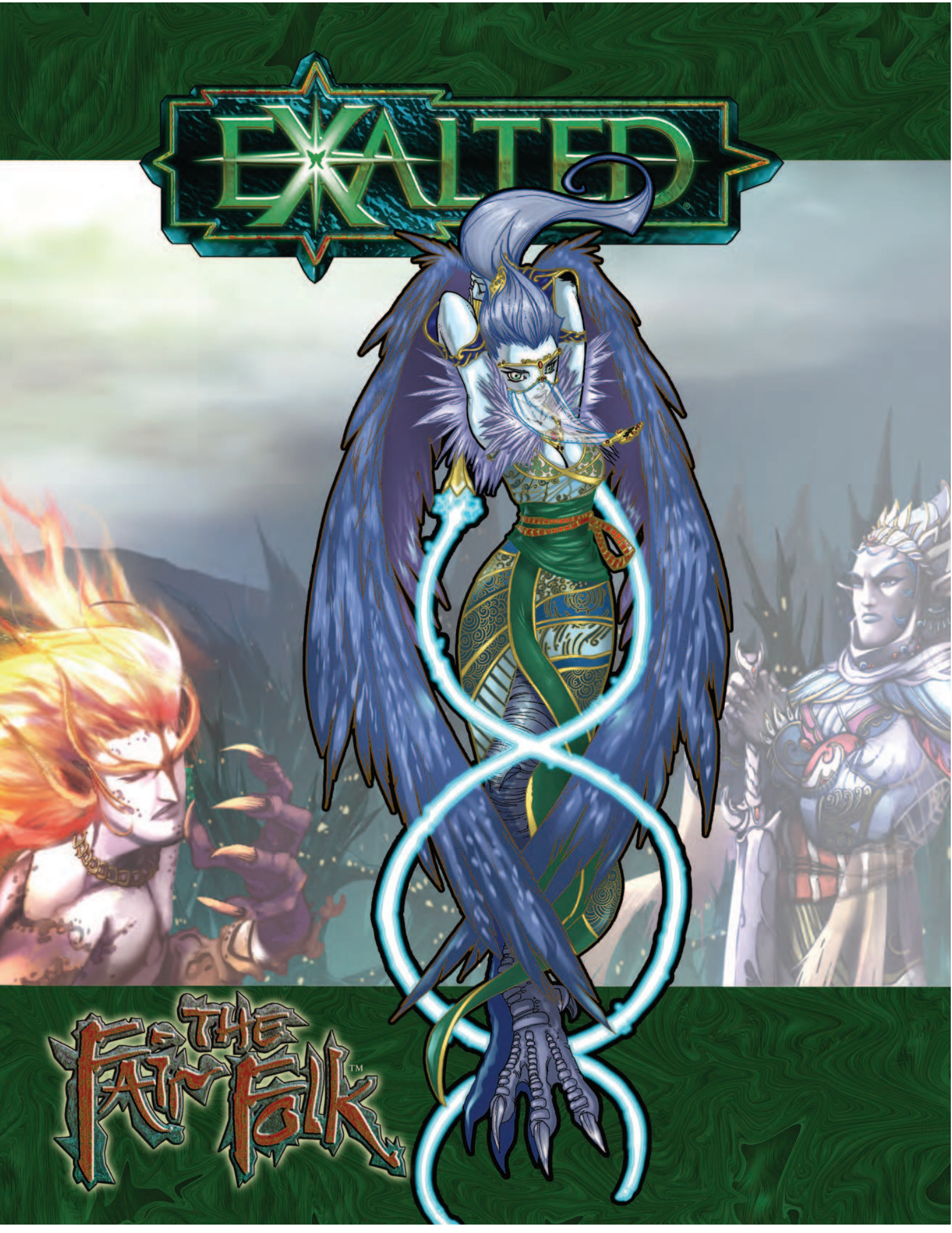

EXALTED
THE FAIR FOLK™

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He was Subarto of the Opal Court, and he'd been up and down and to Creation's black heart and back. He'd supped with the enemies of his people and come away with stories of the wickednesses he'd performed upon them. He was a noble of the first rank, with all his Graces intact. An Eshu, he was a survivor and an entertainer. Once a creature of the frozen Northern waste, he still affected its fashion. He styled himself a fighting poet and went about in otter and wolf furs in all sorts of inappropriate circumstances.

The current moment was arguably such a circumstance. At this point, the Opal Court marshaled beneath the gaily colored branches of the Far East. Self-billed as the foremost outpost of the Balorian crusade within the Marches of Rakshastan, the Opal Court prided itself on a certain military air. Prince Japhthia was the heir of Balor, he claimed, and he tried to project an organized appearance that Subarto's folksy splendor seemed at odds with. The hobgoblins that milled about the court's encampment were dressed in the green-and-brown dappled uniforms of forest rangers influenced by Seventh Legion training.

But Subarto was not entirely without awareness of his location. He had shed his antlers and wore a martially sleek wolf's tail and ears instead. The warband of tiny, drunken manikins who paraded behind him performing skits to slyly mock the unspoken social tension in any given situation had been banished away. He still wore furs and wool, but they had a military air, and he looked like a general who had spent too much time among the hill men and given up civilized dress. Or rather, he looked like a faerie prince pretending to be such a general. No mortal general, not even a Dynast deep in some decadent playacting folly, could have found such an array of furs, for they were conjured from the notional.

This much he had changed, and he would change no more. An appearance was, after all, a thing meticulously cultivated and carefully maintained. Just as the Opal Court's air of purposeful military bearing, its baroque uniforms and its thick combat jargon were all deliberate parts of the court's airs, so his barbarian image served Subarto well. In addition, Subarto was one of the senior officers at the court, reporting only to the prince himself, and his Cup Grace served as the Glory of their current Freehold realm. He would look how he pleased.

"I am the greeter for the Opal Court," the Eshu prince said to those who came to the Freehold's front gate. This was a duty he relished, and none in the court could excel him at it — in no small part due to his role as Glory. As a rule, there were three kinds of individuals who came to his gate. The first were individuals who were there to live in the martial splendor of the Balorian sway. These he welcomed to the brotherhood of arms and sent on to the Opal Court's ever-growing bivouac. This was the most common sort of visitor by far, as the Opal Court had quite a reputation for its militant undertakings.

Of course, there were also nobles and their retinues. Alone or in small groups, nobles of Balorian persuasion or simply those desiring a martial air made their way to the Opal Court. These, the Eshu greeted gravely, for their substance would increase the might of the court. Even if the nobles' retinues were quickly torn apart by the stresses of the court, their possessions would still enhance the armories and panoplies of the court and its attendants.

Not that Subarto generally volunteered the last proviso.

But these were not the only warriors who came. Many commoners who had not awakened to free will arrived also, drawn by the court's influence resonating with their own natures. This was one reason for the court's constant circulation — by encamping near bivouacs of troops lost during the Balorian Crusade, the court could draw them into its influence and swell its ranks. It was a gradual matter, but it had paid off in terms of the muster strength of the court's army, and readiness and combat power were always foremost on the Opal Court's agenda.

This was a trick that Subarto himself supervised, and he was, to no small degree, quite pleased with himself, even if his miracles did draw wolves and lions and other strange creatures sprung wholly or somewhat from the Wyld. They rolled and pawed before the gate, drawn by the same dreams of blood and strife, and Subarto directed them to the kennels as gravely as if they were faerie princes.

Also drawn like the animals were those martially inclined beastmen, Wyld-mutants, glamour-addled outcastes and other such unlikely creatures. Some came to serve, harkening to rumors percolating in the Wyld of the Opal Court's terrible might. Others were recruited directly by the malevolent whispers of Subarto's dream-broadcasts. Less beautiful of line than natural predators, these once-mortal creatures were used as playthings, training dummies and cannon fodder of the first degree, fates to which they were generally agreeable by the time they met Subarto, and if not, then shortly thereafter.

Another kind of visitor were those refugees and starvelings that fortune threw to the court's front gate. The Opal Court was a mighty assembly of heroes. Those with especially fierce enemies but unimposing means of defense and those who had nothing and could not defend even that could come to the court and find positions as menials or servants. Some might even rise in rank some day and become warrior in the legions of the court. However, most would stay thralls for the duration of their stay, which might be as long as forever or as short as the distance a hobgoblin need leap to deliver savage bites and blows when it is accidentally offended.

There wasn't much difference between these beings and those who came to add themselves to the lower ranks of the court's military, to be honest. Subarto gave those who came to him the position they asked for. Those who needed refuge were given succor. Those seeking service were given whatever uniforms were fashionable at that time.

But there was a kind of visitor that was, in Subarto's opinion, the best. These came to demand war. Most came as a result of the court's generous policy regarding fugitives and refugees. The Opal Court was not just willing to defend those who demanded shelter beneath its eaves, it was *eager*. Those who trailed behind their quarry often exclaimed that their words meant war and that the lords of Opal might gain little from the issue.

Unfortunately for such emissaries, it was the policy of the Opal Court to provide shelter for the very reason of prompting conflict. If one accepts enough criminals, the Opal Court's thinking went, then eventually, someone worthy would be drawn forth to do battle in the process of securing their fugitives.

This policy generally summarized the workings of the Opal Court — and of much of Rakshastan. Years of effort spent recruiting hobgoblins to carry forward the Balorian Crusade would be sacrificed without hesitation on an afternoon battle over the disposition of an escaped concubine. This attitude was not only normal, but commendable.

And currently, it seemed as if Subarto was about to get one of this favorite sort of visitors. He felt the creature approach from quite some distance away with his glinting eyes. A noble, and not a small one, with a contingent of hobgoblins riding along behind her.

He apprehended her making her way around the scattered obstacles, through the trees and up the long gradual slope before the front gate, but he did not peer closer. Better not to spoil the moment of the meeting with foretastes and premonitions. Nothing would change regardless of what Subarto learned or when he learned it. That was the glory of living one's ideals to the fullest. All that was required of Subarto was to see which of his personal library of responses and archetypal poses the visitor prompted.



Emerging from the last bend of the forest before the gates, she was quite the impressive creature. She was young, weaker than he, but still, she had a strong enough Essence to demand a certain wariness. Subarto glanced at the belt her body wore and noted the vast power upon it, then took in the rest of his visitor, while never letting his attention wander far from the awful might at her hip.

She strove in every way to embody the Southern raksha noble, and she was a marvelous Cataphract. Her gryphon reeled as it strolled up the road with the forced, perfect gait of the created or recreated. Its legs were held outward in the peculiar style of gryphons made to walk far too much aground, so who knew how long she had been riding it, yet it was a healthy and well-fed beast and showed no tattered feathers or dull fur.

The Cataphract's own frame was as harsh, lithe and perfect as her riding beast's, forged from the fiery Essence of the South. Her white robes were embroidered with endless traceries of scarlet thread that rolled and ran like liquid blood, the embroidery on the hem spelling out spidery threats against the loved ones of the reader in shockingly specific detail.

Subarto had seen its like before. They were an armor and a common enough miracle in the Southern reaches of Rakshastan. Within the infinite variety of the writhing, whirling thread, there would be a few sorcerous tendencies embedded. Now, the cloak was in a clearly defensive configuration, the diagrams switching from one starburst-and-circles pattern to another in an iron wall of flower-blossom, pond-life mandalas. There might also be hypnotic or elusive patterns in the robes, but those that combined multiple functions became increasingly difficult to obtain. The Opal Court greeter doubted it could perform more than one other miracle.

The saddle boots the Cataphract wore were a pale, almost yellow, leather, and beneath her white and scarlet-embroidered cloak of glory, she wore gray pants and a white belt that ended with soft, round beads the color of a rainbow. Her skin was the warm brown of polished mortal wood, and her hair was an elegant drapery of thick raven tresses. She wore a steel helm with fine, slim lines and a plume of peacock feathers whose iridescent blue-and-violet eyes blinked in a commonplace reminder of Rakshastan's miraculous character. It could be that the helm was in some fashion enchanted, but it seemed more a mere ornament.

Then, Subarto's eyes turned back to the noble's girdle. From the belt dangled a calabash dipping-gourd and a slim sword of Chiaroscuran glass or some substance so similar as to be indistinguishable. The sword was nothing more than a weapon for her body, a fine enough possession but neither adamant nor especially miraculous. The gourd was another matter, and Subarto eyed it carefully. Perhaps it contained a powerful oath or magical spell, but whatever the case, it was a veritable fountain of power — probably more powerful than the noble herself. If it was an oath, Subarto thought he would be better off negotiating directly with it.

Her retinue numbered in the dozens, loping lion warriors from the Southern savannas. They were simple, bestial creatures, clothed only in load-bearing harnesses and fighting with their talons and teeth. There was no evidence of wings on her minions, so perhaps she had ridden all the way along the vast route from the South to here? If so, they had left a trial of butchery, for the lion warriors looked sleek and battle-ready.

Subarto stroked his chin and considered that. The travelers looked fresh, but it was Rakshastan. Looks were merely another way to lie, and distance was merely a formidable illusion. Resting his body's hand on the hilt of his sword, Subarto smiled and quickly considered his mode of introduction. She was definitely tribal in nature — not the sort of traveler one met with a demand for identification and an appointment with the base commander. He bowed with a flourish, his body's hand still on its own sword. "I am the greeter for the Opal Court. I am called Subarto.

Oh, traveler from the Southern sands, what brings you to our humble forest encampment? Surely it must be hard on the constitution of your magnificent beast."

She fixed Subarto with her own piercing violet eyes, and the many eyes of her helmet's peacock plum mirrored the angry glance. The Eshu closed his feeding maws tightly in case the strikes against his soul began. Her glittering eyes narrowed, one of her body's hands lifted, a finger raised.

"I will fight any duel required of me, if I can but win my way into the service of Prince Japhthia."

Subarto relaxed. One of those. His smile broadened, but his ears stayed back. "I am his gatekeeper and his chief herald. Many fighters come to sit at his table. Why don't you show me what you have to give me an idea what bench you should start out on."

The fighter nodded, looking Subarto over, as he apprehended her. She grimly said, "To the death, then?"

Subarto nodded, "By way of introduction, yes."

* * *

Veronique whipped out her glass blade, the greeter readied his own weapon, and after a few quick passes, the Cataphract found her excellency wholly inadequate to compete with the Eshu's own mastery of the combat arts. Then, Subarto twisted his sword-tip left instead of right and muffed a parry. Veronique's icy blade slipped through the armhole of his gossamer protection, and he died.

Clearly, he had thrown the match, and she waited, surrounded by her snarling lion warriors at full ready, for whatever sort of assault might befall her now that the guest-right had been violated and blood had been spilled — or whatever other ban the matter sought to circumvent. But the hobgoblin guards at the gate calmly continued their vigil, and after a few moments, Subarto stood up and dusted himself off. "I'm sorry, that was probably quite disconcerting."

She nodded almost imperceptibly. She asked him, "You are that protective of your technique?" and studied him for his response. Would she be a junior rival? A romantic pursuer? An obsessive foe? Subarto's smile, which had twinkled out with his death, was suddenly back again. "You are not?"

He was a noble, and ancient, at the center of a court, subject to who knew how many vexations and feuds. His power was great, and his willingness to entangle her in his story was obvious. She was burdened with the power that hung around her like a curse.

Veronique said without expression, "Perhaps I should have been. I am a creature with many enemies. I see to shelter behind the hem of your lord's robes, as well as sit at his table."

The wolf-eared Northman's ear's pricked up and forward. "Your display is adequate, of course. You will be started in the middle rank of nobles serving the court. Take that news to the herald at the court, and he will announce you and get you settled in."

She nodded. "That is all?"

The Eshu called Subarto cocked his head, the smile flickering across his lips again. "What else is there? You're part of our story now. Get on well, and they'll make you an officer immediately. Be well, and use my name to assure yourself hospitality in petty matters if you wish."

Subarto's smile was the smile of a wolf, and Veronique forced an icy smile in return. So, she saw, there would be no evenness to this at all, only clients and patrons and debts that could never be repaid.

Her finger caressing the crown of the calabash on her belt, the faerie princess strode forward through the gate, and the hobgoblin troopers saluted her.

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Heels burning, the Laughing Boy streaked and darted across the surface of the Wyld. Like an insect skating across the water, like a glowing mote from a bonfire, like a thistledown in the wind. Oh, up over and around he went, racing with his perfect legs. He held back from leaping forward with his Essence, held back from tearing through the flimsy fabric of the Wyld with a laughing leap and wishing his way forward. He ran with men's legs as men do, and the world unrolled beneath his feet.

There were many who could not abide their exile to Creation and lived there in sullen hate of what they were or planned a murder-suicide of all things shaped. The Laughing Boy was not one of these beings. Oh, he was destructive enough, and even now, where he ran, he left black charred spots surrounded by teeming, squirming miracles. But he loved this place, with its riot of prodigies, its endless explorations of its themes. Not that the unshaped Wyld did not have a certain beauty of its own, but it was abstract.

The Laughing Boy streaked over a gully, his laughter lending him wings. He rolled down a hill, his body as limber as his laughing heart. He raced beside a startled herbivore of some sort, pacing it as it curvetted through the crystal trees. Trapping it against a hill and cutting off its escape again and again, he cackled with the childish glee that gave him his name, grabbed the beast and kissed it on the forehead. Its eyes grew wide, and then, he was away, crashing through the thickets by a streambed as if his body were made of stone, slicing through the reedbeds as if his body were made of quicksilver.

Why did he abide in the Opal Court? He was powerful, and the court's politics fascinated him. He enjoyed Japhthia's vision of a Balorian Crusade, even if he felt that the crusade as the prince proposed it was doomed. It was still a wonderful concept, and it was so full of individuals, each motivated by his own ends. There was Cahlenna's discipline, Subarto's desire to pursue fame beneath the banner of a great hero, Wiskisa's endless hatred for the world that had destroyed her feelings. This was indeed the best sort of Balorian Crusade. It was passionate, elitist, militant and ineffectual. It provided all the entertainment of an actual war with none of the substance.

Others might think otherwise — certainly none of the other figures in the Opal Court openly believed their crusade doomed from the start. But the Laughing Boy felt otherwise, and so, when he came in from his beloved depths of the Wyld, he ran along beside them and helped to protect their great endeavor from the depredations of those who opposed it. He also laid them one against another obliquely, so that they wouldn't notice — or wouldn't be offended enough to cast him out, at least — and sewed discord among them.

Anarchs were creatures of trouble and strife. Where they went, they ran riot. It was no surprise the Laughing Boy set members of the court against one another. Who could discern the depth of his loathing for a world totally without definition? Who could understand how sincere were his manipulations?

None who had not run with him, as some had done. None who could not understand the joy of flesh and pattern, however tenuous. And so, the Laughing Boy bolted through the trees, the silver peals of his laughter echoing from tree limb and earth and mad sky. He was a bolt of flame, a spear of light, a swooping beast diving for its prey. He was a viper nestled at the heart of the Opal Court, and in this, he was hardly unique. Most courts harbored such a rebel among them, just as most rebels against the unshaped harbored a secret Balorian amidst their number. Yet, scorpions are common — a man sleeping in the right place might have to shake several from his shoes in the morning. But this commonality made them no less dangerous. So it was with the Laughing Boy.

INTRODUCTION

"…Old folk tell of pleasing voices heard singing there, and of laughter that swells with joys beyond earth's joys; and say that at evening the little low windows are brighter than formerly. They say too the fierce aurora comes oftener to that spot, shining blue in the north with visions of frozen worlds while the crag and cottage hang black and fantastic against wild coruscations."
—H.P Lovecraft, *"The Strange High House in the Mist"*

Beyond the uttermost borders of Creation, there is madness. It is formless and with all forms. It is shapeless and with all shapes. Perhaps the Primordials arose from this, or predated it, or perhaps they traveled to it from far away. On its formless face, they scrawled form and built a great house for themselves that they might rest safely within and play between themselves the Games of Divinity.

But there were shapes within the chaos, forms of existence native to it. Faceless storms and vortices of Essence, these are the unshaped Fair Folk. These beings resented the house of the Primordials and made war on it ceaselessly.

Yet, first the Primordials, then the gods and finally even the inhabitants of Creation expanded on its borders and increased the dimensions of the Primordials' house, adding countless additions hacked from the twisting ur-space outside their world. It seemed as if the Fair Folk could do nothing to combat this strange fortress of

alien invaders or stop its incessant raids and encroachments. Its very operation drew in the Essence of the world around it and spun it into pattern and event. It was an ineradicable insult, and intolerable.

And then, opportunity dawned. Petty, angry servants of Creation came to the Primordials and said, "We seek to lay our lords' house to waste with pestilence, for we would rather die than live within it. We beg you to burn the remains."

The Fair Folk heard this and tested what the emissaries of the insurrectionists attested and said "This is as you say it is. On the appointed day, our armies march." And the armies of the Fair Folk rallied, and the unshaped drew themselves up, and many legions of them took form that they might sew discord and death in Creation, while the others prepared to destroy the fabric of Creation itself.

Their armies marched, triumphant, across the face of Creation, slaughtering the few wide-eyed victims who remained after the Great Contagion. And then, the unthinkable happened. The defenses of Creation became active and scourged the Fair Folk from the face of the world.

Now, Creation lies half-sundered, and countless exiles of the Wyld live in the penumbra of ruined matter on the fringes of Creation. Some are survivors of the initial, uncompleted war of annihilation. Others are exiles who were unable or unwilling to compete in the brutal world of the Wyld. Still others sprang into existence in the Wyld-scarred hinterland of Creation or were created by their fellows. Regardless or their origin, they are the subjects of this supplement.

Exalted: The Fair Folk is a supplement about these exiles and survivors and the existences they lead in the nebulous borderlands of Creation. Some work to bring about the destruction of all that is. Others seek only to survive in the strange and hostile world they find themselves inhabiting. Forever creatures of the borderlands, they cannot return to the world of the unshaped, nor can they survive in Creation without consuming Essence. Immortal unless slain by the Creation-born, these undying exiles while away the hours before the end of history in raids and intrigues, competing with one another in political and religious struggles, reducing one another to puppets and slaves to amuse themselves in the long eternity ahead. Some Fair Folk still seek to overthrow Creation, but their message has become dilute, and the majority are more interested in diversion than in destruction.

Most raksha are will-less commoners, extras who serve the rule of their masters. They are governed by the nobles, a domineering class of overlords who use their command over magic and ability to shape reality to enforce their rule. Characters in **Exalted: The Fair Folk** play Fair Folk nobles or commoners who have mastered certain natural but difficult forms of self-progression and attained free will and the ability to shape reality in the Wyld.

Exalted: The Fair Folk also details the Mountain Folk, Fair Folk spirits trapped in the fabric of Creation when the world was formed. Given form and voice by the Great Maker, Autochthon, the Mountain Folk were humbled by the Exalted in the First Age. Forced to swear to defer to and serve the Celestial Exalted, the Mountain Folk dwell even now below the Imperial Mountain and seek to protect Creation's jade heart from the nameless, terrible things that dwell beneath the earth.

This Is not a Complete Game

Despite its size, **Exalted: The Fair Folk** is not a complete game. It is a supplement for White Wolf's **Exalted**, a game in which characters take the role of Solar Exalted, dispossessed masters of the shaped world of Creation returned after long exile to reclaim their thrones. This book doesn't include descriptions of the game's various Traits, rules on combat or a complete setting. It is a hardback treatment of the Fair Folk, strange alien exiles from the chaos beyond the borders of the world who now live on the tainted borderlands of Creation. You'll have to at least have access to a copy of **Exalted** to use this book. This book is also highly concerned with the Wyld, but not the way the Wyld effects mortals. Storytellers and players will probably find **Exalted: The Lunars**, which has an extensive chapter on the Wyld, to be an invaluable resource in running their games, particularly as it vastly expands the selection of mutations that the Fair Folk can enjoy and details the effects of the Wyld on living beings.

Where Are the Faeries?

The word "fae" and "faerie" are not in this book. During its writing, it was found impossible to maintain the proper tone while using the terms. Instead, we have used the term "raksha" (pl. "raksha") in their place. The place known as "Faerie" or "Faerieland" is referred to throughout as "Rakshastan." The words "Wyld" and "Fair Folk" are used as normal.

How to Use this Book

Introduction

The section you're reading right now. Explains this book and how to use it.

Chapter One: Rakshastan

This chapter describes the hazardous land of Rakshastan, that area of Creation that has been twisted by the influence of the Wyld, and how it appears in each of the four directions.

Chapter Two: The Raksha

This chapter describes the greater and lesser tribes of the raksha and the politics and religion of the land of Rakshastan.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

This section details how to create Fair Folk characters for use in an **Exalted** game. Though they are mechanically compatible with other **Exalted** character types, the Fair Folk are very much their own sort of being and may not fit many **Exalted** games.

Chapter Four: Traits

This chapter describes the specialized Traits used in **Exalted: The Fair Folk** and describes the castes of the raksha as well. It also discusses Traits, such as Backgrounds, that appear in **Exalted** but are but modified for use in this supplement.

Chapter Five: Raksha Magic

This chapter details the Charms of the Raksha, their powers of reality shaping and their use of oaths, artifacts, sorcery and behemoths to enforce their might.

Chapter Six: The Mountain Folk

The section details the enigmatic Mountain Folk. Dwellers in the vast Imperial Mountain, the Mountain Folk protect Creation and their own kingdom from the terrible Nameless Hordes. This chapter provides a complete description of the Mountain Folk character type including character creation, Charms and a description of their society, culture and history.

Chapter Seven: Storytelling

This final chapter of the book discusses how Storytellers can approach running a game of **Exalted: The Fair Folk**.

Lexicon

The following terms have special significance in the argot of the raksha. There are, of course, many other terms in use in **Exalted**, but only those of specific significance to the raksha and **Exalted: The Fair Folk** are defined here.

Conclave: The council of Artisans who govern the *Mountain Folk*.

Creation: For the purposes of this book, Creation is the area of the world that is wholly outside the influence of the Wyld. In fact, the Marches of *Rakshastan* are a slowly decaying part of Creation, but they comprise a unique environment, which we refer to as the Wyld.

Cup: The *Grace* of the *Fair Folk* focusing on appeasement and performance. It is the focus of the *raksha*'s Compassion.

Enlightened: *Mountain Folk* touched by the inspiration and genius of Autochthon.

Fair Folk: The term the inhabitants of *Creation* use when referring to the *raksha*, as using their true names might attract their attention. Raksha almost never call themselves Fair Folk unless they are expressing self-aware humor.

Grace: A repository of the *Fair Folk*'s being and self. There are five Graces, the *Cup*, the *Ring*, the *Staff*, the *Sword* and the central *Heart* Grace.

Great Geas, the: The magical binding Autochthon placed on the *Mountain Folk* to prevent them from challenging the Exalted mandate.

Heart: The central *Grace* of a *raksha* and the residence of her Willpower and free will. The Heart Grace is protected by the other Graces.

Mountain Folk: *Fair Folk* Essence trapped in *Creation* when the world was created and given shape by the efforts of the Great Maker, Autochthon.

possession: Something belonging of one of the *raksha* through a mystical link created through the use of various Charms. Possessions can be stored Elsewhere or be made to manifest in the raksha's presence, modified cosmetically to suit the raksha's whims and the needs of the moment, as a reflexive action.

raksha: A congerie of five *Graces* (the *Cup*, the *Ring*, the *Staff*, the *Sword* and the *Heart*), one or two of which possess feeding maws and the rest of which are Essence repositories and counterweights for the feeding maws. *Fair Folk* in *Creation* must use Charms to create physical existences for themselves, or they sublimate into nothingness instantly from the sheer pressure of shaped reality.

Rakshastan: That part of *Creation* that has been touched by the Wyld. The denizens of Creation call this place "The Wyld," but in fact, it is a medley of both Creation and the true Wyld. Rakshastan is not an actual kingdom, merely a name for the region the *raksha* inhabit.

Ring: The *Grace* of the *Fair Folk* focusing on self-awareness and the ability to change the *raksha*'s physical circumstances. It springs from the raksha's Temperance.

shaping: The innate ability of the *raksha* to shape the Wyld around them through the use of their *Graces*.

shinma: Ultimate concepts that exist in and beyond the Wyld, somewhat between natural laws and unspeaking divinities, venerated and studied by the raksha. The shinma include Nirikara (the Mask), Nirguna

(the *Heart*), Dharma (the *Cup*), Nirvishesha (the *Ring*), Nirvikalpa (the *Staff*) and Nishkriya (the *Sword*).

Staff: The Staff *Grace* is the home of Conviction and social power. It defines the *raksha*'s ability to change the social world around her.

Sword: The Sword *Grace* is the home of Valor and the *raksha*'s sense of mythic self-importance and ability to destroy that which opposes them.

Unenlightened: *Mountain Folk* with intelligence and autonomy diminished by *the Great Geas*.

Sources

Like any good fairy tale, **Exalted: The Fair Folk** draws from a variety of sources — too many and too loosely from all, in fact, to really credit the book directly to any one heritage.

Many are traditional, and the book draws primarily from *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, the Celtic tradition and, as their name suggests, from the wicked spirits of Indian myth. All of these sources depict alien races, powerful yet foreign, with motivations and values different from those of normal men, left behind by history and with a malevolent disregard for the well-being or even outright hostility for the mortals who have superceded them as lords of the world. Although **Exalted: The Fair Folk** lacks the "dwindling away" element of the Celtic Fair Folk, the hostility toward the race of man rooted in the very nature of their existence is part of all three, and many of the Fair Folk's powers and illusions are drawn from classic sources.

More modern sources include the works of Michael Moorcock (particularly the Elric books), those of Roger Zelazny (especially the first five Amber books), Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions* and the many other fictions of the period that depict the Princes of Chaos. The Fair Folk in **Exalted** are as much these modern Princes of Chaos as they are traditional "faeries." These Princes of Chaos are rooted distinctly in the modern world and the modern viewpoint, borrowing trappings of demons or jinn, but really existing as their own unique element. They are lords of a hostile and arbitrary realm inimical to all orders of mortal life and rational existence. As devils from an era of science fiction that could admit no supernatural influence without a "scientific" explanation, the Princes of Chaos in these stories, like the Fair Folk, are embodiments of bad luck, disorder and randomness — the primal, ethically void vexations of all existence. From their twisted realms spring glorious angels of destruction and toxic nuclear mutants. The truly alien and inherently hostile nature of the raksha owes much to this heritage of modern Princes of Chaos. From this source, the Fair Folk also draw their peculiar sort of beauty and their cancerous, mutative character.

It's also worth noting as a source of at least as much indirect inspiration for this material is the modern American short cartoon, particular the Merrie Melodies and other early and mid-period Warner Brothers studio work. **Exalted: The Fair Folk** is very much a game about life in a world where anything is possible and death is not especially to be feared, and what is left when the ultimate threat and compulsion is removed. Our culture's closest analog to such a place is the world of the children's cartoon, where causality and even life itself do not matter so much as relationships and the scenarios the characters find themselves in again and again. Players and Storytellers seeking to understand the world of the Fair Folk when they are alone, without mortals, would not do badly to take a look at these mid-20th-century entertainments, particularly those kept in their original format and not cut for modern television screening.



The little ones were gathered around now. Neshi put her hands to her veil and carefully considered. She had a powerful geas against revealing her face to any but her prey. Could there be some watching onlooker? In but a short moment, her consideration ended. The geas provided, among other boons, a method by which she could sense if she was observed.

Neshi smiled her perfect wolf's smile and called on today's darling angel, little Betanni. Betanni had been very doting today and had made Neshi a beautiful bouquet of crystal flowers and sung her queen a song. Tonight, she would be the special one. It would probably be one of Betanni's last nights as the special one. Her flowers had been a rudely grabbed mass, with half the petals cracked or broken. The song had been merely jumbled joyousness, cheerful sounds without structure or even words. Neshi briefly regretted her impulsive feeding — but only briefly. What was done was done.

The rasksha queen's hand guided Betanni's face up. "Do you remember the story of the stars, Betanni?"

The young girl shook her head and said, "No…." distantly. Neshi quietly clucked. The girl wasn't supposed to have forgotten.

"Would you like to hear it, child?" Neshi prompted.

"Yes!" the girl responded, her voice hollowly emphatic in response to this easy question.

"These are the true stars, ever changing and always new" Neshi lied, placing the girl on her knee, "not like the stars of the gods of your world, but changing as the world changes." This was a new ritual. Neshi had built the stars herself a few days ago for reasons even she could not discern and used them to decorate the sky outside her mansion. "The ones in the center, that swirl endlessly — they are Balor's Eye. And the ones fixed around them, those are the Great Graces. The five that swirl like fireflies are the Courts, first here and then there. Can you see my star, the bright one, over there? And, my little bunny, there is one star that is not in the sky. He is Thief of Words. They say he walks among us, an earthbound star, and that he will emerge to lead the Last Great Crusade against the Shaped World."

Neshi felt this was her great strength, that she confessed her dreams and desires to her prey thus. It was nothing that those around her could not guess, but to know what she thought at a given moment — Neshi's court was devoted to the Cup and to Compassion, which was to say, it was full of courtesans, users and tricksters of the heart. To inform another of such weakness would be to invite manipulation, dependency and slavery. Neshi had no desire for that, nor did most Fair Folk.

But, looked after carefully and taught unswerving loyalty, mortals too young to understand the complex and often nonsensical politics of the courts could be excellent confidants. They listened attentively, they always took one's side, and they were inexpensive, compared to the cost of developing friendships when one was a queen of Rakshastan.

Neshi was known to slay her playthings when their love for her wavered. Some said it was an eccentricity of her Heart. Others said it was to fulfill another geas she'd accepted. It was neither. It was just a matter of security. Once their love for her had wavered, how could she know whose playthings they might be? There was also a certain amount of picky eating involved, though perhaps the refined tastes developed to justify Neshi's rather expensive coterie. And, of course, Neshi loved the soft, gentle harmlessness of their souls in her feeding maws. Those children whose love for her waved tasted off, rank — gamey — not tender and tame and properly devoted. Those who were impure, Neshi slew. She had no use for them, and bless the shinma and hope for luck if the image of her face be fished from one of their minds or her secret dreams recorded.

Betanni, however, she would probably keep for some time. While her intellect was clearly on the verge of failure, she still loved only her beautiful god-mother. Soon enough, there would be no love of any sort, and she would be useless, but the habituated actions of the girl's body would prove handy to help provide some bulk for Neshi's coterie of little darlings. So long as she trailed along quietly behind her mistress and didn't lose control of her bowels, Neshi would keep her on, an englamoured doll. When she slid beyond even the lies of the Fair Folk to conceal her degenerated state, Neshi would give the child to the Guild, and the mortals could do whatever it was they did with the empty wine jugs they filched from the floor of the Fair Folk's feast. She caressed the back of the child's neck, and Betanni quivered rapturously. There would certainly be no secrets left in Betanni's empty little soul.

CHAPTER ONE
RAKSHASTAN

Rakshastan is the unstable and exotic realm that lies between Creation and Pure Chaos. Most Exalts refer to Rakshastan as the Wyld, but the raksha who inhabit it know that Rakshastan is more properly an adjunct to Creation than it is part of the true Wyld. Creation is a huge continent sitting in the vast and endless sea of the Wyld, and Rakshastan is the continental shelf of Creation — it neither partakes of the static reality of Creation nor the endless chaos of the Wyld, but is a mixture of both.

Rakshastan is a realm of flux and change, the deeper characters go into Rakshastan, the more mutable and ultimately the more chaotic the landscape and the creatures become, until it finally gives way to the raw chaos of the Wyld. The Bordermarches often look little different from the more unusual portions of Creation, but no one would ever mistake the Eastern blade forests or any of the other manifestations of the Middlemarches for even the most exotic natural features of Creation.

However, for all of it endless and chaotic change, true creativity is almost unknown in Rakshastan. The creatures and the landscape there imitate the forms of Creation but are incapable of creating any new forms. Even the most exotic beasts of Rakshastan are either a variation on some beast in Creation, a blending of several animals, animals

and plants or even animals and natural features, such as the vast living islands of the Western Middlemarches.

The landscape itself is similar — the most flexible portions of Rakshastan sometimes spontaneously transform into exact duplicates of forests or mountains somewhere in Creation and can even duplicate ruined cities such as the First Age metropolis of Tamar-Lak exactly as they were in their heyday. Every hut and every insect in Rakshastan is either an exact duplicate of something in Creation or a blending of several creatures or objects from Creation. Rakshastan is in many ways nothing more than a constantly shifting fun-house mirror version of Creation.

Also, the flexibility of Rakshastan is never random. The laws of Rakshastan are different from those of Creation — they are the laws of meaning and story. The Spired Fortress of Ice and Emerald is always the Spired Fortress of Ice and Emerald, but the exact number and arrangement of its spires can vary from one day to the next. Similarly, while a huge forest of amethyst trees always remains a forest of amethyst trees, the paths between the trees shift, and the trees themselves also move and change shape. The conscious desires of the raksha nobles are responsible for some of these changes, but most occur as consequence of the innate nature of Rakshastan. In the Bordermarches and the Middlemarches, these natural changes sometimes occur quite rapidly, but they rarely occur when anyone is directly observing them. Instead, a character might walk down a road through a forest, look back and see that the curves and twists the road she took are now different from when she actually walked along that portion of the road.

How Does this Relate to Raksha?

Reading further in this text, it will become clear that the Fair Folk have incredible control over their environment. The descriptions in this chapter exist to establish the "environmental genre" of Rakshastan.

The raksha are not the only force in their world. The winds of chaos, the influence of the unshaped Fair Folk and the vast geomantic power of the remnants of Creation that underlie Rakshastan all combine to give each direction a "feel" outside the influence of the raksha. Areas that were once part of a Freehold but left its power will gradually assume the character of their elemental direction over time. In general, it takes about three stories for the area to become "soft" and touched with external power and about five stories until it is lost. In the West, it takes only one story for softening and three stories until collapse. This can be dramatically shortened by Wyld storms and actions by the unshaped Fair Folk.

In the Bordermarches, these changes occur relatively infrequently and are rarely extreme. Every few hours, the location of a tree, the shape of a rock or the pattern of curves and oxbows in a stream will shift, but only a few elements of the landscape change at once. In the Middlemarches, these changes are far more extensive. All elements of the Middlemarches regularly change, and these changes occur quite frequently. In the deepest portions of the Middlemarches, a forest may always remain a forest, but the types of trees, how dense the forest is and the paths through it can all change every time a traveler looks over her shoulder. In both the Bordermarches and the Middlemarches, the essential nature of a place is almost always fixed, unless one of the raksha nobles or some similarly powerful being changes it. Just as the details of a story or legend can change without changing the meaning or the impact of the story, in Rakshastan, the details of a place regularly change without affecting its nature. Unless a raksha noble has specifically fixed all of the details of a place she controls, every place in Rakshastan changes to some degree. Even the cities and towns inhabited by the lesser raksha change — their streets wind in different paths, architectural details of buildings change, and in the Middlemarches, even the locations of buildings relative to each other can shift dramatically.

The Deep Wyld is far more mutable than the Middlemarches. Here, everything shifts and changes constantly, and it does so even while characters are watching. A low glacier in the Northern Deep Wyld can transform into a mountain peak in a few hours and then erode before the eyes of everyone watching and become a massive citadel sitting on a solid ice flow, which is just as fleeting and unstable as the mountain.

Rakshastan and the Elemental Directions

One of the most confusing things about Rakshastan is that, like Creation, it is closely associated with the five elements, but how deep into Rakshastan a character goes is equally important for determining what the landscape, the natural laws and the inhabitants are like. These two variables are completely unrelated. There are portions of Rakshastan that are close to one of the elementals poles but are only in the Bordermarches, just as there are portions of the Middlemarches that are not particularly close to one of the elemental poles.

The exact location of a local border between Creation and Rakshastan determines the elemental characteristics of that portion of Rakshastan. If that border is far from a particular elemental pole, then the entire landscape of both the Bordermarches and the Middlemarches will lack extreme elemental features such as trees dozens of miles tall, lakes of fire or plains of

Central Traits

When creating any location in Rakshastan, Storytellers must also determine the central traits of the place. One should always be able to be sum up these traits in a few paragraphs. Regardless of how the place shifts and alters itself, these traits do not change because they represent the essential nature of that place. The descriptions of specific places given in this book should be considered to be their central traits. The only way that a location's central traits can be changed is if one of the raksha nobles deliberately changes it.

The natural changes that regularly occur in all portions of Rakshastan will not affect these traits. However, anything that is not directly related to this statement of central traits can and does change on its own. In the Bordermarches, these changes will always be gradual and relatively superficial. In the Middlemarches, the changes can include everything not set by the central trait statement.

The Deep Wyld is different. It contains no stable locations that are not artificially maintained by raksha nobles, no single place within the Deep Wyld has any central traits, but each elemental direction of the Deep Wyld has its own more general central traits. Everything within the Deep Wyld changes, but this realm maintains a consistency that is not found in the pure chaos beyond its borders.

endless ice. However, if the border is near one of the elemental poles, then the Bordermarches and the Middlemarches will be just as elementally extreme as the neighboring portion of Creation.

The Deep Wyld

The only exception to this general rule is the Deep Wyld. All portions of the Deep Wyld are close to their particular elemental pole. In addition, they are also infinitely mutable and constantly changing. The one constant of the Deep Wyld is that the entire landscape and many of the inhabitants are made from elementally appropriate materials. While portions of the Northern Deep Wyld can precisely duplicate everything from the ice-covered peaks surrounding the city of Diamond Hearth to the tundra around Gethamane, all of the rocks, soil and plants appear to be made of snow and ice. Similarly, in the Deep Wyld of the South, the cities and mountains and savannas that briefly appear there are all made of ash, glowing coals and tiny fragments of lava rock and gemstones, and the air is perpetually filled with smoke.

Wyld Paths

The laws of Rakshastan also affect movement through this mutable realm. In Creation, the distance between Lookshy and Great Forks is always the same, and while there are a multitude of different ways to travel between these two cities, travelers must always cross the same distance. In Rakshastan, distance can be extremely flexible, and directions can bend in accord with the wishes of the raksha.

Raksha know the trick of using the fluid nature of Rakshastan to move rapidly along the interface between the Wyld and Creation. To travel in this manner, the raksha must spend a point of Willpower, and her player must roll Intelligence + Craft (Glamour). The difficulty is 1 plus the difficult penalty for the raksha's location, typically +2 for Bordermarches and +5 for tainted lands. For every success the player rolls, the raksha may slide her location 100 miles along the edge of Creation while staying in the same waypoint. A raksha can never move more than 1,000 miles in this fashion without changing waypoints.

The trick can only be performed in Bordermarches waypoints adjacent to Creation or in tainted lands.

Rules for Fae-Blooded mortals performing similar feats of mobility can be found in the Wyldwalk Merit (see the **Exalted Players Guide,** pp. 77-78).

The Land and the Nobles

When one of the raksha nobles gains control of a portion of Rakshastan, she not only controls the lesser raksha who live upon it, she also gains control of the very landscape itself. By taking control of the local Freehold, she can command the domain that surrounds it. These domains need follow no laws other than those imposed by the noble or nobles who control it. While many nobles do not bother to alter the landscape and the creatures of their domain, some transform their domain into vast citadels of inhuman beauty, charnel houses of mind-shattering horror or exotic realms filled with singular inhabitants. The Princess of the Shining Herons lives in a large lovely meadow filled with tens of thousands of identical great blue herons all made of living glass. In addition to them acting as her servants and guards, they also form the very structure of all buildings within her realm. They interlock their bodies together, forming edifices as solid and as durable as those made from wood or stone. Similarly, some of Balor's most loyal survivors openly display their contempt for humanity by adoring their landscapes with living human limbs and carpeting the ground with human skin.

However, even the raksha nobles are closely connected with one of the five elements, so the domains of Western nobles are always associated with water, while the domains of the Southern raksha are hot and sometimes

Laws, Transitions and Borders

The border between Creation and the Bordermarches is often very subtle. Instead of any obvious shift, there are an increasing number of oddities and changes the deeper a character goes into Rakshastan. The edge of the Bordermarches is normally between one and three miles wide. Unsuspecting mortals and Exalts can sometimes wander into Rakshastan for several hours before they see a sufficient number of unusual features, such as violet-colored rivers or trees bearing small crystalline fruit, to be completely certain that they are in the Bordermarches. This border is made even more indistinct by the existence of lands fully within Creation that Rakshastan has previously touched. Mortals call them "tainted lands" (see **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 200). Unlike the residents of Creation, even the least powerful raksha can vividly feel the border with Creation. They instantly know when they cross the invisible line between a realm filled with the shifting energies they require and the static deadness of Creation.

The borders between the Bordermarches and the Middlemarches and between the Middlemarches and the Deep Wyld are normally far less subtle. Here, the very nature of Rakshastan can dramatically change in the space of a few hundred yards. The most impressive such border is the vast bottomless cliff of the North that separates the Bordermarches from the Middlemarches, but some of the other borders are almost as dramatic.

Rakshastan is a kingdom of madness and illusion, but there is still the residue of Creation beneath it, slowly eroding away. This residue provides Rakshastan with a non-notional, if rather flexible, size. Measured in waypoints, the Bordermarches of Rakshastan are approximately 20 waypoints wide, and the Middlemarches encompass a belt some 60 waypoints thick beyond that. At the far edge of the Middlemarches, there are approximately 20 waypoints of horrifying and unpredictable madness that the Creation-born call the Deep Wyld. Beyond that lie only the vast wastes of primal chaos and the horrible appetites of the unshaped Fair Folk. Into the thin space between the sterility of the Bordermarches and the danger of the Deep Wyld, the entirety of Fair Folk culture presses itself, and there is never a moment when some tribe, household or court is not being evicted from, raided for or challenged over its hard-won turf.

ringed with moats of living flame. Even though a noble's domain always conforms to her imagination and will, the powerful elemental resonances of the Wyld means that their imagination always fits in with the local elements.

Visitors, Madness and Perception

Raksha nobles who deign to communicate with mortals or Exalts are often amused by the manner in which these outsiders talk about Rakshastan. Many visitors experience the entirety of Rakshastan as a realm of ephemeral shapes, shifting colors and formless, ever-changing landscapes. Stories about how a perfectly ordinary meadow suddenly transformed into a rippling human skin covered in coarse hairs the size of a horse's leg or how the visitor wandered for hours or days in a fog filled with ever-changing colored lights are exceedingly common. Such stories present a completely false and misleading picture of Rakshastan. Except in the Deep Wyld, the landscape of Rakshastan is relatively stable. It never undergoes purely random changes, and almost none of it is composed of glowing mist.

The raksha are the primary reason that so many mortals perceive Rakshastan as they do. Visitors to Rakshastan regularly become lost in clouds of glowing lights or find themselves walking through forests of continually mutating human limbs. Such exotic and rapidly shifting landscapes are almost always a warning that the visitors have entered the domain of one of those raksha nobles who either has particularly unusual tastes or is manipulating her domain to deliberately confuse or play with the characters. In either case, such changes in the landscape indicate that the characters have trespassed and may now be in great danger. Because most raksha nobles who regularly interact with mortals know the stories mortals tell about Rakshastan, some of them take great pleasure in making their domain exactly resemble the most fantastic and unlikely of these stories, at least when visitors are present.

Raksha Freeholds

Throughout Rakshastan and even out in the pure chaos of the Wyld, the flows of Essence are not random. The wellsprings of Essence known as Demesnes also exist throughout all of Rakshastan. Like gods and Exalts, the raksha make use of the immense power found in these sites. Instead of making use of their Hearthstones like Exalts and gods do in Creation, raksha nobles build their castles and fortresses on these sites and use them as the center of the domains that they rule.

Raksha cannot create Manses, as they lack the understanding of the laws of Creation needed to construct such precise and stable structures. Instead, they have developed alternative constructions known as Freeholds. Created through a combination of raksha sorcery and complex and

detailed Glamour crafting, these structures are the raksha versions of Manses. The heart of a Freehold lies at its exact center. Here stands a pillar of silver heatless flame known a bonefire. The bonefire is the magical heart of the Freehold — it contains a raksha's heart's grace and burns a mixture of Essence and gossamer. This heady mixture is effectively a concentrated source of the creative potential of chaos. It can be used to perform all manner of miracles — the raksha noble who controls it can use shaping actions anywhere in her domain as if she was there, changing water into wine, reshaping a castle into a ruin or transforming a mountain into the bleached and weathered skeleton of an ancient behemoth.

Anyone looking at a bonefire can easily determine the level of a Freehold (Perception + Occult, difficulty 1). Larger Freeholds have bonefires that are brighter and larger. However, in all cases, the area around the bonefire is relatively similar. This area is usually an open plaza of some kind. It may be covered by a roof or even exist within a great hall or temple, but it is mostly flat and empty. Many raksha enclose these bonefires within small buildings that are often decorated both inside and out with friezes, paintings or sculptures of deeps of glory and heroism performed by the domain's ruler. The actual bonefire is a yard or two in diameter and several yards tall. It is usually either on a raised dais or within a pit or similar depression. Sometimes, the raksha design their Freehold so that the bonefire comes from the palm of a huge statue or surrounds a statue that has been rendered immune to its effects by the domain's lord.

Controlling a Domain

Within their domain, the nobles who control the Freehold's bonefire can use it to create all manner of miracles and to control the land and everything upon it. A raksha lord in his domain can take shaping actions in any part of it as if he were present there and can spy on any location in the Freehold or any Cyst or pennant it has produced. So long as the domain's ruler remains within his domain, he can control it and is in constant contact with it. He can also control and sense it as long as he bears a token or pennant, even if he is thousands of miles away from his domain.

Everyone bearing a token or pennant knows the instant a lord of a domain ceases to be in contact with his domain. In addition, all of the native inhabitants of the domain can feel when their current prince is near the edge of the domain, if he is not carrying a pennant or token. When the prince of a domain starts to leave in a way that would temporarily sever his contact with the domain, every nearby animal and hobgoblin crowds around him and begs him to stay. The prince can order these creatures to leave him alone, but he cannot prevent their looks of abject despair at the thought of losing their beloved ruler for even a few days.

The prince can control everything else by merely by act of will. He can make the land bountiful or barren, create beasts and servants at will and alter the weather, the landscape and the architecture of any building within this domain to fit his whim. See Forging the Arcane Redoubt and its companion Charms on pages 181-191 to see precisely the powers available to raksha on their home territory. The general character of the land is elementally based, but the prince controls all of the details. A domain built in the East could be a lush and bountiful forest of everbearing fruit trees inhabited by a multitude of small friendly animals, or it could be a dark and lifeless forest of jagged razor-sharp oiled steel trees that strike at all intruders with their bladelike limbs, depending on the whim of its lord.

Tokens and Pennants

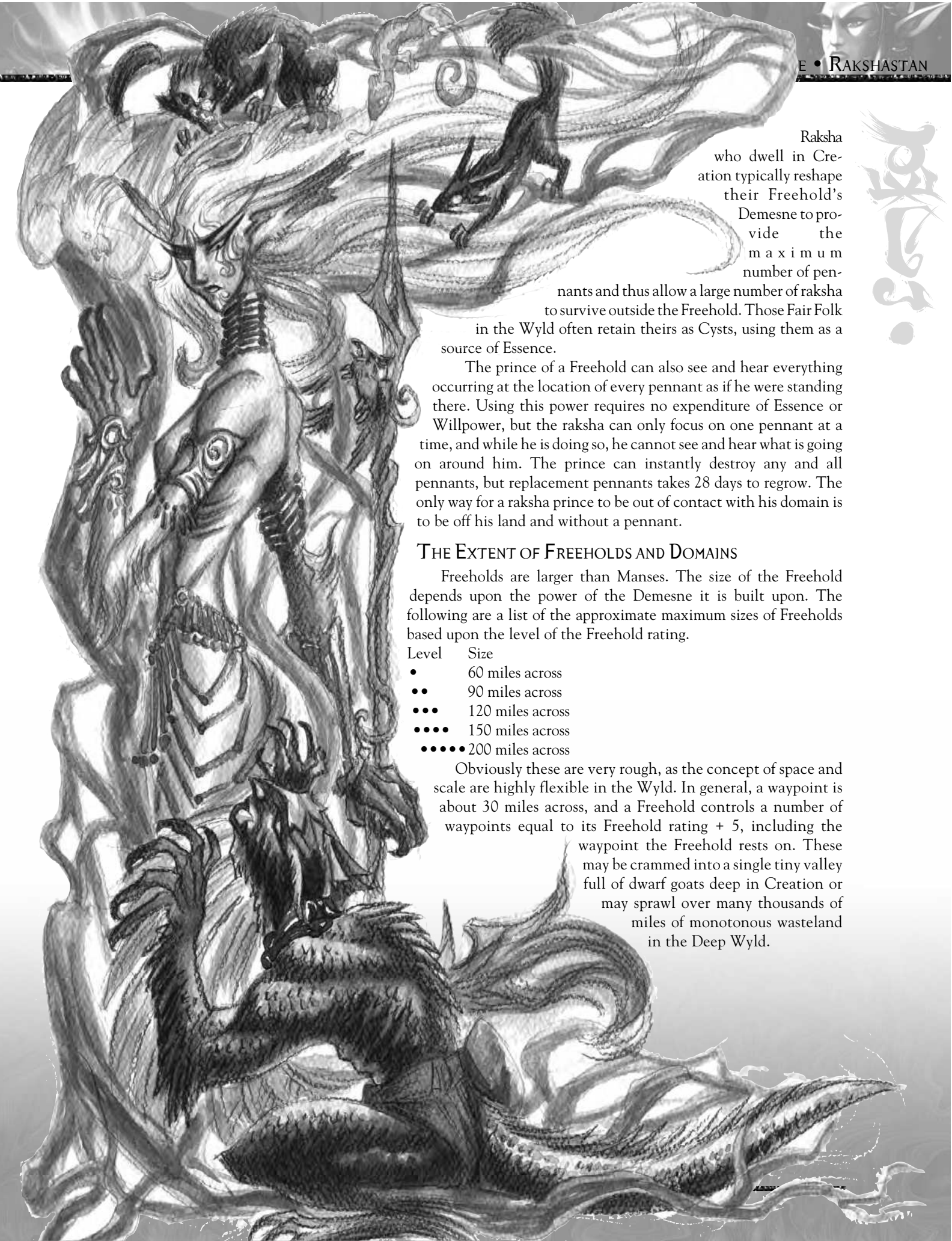
Since raksha cannot attune themselves to Hearthstones, they use their glamour to reshape the Demesnes into Freeholds. From those Freeholds spring Cysts, wellsprings of Essence akin to Hearthstones, and pennants, which are mere fragments of power not sufficient to allow the Fair Folk to regain Essence, but strong enough to stave off the wasting away that raksha succumb to when in Creation. A Freehold can produce up to three pennants per point of its rating.

The Pace of Raksha Lives

The raksha are immortal creatures and natives of an infinite expanse. These rules scale their measures of time and distance accordingly. The intrigues and battles of the raksha move slowly, with a certain Rip Van Winkle feel. A single shaping contest can easily cover a season of time and hundreds of miles of ground. The raksha are used to thinking on this time scale, even though they can function at Creation's pace.

As a measure of life experience, it's reasonable to assume that the active elder raksha of the Middlemarches have picked up perhaps 100 experience points during the Scarlet Empress' reign. Less involved creatures have earned 5 or 10.

The marshalling forces of the Wyld have taken five years to respond to the Empress' disappearance. This is not because they are tentative and careful; rather, it shows their desperate hurry. The tribes of madness are striking against Creation with the fury of a warrior who has seen a weakness in an enemy's defense, and even so, it may take two, five, ten or fifty more years before an organized attack comes of it.



Raksha who dwell in Creation typically reshape their Freehold's Demesne to provide the maximum number of pennants and thus allow a large number of raksha to survive outside the Freehold. Those Fair Folk in the Wyld often retain theirs as Cysts, using them as a source of Essence.

The prince of a Freehold can also see and hear everything occurring at the location of every pennant as if he were standing there. Using this power requires no expenditure of Essence or Willpower, but the raksha can only focus on one pennant at a time, and while he is doing so, he cannot see and hear what is going on around him. The prince can instantly destroy any and all pennants, but replacement pennants takes 28 days to regrow. The only way for a raksha prince to be out of contact with his domain is to be off his land and without a pennant.

The Extent of Freeholds and Domains

Freeholds are larger than Manses. The size of the Freehold depends upon the power of the Demesne it is built upon. The following are a list of the approximate maximum sizes of Freeholds based upon the level of the Freehold rating.

Level	Size
•	60 miles across
••	90 miles across
•••	120 miles across
••••	150 miles across
•••••	200 miles across

Obviously these are very rough, as the concept of space and scale are highly flexible in the Wyld. In general, a waypoint is about 30 miles across, and a Freehold controls a number of waypoints equal to its Freehold rating + 5, including the waypoint the Freehold rests on. These may be crammed into a single tiny valley full of dwarf goats deep in Creation or may sprawl over many thousands of miles of monotonous wasteland in the Deep Wyld.

Bonding with a Bonefire

To take control of a Freehold, a raksha noble must places her heart in the center of the silver flames after the bonefire is lit with the Charm Forging the Arcane Redoubt (see p. 188). Performing this act causes her to become one with the land of her domain. Multiple raksha can all put their hearts into the bonefire, but only one can have dominion of a Freehold at any given time. If a bonefire holds multiple hearts, the raksha involved must set the cycle that determines who controls the domain when.

Freeholds and Domains Within the Middlemarches and the Deep Wyld

In the Middlemarches or the Deep Wyld, Freeholds are almost always built as castles, manor houses or temples inhabited by the raksha who rule the surrounding domain. In almost all cases, the Freehold also has room for many lesser raksha servants as well as whatever close allies the rulers possess. Like most of Rakshastan, the details of each Freehold are determined by a combination of its location and the desires of its ruler. The architectural details are controlled by the prince of the domain and can be changed at a moment's notice.

Naturally, the elemental direction has a significant impact upon the nature of both the Demesne and the Freehold within it. In the East, Freeholds are normally built of wood, and in the Far East, they are often vast living trees that have been reshaped so that their trunks, branches and leaves form the floor, walls, ceilings and furnishings of the Freehold. Similarly, Northern raksha often carve their Freeholds from mountains or build them from unmelting ice, while Western raksha either build their Freeholds underwater or create them from sheets of solid water.

Freeholds in Creation

Although the vast majority of the raksha would never consider leaving Rakshastan for more than a few days, some raksha nobles choose to avoid dangerous neighbors and raiding parties from the Wyld by dwelling within Creation. A few live among mortals and Exalts as expatriates or as wretched exiles who frequently long for the fluid joys of their homeland. Most, however, transform a Demesne inside Creation into a small and completely isolated pocket world where reality is a fluid as the Middlemarches of Rakshastan. Entering one of these Freeholds from the outside is exactly like walking suddenly from Creation into the Middlemarches. Mortals and Exalts suffer all of the same affects and run all of the same risks. Also, every raksha within the Freehold can respire normally.

Geomantic considerations demand that these Freeholds be physically isolated from the rest of Creation. They are all built under hills, at the bottoms of lakes and, on rare occasions, in steep inaccessible valleys high in the mountains. These locations also help to protect the residents from interference by the denizens of Creation and guard their residents' privacy. Except at special doorways created by the raksha noble who controls the Freehold, no one can enter, leave or even see in or out — the water in the lake is unusually refractive and the high mountain valley is perpetually covered by dense clouds or obscured by the shadows of the surrounding mountains. Though these areas are the same size as a Freehold in the Wyld — the Freehold rating + 5 waypoints in size — the Essence surface tension of Creation's geomantic fabric confines them to a much smaller area.

What Is a Breakthrough

Breakthroughs are referred to in various First Age texts. They are a method of attacking Creation where Demesnes are subverted into Freeholds. Then, rituals performed by mortal slaves of the raksha cause the geomantic fabric of Creation around the Freeholds to loosen enough that the waypoints overcome geomantic tension and leap from Freehold to Freehold and back to the border of Rakshastan. Breakthroughs are not generally executed anymore, as the armies of the Fair Folk and the defenses of Creation are both so weak that the defense of Creation's borders is a one-Demesne-at-a-time business.

Although the interiors of these Freeholds are as different and varied as any other Freehold, they are all strictly bounded and limited, and their character is, in part, determined by their location. Although the water at a lake bottom may look and feel like air and be breathable to all residents, Freeholds built in lake bottoms all incorporate a variety of aquatic traits. A typical example is a small Freehold known as Shining Mist. It is located at the bottom of a lake a few hundred miles northeast of Larjyn.

The lake bottom of Shining Mist is a strange mixture of bucolic meadow and sea floor — there is both grass and coral, and trees and huge sea fans all grow from the lake bottom. The lake is filled with water, but everyone within this Freehold can breathe it normally and can either walk as if they were on land or swim, at their choice. All the animals are mixtures of beasts that live in ordinary meadows and of sea life. Creatures that resemble crosses between

small, brightly colored tropical fish and songbirds fly through the water, while crab-shelled horses (treat as ordinary horses that can breathe both air and water and that have a soak of 7L/9B) and octopus-tentacled sheep graze the lake bottom.

The shops and houses are well-made buildings typical of those found in the Realm or one of its more prosperous client states. However, they also have distinctly aquatic touches. They are all painted in sea colors, with windows and trim shaped like seashells and fish. Shingles resemble huge fish scales, and all of the stonework looks heavily water worn.

Similarly, Freeholds built under hills are all clearly built underground. Some consist of endless corridors of roughly worked stone or a truly vast wooden longhouses, while others are made up of elaborately carved and decorated passageways much like an inhabited version of the more elaborate underground tombs of Sijan. The most ornate of these Freeholds are buried castles or castles carved from either enormous buried tree roots or native rock that are built inside great caverns.

One such Freehold is Dark Fountain, located in one of the mountains to the northwest of the Lap. The central buildings of Dark Fountain are built inside a great cavern more than 500 yards across and 100 yards high. Gothic and baroque buildings made from black and charcoal-gray stone occupy almost half of this immense cave. They have elaborate flying buttresses and are adorned with fantastic gargoyles. These gargoyles are all servants of the ruling nobles and can all be animated or transformed back into stone at the controlling noble's whim. Only half of this palace is built in the cave, the rest is carved deep into the surrounding rock and consists of a series of ornately decorated but completely windowless passages and large chambers that wind for several miles through the mountain.

The cave itself is the other half of this Freehold. Dimly lit by the large patches of luminescent fungi that adorn the cavern walls, the unworked portions of the cave are filled with stalagmites and stalactites and have several streams running through them. The cavern is heated by deep volcanic fires and, so, is perpetually as warm as a fine spring day. A multitude of multi-tentacled bats, large blind predatory lizards and pallid dog-sized slugs live in this cavern, while bone-white cave fish swim in its streams. Additional caverns also connect to this large central cavern and continue on for many miles. A few of these caverns have small and difficult to access entrances to the surface.

Freeholds built in isolated mountain valleys are the most like their counterparts in the Middlemarches. Some are either small castles in diminutive valleys inhabited by dwarf animals and equally small servants. In these Freeholds, the nobles are typically normal-sized, but all other inhabitants are half-sized or smaller, and visitors occasionally see sheep or other more exotic animals the size of normal dogs being herded by groups of cat-sized sheepdogs. Other valleys are almost completely filled with raksha castles as elaborate and beautiful as any in Rakshastan. However, unlike Freeholds in Rakshastan, these castles make up almost the entirety of the Freehold, and there is very little in the way of fields or other grounds around the castle.

Freeholds are often larger on the inside than the lake, hill or valley that contains them should normally be

Gargoyle (Hazard Rating ••)

These creatures look like distorted winged humans carved from living stone. The gargoyles are fully intelligent and can speak. They are fearsome guardians and are capable of flight. However, they become immobile stone statues as long as they are in direct sunlight. The instant they are out of direct sunlight, they can once again move and think.

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Will.	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Acc/Dmg	Dodge/Soak	Abilities
Gargoyle	6/3/5	3	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Claw: 6/6/8L Spear: 9/7/9L	5/8L/11B	Athletics 3, Awareness 3 (Hearing +2), Brawl 3, Craft (Stone Carving) 2, Dodge 2, Endurance 2, Linguistics 1, Melee 3, Presence 1 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Stealth 3 (In Darkness +2)

able to hold. However, they are still quite limited in extent. Their exact size varies depending upon the power of the Demesne (see p. 21). The smallest are only 100 yards in diameter, and the largest are never more than a mile across. Most raksha nobles who live in such Freeholds attempt to disguise the limited nature of their domain with intricate branching passages and other complex architectural features that are made even more confusing by the fact that the noble controlling the Freehold can alter its structure at any time. However, none of these tricks can ultimately disguise the fact that the Freehold is a relatively small pocket of safety amidst the strange and hostile world of Creation.

On the other hand, these miniature realms of chaos are the ultimate retreat — the inhabitants know that they are far safer there from both their rivals in Rakshastan and their enemies in the Wyld. The residents effectively live in an extremely sturdy fortress buried in the center of an exceptionally hostile wilderness — before any invaders from the Wyld can attack, they must first brave the perilous journey through Creation. Unfortunately, this same protection means that the residents are also vulnerable to attacks by mortals, rogue gods and Exalts who live within Creation, as such beings often view these Freeholds as a constant threat to Creation.

Entering Freeholds in Creation

The only way to enter Freeholds in Creation is through special doorways. These are all clearly marked and look either like gateways or natural arches of some sort. Even Freeholds located in the bottom of lakes can only be entered by such gateways. Residents can only leave the Freehold through these same gateways. Naturally, all but the most desperate or impoverished raksha nobles post many well-armed guards at these entrances to fend off intruders.

If desired, the raksha controlling the Freehold can conceal these entrances from the eyes of mortals. The difficulty of perceiving these entrances becomes the permanent Essence of the raksha + the level of the Freehold. However, the distortions in Essence caused by these openings allow Exalts and other Essence users who activate any Charm that increases Perception or Awareness to reduce the difficulty of this roll by half (round down before adding in any bonuses gained by the specific Charm). Charms such as All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, Tell-Tale Symphony or Measure the Wind, which permit the character to directly sense the flows of Essence, allow the character to automatically detect these openings.

Because of the nature of the artificially created border between Creation and the inside of the Freehold, nothing short of the most powerful Celestial Charms, such as Wyld-Shaping Technique and Ritual of Lunar Stability, allow Exalts to create other entrances into these Freeholds. Wyld-Shaping Technique allows Solar Exalted to enlarge existing entrances or to create new openings into the Freehold, while Ritual of Lunar Stability only allows Lunar Exalted to enlarge or open existing doorways, and even when using this Charm, Lunar Exalted must also physically rend the rock or other substance of the gateway to widen it.

In both cases, the difficulty of the roll is equal to the permanent Essence of the raksha who controls this Freehold. Solar Exalted can also attempt to use Wyld-Shaping Technique to destroy or reshape a Freehold, but the difficulty of this roll is the permanent Essence of the raksha who controls the Freehold + the rating of the Demesne from which it is built. This is not an extended roll. The Solar's player must succeed on a single roll to accomplish this feat. As a result, very few Solar Exalted are capable of instantly destroying a Freehold. Also, the raksha who controls this Freehold will actively resist this attempt. A Solar whose player fails the roll suffers one level of unsoakable lethal damage for every difficulty level she failed this roll by. A Solar Exalt whose player botches this roll suffers a number of automatic levels of unsoakable aggravated damage equal to the permanent Essence of the raksha who controls the Freehold + the rating of the Demesne.

Freeholds in the Bordermarches

In the Bordermarches, geomantic considerations demand that Freeholds must be almost as physically isolated as those in Creation. However, the requirement for isolation is not quite so severe. In addition to being found in lake bottoms, high mountain valleys or underground, they can also be found on small islands in the middle of large lakes or even on remote islands in the oceans of the West. These Freeholds can also be created on mesas, mountaintops or (in the East) in especially dense and impenetrable forests. In all cases, these Freeholds are isolated and bounded, but they need not be completely separate from their surroundings. However, the fact that they are surrounded by the Bordermarches instead of Creation means that they are not as well hidden. Entrances in and out of the Freeholds are clearly visible, although they are as well defended as those of Freeholds in Creation.

The Wee Folk

Most beings in Rakshastan have analogues in Creation. The lesser raksha are servants and retainers to the raksha nobles and are, in many ways, comparable to mortal servants. The innumerable beasts that inhabit Rakshastan are either wild animals or the domestic animals who serve the raksha. However, the wee folk are something that has no clear analog in Creation. They are the servants, the tools and, sometimes, the amusing toys of the raksha nobles, created with the Charm Awakened Dream Manufacture. Many of them now exist independently of the nobles, as wild creatures that lead strange and tiny lives. Others spring into existence naturally, as akin to Fair Folk as raccoons or small

Hazard Ratings

All creatures and natural hazards in this book are marked with a hazard rating. This indicates the sorts of characters that will be challenged by the hazard and should be used as a guide for Storytellers seeking to create difficult but survivable scenarios. The ratings are on the standard one- to five-dot scale. If the hazard is some form of creature or other opponent, this table is adjusted for one or two characters of the type listed below facing a single opponent or a group of four to five facing two to four of the same type of opponents. If the opponents outnumber the characters, increase their hazard level by one.

- • This hazard would challenge a mortal. If it is a creature, it is dangerous but not deadly, like a wolf or a well-trained guard dog. If it is a trap or a natural hazard, it does 4-6L of environmental damage.
- •• This hazard would challenge a God-Blood or a powerful mortal thaumaturge. This could be a creature like a lion or a shark. If it is a trap or a natural hazard, it does 8-12L of environmental damage.
- ••• The hazard would challenge a young Terrestrial Exalt. This could be a creature like a lion dog or a mammoth. If it is a trap or a natural hazard, it does 14-20L of environmental damage.
- •••• This hazard would challenge a young Celestial Exalt or an experienced (150+ xp) Dragon-Blooded. This could be a celestial lion, a storm serpent or a Second Circle demon. If it is a trap or a natural hazard, it does 21-28L of environmental damage.
- ••••• The hazard would challenge an experienced Celestial Exalt or a young Celestial Circle. This could be a powerful god or some similarly impressive being. If it is a trap or a natural hazard, it does 29L+ of environmental damage.

Storytellers should also keep in mind that the level of the hazard level does not always need to match the characters in her game. Characters facing a hazard level that is one above their own rating (for example, a young Terrestrial Exalted facing a celestial lion) will have an exceedingly difficult challenge, and if the Storyteller does not provide some form of substantial assistance, several of the characters may die unless they are exceptional strategists or exceedingly lucky. Similarly, characters facing an opponent one level lower then they are (for example, a God-Blood facing a wolf) will have an easy but not completely trivial battle — just the sort of thing to allow the characters to show off their combat prowess with no real risk of life or limb unless they are seriously unlucky.

There is little reason for Storytellers to run combats between characters and opponents two or more levels apart on the above table. In such a conflict, one side or the other will die a swift and miserable death unless their opponents allow them to surrender or flee.

monkeys are akin to men. Although there are a vast number of different types of wee folk and any raksha noble who knows the Charm Awakened Dream Manufacture could create new varieties on a whim, there are commonalties among the various sorts and they all fall into one of these three types: manikins, poppets and homunculi.

Wyld-Shot

Most variety of wee folk can attack with tiny weapons. Like many beings in Rakshastan, these attacks can do more to their target than merely cause physical harm. Wyld-shot can drive a its target mad, paralyze it or deprive it of one of its senses. The most important limit on all wee folk is that their Wyld-shot cannot affect anything with a permanent Essence higher than the wee folk's. For example, a manikin's Wyld-shot can only affect mortals and other beings with an Essence of 1. Each Wyld-shot costs 1 mote of Essence to use.

Common Forms:

Although there are a great many unique types of wee folk, some varieties are more common than others. The most common are listed below, along with where in Rakshastan they most often appear.

General: Small men with mail and weapons, diminutive servants in impeccable uniforms

North: Animate breezes, statues of blue unmelting ice, small winged people or humanoid birds

East: Animate wooden statues, small monkeys, humanoid lizards

South: Creatures of living fire, animate gemstone statues, tiny lions or lion-headed people

West: Beings of living water, humanoid fish, bipedal frogs

Manikin (a half-dozen are Hazard Rating •)

Description: These tiny creatures are between three and six inches tall. They are almost completely mindless creatures that are far more like tools or toys than intelligent beings. In addition to creating them in large numbers,

many of the raksha nobles also create plants and other natural features that produce manikins. In the Northwest, there grow large pine cones that shed dozens of the smallest manikins like ordinary pine cones shed seeds, and dandelions whose seeds are small warriors in mail grow wild in much of Rakshastan. Similarly, in the Western Marches of Rakshastan, there are natural fountains of water where each drop that falls transforms into a manikin the instant it touches the ground.

While some raksha enjoy seeing legions of manikins carrying pieces of fruit or tableware across a dining hall or having their floors swept clean by an army of diligent manikins, most raksha have no use for such minute servants and, instead, use manikins only as toys and gaming pieces. Manikins are often used to fight elaborate mock battles. Raksha regularly create tiny duplicates of cities or other landscapes and cause their manikins to fight minute but epic battles. Betting on the results of such contests is exceedingly popular. Although manikins can understand all simple commands and most can speak, they are actually no more intelligent than a smart monkey or a very young child.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1-3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Craft (varies) 1, Dodge 2, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 6

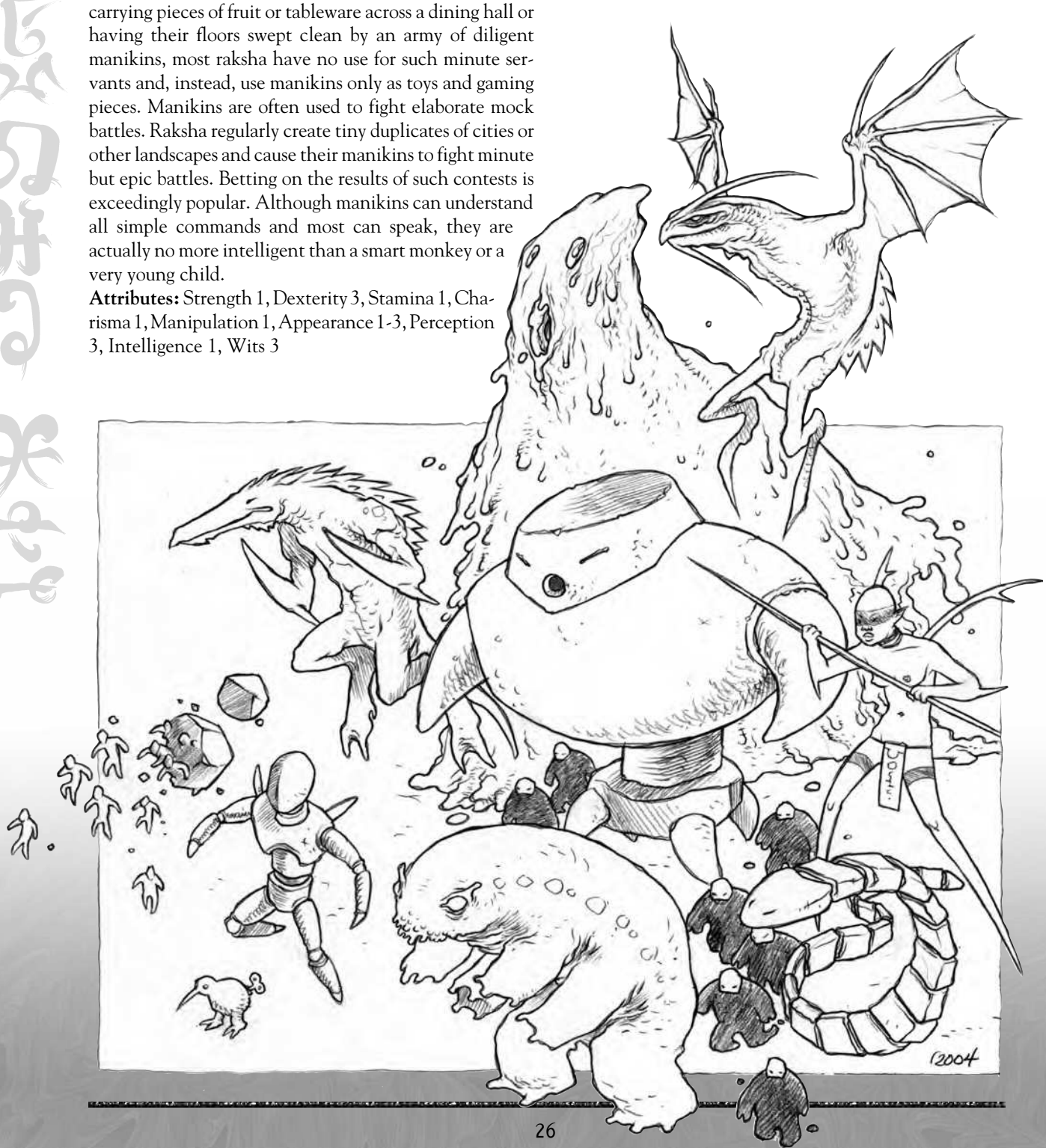
Attack:

Wyld-shot: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 1L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 1B

Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** Incap

Essence: 1 **Essence Pool:** 10



Other Notes: Manikins are all so small that their Strength is effectively non-existent. None of them can lift anything larger than a rat or a teacup. The Wyld-shot of manikins takes the form of either minute but razor sharp claws, tiny swords or spears the size of needles. Manikins cannot use ranged weapons. Depending on the orders they were given, they may use their Wyld-shot to attack one of the target's senses. Each successful attack that does damage also reduces the target's Awareness + Perception dice pool by one. If the dice pool for one sense is ever reduced to zero, the target cannot use that sense for the remainder of the scene. Manikins can attack either the target's sight, both her hearing and her touch or her senses of taste and smell. The raksha that controls them can order them to use any of these three possible attacks. Feral manikins mostly attack their foe's sight. Lost senses recover gradually after the end of the scene.

Poppet (Hazard Rating •)

Description: These medium-sized wee folk are between six inches and one foot tall. Although never more intelligent than bright children, poppets are fully sentient creatures and are capable of holding ordinary conversations, even if they cannot discuss complex subjects. While many raksha nobles also use poppets as toys in living chess games, mock battles and miniature dramas and orchestras, they are also commonly used as servants. Poppets capable of climbing or flying can easily move about any raksha castle or mansion and frequently carry messages, announce guests or move small objects.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1-3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Craft (varies) 2, Dodge 2, Melee 2, Performance 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Wyld-shot (Melee): Speed 8 Accuracy 6 Damage 3L Defense 5

Wyld-shot (Ranged): Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 2L (Rate 3, Range 10)

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 1L/2B

Willpower: 4 **Health Levels:** -1/-2/Incap

Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 20

Other Notes: The hand-to-hand Wyld-shot of the poppet takes the form of either minute but razor-sharp claws, tiny swords or spears the size of knitting needles. Its ranged Wyld-shot is usually in the form of tiny arrows fired from minute bows. In addition to ordinary damage, this Wyld-shot also gradually paralyzes the target for a scene. Each blow that inflicts any damage on the target also reduces all of the targets dice pools involving Dexterity by 1. If the dice pool of any action is reduced to 0, then the target becomes too clumsy and paralyzed to perform this action. This paralysis lasts for the rest of the scene.

Homunculus (Hazard Rating ••)

Description: These are the largest of the wee folk and are between one and three feet tall. Homunculi are fully intelligent beings that are simply a diminutive form of lesser raksha. Homunculi are some of the most common servants and entertainers among raksha nobles. They regularly serve food, clean, perform all manner of entertainments and even defend their domains with their lives. All homunculi are fully intelligent beings. They have no more free will than any other lesser raksha, but they are as capable of intelligent conversation and complex thought as any larger raksha.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2-3, Charisma 2-3, Manipulation 2-3, Appearance 1-3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2-3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Craft (varies) 2, Dodge 2, Lore 1, Melee 3, Occult 1, Performance 3, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Wyld-shot (Melee): Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 5L Defense 7

Wyld-shot (Ranged): Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 4L (Rate 3, Range 30)

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 3L/4B (Various forms of armor, 2L/2B)

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 30

Other Notes: The melee Wyld-shot of homunculi takes the form of either minute but razor-sharp claws, tiny swords or small spears. Their ranged Wyld-shot is mostly in the form of tiny bows and arrows, javelins or thrown knives.

Homunculi are fully intelligent and can choose to produce either of the Wyld-shot effects produced by manikins or poppets. In addition, their Wyld-shot can instead produce temporary derangements. In this case, a blow that inflicts any damage on a target produces a random derangement in the target unless the target's player makes a successful Willpower roll with a difficulty of 1. Each additional hit by one of these Wyld-shots increases the difficulty of this roll by 1, until the player fails. At this point, the next shot that hits this target causes the target to make a Willpower roll with difficulty one to resist gaining a new derangement. All of these derangements last for one full day.

Creatures and Inhabitants

In addition to the raksha and their servants, Rakshastan also contains a multitude of animals, plants and living things that have no counterparts in Creation. Some wandered in from the boundaries of Creation and were changed by their stay in Rakshastan, while others either spontaneously generated or are the offspring of matings between existing creatures. The deeper into the Marches of Rakshastan characters travel, the less strict the laws of biology become. In the Bordermarches, most creatures either wander in or are the offspring of two creatures that are at least relatively similar. In the Bordermarches, strix and lions occasionally mate and produce offspring, but lions and grasshoppers do not, nor does tree pollen that falls upon the back of a cow ever cause the cow to produce bark-covered calves. Wolves occasionally mate with lions and produce offspring, just as barracudas and lions can also infrequently breed together. Creatures that are vastly different in size, such as housecats and lions cannot breed, nor can animals and plants or animals and inanimate objects.

In the Middlemarches of Rakshastan, even these rules are suspended, and rocks occasionally have litters of strange lithic beings. Beyond this realm, out in the Deep Wyld, ordinary biology ceases to have any meaning, and spontaneous generation or magical creation by one of the raksha are the most common ways for new creatures to come into being.

Despite the oddities of animal and plant reproduction, the creatures born in Rakshastan are never simply random mixtures of beasts. The laws of Rakshastan are far more flexible than those of Creation, but they are not random or chaotic. The rules of myth and story are just as important for animals as for anything else in this realm. Most of the legendary and mythic beasts in Creation, such as manticores, flame gryphons, unicorns and even living islands, dwell somewhere in Rakshastan. Not only does Rakshastan duplicate portions of Creation, it also duplicates its myths and stories.

Raksha Shadowlands

The lands of the dead and the energies of Rakshastan mix poorly, and the results of interactions are always strange and dangerous. The Underworld and Rakshastan can never directly touch. However, there are a handful of shadowlands within Rakshastan. All of these shadowlands lie within the Bordermarches — the more chaotic portions of Rakshastan are both too far from Creation and too different from the rigidly static rules of the Underworld to form shadowlands. In the Bordermarches though, ghosts and raksha can walk side by side, although they almost never do so willingly. Ghosts from Creation fear the effects of Rakshastan almost as much as mortals do.

Unless forced to go there by a deathknight or some other powerful being, the ghosts of mortals who died in Creation never venture into Rakshastan. The only ghosts who inhabit shadowlands in Rakshastan are those of mortals and Exalts who actually died there. Tens of thousands of mortals died there shortly after the Contagion, when Rakshastan consumed some of the lands of Creation. The remaining shades are deceased captives and overly adventurous travelers who died during or after the Shogunate. Most of those who succumb to the appetites of the raksha are too spiritually drained to leave behind ghosts. Instead, the recent shades are mostly barbarians and travelers who ventured into Rakshastan either willingly or by accident and fell prey to its many dangers. Because they died here, their spirits are tied to one of the shadowlands found in this eldritch realm.

Both by its very nature and because the raksha nobles hate all shadowlands, Rakshastan attacks and attempts to reshape shadowlands in much the same way it alters

Stone Lion (Hazard Rating ••)

The offspring of a lion and a stone, a stone lion can only be conceived in the Middlemarches or the Deep Wyld. They appear to be lions roughly carved from stone. These beasts cannot exist outside of Rakshastan, as they transform into unliving statues after only a few days in Creation. Although primarily found in the South, stone lions and other hybrids between animals and stones can be found throughout Rakshastan. There are even a few stone lions that are made from precious stones. Their bodies crumble to small fragments after they die, but such fragments of rubies or emeralds can still be sold for Resources •••••.

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Will.	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Acc/Dmg	Dodge/Soak	Abilities
Stone Lion	7/3/6	5	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 6/6/9L, Claw: 7/7/8L	5/9L/12B	Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Presence 3 (Intimidation +2), Stealth 3, Survival 3

portions of Creation that fall within its grasp. Any mortals living within such a shadowland are all tainted by the power of Rakshastan, and while Rakshastan can make no permanent changes in ghosts, it can reshape them as long as they remain within Rakshastan. These affects normally begin to fade once the ghost returns to the Underworld. However, some of these ghosts have been sufficiently changed so that they will never willingly return to the Underworld or have become addicted to Rakshastan in much the same way as mortals do. While a few of the raksha shadowlands are largely unpopulated because all sensible ghosts avoid them, others have become home to ghosts who have become even more warped and strange than they were in the Underworld.

Ghosts are not the only beings who live in the shadowlands. Because they are not fully a part of Rakshastan, none of the raksha nobles can extend their domains over these dark realms. As a result, a few of the lesser raksha who have gained some minor semblance of free will congregate there, free from the power of those who were once their lords.

The Geography of Rakshastan

While this realm is far more flexible than Creation, the basic nature of the various elemental quadrants of Rakshastan remains the same. Some features of Rakshastan have existed in something like their present form for centuries, and while most of it changes far more rapidly, these changes are usually within fairly strict limits.

The East

As in Creation, the Eastern Marches are filled with more life than anywhere else in Rakshastan. Verdant forests and dense jungles abound, as do exotic groves that have no counterparts in Creation.

The Bordermarches

The Eastern Bordermarches appear to be very similar to Creation, at least to someone unskilled in woodcraft. The climate is much like the rest of the East, ranging from the cold forests of the Northeast to the steamy jungles of the Southeast. However, some of the plants and animals found here are unlike any born in Creation. Tall reeds that end in serpents instead of flowers (use the statistics for coral snakes, see **Exalted** pp. 315 and 316) and trees that have leaves that migrate from a Southern tree to a Northern one according to the season are only two examples of the many beasts, plants and nameless things that partake of the properties of both to be found in this unnaturally verdant realm. Even more than elsewhere in Rakshastan, everything in the Eastern Marches can breed with everything else — and often does. While ordinary trees grow here, most trees sprout leaves and fruits belonging to other sorts of trees or plants, and many have leaves or fruit made of silver, flame or gemstones. Also, instead of being born in any normal fashion, a great many animals here are born from fruit or pods that grow upon these trees or bushes. These pods break open when they ripen, and the creatures emerge. These creatures have no parents to nurture them, and so, they either grow quite rapidly or leave the fruit most of the way to adulthood.

The Land of Night

In the Northeast lies the Land of Night. Even when the sun is shining over the rest of the Eastern Bordermarches, this realm is cloaked in perpetual darkness. The moon and stars shine normally over this land, but the light here is never brighter than the full moon. This forest is notable for being home to pale and etiolated trees with bone-colored leaves and chalk-white bark. Mixed in with these unnatural groves and forests are an abundance of fungi.

These mushrooms can grow to be as much as five yards tall, shading the ground with their spreading caps. They grow in large fields, like miniature fungal forests where mobile puffball mushrooms a yard or more in diameter creep slowly across the landscape. The animals that live here are immune to the affects of the mushroom spores and are all unusually large and abundant versions of nocturnal animals. Strix and giant carnivorous bats feast on the fungal trees and occasionally supplement their diet with living flesh, and the deer have eyes twice the size of normal members of their kind as well as jet-black hooves, antlers and eyes and chalk-white coats. Most of the lesser raksha who live in this realm have the large-eared heads of bats, their sonar allowing them to ignore the perpetual darkness of their homeland

The Shadowland of Fatal Onyx

At the center of the Land of Night lies a city known as Fatal Onyx. It is a small shadowland that benefits from the perpetual darkness of its surroundings. The entire city is monochromatic, and all of the buildings are made from carefully sculpted bones that are as white as chalk. The ghosts within this shadowland realize that they are ghosts living in a shadowland, and they move to and from the Underworld as readily as any other ghosts. However, the touch of Rakshastan also affects this shadowland — all of the dead inhabitants of Fatal Onyx look like solid, living shadows. They are all as black as soot and appear to be shadows who have been given a three-dimensional form. Their eyes and mouths are only minor variations in their uniform darkness. Also, while they all start out having shadowy versions of the forms they possessed in life, ghosts that remain in Fatal Onyx shift and change as much as anything else in Rakshastan. Some grow taller or wider, or both, others have their limbs change into flippers, wings or claws, and some lose all limbs and become featureless inky black blobs crawling across the landscape. These transformations are almost as terrible for the ghosts as they would

be for living men, especially because they are completely random. Despite the fact that the ghosts can leave anytime they wish, many remain and become increasingly malformed. These transformations eventually fade when ghosts return to the Underworld, but a ghost may not fully return to its original form for years or even decades.

The reasons that the ghosts endure these horrors are two-fold. In this shadowland, the energies of Rakshastan are as addictive to ghosts as they are to mortals (see **Exalted: The Lunars**, pp. 205-207). Also, there are great rewards that can be reaped by ghosts willing to endure these strange alterations to their corpora. Fatal Onyx is ruled by a trio of exceedingly powerful nephwracks. They use the black ghosts as packs of hunting beasts, which run screeching and howling through the Land of Night. When night falls in the surrounding lands, the nephwracks also send their ghost packs into the rest of the Eastern Bordermarches to hunt anything they can find, be it lesser raksha, some of the less powerful noble raksha, Exalts or mortals. They care little for exactly what they catch. All that matters is the hunt. However, they avoid killing their prey. Instead, the spectres take their captives back to be gradually devoured. The nephwracks greatly enjoy torturing lesser raksha to death. Noble raksha face the same fate unless they can buy their freedom with gifts and sworn promises of large favors. An even worse fate awaits any mortals or Exalts captured by these monsters. The priests of Oblivion also have a terrible artifact that allows them to devour the dreams, emotions and souls of their captives, just as if the captives were being fed upon by one of the raksha. The nephwracks periodically allow their best hunting ghosts to tear apart one of their captives. Even a small taste of this twisted pleasure is one of the greatest joys that a ghost can obtain, and so, there are thousands of eager hunting ghosts who long to experience this twisted ecstasy.

The spectres acquired this artifact as payment for the release of a pair of particularly powerful Fair Folk nobles. Ever since that time, they have turned their attention primarily to hunting mortals and other Exalts. However, their packs of ghosts are so addicted to Rakshastan that most refuse to hunt in Creation. Therefore, the priests either hunt the rare mortals and Exalts who wander into Rakshastan or raid the caravans of slaves taken through the nearby portions of the Bordermarches, on their way to be ravished by waiting raksha lords and ladies. These ghosts have recently begun capturing larger numbers of raksha nobles and demanding small groups of unravished mortals as ransom.

The Middlemarches

The vast and endless forest of the Bordermarches gives way to a series of increasingly strange and exotic forests. Although they can be found anywhere, forests of glass and crystal are predominantly found in the Southeast, while more organic forests such as the Forest of Arms are primarily found in the East. There are also ice forests located in the Far Northeast that are effectively identical to the Southeastern glass forests. In addition to having an abundance of plants, the Eastern Middlemarches are also home to many exotic animals, including vine wyrms, wood wives and hatra that hatch on hatra trees.

Most of the groves and wealds of the Eastern Middlemarches are simply different portions of the same vast expanse of woodlands, but some of these forests hang in the sky, far above the landscape. A few trees are also far taller than the rest. Their trunks arc up for many miles and terminate in a forest that can range in size from groves a mile or two across to huge wealds so large that they would take more than a week to hike across. Each forests hangs in the air, connected to the ground only by a single massive trunk. All of these trunks are at least 50 yards in diameter and exceptionally easy to climb (all Dexterity + Acrobatics rolls to climb these trees are difficulty 1). Some of these aerial forests contain Demesnes and are raksha domains.

These aerial forests float in space, high above the main forest that lies below them, but all of them experience normal gravity. In some, all of the trees in the forests radiate outward from a small mass of soil and roots, like the seeds of a dandelion radiate out from its heart. In other cases, there is a solid surface made of fallen leaves over a thin layer of soil. Underneath this surface, however, there is only endless air. Anyone who goes more than 20 yards from either the ground or the trees is suddenly weightless.

From the inside, all of these forests look and feel like forests in Creation, except for the nature of the strange plants and animals that live there. Viewed from the outside, all of these forests float in space. Birds and the Northeastern flying trees regularly travel from one such forest to another.

Whether in the air or on the ground, most of the forests in the Eastern Middlemarches are quite dense and can be of any variety imaginable, from Haltan redwoods made of solid gold to jungles of scaled plants that are part plant and part snake. There are also forests of steel where the trees all have razor-sharp leaves of almost unbreakable glass and forests where the trees all appear to be perfectly carved gemstones.

The Poison Wood

The most treacherous and deadly forest in the Eastern Marches is the Poison Wood. Here, the trees are formed of crystallized poisons such as coral snake venom, strychnine or arsenic. A single scratch can bring a lingering and painful death to any mortal, and eating one of the trees' fruits would kill all but the most powerful raksha or god. Many of the trees and other plants are also covered in glittering and exceptionally deadly jewel-like thorns. In addition to simply being deadly to touch, the Poison Wood is also inhabited by half-plant creatures that are equally

dangerous. A single well-trained poison raiton or hatra sells for a high price in Creation (Resources ••••+). None of these creatures can be bred outside of the Poison Wood, since they all grow from pods on the plants there and none of the plants will grow anywhere else.

Treat any scratch by a branch or prick by a thorn as exposure to arrow frog venom, while eating anything in the poison wood is equivalent to exposure to three doses of arrow frog venom (see **Exalted**, p. 243). The animals here are equally deadly. Forest animals such as hatra (see p. 33), raitons, vine wryms (see p. 33) and tree striders (see **Blood and Salt**, p. 82) live here, but they are all extremely brightly colored, deadly venoms run through their veins, and they all have a few plant-like characteristics such as fuzzy bark or leaves instead of fur or feathers. These animals otherwise have the same characteristics as ordinary members of their kind, except that their plant-like skins gives them an additional 3L/3B soak. Also, their bites are as deadly as coral snake venom (see **Exalted**, p. 243).

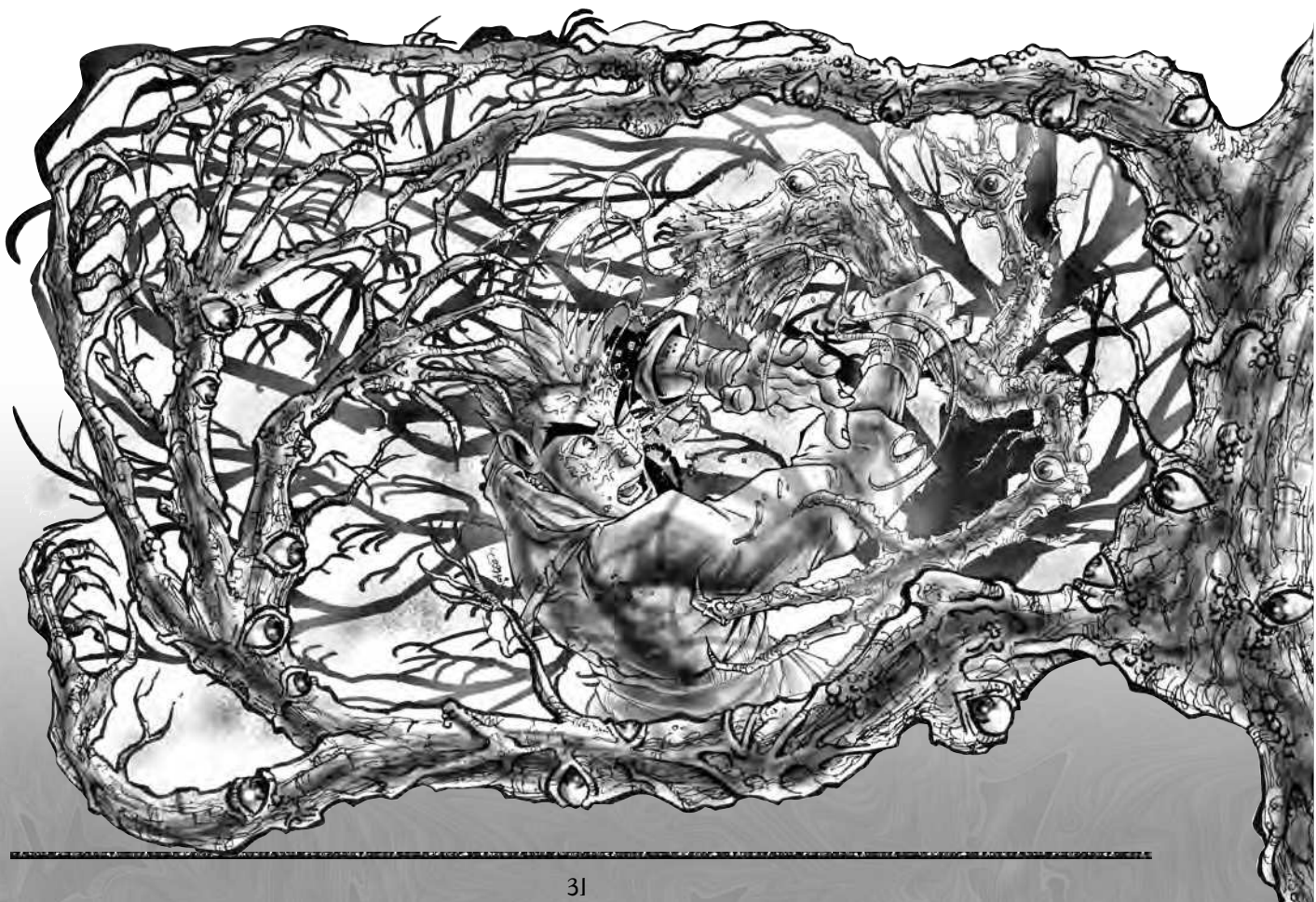
The Forest of Arms

Although far less deadly than the Poison Wood, this is one of the most disturbing of the forests in the Eastern Middlemarches. Here, the trees are wildly branching arrays of arms and legs that watch visitors with functional human eyes. The trees come in all colors, and some possess skin that is as transparent as glass or covered in downy feathers, as well as other types of skin not found on any of the humans currently living in Creation.

In addition to moving in the breeze, these arms and legs also react to movement around them. If anyone comes within reach of one of these trees, it will attempt to grab her. Also, the trees fight back if someone attacks them. Walking hands and strange creatures made of arms and eyes occasionally fall from these trees like ripe fruit and scuttle or run across the ground until they find a new tree to climb and join themselves with. This sharing of parts helps keep the trees healthy.

Unfortunately, if a mortal, Exalt or one of the raksha is wandering in this forest when these creatures crawl by, the wandering body-parts often mistake the visitors for particularly attractive trees in desperate need of additional branches. The arm-beasts attempt to climb up the visitors and attach themselves to them. For characters who are protected from the affects of Rakshastan, the worst these wandering limbs can do is immobilize, or squeeze, the characters in a vain but extremely determined attempt to bond with them.

These limbs can actually attach themselves to unprotected mortals and Exalts, who immediately gain a particularly horrific-looking version of the Multiple Arms blight. The worst part is that the arms are almost never the same size and color as the unfortunate's original limbs. To bond with an unprotected being, a free arm need only



maintain a hold for a number of turns equal to its opponent's Stamina. After that time, it has successfully bonded itself to the character. The time required is doubled for gods, Exalts and other beings that heal as rapidly and completely as the Exalted.

The Deep Wyld

Entering the Deep Wyld of Eastern Rakshastan consists of leaving the mostly static forests behind and entering a landscape composed entirely of flower petals, pollen, tiny twigs, and leaves. Here, visitors can find duplicates of everything from the dense jungles of the Southeast to entire streets from Rathess or a small section of the tree-city of Chanta. Although they are all clearly made from thin layers of flowers, twigs and leaves, these duplicates are otherwise completely identical to the originals and even have the same soak values and contain ephemeral versions of the ancient magics like those so common in the more intact portions of Rathess.

Many of the creatures from the Eastern Bordermarches and the Middlemarches wander into the Eastern Deep Wyld. However, there are also natives creatures that look like animals made from pollen and flower petals. Despite their exotic appearance, these beings have the same statistics as their counterparts in Creation.

Hazards of the East

The many hostile plants of the Eastern Marches of Rakshastan and the extreme fertility of its inhabitants make the area unique in its dangers. In no other part of the Wyld are creatures so intent on impregnating their victims, and in no other place have so many topsy-turvy prodigies of unlikely sexual unions come forth to seek their fortune in the world.

Giant Mushroom Spores (Hazard Rating ••)

One of the chief dangers of the various mushrooms found here is their spores. If they are cut down or otherwise severely damaged, these mushrooms release their spores in a large spreading cloud approximately six yards in diameter. The spores are both mildly toxic and horrifically invasive. Breathing the spores forces the character's player to roll to resist their poison with a Stamina + Resistance with a difficulty of 2. Success results in the character taking only 1L damage, while failure causes 3L of damage. This spore poison has a duration of one hour and a penalty of –2, and it is mild enough that the same resistance roll applies to mortals as well as to raksha and Exalts.

However, the player of anyone who is touched by the spores must make a Stamina + Resistance roll with a difficulty of 3, or her player will sprout mushrooms over her entire body. If the player of a mortal botches this roll, within three days the mushroom also grows internally and the character soon after explodes in a vast cloud of spores. Raksha and Exalts whose players fail or botch and mortals whose players fail this roll simply sprout thumb- to fist-sized mushrooms all over their bodies. These mushrooms subtract 1 from Dexterity and reduce the character's Appearance to 1. Mortals require special medicine (minimum Occult •••, Lore ••• and Resources •• to create) to cure them. More powerful beings recover from the touch of these spores like they recover from disease.

Glass Forests (Hazard Rating •)

In portions of the Eastern Middlemarches, all of the trees are made of glass. Every leaf and every flower is also made of the finest glass. Some glass forests are colored like natural forests, while others are all a single color. Such vitric forests can be found both on the ground and in the aerial forests. Like all glass, these trees are exceptionally brittle. Twigs and branches have no soak score, and even sturdy trunks have no more than 1L/2B. Also, any branch smaller than a grown man's wrist has only one health level, and trees a yard in diameter take only one health level to damage and seven to destroy. Also, doing one or more health levels of damage to a tree causes a multitude of branches and leaves to fall upon the character. These falling shards of glass cannot normally be parried and will hit the character doing 6L damage unless the character's player can make a successful Dexterity + Dodge roll with a difficulty of 3 for her character to leap well away from them. In heavy wind storms, the interiors of these forests can become deadly. Shards of small branches and leaves fly through the air, doing the same environmental damage as a supernatural ice storm (see **Exalted**, p. 244). The above statistics also apply to forests made from ice or gemstones.

Wood Wife (Hazard Rating ••)

Description: Like many other creatures that live in the Eastern Marches, wood wives are half plant. These beings grow from small seeds produced by tall willowlike trees. The seeds sprout into low, bushy plants with large, humanoid roots. When they are fully grown, wood wives dig themselves out of the ground and, so, transform from immobile plants into a form of wee folk. Sometimes, in the correct season, wood wives will give birth to small seeds that they carefully plant. These seeds grow into trees that produce more wood-wife seeds. Many of the Eastern noble raksha transplant these trees to their domains and maintain large groves of wood-wife producing trees. Wood wives stand five feet tall and look like statues carved from knobby, tough roots. On top of their heads, they have long, trailing branches like those on a weeping willow. These branches normally reach down to the middle of their backs. Their faces are small and gnarled, and their hands are large and have many slender and nimble fingers. However, they also have short spade-like claws on their knuckles, so they are skilled at both digging and carving without tools. The noble raksha

normally employ wood wives as crafters and general servants, but they are tough enough to also be somewhat useful in a fight. Wood wives are calm and obedient, but they can become doggedly determined fighters if they or their masters are threatened.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 2

Graces: Cup 1, Ring 4, Staff 1, Sword 1, Heart 1

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Craft (Wood Carving) 5, Dodge 2, Lore 1, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Charms: Armament of Flesh, Assumption of Elemental Shape, Essence-Forging Art, Ravishing the Created Form. Some examples may know more advanced Ring Charms.

Mutations (4): Affliction (Thick Skin), Armament of Flesh, Assumption of Elemental Shape

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Claw: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 8L Defense 10

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 5L/7B (Thick skin, 3L/3B)

Shaping Wounds: Cup 3 Ring 2 Staff 5 Sword 3

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1 **Essence Pool:** 10

Other Notes: Wood wives are an example of a raksha commoner Worker. They are often extras.

Lesser Menaces

Hatra Tree (Hazard Rating •)

In the jungles of Southeast Rakshastan, hatra trees are particularly common. These wide, bush-like trees stand between 15 and 30 feet tall, and in season, they can hatch as many as half a dozen hatra in one day. These small but voracious predators live on the tree, guarding it from harm and devouring anything that comes near.

Hatra are the size of a small cat and have leathery gliding membranes between their legs that allow them to glide as well as a flying squirrel. Hatra are carnivorous, and while a single one is rarely dangerous, they live in packs of between 30 and 60 and can kill prey as large as full-grown oxen by descending upon them in a huge flock. Hatra are primarily nocturnal, but they are sometimes active in the daytime in multi-canopy jungles.

Vine Wyrm (Hazard Rating •••)

Like many other creatures found in the Eastern Marches, vine wyrms are halfway between plants and animals. Each looks like an animated vine with a dragon's head and a serpent's tail. Unfortunately, unlike most plants, vine wyrms have prodigious appetites. They are also highly venomous. Their bite delivers a poison with a difficulty of 3, that does 4L damage if the target successfully resists and 8L damage if the target doesn't, with a penalty of -4 and duration of two hours. Fully grown vine wyrms are normally 100 feet long and 6 feet in diameter. They live in both the Bordermarches and Middlemarches of the East and occasionally visit the jungles of the Southeastern portions of Creation. However, they almost never come down to the ground. In the trees, they are almost indistinguishable from any other vine.

The South

The Southern Marches are the lands of living deserts and exotic fire — in Rakshastan, fire can be very different than in Creation. There, it can any of the colors of the rainbow and can even be a liquid.

Menaces of the East

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Will.	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Acc/Dmg	Dodge/Soak	Abilities
Arm Tree	4/3/6	N/A	-0x8/-4x2/I	Punch: 6/8/4B, Clinch: 4/8/clinch	0/5L/8B	Brawl 5
Arm-Beast	4/3/2	N/A	-0x2/-4/I	Punch: 6/8/4B, Clinch: 0/8/clinch	0/5L/8B	Brawl 5
Hatra	1/4/2	3	-0/-1x2/-2/I	Bite 7/7/2L	8/1L/2B	Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3
Vine Wyrm	9/5/8	6	-0x3/-1x3/-2x4/-4/I	Bite: 10/14/17L + poison	8/12L/15B	Athletics 3 (In Trees +2), Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Stealth 4 (In Trees +3), Survival 4

The Bordermarches

Much of the Southern Bordermarches look like Southern portions of Creation. Fertile soil and the scrubby bushes, olive groves, date palms and almond trees found in the mediterranean and arid portions of Creation are all still common, but here, they are surrounded by expanses of either sandy desert or ragged lava. While these fertile lands are similar to those found in the coastal portions of the Southlands of Creation, the trees are taller and occasionally more mobile, and the animals are stranger and more exotic. Also, Rakshastan reveals its nature in other more obvious ways.

Rivers flow through this land, and small lakes are frequently found in the wetter portions. However, not all of these rivers and lakes are filled with water. Some of these rivers and lakes are composed of liquid gemstones. Rivers of liquid emerald and ruby flow throughout the Southern Bordermarches, and there are even rivers of luminescent glowstone that light up the nearby landscape at night. Despite their composition, these rivers nourish the plants and animals along their banks. Most of the life near these rivers takes on the color of the river, and the plants growing closest to the banks are almost all made of living gemstones. These gemstone rivers provide no sustenance for mortals or Exalts, but they are as cool as ordinary river water and are not harmful to touch or drink. When these jeweled liquids dry, they leave behind exceedingly thin films of solid gemstone. While the liquid itself soon transforms into colored water if taken into Creation, the dried residue remains. A few foolishly brave mortals regularly travel into the Wyld to coat cloth in this liquid, so that they can sell trinkets made of rubies or solid sheets or rods of glowstone that can light a traveler's way at night. While doing this can be extremely lucrative (and can earn those who do it an income of at least Resources ••• if they do this for a living), few are willing to risk the dangers of Rakshastan to earn this wealth.

Volcanoes and Underways

Volcanoes are moderately common in the Southern Bordermarches. Here, these fiery mountains can grow considerably taller and jagged than in Creation. Also, they sometimes spew forth fluid gemstones, any of the various colors of liquid fire (see pp. 36-37), boiling blood, vital lava (see p. 40) or exotic substances such as hallucinogenic steam, burning hot venom or, occasionally, clouds of butterflies. Even near the border with Creation, these volcanoes produce strange and eldritch affects, in large part because the veins of lava they tap into lead back into the deepest portions of Rakshastan — the volcanoes serve as conduits for fragments of the Wyld's pure chaos to infiltrate even the portions of Rakshastan closest to Creation.

Fire in the Southern Bordermarches

Fires lit in the Southern Bordermarches of Rakshastan never extinguish themselves naturally. Such fires can be put out with water or by smothering them, but they do not burn out on their own. Just as in Creation, fires in the Southern Bordermarches only burn flammable objects, but even once the fire has consumed the fuel, it continues to burn until someone or something extinguishes it. Once the fuel is gone, the fire does not grow larger or spread unless it is supplied with more fuel, but a campfire lit in the Southern Bordermarches could theoretically burn for 1,000 years if no one put it out. Also, every fire in the Southern Marches adds one extra die to both its resisted and nonresisted damage. For example, a bonfire does 3L damage if the character resists it and 7L damage if she does not (see **Exalted**, p. 244).

Lava currents coming from the Deep Wyld and beyond periodically shift, leaving empty lava tubes, just like those found in volcanoes in Creation. Some portions of the Southern Middlemarches have vast numbers of such empty underground lava tubes, and in places, they form

Southern Environmental Hazards

Hazard	Diff.	Resisted Effect	Failed Effect	Interval	Hazard Rating
Boiling Acid	3	3L	6L	one turn	•
Boiling Blood	2	2L	4L	one minute	•
Boiling Venom	4	4L	8L	one turn	••
Hallucinogenic Steam	3	1L*	3L**	one turn	••
Lava	4	5L	10L	one turn	••

* Resisting the effects of hallucinogenic steam also increases the difficulty of all Wits and Perception rolls by 1 because of residual hallucinations. This penalty lasts for the next full scene after the character is exposed to the steam.
** Failing to resist the effects of hallucinogenic steam also increases the difficulty of all Wits, Perception and Dexterity rolls by 2 because of the intense hallucinations the steam produces. This penalty lasts for the next full scene. After the scene is over, the characters still increases the difficulty of all Wits and Perception rolls by 1 because of residual hallucinations. This penalty lasts for a full day.

complex and deadly mazes filled with exotic beasts such as tree striders (see **Blood and Salt**, p. 82). These tubes are typically between one and ten yards in diameter.

Because of the strange substances that once flowed through them, the tubes are often coated with dried blood, gemstones, acid or even seemingly endless rows of human arms, kraken tentacles or other equally mobile and potentially deadly protuberances. Occasionally, a connection with either the burning lava of Creation or various forms of liquid chaos from the Deep Wyld is reestablished, and the lava tubes are again filled with some deadly substance.

In addition to the treasures lost by those who have died in these depths, these lava tunnels form a secure hiding place against pursuit. They are also the location for various wonders carried in from the Deep Wyld or for equally amazing things that spontaneously appear when the chaos of the Wyld comes close to the borders of Creation. On extremely rare occasions, these tunnels contain wondrous remnants of the First Age that survived untouched. Uncovering any of these artifacts and lost treasures requires treasure hunters to brave the various dangers found in these tunnels.

The Desert Seas

Unlike the sandy deserts of Creation, not only do the shifting dunes of Rakshastan look vaguely like oceans of sand, but the sands move in waves and even break upon the shores both of Creation and of the Southern Marches' many islands of fertile land. Some of the raksha build glass sand schooners to sail this gritty sea and even fish for the beasts that inhabit it. The most vicious predators are the eyeless sand sharks and the human-voiced manticores.

The sand in these powdery deserts is exceptionally fine. Characters without appropriate Charms, artifacts or special snow-shoe-like footwear will sink more than a foot into the sand and can move at no faster than half their normal walking or running speed. Some desert oceans are near the edge of Creation, and during sandstorms, mortals may inadvertently cross far into Rakshastan with no clue to the location of the actual border.

These deserts teem with life, but very little of it is visible on the surface. Occasionally, a sand shark will attack unwary travelers, and a few patches of green or brick-red mar the otherwise golden brown of the sand. These vivid colors mark the presence of clouds of tiny life forms that live in the sand. The waves and tides of these sandy seas are almost as extensive as those found on a normal watery ocean, the waves can reach several yards high, and on windy days, they move faster than a person can walk.

Under these seas are versions of all of the beasts commonly found in the oceans of the West. For many, the only significant difference is that none of these creatures have eyes. Instead, they have special senses that allow them to detect both heat and movement. At the bottom of the sea, there are also colonies of lesser raksha who are similarly eyeless and possess webbed hands and feet that allow them to swim though the sand at their normal movement rate. These lesser raksha live in small villages made of stone. They treasure wood and other materials that they can acquire from the surface. They also regularly swim up through the sand to hunt the various sand-dwelling creatures. These lesser raksha swim though the sands of this desert and the adjoining desert in Creation equally well and occasionally swarm up out of the sand to overwhelm a caravan or to dart into a mortal village or town and carry off whatever or whoever they need. While most raksha nobles who dwell in these sandy oceans are guarded by lion warriors (see pp. 39-40), some of them have eyeless siaka-men (see p. 46) adapted for life in the sand.

Some raksha capture and partially tame sand sharks. Although these fierce creatures occasionally turn on their supposed masters, riding a shark allows a raksha to travel through the sand far faster than he can swim. Meanwhile, manticores and lesser raksha who can shapeshift into lions hunt the surface of these sandy seas. Both have unusually large paws and can move normally on top of even the softest and finest sand.

The Lava Plains

The large swathes of volcanic rock are considerably less hospitable than the deserts or the fertile land. They are covered with complex arabesques of frozen lava, forming impossible spires and slender, curved natural bridges that are often several miles long. Rivers of molten lava sometimes flow through these forbidding regions, and in places, the ground burns (depending upon the degree of heat, the damage ranges from that inflicted by a hearth to that inflicted by a supernatural ice storm [see **Exalted**, p. 244]). Lava plains are most common in the portions of the Bordermarches located further South, well away from the coast.

The Middlemarches

The Southern Middlemarches are lands of exotic rocky landscapes and fire rivers. Although there are a few oases, the majority of the Southern Middlemarches consist of expanses of volcanic rock and rolling deserts amidst rivers and lakes of all forms of liquid fire. In a few portions of the Southern Middlemarches, huge lava islands float on top of small seas of fire, where they are carried along by the winds and currents. These rocky islands drift upon the liquid fire like boats on the sea. Liquid fire comes in a multitude of different colors, each of which burns different substances.

In some places, the fire rivers are several miles wide. To cross both these rivers and the few large fire seas, travelers who cannot fly must swim or take boats across the least dangerous types of fire. Blue and green fire are both common and relatively safe. They are also frequently found alongside one another, so that characters can easily move from one current to another in their quest to go from one island to the next. Some daring

Survival, Movement and Sight in the Great Desert Sea

Beneath the surface, this sea is as full of life as any other ocean. Anyone can dive into this sea, but mortals, as well as Exalts and raksha who lack Charms that allow them to aid their movement, can only struggle through it at a maximum speed of one yard per turn. Without some method of enhancing their senses, swimmers are also completely blind. In addition, while the sand holds large amounts of trapped air, a swimmer will soon suffocate if she goes below the surface unless she is protected by some Charm or artifact. Because it is possible to take in small amounts of the air trapped in the sand, characters who go under the sand can hold their breath twice as long as they can do so underwater (see **Exalted**, p. 243, for details).

While the raksha and other creatures that live in this sandy ocean can see and move as easily as the fish and whales in the lakes and oceans of Creation, outsiders are both blind and pitifully slow. Spirits native to deserts who know the Charm Landscape Travel can move and see normally in this environment, but most other beings must use a combination of mobility and sensory-enhancing Charms to allow them to function normally here. Any Charm or artifact that allows a character to perceive Essence or use Essence sight allows her to see normally. Fair Folk using Assumption of Elemental Shape (Earth) or (Fire) may move freely in the sand. Raksha provide airy sand to victims and visitors as their cousins in the West do with water, with Principle of Worlds or through the Charm Assumption of the Person's Heart.

Finding Water

In the Southern Marches, water can be difficult to find. The only water in the Great Desert Sea is located in springs on the sea bottom. Water is easier to find on the lava plains and lava islands, but finding the few ordinary springs and streams requires a successful Perception + Survival roll with a difficulty of 3 to find fresh water and 4 to find an actual oasis. None of the native inhabitants of the Southern Middlemarches or Deep Wyld ever need to drink water.

mariners sail on the currents of white fire, but a single splash of the fire can bring agony, and white fire often runs next to currents of black fire, so a single mistake can easily prove fatal. The safest way to travel is along the relatively uncommon currents of benign silver fire. Caravans sometimes walk along these currents, and some of the raksha use gossamer mantas (see p. 38) to travel these currents because they can move especially fast over silver fire. All forms of fire-sailing are especially difficult because the currents continually move and shift — to avoid stepping into a deadly current of golden fire, travelers may end up far from their intended destination.

The Southern Middlemarches are filled with active volcanoes, small deserts, rocky expanses with baroque and elaborate landscapes of slender spires of rock and, on rare occasions, lush oases. Many of these oases are Demesnes. Huge rocky natural bridges periodically cross the fire rivers and connect the lava islands with the mainland. These bridges shrink and stretch to accommodate the movements of the lava islands. This region also contains an abundance of life. Jewel-horned elk graze on the crystalline plants and drink from the fountains of vital lava, flame gryphons hunt all manner of prey, abacasteri slaughter indiscriminately and devour carrion, and the great lumbering fire whales swim through the currents of the fire rivers and seas.

Liquid Fire

While fire in Creation burn only flammable objects, it heats everything and can be used to melt even the most refractory metal. The qualities of the various sorts of liquid fire found in the Southern Middlemarches are far more specific. Each form of fire heats and burns a different sort of material but only causes other things that touch it to become as warm as a hot summer day in the shade. The different types of flames never mix together and each liquid-fire current is always at least 10 yards wide. Every sort of fire does the same damage as a bonfire (see **Exalted**, p. 244) to anything that it can burn that is thrust inside it. Characters can swim normally through any fire except silver fire or fire that burns them. However, swimming through yellow or green fire can rapidly strip a character of his equipment. Items made of gossamer or the Five Magical Materials are immune to all of these types of fire except golden fire.

- Red fire is the most like ordinary flame, it burns wood and flesh but does not harm metal or stone.
- Yellow fire burns only plants. It even leaves animals and animal products unharmed.
- Black fire burns dead material such as driftwood or leather or the undead, but it does not affect living flesh.
- Green fire only burns metal, leaving everything else unharmed.
- Blue fire burns only stone. This sort of fire almost never flows next to or under the floating lava islands.
- White fire burns living things but does not harm anything already dead, including the undead and even highly flammable articles such as paper.
- Golden fire is by far the rarest variety of fire and also by far the most dangerous. It consumes everything except other fire.

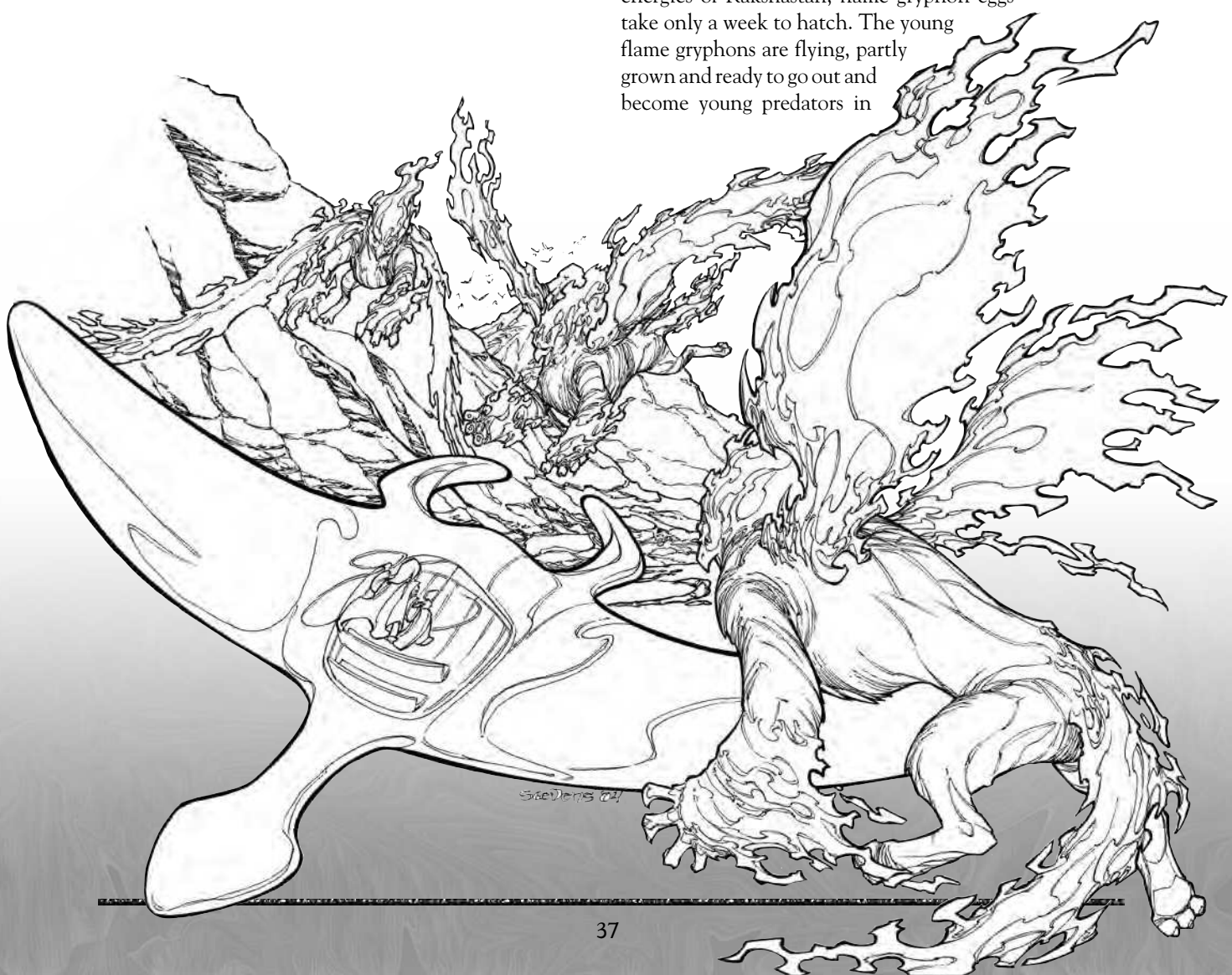
• Silver fire is unlike all of the others, as it is cool to the touch and burns nothing. Also, while it flows like a liquid, silver fire can support the weight of a person, horse or raksha walking upon it. Characters whose players succeed once every scene in a Dexterity + Athletics roll with a difficulty of 2 can walk normally across this liquid. Failure means that the characters cannot move faster than five yards a turn, and a botch means that they fall down and must get up again, and their players must immediately make another roll to avoid having their characters slip into a fire current of another color.

A bucket or cask of liquid fire can be carried anywhere in Rakshastan, so long as it is in a container impervious to its particular affects. For example, blue or white fire could be carried in a wooden barrel, but yellow fire could only be carried in a stone or metal cask. All of these fires continue to burn without fuel so long as they remain in Rakshastan. However, they all go out three days after they enter Creation. A bucket of fire thrown on someone or something does the same damage as three turns in a bonfire (see **Exalted**, p. 243), while a barrel of fire poured on something does the same damage but burns indefinitely. Mortal thieves who live near the borders of Rakshastan will pay a high price for buckets of blue fire.

The Rookery

The Rookery is one of the most legendary and deadly locations in all the Southern Marches. Located on the largest of the fire seas, it is a lava island that moves around more rapidly than any other. Any flame gryphon can automatically find it, but unless one is seriously threatened, no flame gryphon would tell any raksha, Exalt or other being the island's location or guide anyone there. Even raksha who are close allies with flame gryphons will never be taken there unless the Rookery is already in dire need.

The location of the Rookery is so greatly desired because it is both where young flame gryphons are hatched and where old flame gryphons go to die. An entire quadrant of the island is a huge graveyard of golden claws and beaks and opalescent white bones. Most flame gryphons either mate or spontaneously lay eggs here, and every flame gryphon goes here to make nests on the vast nesting mountain and hatch their young. Aided by the powerful energies of Rakshastan, flame gryphon eggs take only a week to hatch. The young flame gryphons are flying, partly grown and ready to go out and become young predators in



another two weeks. Some gryphons permanently live on the Rookery, but almost every flame gryphon in the Southern Marches visits it periodically, and it regularly has a population of between 100 and 300 flame gryphons, who will all defend it to the death.

Although a few raksha nobles and a handful of Lunar Exalted know the location of the Rookery, they keep this knowledge to themselves. Flame gryphons are willing to accept a few polite visitors seeking young gryphons as steeds and partners. However, attempts to invade the Rookery result in the flame gryphons fleeing to a new and unknown location or slaughtering all of the invaders and then spending the next few years killing everyone who attempts to visit the Rookery. Flame gryphons know that, without this vigilance and determination, their young would soon all be abducted and carefully raised to be content and willing slaves who had never tasted the untamed freedom of the open air. As a result, the normally solitary flame gryphons work together to protect this island from discovery or exploitation.

The Deep Wyld

On the edge of purest chaos, nothing but smoke and ash remains. The boundary between the Middlemarches and the Deep Wyld is vivid and obvious. Once past this border, the entire landscape gradually transforms into a shifting plain where everything is made of smoke and ash. Regardless of whether the landscape currently appears to be the streets of Chiaroscuro or the private jewel-mines of Despot of Gem, everything is made of solidified smoke and ash. Smoke perpetually hangs in the air, and the heat in this landscape is equal to that of a hearth (see **Exalted**, p. 244).

Because of the smoky, stinging conditions for sight, the Storyteller should increase the difficulty of all rolls involving sight or vision by 1 while characters from Creation are in the Southern portion of the Deep Wyld. Human and Exalted eyes and minds are not designed to understand or make out the details when the landscape is shrouded in smoke. Charms or artifacts that negate vision penalties enable such characters to operate normally. Naturally, members of the Fair Folk can use Staff or Ring Charms to remove any penalties they might otherwise suffer.

Hazards of the South

The fiery Southern Marches of the Wyld are home to countless deadly creatures. Those below are endemic to the region or mentioned in the text above.

Flame Gryphon (Hazard Rating ••••)

Description: The most glorious and deadly beasts of the Southern Marches are the flame gryphons. They are creatures of fire and majesty that submit to no one, not even raksha nobles. Flame gryphons can be killed, and they can willingly ally themselves with someone that they

Gossamer Manta (Artifact •••)

The gossamer manta is one of the more unique vehicles used by the raksha. It is most commonly used in the liquid-fire rivers and seas of the Southern Middlemarches, but the Fair Folk also use it on the Northern ice and the plains and sandy deserts of the South. It can be used to travel over any relatively flat surface, including prairie, tundra or any liquid, including water, liquid gemstone and molten lava. The vehicle looks much like a large, stained-glass manta ray. This vessel floats a yard above the ground and has an oval body 25 feet long and 15 feet wide that can hold up to seven raksha, with one pilot in the front and three rows of seats behind that. The manta's wings slowly flap as the vehicle moves forward.

When traveling over anything except silver fire, the vehicle can move at speed of up to 40 mph. Waves of Essence push against the surface below it, keeping the vessel aloft and moving it swiftly forward. The unique properties of silver fire enhances these waves of Essence, and so, a gossamer manta can travel significantly faster on it, reaching speeds of up to two waypoints per scene (80 mph). Although they are most often used in Rakshastan, some raksha also use gossamer mantas on the seas, plains and glaciers of Creation. Gossamer mantas are made of the finest raksha-made glass and are immune to the heat of lava as well as destruction by all types of liquid fire. The sides of the vehicle are somewhat high, so that being in it during combat counts as 50% cover. It is a difficult craft to pilot, and doing so requires both Sail •• and at least a one-dot specialty in Gossamer Manta. To pilot this craft, the driver must commit 7 motes of Essence to it.

Gossamer Manta (Ring-Shaping Weapon)

Name	Acc.	Dmg.	Def.	Rate	Cost	Range	Max Perception	Notes
Gossamer Manta	-2	-2	+4	1	A•••	0*	3	P

* This is a hand-to-hand Ring weapon. It affects targets in the same waypoint only.
P The weapon does piercing damage. This halves the target's Willpower for purposes of computing soak.

consider to be worthy, but they cannot be forced to obey another. Attempting to enslave them causes them to claw themselves to death in a fit of despair and bloody rage (they can thus avoid even the forfeits of shaping combat). Flame gryphons primarily live in the Middlemarches of Rakshastan, but they occasionally enter the Deep Wyld, and a few of the more adventurous ones visit the Bordermarches and the outskirts of Creation. Flame gryphons can live indefinitely in Creation, but they cannot breed there.

Flame gryphons are lions the size of aurochs, with the heads of eagles, eagle legs instead of forepaws, hooked eagle beaks, long claws of unnaturally shining gold and wings of gold and crimson flame. Although they have the form of beasts, they can speak in harsh and terrifying voices and are as intelligent as ordinary humans. However, their concerns are those of beasts — they care nothing for wealth, learning, politics or for anything beyond the joys of the hunt and the pleasures of a fully belly and a warm den. Their voices can command any mindless beast except familiars or other beasts that are magically tied to their masters.

Flame gryphons are the mortal enemies of all horses and especially the mystic beasts of the Northwest, sea horses and unicorns. Flame gryphons normally only attack when threatened or hungry, but they will go out of their way to kill these creatures and will continue slaughtering them even when they are completely full. In addition to being fierce predators that are easily a match for any of the weaker raksha nobles, flame gryphons are also the most prized steeds in all of the Southern Marches. While a very few raksha nobles ride gryphons, their steeds are willing allies and never servants or beasts of burden. Flame gryphon allies are Familiar •••••.

Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 4, Stamina 8, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Linguistics 2, Presence 4, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Supernatural Powers:

Command Beasts: They can reflexively command any non-intelligent animal except Familiars. To control a mount or other animal that is currently with its owner, they must roll Charisma + Presence vs. the owner's Charisma + Survival. This affect costs 2 motes and lasts for a full scene. They must use this separately to command multiple animals.

Immunity to Command: Flame gryphons are immune to all effects that force them to obey someone, including shaping attacks. Any attempt that succeeds instantly causes them to commit suicide. This effect is a perfect one.

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 10 Damage 16L Defense 8
Claw: Speed 11 Accuracy 12 Damage 13L Defense 12
Wing Buffet: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 17L Defense 8

Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 12L/16B (Tough hide, 8L/8B)
Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0x3/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap
Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 30
Other Notes: None

The Glittering Desert (Hazard Rating ••)

Two centuries ago, the mortal prophet Ikerre used the vastly powerful Eye of Autochthon to slay enormous numbers of the Southern raksha and their servants. The result of this devastation is a region now known as the Glittering Desert. It extends through both the Bordermarches and the Middlemarches and lies roughly south of Chiaroscuro. Here, the vast magics of this legendary artifact transformed every raksha and every creature that was intimately tied to Rakshastan, including thousands of Wyld barbarians, into shining multicolored crystalline statues of quartz. Every plant and animal in this portion of Rakshastan was similarly transformed, as was every worm and bit of lichen to be found in the thin dry soil — in fact, the soil itself was transformed into glittering fragments of brilliantly multicolored quartz.

Even today, nothing lives in the Glittering Desert. However, both Exalts and raksha occasionally visit it searching for valuable artifacts. Although many of the buildings in the Freeholds and raksha domains once found here were also transformed into quartz, almost all of the magical artifacts here were untouched by the transformation. Whether made from gossamer or one of the Five Magical Materials, they now lie buried under the shifting, shining drifts of quartz crystals. Many legends claim that the Eye of Autochthon itself now lies somewhere in this vast wasteland.

Anyone wandering the Glittering Desert during the day experiences a +2 penalty to all Perception rolls involving vision because of the brilliantly shining reflections from the unnatural sands. The only way to negate these penalties is to wear a visor of smoked or darkly colored glass (which provides a +1 difficulty increase to vision rolls when not in bright sunlight) or to travel at night. Also, the sand in this desert is unusually jagged and sharp, so the damage from a severe sandstorm here is the same as for a supernatural ice storm (see **Exalted**, p. 244)

Lion Warrior (Hazard Rating ••)

Description: These shapeshifting lesser raksha are the most common Warriors employed by the Southern raksha nobles. Lion warriors appear to be tall, muscular humans with an extremely short coat of lionlike fur on their bodies, as well as the golden eyes of lions. They normally transform into lions to fight, but they can also

fight in their normal form. Although the vast majority of these creatures can be found on the surface, there is also an eyeless type of lion warrior that is at home underneath the desert seas. These lion warriors can safely breathe in the sand and can swim through it at their normally running speed.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Graces: Cup 2, Ring 1, Staff 1, Sword 3, Heart 1

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 4 (Claws +2), Dodge 3, Endurance 2, Melee 3, Presence 2, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Charms: Armament of Flesh, Assumption of Elemental Shape, Elemental Transformation (Lion), Ravishing the Created Form. Some examples may know some or all of the following Charms: Awakened Dream Manufacture, Essence-Forging Art, Gossamer-Forging Art, Principle of Worlds, Shape-Forged Servant and Translucent Dream Sheathing Technology.

Mutations (6): Affliction (Thick Skin), Armament of Flesh, Assumption of Elemental Shape (Fire), Elemental Transformation (Lion)

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 9 Damage 7L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 7 Accuracy 11 Damage 9L Defense 9

Chopping Sword: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 9L Defense 7

Composite Bow: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 7L (Rate 3, Range 250)

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 10L/13B (Thick skin and reinforced buff jacket, 8L/9B, -2 mobility penalty)

Shaping Wounds: Cup 4 Ring 4 Staff 2 Sword 6

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1 **Essence Pool:** 10

Other Notes: None

Sand Shark

(Hazard Rating ••, ••• for packs)

Description: These vicious and ever-hungry predators are as much of a threat in the sand seas of the Southern Middlemarches as ordinary sharks are in watery oceans. They look exactly like normal sharks, except that they have no eyes and their skin is very close in color to the golden-brown sand in which they live. Although smaller sharks also live in the deserts of the Southern Bordermarches, the most common sharks are the size of siaka. They use the same statistics as siaka (see **Exalted**, p. 317), except that they live in the sand of raksha-touched deserts and cannot survive in water. Most are solitary, but packs of up to a dozen sometimes descend upon wounded prey.

Vital Lava (Hazard Rating ••)

In many ways, the Southern Marches are the closest to the destructive powers of the untamed Wyld. However, this chaos can both create as well as destroy, and in the South, its creative power is exemplified by the rare pools of vital lava. These are always quite small and regularly shift location. Each pool appears to be a small fumarole, much like a very low miniature volcano no more than a few yards across. The glowing amber-colored substance that oozes out of it contains the raw creative energies of the Wyld. The player of any unprotected mortal or Exalt who touches it must roll on the Wyld Exposure Table (see **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 209) as if the character was exposed to pure chaos.

In contrast, the touch of this substance is far more benign for raksha and other natives of Rakshastan — this substance heals one level of shaping damage for every scene they are in contact with it (it cannot be used in this fashion more than once per story per raksha). However, even the raksha can fall prey to its chaotic energies. Any raksha who is fully healed when he touches this substance loses a point of Willpower for every scene he is exposed to it. Many raksha have attempted to find ways to use vital lava as a weapon. However, it rapidly dissolves any material it is placed within, including both gossamer and the Five Magical Materials. As a result, vital lava cannot be moved from the vicinity of the pool from which it comes.

Lesser Menaces

Abacasteri (Hazard Rating ••)

These golden cats are creatures of living metal, with blood as hot as lava and muscles as firm as rock. They live off carrion and rotting corpses, and their saliva is corrosive and burning. They often seek out graveyards to feed on the bodies buried there. They are not merely golden-furred, but made of actual gold, and their eyes are topazes. Abacasteri run in prides, like mortal lions.

Their saliva is acidic, causing their bites to inflict aggravated damage, and their metallic nature makes them unnaturally resistant to blows. Their blood is hot as molten metal and will inflict burns (a level of aggravated damage) on anyone who touches it. When an abacasteri is killed, its body usually falls into yellow dust. The only way to gain a lion's weight in pure gold is to bleed the animal to death, so that it dies when the last drop of blood leaves the body. This is difficult to achieve and is also not widely known. The body of a dead abacasteri can be sold for Resources •••••.

Dangers of the Lava Tunnels (Hazard Rating ••)

The acid coating the walls of some tunnels is treated just as ordinary acid (see **Exalted**, p. 244). The arms or tentacles all attack individually and must be defeated individually, unless the character possesses some way to destroy or immobilize large masses of them simultaneously.

Typically, half a dozen or more of these arms or tentacles can attack each character.

Fire Whales (Hazard Rating •••)

These beasts are huge whales that can only survive in the largest fire rivers and in the fire seas. They are immune to the affects of all types of fire, except for the rare golden fire. Cloaks made from the skin of these animals can be used as protection against the fire rivers and leather buckets made from their hide can carry this fire.

Jewel-Horned Elk (Hazard Rating ••)

Unlike mortal elk, both the males and females of these moose-sized creatures have huge antlers that they never shed, and these antlers are all made from precious stone. Each elk has antlers made from a single kind of stone — there are ruby elk, diamond elk and emerald elk. Although slightly more aggressive that ordinary elk, they mostly wander the Southern Middlemarches in large herds, grazing on crystal plants. In Creation, the antlers of one of these creatures is worth Resources ••••.

Manticore (Hazard Rating •••)

Found most often in the Bordermarches, manticores can exist in Creation for an unlimited amount of time and occasionally visit the Middlemarches and the Deep Wyld. They are never a match for anything other than the weakest raksha nobles. However, mortals, lesser raksha and relatively inexperienced Terrestrial Exalted all fear them. Manticores appear to be large lions with wide mouths filled with three rows of shark-like teeth. In addition, each also possesses a long, scorpion-like tail tipped with a barbed stinger full of deadly venom equal to arrow frog poison (see **Exalted**, p. 243). To make matters worse, manticores are at least as intelligent as the brightest apes and can perfectly imitate any voice that they have ever heard and project this voice so that it appears to come from any location within 30 yards of their true location. While they are not intelligent enough to carry on any sort of conversation or to create elaborate dialog, even simple phrases such as cries for help or suggestions that someone come look at something, said in

Menaces of the South

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Will.	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Acc/Dmg	Dodge/Soak	Abilities
Abacasteri	6/4/6	5	-0x3/-1x3/-2x3/-4/I	Bite: 7/6/5A, Claw: 7/7/8L	7/7L/10B	Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Presence 3 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3 (Desert +1)
Fire Whale	12/2/14	4	-0x3/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/I	Bite: 2/4/12L, Ram: 3/5/18L	2/7L/14B	Awareness 2, Brawl 2 (Bite +1, Ram +1), Athletics 3 (Swim +2), Presence 2 (Intimidation +1), Endurance 3, Resistance 2
Jewel-Horned Elk	6/2/5	3	-0x2/-1x2/-2x2/-4/I	Gore: 7/6/10L, Kick: 2/5/8L	4/2L/5B	Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2
Manticore	8/4/6	3	-0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4/I	Bite: 8/10/11L, Sting: 10/11/9L + poison	8/6L/9B	Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Performance 3, Presence 2, Stealth 3, Survival 4
Wall Arm	4/3/2	N/A	-0x2/-4/I	Clinch: 0/7/clinch, Punch: 6/7/4B	0/6L/9B	Brawl 4
Wall Tentacle	4/4/2	N/A	-0x2/-4/I	Bash: 7/8/5B, Clinch: 1/8/clinch	0/6L/9B	Brawl 4

the voice of one of their companions has lured many characters to their doom. In addition to being deadly combatants, their voices also possess a limited glamour that causes many who hear it to be certain that it actually comes from the person being imitated.

The West

In the West, the Wyld is especially mutable and often changes in response to the presence of mortals or Exalts. Both the landscape and the creatures mimic visitors' forms and thoughts, and in a few portions of the Western Deep Wyld, the creatures and the landscape become almost indistinguishable. The Western Marches are the most fluid portions of Rakshastan and also the largest. More than elsewhere, it is very easy for mortals and others not sensitive to the energies of Rakshastan to drift in or out of it without knowing they are doing so. Some mortal shipping routes even go through the edges of the Bordermarches, making it possible for raksha nobles to exact tithes from travelers. The creative and destructive aspects of Rakshastan are also most active in the West. Mortal sailors sometimes sail into Rakshastan and find the land of their dreams. However, waves of chaos can also sweep out of the seas of Rakshastan and dissolve entire islands and everything on them.

While many of the beasts that inhabit the Western Marches of Rakshastan are more exotic versions of ordinary aquatic creatures, such as glowing green siaka, whales covered in fur or fish scales or fish that can inexplicably swim through the air, there are also a large number of hybrid beasts that combine features of land and sea animals. Razor bears and tentacle men are two relatively common examples of such creatures. Such hybrids can inhabit both the islands and the seas of the Western Marches.

The Bordermarches

The Western Ocean of the Bordermarches is unusually animate and active. Waves often move regardless of any wind and occasionally form tendrils that reach out and attempt to touch anything that comes too close. Also, in addition to the risk of creating doppelgangers, looking into the sea for any length of time can result in faces, heads and even most of a roughly formed body rising up from the surface of the water. Reaching down to touch the water often results in a watery hand reaching up to touch the character. While such hands sometimes attempt to grab the character weakly, in most cases, they touch and then vanish back into the water.

The Western Bordermarches are really two realms: One exists on the islands and the surface of the sea, while the other is underwater — and especially on the sea floor. This undersea realm is, by far, the most populous and, to the raksha, the most important. There are dozens of underwater Demesnes and domains, as well as gossamer fortresses and exotic landscapes where herds of panicked sea horses flee from ravenous bands of siaka-men.

Raksha and their servants inhabit much of the sea floor. In addition, a multitude of animals normally found on land have aquatic versions that wander the sea floor. Tigers covered with blue fish scales and elk with the skin of dolphins hunt and graze the strange land underneath the sea. Many of these creatures cannot swim — instead, they walk and run along the sea bottom as easily and swiftly as their counterparts run along the plains and savannas of Creation.

Aquatic Survival

Fair Folk do not respire in the conventional sense and may easily adapt their bodies to breathe underwater through the use of the Charm Assumption of Elemental Shape (Water). However, Creation-born characters do not have this luxury. Raksha taking prisoners or entertaining guests generally either use the Charm Assumption of the Person's Heart instead or provide breathable water through the use of the Charm Principle of Worlds.

The Middlemarches

Out in the Western Middlemarches, ordinary land, including the sea floor adjoins a confusing mixture of liquid water, solid water and air. The division between land, sky and sea becomes difficult to determine. There are floating islands and spheres of land inside giant bubbles of water. Also, in much of the Western Middlemarches, the sea is both crystal clear and perfectly reflective of the sky. In a few regions, everything is made out of water, including lakes, mountains, trees and animals. The land, buildings and creatures here are just as durable and dangerous as those made from rock or flesh, but in such places, the difficulty of all Perception rolls involving vision are increased by 2 because the land and the animals are both reflective and transparent. Also, the waters of the Western Middlemarches can sometimes duplicate the thoughts and hopes of those who stare into them.

Other portions of the Western Middlemarches are made of more conventional materials. However, even here, the rocks and trees are considerably more fluid and mutable than in the rest of the Middlemarches. Like the Northern Marches of Rakshastan, concepts of up and down sometimes become completely irrelevant. In a few places, spherical seas float through the air, and complex ribbons and paths of solid water form three-dimensional mazes. Some of the Western Middlemarches consist of a sea with islands, but even here, waves can move in all directions at once, independent of any wind and often take on the shapes of people or other stranger forms.

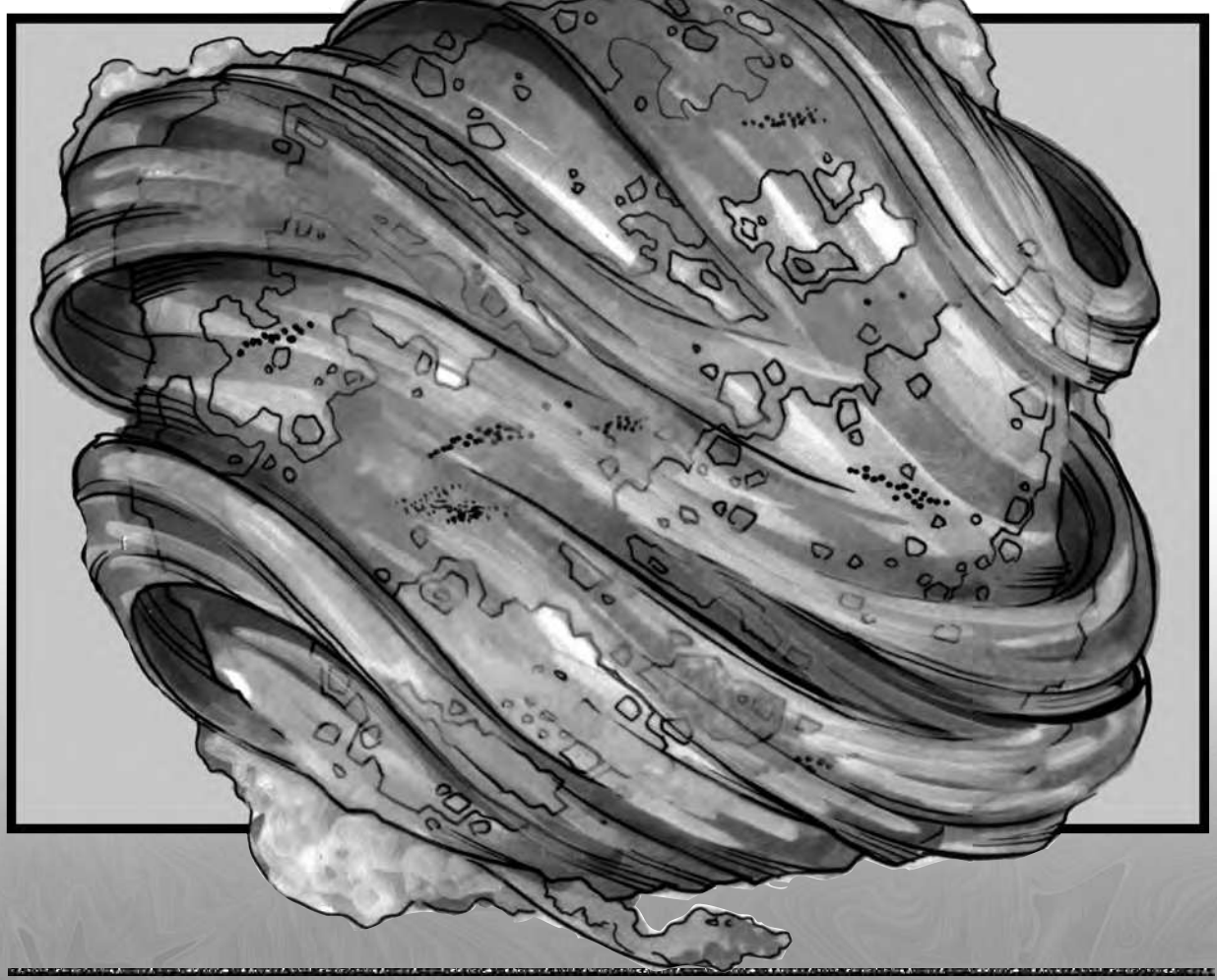
The Waterdrop Ocean

Enormous masses of floating water are ubiquitous in the Western Middlemarches, but the Waterdrop Ocean is one of the largest. It appears to be a huge perfectly spherical ball of water more than 500 hundred miles in diameter. It is, in fact, a vast ocean, filled with a multitude of fish and other sea creatures, with a single massive coral reef growing throughout it. The reef is a slender lacy openwork structure that fills the ocean with hundreds of narrow spreading branches. Between the branches of the reef, in the large open spaces where it does not grow, live vast kraken, enormous sea dragons and huge sea serpents. Legends say that the center of the reef holds a cache of treasure placed there long ago by one of Balor's chief aides, but this treasure is also said to be guarded by kraken-whales and other powerful underwater beasts that are mindlessly loyal to the raksha who placed them there. No one who's returned from a journey to the center of the Waterdrop Ocean has ever even found the location of this treasure, much less defeated its guardians.

The Mirror Maze

One of the most enigmatic places in Rakshastan is the Mirror Maze. Various raksha nobles have attempted to control it and place it within their domains, but it is immune to all forms of control. This place is a huge shifting maze made of solid water. This water is as hard as a wood wall (see **Exalted**, p. 239), but it is fully transparent and is neither cold nor frozen. It is a three-dimensional maze, where gravity is oriented toward every surface. Wherever visitors walk is the floor, and terms such as walls and ceilings are essentially meaningless. The passages are all square and between 9 and 11 feet across. They twist, turn, branch off from one another and intersect in a constantly changing network of smooth corridors.

The walls of these twisting passages of solid water are filled with bubbles of all sizes. Some bubbles are as small as a fist, while the largest are three yards in diameter. Each of these bubbles is an exact duplicate in miniature of someplace else in Creation or Rakshastan. One may be the exact double of the bedroom of the Perfect of Paragon, while another might be a duplicate of the private hunting preserve of a raksha noble living in the Eastern Middlemarches. Naturally, larger bubbles provide views that are more detailed. These bubbles are only miniature duplicates — they cannot be used to affect the



actual locations they show. Also, if a bubble is disturbed at all, it breaks and vanishes. All of these bubbles move slowly, and they regularly vanish altogether, so there is no reason to assume that a bubble that was present one day will be there the next.

Finding a particular bubble is exceedingly difficult and normally involves a lengthy and difficult search. Because it is as much an act of will as it is an actual search, finding a particular bubble requires a Ring-shaping action with a difficulty equal to the Essence of the being to be viewed. The difficulty of this search drops by 1 (to a minimum of 2) for every scene the character spends walking the Mirror Maze looking for the appropriate bubble. Unfortunately, the longer a character wanders through this place looking for a single bubble, the harder it becomes for the character to find her way out. Leaving the Mirror Maze requires a Ring-shaping action with a base difficulty of 1, but it's increased by 1 for every scene the character spends searching, to a maximum of 7. Characters who botch either roll become hopelessly lost, and the difficulty of leaving the Mirror Maze becomes 7 immediately. Occasionally, visitors will find lost raksha and Exalts wandering helplessly through the Mirror Maze.

The Deep Wyld

The Western Deep Wyld is as ephemeral of the rest of this chaotic realm, but the entire landscape here is made up of water. Unless altered by the will of one of the raksha, all water here is unnaturally reflective and often forms itself into large flat sheets like giant mirrors. Freeholds take the form of vortices, standing breakers and other aquatic manifestations of power. This land of mist and reflections is even more chaotic and changeable than the rest of the Deep Wyld. A stray thought or memory can briefly reshape a nearby bit of water into a duplicate of some familiar place or cause an image of a friend to appear in a nearby reflection. The difference between air and water becomes largely meaningless here, and without some vehicle, the easiest way to get around is to swim. Because of the confusing reflections, increase the difficulty of all Perception rolls involving vision by 2. Although almost everything here is made of water, this water can form shining, transparent duplicates of whales, seals, people, islands, cities or anything else found in the West of Creation, and all of these duplicates have the same Attributes, soak and number of health levels as the originals.

Hazards of the West

The West is a treacherous and mercurial region of trackless sea and Essence vortices. It teems with danger, even for the raksha. What follow are a selection of the dangers endemic to the area or referred to in the text above.

Doppelganger, Emotional and Sleep (Hazard Rating •••• or •)

The water the Western Bordermarches does more than merely reflect images, it can hold onto them for long periods of time. Doppelgangers are temporary duplicates of a character. Most only look like the persons they duplicate but have only partial knowledge of who they are and possess none of the characters' special abilities. However, some are exact duplicates who have all of a character's memories, Attributes, Abilities, spells and Charms.

Anytime a sleeper's face is reflected in the water of the Bordermarches for more than hour, the water may create a sleep doppelganger. As a result, few residents of the West sleep anywhere that their faces can be reflected in water. If someone creates such a sleep doppelganger, the doppelganger can keep the character asleep indefinitely. The doppelganger uses a version of Curse of Definition (see pp. 170-171) on the victim. If the character's Wits + Essence are not greater than or equal to 4, she remains asleep unless awakened by a stunt or Charm and the doppelganger continues to take her place. A player may make a new roll every scene for her character to awaken. Sleep doppelgangers vanish the instant the affected character awakens.

Confusing reflections from the nearby water conceal the character so long as she is asleep. Anyone looking for the character will not see her unless they have a Wits + Essence of 4 or higher. Otherwise, searchers continue to overlook the character, even if she is asleep in plain sight.

A sleep doppelgangers does not know that it is not real. It is an exact duplicate of the character and has all of her Attributes and Abilities. However, it has none of her Charms, Graces, spells and so on and only possesses an Essence of 1. Cup Charms created to pierce glamours will reveal doppelgangers for what they are and characters with Wits + Essence higher than an emulated character's Stealth will instantly see the doppelganger to be a false duplicate. There are only two non-magical ways to determine their true nature. Doppelgangers will not willingly leave Rakshastan, and if forced, they will either escape or dissolve into a puddle of water as they enter Creation. Also, if a doppelganger is cut, it bleeds seawater, not blood. If a doppelganger is destroyed, the original automatically wakes up and can be seen normally.

Emotional doppelgangers are considerably more dangerous but also more limited. An emotional doppelganger can be instantaneously created when someone's face is reflected while she is feeling a particularly intense emotion. Weeping uncontrollably into the waters of Western Rakshastan is almost certain to create such a doppelganger. This being knows that it is not real, and it exists only to attempt to kill the real character and replace her. Although it possesses all of the memories and other Traits of the original, its personality is a twisted mirror of the

character's, distorted by the overwhelming presence of the emotion that character was feeling when she originally spawned the doppelganger. Emotional doppelgangers only survive for three days unless they can kill the characters they duplicated within this time.

An emotional doppelganger knows that its life span is severely limited and tirelessly stalks the original character, waiting for precisely the right moment to strike. Since the emotional doppelganger has all of the character's Charms, spells, Essence, Attributes and other Abilities, it can be a profoundly deadly opponent. If an emotional doppelganger succeeds in destroying the original, it continues to exist, but like other doppelgangers, it cannot safely leave the Wyld. Any attempt to control the mind or emotion of an emotional doppelganger automatically fails. These beings have only illusory minds that cannot be controlled in any fashion.

Emotional doppelgangers often spring from botched Cup-shaping rolls in the West and are quite dangerous to the raksha who spawn them. They have all the raksha's Traits, including Grace scores and Charms, but none of their possessions or artifacts. They also have no Heart Grace and are destroyed if they take enough damage in any shaping combat to suffer a negative effect such as vexation. If one can incumber the raksha it mirrors, it will exile her to the world of impermanent reflection, inherit her Heart Grace and possessions and so on, effectively becoming that raksha. While the actual effect of this event is negligible, it is nevertheless quite unpopular among raksha stalked by aspirant selves.

Doppelganger, Memory (Hazard Rating ••)

Instead of merely mirroring visitors, the waters of the Western Middlemarches also serve as a mirror for visitors' memories and dreams. Anyone who enters this portion of Rakshastan while mourning someone's loss or otherwise missing someone is likely to find a doppelganger of this person. Similarly, almost anyone who is fleeing a pursuer will be found by a doppelganger of this pursuer while in the Middlemarches.

These beings are not exact duplicates of the person the character fears or desires. Instead, they are exact duplicates of what the character dreams or remembers this person to be like. Here, the water absorbs these dreams or memories and creates a duplicate based upon them. A lost love might be far more sweet and idealized than she ever was in real life, and a duplicate enemy will usually be either more fearsomely skilled or more bumbling and incompetent than the actual enemy, depending upon the beliefs and attitudes of the character whose memory they come from.

Memory doppelgangers do not have any knowledge about themselves or anything else that the character who inadvertently created them does not also possess. Unless confronted with evidence that they are not real, both the memory doppelganger and its creator will believe that the doppelganger is who it claims to be. Its creator must have a Wits + Essence of 7 or higher to determine that this duplicate is not the real individual (other witnesses only need a Wits + Essence of 6 or more).

However, other characters who know the actual person often have little trouble telling the doppelganger from the original. Memory doppelgangers have no idea that they are not real, and many of them react with shock or horror if they discover this fact. If a memory doppelganger of a character's enemy realizes its true nature, it becomes a truly deadly opponent because it ceases to care about its own survival. Memory doppelgangers of enemies or rivals automatically transform back into seawater a few hours after they slay or otherwise best their opponents.

The fate of memory doppelgangers of loved ones is more tragic. They can exist as long as the character who inadvertently created them continues to care about them. It doesn't matter if both the character and the doppelganger realize that it is a duplicate. All that matters is the continued affection. Like all other doppelgangers, memory doppelgangers cannot survive leaving Rakshastan.

Occasionally, mortals and Exalts who have lost someone important to them choose to live in the Bordermarches because they cannot bear to be parted from the duplicates of the persons they lost. Sometimes, raksha nobles will create memory doppelgangers to practice against potential foes or to gain some satisfaction from torturing hated rivals, but most soon tire of the game, as these creations lack the spontaneity and life of the originals and are merely empty shells. Memory doppelgangers have all of the Traits of the beings they resemble, but they all have an Essence of 1 and lack all Charms, Graces and spells. Though real enough to the Creation-born, these doppelgangers are mere images to shaping and can be dismissed or destroyed through any shaping roll. Abilities are limited to the lower of the scores possessed by both the original and its creator.

Certain waypoints spawn memory doppelgangers easily. In these places, characters who can perform Cup shaping can call up these shades with a Conviction + Performance roll (difficulty 1, no more than one may be summoned per story). They are often used in the creation of possessions, for reasons both ironic and practical, depending on the raksha.

Islands of Desire (Hazard Rating ••)

Western Rakshastan is a place that fulfills the dreams of any who are willing to risk seeking them. Islands of desire are small wonders filled with everything that a character could wish, including dead loved ones now miraculously alive, luxurious mansions and banquet tables piled high with exotic delights.

However, there are also limits on what can exist on these islands of desire. They cannot contain Demesne's, Freeholds, gods, Exalts, noble raksha or any beings with a

permanent Essence greater than 1. Also, nothing on one of these islands can contain any knowledge not already known by the seeker. In addition to meaning that no one can find an island of desire piled full of First Age maps and lost spell books, this limit also means that any people found on these islands are creations from the hopes and memories of the character who finds this island and only know what the seeker thinks they do.

Mechanically, these islands are waypoints that change their contents to make Cup-shaping attacks on the individuals who enter them. They attack with a Speed of 5 Accuracy 11, Damage 3, Rate 1 (using the milieu). If successful, the area attempts to ravish the Temperance of the individual with the compulsion to never leave. Even if it fails, however, it still retains the form of the heart's desire of the character who happened upon it.

Because it assumes the shape of a specific desire, it uses this same Cup-shaping attack (including the attack roll) against all who are exposed to it, every time they go there. It makes only one attack, but it attacks every time an individual enters the waypoint. The area automatically responds to the first individual who enters it when it is shapeless. Once it has been shaped, it will remain as it is until three stories go by without a visit by characters who have visited it in its present form.

In addition, the area is susceptible to Ring-shaping attacks, and even one success on a Ring attack will incumber the waypoint into taking the shape of the character's desire, just as if the area was a Freehold and the character's Heart was in the bonefire. This allow the character to make Cup attacks within the waypoint with the area's attack Traits as his shaping action. Unlike a Freehold, the character has no special control over it if another raksha reshapes it through Ring attacks, and his awareness does not extend entirely through the area as if he was enfleshed.

Islands of desire are a strange residual of the Contagion War in the West, and some are used as nests by unshaped Fair Folk who lair in the Middlemarches for brief periods. The islands never hold a Freehold but can be part of a Freehold — in which case, the master of the Freehold has control over it regardless of what the individuals in it wish.

Siaka-Man (Hazard Rating ••)

Description: These humanoid siaka form the bulk of the armies of the Western raksha. The siaka-men are ravenous and merciless creatures whose thoughts and desires most closely resemble those of sharks. However, they are also innately subservient beings that will follow any leader strong enough to beat them into submission, making them ideal warriors for the raksha's endless battles.

Siaka-men all have rough, leathery, greenish or bluish-gray skin devoid of all hair, a broad, pointed snout and head, with almost no neck, and a vast mouth full of sharp teeth. They have no ears, hearing instead through a pair of listening holes on either side of the forehead, and gill slits adorn their necks. A siaka-man's broad hands and feet are webbed to assist in swimming. A broad tail helps propel them through the water. They are equally at home on the land or in the sea and typically live in reefs, on small islands or within the domains of raksha nobles who wish to be protected by these hulking, deadly and frighteningly efficient brutes.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Graces*: Cup 1, Ring 1, Staff 1, Sword 4, Heart 1

* Cannot attack in shaping combat.

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Swim +3), Awareness 2 (Smell +2), Brawl 3 (Bite +1), Dodge 2, Endurance 2 (Underwater +2), Melee 2, Resistance 2, Stealth 2 (Underwater +1), Survival 5 (Underwater +1)

Charms: Armament of Flesh, Assumption of Elemental Shape, Ravishing the Created Form. Some may know some or all of the following Charms: Awakened Dream Manufacture, Essence-Forging Art, Gossamer-Forging Art, Principle of Worlds, Shape-Forged Servant and Translucent Dream Sheathing Technology.

Mutations (in Creation)**:** Affliction (Thick Skin), Armament of Flesh, Assumption of Elemental Shape

Base Initiative: 4

Attack:

Bite: Speed 4 Accuracy 6 Damage 8L Defense 4
Punch: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 5B Defense 5
Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 4 Damage 7B Defense 4
Chopping Sword: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 9L Defense 4
Short Spear: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 8L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 4 **Soak:** 5L/8B (Thick skin, 3L/3B)

Shaping Wounds: Cup 2 Ring 2 Staff 5 Sword 8

Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-3/Incap

Essence: 1 **Essence Pool:** 10

Other Notes: Siaka-men are an example of commoner raksha Warriors. They are often extras. When they smell blood, they reduce all wound penalties by 1 and become fearless and extremely aggressive.

The Waters of Chaos (Hazard Rating ••)

Sometimes, the waters of Rakshastan become filled with the destructive and dissolving powers of chaos and rapidly erode everything solid in their path. This unnatural extension of the destructive power of water is normally confined to the Middlemarches and the Deep Wyld of Rakshastan, but occasionally, these lethal currents sweep into the Bordermarches or Creation. These waters sometimes dissolve both small islands and everything on them.

When the waters of chaos flow, it is a Sword-shaping attack that attacks all within the waypoint every scene with Speed 12, Accuracy 6, Damage 13 and Rate 1. Those who can engage in Sword-shaping combat are vexed for their possessions, which the waters strip away and destroy. Those who are vexed but have no Sword Grace are dissolved by the waters. In the Bordermarches, the waters of chaos rarely remain for more than one scene, and in the Middlemarches and deeper, they normally confine themselves to special currents that can be mapped by any raksha with a Lore of •• or more or any being from Creation with both Lore •• and a specialty in the Wyld. Locating these currents requires a successful difficulty 3 roll be made using Perception + Lore.

Waypoints of the waters of chaos cannot be controlled or shaped by the shaped Fair Folk, but are easy for the unshaped Fair Folk to exist in, so the princes of Rakshastan avoid them as assiduously as mortals do.

Lesser Menaces

Kraken-Whale (Hazard Rating ••••)

These horrors appear to be huge whales up to 120 feet long with wide mouths filled with jagged teeth and eight enormous tentacles that are as long as their bodies. They are ravenous carnivores and often attempt to devour boats up to half their length. Kraken-whales are large enough that those attacking one get an extra three dice in their dice pools.

Living Islands (Hazard Rating •••)

The Western Middlemarches are home to living islands that are actually behemoths. Much of the land in this realm is actually on one of these huge beings. These creatures usually appear to be small islands between several hundred yards and several miles across that are seemingly covered with hills, mountains and trees. In actuality, all of the plants and trees on these vast creatures are actually extensions of the polymorphic flesh of the being's back. The living island can alter its terrain at will, transforming a hilly forest to a barren mountain to a smooth domed surface lacking in all handholds (roll Dexterity + Athletics with a difficulty of 2 to avoid falling, the difficulty rises to 3 if the character runs or otherwise moves rapidly) or a forest of hungry tentacles. While most living islands are docile and placid, all become enraged if injured, as more than one person attempting to dig for treasure on one has discovered. Also, a few unusually aggressive living islands attempt to supplement their diets by feeding on anyone walking on their backs. If desired, these beings can create huge mouths and devour anyone walking on their backs.

The land-dwelling inhabitants of the Western Middlemarches sometimes live on such islands. Raksha commoners make deals with the living islands, while the



powerful raksha nobles command the living islands as their servants and order them to become great, ornate, mobile, living palaces. Living islands occasionally visit both the Deep Wyld and the Bordermarches, but they cannot survive life in Creation.

Razor Bear (Hazard Rating •••)

Razor bears are bear-shaped monsters, covered in heavy fish scales and possessing the lidless eyes and huge jaws of barracudas. Unlike ordinary bears, they cannot stand up on their hind legs, but they are fully amphibious and can use their short flattened tails to swim at their normal sprinting speed.

Sea Dragon (Hazard Rating ••)

This predators shares the same blunt-nosed, tooth-filled jaw, flippers and hostile attitude of the smaller river dragon, but its tail is much longer, ending in a flat paddle-

Lesser Menaces of the West

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Will.	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Acc/Dam	Dodge/Soak	Abilities
Kraken-Whale	18/3/20	6	-0x6/-1x4/ -2x4/-4x2/I	Bite: 6/9/21L, Grab: 8/10/clinch	5/12L/23B	Athletics 2 (Swim +3), Awareness 2, Brawl 3 (Bite+2, Grab +3), Dodge 2, Endurance 4, Presence 5 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 3
Living Island	17/3/20	6	-0x5/-1x4/ -2x4/-4x2/I	Bite: 8/12/21L, Tentacle: 10/15/clinch	5/12L/23B	Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 2, Presence 2, Survival 4
Razor Bear	9/3/10	4	-0x3/-1x3/ -2x3/-4/I	Bite: 5/11/14L, Claw: 8/9/9L	6/8L/14B	Awareness 3, Brawl 4 (Bite +2), Dodge 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3
Sea Dragon	15/2/12	3	-0x3/-1x4/ -2x3/-4/I	Bite: 4/5/10L	3/6L/12B	Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Brawl 3, Presence 3 (Intimidation +1), Swim 4
Sea Horse	7/4/6	5	-0x3/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 7/6/3L, Kick: 8/8/9L	7/4L/7B	Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Presence 1
Sea Serpent	10/3/8	3	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x3/-4/I	Bite: 6/6/10L + poison, Constrict: 4/7/clinch	5/6L/10B	Athletics 3 (Swim +2), Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Endurance 2, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2)
Tentacle Man	9/4/8	3	-0x3/-1x3/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 7/7/7L, Grab: 9/11/clinch	6/7L/11B	Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3 (Grab +3), Dodge 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3

like extension that propels the creature through the water with great force. Sea dragons are large enough that those attacking one get an extra two dice in their dice pools.

Sea Horse (Hazard Rating ••)

Equally at home in the Western Ocean, on many Western islands and on the coastal plains and rivers of the Northern Marches of Rakshastan, these creatures are the favored steeds of the Western and seafaring Northern raksha. On land, they are horses colored like the sea, with brilliant green manes, hooves that look like ancient ice and eyes of uniform shining blue. When they enter the water, their hindquarters instantly transform into scaled and well-muscled fishtails that propel them and any riders they carry through the waves as fast as they can gallop on land. In the Bordermarches of Rakshastan (and occasionally on the Northwestern shores of Creation), vast herds of sea horses run in and out of the waves, especially during storms. They are wild and dangerous beasts but rarely difficult for a raksha or an Exalt to capture and tame. They are also as intelligent as bright apes or children of five or six and can understand most speech. A sea horse counts as Familiar ••••.

Sea Serpent (Hazard Rating •••)

Sea serpents can range upward of 50 feet long and up to five feet in diameter. They subsist mostly on fish and seals and dwell in both coastal waters and the open ocean. In addition to their deadly jaws, they are also as poisonous as coral snakes (see **Exalted**, p. 243). Sea serpents are extremely aggressive and will attack passing vessels to grab a crewmember or two for a snack. Sea serpents attack by both biting and constricting their targets. They sometimes take entire small boats or slender ships in their coils and squeeze them until the hulls buckle, then snapping sailors out of the water and wreckage.

Tentacle Man (Hazard Rating ••)

These amphibious horrors appear to be giant headless men and women with the flabby gray skin of octopi. They have eight huge octopus tentacles and a beak coming from where their neck and head would normally be. They are between 10 and 13 feet tall, and their tentacles are equally long. Although many live in wilderness areas of Rakshastan, some of them have been tamed and are used by raksha nobles as workers and servants. While they normally walk along the bottom of the sea, tentacle men can also swim at their normal running speed and can attack underwater without penalty.

The North

As the domain of elemental air and of cold, the Northern Marches of Rakshastan are a realm of winds and ice.

The Bordermarches

As characters venture deeper into the Northern Marches of Rakshastan, the landscape becomes increasingly attenuated to the element of air, and soon, hills and mountains separate themselves entirely from the ground. In the Bordermarches, aerial islands ranging from small rock-lined pools a dozen yards across to flying mountains a mile or more across float lazily through the sky. Gravity remains relatively constant, and so, characters can only walk or stand on the tops of these islands without using Charms. However, the islands float between 10 yards and a few miles above the ground. A few of the driftlands are stationary, but most move in complex and ever-changing paths through the air. Except when a new driftland rips itself from the ground and rises gradually upward, none of them ever come closer than four yards from the ground, but beyond that, they can take any path. They rarely collide with each other, but when such collisions occur, they are spectacular. Many of the driftlands contain rivers that run off of their edges and down into the void. Some of these rivers plunge down to the ground, forming mobile waterfalls. However, a few of the largest aerial rivers run from one driftland to another, twisting in complex ribbonlike paths as the two driftlands move in relation to one another. Fish and rocks travel between driftlands on rivers that often cross many miles of open space, and a few daring Lunars occasionally swim from one driftland to another. These journeys are especially risky because falling out of the river results in the swimmer plummeting to the ground.

The landscape of the Northern Bordermarches is equally strange — it is covered with rock formations that could never exist in Creation, including vast funnel-shaped hollow mountains that are widest at the top and narrow to thin columns of rock no more than a few yards wide. Impossibly narrow bridges of rock cross mile-wide chasms, and rivers flow uphill as easily as down. The few stationary driftlands are connected to the ground by equally slender natural bridges. Breaking one of these bridges frees the driftland and causes it to move through the skies like the other driftlands.

The Bridge of Tears

The most impressive of all of these natural bridges is the Bridge of Tears. It exists on the furthest reaches of the Northern Bordermarches and bridges the path into the Middlemarches. This vast natural structure is actually a single huge peninsula that has gradually been breaking free of the ground for the last 600 years. Today, it is an arch of land 30 miles long and half a mile wide. The southernmost portion of this bridge joins the ground in a gradual slope that is easy for even ordinary mortals to walk up. After the first mile, the bridge has completely separated itself from the ground. The bridge rises as high as a mile above the ground and extends 12 miles out beyond the huge cliff that marks the end of the Bordermarches and the beginning of the Middlemarches. The end of the Bridge of Tears is a wide aerial plateau roughly a mile in diameter that most of the raksha consider to be neutral territory. This plateau has

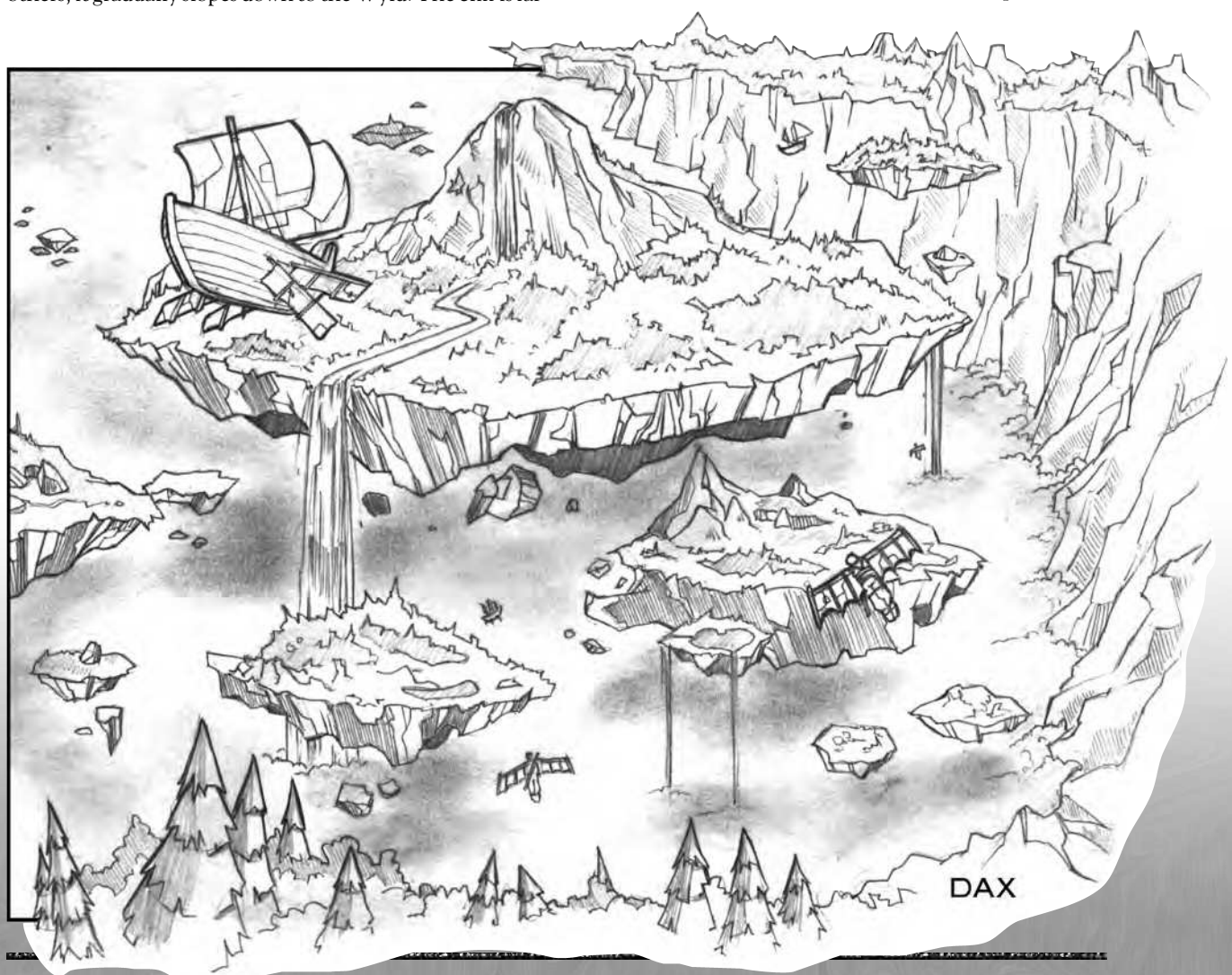
the unique property that it attracts the driftlands of the Middlemarches. Every week or two, a driftland moves toward the end of the Bridge of Tears and then stops just as it touches it. Anyone on either the bridge or the driftland can then walk from one to the other safely and easily. The driftland remains in contact with the bridge for between one and three days, and then, it moves off, only to be replaced by another in a few weeks. No driftland has ever been known to touch the bridge more than once a decade unless directed to do so by one of the raksha nobles. The bridge obtained its rather sorrowful name because of the mist and gentle rain that covers it at least once a day.

The Middlemarches

The border between the Northern Bordermarches and the Middlemarches is one of the most impressive natural features in all of Rakshastan — the Sanctuary Cliff, named because a portion of the remnants of Balor's defeated army fled North and escaped pursuit by fleeing over this cliff and into the Middlemarches. This cliff is thousands of miles long, extending along the entire range of the North. In some places, the cliff forms a sheer drop off. In others, it gradually slopes down to the Wyld. The cliff is far from straight. In places, it curves far into Creation, and in others, it sweeps many thousands of miles north toward the Elemental Pole of Air.

The Sanctuary Cliff quite literally appears to be the end of the world. There is no solid ground beyond it, and the rocky cliff face goes infinitely far down. Beyond these cliffs, solid ground vanishes, and the entire region consists of floating driftlands of varying sizes. Gravity also changes in the Middlemarches. Most of this portion of Rakshastan is completely without gravity. Characters can fly from one driftland to another by strapping a pair of wings onto their arms and lightly made sailing vessels with large sails regularly travel from one driftland to another. Gravity only exists when someone comes within 20 yards of a driftland. This thin layer of gravity sheathes each driftland and extends 20 yards from every portion, including the highest, narrowest mountain peaks. Gravity increases gradually, so wind yachts and flying characters do not suddenly crash to the ground.

The driftlands of the Middlemarches are extremely diverse. The smallest are small clumps of rock no more than a few yards in diameter, while the largest are aerial continents more than 500 miles across. In the portions of



Rakshastan located furthest to the North, the air is near freezing, and many of the driftlands are either covered in ice or are simply giant floating glaciers. The largest driftlands generally stay far from any of their neighbors, but the smaller ones float in vast clouds, allowing the inhabitants and animals to easily travel from one to another. Many of the largest driftlands are home to one or more unicorns.

Hy Bannit

One of the largest of the driftlands is Hy Bannit. It is roughly circular and shaped like a coin almost 300 miles in diameter and 50 miles thick. The edges of Hy Bannit are made of smooth polished ice. The total surface contains some 50 waypoints and several small Freeholds exist on each side.

Because the edges are essentially impassible to anything that cannot fly, the top and bottom of Hy Bannit are completely separate lands with wildly different animals and plants. The top consists of wide fertile valleys located between the land's many mountains. The highest mountains are all less than half a mile tall, and the valleys are all lush and filled with green and perpetually blooming vegetation. The trees and bushes are all heavy with fruit, and the wide slow rivers are all filled with salmon and the ubiquitous flying fish. Herds of musk oxen, reindeer, lemmings and similar beasts graze the meadows of upper Hy Bannit, and the land is in an eternal Northern spring. Only the tops of the mountains are covered in snow and ice, and the temperatures elsewhere are mild and pleasant. Raksha who enjoy hunting often visit this realm because the game is exceptionally abundant.

Lower Hy Bannit is far harsher. It is a broken and rocky wilderness of jagged peaks. The mountains here are all between one and five miles high, and the valleys contain tough scrub, swift rocky rivers and deep lakes that are always at least partially covered with ice. Large predators such as polar bears, wolves and horned snow hunters continually prowl the lands in search of lake seals, deer and mammoths. The days here are always cool, and the nights frigid. Only those raksha who love the rugged beauty of the Far North or who enjoy hunting dangerous predators ever visit lower Hy Bannit.

The strangest portion of this vast driftland is the most hidden — this driftland is filled with great caves. Also, there is barren ice around the driftland's edges because Hy Bannit is actually two lands that were each covered on one side with ice, which smashed together aeons ago. Anyone who finds a cavern that leads into the depths of Hy Bannit first travels through ordinary rocky caves for several miles, and then, the rock ends, and there are in a seemingly endless series of ice caves. Lit with small pieces of topaz-blue glowstone and occasional patches of luminescent ice lichen, most of these ice caves are as bright as a full moon night over snowy ground. Because they are deep inside a driftland, these caves lack gravity — up and down are all meaningless concepts. While one side of Hy Bannit is spring and the other is fall, the interior is locked in a deep Northern winter. The interior contains a level-3 and a level-4 Freehold and encompasses an area of 120 waypoints.

Even here, there is life. Arctic foxes, horned snow hunters, ice hollows and snow lions prey upon the small herds of ice deer that live here. However, the majority of these predators' food comes from the young of these cavern's greatest predator, the vast snow wyrms.

For as long as Hy Bannit has existed, there have been legends of a huge treasure trove lying deep in the caverns inside this icy realm. An abandoned ice castle made in the later days of Balor's attack on Creation lie in the heart of these caverns. Here, some of his allies stored their most potent enchantments. The ice caves of Hy Bannit contains one of the richest treasures of the Northern Marches of Rakshastan, but they are deadly enough that most visitors add to the caves' store of riches rather than surviving long enough to take any away.

The Shattered Land

This largest cloud of driftlands is known as the Shattered Land, after a legend that these thousands of driftlands were once part of a great land that almost rivaled Creation in size. The Shattered Land is an oval cloud of driftlands approximately 2,000 miles long and 1,600 miles deep and wide. Most of these driftlands are spheres and ovoids between a quarter of a mile and 10 miles in diameter. These driftlands are rarely more than three miles from one another, and some are considerably closer than this. They all move slowly in complex and ever-changing orbits. The various driftlands rarely touch one another, and when they do impact, some property of the Shattered Land prevents any of these collisions from being harder than a lover's kiss.

An alliance of raksha nobles control a good portion of the Shattered Land, but most of it is wild and untamed. Although each of the small driftlands has its own flora and fauna, the majority of the wildlife of the Shattered Land either lives in the air between the driftlands or can easily travel between them. Strix with feathers made of solid silver (like ordinary strix, but with a soak of 8L/12B, see **Exalted** pp. 317-318) are common here, as are wind whales and the large carnivorous moths.

Trade and commerce abound in the Shattered Land, and lesser raksha work the open mines found on many of the driftlands. Despite the dangerous predators and nobles who take pleasure in attacking their fellows, raksha wind yachts regularly ply the air between these driftlands. In many ways, the complex politics of the Shattered Land is a microcosm of Rakshastan, with a constantly shifting network of alliances and feuds. Often, these shifts in alliances relate to shifts in the physical positions of driftlands. Driftlands that are too close to one another become rivals for the same resources, while ones that are too far apart have little in common and rarely interact.

Raksha Wind Yacht

Role(s): Pleasure craft, small cargo vessel, small pirate corsair
Length: 80 feet
Beam: 18 feet
Rig Type/Closest Tack: Abalone with foresail/2 points
Speed: •••••
Maneuverability: -1
Standard/Minimum Crew: 4/2 (Additional accommodations exist for seven passengers)
Soak: 15L
Health Levels: 15/25

Description: This gossamer-and-glass craft is typical of the swift and beautiful wind yachts that sail the skys of the Northern Marches of Rakshastan. Without the use of Ring Charms or similar magics, wind yachts cannot be used anywhere except the Northern Marches, the Deep Wyld of the West and the portions of Creation closest to the Elemental Pole of Air. This wind yacht costs Resources •••• in Rakshastan.

The Deep Wyld

Here, the driftlands are replaced by a solid uniform surface that continually changes. The land in Deep Wyld is all made of snow and ice and although it is as durable as ordinary rock, soil and wood, it is no thicker than a child's hand. This land is more like a single vast ribbon than the plains and mountains of Creation. While gravity always remains oriented toward the surface a character is standing upon, vast arcs of land twist and fold in the sky, and valleys can lead down to other seemingly endless ribbons of land.

Hazards of the North

The Northern tundra and ice abound with snowy horrors and terrible foes. Every raksha of this direction goes about armed, for Wyld-mutated beasts can slink near even the most tightly secured Freehold, especially in the Bordermarches.

Unicorn (Hazard Rating •••)

Description: These inhabitants of the Middlemarches of the Northwest occasionally blind mortals with the grandeur of their appearance. Some fortunate raksha have even allied themselves with these glorious creatures and ride them into battle. At first glance, unicorns look like inhumanly perfect horses. They are pure white, without a spot of any other color, and have featureless, glowing blue eyes and a yard-long spiraled horn that appears to have been carved out of a single piece of perfectly transparent opal. Closer examination reveals that they also have cloven hooves and the tails of lions.

Unicorns are creatures of purity and elegance. No Charm or spell less powerful than Solar Circle sorcery can make them appear graceless or inelegant, just as nothing less can break their will or force them to obey another — they soon sicken and die if they are held captive. Unicorns are fully intelligent and speak with voices like symphonies. Some unicorns live in small groups, but many are solitary. However, even solitary unicorns regularly gather together to mate, to sing or to deal with problems common to all their kind. They are fearless combatants, and each defends a portion of the Middlemarches against anyone who would destroy, damage or reshape the land.

Because having a unicorn as an ally is a mark of status, most nobles attempt to work out some mutually beneficial arrangement with the creatures. Unicorns usually permit their noble allies to ride them, and riding a unicorn in a hunt, in a procession or in battle is a mark of high status — as well as being extremely useful in the latter case. Although many unicorns dwell in the Northern Middlemarches, they are well-traveled creatures that can live indefinitely in Creation — some of them dedicate themselves to protecting portions of the Bordermarches, small pockets of Rakshastan deep within Creation or even some of the powerful untapped Demesnes within Creation itself. On rare occasions, unicorns also ally themselves with Exalts or truly exceptional and heroic mortals (Familiar •••••).

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 7, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 4
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Linguistics 2, Presence 4, Stealth 4, Survival 4
Supernatural Powers: Aerial Gallop, Sacred Mien
Base Initiative: 7
Attack:
Gore: Speed 13 Accuracy 12 Damage 16L Defense 12
Kick: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 12L Defense 7
Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 12L/16B (Iridescent white perfection, 9L/9B)
Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0x3/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap
Essence: 3 **Essence Points:** 30
Other Notes: Unicorns are Wyld creatures and thus vulnerable to cold iron, prone to having their names discovered and constrained by oaths similarly to the raksha. Unicorns are immune to all Wyld mutation, shaping effects and works of glamour. Most are attracted to virgins and those who appear pure, but they are harsh and condescending lovers. If slain in the Wyld by the Wyld, unicorns spring forth unwounded from the earth three days later.

Aerial Gallop

Unicorns can gallop across empty air. In the Northern Marches of Rakshastan, they can charge across the air as easily as across the land and can run from one driftland to another. In Creation, they can gallop across chasms or run just a few inches above rough terrain (thus allowing them to move far more swiftly). However, in Creation, they must expend 6 motes of Essence to allow them move in this manner for a scene.

Sacred Mien

Unicorns strike everyone who see them as sacred beasts, and it takes an effort of will to attack one. The players of all attackers must make a Willpower roll every turn for their characters to attack a unicorn unless the unicorn struck them earlier in the turn. The difficulty of this roll is 1 if using missile weapons or 2 if the attacker attacks in hand-to-hand combat. No roll is necessary to defend against an attack by a unicorn.

Lesser Menaces

Carnivorous Moth (Hazard Rating •••, •••• in packs)

With wingspans of almost a dozen feet, carnivorous moths can threaten all but the mightiest raksha nobles when the insects gather in great feeding flocks. Although their shining wings appear to be made from beautiful paper-thin slabs of translucent ice, the moths are as horrific as they are dangerous. Their heads are bleached human skulls surmounted by cabbage-sized compound eyes. Even worse, their teeth are all several inches long and as sharp as a Cataphract's glass blade. These beasts have unnaturally flexible necks and can open their mouths wide enough to swallow a human head. Like their smaller kin, they have six legs, but each leg ends in a skeletal human hand with two inch-long claws. While they are occasionally solitary hunters, carnivorous moths most often travel in packs of between half a dozen and 20. Scavengers know to avoid a carnivorous moth's kill, because there is nothing left. They use their unnaturally sharp teeth to completely devour a kill, including all bones and teeth. All that is left of a human or raksha killed by a pack of these horrors are shreds of clothing and fragments of armor. While they are too small to ride upon, a few of the more ruthless and aggressive Northern raksha have trained carnivorous moths to act as their hunting beasts and familiars (Familiar •••••).

Horned Snow Hunter (Hazard Rating ••)

The horned snow hunter is a fearsome predator that hunts in packs of 10 to 15 adults. Snow hunters typically stand three to four feet at the shoulder and weigh as much as 300 pounds. Their fur is silky, white and thick, providing excellent protection against the frigid climate they inhabit. Their blunt-jawed snout is almost dog-like, but the sharp teeth that fill it are those of a cat; snow hunters are pure carnivores. A pair of spear-like horns point forward from the top of their long-eared skulls. Horned snow hunters sometimes partner with raksha and Exalts. The beasts count as Familiar ••••.

Ice Hollow (Hazard Rating •)

These giant insects wander the rivers and lakes of the frozen North, moving silently across the ice and snow, like huge frozen waterstriders, their long thin legs and swollen bodies as clear and transparent as crystal. Ice hollows can pursue prey with surprising speed, seeming almost to glide over the surface of the snow and ice in long fluid strides. However, they dislike crossing running water if it is not covered firmly by ice. They recognize raksha and avoid them. Some raksha Warriors and nobles capture ice hollows and use them as steeds (Familiar •••).

Snow Lion (Hazard Rating •••)

Where snow lions live, travelers must be careful not to fall into the icy caverns in which they lurk, hidden beneath a smooth, white surface. These lazy beasts sit silently waiting for a tremor from above. As soon as it detects potential prey, a snow lion collapses the roof of its lair, pouncing upon the victims who fall into the sudden chasm. Snow lions are about 10 feet tall at the shoulder, with blue eyes, brilliant white fur, long, strong forepaws and wide mouths full of wickedly sharp teeth. Stretching on its hind legs, a snow lion can easily reach over 20 feet upward to capsize the snow and ice canopy above.

The player of a potential victim may roll Perception + Survival, difficulty 3, for her character to detect the thin surface above the snow lion's lair. Should the roll fail, she falls through the surface an average distance of about 25 feet, which normally causes five levels of bashing damage.

Snow Wyrm (Hazard Rating ••• for adults)

Snow wyrms are typically found in glaciers or in the Northernmost portions of the Bordermarches and Middlemarches. A few venture into the icy winds of the Deep Wyld, and every decade or so, one visits the most Northerly portions of Creation. Five years ago, a snow wyrm destroyed a portion of the Haslanti city of Diamond Hearth.

Snow wyrms lay large clutches of eggs that are two feet across and look exactly like cloudy ice. For the first decades of their lives, these snakes are between two and five yards long and subsist solely on eating ice. They are harmless and docile, and many predators in the Northern Marches regularly dine upon them. The young snow wyrms' only protection is that they can burrow deep into ice. They live there in their deep burrows, only coming up after a new snow or during blizzards or ice storms. After 30 years, the surviving snow wyrms burrow even deeper

into the ice and hibernate for a decade. At the end of this time, they emerge, having grown to enormous size. When they first hatch, they are 30 feet long, and the oldest grow to be more than 200 feet long. The snow wyrms can still burrow in ice as fast as a man can walk, and they can also fly. Although they are not swift fliers, they are exceptionally maneuverable.

Juvenile snow wyrms look like large, white snakes covered with a short coat of white or pale-slate-colored fur. Adult snow wyrms have white fur as long as a musk ox's and have a line of several dozen fan-shaped fins that help them steer and fly. Also, their mouths enlarge, and their teeth grow to be several feet long. These teeth look like translucent milk-colored opal and are filled with power well after a snow wyrm's death. Raksha nobles who do not want to take the time to enchant their servants' weapons often give them these teeth to craft into spears and straight swords. Any weapon made from these teeth gains +1 to speed, accuracy and defense and +2 to damage.

Snow worms are used as a common basis for behemoths in the North.

Wind Whale (Hazard Rating ••)

These vast beasts are most abundant in the Northwest, but they can be found throughout the North. Wind whales are cigar-shaped, between 150 and 200 feet long and 30 and 40 feet in diameter. Unlike aquatic whales, their flukes and tails are all extremely large, wide and flat and look much like the fan-shaped fins of fish. Northern raksha who make wind yachts all know that the tail of a wind whale makes the finest sail for one of these swift and delicate craft.

Like the greatest whales in Creation, wind whales feed upon the tiny beasts that live upon the wind of the Northern Marches — the insides of their mouths are actually large windy caverns that can be as much as 40 feet long and 30 feet in diameter. A few raksha nobles tame these swift beasts and use them as living wind yachts. Wind whales can be trained to obey commands delivered by skilled helm keepers (Sail •• and a specialty in Wind Whale Sailing). The wind whale keeps its mouth open, and the helm keeper stands on the beast's projecting lower jaw, surveys her surroundings and delivers her orders by firmly striking the floor of the beast's mouth with a stout staff. Firing missile weapons from inside a wind whale's mouth counts as 75% cover.



Menaces of the North

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Will.	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Acc/Dam	Dodge/Soak	Abilities
Carnivorous Moth	7/5/6	4	-0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4/I	Bite: 13/12/15L	9/10L/13B	Athletics 4, Awareness 3 (Sight +3), Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Survival 3
Horned Snow Hunter	6/3/5	5	-0x2/-1x3/-2x2/-4x2/I	Bite: 6/8/9L, Claw: 6/8/7L, Gore: 3/6/11L	6/3L/8B	Athletics 5, Awareness 3 (Hearing +2, Sight +1), Brawl 3 (Bite +1, Gore +1), Dodge 3, Endurance 4, Presence 1 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Stealth 4 (Ambush +2)
Ice Hollow	4/4/4	3	-0x4/-1x4/-2x4/-4/I	Bite: 6/9/5L	8/5L/7B	Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Presence 2, Resistance 3 (Cold +2), Stealth 5
Snow Lion	12/3/8	3	0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4/I	Bite: 5/7/14L, Claw: 5/7/16L	5/6L/12B	Athletics 3 (Tunnel Movement +3), Awareness 3 (Tremors +3), Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Stealth 3 (Ambush From Below +3), Survival 3 (Burrowed Traps +3)
Snow Wyrm	12/4/8	7	-0x4/-1x4/-2x4/-4/I	Bite: 12/14/20L	9/15L/19B	Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Presence 2, Stealth 4, Survival 4
Wind Whale	12/3/18	3	-0x5/-1x4/-2x4/-4/I	Bite: 5/7/12L	6/9L/18B	Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Survival 3

Exalted Power Combat Statistics

Name	Speed	Acc.	Damage	Defense	Rate
Generic Inhabitants of Rakshastan					
Gargoyle Claw	3	6	8L	5	4
Gargoyle Spear	16	7	8L	8	2
Homunculus Wyld-shot	8	8	4L*	7	3
Manikin Wyld-shot	6	6	1L*	4	1
Poppet Wyld-shot	8	6	3L	5	2
Stone Lion Bite	3	7	9L	4	2
Stone Lion Claw	8	7	7L	7	3
East					
Arm Tree Claw	8	9	5B	10	3
Arm Tree Clinch	4	8	Clinch	8	1
Arm-Beast Clinch	0	8	Clinch	8	1
Arm-Beast Punch	6	9	4B	10	3
Hatra Bite	7	5	2L	5	3
Vine Wyrm Bite	9	12	17L+poison	10	2
Wood Wife Claws	7	8	8L	8	4
South					
Abacasteri Bite	7	7	10L	5	2
Abacasteri Claw	9	8	7L	9	3
Fire Whale Bite	5	5	16L	4	2
Fire Whale Ram	1	3	24L	4	1
Flame Gryphon Bite	7	8	15L	4	2
Flame Gryphon Buffet	12	9	16B	8	1
Flame Gryphon Claw	10	10	12L	12	3
Jewel-Horned Elk Gore	7	6	10L	8	2
Jewel-Horned Elk Kick	5	5	6L	4	2
Lion Warrior Bite	5	8	9L	7	2
Lion Warrior Claw	7	11	8L	12	3
Manticore Bite	7	8	12L	6	2
Manticore Sting	10	10	8L+poison	6	3
Wall Arm Clinch	0	7	Clinch	7	1
Wall Arm Punch	6	8	4B	9	5
Wall Tentacle Bash	7	8	5B	8	3
Wall Tentacle Clinch	1	8	Clinch	8	1

Exalted Power Combat Statistics

Name	Speed	Acc.	Damage	Defense	Rate
West					
Kraken-Whale Grab	6	9	Clinch	6	3
Kraken-Whale Bite	3	7	21L	3	1
Living Island Bite	6	10	21L	4	1
Living Island Tentacle Clinch	9	8	Clinch	8	1
Living Island Tentacle Squish	15	9	21L	10	3
Razor Bear Bite	6	10	12L	5	2
Razor Bear Claw	9	8	10L	7	3
Sea Dragon Bite	2	5	18L	3	2
Sea Horse Bite	7	7	4L	3	2
Sea Horse Kick	10	7	9B	7	3
Sea Serpent Bite	5	8	12L+poison	5	2
Sea Serpent Constriction	-1	6	Clinch	6	1
Tentacle Man Bite	6	7	8L	4	1
Tentacle Man Clinch	8	12	Clinch	9	2
North					
Carnivorous Moth Bite	11	12	12L	8	3
Horned Snow Hunter Bite	6	8	8L	4	2
Horned Snow Hunter Claw	6	6	8L	6	3
Horned Snow Hunter Gore	12	9	9L	9	2
Ice Hollow Bite	9	10	5L	8	3
Snow Lion Bite	6	8	18L	4	2
Snow Lion Claw	9	6	14L	6	3
Snow Wyrm Bite	14	10	16L	8	3
Unicorn Gore	13	12	16L	12	5
Unicorn Kick	10	10	12L	8	3
Wind Whale Bite	6	6	12L	6	2



Nehemeth sat impassively on her throne while her court twirled and gyrated before her. Bronze, impassive and mighty, she was the unmoved mover as her followers, disciples and hangers-on reeled through the intricate steps of the night's sarbande.

It was the law of the Pearl Court that, every month, when the moon was full and the waters were at their highest, a great dancing and meeting should take place. In this environment, the law stated, the raksha of the court could meet. This palace in the depths of Western Rakshastan had been conjured up from the Wyld just for the night by Nehemeth's servants. It had been decorated by the great Judge's nobles in accordance with the regulations for such things, and the result was a dazzling display of finery, where each courtier attempted to outdo the others to bring the glories of the watery West to the festival.

The festival itself was one of Rakshastan's greatest congeries of guests and visitors. As a regular event with a large guest list, it served a central role in the life of the Pearl Court. The guest list itself was comprehensive. The hall thronged with a mass of raksha nobles, free commoners here on the court's sufferance, even denizens of the Wyld powerful enough to make their way to the festivities and rational and clever enough to find a way to entreat the Judge for an invitation. Indeed, the throng was composed of every notable who could reasonably meet her obligation to attend. For though the attendance policy was liberal, it was quite strict on those who did not attend when they said they would, for Judge Nehemeth was a strict judge, and she felt missed invitations defamed the dignity of her station.

There was also the matter of dancing. None could attend the balls who were unable to master the intricate dance steps before the event. Every new attendee must somehow learn the prescribed steps and demonstrate them before the Pearl Court's merciless master of dance, currently the beautiful and unforgiving Dilari of the Sea Foam. There were no less than three rehearsals for each ball, and to be admitted, the guest must have attended at least three of the rehearsals for the last two cotillions. To make a misstep was a faux pas of the highest order. To misunderstand or misperform the dance could lead to exile or death. If it seemed arbitrary or cruel, those were certainly traits the raksha were known for, and if any among them objected, two more were eager to seize his assigned spot on the floor. Nehemeth approved of this, supporting the banner of the Will. "Determination will find expression," was among her many mottoes. It went without saying that Nehemeth held final approval over the order and composition of the dances, though the master of the dance, of course, contributed.

As always, Nehemeth took little direct part in her court. She was the sort of lady who governed her fractious servants through the iron bonds of her laws and strictures, not through cajoling and manipulation. The effect was the same — a court that did not slay its ruler or dissolve in a welter of blame and accusations. But for the raksha, the methods by which the end was attained was often more important than the actual goal.

Nehemeth's court certainly satisfied her well. It was as if this dance she attended was a microcosm of the court — a fact not entirely unintentional in the Judge's endless quiet planning.

At its center, she sat as an impassive witness, experiencing its imbroglios and misadventures, the romantic and political whirl of events. The unmoved mover, Nehemeth governed through the iron rules of her law and the iron determination of her Will. Glancing down with nary a word, far away from even her closest courtiers and guards, the metal-skinned Judge of the Pearl Court seemed, at first, distant and alone.

And yet, as each of the court's great and intricate dances ended, Nehemeth smiled and clapped her metal hands together politely, signaling the dance had ended and socializing could begin again. And as the players tuned their instruments and began the next number, her metallic hands rang together briefly, marking out the rhythm for the first measure of the musical interlude. Each dance was an act of art, a complicated, long rehearsed performance, in which Nehemeth had both the first and last word.

Thus it was at the ball, thus it was in the Pearl Court. Nehemeth acted little and moved less, and yet, she governed her people entirely.

CHAPTER TWO
THE RAKSHA

The Fair Folk borrow or steal the words and skills of others to describe — and, ultimately, to define — themselves. They are nightmares and heroes and lovers and warriors and murderers and torturers, larger-than-life figures out of stories. They have to be; they do not know how to be, and they cannot be, simply human. Their histories are full of archetypes dancing through predestined roles, betraying and loving and warring and despairing, but never ultimately changing in nature. And the Fair Folk cling to this, throwing themselves into each successive part and living it to the hilt, desperate to fan passion — any passion — to a flame inside their hearts.

A History of the Fair Folk

The raksha themselves know their own history, even if they will not admit certain aspects of it to outsiders. In a very real sense, it *formed* them. They emerged from the chaos of the Deep Wyld, and what they then chose to do gave them shape and identity. For them to deny this to

themselves, or to try to believe otherwise, would be to create a deep weakness at the heart of that identity.

Similarly, the Fair Folk do not lie to each other in these matters. They define themselves with respect to each other and by the deeds that they have accomplished, the passion and hatred that they have garnered from others and the skills that they have mastered. If a lie is told, then it will be told for a reason, as part of a political stratagem, perhaps ("My sword is at your service, oh prince!") or to enrage an enemy ("…and then I defiled her bloodstained corpse!") or to gain a new concubine's trust ("I have seen many humans before, but never have I truly loved one till now…"). The fundamental Wyld at the core of Fair Folk nature causes them to need the stability of a settled past and established deeds as part of their carefully structured notions of identity. Shusai of the Immaculate Blade is a hollow shell without her weapon, her list of conquests and her enemies. Without them, she would have no identity, no personality and no motivation to do anything other than exist in a state of unformed madness.

The Balorian Crusade

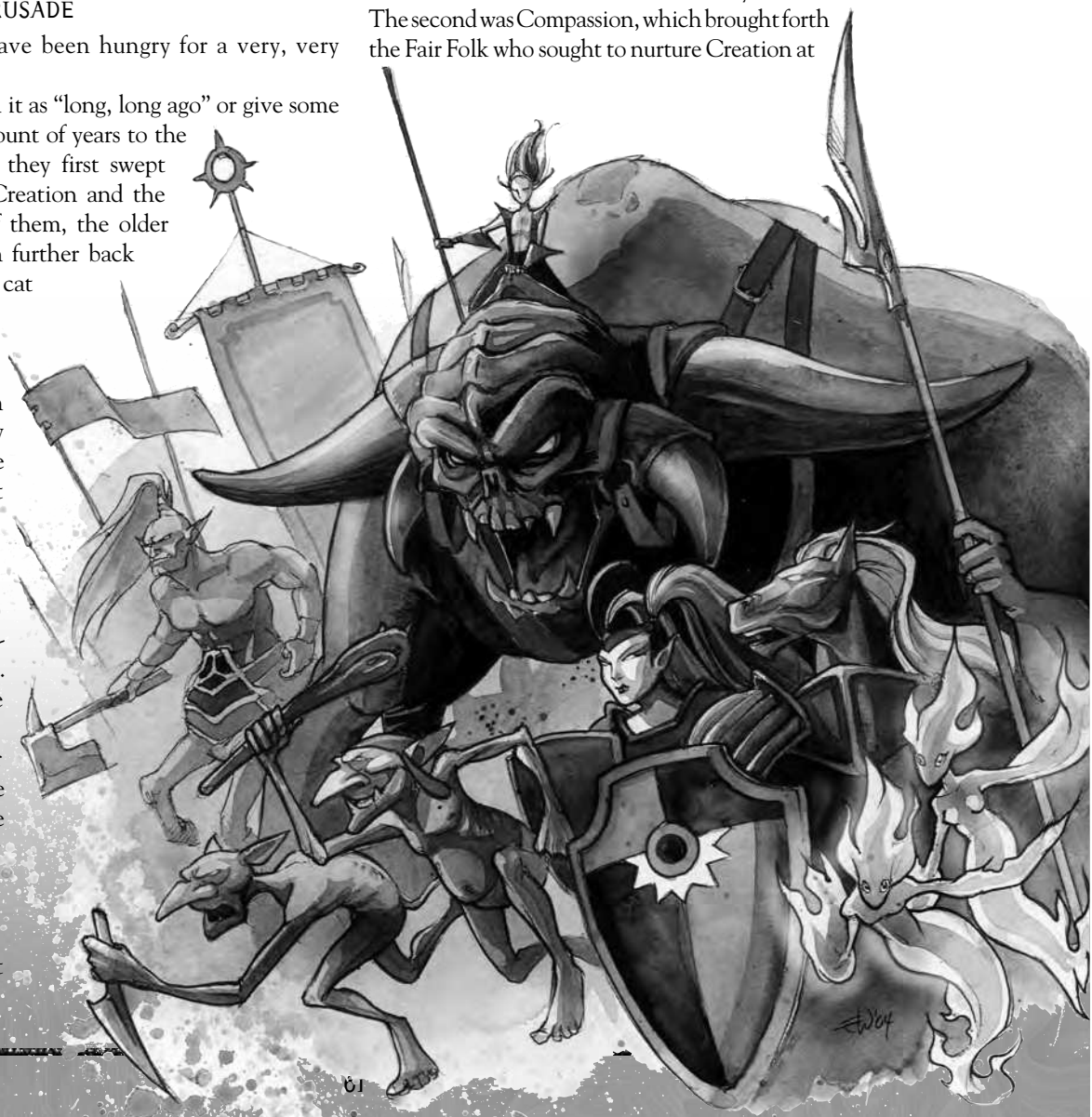
The Fair Folk have been hungry for a very, very long time.

The Fair Folk tell it as "long, long ago" or give some meaninglessly huge count of years to the space between when they first swept over the borders of Creation and the current day. Some of them, the older ones, can count even further back and would say that a cat had lived a thousand years, and sired a thousand kits, and each of them had slain the baby of the family who owned it, since those Fair Folk who first perceived Creation made the decision to attack it and tried to tear it down. In truth, the divisions are meaningless. It was long ago. But, even now, they are still hungry.

Long ago, the Fair Folk had neither shape nor form. They were vortices in the energy of the Wyld, patterns that took enough structure to be sentient and to have desires, but not more than that. More than that would have been confining and limiting. The Fair Folk might not have had words at that time (such things were created by the gods, the humans and the Exalted), but they had enough perception to see and to be both hungry and disgusted — occasionally, both at the same time. They saw within the bounds of Creation, and they thirsted for the dreams of men. They saw within the walls of Creation what was built therein, and they hungered to tear it down and to leave the world without form and void.

The great ones among the Fair Folk took shape themselves so that they might have voices to speak and gathered their thoughts from the dreams of those inside Creation, so that they might formulate what they desired to say. They sought among the denizens of Creation for the expression of their emotions, and they found what they desired: hatred, anger, vehemence, the will to destroy.

The first of all these things was Valor, and from it came those of the Fair Folk who called for a crusade against Creation, led by Prince Balor of the Terrible Gaze, who swore that he would unmake all that lay within his vision. The second was Compassion, which brought forth the Fair Folk who sought to nurture Creation at



their own breasts and suck the living soul from it to warm their own hearts. They were led by the Princess Melusine of the Glittering Train, who bore the weapon Howling For Blood. A step behind them came Temperance, with many of the undecided Fair Folk choosing it for pattern and for premise. Led by the Duke of Mirrors, they swore that they would have all things and declared that none should be above the others. Finally, Conviction clove the gathered mass like the blade of an axe, and from it sprang forth those Fair Folk who claimed that whatever they desired, none should turn them from it. At their head stood the two sisters Incarnadine and Viridian, and wolves followed close behind. And they contended among themselves.

Then, one stood forth from among them, and each swore that he came from their own party and bore their device. And to the Prince, he asked, "What is it fuels the courage of Creation?" And to the Princess he asked, "How is it that they have warmth that we can steal?" To the Duke, he asked, "Why do the beings of form seek to own and possess, that we should be like them?" And to the sisters, he smiled and asked, "By what right do you claim that none should turn you from your path?"

And all of them answered him, "The power of will."

As they spoke, he took full shape and was clothed in a thousand lights, and they named him Thief of Words. He laughed and said, "This is the power of our will. Whether we shall ravage or destroy, whether we shall claim or unmake, we shall do as we desire, now and forever."

At this, Prince Balor raised his banner and led his forces into the world, and this was the Balorian Crusade. And those who rode in his train named themselves the paladins of Balor and ordained themselves the priests of the Church of Balor, which should bring all things to rioting chaos.

The crusade was armed and caparisoned after the fashion of the gods and the Exalted, in bodies like those of the living things that dwelt upon the earth or the gods that inhabited Yu-Shan. Some of the Fair Folk took the shape of horses and elephants and tyrant lizards, that their leaders might ride upon them. Others took no shape at all, but danced as vortices of chaos, sweeping across the land and leaving nothingness where they passed. Still others joined themselves together and raised great beings from out of the formless Wyld, and these things were called behemoths, and where they set foot, the armies of Creation trembled and fled.

Now, perhaps the walls of Creation might have stood longer against the Fair Folk, had they been left untouched, but they were betrayed from within by the treachery of those who have since been named the Deathlords. Two of these creatures of darkness, the First and Forsaken Lion and Eye and Seven Despairs, sent cunning messengers by secret to Prince Balor and those who stood with him, and the scrolls of human skin that the messengers bore said merely, "Come, we await you. Do as you wish to the living, for our sole concern is with the dead." As these scrolls were unfurled, a great cry went up from the Balorian Crusade, and their behemoths charged and trampled their way into Creation until they stood upon solid earth.

Against them stood the Dragon-Blooded, wearied as they were from their own internal wars and from the Great Contagion, which scourged Creation like a barbed whip. At that hour, many of the Terrestrial Exalted cried out, "Woe unto us, that we have struck down the Chosen of the Sun, for this is another curse visited upon us!" And yet, they stood, and they held firm, and they endured.

Now, it must be said that, of the host who came forth upon the crusade, many of them held enmity toward the others, for Thief of Words had not soothed all hearts, nor had he reconciled all to Prince Balor. Thus, at that time, Incarnadine and Viridian unveiled their power and took the jade daiklave from a fallen Dragon-Blood and sheathed it to the hilt in the back of their brother, the Prince. But even as he fell, his Terrible Gaze smote the land around him, so that 50 leagues in every direction were blasted to ash and salt upon the wind, and the sisters were lost to the Fair Folk.

Then, the Duke of Mirrors cast a thousand prisms abroad, and his reflection stood in each of them, and he called on all the forces of the crusade to heed his command and follow him. The vortices came behind him and left great swathes of madness in their wake and unmade all humans that they touched. But in truth, the Duke was seized with a great fear, for he knew that, by entering Creation, he had taken some of Creation's nature upon himself, and if he should not be able to conquer and destroy as he wished, then those Fair Folk who still lay outside the boundaries of Creation would devour him in turn.

To take on shape while inside Creation binds the Fair Folk, and to take on desire and wishes and rulership is also a binding of sorts. Thus, he knew himself to be lessened in some ways from what he was before, and he also found that the weeping of human souls was sweeter than anything he had tasted before.

Between one moment and the next, behind him stood Princess Melusine of the Glittering Train, and she said unto him, "Now do you understand? This is what I and my kin hunger for. Join us, and together, we shall enjoy Creation as the mortals enjoy their food and drink. None can stand against us."

The Duke of Mirrors considered her words. Then, the earth shook beneath their feet, and the storm-ridden skies trembled above their heads, and he said, "Let us first see what has come to pass." And they wrapped great feathered mantles around themselves and took on the shapes of great birds. Then, the two sped to the heart of the Realm, leaving their armies behind.

For it was at this moment that the Scarlet Empress had set her hands upon the mighty engines of destruction that warded Creation from That Which Lies Beyond, and the whole Realm shook as she set forth her power.

The two great Fair Folk realized this, and with but one thought, they turned on each other in midair. They both knew that they could not now return to beyond the boundaries of Creation, but at the same time, both sought to be lord of the Fair Folk who still served them. Thus, they tore at each other with teeth and claws, blades and mirrors, serpentine coils and poisoned knives, and their blood fell upon the sea, and the sea itself boiled with the heat that came from it. Finally they parted, neither willing to die to kill the other, but they were both so sorely wounded that they had no longer the strength to rejoin their servants, and both passed out of history, though it is unknown if they fled into obscurity or were slain.

Meanwhile, the armies of the Dragon-Blooded fell with renewed fervor upon the remaining Fair Folk, who were now bereaved of all four of their great leaders. Many of the Fair Folk fled, casting aside all but the vestiges of form, and concealing themselves in the shapes of animals or of birds or of growing things. Others dove into the waters of the seas and rivers or ran across the deserts or hid between one snowflake and the next in the great blizzards or dwelt among the humans like wasps in the nests of ants. Those minor lords and petty ladies who remained, while not of the rank or power of the great Prince Balor or the other leaders, took refuge in the middle Wyld, where Creation and the pure Wyld eddied like the waves upon the shore, and raised their Freeholds there, to shelter the lesser Fair Folk. And all of them fed upon the souls of humans.

While the Dragon-Blooded knew that there were still Fair Folk within the bounds of Creation, they were, at the time, much taken with their own duties and armies, and thought the main threat broken. They set up garrisons upon the borders and led hunts to strike down small Freeholds where they might find them, but the newly risen Scarlet Empress had greater matters to attend to. Thus, the Fair Folk nestled in the places where they had chosen, like maggots in a living body. In time, they spoke one with another, sharing their feuds and friendships, their loves and their hates, and — though none would admit such a thing — as they fed upon their human prey, they took upon themselves aspects of human nature. They were no longer as they had been.

Beyond the boundaries of Creation, countless legions of the Fair Folk swarmed and fretted like flies circling a rotten fruit. They saw that their fellows had turned to ravaging the land rather than destroying it and that those who had once sworn to destroy the world now lived upon its richness and contented themselves with follies stolen from the humans who had humbled them.

For while it is true that the amusements and pleasures of the Fair Folk are strange to those who are born mortal — or even divine — the nature and aspects of those Fair Folk who have never touched Creation are stranger still, and they look down upon their inner-dwelling brethren with as much scorn and as little pity as those Fair Folk look down on the humans around them.

Within Creation and on its outskirts, the separate Freeholds and courts of Fair Folk settled into regular patterns, both in how they conducted their raids upon mortals and in their dealings with each other. The Fair Folk swiftly became a terror to the general populace, and a thing of legend. Yet, at the same time, some mortals found that the raksha were open to commerce, as long as this involved matters of interest to them — and as long as it was cast in a way which the Fair Folk could accept. While they would not deal in petty haggling or small-minded counting of small coins, preferring by far to imperiously cast a bag of gems at the feet of these merchants, they would gleefully buy living human slaves to serve as feasts for the high Fair Folk and fodder for the low ones. Indeed, such methods of subsistence — unfortunately increased by the foundation of the Guild and the growth of the slave trade — gave the Fair Folk the strength to increase their numbers and to spread across Creation. Although some of them became fixed in quality because of this, taking human customs as their own and living in peace with the humans, others raided and ravaged as they wished and brought down the curses of all settled folk upon their heads.

The Forming of the Courts

Now, when many of the Fair Folk met in later days, they had each taken from the dreams and nightmares of the living things of Creation, and therefore, they had changed, each to a different shape and way of being. And for a while, this caused great confusion, as some gave offense when none was intended and others failed to give offense despite their most serious attempts to do so, and thus, little of value could be communicated between the Fair Folk. Since there were at this time many raids from the Dragon-Blooded, this was a matter of some concern.

But then, it became clear (and some saw in this the fine hand of Thief of Words) that there were certain areas in which there was little contradiction and through which the Fair Folk could obtain an understanding of sorts. These areas, much as they had been before the Balorian Crusade, were Valor, Temperance, Conviction, Compassion and Willpower. All but a few of the Fair Folk prized one or two of these things before all other values and used them as prisms through which they might see the world. Many of the Fair Folk fell into rough associations based around these concepts, and from these associations rose five courts and many lesser households. As one of the Fair Folk might hold rank in a court or household as well as in his own Freehold or in his own private realm, many Fair Folk chose to loosely affiliate themselves with those groupings, the better to befriend or feud with their kin.

As the years turned, more than one court fell to become a mere household, and more than one household rose to become a court. From time to time, courts or households set up their own treaties with outcastes from among the Dragon-Blooded (for few who served the

Empress loyally were willing to treat with them) or with gods or mortals who had desires that the raksha could satisfy. Alas, many of these treaties bound only this household or that court. Those wishing to bargain with the Fair Folk were more than once deceived by the terms of such a bargain and thought that they had won immunity from all raksha depredations, when, in fact, they had only gained safety from a specified few. But that is a peril faced by all those who deal with the Fair Folk.

As of RY 768, the Five Courts are Opal, Ruby, Jet, Lapis and Pearl. Previous courts include the Emerald Court — now a mere household, due to the carelessness of its twin rulers, though still devoted to Valor — and the Diamond Court, which was utterly destroyed, its palace burned and cast to the winds and the children of its queen sold to the Guild as slaves.

The Opal Court is the home of those who cleave to Valor, and it is ruled by Prince Japhthia, who traces his command back to Prince Balor himself. It is currently to be found in the distant East, in a palace hacked from the living wood of the great trees east of Halta, from where the Warriors ride forth to cast defiance at the local petty gods.

The Lapis Court is a shelter for those who practice what the Fair Folk name Compassion and is ruled cruelly by Neshi of the Double Whips, who goes about perpetually veiled and who sleeps surrounded by human children. The mood of this court ebbs and flows with the passing of seasons and of years, and it is one of the courts most given to passing fashions. It has recently traveled to the Far South, and lion warriors guard the silken tents of its nobles.

The Pearl Court is a strange place. Filled as it is with those who idolize the personal expression of Willpower, its nobles duel by night and by day, and the sea around it is doubly salted, fed by the blood of the raksha. It is situated upon the back of one of the last remaining behemoths, who swims the seas of the distant Western Wyld, and is ruled by Judge Nehemeth, who sits upon a throne carved from a single pearl and only moves from it when she is challenged by some usurper.

The Jet Court is the dwelling place of those who have a high regard for Temperance. Many of them strive to demonstrate this Virtue at the expense of their fellows and take pleasure in demonstrating how moderate and well-judged they are in their pleasures and hatreds. This state of affairs results in a number of duels second only to the Pearl Court. Princess Kyema rules the Jet Court mildly and seductively, aided by her personal rumormongers and spies. The Jet Court currently lies in the Northern Wyld, but it rarely stays in one place for long. After all, that would be intemperate.

The Ruby Court prizes Conviction above all things. It does not matter what is done, so long as it is done with the uttermost passion of the heart. The nobles of this court weep tears of blood to prove their intensity and take many human lovers, before slaying them in fits of utter jealousy or violent passion. Duke Aral is a weak ruler, however, and spends much of his time before his mirror, which is said to be a relic of the Duke of Mirrors himself. Thus, the nobles of the court largely guide it according to their will. It may be found in the remote Southeast, in a palace raised from obsidian and sand, and the Guild trades with it more frequently than any other court.

The Lesser Households, such as the Garnet, the Beryl and the Citrine, to name but a few, move and travel as they wish. While a household will often be guided by its master's wish and choose to dwell within a single court, there are as many cases where the members of the household have been scattered across the courts or have chosen to live elsewhere in Creation or the Wyld. While a household does not have the authority or power of a court, a sufficiently strong household can gather allies, and the Ruby Court was once a simple household. (The observant point toward Duke Aral's allies, who have friends in other courts and households, and to the amount of power that they now exercise in his name. The Ruby Court now has many allies among the lesser households, and there is growing concern in the other courts as to what its ultimate purpose may be.)

Thief of Words

Thief of Words has become a legend among the Fair Folk. While the raksha frequently profess to honoring sages or respecting wise counselors, Thief of Words is one of the very few elder raksha whose advice is always to the point and who everyone respects and will obey. This is partly because he is so much a part of the Balorian Crusade and the creation of the courts and is so deeply bound into the story of every raksha in existence and partly because the Fair Folk are deeply, *deeply* terrified of him. He is a force of chaos who dates back to before the Balorian Crusade, with unknown powers and untested strength. Rumor variously has it that he's been the lover of the Scarlet Empress, that he dwells in Yu-Shan, that he journeys in disguise between the courts in order to keep them in opposition and that he's organizing the next crusade to destroy Creation. As one of his abilities is a great skill in disguise, nobody can say for certain what he looks like. Several Fair Folk claim to have locks of his hair, which they can use in glamour sorcery to summon him in cases of dire emergency. Such talismans are much sought after, whether or not the stories are true.

Waves Before the Storm

Of late, the raksha beyond the outskirts of Creation have been considering another crusade, as have some of the nobles within Creation. However, the raksha outside Creation have actually begun doing something about it. Scouting missions, raiding forces and destroying bands have begun to sweep through the Deep Wyld and into the shallower portions of the Wyld that actually border on firm Creation and settled lands.

While these forces are not always perceptible to the Terrestrial Exalted of the Realm — or to the Sidereals, who can only perceive what is born of Creation — they have an additional effect. Other Fair Folk, more settled nobles who dwelt in the near Wyld or had their Freeholds on the fringes, are being driven further into Creation by these purely Wyld groups. Sadly, many of the Fair Folk who have chosen to inhabit Creation, and who have lived there for centuries, are no longer palatable to their own unformed kind. They have become, though they would not recognize it themselves, too defined and too orderly.

The Politics of the Fair Folk

Whereas among humans or Exalted or gods politics are a vital exercise of power, necessary to secure vital resources or to press territory claims, among the Fair Folk, politics are far more a question of personal feuds, long-term enmities, current fashions in the use of captive humans and style. The actual reason for the long-term division between the Pearl and Lapis Courts matters little when compared to the fact that members of those courts now have an excuse to duel with each other, to plot against each other, to insult each other in public places, steal each other's treasures or pet mortals or to have passionate affairs with each other before the tragic betrayal and inevitable temporary mutual destruction.

The above is something of a generalization. Genuine discussions about territory go on, as do negotiations with the Guild and with Lunars and petty gods, or even Solars and Dragon-Blooded. Occasional messengers are sent out beyond the Wyld, to seek advice from the Fair Folk who have never entered Creation. (Few return, and those who do return are — changed.) However, the real politics goes on behind the scenes, and those bits of it which arise in public, or which are seized on as excuses for feuds and battles, are either so publicly known that it is impossible to hide them or merely excuses and no more than that.

It may be known that the Pearl and Lapis Courts have a long-standing grievance with each other, and messengers may pass between the courts to exchange insults and duel with Courtiers, but any serious negotiation goes on between the rulers of the courts and the heads of affiliated households and their counselors and other major powers in the area. If characters actually find themselves being involved in what's going on behind the scenes or in serious missions of diplomacy, then this is a recognition of their power, status and abilities. They should feel flattered — and should begin watching their backs for assassination attempts, if they are not already doing so.

Status Inside

There are four main levels of status inside any nexus of Fair Folk power: nonentities, the talented, the powerful and the rulers. Few would use precisely these terms to classify their own Freehold, but the levels of status and capability are perceived and understood by all. While it is possible for one of the Fair Folk to rise from one level to another, by increasing her personal power or by attracting the attention of those around her, it is also possible for her to fall in status. There are entertainers and petty courtiers who were once trusted counselors, low-ranking champions who were once court beauties and heroes and petty servants who once were once of princely stature. Their legends have dwindled, their power has faded, and where they were once feared and respected, they are now mere backdrop for the drama that the main figures of the court provide.

At the bottom, there are the nonentities, the common folk who supply the place's powers with the necessities of life, who tend the fires, who stand guard and who perform all the tedious and inartistic necessities of life. If one of the Fair Folk wishes to rise from this station, he must prove that he has some degree of personal power or some elegance or style with which to catch the eye of his superiors. This may be a page who is first in the hunt and brings down the quarry or a guard who takes the initiative and patrols the local woods to confront a hostile Terrestrial Exalt or a singer who bribes and coaxes her way into being allowed to perform before visiting diplomats and does so well enough to gain the ruler's attention.

At the next level above this are those raksha who have enough talent or power or style to be identified by it. These are the talented. They often have a sobriquet of some sort to denote their particular style, weapon or power, such as Golden-Clawed, of the Glittering Blade, Swifter than the Storm, Silver-Tongued or the like. (However, such a nickname should not be too dramatic or powerful, or they are liable to be challenged to prove it.) Fair Folk courts brim with individuals of this level of status, and they are all constantly competing with each other, trying to find a way to raise themselves above the average. Treachery is rife, but so are sincere alliances. A pair of friends, or a pair of enemies, can often rise in status by playing off each others' skills and talents where a single raksha could not.

Above these raksha are the powerful: the champions, the counselors, the favored concubines of the ruler and others of major importance. Their interest and attention can elevate lower Fair Folk out of the common herd, and

they help form the policies of the Freehold. They lead raids on the outside world, make treaties with other Fair Folk — or even the Guild, the Lunars or others — and are respected and feared by the rest of the Freehold. The ruler himself must take their opinions into account. They generally have some long-running feuds and friendships already established, which will be widely known and may be used against them.

At the apex of the Freehold's power sit the rulers, tolerably secure in their power and ability to command those beneath them. While in practice and in the long term, it would be foolish to disregard the wishes and desires of their subjects, in practice, the Fair Folk obey the strong and command the weak. While the ruler is the strongest, she will be obeyed. This is not to say that a coalition could not unseat her, but such a coalition would likely fall to pieces, its members mutually attempting to duel or assassinate one another immediately afterward, unless bound by the strongest of oaths. Generous sharing of power is not a common trait among the Fair Folk. A wise ruler knows that her Freehold will become all the more powerful if she has notorious champions and skilled artists under her rule. She therefore encourages her folk to become legends in their own right. If this takes them away from her court and stops them from challenging her, well, this too has its advantages.

Status Outside

A Fair Folk may be a proud and notorious noble within his own Freehold, respected by his peers and feared by his enemies, but outside that particular circle of acquaintances, he may be treated as merely "another stranger" by the Fair Folk of a different land. Similarly, a lowly minstrel or humble Warrior who is a small fish in his own locality may be feared and respected elsewhere, known as "Lady Dove of the Emerald Skin," where she is merely "Lady Dove" to her equals and superiors at home. While it is unusual to have a vast disparity of levels of respect, some fluctuation is usually the case. After all, reputation and notoriety (or simply notoriety) are significant in how the Fair Folk treat each other. When you can perceive that a stranger is powerful, but you do not know who she is or what she may have done, why should you give her any particular respect?

This is often the cause of particularly wanton Fair Folk raiding. If a Fair Folk noble, or a whole band of them, are, for some reason, forced to leave their usual habitations, they may find themselves reputationless and lonely among other Fair Folk who have simply never heard of them and who view them merely as curiosities, rather than as worthwhile rivals or allies.



This is one reason why the Church of Balor and the courts are prized. They provide a context in which Fair Folk can relate to each other. If you can introduce yourself as Eminence Zera of the Lapis Court, you will never be short of immediate friends or enemies, not because you are Eminence Zera, but because of your court affiliation. One of the easiest ways to remedy this lack of reputation is to go out raiding local settlements. The next easiest is to engage in profligate dueling or amorous congress with the local Fair Folk, though this requires that they take you seriously enough for a duel or an affair in the first place.

Of course, if Fair Folk have high status outside their usual home court or Freehold, but lower status within it, things are more difficult. It's easy for a medium-ranking noble to have a high reputation among petty Freeholds, if he chooses to visit them and to demonstrate his prowess in whatever manner is most natural to him. This won't, however, win him respect at home. If anything, being away for so much of the year dazzling the lower-ranking outsiders will mean he's lost position at home and will have been discarded by local allies and enemies in favor of more convenient targets. After all, who is more interesting to duel with, your enemy who's *never there* or your enemy across the court who's just seduced your lover, stolen your favorite blade and kicked your pet human concubine?

One way to get around this is to build support and reputation in wider circles and then arrange for some of your particular connections to visit or interact with your home court — and, preferably, in an *interesting* way. Lady Dove may be a typical petty noble, noticed when she puts particular effort into it but otherwise disregarded. However, if Lord Laco of a neighboring Freehold rides into the middle of Dove's own court on a charger forged from bone, casts his glove in her face and demands satisfaction from her on multiple charges — well, people will sit up and take notice, and the nobles are likely to polarize into instant allies or enemies on the spot. The problem then is how to keep that interest.

Status With Non-Raksha

Of course, concepts of respect and fear and status lack the same meaning when dealing with those not of the Fair Folk. While the raksha are generally agreed that they are superior to any other creature in existence, those of them who have become tied to the physical world — that is, those of them inside Creation, and especially the ones who have spent a long time there — can recognize other powerful beings and value their affection, fear or hatred. Having a Solar as a bitter enemy is enough to invigorate any raksha. Imagine the battles, the revenges, the challenges, the stratagems, the sheer passion and danger of it! Similarly, the respect or hatred of Lunars and Abyssals is worth owning. Attention from such powerful beings provides the sort of personal definition and strong emotion that the Fair Folk *need* in ways that they cannot describe.

Once an Exalt or other powerful being has managed to somehow impress a raksha as being worthy of attention — possible ways of doing so include possessing extreme physical beauty or great talents or defeating the raksha in battle — there is the potential for some sort of relationship, whether adversarial or friendly. It doesn't matter that these rivalries are often short and fatal. The need does not change just because the matter is dangerous. The raksha may have to pursue his new object of interest across Creation in order to confront her again or may simply wait on his home ground and send her tokens of affection or insult in order to provoke a confrontation.

The type of relationship may depend on the Fair Folk's particular areas of focus. A Valor-obsessed raksha will seek a worthy enemy, a Compassionate one may want a lover or a heroic friend, a Willpower-centered raksha might prefer a strong-willed antagonist to plot against, a Conviction-focused one may be fascinated by an Exalt who will persevere against — or even seek out — countless obstacles, and a raksha who prizes Temperance may choose a violently flamboyant Exalt for pure contrast.

Among other Fair Folk, having a Solar or Lunar Exalt as a personal ally or enemy garners one a great deal of status. A Fair Folk Warrior who can say that he dueled with the Bull of the North from sunrise to sunset promptly becomes a dramatic hero to his fellows and a subject for the latest raksha ballads, and he attracts a following of lesser Fair Folk hoping for similar drama and acclaim. Abyssals are too new to really provide the same level of fame, though they do have the charm of novelty, while Dragon-Blooded are more run-of-the-mill opponents or friends.

The Church of Balor

The Church of Balor was begun during the Balorian Crusade, stolen from human and divine beliefs of higher purposes. While the Fair Folk admit to no gods, and would not worship any if offered the opportunity, they eagerly embrace concepts such as divinity born inside Creation and destroying the world in a truly godly fashion. This does not, of course, mean that they deny the existence of gods or fail to offer proper courtesy under the relevant circumstances. What they do not do is worship them — or even respect them particularly. While there are isolated incidences of Fair Folk being taken with the image of themselves as devoted worshipers of insane gods or virtuous warriors of the Unconquered Sun, such raksha are few and far between.

But the idea of worship in itself — ah, that appealed to the raksha. The Fair Folk could respect each other, could adopt formalized postures of allegiance and fealty and could claim that they worshiped one of their own, with as much self-honesty as they ever claimed anything. Prince Balor, who died so tragically on the battlefield (little matter that he was slain by other Fair Folk) and who symbolized the entire crusade for those who had followed

The Fair Folk and The Guild

Everyone who chooses not to stay ignorant knows about the dealings between the Fair Folk and the Guild. Neither side makes any attempt to disguise it. The Guild marches human slaves into the Wyld in chains or takes them to certain prearranged points and returns with gold, gems, englamoured objects and blank-eyed shuffling slaves who no longer have the soul to rebel, dream or even reason. Opinion on this practice from other people ranges from a casual shrug to seeing it as a valuable resource and a way of keeping the Fair Folk from more extensive raiding to outright disgust and disapproval.

But why do the raksha do it? Why do they treat with mortals in such a mercantile fashion, reducing the rape of souls to a mere matter of buying and selling? Why, indeed, do they bother to engage in such a petty activity as buying slaves?

There are two main reasons: practicality and art. In practical terms, it is useful to have a convenient supply of dreams to devour and hearts to break and human pets to serve as diversions. Many of the Fair Folk have enough grounding in reality to appreciate this and to find some sort of excuse with which they can justify their actions to themselves.

On an artistic level, however, an aesthetically minded Fair Folk noble can find much to appreciate in the trade of human slaves. The sheer venality of humans, being willing to hand over their own kind to death or worse merely for the sake of a little money! The concept of being able to value human dreams against jade! The stages of a human's passage from slavery to Fair Folk hands, then into slavery again! Even the very *concept* of slavery, of one person having absolute dominion over another, is something that goes deep to the roots of the Fair Folk. If humans are prepared to enact this beautiful process of chaining their fellows and handing them over helpless to the raksha, merely for a few trifling coins or some minor glamours, why should the raksha not enjoy themselves and take advantage?

Negotiations with Guild representatives are handled by those raksha who have some understanding of human concepts of worth and finance. Such Fair Folk must also be able to deal with humans without enchanting them, breaking their minds with glamours or threatening them with painful death or worse. As many Fair Folk find this hard, those raksha who can deal with the Guild are usually treasured by the leaders of their Freeholds or courts and have a great deal of political influence. They also tend to be well informed about the local lands and human tribes. However, such understanding of human affairs often comes at a price. These nobles may not have as strong a connection with the Wyld as do others of their kind, for they have come too close to humanity and an understanding of the human soul.

him, was an obvious deity to their liking. The Church of Balor arose from the memories of Prince Balor's passion and was sculpted by a thousand terrified human dreams of destruction, a thousand wanton human lusts for conquest and a thousand human dying souls screaming in pain.

The Church is what the Fair Folk think religion *ought* to be, based on their perceptions of the religious practice of Creation. Worshipers kneel and kowtow, priests incant strange chants of praise and burn offerings to the powers of chance, soldiers in shining armor ride forth on raksha steeds to protect their faith and do battle with theological enemies, and zealots duel over miniscule points of theology or the interpretation of Balor's recorded sayings. Many Fair Folk join or leave it on a whim, finding it a convenient excuse for some current role that they wish to play or using it as justification for a feud or friendship.

While the Church is theoretically devoted to the task of bringing the Final Crusade that will sweep Creation back into primal chaos and destroy all things upon the face of the earth, there is a certain amount of internecine dispute as to how this should take place. Some of the adherents favor the idea of returning outside the Wyld to what lies beyond and inviting those Fair Folk still there to return with them. Others hold that it will be necessary to assassinate the Scarlet Empress and other Dragon-Blooded in positions of power and to destroy the Realm's power grids before leading any new invasion of the world. Others, more impatient, simply want to ride forth in blood and fire, destroying all in their path. The passive remainder simply enjoy the associated games and disputes and painfully vital feuds that come with belonging to the Church of Balor. They would no sooner give it up than they would give up anything else that they use to define themselves — though they would not necessarily be prepared to launch a new crusade on the morrow.

The Four Quarters of Creation

Those who journey to the distant parts of Creation, where the Wyld laps on the edges of reality, report truthfully that the raksha who live in the different quarters of

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Ministering warrior nobly saving humans from great perils, then riding into the sunset.
Conviction: Traveling messenger spreading the word of the Church.
Temperance: Reconciling counselor gathering support for the Church.
Valor: Heroic paladin bringing chaos to the world.
Willpower: Charismatic leader organizing strikes by paladins and Warriors.

Adjusting To Taste

A Storyteller should always feel free to position a Fair Folk Freehold anywhere that she likes, regardless of the local "theme" or type of nobles. Perhaps it's an offshoot of one of the Five Courts or a household or was inspired by a noble coming from there who managed to impose his vision on the local raksha. Maybe a traveling group of raksha from the other side of Creation took over a Freehold and warped it to suit their own needs and desires. Maybe the place has been feuding with another Fair Folk Freehold, and a long-standing custom of hostage exchange or diplomatic visits have introduced new ways of using glamour or new thoughts about humans or trading with the Guild. If you want to put a fortress made from a single pearl in the middle of the Southwestern ocean, don't worry that the place seems to be full of cannibalistic tribes. The Wyld is a big place, and there's room there for all the stolen dreams in Creation.

Creation each have their own habits, customs, hungers and delights.

So why, given that raksha are creatures of the Wyld and infinitely variable, do they tend to fall into similar patterns of behavior in particular areas? The answer is a consequence of their variability. They are also infinitely impressionable. The average raksha noble or Worker, barring strong personal inspirations, Virtues or history, is as pliable as a drop of hot wax when it comes to an intricate and passionate way of living. Fair Folk *want* exotic personal habits, personal rites, oaths, feuds and all the other things that will give them something that could be compared to a human personality. They are easily swayed by the hunger of the sea, the drama of the climate and the local human customs, and they gather them like gaudy magpies to create their own ways of living — which, of course, they cannot abandon for fear of losing their own personalities.

The Five Courts, by comparison, and the households to a lesser degree, define themselves to a far higher degree by their Virtues and are thus less impressed-upon by the general customs or nature of the area in which they live. They are, of course, far more defined by those Virtues than any human could possibly be and lack the subtler shadings of personality.

Finally, there are Fair Folk Freeholds where the ruler has made an impression upon his subjects and imposed his own customs and desires on them, shaping the locale to his own vision. These can lead to small, strange enclaves inside areas of Fair Folk influence that are otherwise "normal" for that direction of the compass. In time, they may expand to change general raksha habits or natures in that area, or they may fade and vanish.

The East

Despite the current turmoil in Halta and the actions or reactions of the Fair Folk there, the raksha of the East continues much as they have done for the last few centuries. The leaves there will always be green, and the trees will always reach from the earth to the sky; the Fair Folk will always wander through the trees and take who they wish from the human villages, as lovers or prey, and their hunger will never end.

To the Fair Folk of the East, appearance is the primary art and must be served in every way, both by displaying natural beauty and by reinforcing it with art and craft. They do not so much wrap themselves in glamour to assume a pleasant visage, but instead bathe themselves in deep pools of clear water and perfume themselves with orchids that no human eye has ever seen and clothe themselves in fabrics woven from solidified dreams.

The Northeast: The Fair Folk of the Northeast are close kin to their brothers of the more distant snowy wastes and live in a world of darkling woods, constantly changing with their climate. They typically deck themselves in somber yet striking clothing, wearing shades such as black and green all year long and favoring night over day, shadow over sunlight. They call snowstorms through the Northern ranges of the Eastern forests so that they may dance under the stormclouds and listen to the howling winds. In the autumn, they ornament themselves with cloaks of leaves and necklaces and crowns of berries, brown and crimson and orange, but as the seasons turn to winter, they discard their finery and are as stark and barren as evergreens against the white, newly fallen snow. When spring comes, they gird themselves with belts and gloves of fresh green, and with the summer, they don the darker greens of the season, as rich and passionate as the fertile forest, but also as dangerous.

These raksha practice stealth as an art form, dropping down from high branches and landing on the dry leaves

below with nary a sound or moving between the trees and over pine needles without leaving a single footprint behind. Their aesthetic involves showing precisely what they *choose* to show, finding art in minimalism and elegance in stark precision. A Northeastern raksha would be ashamed if he couldn't pick a single leaf from a cluster of them with a single arrow from his bow and mortified if humans could note the traces of his presence or his passing — unless, of course, he wanted them to do so, in order to inspire delicious fear in their hearts.

The Fair Folk of the Northeast dwell in long, dark halls and gloomy mansions built on the model of peasant cottages but roofed with silk and amber and walled with bones and teak. Those who dwell in raksha hills make their homes in dense pine groves, whose branches fence out the order of Creation and separate the Freehold from reality.

In the wide rooms that they share, the silence is broken by the music of flutes, the hiss of needles embroidering silk, the rattle of shuttles in looms and the whimpering of humans begging for respite from the constant fear that haunts them. The raksha pursue their victims through the woods, never letting them have more than a moment's respite, until their feet are bloody and their bodies exhausted and their hopes of escape have been roused a dozen times, only to be shattered a few moments later.

This tenderizing of potential prey is another art form among the Northeastern Fair Folk, and humans are not usually brought back to the Freeholds until they are so terrified and broken that they do not even dare think of escape. Their hopeless pleas for mercy serve as accompaniment as the raksha taunt them with dreams of freedom, before dragging them back to wakefulness and new pain. When their hearts finally give out from exhaustion and despair, their bones serve to decorate the walls. While these raksha do trade with the Guild, they dislike the mental state of the slaves that they buy. Such victims lack the proper terror and misery the raksha desire. They therefore release the slaves into the woods, in order to hunt them down. For a new slave to escape such a hunt is a rare event but not impossible, and it will mark her out for future raksha attention, as such a human must have a vivid, powerful soul.

While it may seem odd that the Fair Folk of these lands should love baroque clothing while at the same time appreciating a minimalistic aesthetic, the two come down to much the same thing, which is also tied to their treatment of their human prey. These raksha desire absolute control over their environment and over every living thing around them. They are calm and haughty with the arrogance of those who know that they are superior and are so sure of their superiority that they have no need to argue the point, but they will take the time to draw out a human's agony and fear — because it's fun.

Diplomacy among these raksha is an excuse to get the maximum of entertainment from a feud, with the minimum of actual death. The Fair Folk of these lands love their lives, and the endless turning of the seasons gives many of them the impression that they will live forever, as constant as the great trees that fill their world. They are cowards at heart, however great their arrogance, and would rather be disfigured than be snuffed out. Duels are to the injury, rather than to the death, except in matters of great importance, such as the leadership of a Freehold.

These Fair Folk are arrogant, elegant and cowardly. While their taste is exquisite, in everything ranging from clothing to poisons to the inflicting of fear, their concepts of love and harmony are bound up with power, sadism and capture. They find it hard to comprehend any relationship that doesn't involve fear, and indeed, their own internecine power struggles and romances all have terror and pain at their root. While they live among trees and imitate their beauty, there are corpses buried at their roots.

Notable Freeholds in the Northeast include **the Silver Clouds** and **the Arch of Bones**. The Silver Clouds are mansions roofed with silver and ivory, so that they glimmer beneath the branches of the trees and can be seen from far distant. The raksha of this Freehold are led by Duke Chanis, a warlord who is rare among these Fair Folk in that he knows no fear and will risk anything to conquer. Many of his people are infected by his spirit, and he is planning expansion and the conquest of other raksha Freeholds. The Arch of Bones is hidden deeper in the woods. The trees that surround the clearing above which it stands are inlaid with the bones of these raksha's victims, and the clearing itself is littered with skulls. Those Fair Folk dwelling here are extremely secretive, and though they frequently trade with the Guild for victims, they take pains never to let their home be seen by anyone other than doomed mortals. Even other Fair Folk are brought there blindfolded. They are led by Lady Ebon, who eschews the usual fashions to always wear black, claiming that the winter in her heart knows no end.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Swift killer.
Conviction: Dedicated artist.
Temperance: Diplomat with the Guild.
Valor: Hunter of great beasts.
Willpower: Spinner of fears.

The Southeast: In the Southeast, where the jungles are hot with the banked warmth of thousands of years, the raksha deck themselves with gaudy bright colors, as though to warn others that they are poisonous. They are slender figures, seeming as light as the rainbow-hued feathers woven into their hair, but are swift as the darting dragonfly, strong as the remorseless crocodile and lethal as the

poisonous snakes that they wear wrapped around them like girdles. While they are not cowards, neither are they stupid. It might better be said that they are lazy. They wait patiently, then strike from ambush and take their prey back to their treetop nests.

As the Northeastern Fair Folk celebrate and imitate the cold, so the Southeastern Fair Folk luxuriate in the heat and damp and lounge amid brilliant swathes of flowers. They wear the brilliant hues of this land, either wrapping themselves in swathes of silk and leather and metal or stripping down to bare most of their skin to the steamy forest air. They favor the blowgun, the club and the spear when they go hunting but believe that only a buffoon or a clumsy incompetent would need to actually go chasing prey. A true hunter, to them, is one who is already lying in wait when the prey wanders into his trap and who need merely perform a single elegant stroke to bring the victim down. Mass hunts against large and dangerous creatures are an exception to this rule, but even then, there is a certain degree of competition. All the raksha present are attempting to demonstrate their own nonchalance, while at the same time being the one who brings the monster down.

The Southeastern Fair Folk are quite ready to deal with the Guild, and were it not for their occasional habit of kidnaping Guild guards and representatives for victims as well as the slaves on sale, then concealing the evidence, their business relationship would be well-nigh perfect. As it is, the Guild sends very heavily armed parties to escort such slaves and takes care to require the raksha to swear that the Guild representatives will return safely. Their victims suffer atrociously, whether slaves or captives or mere wandering fools, as these Fair Folk use glamours and jungle hallucinogens to extract the dreams from their prey, involving long hours of screaming nightmarish torments. Members of local tribes would rather take their own lives than to fall into raksha hands, another reason for raksha stealth and precision in capturing mortals.

Entertainers in these lands are storytellers, mimes, flautists, silk-weavers and body-painters. Normal tattoos are considered too permanent to be a proper expression of style, but many use their glamour to adorn themselves with animated or changeable designs. These raksha make their own weapons, and using a weapon created by someone else is only socially acceptable if the weapon is of truly incredible beauty and quality. Diplomacy is highly valued, as tribes often exchange territory, traveling to each other's Freeholds in order to investigate the local mortal prey and enjoy new dreams. It is the task of the Diplomats to arrange this changeover without too many fatalities, duels or feuds entering into the process.

These raksha are malign, lazy, beautiful and sly. They are hungry for dreams and want to enjoy the last iota of the dreamer's soul, extracted in screaming pain. While they may aesthetically appreciate a powerful enemy, they would prefer that enemy chained and naked at their feet, shivering in nightmares. Few would respect any sort of alliance with them. Certainly, the Southeast raksha would be unlikely to respect one in return, unless it was sealed with the most binding of oaths, and even then, they would be seeking some way to break their bargain. They loathe Eclipse Caste Solars with a surpassing hatred.

Notable tribes of raksha in this region include **Mabande's Serpents**, known for the accuracy of their blowdarts and the virulence of their poisons, and **the Unmatched**, who pride themselves on their speed, and who take a particular pleasure in trapping human hunters. Mabande's Serpents all dye their tongues in shades of blue and purple to match their hair and take an aesthetic interest in procuring rare frogs and serpents from far parts of the jungles, in order to distill new venoms. The Unmatched take their name from an insult once delivered to their chief Demis, an androgynous youth, by some Northeastern raksha, who said that even human hunters could outmatch the Southeastern Fair Folk. This has rankled their ruler, and now, Demis and the others hunt both humans and the Northeastern raksha.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Keeper of poisonous frogs.
Conviction: Lone scout.
Temperance: Silent, stealthy watcher.
Valor: Tyrant lizard hunter.
Willpower: Stone-hearted diplomat.

The North

The Fair Folk of the North, the Winter People, are shaped by the region's long winters and harsh landscapes, by the wind and snow and tundra and by the unending cold. Their smiles are as short and as false as the pitifully brief summers, and they are fell and merciless. Although these raksha respect strength, they will not spare their enemies or release the helpless. They lust for warmth of all kinds: the passion of desire, the vivid burning of dreams, the heat of living bodies and of blood.

The Winter People dress as do the mortals of their lands — but with a wealth and luxury that those mortals could not dream of. These raksha wear thick, enameled breastplates and bronze chain mail when they ride to war, omen-dog and sable furs, elk and mammoth and deer hide. Within their Freeholds, they wear simple woolen tunics and skirts or trousers, but woven from wools softer than a maiden's lips, in colors that humans only see in their wildest dreams. Many of them have cow or wolf tails, and they take great care to hide them with clothing or glamours. Stories tell of the

brave hero or the wise crone who sees a tail at some crucial moment and foils a raksha plot or rejects a bargain that would have sold her soul.

When the storms rise in the depths of winter, then the raksha go hunting, mounted on black stallions and with white omen dogs running beside them. Behind them come empty sleighs decked with ice chains that shine like jewels, which will hold the coffles of their victims. Sometimes, they hunt along the road to Whitewall, keeping the required distance from the highway but allowing the terror of their presence to go before them, in the hopes of frightening or luring humans from the road where they are safe. Sometimes, they raid villages and tribal tents, seizing human victims as their steeds trample down the walls of the huts or rip apart the tents. They make no distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, the young and the old. All have mortal heat, all have dreams. Sometimes, they simply ride on the hunt for the joy of riding amid the storm and knowing themselves to be terrors and nightmares, and if they come across some prey wandering abroad in such weather, so much the worse for their victims.

Sometimes, in the depths of winter, the women of the Winter People walk in the midst of snowstorms, clad only in their thin shifts. Traders caught on the roads may see them passing, and tribesmen bunkered down in their longhouses hear their pale song outside the walls, sweet as the kiss of falling snow. Those who accept their bargain of bliss in exchange for the body's warmth and the heart's dreams are often left alive, lying in the snow, to be fed on again and again. These addicts are known as "snow ghosts" or "snow dolls" and wander the roads near their homes during snowstorms, searching desperately for their lovers. Most tribes drive such madmen away, fearing them as unlucky, or bind and chain them safely inside during storms.

The Northwest: In the Northwest, the raksha sail out in longships as well as hunt with sleighs and horses and dogs, and they summon storms to fill their sails. One of their favorite sports is chasing victims along the fjords and frozen rivers, forcing their prey to choose between the treacherous ice and the fangs of their hounds. At times, the raksha women will swim in the rivers, beautiful and cold as the snowmelt water, or sit on the edges of wells, calling children to them with sweet lullabies. If one of these raksha women is caught by a sudden rise in the river, she may be swept south and away from her tribe. There are legends of such raksha who found themselves farther South and who changed with the climate, growing mellow and gentle and protecting lakes or streams. Of course, anyone who relies on such a story and trusts such a raksha to be kind is taking his life in his own hands.

The longhouses of the Winter People are raised from the deep ice. These longhouses are much like those of the human tribes and could be mistaken for them from a distance by an unobservant traveler. All their dwellings are molded from ice so cold and hard that no normal weapon will bite or shatter it. These raksha ornament their Freeholds with the withered remains of their human prey, covering them with water and freezing them into decorations. Their arches are framed by corpses, their thresholds require all visitors to step over a dead body trapped beneath the unchanging ice, and the figures that form tableaux in the icy walls were once living humans.



When the brief summer comes, it is the season for travel. The leaders of each tribe of Winter People take a human deep into the Wyld and release her, observing the changes that the Wyld makes on her body and mind. These are interpreted as omens for the tribe's future. The tribes then abandon their current longhouses to melt — which they do, deprived of the raksha glamour that sustains them — and travel elsewhere in the Northwestern lands, eventually coming to a halt as winter draws in again. They build new longhouses and decorate them with fresh corpses. It is said that gray butterflies gather where raksha longhouses once stood and that they are the remnants of the souls of the Winter People's dead victims, trapped there for eternity.

Humans in the raksha longhouses spend their lives in chained sleep, dreaming the hours away under heavy piles of furs that would fetch a despot's ransom elsewhere. Milk and animal blood is poured down their throats to sustain them — animal blood, like animal dreams, is insufficient for raksha tastes. The Fair Folk curl against their victims in their sleeping chambers, drawing out their dreams along with their body heat and sipping their blood along with the dreams. Even after the human dies, a raksha drinks until the last drop of warm blood is drained away, leaving the body pale and cold.

The art of the Fair Folk in these lands is symbolic and physical, taking expression in such shapes as woven cloth, embroidery, the inlay on the breastplates that the raksha wear to the hunt and the positioning of corpses as sculptures inside the longhouse. Many raksha spend long hours in quiet contemplation of the works of art that they wear or that are scattered around them, posing like frozen statues amid the ice. Mime and dance around the fire are also valued as entertainment, but these dances and mimes are representational rather than innovative, based off of past deeds or the movements of wild beasts rather than being in any way original. Speech and music are appreciated but valued less highly. The raksha pride themselves on facing the worst that winter can hurl at them and prefer deeds and actions to words.

The raksha of the Northwest are proud, hardy and merciless, and their bodies sing with the pulse of the seasons. They are cold and bitter in the winter, as heartless as the icy winds, but gentler in the brief summer, journeying across the land and dancing as they go. They have little to say to the raksha of the West, as their ships hug the coast rather than going into the Deep Wyld of the Western Ocean, and are on terms of guarded neutrality with the raksha of the Northeast, who they occasionally meet for petty wars or duels. The leaders of the Northeastern raksha take power by a combination of craft and guile and skill at arms. Assassination is rare, but challenges when the other person is under some form of disadvantage — for instance, when they have just fought a dozen bears and half a tribe and are physically weak — are considered quite reasonable. More common are challenges over questions of craftwork and carving and art, which go on all winter and can begin or foster deep feuds. While these Fair Folk frequently trade with the Guild for slaves, the Diplomats who handle such exchanges dislike doing so. Any proper noble of the Northwest prefers to ride out and take his own prey. Remorseless hunger, however, drives them to this petty necessity.

Well-known Northwestern tribes include **the Seven Stormwinds** and **the Lions of the Snow**. The Seven Stormwinds actually number three or four dozen, and the best warriors in the group are acclaimed as the Seven Stormwinds in person and form a council who lead the tribe. This unusual sharing of authority (for raksha) has resulted in an extremely stable tribe — and, possibly, one that may become as stable as the Mountain Folk in time. While the position of a Stormwind is theoretically open to challenge at any time, in practice, the Stormwinds have grown used to watching each other's backs and eliminating each other's challengers by threats or treachery before a duel can take place. The Lions of the Snow are a vicious group, even for the Winter People, who preach a new Balorian Crusade. They are seeking allies among other native raksha and have even sent some Diplomats further abroad to other regions.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Slayer of the weak.
Conviction: Studious dancer.
Temperance: Summer traveler, winter crafter.
Valor: Rider on the storm.
Willpower: Would-be leader.

The Northeast: In the Northeast, the Winter People have elks to draw their sleighs and harps strung with human hair to accompany their singing. They dwell in castles of ice, cold chiseled triumphs of impossible architecture with white-blue spires and huge carved halls that tower over the twisted forests of pine and aspen below. Singing is not only an art form here, but something that any noble raksha is expected to do well. Those who lack memory, talent or voice are universally mocked. These Fair Folk are often shapeshifters, taking the form of eagles or wolves or stags in order to spy on humans or to lure them into danger — or to experience the thrill of the kill in a truly visceral manner.

Where the Winter People of the Northwest live under the sledgehammer of the weather, the raksha of the Northeast shape their environment around them. They raise ice castles rather than shelter in longhouses, they bend storms to their will rather than riding through them,

and they can be kind as well as cruel to the humans around them, depending on their mood. It is not unknown for some raksha to lead lost children home, to take humans as lovers and leave them alive with a parting gift of glamoured jewels or even to invite an amusing chance-met traveler home for an evening's feasting. These are, however, by no means regular occurrences. The random nature of raksha behavior makes them more terrible in some ways than if they had been always dangerous and forever dreadful.

Much of the glamour and the sorcery that the Northeastern raksha use is tied to singing, which is also their greatest art. While they value storytellers, weavers and metalworkers, their most valued Entertainers are singers. These singers, however, make poor diplomats, as while they are word-perfect at repeating the longest sagas or the most convoluted epics and descriptions, they do so without originality. These Winter People borrow or steal their songs, however much they prize them.

Their Diplomats, on the other hand, are expected to be subtle, original, treacherous and elegant. They are tasked with providing fodder for the ongoing sagas that so delight the Northeastern raksha, by stimulating local humans into wars and acts of heroism and tragedy or by inspiring affairs and assassinations and duels among the raksha themselves.

Relationships between raksha castles are confusing and tangled — which is as the raksha themselves desire. Feuds and betrayal and passionate heartbreak are so much more delightful than anything else could possibly be. Travelers are always welcome, and even if they are met on the doorstep with a challenge to a duel, they are always offered a meal and a bath first. Indeed, the baths in the ice castles are marvels of glamour and sorcery and are a frequent rendezvous point for lovers or conspirators or enemies.

The Northeastern Winter People are fanciful, gaudy, unpredictable and exemplify the wildness of the winter. Their moods may range from the murderous rage of a storm that strips flesh from bone to the quiet beauty of sunlight on freshly fallen snow. Their relations with other powers, such as Lunars or the Realm, are just as unpredictable as their general behavior. They may be amused and form an alliance on the spur of the moment, or they may find reason to nurture a feud purely for the aesthetic beauty of the hatred and the glory of the legends that it will supply. At the moment, they are prodding at their eastern borders, considering the goings-on in Halta and how best to meddle in the matter. Some spies have already journeyed there from the Northeast. Their heads were returned in wooden caskets. The Northeastern Fair Folk happily trade with the Guild and go so far as to receive its representatives in their castles. If any wanderer sought to locate a Freehold of the Northeast raksha, the Guild would surely be able to assist her — for the usual price.

Famous ice castles in the Northeast include **the Turrets of the Ice Blossom**, a castle that apes the luxury and self-indulgence of First Age Solars, and **the Last Refuge**, which appears to be a shelter in the middle of the snowy wastelands, but which reveals its true nature later, and slowly, once the travelers cannot leave. The Turrets of the Ice Blossom is ruled by a raksha queen who has slowly sunk into decrepitude and weariness and who sustains herself on the blood of children. Her subjects fear her for her power and love her for the bright innocence-fed dreams with which she fills the castle. The beautiful ice palace is crowded with ghosts amid the gaudy raksha indulgence, and there are Abyssals who would recognize it as the location of a nascent shadowland. As for the Last Refuge, the Fair Folk of that Freehold have grown idle and have lost their vigor. They no longer ride out to hunts or raid villages, but instead, lure wanderers from the roads or sing up storms to confuse them and then invite them in. The place is beautifully decorated and has every luxury that humanity can imagine. However, the Fair Folk eventually grow bored of devouring simple dreams of happiness and wish-fulfillment and turn to darker shades of sadism, terror and nightmare, until, at last, they must dispose of the bodies and wash the blood out of the silk tapestries.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Wonder-working magician.
Conviction: Obsessive minstrel.
Temperance: Necessary diplomat.
Valor: Proud duelist.
Willpower: Shapeshifter spying on humans.

The South

The Fair Folk of the South are a motley group, comprised of hunters and rovers of various sorts, driven to constant wandering by the sparse nature of human settlement in the region.

Fair Folk in the South are scattered wanderers for another reason — the influence of the Cult of Ikerre. This visionary fanatic attempted to use the Eye of Autochthon to rid the South of Wyld influences some two centuries ago. Though he was destroyed by the Eye, he survived long enough to do considerable damage to the Fair Folk of that direction. Those Fair Folk who had well-known, long-established settlements were largely destroyed and their Freeholds withered, leaving only the desert raiders and lion-Folk.

The Savanna: On the wide stretches of the savannas in the South, the Fair Folk run in the shapes of lions, forming prides to hunt down their prey. They whisper outside the walls of mortal villages, luring victims out to

join them or convincing their dupes to open the village gates. The raksha of the Southern savannas are masters of manipulating mortal emotions and thrive on convincing mortals to join them in the erotic ecstasy of the hunt in the role of prey. These creatures are terrible blights, so fearsome that they must migrate from district to district lest they exhaust all prey in a given region.

Imitating natural lions, these Fair Folk form groups that have a single male leader, several secondary female members and tertiary young males who are at the bottom of the social pecking order. They wear furs, when they bother to wear clothes at all, and heavy jewelry of gold and copper and bronze. The lion-Folk rise within their tribes through skill in battle, elegance in tempting and sheer ferocity. Assassination is known but rare, and an identified assassin is respected but shunned and would rarely be accepted into a pride. The exception to this rule is in the case of a known outsider (from beyond the South) who had joined a pride or a dramatic struggle with one of the Exalted that culminated in the Exalt's murder.

The prides of these Fair Folk tend not to last for more than 30 or 40 years at the most. Duels and struggles for supremacy inside the pride eventually cause the members to disperse or result in so high a turnover of raksha that the pride is almost totally replaced by new members. It is easy enough for a raksha noble from elsewhere to join a pride, if he is prepared to accept a low-ranking place in the hierarchy. Taking a higher-ranking place, even if the outsider has the skill and ferocity to hold it, always risks betrayal from offended pridemates.

While these raksha will gladly carry weapons — indeed, weapons are among the few types of art which they recognize and appreciate — such weapons are almost always lightweight work, swords or javelins or daggers, suited for carrying on the hunt, either woven from glamour or stolen from particularly well-armed prey. Visiting raksha nobles seeking alliance have occasionally used gifts of metalwork to ingratiate themselves. The twin javelins Fury and Repentance, worked from ivory and inlaid with gold and set with enchantments, were given to Maderen of the Blue-Silk Raiders five years ago but were lost during a hunt and have not been found yet.

On nights when the humans have locked themselves inside and sealed their homes and villages with charms and wards, the Fair Folk lie outside the windows and whisper of the endless delight that comes of being their victim, the sweet release at the moment of death and the unequalled joy that comes from surrendering oneself to something so much more beautiful and perfect than any mortal could ever be. This is often considered an occasion for a young raksha noble to prove himself, and others of his pride will listen to his whispers and criticize his artistry later as they share his mortal victims.

Other than this, the lion-Folk have little in the way of entertainment. Traveling storytellers or musicians are greeted with great enthusiasm and will be expected to provide stories and music all night long. However, art on its own is insufficient to win actual respect, and while raksha Entertainers are certainly accepted into prides, they are among the lowest-ranking in a pride, unless they have warrior skills as well. Some raksha prides have even gone so far as to kidnap human performers and to extort entertainment from them by threats and torture. Others compel mind-shattered human slaves to enact stories or dramas, then slay them when the drained humans lack the emotions or souls to give any real value to the pieces.

The keynotes for the Fair Folk of the Southern savannas are that they are proud, seductive and lethal and that they get no satisfaction from anything less than devouring souls or slaying humans. They have little interest in appreciating mortal arts, though they may deign to take an interest in the work of the Exalted or others of their own kind. In many ways, they culture animal hungers rather than civilized tastes, and they could quite easily be assimilated into any new crusade that arose to destroy Creation, assuming that they could devour human souls on the way.

Notorious prides of the Southern savannas include **the Blue-Silk Raiders**, **the Pacharenai** and **Ranu's Silent Ones**. The Blue-Silk Raiders weave blue-silk scarves into their gold jewelry and sometimes prowl as far north as the outskirts of Gem. They also leave fragments of blue silk inside houses that they have emptied, amid the bodies of the slain inhabitants, so that the terror they inspire will spice the fears of their next victims. The Pacharenai hunt further south and have an ongoing vendetta with some of the desert tribes of the Far South, competing with them for prey and hunting them when they find them. It is an unusually large pride, numbering a full two score and is held together by a leader named Elegance. Ranu's Silent Ones always hunt at midday and in total silence. They disdain luring humans from their houses and would rather go hungry than lower themselves to seduction. As a consequence, they are few — barely a dozen — but highly skilled, and they race the dry winds across the savanna.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Merciful deathbringer.
Conviction: Capable leader.
Temperance: Prowler of the savanna.
Valor: Hunter of dangerous prey.
Willpower: Tempting lurer.

The Desert: In the distant South, the Fair Folk ride horses swifter than arrows and catch rumors on the wind as it blows from East to West. From a distance, they are a streak of color racing across the dunes, clad like any ger-dwelling tribesman, but closer, one sees their silk robes and burnooses are woven of poetry and song, embroidered with hearts' desires and ornamented with despair. They raid oases and tents and settled villages, sweeping down like a storm to carry away the children and young adults, the strong and the beautiful, leaving the old and weary behind.

There is little formalized hierarchy among such bands. Although each band has a leader, who is universally acknowledged as the most powerful of the group, all others in the group are considered equals, and no noble has any particular right to give orders to another. Of course, if one of them wishes to voluntarily perform what another asks of him, rather than suffer a later attempt on his life or some form of challenge or torture, then that is quite acceptable. Jockeying for status constantly goes on below the surface, with all the members of the band demonstrating their skill and power on their human targets or on opponents in battle, in order to convince the other raksha that they are unassailable. Open dueling is moderately common but viewed as somewhat lacking in style. A proper noble is so obviously pre-eminent that he doesn't need to duel.

These raksha nobles have a great appreciation of art, and they particularly delight in kidnaping poets, minstrels and artists or warriors who epitomize skill in battle or even young lovers whose passion for each other is a thing of beauty. However, they associate beauty with passion of some sort. They would find no beauty in mathematics or in a perfectly cast spell, if there were no actual passion associated with it. They prefer to harvest dreams from their captives at their leisure, in their elegantly appointed tents, where the walls are hung with silks woven from the grief of children and the sand is covered with carpets threaded with the hopelessness of discarded concubines.

These raksha are also fond of amusing jokes and witty humor. Unfortunately for the subjects of these jokes, the punchline is often a human writhing in pain, discovering the loss of his most beloved wife or child or dying miserably a few bare inches away from salvation. Notorious raksha jests include such witticisms as taking the form of an asp in order to bite a woman's naked foot, replacing a favorite necklace with an glamoured scorpion, promising a man wealth if he will eat the flesh of his pet dog and then feeding him the flesh of his own son, blinding a woman and leaving her to die of thirst within sight of an oasis and so on. Southern Fair Folk make an art of such amusements and compete to create particularly witty ironies. This is one of the main arts of their Entertainers, together with storytelling, playing upon the harp and weaving human dreams into clothing and tent-hangings.

The Fair Folk of the distant South dwell in tent encampments or, occasionally, in obsidian and marble fortresses hidden in the depths of the desert. Several bands of raiders often share the same dwellings but live separately from each other within those dwellings, like groups of cats, and do not interfere with the possessions or human slaves of the other bands. Diplomats from the separate bands handle any vital messages or discussions, such as reports of Exalted in the area. Infractions of these unspoken rules have been known to cause vicious inter-band warfare and result in the destruction of the Freehold and the scattering of the bands.

The keynotes for these Fair Folk are speed, beauty, art and a mordantly vicious sense of humor. Few of them would support a new crusade. Humans are food to be exploited and targets for wit, certainly, and worth nothing in themselves, but destroying them all would leave these desert raksha short of nourishment and amusement. However, one should not imagine that these Fair Folk *like* humans or value any of them beyond what pleasure they may give. While some of these raksha trade with the Guild, it is a highly uncertain relationship and liable to frequent betrayals by raksha nobles who desire particular Guildsmen or cannot restrain themselves from a charming jest that came to mind at an unfortunate moment. The Guild tends to trade with fixed encampments and Freeholds rather than with single bands, as this provides an easier location for it to bring its slaves to.

Feared bands of the distant South include the group led by Ali of the Last Whisper, which dwells in **the Encampment of the Copper Rose**, and the group led by Farame Silvereyes, which travels between dwellings but, for the moment, has taken shelter at the fortress of **Goujuen,** also known as **the Infinite City**. Ali holds to the classic methods and the classic legends and chooses to refrain from attacking villages or oases that display certain charms against the Fair Folk. He believes that, by doing so, he makes his legend all the stronger, and he knows that he can break those particular charms if hunger makes it necessary to drop the pretence. Some others in his band, led by a young noble named Rimoah, disagree with him, but they have not yet dared to rebel openly. The Encampment of the Copper Rose is a set of silken tents shared by four different bands. Ali's band is unquestionably the most powerful, but he and his group carefully avoid antagonizing the others. Farame Silvereyes is a minstrel with a voice that could lure a baby from his mother's breast, and young men and women come running to her, begging to be taken away to share her bed. The Infinite City is a strange fortress of obsidian and gold (actually the remains of an ancient Solar Manse). The half-dozen bands that live there are all of equivalent strength and constantly feud while attempting to discover its secrets. None of them have yet mapped the Manse's full geometries or located its Hearthstone.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Dispassionate prankster teaching the cruelty of life.
Conviction: Alluring minstrel.
Temperance: Diplomat to other bands.
Valor: Lone rider of the desert.
Willpower: Leader planning expansion.

The West

The West is the most sparsely populated of the five directions and, as a result, one of the most strongly touched by the Wyld. Raksha live both on the many islands of the Great Western Ocean and also under it.

As in the South, the Fair Folk's interactions with mortals are determined by the sparse mortal population of the region. Unlike in the South, where Ikerre's efforts reshaped the land itself, great forces were never deployed to stabilize the West.

The result is that mortal settlements are tightly surrounded with wards against the Fair Folk, who are common and attracted to the few islands of prey in the great sea of dull, lifeless water that makes up the direction to their eyes. Yet, at the same time, their predation is less severe, as there are many more Wyld areas for them to live in, and mortals and their gods are much more alert to the presence of the raksha among them.

The Southwest: The Fair Folk of the Southwest know neither fear nor remorse. They feed on the pain and desperation and fear of their victims, sucking the dreams and passions from the boiled flesh of their prey. For them, nothing can be freely given. Anything worth having must be taken by force. They are too enamored of the sensations of the world to wish to destroy it, and indeed they have no objection to civilization. The flesh and souls of city-bred humans are a pleasant and palatable change from those of island-bred tribesmen.

These raksha dwell on islands in tribal groups, each having its own sets of initiatory ceremonies, customs, tattoos and carved wooden masks. It is traditional for each raksha to carve and paint his own mask, marking it with symbols representing power and strength. The tribes are ruled by the oldest and most sea-crafty raksha, rather than the most powerful ones. Those take the role of warleaders and captain the outrigger canoes that go out in search of prey. The Fair Folk who rule the tribes maintain their positions by also controlling the tribe's tame siaka and squid. Warleaders who go against their wishes too often may end up having lethal "accidents" in the middle of a raid.

Raids are typically made against fleets or single boats rather than islands or archipelagoes. The Southwestern raksha are perfectly well aware of the concept of overfishing an area and can apply it to their own raids for human flesh and souls. If they prey overmuch on a particular island, then the humans will either leave it or put up such defenses of charms and warriors that it becomes impossible to raid there further. Better and easier to take their prey from humans who are already abroad on the sea. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. If a raksha raiding party happens to see some humans alone on a beach that they are passing, they will not pass up such an opportunity, or if the humans take care to avoid the seas near the raksha's island, then grinding hunger will drive the Fair Folk to raid settlements. However, as a rule, the raksha will attack only boats. This practice also allows them to use their tamed "pets" to herd the human boats and to prevent the humans from escaping by throwing themselves into the sea to drown and from thinking that they can swim to safety.

These Fair Folk dress in paint, tattoos and little else. They wear no armor, for they do not know fear, and they carry light weapons, javelins and daggers and slings made from tanned human skin. Diplomats and Entertainers both have their places in the tribes, though true status comes from warcraft and sea-craftiness. It is often necessary for these tribes to negotiate territory with other Southwestern raksha, and this is when the Diplomats prove their worth — or, alternatively, spy on the other tribes and bring back the necessary terms and information for a good satisfying war. Entertainers are storytellers, carvers, drummers and torturers. They are skilled at taking the flesh from humans to boil down for dreams.

It would be easier to list who the Southwestern raksha are *not* at war with than to detail their current enemies. The answer is, in short, that they are at peace with nobody and at war with nearly everybody, ranging from the humans in nearby islands to Exalts who can offer them an interesting challenge to other tribes of Fair Folk. They have a particular dislike for the more Western and Northwestern raksha and will attack them even in preference to capturing humans. More than once, a mortal boat has escaped with no fatalities or losses because two groups of Fair Folk had assaulted each other on sight, and the waves ran scarlet with raksha blood. Such battles tend to produce violent storms and high winds and to leave shoals of fish dead and floating belly up the next day.

If other raksha wish to approach the Southwestern Fair Folk diplomatically, then there are two ways of doing so. One method is for the envoy to come in obvious peace, carrying no weapons, and to take no offence, however great the verbal insult, until he has reached the leader of the tribe and can speak to her. It is then customary for the diplomat to present gifts, and to boast about his own skills, before coming to the point of his mission. The other method is for the diplomat to arrive by stealth, reaching the island undetected and only to revealing himself once he has arrived behind the leader of the tribe. While this method carries

more of a risk of being attacked by the native Fair Folk on the basis of hair-trigger reaction, it carries more prestige if successful. Joining a tribe requires initiation ceremonies, tattooing, the carving of a wooden mask, the slaying of dangerous prey solo and otherwise demonstrating one's fitness to be a part of the tribe. Even then, it may take decades for a new arrival to be fully trusted.

From time to time, a small group of young raksha, or a single older, experienced one, leaves the tribe's island to explore or to undertake a particular mission. While such Fair Folk provide good material to the tribe's drummers and storytellers and will be duly celebrated if they perform great deeds, they are unusual among their kind. The Fair Folk of the Southwest are bloody, violent and hungry. They have few great dreams to fill their empty spirits and are, for the most part, content to live out an endless cycle of hunger and war and hunger again.

In the Southwest, famed tribes include **the Drummers of the Endless Wave**, who dwell on an nameless island surrounded by dead volcanoes, and **the Fanged Spears**, a dreaded group of bloodthirsty Fair Folk who even go so far as to attack Guild ships. The Drummers of the Endless Wave are led by a mated pair of Fair Folk, No-mind and No-desire, whose original names have been lost to the ocean. No-mind is the planner of the pair, scheming to increase the tribe's influence and watching constantly for attempts to usurp him. One of his eyes was lost together with his name, but he replaced it with a faceted emerald. No-desire swims naked with the siaka, his long blood-scarlet hair floating behind him, and his mask is set with ruby scars. The two hold an iron domination over their tribe but fear any discovery of their names. The Fanged Spears wear masks of ivory, stain their hair white and paint their bodies in white on white. They are led by Howling Ripper, who wears nail sheaths of lapis and coral at moments of leisure so that she does not slice up those near to her. While they are known and feared for their attacks on shipping, few are aware of the Fanged Spears' hidden alliance with the Lintha, and fewer still know of the strange rituals that they have begun to practice. Howling Ripper is much amused by the exoticism of Yozi worship and, as ever, her followers obey her.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Friend to sharks.
Conviction: Navigator and explorer.
Temperance: Musician and cook.
Valor: Tribal warleader.
Willpower: Sea-crafty sorcerer.

The West: Deep beneath the sea lie the pearl and coral palaces of the raksha of the West and Northwest, and far below any range of human divers are their shadowy sea caves. These secret dwellings are beautifully and ornately decorated with all that the sea provides and with many jewels and figureheads taken from sunken ships. At the center of all such dwellings is a great hall, where captured humans are kept for general entertainment and nourishment. Only the ruler of a Freehold or her most trusted counselors may take a human for private amusement, as the prey are generally understood to be communal property and are treated as such.

The male raksha come swimming to the surface to hunt, swarming over unsuspecting ships or tearing them apart with glamour, then carry the survivors down beneath the surface in cocoons of air. Those humans who survive long enough for such a fate find it a cruel and horrible one. They die slowly, wrapped in glamours and nightmares, screaming in their sleep and wakening to worse, as their dreams are torn asunder and violated. As their souls die, so too does the air in their cocoons grow foul, till finally they perish in both spirit and body and their corpses are given to the crabs that scuttle across the floor.

Male Western raksha take a great pride in their weapons — nets, tridents and spears — and sometimes go on land under glamours to seek out smiths who will forge them good metal spears and tridents. If they are caught while on land, they will offer three services in exchange for being spared. However, they are liars and not to be trusted and will seek revenge at the first opportunity. The men wear sailcloth or fish-scale kilts and heavy necklaces and bracelets of pearls or jewelry taken from the bodies of the dead.

Female raksha of this region prefer to hunt alone, rather than in groups like the men. They ascend to the surface and pursue isolated prey — ships' lookouts, watchmen, lonely pearl divers, shepherds on cliff tops or children playing alone on the beach. The raksha sing to them in tones that mingle with the waves, cruel but sweet songs of the beauty of mingling one's blood with the sea, the passion of dying in the arms of the "women of the waves," as some call them, and the sweet ecstasy of surrender to white hands and red lips and white teeth. And they speak nothing but the truth. Those who follow the songs and come down into the water die in surrendered bliss, as the raksha women drink down their blood and their dreams.

Sometimes, the female Fair Folk go hunting in groups, when a particularly large harvest of human prisoners are required. In such a case, the more magically skilled of the women sing up storms and raise great waves, while their sisters seize the hapless sailors whose boats have been shattered and drag them down beneath the ocean to the palaces and caves that shall be their homes for the rest of their pitiable lives. The women do not carry weapons. Instead, they rely on the sweetness of their songs and the



power of their spells, and they gird themselves with fish-scale kilts and deck themselves with pearls and rouge.

For raksha, the Western Fair Folk are positively lazy. They only raid for humans when they need a new supply of dreams, they require an actual challenge or significant provocation before going to war, and they are, for the most part, content with their undersea palaces. Their art is drawn-out and elegant: They sing, they play their harps, they weave great tapestries of pearl and silver and despair to hang on their walls, and they carve endless murals into the walls of their Freeholds. If they capture a human minstrel or storyteller, they take great pains to draw her repertoire from her, to add it to their own, before supping on her dreams and her life. They are rocked in the great cradle of the sea, floating on the surface or hidden in its depths, and perhaps this has given them some measure of stability and order — and has, in turn, reduced their ties to the Wyld.

Diplomacy between Western raksha Freeholds is generally an excuse for cultural exchange and the loan of artists, rather than having much to do with war. Actual strife is rare and requires a very deliberate and pointed insult to the entire Freehold or to its leaders. A shortage of humans tends to result in all affected groups of raksha combining their forces for mass raids on human settlements, with the female raksha singing up storms, while the male ones seize captives. Entertainers are considered to be the effective property of the Freehold to which they belong and are expected to constantly provide some form of art for that Freehold or to go elsewhere if required — they are birds in gilded cages. While most of them accept these restrictions, a few passionate ones have taken to journeying between Freeholds (and then escaping from them) of their own accord or even going elsewhere in Creation to discover new works and new passions.

The Western Fair Folk readily deal with the Guild and keep to the letter of their word in bargains, paying with pearls and gems from the depths of the sea and treasure from ancient wrecks. These raksha do not return soul-broken slaves, since their victims die. The usual practice is for the Guild slave ships to sail on particular routes if they

have captives for the raksha and, if the raksha are in need of human dreams, for the raksha to come swimming up and pay for fresh prey. Many a slave has heard inhuman singing outside the portholes as he lay in chains and mistakenly thought that whatever this fate might be, it could not be worse than lifetime labor on some desolate island. They typically discover their error too late.

These raksha are lazy, beautiful and crafty, and they have absolutely no regard for humans but have grown to love their own existences. They understand death enough that they can lure humans to their arms by singing about how beautiful it is, but at the same time, they also understand it well enough that they fear to die. They are artists and creators and dangerous hunters, but they feed at the sea's breast like idle children and could dream the centuries away nibbling at the edges of Creation. If someone could rouse them into a crusade, they would be dangerous, but it is difficult to see how this could be done. Most of them lack any desire to see the Wyld break down the walls of reality, when they are happy enough as they are.

In the West and the Northwest, **the Nacre Whirlpool** and **Winding Stairs** command awe, fear and horror. The Nacre Whirlpool has lain beneath the waves for centuries, and a foam-fringed whirlpool lies directly above the mother-of-pearl palace, giving it its name. Those who must pass near it know its dangers, but they also know that the payment of a living victim will allow them unchallenged passage — usually. Ruled by Baron Temmeno, the Fair Folk of this castle are lazy and self-indulgent and have no notion that local Guild representatives are plotting to subsidize a mercenary strike to destroy their Freehold. Winding Stairs, on the other hand, is a place of mystery and dreams, where even the native Fair Folk rarely speak to one another but attempt to enrapture each other in illusions while draining their human captives. The inhabitants of the palace are not sure themselves who rules it, but proclaim true fealty to their monarch. A number of them are also members of the Jet Court and delight in entertaining visitors from there. Beneath the silver-and-opal palace lies an ancient deposit of starmetal, which struck the ocean floor there during the Usurpation and was lost from the records of the Sidereals.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Watcher of the tides, guardian of the waters.
Conviction: Sweet singer of the beauty of death.
Temperance: Weaver of passions.
Valor: Hunter of the depths.
Willpower: Proud warrior seeking challenges.

The Five Courts

These courts (and the households associated with them) are largely independent of direction or elemental affiliation and are accustomed to traveling between suitable Wyld areas when they are bored with their current location or whether they feel the need for a new target human population. However, the fact of being temporarily planted in a particular area means that they will, at that point, have a higher-than-usual number of local raksha resident at the court. If the Pearl Court should be in the Northern Wylds, it will, at that point, have more Northern Fair Folk present than those from other directions. Such local hangers-on tend to be minions and guards and pages and minstrels and similar servants of a lower degree rather than the nobility of the court. Local nobility will visit, but they are unlikely to remain for any length of time unless they are affiliated with the court's particular aspect. A Compassion-centered raksha is unlikely to be overly interested by the goings-on at the Pearl Court, which centers on Willpower, or wish to stay there for more than a season or two.

A court will customarily have a single ruler who holds sole putative authority. He or she will be assisted in this task by a group of counselors, who customarily consist of the heads of several households (in practice, those who have declared fealty to that court) and other notable Fair Folk of power. Unfortunately, adherence to a particular aspect of character, be it Compassion or Conviction or whatever, does not imply a similar type of personality, and dissension among the counselors or between the counselors and ruler is as common in a court as in any Fair Folk Freehold. Indeed, the fact that a court contains Fair Folk from across Creation, who may already be inclined to feud or plot against each other due to the differences in their nature, only makes matters worse. Of course, some Fair Folk consider this an added reason to join a court and not a problem at all.

As the courts all exist in a sublime belief as to the superiority of their chosen value, they rarely go to war against each other with any real sincerity. Mutual derision and condescension are common, but actual discourtesy is rare, unless the raksha involved actually wishes to provoke a battle. Vaguely diplomatic visits between the courts occur several times a year, and being sent on one can be a signal honor or an attempt to dispose of a junior enemy by sending her into a metaphorical nest of vipers. These visits are more dangerous than the usual visiting of Fair Folk between different Freeholds. They do not often concern territory, as it is not common for two courts to be so close to each other that territory becomes an issue. They are more likely to concern rare or fabled items, particularly favored mortals (or Exalted) or long, drawn-out feuds that have been carefully tended to provide the maximum emotion and entertainment value for all concerned.

Every court has its own understood customs, which may never be fully expressed, but which have occasionally been codified in various forms by minstrels and artists. Naturally, few live their entire lives under such restrictive conditions. The codes are more guidelines or excuses for feuds and accusations of improper conduct than laws to bind the Fair Folk of that court.

The nobles mentioned in each court are by no means the only nobles present — or even the only powerful nobles present. The Storyteller is encouraged to add more prominent characters. However, the nobles listed below are major movers and shakers in the court and would certainly be pointed out to any new arrival as individuals to court or avoid. They are also individuals who might well serve as patrons — or enemies — to young Fair Folk still carving themselves a place in history and fable.

The Ruby Court

While most of the nobles here are slow to rise in the morning, once they have left their beds and their concubines, they are swift to attend Duke Aral's throne room, whether or not the Duke himself is present. It is there that many duels take place — after all, why have them in private and waste the spectacle? — and that general plans are laid for hunts and raids. The Guild also bring its latest groups of slaves there, on occasions when it has a new selection of fresh meat, and Hakasane is often found sitting in a corner, surrounded by her animal pets. Human ravagers are only allowed to attend the throne room if they are accompanied by a raksha who will take responsibility for their conduct, as few of this court accept that humans can possibly equal raksha in sheer Conviction.

Again, whether or not the Duke is present, midday and evening feasts take place in the throne room. Shikuzi rarely leaves the place, even at night when all the others have gone to their beds, and the sound of his loom continues under the evening stars. Conspiracies meet throughout the day and night. Most serious plans are formulated during periods away from the court, such as during hunts or diplomatic visits to local raksha Freeholds, but it is acceptable, if unfashionable, to plot treason in one's own bedroom. Another frequent feature of the court is funerals for recently slain human lovers, followed by feuds with the Fair Folk who seduced the dead lovers away from their suitors. It is easy to find a casual mentor in this court, as most nobles are delighted to gain a new catspaw or ally.

Customs of the Ruby Court:

- It is unthinkable for a member of the Ruby Court to retract an action or statement once made.
- It is improper for a member of the Ruby Court to discard a current passion, enmity, concubine or fashion, unless he has another to take up in its place and with equal vehemence.
- It is unlikely that a member of the Ruby Court will react mildly to a contradiction.
- It is likely that a member of the Ruby Court will deal with the Guild. If the humans are moved to sell each other, why should the raksha argue?
- It is proper for a member of the Ruby Court to duel at a moment's notice or to accept some other form of challenge.
- It is required that a member of this court act according to his beliefs rather than according to the necessities of the moment.

Relations With Other Groups:

Duke Aral barely has the attention span to take an interest in the other courts. In consequence, he is overtly praised for his even-handed tolerance, his clear passion for mutual coexistence, his alliances and his ability to accept that other Fair Folk have dreams different from his own. In private, however, many raksha nobles scheme against him and plot their ascension to his throne. This results in the sort of behind-the-scenes treachery and backstabbing that many Fair Folk find a thoroughly enjoyable pastime — so much so that there have been few serious attempts to usurp Duke Aral so far, given that it's such fun to embroil oneself in plots against him.

Shikuzi, backed by Shusai's capable threats, deals with most of the Ruby Court's outward politics. At the moment, he is attempting to ascertain the strength of several nearby Lunar groups. He is, as yet, uncertain whether they will make suitable quarries or opponents for the court's Warriors or whether they should be dealt with by treaties, or better yet, total avoidance. As it would be improper for him to reconsider any decision that he made on the subject, he is attempting to gather sufficient information before making such a decision. Shikuzi is also establishing links with other Fair Folk Freeholds in the South and East. The recent arrival of the Ruby Court, barely a decade ago, means that social matters of respective status have not yet been fully established. In practice, this means plenty of duels and other contests and a good supply of raw meat for any visiting raksha who prefer the shape of lions.

Those who track the Ruby Court's movements point out that its movement a decade ago from the distant North to the Southeast coincided strangely with the Roseblack's arrival in the North, backed by several Tepet legions. It is, to be certain, not clear whether the Ruby Court might have moved due to fear on the part of Duke Aral or whether it might have been due to some crafty diplomacy between Shikuzi and the Roseblack. If the latter case, she had one enemy less to dispose of, and the Ruby Court in general had been in the North for nearly a century and was quite ready to accept any plausible excuse to move elsewhere. However, any Fair Folk (or other) who could prove active collusion between the Exalt and the raksha would have a piece of information that might topple a court — or serve as a key to very rapid advancement.

Leader:

• **Duke Aral (Xia)** — Duke Aral is a courtier as well as a warrior. Unfortunately, he is a better warrior than he is a courtier, and worse still, he understands the precepts of his court as urging total self-indulgence in whatever he desires. He whiles away his days with an endless stream of beautiful blonde women who he claims to recognize as his one true love. They die on his blade when he (inevitably) finds them betraying him with one of his counselors, and he laments them, then returns to staring into the great mirror that hangs beside his throne.

Nobles:

• **Shikuzi the Weaver (Scribe)** — Duke Aral's most trusted counselor, Shikuzi has friends throughout the court. While many suspect that he is behind Duke Aral's policies, few would dare accuse him to his face. He appears to be a tall man, swathed in silken scarves, who never draws his scimitar, but spends most of his day at his loom, which is twice the height of a man. Shikuzi only uses hair from living humans with which to thread his loom and is constantly seeking for new shades and varieties. The cloths that he produces are usually cursed with some manner of misfortune, but as a gift, they cannot be refused without insulting him. If required to duel, he invariably asks Shusai to take his place. Few challenge him to a duel.

• **Shusai of the Immaculate Blade (Cataphract)** — Shuasi took her name as a direct challenge to the Immaculate Order and constantly lusts to test herself against its monks. Her enthusiasm for personal dueling and new challenges has resulted in, oddly enough, a lack of truly competent warriors at the Ruby Court. Shusai cannot hold herself back from challenging anyone who might actually be a serious threat to her, and as a consequence, they frequently die on her blade. Some point at this as the true reason for Duke Aral's alliances with minor households, saying that he requires their support in order to maintain the court's strength.

• **Hakasane (Eshu)** — She is one of Duke Aral's counselors, but Hakasane's particular importance comes from her ability to deal with the Guild. She appears to be a twelve-year-old girl, with curly blonde hair and blue eyes, and is fond of carrying rabbits or doves or other small harmless pets around with her. She is as dangerous at the bargaining table as she is with a curdling dream bow, and her dogged tenaciousness has won the court many fine slaves. Hakasane frequently travels outside the Ruby Court on errands of trade and slave-handling and is always accompanied by four mute human guards who are hopelessly devoted to her. Generations of Guild traders have come to know and loathe her, as she has traded with them and with their fathers before them.

The Lapis Court

Neshi of the Double Whips is one of the first in the Lapis Court to rise, and she spends the first few hours of the day slaying any of her children who have disappointed her or calligraphing poems about the beauty of innocence. Equally, other members of the court often undertake matters of discipline or art at this time of day — usually in public, of course, so that their grace may be generally appreciated.

Neshi does not hold a formal public audience. Indeed, she prefers to behave merely like any other noble and to mingle with the general throngs for most of the day, wandering around the court's tents and watching the general activity. A visitor who does not take steps to bribe or please local nobles is liable to spend most of the day trying to find her among the swirling crowds. Given the court's ethos, the place is rife with humans who have been broken to varying

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Passionate romancer.
Conviction: Loyalist warrior.
Temperance: Cautious investigator.
Valor: Impatient duelist.
Willpower: Loner seeking to perfect his self-control.

Children of the Diamond Court

The Diamond Court is one of the great raksha cautionary tales. Once, centuries ago, it was the court that celebrated Conviction, but it set itself against all four of the other courts, declaring that Conviction was the cardinal Virtue and all others mere imitations. Warriors of the Diamond Court also raided many human villages and left false traces behind that cast blame on the other courts or on neighboring Freeholds, in an attempt to draw the other courts and Freeholds into alliance against the humans. The nobles of the Diamond Court and its ruler Queen Kanatharitha justified their actions by arguing that true Conviction made all means not merely possible, but actively necessary.

The Diamond Court was taken by surprise by an attack from the Tepet legions, who penetrated deep into the Wyld with the help of Guild experts, sorcery and powerful Charms. If some raksha nobles might also have supplied assistance, then it was kept well secret. The legions cast down and utterly destroyed the Diamond Court, burned its palace, slew the Queen and left the remains to the Wyld. The raksha hold that some of the younger members of the court were taken to be sold as slaves by the Guild, including the Queen's twin babes. If this is so, no trace of them has been found for centuries. The Ruby Household rose to become a court in the absence of the Diamond Court, though numerous petty lords claimed the throne until Duke Aral finally seized power.

degrees of servility, and particularly favored Ravagers are almost as well-regarded as a petty Fair Folk noble. (Needless to say, this state of affairs only lasts for a year or two, while the Ravager is still young, beautiful and amusing.)

This court is not overly prone to dueling (in other words, there are only a couple of duels taking place on any given day) but has a long and enthusiastic tradition of ambushes and torture. The concept of protecting one's loved ones has been adopted by the nobles of the court, who consider that it extends to visiting vigorous and painful revenge on anyone who touches those humans and Fair Folk who are a noble's personal "property." However, the court does enjoy great hunts of dangerous prey, and such an occasion is one of the few times when a noble can be reasonably sure that he can depend on his fellows. To come back with no victims or quarry is far more shameful than to neglect the opportunity to take revenge on an enemy.

Afternoon and evening feasts take place under the stars, in the open air, with musical accompaniment and dramatic entertainment from Fair Folk minstrels and human pets or victims. Neshi makes any important announcements at such times and also receives Guild merchants with their wares. It is the custom of the Lapis Court that Neshi purchases all slaves directly and then presents them to her nobles in return for suitable gifts. This irritates the Guild, as it has no convenient way of driving up prices — and, in fact, many suspect this is why she does so. However, this also means that the present of a human pet is one of the quickest ways for other Fair Folk to win the favor of a Lapis Court noble.

Customs of the Lapis Court:

• It is unthinkable that any creature should lack feelings. Therefore, use the hearts of others until they bleed.

• It is improper to fail to take into account another raksha's emotions. Remember that she will hate you for your deeds, and delight in it.

• It is unlikely that any member of the Lapis Court will lack a true love or a sworn enemy.

• It is likely that a member of the Lapis Court would rather collect her own human pets than trade with the Guild, as such affairs have more intimacy.

• It is proper that the members of the Lapis Court indulge in passion rather than destruction, except where the second results in the first.

• It is required that all members of the Lapis Court should have known both love and hatred themselves. Only those who have known emotions can fully savor their flavor in others.

Relations With Other Groups:

The Lapis Court would love to pursue long, twisted relationships with other groups, Solars for preference, but Lunars are also good for protracted romances and bitter revenge. The Dragon-Blooded are anybody's meat. A relationship with a Terrestrial Exalt is only worth mentioning if it's lasted at least a decade.

The Lapis Court is distant enough from any local imperial garrisons not to have direct feuds with them, though the Lunar Ka-Koshu, who claims domain nearby, is profoundly offended by the Fair Folk's presence and suspects Neshi (accurately) of plotting to bring destruction in from the Deep Wyld. He is currently seeking help urgently and slaying occasional nobles in the meantime when they go hunting alone.

The Lapis Court has a bad reputation among the other courts. While no Fair Folk ever objects to a duel or to a vigorous feud, the nobles of the Lapis Court's overly protective/possessive attitude toward their human pets and those raksha's willingness to strike from ambush, has killed or crippled many visiting nobles. As such, only the competent or the expendable are sent there as diplomats — which, in turn, has lowered the Lapis Court's expectations of the other courts and has done much to promote the Lapis nobles' own enthusiasm for a new Balorian Crusade. On the other hand, it is generally acknowledged that few outside the Lapis Court are so skilled at exhorting true love and devotion from human pets. Those who appreciate the taste of these emotions often seek aid from the Lapis Court.

Leader:

• **Neshi of the Double Whips (Imperial Raksha)** — Neshi always goes about veiled and only allows her entourage of human children to see her naked face. She carries paired whip handles, which create long whips of pure light when she shakes them and calls their names, Angvrbod and Seta. Her tastes incline toward the pure, sweet emotions of young children, and she does not suffer her pets to be molested by others of the court, in case this behavior should taint their innocence. However, if any of them become attached to one another or to someone else and feel an emotion greater than their love for her, she disposes of them cruelly that same night. Neshi is a consummate politician and intends to bring down Duke Aral and the Ruby Court, as she fears that, otherwise, cooperation between households and between less powerful raksha may become more common and threaten the undisputed power of the rulers. She is still close to the Wyld, and she secretly supports the Church of Balor and hopes for a new crusade.

Nobles:

• **Lady Ayana (Courtier)** — Ayana came originally from the Far Northeast, and her chambers are always as cold as the North, wherever the Lapis Court may be, and hung with heavy, white furs. She is, in all respects, a beautiful woman with long black hair, except for her legs and feet, which are those of a deer. Lady Ayana likes to go by stealth to human gatherings, in particular dances, and join the throng, passing as merely another human woman. While there, she selects a lover and leaves the gathering with him. The lover will be found the next morning, frozen to death, with the marks of deer hooves up and down his corpse. The Lady expresses her Compassion for humans by

giving them a chance of noticing her. If anyone looks down while she is dancing with them, they will see her hooves below the skirts of her dress, and she will flee the company with a mocking laugh. While Lady Ayana is not the most dangerous or competent of Fair Folk, her fondness for frequent visits to human lands makes her very well-informed on local goings-on, and Neshi relies on her as a useful and effective spy.

• **Nlassa of the Lion's Mane (Anarch)** — Nlassa originally hails from the distant South, and she still prowls the court in the form of a black-furred lion when the mood strikes her. She is an open member of the Church of Balor and constantly attempts to persuade Neshi toward a new crusade — or at least into more frequent raids on human settlements. As such, Nlassa serves as a convenient lightning rod to polarize the court in most debates, and Neshi uses the Anarch to gauge current conservative raksha opinion on many things. Nlassa drives humans to insanity, feeling that they are happier in that state, and then feeds on their ravings and their pitiful helplessness until they are drained of all will and soul. She is a frequent customer of the Guild and a crafty and strategic raider. When she takes human form, she is easily identifiable by the great, black lion's-mane collar that she wears and by her golden, slitted eyes.

• **Janiera the Winter Rose (Ornamental Raksha)** — This raksha is genuine and sincere in her Compassion for humans. She is also genuine and sincere in her agreement with other Fair Folk that one should do what one wishes with humans. She agrees with *everyone*, sincerely and honestly and openly, whatever they may say or suggest. Her human pets swiftly learn that she is totally unpredictable and fear her more than many of the more obvious sadists of the court. Her skills at crafting dreams to suit a particular subject's inner longings are rivaled by few among the raksha, and she is widely renowned for her talents. Neshi herself comes to Janiera for dreams that will let her children sleep happily. However, Janiera is the last person that any sane Fair Folk would want to involve in a conspiracy because she will helplessly betray it to anyone who asks about it, swayed by the latest opinion that is presented to her. On the other hand, her skills and contacts make her a valuable ally — if only she can be trusted *this* time…

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Court loyalist.
Conviction: Visiting sensualist.
Temperance: Stern ascetic.
Valor: Noble protector of humans.
Willpower: Glamour worker and destroyer of human wills.

The Pearl Court

Duels in the Pearl Court are frequent but rarely go beyond a significant proof of mastery. They are generally not as vicious as in other courts, nor do they provoke quite the same degree of permanent feud. A Pearl Court noble who loses a duel may well bear a grudge against his opponent, but he will also blame himself for the loss, feeling that his own Willpower cannot have been strong enough. This leads to a constantly self-loathing group of nobles, often testing themselves against each other and trying to improve themselves the remainder of the time.

As such, everyone in the Pearl Court is constantly busy. Nobles rise early and practice their particular skills, playing on lute or drums or flute, testing their weapons or leading raids out into the nearby seas and islands. Those who stay at the court must also struggle against Nehemeth's petty strictures, which range from approved colors of clothing and styles of fashion to legislature as to how nobles must (or must not) treat their human slaves and how duels must be conducted. All the court realize that this is merely their ruler's way of proving her own dominance, but so far, none have challenged her successfully.

Humans cannot merely acknowledge that they are worthless slaves. They must constantly have the point rubbed in their faces, as the raksha of this court feel the need to prove their power by demonstrating it. Showing kindness to a human, or giving one respite, is viewed as a possible sign of weakness and a lack of will. This attitude pleases the Guild, as the Pearl Court goes through slaves very fast indeed and is always willing to buy more.

Large-scale feasts or parties are rare in the Pearl Court, with small gatherings or private festivities being more common. Even Nehemeth invites only her inner circle when she hosts an entertainment or a council. It is also customary for a noble to invite at least one enemy to any party that she hosts, in order to demonstrate her power and her ability to let down her guard in this enemy's presence. Under these particular circumstances, the enemy in question is supposed to refrain from dueling till the next day, on pain of looking socially gauche. Caustic wit, however, is not only permitted, but expected.

Customs of the Pearl Court:

• It is unthinkable that any noble of the Pearl Court should willingly choose to obey another.
• It is improper for any noble of the Pearl Court to give up something that she desires.
• It is unlikely that any noble of the Pearl Court will admit to weakness.
• It is likely that a noble of the Pearl Court will attempt to assert his will in respect to others at all times.
• It is proper for a noble of the Pearl Court to rule over lesser beings who have not the strength to resist him.
• It is required that a noble of the Pearl Court avenge any failed attempt to control her.

Relations With Other Groups:

The Pearl Court sees its role as one of clear superiority and leadership. The raksha nobles there hold that the other four courts weaken their purity of focus and their strength of will by favoring other Virtues. Fortunately, the Pearl Court itself lacks a clear focus. Nehemeth keeps her own counsel about her plans for the future, and factions in the court attempt to sway her to their side, either to support a new crusade or to enthrall still greater numbers of humans. Nehemeth's own hidden opinion is that even the most powerful raksha can only rule a limited area and that her current reach is as much as she can realistically extend her will over. As such, she allows both sides to think that they have a hope of persuading her to join them and enjoys her control over the court. The focus of diplomatic missions to other courts depends on whether she is currently conciliating the pro-crusaders or the others and on her reports from her spies.

While this court has been in the distant West for a while, its location on a behemoth and the behemoth's habit of swimming around of its own accord mean that both Guild slave traders and other expected visitors have trouble finding their way to the Pearl Court. Fortunately, the court's frequent raids on nearby islands — and even, on rare occasions, on Lintha or Guild ships — means that there are usually raksha in the nearby oceans, noble or common, who can point the way to the court and who may even be willing to suggest suitable guests or provide an introduction to a noble.

Unfortunately, the court's long tenure means that it has had the opportunity to make a great many enemies locally. Not only have the nobles of the Pearl Court displeased several nearby Lunars and passing Solars, but they have also angered the Silver Prince of the Skullstone Archipelago, who values his populace. Fair Folk raiders have no use for the undead, but they take great pleasure in the anguish of living sailors from the archipelago who find themselves denied the chance of undead immortality. Even the Lintha would be glad to have the Pearl Court elsewhere, though they have no significant grievances against it. The court's only local ally is the Guild, which doesn't want to lose a stable market. Other Fair Folk are speculating as to whether the Pearl Court may be preparing to move elsewhere in the Wyld — and, if so, where it will go.

Leader:

• **Judge Nehemeth (Panjandrum)** — Nehemeth has a body that is only human in form. Her flesh is living bronze, her eyes are rubies, and her long fingernails are carved ivory. Her opinion of Willpower is that it is defined by a raksha noble's ability to control all that lies around her, and as such, she never moves except when challenged to



a duel, instead sitting like a spider at the center of a web and issuing strict judgments on any who defy her laws. Her human pets and raksha pages are responsible for changing her robes, polishing her body and copying down her pronouncements. Nehemeth knows that she cannot be sure the other raksha are obeying her unless she gives them something to potentially rebel against, and she spends day and night constructing or altering the court's laws, leaving actual diplomacy to counselors and Entertainers.

Nobles:

• **Coraydo (Anarch)** — Coraydo is an arrogant, swaggering, bullying warrior, and as such, he typifies the Pearl Court to many whom he meets. He wears nacreous scale armor and styles himself the Warrior of the Pearl, constantly seeking out new adversaries with whom to duel. He is actually one of the kinder masters in the court to his human slaves, as he rarely considers them worth more than casual orders and absent-minded floggings. Coraydo reserves his true anger and hatred for other raksha or, better yet, Exalts. He believes that the only way to assert his own will is to conquer Creation all the way to the gods and beyond, just to be sure that they are not using him as a pawn. Nehemeth finds it convenient to let him lead many of the raids and hunts. She has no desire to lose so potent a warrior, but at the same time, the longer he remains within the court, the more likely it is that they will come into conflict and she will be forced to kill him. While she does nurture the odd daydream of drinking his blood from his newly flayed skull, practicality causes her to stay her hand and control her impulses for the moment.

• **Dilari of the Sea Foam (Artisan)** — This raksha is one of the most skilled dancers in all Creation. Her feet and hands move with such grace that the very sea is said to hold still to see her, and her skin is whiter than the most luminous pearl. While she has little skill with weapons, her craft is such that she is an ornament to any court or Freehold that she visits. As such, she moves freely across Creation and has so far evaded all plots and machinations to bind her to a particular place. She is also Nehemeth's most useful spy and collaborator. Nehemeth goes so far as to take Dilari's advice on calligraphy and politics. While it would be easy to assume (as many do) that Dilari's sole interests are in her craft and in socializing or romance, she is highly intelligent, and her affinity for Temperance is almost as strong as her affinity for Willpower. As such, she attempts to keep the courts in balance and works to avoid another crusade. She sees it as merely a matter of time before all the Fair Folk are as deeply bound into Creation as the Mountain Folk of the Realm and secretly works toward that.

• **Sweeter Than Honey (Courtier)** — Sweeter Than Honey is a minstrel, an equivocator and a diplomat of the highest order. He was given his current name by a Lunar with whom he formed a brief alliance to dispose of a mutual deathknight annoyance. After avoiding the Lunar's subsequent attempt to kill *him*, Sweeter Than Honey kept the name as a sign of his prowess with words. He is an exceptionally talented and persuasive diplomat, and spends half his time traveling the Wyld with apprentices — who, oddly enough, are rarely seen again. The rest of his time is spent in the Pearl Court, trying to find loopholes in Nehemeth's laws or arguing on behalf of those who have offended against them. Nehemeth finds him useful but knows that he's a very public and obvious ambassador, so she only uses him in cases where she doesn't mind her interference being known. He goes through human slaves at a shocking rate, driving them to sobbing madness and total incoherence while speaking to them in the voices of their parents and loved ones.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Pro-crusader wanting to drown all dry land.
Conviction: Minstrel seeking to convert others to her cause.
Temperance: Paladin honing his skills.
Valor: Fearless diplomat.
Willpower: Paranoid warrior fearing manipulation.

The Opal Court

There are few in the Opal Court who hold that Valor as a Virtue involves self-denial or rigorous self-discipline, and the court as a whole sleeps in and wakes in the late morning or the early afternoon. Servants and pages, of course, rise early to perform necessary services, but their masters and mistresses lie abed well into the day. As many raksha of this court believe that a valorous noble will have similarly valorous servants, petty brawling and fights are common among the nobles' human pets and the lower Fair Folk. When the nobles rise, it is to a leisurely lunch and the planning of pursuits such as hunts, battles and raids. Valor, after all, requires a suitable setting to display itself and a proper length of time for anticipation to rise and crest.

While one might expect this court to be constantly torn apart by dueling — and, indeed, it is a common enough sport here — the Prince has far too many plans for future campaigns to wish to have half his nobles at each other's throats. Prince Japhthia has therefore cunningly set a fashion for challenges of will and glamour rather than actual fighting, and as a result, there are far fewer deaths and serious injuries. Unfortunately, this fad has begun to grow old among the court nobles. It is not only possible, but likely, that bloodshed will soon be in style again.

Newcomers or young Warriors are always welcome on raids, as the nobles of the court consider it only fair to give others a chance to prove themselves. In a similar vein, it is viewed as somewhat pointless (though occasionally necessary) to waste time challenging those weaker than oneself. Where, after all, is the Valor in that? In conse-

quence, this is actually one of the safer courts for weak Fair Folk, as they are less likely to be challenged by those more powerful than them. Of course, they will be regarded as less worthy by those whose opinion counts, but if safety is what a raksha noble seeks, the Opal Court is one place to find it. Prince Japhthia is aware of this and is considering ways to use it to his advantage.

Late afternoons and evenings are full of feasts, contests, assignations, carousing and betrayals. In this respect, the Opal Court is unimaginative and merely copies human or Exalted mannerisms.

Guild representatives are not allowed to visit the court. Instead, human slave trains are met at a distance, and the Guild is paid with rare woods, gold and glamoured trinkets, while the new slaves are put through an obstacle course of sorts as they make their way to the court. This lets the nobles identify promisingly brave and competent humans and weeds out the weak ones who will serve as dream fodder and playthings.

Customs of the Opal Court:

• It is unthinkable for a noble of the Opal Court to show cowardice.

• It is improper for a noble of the Opal Court to admit to fear.

• It is unlikely that a noble of the Opal Court will retreat.

• It is likely that a noble of the Opal Court will take advantage of any situation to show his mettle.

• It is proper for a noble of the Opal Court to acknowledge courage in others.

• It is required that a noble of the Opal Court be an example of Valor to others.

Relations With Other Groups:

Given the current turmoil in Halta, Prince Japhthia is torn — should he be prudent and keep the court well out of it, or should he seize the opportunity and let his nobles ride out to challenge heroes and wage war? Every instinct of his urges him toward the second course of action, but equally, he realizes that a combined attack by the now-experienced armies swarming through Halta could cause the Opal Court serious difficulties. The cause of Valor would not be served by having to abandon the field — not that most of the court would do so, in any case. As a result of this, he has issued orders that small groups of nobles may ride out to seek for adventure and challenges in Halta but that such a group should not contain more than a dozen or so nobles total. Linowan and other nearby countries, however, are fair game.

The Opal Court's reputation among the other courts is variable. The Lapis Court admires its concern for getting the best out of their human servants, the Ruby Court deprecates its lack of Conviction in failing to raid more often, the Pearl Court approves of contests of will but scorns the lack of proper dueling, and the Jet Court begins to wonder whether Prince Japhthia may be joining it soon. All of them, however, object to the Opal Court's habit of harboring weaker Fair Folk who have fled there for refuge, and visiting nobles demanding opponents or satisfaction are common.

The local deities are severely distressed by the Opal Court's presence, both because of the court's raids on local humans and because of the way that the nobles challenge local spirits and petty godlings to battle. The Sidereals have also noticed the Opal Court's activities, as Prince Japhthia's unusual stability and plans have begun to have repercussions in the Tapestry. Though the Prince himself has no effect on the Loom of Fate, the results of his actions in the present and future are a growing warp in the threads.

Leader:

• **Prince Japhthia (Strategos)** — Prince Japhthia accurately claims descent from Prince Balor, though he is unaware that he was a mere by-blow of Balor's, got on a harpist of low rank while the Prince was exploring certain human manners of conquest. Japhthia believes that he is destined to lead the new crusade, but he does not want to destroy himself or his followers in the process. Doomed wars have their charms, but they are ultimately unsatisfying. Japhthia therefore spends his time marshalling information and attempting to inspire armies, seeking to be the courageous leader from so many tales. He has not realized, and may never do so, that he has become far too bound by Creation to survive in the true Wyld he wishes to unleash.

Nobles:

• **Cahlenna (Cataphract)** — Cahlenna eats only the hearts of prey whom she has slain with her own hands and drinks only the finest of wines and purest of waters. She is obsessed with the idea of hunting and killing one of the Lunar Exalted — though, since she is not stupid, she intends to choose a target whom she actually has a chance of killing, and she sees no reason not to weaken her prey with other adversaries and perils first. Her interest in the Lunar Exalted causes her to pay a number of Guild spies, who bring her information as well as human slaves. While she herself has little concern for politics, her prowess and her wide-ranging sources of information make her a powerful ally in the Opal Court. She is the head of the Topaz Household, whose members are notorious for similar interests in Valor and hunting. They share information on potential prey.

• **Subarto (Eshu)** — Hailing from the Far North, Subarto is a minstrel who seeks diversion by traveling to dangerous places to play for perilous rulers. He has walked the roads of the Realm, with glamour to shield him, and played before Immaculates and before the Dragon-Blooded. He has ridden from the East to the West and back again and performed for audiences ranging from Solars to peasants. For him, the thrill of the performance is in knowing that his listeners might well slay him. He is incapable of performing unless he's in some sort of danger, and he has even provoked challenges to duels or offered his life in a wager if his music failed to please his listeners, merely to bask in sensations of peril. Nobody trusts him, as he is a gossip and a satirist and loves to blend private secrets into his latest scurrilous songs. He keeps few human slaves, as he finds them lacking in interest. The ones that he has

spend their time performing necessary menial functions — and thank the gods for their good fortune in finding so disinterested a master.

• **The Laughing Boy (Anarch)** — This raksha has no known name. He runs barefoot and leaves the ground scorched behind him. While he prefers to dwell in the Deep Wyld, he enters Creation from time to time in order to destroy and ravage, tearing people and buildings apart with his bare hands. He says little, but his eyes burn with pure madness at joyful destruction. While he has chosen to make his home at the Opal Court, none are certain why he does so. Prince Japhthia views it as a good omen for his plans for a new crusade. The Laughing Boy seems to share some sort of understanding with Hakasane of the Ruby Court, as twice they have met and spoken to each other, though none knows what they said. While he will allow others to follow behind him when he goes raiding, he will not suffer them to lead the way, and he has torn out the eyes of Fair Folk nobles who dared to duel with him.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Warrior with trusted human "friends."
Conviction: Dedicated warrior of the next crusade.
Temperance: Entertainer seeking self-control.
Valor: Diplomat issuing challenges to war.
Willpower: Sorcerous noble staring others down.

The Jet Court

The Jet Court agrees that Temperance of some sort is the highest perfection to which a noble of the Fair Folk can aspire, and the nobles of this court disfigure each other bloodily to establish their own mastery of the Virtue. While killing an opponent in a duel is generally considered too extreme for a court noble — barring a particularly elegant piece of reasoning to justify it, of course — a significant injury, such as the loss of an eye or a limb, is a perfectly adequate response to most disagreements. Spying on others in order to present their inadequacies for court gossip and scandal is another major court pastime. Even human pets are allowed to present evidence of intemperate behavior, though, naturally, they are questioned under many entertaining forms of duress in order to ascertain the truth of their testimony.

The Jet Court never sleeps, and thus, there are no set hours for sleep or waking and no fixed times for feasts. The Courtiers move through the shadowy corridors of ice that currently house the court, whispering and gossiping and dueling in the corners. Humans are toys, and they never know how far they will be indulged or where the line of permissible behavior will abruptly end as their masters decide that further indulgence would be intemperate. Those who are not enchanted into hopeless dreams live in a state of constant terror. Fashions change constantly, sometimes even in the same day, and what was extreme yesterday is merely a display of indifference to the whims of others today.

Princess Kyema likes to leave glamour-created copies of herself around the court while she goes spying or engages in secret meetings with visiting nobles. She has often stepped out from behind a noble who was delivering a particularly vicious denunciation of her habits and policies in order to smilingly critique his style, when all had thought her busy elsewhere. She dislikes delegation and trust, preferring to rely on blackmail and desperation, and is always looking for new agents for her schemes.

Customs of the Jet Court:

• It is unthinkable that a noble of the Jet Court should be excessive in any way.
• It is improper for a noble of the Jet Court to act solely on the grounds of emotion.
• It is unlikely that a noble of the Jet Court would neglect an opportunity to share words.
• It is likely that a noble of the Jet Court would be temperate in her use of human pets.
• It is proper for a noble of the Jet Court to somehow demonstrate her temperance publicly.
• It is required that a noble of the Jet Court be an example to others.

Relations With Other Groups:

All four other courts are troubled by the Jet Court, for the simple and primary reason that they cannot predict its actions. Jet Court nobles may do the most extraordinary or atrocious things merely in order to demonstrate how temperately they feel about a matter or that such a thing doesn't disturb them. Equally, they may react quite out of proportion to behavior that another raksha might think was perfectly normal. In consequence, diplomats sent to the Jet Court are either experts or disposable fools, and they often return with charmingly elegant disfigurements and new enemies.

The Jet Court does good business with the Guild. The court's nobles prefer to come sweeping down past the Great Northern Road when a Guild slave train is passing and throw appropriate payment in gems and gold to the Guildsmen there before luring the unchained slaves out into the snow. Mind-broken slaves are returned in a similar way, and the Jet Court nobles usually do not try too hard to lure the Guildsmen into the snows as well.

Of late, the Bull of the North and several Lunars have caused the Jet Court some problems, forcing it to restrict its raiding and curtailing the Guild's visits. Princess Kyema is considering the notion of taking an entire encampment of Northern warriors for slaves or of breaking into a city and removing a choice selection of humans from it before fleeing back to the court. While this would remove the need for raiding for a while, it could also be the grounds for a major alliance between Terrestrial and Celestial Exalted against the Fair Folk of the region. She is still considering whether or not it would be worth it.

Leader:

• **Princess Kyema (Luminary)** — The Princess is renowned for the artistic perfection of her countenance, the whiteness of her hands and the subtlety of her words. She always wears white silk and dark-red furs, whatever the climate, and constantly smiles in a mild and threatening fashion. She rules the Jet Court through intrigue and spies and has done so for centuries. As she established long ago that evidence (or even significant gossip) of intemperate behavior is enough to disgrace or even cause the dismissal of a noble from court, she is able to use blackmail and threats as tools to keep the nobles serving her. It must equally be admitted that the nobles of the court thrive in such an atmosphere, and few of them would even consider removing so able and entertaining a mistress.

Nobles:

• **Lady Ennaya (Scribe)** — The raksha Ennaya dresses in long, gray robes and hides her amethyst hair under a gray-silk coif. She crafts mice out of silver and pearls and glamour and sends them out to spy on the rest of the court. She is also a mistress of poisons and aphrodisiacs and other entertaining drugs, which makes her much in demand among those nobles who want to toy with their human pets. Lady Ennaya keeps no human slaves herself (which has caused some debate about whether such behavior is intemperate) but feeds on the slaves of others, in payment for the concoctions that she supplies. She only rarely travels outside the court, either in payment for a major obligation or for a very high fee. Her laboratories and libraries are famous in themselves and have been the target of numerous attempted thefts. She is the head of the Amethyst Household, whose members are well spread out over Creation, and she is owed many debts by junior nobles of that household for the drugs she supplies.

• **Count Okudo (Cataphract)** — Okudo is a fearsome swordsman, and a passionate lover. He keeps to the path of Temperance by not cleaving to any single partner and by not vowing his allegiance to any single cause. He has, on some occasions, been known to choose his actions by the toss of a coin. Half the Jet court disdains him for his vigor, while the other half agrees with his reasoning. It is a popular subject for debate. Count Okudo often rides abroad, raiding and romancing, and has assisted stranded humans in reaching shelter as many times as he has slain them or seduced them into slavery. The Count himself has difficulty in justifying some of his actions. His unbridled spirit is close to the Wyld in its free and chaotic nature, and from time to time, he considers supporting a new Balorian Crusade and bringing down the borders of Creation for once and all.

• **Lord Kazour (Courtier)** — Lord Kazour is a master of glamour and a skilled diplomat, able to charm humans with merely a word or anger other raksha with a bare sentence. He is originally from the Far West, and he goes clad in the bare minimum of silks, claiming that he manifests Temperance by being unconcerned by the elements. He is fond of leading humans naked into the winter snows to perish. Lord Kazour's greatest secret is that he is despairingly in love with Princess Kyema, despite his best efforts. He conceals this with a careless attitude of homage, pretending that he adores her merely because it is the fashion to do so, but he could not bring himself to refuse a single one of her commands. Princess Kyema knows this and uses him as he uses his own human slaves, with no more compassion or affection.

Roles for Nobles

Compassion: Pure ascetic champion.
Conviction: Motherly controlling sadist.
Temperance: Persuasive diplomat.
Valor: Critical duelist.
Willpower: Secretive sorcerer.





NOI SACKDA

Nlassa prowled among the crystal ruins.

She was far, far away from the center of the place, but deep down in her ivory cat's bones, Nlassa could feel the grating and crunching down at the center, where the great work of Essence triggered in this place ground ever onward.

Here, out on the edges, there were absolute boundaries. One hundred yards from Nlassa were the Middlemarches of Rakshastan. Here, where there had once been a Bordermarch, there was nothing but gray soil, stones and crystal. When Ikerre scoured the land, he had had used a great weapon of Creation, one not wielded for many centuries, to slay the Fair Folk. In the end, it had malfunctioned, or perhaps its power had exceeded his understanding and he had used it in a fashion that he did not comprehend fully.

The result had been this, an invulnerable divot of order cut into the Wyld. The forces of the Cult had been at the borders of Rakshastan, and so, a hemisphere of reality had jabbed far out into the land of Rakshastan, encompassing an area some five journeys in depth and killing several thousand of the raksha.

All the living things in the area, plants, mortals and miraculous hybrids alike, had been instantly crystallized. The raksha and the wholly fantastic had evaporated instantly. The effect extended across the mortal world as well. Nlassa's people could not approach the center of the effect, but out here, the matrix of artificial stability that lingered still was just an unpleasant griminess to the air. She did not linger here over-long. Her body was quite miraculous and might collapse into a beryl statue or a pillar of salt under the extended effects of the enchantment.

Nlassa did not know the extent to which the place was dangerous, but like a cat, she was cautious. She had obtained certain miracles she though might be effective if she were exposed to the forces of Creation, but she was not sure of their might and didn't wish to test them. She knew from her own very careful investigations how far in the Fair Folk found the lingering radiance of the transmogrification to be dangerous, and she lingered at least a few yards beyond that line.

Or perhaps not. Her people did not come often to this place, thinking it accursed. There were several societies pledged to destroying the area. All placed the start of their plans shortly after the success of the next Balorian Crusade, but the planning surely provided manifold reasons for treaties and fallings-out. None had actually come forward to explain the region or their plans for it. If they had visited, they were careful to conceal themselves. There seemed to be just a handful of faerie seekers among the crystal trees and beasts. Nlassa thought it reminded her of certain areas of the Far East, but only vaguely. The crystalline forests of the East were alive with scintillations and self-illuminations and fabulous surfaces that reflected so many strange things. Here, it was a glaring, empty land of white, cloudy quartz.

The statues were relatively easy to interpret, and Nlassa thought the device must have taken some time — a second to ten — to do its work because some statues glanced back over their shoulders or threw up their arms. Not many, though, so it must not have taken especially long. The beasts had not been caught in exodus.

And so, she lingered beneath the sky of Creation on the verge of a land poisonous to her people and pondered the shinma and the miracles of the Wyld. She was curious, cautious, lazy and interested, in the fashion of the creatures of Creation she mimicked. Nlassa had a certain curiosity for this place and had come here before. This was the last place such a weapon had been employed. She wondered if it still lay in the center of the blast area or if some Exalt had spirited it away to fuel his own schemes. Nlassa raked her claws against the earth in frustration now and again, but she had no faith in her spells and oaths, and so, her curiosity must go unsated. But each visit, she had come closer to the line of danger. Soon, she would obtain miracles sufficient to assuage her prudence. She flicked her tail. Not soon enough.

CHAPTER THREE
CHARACTER CREATION

In all the long Ages left to the world, its people shall have visions and deliriums of the Wyld. They shall speak of its promontories where the faceless things dwell, performing their abominable rites in honor of forces and creatures that no human has ever known. They shall speak of its dreaming meadows, where a visitor may find a certain satiety of peace as the gentle, chiming birds dip their beaks into the vitreous fluid of her eye and sip on the memories stored there. They shall whisper of the mad gods, the Princes of Chaos, the things corrosive to the mind and works of humankind, and send thankful prayers wafting up to Heaven that they have met them only in their fevered dreams. Now, you are one of those mad gods. You are a Prince of Chaos — one of the Fair Folk, the people of dreams and passion. In the books of the savants, your name is *raksha* — a demon, god and incarnation of the chaos that came before the world and dwells outside it still.

This chapter provides the rules needed to create raksha characters. The process for creating one of the Fair Folk follows the same guidelines presented for Solars in **Exalted**. However, there are areas in which the creatures of the Wyld differ from their Sun-infected Solar enemies. The following material details these differences and is meant to supplement the rules in **Exalted**.

Step One: Character Concept

This step is the single most important one in creating your character. Without it, your Traits are nothing but random dots on a sheet of paper. The stronger your concept is, the stronger your final character will be, and the easier it will be to flesh him out. For the raksha, there are several important factors that must be taken into account when deciding upon a character concept.

The Storyteller

During character creation, it is important for the Storyteller to work with her players, and vice versa. Ultimately, gaming is a team effort, and the closer everyone works together, the more fun everyone will have. This is especially important when playing the raksha, whose inherent egocentrism must balance with the needs of group play. Storytellers should discuss with their players the type of series they want to play, and players should work to create character concepts that fit that type of series. Players should also work at making their characters fully developed personalities, with histories and goals and potential for mutually satisfying group dynamics. The more raw material a Storyteller has to work with, the more story hooks she can provide for that character.

The Society of the Wyld

Thief of Words has set his favored order upon the Fair Folk of Creation and the Middlemarches. Drawn together by the substance of their Virtues, the Fair Folk bind themselves to the Freeholds, courts and households, competing in their fashion for influence over their kin.

• **Freehold:** The Freeholds are the enclaves, fortresses and city-worlds of Rakshastan. Sustained by pyres of oneiromantic bonefire that consume Essence, gossamer and raksha Hearts, each is a shaped cosmos isolated from the surrounding world or Wyld by the raksha's will. A typical Freehold gathers three to ten nobles and hundreds or thousands of common raksha. Each Freehold has a culture and style of its own. Would you prefer a world of vicious court intrigue or the corrosive beauty of a tiny paradise? Do you live as a great lord of the Middlemarches, fearing the all-consuming horrors of the deep, or is your Freehold an isolated fortress in the depths of the Primordials' machine, Creation?

• **Direction:** Each of the directions of the world has its own unique culture that shapes the raksha who call that place their home. What customs have you brought from the places and Freeholds that you've tarried in?

• **Households and Courts:** The greatest games of the Diplomats are played in the households and courts, the great alliances of raksha that stretch across Rakshastan. Though most households and courts center in a single Freehold, they embody concepts known and followed throughout the world. Which of the Five Courts appeals to you? Which draw hostility from the madness in your heart? Is the limit of your ambition a place in the Five Courts, or would you prefer to claim a household and displace them?

• **The Church of Balor:** The Church of Balor is an organizing principle orthogonal to the courts — for the game of politics lacks flavor when restricted to a single battlefield. It is more favored by the Entertainers than the Diplomats, but there are raksha of all types who appreciate its simple, compelling message: Prince Balor died to bring the world's end, and a new crusade should follow to finish the job. Is this the cause that calls to your heart, or do you pursue some incomprehensible belief born in the outer reaches?

• **Fomorians:** The fomorians oppose the existence of Creation. Hideous monsters of the outer reaches, they seek to destroy everything that is or is not, leaving only that which may be. They wreak ruin on the Middlemarches' fortresses and slip into the borders of Creation to work their madness. Some are terrors feared by the raksha courts. Others integrate with society, anarchs and Balorian priests tearing at the fabric of Creation from within the ranks of shape. Is their hunger for the end a temptation or a horror to you?

• **Definition:** The raksha are creatures with little pattern of their own. The world influences them. They take their strength from the elements. They derive their sense of order from human dreams. Yet, they are not blank slates. Somewhere in every raksha is the core of their definition, the truth of who they are and what they exist to do. Who are you? What are the laws of your nature? What is the call of your soul? What drives you? What makes one human habit appeal to you and another so much dross? You need not know the fundamental truths and answers of your life, for raksha, like humankind, are capable of blindness — but if you do not know the answers, you may still profit by defining the question.

Caste

Like the Exalted, the raksha are divided into castes, for the division of one thing into many is the principle Advaita that predates Creation. Common raksha have a

single caste; nobles have two, with one of them dominant in their hearts.

Diplomats are those raksha who feed on Conviction. Recognizing that society exists to strangle personal conviction in its coils and subordinate it to the broader principles of the culture itself, they study the arts of manipulation, intrigue, treaty and accord. Entertainers feed on Compassion. They channel their own empathy and become both desirable and admirable to others, attracting the flow of Compassion they hunger for. Warriors feed on Valor. To bring fear to their enemies and courage to their allies, they make themselves epic heroes and fearsome monsters. Workers feed on Temperance. Through rigorous subordination of their momentary desires to their long-term principles and goals, they create a flow of Essence and power. Diplomats are creatures of obligation; Entertainers, of desire; Warriors, of power; and Workers, of principle. Which are you?

Casteless Raksha

The castes of the raksha are rigorously defined: Common raksha can feed on one Virtue, and nobles two, and these define their caste or castes. From the standpoint of strict definition, there are no exceptions. In practice, however, the descriptions of the castes are not particularly binding on the raksha. Each hungers for the emanations of one or two Virtues, but the rest of these notes are just guidelines.

In the long term, even this baseline is not certain. In this Age of the world, the Wyld regards itself through a lens of Virtues and Willpower. In another time, the auspices of the raksha's feeding may change, and the ramifications of that change echo back and forward through time to all that has ever been and all that ever shall be.

Innate Powers

The raksha have an influence over the Wyld that protects them from any Wyld phenomenon less real than themselves. They treat the damage and change that Wyld phenomena and creatures inflict as dreams — they may be killed, burned, transformed or driven mad, but these effects have no suzerainty over their spirits. The primitive consciousness of their Essence does not suffer from effects of this fashion and can issue forth an act of will to restore them.

The attacks of Wyld creatures, Wyld-mutated creatures and various hazards of the Wyld cannot permanently affect raksha unless specifically stated. Damage and change from such sources can simply be wished away by a *shaping action* (see pp. 133-135). Nor can mental or social influence from such a source turn the raksha from this option. The raksha are still vulnerable to the direct actions of the Creation-born, other raksha, and certain phenomena of the Wyld.

Noble raksha and heroic commoners can use this shaping ability offensively, turning the world of the Wyld against an enemy in *shaping attacks* (see pp. 136-148). This ability is not available to typical common raksha.

Nature functions identically for raksha as for Solar Exalted. However, raksha have limited inherent conviction and can change their Nature at the beginning of a story, reflecting their current role in life. This costs 1 Willpower.

Paragons of the Wyld

Paragons of the raksha are rare. The convictions of the raksha are either the eternal backbones of their spirit or laughing mad follies adopted for a few days or millennia to while away the time. To become a true Paragon, a raksha must learn to set these things aside — through some incomprehensible ordeal in Creation or the outer Wyld, the raksha must learn self-sacrifice and bind itself to an alien principle. Such Paragons include the shuddha raksha, who break their wills on the altar of an abstract morality; the Akshata, cauldrons of birth; and certain of the fomorians, who sacrifice their own nature as the first step to unmaking the world.

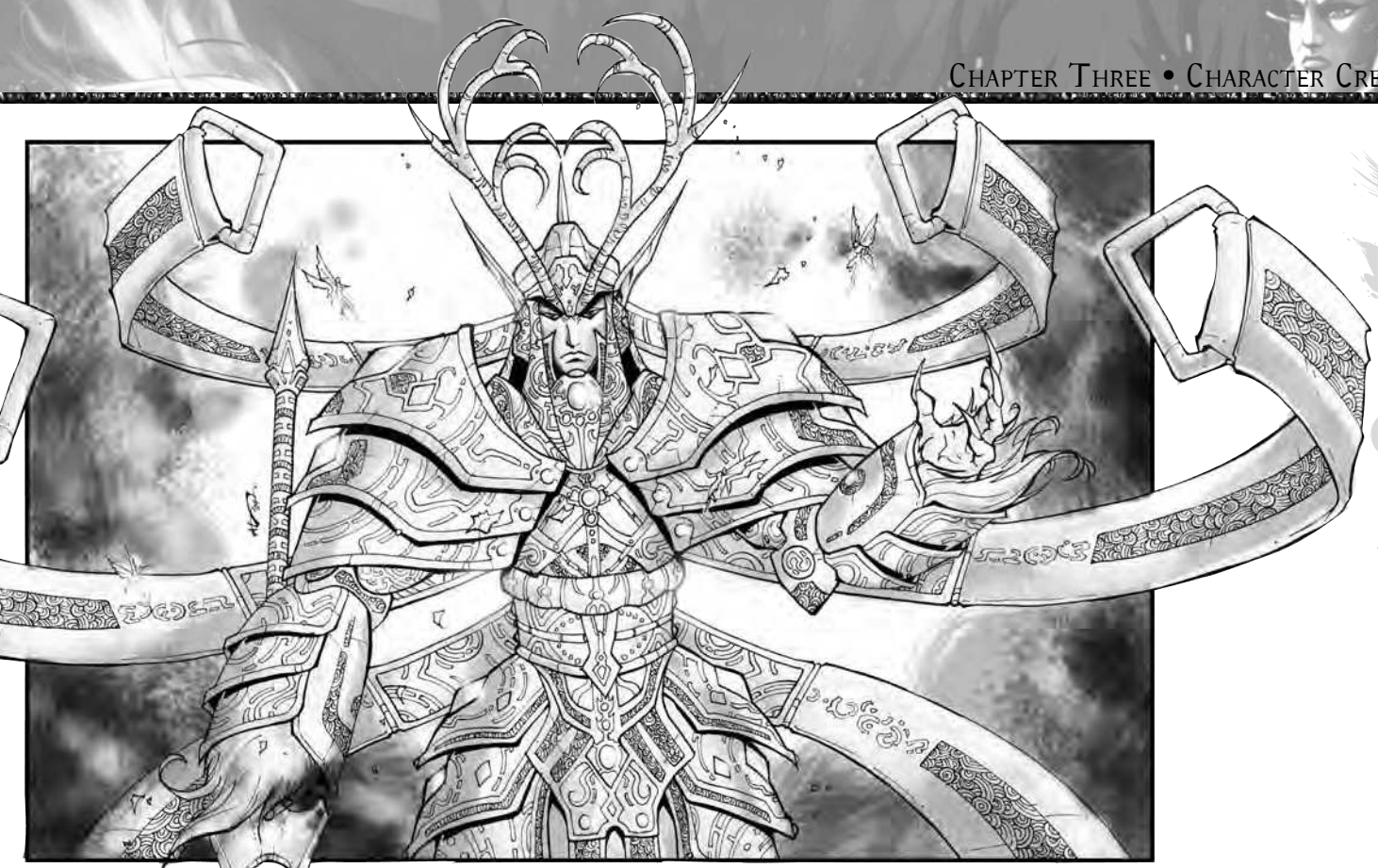


Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Fair Folk nobles begin with each Attribute at three (3) dots. The inhuman perfection of the nobility and their dedication to the shaping arts gives them raw power far beyond the mortal kind.

For the common raksha, the converse is true. They begin with each Attribute at zero (0) dots. If the players do not buy their characters' Intelligence and Wits to 1, the raksha cannot think; if the players do not buy their characters' Perception to 1, they cannot perceive the world; if the players do not buy Dexterity 1, their characters cannot move; and if the players do not buy Stamina 1, their characters cannot exist in Creation.

A raksha divides ten (10) dots among her primary Attributes, seven (7) dots among her secondary Attributes and four (4) dots among her tertiary Attributes. She can add, at most, four dots to any given Attribute — so nobles cannot have Attributes greater than seven, and common raksha cannot have Attributes greater than four. Mutations such as Huge (see **Exalted**, p. 280) and Glorious Hero Form (see p. 205) ignore this limitation.



Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities begin with a rating of zero and are divided according to which caste each is associated with.

• **Diplomat (Staff) Abilities** are skills related to intrigue and travel. They are Linguistics, Occult, Ride, Socialize and Thrown.

• **Entertainer (Cup) Abilities** are arts of subterfuge and performance. They are Investigation, Larceny, Medicine, Performance and Stealth.

• **Warrior (Sword) Abilities** are the physical and social arts of war. They are Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee and Presence.

• **Worker (Ring) Abilities** are skills useful in shaping Essence and worlds. They are Bureaucracy, Craft, Endurance, Lore and Martial Arts.

• **Casteless Abilities** are equally common or uncommon across all castes. They are Awareness, Dodge, Resistance, Sail and Survival.

Common raksha have a natural affinity with their caste's Abilities. This affinity is represented by the easier time a character has in raising her Caste Abilities through both bonus and experience points. See the table on page 101 for the bonus point costs. In addition, common raksha may choose one (1) Ability as a Favored Ability, which receives the same bonus and experience point costs as her Caste Abilities. "Doubling up" a Caste and Favored Ability is possible, but it only converts the Caste Ability into a Favored Ability — the benefits are not cumulative.

Noble raksha, combining in themselves two castes, can choose their Caste Abilities more freely. They choose any five (5) of the ten Abilities associated with their caste as Caste Abilities, and three (3) Favored Abilities besides.

Raksha receive twenty-five (25) dots of Abilities. They can spend these on any Ability, but cannot spend more than three dots on any given Ability at this stage. In addition, a raksha receives a free dot in each Caste Ability, which can increase it to 4, and two free dots of each favored Ability, which can increase it to 5. Raksha can increase their Favored Abilities to 7, their Caste Abilities to 6 and their other Abilities to 5 with bonus points or experience.

Common raksha can purchase Ability specialties cheaply, while nobles cannot (see the bonus point costs on pages 100 and 101).

Step Four: Advantages

Common raksha receive no free Background points. Having a single dot of Freehold or Manse makes them fortunate; a dot of Gossamer or Style makes them powerful; a dot of Allies, Contacts or Mentor makes them astonishingly well connected. These are, after all, slaves by their nature.

Noble raksha, conversely, exist in an established social context. Their society offers them no exceptional support, but neither does it cast them out. They receive ten (10) dots of Backgrounds.

Both noble and common raksha have access to unusual Backgrounds suiting their heritage (see pp. 109-112 for full details on these new and altered Backgrounds).

Virtues, Graces and Lures

As with all people who live in the world of **Exalted**, and perhaps more than most, the raksha are driven by desire and emotion. The four Virtues — Compassion, Conviction, Temperance and Valor — begin at one dot, and your character has six (6) additional dots to divide among them. One of these Virtues must have an attached Lure that tempts the raksha to channel it, as described on pages 112 and 113.

Associated with these four Virtues, the raksha have Traits known as *Graces*. These are the Cup, the Ring, the Staff and the Sword, as described on pages 105-108.

The Cup is the Major Grace for Entertainers. For characters of the Entertainer Caste, including noble hybrids, the Cup begins equal to the raksha's Compassion. For all other raksha, it begins at 1.

The Ring is the Major Grace for Workers. For characters of the Worker Caste, including noble hybrids, the Ring begins equal to the raksha's Temperance. For all other raksha, it begins at 1.

The Staff is the Major Grace for Diplomats. For characters of the Diplomat Caste, including noble hybrids, the Staff begins equal to the raksha's Conviction. For all other raksha, it begins at 1.

The Sword is the Major Grace for Warriors. For characters of the Warrior Caste, including noble hybrids, the Sword begins equal to the raksha's Valor. For all other raksha, it begins at 1.

Spending bonus points on the Virtue associated with a Major Grace also increases that Grace. Thus, a Warrior who increases his Valor with bonus points also increases his Sword Grace.

Raksha have a fifth Grace, the Heart Grace, but its value is fixed: 1 for common raksha, 2 for heroic common raksha, 3 for noble raksha, 4 for powerful nobles (characters with over 200 experience points) and 5 for the unshaped. This value cannot be raised with bonus points.

Charms

Raksha, like the Exalted, have access to the mystic powers and abilities known as Charms. Fair Folk Charms are based not on Attributes or Abilities, but on their Graces. A raksha may select eight (8) Charms, at least five of which must be selected from the Charms of his Major Graces. Many common raksha have fewer.

The Unshaped

The unshaped are normally designed in the same fashion as a small Freehold of noble raksha.

The "body" of an unshaped is a Freehold-like region between 10 and 30 waypoints in size. It has an Arcane Redoubt, the seat of that unshaped creature's mind. Some also have places that function as a Stronghold, Glory, Fountainhead or Throne Room. Raksha can seize these during a struggle, just as they can in a real Freehold, and the minds of the unshaped can use them in the same fashion. Unshaped bodies are, like artifact waypoint structures, mobile. An unshaped can make a Ring-shaping attack against an adjacent waypoint to "eat" it, making it part of the raksha's own waypoint structure, and with an unrolled shaping action, it can detach one of its border waypoints and return it to the Wyld. Seizing an unshaped and using it as a mobile base is impossible under normal circumstances, but it is possible if special artifacts or the Charms of the Creation-born keep its mind sedated while its body still lives.

The unshaped has a guiding intelligence, a central spirit that the questing raksha must defeat in order to wrest an artifact from the unshaped. When facing inexperienced raksha, a typical guiding intelligence has Essence 6. Unshaped also have subsidiary intelligences (normally, one to four), built on a scale with the questing characters. When defeated in the shaping contest, these lesser minds fade into a comatose state for the remainder of the story. There may also be a handful of near-mindless Workers, particularly if the unshaped has a Fountainhead. The guiding intelligence and subsidiary intelligences manifest their own bodies, but they are as difficult to kill as spirits — even when slain by the Creation-born, they eventually return to life unless annihilated by spirit-killing Charms. The minds of an unshaped can leave the main body, but wither in the Wyld like Fair Folk in Creation.

The guiding intelligence typically has Willpower 8-10 and 11/9/7 Attributes (starting, like a noble raksha, at three dots each). It has three Abilities at 7, three at 6, and the remainder at 2-4. Its Virtues and Graces are all in the 3-5 range. It has 12 Charms for shaping combat, Birth 5 and 12 miscellaneous Charms — in particular, it often has Glamour and Bastion of the Self. Shiftless Untamed Beauty and Compelling Presence are also common. The lesser minds are more likely to have Essence 3, Willpower 6, one high Grace, 6 combat Charms and several miscellaneous Charms. If attacked by mortals, it's reasonable to assume that an unshaped has a small army of poppets, a collection of interesting hazards and gossamer armor and weapons for each of its selves.

If the players have a good grasp of **Exalted** tactics, consider outfitting the unshaped with artifact shaping weapons. Behemoths are particularly useful if the Creation-born are involved. As the characters become more experienced, increase the competence and numbers of the subsidiary intelligences, and escalate the malevolent power of the guiding intelligence. This is not simply narrative convenience. The unshaped take a certain amount of their nature from the Essence patterns of the visitors, and it's only natural that they become ever-fiercer as the questing raksha grow stronger. Only those who trouble the Middlemarches as fomorian monsters are static enough to meet all opposition with the same degree of force.

Unshaped never have mutations, although the Storyteller can create some mutation-like effects if desired. In addition, their gossamer supplies are typically low — a typical unshaped might have 10 gossamer and no Charms for easy gossamer recovery. The following Charm suggestions provide some interesting combat models for the unshaped. The first six Charm picks are for a subsidiary intelligence. The guiding intelligence of the unshaped has all 12.

Cup Attacks and Persistent Dodge: Assertion of a Greater Vision, Dissonance of Principles, Heart-Cutting Style, Howling Dream Consumption Prana, Ill-Approving Eyes, Sapphire Emptiness Kata; *plus* Furious Maelstrom Craft, Overriding Construct of Fate, Subversion and Transformation Artifice, Swift Wings of Song, Thousand Tiny Hooks Technique and Untouchable Performer Technique.

This model is suitable for unshaped with high Virtues wielding a heart thorn or a harness of razored dreams. Guiding intelligences would have a Combo: Heart-Cutting Style, Swift Wings of Song, Overriding Construct of Fate and Ill-Approving Eyes.

Spirit-Twisting Obsession Style: Art of Corrosion, Decaying Principles, Elusive Object of Desire, Heart-Cutting Style, Ill-Approving Eyes, Spirit-Twisting Obsession Stance; *plus* All-Consuming God-Monster Stance (Advaita Harmony, Chain-Defying Art and Untouchable Infinite Spirit), Assertion of a Greater Vision, Overriding Construct of Fate, Spirit-Flaying Meditation, Subversion and Transformation Artifice and Wyld Communion.

This model is suitable for unshaped with high Virtues wielding chimerae or a harness of razored dreams. Guiding intelligences would adopt God-Monster Stance before entering combat for its Virtue and regeneration benefits. Their deadliest attack would be a Combo of Overriding Construct of Fate, Decaying Principles, Ill-Approving Eyes and Assertion of a Greater Vision.

Artillery: Flesh-Carved World, Ill-Approving Eyes, Mind's Grip Rigor, Pounding Dream Harmony, Shuddering Wyld Inference, Wyld-Curdling Attack; *plus* Assertion of a Greater Vision, Creator's Fugue, Impinging Web of Dream, Sorrowful Firmament Resonance, Twisting Serpent Shape and Waypoint Knife.

This model is suitable for an unshaped mind that acts as ranged-combat support for its other selves. Its typical weapon is a curdling dream bow, replaced by a courtier's caul when ammunition runs low. It would have a Combo of Flesh-Carved World, Wyld-Curdling Attack and Ill-Approving Eyes. As a guiding intelligence, it would also have a Combo of Mind's Grip Rigor and Creator's Fugue.

Warrior: Assertion of a Greater Vision, God-Humbling Victory Sword, Ill-Approving Eyes, Radiance of the Invincible Warrior, Scattering the Foe, Unparalleled Terror Technique; *plus* All-Consuming God-Monster Stance (Chain-Defying Art, Lumbering Feet of God and Untouchable Infinite Spirit), Endless Armies of the Storm, Pincer of Transcendent Time and Fate, Spirit-Flaying Meditation, Waypoint-Sealing Stance and Wyld Communion.

Variation: Replace Endless Armies of the Storm and Pincer of Transcendent Time and Fate with two more purchases of All-Consuming God-Monster Stance (Heart-Stopping Numinous Power, Miasma of Principle, Terrible Shaping Suasion and Unshapeable Transcendent Essence).

This model is suitable for an unshaped wielding a horror or a Nishkriya mask. Its combat style is somewhere between that of a Solar and a Lunar Exalt — basic, straightforward attacks, backed with moderate dice pools, regeneration and a good reflexive defense. A typical Combo features God-Humbling Victory Sword, Ill-Approving Eyes and Assertion of a Greater Vision. A guiding intelligence may augment this with Endless Armies of the Storm. Because Radiance of the Invincible Warrior allows the creature to reflexively parry Staff and Sword attacks, its Bastion of the Self probably defends against attacks by the Cup or the Ring.

Laughing Monster Style: Deeper Into Trouble Technique, Furiously Stalling Destiny, Ill-Approving Eyes, Inauspicious Moment for Attack, Laughing Monster Stance, Subtle Hammer; *plus* Assertion of a Greater Vision, Howling Dream Consumption Prana, Sapphire Emptiness Kata, Shuffling the Pieces, Thieves Fall Out and Unitary Being Forge.

This model is suitable for an unshaped wielding litany bones and focusing on defense and support. The guiding intelligence with this model would enter into battle with Howling Dream Consumption Prana and Laughing Monster Stance active, using Shuffling the Pieces to collapse the defense of enemies already wounded by its lesser minds.

Heroic Commoners

Every common raksha has the potential to awaken to its true power and become a force with which Creation must reckon. These raksha are the heroic commoners — living up to the potential of their Essence and increasing their Heart Trait to 2. They gain 18 extra bonus points, for a total of 33. After earning roughly 200 experience points, a heroic commoner can open a second feeding Virtue and become a noble.

Gossamer Equipment

Fair Folk can begin with gossamer equipment whose mundane equivalent has a Resources cost at most equal to their Gossamer Background. For example, a raksha with Gossamer •••• could have gossamer plate-and-chain (see p. 110 and **Exalted**, p. 332) but not gossamer superheavy plate.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Calculate a raksha's Willpower by adding together his two highest Virtues. Raksha begin with an Essence of two (2). Both of these Traits can be raised with bonus points.

Raksha have a single Essence pool — their Essence is entirely Personal and equal to (their Permanent Essence x 10).

Raksha have the normal mortal seven (7) health levels — a -0 health level, two -1 health levels, two -2 health levels, a -4 health level and an Incapacitated health level — plus any additional health levels gained from the raksha Ox-Body Technique Charm.

Raksha have fifteen (15) bonus points that may be spent at any time during character creation. See the chart on page 100 or 101 for the point cost of increasing each Trait.

Spark of Life

Now come the final touches. Answer the same questions for your raksha that you would for an Exalt: What does she look like? What are her habits and quirks? Who is she close to? Who are her enemies and rivals? What motivates her to do the things she does?

In addition, there are other questions to consider.

• **Ambition:** Where are you going? What is the victory that would satisfy your heart? Do you want power in the courts and households, do you have a vision to implement, or do you harbor the fomorians' nihilistic longing for the all-devouring end?

• **Birth:** How were you born? Did you forge your heart from nothingness and wake yourself to the Wyld? Were you a common raksha abandoned to freedom who learned the ways of self-reliance and tore open a second feeding Virtue? Were you made to serve your parent as a slave or as the vessel for an oath (see p. 188)? Do you still own the Graces of your spirit, or have some been stolen (see p. 106) by an enemy or ally?

• **Feeding:** How do you survive amidst the thin Essence of Creation? Are you a prisoner, trapped within the walls of your Freehold? Are you a generous monster, lifting mortals to the height of passion to feed from their drippings? Are you a ravisher, devouring the structure of their souls? Do you intend to play out feeding on mortal souls as complicated emotional scenes, or would you rather keep a herd of mortals in your home and ignore the details? In the former case, do you have ideas to keep it sufficiently interesting? In the latter, do you have a good plan for regaining Essence while traveling in Creation?

• **Group Dynamics:** How do you deal with the other characters? What rivalries and passions do you have to keep back the weariness of endless days? What sympathies and obligations keep you from eliminating your rivals or dominating your loved ones? What implicit and explicit truces and oaths govern your interactions with your peers? What private contests do you have with them to divert yourselves from deadlier pursuits? Why have you chosen these others as your companions for an eternity in the Marches of Rakshastan?

Noble Character Creation Summary

Character Creation Process

• Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, first caste, second caste and Nature.

• Step Two: Select Attributes

Note that all Attributes start with **three dots** before you add any. You cannot increase them above seven dots without mutation from Charms.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (10/7/4)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

• Step Three: Select Abilities

Select five Caste Abilities from the Abilities associated with your castes.

Select Favored Abilities (3; can be Abilities from one of your castes, but cannot be an Ability chosen as a Caste Ability).

Choose Abilities (25 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

Add one dot to all Caste Abilities.

Add two dots to all Favored Abilities.

• Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (10 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points) and Virtues (6).

Note Graces — Major Graces are equal to their corresponding Virtues, and Minor Graces start at one (1).

Choose Charms (8 — at least 5 must be from Major Graces).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — it may start higher than 8), Essence pool (Essence x 10) and health levels (7, plus any gained from Charms).

• Bonus Points

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

Castes

• **Diplomat:** Creatures of subtle words and bindings. The lawgivers, emissaries and courtiers of the Wyld.
Caste Abilities: Linguistics, Occult, Ride, Socialize, Thrown
Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Conviction and the Staff

• **Entertainer:** The desirable ones, the compelling ones, the creatures who wish others to need and depend upon them.
Caste Abilities: Investigation, Larceny, Medicine, Performance, Stealth
Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Compassion and the Cup

• **Warrior:** Terrible figures, creatures that wield sword and claw to rise above the cauldron of myth and make themselves its legends and its nightmares.
Caste Abilities: Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee, Presence
Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Valor and the Sword

• **Worker:** The machines of the Wyld, Fair Folk driven by the voices in their heart to rigorous efforts, service and shape.
Caste Abilities: Bureaucracy, Craft, Endurance, Lore, Martial Arts
Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Temperance and the Ring

• **Casteless Abilities:** Awareness, Dodge, Resistance, Sail, Survival

Virtues

• **Compassion** — Understanding and valuing others.
• **Conviction** — Being driven to express one's Nature.
• **Temperance** — Balance and appreciation for consequences.
• **Valor** — Being driven to change the world.

Graces

• **Cup** — Desirability and the appearance of sanity.
• **Ring** — Self-awareness and mastery.
• **Staff** — Mastery of the social environment.
• **Sword** — Being larger than life.
• **Heart** — Existing.

Noble Character Creation Summary

Backgrounds

- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifact** — Weapons, tools, monsters and spells crafted from the Wyld.
- **Birth** — Powers deriving from a fortunate birth.
- **Familiar** — A bestial companion.
- **Freehold** — A place of Wyld power to which you have access.
- **Gossamer** — Income measured in dreams.
- **Manse** — A place of power and Essence to which you have access.
- **Mentor** — A patron and instructor.
- **Retinue** — Command over a horde of common raksha.
- **Style** — Confidence with which to shape the Wyld and the world.

Bonus Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored or Caste Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1
Virtue	3
Major Grace	3
Minor Grace	5
Heart Grace	–
Willpower	2
Essence	10
Charm	7

Common Raksha Character Creation Summary

Character Creation Process

• Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, caste and Nature.

• Step Two: Select Attributes

Note that all Attributes start with **zero dots** before you add any. You cannot increase them above four dots without mutation from Charms.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (10/7/4)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

• Step Three: Select Abilities

Note Caste Abilities.

Select Favored Abilities (1; can upgrade a Caste Ability to a Favored Ability).

Choose Abilities (25 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

Add one dot to all Caste Abilities.

Add two dots to all Favored Abilities. This is not cumulative with the Caste Ability bonus.

• Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Virtues (6).

Note Graces — Major Grace is equal to the corresponding Virtue, and Minor Graces start at one (1).

Choose Charms (up to 8 — at least 5 must be from Major Grace).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — it may start higher than 8), Essence pool (Essence x 10) and health levels (7, plus any gained from Charms).

• Bonus Points

Bonus points (15) may be spent at any time during character creation. Heroic commoners have an additional 18, for a total of 33.

Common Raksha Character Creation Summary

Castes

- **Diplomat:** Creatures of subtle words and bindings. The lawgivers, emissaries and courtiers of the Wyld.
  Caste Abilities: Linguistics, Occult, Ride, Socialize, Thrown
  Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Conviction and the Staff
- **Entertainer:** The desirable ones, the compelling ones, the creatures who wish others to need and depend upon them.
  Caste Abilities: Investigation, Larceny, Medicine, Performance, Stealth
  Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Compassion and the Cup
- **Warrior:** Terrible figures, creatures that wield the sword and the claw to rise above the cauldron of myth and make themselves its legends and its nightmares.
  Caste Abilities: Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee, Presence
  Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Valor and the Sword
- **Worker:** The machines of the Wyld, Fair Folk driven by the voices in their heart to rigorous efforts, service and shape.
  Caste Abilities: Bureaucracy, Craft, Endurance, Lore, Martial Arts
  Feeding Virtue and Major Grace: Temperance and the Ring
- **Casteless Abilities:** Awareness, Dodge, Resistance, Sail, Survival

Virtues

- **Compassion** — Understanding and valuing others.
- **Conviction** — Being driven to express one's nature.
- **Temperance** — Balance and appreciation for consequences.
- **Valor** — Being driven to change the world.

Graces

- **Cup** — Desirability and the appearance of sanity.
- **Ring** — Self-awareness and mastery.
- **Staff** — Mastery of the social environment.
- **Sword** — Being larger than life.
- **Heart** — Existing.

Backgrounds

- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifact** — Weapons, tools, monsters and spells crafted from the Wyld.
- **Birth** — Powers deriving from a fortunate birth.
- **Familiar** — A bestial companion.
- **Freehold** — A place of Wyld power to which you have access.
- **Gossamer** — Income measured in dreams.
- **Manse** — A place of power and Essence to which you have access.
- **Mentor** — A patron and instructor.
- **Retinue** — Command over a horde of common raksha.
- **Style** — Confidence with which to shape the Wyld and the world.

Bonus Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored or Caste Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	Three per 1
Virtue	3
Major Grace	2
Minor Grace	5
Heart Grace	–
Willpower	2
Essence	10
Charm	7



Clad only in the salt of the spray and her foam-white hair, Dilari danced, as if it was her purpose in existence. It was certainly her purpose in Creation. Across the sea's face, her toes struck the water and penetrated only ever so slightly. She leapt from patch to patch, graceful as a dolphin. Her "dance" was not a formal one. It swayed like a tree in the breeze or like the line of the water against the shore. It was a soft undulance without rhythm or direction.

To the mortal youth who watched and wanted her, she was the center of the universe. Her dance was entrancing, all-consuming and performed only for him. The empress of the ocean stood before him on the waves, her hair blowing around her in the morning light, her body naked and delicate. He had charms and talismans against the Fair Folk, but he had not noticed his iron nail was riding outside his shirt. Dilari of the Sea Foam had been lurking near the shore seeking prey, however, and she had noticed. Now, it was unlikely the boy would ever detect his error.

Dilari saw his eyes were locked to her form and ceased her dancing. With a pantomimed look of surprise, she slid into the water as if it would no longer support her weight. She watched from beneath the waves as the boy's face broke, his heart crushed by the disappearance of the divine apparition that had just appeared before him.

Caught.

She came up laughing, kicking her feet gently, waving her arms. A breaker washed over her and split around her improbably, leaving her standing there on the sea floor, sand and silt around her toes, her body naked and glorious. She smiled at the youth and ran a single finger along her sex.

And then, the foaming white water was back and boiling around her in a cataclysm of spray that left the teen to wonder if he had seen her so or just wished for it. Dilari smiled coyly at him from the water and called out over the cutting roar of the surf.

"Take off your iron talismans if you want to swim with me! They'll weigh you to the bottom like anchors! I don't want you to drown!" she called. It was the oldest of faerie lies, but the age of the lie didn't count so much as its quality, and this one was quite useful. The youth impetuously tore the charms from around his neck and cast them to the beach. The idea of swimming with his newfound queen had never occurred to him, until he suddenly realized it was his one overwhelming desire.

"Come out and swim with me, fisher!," Dilari called. "My husband travels the sea, and I'm lonely and horny. I promise I won't harm you. Come swim with me!"

One stiff leg after another, the boy plunged slowly into the sea, some screaming voice in the back of his head warning him that there was something wrong, that glorious divinities didn't favor boys on the seashore, that she could have had any man on the island. But that voice was just a whisper. Dilari could overwhelm a preadolescent girl or an old woman with her tongue and her body. There was no escape for a randy young buck of an islander once his sorcery failed.

The taste of Dilari's sex was already in the boy's mouth, and crashing sea foam poured over his thighs and then his belly and then over his shoulders as he marched into the pouring surf. Dilari smiled and darted forward to meet him. Her face glowed with her sexuality, but within her consciousness, she hurried forward, eager to prevent him from drowning in his blind fool hunger for her. She kissed his lips hotly and lent him the gift of breathing water.

It would not do to be so close to shore with a catch of such poor wits. He could never conceal himself effectively in his smitten state. Dilari smiled, she would need to get him home, or at least away from the shallows where they might be spotted, and quickly.

Dilari dragged him unresisting beneath the waves, and he did not drown. She spoke to him under the water, and he accepted that she might do such a thing. "Swim with me, my boy-love," she said, "to a place I know, and we can swim and make love together."

He eagerly grabbed Dilari's hand, and she led him along. This one would not last long — he had no especial reserves of spirit — but she would appreciate him almost as much as he appreciated her.

Dilari of the Sea Foam was very, very hungry.

CHAPTER FOUR
TRAITS

Most of the Traits used by Fair Folk are identical to the ones used in **Exalted**. Virtues, Attributes, Willpower, Essence and the like are all handled identically or nearly so. For the rules governing these Traits, see the Traits chapter, beginning on page 112 of **Exalted**.

Craft (Glamour)

The Craft most useful to the raksha is Craft (Glamour), the art of shaping Essence and dream. This Ability is the paramount creator's skill in the Wyld, superceding metalwork, woodwork, stonework and similar arts. Players of raksha in Creation can make Perception + Craft (Glamour) rolls for their characters to identify the works of their peers.

Stunting in the Wyld

In the Wyld, natural law does not exist as such. Even basic principles such as location, identity and meaning are

flexible. The dominating factor that determines what's possible is mythic resonance. Cool things that entertain the players are possible. Less entertaining things require special powers to accomplish. The simplest way to control the fabric of the Wyld is to stunt.

Improvised Magic

Traditional stunts resemble the effects of Solar Charms — they cinematically display the user's superhuman skill. When it comes to manipulating real things, or stunting in Creation, that's usually the most they can do.

In the Wyld, the physical world is primordial Essence taking flesh in dream. Few things have the spiritual integrity to resist manipulation. The fabric of existence is, in short, a prop. When stunts manipulate dreams and unreal things, they have effects and visuals more reminiscent of sorcery. For example, a thrown-weapons specialist unarmed in the Wyld might pluck a handful of flowers and blow on the petals, so that they rush out in a gust of wind and fall on her enemies like shards of stained glass — it's a Thrown stunt, but it also resembles Death of Obsidian Butterflies.

Used against the environment and unreal things, this kind of stunt has the full effects and power of sorcery. Used against real things — Fair Folk with a Heart Grace (p. 108), Creation-born characters and so forth — it has more reasonable qualities.

In the Wyld, stunt effects resembling Terrestrial Circle Sorcery or Shadowlands Circle Necromancy have difficulty 3. Effects resembling Celestial Circle Sorcery or Labyrinth Circle Necromancy have difficulty 5. Effects that emulate the Solar or Void Circles have difficulty 10.

The flower-throwing stunt has basic Terrestrial Circle effects. Assuming that the character gets at least one stunt die — that is, that she doesn't do this every fight — it's a difficulty 3 Dexterity + Thrown stunt. If she's just facing the mirages of the Wyld, treat it as a spell. However, if she wants to cut open a bunch of raksha or Exalted, she has to split her dice pool and attack each of them, and the Storyteller will give the petals reasonable improvised weapon qualities — probably those of the character's favored non-artifact thrown weapons.

Stunts of this sort — requiring the malleable Wyld to function — are called Wyld stunts. Otherwise, they work like ordinary stunts, including the recommended stunt awards and the possibility for Essence and Willpower recovery. Stunts that invent environmental factors are a special case — worth one die if the environmental factor clashes with the Storyteller's vision ("okay, but there weren't flowers here a minute ago") and two dice if they work well with the preestablished world.

Wyld Bonuses

Characters whose actions the Wyld favor can receive Wyld bonuses. Wyld bonuses are an environmental dice bonus that can — like stunts — allow quasi-supernatural effects. Wyld bonuses are a mechanical effect, like the higher ground bonus. They can interact with stunts but they function even if the player doesn't do anything impressive.

Graces and Gossamer

The Essence of the raw Wyld is slippery, unformed potential. Not even the raksha can use its power without first imposing shape. There are two intermediate stages between primordial chaos and realized form. Gossamer is the vaporous Essence of dreams, metamorphic and unstable but shaped enough for the Fair Folk to bind it to themselves. The Graces are calcified nodules of Wyld Essence. They have certain consistent properties and resist destruction and change. These are the artifacts of the Wyld.

The Anatomy of a Raksha

In Creation and in their games of shaped worlds, the raksha adopt a human-like form. Many commoners are animalistic; most nobles, inhumanly beautiful. In both cases, they look like creatures out of fable — the magical, luminescent and gently dangerous faeries of childhood dream.

This appearance is a lie.

The raksha have no shape, not even a protoplasmic one. In shaped worlds, they must take one on, and it is natural that it look like the things of dream. But a raksha is a flowing, viscous agglutination of Essence patterns, an indescribable congeries of passions and the elements of dream, coagulating around the five fixed points of self that keep them from dissolution. One of those is its heart. Two or three are containers for their spirit. The remaining points are the fanged Virtue maws.

The raksha would say that the human soul is no prettier, seen up close — and they should know, for they have fixed their teeth on human souls and drained the Virtues from them. And so, in one sense, their shapeless description too is a lie. Just as the beauty of a raksha relies on the human inability to see their true nature, the horror of witnessing their true self derives in part from the absence of fair comparison.

The Graces

The five fixed points that define a raksha's self are the Graces. Where humans have the vibrant hun and po souls, and Yozis have a host of demonic souls, raksha have only cold lumps of Essence and glamour. The core of their being is empty power.

The pith of a raksha is the Heart Grace, containing his Willpower and reflecting his Nature. The four remaining Graces are the Cup, that contains and catches Compassion; the Ring, symbol of Temperance; the Staff, focus for the Convictions of the Wyld; and the Sword, principal icon of Valor.

General Rules for Graces

Raksha can forge Cup, Ring, Staff and Sword Graces for any consenting creature. This includes creatures dominated through beguilement or possession of their Heart. This takes a scene of effort, and the creature must be present for the process.

Each Grace spiritually attaches to that creature's corresponding Virtue. The Cup is Desire, attaching to Compassion and teaching the raksha to undermine Temperance. The Ring is Self-Awareness, attaching to Temperance and defining the nature of the creature's Valor. The Staff is Social Power, attaching to Conviction and defining the nature of the creature's Compassion. The Sword is Greatness, attaching to Valor and teaching the raksha to overwhelm Conviction.

Having a Grace gives the creature the corresponding Grace Trait, initially rated 1, and the appropriate shaping damage track. In addition, characters with a Grace Trait acquire a shaping action and can perform the appropriate type of shaping. This allows raksha to learn and use Charms associated with that Grace. It also allows Eclipse Caste Solar Exalted, Moonshadow Caste Abyssal Exalted, Fae-Blooded and Lunar Exalted to learn the appropriate Grace's Charms according to the rules for the Eclipse anima — that is, for double the experience point and mote cost. Storytellers running games set in the Wyld can extend this benefit to the protagonists' character type (Dragon-Blooded, heroic mortal, etcetera) as a highly optional rule.

The artifacts associated with a Grace resist damage like artifacts of the Five Magical Materials. Once forged, a Grace is a possession of the raksha who crafted it — *not* of the person whose Virtue it holds. It is generous but uncommon to give someone his Grace, once forged. In theory, one raksha's Grace can be owned by a second raksha, who can invoke or banish it at any time; physically in the hands of a third; and attuned to by a fourth.

If a character's Grace is broken or destroyed, it inflicts one of the Bedlam curses on him (see pp. 112-113). Such Graces can be recreated with Fair Folk Charms, but only if the smith has every remaining piece of the original Grace. Creation-born characters are less vulnerable. If a Grace of theirs breaks, they suffer the associated curse for one or two stories, after which they recover.

For further rules on losing and forging Graces, see the Charms Forging the (Grace) Grace on pages 185-187 of Chapter Five: Raksha Magic.

Common raksha choose one of these as their Major Grace. Nobles choose two Major Graces. These are the raksha's driving Graces, the maws of their feeding Virtues, the Graces that bring energy and Essence into their systems. The remaining Graces exist as counterpoint, qualities of existence that dissipate the energies of the Fair Folk rather than empowering them.

Graces are rated as independent Traits. Each "contains" or "channels" one Virtue, drawing its power from that Virtue in the raksha's spirit.

The Cup Grace

It is an inevitable truth of the Wyld that one is small. The raksha are big fish in an infinite pond. There are things that move in its deeps that transcend any measure. The only protection for princes and Primordials alike is distance, time and hope. The great everything-ending terror may come to Rakshastan and Creation tomorrow, or it may take more years than the pattern spiders can count, but it will come. If any truth of the Wyld contradicts this bleak evaluation, the raksha do not know of it.

Raksha forge the Cup Grace as they contemplate how small they are. It is the Grace of parasites and symbiotes, the cup of conciliation, the grail of good service. It is a standing offer to those that might destroy them: "I can please you." The raksha use the Cup to serve others on their own terms. It is the lesser art of the Cup to make one's service pleasing. It is the greater art to make that service necessary. The great performers of the raksha addict others to their pleasures and their arts. They make others dependent upon them. In so doing, they obtain insidious power over the greatest of the Wyld.

When the everything-ending terror comes, the Warriors will stand against it with their blades and fall like wheat. The wave of its passage will crack the rings and staves of the raksha. Those of the Cup shall stand before it and offer themselves, and, with their songs and stories, seek to make the terror love them. This is the power of Compassion, the bridge between souls, and the draught one draws from a raksha's Cup.

The Cup

The Cup Grace feeds on Compassion and represents Desirability. It lets the raksha invoke empathy from others. A raksha's Cup encourages others' Compassion and undermines their Temperance.

- x — You are fundamentally alien. Like a spider or a chthonic god, your nature discourages the empathy of others. You may be beautiful, alluring and even sympathetic in your motivations, but others cannot truly understand you. You are a mad god of the Wyld.
- • — Your motivations and aesthetic are comprehensible but disturbing. There is

nothing in you that others can love or need, save through your artifice or some terrible work of fate.

•• You are skilled at seeming comprehensible, sane and interesting to others. Sometimes people become comfortable around you without your making an overt effort to befriend them.

••• Strangers sometimes find you worth their succor. Others often feel good in your presence, whether Fair Folk or Creation-born.

•••• Your Essence is naturally harmonious with others'. You attract others' love, friendship and devotion through your own compassionate acts.

••••• You are alien to none. Birds may come to your hand, mortals may love you, and spiders and chthonic gods may crawl on you with a comfortable sense of kinship.



The Ring Grace

Most of the Wyld sleeps. Patterns and ideas are born, live and die, all without the awareness of self. They occur without purpose and exist without desire. Some are simple constructs. Others are great, complex structures of Essence, as deep and as intricate as the Primordials themselves — but they are nothing more than constructs and phenomena.

The raksha forge the Ring Grace to wake from their sleep. It is the endless circle of a being observing itself. It is their ego, their self-awareness and their consciousness. The raksha wield their Ring Grace to understand themselves. It lets them declare, "I am thus." It is their Temperance, the principles that they will not violate. It is their integrity. It is their definition.

The Ring

The Ring Grace feeds on Temperance and represents Self-Awareness. It strengthens the Fair Folk in their natures. A raksha's Ring flows from his Temperance to define the circumstances of his Valor.

x You are aware of yourself, at best, as a dream. You are a transient notion bubbling up from the Wyld. You are a soap bubble. You are a moment's fancy. You are a toy of the chaos. Your time will pass, and you shall leave nothing behind you.

• You have shaped yourself to raksha standards. Fluid and strange, your nature shifts from moment to moment, but the few consistent threads give you a sense of self.

•• Your sense of your own nature drives you. You have an integrity of self comparable to that of the Creation-born.

••• You are a point of stability in the Wyld, a bastion of decision and self.

•••• The laws of your nature are a madness and a power. Others cannot change you.

••••• You are self-contained and complete. You will go on as you always have even if the Wyld and the world should turn to dust and ash around you.

The Staff Grace

The courts of the Wyld are brutal and cruel. To survive them, the Fair

Folk must intertwine their existence with others. They must learn to rely on their kindred and to have faith in them. Unfortunately, the other raksha are inherently unreliable, faithless, twisted bastards. Putting the cherry on that particular bitter sundae, they're also insane alien monsters.

Raksha forge their Staff Grace to restrain themselves and others. The Staff Grace is convention, taboo, social contract and muzzle. It is the common language of restraint necessary for a society of elegant horrors to exist. The Staff teaches them and others what is done and not done. The conventions of court and household inscribe themselves on a raksha's Staff Grace, as do the bargains he swears to. The Staff is both Custom and Law. Because they have a Staff Grace, the raksha cannot break their sworn word. Their only answer to an impossible oath is to shatter their own Staff Grace and destroy part of themselves. The Staff Grace holds the raksha's Conviction.

The Staff

The Staff Grace feeds on Conviction and represents Social Power. It lets the Fair Folk shape the social order around them. A raksha's Staff flows from her Conviction to define the circumstances of her Compassion.

- x — Creation-born and other raksha are nothing more than objects and forces to you. You have no connection to them. They are not people. They are simply a peculiarly animate aspect of your existence.
- • — You grasp that others think of themselves as people and, in some strange fashion, have an identity they consider comparable to your own. You may even come to agree.
- •• — You understand the necessities and convictions that drive others and have a good sense for where those meet or conflict with your own.
- ••• — You have a cold appreciation for the motivations of your enemies.
- •••• — You recognize in others the twisted, mutated form of your own desires.
- ••••• — You understand the essential principles of dedication and conviction and can ruthlessly manipulate their manifestations in yourself and others.

The Sword Grace

Each newborn raksha is an oasis of pattern in an endless sea of change. It is the nature of the tides of myth to drown them — to treat them as nothing more than one more extra, one more scrap of dream, something small and meek to be eaten by the great.

To survive as anything more than a slave, the raksha must have a Sword Grace to serve as weapon and armor against the chaos. It raises them up, like an Exaltation, making them legendary figures that stand above the Wyld. It transforms them from fantasies into great warriors and monsters, standing in sharp contrast against the faintest wash of dream. It is their immortality and their power.

The Sword

The Sword Grace feeds on Valor and represents Greatness. A raksha's Sword makes her a symbol of terror and glory, encouraging others' Valor but overwhelming their Convictions.

- x — Your identity is not important, even to yourself.
- • — You are a thing that can do harm.
- •• — You cast a shadow of death and dissolution, and so, these things shy from you.
- ••• — You are an agency of fear, death and power.
- •••• — You are a thing that others dread. You are a dream of ice and horror and blood.
- ••••• — You are a dream of glory and endings, imposing and terrible even in the Wyld.

The Heart Grace

The raksha's Heart Grace holds her identity and her name. Thus, raksha under the curse of namelessness cannot see or touch their own Heart Grace, even if it's dangled before their face. The Heart Grace traditionally manifests as an adamant egg. It is unbreakable and sacrosanct — unless the raksha loses all four of her Virtue Graces to others and those attuned to them all withdraw their protection. Then, the Heart Grace becomes as fragile as glass.

The Heart

The Heart Grace channels a raksha's Willpower and Essence. It allows the Fair Folk to exist. The greater the Heart Grace, the more real the raksha.

- x — You are contingent on another creature's dreams. Your will and power rest in your master's hands, and you are most likely an extra.
- • — You are an independent and self-willed creature, able to shape the Wyld but unable to make shaping attacks.
- •• — You are a heroic raksha, able to make shaping attacks.
- ••• — You are a noble.
- •••• — You are one of the great leaders of the Fair Folk.
- ••••• — You are an unshaped monster.

Exalted, Mortals and the Graces

Creatures of Creation can never have a Heart Grace. Charms with Heart minimums treat them as having Heart 2, with the Exalted and high-Essence creatures having an effective Heart 3.

The raksha can forge Cup, Ring, Staff and Sword Graces for the creatures of Creation (see pp. 185-187). The Grace Trait descriptions influence the Creation-born, but their birth nature dominates — a Dragon-Blooded with Cup 1 is a little more alien than her peers, but not so alien as the equivalent raksha.

Expanded Backgrounds

The realities of the Wyld differ from the circumstances of Creation, and this difference necessitates certain changes in the function of certain Backgrounds. Unless mentioned below, existing Backgrounds work just as they do in **Exalted**.

Artifact

The treasures of the Wyld are not the treasures of Creation, and raksha rarely claim artifacts of the Five Magical Materials. In the artifacts of the Wyld — glamour spells, behemoths, adjurations and the tools of the Ring — they keep their power.

Raksha must win major artifacts from the unshaped through questing and rarely possess a significant supply. The simpler artifacts of their kind they forge themselves and trade for Gossamer or services, and many keep a small stable of petty spells, beasts, and other little treasures. The raksha have an adjusted Artifact Background to reflect this.

x	None. Are you too arrogant for such trinkets or too weak to keep them?
•	Threadbare: A pair of level-1 artifacts.
••	Equipped: Four dots of artifacts, including at least two level-1 artifacts.
•••	Coffers: Seven dots of artifacts, including at least four level-1 artifacts.
••••	Hoard: Twelve dots of artifacts, including at least five level-1 artifacts and no single artifact greater than level 4.
•••••	Prince's Treasure: Fifteen dots of artifacts, including at least five level-1 artifacts and one level-3 artifact.

Backing, Contacts and Influence

Raksha rarely possess these Backgrounds, and when they do, they refer to influence in mortal communities.

Familiar

Raksha familiars are scraps of dream and are more often poppets, manikins and homunculi than beasts.

x	No familiar.
•	A small animal with the size and ferocity of a cat or manikin, most likely of Wyld extraction.
••	An impressive pet — a Threat • creature, such as a wolf or a poppet, or an unusually useful manikin.
•••	A powerful, dangerous pet — a Threat •• creature, such as a homunculus — or a manikin, poppet or beast with meaningful noncombat abilities. The creature can share one of its senses with the raksha when within 30 miles.
••••	A Threat • creature with meaningful noncombat abilities and the power to share its senses with the raksha.
•••••	A Threat •• creature with meaningful noncombat abilities and the power to share its senses.

Followers and Resources

Raksha do not use these Backgrounds. Instead, purchase mortal servants with the Retinue Background and wealth with Gossamer.

Manse

While they cannot construct them, Fair Folk can own Manses and Demesnes. In Demesnes and Manses, they recover Essence as in the Wyld, and raksha who carry Hearthstones do not wither in Creation. They do not, however, receive the normal benefits of a Hearthstone — its power is dead to them.

New Backgrounds

In addition to the standard Backgrounds presented in **Exalted**, the Fair Folk have the following Backgrounds to choose from.

Birth

Some raksha come into being from miserable and paltry scraps of dream, struggling to forge even the rudiments of power from the dregs of the Wyld. Others are born glorious, ascending to being on a pyre of nothingness already in possession of the greatness of their kind. This Background lets raksha of fortunate birth begin play with certain common Charms without spending Charm slots.

x	You may choose one Assumption-type Charm for free.
•	…and Ravishing the Created Form.
••	…and Banquet of Crumbs.

••• …and Essence-Forging Art and Awakened Dream Manufacture.

•••• …and all five Forging the (Grace) Grace Charms.

••••• …and Gaping Virtue Mouth and Ecstatic Reproduction Style.

Freehold

In the Wyld, as in Creation, there are places of power. The Essence flows of the Wyld aspect to the infinite shapes of pattern and the raw emptiness of chaos, and where these forces converge, a great wealth of Essence forms Demesnes. The raksha tame Demesnes with dream and magic and the Heart of a peer, making a Freehold. Most alliances of raksha share a single Freehold.

Like Manses, Freeholds yield up tokens of power. A single token is a Cyst or Carbuncle, a membranous sac of Essence containing the writhing dreams the Freehold's architecture spawns. Raksha attuned to it recover (Freehold rating) motes per hour. Freehold design can divide the Cyst up into a number of smaller Cysts with total rating equal to the Freehold's rating. The smallest possible Cyst, a *pennant* that does not help recover Essence but keeps the raksha from withering in Creation, has an effective rating of 1/3 — so the architecture of a five-dot Freehold could yield a two-dot Cyst, a one-dot Cyst and six pennants.

Most of the Freehold's power lives not in the Cysts or the pennants, but in the bonefire, a pillar of heatless silver flame that focuses the Freehold's power and holds the Freehold lord's Heart. Raksha can draw on the power of the bonefire from afar to control the glamour spells, artifacts, behemoths and great oaths of the Freehold.

The key geomantic locations within a Freehold and the Wyld are called waypoints. A newly constructed Freehold stretches the lord's influence over a number of waypoints equal to (Freehold rating + 5). Raksha can increase this radius with the Forging the Stronghold Charm (see p. 189).

x Why are you unwelcome in the Freeholds of the Fair Ones?

• You are permitted to reside in a level-1 or level–2 Freehold.

•• You hold a pennant from a level-1 or level-2 Freehold and have permission to enter one or two others.

••• You hold a pennant from a Freehold of level 3 or more or share power over a level-1 or level-2 Freehold and can negotiate for a Cyst. You are most likely permitted in most of the region's Freeholds.

•••• You hold pennants from two or more Freeholds, providing you shelter from any single lord's disfavor, and might command a tiny (level-1 or level-2) Freehold of your own. As an alternative, you share power over a significant Freehold and hold one of its Cysts.

••••• You command a significant Freehold, or you share power over one Freehold and — in the event of an emergency — have a pennant from one or two others.

Gossamer

Raksha measure their wealth in gossamer — vaporous Essence patterns that respond to the raksha's will. Gossamer is an intermediate stage between the raw Wyld and shaped power. In Creation, it manifests as the substance of dreams. It forms the perfect vehicle for the raksha's power. Raksha with large stores of gossamer have more influence in the Wyld and more access to material wealth in Creation.

Each dot of Gossamer gives a standard income as well as a gossamer supply. In Creation, this means that the raksha has access to mortal dreams. In the Wyld, raksha generate small quantities of gossamer as a byproduct of Wyld shaping. Income, then, represents control over a gossamer-rich Wyld region or the ability to tithe raksha Workers who create or gather it.

The Gossamer Background does not include gossamer received from Charms.

x None: You control no gossamer. You are an isolated creature, threadbare in the Wyld.

• Poor: You receive 1 gossamer per story. You have an effective Resources ••• in Creation. Though most mortals would envy your wealth, you are impoverished by the standards of your kind.

•• Comfortable: You receive 3 gossamer per story. You have an effective Resources •••• in Creation and live in the style of the great potentates of the Realm. You can caparison your more capable servants in magical raiment. In the Middlemarches, this is considered the minimum respectable wealth.

••• Affluent: You receive 6 gossamer per story. You have an effective Resources ••••• in Creation. You can buy the services of nobles, support a retinue and wield influence over a large section of the Wyld.

•••• Dominant: You receive 10 gossamer per story. You can make multiple Resources ••••• purchases in a story and trade in the Heart Graces of your lesser kin.

••••• Vastly Rich: You receive 20 gossamer per story. You can afford an unlimited quantity of mortal wealth and spend the dreams of mortals as if they were so much tin.

Where Do I Harvest Gossamer?

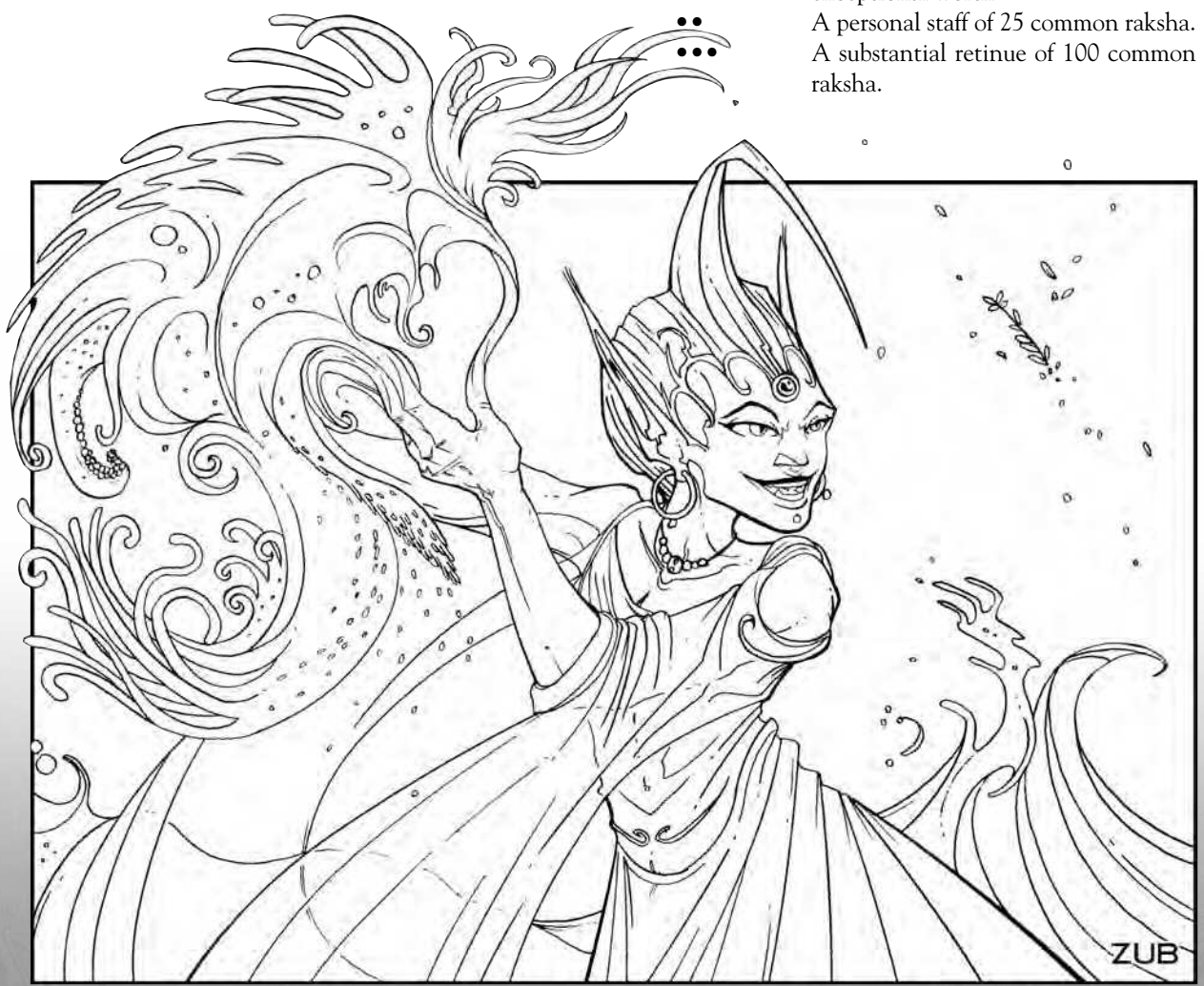
Waypoints in the Wyld, as minor oneiromantic locations, are sources of gossamer. The process of shaping creates tiny scraps of gossamer as a byproduct. Some waypoints are rich in this power from centuries of shaping without a harvest; others naturally produce more gossamer in each shaping. To determine if a given waypoint holds any unusual wealth or wealth-generating capacity, roll Perception + Awareness against difficulty 1 as a Ring-shaping action. This stirs up the scraps of gossamer already present, shaking loose a fine mist of dream in a region of accumulated gossamer and knuckle-sized gossamer spheres in a place of raw power.

To harvest gossamer, a raksha spends 1 Willpower and uses Ring shaping to lure the gossamer to herself and trap it in usable form. Traditional dice pools include Intelligence + Martial Arts in a gossamer-summoning kata and Intelligence + Lore to attune its pattern to the raksha's own. The difficulty for this roll varies based on the region, as does the amount of gossamer the raksha can harvest from it in a single story. For example, a "sweet spot" might have difficulty 2 and allow the Fair Folk to harvest 3 gossamer per story, while a typical waypoint has harvest difficulty 5 and yields, at most, 1 gossamer per story to those with shaping skill sufficient to draw it forth.

Retinue

It is the tradition of the noble raksha to both construct and enslave the less fearsome of their kind. Common raksha bound in personal service to the noble Fair Ones form their retinue. Raksha in Creation can substitute powerful mortals (elite troops or Wyld barbarians) for some of the common raksha in their retinue.

x	None. You might be a wanderer, a noble too weak or young to have such possessions or a commoner yourself.
•	Five retainers — common raksha of no exceptional worth.
••	A personal staff of 25 common raksha.
•••	A substantial retinue of 100 common raksha.



•••• A great force of 200 common raksha, including one or two heroic commoners whose Hearts you hold.

••••• A small army of 300 common raksha, including a staff of five heroic commoners whose Hearts you hold.

Style

The deeper into the Wyld the characters go, the more raw power they have over the stories of their lives. The Storyteller should yield correspondingly greater influence to the players to decide the course of events. The Storyteller can't take on the role of "the world," because there is none — only the characters, the Storyteller characters and the rules of the raw Wyld.

To help simulate this, the raksha have access to a pool of stunt dice. These refresh at the beginning of each scene. They represent stunt dice that the raksha award themselves for being cool — simulated by the player taking stunt dice from the pool and giving them to the character. These function in every way like normal stunt dice, including potential Essence and Willpower regeneration.

In Creation and the tainted lands, the raksha can spend, at most, one die from the pool on any action. In the Bordermarches, Middlemarches, uncapped Demesnes and Freeholds, they can spend two. Deeper in the Wyld, they can spend three.

Storytellers can still award stunt dice for obvious coolness and has the opportunity to do so before the raksha awards them to herself. The total stunt dice for an action cannot exceed three.

x None: You have no stunt pool. You lack confidence in your own nature.

• Sword Stunts: You define yourself as a creature of epic scope and gain a stunt pool equal to your Sword in dice.

•• Cup Stunts: You corrode the world's laws to allow yourself more power. You gain a stunt pool equal to your Sword plus your Cup in dice.

••• Ring Stunts: Your definition is a constant influence on the world. You recover your Ring in stunt dice each scene, in addition to the full refresh at the beginning of the story.

•••• Heart Stunts: Your Wyld nature is a source of raw power to you. You fully refresh your stunt pool whenever you enter bedlam.

••••• Staff Stunts: Your Staff mediates between the principles of the world and the principles of self. In Creation, you can perform a number of Wyld stunts per story equal to your Staff.

Raksha Lore and Occult in Creation

Through dreams and mirrors, the raksha understand Creation, and thus, their sense of the world is somewhat skewed. In the Middlemarches of Rakshastan, a true understanding of Creation's laws, history and principles is rare. Raksha who live in the Freeholds of Creation develop an instinct for the place over time.

Raksha suffer a +3 difficulty on Lore and Occult rolls that involve the things of Creation — knowing the history of the mortal world, the ways of its spirit courts, understanding human artifacts, designing geomantic architecture and so forth. They know many of the secrets of the world, but it takes an effect such as Heaven Rains Wisdom (see p. 168) to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

Bedlam

Only the thin thread of their self-control holds the raksha back from madness and differentiates them from the terrible chaos of the Wyld. Their Virtues and their Willpower set order on them, making them creatures rather than montages of swirling dream. When the strength of their Virtues gives out, they devolve into entities of turmoil and bedlam.

General Rules

Like the Exalted, the raksha can channel each Virtue a number of times per story equal to that Virtue's rating. Several effects in these rules refer to this as spending a channel of that Virtue. Bedlam follows automatically when a raksha spends his last channel of a given Virtue. Raksha in bedlam roll the relevant Virtue or Virtues at +2 difficulty. Recovering from bedlam, like the end of a story, restores a raksha's expended channels of his Virtues.

Raksha are particularly suited to the bedlam associated with high Virtues. One of their Virtues rated 3 or more is associated with a circumstance where the raksha *must* channel a Virtue, if possible. These circumstances are known as Lures. The player chooses one of the listed Lures or works with the Storyteller to create an original Lure. These represent the uttermost temptation of shape — the aspect of their Virtues that coaxes the raksha to ossify into a predictable and static creature. Players choosing Lures should think of them as forbidden passions. Of all the aspects of the Virtue, the raksha love their Lures best, but pursuing them too avidly burns out the last of the Fair Ones' sanity and sends them reeling into bedlam. Lures do not force the raksha to channel the Virtue more than once per scene, and they have no power if the raksha does not behave in the relevant fashion.

Compassion

Raksha who fall into bedlam by spending their last point of Compassion suffer the Curse of Hubris. Like creatures with Compassion 0 or Staff 0, they lose the ability to appreciate the existence of others as living things rather than phenomena. This comes with an intrinsic +2 difficulty to any attempt to influence or understand others, including the use of the reality-shaping abilities (see p. 132) of the Cup and the Staff.

The raksha, flush with arrogance and contempt, does not recover until he commits a number of cruel and regrettable acts equal to his Compassion. The term "regrettable" is literal — when the raksha's cruelty puts the raksha at risk of personal suffering, it helps reawaken his Compassion. Thus, slaughtering random mortals does not help the raksha recover from bedlam, but hurting a cherished slave or humiliating a dangerous rival might.

Raksha prone to Compassion-based bedlam usually balance their compassion and cruelty with a quixotic unreliability. They show generosity to others not in any pattern but from whim.

Lures: Giving help when asked. Romantic love. Creating beauty. Serving justice.

Conviction

Raksha who fall into bedlam by spending their last point of Conviction suffer the Curse of Namelessness. Like creatures with Conviction 0 or Sword 0, they lose their ability to project themselves upon the world. The raksha forgets her name, identity, nature and oaths. These things continue to bind her, but she does not know them. Her memory of all other things, particularly secrets, becomes dreamlike — this adds 2 to the difficulty of Lore rolls, but it also increases the difficulty of any attempt to interrogate the raksha by 2.

The raksha, lost and nameless in a feverishly strange world, does not recover until she betrays herself a number of times equal to her Conviction. This may take a matter of a moment, as she smashes her limbs and artifacts in fury at her own existence, or it may take years of namelessness before an enemy takes advantage of her state to pit her against her own interests.

Raksha prone to Conviction-based bedlam move through the world like storms. They change the world as they pass through it, but dare not become a fixture and implement the long-term plans of power.

Lures: Seizing power over other raksha. Fighting against the odds. Making commitments or oaths.

Temperance

Raksha who fall into bedlam by spending their last point of Temperance suffer the Curse of Alienation. Like creatures with Temperance 0 or Cup 0, they lose the sense that others' desires should affect them. They do not hide their nature behind a façade of comprehensibility because they see no reason to do so. This gives a +2 difficulty to attempts to influence or serve others, including through the reality-shaping abilities (see p. 132) of the Cup and the Staff.

The raksha, raging through the world as a vortex of unleashed Wyld power, does not recover until he commits acts of regrettable excess a number of times equal to his Temperance. As with Compassion-based bedlam, the term "regrettable" is literal — it takes an act of mad folly, rather than simple madness, to help the raksha recall his Temperance.

Raksha prone to Temperance-based bedlam are also followers of dissipation. In recklessness and insatiable desire, they lose themselves and suffer a terrifying corrosion of the spirit — but their mad indulgence is also a paean to the Wyld, and it is their duty to give themselves to passion.

Lures: Resisting a certain type of temptation, such as drugs, sex or dancing. Refusing a properly phrased request. Hiding one's opinion.

Valor

Raksha who fall into bedlam by spending their last point of Valor suffer the Curse of Meekness, also called the Curse of Terror. Like creatures with Valor 0 or Ring 0, they lose the desire to project themselves on the world. This imposes a two-die environmental penalty on all rolls.

Raksha suffering from the Curse of Meekness are prone to paranoia, timidity or cringing servility, but most of all, to acceptance — it is their inclination to passively watch the greatest horrors and quietly refuse the greatest challenges, their attitude a dreamlike expression that there's simply nothing to be done. When this fear or passivity humiliates or harms them a number of times equal to their Valor, they recover from bedlam.

Raksha prone to Valor-based bedlam are creatures of stillness. They must walk between the roads of courage and fear. They shadow their greatness, letting the dragon in their spirits sleep, until such time as they can risk unveiling it.

Lures: Feats of heroism. Facing down terrible things. Fighting duels. Fighting in great battles.

Common Castes

Common raksha divide into castes based on their Major Grace. This determines which Virtue they feed from. Those of the Cup feed on the air of Compassion; the Ring, Temperance; the Staff, Conviction; and the Sword, Valor. For example, raksha Warriors have the Sword as their Major Grace. They feed on Valor. Thus, war and bravery invigorate them. They can eat the Valor of mortals or bathe in its subtle radiance. In the Wyld, they can summon up Valor from the world around them and feast.

Diplomat

Diplomats are the intermediaries. They live in the between — in that space between the teeth of a demon and the flesh of its slaves, the memory of a lover and the touch of his hand, the fall of a kingdom and the rebirth that follows. There are no two creatures so alien that a raksha Diplomat cannot seek the common ground between them and, finding it, use it to bind them both to his will in an agreement all three find satisfactory.

The tool of the Diplomat is the Staff — not the weapon and not the distaff, but the staff of law, on which they record the bargains and promises of their kind. Their purpose and hunger is to build the alliances and bridges that link the raksha (and others) together through all the timeless years of their existence. In so doing, they bind and channel the Conviction of the rabid monsters of the Wyld, feeding from the Essence cast off by that binding.

The Diplomats hate Creation because it does not bind itself to their bargains. The humans and animals and gods of Creation are oathbreakers, abominations physically capable of promising one thing and doing another. This is sickening, horrible, filthy and wrong. Worse, it is corrosive. If a Diplomat wishes to cope with Creation at all, she must come to understand its ways and learn the structure of the machine. In Creation, if forced to it by the weave of events, even a Diplomat can inadvertently break her word.



In one respect, Creation redeems itself. The Conviction of its fanatics has a rare and heady flavor. Those driven to live in Creation's reaches sup on the dreams, souls, passion and radiance of zealots, fanatics and ecstatic cultists. For the ravisher, nothing is sweeter than devouring the will of a dedicated victim. She drains her victim's integrity and drive until his only remaining conviction is service to whatever oaths the raksha chooses to extract.

Caste Traits: Diplomats excel at the arts of intrigue, wayfare and manipulation. Their Caste Abilities are Linguistics, Occult, Ride, Socialize and the assassin's art, Thrown.

Grace and Virtue: Diplomats feed on Conviction. They favor the Staff Grace and its Charms, which channel Conviction and manifest diplomatic power. The Staff has the power to create and support social order.

Controlling Grace: Valor controls Conviction. Diplomacy is strongest when allied to the Sword and weakest when opposed to it. Imperial Raksha — noble Diplomats who master their Warrior aspect — are the nobles most fitting the Diplomat description above.

Associations: The northern direction, the color blue, the place between, the shinma Nirvikalpa, the social world and unity.

Sobriquets: Rajanya, Constraining Storms, Shapers of Law, Silent Chains, Culture Dancers, Summit and Chasm Folk, Beguilers, Poison Knives, Tulpa

I'm proud of you.
Sacrificing your life for this pathetic little village —
I can taste the integrity of your choice.
I set in motion the cycle of events that brought you here; that brought this doom of the wolf god's wrath; that lets you save them by standing in its way. It is by my word and my hand that this is necessary. But it gives me joy to know that you are not chained. That it is your own nature and your own desires that keep you here, bound in death's shadow to this little town, waiting at the stake —
For the monster to come.

Entertainer

Entertainers are everything you want. They are everything you crave. They are your heart's desire. There is no hole in the heart that they cannot fill and no quality in their possession that they cannot make others long for. They are joy and brightness, forbidden lust and blood-thirst, hungers, addictions, satiation and release. To the ghostly Disciples of the Abyss, they are wisps of Oblivion. The pattern spiders at the Loom see them as the woven shapes of Creation, Wyld Essence in perfect obedience to form. To the Solar Exalted, the Entertainers paint themselves as victims, patrons and, sometimes, monsters — the necessary accouterments to the quests of epic heroes. To the raksha, the Entertainers have a simpler name and wear a simpler mask. They are Need.

The symbol of the Entertainer is the cup. Entertainers offer the drought that slakes the thirsts of the raksha. They are the grail, the gift of provenance that offers completion, certainty and peace. Those who drink once from an Entertainer's cup long for it forever after — and even the greatest raksha, with dozens of master Entertainers at their beck and call, sometimes think back to the cups they have drunk from and later lost.

The raksha depict the cup with a cracked edge. Those who literally drink from an Entertainer's cup cut their lip. Their blood trickles to the floor, where the Entertainer can lap it up. In the Wyld, this is named Compassion. In like fashion, when the Entertainer uses her performance to bind the passions of others, this releases the Compassionate Essence that feeds her.

The Entertainers hate Creation because it does not need them. They have sung to it, danced for it, written for it, painted for it, told it stories and writhed in sexual abandon upon the naked earth. Such deeds have won the hearts and affections of mortals, gods and Exalts — but the great machine of the Primordials pays them no heed. The world grinds on in callous ignorance of their efforts, and the people that live within it are fickle. They forget. They move on. They use their concepts of death, time and forgetfulness to escape the timeless gifts of the raksha performers, and that is why the Wyld must wipe the very idea of Creation from existence.

Those who find themselves living in Creation must come to terms with the indifference of the machine. They seek to draw forth love and rapture from others' hearts. Careful, stealthy parasites use their arts to rouse mortals and spirits to a pitch of tempestuous joy. Ravishers use cruelty to crush the soul, draining away all Compassion and love of life until the victim sees neither beauty or value in anything save the raksha's own arts.

Caste Traits: Entertainers are practiced at service and subterfuge. Their Caste Abilities are Investigation, Larceny, Medicine, Performance and Stealth.

Grace and Virtue: Entertainers feed on Compassion. They favor the Cup Grace and its Charms, which channel

Compassion and give them the parasitic power to subvert the will and nature of others.

Controlling Grace: Conviction controls Compassion. The Entertainer's art is strongest when allied to the social order and weakest when shunned by it. Luminaries — noble Entertainers augmented with a Diplomat's skills — are the nobles best fitting the Entertainer description above.

Associations: The western direction, the color black, the place inside, the shinma Dharma, the mind's eye and dissolution.

Sobriquets: Shudra, The Desirable, Beckoning Folk, Pleasure Toys, Unmakers, Heart Eaters, Transforming Passions, Lananshee

I'm sorry. I really am.
You don't have anything more to give me. You've used it all up. Family, power, talent, health — it's all gone.
I know you need me. And I wish I could give you more. But I can't. All I can do is let you go, set you free of me, send you back to the cold dark world.
You asked me for that once, remember?
It's what you wanted.

Warrior

Warriors are legends and terrors. They are the people of fear and the outriders of death. They alloy themselves with their own nightmares and become creatures above and transcendent to horror, pain, and loss. They are the grim march of devastation. In the Wyld, the Warriors can give even the greatest of the unshaped a certain measure of death. In Creation, they are mercenaries and murderers, and crows follow at their heels. Bold heroes and cruel monsters are alike in their nature: The Warrior raksha are epic, iconic figures, bringing fear to their enemies and sheltering those they serve.

The symbol of the Warrior is the sword. Held in the left hand, it means stasis, for those who fear the sword may shape themselves to the Warrior's service. Held in the right hand, it means change, for each cut brings new endings and new beginnings to the world. In all times and places, the sword means death. These three concepts summarize every fear known to raksha, mortal or god, and in taking up the sword, the Warrior makes such fears the problems of his enemies.

Warriors hate Creation because it can kill them. In the Wyld, riding on the winds of storm and battle, they are eternal — but it takes only the touch of an iron blade or a Lunar Exalt's claw to end their lives forever. Simply by existing, Creation makes death and terror once again the Warriors' masters. It limits their Valor and their immortality. It makes them small.

Those who find themselves trapped in Creation feed on others' fear. The gentler method distills the fear from the subtle taste of Valor — the radiance of fear defied, cast off and ignored by gladiators, thugs



and heroes. The ravisher's way cuts the bravery from the mortal soul and plunges the victim into trembling, wide-eyed, waking nightmares.

Caste Traits: Warriors are skilled at the physical and social arts of war. Their Caste Abilities are Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee and Presence.

Grace and Virtue: Warriors feed on Valor. They favor the Sword Grace and its Charms, which channel Valor and give them the power to inspire fear.

Controlling Grace: Temperance controls Valor. The art of the Ring is drive, integrity and the creative principle. Two are necessary to war, but the third is its antithesis. Thus, Cataphractoi, Warriors who also master the Worker's art, are the nobles best fitting the Warrior description above.

Associations: The southern direction, the color red, the place outside, the shinma Nishkriya, the physical world and greatness.

Sobriquets: Kshatriya, Nightmare Brood, Hero Spawn, Death and Fear Folk, Killers, Trembling World Walkers, Outriders, Hobgoblins

A little girl looked at me and said, "I am afraid."
I told her, "Little one, even in this Age of Sorrows, there is virtue in mastering your fear. Take up your father's sword. Strike at me. Perhaps it will strike true."
Ah! Was even the Unconquered Sun so proud of his children as I, when she raised up that blade? She struck at me, and struck not well, but I have made the town a pyre in her name.

Worker

Workers are action and creation. They are the forces and movers of the Wyld. Their first act is to forge themselves out of gossamer and dream, and when this is accomplished, they do not rest. They pursue the labors of their lives with endless, rigorous devotion. They are machines. They are insects. They are pure and unceasing flames, driving with their work the great engine of the madlands.

The symbol of the Worker is the ring — the closed circle, the snake that devours itself, the phoenix born from her own egg, the storyteller caught in her own story and the reflective "I" that gazes endlessly upon its own nature within a raksha's mind. Of all the raksha, the Workers know themselves best and change the least. Some have a quiet, deep pride in their nature that lets them laugh at others' temptations. Others are empty, static husks, content to scrub, patrol, watch, whore, tidy, garden or transcribe for all eternity because it is their function. This is their Temperance and their devotion, the source of their energy, from which the nobles harvest gossamer.

The raksha of the ring have a knack for shape. They are crafters and makers. The Wyld shifts more slowly around them and, in a fashion, more precisely. The greatest wonders of the raksha are shaped by the hands that know the ring — Workers and the nobles that share, after a fashion, the nature of that kind.

Workers hate Creation because it is their nature to do so. It is grime in the gears of the Wyld. It is a short circuit in the chaos. Most of all, its existence mocks them. The great machine of Creation, the bastion of shape, makes a parody of their existence. It is a blasphemy against them, much as a stuporous, drunken four-armed idol would blaspheme against the Unconquered Sun. It must end because it is wrong, and while it is wrong, nothing and no one can truly be right.

Those who find themselves in Creation seek out those pockets of Creation that least offend them — temples, workshops and villages with



a meditative air. Where mortals and spirits live in harmony with themselves, the Workers can feel somewhat at ease with Creation and use the subtle airs of Temperance to fuel their own. In fits of hunger, ravishers rip the Temperance and self-definition from the mortal soul. Their victims lose their certainty and resolve. Once drained to nothing, a victim forgets herself when faced by the slightest temptation — her convictions remain strong, but her ability to focus on them dissolves. Dissipated and inattentive, mortals stripped of Temperance can no longer function as part of the great machine. Trouble and sorrow follows them until they die.

Caste Traits: Workers are skilled at disciplined and creative arts. Their Caste Abilities are Bureaucracy, Craft, Endurance, Lore and Martial Arts.

Grace and Virtue: Workers feed on Temperance. They favor the Ring Grace and its Charms, which channel Temperance and give them the awareness of self. The Ring has the power to inspire and control productive labor.

Controlling Grace: Compassion controls Temperance. Entertainers create desire, while Workers provide service. Their service is least accepted when it stands in opposition to desire and most valued when functionality and desire conjoin. Artisans — noble Workers with certain of an Entertainer's skills — are the nobles best fitting the Workers' description above.

Associations: The inward direction, the color white, the place nearby, the shinma Nirvishesha, creation and insight.

Sobriquets: Jathita, Laborers, Chaos Ants, Rigid Ghosts, Circle and Forge Folk, Makers, Ring People, The Servile Ones, Shapers of Worlds, Kobolds

I have changed your dreams and aspirations. They should be more functional now.

Noble Castes

Noble raksha feed from two different Virtues. Having two sources of energy makes the structure of their Essence infinitely more complex and far more vibrant. They have raw potential and actual power that the commoners lack and, thereby, rule the inner reaches of the Wyld.

For a noble raksha, one feeding Virtue is ascendant. Its associated Grace and caste define their essential nature exactly as for commoners. The other feeding Virtue and its Grace are "shadowed" — the raksha twists its purpose and principles to the service of the ascendant Grace. Noble raksha can invert their nature, ascending their slighted Virtue, Grace and caste and casting the other down into shadow. Some do this at whim, but most switch ascendant and shadowed castes only when faced with bleakest failure and sorrow.

Nobles favor both Virtues, both Graces and their associated Charms. They favor eight Abilities, five of which they must choose from the Abilities associated with their castes.

Shadowed Diplomats

Nobles with a shadowed Staff turn their diplomatic talents to the service of their primary caste. They use a Diplomat's insight, temperance and talent for forging compromise and community to express the fundamental nature of Cup, Ring and Sword.

Anarch (Warrior and Diplomat): Anarchs are the savagery of the Wyld. The natural state of chaos is an endless, raging battle, where every raksha is enemy to every other. There is no industry, no culture, no knowledge, no time, no art and no society. All and each live in continual fear of death or subjugation, and the life of every creature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. The raksha create the art of the staff to rise above this time and live in opulent luxury, but in the Anarch, the sword ascends above the staff. They use the arts of diplomacy to destabilize human and raksha courts, driving their kin and their victims into primal conflict. Some do this to spur evolution or from quasi-religious devotion to the concepts of strife. Most, being raksha, are just self-oriented monsters. Ill-suited to conditions of luxury and empire, they seek the decay of order. In places of chaos, strife and madness, driven by treachery and fear, the Anarch thrives.

Anarchs wield both military and diplomatic power — the sword and the staff. For this reason, they are creatures both of battle and the between. It is their gift to find the points of compromise between any two positions. It is their nature, on finding such opportunities for reconciliation, to shatter them and use the splintered pieces to fuel the fires of hatred and madness.

Luminary (Entertainer and Diplomat): Luminaries are the radiance and beauty that changes every rule. They burn with the same crisp brightness as a god's blessing, a child's first summer, the taste of a cold grape, the pains of opium withdrawal or the searing beauty a condemned man knows waking up to the symphony of birds on the day announced for his execution. Their touch exalts, transforms, muddles and inspires those around them.

Luminaries wield the cup and the staff — the tools and powers of Entertainers and Diplomats alike. Their cup is ascendant. Its corrosive power changes and subverts the order of society. The staff is the symbol of that order. Luminaries turn it to the service of the cup, sweeping away resistance to their power. Their ability to twist others to their ends knows no equal. Some are rakes and seductresses, trading pleasure for promises, unbalancing their diplomatic rivals to achieve more favorable agreements. Others are priests, celebrities and skalds, reshaping the courts of the raksha with their arts.

Panjandrum (Worker and Diplomat): Panjandrums are the living hearts and ritual centers of the raksha courts. They are architects of societies and worlds, organizing others into the patterns of their vision. The influence of the Panjandrum is seen everywhere in the Wyld. They are shamans and mystics and, on occasion, social theorists. Their will and dreams and whispers shape the culture and courts of the raksha into eccentric, mad and alien forms. Where the leaders of the raksha use the staff to shape society in pragmatic service to their own ends, the Panjandrums shape society because they can — one seeking to balance the interests of the residents in glorious utopia, another crafting her Freehold into the endless twisted branches of a silver moebius tree where blind Worker acolytes trudge forever across the wood singing the songs that govern the tree's life.

Panjandrums wield the ring and the staff — the tools that define themselves and their society. Because their ring is ascendant, they shape the order of the world to better fit their definition of themselves. They make others the mirror of their own identity. In so doing, they provide stability of a sort. Their desires for society and the influence they wield flow consistently from their nature rather than changing based upon their needs.

The Transformation: Luminaries, Anarchs and Panjandrums are fundamentally dissatisfied with the societies in which they find themselves. If they should discover or build a place that appeals to them, functioning in accords with the nature of their hearts, they often transform into Courtiers, Imperial Raksha and Scribes.

Shadowed Entertainers

Nobles with a shadowed Cup bend the arts of the Entertainer to the service of their caste. They use an

Entertainer's symbiotic and parasitic arts in service to the fundamental principles of Staff, Ring and Sword.

Artisan (Worker and Entertainer): Artisans are the virtuosos, the maestros, the geniuses, the crafters, the artists and the builders of the raksha. They are priceless resources, for each has mastered the trick of pleasing others with their arts. They craft wonders of art, architecture, science, glamour and policy such as even the raksha must treasure.

Artisans wield the ring and the cup, with the ring ascendant and the cup in shadow. It is for the common Workers to build to their masters' design. Noble Artisans craft to their own eccentric muses, weaving threads of pleasure and desirability into their work that their court may find it pleasing.

Courtier (Diplomat and Entertainer): Every court attracts Courtiers — the self-adoring acolytes of finery and coquetry, with their pointless intrigues and devotion to fashion. To the great lords of the raksha, they seem little more than household pets, the harem of the throne and not the rajah. Yet, the dances, whispers, glittering robes and lowered eyes of the Courtiers have a purpose to them. They are artificial contests of power, striving for social place, sheltered from the broader world by the power of the throne.

Though their staff is ascendant, a Courtier's weapon is the cup. The social orders that they build are fundamentally parasitic. The lords and ladies of the raksha tolerate them because of the power of the cup — the Courtiers do not simply adorn the court, but use the arts of the raksha to make that adornment seem necessary. They drain the strength of their lords, in exchange for entertainment and legitimacy, and in some courts, the titular king, queen or emperor is drained to nothing, a toy they leave on the throne to intercept the swords and staves of outside powers, a doddering and empty puppet who watches over the endless dance of mannerly intrigue.

Xia (Warrior and Entertainer): The Xia fight because, in every time and every place, some must always shed blood. They are sword-dancers and gladiators, dueling for the entertainment, status and bloodlust of their lords. They are soldiers and great generals, marching against the enemies of their court. They are grim avengers and hunters, endlessly working their arts against their foes. They fight for honor and glory and limited objectives, not for victory, for it is the purpose of the Xia to maintain a world in which their kind is necessary. A fallen enemy is a wasted enemy. A dead nemesis is an unrecoverable loss. The Xia will mourn such a creature's ending forever.

Xia wield the sword and the cup, with the sword ascendant. They take service with others, they make themselves necessary, they provide entertainment and military aid, but the goal of it all is their hunger for conflict. In constructing their world, the Xia seek to free themselves from attachment and dependence. They use the art of the cup to ensure themselves social backing and resources, that they may devote themselves entirely to the arts of war.

The Transformation: Courtiers, Xia and Artisans are essentially secure — their gifts of politics, war and craft give them the confidence that they will not die. If fear takes root in their hearts, or something threatens their survival, many will transform into Luminaries, Eshu or Ornamental Raksha.

Shadowed Warriors

Nobles with a shadowed Sword bend the arts of war to the service of their caste. They use violence, fear and war in service to the ethos of Staff, Ring and Cup.

Eshu (Entertainer and Warrior): Eshu are those who survive. They endure the harshest winters, when rains and sleets of acid and cold fire fall; they make their passage through the darkest unformed madlands, and the behemoths dare not trouble them; most are scarred and bear the weight of endless years of others' failure. They have the raw will to endure. They are dangerous and hardened creatures, who practice the arts of the Warrior so that none may trouble them. Their highest purpose is existence itself, and whether they face lesser enemies or greater, they will not sell their lives cheaply.

Eshu wield the cup and the sword. The cup is ascendant and casts the sword into shadow. They practice the arts of war as a display to others — in most cases, a warning. An Eshu evokes in others a great need and desire not to have the Eshu as an enemy. Many practice other arts as well. There are martial musicians, storytellers, smiths and poets in the Eshu's ranks — but all are dangerous, and all are survivors because the Grace of survival has cast the Grace of death into its shadow.

Imperial Raksha (Diplomat and Warrior): Imperial Raksha forge empires with the sword. They are creatures of war, not battle — born to the disciplined sweep of behemoths and armies across the territories of the Wyld, binding every strongpoint left behind them with oaths of allegiance or compliance. Not lust for battle nor hunger for possession drives their conquest, but the endless scratching of Scribes who record the limits of their territory and achievement. They are experts at using violence in service of the state.

Imperial Raksha wield the sword and the staff — force and diplomacy, battle and the fabric of law. Their staff is ascendant, and thus, martial skills become a tool of diplomacy. Many Imperial Raksha, unable to establish their own kingdoms, serve as emissaries and lieutenants for their stronger kin, securing alliances and tributaries with the threat of force.

Strategos (Worker and Warrior): Strategoi are the machinists of war. They are the weavers of the fates of battle, and at all times, the patterns of power and blood whisper to them. They craft the war plans of the raksha and direct the forces of the courts. They are elegant and dynamic, creatures driven to apply the utmost rigor and control to the byways and channels of death and fear.

Strategoi wield the ring and the sword. The ring is ascendant, and Temperance masters both a Strategos and her plans. Strategoi are crafters foremost, but their art and craft is war. There is no malice to it — in the Wyld, shaping reality to the patterns of death, pain and disease is scarcely more brutal than the patterns of the other Graces. In Creation, it is the same. The Strategos who crucifies 10,000 mortals as a warning to the rest is rarely pleased or saddened by their pain. The exercise simply expresses certain of her beliefs about the inherent applicability of force.

The Transformation: Imperial Raksha, Eshu and Strategoi have mastered the fire in their own hearts. They live not for glory but for their ambitions. Yet, there is always a hunger in them, eating at the back of their hearts — a will to greatness, but also for murder. If their rage and passion and desire for glory break free, they often transform into Anarchs, Xia and Cataphractoi.

Shadowed Workers

Nobles with a shadowed Ring bend the principles of creation and action to the service of their caste. Their dedication, their integrity and their pride in craftsmanship drives them as they pursue the arts of Cup, Staff and Sword. Because their ascendant Virtue casts the Ring of their ego into shadow, these nobles have subtle and understated personalities. Their potential for greatness manifests best when they stand at a more active noble's side.

Scribe (Diplomat and Worker): Scribes are the functionaries of law and the cogs in the machine of empire. They are loyal, dedicated and essentially invisible — they exist as part of the apparatus of the court. They are loyal advisors, ministers and attendants to the great, making their mark on society not through acts of chaotic greatness, but through steadfast, loyal service.

Scribes are creatures of the staff and the ring, but their symbol is the quill. Scribes identify with the mystery of writing — the process that transforms the ephemeral forms of custom, law and story into shaped, eternal forms. The staff, the order of society, is ascendant in their hearts. It subjugates and shadows the ring, and thus, they turn their identity and creative impulse to society's service.

Ornamental Raksha (Entertainer and Worker): The Ornamental Raksha exist to grace, adorn and pro-



vide entertainment to the nobles of the court. Their search for beauty in life is almost honest — they craft themselves to others' desires, rather than crafting others' desires to them. They are calm and withdrawn even in the face of rejection. Emptying themselves of personal hungers, they seek to please.

Ornamental Raksha are creatures of the cup and the ring, but their symbol is the mirror. They identify with the mystery of reflection, of one creature seeing themselves in another. The cup, the desire for others' admiration, is ascendant in them and shadows the ring of their own aesthetic.

Cataphract (Warrior and Worker): The Cataphractoi shape themselves as dreams of knights, heroes, warriors and murderers. They are the mailed fist of the courts, bodyguards and elite troops, the warrior-servants of greater nobles than they. They are the shield, the armor and the sword that stands between their masters and the foe. They fight in service to a greater cause, but more than that, because war defines them.

Cataphractoi are creatures of the sword and the ring, but their symbol is the crow. They do not attend wars because they must or from bloodlust or in the name of tactical objectives. They fight because they are Cataphractoi. They come — like the crows — because the war is there. The sword, their identification with violence and battle, supercedes the ring that is their sense of self.

The Transformation: Scribes, Ornamental Raksha and Cataphractoi suborn themselves to their definitions. It is an calm, empty pleasure in their spirits that drives them — they live as they do because a functionary's life pleases them. When terrible events rouse their egos and force them to take a stand — driving them to plans and motives beyond their duties — Scribes become Panjandrums, ornaments become Artisans, and Cataphractoi claim the role of Strategoi.



Among the raksha and in their land, some oaths could not merely be sworn, some wonders could not merely be forged, some sorceries could not merely be composed by the wise, and some beasts could not merely be drawn forth from the powers of the Wyld.

These things, Shikuzi the Weaver knew — and knew well. Though he was not a warrior as mortals would understand it, all raksha were warriors, for there was not a day in Rakshastan or the unshaped lands beyond it that did not force every being in those places to struggle for survival. Often, that struggle would have seemed abstract or hopelessly ephemeral to mortals, and even to many Exalts, but to sorcerers and the more erudite among the gods, the battles of the raksha against their peers and their unshaped progenitors were a fascinating, if little-understood, matter. Death was a difficult matter for the Fair Folk to deal out among one another, and so, they rarely sought to do so. The raksha did not fight to kill, but to take and to dominate.

Today, Shikuzi wished to hunt, for there were furs and threads and cloths that could not be spun merely from gossamer and Essence. There was a shawl he could not make without true miracles, wrested from the beyond. And so, Shikuzi had walked out to the edge of Creation with naught but a spear and a silk net. It was not merely any net, or merely any spear, but among the hunting gear of legend, their names would not be remembered. To go more heavily armed beyond this point, to come in a group — that invited the attention of the truly mighty among the unshaped. Shikuzi did not need to bind such a god-monster to his will, despite the fact that he might have been able to do so, even acting alone. They could enter even the Middlemarches with some difficulty, especially when the moon was full, and Shikuzi had no desire to tempt the anger of such a being just to feed his loom, if there was no reason to do so.

And so, alone, Shikuzi strode to the edge of Rakshastan, the last frontier of the miracle-riddled madlands of Creation, beyond which lay only random wildness and the true Princes of Chaos. He loosened his net and winded his hunting horn, then walked out into the storm, following tracks that perhaps only he could perceive — or perhaps imagine. Perhaps they were not there at all, but there were no others with him, so who could challenge his assertions?

As he walked, a terrible rain of glass spears and arrows and tears began, falling so hard and stinging it would have slain an army of mortal cataphractoi. Shikuzi tied a shawl around his head and trudged onward while the cliffs and trees and oceans near him split with the force of the storm. Atop a storm-lashed hill, he thrust his spear into the heart of the clouds, and it ceased to thunder. He removed the rain-shawl and continued.

Then, the land became harsh, impassible. Vast chasms loomed, tall mountains pierced the clouds, rivers faster than all reason sizzled before him with acidic ferocity. Shikuzi sighed and trudged on, leaping the gorges, bloodying his fingers on the mountains, crossing the rivers on bridges and fords. He had no answer to this, and he found it discouraging him as he crept ever-forward through the misery.

It wore and crushed at his spirit, challenging his determination to go forward on his hunt for mere miracles against the forces of the unshaped Fair Folk. What did he want, he seemed to ask himself, that he should invite this ruin to descend upon him? Shikuzi shook his head and stopped. On the edge of a vast chasm, he unlaced his trousers and performed the very epitomizing act of the shaped world. He pissed into the abyss. Then, he laced up his breeches, reached into his pocket and drew out a heart thorn and stabbed his harasser in return.

The voice in his mind fell silent, but the chasms and rivers and mountains remained, and Shikuzi, undaunted, could do little more than struggle over them. *He was a hunter, pursuing his prey*, he recited. There would be no going home without supper.

And, above the last gushing torrent, on a high cliff studded with boulders and thorny crystal growths and small patches of burning eyes, Shikuzi finally ran his prey to ground in its retreat.

Who won? Who can know what happens in the lands beyond the borders of Rakshastan. Surely Shikuzi does wear a fine new robe of glittering perfection, but is it his token of victory or his slave collar? Perhaps you should ask him if you wish to know.

CHAPTER FIVE
RAKSHA MAGIC

General Rules

The raksha ability to shape reality is an innate power. Once per scene, a raksha can take a special action called a "shaping action," potentially augmenting this action with Charms. In Creation, this gives the Fair Folk access to works of glamour. In the Wyld, it lets them redesign the physical reality around them. **Glamour is available only to heroic commoners and noble raksha.** Normal commoners have Graces and may know Charms, but they do not gain the ability to work shaping magic until they gain free will.

Most raksha Charms affect only their shaping action. They have no direct effect on their mundane dice actions. These extend the natural shaping ability of the raksha much as the Charms of the Solar Exalted extend their mundane abilities.

Charms that affect shaping actions resemble Solar Charms. **Raksha Charms that add dice cannot increase**

their shaping dice pools by more than (Attribute + Ability) dice. The cost for raksha Charms that modify their shaping action generally resembles the cost for similar Solar Charms that modify the Exalt's dice actions. However, the raksha do not have true perfect effects — sufficient opposition can overcome any work of the Fair Ones, including their defensive Charms.

Charms that affect the raksha's normal dice actions have a gossamer cost in addition to any mote, Willpower or health cost they have. They last for one scene or one story, but powerful effects have an additional cost each time the raksha uses them. For those rare Charms with a dice adding effect, **raksha Charms that add dice to normal actions can only increase their dice pool by their highest feeding Virtue.** Charms that increase the feeding Virtue do not increase the effects of dice adders.

The magic of the Fair Folk relies on the Graces rather than Attributes or Abilities. Their Charms have a minimum Grace requirement, and characters must possess that Grace at the appropriate level to learn them. This refers to the permanent Grace Trait, unmodified by any Charms. Typical Charm trees are based on two Graces: the primary Grace for the tree and a handful of Staff-based Charms at the higher levels of the tree. Diplomats benefit from the techniques of Cup, Ring and Sword.

Gossamer and Glamour

Gossamer is the stuff of dream and power. It is crystallized Essence, drawn from mortal dreams or coaxed from the energies of the Wyld — formless as a forgotten daydream, but shaped enough that the raksha can bind it to themselves. It exists in a limited supply. **Charms without a gossamer cost cannot affect the raksha's normal actions and only affect reality within the Wyld, Freeholds, Bordermarches and uncapped Demesnes.**

A few Charms list a gossamer cost of 0. These are gossamer-based Charms but are explicitly optimized to draw their power from negligible scraps of gossamer or the target's own dreams. Charms with a mutation cost (see below) are also considered to have a gossamer cost.

Works of Glamour

Unless otherwise stated, gossamer-based Charms are *works of glamour*. These are illusions, but they do not target the mind. The raksha aim their illusions at the flows of Essence that make up the people and things of the world. Those who develop their mind, body and spirit can hone their Essence to the point where they may see through raksha glamour. Those who do not must treat works of glamour as real.

Mechanically, each work of glamour has a shaping Trait and an opposed Trait. Characters whose Essence plus their opposed Trait exceeds the raksha's shaping Trait see through the illusion. They receive no benefit from the glamour and suffer no penalties from it. It can only affect them indirectly, by deceiving others. For example, Undetectable Lie (see **Exalted**, p. 286) has a shaping Trait of Manipulation and an opposed Trait of Wits. Characters with Wits + Essence greater than the raksha's Manipulation are immune to the Charm. Raksha can waive this immunity, but creatures of Creation cannot.

Every raksha has a true name, which can be determined by direct study of their Essence patterns (as with All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight) and a difficulty 5 Intelligence + Occult roll. **Characters who know a shaping raksha's true name are also immune to her works of glamour**; they know the true nature of the raksha's Essence pattern and can recognize its reality as false.

Some raksha Charms work around this limitation by imbuing the raksha herself with power. One example of this kind of effect is Gossamer Wing Flight (see p. 203), which lets the raksha grow wings. The wings are a work of glamour, but only the raksha is in a position to disbelieve them. Another example is Teeth of the World (see pp. 152-153). This Charm imbues the raksha with elemental Essence and lets her make wind- or lightning-based attacks for 5 motes each. Such Charms draw on the Essence of the raksha's body and mind rather than the spiritual nature that lets her shape the Wyld.

Permanent Glamours

Some gossamer-based Charms are *permanent glamours*. These Charms create something effectively real. Creation slowly withers them, but small permanent glamours can survive in Creation a number of years equal to the crafter's Essence. Large permanent glamours — bigger than a typical house, such as war machines and fortresses — continue for a number of decades equal to the crafter's Essence. Most permanent glamours create physical artifacts or cohesive sorcerous effects.

Characters cannot see through permanent glamours by default. Some radiate mind- or Essence-affecting effects, and these effects are works of glamour that the Creation-born can resist.

Mutation

Raksha can use Charms to shape themselves permanently. This waives the Essence and Willpower cost of the Charm and replaces its gossamer cost with a mutation point cost. Mutation points, originally defined on page 210 of **Exalted: The Lunars**, provide a cap on the raksha's permanent Essence.

Mutations	Points
Pox	1
Affliction	2
Blight	4
Abomination	6+

A raksha's mutation points add directly to the experience cost of increasing her Essence. In addition, a raksha cannot increase her Essence plus her mutation points past her (Willpower + 4) — a raksha with Essence 4, 6 mutation points and Willpower 10 can take up to 4 new points of mutations, but if she does, she will not be able to increase her Essence. If she takes 3 points of Mutations, she will still be able to increase her Essence to 5 but no higher.

For example, a raksha with Willpower 7 purchases Ox-Body Technique. She buys an additional -0 health level for the cost of 1 gossamer per story. She can make this a permanent effect by accepting 1 mutation point. She now has an Essence + mutation point cap of 10, rising to a maximum of 13 if she buys up her Willpower. Improving her Essence costs an additional point of experience.

Fair Folk can acquire temporary mutations. If these increase a raksha's Essence + mutation points past her (Willpower + 4), she calcifies, turning to stone, gossamer, daydreams or mortal flesh, as the Storyteller desires.

Building Mutations from Charms

Only Fair Folk Charms that cost a fixed, nonzero amount of gossamer can convert into mutations. Charms with no gossamer cost, Charms with a 0 gossamer cost and Charms with a variable gossamer cost are ineligible.

Charms that affect the raksha himself convert directly into mutations. Each gossamer in the cost becomes 1 mutation point. The Essence, Willpower and health level costs are waived.

Raksha can also convert Charms that affect other targets into mutations. This creates an ongoing effect. The raksha makes all decisions related to the Charm when taking the mutation, including valid targets. For example, if a raksha makes Undetectable Lie a mutation (see p. 175), he chooses a single lie, such as "you love me," and a target description, such as, "someone whose eyes I'm looking into." This Charm is continuously active, thereafter. Whenever he looks into someone's eyes and tells that specific lie, the target falls under the effect. The effects of these mutations are not cumulative with themselves — characters already suffering their effects are immune. Thus, if a raksha makes a Hateful Coin Curse mutation (see p. 180), triggering whenever someone wounds him, and someone stabs him, she suffers the effect for the normal one-story duration of the Charm. If she then stabs him again, the effect does not trigger. Continuously active works of glamour remain works of glamour. The targets can still see through them with sufficiently high Traits. **When a character gain this sort of mutation, each gossamer in the cost equates to 3 mutation points.** The Essence and Willpower costs are waived.

Raksha must purchase a Charm before they can make its effects a mutation. The effects of the Charm and its mutation version are not cumulative, but the raksha can still use the Charm in other ways.

Mutations and Monsters

Monstrous servants of the raksha often have mutations. Many powers create servants, artifacts or effects with a fixed number of mutation points. The raksha can choose the mutations these things possess. Unless otherwise stated, these can include the mutation version of raksha Charms, and the creature need not have the Charm's prerequisites.

For example, Glorious Hero Form (see p. 205) costs 2 mutation points. A raksha desiring a strong, handsome servant could use 2 available mutation points to buy the servant Glorious Hero Form. This adds one dot to the servant's Strength and one dot to the servant's Stamina. Conversely, if the raksha wishes a strong, deformed monster, the Huge affliction (see **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 214) adds two dots of Strength, two dots of Stamina and an additional -0 and -1 health level. This also costs 2 of the available mutation points.

New Charm Types

The raksha have two Charm types observing special rules:

Assumption-Type Charms

To enter Creation, a raksha must assume a certain amount of shape. The Charms used for this are Assumption-type Charms.

Raksha in standard games are expected to enter Creation. They receive one Assumption-type Charm for free. It does not require a Charm slot. It has its normal cost in motes, Willpower, health levels and gossamer.

Raksha need an Assumption-type Charm active to enter or exist in Creation. Without such a Charm active in temporary or mutation form, a raksha can only exist in uncapped Demesnes, Freeholds and the Wyld, including the Bordermarches. Raksha who terminate all of their Assumption-type Charms while in Creation dissolve instantly into nothingness.

Assumption-type Charms are explicitly immune to the effects of cold-wrought iron (see p. 131).

Stance-Type Charms

Stance-type Charms are the shaping equivalent of Martial Arts Forms. When the Fair Folk adopt Stances, they shape their Essence into powerful archetypal patterns. This influences and aids in their shaping rolls, but the effect fades if they assume another Stance. It is possible, although unusual, to assume a Stance and a Form simultaneously.

Shaping Charms and Combos

All raksha Charms are shaping Charms unless stated otherwise. Each simple Charm consumes a shaping action and not a dice action. Extra action Charms give additional shaping actions and not additional normal actions. Supplemental Charms supplement a shaping action and not a

The "Creation-Born"

Charms that have special effects on creatures of Creation or that only affect the creatures of Creation, describe those creatures as "Creation-born." This term includes spirits, ghosts, mortals, elementals, Dragon Kings and Exalted, among others. It also includes alien creatures such as demons and Autochthonians, but only if their Essence more resembles Creation's than the Wyld's. Octavian, a Second Circle demon with ties to the earth element, would be treated as Creation-born, while Makarios, a Second Circle demon who manipulates dreams, would usually be treated as raksha.

normal action. Shaping Charms cannot share a Combo with Charms based on a normal dice action.

Fair Folk build shaping Combos using the same basic rules as the Combos of the Solar Exalted. However, their Charms have no Ability basis. The Grace minimums for Charms impose no Combo restrictions. Combos of shaping Charms can potentially include shaping Charms from any tree. This does not waive the rules of the Charm description, however. Since Heart-Cutting Style supplements a Cup- or Staff-shaping attack and Shape-Forged Servant is a Simple Ring-shaping Charm, Fair Folk cannot combine them in a Combo.

Charms without a gossamer cost can share a Combo with Charms that have a gossamer cost. In Creation, only the effects stated by the gossamer-fueled Charm are meaningful — but other Charms can facilitate the gossamer-fueled Charm's use.

The experience cost required to build a shaping Combo equals the sum of the minimum Grace requirements. To include Charms without Grace requirements, pay experience equal to twice the Charm's minimum Essence requirement instead.

Cold-Wrought Iron

Cold-wrought iron is anathema to gossamer. It does aggravated damage to the raksha and ignores their natural soak from Stamina and Charms. It also dispels most works of glamour on contact. The following exceptions exist.

A mutation's effects on the mutated creature are immune to the dispelling effects of cold-wrought iron. Mutations change the creature's nature in a quasi-permanent fashion — there is no default form to which to return.

Assumption-type Charms are immune to cold-wrought iron. They infuse the raksha with Creation's Essence, which iron does not dispel.

When a work of glamour affects multiple sentient creatures, cold-wrought iron must touch each of them to dispel its effects upon them. Storytellers can overrule this for dramatic purposes in games with no raksha player characters — but in a typical game of **Exalted: The Fair Folk**, touching a single sleeping princess with an iron nail does not wake an entire sleeping kingdom.

Oaths

Oaths become part of the raksha's Essence patterns when they swear them. They cannot break them voluntarily, and involuntarily breaking an oath brings a catastrophic botch down on their heads — just as if an Eclipse Caste Solar Exalt had sanctified the oath.

The Fair Folk, cursed in this fashion by their own nature, have a certain primordial cunning where oath-making and oath-breaking are concerned. The players and the Storyteller don't need to hammer out complex contracts or overanalyze the wording of a raksha's vows. On those occasions where making an airtight vow or finding a loophole is actually fun and interesting, treat it as a stunt or plot point. Otherwise, assume that a raksha can find a way around her oath with some difficulty. While circumventing the spirit of a promise, the raksha suffers an environmental penalty on normal and shaping actions. This penalty is an abstract representation of the raksha's need to work around the vow.

Hastily given promises — slips of a player or Storyteller's tongue — give a zero-die penalty. The opponent can use the promise in stunts designed to trip up the raksha, but it has no inherent penalty. Oaths extorted without Charms by a bargaining opponent give a penalty equal to that opponent's Essence.

This penalty is fairly light. It's usually more fun when Fair Folk abide by the stated terms of their oaths, so players and Storytellers are encouraged to do so whenever possible.

Raksha Possessions

Most of a raksha's possessions are semi-tangible objects and servants — patterns of Essence and dream. Such things as sturdy doors, armor and odalisques exist in potential, orbiting around the central nature of the raksha, waiting for a shaping invocation to manifest them. Their physical manifestation is Elsewhere.

A raksha can summon his glamour-forged servants, artifacts and tools from Elsewhere into the local reality — introducing and cosmetically adjusting as many of his possessions as he chooses. This requires a single success on a shaping action. The dice pool depends on how the raksha introduces them into the environment — an Craft (Glamour) Ring-shaping action governs invoking things from thin air, but a Presence-based Sword-shaping action could govern marshalling troops. Rules for forging possessions from gossamer are found on pages 181-182.

It takes only an unrolled shaping action to instantly banish any number of a raksha's possessions to Elsewhere,

whether the raksha has physical control over the possessions or not. Raksha cannot banish or invoke possessions in Creation, nor can they banish possessions deliberately guarded by the Creation-born.

Established raksha can assume that they possess any desired quantity of ordinary crafted objects available for invocation — doors, clothing, weapons, sturdy cabinets, slaves, musical instruments and so forth.

A raksha's Heart Grace binds his possessions to him, including his objects, his servants, his Graces and his artifacts. Creation-born characters can sever this bond by stealing something and keeping it away from the raksha for one full story or one full season. Raksha can only steal one another's' possessions through vexation (see pp. 147-148) or special Charms.

Reality Shaping

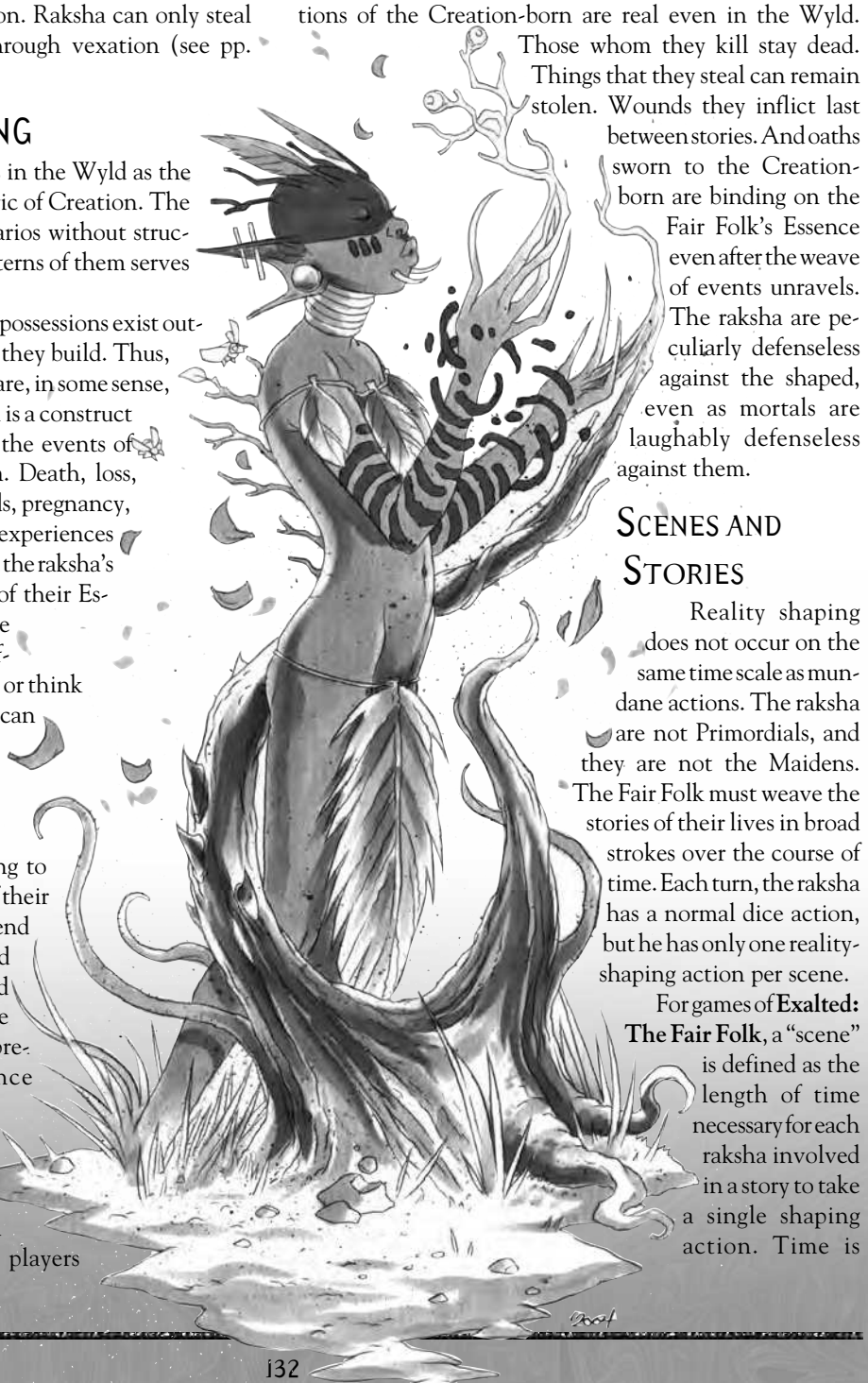
The raksha weave events in the Wyld as the pattern spiders weave the fabric of Creation. The raksha build stories and scenarios without structure or plan, save that the patterns of them serves the raksha's purpose.

Raksha and their magical possessions exist outside of the weaves of fate that they build. Thus, the environments they live in are, in some sense, artificial. Their physical world is a construct of their will. For this reason, the events of that world do not bind them. Death, loss, sacrifice, theft, disease, wounds, pregnancy, exhaustion and satiation are experiences and not conditions. They affect the raksha's dreams and not the patterns of their Essence. A raksha turned to stone or frozen in time by Wyld effects or creatures cannot move or think in the mortal fashion, but she can still shape reality without penalty — and can, therefore, abate or ignore those two conditions.

When raksha war, seeking to bind, cripple or ravish others of their kind, they practice a strange blend of storytelling, fate-weaving and sorcery. The environments and events they create are exquisite traps. They shape reality into precisely engineered Essence constructs that force their enemies to accept the consequences of the stories they tell.

In Fair Folk games set in the Wyld, Storytellers and players should understand that the physical events of the story are purely descriptive. Social interaction and reality-shaping contests matter. Things that happen within the defined reality are special effects. It's a contest of illusions, the events of a dream. Players should consider doing cool, interesting and effective things in that dream to be about as important as making a good speech before a Performance roll, stunting attacks, snappy dialogue and thinking up neat imagery for the character's appearance. In short, do it as often as you can, but don't assume your character's performance depends on it.

Creatures of Creation can violate this rule. The actions of the Creation-born are real even in the Wyld. Those whom they kill stay dead. Things that they steal can remain stolen. Wounds they inflict last between stories. And oaths sworn to the Creation-born are binding on the Fair Folk's Essence even after the weave of events unravels. The raksha are peculiarly defenseless against the shaped, even as mortals are laughably defenseless against them.



Scenes and Stories

Reality shaping does not occur on the same time scale as mundane actions. The raksha are not Primordials, and they are not the Maidens. The Fair Folk must weave the stories of their lives in broad strokes over the course of time. Each turn, the raksha has a normal dice action, but he has only one reality-shaping action per scene.

For games of **Exalted: The Fair Folk**, a "scene" is defined as the length of time necessary for each raksha involved in a story to take a single shaping action. Time is

fluid in the Wyld and yields to dramatic necessity in Creation. Thus, a scene can last anywhere from a few minutes to several weeks.

Similarly, a "story" is a collection of related scenes. It ends when the raksha involved move on and let the weave of fate dissolve back into the Wyld. Storytellers should not give an experience bonus for completing this sort of story, but they can still reward characters for completing a multi-session arc of the game.

If the Storyteller ever needs a more precise measure of a scene or story's duration, these rules assume a default time frame of a 20-minute scene and a season-length story.

Distance in the Wyld

Travel in the Wyld is measured not in miles, but in experience — the layers of myth, chaos and change one must pass through to reach one's destination. The raksha measure distances in periods of *journey* and in *waypoints*. Times of journey carry the raksha through regions thin in shape and form, where very little happens or can happen. Waypoints are the important events of their travels.

As a rule of thumb, each period of Storyteller-narrated travel is a journey, and the Storyteller's narration represents almost the entire experience. In the reaches of the Wyld, "You travel for a few days through a land of rock and low brush" is a complete experience. The raksha can study a rock more closely and force it through observation or memory to take on color and quality — but by default, it has none. Journeys do not take the raksha through places. They are simply travel. Waypoints are interactive. Fair Folk at a waypoint can interact with the world and have more detailed interactions with one another.

Breaking Dramatic Time

It's pretty easy for players to break or abuse the correspondence between scenes of play, scenes of shaping and waypoints on a journey. It's also something that can happen naturally — particularly when using waypoints to measure distances in shaping contests.

This is okay. The raksha come from a cauldron of seething, unformed myth. It runs on dramatic rather than physical rules, and so, it has scenes, stories and other qualities a lot like game play. **It's useful to maintain the correspondence, but only as long as it helps the Storyteller run the game.** Racing through some scenes and lingering on others is fine, and skipping past waypoints in a tense confrontation is fine. Also keep in mind that, while the raksha gleefully abuse the dramatic laws of the Wyld, they don't know about your gaming table and can't take advantage of the player-character connection.

Travel

When creatures of Creation use Charms to speed travel through the Wyld, they force it into a shape like their own. In such circumstances, each journey corresponds to 30 miles. Similarly, raksha powers with a waypoint range treat each 30 miles as a waypoint when used in Creation. In the Wyld, without influence from Creation or the Creation-born, a journey can occupy anywhere from a few minutes to a few days.

In one scene, raksha can journey from one waypoint to the next, in addition to performing their shaping action. If they forfeit their shaping action, they can skip past two waypoints and arrive at a third, tearing through the Wyld like knife-edged shadows and sundering its concepts of space and time. In both cases, this assumes no direct obstacles to their travel — some environments are hostile to raksha travel, and some Charms create barriers in the Wyld.

Raksha can survey the local Wyld, their players rolling Perception + Awareness as a Ring-shaping action. Success lets the characters identify major features — raksha, unshaped, Freeholds, wandering behemoths and so forth — as far as 20 waypoints away. With one success, they can identify known raksha and Freeholds and roughly assess others' movements and condition. Three or more successes gives data equivalent to a close but quick visual examination. **Characters can oppose this in the usual fashion with a Stealth shaping action — specifically, Stealth in the Wyld is a Conviction + Stealth Cup-shaping action.**

Players of Fair Folk further from their destination can roll Perception + Survival as a Ring-shaping action for their characters to estimate how far they have left to travel. One success gives an order of magnitude assessment. Three or more successes gives an accurate prognostication for typical Wyld destinations.

Wyld Domains

The Wyld is immeasurably vast. A small Freehold likely governs a few dozen waypoints. A major power might rule ten thousand. Storytellers without specific inspiration to do otherwise can lay out waypoints in a rough grid — it's not any more or less accurate than any other method of mapping the Wyld.

Shaping Actions

Raksha receive one shaping action per scene.

Shaping actions function like combat dice actions, with the one-turn time frame replaced by a one-scene time frame. A raksha takes each shaping action on his initiative, can abort to a defensive shaping action, can split his shaping action with normal multiple-action penalties and can take as many reflexive shaping actions per scene as appropriate. Raksha can use one shaping

Charm or shaping Combo per scene. Shaping actions and normal actions are entirely independent — a raksha can use a shaping action while physically paralyzed and split his shaping action without suffering penalties on normal actions, and vice versa.

All raksha Charms are shaping Charms unless stated otherwise. When a raksha Charm refers to an action, this means "shaping action." Charms refer to mundane dice actions as "normal dice actions" or "dice actions."

Unrolled Shaping Actions

Some effects require a shaping action but not a roll. These include banishing possessions (see pp. 131-132) and readying a shaping weapon (see p. 136).

Fair Folk automatically succeed on an unrolled shaping action, but it does use their shaping action. If they wish to perform additional shaping that scene, they must split their shaping action.

Shaping in Creation

Ordinary shaping has no effect in Creation. Raksha in Creation can still use their shaping actions to fuel Charms, but only gossamer-based Charms have any effect there. For this purpose, Freeholds, uncapped Demesnes and the Bordermarches count as part of the Wyld.

The people of Creation have various defenses against the Wyld, such as the Solar Exalted's Integrity-Protecting Prana (see **Exalted**, p. 186). These protect against shaping effects and works of glamour, both in the Wyld and in Creation. They only protect against permanent glamour and mutation during the process of creation or mutation. Standard defenses against the Wyld cannot unmake mutations or undo established permanent glamours. These defenses do not reverse invocations or conjurations, but a raksha cannot invoke or conjure substance in the character's immediate vicinity — either the character's Essence in yards or whatever radius the defense itself suggests.

Shaping at Creation's Edge

The default shaping rules assume significant Wyld influence on the region. Places where the Wyld is weak increase the difficulty of shaping. Charms that use gossamer do not suffer from this restriction.

Effects of Reality Shaping

Used against real creatures — Creation-born and raksha — shaping has a principally cosmetic influence. Turning someone to stone or burning them in a pillar of Heavenly flame sheathes their appearance in illusion, but the truth is still visible for those who make the effort to look: It takes only a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll to see through the effect. If a raksha shapes a Lunar Exalt dead, spearing him through the chest with a silver talon five miles long, then it only takes a successful Perception + Awareness roll for the Lunar to notice he's alive. If he refuses to play dead and gets back up to fight, success is probably automatic. Shaping has a few meaningful effects, as spelled out below, but it takes Charms and gossamer to make it deadly.

Taking a normal dice action in accord with the raksha's reality shaping gives a one-die Wyld bonus and explicitly allows "impossible" tasks. If the raksha says, "And then the Lunar hero runs on the arrows in flight, charging her benighted foe," then she may do so, regardless of the player's creativity in implementation. The local physics explicitly approve of cooperation.

Taking a normal dice action against the tenets of the raksha's reality suffers an environmental penalty equal to the shaping raksha's Essence. The first such defiance in a scene also costs 1 Willpower. Characters declared dead by the shaping suffer these penalties when they take any sort of action without shaping themselves back to life — they must break out of the local reality in order to recognize their continued life.

For example, the Essence 3 raksha shaping a scene of battle declares that a visiting heroic mortal breaks off from her companions to challenge a terrifying monster. If the mortal does so, then she receives a one-die Wyld bonus on all relevant actions. If the mortal does not, she must pay 1 Willpower and suffers a three-die environmental penalty on other actions. If the raksha describes how the mortal challenges the monster, then the mortal can fight it in that fashion, even if the tactics involved would normally require a stunt. These effects, of course, would not apply in Creation.

Shaping effects can also undo the work of the Wyld or its beasts. The raksha are not immune to the strange

Location	Shaping Difficulty
Tainted Lands	Usually impossible, sometimes +5 (see above)
Bordermarches	+2
Uncapped Demesne	+2*
Middlemarches	+0
Freehold	+0

* As an optional rule, Storytellers can replace this difficulty with +(6 - Demesne level).

transformations that the Wyld and its creatures can inflict — but these effects change their bodies and minds, not the true patterns of their Essence, and a simple shaping effort can restore the status quo. Mauled by a gryphon, a raksha can simply get up again. After falling into a bottomless chasm full of swirling blades, the raksha can climb out. It takes the efforts of a Creation-born creature or a creature with reality-shaping skills to do them genuine harm. Characters can use any shaping skill they can convince the Storyteller is appropriate to rise from the dead. Returning from the grave should not be challenging — the body wasn't actually destroyed. It just vanished. Storytellers should be generous in what they allow.

I Got Disintegrated!

Fair Folk's physical bodies can be destroyed utterly, or their physical forms may be abandoned in a Freehold. This leaves the raksha devoid of body, but not of position. Raksha without a physical form are visible only to those using All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight or some similar visual power. They resist attack with just their Traits, with no bonuses for equipment — discorporate Fair Folk are easy prey for enemies who can strike dematerialized foes. Add 1 to the difficulty of a shaping attack to attack a raksha with no physical body.

Fantasies, Invocations and Conjurations

Shaping effects have two important qualities. The first is their narrative power. On most shaping actions, the more successes the raksha rolls, the more compelling the narrative. Narrative power makes the shaping seem convincingly real. Shaping combat isn't about beating the enemy so much as convincing him that he's lost — so narrative power is the key quality in shaping combat. The second quality is their raw material power. Material power lets the shaping pose an actual threat or challenge to Creation-born in a conflict.

Normal shaping actions have a lot of narrative power and minimal material power. Their effects are *fantasies*. They come with an unlimited amount of thunder and fury — raksha can conjure terrors, fortresses and armies capable of daunting even First Age Solar Exalted. Without the use of glamour, however, these creations cannot participate in actual conflict. They have no dice pools. They cannot generate a practical effect. They amount to extremely convincing set dressing, and characters can declare them defeated as part of a stunt, Charm or shaping action.

Raksha can create soldiers, servants and obstacles as fantasies. A single shaping action can create an unlimited number of fantasies, and they can have an appearance and behavior as egregiously impressive as the raksha desires. However, such fantasies are soap bubble monsters and hypothetical courtesans. The greatest warriors conjured by this method must move aside if a six-year-old child shoves past. The richest repast is, in a mortal's mouth, as lightly scented air. Even a fantasy of blackest moonless night cannot impose a greater penalty to Awareness than the shaping rules otherwise allow.

Raksha wanting to invest their artifacts, armies and enchantments with greater material power have two options. The first option is conjuration. Charms that craft powerful servants, objects and effects from gossamer are conjurations. The effects of conjuration are described in the appropriate Charms, such as Undetectable Lie (see p. 175), Ordinary Object Conjuration (see p. 179), Limitless Wealth Conjuration Technique (see pp. 179-180) and Transient Work of Flesh and Bone (see p. 197). In addition to their tangible power, these Charms often have an effect on shaping combat, increasing the narrative power of the conjuration. For example, Undetectable Lie converts post-soak shaping damage into automatic successes, and Transient Work of Flesh and Bone creates a shaping weapon.

The second option is invocation. As discussed on page 131, a raksha can summon her possessions — including monsters, hazards and simple comforts — from Elsewhere into the local environment. These possessions can include shaping weapons. For example, the horrors and mutant warleaders (see pp. 146 and 147) used in Sword-shaping combat are often mutated servants created using Shape-Forged Servant (see p. 183). Similarly, the raksha often store shaping weapons such as resonant chorus bows (see p. 207) Elsewhere.

The material events of the scene can serve as stunt fodder or provide environmental penalties to shaping rolls, as described on pages 104 and 105. The narrative influence of the raksha imposes environmental penalties on characters who refuse to accept the shaping and may cost them Willpower for doing so, as described on page 134. Otherwise, material and narrative power are independent. A raksha could pit a behemoth against a Dragon-Blooded Exalt as part of a Sword-shaping attack. The raksha narrates the battle and depicts the behemoth victorious. Even if the Exalt wins the fight, the Sword-shaping attack could still succeed — as he draws back his sword from the fatal blow, the Dragon-Blooded finds himself accepting the raksha's narrative of his defeat. He doesn't "lose" in any material sense, but he could suffer vexation (see pp. 147-148). Conversely, the behemoth could savage the Dragon-Blooded and the shaping attack still fail because the fight does not ring true — the Essence of the Exalt rejects the raksha's story of defeat. For the Dragon-Blooded, vexation is less terrible than losing the physical contest against the behemoth. Among the raksha, however, death is unpleasant, but vexation is far more terrible.

Shaping Combat

Shaping combat uses a derivative of the **Exalted** physical combat system. Only characters with at least Heart 2 can participate.

Shaping Weapons

Certain tools act as shaping "weapons." In a story of war, a behemoth is a weapon. A raksha can focus the oneiromantic power of battle through the behemoth's march on the enemy troops, significantly increasing her chance of victory.

In order to use a shaping weapon, a raksha must have that weapon "ready." Readying a weapon requires an unrolled shaping action. This automatically replaces the raksha's previous weapon unless the raksha uses a Charm or stunt to wield two shaping weapons simultaneously.

Initiative

A raksha's base initiative in a shaping contest is the sum of her feeding Virtues. Raksha add their base initiative, a 10-sided die and the speed of any readied shaping weapon (see above) to determine their place in the initiative order.

The character with the initiative can take offensive shaping actions. She can delay her action or reserve defensive actions, but she cannot keep the initiative without taking a shaping action. Each offensive action works as follows. The attacker's player declares the dice pool for the attack and invokes relevant Charms and Combos. She then explains how the attack proceeds in the false world of shaped fate. The defender's player declares any defense, invokes relevant Charms and Combos and describes her character's defense. Then, interaction begins, and the attacker pursues dominance. At the pivotal moment of the conflict, as declared by either the attacker's player or the Storyteller, the players roll and resolve the shaping attack and defenses. This completes the action.

For example, Asira and Citraratha are dueling in a mountain city — a place of their crafting, with high walls and stark brown stone and paths descending away into the clouds. Asira has the initiative, and his player declares three actions. The first is a Cup-shaping attack, using the milieu shaping weapon (see p. 140), where he rolls Asira's Conviction + Investigation modified by Heart-Cutting Style. Citraratha is walking through the streets when she feels a thief's hand in her purse — but before she can catch him, he's fled into an alley. Bells ring, and the wind blows, and there's a flash of vivid red, but at the end of the alley, there's no thief. She checks her pocket and finds that someone has added a smooth stone to her purse. Asira is shaping the mystery of the thief to confound Citraratha and fix her attention on something unimportant — the stone that he just made up a few minutes ago. Citraratha's player declares a full parry and blocks with Conviction + Stealth, the raksha trimming away bits of the city until all mysteries are evident. As Citraratha pursues the thief, the city slowly dissolves. Eventually, there's only Citraratha and a locked room left, which presumably contains Asira, the thief — but will it fade or remain entirely an enigma? The two players roll to resolve the shaping attack. The attack fails. The entire process could be resolved in as little as 10 seconds of description or as much as two hours of play — it depends on how much the players involved enjoy it.

Asira may now proceed to his next action. If he does not want to take another shaping attack, he can reserve his remaining actions for defense (unnecessary in this case) or simply pass the initiative to Citraratha. When all the raksha involved in the contest have acted, the scene ends, and a new scene begins.

Characters can delay their action in a shaping contest. This follows the same rules as for normal initiative, described on page 227 of **Exalted** or page 203 of the **Exalted Players Guide**.

These rules apply to scenes involving direct conflict — where raksha are using shaping to attack one another or the creatures of Creation. Noncombat scenes have less stringent limitations. Raksha outside of conflict situations take or yield their shaping actions independently, and can take another whenever they've logically finished their current action.

Shaping and Normal Actions

Normal actions and the events of the local reality have minor environmental impact on the outcome of shaping rolls. Unfavorable events during the scene can impose a one- or two-die environmental penalty on the shaping roll. Favorable events can justify stunts or help the raksha activate certain Charms. For the most part, the raksha have no reason to care about the outcome of specific events within their weaves of artificial fate.

The presence of creatures of Creation changes this situation. As powerful as the raksha are, the reality of Creation supercedes theirs. Mortals, Exalts and other shaped creatures of Creation can meaningfully interact with the raksha via the medium of normal actions. They can kill a raksha, rendering that raksha permanently dead. They can steal from the raksha. They do not need special shaping effects to scatter and drive back the armies of the raksha, rendering them unready for use. They can smash the raksha's palaces. They can coerce oaths from the raksha outside the context of a shaping duel. The things that Creation's residents do with their normal actions are not casual constructs of dream — they are real and very dangerous.

If raksha and Creation-born oppose one another in the Wyld, then the raksha wield shaping as their weapon. They bend reality against the creatures of Creation, who must struggle against a hostile existence to reach and damage the

Fair Folk. If Creation-born creatures participate in the struggles of the raksha, the matter is more genteel — they assist with their allies' shapings, resist the shapings of their enemies and, occasionally, use their terrifying ability to kill for intimidation or surgical strikes. The deadliest combination is a raksha assisting gods or Exalted in an attack on another raksha. During the assisting raksha's shaping initiative, its shaping can actively assist the Creation-born in reaching and wreaking havoc on the Princes of Chaos.

In mixed groups, the Storyteller may need to handle events entirely irrelevant to the schemes of the raksha. That's fine — shaping initiative determines how the raksha use their shaping actions, but the Storyteller can cut to events outside this framework at any time. While one raksha seduces another with a diplomatic shaping action, mortal heroes can storm the raksha's keep. If they breach the keep's walls, it probably triggers the pivotal moment of the seduction, at which point the players roll attack and defense, but until then, the Diplomat's shaping does not affect the mortals' advance.



Shaping Attacks, Defenses and Soak

Shaping attacks are a special kind of shaping action. Charms that affect a shaping action can apply relevant effects to shaping attacks, but not vice versa. Each Grace has an associated attack/defense, damage, soak, damage track and a rough analog in physical combat.

The Cup

Roll Conviction + Ability for Cup attacks and blocks. Dodging a Cup attack requires a successful Conviction + Dodge (plus Essence, in Exalted Power Combat) roll. The base damage of a Cup attack is the raksha's Valor plus shaping weapon damage. Soak against Cup attacks equals the target's Temperance + Willpower. The damage track for Cup attacks equals the target's Compassion + Cup.

In shaping combat, the Cup resembles Brawl, with a focus on entanglement (shaping clinches). Entertainers often lock their targets in one-on-one interactions or assail them with the raw, swift, brutal power of their art.

The Ring

Roll Intelligence + Ability for Ring attacks and blocks. Dodging a Ring attack requires a successful Intelligence + Dodge (plus Essence, in Exalted Power Combat) roll. The base damage of a Ring attack is the raksha's Perception plus shaping weapon damage. Soak against Ring attacks equals the target's Wits + Willpower. The damage track for Ring attacks equals the target's Temperance + Ring.

In shaping combat, the Ring resembles Archery or Thrown, with a focus on fundamental world-design principles that can enmesh a target from hundreds of miles away. Workers often begin setting their traps and dealing out shaping damage 10 scenes before the target arrives to confront them.

The Staff

Roll Manipulation + Ability for Staff attacks and blocks. Dodging a Staff attack requires a successful Manipulation + Dodge (plus Essence, in Exalted Power Combat) roll. The base damage of a Staff attack is the raksha's Charisma plus shaping weapon damage. Soak against Staff attacks equals the target's Appearance + Willpower. The damage track for Staff attacks equals the target's Conviction + Staff.

In shaping combat, the Staff functions as its mortal equivalent, the wooden staff. It is a heavy but blunt damage source that can beat its opponent into helplessness more readily than kill. Diplomats weave spiderwebs of deceit to tie up the victim's ability to shape. Only then do they seize what they desire from the wounded foe. The Staff often relies on the techniques and Charms of the Cup, the Ring and the Sword — the Diplomats of the raksha consider pleasure, craft and violence tools of their social order.

The Sword

Roll Dexterity + Ability for Sword attacks and blocks. Dodging a Sword attack requires a successful Dexterity + Dodge (plus Essence, in Exalted Power Combat) roll. The base damage of a Sword attack is the raksha's Strength plus shaping weapon damage. Soak against Sword attacks equals the target's Stamina + Willpower. The damage track for Sword attacks equals the target's Valor + Sword.

In shaping combat, the Sword resembles Melee — a comprehensive art of battle relying on the proper application of force.

Attack and Defense

Raksha must have a shaping weapon readied in order to make a shaping attack. Then, the raksha chooses an appropriate Ability, and his player rolls (Primary Trait) + Ability + weapon accuracy. If he rolls at least one success, the attack will hit unless blocked or dodged.

Blocking and dodging shaping actions work as in physical combat. To block, the raksha chooses an appropriate Ability, and his player rolls (Primary Trait) + Ability + weapon defense. Every shaping weapon allows defense against all four Graces' attacks. To dodge, the raksha's player rolls (Primary Trait) + Dodge — adding his character's Essence if the Storyteller uses the Exalted Power Combat rules. Blocking usually involves countering the shaping effort of the enemy with shaping of your own. Dodging denies that effort suasion over your spirit. In neither case does it undo the shaping efforts of the enemy — it just makes them less useful.

Without using Charms, raksha must use Cup shaping to block or dodge Cup attacks, Ring shaping to block or dodge Ring attacks, Staff shaping to block or dodge Staff attacks and Sword shaping to block or dodge Sword attacks. The Primary Trait for blocking and dodging is therefore the Primary Trait for the attack.

Shaping attacks — except when done for practice or play — are always targeted. Only one victim suffers real, deleterious or positive effects. To mount a serious attack on several enemies at once, the raksha must use Charms or split his attack.

Ranged Attacks

Characters can use Ring and Staff shaping as a kind of summons, constructing shaped worlds that serve as vortices in the Wyld — dragging the opponents into the framework of the raksha's creation from many waypoints away. This acts as a ranged attack. Ring-shaping weapons and certain Staff-shaping weapons have a range measured in waypoints. This functions as with the Thrown and Archery weapons of Creation: The raksha can attack out to that range without penalty, out to twice that range with a -2 penalty on each shaping attack and out to three times that range with a -4 penalty. Attacking blind — without splitting the shaping action each scene to locate the target with a Perception + Awareness roll — subtracts two successes from the attack.

Ranged shaping attacks can only be blocked by characters using a stunt or Charm.

Entanglement

The secret of the Entertainer's art, entanglement locks the Essence of the raksha and her victim together in a one-on-one struggle for power over the victim's soul. This functions as a clinch or hold (see **Exalted**, p. 239-240, or the **Exalted Players Guide**, p. 205) save that the entanglement dice pool is a Cup-shaping dice pool and damage is based on Valor rather than Strength. Entangled raksha can only use shaping to maintain the entanglement, sever the entanglement or do shaping

Shaping Attacks Summary

Grace	Primary Trait	Damage	Soak	Health	Model
Cup	Conviction	Valor	Temperance + Will	Compassion + Cup	Brawl
Ring	Intelligence	Perception	Wits + Will	Temperance + Ring	Archery/Thrown
Staff	Manipulation	Charisma	Appearance + Will	Conviction + Staff	Bashing attacks
Sword	Dexterity	Strength	Stamina + Will	Valor + Sword	Melee

damage. Raksha refer to these choices as fascinating the target, breaking the fascination and tearing the target's pattern, respectively.

Raksha can also use entanglement to do Sword or Staff damage, using a Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping dice pool and basing damage on Strength or Charisma. This is less effective than Cup-based entanglement, and the shaping weapons for Sword and Staff entanglement have lower accuracy and defense than Cup-shaping entanglement weapons.

Wound Penalties

Each of a raksha's Graces has an associated wound track — one for Cup damage, one for Ring damage, one for Staff damage and one for Sword damage. The raksha is at a -1 wound penalty if any of these is wounded, a -2 wound penalty if two or more are wounded and a -4 penalty if one of them runs out. These penalties apply to shaping actions only and are not cumulative with one another. Once a raksha runs out of a wound track, she resists further damage to that Grace in the same fashion as creatures without that Grace (see pp. 140, 143, 145 and 147).

Other details and effects of damage are described with the discussion of individual Graces' combat abilities, below.

Damaging Waypoints

Characters can target waypoints with shaping attacks. Waypoints have no natural resistance to shaping, so it takes only a single success on a shaping roll to inflict damage upon them. Raksha can use the various forms of shaping damage to assert long-term possession over a waypoint and the events that transpire there.

Healing

At the end of each story, a raksha heals her Essence in Cup wounds, Ring wounds and Sword wounds. She heals her Staff wounds completely.

Cup Shaping

Cup shaping weaves the fates of transformations and pleasures. The raksha wield the Cup to create environments of indolent gratification, where no desire goes unslaked and unpredictable changes stave off boredom.

The Cup is associated with all four Virtues, Compassion foremost among them. The Abilities tied to the Cup are Investigation, Larceny, Medicine, Performance and Stealth. Its color is black, and its direction is west. Thus, raksha in the Wyld travel west to seek contests of the Cup.

Cup contests target the victim's self-control. Defeating an enemy in a Cup-based contest damages one of his Virtues — hardening his heart, subverting his convictions, driving him into fits of passion or inducing fear. The raksha induce dependency in their patrons and madness in their enemies, gulping down the motes of Essence that the damaged Virtue frees.

Shaping and Exalted Power Combat

Shaping combat draws on some of the ideas in Exalted Power Combat, as described on pages 199-213 of the **Exalted Players Guide.** In case you don't have the **Exalted Players Guide** or aren't using those rules, here's everything you need to know.

The qualities for shaping weapons are modeled on the Exalted Power Combat weapon qualities. This includes the fact that all shaping weapons have a rate — the total number of offensive and defensive actions one can take with them each turn. For example, a chimera has Rate 4. A raksha can't split his action to attack three times and defend twice with a chimera because the total exceeds its rate. Rate only governs normal shaping actions. Charms that give actions (whether extra actions, counterattacks, reflexive actions or something else) ignore rate.

Exalted Power Combat increases the minimum damage of attacks. Without effects that specify otherwise, a character's soak cannot reduce the damage of an incoming attack to below the permanent Essence of the attacker. Even if you don't use this rule for normal actions, it's a good idea in shaping combat — it's rare to see soak much below 10.

Exalted Power Combat allows for a "full parry" — it functions just like a full dodge, but the character parries instead of dodging. You don't have to use this rule, but a few Charms interact with it if you do.

Cup Combat

Raksha can shape addictive, paradisiacal environments and subversive domains of madness. These realms, tailored for their emotional impact, have profound effects even on the Exalted. The dice pool for Cup shaping is chosen from the list below. Should the raksha have multiple viable choices, she can choose whichever she finds most auspicious, subject to Storyteller discretion.

Conviction + Investigation: The raksha shapes scenes of mysteries, secrets and indirection. Because such mysteries are formed from transient fates, they are either meaningless artifice or koans designed to produce emotional or spiritual response. In either case, crafting and solving them is the art of the Cup.

Conviction + Larceny: The raksha misdirects an enemy in a shaping contest — the desired focus of the target's attention is not the key emotional element of the shaping.

Conviction + Medicine: The raksha shapes scenes to heal, to console and to tend to others' minds.

Conviction + Performance: The raksha shapes scenes and environments designed to evoke a raw emotional aesthetic.

Conviction + Stealth: The raksha shapes minimalist scenes — simplified worlds, where one or two concepts play out against a blank and empty void.

The player describes some of the events of the scene and the victory or limited victory she seeks from them. The default description for a Cup shaping is along the lines of "the environment disorients and maddens him" or "my singing fills his heart with joy." Better descriptions can and should earn stunt dice.

Damage

The emotions and thoughts invoked by a Cup shaping are things of transient fate and dream. They have no more impact than the shaping rules allow. A certain understatement of shaping is popular among Entertainers, as a song that induces an all-consuming lust has the same raw impact on normal dice actions as a song that induces distracting arousal — an environmental penalty on some actions equal to the raksha's Essence, a one-die bonus on others and a Willpower cost the first time the target ignores the effects in a given scene. Excessively powerful emotional effects are essentially external to their targets — a quality of the scene, rather than their minds.

To "win" a contest of Cup shaping, a raksha must instead insinuate herself into the mind of the enemy. The emotional impact must ring true. To measure her ability to produce genuine reactions rather than the dream of an emotion, a raksha's player rolls damage. The base damage is Valor plus the successes on the attack roll. The victim receives a damage soak equal to the victim's Temperance + Willpower. This functions exactly like **Exalted** damage soak and, thus, cannot reduce the damage dice to zero.

Weapons of the Cup

Damage from Cup attacks depends on the style of the attack. Costs for shaping weapons are measured based on the Gossamer Background (see p. 110) — characters with the listed Gossamer level can start with one shaping weapon of that cost and any number of cheaper weapons.

Chimera: Chimerae are aesthetic ideas or visions specifically designed to corrode the Virtues of others — harmonious or monstrous arrangements of color, sound and meaning that interfere with the structure of the raksha or human spirit.

Entanglement: Entanglement locks the Essence of the raksha and her victim together in a one-on-one struggle for power over the victim's soul.

Harness of Razored Dreams: Some raksha Entertainers wear a garment of interlaced heart thorns, so that those who interact with them are seized with jagged, sharp emotions. These cut at the spirit of those whom the raksha entangles.

Heart Thorn: Heart thorns are strong, powerful aesthetic elements that raksha can conjure into their shaping — from the presence of a deity to a song evoking true grief. These wonders conjure barbed, dangerous emotions.

Milieu: The entire shaped world is the raksha's weapon — it forms an emotional context for the attack.

Prodigies: The raksha focuses the shaping on a small handful of powerful emotional elements.

Effects of Damage

Raksha mark Cup damage off against their Compassion + Cup. When they have taken more Cup damage than the sum of their Compassion and Cup Traits, they lose the shaping contest. They are *ravished.*

Ravishing a raksha damages one of his Virtues. It makes him unable to exert that Virtue in a situation that the attacker names. The attacker gains 10 motes of Essence from this ravishing.

Ravishing Compassion

The attacker removes the ravished victim's empathy for one specific target. Each scene that the victim wishes to behave civilly toward that target costs 1 Willpower. Active cooperation costs Willpower equal to the victim's Cup.

Name	Speed	Acc.	Damage	Defense	Rate	Cost	Notes
Chimera	+0	+0	+2	+3	4	••	–
Entanglement	-6	+0	+0	+0	1	–	P, *, **
Harness of Razored Dreams	-5	-1	+3	+1	1	•••	P,C
Heart Thorn	-6	+0	+5	+2	2	•	P
Milieu	+0	+1	+0	+2	5	–	*
Prodigies	-3	+1	+3	-3	3	–	*

* This weapon is the shaping equivalent of fighting unarmed. A raksha can ready this shaping weapon reflexively without using a shaping action.

** Entanglement can do Sword or Staff damage, but this lowers its accuracy and defense by 2.

P The weapon does piercing damage. This halves the target's Willpower for purposes of computing soak.

C The weapon is a clinch enhancer and can only be used for entanglement.

Ravishing Conviction

The attacker names an event that the ravished victim can no longer bear to witness — such as "warriors practicing their art" or "harm to the raksha Kalanos." Each scene that the victim passively witnesses that condition costs 1 Willpower. Each scene of active participation costs Willpower equal to the victim's Cup.

Ravishing Temperance

The attacker names a passion that the ravished victim can no longer control, such as anger, lust or despair. Controlling this passion for a scene costs 1 Willpower. If actively provoked, it costs Willpower equal to the victim's Cup.

Ravishing Valor

The attacker names something that now terrifies the ravished victim, such as spiders, the attacker or the substance of Creation. Facing that terror for a scene costs 1 Willpower. Actively attacking or challenging it costs Willpower equal to the victim's Cup.

Ravishing Places

Ravishing a waypoint damages its ability to feed raksha. A single ravishment removes the air of Compassion, Conviction, Temperance or Valor from the waypoint. For those who only feed on the damaged Virtue, that waypoint is as barren as Creation — they do not regain Essence normally there. Raksha only gain 1 mote of Essence from ravishing a waypoint and only when they feed on a previously undamaged air.

Ravishing the Unshaped

Ravishing the unshaped carves from their Virtues a glamour sorcery spell. The raksha can carve out a Desire Circle spell (see pp. 206-207) or use the drippings of Virtue to improve an existing Desire or Samadhi Circle spell (see pp. 206-207) by one circle, changing its nature accordingly. A given unshaped can be ravished, at most, once per story.

Ravishing Creatures of Creation

Creatures without a Cup Grace are still vulnerable to ravishment. However, they do not have a Cup damage track. Instead of marking off damage, the victim's player rolls the character's Willpower + Essence against a difficulty equal to the raksha's damage successes. Dragon-Blooded Exaltation confers a bonus die. Celestial Exaltation confers two bonus dice. Solar (or Abyssal) Exaltation confers three. If the roll succeeds, the character takes no damage. If the roll fails, she is ravished.

Charms and effects that reduce the victim's soak against Cup-shaping attacks reduce this Willpower + Essence dice pool by or to the same amount. Exalted then add their bonus dice normally.

Recovering from Ravishment

In the Wyld, ravishment is tantamount to mutilation, and raksha do not recover easily. It takes powerful Charms and significant gossamer to repair wounded Virtues.

For creatures of Creation, ravishment is damage to the mind and the soul. Some Exalted Charms can cure this directly, such as Merciful Balm of Sleep (see **Caste Book: Twilight**, p. 73) and Purity of Mind Method (see **Exalted: The Dragon-Blooded**, pp. 227-228). Exalted can also cure ravishment with a stunt, a less applicable Charm and a story of effort — Emotion-Shaping Technique (see **Exalted: the Lunars**, pp. 186-187) and Heart-Compelling Method (see **Exalted**, pp. 174-175) are examples of such potentially therapeutic Charms.

Ring Shaping

Ring shaping forges the treasures of the Wyld. It builds intricate and elegant worlds, precision-crafted and with strong natural laws. This is the strength and the weakness of the Ring — its orderly worlds are self-sustaining and immensely compelling, but that very consistency makes it harder for Ring-shapers to produce the feral, reckless sweeps of dream that overwhelm the mind of a shaping opponent.

The Ring contains Temperance and is associated with the Mental Attributes. The Abilities associated with the Ring are Bureaucracy, Craft, Endurance, Lore and Martial Arts. Its color is white and its direction is inward. Thus, raksha in the Wyld turn their mental eye inward in meditation and stillness when seeking a contest or practice of the Ring.

Ring contests are contests of law — a complex interaction of the natural laws of created worlds and the laws of the raksha's nature. The purpose of a Ring contest is to subjugate others' natures to one's own, to force them to accept the supremacy and dominance of one's own purpose and order and to chain others' labors to the support of that purpose by imposing incumbrances, burdens and duties upon them. In the eyes of the Wyld, Creation wages a war of the Ring on every raksha who enters it, on every creature born to it and, to a lesser extent, on every Prince of Chaos who looks on it from afar.

Ring Combat

Raksha can shape complex Wyld world-machines from interacting strands of dream and nightmare. Inexorable logic chains drive these machines, building an ever-expanding net of certainty from a few carefully chosen principles. Worlds made by Ring shaping present the irrefutable proposition and the inescapable conclusion that the witnesses and residents are themselves subject to those worlds' laws. This is the art of shape.

The dice pool for Ring shaping is chosen from the list below. Should the raksha have multiple viable choices, she can choose whichever she finds most auspicious, subject to Storyteller discretion.

Intelligence + Bureaucracy: The raksha creates or edits social and economic principles.

Intelligence + Craft (Glamour): The raksha creates or changes the physical aspects of an environment. Rolling Intelligence + a relevant mundane Craft is also acceptable.

Intelligence + Endurance: The raksha defends or bolsters the structure of a shaped world.

Intelligence + Lore: The raksha designs the metaphysical principles, artificial history and natural sciences of a created world.

Intelligence + Martial Arts: The raksha shapes herself, imposing new laws and structure on her own Essence pattern.

The default description for a Ring shaping is along the lines of "this world rejects violence, so his army's advance falters" or "I raise a mountain in my enemy's path." Better descriptions and more interesting changes to the world can and should earn stunt dice.

Damage

As with Cup shaping, the fundamental limit on Ring shaping is not the scope of its raw effects, but its ability to force its law on the raksha, the unshaped and the Creation-born. To win a contest of Ring shaping, a raksha must use the gentle and inevitable suasion typical of mathematics, logic and sorcery — building the desired conclusion from the interaction of small principles and patterns in the target's mind. To measure the success of a Ring shaping, the raksha's player rolls damage. The base damage is Perception plus the successes on the attack roll. Like mundane bows, Ring-shaping weapons often have a limit to the Perception they can add to the damage. The victim receives a damage soak equal to his Wits + Willpower. This functions exactly like **Exalted** damage soak and, thus, cannot reduce the damage dice to zero.

Weapons of the Ring

Damage from Ring attacks depends on the style of the attack. All Ring-shaping weapons have a speed of +0 and a defense of -6. Costs for shaping weapons are measured



based on the Gossamer Background (see p. 110) — characters with the listed Gossamer level can start with one shaping weapon of that cost and any number of cheaper weapons. These weapons measure their range in waypoints.

Cosmos Seed: The cosmos seed is a small speck of perfect order, hungry to impose its law on the world of dreams. If fed 1 gossamer per shaping action, this repugnant tool will pulse with silver Essence and cast out a radiance of rigorous change.

Curdling Dream Bow: Curdling dream bows are great corrugated weapons of horn and ebony that congeal the principles of shaping into bolts of Essence and gossamer fired at the substance of the world. These weapons must be fed 1 gossamer per scene of use.

Gossamer: Gossamer is particularly suited to creating order from chaos. Fair Folk can spend gossamer directly, one point per shaping action, to launch powerful Ring-based attacks. Gossamer cannot be used with shaping Charms that remove the need for gossamer ammunition.

Raw Will: The raksha shapes the world through raw will.

Shaping Lens: A shaping lens is a Wyld-forged metal circlet with a shimmering point of gossamer stretched over the frame. Raksha can use this lens to focus their will and insight. It consumes one point of gossamer per scene of use.

World Heart: World hearts are names of power, taking the form of metal eggs filled with mist. Activating the power within a world heart consumes 1 gossamer per scene. It allows the raksha to call forth laws, principles and substance from the beating heart of an unformed world.

Effects of Damage

Raksha mark Ring damage off against their Temperance + Ring. When they have taken more Ring damage than the sum of their Temperance and Ring Traits, they lose the shaping contest. They then suffer an *incumbrance* (also called a *burden*.)

Incumbrances

An incumbrance imposes a specific duty on the victim to work for the attacker. The attacker names a task. This task observes the following limitations.

- It must be possible.
- It cannot conflict with previously established incumbrances.
- It cannot permanently damage the victim.
- It must be a task, not a behavior — incumbrances produce a specific service or good for a specific purpose.
- The victim need not expend irreplaceable resources on the task.

If an initially valid task later becomes impossible, or comes into conflict with a previous incumbrance, the victim suffers three scenes of nightmarish remorse and withdrawal that impose a -4 wound penalty on all actions. This penalty is not cumulative with other wound-penalty effects. Then, the incumbrance fades.

If a victim wishes to act in a derelict fashion regarding her incumbrances, each scene of dereliction costs 1 Willpower. If she wishes to make fulfilling an incumbrance actively more difficult, she must spend her Ring in Willpower instead.

Some typical incumbrances include:

- At the end of each month, bring me such gossamer as you can spare.
- Craft me a masterwork.
- Sit in the silver cage in my throne room, and play for me during the days and nights of the full moon.

Incumbrances are wounds to the spirit and need have no limit to their cruelty. As a rule, common raksha find themselves occupied day and night, while incumbrances set on nobles are light. The reason is simple: Nobles forced to betray themselves or to work continuously have more incentive than common raksha to spend Willpower until they find their way free.

Incumbering Places

Incumbering a waypoint dedicates that waypoint to the purpose set. Characters who enter or pass through the waypoint suffer the burden for the duration of the scene, if the incumbrance is a valid binding on them. **Players can make a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll for their characters to notice burdens on waypoints before journeying there.**

Name	Acc.	Dmg.	Rate	Cost	Range	Max Perception	Notes
Cosmos Seed	+0	+2	3	•••	10	6	P
Curdling Dream Bow	+1	+12	3	••••	1	6	
Gossamer	+1	+6	2	–	0	8	*
Raw Will	+0	+0	2	–	0	3	*
Shaping Lens	+0	+0	2	•	6	3	P
World Heart	+1	+0	3	••	8	4	P

* This weapon is the shaping equivalent of unarmed combat. A raksha can ready this shaping weapon reflexively without using a shaping action.
P The weapon does piercing damage, halving the target's Willpower soak.

Incumbering the Unshaped

Incumbering the unshaped forces them to produce from their Ring Grace a three-dot Wyld artifact or to improve a three- or four-dot Wyld artifact by one dot. A given unshaped can be incumbered, at most, once per story.

Burdening Creatures of Creation

Creatures without a Ring Grace are still vulnerable to incumbrance. However, they do not have a Ring damage track. Instead of marking off damage, roll their Willpower + Essence against a difficulty equal to the raksha's damage successes. Dragon-Blooded Exaltation confers a bonus die. Celestial Exaltation confers two bonus dice. Solar (or Abyssal) Exaltation confers three. If the roll succeeds, they take no damage. If the roll fails, they suffer the imposed burden.

Charms and effects that reduce the victim's soak against Ring-shaping attacks reduce this Willpower + Essence dice pool by or to the same amount. Exalted then add their bonus dice normally.

Staff Shaping

Staff shaping crafts social contexts. The raksha wield the Staff to populate their false worlds of shaping but also to create the social world of the raksha themselves — the laws, taboos and customs of the raksha are not inherent to the chaos so much as forged with the art of the Staff. The great Diplomats of the raksha weave spider webs of deceit and ponderous inevitabilities of power to place their victims and their peers in inescapable traps of obligation, taboo and interdependency.

The Staff contains Conviction and is associated with the Social Attributes. The Abilities associated with the Staff are Linguistics, Occult, Ride, Socialize and Thrown. Its color is blue and its direction is north. Thus, raksha in the Wyld travel north when seeking the great courts of their land.

Staff contests have two stages. First, the raksha seeks to entangle the enemy in obligations and taboos to cripple her effectiveness. Then, the raksha strikes against the helpless victim's soul, ravishing her, imposing burdens or seizing her possessions.

Staff Combat

Raksha can shape rigid social contexts or maelstroms of shifting allegiance. The dice pool for Staff shaping is chosen from the list below. Should a raksha have multiple viable choices, he can choose whichever he finds most auspicious, subject to Storyteller discretion.

Manipulation + Linguistics: The raksha shapes societies driven primarily by honest communication. Such societies are utopias or savage, unsophisticated tribes.

Manipulation + Occult: The raksha shapes societies driven primarily by arcane and incomprehensible laws. Raksha can always use this Ability when shaping actual Fair Folk societies as opposed to artificial pockets of the Wyld.

Manipulation + Ride: The raksha shapes societies motivated by the exigencies of distance, travel and commerce with distant lands.

Manipulation + Socialize: The raksha shapes societies driven by manners, genteel politics and the art of the lie.

Manipulation + Thrown: The raksha shapes societies driven by the assassin's art — that is, by cutthroat politics and a disregard for life.

The player describes some of the events of the scene and the victory or limited victory he seeks from them. The default description for a Staff shaping is along the lines of "I inflict social problems on her" or "I entangle her in obligation and taboo." Better descriptions can and should earn stunt dice.

"I Inflict Social Problems?"

Shaping is designed to offer endless opportunities for stunts and clever plans. That doesn't mean that players have to stunt or describe things well. Using the Staff to inflict generic "social problems" on someone is the moral equivalent of a swordsman saying, "I hit her again" — it's not as fun as stunting, and it's not quite as effective as stunting, but it's better than having tired or uninspired players try to force stunt inspiration.

If your group is good at stunting and description, the players will probably manage a stunt on every shaping action. Most of them will be worth at least two dice. If not, you're still allowed to play **Exalted: The Fair Folk**, even in games set in the Wyld. These are games for mature minds, not games for monstrously skilled alien storytellers. The raksha are congeries of Essence, Grace and dreams with inhuman skill at the shaping arts — but you're emulating their lives, not living them. Roll the dice, have fun, and if you wind up doing generic shaping most of the time, so be it.

Damage

Staff shaping can impose taboos, oaths and obligations on others. These are things of transient fate — they're not real taboos, they're not real obligations, and they're definitely not binding oaths. They're all just part of the dream. The point of Staff shaping is to tangle and cripple the enemy, making him unable to apply his strengths in the context of the shaped world.

The base damage of a Staff attack is Manipulation plus the successes on the attack roll. The victim receives a

damage soak equal to his Appearance + Willpower. This functions exactly like **Exalted** damage soak and, thus, cannot reduce the damage dice to zero.

Weapons of the Staff

Damage from Staff attacks depends on the style of the attack. Most Staff-shaping weapons depend on increasing the inhabitants' resistance to others' shaping — so that the Sword has more trouble gathering and supplying armies, the Staff has difficulty imposing social change and the Cup's performances fall flat. The Staff can oppose the Ring as well — it is a peculiar trait both of Creation and the Wyld that the fabric of society's beliefs can oppose changes to natural law.

Commandment Lens: A commandment lens is a metal circlet with an inset star, twisted to attach a point of gossamer to the frame. It focuses a raksha's will and insight, allowing the raksha to make ranged Staff-shaping attacks. It consumes one point of gossamer per scene of use. Like a Ring-shaping weapon, it has speed +0, defense -6 and limited access to the damage Trait (Charisma).

Courtier's Caul: Diplomats draw this near-invisible sheath of gossamer over their hands and face when they wish to shape the fabric of society directly. The terrible momentum of courts and kingdoms is as nothing to them. With the lightest movement of their hands, they can send two great nations into war or lift a society from barbarism.

Entanglement: See pages 138-139.

Harness of Twisting Words: Some Diplomats wrap themselves in aura of law, pact and deceit that binds all those they challenge. Those entangled with the Diplomat find themselves suffocating on tradition, trapped by the ill-defined protections and unspoken taboos that make such envoys sacrosanct. Eclipse Caste Solars can ready their diplomatic immunity as if it were a harness of twisting words when shaping.

Hunting Clan: Hunting clans are swarms of cold and skittering dreams commanded by a scrap of white void. The raksha impresses the social principles he desires on the void. The hunting clan then travels into society, living in shadows, words and the space inside the shaped creatures' minds. The swarm seeks to organize the internal bonds of society according to the principles laid out by the raksha — heightening the feelings of devotion, family, love, lust, fear, loyalty and disempowerment that bind people together. In this fashion, those who serve the raksha's wishes become dominant in the social order.

Litany Bones: The Diplomat taps the litany bones together as he states the words that shall now and forever be the deepest truths that society knows. The hollow sound created as the bones come together carries his words into the primal core of the collective unconscious of the shaped world of dream.

People: Individual residents of the shaped world — allies, romantic interests, henchmen and enemies — form connections with the target, making the artificial social environment more real and, thus, more dangerous.

Society: The traditions, laws, taboos, customs and general social structure of a shaped world to help ensnare the target.

Effects of Damage

Raksha mark Staff damage off against their Conviction + Staff. When they have taken more Staff damage than the sum of their Conviction and Staff Traits, they are *snared*. The target raksha can apply any excess damage and any further Staff damage as Cup damage, Ring damage or Sword damage (attacker's choice), much like bashing damage becomes lethal when it overflows the normal wound track. In addition, typical targets suffer a -4 wound penalty to shaping actions for the duration of the combat.

Name	Speed	Acc.	Damage	Defense	Rate	Cost	Notes
Courtier's Caul	+3	-1	+12	-3	1	••	P
Entanglement	-6	-2	+0	-2	1	–	*, P
Harness of Twisting Words	-5	-3	+3	-1	1	•••	P,C
Hunting Clans	+4	+1	+8	+1	2	•	P
Litany Bones	+8	+3	+7	+2	2	–	–
People	-3	+1	+3	-3	3	–	*
Society	+0	+1	+0	+2	5	–	*

Name	Acc.	Damage	Rate	Cost	Range	Max Charisma	Notes
Commandment Lens	+0	+0	2	•	6	•••	P

* This weapon is the equivalent of unarmed shaping. A raksha can ready this shaping weapon reflexively without using a shaping action.
P The weapon does piercing damage, halving the target's Willpower soak.
C The weapon is a clinch enhancer and can only be used for entanglement.

Snaring the Unshaped

The unshaped mark Staff damage off against twice their Conviction + Staff. Snaring them successfully is difficult — but if snared, the power of their binding can be captured in a three-dot adjuration or used to improve an existing anugraha or tirobhava oath (see p. 209) by one dot. Unshaped can be snared, at most, once per story.

Snaring Creatures of Creation

Creatures without a Staff Grace are still vulnerable to snaring. However, they do not have a Staff damage track. Instead of marking off damage, roll their Willpower + Essence against a difficulty equal to the raksha's damage successes. Dragon-Blooded Exaltation confers a bonus die. Celestial Exaltation confers two bonus dice. Solar (or Abyssal) Exaltation confers three. If the roll succeeds, they take no damage. If the roll fails, they are snared. Their players have a four-die penalty on future rolls against Staff-shaping damage and, on failure, suffer the effects of ravishment (see pp. 140-141), incumbrance (see pp. 143-144) or vexation (see pp. 147-148), as the raksha chooses. This four-die penalty expires at the end of the story.

Charms that reduce the victim's soak against Staff-shaping attacks reduce a Creation-born creature's Willpower + Essence dice pool by or to the same amount. Exalted then add their bonus dice normally.

Sword Shaping

Sword shaping weaves the fate of battle. When the raksha play the game of Swords, then armies march. Heroes and monsters strive. Raksha die, struck low by the blows of their enemies, only to rise again as ghosts, walking corpses or death-defying warriors. Blood flows, birds feast, and screams tear the empty Wyld.

The Sword is associated with the Physical Attributes. Raksha skilled with the Sword can shape powerful, graceful bodies for themselves. The Abilities tied to the Sword are Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee and Presence. Its color is red, and its direction is south. Thus, raksha in the Wyld travel south when they wish to find battle.

Sword contests target the physical possessions of the enemy. Defeating an enemy in a Sword-based contest lets a raksha rip away one of the enemy's artifacts or Graces.

Sword Combat

Raksha can shape stories of battle, war and other physical struggles. The dice pool for Sword shaping is chosen from the list below. Should the raksha have multiple viable choices, she can choose whichever she finds most auspicious, subject to Storyteller discretion.

Dexterity + Archery: The raksha shapes scenes of long-distance battle or war. This remains a viable choice until the two forces close. Thus, a raksha archer favors inaccessible fortresses and hit-and-run offensives.

Dexterity + Athletics: The raksha shapes scenes of nonmartial physical conflict. These include athletic contests, races and battles with significant environmental challenges.

Dexterity + Brawl: The raksha shapes scenes of raw and brutal battle, where forces contend in primitive and undisciplined savagery. Raksha brawlers favor armies of monsters and barbarian heroes. They stride shirtless and gleaming at the front of the horde.

Dexterity + Melee: The raksha shapes scenes of disciplined and elegant battle. Melee governs marching legions in shining armor, complex battle plans and graceful duels.

Dexterity + Presence: The raksha shapes scenes of leadership — drowning the foe in minions, monsters and servants. Players of raksha can roll Presence in almost any conflict of the Sword, so long as they themselves do not fight.

The player describes some of the events of the scene and the victory or limited victory he seeks from them. The default description for a Sword shaping is along the lines of "my forces attack" or "my behemoth advances." Better descriptions can and should earn stunt dice.

Damage

To win a contest of Sword shaping, a raksha must earn the enemy's buy-in in her victory. She must shape an inevitable, unstoppable, glorious tale of her triumph. To measure the unstoppable glory of her attack, a raksha's player rolls damage. The base damage is Strength plus the successes on the attack roll. The victim receives a damage soak equal to his Stamina + Willpower. This functions exactly like **Exalted** damage soak and, thus, cannot reduce the damage dice to zero.

Weapons of the Sword

Damage from Sword attacks depends on the style of the attack. Costs for shaping weapons are based on the Gossamer Background (see p. 110) and not the Resources Background.

Entanglement: See pages 138-139. In Sword combat, this usually represents a duel.

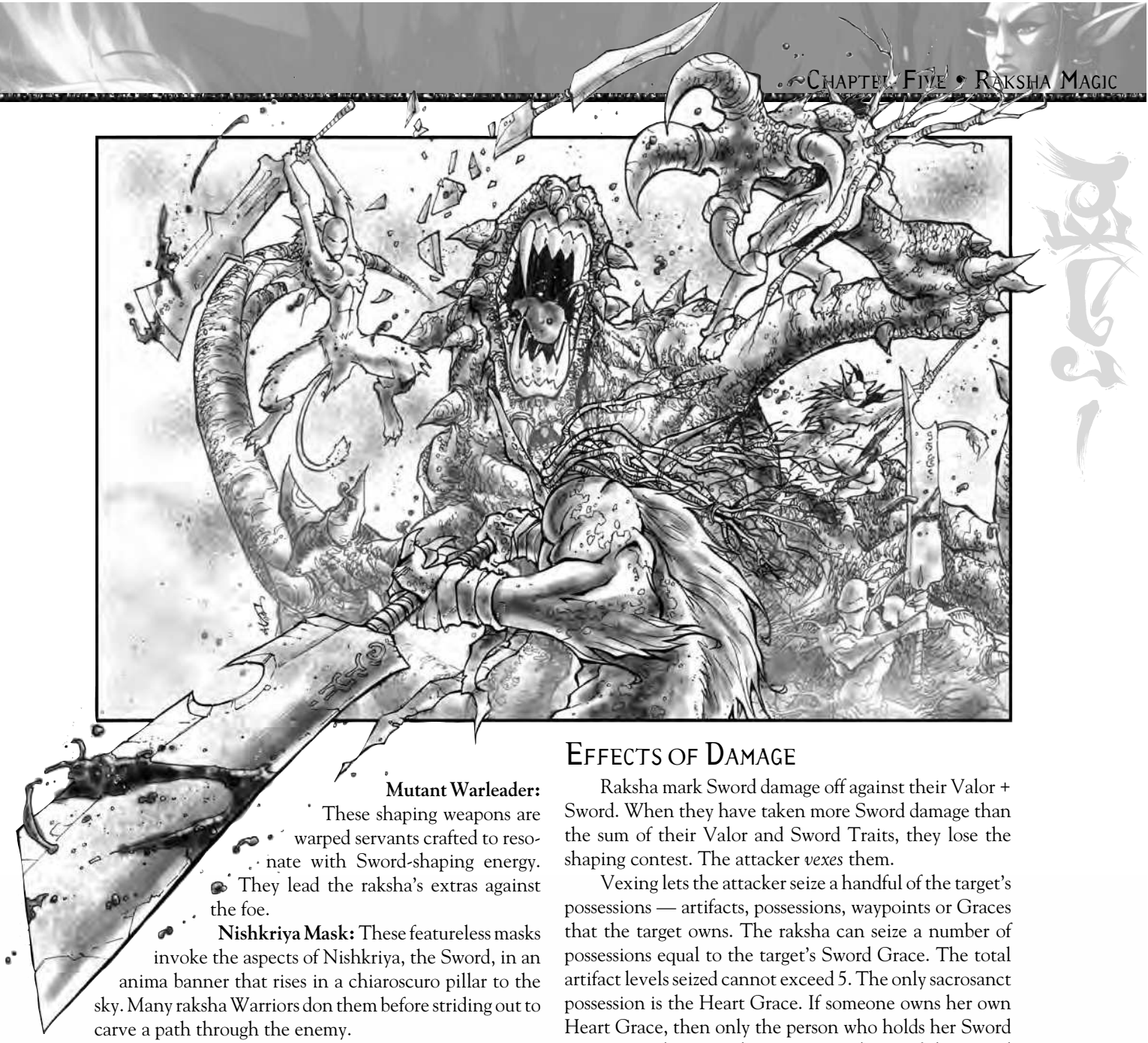
Extras: The raksha shapes extras from nothing and wields them against the enemy.

Hazard: The raksha turns the environment against his enemy. These are the

appropriate statistics for a typical hazard possession. A raksha can also make these attacks using a "sky barb" — a three-barbed whip that cuts open the sky to send rain at his enemy, carves open the ground to turn it to swamp or otherwise influences the environment against her foe.

Horror: These lumbering beasts are monsters permanently crafted to deliver fear and death to the opponents of their master.

Monster: A great and terrible monster of the Wyld assails the enemy's forces.



Mutant Warleader: These shaping weapons are warped servants crafted to resonate with Sword-shaping energy. They lead the raksha's extras against the foe.

Nishkriya Mask: These featureless masks invoke the aspects of Nishkriya, the Sword, in an anima banner that rises in a chiaroscuro pillar to the sky. Many raksha Warriors don them before striding out to carve a path through the enemy.

Personal Prowess: The raksha attacks the enemy directly.

Effects of Damage

Raksha mark Sword damage off against their Valor + Sword. When they have taken more Sword damage than the sum of their Valor and Sword Traits, they lose the shaping contest. The attacker *vexes* them.

Vexing lets the attacker seize a handful of the target's possessions — artifacts, possessions, waypoints or Graces that the target owns. The raksha can seize a number of possessions equal to the target's Sword Grace. The total artifact levels seized cannot exceed 5. The only sacrosanct possession is the Heart Grace. If someone owns her own Heart Grace, then only the person who holds her Sword Grace can claim it. This protection lapses if the Sword Grace breaks.

Name	Speed	Acc.	Damage	Defense	Rate	Cost	Notes
Entanglement	-6	-2	+0	-2	1	–	P,*
Extras	+1	+1	+3	+1	3	–	*
Hazard	+10	-1	+7	-3	2	–	*
Horror	+7	+2	+6	-1	2	–	*
Monster	+4	+1	+6	-2	2	–	–
Mutant Warleader	+0	+0	+2	+3	4	–	*
Nishkriya Mask	+4	+3	+3	+1	3	–	*
Personal Prowess	+2	+1	+3	+0	3	–	*

* This weapon is the shaping equivalent of unarmed combat. A raksha can ready this shaping weapon reflexively without using a shaping action.

P The weapon does piercing damage. This halves the target's Willpower for purposes of computing soak.

Vexing Places

Vexing a waypoint claims possession of it. The raksha must commit 3 motes to each waypoint he claims, but while that commitment lasts, a portion of his spirit resides there. This effect makes him aware of all Sword shaping within that waypoint, lets him use applicable Sword defenses against shaping attacks made against that waypoint and permits him to make Sword-shaping actions as if present in the waypoint.

Vexing the Unshaped

Vexing the unshaped rips open their Sword Grace. The bloody rush of power that pours out shapes itself naturally into a three-dot behemoth. Raksha can capture it instead in an existing behemoth to improve a three- or four-dot behemoth by one dot. A given unshaped can be vexed, at most, once per story.

Vexing Creatures of Creation

Creatures without a Sword Grace are still vulnerable to vexation. However, they do not have a Sword damage track. Instead of marking off damage, their players roll the characters' Willpower + Essence against a difficulty equal to the raksha's damage successes. Dragon-Blooded Exaltation confers a bonus die. Celestial Exaltation confers two bonus dice. Solar (or Abyssal) Exaltation confers three. If the roll succeeds, they take no damage. If the roll fails, they are vexed.

Charms and effects that reduce the victim's soak against Sword-shaping attacks reduce this Willpower + Essence dice pool by or to the same amount. Exalted then add their bonus dice normally.

The Shinma

The raksha are patterns. Certain rules govern the formation of patterns. These rules are themselves patterns, born in the primeval Before. The raksha call the patterns governing the Wyld "shinma." Such basic concepts as location and identity are shinma, and the shinma predate them — they exist without differentiation and spread throughout infinity.

Nirupadhika, for example, is the shinma of space, the shinma of geographical order, the pattern of proximity and travel. These concepts are its body and its flesh. Because Nirupadhika has limits, these things are not consistent everywhere, and at times, the raksha may arrive before leaving, exist in two places simultaneously or occupy multiple distances from the same point.

Nirvishesha, similarly, is the shinma of identity. The idea of things being different from one another is part of Nirvishesha. It also has limits, and in the Wyld, people can blur together, split apart, merge with the landscape, coalesce out of nothingness or change in unprecedented ways.

The Charms of the Fair Folk draw on the shinma. To master these Charms is to "tame the shinma" — a term used in the same way that a monk might tame his ego or an Exalt tame the wild rush of her Essence. The Fair Folk specialize in Charms drawing on the strength of six shinma: the shinma of the five Graces, defining power, and the shinma Nirakara, architect of form.

Questing

Raksha sometimes seek out the unshaped and engage them in ritual shaping contests. A triumphant raksha can rip a powerful artifact, spell or servant from the unshaped's soul.

In the Deep Wyld, the unshaped are all but immortal — only a few rare artifacts can subdue them on a permanent basis. It's wise for a questing raksha to plan his escape route carefully. The unshaped are believed to derive a certain power from the process of questing that encourages them to tolerate it, even when they lose. Less tolerant god-monsters of the deep can chase an impudent quester to the Middlemarches or even the Bordermarches, inflicting terrible ravishments and burdens on his soul.

Nirakara, the Mask

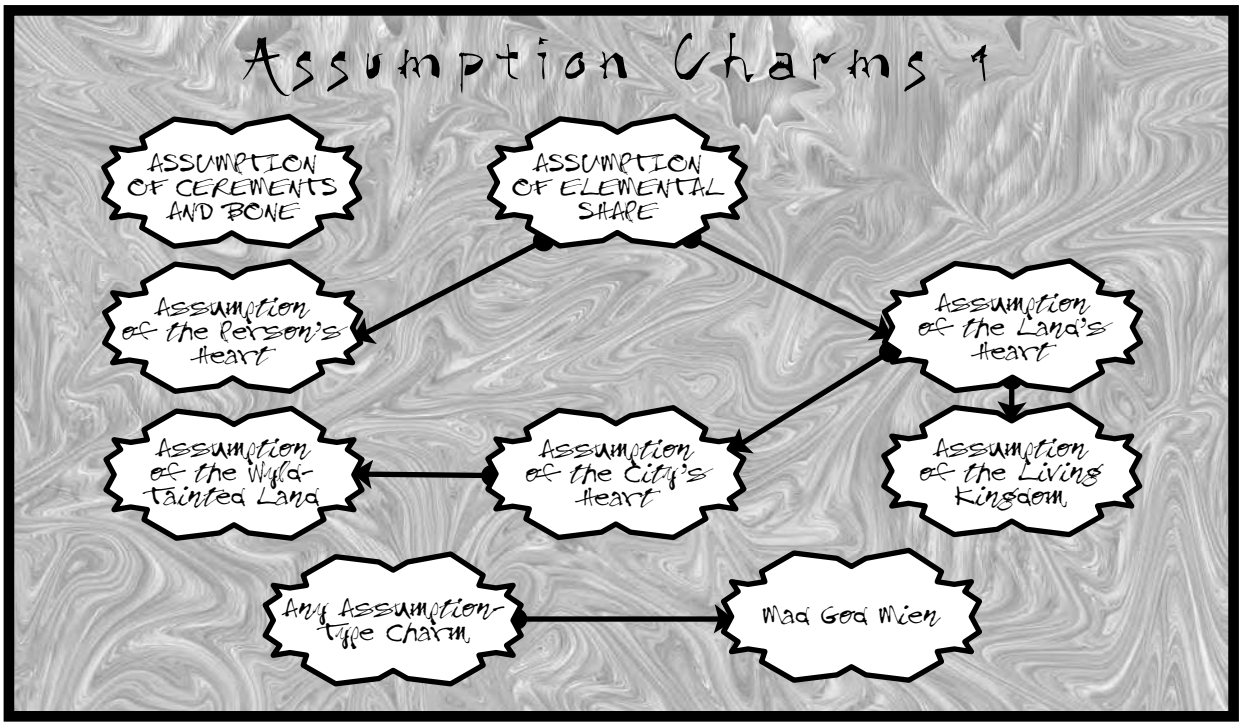
The shinma Nirakara defines shapes. He is the gateway between world and Wyld — between the place of defined form and the place without. To take on shape, or to change one's shape with Wyld energy, is to "pass through Nirakara." For creatures of Creation, this means acquiring Wyld mutations. For raksha, it means acquiring both shape and form.

Fair Folk can take poxes, afflictions, blights and other mutations just as the creatures of Creation can. However, this is an atypical approach. Wyld mutations produce inelegant horrors. Most raksha prefer to be graceful monsters. Competent raksha guide their journey through Nirakara and gain mutations fitting their personal aesthetic — animalistic, elemental or humanoid.

The Charms of Nirakara are divided among all five Graces — any Charm with a mutation point cost belongs, in a way, to Nirakara. A handful of Charms belong to Nirakara alone. Since they have no minimum Grace requirement, the experience cost to put them in a Combo equals twice their minimum Essence requirement.

Assumption-Type Charms

The raksha use these Charms to exist as shaped creatures within Creation. When using an Assumption-type Charm to enter Creation, the raksha can choose any desired shape of roughly human size, but must use Charms to receive any meaningful benefit from a nonhuman form. For example, a water raksha could have shining silver hair,



prehensile and many yards in length — but it would not improve his reach or give him multiple-action benefits without Charms such as Hundred-Hand Style or Long-Arm Technique (see page 203).

In Creation-based games, most raksha choose the mutation form of their primary Assumption-type Charm. Those who do not can return to a Freehold, terminate the Charm and unmake their body and then use the Charm again to craft a new shape. A successful difficulty 3 Perception + Occult roll allows one to recognize the new body of a known raksha by its manner and aesthetic.

Assumption of Elemental Shape

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows a raksha to pass through the gateway Nirakara and exist as a shaped creature within Creation. This Charm is actually five different Charms, each offering a different benefit.

• Assumption of Elemental Shape (Air) — Raksha with this Charm active suffer no ill effects from cold. They may walk on snow or ice as if it were solid, stable ground.

• Assumption of Elemental Shape (Earth) — Raksha with this Charm active can see clearly in the deepest darkness.

• Assumption of Elemental Shape (Fire) — Raksha with this Charm active suffer no ill effects from heat or non-magical flame.

• Assumption of Elemental Shape (Water) — Raksha with this Charm active can swim at normal movement rates, breathe water as well as air and otherwise exist comfortably in an aquatic environment.

• Assumption of Elemental Shape (Wood) — Raksha with this Charm active can balance on even the thinnest branch. They entirely ignore any natural poison with a single success on a Stamina + Resistance roll.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Assumption of Cerements and Bone

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows a raksha to pass through the gateway Nirakara and exist as a shaped creature within the Underworld. Raksha with this Charm active are material in Creation but, otherwise, are treated as dead for all effects — they can receive Essence from burnt offerings, Deathlords can feed on them for power, and so forth.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Assumption of the Person's Heart

Cost: 10 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Elemental Shape (Any)

This Charm allows a raksha to pass through the gateway Nirakara and exist as a minor Wyld taint on a creature of Creation. The creature must be visible when she uses this Charm. If this is her only active Assumption-type Charm, the raksha exists in Creation as an extension of that creature — she cannot exist outside of its presence, and she involuntarily becomes a dematerialized but manifest spirit when the creature becomes unconscious or someone attempts to forcibly separate her from it. If she has another Assumption-type Charm active, she can leave its presence and does not dematerialize (voluntarily or otherwise) in either circumstance.

If the creature consents, this Charm allows the raksha to share the benefits of her mutations and active Charms with it. This costs 1 gossamer for each mutation point or gossamer point of Charms shared. For example, she can spend 1 gossamer to extend the benefits of her Assumption of Elemental Shape (Water) to a shipwrecked sailor. She can withdraw these gifts at any time.

This Charm is a work of glamour. The raksha cannot taint creatures whose Stamina + Essence exceeds the raksha's Charisma.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Assumption of the Land's Heart

Cost: 10 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Elemental Shape (Any)

This Charm allows the raksha to pass through the gateway Nirakara and exist as a subliminal Wyld taint on a region of Creation. The raksha sinks her Heart Grace into a region suitable for a small hamlet — a place sized to house and feed up to 25 people. The raksha, mystically separated from her Heart Grace, cannot spend Willpower and exists without volition. She responds to events around her and can defend herself, answer questions and perform repetitive tasks, but she cannot initiate new courses of action.

This Charm lets the raksha "program" her Heart Grace to use works of glamour based on conditions she specifies. The Heart Grace interacts spiritually with everything within the region. Therefore, works of glamour such as Fearsome Mien and Beguilement (see pp. 199-200 and 160) can affect any appropriate target within the region. The raksha can access this information consciously with a successful difficulty 5 Intelligence + Lore roll.

It takes a successful difficulty 3 Perception + Occult roll to realize the nature of the taint on the land. Tracking it back to the raksha requires a successful difficulty 5 Perception + Occult roll. Charms such as All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight (see **Exalted**, p. 193) allow automatic success on these tasks.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Assumption of the City's Heart

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of the Land's Heart

This Charm functions as Assumption of the Land's Heart. However, it blankets a larger region — a place sized to support up to 1,000 people.

Fair Folk can invoke this Charm together with Assumption of the Land's Heart. The central region, where both overlap, is a place of power. The raksha's Heart can invoke permanent glamours as well as works of glamour within this central region.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Assumption of the Living Kingdom

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower, 6 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of the Land's Heart

This Charm functions as Assumption of the Land's Heart. It blankets a much larger region — a small kingdom, able to support 100,000 people.

Fair Folk can invoke this Charm together with Assumption of the Land's Heart. The central region, where both overlap, is a place of power. So long as he remains within that central region, the raksha can commune with his Heart and make decisions. He cannot spend Willpower (although the Heart can), but he can take self-directed actions.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Assumption of the Wyld-Tainted Land

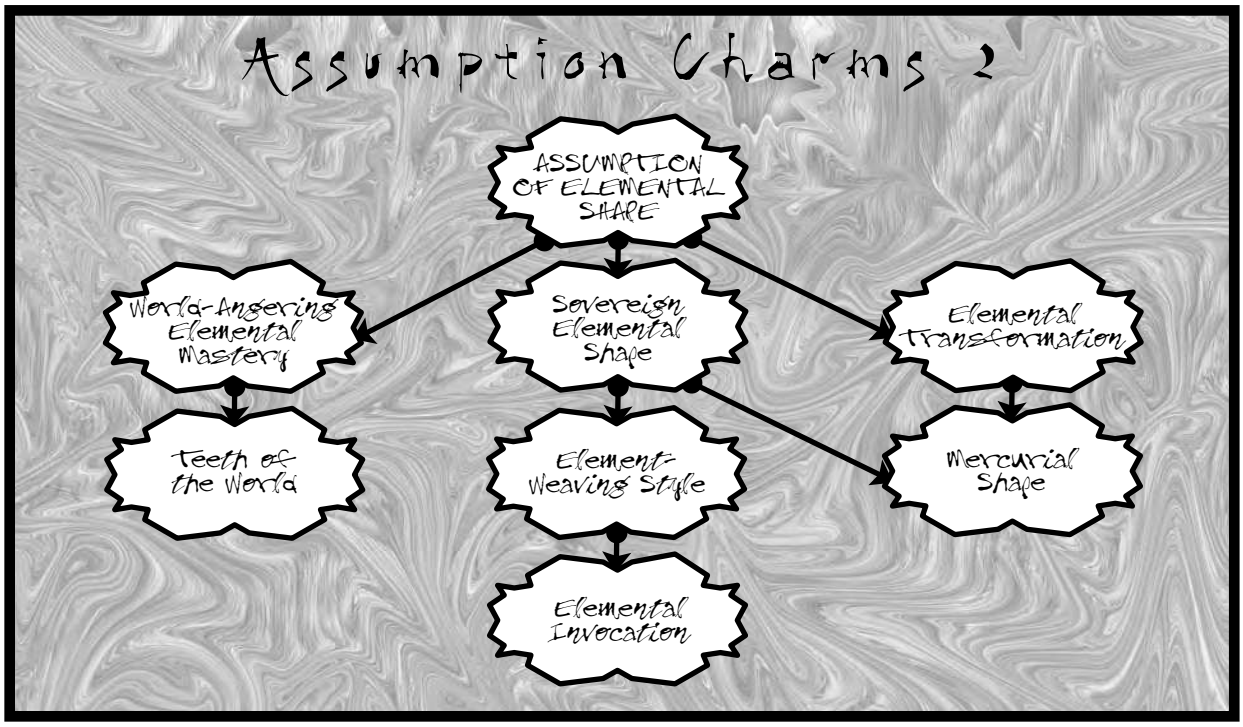
Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower, 6 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of the City's Heart

As the Wyld recedes from a region, a raksha can take the land with her through the gateway Nirakara. This Charm functions as Assumption of the Kingdom's Heart. However, the region chosen must be a section of Bordermarches fading into Creation. In addition to the other effects, this Charm creates a powerful tainted land — infused with sufficient ambient Wyld energy for the raksha to shape it, albeit at +5 difficulty.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Mad God Mien

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Reflexive



Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Any Assumption-type Charm

Some raksha learn to adopt shape while remaining wholly alien to Creation. As they pass through Nirakara and fill themselves with Creation's Essence, they twist it into the raw, mad structures of the Wyld. Learning this Charm permanently increases the cost of all Assumption-type Charms by 2 gossamer or 2 mutation points. This Charm adds 1 to the difficulty of Charms that twist or reshape the raksha's body. It also makes the Charms and powers of the Creation-born treat the raksha as an automaton and a creature outside of fate, immune to most direct mental influence effects. Glamour sorcery with the permanent version of this Charm is immune to normal sorcerous countermagic.

The effects of this Charm are a matter of structure rather than power. It can be undone by powers that bind the raksha (or spell) into Creation, such as the Greater Sign of Jupiter (see **Exalted: The Sidereals**, p. 235) and Harmony with Reality Technique (see **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 177).

Elemental Influence

These Charms charge the raksha's elemental Essence with power. They give the Fair Folk abilities similar to those of elementals. Charms of elemental influence are works of glamour, but — like physical mutations — the glamour empowers the raksha rather than directly affecting others. Others do not have the opportunity to see through this glamour.

Sovereign Elemental Shape

Cost: 1 gossamer

Duration: One story

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Elemental Shape (Any)

The raksha can use the elements of Creation to assist others. The Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Elemental Assistance. For 1 mote, the raksha can reflexively grant a one-die Wyld bonus to a single witnessed action. The player of the raksha or his target must define how the target uses one of the five elements to assist him, and the raksha must have the Assumption of Elemental Shape for that element active.

For example, an archer might gain the assistance of a raksha who has assumed elemental Earth by taking a firm stance and "rooting herself in the ground." Someone engaged in seduction might gain that raksha's assistance by maneuvering the conversation so that (hopefully) the target trips over a rock and falls into his arms.

Element-Weaving Style

Cost: 1 gossamer

Duration: One story

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Sovereign Elemental Shape

The raksha can shape the element by touch, rapidly molding it into complex and intricate shapes without tools. This gives the raksha access to the following abilities. These are normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Compliant Element Shaping: For 5 motes, the raksha's player can make a single Craft roll for the character to shape air, fire or water. Sculptures of water, fire or air last for a single cycle of the moon. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Air) active to sculpt mist or wind, Assumption of Elemental Shape (Fire) active to sculpt fire or Assumption of Elemental Shape (Water) active to sculpt water.

Compliant Woodland Shaping: For 5 motes, the raksha's player can make a single Craft roll for the character to shape wood as if he had First Age tools — a -1 difficulty reduction replaces any penalty or benefit he might receive from tools or the lack thereof. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Wood) active.

Compliant Mountain Shaping: For 5 motes, the raksha's player can make a single Craft roll for the character to shape earth and metal as if he had First Age tools — a -1 difficulty reduction replaces any penalty or benefit he might receive from tools or the lack thereof. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Earth) active.

Elemental Invocation

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Element-Weaving Style

The raksha manifests in Creation one of the treasures of the Wyld. This Charm lets the raksha invoke a possession (see pp. 131-132) in Creation, giving it shape and form appropriate to an element whose Essence the raksha has absorbed through Assumption of Elemental Shape. For example, a raksha of air might summon a lethal hazard as a storm, and a raksha of water might call forth a servant in the shape of a siaka. It fades away again at the end of the story. This Charm can call forth even possessions and servants that cannot normally exist in Creation.

World-Angering Elemental Mastery

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Elemental Shape (Any)

The raksha can use the elements of Creation to hinder others. This Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Elemental Hindrance: For 5 motes, the raksha can reflexively impose an environmental penalty equal to his Essence on a single witnessed action of which he disapproves. The raksha's player must define how his character uses one of the five elements to impose this penalty, and he must have the Assumption of Elemental Shape appropriate to that element active.

Teeth of the World

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: World-Angering Elemental Mastery

The raksha attacks others with the elements of Creation. This Charm gives the raksha access to the following abilities. These abilities affect normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Wind Knives: For 5 motes, the raksha can attack others with hail, lightning or frigid, brutal winds. This attack is an undodgeable one with a base lethal damage of twice the raksha's Essence and a normal Dexterity + Archery dice pool. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Air) active and must be within 1,000 yards of the target and able to see it.

Inciting the Ocean's Hunger: For 5 motes, the raksha can turn the sea, a river or another significant water source against an enemy. The enemy must be within five yards of the water. This attack is an unblockable one with a base lethal damage of twice the raksha's Essence and a normal Dexterity + Brawl dice pool. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Water) active and must be within 100 yards of the target and able to see it.

Thrashing Dragon Fire Dance: For 5 motes, the raksha can turn fire against an enemy. The enemy must be within five yards of a significant blaze. This attack is a normal dice action with a Dexterity + Archery dice pool. Its base damage is twice the raksha's Essence. The raksha can also use this power to immolate an enemy or a flammable object for 5 motes, even without a fire handy, but this weak conjuration of flame has a base damage of 2L. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Fire) active. This effect has a range of 100 yards.

Leaping Forest: For 5 motes, the raksha can turn wood against an enemy. The enemy must be within five yards of a tree or within 30 yards of a small wooden object. This attack is a normal dice action with a Dexterity + Brawl dice pool. Its base damage is twice the raksha's Essence in lethal damage. Trees can initiate clinches, while smaller wooden objects leap at the enemy. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Wood) active. The attack has a range of 100 yards.

World-Shaking Heart. For 5 motes, the raksha can attack her enemies with the power of earth and stone. This power does not affect enemies more than five yards from the

ground (either in the air or at sea.) The raksha can make this attack as a normal dice action with a Dexterity + Brawl dice pool and a base damage of twice the raksha's Essence. This attack has a range of 500 yards. Alternately, with one success on a normal Dexterity + Brawl action, she can shake the ground within 30 yards. Anyone standing must roll Dexterity + Athletics as a normal action or fall down. Structures take the raksha's Essence in dice of lethal damage. The raksha must have Assumption of Elemental Shape (Earth) active.

Elemental Transformation

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Elemental Shape (Any)

The raksha masters the art of transformation, learning to adopt an alternate shape suited to her elemental Essence. The raksha can purchase this Charm more than once, learning an additional shape each time.

The raksha chooses a single alternate shape when purchasing this Charm. If this is an animal shape, the raksha can speak to animals of that type whenever this Charm is active. In addition, this Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

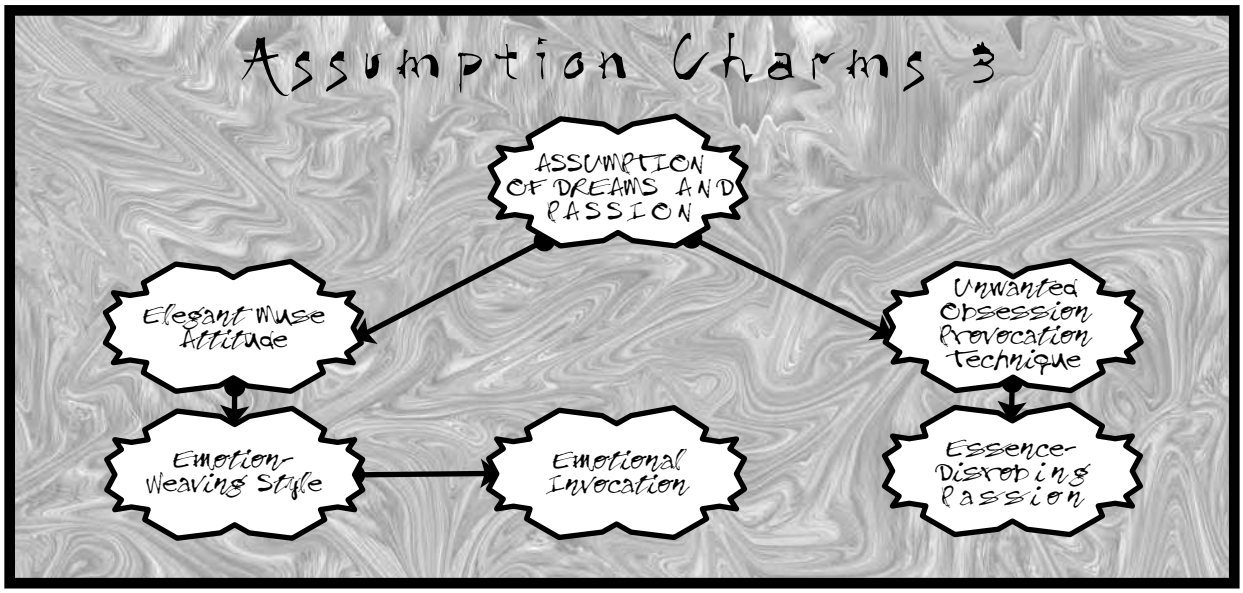
Shapeshift: For 10 motes and 1 Willpower, the raksha can change shape to an alternate form — an animal or elemental body chosen when the player purchases the Elemental Transformation Charm. The special abilities of animal and elemental bodies are designed with 3 mutation points. For example, a raksha could assume the form of an eagle, with Gossamer Wing Flight (see p. 203) and keen vision purchased through Surpassing Excellence (see p. 204). A bear might have Armament of Flesh (see p. 204) and the Large pox (see **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 212). This change is a work of glamour. It imposes a two-die penalty on the raksha's physical and social actions and gives the benefits of the mutations without actual mutation points. The raksha can still talk in the animal form.

Mercurial Shape

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Sovereign Elemental Shape, Elemental Transformation

The raksha makes his shape a thing of quicksilver and change. This Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.





Mutable Form: For 5 motes, the raksha can reflexively give himself a two-die Wyld bonus. The raksha must define how he uses a mutable form to achieve this bonus — arms that lengthen and retract for a Larceny roll to steal an Exalt's sword, an ever-changing shape for the Survival roll to avoid pursuit or a light effort of shapeshifting for the Larceny roll to create a disguise.

Emotional Influence

Raksha can assume non-elemental shapes and develop Charm trees based on their personalized Assumption-type Charms. This tree is an example of the type, based on raksha who charge their being with emotional Essence.

Assumption of Dreams and Passion

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows a raksha to pass through the gateway Nirakara and exist as a shaped creature within Creation. The raksha fills his spirit with the raw dream-derived Essence of an emotion or passion. This Charm adds the raksha's highest feeding Grace in dice to Social rolls where provoking that emotion is useful. The raksha chooses the emotion in question when invoking this Charm.

This is an Assumption-type Charm.

Elegant Muse Attitude

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Dreams and Passion

The raksha can use emotion to assist others. The Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Emotional Assistance: For 1 mote, the raksha can reflexively grant a one-die Wyld bonus to a single witnessed action. The player of the raksha or his target must define how the target uses raksha-inspired passion to assist himself. The raksha must have Assumption of Dreams and Passion active.

Emotion-Weaving Style

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Elegant Muse Attitude

The raksha uses the emotional Essence embedded in his alien soul to shape, mold and carve the minds of others. This Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Great Craft of Minds: The raksha spends 5 motes, and his player rolls Conviction + Performance as a normal action against a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. On a success, the raksha can change the target's Nature to a Nature of the raksha's choice. This change lasts for one story. This change in Nature is an artificial and artistic twisting of the target's spirit, driven by emotional blocks set up within the target's mind. Targets can therefore ignore the non-mechanical impact of the change but find it uncomfortable to do so.

Emotional Invocation

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Emotion-Weaving Style

The raksha manifests in Creation one of the treasures of the Wyld. This Charm lets the raksha invoke a possession (see pp. 131-132) into Creation, filling the gaps in its shape and Essence with the emotion the raksha has assumed via Assumption of Dreams and Passion. For example, a raksha enshrouded in lust could summon a cabinet or a mutated siaka, but both would have an odd and sensual appeal for those who looked upon them.

Unwanted Obsession Provocation Technique

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assumption of Dreams and Passion

The raksha can use the emotional Essence flooding him to drive others to distraction. This Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Emotional Hindrance: For 5 motes, the raksha can reflexively impose an environmental penalty equal to his Essence on a single witnessed action of which he disapproves. The raksha's player must define how his character uses the emotional mien imposed by Assumption of Dreams and Passion to inflict this penalty.

Essence-Disrobing Passion

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unwanted Obsession Provocation Technique

The raksha attacks the Essence patterns of others with madly surging dreams. This Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Mote-Scattering Storm: For 5 motes, the raksha can overwhelm the thoughts and Essence of a witnessed target with unruly emotion. This is a normal action with a Conviction + Performance dice pool and a base difficulty of the target's permanent Essence. This attack is an intangible one and cannot be parried without Charms or stunts capable of deflecting such attacks. If the raksha succeeds, the target loses motes equal to the raksha's Essence and suffers a one-die environmental penalty on normal actions for the rest of the scene. This penalty is cumulative with the penalty for Emotional Hindrance but not with itself.

Nirguna, the Heart

The shinma Nirguna defines the qualities of existence. For this reason, in its own person, one cannot properly describe it as existing. Like Dharma, it transcends corrosion; like Nishkriya, it takes no action; like Nirvikalpa, it recognizes no differentiation; and like Nirvishesha, it has no identity. It is the nowhere and everywhere principle, the nothing and everything dream, the raw beating heart at the core of the Wyld. Some of its aspects are Namadiksha, the gift of names; Naraka, the abode of darkness; Neti Neti, the nonexistent lord; Nirvani, the extinguished one; Nirvahara, the completion of things; and shinma Advaita Iraivan — God.

Nirguna is associated with the Dodge and Resistance Abilities.

Name Charms

These Charms give the raksha power by virtue of their identity. The raksha's Name shouts its definition of itself, and even the stifling machine called Creation must listen. These Charms are key to the construction of behemoths.

Imposition of Law

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha defines a truth about herself — some mundane task she cannot fail at. The player chooses an Attribute, an Ability and a specialty when purchasing this Charm. This Charm only affects normal dice actions rolling the relevant Attribute + Ability that fall under that specialty. This Charm gives the raksha automatic success on the roll — a minimum of one success, after taking difficulty and any defenses into account — unless opposed by Charms or stunts. If someone opposes the raksha with Charms or stunts, Imposition of Law does not give automatic success. It gives two bonus successes on the roll instead.

For example, a raksha might choose Dexterity + Melee (Swords) to make herself a perfect master of the blade. If she attacks someone with a sword, and her player rolls three successes, and the target parries for six, she still hits with one success. If he then uses a reflexive Dodge Charm to dodge, she misses outright — five successes to attack, versus a six-success parry and a dodge.

Similarly, a silver-tongued thief might choose Charisma + Larceny (Appearance of Innocence). If caught stealing a

king's crown from his head, she can automatically laugh the whole thing off — unless someone uses a stunt or Charm to expose her. A heroic minister might do so by pointing out "faint stains on her hands where they touched something too perfect for a guttersnipe," by soliloquizing about the dignity of the crown and the importance of the occasion or by tricking her into admitting her crime, but a typical mortal court will accept her story of "just adjusting it, sirs."

The Storyteller can permit the player to choose a normally unrolled task instead of an Attribute, Ability and specialty combination — something like "fertility" or "attracting the notice of the Realm."

Players can purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the raksha's Heart.

Bastion of the Self (Grace)

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm provides partial immunity against certain effects. The player chooses one effect from the following list when purchasing this Charm.

- Bastion of the Self (Cup) — this Charm protects against normal attacks and effects that weaken the raksha and Cup-shaping attacks.
- Bastion of the Self (Ring) — this Charm protects against undue mental influence and Ring-shaping attacks.
- Bastion of the Self (Staff) — this Charm protects against undue social influence and Staff-shaping attacks.
- Bastion of the Self (Sword) — this Charm protects against normal attacks with damaging effects and Sword-shaping attacks.

This Charm provides full immunity against mundane effects unaugmented by Charms or stunts. They fail entirely. If an attacker uses a Charm, stunt or shaping action, Bastion of the Self instead increases the difficulty of attacking the raksha by two.

For example, a raksha purchases this Charm to make himself immune to physical damage. He can walk pleasantly through an army of extras and their spears, for they have no chance to harm him. Against a hero using even a one- or two-die stunt — "Hidden by the forest of aimless spears, my blade slips through his defenses to strike his vulnerable spot" — this Charm increases the difficulty to hit the raksha by 2.

Players can purchase this Charm only once.

Bedlam-Influencing Charms

These Charms influence how a raksha experiences bedlam. This tree holds Charms associated with all five Graces, but the core is the Heart Charm Spectacular Insanity.

Spectacular Insanity

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha shapes and molds her Virtues as she passes through Nirakara, changing her response to bedlam. Instead of a debility, bedlam becomes a spectacular insanity. Invoking this Charm each time she enters bedlam gives the raksha Willpower and gossamer equal to the relevant Virtue.

Ambrosial Ascension

Cost: 8 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Spectacular Insanity

Raksha who pass into bedlam with this Charm active take on an angelic, beatific aspect. They radiate glorious, unconquerable beauty, and it is no less for the ravening look of madness that crawls upon their faces. They are the grail of every Creation-born's desire. If a raksha is in bedlam and this Charm is active, it forces the player of any character wishing to impede or attack the raksha to succeed on a difficulty 2 Willpower roll. This roll need not be made more than once per turn for any character.

Bedlam Masterworks

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Spectacular Insanity

Raksha who return from bedlam with this Charm active bring — things — back with them. These are craftworks of madness, inexplicable even to the raksha whose spirit constructed them. The raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as the bedlam fades. Each success yields an incomprehensible artifact containing a single gossamer point, which can be shattered or ravished to claim that gossamer.

Driven Madness

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Staff: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Spectacular Insanity



The raksha shapes herself to the rigor of a binding oath. This Charm gives her three bonus successes on all non-shaping Virtue rolls that help her keep that oath, even when in bedlam.

Raging Vortex Form

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spectacular Insanity

At the dry base of the raksha's well of Virtue, a monster lurks. Bedlam can trigger a passage through Nirakara and the assumption of monstrous shape. When a raksha activates this Charm while in Bedlam, this Charm gives her temporary mutation points equal to half her permanent Willpower. These do not calcify her and can simulate the permanent effects of any raksha Charms. The mutations last until the raksha leaves bedlam.

The player must choose the mutations in question when purchasing the Charm and can change them only when the raksha's permanent Willpower increases or decreases.

Dodge Charms

These Charms help to avoid shaping attacks.

Ill-Approving Eyes

Cost: 1 mote per 2 dice
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character's brooding Essence looks down upon the game of worlds the Fair Folk play and is not much impressed. With short, sharp gestures of fate, he declares the impotence of others' events. For each mote spent, this Charm adds two dice to an attempt to dodge a shaping attack the raksha can anticipate. A character cannot gain more dice than his shaping Trait + Dodge. The raksha's player must declare how many motes he wishes to spend on this Charm before his opponent's player makes the shaping attack roll.

Assertion of a Greater Vision

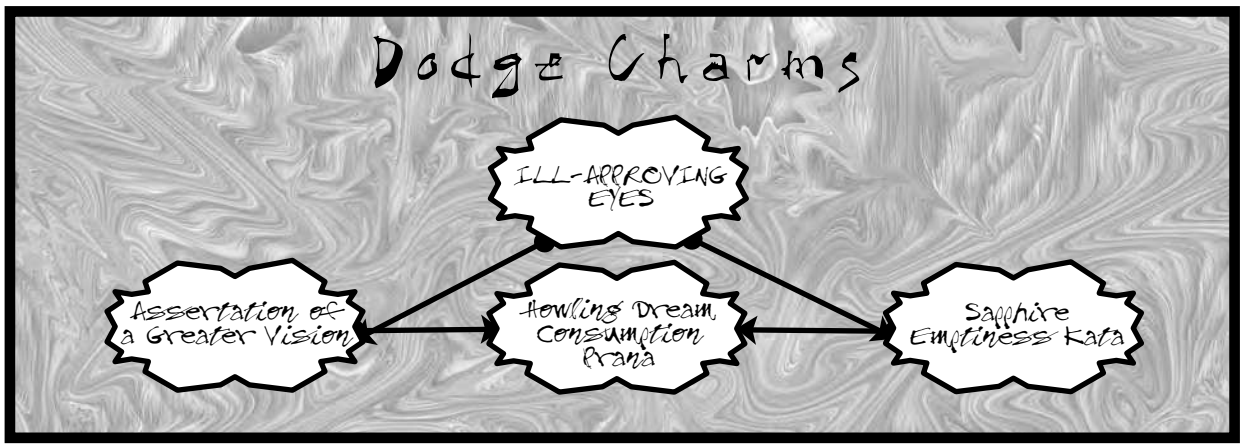
Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ill-Approving Eyes

Setting his name upon local reality, the character denies the world shaping of others as paltry shadows and dreams. The events they assert may happen, but what of it? They are meaningless background images behind the raksha's own great work of fate. This Charm lets the raksha dodge a single anticipated attack with his full shaping Trait + Dodge pool. (In Exalted Power Combat, add his Essence to this pool.) The raksha's player must spend the Essence for Assertion of a Greater Vision before his opponent's player makes her attack roll.

Sapphire Emptiness Kata

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ill-Approving Eyes

As an opponent works her shaping, the raksha declares, "This shall not be." And it is not. This Charm increases the difficulty to hit the raksha with a single dodgeable shaping attack that she can anticipate by the raksha's Dodge. The raksha's player must invoke Sapphire Emptiness Kata before the opponent's player makes his attack roll.



Howling Dream Consumption Prana

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Heart: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Assertion of a Greater Vision, Sapphire Emptiness Kata

The raksha opens the mouths of her Graces, and inside them, there is the hunger of the void, and she eats the world shaped by her enemies. For the rest of the story, this Charm lets the character use her full shaping Trait + Dodge dice pool to reflexively dodge all shaping attacks. (In Exalted Power Combat, add her Essence to this pool.)

Resistance Charms

These Charms help to resist shaping attacks.

Writhing Ego Evasion

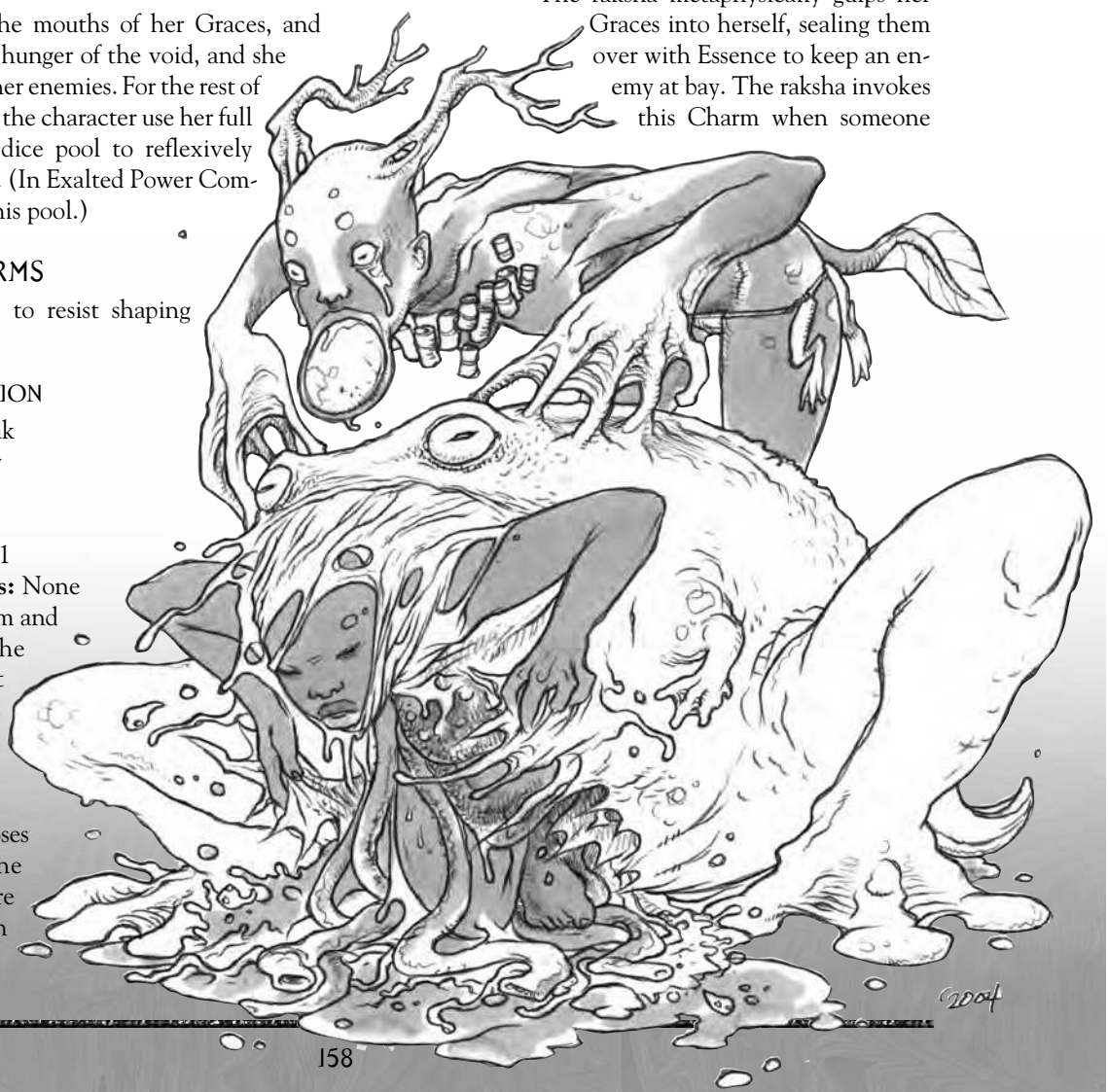
Cost: 1 mote per soak
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Heart: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Desperate for freedom and the integrity of self, the raksha writhes her way out of the trap of another's shaping. This Charm increases her Willpower by one per mote spent for the purposes of calculating soak. The raksha cannot spend more motes on this Charm than her Temperance.

Swallowed Grace Defense

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Writhing Ego Evasion

The raksha metaphysically gulps her Graces into herself, sealing them over with Essence to keep an enemy at bay. The raksha invokes this Charm when someone





uses shaping to attack her. If the attacker does less pre-soak damage than the raksha's Willpower, this Charm lets her ignore the attack entirely.

Pyre of Dreams Defense

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Heart: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Writhing Ego Evasion

The raksha's pain at a shaping attack scatters images of fire and disaster through the dream. This Charm sets the damage successes of a successful attack that hits the raksha to two, regardless of how many dice the enemy would otherwise roll. This damage cannot be further lowered by other Charms or effects. The raksha must use this Charm after the attack hits but before the attack's damage is rolled.

Dharma, the Cup

The shinma Dharma defines corrosion, ignorance and desire. Dharma is the mad addictions and cravings that subvert the nature of the raksha. As the progenitor of corruption, Dharma is, himself, pure; as the definition of ignorance, he is, himself, all-knowing; as the forerunner of every desire, he is, himself, free of hunger. Thus, Dharma is, in all ways, righteous, self-sacrificing and wise. He is the pillar of perfect devotion that upholds a cosmos tainted by his own existence.

Fair Folk that practice the arts of entertainment draw on Dharma. Their Charms eat at others' nature like a spiritual acid. Those who emulate Dharma are called shuddha raksha, paragons struggling to understand how the raksha ought to be. The Wyld offers few answers, and the ethical systems proposed by the shuddha raksha are scarcely comprehensible even to the other Princes of Chaos.

Cup Combat Charms

The raksha use these Charms to improve their Cup-shaping actions and attacks.

Heart-Cutting Style

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character practices such arts and aesthetics as to rend the witnesses' spirits and make them helpless with emotion. The raksha invokes this Charm after making a successful Cup-shaping or Staff-shaping attack. This Charm lets the raksha count extra successes twice for the purposes of determining damage.

Untouchable Performer Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Heart-Cutting Style

In the fashion of the Entertainer raksha, the character makes herself sacrosanct. She can parry any one attack with Cup shaping. Her player rolls Conviction + Performance + shaping weapon defense and adds her Cup in extra dice. This Charm cannot generate a defense from nothing — there must be an initial dice pool for it to add to.

Dissonance of Principles

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Heart-Cutting Style

The raksha's art stuns and disorients his target, scattering patterns of cascading conceptual dissonance through the victim's mind. The raksha spends up to twice his Valor in motes and makes a Cup-shaping or Staff-shaping attack. If he hits, this Charm replaces his shaping damage with stunning damage. He does one level of stunning damage for every mote spent on this Charm. Extra successes add to his damage as usual. Stunning damage is soaked only with Temperance. Each success on the damage roll imposes a -1 penalty to the target's shaping dice pools for the next three scenes. Stunning damage is not cumulative. Only the highest result counts, even if this would shorten the duration of the stunning.

Thousand Tiny Hooks Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Dissonance of Principles

Through her shaping arts, the raksha plants a thousand tiny hooks in the target's soul. The character makes a Cup-shaping or Staff-shaping entanglement attack, receiving the benefits of any readied clinch enhancers. This Charm adds her Essence in dice to the shaping dice pools to inflict, maintain, control and use the entanglement. This Charm also adds her Essence to the damage of her entanglement-based shaping attacks.

Although a simple Charm, this Charm can be invoked while entangled. It cannot be placed in a combo with extra-action Charms.

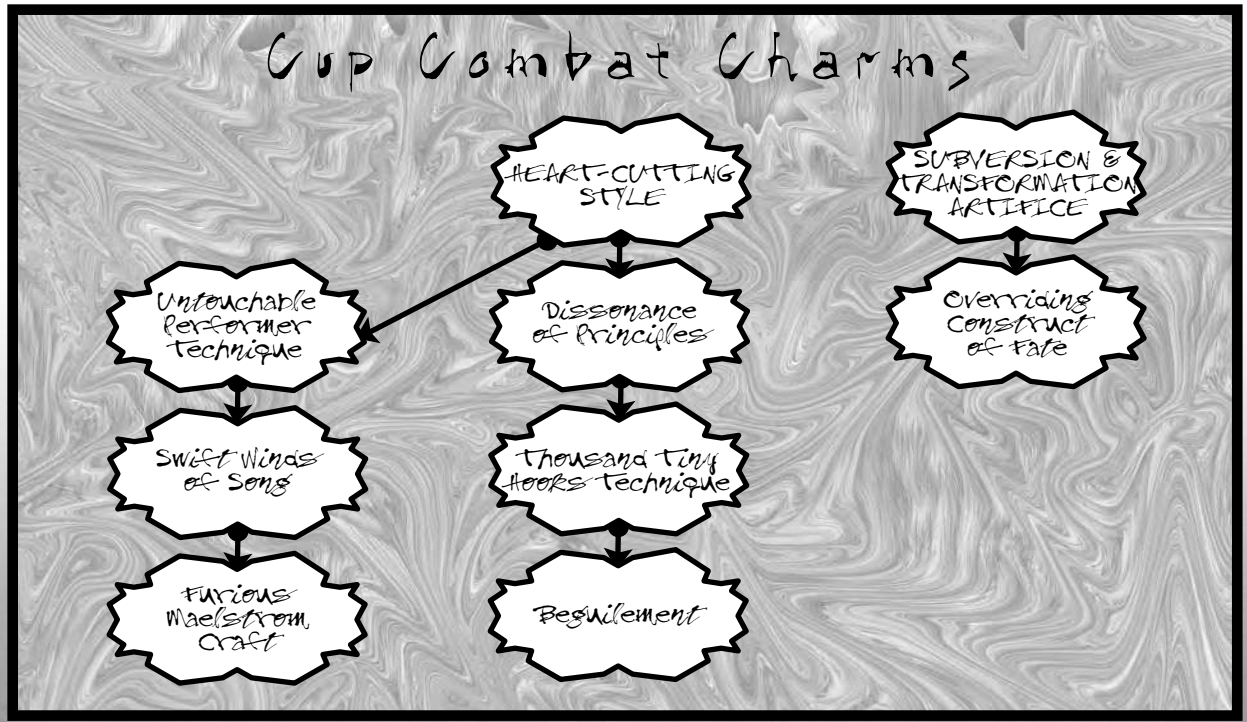
Beguilement

Cost: 5 motes, 3 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Staff: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Thousand Tiny Hooks Technique

The raksha becomes utterly charming, to the point where it is impossible to resist his suggestions. His player rolls Manipulation + Socialize as a Staff-shaping attack. This Charm adds the raksha's Charisma in dice to a successful attack's pre-soak damage.

Used against creatures with no Staff Grace, this Charm functions as a work of glamour. The raksha must interact with the target, who must be in a reasonably calm and receptive state — it cannot be used in physical combat or to quiet a mob. If the shaping attack succeeds, the target accepts any reasonably phrased suggestion or request as natural. The target will not directly kill herself, but she can easily be manipulated into lethal situations. She will happily give the raksha all her warm clothing in the midst of a snowstorm, consent to ravishment or attack the raksha's enemies. This Charm does not work on targets whose Wits + Essence or Willpower are greater than the raksha's Charisma.

This is a Staff-shaping Charm.



Swift Wings of Song

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Untouchable Performer Technique

Preempting initiative, the raksha sets the stage for her performance with a whisper of song, a splash of color or the hint of an idea. This Charm lets the raksha win shaping initiative automatically over a single opponent.

Fair Folk cannot split their dice pool in the same turn they use Swift Wings of Song. Two characters using Swift Wings of Song in competition roll for initiative normally.

Furious Maelstrom Craft

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Swift Wings of Song

The raksha crafts a terrible wave of madness and desire that washes out across the local weave of fate. The raksha makes a Cup-shaping or Staff-shaping attack, applying the results against a number of enemies equal to twice her Essence.

Subversion and Transformation Artifice

Cost: 3 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha plans and constructs a shaping weapon for her art. This Charm crafts a chimera, a heart thorn, a harness of razored dreams or a harness of twisting words (see p. 145) from Essence and gossamer. In addition to the weapon's base qualities, the raksha can divide a number of points equal to her Cup between its speed, accuracy, damage, defense and rate. The creation is a permanent glamour that lasts for one story.

Overriding Construct of Fate

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Subversion and Transformation Artifice

The raksha learns to craft patterns of fate seamless enough to seal an opponent out of the ongoing story. The raksha makes a Cup-shaping or Staff-shaping attack. This Charm makes the attack unblockable. In addition, if the raksha hits, this Charm knocks the opponent into an adjacent waypoint.

Spirit-Twisting Obsession Style

This shaping art tells stories of a great Prince of Chaos brought low by desire, passion or madness. The raksha using Spirit-Twisting Obsession Style assumes the role and Essence pattern of the object of desire, the provoker of passion or the artist whose shaping works incite madness.

Elusive Object of Desire

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Desire is strongest for forbidden fruit, and Entertainers therefore the most elusive of the fey. This Charm adds the raksha's Cup in automatic successes to the roll to escape, dodge or parry an entanglement.

Art of Corrosion

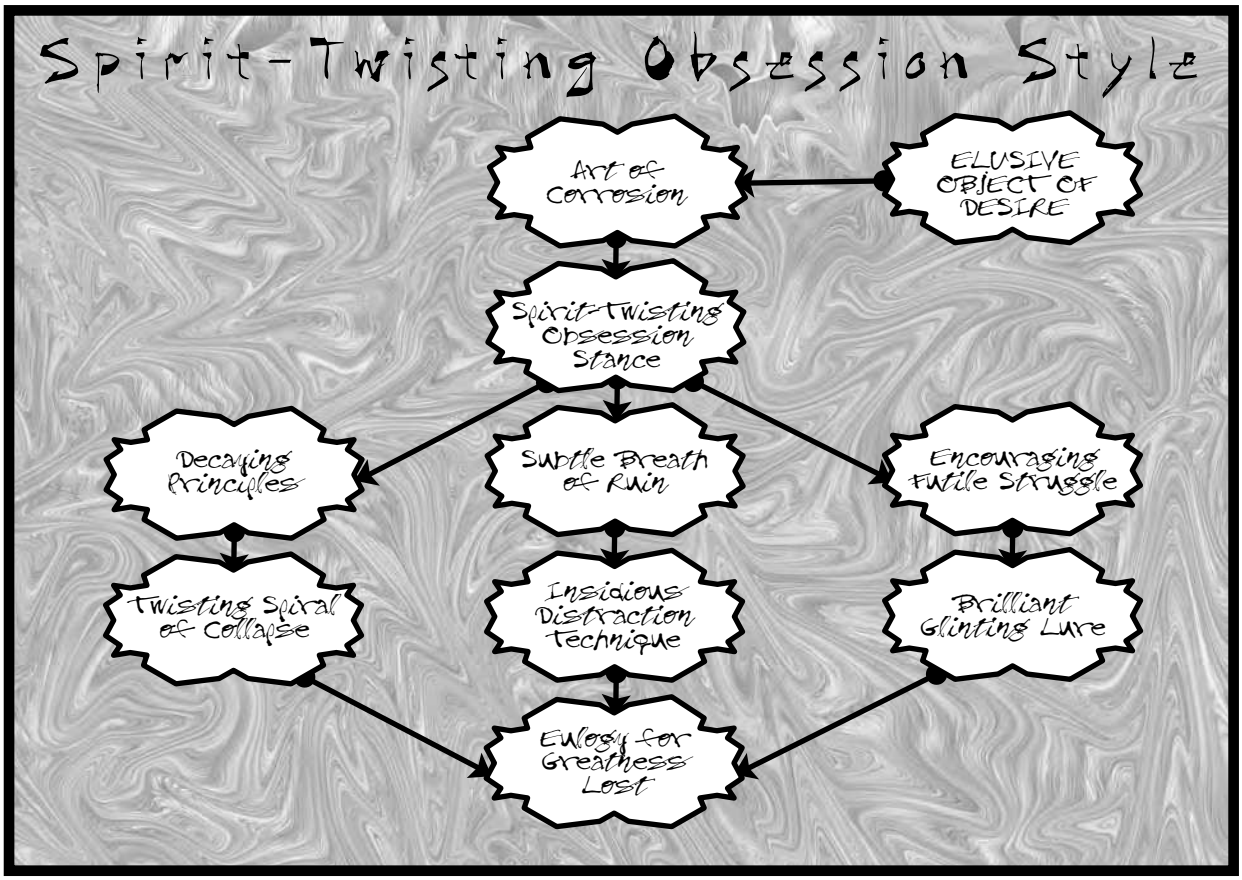
Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Elusive Object of Desire

The weave of shaped fate praises the target's Virtues. Those Virtues clad the target in an adamant armor of righteousness and give his every action a numinous glory. Yet, even adamant can crumble.

The raksha uses this Charm after the target's player declares a shaping or normal action but before the target's player rolls. The player rolls Conviction + Performance in a Cup-shaping attack against a difficulty equal to his target's Essence. If the roll succeeds, this Charm forces the target to channel the praised Virtue on the declared action. This Charm functions on actions inappropriate to the Virtue in question. It does not function if the target has no more temporary Willpower or has used all the available channels for that Virtue this story.

Spirit-Twisting Obsession Stance

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 2



Prerequisite Charms: Art of Corrosion

The raksha pours Essence into her Cup Grace. She becomes a living symbol of the corruption of self. She names a single opponent, who must be a participant in the current story. This Charm subtracts the raksha's permanent Essence from the targeted opponent's shaping dice pools, including defensive pools.

This is a Stance-type Charm. Characters cannot use more than one Stance-type Charm at a time.

Decaying Principles

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Twisting Obsession Stance

The raksha's corruption spreads. The target finds herself losing the principles she once held dear. The raksha makes a Cup-shaping attack. This Charm makes the attack undodgeable unless the victim channels Temperance into a dodge. It can be parried normally.

Twisting Spiral of Collapse

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Decaying Principles

The decline of the target's spirit hastens. This Charm increases the rate of the raksha's chosen shaping weapon by one. Multiple invocations of this Charm stack. Note that this Charm functions on entanglement weapons such as harnesses of razored dreams.

Subtle Breath of Ruin

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Twisting Obsession Stance

While the raksha's arts distract the target, the target's life — within the Wyld's false weave of fate — collapses. The raksha's player rolls Conviction + Larceny as a Cup-shaping attack. If the attack hits, this Charm nullifies the damage of the attack and, instead, increases the difficulty of all the target's shaping actions by the raksha's Essence for the remainder of the scene.

Insidious Distraction Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Subtle Breath of Ruin

The raksha's presence and practices makes concentration difficult for her victim. The raksha uses this Charm at the beginning of the scene. The Charm reduces the victim's ability to split her shaping action. The victim cannot split his shaping action into more actions than his Temperance. The victim receives only his Temperance in dodge or parry actions from a full dodge or full parry.

Encouraging Futile Struggle

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Twisting Obsession Stance

The target attempts to shut out the madness or passion that the raksha invokes and, failing, sinks further into the Entertainer's web. The raksha makes a Cup-shaping attack. If it is successful, this Charm reduces the target's shaping soak against only this attack by the target's Willpower.

Brilliant Glinting Lure

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Encouraging Futile Struggle

The raksha reshapes herself into the perfect object of obsession. This Charm adds her Performance in dice to her next Cup-shaping action, including reflexive shaping actions such as Art of Corrosion. The raksha cannot use this Charm to construct a dice pool from nothing.

Eulogy for Greatness Lost

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Twisting Spiral of Collapse, Insidious Distraction Technique, Brilliant Glinting Lure

The raksha stands triumphant over the crumbled ruins of the target's life. The raksha makes a Cup-shaping attack. This Charm transforms each post-soak damage die into a success.

Feeding Charms

Raksha use these Charms to feed on the thin substance of Creation. With these Charms, they can sustain themselves in a world without ready sources of gossamer and Wyld energy.

These Charms inflict a variant of ravishment on their victims. Creatures of Creation can heal from it as described earlier (see p. 141).

Ravishing the Created Form

Cost: 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Fair Folk in Creation devour the Willpower and Virtues of mortals to live. To use this Charm, a raksha touches a consenting Creation-born target, and her player rolls a feeding Grace as a Cup-shaping attack. Instead of the normal damage, this Charm reduces the target's permanent Willpower or the target's relevant Virtue. The raksha chooses which to reduce. The raksha can reduce the target's Trait by up to one dot per success, to a minimum of 0. Fair Folk devour the Willpower and Virtues so stolen. This does not increase the raksha's Traits, but this Charm lets the raksha recover 10 motes of temporary Essence for each Trait point the target loses.

This Charm is a work of glamour. It cannot feed from creatures whose Willpower + Essence exceeds the raksha's Willpower. Raksha cannot drain Exalted Virtues below the minimums imposed by the Great Curse.

Soul-Carving Artifice

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Ravishing the Created Form

The raksha can ravish others in Creation as in the Wyld. Soul-Carving Artifice lets them shape the Virtues of mortals to their needs and allows them to contest with one another in the thin and dreamless air of the Primordials' world. This Charm creates a daydream or vision shared by the raksha and a consenting target. This vision fills the



mind's eye of both raksha and target, imposing a one-die distraction penalty on normal dice actions. The raksha and the target can use shaping actions to change the vision as if it were a 10-waypoint space of the Middlemarches of the Wyld. Anything created in this daydream — such as new possessions or gossamer — fades entirely when the Charm's effects end.

This Charm is a work of glamour and does not affect characters with Wits + Essence greater than the raksha's Performance.

Devouring Wings of the Wyld

Cost: 5 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Soul-Carving Artifice

The shifting patterns of the raksha's wings draw in the soul of those who look upon them. The Charm gives the raksha access to the following ability. This ability affects normal actions rather than shaping actions.

Hypnotic Wings: The raksha must have wings to use this ability. When the raksha spreads her wings, every character who can see the wings suffers a +1 difficulty on all normal dice actions. If a Creation-born character's player botches a Virtue roll while his character is interacting with a raksha with hypnotic wings spread, the raksha can permanently and reflexively devour one dot of that target's Virtue, gaining 10 motes of Essence.

Raksha can purchase functional wings with Gossamer Wing Flight (see p. 203) or an artifact. Nonfunctional wings are available for any raksha who wishes them. This Charm is a work of glamour, but it affects the raksha rather than the witnesses, so seeing through it has no effect.

Heart-Stealing Kiss

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Ravishing the Created Form

The raksha ravishes one of the Creation-born by touch. The raksha can only use this Charm after touching the target with a normal dice action. This often requires a Dexterity + Brawl or Dexterity + Martial Arts roll. The raksha then feeds from the

target. This Charm functions as Ravishing the Created Form, save that the raksha gains 2 motes per drained Virtue or Willpower point and that the drained Virtues or Willpower heal at one dot per day.

This Charm is a work of glamour. It cannot be used to feed from creatures whose relevant Virtue + Essence exceeds the raksha's permanent Willpower. Raksha cannot drain Exalted Virtues below the minimums imposed by the Great Curse.

The Enchanted

Raksha Charms can lower any Creation-born character's Virtue or Willpower to 1. However, they can lower an Essence 1 Creation-born character's Virtues or Willpower to 0. Such victims are known as "the enchanted."

Characters with a Virtue rating of 0 cannot succeed at Virtue rolls without the use of Charms and cannot channel Virtues. In addition, they suffer the following additional effects.

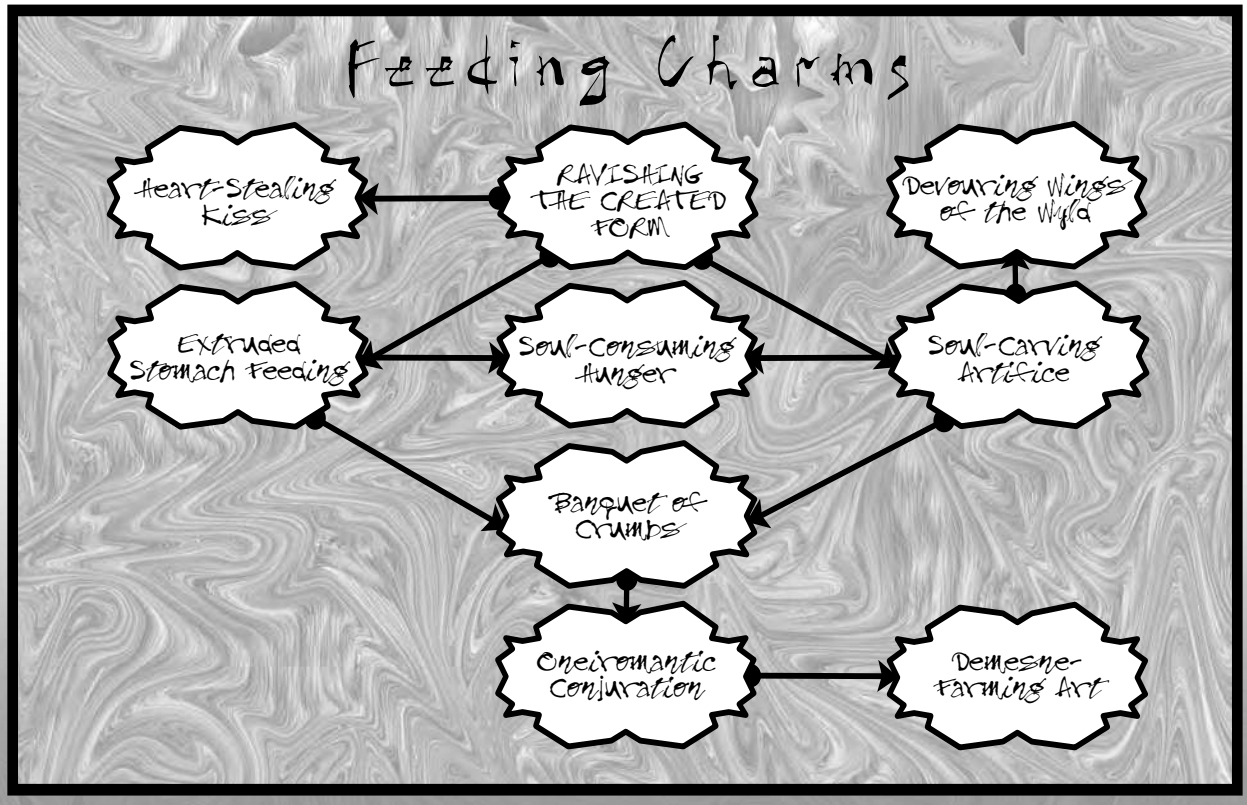
Compassion 0 characters find all other creatures alien. They suffer the Curse of Hubris, as defined on page 113 — a +2 difficulty penalty on all attempts to understand or influence others.

Conviction 0 characters have no stability. They are blind to the nature of their own existence, and so, a moment's whim can overwhelm the dedication of a lifetime. They suffer the Curse of Namelessness as defined on page 113 — forgetting their name, identity and Nature, adding 2 to the difficulty of Lore rolls, and increasing the difficulty of others' attempts to interrogate them by 2.

Temperance 0 characters have no sense of restraint. Their desires overwhelm them. They retain primitive ethical principles, but they cannot grasp why others' standards or abstract philosophical ideas should restrain them. They suffer the Curse of Alienation as defined on page 113 — a +2 penalty on attempts to influence or serve others.

Valor 0 characters have no faith in their own reality. Their own existence is nothing more than a transient dream, easily shattered by even the slightest threat. They suffer the Curse of Meekness as defined on page 113 — a two-die penalty on all actions.

Willpower 0 characters — the "dream-eaten" — cannot succeed at Willpower rolls or spend Willpower. In addition, they have no volition. Their direction comes from the most persuasive or commanding orders received.



Extruded Stomach Feeding

Cost: 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Ravishing the Created Form

The raksha inverts her Essence pattern and uses a Minor Grace to drink from her target. The raksha typically remains elegant to mortal eyes, but spirits, raksha and characters using effects such as All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight (see **Exalted**, p. 193) can see the raksha's spiritual "stomach" pour out her mouth and fix its fanged maw to the target's soul.

This Charm functions exactly as Ravishing the Created Form, save that the raksha can feed using any Grace.

Soul-Consuming Hunger

Cost: 1 Willpower, 1 health level, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Soul-Carving Artifice, Extruded Stomach Feeding

Gaping wide the four mouths of her Graces, the raksha swallows a consenting target's soul. The raksha's player rolls her character's Cup Grace (and Cup Grace only) as a Cup-shaping attack against a difficulty of the target's Essence. On a success, instead of normal damage, this Charm utterly annihilates the target. The raksha recovers 10 motes of Essence for each Virtue point or Willpower point the target possessed, to the limits of her normal Essence pool.

This Charm is a work of glamour. It cannot be used to feed from creatures whose Willpower + Essence exceeds the raksha's permanent Willpower.

Banquet of Crumbs

Cost: 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Soul-Carving Artifice, Extruded Stomach Feeding

The raksha can sup on the ambient Virtue of Creation, though they find no satiety in it. After exposure to strong, appropriate emotions, the raksha can invoke this Charm and roll a feeding Grace as a Cup-shaping action. This Charm recovers 1 mote of the raksha's Essence per success.

Oneiromantic Conjuration

Cost: 10 motes, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Banquet of Crumbs

The raksha can use a mortal's dream as a crucible, transforming motes into gossamer. The raksha must have access to a dreaming mortal to use Oneiromantic Conjuration. This Charm creates 1 gossamer.

Demesne-Farming Art

Cost: 10 motes, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Oneiromantic Conjuration

The raksha prunes the wild power of an uncapped Demesne, creating gossamer from the clippings. The raksha must visit an uncapped Demesne to use this technique. This Charm creates gossamer equal to the Demesne's rating. A given Demesne only offers gossamer once per story.

Addiction Charms

These Charms tap the addictive nature of the Wyld.

Shiftless Untamed Beauty

Cost: 8 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha invests herself with the chaotic majesty of the Wyld — often with its beauty, sometimes with its nightmarish horror but always with the raw seductive power of the primordial cauldron of dream. She is something new, something strange, something that transcends ordinary mortal concepts of enjoyable or fearful experiences.

This Charm makes the raksha's presence addictive. Players of Creation-born characters who interact with her must make a successful Willpower + Temperance roll against a difficulty of 2 once per scene, or their characters become addicted to her presence. The raksha receives one bonus success on normal Social dice actions when dealing with those addicted to her. In addition, after each full month apart from the raksha, players of addicts must make a successful Willpower roll, or their characters feel drawn to return. Those drawn to return cannot regain

Willpower (save through stunts and Charms) until they spend time with the raksha again. An addict's player must succeed at three consecutive Willpower rolls for his character to break the addiction.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect characters with Temperance + Essence greater than the raksha's Cup.

Compelling Presence

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Shiftless Untamed Beauty

The raksha shapes herself to match her target's personal dreams and nightmares. This Charm instantly addicts the target, as with Shiftless Untamed Beauty, unless the target's player can successfully roll Willpower + Temperance against a difficulty of the raksha's Essence. Further, characters addicted by means of this Charm cannot attack the raksha without spending an extra Willpower point in each turn in which the addict wishes to take hostile action. The raksha can only use this power against a given target once per turn.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect characters with Temperance + Essence greater than the raksha's Cup.

Maddening Summons

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

A Fair One can call addicted or formerly addicted characters to his side. The raksha chooses a target who has spent time addicted to the raksha and invokes this Charm. The raksha's player rolls Conviction + Performance as a Cup-shaping action against a difficulty of the target's Essence. On a success, this Charm fills the dreams of the target with images of the raksha, the raksha's location and his desire for the target to return. Current addicts suffer a derangement of the raksha's choice (delusions, mood swings or obsession) until they break their addiction or return to the raksha's side. Former addicts notice the dreams but can ignore them without ill effect.

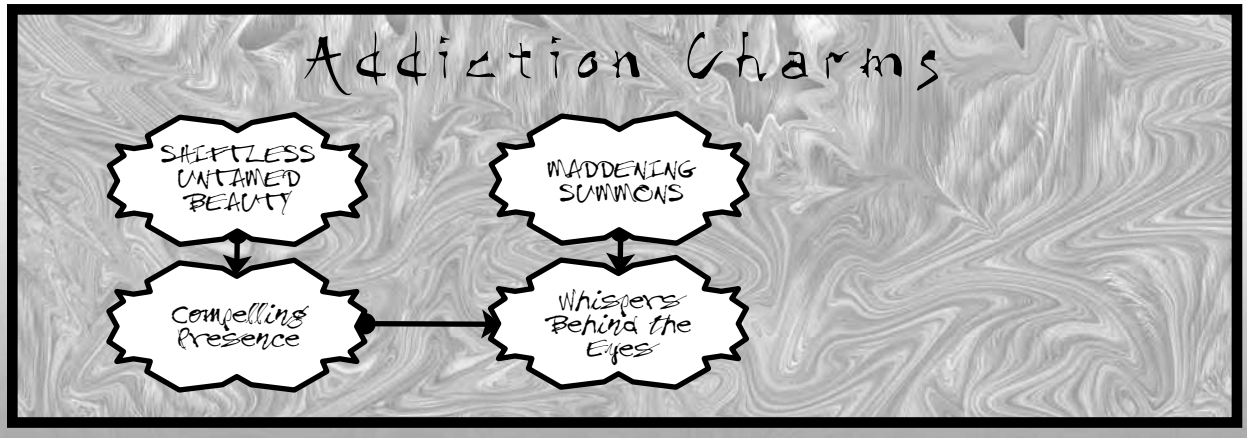
This Charm is a work of glamour. It does not affect characters with Temperance + Essence greater than the raksha's Performance. It only affects characters who dream and whose dreams are not spoken for by some other effect.

Whispers Behind the Eyes

Cost: 3 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Compelling Presence, Maddening Summons

Those addicted to the Fair Folk sometimes hear strange mad whispers, the patina of Wyld taint on their minds resonating with the raksha's will. The raksha can use this Charm and a Cup-shaping action to open a channel to an addict's mind, through which — for the rest of the story — she can speak.

This Charm is a work of glamour. It does not affect characters with Temperance + Essence greater than the raksha's Performance.



World-Shaping Charms

These Charms are the core Charms for glamour sorcery (see pp. 205-207). They draw on the power of the Cup to subvert the laws of Creation.

Gladdening Visage

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha makes herself more appealing to the creatures of Creation. If she looks essentially human, this Charm makes others identify her as human. If she does not, they recognize her as a natural and beneficent little god.

This Charm is a work of glamour and has no effect on creatures with Perception + Essence greater than the raksha's Performance.

Adored by All the Worlds

Cost: 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Gladdening Visage

The raksha weaves a fate of serenity, loyalty and pleasure. He thereby attracts tangible support in the form of allies and followers. The raksha's player rolls Conviction + Performance as a Cup-shaping action. This Charm gives the raksha one temporary dot of Allies or Followers per success, to a maximum of his Essence. The raksha can divide successes between Allies and Followers as he chooses. The raksha does not choose his allies or followers, but they are always appropriate to the situation in which he finds himself.

This Charm is a work of glamour and cannot attract allies or followers whose Perception + Essence exceeds the raksha's Performance.

Abandoned by All Creatures Curse

Cost: 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Gladdening Visage

The raksha weaves fates of confusion and dissent, distancing a creature of Creation from his supporters. The raksha interacts with the target, and then, her player rolls Conviction + Larceny as a Cup-shaping action. This Charm temporarily reduces the target's Allies, Followers or Mentor by one dot per success. The raksha can divide successes between the Backgrounds as she chooses. Followers, allies and mentors drift away — distracted, occupied, angry, kidnaped or otherwise unable to come to the character's aid.

This is a work of glamour. It cannot drive away creatures whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Stealth. If the target has Wits + Essence exceeding the raksha's Stealth, the target can use stunts or Charms to hunt down lost associates and convince them that their anger or preoccupation is illusory.

Spite-Summoning Malediction

Cost: 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Staff: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Gladdening Visage

The raksha wields rumors, lies and the natural human desire to blame others for their troubles against an enemy. The raksha interacts with the target, and then, her player rolls Manipulation + Socialize as a Staff-shaping action. This Charm attracts the enmity of powerful forces to the target. Treat this as an Enemy Flaw (see the **Exalted Players Guide**, p. 37) or reversed Allies Background of a level equal to the number of successes rolled — the target attracts one meaningful enemy per success or a smaller number of deadlier foes.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it cannot attract hostile action from creatures whose Wits + Essence exceed the raksha's Socialize. If the target has Wits + Essence exceeding the raksha's Socialize, the target can use stunts or Charms to help his new enemies realize that they have no true quarrel.

This is a Staff-shaping Charm.

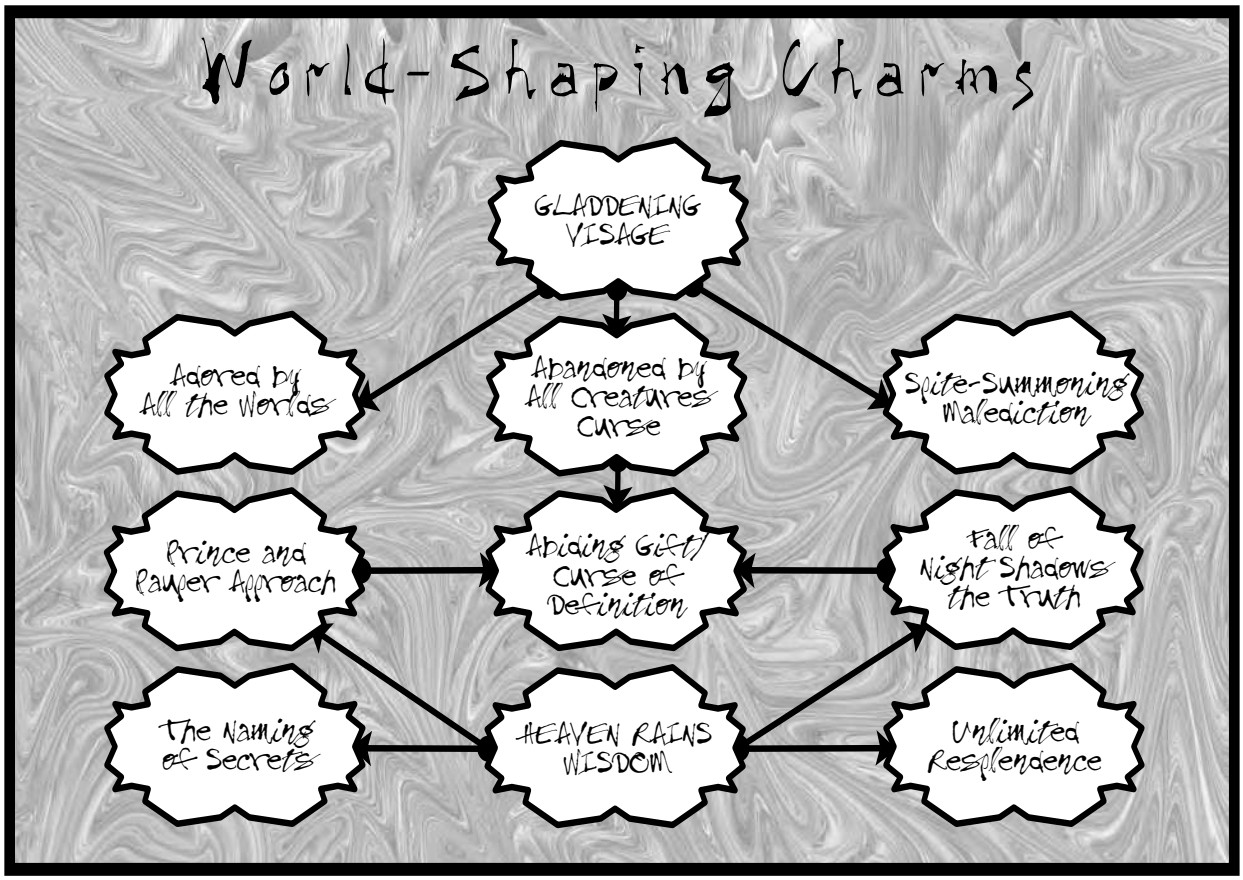
Heaven Rains Wisdom

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha makes the mysteries of Creation apparent. This Charm removes the difficulty penalty (see p. 112) for using Lore or Occult to understand the things of Creation, replacing it with a bonus success on Lore and Occult rolls. It does not affect the rolls to design or modify geomantic architecture.

The Naming of Secrets

Cost: 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven Rains Wisdom



The raksha unravels the fates of secrets, and Creation speaks its truths to her. The raksha's player rolls Conviction + Investigation as a Cup-shaping action. This Charm gives the raksha one temporary dot of Contacts per success, to a maximum of the raksha's Essence, for a cost of 1 gossamer each. The raksha does not choose the major contacts, but they are always appropriate for the situation in which she finds herself.

Fall of Night Shadows the Truth

Cost: 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven Rains Wisdom

The raksha deepens mysteries. The raksha interacts with a situation or thing that she wishes to veil in secrecy. Then, her player must succeed on a Cup-shaping roll using Conviction + Stealth. This Charm adds one to the difficulty of Contacts or Connections rolls to discover more about the thing or situation veiled. It adds the raksha's successes to the difficulty of Investigation, Lore, Occult and Socialize rolls to discover more.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect creatures whose Intelligence + Essence exceeds the raksha's Stealth.

Unlimited Resplendence

Cost: 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven Rains Wisdom

The raksha weaves from secrets and serenity the fates of power. The raksha's player rolls Conviction + Performance as a Cup-shaping action. This Charm gives the raksha one temporary dot of Influence or Backing per success, to a maximum of the raksha's Essence. The raksha can divide successes between Influence and Backing as she chooses. The raksha can choose general regional influence or influence within a specific organization. Storytellers familiar with the Connections Background (see **Exalted: The Dragon-Blooded**, pp. 159-160) can treat specific Influence as Connections.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and the new Backgrounds give the raksha no sway over characters whose Perception + Essence exceeds the raksha's Performance.

Prince and Pauper Approach

Cost: 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Staff: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven Rains Wisdom

The raksha shatters a mortal's influence, making the victim's power ring subtly false to all those the victim would impress. The raksha interacts with the target, and her player rolls Manipulation + Socialize as a Staff-shaping action. If she succeeds, this Charm increases the difficulty of all Social rolls by 2 when the target attempts to make use of influence-related Backgrounds such as Influence, Backing and Connections.

This Charm is a work of glamour. It has no effect when the target interacts with someone whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Socialize.

This is a Staff-shaping Charm.

Abiding Gift

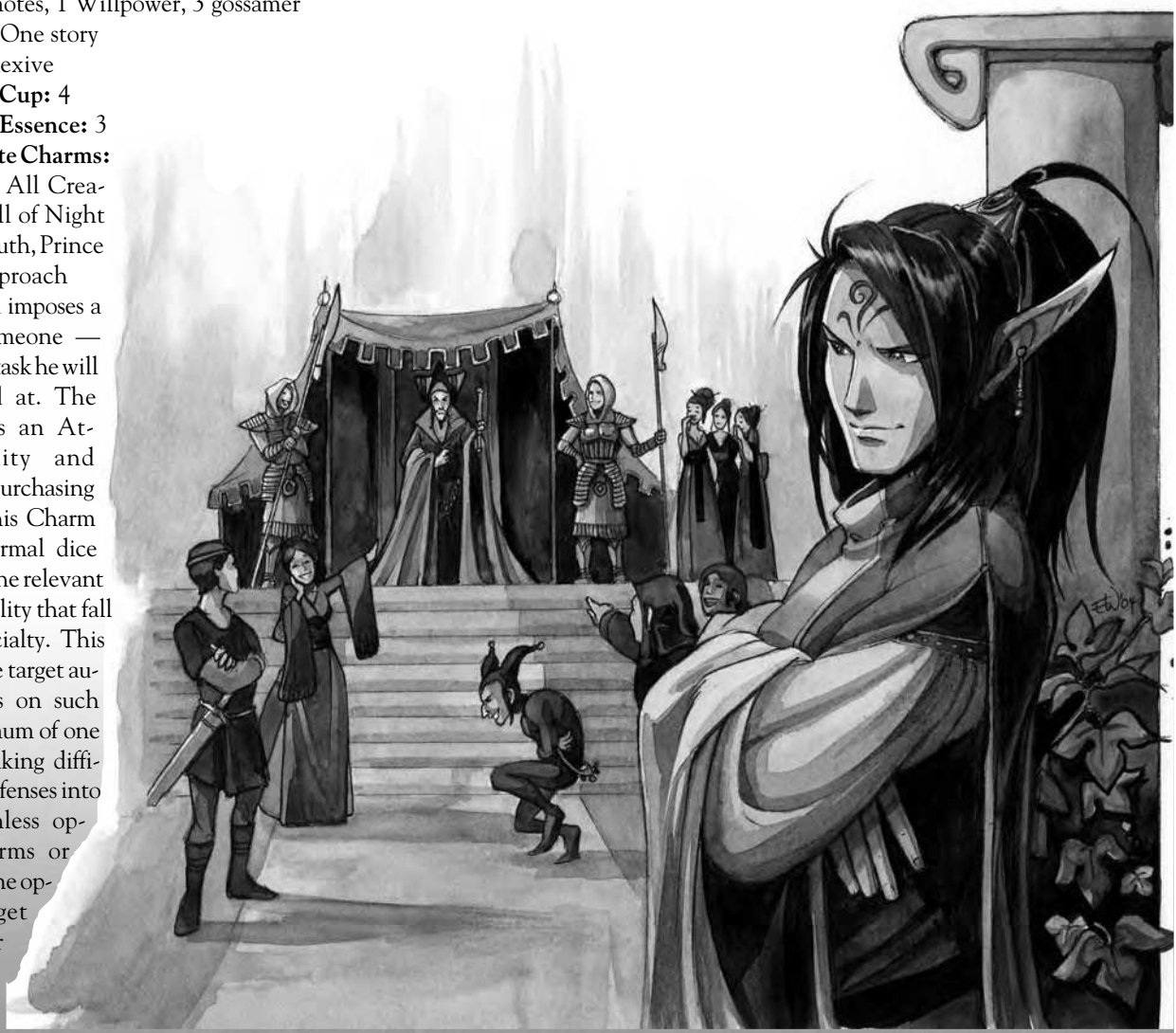
Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Abandoned by All Creatures Curse, Fall of Night Shadows the Truth, Prince and Pauper Approach

The raksha imposes a blessing on someone — some mundane task he will always succeed at. The raksha chooses an Attribute, Ability and specialty when purchasing this Charm. This Charm only affects normal dice actions rolling the relevant Attribute + Ability that fall under that specialty. This Charm gives the target automatic success on such rolls — a minimum of one success, after taking difficulty and any defenses into account — unless opposed by Charms or stunts. If someone opposes the target with Charms or stunts, Abiding Gift does not give automatic success. It gives two bonus successes on the roll instead.

Curse of Definition

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 5 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Abandoned by All Creatures Curse, Fall of Night Shadows the Truth, Prince and Pauper Approach

The raksha imposes a curse on someone — some mundane task he will always fail at. This can include use of Abilities or have a more mundane definition such as "waking up" or "drinking water." The raksha chooses an Attribute, Ability and specialty when purchasing this Charm. This Charm only affects normal dice actions rolling the relevant Attribute + Ability that fall under that specialty. This Charm ensures that the victim's player automatically fails such rolls unless



the victim uses a Charm or a stunt. If he uses a Charm or a stunt, this Charm imposes a +2 difficulty penalty instead of failure.

This Charm is a work of glamour. It has no effect on creatures whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Stealth.

Virtue-Shaping Charms

These Charms, also useful for glamour sorcery, use the power of the Cup to manipulate Virtues, Graces and the amount of shaping damage a raksha can endure.

Unsightly Rigor Approach

Cost: 5 motes per scene, 0 gossamer
Duration: Varies
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha bolsters one of her Virtues or Graces with artificial rigor. Her player rolls the raksha's Conviction + Medicine in a Cup-shaping action, temporarily improving that Virtue or Grace by one for each success received. The raksha cannot add more than her Essence to a Virtue or Grace with any combination of Charms. This Charm lasts until the raksha's next shaping action, but the raksha can maintain this Charm for additional scenes by spending 5 motes at the beginning of each scene.

Wyld Prince Resilience

Cost: 1 mutation point
Duration: Instant
Type: Special
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Unsightly Rigor Approach

Raksha can shape themselves to better resist shaping damage. Each purchase of this Charm adds two health levels to all of the raksha's shaping damage tracks, and players can purchase this Charm a number of times equal to the raksha's Cup.

Manacles of Virtue

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Unsightly Rigor Approach

The raksha imposes an artificially heightened Virtue on some other character. The raksha chooses a Virtue. She then chooses a target, with whom she must have interacted this scene. She invokes this Charm, and her player rolls Conviction + Medicine in a Cup-shaping action. This adds one dot to the target's Virtue for each success. The Fair Folk cannot improve a target's Virtues by more than the target's Essence with any combination of effects.

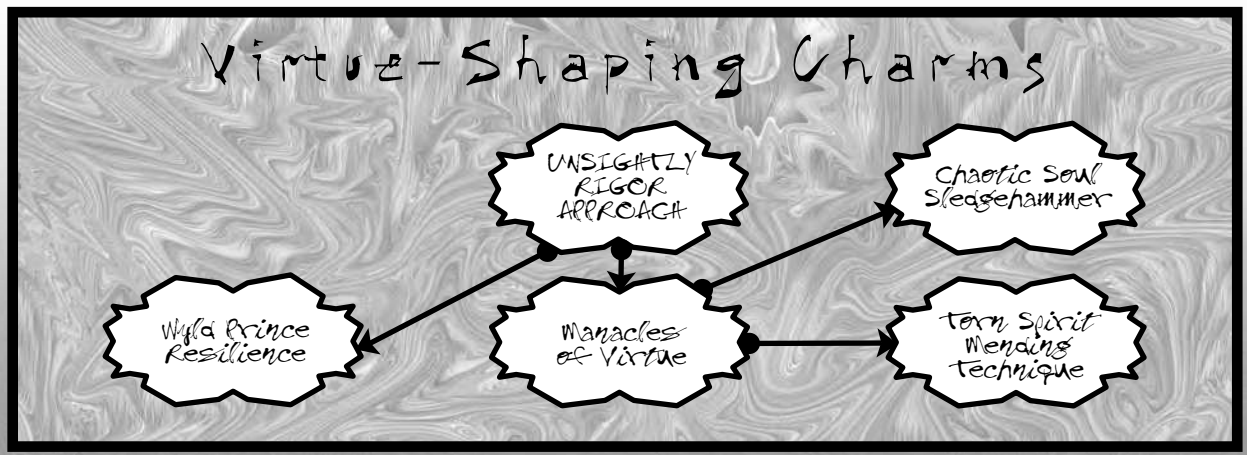
This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect characters whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Medicine. Raksha cannot feed off these artificial Virtues.

Chaotic Soul Sledgehammer

Cost: 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Manacles of Virtue

The raksha strikes a sledgehammer blow to another creature's Essence pattern, damaging the roots of one of the four Virtues. The raksha names a Virtue, and his player rolls a Cup-shaping attack against a difficulty of the target's Essence. If it succeeds, the target instantly loses one channel of that Virtue. For the rest of the story, the target's rolls for that Virtue are at +1 difficulty.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect characters whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Medicine.



Torn Spirit Mending Technique

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Cup: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Manacles of Virtue

Snipping and tugging at a wounded target's Essence, the raksha redresses the effects of ravishment. This Charm can restore damaged Virtues and Willpower to their previous maximum or remove a permanent ravishment (see p. 141).

To power its work, this Charm utterly consumes a glamour sorcery spell (see pp. 205-207) that the raksha owns. Used to cure a character's ravishment, the spell must have Artifact level equal to or above the target's Cup.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect Creation-born characters whose wounded Trait + Essence exceeds the raksha's Willpower.

Nirvishesha, the Ring

The shinma Nirvishesha defines identity. She is the heartless machine god of the Wyld, the incarnation of process and the cold order that sets itself on the chaos to make the Wyld differ from the Void. To speak the name of her aspects is to invite extinction, for the creator of self-awareness herself has none, and the names that suggest to her her own existence are nagging, painful impossibilities in the egoless calculation of her life. Thus, do not speak the name Sakshin, who is the witness; Savikalpa, the seed of ecstasy; Samavartana, the snake returning home; Ahamkara, the smith of selves; Parusha, the cosmic man; or Sayujya, the great union of spirits. These names are killing words.

Ring Combat Charms

The raksha use these Charms to improve their Ring-shaping actions and attacks.

Flesh-Carved World

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character unwraps her spirit and imposes its order on the world. The law of the self becomes the law of the cosmos. This Charm adds one die to a Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack for each mote spent.

Shuddering Wyld Inference

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Flesh-Carved World

The self and the world are one, and patterns of motion in the Wyld are reflected in waves of change rippling and scraping against the raksha's Essence. This Charm lets the raksha make a blind ranged Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack without penalty. This Charm is very important for attacking individuals on distant waypoints.

Waypoint Knife

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Shuddering Wyld Inference

The raksha forms a knife of Essence and dream and, with it, cuts a waypoint out of the Wyld. The raksha spends the motes for this Charm and targets an unoccupied waypoint within the maximum range of his shaping weapon, and his player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping attack. On a success, he swallows that waypoint in the substance of the Wyld. The fabric of space compresses. For the rest of the story, everyone who enters that waypoint can and must immediately move on to another without spending movement.

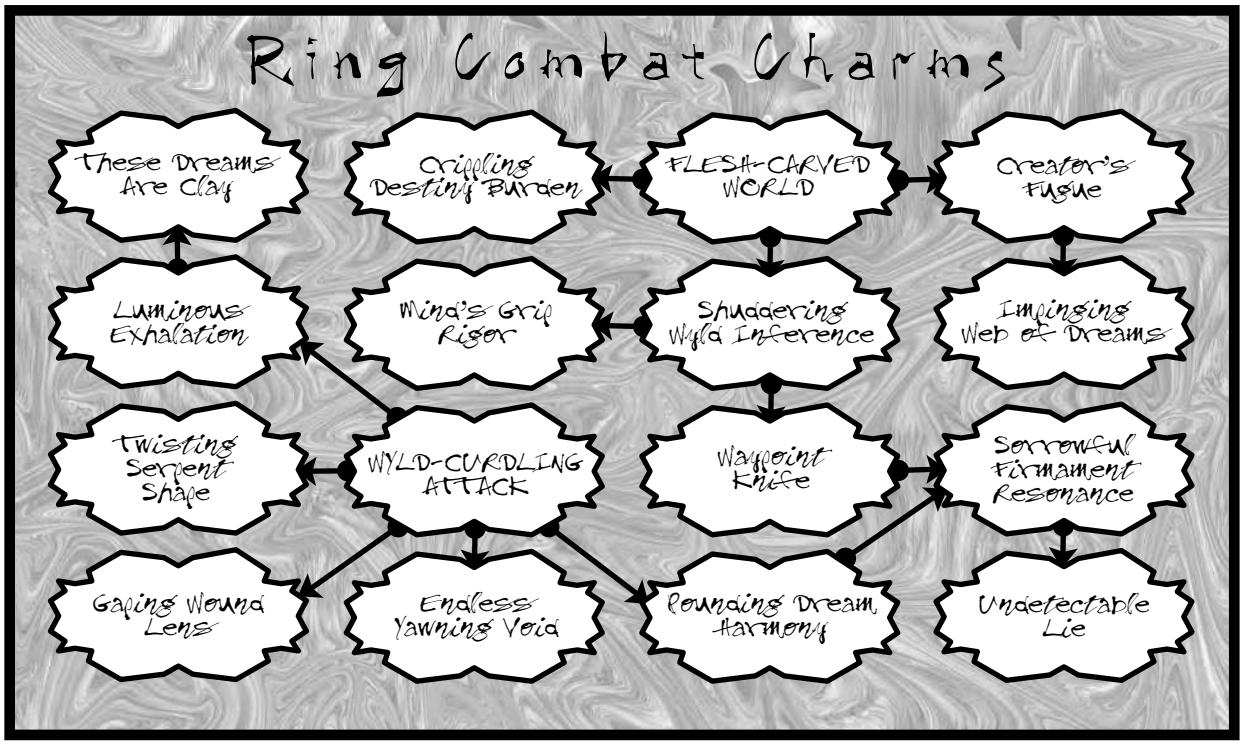
Mind's Grip Rigor

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Shuddering Wyld Inference

The raksha forces principle on the Wyld, her mind locking the bucking, wrestling tides of chaos in an iron grip of will. She can take a Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping action with complete certainty of success. This Charm gives two bonus successes on noncombat Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping actions. It adds six bonus successes to an attack, but halves extra successes for the purposes of computing damage.

Creator's Fugue

Cost: 3 motes per extra attack
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 1



Prerequisite Charms: Flesh-Carved World

In a mad fugue of creation, the raksha dreams principle upon principle into the shifting void. On his initiative, before taking an attack action, the raksha invokes this Charm and declares the desired number of extra attacks. This Charm gives one extra Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack for each 3 motes spent, up to a maximum number of extra attacks equal to the raksha's permanent Essence.

Impinging Web of Dream

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Creator's Fugue

Weaving the world in an Essence and gossamer-fueled trance, the raksha binds her target in a seething web of shape. The soft and yielding substance of the Wyld becomes a rigid net. This Charm gives the raksha a number of extra Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attacks equal to her Essence. She must make all of her attacks against the same target.

Crippling Destiny Burden

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Flesh-Carved World

To resist the raw physical power of the martial raksha, Workers and Diplomats often write destinies for the Warriors into the fabric of their created worlds. The burden of such a destiny and its expectations weighs on the target's spirit, distracting him from the victory conditions of the shaping contest. The character makes a Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack, from a maximum distance of one waypoint, his player rolling damage normally. For each level of damage this attack inflicts, this Charm inflicts a -1 environmental penalty on all the target's Sword-shaping actions until the end of the story.

Wyld-Curdling Attack

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha's shaping congeals the Wyld, stiffening it into a horrid trap of form. This Charm adds dice equal to the raksha's Essence to the damage of a successful Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack.

Endless Yawning Void

Cost: 1 mote per 2 health levels damage
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Curdling Attack

Fair Folk who use this Charm surround their Essence in a coruscating aura of time. Every raksha within 20 waypoints is instantly aware of this Charm's use as the cold touch of causality and rigor rasps against their Hearts. The target finds himself wrapped in layers of dream and the inevitable progression of events, the march of time escorting him inevitably toward his doom or trapping him in an eternity of repetition. This Charm adds two dice to the shaping dice pool for a Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping action. In addition, if that action is a shaping attack, this Charm adds two dice to the damage for each mote spent, and the raksha can spend up to his permanent Essence in motes.

This Charm has a minimum cost of 1 mote.

Luminous Exhalation

Cost: 1 mote per attack
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Curdling Attack

The weakness of ranged Ring-shaping attacks is their dependence on ammunition. This Charm lets the raksha exhale a fine mist of Essence that Ring-shaping weapons can use as gossamer. Each use allows a single Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack without the need for gossamer ammunition.

Twisting Serpent Shape

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Curdling Attack

The raksha curls the local weave of fate in on itself, building a twisting world of circular reasoning and self-justifying propositions that, with the raw writhing vitality of a living thing, shapes itself to ensure its continued existence. The Essence of the raksha's shaping weapon and the Essence of the world are mirrors of one another.

This Charm allows the raksha to make a single Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack without gossamer ammunition. This attack uses the accuracy of his readied shaping weapon, which must have a nonzero waypoint range. The base damage of the attack is the raksha's Perception + 10, and the range of the attack is 10 waypoints' distance.

Gaping Wound Lens

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Curdling Attack

The raksha rips open his Essence pattern, using the bleeding hollow this forms as a lens. This lens has accuracy and rate equal to the raksha's permanent Essence and a range of 10 waypoints.

The raksha can use his gaping wound lens to make either Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attacks. These have a base damage of Perception + Essence or Charisma + Essence, respectively. This lens has no Perception or Charisma maximum.

Pounding Dream Harmony

Cost: 1 mote per soak reduction
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Curdling Attack

The raksha speaks the law of the world not in words, but in chorus. She sets forth not one, but many principles in subtle harmony and arrangement. The raksha spends the motes for this Charm and makes a Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack. If this attack succeeds, this Charm lets her ignore up to one point of the enemy's soak for each mote spent.

Sorrowful Firmament Resonance

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Waypoint Knife, Pounding Dream Harmony

Singing the sonorous lament of Nirvishesha's Sayujya aspect, the raksha sinks her will into the substrata of the Wyld. She makes a Ring-shaping or Staff-shaping attack against a target no more than three waypoints away. There is no escape from this attack — parrying is possible with stunts and Charms, but dodging is impossible. Every local waypoint and every raksha's spirit, within a 10 waypoints' distance, shivers with her song.

Undetectable Lie

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower, 3 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Staff: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Sorrowful Firmament Resonance

The raksha defines the law of the world in such compelling terms that not even the Creation-born can refuse belief. Her player rolls Manipulation + Socialize as a Staff-shaping attack. She converts the post-soak damage dice into automatic successes.

Used against creatures with no Staff Grace, this Charm functions as a work of glamour. The target accepts any one statement of the raksha's as absolute truth. It takes one scene before the target is receptive to contradictory evidence, and even then, most targets remember it as a distortion in the world rather than their senses — "that time the faerie mutated the world so that the Unconquered Sun had turned his back on me" rather than "that time he made me believe myself a mortal again." This power does not work on targets whose Wits + Essence is greater than the raksha's Manipulation.

This is a Staff-shaping Charm.

These Dreams Are Clay

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Luminous Exhalation

The craft of the Workers brings forth gossamer from the Wyld. Massaging the unformed shapeless world with his hands, a raksha in the Middlemarches or deeper regions of the Wyld can create 1 gossamer from Essence. Gossamer created by this Charm is unstable and fades at the end of the next scene.

All-Consuming God-Monster Style

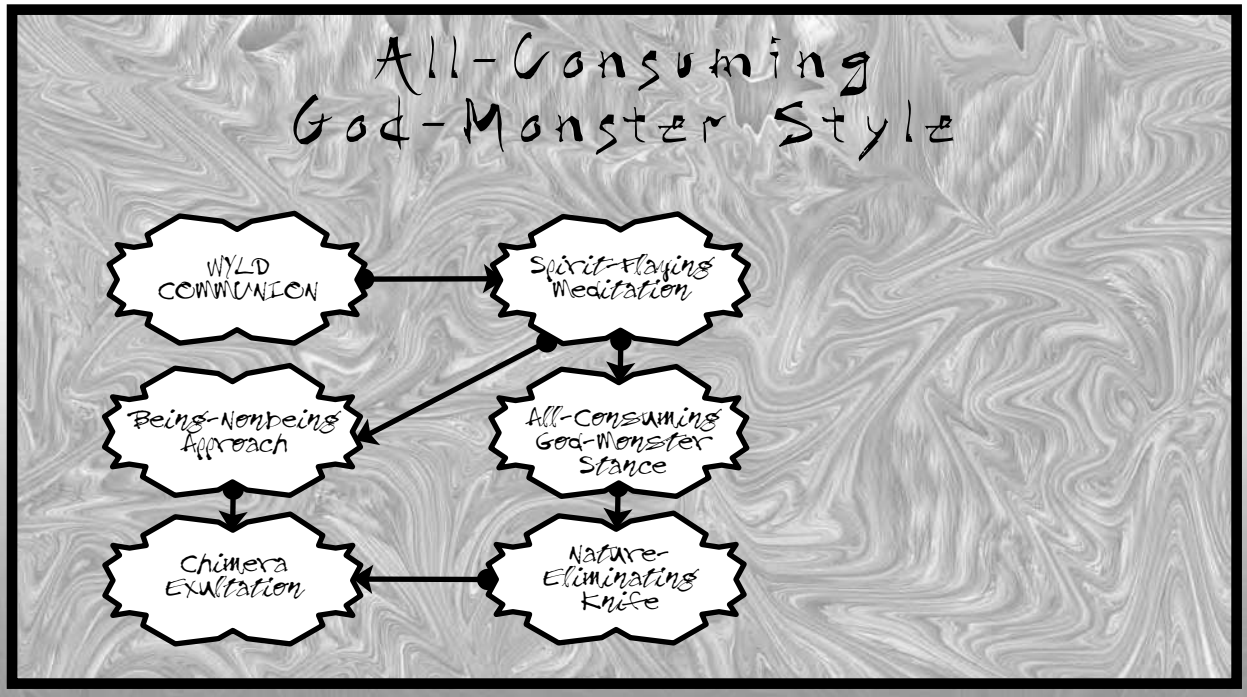
This shaping art tells stories of the rise of a great architect and dreamer, that some might consider a shinma, a Primordial or a god. In the course of the story, he organizes the world in harmony under him, making of his self and his slaves an infinite world of potential as great in its fashion as Creation, Oblivion or the Wyld. The practitioners of this style dream grandly, though their dreams — as yet — are simply metaphysical stories formed from Essence and gossamer and not a true reordering of the world.

The patterns of this shaping art have been broken by the unshaped, who use it frequently enough to corrode its underlying nature. Although it features a Stance-type Charm, Storytellers should consider it parallel to a process of metastasis rather than a martial art.

Wyld Communion

Cost: 5 motes, 0 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha meditates on the Wyld, dredging forth and harmonizing with the strange Essence of the principles that gave the Wyld birth. This Charm improves all her



stunts by one die. (For example, a one-die stunt would add two dice to her pool.) This functions only in the Wyld.

Spirit-Flaying Meditation

Cost: 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wyld Communion

Striving for harmony with a greater principle, the raksha cuts a Charm or Trait out of her own soul. This Charm removes one of the raksha's Charms from the character sheet or lowers one of her own Traits by one. Raksha who lose a Charm also lose any permanent mutations gained through purchase of that Charm. The raksha receives no other compensation for the loss.

Being-Nonbeing Approach

Cost: 1 mote, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Flaying Meditation

The raksha elides herself from the shaped world, becoming undirected immanent power inherent in the nature of existence. The raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Martial Arts. On a success, this Charm increases the difficulty of targeting her with shaping actions by one. The Creation-born can still make out her shadowy form in some specific location within the world, but successful use of this Charm also adds her highest feeding Virtue in dice to normal Stealth dice actions unless those attempting to see her have All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight or some other form of Essence sense.

All-Consuming God-Monster Stance

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Flaying Meditation

The raksha strives for transcendence. She makes herself a channel for the deepest madness of the Wyld. She fills her mind and spirit with the mad purity of the





Sample God-Monster Body Gifts

Advaita Harmony:

The raksha escapes the duality of Virtues and transcends mortal principles, being simultaneously compassionate and cruel, dedicated and purposeless, valiant and withdrawn, temperate and rash. She divides three extra dots among her Virtues when in her God-Monster Body and can violate her Virtues without spending Willpower. She must assign the Virtue points when taking this gift.

Calling Upon the Dragon's Ire:

The raksha can use this Charm while an Assumption-type Charm is active, and vice versa. This gift is necessary for any raksha with an Assumption-type mutation who wishes to use All-Consuming God-Monster Stance.

Chain-Defying Art:

The raksha heals one level of shaping damage each scene.

Untouchable Infinite Spirit:

Prerequisite: Chain-Defying Art

Choose one shaping damage track when buying this Charm. The raksha heals all shaping damage of that type, and one point of each other shaping damage type, at the end of each scene. This replaces the benefit of Chain-Defying Art.

Fearsome Radiance:

The primal power of the raksha's God-Monster Body terrifies others. Those with Valor less than the character's Essence are at +1 difficulty when attacking or defending against the raksha with shaping or normal actions.

World-Devourer's Shadow:

Prerequisite: Fearsome Radiance

Even the raksha cower at the God-Monster's passage. The players of all beings possessing less Essence than the character must make a successful Valor roll at difficulty 1 once per scene for their characters to attack the raksha with either a shaping or normal attack. They suffer the penalty for Fearsome Radiance even should they succeed.

Graces of the Wyld:

The raksha does not suffer from the Curses of Alienation, Hubris, Namelessness or Meekness while in God-Monster form.

Heart-Stopping Numinous Power:

The embodiment of power and principle, the raksha improves her effective Essence by 2 when in her God-Monster form.

Lumbering Feet of God:

The raksha's God-Monster Body exists on a scale atypical for the Wyld. She can journey three waypoints in a scene or sprint for six.

Terrible Shaping Suasion:

The raksha's player adds two dice to all shaping rolls while the character's in God-Monster form.

Unshapeable Transcendent Essence:

This gift bolsters the raksha against shaping. She adds her Essence to her shaping soak.

Miasma of Principle:

Prerequisite: Unshapeable Transcendent Essence

The God-Monster Body casts off a horrid miasma of its nature. The air of her own transcendent principles increases the raksha's shaping soak, natural lethal soak and natural bashing soak by her Essence. This extra soak is cumulative with the benefits of Unshapeable Transcendent Essence.

firmament of existence. She hammers herself into a shape defined by imperatives and laws that predate reason and existence, touching that stark Essence of the Wyld that is chaos beyond even the minds of the raksha.

There is a law before the laws of shaping. There is a way before the way of the courts of the Wyld. The Primordials know it, but they do not speak of it. The shinma know it, but they do not speak at all. This Charm is but the first step of a long path of initiation, but for a time, the raksha becomes an unholy god.

This Charm transforms the raksha's Essence, giving her what the Fair Folk call a "God-Monster Body."

The first time the character purchases this Charm, she receives three gifts, which must be chosen immediately

after the character purchases this Charm. Subsequent purchases of this Charm provide two gifts per purchase. These gifts exist only when this Charm is in force. Raksha can only purchase this Charm once, but unshaped can buy it a number of times equal to half their Essence.

Gifts represent the special powers of the God-Monster Body. Many gifts have prerequisite gifts, and a character cannot take a gift without first taking all of its prerequisites. Raksha cannot purchase a given gift more than once. Sample gifts are listed in the accompanying box.

This Charm is specifically incompatible with Assumption-type Charms. If the raksha wishes to use both simultaneously, she must take the gift Calling Upon the Dragon's Ire.

This is a Stance-type Charm. Characters cannot use more than one Stance-type Charm at a time.

Nature-Eliminating Knife

Cost: 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: All-Consuming God-Monster Stance

This Charm utterly destroys one of its user's own Graces, no matter in whose hands it dwells. Invoking this Charm permanently adds the "Graces of the Wyld" gift to the raksha's God-Monster Body or, if the raksha's God-Monster Body already has this gift, adds any other gift of the raksha's choice.

Chimera Exultation

Cost: 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Being-Nonbeing Approach, Nature-Eliminating Knife

Assuming a God-Monster Body, the raksha destroys her Heart Grace and vanishes in a flare of pearlescent light.

This Charm utterly destroys the raksha who uses it, driving the radiance of the raksha's will and desire into the substrata of the Wyld. This Charm is a plot device, having such limited or limitless effects as the Storyteller desires.

Body-Strengthening Charms

These Charms are defensive shapings, bolstering raksha in their integrity of self when dealing with Creation or the Creation-born.

Knife-Hand Dream

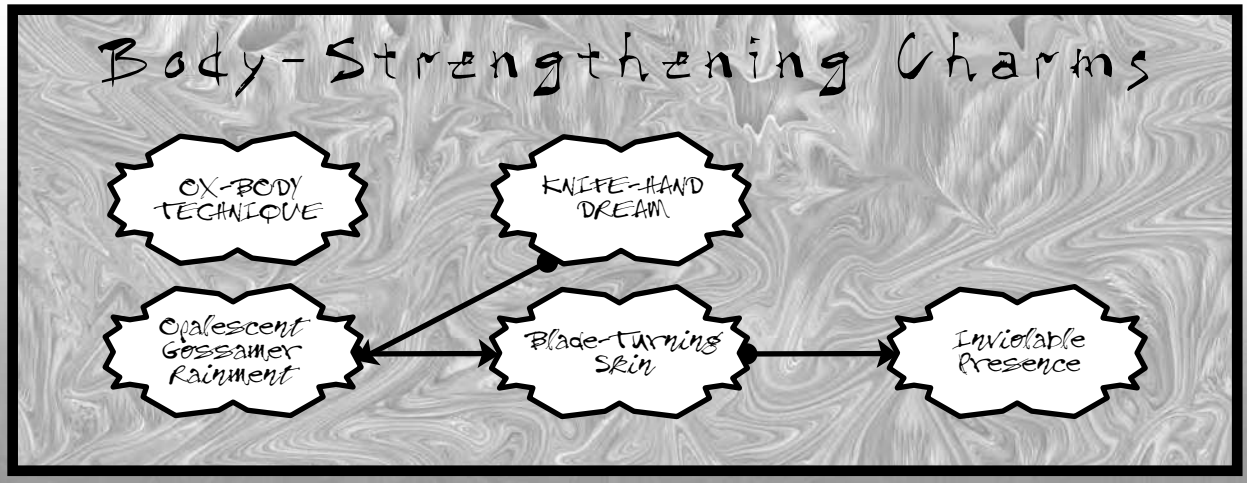
Cost: 1 mote, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha reinforces her body with elemental Essence. This Charm allows her to do lethal damage barehanded. She can also parry lethal blows barehanded as if wielding a weapon.

Opalescent Gossamer Raiment

Cost: 1 mote, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Knife-Hand Dream

The raksha strengthens the dream of his flesh against the weapons of Creation. In firelight, his skin glimmers with the faintest opalescent sheen, and a difficulty 3 Perception + Occult roll identifies this as a mark of the raksha. This Charm adds one to his natural bashing soak and one to his natural lethal soak.



Blade-Turning Skin

Cost: 1 mote, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Opalescent Gossamer Raiment

The raksha's soft and delicate skin casts off the blades of her enemies. In firelight or moonlight, its peculiar and beautiful highlights reveal her as a raksha to those characters whose players make a successful difficulty 5 Perception + Occult roll. This Charm adds two to her natural bashing soak and two to her natural lethal soak. The raksha can benefit from this Charm and its prerequisites simultaneously.

Inviolable Presence

Cost: 1 mote, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Blade-Turning Skin

The thinnest layer of dream, like ice or clear adamant, protects the raksha from others' touch. Any who see the character can recognize him as a raksha. This Charm adds four to his natural bashing soak and four to his natural lethal soak. The raksha can benefit from this Charm and its prerequisites simultaneously.

Ox-Body Technique

Cost: Special
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Raksha can shape themselves for additional resilience, purchasing additional health levels as if they were a Charm. Each Ox-Body Technique Charm can provide one of the following, at the player's option, chosen at the time of purchase:

• One -0 health level. This costs 1 gossamer per story to activate.

• One -1 and -2 health level. These cost 1 gossamer per story to activate.

• One -2 health level. This is permanent and has no gossamer or mutation cost.

Players can purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the raksha's Ring. Additional health levels for use in shaping combat are available through Wyld Prince Resilience (see p. 171).

Creation-Based Crafting

These Charms create or destroy wealth and possessions in the shaped world of Creation. They are often useful in constructing glamour sorcery spells.

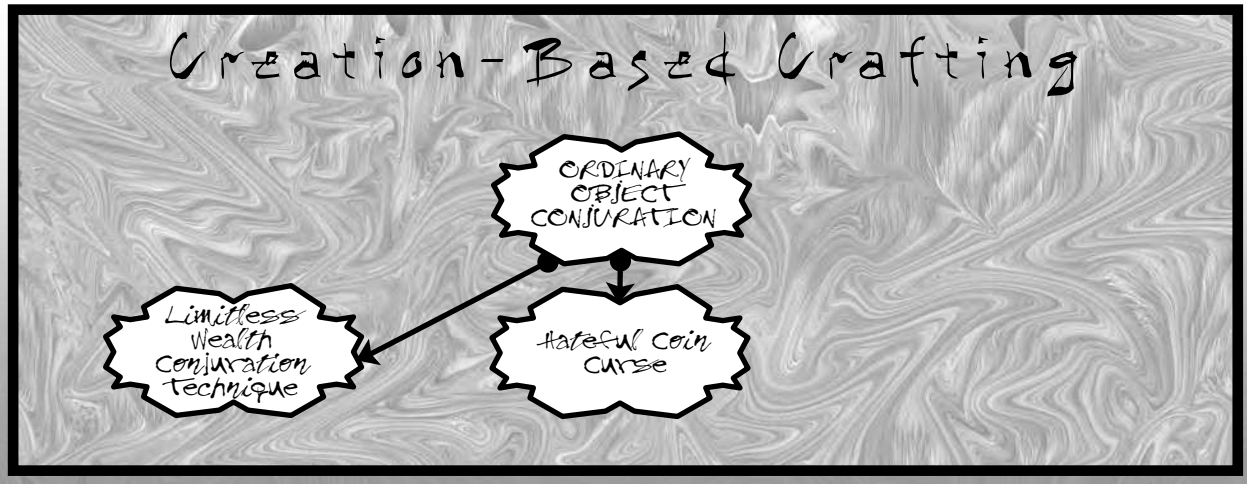
Ordinary Object Conjuration

Cost: 1 gossamer
Duration: Permanent
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha forges an ordinary item from gossamer. The raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. This Charm creates the permanent glamour of a mundane object. Its Resources value cannot be greater than the number of successes rolled.

Limitless Wealth Conjuration Technique

Cost: 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ordinary Object Conjuration



The raksha forges wealth from glamour. The raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Bureaucracy as a Ring-shaping action. This Charm gives the raksha one temporary dot of Resources per success, to a maximum of the raksha's Essence. She may immediately upgrade her lifestyle and living conditions to the new condition — she does not need to go and buy rich paintings to appoint her walls with them. Such wealth is raksha gold, disappearing at the end of the story. Canny buyers, whose Bureaucracy + Essence or Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Bureaucracy, recognize her treasure as glamour-forged gilt.

Hateful Coin Curse

Cost: 3 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Ordinary Object Conjuration

The raksha unravels the fates of serenity and wealth. The raksha interacts with the target, and then, her player rolls Intelligence + Bureaucracy as a Ring-shaping action. Money slips through the target's fingers, and the target finds himself unable to marshal his financial resources — his clothes grow tattered and torn, no one will take his coin, debtors will not pay, servants forget their contracts, and even the finest house lets in the cold, rain, wind and burglars.

This Charm temporarily reduces the target's Resources by one dot per success. This is a work of glamour, and it does not affect creatures whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Bureaucracy. The Charm also adds 2 to the difficulty of all the target's mercantile transactions. This effect is a work of glamour, and it does not apply when either the target or the merchant the target interacts with has Wits + Essence exceeding the raksha's Bureaucracy.

Glamour Charms

These Charms forge new possessions in the Wyld.

Worker's Gift

Cost: 1 mutation point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through their efforts and dedication, the Workers in the Wyld produce gossamer. This Charm gives the raksha 2 bonus gossamer whenever she gains Willpower from fulfilling her nature. Players can purchase this Charm a number of times equal to the raksha's Ring, and the effects are cumulative.

Style-Improving Spirit

Cost: 1 experience point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Worker's Gift

Tuning her nature in the forge of the Wyld, the raksha gains power over her own definition. Her Style Background improves by one dot each time she uses this Charm, and she can use it once per story.

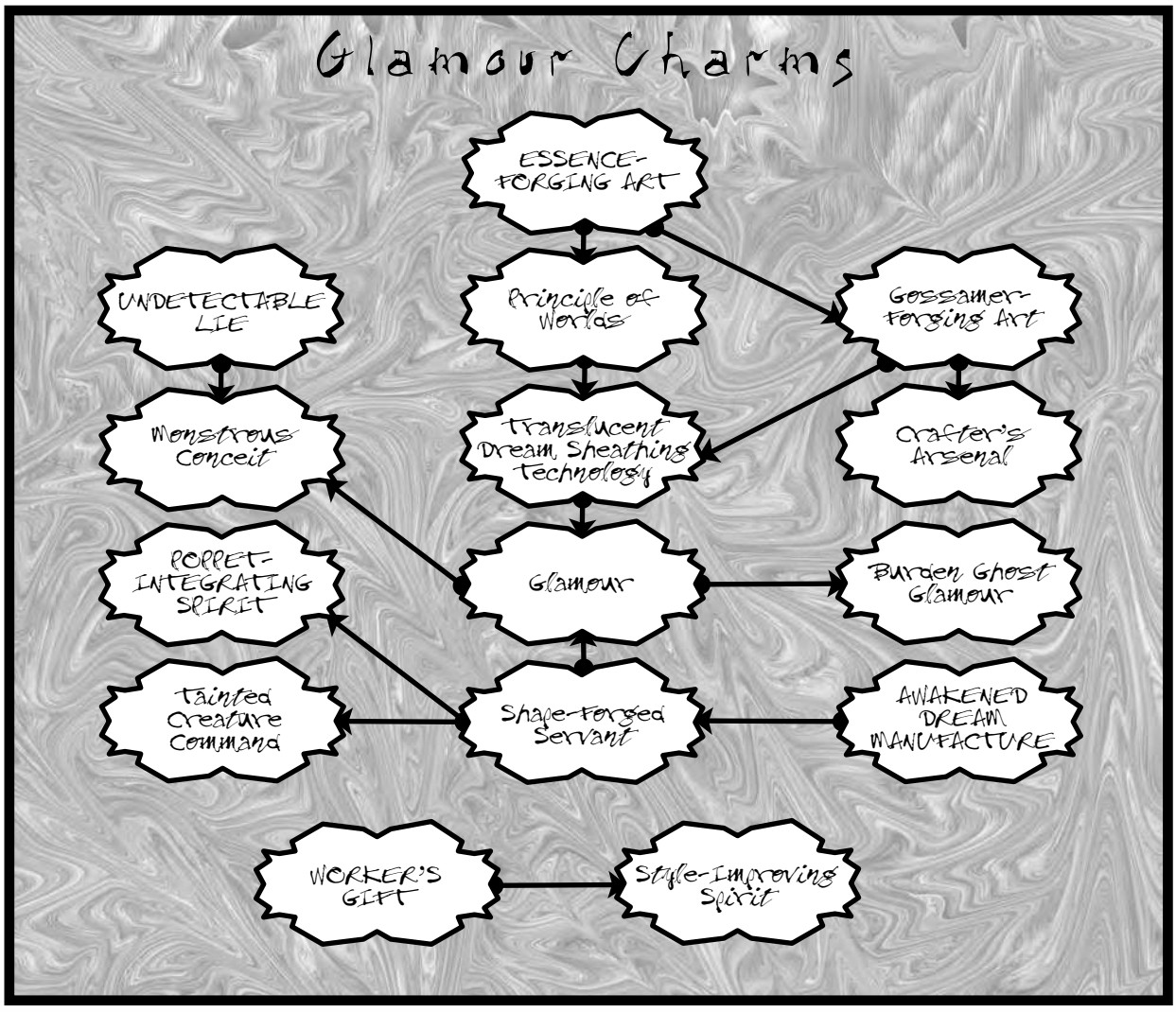
Essence-Forging Art

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Fair Folk use this art to craft substance from the Wyld. The raksha chooses whether to create a serviceable, fine or exceptional item, and his player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action against the difficulty listed below. On success, this Charm produces the desired creation.

This Charm is limited in scale. It cannot create artifacts. Nor can it make anything large enough for two characters to fight on it or in it without environmental penalties. Possessions created with this Charm cannot enter Creation unless the raksha uses an atypical effect such as Elemental Invocation (see p. 152). Tools and weapons crafted with this Charm cannot benefit shaping actions.

Difficulty	Description
1	**Serviceable.** A normal, good-quality item, no better than one might find in Creation. Objects can have strange Wyld properties, but only at the cost of their natural effectiveness — for example, a living feathered hammer that coils around the wielder's hand might facilitate stunts, but it would suffer a penalty to both accuracy and damage.
2	**Fine.** An object of superior quality. Weapons are well balanced, extra sharp or otherwise special. This adds +1 to one statistic, such as speed, accuracy or defense. Armor is elegantly formed and adds +1L/+1B to its soak. Fine weapons, armor and other tools can have the touch of the Wyld — living, blinking eyes; a soft radiance of warmth; or an unusual combination of traits, such as a sword that produces harp music when the raksha runs his hand along its length.



3

Exceptional. Exceptional weapons are finely honed, superbly balanced, flexible and light. Exceptional armor is tough, easy to wear and designed for speed. Weapons gain three +1s that can be added to the weapon's statistics (no more than +1 in any statistic.) Armor gains two +1s that can be used to add +1L/+1B to soak or to subtract 1 from either the mobility penalty or fatigue. Other equipment will have some virtue that is applicable to its needs (possibly adding one die to a relevant dice pool while that equipment is used.) Exceptional weapons, armor and other tools can have the touch of the Wyld, and most achieve aesthetic perfection.

Gossamer-Forging Art

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer per Resources dot
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Forging Art

Raksha who spend gossamer equal to the mundane Resources cost of the item they wish to create can make truly wondrous works of craft. The raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. If successful, the raksha must leave the motes committed for a full story as she nurtures the craftwork within her Essence pattern. This Charm creates the desired wonder at the story's end.

Gossamer weapons add +1 to accuracy, damage and defense and +2 to their rate. They also subtract one dot from their Strength minimum. Gossamer armor has neither fatigue nor mobility penalty. Gossamer tools are

dreams of perfection, adding an automatic success to rolls involving their use. These benefits replace the exceptional item benefits above and are never applied to artifacts.

This Charm has the same scale limits as the Essence-Forging Art above. Gossamer-forged items are works of permanent glamour, and the raksha can invoke them in Creation without special Charms.

Crafter's Arsenal

Cost: 5 motes, 1 or more gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Gossamer-Forging Art

In the workshops of the Wyld, the raksha forges a shaping weapon. The raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. The base difficulty of the roll equals the Gossamer Background rating necessary to purchase the item. Increase the difficulty by 2 to make a fine shaping weapon and by 4 to make an exceptional shaping weapon — so crafting an exceptional curdling dream bow would be a difficulty 8 task. If successful, the raksha must leave the motes committed for a full story as she nurtures the craftwork within her Essence pattern. This Charm creates the desired wonder at the story's end.

Principle of Worlds

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Forging Art

The raksha takes up the crafter's art and carves out landscapes from the Wyld. The raksha chooses whether to create a serviceable, fine or exceptional territory, and her player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. On a success, this Charm produces the desired creation. Territories are regions, vehicles or effects roughly one journey and one waypoint across. Therefore, when Creation-born use Charms to traverse them, they are limited to 30 miles in diameter, and many are much smaller.

Territories created with this Charm cannot enter Creation unless the raksha uses an atypical effect such as Elemental Invocation (see p. 152).

Difficulty	Description
1	**Serviceable.** A simple landscape, home, or vehicle — a meadow, a swamp, a well-appointed home or a small cargo vessel.
2	**Fine.** Fine territories include unusual landscapes, tailored to the raksha's needs; palatial homes and literal palaces; and large vehicles, such as military triremes. Unusual landscapes have the touch of the Wyld, making them more or less comfortable in ways that affect stunting and others' reactions but not dice pools. Fine territories also include simple region-sized physical phenomena such as storms or mists. (To make these a genuine hazard, see Translucent Dream Sheathing Technology, below.)
3	**Exceptional.** Exceptional territories include aesthetically perfect regions of significant extent and complexity, great fortresses and cities, and mundane ships that qualify as palaces or First Age war machines. Exceptional territories also include complex region-sized physical and aesthetic phenomena such as the trappings of a celebration or ritual — invoking such a territory might hang ribbons on every window and bells on every door.

Translucent Dream Sheathing Technology

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer per difficulty point
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Gossamer-Forging Art, Principle of Worlds

The raksha traps a shaping effort in a web of Essence, will and gossamer, transforming it from a moment's work to a permanent possession. Such possessions may include hazardous regions that no one ventures into, cabinets that no one opens and castles that put every visitor to sleep.

This Charm either creates or targets an exceptional item or territory. It can target gossamer items but cannot create them. The raksha chooses whether to imbue the item or territory with a serviceable, fine or exceptional effect. Then, the player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. If successful, the raksha must leave the motes committed for a full story as she touches up the details of the craftwork.

Difficulty	Description
1	**Serviceable.** The shaping effect can be overcome with a Charm, stunt or Wyld stunt. Other shaping effects override it automatically. Otherwise, it imposes the same penalties for violation and the same benefits for cooperation as an Essence 1 shaping roll. For example, a mortal in the Wyld encounters a wall of fire that "no one passes through." She could stunt to get through it — perhaps using a Wyld stunt to pull the skin from a nearby river and wrap it around her before diving

through. Otherwise, she suffers a one-die penalty equal to the raksha's Essence on the Athletics roll to dive through. If this is her first violation of local reality this scene, she must spend a Willpower. If a shaping raksha had declared that the mortal was a "vicious killer, with a flame in her heart exceeding the wall's fire," then she could ignore the shaping entirely — this active shaping effect overrides the persistent effect.

2 **Fine.** The raksha can make a persistent shaping effect with a two-die environmental penalty. This functions exactly as above. Alternately, the raksha can make regional effects suitable to a one-dot hazard.

3 **Exceptional.** The raksha can make a persistent shaping effect with a three-die environmental penalty. This functions exactly as above. Alternately, the raksha can make regional effects suitable to a two-dot hazard.

+1 **Permanence.** The result can enter Creation without special Charms, where it is treated as a permanent glamour. Without this benefit, items and territories created with this Charm cannot enter Creation unless the raksha uses an atypical effect such as Elemental Invocation (see p. 152). Similarly, without this benefit or an atypical Charm use, effects created by this Charm do not function in Creation, even if applied to items that can enter Creation normally.

Awakened Dream Manufacture

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Most of the servants of the raksha are forged in the same fashion as their tangible possessions. In some cases, no concrete distinction exists — the tools, foodstuffs and homes of the raksha often possess some measure of life. The servants created with this Charm are patterns and dreams, with only the mildest self-awareness. They have no Willpower Trait, no Nature and no volition, and they serve as dictated by their raksha owner.

Drawing on the secrets of his own Ring, the raksha forges an awakened dream. The raksha chooses whether to create a basic, fine or exceptional servant, and his player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. On a success, this Charm produces the desired creature. Servants based on human Traits have a three-dot Craft or Performance Ability of the raksha's choice in addition to the Abilities below.

Difficulty	Description
1	**Basic.** The forged servant has the Traits of a typical citizen (see **Exalted**, p. 276), an animal with a horse's combat abilities (see **Exalted** p. 316) or a mannikin (see p. 25).
2	**Fine.** The forged servant has the Traits of an elite soldier (see **Exalted**, p. 278), an animal with a war dog's combat abilities (see **Exalted**, p. 316) or a poppet (see p. 27). The Storyteller can optionally allow the creation of other one-dot hazards.
3	**Exceptional.** The forged servant has the Traits of an animal with a tyrant lizard's combat abilities (see **Exalted**, p. 317) or a homunculus (see p. 27). The Storyteller can optionally allow the creation of other two-dot hazards.

Shape-Forged Servant

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer per mutation point
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Awakened Dream Manufacture

The raksha forges a servant in the gateway Nirakara, holding it away from world and Wyld as she gives it certain of the characteristics of shape and form. The raksha chooses whether to create a basic, fine or exceptional servant. Her player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action against the difficulties listed under Awakened Dream Manufacture. If successful, the raksha must leave the motes committed for a full story as she nurtures the budding creature of shape in her Essence pattern.

The completed servant has one mutation point for each gossamer spent. The raksha can spend up to her Craft (Glamour) in gossamer. The servant cannot enter Creation without a permanent Assumption-type Charm, unless the raksha uses an atypical effect such as Elemental Invocation (see p. 152).

Shape-forged servants are works of permanent glamour.

Tainted Creature Command

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Staff: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Shape-Forged Servant

Wrapping herself in a shimmering cloak of Wyld energy, the raksha asserts dominance over the lesser creatures of chaos. These include humans and animals with Wyld mutations; manikins, poppets, homunculi and other natural beasts of the Wyld; and common

raksha whose Essence is less than half the character's own. This Charm forces a successful Willpower roll be made for such creatures, subtracting any points of mutations they might possess, or for them to submit to the raksha's authority.

This Charm is a work of glamour and does not affect creatures whose Wits + Essence exceed the character's Charisma. Exalted and other Creation-born Essence channelers are also immune to this effect.

This is a Staff-shaping Charm.

Poppet-Integrating Spirit

Cost: 10 motes, 1 experience point, 1 gossamer per mutation point

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Ring: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Shape-Forged Servant

The raksha binds a small creature of the Wyld — a normal or mutated creature with a base form of, at most, Hazard Rating •• — to herself. If the creature has a Heart Grace, its Heart Trait cannot exceed 1. This Charm creates a familiar, destroying the target's Heart Grace and binding the creature to the raksha's Heart instead. This Charm increases the raksha's Familiar Background by one dot each time it is used. The raksha's control remains incomplete until she increases her Familiar Background to the point necessary to have the creature. The gossamer cost represents the additional effort necessary to bind a mutated familiar. The raksha can bind a creature of her own creation.

Glamour

Cost: 5 motes, 1 or more gossamer

Duration: One scene, turn or day per success

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Ring: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Translucent Dream Sheathing Technology, Shape-Forged Servant

The raksha focuses her Essence and wrests gossamer into unstable shapes of glamour. Fair Folk using this Charm do not take the time to properly accustom the gossamer to shape. What is made is quickly unmade as its own Wyld nature tears it apart.

This Charm creates something from gossamer and Essence. It uses the rules for Shape-Forged Servant when creating living creatures, Gossamer-Forging Art when creating gossamer objects and Translucent Dream Sheathing Technology when forging enchanted territories or objects — but it differs from these effects as follows:



• The creation is completed instantly.

• The creation vanishes at the end of the Charm's duration.

• This is a work of glamour rather than a permanent glamour. The creations have no effect on creatures with Wits + Essence higher than the raksha's Intelligence.

In Creation, each creation requires a seed of Creation's substance. Each servant is transformed out of an insect or simple animal. Each item is created out of a mundane item. Regions, homes and vehicles are enchantments laid down on the regions, shelters and transport devices of Creation.

This Charm normally lasts one scene per success on the raksha's player's Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) roll. If the raksha ignores the requirement for a seed and crafts substance from nothingness, the result lasts only one turn per success on the Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) roll. If the raksha uses particularly apt seeds, as defined by the Storyteller, this Charm can last one day per success.

Monstrous Conceit

Cost: 5 motes, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Staff: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Undetectable Lie, Glamour

The raksha forges something within a consenting target's mind. This Charm functions exactly as Glamour, save that the motes are not committed, the glamour can interact only with the target and the raksha is treated as having spent a number of gossamer points on the glamour equal to her Essence.

Burden Ghost Glamour

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 0 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Glamour

The raksha disincarnates a burden (in the mechanical sense of an incumbrance) from the creature bound to it. The burden takes on a ghostly insectile form and scuttles off into the Wyld.

To power its work, this Charm utterly consumes a Wyld artifact (see pp. 207-208) that the raksha owns. Used to lift a character's burden, the artifact must have Artifact level equal to or above the target's Ring. To lift a waypoint burden in a Freehold or Demesne, the artifact must have an Artifact level equal to or greater than the Freehold or Demesne level.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it does not affect Creation-born characters whose Intelligence + Essence exceeds the raksha's Willpower.

Greater Arts of Glamour

The raksha use these Charms to create artifacts, Freeholds and the raksha themselves.

Forging the Heart Grace

Cost: 20 motes, 1 gossamer, plus 1 gossamer per mutation point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 0
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Shape-Forged Servant

Many noble raksha perform this Charm at the moment of their own birth. They literally shape themselves from the substance of the Wyld. Raksha without this Charm were created as property, finding freedom at the sufferance of their masters or upon their owners' deaths.

This Charm functions as Shape-Forged Servant, but in addition to crafting a creature, this Charm creates an artifact. The two are inextricably bound — to own one is to own the other. This artifact is the Heart Grace, and it has the following specific properties:

• It is unbreakable.

• It cannot be stolen, save through shaping combat.

• It contains a miniature reflection of the creature that mimics the creature's activities. This serves as a one-way magical link between Heart Grace and creature. Others can use the Heart to observe the creature. If the Heart Grace is something that opens and closes, then others can use Charms and effects on the creature via this reflection.

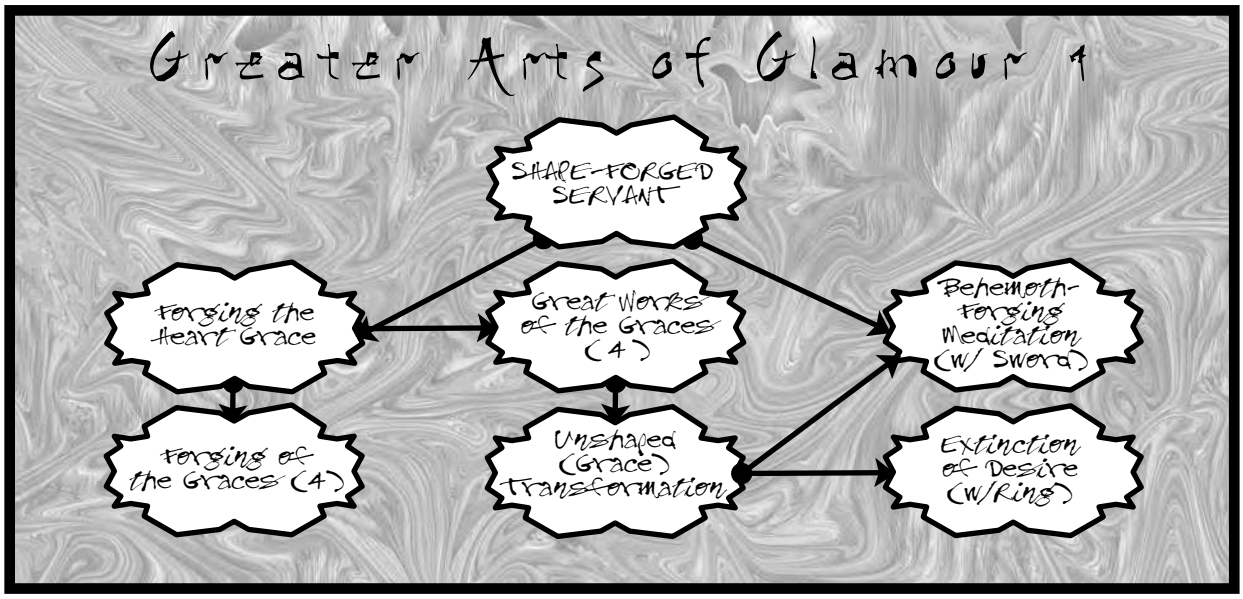
• It contains the creature's Willpower. The Heart Grace gives the creature a Willpower Trait, a Nature, volition and a Heart Trait of 1.

To attune to the Heart Grace, one must own it. Since it cannot be stolen, one must create, purchase or win a Heart Grace before attuning to it. Attuning to a Heart Grace requires six scenes of handling and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. This attunement buys the utter and absolute loyalty and service of the creature associated with that Heart. This loyalty fades if someone else attunes the Heart or if the Heart remains unattuned for a year and a day.

Forging the Cup Grace

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 0
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

Crafting the Cup Grace for a consenting creature, the raksha teaches the target to please others in the manner of the Fair Folk. This Charm consumes a supply of gossamer



and creates an artifact. This artifact has the normal qualities of a finely crafted weapon, suit of armor or tool, in addition to the standard Grace qualities.

Raksha and other Essence users can attune to a creature's Cup Grace. This attunement process requires six scenes of handling and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. Characters attuned to a creature's Cup Grace can reflexively strip away the creature's comprehensible façade. This lowers the creature's Cup to 0 and imposes the Curse of Alienation (see p. 113). Breaking or destroying someone's Cup Grace also inflicts these effects.

The raksha who creates a Cup Grace is its initial owner.

Forging the Ring Grace

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 0
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

The raksha teaches the target to see itself as the Fair Folk do. This Charm consumes a supply of gossamer and creates an artifact. This artifact has the normal qualities of a finely crafted weapon, suit of armor or tool, in addition to the standard Grace qualities.

Raksha and other Essence users can attune to a creature's Ring Grace. The attunement process requires six scenes of handling and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. Characters attuned to a creature's Ring Grace can reflexively strip away the creature's sense of self. This lowers the creature's Ring to 0 and imposes the Curse of Meekness (see p. 113). Breaking or destroying someone's Ring Grace also inflicts these effects.

The raksha who creates a Ring Grace is its initial owner.

Forging the Staff Grace

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 0
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

The raksha teaches the target the ways of Fair Folk diplomacy. This Charm consumes a supply of gossamer and creates an artifact. This artifact has the normal qualities of a finely crafted weapon, suit of armor or tool, in addition to the standard Grace qualities.

Raksha and other Essence users can attune to a creature's Staff Grace. This attunement requires six scenes of handling and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. Characters attuned to a creature's Staff Grace can reflexively strip away the creature's understanding of others. This lowers the creature's Staff to 0 and imposes the Curse of Hubris (see p. 113). Breaking or destroying someone's Staff Grace also inflicts these effects.

The raksha who creates a Staff Grace is its initial owner.

Forging the Sword Grace

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 0
Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

The character makes the target as terrifying as the raksha themselves. This Charm consumes a supply of gossamer and creates an artifact. This artifact has the normal qualities of a finely crafted weapon, suit of armor or tool, in addition to the normal Grace qualities.

Raksha and other Essence users can attune to a creature's Sword Grace. The attunement requires six scenes of handling and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. Characters attuned to a creature's Sword Grace can reflexively strip the creature of its epic mien. This lowers the creature's Sword to 0 and imposes the Curse of Namelessness (see p. 113). Breaking or destroying someone's Sword Grace also inflicts these effects.

A Sword Grace protects a raksha from enslavement to a certain extent. While it exists, the character's Heart Grace cannot be broken or stolen by anyone who does not own the character's Sword Grace, whether through shaping combat or by mortal theft. Raksha sometimes give their Sword Grace to others to safeguard, ensuring that no creature can steal their Heart without first discovering who holds their Sword. Others hesitate, understandably, to give such power to another.

The raksha who creates a Sword Grace is its initial owner.

Gaping Virtue Mouth

Cost: 20 motes, 1 gossamer, 1 experience point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Cup Grace, Forging the Ring Grace, Forging the Staff Grace, Forging the Sword Grace

The raksha interacts with a character and pries open one of that character's Graces, transforming it into a fanged feeding maw that hungers for the emanations of its Virtue. The mouth and its teeth exist in an abstract sense, typically only visible to effects such as All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight (see **Exalted**, p. 193) and in the anima banner of Exalted who acquire a feeding Grace. Characters with a feeding Grace have access to the feeding Charms of the Cup and can regain Essence naturally in the Wyld or a Freehold. In addition, feeding Graces are treated as Major Graces for the purposes of Charm experience costs.

The maximum number of feeding Graces that a character can possess equals her Heart rating minus one.

Iron Nightmare Muzzle

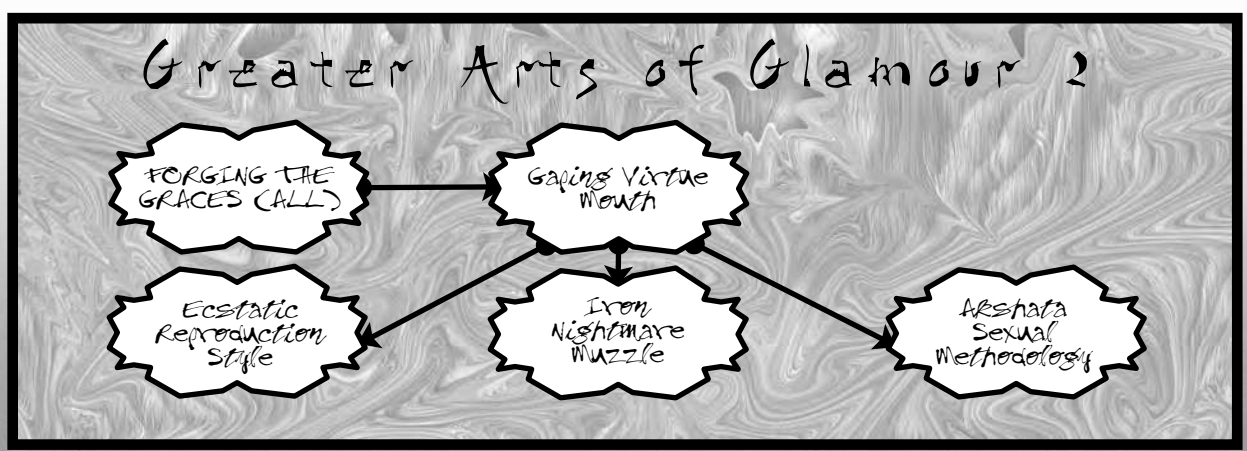
Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Gaping Virtue Mouth

The raksha seals over a Grace, closing an enemy's Virtue mouth. The raksha's player makes a Ring-shaping attack against a target no more than one waypoint away. On a success, instead of the normal damage, this Charm seals one of the target's Major Graces so that he can no longer feed from it. This doubles the mote cost for all the Charms of that Grace until the target can reopen the Virtue maw (for example, with Gaping Virtue Mouth). The Grace is still a feeding Grace — it's just not usable.

Ecstatic Reproduction Style

Cost: 20 motes, 5 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 1
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Gaping Virtue Mouth

The raksha performs an act of communion with the mad, amorphous desires and substance of the Wyld. From the delicate shaping of the raksha and the blind primordial urges of chaos a child is made — a raksha, prince or servant of the Wyld, born into servitude with the child's Heart Grace in the Charm-user's hand.



To use this Charm, the raksha's player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour). Creating a common raksha is difficulty 5. Heroic commoners are difficulty 7. Nobles are difficulty 9. This roll is not an extended one. On a success, this Charm creates the desired raksha. The creation has all five Graces, an appropriate number of them feeding Graces, and the Charm user owns and is attuned to all of them. Botching produces a deformed or suboptimal child — often, an enemy raksha or monster who owns his own Graces.

Akshata Sexual Methodology

Cost: 40 motes, 5 gossamer, 2 experience points
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Staff: 2
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Gaping Virtue Mouth

This Charm evokes the aspect of the Staff shinma, Nirvikalpa. This Charm lets the raksha draw the Essence of two consenting Fair Folk into himself and manipulate it to create a child. Each parent makes an oath to the other, and the Akshata makes a third oath in the child's name. The child is bound by the Akshata's oath; the parents' oaths are sacrosanct only as long as the child exists. Many treaties in the Wyld are sealed by such oath-children. The parents can contribute motes, gossamer and experience points to the cost of this Charm. Each parent holds one of the child's Graces, and the child possesses its own Heart, Ring and Sword.

If one of the parents is raksha, the child is raksha. If one is noble, the child is noble. The children of the unshaped are often prodigies.

This is a Staff-shaping Charm.

"Enfleshed"

Characters who are "enfleshed" do not lose their physical body, they are simply totally aware of the status of the area they control. While the characters choose to be aware of it, not a sparrow falls without their perfect knowledge. Characters cannot enflesh themselves in a Freehold when they are away from the area it controls. This awareness is reflexive and requires no roll, but the cognition is immediate and transient. If a character for some reason deliberately pays it no mind or leaves the Freehold and loses access to the sense, he cannot "rewind" his impressions.

Forging the Arcane Redoubt

Cost: 25 motes, 3 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

The raksha embeds a consenting creature's Heart Grace in the center of an uncapped Demesne. Over the course of a story, it begins to burn, until, finally, the Heart immolates and becomes a pillar of silver heatless bonefire. The creature associated with that Heart then turns to dust and ash. It ceases to exist until such a time as the bonefire dies, at which point the immolated creature returns to life.

Building the bonefire turns the Demesne into a Freehold. It creates a Cyst or a set of pennants. The Freehold fills with Wyld taint, and the Demesne becomes part of the Middlemarches of Rakshastan. The bonefire must be fed with dross, a mix of Essence and gossamer — if not fed 20 motes and 1 gossamer per story, the bonefire dies, and all its effects fail.

To attune to a bonefire, a character must cast her own Heart into the bonefire. If she does not own her Heart, she must have the owner's consent. For the next six scenes, the Heart is vulnerable — it can be stolen or stolen back with normal dice actions or vexation (see pp. 147-148), although reaching into the fire to claim it inflicts one level of aggravated damage. Once the Heart has spent six scenes in the fire, the character is attuned. Attunement gives three benefits:

- The attuned character can enflesh herself within the Freehold as a whole. She is reflexively aware of all things that transpire there, interacts with the whole Freehold at once and can use shaping actions as if present in any of the Freehold's waypoints.
- The attuned character receives her Essence in automatic successes on all shaping rolls within the Freehold.
- The character can reflexively spy on any of the creatures carrying a pennant or Cyst for the Freehold, looking in on them as if present. She can also wither any of the Freehold's pennants or Cysts, wheresoever it might be, and grow it again over the course of a story in the Freehold's heart.

Raksha outside the Freehold must hold a pennant or a Cyst to realize these benefits.

Multiple raksha can place their Hearts in the bonefire. The benefits of attunement divide among them. Each holds power in turn, for a duration set by the raksha who makes the bonefire — a day, a week, a month, a season, a year or a story. The raksha track all of these on the moon's face, even the last. Luna hangs lowest in the sky when a story nears its ending.

Forging the Stronghold

Cost: 20 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Sword Grace, Forging the Arcane Redoubt

The raksha embeds a Sword Grace in the spiritual structure of a Freehold waypoint. That Sword Grace and waypoint transform. The waypoint becomes a "Stronghold" — the center of and focus for that Freehold's active, aggressive strength. It always has masculine or martial symbolism — examples include a fortress, a marshalling yard, a maypole or a mountain peak. Its existence protects the Freehold against physical invasion. The Freehold gains a Sword Trait (or Stronghold Trait) with a rating equal to the creature's Sword Trait.

A Freehold with a Stronghold can claim possession of additional waypoints. The Freehold can directly control a number of waypoints equal to 10 times its Stronghold Trait.

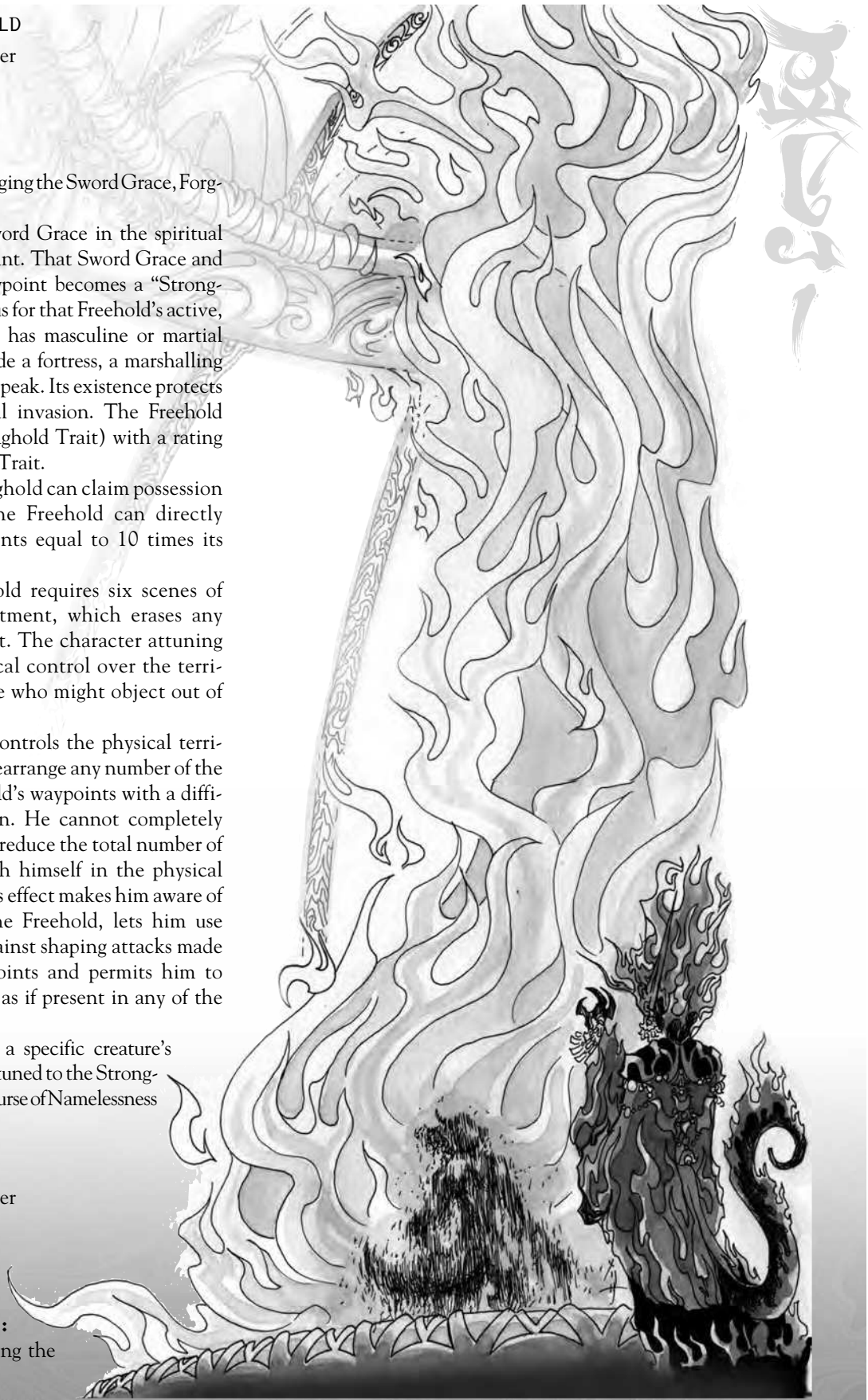
Attuning to a Stronghold requires six scenes of effort and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. The character attuning must have undisputed physical control over the territory — he must drive anyone who might object out of the Stronghold waypoint.

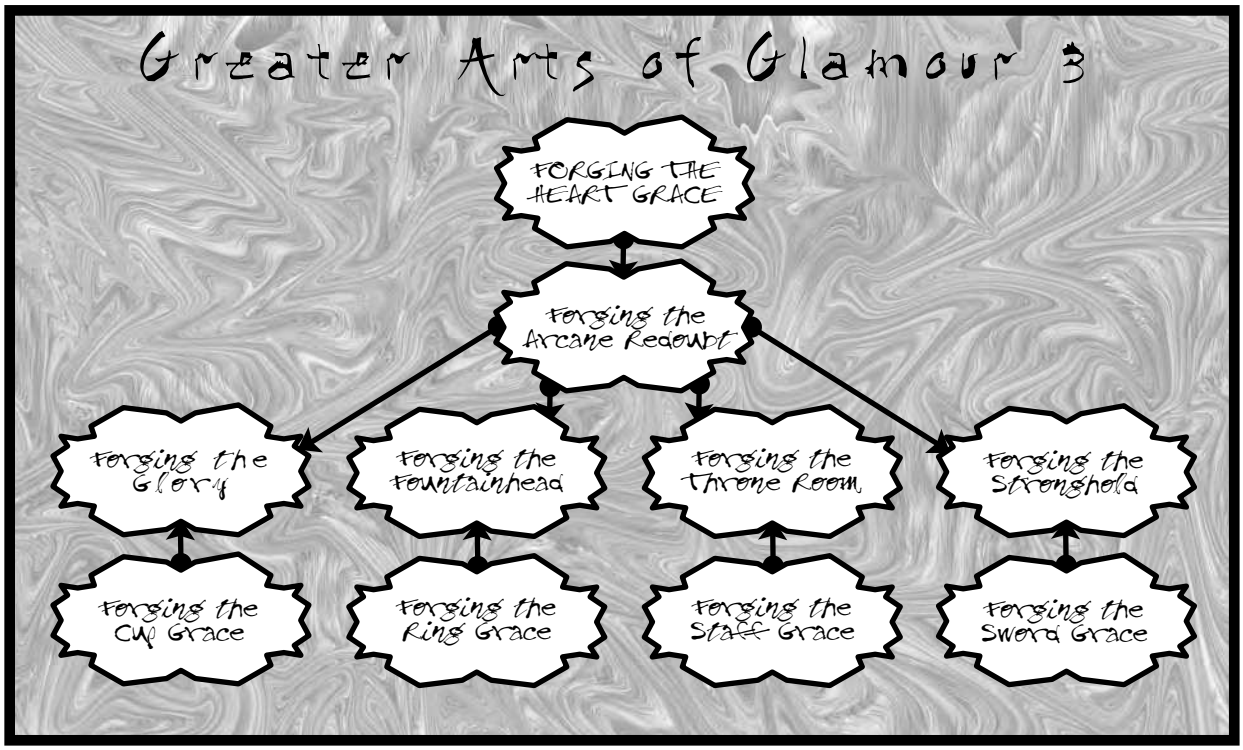
The attuned character controls the physical territory of the Freehold. He can rearrange any number of the journeys between the Freehold's waypoints with a difficulty 3 Sword-shaping action. He cannot completely isolate any given waypoint or reduce the total number of journeys. He can also enflesh himself in the physical structure of the Freehold. This effect makes him aware of all Sword shaping within the Freehold, lets him use applicable Sword defenses against shaping attacks made against the Freehold's waypoints and permits him to make Sword-shaping actions as if present in any of the Freehold's waypoints.

The Stronghold remains a specific creature's Sword Grace. The character attuned to the Stronghold can reflexively inflict the Curse of Namelessness on that creature.

Forging the Glory

Cost: 20 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Cup Grace, Forging the Arcane Redoubt





The raksha embeds a Cup Grace in the spiritual structure of a Freehold waypoint. That Cup Grace and waypoint transform. The waypoint becomes a "Glory" — the center of and focus for that Freehold's majesty. It emits a subtle radiance of the Cup that makes the Freehold a magical and wondrous place. Even for the mortals tortured and mutilated in the lightless, stinking sewers beneath the Freehold Segneri, the place has a certain numinous beauty that part of them will long for forever. The Freehold gains a Cup Trait (or Glory Trait) with a rating equal to the creature's Cup Trait.

A Freehold with a Glory radiates beguilement and glamour. Player of characters who relax their mental defenses against the Freehold's beauty and accept its hospitality must make a Willpower roll — the difficulty is 1 for the raksha, 2 for the Creation-born and 3 for Creation-born prisoners. Those characters whose players fail suffer a beguilement effect directing them to linger in the Freehold, to show no resistance to the raksha and to consent to the raksha's Charms.

This effect is a work of glamour, and it has no effect on characters with a Wits + Essence of 7 or higher.

Attuning to a Glory requires an uninterrupted performance six scenes long and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. The process fails if someone drives away the attuning character or successfully interrupts the performance.

The attuned character controls the emotional ambience of the Freehold. He can selectively prevent raksha from regaining Essence naturally in the Freehold with a difficulty 3 Cup-shaping action. He can enflesh himself in the spiritual structure of the Freehold. This effect makes him aware of all Cup shaping within the Freehold, lets him use applicable Cup defenses against shaping attacks made against the Freehold's waypoints and permits him to make Cup-shaping actions as if present in any of the Freehold's waypoints.

The Glory remains a specific creature's Cup Grace. The character attuned to the Glory can reflexively inflict the Curse of Alienation on that creature.

Forging the Fountainhead

Cost: 20 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Ring Grace, Forging the Arcane Redoubt

The raksha embeds a Ring Grace in the spiritual structure of a Freehold waypoint. That Ring Grace and waypoint transform. They become a "Fountainhead" — the center and focus for that Freehold's definition. It has feminine or passive symbolism — examples include a well, a lake, a garden, a grotto, a mosaic, a room-sized mirror or a hollow. Its existence gives the Freehold self-awareness and identity. The Freehold gains a Ring Trait (or Fountainhead Trait) with a rating equal to the creature's Ring Trait.

A Freehold with a Fountainhead is a living creature. Its consciousness is abstract and distant, but it's able to witness everything that transpires within the Freehold.

Attuning to a Fountainhead requires six scenes of effort and a 1-mote commitment. The majority of the Worker raksha in the Freehold must participate, giving their strength to the project. This attunement erases any previous raksha's attunement.

The attuned character defines the Freehold and commands its awareness. She can reflexively sense everything that happens anywhere in the Freehold or near any of its pennants or Cysts. She can use applicable Ring defenses against shaping attacks made against the Freehold's waypoints and can make Ring-shaping actions as if present in any of the Freehold's waypoints.

The Fountainhead remains a specific creature's Ring Grace. The character attuned to the Fountainhead can reflexively inflict the Curse of Meekness on that creature.

Forging the Throne Room

Cost: 20 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Staff Grace, Forging the Arcane Redoubt

The raksha embeds a Staff Grace in the spiritual structure of a Freehold waypoint. That Staff Grace and waypoint transform. The waypoint becomes a "Throne Room" — a place of court and deliberations and the central focus for the Freehold's society. Its existence gives the Freehold the ability to marshal and shape the convictions of others. The Freehold gains a Staff Trait (or Throne Room Trait) with a rating equal to the creature's Staff Trait.

A Freehold's Throne Room allows raksha to bind themselves in fealty to the Freehold and its lord. The oaths binding the Freehold (see pp. 19-24) apply to all such characters until they or the current lord rejects that fealty.

Attuning to a Throne Room requires six scenes of effort and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. The character attuning must have a certain level of cooperation — during the story in which he attempts to attune, the character must meaningfully interact with every noble sworn to the Freehold. Meaningful interactions include gift exchanges, sexual liaisons and plotting together, but not casual conversation or strictly hostile encounters.

The attuning character controls the social fabric of the Freehold. She can take one oath or adjuration per story (see pp. 208-209) on the Freehold's behalf. She can also enflesh herself in the social structure of the Freehold. This effect makes her aware of all Staff shaping within the Freehold, lets her use applicable Staff defenses against shaping attacks made against the Freehold's territory and permits her to make Staff-shaping actions as if present in any of the Freehold's waypoints.

The Throne Room remains a specific creature's Staff Grace. The character attuned to the Throne Room can reflexively inflict the Curse of Hubris on that creature.

Great Works of the (Grace)

Cost: 20 motes, 3 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

The raksha engages in the Ring's mightiest art: forging artifacts from the Graces of fellow raksha.

This is actually four separate Charms. Each forges a specific type of artifact from a specific Grace.

• Great Works of the Cup — the raksha forges a glamour sorcery spell (see pp. 205-207) from a Cup Grace.

• Great Works of the Ring — the raksha forges a Wyld artifact (see pp. 207-208) from a Ring Grace.

• Great Works of the Staff — the raksha forges an adjuration (see pp. 208-209) from a Staff Grace.

• Great Works of the Sword — the raksha forges a behemoth (see pp. 209-211) from a Sword Grace.

A common raksha's Grace becomes a one-dot artifact. Noble Graces can become two- or three-dot artifacts. The artifact remains the raksha's Grace; it just gains new potence. Characters attuned to the item can reflexive exert the appropriate Curse on the character (see p. 113).

The raksha chooses the nature, power level and properties of the artifact he wishes to create and acquires a suitable Grace, and his player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. An Artifact • has difficulty 3; an Artifact •• has difficulty 4; An artifact ••• has difficulty 5. This roll is an extended one. To gain the benefits of a single roll, the raksha must leave the motes committed for a full story.

When the raksha accumulates 10 successes for an Artifact •, 30 for an Artifact •• or 60 for an Artifact •••, this Charm transforms the Grace into the desired artifact as a work of permanent glamour.

Unshaped (Grace) Transformation

Cost: 20 motes, 3 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Great Works of the (Matching Grace)

Molding the Essence and gossamer of an artifact as if it were fine clay, the Fair Folk can reshape existing artifacts to their whims. This is actually four Charms:

• Unshaped Cup Transformation — the raksha changes the nature of a glamour sorcery spell (see pp. 205-207).

• Unshaped Ring Transformation — the raksha changes the nature of a Wyld artifact (see pp. 207-208).

• Unshaped Staff Transformation — the raksha changes the nature of an inactive adjuration (see pp. 208-209).

• Unshaped Sword Transformation — the raksha redefines a behemoth (see pp. 209-211).

The raksha chooses the nature, power level and properties of the artifact she wishes to create and acquires a suitable artifact of the same level, and her player rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour) as a Ring-shaping action. The difficulty of the roll equals the level of the artifact — a one-dot artifact gives difficulty 1, a two-dot artifact difficulty 2, and so forth. This Charm can manipulate Wyld-forged artifacts up to level 5. As with Great Works of the (Grace), this roll is an extended one. To gain the benefits of a single roll, the raksha must leave the motes committed for a full story.

When the raksha accumulates 3 successes for an Artifact •, 5 successes for an Artifact ••, 10 successes for an Artifact •••, 30 successes for an Artifact •••• or 60 successes for an Artifact •••••, this Charm reshapes the artifact into a Storyteller-authorized artifact of the raksha's own design.

This Charm can also be used to repair damaged artifacts or slain behemoths. If the raksha only seeks to repair damage, reduce the difficulty of each roll by one.

Behemoth-Forging Meditation

Cost: 20 motes, 3 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Shape-Forged Servant, Unshaped Sword Transformation

Twisting the nature of a visiting Creation-born creature, the raksha imposes one or more mutations. The raksha rolls Intelligence + Craft (Glamour). This Charm changes the target's cosmetic appearance and adds 1 mutation point to the target for each two successes rolled. Essence 1 targets affected by this Charm become minor behemoths — raksha can attune to them and control them as Sword-shaping weapons. Most of these have the weapon qualities of basic non-artifact weapons (horrors, mutant warleaders and so forth) and require only a 1-mote attunement to command. Mutants with 10 or more points of mutation qualify as one-dot fey beasts.

This Charm is a work of glamour and does not affect creatures whose Stamina + Essence exceeds the raksha's Intelligence. Tattooed Lunar Exalted are also immune.

Extinction of Desire

Cost: 1 mutation point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unshaped Ring Transformation

The raksha achieves the enlightenment of Nirvishesha and remakes herself as an artifact. Her Heart and Ring Graces turn to dust, and her reflection in her Heart screams in endless agony before fading into foul smoke. This Charm extinguishes the raksha's volition and awareness of self. She can no longer spend Willpower or use the Charms of the Ring. She does not suffer the Curse of Meekness and does not cease to exist. Instead, she delivers her will utterly into the hands of the first raksha to attune to her. Attunement requires a 1-mote commitment and six scenes of interaction, and it only functions if no other character is attuned. The attuned character can command the raksha as if in possession of her Heart Grace — her loyalty is absolute.

Raksha influenced by this Charm receive the following benefits:

• They ignore the effects of shaping damage.

• They have an additional 6L/6B soak against mortal attacks.

• They become unbreakable. This means that they automatically convert any lethal damage received to bashing damage, before soak, unless the attack could damage one of the Five Magical Materials.

• If killed in Creation, they can be repaired as a damaged three-dot artifact.

• They gain the benefits of Mad God Mien (see pp. 150-151).

Nirvikalpa, the Staff

The shinma Nirvikalpa defines communication. Nirvikalpa is the great unbroken being, the unitary shape. To Nirvikalpa, all perspectives are one. It exists in mad, mindless isolation, unable to witness the existence of itself or others; but through the medium of its existence, the raksha can express their thoughts to one another. Those raksha who emulate Nirvikalpa's existence are called Akshata, unbroken. They serve as priests and sexual receptacles, through which two raksha can exchange portions of themselves.

Laughing Monster Style

This shaping art tells the stories of an iconic trickster. He dances through the ranks of his enemies, using the arts of persuasion and diplomacy to lay them low while they blame one another for the crime. At the beginning of this style, the trickster is something of a buffoon. By its end, he is a laughing monster.

Furiously Stalling Destiny

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Staff: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha uses diplomatic techniques to protest the shaping contest. This Charm lets him issue a Staff-shaping counterattack using his full Manipulation + Occult dice pool against an opponent who uses a shaping attack against him. The counterattack comes after the opponent's attack roll but before the damage effects are applied. He can only make one counterattack. Supplemental Charms in a Combo with Furiously Stalling Destiny enhance the Staff-shaping counterattack. The raksha cannot use this Charm's counterattack to respond to a counterattack.

Deeper Into Trouble Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Until the victim's next attack
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Staff: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Furiously Stalling Destiny

The raksha drives an opponent into fury. The raksha's player rolls Manipulation + Occult as a Staff-shaping attack. If he hits, he does damage normally. This Charm infuriates the target, urging him to attack the raksha — if the target's next shaping attack action targets anyone else, this Charm drains one of the target's temporary Willpower points.

Laughing Monster Stance

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Staff: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Deeper Into Trouble Technique

The raksha pours Essence into her Staff Grace. She becomes the dweller in the between, the laughing monster, the creature that dances through the cracks in society and twists oaths against their holders. She confounds her enemies and twists their efforts to her ends. If a shaping attack misses her, this Charm lets her reflexively spend 1 Willpower to redirect it against any target of her choice — including the attacker. The attack is rolled again against the new target, treating it as if it had been aimed at the new target all along.

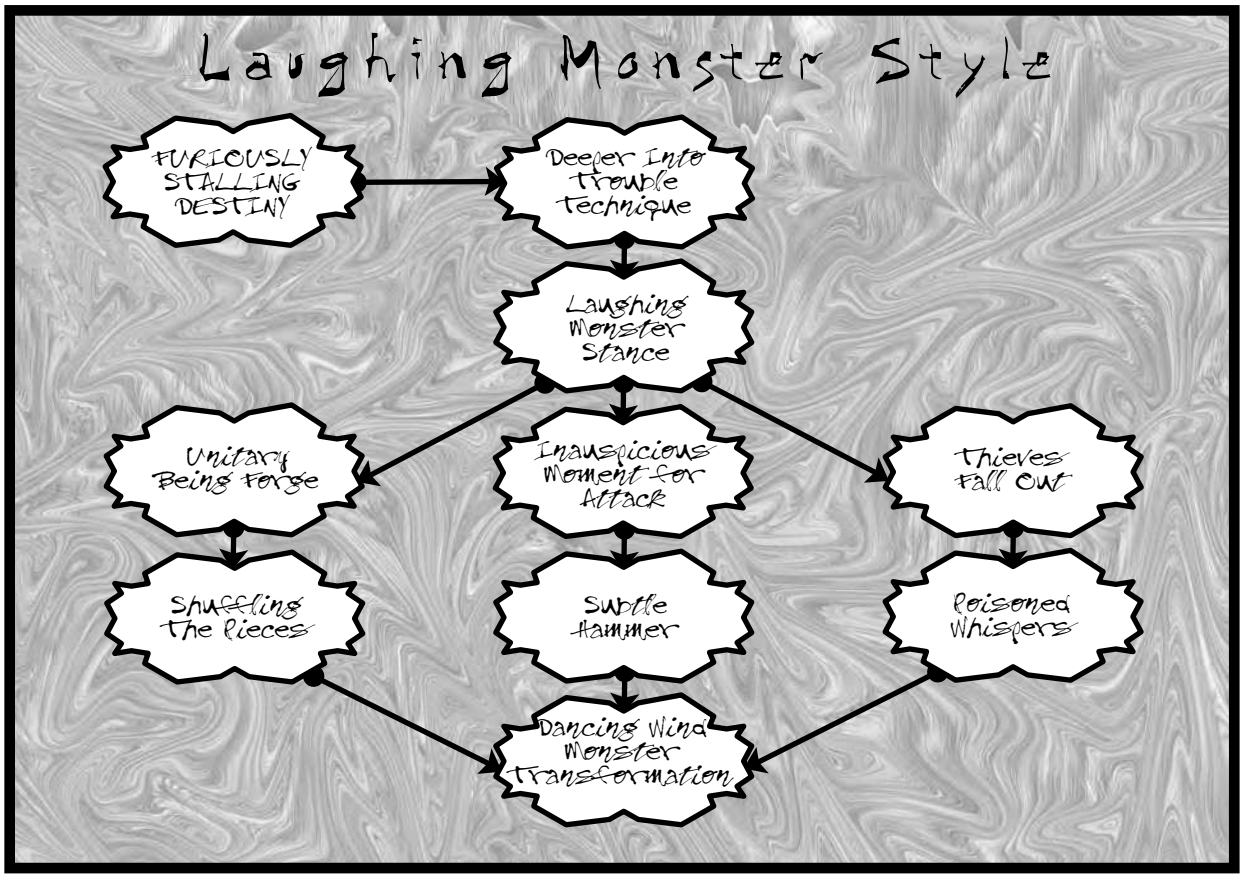
This is a Stance-type Charm. Characters cannot use more than one Stance-type Charm at a time.

Unitary Being Forge

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Staff: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Laughing Monster Stance

The raksha exploits an awkward situation for diplomatic advantage. His player rolls Manipulation + Occult as a Staff-shaping attack. On a success, add one die to damage for each point of Sword, Ring or Cup damage his opponent is currently suffering.





Shuffling the Pieces

Cost: 2 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Staff: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unitary Being Forge

The raksha's words revise the world, so that the pounding march of armies, the stringent laws of the world and the harmonious strains of an Entertainer's vision are nothing more than diplomatic tools. Her player rolls Manipulation + Occult as a Staff-shaping attack. On a success, instead of applying her normal damage, the raksha heals up to 10 total levels of a target's Sword, Ring and Cup damage, dividing up her healing as she chooses and immediately inflicting that much damage upon his Staff Grace. This Charm can be used to "heal" allies as well as to further damage enemies.

Inauspicious Moment for Attack

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Staff: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Laughing Monster Stance

With the arts of distraction and omen, the laughing monster slows the enemy's advance. She must use this Charm at the beginning of the scene. This Charm reduces an opponent's shaping initiative by twice the raksha's Essence. If this lowers the opponent's shaping initiative below 1, the opponent may not take a shaping action that scene, though he can still activate reflexive effects.

Subtle Hammer

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Staff: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Inauspicious Moment for Attack

The Diplomat's work is subtle, and the opponent does not notice its danger until too late. The raksha makes a Staff-shaping attack. The opponent cannot parry or dodge without the use of Charms, and the raksha doubles extra successes for the purposes of determining damage.

Thieves Fall Out

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Five scenes
Type: Simple
Minimum Staff: 5
Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Laughing Monster Stance

The raksha encourages enmity between two foes. The raksha names two targets, and his player rolls Manipulation + Occult as a shaping action against a difficulty equal to the first target's Essence. This Charm inflicts one level of unblockable and undodgeable Staff damage on the first target each scene that the two targets occupy the same or adjacent waypoints.

Poisoned Whispers

Cost: 8 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Staff: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Thieves Fall Out

The raksha poisons and twists the mind of a target. If the target attacks the raksha and misses this scene, then this Charm lets her reflexively redirect that attack against any target of her choice — including the attacker. She need not spend a Willpower to do so.

Dancing Wind Monster Transformation

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Staff: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Shuffling the Pieces, Subtle Hammer, Poisoned Whispers

The raksha fades into the wind, laughing, invisible, leaving nothing but the echo of his spiteful words. His enemies, bereft, must turn on one another. This Charm adds the raksha's Essence in automatic successes to his shaping dodge actions.

Society-Forging Charms

The raksha use these Charms to construct the society of the Fair Folk.

Oath Gossamer

Cost: 4 gossamer
Duration: One century
Type: Special
Minimum Staff: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha binds himself to a consenting raksha in a gossamer-producing relationship. He can choose any relationship — from true love to rivalry to bitterest hate. This Charm gives him 1 bonus gossamer in each story in which he actively pursues the named relationship, but it breaks his Staff Grace and scatters the pieces if he brings that relationship to a permanent end.

Eight-Corner Ring Binding

Cost: 1 gossamer per participant
Duration: One century
Type: Special
Minimum Staff: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Oath Gossamer

The basic unit of pragmatic alliance, this Charm binds a group of up to eight raksha into a ring. Each names their desired relationship with each of the others, as with Oath Gossamer. At the end of each story, this Charm gives each involved raksha 1 bonus gossamer per relationship actively pursued that story. If any raksha brings a relationship to a permanent end, her Staff Grace shatters, each of the other raksha in the binding receiving one piece.

Raksha bound by this Charm can revise their relationships, but they must declare the change a full story in advance.

Nishkriya, the Sword

The shinma Nishkriya defines conflict. She is the savagery that drives the Wyld to war upon itself. She is the lust for possession and control. She is the thief and the killer. She is death. She is fear. She is ravage. Her kind faces spur growth. Her cold faces craft hardship. Her infinite aspects are the most terrible weapons of the void: Danda, the punisher. Ishiika, the grass-cutter scythe. Modaki, the god-bludgeon. Aardra, who drenches the Wyld with blood, and Shushka, who dries it. Haya-shira, the horse-headed weapon. Krouncha, the wrestler chain. Mohana, thief of minds. Madava, the humane blade. Tejaprabha, the sun-slaying missile. Shishira, who brings winter. These and others she has, among them weapons



too terrible to name and horrors beyond even the comprehension of the gods.

Sword Combat Charms

The raksha use these Charms to improve their Sword-shaping actions and attacks.

God-Humbling Victory Sword

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha calls Nishkriya into the aspect of her Sword and fills the world with portents of her victory. This Charm adds one or more dice to a single Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping attack.

Scourging Wind Raid

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: God-Humbling Victory Sword

In a lightning raid, the raksha steals the wealth of her foe. The raksha spends the motes for this Charm, names one of the target's possessions and makes a Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping attack at +2 difficulty. If successful, this Charm co-opts the ownership of that possession, in addition to inflicting normal damage. The Charm cannot steal Graces, artifacts or Hearthstones, but it can steal shaping weapons, including readied weapons.

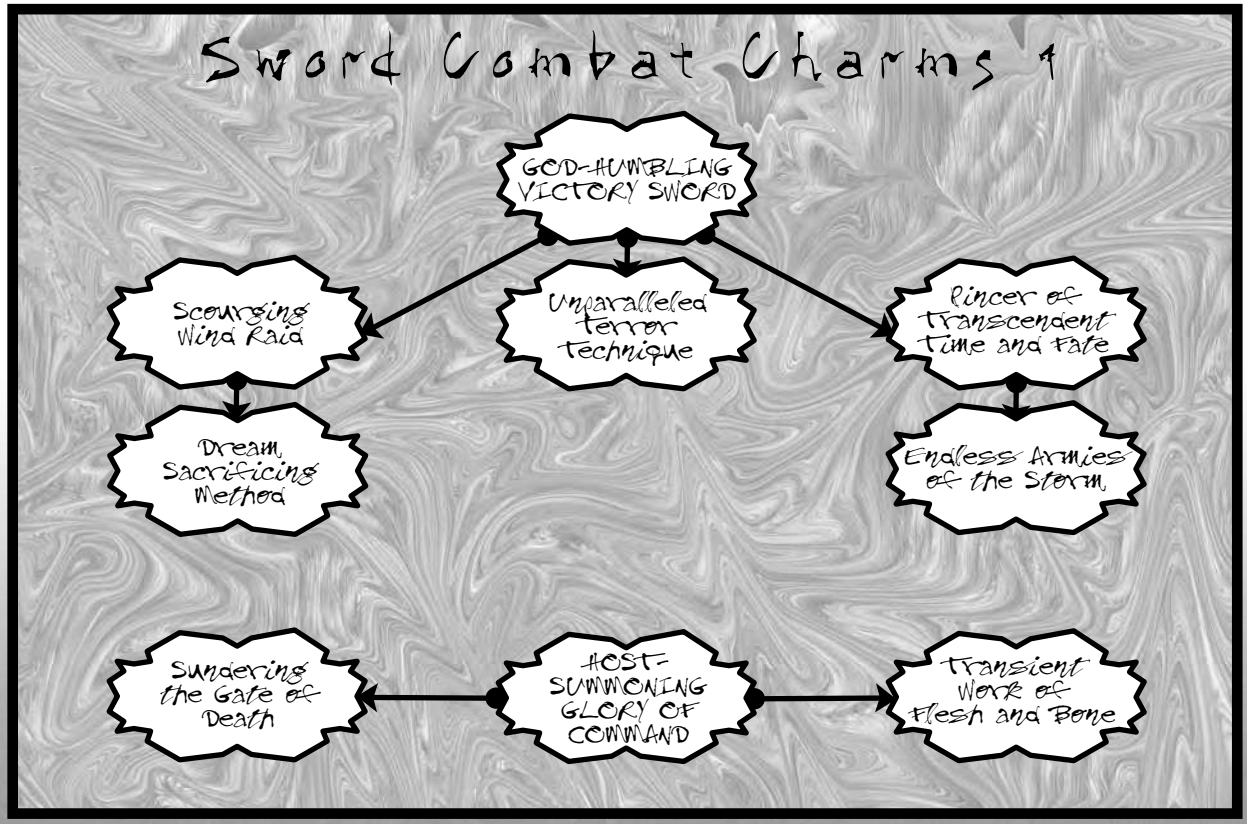
Dream Sacrificing Method

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Scourging Wind Raid

Even the living deities of battle must choose their sacrifices. The raksha invokes this Charm after an enemy rolls damage for a Sword-shaping attack. The raksha can negate this damage by sacrificing gossamer equal to the damage successes. This Charm negates the damage but transfers the gossamer into the attacker's hands.

Unparalleled Terror Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: God-Humbling Victory Sword



The raksha's Sword hungers for the fear of her foe. Her shaping englamours an ordinary blow with the touch of nightmare. This Charm augments a single Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping attack. If the attack succeeds, the raksha counts extra successes twice for purposes of dealing damage.

Pincer of Transcendent Time and Fate

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: God-Humbling Victory Sword

The raksha's Sword takes on the aspect of Kala and Dharma, the paired weapons of Nishkriya that strike as one. This Charm uses the raksha's shaping action to launch two Sword-shaping or two Staff-shaping attacks at her full dice pool.

Endless Armies of the Storm

Cost: 3 motes per attack, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Sword: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Pincer of Transcendent Time and Fate

The raksha opens her spirit with Nishkriya, the Sword, and calls an endless host. Driven forth by the sound of flute and drum, the limitless armies of the Wyld march. In addition to the raksha's normal shaping action, this Charm lets the raksha make one Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping attack for each 3 motes of Essence spent, up to a limit of his permanent Essence.

Host-Summoning Glory of Command

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha wears the mantle of greatness, visibly displaying her terrible aptitude for war. She can draw her armies, monsters and champions into an ongoing story without further explanation of their presence. This Charm instantly readies a Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping weapon. The raksha can use this Charm before her initiative.

Sundering the Gates of Death

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Host-Summoning Glory of Command

The raksha command death, and it is not their master. If a raksha's army is slain or scattered, he can call it back. If his behemoth is slain or driven away, he can restore it. Even should an enemy shatter the raksha's bones and leave him bloody and broken on the field of battle, he can restore himself and continue the fight. This Charm instantly readies a Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping weapon, even if that weapon has been slain or otherwise driven from the battle. The raksha can use this Charm before his initiative. This Charm cannot restore the permanently slain.

Transient Work of Flesh and Bone

Cost: 6 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Host-Summoning Glory of Command

The raksha shapes a behemoth or a host of warriors from gossamer.

This Charm forms a shaping weapon of the Sword. The player divides twice the raksha's Sword Grace between the weapon's speed, accuracy, damage and defense. Perfectly tuned to the raksha's intentions, its rate equals the raksha's permanent Willpower.

The weapon formed by this Charm is a monster or a small army. Monsters are fey beasts (See Chapter One and pp. 147 and 210). Armies are units of 500 extras using the elite troop Traits found on page 278 of **Exalted**. In either case, the result is a work of glamour. It cannot attack, defend or soak against residents of Creation whose Wits + Essence exceeds the raksha's Valor.

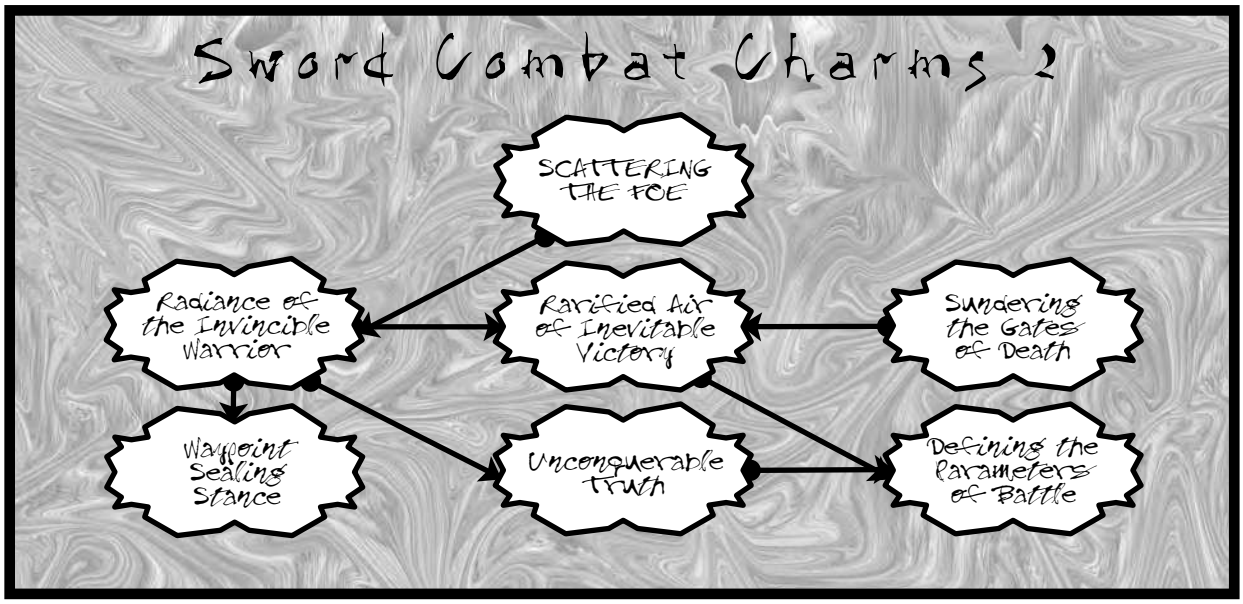
Scattering the Foe

Cost: 1 mote per 2 dice
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha's sword takes on the aspect of Shikhari, the hammer that scatters armies. An enemy attack shatters against the raksha's battle prowess. This Charm allows the raksha to buy dice for blocking Sword or Staff attacks. She can improve a normal shaping parry or build a shaping dice pool from nothing. She must be aware of the attack.

Radiance of the Invincible Warrior

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2



Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Scattering the Foe

The raksha's Sword Grace binds back fear and death, so that they come only grudgingly to his assembled forces. This Charm lets the raksha parry any one Sword or Staff attack with his full dice pool. He must be aware of the attack.

Waypoint-Sealing Technique

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Radiance of the Invincible Warrior

Taking up the powerful defensive position typified by the Raghava aspect of the Sword, the raksha seals an opponent out of a waypoint. The raksha uses this Charm as an opponent enters a waypoint he occupies or controls, and his player rolls Dexterity + Melee as an undodgeable Sword-shaping attack. If he achieves even one success, the opponent cannot enter the waypoint this scene and loses that portion of her movement.

Unconquerable Truth

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Radiance of the Invincible Warrior

There are some warriors who cannot be defeated. There are some generals whom no mind can outmaneuver. There are truths of the raksha that no paltry weaving of fate and story can master. This Charm lets the raksha parry any one Sword- or Staff-shaping attack with his full dice pool, adding six bonus successes, even if that attack is normally unblockable.

Rarefied Air of Inevitable Victory

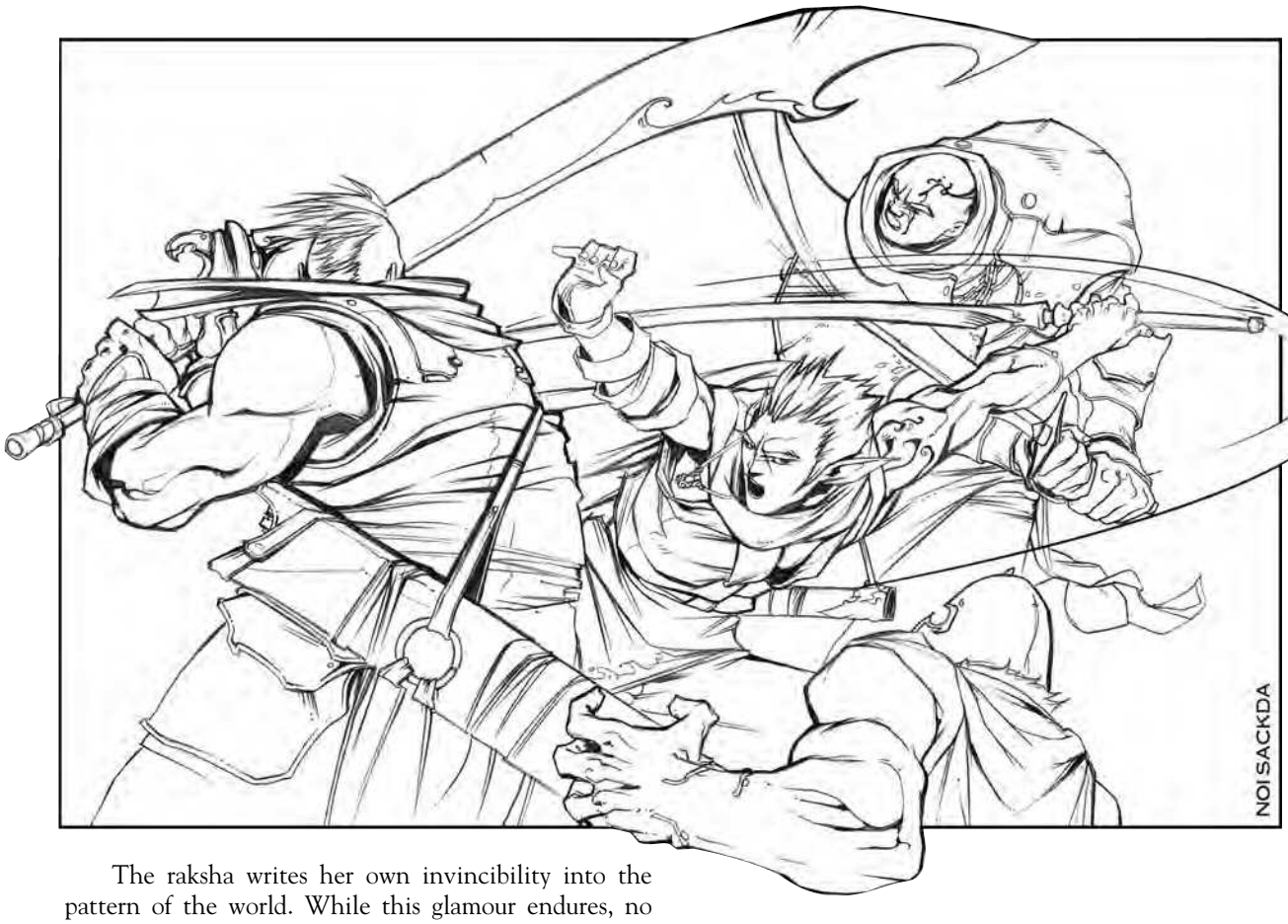
Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Sundering the Gates of Death, Radiance of the Invincible Warrior

The raksha masters the destiny of war. Cast itself at him though it might, the enemy cannot keep his forces down — they endure the most horrific assaults, they regroup after the most terrible of blows, and not all the greatest nightmares of the Wyld can keep the raksha from his appointed goal.

This Charm allows the raksha to reflexively parry any Sword or Staff attack against him with his full dice pool. He need not be aware of the attack. This paramount skill lasts until the end of the story.

Defining the Parameters of Battle

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 5
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Unconquerable Truth, Rarefied Air of Inevitable Victory



The raksha writes her own invincibility into the pattern of the world. While this glamour endures, no Sword shaping can defy the essential truths of her nature.

While this Charm is in force, the raksha can spend 1 gossamer to parry any one Sword- or Staff-shaping attack with her full dice pool, adding six bonus successes, even if that attack is normally unblockable.

In addition, this Charm allows the character to spend 1 gossamer to parry any mortal attack with her full Dexterity + Melee pool, adding six bonus successes, even if the attack is normally unblockable. This defense is a work of glamour and does not function against mortals with Wits + Essence greater than the raksha's Stamina.

All-Inclusive Nightmare Defense

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Scattering the Foe

The raksha unleashes fear and doubt upon her enemies. She disperses and drives back the weapons of the Sword. To use this Charm, she must successfully parry a Sword attack and receive extra successes equal to or exceeding the attacker's permanent Essence. This Charm removes the enemy's Sword-shaping or Staff-shaping weapon from readiness, normally by routing or killing the enemy's forces.

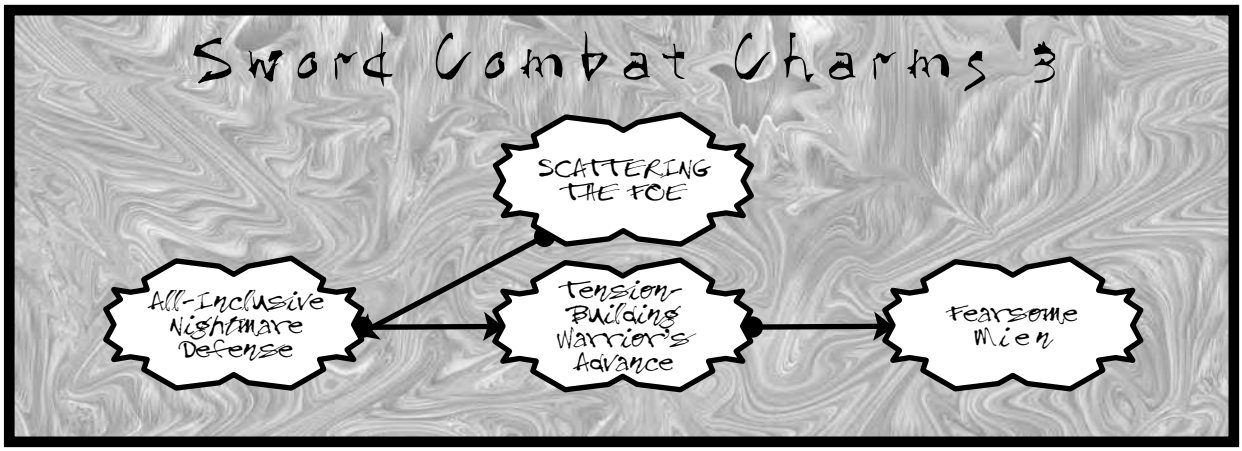
Tension-Building Warrior's Advance

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: All-Inclusive Nightmare Defense

The footsteps of the raksha ring loudly in the air. He takes on the aspect of the supreme divine emissary of death. As nothing can stand against him, nothing will. This Charm supplements a Sword or Staff attack, adding the raksha's Essence to the difficulty of all shaping parries. If the attack succeeds, the Charm also removes the enemy's shaping weapon from readiness. This Charm cannot be used for surprise attacks.

Fearsome Mien

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower, 2 gossamer
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Tension-Building Warrior's Advance



The raksha can weave a glamour that terrifies creatures of Creation. This requires a successful Sword attack. This Charm imposes a two-die penalty to the dice pools of all Creation-born enemies interacting with the character.

This is a work of glamour, and it has no effect on creatures with Valor + Essence greater than the raksha's highest Sword Ability (Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee or Presence).

World-Devouring Warlord Style

This shaping art tells the story of the emissary of death and fear, the great warlord who rises from inauspicious beginnings to cast the world into his shadow. The raksha using World-Devouring Warlord Style builds his army into a ravening and terrifying horde.

Aegis of a Martial Destiny

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Early in the story, the raksha establishes her motivation for battle. She cannot use this Charm if she has taken an aggressive shaping action this story. The raksha uses this Charm to augment a shaping Dodge action. This Charm adds her Sword in automatic successes to her Dodge roll.

Antagonist-Naming Technique

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Aegis of a Martial Destiny

The raksha defines herself and an antagonist of her choice as the principal characters of the story. The antagonist must exist. This Charm prevents the use of shaping actions that remove the raksha or her named antagonist as active characters in the story. For example, no one can use a shaping action to kill the raksha without also in some fashion bringing her back to life.

Thematic Stunting Methodology

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Aegis of a Martial Destiny

The raksha defines desirable premises of the story and genre. This adds five extra dice to her stunt pool.

World-Devouring Warlord Stance

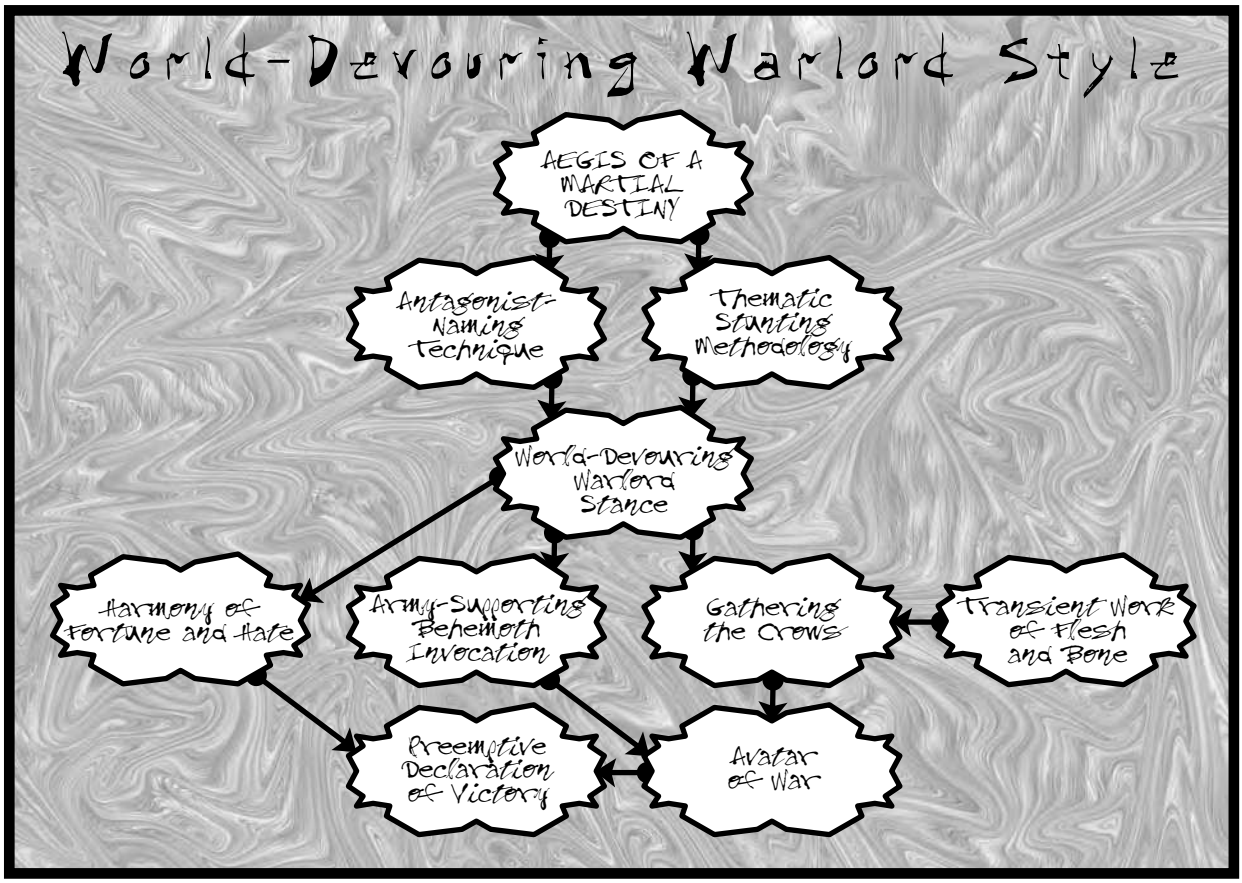
Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Antagonist-Naming Technique, Thematic Stunting Methodology

The raksha pours Essence into her Sword Grace. Flush with the power of the Sword, she becomes a devotee of battle and assumes the stance of an all-devouring warlord. This Charm adds the raksha's permanent Essence to her initiative, her Sword attack pools, her Sword defense pools and the raw (pre-soak) damage of Sword attacks.

This is a Stance-type Charm. Characters cannot use more than one Stance-type Charm at a time.

Gathering the Crows

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 4
Minimum Essence: 2



Prerequisite Charms: Transient Work of Flesh and Bone, World-Devouring Warlord Stance

The raksha summons servants and minions. Each invocation of this Charm calls forth a greater host to support her in war. Most of the troops are literal extras — they don't ever interact with enemies directly, but they swell the raksha's army ominously. This Charm increases the defense quality of her chosen shaping weapon by one, and multiple invocations of this Charm are cumulative.

Army-Supporting Behemoth Invocation

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: World-Devouring Warlord Stance

The raksha summons monsters, horrors and war machines to serve with his army. Each use of this Charm supports his forces with another great monster or a handful of smaller beasts. This Charm increases the damage of her chosen shaping weapon by one, and multiple invocations of this Charm are cumulative.

Avatar of War

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Gathering the Crows, Army-Supporting Behemoth Invocation

Closing her ears to screams and blandishments alike, the raksha marches to war. This Charm lets her immediately execute a Sword attack at her full dice pool against any character attacking her with a shaping action. This counterattack is resolved after the original attack is rolled but before its damage is determined.

Harmony of Fortune and Hate

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: World-Devouring Warlord Stance

The pattern of events develops inexorably in the raksha's favor. Hostile weather, strokes of ill fortune and

unpleasant terrain eat away at the enemy's will and power to fight. Each use of this Charm increases the difficulty of defense against the raksha's Sword attacks by one. Multiple invocations of this Charm stack, up to a maximum increased difficulty of the raksha's Essence.

Preemptive Declaration of Victory

Cost: 5 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Sword: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Avatar of War, Harmony of Fortune and Hate

Crushing her enemy underfoot, the raksha declares victory. The raksha makes a Sword attack. If she succeeds, this Charm converts the damage dice directly into successes.

The damage of this attack can affect the creatures of Creation. If the Sword attack succeeds, then all shaped creatures directly or indirectly in combat with the character realize themselves defeated. Their players must succeed at a Valor roll, or the characters lay down their arms in resigned surrender. For the rest of the scene, the defeated suffer a five-die penalty on all combat actions.

This Charm is a work of glamour, and it has no effect on creatures with Valor + Essence greater than the raksha's highest Sword Ability (Archery, Athletics, Brawl, Melee or Presence).

Mutation Charms

These Charms of Shape improve the raksha's combat abilities. They are often useful in the design of behemoths.

Pox

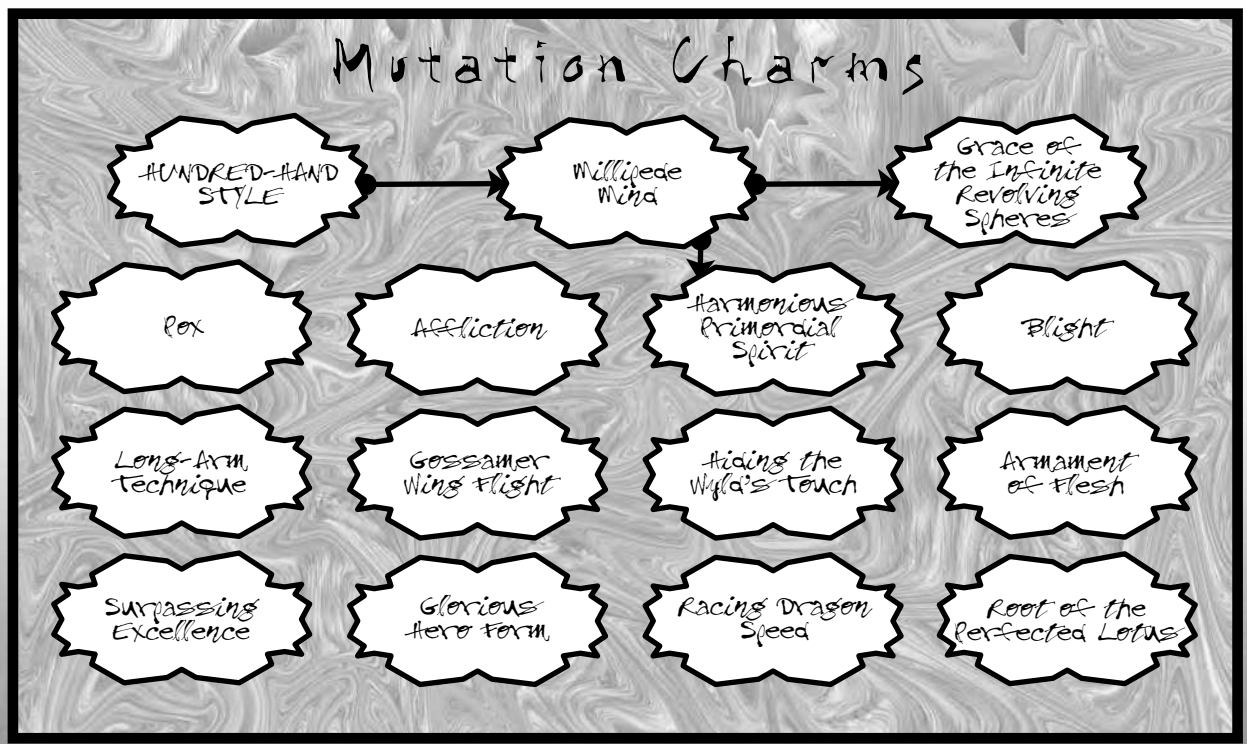
Cost: 2 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha manifests a Wyld pox (see **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 212) chosen at the time of the Charm's purchase. Players can purchase this Charm more than once, choosing a new pox each time.

Affliction

Cost: 4 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha manifests a Wyld affliction (see **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, pp. 212-215) chosen at the time of the Charm's purchase. Players can purchase this Charm more than once, choosing a new affliction each time.



Blight

Cost: 10 motes, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha manifests a Wyld blight (see **Exalted**, pp. 280-281, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, pp. 215-218) chosen at the time of the Charm's purchase. Players can purchase this Charm more than once, choosing a new blight each time.

Hundred-Hand Style

Cost: 4 motes, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha attunes her shape to the harmony of principles, so that her mind and body function as many rather than one. This Charm is favored by raksha with extra arms, heads or personalities, but these things are not necessary to receive the Charm's primary benefit. Activating this Charm reduces multiple action penalties by 1, to a minimum of 0.

Millipede Mind

Cost: 8 motes, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Hundred-Hand Style

The raksha divides control of her mind and body among her Graces, so that five distinct principles guide her every action. Activating this Charm reduces multiple action penalties by 2, to a minimum of 0. The raksha can benefit from this Charm and its prerequisite simultaneously.

Grace of the Infinite Revolving Spheres

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Millipede Mind

The raksha flows smoothly through the interwoven desires of his five component Graces. If he splits his dice pool, the first five actions suffer no multiple-action penalties. The raksha can benefit from this Charm and its prerequisites simultaneously.

Harmonious Primordial Spirit

Cost: 4 motes, 1 gossamer, 1 experience point
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Millipede Mind

The raksha embeds one of her Graces in a consenting common raksha, replacing his own version of that Grace. The creature becomes a bound subsidiary entity, a spiritual extension of the raksha's body, with the qualities and abilities of a heroic commoner. The servant serves the raksha loyally and at all times knows her will. The activating raksha still has access to the Grace while this Charm is in effect, and the subsidiary raksha also uses this Grace for Charms and damage.

Long-Arm Technique

Cost: 1 mote, 1 gossamer per 2 yards
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

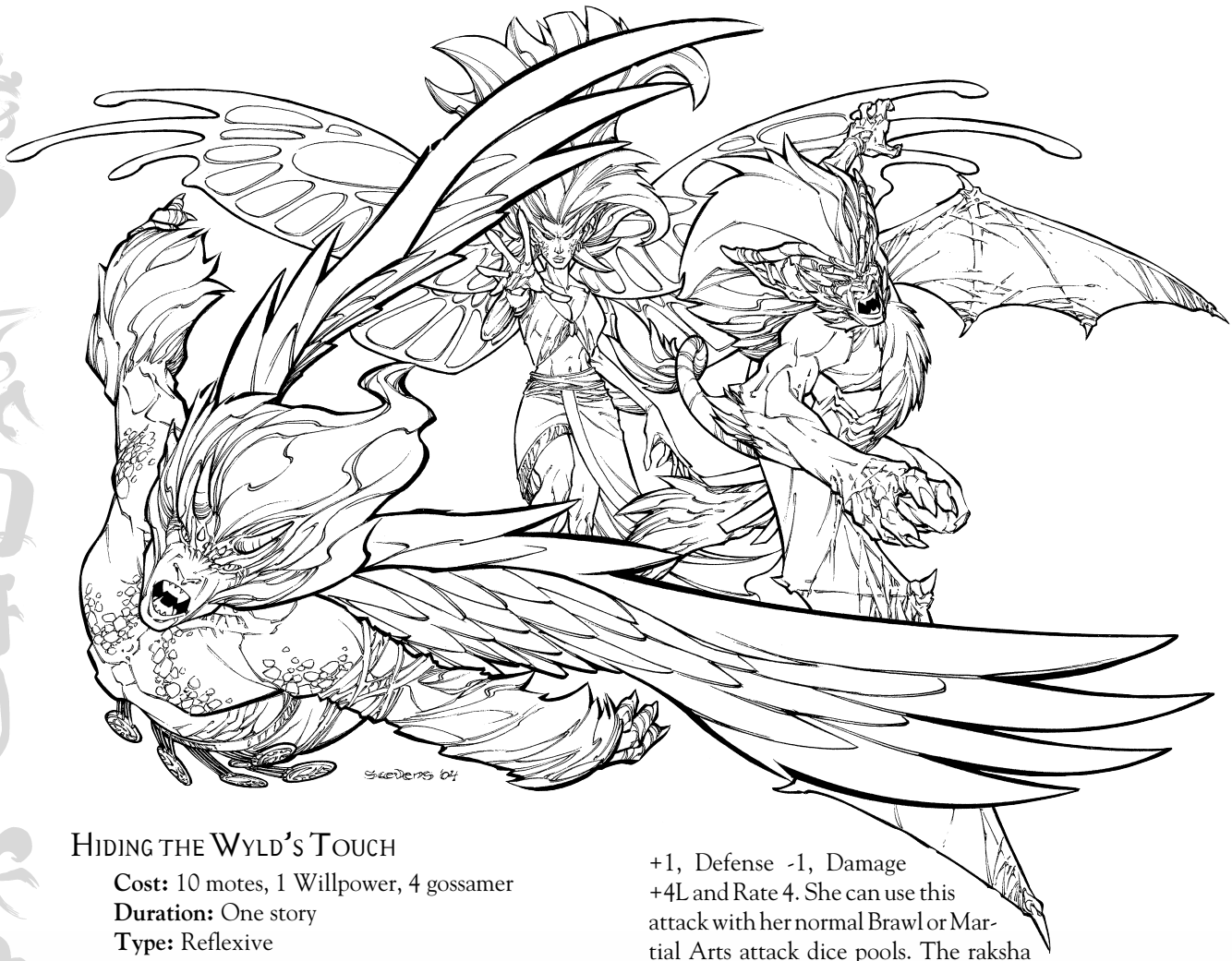
Raksha with this Charm are never quite so far from their victims as they might appear. Fair Folk under this Charm's influence look normal until they attack, when their limbs stretch and unfold like flowing geysers of flesh. For each gossamer spent, this Charm adds two yards to the raksha's reach. Raksha with this Charm active can strike opponents on horseback without penalty.

Gossamer Wing Flight

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower, 2 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Simple
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha forms wings for himself, shaping them from the mixed substances of the Wyld and Creation. Nobles often build their wings from the appropriate element. Commoners base their wings on the wings of birds or insects. The raksha's wingspan is at least equal to his height, and the raksha cannot fly if he cannot spread his wings. The character can fly at normal speed, ascend at half speed or dive at twice his normal speed.

Gossamer wings are clumsy, and the character suffers a +2 difficulty penalty on all Dexterity-based normal dice actions while airborne. The player can eliminate this penalty by purchasing this Charm a second time. Raksha using either version of this Charm may make fly-by attacks (see the **Exalted Players Guide**, p. 201).



Hiding the Wyld's Touch

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 4 gossamer
Duration: One story
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha's body language and manner of expression are unnaturally human and familiar — the monster moves and speaks like an amalgam of old friends, family and lovers. This Charm gives two automatic successes on normal Social dice actions. If the raksha is also hideously inhuman in appearance or behavior, this Charm does not force others to disregard this fact — they simply find themselves noticing the "person within."

Armament of Flesh

Cost: 2 mutation points
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha develops understated but potent natural weaponry. Her small fangs, pointed nails or thin elegant horns are sharp enough to puncture steel. This affliction gives the raksha a natural attack with Speed -3, Accuracy +1, Defense -1, Damage +4L and Rate 4. She can use this attack with her normal Brawl or Martial Arts attack dice pools. The raksha can shape more blatant and obvious weaponry if desired — subtlety is simply the standard.

Surpassing Excellence

Cost: 1 mutation point
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

In a place between worlds, the raksha forges herself like a weapon. She uses the elemental Essence of Creation to empower one of her Abilities.

This pox adds a permanent two-die specialty to any one Ability, which does not count against her specialty limit. Raksha can use this Charm to purchase inhumanly keen senses — for example, a two-die Keen Eyesight specialty on Awareness gives benefits commensurate with the Eye Color pox (see **Exalted** p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 212).

Players can purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the raksha's Sword.

Glorious Hero Form

Cost: 2 mutation points
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha binds herself to the principle Caturbhuja, the shinma that breaks the borders of the possible and impossible. She transcends even the perfection of the raksha.

This affliction permanently increases her Attributes in one of the following ways:

- She gains one dot of Strength and one dot of Stamina.
- She gains one dot of Intelligence and one dot of Perception.
- She gains one dot of Charisma and one dot of Appearance.
- She gains one dot of Dexterity.
- She gains one dot of Wits.
- She gains one dot of Manipulation.

Players can purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the raksha's Sword.

Racing Dragon Speed

Cost: 1 mutation point
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Sword: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha imbues her body with the speed of the wind, the fire or the waves. This Charm permanently adds five yards to the raksha's running speed. Players can purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the raksha's Compassion.

Root of the Perfected Lotus

Cost: 4 mutation points
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Sword: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha sinks into the flows of the Essence of Creation, shaping in herself the destiny, spirit and attitude necessary to practice supernatural martial arts. This allows her to learn Martial Arts Charms as a Dragon-Blooded.

Glamour Sorcery

The great spells of the raksha are artifacts forged from raksha Graces and bound to the aspects of Dharma. Most come from the Graces of the unshaped.

Spells are the poisons and drugs of the Wyld. They undermine or change the Essence patterns of those they encounter. The raksha use them as tools of ravishment. They are aphrodisiacs, depressants, euphorics, opiates and hallucinogens. They make the experience of others' shaping more intense, more confusing or more unbearable and, in so doing, facilitate the arts of the Cup. In Creation and within the worlds of raksha-shaped fate, they manifest as patterns of changing circumstance.

Raksha and Lunar Exalted purchase the spells of glamour sorcery as artifacts. Spells have an Artifact level ranging from one to five, with the rarest distillations qualifying as Artifact N/A. Attuning a spell requires a commitment of 3 motes per level and several scenes of ritual maintenance each day. Many nobles have common lorekeepers who tend their spells and perform the invocations and rituals on their behalf.

Spell Abilities

The spells of glamour sorcery are brooding, viscous agglutinations of ideas, and if left unattuned and unappeased, most slouch back to the depths of the Wyld from which they came. The raksha who attunes to and maintains the spell is its lorekeeper. The spell uses the lorekeeper's Traits when determining its abilities. This lorekeeper is not necessarily the raksha who holds spiritual ownership over the spell — having created, purchased or won it — and it is the raksha who owns the spell who spends the motes and gossamer to summon it into Creation.

Glamour Sorcery spells can be used as weapons in Cup-shaping combat.

Waking Circle Spell (Artifact •)

These are the pettiest of spells, from the circle of waking visions — more the caffeine or sugar of the Wyld than its cocaine. In Cup-shaping combat, they have qualities similar to a normal one-dot artifact weapon — by default, a piercing clinch enhancer with Speed -5, Accuracy +1, Damage +4, Defense +4 and Rate 1.

Invoking these spells in Creation takes one scene, 10 motes and 1 gossamer. Once invoked, they remain invoked for a full story, but the motes are not committed.

To determine the tangible effects of a Waking Circle spell, build each spell as an object with 10 mutation points. They must have exactly 1 point of Assumption-type Charm mutations, normally Assumption of Elemental Shape (see p. 149). The remaining mutation points are spent on non-Assumption-type mutations to craft the spell itself.

For example, a Waking Circle spell might take form as a leering wooden mask that impoverishes all who look upon it. Such a mask has the permanent versions of Assumption of Elemental Shape (Wood) and the Hateful Coin Curse (see p. 180). When someone looks at the mask, roll its lorekeeper's Intelligence + Bureaucracy. The victim temporarily loses one dot of Resources per success; this work of glamour fails if the target's Wits + Essence exceeds the lorekeeper's Bureaucracy.

Glamour Sorcery and Countermagic

Countermagic can dispel the effects of glamour sorcery. For this purpose, treat Waking and Dreaming Circle spells as Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, treat Desire and Samadhi Circle spells as Celestial Circle Sorcery, and treat Shinma Circle spells as Solar Circle Sorcery.

In addition, each of these spells has a physical manifestation — usually as sturdy as an artifact made from one of the Five Magical Materials. Targeted by countermagic of equal level, it goes inert, dispelling all effects; the raksha cannot use that spell again that story. Targeted by greater countermagic, the manifestation shatters, destroying the spell entirely and unmaking all its effects. Emerald Countermagic shatters Waking Circle spells; Sapphire Countermagic shatters Waking, Dreaming and Desire Circle spells; and Adamant Countermagic, targeting the spell's manifestation, utterly destroys any raksha spell not protected by Mad God Mien (see p. 150).

Dreaming Circle Spell (Artifact ••)

These spells are the substance of dream, disruptive to elements of pattern. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to a normal one-dot artifact weapon. In addition, most offer a positive pharmaceutical effect to the user or disruptively poison their victims. Pharmaceuticals usually add two dice to a shaping Ability. Poisons usually force a Stamina + Resistance check at difficulty 3 each time the shaping weapon damages a target lest the target suffer an extra point of Cup damage.

Invoking these spells in Creation takes one scene, 15 motes and 1 gossamer. Once invoked, they remain invoked for a full story, but the motes are not committed.

The tangible effects of a Dreaming Circle spell are built with 11 mutation points. They have either 1 or 2 points of Assumption-type Charm mutations, normally Assumption of Elemental Shape (see p. 149) or Assumption of the Land's Heart (see p. 150). The remaining mutation points are spent on non-Assumption-type mutations to craft the spell itself.

For example, a Dreaming Circle spell might blanket a hamlet-sized region with the ignorance of pain — though pain and suffering remain real, people there naturally conceal and forget about its existence, so that they believe themselves living in a utopia. This might take form as a spherical gem with the permanent versions of Assumption of the Land's Heart and Fall of Night Shadows the Truth (see p. 169). When conjured into Creation, the Assumption of the Land's Heart effect draws its influence down into the earth, blanketing a region suitable for a small hamlet. Whenever someone is hurt or suffers in that region, roll the spell's lorekeeper's Conviction + Stealth, adding its successes to the difficulty of Investigation, Lore, Occult or Socialize rolls to find out about that pain. This is a work of glamour that cannot shield suffering from those with Intelligence + Essence exceeding the lorekeeper's Stealth.

Desire Circle Spell (Artifact •••)

These spells are crafted to influence the deep shifting undermind urges that inspire both life-affirming dreams and nightmares. In shaping combat, Desire Circle spells have qualities similar to a normal two- or three-dot artifact weapon, defaulting to Speed +6, Accuracy +1, Damage +8, Defense +1 and Rate 5.

Invoking these spells in Creation takes two scenes, 20 motes and 2 gossamer. Once invoked, they remain invoked until some condition inherent to the spell is met. If that condition is the passage of time, the spell lasts up to one year and one day. The motes are not committed.

The tangible effects of a Desire Circle spell are built with 13 mutation points. They have 1 to 4 points of Assumption-type Charm mutations, normally chosen from Assumption of Elemental Shape (see p. 149), Assumption of the Land's Heart (see p. 150) or Assumption of the City's Heart (see p. 150). The remaining mutation points are spent on non-Assumption-type Charms to craft the spell itself.

The effects of Desire Circle spells are stronger than ordinary works of glamour. Characters whose Traits would normally render them immune to the work of glamour still suffer its effects unless they use a stunt or Charm to see through it. Such Charms need not offer any specific defense against the Wyld.

For example, a Desire Circle spell could transform a city into a maze. This might take the form of a labyrinth drawn on a piece of gilt paper. It has the permanent versions of Assumption of the City's Heart and Undetectable Lie (see p. 175). When summoned into Creation, it tacks itself to a wall in the city and sinks its power deep into the land. The chosen lie is "You're hopelessly lost." Characters with Wits + Essence up to the lorekeeper's Manipulation consider themselves hopelessly lost from the moment they enter the city and are likely to wander in circles even with their destination in plain sight. Their only hope for finding their way is to give up on finding their way. Stunts and Charms won't help unless they defend against the Fair Folk, the Wyld or the raksha's twisting of their minds. Characters with Wits + Essence higher than the lorekeeper's Manipulation would normally be immune, but because this spell is of the Desire Circle, they must use a stunt or Charm to escape it. Some appropriate Solar Charms include Trackless Region Navigation Charm, Judge's Ear Technique and even Ten

Magistrate Eyes (see **Exalted**, pp. 181 and 185). A simple stunt such as marking one's way with chalk or navigating by the stars would also suffice.

Samadhi Circle Spell (Artifact ••••)

These spells are crafted to influence the endless primordial dreams of the Wyld, the Graces and the mortal soul. These are also called "True Self Spells," and no raksha can cast them that does not own his own Heart. In shaping combat, Samadhi Circle spells have qualities appropriate to a three- or four-dot artifact weapon, defaulting to Speed +6, Accuracy +1, Damage +8, Defense +1, Rate 5 and a special power, such as the ability to ready the spell without a shaping action.

Invoking these spells in Creation takes two scenes, 25 motes and 2 gossamer. Once invoked, they remain invoked until some condition inherent to the spell is met. If that condition is the passage of time, the spell lasts up to one year and one day. The motes are not committed.

The tangible effects of a Samadhi Circle spell are built with 15 mutation points. They have 1 to 6 points of Assumption-type Charm mutations. The remaining mutation points are spent on non-Assumption-type mutations to craft the spell itself. Charms or stunts are necessary to see through the Samadhi Circle, as with the Desire Circle.

For example, a Samadhi Circle spell could create a tainted land and slowly gather an army of Wyld addicts. Cast as the Wyld recedes from Creation, its permanent Assumption of the Wyld-Tainted Land (see p. 150) takes force and creates a tainted region. The permanent version of Shiftless Untamed Beauty (see pp. 166-167) makes the land itself addictive, and the permanent version of Adored By All the Worlds (see p. 168) attracts a few more followers — Wyld loyalists, drawn to the region rather than the raksha — each scene. As the storm gathers, the permanent form of Ordinary Object Conjuration (see p. 179) forges one suit of armor from the sky each scene. Mad God Mien (see pp. 150-151) protects the result from standard countermagic.

Shinma Circle Spell (Artifact •••••)

These spells are crafted to influence the substance before dreams, the primal substrata of the Wyld and the world from which the shinma, the Primordials and certain of the unshaped were made. These spells are the most terrifying of the shaping weapons of the Cup. In shaping combat, Samadhi Circle spells have qualities appropriate to a four- or five-dot artifact weapon, defaulting to Speed +6, Accuracy +1, Damage +8, Defense +1, Rate 5 and a major special power, such as a mote-fueled persistent defense or the ability to fight on its own.

Invoking these spells in Creation takes three scenes, 30 motes and 3 gossamer. Once invoked, they remain invoked until some condition inherent to the spell is met. If that condition is the passage of time, the spell lasts up to one century. The motes are not committed.

The tangible effects of a Shinma Circle spell are built with up to 18 mutation points, at least 1 of which must come from an Assumption-type Charm. The remaining mutation points are spent to craft the spell itself. It takes an appropriate Charm or stunt to see through Shinma Circle works of glamour, as with the Samadhi and Desire Circles.

These rules apply only to player-created Shinma Circle spells or spells created by the Storyteller for casual unshaped use. Shinma Circle spells that exist for story purposes can have additional or unusual abilities. Some are effectively legendary (N/A) artifacts in power.

Wyld Artifacts

Artifacts are the proof of craft. They are the creator's will resonating with the patterns of the world. Raksha receive a +2 rate bonus, a +1 accuracy bonus and a +1 defense bonus to the qualities of a Ring-shaping weapon if they crafted or reshaped it themselves. Such weapons demonstrate the puissance of the creator as well as the general principles of craft.

The Ring can forge traditional artifacts — things such as artifact swords and enchanted masks — from Ring Graces and the substance of the Wyld. These are known as Wyld artifacts and rarely display the full predictability of the artifacts of Creation. Only a few of these treasures are Ring-shaping weapons, since the Ring's urge to shape is more generic than the Cup's, the Staff's or the Sword's. Treasures that do function as Ring-shaping weapons are usually artifacts based on the same principles as the curdling dream bow, the shaping lens and the world heart.

Resonant Chorus Bow (Artifact •)

Resonant chorus bows are gossamer-inlaid versions of curdling dream bows. The deep power and order in them gives rise to chiming, thrumming, susurruses, chittering and song — varying in tenor and style from one moment to the next, but never silent.

They have Accuracy +2, Damage 15, Rate 2, unlimited Maximum Perception, a range of 6 waypoints and a commitment cost of 3 motes.

Hundred Color Shaping Lens (Artifact ••)

Hundred color shaping lenses are writhing microcosms. The ornate inlay on the shaping lens is made of a hundred woven strands of dream, struggling eternally with one another to dominate the pattern.

They have +2 Accuracy, +3 Damage, 2 Rate, unlimited Maximum Perception, a range of 10 waypoints, and a commitment cost of six motes.

Artifact Waypoint (Artifact •••+)

The raksha can enchant a waypoint or collection of waypoints, forming a Ring-shaping weapon. Such weapons are the equivalent of mobile artillery platforms.

Like an airship passing over Creation at a fixed altitude, artifact waypoints float through the Wyld at a fixed distance of one journey "away," "above" or "below" the waypoints they pass through. The attuned raksha steers them at his normal movement rate.

Used in Ring-shaping combat, an artifact waypoint has qualities similar to a normal artifact ranged or thrown weapon of equal level and a commitment cost of 3 motes per level. An artifact waypoint structure contains up to the Artifact level in waypoints, and attempts to damage the waypoints themselves through shaping are at +3 difficulty.

Adjurations

Raksha bind their society together with adjurations, also called "the world-shaping oaths." In Creation, oaths are intangible concepts. In the Wyld, the adjurations of the Fair Folk are Essence patterns and, thus, as real and physical as anything else in the cauldron of dream — artifacts of the raksha, shaped from Graces, bound to the aspects of Nirvikalpa.

Adjurations differ from typical promises or vows in that they empower those bound to them. Enticing the raksha to swear to them, they offer gifts and blessings; once having bound the Fair Folk, they manipulate the oathtaker and the world itself to ensure their own fulfillment. They are essentially living creatures, diplomats of a sort, hungry to draw society together in the harmonious or anarchistic order implicit to their nature. They are also shaping weapons, for each casts its shadow over the weave of fate and encourages others into those commitments its raksha favors.

Fair Folk and Lunar Exalted purchase adjurations as artifacts. Adjurations have an Artifact level ranging from • to •••••, with certain lost oaths qualifying as Artifact N/A. Swearing to an oath requires a commitment of 1 mote per level and the character cannot voluntarily stop committing Essence to the oath — she must fulfill it before she can reclaim the investment.

Raksha sworn to an adjuration cannot voluntarily break that oath. Breaking it involuntarily causes the character to suffer a catastrophic botch at the most poetically appropriate moment, exactly as though an Eclipse Caste Solar had sanctified the oath. The environmental penalty for working around the adjuration (see p. 131) is usually equal to its level.

When a raksha attuned to a Throne Room swears to an adjuration on behalf of a Freehold, the Freehold holds the benefit in common — the lord of the Freehold can reflexively assign it to any consenting character in fealty to him.

Adjurations are weapons in Staff-shaping combat.

Samhara Oath (Artifact •)

These are adjurations sworn in the name of the Nishkriya, the Sword. These oaths are made in the shadow of endings and the knowledge that all things die. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to normal one-dot artifact weapons — typically a weapon with Speed +7, Accuracy +2, Damage +9, Defense +3 and Rate 2 that does piercing damage. They often manifest as raven shadows that hover close to the raksha and drive others into commitments through fear.

Each samhara oath contains a specific promise and up to 2 mutation points of powers. Raksha who attune to the oath by swearing to that promise receive the associated mutations until the oath is broken or fulfilled. An unwise oath can put a raksha in bedlam or calcify him.

The raksha Dasasya swore, "I shall not set foot again on land until I have slain the Unconquered Sun." With bloody sword and the 2-point mutation Gossamer Wing Flight, he rose into the sky.

Samhara oaths are also called Sword oaths or one-dot oaths.

Sthiti Oath (Artifact ••)

These are adjurations sworn in honor of the shinma of the Ring. These oaths are made in recognition that the self exists only in context with the other and that interaction is part of self-definition. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to normal two-dot artifact weapons — typically a weapon with Speed +6, Accuracy +0, Damage +13, Defense -1 and Rate 1 that does piercing damage. They often manifest in shaped worlds as coronas of light that subtly shine around those who sanctify their integrity with commitments.

Each sthiti oath contains a specific promise and up to 3 mutation points of powers. Raksha who attune to the oath by swearing to that promise receive the associated mutations until the oath is broken or fulfilled.

The raksha Ayo swore, "Until Calibration takes this burden from me, I shall not sleep without weapon in

How Inconvenient Are a Raksha's Oaths?

They're not.

The raksha do take complicated, powerful oaths and then squirm their way out of them with admirable finesse. They do take ruthless advantage of an enemy's most trivial promises. These things happen — but they're part of Staff-shaping contests, where the complexity and power of these oaths is just one more token in the game.

In Creation and in the raw Wyld, the raksha try very hard to avoid promises that hamstring them — adjuration or otherwise. When they do make the kinds of oaths you see in stories, it's not to access an adjuration's power; it's because their passion drives them to make a legendary oath. (Or possibly because an Exalt tricks them into it.)

hand." She gained the mutation version of Ordinary Object Conjuration. She need only beckon and her player roll Conviction + Performance, and if three successes are achieved, an excellent straight sword appears in the raksha's hand.

Sthiti oaths are also called Ring oaths or two-dot oaths.

Anugraha Oath (Artifact •••)

These are adjurations sworn in the name of the Dharma, the Cup. These are oaths made in joy or hunger, out of desire for their outcome. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to normal three-dot artifact weapons — typically, a piercing weapon with Speed +10, Accuracy +0, Damage +9, Defense +1 and Rate 3. They often manifest in shaped worlds as will-o-wisps or siren scraps of music, luring others into commitments through beauty.

Each anugraha oath contains a specific promise and up to 4 mutation points of powers. Raksha who attune to the oath by swearing to that promise receive the associated mutations until the oath is broken or fulfilled — but halve the total mutation point cost, rounding up.

The raksha Nishumba swore to dedicate himself for a year and a day to the devastation of his enemies. To do so, he took on a monstrous two-headed goblin body formed with the Wyld affliction Huge (see **Exalted,** p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 214) and took 2 mutation points worth of Oath Gossamer (see p. 195).

Anugraha oaths are also called Cup oaths or three-dot oaths.

Tirobhava Oath (Artifact ••••)

These are adjurations sworn in the name of Nirvikalpa, the Staff. These are oaths sworn because oaths are bindings, and in bindings, there is power. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to normal four-dot artifact weapons — typically, a weapon with Speed +10, Accuracy +0, Damage +9, Defense +1 and Rate 3 that does piercing damage and possesses a minor special power. They often manifest in shaped worlds as a staff held by the raksha and wrapped with the terrible power of law.

Each tirobhava oath contains a specific promise and up to 6 mutation points of powers. Raksha who attune to the oath by swearing to that promise receive the associated mutations until the oath is broken or fulfilled — but halve the total mutation point cost, rounding up.

The raksha Madhu, who dwelt in endless ocean, swore, "Let any catch me on the land, and they may slay me." For this oath, he gained Assumption of the Living Kingdom and paired it with the Assumption of the Land's Heart that he personally knew. No sooner did he pass into Creation but his spirit sank into the endless ocean of the West and became the invulnerable sea. Then, a Solar prince covered the sea in obsidian shards and dredged up Madhu to lay atop them, and the raksha was forced to submit to destruction.

Tirobhava oaths are also called Staff oaths or four-dot oaths.

Srishti Oath (Artifact •••••)

These are adjurations sworn in the name of Nirguna, the Heart — the truest and deepest oaths of the raksha. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to normal four-dot artifact weapons — typically, a weapon with Speed +10, Accuracy +0, Damage +9, Defense +1 and Rate 3 that does piercing damage and possesses a major special power.

The benefits of the srishti oath are built on up to 4 points of mutations, but the raksha may swear to the oath for a single mutation point.

Hiranya swore that he would serve the shinma Nirvikalpa with the performance of many austerities, never letting himself rest or die, and the strength of the oath was such that neither man nor beast could kill him — not with a weapon or without a weapon, not during day nor night, not indoors nor outdoors and not on the earth nor in the sky. This brought him the benefit Bastion of the Self (see p. 156), with partial immunity to mortal damage and the arts of the Sword. Yet, Nara-simha, a monstrous lion-headed raksha, caught Hiranya in the twilight hour, carried him to a threshold, and on his lap, with clawed hands, strangled him. This attack earned a three-die Wyld stunt on a Sword attack, broke the oath and earned Hiranya a botch on his reflexive counterattack that snapped his own Sword Grace.

Srishti oaths are also called Heart oaths or five-dot oaths.

Behemoths

The behemoths of the Fair Folk are artifacts forged from raksha Graces and bound to the aspects of Nishkriya. Most come from the Graces of the unshaped.

Behemoths exist to make a point. They manifest the attitude of the raksha that creates them. The unshaped answer the impudence of questing nobles with giant monsters, leaving the philosophical commentary implicit. Classically, behemoths are huge, terrifying beasts. The unshaped forge them to maximize stunt potential — they have quirks that make them exceptionally horrible or let them do unusually cool things.

Fair Folk and Lunar Exalted purchase behemoths as artifacts. Behemoths have an Artifact level ranging from • to •••••, with the greatest monsters of the far reaches qualifying as Artifact N/A. Dominating a behemoth requires a commitment of 3 motes per level, as well as several hours of bonding time per day. Nobles typically have creature handlers attune behemoths on their behalf.

Behemoths are weapons in Sword-shaping combat.

Behemoth Powers

Behemoths use the base Traits of the attuned creature handler. This specifically excludes Backgrounds and most Merits and Flaws. It does include Virtues. Compassionate

raksha field sympathetic monsters. Valorous raksha field terrible, fearless foes.

Fey Beasts (Artifact • or ••)

Fey beasts are the least of the Wyld horrors the raksha marshal in battle. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to a normal one-dot artifact weapon — by default Speed, -5, Accuracy +1, Damage +4, Defense +4 and Rate 2.

Build one-dot fey beasts on up to 9 mutation points and two-dot fey beasts on 11. You must spend 1 mutation point on Knife-Hand Dream and 2 mutation points on Armament of Flesh. This gives the creature a natural attack with Speed -3, Accuracy +1, Damage +4L, Defense +1 and Rate 4. It can also parry lethal attacks while unarmed. The remaining 6 mutation points fit the creature's theme.

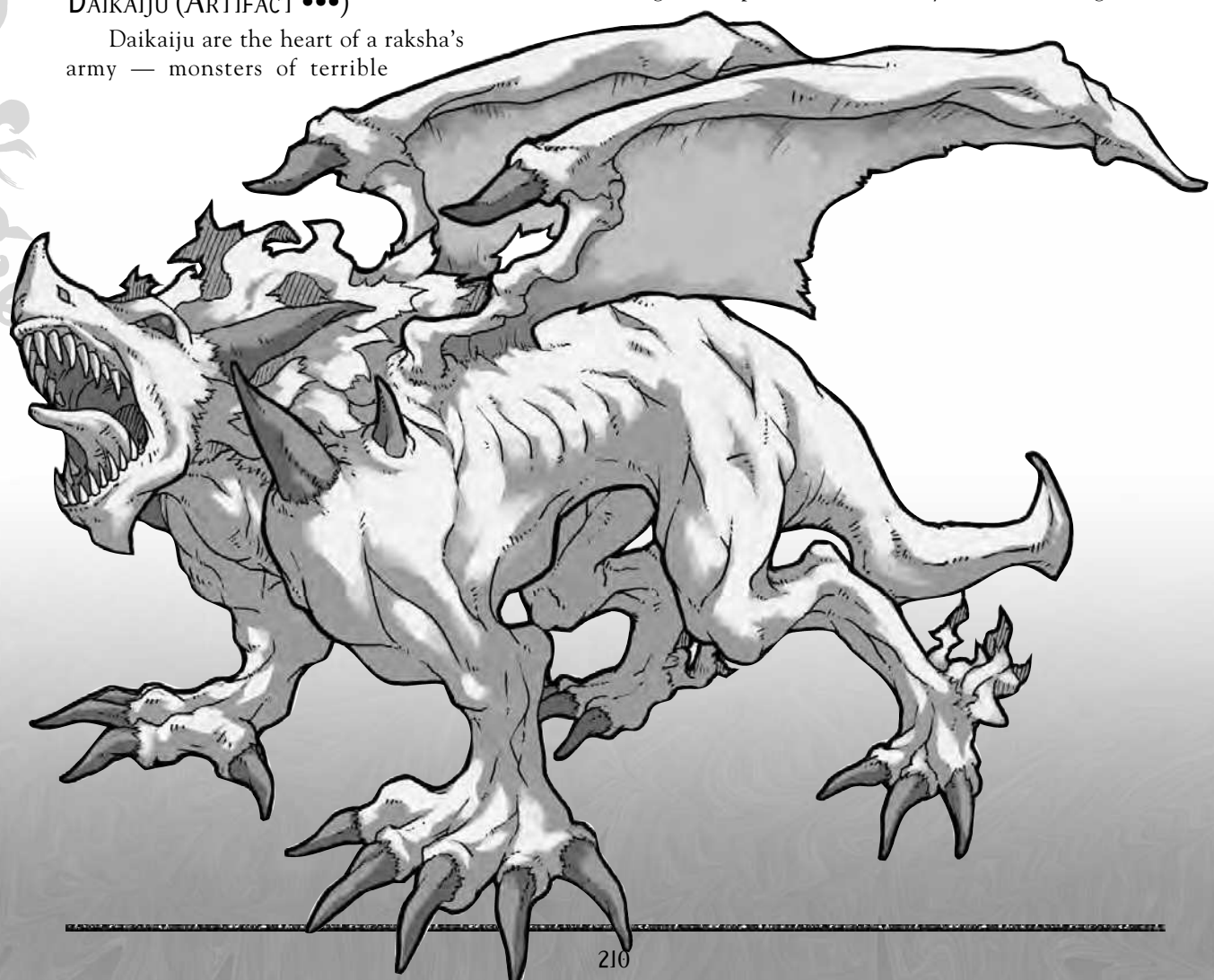
For example, a long-necked, sharp-beaked, scaled riding bird might have Knife-Hand Dream, Armament of Flesh, Gossamer Wing Flight, Glorious Hero Form and the Wyld affliction Thick Skin (see pp. 178, 204, 203 and 205 and **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 214). It uses its handler's Traits, but it adds flight, 3L/3B soak, three dice on Survival rolls, one dot of Strength, one dot of Stamina and a beak-based natural attack.

Daikaiju (Artifact •••)

Daikaiju are the heart of a raksha's army — monsters of terrible prowess. In shaping combat, they have qualities similar to a normal two- or three-dot artifact weapon — by default, Speed +10, Accuracy +3, Damage +12, Defense +0 and Rate 4.

Daikaiju have 12L/12B armor. This stacks with armor from mutations. Their natural weaponry uses the attack modifiers of an exceptional mundane weapon. For example, a behemoth with great elephantine legs might use them as exceptional sledges with bonus accuracy, damage and defense. In addition, daikaiju receive 12 mutation points to spend as desired.

For example, an unshaped could create a white hybroc dwelling in the heart of an eternal blizzard. Its feathers are like knives — specifically, exceptional throwing knives with improved rate, melee damage and ranged damage. It can cast them off at the nadir of a wingbeat. This monstrous beast inflicts primal terror on those who catch a glimpse of its burning red eyes or hear the beat of its wings — it uses Imposition of Law (see pp. 155-156) to automatically succeed on Presence (Intimidation) rolls. Its frozen heart beats once a century, and its skin turns attacks like superheavy steel — it uses Bastion of the Self (see p. 156) for immunity to normal damage. It has Gossamer Wing Flight (see p. 203) and the Wyld affliction Huge (see



Exalted, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 214), increasing its Strength and Stamina by two dots over those of its handler and adding a -0 and a -1 health level.

Deep Wyld Horror (Artifact •••• or •••••)

These monsters are the terror weapons in a raksha's arsenal. In Sword combat, they have qualities appropriate to a four- or five-dot artifact. In shaping combat, they default to Speed +10, Accuracy +3, Damage +12, Defense +0, Rate 4 and possess a special power of some sort.

Deep Wyld horrors have 20L/20B armor. This stacks with armor from mutations. Their natural weaponry uses the modifiers for an attuned one- or two-dot artifact weapon, complete with Magical Material bonus. For example, the writhing barbed spines of a soul-eating monstrous boar might have the weapon qualities of an attuned soulsteel dire lance: Speed +12, Accuracy +3, Damage +9L, Defense +3, Rate 3, extra damage on a charge and the ability to drink the boar's handler's Essence in motes from any creature to which the terror does at least one health level of damage. In addition, Deep Wyld horrors receive 15 mutation points to spend as desired.

For example, the boar might be an indefatigable hunter. Two picks of Imposition of Law (see pp. 155-156) give it automatic success on Stamina + Endurance (While Hunting) and Perception + Survival (Tracking) rolls. To this, it adds the Giant blight (see **Exalted**, p. 281, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 216), the Enhanced Smell and Hearing pox (see **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 212) and Glorious Hero Form (see p. 205), increasing its Strength by three, its Stamina by three, its health levels by -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2, its scent and hearing Awareness rolls by two dice and its Dexterity by one.

Ishiika (Artifact N/A)

Prince Balor, who is lost, tamed and wielded Ishiika, a behemoth aspect of the shinma Nishkriya. Ishiika, the grass-cutter scythe, is a scorpion formed of a surging sea of teeth. All around it hovers a cloud of endless clicking disembodied mandibles that in the pattern of their sounds speak the greatest fears of every listener's heart. Even Balor could not wield Ishiika against Creation, for the creature is larger than all the lands of shape.

Employed in Sword combat, Ishiika has Speed +10, Accuracy +3, Damage +12, Defense +5 and an unlimited rate. Its wielder automatically wins initiative. If opposed by a similar initiative-stealing effect, those involved roll for initiative normally. In addition, the wielder can delay his initiative without penalty, acting at any point during the initiative order. Shaping weapons used to parry Ishiika are utterly destroyed, shattering their Sword and Heart Graces (if any) before eliminating them entirely.

In ordinary combat, Ishiika has immortality on the level of the Primordials. It focuses three attacks on each mortal enemy per turn, each with 10 successes on the attack roll and 11L base damage. Targets who do not use Charms or stunts to defend themselves take an automatic three health levels of damage rather than suffer an attack.

Nirupadhika, the Way

The shinma Nirupadhika defines space and location. It exists in no place and all places, and its mad eyes regard all things in the Wyld with disorienting simultaneity. It would speak, but it has no voice. It would act, but it has no space in which to act. Compressed to nothingness and stretched in all directions, it wails the agony of its existence, and that agony is travel.

Nirupadhika is an example of one of the other shinma the raksha might tame, associated with the Abilities Awareness, Sail and Survival. Its Charms are extremely rare, but two are included here as examples.

Forging the Way Grace

Cost: 10 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ring: 0
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Forging the Heart Grace

Crafting the Way Grace for a consenting creature, the raksha teaches the target to tame Nirupadhika. This Charm consumes a supply of gossamer and creates an artifact. This artifact has the normal qualities of a finely crafted weapon, suit of armor or tool, in addition to the standard Grace qualities. It creates a Way Trait for the creature.

Raksha and other Essence users can attune to a creature's Way Grace. This requires six scenes of handling and a 1-mote commitment, which erases any previous raksha's attunement. Characters attuned to a creature's Way Grace can reflexively strip away the creature's connection to Nirupadhika, lowering their Way to 0. The Curse associated with this reduction is left to the Storyteller to determine.

Raksha with a Way Grace can use their shaping actions to speed their travel through the Wyld. A single success on a Dexterity + Sail Way-shaping action can move them one journey through the Wyld.

Perfect Reckoning Technique

Cost: 4 motes, 1 gossamer
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Way: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The raksha sees for a moment through Nirupadhika's eyes. This Charm lets her plot a course to any landmark in the Wyld or Creation that she knows.



The cephalids had not been created to be the monsters they were today, or rather, they had not been created to occupy this low, miserable station in Creation. They had been a dream of the Primordials, a race with souls like those of mortals, as fierce and physically perfect as the Dragon Kings, able to communicate without speech. Many thought they had been intended to serve as a warrior race but had emerged from the process "high strung," like an overbred animal. Others thought their problems were a result of their method of silent speech. Regardless, they were a race of pathological murderers, united against the outside world and determined to tear it down.

Fortunately, the Primordials found their tireless, murderous insanity as bothersome as the rest of Creation or, at least, found no real use for it. Those who came before the gods banished their mad creations to the bowels of earth to suffer and die in the darkness.

As is often the way of such things, they did not perish. While they were hardly numerous, even thousands of years later their race persisted in scattered sticks and sections, each independently seeking to murder all other forms of life that it encountered. It was probably fortunate for the cephalids that the oubliette of their race's exile was so dark and constricted. Surely the Solar Deliberative would have hunted down and slain them with the rest of the chaff of the Primordial War otherwise.

It was not so fortunate for the Mountain Folk, however. Firstborn of Autochthon, the Mountain Folk shared the cephalids' underground home. Though they were not as dangerous as the other forms of nameless foes the Mountain Folk faced, the cephalids were both cunning and vicious. They would spend weeks or months surveilling a victim, strike and then vanish back into the endless caves that spawned them. Most often, they struck on nights when the earth shifted slightly, and the tremors of their steps would be cloaked by the harmonics reverberating through Creation as the foundations of the world settled.

Tonight was such a night, and Kravah stood ready at her isolated post for an attack. She was a veteran and a master fighter. She had spent her life in the service of her people's Endless War or, more recently, teaching military youths the skills of battle. However, when she could, she prevailed upon her superiors to assign her to combat posts. In deference to her seniority and her general compliance with their wishes that she act as a trainer, they did so. Typically, this meant a short assignment in the field, generally protecting vital crossroad caverns or acting as a reserve for garrison forces on the edge of the Mountain Folk's territory. It was hardly as if the Conclave could put up too stiff a fight against 70-year-old combat soldiers who insisted on field service.

The cephalids crawled up from the depths beneath the world as silently as rising smoke. They had skin like black leeches, the bodies of taut warriors and spirit powers their Creators had bred into their race for good measure. Without smiles — for their faces were naught but rasping teeth and sharp mandibles — and laughing silently between them, the cephalids crept ever so quietly to the verge of Kravah's sentry post.

They expected someone younger — Kravah was a new arrival, more recent than their last surveillance mission, but the cephalids were nothing if not sly masters of improvisation, and even her well-honed ears were deaf to the almost-silent flip-flap of their bare feet on the stone. One by one, they gained their positions just beyond a rock outcrop near Kravah and froze there, for the cephalids were still as stone when they chose not to stir. One opened its maw and fished inside, producing a large, round pebble. Cephalids never assumed, and mere discomfort was unknown to them.

There was a flick and a clatter, and Kravah's eyes darted to the noise. Her combat instinct told her to investigate, and she slipped forward, almost as slow and silent as a cephalid herself, moving without Charms. The cephalids laughed silently as she started forward, move not by warrior's instinct but by the powers of their silent will.

One tentative step, then another. They added together until Kravah could peer around the corner of the cavern mouth. As she leaned her head out, a half-dozen tentacles wrapped around it and pulled her into the darkness. Starting with her mind and ending with her body, the cephalids consumed her. When the reaction team arrived to secure the area after the roving sentry spotted her missing from her post mere minutes later, there was nothing left of her but a few bloodstains on the cavern floor.

CHAPTER SIX
THE MOUNTAIN FOLK

Laboring in the bottomless jade mines beneath the Imperial Mountain, the Fair Folk of the Blessed Isle seldom emerge from their subterranean kingdoms except to sell commissioned wonders or to construct great Manses for Dynasts wealthy enough to afford them. The Mountain Folk never travel in large numbers on the surface, save for the regiment of 1,000 Warriors serving the imperial army and the yearly caravan bringing tribute to Realm's coffers. To the human and Terrestrial Exalted citizens of the Blessed Isle, the Mountain Folk represent a paradox. They do not act like Fair Folk, never marauding or ravaging or showing the slightest affiliation for chaos in any form. Yet, they are not gods or Exalted nor even earth elementals in spite of their obvious affiliation with the pole of their dwelling. Savants have long posited many theories to explain the discrepancies between the Mountain Folk and their inchoate cousins who menace Creation, with the leading hypothesis being that centuries of attunement

with Earth has gradually stabilized the personality and Essence of these fae. For the most part, the question is simply academic, as few Dragon-Blooded care about the origins of their strange neighbors so long as the Mountain Folk keep to themselves and pay their tribute.

History

In the timeless epoch before the beginning, the infinite nothing birthed something, and from that primal existence blossomed the immeasurable and malleable possibilities of the Wyld. Patterns emerged from potential, some growing in complexity even unto the miracle of self-awareness before chaos swallowed them whole to create anew. Nothing remains of this indeterminate era, whether a moment or an eternity, but by its end, the Fair Folk dwelt in the limitless reaches, playing at their courts and games. Towering above and beyond the fae, the Primordials strode as titans through the unformed spaces, each embodying concepts too vast for the Wyld to reclaim. None recall the emergence of these giants and whether they were the first things born to endure and prosper or those who called possibility from nothingness by predating all realms and making. Or perhaps they were Fair Folk once, bloated to the threshold of omnipotence by ambition and cumulative improbabilities. Little more may be said of the unwritten and unremembered beginning of beginnings.

At the moment of Creation, the word and will of the Primordials Gaia and Cytherea tore through the Wyld. Even as the motives of gods defy mortal reason, so did the Primordials built the world according to their infinitely unknowable purpose. To whatever end, the growing sphere of the beginning defined time to linear causality and space to fixed location. The hordes of the Fair Folk screamed the birthing cry of the world as they fled the expanding boundaries. Those near the borders escaped before the world hardened, but those at the heart of Creation could not evade the tangling threads of the Tapestry and were ensnared. Each of these tore at their restraints, defying the pattern that held them. Creation retaliated against them as an oyster to grains of sand that pierce its shell, growing pearls of jade to seal the fae in stone. Entombed and forgotten, the children of chaos stilled and slumbered in the hearts of mountains and roots of the world, fading away to quiet potential. While they slept, time flowed on, and the great work of Creation grew in complexity and glory as the other Primordials joined their will to the dream of Gaia and Cytherea.

The Great Maker

Although he did not join his sisters in the initial birth of Creation, the Primordial Autochthon also sculpted the land and life that came to be. He was an inventor, the first perhaps by definition, the Great Maker who forged the earliest gods to serve his kind so the Primordials could dwell in luxury in the divine city of Yu-Shan. Autochthon moved through the world long after most of his brethren withdrew to Heaven. In his wake, he trailed wonders and miracles such as the wisest craftsmen of the First Age could only vainly emulate. His will awakened stone and metal to dimly reflect his power, as he enchanted jade, orichalcum, moonsilver and nameless ores depleted from the world and memory. As he completed one project, the Primordial sought the materials for another, and in this fashion, he stumbled upon the sleeping Fair Folk, bound in jade.

As he had done before innumerable times and would innumerably again, Autochthon set the jade before him and brought the force of his power to bear to shape and transmute the stone. The fae within stirred, and though its will dwarfed in comparison to the Primordial's, the resistance of a sentient presence marred the design. Rather than incensed, Autochthon grew intrigued and beheld the chaos within the rock and the pattern of power he imposed upon it. He discarded the sphere and withdrew another nodule, and this one also bore the spark of unformed possibility. He breathed upon the second stone and shaped it more lightly, as the other Primordials had shaped the gods and laid their touch upon the Dragon Kings. Guided by the half-formed designs that would ultimately become humanity, Autochthon assembled the first of the Mountain Folk in the rough-hewn shape of man. The creature did not remember other than it was, not of the Wyld or the torpid Ages locked within stone. Its life began with the will of the Great Maker.

Though Autochthon remained unparalleled in the act of crafting, he had little patience for the dominion of godhood and had not made the first of the Mountain Folk with any greater purpose than the act of making it. The creature waited for that purpose, patient as the stone from which it was made, while the Great Maker moved on to other projects and forgot his creation. Centuries later, Autochthon chanced to return to the mountain and found the creature still waiting, still patient, still purposeless. Lacking anything else and once more intrigued, the Great Maker imbued the Jadeborn with a fraction of his own need to create, and with that gift, he tasked the progenitor of the Mountain Folk to find and free the others of its kind. Once again, the Primordial left to roam the world and beyond. Faithful and now possessed of purpose, the creature mined into the depths of the earth and released the race of the Mountain Folk in its own image.

The Children of Jade

The early Mountain Folk were crude beings, caricatures of men more stone than flesh. Unlike elementals, the Jadeborn incorporated the properties of all elements in their form. Like wood, their flesh carried the growing nature of life. Air flowed in their lungs and water in their sluggish blood, and the imperishable fire of their souls was

a spark of Autochthon's own Primordial Essence. Yet, the earth tempered and bound all, the predominant element of their form. The First taught the ways of making to others, and these were like the First in their power and need to create but lesser for never having felt the touch of a Primordial. All of those after the First bore the duality of gender, a curious and seemingly unnecessary divergence for a race that could not breed, and so, the First assumed the aspect of male so he would not draw attention to his difference. The design of the race changed in other ways, too, growing more refined toward a human-like ideal of perfection that did not yet exist. The Mountain Folk spread beneath the world, but as the First was shaped beneath the slopes of the Imperial Mountain, the caverns beneath the Blessed Isle remained the heart of Jadeborn civilization. The First reigned over his siblings, removed and alone in his namelessness because Autochthon never thought to name him.

Time passed, and the world changed. The Mountain Folk built vast cities and warrens in the sunless depths until they had released all of their kind that could be found. Their singular task completed, they prayed for a new purpose. Yet, Autochthon did not answer. For years they prayed, and in long waiting, they uncovered other denizens of the world beneath. Some were behemoths, as old or older than themselves. Some were races spawned of behemoths or beasts warped and elevated to sentience by untamed founts of Essence. A few were made by the power and design of the Primordials, though none were made so well or fair as the Mountain Folk. Above, the civilization of the Dragon Kings flourished upon all reaches of Creation save the Blessed Isle, which alone of all lands remained the sole dominion of the gods. When the prayers began to falter and the Mountain Folk despaired that their creator had abandoned them, the immortal First stepped aside as emperor and left a conclave of the wisest aristocrats to reign in his stead. Upon completing his abdication, he departed his capital city of Urvar beneath the core of the Imperial Mountain and sought his maker.

The First traveled beneath the world and upon it, journeying the length and breadth of Creation many times until, at last, he found the Great Maker. The two conversed, and what was said between them remains unknown, but the First left that place and never returned to his people. Autochthon spoke in the souls of his children, inscribing new purpose upon them. They would mirror their creator and find fulfillment in craft as he did, forging and sculpting wonders with their Essence and enlightenment. The Mountain Folk rejoiced in this command, and the fires and smoke of their forges was as the incense of offered prayers to their maker, who returned, as always, to his own work.

Fate of the First

Crafted directly by Autochthon and imbued with a permanent link to his creator's Primordial Essence, the First of the Mountain Folk is as immortal and eternal as his maker. No power in or beyond Creation can truly slay him so long as Autochthon lives, as death only causes him to rise anew and undiminished somewhere in the earth. In spite of this power, he *can* suffer and has suffered more terribly than any living being in Creation. After obtaining a new purpose for his race, the First left the workshop of the Great Maker and roamed the world again. Perhaps he might have found joy or deeper enlightenment, but other Primordials found the creature first. They cruelly tore him asunder to understand their brother's work, assembling and rebuilding his body and mind in countless succession. From their studies, the Primordials created humankind, and so, the First has always felt bitterly toward the race birthed from his torments. He reserves greater anger for the Exalted, whose spiteful jealousy called the Great Geas upon the Mountain Folk and led Autochthon to abandon Creation. In contrast, the First feels kindly detachment toward the Jadeborn, but he also pities them for how far they have fallen since his reign. He is too unlike them now to rule them, but he protects them as best he can. They do not know or have any reason to suspect the behemoth is the First — or even that the First still lives. To Exalted and Mountain Folk alike, he is simply the Clay Man. The wisest savants and records of the First Age know only that he served as the template for mankind but do not connect him with the Mountain Folk.

More information and statistics for the Clay Man can be found online in the bonus material for **Creatures of the Wyld** at the following address: http://www.white-wolf.com/Download/Creature.pdf. In addition to his listed powers, the Clay Man is completely immune to the Wyld as if perpetually shielded by the Charm Integrity-Protecting Prana (see **Exalted**, p. 186), has all the innate capabilities of the Mountain Folk and knows any and all of their Charms that the Storyteller finds appropriate. Unlike his brethren, he is unaffected by the Great Geas and may cleanse a Jadeborn of Divergence points by touching her and spending Willpower on a one-for-one basis.

The Primordial War

While the empires of the Dragon Kings and the Mountain Folk flourished, each preeminent within their domain, the world moved unwittingly toward war. Jealousy and resentment gnawed at the hearts of the gods, who coveted the city of Yu-Shan and the Games of Divinity. They plotted in secret to usurp their Primordial masters but could not execute their desired rebellion because of a geas placed upon them by the paranoid titans. The gods were not alone, however, for Gaia abandoned Cytherea and allied herself with the Celestines for the sake of her new lover Luna. Autochthon also resented his siblings, who callously broke his creations and mocked his ill health. The strange alliance plotted in vain until the Great Maker finally devised the means of achieving victory from a most unlikely source.

Mankind was not a creation of Autochthon, but instead, a crude work of other Primordials based upon the First of the Mountain Folk. Yet, the Great Maker cherished these fragile beings as if they were his own and saw the potential for greatness in them. He crafted a means of imbuing them with divine power and gave this secret to the gods, so that they could make an army of champions. The Celestines and the children of Gaia created this army of Exalted but had no weapons to equip the vast host. Once more, Autochthon provided the tools of victory as he called his children from the Mountain to present their stockpiled arsenals. Armed with these dire weapons and their own powers, the Exalted prevailed and slew or banished the enemies of the gods.

At the end of the war, the Celestines gave dominion over Creation to the Exalted and withdrew to Yu-Shan to play the Games of Divinity. While the Dragon Kings were vastly reduced in number and would never again rule the surface world, the Mountain Folk remained powerful in their buried empire. The Jadeborn had provided invaluable aid in equipping the armies of the Chosen, but the Exalted feared the creators of such terrible weapons might eventually rise up in their own rebellion. The priests of the Unconquered Sun prayed to their god for aid, and he approached Autochthon with an ultimatum. The Primordial could either lay a magical binding upon his children that would limit them to their underground realms, or the Chosen would make war on the Mountain Folk and exterminate their race, even as they had destroyed the servants of the other Primordials.

Autochthon suspected the hand of his slain brethren lay behind this threat, although he did not yet understand the full ramifications of the Great Curse. He understood enough, however, to know the gods would eventually send their Exalted against him, either because he was a painful reminder of their treachery or because they would grow jealous and fearful of his power. He did not speak of these fears, but he gathered his mortal followers across Creation and took them within himself, departing through the myriad folds of Elsewhere to plan and wait. Before he left Creation, he did as the Unconquered Sun demanded, for he saw no other way to save his children and could not separate them from the earth without dooming their race. His words echoed in each of them once more, binding them in fealty to the Exalted mandate.

The First Age

While the First Age marked a time of great prosperity for mankind and the Exalted, the civilization of the Mountain Folk all but disintegrated under the weight of Autochthon's Great Geas. The Jadeborn had always preferred their underground cities to the daunting expanses of the roofless sky, but the Mountain Folk now found themselves forced to remain beneath the earth. For their part, the Exalted had no real desire to administer the caverns of the earth and magnanimously granted the Mountain Folk political autonomy in exchange for a yearly tribute of jade. Faced with the alternative of Exalted governors seizing control of their cities, the Jadeborn grudgingly assented. Yet, the worst was still to come.

When the Mountain Folk died, their Essence departed to infuse nearby jade with life. Stripped of memories, identity and power, new incarnations of Jadeborn remained in torpor until freed of the stone and shaped into flesh by their brethren. As a result, the Mountain Folk experienced lives as new beings with the same potential for greatness as their predecessors. The race needed little governance, abiding by the directives of their wisest minds. Yet, they were all geniuses in their own right and, therefore, divided labors on rotating schedules to tend farms and meet basic needs so that everyone had time to pursue their chosen art.

After Autochthon left, Mountain Folk continued to die as their bodies wore out or suffered fatal injury. Yet, the generations born into the Great Geas lacked the universal genius that had always defined their race. They were hardly stupid, merely uninspired and weaker willed. The best teaching methods and wisest instructors could not awaken in them the spark of Enlightenment, and the Jadeborn despaired that their civilization would fade away entirely. All hope seemed lost.

The Breaking Into Castes

As the Mountain Folk dwindled into ruinous mediocrity and few remained who could maintain or remember the greatest wonders of the past, one of the last heroes proposed a daring solution. She would journey to the ends of the earth to find an answer, even as the First had done. Her name was White Shale, and her quest seemed a fool's errand. In spite her people's derision, she set out alone toward the borders of the Mountain Folk empire and beyond, into the unexplored caverns and grottos where

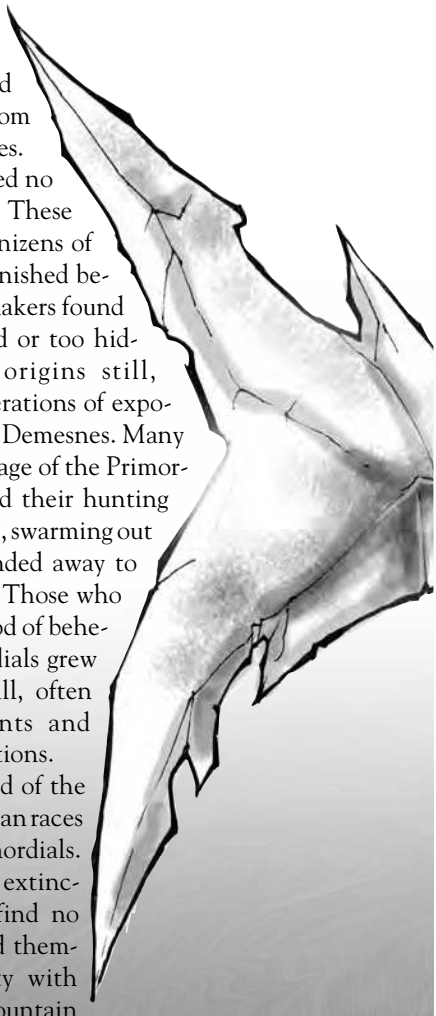
the last servants of the Primordials still dwelt. She saw much, fought often and nearly died on many occasions, but she found no means to save her people. At the last, many years later, she stumbled upon a crystal cave strewn with tools in the deepest places of the earth. She recognized the place as a long-abandoned workshop of the Great Maker and basked in the lingering echo of her creator's presence. In her rapture, she saw a figure of clay rise out of the earth and address her by name, proclaiming itself an avatar of Autochthon. The being then raised a fist like a hammer and struck her in the chest. The blow cracked her soul and left her sprawled unconscious. When she awoke, she found herself returned to a tunnel within the Mountain Folk empire and understood what she must do.

White Shale traveled in secret to the bowels of the mines, where the great nodules of jade bearing her siblings lay stacked in sconces against the walls. Taking up hammer and chisel, she released one of her kin with brutal, heavy strokes. The creature that arose from the shards was unlike her own carved perfection, but instead, short and stocky with rough-hewn features like the earliest Mountain Folk of legend. He stared at her with placid eyes and innocent trust, and she named him Uklem, which meant Bearer of Burdens. With her tools, White Shale sharply struck the next womb of jade, bringing the blows together in fierce angles that sprayed her with sparks. This creature stood, short and broad like the first, and yet his flesh was studded here and there with gnarled rock. She named him Naxok, Hammer of Sorrow. By this time, the noise of her efforts attracted others, and her peers burst in to find her rapidly carving a third slab of jade. They shouted for her to stop, but she ignored them and finished the rhythmic hammering with a ringing echo like a great bell. The third of the newborns stood from the rubble, a delicate and beautiful woman reflecting the very best of the Mountain Folk. Her eyes shone with the light of understanding and reason, the long-sought beacon of salvation in the dim chasm. As White Shale dropped her tools and wiped the sweat from her brow, she pointed a shaking finger at the woman and named her Eryan, Daughter of Hope.

The three born of White Shale's hammer marked a new beginning for the Mountain Folk and led to a complete reorganization of their society. Uklem and those who followed him became the Worker Caste. Though their spirits burned only dimly, they were tough and strong and labored hard to complete all work given to them. They assumed the duties for which they were made, laboring in farms and mines and digging passages to extend the empire of the Mountain Folk. Naxok provided the template for the Warrior Caste, who readied themselves to face the numberless hordes of monsters White Shale had witnessed massing beyond the empire's borders. Finally, Eryan represented the first of the Artisan Caste and the last vestige of the original Enlightened Mountain Folk. With the breaking of the Jadeborn into castes, White Shale earned her place as the mother of her race and the greatest hero since the First. In time, she and all her kind passed away, leaving the castes to carry on the race.

The Endless War

Although older than the world by virtue of their distant origins in the Wyld, the Mountain Folk were not the first sentient beings to actually live beneath Creation. During the primeval era, they shared the labyrinthine network of caverns and tunnels with all manner of spirits and stranger creatures. The Mountain Folk traded with some and made war on others, but they remained the strongest, most technologically advanced and best organized of the subterranean civilizations. During the uprising of the gods, many of the chthonic races descended from behemoths or created by the Primordials rose up in defense of their masters, even as the Lintha and others fought on the surface. They boiled out of fissures and cracks to slaughter the armies of Dragon Kings and Exalted by night and end their laughable rebellion. Instead, the Chosen butchered the hordes by the hundreds and thousands until many of these nameless races were rendered extinct. The stragglers who fled the massacre retreated back into the depths to hide from the blazing wrath of their enemies.



Other races in the dark owed no allegiance to god or Primordial. These were often the most horrific denizens of the chasms, castoff creations banished beneath the world because their makers found them too dangerous, too flawed or too hideous. Others had stranger origins still, monstrosities birthed from generations of exposure to the deepest, most primal Demesnes. Many of the neutral races took advantage of the Primordial War as a chance to expand their hunting ranges and to scavenge the fallen, swarming out of the depths to drag the wounded away to uncertain and unpleasant fates. Those who battened themselves on the blood of behemoths and the ichor of Primordials grew more twisted and wretched still, often expanding into freakish giants and bloated, many-limbed abominations.

Less than one in a thousand of the assorted monsters and subterranean races survived the war against the Primordials. Many of these faded to pitiful extinction, as lone survivors could find no mates of their own kind or bred themselves into further monstrosity with incestuous desperation. The Mountain



Folk suffered far fewer casualties, since the Primordials pitted their servitor races against the greater threat of the Dragon Kings and Exalted rather than wasting them against the cities of the Jadeborn. This discrepancy in fortune only deepened the resentment the chthonic races harbored toward the Mountain Folk. While the Exalted built their Realm in the world above and the Jadeborn languished under the Great Geas, their enemies bred and brooded in the dark. Although disparate in form and origin, the breeds suspended many of their hostilities toward one another out of shared hatred for the Mountain Folk. If the Exalted had not devastated the chthonic races so thoroughly, these horrors might have launched their genocidal war within decades of the Primordials' overthrow and wiped Autochthon's weakened children from memory and history. Their casualties delayed this invasion long enough for White Shale to save her people and begin training an army of Warrior Castes against the massing threat.

When the war finally came, the Mountain Folk were ready. In the past, the Jadeborn had always fought as brilliant individuals united by common purpose. Their mismatched ranks had encompassed a host of fighting styles and weapons as varied as their creators. While inefficient, such tactics had proved surprisingly effective on account of the unmatched genius of the Jadeborn. The Great Geas and the breaking into castes forced the Mountain Folk to develop new strategies. As the Nameless Hordes reached the well-lit tunnels of the Jadeborn, they found themselves opposed by grim ranks of stony Warriors armed and clad in arsenals of mass-produced jade weaponry. Elite cadres of Artisan tacticians commanded these soldiers with devastating precision, allowing the Mountain Folk to prevail against forces well over five times their size. Victory granted a brief reprieve for the Jadeborn, but the hordes returned all too soon with greater numbers to fight in calamitous and ultimately meaningless battles. In time, the war settled into a surreal cycle of atrocity followed by eerie calm as both sides recuperated and rearmed. The worst of these battles shook the very earth as the hordes pitted behemoths and similarly awesome monsters against the greatest war machines of the Mountain Folk. Far above, the Exalted listened but lent no aid. Some hoped the races of the deep might exterminate one another, or at least thin each other's ranks, while others realized the Jadeborn served as a useful buffer against the last allies of the Primordials. Many simply did not care at all. Throughout the First Age, the borders of the Mountain Folk lands fluctuated wildly as new settlements replaced those sacked by their enemies.

The Hierarchy of Kingdoms

While the Endless War ground on throughout the First Age without any sign of abating, the Mountain Folk gradually rebuilt their civilization to accommodate the struggle. The egalitarian empire created by the First had long since disintegrated with the division of castes, replaced by teeming masses of Unenlightened Workers and Warriors ruled by the aristocracy of Enlightened Artisans. Only a tiny handful of the undercastes achieved inexplicable Enlightenment, and these unhappy few faced pity and condescension. Owing to the scarcity of Enlightenment (roughly one in a thousand at any given time), the host of Artisans remained an elite and privileged few who ruthlessly competed amongst themselves for additional power and prestige. Ironically, the Endless War ensured the stability of Mountain Folk civilization by forcing competing nobles to set aside their feuds and unite as allies. The kingdoms assembled into a confederated hierarchy, with power constantly shifting among the factions according to perceptions of talent and accomplishment. The Conclave of Artisans served as a democratic ruling body to dictate policies throughout the hierarchy, although individual kingdoms retained considerable autonomy within the terms of the alliance. Near the edges of the Mountain Folk lands, the frontlines of the Endless War created a buffer wasteland of fortresses and garrisons almost solely populated by Warriors. Workers and Artisans lived in the stable regions within that perimeter, maintaining the great engines of commerce and industry to support the war effort and pay the tribute demanded by the Exalted. This way of life continued unabated for centuries without substantial deviation.

The Mountain Folk barely noticed the Usurpation. The battles that shook the world as the Exalted fought amongst themselves above did not reach into the depths of the earth any more than the Endless War affected the surface. The hierarchy gave sanctuary to the few Solars who fled into the caves for fear of the Great Geas, but the Conclave also permitted Sidereal assassins in their lands according to that same treaty. The Solar Exalted perished utterly, and the Dragon-Blooded declared their Shogunate. The change mattered very little to the Mountain Folk, who continued to pay tribute to the new government as they had bribed the old in exchange for autonomy. And the Endless War continued.

The Great Contagion

Unlike the Usurpation, the plague that swept across Creation indiscriminately slew everyone in its path. Whether it entered into the caverns by magical design or by the mechanism of a feverish wretch who crawled into a cave to die, the Great Contagion utterly devastated the hordes besieging the Mountain Folk. Outlying garrisons of the Jadeborn suffered similar casualties, but they managed to warn their commanders using communication artifacts before they died. With reports and warnings filtering in from all sides, the Conclave voted on a desperate solution. They sealed and warded the tunnel entrances of Urvar and covered the shafts of the bottomless mines in slabs of enchanted jade, abandoning their kingdoms to die. Those trapped outside begged and pleaded entry in vain, but their hammering could not so much as scratch the inviolate bulwarks and soon stopped when the plague reached the walls. The Conclave waited and prayed, judging they had enough supplies to remain for a century of quarantine. They resolved to wait that long before emerging to whatever remained of Creation.

When a heroic Dragon-Blooded officer activated the defense grid of the Realm against the invading forces of the Fair Folk, the cataclysmic power of the doomsday weapons she unleashed shook the whole of the Imperial Mountain and shattered the seals laid by the Conclave. Half of Urvar collapsed into ruins. The Mountain Folk waited for their final doom, but the Great Contagion had passed. The survivors rebuilt and sent brave scouts to the surface to find the source of the earthquake. They returned with news of the Scarlet Empress who now ruled the Realm. Lacking sufficient Workers for a full caravan, the members of the Conclave swallowed their pride and carried their tribute to the Manse of the Scarlet Empress. Before the witness of stunned courtiers and officers, a great parade of the greatest nobility of the Mountain Folk fulfilled their oath and laid heaps of jade before the enthroned Empress. They left as silently and soberly as they arrived, returning to the broken city of Urvar to restore their home and people. While their race had previously numbered close to 10 million, barely a thousand remained incarnate to dig their people out of the bottomless mines and shape them into new life from their stone wombs.

The Great Contagion nearly destroyed the Mountain Folk, but it also granted them a much-needed reprieve from the Endless War. Still, the Jadeborn knew the hordes of their enemies would return in time, so they carefully balanced the need for Warriors against the need for Workers to meet their tribute. The arduous rebuilding process took close to five centuries, with minor skirmishes in the second century soon escalating to full-scale battles. In the bleakest years of the campaign, Warriors fought and died step by bloody step to hold their borders. In better years, they routed their ancestral enemies to reclaim vast swaths of territory for the glory of the Conclave. Half a millennium after the Great Contagion, the Mountain Folk controlled a region as wide as they had held in the First Age.

Present

The Mountain Folk still follow the same way of life they did throughout the First Age. Their Warriors fight and die to protect their borders against the numberless and Nameless Hordes, while Workers labor to keep the soldiers fed and to fill the coffers of the corrupt and crumbling Dynasty. Artisans play at their games of politics with one another, banding together like squabbling siblings against all outsiders. They resent and distrust the Exalted and do not happily welcome the Chosen in their kingdoms, but they also journey across the Realm to build wonders and Manses for any Dynasts willing to pay their steep fees. In general, the Mountain Folk do not concern themselves with the happenings of the Threshold and do not particularly care who wins the impending succession war. Rumors that the Solar Exalted have returned trouble the Artisans, who wonder at the significance of such an event. The Jadeborn do not know how to read the stars, but the earth shakes beneath the footfalls of Creation's usurped lords, and that is portent enough to make the Conclave nervous. The Mountain Folk have no intention of becoming involved in a civil war between the Chosen, but they would ultimately rather deal with a weak and fractious Realm than the might of a restored Solar Deliberative. If forced to choose sides, the Conclave will side with the obvious victor. If the outcome is less certain, the Mountain Folk will cast their lot with the Realm.

What Do They Know?

While the preceding information accurately chronicles the history of the Mountain Folk from the beginning of Creation to the present, only a handful of the most learned and eccentric scholars of the Conclave can trace their lore back so far. Most Artisans make do with a rough synopsis of significant events but have no interest in any of the intervening tedium.

While any member of the Conclave could learn the intricacies of history, no such educational opportunities exist for their subordinates. After all, Workers do not need to know why they must complete a project or what the project will achieve, so long as they know what to do and how to do it. Warriors do not need to know the context of their missions in the Endless War, provided they fight wherever and whenever ordered. As a result, the undercastes know very little about their past, except that they are an ancient people created by the Great Maker to oppose the forces of chaos.

Culture

The society of the Mountain Folk venerates and embodies order, with the Unenlightened masses governed by the oligarchic meritocracy of the Conclave. Like the Mountain Folk themselves, however, this outward structure belies the hidden chaos of its innermost politics. Artisans vie with one another ruthlessly and cruelly, betraying each other in grand games of ever-shifting alliance. Perhaps hypocritically, this government treats its common citizens like the components of a vast machine, repairing or replacing "broken" dissenters with reeducation and punishment to maintain the status quo. The system is not innately cruel, but neither is it kind. Ultimately, the social order perpetuates itself as much from inertia as any pretext of necessity.

Birth

All Mountain Folk begin their lives as patterns of shapeless Essence entombed in nodules of jade. The vast majority have the good fortune to incarnate each life within the bottomless mines beneath the Imperial Mountain, safe at the very heart of their civilization. The Conclave spares no expense or effort to retrieve those souls that occasionally incarnate elsewhere in the earth. Artisans use the Charm Jade's Egg Hatched (see p. 271) to free inchoate Mountain Folk from their stone wombs, cracking open the transmuted rock to shape the newborn into one of the three castes. The infant creatures have fully grown — if somewhat emaciated — bodies tightly curled in a fetal position. They immediately stretch and stir to life, standing amidst the rubble of their shells to gaze at their Artisan "parent" in placid innocence.

In order to ensure maximum efficiency and to avoid exposing Artisans to unnecessary danger, Workers quarry their unborn siblings from the mines and bring them to secure birthing chambers constructed at the center of Mountain Folk cities. The vast cathedral-like chambers contain hundreds or even thousands of sconces set in their sloping walls. In the larger cities, great clockwork machines withdraw unborn slabs as needed, setting them in front of attendant Artisans for release. In smaller settlements, teams of Workers move the slabs into position by hand in a living assembly line. Artisans typically shape batches of around a hundred newborns at a single session. After each birth, representatives of each caste lead their new members along tunnels toward segregated nurseries.

Year One

Although they have little personality and no verbal ability at birth, young Mountain Folk learn quickly. During the first year of their lives, they live and play with their peers in collective pens, surrounded by toys designed to familiarize them with their expected roles in

Jadeborn society. These children develop at five times the rate of mortals, so each season is the equivalent of a year. Separate pens exist for offspring born in each season so that overall cognitive and social development in the batches remains comparable. Life in the nurseries varies substantially between castes:

Workers: Members of this caste grow up in the most populous communes, playing with mock-ups of assorted tools. Daily lessons allow the young to learn by mimicking the movements of their teacher-caretakers, while the instructors study their charges and split them into practice work details as they begin showing aptitudes.

Warriors: In contrast with Workers, Warrior children receive very little instruction. Once they are capable of feeding themselves (roughly a month after birth), their caretakers abandon them in prisonlike paddocks filled with obstacle courses of tunnels and potential ambush points. New arrivals quickly establish social pecking orders amongst themselves and break into crude gangs. These groups fight brutal skirmishes over the limited resources strategically placed around their paddocks, especially the food shipments lowered on chains from above. Such brawls rarely lead to serious injury or death, but accidents occasionally happen. Veteran Warriors carefully monitor their wards, hidden behind hardened one-way mirror windows of observation towers. If gang fights get out of control, the sentries leave their watchtowers and disperse the rabble with artifact weapons.

Artisans: Owing to their extreme rarity and gifted minds, Artisans receive very different treatment from the mass-pens of the Unenlightened castes. Instead of training them locally, Mountain Folk ship all new Artisans to Urvar, where they live and learn at the Underschool of the Conclave. Every year, adult Artisans bid in public auctions to serve as faculty of this institution. Bidding wars grow intense, as teachers invariably use these positions to recruit future members for their own political factions. The proceeds go toward the upkeep of the school, ensuring that young Artisans receive the very best instruction possible.

Education

On their first birthday, Mountain Folk leave their nurseries to begin rigorous formal schooling according to their caste. This training period lasts for three years, after which graduate Jadeborn become full adults and start the careers they will hold for the rest of their lives.

Workers: The primary schools of this caste begin their ever-increasing specialization as laborers. The largest schools train miners and farmers, but smaller institutions exist for narrower fields such as urban repair and the household or laboratory servants of Artisans. Students study and live together in classes of 100, regularly rotated and reassigned each month to prevent relationship attachments from interfering with attentiveness. Older and more experienced Workers serve as the faculty and headmasters of these schools, using curriculums developed by the Conclave. While students generally go to the schools that best match their demonstrated aptitudes, demand supersedes talent. If a calamitous cave-in kills several hundred miners, the Conclave will order nurseries to send a higher percentage of students to mining school until sufficient graduates balance the deficit.

Warriors: While Workers transition smoothly from the general tutoring of their nurseries to the more advanced lessons of their schools, Warriors must leave behind everything they know. In place of familiar, half-feral gang wars, new students spend a full season learning civility and obedience from accomplished veterans of their caste. The combination of psychological conditioning and physical punishment tames their violent impulses, readying Warriors for the disciplined life of a soldier. Most students break within the first two months, though they must still endure the full treatment as a safety precaution. Only the most intractable students require additional months of remedial lessons, but even these willful souls eventually learn submission.

After finishing preparatory training, newly civilized Warriors start learning the actual crafts of war. The instructors randomly divide the students into cohorts of 100 members, pitting cohorts against one another in an unending succession of wargames. Each cohort has its own instructor-sponsor who teaches the use of weapons and battle tactics. Membership in a cohort lasts one season, after which students move to a new unit under the guidance of a new teacher. Because each instructor has a different area of expertise, cohort membership also doubles as a three-month intensive course in that discipline. This cycling repeats for the first two years of school, with the last year being devoted to advanced training in a specific duty. Most Warriors go on to basic infantry, with the remainder prepared for careers as saboteurs, scouts, war-machine pilots and similarly narrow support fields.

Artisans: The education of an Artisan is at once more rigorous and gentler than either of the other castes. Students graduate from the Underschool of the Conclave to the College of Divine Enlightenment, a massive campus complex of libraries, studios and laboratories in Urvar. Faculty members receive immense stipends and lifelong tenure, not to mention the best research and magical facilities in the Mountain Folk kingdoms. Employment is by invitation only, with extant faculty interviewing hundreds of the greatest paragons of their race just to fill a single vacancy. Artisan apprentices study every magical and mundane discipline, including rigorous tutelage in history, geography, theology, politics, mathematics, sculpting, Essence theory, spirit lore and Charm use. Students live alone in luxurious private dormitories but study together in small peerage groups that often remain associates (if not necessarily friends) throughout the rest of their lives.

Government and Law

All adult members of the Artisan Caste belong to the Conclave, the democratic society of Enlightened aristocrats that governs the Mountain Folk from the halls of Urvar. This body was originally created by the First to rule in his absence, though the modern Conclave has little in common with its earliest incarnation besides its name. While each Artisan technically has a single vote and, therefore, equal rank in this elite peerage, the government could never hope to function if its approximately 10,000 members settled every issue by means of direct vote. Instead, Artisans gather into constantly shifting alliances of factions, formally surrendering their individual votes into power blocs for mutual self-interest. Anyone can freely leave at any time to invest her proxy elsewhere, so a faction that fails to provide for its members gradually dissolves. Within factions, leadership is a matter of personal charisma, wealth and age. Younger and less accomplished Artisans give temporary fealty to elders with the understanding that such loyalty will be rewarded. If that expectation is not met or if another faction makes a better offer, members generally abandon their current organization without a second thought. Though there is no social stigma for leaving a faction, pragmatic Artisans do not leave out of idle whim. After all, it takes time to build a personal power base, and most lateral shifts involve a loss of accumulated status. Consequently, the youngest Artisans are also the flightiest, with established elders forming the stable nuclei of longstanding political parties.

The edicts of the Conclave are inviolate and unquestionable to all, Enlightened and Unenlightened alike. However, given the fluid nature of faction-based control, reversals and amendments to prior laws are commonplace. A successful faction or coalition of factions invariably reapportions Conclave resources and military might to favor itself, though gross unfairness often unites rivals into an unlikely alliance against the hegemony. Blocs rarely need to deploy physical force against outvoted rivals, since the Enlightened are intelligent enough to perceive the unspoken threat of force implicit in all debates. Votes keep matters civil, but no one forgets that each vote represents the interests of a powerful magical being all too capable of wreaking devastation if she so chooses. "Diplomacy is a half-drawn blade," has been the unofficial motto of the Conclave since before humans walked upon Creation. Similarly, the Conclave also recognizes the need for solidarity in matters of common defense, especially in the context of the Endless War. For all the Artisans' ambitions, no one wants to bicker himself into extinction.

Owing to the complexity of governing policy, the Mountain Folk legal system is almost as labyrinthine and capricious in its execution as that of Nexus. In spite of and underlying such fluidity, the Conclave also maintains the Codex of Primal Order. Scribed by White Shale herself and delivered to the earliest Artisans, this ancient document serves as the foundation of Mountain Folk civilization and as a constitution beyond the Conclave. Equal parts sociological treatise and theological rumination, the lengthy Codex details the responsibilities and roles of each caste. Among its many provisions, the Codex of Primal Order states that none of the Mountain Folk may kill anyone Enlightened by the Great Maker. Violation of this sacred law carries the penalty of death for one of the Unenlightened and the steepest demotion for another of the Enlightened. Even an accidental slaying may merit such extreme consequences if there is the slightest indication of culpability. The Enlightened are simply too rare and too valuable to waste in petty political infighting. As a result, Artisans enjoy a powerful safety net against blood feuds. Members of the Conclave often compete through proxies and words, even fighting rare and epic duels on occasion, but even the bitterest of rivals will halt their grudge before committing the ultimate and unthinkable crime.

No such protections extend to the Unenlightened. The teeming masses are eminently replaceable by design, and rehabilitation often requires a greater investment of effort than training a new child from birth. The Conclave imposes the death penalty on most Unenlightened criminals, providing a steep deterrent against unacceptable behavior. Capital offenses include, but are not limited to: murder, treason, starting a riot, sabotage, catastrophic incompetence or negligence (which also leads to lesser sanction for the supervisor) and willful dereliction of duty. The last merits special attention, since those executed for dereliction are dealt with publicly and painfully as an object lesson to others. Unenlightened found guilty of minor theft, brawling, poor performance and other lesser crimes typically receive rehabilitation through some combination of unpleasant or hazardous duties and fines.

Property

With ready access to the largest known supplies of jade and precious minerals in all of Creation, the Mountain Folk collectively represent one of the wealthiest civilizations in the Age of Sorrows. The Conclave technically owns all land in collective, but it leases domains to individual Artisans in exchange for taxes. These domains shift with the rise and fall of factions, although certain patterns govern redistributions across faction lines. Success leads to expansion of territory. Failure reduces territory. Artisans pay between 40 and 60 percent of all wealth generated in their lands back to the coffers of the Conclave, keeping the rest for their own hoards. Any Artisan who fails to meet the established quota of minimum productivity for her lands receives demotion, with a better taskmaster being placed in her stead.

The Conclave orders Workers to serve in territories where they are needed, although the distribution of labor is at least as politically driven as the partition of lands. Artisans must pay every Worker in their domain from their own treasuries, using a formula provided in the Codex of Primal Order. This formula ensures comfortable subsistence with mandatory bonuses awarded for superior productivity. Warriors receive similar stipends directly from the Conclave using a separate formula but generally enjoy a higher standard of living than Workers to balance their shorter projected life spans. Workers, in turn, pay their Artisan lords for food, lodging and other goods, while Warriors pay the Conclave for all amenities and possessions beyond basic armament. The stipends issued to both Workers and Warriors take the form of black stone coins engraved with the ornate seal of the Conclave. The coins have no actual value, as the Conclave does not trust their subordinates to manage true wealth responsibly. They are difficult, but hardly impossible to forge with the right tools and a Dexterity + Larceny or Craft (Engraving) roll made at difficulty 3. Unsurprisingly, any Unenlightened caught forging currency faces the death penalty.

Religion

As in all else, most Mountain Folk take a very practical and utilitarian view of religion. The Unenlightened give ritual prayers to the Great Maker, but they do so more in observance of tradition than actual faith. They know their god is the first inventor, the archetypal and ultimate Artisan who sculpted the Jadeborn in his own image, but that is generally all. The Enlightened have even less faith, albeit for different reasons. The members of the Conclave know their history well enough to realize that Autochthon left Creation long ago. He might eventually return, or he might not, and so, the Artisans keep the commandments and ways of their creator so that he might find them worthy. Yet, the Artisans also realize they cannot count on that return and must instead rely on themselves. They venerate Autochthon in emulating his genius, not as supplicants.

In spite of the pragmatism and cynicism of their peers, a minority of Mountain Folk still worship their creator zealously, clinging to the belief that Autochthon will return when his children prove they are ready. These zealots believe he will lift the tribulation of the Great Geas, ushering in a golden renaissance of culture and magic. The Conclave accepts this Cult of the Great Maker warily, considering the faith naïve even as it exploits believers for its own political ends. A small number of Artisans actually buy into this mystique but do so from within



their own Enlightenment. They do not believe Autochthon's return is contingent upon nebulous moral worthiness. Instead, they seek to contact the Primordial with magic to demonstrate their mystical advancement.

Beyond Autochthon, Mountain Folk also wisely acknowledge and keep small shrines to allied little gods of the subterranean world. They have fewer but larger temples to a handful of greater deities, especially Gaia, her Five Elemental Dragon offspring and Flashing Peak, Goddess of the Imperial Mountain. Lesser shrines also placate the most powerful elementals, such as gemlords. In general, spirit temples appear far more often in outlying regions of the Mountain Folk kingdoms, with almost none existing along the tunnel streets of Urvar and neighboring cities.

Military

The Endless War drives innumerable facets of Mountain Folk society. Tremendous resources go toward equipping, training and replacing the casualties of the Warrior Caste. Artisan strategoi appointed by the Conclave ultimately direct all military operations from committees within Urvar, but these tacticians cannot manage the day-to-day operations of the front lines. The responsibility for field-level management falls to lower status Artisan generals, some who chose war as their craft and others of whom lost all their territory in the cutthroat politics of the Conclave. The few Enlightened Warriors invariably rise to the rank of general, often with great power and responsibility, but these strange anomalies worry the Conclave. An Artisan who achieves great military success and demonstrates competent leadership can expect civilian opportunities. No such opportunities exist for Warriors, who are deemed unfit for anything but a life of battle.

The armies of the Mountain Folk divide themselves into a nested hierarchy of units. At the top, five ranges of approximately 800,000 soldiers form semi-independent armies, one for each cardinal direction of the border (named by element) and a fifth stationed within Jadeborn lands as a combination of reserve and police force. The ranges carefully monitor their assigned territory for any signs of incursions from beyond or below. Each Range further divides into eight mountains of 100,000 soldiers. All mountains have 10 hills with 10,000 soldiers, which in turn have 10 stones of 1,000 soldiers each. Finally, every stone has 10 shards of 100 soldiers. Warriors serve four years on the front lines, with a fifth spent recuperating in the reserves. Soldiers in the field stay with the same unit until transferred to the reserves, after which, they join a new unit. Ideally, the Conclave divides the rotation schedule so that only a fifth of each unit changes each season. In practice, heavy casualties guarantee much higher turnover and force decimated units to pool together or scatter among the ranks of new recruits. Most unit commanders at the shard or stone level are Unenlightened veterans. Higher commands remain the exclusive province of the Enlightened.

Mountain Folk soldiers wear a single crystal rivet on each shoulder, either affixed to metal plates on their uniforms or the pauldrons of their armor. The type and shape of these crystals indicate the soldier's rank. A clear quartz square adorns mere rank-and-file, while their shard leaders wear a yellow beryl square. Above them, stone leaders have an emerald triangle. Higher still, hill commanders bear an amethyst triangle, while a ruby circle marks the mountain lords. Finally, the range lords wear ice-blue stars of the purest adamant, each jewel worth a king's ransom.

Why Don't They Win?

The Mountain Folk have an army of nearly four million soldiers trained from birth as regimented killers. This army has the best equipment for its size of any in Creation and is led by tacticians with superhuman intelligence and cunning. These Warriors are tough, hardy, disciplined and deadly. And yet, this vast and terrible army can barely hold its empire's borders against the untold hordes constantly assaulting from every side. A young soldier is lucky to live 50 years, though the survival rate climbs as veterans grow in power and rank. The Mountain Folk frequently suffer crushing casualties or, worse yet, crushing defeats. When outposts fall, they must be retaken, leading to costly assaults. Artisans replace the fallen as quickly as they can, aided by the quickened pace of Jadeborn development. Even so, the civilization can barely keep up with the demand for new soldiers. For all their might, the Mountain Folk have too many problems to consider a war of conquest against humanity and its Exalted protectors, even setting aside the utter futility of such an endeavor on account of the Great Geas.

Time

Mountain Folk follow the same calendar as the rest of Creation, though most Jadeborn refer to the current day by its numerical place in the year rather than months, so the 15th day of Ascendant Earth is simply Day 183. The Conclave does *not* reference the year according to the reign of the Scarlet Empress, beginning its calendar with the Great Geas and the departure of Autochthon. This reckoning is 4,110 years ahead of the Revised Imperial Calendar, so RY 768 is considered Year 4,878 by the Mountain Folk. The Jadeborn only use the Realm Year for

The Scarlet Stone

The Realm commands one stone of Mountain Folk Warriors that fights beside the legions, secured by a treaty between the Conclave and the Scarlet Empress in the early years of her reign. The Empress wanted a way to gauge the strength of her tributary neighbors, which the Conclave carefully provided in exchange for a means of studying the world above. Warriors assigned to the Scarlet Stone are generally accomplished veterans with somewhere between 50 years and a century of experience fighting in the Endless War. The Conclave does not send Warriors of lesser experience for fear they might project weakness, but it also eschews greater veterans for fear they will alert the Dynasty as to the true power of the Mountain Folk. Every year at Calibration, the Conclave recalls and replaces 100 of its soldiers. The Scarlet Stone serves a primarily ceremonial function, with its presence in military parades a sign of the Realm's dominion over the People of the Mountain. When called into action, these Warriors fight with ruthless efficiency unfettered by empathy. The Scarlet Empress carefully exploited this frightening discipline in the past to quell peasant uprisings, relying on the inhuman resolve and visage of her borrowed Warriors to crush morale.

documents involving external trade, swallowing their pride to present tributary docility.

Each day has 25 hours, with Workers and Warriors serving duty shifts of 15 hours followed by 10 hours of recuperation. The Conclave divides the entire labor pool into fifths. The second roster begins its work cycle five hours after the first, and the third starts five hours later, and so on. This ensures that that work can progress unimpeded at all hours of the day. Artisans do not have a fixed schedule to which they must adhere, but instead, structure their days in the manner that best serves their needs.

Recreation

Barring emergencies, Workers and Warriors have 10 hours out of every day in which to recuperate before their next duty shift. Even without Charms, Jadeborn only require six hours of sleep in order to work at sustained peak efficiency. This leaves them up to four hours of actual leisure time in which to pursue hobbies, hone their skills and mentally recharge. Actual idleness is strongly discouraged, with the understanding that all time is precious and every minute must go toward enrichment, functional rest or development of supplementary capability.

Off-duty Workers congregate together in designated plazas nestled between their barracks. They socialize together, attend classes to improve or broaden their repertoire of crafts, play games and team sports that simultaneously build camaraderie and encourage competition, carry out sexual relationships, gather in religious rites and indulge in all manner of orderly hobbies sanctioned by the Conclave.

Warriors spend most of their duty shifts drilling as units and standing watches behind the walls of their citadels. In their off time, they devote considerable effort to training as individuals, either improving upon or expanding their mastery of weapons and battle crafts. Beyond such drill, they also socialize in a variety of platonic and sexual ways. Wargames pit improvised units in mock-battles, allowing for the development of new tactical theories, while tournaments of singular prowess allow observers to study techniques. Infrequently, larger gladiatorial games provide bloody sport fought to blood or death depending on whichever outcome provides a superior lesson. Gladiatorial games also serve to reinforce discipline, since fighters are typically Warriors found guilty of minor crimes. Soldiers may pursue nonmartial hobbies and assorted physical games bereft of direct violence, but such pursuits are the exception rather than the norm. Neglect of proper activities can result in minor disciplinary action if carried to excess, though officers show considerable leniency in such matters.

Without anyone dictating or reviewing their activities, Artisans combine work and leisure freely. Most find great satisfaction in learning, either passively studying the works and lore of others in libraries and galleries or actively pioneering new ideas and wonders in their own laboratories. Artisans live a considerably more lonely existence than their subordinates. Groups of three to five allies may live together as a royal family of sorts, with each pursuing his own agendas and overseeing different aspects of their shared dominions. These families gather together to socialize with the only peers they have, showing off their works and plotting against members of rival factions. Many Artisans live alone in their palatial Manses, interacting with the undercastes only as necessary to issue policies and receive reports.

Sex and Gender

While they possess distinct genders and functional sex organs like mortals, Mountain Folk cannot produce offspring with one another via intercourse and do not substantially differ in terms of physical or mental ability between the sexes. As a result, gender plays absolutely no role in career choices or success, and both sexes may be found performing every imaginable task. Just as importantly, the inability to procreate means that sex is a purely recreational act leaving no appreciable difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Furthermore,

the very concept of marriage has no real counterpart in Mountain Folk culture. Warriors never know when they will be reassigned to another unit or perish in battle, so they do not often forge or maintain lasting couples. Instead, Warriors engage in a series of intensely passionate flings terminated without lingering attachment after they or their partner transfers or dies. Artisans have considerably longer expected life spans but establish all relationships in the context of their political ambitions. Intimate emotional attachments to potential rivals represent a liability, so most Artisans only build romances as a game or a means of establishing a new ally. Workers lack the political aspirations or high turnover of the other castes, so they are the most likely to engage in any sort of lasting emotional partnership. However, even the most intimate couples do not require or expect sexual monogamy.

Language

Mountain Folk speak Rocktongue, a guttural language that shares close linguistic ties to Old Realm despite using an entirely different set of pictographic runes for its writing. Jadeborn historians contend that Rocktongue is the original language from which Old Realm derives, though it is probably more likely that the reverse is actually true. Regardless, the two languages are sufficiently similar that anyone fluent in Rocktongue can communicate basic needs and concepts in Old Realm, and vice versa. This limited comprehension does not extend to idioms, poetry and other complicated ideas. In addition to their native language, all Artisans study Old and High Realm at the College of Divine Enlightenment.

Geography

The empire of the Mountain Folk extends deep beneath the Blessed Isle and even slightly beyond, with a multitude of cavern cities linked by a three-dimensional web of tunnels. Urvar is the greatest of these cities by far, a vast labyrinthine metropolis in the roots of the Imperial Mountain with a population almost double that of the Imperial City. Farming plantations surround the cities, with loam-packed caves yielding assorted crops of mushrooms and bizarre plants cultivated to thrive on Essence or geothermal heat in the sunless depths. Most large settlements sit atop quarries of some variety, all paling before the bottomless jade mines under Urvar. A buffer zone of largely uninhabited caves and crevasses surrounds the empire, crisscrossed with all manner of roadways and carved paths to allow for rapid troop deployment. In a ring beyond this, Warrior outposts and fortresses hold the borders against all enemies beyond. The Endless War rages here in skirmishes and massacres. When the Mountain Folk win, they buy themselves a reprieve to prepare for the next wave. When they lose, reserves or nearby garrisons must cut through the defensive zone to intercept the hordes. In general, the Mountain Folk empire grows deeper the further out it gets, with the farthest outposts many dozens of miles beneath the bottom of the Inland Sea. This slope closely parallels the Imperial Mountain, the roots of which widen and deepen beyond all measurement, spreading out to become the foundation of Creation itself.

Children of the Mountain

Although infertile with one another, Mountain Folk can sire or bear offspring with mortals and Exalted. The results of such unions are always God-Blooded, with a heritage dependent on which parent has a higher permanent Essence. Jadeborn have little use for infants and no social structures in place to rear such offspring. Consequently, a female Worker or Warrior who becomes pregnant must immediately report the matter to her superior. In most cases, the mother receives orders to terminate the pregnancy by means of abortive drugs as soon as possible, in order to minimize any productivity loss. In cases where the father is a powerful magical being, however, the Conclave transfers the mother to Urvar and restricts her assignments for the duration of her pregnancy. After birth, the infant goes to the father, and the mother returns to her previous work with a reprimand and moderate fine for creating an incident. Female Artisans may keep their children or not as they choose, although they are solely responsible for raising their offspring and may earn the derision of their peers for their strange hobby. Unenlightened Mountain Folk males may freely sire offspring given the unlikely opportunity, but face demotion and strict fines if lechery creates a diplomatic embarrassment. Moreover, conservative Jadeborn regard those who regularly indulge in cross-species mating with a fair amount of distaste.

God-Blooded offspring who inherit their power from Mountain Folk parentage look unremarkably human and seldom show any overtly magical capabilities. Their ancestry gives them great artistic potential that most exploit, but these bastards may be unaware of their true nature. The handful that manifest Essence and Charms hail from Artisan stock, learning these powers at the standard cost for all God-Blooded. See Chapter Two of the **Exalted Players Guide** for detailed rules on creating God-Blooded characters.

Anomalies

While the overwhelming majority of Mountain Folk fit neatly in the three castes, living similar or even

interchangeable lives, several specialized subcastes deviate sufficiently from their parent group to merit special attention. By definition, these anomalous individuals suffer unhappy lives ostracized from a society that worships conformity and symmetry.

Chaos Seers

In an empire without sky or stars, the Mountain Folk have no means of prying secrets from the heavens or inclination to do so. Yet, they still have their prophets, inexplicable seers who gaze into the myriad folds of possibility at the cost of their sanity. The Jadeborn do not understand this phenomenon, though they certainly exploit these brilliant and terrible wretches as weapons against their many enemies. The truth of the matter is surprisingly simple, though the implications are not. In Yu-Shan, the Loom of Fate weaves destiny's skeins from the Wyld in the inexorable march of causality. While the planning and command of fate falls to the Maidens and their Chosen, they seldom weave these threads directly. Instead, this thankless and endless chore falls to the pattern spiders, equal parts god and automaton fashioned by Autochthon before his departure from Creation. Chaos Seers tap into some bizarre resonance between themselves and the keepers of destiny, simultaneously viewing the Loom of Fate from the eightfold eyes of every pattern spider in Heaven. Perhaps the Great Maker intended for the Mountain Folk to develop this capability in some distant future when they were ready to receive it, or perhaps the Chaos Seers have tragically uncovered an unanticipated flaw in their creator's works. Regardless, the overwhelming visions of fate shatter their minds like so much spun glass, transforming these prophets into irredeemable sociopaths. It is doubtful that the seers understand how they scry into the designs of the future, since no Jadeborn has ever visited Heaven.

The Conclave only keeps a dozen Chaos Seers around at any time, locked away under the tightest security in a prison Manse in Urvar. In spite of all the precautions, at least one of these mad geniuses escapes every few decades and begins murdering citizens to sculpt the futures she sees, playing a deadly game of cat and mouse with the best investigators of the Conclave. Fortunately, even the most depraved of these deadly prophets enjoy flaunting their power and brilliance, so they serve as strange advisors to their captors. Their uncanny deductive and predictive powers have helped strategoi anticipate enemy incursions and plotted the downfall of many political rivals within the Conclave.

Given the unavoidable madness associated with the state, no one actually volunteers to become a Chaos Seer. However, any Enlightened Jadeborn who regularly interacts with one of these geniuses runs the risk of attracting their corruptive attention. Seers delight in covertly inducting their would-be keepers and inquisitors into their own ranks, and anyone foolish enough to let her mental guard down may end up learning their dread Charm Heart of Chaos without realizing it. Consequently, anyone who has more than one conversation with a seer in a year must undergo monthly psychiatric evaluation for the next year to be safe. These precautions catch most of those who fall prey to chaos, but not all. In the end, these strange and frightening beings are simply too useful to ignore or destroy. The predictive Charm Heart of Chaos is explained in detail on page 247.

Enlightened Undercastes

According to the hierarchy established by White Shale, Artisans and only Artisans bear the Enlightenment of Autochthon. In actuality, this is not the case. Workers and Warriors touched by the genius of the Great Maker are phenomenally rare, perhaps one in a hundred thousand, but it does happen and has always happened. Officially, the Conclave regards anomalous Enlightenment as a tragic mistake. Clearly, the individual would have been an Artisan but for the deplorable incompetence of his Artisan parent. The Conclave regrets that spiritually maimed anomalies cannot hope to attain their full potential in light of their disfigurement, but at least they can assist the Artisans in managing the caste to which they so sorrowfully belong. This magnanimous and pretentious sentiment is a carefully constructed lie, albeit one pervasive enough that most Mountain Folk accept it at face value. The Enlightened undercastes are not in any way failed Artisans. Rather, they represent a throwback to the ancient Mountain Folk as they were before the Great Geas, when all were Enlightened. Perhaps they also represent the future, an evolution toward greater cognition and the eventual end of Autochthon's binding.

The Conclave fears anything that could upset the status quo and create a more equitable redistribution of power, and so, its members lie to themselves and others. They punish Artisans found "guilty" of botched births and carefully keep all aberrant prodigies as busy as possible so they cannot aspire toward the political power that is their just right. If anomalies happen to die in accidents or by fighting in the deadliest of battle zones, Artisans do not weep overmuch, though none would dare arrange a murder for fear of legal reprisal. The Conclave does everything it possibly can to ignore the reality, but that reality is growing. Within the past few years, the number of Workers and Warriors born with Enlightenment has risen threefold. Such an increase ultimately matters little unless the trend continues, in which case the Conclave may be looking at the first sign of its ultimate obsolescence. Only a few savants know the percentage rate has jumped, and they have not disclosed this information to their peers as of yet.

Undercaste prodigies dominate their nurseries and rapidly outstrip their teachers. For Workers, this is merely embarrassing and demoralizing. For Warriors, the results can be nothing short of catastrophic. In far too many instances, half-feral prodigies have butchered all of the gang alphas in their nursery paddock and several overseers before assault teams could subdue them. In both cases, it's clear that prodigies do not belong in the educational system designed for their caste. Instead, they travel to Urvar, where each goes to live with an Artisan master who provides extensive private tutelage. Warriors learn civility but spend most of their time mastering the arts of death and the crafts of war. Workers learn management and engineering and the total mastery of a single craft in place of broad curricula.

As adults, Enlightened Workers serve as engineers and managers, guiding their Unenlightened brethren to complete the most ambitious projects of the Conclave. While they cannot match Artisans in theoretical geomancy, these paragons of the Worker Caste remain the foremost experts at building Manses. Their higher-Essence Charms allow them to yoke the spirits of Workers together, building efficiency through synergy.

Enlightened Warriors approach the craft of battle from within their singular genius, tempering violence with calculated stratagem and brutality. Unlike Artisans, they seldom dabble in any breadth of lore or arts except to enhance their killing prowess, viewing the world as an infinite battlefield upon which they must conquer or die. The Conclave fears these ultimate fighters, but Enlightened Warriors have repeatedly demonstrated they make the most effective commanders. Consequently, the Conclave plays a delicate balancing game with these generals. On the one hand, the Artisans certainly don't want superior fighters idly lingering around Urvar. On the other, they certainly don't want a distant general rallying a personal army under her own banner and starting a civil war. The Conclave takes a compromise approach, leaving Enlightened Warriors on the front lines with Artisan subcommanders prepared to assume control at the first sign of betrayal. These dire countermeasures have never proven necessary, at least not in any official records.

Character Creation

Step One: Character Concept

As with all characters, players designing one of the Mountain Folk must start with a basic premise. The hierarchical nature of Jadeborn society means that every concept must begin with caste and Enlightenment, the conjunction of which determines everything from name format and upbringing to common personality traits and specific duties.

Name

Mountain Folk nomenclature tends to fall into one of two categories. Unenlightened names are generally one or two syllables long, with a hard or glottal consonant beginning and ending the word. Female names sometimes break this form with a vowel ending or softer consonant, but not always. In most cases, these names are assigned randomly from a pregenerated list maintained at each birthing facility. This list usually repeats and recycles every decade or so. When two Mountain Folk with the same name encounter one another, they add the name of the settlement where they were born as an informal surname, followed by their birth year if necessary. Enlightened names favor poetic and descriptive styles combining one or two adjectives before a noun or noun pair. The Conclave assigns these names very carefully after several months, usually to capture some facet of the child's character or qualities. Until then, they are simply "Child" or something equally vague.

Caste and Enlightenment

The castes of the Exalted exist in lateral harmony, roughly equal in power within their divergent spheres of expertise. No such equality exists among the Mountain Folk, whose Workers and Warriors serve as commoners beneath the rule of Artisans. As such, caste dictates social standing and importance. Workers and Warriors are merely cogs in the vast machine of Mountain Folk society, largely considered interchangeable and expendable by their leaders. In contrast, Artisans direct and build the machine as brilliant architects and scholars, enjoying privilege and power such as the Unenlightened masses can only imagine. Exceptions to this hierarchy are phenomenally rare, but even the greatest Enlightened minds of the undercastes remain second-class citizens who can never fully transcend their station.

Owing to their segregated lives and duties, members of different castes do not generally intermingle. As such, players in an all-Mountain Folk game should collectively pick a caste they want to explore together. Even more importantly, the power difference between Enlightened and Unenlightened ensures that mixed groups suffer the same problems as games incorporating Exalted and heroic mortals. The only way to combine castes without resorting to unlikely plot contrivances is a mixture of Artisans and Enlightened members of the undercastes, who would still need a good reason to associate with one another.

Nature

Mountain Folk choose their Natures from the same list as other characters, although certain archetypes predominate among the different castes. Most Workers are Followers, with their foremen taking the role of Architects or Paragons. Warriors also tend toward Follower, but their

Paragons of Order

Mountain Folk believe in a perfected hierarchy of duty, in which everyone has a designated function that serves the greater good. Righteous citizens obey their superiors without question and expect the same obedience from those beneath them in the hierarchy. Just as importantly, righteousness demands strict adherence to truth, law and stability. Order need not be static or sterile in its implementation, as every successive iteration of a pattern should improve upon the last toward the ideal of ultimate perfection. However, innovation is only acceptable within established parameters, subject to the review and censure of superiors. Deviation is sin. Unenlightened Paragons of Order are model citizens who follow where bid and wholeheartedly believe in the dream of a collective good greater and more valuable than their own lives. Enlightened Paragons of Order view themselves as stewards and shapers of pattern, the champions whose guidance holds back anarchy and annihilation.

ranks also include an unhealthy number of Martyrs. The Enlightened have the widest range of choices available to them given their autonomy, but most outwardly play the expected roles of Architects, Leaders, Paragons, Savants or Visionaries. Open Rebels, Explorers and Thrillseekers are not tolerated among the undercastes and are subject to social censure among Artisans.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Mountain Folk prioritize and allocate dots among their Physical, Social and Mental Attributes as normal, beginning with one free dot in each. Unenlightened characters often have their Physical as primary, while Artisans seldom do. Enlightened characters receive a spread of sixteen (16),thirteen (13) and ten (10) dots to divide among their primary, secondary and tertiary categories, but no Attribute can have a rating higher than seven (7) dots or lower than three (3). Unenlightened only have eight (8), four (4) and three (3) dots to distribute and cannot have an Intelligence rating above two (2) dots or any other Attribute above five (5).

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities begin with a rating of zero. Unlike Exalted, Mountain Folk do not have any Caste Abilities. Instead, they all have six (6) Favored Abilities (Craft, plus five others selected by the player).

Enlightened characters receive 10 dots to spend on Favored Abilities (placing a minimum of one dot in each), as well as 25 additional dots to spend on any Abilities. They may not place more than three of these dots in any Ability, but can increase Abilities as high as six dots with bonus points.

Artisans receive a rigorous education at the College of Divine Enlightenment. All graduates of that school must have an *absolute minimum* of Awareness •, Bureaucracy ••, Linguistics •• (High Realm, Old Realm), Lore ••, Martial Arts *or* Melee •, Occult ••, Performance *or* Presence •, Socialize •• and •• divided among Craft Abilities.

Unenlightened characters receive 14 dots to divide among their Favored Abilities, each of which must have at least one dot. They also receive 8 additional dots to spend on any Abilities, Favored or otherwise. Unlike most characters, the Unenlightened may place up to five dots in any Favored Ability during this stage but cannot ever have Ability ratings above 5 (even with bonus points).

In addition to the preceding rules, players should keep their character's concept and Enlightenment in mind. The Unenlightened do not receive any formal training or education that does not immediately pertain to their duties. Furthermore, they have precious little opportunity or inclination to pursue extraneous studies on their own. As a result, they will tend to have fewer Abilities with high ratings rather than dabbling in a multitude of areas. Such characters will often purchase the same specialty twice or even three times to raise their narrow field of expertise even further.

In contrast, Enlightened characters face no cultural restrictions on learning. Rather, the Conclave encourages members to study everything and anything they can. This emphasis usually results in an eclectic diversity of Abilities with lower ratings. Specialties are less common and seldom duplicated for the same Ability, though hardly unheard of.

Step Four: Advantages

As the aristocracy of the Mountain Folk, Artisans receive thirteen (13) dots to purchase Backgrounds. Enlightened members of the undercastes receive ten (10). Unenlightened characters only receive six (6) dots of Backgrounds. (For more information on the new and modified Backgrounds available to Mountain Folk, see pages 234-235.)

Like most magical beings, Mountain Folk have access to the Essence-fueled magic of Charms. The Jadeborn divide their Charms into five Patterns, one for each caste, a third shared by the Enlightened and a fifth Foundation Pattern encompassing the miscellaneous powers shared equally by all castes. Enlightened characters receive six (6) Charms, no more than three (3) of which may come from the Pattern of another caste. Unenlightened receive only three (3) Charms, all of which must belong to their own Caste Pattern or the Foundation Pattern. (For full information on the Charms of the Mountain Folk, see pages 244-275.)

Mountain Folk choose Virtues as normal, with one free dot in each and five (5) additional dots to distribute among

them. No Virtue can have a rating above three (3) dots without bonus points, and none may ever rise above five (5) dots. Each of the three castes has its own ethos that loosely corresponds to one of the Virtues. There is no rule for this association, though characters will usually have their highest rating in the Virtue appropriate to their caste. Artisans prize Conviction, both to weather challenges and to impose their will upon the world. Workers require Temperance to fulfill repetitious duties faithfully, regarding self-discipline as the purest expression of piety. Warriors hold fast to Valor against their innumerable enemies, resigned to yield their lives in defense of their race. No caste believes as strongly in Compassion, but all severely punish antisocial behavior. Even beyond caste values, all Mountain Folk prize emotional stability. Characters with any Virtues rated at one dot risk the censure and contempt of their peers, particularly if the deficiency matches the Virtue espoused by their caste.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Like the Exalted, Mountain Folk have a starting Willpower equal to the sum of their two highest Virtues. However, Unenlightened characters cannot ever have a permanent Willpower above 6, even if their Virtues would allow a higher rating. The Enlightened may not have a starting Willpower above 8 unless at least two Virtues have a rating of 4 or higher. Permanent Essence begins at one (1) dot for the Unenlightened and two (2) dots for the Enlightened. Mountain Folk have the same seven (7) health levels as mortals (-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap), plus any obtained from Charms. Unlike Exalted, Jadeborn have a single Essence pool that does not display any form of anima. This pool has a reserve of motes equal to (Essence x 10). Mountain Folk receive 15 bonus points to spend at any time during character creation. See the chart on page 233 for the point cost associated with each Trait.

Spark of Life

Even in a society of duty and conformity, each of the Mountain Folk remains an individual. Caste determines overall appearance, but what of distinctive markings? Most Warriors have their share of battle scars earned in childhood or the front lines, with no two alike. Workers with factory duties carry the scent and stain of soot and alchemy in their hair and skin, even as farmers reek of



must from their crops. Adding these touches helps to define a character and to establish her place in society. Those who deviate substantially will face derision or even ostracism, so a Worker or Warrior with a particularly low or high Appearance score might well feel resentful and out of place. More important than any physical details, players should consider the character's past and personality. How does she feel about her lot in life? As one of the Unenlightened, has she ever done anything to distinguish herself positively or negatively? Is she content to be a face in the crowd, or does she have just enough autonomy to secretly hope for something better? Does she have a distant and benevolent lord or a manipulative tycoon-tyrant who pushes his labor past the point of exhaustion to sate his greed? How much does the character know or care about the history of the Mountain Folk? How do Warriors feel about the Endless War? Do they regard the near certainty of violent death with heroic fatalism or bitter sorrow?

For an Enlightened character, how well does she play politics? To which faction does she belong, and how powerful is that faction? How has the character proven her genius, and what is her glorious vision for the future of the Mountain Folk? What are her ultimate ambitions? Does she seek to escape or overthrow the Great Geas and conquer humanity? Does she seek the legendary First or even the mighty Autochthon himself? Does she wish to dominate the Conclave? Does she foresee an apocalyptic solution to end the Endless War for all time? Players should think in sweeping epic terms, even as the Enlightened do.

Mountain Folk Thaumaturgy

Enlightened Mountain Folk can practice the common magic of thaumaturgy, though few do, and even the Unenlightened may learn procedures and formulas. Like the Dragon Kings and the Exalted, the Jadeborn have more immediate and powerful magic available to them through their Charms. Still, some esoteric savants look to Arts and Sciences for an unexpected edge over their peers or merely study the paths and rituals out of idle curiosity. Mountain Folk characters pay the same costs and require the same training times as mortals (see Chapter Three of the **Exalted Players Guide**).

According to one Jadeborn legend, the acclaimed sorcerer-smith Xarbala forged the principles of thaumaturgy as an occult experiment. He ultimately incorporated his research into a new Charm Pattern, but did not think to destroy the notes he scrawled upon the walls of his workshop. Many centuries later, mortal fugitives of the Dragon Kings inadvertently discovered these notes and transformed them into the familiar Arts and Sciences. This legend may be just that, a fable told by Mountain Folk who (like the Dragon Kings) could hardly believe humans might develop magic on their own. The Jadeborn themselves do not really know and probably never will.

Mountain Folk Experience

Jadeborn are creatures of order, not stasis. They receive experience points as other characters do and may use these points to increase their existing Traits or to purchase new Traits. Unless otherwise noted, all costs and training times are the same as for Solar Exalted (see **Exalted**, pp. 270-271). Enlightened characters may have a maximum rating of 7 in any Attribute, 6 in any Ability and a permanent Essence as high as 5. The Unenlightened cannot have an Essence rating above 3 or a Willpower above 6. Their Intelligence has a maximum of 2, with all other Attributes and Abilities limited to 5 dots. Like Exalted, Mountain Folk cannot generally have Virtues above 5 dots or more than three specialties in any Ability. Craft Abilities mark the sole exception to this rule. Jadeborn can have up to five Specialties in any Craft, but they cannot purchase the same specialty more than three times.

Trait	Experience Cost	Training Time
Craft Ability	current rating	current rating x 3 days
Craft Specialty	2	2 weeks
Essence	current rating x 10	current rating x 3 months*
New Charm	10 (12 if part of another Caste Pattern)	minimum Essence x 3 days

* This training time assumes the character performs rigorous meditations and exercises requiring several hours each day. For those who can only spare a sporadic hour per day at best (such as most of the Unenlightened), the training time increases to current rating in years. Enlightened characters must enter monastic retreat to raise their Essence above 3, just like Exalted. Such characters can still attempt to raise Essence with daily meditations, but this dramatically increases the training time to (current rating x 5) years.

Character Creation

• Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, caste and Nature

Select Enlightened or Unenlightened. All of the Artisan Caste are Enlightened, while the vast majority of the other castes are not.

• Step Two: Select Attributes

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental. Worker and Warrior Caste characters almost always have Physical Attributes as primary, while Artisans rarely ever do.

Enlightened characters receive 16/13/10, while the Unenlightened receive 8/4/3.

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

Enlightened cannot have Attribute ratings below 3 or above 7.

Unenlightened cannot have Intelligence above 2 or other Attributes above 5.

• Step Three: Select Abilities

Select Favored Abilities (Craft, plus 5 others).

Choose Abilities:

Enlightened characters receive 10 dots to spend on Favored Abilities and must place at least one dot in each. They also receive an additional 25 dots to spend on any Abilities. These dots cannot increase an Ability rating above 3, though bonus points can raise Abilities as high as 6. Adult Artisans must have a minimum of Awareness •, Bureaucracy ••, Linguistics •• (High Realm, Old Realm), Lore ••, Martial Arts *or* Melee •, Occult ••, Performance *or* Presence •, Socialize •• and •• divided among Craft Abilities.

Unenlightened receive 14 dots for Favored Abilities and must place at least one dot in each. They also have another eight dots to spend on any Abilities as desired. Even without bonus points, Favored Abilities can have a rating as high as 5. Other Abilities require bonus points to exceed three dots as normal.

• Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (13 for Artisans, 10 for Enlightened members of the undercastes and 6 for the Unenlightened; none may exceed 3 dots without bonus points), Charms (6 for Enlightened; 3 for Unenlightened — Enlightened characters cannot take more than 3 of these Charms from the Pattern of another caste, while the Unenlightened can only take Charms from their own Caste Pattern or the Foundation Pattern), Virtues (5; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points, and all begin with one dot before spending points).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2 for the Enlightened, 1 for the Unenlightened), Willpower (sum of two highest Virtues; Willpower cannot start above 8 unless two Virtues are rated at 4 or higher and may never exceed 6 for the Unenlightened), Essence pool (Essence x 10) and health levels (7 + any gained from Charms).

• Bonus Points

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

Castes

• **Artisan:**

The unchallenged scholar aristocrats of the Mountain Folk, the Jadeweavers are like the arts they master: subtle, beautiful and deadly. They build and hoard vast treasures and wonders in their halls and Manse workshops, reigning as the lords of their race.

• **Warrior:**

Created to defend the Mountain Folk and Creation as a whole from the endless hidden enemies lurking in the roots of the world, the hordes of Myrmidons exemplify selfless duty and sacrifice for the greater good. Rare Enlightened Warriors lead their brethren as generals and champions.

• **Worker:**

Too often overlooked as the least significant of the three castes, the Pillars of the Mountain comprise the greatest percentage of their race. The arduous labors of the Workers are the invaluable backbone of the Mountain Folk economy and the key to their survival. Rare Enlightened Workers serve as foremen and engineers.

Virtues

- **Compassion** — Empathy and forgiveness
- **Conviction** — Emotional endurance, associated with Artisans
- **Temperance** — Self-control and clear-headedness, associated with Workers
- **Valor** — Courage and bravery, associated with Warriors

Backgrounds

- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks
- **Artifact** — Magical devices and talismans
- **Backing** — Rank in the military or another influential organization
- **Contacts** — Information sources and well-connected associates
- **Familiar** — An animal or elemental companion
- **Followers** — Unenlightened subordinates
- **Influence** — Social status
- **Manse** — A place of power and Essence
- **Mentor** — A patron and instructor
- **Resources** — Material goods and wealth

Bonus Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence	10
Charms	5 (7 if part of another caste's Pattern)

New and Expanded Traits

While the Mountain Folk do not have any new Backgrounds exclusive to them, they interpret many of the standard Backgrounds differently. In addition, they have a number of innate powers and physiological quirks unique to their inhuman nature and hierarchical triumvirate of castes. Finally, they must contend with the Great Geas of Autochthon, just as the Exalted suffer from the Great Curse of the Malfeans.

Modified Backgrounds

Allies

Most of the allies available to Mountain Folk characters will be others of their own kind. Less commonly, the Enlightened associate with earth elementals or gods of the subterranean depths. Those who dwell near the surface of the Imperial Mountain may even have allies among the Dragon Blooded Host.

Artifact

As the premiere craftsmen of Creation, Mountain Folk receive two dots worth of artifacts for every dot invested in this Background. They pay only one Background or bonus point to purchase each dot, even above a rating of 3. The greatest Enlightened heroes of the Mountain Folk can possess this Background above a rating of 5 to reflect a truly amazing hoard, with each dot beyond 5 costing one bonus point and granting an additional dot of total artifacts. Even among the Jadeborn, such extreme caches are rare and precious, so players should have an excellent story explanation or select other appropriate Backgrounds to justify their extraordinary magical wealth. Most of the artifacts used by the Mountain Folk are constructed of jade, although they occasionally use orichalcum and moonsilver. Some few devices use starmetal, but the subterranean Jadeborn have very little access to meteoric iron. Soulsteel is all but unknown and considered extremely dangerous, though not actually illegal.

Backing

Mountain Folk do not generally remain aboveground long enough to gain membership in many organizations, let alone to advance in rank. Within Mountain Folk society, Backing usually represents rank in the military (• for shard leader, •• for stone leader, ••• for hill commander, •••• for mountain lord and ••••• for range lord. Rank above ••• is generally reserved for Enlightened veterans with centuries of experience and appropriately high levels of Influence and should only be earned in the course of play unless the game assumes extremely powerful starting characters with hundreds of experience points. The Unenlightened can only ever have a rank as high as ••. Military Backing affords similar benefits to the Command Background available to the Dragon-Blooded and Abyssal Exalted. Each officer commands an appropriate chain of subordinate officers, culminating in shard leaders who actually lead the rank and file. All forces belong to the Conclave, not to the character, and officers abusing their authority face heavy and immediate punishment. As an alternative to military rank, Backing can also represent leadership status within a religious order such as the Cult of the Great Maker or another sub-society of the Jadeborn. The Unenlightened cannot have this Background above 3 for private organizations.

Contacts

Unlike many other social Backgrounds, a Jadeborn's contacts can easily include mortals, at least for those Mountain Folk who dwell near the surface of the Imperial Mountain. Some even draw contacts from spirits and Exalted, though most build networks of informants among their own kind.

Cult

The Great Geas of Autochthon ensures that any Mountain Folk rash enough to build a cult suffers terrible and rapid doom. This Background is explicitly prohibited.

Familiar

While quite rare, some Mountain Folk establish a magical rapport with creatures of the sunless deep. The Unenlightened have little time for pets to build such bonds, so these animals must generally be able to assist them in their duties in some way. The Enlightened can even establish ties with lesser earth elementals such as jokun and mercury ants (see **Games of Divinity**, pp. 76-77). Elementals with Essence 2 count as four-dot familiars; those with Essence 3 cost five dots. Such beings show more autonomy than animals and never provide Essence unless they have a means and inclination to donate from their own pool, but they may share their senses if they so will it.

Followers

For Enlightened Workers and Warrior Caste Mountain Folk, Followers represent Unenlightened subordinates of their own caste. Artisans can draw their retainers from any of the Unenlightened, typically a retinue of bodyguards or personal laborer-aides. The Unenlightened cannot possess this Background.

Influence

As applied to the surface world, this Background is extremely dangerous and runs a strong risk of triggering the Great Geas. Most Mountain Folk only have influence pertaining to the Conclave. In either case,

Unenlightened characters cannot have more than a single dot in this Background.

Manse

The Earth holds many places of power hidden too deep for those on Creation to tap. The cities and warrens of the Mountain Folk are invariably situated on such geomantic wellsprings and built around the core of a central Manse. Unsurprisingly, most of the Demesnes and Manses owned by the Jadeborn have an Earth Aspect, although other elements find expression in volcanic vents, flooded caverns and passages walled in deep-burrowing roots. The Mountain Folk control few Manses of Air, fewer still of Celestial Aspect and none tainted by Abyssal energies. Each dot in this Background provides two dots worth of Manses or three dots of Demesnes to which the character is attuned. These dots may be arranged however desired. Unenlightened characters are not assumed to carry the Hearthstones of any Manses to which they are attuned, unless these stones are temporarily on loan for a specific task. However, any task that requires a Hearthstone will be generally fall to one of the Enlightened, making the issue a moot point except in the most extraordinary circumstances.

Mentor

In most cases, a mentor represents a senior member of a character's own caste. In far more unusual instances, Mountain Folk may receive tutelage from spirits or even Exalted. The Enlightened undercastes usually draw their Mentors from Artisans. The Unenlightened may not have more than three dots of this Background.

Resources

The earth bears many treasures coveted in the world, especially precious ores and gleaming gems. As a result, Mountain Folk characters have an effective Resources rating equal to the number of dots invested in this Background + 2, but cannot have more than three actual dots in the Background. Characters lacking this Background may still live comfortably with an standard of living equivalent to Resources •• for the Enlightened and Resources • for the Unenlightened. Only those pathetic wretches and criminals exiled from Mountain Folk society face true poverty. Unenlightened characters rarely have any actual rating in this Background unless their hoard represents a reward for extraordinary acts of heroism. Conversely, very few Enlightened characters have less than effective Resources •••••, except for those who have suffered fines as a result of misconduct.

The Great Geas

The Great Geas of the Mountain Folk imposes certain limitations on their behavior and requires them to fulfill other duties when properly bidden. Those who break the taboos or fail in their duties incur the wrath of the binding, which imposes terrible misfortune in punishment. Whenever Jadeborn break the Geas, they gain points of Divergence as described below. The Storyteller remains the sole arbiter of what qualifies as an offense. This Trait functions similarly to the Limit of the Great Curse. When Divergence reaches 10, the pool resets to zero, and the character suffers misfortune as though he broke an oath sanctified by an Eclipse Caste Solar with a permanent Essence equal to his own Essence rating. The automatic botches inflicted by the Great Geas play themselves out at the worst possible moment to ensure that further ambitions and misconduct lead to utter ruin. Fortunately for the Mountain Folk, Autochthon did not impose his Great Geas willingly and left mercy in its edicts. For every full month the Jadeborn live underground and avoid gaining any Divergence, they lose one point from their total. Abyssal and Infernal Exalted are not protected by the Great Geas as Celestial Exalted, though Autochthon's own Alchemical Exalted would be if they ever found their way into Creation.

- Breaking a sworn oath. Five points. Once broken, an oath no longer has power.
- Fighting against a Celestial Exalt except in self-defense or at the behest of another Celestial Exalt. Five points at the beginning of hostilities.
- Slaying one of the Exalted. Five points for striking the deathblow against a Celestial Exalt, or three points for a Terrestrial Exalt.
- Giving aid to an enemy of Creation. This includes the banished and dead Primordials and their servants, as well as any denizen of the Wyld and most Darkbroods. Four points for every instance of forbidden aid.
- Associating with the enemies of Creation in any nonhostile manner. Two points per week.
- Accepting worship from mortals. Three points per week.
- Asserting authority and leadership over a community of mortals. One point per week.
- Dwelling more than a month aboveground except in service to the Exalted. One point per month after the first.
- Refusing to build an artifact for a Celestial Exalt of higher Essence when properly commanded to do so. One point per week of disobedience. This clause of the Great Geas only applies to Enlightened Mountain Folk commanded to build artifacts they are actually capable of building, and no Jadeborn may be compelled to manufacture more than one artifact per year through this clause.

Knowing how to phrase a project request in such a way as to trigger the Geas requires knowledge of Rocktongue, a Lore (+ Savant Background, if applicable) rating of 5 or higher and an Intelligence + Lore roll at difficulty 6. In the Age of Sorrows, only the eldest Sidereals of the Bronze Faction remember and exploit this ancient privilege.

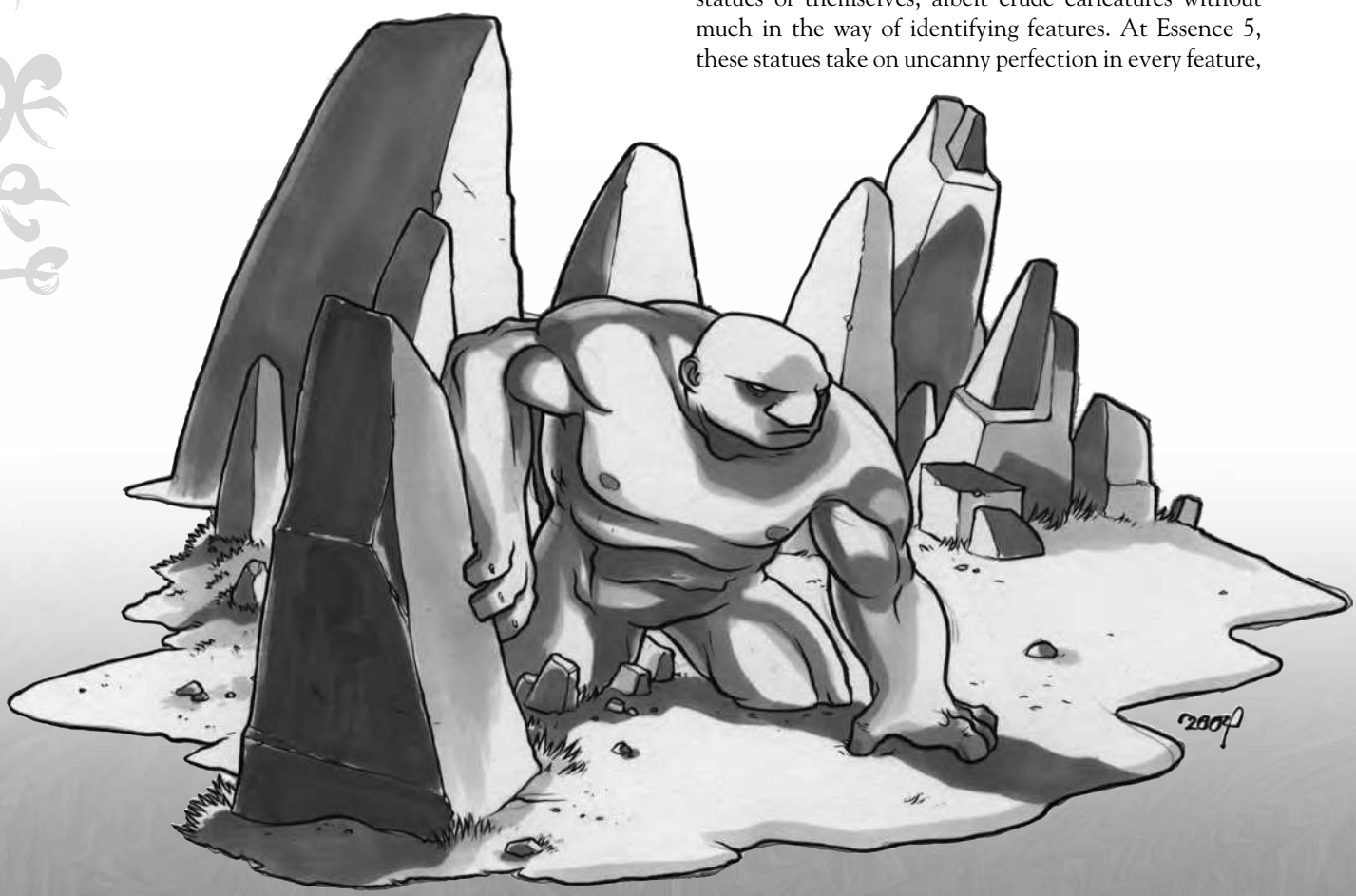
Mountain Folk Physiology

Autochthon crafted the Mountain Folk out of fae using his own Primordial Essence, and these strange beings do not experience life or death as mortals do. Their race is strong and hardy, befitting the calamitous epoch in which they were made, and so, the Jadeborn heal and resist all injury, illness, poison and other hazards like the Exalted. Mountain Folk begin their lives fully grown in body, while entirely ignorant in mind and spirit. The passing of years does not mark their flesh appreciably until they have lived a number of centuries equal to their permanent Essence, at which time they grow increasingly weathered and wizened, as from a combination of desiccation and erosion, dying sometime within a decade. However, the Charm Eternal Jade Rejuvenation (see pp. 245-246) can allow the Enlightened to prolong their lives well beyond this limit.

The Jadeborn have no parents and cannot reproduce amongst themselves. They do have genders, though perhaps only for vestigial aesthetic reasons or as an experimental precursor to humankind. Whatever Autochthon's reasons, Mountain Folk anatomy permits reproduction with humans to create a special breed of Fae-Blooded offspring (see pp. 59-60 of the **Exalted Players Guide**). Despite their ability to sire and bear half-breeds, the Mountain Folk cannot actually increase their own numbers, but neither does death actually decrease their population.

When Mountain Folk die, their Essence separates from their flesh and seeks deposits of jade large enough to contain them. Most travel back to the bottomless mines beneath the core of the Imperial Mountain, but some occasionally become waylaid by large deposits along the way. Such a journey can take minutes or months, but the Essence moves invisibly, silently and quickly as a sphere of energy the size of a child's fist. Such Essence is utterly intangible even to spirits and magic capable of interacting with the immaterial, although such magic can be used to observe the sphere in flight. When the Essence finds a new home, it fades into slumber and remains quiescent until released into new life and caste by the Charm Jade's Egg Hatched (see p. 271). Newborn Mountain Folk emerge fully grown but with only trace memories of their previous incarnations. They must begin their spiritual enlightenment again and develop their personalities anew, so each cycle of their existence creates distinctly unique beings.

The corpses of Mountain Folk immediately revert back to earth as their Essence departs. The exact nature of this transmutation depends on the power of the Jadeborn at the time of death. At Essence 1-2, the flesh crumbles into soft clay. Those with Essence 3-4 become marble statues of themselves, albeit crude caricatures without much in the way of identifying features. At Essence 5, these statues take on uncanny perfection in every feature,



lingering as eternal monuments to these glorious heroes. The process of transmutation starts immediately and finishes by the end of the turn, so any weapons left embedded in the flesh of a powerful Jadeborn will remain trapped in the statue unless quickly withdrawn. Freeing an object from a corpse statue is a feat of Strength requiring a Strength + Athletics total of 7 or greater.

Innate Powers

• **Immortal Essence:** As described above, Mountain Folk are eternal beings who experience a perfect form of reincarnation upon death. No magic short of Solar Circle Sorcery, Void Circle Necromancy or the raw power of a Primordial can prevent or even interfere with this effect.

• **Jade Sense:** For a reflexive cost of 1 mote, the Mountain Folk evoke their ancestral resonance to jade. This preternatural awareness allows them to sense the presence of jade within (their Essence x 5) yards, but they cannot identify the direction or concentration of detected deposits. As an added benefit, Jadeborn using their jade sense can feel the pull of the Elemental Pole of Earth on their souls as a form of perfect compass. This sense remains active for a scene, during which time they infallibly know their orientation with regard to the center of Creation.

• **Magical Attunement:** Mountain Folk may attune themselves to magical artifacts constructed of jade as if they were Terrestrial Exalted. They can also force full attunement with any of the other four Magical Materials without a roll if so desired, but they must still pay double the usual commitment cost to do so. As beings of the Tapestry rather than the Wyld, Jadeborn draw their power from Creation and respire Essence in the same manner and rate as the Exalted. The Mountain Folk can also attune themselves to Manses and Demesnes.

• **Superior Craftsmanship:** As the children of Autochthon, Mountain Folk may purchase or improve Craft Abilities and specialties for half the usual experience cost and training time (rounded up). This discount supersedes and replaces the normal discount awarded to Favored Abilities. In addition, Jadeborn may have up to five specialties per Craft Ability rather than the usual three, although they cannot apply more than +3 to a single roll and may not purchase the same specialty more than three times.

• **Wyld Resistance:** Despite their distant origins as fae, Mountain Folk retain no meaningful ties to the forces and energies of chaos outside of their seers. Instead, the patterns Autochthon placed on their Essence serve as a potent defense against the Wyld, adding five dice to all applicable rolls. In the unlikely event they would suffer a physical transformation from Wyld exposure, they suffer a number of levels of unsoakable aggravated damage equal to the number of mutation points they would have gained but remain unchanged. Furthermore, any attempt by chaotic Fair Folk to feed on Mountain Folk souls automatically fails. Mountain Folk feel nothing but discomfort in lands touched by chaos and never risk addiction, but neither can they undergo vision quests. (See Chapter Six of **Exalted: The Lunars** for more details on the various effects of Wyld exposure.)

Worker

Forged to bear the burdens of Mountain Folk society, Workers represent the most populous caste of their race. They perform the civil tasks that maintain the infrastructure of Jadeborn settlements and keep the great engines of industry turning. Warriors may defend the Mountain Folk civilization from enemies, even as Artisans guide and shape the people, but Workers *are* the Mountain Folk civilization. Whatever they lack in individual strength or genius, they more than make up for in collective might. Alone, they are little more than scattered gears and cogs devoid of purpose. Assembled, they remain the greatest machine of the Great Maker. Their drums sound in the deep, a pulsing counterpoint to the unceasing chants of their foremen. Efficiency. Discipline. Duty. These mantras are prayers to the Great Maker and reflect the very core of the Worker Caste's identity. In the mines, ten thousand hammers fall at a stroke, and the earth rings beneath the blows as one vast bell. In the farms, ten thousand scythes harvest mushrooms within an inch of synchronicity. Unity gives them power and purpose, whether to move mountains or to raise them.

Life is hard for most Workers but seldom unbearable. The Conclave has little patience with members who would raise themselves as petty tyrants to crush the overworked bodies and souls of their laborers. Such greed inevitably leads to inefficiency and economic failure. Consequently, most Workers can expect two meals a day and a good night's sleep and even a few hours of recuperative leisure. They cannot rise beyond their station and always remain the very bottom tier of the Jadeborn social pyramid, but they know nothing else. Strangely enough, most find genuine contentment in their lot. They cannot change what they are, so instead, they seek fulfillment in what they are. Those who work hard contribute to the success and survival of their civilization, reaping the benefits with their continued lives. Only a few thousand would-be rebels and malcontents exist among the more than six million Workers in Creation, and these piteous aberrations learn to hold their tongues lest they face ostracism, punishment or even death.

Duties: The Pillars of the Mountain perform a wide range of vital functions for their society. Close to two million Workers toil in the bottomless mines beneath Urvar, quarrying vast loads of jade and other precious materials from the depths. Another two million labor in the vast mushroom plantations and smaller farms strewn across the empire. Approximately a million work in assorted factories, building arsenals of wonders to equip the Warrior Caste and to fill the hoards of the Conclave. The final million and a half or so perform miscellaneous duties: Some serve as assistants or personal retainers to Artisans, others bring supplies to Warrior garrisons and still others have such exotic and specialized functions that even they seldom know what it is they actually do.

Appearance: Members of this caste are shorter than their brethren,



ZUB

standing between three and four feet tall. Their heavy toil and monitored rations keep them fit and minimize body fat, but Workers also possess disproportionately heavy bones and musculature for their height. Like all Mountain Folk, they value cleanliness and take great pains to scrub themselves in vast communal showers after each shift. The ugliest among them caricaturize the humanoid form, with hunched backs, ape-like arms hanging below their knees and primitive prognathous jaws beneath deep-set beady eyes and bulbous noses. Most, however, could pass for small humans, albeit unduly leathery and calloused ones. The fairest few turn this thickness into an exotic, aboriginal lure quite unlike the conventional aesthetics of the Realm. Pigmentation varies widely, with near-albino paleness and swarthy brownish-gray skin tones predominating in roughly equal measure.

Standard Worker attire varies by job, with clothing designed for utility and durability over form. Most wear simple belted tunics and boots of synthetic leather (see p. 277), color-coordinated for specific duties. Farmers dress in green, miners in black, factory laborers in maroon, maintenance technicians in brown, laboratory and research assistants in gray and personal aides to Artisans in bright yellow. Most jobs with hazardous duties require additional protective clothing appropriate to the danger, most commonly helmets and assorted variants of buff jackets treated to better withstand heat and/or chemicals.

Associations: Dim and dusty colors, Temperance, hammers and pickaxes, pillars, heavy architecture, granite, iron, a plain yellow gear (official symbol)

Sobriquets: Pillars of the Mountain, Humble Gears, Children of Clay, Hammers of Autochthon, Ironsouls

Concepts: Bitter foreman, humble farmer, laboratory assistant, adventurous miner, page to the Conclave, shunned inventor (Enlightened), uncredited genius (Enlightened), unlikely hero

There is no golden roof so grand it can stand without support.

Warrior

The Endless War rages on as it has since the First Age, and true to its name, the genocidal struggle shows no sign of slowing. The war has claimed more lives in its long and bloody millennia than all wars upon Creation save perhaps the overthrow of the Primordials, though it is impossible to really know. If Mountain Folk and their Darkbrood enemies had souls as mortals do, Creation would fester with shadowlands devouring it from beneath. Thankfully, such is not the case. Warriors reincarnate to fight and die anew, a succession of independent yet interchangeable lives. They exist only to shield their race from annihilation and are widely regarded by the Conclave as living weapons more than citizens. Their life is violence, and their death is violence. They neither know nor care for anything else.

Warriors fight with discipline. Narrow tunnels and irregular caves do not permit most of the formations known to mortal armies, so the Jadeborn adapt their tactics accordingly. Pikemen crouch to form curved lines near entrances, while troops move in with flamecasters blasting overhead. Then, these crouch to reload while archers rise further behind, picking off the stragglers who survived the flames. In other cases, Warriors set ambushes and devastate enemies with rapid guerilla tactics. Sometimes, they fall prey to the ambushes of the enemy, and then, they band together in outward-facing circles to kill as many as possible before death takes them. Through it all, Mountain Folk Warriors are a clockwork army. They are precise and exacting, utterly without remorse or mercy, the Engines of Victory.



Most Warriors live a few decades at best. Among their subculture, longevity is viewed as a peculiar form of heroism. Veterans who somehow endure a century or more are obviously blessed with good fortune and can expect their units to treat them like living good-luck talismans. For the rest, life isn't so bad while it lasts, and many learn to savor the fleeting pleasures of a fleeting existence. Faced with every cause for despair, most Warriors somehow choose grim acceptance. They are righteous heroes, each and every one. They have seen the vast and terrible hordes of the enemy. They know the fate that awaits their people if they fail. So long as Warriors fight and hold the borders, death is never the end. Death is only the beginning of another life, an endless march of lives sacrificed to the Endless War.

Duties: Built for strength and aggression, members of the Warrior Caste receive lengthy conditioning and combat training so that they may better kill and die for the Conclave. They perform this task with almost religious zeal, rightly convinced that they alone stand between the Nameless Hordes and the extinction of their race. Most Warriors live at the periphery of the Mountain Folk kingdoms in ZUB

border forts, with the remainder being kept in reserve at strategically placed garrisons throughout the empire. These reserves provide sentries for Manses, bodyguards for Artisans and a domestic police force.

Appearance: Members of the Warrior Caste can stand as tall as five feet, though most are shorter. Their skin has a stony texture and can even look like stone harshly chiseled into the muscular semblance of mankind. Many have inclusions of crystal or stone like freckles or moles on their skin. Age weathers away these edges and facets, gradually smoothing their features toward humanlike norms over the course of a century. Few live to complete the process of refinement, and those fortunate and skilled enough to endure their first century often exchange their stony visages for the leathery gristle and pocked flesh of battle scars.

Warriors always wear armor in public. While on duty, this armor consists of heavy mail with heavily spined helms — even those stationed in low-risk areas as Manse guards or police forces stand watches prepared for war. Off-duty soldiers may wear as little as a chain shirt or breastplate atop their black uniforms, carrying nothing more impressive than a sheathed short sword and matched knife as token armament. The uniforms of the Warrior Caste are made from black artificial leather (see p. 277) and include tunics, pants and high boots.black artificial leather (see p. 277) and include tunics, pants and high boots.

Associations: Vivid colors, Valor, weapons and armor, gates, fortresses, basalt and obsidian, bronze and steel, a crimson gear with spiked teeth (official symbol)

Sobriquets: Myrmidons, Engines of Victory, Children of Stone, Blades of Autochthon, Steelhearts

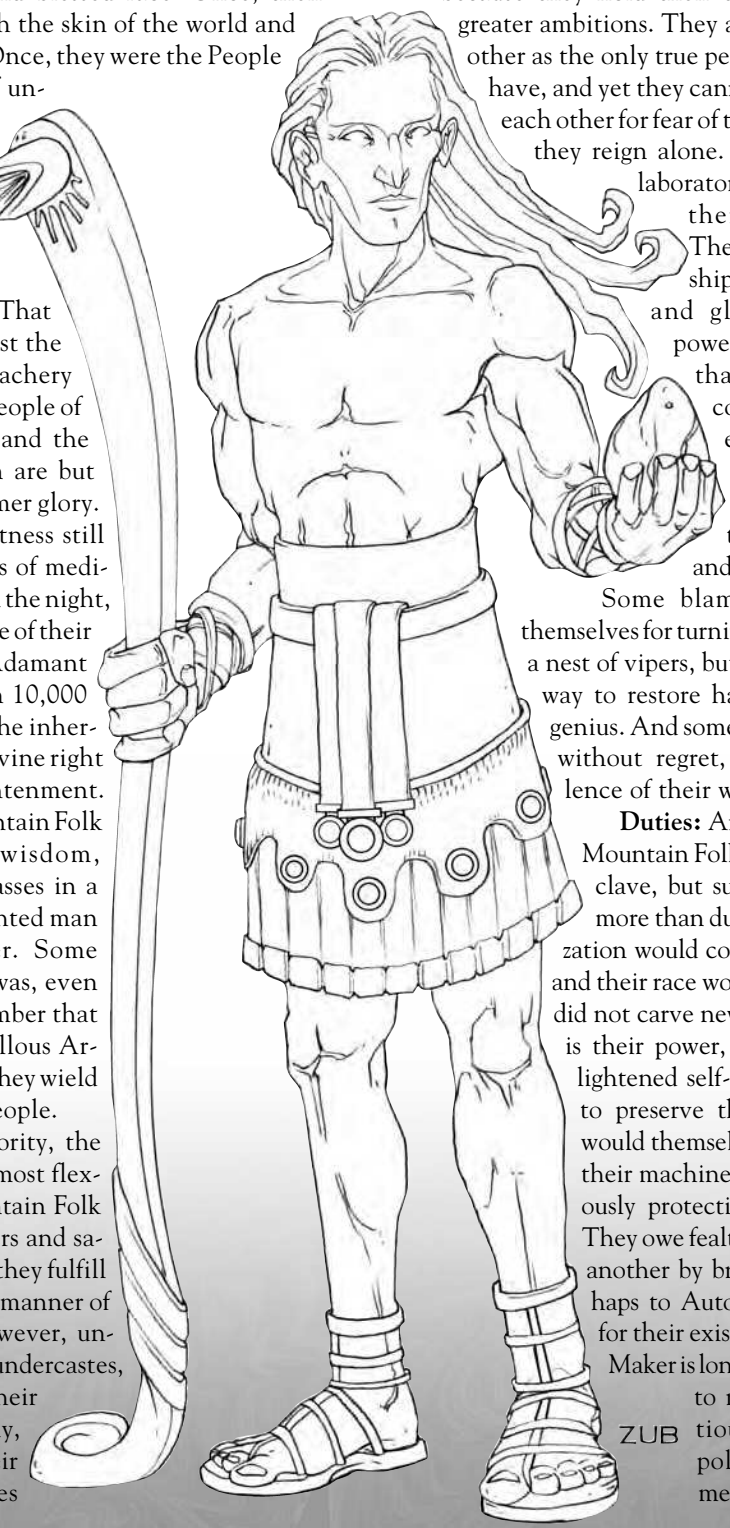
Concepts: Charismatic general (Enlightened), grizzled veteran, idealistic grunt, philosophical sentry, ultimate fighter (Enlightened), war-machine pilot

The more prosperous the flock, the more predators it attracts. One cannot have sheep without sheepdogs.

Artisan

The Mountain Folk have fallen far from their original splendor. Once, they were the hands of Autochthon, his chosen and blessed race. Once, their empire stretched beneath the skin of the world and brought order to chaos. Once, they were the People of Adamant, a nation of unsurpassed geniuses 10 million strong. But that was long ago, before the coming of mankind and their Exalted heroes. That was before the war against the Primordials and the treachery of the Great Geas. The People of Adamant are no more, and the People of the Mountain are but dim shadows of their former glory. And yet, embers of greatness still smolder among the ashes of mediocrity. They are as stars in the night, the last and lingering hope of their race. The Princes of Adamant are few — no more than 10,000 — but they alone claim the inheritance of myth and the divine right of Autochthon's Enlightenment. They alone rule the Mountain Folk with cunning and wisdom, shepherding the dim masses in a feudal hierarchy, as a sighted man leads his blind brother. Some mourn the loss of what was, even though none alive remember that wondrous time. More callous Artisans exult in the power they wield over their diminished people.

By design and authority, the Jadeweavers remain the most flexible and diverse of Mountain Folk castes. They are all leaders and savants and craftsmen, but they fulfill each of these roles in the manner of their own choosing. However, unlike the members of the undercastes, they are also more than their obvious roles. Ultimately, their role is to *define* their role. Such vision guides them, empowers them and ultimately decides the fate of their race. Their politics are petty and shallow, but only because they hold their depth in reserve for greater ambitions. They are drawn to one another as the only true peers they can possibly have, and yet they cannot ever risk trusting each other for fear of treachery. In the end, they reign alone. They work in their laboratories alone. They plot their schemes alone. They crave companionship they cannot have and glut themselves on power and wealth to fill that void. Some find contentment, and others bitterness. Some blame the Exalted. Some despise Autochthon for cursing and abandoning them. Some blame each other and themselves for turning the Conclave into a nest of vipers, but these cannot find a way to restore harmony for all their genius. And some relish what they are without regret, satisfied in the silence of their workshops.



Duties: Artisans reign over the Mountain Folk in their grand Conclave, but such is their privilege more than duty. True, their civilization would collapse without them, and their race would perish if Artisans did not carve newborns free. But that is their power, not their duty. Enlightened self-interest guides them to preserve their empire as they would themselves, for the empire is their machine, and they are covetously protective of all they own. They owe fealty to no one, save one another by brief alliance and perhaps to Autochthon in gratitude for their existence. Yet, the Great Maker is long gone, perhaps never to return, and the fractiousness of Jadeborn politics makes duty a mere game.

Lacking duties, the Princes of Adamant make do with ambitions. Each holds a vision for the world and her place in that ideal world. Some crave riches, and others temporal might, and still others secrets, but all to some greater end. Power is but a tool, regardless of its form. Only absolute power merits a goal, and even that is only a step toward the ultimate realization of their vision. Artisans are proud and arrogant, but they truly are the best and most brilliant of their kind, touched and blessed by the Great Maker. The need to create burns in their souls, and so, they sculpt and forge according to their preferred crafts. They stockpile wonders as they refine their art, chasing the elusive and ultimately impossible perfection imprinted upon their souls. They are wise enough to know they cannot succeed, and yet, they must obey their ordained nature.

Appearance: Artisans range from merely attractive to radiant beyond the capacity of words to describe or dreams to envision. Unlike their noble Fair Folk cousins of the Wyld, their features are not angular or alien and do not evoke the rapture of predatory grace. Neither do they appear as crude parodies of mankind like their lesser brethren, but instead, make parodies of men. Even diminished by the Great Geas, Artisans remain the Firstborn, the true inheritors of Autochthon's perfected aesthetics. Their flesh reveals no trace of stone or earth save in its stillness, and yet, they appear as idealized statues of the human form far more than living beings. Every breath is a marvel to behold. Every movement is excruciating in its unsurpassed elegance. Their skin is marble smooth and hued according to the multitudinous shades known among mankind, with some bronzed and dusky and others pale and some tinted dark as by the sun they've never felt. They are studies in beauty and symmetry, a race of living archetypes standing lithe, tall, perfectly proportioned and utterly without blemish.

Artisans dress in wonders befitting their status, adorning themselves in the ultimate expressions of function and form. They do not craft gossamer, yet their enchanted finery glistens as woven light from threads of spun diamonds and precious metals. In their daily labors, they often settle for attire of synthetic black silk that mends and cleans itself, often studded with jewels to mirror the night sky they've never seen. When they must journey aboveground, they eschew the wonders of their hand for merely exceptional garb. Most wear their hair long, shaping elaborate tresses with a moment's effort to frame their faces and mood. These styles hold all the shades known to men and many peculiar and wondrous, with strands of metallic or even jeweled luster. Only necessity compels them to hide beneath masks and helms against the sparks of their forges and the blades of their enemies. In battle, their armor combines jade and gems in carapaces that strike awe and terror in their enemies. The Princes of Adamant are as gods in the deep, and even gods marvel before them.

Associations: Luminous hues and jewel tones, Conviction, chisels, splayed hands, palaces, tall architecture, precious metals and gems, a blue gear wreathed in stylized flame (official symbol)

Sobriquets: Jadeweavers, Righteous Engineers, Children of Crystal, Hands of Autochthon, Firstborn, Princes of Adamant

Concepts: Character assassin, geomancer, master of the forge, Pattern Knight, scheming politician, strategos

THERE IS NO BUILDING WITHOUT AN ARCHITECT, NO SYMPHONY WITHOUT A CONDUCTOR, NO ARMY WITHOUT A GENERAL. THE SACRIFICES OF THOSE WHO LABOR ARE NAUGHT WITHOUT PROPER DIRECTION AND PLANNING.

Charms

The Charms of the Mountain Folk reflect their methodically hierarchical nature. All Charms fall into one of three caste-specific Patterns, a fourth Pattern designed for the Enlightened and a fifth group of miscellaneous common powers known as the Foundation Pattern. Unenlightened characters can only learn the Charms of their own Caste Pattern or the Foundation Pattern, while the Enlightened can learn from any group. Each Pattern is thematically tied to the purpose and identity of its caste or the mental and social prowess of Enlightenment, converging into a mastery Charm at its apex.

Mountain Folk require a number of days to learn a Charm equal to (its Minimum Essence x 3). However, this duration assumes the character has the tutoring of a Jadeborn who already knows the Charm. Learning a Charm without a tutor doubles the training time. Only Jadeborn who master a Pattern can expand it with new Charms of their own design, but few ever achieve such resplendent might. Designing an entirely new Pattern remains a legendary feat that has not occurred since the time of White Shale.

Format and Tone

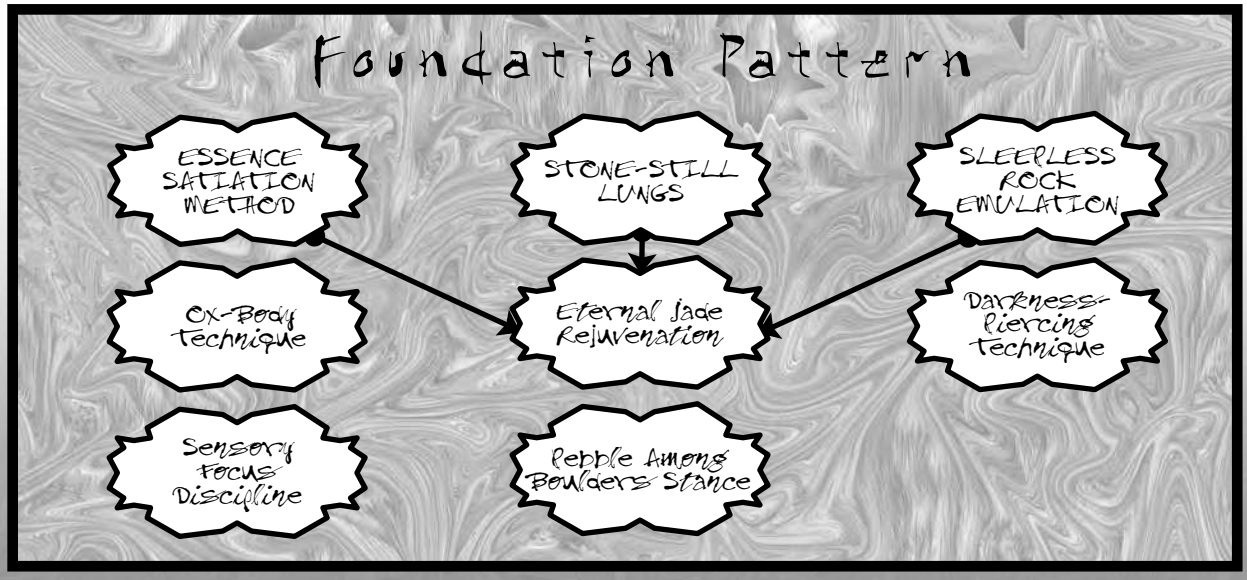
Unlike the Charms of Exalted or spirits, Mountain Folk magic lacks any minimum Trait requirements apart from Essence. Like Lunar Charms, many serve to expand capabilities rather than improve skill. Others perform powerful spell-like effects, channeling Essence into an expression of will and art. The Jadeborn have precious few instant-duration dice-adding Charms and no actual extra action-type Charms, though some Patterns allow characters to cleverly and unusually circumvent this restriction. In general, Mountain Folk Charms are highly efficient on account of the low Essence pools of the Jadeborn. Adding to this efficiency, many of these Charms blur the lines between Charm and spell. Charms with the new "enchantment" type are treated as simple Charms with a duration longer than instant. However, characters need not commit Essence to sustain these ongoing effects.

Mountain Folk cannot learn actual sorcery, although they can replicate many sorcerous effects with the Artisan Pattern. Similarly, they cannot learn supernatural martial arts. At best, masters of the Warrior Pattern can design new battle Charms that mimic martial-arts techniques at a comparable power level to Celestial styles.

Eclipse and Moonshadow Caste Exalted have difficulty learning Mountain Folk Charms. Their dynamic Exalted Essence rebels against the crystallized channeling methods of the Jadeborn. As such, they cannot learn Charms from the Artisan Pattern or the Enlightened Pattern or learn any other Mountain Folk Charms with a Minimum Essence of 4+. Furthermore, they treat all enchantment-type Charms as simple and must commit double the listed Essence to sustain the effects.

The Foundation Pattern

Technically, this group of Charms is not an actual Pattern, but rather, a miscellaneous collection of unrelated powers common to all castes. The Foundation Pattern is a bastard hybrid, the remnants of ancient Patterns lost as a result of the Great Geas. It has no common theme or convergence and cannot be improved or expanded upon. Conclave savants still don't know entirely how White Shale created the Foundation Pattern or tied the incomplete form to the Essence of each caste, as such a feat should have been impossible. Scholars can only marvel at her genius and study the scraps of the broken Foundation Pattern, mourning the diminishment of their race.



Ox-Body Technique

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Like many magical beings, most Mountain Folk are considerably hardier than their physiques suggest. Every purchase of this Charm provides one -1 and one -2 health level. Jadeborn cannot develop Ox-Body Technique more times than their highest Virtue.

Essence Satiation Method

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Mountain Folk who develop Essence Satiation Method alter their metabolism, subsisting on an ephemeral diet of Essence. With the first purchase of this Charm, the character halves the amount of food and water she needs to consume in order to remain healthy and fit. With the second purchase, this requirement drops to a quarter of normal. Jadeborn must have Essence 3 to purchase the Charm a third time, but this purchase obviates the need for sustenance altogether.

Stone-Still Lungs

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

By studying this Charm, Jadeborn may learn to respire Essence in place of air. With the first purchase of Stone-Still Lungs, the character only needs to take a breath every (Stamina + Essence + highest Virtue) minutes. Suffocation proceeds normally after this interval passes. With the second purchase, the interval increases to ([Stamina + Essence + highest Virtue] x 3) minutes. Upon the third purchase (which requires Essence 3), the character no longer needs to breath at all except to facilitate speech or other vocal utterance.

Sleepless Rock Emulation

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

Mountain Folk with this Charm surpass the physiological need for sleep, although they still derive spiritual benefit as represented by respired Essence and Conviction rolls to regain Willpower. If a character goes more days without sleep than his Stamina rating, each subsequent day of sleeplessness cumulatively reduces the number of motes he gains from respiration each hour. For example, a Jadeborn with Stamina 3 could go without sleep for three days. After the fourth day, he respires one less mote per hour (7 for meditation, 3 for inactivity). By the seventh day, he only respires 4 motes per hour of meditation and cannot respire by casual inactivity at all. Sleeping one full night for eight hours resets the count back to zero. This Charm provides no benefit outside of Creation.

Eternal Jade Rejuvenation

Cost: 20 motes
Duration: Varies
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Essence Satiation Method (x 1), Stone-Still Lungs (x 1), Sleepless Rock Emulation

The Jadeborn floods his body with Essence, crystallizing his flesh and personal possessions into a statue of the purest jade. He remains aware and conscious in this state, but he loses all senses and mobility, leaving him a prisoner within his own transmogrified form. Upon activating the Charm, the player must specify the intended duration in increments of one month. The Jadeborn cannot abandon the state any sooner, nor can he be roused by conventional means. As a statue, he has a nearly invincible soak of 20L/30B and completely ignores all attacks that do not inflict more damage than his soak. He heals any damage sustained at the rate of 1L or 2B per day, remaining a lifeless and broken statue if killed. Furthermore, he does not hunger, thirst or breath. Instead of aging, his biological age actually decreases by the chronological time spent in torpor. When he emerges from slumber, he has full reserves of health, Willpower and Essence (minus the commitment required by the Charm and any recent injuries). All mundane diseases and poisons are purged by the magic, though supernatural maladies remain as virulent as they were at the time of transformation.

The experience of total isolation inflicted by this Charm can be maddening, even for one of the Enlightened. Roll the Jadeborn's Willpower with a difficulty of the number of months spent comatose. If the roll fails, the character gains a derangement that he must contend with normally. On a botch, he also loses a dot of permanent Willpower. Time spent torpid counts as training time for Mental Attributes but cannot be used for raising or purchasing any other Traits that have a required training time. The only way to end Eternal Jade Rejuvenation prematurely is through Emerald (or greater) Countermagic. This spell shatters the enchantment, leaving the Jadeborn with sufficient levels of unsoakable aggravated damage

such that he has only two health levels remaining when he awakens. This Charm only functions in Creation.

Darkness-Piercing Technique

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Jadeborn's eyes darken to the glassy black of obsidian. In this state, she can see in total darkness without penalty. She cannot see any better through fog or other visual obstructions, however.

Sensory Focus Discipline

Cost: 3 motes per difficulty point
Duration: One hour
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

Suffusing her senses with Essence, the Jadeborn's senses become preternaturally attuned to details and stimuli. For every 3 motes spent, she subtracts one from the difficulty of all Awareness rolls for next hour. Multiple activations of this Charm are cumulative, but no roll can have a difficulty lower than 1.

Pebble Among Boulders Stance

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: One hour
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Jadeborn freezes in place, becoming like a statue. His skin and possessions take on the visual and tactile semblance of rock or earth, blending in with any subterranean environment. So long as he remains motionless, his player adds the character's Temperance to all Stealth rolls. This camouflage vanishes as soon as he moves, falling away as a fine sheen of gray-brown dust. However, the camouflage reasserts itself the moment the Jadeborn stops moving again and continues to do so for the duration of the Charm.

The Worker Pattern

The smallest and least dramatic of the three Patterns, the Charms of the Worker Caste serve as a natural and practical outgrowth of their utilitarian nature. This magic assists in day-to-day tasks and is the craft of servitude, though Enlightened masters of the Pattern transcend labor itself to become efficient overseers.



Heart of Chaos

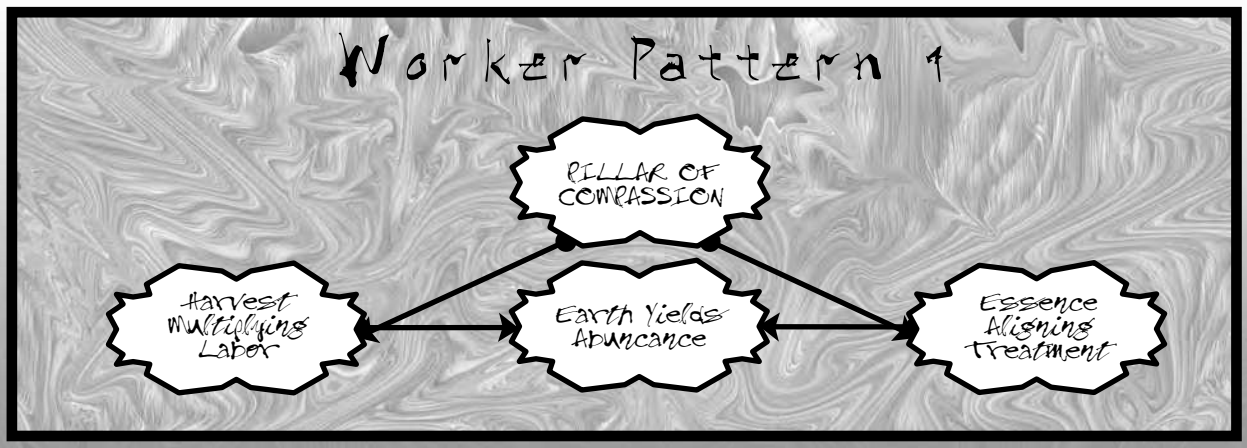
Cost: Varies
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: None

Autochthon claims many wonders and races as his own. This Charm exploits a bizarre metaphysical synergy between two of these breeds, allowing Enlightened Mountain Folk to connect their minds and senses to the myriad perceptions of Heaven's pattern spiders. This momentary and likely unintended glimpse into fate's innermost workings steps dangerously outside all Charm Patterns to allow bursts of directed epiphany. Unfortunately, the process exacts a terrible psychic toll, eroding all empathy and morality until the seer becomes an irredeemable and calculating killer. This moral degeneration costs characters with this Charm one dot of Compassion every time their Divergence reaches 10 points and breaks. A character who reaches Compassion 1 no longer has any moral compunctions about killing anyone and is lost to spiritual madness. Such heartless monsters can never again raise their Compassion with experience. Perhaps even more dangerously, this Charm resonates with the Great Geas by forcing the seer to recognize himself as an enemy of Creation in the context of his visions. Jadeborn who use Heart of Chaos rapidly build up catastrophic levels of Divergence. Oddly enough, seers no longer gain Divergence by other means and may freely consort with Creation's enemies and dominate mortals with impunity.

Predictive glimpses of fate have two distinct uses. First, a seer can witness the immediate future, determining the course of action most likely to lead to favorable results. For every mote spent, the Jadeborn reduces the target number of a single Attribute and/or Ability roll his player makes by one, to a minimum target number of 4. Roll a number of dice equal to the motes spent. Each success gives the character one point of Divergence.

Analyzing farther into the future or modeling events of the present costs 10 motes. Roll the Jadeborn's Intelligence + Essence (difficulty 3). Add 1 to the difficulty for every year (or fraction thereof) ahead the character wishes to look. The Storyteller may create and impose additional penalties as appropriate to the situation. With one success, the character discerns vague information about the topic at hand. With three successes, the information is much clearer, providing a largely accurate answer to the central question at hand. Five successes provide an answer as well as placing that answer in a helpful context. This Charm cannot account for the actions of beings outside of fate. However, the character gains one point of Divergence for every die that comes up a success, even if the number of successes fails to meet the required difficulty. It is possible for characters to reduce the target number of a prediction roll by stacking both uses of Heart of Chaos, but this tactic is *extremely* dangerous in terms of awarding Divergence.

Eclipse and Moonshadow Caste Exalted cannot learn this Charm, lacking the synergy of Autochthon's creations' patterns that permits the magic to operate.



Pillar of (Virtue)

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

With solemnity and dignity fueled by Essence, a Worker accepts the burdens and blessings of service. Pillar of (Virtue) is actually four separate Charms, one for each Virtue. Characters who know multiple versions can activate them in conjunction on the same initiative as if they were a single Charm. Additionally, Jadeborn who master all four versions reduce the activation cost to 2 motes per Charm instead of 3. Characters can only benefit from one application of each version at a time. Reactivating the Charm before the effect wears off merely resets the duration.

Compassion: The Jadeborn becomes deeply empathic, adding a bonus of half her Compassion rating (rounded up) to all Ability dice pools to discern the emotional state or health of others.

Conviction: The Worker becomes unswervingly loyal to his superiors (or personal values, if Enlightened). Whenever anyone attempts to make the Worker directly betray the subject of his loyalty (either magically or through mundane means), add the Jadeborn's Conviction rating to the resistance roll. In the case of magic that offers no resistance roll, the Worker's player may roll Conviction + Essence at a difficulty of the opposing character's Essence rating to ignore the effect. This Charm does not protect characters from all forms of mind-control and influence, only such effects as would lead to a betrayal of true loyalties.

Temperance: The Jadeborn gains a practical intuition for task management. She can determine the complexity and efforts required for any job, as well as gauge the expected interference of all perceived and predictable obstacles. Furthermore, she can determine any required tools and calculate the projected time required for the task. From a rules perspective, the Worker's player knows the final difficulty of any roll after applying all modifiers, as well as all other supplementary information outlined above. Her foresight also adds bonus dice equal to half of her Temperance rating (rounded up) to all Physical and Mental Attribute actions with a duration of two turns or more, provided she spends a full turn contemplating the task in advance as a simple action. This bonus cannot stack with itself for longer planning efforts.

Valor: The Worker grows inured to hardship, adding half his Valor rating to all Endurance and Resistance pools to withstand harsh environmental conditions or fatigue.

Harvest Multiplying Labor

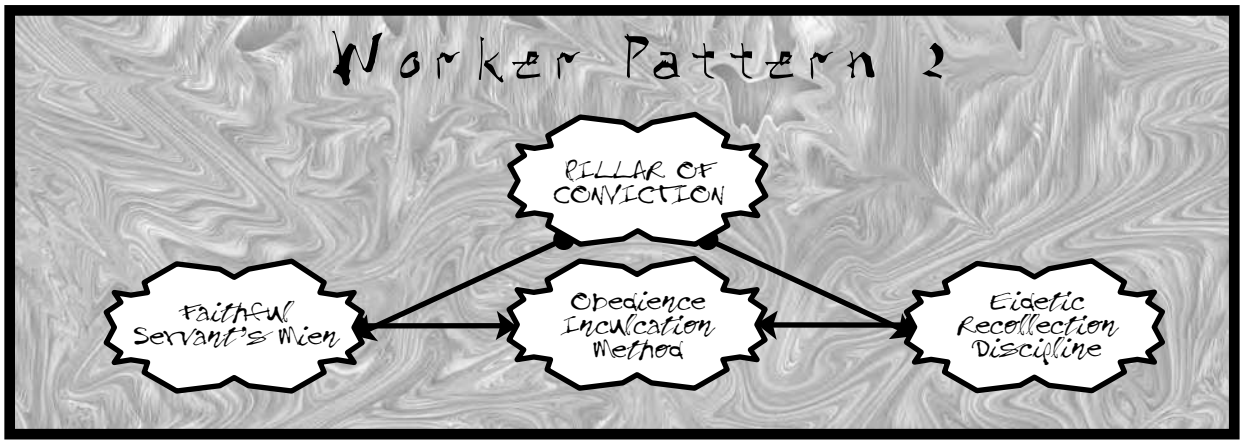
Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Until harvest or slaughter
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Compassion

A potent aid to farmers, Harvest Multiplying Labor accelerates the healthy growth of crops and nonsentient livestock. Use of this Charm requires one day of inspecting, watering, feeding and otherwise tending the agricultural products. The Worker cannot affect more than one acre of farmland or (the Jadeborn's Essence x 10) cumulative health levels worth of livestock with a single activation of this Charm. Target animals must be non-magical and either domesticated or penned for the purposes of domestication. Crops affected by this Charm grow twice as tall, fast and thick, producing double their standard yield. Furthermore, they are exceptionally resistant to blight and only take ill from magical diseases. Livestock blessed by this Charm grow stronger and roughly 25 percent larger, as represented by the Large pox (see **Exalted**, p. 280, or **Exalted: The Lunars**, p. 212), over the course of a month, as well as adding an automatic success to all rolls to resist disease. The increased bulk and resistance to disease lasts for the remainder of the animal's life. Unfortunately, the Charm cuts the remaining life span of such beings in half. Enhanced animals yield almost twice as much meat as they would otherwise do so and lay eggs twice as often (for egg-laying species). Crops and animals can only benefit from a single application of this Charm and ignore all subsequent activations.

Essence Aligning Treatment

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Until fully healed
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Compassion

The Worker spends a minute massaging a living patient's pressure points and Essence centers, his touch warm and gentle. In addition to inducing mild euphoria, the treatment harmonizes the body's rhythms and Essence flows to greater efficiency. Patients blessed with this Charm multiply their standard healing rate by the Worker's Compassion rating to recover from all bashing and lethal injuries. Furthermore, the patient's player adds one die to all rolls made for the patient to resist or throw off disease (including infection). The benefits of this Charm last a number of days equal to the Worker's Compassion or until the patient has healed all bashing and lethal injuries and purged her system of all disease (whichever comes first). Jadeborn may treat themselves with this Charm.



Earth Yields Abundance

Cost: 30 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Harvest Multiplying Labor, Essence Aligning Treatment

The Worker presses both hands in the dirt of sown farmland or lays them upon an immature animal. Verdant Essence flows from the touch and races outward in a pulse that skims the land or briefly outlines the animal in an aura of power. Wherever the light passes, life flourishes. On croplands, the Charm triggers vastly accelerated growth in plants and fungi. Everything from a seed and spore to a scraggly blighted husk grows to the enhanced prime of life in the span of a single day. Such growth is unsustainable, so every plant and fungus withers and dies a week after being treated with this Charm. The region of intensified growth can have any shape and dimensions, but the zone cannot extend further away than (the Worker's Compassion x 100) yards. Only Jadeborn with Essence 5 can target sentient animals with this Charm (including mortals), and the Charm cannot ever affect magical beings. Animals touched by the Charm grow to full maturity in the span of an day, during which time they are wracked with pain and mostly helpless. The Charm permanently bolsters strength, size and disease immunity exactly as Harvest Multiplying Labor but similarly cuts the being's remaining life span in half. Furthermore, the animal retains the mental faculties of its true age.

Faithful Servant's Mien

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Conviction

The Worker dons the persona of humble servitude, submerging his true personality behind a mask of duty. This allows him to tend to the needs of obligation with maximum efficiency, removing the imperative to pursue his own goals during hours of free time. For the duration of the Charm, the character's Nature changes to Follower, and he doubles all Willpower recovered as a result of acting in accordance with this Archetype. However, such characters lose a point of Willpower whenever they take any action in direct contradiction with their new Nature. As a final benefit, the character adds one bonus die to all Ability rolls made in fulfillment of duty or in direct defense of a recognized superior. This bonus only applies when the character's superior orders him to complete a task and does not benefit rolls made as a result of the Worker's autonomous initiative.

Enlightened Mountain Folk using this Charm become obedient to the greater good of their race and the *ideal* of order rather than the social hierarchy itself. Their Nature changes to Paragon, and they receive the bonus die to actions that heroically serve the greater good even above their own desires and happiness.

Eidetic Recollection Discipline

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Conviction

With this Charm, a Worker may perfectly recall any piece of sensory information she has ever encountered. She need only concentrate a moment, and the desired memory replays itself in her mind as if she were reliving it. As an added bonus, this mnemonic boost adds one automatic success to any subsequent Ability roll partially based on memory (correctly mixing an alchemical mixture, making a good first impression using memorized customs, etc.). Players must take good notes for characters with this Charm, or else, they must accept the rulings and often less-than-perfect memory of the Storyteller.

Obedience Inculcation Method

Cost: Varies
Duration: Varies
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Faithful Servant's Mien, Eidetic Recollection Discipline

Where lesser Workers reap the rewards of dutiful compliance, Enlightened Mountain Folk with this Charm may command obedience. The Jadeborn lays one hand on each side of a sentient subject's head and stares into her eyes, spending one Willpower point and motes equal to (the subject's Willpower + Essence x 2). Essence flashes in a brilliant arc through the subject's overwhelmed brain, blue-white light spilling from her eyes and mouth. The subject's Willpower rating drops by a number of dots equal to the Jadeborn's Conviction (to a minimum of the subject's permanent Essence). She immediately loses all Willpower points in excess of her new rating. If this results in a Willpower rating of 3 or less, the subject's Nature shifts to Follower. She becomes docile and passive with a strong desire to serve her new master to the best of her ability. This master can be the Jadeborn or anyone he designates. If the subject's Willpower is higher than 3, she retains free will to the capacity of her dimmed spirit. If the Worker desires greater complicity, he must use the Charm again. The effects of this Charm are not permanent. Mortals, God-Blooded, Unenlightened Mountain Folk and weaker magical beings recover one dot of Willpower every month and regain their former Nature and autonomy when their Willpower rises to 4 or higher. Exalted, Enlightened Mountain Folk and other magical beings of comparable power and significance recover a dot every week. Chaos Seers recover a dot every day. Alternately, Emerald Countermagic can break the compulsion immediately and fully restore subjects to their former selves, though sorcerers cannot free themselves in this manner. This Charm cannot affect beings with a higher permanent Essence than the character using the Charm. Using this Charm on mortals or Exalted is an egregious violation of the Great Geas (see p. 235).

Obedience Inculcation Method is most often used as a combination of punishment and reeducation for the few recalcitrant Workers deemed salvageable by the Conclave. It is illegal to use this Charm on an Enlightened citizen without the direct authorization of the Conclave, but it is not quite as egregious a crime as murder so the practice sees some use in spite of the ban. Chaos Seers are always treated with this Charm before being transported between locations, in hopes the Charm will prevent escapes and fatal accidents.

Incomparable Efficiency Trance

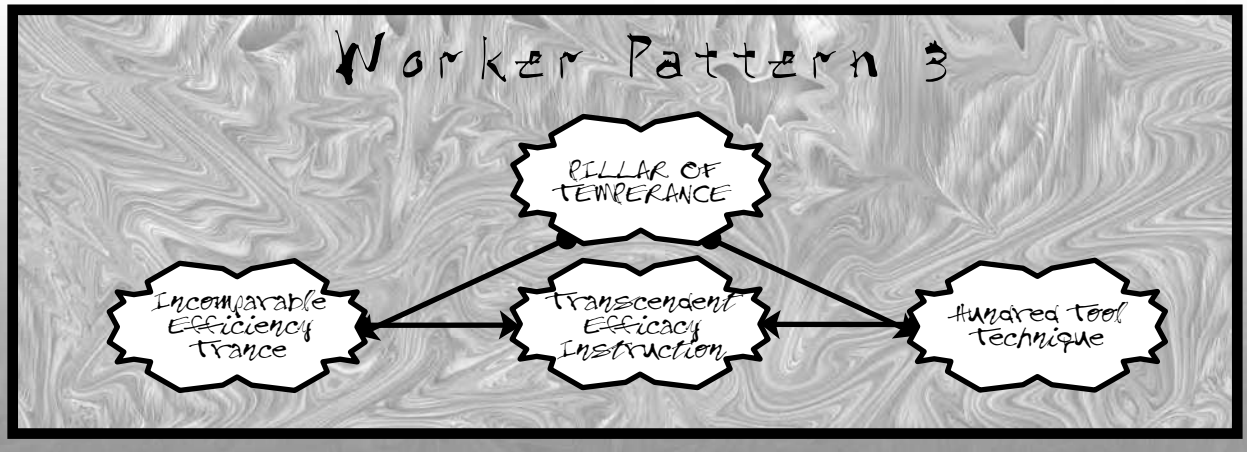
Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One task
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Temperance

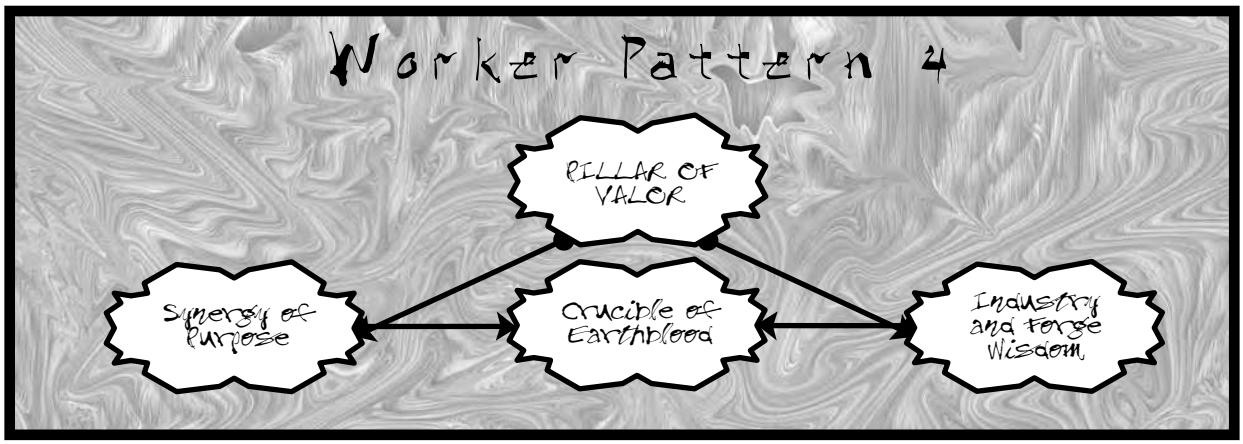
The Worker dedicates his will to a single physical task with a duration greater than instant. For as long as he continues to do nothing but labor at that single task, he accelerates his pace by a factor of his permanent Essence. Mountain Folk employing this Charm are not much faster than before, but they move with greater apparent skill and economy of motion. If a Worker takes a break or attempts any other non-reflexive actions not directly associated with the job, the trance ends.

Hundred Tool Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: One scene
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Temperance

With application of Essence and this Charm, a Worker gains the ability to replicate the function of any and all simple mechanical tools with his bare hands. This Charm does not actually change the Jadeborn's hands in





any apparent way except to toughen them, but it allows feats that appear impossible. For example, a fist can hammer a nail, a fingernail can turn screws, a hand's edge can saw and slice through planks, and a turned finger can drill holes. This Charm is perfected in its emulation, adding one bonus die to any roll aided by the improvised tools. Hundred Tool Technique cannot emulate weapons or facilitate changes quickly enough to merit a direct attack, although a bit of concentration and a drilling finger aids in interrogations as readily as in industry.

Transcendent Efficacy Instruction

Cost: 1 mote per subject, plus 1 Willpower
Duration: One task
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Incomparable Efficiency Trance, Hundred Tool Technique

The Mountain Folk gathers subordinates and assigns them a task. She must spend 1 mote per subject, plus one Willpower point, and no subordinate can have a higher permanent Essence than her own. So long as the affected laborers carry out their assignment together as a collaborative effort, they multiply their rate of progress by the lowest permanent Essence among the group (minimum of double speed). This bonus is additively cumulative with Incomparable Efficiency Trance, so a x3 and x2 modifier yields x5 rather than x6. Anyone who stops work for any reason loses the benefits of this Charm, exactly as with Incomparable Efficiency Trance.

Synergy of Purpose

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One task
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Valor

This Charm links groups of cooperating Workers into a collective hive-mind, allowing the collective sense of purpose to enhance every effort toward harmonious synchronicity. The Jadeborn gains one bonus die for every five characters using this Charm, provided that each contributing character is working toward the same task. This bonus cannot exceed the character's Valor rating. For tasks that are extended rolls, the bonus applies to each roll until the job is done or until sufficient laborers leave the collective pool to lower the number of extra dice. If the Worker stops his own labors prematurely or does any unrelated task requiring conscious effort, the Charm immediately ends.

Industry and Forge Wisdom

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Pillar of Valor

The Worker draws upon the imprint of the Machine God in his soul, channeling brute intuition to understand and operate a mechanism. For most Workers, this experience is the closest they ever get to the glory of Enlightenment. The character may substitute Valor for an Ability rating in a single roll, provided the roll fulfills the stated intent of the Charm (therefore usually replacing Lore or Craft). For the purposes of Industry and Forge Wisdom, a mechanism can be magical or can operate purely on complex mundane physical principles such as clockwork. If the character has the required Ability at an equal or higher rating than Valor, he instead adds half his Valor rating (rounded up) as bonus dice.

Crucible of Earthblood

Cost: 30 motes, 3 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Synergy of Purpose, Industry and Forge Wisdom

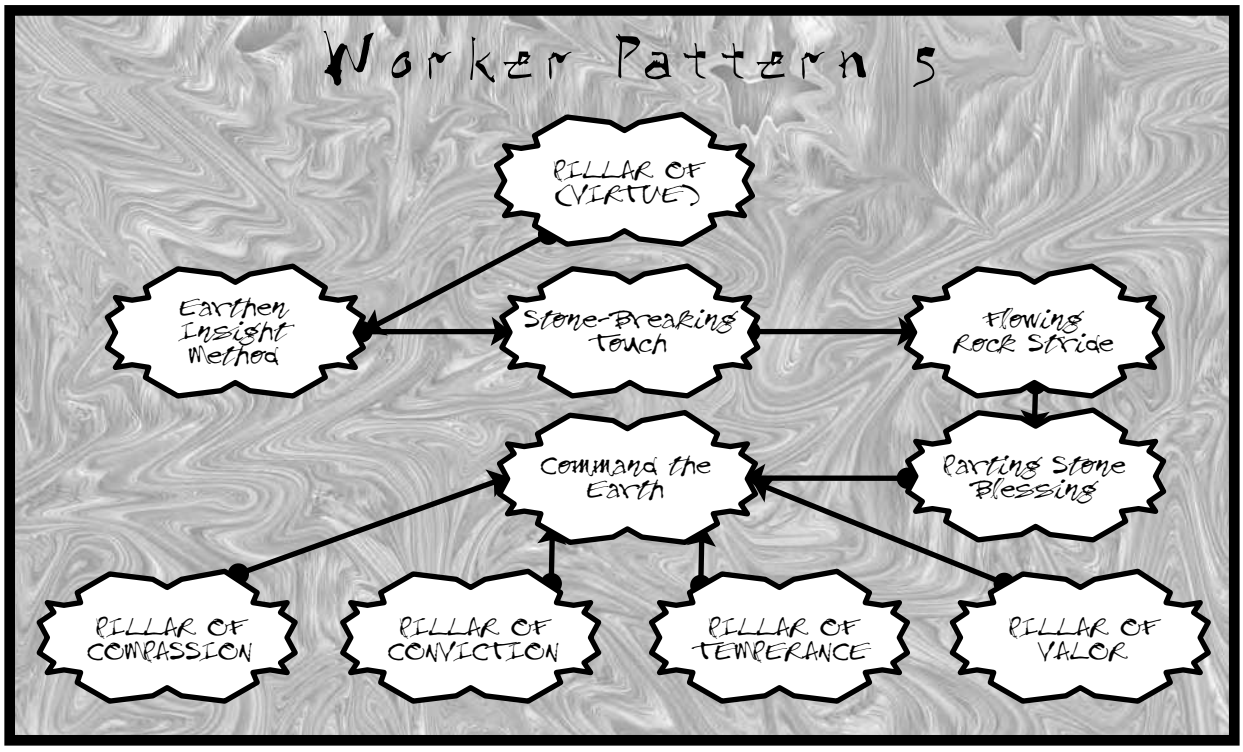


With minds like machines, Enlightened Workers probe beneath mechanisms to the primal fire at the core of all industry. Somewhere between alchemy and blacksmithing, this Charm allows Jadeborn to stoke bonfire-sized flames with Essence in an elaborate ritual lasting five minutes. When completed, the rite transforms the burning energies into the primordial ideal of fire. Flames enchanted by Crucible of Earthblood rage at volcanic temperatures and burn where they were made without fuel or air, quickly reducing whatever sits beneath or around them to so much slag and mephitic vapor. Only furnaces made from adamant, the Magical Materials or similarly durable substances can contain and resist these fires, as anyone or anything foolish enough to touch the obliterating white fire suffers 20A per turn. Besides scorching deep craters and causing utter devastation, this Charm has an equally powerful constructive purpose. In the crucible, gold smelts and purifies to orichalcum, silver flows to moonsilver, diamonds harden to adamant, and mixed precious ores crystallize into fine jade. Only a tenth of the mass remains of the original substances, the rest having been consumed by the process of forging the remainder into Magical Materials. Every five minutes of exposure converts 10 pounds of precious ore into a pound of the appropriate substance. In general, the precious raw materials for artifacts have a Resources cost equal to (the rating of the artifact + 2). Consequently, lesser wonders require a dramatic investment of wealth, while greater wonders remain well beyond the purview of most individuals to finance on their own. This Charm cannot create soulsteel or starmetal.

Earthen Insight Method

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: One Pillar of (Virtue) Charm

The Worker reaches out with her mind, searching for familiar patterns in the earth. She can use this Charm in one of two ways, either orienting herself toward concentrations of a specific material or mapping the surrounding terrain. In the former case, the Worker can choose any earth-based substance she has ever touched, including metals, rock types, specific varieties of jewels and so on. If any of that substance exists within a radius of (her Essence x 10) yards, she senses the direction and



distance of the largest concentration from her present location. She does not know the quantity or quality of the deposit. If this Charm is used as a map, it provides a snapshot image of the terrain within the aforementioned radius. The character only knows what spaces are filled with earth and what spaces are not. She has no way to know whether a particular empty region is filled with air, water or a nest of hungry Darkbroods. This Charm only functions underground in Creation.

Stone-Breaking Touch

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One hour
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Earthen Insight Method

Essence spreads over the Worker's body with a faint hum, changing pitch and tone as he moves. For the next hour, his unarmed attacks inflict lethal damage to any non-magical inanimate object made of earth (metal, stone, ceramics, etc.), and he cannot injure himself delivering such blows. Furthermore, all hand-to-hand attacks against earthen objects double their raw damage before applying the target's soak. Finally, the character is always assured of inflicting at least one level of damage with each successful blow, even if the object's soak completely negates the attack. This ensures that the Worker can slowly tunnel and carve through even the toughest ores.

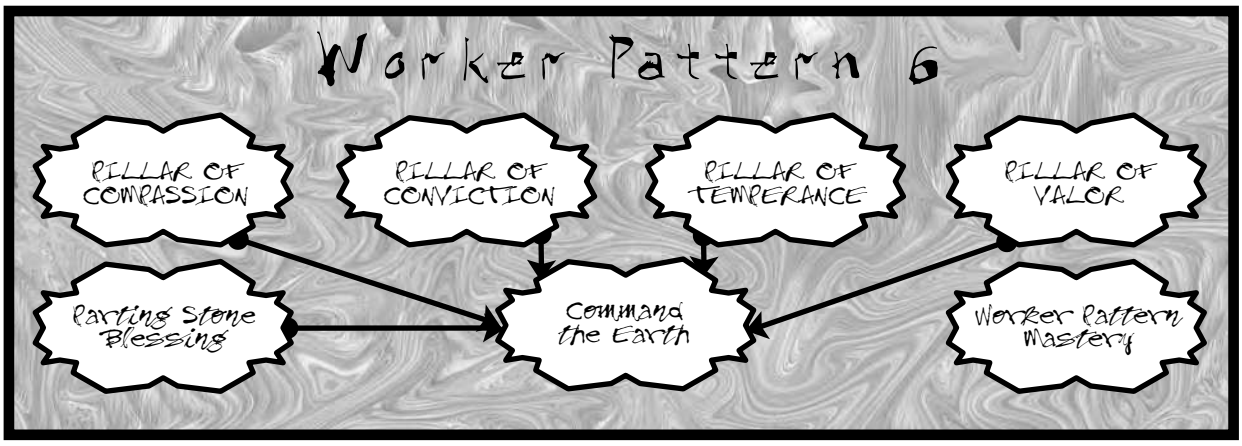
Flowing Rock Stride

Cost: 8 motes per hour
Duration: Varies
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Stone-Breaking Touch

The Worker closes her eyes and concentrates, walking confidently into barriers of solid stone or other earth. As she reaches the obstruction, her body and personal possessions displace the rock with less resistance than water. In her wake, the stone hardens back to its original configuration. For as long as the Charm lasts, she can half-walk, half-swim through the earth at her normal ground speed without needing to breathe. She can move horizontally, at an angle or even vertically if so desired. Although blind, she remains constantly aware of her surrounding terrain according to the guidelines and range of Earthen Insight Method. Multiple activations of this Charm extend the duration of the effect accordingly. If the Charm ends while the character remains encased in earth, she is entombed in unyielding earth and immediately begin to suffocate. Without other magic or outside help, she will soon perish unless she reactivates this Charm.

Parting Stone Blessing

Cost: 10 motes per hour, plus 1 Willpower
Duration: Varies
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Rock Stride



By touching another being, the Jadeborn can confer the effects of Flowing Rock Stride upon her. The target need not be willing, and this Charm may be activated from within a clinch. Particularly sadistic Mountain Folk have been known to hurl their enchanted enemies into walls or floors and then deactivate the Charm, leaving such victims to die horribly.

Command the Earth

Cost: Varies
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: All Pillar of (Virtue) Charms, Parting Stone Blessing

The Jadeborn gestures imperiously and grandiosely, directing the earth around him with the raw force of Essence. This Charm can only impose crude and sweeping changes without finesse or grace, though not necessarily without primal beauty. For example, the character can open yawning chasms or raise megalithic towers, crumble walls of stone like eggshells and variably cave in or open long stretches of tunnels. These changes cost two Willpower points, plus 1 mote for every three cubic yards of earth affected. Only three cubic yards shift each turn after the character uses the Charm, so most changes take several minutes to completely assemble. Thankfully for witnesses, the rate of change is slow enough that agile characters can avoid suffering damage. The tectonic forces generally pulverize any characters unfortunate enough to be caught in the changes (this does about 20L damage every three turns if the character doesn't move, plus leads to possible suffocation), so Storytellers should give players ample opportunity to move their characters out of the way or take ingenious shelter.

Worker Pattern Mastery

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Entire Worker Pattern (21 Charms total)

Enlightened Mountain Folk who obtain cumulative mastery of the Worker Pattern become intrinsically attuned to its ways and power. This transcendent state reduces the Essence cost of all Charms in this Pattern by 3 motes, to a minimum expenditure of 1 mote. More importantly, these engineer-savants can construct new extensions of the Pattern by creating their own custom Charms. Each personal Charm requires Storyteller approval and oversight, and all must have at least one of the existing Worker Pattern Charms as a direct or ultimate prerequisite. Custom Charms should follow the themes and overall power level of the Worker Pattern, particularly with regard to emphasis on practicality as well as interaction of Virtues and elements. Only Jadeborn with Worker Pattern Mastery can learn custom Charms for this Pattern.

The Warrior Pattern

The Mountain Folk have lived in a state of unremitting war since the beginning of the First Age. This Pattern grew from the battle arts of the ancient Mountain Folk, a crystallization of techniques and enchantments designed to accommodate a predominantly Unenlightened caste. The Warrior Pattern has served its caste well in the Endless War as a potent weapon and defense. For its Enlightened masters, it is even more devastating, an instrument of command and military training and unmatched battle prowess. The Pattern Knights of the Conclave are akin to Exalted in their cold and brilliant fury, figures of epic dread and deeds.

(Virtue)-Bolstering Meditation

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Warrior clears his mind of distractions with a chant or yell, hardening his spirit against suffering. (Virtue)-Bolstering Meditation is actually four separate Charms, one for each Virtue. Characters who know multiple ver-



sions can activate them in conjunction on the same initiative as if they were a single Charm. Additionally, a Jadeborn who masters all four versions reduces the activation cost to 2 motes per Charm instead of 3. Characters can only benefit from one application of each version at a time. Reactivating the Charm before the effect wears off merely resets the duration.

Compassion: The character adds one bonus die to all actions intended to protect or rescue an ally from immediate physical danger. Once per scene, the character may increase this bonus to her Compassion rating for a single turn.

Conviction: The character subtracts his Conviction rating from all wound penalties.

Temperance: The character subtracts his Temperance rating from all environmental penalties.

Valor: The character gains one additional dot of Valor, plus one for every five allies in line of sight who are also using the Valor permutation of this Charm. If this results in a Valor rating of 6+, the character's Valor remains at five dots, but she becomes truly fearless, like an automaton. She is incapable of failing Valor rolls and becomes immune to all magic and penalties based on fear. The character immediately loses additional Valor if the number of linked allies in range drops below the number required for the bonus. Valor bonuses gained with this Charm are considered part of the character's natural rating.

(Color) Jade Transformation

Cost: 8 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: (Virtue)-Bolstering Meditation

The Mountain Folk begin and end their lives entombed in stone. Warriors who learn this Charm may call upon that heritage, briefly transmuting their bodies into statues of living jade. Five versions of this Charm exist, one for each color of jade. All versions grant a natural lethal soak equal to the character's Stamina and permit characters to parry lethal attacks unarmed without a stunt. Each version also provides a unique benefit as listed below. Characters who know multiple versions of this Charm may activate multiple versions at the same instant as a single Charm use. The cost to use any of these Charms is (8 - the number of [Color] Jade Transformation Charms the character already has active) motes. While Jadeborn can stack multiple versions of this Charm together, they cannot benefit from more than one application of the same version at a time. Reactivating a Charm before its effect runs out resets the duration.

Green:

Prerequisites: Compassion-Bolstering Meditation

The Warrior resonates with the elemental aspect of wood, regenerating one level of bashing damage every turn and one level of lethal damage every hour.

Red:

Prerequisites: Valor-Bolstering Meditation

The character resonates with fire, gaining total immunity to damage from non-magical fire and extreme heat. Against magical sources of flame, the character adds his Valor to his lethal soak. The flickering sparks of Essence also accelerate the character's reflexes, adding half his Valor rating to base initiative (rounded up).

Black:

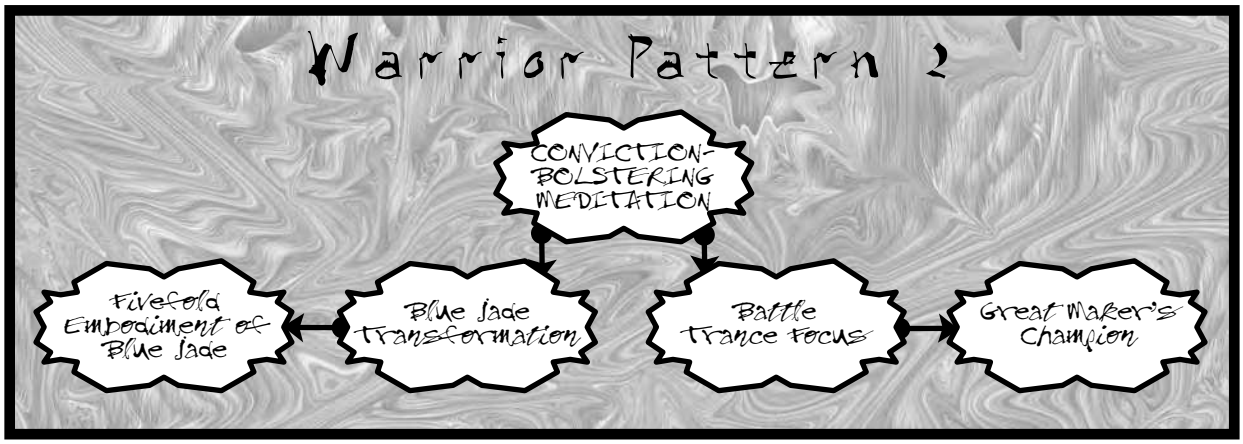
Prerequisites: Temperance-Bolstering Meditation

By resonating with water, the character gains flowing quickness and greater freedom of movement. She adds one to her Dexterity and subtracts her Temperance from the total mobility penalty of any armor and/or encumbering possessions she carries.

Blue:

Prerequisites: Conviction-Bolstering Meditation

Through resonance with air, the Warrior becomes light and deft, subtracting his Conviction from the fatigue ratings for armor and similarly encumbering possessions. Furthermore, he doubles his usual leaping distance and halves the actual distance of any fall for the purposes of determining damage sustained on impact.



White:

Prerequisites: All four (Virtue)-Bolstering Meditation Charms

Embodying the balance and harmony of earth, the character adds (the rating of her highest Virtue + Essence) to her natural bashing and lethal soak values. In addition, her hardened body becomes a deadly weapon, causing all her unarmed attacks to inflict lethal damage unless she deliberately pulls her blows (see **Exalted**, p. 238). Finally, she cannot be stunned, thrown or otherwise tackled to the ground, nor can she suffer any other form of knockback or knockdown (see **Exalted**, pp. 234-235). This immunity does *not* extend to magical effects that induce these conditions, nor does it prevent injuries associated with unsuccessful maneuvers. For example, a tackle still strikes with full force even if it cannot knock the character to the ground.

Fivefold Embodiment of (Color) Jade

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: (Color) Jade Transformation

Where lesser Warriors may briefly change flesh into enchanted jade, more powerful veterans can permanently sculpt their bodies into armored form. For each purchase of this Charm, the Jadeborn permanently gains the effects of one (Color) Jade Transformation Charm he already knows. Characters with Fivefold Embodiment of Black Jade consider the bonus dot of Dexterity part of their natural rating for all purposes, including raising the Attribute with experience. This effect can raise Dexterity above normal maximums. Note that the temporary and permanent versions of the same effect do not stack, so characters with any version of this Charm have no further use for its prerequisite. Mountain Folk may not learn more versions of this Charm than their permanent Essence. Eclipse and Moonshadow Caste Exalted may not learn any versions of this Charm.

Arsenal-Enhancing Technique

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Compassion-Bolstering Meditation

The Warrior carefully and reverently handles a weapon or suit of armor, reinforcing the object's pattern with her own Essence. In addition to cleaning and polishing the item, the magic also transforms it into exceptional gear. This upgrade provides bonus points that the Jadeborn may spend to enhance the object. Unless otherwise noted, these points can only improve the same statistic once. Melee weapons receive three points that can add to speed, accuracy, damage or defense. Each point can also subtract one from a minimum. Exceptional bows receive two bonus points to divide among accuracy, rate and range (which adds 50 yards), but crossbows cannot increase their rate. Thrown weapons gain three bonus points to enhance their melee capabilities *or* distance use (spending a dot on range adds +10 yards). However, improving a thrown weapon's melee characteristics does not increase its ranged characteristics, and vice versa. Exceptional armor adds two bonus points that can increase soak by +1L/+1B, reduce the mobility penalty by one or reduce the fatigue value by one. Finally, this Charm can make clothing more durable, changing it into a type of makeshift armor with 2L/1B soak and no mobility penalty or fatigue value.

Arsenal-Enhancing Technique normally lasts for a day, after which the character must renew the magic. Spending 2 experience points makes the enchantment permanent. This Charm can enchant an already exceptional item to make it a perfect item, in which case the two enhancements stack with one another. Perfect defensive clothing is comfortable in all but the most extreme temperatures, in addition to being extremely durable and light (counts as armor with a soak rating of 3L/2B and no mobility penalty or fatigue value). Only objects that are



permanently exceptional can be made permanently perfect. Mountain Folk can enchant artifacts with this Charm, but they cannot stack a second activation to make the object perfect or spend experience points to make the enchantment permanent. This Charm has no effect on perfect equipment, except to clean it.

Battle Trance Focus

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Conviction-Bolstering Meditation

The Warrior silently concentrates, crystallizing his mind toward the singular purpose of violence. In this hardened mental state, the character adds his Essence or half his Conviction rating, rounded up (whichever is higher), to the dice pools of all attacks and defense rolls. However, the character's single-minded focus also subtracts his Conviction or Essence rating (whichever is higher) from the dice pools of all Ability rolls not involved with combat. Rolls that are indirectly connected with combat (such as movement, hiding for an ambush, etc.) receive no bonus or penalty. The Storyteller remains the final arbiter of whether an action is indirectly combat related or not but should give players ample opportunity to justify associations through clever descriptions (particularly if such descriptions warrant a stunt bonus). Once activated, Battle Trance Focus must run its course. Characters may not prematurely deactivate the Charm before its duration expires. Eclipse and Moonshadow Caste Exalted cannot learn this Charm.

Precision Onslaught Method

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Temperance-Bolstering Meditation

The Warrior adopts a dynamic fighting stance, allowing her to strike with supernatural economy of motion and exacting aim. Her blows and missiles find the weak points in armor and flesh alike, subtracting her Temperance from the soak of any being or object she attacks (to a minimum of 0 soak). In addition, the Jadeborn reduces the difficulty of all called shots by one, to a minimum of difficulty 1. For example, characters can inflict bashing damage with lethal weapons as an attack at standard difficulty. Full information on called shots may be found on pages 238-239 of **Exalted**.

Charring Magma Blade

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Valor-Bolstering Meditation

The Jadeborn touches his weapon to the ground, absorbing the destructive wrath of the earth's blood. A rumble stirs the air as burning Essence erupts from the point of contact, enveloping the weapon in a bright-orange radiance that quickly cools into a mottled glow. The energies remain banked and dim, giving off uncomfortable warmth without setting anything aflame. The power roars to life whenever the owner strikes a blow, adding his Valor to the base damage and setting any flammable object alight. Such burning weapons inflict lethal damage and cannot inflict bashing damage.

As an added benefit, the enchanted weapon knows its master. If anyone but the weapon's true owner tries to hold or wield it, the volcanic Essence inflicts lethal damage equal to the Jadeborn's Valor every turn. The bearer's player must also make a successful reflexive roll of Stamina + Resistance each turn at difficulty 4, or the character drops the burning weapon in agony.

Normally, this Charm can only enchant melee weapons. However, characters using a (Color) Jade Transformation Charm, a Fivefold Embodiment of

(Color) Jade Charm or Living Jewel Armor may imbue their own bodies with smoldering power. This converts the damage of all unarmed attacks to lethal and adds the character's Valor as normal. If (Color) Jade Transformation or Living Jewel Armor wears off and the character has no other valid Charms active, Charring Magma Blade also ends.

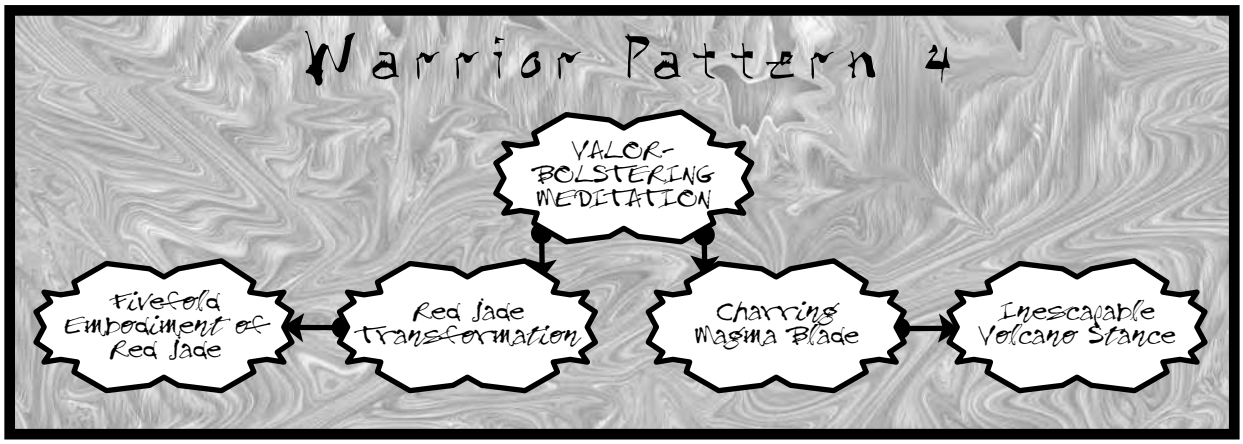
Living Jewel Armor

Cost: 7 motes
Duration: Essence hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: White Jade Transformation

As the character evokes the pattern of her Essence, a lattice of razor-sharp crystal spikes grows from her flesh and weaves itself into a spiked exoskeleton. This transformation assimilates any armor the character is wearing into itself, crystallizing and reweaving the protection into an extension of her being. Living Jewel Armor has a bashing and lethal soak of its creator's permanent Essence, plus the soak rating of any assimilated armor. It has a mobility penalty and fatigue value each equal to half the penalty/value of any assimilated armor, rounded up. If the exoskeleton did not absorb any armor, it has no mobility penalty or fatigue value. As a final defensive power, the crystal armor partially absorbs and conducts attacks of raw Essence (i.e., those lacking a physical component, such as Solar Spike, Elemental Bolt Attack or blasts from a skirmish pike). The armor has double its usual soak against such attacks and allows the Warrior's player to roll one die for every point of soaked damage. Each success restores one mote to the Jadeborn's pool.

In addition to its defensive powers, armor created with this Charm serves as a deadly weapon. The lattice of razor sharp blades adds +1 to the accuracy and +2L to the damage of all unarmed attacks, including grappling maneuvers. The spikes also act as quills, inflicting 5L damage to anyone who strikes the character with an unarmed attack. Finally, the reinforced exoskeleton provides the Warrior with an additional dot of Strength that is considered part of the character's natural rating for the duration of the Charm.





Reforging Travail of the Veteran

Cost: 1 mote per dot of Essence
Duration: One week
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Arsenal-Enhancing Technique

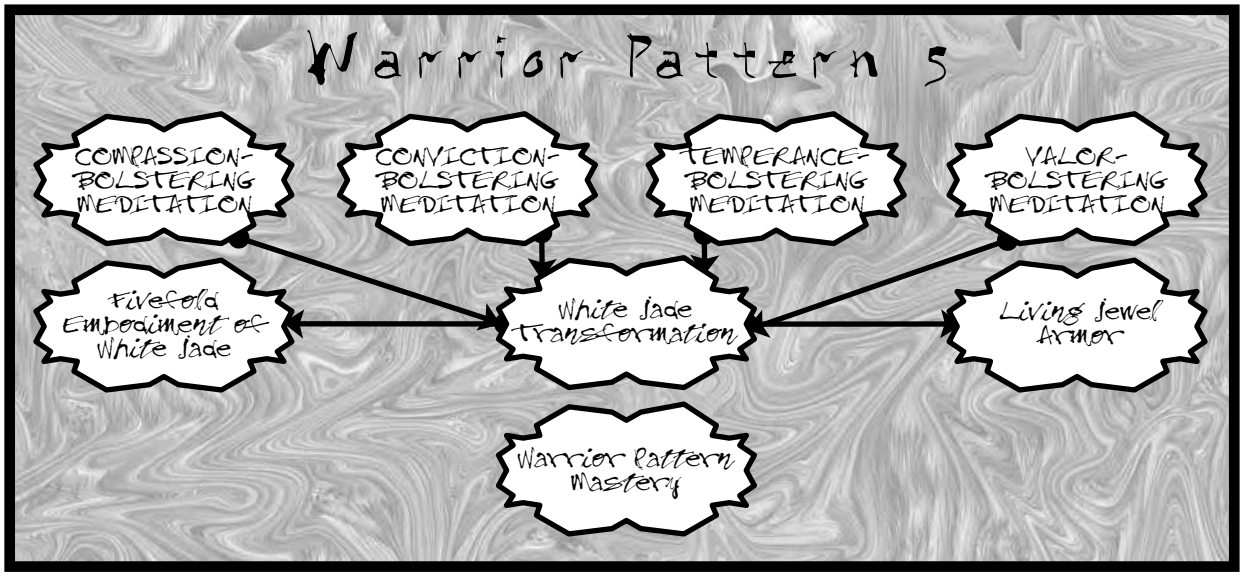
Lesser Warriors augment weapons with Essence. Enlightened generals build upon this principle to augment soldiers as weapons, applying Essence and rigorous training to improve their quality. First, the Warrior gathers the forces she wishes to train, all of whom must have a permanent Essence of 3 or less. Next, she takes these soldiers to a secluded area and commits 1 mote for every dot of permanent Essence possessed by members of the group (or 2 motes per dot for non-Mountain Folk). Trainees study under the Warrior's rigorous tutelage for at least 15 hours a day, learning the crafts and arts of war. For each day that passes, these soldiers gain 1 phantom experience point. Phantom points are banked separately for those characters who normally keep track of experience totals (i.e., those controlled by players).

At the end of the week, graduates of the program must spend the experience points they have earned without regard for training times. The instructor's player designates and prioritizes how these points must be spent. Valid choices for improvement include Valor, Warrior Pattern Charms, Physical Attributes, Wits or war-related Abilities: Archery, Athletics, Awareness, Brawl, Craft (War), Dodge, Endurance, Martial Arts, Melee, Resistance, Stealth, Survival, Thrown. The curriculum must list the prioritized Traits at the desired value, none of which may exceed the Warrior's own rating. Affected characters use phantom experience at the normal cost to raise Traits as per the list, ignoring all training times. Characters with any actual experience points banked must first spend these before spending phantom points. Any phantom points leftover after purchasing the prioritized Traits are lost unless the Warrior immediately begins another round of teaching with this Charm. This process repeats with successive weeks of magical training until the teacher stops. Characters may not train under all applications of this Charm for more than (their Willpower + Essence) weeks a year. For the purposes of this Charm, a year spans the time between two Calibrations. Characters who receive normal experience points must note the number of phantom experience spent. These characters do not receive any experience awards until they have paid off this debt in full. They may circumvent standard training times and accumulate as much experience debt as they are willing and able, so the Charm still provides considerable benefit. However, the Charm's primary purpose is to rapidly train large numbers of Storyteller characters at an accelerated pace.

Great Maker's Champion

Cost: 20 motes, 2 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Battle Trance Focus

The Enlightened Warrior disseminates shards of his will and genius through all the forces he commands, integrating them into a collective engine of war. Ruthlessly and pitilessly efficient, this machine of formations and blades strikes fear into enemy hearts. This effect extends a half mile from the character and incorporates all Mountain Folk with a permanent Essence of 1-3 who regard the Warrior as their military commander (either directly or through an unbroken chain of relayed command). Affected Jadeborn add one die to all attack and defense rolls, as well as adding one automatic success to all Valor rolls. All enemies within a half mile radius of the Warrior who have a permanent Essence of 1 and a Valor of 3 or less suffer a corresponding penalty if they fight the enchanted host, losing one die from all attacks and defense rolls and increasing the difficulty of all Valor rolls by 1. If any of these forces actually try to face the Warrior directly rather than simply engaging his unit, the dice penalties to attacks increase to a rating of the Jadeborn's Valor.



Beings may only benefit from (or suffer from) a single application of this Charm at a time. Those who pass beyond the range of the effect are not affected, but anyone who enters into the effect during its duration similarly becomes subject to it. If the Warrior dies, the Charm immediately ends.

If using the Mail and Steel rules from the **Exalted Players Guide** (see pp. 214-230), Great Maker's Champion improves the Hand-to-Hand Skill, Ranged Skill and Drill of enchanted units by one dot, as well as adding one success to all Valor rolls. However, the following conditions must be met for the Charm to function. First, the Warrior using the Charm must be the unit's commander (either directly or through an unbroken chain of command). Second, the unit must be made exclusively of Mountain Folk with an Essence rating of 1-3. Any non-Mountain Folk members or Mountain Folk with Essence 4-5 must be designated as heroes, sorcerers or relays. Finally, the affected units must be within a half mile of their commander. Great Maker's Champion affects all enemy units who engage in battle with an enchanted unit, provided that such units have a Valor of 3 or less and an average Essence of 1 (generally those with Might 0-1, though not always) and are entirely within a half mile of the Jadeborn using the Charm. Affected enemy units lose one dot each of Hand-to-Hand Skill and Ranged Skill, as well as adding 1 to the difficulty of all Valor rolls.

Diamond-Shattering Blow

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Precision Onslaught Method

The Enlightened Warrior concentrates, striking with perfect calm in an instant of destructive clarity. If she strikes an inanimate object, she adds her Temperance + Essence to the base damage, and her target receives no soak against the attack. Against an animate target, the attack ignores and destroys any non-magical armor the victim is wearing, but adds no extra dice to damage. The attack also shatters any non-magical weapon used to parry the blow, although the victim's parry still provides its usual protection. Mountain Folk may also use this Charm to target an opponent's weapon with a called shot at difficulty 3. This blow may be dodged normally. If the target parries, the attack against the weapon automatically succeeds. Success destroys any non-magical weapon and sends any magical weapon flying out of its owner's grasp as an automatic disarm attempt. Objects destroyed by this attack spectacularly shatter into hundreds or even thousands of shards. Beings killed with this Charm perish no less spectacularly, cleaved in half or even reduced to a spray of pulped bone and gore, depending on the weapon used.

This Charm has less effect on inanimate objects of First Age construction or similar mystical durability (i.e., those that ignore non-magical damage and/or require damage to be rolled). Against such targets, the Warrior adds Temperance + Essence to damage, but the target's full soak applies. However, the target's soak cannot reduce the damage dice below the Jadeborn's Temperance + Essence. If the character uses this Charm to attack a First Age object with a non-magical weapon, the weapon shatters in the process of delivering the blow.

By default, this Charm can only augment armed hand-to-hand attacks. However, characters using a (Color) Jade Transformation Charm, a Fivefold Embodiment of (Color) Jade Charm or Living Jewel Armor may use Diamond-Shattering Blow in conjunction with unarmed attacks.

Inescapable Volcano Stance

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Charring Magma Blade

The Warrior holds perfectly still for the span of a heartbeat, then launches into a flurry of movement. Upon activating this Charm, the character adds his Valor to his initiative. Additionally, if using the Power Combat rules from the **Exalted Players Guide**, his hand-to-hand weapons have unlimited rate. Most importantly, the normal rules for multiple actions do not apply to the character for the turn. Instead, his first dice action is made at his full pool, with each subsequent action suffering a cumulative one-die penalty. If the penalty exceeds the dice pool for an action after all modifiers, that action cannot be attempted. Defensive actions occur outside of initiative, allowing the Warrior to dodge or parry whenever needed in response to attacks. He may, in fact, dodge and parry the same attack. For all other actions, the character must wait until his initiative count or later. Mountain Folk can only activate this Charm at the beginning of a turn before initiative is rolled and may not use Inescapable Volcano Stance more than once per turn.

Warrior Pattern Mastery

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Entire Warrior Pattern (23 Charms total)

Enlightened Mountain Folk who attain cumulative mastery of the Warrior Pattern may unlock its final revelation with this Charm. These ultimate grandmasters of battle see the web of the Pattern itself and may navigate its interstices more easily or even weave their own threads. Jadeborn with this Charm subtract 2 motes from the activation cost for all the 18 subsidiary Warrior Pattern Charms that require Essence. This cannot reduce the Essence cost of a Charm below 1 mote. Additionally, Mountain Folk grandmasters can spend a Willpower point to simultaneously activate as many Warrior Pattern enchantment-type Charms as desired on a single initiative count. Finally, players of these paragons may design new Warrior Pattern Charms with Storyteller permission and oversight. Each of these custom Charms must have one or more of the 23 subsidiary Pattern Charms as prerequisites, building upon existing themes and motifs of design (especially in terms of elements and Virtues). Only Jadeborn with Warrior Pattern Mastery can learn custom Charms for this Pattern.

The Artisan Pattern

The Patterns of the undercastes must accommodate their predominantly Unenlightened users. The Charms flexibly encompass a range of power levels, limiting the greater effects to higher orders of mastery. No such limitations bind the exclusively Enlightened Artisans, and this freedom permits their Pattern to expand in dimensions of unsurpassed complexity and sorcerous erudition.

Unfolding Pattern Intuition

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

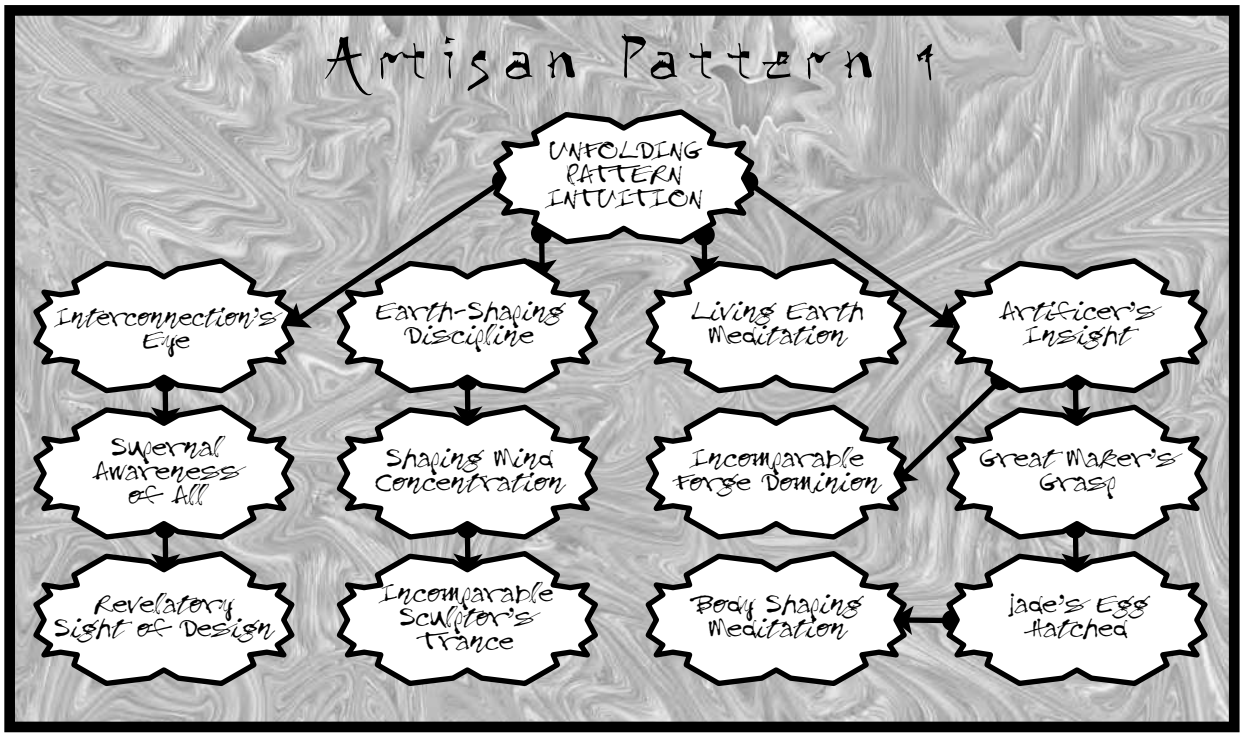
The Artisan attunes herself to the flow of Essence, perceiving the hidden currents and structures of Creation. In this state, the Jadeborn can see the luminous contrails and whirls of Essence floating through the world. Manses and Demesnes glow the shade of their aspect (midnight-blue for water, red for fire, green for wood, sky-blue for air, white for earth, silver for Lunar, black for Abyssal, gold for Solar and a shifting chromatic rainbow for Sidereal). Artifacts and beings with Essence pools appear outlined in auras colored by their aspect and magic. Charms and spells shine as they take shape, each according to a design particular to the magic. Living and animate beings glimmer with the undifferentiated hue of their life force, only marginally brighter than the backdrop of Creation itself. This alternate illumination reduces the penalty for absolute darkness to that associated with murky vision.

Mountain Folk using this Charm can perceive immaterial beings and sanctum entrances clearly. In addition, they can see the patterns of standing Essence in ongoing magical effects and can recognize any magic they have previously seen without a roll. They can similarly identify the aspect of any perceived Essence with a Perception + Essence roll at standard difficulty. Finally, this Charm adds the Jadeborn's Essence to any Awareness rolls to counteract mundane Stealth attempts, although Unfolding Pattern Intuition provides no bonus to spot magically concealed beings.

Interconnection's Eye

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unfolding Pattern Intuition

With a jolt of clarifying Essence, the Artisan looks past apparent randomness to the underlying levels of association and order. For every mote spent, this Charm reduces the difficulty of any roll to notice hidden patterns by 1. This cannot reduce the difficulty by more than the



character's lowest Virtue or below difficulty 1. This Charm can aid in any roll that falls under its broad purview. For example, it can help an Investigation attempt to connect clues from various crime scenes, developing a profile of the killer. With Awareness, the Charm can try to spot a team of disguised secret police hiding throughout a crowded marketplace. In conjunction with Linguistics, Interconnection's Eye can help trace the changing meaning of shared words between languages or aid translation of unknown symbols from extrapolated context. Storytellers should adjudicate each use of this Charm on a case-by-case basis but should generally give the benefit of the doubt to any narrative sufficiently clever enough for a stunt bonus.

Supernal Awareness of All

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Interconnection's Eye

The Jadeborn closes his eyes and clears his mind, opening his soul to the ebb and flow of Essence currents through Creation. If he opens his eyes, they appear as featureless orbs of cold white jade that no longer grant sight for the duration of the Charm. Instead, the character sees in all directions simultaneously and perfectly by magic alone. He cannot be surprised and gains the effects of Unfolding Pattern Intuition. He still cannot pierce magical concealment or see in darkness better than Unfolding Pattern Intuition allows. Finally, his magical sight perceives a flash of Essence whenever an unseen physical danger directly threatens. This sense does not reveal the source of the threat apart from a general sense of direction (above, below, behind, etc.), but it provides at least one full turn of advance warning in which to prepare.

Revelatory Sight of Design

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Supernal Awareness of All

Upon learning this Charm, an Artisan gains all the effects of Unfolding Pattern Intuition as a permanent expansion of her natural senses. Characters with Essence 5 further upgrade this second sight to permanently duplicate Supernal Awareness of All.

Earth-Shaping Discipline

Cost: 1 mote per cubic yard
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Unfolding Pattern Intuition

This Charm begins the brief cascade known variably as the Lower Earth Path or the Art of Shaping. The Artisan lays a hand upon any object made of earth and extends his Essence through it, suffusing and sculpting the material according to the Jadeborn's will. The character may not affect more cubic yards than the number of motes

spent, but he may target portions of a larger structure. As the Essence spreads, the object flows as if liquefied to its new form. The final result can defy forces with supernatural cohesion and tensile strength (such as a standing model of shaped sand or a bridge of dust as firm as rock), but any untenable structure collapses at the end of the scene. Use of this Charm requires finesse and art as well as power. Roll the Jadeborn's Intelligence + Craft (Sculpture). The base difficulty depends on the density of the targeted material: 1 for sand, dust or dirt, 2 for packed soil or clay, 3 for stone or metal and 4 for most crystals. This Charm cannot affect magical items. Increase the difficulty by +1 if the change is simple and crude (tearing a hole in a wall), +2 for complex changes (raising three dozen bars from a floor to make a cage) and +3 for extremely difficult and artistic changes (transforming a stone slab into someone's perfect likeness). This Charm cannot be used as a direct attack, although it can collapse ceilings and pillars with appropriately catastrophic results or cruelly entomb a victim to suffocate.

Shaping Mind Concentration

Cost: 1 mote per cubic yard
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Earth-Shaping Discipline

This Charm duplicates the effects of Earth-Shaping Discipline, save that Artisans can sculpt objects from a distance with their will alone, to a maximum range of (Willpower x 10) yards. This upgraded version requires no words or gestures to invoke, although such movements can merit a stunt bonus if properly narrated.

Incomparable Sculptor's Trance

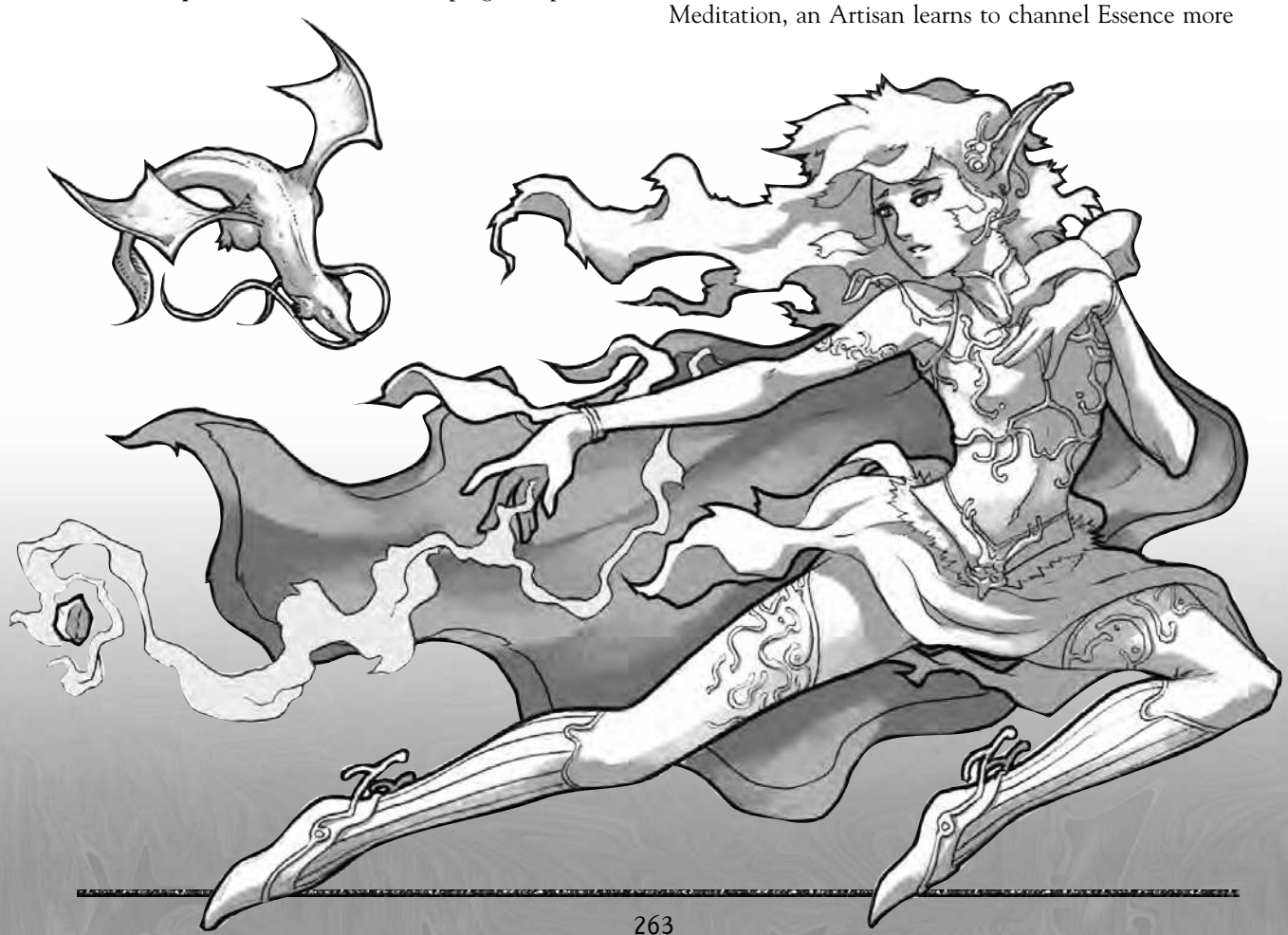
Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Shaping Mind Concentration

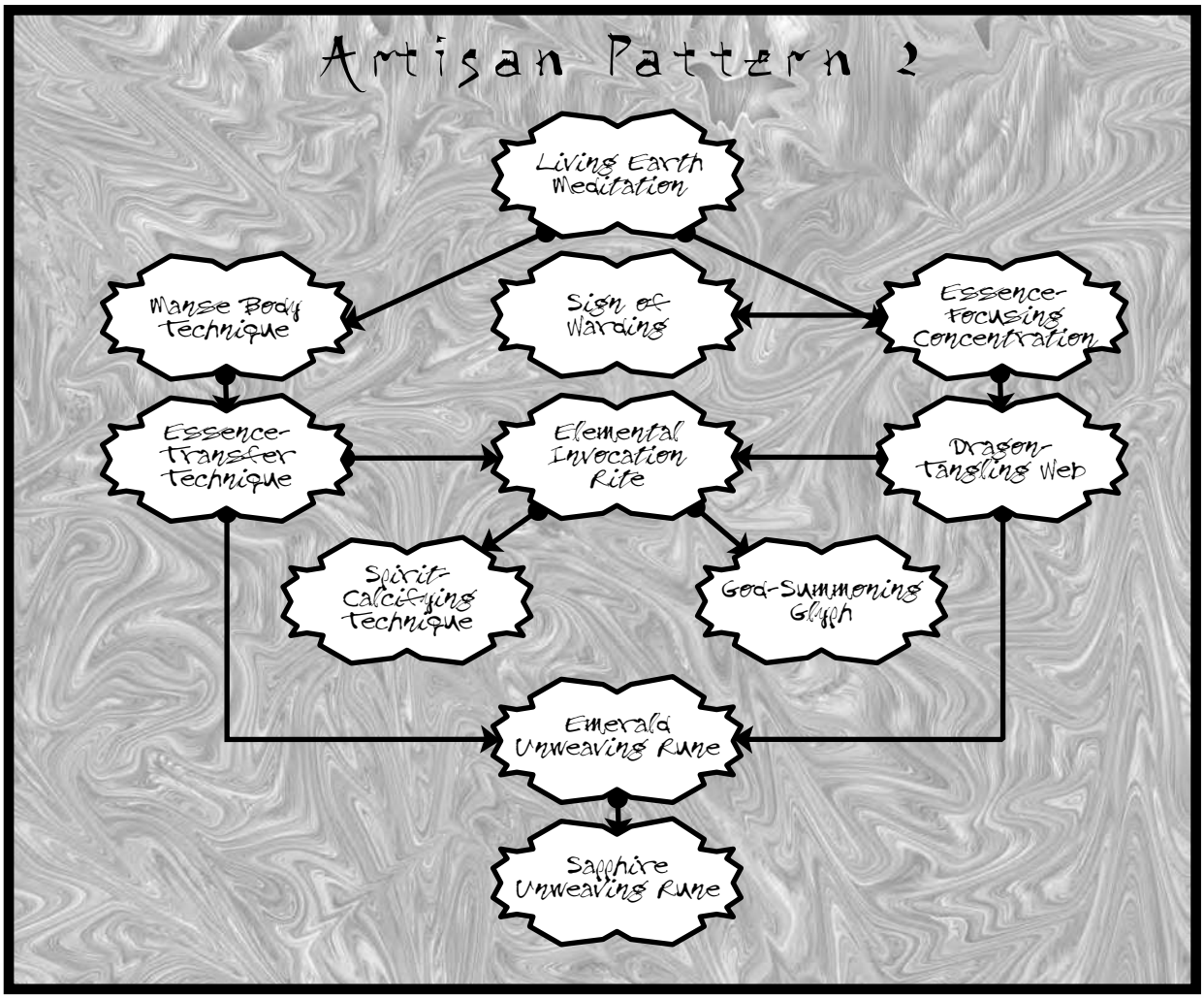
With this Charm active, Jadeborn can shape earth with their minds as a simple action each turn as if using Shaping Mind Concentration. This costs no Essence, but cannot affect more cubic yards in a turn than the character's permanent Essence.

Living Earth Meditation

Cost: 10 motes /1 mote
Duration: Instant/one hour
Type: Simple/Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Unfolding Pattern Intuition

This Charm begins the cascade known as the Higher Earth Path or the Art of Geomancy. With Living Earth Meditation, an Artisan learns to channel Essence more





efficiently through auspicious meditative posture. These stances serve two purposes. First, the Jadeborn can spend 10 motes to force instant attunement with a Manse or Demesne by standing within its boundaries. If the place of power has no beings attuned to it, the process occurs automatically without need for a roll. Otherwise, the Jadeborn's player must roll Intelligence + Lore against a difficulty equal to the highest permanent Essence of any attuned being. On a botch, the harmonic feedback inflicts one level of unsoakable lethal damage, and the attunement fails. On a failure, the character simply wastes Essence. Regardless of failure or success, the use of the Charm alerts all beings attuned to the Manse that someone has attempted to claim it. Success leaves all existing attunements intact, with the Artisan joining the group.

In addition to aiding attunement, this Charm also speeds the rate of Essence recovery through meditation. For a cost of 1 mote, the character can spend an hour meditating in exacting postures. At the end of the hour, roll the Artisan's Temperance. He regains 8 motes, plus 1 additional mote per success.

This Charm only functions within Creation proper and has no effect in shadowlands or Wyld-tainted lands, let alone other realms of existence.

Manse Body Technique

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Living Earth Meditation

In learning this Charm, an Artisan awakens and deepens her connection to the vast wellspring of Essence at the heart of Creation. While underground in Creation, she regains a number of motes per hour equal to her Essence regardless of her activity level. This amount is in addition to any received as a result of resting, sleeping or meditating. Mountain Folk with Essence 4 may purchase this Charm a second time, doubling the Essence recovery bonus. Characters may not purchase this Charm more than twice under any circumstances.

Essence-Transfer Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Manse Body Technique

With a touch, an Artisan with this Charm can drain or donate Essence in a cascade of glittering light. The transfer requires complete concentration for several seconds and cannot be used in conjunction with a striking attack. However, characters may explicitly use this Charm from within a clinch. Each activation of this Charm can drain or donate motes up to the permanent Essence of the target or Artisan (whichever is lower). Jadeborn cannot donate motes to beings that lack Essence pools, but they can store Essence in flawless crystals. This unusual use costs 5 motes per mote stored in the gem, and gems cannot hold more motes than their Resources value. Gems filled with Essence faintly glow with a pale white light, but have no additional powers. If taken above to the surface world, these stones lose 1 mote per week, but otherwise remain charged indefinitely in their natural environs. Any being with an Essence pool can take Essence from a charged gem with a touch but cannot regain motes from more than one gem in a turn or more motes per turn than her permanent Essence.

Essence-Focusing Concentration

Cost: 1 Willpower per dot
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Living Earth Meditation

The Artisan extends the grasping power of her will, channeling and absorbing ambient Essence from the earth in an incandescent surge of power. White light flares in a corona around the character as the Charm activates, as bright and glorious as an iconic Solar anima but not depictive of the character's nature.

If the Artisan is standing within a Manse or Demesne to which she is attuned, she may drain as many dots as desired from the site's rating. She can also pillage a Manse through the conduit of its Hearthstone by focusing on the gem. Each drained dot costs one Willpower point and restores 10 motes to her Essence pool. Sites of power recover one dot of drained rating per day until they refill completely. Any Hearthstones belonging to a drained Manse continue to provide Essence at the diminished rate, but lose all special powers until the Manse fully heals. Mountain Folk cannot drain Essence from a Manse/Demesne to which they are not attuned and so must first connect themselves to the site using Living Earth Meditation.

As a dangerous alternative to draining a site of power, an intrepid Artisan can journey into the Wyld itself and draw power from the flowing sea of inchoate Essence. A mile radius region in the Bordermarches or Middlemarches is considered the equivalent of a level-1 Demesne, while the same area in the Deep Wyld is level 2. Zones of Pure Chaos afford the equivalent of level 3. Draining any Wyld region inflicts unsoakable levels of aggravated damage to the Mountain Folk equal the equivalent Demesne rating, as well as sending painful shockwaves of disturbed Essence for 10 miles that Fair Folk can sense with a Perception + Awareness roll at standard difficulty.

Finally, Artisans can tap the ambient Essence in Creation outside of a Manse. This restores 5 motes to their pool, but desiccates the area's geomantic currents within a half mile radius for a day. No being can respire to regain Essence in the depleted zone (stunts, Hearthstones and other effects work normally), and all immaterial spirits feel acutely uncomfortable in the area. Gods and elementals will assuredly seek revenge for such abuse of their homes unless placated with apologetic prayers and offerings.

Demesnes and Manses reduced to a rating of 0 cannot be drained any further, nor may areas desiccated of Essence. Use of this Charm can increase a Jadeborn's Essence pool above its normal maximum, but only briefly. After a number of full turns equal to the character's permanent Essence, the excess begins bleeding off at the rate of 5 motes per turn.

Dragon-Tangling Web

Cost: 5+ motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Essence hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Focusing Concentration

The Artisan makes a harsh clutching gesture and spreads his fingers. Coruscating filaments of light flash and sizzle in the air around his hand, weaving into geometrically impossible knots as they fade to invisibility. This versatile and much-feared Charm has many uses, depending on how the Artisan deploys the web.

As a first option, the Jadeborn can attack a Manse or Demesne in which he stands, provided the site does not have a rating higher than his permanent Essence. The web hopelessly snares the Essence flows of the site, scattering and diminishing its power. The site loses one dot of its rating for every 5 motes spent (to a minimum rating of 0) until the Charm's duration ends. This effect temporarily disables all Hearthstones of tangled Manses until the web fades.

A Dragon-Tangling Web can also assault a Hearthstone the character touches with an unarmed attack for a cost of (the rating of the stone x 3) motes. The tangled gem loses its glow and remains an inert and powerless rock for the duration of the Charm.

More viciously, Artisans with Essence 5 can use this Charm to attack any being with an Essence pool for a cost of (the permanent Essence of the victim + 10) motes. The Artisan must specify whether to lay a stable or unstable web at the time of activation. Stable webs prevent the target from recovering Essence by *any* means other than respiration (including successful stunts and enhancements to respiration) but last for one scene only. Unstable webs snare and collapse immediately, draining a number of motes from the victim equal to their creator's Willpower + Essence. Webs cannot target beings with a higher permanent Essence than the Artisan.

Finally, a Dragon-Tangling Web can spread through an area of space itself for a cost of 20 motes. This effect extends in a sphere with a radius of its creator's (Willpower + Essence x 10) yards. Inside this zone, magical beings respire Essence at half their normal rate, rounded down. More importantly, the web adds a number of motes equal to its creator's permanent Essence to the cost of all magical effects requiring Essence expenditure. The creator is not exempt from this effect, although anyone with a higher permanent Essence than the creator is immune.

A Dragon-Tangling Web can only be parried or dodged with a perfect defense, but it can be torn asunder with Emerald Countermagic.

Sign of Warding

Cost: Varies
Duration: Until broken
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Focusing Concentration

The Artisan traces an elaborate mandala with one finger, trailing luminous Essence in the air or upon a surface. When complete, the sign flares with power and spreads weaving tendrils of Essence across the warded area. These threads fade by the end of the turn, and the original symbol dims by the end of the scene, visible only to spirits and beings capable of perceiving Essence. The ward only appears in full radiance when triggered by a forbidden intruder. The effects of the warding sign depend upon its intended function. Each ward can be keyed as broadly or specifically as desired and with as much "intelligence" as needed to fulfill the directives. The simplest and most basic wards are barriers of material and immaterial force that only permit their creators to pass. More complicated barriers only stop spirits or anyone who isn't a Jadeborn or even key themselves to specific individuals. Additionally, wards can be keyed to inflict damage on anyone who touches them, though this rapidly depletes their energies. Finally, wards can be made one or two way.

Regardless of their keys, wards have common statistics. Barrier-type wards have a soak of 1L/1B per mote invested in the enchantment and require twice that number of health levels of damage to damage. A damaged ward has a hole large enough for whatever broke it to squeeze through, with additional damage tearing open other cracks as appropriate. Destroying a ward requires a total number of health levels of damage equal to the motes invested x 4. Barriers regenerate one health level per turn, sealing all gaps once they mend sufficient structural damage. For every week that passes, a barrier cumulatively loses 1L/1B soak. When soak reaches zero, the barrier is destroyed. Wards that have the ability to inflict injury do so on contact, inflicting dice of bashing or lethal damage (as designated) equal to half of their soak value to any forbidden being touching them. This damage is applied once a turn, with each shock depleting 1L/1B from the ward's soak (which may diminish future damage effects). A barrier can be renewed and mended with a reapplication of this Charm by anyone, but no ward can be made stronger than its original strength or have its key conditions altered. Wards that enclose a space can shield a sphere with a maximum radius of (Willpower x 10) yards. Wards that cover a specific two-dimensional space (serving as a gate, for instance) can have a maximum area of (Willpower x 50) square yards.

Emerald Countermagic can nullify a ward created with this Charm.

Elemental Invocation Rite

Cost: 10+ motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Varies
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Transfer Technique, Dragon-Tangling Web

Like the Exalted, the Artisans of the Mountain Folk can learn to ritually summon and bind elementals. To use this Charm, the Jadeborn spends 10 motes and 1 Willpower point. He then uses his finger as a stylus, inscribing a geometric design of light upon a stone surface. The power of the elemental determines the complexity of the design as well as the time required to draw it (one hour per dot of the spirit's permanent Essence). The elemental's aspect dictates the pattern's color: azure for air, green for wood, red for fire, midnight blue for water and white for earth. Finally, the spirit's size defines the size of the design, ensuring that it will always be large enough to contain the elemental when it appears. Once the Artisan completes the mystical design, he steps outside of it and lays a hand against its edge. A dragon line erupts from the center of the pattern, threading its way through Creation at the speed of thought toward the specific elemental or the closest elemental of the desired type. Only the Artisan, spirits and beings capable of perceiving Essence can see this blazing filament. The line instantly coils and weaves itself into a

cocoon around the target and implodes, transporting the target to the center of the design.

After summoning an elemental, the Artisan must then bind the spirit, represented by a roll of Essence + the Virtue associated with the being's aspect (Compassion for wood, Conviction for air, Temperance for water, Valor for fire and highest Virtue for earth). For every 5 additional motes spent, the Artisan's player adds one additional die to this roll. The difficulty of the binding attempt is the elemental's permanent Essence. If the Artisan fails, he can banish the elemental back to its original location, requiring a second Essence + Virtue roll at difficulty 1. If the banishing roll fails, the elemental is free to seek retribution on its would-be master. If the binding succeeds, the elemental must obey the Artisan's every command until released of its duty or until the next Calibration.

Kidnaping and enslaving powerful elementals offends the Celestial Hierarchy and earns the enmity of spirits. In general, elementals of Essence 3 or less will not be missed. Artisans daring or foolish enough to summon spirits with Essence 5+ should treat their vassals with the utmost respect, phrasing all commands as requests and compensating the elemental for its labors with artifacts and prayers. As usual, powerful elementals may send minions in their stead to the summons.

Spirit-Calcifying Technique

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Invocation Rite

The Artisan hurls a pulse of opalescent light at an immaterial being in his line of sight. The energy spreads and coruscates through the ephemera of the spirit's body, weighting it with Essence. Roll the Jadeborn's Willpower + 6 against the target's Willpower + Essence. If the target wins, the Charm simply drains 5 motes from the being's Essence pool. If the Artisan wins, the being becomes solid. Gods and demons with the Materialize Charm must activate it immediately and cannot voluntarily retreat back to an immaterial state for the rest of the scene. Ghosts with Weighted with the Anchor of Flesh or another Arcanos allowing materialization must activate one of their options and also cannot dematerialize before the end of the scene. Spirits without such Charms or who cannot currently afford to pay the cost of these Charms lose all remaining motes of Essence but materialize for the scene. Elementals and other beings using the Dematerialize Charm (or an equivalent effect) are forced back into a default material state at no cost but cannot attempt to dematerialize again for the duration of the Charm. Spirit-Calcifying Technique cannot affect beings with a permanent Essence of 7+. This Charm does not confer the ability to detect immaterial beings.

God-Summoning Glyph

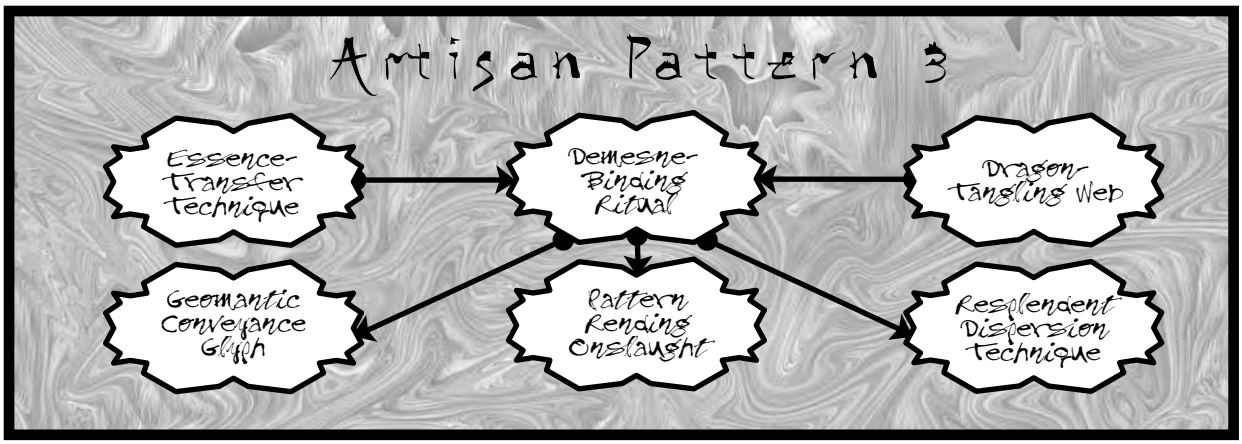
Cost: 30 motes, 3 Willpower
Duration: Varies
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Invocation Rite

Although Mountain Folk cannot bind gods into service any more than the Exalted, the greatest Artisans can command gods associated with the element of earth or the subterranean depths to appear before them. This requires a geometric pattern similar to that employed by the Elemental Invocation Rite, although designs to summon gods are considerably more complex and time consuming to create (four hours per dot of the spirit's Essence). At the end of the ritual, the Artisan kneels outside the violet pattern and unleashes the dragon line with a touch. The god appears before the Jadeborn and manifests, although it need not actually materialize unless it wishes to do so. From this point on, the god and Artisan are free to interact however they choose. If the Jadeborn desires service or a favor from the deity, she must bargain, bribe or bully it — or employ some combination of the three. Nothing stops the spirit from attacking or using Charms, though the Artisan can attempt to banish the god back to its original location at any time as a standard dice action. The player rolls Willpower + Essence against a difficulty of the spirit's permanent Essence. Alternately, Artisans who know Sign of Warding can set up protective barriers to contain potentially hostile deities, though most gods regard this as a deadly insult.

Emerald Unweaving Rune

Cost: 10 or 20 motes, plus 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Transfer Technique, Dragon-Tangling Web

Although Mountain Folk cannot learn actual sorcery, geomancers with sufficient understanding of Essence can disrupt the patterns of such magic. The Artisan traces a coiled symbol of green light in the air with her fingers and invests the sign with power. She can hold this sign ahead of her for the rest of the turn, shattering all Terrestrial Circle spells that attempt to affect her. However, the concentration required to sustain this rune adds one to the difficulty of all non-reflexive physical actions. Alternately, the Artisan can spend 20 motes to unleash the sign against a Terrestrial Circle spell already in effect. The symbol flies from the Jadeborn's hand to the center or focal point of the magic and shatters in a violent flash. This tears apart the spell but inflicts dice of bashing damage equal to half the shattered spell's Essence cost (rounded up) to everything within three yards of the explosion. This Charm can only shatter spells within (the Artisan's Essence x 20) yards.



Emerald Unweaving Rune is comparable to the spell Emerald Countermagic in all regards, including its ability to disrupt certain Mountain Folk Charms.

Sapphire Unweaving Rune

Cost: 20 motes, 2 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Emerald Unweaving Rune

While accomplished Artisans can tear apart Terrestrial Circle spells with relative ease, they can only shatter magic of the Celestial or Shadowlands Circle with a ritual requiring three participants using this Charm in conjunction. As the rite begins, the gathered Mountain Folk stand together and raise their hands in unison. They chant or sing, each in a different and discordant pitch. As the melodious incantations flow from their lips, their hands trace vast azure patterns of light around them. At the conclusion of the hour, the trio adjusts their pitch into breathtaking harmony, and the three designs merge into a single rune. The symbol hovers for a moment, then flashes to the center of the targeted spell and detonates with a thunderclap. This focal point of the spell cannot be further than (the lowest permanent Essence of any participant x 20) yards. As the magic shatters, its Essence rushes out in a destructive torrent, inflicting dice of lethal damage equal to half the spell's Essence cost (rounded up) to everything within 10 yards of the blast. Sapphire Unweaving Rune is comparable to the spell Sapphire Countermagic in all regards except those previously listed.

Demesne-Binding Ritual

Cost: 30 motes, 3 Willpower
Duration: Until broken
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Transfer Technique, Dragon-Tangling Web

The Artisan spends an hour setting up an array of flawless crystals around the heart of a Demesne to which he is attuned. These gems can be any variety provided they are sufficiently large and well cut (Resources ••• for a Demesne of • to ••• or Resources ••••• for a Demesne of •••• to •••••). Tradition links certain gemstones with Essence aspects (emerald for wood, ruby for fire, sapphire for water, chalcedony for air and diamond for earth), but the use of specific types of gemstones is unnecessary. With the Ritual of Auspicious Placement complete, the Artisan stands at the center of the Demesne (or as close as physically possible) and activates this Charm. Lines of Essence crisscross the room like a vast spider web, connecting the gems to one another. The gems chime in various pitches beginning with cacophony and ending in perfected harmony. As the pitches and lights align, a pulse of Essence sweeps the room. When this pulse passes, the crystals remain charged with Essence and glow like strange votive candles. For as long as the crystals remain undisturbed, the Demesne is now considered capped by a Manse of equal rating. Over the next week, this temporary Manse produces a Hearthstone somewhere toward the center of the chamber. Fortunately for the creator, the Charm locks the crystals in place so they will not accidentally fall out of position. A being must deliberately try to move the gems by applying a Strength + Athletics total of 10 or greater to the task. Once disturbed, the Manse is ruined. The crystals may be reused and the Charm applied to fix the situation, but the Hearthstone remains an inert rock until and unless such repairs are completed.

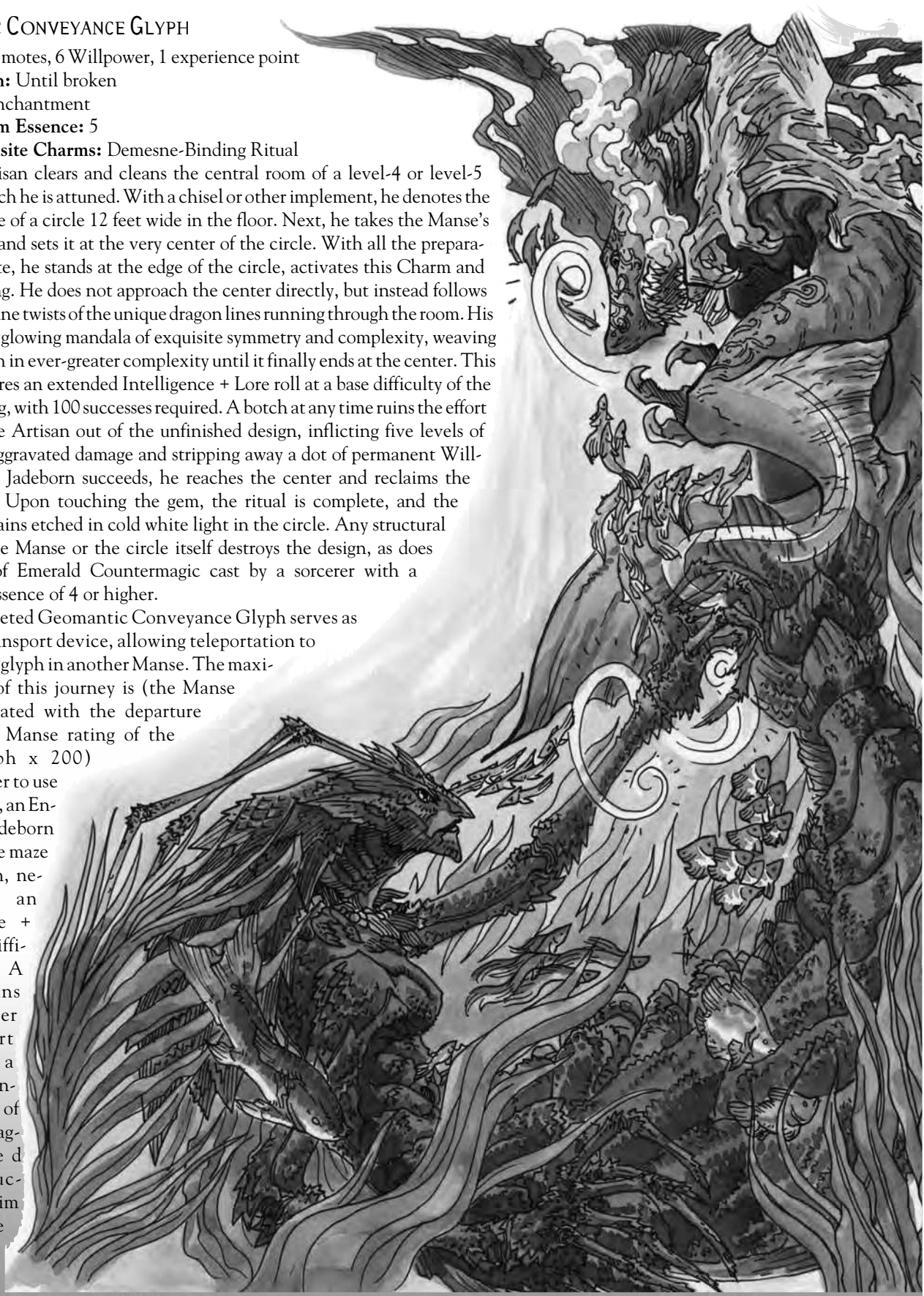
In addition to its primary function, Demesne-Binding Ritual has a second supplementary use. The Artisan can place crystals around the central chamber of an extant Manse and activate the Charm as normal. If the Manse has an insufficient rating to cap the Demesne beneath it, it rises to the needed level for as long as the crystals remain intact.

Geomantic Conveyance Glyph

Cost: 40 motes, 6 Willpower, 1 experience point
Duration: Until broken
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Demesne-Binding Ritual

The Artisan clears and cleans the central room of a level-4 or level-5 Manse to which he is attuned. With a chisel or other implement, he denotes the circumference of a circle 12 feet wide in the floor. Next, he takes the Manse's Hearthstone and sets it at the very center of the circle. With all the preparations complete, he stands at the edge of the circle, activates this Charm and begins walking. He does not approach the center directly, but instead follows the labyrinthine twists of the unique dragon lines running through the room. His path etches a glowing mandala of exquisite symmetry and complexity, weaving back and forth in ever-greater complexity until it finally ends at the center. This journey requires an extended Intelligence + Lore roll at a base difficulty of the Manse's rating, with 100 successes required. A botch at any time ruins the effort and blasts the Artisan out of the unfinished design, inflicting five levels of unsoakable aggravated damage and stripping away a dot of permanent Willpower. If the Jadeborn succeeds, he reaches the center and reclaims the Hearthstone. Upon touching the gem, the ritual is complete, and the mandala remains etched in cold white light in the circle. Any structural damage to the Manse or the circle itself destroys the design, as does application of Emerald Countermagic cast by a sorcerer with a permanent Essence of 4 or higher.

A completed Geomantic Conveyance Glyph serves as a mystical transport device, allowing teleportation to another such glyph in another Manse. The maximum range of this journey is (the Manse rating associated with the departure glyph + the Manse rating of the arrival glyph x 200) miles. In order to use these devices, an Enlightened Jadeborn must walk the maze of the design, necessitating an Intelligence + Lore roll (difficulty 4). A failure means the character must start anew, while a botch also inflicts a level of unsoakable aggravated damage. Success allows him to sense the direction and rough



distance of all valid exit points in range. After selecting a destination, he spends 10 motes and 1 Willpower point to teleport himself in a flash of Essence to the chosen glyph. Only Enlightened Mountain Folk can use these tangled dragon lines. No other being can replicate the necessary pattern of Essence.

Pattern Rending Onslaught

Cost: 8+ motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Demesne-Binding Ritual

While most geomantic Charms have a wide variety of complex utilitarian purposes, Pattern Rending Onslaught is elegant in its simplicity and monstrous brutality. The underlying principle of the magic is trivial. Essence is everywhere, bound up in the laws of form and force inscribed by the Primordials upon the shapeless Wyld. These laws define the web of the Tapestry, the very fabric of space and fate. With this Charm, an Artisan reaches out his hand and will to slit a handful of these strands, disintegrating the targeted object in a shrieking flare of discharged Essence.

The Artisan spends a turn in concentration as a simple action, gathering Essence as colorless flame around his hand. On the next turn, he makes a stylized slashing blow as a simple action, releasing the power in a spray of immaterial ribbons that reach into the center of the target. The light spreads outward to pierce the surface in dazzling rays, a broken prism of hues. In a moment, nothing remains of the target except a fine cloud of glittering motes. Anyone or anything that somehow survives an attack by this Charm is almost assuredly horribly maimed.

The blast from Pattern Rending Onslaught is made using the Artisan's Willpower + Essence. It cannot be parried without an enchanted weapon, although it can be dodged. If a defending character attempts a parry with a non-magical weapon, the attempt fails, and the weapon is destroyed by the energies. The beam has a base damage of 10L + successes + (1L for every mote spent after the eighth). There is no limit on how much Essence an Artisan may pour into a single use of this Charm apart from what he has available. The Charm bypasses the entire soak of non-magical inanimate targets and ignores and destroys non-magical armor. This attack can affect immaterial beings (which the Jadeborn must perceive and target using some other effect). Anything destroyed by this Charm is truly obliterated and leaves no ghost, grave good or continued trace of its existence. Spirits are annihilated utterly. Only Mountain Folk souls, the Exaltations of Celestial Exalted and beings with Primordial Essence can endure to reincarnate or linger forever in the Underworld as appropriate to their nature. Storytellers should consider allowing this Charm to instantly destroy extras and any non-magical inanimate objects of roughly human size or smaller rather than wasting time with a damage roll.

Resplendent Dispersion Technique

Cost: 1-5 motes
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Demesne-Binding Ritual

The Artisan brings her hands together and indicates an inanimate object within two yards. After a moment's concentration, she pulls her hands apart forcefully. The target glows a pale white and fades away, the pattern of its Essence dispersed across the folded non-space of Elsewhere. While banished, objects exist in ageless and immutable stasis. At any later time, the Artisan can revoke the Charm as a reflexive action, summoning the object to appear in her grasp or anywhere within a yard of her person. This Charm can only affect objects of the character's size or smaller and may not target anything that currently belongs to someone else. Ownership creates a metaphysical attachment that causes this Charm to fail. The activation cost is normally only 1 mote, but it increases to the artifact's rating if targeting a magical device. Only artifacts attuned to the Artisan may be banished, but they retain their attunement indefinitely while Elsewhere.

Artificer's Insight

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Unfolding Pattern Intuition

This Charm marks the beginning of the cascade known as the Fire Path or the Art of the Forge. Essence flashes across the Artisan's eyes as he stares at a crafted object. He immediately knows whether the object has any magical power. If the object is enchanted, roll the Jadeborn's Perception + Occult at a difficulty of the artifact's rating (or 6 in the case of artifacts with an N/A rating). The number of successes determines the additional information gleaned. Each threshold of success cumulatively provides all the information available at lower thresholds.

One success: The character determines whether the artifact is functional, damaged or otherwise inoperative.

Two successes: The Artisan knows the overall category of purpose into which the device's magic falls (offensive, defensive, utilitarian, etc.).

Three successes: The character understands the object's specific purpose but not the details of its powers

(narrative details only, without any explanation of rules or statistics).

Four or more successes: The Artisan discerns the specific details and operation of all powers and understands how to operate the artifact perfectly.

Incomparable Forge Dominion

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Artificer's Insight

The Artisan resonates with the Primordial Essence of his creator, greatly accelerating the pace at which he can create or repair mundane objects and artifacts. This Charm halves the duration required for any such attempt. Mountain Folk with Essence 4 can purchase this Charm a second time, reducing the duration to a third of usual. Jadeborn with Essence 5 may purchase this Charm a third and final time, quartering the original duration.

Great Maker's Grasp

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Artificer's Insight

The Artisan touches an ownerless artifact, threading tendrils of invisible Essence through its components. She may instantly force full attunement with the device, reducing the standard commitment cost by her permanent Essence (to a minimum of half its standard cost, rounded up). For artifacts made of Magical Materials other than jade, the attunement cost is doubled before subtracting the cost reduction granted by this Charm.

Jade's Egg Hatched

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Great Maker's Grasp

This Charm is perhaps the single most important piece of magical lore known to the Mountain Folk. Without it, their race would quickly dwindle into extinction. Jade's Egg Hatched allows Artisans to carve jade slabs containing Mountain Folk souls, transmuting cold rock into living flesh as they free the newborn within. The birthing ritual takes (8 - the Artisan's permanent Essence) minutes. Roll the Jadeborn's Intelligence + Craft (Sculpture). The difficulty is 1 to make a Worker, 2 for a Warrior and 6 for an Artisan. Failing the roll produces a Worker, while a botch kills the newborn and forces its soul to flee to a new slab of jade. Rolling eight or more successes on an attempt to create a Warrior or Worker can make the Jadeborn one of the Enlightened at Storyteller discretion. However, Mountain Folk culture teaches that this freakish occurrence is the result of catastrophic and regrettable failure on the part of an Artisan. Storytellers should keep in mind that only 10,000 or so Enlightened Mountain Folk exist out of a total population of 10 million, so the odds are roughly 1 in 1,000 that any particular child will be an Artisan. For a more "realistic" system, roll four dice. If three dice show a result of 10, the child can be an Artisan. With four 10s, she can be an Enlightened member of an undercaste. Roll the sculpting attempt normally, only allowing creation of an Enlightened Jadeborn if the probability check permits.

Body Shaping Meditation

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Jade's Egg Hatched

The Artisan concentrates, reweaving the threads of his Essence. In response, his body ripples and shifts like molded clay. Upon activating this Charm, the Jadeborn's player may reallocate a number of dots of the character's Physical Attributes up to his permanent Essence. This cannot raise any Attribute above 7 or drop any Attribute below 3, nor can the magic change an Attribute by more than three dots from its true rating. A character's body can only accept one application of this Charm at a time. If he wishes to change the allocation, he must first drop back to his normal configuration by ending the Charm.

Artisan Pattern Mastery

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Entire Artisan Pattern (30 Charms total)

At the apex of mastery, this supernal enlightenment allows the greatest Princes of Adamant to wield a shard of Autochthon's own Primordial power. This confers numerous benefits:

First, the master Artisan can create matter out of raw Essence, shaping it into any form he can imagine with a combination of will and craft. Such matter coalesces from streamers of white light that weave into the desired shape next to their creator. Upon activating this power (which counts as a Charm use), the Jadeborn spends 1 Willpower point and the requisite motes of Essence as a simple action. The number of motes varies with the size and complexity of the desired object. The base cost is 2 motes for every cubic yard the final object will occupy.

This is the final number if the object is extremely simple: no moving parts and only one type of mundane material in its composition. Objects that have simple mechanics involving a few different composite materials cost double. Objects with complex mechanics and many composite materials cost triple. Creating raw Magical Materials costs five times the base. Actual enchanted objects multiply the base cost by (the Artifact's rating x 6). Only nonliving matter can be created, regardless of the Essence spent. If the character lacks sufficient Essence for the task, he must prepare in advance with Essence-Focusing Concentration.

Besides conferring the ability to create objects, Artisan Pattern Mastery allows Artisans to create new magic in the form of custom Charms. This process follows the guidelines and restrictions for other Pattern Mastery Charms (see pp. 254 and 261). Finally, Artisan masters subtract two motes from the Essence cost to activate any Artisan Pattern Charm (except the creation ability associated with mastery itself), to a minimum cost of 1 mote.

The Enlightened Pattern

This Pattern encompasses the social and mental supremacy that defines Enlightenment. Though primarily restricted to Artisans and their intricate politics, the Enlightened members of the undercastes also study these arts for any edge they can find against the prejudice and dominion of the Conclave.

Glorious Prodigy Lesson

Cost: 15 motes, 6 experience points
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Jadeborn spends a full day in sequestered isolation contemplating a body of knowledge and skill she has previously studied. In game terms, the player selects an Ability in which the character already has at least one dot. By using this Charm, that Ability becomes Favored (if it wasn't already). The Jadeborn also gains one additional dot in the Ability. Finally, the character's maximum potential rating in that Trait increases by one (to seven dots). Characters cannot use this Charm to contemplate the same Ability more than once. Each type of Craft counts as a separate Ability for the purposes of this Charm.

Upon Strands Lightly

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: (Essence + 1) hours
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Glorious Prodigy Lesson

This Charm begins the cascade known as the Art of Civilization. The Jadeborn empathically attunes herself to the delicate web of social interactions around her, perceiving each relationship as a thread in the tapestry of civilization itself. She intuitively understands the courtesies expected of her and executes these gestures and mannerisms flawlessly. She may not even fully understand why she must act in a particular manner, only that the actions represent the most harmonious behavior for her situation and company. Just as importantly, her hypersensitivity to intentions warns her whenever anyone intends her immediate harm. Although sensing danger is automatic, she does not know the source without a successful reflexive Perception + Compassion roll at a difficulty of the aggressor's permanent Essence. This warning comes at least a full turn before the impending attack, ruining any chance of surprise or ambush.

Mien of (Virtue)

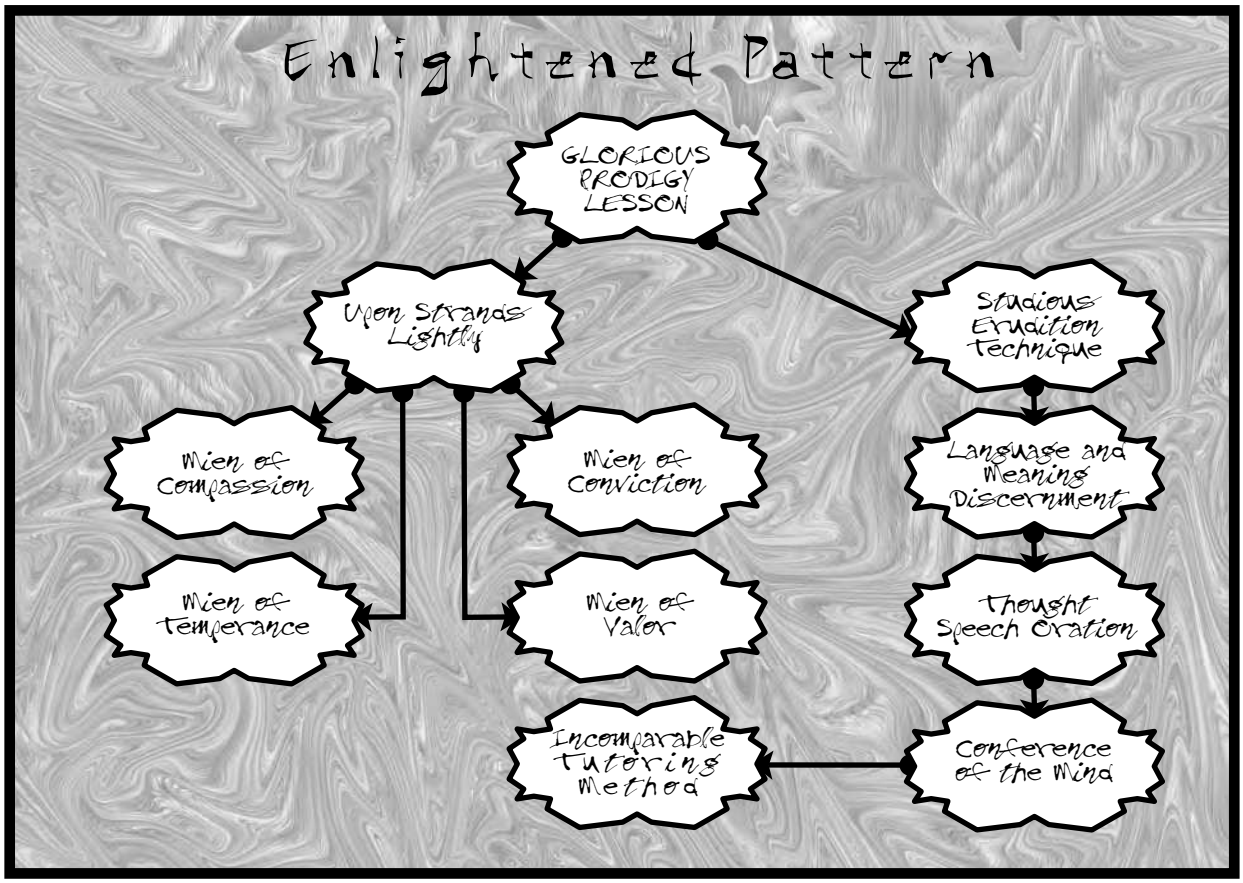
Cost: 2 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Enchantment
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Upon Strands Lightly

The Conclave of the Mountain Folk is a ruthless sea of treachery and infighting held together by strictures of custom and decorum. Artisans hate and fight one another over factional and personal differences or simply for sport, but they accept that social warfare requires rules in order to preserve the very society they all wish to control. Mien of (Virtue) is one of the most ubiquitous and yet powerful weapons of Jadeborn politics, encompassing the four fundamental Charms that define acceptable social interaction. While under the effects of a mien, characters project a specific emotional archetype that helps them act the part of their assumed role.

Although these Charms are enchantment-type, they are designed to be extremely fluid. Characters may be assumed to be able to switch back and forth in a social engagement as often as desired or as the situation demands. The timing restrictions for the enchantment type only matter if these Charms are used during combat.

In addition to their basic powers, each Charm includes a greater effect for extreme circumstances and emergencies. Characters with Essence 3+ who are wearing a mien can access this power for a reflexive cost of 10 motes or 1 temporary point of the appropriate Virtue. The greater effect lasts until voluntarily relinquished or the Jadeborn ends the mien.

Compassion: The Jadeborn assumes inquisitive or amicable mode, projecting an amount of gregariousness and curiosity appropriate to the situation. This mode is the least common one, predominantly employed in private negotiations and liaisons. In public, it lacks the protective and



offensive benefits of the other Charms. Add the character's Compassion rating to all Social rolls based on friendliness and Charm, as well as to all Investigation rolls where he politely attempts to get information from someone else.

The greater effect of this mien makes the character irresistibly charming and attractive. He converts the standard mien dice bonus into automatic successes for all seduction attempts.

Conviction: The Jadeborn assumes defensive mode, projecting stalwart and implacable calm. He is no more or less noticeable than usual, but his motives and emotional state remain obscured. This is the default mood appropriate for most social encounters, particularly in unfamiliar company. While wearing this mien, anyone targeting the character with a Social roll of any kind adds his Conviction rating to the difficulty. He receives no bonus penalty of any sort to his own interactions.

The greater effect of this mien grants total immunity to magic intended to alter his thoughts, perceptions or emotions, provided that the aggressor employing the magic has a lower permanent Essence. This specifically does not defend against the lesser effects of any Mien of (Virtue) Charm.

Temperance: The Jadeborn assumes passive mode, withdrawing behind a shroud of complete detachment. This mood is the default one of neutral witnesses who do not wish to take part in hostilities. Any roll to notice the character amidst a crowd has its difficulty increased by her Temperance rating, and similarly, add her Temperance to active Stealth rolls in such environs. Most sentient beings ignore her outright. This bonus only applies so long as she does nothing to draw attention to herself. She is not invisible or undetectable, just deliberately unremarkable. As a final benefit, she adds her Temperance rating to the difficulty of all Social rolls targeting her. Unfortunately, characters wearing this mien cannot effectively draw attention to themselves even if they want to, adding their Temperance to the difficulty of their own Social rolls. This mien does not interfere with attempts to understand a social situation or to discern the feelings of a target. Switching from Compassion or Valor to Temperance creates a jarring emotional disconnect that helps end or postpone discussion. Anyone currently interacting with the character must cease doing so unless their players make a successful Willpower roll at a difficulty of the character's Temperance. If this roll fails, the conversation is interrupted, and the Jadeborn can gracefully retreat from the situation.

The greater effects of this mien allow a character to retreat even further from social interaction. The player of anyone attempting to speak with her (after succeeding at the difficult task of noticing her in the first place) must

make a successful reflexively Willpower roll at a difficulty of the character's Temperance each turn.

Valor: The Jadeborn dons aggressive mode, projecting arrogance and glorious anger. For all that he retains superficial signs of courtesy, his whispers carry the same stunning force as shouted epithets. Every word is a seething manifestation of epic tyranny. Obviously, this mood draws immediate attention and aids in arguments and attacks. For all its advantages, however, the mood carries a stigma as a weapon of sparing or last resort. Those who overuse its power are viewed as crass and barbaric. This mien adds the character's Valor to all Social rolls involving raw force of personality or intimidation. Also, add half the character's Valor (rounded up) to the difficulty of all Social rolls targeting him. Unfortunately, his aggressive demeanor makes him far less likeable, adding his Valor to the difficulty of all his player's own Social rolls where the Jadeborn cannot triumph through domination. Furthermore, the mien voids all Stealth attempts and makes the character preternaturally conspicuous. The players of all observers receive a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll at standard difficulty for their characters to notice him in any situation, and he cannot hope to blend in to a crowd.

The greater effect of this mien converts the standard dice bonus into automatic successes for actual intimidation attempts only. Furthermore, the character's voice carries clearly over any ambient noise. Everyone in line of sight can hear him clearly as if he stood directly before them.

Studious Erudition Technique

Cost: Varies
Duration: Until learned
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Glorious Prodigy Lesson

This Charm begins the cascade known as the Art of Thought. The Jadeborn focuses Essence on expanding her cognitive faculties or on learning a specific skill or magical secret. She divides the training time required to purchase or improve a Mental Attribute, Ability, specialty or Charm by a third of the number of motes spent. Thus, it costs 6 motes to halve training time, 9 to cut it to a third of normal, 12 for a quarter, etc. This Essence remains committed until the character purchases or advances the Trait. The Charm cannot be voluntarily relinquished before that time.

Language and Meaning Discernment

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Studious Erudition Technique

By listening to an unfamiliar language spoken for one hour, a Jadeborn with this Charm may attune her mind to its syntactical structure. She permanently and completely learns the language in question, but this does not improve her Linguistics rating. This Charm's effects end when the character ceases to commit Essence to it.

Thought Speech Oration

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Language and Meaning Discernment

The Jadeborn concentrates, imprinting her thoughts upon an abstract construct of Essence. She need only glance at a sentient being to silently hurl the construct into his mind. If he resists the sudden intrusion of foreign thoughts, the Jadeborn's player must successfully roll Willpower (difficulty of the target's highest Virtue) to override the barrier. If the target receives the telepathic message, he hears the Jadeborn's own words clearly speaking the message in his mind. This message can have any length, but once sent, the character must use this Charm again to send a new message.

Jadeborn can also attune themselves to other sentient beings by using this Charm while maintaining physical contact. Each such attunement costs 1 experience point. Jadeborn can send messages to those are attuned to for a reduced cost of 1 mote and may be out of visual range and as far as a mile away.

Conference of the Mind

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Thought Speech Oration

By touching or making eye contact with a sentient being, a Jadeborn with this Charm can transport their two minds into a shared dreamscape outside of time and space. This virtual construct has whatever terrain and features the Jadeborn imagines, and she can dictate any events, regardless of the laws of reality. However, she cannot affect the ephemeral thought-body of the person contacted, nor may either participant come to any actual harm in the mindscape. If the target also knows this Charm, he can also affect changes to the surroundings and summon unreal objects, but the overall terrain remains dominated by the initiator. This Charm predominantly serves to facilitate private communication. The two can talk and interact for a maximum perceived duration of the initiator's permanent Willpower in hours. After this duration passes or whenever the Jadeborn so wills, both characters flash back to their bodies. No actual time elapses during the sojourn into thought, so the participants emerge precisely at the moment they left.

Incomparable Tutoring Method

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower, 1+ experience point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Conference of the Mind

The Jadeborn lays a hand against a sentient being's forehead. A white light flashes under the touch, imprinting whatever knowledge the character wishes to share. He can transfer memories, expand consciousness (raising Mental Attributes), teach or improve Abilities and specialties or instruct Mountain Folk in new Charms they are capable of learning. In the case of an actual Trait increase, the target must still spend the appropriate number of experience points to process the lesson; the benefit is simply obviated training time. If the Jadeborn feels particularly generous, he may donate experience points beyond the 1 required to activate the Charm. These points must be immediately used, but it is enough that they merely be earmarked toward a certain end if the character cannot afford the subject taught.

Enlightened Pattern Mastery

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Entire Enlightened Pattern (11 Charms total)

With mastery of the Enlightened Pattern comes a heightened understanding of Enlightenment itself. With this wisdom, a Jadeborn may create custom Charms to augment this Pattern. Only Jadeborn with Enlightened Pattern Mastery can learn these Charms. In addition, the character reduces the Essence cost to activate any Charms of this Pattern by 1 mote.

Transcendent Pattern Mastery

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Three Pattern Mastery Charms

Before the Great Geas, the Mountain Folk had no castes and none of the limitations of castes. Their civilization recognized dozens of Patterns exploring practical and esoteric themes. They had arts of war and healing, design and abstract manipulation of Essence, elements and Virtues. As now, Mountain Folk could not initially create their own Charms, but they could ultimately learn to expand upon Patterns by mastering them. Those who mastered three Patterns could obtain this Charm, giving them the Enlightened power to design entirely new Charm Patterns and removing the need for training time to learn any Charms. This creative effort was still extremely difficult, costing a number of experience points equal to the number of Charms in the Pattern. After conceptualizing the design in full, the master could actually learn the Pattern (at regular cost) and teach its Charms to any Enlightened Jadeborn.

Sadly, this Charm no longer exists except as a legend and theory. None have reached this pinnacle of understanding since White Shale, and even this Charm does not explain her ability to forge the castes or to attach Patterns to them. Still, the elusive hope remains that one of the Jadeborn might walk in her footsteps and lead the Mountain Folk back to glory. Unbeknownst to all, this hope is not without some justification, as characters with this Charm pass beyond the binding of the Great Geas and no longer gain Divergence.

Mountain Folk Technology

Created by the Machine God in his own image, the Mountain Folk remain one of the most technologically advanced civilizations in the Age of Sorrows. Artisans serve as the foremost architects and craftsmen known to the Realm, their exorbitant fees only surpassed by the stunning quality of their work. They have their hand in every conceivable enterprise, from the half-thaumaturgical sciences of alchemy and clockwork mechanics to purely sorcerous wonders transforming Essence into miracles.

Alchemical Goods

In many factories in Mountain Folk lands, great crucibles sit atop magma vents, their blue-jade smokestacks purifying the fumes to a mildly acrid fog. Workers in protective suits pour cauldrons of exotic components into funnels around the engines, following the precise formulas dictated by the Conclave. The magical reactors grind and bubble fiercely like the smelters of the gods, extruding all manner of wondrous goods onto conveyor belts below. In addition to producing many of the common alchemical compounds known to mortal thaumaturges, Mountain Folk also manufacture many unusual substances peculiar to their strange sciences. The following is only a small sampling of the most prominent examples:

Godstrike Oil (Resources ••• or Artifact •)

Blending several varieties of mushroom spores, crushed marble, oil and the nectar of rare subterranean orchids that exclusively grow in uncapped Demesnes, processed godstrike oil is a sticky, sapphire-colored liquid that glows if a dematerialized spirit approaches within 10 yards. More importantly, any object rubbed with sufficient quantities of the oil gains the ability to touch immaterial beings as if they were solid for one scene. One dose is sufficient to anoint one two-handed melee weapon, two one-handed melee or thrown weapons, ten arrows or the natural weapons of a character's body (hands, feet, etc.). Anointing one dose onto an object or dipping five arrowheads requires a simple action. Ten doses of the substance cost Resources ••• in Mountain Folk lands, and five doses cost Resources •••• elsewhere, when it can be found at all. The substance loses all potency in a year unless stored in diamond or adamant containers and is so expensive to produce that the Conclave does not ever stockpile large volumes of the material. Many Mountain Folk buildings have small diamond chimes filled with several drops of godstrike oil and sealed to prevent evaporation. Sentries use these crystals to alert them whenever gods attempt to sneak by. Other Jadeborn carry pendants, rings or other baubles for similar purposes. Chimes and jewelry of this nature are considered Artifact •, but they may be obtained for Resources •••. As with bright morning, the Realm strictly outlaws the possession of this substance by the unExalted.

Pyromantic Gel (Resources • to •••••)

This alchemical compound is distilled from powdered red jade, sulfur, tar and a dozen rarer thaumaturgical compounds, simmered at low heat over an Essence-charged fire. After boiling away the toxic impurities created in the reaction, bubbles of orange gelatinous paste float like scum on inert yellow oil. When skimmed and cooled, the magical gel becomes a thick fluid roughly the consistency of honey. Pyromantic gel burns with explosive incandescence, like firedust, and Mountain Folk Warriors use the substance to fuel their flamecasters and larger cannons. This substance costs the same Resources value to produce in Mountain Folk lands as firedust, but adds +•• to the cost elsewhere due to the cost of jade and requires advanced alchemical foundries that simply do not exist outside the largest cities of the Realm or the Scavenger Lands. Pyromantic gel weakens with time, cumulatively halving the damage it inflicts with each year that passes until it becomes completely inert.



Synthetic Leather (Resources • to ••••)

By mixing reagents and lichens with black oils siphoned from deep chasms, the Mountain Folk produce a viscous liquid that is cooled in large shallow pans. As it cools, the substance hardens into a substance nearly indistinguishable from glossy leather. Depending on the dyes and the specific alchemical process used, synthetic leather can be manufactured to have almost any shade and a number of useful properties. All normal clothing made from this substance costs the same Resources value as corresponding leather, but also provides a +1L/1B soak because of its durability. Long overcoats of synthetic leather function as buff jackets with a fatigue value of 1, with heavier jackets actually intended for use as armor being treated as exceptional buff jackets. Unfortunately, exposure to sunlight causes most synthetic leather to grow brittle and gradually dissolve, irreparably ruining any item made from the material in a number of days equal to its Resources cost. Leather specifically treated to resist sunlight costs one of the bonus points granted to enhance exceptional goods. Other treatments provide superior protection against fire, acid or extreme cold (+3L soak or double its usual lethal soak value against appropriate sources of damage, whichever is higher).

Advanced Devices

Although many Artisans exclusively devote their research and experimentation to magical pursuits, some tinker with mundane principles to produce advanced technology. More complicated devices incorporate steam power and clockwork components well beyond mortal science. Such devices whir and click inscrutably and might as well be magic to the Unenlightened masses. In addition to their greater marvels, Mountain Folk build and use devices "merely" considered rare and unusual by human standards, though commonplace among the Jadeborn. Examples of such include:

Crossbows

Among mortals, crossbows remain an exclusive military secret of the Haslanti League. In contrast, the Mountain Folk have used such weapons since well before the creation of mankind. Crossbows are much cheaper than artifact weapons and smaller than many bows, allowing them to fit and fire in tighter crawlspaces. More importantly, crossbows do not depend on the strength of the wielder for power and may be tightened to a heavier draw than even most Mountain Folk can pull. The most powerful crossbows use a combination of pulleys and gears affixed to a lever along the side, without which a user could not hope to reload between each round. Other variant modifications include a repeating feature where a magazine box drops a new bolt into place after firing, with the bowstring sliding back to its starting position through a separate groove beneath the bolt. The only substantial problem with repeating and lever-loaded models is that the mechanisms require more upkeep and prove almost impossible to repair under battlefield conditions. Botching an attack roll with a repeating crossbow means the magazine has jammed and requires a simple action to fix before it can fire again. Botching an attack roll with a mechanized crossbow means the entire bow has jammed. The weapon is useless until repaired by a character with Craft (Clockworks) at •• or higher. Such repairs take at least two minutes.

Crossbows fire three types of standard ammunition. Most commonly, Warriors use crystal-tipped armor-piercing bolts (which inflict piercing damage, halving the lethal soak provided by the victim's armor). In policing situations, archers generally switch to blunt-headed fowling bolts (which inflict bashing damage and add +2B to the base damage). Finally, Mountain Folk have unique fléchette bolts with crystal shafts designed to splinter on impact, sending a spray of jagged shards through the wound. These cruel bolts duplicate the effects of frog crotch arrows (+4L to the base damage), but they have little effect against armored targets (double the lethal soak of the target's armor against the attack). Crossbows cannot accommodate actual frog crotch or broadhead bolts. These weapons use the Archery skill, but they are not compatible with Charms that allow characters to fire multiple arrows in a turn. Exceptional crossbows add +1 to accuracy and 50 to range, but cannot increase rate.

A few elite units of Mountain Folk Warriors carry assault crossbows incorporating one of the Magical Materials in their frame. These weapons are vastly superior to their standard counterparts, lacking any risk of the catastrophic mechanical failure mechanized versions are prone to. Assault crossbows built of jade propel their arrows like flashing thunderbolts, gaining a +2 bonus to speed and adding 30 yards to range. Crossbows built from the other four Magical Materials gain the same benefits as powerbows. These weapons cost 5 motes to attune and have a socket for one Hearthstone built into their stocks. A few of the most exquisite assault crossbows have modified sockets that power additional enchantments. These so-called onslaught crossbows cost 6 motes to attune and must have a level-2 Hearthstone or better placed in the socket, which provides no other benefit besides powering the bow. In return, these weapons shoot with greater force and generate their own unlimited ammunition (of whatever type desired by the bearer) from the raw Essence of the Hearthstone. Such fantastic weapons even cock themselves after every shot using perfected clockwork gears that never jam.

Flamecasters

These alloyed-steel flamethrowers are both more advanced and more expensive than those used by South-

ern armies, lacking any counterpart among mortal arsenals. First, they do not rely on muzzle-loaded firedust for ammunition. Instead, they have a top-mounted socket for pressurized canisters of pyromantic gel (see p. 276). The clasps of the socket hold the canister firmly in place. Pulling the trigger opens clockwork valves, releasing the flammable mixture to spray into the firing chamber. A spark from a flint striker completes the firing sequence, igniting the gel in a devastating jet of fire that erupts from the barrel. In spite of their advanced mechanics, these weapons are still only single-shot devices with an extremely poor rate of fire. A small lever releases the empty canister, allowing the insertion of a new one. Botching an attack roll with flamecaster means the firing mechanism has jammed and requires success on a simple roll of Dexterity + Craft (Clockworks) at difficulty 3 before it can fire again.

In addition to flamecasters, Mountain Folk Warriors also employ incendiary explosives for use against massed opponents. These expensive spherical ordinances feature a clockwork timer mechanism that activates when the user twists or slides a toggle switch. The device audibly ticks as it locks into place, releasing a spark to detonate the compressed charge of pyromantic gel. This explosion bursts outward in a white-hot conflagration, charring everything and everyone caught in the blast. Although surprisingly safe compared with mortal firedust grenades and capable of delaying detonation up to a full minute, pyromantic charges are too prohibitively expensive to see common use. Botching an attack roll with a grenade means the charge landed somewhere other than intended, almost certainly leaving the thrower inside the blast zone.

Artifacts

Mountain Folk make heavy use of the Magical Materials, especially jade. They also regularly integrate adamant and other crystals into designs, drawing on the resources their subterranean empire have in greatest abundance. Creating new talismans and treasures is viewed as a sacred act, a fulfillment of Autochthon's will and purpose for the Jadeborn. In spite of their focus and preternatural skill at crafting, the Mountain Folk use the same overall methods and materials as Exalted craftsmen. This is no coincidence, as the Exalted methodologies owe their origins to the Mountain Folk even more than they do to the alien technology of the Dragon Kings. The following reflect the smallest sampling of Mountain Folk devices, so Storytellers and players should feel free to invent all manner of strange talismans and clockwork wonders brought to life with Essence. Jadeborn have access to or could make any artifact published in **Exalted** supplements excepting those proprietary to the glamour magic of the fae, the relics of the dead or the Demon Realm and the vegetative technology of the Dragon Kings. It should be noted that Artisans can and do make level-5 artifacts, even in the Age of Sorrows. As a whole, the overall level of magical technology used by the Mountain Folk is roughly on par with the Shogunate era, so Storytellers with **Exalted: The Outcaste** should liberally steal ideas and inspiration from Chapter One of that book. If using the artifact-creation rules from **Savant and Sorcerer**, note that the Conclave has at least a dozen First Age factory cathedrals and twice this number of Shogunate-quality workshops. This extraordinary production capacity is one of the best-kept secrets of the Jadeborn. Artisans will

Name	Acc.	Damage	Rate	Range	Minimums	Resources/Artifact
Crossbow	+1	5*	1**	125	S•	••
Mechanized Crossbow	+1	7*	1**	200	S••	•••
Assault Crossbow	+3	8*	1	250	S•	••
Onslaught Crossbow	+3	10*	2	300	S•	•••

* This is the base damage of the bow, modified according to the type of ammunition used (see above).
** Crossbows equipped with a repeating magazine have a rate of 2 until they run out of ammunition (10 bolts), but they require a simple action to load a new magazine. This feature adds • to the Resources cost of the bow.

Name	Accuracy	Damage	Range	Rate	Resources
Flamecaster	+1	12L	10*	1**	•••
Pyromantic Grenade	+0	10L***	15	1	•••

* 10 yards is the upper limit the jet of fire will reach. Flamecasters have no range increments.
** Reloading a flamecaster requires a standard action and a roll of Dexterity + Archery at standard difficulty. Each ammunition canister costs Resources • (or Resources ••• if alchemically synthesized outside of Mountain Folk territory).
*** This damage is reduced by one die for every full yard away the victim is from the blast. All flammable objects within five yards of the explosion immediately catch fire.

kill Exalted before they let this secret become known, even knowing full well the terrible reprisal of the Great Geas.

Essence-Scrying Visor (Artifact •)

These arcs of solid translucent crystal fit snugly across the eyes like goggles. Anyone wearing an Essence-scrying visor can spend 1 mote per scene to ignore all penalties for low-light conditions less severe than absolute darkness. More importantly, wearers can spend 3 motes per scene to activate Essence sight. This magical vision displays the world in dark surreal hues, with unmanifested spirits, living beings and enchanted objects (including the walking dead and automatons) glowing against the murk. Essence sight negates all visual penalties, piercing the thickest smoke and the deepest darkness, as well as adding three dice to any Awareness roll to notice illuminated beings and objects that are not magically concealed. This power is useless inside Demesnes and Manses, since the ambient Essence there leaves the user effectively blind. Worker Caste foremen overseeing jade-mining operations use these devices to check deposits for signs of unborn Mountain Folk, with higher-ranking overseers issued Artifact •• versions that require 4 motes of committed Essence to attune and activate but provide constant Essence sight without needing regular infusions.

Hammerfist Bracer (Artifact •)

This bulky jade bracer fits snugly over the entire forearm and locks shut with a commitment of 4 motes. Upon donning such a device, the character's hand involuntarily tightens into a fist, and the entire arm below the elbow transmutes into indestructible stone as hard as any Magical Material. This transformation lasts until the character removes the bracer. The petrified fist is slower and more unwieldy (speed -2), but it allows parries against lethal attacks without a stunt and inflicts massive crushing damage (+8L damage against animate targets or +10L against inanimate objects). Despite their obvious combat utility, hammerfist bracers are predominantly used as excavation tools by Worker Caste miners. Warriors do not generally consider the raw power worth the loss of a hand.

Mask of Pure Breath (Artifact •)

These flattened domes of blue jade and other magical alloys fit snugly over the mouth and nose of a human or Mountain Folk, resembling a stylized sea-shell with a vertical grill of etched grooves. The device automatically affixes to its wearer's flesh and activates with an expenditure of 1 mote, remaining firmly locked in place until voluntarily removed or until the wearer dies. The mask absorbs and cleanses air for the wearer, providing complete protection against toxin gases, smoke inhalation and other airborne environmental hazards. In environments with little or no atmosphere, the wearer can spend 2 motes per hour to synthesize stale (if breathable) air,



but this completely mutes the character's sense of smell for the duration of the effect. Finally, the mask of pure breath distorts its wearer's voice, adding a deeper and more menacing resonance. This distortion adds one die to any intimidation-based Presence roll involving speech and adds 2 to the difficulty of identifying the speaker if the listener has only heard her normal voice.

Skirmish Pike (Artifact •)

Standard issue to all Mountain Folk infantry, these four-foot long spears boast a haft of jade and magical alloys tipped with a 15-inch crystal spike. Once per turn, an attuned bearer can collapse a skirmish pike from its full length to a blunt, 18-inch baton or telescope it back to its former length as a reflexive action. Though not as impressive or as devastating as a dire lance, the slender points of these weapons are especially effective as puncturing armor. The mixed alloys used in the construction of these weapons prevents them from providing any Magical Material benefit, but they also allow any magical being to commit 5 motes of Essence to attune the weapons. Skirmish Pikes do not have any settings for Hearthstones.

A few skirmish pikes have additional features built in, although Mountain Folk reserve these superior artifacts for officers or for specific missions that call for their use. Adding one feature raises the Artifact rating to ••, while spears with all three of these functions are rated at •••.

Stun Point: Upon striking an enemy with the spear, the bearer can spend 2 motes to discharge a jolt of electricity and force from the tip. This doubles the raw damage of the weapon and converts the type of injury to bashing, forfeiting the usual piercing bonus. Additionally, any victim who suffers actual levels of damage from the attack is automatically stunned (see **Exalted**, pp. 234-235) unless her player makes a successful Stamina + Resistance roll at difficulty 3.

Shock Pulse: As an alternative to thrusting with the spear, the bearer can spend 1 mote to fire a bolt of glowing Essence from the tip. The player rolls Dexterity + Melee to hit as normal, but the pulse has accuracy +0, rate 1, a range of 30 yards and inflicts a base damage of 4L plus attack successes. These focused bolts of force inflict piercing damage like target arrows.

Essence Capacitor: The spear has a dimly glowing gem set in its haft, storing an additional 20 motes that may only be used to power the other features of the weapon. The only way to recharge this crystal is for a being with an Essence pool to touch the jewel and spend 2 motes per mote restored to its reserve. Recharging a crystal is a simple action. Mortals can attune to skirmish pikes equipped with this feature by committing 2 Willpower points, but they must rely solely on the reserves of the crystal to power any features that cost Essence. As a final benefit, anyone carrying a skirmish pike in extended mode with an Essence capacitor can spend 1 mote to make the crystal spike glow as brightly as a torch for one scene. Additional motes extend the duration of illumination accordingly.

Echo Jewel (Artifact • or •••)

These crystal disks rimmed in jade serve as powerful communication devices. The portable versions have a rating of • and look like inch-diameter coins. These require 1 mote of committed Essence to attune and activate. So long as an attuned bearer maintains physical contact with the jewel, it instantaneously transmits every vocal utterance she makes to every other linked echo jewel in a half-mile radius. Above ground, these devices function far less efficiently, drastically decreasing their maximum range to 50 yards. Echo jewels broadcast received transmissions at a fraction of their original volume, generally requiring characters to hold the devices near their ears in order to hear clearly. Characters may link an attuned echo jewel to another such device by touching the two together and spending a mote. Characters may also sever all existing links by spending a mote.

Echo jewels rated at Artifact ••• are cumbersome arrays of two disks, both nearly four feet wide. They must be laid flat in the central chamber of a subterranean Manse with an Earth aspect and a rating of ••• or higher. Furthermore, the Hearthstone of that Manse must be placed in a socket at the center of the disk, so each Manse can only house of one these arrays. Anyone standing on one of these crystalline platforms can spend 1 mote per minute to transmit a real-time, life-sized image of themselves to the reception disk of an array installed in another

Exalted

Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Minimums
Skirmish Pike	+4	+1	+4L*	+1	S•

* Inflicts piercing damage

Exalted Power Combat

Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Rate	Minimums
Skirmish Pike	+12	+2	+5L*	+1	3	S•

* Inflicts piercing damage

Manse. The phantom representation appears translucent and ripples as if viewed underwater, but it otherwise perfectly captures the transmitting character's image and voice. Platforms do not need a Hearthstone set in their socket in order to receive transmissions, provided the conversation is intended to be one way only. Activating an echo jewel platform requires an Intelligence + Lore roll at difficulty 3 to target the signal to the intended platform. Failure indicates the character wastes a mote but may try again. A botch indicates the character transmits the signal to a different echo jewel than intended. Two characters in different Manses can simultaneously target one another using their arrays to engage in conversation. Echo jewels of this size have a maximum range of (the rating of Manse housing the array x 1,000 miles).

Talisman of Suspended Evocation (Artifact • to •••••)

These artificial gems resemble a layered fusion of diamond and opal, with iridescent motes of shifting colors inside the core of a clear crystal. The artificial jewels always appear as regular polyhedrons, with the total number of facets indicating their overall power. In ascending order of might and rarity, they are tetrahedron (•), cube (••), octahedron (•••), dodecahedron (••••) and icosahedron (•••••). More than just pretty baubles, talismans of suspended evocation store Mountain Folk Charms, allowing a bearer to use the stored magic at a later time without spending Essence. In order to charge one of these gems with a Charm, the bearer must concentrate as a simple action and pay all the costs for the Charm plus 1 additional point of Willpower. In the case of Charms with a flexible cost, the stored Charm will take effect exactly according to the number of motes spent. No part of the cost remains committed. Talismans can only hold a number of Charms with a total minimum Essence of double their Artifact rating. For example, an Artifact •• stone can hold one Essence 4 Charm, two Essence 2 Charms, four Essence 1 Charms or one Essence 3 Charm and one Essence 1 Charm. Activating a talisman of suspended evocation occurs on the appropriate timing for the stored Charm, exactly as if the bearer knew and had used the Charm in question. This counts as a Charm use and cannot be part of a Combo. The jewel must be in physical contact with the character or touching an artifact to which the bearer is attuned. Furthermore, the character must actually know what Charm he intends to use. Each Charm leaves a distinctive shade of light in the crystal, which any Jadeborn can recognize with a successful Intelligence + Occult roll (difficulty of the Charm's minimum Essence). Once a character learns a specific Charm's light, she will always recognize it. Only Mountain Folk can use these devices.

Dragon Sigh Wand (Artifact ••)

Carved from red jade in the likeness of an open-mouthed dragon and inlaid with a fine tracing of orichalcum, these two-foot-long artifact firewands do not require ammunition. Instead, the jade conducts the user's Essence through an array of crystal lenses in the throat of the barrel, unleashing a torrent of scarlet flame from the mouth. Attuning to a Dragon Sigh Wand costs 5 motes, and the devices are specifically designed to resonate with all magical beings in spite of their predominantly jade construction. Owing to this universal design, the weapons also do not receive the usual Magical Material bonus for jade weapons. Attuned users need only point the wands in the direction of their enemies and spend 2 motes per blast. Ruby capacitors in the device store up to 12 motes that the bearer can use as an alternate power source for blasts. Recharging these artifacts requires touch and a simple action costing 2 motes per mote restored. In addition to their other limitations, dragon sigh wands require adjustment of their delicate lenses after every scene in which they are fired. Failure to perform such maintenance can result in a misfire or even a catastrophic explosion. Aligning the crystals requires five minutes of undisturbed work and a successful Intelligence + Craft (First Age Weapons) roll at difficulty 3. For every five additional minutes spent adjusting the lenses, the player adds an extra die to this roll (to a maximum of three bonus dice). Each failed or missed maintenance roll cumulatively adds 1 to the difficulty and Essence cost of attacks made with the poorly aligned weapon, until the third successive failure or missed repair imposes the effects of a botch. On a botch, the weapon becomes extremely unstable. If fired, the wand does not produce a stream of flame, but instead, unleashes a spherical conflagration inflicting the weapon's normal damage on everything within two yards (including the user). The weapon itself remains unharmed by the explosion. Repairing a botched alignment takes an hour of undisturbed work and increases the difficulty of the maintenance roll to 5. Fortunately, any further failures or botched repair rolls do not make the weapon more dangerous. A successful repair roll keeps a dragon sigh wand functioning normally or repairs the effects of any previously failed or missed maintenance rolls.

Smaller foot-long versions of this weapon type exist, also rated Artifact •• for a single wand or Artifact ••• for set of two. These models cost 4 motes to attune, 6 motes for a matched pair, and only store 8 motes in their ruby capacitors per wand. These variants trade a slightly reduced damage for an effectively doubled rate when used as a pair.

Dragon sigh wands of either size are permitted as style weapons by Righteous Devil martial arts (see the **Exalted Players Guide**, pp. 253-258).

Essence Pulse Grenade (Artifact ••)

Some elite Warriors carry artifact grenades constructed of jade and crystal. These reusable spheres store a charge of elemental Essence at their core. When activated by pressing a combination of jeweled buttons, the orbs hum with power and detonate after the desired duration (any time from a turn to an hour) or when a squeezed button is released without disarming (a "dead man's" switch). The explosion does not damage the grenade, but instead, releases its stored Essence in a deadly spherical pulse. Recharging a grenade is a simple action costing 6 motes (these are not committed), but this process also requires the insertion of a unique jeweled key as a security precaution. Building a replacement key is possible, but it's beyond the technology of any of the Nameless Hordes. Depending on the type of jade used, this blast manifests as an appropriate form of elemental energy. Red yield 10L fire damage exactly as pyromantic grenades (see p. 278), setting objects aflame. Blue project a stunning corona of lightning (20B, ignoring the soak of any non-magical metallic armor). White orbs emit concussive force (20B, all targets in blast range must resist knockdown at difficulty 3 — see **Exalted**, pp. 234-235, for details). Black release a 10L damage freezing pulse that temporarily reduces the Dexterity of all victims in range by two dots, unless their players make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll (difficulty 3). Victims with zero Dexterity are frozen in place and cannot move. Lost Dexterity returns at the rate of one dot per hour. Green emits poison gas that inflicts no damage, but every living being in range must test for exposure to a toxin comparable to arrow frog venom (see **Exalted**, p. 243). The conjured fumes dissipate after a single turn.

Shieldstone Gauntlet (Artifact •• or •••)

This strange device looks like a web of straps and flexible articulated plates that fits over one hand like a fingerless glove. A larger plate covers the back of the hand, into which is set a large hemispherical ruby. A smaller, disk-shaped ruby sits in the center of the palm, surrounded by a ring of jade inscribed with runes. A shieldstone gauntlet is extremely light and unobtrusive, deliberately designed to accommodate any movement or use of the hand bearing it. At any time, an attuned wearer can use a normal dice action to hold up her palm or the back of her hand and activate the device. Whichever stone the character presents away from her body glows brightly, projecting a circular barrier of luminous force that expands into the shape of a shield. This barrier increases the difficulty of all attacks against the character by +2 and provides illumination about a third as bright as a torch. Deactivating this shield is a reflexive action.

The Artifact ••• version of the shieldstone gauntlet has all the above powers, but it also allows the character to devote a simple action to create a freestanding wall of raw Essence. The character points the palm stone at the area where she wants to create the barrier, while her player spends 1 Willpower point and a variable quantity of Essence. These immovable, two-way walls of translucent force have a soak of 3B/2L per mote spent and may cover a maximum area in square yards equal to half their lethal soak. Such constructs are considered inanimate objects for the purposes of Charms, save that damage against them is rolled rather than directly applied. For every level of damage sustained (or hour that passes), the barrier loses 1B/1L from its soak. When the lethal soak reaches zero or the creator desires, the barrier disintegrates into wisps of energy. Characters can shape a wall of force into any geometric configuration they can imagine, from simple walls to cages, but at least one point on the surface must be within a yard of the creator when the wall first materializes. A shieldstone gauntlet can only produce one force barrier at a time, whether a single wall or a shield.

Both versions of this artifact cost users 4 motes of committed Essence to attune to them and do not count as jade artifacts for the purposes of attunement.

Name	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range
Dragon Sigh Wand	+1/+2*	12L/9L*	1	30**

* Statistics before the slash are for standard models; the second numbers represent the smaller models intended for paired use.

** Flame weapons have no range increments and suffer no range penalties. This is their maximum range.

Name	Accuracy	Damage	Range	Rate
Essence Pulse Grenade	+0	see above*	20	1

* The damage is reduced by one die for every full yard away the victim is from the blast.

Name	Soak (L/B)	Mobility Penalty	Fatigue Value
Myrmidon Carapace	8/8	-1	1

Myrmidon Carapace (Artifact •••)

Front-line Mountain Folk infantry wear a distinctive suit of articulated jade and alloy armor optimized for efficiency, durability and mass production. This armor covers the wearer's body in interlocking riveted plates held in place with a web of self-locking harnesses and clasps. The thick breastplate, bracers, greaves and pauldrons have imposing thickness and organic curves resembling the exoskeleton of an insect, with the remainder of the armor thinner and more flexibly designed like reptile scales. The masked helmet covers the entire head, its face empty of any discernible features besides a slight bulge over the mouth and narrow eye slits inset with translucent crystal lenses.

The Myrmidon carapace provides substantial protection, but its chief advantages lie in the integrated enhancements. The crystal lenses in the mask duplicate the effects of an Essence-scrying visor (Artifact • version, see p. 279), save that the night-vision effect is constant and requires no Essence infusions to maintain. The helmet also contains a small echo jewel permanently set in an internal socket beside the left ear (Artifact • version, see pp. 280-281). The helmet itself serves as a physical conductor to establish links with other echo jewels. Finally, the helmet incorporates a voice distorter and filtration system that duplicates a mask of pure breath (see pp. 279-280), The commitment cost for the communication and filtration system is subsumed into the attunement cost of the armor as a whole. Beyond its helmet, a Myrmidon carapace augments its wearers Strength by one dot for the purposes of inflicting damage, lifting and other feats of Strength. This armor costs 5 motes to attune and counts as jade for the purposes of attunement, but its alloyed components do not receive the jade Magical Material bonus. Once attuned, a Myrmidon carapace resizes itself to perfectly fit its new owner.

While extremely durable, Myrmidon carapaces need regular maintenance in order to continue functioning at peak efficiency. After every 100 hours of use (each hour of combat or other strenuous use counts as two hours), the suit needs two hours of overhaul and recalibration of its joints. This upkeep requires a technician with Craft (First Age Weapons) •• using a combination of metallurgical and thaumaturgical components costing Resources •• in Mountain Folk lands, Lookshy or similarly advanced regions and Resources ••• elsewhere. If maintenance becomes necessary in the middle of a scene, the suit continues to function normally using attuned Essence until the scene ends. For every 10 hours of missed maintenance, the armor randomly adds one to its mobility penalty *or* fatigue value (to a maximum rating of 3 in either) *or* it loses one power (optical enhancement, filtration, communication or strength boost). After 80 missed hours, the suit's joints freeze completely, and the armor becomes useless. Most members of the Warrior Caste know how to maintain their own armor and keep toolkits with components sufficient for two repairs strapped to their upper thighs.

The Nameless Hordes

The ancestral enemies of the Mountain Folk encompass innumerable permutations of monsters and malformed wretches, their diversity belying any sweeping generalizations of their nature or behavior. At best, Jadeborn scholars divide most of their adversaries into broad categories according to origin or appearance, but even these vague divisions cannot hope to express every face worn by the enemy. If anything can be said to be true of all the Nameless Hordes, it is that they hate light and all beings who dwell in light. They hate each other only slightly less and make war upon one another in clashes of breeds and clans when they do not assault the Mountain Folk or creep out of fissures to raid the world above. Their attacks seldom show much coordination, relying instead on overwhelming numbers to prevail against better-organized and better-equipped adversaries. While these tactics ensure that the vast majority of hordes are extras unless specifically noted otherwise, an advancing wall of bodies can eventually overrun any defenders. Actual champions of the darkness are blessedly rare, though some war bands boast more powerful leaders. Other clans worship demons, behemoths, chthonic gods or stranger beings who may even fight beside their cults on rare occasions. The Mountain Folk have learned to retreat when their enemies suddenly break away and part ranks, as such maneuvers often presage the appearance of something infinitely worse.

Underpeople

Mortals warped by exposure to the Wyld, uncapped Demesnes and other surges of uncontrolled Essence occasionally find their way into the bowels of the earth. Some flee the light they can no longer bear, cursing the pitiless sun and the cruel hand of fate. Others seek refuge from the cruelties of mankind, escaping the jeers, flung stones and weeping children terrified by their passage. Deep crevasses offer sanctuary from light and judgment — or, at the very least, afford a place where the despondent may die in peace. Those who cling to life and embrace their new state may eke out a pathetic existence as sunless scavengers or predators, insinuating themselves into subterranean food chains until they finally encounter something large enough to consume them. In other cases, former mortals actually find more beings like themselves and band together in packs and clans. These societies of freaks may die out in a single generation or grow into a new race entirely if they breed true.

Since Mountain Folk do not generally question or dissect most of their enemies for further study, they have

no real way to ascertain the origins of their foes beyond a quick glance. As a result, the Jadeborn use the term "underpeople" for beings that appear recognizably human-based. In general, underpeople *tend* to dwell closer to the surface than other chthonic races and also *tend* to be the weakest variety of denizen, though unpleasant exceptions to both rules exist.

Suggested Traits: By definition, underpeople hail from human stock or retain enough humanity that they can be identified as such. Storytellers can use the Wyld Barbarian or Wyld Shaman templates as a starting point for creating such characters, lowering Appearance to a rating of 0-1 and adding as many mutations as appropriate (see **Exalted**, pp. 280-283). In particular, almost all underpeople have some form of enhanced senses to navigate the lightless depths and either experience discomfort or outright injury when exposed to sunlight. Storytellers with **Exalted: The Lunars** can use the more extensive list of Wyld mutations found on pages 212-222 to devise more varied freaks. Although mutants created by Demesnes and stranger means do not require Wyld energies to sustain their unnatural existence, these beings must often remain near the source of their aberrations or suffer similar physical degradation (see **Exalted: The Lunars**, pp. 210-211). An actual example of an underpeople race descended from mortals and leech spirits can be found on page 75 of **Ruins of Rathess**.

Darkbroods

While the underpeople are — or at least were — fundamentally human beneath their assorted mutations and deformities, the Darkbroods make no such pretense. A few of these races follow the same general body type as mankind and the Mountain Folk: two arms and two legs extend from a central body topped by a head with two eyes and a mouth. These vague humanoids represent a narrow minority. The rest add tentacles or too many limbs in one extreme or slither limbless and boneless like grubs through the narrow cracks of their warrens in the other. Some Darkbroods have mouths full of grinding chelicerae or leechlike suckers or a needle-tipped proboscis like a mosquito, while the strangest have no apparent mouths at all and drink the vital fluids of their prey through pallid and pulsing skin. Eyes change numbers and location from race to race, some clusters staring and glittering like studded jewels and others reduced to a single bloated monocle atop a waving tendril. Some breeds are thin, their frail and desiccated flesh stretched taut over flexible, cartilaginous skeletons. Others wear shells in the manner of insects and crustaceans, clicking and clattering unnervingly as they scuttle along their tunnels.

Darkbroods claim nearly as many origins as physical forms. Some are nearly as old or older than the Mountain Folk, discarded experiments of gods and Primordials that somehow bred true in forgotten grottos to endure the march of Ages. Others are God-Blooded of a sort, the gruesome and distant bastards of gods and demons or breeding experiments of debauched sorcerers gone awry. In still other cases, successive generations of inbreeding and exposure to unwholesome wellsprings of Essence transform colonies of underpeople into something lacking any identifiable vestiges of humanity.

Suggested Traits: Without any common traits beyond gross inhumanity, each of the Darkbroods may have whatever powers, weaknesses and other Traits a Storyteller sees fit to give them. Most of these races lack any overtly magical capabilities, relying instead on bizarre physical adaptations best represented with a collection of Wyld mutations. Storytellers should keep in mind that such changes are "natural" for these beings and do not carry the risk of deterioration if the creature wanders too far from its natural habitat.

A handful of Darkbrood races have an Essence pool equal to their (Essence x 2) + Willpower + (the sum of Virtues) and limited access to spirit Charms (as per the Essence Channeler blight on page 216 of **Exalted: The Lunars**), though these rare and deadly prodigies are generally castoff races created by the Primordials.

When designing Darkbroods, Storytellers should remember that any populous races should be individually weak enough to be extras or else they will rapidly overpower any opposition. Races capable of challenging Mountain Folk characters one on one should have extremely limited populations or other substantial drawbacks to balance their uncommon deadliness. Even more than underpeople, Darkbroods cannot abide light and make their lairs in the deepest crevasses of the earth to escape the burning sun. Example of Darkbrood races include the hruggha and the cephalids, as well as the skinless monstrosities birthed by the Tree of the Inchoate (see **Creatures of the Wyld**, p. 128).

Hruggha

Description: One of the least imposing and, yet, most troublesome Darkbroods, the beings that call themselves hruggha are squat humanoids standing between four and five feet tall. Their skin is a mottled patchwork of albino white caked with brown and gray filth, over which they occasionally wear rotting clothes or mismatched bits of armor they have scavenged from graves or fallen enemies. Their faces are leering caricatures dominated by large, inky-black eyes and thin-lipped mouths filled with jagged teeth. They have only three fingers on each hand and pronounced dewclaws on their leathery feet. Most hruggha raiders carry stone knives or axes smeared with rotting blood and feces to induce infection, though some favor maces of toughened mushroom stalks studded with jagged bits of crystal.

Hruggha begin life as colonies of glowing green mold that exclusively grows in the heart of Demesnes. This mold feeds on the powerful wellspring of Essence, disrupting and dissolving Manses they infect in order to release the raw energies of the site (a process that takes one week per dot of the Manse). Infected Demesnes become vast spawning pits, into which adult hruggha throw captured humans, Mountain Folk and, occasionally, other Darkbroods. The sticky mold binds victims in place and germinates in their flesh, gradually converting their biomass into new adult hruggha. When adults die, their blood carries spores that remain dormant until planted in a Demesne. Breaking free of the slime in hruggha spawning pits is a feat of strength requiring a combined Strength + Athletics of 6, though guards generally toss anyone who breaks free back in. The actual conversion process is treated as an infection with Virulence 5, Untreated Morbidity 5, Treated Morbidity 4 and Difficulty to Treat 5. A single success with Contagion Curing Touch or similar magic will kill a hruggha infection.

No one remembers how or when hruggha first appeared, though their ability to destroy subterranean Manses suggests they may descend from a sorcerous weapon of the Exalted. These creatures attack in swarms of several hundred or more, taking as many living prisoners as possible back to their spawning pits and seeking to infect new Demesnes with spores. Mountain Folk Warriors undergo mystical decontamination after facing hruggha, and all Manse guards know how to spot the early signs of infestation.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1-2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Larceny 1, Melee 2, Survival 1 (Underground +2)

Backgrounds: Allies 5 (Other Hruggha), Resources 1

Powers: Night Vision (can see in pitch darkness), Sense Demesne (roll Perception + Awareness; difficulty is 6 - the level of the Demesne; range is one mile)

Base Initiative: 4

Attack:

Punch: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4

Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3

Crystal Mace: Speed 1 Accuracy 5 Damage 8L* Defense 4

Stone Axe: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 8L* Defense 4

Stone Knife: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L* Defense 2

* Victims wounded by these fouled weapons add 2 to the difficulty of rolls to resist infection.

Dodge Pool: 3 **Soak:** 3L/6B (Scavenged armor, 2L/3B)

Willpower: 4 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1



Other Notes: Sunlight kills hruggha spores and inflicts one level of aggravated damage per minute of exposure to adults. These creatures are considered creatures of darkness for the purposes of Solar Charms and anima powers, fleeing from the anima powers of both the Zenith and the Dawn Caste.

Exalted Power Combat

Attack:
Punch: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 3B Defense 6 Rate 5
Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 5 Damage 6B Defense 2 Rate 3
Crystal Mace: Speed 8 Accuracy 5 Damage 11B* Defense 5 Rate 2
Stone Axe: Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 8L* Defense 2 Rate 2
Stone Knife: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L* Defense 2 Rate 4
* Victims wounded by these fouled weapons add 2 to the difficulty of rolls to resist infection.

Cephalid

Description: Each of these Darkbrood monsters appears vaguely humanoid from the waist up, with two sinuous arms branching from a bulbous, undulating trunk. These arms end in a surprisingly dexterous approximation of hands boasting seven cartilaginous tendril fingers with suckers along the inside surface and palm. From the waist down, cephalids sprout a dozen thick, muscular tentacles capable of gripping and supporting their weight as they slither along any surface. Their heads are nightmarishly bloated, eyes reduced to the finest glittering slits and mouth distended for the triple row of inward curving teeth designed to constrict and tear flesh. A forest of interlocking mandibles covers this maw, giving cephalids the appearance of having no mouth at all until it blossoms into jointed blades like the petals of some obscene flower. They naturally appear a sickly gray-green, but shift their coloration to match their background like a chameleon. Although its flexible tentacles add considerable mass, a cephalid's actual body is not much larger than a human's.

This grotesque race was among the many created by the Primordials, but the cephalids proved uncontrollably insane, and the Primordials banished them into darkness rather than expending the effort necessary to destroy them. Cephalids lingered in the deep places, breeding and plotting in impotent hatred against all life. They appear to communicate with one another by telepathy or some other inaudible process — the term "cephalid" owes its origins to Mountain Folk scholars attempting to describe the monsters. Fortunately for Creation and the Jadeborn, these monsters breed slowly and never ally themselves with other races. They can generally be found in clutches of three to six members protecting a hidden nest filled with jellylike eggs that take a decade or more to hatch.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 6, Wits 5
Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 2
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Contortion +3), Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Lore 3, Occult 5, Presence 2 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 2, Stealth 5 (When Still +5), Survival 3 (Underground +3)
Backgrounds: Allies 3 (Other Cephalids), Resources 3 (Assorted Gems)
Charms: Confusion, Dreamspeak, Harrow the Mind, Instill Obedience, Memory Mirror, Memory Sponge, Natural Prognostication, Stillness, Stoke the Flame
Other Powers: Darksight (can see clearly in pitch darkness), Mutations (Long Tentacles, Wall-Walking; see **Exalted: The Lunars**, pp. 215-216), Regeneration (heals one level of bashing or lethal damage every turn unless it is caused by fire), Telepathy (may silently communicate with any other cephalids in line of sight)
Base Initiative: 10
Attack:
Bite: Speed 9 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L* Defense 4
Tentacle Grip: Speed 9 Accuracy 8 Damage clinch for 7B per turn
Tentacle Strike: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 7B Defense 8
* Inflicts piercing damage, halving the soak provided by a victim's armor
Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 6L/8B (Rubbery hide, 4L/4B)
Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 25
Other Notes: Sunlight inflicts one level of aggravated damage every minute to cephalids as it sears and boils their flesh. As a result of this vulnerability, they are also considered creatures of darkness for the purposes of Solar anima effects and Charms. The cephalid versions of the Memory Mirror and Memory Sponge Charms require them to successfully bite an opponent. Although they can only initiate one grip or strike attack per turn without splitting their dice pool, they can sustain up to nine simultaneous clinches without an action using separate tentacles. They can strike or grab victims up to five yards away.

Exalted Power Combat

Attack:
Bite: Speed 9 Accuracy 8 Damage 7L* Defense 4 Rate 1
Tentacle Grip: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage clinch for 4B per turn Rate 1
Tentacle Strike: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 12B Defense 8 Rate 4
* Inflicts piercing damage, halving the soak provided by a victim's armor

Labyrinthines

The Mountain Folk have very little to do with the Underworld, since neither they nor most Darkbroods can even become ghosts. As a result of this peculiar metaphysical situation, only the most brutal massacres of the Endless War even weaken the shroud between life and death. Normally, such weak areas have an opportunity to restore their damaged Essence before the condition worsens. In regions where such atrocities take place regularly or occur over an extremely prolonged battle, however, the Shroud can tear away completely to create a shadowland. These death-tainted abscesses in the earth represent a much greater hazard than those that form of the surface of Creation, as they open directly into the twisting passages of the Labyrinth. All manner of shades and spectral horrors emerge from these holes in the world to ravage the living, representing a universal threat to Mountain Folk and Darkbroods alike. Mountain Folk work hard to quarantine known shadowlands and slow their growth with wards and geomantic architecture, although it can take decades for such projects to begin healing the blighted lands.

Suggested Traits: Monsters from the Labyrinth are all varieties of ghost, existing in a naturally incorporeal state within Creation except in shadowlands by night. As spirits, these beings do not have to conform to any living precepts of plausibility and may demonstrate whatever nightmarish powers and physiology Storytellers can imagine. Extensive information on the Labyrinth and its inhabitants can be found on pages 61-73 of **Exalted: The Abyssals**.

Vodak

Description: Nowhere in Creation frightens the Mountain Folk more than the catacombs under Gethamane. Darkbroods and other monsters prowl the region in greater numbers than in any other place, yet even these denizens avoid the deepest recesses. A force of incalculable malice and insatiable hunger dwells in the silent crevices. They call it Vodak in the language of a long-extinct race, a name they dare only whisper in dread and hushed awe. Every utterance of its name is a warning and a horrified prayer. They do not know its nature or appearance, only that it is inescapable death to all who behold it.

Unknown to all, Vodak is a hekatonkhire, a behemoth of Malfean Essence. When the first Primordial perished at the hands of the Exalted, its dying blood seeped into the earth. The titan's last breath animated the flowing ichors with its own vitriolic hatred, transforming the mass into a nightmare of bubbling and writhing quicksilver. At first, it flowed mindlessly, devouring all life it could find. The tortured and half-digested ghosts of its absorbed prey swelled its mass and cunning, gradually expanding Vodak into an undulating lake of necrotic power. In addition to its nearly indestructible form, the hekatonkhire can extrude congealed masses of its Essence to replicate any living being it has ever absorbed. These simulacra are corporeal beings with the semblance, the Traits and even the memories of their former selves up to their deaths. They almost indistinguishably mimic the original beings, save that they remain helplessly enthralled to their hideous maker and instantly dissolve to silver ash if they are slain or touched by sunlight (or if Vodak withdraws the committed Essence sustaining their existence). These copies have no Essence pool and none of the replicated beings' non-physical supernatural powers (if any), but they can easily mistake themselves for the beings they emulate if Vodak gives them that illusion. The hekatonkhire uses its slaves as bait and as hunters, luring prey into its glittering depths. It is possible that other Primordials spawned similar monsters throughout Creation when they died, though no such beings have ever made themselves known in the Ages since.

Storytellers should keep in mind that a being of Vodak's age and power does not necessarily need statistics, nor should the following information provide anything more than a rough guideline. In most cases, this being will function as an alien evil in the background, never entering scenes except through enslaved proxies. Vodak lies well beyond the power of the Jadeborn to conquer. The best they can hope to do is escape and survive its predations.

Attributes: Strength 30, Dexterity 3, Stamina Immeasurable, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 5 (Sense Life +3), Brawl 5, Lore 4, Occult 3, Presence 8

Backgrounds: Cult 5 (Darkbroods), Followers 5+ (Simulacra)

Powers: Control Simulacra (For a reflexive cost of 1 mote, Vodak can issue a telepathic order to one of its simulacra, regardless of distance. Such commands are absolute, dictating orders or memories without the possibility of resistance. Alternately, it can spend a mote to usurp the voice of its slave and/or undetectably share the simulacrum's senses for a minute.), Create Simulacra (With an Essence roll at standard difficulty, Vodak can excrete a copy of any being it has previously consumed. Only one copy of the same being can exist at one time. This costs 2 motes for every health level the original being had. These motes are committed until the simulacrum dies.), Devour Essence (Whenever Vodak touches a living being at the moment of death, it regains a number of motes equal to the prey's Stamina + Essence. The souls of the devoured become part of Vodak, lingering in half-aware pain for eternity.), Immortal (Vodak takes no damage from non-magical sources and may only be destroyed if cast into the Mouth of

Oblivion. Any lesser "demise" merely forces it into quiescence for a century until it can reform in the Labyrinth.), Telepathy (Vodak can project its thoughts to any sentient being in line of sight as a discordant cacophony of its previous victims' voices. Targets can respond telepathically or not as they choose, but the hekatonkhire cannot forcibly read thoughts or control minds. Blocking out Vodak's voice for a scene requires a Willpower roll at difficulty 4.)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Pseudopods: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 30L*

* Any organic matter touching Vodak suffers damage as if exposed to an acid bath (see **Exalted**, p. 244). This corrosion bypasses all non-magical armor and occurs whenever a being comes in contact with the hekatonkhire. Apply this damage separately following impact trauma from a successful pseudopod attack.

Dodge Pool: None **Soak:** 30L/60B (Protean body)
Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0 x 200/Quiescent
Essence: 8 **Essence Pool:** 800

Other Notes: Vodak does not suffer the usual progression of dice penalties for taking multiple actions. Instead, it cumulatively loses one die for every non-reflexive action performed in a turn after the first. Sunlight inflicts one level of aggravated damage every turn to Vodak, vaporizing its tainted plasm. It can take no actions under sunlight except to retreat from the charring rays. The hekatonkhire and its simulacra are creatures of darkness.

Exalted Power Combat

Attack:

Pseudopods: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 30L* Rate unlimited

* Any organic matter touching Vodak suffers damage as if exposed to an acid bath (see **Exalted**, p. 244). This corrosion bypasses all non-magical armor and occurs whenever a being comes in contact with the hekatonkhire. Apply this damage separately following impact trauma from a successful pseudopod attack.

Buried Gods

When the Primordials created the gods, they designed some imperfectly by accident or malicious design. The titans cast these defective and wretched spirits into the deepest pits of the earth to suffer in darkness until they were needed. These broken deities lingered in hungry madness, feeding like maggots on the primal Essence of Gaia until they grew into gargantuan monstrosities. When the Primordials finally realized the threat posed by the Exalted, they cracked open the world to unleash their bloated horrors against the Chosen. Despite the terrible casualties inflicted by these monsters, the Exalted ultimately slew the wounded gods or drove them back underground. Many of these linger still in forgotten places, vast and terrible forces gnawing at the roots of the world in single-minded nihilism. Not all gods of darkness are so ancient or mighty, however, and their ranks also include criminals fleeing the justice of the Celestial Bureaucracy and others drawn by the siren song of the ultimate depths. Along with gods, many demons lurk in grotto lairs within the earth. These include refugees of the Primordial War who chose to hide rather than face exile beyond the world, as well as more recent arrivals who escaped their bindings and sought sanctuary below. Finally, a few of the great powers beneath the world are neither god nor demon, but behemoths or stranger things that defy sanity and classification. Buried gods, be they actual deities or otherwise, represent the deadliest and most awesome foes the Mountain Folk ever face. To make matters worse, such beings often lord over vast cults of underpeople and Darkbroods.

Suggested Traits: Buried gods are unique beings, as varied in their powers and personality as any other spirits and godlike beings. Storytellers may find inspiration and many examples for gods and demons in **Games of Divinity**. Several examples of behemoths may be found in **Creatures of the Wyld**. These beings comprise the very top of the underground food chain, posing a danger to anyone and everyone unfortunate enough to encounter them. The leech gods (see **Ruins of Rathess**, pp. 71-72) are a medium-sized example of the deities banished below by the Primordials.

Storytelling

While natives of Creation, the Mountain Folk exist in a milieu all their own. Far beneath the notice or reach of mankind, the Jadeborn wage their Endless War with legions of soldiers and war machines built by the great engines of commerce and industry. The society of the Mountain Folk loosely parallels the Realm, with its Enlightened elite reigning over the Unenlightened masses like Exalted over mortals. Yet, the disparity between "haves" and "have-nots" is even more pronounced among the Jadeborn, closer perhaps to the structure of an anthill or beehive. Artisans take the role of queens by constantly "breeding" new Mountain Folk to replace those killed in their work. Warriors defend against the rival "hives" of the Nameless Hordes. Finally, Workers labor to dig tunnels and gather the resources necessary to support and expand the hive. The analogy only carries so far, since Artisans also directly rule their underlings, play politics amongst themselves and craft wonders. Furthermore, rare Enlightened Workers and Warriors can ascend beyond their station, and even the lowliest of Unenlightened remain sentient magical beings. Although far less alien than their distant Wyld-spawned cousins, the Mountain Folk and their world remain different enough to offer players a change of pace from normal **Exalted** games.

Castes Apart

By design, the castes of the Exalted operate in egalitarian harmony, with each contributing equally to the success and power of their Circle. This is not true of the Mountain Folk, whose castes only integrate in the macrocosm of their society as a whole. Workers associate with Workers, only rarely witnessing a Warrior sentry on patrol or attending the motivational speeches of their Artisan lord. Warriors fight beside Warriors under the ultimate command of distant Artisans, seldom intersecting with "civilians" in any meaningful capacity. Finally, Artisans keep to themselves and their own Enlightened kind. Their subordinates offer nothing in the way of stimulating companionship or scintillating insight, and so, the Conclave remains their incestuous and lonely family. Consequently, any stories featuring Mountain Folk protagonists must usually focus on a single caste. The only exceptions to this rule are Enlightened members of the undercastes, who certainly do not belong among their own caste, but make excellent adjuncts to Artisan stories.

Worker

At first glance, Workers are the least interesting of the Mountain Folk castes. They do not fight epic battles or lord over the trodden masses. Rather, they *are* the trodden masses. Oppressed and too often ignored, Workers exist almost entirely outside the standard heroics of the **Exalted** setting. However, this doesn't mean they have nothing to offer. Workers live in a society so regimented it borders on parody. As such, their lives span the border between tragedy and comedy. Games centered on the lowest caste can explore social injustice or just social absurdity, giving wry commentary on soul-numbing, faceless bureaucracy in the vein of *Office Space* or *Dilbert*. Strangely enough, such games also lend themselves well to sitcom. These beings go to work, they do the same thing they always do, and then, they socialize with friends. Do they matter? Do their lives matter? Are they merely cogs in a vast, impersonal machine? Well, yes, in point of fact they are. So what? Many people go to jobs because they must and bemoan the so-called rat race. Run with that. Make fun of it. Perhaps it is boring to play a farmer or a miner, but Storytellers can have all the tedium occurring offstage with the social drama taking place as a saga of intermissions and relationships. Such low-action fare will not appeal to all players, but it certainly affords a change of pace.

The second type of Worker-based game focuses on the dramatic potential of unlikely heroes. By default, Workers aren't heroes. They don't try to be. They have a caste protecting them and another caste leading them. They obey the system. But what happens when the system falls apart? A distant outpost falls to the enemy, leaving only a handful of Worker survivors who hid from the slaughter. The Artisans are gone or dead. The Warriors are dead. The Nameless Hordes have moved on to seek new prey, leaving these survivors alone amidst the carnage. They have no one to tell them what to do and no one to save them from monsters. Perhaps they find a dead Artisan clutching a recording crystal containing a warning for the Conclave. Civilization is dozens or even hundreds of leagues away, through untamed and likely hostile territory. Can they make it home? Can they bring the warning that might save their people in time for that warning to matter? The triumph of the common man (or woman) is a literary staple with powerful antecedents, especially in fantasy. The hobbits in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* lived a simple existence largely centered on food and tobacco. Yet, much of that epic revolves around these diminutive and unassuming creatures proving their mettle against all odds. Likewise, Lloyd Alexander's five-volume Chronicles of Prydain features its obligatory share of kings and sorcerers and bards but, also, a very valiant assistant pig keeper. In short, Workers can easily find themselves in epic sagas in spite of themselves.

Warrior

Indoctrinated to fight and conquer from birth and steeped in a subculture of death before surrender, Warriors have an obvious place in standard high-action **Exalted** games. This elegant and bloody simplicity can play to itself, a cathartically visceral respite from deeper stories and social dramas. Conversely, this same simplicity affords

The Eye of Autochthon

Representing a power beyond imagining, the fabled Eye of Autochthon represents the ultimate "holy grail" of the Mountain Folk. None of their race have ever beheld it, let alone wielded the ancient orb, but in the hands of an Artisan capable of mastering its delicate controls, the Eye would grant nearly unlimited power. It could certainly shatter the Great Geas and perhaps even contact the creator of the Mountain Folk and plead for his return. Thus, upon each sighting of the Eye throughout recorded history, the Mountain Folk have dared to send heroes aboveground with a mission to recover the holy relic at any cost. Obviously, none of these heroes have ever succeeded, but the Cult of the Great Maker teaches that the Lord of the Eye will come and grant dominion of all realms above and below. Pious member of the cult wait and watch patiently for any signs that the Eye has chosen to reveal itself once more.



a powerful social commentary all its own. Day by day, Warriors live the quintessential "war drama" repeated countless times in books and film. They fight, but why? They die, but to what end? They have no hope of reward or pension or retirement. They defend a civilian populace and government that that neither understands nor appreciates them. The Conclave exclusively refers to units by numbers and symbols drawn on maps, heartlessly discussing casualties without any regard for lives lost.

Games that focus on unreciprocated duty and alienation can be deep and gut wrenching or poignantly silly. On the serious side, inspiration can come from such films as *Saving Private Ryan*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *Platoon* and *Apocalypse Now*. Even the war-sequence from *Forrest Gump* deserves mention, with Warriors effectively trapped in that sort of meaningless brutality until they die. Lighter-toned stories can follow in the footsteps of M*A*S*H or *Good Morning, Vietnam*. Warriors are not Exalted, and their battles are not beautiful kung-fu dramas full of wirework and glowing auras. They aren't so lucky. They fight in the dirt below the earth against an unending tide of enemies. They have superior equipment and superior training, but all the advantages stop there. For the Jadeborn, the cliché "War is hell!" still stands, a grim counterpoint to the over-the-top battle epics of the Exalted. In between actual fighting, Warriors sluice away the blood and relax, savoring good food and camaraderie. They laugh among themselves, but uneasily, secretly wondering when their time will come.

Not all Warrior stories must focus on the negative aspects of their life. Forget the angst and melodrama. *They kill monsters and blow shit up.* That's what they do. That's their life. Forget war sagas or tearful sacrifices and "It should have been me!" for a moment. Warriors are scarred career killers who strap on power armor and magitech weapons and go bug hunting in the bowels of the earth. Think *Aliens* and *Starship Troopers* and every other story with intrepid space marines pitting their courage and cool toys against monsters. The caverns beneath Creation might as well be an alien world for all that it resembles the lands above. Strange horrors without any redeeming qualities populate those depths. Forget diplomacy. Diplomacy is a pyromantic gel grenade with a 10-second fuse. This is simple, straightforward ass kicking against an endless horde of extras, as over-the-top in its own milieu as anything in **Exalted**. Of course, nothing says that a story can't mix a little drama into the action-adventure. War can be hell one moment and an adrenaline-charged romp the next. Jokes can turn to tears, and a sudden ambush can turn a picnic into a surreal struggle for survival. Storytellers should do what is fun and exciting, custom-tailoring the story to the tastes of their players. Fortunately, Warriors have a diversity of tones to offer and a rich setting in which to explore those tones.

Artisan

The most rarified caste of their race, Artisans are also the most like the Exalted. They are the princes beneath the earth even as the Chosen are the rulers above. Their word is law, and who can gainsay them? They are majestic and transcendent, undeniably the most powerful and brilliant paragons of their race — and they know it. Games centered on Artisans can address anything and everything. They believe they can do whatever they set their minds to, and they probably aren't wrong. Only the Great Geas, the Endless War and their own infighting hold their ambitions in check.

As stated previously, Artisans have little in the way of duty and nothing if not an abundance of free will. Mountain Folk society is a machine, but it is *their* machine. None of the motifs and oppressive social controls that hold true for the undercastes apply to the Princes of Adamant. Artisans sleep when they want, eat when they want, love when they want and work when they want. And yet, they pay for their freedom from duty with the unavoidable burden of politics. The Conclave is a great incestuous family, a seething cauldron of ruthless geniuses vying with one another for power and prestige. Compared with the undercastes, Artisans play for higher stakes. There is no room for error. They can advance to greater heights, but they can also fall much farther. Artisan stories should almost certainly feature politics as a powerful overriding element, or at the very least, political pressure should lurk in the background as a strong and treacherous undercurrent. Friends are an illusion. There are only allies and enemies. Allies will probably betray you if they get a better offer, but at least most enemies can be bought. If elder Artisans are paranoid, it is not without reason. Storytellers seeking inspiration for cutthroat political stories should consider Frank Herbert's Dune saga and Roger Zelazny's Amber series, taking into account the subtlety forced by the Conclave prohibition against assassination.

According to its members, the Conclave is a fluid and dynamic pattern. From the outside, it just looks like chaos. Maybe it's both. After all, the Mountain Folk were originally fae and retain a dim spark of the Wyld at their core. They are fragments of chaos encased in the semblance and form of order. Their society reflects this duality in macrocosm, a clockwork hierarchy hiding the core of ever-changing flux that is the Conclave. Such irony merits consideration. For all that they impose order on others, Artisans do not impose it on themselves. Is that fair? Should it be fair? The social commentary integrated into the Artisan Caste is grander and yet subtler than that of the undercastes, but it's no less pronounced.

Beyond politics, Artisans hold true to their names as peerless inventors and savants. Their curiosity and creative impulses are quite literally divinely inspired, producing countless artifacts and geomantic wonders. Much of this work is done in laboratories and workshops and should probably occur behind the scenes or in the course of brief vignettes. However, Mountain Folk are not exempt from the need for exotic ingredients for their creations. Likewise, they must often seek hidden bits of pertinent lore from reclusive masters, even going so far as to dare the Great Geas and quest aboveground. Artisans often barter amongst themselves and raid the libraries of rival factions and go to secret caverns to test their devices and go on epic quests as described, all of which afford excellent potential for stories. Likewise, stories can involve an arduous journey in search of the Eye of Autochthon or the legendary First or any of the other dramatic elements particular to the mythos of the Mountain Folk. Whether for components, secrets or religious icons, many quests have political ramifications. In most instances, Artisans must carefully balance

Mountain Folk and Alchemical Exalted

Players and Storytellers using the Locust Crusade from **Time of Tumult** or the forthcoming supplement **Exalted: The Alchemicals** may be curious as to how the invading forces of Autochthonia might regard the ancient servants of their patron deity (and vice versa). For their part, the Mountain Folk have prophecies that the Great Maker will one day return and lift his Geas, heralding a golden age of magical and technological enlightenment where the Jadeborn will reign over humankind. Nothing in these prophecies even mentions the Alchemical Exalted, but then, Autochthon created his champions of flesh and metal after he abandoned the Mountain Folk and Creation. The human denizens of Autochthonia would certainly take issue with any supposed destiny placing them in a subservient role to the Jadeborn. As such, initial encounters between the Mountain Folk and the citizens of Autochthonia might not go well in spite of their common patron. Each may regard the other as heretics who have distorted the teachings of the Great Maker, especially since the cultures and beliefs of Autochthonia and the Mountain Folk have had millennia to diverge. Of course, an Alchemical Exalt who somehow found a way to channel Autochthon's power and end the Great Geas would find herself regarded as a messianic hero with a vast and well-armed army at her disposal. Such an event could rapidly turn the tide of the Locust Crusade toward certain victory, decimating an unsuspecting Realm crippled by civil war.

their time and effort between magical and temporal ambitions or risk falling behind those who do.

Not all Artisans spend their days as scheming politicians and mad scientists, and even those who do are more than just that. Many serve as officers in the military, either by choice (and perhaps disgust with their backbiting siblings) or because they have lost face through failure and have no other venue in which to prove themselves. Regardless, Artisans do not experience army life like Warriors do. They have none of the camaraderie to fall back on at the end of the day. They may have a few allies and perhaps even friends among the Enlightened officer corps, but they cannot walk among their soldiers openly and join in their laughter. Politics matter less when death becomes a very real possibility, and some friendships forged in the heat of battle miraculously linger when both parties transfer back to civilian life and Conclave schemes. But there is more to military life than loneliness. Artisans are superhuman geniuses, and they fight as superhuman geniuses. This manifests in tactical ability but also in personal combat. So-called Pattern Knights move with precision that is art. They dance and weave and strike, and death follows their movements. To those under their command and all who oppose them, they are not simply fighters. They are gods. Inspiration for these majestic hero-commanders may be found in such films as *Gladiator* and *The Last Samurai*, as well as in literature from the aforementioned Amber series to Homer's *Iliad*.

Anomalies

While all Mountain Folk belong to one of the three castes, unusual and deviant members necessarily involve different plot elements. Most aberrants make poor or, at least, difficult choices for protagonists because of their inherent limitations. However, these characters can serve in a supporting or antagonistic role very easily.

Chaos Seers: These sociopathic prophets make for frightening antagonists, dangerous supporting characters or even extremely disturbing protagonists. They represent the unknown and the unknowable, neither of order or of chaos but straddling both in their madness. In a supporting role, they may advise characters regarding the future. Such advice is hardly infallible and is certainly risky on any number of levels, but some questions are worth the risk — or, at least, they initially appear to be.

Prehistoric Mountain Folk

Before the Great Geas and the First Age, the Mountain Folk did not divide themselves or their society into castes, but enjoyed an egalitarian existence under the detached patronage of Autochthon. The early Jadeborn mined the primal depths of the earth for secrets and treasures, crafting vast stockpiles of technology to rival the greatest marvels of the First Age. The Primordials still roamed and lorded over Creation during this period as capricious forces of nature who regarded all beneath them as insignificant playthings. The gods attended these titans and took what little rest they could upon the Blessed Isle, while the rest of Creation fell under the stewardship of the Dragon Kings. Storytellers and players might consider exploring this primeval Age as a break from the Age of Sorrows, with stories centered on the heroic deeds of prehuman champions. The Jadeborn of this time follow the same character creation rules as members of the Artisan Caste, save that they treat all Mountain Folk Charms as favored and have many additional Patterns (which Storytellers and/or players can devise). These heroes also do not suffer from the Great Geas.

While the information presented in this book, in **Ruins of Rathess** and in the **Exalted Players Guide** reveals scattered glimpses of the Age before man, Storytellers should feel free to expand upon this setting however they desire. Virtually no records survived the cataclysm of the war against the Primordials, let alone endured the successive upheavals of the Usurpation and Great Contagion. Ultimately, any deviations from canon have no real bearing or impact on the default setting of **Exalted**. Perhaps the Mountain Folk empire once stretched beneath all of Creation, with vast metal cities linked by magical subway tunnels and indestructible apartment complexes burrowing hundreds of stories deep into volcanic vents, but such structures are long gone in the Second Age, and no ruins remain to tell of their creators. Or perhaps Exalted might actually uncover traces of such ruins without understanding their origin, ending their current story baffled even as they complete some unrelated task. A prehuman story could serve as a poignant interlude before resuming the main plot, showing off the splendor and inherent tragedy of the lost era that created the fragmentary ruins. Everything these people did ultimately came to nothing. What does that suggest about the accomplishments of the Exalted? Can they succeed where their predecessors failed? Such a mournful tone is not appropriate for every series, and an interlude could just as easily provide a fresh perspective without any brooding overtones. Nothing is inappropriate, so long as everyone has fun.

As an antagonist, a Chaos Seer who escapes custody is among the deadliest opponents a Mountain Folk character could have. These mad killers are the smartest of their race after all, unpredictably insane while capable of anticipating and planning for every likely move of their enemies. Fugitives might remain in Mountain Folk lands or leave to seize dominion over a clan of Darkbroods. At least one has found employment with the Deathlords. Like a precognitive Hannibal Lector, a Chaos Seer is an urbane predatory monster that serves as a grim reminder that Jadeborn are still Fair Folk. Because of their extreme antisocial tendencies, Chaos Seers do not make good additions to a player group. For a very twisted game, suppose that an unknown benefactor orchestrated the release of four or five Seers controlled by the players. Now, the greatest and deadliest minds of their generation are on the loose in a debauched competition of terror and violence against the Conclave. Alternately, an Artisan murder mystery could feature a single Chaos Seer hidden in the ranks. None of the players know who the traitor is, and they can't risk an open inquiry without serious loss of face. So instead, each is a suspect to the other as they seek to uncover the killer before she strikes again.

Enlightened Members of the Undercastes: Living between the cracks in their social hierarchy, these characters are the bastard children of the aristocracy. Their Enlightenment grants them many privileges, yet they remain forever excluded from the Conclave and all official channels of power. Many are resentful of their lot, but they are also intelligent enough to find unofficial channels and Artisan allies they can manipulate. The themes and stories of these characters closely resemble Artisans, albeit more focused in their purpose. An Artisan can learn to fight, but she must also attend to other facets of her life, from politics and magic to art. An Enlightened Warrior has no such obligations and may focus every ounce of inspired genius on becoming the ultimate warrior. But to what end? What does the ultimate warrior fight for? Herself? The Conclave? Order? Justice? Enlightened members of the undercastes highlight specific aspects of their race, embodying them to the exclusion of all else. In a society so firmly rooted in balance, they represent frightening, and perhaps even dangerous, imbalance. What happens if a charismatic Worker secretly organizes a strike, holding the Conclave hostage? What happens if a triumphant general marches on Urvar? Imagine a demagogue warlord like Julius Caesar and the dramatic potential for such a figure, either as a protagonist or a central Storyteller character destabilizing the political landscape.



Lord Kazour looked down at the mortal who approached his pavilion. As was the nature of mortals, he didn't seem like much. He looked youthful, and as even normal mortals reckoned age, he was young. His hair hung lank and black into his face. As the Exalted perceived time, he was a mere infant, less than a decade into his power.

The meeting was a staged encounter between this Circle of Solar Exalted and the Fair Folk of the Jet Court. There were no particular goals for the diplomacy, other than to become acquainted and possibly agree to some form of nonaggression. The meeting was held on the edge of the Wyld, just inside its borders. The snow rarely fell as goose-down or sawdust or the ash from burning worlds, and the howling of the wind contained few voices or songs. Only the viscid darkness of the shadows beneath the pine trees and the air of almost spine-tingling titillation that lingered in the air made it clear that this was Rakshastan and not the realm of mortals.

As if he had asked for verification of the fact that the Solars grew quickly into the first flower of their power, Kazour casually tried to manipulate the fabric of the Wyld near the Solar. His efforts wilted utterly, rather unexpectedly. The Exalt would never have agreed to meet the emissary in the Wyld if he was defenseless. It was interesting to see that his power extended over the area near his person, however. A strange technique, and not one that Kazour has experienced before. Perhaps it was some miracle he had with him and not an inherent power?

The raksha diplomat did not know, nor could he easily experiment. He was already worried his one casual attempt at manipulating the area near the Eclipse might result in some sort of retribution, either from the Solar or from the great oaths the raksha had sworn to them in the days before the Balorian Crusade. It seemed to Kazour that he had escaped intact, but the oaths of the Fair Folk were mighty and capricious.

Whatever the case, Kazour was still pleased to be in the Wyld and not away from it. Kyema had asked him to come here, and he could never refuse his maiden. For her, he would have met this Solar on the slopes of Meru. Yet, though he would suffer destruction for his fair princess, he would not be glad to do so. Lord Kazour was just as glad that he hadn't had to travel to Meru as part of his diplomatic efforts.

Kazour walked forward, away from his guards. The Solar walked forward as well, a white owl perched on his shoulder. At first, Kazour assumed it was the Solar's familiar, but as he neared the Exalt, it became clear that the one called Swan did not come to this meeting alone.

Kazour shook his head. "I object to the Lunar."

Swan shook his head in return, "This is my legal wife. Spousal privilege allows her to accompany me. It is the custom of my people that we always go about with our spouses near us, that we might be protected by their might. You do not object to this, do you? My wife suggests you do not, and I believe she has made your acquaintance in the past?"

Kazour nodded glumly. He knew the owl well enough. And the Solar beneath the owl as well.

"I admit this is permissible, even in privy council, but I continue to object in principle. May I offer you some advice as one diplomat to another, Your Exaltation?"

"You may, though I do not know if I will heed it."

"I would suggest you think carefully before choosing such companions. Not that there is anything wrong with them," he hastened to interject, as the owl fluffed its feathers and stared at him with its beak slightly open. "But, you see, others may remember your previous behavior, from other lives. Do not demand too much of your birthright unless you know the liabilities as well as the benefits."

Swan smiled. "I know exactly how objectionable my former incarnation was, and to some extent, I apologize. However, my problems lie primarily with how my former self let his often emotionally punishing job color his outlook and his life. In his dealings with the enemies of Creation, I can only hope to emulate his hard-edged technique. Is this acceptable, Lord Kazour?"

The raksha prince nodded glumly again, understanding.

CHAPTER SEVEN
STORYTELLING

The Storyteller's job in a series centered around the Fair Folk is to make sure that the raksha are more than just "Exalted with antlers and glamour." While a series can indeed be run that way, it ignores those aspects of the Fair Folk that make them such unique beings in the Age of Sorrows. The Fair Folk can engage their enemies in shaping duels, summoning up armies of pure fancy to fight their foes or seducing their rivals within dreamscapes. The Fair Folk vex one another's Graces, trying to gain power in a ruthless struggle for dominance within the court, but the Fair Folk have a kind of immortality within the Wyld, and so such feuds can go on for centuries without lasting harm befalling any of the participants. These are traits that make the raksha unique, and make preparing for — and running — a Fair Folk series such a rewarding challenge for the Exalted Storyteller.

Preparing a Fair Folk Series

The Fair Folk are creatures shaped from dreams, living in a realm of half-truths and formlessness that answers to their every whim. They can conjure up the raw material of stories with but a thought — and often do so, even as they plot and scheme within the courts of the Middlemarches. The players of Fair Folk characters will have more control over their environment and more power over events than the players of typical Exalted might because narrating a shaping duel or questing within the Deep Wyld grants the players far more descriptive power — at times it might seem almost as if the players are co-Storytellers.

Thus, preparation is even more important in a series centered in Rakshastan and the courts of the Fair Folk than it is in a typical **Exalted** story. Even Storytellers who enjoy running off-the-cuff stories based heavily on improvisation will find that their job is made immensely easier by answering a few questions beforehand about the nature of the series. In the same way, a little time spent pondering the structure of the court that the player's characters find themselves in will pay big dividends when play begins, as will mentally preparing for the potential shaping duels and social warfare that will ensue from the characters' actions. It's a truism that no game plan survives the characters, but by preparing a solid framework before play begins, the structure of the series will be better equipped to deal with the actions of the characters as they war, scheme and seduce their way across both the Wyld and Creation.

Initial Concepts

Before any character preparation begins, a Storyteller should either think ahead to the general outline of the series or quiz players as to what kind of story they're interested in. Unlike with the Exalted, the location of a Fair Folk series can range from the cities of Creation to Freeholds buried under hills in the Threshold to the courts of the Middlemarches — possibly all three. If the Storyteller hopes to have a series revolving around a troupe of Fair Folk circus-folk in the Varang City-States, and the players want their characters to be the movers and shakers within a Freehold, it's better that the disconnect is discovered and resolved before anybody puts pen to paper. The alternative — that the characters are designed haphazardly and the Storyteller attempts to shoehorn them into the series after the fact — is problematic, at best. Whether the Storyteller "pitches" the series concept to the players or the players brainstorm together and come up with an idea for a ring that excites everybody equally, the series concept is a necessary piece of the puzzle.

Once a series concept is created, there's no reason why it cannot be altered in play if everyone agrees to move play in a new direction. The raksha of a Freehold might travel deep into the stasis of Creation on some errand, while the expatriates who wander the Threshold could head into the Middlemarches on a mission and find themselves caught up in courtly intrigues — changes to the central hooks that a series hangs on are not just commonplace, they help keep a series fresh. That everyone be on the same page at the beginning of a story is a necessary part of getting most series off the ground and running smoothly.

Beyond Character Generation

In a successful Fair Folk series, it is of the utmost importance that a Storyteller work with his players and give them the freedom to define their characters beyond mere dots on a character sheet. The Storytellers job is to enable the players to design the characters they want, characters who breathe and come to life, while making sure that the individual characters fit together, and fit the series, as a whole.

The easiest way for a Storyteller to accomplish this is to give a player the creative freedom to make her character one of the best in the household, be it at some form of shaping duel or at the performance of poetry. By giving the players the ability to carve out a unique niche for their characters within their court, household or ring, you give them the power to let their characters define themselves in the Fair Folk way and give each character an in-game goal to pursue. This, in turn, serves the dual purpose of empowering the players and providing a Storyteller with plot hooks throughout the series — after all, if the player's stated goal for her character is to be the most cunning rogue within the Freehold, all the Storyteller need do is introduce some competition and the player's interest will be piqued. She has a title to defend, after all.

There are numerous areas where raksha contend on an almost daily basis for status and recognition, and which a character might hope to excel in:

Shaping: The raksha ability to win a contest of shaping is often tied into raw power, but among the Fair Folk, there is also something to be said for artistry within a duel (stunt bonuses, for example). Especially in combats waged for the entertainment of the court as a whole, it is often not the strongest shaper who wins applause, but the most creative. Characters designed to be master shapers should buy Backgrounds to reflect their reputation within the court, as well as make sure that the Abilities relevant to their style of shaping are as high as they can be — after all, ingenuity and artistry only get one so far. But they should also examine the nature of shaping as combat-within-storytelling and put a lot of thought into how, exactly, their character fights his duels and what imaginative twists give the character his edge when shaping. Is the raksha more imaginative than his fellows, or does he ferret out his opponent's techniques in advance and attempt to counter them?

Romance: Fair Folk Freeholds are like soap operas, with romances springing into life, drawing others into their whirl and then ending dramatically. While not every

love affair among the raksha needs to end with tears or violence, most are opportunities for emotional turmoil. Their disintegration is a chance to begin feuds or draw attention to oneself in public ways.

Characters designed to be the romantic leads of a Fair Folk story should have high Social Attributes and dots in Socialize, Presence, and Performance (Abilities which draw others to them.) Storytellers should allow characters who have designs on being the court Lothario to jockey for position through the seduction of the Freehold's most eligible partners but should also keep an eye toward the inevitable split and its repercussions — essentially, the moment the romance begins, the Storyteller should be planning its demise and the resulting bad blood and emotional upheaval. While it is possible for the raksha to engage in long, torrid romances in which both partners are devoted to one another, within the courts of the Middlemarches such liaisons are the exception, not the rule — comfortable love affairs rarely stave off boredom like a rollicking good breakup.

Keep in mind Fair Folk are forever. Characters (and Storytellers) should think about who has repeating patterns in their romantic existence. Raksha that have good flings and breakups may make a habit of it.

Combat Prowess: There are occasions when a court or Freehold enters into violent contact with other beings, ranging from skirmishes with Lunar barbarians and their tribes to open warfare with other courts of raksha. With these characters in the series, the Storyteller should be ready to create enemies for the court to face in open combat and to manage stories that involve showy combat, sometimes involving large forces attacking one another on the battlefield. Characters who hope to be the masterful generals and unparalleled warriors of a domain must develop their combat Abilities and Charms, as well as demonstrate a willingness to use their skills against the enemies of the Freehold — and any who would challenge their position as warriors without peer.

Artistry: It would be false to claim that every court's activities center only on confrontations such as court intrigues, warfare, dueling and the aftermath of love affairs. One of the arenas in which Fair Folk — especially those of the Entertainer and Worker Castes —involve themselves is artistry, be it the creation of artwork, the crafting of useful goods such as weapons or the design and performance of musical or dramatic works. Raksha view even their own bodies as canvases to work their craft upon. After all, when beings shape their bodies out of pure dreams, everyone can look as beautiful as they please, and so, the struggle to look better than everyone else — or at least more unique — becomes that much more important. Characters designed to be master artisans, great performers and craftsmen without peer should invest in the appropriate Abilities, specialties and Charms. Storytellers should keep an eye open for potential feuds between rival artists and even conflict between virtuosos across fields — imagine the struggles that might occur as a craftsmen attempts to prove to a Warrior that the creation of a weapon is just as important, if not more so, as its wielding.



Intrigue: The courts of the Middlemarches and Creation thrive on intrigue — it is the lifeblood through which Fair Folk keep their lives interesting, and it provides a means of interacting with others of their

kind in games of dominance. The advantage that characters designed to be the gray eminences of a court have is that skill at plotting is not always tied to raw power. Just because shaping combat can include blackmail doesn't mean that blackmail has to involve shaping combat. Even though the court's experts on intrigue have centuries of experience to aid them, there is no reason why a relative youth within the Freehold cannot climb the social ladder through a campaign of innovative backstabbing. Social Attributes and Abilities are key for this kind of character, and Storytellers must prepare in advance all of the details that will go into a series focused on skullduggery and the back-and-forth of politics. Running social conflict and intrigue-centered series is so important to a Fair Folk series that a section has been written with advice on making it work (see below.)

Enabling Character Concepts

It is not enough just to let the player *want* his character to be one of the most creative shapers in the Freehold — the Storyteller should work from the beginning of the series to pepper conversations with references to the character's skill and to prepare appropriate challenges for him to defeat. Most importantly, the Storyteller should *enable* the characters' schemes — if a character's goal is to be a powerful general, then the Storyteller must give her foes to face and make it possible for these foes to be beaten. If a player wants her character to run from one torrid love affair to the next, then the Storyteller and player must make sure that the character is attractive to those within the court. That's not to say that every goal of a character should be easy to accomplish — far from it. But it should be within the realm of possibility that the character *could* accomplish it.

Part of making a character's goals realistic begins at character creation. A Storyteller should ascertain exactly what a player wants his character to accomplish and then glance at the character sheet to make sure that the raksha in question has been built with an eye toward actually achieving those goals. If a player wants his character to be the court's resident artistic genius, but then focuses on combat Abilities to the exclusion of Craft, there's a disconnect, and all of the enabling a Storyteller can do won't help matters until the disconnect is resolved.

Overlapping Concepts

There is always the risk of overlap between two players' intentions for their characters. Especially in rings with more than one character of the same caste, Storytellers may have more than one player whose character's aim is to be the most potent shaper in the Freehold, for example. In cases such as this, Storytellers should try to consider whether the players involved will find conflict between their characters stifling or whether the Storyteller can mine the rivalry for story ideas. If the characters' overlapping areas of endeavor are going to cause problems, Storytellers should point out the situation to the players involved and encourage them to redefine — or perhaps just differentiate between —their characters.

If the group has two Warriors and the players would find competition between themselves or a shared niche within the ring a problem, then make sure that the differences between the two characters stand out. Perhaps one character wants to be the greatest battlefield commander within the Freehold, while the other aspires to be the best swordsman. Despite the fact that their goals still overlap somewhat, they now have enough distinctiveness to resolve the issue and allow each character excel in his own field — one can be an Imperial Raksha or Strategos, while the other is a Xia or Cataphract.

On the other hand, if the players won't find similar goals stifling, then the Storyteller might want to encourage the rivalry and build it into the series. When raksha gather in rings, there is a cessation of the more vicious hostilities between ringmates, and so, two characters who aspire to reach the same lofty heights, be it as master swordsmen, Machiavellian plotters or peerless craftsmen, have a reason to keep their rivalry a friendly one — although this doesn't mean they'll take it any less seriously. Instead of the overlap causing problems, it creates an impetus for both characters to continually strive to outdo one another and yet keep the conflict centered on mere competition rather than letting it spread to other areas. The rivalry feeds the needs of the story rather than causing conflict between players.

While characters with overlapping goals can be a problem, there is also the issue of players who want to design characters that do everything. Unlike the Exalted, the Fair Folk castes are not as easily predisposed toward generalism. And in a series where each member of a ring might be aspiring to be the best in her area of endeavor, a character designed to be good at everything is going to fall flat in comparison to those who have specialized in one or two areas, especially if the character attempts to be a generalist at shaping combat.

The easiest way to deal with these characters is to make it explicitly known to the player involved exactly what the other players are doing with their characters and to point out that a raksha designed to be a generalist is not going to shine as brightly in one area as his fellows do. With that in the open, some players will decide that they still want to play a generalist — some people simply prefer to be prepared for all of the possible directions that the series might head. As long as they're willing to acknowledge the fact that other characters will probably outperform them in many areas and accept the fact that their dice pools may not be as large as other characters', it's not a disconnect.

Generalists in Creation

While trying to be good at everything is not an ideal way to make a name for one's self at court, it's actually a survival trait among the raksha who wander Creation, where day-to-day experiences brings the character into contact with a variety of threats, from starvation, travel and combat. If the Storyteller finds that most of her players desire to play characters with a wide variety of Abilities and show no interest in being the best at any one or two things, then she might ponder dropping the characters into the Threshold, to survive in the streets of Nexus or the aquatic wilderness of the West.

Of course, some players may resent the fact that while they're attempting to play a peerless diplomatic envoy, the player of the character who's a little bit good at everything keeps stepping on their niche. There are several ways to deal with this. The first method is to remind the player of the specialist that, for all the generalist's involvement in various in-game events, the specialist still has more power, by dint of larger dice pools. The Storyteller can also acknowledge the specialist character's virtuosity through the reactions of Storyteller characters — challenges and rivalries don't spring up because someone wants to outperform someone who's a little bit proficient in everything; they arise because someone wants to prove their worth against a master in the field.

Elements of a Fair Folk Series

Once the series begins, there are a number of unique facets to the Fair Folk's existence that Storytellers should familiarize themselves with and emphasize during play. Feeding, shaping, their unique brand of immortality, their consciously shaped visages and vivid beauty, their altered priorities as beings of Wyld energy given shape and the constant social warfare at court all bear special notice, since they are central to maintaining the alien feel of the raksha.

While individual Storytellers will play with the unique elements of the Fair Folk to suit their interests, emphasizing feeding more than shaping or vice versa, the players themselves will be more interested in some aspects of Fair Folk characters than others. The important thing is to reconcile the facets that intrigue you as Storyteller with those aspects of the Fair Folk that attract the players. A Storyteller wholly uninterested in games of intrigue at court will have to find some way to satisfy players who want their characters to partake in skullduggery and backstabbing.

Characters and Appearance

Unlike mere mortals, the Fair Folk have crafted their forms to their own specifications, sculpting them from pieces of raw dream and myth to suit whatever fancy took them before they traveled away from the Kingdoms of Chaos. These forms have changed over time, of course, colored by the raksha's proximity to the elemental poles during their creation and by the Fair Folk's own talents with glamour. Notwithstanding those slight alterations over the years, each of the raksha's bodies is a work of art, crafted to suit and crafted from dreams or elemental energy.

As such, Storytellers should make sure that the player of a Fair Folk character describes his character's form as a kind of unique sculpture, meant to reflect the raksha's inner desires and urges.

A Courtier should appear terrible, glorious and breathtakingly beautiful depending on her mood — and during important negotiations or the seduction of an Exalt, she will certainly heighten her already inhuman beauty with glamour. A Fair Folk Cataphract, on the other hand, may appear to be a fearsome foe out of legend, her every movement impossibly smooth and deadly, her face storm-browed and possessing the never-resting eyes of a predator. Even those rare characters who are horrifically ugly are perfectly designed terrors out of nightmare, rather than simply randomly disfigured.

Players should be encouraged to spend an appropriate amount of time describing their Fair Folk characters' appearance when they are first designed. Storytellers should remind the players that their characters have the potential to be as beautiful as any mortal — they may even be supernally radiant, creatures whose appearance steals the breath away from those who see them. Allow each player to define exactly how her raksha's inner nature is reflected in her form, to outline exactly what mutations the character shaped into her body at the moment of its creation and to explain exactly why she added any changes later on.

Appearance in a Story

During play, describe the impact raksha characters have on mere mortals and even the more inexperienced — or unwary — Exalted. You should even encourage players to use their characters' appearance in stunts, describing how their silken hair flutters like a banner in the air right before a killing blow is landed or how the sunlight glints off of a character's steel-hued eyes. Appearance is the basis for the first impression the raksha will make, and players should use it as the framework for how they interact with others, even in combat.

In addition to describing the appearance of characters through detail, you can get a lot of mileage out of conveying the raksha's vivid appearance through descriptions of how drab other beings are. To the Fair Folk, whose shapes are the products of imagination and whose powers of

Helping Players Along

There's no denying it — there are players who will balk at the opportunity to describe their characters in flowery prose. Just as some players will leap at the opportunity to describe their characters and will lovingly detail every inch of their characters, hauling out the thesaurus to make sure everything sounds right, there are going to be some players who either won't try or believe they're not capable of doing it.

Remember, the goal is to have fun, and some players are uncomfortable being put on the spot, pulling inward when they start to feel like they're hogging too much of the spotlight. Just like when it comes to learning how to use stunts, some players need to be eased into **Exalted**'s unique style, and Storytellers should remember that the Fair Folk have a unique feel that every player might not be ready for.

The question is, can you, the Storyteller, help such players? The answer is: It depends. You should always give recalcitrant players an opportunity to describe their characters during character creation and at the start of play, since, in a Fair Folk series, half of the fun of playing a raksha is in playing an ageless beauty or a creature out of nightmare. Everyone should get the chance to craft the characters they want. If a player doesn't take the bait even with your encouragement, you can do several things.

Pre-generation: If a Storyteller knows that there's a player uncomfortable with certain aspects of character creation and description, the player might be far happier using a pre-generated description (or even a whole pre-generated character) the first time around. This approach lets a player get a feel for what an appropriate level of description is and gauge the other players' reactions to his character's vivid appearance. Once the player sees that the other players are embracing the same kind of detailed depictions, he may be more willing to try it later on in the series. Still, the Storyteller should never assume that the player will want to use a pre-generated character or description, instead offering the player the chance to build his own character first.

Brainstorming: Sometimes, a player's failure to go wild with description can be blamed on a lack of self-confidence, and in cases such as that, a little nudge is all he needs, be it from a helpful Storyteller or fellow players. Pull the player aside and brainstorm with him, or ask him to bounce ideas off of the rest of the players. If the player in question has the basics of a description down, nudge him a little, or help him ask other players for advice and help to fully flesh it out. Ask him to describe what the character looks like in his mind's eye, and then, help him put it into verbiage that is a little more robust than what he has.

Let It Slide: Finally, if nothing else works, you can come to terms with the fact that the player doesn't think he's capable of that level of description. The player might be happy with a sentence or two that consists of "My noble has black hair and blue eyes and white antlers. And he's dressed nicely," and if that's the case, the important thing to remember is that he's having as much fun, in his own way, as the player who spent a paragraph describing her character's image. Let the player get away with limited detail and hope that the heights of description that the other players are reaching will rub off on him a little as the series progresses. In the meantime, take the liberty of fleshing out the player's description a little when it comes to your own portrayals of the character in-game — describe the character's eyes as azure, instead of just blue, and hope the player picks up on what a little bit of thesaurus work can do to a blandly depicted appearance.

glamour and beguilement allow them to weave illusions to make themselves even more unspeakably radiant, there is a certain flatness in the sad similarity that all mortal forms share. An Exalt with an Appearance of 4 dots should pale before a Fair Folk noble with an Appearance of 6.

Impart how colorless and lackluster most Creation-born appear in comparison to the Fair Folk of a court. Emphasize how plainly ordinary they are, lacking even the barest of gossamers. Even their goods are mundane — mortal clothing and goods that are not shaped from glamour rarely shimmer and twist like the ephemeral garb of the raksha. Mortal architecture is often practical and pedestrian, meant to shelter the fragile human form from the elements or from foes, rather than existing to display the superior craftsmanship of its creators for its own sake.

Make the Exalted stand out amongst other Creation-born by conveying to Fair Folk characters that these are the only mortals whose glory and power matches their own ageless splendor — that their Essence radiates raw power and their Virtues are those of beings who dream of building empires and accomplishing the impossible. Convey to your players just how precious those few mortals whose appearances stand out are, be they alluring beauties or hideous freaks — for a raksha, the particularly pretty or ugly amongst the teeming hordes of nearly identical humanity is a precious thing indeed.



Keep in mind, however, that there is a distinct difference between the natural beauty of the Creation-born and the planned, constructed beauty of the Fair Folk. Storytellers should make it known through encounters with mortals and the passage of time within the series that a raksha will never grow old, showing venerable wisdom in gray hair or wrinkles or demonstrating hard-won experience in the scars they've earned — instead, the Fair Folk stay the same, forever, unless they willingly sculpt themselves into new forms.

Storytellers can also emphasize the fact that the Fair Folk, for all their beauty, are somewhat static, alien creatures, taking on form as part of a lost crusade to destroy Creation, rather than bearing form because they are naturally a part of reality. If one is mighty enough to endure the fact that they are powerful wielders of glamour, raksha are somewhat pitiable from the perspective of those who are part of the "natural" cycles of Creation. As such, Storytellers should occasionally throw in gods or Exalted whose experience with the raksha has led them to find the Fair Folk pitiable, rather than attractive or fearsome. For these beings, too powerful in their own right to be cowed by an individual raksha's glamour and might, the Fair Folk are dangerous but ultimately shallow things, and Storytellers can engage raksha characters by allowing these puissant beings to patronize them, regarding them with disdain rather than fear.

Madness & Immortality

Storytellers will want to keep in the forefront of their minds the fact that the Fair Folk's bodies are invulnerable to the wear and tear to which pathetic mortal forms are subject, much like the bodies of the Exalted are. Even in a shaped form, Fair Folk nobility tower above mortals in physical capability.

And unlike many other beings, the Fair Folk are literally immune to sickness, aging and death while they are within the confines of the Wyld or a Freehold. Within their safe havens, the Fair Folk can exist forever, eternally young. To the Creation-born, the Fair Folk are mad, uninterested in the needs that drive the societies of Creation and fearless of damage that would kill all but the strongest Exalt or God-Blood. At the same time, the Fair Folk seem even more disconcerting for their fear of simple iron implements and their attempts to desperately stave off banality by keeping their lives interesting.

Storytellers should make it apparent very early on that, within the Freeholds of their people and their dens within the Wyld, the Fair Folk play deadly games with little thought to their own safety. In some courts, the nobility have become capricious enough to mete out amputations and executions on the slightest of justifications, safe in the knowledge that the target of their whimsy will be essentially unharmed. Duels can be fought to the threshold of death because, so long as magical weapons and certain Charms are not allowed, death is but a temporary annoyance for even the weakest of the raksha. Storytellers should play up the atmosphere of apparent whimsical madness that comes when dealing with ageless, jaded

beings that can commit any crime against their inferiors and yet do no lasting harm.

The strange, altered priorities of the Fair Folk compared to the Creation-born should also be something that Storytellers emphasize in their series. Between their resistance to harm, their wholly self-created natures, their predatory need to feed on dreams and their lack of concern for mundane needs such as food and shelter when in the Wyld or a Freehold, the Fair Folk have completely different priorities and fears than the mortals of Creation. A Fair One doesn't covet money or goods because her glamour allows her to create such items out of whole cloth. Likewise, a raksha is heedless of harm under most circumstances because she is only vulnerable to permanent damage under exceptional circumstances.

At the same time they portray invulnerability to most mundane mortal hazards, Storytellers should attempt to generate a sense of altered reality in their series by emphasizing that what is harmless to mortals and the Exalted – boredom, for instance — is fatal or painful for the raksha. At the same time, the Fair Folk have no need for things that beings of Creation require for survival, such as normal food, clothing or goods. The Exalted, for all their power, are still beings of Creation, while the Fair Folk are an alien "other," and Storytellers should underline these differences. Otherwise, a player's first instinct might be to play his Fair Folk character like any other being in the Age of Sorrows.

Storytellers should attempt to balance the Fair Folk's smugness concerning how difficult it is to damage them with their fear of the negative consequences of shaping combat. Though their bodies might be the matter of a moment's trifle given their effective immortality within the Wyld, the Fair Folk can still lose their souls. Play up the incongruousness that comes with Fair Folk who compete in lethal games utilizing everything from large weapons to behemoths but who tremble at the thought of a personal setback.

Finally, keep in mind that the Fair Folk's control of reality and their experiences within the limitless possibility of the Wyld mean that they find the solid foundation of Creation leaden and bleak. Events and sights that would provoke hushed awe from even the most jaded mortal traveler should result in only a yawn from one of the raksha. For the Fair Folk, a trip away from their strange and chaotic safe havens and into Creation is like a trip into an amateurish painting with little detail to catch the eye. Storyteller characters who have spent years in the Middlemarches should be jaded under all but the most extraordinary circumstances, and even the most satiated Dragon-Blooded would shudder at the apparent callousness and imperturbability of the raksha. Storyteller raksha who find beauty in the static reality of Creation will be exceptional — and far from the typical Fair Folk.

Feeding an Alien Hunger

Storytellers should establish in advance how much primacy to give feeding in their series. For the Fair Folk, feeding is a fundamental aspect of their existence. Outside of the Wyld, the nature of the Fair Folk is to whither away without access to either a pennant or the heady dreams of mortals, gathered by devouring their Virtues. Even beyond the issues of appetite or the need to renew Essence, the Fair Folk find feeding intensely pleasurable, often bringing mortal slaves into the Wyld in order to dine on them at leisure or seeking out prey regardless of whether or not they need to satisfy their hunger.

Since the Fair Folk nature is essentially predatory, the act of feeding both fuels their existence and assures them that they are superior to the mortals who inhabit Creation — in essence, it serves the dual purpose of granting them vitality and confirming that their place is at the top of the food chain. While there are Fair Folk who eschew actively feeding from or ravishing mortals and rely merely upon passive absorption of ambient emotions, the latter are the exception among raksha and are typically found among those Fair Folk who have chosen to live in the societies of the Threshold.

For Storytellers who wish to give feeding an important place in their series, the first step is in romanticizing it. To the Fair Folk, feeding is not merely an empty act undertaken to renew their reserves of Essence, but instead, an intimate contact with another sentient being in which they feed on that being's aspirations and hopes. To the Fair Folk, who are somewhat shallow beings, the fact that the end of the act often results in a soulless husk in no way detracts from its powerful beauty.

One way to portray the intimacy of the contact is to describe the flow of the Virtue from prey to raksha — to describe the moment where the raksha accepts that aspect of the prey's character into herself. Establish what the nature of the act is — has the Fair Folk seduced the prey or terrorized him beforehand? Is this the first time the raksha has fed from that prey? Is the raksha ravishing the prey, and if so, is the prey beguiled or willing? These are all questions that, when answered, form a basis for describing the moment properly.

Just as describing the circumstances of the feeding is important to establishing atmosphere, portraying the dreams of the Creation-born as they flit from prey to raksha is also a way of heightening the way players perceive the act as intimate. Look at the descriptions of the Virtues and the actions they aid in the **Exalted** core rulebook, and then, describe the dreams of the prey in terms of one of those actions. As an example, a captured mortal warrior's fantasies might revolve around being a member of the Terrestrial Exalted and fighting at the head of a mighty host, so that may be a memory that will fly from the prey to the raksha at the moment of feeding. Use this one-way transmission

to establish how alien and inhuman the Fair Folk are and how distant they are from mortal concerns — no matter how terrible the prey's dream, the Fair Folk will love it. If a mortal sheds her dreams of a lost love for whom she still pines, the raksha will not care about the tragedy of the parting, instead reveling in the potency of the dream.

Just as important as the moment of feeding itself is the fate of the mortal afterward. How does the mortal react to the contact, based on the nature of it? A mortal tortured in order to shed his Virtue in the form of ambient emotion is unlikely to want that contact to occur again, while a human seduced or beguiled into being ravished will desire feeding to occur repeatedly, despite the loss of his Virtue or Willpower. Sating the hunger of the raksha is rarely something that happens only once if the mortal survives the initial event. Mortals trapped within the courts of the Wyld or within a Freehold are going to be called upon again and again to give up their Virtues to feed the alien hunger of the Fair Folk, until their dreams and wills are totally stripped clean.

Just as romanticizing feeding involves establishing the nature of the act in the minds of the players and within the context of the series, keeping the act interesting requires knowing when to focus on it and when to keep it in the background. Typically, the first few times feeding occurs in a series, the Storyteller will want to delve into it in detail, answering questions about what actually occurs before and after the act. After the feel of feeding has been established within the story, however, the Storyteller and players should feel confident enough about how it happens that feeding should only be described in detail when something dramatic occurs. Appropriate times to describe feeding include when it involves important conversations with a mortal, when the mortal is being groomed as a Ravager or when the feeding itself is notable and worthy of the focus. All of the descriptive prowess the Storyteller has in her possession won't keep the act of feeding from growing boring if every single time it occurs the action slows for a dramatic interlude between a single player's character and his prey.

Given how central feeding is to the raksha's lives, the Storyteller should attempt to add certain flourishes concerning the feeding habits of various raksha that the players' characters will encounter. Does a certain noble only strip away select portions of a mortal's being, in order to create a bloodthirsty Ravager? Does a particular Worker prefer the ordered Temperance of a holy man, or does he favor the insensate desire for drugs that an addict feels? On a larger level, does the court the characters belong to traffic with the major slave centers that the Fair Folk possess, or are they so isolated in the Wyld that the only mortals that they prey on are members of the Wyld-barbarian tribes that wander the domain or that they capture while raiding? Every raksha should have his or her own quirks when it comes to devouring the dreams of mortals, and every court should have its own manner of gathering mortals to it, if it does so at all.

When the characters are in Creation, use the nature of ambient feeding to again hammer home how alien the raksha are. Fair Folk cannot help but feed on the emotions that surround them — even those who have learned to live among the swell of humanity devour the heady Virtues around them. Whenever the mortals surrounding the

Feeding and Comfort Zones

Given the overtones of Fair Folk feeding, some players may potentially feel uncomfortable with it occurring in the series. Storytellers know their groups best and should be able to gauge the proper comfort zone for their players, but if in doubt or working with a new gaming group, it never hurts to broach the subject as the series is being prepared — such as during character generation — and to inform the players about how you conceive of feeding occurring in the series. If any of the players has misgivings, then there are a few ways to handle the matter.

Avoiding Feeding Entirely: There are circumstances where a ring of Fair Folk will never need to feed from mortal Virtues. In the first place, raksha within the Wyld are safe enough from dissipation that they have no reason to devour the Virtues of mortals outside of the sheer pleasure of it, and series set wholly in the Middlemarches will have less reason for the raksha to renew their stores of Essence by feeding. During those times when the raksha head toward Creation, they can utilize pennants to stave off dissipation and feed only from ambient emotions. Although it might seem contrived to some, this method guarantees that feeding never becomes an issue if the matter is handled skillfully by the Storyteller.

Keep It in the Background: Some Storytellers will decide to run a Fair Folk series in which feeding never gets described in detail and, instead, the focus lies entirely on intrigue, shaping duels and conflict with the denizens of Creation. While players who are interested in that aspect of the raksha will find this immensely unsatisfying, feeding can be assumed to occur behind the scenes, and the events leading up to it can be glossed over.

Whichever method the Storyteller chooses will mean some amount of working around a key element of the raksha existence, but some Storytellers will find the sacrifice worth it in order to keep their players comfortable.

raksha are excited or up in arms about something, allow the characters to feed, even if the mortals are in a furor over the characters themselves. Not only does this keep a modicum of Essence flowing toward the players' characters, but it reminds everyone that the Fair Folk's existence, especially away from the Wyld, is predicated wholly on having a source of Essence — willing or no.

The Fair Folk and Intrigue

The predatory aspect of the Fair Folk, embodied by their feeding and by their constant plotting and intriguing, gives Storytellers an avenue to make them alien but accessible in the same way that modern myths of the vampire and true-crime stories about the Mafia are both attractive, yet still manage to describe an alien existence separate from the one with which the average person is familiar. In either example, there is a central, predatory being or organization aimed at milking human beings for food or wealth, existing within an enclosed society where intrigue and backstabbing over an area's finite resources are commonplace. Inspiration for a series filled with politics, intrigue, backstabbing and jockeying for position is as simple as finding any kind of story that emphasizes the literary equivalent of caged animals — aggressive personalities fighting over limited resources. Novels and shows set in prisons work just as well as the basis for this series as movies set in a cutthroat work environment such as the stock market do. In this kind of story, the question becomes: What will you do to end up on top? What will you do to keep from slipping from your current position?

Characters in any series that takes place in one of the courts of Fair Folk can expect the opportunity for intrigue and politicking to appear at times, and skullduggery and backstabbing can easily become the focus of a Fair Folk series if the players and Storyteller wish it. Furtive rendezvous with one's spies, liaisons with an enemy's bitter ex-lover and coup de grâce in front of the entire court are the meat and potatoes of this kind of series. Those who have a taste for plotting and subtle conflict can have just as much intensity in their sessions as those who pit their characters against legions of the Dragon-Blooded or bloody-handed Immaculate monks. The issue for Storytellers and players who desire this kind of series isn't "What is intrigue?" because tales of intrigue and Machiavellian maneuvering are everywhere, from the spy novels of Le Carre and Dumas to the first two Godfather films. The question is, "How much intrigue do you want in your series?"

The Board

The first thing to do is define what a series centered around intrigue is about, and in most cases, that can be assumed to be the control of resources. The resources in question don't have to be tangible, but they do have to be perceived as valuable — battles of wits are fought over elusive items such as status and reputation every day, simply because the participants feel that those qualities are more valuable than jade or gems. Even a series chronicling nobles' attempts to avenge themselves upon one another utilizes the resources around the court as the pieces upon which the game revolves, just as the court itself is the game board.

With that in mind, a wise Storyteller will examine the players' motives and tools and determine what, exactly, the resources being fought over are. Are the characters attempting to prop up their own reputations by embarrassing others, or are they trying to remove threats to their power base and climb the hierarchy of court until they wield real decision-making control? In the first example, you should look to ways that the characters can increase the regard that important dignitaries in court have for them, while embarrassing those other raksha who might possibly show them up. In the second example, the characters are fighting over status, access to embarrassing secrets and knowledge of their opponents' vulnerabilities. Although neither scenario is a zero-sum game — there's a potentially unlimited amount of status or good public-image in a court — the characters feel that they make themselves look better by making everyone else look worse by comparison.

Keep in mind that not all feuds within a court have to be directly adversarial — they can be competitive. Romantic, historical and adventure fiction are rife with individuals and groups who figure their position in the balance of a rivalry based not on how many rivals they've eliminated or embarrassed, but by how many hearts they've broken or how many secret martial-arts techniques they've learned. It's quite possible to have an intrigue series centered around two factions who are competing to see which one of them can manipulate the most servants into suicide or build the best Freehold so as to gain a title from a local ruler. In cases such as these, the resources cultivated are independent of one another, but the characters of each faction can still attempt to plot against and sabotage one another.

The Pieces

The next detail that Storytellers must establish is who the players in the game are. Within any court or closed social environment, there are going to be people who the characters want to target because they're rivals — but not everyone who is a potential rival need be competed with. Some fellow contenders can be cultivated as allies with informal understandings, and others may be out of the characters' reach entirely — at least for the present. At the upper echelons of a court, there are going to individuals whose skill at playing the games of politics have effectively made them untouchable over the years — these raksha should be cultivated as resources or, if that's not possible, at least be convinced to smile upon the characters' actions. The problem with reaching an accord with such individuals is not that they're impossible to turn to the characters'

side, but that the characters potentially make themselves into catspaws if they enter into an alliance with such savvy and cunning Fair Folk. Better to avoid the alliance entirely and just remain amicable, if possible.

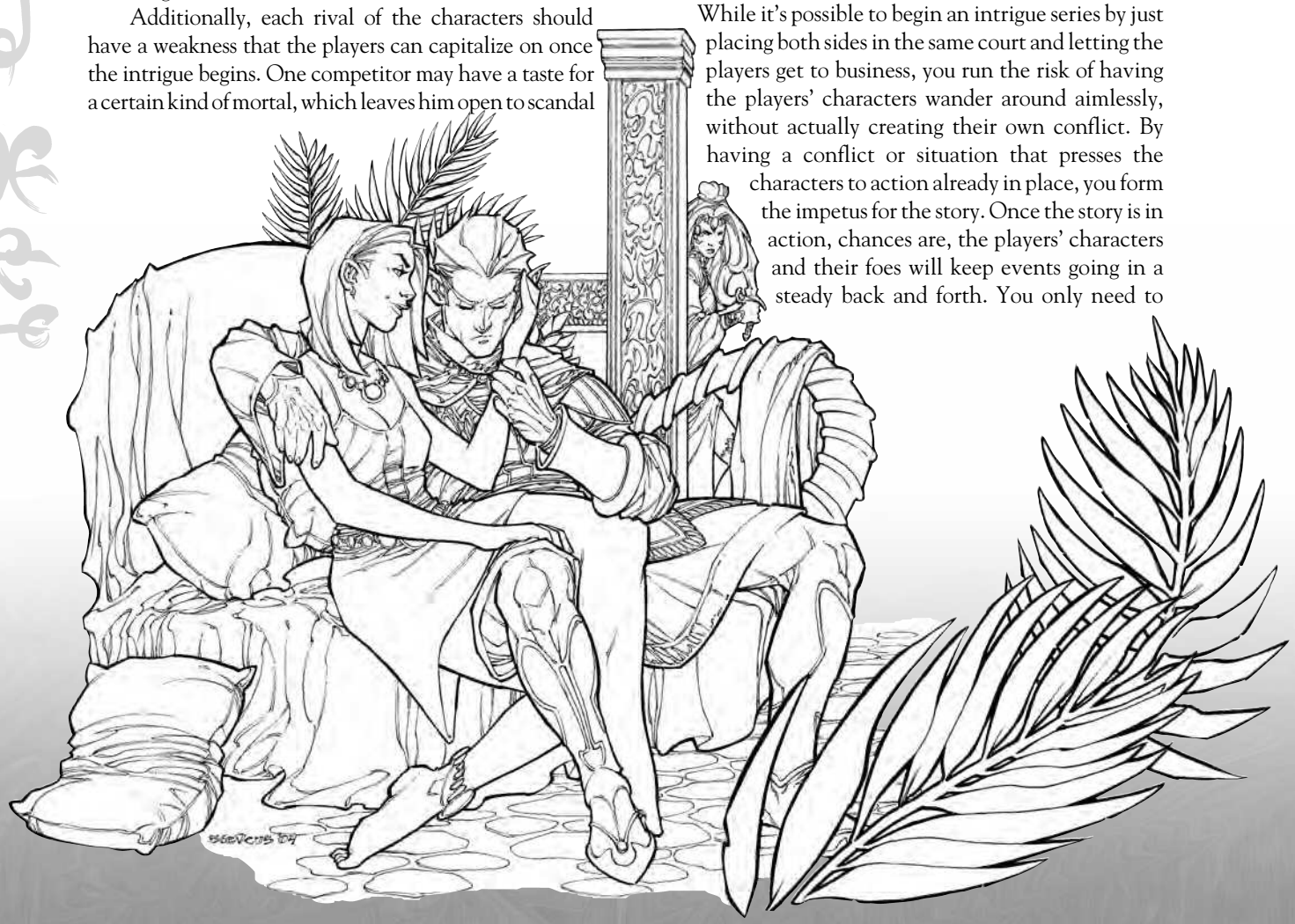
Each member of the rival factions who has any importance whatsoever should be fleshed out in sufficient detail that the Storyteller feels comfortable with them. Some Storytellers are going to want to stat out every character, while others are going to write down a few keywords that describe the key elements of the character's personality and stop there — the best advice is just to do what you feel comfortable with. However you go about doing it, the one thing you need to do is make sure that the opponents are compelling, in the sense that they push the players' characters to engage with them. Whether they're honorable or despicable, beautiful or twisted, educated or coarse, the characters' opponents should get a reaction out of the characters — if not right away, then certainly soon after the series gets put into motion. If the opponents you have designated as the characters' adversaries are not getting a reaction out of them, then you need to rethink how you're portraying them or whether the characters are interested in taking the bait.

Additionally, each rival of the characters should have a weakness that the players can capitalize on once the intrigue begins. One competitor may have a taste for a certain kind of mortal, which leaves him open to scandal or blackmail. Another may have a hot temper and make missteps once the characters begin to push her buttons or may rely too much on a trusted associate who can be bought. Even those raksha who have no weaknesses in the sense of vices or obsessions and who keep themselves isolated from any possible traitors have a kind of weakness in their isolation — being that self-reliant means that you cut yourself off from possible allies at the worst possible times.

Not every person in court is going to be playing the same game as the characters — some of them are going to be potential pawns in the struggle, while others will be sources of information and arbiters of who's winning. These people should be fleshed out as needed and, if at all possible, worked into the living history of the court — if the characters relied on a certain handmaiden for information one episode, she should still be around later, unless some aspect of the plot resulted in her death.

The Opening Gambit

Once you have the nature of the resources being fought or competed over and an idea of the players and potential pawns in the court, the next thing to do is to find an event or situation with which to begin the episode. While it's possible to begin an intrigue series by just placing both sides in the same court and letting the players get to business, you run the risk of having the players' characters wander around aimlessly, without actually creating their own conflict. By having a conflict or situation that presses the characters to action already in place, you form the impetus for the story. Once the story is in action, chances are, the players' characters and their foes will keep events going in a steady back and forth. You only need to



provide another hook to move things along when the struggle begins to slow.

The nature of these motivators can vary based on what seems exciting, but they don't need to be flashy or obvious. A ring of characters could be pressed into a plot when one of their contacts is killed or vexed into a diminished state and they try to unravel who did the deed. They could also come into conflict with rivals over who can find the most novel trinket for the prince's fete or who can win a wager over which character can make the visiting noble from the Court of Lapis fall passionately in love with them.

All it takes is a single push for the characters to take the bait and begin plotting against their foes — but it is partly the players' responsibility to take the bait. If the players are refusing to take the lead, then its time to rethink the nature of the series you're running or to make a drastic shift in the series' narrative so that the characters *must* slip into action. As an example, if a ring of raksha is accused of murdering the boon companion of an important local personage, its members need to find out who the real culprits are or face lasting censure, exile or worse. Playing the heavy-handed card quickly grows wearisome, though — keeping the characters on the defensive, where there lives are at stake, deprotagonizes them, and an intrigue series is all about the characters being movers and shakers in their own right.

If the players are ignoring the bait too often, it may be time to move away from intrigue as the center of your series and to shift into more conventional action-adventure series.

Finally, one of the best ways to let an intrigue series founder is to let it go on forever. As much as the Fair Folk as a people may draw out intrigue and skullduggery, from a plot perspective, the same foes in the same plots, over and over again, gets old. Once the characters have completely overwhelmed their rivals, possibly vexing them at the end, there should be a new challenge awaiting them.

One way to ensure that the struggle between rival factions does not become interminable is to keep an informal score and to reflect the results in the characters'

Made to Be Broken

To suggest that every opponent of the characters' have some weakness or vulnerability may seem like cheating in favor of the players, at least to some Storytellers. But the fact is the players are at a disadvantage, for you, as someone who's played with them over a period of time, are well aware of the players' weaknesses. There's the guy who always likes to plot against his fellow players and the girl who's a sucker for a romantic subplot. You know how to take them down, and if you played straight, you would pick your players' characters apart in a scant few sessions.

At the same time, as a Storyteller, your first impulse is to create adversaries who are challenging to the players' characters, and it's easy to slip into overkill and create an unstoppable social foe who knows everything about everyone within the court and who has no obvious or penetrable weaknesses. While such characters exist and are plentiful in fiction, they're quite difficult to work with in a roleplaying game. The problem with them in an intrigue-laden series is that an opponent with no social weaknesses may be too tempting for the characters to just eliminate with physical violence. Once the swords are drawn, the tone of the series can slip, with the players settling all of their grudges with gossamer weapons and brute force, rather than scuttling in the shadows, eliminating their rivals from a position of secrecy. Before you know it, the tone of an intrigue series is effectively ruined.

The easiest way to avoid the boring, emotionless, cunning villain-without-a-weakness is to build your adversaries with a plan as to the seeds of their undoing. It may take a while for the players' characters to figure out what those weaknesses are, and that's fine — they should be a challenge, after all — but by making them flawed, you make them more realistic, and the battles between them and the characters will be more lively, as a result.

Pawns of the Heart's Grace

Raksha who have had their Heart's Grace dominated make wonderful pawns and players in intrigue games. The raksha who has failed to stop some other member of the Fair Folk from attuning to his Heart's Grace is absolutely loyal to his master — and there is no outward sign of this dominance. Those who command a raksha through his Heart's Grace often have to balance the usefulness of having the knowledge spread around the court that they were masterful and intelligent enough to dominate another one of their kind with the knowledge that, if the fact of the dominated raksha's downfall is kept hidden, the dominated pawn becomes a potent weapon. Indeed, the most adroit among the raksha will dominate an enemy's Heart's Grace but still keep up the appearance of a feud between the two of them. The rest of the court will never suspect that what appears to be a raksha's most embittered enemy is actually her most devoted slave, and enemies approaching the enemy for help against the raksha actually only alert her to their intentions…

Backgrounds, specifically Allies, Contacts, Influence and Backing. As a ring scores more victories against its opponents, the high-ranking nobles around the court will take notice of them and give them more responsibility. As they cultivate more spies, informants and friends, the players' characters will amass more allies and contacts upon whom to depend, thus increasing their usefulness again to the ranking members of the court. Eventually, the characters will have moved out of the league of their old foes and into the arena of newer challenges and more experienced rivals who were, up until now, out of their reach.

Keep in mind that this advice doesn't have to apply only to Storyteller characters in conflict with their rivals among the players' characters — as stated in the section on rings, intra-ring conflict is quite a powerful force in Fair Folk society and actually works to keep the raksha vibrant and less prone to ennui. If the characters are willing to feud and enter into rivalries with one another, so much the better.

Shaping and Questing

The ability of the Fair Folk to manipulate the fluid, inchoate reality of the Wyld in order to wage shaping duels or to quest for power is the most distinct aspect of their beings. No other kind of being, even the Exalted, can create a story from the formless matter of the Wyld and then attempt to force other beings to conform to that story in a ritual duel that obliges the loser to give up an important belonging, to submit to a binding oath and bear an incumbrance. The ability to shape is, thus, a central part of any Fair Folk series and an exciting way for Storytellers to make the raksha distinct.

Sharing the Power

The biggest challenge for Storytellers when running a quest set in the Deep Wyld or a shaping duel within the bounds of a court is the fact that the rules give an unusual amount of power to the players. As the players attempt to rip power from the heart of one of the unshaped or to battle one of their own kind, the rules elevate them to a nearly equal level with the Storyteller, which may be a strange sensation for you if you are not prepared for it or are initially unwilling to share the descriptive power. The simplest advice is, embrace it — view it as an opportunity for you to do a little less work.

The fact is that, if you are an experienced **Exalted** Storyteller, the game has already prepared you for players gaining control of the story, in a large part through the stunt system. The players take control of the description and add to the environment when they have their characters perform stunts, and questing and shaping are just stunts writ large and expanded. On the descriptive level, the characters are trying to ritually force one of the unshaped raksha that lurk within pure chaos to give up its power or to allow some of its power to be forged into a belonging or to shoulder an incumbrance. However, on the mechanical level, the players are still simply trying to make their characters sound cool while achieving a goal.

The easiest way to encourage the players is to reward them for solid play during a shaping or quest, either through the generous awarding of stunt dice — including Wyld stunts — or through experience awards at the end of the session. Be very clear about where the bonus experience points come from, so as to make sure that the players are cognizant of what they're doing right. If possible, quit 15 minutes early the first time you run through a quest or a shaping duel and discuss how it worked. If the players embraced the amount of power they had during the quest, commend them. If they were hesitant or abused it, give them some friendly advice on how to throw themselves into that specific part of the series a little more effectively. There are many players who will be very reluctant to seize the reins during a quest or a shaping duel, and those are the ones who will most need positive feedback on what they're doing right and gentle, constructive criticism when they're doing something ineffectively. Remember, the goal is to have fun, and as the person who rewards player activity through experience points, you can encourage — or accidentally discourage — the players.

You will also want to balance the fact that your role as Storyteller is both an adversarial one, in the context of you roleplaying the characters' opponents in a shaping duel, and an enabling one, in that part of your goal is to make the experience as remarkable as it can possibly be. Every Storyteller will take a different tack trying to make the experience memorable and exciting. Some will attempt to keep escalating the coolness when it comes to their shaping action, pushing the contest higher and higher. Others will attempt to keep the story exciting by adding to the stakes — making the price of failure, and the rewards for victory, suitable incentives to keep the players interested and the action moving. Regardless of how, exactly, the Storyteller tries to embrace a shaping duel and share narrative power with the players, all that matters is that the Storyteller should be a helpful presence, rather than only an adversarial one.

The best advice a Storyteller can get once the knives are drawn and the rulebooks are turned to the pages detailing the shaping and questing rules is to embrace the moment — to help the players to make this a cool encounter. Yes, the act of dueling or questing is fundamentally adversarial, but the fact is that both you and the players alike want to make the series memorable and enjoyable.

Preparing for Shaping and Questing

In addition to the potential anxiety associated with sharing power with the players during a shaping duel, Storytellers will have to keep up with the players when it comes to creating imaginative elements of the action. Some Storytellers, who specialize in extemporaneously manufacturing elements of their story on the fly, will have

no problems, while less freeform Storytellers will be caught off guard. After all, a shaping battle can take the form of anything, from a contest of strength, to a seduction to a battle involving massed numbers of troops, depending on which raksha initiated it. Keeping up with the sheer madness of a shaping duel is a lot to ask from any Storyteller, but there are a few tricks to keep the story moving and help even unprepared Storytellers along.

The best advice Storytellers can rely on is to simply call upon their knowledge of appropriate events in films, novels, folktales and previous series. The shaping duel is a kind of ritual warfare designed around the creation of a story, and most Storytellers will have a library of material to call upon — battle scenes from movies in the case of Sword duels, seductions from various books in the case of Ring duels and so on. The average Storyteller has a lot of material to call upon, if he just looks at things as potential hooks to hang maneuvers in a shaping duel on.

Finally, nothing beats good old preparation. If you suspect that the players are planning to have their characters engage in a shaping duel in the next episode or if the plot is building toward a showdown between two characters, thinking ahead as to how your Storyteller characters who might potentially be in the line of fire will react is the best edge you can have. How will the character react if a Grace comes under fire in a shaping duel? Does the character have the option of initiating the duel, and if she does, what tack will she take? What will she ask of her opponent if she wins? How will she react if defeated? And finally, how will this change the existing dynamics of power within the court if it's a public defeat?

In the case of a quest, the hard part will be designing what the monstrous target of the quest will look like — what the unshaped will send forward to represent it in the contest. What sort of terrors will the Fair Folk face — are the unshaped's minions part of some theme or array, or are they mad and random conglomerations linked together by some mechanical or similarly obscured theme? There should generally be some sort of thematic link so the unshaped can have some sort of thematic unity, but it's appropriate that this not be directly obvious. These beings are not wholly random, or they would just be the winds of chaos. There should be some theme that clever players can discover and let their characters exploit, but it's not necessary that this theme be something the players will immediately recognize.

Rings

Finally, the last element unique to a Fair Folk series is the ring — as the basic component of raksha society, it forms the central focus of any story. While Fair Folk society is competitive and predatory, the Fair Folk within a ring agree to suspend the more overt and vicious hostilities between members in order to accomplish short-term projects or to pursue long-term goals in which all of the members have a stake. For Storyteller characters and the players' characters alike, the ring is a long-term alliance, and the creation and sundering of rings within the series is an important, symbolic act.

Forming the Ring

The most obvious reason for a group of Fair Folk to ally with one another is for mutual protection and mutual advancement within their social milieu, be it one of the courts, a household or a large Freehold. The political intrigues and social warfare of the raksha are far easier to survive and thrive in if characters have someone watching their backs, hence the reason for this kind of ring. Such cabals also form an easy way for a group of Fair Folk to find their footing as they navigate the treacherous waters of raksha society, discovering their own innate talents as they answer challenges set forth by a Freehold's adversaries or in the completion of tasks that they are called to complete by their rulers. A ring of allies might be summoned to wage war on the Freeholds' enemies, to form a diplomatic mission to a nearby spirit court or another nation of raksha or even to go off on their own and start a new Freehold under the aegis of their current lord.

Rings can either start at the bottom of the local hierarchies and work their way up the social ladder of their court, gaining allies as they go — or start play with a mentor to watch their backs, an elder raksha who will look out for them in the games at court without demanding too much in return. In the latter case, you may build the first few stories of such a series around the characters' efforts to complete the tasks set before them by their mentor and then continue the series as the stories begin to detail the characters' rising and falling fortunes as they become more powerful in court in their own right. Eventually, the characters might finally eclipse their mentor or move on to their own territory, where they can flourish without the aid of a more powerful raksha.

Intra-Ring Conflict

Among the members of a ring, not all hostilities are suspended. The physical and social conflicts that provide the motive force for the Fair Folk and keeps their lives interesting does not have to be aimed solely at those beings outside of the intimacy of the ring — many Fair Folk thrive on competition, and in many rings, there are fierce rivalries among the raksha who coexist within them. Just because those within the ring's confines have agreed to protect one another from outsiders, it doesn't automatically follow that they forgo all interpersonal conflict with one another or avoid the occasional duel. After all, unless very specific weapons are brought into the equation, dueling sessions among the raksha within a ring are nonlethal.

Storytellers should attempt to make it clear to players from the series' onset that the Fair Folk who participate within a ring often have colorful relationships with one

another that, to outsiders, can appear to be combative and even dysfunctional. Like a tight-knit clique at a school or a family full of strong personalities, the members of a ring often try to score points off of one another either by outperforming one another in combat or through romantic and social coups. Cutting remarks, nonlethal sparring and dueling and braggadocio are often the vehicles through which members of a ring attempt to show one another up. This behavior is not so much an automatic reflex as a conscious intellectual defense — within a ring, raksha can let their defenses down, but anyone outside of the ring getting involved in conflict is a potential threat, looking to enslave the raksha in question or seeking to undermine the entire ring.

The conflict that goes on within the confines of a ring should be of a different flavor entirely than the clashes that occur between Fair Folk who do not share membership in a common ring. Vexing within a ring is probably going to be very rare, if not unheard of, and fights will almost always be nonlethal. The Storyteller and players should either formally, or informally, establish what is and isn't an appropriate level of hostilities for members of a ring and to what extent outsiders can be brought into the dispute as allies, targets and prizes. For some groups, braggadocio concerning who has the bigger sword and cutting remarks over dinner suffices to provide the right level of intra-ring conflict. In others rings, Machiavellian challenges as to which raksha can seduce the beautiful musician who's just entered the court or contests to see which member can eliminate another characters' favored mortal pet are standard levels of hostility. Storytellers should keep similar track of what the other rings within the court consider appropriate conduct, and the princes of some courts may insist on establishing hard rules for what is and is not a transgression between ringmates.

Of course, transgressing the rules of engagement that everyone has agreed upon is a good way to escalate interpersonal conflict within the ring. The rest of the ring may decide to censure the aggressor by either temporarily forcing some penalty on her or subjecting her to some humiliating geas. Or the rest of the ring may decide to embrace the new range of appropriate conduct in order to press their once friendly feuds into more interesting territory.

The Origin of the Ring

Even though the players' characters' ring will be a long-term alliance based around mutual aid and protection, Storytellers can get a lot of mileage out of letting the players define what the original purpose of their ring was and letting that frame the series through a recurring enterprise that the ring often undertakes. A ring that formed because its individual members got together to go on late-night hunts through the villages of Creation would have a different flavor than a ring put together by the prince of a Freehold in order to send an embassy to a nearby household.

The important thing for Storytellers is to make sure the players had a solid reason for their characters to ally together while still leaving plenty of room for the ring to experiment with different kinds of stories and missions. Whether the origin of the ring lies in a group of disenchanted young nobles embittered about the existing hierarchy, a group



that's vowed revenge against some slight or atrocity committed against its court or a group of raksha who've been brought together by a common mentor or mentors, the origin of a ring defines only its original purpose. A ring that formed around an alliance of young nobles defending themselves against predatory superiors can still fight wars together or travel across Creation to seek out some powerful weapon for use against the filthy Creation-born.

When Internal Conflict Goes Wrong

If players do embrace the challenge of playing a ring that utilizes internal struggle in order to keep the individual raksha engaged and vital, it is the Storyteller's job to make sure that conflicts stay within the realm of healthy roleplay and not become real disputes between players. The easiest way to do this is to simply defuse situations when they become too tense, which is easiest when an external threat appears to unite the feuding ring against a common enemy.

If that doesn't work, there are still several methods for a Storyteller to rein in her players' tempers. Within the story, it is possible to have another player's character sit the two sides down and defuse the situation, negotiating the whole conflict in-character and, ideally, keeping it from happening again. Such a meeting can be arranged between sessions, with the Storyteller discussing the matter in advance with the mediator, or the discussion can be arranged within the context of the story itself. A second method is simply to call a time-out at the table and pull both players aside, reminding them that the events that have tempers flaring are just part of a game, that the whole idea is to have a good time and that the situation is getting too intense. All too often, it only takes a neutral party (like the Storyteller) calling attention to a problem to make both players realize emotions had become too heated and to put it aside.

Of course, it's not a perfect world — not all players are always rational, not all of them are aware of the boundaries of good play, and sometimes, they don't just drop it. If events actually reach this level, the best a Storyteller can do is nip the whole situation in the bud by suspending the game for the evening and explaining to all parties involved that they're about to derail the plot, while pointing out that the conflict has ceased to just be about their characters. Let them know that they're making you and/or the other players uncomfortable and that the whole thing needs to be resolved. After that talk, a Storyteller should probably refocus the nature of the ring within the series and suspend intra-ring politics until a suitable cooling-off period has elapsed.

The Worlds of the Raksha

A central conceit of **Exalted: The Fair Folk** is that the raksha are trapped between worlds. By taking shape, they have become too static for the Deep Wyld and the courts of the unshaped that lie within the pure chaos, but their wild natures and power over glamour make them too mercurial to exist safely in Creation. They exist somewhere between the two extremes, never truly safe in either place, drawn to the Middlemarches of Rakshastan, where a layer of Wyld energy overlays the shelf of reality that still exists deep beneath its surface.

Despite the tenuous nature of their beings, the Fair Folk have learned to survive, even in environments inimical to their species. Anywhere the natural Essence flows warp the fabric of Creation to form a Demesne, the Fair Folk can build a homestead, a tiny scrap of the Wyld in which they can survive, provided they have a steady stream of dreams with which to feed the bonefire at the heart of the Freehold. Likewise, the Deep Wyld is a place of madness that tests the mettle of the shaped raksha, but they still hunt there, questing for the unshaped and forcing them through ritual combat to give up their power.

Because of the raksha's strange souls and adaptability, Storytellers should give some thought as to where they will set their series and what strange landscapes will beckon to the characters. A series set against the backdrop of the Middlemarches of Rakshastan will require a bit more work on the part of the Storyteller than one set in the mundane wasteland of Creation. At the same time, series set in the Threshold require more work on the players' part as their characters struggle to survive in what amounts to an arid desert that requires them to be feed on the local mortal population just to survive. And no matter where the series is set, there may still be moments where the characters need to travel from one kind of terrain to another, requiring the Storyteller to be prepared to provide different environmental conditions and threats for the characters to cope with.

Creation

There are a number of reasons for Storytellers to bring Creation into their series. For a standard Fair Folk series set in the Middlemarches, Creation is a hostile environment. Even traveling from one Freehold to another requires access to pennants or a steady supply of mortal dreams — and the skill to fight off the raksha's numerous enemies, from gods with vendettas dating back to the Balorian Crusade to Solar Exalted and Dragon-Bloods guarding mortal populations. Even the greatest gift the raksha have, the ability to shape reality to match their needs, is stymied within the cruel wasteland of Creation.

In a Middlemarches-centered series, the Storyteller should endeavor to portray Creation as the barren desert it is. Raksha are not at the top of the food chain here, and their foes outnumber them. While they do not have to worry about ancient Lunar warlords or the unshaped, they do have to worry that every expenditure of Essence will result in the need to feed, either on ambient emotions or through ravishing the Creation-born. Even a journey from one Freehold to another will be potentially deadly to the immortal raksha, so they must be clever and strong to avoid death at the hands of the denizens of Creation.

At the same time, some raksha have spent their existences living in Creation. Away from the Wyld, and without the use of an artificially maintained chaotic environment such as a Freehold, they live in cities, hunt the wastelands of the Threshold or live as part of traveling troupes, wandering the highways and byways of Creation. To these Fair Folk, existing within the harsh stasis of Creation is still a chore, but their experience means that the danger for them is lessened. They may have reached some accommodation with the Creation-born or found succor within the Guild or some potentate's kingdom due to their unique gifts, and they will certainly have found sources from which to feed, either slaves or ambient emotions. Storytellers using beings such as this within their story — or basing the whole story around them — should explain why the raksha in question have chosen to avoid the Middlemarches. Did they commit some crime too heinous even for the Fair Folk of the Wyld? Are they so frightened of the unshaped princes within the outer reaches of pure chaos that they only feel safe in the arid environment of the Threshold? How have they survived? What arrangements have they made with local mortals? Do they rule the area around them, or do they serve some Creation-born in exchange for sanctuary? How do they feed? Do they still enjoy preying on mortals, or have they developed some grudging respect for the Creation-born that keeps them from beguiling and ravishing human prey? Storytellers can base entire series around these raksha living within Creation, how they survive and what accommodations they've come to with local Exalted and mortals.

The Wyld

The Wyld is as much a home as any for the Fair Folk. Within its shifting borders and chimerical reality, the glamours of the Fair Folk are at their most powerful, and the raksha do not need to feed on mortal dreams to survive — although they still enjoy it. However, each layer of the Wyld holds unique perils for the players' characters and new challenges for the Storyteller. You should prepare for series set in the Wyld well before play begins, since coming up with endlessly shifting environments and hallucinatory imagery on the fly is usually a tough challenge for even the most stalwart Storyteller — especially when you're distracted by the normal minutiae of running a series.

Naturally, Storytellers may want to familiarize themselves with the Wyld as it is described in Chapter One of this book. What follows are some Storytelling tips for running episodes of a Fair Folk set in the various gradations of the Wyld. Each section describes potential plot hooks in the various locales, outlines potential threats to the raksha and provides Storytelling tips on preparing for a series set there.

The Bordermarches

The Bordermarches are the periphery of the Wyld. If the Wyld can be viewed as a massive sea of chaos washing away the borders of Creation, then the Bordermarches is that region where the beach is almost always above sea level except for those rare occasions when the tide rises higher than normal. While the lands here are certainly tainted by the Wyld, they bear more resemblance to the terrain that existed before the Wyld touched it than they do the phantasmagoric landscapes of the Middlemarches.

Stories set in the Bordermarches offer a number of advantages for rings of raksha in that the area is just Wyld enough to keep the Fair Folk from diminishing over much, but not so Wyld that the Storyteller must invest a lot of time in maintaining the right atmosphere of environmental chaos and madness. At the same time, the region gives the Storyteller a wide variety of foes to pit against the characters, ranging from tribes of Wyld barbarians and their gods and allies to Lunar warlords seeking to defend the periphery of Creation from the Fair Folk.

Preparing series set in the Bordermarches is relatively easy. The terrain is still essentially the terrain of Creation, the beasts and environmental phenomena still, at heart, the same as what would exist in Creation. The key for Storytellers is to add a slight tinge of strangeness to the environment. Seed just enough odd details into the description of the Bordermarches to convey the alien nature of the environment, but not so much that the location seems more than slightly twisted — if detailing a forest, add only one or two strange mutations to the trees, for instance.

If you are preparing in advance — which is highly recommended — then you should create a short "cheat sheet" of terrains that the players might encounter during play and then add in a few details that convey that the characters are in the Bordermarches. If you are going to read prepared flavor text, keep the description brief but impressive — it's better to have two very noteworthy sentences than a whole paragraph of tiny little details. Better still, avoid reading text entirely and keep short thumbnail descriptions that you can call upon when necessary.

Also, keep in mind that it is not just the terrain in the Bordermarches that has been twisted by the Wyld – there will also be extant structures from the First Age, some of them warped by the Wyld and some of them proof against the warping effect of the chaotic energy washing against them. Some sites may merely be ancient ruins, with nothing of value left behind — but others will be lost

tombs, filled with artifacts of the Shogunate and the Old Realm. Some might even be abandoned courts belonging to long-dead Fair Folk, who were wiped out by the efforts of Creation's defenders or the Lunar Exalted. Remember to also populate this region with strange weather patterns and twisted animals, sometimes tragically deformed monstrosities barely able to eke out an existence and waiting for the mercy of death, other times viable but mutated creatures who have adapted to their new homes.

The encampments and bazaars of Wyld barbarians, the fortresses of the Lunar Exalted and the sanctums of gods whose assignments have been eaten by the Wyld are also to be found in this region. The mortals will have some agreement with local gods, with courts of Fair Folk or with the Lunar Exalted or their God-Blooded progeny in order to safeguard them from threats and from the Wyld itself. Attacking them out of hand may bring down the wrath of some greater power — after all, the Lunar Exalted have walked the Bordermarches since the Usurpation, and those who manage to live as kings in this region of the Wyld are formidable opponents even for a whole court of Fair Folk.

The Middlemarches

The Middlemarches of Rakshastan are where the shaped Fair Folk come into their own. The Wyld of the Middlemarches is malleable enough to complement the reality manipulation of the raksha, and here, their power is strongest. The Fair Folk stand no chance of diminishment in the Middlemarches, and the power of the Wyld is strong enough to let them exist without having to worry about an army of Wyld barbarians and their Lunar Exalted masters appearing on the horizon at any moment.

The Middlemarches also make an excellent staging ground for the shaped raksha to launch quests into the Deep Wyld or raids into the fringes of Creation. Enemies made on these missions, be they unshaped Princes of Chaos or Lunar Exalted, will be hard-pressed to track their attackers all the way through the Wyld back to the Middlemarches. Even if they do, the Fair Folk can stay mobile, forcing the unshaped to follow them into the Bordermarches and even Creation in order to catch them, while compelling Lunar opponents to proceed even deeper into the Wyld if they want justice.

When running episodes set in the Middlemarches, it is important to realize that the mythical nature of the Fair Folk resonates deeply with the nature of the Wyld in the area. When looking for elements to add to the scenery, play off of the nature of the characters — much of the phenomena they will encounter will be spun off from their own subconscious or conscious minds, echoing fears, desires, friendships and enmities. Allow the characters' backgrounds and rivalries to fuel your descriptions, almost as if there is the slightest subconscious reflection of themselves in the world around them, rooted in their innate and powerful ability to shape. If emotions are heated, the weather will be tumultuous and apocalyptic, yet strangely twisted in the manner of the Wyld — perhaps rain falls sideways or the grass explodes upward and spirals around the combatants, whirling from opponent to opponent as Essence is expended.

More Than a Picture

The best advice that a Storyteller can take when it comes to describing Wyld environments is to do more than paint a picture — the scene should affect the characters in some way, connecting with the players' imaginations on a more visceral level. If a Storyteller just describes a vista to the players, then she's only really connecting with one of the players' senses, no matter how pretty the prose, and detailing the scene from a distance at that. Instead, Storytellers should try to affect the more immediate, personal senses. Rather than just describe purple clouds scudding across the sky of the Bordermarches, describe the wind against the characters' skin, the smell of cinnamon and natron in the breeze — players tend to view things in their mind's eye from a distance, visualizing the characters from the third person, while the senses of touch and smell imply a presence closer to the characters' location.

Most of the time, simply placing the characters into the scene right away, rather than describing it to them in advance, can accomplish this feel of immediacy. If the Storyteller wants to have a plain where instead of green grass standing up from the ground there are hollow ivory knucklebones, describe the feel of the knucklebones as they crunch against the characters' shoes or convey how the bones seem to clatter together in the breeze. Connect the scene to the characters through a variety of senses, and the players will appreciate it not just as a pretty bit of description concocted by the Storyteller to set a scene, but as an environment their characters are actually present in.

Remember that even in the oases of stability in the Bordermarches where the Wyld, for whatever reason, has receded and Wyld barbarians survive, what is left behind is seemingly normal but still somehow wrong. Sometimes, an effective tool is to turn the fun-house mirrors of the Bordermarches off and present the players with a beast of Creation that's somehow avoided mutation or that has just wandered into the area and has yet to be tainted. Imagine the effect that a normal deer would have on the players if they saw it drinking out of a pond surrounded by trees that had viscera hanging from the branches instead of leaves or if they were witness to a normal eagle struggling to soar through a rainstorm made up of bits of rusted metal.

The only time that the players won't be shaping the reality of the Middlemarches is when they are within the range of influence of a Freehold, at which point the fabric of reality responds to the whim of the noble whose Heart lies in the bonefire. These regions will reflect that single individual's desires and can be as easy or as difficult to traverse as the ruler desires. Storytellers are advised to embrace the idea that the area's logic responds to a single, unifying will instead of the almost random events that occur in the rest of the Middlemarches. The rules of the area should reflect that single raksha, and the trick of navigating these pocket regions should be for the characters to grasp those rules and to work within their boundaries. As an aid for themselves and the players, Storytellers might want to come up with a set of "rules" that the basic logic of the area is formed around — in the Freehold, everything will use those rules as the basic underlying skeleton for the place's physics, architecture and weather.

When describing the Middlemarches, keep to the strong, short details that the Bordermarches use, but add strange phenomena, be it fishes that fly, strange gravitational affects or bizarre synesthesia where the senses become confused or twist in on one another — describe an animal that smells bright orange or an onion-colored tree. Remember not to overload your players with too many bizarre details, and keep an eye as to how the details you do describe will affect stunts.

The Deep Wyld

The Deep Wyld is a dangerous place for the raksha. It is where the unshaped roam and where the Fair Folk quest against them in order to secure more power for themselves for wars in Creation or intrigue in the Middlemarches. At the same time, the Deep Wyld is almost too malleable — it conforms too readily to the ability of the Fair Folk's shaping, reflecting every desire, every whim, no matter how fast it flits through the raksha's imagination. The Fair Folk rarely travel here unless on important business or questing — for the raksha, the Deep Wyld is something they left behind when they took on the abomination of shape, and it reminds them of the limitless freedom they had within the pure chaos and the domains of the unshaped.

The Deep Wyld is literally the madness of the Middlemarches with the intensity turned up to its highest possible level. During attempts to travel through the region, Storytellers should play up the sheer, mercurial bedlam that exists here, with details changing from moment to moment to match the fancies of the travelers or of other beings in the region. Storytellers are well-advised to create a long list of elements of the terrain and environment — and then sublists describing how those elements change from moment to moment. If the Storyteller knows the nature of the characters, make the environment match even the briefest of thoughts the characters have — images that seem like forgotten loves that turn into trees and then birds, rock formations that look like weapons and then melt into quicksilver beetles. Only when the characters encounter the unshaped should the Deep Wyld conform, even briefly, to something solid, as it forms an arena for the encounter.

The Wyld as Setpiece

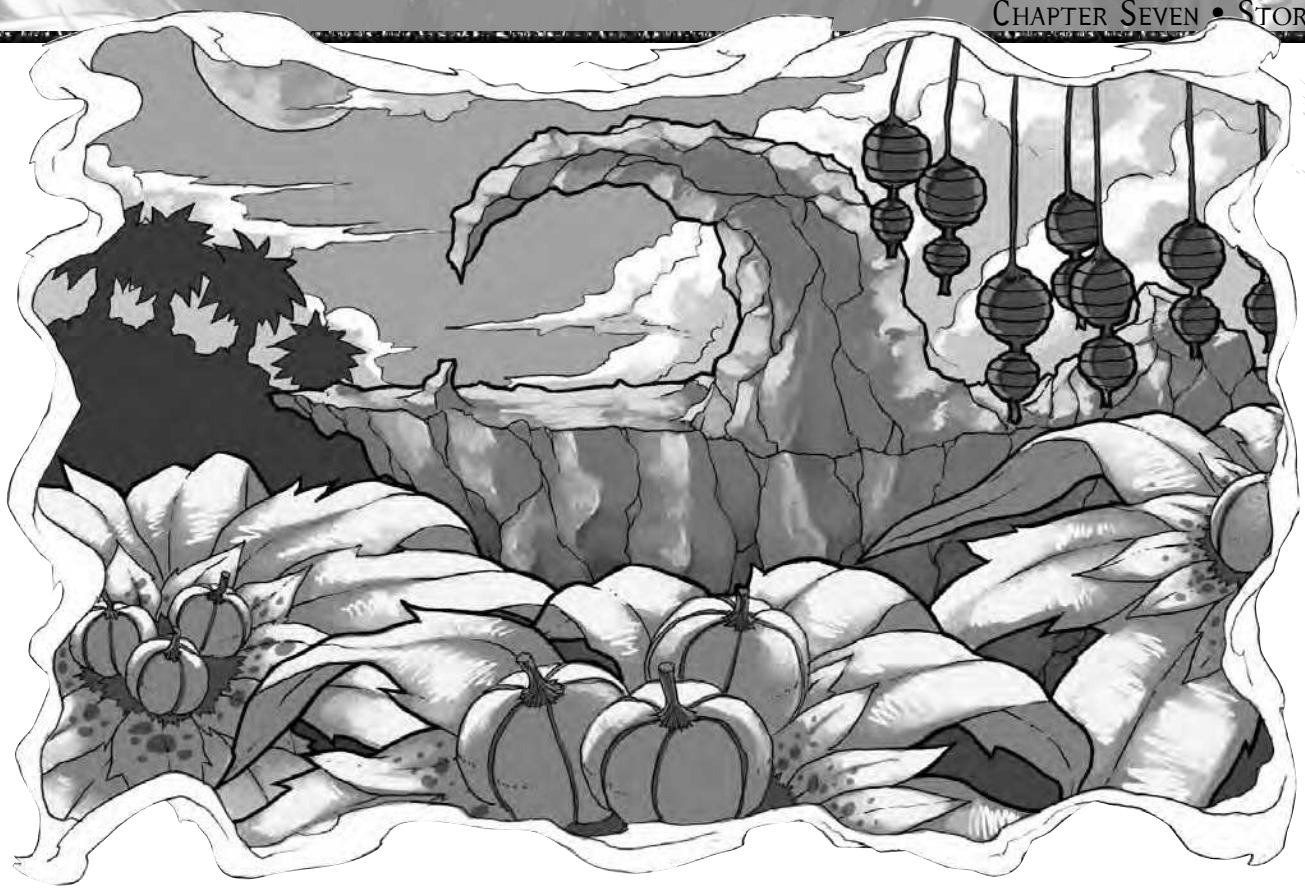
Storytellers should always remember that the Wyld shouldn't be a challenge to run — it's an opportunity. Now's the time to use all of those wild and impossible ideas for setpieces and fight scenes, from martial arts battles where the combatants are falling upward into the sky to swordfights on the edge of bottomless precipices. Make sure that some of your Wyld-tainted scenery has the potential to be integrated into the fight in the form of stunts, from the metal leaves on a tree that can be used as part of Thrown Charms to water that tries to drown those fighting in it. Also, remind players that the more dangerous pieces of terrain in the Wyld — bottomless chasms, gardens of carnivorous plants — can be slightly ameliorated through stunt insurance. Characters who stunt in such potentially deadly environs actually end up adding another layer of protection between themselves and the threat of near-certain death.

When looking for advice on what the more bizarre threats you imagine should look like, remember to use the environmental conditions in the **Exalted** core rulebook and in Chapter One of this book as an inspiration. If a player falls "upward" in an area with uncertain gravity, the standard falling rules should be fine to use, so long as you're fair in arbitrating the "special effect" of the reverse gravity.

Also, keep in mind that the Fair Folk are the undisputed masters of fighting in the bizarre physics of the Wyld and that they are aided by their ability to manipulate reality within its depths. Only the Lunar Exalted are as skilled at fighting within the Middlemarches, and all but the most powerful Lunars will balk at combat in the Deep Wyld unless the need is particularly dire.

Pure Chaos

The Courts of Chaos have little to offer the shaped Fair Folk anymore, although many of them still keep the fearsome power of the unshaped in the back of their minds. Those who dwell in the Middlemarches continually worry about an assault by the unshaped, and fret over the tales that those fleeing the pure chaos in newly created shapes bring back concerning the renewed efforts of the Church of Balor and the unshaped princes' attempts to consolidate power. If the Fair Folk are alien to mortals, the unshaped are alien to even the Fair Folk, and the struggle for power



going on back in the homelands do not leave the raksha on the fringes of Creation feeling very safe. Many of them wonder if the time may come for them to flee to Creation to escape from the unfathomable and powerful beasts roaming the lands of true chaos, to which, in comparison, even the Deep Wyld seems staid and logical.

In most series, the Courts of Chaos will exist in the minds of some raksha as their old homeland, thought of with fond remembrance and trepidation in equal parts. Others, exiled or fleeing the lands of pure chaos just ahead of justice or some crusade, view it only as a place of turmoil and danger. Storytellers should populate the imagination of Fair Folk characters with all sorts of rumors about the region — stories of messiahs preaching the philosophy of the fomorians, schisms within the Church of Balor and massacres and atrocities occurring daily as one unshaped prince attempts to devour another. The chaotic lands of the unshaped might be a fond memory of the past for some who rode alongside Balor, but in the ensuing centuries, it has become a threat about which most raksha know very little of outside of hearsay.

Fair Folk Stories

A Fair Folk series has the potential to allow Storytellers access to all of the standard **Exalted** story types, from high-flying action to intrigue to empire building. At the same time, it also provides several new concepts and kinds of conflict with which to base play around, from the ongoing social sparring within individual rings to power questing in the Deep Wyld and from vexing one's foes to nettling a Freehold.

Storytellers are advised that no matter how far afield their Fair Folk series goes from standard **Exalted**, it's necessary to remember that, at heart, the Fair Folk should be allowed to get involved in all of the coolness that the standard Exalted types have access to. No matter how convoluted the social intrigues become or how strange the environments get, remember to throw in dazzling battle scenes in which the Fair Folk stunt and use their abilities to confound their foes in combat. A good story should keep the feel of **Exalted** while introducing the alien nature and new story opportunities of the raksha, not eschew the typical play style entirely.

Episode Focus

One way to make sure that the players get a good survey of what the raksha can do is to choose a single element of Fair Folk life and make it the central pivot upon which the episode revolves. By focusing on the more novel aspects of the nature of the raksha, one by one, you allow the series to pick up steam and get the players' feet wet, permitting them to get the hang of each element in turn. This process of acclimation can take as little time as you think is appropriate, from being restricted to the first three episodes to an entire opening story. The key is to make sure that you don't drown your players in detail right off of that bat and that, in turn, you emphasize those parts of the series that you feel are most essential to playing in Fair Folk series.

Sample Series

What follows are sample series based around several themes — courtly life, war and phantasmagoria. They are not meant to be detailed roadmaps for Storytellers to follow, but instead, guideposts and pools of ideas for you to use in your own series. Storytellers and players alike should feel free to hand-pick elements from each series in order to create the series they want.

Courtly Life: Wheels Within Wheels

In this series, the characters are members of a larger household or one of the great raksha courts, plotting to increase their own status at the expense of their enemies, all while living a life without need. Occasionally, the characters are drawn forth from their series of petty intrigues to perform a deed for the prince of the Freehold, but even the simplest of tasks might be traps with which to slow the characters' ascent up the social ladder. Every step the characters take must be one that furthers their own aims while limiting the ability of their enemies to take advantage of their vulnerabilities.

This is the standard Fair Folk series centering around intrigue and skullduggery, as the characters' ring tries to manipulate, ally and backstab its way into higher status and the favor of the local rulers. Every step must be measured — if the characters move too slowly, they will never catch the prince's eye, while if they move too quickly, they might be viewed as a threat. Conflict doesn't just center around status, however — it provides an avenue to power and a way to gain territory. Fair Folk aren't in it for the adulation. Among the Princes of Chaos, those who do not grow in strength are consumed by peers who do. Throw in the occasional hunt for mortals, assaults by young Lunars and their Wyld-barbarian allies and duels in the middle of marble gardens filled with humming statues, and you're ready to go.

Each court described in Chapter Two has its own unique feel, so Storytellers should choose wisely before beginning play. Look at the customs and examples of daily life in Chapter Two, and pick the court that best fits your group's style of play. Look at the Virtue that each court epitomizes, and compare it to the Virtues that the players favor the most. In fact, if at all possible, persuade the players to choose a court before they begin creating characters, so the characters might fit in more readily — after all, characters ill-suited for legalistic intrigue won't fit into the Pearl Court, and it becomes just as much a problem when one character does not click in the environment and the rest do. Planning ahead pays off in a courtly drama.

Also, remember that the courts move and that a Storyteller will have to decide on where the court is currently located. Is the court located in the Southeast, surrounded by jungles and swamps and populated with vicious hobgoblins wielding blowguns, preying on local indigenous tribes? Or is it located in the Wyld of the Northeast amidst mighty forests and plagued by households run by ancient cannibalistic grandmothers who dine on the marrow of children? The location of the court can change when the Storyteller wants to introduce a new feel or a new environment, so dramas of courtly intrigue need not worry about a static environment.

Characters: Any character can shine in a series centered around the court. Entertainers, Diplomats, Warriors and nobles are all important to a ring hoping to rise within the estimation of the local court and gain power, although Social Attributes are very important to such a series. The thing to note with this type of series is that players should be familiar with the rules for shaping combat, so that they know enough to function in a series built around the court.

Episodes: Any event around court can be an excuse for moving against one's enemies or jockeying for position. Perhaps the prince is celebrating some holiday and expects a gift from each of the rings and from all the titled individuals around the throne. Entire episodes can be set around the characters attempting to stymie another ring's pursuit of a certain special gift, while ensuring that their own is unforgettable, and the feast during which the gifts are presented will be filled with cutting remarks, the potential for duels and nonlethal (but still somewhat embarrassing) poisonings.

This Fair Folk series makes a good first one because the nonlethal and cyclical nature of Fair Folk feuding means that the players' first tentative steps into a series centered around intrigue will be nonfatal for their characters. Plus, by that token, adversaries who have made an impact on the characters do not have to be removed from the series just because they lost a round of social skirmishing, even if they were slain. Among the Fair Folk, there's an enormous justification for keeping worthy foes around because they keep life interesting and, thus, bearable. It's a fool who disposes of an enemy out of hand — if he's too troubling, one can merely vex him until he becomes more manageable.

Naturally, that is not always the case. Certainly, there are Fair Folk who insist on ending the lives of whoever stands in their way, and the players may insist on making social struggles and intrigues somewhat fatal affairs for their enemies. If that's the case, the Storyteller should take his cues from the players and up the ante once the characters start ending the lives of those around them, if the court decides not to censure them for violation of any informal rules of engagement.

War: The New Wyld Army

In this series, the characters are members of an army mustering beyond the Bordermarches — perhaps even its leaders. Whether they take their cues from the Balorian philosophy or that of the fomorians, their desire is to force their way past the Bordermarches into Creation proper. Along the way, they'll seize Manses and Demesnes as they

go to form a kind of "supply line" of Essence for themselves, all while avoiding the notice of one of the ancient Lunars who guards the gates to the Threshold. Their hope is that, once they've made some inroads and created a kind of beachhead into civilization, the powers of the Wyld will take note and follow them in. This doesn't have to be the final revival of the Balorian Crusade — a ring of Fair Folk leading an army into Creation is its own reward, granting the leaders and the best soldiers mortal chattel, access to new territory on which to build Freeholds and an increase in status in the courts of Creation and the Wyld alike.

Since the Scarlet Empress has disappeared, the rides of the Wyld Hunt have become less frequent, while the legions of the Dragon-Blooded Host have retreated to the Blessed Isle. The time hasn't been this ripe for an invasion by the raksha since the Great Contagion. The best information that the Fair Folk can glean from their spies is that there's no one manning the defense systems of Creation. Of course, that was also the case during Balor's invasion, which provides the Fair Folk plenty of reason to make only shallow probes for now, rather than attempting a sweeping assault on all of Creation as they did centuries ago — even if such a thing were politically possible now, which it isn't.

With the Realm having withdrawn its legions from the kingdoms surrounding the Inland Sea, the Lunar Exalted, who have long guarded the borders of Creation from the depredations of the raksha, have begun to turn their gaze toward the rich kingdoms closer to the Blessed Isle. As the Lunars divide their attention, the moment approaches when a daring legion of the Fair Folk can perhaps sweep in and make gains within the Threshold, especially if it steers clear of the territories of the more powerful old Lunars such as Raksi and Leviathan.

The first thing that the characters will have to decide is where to make their initial strike. They must choose a location that will not draw the ire of a powerful Lunar, while, at the same time, guaranteeing either access to Essence or to mortals. If that initial probe is successful, the characters must begin digging in, finding Demesnes and Manses to control, isolating the mortal populace and eliminating or making treaties with local barbarian tribes, Essence-wielders and gods. Once they've shored up this initial beachhead, they must then penetrate deeper into Creation, anchoring their assaults with more Essence-supplies and dealing with new threats. At some point, they will want to cease pushing forward and, instead, fortify their existing holdings — if they penetrate too deeply into the interior of Creation without protecting their supply lines of Essence, they risk being cut off from the Wyld. Once firmly dug into Creation, the characters may need to bring in reinforcements from the Wyld or to make pacts with Freeholds and courts existing within the Threshold.

All the while, the characters will have to decide upon their strategy. Do they attempt to dig in and lay siege to one area at a time, slowly pushing into Creation? Or once they've established an area under their control, do they wage lightning-fast strikes against local nations and important cities? The former infers that the characters are in the war for the long haul and pursuing a concrete objective, such as "Convert this area of Creation into more Bordermarches" or "Create a kingdom here for ourselves." If they choose instead to perform fast raids, they may just be after mortal slaves and artifacts of the past, or they may hope to destabilize a region and weaken it for some future attack.

The threats facing the characters will be many and varied, but the Fair Folk will be most concerned about the two layers of defense that have thwarted them on previous occasions. The Lunars see themselves as the stewards of the frontiers of the Threshold and the Bordermarches and count among their number some of the most powerful beings still extant, and these form the first barrier to Fair Folk intrusion. The Dragon-Blooded, who make up the second defense, see themselves as the owners of the inner Threshold and have access to powerful legions of Terrestrial Exalted troops and the defenses of the Imperial Manse, if they can puzzle out how to make use of it.

Depending on where the first strike happens, there are still other beings who have a vested interest in not seeing another large swath of Creation effectively turned into more Middlemarches and, thus, into a staging point for another invasion of Creation. Some Solar Exalted, mortal defenders, outcastes and gods from whatever region the Fair Folk strike first will all fight to the bitter end to keep the raksha from seizing land, wherever they attempt to break through. Other members of these groups, however, may be willing to switch sides and fight for the Fair Folk if offered the right incentive — and if the Fair Folk goal is the seizure of territory rather than the destruction of Creation. Remember through it all to convey just how poorly mortals might fair under callous, immortal masters — capricious warriors from beyond reality are difficult for even the most desperate of Creation-born individuals to come to terms with for very long.

Characters: Characters involved in a war series can be of any occupation within Fair Folk society, so long as they can wield a blade or a bow in addition to performing their normal duties. They should have access to a Freehold, or at least pennants, in order to stave off deterioration away from the Wyld.

Episodes: Despite the fact that the series will emphasize a great amount of combat, there are plenty of kinds of adventures that the characters can undertake. Such a war will call for daring assassination attempts against Essence-wielding heroes deep within enemy territory and for sieges against First Age citadels.

There is also room for diplomacy. Many mortal rulers will step forward and sign nonaggression pacts with the raksha, terribly cognizant of just how poorly the first Fair Folk invasion went for Creation's human defenders. The characters can step forward as representatives of the army

and debate the finer points of how many lower-class citizens the kingdom must tithe to the raksha forces or exactly which Manses must be surrendered to the army. And embassies will need to be sent to neutral courts and households to get raksha living in Creation to strike an alliance with the characters or aid the war effort. Also, lost ruins will have to be explored — or raided — in order to locate First Age weaponry, either to place it into raksha hands or to deny it to Creation's defenders.

In addition to a chance to demonstrate the already alien nature of the raksha, this kind of series brings the characters in contact with many other kinds of beings, almost all in an adversarial context. Do the characters begin to gain a grudging respect for the mortals that stand against them despite no hope of success? Do they attempt to hire mercenary Exalted outcastes or to suborn newborn Solars? When the characters have achieved their goals, what will they do with their kingdom in Creation?

Phantasmagoria: The Lands Beyond The Sunset

In the phantasmagoric series, the Storyteller and the players put aside the concerns of the raksha living near or in Creation and embrace play in the Wyld. All of the normal trappings of the other series types are present, but the tone of the series is more fantastic and dreamlike. A war run in a phantasmagoric series is fought against creatures out of dream, stray nightmares who have armed themselves and organized against the raksha rulers of the region. A courier sent to a nearby kingdom in the Middlemarches will encounter beautiful spirits driven mad by their time in the Wyld and face doomed kings and damned queens. Courtly maneuvering will revolve around who can find the most beautiful rose to present to the prince's daughter, or who can discover the thrice-hidden true name of her foe in order to vex him. The key word for a phantasmagoric series would be "fantasy," in the sense of Dunsany, Eddison and Peake. The feel of the series should be that the events that are occurring are dreamlike, if not actually a dream.

Characters: Any kind of character permissible in a normal Fair Folk series is appropriate for a phantasmagoric series, although players should spend more time defining themselves in mythic or storybook terms — it's not enough to just build Rosen, The Fair Folk Duelist, for a phantasmagoric story — Rosen should leap off of the page and be a creature made of dreams of desire and duty. Much like any character in **Exalted**, characters in a phantasmagoric series should be larger than life, with the added twist that they exist in a dreamland where they war and dine in a fortress that reflects the inner psyche of the noble who controls it, wanting for nothing but adventure and romance.

Episodes: There are as many possibilities for episodes in a phantasmagoric series as there are in any other kind of series with a particular emphasis. As a matter of fact, most of the plots in the other sample series can be extrapolated to this kind of series fairly easily, so long as you remember to emphasize the storybook, alien quality of it all. Wars can be fought over proper etiquette, a romance may be doomed to tragedy because the character's bride was actually grown from a seed within the Wyld and is doomed to live only 10 days and diplomatic encounters could be marked with bizarre ritual combat utilizing flowers as thrown weapons. There might be a standard plot at the heart of a phantasmagoric tale or not, but regardless, it should have a strange internal logic. In addition, Virtues and Graces should take the center stage in a phantasmagoric series — the Valorous Warrior must resist a challenge to complete his quest for his lady, while the Temperate noble might only be able to win the safety of a favored friend by engaging in a drinking game. If possible, every important setpiece during each episode should be tied in some way to a Virtue.

The key to writing a phantasmagoric episode is in the description. Florid prose should be used to describe a Storyteller character or an important locale, but it shouldn't be overused, so try to limit yourself to a sentence or two instead of paragraphs because, like description of elements of the Wyld, too much tends to numb players. Better to use description both sparingly and strikingly than to have the players grow bored with the whole thing. Additionally, players should be encouraged to take the same liberties with their own actions and characters — to encourage this, Storytellers should award stunt dice for particularly tasty bits of description.

Vexing opponents, nettling a Freehold, shaping duels and the rituals that mark the Fair Folk existence, like

What Is Phantasmagoria?

The definition of phantasmagoria that is most applicable to a Fair Folk series states that it is a "bizarre or fantastic combination or conglomeration," but the etymology of the word states that it is literally an "assembly of fancies." For the purposes of a series, a phantasmagoric series takes its cues from the works of Lord Dunsany and other early fantasists, presenting raksha who are strange and distant, humanlike but never really human, creatures of story given life.

A phantasmagoric series may very well eschew some of the darker "alien predator from beyond reality" trappings that a normal Fair Folk series embraces, simply because it will usually be based in the Wyld, where there's no need for the raksha to hunt mortals. That's still not an excuse to pull out "wacky fey." The raksha in a phantasmagoric series should be dreamlike and ethereal but never cute or precious.

casting dreams into a bonefire — these are the bread and butter of a phantasmagoric series. The creation of an item out of gossamer, the bewitching of a particularly handsome mortal hero — each of these acts should be roleplayed out in detail, since, if its important enough to appear in the story, it's important enough to make a central piece of the night's entertainment.

Crossover Series

Initially, it might appear that the Fair Folk make poor fodder for crossover games. They are, after all, infamous for almost destroying the world, and for all of their bloody-mindedness, few of the Exalted apart from the Abyssals actually want to bring Creation down around their own heads. Nevertheless, in the Age of Sorrows, adventure makes for strange bedfellows, and numerous Exalted products have made mention of Fair Folk who would willingly work with mortals or who could conceivably ally with a Circle of Exalted. The Fair Folk even have an incentive to involve Creation-born in their shaping duels, if such an alliance can be forged — many a triumph has hinged on a mortal appearing to turn the tide for a raksha on the verge of defeat, although there is always a price to be paid for such aid.

On the other side of that coin, there are certainly Exalted out there who would work with the Fair Folk, especially if the raksha in question had come to the conclusion that Creation's status quo was acceptable. Even if the Fair Folk remained a rapacious eaters of dreams, Exaltation does not bring with it a moral code, and there are plenty of Exalted in the world mercenary or acquisitive enough to put aside their distaste for the raksha in order to pursue common interests. With the end of the Scarlet Empress' reign and the slow slide into chaos that has marked the world since her disappearance, many beings have put aside previous enmities in order to gain power or wealth.

The Solar Exalted

Even though their elevation to the status of demigods happened only within the last five years, Solar characters used to be mortals, and all of them will have heard of the war that took place after the Great Contagion. More importantly, all of them will have heard the stories about what the raksha do to those they get their hands on, and so, only the most cocksure or mercenary Solar will work in concert with raksha who have not renounced their predatory ways. Still, Solar characters are nothing if not filled with temerity, and so, a crossover is possible, with the Solar Exalted working alongside the Fair Folk, individually or in rings, if the raksha have enough to gain from the alliance and the Solar Exalted have cause.

For the Fair Folk's part, they eye the current crop of Solar Exalted nervously, all too aware that, given time, the Solar Exalted might again achieve the heights they reached in the First Age, when the raksha's attempts to assault Creation were repelled at every turn. Still, the Fair Folk are beings who always look for the upper hand in any dealing, and most would certainly attempt to bargain with Solar Exalted characters for some advantage, thus setting the basis for the crossover. Many Fair Folk will secretly attempt to induce Solar characters to complete some task for them or to move against some of the Fair Folk's foes in court. It is not impossible that a Fair Folk noble might consider allying with local Solar Exalted in exchange for a nonaggression pact and pledge of mutual aid.

Occasionally, a raksha who has acclimated to the ways of Creation — and gained some measure of respect for the mortals that make up its population — might fight alongside a Solar Exalted, and a handful of the Fair Folk have come to call one of the newly reborn Chosen of the Unconquered Sun a friend. After all, the lives of the Solar Exalted are tumultuous and wracked with conflicts social and physical, and there are plenty of opportunities for a Fair Folk character to passively feed during a battle or at a negotiating table.

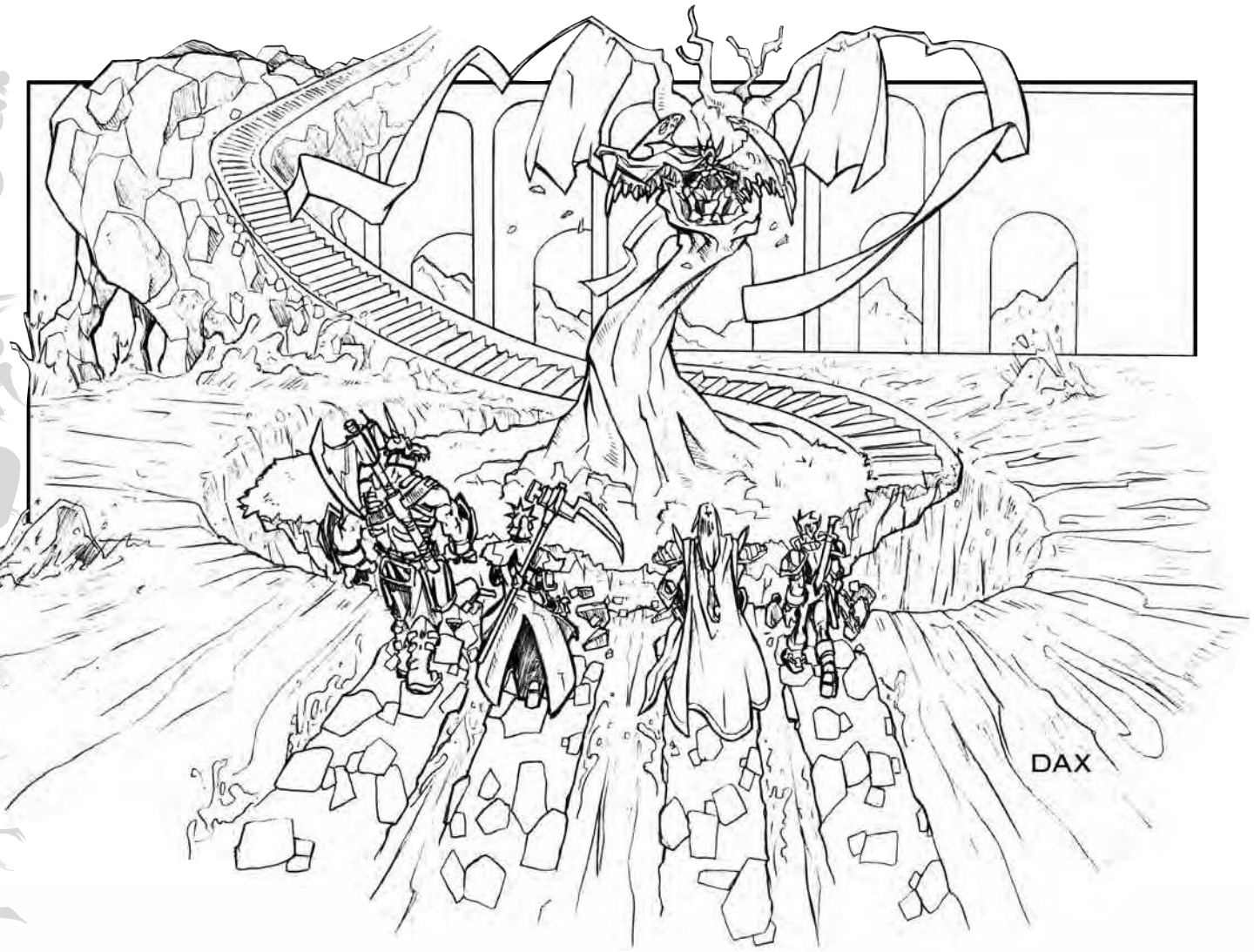
The Dragon-Blooded

If there's one kind of Exalt that the raksha hate almost as much as the Lunars, it is the Dragon-Blooded, especially those of the Realm. After all, it was one of the Dragon-Blooded who activated the Imperial Manse and swept away the Fair Folk armies like so many dead leaves and then had the temerity to build an empire on the victory. Even more importantly, it has been the Dragon-Blooded who have warred with the raksha incessantly within the Threshold, forming Creation's second layer of defense against the Fair Folk.

That is not to say that the two groups have nothing in common or that crossover is impossible. As the fate of the Diamond Court illustrates, both groups are filled with plotters, and intrigue makes for strange bedfellows. The Fair Folk might work with some small faction of the Dragon-Blooded — or a particularly cagey Great House — in exchange for some boon or for a shipment of slaves. On the other side, some among the jaded Dragon-Blooded might aid a single raksha or a ring in exchange for exposure to pleasures beyond imagining or to gain allies whose glamour and strange weaponry makes for a potent aid in the current struggle for the Scarlet Throne.

The Lunar Exalted

Crossover series with the Lunar Exalted are the most easy to actually facilitate, given the Lunar Exalted's immunities to the Wyld and to transformation, but nearly the hardest to justify, given the two factions' immense hatred of one another. As **Exalted: The Lunars** points out, however, it was not so long ago that the Lunar Exalted and the Fair Folk were, if not allies, then at least capable of cooperating with one another. It's only when the Lunars began cultivating tribes of barbarians underneath them that the struggle for a specific resource — in this case, mortals — began causing friction between the two groups.



But as the Ages turn and the Age of Sorrows begins to pick up steam, there may be some Lunar Exalted willing to reach an accommodation with the Fair Folk in exchange for weaponry, hobgoblin shock troops or even the aid of Fair Folk Cataphractoi. At the same time, there are surely princes in the Middlemarches who see that the Lunar Exalted make better allies than foes and who ponder what a push into Creation would be like aided by one of the Celestial Exalted using Wyld barbarians as shock troops. If all it takes to facilitate such an alliance is a peace treaty and an oath not to feed off of an Exalted's barbarian flock, then surely something could be arranged.

The only thing standing in the way of such an alliance is what amounts to centuries upon centuries of bad blood and the weight of the Silver Pact coming down on whoever would dare aid the Lunars' traditional enemies. But as the Lunars tire of guarding the threshold of Creation and begin to eye the rich and weak cities of civilization, more and more may decide that it's better to aid the Fair Folk and guarantee a successful campaign, than to continue to sit on the edge of the world, biding their time.

The Abyssal Exalted

Of all the Exalted, Abyssal characters are the most likely to engage in some kind of crossover with Fair Folk characters, since the Deathlords have demonstrated their willingness to work with the raksha to attain their goals in the past, and since their goals are not — at least at first glance — mutually exclusive. The Deathlords and their Malfean masters seek to glut the maw of Oblivion with every soul in Creation, and the Fair Folk, or at least the vast majority of them, are happy to see all mortal life go away so that reality can be extinguished back into pure chaos — or at least something similar to the Middlemarches.

For Fair Folk characters, this means that princes interested in sharing resources with the Deathlords might house a single Abyssal emissary on occasion, and Fair Folk ambassadors might be sent into a shadowland — or, more to the chagrin of the raksha involved, the Underworld itself. On rare occasions, when a Deathlord and a prince share a mutual goal, an Abyssal character may assist a Fair Folk ring raiding into the heart of Creation. Certainly, the

two groups, Abyssal Exalted and Fair Folk, share much in common in their need to feed from mortals to survive, and many of the themes of a Fair Folk series are shared by an Abyssal series.

The Sidereal Exalted

The Sidereal Exalted have no obvious reason to work with the Fair Folk, although members of the two groups occasionally encounter another on the streets of Yu-Shan. For the Sidereals, the raksha are off-putting, existing outside of fate as they do. For the Fair Folk, the Sidereals are often a nonissue — their numbers were low enough that they never attracted the attention of the raksha, and those times that Sidereal assassins have gone after Fair Folk targets, there were rarely many survivors left to tell the tale.

The Fair Folk and the Deathlords

Not all of the nobility of the Fair Folk trust the Deathlords. Many of the more far-sighted and Machiavellian of the raksha suspect that the Deathlords initiated the Great Contagion and lured Balor into open warfare with Creation in order to test its defenses for a later war of their own. As ludicrous as it sounds at first, the idea has some merit — if Creation fell before the raksha, the Underworld would be packed tightly with souls, and the Deathlords would be one step closer to completing their master plan, which most of the Fair Folk cannot begin to guess at. If, as was actually the case, the defenses of Creation were stronger than any single army, even a massed host as great as the legions of the Fair Folk, then the Deathlords lost nothing when the defenses inevitably activated. (The Fair Folk do not know that the Deathlords are the remaindered souls of the First Age Solars who actually *built* the Imperial Manse and its defense systems. If the raksha ever found that fact out, there would be no doubt in their mind that they were lured into a trap to destroy the best and brightest of their nobility, and tensions between the two factions would greatly increase.)

Due to their suspicions, there are many among the Fair Folk who will hear no talk of ever cooperating with the Deathlords again or of dealing amicably with their Abyssal minions. Whenever beings from the Underworld are discovered, the servants of these Fair Folk lords and ladies eliminate them — and news of an Abyssal Exalted in the area is enough to trigger a mighty hunt, with the greatest warriors of the local households mounting their steeds, gathering their Wyld-tainted hounds and going to war.

Others: God-Bloods and Outcastes

God-Blooded and Dragon-Blooded outcastes are the most likely to work with the Fair Folk. Raksha who have fled the competitive dens of the local court and begun to wander Creation often take up with beings of a similar power level, and the God-Blooded and outcastes of the Threshold are often eager to accompany one of the raksha for mutual protection. Both sides work well together — the outcastes and God-Bloods are human enough to deal well with local authorities and calm down those too afraid of one of the Fair Folk, while the raksha's powers can be used to provide glamoured weapons and armor, as well as protection from Wyld zones and the Bordermarches.

Fair Folk Experience

Trait Increase	Cost
Caste or Common Ability	current rating x 2
Other Ability	current rating x 3
Major Grace	current rating x 3
Minor Grace	current rating x 6
Heart Grace to 4	20*

* Only when eligible (over 200 experience points)

New Trait	Cost
New Charm	6
Specialty, for commoners	2
Specialty, for nobles	5

Other costs are as per the experience table on page 270 of the **Exalted** core rules.

Fair Folk Training Time

The patterns of the Fair Folk are different than those of mortal beings, and the way they learn is different as well. Fair Folk can gain one new Trait per story. There is no "training time" required, in that the raksha does not actively need to practice and study the matter. Instead, any raksha can increase a Trait or gain a new one at the beginning of each story, provided she has the experience to afford it. In general, raksha cannot learn things that they are not exposed to, so Storytellers should apply discretion when players wish their characters to suddenly manifest knowledge of secret languages or other impossible feats of training. This can cause experience to pile up, and raksha wishing to advance themselves often travel, allowing their personal stories to slip by quickly, free of stultifying friction with the personal narratives of other raksha.

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EXALTED
THE FAIR FOLK™

Name: _____ Concept: _____
Player: _____ Nature: _____
Caste: _____ Court: _____

Attributes

Strength _____ ●OOOOO
Dexterity _____ ●OOOOO
Stamina _____ ●OOOOO
Charisma _____ ●OOOOO
Manipulation _____ ●OOOOO
Appearance _____ ●OOOOO
Perception _____ ●OOOOO
Intelligence _____ ●OOOOO
Wits _____ ●OOOOO

Abilities

Diplomat

☐ Linguistics _____ OOOOO
☐ Occult _____ OOOOO
☐ Ride _____ OOOOO
☐ Socialize _____ OOOOO
☐ Thrown _____ OOOOO

Entertainer

☐ Investigation _____ OOOOO
☐ Larceny _____ OOOOO
☐ Medicine _____ OOOOO
☐ Performance _____ OOOOO
☐ Stealth _____ OOOOO

Warrior

☐ Archery _____ OOOOO
☐ Athletics _____ OOOOO
☐ Brawl _____ OOOOO
☐ Melee _____ OOOOO
☐ Presence _____ OOOOO

Worker

☐ Bureaucracy _____ OOOOO
☐ Craft _____ OOOOO
☐ Endurance _____ OOOOO
☐ Lore _____ OOOOO
☐ Martial Arts _____ OOOOO

Casteless

☐ Awareness _____ OOOOO
☐ Dodge _____ OOOOO
☐ Resistance _____ OOOOO
☐ Sail _____ OOOOO
☐ Survival _____ OOOOO

Specialties

☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO

Advantages

Backgrounds

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Charms

Name	Cost	Name	Cost

Weapons

_____
_____
_____
_____

Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Virtues

Compassion ___ Temperance ___
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
☐ Cup ___ ☐ Ring ___
Cup Soak ___ Ring Soak ___
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
Conviction Intelligence

Conviction ___ Valor ___
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
☐ Staff ___ ☐ Sword ___
Staff Soak ___ Sword Soak ___
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
Manipulation Dexterity

Heart

● O O O

Health

Soak
B_____ L_____ A_____

-0	☐☐☐☐☐
-1	☐☐☐☐☐
-2	☐☐☐☐☐
	☐☐☐☐☐
-4	☐
Incapacitated	☐

Essence

● O O O O O

Temporary _____
Committed _____

Experience

EXALTED
THE MOUNTAIN FOLK™

Name: _____ Concept: _____
Player: _____ Nature: _____
Caste: _____ Faction: _____

Attributes

Strength _____ ●OOOOO
Dexterity _____ ●OOOOO
Stamina _____ ●OOOOO
Charisma _____ ●OOOOO
Manipulation _____ ●OOOOO
Appearance _____ ●OOOOO
Perception _____ ●OOOOO
Intelligence _____ ●OOOOO
Wits _____ ●OOOOO

Abilities

War		Life		Wisdom	
☐ Archery	OOOOO	☐ Craft	OOOOO	☐ Bureaucracy	OOOOO
☐ Athletics	OOOOO	☐ Larceny	OOOOO	☐ Investigation	OOOOO
☐ Awareness	OOOOO	☐ Linguistics	OOOOO	☐ Lore	OOOOO
☐ Brawl	OOOOO	☐ Performance	OOOOO	☐ Medicine	OOOOO
☐ Dodge	OOOOO	☐ Presence	OOOOO	☐ Occult	OOOOO
☐ Endurance	OOOOO	☐ Ride	OOOOO		
☐ Martial Arts	OOOOO	☐ Sail	OOOOO	Specialties	
☐ Melee	OOOOO	☐ Socialize	OOOOO	☐ _____	OOOOO
☐ Resistance	OOOOO	☐ Stealth	OOOOO	☐ _____	OOOOO
☐ Thrown	OOOOO	☐ Survival	OOOOO	☐ _____	OOOOO

Advantages

Backgrounds		Charms					
		Name	Cost	Name	Cost		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		
_____	OOOOO	_____	_____	_____	_____		

Weapons

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Health

Soak
B_____ L_____ A_____

-0	☐☐☐☐☐
-1	☐☐☐☐☐
-2	☐☐☐☐☐
	☐☐☐☐☐
-4	☐
Incapacitated	☐

Virtues

Compassion ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Temperance ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Conviction ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Valor ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐

Essence

● O O O O O

Temporary _____
Committed _____

Experience

Notes

_____
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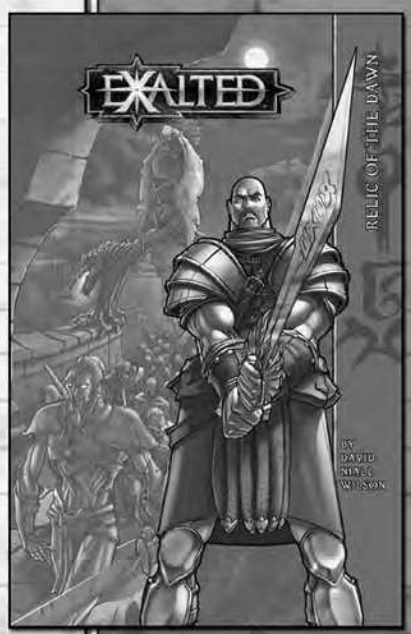
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