

THE MANUAL OF EXALTED POWER

Sidereals™



EXALTED
SECOND EDITION



By ALAN ALEXANDER, CARL BOWEN, JOSEPH CARRIKER, CONRAD HUBBARD,
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HURRY,
SHEPHERD.
TIME'S
WASTING.

I KNOW
I'M COMING.



WHERE
HAVE YOU
BEEN
ANYWAY?

STUCK ON
A DRAGON
BOAT.

MERCURY'S
AHEAD IN THE
GAMES OF
DIVINITY.



AH... THAT
DOES EXCITE
THE PILOTS'
UNION.

I SUPPOSE
THE OTHERS
ARE ALREADY
WAITING...

Fiveoosh

YES, YES.
I'M LATE. LET'S
NOT MAKE A
CELESTIAL AUDIT
OUT OF IT.



ACTUALLY,
THAT
REMINDS
ME...

AND,
THERE'S MY
DOORWAY.
SO LONG!



HELLO,
ALL. SORRY
I'M...

WHAT, YOU
COULDN'T FIND
ANYTHING
BIGGER?











YES, YOU SEE, THERE'S... HOW CAN I PUT THIS? THE WORLD...

LET ME DO THIS.



I'M SORRY. WAS I EXPLAINING IT POORLY?

NOT POORLY, JUST TOO SLOWLY.



LISTEN. THIS CITY WAS BUILT OVER A WEAK PATCH IN THE TAPESTRY OF CREATION.

IT'S NEARING A BREAKING POINT, AND...

AS YOUR CITY GROWS, IT SPREADS THAT PATCH OUT, MAKING IT EVEN WEAKER.



TELL HIM WHAT YOU FOUND.

THE WALKER IN DARKNESS IS GOING TO TEAR A HOLE HERE FROM HIS DOMAIN.

THIS CITY WILL BECOME CREATION'S NEXT CHIAROSCULO. OR THORNS.



WHAT? NO! THAT ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN!



I KNOW THE WALKER'S DEATH KNIGHTS TOLD YOU YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR, BUT—

YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM?

I'M AFRAID SO.





SO WHAT NOW?

NOW YOU RETURN TO YU-SHAN FOR QUESTIONING.

YOU CAN TELL US ABOUT ANY MEETINGS WITH THE WALKER'S AGENTS WE'VE MISSED.

AND IN RETURN?



IN RETURN, WE DON'T MINE YOU FOR STARMETAL!

SOUNDS FAIR!



WHAT ABOUT THE CITY?

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT. COME ALONG NOW.



MAY BLOSSOM, IF YOU'LL SUMMON THE HEAVENLY PORTAL...

OF COURSE. RIGHT THIS WAY.



IRON SIAKA AND I WILL MOVE THE CITY. SHOULDN'T TAKE MORE THAN AN HOUR.

ALL RIGHT. THE PAIR OF YOU, STAND GUARD HERE OUTSIDE FATE.



WELL, THEN. SHALL WE?

LET'S HURRY. I DON'T WANT TO MISS ANY MORE OF THE FESTIVAL.

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THE MANUAL OF EXALTED POWER

Sidereals[™]

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WELL, THAT'S
A RELIEF.



I'M NOT TOO
LATE YET.



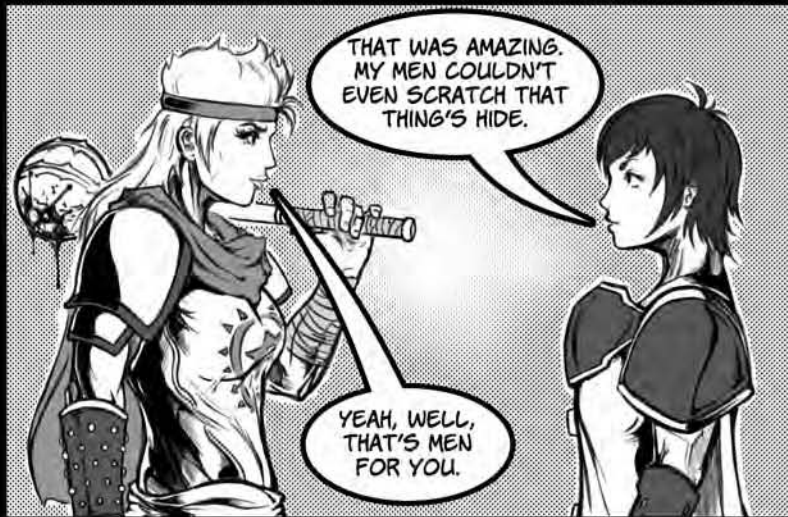
DON'T BREAK,
AWNING... DON'T
BREAK, AWNING...



HEY! SPIT
THAT OUT!



EAT THIS IF
YOU'RE
HUNGRY!





INTRODUCTION

The conservative has but little to fear from the man whose reason is the servant of his passions, but let him beware of him in whom reason has become the greatest and most terrible of the passions. These are the wreckers of outworn empires and civilisations, doubters, disintegrators, deicides . . .

—J. B. S. Haldane, *Daedalus; or, Science and the Future*

Nobody thinks about the Sidereal Exalted. That's just the way the Sidereals want it. Once upon a time, they advised the Solar Exalted god-kings of Creation. When they decided their rulers had gone mad, the Sidereal Exalted incited the Terrestrial Exalts to murder the Solars and take their place as Princes of the Earth. The Sidereals then hid themselves from Creation in order to guide and protect it. No one outside of Heaven must know about the games of deceit and death the Sidereals play to safeguard the world. No one else *could* know the terrible choices their powers and foreknowledge force upon them.

As Creation enters a Time of Tumult, the players' characters—the secret masters of destiny—must reconsider old choices and ponder new paths. They must battle enemies older than time or never seen before. The fate of the world depends upon the players' characters.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals provides the rules and background to run a game that focuses upon Sidereal Exalted characters or to design such characters as allies and antagonists for other **Exalted** games. The book's contents are as follows:

Chapter One: The Five-Score Fellowship

This chapter describes the history of the Sidereal Exalted and the factions that cause so many of their internal conflicts.

Chapter Two: The Bureau of Destiny

This section describes the institution that employs the Sidereal Exalted: its duties and departments, the gods with whom the Sidereals work and the subdivisions that assign their missions.

THIS IS NOT A COMPLETE GAME!

The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals, despite its size, is not a complete game. It is a supplement for White Wolf's **Exalted**, a game about near-divine heroes in a world of high fantasy. The core book describes the Solar Exalted, the Sun-blessed rightful rulers of Creation, reborn into a world that for centuries has hated them as the Solar Anathema, the demonic despots of the First Age. This supplement does not describe the game's various core traits, present its rules for combat or provide a complete setting. This supplement just gives in-depth information about the Sidereal Exalted, their society, their activities and the rules necessary to create and play Sidereal characters. You'll need to consult the **Exalted** core book in order to play.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

This chapter supplies the rules you need to create a Sidereal character.

Chapter Four: Traits

Here, you can find the special traits that only Sidereal characters possess, as well as information on how to adjust existing traits for the Sidereal Exalted.

Chapter Five: Charms

This chapter details the weird, fate-binding Charms of the Sidereal Exalted.

Chapter Six: Sidereal Astrology

This section presents the unique astrological powers that Sidereal Exalted use to shape destiny in subtle and far-reaching ways. They also use Sidereal astrology to assume false identities as they act within Creation.

Chapter Seven: Storytelling

The book's final chapter describes the special factors one must consider when Storytelling a game about the Sidereal Exalted.

LEXICON

Most of the terms used in the core **Exalted** core book also apply to Sidereals. The following terms, however, refer particularly to Sidereal characters and their special milieu, the Bureau of Destiny.

audit: A formal hearing to examine the deeds of a god or Sidereal and assess penalties for any wrongdoing.

Arcane Fate: The propensity of most people, and Creation itself, to ignore Sidereals, forget them and destroy evidence of their activities.

ascending destiny: A blessing conferred through *Sidereal astrology*.

astrological house: The five groups that comprise the 25 *constellations* and *colleges*. Each house also corresponds to a division in the *Bureau of Destiny*, which has jurisdiction over those aspects of *fate*. The five houses are as follows:

The Golden Barque of the Heavens (The Division of Journeys): The constellations in the house of Journeys are the Captain, the Gull, the Mast, the Messenger and the Ship's Wheel.

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony (The Division of Serenity): The constellations in the house of Serenity are the Ewer, the Lovers, the Musician, the Peacock and the Pillar.

The Crimson Panoply of Battles (The Division of Battles): The constellations in the house of Battles are the Banner, the Gauntlet, the Quiver, the Shield and the Spear.

The Forbidding Manse of Ivy (The Division of Secrets): The constellations in the house of Secrets are the Guardians, the Key, the Mask, the Sorcerer and the Treasure Trove.

The Violet Bier of Sorrows (The Division of Endings): The constellations in the house of Endings are the Corpse, the Crow, the Haywain, the Rising Smoke and the Sword.

Bureau of Destiny, the: The organization within the Celestial Bureaucracy that plans history and oversees cause and effect within Creation, it's more formally called the Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions. The Bureau's greatest tool is the *Loom of Fate*, and its most important agents are the Sidereal Exalted. The Five Maidens technically lead the Bureau, but delegate its administration to other gods and Sidereals.

censor: An official, usually a lesser elemental dragon, who metes out justice among the gods. Sidereals encounter censors during *audits*.

Chair: The leader of a *convention*.

college: One of the 25 areas of *fate* that correspond to the constellations in the *astrological houses*. Also, the groups of *pattern spiders* who specialize in these types of fate. Sidereal Exalted can learn to invoke certain effects associated with each college, either to alter the *destinies* of others or to give themselves false identities with various special powers.

constellation: Simple and stable patterns of stars associated with particular manifestations of *fate* and *destiny*, as well as classes of Sidereal Charms and divisions of *pattern spiders*.

convention: Special groups of Sidereals assigned to monitor and repair disruptions of *fate*. Some conventions work in particular sections of Creation; others deal with particular dangers.

convention house: The headquarters for a convention's operations within Creation.

Convention on Oversight: The mysterious entity or agency that assigns many missions to Sidereals, watches their conduct and generally scares the heck out of everyone at the *Bureau of Destiny*.

descending destiny: A curse imposed through *Sidereal astrology*.

destiny: The sequences of events that have befallen a person, place or thing, and are expected to befall it in the future. The way things work, on a broad scale.

fate: The way things work, on a narrow scale; the properties of any person, place or thing. The fate of wood is to

split when struck by an axe; a tree might have a *destiny* to fall on the man who chops it down.

Games of Divinity: A competitive, structured recreation devised by the Primordials. It now distracts the Celestial Incarnae.

Loom of Fate, the: A structure on which the *pattern spiders* weave mystic strands of *fate* to set the *destiny* of all things.

Paradox: A measure of the accumulating irritation of the *pattern spiders* at the extra work forced upon them by works of *Sidereal astrology*.

pattern bite: The retribution of the *pattern spiders* against a Sidereal who overworks them.

pattern spiders: Spider-shaped constructs that the Primordial Autochthon made to assist the Five Maidens in operating the *Loom of Fate*.

Resplendency: A special power that accompanies a *resplendent destiny*.

resplendent destiny: A false identity crafted and assumed using *Sidereal astrology*.

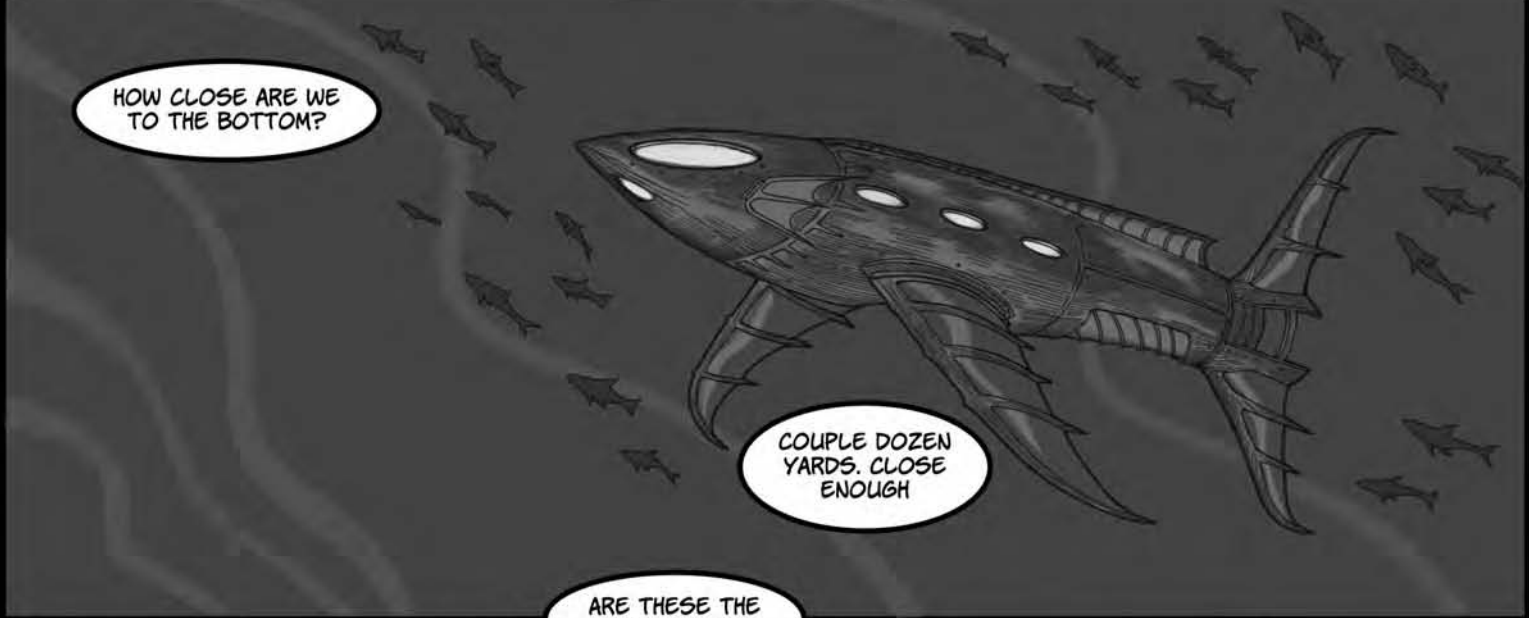
ronin: Supposedly, Sidereal Exalted who were never found and recruited by the *Bureau of Destiny*. Also, Sidereals who have abandoned the Bureau to operate as completely free agents.

sabbatical: A vacation period granted to a Sidereal, in which she may pursue her own interests.

Sidereal astrology: The astrology known to mortals merely tries to predict the future through the movements of the stars. Sidereal astrology decides the future by manipulating the *Loom of Fate*, usually with the help of the *pattern spiders*.

Tapestry, the: The network of interlocking *fates* and *destinies* that makes up Creation. Everything that exists in Creation at this moment.





HOW CLOSE ARE WE
TO THE BOTTOM?

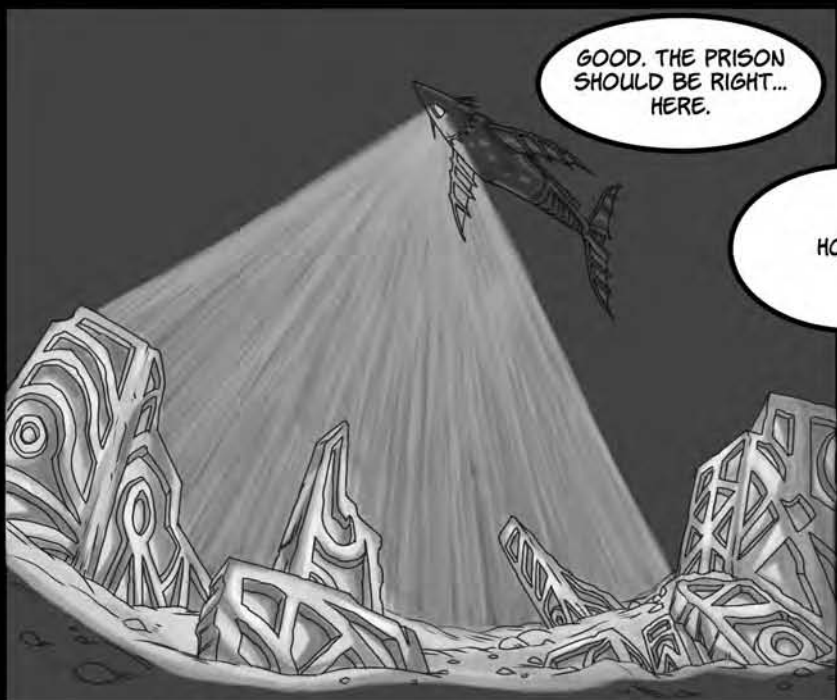
COUPLE DOZEN
YARDS. CLOSE
ENOUGH



ARE THESE THE
COORDINATES?

THEY'RE THE
ONES KEJAK
GAVE ME.

GOOD. HIT THE
EXTERIOR
LIGHTS.



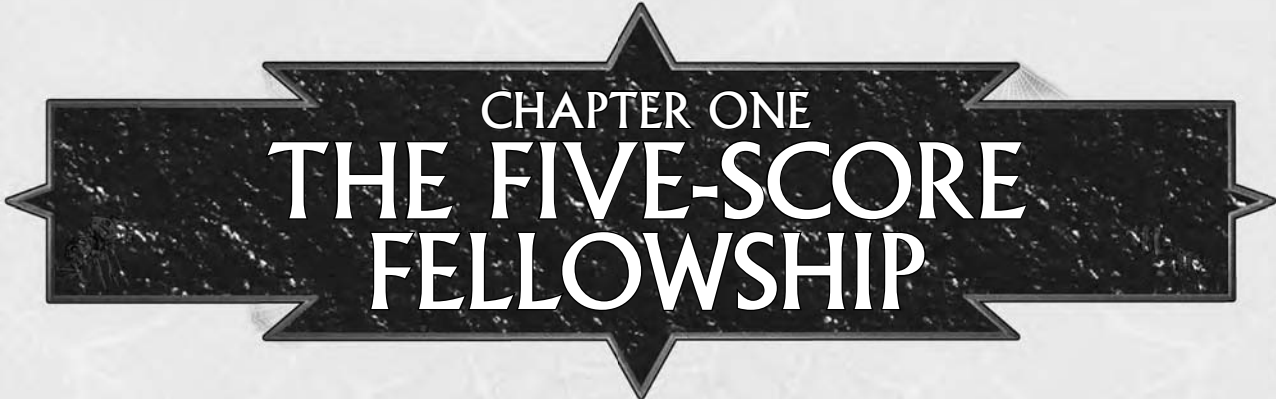
GOOD. THE PRISON
SHOULD BE RIGHT...
HERE.

HOLY...



DAMN MY
EYES, THIS
ISN'T
POSSIBLE.





CHAPTER ONE THE FIVE-SCORE FELLOWSHIP

The Sidereal Exalted can live up to 5,000 years. The Five Maidens chose the Sidereals to spend those long lives working for the Bureau of Destiny as its elite agents within Creation. The Sidereals, however, reach beyond the duties the Maidens and the Bureau set for them. These 100 men and women—the Five-Score Fellowship—like to believe their gifts and training lift them above the violent passions of the other Exalted. The Sidereals’ knowledge, foresight and reason show them what must be done to protect Creation, and they accept these harsh necessities. Yet, they deceive themselves. Passions as fierce as those of any mortal still drive the Sidereal Exalted... and become all the more dangerous when cloaked in logic and dogma.

GAZING BACKWARDS ON THE LOOM

The Loom of Fate works eternally, each moment in time created in the weaving of disparate threads of primal Essence. The threads of What May Be twist and interweave in the ever-changing Now to weave the Tapestry of Creation.

Of all the Exalted, the Sidereals understand best the connection between the past, present and future. Every new recruit to the Maiden’s Chosen learns the history of their fellowship... though the Sidereals draw different lessons from the events. Even the facts of their past are no longer certain: in hiding from Creation, the Sidereals also hid much from themselves.

THE FIRST SIDEREAL EXALTATION

According to Sidereal lore, the rebellious Incarnae planned for the aftermath of their victory. They knew their duties would become more onerous when they replaced the Primordials as masters of Creation, and so, the Incarnae made sure that their Exalted could lift some of their patrons’ divine burdens. Thus, the Unconquered Sun gave his Chosen not simply strength and tactical cunning, but also the commanding majesty to rule Creation. Luna invested her Exalted not simply with shapeshifting and a love of battle, but with also the desire to defend Creation



from the twisted Wyld, that they might patrol the strange places of the world.

And then the Five Maidens conferred and called Autochthon, the Great Maker, to the Loom. They plucked up 100 threads, as yet unwoven into the Tapestry: the greatest fated events of their kind. Twenty epic travels would give power to the Chosen of Journeys, while 20 epic romances and revelries became raw materials for the Chosen of Serenity. Twenty Creation-shaking battles formed the basis for the Chosen of Battles; indeed, some in Heaven believe that not all the Primordials were slain because the fates of those epic battles were used instead to shape those Exaltations. Twenty Creation-shattering mysteries formed the template for the Chosen of Secrets, and the Exaltations of the Chosen of Endings were woven from 20 portentous deaths and the ends of empires. These threads were not cut from the Loom, though. They yet exist within it. The Great Maker worked his art, and the Maidens reweave those threads into the Loom to endure forever, flowing in and out of history, Exalting men and women not because of their deeds and goals, but because they are destined to Exalt: the Chosen of Fate.

THE PRIMORDIAL WAR

On average, fewer incarnations separate a Sidereal from the first mortal to receive her Exaltation, and so, a few flickers of memory reach back to the Primordial War itself. A few of the Maidens' Chosen say they remember wondering whether rebellion against the Primordials was really such a good idea. What could come of slaying the very authors of Creation?

Still, the Starborn played their roles, and played them well. The Maidens introduced their Exalted as simple assistants at the Loom of Fate, helping the Maidens perform the thousand-thousand tasks the Primordials demanded for the world's continuation. At this time, the gods and the Loom of Fate occupied the Blessed Isle. The Primordials kept Yu-Shan as their private palace and playground. In time, however, the Primordials allowed the Maidens to use their human pets to run small errands between Creation and Heaven, while still forbidding Yu-Shan to the gods. After all, humans were so very weak and insignificant, even humans given a few tricks to help them work the Loom of Fate. Humans could not even channel Essence without the blessings given by the Maidens and great Autochthon. Modern Sidereals can only infer that the other Primordials never considered the possibility that one of their own might betray them, or that the Incarnae might create weapons the Primordials could not fully control.

Even then, the Sidereal Exalted showed a talent for avoiding notice. Years before the first blow was struck against the Primordials, the Sidereals gathered information the other Exalted needed for the War itself: where fetiches were most vulnerable, which Primordials distrusted the others, what

gods were loyal to the Progenitors and must be put down along with their masters.

By the time the Primordials noticed the true nature and purpose of the Sidereal Exalted, it was too late. The sun and moon drowned out the stars; because the Solars and their Lunar mates quickly used Sidereal intelligence to strike decisively against the Primordials, the Great Progenitors did not appreciate the full danger of the Maidens' servants. The Great Progenitors found out in time, though. Already, the first Sidereals had progressed far in the study of the martial arts. Many subordinate souls of the Primordials met their end at Sidereal hands and feet, not understanding the power the Exalted had found in Essence directed through the perfect harmony of mind and body.

THE BANISHMENT OF THE FORBIDDEN GODS

After the War, the Exalted joined the gods in arranging the new order for Creation. The greater gods claimed Yu-Shan as their own, while the Exalted received the hand-me-down Blessed Isle. Much of Creation, however, was a mess. Before the Exalted could rule Creation, they had to eliminate a variety of creatures the Exalted deemed undesirable. Some were horrors the Primordials had created through their unguessable whims. Others were simply races of beings that chose the Primordials' side in the War. Still others had once been normal people, animals and gods twisted by the bleeding power, hate and fury of the Primordials as the creatures and people died.

The struggle to cleanse the surface of Creation lasted longer than the campaign against the Primordials themselves, and indeed, deadly behemoths still stalk the far reaches of Creation, and foul creatures still haunt the dark places of the world, heirs to primal hungers and inherited fury. But these were not the only servants of the Primordials banished from the light of the Unconquered Sun.

Some gods, or things somewhat like gods, would not turn against their creators, even after the Primordials themselves were dead or banished. These are the Usurped. Their purviews still exist, but the Incarnae stripped the Usurped of their positions and gave their duties to other gods. Yu-Shan holds millions of unemployed gods, and none of them enjoy that condition, but the Usurped are mad with bitter rage for their loss.

Others entities embodied concepts the Exalted considered too abhorrent or dangerous for Creation. These are the Unwholesome. Sometimes these purviews were truly wicked and twisted things, such as Han-Tha's cannibalistic, corruptive need to see Creation rot, or the purview of Ithmit-Laia, the goddess of dreams that kill those who dream them, a phenomenon that Creation has not seen since her banishment. Other Unwholesome were gods of races that rose in support of the Primordials, and place-deities of locations utterly befouled or destroyed by the Primordials—such as the gods of all the things and concepts the Primordial that

FORBIDDEN GODS

These creatures use the normal rules for gods in Exalted. They are simply gods whose utter malevolence makes them hostile to Creation and all things of the sunlit world.

is now called She Who Lives in Her Name destroyed in her final spasm of rage.

These spiritual entities were banished beneath the earth in sanctums chained shut by deep dragon-lines of powerful Essence. Other entities were hurled into Elsewhere to become imprisoned within their own bodies, in tiny imitations of the hell made from the defeated Primordials themselves, such as the enigmatic Eyeless Face whose minions sorcerers may summon. And still others escaped by themselves, to hide and brood in secret, whether in Creation, the new Underworld or the Wyld. The glories of the Old Realm could begin only once most of these "forbidden gods" were dead, jailed or in hiding.

Whether through their own power, damage to their geomantic prison-wardings or the folly of sorcerers, throughout history several of these forbidden gods have freed themselves. Sometimes, they rise to avenge themselves on Creation. Others are intelligent enough to understand the danger they face and slink away, hiding from the other gods and the Exalted as best such forbidden gods can. Most of the forbidden gods simply pursue their own ends, but a rare few—discovering the fate of the remaining Primordials—seek alliance with infernal cults, hoping to return the gods' creators back to power.

THE GLORIES OF THE FIRST AGE

In the aftermath of the Primordial War, the Starborn and the newly crafted pattern spiders assumed many of the Maidens' duties at the Loom of Fate. This duty earned them their First Age title: the Seers of Heaven, or simply Seers. Together with the Lawgivers of Creation and the Stewards of the Wyld, the Sidereals formed the basis of Exalted rule in the epochs of the First Age.

The Seers of Heaven divided their responsibilities into three main classes. The Glorious Viziers represented the Bureau of Destiny to Creation and the Solar and Lunar Exalted. The Watchers monitored the health of fate and Creation from secret, making sure they remained predictable and safe. The Keepers of the Loom oversaw the Loom of Fate itself, as well as acting as the elder leadership of the Sidereal Exalted.

In theory, Sidereals performed only one job at a time. In practice, there were never enough Sidereals to go around. Viziers had to watch for disruptions of fate; Keepers of the Loom had to negotiate with prominent Lawgivers and Stewards. Delegations of Sidereals asked the Maidens if they and



Autochthon could not craft 200 more Exaltations, to bring the Starborn into parity with the Solars and Lunars. Each time, the Maidens replied that they had Chosen exactly the right number for Creation.

THE GLORIOUS VIZIERS

Through the immense territory and millennia of the High First Age, the Solars and Lunars organized themselves in many ways. At one extreme was the Perfect Circle: five Solars, one per caste, mated to five Lunars, one per caste, and each one commanding a fang of Dragon-Blooded assistants. Other Exalted preferred to operate alone, with as much freedom as the Deliberative would allow them—which was often quite a lot. Any major grouping or undertaking of Celestial Exalted, however, was supposed to include at least one Glorious Vizier. The Sidereal served as an intermediary between the Celestial Bureaucracy and the Exalted, and advised the Exalted so their activities did not clash with other projects or disrupt the destinies planned for Creation.

Sometimes, the Lunars and Solars appreciated the guidance given by Sidereal colleagues. The Gold Faction likes to emphasize how much of the Old Realm's achievements rested on Solar might and genius, guided by Sidereal foresight and planning. The faction points to the Salinan Working, which wove sorcerous initiation into the fabric of Creation itself, as an example of such partnership, stressing that the Twilight Caste Salina had Glorious Viziers in her group.

The Bronze Faction prefers to cite the evidence that the Solars and Lunars became increasingly resentful of their cautious advisors. A few diaries and missives from First Age Exalted call the Seers the “Naysayers” instead, for telling powerful Exalted about the problems and difficulties of the deeds they planned. The Salinan Working may have been the greatest collaboration between Solars and Sidereals—but it was also one of the last.

THE WATCHERS

Sidereal Exalted also served as the Sagacious Watchers Upon the Threshold of Reality, to use the full title given them in the Celestial Bureaucracy. These Seers operated as solitary agents. They used resplendent destinies to blend into the local populace, the better to observe what was happening in Creation: the Loom sees all, but it can be difficult to interpret. Watchers looked for evidence of disruptions to fate—especially by the Fair Folk, the minions of the Yozis or other entities from beyond Creation. A Watcher might mingle with those discontented by excessive comfort to seek those who dabbled in infernalism, or discourse with philosophers who might somehow stumble into a paradoxical realization that caused fate to unravel. Likewise, a Watcher might take the guise of a miner to make sure that no one delved too deep into the Dark Beneath Creation, where the Banished Gods might find their way back into the world.

THE KEEPERS OF THE LOOM

Three elder Sidereals of each caste, 15 in all, oversaw the Loom of Fate in Yu-Shan in concert with the Maidens' five deputies in the Bureau of Destiny. The Keepers of the Loom directed pattern spiders and lesser gods in weaving problems out of existence when they could, and dispatched information to the Solar Deliberative when they couldn't. Many times, the Keepers of the Loom alerted the Solars to incursions from outside Creation. In this fashion, the Seers continued their role in providing advice and guidance to the other Exalted. The Bronze Faction insists that in the last centuries of the Old Realm, however, the disruption of fate and conflicts of destiny were often caused by the Deliberative itself. The little gods who delivered the Bureau's complaints to Meru often found themselves harassed, given the runaround or simply ignored. The arrogant Lawgivers resented any request that sounded too much like a demand. This difficult balancing act often ran afoul of Exalted egos and typical factionalism.

THE CONVENTIONS

The vast scope of Creation and the diversity of Sidereal duties meant that Seers had to specialize. Naturally, Sidereals who devoted themselves to similar regions, activities or dangers to Creation tended to work together. Ad-hoc arrangements soon gave way to formalized conventions. The conventions of Air, Fire, Wood and Water monitored events in the North, South, East and West of Creation, while the Capital Convention dealt with the Blessed Isle and especially the Solars' city of Meru. Working groups about war, natural disasters, the Forbidden Gods and other matters grew into special conventions on these topics.

THE LOWER HOUSE OF THE DELIBERATIVE

On top of all their other roles, each and every Sidereal also had the right to sit in the Lower House of the Deliberative. Of course, the Sidereals wielded the least power as a bloc in the Deliberative; they held only one seat for every three seats of the Lunars. All too often, the Sidereals' most potent tactic was mass abstention from any voting at all, to show they thought their advice was being unjustly ignored. This kind of solidarity of voting seldom occurred among any of the other Exalted and partly explains the Sidereals' nickname as the “Five-Score Fellowship.” The Solars and Lunars intended some measure of derision, but the Starborn quickly adopted it with a tinge of pride. Sidereal historians prefer to gloss over the many other instances when the Sidereal delegation shattered into factions that absolutely would not compromise at all, and whose members could bring up an old dispute centuries after everyone else thought a matter had been resolved.

Most of the time, however, the Sidereal Exalted had to wield influence behind the scenes, before voting ever happened. The promise of aid—of a personal, “off-the-record” sort—could go a long way toward convincing other Exalted of the worthiness of the Sidereal perspective, particularly

when the Exalt in question believed his needs were being ignored by his fellow Exalted.

Late in the Old Realm, the Greater House of Solars passed the *Ratified Mandate of Forthright Honesty*, a stricture making this kind of behind-the-scenes machination illegal. By that time, however, the tradition was so ingrained that all members of the Deliberative—Greater and Lesser alike—nearly took pleasure in flouting the Mandate. In truth, the stricture became a weapon for discrediting proposals to the Deliberative and one's political foes. Much legislation within the Deliberative became bogged down in "Mandate scandal" investigations and time-wasting attempts to discredit the names of fellow Deliberators.

At this point, the Lower House—lacking the overwhelming, Essence-fueled powers of command and manipulation the Lawgivers could muster—became all but irrelevant. This was just one sign of many, however, prompting the examination of the Loom's most distant, hazy threads, and leading to the Great Prophecy.

THE GREAT PROPHECY

Frustration and fear led to the Great Prophecy. The Sidereal Exalted, Chosen by the Maidens for the Sidereals' long sight and wisdom, saw the Old Realm's decadence sooner and clearer than most. On this matter, Gold and Bronze tutors agree. The Seers were in a unique position, after all—they had connections to all the other Exalted, yet seldom stayed close to any one. Where a Lunar spouse or Dragon-Blooded lieutenant might suppose that a Solar Exalt acted strangely or irrationally—But oh! They were still so grand!—the Glorious Viziers could see how madness grew among *all* the Solar Exalted.

The Sagacious Watchers were often overworked. Solars and even Lunars became increasingly reckless in their Essence expenditures, using powerful Charms for almost trivial reasons and making it nigh impossible for the Sidereals to remain abreast of future disruptions of the Loom of Fate. Even formal charges before the Deliberative did not stop the mad experiments, whose massive expenditures of Essence set threads of fate whipping and tangling in the Loom. Accused Lawgivers simply had allies in the Deliberative quash the charges.

Several Sidereals finally explained the problem to a group of Twilight savants and asked for guidance... and the ever-inquisitive Twilights began triggering truly immense Essence expenditures just to see *how much* they could disrupt the Loom of Fate. It was, after all, the greatest artifact of the Primordials, and had defied analysis by even the wisest Solar savants.

The tipping point came, however, with a whisper. In the corners of Yu-Shan, it was said that the Hierophant of the Deliberative no longer spoke with the voice of the Unconquered Sun. Servants said that the rarified golden ambrosia of the Hierophant's prayers had not manifested for years on the great altar of the Unconquered Sun. For

just as many years, the Lord of Creation had not spoken with his Chosen.

The Unconquered Sun had turned his face from his Chosen and Creation itself, said the whispers.

Some Seers believe the Great Prophecy was meant to convince the Unconquered Sun to change his mind. If they could produce a definitive treatise on the consequences of the Lord of Heaven and Earth's decision to turn from Creation, the Maidens might convince him to recant his choice and force his errant chosen into line. Others, however, believe that frustrated Seers sought to use the Great Prophecy as justification to strike out against the Solar Exalted, in retribution for their utter control over the Deliberative and their contempt for Sidereal advice. Regardless of the reasons why, the Five-Score Fellowship gathered their numbers to conduct the greatest divination of all time.

On one fateful Calibration, while gods and Exalted both reveled, the Seers of Heaven walked into the great chamber of the Loom. Survivors and journals from that time say that the Five Maidens stood at the doors to the Loom. Some say the Maidens smiled and nodded their approval of the undertaking. Others say the Maidens frowned, looked sad or gave no expression at all.

In the great circular chamber built by Autochthon, the Five-Score Fellowship sought the furthest reaches of future possibility among the humming threads. At the nexus of past, present and future, the Five-Score Fellowship cast their Charms and strained to see the threads twisting through dimensions of probability. From the cross-checking of a thousand predictions emerged three greater visions: the Vision of Bronze, the Vision of Gold and the Vision of Darkness. But which vision should they believe? If they chose wrongly, would they create the future they sought to avoid? And the arguments began.

THE VISION OF BRONZE

Whispers in the ears of hounds—a thousand-thousand dragon-hounds bay the hunt. How shall the mighty be dragged, bloodied and furious, from their thrones? Darkness cloaks the hound, and the keeper of the kennel watches beneath five bloodied stars. Weep for the hounds that must put down the mad, and catch up the mad to never again taint the world. Hounds are ill suited to sit thrones, but in so doing, the estate is preserved.

The Vision of Bronze foretold the horrors of the Usurpation: Exalted and mortal lives lost on an unimaginable scale, comparable perhaps only to the decimation of the Primordial War. The Sidereals also knew that the violence would never end as they hunted constantly reborn Solars, though a few saw symbolic dreams in which the sun itself shattered into 300 sparks of white fire and fell, extinguished, into the sea. From these visions came the concept of the Jade Prison, paired with visions of strange designs etched on the sea that proved to be the patterns of Essence necessary to imprison Solar Exaltations.



The Vision of Bronze terrified many Seers. They saw themselves shackled with the ultimate responsibility of both governing and protecting Creation, rather than simply advising those who did so. The Seers saw themselves drifting through the shadows, whispering in Dragon-Blooded ears, taking all of the risks and none of the rewards for their efforts. All who spoke of it agreed—the Five-Score Fellowship could not possibly do the work of 300 Lawgivers and 300 Stewards, all the while still fulfilling their duties in the Bureau of Destiny. Creation would suffer and be lessened, though it would survive.

Those who supported the Vision of Bronze accepted the lessening of Creation, and that their jobs would suddenly become much, much more difficult. They and their Dragon-Blooded pawns simply could not preserve the vast Essence-fueled industries built by the Lawgivers. Some said this was for the best: at least the diminished use of Essence would reduce the disruptions to fate. All in all, claimed the nascent Bronze Faction, Creation's survival meant more than Creation's glory.

THE VISION OF GOLD

Three hundred golden swords, raised above the heads of men. Cautious star-etched hands must touch the swords, must hold them, must wield them. One slip, and the blades shall cut away those hands, and loose carnage and war—the ringing of blades against blades shatters the palace of glass. Wielded deftly, the blades of gold uphold the palace of glass forevermore.

It took many weeks for the seemingly disparate prophecies that form the Vision of Gold to be acknowledged as a single foretelling. The outcomes were so different and strange at every turn that they might as well have been entirely different fortunes, save for one aspect: all were brought about by the Sidereal Exalted revealing their concerns of madness to the Solar Exalted.

In some visions, the Sidereals revealed their concerns to a few Lawgivers who shared the Sidereals' concerns. They worked together to create a system by which the Solars might themselves be appropriately policed. Working hard to quell any concerns and to keep their system above corruption, the Solars could address the fears of the Seers, and lead Creation to even greater heights of glory, peace and justice than before.

Other visions gave darker outcomes. In those visions, word of Sidereal concerns reached the Solar Exalted. Some Solars agreed, and cast a suspicious eye on their peers, never once considering that they themselves might be mad. Paranoia and accusations of corruption and madness led to civil war. Sidereals and Lunars were forced to either flee the pogroms or be swept up into them. Solar battled Solar until Creation became a wasteland and the Wyld consumed the ruins.

The Sidereals who chose this vision believed they could manage the revelation and help the Solars regain their sanity. After all, the Sun's Chosen had succeeded at

so much. If they could be persuaded to reform themselves, how could they fail?

Many of the Sidereals were not so sure; indeed, even those who did not wish to see Creation lessened still sided with the Vision of Bronze because it was *sure*. The Vision of Gold fanned into many possibilities, never settling into a single, stable truth. The future foretold by the Vision of Bronze might take a thousand years or more to fulfill, but in the end, a new Realm would rule all of Creation, lumpen, a bit brutal, but unchanging, forever.

THE VISION OF DARKNESS

Woe! Woe to humankind, and to all Heaven and Earth. Poison drips from a blinded Sun, and its pestilence taints all things. The wells of the world are made vile, and poison creeps into all things living and dead, until all are rotted from within. Even the stars drop from the pestilent firmament, cutting a burning swathe through a venom-clouded sky.

The Vision of Darkness was supposedly caused by the Sidereals doing nothing and allowing the Solar Exalted to continue their abuses. It led to the end of Creation, or to horrors without end that would outdo the madness of the Wyld, the cruelties of Malfeas or the despair of the Underworld. The Sidereals even saw the ways they themselves might become poisoned, vile creatures worshipfully enslaved to the demented Solars.

Each faction exploited the fear aroused by the Vision of Darkness by saying the other side's plans would bring the vision about. Supporters of the Bronze Faction, led by the Chosen of Secrets called Chejop Kejak, accuse the Gold Faction supporters of naïveté that would let the Solars continue their descent into madness. The Gold Faction, led by the Chosen of Journeys Tammiz Ushun, claimed that the Bronze Faction's plan was utterly impossible and would result only in a Solar pogrom that would hasten the coming of darkness.

Ultimately, though, the Vision of Darkness proved to the Sidereal Exalted that the one thing they could not do was do nothing.

THE USURPATION

In the end, most of the Seers chose the Vision of Bronze. The Maidens themselves stayed silent, according to records, refusing to answer missives sent to them requesting their guidance on the matter. Indeed, some Sidereals claimed that the Maidens were waiting for their Chosen to make their decision—that to make the wrong decision risked losing the Maidens' favor as the Solar Exalted had already lost that of the Unconquered Sun. In the end, the cold caution and ruthless logic of Chejop Kejak overcame the impassioned pleas of Tammiz Ushun, and the Sidereal Exalted undertook plans for the Usurpation.

In truth, though, the first deaths of the Usurpation were not Solar Exalted, or their servants. The first murders were of Sidereals who could not bend their will to the majority. Several Seers—including Tammiz Ushun—sought to flee

what they saw as the Five-Score Fellowship's own descent into madness and warn the Solar Exalted. None managed to do so. Gods in the Bureau of Destiny still speak of the Night of Fallen Stars, when five Sidereals died because they intended to betray the goals of the Bronze Faction's so-called Final Calibration Feast. By the time of the Usurpation itself, members of the Bronze Faction had arranged the deaths of at least a dozen of their fellow Seers. Meanwhile, Sidereal agents spent years arranging the destruction or distraction of elementals, gods and other beings of power who might assist embattled Chosen of the Sun.

Many of the epic tales of deeds during the Usurpation were lost with those who died performing the acts. Using sorcery, astrology, the Greater Signs of the Maidens and Dragon-Blooded troops, however, the Sidereals managed the impossible—the slaughter of all but a few dozen Lawgivers. Of course, this success had its price: literally thousands of Dragon-Blooded and dozens of Sidereal Exalted died in the campaign... more than the Bronze Faction leaders had expected.

Of course, the lives of those who rose against the mad Solars were not the only cost—millions of mortal lives were lost in the battle, which destroyed Meru as the Lawgivers attempted to escape the trap. Solar Exalts used terrible magics to wreak untold havoc on the very fabric of Creation, and wicked sorcerers attempted to turn the very dragon-lines that ran through sacred Meru into their weapons. The First City was obliterated that day, and has never recovered.

By the time Calibration ended, the deed was done. The Solar Deliberative was destroyed, its few survivors conducting guerilla wars that would take decades to quash, and the Lunars had retreated into the Wyld—some out of guilt, others in rage and others still simply to flee and mourn. The Dragon-Blooded stepped into their new roles as the Princes of the Earth, and the Sidereal Exalted gathered once more to consider their options.

THE PRISON OF JADE

Many gods in Heaven say the greatest crime of the Sidereal Exalted was not the Final Calibration Feast. Instead, the gods point to another act of violence and rebellion. At the exact moment violence broke out in the Final Calibration Feast, a small team of Sidereals attacked the Division of Exaltation and its daimyo, Lytek, the God of Exaltation.

On the death of any Celestial Exalt, its Exaltation flies to a cabinet in Lytek's office. For the five days of Calibration, while the Carnival of Meeting kept Yu-Shan in chaos, this small squad of Seers held Lytek prisoner and set up a weird mechanism around the sacred cabinet. Lytek could only watch in horror as orichalcum wires sucked the manifesting Solar Exaltations into the receptacle of jade.

By the time a force of celestial lions arrived to free Lytek, it was too late: the Sidereals were gone, taking the Jade Prison with them.

BREAKING THE MASK

Of course, this did not sit well with the denizens of Heaven. Indeed, the Bureau of Heaven (to whom the Division of Exaltations is attached) howled for Sidereal blood, and Celestial censors were summoned up even from their duties in Creation to aid in the investigation. The Sidereals had gone too far, the gods vowed, and would be punished appropriately.

Today, Sidereals claim that the Sign of the Mask was broken in order to grant Sidereals secrecy in their dealings with Creation. Many

gods know better: the Breaking of the Mask was an act of obfuscation directed against Heaven itself. The Sidereals were sworn to protect the Tapestry of Creation, but they tore part of it to protect themselves.

As the few surviving Sidereals gathered in the wake of the Usurpation, the Bronze Faction's leaders proposed their second audacious plan. The Sign of the Mask was closely tied to secrecy and the obfuscation of identity—in





the Sign of the Mask exists the fate of all things known but concealed. The Sidereals must use the Mask to disguise their involvement in the Usurpation, to the point where it was impossible to find any *proof* of their complicity. Certainly, everyone *knew* they had murdered the Solars, but without any proof to that effect, there could be no Heavenly reprisals... at least, nothing official, and the Seers could handle bureaucratic spite.

The Bronze Faction leaders drew up no fewer than 625 complex horoscopes to be worked into the house of the Mask. Each Sidereal received a part of this concealment. Things did not quite go as planned. These manipulations overstrained the Loom of Fate. Perhaps they were ill-timed in relation to one another; perhaps there was even sabotage by bitter Seers. Regardless of the reason why, the constellation of the Mask shattered. Conspiracy theorists among the Five-Score Fellowship claim that Chejop Kejak knew this would happen—indeed, they claim that was the intent of the manipulations in the first place. No one now can say... not even Kejak himself.

Destiny warped and began to unravel. The relationship between common knowledge and secrets twisted and tangled, blurring the two. Commonly held information became terrible secrets, and the mysteries of Creation entered the minds of thousands, driving them utterly mad. Only the intervention of the Maiden of Secrets herself saved the constellation of the Mask. In the wake of its breaking, no evidence could be found tying the Sidereal Exalted to the Usurpation and related crimes in Heaven itself. All the Sidereal Exalted had perfect alibis. They could not even be compelled to confess their own deeds, because no one knew exactly who did what. Indeed, no one knows exactly who planned the assault on the Mask... just as no one knows exactly how the Bronze Faction members built the Jade Prison, or where they hid it.

Strangely, this effect continues to this day. Nearly every denizen in Heaven knows that the Sidereals led the Usurpation. But nothing has qualified as sufficient evidence since the Breaking of the Mask—not even direct Sidereal confessions. Something shattered in Creation on the day the Mask broke, and for the purpose of causality and the Tapestry, the Sidereal Exalted are somehow simultaneously responsible for the Usurpation and utterly unattached to it.

SIDEREALS DURING THE SHOGUNATE

The Sidereal Exalted spent the first century of the Shogunate repairing the damage the Sidereals had inflicted on Creation and themselves. The Exaltations of the slain Sidereals found their appointed mortal hosts, and the new Starborn received their training. They repaired the natural and supernatural damage left by battling Exalted as best they could. The Lunar Admiral Leviathan alone had triggered the single largest Essence expenditure ever recorded by the Sidereals when he vindictively activated the self-destruct mechanisms of most of the ships in the Western Fleet.



These reckless Essence surges inflicted massive damage on the Loom of Fate and triggered major tangles in the skeins of fate, some of which took nearly a century to fully correct. Along the way, the Sidereals found time to destroy various records of their existence—and memories both living and divine—not dealt with by their new Arcane Fate.

The Sidereals also tried to repair their reputations in Heaven. Despite the lack of prosecutions, few gods showed much interest in political or social alliances with the Maidens' Chosen. In an ironic twist, the Sidereals' new Arcane Fate affected many gods: deities a Sidereal thought he had cajoled, bribed or blackmailed into cooperation forgot their alliances... often at the most inconvenient times. The five gods whom the Maidens had deputized to lead the Bureau of Destiny's divisions reduced the authority and autonomy granted to the Sidereals, and the Maidens did not object. The Sidereals have never regained the full trust in Heaven they once enjoyed in the Old Realm.

CHANGING CONVENTIONS

In the bureaucratic reshufflings that followed the Usurpation, the old divisions into Watcher, Vizier and Keeper became meaningless. Instead, the conventions became more important, though some changed their focus. For instance, the Convention on Essence Wielders dealt less with mitigating the disruptions caused by large Essence discharges and more with leftover Solar traps and projects that no one understood. The Convention on the Underworld found its research no longer a matter of pure knowledge; the convention became the Convention on Shadowlands and sought to limit their growth and impact on Creation. In turn, the convention eventually evolved into the Convention on Deathlords when Heaven discovered the existence of these lords of the dead well into the Shogunate's lifespan.

FACTIONALISM

Many Sidereals who supported the Vision of Bronze considered it their duty to continue to shepherd the Dragon-Blooded. These Sidereals reasoned that the more influence they had over the Terrestrial Exalted, the better the Sidereals could compensate for the missing Solars and Lunars. To this end, Bronze Faction Sidereals lobbied Heavenly authorities to recognize the Dragon-Blooded as the legitimate Princes of the Earth.

These attempts failed miserably. Gods who still nursed grudges for the Usurpation, working closely with the remaining Sidereals who had supported the Vision of Gold, stymied such attempts at every turn. The Shogunate received no endorsement from Heaven, and no aid except by the mercy of individual gods to their worshippers. The Bronze Faction had to manipulate the Shogunate's leaders through false identities, Charms, astrology and front groups such as their new cult, the Immaculate Order. These Sidereals became the Viziers... but no longer glorious.

Throughout the Shogunate period, Bronze Faction Sidereals held complete dominance among the Starborn.

Nevertheless, a few survivors of the Gold Faction kept Tamiz Ushun's dream alive. At the Bureau of Destiny, they did little more than reminisce about the good old days and complain about the way things were now. However, they, too, launched secret projects within Creation.

Under the Bronze Faction's direction, the Shogunate sought to eradicate all traces of the hated Anathema from history. Gold Faction members did everything they could to prevent this. In time, they gave up trying to preserve history in the open; instead, they hid artifacts, books of lore, artifact intelligences and automatons in their estates in Heaven and in safe houses in Creation and Elsewhere. The Gold Faction also concealed Solar tombs so an increasingly daring Shogunate could not destroy these memorials to the Lawgivers.

Most of all, the Gold Faction sought the Jade Prison's location in hopes the faction could liberate the Solar Exaltations. Neither sorcery nor the Loom of Fate could find it, though, so the Gold Faction Sidereals looked outside fate, in the Wyld... and the Underworld.

FAMILIAR GHOSTS

In the Underworld, the Gold Faction Sidereals found that many of the murdered Solar Exalted had left ghosts, and several had resisted both reincarnation and Oblivion. Not all of them remembered their existences as Solars, though. Members of the Gold Faction interrogated these ghosts, seeking information on hidden lore and a possible means of finding the Jade Prison through the arcane links between the Exaltations and the souls that once held them.

Through Sidereal meddling, a number of ghosts regained their emotions along with their memories, and became quite angry. Several of these ghosts fled the Underworld, seeking seclusion in the Labyrinth—or possibly deeper.

THE CONTAGION STRIKES

In time, the Sidereal Exalted came to a balanced existence, tending to the duties of their conventions and letting the Shogunate tend to the defense and rule of Creation. Now and then, the Fair Folk raided from beyond Creation's rim, or strange ash-storms brought the dead billowing up out of shadowlands. As the centuries passed, the Shogunate became more adept at quashing these intrusions without Sidereal help. The Vision of Bronze seemed well on its way to fulfillment. The Gold Faction became a mark of nostalgia, a bout of wishful thinking without any real relevance to the Sidereals of the day, though occasionally the Wyld Hunt might fail to discover and kill a Solar long enough for a Gold Faction member to find and harbor the fugitive. It never lasted long, and always ended in death for the Solar and nasty, petty bureaucratic vengeance taken out on the would-be Gold Faction Sidereal by the juggernaut that was the Bronze Faction.

Then, the world died.

The Great Contagion swept out of the East and destroyed every population of mortals the Contagion touched.

Even the healing powers of gods and Exalted could not cure it, and the Dragon-Blooded fell just as surely as did mortals. The Sidereals tried to find a cure, promoting the Convention on Plague from a small sub-convention of the Convention on Natural Disaster to its own full convention. They gave mortal and Dragon-Blooded savants and healers the greatest destinies they could arrange—to no avail.

Every Sidereal who harbored an inkling of Gold Faction sympathies blamed the Bronze Faction leaders for this destruction—the Solar Exalted had been the most potent healers in Creation, and surely could have stopped the Contagion.

Recriminations stopped when a Vizier who tried to study the Contagion through the Loom of Fate caught the disease himself. Even its fate was deadly. Outright panic set in when huge swaths of fate began disappearing—their threads not cut, but simply *gone*. The Starborn feared the Loom itself might collapse. They soon realized, however, that Creation faced a worse threat than the supernatural plague. The Fair Folk had arrived.

THE MARCH OF THE WYLD

The Sidereal Exalted put aside all their differences when the Fair Folk invaded Creation from every direction. Indeed, the Viziers became among the first to fight the lords of the outer madness, leading squads of celestial lions and martial gods. As a result, the Viziers became among the first to die.

The Bronze Faction mobilized the Dragon-Blooded. Though the Shogunate was nearly in ruins, the Terrestrial Exalted did their best to defend Creation. Even the bitterest Gold Faction member had to admit that the Dragon-Blooded—while wholly insufficient to stop the Fair Folk—did more than anyone expected the Dragon-Blooded could. They fought with great vigor and courage, and won the respect of the Gold Faction Sidereals of the day, and of many in Heaven. Whole Dynasties of Dragon-Blooded—their numbers already weakened by the Contagion—died out in the struggle, and they gave of themselves willingly and without pause. How could the Viziers do any less?

But the Five-Score Fellowship soon saw that direct battle against the Fair Folk hordes was futile. The invaders from the Outer Chaos had no end. And so the Sidereals retreated to the Loom of Fate, the true fount of Sidereal power. If any force in Creation could stop the Fair Folk, someone would have to find it and use it. The Sidereals bade the pattern spiders gather the threads of every person remaining in Creation and gathered them together so that one thread might touch every other, and bind them into a mighty cable of destiny.

Nearly every child in Creation knows how a young Dragon-Blooded officer braved the unknown dangers of the Imperial Manse and roused its long-dormant powers. The threads of destiny separated once more as the Realm Defense Grid scourged the Fair Folk from Creation. And the world



held a new power, whom even the Bronze Faction would have to treat with as an equal: the Scarlet Empress.

Young Sidereals sometimes wonder if the Bronze Faction foresaw or arranged the Empress's rise and gave her the knowledge she needed to claim the Imperial Manse. Their teachers then smack them upside the head. Even the most devoted Bronze Faction ideologue would not place Creation's ultimate weapon in Dragon-Blooded hands if the Bronze Faction followers could claim it for themselves.

THE SECOND AGE

The rise of the Empress pushed the Vision of Bronze rather further than its partisans expected—but the Great Contagion and the Fair Folk Invasion greatly reduced the Bronze Faction's dominance in the Five-Score Fellowship. The Bronze Faction had not predicted the Great Contagion. The faction's precious Shogunate had fallen. They could not control the new Empress—only negotiate. All in all, their great plan was a debacle.

Sidereals who merely went along with the Bronze Faction because there seemed to be no real alternative broke away. Many declared that only the Maidens and the Bureau of Destiny deserved Sidereal loyalty. As the Exaltations of slain Sidereals found their appointed next incarnations, a third faction grew: the Independents, who accepted themselves as a faction only in the sense that they refused to follow Bronze Faction leadership. The Bronze Faction members still held all the senior positions, but they could not count on their juniors to implement their plans.

A few Viziers switched to the Gold Faction. No one really thought the Solars could return in force, but perhaps the few remaining Solar Exalted could be trained to serve the Bureau of Destiny. Perhaps they might even give the Bureau direct control over the Realm Defense Grid. A few gods listened with interest to these plans—but never enough.

THE SCARLET EMPIRE

Chejop Kejak journeyed to the palace of the Scarlet Empress to offer her an alliance. The Bronze Faction would bend the Immaculate Order to the service of the Scarlet Empire in exchange for the opportunity to influence the Empire's development and ensure that it became a viable defense against future Fair Folk incursions. The Empress accepted this arrangement, and Chejop Kejak soon became a "trusted advisor" to both the Mouth of Peace and the Empress herself. A significant percentage of the Bronze Faction followed Kejak's lead, fashioning resplendent destinies as Immaculate monks or Heptagram teachers in order to forge the best and brightest of the Scarlet Dynasty into tools against the enemies of the Sidereals.

The Bronze Faction's alliance with the Empress provoked great controversy in Heaven. Not only did many Viziers divide their time and focus between their duties at the Bureau and their mortal power games, but they also reallocated the Bureau's limited resources to aid their endeavors.

In particular, the ranking Sidereal on the Convention of Water was livid when she learned that more than a third of her convention was reassigned to teach Celestial Martial Arts to Dragon-Blooded monks. Kejak and his cronies still must justify every bit of support they give the Realm. For instance, the Bureau's leaders permit the Bronze Faction to continue aiding the Wyld Hunt only because the Hunt has proved so useful against rogue demons and rampaging Fair Folk. Even Gold Faction loyalists have sometimes used the Realm's forces for such purposes.

AND NOW?

In RY 763, the impossible and unforeseen happened again. The Empress disappeared, throwing all of Kejak's machinations into doubt. A year later, *someone* found and opened the Jade Prison, a host of Solar Exalted walked Creation once more—and the Gold Faction seemed as surprised as anyone. Its membership doubled within a year, though. The Bronze Faction now faces a viable alternative faction at the very time the Bronze Faction's greatest asset, the Realm, crumbles. Independents wish their colleagues would shut up and do their jobs.

The Five-Score Fellowship finds itself in transition. Some Viziers say it's time for another Great Prophecy to assess the different ways they might manage the Solars' return and the many threats against Creation. Other Viziers sourly suggest that a new Great Prophecy might not work any better than the first: too many threats come from outside of fate. And this frightens many Sidereal Exalted more than the Deathlords, the crumbling of the Realm or any other threat to Creation's order. The Chosen of Fate, the masters of foresight appointed by the Maidens themselves, are no longer sure what to do next.

FACTIONS

The Bureau of Destiny is supposed to run smoothly, with no purpose except to preserve the orderly working of fate. The Maidens never intended their Bureau to suffer the infighting and scheming between the Bronze and the Gold—or so say the gods in the Bureau who refuse to side with either faction.

Before the Usurpation, the Sidereal Exalted certainly had small cabals that held strong opinions on some topic or another or nursed jealousies with their rivals. That's part and parcel of being human. None of the Five-Score Fellowship, however, would let petty social games impinge on their work for the Bureau.

In the Second Age, however, the factions seem entrenched and ineradicable. Some Viziers keep themselves aloof from these conspiracies, but their refusal practically makes them a faction in and of themselves. When everyone is part of the great game, even "neutral" becomes a side.

JOINING THE FACTIONS

Sidereals encounter the Five-Score Fellowship's internal rivalries almost from the first day they arrive in Heaven—

which may happen years before their predestined Exaltations. The gods who run the divisions divide a young Seer's training among several Sidereals to prevent one mentor from gaining too much influence over a pupil; unfortunately, the supernatural martial arts require intensely personalized training that only a single sifu can provide. A faction member who becomes a sifu has an excellent opportunity to mold a pupil's opinions. Memories from previous lives can also predispose a Seer to one side or another.

Whatever side a young Sidereal chooses, she cannot avoid exposure to each faction's viewpoints. Bronze Faction trainers try to convince a Seer that her destiny involves upholding the Sidereal control of the Immaculate Philosophy, keeping the Scarlet Empire in power and battling the return of the Solar Exalted. Likewise, Gold Faction mentors claim that Creation is dramatically damaged, and only the return of the Solar Exalted gives Creation a fighting chance.

All too often, faction zealots display a perverse genius at driving new recruits to the opposite side. A student meets another Sidereal, who treats him with sneering disdain because one of his current teachers belongs to the other faction. A young Sidereal might join his sifu's faction just because members of the opposing faction treat him like a leper. Before too long, he's quick to return the favor to those he meets. Thus, the cycle continues.

A significant proportion of Viziers, however, reject both Bronze and Gold loyalties. These Sidereals choose a harder

path in some ways... but not as hard as it once was. While elder Sidereals tend to be factional zealots, the middle ranks of the Five-Score Fellowship—the Sidereals who are most likely to train new Exalted—include increasing numbers of Seers who advise recruits to stay away from both sides.

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

The Sidereal Exalted value subtlety and circumspection, but not every Vizier is a conspiratorial genius. Many Viziers lack the devious minds (or simply the age and experience) needed to outwit their political enemies. Such Seers usually take one of three roles: the unwitting pawn of both sides, the curmudgeon who despises both or the zealot who immerses herself in her own faction's goals and follows the orders of her leaders.

A young Seer often finds someone whose goals he likes and attaches himself to that individual. In many instances, this person becomes the Sidereal's sifu—the elders of the Bureau see the amount of time and dedication the young Sidereal applies to the goals and methods of the senior Vizier, and simply make official the relationship that already exists. The danger to this approach lies with evolving personalities and desires; should the younger Sidereal find himself no longer supporting his sifu's goals (or even decide to change faction), future interactions can become quite awkward and unpleasant.

From such a mentor, the young Sidereal learns how to play the game of factional politics. She accompanies her sifu





to meetings where faction members pass information; she may even act as her sifu's courier. In this way, the apprentice builds a reputation as a trustworthy and useful adjunct to her master's faction.

Neither faction has any formal criteria for membership. One day, a Sidereal simply passes from sympathizer to member—a superior in the faction needs something done on the faction's behalf and asks the younger Vizier to do it. Success in such an endeavor guarantees a Seer's identity as one of the faction.

CASUAL RELATIONSHIPS

The factions don't conduct any official meetings, since officially they don't exist. Factionalism operates by casual activities and seemingly meaningless interactions. Only a dull-witted Sidereal would claim he belongs to a faction; no, he simply associates with fellow Sidereals who agree on a few sensible policies. Viziers seldom find their friends on one side and their faction on the other—a Sidereal's friends generally *are* his faction.

Faction members establish policies through tea ceremonies, nights at the theater, getaways to some exotic part of Creation for a few days of relaxation and other social activities. These gatherings stand in marked opposition to the distinctly formal, public functioning of the Bureau. When the Bureau asks Sidereals to discuss some plan for Creation's destiny, they follow rules of order and a secretary-god records the debate. Faction meetings have no records because they are just gatherings of friends who feel like chatting a bit about work while they do something else. Their meetings might even include gods from outside the Bureau of Destiny... who also happen to share the faction's viewpoint.

BUREAU FUNCTIONS

Of course, even the most loyal faction member sometimes must encounter the opposite faction on a social basis. High-ranking Sidereals often throw functions to which Seers and gods of every faction are invited. Whatever a Sidereal's age, rank or allegiance, she can advance her career in the Celestial Hierarchy through a well-executed hunting expedition or moon-gazing party or making a good impression at someone else's social event.

Ostensibly, social gatherings are not under the same restrictions on behavior that govern official activity at the Bureau. Therefore, these open social events tend to get a little intense, complete with rivals snubbing one another, vicious gossip making the rounds and Sidereals and gods trading snide remarks. Thus, a young Sidereal who manages to host a successful party despite guests who hate one another is looked upon with esteem—after all, that kind of adroitness stands any Sidereal well in terms of managing others.

THE SUBTLE STRIKE

Heaven perceives the Gold and Bronze Factions as being constantly at one another's throats. That view has a fair bit of truth, but the complete situation is not that simple. The earliest parts of Sidereal training involve a complex syllabus of Heavenly etiquette, inter-Bureau observations of polite behavior and the intricate dance of honor, respect, admiration and dislike in daily behavior. The directional conventions have a good reason to keep the youngest Sidereals too busy to spend much time in Heaven—the stakes are too high to risk breaches of conduct by a foolhardy, impatient and rude young Seer.

The factions refer to skillful jabs at one another as Subtle Strikes—blows that go unseen, observed only by their results. The true master of the Subtle Strike leaves his victim in no doubt she was attacked, but unable to retaliate. Physical confrontation is absurd, particularly within the gaze of other Sidereals or anywhere in Heaven. Rather, the factions learn to use the many weapons of the social battlefield: rumors, secret deals (kept or betrayed), the revelation of scandals and the use of bureaucratic influence.

Ultimately, the goal of factional infighting is simple: to make a rival's life difficult enough that he cannot achieve his goals. Some favored tactics for Sidereals striking at one another include the following:

- **Heavy Burdens:** Perhaps the most common form of harassment between the factions consists of laying additional duties on rivals. Anytime a Sidereal of one faction chooses a member of another faction to fulfill a difficult, dangerous, humiliating or simply time-consuming task for the Bureau of Destiny, the one so burdened knows why.

- **Sabotage:** Sidereals who fail in the tasks the Bureau assigns them lose prestige, credibility and possibly rank and salary, and so, Viziers must watch out for sabotage by their rivals. Sometimes, this attack is bureaucratic—a Sidereal returns to Heaven having accomplished his mission only to discover that he wasn't told all of his mission's objectives, or suddenly all the reports praising the Sidereal as a worthy agent of Heaven go missing from his convention archives. Likewise, a rival may arrange for others to file grievances against the Sidereal, accusing him of inappropriate or rude behavior.

Other forms of sabotage may be more direct. A rival may seek to obstruct a Seer by arranging for unexpected attacks by elementals or Wyld barbarians or simple bandits, for example. All Sidereals know that these strategies can backfire horribly: deliberately preventing a repair to Creation constitutes treason. The Bureau punishes treason most severely (see p. 58). The watchword for such an assignment is, "Don't make it impossible to repair the problem; just make it impossible for *your enemy* to repair the problem."

- **The Rumor Mill:** A well-respected Celestial bureaucrat can find many of the most onerous aspects of his life made easier. What officially would justify an audit instead

THE FINE ART OF RUMOR-MONGERING

A mud-slinging campaign against a rival is run as a normal series of social attacks. The character does not focus these attacks directly against the rival, however—they are aimed at others, especially individuals who have Intimacies with the target. Presence is the best skill for whispered campaigns, where the attacker focuses on one person at a time. Likewise, smear campaigns based on telling embarrassing stories, coming up with mocking tavern songs and creating humiliating bits of street theater are best done with Performance. Investigation is used when presenting evidence of the victim's incompetence or perfidy, allowing the target to come to her own conclusions.

Many Sidereals launch rumor-mongering attacks from as concealed a position as possible. A favored tactic is to subtly steer a conversation to the victim, then making a seemingly innocent offhand remark that outrages the target, turning her against the victim. Such attacks are performed as though Reestablishing Surprise—the attacker must flurry a Reestablishing Surprise roll of (Wits + Socialize), opposed by a reflexive (Perception + [Investigation or Socialize]) roll. If the attacker gains more successes, the target's Mental Defense Value is rendered inapplicable against the social attack.

Clever uses of other Abilities can aid in this endeavor. A campaign of letter-writing, memos or posted fliers would let the attacker use his Linguistics rating in place of his Appearance with the attacks. Likewise, submitting a series of reports and complaints might let the attacker use his Bureaucracy in place of his Appearance. A mocking cartoon might permit a similar substitution of an appropriate Craft Skill instead of Appearance.

Of course, the ultimate goal of such a rumor mill is not simply the erosion of the target's Intimacy toward the victim. Rather, a successful mudslinger strives to create an entirely new Intimacy either in his own favor, or one *against* the victim (for Intimacies can reflect not simply the things a character likes or is loyal to, but those things a character truly despises as well).

becomes a chance for the auditor to sit down and have a serious (but friendly) chat with an honored luminary. A highly regarded individual moves to the front of waiting queues at Celestial Gates. He receives invitations to social events where he can meet the individual who can raise the bureaucrat's star still higher.

Open slander of a rival can sometimes backfire—particularly if performed without finesse—but the shining star of

the Heavenly social scene one day may find her upcoming season of social engagements suddenly cancelled the next. Even if most people know a mudslinging rumor isn't true, they may feel doubts. Smoke and fire, and all that. The genius of the sly insinuation, the sniggering put-down and the deliciously scandalous rumor is that openly denying them only lends them more power. Those who find themselves ill thought of may find themselves burdened with worse tasks in their professional lives, while those in the position to make these sufferers' lives difficult often win esteem from the vicious social networks for doing so.

• **Striking the Blood:** The tactic referred to as Striking the Blood is an act of war between Sidereals, reserved for blood-rivals rather than those who simply disagree about policy ideals. The Bureau punishes physical assaults on fellow Sidereals. The friends, loved ones and relations of a Sidereal receive no such protection, however. Striking the Blood, at its simplest, involves venting one's frustrations on a rival's family and friends—sometimes with astrological curses, and sometimes with direct violence.

Such sloppy and inelegant methods can still get a Sidereal in trouble with the division heads or, worse, the mysterious Convention on Oversight that seems to know all about Sidereal hearts so well (see pp. 50-51 and 87-89). A skilled conspirator arranges so that a rival's family and friends must be harmed in some way as part of Heaven's plans. In such a fashion, an attacker places herself beyond reproach for the act: after all, she simply attended to her duties.

The most masterful execution of Striking the Blood, of course, comes when a Sidereal maneuvers his rival into a position where she is directly commanded to harm or disadvantage her own family as part of implementing destiny or defending Creation. Just the sheer moral torment that such a situation generates is worth the effort of setting it up. Best of all, though, if the Sidereal refuses to do her duty out of love for those involved, official censure follows and perhaps even an audit. Sidereals who pull off such an act of Striking the Blood against a foe become deeply feared in the Bureau.

SPY GAMES

Heaven knows the Sidereals as the acknowledged masters of espionage, intrigue, double-dealing and information-gathering. When a god or other Heavenly official outside the Bureau of Destiny deals with a Sidereal, the god or official assumes that the obvious reason for the interaction is probably not the only one.

Many Sidereals cultivate networks of spies and informants to bring them whatever information the Sidereals cannot obtain through their own Charms. The Sidereal Exaltation goes to mortals who already possess a strong desire to know what's *really* going on. This desire influences Seers' personal, professional and factional activities, from investigating the plans of the Deathlords to gossip about coworkers in their divisions.



Of course, the only thing that drives Sidereals more than the need to know is the need for secrecy. Thus, the Chosen of the Maidens are simultaneously some of the nosiest and most secretive creatures in Creation. They look for information and secrets at every turn, while working to make sure their own stay protected.

These simultaneous urges manifest in the incessant spy games that mark factionalism. A Sidereal who arrives to his faction's gathering with new and interesting information about the opposing faction gains the interest and respect of his allies, even if that information has no immediate use. They know that any datum might become useful sometime later—where Sidereals are concerned, perhaps millennia later.

Bribing the little gods that populate Heaven is an easy way to gain information on rivals. More than a few gods supplement their incomes by acting as additional eyes and ears for one or more Sidereals. A god with a particularly juicy bit of information on someone may offer to sell it to the highest bidder. Of course, should the subject of such information hear about the unofficial auction, she is likely to take a hand in stopping it.

THE BRONZE FACTION

Bronze Faction members like to call themselves the secret masters of Creation, and that's not entirely a boast. As a whole, the Bronze Faction wields incredible power in every variety—spiritual, supernatural, political, martial and every other sort. Of course, the Bronze Faction is hardly a monolith. Each Seer in the conspiracy has her own ideas how to do things.

These Viziers occupy a vast and invisible web of power. No one since the Old Realm has created such diverse and extensive institutions to manipulate, or co-opted so many of the power-structures built by others. Faction members are masters of hierarchy, organization and trickle-down distribution of wealth, influence and power.

The Bronze Faction gets much of its power from the Scarlet Empire. Creation's only superpower is a direct manifestation of the Bronze Faction's decision to support the Dragon-Blooded as the Princes of the Earth. Bronze Faction Viziers act as the secret masters in nearly every aspect of Dynastic existence—they lurk within the culture's religion, its occultism, its civil bureaucracy and its military.

PHILOSOPHY

Ever since the terrible visions of the Great Prophecy, the Bronze Faction has sought to achieve the greatest good with the least chance of damage. Its members regard themselves as sensibly cautious, eschewing the possible benefits of taking risks in favor of actions that have the least threat of devastation and catastrophe.

In the weeks after the Great Prophecy, Tammiz Ushun accused followers of the Vision of Bronze of cowardice—they were too afraid to take the risks needed to achieve

what was best for Creation. Chejop Kejak's rebuttal still stands as the guiding principle of the Bronze Faction:

"Cowardice? Perhaps so. But not fear for my own life. I think of the hundreds of millions—the entire future of Creation!—whose lives depend on our actions. Have you asked them if they want to chance their children's lives on an uncertain prophecy? We do not have the right to gamble with the future to prove to one another that we are not cowards. Leave such pride for the field of war and sporting tournaments—this is the world of fate and reality, my brethren. We cannot throw the dice and hope for the best. We must not let what might happen if we succeed drive us. In this, we must look only to what might happen if we fail. That is our charge."

The Bronze Faction takes a great deal of pride in its achievements. Though the Realm, the Immaculate Order and other Bronze Faction instruments may not match the glories of the First Age, they are amazing works, especially given the subtlety and finesse required to construct and direct them. For centuries, the Shogunate defended

CHEJOP KEJAK AND THE IMMORTALITY QUESTION

Some gods and Sidereals can't believe that Chejop Kejak is about to die. Surely, the oldest and most influential Vizier can capture some kind of immortality for himself. A decade ago, a group of Bronze Faction luminaries acquired the hearthstone to the Ancient Estate, a powerful Earth-aspected manse on the northern slope of the Imperial Mountain. This hearthstone is a Gem of Immortality (see *Exalted*, p. 382), and the group presented it to Kejak at a feast in his honor, with the humble request that he never deny them his wisdom and guidance.

Kejak turned down the gift. His admirers left the feast concerned, but they accepted his explanation of why he could not take their gift. They have also respected Kejak's desire to keep his reasons private.

Some in the Bureau believe that Kejak prefers to set his affairs in order and wrap up his projects as best he can, rather than risk disaster should something happen to his source of longevity. Others speculate that he long ago considered such a thing, but discovered that he was destined to wreak terrible damage to the Loom itself—in a year long past the point where he should be dead. Still others suggest that perhaps Kejak is tired and simply wants to hand over the burden he has carried for so many centuries. Regardless of Kejak's motives, the Bronze Faction knows their leader will leave them in a few years. No one knows who could replace him.

Creation without the need for the Realm Defense Grid. It took incredible sacrifice, dedication and a level of organization and hierarchy never deemed necessary in the Old Realm, but the Sidereals and their vision for the world *worked*, according to the Bronze Faction, right up until the Contagion. Given a few more centuries, the necessary evils involved in building that imperium—the mass serfdom, the simplifications needed for standardized, mass-produced magitech, the bouts of civil strife between daimyos—would have withered away.

The Scarlet Empress's Realm had such a future, as well. With her renewed control over the Imperial Manse, it seemed that the much-abused and smaller Creation was in fine hands. Rebuilding was slow, to be sure, but the masters of Creation refused to look to ages past for their inspiration. The Old Realm was a creation of the Anathema, and needed them to survive. It was flawed at the core, an unworthy ideal. Rather, the Bronze Faction and their Dragon-Blooded conspirators sought to create something greater than had ever existed before.

The Bronze Faction still reels from the sudden disappearance of the Empress. Moreover, the semi-public knowledge of Kejak's impending death does nothing to allay fears, particularly given his refusal to seek artificial longevity.

METHODOLOGY

The Bronze Faction operates by building strong social systems in Creation, and then using those systems to accomplish their ends. The Bronze Faction approach to defending Creation is to establish the means by which Creation's people can defend themselves. The faction's members genuinely believe that the Sidereal who works best works least. Of course, only an agent of the Bureau of Destiny can deal with the puzzles and paradoxes caused by spontaneous snarls of fate—but since so many of those snarls happen because of people misusing Essence, even these snarls suggest a failure of planning and fatecraft.

Therefore, the Bronze Faction tries to impart traditions and social conventions that reinforce the integrity of Creation. The small Immaculate monastery one Sidereal works to build is not just an interesting hobby, or a grab for power: the monastery is a tool that will one day serve the Bureau of Destiny. Bronze Faction sifus tell their pupils that they are not the warriors fighting a war: they are the smiths who create the swords and armor years before the war must be fought.

This doesn't mean that every Bronze Faction Vizier has a network of Dragon-Blooded minions at his personal beck and call—far from it. Rather, Bronze Factions members find people who have the power to deal with a problem, and give them a reason to deal with it. When a young Sidereal must go in and get his hands dirty personally, he can be assured that, at his next Bronze Faction function, several of his seniors will want to give him advice on how to better

prepare for that kind of occurrence in the future. Indeed, they may offer to help plan and build a front group for that very purpose, in return for a small favor....

Bronze Faction members prefer to manipulate their operatives into fulfilling their roles without ever knowing the Sidereal was at work—indeed, without ever knowing that Sidereals exist, at all. Of course, just as many ideals, this can be difficult to accomplish. After all, the Dragon-Blooded are still Exalted, and they aren't stupid.

The Bronze Faction understands that sometimes Terrestrial Exalted will discover the Sidereals' existence, and they plan accordingly. When feasible, the Sidereal quickly arranges for the Dragon-Blooded's knowledge to be snatched from him, using spells such as Theft of Memory (see **The White Treatise**, p. 65) or similar effects. Sometimes, however, memory manipulation does not suffice. If the situation that led to the revelation seems likely to come up again, the Viziers fall back on other measures.

Bronze Faction doctrine holds that an outsider who discovers a conspiracy will eventually reveal that conspiracy to other outsiders. Spells such as Corrupted Words (see **The White Treatise**, p. 41) or other supernatural compulsions can keep someone silent for a time, but not forever. Co-option works better: if a Terrestrial Exalt figures out who and what a Sidereal really is, make that Dragon-Blood part of the conspiracy as well.

The Sidereal quickly works to show the Dragon-Blood some benefit to alliance, such as knowledge of a rival's plans or access to a lucrative business opportunity. After that, anyone clever enough to pierce a Sidereal's cover is smart enough to understand that he, too, is now part of this conspiracy and revelation would harm him as well. Some people can be recruited just by praising them for their cleverness and offering to make them part of Creation's *real* elite.

On the other hand, the Sidereal also points out that no one else knows the big secret, or would believe it if told. After all, the ancient texts of the Realm never speak of any "Sidereal Exalted." Does the Dynast want his fellows to think he is crazy?

Many old Dynasts know about the Sidereal Exalted—although those Dynasts do not know exactly what the Sidereal Exalted are. These Dynasts keep their silence because they see advantages in doing so... and thus, they do not compare notes and realize how deeply the Star-born conspiracy penetrates the Realm the Dynasts think they rule.

TRAINING AND INITIATION

Exposure to Bronze Faction philosophy comes early and often in a young Sidereal's training. Indeed, Sidereals do not always understand where Bronze Faction dogma ends and training in the Bureau of Destiny begins. Many things that a young Seer takes for granted—the use of Dragon-Blooded institutions as tools for Heaven, the necessity of the Usurpation and the concept that defense





against the Wyld rests on stability in the Realm—are Bronze Faction constructs.

Sifus from the faction instill its methodology and ideology along with knowledge of Charms, martial arts and the secrets of Exalted astrology. Sifus strive to impress the young Sidereal with the seriousness of the charge the Bronze Faction has laid claim to—literally, the guidance and defense of Creation. Young Viziers must understand how the Great Prophecy and the Usurpation changed the essential nature of Sidereal duties, and that the changes were utterly necessary for Creation's survival.

Bronze Faction recruits also learn that many gods within the Celestial Bureaucracy do not agree with the change of the Sidereal mandate. They still cling to the corruption of the Anathema, even after 15 centuries. The Bronze Faction's directive matters more than old regulations that no longer reflect the true state of Creation.

Yet, young Bronze Faction Sidereals are also taught to respect those gods and institutions. To flout them would be a slap in the face of the order and security the faction tries to preserve. The Bronze Faction oversteps its Heavenly duties not from rebellion, but to protect Heaven from itself. The essential nature of the Celestial Bureaucracy—the “spirit of the law,” as it were—should not suffer under petty regu-

lations imposed by mad Solar god-kings and their divine flunkies. A Bronze Faction Sidereal breaks Celestial laws and regulations in small ways for the sake of her greater duty to Heaven and Creation.

These early training sessions emphasize the role of Chejop Kejak and other elder Sidereals in the history of the faction. By the time a young Bronze Faction finishes her training, she generally regards Master Kejak as an absolute hero of Creation, who sacrificed anything and everything for the greater good. Sometimes, an apprentice trains under a sifu who has a bit more jaded view of Chejop Kejak, but not often; those Sidereals who assign sifus take care that only appropriately respectful masters receive access to new Exalted. Working in the Bureau of Destiny will turn a Sidereal cynical soon enough. No reason to start any sooner than necessary.

A Sidereal never becomes a full member of the faction until he experiences tea with Chejop Kejak. The (probably awestruck) young Sidereal is given a place at the meeting table along with a number of important and influential Bronze Faction Sidereals. His sifu tells him simply to sit silently and observe while his elders discuss various issues and what to do about them. His only responsibility is to ensure that none of the masters present ever face the impossible conundrum of an empty tea cup.

After the meeting ends, Chejop Kejak asks the novice to remain, and they have a cup of tea together. Kejak questions the recruit about the history of the faction, and what it means to follow Bronze Faction philosophy as a Sidereal. The talk then turns to what the young Sidereal heard at the meeting. Kejak asks the young Sidereal's opinion on what he heard, including what he would do if he were faced with such a problem. Chejop Kejak's approval is necessary to join the faction—though most who go through his interrogation without committing a horrible social blunder receive it. Even Sidereals whose nerves get the better of them are still accepted, albeit with a bit more training by their sifus. A Sidereal knows the faction accepts him when he receives an invitation to attend one of the many theater-viewings, stargazing parties, social teas or other gatherings of the Bronze Faction by himself, rather than as part of his sifu's entourage.

CLIQUEs

The Bronze Faction's activities are sufficiently broad that sub-groups form. They all believe the Dragon-Blooded must rule Creation, with the Bronze Faction as their puppet-masters; the faction is in no danger of splintering. Each clique simply concentrates on particular methods or areas of influence. A Sidereal can belong to more than one clique.

- **The Inner Circle** consists of Chejop Kejak and his immediate cronies. They include the last survivors of the original Bronze Faction who participated in the Great Prophecy; no member is less than a millennium old.

The Inner Circle makes decisions for the Bronze Faction. These men and women possess immense power of many forms—from bureaucratic connections to martial arts prowess—and they do not hesitate to use that power for the benefit of the faction and one another.

- **The Immaculate Seers** concentrate on the Immaculate Order. These Sidereals generally go about with shaved heads, the better to pose as Immaculate monks. (And indeed, most really do hold positions in the Order.) They know the Immaculate Texts inside and out, since they write and rewrite them, and can twist their words to justify any position they want. A few of the younger Sidereals believe history has proved that the Dragon-Blooded *are* meant to be Princes of the Earth, and that the Solar and Lunar Exalted made themselves truly Anathema. The Sidereals understand that many of the precepts of the Immaculate Philosophy are simplified for the consumption of mortals and simple Terrestrial Exalted, but that doesn't make the precepts any less true.

- **The Keepers of the Seven** consist of the faction's sorcerers, thaumaturges, demonologists and occult savants. They focus on the Heptagram and its students, teachers and graduates. Many of these Sidereals maintain identities as staff, teachers and even sometimes students in the Heptagram: when the Bronze Faction wants to teach its

recruits spells and other lore without Gold Faction rivals (or divine superiors) knowing about it, Bronze Faction Sidereals find it very useful to control one of the largest sorcerous academies in Creation.

- **The Initiates of the Unblinking Eye** teach that the best way to control an institution is to control what information its members receive. In the Realm, that means its intelligence agency, the All-Seeing Eye. Whatever the All-Seeing Eye learns soon passes to Yu-Shan—and sometimes to the Bureau of Destiny as well. The Sidereals of this clique are all masters of subterfuge and stealth-enhancing astrology, and do not hesitate to rewrite the destinies of anyone they want to influence.

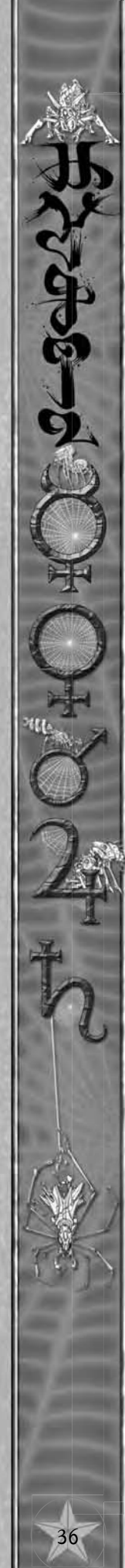
- **The Dragons' Bastards** deal with the Great Houses instead of the agencies of the Realm or the Immaculate Order. The term began three centuries ago when an extremely peripheral member of House Ragara Exalted as a Chosen of Journeys. This Sidereal, a winsome rogue named Ragara Ulmani, retained his loyalty to his House. When he was audited for abusing his Heavenly privileges to help his family, one of his accusers called Ragara Ulmani "a bastard of the Dragons." The name has stuck and been extended to any Vizier who cultivates strong connections in the Scarlet Dynasty.

- **The Egg Hunters** try to aid and influence the many Dragon-Blooded of the Threshold. The Egg Hunters prefer that these Terrestrials do *not* assimilate into the Scarlet Dynasty. The Egg Hunters have nothing against the Realm as such, they just think that Creation doesn't need yet another spoiled Dynast fucking, drinking and politicking on the Blessed Isle. Instead, the putative Princes of the Earth should be out in the Threshold, where most of the threats to Creation come from. The clique would like to find some way to influence Lookshy—however, the significant fate seals that the Maiden of Battles placed on the city's destiny make this quite difficult.

THE GOLD FACTION

The Sidereals of the Gold Faction do not rule Creation, but they have ambitions. For 15 centuries, this faction consisted merely of a rejection of the Bronze Faction establishment. Gold Faction members could do little besides say, "I told you so" each time a crisis arose that the Solars could have handled. When Ayesha Ura defected from the Bronze Faction, she gave the Gold Faction its strongest leadership since the Usurpation, but to most Sidereals, the faction still seemed to cling to a lost cause.

All that changed with the reappearance of the Solars. The Gold Faction now has real power—nothing on the scale of the Bronze Faction's influence over the Realm and the Immaculate Order, but growing rapidly. The Gold Faction infiltrates many small front groups throughout the Threshold. Most importantly, the faction recruits young Lawgivers through the Cult of the Illuminated



and trains them to resume their place as Princes of the Earth... with Sidereal advisors.

In the Bureau of Destiny, gods and Sidereals alike remember how the Solar Exalted of old once bent Creation to their will. Some of these Sidereals join the Gold Faction, eager to bring those days of glory back again. Others offer cautious favor—hedging their bets in case the Gold Faction succeeds in giving Creation a new order. And others shudder, and join the Bronze Faction.

PHILOSOPHY

The Vision of Gold continues to guide this faction's activities. Gold Faction Sidereals believe that the Usurpation was wrong and that Creation needs the Solar Exalted. Gold Faction Sidereals accept the ancient title of Lawgivers given to the Sun's Chosen.

Of course, these Sidereals also note that the Solars weren't called *Law-Writers*. That role, the Gold Faction plans to keep for itself. The Gold Faction works toward a Creation ruled by a new Solar Deliberative... that does whatever the Gold Faction tells the Solar Deliberative to. The Gold Faction's vision, indeed, mirrors that of the Bronze Faction, except the Gold Faction wants a small number of awesomely powerful Solar dupes instead of a large number of moderately powerful Terrestrial Exalted dupes.

Not that most of the Gold Faction Sidereals would be so blunt as to call their Solar allies "dupes." Gold Faction members see their program as one of proper education, not brainwashing. They don't deceive Solars; the Sidereals just shield the Solars from certain information that could lead them away from the Gold Faction's plans. It's all for the Solars' own good, to keep them from the madness that consumed them in the First Age.

The Unconquered Sun made his Chosen to wield power. The Five Maidens made their Chosen to tell the Solars how to do it. The Sidereals neglected that duty in the Old Realm, and the Solars went mad without the Sidereals' guidance. This time, the Sidereals know better. They can avoid the mistakes of the past and return Creation to an Age of Gold.

METHODOLOGY

The first goal of the Gold Faction is simply to undercut the Bronze Faction whenever and wherever the Gold Faction can. In the Bureau, Gold Faction Sidereals lobby for destinies that weaken the Realm and its loyal satrapies, and strengthen states that resist the Realm. In the field, Gold Faction Sidereals try to strip the Bronze Faction of its mortal pawns and areas of influence. This can range from co-opting an informer to assassinating a minister of state. Of course, drastic tactics run the risk of censure, if the Bronze Faction can present a pawn as an asset for the Bureau. Unfortunately for the Gold Faction, the Wyld Hunt is now considered "an asset of the Bureau."

Gold Faction members particularly look for chances to weaken the Realm's satrapies. The Realm itself lies beyond

their reach. If they can deny the Realm a satrapy's tribute and local soldiery, however, they weaken the Realm's influence overall.

Any state that resists the Realm, however, receives the Gold Faction's support. In the planning boards of the Bureau of Destiny, Gold Faction members advocate destinies that strengthen the Threshold, because strong nations can better resist the Fair Folk, the Deathlords and other enemies of Creation.

The Gold Faction undercuts the Immaculate Order by encouraging local cults. Just about every god would rather receive prayer directly, without the Order telling people when or how much to show their reverence. The Gold Faction collects many divine allies, in both the Celestial Bureaucracy and Terrestrial Hierarchy, who help fund the faction's efforts in Creation in return for the Gold Faction's help in building their cults.

The Gold Faction also works to build a faith of its own. Three decades ago, the faction discovered the tiny Cult of the Illuminated, led by a drug-addled prophet. The Cult held that "Shining Ones" or "Illuminated Ones" would come from Heaven to make the world a good and happy place. The Cult's somewhat incoherent dogma didn't specifically say "Solar Exalted," but the description was close enough to suit the Gold Faction. Perhaps Ayesha Ura planned on manufacturing ersatz Illuminated Ones as figureheads—a Solar cult without the Solars. When the Jade Prison broke and released the Solar Exaltations, however, the Gold Faction had a growing religion ready-made to exploit them.

Most members of the Gold Faction now help spread the Cult of the Illuminated. It isn't difficult: the Cult's hopeful message of a bright new age coming soon attracts the poor and oppressed throughout Creation. Although it remains miniscule compared to the Immaculate Order, the Cult grows rapidly.

The Cult gives the Gold Faction two assets for the Bureau's use as well as the faction's own. The Cult's cells of adherents give the Bureau a sparse but wide network of mortal informers who can watch for Fair Folk, demonic intrusions or the miscellaneous uncanny events brought about by disruptions of fate. Sidereals can also stay with Cult members when the Sidereals operate in the field, or use Cult members as mortal cat's-paws.

More dramatically, the Cult of the Illuminated helps the Gold Faction attract young Solars to its service. Cult cells hide Solars from the Wyld Hunt and channel them to Gold Faction recruiters. Many neophyte Lawgivers are glad finally to meet someone who doesn't want to kill them as Anathema—indeed, someone who honors them as the destined saviors of Creation. The Viziers spirit their recruits to hidden training camps to train them as the Cult's champions. Once trained, these Lawgivers travel throughout the Threshold, defending the weak and defeating the forces of evil. If their gallant deeds happen to quash some invader from outside of fate, that's

good for the Bureau of Destiny. And if the Cult's highly trained Solars should kill a Wyld Hunt sent after them, or overthrow a tax-happy satrap of the Realm, that's good for the Gold Faction.

TRAINING AND INITIATION

Sifus of the Gold Faction face an uphill struggle against the traditions the Bronze Faction have woven into Sidereal training. While Gold Faction sifus teach astrology, Charms and martial arts to a young Sidereal, they also point out the failures of the Bronze Faction's vision. They recount all the instances when the Realm and the Immaculate Order proved to be poor instruments for Heaven's purposes, the failure to anticipate the Great Contagion and Fair Folk Attack and all the arts and industries lost since the Old Realm. All Seers are taught to play it safe, but Gold Faction trainers say the Bronze Faction fears risk too much. Sometimes, Gold Faction sifus argue, minimizing the maximum possible loss is just a plan for losing by inches. Sometimes, one must take bigger risks for bigger rewards.

A nascent Gold Faction member learns the name of every Sidereal who died through the machinations of the Bronze Faction, starting with Tammiz Ushun. Gold Faction sifus stress the good these martyrs strove to accomplish, for which the selfish Bronze Faction struck them down. A recruit also learns about all the Gold Faction's accomplishments despite Bronze Faction interference. Ayesha Ura, of course, comes first in the roster of Gold Faction heroes.

As a Gold Faction novice begins fieldwork, her sifu arranges for missions that give chances to assist the Cult of the Illuminated or sabotage Bronze Faction plans. A sifu hopes for her student to compile such a record of affronts to the Bronze Faction that he cannot possibly switch sides. Nevertheless, the Gold Faction considers the possibility of deep-cover agents planted by the Bronze Faction. Three times in his training, a Gold Faction recruit receives information that would embarrass the Gold Faction if the information reached the Bronze Faction. (It is, of course, false information planted as a trap.)

Only once Ayesha Ura and four other senior faction members are sure of the young Seer's loyalty do they grant him true membership in the Gold Faction. Ayesha invites the Sidereal to join her and his sifu in a small ceremony of remembrance at Yu-Shan's monument to the Solars killed in the Usurpation. They do not discuss any factional business in this public place. From then on, the other Gold Faction members treat the Sidereal as a member in his own right, rather than as an apprentice to his sifu. The Sidereal can learn the full activities of the Cult of the Illuminated.

Of late, however, some faction members feel their true acceptance comes when they perform a mission with one of the Cult's Solar members. At least, that's when they fully appreciate the Lawgivers' potential for power... and the necessity that the Viziers control that power.



Seers





CLIQUE

The Gold Faction has its own internal divisions based on rank, favored strategies or areas of activity. So far, none of these differences of opinion prevent members from working together; they know too well that they must present a united front, or the Bronze Faction will use its still-superior place in the Bureau of Destiny to sideline and crush the Gold Faction.

- **The Golden Circle:** This clique consists of Ayesha Ura and her immediate cronies. It includes those few Gold Faction elders who survived the Usurpation, the Great Contagion and 15 centuries of Bronze Faction attempts to have Gold Faction members killed. The Golden Circle sets policy for the faction. The clique's members also negotiate the agreements with the gods who support the faction's activities in Creation.

- **Kether Rock:** This fortress in the far South of Creation is one of the main training grounds for the Cult of the Illuminated. The Sidereals who run Kether Rock believe the Solars need a strong grounding in military discipline and self-sacrifice. The Solars are destined for command, but a good commander gives her troops the same loyalty she expects from them... whether she commands a small squad of bandit-hunting tiger warriors or all of Creation.

- **The Sequestered Tabernacle:** The Cult of the Illuminated's second great training center occupies a temple-manse built in the Dehennen Mountains, in the Northwest of Creation. The Sidereals of the Tabernacle believe that pride is an intrinsic part of Solar character, and train Tabernacle recruits as warrior-prophets who take power as their right. These members of the Gold Faction trust in their ability to give their recruits a personal moral code that makes them fit rulers for Creation... and in their ability to "suggest" the proper course of action.

- **The Missionaries:** The Gold Faction members who deal with the mortal members of the Cult of the Illuminated tend to think the idea of the Illuminated Ones matters more than the Solars recruited to fill that role. These Gold Faction members draw a comparison with the Immaculate Order: these Sidereals believe the Order's greatest strength lies with the millions of mortals who tithe to support it, pray as the Order directs and live their lives according to its precepts. The Gold Faction wins, these Sidereals say, when the Cult achieves the same omnipresent moral authority in the Threshold that the Order wields on the Blessed Isle.

THE INDEPENDENTS

By now, a significant fraction of the Five-Score Fellowship rejects both the Bronze and Gold Factions. The Independents Exalted long after the Great Prophecy and simply *don't care* about it. Creation has moved on. Creation's *enemies* have moved on. The Independents think the Sidereals should, too. Yes, the Realm, the Terrestrial Exalted and the Immaculate Order make useful tools, but the Independents don't see these tools as the only ones

available to the Bureau, and certainly not as ends in themselves. On the other hand, the Solars were gone for 15 centuries, apparently beyond return, so the Independents don't look on the Solars as some beautiful lost cause that must be redeemed. Most of all, the Independents don't like the politics between the Bronze and Gold Factions. The Independents would rather claim the Bureau of Destiny itself as the side they favor, or Creation, or simply their own ambitions without regard to faction.

Almost by definition, Independent Sidereals have no organization, goals, bylaws or initiations. A young Seer becomes an Independent when the other two sides fail to recruit her, or she becomes disillusioned with their goals and methods. (Of course, some Viziers also suffer expulsion from the factions due to personality conflicts or monumental screw-ups, and do not always seek revenge by joining the other faction.)

Some Independents achieve high rank in the Bureau through sheer tenacity and competence, without the patronage that the factions provide. These Viziers show the same political savvy and ruthless ambition as their factional counterparts. (Just because they don't like factional politics doesn't mean they reject office politics as a whole....) These Independent paragons sometimes help younger Independents advance in the Bureau. The paragons' motives range from a sincere conviction that Creation is best served by Seers with no loyalty except to the Bureau to a desire to build petty empires of personally loyal subordinates. Many gods of the Bureau also prefer Independent Sidereals, for the same range of reasons. Either way, the Bronze and Gold Factions must compete against a viable "none of the above" career path for Sidereals.

Such personal ties, however, cannot achieve the same results as the collective power of the factions. Independent Sidereals cannot pool their allies or influence the way faction members can (or at least not as easily). If a Bronze Faction member needs an in with the Guild, the All-Seeing Eye or House Mnemon, she just asks Chejop Kejak, and he finds another faction member with the proper connections. A Gold Faction member who lacks experience with a particular institution, god or Threshold nation makes the same request of Ayesha Ura. Independent Sidereals are on their own—or at least, nearly so.

Independent Sidereals still engage in factional politics; their cliques are simply very small. As mentioned, an influential, older Sidereal might gather a clique of younger Seers who support his ambitions. Other cliques are based on personal interests and recreations, from Haltan poetry to particular martial arts. These cliques sometimes cut across factional lines—a loyal Bronze Faction member might associate with Independents (or even Gold Faction loyalists) to get a *really good* game of Gateway. Recreational cliques seldom become influential, but any common interest might become a basis for trading favors, so politically astute Sidereals pay attention to such cliques.

A few cliques are secret. Their members hold views or interests that would bring serious enmity from the major factions or particular high-ranking gods. Most such cliques will stay small for good reason: for example, very few Sidereals (or anyone else in the Bureau) accepts the pattern spiders as evidence that artificial intelligences deserve a chance as Princes of the Earth. Under the right circumstances, however, one micro-faction could perhaps emerge as a major new force among the Five-Score Fellowship.

THE SILVER FACTION

The Silver Faction doesn't exist. At least, no Sidereal would openly claim membership.

At the time of the Great Prophecy, the Viziers never considered the Lunar Exalted as a force in their own right. They seemed bound to the wills of their Solar mates. The Bronze Faction tried to kill any Lunar who fought the Usurpation. As far as is known, they did not recruit any Lunar allies. Luna's Chosen fled to Creation's rim, and the Wyld Hunt kept them there.

In the last few centuries, however, the Seers have seen the Lunar Exalted gain power. Not only do they lead tribes of barbarians and their own beastman progeny, but Lunar Exalted meddle in the nations of the further Threshold. For instance, a few Lunars quite openly guided the rise of the Haslanti League, and the Viziers suspect Lunar involvement in Halta and a few other states. Viziers even know a name, the Thousand Streams River, which seems to be some master plan to supplant the Realm. Whether Bronze, Gold or Independent, Sidereals now discuss, "What do we do about the Lunars?" Sidereals cannot ignore the onetime Stewards of Creation any longer.

Bronze Faction dogma holds that the Wyld and the Lunars' own bestial nature taint the Lunars. They would crush civilization, or at least they would crush the Realm and the Dragon-Blooded. Gold Faction dogma offers Lunars their old place as helpmeets of the Solar Exalted... and further pawns of the Gold Faction. Only a few Sidereals suggest, quite diffidently, that they should negotiate with Luna's Chosen as a power in their own right. After all, the Lunar Exalted never showed the same deadly megalomania as their Solar mates, and show no signs of returning en masse to the sides of the reborn Solars.

Only a very few Sidereals—you could count them on the fingers of one hand—go beyond idle speculation and seek alliance with Luna's Chosen. These few Viziers, who call themselves the Silver Faction practically as a joke, believe the Lunar Exalted can help guide and protect Creation. Some see the Lunars as potential rulers Silver Faction members could guide from the shadows, just as the Bronze Faction has the Dragon-Blooded and the Gold Faction seeks to guide the Solars. Other members simply think the Bureau of Destiny needs all the help it can get.

Either way, Silver Faction members now trade favors with a few Lunar allies. They share information about the

Fair Folk and other enemies of Creation. Now and then, the Silver Faction persuades a Lunar to help deal with some threat in the Wyld, and in return, these Viziers assist Lunars who must act within civilization. Once, Silver Faction members even smuggled a newly Exalted Lunar off the Blessed Isle. How this relationship develops, on either side, remains to be seen.

PROMINENT SIDEREALS

The Chosen of the Maidens number only 100 total Exaltations. Of those, only 80 to 90 are actually Exalted at any given time; the rest are children and adolescents awaiting their destined Exaltation. Working for the Bureau of Destiny, most Sidereals come to recognize one another by sight. Word passes quickly among the Five-Score Fellowship. After a Sidereal spends 20 or so years as an Exalt, she knows the reputation of nearly every other Sidereal in Creation.

Despite this, even the Sidereals have their luminaries—individuals both renowned and notorious by turns, among their fellow Exalted. Even the youngest Viziers have heard these names, though their opinions are undoubtedly influenced by factional views and the relationships between elders.

CHEJOP KEJAK

*Master of the
Bronze Faction,
Chosen of Secrets*

What can one say about the master of the Bronze Faction that is not common knowledge in the Bureau of Destiny? The Five-Score Fellowship whispers that Chejop Kejak has so few secrets because he knows the power

of secrets: he is a master of blackmail and treachery and fomenting dissent among allies. Why would he provide others with such weapons to use against him? Of course, no one actually believes that the eldest Chosen of Secrets actually lives a life of such honesty and openness. He must simply be better at keeping those secrets than others.

Chejop Kejak has lived nearly the full lifespan of a Sidereal Exalt. His authorized biography says he was born early in the High First Age, and was immediately found and brought to Heaven for training. He grew up surrounded by gods and Exalted. He doesn't remember much of his youth, save for one memory seared into his brain. As a boy, while



running an errand, he encountered the Maiden of Endings herself. He bowed low as he'd been taught, but looked up when a hand raised his chin to look into the deep violet eyes of Saturn herself.

"It is an irony of the fates," she said to those who accompanied her. "This boy—not even one of my Chosen—shall usher in the greatest ending of an Age." Chejop Kejak forgot that encounter until the night of the Usurpation.

The great Vizier's biography errs on only one point. The Maiden of Endings said he would end *two* Ages.

Chejop Kejak rules the Bronze Faction utterly. He also holds the Chair of the Capital Convention and belongs to all the special conventions. He is the senior Vizier in the Forbidding Manse of Ivy, and therefore engages in frequent planning sessions with Nara-O. On top of that, he works at the Palace Sublime as advisor to the Mouth of Peace, fits in daily martial arts practice and lectures now and then at the Heptagram. Younger Sidereals wonder how Kejak finds time to breathe. His secret, of course, is delegation: Kejak works at the highest policy levels and has Bronze Faction subordinates work out the details. Kejak also has no personal life at all. He spends every waking moment analyzing, planning and politicking—and he doesn't sleep much. He sacrifices his entire life to protect Creation, and his many admirers seek to emulate him.

A mere decade ago, a young Gold Faction functionary in the Division of Secrets ran across the reports written about Chejop Kejak as an un-Exalted youth in training. Doing some quick math, the functionary realized that Kejak was not only older than any Sidereal currently alive but near the end of the lifespan allotted by the Fateful Exaltation. Word of this quickly leaked to the rest of the Five-Score Fellowship, and the inevitable power plays have already begun. Chejop Kejak simply watches all of this from his offices high in the Palace Sublime. Sometimes, he rages, and sometimes, he weeps, for he knows that once he dies, Creation is doomed.

The master of the Bronze Faction looks old but still hale, with piercing, emerald-green eyes. He wears his fringe of gray-and-white hair tied in a ponytail in back, and sports a short beard and mustache. Most of the time, he wears the swathing robes of a senior Immaculate monk, with no other indications of rank. He doesn't need them.

AYESHA URA

Leader of the Gold Faction, Chosen of Journeys

Ayesha Ura was born in the middle of the Usurpation, in the lands of the Southeast. Ayesha Ura's people worshipped their queen, a glorious Solar with a phoenix anima, the wife of the great Lunar Tammuz. When she died and Tammuz disappeared, the Dragon-Blooded executed everyone who remained loyal to their king and queen. Rather than renounce their divine rulers, many of the citizens (including Ura's parents) fled into the hills and deserts, scattered to the winds.

Of course, it was years before Ayesha knew about this, because the Chosen of the Maidens took her from her family when she was merely nine months old. Raised in Heaven and eventually Exalted as a Chosen of Journeys, Ayesha learned the traditions and causes of the Bronze Faction from the time she could talk. She quickly

gained the notice of Chejop Kejak, who became first her mentor, then her lover. Still, in spite of all this, something sat wrong with her.

Dreams troubled Ayesha Ura: dreams of the Great Prophecy, of great arguments with the man who was now her lover, of flight to warn the Solar Deliberative of what the Bronze Faction intended and the Dragon-Blooded cutting her down before she could speak. She often awoke in bed next to Kejak and simply stared at him, trying to overcome the hate she felt.

She fought the dreams as best she could, but when the time came for her first sacrifice to learn sorcery, she chose to abandon her resistance. The dreams came much more clearly then, and she remembered her previous Exaltation as Tammiz Ushun, who led the Gold Faction of the Great Conclave. She wept to remember the visions he'd seen in the Prophecy, and wept to remember the deaths. Still, she remained loyal to the Bronze Faction and Chejop Kejak.

Ayesha resisted her elevation to the Celestial Circle of Sorcery. She knew that a sorcerer's second initiation always involves another sacrifice—similar to that of the Terrestrial Circle, but greater. Eventually, though, Chejop Kejak insisted that she learn the most powerful magics the Sidereal Exalted could command and reach her full power as a Vizier.

When the time came, Ayesha knew what her sacrifice must be. She spent one final night with Chejop Kejak, and as dawn broke on that new day, she told him what she'd sacrificed: her love and loyalty to him, and her identity as one of the Bronze Faction. In embracing the higher mysteries of the Celestial Circle, she also had to accept her Exaltation's



past as Tammiz Ushun, and she could no longer aid Kejak in his betrayal of Creation. They parted ways, then, and if they have spoken since outside the necessities of Bureau business, why, no other Sidereal knows of it.

Ayesha Ura—speaking with the authority gained from her memories of Ushun's founding of the Gold Faction—quickly became the faction's leader. She insisted that the Gold Faction move beyond rejecting Bronze Faction policies to develop plans of its own. The Gold Faction has undertaken more projects under Ayesha's tenure than in the previous thousand years. The takeover of the Cult of the Illuminated, the return of the Solar Exalted, the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and the whispers of Kejak's impending death: all have driven the Gold Faction to levels of popularity and activity unseen since the early days of the Shogunate.

Ayesha seems determined to become as much of an overachiever as her arch-rival Kejak. In addition to serving as Eastern Chair, Ayesha is now the highest ranking Sidereal within the Division of Journeys (though she is not the oldest). She also serves as both the Chair of the Convention on Essence Wielders and the Chair of the Sub-Convention on Demons. Chejop Kejak foisted the latter position on her shortly after she rejected him, as way of distracting her from factional business. It hasn't worked.

At 15 centuries old, Ayesha Ura is not even middle-aged by Sidereal standards, and looks younger. She has dark skin and black, curly hair cut short. Ayesha prefers gold and amber jewelry: it goes with her dark amber eyes and the amber hearthstone she wears in a gold circlet over her caste mark. Her vivacious manner and bright, easy smile conceal iron determination and a brilliant, scheming mind.

THE GREEN LADY

Walker Among Deathlords, Chosen of Secrets

The Green Lady is the subject of many rumors and whispers. The files available to most Sidereals tell little: she is a Chosen of Secrets, and splits her time between the courts of rival Deathlords known as the Walker in Darkness and the Mask of Winters. She plays the two Deathlords of the Scavenger Lands off one another, for the benefit of Heaven. Further information requires permission from Nara-O, which the god does not give. The Chair of the Convention on Deathlords likewise remains silent regarding the Green Lady. A few Viziers speculate that the Green Lady herself may be the actual Chair of the convention.

The Vizier later called the Green Lady was Exalted a century before the Usurpation. She became close to several Lawgivers, especially some students of the great Twilight artificer Kal Bax. One young sorcerer became her lover. That did not stop her from joining in the Great Betrayal and hunting the Solars who survived the initial assault. She volunteered to lead the hunt for Kal Bax and his cronies, after several decades announced their deaths.

She had plenty of witnesses, though the bodies could not be recovered.

Centuries later, the Green Lady felt through her Essential connection that her one-time lover had died. The Green Lady quickly maneuvered herself into a position in the Convention on Shadowlands,

the precursor to the Convention on Deathlords. She convinced Nara-O to approve a mission to gain power over the mystic Calendar of Setesh that directs fate in the Underworld: if the Bureau of Destiny could bring postmortem fates under the Bureau's control, surely the Bureau could protect Creation from the Underworld all the better.

In the Underworld, however, the Green Lady found the ghost of her lover at the tombs of the Neverborn, along with the ghost of another old crony. The power of the Neverborn had changed her lover into the Mask of Winters, and his old crony was the Walker in Darkness. The Green Lady helped them both remember her former friendship, and has played a subtle game between them ever since. Sometimes, she does pass useful intelligence to the Convention on Deathlords, and helps other Exalted in missions to thwart the Deathlords' plans. Other times, she helps one Deathlord against the other, or in plots to gain power. She even helped her onetime lover plan the conquest of Thorns.

Unfortunately, after centuries of double- and triple-dealing, the Green Lady herself does not know where her true loyalties lie. Worse yet, her time in the death-realms set the whispers of the Neverborn haunting her dreams. She fears what would happen if anyone in Heaven learned this fact.

Most disturbing still, the Green Lady knows the source of the deathknights. Though she once entertained Gold Faction sympathies, she wonders if at some point the Mask of Winters—or worse, the Neverborn themselves—have somehow used her to create the Abyssal Exalted. The Mask of Winters has obliquely hinted that his fellow Deathlords couldn't have learned how to corrupt Solar Exaltations without her. The Green Lady remains too frightened that this might be true to ask him the exact nature of her alleged contribution.



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NAZRI

Chair of the Convention of Fire, Chosen of Endings

If the Independent Sidereals had a leader, it might be Nazri. This Chosen of Endings has defied the Bronze and Gold Factions for seven centuries, yet risen to the highest official rank possible in the Sideral hierarchy.

Nazri Exalted in the generation following the Usurpation. His first act as a Vizier was to stalk and kill a group of masterless First Circle demons that had attacked his hometown. He spent the Low First Age as a dutiful agent of the Bronze Faction, but remained aloof from Chejop Kejak and his cult of personality. After the Empress saved Creation, however, Nazri excoriated Bronze and Gold Faction leaders as blind, stubborn fools who had forgotten that forces beyond fate could make hash of any prophecy. He compares their conflict to a couple who can't stop arguing over what they should have had for dinner a year ago—they are still sniping at one another long after the dinner has been made, eaten and itself nearly forgotten. Nazri concluded his diatribe by declaring his undivided loyalty to the Maidens and the Bureau of Destiny.

Despite enmity from both factions, Nazri clawed his way up the ranks to become the Chair of the Convention of Fire. He uses his position to give young Independents a chance to shine, and takes an indecent glee in forcing Gold and Bronze loyalists to work together on assignments. He never gives anyone a commendation or demerit they don't deserve, though. Nazri has evaded so many smear campaigns and dirty tricks that Gold and Bronze leaders have given up trying to unseat him... at least for now.

Secure in his position, Nazri turns his attention from bureaucratic infighting to his true obsession: the Fair Folk. Since the Great Contagion, Nazri has advocated harsher and more extensive campaigns to drive the Fair Folk from Creation. Nazri even risked his career to delay the Bureau from taking action against the mad prophet Ikerre, because her rampage across the South targeted Fair Folk freeholds. Rivals say that Nazri sometimes underestimates other threats because of his Fair Folk obsession.

Nazri has the jet-black skin that often occurs among people of the Far South, and dark purple eyes. He is com-

pletely bald. The Southern Chair usually wears caftans and birettas of embroidered silk.

GRACIOUS SHAIA

Cult of the Illuminated Recruiter, Chosen of Serenity

In two centuries as a Joybringer, Gracious Shaia has watched some of the most compelling and wonderful love affairs of the Scavenger Lands unfold. Some she orchestrated herself; others,

she simply watched from afar. She has played roles ranging from a maiden aunt from far away come to visit just in time for her nephew to have someone to confide his feelings in to the madam of a brothel where two young noblemen come to meet and enjoy their limited and forbidden time with one another.

When not fulfilling her duties to the Convention of Wood, however, Shaia works for the Gold Faction to recruit new followers for the Cult of the Illuminated. More than one pair of lovers have happily married under her auspices, promising to work for the Cult's New Day for Creation as their own New Day with one another begins. Wherever she goes, she spreads the dogma of the Illuminated, enjoining those she aids to look for the glowing saviors of the New Day wherever they might turn up, to offer them sanctuary and safety as they may and to contact the rest of the Cult as quickly as possible.

Shaia is one of the first Sidereals many Solar recruits ever meet, and she instinctively seems to know what approach to take with them—she can play the stern taskmistress, the lovesick young innocent, the vixen or the motherly figure, as necessary. Though her cohorts consider her a manipulator in the extreme, her secret is her sincerity. She genuinely believes in the destiny of the Solar Exalted to bring a bright new Age to the world, and she genuinely loves just about everyone she meets.

Having watched the methods of Kether Rock and the Sequestered Tabernacle, Shaia has recently decided that she wishes to establish a training camp of her own. Instead of channeling the destiny of the Illuminated through the auspices of war-craft or spirituality, however, she wishes to present an option for Exalted who want to help the common man. In her eyes, the Illuminated can do their best not as



priests or generals but as leaders of men. She already looks among the new recruits, seeking those with the inclination to become kings, viziers and ambassadors.



RIGHTEOUS TSUNAMI

*Chair of the
Convention of
Water, Chosen
of Battles*

Righteous Tsunami was a Tya—a woman of the Western islands who lives as a man and is legally treated as such—before her Exaltation. She still maintains the custom and insists on being referred to as male.

This Chosen of Mars comes from the cohort that Exalted after the Great Contagion. Her previous incarnation was a Bronze Faction loyalist, and Righteous Tsunami kept those sympathies. Chejop Kejak was immensely proud

when Righteous Tsunami received the Chair of Water when she was only five centuries old—the youngest Chair since the Usurpation. Righteous Tsunami earned it, too, both with personal battles (the youngest Sidereal to clash with a Deathlord and survive) and military commands ranging from protecting Realm shipping in the Neck to guerilla warfare in the Southeastern jungles.

Righteous Tsunami fully embodies the hard practicality of war. She doesn't like bloodshed per se, but she does whatever she must to achieve a swift, decisive victory (an attitude that makes her a favorite of Hu Dai Liang, Mars's deputy in the Division of Battles). She encourages the same ruthless efficiency among her staff. "Better a horrible ending," she says, "than horrors without end"—an attitude that many Chosen of Saturn also applaud. She argues that a swift victory, however harshly obtained, saves more lives in the long run and leaves the survivors less embittered.

The Western Chair looks like a youngish woman with golden skin and close-cropped green hair, handsome rather than beautiful, with the square, strong body and hard-bitten look of someone who spent her life hauling heavily laden nets from the treacherous sea... or driving steel into an enemy's guts before they could do it to her. She prefers sturdy, practical clothing or starmetal chain armor when she doesn't have to "play dress-up" for Heavenly functions. No one has ever seen her wear anything remotely feminine.





WAS IT
SUPPOSED TO
BE THIS WAY ALL
ALONG?



WHY DID THE BOY
HAVE TO BE THE
ONE TO DIE?



LET GO
OF ME!

THERE WERE ONLY
THREE TERRESTRIALS
WITH THE CARAVAN...



DACE!
RHADANTHOS!
RAITON! SOMEBODY
HELP ME!



WHY DIDN'T YOU
LET ME, WAYANG?

CREATION'S DESTINY
IS GREATER THAN ONE
PERSON'S SUFFERING.

I COULD'VE SAVED HIM!



HE WAS JUST
A BOY! A BOY
SCREAMING
FOR HELP!



YOU MADE ME SEND
HIM TO HIS DEATH! I
COULD'VE JUST
KILLED HIM MYSELF!

I WOULDN'T
HAVE MADE HIM
SUFFER, AT
LEAST!

AN UNCOMFORTABLE
NECESSITY INDEED.



HIS SUFFERING
WAS NECESSARY.
HIS SCREAMS
WERE MEANT TO
RESOUND.



BUT WHY?

TO TEACH A
LESSON, BLACK
ICE SHADOW.

THOSE MEN
BELIEVED THAT BOY
WAS ANATHEMA AND
DESERVED TO DIE
FOR IT.



NONETHELESS,
THOSE THREE GROWN
MEN MURDERED ONE
SOBBING BOY.

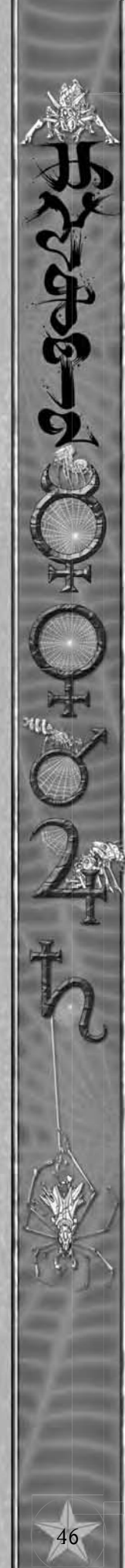
NO SCRIPTURE CAN
TELL THEIR HEARTS
THEY DID THE RIGHT
THING TODAY.



DO YOU UNDERSTAND,
MY STUDENT?

UNDERSTAND???
A CHILD DIDN'T
HAVE TO DIE TO
TEACH ME THAT!

OF COURSE. I NEVER
SAID IT WAS A
LESSON FOR YOU.



CHAPTER TWO

THE BUREAU OF DESTINY

Although many Sidereal Exalted spend much of their time (too much some would say) in Creation, advancing their factional or personal agendas, such activities are extraneous to their real duties. A Sidereal who neglects his duty to his Maiden does so at his peril, for he was chosen for nothing less than to defend Creation itself. However, individual Sidereals rarely receive direction from the Maidens personally. Instead, a bureaucracy regulates their duties: the Most Excellent Designers of Destiny and Sidereal Conjunctions, better known in Yu-Shan as the Bureau of Destiny. The Bureau of Destiny oversees the operation of fate and destiny and protects Creation from forces that could disrupt its integrity. The Bureau charges its Sidereal employees with two principal duties.

First and foremost, Sidereals must assist in the proper functioning of the Loom of Fate. While the Loom operates itself to a large degree, powerful and unexpected discharges of Essence in Creation can entangle the Loom's strands. These tangles manifest as spatial and temporal anomalies,

disruptions in the chain of causality and even unpredictable junctures between Creation and other realms of existence. A region of desert south of Chiaroscuro suffers a blizzard as weather patterns from the extreme North graft onto the area. A construction worker in Nexus falls from a roof to his death... and doesn't... at the same time, resulting in a shocked construction worker staring down at his own dead twin. Small contradictions are usually harmless, but sometimes they escalate to affect more people over wider areas. For instance, the alive-and-dead construction worker might lead to an influx of ghosts who want to resume their former lives. Sidereals must resolve these phenomena before they grow large enough to threaten the whole of Creation, and Sidereals have a wide variety of specialized Charms to aid them in such manipulations.

Since the Contagion and the Fair Folk Invasion, all Sidereals have also accepted the duty of protecting Creation from its "foreign enemies" such as Fair Folk, demons, ghosts



and Deathlords. Most of these beings have goals inimical to Creation as a whole, but all are powerful Essence wielders whose unpredictable Charm deployment can snarl the Loom of Fate. When a Sidereal has resolved whatever local phenomenon was caused by the tangle in fate, she must then turn her attention to the event's initial cause.

HISTORY OF THE BUREAU OF DESTINY

Bureau tradition says that in the beginning, the Primordials themselves directed the proper functioning of Creation. In time, they created the Five Maidens to assume this duty and gave them the Loom of Fate and a host of lesser gods as their instruments. No one knows how old the Loom is: Jupiter has decreed this a secret reserved for the Maidens alone. When the first Sidereals received their Exaltations, however, the Loom already existed. At that time, the Bureau was located on the Blessed Isle.

Legend has it that in the earliest days of Creation, the Maidens handled every aspect of fate personally. The Maiden of Journeys spun out the threads of new life to begin the journey of each new thing. The Maiden of Secrets measured their length, and eventually, the Maiden of Endings cut them. The Maidens of Battles and Serenity plucked at and soothed the individual strands, alternately bringing conflict and stability to whatever each represented.

After the Primordial War, the Bureau of Destiny relocated to Yu-Shan along with the rest of the Celestial Bureaucracy. The Maidens then asked the Primordial Autochthon to supply a replacement labor force. In response, the Great Maker invented the pattern spiders. The Primordial fashioned Asna Firstborn with his own hands. This prototype then built all the millions of pattern spiders that now tend the Loom of Fate.

While Sidereal elders tell stories about the frustration of dealing with willful, fate-disrupting Solars, many gods retain fond memories of their relationships with the Bureau of Destiny during the Old Realm. For instance, the Convention on Natural Disasters liaised with the Bureau of Nature's gods of hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and other upheavals so Creation's folk received fair warning. At the height of the Old Realm, cataclysms became entertainment. The god Pirouette of Thunders sighs at the good old days when mortals hung a million colored streamers for her tornadoes to collect, and the volcano gods miss the crowds cheering them to send their lava fountains and ash clouds ever higher.

The Bureau as an institution did not involve itself in the Usurpation. The gods of the bureaucracy were as divided as the Gold and Bronze Factions over the erratic Solars, but the Maidens remained as inscrutable as ever. Significantly, though, none of the Maidens ever made any

History





moves to quash the Usurpation in its planning stages. Bronze Faction Sidereals chose to interpret silence as unanimous support. As the Usurpation proceeded, most of those gods whose loyalty to the Solars outweighed their loyalty to the Bureau were purged (violently in some cases), with a few exceptions for powerful gods who retained the favor of one or more Incarnae (see the “Sidereals and Whitewall” sidebar on p. 77).

In the immediate aftermath of the Usurpation, the gods of the Bureau worked to resume normal operations despite the split between the Gold and Bronze Factions. Repairing all the breaches of fate caused by the Essence-intensive battles of the Usurpation took more than a century. After that, the Bureau had its hands full dealing with the shadowlands caused by the slaughter, plus a steady stream of incursions from Malfeas or the Wyld, not to mention further local catastrophes when powerful but ill-maintained devices of the Old Realm exploded in spectacular eruptions of fate-disrupting Essence. To the extent that factional politics affected the Bureau’s working during the Low First Age, it mainly took the form of unpleasant assignments in minor conventions and obscure sections of Creation.

Every god and Exalt did their duty, though, to deal with the Great Contagion and the Fair Folk. Asna Firstborn, Autochthon’s prototype for the pattern spiders, herself manipulated the strands of fate as the Sidereals wove the great cable of destiny for the nascent Empress. Along the way, the gods and Sidereals made many hard choices, such as cutting cities and districts from any contact with the rest of Creation, in hopes they would escape the Contagion or be missed by the Fair Folk. No one can guess how many hidden valleys, remote islands and other small lands remain hidden, waiting for explorers to find them again and reconnect their destinies to the rest of Creation.

Today, the Bureau of Destiny is at a crossroads, the Bureau’s godly and Exalted members at each other’s throats (often literally) over organizational priorities. The Gold Faction, surly and bitter for 1,500 years, is now gripped with a missionary zeal, convinced that the Bronze Faction’s reading of the Great Prophecy was fatally wrong. The Bronze Faction, reeling after 15 centuries of ruling Creation by proxy, is obsessed with destroying the Solars and anyone who stands with them, certain that any other choice will lead to apocalypse. Other Sidereals are caught between these factions, constantly distracted from their actual duties by politics and infighting and plagued with suspicion that the faction leaders would actually rather see the world end than ever admit they were wrong. The various gods play these factions off one another, either to advance their own agendas or simply to distract feckless Sidereal elders so that the deities who actually run the Bureau can do their jobs unmolested.

And that’s just the leaders. The rank-and-file Sidereals spend most of their time in Creation, struggling with an impossible juggling act. Young Sidereal agents must

balance the duty of repairing breaches in causality and the responsibility of hunting rogue Essence users with factional missions that have nothing to do with defending Creation and everything to do with perpetuating a centuries-old feud. These are the Exalted charged with preserving the Loom of Fate and ensuring the survival of Creation. May the Maidens have mercy on them all.

BIG “DESTINY” VS. LITTLE “DESTINY”

In *Exalted*, the term “destiny” is sometimes ambiguous, as it refers not only to an in-game metaphysical concept but also to an actual game mechanic, specifically the Destiny Background (see *Scroll of the Monk*, pp. 151-152). A mortal or Dragon-Blooded character can possess the Destiny Background, which allows her to stay alive and drives her to fulfill her fated end. Such a Destiny represents a sort of standing order within the Loom to nudge probability in the affected mortal’s favor when certain conditions are met—such as the effects of Sidereal astrology, but further-reaching. Celestial Exalted cannot have the Destiny Background, as their Exalted nature makes them largely immune to the vagaries of the Loom of Fate, absent direct intervention by Sidereals. A mortal can be Destined to Exalt, but once Exaltation occurs, her Destiny (with a capital “D”) is fulfilled. She may still have a destiny (with a small “d”) ahead of her, but that destiny comes from the character’s actions, as represented by player choices, and the effects of institutions and events on the character, as represented by the Storyteller’s narrative.

As a rule, when the capitalized term “Destiny” appears in *Exalted*, it refers to a standing protocol that directs the Loom of Fate to confer the benefits of this Background on a character. When the lowercase “destiny” is used, the term simply means, “what has happened or will happen to the character.” The latter can be tracked through the Loom of Fate to predict what will happen in the character’s future or to influence what will happen through the operation of Sidereal astrology. The former determines what will happen in the character’s future automatically through preprogrammed alteration of fate threads.

LIFE WITHIN THE BUREAU

The Sidereal Exalted possess the power to shape the destiny of others. The price for this power, however, is the realization of how much the Sidereal’s own destiny is shaped by forces beyond her control. When a mortal receives the blessing of Lunar or Solar Exaltation, he rarely receives any training, let alone a divinely articulated agenda with which he is expected to comply. Even Dynasts, who are trained from birth to expect Terrestrial Exaltation, possess

remarkable freedom to use their gifts as they see fit. Not so for the Chosen of the Maidens, for their future is written in the Loom of Fate and shaped by the hands of ancient Exalted, potent gods and even the Maidens themselves, often in conflicting ways. While many Sidereals chafe at and struggle against the role foisted upon them, they can never escape it completely.

PREPARING FOR EXALTATION

Historically, elder Sidereals had considerable advance notice when one of the Five-Score Fellowship was destined to die and which mortal would take the Sidereal's place. In the First Age, mortals destined for Sidereal Exaltation were often spirited away from their families at a young age, to be trained in their future duties. Before the Usurpation, the Chosen of Endings had refined the process so well that a future Sidereal would usually be actively employed by his division in some menial capacity, prepared to take over his duties at the very moment of Exaltation. Those days are long gone.

In the contemporary era, the events that tangle and tear at the Loom of Fate have grown to the point that such advance notice becomes the exception rather than the rule. Too many Sidereals meet their ends at the hands of rogue demons, Deathlords and their servants or even enraged Solars and Lunars nursing ancient grudges. Such beings bring powerful Charms to bear in their battles against the Sidereals. When such great quantities of Essence tug at the strands of fate, what should be an absurdly unlikely prospect for the Sidereal's death can blossom in a heartbeat into virtual certainty. Even worse, many adversaries to the Sidereals originate in the Wyld, in Malfeas or deep in the Underworld, and the impact of such threats does not even register within the Loom until the enemy overtly affects Creation's destiny in a large-scale way... such as by slaying a Sidereal who was supposed to live for another thousand years.

When such unexpected events occur, Exaltation proceeds as it must, and the rest of the Sidereals cope as best they can. Not even Lytek, the God of Exaltation himself, fully understands the criteria by which each Exaltation seeks out its next host. All that is known about the process is that when a Sidereal dies, the Exaltation flees instantly to Lytek for a quick clean-and-polish, and then immediately proceeds to the next viable candidate. The delay between death and new Exaltation can last from hours to decades. Gods in the Bureau of Destiny make bets on the duration—it's one of the few phenomena in Creation these gods cannot predict.

When the previous Sidereal's death date can be predicted with reasonable accuracy—say, within a year or so—astrology can identify his replacement to a high degree of probability. In recent years, however, too many Sidereals have died unexpectedly, centuries or millennia before their ordained times. In such cases, the Five-Score

Fellowship often has no time to target the Exalt-to-be for preliminary training. In a few cases, the deaths were so unexpected and so soon in the Sidereals' lifespans that the inheritors cannot be identified at all and the newly Exalted Sidereals run amok, ignorantly displaying their powers and drawing the unwanted attention of the Wyld Hunt—which treats them just as any other Anathema.

Whether or not the Bureau knows who is destined for Sidereal Exaltation, these men and women find their early lives preparing them for their destiny. Those destined to become Chosen of Journeys feel a wanderlust from their youth; Venus's Chosen develop a taste for life's joys—sometimes through early indulgence, perhaps through early denial; and so on. The future Sidereal develops skills she can use in the Bureau's service. By the time of Exaltation, a young Sidereal is already an uncommonly competent person, worthy to receive the blessing of the Maidens.

After Exaltation, young Sidereals receive whatever training their former lives did not supply. As agents of the Bureau of Destiny, they must know a great deal about Creation. They also need to learn the Old Realm's tongue, which remains the language of Heaven. Martial arts training is a must, as well. The fledgling Vizier gains practice with her Charms and learns to handle the strands of fate, both in person and by submitting requests to the pattern spiders. A young Sidereal begins her fieldwork already knowing more and wielding greater power than most mortals can imagine.

SOMETIMES, THINGS GO RIGHT

On the other hand, when the Sidereals locate and procure the Exalt-to-be in an efficient manner, they usually do a thorough job of preparing her for her destined power and duties. For example, some 40 years ago, Sidereal astrologers predicted the death of Akiva Dulanga, a venerable Chosen of Endings, of old age sometime in RY 739 and her subsequent replacement by a particular young man of Ghost-Blooded parentage who would eventually be named Black Ice Shadow. Seeing the potential value in a Ghost-Blooded Sidereal as an agent in the Underworld, the elder Sidereals stole the infant Black Ice Shadow away from his family days after his birth and delivered him to a collection of death and decay gods for training and indoctrination. By the time of his Exaltation, Black Ice Shadow was already a mortal employee within the Violet Bier of Sorrows, and he immediately transferred to begin specialized training in necromancy under the tutelage of Wayang, the head of the Division of Endings. Today, the Five-Score Fellowship's foremost expert on death continues to serve as Wayang's chief assistant.



A SERVANT WITH MANY MASTERS

When a Solar or Lunar receives Exaltation, she gains only power. When a Sidereal Exalts, he gains power, influence in Heaven itself, a well-paying job in the Celestial Bureaucracy... and several bosses who often have conflicting agendas and who seldom talk to each other.

THE MAIDENS

The first layer of bureaucracy to wrap itself around a new Sidereal is that of his caste. All Celestial Exalts fall into castes that determine their expected societal role. The Sidereals are just the only ones to get office space to go with it. Every Vizier automatically receives a position within the appropriate division of the Bureau of Destiny. Some new “recruits” have trained as agents of destiny long before their Exaltations, but others (especially those who were discovered late or who Exalted unexpectedly) receive crash courses in their jobs.

Each of the Five Maidens leads one of the five divisions of the Bureau of Destiny, though as a practical matter, the five goddesses have delegated much of their responsibilities to underlings. Much but not all—while each Maiden devotes the bulk of her attention to the Games of Divinity, their deputies regularly venture into the Pleasure Dome to consult with their respective patrons during the brief intervals between the moves of the Games. Also, each Maiden has an innate connection to the great Loom of Fate itself. Through this connection, the Maidens gain insight into unfolding events that might affect their portfolios. This connection also allows each Maiden to send orders through the Loom directly to her Chosen.

Of course, just because a Maiden can send orders doesn't mean that they will be comprehensible. The Maidens are Incarnae, as spiritually above “normal gods” as those gods are above mortals. The Maidens' portfolios are vast, their methods enigmatic and their goals typically baffling. Consequently, orders from one of the Maidens delivered to Sidereals direct them to fulfill seemingly random tasks connected to the Maiden's purview as often as they issue some command actually relevant to the Bureau's official duties. A proposed new road in An-Teng must be rerouted so that a certain old widow's house is not demolished. A particular son of privilege in Juche must fall in love with a slave-girl. An underdog gladiator in Nexus must defeat the reigning champion who is favored 4 to 1. An adulteress in Wavecrest must conceal her affair with a married neighbor until after Calibration. A newborn infant in Gethamane must succumb to crib death. None of these missions are required to fulfill the functioning of the Loom of Fate, at least as far as the Sidereals can see. But they are assigned, nonetheless, with the hopeful assumption that the Maidens know what they are doing and can perceive destinies that elude even the most skilled Seers. Such assumptions offer cold comfort for the Chosen of Endings who must kill the sleeping infant without ever knowing why.

THE GODS OF THE BUREAU OF DESTINY

The Maidens foist their administrative duties onto five gods who serve as divisional heads, and who each have deputies of their own. Once appointed, these administrative gods have great latitude in how they run their divisions so long as they do not challenge the authority of the Maidens. Although usually quite loyal to their patrons, each of these gods has his own agenda and may use the authority of his office (and his power over younger Sidereals) to pursue it.

ELDER SIDEREALS

For every Sidereal in existence, there are three Lunar Exalted. So why do Sidereals enjoy so much power over Creation? In part, it is because there are about three times as many Sidereal elders as there are Lunars of the same age. These ancient Essence wielders possess skills and wield Charms that surpass those of most gods. Sidereal elders also enjoy great authority in shaping the job descriptions of their younger associates, particularly in convention appointments.

While a Sidereal's caste determines his division within the Bureau, each Sidereal must also serve within at least two conventions. A convention is a cross-divisional working group of Sidereals charged with managing fate either in a specific part of Creation or in some area of interest to the Bureau. There are two types of conventions: directional and special (see pp. 74-89). Each Sidereal serves in at least one of each, and the Chairs of each convention are invariably elder Sidereals. Thus, in addition to superiors within her division, each Sidereal also has at least two additional convention Chairs with independent authority to assign field missions.

THE CONVENTION ON OVERSIGHT

Sidereals generally assume that the Convention on Oversight represents one of the previously mentioned layers of authority. No one knows who serves on the Convention on Oversight except for its own members. The Seers know only that Oversight governs the lines of communication between individual Sidereals and the various entities who would direct the Sidereals' activities. Field missions assigned by the Loom of Fate are directed to agents via Oversight, as are missions outside the scope of Bureau activity that have been assigned by the Maidens or by the gods who command each division. Only missions assigned by faction leaders seem to avoid Oversight's attention. The Convention on Oversight, however, is even more cryptic than the Maidens themselves. At least Sidereals have some knowledge of the personalities and agendas of the Maidens. No one knows anything about the composition and goals of the Convention on Oversight, though speculations abound.

One such rumor is that Oversight also polices the Five-Score Fellowship and occasionally terminates Sidereals whose actions and divided loyalties threaten the Bureau's mission. Some whisper that Oversight arranged for the young Bronze Faction zealot Ahn-Aru to kill a Gold Faction Sidereal. As the Age of Sorrows takes its

toll on the Bureau of Destiny, paranoia has only added to the Sidereals' problems.

THE LOOM OF FATE

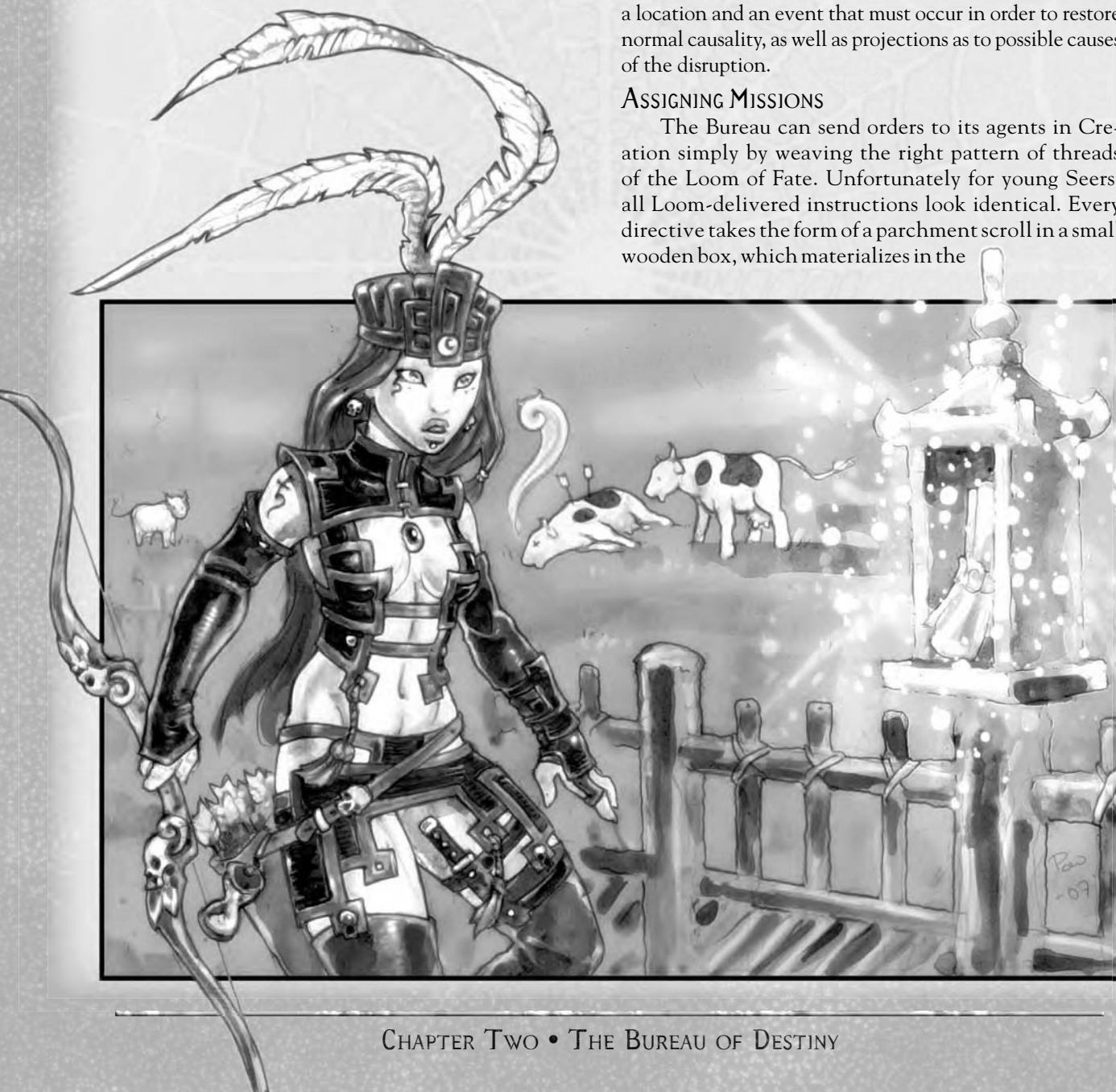
The final and most important layer of authority over young Sidereals consists of the Loom itself and the pattern spiders that maintain it. The pattern spiders constantly monitor the Loom for potential tangles of fate. Snags are most commonly caused by rampant and uncontrolled Essence usage in Creation. These Essence expenditures may come from the activities of Solar or Lunar Exalted, Fair Folk, demons that have escaped their bindings or even Creation-bound gods who have gone rogue. Even the Blessed Isle, which remains tightly managed by the Bronze Faction, has dramatically increased its ambient Essence turbulence—as the Realm lurches toward civil war, factions of Dragon-Blooded have begun field testing

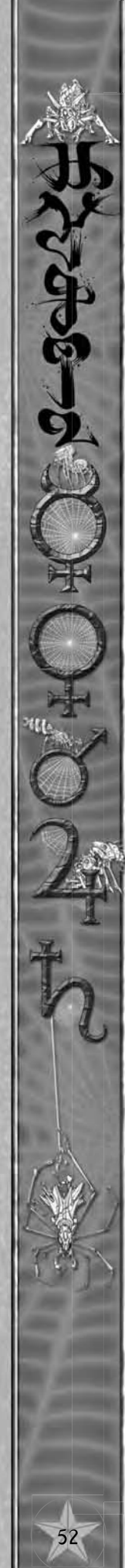
powerful First Age artifacts such as the thousand-forged dragons (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 113–114).

These surges of raw Essence feed back from Creation into the Loom, causing individual strands first to vibrate in sympathy and then to stick together when they come into contact. This in turn echoes in Creation as breaches in causality. When the pattern spiders believe they cannot untangle the fates, they alert the gods of the Bureau. A suitable deity compiles a mission profile and sends it to one or more Sidereals who can resolve the anomaly quickly and efficiently. Where possible, the Bureau also informs the assigned agents what actually caused the anomaly and directs them to prevent future disruptions by any means necessary. Unfortunately, when the source of the anomaly comes from beyond Creation, the Bureau often cannot identify the source directly. Instead, the spiders simply provide a time, a location and an event that must occur in order to restore normal causality, as well as projections as to possible causes of the disruption.

ASSIGNING MISSIONS

The Bureau can send orders to its agents in Creation simply by weaving the right pattern of threads of the Loom of Fate. Unfortunately for young Seers, all Loom-delivered instructions look identical. Every directive takes the form of a parchment scroll in a small wooden box, which materializes in the





Vizier's presence. They are not always signed. Thus, a Sidereal often does not know whether he fulfills the wishes of the pattern spiders, the gods who head each division, a convention leader or the Maidens themselves. Directives from the Convention on Oversight, however, are always signed. No one has ever succeeded in using the Loom to send a message falsely attributed to Oversight, and everyone who tries instead finds that Oversight has sent a report on the attempted fraud to the Sidereal's division head.

As a practical matter, the Bureau frowns on using the Loom to assign missions that are unrelated to the business of the Bureau of Destiny, and so most missions really do come from legitimate sources. However, some tasks are considered so important to the personal agenda of a god or Sidereal that the risk is worth it, particularly if there is little chance of the offence being reported. Furthermore, even when a mission is legitimate, division heads and elder Sidereals can both overrule the decision about which Sidereal agent gets the mission. Thus, a petty elder can ensure that a mission that affects her agenda goes to a Sidereal more amenable to doing things the elder's way, or that a highly complicated or exceptionally dangerous mission goes to a potential rival.

SAMPLE MISSION BRIEFING

Directives sent through the Loom tend to appear where only the Sidereal can notice them and usually when she is alone. The scroll and box vanish once their contents have been read and when no one observes them. A typical mission to correct a small disruption to fate might look like this:

To: Iron Siaka, Rizako of Gem, Quiet Victory and Ahn-Aru.

From: Office of Wayang, Division of Endings, Sub-Directorate of Brushes with Death

You are directed to form a circle and resolve the causal nexus disruption identified by Case Number 8416-S-3153-542.

Mission Profile:

18 Ascending Fire, Chiaroscuro. On this day, make certain that the chief chef of the patrician Ragara Ululo serves fish rather than beef as a main course during the feast that night. Ululo is forecast to choke on a fish bone, but not to die.

Be advised that four Dragon-Blooded officers will attend, along with one disguised Solar Exalt.

Estimated probability of hidden Lunar presence: 53.8%.

Estimated probability of hidden demonic presence: 46.4%.

Estimated probability of Fair Folk presence: 23.7%.

LIFE IN YU-SHAN

As compensation for their strange and dangerous work, the Sidereal Exalted get to live in Heaven. Few mortals could imagine the incredible splendor of Yu-Shan or the unimaginable opulence of life on a Celestial bureaucrat's salary. On the other hand, most deities of Yu-Shan stick to the routine of their duties and are baffled by the rough-and-tumble of Sidereal field missions that combine aspects of espionage, law enforcement and big-game hunting. As each Sidereal ages and rises through the bureaucracy, she inevitably spends less and less time in fieldwork and ever more in her office within the Bureau. Few elders completely escape the call to work in Creation, though—or want to, really. Field missions might see the Exalted hunting demons through the territory of an ancient and hostile Lunar one week; on the next, while cunningly disguised as a waiter, she serves poisoned drinks to a Solar Exalt.

OFFICE SPACE

Every Sidereal who has not been outright banished from Yu-Shan (an extremely rare occurrence) is entitled to at least some office space within the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design. The size and quality of the Sidereal's office reflect her standing within the Bureau. Top-ranking Viziers such as Chejop Kejak have entire wings of offices for their dozens of godly secretaries and subordinates. On the other hand, a recent Exalt without a patron might share a cramped, windowless single room with a junior deity.

Experienced Sidereals who have been promoted within the Bureau typically receive one or more lesser gods to serve as secretaries, clerks, gofers and even muscle. Most Sidereals maintain some offices within their division (for instance, a Chosen of Mercury has personal cabin-space on the Golden Barque of the Heavens) according to their Backing (Division) rating. Sidereals who also have influence within one or more of the various conventions and sub-conventions see this reflected in the Backing (Convention) Background. Offices allocated exclusively to the conventions are housed within the Dome of the Perfect Lotus where the Loom of Fate is located. Subordinate gods who have significant power of their own are reflected in the Allies Background.

GETTING AROUND

Except for those who have lost their housing privileges for some legal infraction, most Sidereals own or rent dwellings within Yu-Shan, and most Sidereals of any reputation own manses there. As legal residents of both Yu-Shan and Creation, such Sidereals may enter and leave Heaven as they please. Those unfortunates who lack a Heavenly residence are barred from Yu-Shan except when on official Bureau business. Sidereals (and anyone else who knows how) can enter and exit the 60 Yu-Shan gates that are scattered across Creation, each of which accesses a corresponding gate within Heaven. A "61st" gate, called the Calibration Gate, wanders about Creation apparently at random. The

Celestial Circle spell called Summon the Heavenly Portal (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**, p. 82) can call the Calibration Gate to any specific location. Persistent rumors state that Chejop Kejak and other Sidereal elders know of additional secret gates to Heaven that are not listed on the official registries, but this may simply be a legend of the Bureau.

Although Yu-Shan is as large as the Blessed Isle, the Heavenly City is still only a fraction of Creation's size. Yu-Shan also has rapid transit systems of incredible efficiency. Through cunning use of the Yu-Shan gates, a Sidereal can cross the length of Creation in a matter of days or even hours. For example, a Vizier can step through Gate 43 in the Wavecrest Archipelago, catch a dragon boat across Yu-Shan to Gate 16 and then step through it out into Great Forks just a few days later, a journey of thousands of miles that might take months to complete within Creation. More influential or connected Sidereals have access to even faster modes of transportation. Using the gates, a Vizier can maintain false identities in widely separated parts of Creation. For example, many Bronze Faction luminaries maintain mortal identities and mortal homes across the Blessed Isle and the tributary states, the better to manipulate Realm politics, the Immaculate Order or other purviews.

LIVING QUARTERS

Normally, a Sidereal's Heavenly living arrangements depend on his Salary Background rating (described in Chapter Four). Even the lowliest Celestial dwellings compare well to the palaces of Creation. Salary alone, however, does not suffice to obtain even the lowliest Celestial manse. Doing so requires a veritable web of bribes, connections, charm and dumb luck. Accordingly, manses in Yu-Shan can only be acquired through the Celestial Manse Background (also described in Chapter Four). Naturally, Sidereals can also possess manses in Creation for use by their various mortal identities or simply as bases of operation for Terrestrial missions. The standard Manse Background covers such dwellings.

SALARY

All employees of the Bureau of Destiny, both Sidereal and godly, receive compensation from the Bureau in the form of Quintessence and perhaps Ambrosia. Quintessence comes from the general prayers of all mortals for Heavenly intervention, and manifests as a pale, glowing liquid in jade tubs scattered throughout Yu-Shan. Soft, iridescent blocks of Ambrosia manifest from prayers to a specific deity. All gainfully employed entities in Yu-Shan, including the Exalted, receive rations of Quintessence. Ambrosia manifests in the immediate vicinity of the god to whom the relevant prayers were directed. All gods who receive Ambrosia must tithe 10 percent of their prayer income to the Unconquered Sun, a major source of that deity's unrivaled power. The Unconquered Sun then redistributes that tithe to the five Heavenly Bureaus, which then use

the Ambrosia to manufacture necessary equipment and to pay their employees. Sidereals are forbidden to form cults and thus cannot acquire Ambrosia naturally in Heaven (although theoretically, a Solar or Lunar worshiped by a cult would receive Ambrosia in response to mortal prayers if she somehow found herself in Yu-Shan).

The Bureaus receive their Ambrosia in the form of money. Heavenly money consists of Ambrosia concentrated into a waxy, indescribably sweet and delicious substance wrapped in gold foil and stamped with the image of the Unconquered Sun. Young Sidereals are advised not to eat their operational budgets.

A Sidereal's salary comes in the form of raw Quintessence or Ambrosia, as represented by the Salary Background. Only experienced Sidereals with several years of service to the Bureau are likely to receive Ambrosia. Neither raw Quintessence nor raw Ambrosia can be taken beyond the bounds of Yu-Shan—both materials instantly dissipate in a puff of Essence outside the confines of the Heavenly City or a god's sanctum. However, because these materials can be forged into almost any material substance, a Sidereal can theoretically convert them into currency or goods that might allow her to enjoy a lavish lifestyle in Creation, subject to the regulatory limits placed on such activities by the Celestial Bureaucracy. Salary is discussed more fully on pages 104-106.

SABBATICAL

The Bureau of Destiny does not insist that Sidereals spend every waking moment on Bureau business. Every now and then, Viziers can take vacations, which the Bureau calls sabbaticals. While on sabbatical, a Vizier can pursue her own interests.

Some Sidereals use their sabbaticals to unwind—which could mean anything from lolling on a beach in Wavecrest to competing in one of Creation's martial arts tournaments. These Sidereals often use their sabbaticals to reconnect with humanity: they can spend some time being an ordinary person, doing ordinary things. (Of course, they need to use a resplendent destiny if they want to interact with other people very much.) After years spent among protocol-crazy gods or facing danger on the Maidens' secret service, just spending an evening at a caravanserai, drinking and swapping bawdy songs with the drovers and merchants, can seem sweeter than Heaven's finest Ambrosia.

Young Sidereals sometimes use sabbaticals to deal with business from their mortal lives. For instance, a Seer might make sure that family and friends from before his Exaltation are safe and taken care of. The Bureau frowns on Sidereals trying to preserve too much connection to their former lives, but also accepts that mortals have a right to exploit family connections—even when the mortals don't know those connections exist. Conversely, a Seer on sabbatical may deal with old enemies, such as killing off the bandits who raided his village. Before embarking on such ventures,



however, a prudent Sidereal makes sure the Bureau has no special plans that require a mortal relative's suffering or an old foe's survival.

Other Sidereals take time off to pursue special projects. Did a mission leave some loose end that nags at a Seer's curiosity? He can spend a month investigating. Does he want to craft an artifact or learn a spell without the rest of the Bureau knowing? A sabbatical gives him a chance.

"Special projects" can include working for one's faction. Bronze Faction members use sabbaticals to assist Wyld Hunts, spy on known Lunars or Solars, subvert Dynasts or teach at the Heptagram. Gold Faction members rescue novice Solars from Wyld Hunts, spy on Dynasts, assassinate Bronze Faction allies who lack Bureau protection or set up new cells of the Cult of the Illuminated. Sidereals of either faction often use their sabbaticals to generate funds for whatever activities they can't justify to the Bureau; methods range from finding pious merchants willing to tithe for special Immaculate or Illuminated projects to tomb raiding.

SABBATICAL LENGTHS

The Bureau of Destiny frowns on Viziers spending too much time on vacation. Sidereals may safely take no more than one week of sabbatical per season, or one month total per year. Characters with high Salaries or Backing may take longer sabbaticals, but their careers suffer for it: a character who takes a sabbatical lasting longer than one month has her Salary drop by one dot. The maximum permissible length of a sabbatical depends on her highest Salary or Backing score:

- One week
- One month
- One season
- One year
- Five years

Even the highest-ranking Sidereal cannot evade these limits. Overstaying a sabbatical at all is a Severity 1 offense, and the Severity rises by one for every week the Seer remains AWOL, with an immediate audit if the Severity reaches 5.

DETACHED DUTY

On rare occasions, the Bureau of Destiny lets a Sidereal operate for long periods without supervision. Such "detached duty" has no time limit. Detached duty is always extremely secret, for extended missions such as exploring the Underworld or raising a nation to fulfill some long-term plan of destiny. Among the Five-Score Fellowship, rumor has it that some Sidereals wangle detached duty as a form of extra-long sabbatical, whether for personal junkets (such as raising a family) or factional business (such as raising the next generation of a nation's leaders). Another rumor says

the Bureau uses the fiction of detached duty to cover up scandals, such as Viziers who become impossible for a high-ranking god to work with—or worse, a Sidereal who simply abandons her duty and the Bureau can't force her back. No one outside the highest ranks of the Bureau, however, can say what favors or blackmail a Sidereal would need to gain detached duty on her own terms.

CELESTIAL AUDITS

Despite the Sidereals' status as emissaries of the Maidens, every Sidereal remains subject to the laws of Heaven whether they reside in Yu-Shan or Creation. Indeed, young Sidereals learn that they must exercise special care to avoid scandal, for some gods in Yu-Shan secretly look down upon Sidereals as mortals elevated above their station. Other gods still hold a grudge for the Usurpation: breaking the Mask enabled the Five-Score Fellowship to escape punishment (as described on pp. 25-26), but Heaven knows perfectly well that the Sidereals did it. Consequently, every Sidereal, regardless of rank or power, faces an audit by the Celestial Bureaucracy at least once a century. Younger Sidereals are audited at least once a decade, and more often if they antagonize the wrong god. Celestial censors—often lesser elemental dragons—adjudicate all audits. (Storytellers can use Fakharu, the Censor of the West, as a model for most Celestial censors. See **Exalted**, pp. 302-303.)

An audited Sidereal may speak in her own defense or have an advocate speak on her behalf. For example, Chosen of Mars historically eschew diplomacy and oratory to settle their differences with combat; they often hire a more polished advocate from the Chosen of Venus as defense counsel. The laws of Heaven permit representation by any Sidereal, by an Eclipse Caste Solar or by any god with Essence 4 or higher. In the Old Realm, Waxing Moon Lunars also performed this function. The Bureau of Heaven has not decided if any Lunar Caste has inherited this privilege now that the Waxing Moon Caste no longer exists.

GENERAL AUDITS

The general audits that all Seers must undergo are relaxed compared to criminal proceedings, although the audited Sidereal can still find audits nerve-wracking. The censor (who prosecutes and judges the audit) reviews the Sidereal's work history since his last audit for any infractions.

OFFENSES AGAINST HEAVEN

All potential forms of misconduct within Yu-Shan, from littering to high treason, are rated from 1 to 5 according to their Severity level. During a general audit, the censor reviews each infraction rated Severity 3 or higher. Lower Severity infractions are not serious enough to show up in a general audit, unless someone specifically wants to harass the Sidereal.

Storytellers may use the following examples to set the Severity of various offenses:

Severity Sample Offenses

- 1 Inconveniencing a god with Essence of 4 or more; breaking an important but minor law such as using modes of rapid transit reserved for higher-ranking beings without proper authorization.
- 2 Violating the Heavenly rights of a deity with an Essence 5 or less; failure to cooperate with a celestial lion's investigation; the unjustified slaying of a Terrestrial Exalt within Yu-Shan; abusing one's Salary to live in Creation at the Resources 4 level.
- 3 Causing a serious disturbance that harmed or upset more than a dozen important gods; directly interfering with a Sidereal mission assigned through the Loom of Fate; direct interference with a celestial lion's duties.
- 4 Violating the Heavenly rights of, or otherwise inconveniencing, a deity with Essence 6 or higher; the unjustified slaying of a Celestial Exalt with Essence 5 or less within Yu-Shan; abusing one's Salary to live in Creation at the Resources 5 level.
- 5 Committing a serious offense against all of Yu-Shan; conspiring with Fair Folk, demons or agents of the Deathlords; killing a Celestial Exalt of Essence 6 or higher; unlawfully ruling a kingdom or maintaining an army or fleet in Creation.

HEAVENLY RIGHTS

The offense of "violating the Heavenly rights" of a deity deserves special mention. Yu-Shan's legal code does not clearly define "Heavenly rights," a fact that favors high-Essence deities over low-Essence ones. At a minimum, all deities have a right . . .

- To receive Quintessence and lawfully obtained Ambrosia;
- To travel freely about the public areas of Yu-Shan;

- To use any mode of transportation not expressly limited by law to certain entities;
- To remain safe from intrusion in their lawfully owned dwellings;
- To remain free from violence, intimidation and injury;
- And to pursue their godly duties in any manner not forbidden by the Celestial Bureaucracy.

Exalts



GAME MECHANICS: GENERAL AUDITS

The process of the audit is represented by an extended and contested (Manipulation + Bureaucracy) roll between the players of the censor and the audited character (or the character's advocate). The Sidereal's offenses and meritorious deeds, however, modify these dice pools.

Add up all the Severity points from the Sidereal's infractions (ignoring all infractions below Severity 3). Then, total up all the Sidereal's points gained from Meritorious Deeds and subtract that total from the total Severity. If the number is positive (i.e., the Severity outweighs the Sidereal's Meritorious Deeds), add that number to the censor's dice pool. If the number is negative (i.e., the Merit points outweighed the Severity of the Sidereal's mistakes), add that number as bonus dice to the Sidereal's pool (or that of his advocate if he has one).

Any detectable use of Charms in the audit constitutes a Severity 5 offense. A character may attempt stunts, however, through stirring rhetoric (giving the player a chance to ham it up), surprise witnesses and accusations and other stratagems.

The first party to accumulate successes equal to twice the other's Essence (which represents that party's status in Heaven) wins a favorable verdict. If the Sidereal wins in a general audit, the censor gives the Vizier a slap on the wrist or perhaps even no punishment at all. If the censor wins, the Sidereal is fined, demoted or otherwise punished for his malfeasance. The more net successes the winner's player rolls, the lighter or heavier the fine will be. If either side botches, the dispute is resolved swiftly and completely in favor of the party whose player didn't botch—either the censor punishes the Sidereal severely or rewards him with a promotion or pay raise, at the Storyteller's discretion. The Storyteller may also choose to reward a Sidereal with a promotion or pay raise if, for example, the Seer's player won the opposed roll decisively or if the character had a significant number of meritorious deeds.

Gods who favor a more expansive view of "Heavenly rights" assert that they have the right to peace and tranquility while in Yu-Shan and the right to the utmost respect from their spiritual subordinates. As a practical matter, this interpretation of the law gives most high-ranking gods wide latitude in charging Sidereals and other, lesser beings with entirely subjective crimes such as rudeness or even being too noisy.

MERITORIOUS DEEDS

On the other hand, the Bureau of Heaven rewards those who have served Yu-Shan faithfully by granting some leeway

for future missteps. Accordingly, when the censor reaches her verdict, she takes account of past "meritorious deeds" of the accused. Meritorious deeds likely to be performed by Sidereals are likewise rated from 1 to 5.

Bonus Meritorious Deeds

- 1 Saving or providing valuable aid to an important god with Essence 4 or higher.
- 2 Capturing a criminal who has committed crimes of Severity 4 or 5.
- 3 Saving a dozen or more gods with an Essence of 4 or more from harm.
- 4 Saving or providing valuable aid to a high-ranking god with an Essence of 6 or higher.
- 5 Saving Yu-Shan or one of the Celestial Incarnae from serious harm.

CRIMINAL AUDITS

Criminal audits carry graver consequences than general audits, particularly since criminal audits often happen because a powerful god has taken a strong dislike to the Sidereal. Somewhat less commonly, the celestial lions that serve as Yu-Shan's police force have the authority to make accusations against Sidereals for any misconduct the celestial lions observe. They can even arrest and detain all but the most powerful of Sidereal elders. Only a reckless Vizier openly breaks one of Heaven's laws in direct sight of a celestial lion, but stranger things have happened. Absent personal observation, a celestial lion may only arrest a Sidereal with a writ of detention signed by a Celestial censor. More commonly, the lion merely "requests" that the accused Seer accompany the lion to make a statement before the censor—but while such requests do not carry the force of law, no prudent person needlessly antagonizes Heaven's police.

As a practical matter, Sidereals themselves report one another only for serious infractions, opting to resolve lesser matters internally. (In Heaven as in Creation, nobody likes a snitch.) Also, most of the gods of Yu-Shan reflexively group entities into social castes based on Essence ratings: a Sidereal rarely faces complaints (even justifiable ones) from gods whose Essence ratings are significantly below her own. Indeed, the censors routinely ignore all but the most serious criminal complaints made by gods of Essence 3 or less without even bothering to interview the accused.

On the other hand, the censors prosecute young Sidereals for even the flimsiest, most trumped-up charges if the complaint comes from an angry god whose Essence doubles or even trebles the Sidereal's own. Such deities often have the power and inclination to request audits of a lowly Sidereal for "infractions" such as running down the street instead of walking, and thereby causing a commotion at the god's formal tea ceremony. Gross class disparities between high-Essence deities and low-Essence Sidereals can make it extremely difficult for the Chosen to defend herself absent the intervention of powerful patrons of her own.

When a lesser god files a complaint, the censor typically just interviews the parties involved, decides on guilt or innocence and, in the former case, assesses a fine against the guilty party. When a major god files the complaint, the audit features much greater pomp and circumstance. The censor typically calls for an official inquiry after the investigation is complete. These audits take place in special courtrooms within the Bureau of Heaven, where the witnesses are magically compelled to speak only the truth. Also, the proceedings are open to the public, and if the case involves important or interesting personalities, the viewing gallery will be full of gods. In these cases, the accuser typically acts as the prosecutor, while the censor serves as the judge. In some extremely serious cases, usually involving Severity 5 offenses, the censor prosecutes the case with a tribunal of extremely high-ranking gods, all with a minimum Essence of 7, adjudicating the trial.

Censors usually hold official inquiries with witnesses and traditional courtroom decorum only when the accuser and accused are both reasonably powerful or where the transgression affects all of Heaven. When one party is clearly more powerful than the other, the censor often renders a summary judgment. In fact, if the Essence rating of the complainant exceeds that of the accused by four or more, the complainant usually just tells the censor what happened and what sort of fine or punishment she would accept to consider the matter settled. The censor then offers those terms to the accused in exchange for a guilty plea, with the alternative being an official inquiry that might result in an even steeper punishment.

Regardless of the nature of the proceedings, the censor is usually the investigator as well as the judge. Worst of all, he takes one-fourth of all the fines he assesses as part of his salary! Accordingly, although the accused always has the right to speak on his own behalf and even call witnesses, most audits cannot realistically be viewed as impartial proceedings. Often, the only factor in the accused Sidereal's favor is that most censors are lazy and corrupt. Censors rarely accept bribes to ignore infractions that take place within Yu-Shan; the Bureau of Heaven keeps a close eye out for that. On the other hand, a canny Sidereal can often derail a criminal audit simply by persuading the censor that prosecution is more trouble than it is worth—that the Sidereal's superiors might make things difficult for the censor later or that continued investigation of the case might implicate far more important and influential personages than the accused. Regardless, in all but the most obviously frivolous cases, a Sidereal who undergoes a criminal audit can expect at least a light fine, no matter how clear her innocence.

PENALTIES

When a general or criminal audit concludes adversely to the accused (which happens most of the time, given the nature of Yu-Shan's "justice" system), the censor has wide

GAME MECHANICS: CRIMINAL AUDITS

Criminal audits are resolved in much the same way as general audits: resisted and extended (Manipulation + Bureaucracy) rolls, with a difficulty equal to twice the other party's Essence. The difference between the Severity of the crime and the accused's Meritorious Deeds is added as bonus dice to the dice pool of either the censor or the accused. However, three important differences distinguish criminal from general audits:

- The censor considers charges made at any Severity level, not just those rated 3 or above.
- The relative status of the accused and accuser can and will affect the censor's judgment. Subtract the Essence of the accused from that of the accuser. If this number is positive (i.e., the accuser has a higher Essence), add the difference to the censor's dice pool. If the number is negative (i.e., the accused has a higher Essence), add the difference to the dice pool for the accused or his advocate.
- In official inquiries, the censor has the authority to call and examine witnesses, whom the accused is free to cross-examine.

Such legal maneuvering is resolved by an (Intelligence + Bureaucracy) roll made on behalf of the accused, which may be resisted by the player of the prosecutor, the witness (for example, if an adverse witness actively tries to make the accused look bad) or both. If the accused wins against his opponent (or opponents, if the witness and prosecutor each roll against him), that witness's testimony is discredited. Each discredited witness inflicts a cumulative -1 to -3 internal penalty on the prosecutor's player from then on, depending on the importance of the witness's testimony.

If the accused fails to discredit a witness, however, the player of the accused suffers the internal penalty, as the accused has only made himself look worse. The Storyteller has sole discretion over how successfully the witness was discredited, as well as the importance of the witness's testimony. There is no benefit gained either way for attempting to discredit a minor or unimportant witness.

latitude to set penalties, though censors usually choose punishments commensurate to the offenses.

Light penalties imposed on Sidereals may include the following:

- Official reprimands (which add +1 to the Severity of the next offense with which the Sidereal is charged).
- Forfeiture of assets (including temporary or permanent loss of a low-level artifact or a manse).
- Temporary garnishment of some or all of the Sidereal's Salary (see "Salary" on p. 104).

- Exile from Yu-Shan for a period not to exceed (the crime's Severity) months.
- Some minor service that much be performed for the censor or the accuser.
- Use of the Geas Charm to permanently prevent the Sidereal from repeating the criminal acts he performed.

Heavy penalties for severe offenses may include the following:

- Suspension and/or unpaid leave from the Bureau of Destiny (including loss of all Salary and benefits for the duration). Suspension also adds +2 to the Severity of the Sidereal's next offense resulting in an audit.
- Forfeiture of major assets (such as a high-level artifact or manse or several low-level ones).
- Some major or dangerous service, which must be performed for the censor or the accuser.
- Imprisonment, such as by being transformed into a sentient but immobile statue for (the crime's Severity) years.
- Banishment from Yu-Shan, potentially for the rest of the life of the accused.
- Enslavement, such as with the slave collar artifact (see *Wonders of the Lost Age*, p. 63) or some similar magical means.
- Being stripped of permanent Essence.

THE MOST PERFECT LOTUS OF HEAVENLY DESIGN

The Five Maidens each lead their own divisions within the Bureau of Destiny. Each division has its own duties and character. The headquarters, the Most Perfect Lotus of Heavenly Design, is a cluster of five office buildings encircling the massive, five-mile-wide dome that houses the Loom itself.

THE LOTUS DOME AND THE LOOM OF FATE

Regardless of caste, all Sidereals work with the great Loom of Fate. The Loom occupies a simple (if immense) dome. New Sidereals take months to learn the maze of stairs, corridors, balconies and walkways that line the dome's interior. These architectural structures take up only a fraction of the interior space, though. Most of the interior is filled with gossamer threads of pure spun Essence, cut from the primal Wyld by the Maidens and spun into the building blocks of all that is. Each single strand of the web represents the future of a single person, place or thing.

Calling these structures a "Loom" strung with "threads" is only metaphor, however. The Incarnae themselves cannot fully comprehend the mechanisms wrought by the Primordial Autochthon. The additional metaphor of the "Tapestry" simply refers to "everything in existence in Creation at the present time." Each thread of Essence represents a single entity in Creation—from grains of sand to people, cities, nations or even abstract concepts—and describes the range of what could happen to each entity in the future. The

threads cross for as long as their corresponding entities interact, and this ever-shifting Tapestry precisely describes all of patterned reality. Up until that point of crossing, Sidereal astrology can affect that thread's future (see Chapter Six). The workings of the Destiny Background (see "Big 'Destiny' vs. Little 'Destiny'" sidebar on p. 48) likewise affect how threads interact. Charms can affect the Tapestry at the moment of "Now" and set threads moving in new directions. Once that instant passes and becomes the past, however, no form of Essence manipulation can alter what has occurred. Thus, the Exalted cannot change the past (or even travel there) or fully resurrect the dead (as opposed to animating dead remains that persist in the Tapestry after their owners' souls have moved on). Even the Incarnae cannot perform such feats.

When a particular thread reaches its end, the pattern spiders delicately snip it, pull it from the Loom and bundle it onto a suitably-sized spindle for delivery to the proper Bureau. Thus, the vast archives of the Bureau of Humanity hold untold billions of spools of thread, each recording the entire life of a single individual. The archives of the Bureau of Nature are even bigger, with spools recording the story of every plant and animal that ever lived on Creation, down to the tiniest insects and each individual blade of grass.

Studying the Loom of Fate can reveal the plan for Creation's future. As the saying goes, though, "a plan is often a list of things that don't happen." The threads of the Loom represent only the most probable, proposed destinies of the entities the threads represent. Any use of Essence in Creation may subvert that plan and send threads in new directions, for surprising intersections with other threads of fate.

THE PATTERN SPIDERS

The largest and hardest-working cohort within the Bureau of Destiny consists of the pattern spiders. Only Asna Firstborn has a name. The pattern spiders never rest as they scuttle across the strands of fate, crossing and uncrossing the threads as destiny requires. They require no payment or sustenance, for these gods are also machines.

The Great Maker modeled his workers on the greatest spinners and weavers in Creation. A pattern spider looks like a real spider... only three feet long and made of the magical materials. Slender starmetal legs carry pattern spiders across the Tapestry of Fate, or up walls and across ceilings if need be. Eight unblinking orbs of polished jade serve as their eyes, set in a carapace of patterned orichalcum and moonsilver, and their mandibles of black soulsteel are fearsomely sharp. A fraction of them, called august weavers, are somewhat larger and handle especially delicate or complex bits of fate-weaving.

Pattern spiders rarely speak except to inform a god of a nascent tangle of fate; their buzzing, toneless voices are clearly made by some mechanical device. They ignore both praise and complaint, and speak the ceremonial phrases



of respect owed to high-ranking gods without any trace of genuine respect. The only emotions Sidereals can detect amongst the spiders are irritation at extra work (they twitch a bit and move more quickly), worry at anomalies of fate (a side-to-side shimmy) and satisfaction at a well-written bit of calligraphy (a dip of the head and clicking of the mandibles). Now and then, pattern spiders also show profound rage at overwork by biting the fate-thread of the Sidereal responsible for it, inflicting pattern bite (see p. 209).

Fortunately for the Bureau of Destiny, the spiders maintain and repair each other, so these mechanical gods never wear out. Attacking a pattern spider would not be prudent, for countless millions tend the Loom and they quickly respond to attacks on their fellows. If their numbers should ever prove insufficient, or someone managed to remove or destroy any of them, Asna Firstborn would manufacture more in short order.

Thanks to the pattern spiders, most aspects of Creation stay the same. Yeddim breed more yeddim, instead of claw striders or cauliflowers. Upstays up, instead of down, sideways or purple. Axes chop down trees, no matter what the least god of the tree might want, and the falling tree definitely makes a sound. The gods and Sidereals of the Bureau can concentrate on the finer points of destiny and the broad sweep of history, confident that the pattern spiders can handle most of the details.

Most, but not all. The destinies of Exalted and other Essence-wielding beings lie beyond the spiders' competence

or purview. Essence use, by its very nature, bends the rules of fate and destiny, transforming the impossible into the possible. When Charms, spells and other phenomena release large quantities of Essence into Creation, the affected strands hum and vibrate in sympathy—not just the strand associated with the Essence wielder, but those of anyone who was the subject of the Essence-related effect.

When the vibrations become too strong, a strand may contact another, unrelated strand and entangle with it. This connects the destinies of the phenomena the strands represented, possibly despite vast distances and even huge gaps in time. The spiders can untie small tangles, so people in Icehome rarely find their lives curiously bound to people in Paragon, Onyx or Abalone (to say nothing of their doors opening on those other cities). Larger tangles, however, can have strange and pernicious effects on Creation itself, creating impossible situations such as a person being alive and dead, stairs heading up to the cellar instead of down or neomah entering Creation through the tears of jilted lovers. By the time these anomalies manifest in Creation, the problem cannot be solved within the Loom. Only by first removing the anomaly (and perhaps removing the rogue Essence wielder) could the affected threads of the Loom be stilled long enough for the spiders to untangle the strands.

INTRUDING DESTINIES

Some Essence usage is simply impossible to predict and guard against. Specifically, the Maidens realized that beings

Exalted





that come from beyond Creation were not automatically represented in the Loom by threads of fate. Before the Primordial War, only the Fair Folk intruded from outside. Since the War, Creation also must contend with demons and foul things from the Underworld—and the Loom is blind to their presence, at least at first. The longer such a being remains within Creation, the greater the chance that the being follows Creation's patterns of cause and effect, and so becomes subject to the Loom. Until that occurs, the Essence expenditures from such entities seem to originate from nowhere... and some creatures are so powerful, and so strongly tied to alien fates, that the Loom never registers the creatures' presence. Conversely, large and energetic snarls of fate can open portals to realms beyond Creation, allowing alien creatures to enter.

The pattern spiders cannot infer the presence of these intruders until they cause sizable tangles in the Loom's threads. When an unrecognized demon kills someone otherwise destined to live for decades, the spiders notice the violent disruption to the Loom, and rearrange the threads of fate to take the changes into account.

The Maidens realized that eliminating anomalies of fate and defeating intruders from beyond would require intelligent and powerful field operatives who could function within Creation and deal decisively with other Essence wielders. The Sidereal Exalted became those operatives. The Chosen of Journeys repaired the severed connections between neighbors and nations. The Chosen of Serenity stilled the clamor of jarring fates. The Chosen of Battles brought death to outsiders who climbed out of the anomalies to threaten Creation. The Chosen of Mysteries studied the impossible and pulled it into the realm of the possible. Finally, the Chosen of Endings slew those who had escaped a foreordained death through the lapse of destiny.

REFLECTING UPON THE STRANDS OF FATE

One of the few frivolities of life in the Bureau of Destiny is a minor hazing ritual. On the day when a new recruit first sees the Loom of Fate itself, older Sidereals amuse themselves by telling the young Exalt fanciful tales about how strange the Loom is. They also take bets on whether a particular recruit will run from the Loom in fear upon first seeing it. These recruits soon learn that most of these tales *underestimate* how disturbing the Loom can be. The odds on whether a particular young recruit really does run screaming from the Loom Chamber are about 50/50.

The Loom Chamber forms an immense open sphere, with dozens of entrances scattered about. The geography of the Loom chamber changes regularly, as corridors shift and stairs reverse themselves. The maze stretches not only through space, but through time. The young Sidereal steps onto a balcony and sees that the next balcony is upside-down. So is the fellow Sidereal who stands on it. Turning to look across the chamber, she sees a catwalk running across it at a 45-degree angle... with other Sidereals walking on both

FATE VS. DESTINY

People outside the Bureau often treat the concepts of fate and destiny as the same. In fact, many Sidereals often use the two words interchangeably in casual conversation, but not when they deal directly with the Loom. Then, these two words gain very specific meanings. *Fate* refers to a single, specific thread of the Loom, as in, "This strand of fate represents Tanis Pono, a shopkeeper in Abalone." *Destiny* refers to how a specific fate plays out over the length of the thread, as in, "It is Tanis Pono's destiny to marry at the age of 27, sire three children and then die in a fire at the age of 43." The destinies of Pono's wife and three children can also be studied by examining the individual strands of their respective fates.

Destiny also refers to the natural resistance of high-Essence beings to having the course of their lives altered by the mechanisms of the Loom. The Celestial Exalted possess an innate resistance to the powers of fate and destiny. Otherwise, the Primordials could have simply ordered the Maidens to manipulate the fate of each Exalted so that the Primordials were destined to defeat them. Only a being able to resist fate and forge his own destiny could have ever defeated the Primordials. Indeed, from a Sidereal perspective, all Exalted Charms are technically destiny-shaping effects—although other Exalted, who do not understand the Loom, rarely perceive that aspect of their powers.

See also the "Big 'Destiny' vs. Little 'Destiny'" sidebar on page 48.

sides. Then she gasps, as one of the Sidereals hanging upside down from the "bottom" of the catwalk turns and waves. The other woman could be her twin except for her longer hair and the fine clothing of a senior administrator—a vision of her own possible future self, looking back through time.

Innumerable strands of fate like iridescent cobwebs connect all these impossible structures. As the young Sidereal stares out at the Loom, she is overcome by the grandeur of it all. One strand hums softly, as a peasant woman in Arjuf sings her newborn child to sleep. A crossing pair give off a metallic clang, as two gladiators in Nexus fight for their lives. Only one thread has more length to go, and so today, that gladiator will win. A third thread quivers briefly, stops and turns dull as an elderly grandfather in Gem succumbs to old age. The pattern spiders skitter over and gently cut the thread at its end before rolling it onto a spindle for transport to the Bureau of Humanity. And then, a fourth thread, touching the young Sidereal's balcony, vibrates violently and sounds a dissonant note. The spiders stop suddenly and then move near, watching with their polished

GAME MECHANICS: VIEWING THE LOOM

When any human being (including an Exalt) sees the Loom for the first time, her player must attempt a Valor roll to have her character avoid fleeing the Lotus Dome. The difficulty of this roll is equal to (6 – the observer’s Temperance). Players of Sidereals gain a +2 dice bonus on this roll due to advance preparation. Any character can spend Willpower to try resisting this cosmic terror. Once a Sidereal’s player succeeds on the Valor roll, her character need never fear the Loom again. Indeed, most Sidereals eventually come to love studying the Loom. All other mortals and Exalted face Valor rolls every time they enter the Loom Chamber. So do gods, unless they work for the Bureau of Destiny or the Convention on Oversight has issued a writ of authorization for them. The Loom Chamber sees a constant stream of lesser gods coming and going, recording tangles of fate and delivering orders to the pattern spiders.

jade eyes to see if the vibrating thread tangles with another. Curious but with a hint of dread, the young Seer touches the thread. Then she gasps again, as she sees an image of the Solar warlord, his blood-stained face a mask of rage, who will kill her in one year’s time if his destiny and hers remain unaltered. The Sidereal hardens her resolve. This may be her destiny now, but the Sidereals are masters of fate, not its slaves. She whispers, “Let us see, Chosen of the Sun, whose destiny will stand.”

TOUCHING FATE

By touching a single strand of fate, a Sidereal (or anyone else, for that matter) can gain insight into the current status of whatever is represented by that strand, seeing the past, present and future of that fate, depending on where the observer touches the thread.

SEARCHING THE LOOM OF FATE

Before anyone can study a creature’s destiny, he must find the creature’s thread of fate. Every blade of grass and grain of sand has its own thread. The total number of strands contained within the Loom defies calculation, and very few are conspicuously marked.

It is nearly impossible to pick out the specific fate of a particular person just by searching for it at random. Over the Ages, however, the Bureau has marked a number of exceptionally long threads—most commonly cities and nations, whose destinies play out over very long periods of time—to use as reference points. Also, high-ranking Bureau members (Backing 4 or higher) can order certain important threads marked for the convenience of their staff. Chejop Kejak has exercised this authority to mark the threads of

dozens of prominent figures both in the Realm and among the Anathema.

A Sidereal who wants to find a specific person can reduce the odds by carefully researching the history of his target (assuming such research is possible) in search of moments when that person interacted with a person or place already marked on the Loom. For example, if a Sidereal knows that the Night Caste called Harmonious Jade was in Chiaroscuro a year ago, in Nexus three months ago and in Great Forks yesterday, the Sidereal can compare the fates of individuals who cross paths with those three cities, and further focus his attention on active threads that the spiders have marked as “fluctuation-prone.” That would probably reduce his search pool to just a few thousand threads.

GAME MECHANICS: STUDYING THE LOOM

An observer who can withstand the sight of the Loom can try to study the Tapestry of Fate. The roll is (Perception + Lore). On a botch, the observer immediately sees something in the Loom that drives him mad: the character gains a minor derangement. On a failure, the observer’s player must immediately attempt a second Valor roll to remain in the Loom’s presence. On a success, the observer gains insight into the weave of fate.

First, the observer gains insight into his own destiny, gaining a vague impression of where particular information lies or some important event in her future. Each additional success allows the observer’s player to ask one additional question about the information, event or outcome sought. In addition, if the player rolls at least five successes, the character regains a Willpower point (or a mote of Essence if his Willpower is full) from glimpsing some encouraging personal destiny.

For this basic procedure, all questions must pertain to the observer’s own destiny. However, a Sidereal can study the destiny of other entities as well. The character must find and touch the fate-strand associated with that being. The roll is the same, but suffers a -2 external penalty. As with everything pertaining to the Loom of Fate, the answers received are only valid if neither Sidereal astrology nor the unanticipated actions of an Essence wielder change the destiny of the subject studied.

ALTERING THREADS

Once a Sidereal identifies a specific thread, she can watch the fate of the target person with relative ease. Altering the target’s destiny is another matter, usually requiring Sidereal astrology and the complicity of the pattern spiders (as described in Chapter Six). While Charms and other destiny-shaping forces can alter direction or character of

GAME MECHANICS: SEARCHING THE LOOM

Locating a single, unmarked thread requires an extended (Perception + Investigation) roll, with each roll representing one day of studying the Loom. Scrying a nation is far easier than finding an individual—add the Magnitude of the target to the Sidereal's roll (see *Exalted*, p. 159) in bonus dice. The base difficulty of the roll is 20. In the case of individuals, the difficulty is modified by the following factors:

Modifier	Factor
-1	Per point a mortal or Dragon-Blooded subject has in the Destiny Background
-1	Per point of point of Essence the target possesses
-1	Per fate-altering act in the last week
x1 1/2	Target is currently in a Bordermarch, shadowland or a place heavily tainted by demons
x1 3/4	Target is currently in a Middlemarch or the Underworld
—	Target is currently in the Deep Wyld, the Labyrinth, Malfeas or another region completely outside of fate, and cannot be located at all.

"Fate-altering acts" are broadly defined as any scenes that unexpectedly alter the Loom's weave, usually through Charms or other large Essence deployments. Using Charms to change the outcome of an important battle, to steal a national treasure or to assassinate some important figure count as fate-altering acts, as do all sorcery or the use of thaumaturgy to summon demons.

For all the Loom's authority over the beings and objects of Creation, however, the Loom's sight does not extend far beyond Creation's shores. When calculating the total difficulty to search for a target creature, first subtract the modifiers for Destiny, Essence or fate-altering acts. Then multiply the result by the factor for being in a region partially outside of fate.

Even after a child of Creation returns from realms beyond, she remains occluded from the Loom until one month passes or she engages in fate-altering acts. Each fate-altering act brings the person one step closer to full reintegration with Creation and the full view of the Loom.

Any botch on the extended roll means the character cannot find the target's thread, and cannot try again until he obtains some significant new information about the target's history. What's more, he's so lost the thread of the person's life that he can't pull out new information using Charms. The character must seek information the hard way, and so gain a new point of access to the person's destiny.

individual threads of fate, the physical threads themselves are indestructible, even to the Incarnae. You cannot harm or kill a being in Creation by attacking the corresponding thread. Of course, such attempts might cause separate fate threads to cross improperly, thereby triggering fate anomalies. Trying to break a thread triggers a potentially lethal response from the pattern spiders, and a reprimand from the Committee on Oversight.

THE LIMITS OF FORESIGHT

Once a Sidereal identifies a particular creature's thread, she can follow it to its conclusion, thereby gaining insight into the creature's destiny. Peering far into the future is rarely worth the effort, though. Only the destinies of mortal beings (including plants and animals) can be predicted with great accuracy. Even their destinies can change because of Sidereal astrology or interaction with Essence wielders in Creation. Powerful beings such as the Solar Exalted change their own destinies every time they draw their swords, and so prognostication more than a few weeks in advance becomes nearly impossible. Even in the very short term, the most seemingly accurate depiction of a Celestial Exalt's death becomes meaningless if the Exalt brings enough Essence to bear.

In any case, Sidereals rarely need to handle the Loom directly for simple prognostications, and doing so needlessly irritates the spiders. Sidereals with nearly any authority within the Bureau can simply requisition the file on anyone or anything that currently exists in Creation, including all destiny forecasts for up to one year in advance.

Unfortunately, the most interesting files are usually the hardest to get. Each division head, the highest-ranking Sidereal within each division, the Chair of each convention and, of course, the Maidens all have the authority to put seals on the destiny records of anyone or anything connected to their area of influence. Thus, Ayesha Ura has successfully barred Bronze Faction members from reviewing the files on Solar Exalted in the East while Chejop Kejak has done likewise to keep files on Wyld Hunt operatives out of Gold Faction hands. The Maiden of Battles took the unusual step of placing *two* seals on the entire city of Lookshy. One would have sufficed to hide not only the destiny of the city itself but also everyone currently residing in it. No one knows what the other seal covers, but presumably Mars wants someone or something within Lookshy doubly concealed. Only the Convention on Oversight has authority to overrule a seal on a destiny file, and has not done so in centuries.

Thus, the only ways to learn the destiny of the subject of a sealed file are to locate the target's fate strand and study it personally or bribe someone working for the appropriate office to sneak out a copy. The first is incredibly time-consuming and tedious. The second is highly illegal—unauthorized review of a sealed destiny is a Severity 5 offense.

THE GOLDEN BARQUE OF THE HEAVENS (THE DIVISION OF JOURNEYS)

The Division of Journeys operates from the Golden Barque of the Heavens, a flying ship of solid gold roughly a mile long. The Golden Barque is the only part of the Bureau of Destiny that is actually mobile. The ship sets sail each morning from the Quay of Dawn, a landing platform on the eastern edge of the Perfect Lotus. Once airborne, the Golden Barque travels the skies over Yu-Shan in a leisurely course to the Quay of Twilight at the far side of Yu-Shan just as evening sets in Creation. Then, the ship takes on a new crew and sails back toward its starting point in a never-ending journey that symbolizes the progression of the Heavens themselves. The little gods who crew the Golden Barque all deal with navigation and travel. Those who travel by morning include lesser servants of the Unconquered Sun and various conceptual beings that represent important navigational landmarks. Those who travel in the evening include the godly incarnations of the constellations and other phenomena used to navigate at night. The captain of the Golden Barque, Ruvia, rarely leaves the ship as he also serves as the head of this division. Sidereal Chosen of Journeys have a variety of ways to get aboard the Golden Barque as it traverses the Heavenly sky, most commonly via a magical portal connecting the ship's hold with the Loom Chamber of the Perfect Lotus.

MERCURY, THE MAIDEN OF JOURNEYS

Swift Mercury holds dominion over locations and the connections between them. Therefore, her purviews include communication, transportation and trade. She is the patron

of messengers and merchants, mapmakers and explorers, wanderers and vagrants. Today, Mercury remains strongly focused on the day-to-day operation of her division. As a result, the Golden Barque suffers comparatively little factional infighting. On the downside, Mercury herself is fickle and easily distracted. Even the most devoted worshiper can seldom secure her favor for long, or even attract her notice. The sentence most commonly heard by people seeking an audience with Mercury is: "She was here, but you *just missed her*."

During the First Age, trade routes contributed not only to the functioning of Creation but to its outward growth—although Solar Exalted could expand Creation by transforming Wyld areas into patterned reality, these new territories remained unstable until lines of trade and communication linked them to the rest of Creation. The Chosen of mercury held the responsibility for forging those ties.

After the Contagion, the Fair Folk dissolved vast swathes of territory back into the Wyld. As a result, many gods within this Bureau whisper loudly that the Usurpation was a terrible error in judgment, for the Fair Folk Invasion proved that only the Solars could preserve Creation against the Wyld. Moreover, some of these gods claim that Mercury agrees. Certainly, something must explain the meteoric rise

of Ayesha Ura to her position near the top of the divisional hierarchy and the remarkable freedom of movement the Gold Faction has enjoyed since the return of the Solars. Just as her sisters, though, Mercury takes no overt position on the Gold-Bronze Faction dispute.

Mercury most commonly manifests as a young woman, lithe and athletic, with saffron robes and hair the color of spun straw. Those who encounter her find her distracted, brisk and

often with a limited attention span. She seems constitutionally unable to contemplate past events for very long. Forever in motion, Mercury always looks toward the future.



GODS OF THE GOLDEN BARQUE OF THE HEAVENS

The undisputed leader of the Division of Journeys is Ruvia, Captain of the Golden Barque and God of Roads. In addition to serving as the chief administrative officer of the Division of Journeys and Mercury's right hand, Ruvia's expansive divine portfolio makes him the highest-ranking transportation deity in Yu-Shan.

Newcomers to the Golden Barque often note Ruvia's appearance as a dusty old man on the edge of dotage and wonder about his fitness to captain either the ship or the division the ship houses. Such newcomers badly underestimate perhaps the most driven and attentive of all the divisional heads. Beneath Ruvia's genial and slightly absent-minded persona lies a sharp intellect and a powerful devotion to his duties. His formidable administrative skills keep the Division of Journeys relatively free from factional infighting and bureaucratic corruption. As the God of Roads, Ruvia understands the role that interconnectivity plays in preserving Creation, and he will not let those connections break on his watch.

Unlike some of his peers, Ruvia has little in the way of a person agenda that distracts him from his duties. In fact, virtually the only such distraction is his personal distaste for the various rogue city gods of Creation and the gods within the Bureau of Humanity who shield the rogue gods from censure. In particular, Ruvia has feuded for centuries with the Syndics of Whitewall who use the city's connection to the Great Road to consolidate their power. The Great Road was built long before the Usurpation, and the road's enchantments protect travelers to and from Whitewall from demons, Fair Folk and the dead. Ruvia himself helped design the Great Road, and he is incensed that the Syndics take credit for his work in order to win the support of Whitewall's citizenry. (See "Sidereals and Whitewall" sidebar on p. 77.) Ruvia desires to see the rogue elements of the Bureau of Humanity, the Syndics and all the other corrupt city gods of Creation brought to heel. To that end, he "encourages" Sidereals of Mercury to undermine cities ruled directly by gods wherever possible.

Ruvia generally appears as a thin, frail and absent-minded old man in yellow, dusty robes. When not aboard the Golden Barque or some other boat, Ruvia typically rides an enchanted donkey that can cover enormous distances in the blink of an eye. Ruvia carries a magic bag from which he can draw any nonmagical object. He is typically armed with a mallet (actually a knotty traveler's staff with a large gourd at the top), which can either bless or curse, as Ruvia desires.

Ruvia attributes the vicious infighting that sometimes hampers the other divisions as being the result of "weak leadership." In particular, he shows open contempt for the head of the Division of Serenity, whom Ruvia considers plainly incompetent. A cagey operator, Ruvia decided to split the division's administrative staff into daytime and nighttime shifts, which effectively means that only he knows every

DOUBLE DUTIES

Newcomers to Yu-Shan might wonder why the God of Roads serves within the Bureau of Destiny rather than in the Bureau of Humanity; indeed, many gods hold purviews that would seem appropriate for more than one Bureau. Nevertheless, there is a reason for everything in Heaven (if not always a good one).

Ruvia's status as God of Roads represents his portfolio, i.e., the aspect of Creation that he regulates and maintains. His position as Captain of the Golden Barque, on the other hand, is a Celestial appointment. While the two duties overlap, they remain distinct, and Ruvia must handle all the paperwork and oversight necessary to maintain his division and monitor the status and upkeep of every road in Creation. As an employee of the Bureau of Destiny, Ruvia embodies the concept of roads as the chief form of travel in Creation; but he also coordinates the activities of gods within the Bureau of Humanity who represent *actual roads* within Creation.

This sort of cross-bureau coordination is quite common in Yu-Shan. In theory, every god belongs to just one bureau, based on personal aptitudes and subtle shadings of the concepts they embody. Many gods, however, enjoy semi-official adjunct authority within other Bureaus whose duties overlap their own. Thus, agents of the Division of Battles must coordinate virtually all their prospective destinies in Creation with the various war gods in the Bureau of Humanity, as well as innumerable tangentially related deities (for example, Amoth City-Smiter, the God of Tumbled Ruins, if a battle is scheduled to end with an entire city being demolished). Of course, institutional rivalries sometimes inhibit smooth coordination between bureaus.

Some gods actually do achieve employment in more than one bureau. This directly flouts the laws of Heaven—but a doubled salary makes it easier to afford the bribes needed to avoid prosecution for the offense. A few residents of Heaven speculate that something philosophically meaningful would happen if a god managed to become a salaried employee of all five Bureaus.

facet of the division's affairs; none of his subordinates can realistically challenge his authority, let alone replace him. Ruvia's most important divine subordinates are Blue Crest Merchant (the God of Naval Trade), Sirocco Racer (the Goddess of Caravanserais and also Camels) and Laughing Ragamuffin (the God of Smuggling and one of the Guild's chief divine patrons). Of these, only Laughing Ragamuffin has serious designs on Ruvia's position, though the Captain of the Golden Barque has stymied Laughing Ragamuffin

thus far. Laughing Ragamuffin would probably put all of his Guild authority at the disposal of anyone who could give him captaincy of the Golden Barque.

SIDEREALS OF THE DIVISION OF JOURNEYS

The Chosen of Mercury, or Harbingers, deal with the connections between people and locations. Communication, trade, travel, even road construction all help tie the threads of Creation together and strengthen its social integrity. Harbingers of both factions also use their powers to facilitate communication with their mortal lackeys—the Immaculate Order for the Bronze Faction and the Cult of the Illuminated for the Gold Faction. Harbinger agents are most commonly assigned to Creation to repair breaches in causality that manifest as spatial anomalies, economic disruptions or alterations in the social connections between nearby cities. (An example might be the Larjyn Incident of RY 712, when a diplomatic communiqué from that city to Great Forks was inexplicably replaced in transit with a declaration of war on the Wavecrest Archipelago.) Chosen of Mercury may also be assigned to breaches of any sort that occur in remote locations, as their powers of rapid transportation are often the only way to reach the affected area in time.

THE CERULEAN LUTE OF HARMONY (THE DIVISION OF SERENITY)

The Cerulean Lute of Harmony is a curiosity among Yu-Shan's great buildings, for it is one of the few structures in Heaven deliberately designed to emulate a structure in Creation. Long before the Primordial War, indeed not long after the dawn of humanity itself, a group of mortals constructed the world's first tavern and bordello, and they named their establishment "The Cerulean Lute." Intrigued by these early mortals' creativity in building an actual house of pleasure, Venus commissioned the Cerulean Lute of Harmony to be the godly answer to the mortals' innovation. Accordingly, from the outside, the offices of the Division of Serenity resemble

the mortal Cerulean Lute... if that building had been 20 stories tall and constructed of blue jade.

The sounds of music and revelry constantly emanate from the Division of Serenity, baffling those outside who wonder how any work can ever possibly get done within. Indeed, the Cerulean Lute houses not only the administrative offices of the Division of Serenity but also serves as a house of pleasure for those gods who lack the resources to attend the Games of Divinity but still have something to offer the Chosen of the Maidens. While the use of divinely appointed office space as a den of iniquity prompts some gods to call this division "Heaven's Whorehouse," such puritans would be surprised to learn just how much influence, information and wealth the gods and Sidereals of this division have acquired while working on the side as Heavenly geishas and panders. Of course, the Cerulean Lute has interests in everything that gives pleasure, and gods of this division can also supply such diversions as paintings so transcendently beautiful that they are addictive to see, architectural designs that bend the laws of time and space and even limericks so ribald that they can utterly destroy the reputations of their subjects. Everyone has a desire he wants satisfied, and the Division of Serenity oversees them all.

VENUS, THE MAIDEN OF SERENITY

Considered the most beautiful of the Maidens (and indeed, all the gods), Venus holds dominion over leisure, pleasure, health and happiness.

She is the preeminent fertility god in Yu-Shan, and all other fertility deities owe fealty to her. The various regional gods of peace and harmony answer to her as well. Unfortunately, so does every god associated with addiction, carnality and sloth. Plentimon, the God of Gambling, is one of her most beloved courtiers, and there is a reason that lazy and shiftless people are referred to as "churls of Venus."

In the First Age, Venus ensured the happiness and well-being of Creation's populace to preserve the public peace. As the Solars descended into debauchery, the duties of her Sidereal servants seemed more focused on bringing satiety





to the Princes of the Earth than serenity to their subjects. Misery abounded among more and more of the populace. Despite that, her many courtiers insist that Venus nearly opposed the Usurpation due to impassioned arguments by several of her subordinates (such as Uvanavu, the God of Health, and Yo-Ping, the God of Peace): many gods at the Cerulean Lute believed the death of the Solars would lead only to even greater unhappiness. In the Usurpation's aftermath, these gods whispered that such assessments were clearly correct, but nothing could be done about it—the Solars were irrevocably gone, and nothing could reverse the spread of misery. And so, say the rumors, Venus simply gave up.

Today, Venus seems devoted utterly to her own pleasure. Her role in the day-to-day operation of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony consists almost entirely of propping up her former lover, Yaogin, as head of the division despite his own slothful nature. While all of the Incarnae are engrossed in the Games of Divinity, Venus alone seems so addicted that she cannot bear to leave the Jade Pleasure Dome or even distract herself for more than a moment to consult with her deputies. In fact, she remains so fixated on the Games that she seems unaware even of the return of the Solar Exalted.

Venus invariably manifests as a buxom woman of unparalleled beauty. Her gowns are seductive and made of the finest materials, when she deigns to wear clothing at all. Her eyes and hair (just as any clothing she does wear) are sapphire blue, the traditional color of both bridal gowns and the banners that wave in front of bordellos. She typically seems mildly intoxicated, as if she had just consumed qat or had a momentous orgasm.

GODS OF THE CERULEAN LUTE OF HARMONY

Yaogin the Fair, God of Beautiful Dreams, carries a remarkable pedigree, if arguably an undeserved one. As the Bearer of the Lapis Ewer, Yaogin is unquestionably the most important god in Yu-Shan to have begun life as a mortal. According to the most common version of the tale, Yaogin was a simple shepherd of uncommon beauty. Venus saw the young man asleep in his field. Enchanted by his looks, she spirited him to Yu-Shan to serve as her cupbearer and lover. Later, she elevated him to godhood and installed him in her division as a god of dreams within the Cerulean Lute. She eventually tired of him, however, and appointed him head of her division mainly to keep him too busy to bother her. Even then, Venus's ennui began to overcome her judgment, and if any of her subordinates complained about the lackadaisical and unqualified Yaogin's elevation to such an important post, the Maiden of Serenity never deigned to acknowledge any complaints.

Yaogin typically appears as an incredibly handsome teenaged boy with dark hair and dreamy eyes, wrapped in robes of azure satin and silk. He bears the Lapis Ewer, whose waters grant illumination, peace of mind and indescribable

pleasure as Yaogin desires. He frequently nips at his own Celestial drink. Despite the importance of his posting, Yaogin appears supremely disinterested in the Cerulean Lute's role in the Bureau. He considers himself a craftsman of dreams first and foremost, and an administrator a distant second. Yaogin devotes most of his time to dreamshaping and delegates most of his authority to his underlings, a fractious and bitterly divided trio of divinities.

Uvanavu, the God of Health, still fumes over the Usurpation after 1,500 years, and he blatantly abuses his position to harass Bronze Faction Sidereals. Less obviously, the Chrysanthemum Shogun also misappropriates divisional assets for his highly illegal side activities in Creation. (See the "Sidereals and Whitewall" sidebar on p. 77). Something of an overachiever, Uvanavu oversees Creation's health on behalf of the Bureau of Destiny and the Bureau of Humanity; while the concept of health naturally connects to both Bureaus, Uvanavu illegally wangled a second appointment and salary. After the Contagion, Uvanavu saw the number of people who actually required his oversight reduced by 90%, and the considerable time freed up by the near extinction of the human race gave Uvanavu ample time and resources to fulfill both his godly duties and his private ambitions. Well-liked by his peers in both Bureaus and a favorite of the Maiden of Serenity, Uvanavu exercises enormous influence over the Division of Serenity far in excess of what his actual position would indicate, much to the chagrin of Chejop Kejak.

Uvanavu's chief rival is Livilla, Goddess of Prostitution, who does what she can to counter his support of the Gold Faction. In the First Age, prostitution was relatively rare—the Solars pursued policies that raised the living standards of mortals significantly, and only the most wretched of men or women viewed prostitution as socially acceptable or their only means of survival. The Usurpation changed that perception, as the rampant lusts of the Dragon-Blooded created massive demand for high-class courtesans and dirty rent boys alike. The Contagion, ironically, improved Livilla's status even further. Men and women who had nothing else to sell for food turned to selling themselves. From the Harlotry of Nexus to the professional orgiasts of House Cynis, Livilla's worshipers have elevated her almost to the pinnacle of the Bureau.

Balancing Uvanavu and Livilla is Golden Reverie, the God of Euphoria. This patron of drunkards and addicts plays the other two gods against each other, even as he provides Yaogin with an endless supply of mind-altering drugs to sustain his dreamlike existence. Golden Reverie cares nothing for the Gold-Bronze debate, and focuses entirely on his personal vision of Creation: an entire world where every man, woman and child spends life in a warm, pleasant drug-induced haze. To that end, the God of Euphoria blunts every effort by Seers and gods

to focus the division on anything other than the basest, most simplistic view of serenity. Golden Reverie regularly sabotages programs (Sidereal and otherwise) that might undermine the Guild's drug trade, and he has illegally manipulated fate for centuries to prevent discovery of the Guild's Beasts of Resplendent Liquid (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 127).

THE FAIR FOLK

Whatever the gods' specific conceptions of serenity, all the gods of the Cerulean Lute hate the Fair Folk with a most un-serene passion. The various peace gods oppose the raksha because those creatures launched the most horrific war ever seen in Creation, and continue to attack mortals for fun. The gods associated with pleasure detest the Fair Folk because the practice of ravishing strips its victims of the ability to feel joy or happiness or anything at all. Even the dream gods hate the raksha, if only out of jealousy—no dream ever fashioned by this division could match the gossamer fantasies spun by the Fair Folk. Despite the Chosen of Serenity's generally relaxed natures, Chosen of Serenity often join missions to destroy Fair Folk freeholds; missions that, more often than not, are initiated by this division rather than the Division of Battles.

SIDEREALS OF THE DIVISION OF SERENITY

The Chosen of Venus, also known as Joybringers, promote such concepts as health, pleasure, job satisfaction, personal happiness and sexual expression across Creation. The Joybringers' advocacy of peace tamps down factional infighting in the division; most Joybringers would rather compose a satiric song about an enemy than construct some elaborate plot against him. Still, spectacular exceptions do occur; there's no fury like an addict denied his fix, and Joybringers have erupted in stunning rages. Afterward, they said it felt good.

Joybringers are assigned to missions in Creation that require tact, discretion and social graces, such as ensuring the signing of a peace treaty, that the two children of feuding households meet and fall in love or that a sick man dies outside a city's gates before he can get inside and unleash a virulent plague. Unfortunately, Joybringer missions often become entangled in the political intrigues of the gods of this division. In particular, Golden Reverie pulls strings to get Joybringers allied with him assigned to any missions that involve the Guild. Similarly, Uvanavu does whatever he can to ensure that only Gold Faction Joybringers receive missions that might conceivably affect Whitewall, and he prefers to see the diplomatic Joybringers in charge of such missions over any other caste.

THE CRIMSON PANOPLY OF VICTORY (THE DIVISION OF BATTLES)

The Division of Battles regulates all conflicts among mortals, from the greatest battles down to sibling rivalry and barroom brawls. The grounds of the division consist of the Crimson Panoply of Victory, a small fortress of red brick with tall ramparts of crimson steel, all surrounded by a massive array of tents and fields. The gods and Sidereals of this division are generally considered the best combatants and strategists in Yu-Shan. Many of the fields around the administrative fort look at first glance like enormous game boards. In fact, these boards are designed to reflect the state of current battlefields in Creation, enabling the division to monitor ongoing armed struggles or to run simulations of future battles and thus calculate the most desirable outcomes.

The Division of Battles decides neither when and where a battle will take place nor which side will win. The various regional war gods in the Bureau of Heaven generally make those decisions, although those gods invariably consult with the deities of the Crimson Panoply when plotting out future conflicts. As a practical matter, however, most conflicts of any importance have divine lobbyists on both sides who cancel out each other's impact, and most battles are not so much determined by the gods as predicted based on the Loom's assessment of who lives and who dies. The larger, better-armed and better-led force generally defeats the smaller, poorly armed and incompetently led force, and both gods and Sidereals can only watch for anomalies such as unforeseen Essence users and mortals with potent destinies. Accordingly, the chief duties of the Division of Battles simply involve ensuring that the battle goes according to the dictates of fate.

MARS, THE MAIDEN OF BATTLES

While the Unconquered Sun is officially the chief war god of Yu-Shan, the Maiden of Battles governs strategy and war as an abstract concept. Thus, her purview includes the strife and upheaval that accompanies war—she is the Goddess of War Widows and War Orphans, for example, although such unhappy mortals rarely offer her prayer. The Chosen of Mars often claim that their patron's battle plans defeated the Primordials and that the Unconquered Sun's chief contribution was having the sense to accept advice from a superior strategist. Mars also holds dominion over all the accouterments of warfare, and blacksmiths who specialize in weapons and armor often keep tiny shrines to Mars hidden in their smithies in defiance of the Immaculate Order. Even games of strategy are associated with Mars. Outside the Realm, major Gateway tournaments often begin with a prayer to the Maiden of Battles.

Most gods consider Mars the most pragmatic of the Maidens, and the most ruthless. Some of her adjutants quietly speculate that she allowed the Usurpation for

purely selfish reasons—the First Age was just too peaceful for Mars, and she knew that the Usurpation would eventually collapse into bloody warfare across Creation no matter what the Bronze Faction did to maintain control. Still others think that she just wondered whether the weak Dragon-Blooded could defeat the vastly more powerful Solars through superior numbers and tactics, just as the Solars themselves once defeated the Primordials with the same techniques. Ultimately, however, these are only speculations. Mars, just as her sisters, has never openly given any sign of supporting (or opposing) the Usurpation. Whatever her original feelings about the Usurpation, she at least implicitly favors the Bronze Faction, if only through her right hand, Hu Dai Liang, the head of this division and the Bronze Faction's strongest Heavenly supporter.

Mars generally manifests as an angry woman with red hair and blood-stained hands. She is always well armed and well-armored. Her glance provokes terror in mortals, and she often seems to take offence at nearly anything said to her.

GODS OF THE CRIMSON PANOPLY OF VICTORY

The great warrior Hu Dai Liang has served as Shogun of the Crimson Panoply of Victory and Lord General of the Division of Battles since shortly before the Usurpation. Her predecessor, the Golden Lord, God of War and Justice and staunch ally of the Unconquered Sun, left Yu-Shan shortly after the great sun god turned his back on the Solar Exalted. The Golden Lord entered semi-retirement as the national god of An-Teng, and Hu Dai Liang

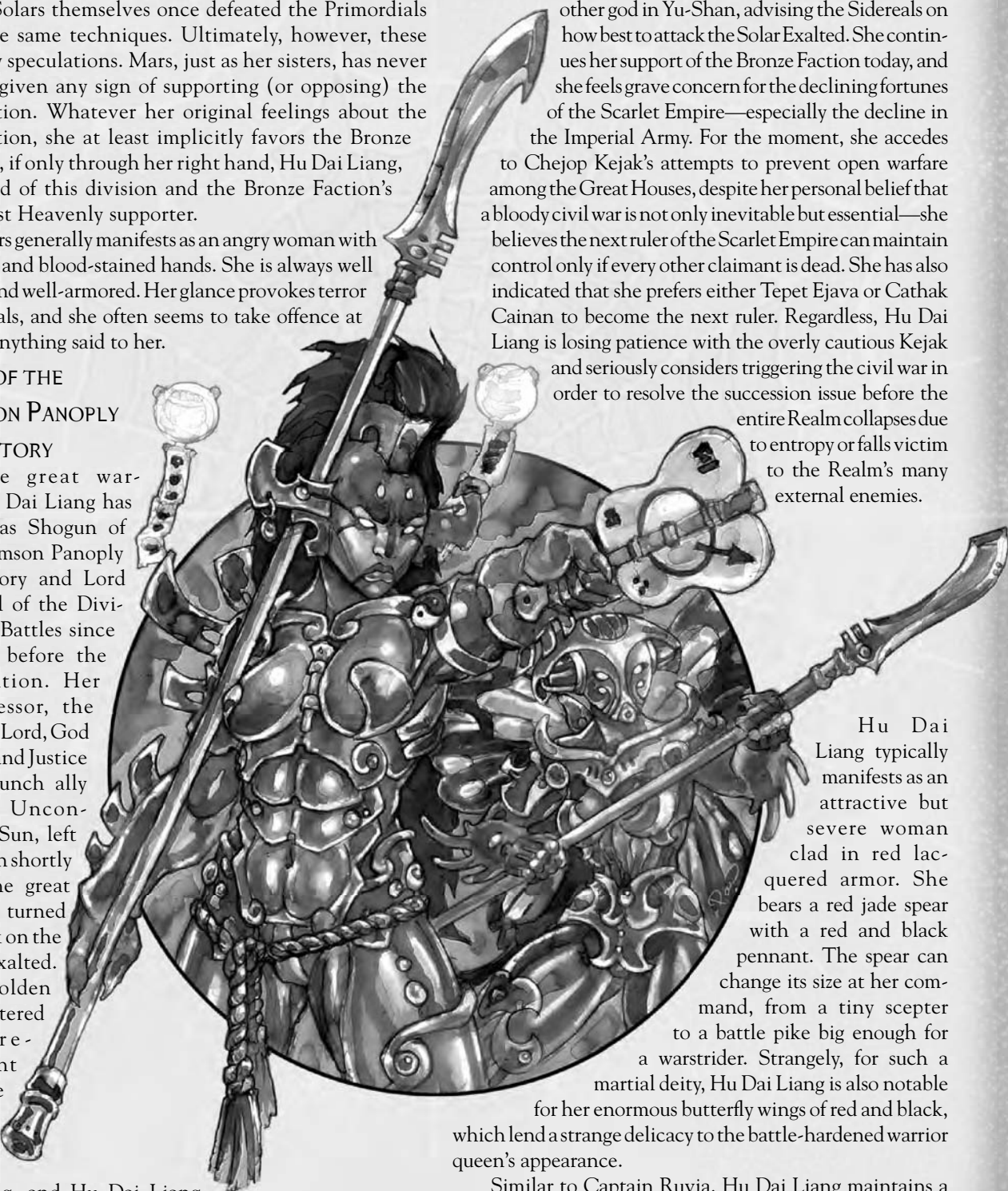
assumed his position. It is unlikely that the Usurpation could have ever taken place without her.

Although she is officially only the God of Soldiers, the Lord General interprets her portfolio broadly and claims dominion over all military personnel, from the freshest grunt to the most decorated senior officers. Hu Dai Liang personally involved herself in the Usurpation more than perhaps any other god in Yu-Shan, advising the Sidereals on how best to attack the Solar Exalted. She continues her support of the Bronze Faction today, and she feels grave concern for the declining fortunes of the Scarlet Empire—especially the decline in the Imperial Army. For the moment, she accedes to Chejop Kejak's attempts to prevent open warfare among the Great Houses, despite her personal belief that a bloody civil war is not only inevitable but essential—she believes the next ruler of the Scarlet Empire can maintain control only if every other claimant is dead. She has also indicated that she prefers either Tepet Ejava or Cathak Cainan to become the next ruler. Regardless, Hu Dai Liang is losing patience with the overly cautious Kejak and seriously considers triggering the civil war in order to resolve the succession issue before the

entire Realm collapses due to entropy or falls victim to the Realm's many external enemies.

Hu Dai Liang typically manifests as an attractive but severe woman clad in red lacquered armor. She bears a red jade spear with a red and black pennant. The spear can change its size at her command, from a tiny scepter to a battle pike big enough for a warstrider. Strangely, for such a martial deity, Hu Dai Liang is also notable for her enormous butterfly wings of red and black, which lend a strange delicacy to the battle-hardened warrior queen's appearance.

Similar to Captain Ruvia, Hu Dai Liang maintains a strict discipline in her division. She regularly rotates her



subordinates in the Crimson Panoply so that none can develop entrenched power bases, and she has often been accused of micromanaging the division. Her greatest rivals are actually not in the Bureau of Destiny at all. The five regional war gods routinely challenge her authority, especially Ahlat, the Southern War God, who unabashedly supports the divine right of the Solar Exalted to rule Creation. The feud between Ahlat and Hu Dai Liang may soon escalate into war between Ahlat's followers in Harborhead and their Dragon-Blooded rulers. Whether Harborhead can throw off the yoke of Dragon-Blooded rule or the Realm crushes the nation under its heel may depend on which of these two proud deities is forced to yield.

Hu Dai Liang must also contend with Siakal, the Western War God. Siakal is also the Goddess of Sharks and Siaka, and her affinity for those animals often overcomes her appreciation of military strategy. Specifically, Siakal neither respects nor acknowledges Hu Dai Liang's views on proper conduct for a soldier and insists that all battles should be fought by raging berserkers and followed by the total extermination of everyone on the losing side. Siakal makes no secret of her contempt for Hu Dai Liang's preference for detailed strategy and respect for noncombatants, and plots constantly to undermine the Lord General and usurp her position.

Finally, Hu Dai Liang fears that if the Solar Exalted return to power, Mars will demote her and give her post back to the Golden Lord of An-Teng, even though the other god has evinced no interest at all in his former position. This unseemly paranoia has led the Lord General to issue a number of secret orders directing Chosen of Battles assigned to An-Teng to inhibit worship of the Golden Lord however possible. Ironically, by illegally involving herself in worldly politics, Hu Dai Liang may soon provoke the Golden Lord into becoming the enemy she fears him to be.

SIDEREALS OF THE DIVISION OF BATTLES

The Shieldbearers of Mars are the warriors of the Sideréal Exalted. All other factors being equal, a Shieldbearer is no match for a Dawn Caste Solar, and few Shieldbearers can match a Full Moon Lunar. Luckily, all factors are not equal. Shieldbearers not only study every form of combat, they study ways to rig a battle through astrological manipulation and arranging the battle for the time and place most propitious to themselves: in short, they cheat and bushwhack their foes.

Often, Shieldbearers serve undercover in military forces so that they can lead a charge or strike down a particular officer at just the right moment. Shieldbearer missions most commonly involve countering the efforts of other Essence users before they can alter the destiny of an important battle. The division also regularly assigns Shieldbearers to monitor major military conflicts between units led by Essence users in order to provide accurate data about Essence deployment and thus prevent future tangles in the Loom.

Finally, when the Bureau must mobilize in force against invaders from beyond fate, the Chosen of Mars take command and lead the battle.

THE FORBIDDING MANSE OF IVY (THE DIVISION OF SECRETS)

The Forbidding Manse of Ivy is well named—the building looms over visitors as if challenging their right to approach. Externally, the Manse looks like a circular building of enormous size, more than 200 feet tall and twice as wide—a plan similar to that of some First Age public libraries, although much larger. White marble columns 10 feet wide surround the building and support it. Dark green ivy covers most of the building. Persistent rumors state that writhing tentacles of ivy will tear apart anyone who dares to attack the Manse. Another legend about the edifice explains why no one has put the first tale to a test—supposedly, anyone who plans to attack the Forbidding Manse of Ivy will be unable to find it.

As huge as the Manse looks from the outside, it is actually much bigger on the inside—larger than most cities in Creation. The Division of Secrets keeps records on quite literally every fact ever recorded. Actually finding a particular piece of information is a daunting task, as the librarian gods who maintain the division's seemingly infinite records vaults require copious paperwork before allowing anyone access to the relevant files, and it is nearly impossible to find anything in the records department without the aid of a librarian. Some files, such as those providing the true names of Third Circle demons, are so restricted that a querent needs a requisition countersigned by the Maiden of Secrets herself.

JUPITER, THE MAIDEN OF SECRETS

The Maiden of Secrets is the most taciturn of the five sisters, perhaps to an unhealthy degree. Secrecy is more than Jupiter's watchword. Secrecy is her obsession, and she pursues it to the point of paranoid madness. Some of Jupiter's underlings claim that she supported the Usurpation because she knew that in its aftermath, Creation would be ruled by conspirators and liars, all of whom implicitly prayed to her with every evasion and falsehood that crossed their lips.

The exact scope of Jupiter's insight is itself a secret. Some say that she knows every fact in Creation that is not generally known—making her virtually omniscient. While such boundless awareness seems improbable, even for an Incarna, Jupiter does hold dominion over wisdom and learning, spycraft and thievery, stealth and misdirection. Assassins venerate Jupiter as well as her sister Saturn, particularly when they fear capture. Whatever the limits of Jupiter's knowledge, however, her insights avail her little—the Maiden of Secrets cannot bear to see her most arcane secrets revealed, no matter what benefits she might reap by the revelation.

When Jupiter directly involves herself in the Bureau's activities, her instructions are often cryptic to the point of incomprehensibility. Her Chosen suspect she occasionally abuses her position by ordering the murder of some mortal savant on the verge of returning lost lore of the First Age to widespread circulation. Getting anything from Jupiter invariably must be done in secret, and requires a pledge to hide some piece of information so it shall never be known.

The head of the Forbidding Manse of Ivy is Nara-O of the Hundred Veils, Keeper of Secrets. Appropriately, Nara-O is among the most mysterious of Yu-Shan's deities. Nara-O holds dominion over all secrets that only one person knows: sharing that information with a second person removes it from its files.

In 1,500 years, Nara-O has never expressed any opinion on the Usurpation. Most of Nara-O's subordinates assume that it supports the Bronze Faction due to the Keeper of Secret's long and close working relationship with Chejop Kejak, the ranking Sidereal within the division. Kejak

One of Nara-O's secrets would arouse even more suspicion if it came out. For the past few years, Nara-O has secretly funneled massive resources to the Cult of the Illuminated. In return, the Keeper of Secrets demands only the chance to meet a single Solar (preferably Eclipse Caste) on the third day of Calibration. No one in the Gold Faction knows what goes on in these meetings save Nara-O and the Solars involved, none of whom have appeared injured or changed in any way and all of whom refuse to speak of what occurred.

Itzcalimon, the Lord of Blackmail, has assumed an unofficial patronage of House Iselsi, for no other group in Creation has as much to lose from exposure of its secrets. He also favors House Cynis, for few others equal these Dynasts in ferreting out the hidden sins of others (or prompting them in the first place). Itzcalimon vaguely supports the Gold Faction, because he thinks that if the Solars retake their former power, then any survivors



DO THEY KNOW?

Several gods in the Division of Secrets sound like good candidates to know about the Great Curse. If no one has discovered it yet, Xaos might know, and if Xaos knows, Nara-O might know. Of course, no one can define the limits of Jupiter's knowledge. Then again, they might not know at all. The Great Curse comes from outside Creation and the purview of fate, where the Bureau of Destiny lacks supernatural means of pulling knowledge from nowhere.

If anyone at the Division of Secrets *does* know, revelation of the secret could shake the Bureau of Destiny to its foundations. Fairly or not, many gods would blame the division for all the horrors that came from the Usurpation. Jupiter could probably escape punishment: her fellow Incarnae understand that gods must follow their natures. Any lesser deity might face execution. The Bureau as a whole would lose much of its power as other gods refused to work with the Bureau any more.

Maybe that's why some gods at the division seem insane: they know they should tell the secret, but their nature forbids them to do so, and the conflict makes them crazy. On the other hand, the Forbidding Manse of Ivy might be Creation's best hope to uncover the deadly secret of Primordial vengeance. If anyone can find the truth, this division can.

among the Dragon-Blooded Host will be forced into hiding and susceptible to extortion on a grand scale. Itzcalimon also remembers the succulent and grotesque secrets the mad Solars kept to themselves in the First Age and wishes to taste those secrets again.

Most of the Bureau thinks that Xaos the Hidden, God of Things Not Yet Discovered, is mad at best and Wyld-tainted at worst. During the Fair Folk Invasion, Nara-O ordered Xaos to divine the strategies of the invading raksha, and he claimed to have learned the true name of the Wyld itself. Unfortunately, every time he repeated the name, the listener was invariably driven as mad as Xaos himself. Xaos also lost his own form at this time. He now appears as a roiling mass of Wyld energy and must remain behind a screen when conversing with visitors, lest those who see him suffer epileptic fits.

SIDEREALS OF THE DIVISION OF SECRETS

The Oracles of the Division of Secrets are among the most learned beings in Creation, if not always the most wise. These peerless savants and sorcerers of the Five-Score Fellowship preserve a tradition of scholarship and a mastery of First Age science that has all but vanished from Creation. In the modern era, the Chosen of Jupiter are among the most skilled sorcerers extant. Most Oracles also possess an

encyclopedic knowledge of history, philosophy and First Age craftsmanship, and they are unquestionably the best astrologers among the Five-Score Fellowship.

Modern Oracles not only keep secrets, they excel at ferreting them out. Often, this means going places where other Sidereals might fear to tread: the Wyld, the Underworld, even the Yozi Realm. Such places exist beyond the gaze of Sidereal astrology. If the Sidereals want to know what goes on there and how it might threaten Creation, then the Chosen of Jupiter must lead the mission.

Of all the Sidereal castes, the Chosen of Jupiter stay most loyal to the Bronze Faction. Chejop Kejak, the oldest and most powerful Oracle, makes a great effort to indoctrinate every new recruit. He now realizes he did not succeed as often as he thought. Oracles outside the Bronze Faction chafe at his control, not to mention his apparent determination to never die. Death comes for everyone, however, and after centuries of Kejak's autocratic influence over the division, no one can guess who will replace him when the time comes.

Sidereal fieldwork requires secrecy, stealth and deception, so Oracles are always useful. Oracles often receive direct command of missions that involve the dissemination of secret information, new discoveries or recovered wonders of the First Age. Missions likely to interact with denizens of the Wyld, the dead or with powerful Essence users also typically call for the presence of a Chosen of Jupiter.

THE VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS (THE DIVISION OF ENDINGS)

The final structure in the Perfect Lotus is also the most feared. The Violet Bier of Sorrows stands as a mausoleum of incredible size, its basalt walls covered with purple tapestries resembling the shrouds used by Sijanese morticians. The halls of the Violet Bier stay preternaturally quiet. Footsteps do not echo, and visitors find it difficult to speak above a whisper. Those who dwell within these halls are feared as well, for the godly employees of the Division of Endings often command purviews of death and decay. As the ambitions of the Deathlords become clearer to all Sidereals, many worried eyes turn toward the Violet Bier of Sorrows, as if to look into the building's very heart and determine its true loyalties.

SATURN, THE MAIDEN OF ENDINGS

The Maiden of Endings typically manifests as a young girl, wise beyond her years, clad in violet funereal shrouds, with white hair and a somber expression. Her daiklave, Gentle Caress, brings instant death with the slightest scratch.

Saturn holds dominion over the ending of all things, from mortal lives to schools of philosophy. She says that death prevents cosmic stagnation: the death of one being makes room for the birth of another. This view stands in stark contrast to the Abyssal ancestor cults, which extol death as the preferred state of existence. As the Deathlords wax

in power and audacity, Saturn's division moves to oppose them. For example, Saturn pulls herself from the Games of Divinity often enough to make sure the Convention on Deathlords receives copious funding.

Despite that, some gods and Exalts worry where the Maiden of Endings truly stands regarding the Deathlords. Death-cults that do not exclusively worship ghosts often pray to Saturn as well—and she never refuses their gifts of Ambrosia. Whether she *answers* any of these prayers, no one knows. Some incautious gods suggest that maybe she does, and that maybe she has looked into the heart of the Labyrinth itself, seen the ultimate manifestation of death... and liked what she saw.

Young Sidereals sometimes worry about Saturn and the Unconquered Sun. As part of her fundamental nature, Saturn must seek the eventual ending of all that is, although she ameliorates this duty by ensuring that new life replaces what is destroyed. According to the principles on which Creation is based, however, the Unconquered Sun must defeat every enemy, including death itself. Who would win—and what would happen to Creation—if this metaphysical duel ever played out and the two Incarnae traded blows? Older Chosen of Endings suggest the fear is based on the fallacy that the Unconquered Sun must necessarily regard his ending as the act of an enemy. In time, he may desire a change of state and seek Saturn's aid.

GODS OF THE VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS

The head of this division is Wayang (also known as Black Puppet Mask), the God of Silence. Wayang typically manifests as a man wrapped in shadow with only his softly glowing eyes visible. Wayang either cannot or will not speak, or indeed make any sound. However, he has

perfected a magical form of sign language that enables him to communicate perfectly through the simplest of gestures. Black Puppet Mask never leaves the Violet Bier, and he can melt into its many shadows and reappear wherever he wishes. Some whisper that he can hear through any shadows as well, and most employees of the division take care never to discuss their private matters at work except in well-lit rooms.

Although Wayang keeps his division running smoothly, he has become something of a victim of his own success. The Division of Endings became aware of the Deathlords centuries ago, although their true power was not yet apparent.

Wayang ordered a study of the Deathlords and their Neverborn masters. A few years ago, he requested Black Ice Shadow, a Ghost-Blooded Chosen of Saturn and necromancer, as his lieutenant and envoy in Creation. Then Thorns fell to the Mask of Winters. Suddenly, Black Puppet Mask, his lieutenant and his entire division became a source of paranoia for the entire Bureau. Worst of all, Wayang considers the paranoia justified. He believes

that at least one traitor within his division has passed classified material to Abyssal agents, but Wayang cannot determine the traitor's identity or

even come up with convincing proof that he wasn't the traitor himself.

And so, Wayang keeps his own counsel, even as he silently moves through his division, trying to identify any hidden traitors while concealing the possibility of such treachery from his peers in the other divisions.

Wayang has three major godly subordinates. Masque of Repose, the God of Funereal Arrangements, splits his time between Yu-Shan and Sijan, where he serves as the city father (which is technically illegal for a Celestial god of his stature, but no one else wants the job). Masque of Repose typically appears as the walking corpse of an old man, wrapped in funeral robes and wearing a death mask of lavender porcelain. Vermilion Ink Silencer, the God of Mergers and Liquidations, oversees the dissolution of every failed business in Creation. The economic troubles that



THE CARNIVAL OF MEETING

Every year during Calibration, Yu-Shan plays host to a fantastic festival called the Carnival of Meeting. The wonders and splendors of the Carnival beggar the imagination of the mortals sometimes invited to attend, but one sight during the Carnival has a significance often lost on mortals. At some point during the Carnival, Saturn and the Unconquered Sun engage in some innocuous contest: a simple game of strategy, a bet on competing athletes, seeing who can spit the furthest. Mortals may watch this contest with amused interest, but the gods watch the competition with a mixture of wonder and dread. Every year since the gods came to Yu-Shan, Saturn has pitted herself against the Unconquered Sun. Every year, she has been defeated. And every year, at the conclusion of the match, Saturn bows to the Unconquered Sun, looks up at him gravely and whispers, "Next year, perhaps." Without fail, he returns the nod and replies, "Perhaps." And then the King of Heaven, tested but still unconquered, kisses Saturn on the forehead and walks away.

accompany the internecine conflict among the Dragon-Blooded now makes him a major player in the division to his own surprise as much as anyone else's. Finally, perhaps the most feared and despised deity in all Yu-Shan is Scarazan, the Goddess of Divine Reallocation. The rather bland and innocuous phrase "divine reallocation" actually refers to the legal process whereby gods whose portfolios cease to exist are reassigned to other, less important roles, stripped of all godly authority and condemned to Yu-Shan's slum areas or, worst of all, prosecuted for crimes against Heaven, executed and then melted down into starmetal. Scarazan glories in her power and authority. While she doesn't actually decide who gets charged, convicted and sentenced (that duty falls to the censors), she takes enormous pleasure in carrying out the sentences, especially the capital ones.

SIDEREALS OF THE DIVISION OF ENDINGS

Some refer to the Chosen of Saturn as the Gardeners of Heaven, for they prune Creation of its dead branches so that the tree that is the world can put forth new growth. Most, however, refer to these Sidereals as the Reckoners, for they call to account those whose deeds warrant the final sanction. Chosen of Saturn see that everything and everyone reaches his proper end. Many gods view the Reckoners as assassins, but their role is more complex than that. Reckoners are not motivated to bring about death, but simply to ensure that it happens at the correct time as determined by the Maiden of Endings and the Loom of Fate. A Chosen of Saturn is just as likely to save someone from dying prematurely as to end a life that has gone on too long. But Reckoners' duties

aren't limited to the death of mortals. Everything must come to an eventual end. Nations, gods, ideas, everything. Even diseases must end, and the Reckoners were the ones charged with ensuring that the Great Contagion had run its course and could no longer threaten Creation.

This expansive view of their duties made some Reckoners the most driven and devoted supporters of the Usurpation. Bronze Faction Reckoners viewed the Prophecy through the lens of their own fatalistic viewpoint and interpreted the Prophecy to mean that the time had come for Solar and Lunar rule to make way for something new. That same viewpoint, ironically, leads younger Chosen of Saturn to the Gold Faction, interpreting the return of the Solars as a sign that the time of the Scarlet Empire approaches its close and that something new must take its place. Or perhaps, something old but in a newer and more purified form.

Sidereals of this division also serve a unique function among their kind: internal affairs. The Chosen of Saturn cut away anything that doesn't work, and they do not shirk that duty when it comes to their fellow Sidereals. The Chosen of Saturn watch constantly for threats both internal and external. When one of their fellow Exalted defies the will of the Maidens, the mysterious Convention on Oversight eventually sends a Reckoner to bring the offender to heel... or send his Exaltation on to a worthier host.

WHAT THE GODS DO

Even though the Bureau of Destiny is one of the smaller Celestial Bureaus, it still has tens of thousands of divine employees. These gods perform many functions. None perform duties as exciting as those of the Five-Score Fellowship, but the Bureau couldn't work without them.

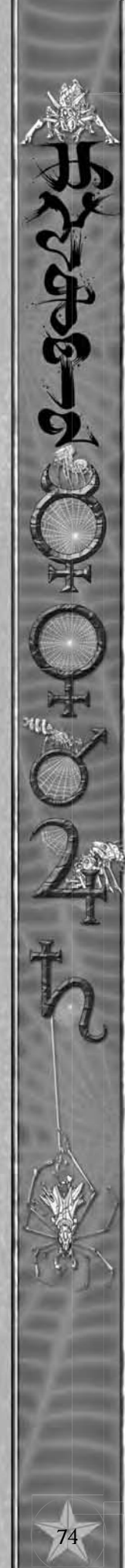
WATCHING THE LOOM

The pattern spiders, of course, watch the Loom all the time. When they spot a tangle of fate they cannot unravel by themselves, they alert a small god, who inspects the anomaly, assesses its likely effects and sends a report to the proper office within the Most Perfect Lotus. Other gods watch the spiders as they weave the destinies planned by the Bureau of Destiny (including works of Sidereal astrology) to make sure each destiny proceeds as intended. Divergences from the expected results may indicate the presence of powerful Essence wielders (usually not so bad) or intruders from beyond fate (definitely bad).

FATE PLANNING

Not only does the Bureau of Destiny work out the most likely results from current events, but its planning committees extrapolate less probable outcomes that could better serve the needs of Heaven—or at least, the desires of the other Bureaus. Countless gods receive memoranda from other deities about their plans for Creation, which the Bureau must reconcile as best it can.

The fate-planning committees design the weave of the future the day before it's woven on the Loom of Fate.



PURSUING AGENDAS

A Sidereal may shape the future by joining a planning committee. This requires Backing (Division) of 2+, or 3+ to lead a committee. A god on a planning committee can be worth Ally 2, or Ally 3+ if the god leads the committee. A Sidereal on a committee can influence the Bureau's plans for Creation's future if her player succeeds at a ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Bureaucracy) roll; the difficulty depends on how far the desired policy diverges from the Bureau's business as usual. If a plan opposes that of another god or Sidereal, the roll becomes resisted, or the two characters may engage in social combat to see who persuades the committee or a higher-ranking arbiter.

Planning committee meetings take a lot of time, though. While few Sidereals escape this duty completely, they often find they cannot advance their bureaucratic careers and remain active in the field.

In case it comes up in a story, planning fate uses the same rules as "Create Item/Artifact" (see **Exalted**, pp. 133–134). The player of the planning committee's leader rolls ([lower of Perception or Intelligence] + Craft [Fate]). The base difficulty is 5, plus the fate's Scope (see pp. 191–192) and the highest Essence rating among the people within that Scope. The committees are large enough that the leader gains the maximum number of bonus dice from teamwork (see **Exalted**, p. 125), assuming neither she nor anyone else on the committee has any agenda except the continued existence of Creation. Trying to advance an agenda through fate-planning, without other committee members noticing, makes the roll resisted, against the highest (Intelligence or Craft [Fate]) pool from the rest of the planning committee—and this roll also gains a full teamwork bonus.

Pre-planning, however, may go on for weeks, months or years beforehand. Most committees operate in parallel, each planning fates for a particular region or aspect of Creation, from villages to volcanoes.

FATE-WEAVING

Ideally, gods would not work their will in Creation without checking first with the Bureau of Destiny; but all too often, gods simply do what they want, and the Bureau must cope with the results. A great deal of fate-weaving consists of detail-work such as making sure that a storm ordered by the Bureau of Seasons blows the proper number of branches from trees and shingles from roofs. The pattern spiders handle most of this work. Higher-ranking gods, however, see to the wider patterns, and make sure that suitable consequences radiate outward from big events.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Consider the case of a weather god who denies rain to a province. The pattern spiders make sure the ground dries out at the proper rate and that plants wilt and die. The Bureau of Destiny soon receives an appeal from the small god of the province to make sure that people stay despite the drought. The Bureau receives other appeals from the gods of other provinces and towns, some of whom want to gain population at the stricken province's expense (more potential worshippers)... or, perhaps, to keep them away (worshippers of different gods).

A committee in the Division of Serenity decides that the people should seek better lives elsewhere. A fate-weaving god in the Division of Journeys ties the thread for the concept of migration to the thread for the village. At the Division of Endings, a commission calculates the odds that villages in the stricken province will die completely.

Whether individuals stay or go, however, is up to them. The Loom of Fate can give people ideas they are very likely to act upon, but cannot actually compel the inhabitants. When the Bureau needs to *force* a particular outcome despite mortal free will, the Bureau hands the job to Sidereals.

CONVENTIONS OF THE BUREAU OF HEAVEN

Sidereals serve in their respective divisions by dint of Exaltation. They serve in conventions, on the other hand, at the pleasure of their elders. Newly Exalted Sidereals generally spend several years training and working on Bureau affairs associated directly with their division. Once this apprenticeship ends, the Exalted's name goes to the Convention on Oversight, which then assigns her to two conventions... at first, anyway. One convention is a directional convention, which determines which of the five "field offices" becomes the Sidereal's base of operations for the next several decades. Directional assignments change more often than they did during the First Age, when Sidereals functioned openly and could simply remain stationed in the part of Creation where they were born. The Convention on Oversight also assigns the young Sidereal to one of the five "special conventions" that determine her principal field of research for the foreseeable future.

DIRECTIONAL CONVENTIONS

Each direction of Creation has its own convention. The Chairs of the directional conventions are identified according to direction (e.g., the Chair of the North) except for the central convention, whose leader is "the Capital Chair."

THE CONVENTION HOUSES

Each directional convention has a special headquarters in Creation. Convention houses are generally disguised as something else—some location where people often arrive and depart, and strangers don't attract notice. No one in

Creation, outside the Bureau and its trusted agents, must know that Creation's destiny is shaped in these locations. The Bureau knows that local gods and Exalted would face irresistible temptation to try to interfere. Even if these outsiders meddled with the best of motives, they don't see the big picture the way the Bureau does, and don't understand what is necessary for Creation.

Of course, these sites are primarily suggestions. These examples include at least one new convention house that could just as easily have been moved somewhere else. In addition, a convention might maintain one of the following sites as a blind, when its essential libraries and meeting places are located somewhere else. Such subterfuge—intended to occult the workings of the convention even from other Sidereals—happens quite often among the Seers.

All the convention houses are manse; the Sidereals have no reason not to exploit these sources of geomantic power. For Storytellers who use the advanced manse-design rules from **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, each convention house comes with a few suggested special powers and capabilities, described under "Known Manse Traits."

THE CAPITAL CONVENTION

The Convention of Earth, or Capital Convention, monitors the Blessed Isle for causality breaches. The Capital Convention has the largest number of Sidereal agents and the best funding of any directional convention, even though the Elemental Pole of Earth inhibits spontaneous tangles in fate and prevents incursions from the Wyld or the Underworld. Furthermore, the Bronze Faction's control over the Scarlet Empire means that Sidereals can monitor Essence expenditures more easily here than anywhere else in Creation. Accordingly, Sidereals of the Capital Convention should be able to predict and prevent tangles in the Loom with far greater efficiency than anywhere else.

The Bronze Faction, however, keeps priorities that are somewhat different from the Bureau of Destiny. Chejop Kejak believes that he needs extra Sidereals to prop up the Scarlet Empire, to maintain control over it and to use it effectively as a tool against the enemies of Creation... and Chejop Kejak, Chair of the Capital Convention, gets what he wants. His arguments that the sheer number of Essence users on the Blessed Isle necessitates additional Bureau resources fool no one in the Five-Score Fellowship, but the division chiefs and the Convention on Oversight find them persuasive enough to continue granting the extra funding and manpower. The added number of Sidereal agents make it easy for Kejak to have one Seer handling factional business, while other Seers cover for her by taking over her duties for the Bureau.

Of course, Kejak knows how short-handed his actions leave the other directional conventions. He "loans" subordinates to the other regional directors as a show of his magnanimity. It hasn't won him any friends, especially since

the Viziers he sends to help out in the Threshold are either failures he wants to unload or factional partisans assigned to use an official Bureau of Destiny mission as a cover for one of Kejak's schemes. Kejak would probably be deeply hurt if he knew just eagerly some of his peers look forward to his long-anticipated death.

Mission profiles for Sidereals assigned to the Capital Convention are often thinly disguised factional missions with just enough official business to justify the Sidereals' presence. Convention members often spend time working at the Cloister of Wisdom, the Heptagram, the House of Bells or with one of the legions. Ostensibly, this is to monitor Essence expenditures, whether by monks, sorcerers or military personnel fielding First Age weaponry, and to train young Dynasts to fight Creation's enemies. Almost invariably, a Sidereal is instructed to perform some factional odd job "as long as you're in the area." Less commonly, Capital conventioners accompany Wyld Hunts, especially against Solar or Lunar Exalted, although the Sidereals are forbidden to directly engage the Anathema with Sidereal Charms if there is any chance of exposure before the attending Immaculates.

In addition to being the most well-staffed convention, the Capital Convention is the best equipped. Given sufficient time to allocate his resources, Kejak can place an entire Wyld Hunt at the disposal of a field team, not to mention enormous quantities of First Age artifacts and enough jade to buy a kingdom. Not that Kejak would tolerate a subordinate buying a kingdom, of course; Kejak zealously prosecutes Sidereals who abuse their Salary privileges or the Bureau's equipment. It is trivially simple, however, for a Capital conventioner to gain temporary use of nearly any manse on the Blessed Isle. The Heptagram's entire library is at the Sidereals' disposal, too, including numerous texts of Celestial sorcery.

THE ANCIENT ACADEMY

Headquarters of the Capital Convention

Aspect: Sidereal; **Rating:** 4

The Blessed Isle offers few opportunities for secrecy and solitude. Imperial geomancer-censors have mapped the dragon-lines for centuries and recorded every demesne in the Imperial Registry of Lands. Almost every such place of power is capped and placed in the service of the Realm, the Immaculate Order, the Army or one of the Great Houses. Even in this populous land, however, the Sidereals have managed to acquire a secret location for themselves.

Every educated man on the Blessed Isle knows that the Imperial Mountain holds the ruins of ancient Meru—a place of poisoned Essence and tainted spirit. Both the Throne and the Immaculate Order forbid travel to Meru, and the Order keeps a variety of monasteries situated along the approaches, meant to guard from just such intrusions. Likewise, the Keepers of the Mandate (see **The Compass**





of *Celestial Directions*, Vol. I—*The Blessed Isle*, p. 101) keep the un-Exalted off the slopes of Mount Meru, with considerable success.

The Capital Convention keeps its official headquarters in the ruined city of Meru, at the site of the city's former academy of sorcery. The Ancient Academy also happens to hold the Glorious Arch, the first gateway to Heaven, and the only safe way in or out of Meru. Otherwise, a person would have to pass through miles of the deadly ruins of Meru.

The Bronze Faction and the Capital Convention both store their confidential records at the Ancient Academy, along with a wide variety of other esoteric knowledge. Members of the Capital Convention also explore the ruins around the Academy, disarming traps and purging toxic Essence, to expand the Academy's grounds. Along the way, they collect and catalogue relics of the Old Realm, from actual artifacts to bits of painted pottery.

In practice, however, very little convention business gets done at the Ancient Academy. Chejop Kejak prefers to spend his time at the Palace Sublime, advising the Mouth of Peace and guiding the interactions between the Immaculate Order and the Realm. Perforce, convention members must go to him; standard procedure for the Capital Convention is to maintain a resplendent destiny as an Immaculate monk, to ease movement in and out of the Palace Sublime. Fortunately, convention members have another gateway to Heaven nearby, in the Imperial City. If necessary, couriers can move between the Palace Sublime and the Ancient Academy in an hour or so.

See *The Blessed Isle*, pages 92 and 98-100, for more information about the Palace Sublime, Meru and the Ancient Academy.

Known Manse Traits: Surrounded as it is by the terrible tainted Essence fields and drifts of strange corroding fogs left in the wake of the Usurpation, the Ancient Academy effectively has *Ultra-Deadly Traps*, pushed outside its walls by the *Zone of Influence* trait. Unfortunately, the Sidereals can't control the traps. The Ancient Academy also holds superb *Archives* of occult lore, archeology of the Old Realm and both sanctioned and unsanctioned activities of the Sidereals.

THE CONVENTION OF AIR

Operating out of the Scriptorium of the Northern Sky in Icehome, the Convention of Air deals with fate disruptions in the Northern Threshold. In addition to the standard duties, Sidereals of this convention must investigate the Deathlord known as the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible, the Jet Court of the Fair Folk and several lesser Fair Folk bands, the enormous shadowland called Marama's Fell, the highly illegal rule of the Syndics in Whitewall and the rising power of the Bull of the North.

Until recently, the Convention of Air was a bulwark of Bronze Faction influence. Just a few years ago, however, the venerable Seer who chaired this convention died of old

age. Not long after, one of his two hand-picked successors died fighting the Bull's forces at the Battle of Fallen Lapis, and the other was audited and executed for using sorcery to massacre the entire city. This left the Convention of Air leaderless. Immediately, political infighting broke out among the Gold and Bronze Factions as to who should hold the Northern Chair. Thus, no faction currently has access to this convention's resources, and Northern convention members have mainly limited their actions to mending fate and hunting the occasional demon or Fair Folk.

The Northern Convention's resources might vary depending on which faction gains control. For the Bronze Faction, the North is home to the Pinnacle of the Hunt, one of the principle training centers and operational bases for the Wyld Hunt. On the other hand, the Cult of the Illuminated stronghold called the Sequestered Tabernacle also falls within the convention's purview. What's more, the Syndics might offer aid and comfort to the Gold Faction if it dominated the convention, not to mention the possibility of an alliance between Gold Faction Sidereals and the Bull of the North.

THE SCRIPTORIUM OF THE NORTHERN SKY

Headquarters of the Convention of Air

Aspect: Sidereal; **Rating:** 2

The Scriptorium of the Northern Sky is perhaps the most open of the convention houses. Indeed, a plaque on the front door gives its name. The people of Icehome know the Scriptorium as a school that teaches children of rich Haslanti families how to read, write and use basic mathematics. Students also learn a modicum of history, especially as it relates to the Haslanti League and other Northern states. Older students who show promise can take elite classes in thaumaturgy and other occult subjects—especially, as the school's name suggests, astrology.

Since the Scriptorium is a recognized school for magic, people expect all manner of odd folk to come and go. Sidereals easily pose as students, faculty and guest lecturers. The Scriptorium also employs a number of God-Blooded, Sidereal half-castes and mortals with awakened Essence. Not only are several employees skilled thaumaturges, some of them know the Falling Blossom Style of supernatural martial arts (see *Scroll of the Monk*, pp. 43-45). A number of small gods and elementals also protect the Scriptorium, though they may not materialize in the public areas except in dire emergencies.

The lower two floors of this five-story building hold the classrooms and other mundane facilities. The next two floors hold libraries, laboratories and living quarters for the faculty and guest researchers. Students are allowed on the third floor only if they are sent to the office of the Master Scriptorian for punishment. The convention itself operates on the fifth floor. The building's maze of small corridors, little conference rooms and storage areas twisting between the major rooms was geomantically designed to confuse and

SIDEREALS AND WHITEWALL

Several gods and Exalted in the Bureau of Destiny believe that Whitewall offers the Convention of Air its most important problem. Certainly, it's a good example of the political tangles that may face Sideréal Exalted. Everyone in the Bureau knows that the Syndics are actually powerful gods who have illegally taken control of Whitewall, formerly the First Age holy city of Ondar Shambal. They are the only regional powers who can affect Sideréal affairs in Heaven itself.

Very few, however, know just how powerful the Syndics are. They include Uvanavu, the Chrysanthemum Shogun and Chief God of Health; Yo-Ping, the Celestial Minister of Harmony and God of Peace; and Luranume, the Master of Five-Fold Luck—three highly influential deities in Yu-Shan. Uvanavu vigorously opposed the Usurpation. In its aftermath, he held onto his position only through support from Venus herself. Yo-Ping is highly placed in the Bureau of Humanity, where he oversees peace wherever it can flourish in Creation. Luranume acts as Luna's special envoy to the Bureau of Destiny, where he assists the Chosen of all five divisions in regulating the application of luck and spontaneity to the Loom's functioning. The Lord of Auspicious Surprises holds the dubious distinction of being the only god in the Bureau of Destiny who does not answer in any way to the Five Maidens—which explains why Sideréals almost uniformly dislike Luranume, even if they do acknowledge his necessity.

In the aftermath of the Great Contagion, Uvanavu, Yo-Ping and Luranume fashioned false identities for themselves as the Syndics and took control of the beleaguered Whitewall. They immediately began repairing its enchanted walls. When the Realm (under Chejop Kejak's guidance) prepared to respond, the three deities contacted Kejak and the Empress and bluntly informed the two plotters of the three's true identities. The three said that if the Realm challenged their rule, they would deny health, peace and luck to the Realm. When Kejak complained to the Bureau of Heaven, the censors explained that trying three gods of their status would be political suicide. Unless Kejak cared to appeal to the Unconquered Sun, about a conspiracy of gods trying to restore the city once dedicated to him? That Kejak's allies had wrecked? Forced to back down, the Empress acknowledged Whitewall as a nominal tributary, while Kejak suppressed all knowledge of the Syndics' identities in order to prevent their unprecedented actions from emboldening the Gold Faction.

Today, the Syndics retain control of Whitewall and openly recruit returning Solars to the city's service. The Syndics also meddle in Sideréal politics. With the death of the previous (and Bronze Faction sympathetic) Northern Chair and his two chief aides, the Bronze Faction now might lose all influence in the Convention of Air. The three gods lobby for various Sideréals to take the Chair; all are eminently qualified, and all just happen to belong to the Gold Faction. It has taken all of Kejak's political acumen simply to keep the Northern Chair open.

As a further complication, Captain Ruvia of the Golden Barque (see p. 64) strongly opposes the very idea of gods openly ruling over mortals. He directs clandestine operations against Whitewall run out of the Division of Journeys without Kejak's knowledge. Ruvia, just as most deities, has no idea who the Syndics are, and a single misstep by one of his Harbingers in Whitewall could cost Ruvia his job.

bewilder. It's easy to get lost in the Scriptorium, though the real purpose is to hide that the building is a manse. The students also know the building contains many secret passages, and they tell stories of children who enter a passage and disappear or encounter eldritch horrors—quite typical stories for schools of magic.

The fifth floor has neither windows nor passages outside, and even the secret passages of the lower four floors are absent. Here, the Convention of Air does its business and keeps its records. This floor also holds the manse's hearthroom. Several hundred saucer-sized disks of intricately scribed crystal spangle the walls of this circular chamber. Each of these geomantic resonators represents a vital star in the Northern Sky. These objects must be realigned to account for the movement of the stars every 14 days, a day-long process.

Known Manse Traits: Only the fifth floor of the Scriptorium is actually a manse, and the exceptional *Geomantic Subtlety* of the building's design hides this fact even from Essence users on the lower floors. *Attunement Recognition* and *Basic Senses* keep unauthorized persons from entering the fifth floor or using the *Hidden Passages* system on the lower floors; *Zone of Influence* extends the manse's ability to sense attuned persons beyond the fifth floor.

THE CONVENTION OF FIRE

Even division between the Gold, Bronze and Independent Viziers makes the Convention of Fire the most intrigue-laden of the directional conventions. The Gold and Bronze Factions both command considerable resources in the area. The Bronze Faction has influence among Realm satrapies and allies from An-Teng to Kirighast. There are



two fully-staffed Wyld Hunts stationed in this region of the Threshold, one under the direct authority of a Bronze Faction functionary who serves as the Abbot of the Immaculate monastery near the Lap. The Gold Faction, on the other hand, prospers from its alliance with the Court of Orderly Flame, a traditionalist fraternity of Southern Fire elementals dedicated to the memory of the former Celestial censor known as Swan Dragon. The Gold Faction also has a presence in Harborhead, where the faction seeks to infiltrate the Brides of Ahlat and prepare that body for a future rebellion against the Realm. Most important of all, the Far South holds Kether Rock, one of the main Gold Faction training areas for young Solars. Even the tiny Silver Faction is active here: its members visit Chiaroscuro to swap information with the Lunar elder who secretly guides the Delzahn Empire.

For the last few centuries, a powerful Independent named Nazri has held the Chair of Fire. Nazri does not hesitate to censure Sidereals of either faction for putting personal politics above convention business. He frequently assigns members of the two factions to the same mission—then personally debriefs agents after missions, giving them a chance to snitch on each other. Nazri makes a note of every possible way in which factional interests might have

jeopardized a mission. Over the centuries, the Southern Chair has initiated audits against several agents of both factions. Members of both factions are united in their hatred of Nazri, but neither Chejop Kejak nor Ayesha Ura dare try to remove him, for fear that his post might go to the other faction. Nazri also enjoys support from many Bureau deities who share his dislike for the factions.

Official missions are the standard fare for Sidereal field agents. The South sees a distressingly high amount of demonic activity, such as the Yozi cults in An-Teng and Chiaroscuro. Nazri assigns agents to monitor the Deathlord known as Eye and Seven Despairs, whose shadowland lies just across the border east of Harborhead. Unfortunately, the Sidereals of the South do not yet recognize the greater threat of the First and Forsaken Lion. The Deathlord commands incredible forces, but bides his time. Nazri also maintains a watch post in Gem in hopes of identifying and explaining the ominous destiny that clings to that city. Finally, Nazri is concerned about persistent causality disruptions southeast of An-Teng—disruptions that appear to be the result not of demons, Fair Folk or Exalted, but... something else. So far, the convention has nothing except strange reports of “locust-men.” Most of all, though, he watches the Fair Folk of the South and uses every opportunity to attack them.

In addition to the standard mission profiles, Nazri demands the utmost accuracy in reports on Essence expenditure. For example, he expects regular reports on Essence usage by the two Wyld Hunts in the area, much to the Bronze Faction's annoyance. He also requires reports on the Essence-related activities of the South's Solar (and where possible, Lunar) Exalted, but he forbids actual interference in those activities for good or ill, viewing direct intervention as an impermissible intrusion of factional politics into convention business. This restriction infuriates members of both factions, whom Nazri assigns to spy on young Solars while disguised by resplendent destinies but who are forbidden to influence the Solars to join the Cult of the Illuminated or to bring the Solars to the Wyld Hunt's attention. The leaders of both factions are convinced Nazri is toying with them, but they can do nothing about it.

NAZRI AND TAMMUZ

The Convention of Fire operates from Chiaroscuro. The Lunar elder called Tammuz also claims that city as his domain and often resides there, right under the nose of the Realm's garrison. Both Nazri and Tammuz are slick, cunning politicians with more than a millennium of experience at manipulating others while remaining hidden themselves. They cannot avoid noticing that someone else is pulling strings in Chiaroscuro.

Do they know more than that? Nazri has never given any hint to Silver Faction members that he knows about Tammuz—but they remind each other, that doesn't mean much. As one of them put it, "He's survived as Chejop Kejak's enemy for 700 years. He could take tea with... our special friend... and *we* sure wouldn't know about it." Only the Storyteller knows how much these two masterminds know about each other, and what they do with their knowledge.

THE VERMILION TOWER

Headquarters of the Convention of Fire

Aspect: Sidereal; **Rating:** 4

Few people venture into the Shatterstreets of Chiaroscuro. Block after block of terrible glass shards and twisted metal—the only remnants of spires thrown down by the epic battles of the Usurpation—make up the landscape here. Glass scavengers, bandits, thieves, assassins and other shady figures skulk among the city's streets during the day, but even they flee for safer hunting grounds at night. The howls of hungry ghosts and other horrors echo through the Shatterstreets when the sun leaves the sky, and the folk of Chiaroscuro can't help but spare a glance to make sure that the lines of salt and talismans that contain them are still in place.

Among these ruins stands the Vermilion Tower, an ancient spire crafted of brilliant crimson glass. The tower's lower levels are ruined and dangerous, both from deadfalls of glass and the bursts of raw Essence that so often erupt within damaged manse. Glass collectors seek less dangerous scavenging elsewhere. This is precisely what the Sidereals who set those Essence-bursts and deadfalls want.

Crafted as a wondrous observatory for the First Age City of Glass, the tower's design reflects and refracts starlight throughout its interior. This refraction is perfect, with each pinpoint of light remaining in place relative to one another—as a result, any room in this tower can serve as a quick astrological guide, for the stars of the night sky above are displayed in fine detail on the ceiling of literally every room in the manse.

The manse itself is more than a dozen stories tall. Its roof is open to the sky, and serves as the meeting room for the convention as a whole. When the convention Chair calls a gathering, silvery flames ignite from five braziers marked with symbols of the Maidens and set around the circumference of the tower-top. Instead of tables and chairs, godly servants provide reclining cushions and keep both the wine jugs and hookahs stocked. Here, the Sidereals of the Convention of Fire discuss the fate of the South.

One floor holds the Flame of Enlightenment, a huge bonfire that does not actually burn flesh. Instead, the bonfire instills a fever in those who remain in it for more than a minute. This fever inflicts dreams and hallucinations that bear lore and information pertaining to Creation, Heaven and the South throughout the Ages. Research in this fever-dream library does not happen any more quickly—the information is simply accessed through a means other than the written word. Indeed, the only thing that burns in this library is paper and vellum: doing so commits the information contained therein to the Flame of Enlightenment, however.

Known Manse Traits: The Vermilion Tower qualifies as a *Divine Observatory*, crafted to gain the attention of the pattern spiders. The Flame of Enlightenment functions as a doubled *Archive* on topics such as Lore (Southern Tribes) and Occult (Fire Elementals, Southern Wyld Manifestations) and contains a selection of thaumaturgical procedures and Emerald Circle spells dealing with fire. The manse isn't really damaged at all: the deadfalls and Essence-bursts are *Minor Tricks and Traps* and *Essence Vents*.

THE CONVENTION OF WATER

The Convention of Water struggles against mighty odds. In the aftermath of the Great Contagion, Chejop Kejak convinced the Convention on Oversight that the Capital Convention needed extra Viziers to cope with the large number of Essence users on the Blessed Isle. The sparsely populated West "donated" the largest number of Sidereals. The Convention of Water has been grossly



understaffed ever since, despite centuries of complaint from each successive Western Chair.

The current head of the convention, a Chosen of Mars named Righteous Tsunami, has held the Western Chair for two centuries. And Righteous Tsunami has had enough. After centuries of begging Chejop Kejak for personnel and resources, she decided to deal with the problems facing the West with whatever she has and however she can, and damn the consequences. She recently declared a truce between the Western Bronze and Gold Factions... and enforced it by transferring every Sidereal unwilling to abide by her terms to other directional conventions, and welcoming Independents from across Creation who wanted to escape factional politics.

Righteous Tsunami considers herself a loyal member of the Bronze Faction. She remains convinced that the Usurpation was necessary and the Realm must stand. She simply concludes that she has worse problems than Solars. The Convention of Water must contend with an entire armada of Yozi-spawned Lintha pirates, the cunning manipulations of the Deathlord called the Silver Prince, five major Fair Folk communities (most notably the Pearl Court) and entire courts of rogue Terrestrial gods. Worst of all, the convention contends with the Great Western Ocean itself, an infinite expanse of sea where the boundaries of Creation fluctuate with every shift of the tides. And Chejop Kejak thinks a Realm civil war could be a bigger threat to Creation than all this? Or a few Solars and Lunars?

Having given up on help from her fellow Sidereals, Righteous Tsunami ordains several draconian solutions to her problems. First, she forbids factional infighting in the West. She reserves the Wavecrest Archipelago, the most pro-Realm region of the West, for Bronze-aligned or Independent operatives. No Sidereals associated with the Gold Faction can go there except on official business. On the other hand, no member of the Bronze Faction may accompany Wyld Hunts outside Wavecrest. Instead, Gold Faction observers accompany such Hunts to catalogue their Essence expenditures. As a practical matter, this means that Wyld Hunts in the West fail when they target Solars (and Lunars, too, most of the time). Rather than waste limited resources, Bronze Faction leaders simply don't send Wyld Hunts after such targets in the West. Indeed, a certain amount of Righteous Tsunami's attitude infects the rest of the Bronze Faction in the West: "If Chejop Kejak thinks that a particular Anathema needs to die, then let him bloody well lead his own Wyld Hunt into battle!"

Both Chejop Kejak and Ayesha Ura now use the West as a dumping ground for Sidereals who lack devotion to either side of the Gold-Bronze debate. Due to the convention's small numbers and Righteous Tsunami's triage approach to Sidereal missions, the West has something of a frontier quality. The Chair has authorized individual Sidereals to deal with Fair Folk, Yozi cults and truculent local gods as the Sidereals see fit. In the case of Terrestrial gods, this

authority extends to investigating, judging and punishing storm mothers and other rogue gods.

Technically, Righteous Tsunami lacks the authority to regulate the behavior of Terrestrial gods, let alone her subordinates. That duty should fall to Fakharu, the Western censor. Fakharu is corrupt and indolent, however, and the local gods are unlikely to appeal the judgment of the Sidereals to Yu-Shan. Of course, the Convention of Water faces a practical limit to such near-vigilantism—even an experienced Sidereal might not defeat a powerful storm mother and her entire court—but through threats and intimidation, the Western Viziers have made some progress in bringing the worst of the rogue gods to heel. In doing so, however, these Sidereals make powerful enemies. For example, rumors swirl among the deities of the West that Plentimon, the God of Gambling, has secretly placed a bounty on the head of a young Sidereal who challenged the god in his Coral Archipelago casino.

Western convention Seers receive amazingly diverse missions. Individual Sidereals might go to the Skullstone Archipelago, the Pearl Court or the Court of the storm mother Sikunare, whether for diplomacy, espionage or assassination. Righteous Tsunami keeps Bronze Faction sympathizers stationed in Wavecrest to monitor Essence usage among the Dragon-Blooded there. Bronze Faction Sidereals also serve as a mobile strike force against the Lintha pirates. Gold Faction Sidereals spend more time in the Neck to monitor both Skullstone and the various Fair Folk enclaves throughout the Northwest. However, specific missions routinely require Sidereals of both factions to cross into each other's "turf," usually without incident. Independents go everywhere.

The Chair keeps a rotating staff of two Sidereals in a First Age stealth ship called *Unseen Slicer of Waves*. This vessel is shielded by a powerful First Age enchantment and piloted by an animating intelligence loyal to the Sidereal Exalted. The ship patrols the Great Western Ocean and monitors changes in reality caused by oceanic Essence flows and the Wyld. Every Sidereal in the convention spends some time training aboard *Invisible Slicer*. Unbeknownst to anyone in the convention, Righteous Tsunami has spent the last several years running combat simulations that pit a dozen Sidereals on a single First Age ship against the entire Lintha Fleet. In a few scenarios, the Sidereals actually come close to winning.

THE MONASTERY OF THE DEEP STARS

Headquarters of the Convention of Water

Aspect: Water; **Rating:** 2

The Monastery of the Deep Stars is only a few years old—hence the chaos within and its insufficient resources. Before the Monastery, the Convention of Water maintained its headquarters in the Skullstone Archipelago, in an obscure brothel called the Moon-Kissed Tidal House. Righteous Tsunami chose this perilous location to spy on

the Deathlord of Skullstone, the Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water, a.k.a. the Silver Prince. Two years after the Empress's disappearance, the Silver Prince unexpectedly attacked and destroyed one of the convention's watch posts in the archipelago, and a deathknight was spotted mapping the area near the convention house. The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water obtained no captives—living or dead—who had significant knowledge of the Bureau's operations, but Righteous Tsunami knew the convention had to move its headquarters.

For the new location, Righteous Tsunami chose the Monastery of the Deep Stars, one of the Convention of Water's safe houses in the West. The Monastery is located on a small island, overlooking a deep-water bay in a hidden harbor. Though the island appears to be nothing but cliffs, those who know the approaches can navigate the narrow crevasse that permits entry to the harbor proper.

The Monastery hosts an order of monks who seek solitude to contemplate wind and waves away from the world, and who study the Seafaring Hero Style of supernatural martial arts (see **Scroll of the Monk**, pp. 59-61). In addition, some aspect of the manse's geomancy naturally attracts water elementals of low Essence to serve those attuned to the manse. These elementals help sailors enter the harbor, which otherwise is remarkably difficult to enter (a difficulty 4 [Wits + Sail] roll), and provide other services.

The island is also two days' sail from the 41st Heavenly Gate, the Mother-of-Pearl Gate, a tall moonsilver and black jade edifice studded with fist-sized pearls.

Known Manse Traits: The Monastery of the Deep Stars possesses the *Bound Servant Force* trait, to reflect the entranced water elementals that serve the people attuned to the manse.

THE CONVENTION OF WOOD

If asked to identify his greatest mistake, Chejop Kejak would not say anything about the Usurpation. Instead, he would most likely point to his own mishandling of the Convention of Wood. After the Contagion, the Eastern convention became a dumping ground for Gold Faction members and other dissidents and malcontents among the Viziers. Of course, the region did have the largest concentration of Essence users after the Blessed Isle, and so Bronze Faction members could not simply raid the region for resources and personnel as they did the Convention of Water. Instead, they used the convention to cripple the Gold Faction by saddling its members with the thankless task of monitoring Essence usage among the fractious barbarian tribes, rogue city states and Lookshy. Kejak further hobbled the Gold Faction members who dominated the Convention of Wood by getting most of them assigned to the Special Convention on Essence Welders, since so many unregulated Essence users operated in the Eastern theater. As so many of Chejop

Kejak's brilliant ideas, this one also ran aground after the Solars returned.

Today, the Gold Faction retains a strong position in the Convention of Wood. The faction's leader, Ayesha Ura, is the Eastern Chair, and most of her close allies belong to the convention as well. Their authority here, combined with their presence in the Convention on Essence Welders, grants them remarkable opportunities to conceal high-level Essence usage by the Solar Exalted under the convention's protection. Ayesha Ura has pushed her authority near the point of Celestial censure, but she has not yet crossed any lines that would draw the attention of the Convention on Oversight. Furthermore, Ayesha, a consummate politician, takes an extremely relaxed view toward the local gods and other powers of the East, including very pleasant relations with the gods of Great Forks and the Council of Entities in Nexus.

Between the convention's above-average numbers, Ayesha's superior administrative and diplomatic skills and the fact that Gold Faction members aren't stuck micromanaging an empire (as the Bronze Faction is), the Convention of Wood probably has the most extensive and efficient fate-managing infrastructure in Creation. The convention freely takes advantage of gods and God-Blooded agents, Exalted, sentient automata and other artificial life forms to support the convention's work. The extra manpower enables Ayesha and her fellows to devote plenty of time to the Cult of the Illuminated. In fact, Ayesha has done so well with her position that she worries some of Kejak's subordinates. When the ancient Sidereal finally dies, a tremendous power vacuum will open up within the Bureau. Will the Maidens fill that vacuum by giving even more power to Kejak's former apprentice, now his chief rival?

Missions for the Convention of Wood are diverse but well-organized. The Gold Faction has developed considerable skill at fitting factional business (such as recruitment) amongst its assignments from the Bureau of Destiny. The convention keeps spies in every major city in the East (except for Thorns) to monitor the activities of Essence users, with two deep undercover in Lookshy and three in Nexus. The Convention of Wood is forbidden to take action against the Mask of Winters and others of his kind without the sanction of the Convention on Deathlords. However, the East has more active Deathlords and shadowlands than any other part of Creation, and Ayesha has unofficially offered rewards for any useful intelligence on the Deathlords or their Abyssal servants.

Although the Gold Faction dominates this region, the faction does not enjoy absolute control. The Bronze Faction regularly sends spies into the area. The Bronze has recently assigned at least two Chosen of Saturn to assassinate Anathema in the East. One, Ahn-Aru, is rumored to include Gold Faction Siderials among her targets, a nearly unprecedented breach of Sidereal

etiquette—but then, many rumors surround the impetuous young Reckoner.

The Bronze Faction also maintains a limited presence in Lookshy. One of the two Bureau monitors in that region is loyal to Chejop Kejak, although the Maiden of Battles herself forbids the Sidereals to interfere in any way with the relations between Lookshy and the Realm.

THE RIVER TEMPLE OF ANISATSI

Headquarters of the Convention of Wood

Aspect: Water; **Rating:** 3

Northeast of the Hundred Kingdoms' city-state of Nathir, where the Meander and Maruto rivers merge to form the mighty Yellow River of the Scavenger Lands, a small cliff promontory juts out over the fork in the river. Built into the cliff face is the great River Temple of Anisatsis, with its tall windows of deep blue glass and its graceful spires carved out of the very cliff rock. The only stairs that lead down to the headquarters are cut into the face of the rock, and have been worn away by the feet of countless pilgrims.

Once, the goddess Anisatsis—the fertility river goddess of the merging of the two rivers to form a third—maintained a dynasty of God-Blooded kings who ruled lands on either side of the rivers. These great lords paid fealty to the Shogunate, and the peoples of their lands worshipped Anisatsis as the mother of nations. All of this ended with the Contagion, however. The few survivors of

her nation fled to the safety of her temple walls, and have never emerged since.

Today, Anisatsis is a nearly forgotten goddess of the river. Occasionally, her temple sees a pilgrim couple who come to her seeking fertility. She is happy to bless such unions, as long as the couple understand her price: such blessings always result in twins, one of whom bears the silver and blue eyes of Anisatsis, and who must be given to the temple when he or she reaches a year of age. Visitors to the temple see entire portions of the massive temple sealed, and assume that the temple has been all but empty since the Contagion.

Nothing could be further from the truth. After the Contagion, Anisatsis approached the Gold Faction. She blamed the Bronze Faction for the deaths of her kingly offspring and the peoples who worshipped her; she believed the Solars could have saved her offspring and worshippers. She offered her temple for the Gold-dominated Convention of Wood to use as a convention house, and has been a staunch ally of the Eastern convention (and most especially of the Gold Faction) ever since.

Because of the shortage of manpower and the sheer level of Essence use in the East and Scavenger Lands, the Sidereals of the Convention of Wood rarely stay at their headquarters for long—they go out on new missions within days of finishing the old ones. Those whose duties require



them to spend more time in the temple maintain resplendent destinies as priests, monks and oracles of the temple, while the other Sidereals simply “visit” disguised as pilgrims.

Inset into the cliff wall—hidden from view below by a jutting stone balcony—is the 16th Heavenly Gate, the River’s Womb, a beautiful structure crafted of black jade and starmetal, inset with orichalcum seals. Anisatsis’s most ancient duty under Heaven is the guardianship of this gate, and she has offered the use of it to the Bureau of Destiny.

Known Manse Traits: The River Temple of Anisatsis qualifies as a *Temple Manse* to the Maiden of Serenity and Anisatsis.

SPECIAL CONVENTIONS

While directional conventions determine where a Sidereal spends the bulk of her time in Creation, her special convention assignments can send her across the world. Young Sidereals usually begin with only one special convention assigned to them by the Convention on Oversight, usually, but not always, a convention in which her sifu enjoys high rank. Special conventions seldom expel a Sidereal except for gross incompetence and/or malfeasance that has so incensed the convention’s chairman that he refuses to work with the offender again. More commonly, Oversight simply adds an additional special convention assignment to the Sidereal’s workload, on top of previous special convention assignments.

The reasons for multiple appointments are varied. One Sidereal who spends too much time on factional or personal affairs instead of Bureau business might receive additional assignments since he “obviously has too much free time.” Another might receive additional assignments because his recent field experience gives him insights into a convention’s area of study. To pick an extreme example, nearly every Sidereal who personally encounters a deathknight is assigned to the Convention on Deathlords on top of her regular assignment. As a result, almost half of all Viziers serve on this overpopulated convention.

Other Sidereals acquire additional assignments for less admirable reasons. A young Sidereal who gains a reputation for recklessness or incompetence might be assigned to a convention simply to put him under the authority of the elder Sidereal judged most likely to force him back on track. In other cases, multiple appointments represent a perverse form of reward—when a young Chosen develops a reputation for excellence, directors of other conventions request her reassignment to their conventions, and such requests are often granted. That this results in the previously effective Sidereal becoming so overworked that it ruins her productivity does little to deter the elders involved.

The Sidereals have five major special conventions, not counting the Convention on Oversight, which is a unique body. In addition, numerous sub-conventions deal with narrower areas of concern. For example, the Convention on Deathlords seeks to understand and defeat the threat of the

servants of the Neverborn throughout Creation. Within that convention, the Convention on Thorns focuses exclusively on the Mask of Winters and his forces, while the Convention on Udr explores evidence of a connection between the Deathlords and the Great Contagion. Righteous Tsunami of the Convention of Water has lobbied for years to add a third sub-convention to address the danger of the Skullstone Archipelago, but Chejop Kejak and Ayesha Ura—seemingly oblivious to any threat coming so far from their domains—continually block Righteous Tsunami’s request.

Young Sidereals who serve on special conventions still spend most of their time in Creation serving their directional conventions and their factions. The Sidereal’s duty to the special convention consists initially of attending regular briefings in Yu-Shan on topics relevant to that convention. Young Sidereals who establish themselves as competent soon receive missions pertaining to the special convention’s scope in addition to standard Bureau missions. These special missions are typically sent at the behest of special convention Chairs, but can also come from the Maidens or their deputies.

A special convention mission can send a young Sidereal nearly anywhere in Creation and sometimes even beyond it. The Bureau prefers that circles sent on a special mission consist chiefly of members of the relevant convention, and include at least one Sidereal from the directional convention within which the mission takes place. If an established, experienced circle should happen to have experience with the special convention’s field, so much the better—the Bureau naturally prefers teams that already work well together. Whether established or ad-hoc, the circle members should notify the local directional Chair of their presence as a courtesy, but the actual mission profile is often highly classified.

THE CONVENTION ON DEATHLORDS

The Convention on Deathlords has become the largest of all special conventions, but most of its members actually have a limited involvement. Since the sack of Thorns, the Bureau has become nearly obsessed with the threat

NEW SPECIAL CONVENTIONS

New sub-conventions give players’ characters a chance to make an impact on the setting. If a group of Sidereals has repeated encounters with a particular Deathlord’s forces, a particular nation, a raksha court, a major institution such as the Guild or anything really, Oversight (i.e., the Storyteller) can declare the characters a sub-convention and give them jurisdiction in that area. The characters can gain significant prestige... and dangerous new assignments. As the saying goes, the reward for a job well done is a harder job.



of the Deathlords—a threat the Sidereals are ill equipped to fight since it springs from beyond Creation. Since the Deathlords themselves rarely leave their shadowlands or Underworld fiefdoms, it is extremely difficult to predict their movements. The Mask of Winters took the Seers off guard when he took Thorns; they do not want to be blindsided again. The Abyssal Exalted frighten the Bronze and Gold Factions equally, since these Exalted seem to be dark reflections of the Solars, turned to the service of the Neverborn and Oblivion.

As a result, every Sidereal who encounters a deathknight or any other major servant of a Deathlord is automatically assigned to this convention. Most of these Sidereals have little subsequent contact with the convention after making their initial report to the Chair, but they must remain available for follow-up interviews if and when future encounters shed further light on their experiences. The actual core membership of this convention consists of fewer than two dozen Sidereals who have had repeated (and usually violent) encounters with Abyssal Exalted or who have actually entered shadowlands and survived brushes with the Deathlords themselves.

The subsidiary Convention on Thorns includes most of the core members of the greater Convention on Deathlords. Although the Mask of Winters is certainly the most notorious Deathlord in all Creation, he is not the only one. Some Sidereals argue that he is not even the most dangerous Deathlord, and urge the convention to consider the more subtle and sophisticated threats of the Silver Prince and the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears. The Chair of this convention does not focus on Thorns because of some exaggerated obsession, though; it's just a matter of practicality. Thorns has an existing resistance infrastructure that remains loyal to the Realm. Also, the Mask of Winters does not yet wield the degree of control over his new territory as that enjoyed by the Silver Prince or the Lover. Accordingly, the Convention on Deathlords believes that Thorns can be more easily infiltrated and that more useful information can be drawn.

The Convention of Udr is extremely new. Its membership is limited to Chejop Kejak and a handful of his trusted advisors. Recently, a Bronze Faction agent learned of a discovery by Ragara Bhagwei, founder and dominie of the Heptagram and one of the premier sorcerers of the Scarlet Empire. Bhagwei had somehow acquired an ancient Sijanese text of necromancy, *The Thousand Veils*, which purportedly included information about the earliest manifestations of the Great Contagion. A deathknight later stole and destroyed the book, but not before Kejak's spies could copy part of the text. One section indicated that the Contagion began in the Underworld and entered Creation through something called the Well of Udr. Of course, the Sidereals have long known of Deathlord involvement in the Great Contagion, but they have never known the precise vector. Research into the word "Udr" led the Division of Secrets to a shadowland



in the East that encompasses a swamp called the Noss Fens. The Convention on Udr now proceeds with caution, for if the architect of the Great Contagion still dwells within the Noss Fens, he or she may well be the greatest threat to Creation extant.

Mission profiles for the Convention on Deathlords usually focus on reconnaissance, although both faction leaders sanction the assassination of deathknights wherever possible. The convention also supports research across Creation into procedures for neutralizing shadowlands: the efforts of the Syndics of Whitewall to shrink Marama's Fell receive the support of even Kejak, despite his antipathy toward those deities.

The convention also sponsors research into necromancy and archeological expeditions to find lost texts on the subject. Some of these take Sidereals into the Underworld and even the Labyrinth itself. Actual necromancers in the Bureau remain few and far between, however, due to concerns that the Neverborn might fundamentally taint the entire field of necromancy. This fear keeps Black Ice Shadow, the Ghost-Blooded Chosen of Saturn, sidelined by the convention despite his status as the best necromancer in the Five-Score Fellowship.

The Chair of the Convention on Thorns is a Gold Faction member who oversees the sub-convention from the nearby port city of Celeren. This Sidereal has sent several spies into Thorns to monitor the Mask of Winters where possible, and ponders the viability of sending in a small circle protected by resplendent destinies for an extended fact-finding mission. The Chair's greatest coup, however, came when he recruited a newly Exalted deathknight named Waters the Fields with Blood, before the Abyssal's Deathlord could reel him in. The information gained from this Abyssal Exalt helped persuade the Bureau to tolerate the Cult as a potential cat's-paw, the same way the Bronze Faction exploits the Immaculate Order.

The Chair of the Convention on Udr is Chejop Kejak, one of all too many hats the elder wears. Kejak plans to recruit a circle to explore the Noss Fens in search of the Well of Udr. Specifically, he hopes to send a circle of Gold Faction members on the first reconnaissance mission, as he considers them more expendable than Bronze Faction loyalists.

THE CONVENTION ON ESSENCE WIELDERS

In the earliest days of the Bureau of Destiny, there was no "Convention on Essence Wielders," simply because regulation of Essence users was considered the duty of all Sidereals. The Bronze Faction created the first Convention on Essence Wielders shortly after the Usurpation, reasoning that Sidereals who refused to go along with the Bronze Faction needed busywork to tie their hands and prevent interference with the faction's operation. Once again, what seemed like a good idea in the short term would come back to haunt the Bronze Faction later. Most of the unregulated

Essence usage that falls within the mandate of this convention now takes place in the Scavenger Lands. By foisting the duty of monitoring this region onto the Gold Faction, Chejop Kejak unwittingly cemented the Gold Faction's future administrative control over the region most amenable to resurgent Solars. Today, Solars whose activities would trigger a red flag instantly on the Blessed Isle can operate for months in the Scavenger Lands before reports of their activities cross the desk of Bronze Faction personnel.

The Chair of the Convention on Essence Wielders is Ayesha Ura. She also heads its most important subsidiary body, the Convention on Demons. Today, demons are more prevalent in Creation than at any point since the Usurpation. Creation has too many reckless sorcerers, too many forbidden books on thaumaturgy in public circulation, too many Yozi cults and, worst of all, too many cracks in the walls of the Yozi Realm caused by the ever-increasing tangles of fate and destiny. Demons that enter Creation from Malfeas via sorcery or thaumaturgy are automatically documented in Yu-Shan and do not pose an immediate threat, although such demons can immediately go rogue if the summoner dies before the term of servitude ends. Mortal cults also tend to summon demons repeatedly in the same place, and the continued Yozi influence pulls these evil fanes a bit outside fate, rendering documentation unreliable. Demons that enter by some other means (usually Loom-based causality disruptions) are not documented automatically.

Such infernal beings, which spring unexpectedly from outside fate, do not immediately have any sort of destiny that the Loom can monitor or affect. They do not acquire such a destiny until they either expend sufficient quantities of Essence to draw the Bureau's attention or interact with some being with a destiny (such as by ending it prematurely). In either case, once the demon becomes a part of Creation sufficiently to acquire a destiny, the demon can be hunted down and dispatched by one or more Sidereals, and the damage to the Tapestry repaired.

Technically, all Sidereals are expected to hunt down and slay rogue demons that run amok in the Sidereals' respective territories. The sub-convention specializes in locating, identifying and neutralizing the groups that bring infernal intruders to Creation. Such Sidereals infiltrate Yozi cults or deal with foolish and inexperienced thaumaturges who summon creatures they cannot control (on those occasions when the problem doesn't correct itself). The Convention on Demons has a high success rate and has exterminated innumerable Yozi cults over the centuries. Virtually the sub-convention's sole failure lies with the Lintha pirates who have resisted every attempt at infiltration for more than 500 years; the convention currently investigates the cult of the Second Circle demon Sondok, called the Darkness's Unseeing Eye, in hopes of making a clean sweep of the entire body.

The subsidiary Convention on Forbidden Gods was at its most prominent after the Primordial War, when gods

formerly loyal to the Primordials engaged in guerilla warfare against Creation's new masters. Currently, the Convention on Forbidden Gods consists of exactly two Sidereals, who have the job because they angered superiors. Officially, the convention is merely an archival project that seeks records of deities who were worshiped before the First Age. The Bureau's leaders hold that all the major Forbidden Gods died in the First Age. Recently, however, the two Sidereal investigators discovered evidence across Creation—from the underground kingdom of the Mountain Folk to the bowels of lost Rathess to the catacombs beneath Gethamane—that some Forbidden Gods still exist. Worse, they may have learned to occlude themselves from the Loom, just as other beings can conceal themselves by traveling through Wyld zones or shadowlands. Thus far, the two Sidereals have failed to persuade anyone of their theories, and many Seers dismiss them as paranoid cranks.

THE CONVENTION ON NATURAL DISASTERS

Despite the ominous name, the Convention on Natural Disasters has little actual power. Mainly, the body exists as to liaise with the Bureau of Seasons and the Bureau of Nature on the topic of when and how natural disasters should occur in Creation. Field missions usually involve making sure that certain individuals are or are not killed (as the Loom dictates) in the relevant disaster where causality disruptions have put the issue in doubt. Normally, such causality repair missions would fall to agents of the local directional convention, but Sidereals who serve the Convention on Natural Disasters often have specialized experience in performing fieldwork against the chaotic and highly confusing backdrop of a flood, hurricane, earthquake or other cataclysm. The convention also sometimes works alongside the Convention on Deathlords to gather intelligence if a given disaster seems likely to trigger the creation of a shadowland.

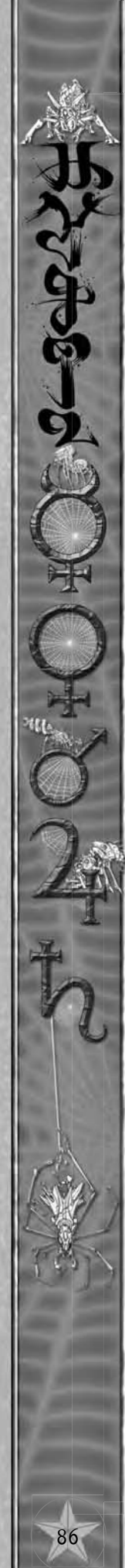
Finally, this convention is technically responsible for deploying the greater elemental dragons, the most powerful weapons in Heaven's arsenal. While the convention lacks the authority to unleash the dragons on its own, the convention must give approval for any such action.

THE APOCALYPSE SCROLLS

Most mortals would be horrified if they understood just how easy it might be to unleash the most destructive forces in Creation such as the greater elemental dragons, the Kukla, Oo-Tahn the Annihilator or the Black Cloud of An-Teng. Any of these legendary creatures can be released and sent against a specific target simply by journeying to their respective prisons in Creation and reading aloud from a scroll currently held within the safe of Arcadelt, the God of World-Shattering Events.

Despite his fearsome title, Arcadelt manifests as a genial blind man covered in tattoos. He sincerely hopes that his services will never be required. Arcadelt's job requires him mainly to document disasters and other similar events that affect all of Creation. Thus far, only the Primordial





War, the Usurpation and the Great Contagion have warranted his attention. Consequently, Arcadelt views his position within the Bureau of Heaven as practically a form of paid retirement.

In the modern era, Arcadelt has little fear of his doomsday scrolls falling into the wrong hands. They are each magically enchanted to incinerate any god who touches one without the proper authorizations co-signed by the Maiden of Endings, the Chair of the Convention on Natural Disasters and Arcadelt himself. Unbeknownst to Arcadelt, however, that defense mechanism applies only to gods. Exalted of all types, demons, Fair Folk and even mortals can touch and read the scrolls with impunity. Oblivious to the possibility that someone could conceivably steal and use one of his scrolls, Arcadelt has become lax in his security protocols over the centuries. If someone could steal a scroll from him, she could hold entire quarters of Creation for ransom and demand almost any payment within Heaven's power.

THE CONVENTION ON PLAGUE

The Convention on Plague formed in the aftermath of the Great Contagion. The convention's first Chair theorized about the Contagion's otherworldly origins. The current Chair would be furious if he learned of the findings of the Convention on Udr, all of which have been carefully concealed from the Convention on Plague in violation of intra-convention policy. In the absence of any more signs of the Great Contagion, the convention focuses on the various supernatural diseases that enter Creation. Many of these diseases resemble the supernatural maladies created by Sidereal martial artists through Citrine Poxes of Contagion Style, but they appear to be products of the Wyld.

Some members of the convention believe that while some of these diseases appear through spontaneous Wyld mutation, either the Fair Folk or Lunar elders may have engineered others to attack Creation. These conspiracy theorists have spent the last several years trying to bring their findings to someone, anyone, who will listen. Unfortunately, the Division of Serenity is gripped by inertia and the other convention Chairs prefer the tangible threat of the Deathlords to the merely potential threat of a new Great Contagion springing from the Wyld. Since the convention is too small and underfunded to give this issue the attention it deserves, some members secretly offer bounties to Sidereals of other conventions who can provide intelligence about the activities of Fair Folk or Lunars within Wyld zones near outbreaks of supernatural diseases.

THE CONVENTION ON WAR

The Convention on War acts as a cross-divisional complement to the Crimson Panoply of Victory. The Division of Battles plots out the course of military conflicts and ensures that the warfare itself takes place according to the weave of destiny. The Convention on War brings the viewpoints of the other four divisions to the table. This helps the Crimson Panoply to forecast how factors such

as troop transportation and supply lines, troop morale and medical treatment, intelligence-gathering and even troop mortality rates may affect the combatants. As a practical matter, missions under the Convention of War's rubric typically involve undercover work in a military theater where the Chosen of Mars are ill equipped to perform causality repairs. For example, a Chosen of Journeys might need to restructure an army's supply lines when they are affected by spatial anomalies, while a Chosen of Endings might go undercover as a combat medic to make certain that wounded soldiers live or die as dictated by the needs of fate. In such cases, the Convention of War often finds itself countering gods who try to affect a war without authorization.

The Convention of War also assists the Division of Battles when it acts as Heaven's defense force or when the division moves into Creation as part of a large-scale assault against invaders from outside fate. No such military maneuvers have taken place since the Fair Folk Invasion. Nevertheless, convention members participate in regular combat training and war games in Yu-Shan and occasionally in Creation. These last about two to three days every other month. While all members of the convention should participate regardless of caste, tension sometimes arises between the Chosen of Mars who must deal with "weekend warriors" and Sidereals of other castes who resent taking time away from other projects to play soldier in mock battles. Occasionally, this tension erupts into outright hostility—in recent years, Shieldbearers have seriously wounded members of other castes. On one occasion, carefully planned war game exercises quickly degenerated into a violent brawl between "soldiers" who were supposed to be on the same side.

The principle sub-group within the Convention on War is the Convention on the Wyld, which runs simulations on large-scale skirmishes between various forces in Creation and resurgent Fair Folk armies. Most of these simulations rely on estimates from the last Fair Folk Invasion more than 700 years ago. Accordingly, the Convention on the Wyld recently began sponsoring missions into Wyld zones in hopes of getting more up-to-date information on Fair Folk populations and troop movements.

At least one member of the Convention on the Wyld actually belongs to the miniscule and super-secret Silver Faction. For several years, this Sidereal has fed information about the Fair Folk to Lunar factions who want to take the fight to the raksha, and has received intelligence in return. In exchange for this help, the Silver Faction member also buries any information on Lunar activities whenever possible. This Vizier currently works on a plot to smuggle First Age weapons into a Wyld zone controlled by allied Lunars, a scheme that could mean censure and removal from office if the scheme is discovered prematurely—or a promotion and a reputation as a brilliant manipulator, if the scheme succeeds.



A number of other small sub-conventions monitor various long-running conflicts. For example, the Convention on Halta monitors the Linowan-Haltan conflict, while the Convention on the Hundred Kingdoms oversees all military conflicts between member nations of that region. Gold Faction members dominate the first two sub-conventions. They abuse their positions to feed disinformation to the Bronze Faction and their Realm pawns. The short-lived Convention on the Bull of the North was effectively destroyed after the Battle of Fallen Lapis, when the Bull killed one of the convention's three members and the Bureau itself executed a second for malfeasance. To date, Oversight has refused Chejop Kejak's requests to reconstitute the convention. A fourth sub-convention, the Convention on Thorns, was originally formed to monitor the Empress's various attempts to conquer the Scavenger Lands. After Thorns fell to the Mask of Winters, that sub-convention was subsumed into the Convention on Deathlords, much to the annoyance of the Chair of the Convention on War.

THE CONVENTION ON OVERSIGHT

The last major convention is the most mysterious and the most feared. No one in the Bureau knows exactly who serves on this convention, although rumors abound—a cabal within the Division of Secrets runs the convention; Kejak and Ayesha control it jointly, their feud

merely a ruse to conceal their secret alliance; the pattern spiders have a hive-mind that uses the Convention on Oversight as a front. The missives from the convention are delivered by way of the Loom of Fate, and signed simply "Oversight."

The powers of Oversight are as nebulous as its identity. Oversight can assign Sidereals to any convention Oversight wishes, although it gives at least some deference to properly drafted personnel requests from elders of sufficient rank. Oversight may appoint any Sidereal to any field mission, trumping all other authorities except the Maidens. On one memorable occasion, Oversight sent a Sidereal working in the Haslanti League on a secret mission to the Elemental Pole of Fire, even though several Viziers were nearer and better qualified. Oversight seldom vetoes the missions assigned by the planning boards and senior gods, though, so the Five-Score Fellowship continues to serve the contradictory agendas of all the gods who lobby the Bureau of Destiny.

Oversight's most feared power is, thus far, merely an unsubstantiated rumor—the power of sanction. It is whispered in the deepest corridors of the Division of Secrets that sometimes, in response to some egregious failure, some perfidious treason against the Bureau, or perhaps even on a whim, Oversight has ordered the assassination of one of the Five-Score Fellowship. There is no proof to support



such allegations, and certainly, the Sidereals of the Division of Endings deny ever turning their arts against their own brethren. But the rumors still circulate, even among the Chosen of Saturn themselves, who wonder who among them might be a killer of his own kind.

Missions assigned by Oversight can be almost anything. Oversight seems to have an intuitive knowledge of the Loom and its status, even more so than those Sidereals who watch the Loom most closely. More disturbingly, Oversight seems to know the most intimate details of the Sidereals themselves, as some Sidereals have been issued mission profiles that reference their former lovers, childhood friends from before Exaltation, even dreams and nightmares the Sidereal has recently suffered. A commonly repeated tale among the Sidereals says that several centuries ago, a Chosen of Serenity who had been taking bribes from a Terrestrial deity received orders to report the Chosen's own violations to the Bureau of Heaven and to participate in a sting operation along with the local censor. According to the story, the mission profile identified all of his mortal acquaintances by name and stated that failure to comply would result in all of their deaths as well as his own. Or so the story goes.

THE TRUTH ABOUT OVERSIGHT

The true nature of the Convention on Oversight is left for the Storyteller to decide. Whatever its goals within the Bureau of Destiny might be, Oversight's ultimate purpose is narrative: to give Sidereal characters a degree of paranoia regarding the faceless and incomprehensible apex of the Sidereal pyramid. To Sidereal characters, Oversight knows everything and is everywhere. Even if Viziers can conceal their failings from the convention for a time, even if the convention doesn't act very often, they can never be certain that Oversight didn't just choose to overlook their crimes for reasons of its own. Three possibilities for the truth behind the mask are described below. Pick one, combine elements from them or make up something of your own.

THE FIVE MAIDENS

The Five Maidens are not as engrossed in the Games of Divinity as they seem. They cultivate the appearance of delegation and distraction while actually micromanaging the Bureau of Destiny behind the veil of the Convention on Oversight. Their motives for this elaborate fiction can be as varied as the Storyteller wishes:

- Perhaps the Maidens discern some secret behind the addictive Games of Divinity and wish to investigate its Primordial origins further without drawing attention to themselves.
- Perhaps the Maidens have grown weary of the Unconquered Sun's hegemony over Yu-Shan. They use the fiction of Oversight to spread their tendrils throughout Heaven in preparation for another coup—this time against the Unconquered Sun himself.

• Perhaps the Maidens are simply mad. Just as all the Incarnae, the sisters' motives defy complete understanding by mortals. Since the Usurpation, though, they've become noticeably eccentric and erratic... ever since the Breaking of the Mask, in fact. Perhaps the near destruction of a major astrological sign affected these personifications of fate more deeply than anyone knows. And so, the Bureau of Destiny hobbles along under the guidance of mad gods who no longer understand the reality they are supposed to govern.

THE SIXTH MAIDEN

Early in the First Age, the Five Maidens realized that running the massive Bureau of Destiny would seriously interfere with playing the Games of Divinity. At the same time, they didn't really want to delegate full authority to any mere god or Exalt. Since no god was trustworthy or competent enough to oversee the Bureau's functioning, the Maidens simply made one who was. The Five Maidens combined their powers and forged... a Sixth Maiden. "Little Sister," the god whose pronouncements shape nearly every aspect of Sidereal existence, manifests as a six-year-old child clutching a china doll, sitting in a tiny chair in a hidden and door-less room beneath the Loom of Fate. She never moves or speaks above a whisper, but the Loom itself responds to her words. Fortunately for Creation, the child has no agenda of her own, or even any personality beyond that of the frightened little girl she appears to be.

Little Sister reflects the consensus viewpoint of the Five Maidens. She monitors every action of the Sidereal Exalted and the gods of the Bureau of Destiny. When she confronts any controversy or indeed anything at all that might interest the Maidens, she considers it from the perspective of each of her creators. If all five viewpoints agree on what should be done, Little Sister communicates this consensus through the Loom. If even one Maiden dissents, however, Little Sister does nothing. Thus, Little Sister is also the source of the malaise that has infected the Bureau of Destiny, especially during the Time of Tumult: the Maidens disagree on how to deal with the returning Solars and the other crises that afflict Creation. This disagreement has paralyzed Little Sister and resulted in her routinely giving contradictory orders that benefit the Gold Faction one day and the Bronze Faction the next. As the Maidens become more divided over the state of Creation, the Convention on Oversight is doomed to drag the entire Bureau down into apathy and ruin.

THE FORBIDDEN INCARNA

Every child in Creation knows of the Five Maidens who rule the night sky, but how many of them know that the Maidens once had a brother? Nox, called the God of Night but actually an Incarna equal to the Maidens, represented the infinite, unformed potential for action that underlies all fates. While the Five Maidens operated the Loom of Fate, Nox monitored the Loom to observe Creation and

report any potential threats to the Lidless Eye That Sees, the great Primordial who oversaw Yu-Shan's security. The Dark Incarna remained loyal to the Primordials. Thus, before the Primordials could be brought down, Nox would need to be co-opted, a duty that fell to his sisters.

First, Venus whored herself, seducing Nox into a sexual relationship that would have embarrassed him before the Primordials. Jupiter caused him to fear his secret incest's exposure, rendering him susceptible to blackmail. Saturn ended his loyalty to the Primordials, finally bringing him into the conspiracy of the Incarnae. In this, Saturn miscalculated. Nox's loyalty to the Primordials always came second to his own forbidden lust for his sisters. While he pretended to acquiesce to the conspiracy, he actually planned to expose it right as the coup began in hopes of being rewarded with his five sisters as concubines. Fortunately, Jupiter divined his secret intent, Mercury led him astray before he could warn his masters and then Mars bested him in battle. For his treachery, the other Incarnae condemned Nox and stripped him of all his power. But the Incarnae refused to slay one of their fellows, for they had all been created together, and they feared that the Primordials might have linked the Incarnae's fates together in some way. Autochthon then came forward

with a solution. He broke Nox's mind and then linked what remained of his intellect to the Loom of Fate so that the Loom would have a limited sentience, just enough to coordinate the activities of the Bureau of Destiny—and perform the functions of Oversight.

Some might question the wisdom of putting a brain-damaged Incarna sympathetic to the Primordials in charge of the Loom of Fate. Nox has never consciously abused his Oversight position to the detriment of Creation. Unfortunately, he often does so unconsciously. For instance, the commands given him by Autochthon included one to suppress all knowledge about Nox's continued existence, lest the idea of a Forbidden God controlling the Loom of Fate undermine the gods' confidence in the Bureau of Destiny. Nox interprets this order to include using the Loom to suppress *all* knowledge about Forbidden Gods, lest interrogation of one of them reveal Nox's existence. Thus, with the best of intentions, the Convention on Oversight has systematically erased every hint of the Forbidden Gods from the knowledge of the Bureau, which is why no one outside the two paranoid Sidereals who comprise the Convention on Forbidden Gods believes that such powers still lurk in the Underneath, all invisible to the Loom's gaze.



MY NAME IS AHN-ARU - CHOSEN OF SATURN, THE MAIDEN OF ENDINGS.

IN 700 YEARS I'VE BEEN A DOCTOR, A HUNTER, A DIPLOMAT, A KILLER...

...AND A FOOL.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE MET AHN-ARU?

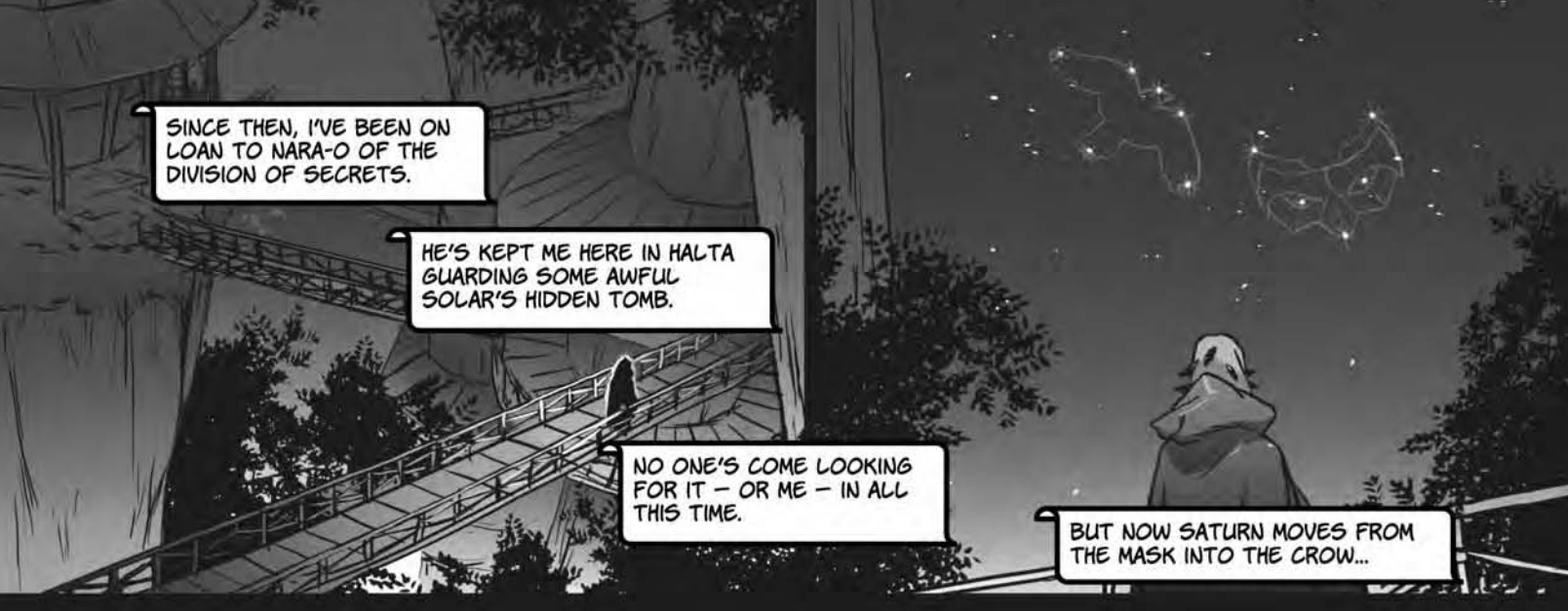
TWO YEARS AGO, I USED A GREEDY FOREST GOD AS BAIT TO TRAP A LUNAR INSURGENT.

I WAS OUT OF MY LEAGUE.

THEY OFFERED ME ADDITIONAL HOLIDAYS, LILITH...

FORTUNATELY, THE LUNAR UNDERESTIMATED ME - THOUGH NOT BY MUCH.

RATHER THAN DIE, I CHOSE TO CEASE TO EXIST.



SINCE THEN, I'VE BEEN ON
LOAN TO NARA-O OF THE
DIVISION OF SECRETS.

HE'S KEPT ME HERE IN HALTA
GUARDING SOME AWFUL
SOLAR'S HIDDEN TOMB.

NO ONE'S COME LOOKING
FOR IT - OR ME - IN ALL
THIS TIME.

BUT NOW SATURN MOVES FROM
THE MASK INTO THE CROW...

...WHICH MEANS MY
TIME HERE IS UP.

SAD IVORY, THE
TIME HAS COME
FOR YOU TO EXIST
ONCE MORE.

OUR AGREEMENT
IS CONCLUDED.
RETURN TO HEAVEN
FOR YOUR NEW
ASSIGNMENT.

I WILL AT ONCE.
THANK YOU,
NARA-O.

THINK NOTHING
OF IT.

I TAKE HIS ADVICE.

IT WAS GOOD TO BE
HOME FOR A WHILE,
BUT NOW THERE'S
WORK TO BE DONE.

I'D BEST GET TO IT.



CHAPTER THREE CHARACTER CREATION

The Sidereal Exalted are the secret masters of Creation. They see what destiny shall bring and correct its mistakes. Their wisdom guides many important events in Creation, holding the Terrestrial Exalted on the Blessed Isle against all comers and moving the Solars like Gateway pieces toward dominance or defeat. That, at least, is what Sidereals believe. It's almost true.

More precisely, the Sidereals are fate's troubleshooters. When a log goes uncut by the proper axe, a Sidereal agent investigates the scene and makes sure the problem gets solved. When threads on the Loom cross and a glass ends up both shattered and whole, a Sidereal ensures that it is only one and not the other. They see to it that the princess gets kidnapped, the old martial artist dies and the young one swears vengeance and the right babies end up in the wrong hands. Sidereals make sure Creation's stories do not go wrong.

The Chosen of the Maidens also watch for greater tears in the fabric of Creation. When one of the Fair Folk strides into the world to infect and twist it with her personal, unnatural stories and idealized tales, a Sidereal drives the raksha back into the Wyld. When a mighty demon tears free of its infernal

prison or escapes a sorcerer's prison of words, the Sidereals know and save Creation from the demon's malice.

These are just a few of the tasks your Sidereal heroes and heroines face in their quest of quests, to protect Creation at all costs. So here is how to create your Sidereal character.

STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

You want to end this process with a well-rounded character who has interesting traits: hopes and dreams, history, a connection to the world you're going to play in, loves, hates, fears and personality quirks. But all that's *hard*. So, start with a one- or two-sentence concept for the character. "Lucky goatherd who became a Chosen of Journeys and sees that all expeditions come to the proper ends" and "Chosen of Venus who resents his duties, since they require him to see to others' needs when, as a mortal, he was pampered prince" are both fine examples.

CASTE

Just as other Exalted, Sidereal characters have a caste. Caste decides a character's professional focus as a Bureau of Destiny operative. From the time that the Exaltation settles

into the character at birth, destiny works to train the character in skills and circumstances appropriate to her future employment. Chosen of Journeys watch over travels and travelers, while the Chosen of Endings become feared for their jurisdiction over cutting things from the Tapestry.

ALLEGIANCE

Factional politics riddles the Celestial Hierarchy, and the Bureau of Destiny is no exception. Sidereal Exalted have disagreed about what actions are *truly* best for Creation since before the Usurpation, and they divide themselves along the lines drawn at that time (and a few unofficial lines drawn since).

The Bronze Faction contains Sidereals who believe that Creation is better off being ruled overtly by the Terrestrials and covertly by the Chosen of Fate. This faction has the greatest numbers. Exalted who helped make the original decision in the First Age form the faction's backbone and wield most of the faction's political power. Sidereals Exalted since that time join because they agree with the decision or just because of the faction's clout in the Bureau. The Bronze Faction now faces serious challenges, however, and no longer enjoys clear dominance among the Five-Score Fellowship.

The Gold Faction denies that the Usurpation was the right path. These Sidereals speak out against the Wyld Hunt and do not agree with the persecution of the Solar Exalted. Very few of the Gold Faction remain from the First Age, and new members usually join out of belief in the cause. The faction offers no political advantage... yet. The sudden return of the Solars, however, makes the Gold Faction seem more of a credible alternative to the Bronze Faction.

Independent Sidereals reject both of the major factions. These Sidereals avoid the rivalries that come from joining either ideology, but they also lack the political network and heft of belonging to a larger group. Some Exalted, professed Independents for centuries, have revealed hidden allegiances to the Gold Faction after the Solar Exalted's reappearance. Other Independents now endure suspicion from the Bronze Faction that they are running cons of some sort, which has only served to chase more actual Independents into the Gold Faction.

Independent Sidereals also form an unknown number of tiny cliques. Some, such as the Gateway Exchange, are public and open to all Viziers regardless of faction. Others, such as the so-called Silver Faction, keep themselves very secret. Most Sidereals belong to at least one such group, even those officially connected with a major faction.

Ronin are Sidereal Exalted who refuse their duties in Heaven. This is not the same as mere neglect of responsibility—that is common, at least on small scales, and rarely punished. Ronin somehow avoided the normal indoctrination into the Bureau of Destiny and fled the grasp of their peers. Ronin have few advantages when compared to other Sidereals and suffer somewhat in the mechanical aspects of character creation. It is meager compensation that Heaven does not assign ronin missions.

You can also use the rules for ronin characters if you want a series to begin with Sidereal characters who have

not yet received their training from the Bureau of Destiny. The Bureau does not assign missions to untrained Viziers—but maybe some fluke event forces characters into action prematurely.

MOTIVATION

Every Exalt has some epic goal or desire. Sidereal Motivations often focus on fantastic feats of institutional derring-do: purge Heaven of all corruption, reorganize the Bureau of Destiny to eliminate infighting or get the Maidens' jobs. Heavenly focus isn't necessary; many Sidereals fail to release their ties to Creation or their worldly desires.

Temporal Motivations are equally valid, though apt to have extra complications. Conquering the Lap isn't the sort of thing a Sidereal can do without complications from her superiors. Creation-focused Motivations, therefore, usually place Viziers behind the scenes rather than at the forefront. Rather than "Conquer the Realm," a Sidereal wants to "Place someone I can manipulate on the Scarlet Throne" or "Find a leader who can make a Threshold revolt against the Blessed Isle successful."

Motivation is discussed in greater depth in **Exalted**, on page 88.

STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES

Just as all characters, Sidereal Exalted begin with one dot in each Attribute. From there, choose the Physical, Mental or Social categories as primary, secondary and tertiary. You have eight dots to distribute among the three primary Attributes, six among the secondary and four among the tertiary.

STEP THREE: ABILITIES

Every Sidereal caste has an affinity for five Abilities, called Auspicious Abilities. Each character also has four Favored Abilities, which represent the character's focus outside his caste affinities. Auspicious and Favored Abilities have a special pool of Ability dots at character generation and cost fewer bonus or experience points to increase later.

- **Journey Abilities** relate to travel, movement and crossing distances safely, governed by the Golden Barque of the Heavens. They are Resistance, Ride, Sail, Survival and Thrown.
- **Serenity Abilities** relate to life, love and recreation, governed by the Cerulean Lute of Harmony. They are Craft, Dodge, Linguistics, Performance and Socialize.
- **Battle Abilities** relate to combat and direct conflict, governed by the Crimson Panoply of Victory. They are Archery, Athletics, Melee, Presence and War.
- **Secret Abilities** relate to concealed actions and hidden knowledge, governed by the Forbidding Manse of Ivy. They are Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Stealth.
- **Ending Abilities** relate to change, death and completion, governed by the Violet Bier of Sorrows. They are Awareness, Bureaucracy, Integrity, Martial Arts and Medicine.

Record your character's five Auspicious Abilities and choose your four Favored Abilities. Favored Abilities must be distinct from one another and from Auspicious Abilities; you can't double up for better cost breaks.

Young Sidereals endure rigorous training; fate usually arranges effective learning experiences before the character's Exaltation, and the Bureau of Destiny makes sure of it afterward. Elder Sidereal Exalted use sorcery and artifacts to teach a lifetime of lessons in only a year and a day, giving even novices extraordinary capability.

Abilities begin rated at zero. Distribute 15 dots among your character's Auspicious and Favored Abilities. Every Favored Ability must have at least one dot. Then distribute an additional 20 dots among *any* Abilities. You cannot increase any Ability above three dots during character creation without using bonus points. Bonus points also purchase specialties, as described in the **Exalted** main rulebook.

Ronin characters lack the intense training of the peers the ronin deny. They begin with 25 Ability dots, 10 of which must be spread among Auspicious and Favored Abilities. Every Favored Ability must still receive at least one dot.

REQUIREMENTS

Members of the Bureau of Destiny must pass qualifying exams before they end their training and become agents for the Bureau. Your character must meet some of the Ability requirements below; some requirements overlap. *All* Sidereals who are not ronin have an *absolute minimum* of Awareness ••, Bureaucracy ••, Linguistics (Old Realm) •, Lore •••, Martial Arts ••, Occult ••, Socialize •, Stealth • and at least one dot in Archery, Melee *or* Thrown.

Members of the Golden Barque of the Heavens (Chosen of Journeys) must have Athletics ••, Linguistics (Old Realm and an appropriate additional language) ••, Resistance ••, Survival •• and Ride *or* Sail •••.

Members of the Cerulean Lute of Harmony (Chosen of Serenity) must have either Craft *or* Performance ••, Linguistics •• (focusing on eloquent speaking and writing rather than languages), Medicine ••, Presence •• and Socialize •••.

Members of the Crimson Panoply of Victory (Chosen of Battles) must have Archery *or* Melee •••, Athletics ••, Dodge ••, Presence •• and War ••.

Members of the Forbidding Manse of Ivy (Chosen of Secrets) must have Awareness ••, Investigation •••, Larceny ••, Socialize •• and Stealth ••.

Members of the Violet Bier of Sorrows (Chosen of Endings) must have Awareness ••, Dodge ••, Integrity ••, Martial Arts ••• and Stealth ••.

These are all minimums, not absolute ratings. Superiors strongly encourage their subordinates to develop greater proficiency in most Abilities that the Bureau or their specific departments favor, and doing so improves one's chance of advancement.

STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

Sidereals live in Yu-Shan, the most lovely and advanced city in Creation or out of it, where they can obtain anything they need or want. Their support network is less extensive but



more dedicated than that of Dragon-Blooded Dynasts. This gives Viziers the opportunity to develop more Backgrounds than most other characters: Sidereal Exalted begin play with 15 Background dots to distribute. Ronin characters do not have the advantage of Heaven at their back and begin with only seven Background dots. You cannot raise Backgrounds above 3 without using bonus points—and, usually, a good explanation for why your character possesses such power or influence.

Some Backgrounds are different for Sidereal Exalted, and they have access to some Backgrounds unavailable to other characters. See Chapter Four: Traits for details.

Sidereal Exalted learn their Charms a little more slowly than the Solar Exalted, but the Sidereals' extensive training gives them greater starting facility with their natural magic. Sidereal characters begin with 12 Charms. At least five of these must derive from Auspicious or Favored Abilities.

Ordering changes in the Loom of Fate requires formal language and knowledge of the technical aspects of what must be and cannot be changed. Colleges represent the character's training in Sidereal astrology, and you have seven dots spread among all the colleges. At least four of these dots must be placed within the colleges of the character's Maiden. Ronin have no training in the colleges and no method for submitting requests even if they knew how. They receive no dots. Find more information on colleges in Chapter Six: Sidereal Astrology.

Sidereals receive five dots to divide among the four Virtues, each of which starts at one dot. No Virtue may begin higher than 3 unless you spend bonus points. Note the character's Flawed Fate, described in Chapter Four: Traits. Choose a Virtue rated at 3 or higher as the character's primary Virtue.

STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Your character has Willpower equal to the sum of her two highest Virtues. You can raise this with bonus points, but the character's Willpower cannot go greater than eight unless she has two Virtues at four dots or higher.

She begins with an Essence of two, which you can raise only by spending bonus points. Use the final rating for Essence to calculate the Sidereal's Personal and Peripheral Essence pools: Personal Essence is equal to $(\text{Essence} \times 2) + \text{Willpower}$ and Peripheral Essence is equal to $(\text{Essence} \times 6) + \text{Willpower} + [\text{sum of all Virtues}]$.

A starting Sidereal begins with seven health levels: one -0, two -1, two -2, one -4 and one Incapacitated. Each purchase of the Sidereal's Ox-Body Charm provides one additional -0 health level.

You have 18 bonus points to spend on the character's various traits. See the chart on page 97 for bonus point costs.

SPARK OF LIFE

This is where you flesh out your character. Asking questions about his life and answering them is a good way

MARTIAL ARTS FOR SIDEREALS

The Chosen of the Maidens know more styles of supernatural martial arts than anyone else in Creation. This book describes only one style: the Violet Bier of Sorrows style that is most natural for Sidereals, described beginning on page 180. For other styles, see **Scroll of the Monk**. That supplement also describes the powerful Sidereal Martial Arts styles, known only to the Viziers themselves. A character may begin play knowing at most three Charms from Sidereal Martial Arts (assuming she can meet the high Essence minimums common to most such Charms).

to learn about the person you are creating. In case you have trouble thinking of questions, here are a few to consider.

What was his childhood like? Unlike the other Exalted, Sidereals have a touch of otherworldly luck from the very beginning. What fortunate signs blessed his birth? How did fate conspire to teach him important skills and shape him into a proper member of the Bureau of Destiny?

When did he actually Exalt, and which Sidereals or gods were there to help him realize his destiny? Did they try to recruit him into one of the factions; if so, did it work or did he rebel against it? Whom did the character meet during his indoctrination? Who became his allies, and who his rivals?

Most of that will stay in the background while you play. You can come up with it now and have it ready for the Storyteller to use, but it's also easy to invent background as you go along. Knowing how your character will act and react as you play him is more important.

Now that his training is done, how does the character like his life? He knows more than almost any other human that he has little control over his life; destiny is already written and already rewritten, and he of all people cannot go against it. Does this reassure him, knowing that the gods are writing his story, or does it chafe, like silken bonds he can never remove?

Is he cavalier about arranging destinies, tweaking lives intuitively? Does he focus without remittance on every facet and detail of an issue, calculating the perfect solution to every tangle in fate's web? Or maybe he thinks the Bureau is just a way to pay the bills so he can do something he enjoys—such as, say, winning martial arts tournaments or stealing from the Fair Folk.

Sidereals know better than any other Exalted the true state of Heaven. What does your character think about the Incarnae? Has he met any of the Maidens, and what happened then? Does he think well or poorly of the Celestial Hierarchy?

In addition, think of one or two *trivial* things that your character likes and dislikes. Maybe he enjoys collecting maps or he loves sampling the local wine while traveling. Perhaps he dislikes cold soup or cannot abide useless people.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

FUNCTIONARIES OF THE BUREAU OF DESTINY

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Choose concept, caste and Motivation.

Note caste's anima powers.

• STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES

All Attributes begin with one dot.

Prioritize the Physical, Mental and Social Attribute categories as primary, secondary and tertiary. Distribute eight dots among the Attributes of the primary category, six dots among those of the secondary category and four dots among those of the tertiary category.

• STEP THREE: ABILITIES

Abilities begin at zero dots.

Note Auspicious Abilities and choose Favored Abilities (four; do not duplicate Auspicious Abilities).

Distribute 35 Ability dots. Fifteen are limited to Auspicious and Favored Abilities; 20 are unlimited. No Ability may be above 3 before spending bonus points.

The character *must* have at least Awareness ••, Bureaucracy ••, Linguistics (Old Realm) •, Lore •••, Martial Arts ••, Occult ••, Socialize •, Stealth • and at least one dot in Archery, Melee or Thrown. There are additional restrictions based on caste:

Chosen of Journeys must have Athletics ••, Linguistics (Old Realm and an appropriate additional language) ••, Resistance ••, Survival •• and Ride or Sail •••.

Chosen of Serenity must have either Craft or Performance ••, Linguistics •• (focusing on eloquent speaking and writing rather than languages), Medicine ••, Presence •• and Socialize •••.

Chosen of Battles must have Archery or Melee •••, Athletics ••, Dodge ••, Presence •• and War ••.

Chosen of Secrets must have Awareness ••, Investigation •••, Larceny ••, Socialize •• and Stealth ••.

Chosen of Endings must have Awareness ••, Dodge ••, Integrity ••, Martial Arts ••• and Stealth ••.

• STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

Choose Backgrounds (15 dots, no Background higher than 3 before spending bonus points), Charms (12, at least five from Auspicious or Favored Abilities, no more than three Sidereal Martial Arts Charms), colleges (seven dots, at least four from her Maiden's colleges) and Virtues (all begin at 1, five dots to spread, none higher than 3 before spending bonus points).

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (two before bonus points), Willpower (sum of the two highest Virtues), Personal Essence pool ([Essence x 2] + Willpower), Peripheral Essence pool ([Essence x 6] + Willpower + [sum of all Virtues]) and health levels (7 + any from Charms).

Spend bonus points (18) on any aspect of character creation. Costs are on page 97. Note changes in calculated values (such as Willpower and temporary Essence).

CASTES

• **Journeys:** Heaven's Messengers, traveling any distance necessary to perform their duties.

Auspicious Abilities: Resistance, Ride, Sail, Survival and Thrown

Anima Powers: Spend 10 motes to triple running speed for her and all allies (including mounts) within (her Essence x 10) yards.

• **Serenity:** Heaven's Courtesans, overseeing the pleasure and prosperity of Creation.

Auspicious Abilities: Craft, Dodge, Linguistics, Performance and Socialize

Anima Powers: Spend 10 motes to add (her Essence) automatic successes to all Performance rolls made by her or her allies within (her Essence x 10) yards.

• **Battles:** Heaven's Soldiers, seeing to the outcomes of important battles and wars.

Auspicious Abilities: Archery, Athletics, Melee, Presence and War

Anima Powers: Spend 10 motes to reduce rolled damage by one health level in Step 10 of attack resolution, effective for her and all allies within (her Essence x 10) yards.

• **Secrets:** Heaven's Eyes, keeping or revealing knowledge at Heaven's direction.

Auspicious Abilities: Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Stealth

Anima Powers: Spend 10 motes to render her and her allies within (her Essence x 10) yards immune to mind-reading and unnatural mental influence from opponents with an Essence less than the Sidereal's; against other opponents, still add (her Essence) to affected persons' Mental Defense Values.

• **Endings:** Heaven's Gardeners, ensuring that all things come to a proper end at the proper time.

Auspicious Abilities: Awareness, Bureaucracy, Integrity, Martial Arts and Medicine

Anima Powers: Spend 10 motes to increase the damage inflicted by her and her allies within (her Essence x 10) yards by one level, applied after rolling in Step 10 of attack resolution, as long as an attack inflicts at least one level before considering the effect.

FACTIONS

There are three factions a Sidereal working for the Bureau of Destiny can choose. Not all are equal.

• **The Bronze Faction** is dominant and publicly supports the status quo—keeping the Terrestrials nominally in charge and the Solars out of the picture.

• **The Gold Faction** is the underdog but still a significant source of contacts and leverage. This faction supports attempting a return to the First Age's glory and methods.

• **Independents** publicly belong to no faction, though some Sidereals use Independent status as a cover.

MOTIVATION

Choose a suitably epic Motivation for your character.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

VIRTUES

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

BACKGROUNDS

- **Acquaintances**—Mortals who remember you... sort of.
- **Allies**—Friends, usually gods and other Exalts, who will help you out.
- **Artifact**—Enchanted tools, usually made of starmetal.
- **Backing**—Rank in an organization, typically the Bronze or Gold Faction.
- **Celestial Manse**—A home and font of Essence in Yu-Shan.
- **Connections**—Information from and pull in one facet of Creation.
- **Familiar**—A loyal animal or godly companion.
- **Manse**—A place of power in Creation.
- **Salary**—Your Celestial stipend.
- **Savant**—First Age lore at your fingertips.
- **Sifu**—A willing mentor for supernatural martial arts.

RONIN

Ronin are those few Sidereals who manage to evade Heaven's service. Ronin do not benefit from the advanced training or privileges of their employed peers.

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

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

• STEP TWO: ATTRIBUTES

All Attributes begin with one dot.

Prioritize the Physical, Mental and Social Attribute categories as primary, secondary and tertiary. Distribute eight dots among the Attributes of the primary category, six dots among those of the secondary category and four dots among those of the tertiary category.

• STEP THREE: ABILITIES

Abilities begin at zero dots.

Note Auspicious Abilities and choose Favored Abilities (four; do not duplicate Auspicious Abilities).

Distribute 25 Ability dots. Ten are limited to Auspicious and Favored Abilities; 15 are unlimited. No Ability may rise above 3 before spending bonus points. The character has no other restrictions about how to spend her Ability dots.

• STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

Choose Backgrounds (seven dots, no Background higher than 3 before spending bonus points), Charms (eight, at least five from Auspicious or Favored Abilities, no Sidereal Martial Arts Charms) and Virtues (begin at 1, five dots to spread, none higher than 3 before spending bonus points).

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (2 before bonus points), Willpower (sum of the two highest Virtues), Personal Essence pool ($[\text{Essence} \times 2] + \text{Willpower}$), Peripheral Essence pool ($[\text{Essence} \times 6] + \text{Willpower} + [\text{sum of all Virtues}]$) and health levels ($7 + \text{any from Charms}$).

Spend bonus points (15) on any aspect of character creation. Costs are on the table below. Note changes in calculated values (such as Willpower and temporary Essence).

CASTES

Same as for servants of Heaven on page 96.

MOTIVATION

Choose a suitably epic Motivation for your character.

VIRTUES

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

BACKGROUNDS

- **Acquaintances**—Mortals who remember you... sort of.
- **Allies**—Friends, usually gods and other Exalted, who will help you out.
- **Artifact**—Enchanted tools, usually made of starmetal.
- **Backing**—Rank in an organization, typically the Bronze or Gold Faction.
- **Connections**—Information from and pull in one facet of Creation.
- **Familiar**—A loyal animal or godly companion.
- **Manse**—A place of power in Creation.

BONUS POINT COSTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Background	1 (2 or 4 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Intimacies	3 to increase starting Intimacies to (Willpower + Compassion)
Essence	10
Charm	7 (5 if in a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Sidereal Martial Arts Charm	8 (6 if Martial Arts is a Favored or Auspicious Ability)
Sidereal astrology colleges	7 (5 in your Maiden's colleges)



SO THE FIRST
MAN SAYS...
HEH... HE SAYS...
"A LANTERN?"

"IF I HAD A
LANTERN I'D HAVE
FOUND MY HORSE
AND RIDDEN OUT OF
HERE ALREADY!"



AHEM...



SORRY ABOUT
THAT. I DIDN'T HEAR
YOU COME IN.

I SEE. SO YOU
WEREN'T TALKING
TO ME JUST NOW?



NO, SORRY. I WAS
JUST PRACTICING A
JOKE I HEARD EARLIER.
HOW WAS IT?

KEEP
PRACTICING.

SO, WHAT CAN I
DO FOR YOU...
UM...

I'M SORRY, I
CAN'T SEEM TO
REMEMBER
YOUR NAME.

THAT'S ALL
RIGHT. IT'S
BEEN A WHILE.



STILL, A
WOMAN LIKE
YOU... YOU'D
THINK I'D
REMEMBER.

TELL ME AGAIN,
WOULD YOU? I
WON'T FORGET
THIS TIME.





CHAPTER FOUR TRAITS

Sidereal Exalted use many of the traits described in **Exalted** as written. Attributes, Abilities, Virtues, Willpower, Essence and some Backgrounds remain the same. For descriptions of those traits, see **Exalted**, beginning on page 88.

EXPANDED BACKGROUNDS

Heaven provides for its servants, offering several new Backgrounds for Sidereals' use and altering the realities of some existing Backgrounds.

ALTERED BACKGROUNDS

Backgrounds tied to Creation or people of Creation are more difficult for Sidereals to develop and maintain. Some of these changes have little mechanical impact but should color the way you see your character; others outright forbid a character from taking a certain Background.

ALLIES

Arcane Fate, Sidereal habits and Bureau regulations make it difficult for Sidereals to form alliances with mortals,

even powerful ones. This Background represents only allies who can remember the character—mostly gods, elementals and some Exalted. With effort, a Sidereal might recruit God-Blooded, Half-Caste or otherwise enlightened mortals, including thaumaturges, shamans or mortal martial artists. Allies in Heaven (such as gods in other Bureaus) know a Vizier's true nature; Allies in Creation might simply know they work with someone powerful and secretive. The Bureau of Destiny prefers for its operatives' associates to know as little as possible, but censures the disclosure of the Sidereals' existence only when information provably passes to enemies of Creation.

ARTIFACT

Starmetal is the Sidereals' preferred magical material for forging artifacts; it's also the rarest magical material. Thus, the Bureau of Destiny can never obtain as much as it wants. Despite the Sidereals' well-oiled machine, they use the same version of this Background as Solars do (see



Exalted, p. 111). Storytellers and players should remember that most starmetal artifacts come with history: one might have once belonged to another Sidereal or a previous incarnation—or the artifact might have once *been* a god who left allies and lovers behind.

BACKING

Sidereals must make a special effort to acquire and maintain Backing. Their nature and work make it difficult to cultivate positions in mundane organizations. More often, they forge subtle relationships with such groups through the Connections Background (see pp. 103-104 and 105). Spending bonus points to raise this Background above three dots costs twice normal (four points per dot instead of two).

The two major Sidereal factions offer exceptions to the rule. The Bronze and Gold Factions can both back a character effectively. (There is no Silver Faction or Independent Backing.) When Backing represents either of those, bonus point costs remain as normal. What must the character have done to deserve such trust?

Most importantly, Backing represents a Seer's rank in the Bureau of Destiny. Characters can have Backing from their divisions and conventions to which they belong. A Sidereal with no Backing at all can still be employed by the Bureau, but receives no trust or confidence from her superiors, whether because of inexperience or truly epic foul-ups. A luminary such as Chejop Kejak, on the other hand, has multiple Backings of 5 as the senior Chosen of Secrets, Chair of the Capital Convention and head of the Bronze Faction.

Typical examples of Backing from a division, convention or faction include the following:

- x Nobody at the Bureau trusts you very much. Why?
- Membership in a minor fate-planning committee; respected member of a convention; recognized faction member.
- Membership in a major fate-planning committee; respected faction member.
- Head of a minor fate-planning committee; Chair of a lesser sub-convention; entrusted with important secrets and administration of a lesser Bureau or factional post.
- Head of a major fate-planning committee; Chair of a major sub-convention; administrator of a major factional base (such as Kether Rock).
- Senior representative of an entire caste; convention Chair; head of a faction.

Divisional backing chiefly offers a voice in designing Creation's future. Convention and factional backing offer tangible benefits: the conventions and factions can loan Sidereals artifacts, hearthstones, access to gods and other powerful people who work with these groups. While on

a mission for the Bureau or a faction, a character might receive temporary access to allies, connections, artifacts and the hearthstones of manses. None of these temporary Backgrounds can exceed the character's Backing, and neither can their total number of dots. The character also has to give back any loaned Backgrounds, and losing them (including "losing" allies by giving offense) brings censure and loss of Backing—maybe all of it, if the character loses a major artifact to an enemy of Creation.

CONTACTS AND INFLUENCE

Sidereal characters use Connections (see pp. 103-104 and 105) instead of either of these Backgrounds.

FAMILIAR

This Background functions normally at character creation, but Sidereals can acquire additional familiars through use of the Ride Charm Ordained Bridle of Mercury. No Sidereal can ever have more familiars than her Essence score.

FOLLOWERS

Sidereals' occulted natures prevent Sidereals from gathering followers. Instead, see Acquaintances.

MANSE

Sidereal Exalted rarely own manses in Creation; they are difficult for Sidereals to maintain and defend while executing their duties elsewhere. Most Viziers prefer to use the Celestial Manse Background instead (see p. 103). The few manses in Creation that do belong to Sidereals are usually Celestially aspected and equipped with lavish observatories or orreries. The conventions, however, own numerous manses and may issue their hearthstones to agents for specific missions. (Of course, the hearthstones aren't very useful if the character cannot reach the manse to attune to it.)

MENTOR

The Chosen of Fate have such an efficient social structure that they do not need an informal mentoring system. Every Sidereal has one or several elder Exalted she can consult or study under when necessary. More relevant is the mastery of supernatural martial arts of those elders willing to teach her, covered by the Sifu Background (see p. 107). Sidereals who refuse to work for the Bureau of Destiny do not enjoy the benefit of available tutors.

A Sidereal may also have a mentor outside of the regular arrangements who teaches things elder Sidereals and gods cannot or will not. Because of Arcane Fate and the difficulty of finding a mentor with such rarified knowledge, *every dot* of the Mentor Background costs twice as much as it would normally (two Background dots for one dot of Mentor and double the bonus points per dot).

RESOURCES

Functionaries of Heaven rarely have a Resources Background, since the more efficacious Salary Background



supersedes the Resources Background in Heaven, and they have expense accounts when they work in Creation. Ronin often possess Resources, but Arcane Fate makes it more difficult for *either* sort to develop high Resources—banks tend to lose their paperwork and refuse their letters of credit. Spending bonus points to raise this Background above three dots costs twice normal (four points per dot instead of two).

NEW BACKGROUNDS

Several new Backgrounds are available only to Sidereals or others similarly blessed by Heaven—mostly gods and favored God-Blooded mortals.

ACQUAINTANCES

After the Usurpation, the Five-Score Fellowship mystically hid itself from Creation... a little too well. As a result, the Chosen of Fate have great difficulty forming relationships with mortals. This Background represents time and effort invested in cultivating a small number of mortal associates. Some Sidereals use acquaintances to help the Sidereals remember the mortal perspectives that make them unique among Heaven's functionaries; others make acquaintances only for the convenience of having mortals who think they recognize the person in front of them.

Without this Background, mortals never recognize the character. She is always a stranger... and in some places, people don't like strangers. A character who repeatedly visits a mortal and makes some effort to be memorable can earn a friendly smile and nod of recognition, even if the mortal can never bring a name to mind and only thinks of her as *that woman*. After enough exposure to the character, some mortals might even think of her when she isn't around or remember her name in person.

The character decides how her acquaintances know her: they may think of her as the woman who tells the best stories or that merchant who always has sweets for the kids. There is no support for these front identities: an acquaintance who decides to visit that "cloth merchant" for his daughter's wedding can't find her store, but he won't think much of it afterward.

Acquaintances are Sidereals' connections to the world. Acquaintances represent people that a character can talk to without falsifying a background and the effort of new lies: there are existing lies in place that require little effort to maintain or avoid revealing. Acquaintances are as close as Sidereals get to mortal allies and provide a place where the character can fit in, even if it's just under a pseudonym.

Sidereals increase this Background through a great expenditure of time and effort, or by using the Ride Charm Breaking the Wild Mortal.

x None. You've made no effort to connect with any mortals. Why?

- One person, such as a merchant or a courtesan, thinks of you as a friendly acquaintance, but only when he sees you.
- A small handful of people recognize you, remember your name and think well of you when they see you. Alternately, more people know you as no more than a friendly stranger.
- A close-knit group welcomes you warmly as one of its own, though it almost never misses you when you're gone. Examples include opium den regulars, the inhabitants of a tiny farming village or a group of bandits. Alternately, more people recognize and think well of you.
- You've developed a close relationship with one mortal, and several mortals consider you their friend. Alternately, you have up to three tight groups that happily acknowledge you among them and a spread of casual acquaintances. Your fronts can be the same identity in multiple places, multiple identities among the same group (in which case you choose which is "on" when you approach that group) or combinations thereof.
- Your front gives you a recognized social position among a community as large as a town, a city neighborhood or a group of similar size. The Connections Background for the same sort of group can enable a character to wield these acquaintances more effectively. Alternately, you have as many as five lesser identities.

CELESTIAL MANSE

The glory of Yu-Shan puts all mortal cities to shame. Gold and silver spires reach toward the sky dome from manses larger than entire neighborhoods in Nexus. Even Heaven's slums have flats that surpass the average mortal palace, and their streets run with refuse that merchant princes would scramble for. The buildings, parks and boulevards of Heaven form their own geomancy, and so, Yu-Shan has its own manses—which surpass the finest manses in Creation as diamonds surpass coal.

A Celestial manse provides sanctuary in Yu-Shan, offers refuge against the constant pressures of the Bureau of Destiny and also confers power: Celestial manses provide hearthstones just as normal manses do, though they are more typically Lunar, Sidereal or Solar in nature. Celestial manses are also generally immune to sabotage. Only rivals with access to Heaven can break in, and they would have great trouble escaping Celestial judgment. Damage to such a manse is at least a Severity 3 offense, increased by the importance of the owner.

Competition for Celestial property is fierce. When a manse becomes available, due to Sidereal death, godly exile or harsh punishment, Heavenly functionaries who want to move into nicer accommodations join an intricate, ruthless

political dance for the award. To the Sidereals' benefit, the long existence of their Exaltations counts toward seniority; to their detriment, effective experience heavily affects merit. Good friends of an expired Sidereal may conspire to retain the manse, safeguarding it for her ally's next incarnation, but kindnesses like that are rare.

Spending bonus points to raise this Background above three dots costs twice normal (four points per dot instead of two).

- x None. The Bureau of Heaven does not find you worthy of a Celestial manse. You have no place of power in Heaven. Why?
- A small shrine or comfortable townhouse. Produces a level 1 hearthstone.
- An elegant pagoda or an expansive townhouse. Produces a level 2 hearthstone.
- A small palace with grounds or a sprawling mansion. Produces a level 3 hearthstone.
- A towering pagoda, a massive palace or a mansion with expansive attached grounds, such as a hunting lodge and preserve stocked with godly deer. Produces a level 4 hearthstone.
- A unique property, famed for its breathtaking construction and grand scale. Produces a level 5 hearthstone, rare even in Yu-Shan's geomantic perfection.

CONNECTIONS

Sidereals combine the vast support of Heaven with their natural talent for seeing the threads that bind people and events to manipulate the institutions of Creation. These Exalted spin webs within others' webs, pulling the organizations that others create in the directions the Sidereals prefer, never drawing notice to themselves. A character with Connections in a society can guide that society and demand special favors from its members. Exerting much influence requires proportional time and resources.

Connections are bound to a specific area of influence (selected from those in the accompanying sidebar); multiple areas of influence require multiple Connections Backgrounds. A character may have Connections (House Tepet) 4 and Connections (The Guild) 3, and others. Connections counts as Influence for the purpose of whether a character qualifies as a savant or sorcerer in relevant regions for the Mandate of Heaven system (see the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**).

Each Connections Background is specific to one of the five directions, because not even a Sidereal can have her fingers in every pie. Connections (Thousand Scales) suffers little being limited to the Blessed Isle, but Connections (House Ragara) focused on the Blessed Isle makes it harder to manipulate the House's satrapies. It's still possible, but the character must go through people she knows on the Isle.

Connections acts as both Contacts and Influence from **Exalted**. The Sidereals' organizational support and unique perspective on Creation confers this encompassing Background. Spending bonus points to raise Connections above three dots costs twice normal (four points per dot instead of two). Some Connections might not exceed three dots for some characters, if the Storyteller allows them at all. For instance, anyone except Gold Faction Sidereals has great difficulty acquiring Connections in the Cult of the Illuminated, while anyone except Bronze Faction Sidereals faces impediment gaining Connections in the Immaculate Order—each group protects its investments carefully.

x None. You are unconnected to the group in question. You may lack ties to any of Creation's societies whatsoever. Why?

- You have at least one major contact (and some minor ones) in the group and are influential on a local scope.
- Two major contacts and several minor ones give you a good deal of pull in your area of influence.
- You have three major contacts and many minor ones, and you are a noteworthy individual with influence in the group.
- Five major contacts and horde of people willing to talk make you one of the most influential people in the bailiwick.
- You know everyone worth knowing in the group; you also know how to bend them around your finger—or over your knee.

SALARY

Mortal wealth is irrelevant in Heaven; possession of Quintessence and Ambrosia far overshadows jewelry of gold and silver. Regulations forbid Sidereals from developing cults, even if they could, and thus earning their own Ambrosia. Instead, the Bureau of Destiny provides stipends for its operatives, which the character may spend however she wants... in Yu-Shan.

Anyone who can channel Essence can transform Quintessence into any mundane substance, from jewels to wine; and Ambrosia can become jade. A single coin contains enough Ambrosia to create a meal for two or a mina of jade. A character merely needs to touch the substance and imagine what she wants (though appropriate Craft Abilities are needed to produce the Celestial feasts and treasures that beggar mortal imagination). Thus, anyone with regular access to congealed prayer could convert it into a rich lifestyle in Creation. Regulations, however, prohibit Sidereals from living too well in Creation. The wealth they could display with their Quintessence would threaten regional economies if unrestricted. Heavenly laws also forbid Celestial salaries from being used to purchase or maintain armies, fleets, thrones or other trappings of

power. Using Salary to live at Resources •••• is a Severity 2 offense, living at Resources ••••• is a Severity 4 offense and buying or supporting armies or nations is a Severity 5 offense. These offenses are pursued to their conclusion *every time* if discovered; even members of the Bronze Faction keep themselves in line, for Chejop Kejak prosecutes his own when they step over this line.

Salary cannot purchase or rent a manse in Yu-Shan. There is simply not enough money in Heaven to secure a home on a confluence of dragon lines; only connections and political wrangling will do. You must take the Celestial Manse Background for your character to begin play with a manse in Heaven. Characters with high Salary but no dots in Celestial manse possess only town-sized palaces that cannot produce a hearthstone.

Exalted other than Sidereals occasionally earn Celestial allowances for exceptional deeds in the service or to the benefit of Heaven. Such honoraria never exceed Salary •••. Characters other than Sidereal Exalted cannot begin play with a Salary without the Storyteller's express permission. Gods earn a Salary equal to half their Essence rating, with variance due to rank and punishment. Sidereal characters may begin with a Resources rating, but it requires a compelling explanation for how and why the character maintains accounts in forgetful Creation.

Salary also determines how long a Sidereal can spend on sabbatical. See p. 54 for more information.

x None. You angered the God of Dispensation, or perhaps your Salary has been garnisheed for violations of Celestial law. You live in the back of your office or on a kind god's floor. You eat only through theft or charity (such as the small daily dole of Quintessence to indigent gods).

- Starting salary for most gods. Sidereal Exalted earn this pay grade only when they are new or being punished. You rent a small apartment (five rooms and facilities) and can afford a mere one feast per day. You earn no Ambrosia but can afford two servants. You have Resources •• in Heaven and Resources ••• in Creation. It's hard to rent a dragon boat; Heaven's passenger dhows are more your speed.
- Solid salary. You have a small townhouse or a large apartment in an unfashionable neighborhood. You always have a smorgasbord for your pleasure. The Quintessence in your pay still outweighs the Ambrosia. You have Resources ••• in Heaven and •••• in Creation, though exercising the latter in full could earn you trouble. This is standard pay for Sidereals.
- You own a townhouse in a good neighborhood, a faux-ranch with land or a rooftop temple-fortress. You travel by your own dragon boat or aerial

CONNECTIONS: AREAS OF INFLUENCE

• **The Dragon-Blooded:** Each Great House and each of the four Dragon-Blooded academies (the Cloister of Wisdom and so on) is an area of influence, as are Lookshy and other sources of outcasts. Through a House, a character wields great power over the direction of the Scarlet Empire, the House's thousands of servants and its many tributaries. Influence over more than one House provides even greater power. Manipulating an academy gives a Vizier access to that institution's resources, teachers and its vast network of graduates.

• **The Realm:** The Empress designed the Realm's bureaucracies so that not even a savant could say for sure where real power lay, but they are only a shadow of the Celestial Bureaucracy. Sidereal Exalted, thanks to experience and training, know better than most how to navigate and manipulate this maze and direct the Realm toward their ends. The All-Seeing Eye, the Thousand Scales and the military machine are separate regions of influence. Through them, the character can influence the meat of the Realm: its people. The Dragon-Blooded, secondary academies and Immaculate Order are only tangential to this influence, instead being covered by other Connections.

• **The Immaculate Order:** Few Sidereals, especially those of the Bronze Faction, neglect influence in the Immaculate Order. It is one of Creation's most widespread and powerful institutions and one of the faction's oldest tools. The Immaculate Order exerts significant influence over politics in the Realm and in its Threshold satrapies. Sidereals use their Connections to stay abreast of what the Order is doing, shift religious policy, bribe gods with a place on the calendar of worship and access the Order's far-flung network of schools, hospitals and other charities that draw in Creation's poor.

• **The Guild:** If any power in the Threshold can match the economic and political might of the Realm, it is the Guild. Almost every place in Creation knows the Guild's caravans, and the organization has the wealth to field its own armies and replace unfriendly despots with allied ones. The Guild even knows some parts of the Wyld through its slave-trade with the Fair Folk.

• **The Threshold:** There are many nations in the Threshold, and the character has a finger in at least one of them. Threshold Connections allow a Sidereal to encourage alliances, topple undesirable potentates, influence military actions, flush out Anathema, strengthen or weaken the Realm's influence and shape Creation's future. Each major nation (such as Halta or Harborhead) or arrangement of smaller nations (such as the Hundred Kingdoms, the Varangian City-States or the Haslanti League) forms a separate influence.

• **The Cult of the Illuminated:** It has grown far beyond the tiny heresy it once was; now, the Cult of the Illuminated is a primary tool of the Gold Faction. Sidereals use the Cult to erode Immaculate devotions, sow seeds of rebellion and locate and direct Solar Exalted.

• **Outlaws:** Creation is a dangerous place, full of luxuries available only to the ruthless and plenty of ruthless to squabble over those luxuries. Bandits roam the roads and pirates the seas, while criminals stalk city streets and barbarians lurk just over the next hill. Outlaw Connections lets a character deal with fences and thieves to buy or sell illegal goods and services; these Connections range from small-time crooks to the Lintha Family in the Southwest.

• **The Celestial Hierarchy:** The Bureaus of Seasons, Nature, Humanity and Heaven are all separate areas of influence, as are each of the five divisions of the Bureau of Destiny. The first three observe more than they act today, but knowing the right gods gives a Sidereal access to much information about their purviews. Occasionally, a god can be moved to adjust something under the table. Connections in the Bureau of Heaven allow one greater pay and privileges in addition to information on goings-on in Yu-Shan and leverage over the gods themselves. Connections in a division of the Bureau of Destiny helps the character learn what that department plans for Creation and gives moderate influence over what that should be. Players who think Connections in the Bureau of Destiny are all-important should remember that destiny does not always unfold as it should and not every fate is met; that what Sidereals are for.

rickshaw, and you have a dozen servitors. Most of your pay comes in Ambrosia, so your repast is godly. You have Resources •••• in Heaven and could have Resources ••••• in Creation if you could get away with it. Members of the Bronze Faction usually achieve this pay rate.

•••• You rent or own more than one of the above residences. Essence 2 or 3 gods live with you as yojimbos, advisors or concubines (though they must be purchased as Allies). You eat only godly victuals and pay even your servants in Ambrosia. Your subsidies give you Resources ••••• in Heaven and Creation.

- You live in a half-dozen grand palaces, penthouse apartments and weekend lodges, moving from one to the next at your whim. If you chose, your parties could last for centuries. Your small fleet of dragon boats ensures that you get *where* you want *when* you want, and your party barge makes you very popular in certain sets. A legion of servants waits on your pleasure, including at least a dozen potent gods (though *useful* gods require the Ally Background). You dine on peaches of immortality and sip Celestial wine. You could make infinite Resources ••••• purchases in Creation, ruining economies at will. Only the most senior Sidereals and mightiest gods receive this paycheck. Decide what divine criminal or Celestial powerbroker you owe and how many Severity 3 to 5 offenses you are committing.

HEAVEN ON A SHOESTRING

Heaven is expensive to visit. Resources of Creation are unimpressive gewgaws to the gods. A character wielding Resources, not Salary, in Yu-Shan adds •• to the Resources cost of all fees and standards of living.

SAVANT

The Sidereals are the only Exalted to retain the greatest secrets and training arts of the First Age. Dragon-Blooded have only what the Sidereals choose to share; the Lunar Exalted salvaged what they could, but it was not enough. The Chosen of Fate still hand down ancient lore, safe in their Yu-Shan libraries from before the Usurpation, and they use magic to instill understanding in Exalted born to the Second Age's squalor. (See the spell "Gift of Knowledge," p. 121.)

A character with the Savant Background adds her Savant rating in dice to any Lore check involving the history, science or magic of the First Age. She also adds her rating in dots to her Lore, Occult and Craft Abilities in order to meet the Ability requirements to operate and maintain First Age artifacts.

- x None. You either forwent the special training, or the training didn't stick. Why?
- You have some knowledge of a more glorious time.
- The secret techniques taught you well, and you have a general understanding of the First Age's lore.
- Your training was extensive, and you remember it well, giving you insight into First Age principles.



- You easily grasp the workings of most First Age artifacts and remember much from before the Usurpation.
- You took so readily to your training that the elders supplemented it with additional lore. You understand First Age lore as though you had grown up amidst it and studied it for decades.

SIFU

Upon Exaltation, each Sidereal receives tutelage from a number of more experienced Seers. In the interest of politics, each faction contributes an equal number of tutors; this practice serves to overwork the Gold Faction, who are already smaller in number. The new Exalt develops close relationships with her tutors. By the end of her study, one tutor has accepted the position as the Exalt's sifu, her teacher of the martial arts. Though many elder Sidereals are available as instructors if the character can sway them to teach her, her sifu is always willing to instruct her in the supernatural martial arts.

This Background lets a player declare which supernatural martial arts she wishes her character to have available

in the future. Players and Storytellers should work together to decide which styles are known by a character's sifu. The sifu is effectively martial arts training on demand; it should always be available, subject only to important plot considerations.

- x You formed no great bonds with any sifus; learning new supernatural martial arts always includes the arduous process of finding a willing teacher. Why do your first instructors neglect you?
- Your sifu knows one supernatural martial art style and has partially mastered one Sidereal style.
- Your sifu knows two supernatural martial arts styles and one Sidereal style.
- Your sifu knows three supernatural martial arts styles and two Sidereal styles.
- Your sifu knows five supernatural martial arts styles and three Sidereal styles.
- Your sifu is unparalleled: he knows seven supernatural martial arts styles and four Sidereal styles.





CHOSEN OF JOURNEYS

Life is a journey. People forget the beginnings and concern themselves too much with the endings, but what matter is how they get from one to the other. This journey shapes what they are and how they meet their fates. All aspects of the journey, from the fall of a nondescript autumn leaf to a Dragon-Blood officer's expedition into the foreboding Palace of the Anathema, fall under Mercury's purview. It now falls to her Chosen to oversee such things and ensure that Creation continues toward its destiny.

Harbingers in the First Age watched over the ever-more-intricate networks of transportation and communication that webbed Creation. When Solar Exalted found new markets and allied more peoples, the Chosen of Journeys blessed the travels. Under the Harbingers' ministration, commodities moved unhindered toward their destiny at the end of the road. When the Sidereals acted against the Solar Exalted, Heaven's Messengers turned this web against the fallen Lawgivers. Warnings did not reach their destinations, escape routes became ambushes and the usurpers outmaneuvered their former lords with ease.



The Great Contagion shattered ties between societies, and the Chosen of Journeys had the task of restoring the ties. The Chosen of Journeys crafted strong destinies for bold explorers, merchants and diplomats, ensuring positive and lasting contact between cultures. At the Chosen's nudging, the wealthy invested in roads and faraway markets. The Immaculate Order founded temples in distant lands to spread wisdom. Some Harbingers also remapped the lay of the land, much changed by the Fair Folk Invasion, and scouted the boundaries of the Wyld for danger.

Children destined to Exalt as Chosen of Journeys develop some form of wanderlust, be it a desire to see over the next rise or a need to escape an abusive parent. They become skilled at the travel they enjoy, and they seek to continue the journey no matter the hardships. More, they develop an interest in evolution of character and situations, for every process of change is also a sort of journey. Some Harbingers constantly work to hone their own natures, following their own path as they foresee it; some act as guides on others' paths to enlightenment.

When a Chosen of Journeys has the leisure to support a faction, he sees that it experiences the physical and metaphorical journeys it must. Members of the Bronze Faction help prolong the life of the ailing Realm: they ensure that important communiqués reach the proper eyes, arrange for troubling messages to disappear, smooth travel between monasteries, help the Wyld Hunt find Anathema and improve the safety of incoming tributes. Gold Faction Harbingers strengthen the trade relationships within the Scavenger Lands, keep secure communications between Cult of the Illuminated cells, conceal the journeys of Solar Exalted and improve the success of caravans that

do not profit the Realm. The Chosen of the Maiden of Journeys see other Sidereals' paths even when those paths are hidden.

Caste Markings: Harbingers' eyes have yellow irises, and yellow almost imperceptibly flecks their pupils, which resemble a star-filled night sky. Great expenditure of Peripheral Essence causes the Sign of Journeys to appear on the Chosen's forehead in bright yellow light.

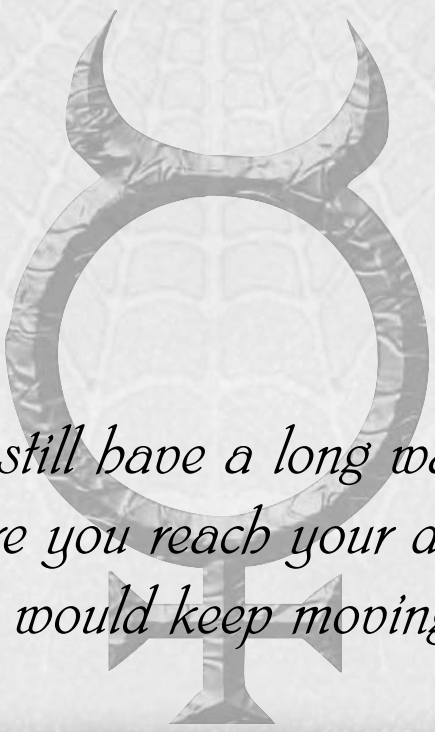
Anima Effect: A Chosen of Journeys reflexively makes the Lesser Sign of Mercury for 10 motes. The Chosen's anima billows outward in a brilliant yellow that touches all those affected. For one scene, the Sidereal and all his allies within (his Essence x 10) yards triple the distance of their Move and Dash action. This affects steeds as well, as long as a creature's feet touch the ground as they travel. Allies enjoy this advantage only as long as they remain within range. With an anima banner in the 11 to 15 mote range, this costs only five motes. If the banner is fully manifest (16+ motes), this costs only one.

Auspicious Abilities: The constellations within the Golden Barque of the Heavens influence the Chosen of Journeys. They are the Captain, the Gull, the Mast, the Messenger and the Ship's Wheel; they provide affinity with Resistance, Ride, Sail, Survival and Thrown.

Associations: The color yellow, the season of winter, the element of Air, the Western direction and the waxing moon.

Sobriquets: Heaven's Messengers, Harbingers

Concepts: Courier for either faction, compulsive explorer, navigator of ships and fleets, wandering troublemaker, caravan master, reformed (or not) bandit, raiding horseman



*You still have a long way to
go before you reach your destiny.
I would keep moving.*



CHOSEN OF SERENITY

Life is pleasure. Life is defined by the series of moments that bring joy and happiness to the people of Creation. The birth of a child, the taking of a lover, the support of a community, the defeat of a rival—these moments shape people and mark the paths into their futures. All aspects of pleasure, from the joy of a wonderful dream to the deep satisfaction of breaking a Great House's legions, fall under Venus's domain. Now, her Chosen oversee the health and happiness of all Creation.

During the First Age, the Chosen of Serenity advised the Solar Deliberative on the health and well-being of Creation's millions of mortals. The Chosen of Serenity examined the Loom of Fate for outbreaks of misfortune and spreading dissatisfaction, alerted provincial governors to the problem and wove destinies of joy to bless the efforts to restore harmony. When the time came to overthrow the mad Solar Exalted, the Joybringers planned the perfect banquet and tied the threads of relaxation to their master's elusive fates.

Creation groaned in misery and grief after the Great Contagion, and the Chosen of Serenity worked hard to return Creation to contentment. The destinies they laid inspired the survivors to rebuild their farms, their cities, their lives and their dreams. The Chosen of Serenity crafted abundant destinies for doctors and courtesans, and recreational trade in all its forms flourished when Joybringers put their hands to the Loom. Their work filled people with hope, making them once again believe that their lot was worth defending—and that they could defend it.

Children destined to become Chosen of Serenity often enjoy their lives more than most people do—or just the opposite. Joybringers find their pleasures in all the small things of life, the moments of peace and the knowledge of another's happiness, but don't neglect the large joys. Some Joybringers focus on the ecstasies of sex and drugs, but more remember the simple contentment of a healthy body and a hale family. They do not seek pleasure for pleasure's sake, but transformation through joy: the realization of destiny through serenity.

When a Chosen of Serenity supports a faction, she oversees its ceremonies and helps it function smoothly. Bronze Faction Joybringers help the people of the Realm and its tributaries stay content and healthy, lend a subtle hand to the eugenics of the Realm's Dragon-Blooded, keep the Blessed Isle's slave population quiet and bring crowds to Immaculate rituals. Gold Faction members



strengthen the Realm's enemies through the same tactics, limiting Immaculate expansion by making local religions and cults more attractive while drawing members and Solars to the Cult of the Illuminated, arranging strategic marriages within the Scavenger Lands and bringing joy and prosperity to any group that accepts Solar leadership. Even other Sidereals need advice on their lives from the Chosen of the Maiden of Serenity.

Caste Markings: Joybringers' eyes have blue irises; tiny star-points of blue spangle their pupils. When they expend Peripheral Essence, the Sign of Serenity shines on the Chosen's forehead in bright blue light.

Anima Effect: A Chosen of Serenity reflexively makes the Lesser Sign of Venus for 10 motes. The Chosen's anima billows outward in a brilliant blue that embraces all those affected. For one scene, the Sidereal and all her allies within (her Essence x 10) yards add (her Essence) successes to all

Performance rolls. Allies enjoy this advantage only as long as they remain within range. With the Sidereal's anima banner in the 11 to 15 mote range, this costs only five motes. If the banner is fully manifest (16+), this costs only one.

Auspicious Abilities: The constellations within the Cerulean Lute of Harmony influence the Chosen of Serenity. They are the Ewer, the Lovers, the Musician, the Peacock and the Pillar; they provide affinity with Craft, Dodge, Linguistics, Performance and Socialize.

Associations: The color blue, the season of spring, the element of Wood, the central direction and the half-moon.

Sobriquets: Heaven's Courtesans, Joybringers

Concepts: Great actress, the queen of whores, calm translator, professional matchmaker, priestess of a fertility cult, recreational pharmacist, a minister of internal affairs, brilliant painter, musician to the gods



*Don't be so sad.
Someone as pretty as you
will always be wanted. I promise.*



CHOSEN OF BATTLES

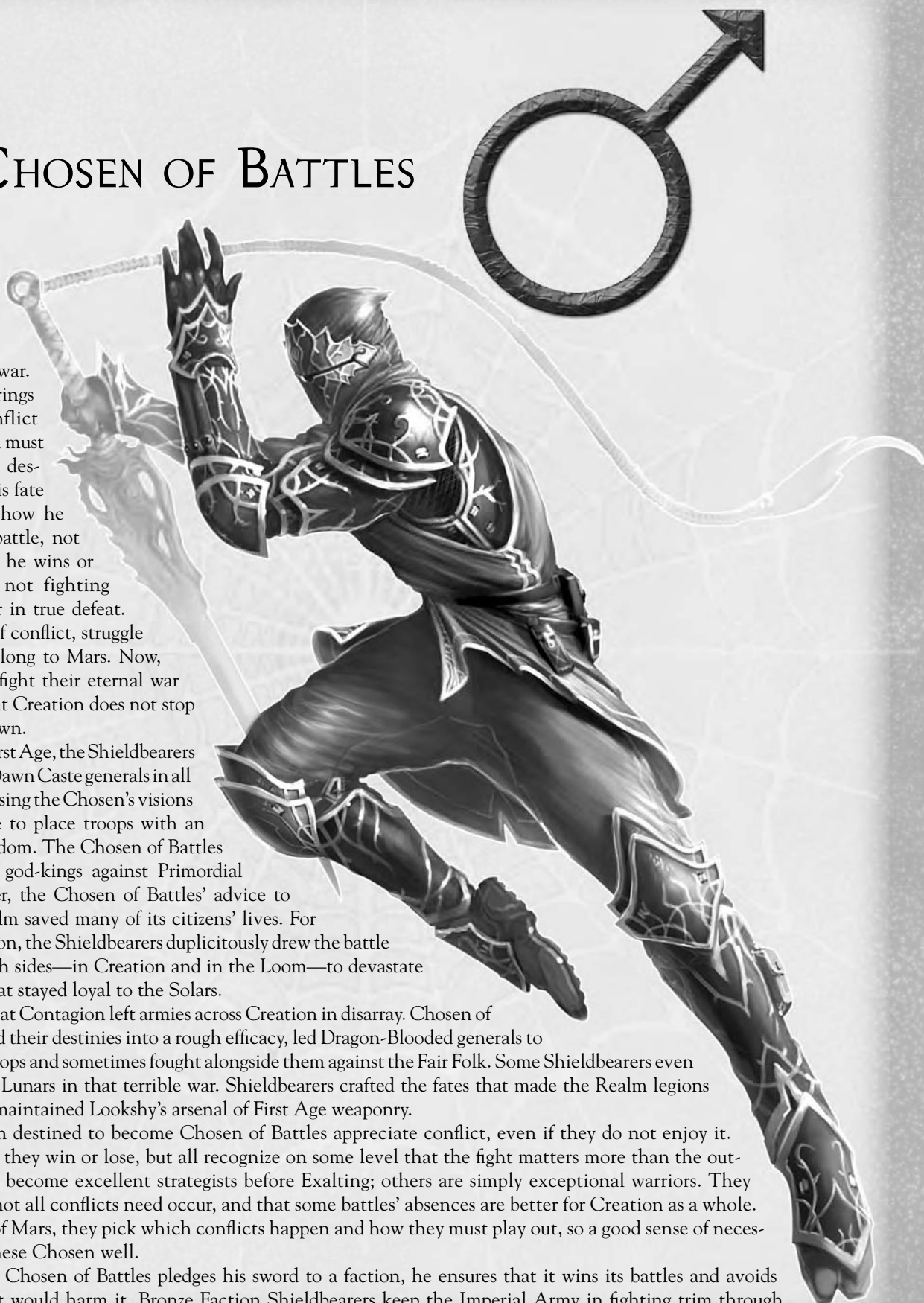
Life is war. Every day brings another conflict that a person must face, or his destiny ends. His fate depends on how he fights each battle, not just whether he wins or loses. Only not fighting ends the war in true defeat. All aspects of conflict, struggle and strife belong to Mars. Now, her Chosen fight their eternal war to ensure that Creation does not stop fighting its own.

In the First Age, the Shieldbearers advised the Dawn Caste generals in all campaigns, using the Chosen's visions of the future to place troops with an uncanny wisdom. The Chosen of Battles guarded the god-kings against Primordial attacks. Later, the Chosen of Battles' advice to the Old Realm saved many of its citizens' lives. For the Usurpation, the Shieldbearers duplicitously drew the battle plans for both sides—in Creation and in the Loom—to devastate the forces that stayed loyal to the Solars.

The Great Contagion left armies across Creation in disarray. Chosen of Battles forced their destinies into a rough efficacy, led Dragon-Blooded generals to leaderless troops and sometimes fought alongside them against the Fair Folk. Some Shieldbearers even stood beside Lunars in that terrible war. Shieldbearers crafted the fates that made the Realm legions mighty and maintained Lookshy's arsenal of First Age weaponry.

Children destined to become Chosen of Battles appreciate conflict, even if they do not enjoy it. Some care if they win or lose, but all recognize on some level that the fight matters more than the outcome. Many become excellent strategists before Exalting; others are simply exceptional warriors. They realize that not all conflicts need occur, and that some battles' absences are better for Creation as a whole. As Chosen of Mars, they pick which conflicts happen and how they must play out, so a good sense of necessity serves these Chosen well.

When a Chosen of Battles pledges his sword to a faction, he ensures that it wins its battles and avoids conflicts that would harm it. Bronze Faction Shieldbearers keep the Imperial Army in fighting trim through



background manipulations, train Immaculate monks in the Five Dragon Paths, teach tactics at the House of Bells, guide Imperial legions to or from battles where they must fall, achieve victory or arrive late. Members of the Gold Faction help the Seventh Legion to remain strong as long as it can, keep the armies of nations that resist the Realm cohesive, train cults and Solars in fighting skills and see that the conflicts of the rest of the world leave stronger nations behind them. Chosen of Battles are admired even among other Sidereals for the Shieldbearers' skill at battle and their understanding of Creation's state of war.

Caste Markings: Red sparks dot the pupils of a Shieldbearer's eyes, surrounded by a blood-red iris. The scarlet Sign of Battles burns on the Chosen's foreheads when they expend great expenditure of Peripheral Essence.

Anima Effect: A Chosen of Battles reflexively makes the Lesser Sign of Mars for 10 motes. The Chosen's anima billows outward in a brilliant scarlet that engulfs all those affected. For one scene, the Sidereal and all his allies within (his Essence x 10) yards reduce the damage they suffer from

all attacks by one level in Step 10 of attack resolution, after damage is rolled; this effect takes place after other such effects (as from starmetal armor) and does not reduce damage below one health level. Allies enjoy this advantage only as long as they remain within range. With the Sidereal's anima banner in the 11 to 15 mote range, this costs only five motes. If the banner is fully manifest (16+), this costs only one.

Auspicious Abilities: The constellations within the Crimson Panoply of Victory influence the Chosen of Battles. They are the Banner, the Gauntlet, the Quiver, the Shield and the Spear; they provide affinity with Archery, Athletics, Melee, Presence and War.

Associations: The color scarlet, the season of summer, the element of Fire, the Eastern direction and the full moon.

Sobriquets: Heaven's Soldiers, Shieldbearers

Concepts: Master strategist, mercenary officer, Immaculate sifu, House of Bells instructor, enforcer of Heaven, demon hunter, legion financier



*The stars hold only
one more battle for you.
This is not that battle. Be gone.*

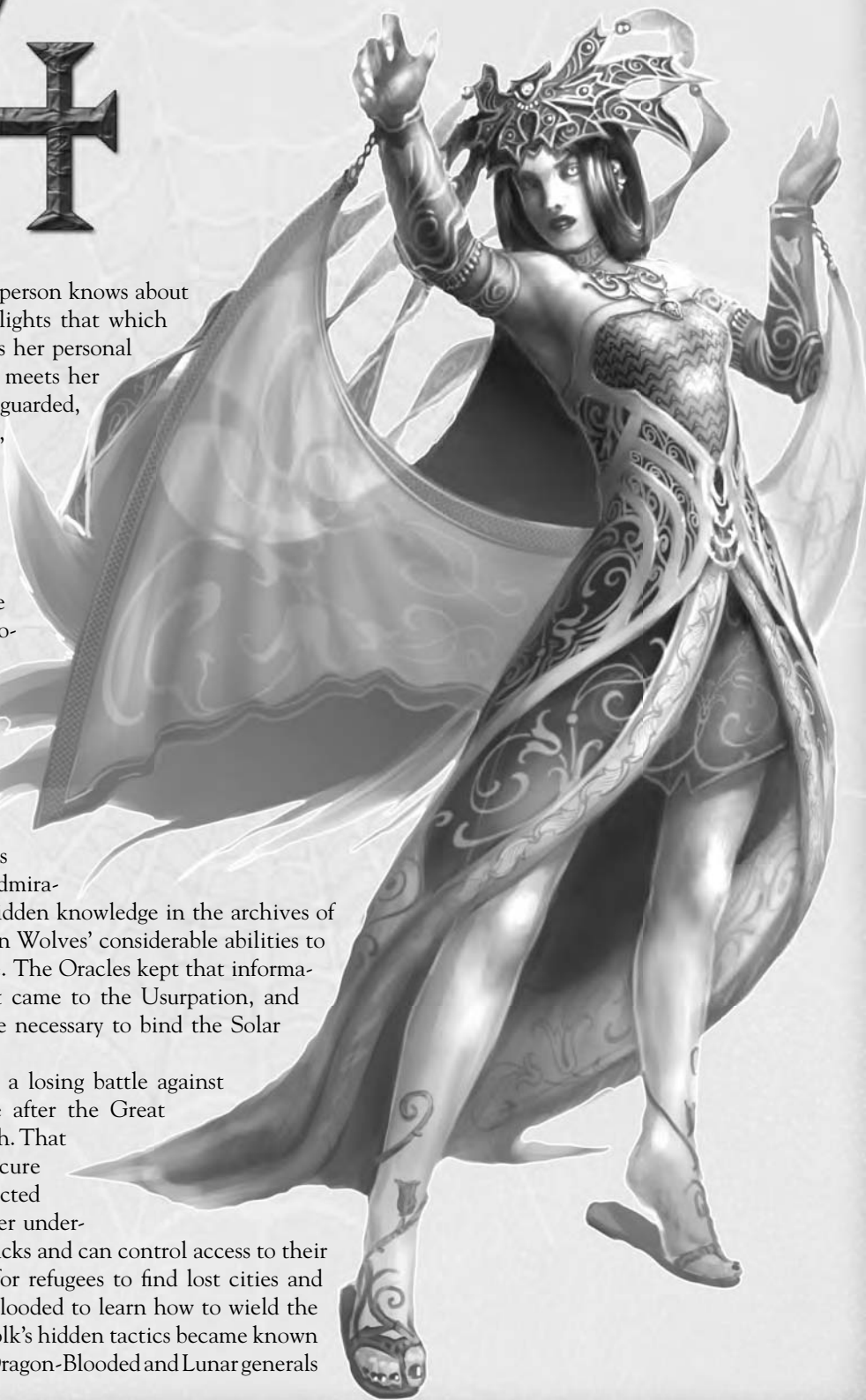
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CHOSEN OF SECRETS

Life is mystery. All that a person knows about herself and her life only highlights that which is unknowable. How she treats her personal mysteries determines how she meets her destiny. Everything hidden or guarded, anything kept from free access, falls under Jupiter's influence. Her Chosen watch over secrets and restricted knowledge, arranging that nothing becomes known or lost before its time.

Before the First Age, the Chosen of Secrets made the Solars' libraries incomparable: these Chosen sought knowledge destined to lie undiscovered and gave it new fates, leading it into the Old Realm's repositories of wisdom. The Chosen of Secrets also served the Night Castes admirably; the Sidereals looked up hidden knowledge in the archives of Heaven to supplement the Iron Wolves' considerable abilities to find criminals against the state. The Oracles kept that information perfectly hidden when it came to the Usurpation, and they discovered the secret lore necessary to bind the Solar Exaltations in the Jade Prison.

Chosen of Secrets fought a losing battle against the destruction of knowledge after the Great Contagion, but they saved much. That information now rests in secure archives in Heaven, so constructed that only the Chosen of Jupiter understand how to navigate their stacks and can control access to their secrets. They wove destinies for refugees to find lost cities and rebuild, and for one Dragon-Blooded to learn how to wield the Sword of Creation. The Fair Folk's hidden tactics became known to the Oracles, and thus to the Dragon-Blooded and Lunar generals fighting the Fair Folk.



Children destined to become Chosen of Secrets find value in knowing and in not knowing. Every person who does not possess a secret lends that secret value, especially if a person seeks it. Some knowledge becomes more powerful when known by many, and some secrets are mighty only with the threat that they might be exposed. Those who Exalt as Oracles learn early that every secret is a weapon finer than any stiletto.

When a Chosen of Secrets supports a faction, she protects its mysteries from outsiders and gathers information for the faction's benefit. Bronze Faction members discover conspiracies to disrupt the Realm's rule, advise the heads of Great Houses from their wise perspectives, instruct at the Heptagram, run the All-Seeing Eye and find Anathema for the Wyld Hunt. Oracles of the Gold Faction conceal signs of the Solar Exalted, draw lost First Age knowledge to the returning Twilights, foster conspiracy and share knowledge with those who advance certain ideals. The Chosen of the Maiden of Secrets are mysterious even among other Sidereals, and the Chosen of Secrets' arcane schemes can be tortuous to unravel.

Caste Markings: The green irises of the Oracles frame pupils flecked with tiny emerald stars. Great expenditures of Peripheral Essence set the Sign of Secrets glowing on the Chosen's forehead in bright green light.

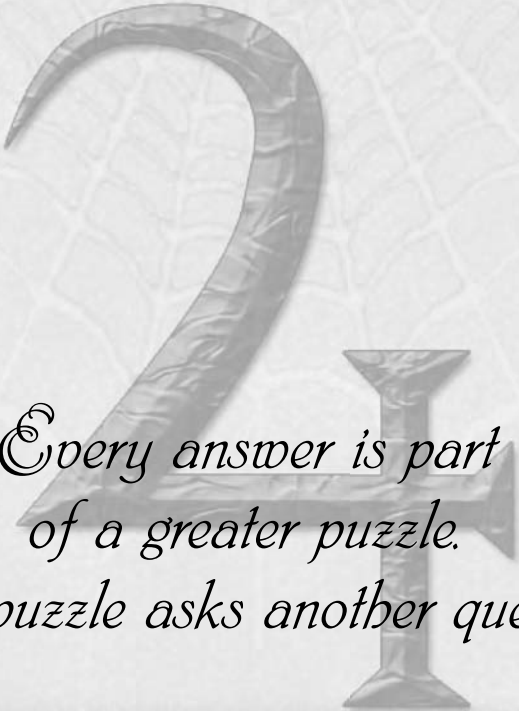
Anima Effect: A Chosen of Secrets reflexively makes the Lesser Sign of Jupiter for 10 motes. The Chosen's anima billows outward in a brilliant green that wafts around all those affected. For one scene, the Sidereal and all her allies within (her Essence x 10) yards are immune to mind-reading and mental attacks from opponents with an Essence less than the Sidereal's. Against other opponents, the Oracle and her allies add (her Essence) to their Mental Defense Values. Allies enjoy this advantage only as long as they remain within range. With the Sidereal's anima banner in the 11 to 15 mote range, this costs only five motes. If the banner is fully manifest (16+ motes), this costs only one.

Auspicious Abilities: The constellations within the Forbidding Manse of Ivy influence the Chosen of Secrets. They are the Guardians, the Key, the Mask, the Sorcerer and the Treasure Trove; they provide affinity with Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Stealth.

Associations: The color green, the time of Calibration, the element of Water, the Northern direction and the new moon.

Sobriquets: Heaven's Eyes, Oracles

Concepts: Undercover agent of either faction, Wyld Hunt director, speaker-to-demons, All-Seeing Eye spymaster, power behind the throne, mentor to a Solar Exalted, devious crime lord



*Every answer is part
of a greater puzzle.
The puzzle asks another question.*



CHOSEN OF ENDINGS

Life is in the endings. A person does not change without letting aspects of him die, abandoned and left behind by the passage of time and the realization of fate. He can meet his destiny only by leaving a hundred endings behind him; seen in this light, death is only another ending and another step written in the stars. All endings, from the last step of the shortest journey to the end of the Scarlet Empress's rule, belong to Saturn. At her command, her Chosen serve this grim aspect of destiny and ensure all endings occur at the proper times.

In the First Age, Chosen of Endings smoothed all necessary endings from behind the scenes. They arranged the funerals over which the Zenith Caste presided, ensured that apples fell easily from the tree, killed diseases and saw negotiations ended appropriately in peace or in war. The Chosen of Endings planned the Solars' mass murder with a casual ease that shocked even the Sidereals' dedicated allies.

The Great Contagion cut millions of lives short before their times, ending countless families, business endeavors, creative projects and kingdoms too early. The Reckoners worked for a time with the Chosen of Serenity to replace some of the destinies that could otherwise not be fulfilled; the Reckoners also ruthlessly eliminated the Contagion's last vestiges, going so far as to destroy entire cities that harbored the disease. When the Fair Folk Invasion ended, the Chosen of Endings went



on the offensive to quietly kill as many of the invaders' generals as possible.

Children destined to become Chosen of Endings develop a fascination with any complete cessation. It often manifests as a morbid preoccupation with death, and some spend early years killing small animals and ending friendships to better examine the phenomenon. They learn that the word "ending" is a misnomer, a word oft- but ill-used for change. Every ending is just a transition into the next moment, and the Reckoners bring that understanding to their work.

When a Reckoner ends her neutrality to support a faction, she governs the conclusions of the faction's affairs. Bronze Faction Reckoners watch over Immaculate funeral rites, slay Anathema, smooth over the end of one reign or dynasty for the beginning of the next and help the Dragon-Blooded eugenics program in their own fashion. Members of the Gold Faction work to end the Bronze Faction, stop the Wyld Hunt and dismantle the Scarlet Empire. Chosen of Endings unnerve even other Sidereals by the Reckoners' acceptance of death and irrevocable conclusions.

Caste Markings: Reckoners' eyes have violet irises, and violet almost imperceptibly flecks their pupils, which resemble a star-filled night sky. Great expenditures of Peripheral Essence cause the Sign of Endings to appear on the Chosen's forehead in bright violet light.

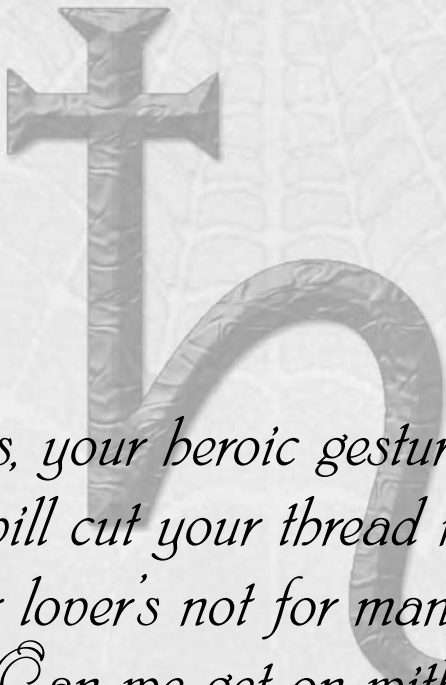
Anima Effect: A Chosen of Endings reflexively makes the Lesser Sign of Saturn for 10 motes. The Chosen's anima billows outward in a brilliant violet that clings to all those affected. For one scene, the Sidereal and all his allies within (his Essence x 10) yards add one level of damage to all attacks they make, applied in Step 10 of attack resolution after damage is rolled; this effect adds no damage to an attack that otherwise inflicts no levels of damage. Allies enjoy this advantage only as long as they remain within range. With the Sidereal's anima banner in the 11 to 15 mote range, this costs only five motes. If the banner is fully manifest (16+), this costs only one.

Auspicious Abilities: The constellations within the Violet Bier of Sorrows influence the Chosen of Endings. They are the Corpse, the Crow, the Haywain, the Rising Smoke and the Sword; they provide affinity with Awareness, Bureaucracy, Integrity, Martial Arts and Medicine.

Associations: The color violet, the season of autumn, the element of Earth, the Southern direction and the waning moon.

Sobriquets: Heaven's Gardeners, Reckoners

Concepts: Physician who ends diseases and ailing lives, master of funerals, assassin, character assassin, revolutionary, martial arts sifu, internal affairs investigator for a Realm bureaucracy



*Yes, your heroic gesture means
I will cut your thread now and
your lover's not for many years.
Can we get on with it?*



RULES AND SORCERY

ANIMA EFFECTS

All Sidereal Exalted can channel Essence through their animas to generate common effects. This is inefficient compared to natural Charms and sorcery, but it is a reflexive and natural action from the moment of Exaltation on.

A Sidereal can spend a single mote of Essence to do the following:

- Make her caste mark obvious for one minute, as if the character had spent eight to 10 motes of Peripheral Essence. The caste mark shines with the symbol and color of her Maiden.
- Know the exact time and date by sensing the position of celestial bodies.
- Attune her anima to the ripples cast by doorways between worlds. For the rest of the scene, the character recognizes the presence of gateways to Heaven or Malfeas within (her Essence x 100) feet. She does not learn the gateway's location, only that it is present.

SIDEREAL ANIMA BANNERS

Peripheral Essence
Expenditure, Motes
1-3

Effect

The caste mark glitters and may be seen from certain angles. Characters whose players succeed at a difficulty 3 (Perception + Awareness) roll notice the caste mark. It may be covered to eliminate any chance of notice.

4-7

The caste mark burns brightly, visible upon a single success on a (Perception + Awareness) roll. The caste mark may still be covered. The character suffers a +1 difficulty to Sidereal astrology effect rolls and gains one Paradox if wearing a resplendent destiny.

8-10

The caste mark burns brightly and is evident to any who look, though it may still be effectively covered. The character's anima acquires a dim glow, visible in darkness or against contrasting colors. Stealth rolls are made at a +2 difficulty, but Stealth Charms function normally. The character suffers a +2 difficulty to Sidereal astrology effect

rolls and gains three Paradox if wearing a resplendent destiny; resplendent destinies recede.

11-15

The caste mark shines through any concealment. An aura in the color of the character's patron surrounds the character. Stealth becomes impossible; Stealth Charms and Stealth-oriented college effects automatically fail. Other penalties from the previous level of expenditure remain.

16+

A burning halo of light sheathes the character, bright enough to read by out to a stone-cast away. It has no imagery, being a simple but brilliant glow in the color of the character's Maiden. Penalties from the previous level of expenditure remain. The anima remains at this level for the rest of the scene.

FLAWED FATES

The death curse of the slain Primordials resonated through Creation. The Solar Exalted bore the brunt, but none of the Exalted escaped unscathed. In the Maidens' Chosen, the Great Curse manifests as a *Flawed Fate*. The Flawed Fate is a kink in the threads of the Sidereal's fate. The Flawed Fate changes a chapter of the story written for her in the Loom, placing a restriction on the character's short-term fate that she must abide for the duration of a session. Regardless of how the character's fate changes, it is unalterable. Sidereals can see destinies set upon them by the Great Curse in the Loom of Fate as well as they see the rest of their futures, but it looks like no more than any other fate that the Sidereal cannot avoid—it is immune to tampering.

Seers gain Limit from three sources: A Sidereal gains one point of Limit when she spends a point of Willpower to act against her primary Virtue. She increases her Limit by one when she resists unnatural mental influence, though no more than once per scene. When she affects fate in a manner counter to her primary Virtue, she rolls (her Virtue) dice and each success adds one point to her Limit; 10s count as two successes as normal. Using Essence Auspicious and other Charms that change the destinies of others count as affecting fate, as do any astrological manipulations the character can make.

It is also the Chosen of the Maidens' fates to suffer greater flaws when they gather in numbers. When a Sidereal must roll her Virtue to accrue Limit in the presence of other Sidereals, she adds a number of dice to the roll based on the following chart.

Total Sidereals	Additional Dice
6–10	+1
11–90	+2
91–100	+3

When a Chosen of Fate reaches 10 Limit (or overflows), her Limit track resets to zero, and her fate irrevocably changes as dictated by the Great Curse and her caste. Each Sidereal suffers from a Flawed Fate dictated by her caste and situation; she does not become possessed by the Flawed Fate, but it shows up in her actions. To the Sidereal's eyes, it becomes her fate to argue for some action or trigger some event; she goes further, rationalizing that it would not be in her fate if it were not her idea and she wouldn't have had the idea if it didn't have some merit. Sidereals' Flawed Fates affect their stories and function on that scale: a Flawed Fate lasts for one episode, usually a single game session.

Chosen of Journeys

Harbingers' Flawed Fates drive them to advocate, seek or cause the greatest journeys they can conceive. At the Great Convocation, this led some to support the Usurpation because of the vast journey Creation would have to take and others because of the journeys the Usurpation would give them.

Chosen of Serenity

Joybringers' Flawed Fates lead them to advocate, seek or cause moments of extreme happiness in their own and others' lives. At the Great Convocation, some backed the Usurpation because of the joy it would bring the Dragon-Blooded, the moments of intense relief when a mortal escaped certain death or the frisson of their peers. Some actually believed the Usurpation would make Creation a happier and healthier place.

Chosen of Battles

Shieldbearers' Flawed Fates force them to advocate, seek or cause ever-greater conflicts. At the Great Convocation, this made some support the Usurpation because of the decades of war and difficulties that would follow; others just wanted to add fuel to the fire at the Convocation.

Chosen of Secrets

Oracles' Flawed Fates inspire them to advocate, seek or cause the wielding of their most powerful secrets to their greatest effects. At the Great Convocation, some argued for the Usurpation because it would afford them an opportunity to exercise their knowledge of the Jade Prison or hidden schemes to topple the Solar Exalted. Others knew that they would never get an opportunity to explore the power of some secrets until the Solars were no longer the Sidereals' masters.

Chosen of Endings

Reckoners' Flawed Fates make them advocate, seek or cause the greatest endings with the most meaningful changes. At the Great Convocation, this moved some to forward the Usurpation because it was the greatest possible

ending or because the suggestion would end the Sidereals' unity. Some might have agreed to the Usurpation because they foresaw an even greater ending far in the future, from which there is no return.

ARCANE FATE

The Five-Score Fellowship has concealed its existence from post-Usurpation Creation at every opportunity. Strong sorcery and irresistible astrological effects make the Five-Score Fellowship nearly immune to serious scrutiny and pulls them from the memories of the weak-minded. Some of these efforts have become an integral part of the Loom of Fate, forever occluding the Chosen of the Maidens from others' minds. The effect has unintentionally become involuntary, but few Sidereal Exalted fail to take advantage of what they call their Arcane Fate.

Arcane Fate has several effects. A Sidereal adds +3 dice to all Performance, Presence, Socialize and Larceny dice pools used to masquerade under a false persona. Mortals accept without qualms a Sidereal who presents herself as a Guild factor, a minor nobleman or an Immaculate monk. The character also takes on other appearances easily: the difficulty of any (Intelligence + Larceny) roll for disguise is always 1. These bonuses only allow the character to represent himself as someone who doesn't exist; attempts to appear as an existing individual have no dice bonus and use normal difficulties.

The Sidereal is easy to overlook, in person and in memory. People suffer a -3 internal penalty on any attempt to spot a Sidereal, even if the Vizier does not actively avoid notice. A Seer also has a good façade but little convincing substance: she suffers a -3 internal penalty on any attempts to build relationships, trust or love with mortals. Only long familiarity (represented by the Acquaintances Background, pp. 102-103) leaves any lasting mark on mortals.

False identities are integral to the Sidereals' fates. A Sidereal gains +3 bonus dice when disguising herself as a resplendent destiny she has donned. Resplendent destinies are a way for Sidereals to temporarily become memorable in Creation; see Chapter Six for more information.

Finally, Creation readily forgets Sidereals—their personas or their actual selves. Arcane Fate makes it almost a certainty that people and objects governed by the Loom will let the Sidereal slip from their minds. This aspect of Arcane Fate is a Shaping effect that affects mortals, Exalted and most gods equally. A character's Familiars and Acquaintances are immune, as are all Sidereals, all officials and functionaries of the Bureau of Destiny, all Celestial gods and any creatures outside of fate.

As long as the Sidereal remains present, anyone aware of her can remember her. Once she leaves, memories of her slip from the minds of anyone who met her. Only powerful wills can grip the memory strongly enough to resist this

insidious destiny. When an affected character tries to remember the Sidereal, his player makes a (Wits + Integrity) roll for the struggle. The roll is at difficulty 1 but suffers a -3 internal penalty as a mind struggles against fate. The player rolls each time his character tries to remember until he has made (Sidereal's Essence) successful rolls or failed once. Failure on any roll indicates that the character forgets about the Sidereal and his interaction with her. If forced to think about what went on at that time, his mind creates a plausible substitute that edits out the Sidereal or replaces her with someone else. If any single roll turns up more successes than the Sidereal's Essence rating, that character can remember the event without any future rolls.

Keep in mind that if an Exalt has any reason to doubt his memory, he might be able to apply Excellencies to his attempt to remember. Even if a person has conclusively forgotten about a Sidereal, another character who remembers can try to remind him, and thereby give his player another roll. Thus, a Solar circle or a Lunar pack are more likely than any single character to retain memories of Sidereal encounters.

Being present is not the same as being "in sight." A Sidereal who alerts guards to her presence puts up with wary sentries for the rest of the night; but most people in the fortress will forget her by morning.

For inanimate objects, such as reports about the Sidereal, journal entries detailing a meeting or even ledger entries regarding a sale to her, the Storyteller rolls a single die for every season after the event. Once the die comes up a success, the relevant record of the Sidereal's existence is forever lost. Because of this, Investigation and Bureaucracy rolls to learn about or track

ARCANE FATE:

A STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE

Who remembers and who fails to remember a Sidereal character and who's made how many rolls end up being a lot of paperwork. Your secret technique is to just skip it. Extras and unimportant characters forget the Sidereal, unless they have a spectacular (Wits + Integrity) pool. Important Storyteller characters remember the Sidereal unless they have a terrible (Wits + Integrity). If players have to worry about remembering a Sidereal, have them mark down how many rolls they've made on their sheets so you don't have to do the work.

Do as little work as you have to—after all, you're already running the entire damn world.



down the character suffer a -3 internal penalty; even the forest forgets the Exalt, applying a -3 internal penalty to Survival rolls on tracking.

Wearing a resplendent destiny makes a Sidereal easier to remember. Nobody rolls to recall a resplendent destiny. People who are immune to Arcane Fate always see the character as herself.

SPELLS

The knowledge that the Sidereal Exalted preserve from the Old Realm includes a good deal of sorcery—particularly a spell that makes training young Siderials much easier to accomplish.

GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

Cost: 25 motes

Target: Touched creature

This spell directly transfers knowledge from the sorcerer to the subject. It consists of an hour-long ritual

during which the sorcerer and subject must be in physical contact. In a deep trance for the duration, small points of light flow from the caster to his target. The spell can impart a specific memory or experience, or provide an understanding of a mechanical trait (Attributes, Abilities, specialties, spells, Charms and Combos). Using this spell eliminates all training time to increase the chosen trait, as long as the caster's rating in that trait is greater than the subject's. The only trait this Charm cannot affect is Essence.

The subject must be able to pay the experience point cost for improving the trait and can only improve a trait by one dot per invocation of the spell. Gift of Knowledge does not grant the ability to learn traits normally inaccessible: a mortal cannot learn Celestial Circle spells and a Dragon-Blood cannot learn Sidereal Charms.





OKAY, RISA,
JUST HOLD THE
GUTS IN. BATTLE'S
ALMOST
OVER.

IT'S
ALREADY
OVER FOR YOU,
DRAGON-
BITCH.

OH GREAT.
DIDN'T ANYBODY
KILL YOU
ALREADY?

HA! NOT YET!
THERE'S STILL
TIME FOR YOU
TO KISS MY
CLEAVER.

I'VE SEEN
BIGGER.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

OOF!



STOP.



WHAT
ARE YOU
SUPPOSED
TO BE?

BAH! I'LL
ASK YOUR
GHOST
INSTEAD!



LIEUTENANT
V'NEEF RISA?

IT'S JUST
RISA NOW.
WHO—

GOOD
ENOUGH.



WHAT?
WHO ARE
YOU?

CAPTAIN
DACE GOT YOUR
MESSAGE. HE'S
ON HIS WAY
HERE NOW.

WHEN HE
ARRIVES,
PLEASE GIVE HIM
A MESSAGE
FOR ME.

TELL
HIM WE'RE
EVEN.



CHAPTER FIVE CHARMS

The Five Maidens themselves designed these Charms to empower their agents of destiny. Sidereal Charms generally function the same way Solar Charms do and obey all of the principles of Charm design outlined in Chapter Five of the **Exalted** core rulebook. Most Sidereal Charms show comparable power to Solar Charms; the Excellencies form the chief exception. Sidereal Charms often take an eerie, oblique approach to their underlying Abilities, however. Sidereal Charms also have a high proportion of Simple Charms—self-contained miracles that may bundle together two or more effects.

All Sidereal Charms are grouped first by the Maiden who created them, and then by the Abilities favored by the agents of that Maiden. Each Ability is associated in turn with a constellation and its presiding god and college of pattern spiders. Each stellar god has taken to heart a single story from the ancient scriptures of the Five Maidens that were written long ago on the Loom of Fate. Meditation on these scriptures can give insight into hidden aspects of

Creation, the Maidens and the Charm tree associated with that constellation.

Only the Maidens themselves could devise these means of influencing the Tapestry of Creation without snarling it beyond repair, and only they have the power to design new Charms that fall outside the scope of those listed here. Over the millennia, the Maidens have devised new Charms as they became necessary, creating new branches to the original trees. This happens very rarely, though.

Sidereal characters who need greater or more varied powers, especially against creatures and characters outside fate, can turn to sorcery or supernatural martial arts. The Seers can learn a wide variety of spells through Department 137 of the Forbidding Manse of Ivy (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**, p. 28). The Sidereals also possess unequaled aptitude for the martial arts. The Seers devote so much effort to mastering powerful martial arts styles that they have a distinct Background related to this (see p. 107). This book describes the introductory Celestial martial art called

the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style (beginning on p. 180). **Scroll of the Monk** describes several more martial arts, including awesomely powerful styles that the Sidereals have kept for themselves ever since the Usurpation.

CREATURES OUTSIDE OF FATE

The Loom of Fate has power over everything born of Creation. Some entities, however, come from realms outside Creation; the Loom does not dictate the laws of their existence. As Primordials, Gaia and Autochthon are outside fate's purview; as former Primordials, so are the Yozis and Neverborn. They, in turn, define the reality of their greater servants: the Alchemical Exalted, Third and Second Circle demons, the Deathlords and the malign entities of the Underworld called hekatonkhires. Noble Fair Folk are laws unto themselves. Creatures native to the further reaches of the Wyld, such as gryphons, count as creatures outside of fate. Some behemoths, as direct creations of the Primordials or great Fair Folk nobles, also qualify. Lesser entities such as First Circle demons, ghosts, hobgoblins and Wyld mutants, however, either retain vestigial connections to Creation or lack the power (or patronage) to resist the Loom of Fate. In such cases, the Storyteller decides whether a particular class of entity falls within fate's purview.

NEW KEYWORDS

The following new keywords are applicable to some Sidereal Charms. These terms represent certain qualities or conditions specific to and inherent in the noted Charms' Sidereal nature.

Fate: Against most targets, a Sidereal Charm works just as written. The Sidereal plays the strands of the victim's fate exactly as the Sidereal intends. Some Sidereal Charms, however, have a modified effect (sometimes no effect at all) against creatures outside of fate, and receive this keyword as a reminder of their limited utility. As general guidelines, Sidereal Charms cannot cause such beings to lose or gain temporary Willpower directly or indirectly. A Sidereal Charm cannot inflict unnatural mental influence on such creatures or transport such beings from one location to another. When a Charm inflicts effects in addition to any of these listed here, those additional effects still apply normally to beings outside fate.

Maiden: Before a character can learn a Charm with this keyword, she must obtain special permission from one of the Five Maidens or from their deputies, the five gods who administer the divisions of the Bureau of Destiny. This is typically because the Charm in question can force a god to obey the character. The Bureau of Heaven witnesses every use of these Charms in Creation and records each use in

the character's file. If the Charm was not used to advance a plan sanctioned by the Bureau of Destiny, the character has committed an offense whose Severity is at least equal to the Essence Minimum of the Charm. The character might not face an audit immediately, but when the character *does* get in trouble, the improper exploitation of gods will be added to the charges. Indeed, the character may need to justify any use of these Charms, if a bureaucratic enemy decides to make trouble for the character.

Prayer Strip: Each Sidereal Charm tree culminates in a powerful Charm that has a special connection to the scripture of that constellation and Ability. To perform that Charm, a Sidereal must write that scripture on a prayer strip and infuse it with Essence. Without the right prayer strip, the Charm cannot be used.

When a character activates a Charm with this keyword, the prayer strip he uses becomes noticeable to magic-detecting powers such as All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight (see **Exalted**, p. 222) or Telltale Symphony (see p. 169). What once was normal paper and ink becomes immune to bashing damage and gains a lethal soak of 10, as well as 25 health levels, for as long as the Charm's duration lasts. The strip can reflexively block or dodge all attacks—even ones that are normally unblockable—with a value equal to the character's own unmodified Defense Value. (A prayer strip can *either* parry *or* dodge, based on whether it is immobile or free-floating.) If attacks can get past this Defense Value, overcome a strip's soak and eventually inflict enough damage to destroy the strip, the Charm that requires the strip's use ends immediately.

CREATING PRAYER STRIPS

Creating a usable prayer strip Charm calls for paper and ink of the highest quality—a Resources 2 purchase. Each strip takes six hours to write and requires a successful roll of (Dexterity + Linguistics) or (Dexterity + Craft [Air]) at difficulty 2. A character with the appropriate materials can create a prayer strip on the fly as a miscellaneous action (Speed 5, DV -2), but the difficulty of the roll rises to 4.

Until a character uses the prayer strip to activate a Charm, a prayer strip remains normal, if expensive, paper and ink. If something damages the strip or makes it unreadable, a Sidereal cannot use it to activate its associated Charm. A Sidereal cannot use prayer strips scribed by anyone else.

Virtue (Name): Just as any Exalted character, a Sidereal may channel a point of Willpower through a Virtue for bonus dice on an important action that resonates with the ideals of that Virtue. (See **Exalted**, p. 102.) Some Sidereal Charms are considered to always resonate with the ideals of certain Virtues. Simply using such a Charm reinforces



the Virtue's value in Creation. Therefore, any roll related to the Charm's use—be it a granted extra action, an action the Charm supplements or any other roll mentioned in the Charm's description—can benefit in this way from bonus dice gained by channeling the specific Virtue named in the keyword. Channeling Willpower through the Virtue for a Charm *does* count against the maximum number of times per story a character may channel Willpower through that Virtue. On the other hand, channeling a Virtue this way does *not* count as dice added through Charms.

BACKGROUNDS GAINED THROUGH CHARMS

A number of Sidereal Charms confer Backgrounds on their users, such as Acquaintance or Familiar. Normally, these Backgrounds last only for one story, and then fade away. But what if a Vizier (or her player) wants to keep a particular animal companion or mortal friend? Storytellers have two options. These are, indeed, two options for handling any Backgrounds gained in play.

First, the player can spend experience points: three points per dot of the Background. Alternatively, the character can simply make an extra effort to make the temporary association pleasant for the person or animal—or at least rewarding in some fashion—so it wants to continue the relationship begun by the Charm. The character retains the Background as long as both sides find the arrangement agreeable.

In the latter case, new Backgrounds tend to be fragile: the Storyteller can take them away through circumstances

of plot as easily as they were gained. In the former case, the Storyteller should grant purchased Backgrounds a degree of "plot immunity." Acquaintances remain friendly even if they haven't seen the Sidereal in a long time; animal familiars don't just get sick and die, or get eaten by predators. The Loom of Fate (in the person of the Storyteller) has made these familiars part of the character's ongoing legend, just as the daiklave she took from her First Age incarnation's tomb.

Either approach is valid, or both. The Storyteller should tell players which method or methods apply in a series.

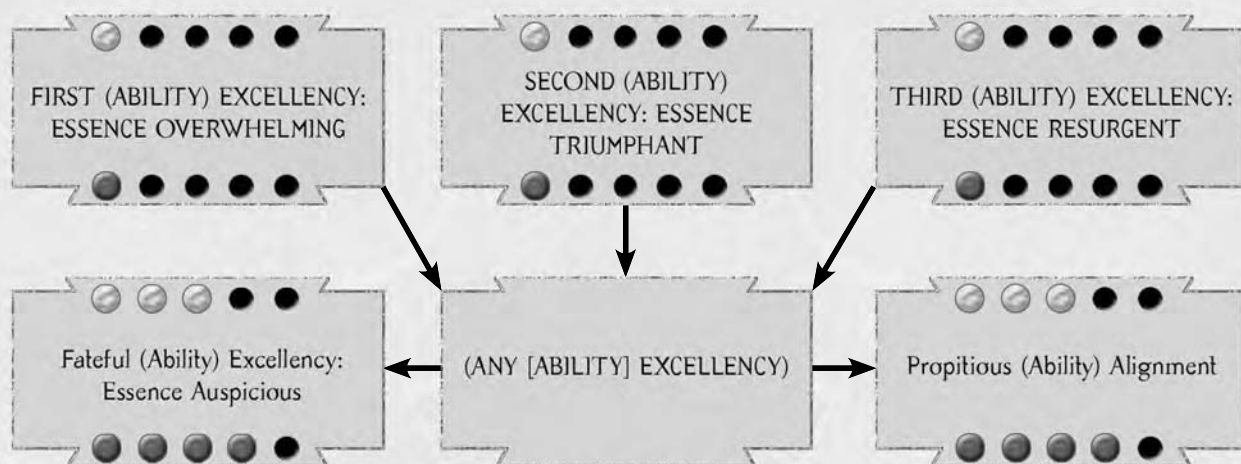
GENERAL CHARMS

EXCELLENCIES AND RELATED CHARMS

The three basic Excellencies function for Sidereals much as they do for Solars. Essence Overwhelming and Essence Triumphant add dice or bonus successes (respectively). A Sidereal, however, cannot add more dice or bonus successes than her permanent Essence score. If a Sidereal character suffers a dice-pool penalty, however, she may still spend motes with Essence Overwhelming to bring her dice pool back up to zero dice before spending an additional number equal to her Essence to add extra dice.

The Third Excellency, Essence Resurgent, works for Sidereals exactly as it does for Solars—except it costs only three motes to activate.

Sidereals also have access to the following Excellency-like Charms:



FATEFUL (ABILITY) EXCELLENCY—

ESSENCE AUSPICIOUS

Cost: 1m+; **Mins:** (Ability) 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any (Ability) Excellency

The target number of any dice roll using the chosen Ability decreases by one for every mote the player spends. For one mote, any roll of 6 or higher becomes a success; two motes grant success on rolls of 5 or higher. This Excellency cannot reduce a target number below 4.

Alternatively, the player can spend one Willpower point and enough Essence to reduce the target number to 3. This grants an “auspicious success”: the player forgoes the actual roll but transforms every die in the dice pool into an automatic success instead.

If the player declares in Step 2 of attack resolution that he wants to purchase an auspicious success for a defensive Ability, the expenditure of one Willpower and enough Essence to lower the target number to 3 doubles his appropriate Defense Value against that attack.

PROPTITIOUS (ABILITY) ALIGNMENT

Cost: 2m+, 1wp; **Mins:** (Ability) 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any (Ability) Excellency

By tuning her Essence to resonate with one of the 25 constellations and its corresponding astrological college, a Sidereal can attune herself to a particular Ability and use its first three Excellencies with greater efficiency. Each two motes committed to this Charm reduce the mote cost for the first three Excellencies, to a minimum of zero. A character may never spend more than twice her permanent Essence on this Charm; and an Exalt may employ only one Propitious (Ability) Alignment at a time.

Propitious (Ability) Alignment is incompatible with the Fateful Excellency: while employing this Charm, one cannot apply Essence Auspicious to any dice pool involving that Ability. If a character does so, the Propitious Alignment immediately ends. On the other hand, every dot a character has in an Ability's corresponding astrological college reduces the cost of Propitious (Ability) Alignment by one mote, to a minimum of 1. Thus, a Sidereal with Essence 3 and four levels of the Mask could spend two motes, and get the same results as if she spent six motes on Propitious Stealth Alignment.

In every other way, Propitious (Ability) Alignment follows the same rules as Infinite (Ability) Mastery.

JOURNEYS: THE GOLDEN BARQUE OF HEAVEN RESISTANCE: THE MAST

OX-BODY TECHNIQUE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

Just as all Exalted, Sidereals gain extra health levels with each purchase of this Charm. Each health level gained thus helps a Sidereal operate at maximum efficiency in spite of his wounds for just a little bit longer. A player may purchase this Charm for his character up to once per dot of the Resistance Ability his character possesses. Each purchase grants the character one additional -0 health level.

WATER AND FIRE TREATY

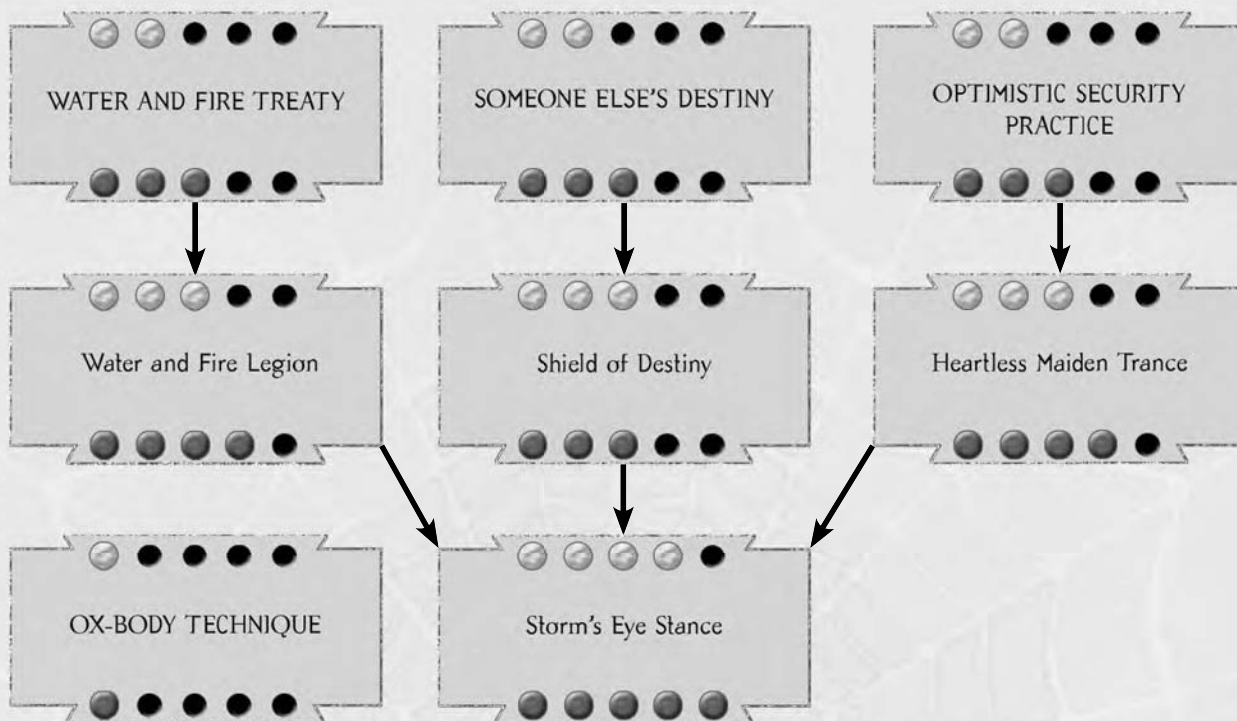
Cost: 5m, 1wp, 1bhl; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: None



The Sidereal buys protection from one element through a sacrifice of pain to one of that element's gods. Despite the name, a Seer can gain protection from any one element at a time, not just water or fire. To activate this Charm, the Sidereal must touch a sample of the chosen element, such as a hearth-fire, a bucket of water, a tree, the ground or a passing breeze. As long as the character keeps Essence committed to the Charm, that element cannot harm her. Water cannot drown, freeze or boil her; fire cannot burn her, nor desert heat give her sunstroke; plants do not hinder her, poison her or tear her flesh with their thorns; and so on.

WATER AND FIRE LEGION

Cost: 8m, 1wp, 1ahl; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Maiden, Mandate, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Until next Calibration

Prerequisite Charms: Water and Fire Treaty

By sacrificing a bit of her flesh and Essence, a Vizier can bind an elemental to protect a location and its people, potentially for almost a year. The Sidereal needs a powerful manifestation of the chosen element, such as a burning house, a rushing stream, a gale, the depths of a cave or an old-growth forest. The Sidereal's player rolls (Charisma + Resistance) with a difficulty equal to the sum of the Essence of the elemental he wants to bind and the Magnitude of the dominion he wants protected (as defined in the Mandate of Heaven system; see the **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**). Sidereals have a +2 bonus when dealing with spirits of the element associated with their Maiden, and this does not count toward dice gained from Charms.

SOMEONE ELSE'S DESTINY

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the Sidereal is exposed to a drug or poison, intentionally or unawares, she can lock it away as a memorandum attached to her fate and pass that memorandum off on someone else.

At the drug or poison's first damage interval (see **Exalted**, p. 130), the Sidereal can reflexively activate this Charm instead of trying to resist the poison. Her player rolls (Stamina + Resistance). If the roll succeeds, the effect of the substance separates entirely from the Sidereal's fate but remains in orbit around it. The substance remains suspended thus until the next time the Sidereal successfully attacks someone in close combat and her player rolls at least one die of lethal or aggravated damage. Whether the damage roll succeeds or not, the orbiting memorandum transfers to the victim of the attack, whereupon the substance's effects kick in immediately as if the victim had originally ingested the poison or drug himself.

The Sidereal can contain only one deleterious substance at a time: using this Charm twice results in the first toxin's effect returning to the Sidereal. The transfer of a poison is automatic, beyond the Sidereal's control.

SHIELD OF DESTINY

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 8)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Someone Else's Destiny

The Sidereal snares his opponents' fates in combat and uses them to safeguard his own. If an attack should damage the Sidereal while he is thus defended, that damage transfers to one of the opponents whose fate the Sidereal has ensnared.

The Sidereal's player may activate this Charm after damage for a successful attack is rolled, but before it is applied. The player rolls (Dexterity + Resistance). For every two successes this roll garners—up to a maximum equal to the levels of damage the attack actually inflicted—the player subtracts one health level from the damage the Sidereal should take and inflicts it instead on his attacker or one of his attacker's present allies. This transferred damage cannot be dodged, parried or soaked except by powers that let a character dodge even undodgeable attacks, parry unblockable attacks or prevent all damage from attacks. If the target does so, neither the Sidereal nor the target suffers the damage. The Sidereal can transfer damage to only one target per attack. He transfers bashing damage as bashing damage, and lethal or aggravated damage as lethal damage.

OPTIMISTIC SECURITY PRACTICE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal catches the destinies of weapons or other sources of damage in a net of Essence. This Charm raises her bashing, lethal and aggravated soak by an amount equal to her Essence. In addition, opponents whose Essence is lower than the Sidereal's Compassion must spend one Willpower point any time they take an action intended to damage or disable her. (This expenditure must be separate from Willpower spent for bonus successes or to channel Virtues.) If an opponent does not do so, the action fails automatically.

The Sidereal cannot benefit from this Charm while she is wearing armor.

HEARTLESS MAIDEN TRANCE

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Optimistic Security Practice

The Sidereal enfolds her heart in a pocket of emptiness that separates her heart from Creation. When she does so, she dispenses with the need to breathe, eat or drink, as well as her normal susceptibility to disease, poison, degenerative effects, temperature extremes or exposure. While her heart remains hidden, she suffers no penalties resulting from adverse environmental conditions or impairments to normal



body function. Fatigue penalties (from exertion or armor) no longer bother her. She cannot be knocked unconscious. She still suffers damage as normal, but does not take wound penalties. Even if damage ought to Incapacitate her, she functions as if nothing is wrong. Seeing foes hacking away at her with axes or perforating her with frog-crotch arrows might convince her that a tactical retreat is wise, but if her determination overrides her better judgment, she can stay in the fight until she drops dead.

Until the Sidereal restores her heart to its place, she cannot regain Essence except through Charms. When she does restore her heart, any poisons, diseases, fatigue penalties, deprivation penalties, environmental conditions (if she's in the same environment) or wounds she accrued while her heart was away kick in all at once as if she were first exposed to them the moment the Charm's duration ended.

STORM'S EYE STANCE

Cost: 10m, 1wp +3m per target; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Heartless Maiden Trance, Shield of Destiny, Water and Fire Legion

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip that bears the Scripture of the Eternal Maiden. As he infuses the prayer strip with Essence, the prayer strip hovers beside him. The air immediately around the character darkens, but the prayer strip glows with bright yellow light.

When any effect inflicts harm on the Sidereal, the Sidereal can reflexively grab the destinies of as many visible targets as he chooses (one per three motes he spends against an attack) and tangle them with his own. This reflexive entanglement occurs in Step 8 of attack resolution after damage or deleterious effects have been rolled, but before they have been applied. With their destinies wound together thus, all of the chosen targets suffer the same damage or other effects the attack inflicted on the Sidereal. Powers that let a character dodge even undodgeable attacks, parry unblockable attacks or prevent all damage from attacks protect against this damage transference.

Although the Charm itself lasts for the scene, the character must entangle his targets' destinies anew (and spend the motes to do so) with each new damage effect that affects him.

RIDE: THE MESSENGER

ORDAINED BRIDLE OF MERCURY

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Obvious, Touch

Duration: Until character applies the bridle

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal evokes a luminous bridle of golden stardust. Fitting the bridle to a chosen mount or animal companion

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE ETERNAL MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden . . .
...made from a lump of iron, shaped by wind, sea
and fire.*

*Fearing how wood might shape her,
She ran, and did not look back.
One day, she forgot what she ran from.
So, she pulled out her heart to ask it.
"Why don't you look back and see?" it said.
So, she sighed and threw her heart away.
"I have no use for beginnings," said she.*

ties that animal's destiny together with the Sidereal's. The bridle automatically sizes and shapes itself to fit the animal in question, then fades away.

That animal becomes a new familiar for the Vizier. If the Sidereal has no appropriate animal at hand, he can ask Mercury to lead him to a worthy specimen of a species he designates. The character gains an innate sense of the direction to an appropriate animal. The bridle remains solid and whole until he reaches his new familiar. The chosen animal allows him to approach and place the bridle upon it, already feeling the gravity of fate pulling its simple soul. If the Sidereal selects his own animal, the Charm costs an additional Willpower point.

The animal remains a familiar, with appropriate benefits to the Sidereal, for the rest of the story. Whether the animal stays a familiar afterward depends on how the character treated the animal. If the player wants to spend experience points on the Background, the character can certainly keep the animal as a familiar (see "Backgrounds Gained Through Charms," p. 126).

SPIRIT-SHAPE COMPANION

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 3xp; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

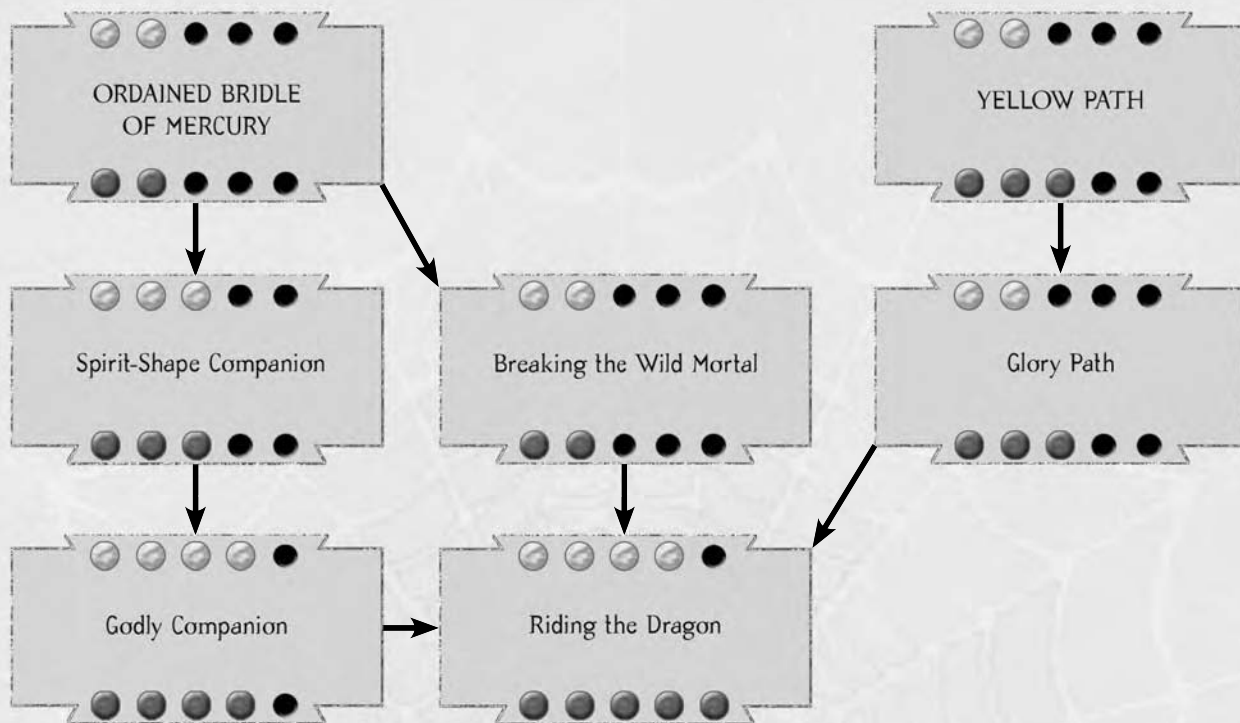
Keywords: Servitude, Shaping, Touch

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ordained Bridle of Mercury

When a Sidereal uses this Charm on a beloved—or, at least, long-suffering—familiar, she transforms that animal into a small god whose only duty is to serve that character. Should the Sidereal release the familiar from her service or die in the line of duty, though, the Celestial Bureaucracy might assign the small god to some other duty.

An uplifted familiar adds one dot to its Background rating. The familiar gains new scores of Essence 2 and minima of Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 1 and Valor 2. The familiar's Intelligence also increases to 2 (if it was lower) and becomes more humanlike in order to facilitate communication. The familiar's health levels rise to a number at least equal to its (Willpower + Conviction),



adding equal numbers of -1 and -2 health levels to make up any shortfall. The former animal's Essence pool equals (Essence x 10) + (Willpower x 5). Just as any familiar, if the small god's Background rating is three dots or higher, the familiar has an additional pool of five motes that only its master can use.

As a spirit, the familiar's natural state is now dematerialized. The familiar no longer needs to eat or drink as a normal animal (though the habits remain). The familiar automatically learns the Materialize Charm (see **Exalted**, p. 295), but can manifest itself visually for only a single mote of Essence. A divine familiar worth three or more dots also learns one additional universal spirit Charm of the Storyteller's choosing. Finally, the familiar gains the ability to assume an alternative appearance that blends humanoid characteristics with the creature's own animal form. Changing from one form to another is a miscellaneous action with no cost or dice roll.

A Sidereal can use this Charm only on his own familiars.

GODLY COMPANION

Cost: 20m, 1wp, 3xp; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Servitude, Shaping, Touch

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Shape Companion

A Sidereal can promote his uplifted small god familiar. The small god's Essence and Intelligence increase to a minimum of 3 (if either was lower). The small god can transport

itself and at least one other creature between Yu-Shan and Creation. The small god also gains four additional points of Virtues, distributed as the Storyteller chooses; two additional spirit Charms, also of the Storyteller's choosing; and an additional alternative appearance. The small god's Background rating rises by one dot.

The familiar also gains new responsibilities. It must safely escort the character the familiar serves to and from Yu-Shan as necessary. (The Celestial Bureaucracy also holds the small god responsible for the character's conduct in Heaven.) The small god must travel regularly between Creation and Heaven to carry messages to or from the Sidereal the familiar serves. Finally, the familiar must file regular reports on the character's activities. A harried, many-limbed spirit named Jagoth, who was once just an uplifted familiar spirit himself, receives the reports at the Bureau of Destiny's mailroom. Jagoth's "IN" box is an architectural marvel often mistaken for a library shelf. His "OUT" box is dusty.

A Sidereal can use this Charm only on a familiar he has previously uplifted with Spirit-Shape Companion.

BREAKING THE WILD MORTAL

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Compulsion, Fate, Obvious, Servitude, Stackable

Duration: Until character applies Mercury's bridle

Prerequisite Charms: Ordained Bridle of Mercury

This Charm works just as Ordained Bridle of Mercury does, but this Charm affects people. The Sidereal chooses a person—or has the Maiden of Journeys choose one of

a preferred occupation and personality for him—and receives Mercury's bridle in a shape that fits a human head. When a chosen mortal sees the bit, he calmly allows the Sidereal to fit it to him, at which point the bridle and the memory of accepting it fade away. If the Sidereal selects a mortal, the Charm costs an additional Willpower point.

The Sidereal gains one dot of the Acquaintances Background. Uses after the first against the same mortal either intensify the bond between the mortal and the Sidereal or expand the familiarity effect among an increasing number of the mortal's own acquaintances. For example, one use of this power enables a single mortal to recognize the Sidereal as a friendly stranger the mortal's seen around before. The next use might rope the mortal's close friends into the effect as well. With the third use, not only the original mortal and his close friends recognize the Sidereal, but all the regulars at the gambling house where the mortal and his pals hang out do as well. In order for the Sidereal to expand her network of acquaintances in this way with this Charm, she must use it repeatedly on the same mortal. (See pp. 102-103 for details about the Acquaintances Background.)

As with Ordained Bridle of Mercury, the new acquaintances last only through a single story, unless the player spends experience points or the character makes a special effort to secure their friendship. Likewise, a Sidereal can use this Charm on (i.e., apply the actual bridle itself to) a maximum number of people equal to her permanent Essence.

YELLOW PATH

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: None

Duration: One journey

Prerequisite Charms: None

A character with a destination in mind asks the Maiden of Journeys for her best advice on arriving there. The player then rolls his character's Essence. For one success, the Maiden shows the Seer a path that enables him to reach his destination in three-quarters of the time it would normally take him based on travel type and distance. (See the chart on p. 264 of *Exalted*.) If the character points out that he has a deadline to keep (and the player rolls three successes), Mercury illuminates any means that might exist to get the character there under normal travel conditions. (The character might have to run for three hours straight, bribe a courier in an elaborate horse relay system to give up his mount, gallop all the way to the coast and finally board a hard-rowing ocean vessel, but he'll make his appointment.) If the player rolls five successes and the character has a deadline to beat, the Maiden of Journeys reveals to him a miraculous path that will get the Seer to his destination ahead of his deadline no matter how far away it is and how little time remains.

GLORY PATH

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Obvious, Virtue (Temperance)

Duration: Five minutes

Prerequisite Charms: Yellow Path

The player spends his motes and rolls (Charisma + Ride). If the roll succeeds, the character's mount radiates a nimbus of faint yellow light for the next five minutes. During that time, every success on the activation roll adds five yards to the mount's base Move distance. Also, the animal can gallop through, up or over natural obstacles such as dense forests, crowds, cliffs, open water or even gaping chasms as easily as it can move across flat, open terrain. Unnatural obstacles, such as human-made walls or sorcerous barricades, still impede progress as normal.

RIDING THE DRAGON

Cost: 20m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 8, DV -3)

Keywords: Obvious, Prayer Strip, Shaping, Touch, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Breaking the Wild Mortal, Glory Path, Godly Companion

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip bearing the Scripture of the Desirable Maiden. He affixes the prayer strip to the forehead of one of his familiars or acquaintances (per the Backgrounds). During the next five miscellaneous actions, the person or animal blazes with golden starlight while it metamorphoses into the shape of a lesser elemental dragon of either air or water, with the scripture written on its back. This process is not gentle or pleasant, so the victim must be restrained until the transformation is complete. Otherwise, the victim can tear the strip from his forehead as a dice-less miscellaneous action. (An unrestrained witness to the transformation can do so as well.) If the prayer strip comes off before the change is finished, the victim returns to normal, decreasing the value of the Sidereal's applicable Familiar or Acquaintances Background by one dot.

The dragon serves as the Vizier's steed and fights for her. It has a Control rating of 2 (see *Exalted*, p. 154)—it actively wants to carry the rider. If anyone somehow tries to ride the dragon without the Sidereal's consent, however, the dragon has a Control rating of 5.

When the Charm's duration elapses, the dragon changes back into the person, animal or minor god it once was. No longer is that being a familiar or acquaintance. Instead, the creature is a burned-out husk of its former self, forever lost in dreams of its all-too-brief glory. The creature's Intelligence drops to zero thereafter, and it cannot care for itself; without constant invalid care, the creature will die. The only alternative is for the Sidereal

to sacrifice a *dot* of permanent Willpower—giving part of her soul and Exaltation so her victim can become a true elemental dragon, albeit with an Essence of only 4. In time, it may grow even greater. The dragon no longer serves the Sidereal, but may become an ally through the course of play (or if the player spends the requisite experience points for a three-dot Ally).

ELEMENTAL RIDING DRAGON

Motivation: To carry and fight for its Sidereal creator

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 5, Stamina 12; Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4; Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Virtues: Automaton: Never fails Valor checks, never makes others

Abilities: Archery 5, Athletics 5, Dodge 5, Martial Arts 5 (Claw +3), Resistance 5

Special Abilities:

Creation-Spanning Flight—The dragon flies at 500 mph, giving a Move of 240 yards per tick (or action in combat) and swims at 200 mph (Move of 100 yards).

Extra Actions—With a Miscellaneous Action, the Sidereal can give the dragon a pool of extra actions equal in number to the successes on a (Charisma + Ride) roll by the player, who can apply Conviction to this roll. The dragon expends these extra actions as its rider sees fit.

Dragon's Suspire—Dragons of air spit lightning; dragons of water spit jets of superheated steam. Each use costs five motes and one Willpower.

Elemental Expression—Per the normal Charm (see *Exalted*, p. 302), affecting wind or water.

Elemental Rejuvenation—Per the normal Charm (see *Exalted*, p. 302).

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 15L, Defense —, Rate 1

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 13, Damage 11L, Defense 6, Rate 2

Dragon's Suspire: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 24L, Range 10, Rate 1

Soak: 20A/20L/20B (Hardness 10)

Health Levels: -0 x 10/Incap

Dodge DV: 5 **Willpower:** 10 (0 against the Sidereal)

Essence: 4 **Essence Pool:** 40

Other Notes: None

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE DESIRABLE MAIDEN

*Once, there was a maiden...
...whom many men wanted for their own.
She stepped as softly as starlight.
She shone with glory.
And one by one, they came to claim her.
She fled by the quickest route she found.
"Why do you run?" the storm clouds said.
She said, "I cannot help who drives me."*

SAIL: THE CAPTAIN

SERENDIPITOUS VOYAGE

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Sail 2, Essence 1;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: None

Duration: Special

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the Viziers must travel, destiny helps them along. The character may use this Charm at any port. Within a day, the character absolutely definitely finds a vessel about to leave for her destination and willing to take her aboard. The ship's captain might not intend to go *exactly* where the Sidereal intends... but the Sidereal knows the ship will end up there anyway. Viziers should keep in mind that some destinations carry intrinsic dangers: the only way to reach Bluehaven, for instance, is to board a vessel destined for capture by the Lintha pirates. The Charm arranges transportation; safety is the Sidereal's own problem.

This Charm's effects extend beyond ships that sail rivers and seas. A Sidereal can find equally fortuitous transport on the sand-ships of the Southern deserts, caravans, stagecoaches or any other form of group conveyance. This Charm does not help with personal transport such as riding beasts, and will not work in locations where vehicles do not regularly arrive and depart.

STONE SKIPPING SPIRIT

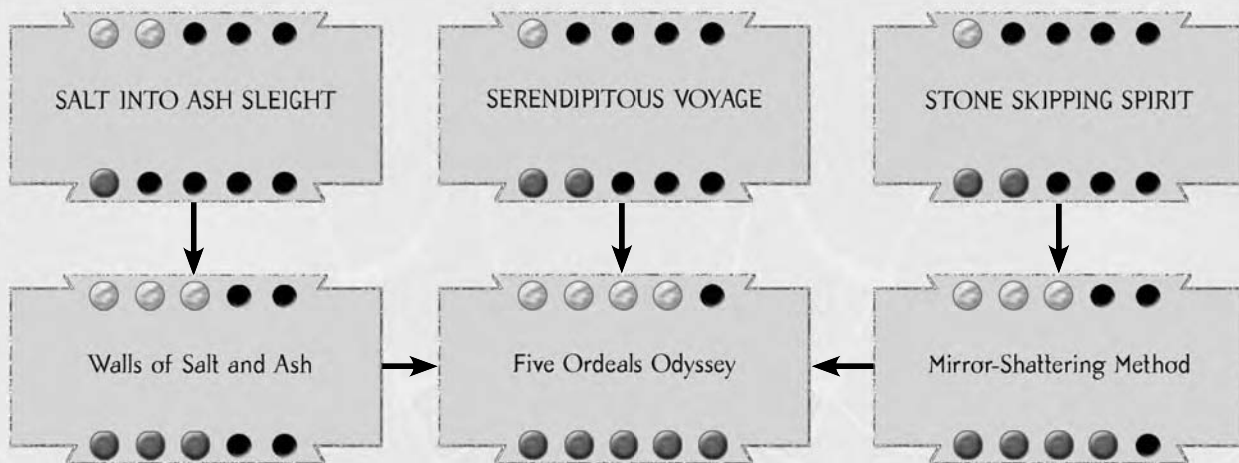
Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Sail 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the Sidereal uses this Charm, he exhales a long, silent breath that slips between the threads of the Tapestry of Creation and clears a space around the strand that represents the ship on which he sails. For the next scene, the ship sails smoothly regardless of fierce weather or high waves, moving as effortlessly as a toy ship across a map.



As a result, environmental penalties no longer affect the pilot's Sail rolls, and the ship takes no further damage from the harsh conditions for the rest of the scene.

SALT INTO ASH SLEIGHT

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Sail 1, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Compulsion, Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal glares or points imperiously at a troublesome water elemental, river god or similar spirit, radiating all the authority of the Maiden of Journeys. A yellow aura surrounds the targeted spirit, and it suddenly remembers something important to do elsewhere. Perhaps the spirit neglected to deliver a delinquent report to its superior. Perhaps an offering awaits the spirit at a shrine downstream. Perhaps Mercury needs to speak to the spirit personally about a pressing matter. This understanding is not false. A legitimate reason to be someplace else does occur to the troublesome spirit, though the Sidereal doesn't know what the reason is.

When this understanding comes upon the spirit, it must act on the understanding. If the spirit wants to do anything other than set out immediately, the spirit must spend a Willpower point to resist the Compulsion to go elsewhere right away.

WALLS OF SALT AND ASH

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Compulsion, Obvious

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Salt into Ash Sleight

A ship is a tiny refuge of human order in the vast, inhuman sea. By tracing the burning yellow Sign of Journeys on a ship's prow, a Sidereal protects the ship and its passengers against supernatural forces. One version of the Charm protects the ship from gods and elementals, another from the Fair Folk and the Wyld, a third from the dead and forces of the Underworld and a fourth from demons and

forces of Malfeas. A character starts with one form of the Charm, and may buy additional forms of protection for two experience points or one bonus point each. A vessel can carry only one form of protection at a time, though.

A banned entity cannot touch or board the ship unless the entity's Essence exceeds the Sidereal's. The Sidereal's Essence is also added to any dice pool or single value needed for the ship or passengers to resist a banned entity or environment, such as the roll to resist Wyld mutation, the dice pool to calculate Defense Value against a demon's claws, or another character's Essence to resist the *Malediction* power of the Storm Mother Sikunare.

MIRROR-SHATTERING METHOD

Cost: 5m (+1wp); **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Fate

Duration: Five days

Prerequisite Charms: Stone Skipping Spirit

The Sidereal commits the required motes and casts a handful of salt over the edge of her vessel. The whiteness of the salt spreads out in all directions. In a blink, the Sidereal finds her vessel and crew bobbing on a solid field of white that shifts between miniature whitecaps, miniature sand dunes, loose flower petals or palm-sized paper snowflakes. From any witness' points of view, the vessel seems to vanish.

The sea of white is a particular view of a dematerialized stratum of reality. From Creation, the ship looks like a faint transparent silhouette moving in a gust of wind. (Awareness rolls to notice the vessel or any rolls to track it suffer a two-dice external penalty.) While the ship moves thus, it travels at twice its normal pace, unimpeded by obstacles or weather conditions. The ship can even travel over dry land. Dematerialized entities can see the ship clearly. Charms and spells that enable one to see or affect dematerialized entities can also reveal or affect the ship.

No one aboard the ship, however, can see the surroundings of Creation through which the ship moves. Plotting a course that takes the use of this Charm into account, or



setting a different course for a new destination once this Charm is in effect, requires a successful (Intelligence + Sail) roll at difficulty 3. Once this Charm is invoked, though, maintaining a heading in the plain of white is as simple as lashing the wheel in place.

The journey ends when the Sidereal ends the commitment of motes at the journey's planned end, at the end of five days or if the Sidereal dies or falls off the vessel. In these cases, the vessel reappears fully in Creation. This can be awkward, if the ship was sailing over land at the time. If anyone falls off the ship, he reappears in Creation and cannot board again. (If the Charm ends because the Sidereal falls overboard, however, the Sidereal also reappears in Creation, next to the vessel.)

As an alternative to cross-Creation travel, a Sidereal can use this Charm to sail a ship from Creation to Yu-Shan or back. The trip takes exactly five days from the moment the Sidereal sets course for Heaven. The Celestial port authorities do *not* like Sidereals arriving unannounced with a shipload of goggle-eyed mortals, unruly Solars or what-have-you, and will surely file a request for censure at the Bureau of Destiny.

Travel to other locations, such as Malfeas or the darkling seas of the Underworld, may also be possible; if so, the Bureau of Destiny keeps these navigational courses strictly secret. Assuming these alternate courses are possible, each

additional otherworldly destination costs two experience points (or one bonus point). The journey between worlds always takes five days.

A Sidereal can also use this Charm personally, just by throwing salt into any body of water (a mud puddle will do) and jumping in. However, this incurs the additional cost of one Willpower point. From then on, the character is swimming in the sea of white until she lets the Charm lapse. See *Exalted*, p. 130, for the effects of prolonged, strenuous activity. However, the character does swim twice as fast as normal.

Note: The Fate keyword applies to passengers aboard a vessel when the Sidereal uses this Charm. The ship and its crew disappear as normal, but beings outside fate are left behind in Creation.

FIVE ORDEALS ODYSSEY

Cost: 10m, 1w, 1lh; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Fate, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Mirror-Shattering Method, Serendipitous Voyage, Walls of Salt and Ash

In their travels, sometimes the Seers of Heaven encounter problems that make further progress seem impossible. In such cases, a Sidereal can channel Essence into a prayer strip bearing the Scripture of the Maiden at Sea. He casts

the strip into the air, where the prayer strip explodes in a flash of golden lightning.

Before the scene ends, *something* happens to remove the obstacle to his travel: a sudden squall blows away the approaching pirates, the desert caravan that has run out of water finds an oasis, a secret tunnel offers a way into the fortress, giant birds nest on the island where he is stranded. But the Sidereal (and any companions) have only traded one trouble for another, equally severe but possibly soluble: the squall also blows the Sidereal's ship aground in a dangerous land, the oasis has a Fair Folk mistress who transforms men into beasts, the secret passage is prone to dangerous rock falls, catching a ride on a giant bird takes the Sidereal to a valley of the giant snakes the birds feed upon. This new threat is locked into destiny, so a Seer cannot use Five Ordeals Odyssey again to attempt another escape and perhaps some lesser danger. The Charm also cannot remove impediments to travel that come from outside fate, such as attacking nephwracks or storms of Wyld energy.

The Charm obviously demands some skill at improvisation from the Storyteller. Whenever a character with this Charm takes a journey, it helps to prepare one or two scenes of replacement perils that can be plugged into the story at any point.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AT SEA

Once, there was a maiden...

...who set sail with a captain she did not know.

She noticed the ship was crushing the waves and told the Captain to steer the ship higher so that it could be above them. "But not too high," she said. "I'd hate to crush the clouds."

The sea came over the side as a creature with teeth. So, she set it on fire, until only the teeth were left. It wasn't expecting that to happen.

A face in the depths glared at the Captain. The maiden got angry.

She broke the face and broke the depths and broke the sea, leaving only the white caps of the waves. "Why did you do that?" asked the face.

"Rarely is travel peaceful," the maiden said.

SURVIVAL: THE SHIP'S WHEEL

ADOPTING THE UNTAMED FACE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Survival 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion

Duration: One action in long ticks

Prerequisite Charms: None

A Sidereal braids her own fate with that of the animal she can see and its totemic god. This Charm not only enables the character to communicate with a single animal

and engage in normal social actions with it, but she can also bind it to serve her goals.

Simple communication works automatically. If the successes on a ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Survival) roll equal or exceed the animal's Control Rating (see **Exalted**, p. 154), the Vizier can impose an unnatural mental influence on the animal. The character can make an animal hostile or friendly to another creature, protect or shun a location or otherwise gain attitudes that would count as an Intimacy in a human being. Any suggestion that goes beyond an animal's normal understanding, however, becomes an unacceptable order. Later experience may break the magical Intimacy—for instance, if a "new friend" attacks the animal.

BECOMING THE WILDERNESS

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Survival 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Fate, Illusion, Social, Virtue (Valor)

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal interweaves her own fate with the networks of fate that bind a wilderness region to its gods, and thereby gain a measure of the gods' authority over local creatures. While this Charm is in effect, any wild beast with a Willpower less than or equal to the Sidereal's Compassion ignores the Exalt as either a potential predator or prey. He can lie down with the lions of the Southeastern savannas or march with the penguins of the frigid Northwestern islands. As long as he doesn't attack them or try to take food away from them, they leave him be.

The Sidereal can even influence the behavior of a beast if he's aware of its presence. He can't give the beast complex commands, but he can cause it to take an action that the animal considers natural. He couldn't, for instance, command an alpha-male wolf to go back and attack the Sidereal's pursuers. He could, however, cause a lioness to choose a particular spot to lie in wait for prey to ambush, then later cause a gazelle to run past the hidden lioness on a path that leads back through the Sidereal's pursuer's camp. Suggesting an action in this manner requires a successful (Manipulation + Survival) roll and is normal mental influence.

The resonant authority that this Charm provides can also aid in social dealing with local spirits or Lunars who consider the surroundings their home. While the Charm is active, the Sidereal may always channel Willpower through his Valor to aid in social dealings with them.

DREAMING THE WILD LANDS

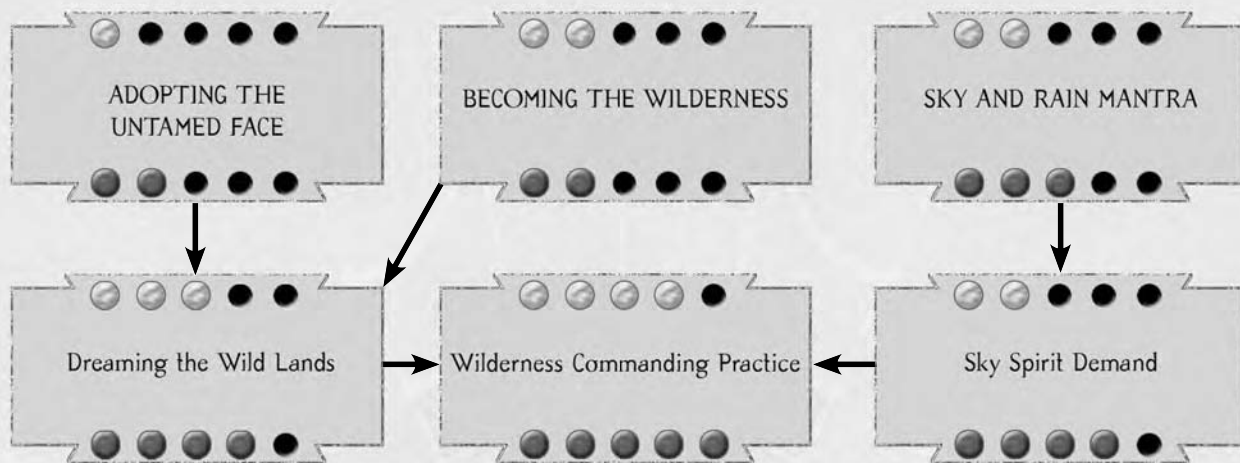
Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Adopting the Untamed Face, Becoming the Wilderness

The Sidereal learns to bend the wilderness to her will. He can make minor changes in the scenery, such as moving a tree, changing a bend in a river or re-sculpting the jumbled aftermath of a rockslide. The Sidereal cannot



shift around permanent, defining characteristics of the landscape, such as glaciers, canyons, volcanoes or island. He can shift only discrete features upon the landscape that teams of mortal laborers could physically move given a few weeks and proper equipment. Mortals could also cause an avalanche if they knew what part of an undercut ice-sheet to tamper with—and so can the Sidereal. A character can use this Charm to attack using elements of the landscape, such as dropping boulders from a cliff or a wasp's nest from a tree, or making a river-bank crumble to pitch an enemy into the water. These follow the normal attack sequence, but use (Wits + Survival) as the attacker's dice pool. The Storyteller defines the other effect of an attack, but damage should not exceed (Sidereal's Essence x 2) dice, whether lethal or bashing damage.

SKY AND RAIN MANTRA

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character can knot up the destinies of the wind and sky in a region, controlling its weather to aid or hinder others. The Vizier's player spends the motes and rolls (Stamina + Survival). Each success adds +1 to the difficulty of other characters' Survival or Resistance rolls to live in the affected area. (The player can apply fewer successes than rolled.) The harsh weather lasts for one whole day and affects an area with a maximum radius of (Sidereal's Essence) miles. The nature of this harsh weather depends on the surroundings. It can be unseasonable for the region (such as torrential downpour in the dry season) but not freakish (such as a blizzard howling across the Southern deserts).

If the Sidereal is so inclined, he can also use this Charm to alleviate harsh (natural) weather conditions. A single success on the (Stamina + Survival) roll calms the weather in the affected area. One success might be enough to counter some forms of deprivation, such as creating rain

to help characters who suffer from thirst. In other cases, the Storyteller might reduce weather-related difficulties of or penalties to Survival or Resistance rolls by the number of successes rolled. If two characters attempt to use this Charm to opposing ends in the same overlapping area, the roll is contested.

SKY SPIRIT DEMAND

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Servitude, Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sky and Rain Mantra

With an impassioned argument and a subtle tug on the strands of fate, the Sidereal can impose a goal on an Air elemental with an Essence no greater than her own. To do so, the Sidereal's player rolls (Manipulation + Survival) against the spirit's Dodge Mental Defense Value, adding the character's Essence in automatic successes. If the roll succeeds, the targeted spirit gains an Intimacy of the Seer's choosing—affection for one person, hostility to a particular town, a fear of a certain location or the like. The spirit may eventually discard this Intimacy, but it certainly lasts through one story.

Characters can use this Charm on elementals of Earth, Fire, Water or Wood, but doing so adds +2 to the difficulty. If the targeted elemental's natural Motivation is specifically and diametrically opposed to the Intimacy the Sidereal tries to impose, the attempt becomes an unacceptable order.

WILDERNESS-COMMANDING PRACTICE

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fate, Obvious, Prayer Strip, Virtue (Valor)

Duration: Five days

Prerequisite Charms: Dreaming the Wild Lands, Sky Spirit Demand

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip on which is written the Scripture of the Maiden Entombed. The Essence-infused paper flutters in the air next to the

character, trailing golden sparkles like a congregation of admiring fireflies.

While this Charm is active, the Sidereal becomes the master of an area of wilderness with a radius of (Sidereal's Essence) miles. As long as the character can see his prayer strip, he remains aware of anyone of interest to him in the affected area. (If creatures of interest use powers that render themselves immune to mundane tracking, the Sidereal must employ other supernatural means of awareness to track them.)

The Seer's command of the wild can grant anyone he chooses three automatic successes on all Survival rolls in the area or reduce an enemy's Survival rolls by the same amount. Affecting others thus forces the Sidereal to commit two more motes per person. The Sidereal can also use Adopting the Untamed Face on animals within the affected area, without the need for line of sight.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN ENTOMBED

*Once there was a maiden...
...who lived in a tomb, and the tomb was made in
her image.*

*Because she lived in a tomb, she became like the dead.
She slept and dreamed.*

*And sometimes woke, and walked within the confines
of her tomb.*

*"Why do you move?" her own ghost asked. "Why
walk at all?"*

"I am not trapped while yet I run," said she.

THROWN: THE GULL

WILLFUL WEAPON METHOD

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Virtue (Temperance)

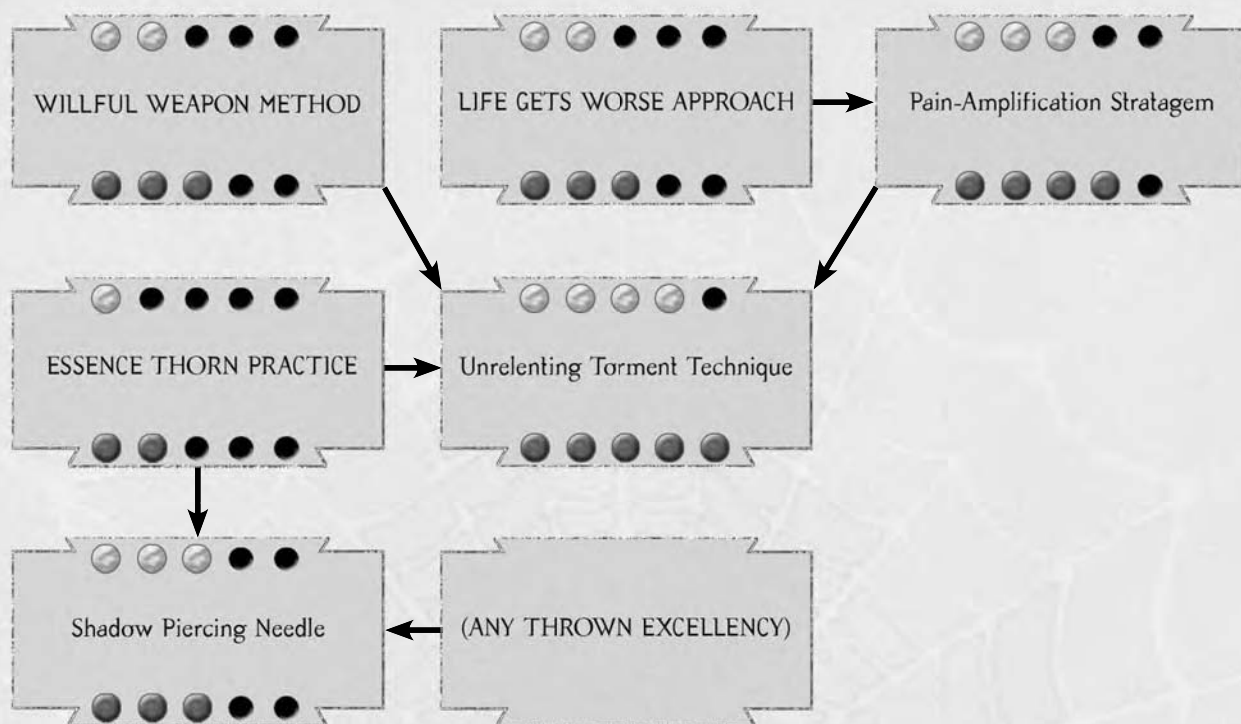
Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal prepares a throwing weapon and looks into the woven pattern of fate that binds her weapon and her target. She makes a throwing motion with her weapon. Rather than the weapon itself, however, she casts the shadow of the weapon at the target. The shadow homes in inexorably on the target at the Sidereal's command—potentially over several attack actions—until the shadow strikes true. When it does so, the shadow is replaced by the actual weapon, which disappears from the Sidereal's hand at last and appears stuck in the target.

The target must be visible to the Sidereal and within the maximum range of her weapon. The Sidereal's player rolls (Dexterity + Thrown), ignoring penalties for weather and range when her character first attacks. If the attack misses, the Seer can redirect the shadow weapon on her next action with a subsequent (Dexterity + Thrown) roll. As long as she can still see the target, and her player attempts a Thrown roll every subsequent action, the Sidereal can keep redirecting the shadow weapon until it hits. The shadow weapon cannot be parried except by supernatural effects that specifically allow the character to parry immaterial attacks.





LIFE GETS WORSE APPROACH

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal makes the Inferior Sign of the Gull over his weapon before he throws it. If it hits, the attack adds the Sidereal's Essence to the raw damage. Then, if the weapon inflicts at least one level of damage, the weapon remains stuck in the wound and emits an eerie yellow light. The weapon continues to do so until the target removes the projectile. Removing it is a miscellaneous action that requires a (Strength + Athletics) roll. The light from the weapon extends yellow tendrils that snatch and pull in airborne objects. Such objects might be insects, loose debris, birds—or other foes' projectiles.

Once per action, when anyone misses his target with a Thrown or Archery attack, the Sidereal may reflexively spend two motes of Essence. Doing so summons the errant projectile toward the embedded one. As a result, the person whose character missed with the attack reflexively rerolls the failed attack. Any Charms that supplemented or otherwise modified the original attack still apply to the rerolled one; the character does not need to pay to activate them. The Sidereal can spend these two motes to call for a reroll of a failed attack roll against the target. A botched attack against *any* target, from a character in range of the victim affected by this Charm, can be redirected to the Charm's victim.

ESSENCE THORN PRACTICE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Thrown 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal motions as if pulling back an elastic strand of the target's fate. A blade of pure, glowing Essence forms in the Sidereal's hand, and he seems to attach this blade to the strand. When he releases it, the blade streaks toward the target, pulling the Sidereal up to 20 yards in the blade's wake. (The Sidereal chooses how far he travels.) The attack has a range of (the Sidereal's Essence x 20) yards and suffers no range penalties. It has Accuracy +(character's Essence), and Damage +6L. The attack cannot be parried, only dodged.

PAIN-AMPLIFICATION STRATAGEM

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Life Gets Worse Approach

By opening a small wound in the skin under her eye—or reopening an old one made for this purpose—the Sidereal bleeds three drops of blood onto her throwing weapon. If a subsequent attack with that weapon hits, the victim also loses one point of temporary Willpower for every level of damage he suffers. Wracking pain afflicts a victim who loses all his Willpower, so he can take only Guard actions in combat.

SHADOW-PIERCING NEEDLE

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Holy, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any Thrown Excellency, Essence Thorn Practice

The Sidereal twists a needle of glittering golden Essence between his fingers. The character can then throw this needle with a regular Thrown attack, using the same traits as a normal thrown needle from p. 371 of **Exalted**. The needle is intangible, so it completely ignores armor and cannot be parried.

If the needle hits, the target uses his Conviction as a soak rating against the attack's damage. Each success on the damage roll inflicts one level of bashing damage. The Charm has an additional effect against ghosts: they cannot regain Essence while within Creation—from blood or any other sources—for one day per level of damage taken.

UNRELENTING TORMENT TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -2)

Keywords: Compulsion, Fate, Obvious, Prayer Strip, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Essence Thorn Practice, Pain-Amplification Stratagem, Willful Weapon Method

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip on which is written the Scripture of the Maiden and Shadow. He infuses the strip with Essence and hurls the prayer strip at a target within 100 yards. This attack can only be dodged, not parried: if the target tries to parry, the strip sticks to the parrying limb or weapon. If the strip hits the target, the strip sticks to him for the duration of the effect, wreathing him in a sickly yellow glow.

With the prayer strip stuck to him, the target feels an insane compulsion (an unnatural mental influence) to hurt the Sidereal who put the strip there. Resisting this urge costs one Willpower point per scene. The compulsion remains for as long as the target can see or hear the Sidereal.

Whenever the Sidereal takes damage during the effect's duration, a hatchet made of yellow Essence appears in one of his free hands. As a reflexive action, he may cast this hatchet at the target wrapped in the prayer strip at any distance up to a quarter of a mile away. The hatchet shrieks through the air, ignoring obstacles, and requiring no roll on the Sidereal's behalf. Only a perfect parry or dodge can prevent the hatchet from hitting the affected character. When it hits, it inflicts dice of lethal damage equal to the Sidereal's Essence. For each health level the target loses, the Sidereal heals one health level.

The effect lasts until the target dies, the Sidereal ceases to commit the Essence or the prayer strip is destroyed. The Sidereal can have only one such prayer strip active at a time.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND SHADOW

*Once, there was a maiden...
...whose shadow fled from her. She chased it over
fire and stone.*

*She chased her shadow to a monster's mouth. Her
shadow went right in. It didn't know how to stop.*

*The maiden caught her shadow in a deep cave full
of ghosts. Her shadow turned into a ball of thorns that
wrapped around her. When the ghosts pricked their
fingers on the thorns, they came to life. This didn't make
anyone very happy.*

*The maiden made a ladder from the ghosts' bones,
but it only pointed downward. "Why go on?" her
shadow asked.*

"I can't quit now," said she.

SERENITY: THE CERULEAN LUTE OF HARMONY CRAFT: THE PEACOCK

ELEMENTAL VISION

Cost: None; **Mins:** Craft 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Special

Keywords: Social, Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal gains a special understanding of the element associated with a particular Maiden. This understanding permits him to channel Willpower through his Compassion to aid in dice rolls pertaining to social dealings with appropriate elementals and gods, regardless of the circumstances. This bonus also applies to the Sidereal's social dealings with Dragon-Blooded of the appropriate element. (See the descriptions of each Sidereal caste in Chapter Four for the Maidens' elemental associations.)

A Sidereal has no trouble gaining this Charm for his Maiden's favored element, as long as he has the form of Craft associated with that element. Gaining an understanding of other elements requires special permission from that element's Maiden or her deputy in the Bureau of Destiny. Heaven does not pay special attention to the use of this Charm, though. A Seer can gain an affinity for as many elements as he likes, but every such understanding requires a separate purchase of this Charm, and at least two dots in the proper elemental Craft.

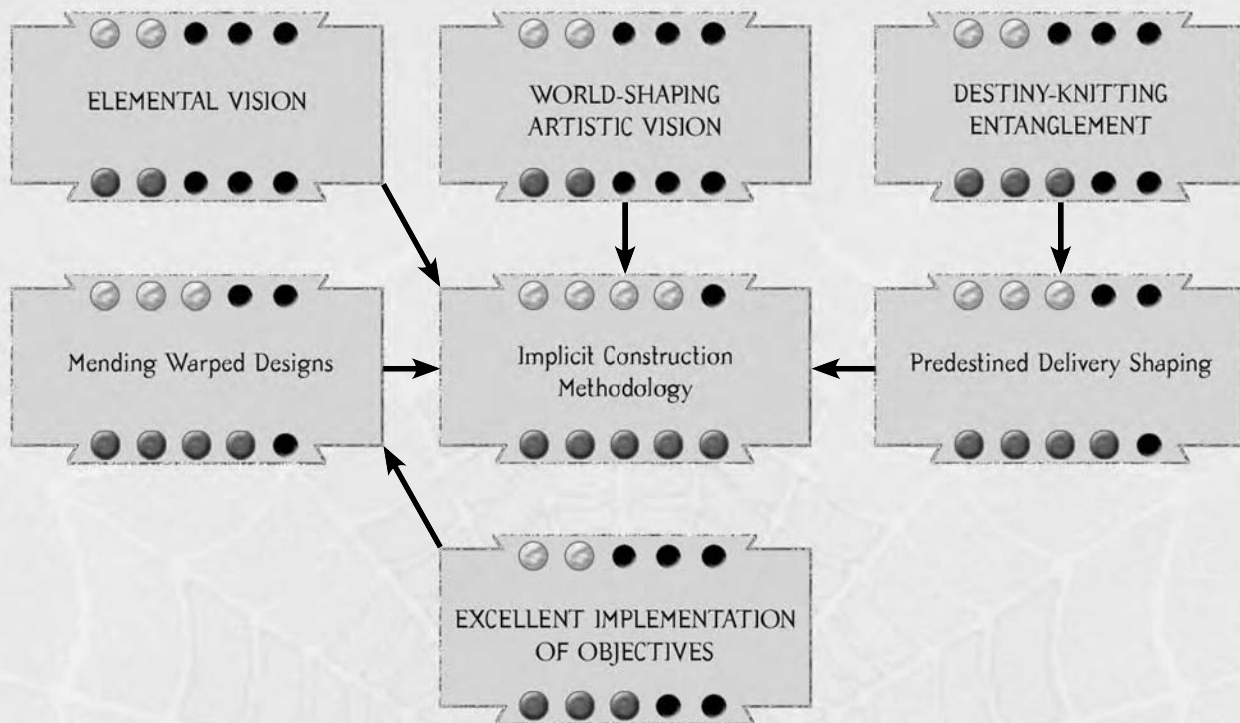
EXCELLENT IMPLEMENTATION OF OBJECTIVES

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: None



Superb works of magical or mundane craftsmanship can become tools of destiny in the right hands. With this Charm, the Sidereal craftsman makes it apparent that destiny simply cannot wait for the object he's putting together. As a result, circumstances conspire so the Sidereal finishes his work in a fraction of the time such artifice would normally take. Divide the amount of time a Craft project would normally take by an amount equal to the character's Essence.

DESTINY-KNITTING ENTANGLEMENT

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

By handling an object for an hour, a Seer can bind its destiny to his own. Thereafter, the character may reflexively spend two motes of Essence to learn the object's general circumstances—where it is, what sort of person has it, what that person is doing with it. The Sidereal can instead spend the two motes to engender a series of events that brings the object back to her. Perhaps a thief steals it and passes it off to a fence in the Sidereal's employ. Perhaps the acquaintance (per the Background) who left with the object chooses that moment to visit the Sidereal and brings it with him. If the circumstances aren't ideal for the Sidereal to draw the object to him, the object might not make it all the way to his hands, but it makes some progress each time. He may continue to monitor the object's location until the object returns to him.

If the Sidereal loses in combat an object affected by this Charm, he can spend the motes (and use a stunt) to call it back to his hand. Doing so must involve the scenery or circumstances: he can't simply make the object float back to him. But if an enemy knocks the Sidereal's daiklave from his grasp, for instance, an arrow meant for the Sidereal's heart might knock the tumbling blade back into his hand.

A character can bind to herself a maximum number of objects equal to her Craft (Fate) score.

WORLD-SHAPING ARTISTIC VISION

Cost: None; **Mins:** Craft 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character develops an enviable knack for manipulating fate in a particular circumstance, environment or condition personal to her. This condition could be "In Cities," "On the Water" or defined by other similar parameters. It should have the same breadth as a specialty. When that specialty condition applies, the target number for Craft (Fate) rolls and all rolls for Sidereal astrology automatically decrease by one. The Sidereal doesn't pay for this reduction; it exists as a permanent enhancement of her capabilities.

A character can buy this Charm up to three times, either for the same condition or a selection of two or three conditions.



PREDESTINED DELIVERY SHAPING

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Destiny-Knitting Entanglement

This Charm reverses its prerequisite, so an object goes from the Sidereal to someone or someplace else. The Seer must herself craft the object, from a sword to a calligraphic scroll. While doing so, she knots the object's destiny to the fate of a chosen person or location. The character must know this person or place by name, and have something physically connected to the target: a swatch of a person's clothing, a few hairs, a bit of soil or a creature from a target location or the like.

The destiny-guided object moves toward its goal for as long as the Sidereal keeps Essence committed to the Charm. This may take less than a day for a person in the same town, or many months to cross Creation. Initially and each month thereafter, the Sidereal's player rolls (Wits + Craft [Fate]) to see how quickly or how far the object moves toward its destination; the Storyteller sets the difficulty for this extended roll, based on the target's proximity (from 1 for a person in town to 20 or more to cross Creation). Destinations in the Wyld or Underworld multiply the difficulty as normal (see p. 208). Excellencies may supplement the first roll but not the subsequent increments: they are no longer actions the character takes, but merely measure the progress of something that continues beyond the character's direct control. A botch on any of these rolls indicates the object was destroyed or otherwise cannot proceed any further. The character knows when this happens or when the object finally reaches its destination.

The object sent by this Charm may simply be useful in its own right—or dangerous, such as a forged map designed to lure the target into a trap. The object can also carry a Sidereal astrology effect as part of the object's fate-crafting, as a way to deliver ascending or descending destinies to people or places the Sidereal cannot reach directly.

MENDING WARPED DESIGNS

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -2)

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Virtue (Valor)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Excellent Implementation of Objectives

The Sidereal can mend damaged sections of fate in an area. Doing so requires a roll of (Dexterity + Craft [Fate]). Each success heals a single health level that the target lost to a creature or effect of the Demon Realm, the Underworld or the Wyld; each success also repairs damage inflicted by sorcery. Successes could, instead, heal debilitating effects

wrought by such creatures—at a cost of one success per mote of Essence spent to inflict the harm. If, for instance, a sorcerer cast Rain of Doom (see **Exalted**, p. 256), using this Charm to repair the damage would take 60 successes. The Charm is also effective against changes imposed by the unstable Wyld. Five successes on the Craft (Fate) roll cleanse a Wyld pox or deficiency, 10 successes remove an affliction or debility, 20 heal a blight or deformity and 30 cure an abomination. Fifty successes could wipe out the Wyld influence in a square mile of the Bordermarches or tainted land, but the Charm cannot affect territory deeper in the Wyld.

Since this is a Simple Charm, with an instant duration, the only way to build up such large numbers of successes is to have large numbers of Sidereals performing the Charm simultaneously in an area.

IMPLICIT CONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY

Cost: 20m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Vision, Mending Warped Designs, Predestined Delivery Shaping, World-Shaping Artistic Vision

This Charm harnesses fate itself to construct an object at a Sidereal's command. She must procure all the necessary materials and provide a workspace. Then she writes the Scripture of Lover and Maiden on a prayer strip, binds it around her wrists and infuses it with Essence. The prayer strip transforms into a twisting band of blue light around her wrists. (Having this band in place imposes a -2 external penalty to actions that require the use of the character's hands.)

Fortunately, actual construction of the object the Sidereal designed doesn't require the use of her hands. The raw materials mold themselves and flow together on their own, assembling themselves as the Sidereal intends. The Craft project still requires its normal dice pools and Ability minimums—but, supplemented by this Charm, each die becomes one automatic success and construction of mundane objects takes 10 minutes per roll. Objects involving the magical materials (except moonsilver, which cannot be part of the construction) require a full hour per roll. Architectural or geomantic projects, such as the construction of a manse, take a week for every year they would normally require. The work proceeds as long as the character keeps the Essence committed and pays attention to the labor.

DODGE: THE EWER

ABSENCE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Dodge 2, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

THE SCRIPTURE OF LOVER AND MAIDEN

Once there was a maiden...

...who met a thing that lived outside the world, and there was a beauty to it.

It burned with an unholy wrath that could destroy Creation.

It hated her as much as it loved her.

Its kiss was blood and perfection, for its teeth were sharp.

It offered her power, and with it, hooks to tear her soul.

With care not to burn her fingers, she took it into her life.

"Love is what you make of it," said she.

Viziers anticipate attacks upon them, and avoid them. Apart from the name and Essence cost, this Charm duplicates Shadow Over Water (see **Exalted**, p. 227).

DUCK FATE

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Absence

Vibrations in the strands of fate alert a Sidereal to imminent danger. Her player rolls (Dexterity + Dodge) against a difficulty equal to the permanent Essence of the foe responsible for the trouble. (Environmental dangers are difficulty 1.) If the roll succeeds, the Exalt avoids the harmful effect. For this Charm's purposes, a "harmful effect" includes unexpected attacks, area-of-effect attacks, attacks with no physical component or even continuous effects with a duration longer than instant. (The character only needs to avoid a continuous effect once.) Attacks with very wide areas of effect (such as the Rain of Doom spell) defeat this Charm if the character is physically incapable of moving the distance needed to escape the effect.

The Sidereal's player must activate this Charm either before her opponent's attack roll or as soon as the player becomes aware of the effect.

AVOIDANCE KATA

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

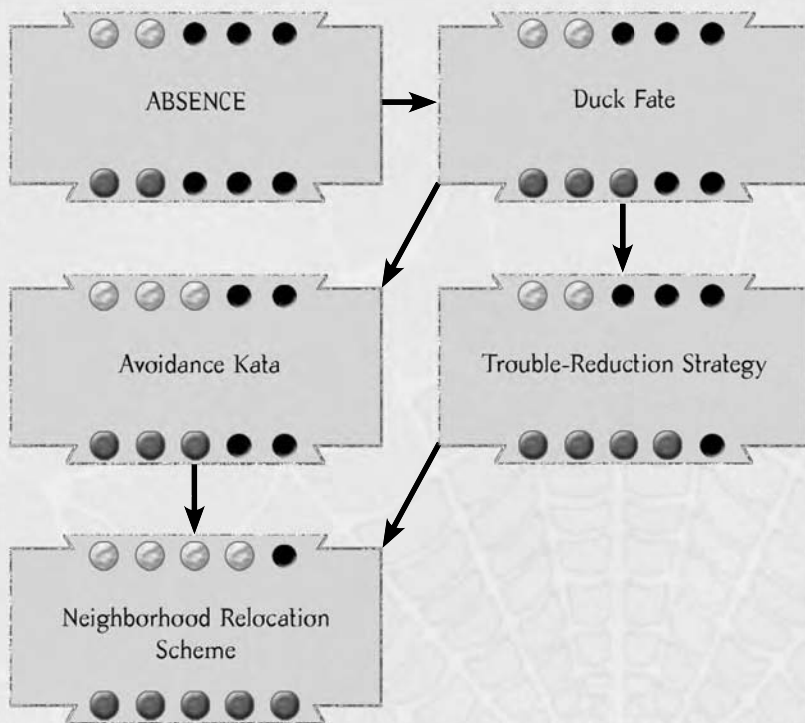
Keywords: Illusion

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Duck Fate

The character wasn't actually there when the trouble began. That's his story, and the Loom of Fate backs it up.

If—within his first two actions after Join Battle or Join Debate—the Sidereal decides he would rather have been somewhere else, he can activate this Charm. Having done so, he vanishes from his current location and reappears in



another location. The Sidereal cannot control his new location, but it's someplace plausible for him to be if he'd decided to take a different course a few minutes before. Simultaneously, an Illusion effect blurs the memories of other people so they don't remember the Sidereal's presence. Wounds still bleed, traps remain sprung, Essence remains spent. However, other people in the aborted encounter receive vague notions of an alternate series of events to explain any evidence of the Sidereal's presence, which they soon confabulate into a detailed scenario that they believe completely. Spending two Willpower overcomes this Illusion.

TRouble-REDUCTION STRATEGY

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Duck Fate

By joining the fates of other people to her own, a Sidereal not only can escape danger herself but protect people around her as well. In a scene in which this Charm is active, the Sidereal can use any Dodge Charm she knows on behalf of a number of targets whose combined Essence scores do not exceed her own (provided a given target reflexively consents to this protection). Simple Charms use the Sidereal's Dodge Defense Value on the character's action. Reflexive Charms use the Sidereal's Dodge Defense Value as well. Supplemental Charms enhance the protected target's action.

Using a Dodge Charm on a willing target's behalf counts as the Sidereal's using that Charm for that action, and the

Exalt must pay any costs associated with that Charm. The character can use a Dodge Charm that is part of a Combo on a protected target, and still use the other Charm(s) in the Combo on herself.

NEIGHBORHOOD RELOCATION SCHEME

Cost: 15m, 1wp, 2+bhl; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Illusion, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Avoidance Kata, Trouble-Reduction Strategy

The Sidereal infuses Essence into a prayer strip that bears the Scripture of the Hunted Maiden and wraps the strip around his waist like a belt. The prayer strip transforms into a band of cerulean light and cinches tight, inflicting two levels of unsoakable bashing damage. Every hour after that, the belt cinches tighter, inflicting two more levels of damage. This damage will not heal until the Charm ends.

With the belt in place, the character starts to walk or run. Charms or the Lesser Sign of Mercury may enhance these movement actions. He drags with him a portion of Creation with a maximum radius (in miles) equal to his Essence, with the Exalt in the center. The terrain, habitations and people within that area all relocate to the place where the Exalt stops walking or running. The territory's original location fills in with scenery appropriate to the geographical context, perhaps including nearby homes. Clerks in Yu-Shan monitor the transfer and make sure that the fate of every relocated person or thing is accounted for in its new

position. All witnesses to or subjects of the effect remember the region's old geography but thereafter consider the new arrangement to be perfectly correct and reasonable. (Most minds can't comprehend such a grand reorganization of the Tapestry of Creation... so they ignore it.)

A Sidereal cannot use this Charm to move only parts of large discrete terrain features—such as half a mountain, a segment of a river or just the market district of a city. If the radius of effect isn't large enough to encompass the entire definable feature, that part of the landscape stays in place as the rest of the region moves. The moving region does not interact with physical Creation while the Sidereal moves, but he cannot drag a moving region onto an inhabited area. (The paperwork alone... You've never heard such complaining.) Nor can the Sidereal drag one region onto another in order to "erase" something in the affected region. The Sidereal cannot, for instance, drag a lake across a forest and relocate the lake on top of a forgotten Solar's tomb in order to make that tomb disappear. The tomb would, instead, recede with the displaced forest to the lake's edge or rise from the center of the lake on a creepy, mist-shrouded island.

Using this Charm to relocate a region without the proper authorization is a Severity 3 offense.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE HUNTED MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who was driven from her land.

*Great black stags chased her, and their eyes
shone blue.*

*Monsters scrambled after her through the bush, though
they found her not.*

*Stumbling on a log, she fell; and thought to surrender,
and end the torment of the hunt; but then, she stood, and
stuck out her tongue at the dark woods behind her.*

"Love is smiling at your troubles," she said.

LINGUISTICS: THE PILLAR

FAVORABLE INFLECTION PROCEDURE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Emotion, Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Chosen of the Gods honor mere mortals just by acknowledging their existence. A Sidereal can forge a powerful connection to another person just by saying his name in his presence. The Seer's player then rolls her (Charisma + Linguistics) against the target's Dodge Mental Defense Value and adds her Essence in automatic successes. If the roll succeeds while the target is calm, the target feels more connected to and enriched by the Sidereal. He gains a single Intimacy toward the Sidereal for the rest of the scene.

If the target is upset or hostile toward the Sidereal, the character can use this Charm to calm him. If the roll succeeds, the target's hostility and its cause evaporate from his mind, giving the Sidereal a chance to change the subject or hide whatever set the target off in the first place. Physical evidence of the trigger (seeing a Sidereal climbing out the window while holding the target's newborn infant, for instance) will rekindle the passion in the target. However, this Charm cannot affect an Exalt in Limit Break.

BLUE VERVAIN BINDING

Cost: 5m, 1xp; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 1;

Type: Simple (1 long tick, DV -2)

Keywords: None

Duration: One minute

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal recites a minute-long blessing in the Old Realm's tongue. (The Charm absolutely requires knowledge of that language.) If his player succeeds at an (Intelligence + Linguistics) roll at difficulty 5, the blessing binds together the fates of two creatures (one of whom may be the Seer himself) such that those two creatures can understand each other's speech forever after. This understanding goes only so far as each creature's respective intellect allows, of course. A Sidereal could no more explain the nuances of motonic physics to a Haltan san-monkey than that Sidereal could understand the san-monkey's description of the pheromones that attracted him to his san-monkey mate.

ABANDONED WORDS CURSE

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (1 long tick, DV -2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate, Illusion, Stackable

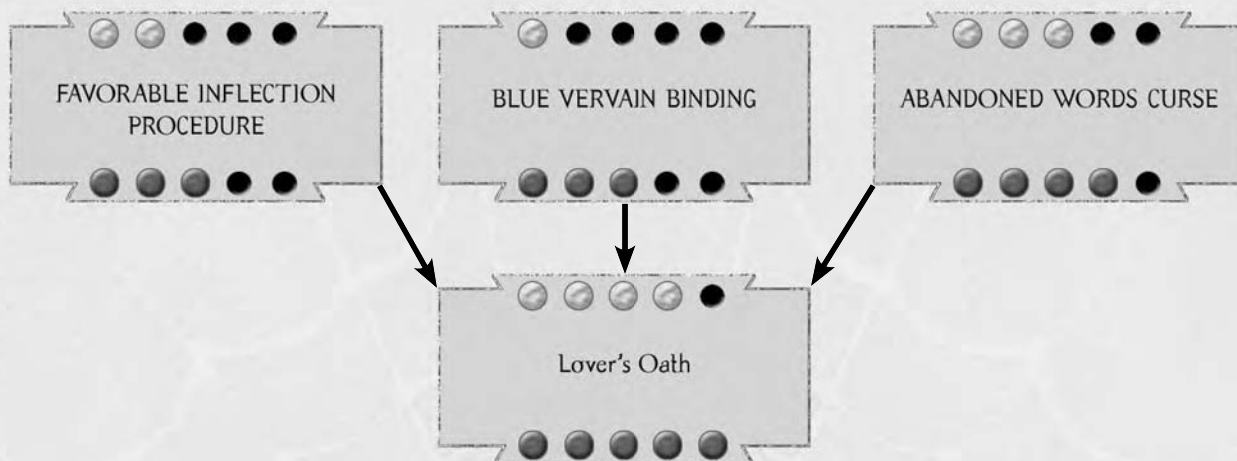
Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal subjects her victim to a chant whose syllables don't *quite* form recognizable words in any language, and whose broken rhythm never settles on a meter. Getting the victim to stay nearby for the minute-long chant is left to the character's ingenuity. The target must hear the chant for the Charm to work.

The Sidereal's player rolls (Wits + Linguistics) against the target's Dodge Mental Defense Value. Success robs the character of one dot of Linguistics. The victim can no longer speak, read or understand one language or language family, chosen by the Sidereal. This may include the character's native tongue, even for a target who speaks no other language.

Dots of Linguistics do not go away; they are merely suppressed. The character must simply learn how to use the language(s) again, either by immersion in a culture that uses one or more of them or by diligent instruction from a tutor. The target can learn back his languages in any order, but doing so takes time—as much time as gaining the dots of an out-of-caste Ability (three weeks to re-learn his native tongue or his first dot of Linguistics, one week for the



second, two weeks for the third and so on). Learning a new language, one different from any of the ones he lost, requires the actual purchase of a new dot of Linguistics.

LOVER'S OATH

Cost: 20m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Prayer Strip, Fate

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blue Vervain Binding, Curse of Abandoned Words, Favorable Inflection Procedure

This Charm links the Sidereal and another person in bonds of fate. The two characters need not actually be wed or even in love for the Charm to work, however. They must merely give assent of their own free will and understand how completely their oath shall join them. Still, the bond is sacred in the eyes of the Maidens, so it behooves the Sidereal not to treat it frivolously.

To sanctify the Lover's Oath, the Sidereal writes the Scripture of the Bride on a prayer strip. She wraps the strip around her hand and her partner's hand. As she does so, she recites an oath in Old Realm and makes the proper expenditures. Her player and her partner's player then roll (Intelligence + Linguistics). If between them their rolls garner five successes, the oath is sanctified and recognized. In a flash, the prayer strip splits and transforms into two starmetal rings set with sapphires, one on each participant's finger. (This event is Obvious, but the subsequent effects of the Charm are not.) Thereafter, neither character can attempt to remove her or her partner's ring. Either ring can be destroyed, but only by using the same rules that govern breaking an activated prayer strip.

Once the oath is joined, each character can use the other's Essence, Willpower and even health levels as her own (as long as her partner has them to spend). Motes drawn from the other person count as peripheral for the character using them. Using a partner's health levels effectively shunts damage from one person to the other at the behest of the person doing the shunting. The recipient has no say in the matter

(at least not where the rules are concerned). The recipient cannot transfer a wound back, either. That is, a wound can be transferred from one partner to the other only once. If one partner is wounded such that he has a more severe wound penalty than the other partner, new damage that is *not* inflicted by transfer via this Charm transfers to his partner automatically until their wound penalties equalize.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE BRIDE

Once, there was a maiden...

...who fled a shadow, in the company of a friend.

They traveled through strange places, and among strange people.

"How can you trust me," he asked, "with such horror behind you?"

"Love endures," she said.

PERFORMANCE: THE MUSICIAN

HEART-BRIGHTENING PRESENTATION STYLE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Performance 2, Essence 1;

Type: Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any Performance Excellency, Any Bureaucracy, Presence or Socialize Excellency

The Sidereal's skill at poetry and song infuses his speech at all times. By spending two more motes, the character can apply any Bureaucracy, Performance, Presence or Socialize Excellency to any dice pool involving those four Abilities. The normal limits for raising dice pools through Charms still apply.

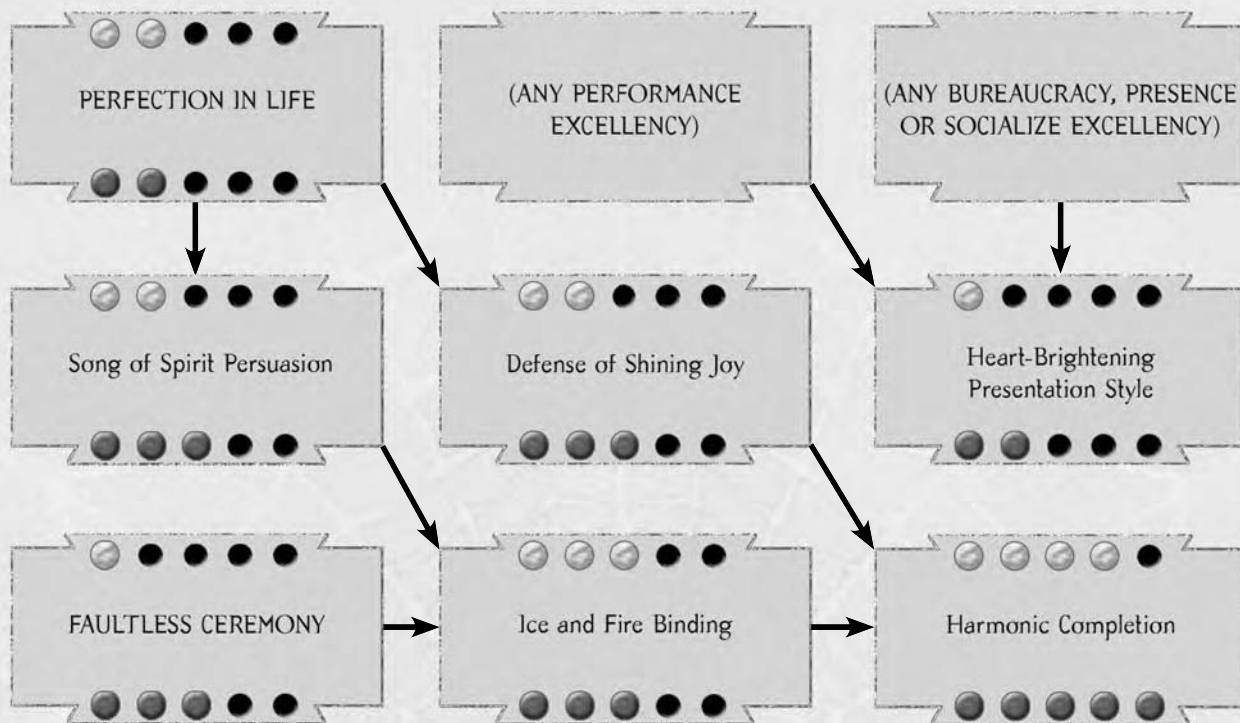
FAULTLESS CEREMONY

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: None



When the Sidereal participates in a ceremony—anything from a newborn’s naming to a funeral—her involvement confers an orthodoxy that pleases Heaven. Her player rolls (Charisma + Performance + Essence) at a difficulty equal to (8 – the Resources expended on the ceremony). If the roll fails, the ceremony is still complete, but does not attract any notice from the Celestial Bureaucracy. If the roll succeeds, the authorities in Heaven look favorably on the ceremony’s participants. For the next week, the people for whom the Sidereal performed the ceremony—a wedded couple, the children who commissioned their father’s funeral or the like—enjoy a +1 bonus on any dice roll meant to represent their efforts. The successful prayer also grants a broader blessing of harmony and joy to the participants that goes beyond anything dice pools can represent: the dutiful children divide the estate without bickering, the newlyweds are assured of fertility and so on.

PERFECTION IN LIFE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Performance 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Fate, Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

Not every person in Creation has a glorious destiny, but every person can live up to his destiny with grace. One of the duties of the Chosen of Venus, then, is to see that mortals and Exalted all live up to their potential.

A Sidereal uses this Charm while he gives a performance of some kind, such as singing, dancing, reciting an epic poem or the like. Audience members feel the sense

of completion, triumph and peace—the *exaltation*—that comes from knowing you are exactly where you should be, doing what you should do. The Seer’s player rolls (Charisma + Performance) against the highest Dodge Mental Defense Value of his assembled audience. If the roll succeeds, everyone who witnessed the Exalt’s entire performance (and is not a creature outside fate) gains a temporary Willpower point. A person can receive this bonus from the same Exalt only once per day, but the extra point can put the person over his Willpower maximum for the scene.

DEFENSE OF SHINING JOY

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -1)

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Perfection in Life

Moving with the tempo of her opponent’s actions, as if the two of them were lifelong dance partners, the Sidereal can predict the perfect completion of any attack that opponent launches. She can also make certain that this perfect completion does not involve her. For the rest of the scene, the character adds her Performance score to her Dodge in calculating her Dodge Defense Value. Also, the character can use either her Performance or Dodge Excellencies (but not both) to increase her Dodge Defense Value static value. This new Defense Value ignores onslaught penalties and reduces the Defense Value penalty of any attack the character makes by one (to a minimum of zero).



SONG OF SPIRIT PERSUASION

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Servitude

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Perfection in Life

By singing to a god or elemental in the sacred language of the Old Realm, the Sidereal can remove any stress of confusion or fear, putting the spirit into a calm, cooperative frame of mind.

To instill this agreeable demeanor, the Sidereal's player rolls (Manipulation + Performance) against the spirit's Dodge Mental Defense Value while the Vizier sings to the spirit. If the roll succeeds, the spirit becomes an ally of the Sidereal, per the Background, and gains an Intimacy to that effect. This alliance lasts until the end of the current story, at which point the spirit resumes its normal feelings for the Sidereal. If the Sidereal treats the spirit especially well during the story and the alliance worked out especially well for the spirit, the alliance could become permanent.

ICE AND FIRE BINDING

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (one hour)

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Maiden, Mandate, Servitude

Duration: One season

Prerequisite Charms: Faultless Ceremony, Song of Spirit Persuasion

This Charm involves a complicated song in Old Realm. The song takes a full hour to perform, and mastering its complexities and subtleties requires a successful (Intelligence + Performance) roll at difficulty 9. Additional Sidereals can add their voices in support, even if they do not have the Charm themselves. Eclipse and Moonshadow Caste Exalted may support the Sidereal as well, but they must know the Charm and the Old Realm language to assist. Each supporter reduces the difficulty by one, to a minimum of 5.

A successful binding summons an elemental with an Essence no higher than that of the character using the Charm. For one season, that spirit is bound by the words to seek the joy, health and pleasure of a particular dominion (as defined by the Mandate of Heaven system from **Exalted Storyteller's Companion**) assigned by the Sidereal. The dominion's Magnitude may not exceed the Sidereal's Essence. When that time is up, memories of who summoned and bound the spirit slip from the spirit's mind, and the spirit is free to go.

HARMONIC COMPLETION

Cost: 16m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Emotion, Prayer Strip

Duration: Five days

Prerequisite Charms: Defense of Shining Joy, Ice and Fire Binding

The Sidereal activates this Charm using a prayer strip marked with the Scripture of the Dancer. When she wraps the prayer strip around her eyes and infuses it with Essence, the strip becomes a band of starmetal and blue jade. (This event is Obvious, but subsequent Charm effects are not.) The prayer strip remains as durable as any other activated prayer strip (see p. 125), but it can be pulled from the character's head if someone's attack manages to get past the Sidereal's defenses and the strip's own Parry Defense Value. If the band comes off the Sidereal's head for any reason, the Charm's effect ends.

The Exalt is blind to Creation while she wears the prayer strip (with all the normal penalties to physical actions), but her words ring with the power of higher truth and ageless wisdom. Any Performance roll for the character (including Charms) automatically succeeds with one success for every die. Anyone who pays attention to the Sidereal's performance immediately gains an Intimacy to this performer who speaks with the voice of Heaven. Finally, the static values of the Sidereal's Dodge Defense Value and Dodge Mental Defense Value increase by an amount equal to her unmodified Performance, as fate itself strives to protect the source of such blessed assurance.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE DANCER

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who stood at the center of every dance.
Back then, she knew all the dances.
She never missed a step.
One day, she heard something in the music, as a
singer dropped the beat.
It taught her of the joy of dancing poorly.
She started dancing more and more awry.
"Love has no rules," she said.*

SOCIALIZE: THE LOVERS

SHUN THE SMILING LADY

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Socialize 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Emotion, Fate, Shaping

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: None

An office of the Bureau of Destiny holds a list of every person in a generation who is destined to fall in love. A spurned, vindictive or simply overprotective Sidereal can remove a person's name from this roster for as long as the Sidereal commits Essence to this Charm. When he does so, the victim's Appearance drops to 1 before the application of any supernatural effects. For the victim to apply such effects, he must pay the standard cost of the effect, and then his player must spend a Willpower point and succeed at a (Manipulation + Socialize) roll with a difficulty of the Sidereal's Essence.

If a person with romantic feelings toward the victim has a permanent Essence score lower than the Sidereal's, that person's romantic feelings cease immediately. Intimacies related to those romantic feelings also disappear. Neither the feelings nor the Intimacies may be re-established until the Charm ends. A player whose character's Motivation centers on love for the Charm's victim must immediately choose a new Motivation. This does not cost experience points. If the player wants to resume the old Motivation once the Charm ends, however, this *does* incur the normal cost of two experience points.

CASH AND MURDER GAMES

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Fate, Servitude, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shun the Smiling Lady

The Sidereal chooses two people—a beneficiary and a victim—and twists their fates to grant the beneficiary an emotional dominion over the victim. The victim might fear the beneficiary, desire her sexually, revere her or otherwise define himself in terms of her. (The Sidereal can name herself the beneficiary in such a relationship.) Regardless, the victim cannot resist succumbing to the beneficiary's will.

To activate this Charm, the Sidereal's player rolls (Manipulation + Socialize) against the victim's Dodge Mental Defense Value, and adds the character's Essence in automatic successes. If the roll succeeds, the victim immediately views the beneficiary in terms the Sidereal defines. To overcome this effect for a scene in the beneficiary's presence, the victim must spend one Willpower point. When he has spent a number of Willpower points equal to the activation roll's threshold, the victim no longer suffers the effect of the Charm.

LIFE WITHOUT COMPUNCTION

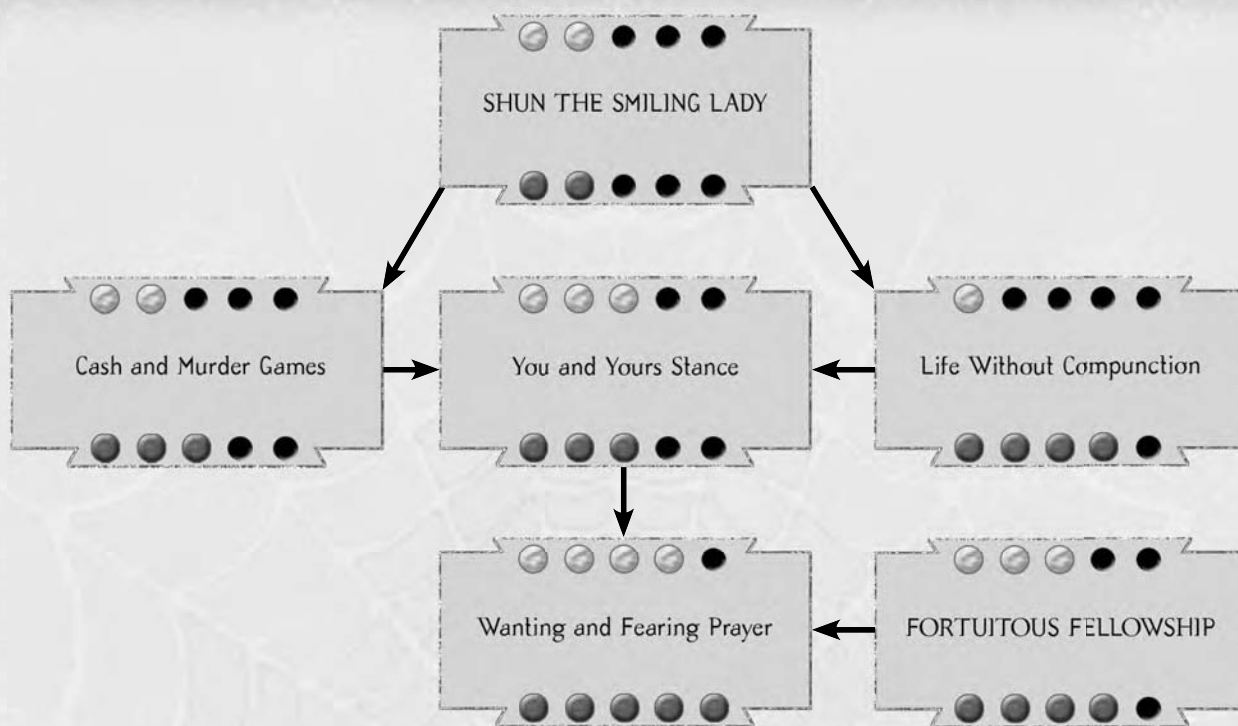
Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Fate, Social, Virtue (Temperance)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shun the Smiling Lady

If a character commits a social *faux pas* or otherwise violates some cultural taboo, a Sidereal can use this Charm to mitigate the social backlash. She can do so either for herself, or on someone else's behalf. Activating the Charm requires a successful (Manipulation + Socialize) roll. With one success, people no longer care about the social infraction. With three successes, not only do people refuse to hold the infraction against the person who committed it, but they either consider the behavior acceptable under the circumstances or hail the violator as a charming rogue. With five or more successes, acceptance of the behavior becomes part of the community's Policy for the rest of the story. Later, people regain their senses.



This Charm won't necessarily save the perpetrator from the legal repercussions of breaking laws, only from the way other people might regard him. This Charm permits a special form of dodging in social combat: when the character comes under social attack, she says something outrageously offensive about her attacker, and activates this Charm. With one success, she distracts onlookers from the social attack and doesn't have to answer her attacker's argument. With three, she pulls the sympathy of any onlookers to her side.

YOU AND YOURS STANCE

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Compulsion, Fate, Servitude

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Cash and Murder Games, Life Without Compunction

Using this Charm, a Vizier can make other people want to please him; actually harming him seems unthinkable. For the scene, anyone whose character wants to attack the Sidereal must succeed at a Conviction roll with a difficulty equal to the Sidereal's Essence. Knowingly acting in a way that will not please the Sidereal requires a successful Temperance roll at the same difficulty. What's more, any roll made for the Sidereal to seduce someone receives a number of bonus successes equal to the Sidereal's Essence.

FORTUITOUS FELLOWSHIP

Cost: 12m; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Fate, Shaping

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The subtle Viziers find social groups to influence that no one else knew existed... including the social group itself. This Charm weaves strands of fate to draw together people who may not have known each other before. As they meet and discover common interests, they form a new social unit that can then become a target for social mass combat or manipulation.

The Sidereal spends a full week in a wider community, meeting people and talking, spreading a net of ideas and fate. Her player rolls (Wits + Socialize) and spends the resulting successes either on the unit's Magnitude or on its Loyalty. Magnitude cannot exceed the Sidereal's Craft (Fate) score; Loyalty cannot exceed her highest Virtue. The Sidereal defines the Policy for the new social unit, but has no control over which individuals join. The Vizier can make herself the group's leader, but only through crafting a resplendent destiny for that purpose. Otherwise, the social unit operates on its own. If it survives, its Policy may evolve beyond what the Sidereal defined.

Any conceivable common interest can become the basis of a social unit, and the group can have any goal the Sidereal wants. Improbable combinations, such as a garden club that wants to overthrow a despot, result in social units that probably do not last very long.

WANTING AND FEARING PRAYER

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fate, Illusion, Prayer Strip, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Fortuitous Fellowship, You and Yours Stance

In each hand, the Sidereal holds a prayer strip bearing the Scripture of the Whore. He infuses the strips with Essence and names a target for each strip. (These targets must both be within 10 miles of the Sidereal.) The prayer strips disappear in flashes of blue flame (an Obvious event, but nothing about the Charm is Obvious to the targets). Each one then reappears wrapped around a bone in the named targets' bodies. The targets can't feel or see the embedded prayer strip unless the flesh over the strip is somehow removed. For as long as the Charm remains in effect, those particular bones become as difficult to damage as the prayer strips themselves (per the rules on destroying a prayer strip, on p. 125).

When the Sidereal's player activates the Charm, he attempts two separate (Manipulation + Socialize) rolls—one against each target's Dodge Mental Defense Value, and adds his Essence in automatic successes each time. If he succeeds both times, he can then craft a new relationship (social and emotional) between the two targets. This relationship lasts for as long as the strips remain within the targets' bodies, even if the targets have never met each other before: fate inexorably pushes the two characters together into their new relationship. While the Sidereal's Essence remains committed, the targets experience a magically enforced Intimacy toward each other, and a target must spend a Willpower point to act significantly at odds with the relationship for a scene. If a character spends a number of Willpower points equal to the Sidereal's Essence on subsequent occasions to allow himself to act at odds with the relationship, the effect ends for that character. (Half of the committed Essence is no longer committed.) The other targeted character remains under the effect, however.

Surgery can dislodge a prayer strip, but doing so requires 12 successes on an extended (Dexterity + Medicine) action and inflicts one level of unsoakable lethal damage. If a strip is removed in this way, the Essence committed to the strip is no longer committed, but the other strip is not affected.

Once the Charm ends, the targets still have the designated Intimacies toward each other, but they become normal Intimacies. Without the Illusion effect to reinforce the Intimacy, the two characters can lose the Intimacy by normal means, or keep it if they (and their players) so desire.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE WHORE

Once, there was a maiden...

...and things didn't go so well for her.

It was just the way of the world, you know?

She had to give up power to get it, and she didn't get much.

Some people hated her for getting any power at all.

She needed a protector, so she gave herself to a man named Necessity.

"Love is hard," she said.

BATTLES: THE CRIMSON PANOPLY OF VICTORY ARCHERY: THE QUIVER

GENERALIZED AMMUNITION TECHNIQUE

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Archery 2, Essence 2;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With this Charm, a Sidereal can turn any item no longer than his arm and no heavier than his fist into a fully functional projectile. Be it a handful of sand, a flounder, a shout, or what-have-you, the Sidereal gives it the fate of an arrow—so the item functions as an arrow, of whatever type the character wants. The improvised projectile inflicts damage per a standard arrow of a chosen type, as well as inflicting any special effects based on the nature of the projectile. If, for instance, the archer uses a handful of sand and gives it the properties of a fowling arrow, his target not only suffers bashing damage from the attack but might also be temporarily blinded. The Charm also serves as a peculiar way to send a brief message: turn the words into an arrow and shoot them near the intended listener.

ANY DIRECTION ARROW

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Archery 1, Essence 1;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal's arrow weaves unpredictably in the air, coming at a target from an unexpected angle. As a result, the archer may ignore penalties to the attack roll from up to 50% cover. If the target enjoys better than 50% hard cover, the full penalties apply.

EVERY DIRECTION ARROW

Cost: 3m per extra arrow; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any Direction Arrow

The Sidereal loads several arrows onto his string and fires them all at once. The arrows initially scatter but converge swiftly on a single target, striking him simultaneously. The Sidereal's player rolls only a single attack, but each arrow applies its damage separately. The Exalt can fire a maximum number of projectiles in a single attack equal to his Essence.

OPPORTUNE SHOT

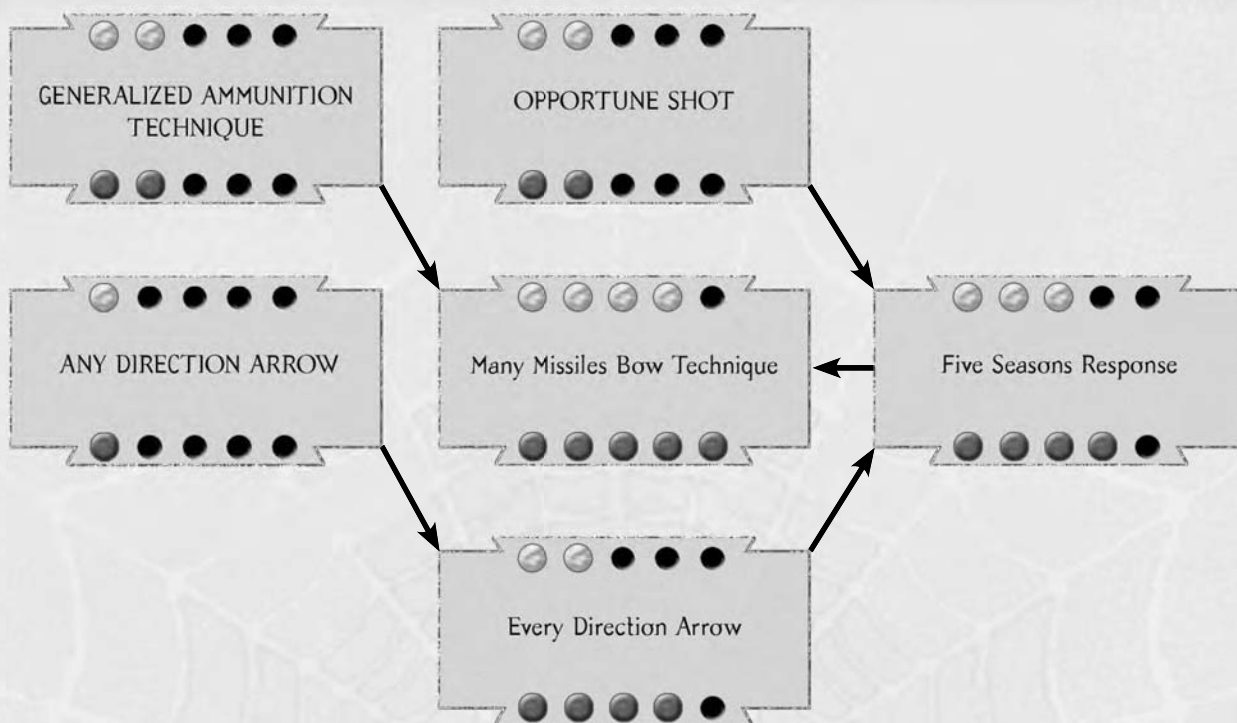
Cost: 2m per reduction; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None



The character spots the moment in which fate intends for him to take his shot, and he rushes to accommodate. The Sidereal reduces the Speed of an Archery-based attack by one tick for every two motes spent to activate the Charm. Opportune Shot and other effects can reduce the attack's final Speed to a minimum of 3.

FIVE SEASONS RESPONSE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Every Direction Arrow, Opportune Shot

If skill cannot protect one of the Maidens' Chosen, then she may trust to the world's esteem for her office and duties. If not to that, then to Creation's fear of what she hopes to save it from. If not to that, to the world's dreams of glories faded that may yet return. And if all these fail, she may ask for luck and revenge. These are the Five Seasons Response. If an Archery-based attack strikes the Sidereal, she may invoke this Charm to reflect that attack back to its source. The attacker receives his own attack, using the same attack roll and including any Charms he used.

MANY MISSILES BOW TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV-1)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Five Seasons Response, Generalized Ammunition Technique

The Sidereal activates this Charm using a prayer strip inscribed with the Scripture of the Clay Maiden. Infused with Essence, the strip rises into the air above the Sidereal's bow (holding steady at 10 yards) and glows a garish pink. The strip's influence triples the effective range for the character's Archery attacks.

What's more, the character can perform the Generalized Ammunition Technique in reverse: he can transform arrows in flight into other materials or phenomena found in Creation... not all of them physical. The character learns one transformation when he first learns the Charm. He can learn as many other transformations as he pleases, either when he first learns the Charm or later, but each additional one costs one experience point (or two for one bonus point). During a scene in which this Charm is active, the Sidereal can use only one transformation per attack. Each arrow so transformed costs one mote. A character cannot transform projectiles he improvises with the Generalized Ammunition Technique or on arrows made of the magical materials. Some sample transformations include the following:

- **Boulder:** In mid-flight, the arrow transforms from a simple wooden shaft to a large boulder. The projectile becomes unblockable. It also doubles its raw damage against inanimate objects.

- **Fire:** The arrow dissolves in the air, to be replaced by a rain of fire. Everything within five yards of the target suffers one action's worth of environmental damage, as if from a bonfire (see **Exalted**, p. 131). Paper, dry grass, grease and other easily combustible substances catch fire.

- **Glass:** The projectile becomes an arrow of perfectly transparent glass. Unless the target's player succeeds on a

reflexive (Perception + Awareness) roll at difficulty 2, the target loses sight of the projectile. As a result, his Defense Value become zero against that attack before adding bonuses from Charms or other supernatural effects.

- **Grain:** Where the arrow lands, a patch of ripe wheat grows, sufficient to feed one person for one day. The arrow must land in open ground for this effect to work. If the arrow hits a creature on open ground, the effect does not work unless that arrow also kills the creature.

- **Health:** Rather than suffering damage, the target of the attack is healed of one level of lethal or bashing damage for every dot the Sidereal has in Archery.

- **Love:** The arrow disintegrates in midair, and the attacker compares successes on his roll to the target's Dodge Mental Defense Value instead of Dodge Defense Value. If the attack "hits," the target falls madly in love with the first person the target sees. The effect is an Intimacy that the target cannot voluntarily erode for a number of days equal to the attacker's Essence. Ensuing events dictate whether the feelings linger or wither.

- **Precipitation:** For one minute after the arrow lands, rain or snow falls in the area (whichever is the least unlikely for the location and time of year). The affected area is 100 yards in diameter per dot of the Sidereal's Essence.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE CLAY MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who made herself from the substance of the world.

She knew how to eat an owl's heart and gain its insight.

She knew how to bake herself in the sun and melt herself in the rain.

She knew how to mess up wisdom.

She knew how to love, and how to hate.

"Survival is flexibility," she said.

ATHLETICS: THE BANNER

FORGOTTEN EARTH

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character leans back into the taut strands of fate and launches from them like an arrow from a bowstring. In so doing, her leaping distance triples for a single jump.

BURN LIFE

Cost: 3m per dot; **Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -2)

Keywords: Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal folds a strand of his destiny over itself, shortening his overall lifespan by a few days in return for a brief boost of physical power. When the character does so, his player rolls (Essence + Athletics). For every success this roll garners, the player may add one dot to the character's Strength, Dexterity or Stamina for the rest of the scene. (Each point added thus costs three motes of Essence.) These dice count against the maximum number of bonus dice a character can receive from Charms.

INEXORABLE ADVANCE

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (DV -2)

Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Five actions

Prerequisite Charms: Burn Life, Forgotten Earth

The character twists short loops into the line of her destiny, enabling her to begin and end a footstep, a swing of her blade or other actions without need for the motion in between. When she does so, her movements take on an eerie, flickering grace. While the Charm remains active, the character suffers no penalties from wounds or armor, or any environmental penalties that reduce her Move or Dash speeds. Outside combat, give the Charm a duration of 25 ticks.

UNSWERVING JUGGERNAUT PRINCIPLE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -1)

Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: None

Ruby stardust falls from the sky and covers the Sidereal for a moment—and she takes off running. Her eyes focus straight ahead, and her feet keep her course within 10 degrees of her initial heading. While she moves, her soak increases by +5L/+5B, she suffers no fatigue penalties, she needs no sleep and she adds a number of dice equal to her Essence to any Athletics rolls required to make forward progress. (These benefits likewise apply to the character's mount if the character is riding.)

The character must continue to make forward progress, though, lest the Charm end suddenly. She can only run, sprint, jump, swim, ride, use a mobility-enhancing Charm or use the Lesser Sign of Mercury. If the reason for the character's journey changes—if she uses this Charm to flee, for instance, and her pursuers give up the chase—the player receives a reflexive (Perception + Awareness) roll to notice that circumstances have changed enough that she can end the Charm.

FORWARD-THINKING TECHNIQUE

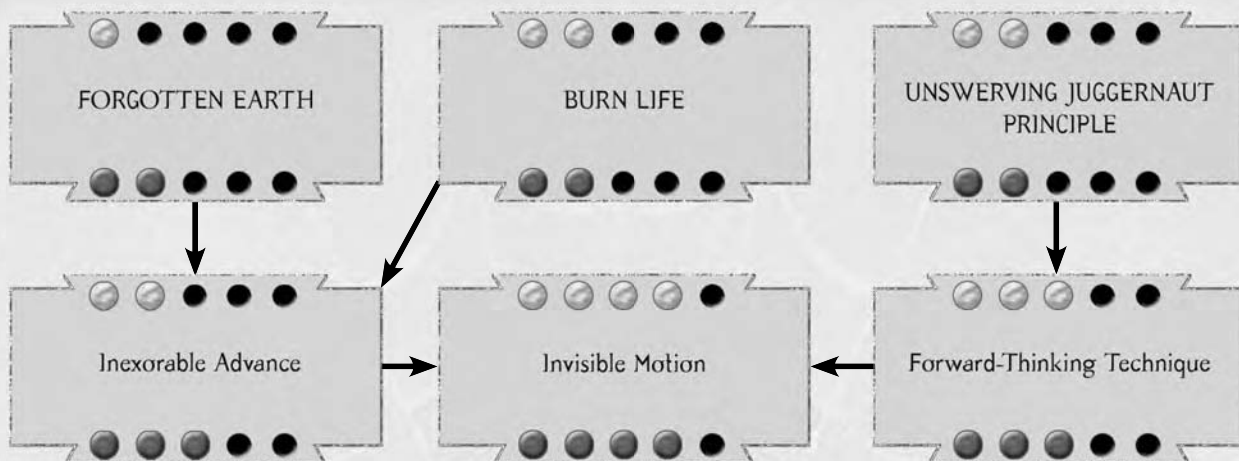
Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Unswerving Juggernaut Principle



A Sidereal must use Unswerving Juggernaut Principle before he can activate this Charm. In addition to all the benefits of the prerequisite Charm, the character cannot botch an Athletics roll devoted to making forward progress—any rolled botches are treated as regular failures. The character also adds his Essence to his Dodge Defense Value static value.

A successful (Wits + Survival) roll enables the Seer to cover his tracks without slowing down or deviating from

his course. If the roll succeeds, pursuers simply cannot tell that the character is proceeding in a straight line unless they succeed in the tracking contest. This Charm does not trump supernatural powers such as the Inevitable Pursuit Charm (see p. 175), since the attempt to cover one's tracks is not itself supernaturally enhanced.

Forward-Thinking Technique also enables the character to climb or swim as fast as he can dash, as



long as he keeps to his original heading. If the character uses this Charm during a scene that is being narrated tick-by-tick—such as a combat scene—he can swim or climb a number of yards per tick equal to (Dexterity + 6 – current wound penalties – armor mobility penalty). His doing so is considered a Move action, though, rather than a Dash action.

INVISIBLE MOTION

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Prayer Strip

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Forward-Thinking Technique, Inexorable Advance

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip of the Scripture of the One-Handed Maiden. Infusing the strip with Essence, the Sidereal wraps the strip around her forehead or neck like a headband or scarf. For the rest of the day, the character acts under the effects of Inexorable Advance, and doubles her base Move and Dash distances. What's more, she has a pool of bonus successes equal to her Athletics that she can apply to any physical action. If the character engages in multiple actions, she divides the bonus successes among them. The player can reserve some successes for reflexive actions the character takes before her Defense Values refresh, but unused successes do not carry over from action to action.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE ONE-HANDED MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who struck an iron wall

Until it shattered her hand.

*She did not stop, though cracks spread throughout
her bones.*

She did not stop, though blood sprayed her eyes.

She did not stop until she shattered the wall.

"Survival is fury," she said.

MELEE: THE SPEAR

HARMONY OF BLOWS

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action

Keywords: Combo-OK, Virtue (Temperance)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Uncertain fates may offer several equally attractive options in parallel. A Seer with this Charm need not choose one option over the others. Instead, he takes every available option. When the character activates this Charm, he can take two extra attack actions using Archery, Martial Arts, Melee or Thrown, ignoring multiple-action penalties and his attacks' listed Rate.

This Charm may be in Combos with Charms of other combat Abilities. Each attack used in the magical flurry must use the same Ability and weapon, though.

ORCHESTRATION OF MIRRORED FATES

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 9)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Harmony of Blows

A Sidereal may graciously share his fate with his opponent. Should a Sidereal's Parry or Dodge Defense Value prove insufficient to defend against an enemy's attack, the Sidereal may invoke this Charm to make a Melee-based counterattack, resolved in Step 9 of the initial attack's resolution. Note the rules for counterattacks on **Exalted** pages 150 and 183.

IMPEDING THE FLOW

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 1;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With a flick of his wrist, the Sidereal uses his weapon to separate the conjoined strands of fate that allow others to attack him. His weapon trails streamers of red stardust that are visible only to creatures that can see dematerialized spirits, and that dust parts the offending strands of fate. When that happens, the character instantaneously reduces the number of successes on an incoming attack to zero, provided that attack has a physical component and is not unblockable. Keep in mind that some Charm-supplemented attacks can hit even with zero successes (such as Accuracy Without Distance, on p. 187 of **Exalted**). Also, keep in mind that while the character invokes the Charm on Step 2 of combat, the Charm's effects take place in Step 3 and Step 4.

SERENITY IN BLOOD

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

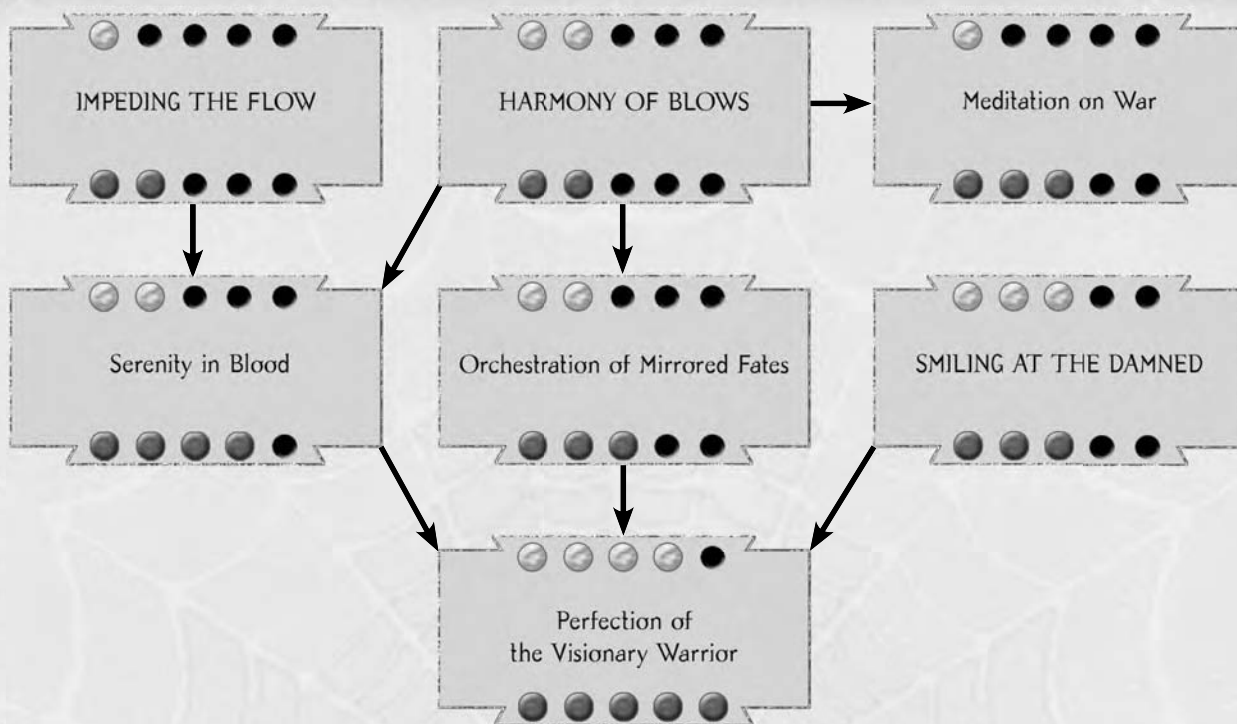
Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Harmony of Blows, Impeding the Flow

As with Impeding the Flow, the character's weapon trails evanescent streamers of crimson stardust, visible only to those who can see dematerialized spirits. This dust parts not only the most obvious conjunctions of fate that bind the character to her attackers, but the subtlest ones as well. This Charm is a parry that perfectly defends against any attack, even if it is unblockable. The Sidereal's player may even invoke Serenity in Blood to block unexpected attacks, although in those cases, the player must succeed at a (Perception + Melee) roll at difficulty 3 for the parry to be effective.

This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Invulnerability (see **Exalted**, p. 194).



MEDITATION ON WAR

Cost: 1m/penalty cancelled; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 1;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Virtue (Temperance)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Harmony of Blows

In the stress of battle, the Vizier draws calm and control from his connection to fate. Each mote spent on this Charm cancels -1 penalty on an attack, such as from wound penalties, multiple action penalties or sensory deprivation penalties, as long as those penalties have not reduced the attack dice pool to zero. This Charm may apply to any attack, not just Melee, and can be part of a Combo with other combat Abilities.

SMILING AT THE DAMNED

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the character's weapon finds its mark, the victim sees the world with a reddish tint for just a moment as his own Essence reflects the wrath of the Maiden of Battles. On a successful attack, the Sidereal halves the post-soak damage the attack inflicts, rounding down, but turns the damage aggravated.

PERFECTION OF THE VISIONARY WARRIOR

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Prayer Strip

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Orchestration of Mirrored Fates, Serenity in Blood, Smiling at the Damned

The Sidereal channels Essence into a prayer strip that bears the Scripture of the One-Handed Maiden, then places the strip across his eyes like a blindfold. It adheres there, and dark blood drips from beneath it, running down the character's face like tears. The strip does not hinder his vision, however. Instead, the prayer strip makes the patterns of his foes' fates—or the disruptions in the strands of fate caused by creatures outside fate—more apparent to him. (Supernatural stealth or concealment effects still work against him as normal.)

While the Charm is in effect, the character doubles his Parry Defense Value against all blockable attacks and suffers no onslaught penalty to his Parry Defense Value. Also, once per action, he can make a reflexive Archery, Martial Arts, Melee or Thrown attack at his full dice pool—but not during the same action in which he performs a flurry. He could, however, reflexively attack once with his sword (and parry any incoming attack with twice his Defense Value) while concentrating on riding a wild horse through a storm of flaming arrows.

PRESENCE: THE GAUNTLET

FORCE DECISION

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Presence 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Compulsion, Fate

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

When people face choices, wise Viziers shape the people's decisions. The Sidereal subtly channels Essence into a victim so he makes the decision that the Seer wants. At the time, the decision seems perfectly natural to the target

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN ON THE SHELF

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who sat on a child's shelf and watched the
entire world.*

Her eyes were made of glass,

And their pupils were red.

Her mouth was sewn on.

For years and years, she did not move.

*Then, when necessary, she was gone, and the head
of that child with her.*

"Survival is control," she said.

character forced to make it, though he might come to regret it later and wonder what possessed him to choose as he did. The Seer's player need merely succeed at a (Manipulation + Presence) roll at a difficulty of the target's Essence; the character can affect anyone she can see.

The Charm works only on people who really are weighing different options: it can't force a person to drop whatever he's doing to go do something else. Any decision imposed must be at least a plausible option in the circumstances: when the Regent ponders what wine to have with dinner, you can't make him decide to declare war on Thorns. Worst of all, the Charm doesn't *hold* the target to his decision. Habitual wafflers may still change their minds a few minutes later. (Bronze Faction Sidereals have learned that using Force Decision on Regent Fokuf is futile and unnecessary: he agrees with whatever *anyone* suggests... and changes his mind the next time anyone speaks.)

PRESENCE IN ABSENCE TECHNIQUE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Presence 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate, Social

Duration: Instant, with time delay

Prerequisite Charms: None

After one scene of social interaction, the Sidereal can make the strands of a victim's fate resonate with the Sidereal's own. The Sidereal picks a time or circumstance when the target makes a social attack. At that time, the Sidereal's personality overwhelms the victim and works itself out through his actions. The victim's will is his own, but the psychic resonance lends his actions the emotional weight that the Sidereal wants.

When the circumstance in question arises, the Sidereal's player specifies his character's intent and makes a single Bureaucracy, Performance, Presence or Socialize roll—the same as the victim's—with a difficulty of the target's Essence. Success means that the victim's actions convey the effect of the Sidereal's intent as if the Sidereal were present and taking the actions himself. If a critical vote comes up in the Greater House of the Deliberative, for instance, the Sidereal can use this Charm to lend his oratorical skills to a senator who intends to make a speech in line with the Sidereal's opinion. Alternatively, the Sidereal could find a loud, pompous senator with whom the Sidereal disagrees and use this same Charm on him. When the senator makes a speech in contrast to the Sidereal's opinion and the Sidereal's player succeeds on a Presence roll, the senator's abusive rhetoric and caustic sense of humor put his colleagues in a mood to oppose him... if only out of spite.

A victim can be under the effect of only one application of this Charm at a time.

IMPOSE MOTIVATION

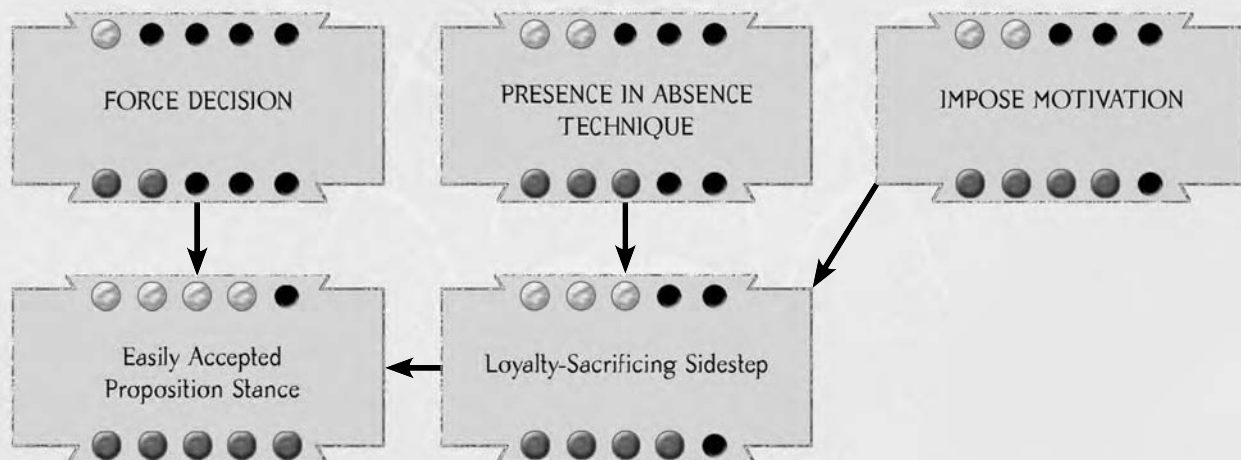
Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Fate, Servitude, Touch

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: None

As the Sidereal touches her target's forehead to bless him, a ghostly image of the Sidereal's caste mark appears on the target's left palm. The player then rolls (Charisma + Presence) against the victim's Dodge Mental Defense Value, and adds her Essence in automatic successes. If this roll succeeds, the victim gains the Sidereal's Motivation in addition to his own.



Both are equally strong and are equally valid for the purposes of social combat and regaining Willpower. This state of dual Motivation lasts for as long as the Sidereal keeps the Essence committed. The victim can spend a point of Willpower to ignore the urges of the Sidereal's Motivation in favor of the victim's own for one day, during which time the Sidereal's Motivation is no longer valid for social combat or regaining Willpower. If the victim pushes the Sidereal's Motivation aside a number of times equal to the Sidereal's Essence, the Charm's effect (and the Essence commitment) ends.

LOYALTY-SACRIFICING SIDESTEP

Cost: 5m, 1w; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 5)

Keywords: Compulsion, Social

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Impose Motivation, Presence in Absence Technique

Even as the Sidereal's allies fall to the arguments of his enemies, he remains unconvinced. A Sidereal may activate this Charm after failing to defend against a social attack. He may apply the effects of the attack to one of his acquaintances (as the Background of that name) instead of himself.

EASILY ACCEPTED PROPOSITION STANCE

Cost: 12m, 2wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate, Mandate, Obvious, Prayer Strip, Shaping

Duration: One battle

Prerequisite Charms: Force Decision, Loyalty-Sacrificing Sidestep

Creation supports the decisions of the Viziers, and punishes those who defy the Viziers. A Vizier may use this Charm any time she (or an individual who serves as her proxy) faces another person in a conflict where choices must be made. The two may be opposing generals on a battlefield, haggling merchants, diplomats negotiating a treaty or any other circumstance in which two people confront each other but at least agree on the nature of the confrontation.

The Sidereal channels Essence into a prayer strip of the Scripture of the Drowning Maiden and fixes the strip in the middle of his shadow, where the prayer strip glows a brilliant scarlet. The Vizier names a single possible—if improbable—circumstance that could prove ruinous to her opponent and advantageous to her own side. For instance, a merchant could suffer a bandit attack on his caravan, leaving him with nothing to sell; the Sidereal general's reinforcements could ride over the hill; the opposing diplomat's nation might suffer unexpected treachery from an ally. The Sidereal cannot ask for the impossible, such as tyrant lizards raining from the sky into the enemy's capital, and she can't ask for any intervention that reaches beyond Creation. The proposed event must be proportional to the target's scale: no burning down the city because a shopkeeper won't give you a discount. Finally, the target must be within 10 miles.

The Sidereal's player rolls (Intelligence + Presence) at a difficulty of the sum of the Magnitude of whatever social unit or dominion he represents, and either his own Essence or the highest Essence of any member of the group he represents. (A shopkeeper might represent no one but a few employees; a diplomat could represent a nation, or even a coalition such as the Confederation of Rivers.)

If this roll succeeds, the Tapestry of Creation itself quivers in excitement and the targeted person intuitively knows that he faces a choice. Either the Sidereal's requested event happens as she wants it to, or the pent-up tension in the Tapestry discharges through the character himself. This discharge inflicts dice of aggravated damage equal to the Sidereal's Essence, plus one die per extra success on the roll. The damage ignores armor. If the target character tries to defend himself with defensive Charms, he takes no damage but the Sidereal's condition comes to pass automatically.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE DROWNING MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...falling forever in the water. She reached for purchase, but found nothing; her arms swung through the sea.

*The water did not slow her, nor did the chill,
But she could not breathe.*

Each time she gasped and found no breath, a human child died; and thus, she lived.

"Survival is acceptance," she said.

WAR: THE SHIELD

AUSPICIOUS RECRUITMENT DRIVE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** War 1, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: War

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Destiny leads soldiers to a Sidereal's command. When the Sidereal engages in recruitment activities designed to drum up a mass combat unit (or heal one between battles), his efforts achieve the desired result in a fraction of the time. Whereas building up or healing a single dot of Magnitude normally takes a number of days equal to (the unit's current Magnitude + 1)—see **Exalted**, p. 169—a Sidereal who uses this Charm can achieve the same result in half that time. The Sidereal can increase a unit's Magnitude by only one dot at a time with this Charm.

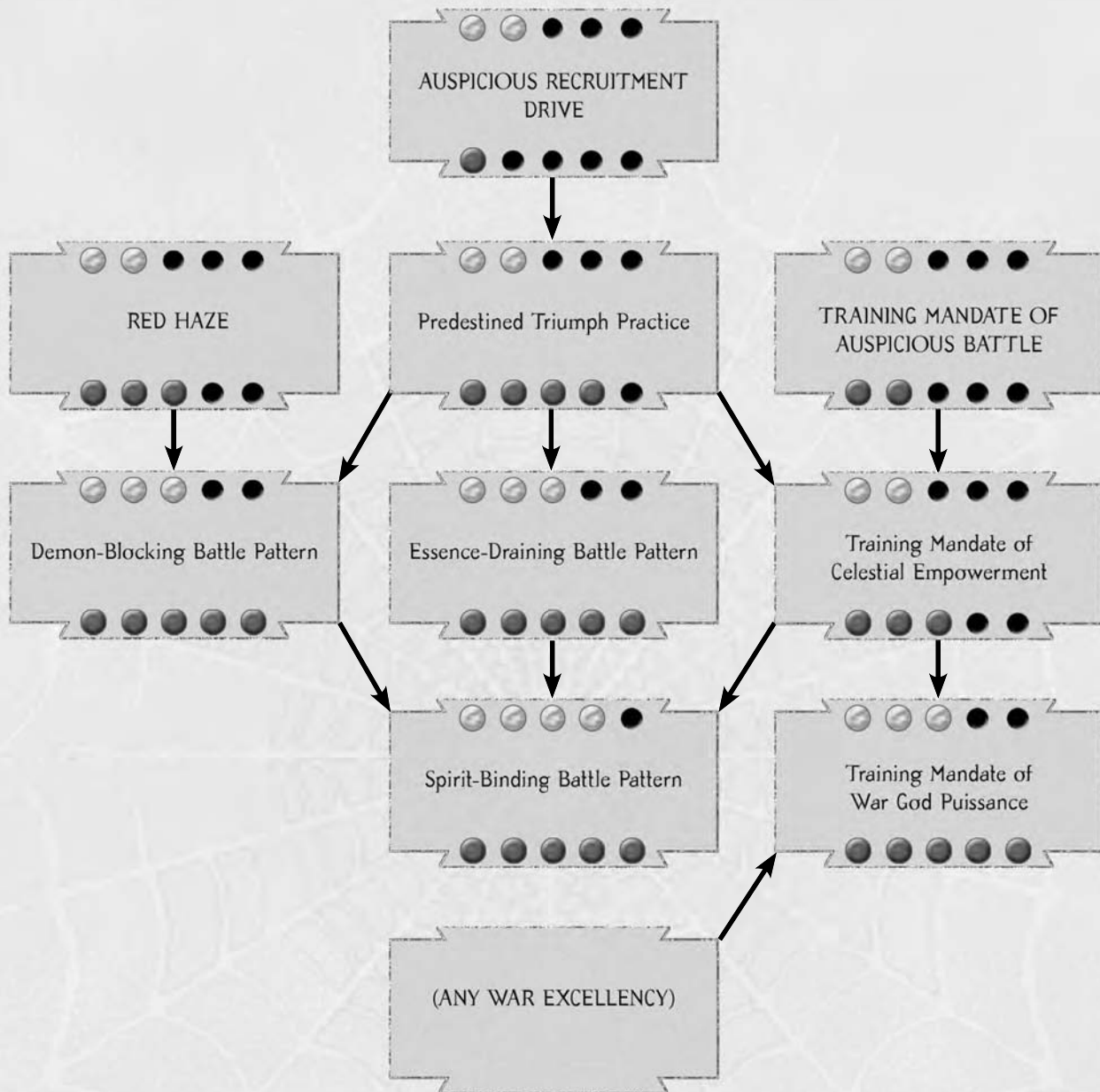
RED HAZE

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Holy, Stackable, War

Duration: Five days

Prerequisite Charms: None



Crimson stardust, visible only to Sidereals or characters with supernatural senses, wafts down from the sky onto a unit of soldiers, whose Magnitude cannot exceed the Sidereal's Essence. Every combatant, man, beast or spirit, gains a primal opposition to entities from beyond Creation. If the anointed soldiers face demons, the dead, the Fair Folk or other creatures of darkness during the five-day duration, the soldiers enjoy a +1 bonus to their Drill rating.

A single Sidereal can affect a given unit only once at a time, but several Sidereals working together can affect the same unit simultaneously, increasing the bonus. The maximum bonus equals the highest Essence rating among the Sidereals activating the Charm simultaneously, but the unit's Magnitude cannot exceed the lowest Essence rating among their group.

TRAINING MANDATE OF AUSPICIOUS BATTLE

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Training

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the Sidereal oversees the training of a mass combat unit, he weaves the soldiers' destinies together. On the field, each soldier's confidence in his training shores up that of his fellow soldiers, making the entire unit stronger for their interwoven resolve. Choose one of the House of Battles Abilities (Archery, Athletics, Melee, Presence, War) per dot of the Sidereal's Essence. While the Charm is active, mass combat rolls involving these Abilities have their target number reduced

by 1, and each soldier in the unit counts as two for the purpose of enacting Battle Pattern Charms. The unit's Magnitude, however, cannot exceed the Sidereal's War rating.

PREDESTINED TRIUMPH PRACTICE

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Virtue (Valor), War

Duration: One battle

Prerequisite Charms: Auspicious Recruitment Drive

Whether a Sidereal leads from the front or coaches from the rear, he can use this Charm to help lead an army to victory. When the Sidereal commands the unit, the Charm automatically succeeds. If the character acts through the army's commander, the Charm requires a successful (Charisma + War) roll with difficulty 1 if the leader cooperates, 3 if the leader doubts the Sidereal's advice and 5 if the leader flatly refuses to take the Sidereal's advice and must be browbeaten or tricked into the proper tactics. When the effect is successful, the affected unit adds the Sidereal's Essence to the unit's Morale, while opposing forces suffer a one-die penalty to their attacks and Defense Values.

TRAINING MANDATE OF CELESTIAL EMPOWERMENT

Cost: 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Training

Duration: Two weeks

Prerequisite Charms: Predestined Triumph Practice, Training Mandate of Auspicious Battle

The Sidereal can train a small team of spirits or Exalted into an elite fighting unit. This team can include no more members than the Sidereal has (War + Essence). When he trains them in this way, though, the Sidereal weaves their fates into a stout lash that strikes as one, even when the characters are not physically together.

The individuals affected by the Charm are treated as a single being for the purposes of Sidereal astrology effects in the House of Battles. This solo unit's Essence equals the average of the group's members' ratings (rounded down) for determining the astrology effect's Scope. While the effect lasts, the Sidereal trainer's astrology effects in the House of Battles that are directed at the unit apply equally to each member of that team, even when those team members work independently.

TRAINING MANDATE OF WAR-GOD PUISSANCE

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Training

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: Any War Excellency, Training Mandate of Celestial Empowerment

With this Charm, a Sidereal trains a group of gods or elementals in the battle tactics of the regional war gods. In so doing, he grants each a temporary promotion that increases the spirit's power on the field of battle. Unlike the preceding Training Mandate Charms, this one was not



developed during the Primordial War. The Five Maidens allowed this Charm to come into being when their Sidereal generals planned the Usurpation... though the Maidens offered no comment on the Charm's potential uses.

The Sidereal can affect (his Essence x 5) spirits at one time, and they retain its effects only for as long as they remain under his direct command. Each spirit so affected gains one temporary dot of Essence, 10 motes of Essence and any two spirit Charms the spirit does not already have that the Sidereal feels the spirit needs. These benefits last for one week. Also, for the rest of the week, the cost of using the Materialize Charm drops by an amount equal to (Sidereal's Essence x 5), to a minimum of one mote.

This Charm works equally well on any god or elemental who accepts the command of the Sidereal using it.

ESSENCE-DRAINING BATTLE PATTERN

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Virtue (Compassion), War

Duration: Until battle's end

Prerequisite Charms: Predestined Triumph Practice

The Sidereal must first activate Predestined Triumph Practice in order to use this Charm. He then urges his forces into a combat pattern that blocks and reroutes the flows of Essence that empower their enemies. Designing the pattern and properly arranging his troops into it requires a successful (Intelligence + War) roll. The maximum number of successes the Sidereal can achieve is equal to his permanent Essence—extra successes are lost.

During the battle, every hero or sorcerer's special character (see **Exalted**, p. 162) who enacts his part of the pattern receives an extra mote of Essence per action from the flows that the pattern disrupts. Each such character also adds a number of motes equal to the Sidereal's player's successes on the aforementioned roll to the costs of any Charms or sorcery used by the opposing army. This increase, however, cannot more than double the cost for a Charm or spell. For instance, an Essence 5 Sidereal leading an army with six special characters could add up to 30 motes to the cost of enemy Charms or spells; for instance, Rain of Doom could have its cost raised from 60 motes to 90. A minor Charm such as Fists of Iron Technique, however, would have its cost raised from just one mote to two.

An army can benefit from only one Battle Pattern Charm in a given battle.

DEMON-BLOCKING BATTLE PATTERN

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Holy, Virtue (Compassion), War

Duration: Until battle's end

Prerequisite Charms: Predestined Triumph Practice, Red Haze

The character activates this Charm just as he would activate Essence-Draining Battle Pattern. This battle pattern, however, is designed to help straighten out the strands of fate disrupted by the presence of inhabitants of the Demon

Realm. The Sidereal's player makes the same (Intelligence + War) roll after activating Predestined Triumph Practice, and counts the successes up to a maximum equal to his Essence. During the battle, every hero or sorcerer who enacts his part of the pattern imposes that number as a dice-pool penalty on one special character on the opposing side. Alternatively, every hero or sorcerer who does his part to form the pattern can impose a cumulative -1 penalty on the enemy's commander's War rolls. This alternative imposed penalty cannot exceed the Sidereal's Essence or reduce the commander's dice pool below zero.

After the Usurpation, the Five-Score Fellowship petitioned the Maidens to create analogous Charms against the Fair Folk and denizens of the Underworld. Chaos-Quelling Battle Pattern and Ghost-Banishing Battle Pattern work exactly the same way as Demon-Blocking Battle Pattern, except for the class of supernatural enemies the Charms affect. An army can benefit from only one Battle Pattern Charm in a given battle.

SPIRIT-BINDING BATTLE PATTERN

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Obvious, Prayer Strip, Servitude, Virtue (Conviction), War

Duration: Until battle's end

Prerequisite Charms: Demon-Blocking Battle Pattern, Essence-Draining Battle Pattern, Training Mandate of Celestial Empowerment

As with the other Battle Pattern Charms, the Sidereal first must activate Predestined Triumph Practice. The Vizier sends Essence through a prayer strip marked with the Scripture of the Maiden At War. The strip burns to ash, leaving the characters of the scripture glowing redly in the air. The Sidereal then names a god or elemental the Sidereal wants to appear and intervene on his side of the battle. The spirit can have a maximum Essence of 5 if a lone character performs this Charm; but at most, one Sidereal of the other castes may assist the Charm's user. Each additional participant adds 1 to the maximum possible Essence of the summoned spirit.

The Sidereal's player's dice pool to summon and bind the chosen spirit starts at zero. Each death of a spirit or Exalt among his forces, or every 20 mortals slain, adds one die to this pool. When the Sidereal decides he has sacrificed enough of his troops for the sake of victory, the player rolls the dice pool against a difficulty of the chosen spirit's Essence.

If this roll succeeds, the chosen spirit must appear, already bound to the Sidereal. Either it must perform whatever task the Vizier asks, with no retribution afterwards, or the spirit must serve the Sidereal for a year and a day... and take whatever revenge the spirit wants afterward.

As usual, a character may apply only one battle pattern at a time.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AT WAR

Once, there was a maiden...
...whose battles called her far from home.
She slew the thing she feared most, and conquered
the land that feared her.
As she fought, far away, she knew her children
needed guidance.
She knew they faced tyrants.
She knew they faced fear.
In her homeland, things were broken.
So, she held up her hand before the sun, cast a
shadow on the world and drowned the troubles of her
home in darkness.
"Survival's a long reach," she said.

SECRETS: THE FORBIDDING MANSE OF IVY

INVESTIGATION: THE KEY

AUSPICIOUS PROSPECTS FOR (CASTE)

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Investigation 2, Essence 1;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm actually represents five separate Charms—one for each Sidereal caste. Each version grants an awareness of astrological details that aid in the completion of destiny's designs. Auspicious Prospects for Journeys reveals when and where someone ought to travel. Auspicious Prospects for Serenity tells whom fate wishes to have joy, as well as how to help such people achieve it. Auspicious Prospects for Battles shows when, where and between whom important

conflicts should occur. Auspicious Prospects for Secrets grants insight into whether certain important information should be revealed or obscured. Auspicious Prospects for Endings suggests when a person, thing or idea's time has come. A Sidereal can easily learn the Auspicious Prospects Charm of her own patron Maiden. Learning the corresponding Charms for other Maidens requires permission from the Maiden herself or that of her deputy in the Bureau of Destiny, but Viziers do not risk any censure for using other versions of this Charm.

Using the Charm requires only a mote of Essence and a successful (Intelligence + Investigation) roll. On a success, the Sidereal gets a sense of whether the fate in question is favorable in terms of the Maiden represented by the caste. Seeing that the favorable fate comes to pass, however, is up to the Sidereal.

EFFICIENT SECRETARY TECHNIQUE

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Investigation 1, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

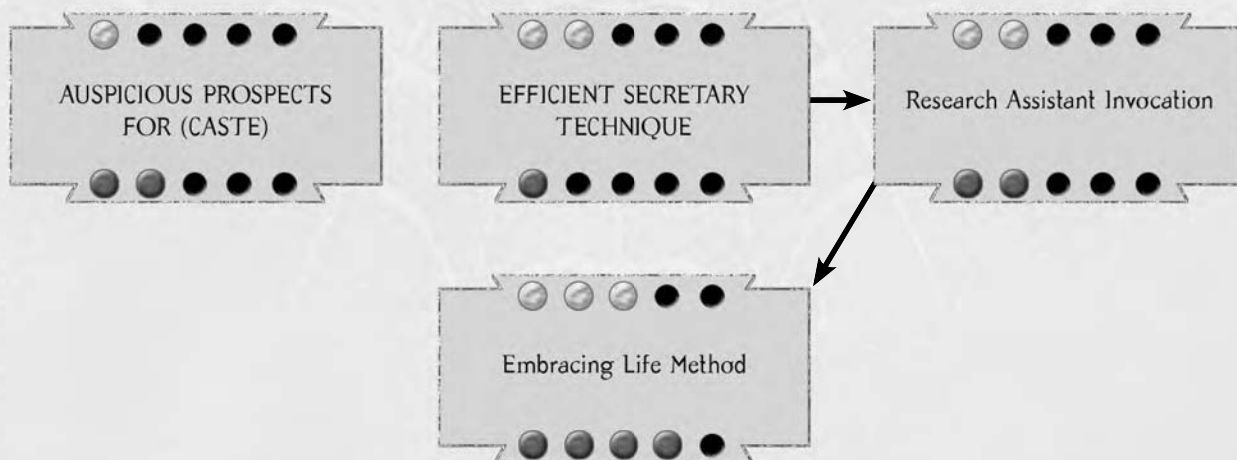
Keywords: None

Duration: One miscellaneous action

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the character first learns this Charm, a measure of his Essence crystallizes in his mouth in the form of a small emerald pattern spider. The character spits out this indestructible construct, whereupon it immediately dematerializes and attaches itself to a part of his body. Thereafter, the character may spend two motes of Essence to instruct the spirit to fetch some particular piece of information for him. If the information is available and not actively concealed, the spider scuttles away along the weave of fate. The spider returns in the space of a miscellaneous action and whispers the information to the Sidereal.

The pattern spider can only retrieve simple, objective facts. It can answer questions such as, "What is that shopkeeper's name?" or "When did it last rain in Nexus?" or even "Who stabbed Sesus Lahor?" It cannot answer questions such as, "Does the shopkeeper hate me?" (the spider



doesn't read minds), "Who's winning the battle?" (the spider has no strategic sense) or "Who murdered Sesus Lahor?" (murder, unlike stabbing, is a matter of intent). Questions such as, "What is the Bull of the North up to?" usually give unhelpful answers, such as, "Eating lunch." The pattern spider cannot retrieve information that is actively hidden or innately esoteric, such as spells, and the spider does not function in regions where fate's influence is weak, such as the Wyld, shadowlands or Malfeas.

As an alternative to pulling such answers from the Loom of Fate, the Sidereal can send the spider with a query to her own library, in Creation or Yu-Shan, for her assistants to look up. The answer falls within the spider's purview because the answer is objective information—what the Sidereal's staff can locate in books—rather than anything so nebulous as truth. Such answers take longer to retrieve, of course.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT INVOCATION

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Investigation 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Obvious

Duration: Five days

Prerequisite Charms: Efficient Secretary Technique

If the Sidereal finds himself frustrated with the minutia of investigation or academic research, he can call forth a loyal helper to assist him. He need only clap his hands over a smallish living plant and activate the Charm. The plant then grows rapidly and twists itself into the shape of a clothed mortal with the Attributes and Abilities of the "Savant" template on pp. 280–281 of *Exalted*, minus any specialties. This research assistant speaks any languages the Sidereal does, and it is unfailingly helpful in the character's investigation and research efforts. If an attack or some other emergency imperils the assistant, though, it panics and immediately reverts to its plant form on the spot, prematurely ending the Charm.

EMBRACING LIFE METHOD

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Prayer Strip, Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: Five days

Prerequisite Charms: Research Assistant Invocation

The Sidereal writes a prayer strip with the Scripture of That Old Thing as she ponders a specific question or subject of interest to her. The Sidereal buries the prayer strip like a seed and waters it with her own blood. In a single day, the strip sprouts roots and rapidly grows into a tall mulberry tree that attracts the gratified attention of local wood spirits. These spirits either leave small gifts or write secrets on the fallen leaves.

The Sidereal may return to the site on the fifth day. Her player then rolls (Charisma + Investigation) as the character looks through the wood spirits' offerings. For each success on the roll, the Sidereal finds a piece of information useful to resolving her quandary—some hint about the answer

to her question or an idea about where to look for more information—as well as an interesting trinket. These gifts seldom possess significant monetary value... but occasionally turn out to be just what the character needs later.

Returning to the tree before five days pass offends the spirits before they finish leaving gifts. For each day the Sidereal refuses to wait, remove one success from the player's roll.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THAT OLD THING

Once, there was that old thing...

...that wasn't like a shadow, because you could see it too well.

...and that wasn't like a light, because it didn't make flowers grow.

So, it had to be a maiden, but she didn't mind.

"To know the world is to love it," said she.

LARCENY: THE GUARDIANS

AVOIDING THE TRUTH TECHNIQUE

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

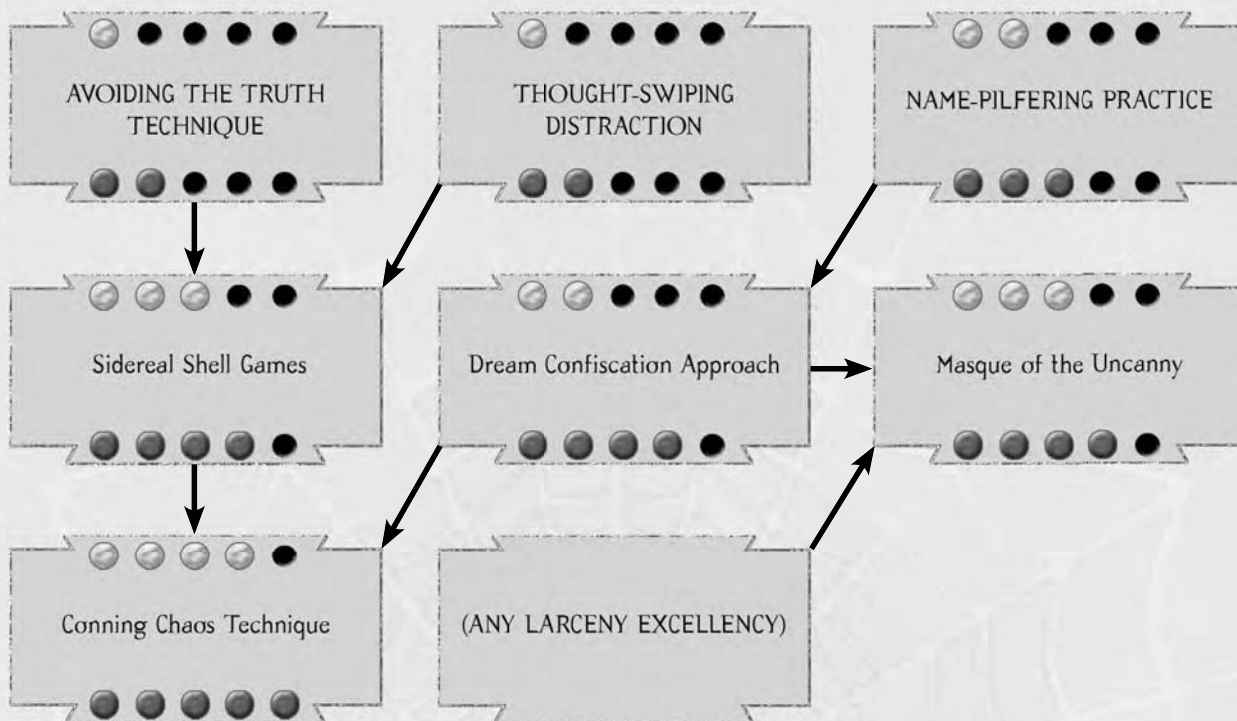
Keywords: Fate, Illusion, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Through subtle adjustments to her manner of speaking, the Sidereal makes her statements seem laden with implications that listeners find too horrible or absurd to believe. The Charm supplements social actions using any Ability (and can be part of a Combo with any ability's Charms), but changes the effect of the social action. The Charm adds the character's Larceny in successes to the social Ability roll. If the result exceeds the target's Dodge Mental Defense Value, he thinks he saw through the Sidereal's "lie" and believes that whatever she said isn't true. This may cause the victim to discount other people who sincerely make similar claims; or when the victim discovers that the Sidereal's "unbelievable" statement was true after all, he might be inclined to believe a genuine whopper from the Sidereal.

Example: Ayesha Ura—concealed by a resplendent destiny as a humble farmer's wife—tells Peleps Deled that Anathema have terrorized the area. She uses Avoiding the Truth Technique while saying this. Since Ayesha wants to persuade Deled, her player rolls (Manipulation + Presence), channels a Willpower through her Conviction (Deled is well-known as a strong-willed man) and adds Ayesha's Larceny in automatic successes. The result just barely overcomes the Dynast's Dodge Mental Defense Value. Deled thinks the "farmwife" is a flibbertigibbet who sees Anathema in every shadow. Thus, the fanatical Immaculate immediately decides the lead that brought him after a suspected Solar was a hoax, and his Wyld Hunt rides away.



THOUGHT-SWIPING DISTRACTION

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fate

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal makes eye contact with a target for long enough to exchange a few words, however brief, and activates this Charm. When the Sidereal does so, he gets a quick impression of what the target is thinking about at that moment. The target loses his train of thought in that moment as his mind goes blank for the blink of an eye.

It is impossible to maintain eye contact for long enough to use this Charm if either the target or the Sidereal engages in physical combat. The Sidereal can swipe a target's surface thoughts while either or both of them engage in social combat.

SIDEREAL SHELL GAMES

Cost: 1m + (2m per increment stolen), 1wp;

Mins: Larceny 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Fate, Shaping

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Avoiding the Truth Technique, Thought-Swiping Distraction

The character sweeps a hand through the weave of events, wrapping her fate around that of a target so that certain portions of one strand temporarily become indistinguishable from the other. The player then rolls (Wits + Larceny). If the roll succeeds, the Sidereal can steal a number equal to his Essence from his target's innate bashing and lethal soak, his target's damage dice from all attacks or dice from one of

his target's specific dice pools. The target loses the dice or levels of soak for the scene, and the Sidereal gains them in addition to his own. This Charm cannot take more dice or levels from the target than the target has and cannot add more bonus dice to the Sidereal's pool in conjunction with other Charms than the Sidereal has dots of Essence.

The Sidereal can steal dice from several different targets or steal dice from several of one target's dice pools, but the Sidereal cannot add to his own soak or to any one of his dice pools more than once. Also, he cannot steal dice or soak just to make it disappear from the target: the character must be able to receive and use the stolen dice or levels in order to be able to steal them.

NAME-PILFERING PRACTICE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Fate

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: None

With a sharp yank on a person's fate, the Sidereal can dislodge that person's name and snatch it from her. This requires a (Manipulation + Larceny) roll, with a difficulty of the target's permanent Essence. If the roll succeeds, only the Sidereal can think, speak or write the stolen name for as long as he keeps the Essence committed.

DREAM CONFISCATION APPROACH

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Virtue (Temperance)

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Name Pilfering Practice

The Essence of dreams is subtler even than fate—too subtle for Sidereals to shape, but not too subtle for them to mangle. The Sidereal attempts the lightest, most surreptitious touch to his victim while her player rolls (Wits + Larceny), against a difficulty equal to the victim's Essence. If the roll succeeds, the Seer slips a net of Essence into her victim—delicate by most standards, but a strangling mesh of cable compared to dreams. The victim can no longer dream while the Sidereal maintains the Essence commitment, and grows listless and distracted. For the Charm's duration, the victim cannot regain Willpower or regenerate his Essence normally. As a dubious benefit, the Fair Folk cannot feed on the victim unless they discern and remove the net of Essence.

The dream-crushing net becomes more dangerous when used against the Fair Folk themselves, for they are made of dreams. The Charm inflicts a number of dice of aggravated damage equal to the Sidereal's Essence. When that happens, the Fair Folk victim immediately becomes ravenous as well as a bit mad (well, madder than usual), though not so deranged it will not try to avoid further attacks.

MASQUE OF THE UNCANNY

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Illusion

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any Larceny Excellency, Dream Confiscation Approach

The Sidereal cloaks herself in Essence infused with tints from outside Creation. This makes her seem like a native of a realm beyond fate: a ghost, a raksha or a demon. The Charm does not let the character impersonate a particular entity, or indeed look radically unlike herself; rather, she looks like herself if she were some sort of human-like demon (such as a neomah), a ghost or one of the Fair Folk.

The disguise is good enough to fool a casual view. If the character comes under close, prolonged or Essence-enhanced perceptions, however, her player rolls (Wits + Larceny) against the observer's (Perception + [Awareness, Investigation or Occult]) to find out if the disguise stands.

The basic purchase of this Charm enables a Vizier to disguise herself as one sort of creature outside of fate. Each additional class of entities costs an additional two experience points or one bonus point.

CONNING CHAOS TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 7, DV -2)

Keywords: Fate, Obvious, Prayer Strip, Shaping

Duration: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: Dream Confiscation Approach, Sidereal Shell Games

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip on which is written the Scripture of the Savory Maiden. The Essence-infused prayer strip goes rigid and affixes itself to the air as if the strip were nailed to a board. As the strip pulses with green light, the Sidereal names a victim within 10 miles. For just a moment, the victim sees a glowing green image of the prayer strip as viewed through the Exalt's eyes. After that, the victim's destiny becomes a bargaining chip between the Maidens and the nameless, formless entities of the deepest Wyld. The Wyld accepts the victim's destiny in exchange for surrendering what seems like a miniscule fraction of the Wyld back into Creation. At the time, the Wyld does not realize—perhaps because it cannot—that its hold over the victim's destiny is temporary, but territory ceded to fixed and stable Creation is lost to it forever. Hindsight reveals the Wyld's folly, however, so the more often a Sidereal tricks the Wyld into this lopsided bargain, the angrier the Wyld grows with her. If she uses this Charm too frequently, the Sidereal will find herself the target of chaotic forces from beyond Creation's rim.

When the character activates the Charm, her player rolls (Manipulation + Larceny) against a difficulty of her chosen victim's Essence. If the roll succeeds, chaos plagues the victim's destiny for one month per success rolled. Fair Folk or Wyld creatures might seek him out with malicious intent—or (just as bad) to do him what they consider "favours." Or, he might suffer physical or mental mutation: each month, the victim's player rolls to avoid Wyld mutation as if the character was in a Middlemarch... but at difficulty 5. (See **Exalted**, pp. 288–290, for basic Wyld mutations; additional physical mutations and mental derangements appear in **Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld** and **Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**). The exact nature of the curse is up to the Storyteller, but the character should be harried or mentally damaged or physically mutated—not all three at once (at least in the same month).

While this curse lasts, the victim's player can make an extended (Intelligence + Lore) roll once per month for the character to gain an understanding of the curse. With six successes, it occurs to him that the prayer strip he saw when the curse came into effect must have been within 10 miles of him at that point and that destroying the strip would free him. With 12 successes, he figures out its precise location.

In return for each month of the victim's torment, the Wyld cedes one square mile of the Bordermarches to Creation, or (for an inhabited region) a dominion of Magnitude 0 (see the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**, p. 133). The Sidereal can specify a region or Wyld-tainted community to bring into Creation.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE SAVORY MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who ate 236 leaves. She had to, because otherwise she'd forget where she came from, and that would make everyone very sad or, possibly, very happy.

She found herself in a woods full of monsters, impelled toward their cook pot. "Do you want to cook me?" she asked. "Or do you just think that's where maidens belong?"

There was a crack in the cook pot's bottom that let in the sky.

She started to squirm through the crack, but then, she saw that the clouds carried chains and the wind was their manacles.

As the monsters pulled her back, she called to the stones and she called to the sky, but it was the night that came to her aid; and, in the night, fire and pain. "Why should you help me?" she asked.

"To know the world is to serve it," they said.

LORE: THE TREASURE TROVE

METHODOLOGY OF SECRETS

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Until the character next sleeps

Prerequisite Charms: None

In the character's sleep, the Maiden of Secrets reveals to him her plan for fate. If the character spends five motes of Essence as he receives this vision, he understands how he fits into this grand plan and what he can do to best integrate himself into the Maiden's efforts. When he wakes, the character has access to three relevant bonus specialties he may divide among up to three Abilities of the Sidereal's choosing. The dice from these specialties may also apply to the effect roll for any Sidereal astrology that involves the college corresponding to a selected Ability.

Keep in mind, however, that characters using this Charm are still limited to a maximum +3 bonus from specialties to any given roll. Also, bonus dice granted from these specialties count as bonus from Charms. The Ability or Abilities the character chooses need not be the same each time the character activates the Methodology of Secrets, but the character cannot change which trait receives the benefit until the next time he sleeps (and uses the Charm again).

OF TRUTHS BEST UNSPOKEN

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3;

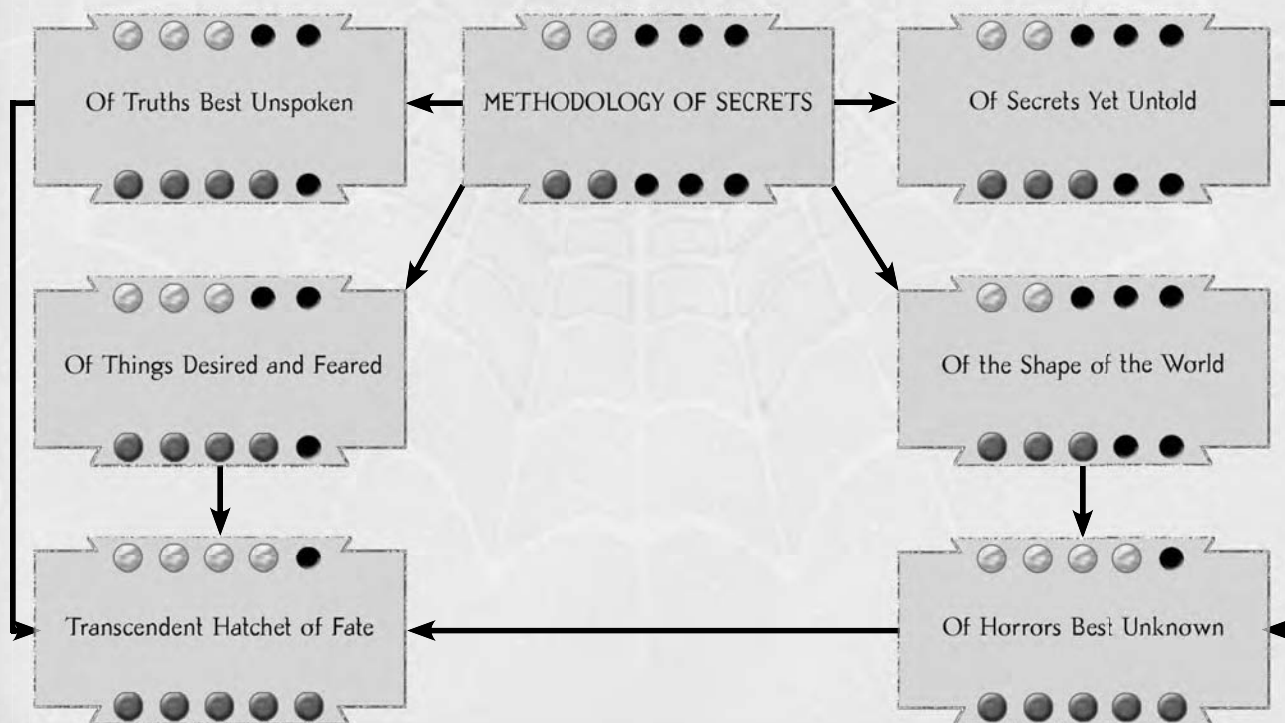
Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Virtue (Conviction)

Duration: Three hours

Prerequisite Charms: Methodology of Secrets

Upon the paths of fate travels the Heptarchy of Tragedy—a group of seven gods responsible for those truths and futures that displease mortal eyes. When the Heptarchs perceive atrocities yet to come, they bundle knowledge in a living sepulcher and bury it in the earth. They might not be able to avert such a tragedy, but at least they can hide knowledge of it from those



eyes the tragedy would most offend. Determined Sidereals can dredge up these sepulchers, however, and bear witness to the truths best left unspoken that are hidden in futurity.

Viewing the unpleasant future requires that a Sidereal engage in a three-hour astrological meditation in the company of at least two other Sidereals. The other Sidereals do not need to know this Charm, but all the participants must be of different castes. The rite must be performed beneath the starry sky. The Charm unearths a buried sepulcher and grants the participants a vision of its hidden contents, from a perspective at the end of the Age of Sorrows. The participants must agree on a general topic for their prognostication, such as “Nexus” or “the Bull of the North.”

Properly interpreting this glimpse requires the character’s player to roll (Intelligence + Lore) at the end of the three-hour meditation. The more successes each player gets, the more clearly the character perceives the connection between the coming tragedy and current events.

A character can use this Charm no more than once per month. Repeated attempts to investigate a future tragedy do not grant further information.

OF SECRETS YET UNTOLD

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Compulsion, Fate

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Methodology of Secrets

Whispering a long, soundless string of words that even the Sidereal himself does not understand, the character reveals to a god or elemental of Earth a secret about the world’s destiny. The spirit glows faintly green as it internalizes this secret, then the spirit can never repeat the secret to anyone. In return for this revelation, the spirit owes the Sidereal one important favor to be called in by fate itself when the time is right. The Sidereal does not know the nature of this favor, and neither does the spirit, until the time is right—neither one chooses it.

Until the spirit repays the favor, the spirit cannot initiate hostile action against the character without a successful (Wits + Temperance) roll, difficulty 3. The spirit can answer in kind if the character initiates the hostile action, though.

In theory, a Sidereal can accumulate as many divine favors as he wants. In practice, the Bureau of Heaven grows suspicious if a Vizier piles up debts of favors from too many gods.

OF THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Methodology of Secrets

The Seers of Heaven research the future as well as the past. By studying the patterns of fate weaving through a





person, place or object, a Sidereal gains information about the target's future. The Sidereal's player rolls (Intelligence + Lore); each success gives one fact about the target, such as "This artifact will pass to a Lunar," "Your future holds a green-haired man" or "Army coming through!" Unfortunately, the Charm does not always say *when* an event takes place: asking for possible events within any given one-year time span raises the difficulty to 3, and a one-month time span forces a difficulty of 5. A full month must pass before another use of the Charm can reveal new information about the target. The Sidereal's own actions may change the foreseen events.

OF THINGS DESIRED AND FEARED

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Three hours

Prerequisite Charms: Methodology of Secrets

Beneath starry skies or at the Loom of Fate, the Sidereal and at least two fellow Viziers meditate upon a goal important to them and chart the surest course of destiny that will see that goal accomplished. Other participants do not need to know the Charm, but all participants must be of different castes. When the character invokes the Charm, the player rolls (Intelligence + Lore) against a difficulty set by how broad and sweeping the goal is. If the roll succeeds, the character sees one true path that undeniably leads to the accomplishment of that goal... as well as the price she must pay to see it done. The price might be anything from "minor bodily harm" to "the sacrifice of your families, your morals, and eventually your lives"—depending, again, on how epic the goal is.

If the player agrees that the character will pay the price, the character's achieving the goal is assured. In most cases, the troupe still plays out the actions needed to bring about the conclusion; the result is assured, but the route might hold surprises, and other storylines and conflicts still claim the character's attention. In other cases, though, the Storyteller might simply narrate the scenes that lead to the accepted resolution, in between other scenes. Of Things Desired and Feared can resolve a peripheral subplot or a side quest that proves unintentionally tedious in play. Under no circumstances does the Charm grant an "automatic-win" option to a lazy player. The steep cost of victory should rarely be desirable over the character's own careful planning and hard work.

OF HORRORS BEST UNKNOWN

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Virtue (Valor)

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Of Secrets Yet Untold, Of the Shape of the World

The character weaves a net of destiny with filaments thinner than spiderweb, yet stronger than malice, and casts

the net over any target the character can see. Doing so requires a successful (Dexterity + Lore) roll, with a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. The invisible net adheres to the target, exerting a subtle gravity on the world around the target. Normally, this effect lasts for one year and one day, but if the Sidereal spent a permanent dot of Willpower, the effect lasts for as long as it must in order to fulfill its purpose.

Thereafter, in a circumstance the Sidereal chose when she performed this Charm, every dice pool that directly opposes the target of the net enjoys a -1 target number reduction (to a minimum of 4). This curse upon the target lasts for one scene. Multiple nets can affect the same victim, but only if they come from different characters and have different triggering circumstances. The net cannot adhere to Incarnae, or to Yozis, Neverborn and other transcendent entities.

The resemblance to Sidereal astrology is, of course, obvious. Of Horrors Best Unknown gives the Five-Score Fellowship one means to affect the fates of entities from beyond Creation, albeit possibly at a high price. The mystic net also has a little-known but even greater function: if a targeted creature from outside fate sacrifices a dot of Willpower, the Charm permanently binds the creature to the Loom; the creature is no longer outside of fate, though the creature retains all its former powers.

TRANSCENDENT HATCHET OF FATE

Cost: 16m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Prayer Strip, Fate

Duration: Until used

Prerequisite Charms: Of Horrors Best Unknown, Of Things Desired and Feared, Of Truths Best Unspoken

When the Sidereal pours her Essence into a prayer strip of the Scripture of the Maiden in Terror, the prayer strip glows a hideous green, then twists itself up and disappears into her palm like a worm burrowing into her flesh (the only Obvious aspect of the Charm). All that remains is a faint impression of the words of the scripture.

At a time of the Sidereal's choosing, she can reveal the scripture to a single victim and name that victim's unpleasant fate. The Sidereal's player rolls (Intelligence + Lore) as the character describes to her victim how the victim's worst fear is, in fact, written into his destiny. The victim immediately loses a number of Willpower points and motes of Essence equal to the Sidereal's Essence plus the successes on the roll. (This effect reduces the affected pools to a minimum of zero.)

Worse yet, the Sidereal's proclamation of the victim's fate—designed in narrative terms by the player, with the Storyteller's approval—is guaranteed in the victim's destiny. His fate might not play out immediately, or quite the way the Sidereal expects, but as long as no one tampers with the Loom of Fate or invites the interference of creatures outside of fate, the victim's destiny will come to pass in the his lifetime.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN IN TERROR

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who knew some things about a man. He didn't like
that, but he kissed her anyway. She told him everything
in her heart:*

*She whispered truths to him, but he didn't care.
She whispered hopes to him, but he didn't care.
She whispered her prayers, but heard only silence.
And she whispered her fear to him, but he didn't care.
He looked upon her inner self, and the void met
his eyes.
"To know the world is to fear it," said he.*

Occult, Bureaucracy or Socialize roll the player makes when the character deals with gods or elementals. This automatic success stacks with automatic successes from other sources, and does not count as dice gained through Charms.

TELLTALE SYMPHONY

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -0)

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Mark of Exaltation

Charms, sorcery, supernatural effects and the presence of spirits (materialized or not) all affect the strands of fate all around them. These effects exert miniscule pulls against the strands, causing them to vibrate at specific frequencies and ring musically in the Sidereal's ears, surrounding him with a symphony of information.

Once he can hear this music, the Sidereal needs to decipher it. Doing so requires a reflexive (Intelligence + Occult) roll at difficulty 3. If the roll succeeds, the character can identify the details of a Charm, spell or other supernatural effect—such as the power level, range, activation cost and what sort of being it's typically associated with. He can recognize Charms and spells he's seen before. The Sidereal can also use this Charm to determine the approximate rank and occupation of a present spirit.

INCITE DECORUM

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Fate

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

OCCULT: THE SORCERER

MARK OF EXALTATION

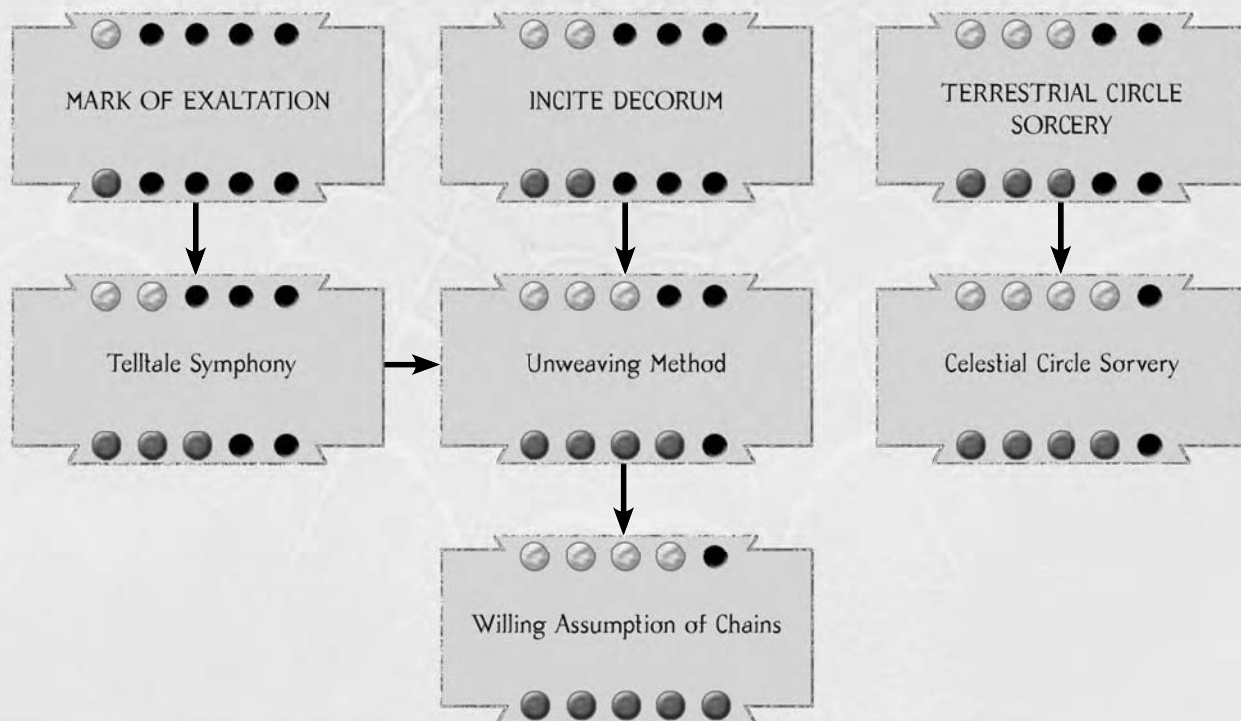
Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Occult 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Social, Virtue (Compassion)

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal makes of his caste mark a lantern that can reveal unmanifested spirits. The mark glows with the color associated with his caste and is visible to spirits and to Chosen of his caste. Anyone who can see the light can also see any unmanifested spirits within (Essence x 5) yards on whom the light shines. The light also grants the Sidereal a single automatic success on any Presence, Performance,



A Sidereal can invoke his Maiden's authority to facilitate polite dealings with elementals and gods. Any spirit whose Essence does not surpass the Sidereal's must remain calm, reasonable and peaceful in the Vizier's presence. The spirit must spend two Willpower points to initiate violence against the Seer, and any Charm the spirit uses against the character costs one additional Willpower. (This includes Charms that normally do not cost Willpower at all.) The effect ends automatically if the Sidereal opens hostilities himself.

UNWEAVING METHOD

Cost: 5m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Obvious, Shaping

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Telltale Symphony, Incite Decorum

The Sidereal tugs on the weave of a victim's fate and part of the victim's very pattern unravels. The victim (be it a creature or object) need only be in the Sidereal's line of sight when he activates the Charm. The Charm inflicts a number of dice of aggravated damage equal to the Sidereal's Essence, and the damage cannot be blocked or soaked. Only Charms or other effects that protect a character from Shaping effects can defend against this Charm. Unfortunately, a bit of the Sidereal's own fate-pattern unweaves as well.

WILLING ASSUMPTION OF CHAINS

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Maiden, Prayer Strip, Shaping

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unweaving Method

Perhaps the greatest power the Maidens give to their Chosen is the power to give a god new responsibilities—and, therefore, a new nature. Yu-Shan holds many gods left beggared and homeless when the Great Contagion and the Fair Folk Invasion destroyed the gods' former purviews. The Sidereals sometimes recruit such gods by offering them the chance to become the god of *something* again.

The Sidereal writes the Scripture of the Maiden in Chains on a prayer strip, signs it and offers it to a target god. The god signs, and the Essence-infused paper vanishes in an emerald flash, to reappear in a certain office at the Bureau of Heaven. The god instantly gains the new office granted by the Vizier (possibly with minor alterations to the god's innate powers if the Storyteller considers this appropriate), but no change in its Attributes or Abilities. Prudent Sidereals choose gods who already have some qualifications for their new posts. For their part, prudent gods ask what sort of duty the Sidereal intends for them before they sign.

The Charm functions only if the recipient deity signs of his own free will. A Sidereal might pressure a god through threats, but such action is a Severity 5 offense if the Bureau of Heaven notices this infringement on the Bureau's prerogatives.

RANK AND ESSENCE

A god's Essence depends largely on his rank. Willing Assumption of Chains can raise a god's Essence by one, and assign the god to any rank that his new Essence rating permits. Any advancement in rank, Essence and overall power then depends on the god's performance of his new duties, and how well the god and his Sidereal ally work the bureaucracy. See *The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I* and *The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. III—Yu Shan* for further information about divine ranks and advancement.

TERRESTRIAL CIRCLE SORCERY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm permits the Sidereal to take Terrestrial Circle Sorcery actions, per page 252 of **Exalted**.

CELESTIAL CIRCLE SORCERY

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

This Charm permits the Sidereal to take Celestial Circle Sorcery actions, per page 252 of **Exalted**.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN IN CHAINS

Once, there was a maiden...

*...and before her came all the peoples of Creation,
and knelt.*

They set aside their petty squabbles in her name.

They acclaimed her with many shouts.

They prayed for her safety and her weal.

Not one of them struck free her chains.

"To know the world..."

"...is to own it," she said.

STEALTH: THE MASK

SOFT PRESENCE PRACTICE

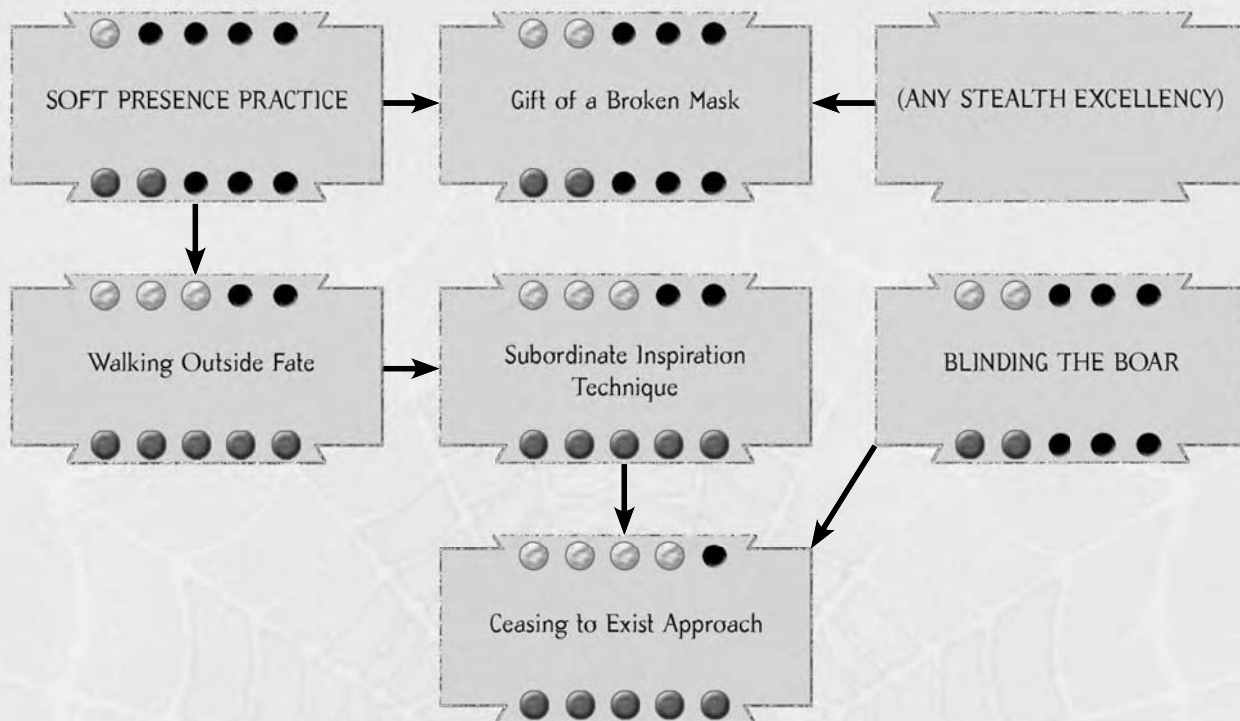
Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Stealth 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: One action

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm supplements expenditures of Essence. While the Charm is active, divide the number of motes spent by two for purposes of calculating the effect on the character's anima. A Combo that includes this Charm does not automatically make



the Sidereal's anima flare (though the mote expenditure might, and Obvious Charms remain Obvious). Soft Presence Practice can be part of a Combo with almost any other Charm.

WALKING OUTSIDE FATE

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Fate

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Soft Presence Practice

A Sidereal who uses this Charm can part the strands of the weave of fate, stepping between them and outside fate altogether. The character still physically exists in Creation, but her new condition makes her almost impossible to perceive. While the character remains outside fate, creatures whose Essence ratings do not exceed hers cannot detect her. If such creatures succeed on a reflexive (Perception + Awareness) roll, they might realize that *some* sort of presence has come among them, but affecting that presence or attacking it incurs a -2 external penalty on any related roll. Only characters with supernatural tracking abilities can attempt to track the hidden character.

The character remains outside fate for as long as she commits the Essence to the Charm, but causing her anima banner to flare such that it causes Stealth Charms to fail also ends this effect. If two characters walk outside fate in the same location, they cannot automatically sense one another. Whether or not one sees or becomes aware of the other depends on the characters' relative Essence ratings.

Walking Outside Fate carries the Fate keyword because other Charms with that keyword have diminished or nullified effects against characters using *this* Charm.

SUBORDINATE INSPIRATION TECHNIQUE

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Social

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Walking Outside Fate

A character can use this Charm only while he walks outside fate, per the prerequisite Charm. When he uses it, the Sidereal can whisper to someone and make the listener think the words come from her own mind. When the Sidereal speaks, the listener's player attempts a reflexive (Perception + Awareness) roll at a difficulty equal to the Sidereal's Essence. If the roll fails, the listener assumes that the words are her own thoughts. If the roll succeeds, the words still whisper in her mind as her own voice, but she knows that the thoughts are not her own.

Regardless of whether the target's roll succeeds, the Sidereal can still initiate social attacks against the target while using this Charm, and those attacks become unexpected. The Seer can even enhance those attacks with Charms based on other social Abilities. The Charm lasts for one social attack, or five minutes (five long ticks) if the Sidereal merely wants to talk to the target.

GIFT OF A BROKEN MASK

Cost: 5m+2m/day, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Fate, Shaping, Touch

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: Any Stealth Excellency, Soft Presence Practice

The Sidereals can grant other people their own concealment from the world, as a blessing to assist them... or a curse. The Vizier must touch her target; the Vizier's player rolls (Dexterity + Stealth) at a difficulty of the target's Essence. Success means the target gains Arcane Fate of his own, with all the advantages and inconveniences that Sidereals know so well. On the other hand, he becomes immune to the Arcane Fates of others; the Sidereals' gift makes the target an honorary member of the Five-Score Fellowship while the Charm lasts. The target's Essence cannot exceed the Sidereal's own.

The Gift of a Broken Mask lasts a day. After that, the Sidereal can extend the gift another day by spending another two motes, without the need to touch the target again. The Sidereal can also rescind the gift at any time.

For double the initial and subsequent cost in Essence and Willpower, a Sidereal can extend the Gift of a Broken Mask to a social unit. He must lead the social unit (most likely through a resplendent destiny), or the social unit must be led by an ally or acquaintance (per the Background). The difficulty becomes the sum of the unit's Magnitude and the highest Essence of any member of the group, other than the Sidereal himself. As with a single target, no member's Essence score may exceed the Sidereal's own; the unit's Magnitude cannot exceed his Stealth. While the Seer continues the Charm, all activities of the social group as a whole are easily overlooked, and other people tend to ignore the unit's existence. In mass social combat, apply an internal penalty of -3 to the defender's side of the contested (Manipulation + Socialize) vs. (Wits + Awareness) roll to establish surprise and make unexpected social attacks.

BLINDING THE BOAR

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic, Virtue (Valor)

Duration: Five actions

Prerequisite Charms: None



The Sidereal cloaks herself in the reflections of a thousand possible futures, making it almost impossible to focus on the "her" that exists in the present. The character is obviously present and real, perceptible by sight and touch, but determining any specific detail about her proves impossible. Where exactly she stands, what she wears, what she says, her appearance, even her gender....

None of these qualities makes an impression on an observer's mind.

To activate this Charm, the player rolls (Manipulation + Stealth). If she scores at least one success, people who see the character cannot understand her words or describe her beyond vague generalities. Also, the effect imposes an external penalty equal to the activation successes on any roll made to affect, influence or notice the Sidereal.

CEASING TO EXIST APPROACH

Cost: 5m, 2wp, 1lhl; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fate, Illusion, Prayer Strip

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Blinding the Boar, Subordinate Inspiration Technique

This Charm can temporarily transform the Sidereal into someone else entirely. To activate it, the Sidereal infuses Essence into a prayer strip of the Scripture of Absence. The prayer strip flashes dark green, then slithers beneath the Seer's ribcage to wrap around her heart. As the strip cinches tight, the Sidereal vanishes from her current location and reappears someplace else in a completely different identity that is seamlessly integrated into the local community. Any effect that was based on the Sidereal's old identity fails automatically. Memories of the Sidereal's old identity do not fade away—except as determined by the vagaries of Arcane Fate—but the person with that identity no longer seems to exist.

In the instant when one identity vanishes, the Sidereal reflexively assumes a new one somewhere else in Creation.

This identity can be mortal, Exalted, god, elemental, ghost or half-breed—any sentient creature from within fate's purview, whose Essence does not exceed the Seer's own. The Sidereal cannot take on the identity of someone who actually exists or existed. The Maidens (and the Storyteller) decide where the character appears, but the Vizier (and her player) can select an identity suitable to the new location—assuming her superiors in the Bureau of Destiny do not assign one.

In her new identity, the character retains all of her Attributes and Abilities but gains up to 15 dots of Backgrounds appropriate to her new identity. (Backgrounds above three dots cost two dots each.) Her old Backgrounds no longer apply. As the Vizier appears in her new location, a network of appropriate social contacts and relationships immediately weaves itself into being as if this new identity had existed among the locals all along. Only creatures of the Wyld, beings outside fate and spirits at or above the Maidens' level of power and authority are not fooled by this extemporaneously woven identity.

Just as Attributes and Abilities, the character retains all of her Charms and spells, as well as her normal anima effects. If the character is known as an Exalt (of whatever type) among the locals, those witnesses understand the Sidereal's powers as being appropriate to an Exalt of the type they assume she is. If the character's supernatural powers, or all-too-human ignorance, should betray the fact that she doesn't belong, the character automatically receives a perfect success on a social roll to explain the matter in a way that makes perfect sense to the audience. ("Oh, she's not an Anathema. That's just a special Southern variant of the Air Dragon Style of the Immaculate martial arts she was apparently doing. I guess we don't have to get the Magistrate involved. Good thing she said something.")

If the Sidereal ends the Charm intentionally or spends more than 10 motes of peripheral Essence in a scene, the Charm ends. Its effects otherwise linger for five days, at which point the Sidereal coughs up the scraps of her prayer strip in a cloud of confetti and disappears from her false identity. She returns to her previous identity in the place that identity considers home.

THE SCRIPTURE OF ABSENCE

Once, there were...

...shadows in the window.

...footsteps at the gates of life.

...whispering at the door:

"Should I live or die? Am I living or dead?"

"To know the world is to choose it," says the Void.

ENDINGS: THE VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS

AWARENESS: THE CROW

PRIOR WARNING

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Awareness 2, Essence 1;

Type: Simple (Speed 4, DV -0)

Keywords: None

Duration: Five hours

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character keeps one eye on the present while the other eye watches for impending trouble. At any time during the next five hours when the character is just about to get into trouble, the player may make a reflexive (Wits + Awareness) roll. If this roll succeeds, the character feels a frisson of cold or gets a sinking sensation in his guts that warns him of a danger on the horizon. This sensation befalls him two minutes per success in advance of the danger and assumes that he will not change his course of action in the intervening period.

Example: Black Ice Shadow uses this Charm while walking through the jungle. The Storyteller tells the Sidereal's player to make the reflexive roll, and the roll garners five successes. The Storyteller informs the player that danger lies 10 minutes ahead. If Black Ice Shadow had continued on his present course at his present speed, he would have walked right into the danger unknowing. Since the character has been warned, however, he can change his intended actions to mitigate or avoid it. Barring that, he can at least approach the danger ready and vigilant—possibly with a prayer strip ready in hand.

This Charm doesn't provide a specific warning of what danger lies ahead, only that *something* will happen. The aforementioned Sidereal might not know if an ambush lurks ahead, a nest of claw striders or a booby-trapped bridge across a deep chasm. When or if the danger confronts him, though, he'll recognize it as the foreseen peril.

EXPECTED PAIN

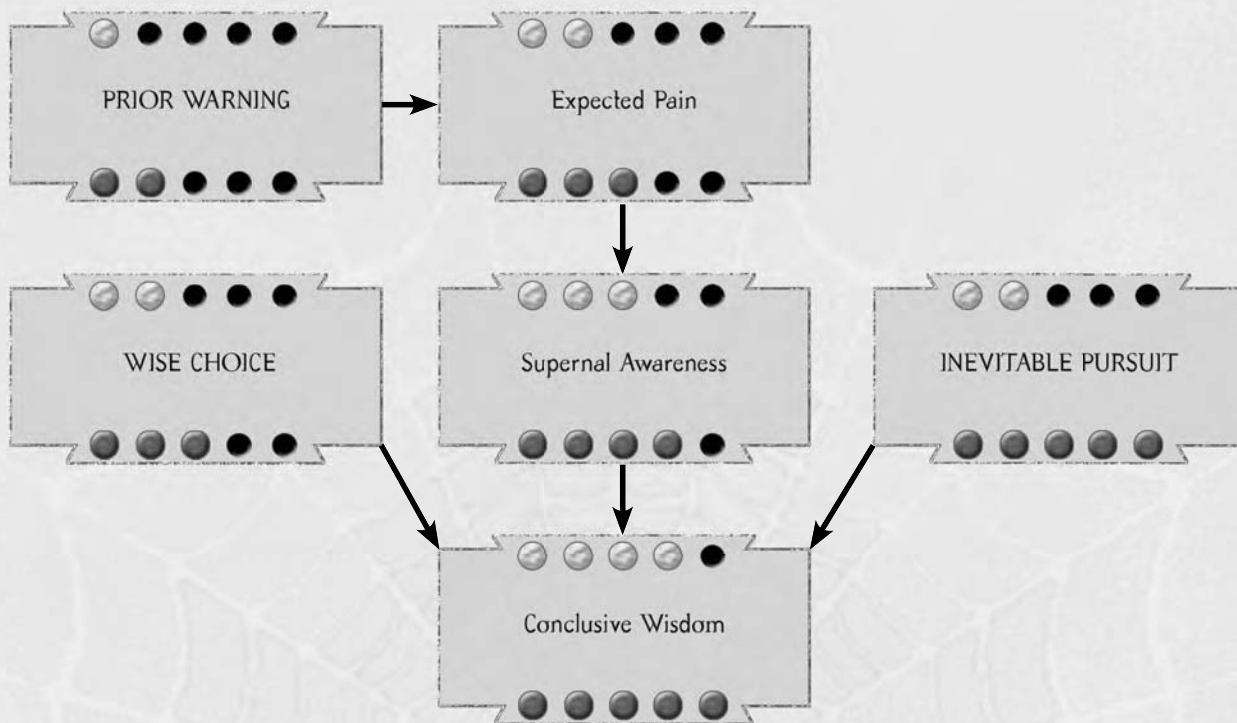
Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Prior Warning

This Charm provides a more specific and more immediate warning about some impending trouble. The Charm activates automatically when an immediate, unexpected danger or unfortunate occurrence is just about to happen. When the bandits hiding on the ridgeline are about to open fire with their crossbows, the Sidereal realizes an ambush is imminent. If the Sidereal's most cherished acquaintance (per the Background of that name) lifts to her lips a teacup that has been painted with an immediately fatal poison, the Sidereal realizes he's about to lose her to poison. If an erstwhile Dragon-Blooded confidant leaves the room



to signal his Abyssal allies, the Sidereal realizes that the Dynast is about to betray the character.

As a result, the Sidereal is never caught unaware by an unexpected attack. His warning of danger comes one miscellaneous action ahead of the imminent trouble. The Charm works as long as the character has Essence to spend.

SUPERNAL AWARENESS

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate, Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Expected Pain

With this Charm, the character expands her awareness not into the future, but across a broader swath of the present. The character must look for something specific, be it a person, a spirit, the use of her name, the use of Essence, the outbreak of combat or some other objectively definable phenomenon. If that specific thing appears or occurs within (character's Essence x 100) yards, the Sidereal becomes aware of it. She doesn't receive a clairvoyant vision, *per se*, so much as she receives a general understanding. She might know the location of a person she monitors but wouldn't necessarily know what that person is doing. If the character watches for a phenomenon, though, she does get a general sense of its power level. If she watches for combat, for example, she can tell the difference between two gangs clashing over disputed turf and two rival noblemen dueling over a girl. If the character looks for the use of Essence, she could tell the difference between a fellow Sidereal's reflexive use of the Forgotten Earth Charm (see p. 153) and a sorcerer casting the Incomparable Body Arsenal spell (see **Exalted**, p. 255).

In these circumstances, the character can even recognize specific Charms, spells or other supernatural powers, if she's seen their use before.

Supernal Awareness does not detect creatures outside of fate. Creatures governed by fate, however, cannot conceal themselves from this Charm by any natural or supernatural means. The more times a Sidereal activates this Charm in a scene, the more creatures or phenomena she can watch for at a time.

WISE CHOICE

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 5, DV -0)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

When the Sidereal faces a choice between options, she can peek into the future to see which choice would bring her the best outcome in the next month. The Charm does not, however, show the consequences of her decision beyond that point. The Charm might show her, for example, which of a range of investment opportunities will yield the greatest short-term dividends but wouldn't reveal that investing her money in that particular venture secretly puts cash in the pocket of the merchant prince whose business practices will destabilize the satrapy's economy.

Wise Choice does not reveal options the Sidereal herself does not consider. For instance, if a Sidereal uses Wise Choice to choose between two paths in a labyrinth, the Charm won't reveal the secret door that provides a third option. The character must also define what sort of outcome

she considers optimal: maximum profit, the shortest path or whatever. The Charm always provides a rough estimate of personal danger, though.

Groups of Sidereals can look further into the future. A circle of five Seers, each of a different caste, can use Wise Choice to assess consequences up to a year in the future. Five such circles can consider outcomes 100 years in the future. The entire Five-Score Fellowship can look an Age in the future. The further they look, however, the wider becomes the spread of possibilities, unless truly grand, Creation-wide forces are at work—as they were when the Sidereals pondered what to do about the madness of the Lawgivers. All participants must know Wise Choice to gain the group benefits.

INEVITABLE PURSUIT

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: None

A Sidereal with this Charm can follow his prey through the scrubbed-crystal streets of Chiaroscuro, across the wind-blown tundra of the North or even across the endless oceans themselves. The Sidereal notes his prey's path not by physical traces but by evidence the character leaves on the Tapestry itself. As the quarry's fate weaves its way across Creation, the fate affects all other fates with which the quarry's fate interacts. The Sidereal can even follow creatures outside fate by using this Charm to follow the disturbances in the Tapestry such creatures leave behind them.

If the area is largely uninhabited, the Sidereal can follow a trail of this kind that is no older than (character's Essence) days. If the Sidereal tracks his prey thus through a more populous region, such as a city or a heavily traveled road, the chaos of interweaving destinies becomes harder to read. He can follow trails no older than (character's Essence) hours.

In instances when this Charm conflicts with Charms that make a creature harder to track, use the normal Charm versus Charm rules (see **Exalted**, p. 179), using (Essence + Awareness) for the Sidereal's side of the contest.

CONCLUSIVE WISDOM

Cost: 20m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Fate, Illusion, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Inevitable Pursuit, Supernal Awareness, Wise Choice

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip bearing the Scripture of the Maiden and the Scythe. She holds the strip up before a living target and infuses the strip with Essence. The strip sticks to the air, and violet flowers bloom all over the prayer strip. These flowers sprout, blossom, wilt and die, raining dry petals at the target's feet. This is all that bystanders see. The target, however, experiences

the soul-upheaving horror of his own death—or at least the way he is most likely to die. Six seconds later, the target finds himself back where the Sidereal used the Charm, the ground covered in dead purple petals.

If the target is a Storyteller character, the Storyteller rolls the character's Willpower against a difficulty of 3 as the vision plays out. If the roll succeeds, the character is taken aback and Inactive for the next six ticks, but nothing more happens. If the roll fails, the character's Willpower drops to a single point, his personal Essence drops to zero and his peripheral Essence drops by an amount equal to his maximum personal Essence (to a minimum of zero). He cannot recover Willpower or Essence for the rest of the scene.

If the target is a player's character, the Storyteller can let the aforementioned rules suffice or literally play the ending scene out for a more dramatic effect. In playing out the scene, the targeted character's player still rolls Willpower at difficulty 3. The Storyteller then sets up a plausible death scene for the target character. The character has his full Essence pools, Willpower pool, health levels, dice pools and Charms (regardless of his actual present condition), and he participates in the scene just as if it actually happened.

If target character somehow survives his doom, he comes out of the experience no worse for the wear (and it doesn't matter whether the player succeeded on the initial Willpower roll). Within a few scenes after the vision, all of his spent Willpower points recharge. If the target of the Charm dies in the vision but his player succeeded on the initial Willpower roll, the character emerges from the vision shaken or awash in fatalistic calm, but suffers no ill effects. If the target of the Charm dies in the vision and the player failed the initial Willpower roll, the character suffers the effects noted for Storyteller characters. If the Willpower roll botched, the character loses one dot of that trait.

This Charm does not affect either Abyssal Exalted or the dead. The prayer strip simply disintegrates into worthless violet petals. It does, however, affect Second and Third Circle demons as normal, despite the Fate keyword... for the Primordial War taught them they can die, without any hope of reincarnation.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND THE SCYTHE

Once, there was a maiden...

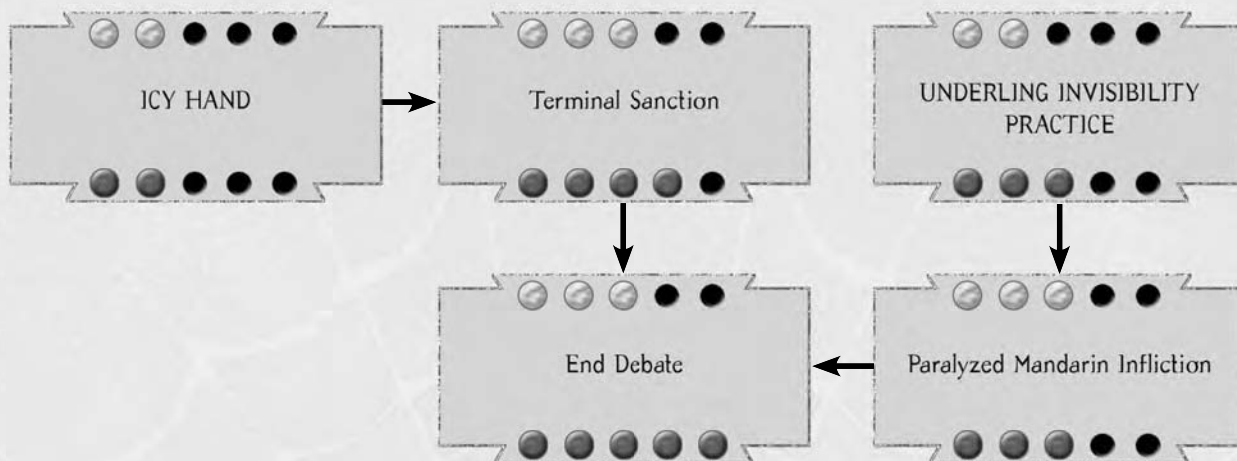
*...who was born, and told her mom, "I know how
I'm gonna die."*

*"It's gonna hurt bad,
and I ain't coming back."*

"...I could avoid it, but I won't."

*"'cause one day, death'd come to me and say, 'Baby,
don't you know?'"*

"There's always an ending."



BUREAUCRACY: THE HAYWAIN

ICY HAND

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Fate, Touch
Duration: Five days
Prerequisite Charms: None

Not only do inefficiency and corruption undermine a bureaucracy's authority, they inject chaos and decay into a society for the benefit of an amoral few. These failings are bad enough in mortal bureaucracies, but when the bureaucracies of Yu-Shan grow lazy or corrupt, all of Creation can suffer.

This Charm, then, helps a Sidereal ensure the proper behavior of a social unit's member for the benefit of everyone who relies on the organization. (This does not need to be a literal bureaucracy: any social group that has definable leaders, followers and procedures, no matter how informal, falls under the Charm's purview.) The Sidereal activates the Charm as he touches a bureaucrat—which might require a Martial Arts roll if the target is unwilling. As a bright spark flashes from deep within the Sidereal's eyes, his player rolls (Charisma + Bureaucracy) against the target's Dodge Mental Defense Value. If the roll succeeds, the victim is compelled to perform his duties honestly and to the best of his abilities for five days.

TERMINAL SANCTION

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Maiden, Servitude, Virtue (Temperance)
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Icy Hand

The Maidens gave their Chosen a frightening authority over spirits. When a Sidereal activates Terminal Sanction against a present god or elemental, the player rolls (Charisma + Bureaucracy) against a difficulty of the targeted spirit's Essence. Whether this roll succeeds or fails, the spirit must

materialize before the Sidereal and remain solid until the end of the scene. If the roll does succeed, the spirit has even more reason to fear the Sidereal. Should the spirit "die" in that scene, the Sidereal has four choices:

- The Sidereal can destroy the spirit.
- He could bind the spirit to his service—either one task of indefinite duration or general obedience for one year and one day.
- He can bind the spirit's Essence into an object, creating an artifact rated at half the spirit's Essence (round up). The Storyteller designs the artifact, based on the powers of the spirit. The artifact lasts only a year and a day, however, before the spirit goes free.
- If nothing else, the Sidereal can simply let the spirit reform in its sanctum, knowing full well what the Sidereal *could have* done to it.

Thanks to the terms of the Yozis' surrender, this Charm also works against demons of every Circle and adds a number of automatic successes on the (Charisma + Bureaucracy) roll against them equal to the Sidereal's Essence. This gives Sidereals a second chance to control demons that escape control.

UNDERLING INVISIBILITY PRACTICE

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Illusion
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: None

The more important someone is, the more people he has scurrying to do his will. The more such people he has under him, the less distinct they all become, until he barely notices any individual one of them. By internalizing the underlying concept, a Sidereal can wrap himself in that same anonymity and invisibility... but only against people who consider themselves better than the Sidereal—or at least better than the type of person the Sidereal pretends to be. A person might consider himself personally better than the Sidereal, of higher social class, higher in an organization, or just generally better than everyone.



When a Sidereal encounters such a person while using this Charm, that person cannot notice the Sidereal. The person might notice signs of the Sidereal's passing, such as footprints, but not while the Sidereal is present. It doesn't help if other people, who can see the Sidereal, point her out; the arrogant victim just doesn't pay attention. At most, the Sidereal leaves a faint impression based on her caste. Chosen of Journeys give the victim a sense that he needs to be someplace else. Chosen of Serenity make the victim feel happy or peaceful. Chosen of Battles make the victim tense and wary. Chosen of Secrets give the victim a sense of déjà vu. Chosen of Endings leave a vague sense of anxiety and futility.

Effects that grant a perfect counter to invisibility pierce this effect. This Charm's glaring flaw—although Sidereals don't consider it such—is that it does not affect other Sidereals. A Vizier in the guise of a Guild merchant could follow the barbarian Bull of the North unnoticed from hell to breakfast, but any effort to sneak past his Sidereal field supervisor in Yu-Shan to drop off a late report would be doomed to failure.

PARALYZED MANDARIN INFLECTION

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keyword: Combo-OK, Compulsion

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Underling Invisibility Practice

A Vizier can declare an ending to a bureaucracy's usefulness. The Charm attacks a social unit consisting of the members of an established bureaucracy. The Sidereal's player rolls (Wits + Bureaucracy) and adds the character's Essence in automatic successes; the difficulty equals the Dodge Mental Defense Value of the unit's leader, plus half the unit's Magnitude. If the roll succeeds, the Sidereal can impose one of two effects:

- The *Pervasive Ennui Sabotage* gives everyone in the bureaucracy a fatalistic sense of the ultimate worthlessness of their work. This overwhelming feeling of futility grinds the wheels of the bureaucratic machine to a halt.
- The *Frenetic Activity Infusion* fills everyone in the affected bureaucracy with the importance of their work. Everyone becomes very busy... circulating memos about modalities for planning sessions about mission statements for quality control of department reorganization. In the rush, nobody notices that the bureaucracy's ostensible purpose remains undone.

Either way, the bureaucracy remains paralyzed for as the Sidereal maintains the Essence commitment, or until the bureaucracy's leader expends three Loyalty to get everyone working again.

Use of this Charm against an office of the Celestial Bureaucracy would be a Severity 3 offense, assuming anyone noticed.

END DEBATE

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Paralyzed Mandarin Infliction, Terminal Sanction

The Sidereal activates this Charm using a prayer strip marked with the Scripture of the Maiden's Promise. When she infuses the strip with Essence and casts the strip on the ground, the strip explodes in a flash of amethyst light. While the Sidereal himself is immune to the effect, all the people present feels an unnatural mental influence to cease their arguing over whatever they disagree about. A customer would stop haggling with the vendor and just split the difference between the listed price and what he wanted to pay before, which the vendor would gladly accept just to make a sale. Two rowdy street gangs would decide to just let this turf squabble go this time and move off in separate directions. The senators of the Lesser House of the Deliberative would cease their semi-civilized bickering and just put the contentious issue to a vote.

Characters with a higher Essence than the Sidereal are immune to the effect, but they cannot force affected characters to continue arguing. Individuals can resist the Charm by spending three Willpower. The Sidereal can use this Charm to affect a group of characters whose Magnitude does not exceed his Essence.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND THE DUST

*Once, there was a maiden...
...who learned that the faster she ran, the faster
she could run.*

*Thus, running consumed her,
Until one day, she flew beyond the ending of
her life.*

"And here I thought it'd last forever," she said.

"But —"

"There's always an ending," said the run.

INTEGRITY: THE RISING SMOKE (VIRTUE) ESSENCE REPLENISHMENT

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 2, (Ability) 3, Essence 2;

Type: Special

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Any Integrity Excellency

This Charm actually represents four separate Charms with a similar effect. Each is based on one of the character's Virtues and uses either that Virtue or a particular Ability to mark its effects, in addition to the basic Integrity and

Essence. A player can take the Charm once for each Virtue. The specific Charms are the following:

- *Compassionate Essence Replenishment*, based on the character's Compassion and Performance;
- *Stern Essence Replenishment*, based on the character's Conviction and Socialize;
- *Heroic Essence Replenishment*, based on the character's Valor and Presence; and
- *Slick Essence Replenishment*, based on the character's Temperance and Bureaucracy.

To buy each Charm, a character needs at least three dots in the secondary Ability. Each Charm has no cost to use; each Charm permanently enhances the character's capabilities.

When a character with this Charm channels Willpower through the Virtue that pertains to the Charm and succeeds on her action, she gets back (Virtue x 2) motes of Essence. The character can also use the required additional Ability to gain a smaller Essence replenishment if her action using the Ability supports the theme of the Virtue in a situation where something important is at stake. For instance, if a character with Heroic Essence Replenishment successfully uses Presence to rally for numbers (see *Exalted*, p. 165) in the face of overwhelming enemy forces, she gains (Virtue) motes. The character cannot gain motes from using the Ability and channeling Willpower through the Virtue on the same roll. The motes can go to either the character's peripheral or personal Essence pools.

PRESERVATION OF RESOLVE

Cost: 2m per +1 MDV; **Mins:** Integrity 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (dramatic action)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Viziers defend gods and mortals alike from temptation and distraction. The character gives a social group the benefit of her own disciplined will through a scene spent interacting with its members. For every two motes the character spends, she adds +1 to the leader's Dodge Mental Defense Value against social attacks directed at the group; the bonus cannot exceed the character's permanent Essence rating.

UNWAVERING WELL-BEING MEDITATION

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 3;

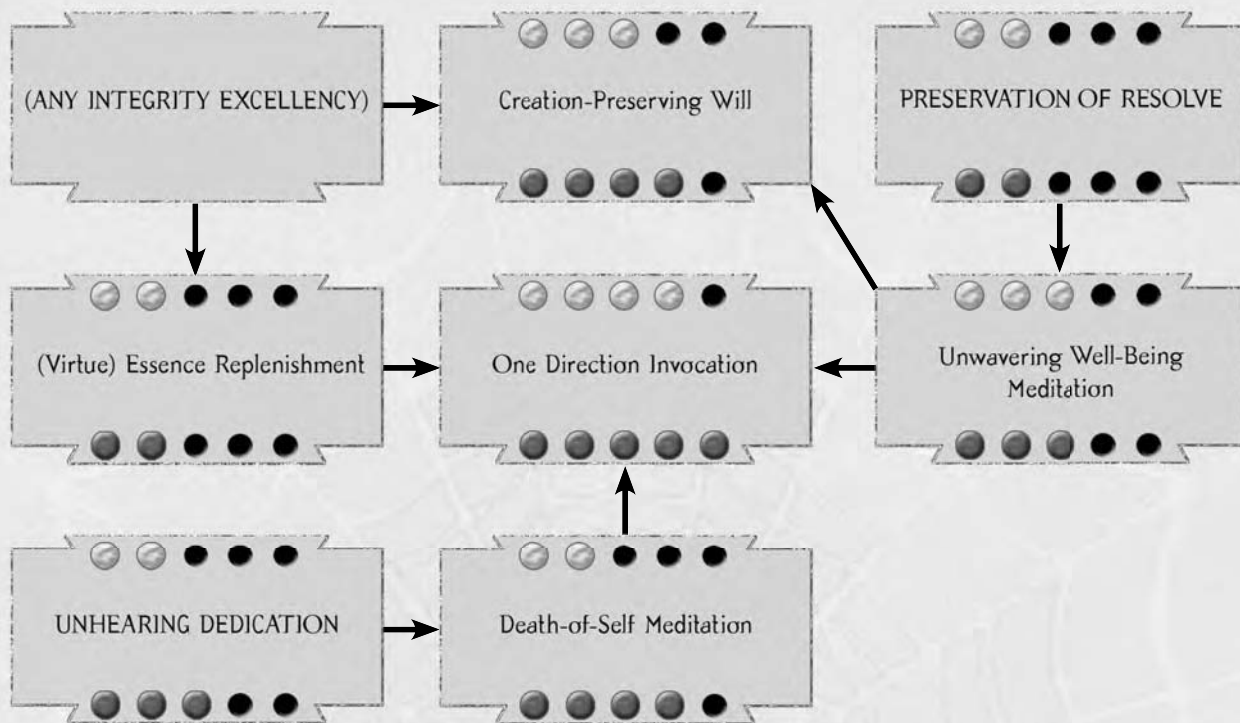
Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion, Social

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Preservation of Resolve

The character's steadfast resolve and confidence in his destiny shield him from an attempt to change his mind or do him harm. Any player whose character has an Essence less than the Sidereal's Temperance must first succeed on a reflexive Willpower roll before the character attempts a social or physical attack against the Sidereal. If the Willpower roll fails, the attack fails automatically. The Sidereal's apparent



steely dedication in the face of opposition cows the attacker so her aim or intention falters. If the Willpower roll succeeds, the attack may proceed, but the Sidereal combines his Parry Defense Value and Dodge Mental Defense Value against the attack.

CREATION-PRESERVING WILL

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 3;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Combo-Basic

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Any Integrity Excellency, Unwavering Well-Being Meditation

By sheer force of will, the Sidereal forces the area around her to conform to the dictates of fate. When the character enters the Wyld, the Underworld or Malfeas, she carries a measure of Creation with her. Neither the character nor anything within 10 yards of her suffers the effects of exposure to these alien realms. Creation-Preserving Will does not protect against physical or magical dangers such as Wyld-beasts, the acidic waves of the demon-ocean Kimberly or attacks by ghosts, but characters avoid Wyld mutation or recover Essence in the Underworld as they would in Creation. This protection lasts only as long as the character remains conscious and keeps the Essence committed.

UNHEARING DEDICATION

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Viziers are deaf to foolish prattle that might sway lesser folk from their duties. The player selects a plan or program endorsed by one of the Sidereal's superiors—from her faction, one of her conventions or her division in the Bureau of Destiny—and forges a supernaturally intense Intimacy to that plan. Any mental influence to betray or abandon that plan becomes an unacceptable order (see **Exalted**, p. 180).

The Charm lasts as long as the character maintains that Intimacy or the Vizier's superiors judge the plan completed to their satisfaction. The character can then apply Unhearing Dedication to a new goal once the next story begins. At any time, though, a player can also shift the Charm to a new Intimacy by spending one experience point.

DEATH-OF-SELF MEDITATION

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 2;

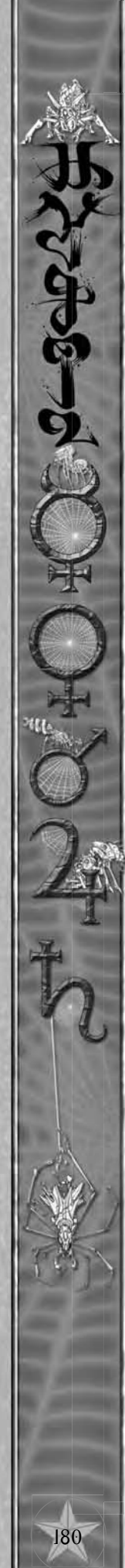
Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Unhearing Dedication

Whenever a Sidereal who possesses this Charm comes under unnatural mental influence, instead of spending Willpower to resist the influence she may abandon her identity to become someone else—someone who would find the influence an unacceptable order (see **Exalted**, p. 180). The character keeps her memories and Abilities, but she has a different personality for the next 24 hours, with a different Motivation. Since the new personality might need to be extreme, eccentric or outright psychotic to



resist some commands—comparable to a Solar in Limit Break—the Death-of-Self Meditation has its disadvantages. The player may select the character's temporary Motivation, but the Storyteller defines the sort of personality that would have it.

ONE DIRECTION INVOCATION

Cost: 16m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Any (Virtue) Essence Replenishment, Death-of-Self Meditation, Unwavering Well-Being Meditation

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip bearing the Scripture of the Maiden and the Scythe. The prayer strip rises into the air and hovers near him, dragging trails of violet light in its wake. By that light, and in the name of the Violet Bier of Sorrows, the Sidereal then makes a binding vow to accomplish some important goal.

That goal can be as great or small as the character pleases. Nonetheless, the character had better be sure she can accomplish it, for her name and very identity are on the line. When the character makes her vow, she forswears these aspects of herself for the duration of the effect. Any roll made to remember her suffers a -3 internal penalty on top of any other penalties the character's Sidereal nature might impose. The character cannot regain her name or identity until she achieves her goal. If the prayer strip is destroyed or if the character ends the Charm prematurely, she cannot become who she used to be. Even worse, she must now complete her goal without the Charm's benefits. (She can't reactivate the Charm because she has no name or identity to pledge as collateral.) If circumstances render her goal impossible—if a Demon Prince devours the person the Sidereal vowed to promote to the Scarlet Throne, for instance—the Sidereal's name and identity are lost forever. She might persuade a higher-up in her division to issue her a new identity, but presenting the proper credentials to file the request could prove tricky for a character who officially no longer exists.

While the character is under this Charm's effects, she cannot perform any action that has no connection to her sworn goal. Rolls for any action that proves beneficial to her sworn goal but serves some other primary purpose suffer a three-dice penalty. On the other hand, any non-aggravated injury inflicted on the character during the Charm's duration heals by one lethal health level or all bashing health levels per action. Aggravated damage heals at one health level per hour. (This benefit applies only to damage incurred after the character activates the Charm. Pre-existing damage heals as normal.)

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN'S PROMISE

Once, there was a maiden...

...who was the living embodiment of everything right in the world.

While she lived, no real harm could come to anyone.

Oh, wounds, disease, even death, sure.

But she stood between the world and anything worse.

"Except," she said, "I'm going to die." And no one listened.

"I'm going to die tomorrow," she said. And no one heard.

Into the silence, she said, "There's always an ending, after all."

MARTIAL ARTS: THE SWORD

Just as the other kinds of Exalted, the Sidereals possess their own distinctive style of supernatural martial arts. However, the Viziers do not speak of a "Sidereal Hero Style" of supernatural martial arts. Instead, they call the Martial Arts Charms they received from the Maidens the Violet Bier of Sorrows Style. The Sidereals believe it is the first of all supernatural martial arts.

The Violet Bier of Sorrows Style is a Celestial martial art. A Sidereal sifu could teach it to anyone who could learn such martial arts—most notably, other Celestial Exalted or Dragon-Blooded trained as Immaculate martial artists—but the elders of the Five-Score Fellowship all forbid this, regardless of their faction. Teaching the style to anyone except other Sidereals or authorized gods in the Bureau of Destiny is a Severity 4 offense.

Weapons and Armor: Charms of this style treat attacks with knives, swords, staves and seven-section staves (and all their artifact versions) as unarmed attacks. These Charms do not function if the character wears armor.

SECRETS OF FUTURE STRIFE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 1, Essence 1;

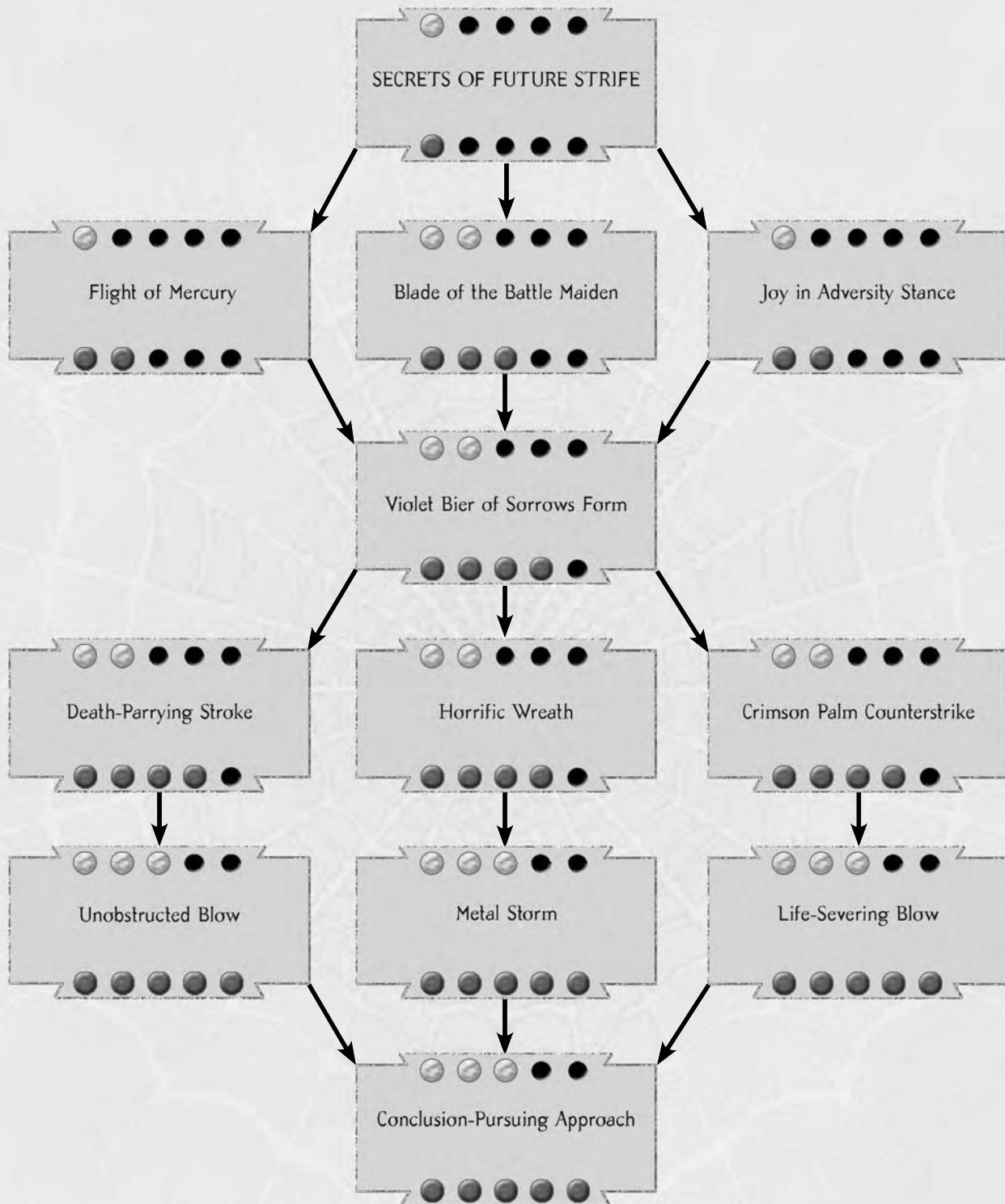
Type: Reflexive (Step 1)

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character trains himself to listen for the slightest telltale hum in the strands of fate that presage the outbreak of combat. He can react to a conflict almost before it starts. This Charm doubles the character's unmodified Join Battle dice pool.



FLIGHT OF MERCURY

Cost: 1m per action; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1;

Type: Reflexive (Step 1)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Up to (Martial Arts) actions

Prerequisite Charms: Secrets of Future Strife

The Vizier gives her attack the speed of the Maiden of Journeys. This Charm reduces the Speed of Martial Arts attacks by 1, to a minimum of 3. Each mote spent confers this benefit for one action, but the character cannot spend more motes than her Martial Arts rating.

BLADE OF THE BATTLE MAIDEN

Cost: 2m/die, 2wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 1)

Keywords: Obvious

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Secrets of Future Strife

Scarlet Essence flares around the Vizier, giving her the fate of an armed and armored warrior. For the rest of the scene, the character's Martial Arts attacks (including clinches) inflict lethal damage. The character can also parry lethal damage from physical attacks (including ranged attacks) without using a weapon or stunt. What's more, every two motes spent on this Charm add one die to each unarmed Martial Arts attack, and one to the pool used to calculate Parry Defense Value. For this Charm alone, the maximum number of dice added rises to (Dexterity + Martial Arts)—but *only* for Martial Arts, and *only* if the character does not wear armor (even if the Seer uses Martial Arts Charms from a style that permits armor, such as the Earth Dragon Style described in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded**).

JOY IN ADVERSITY STANCE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1;

Type: Reflexive (Step 5)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Secrets of Future Strife

Not only does the Sidereal laugh in her opponents' faces when they fail to do her harm, Creation itself rewards her for her combat skills. While the Charm is active, the player rolls the character's permanent Essence whenever an opponent's attack fails to overcome the character's Defense Value. Each success on the roll replenishes two motes of spent Essence.

The character must face true adversity in order to enjoy this Charm's benefits. If an attack isn't truly intended to harm the Sidereal—such as in a friendly sparring match—or if the enemy is too weak to do the Sidereal any harm, the Sidereal receives no Essence.

VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS FORM

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -1)

Keywords: Form-type

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Blade of the Battle Maiden, Flight of Mercury, Joy in Adversity Stance

With grim detachment, the character takes a stance emulating that of Saturn herself when she makes her Sign over someone whose time has passed. While he uses this Charm, the character's minimum damage becomes equal to his Martial Arts score if that number exceeds his Essence or a value provided by his weapon.

While the Sidereal uses this Form, successful Martial Arts attacks that inflict damage also strip away a target's

Virtue dots. The Sidereal's player chooses which Virtue to affect, and the target loses one dot of that Virtue as he suffers damage (to a minimum of 1 in the affected Virtue's rating). Against Exalted targets, this effect cannot reduce a Virtue low enough to invalidate the Great Curse. Stripped-away Virtue dots return at a rate of one point per day.

DEATH-PARRYING STROKE

Cost: 2m per health level; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 8)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Violet Bier of Sorrows Form

The weave of the character's fate becomes less rigid in combat, allowing the strands to spread out and absorb what would normally be a lethal stroke. This uncertainty of fate will not save a character's life from a mortal wound but does give her an extra instant in which to turn aside an attack that penetrated her defenses.

If the Sidereal's Defense Value fails to save her from an opponent's attack and that attack's damage roll scores successes in Step 8 of attack resolution, the Sidereal may reflexively activate this Charm. When she does so, she reduces the damage the attack inflicts on her by one health level per two motes of Essence spent. Witnesses to this effect don't see wounds open and heal before their eyes. Instead, they see the attack come incredibly close to dealing the Sidereal a serious wound before the Sidereal's weapon knocks the attack safely aside, trailing a swath of purple Essence behind the weapon.

UNOBSTRUCTED BLOW

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Death-Parrying Stroke

The Sidereal loops an elastic strand of his foe's fate around the Sidereal's own wrist, pulls the strand back taut and launches his attack as the strand snaps back into place. Doing so makes the attack unblockable. It can still be dodged, but if the attack hits, the victim's armor offers no protection—neither soak nor Hardness—against the attack's damage.

HORRIFIC WREATH

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2;

Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Holy, Obvious

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Violet Bier of Sorrows Form

Violet energy surrounds the character's hands, feet or weapon for a moment. Creatures of darkness (see **Exalted**, p. 192) suffer aggravated damage from Martial Arts attacks supplemented by this Charm.

METAL STORM

Cost: 3m per attack; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Extra Action

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Horrific Wreath

The Sidereal hits his victim with such skilled ferocity that the weave of fate around the target reverberates several times, replaying the moment of the attack several different ways in quick succession. For each set of three motes the Sidereal spends, he may attempt an extra Martial Arts attack on the same target at his full dice pool. The Sidereal can make no more attacks than he has dots of Martial Arts, and he cannot split his original or extra actions into a flurry.

CRIMSON PALM COUNTERSTRIKE

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2;

Type: Reflexive (Step 2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Violet Bier of Sorrows Form

Reading his opponent's movements in the weave of fate, the Sidereal interrupts his attack with a nigh-preemptive counterattack. If he's a skilled enough combatant, the Sidereal not only can weave over his opponent's attack but can supplant it with an attack of his own. When the Sidereal's foe attacks, the Sidereal may reflexively defend himself with this Charm, his player rolling his own (Dexterity + Martial Arts) pool in a contest against the attacker's attack roll. After taking successes out of the attacker's roll based on the Sidereal's normal Parry Defense Value, the Sidereal's successes on this roll then cancel out leftover successes from the attack roll one for one. If the Sidereal's Parry Defense Value and (Dexterity + Martial Arts) result cancels out all of the attacker's successes and still has successes left over, those extra successes are applied against the original attacker as a counterattack.

The Sidereal cannot use this Charm against a counterattack, and he must be physically able to attack his foe.

LIFE-SEVERING BLOW

Cost: 2m per health level; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3;

Type: Reflexive (Step 8)

Keywords: Combo-OK

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Palm Counterstrike



When the Sidereal successfully attacks someone, he can tangle the vector of that attack in the weave of the victim's fate, lodging the vector there like a barbed hook in a fish's mouth. In Step 8 of attack resolution, when the player rolls the attack's damage, he can activate this Charm. He may then buy automatic successes on this roll for two motes of Essence per additional health level. A character may purchase no more automatic successes than he has dots of Essence.

CONCLUSION-PURSUEING APPROACH

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1lh; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4;

Type: Simple (Speed 6, DV -2)

Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate, Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Life-Severing Blow, Metal Storm, Unobstructed Blow

When a Sidereal uses this Charm, she gains strength of purpose whenever her successful attacks bring her opponent closer to his inevitable ending. Whenever a successful Martial Arts attack inflicts damage on an opponent, the Sidereal regains a point of spent Willpower. Using this Charm also helps speed a target to his life's conclusion by tripling his wound penalties as they relate to the Sidereal using the Charm. (That is, while the victim's wound penalties would be normal in an attack against a different person, attacks made against the Sidereal using this Charm suffer the tripled penalty.)

Using a prayer strip is not necessary with this Charm, since it represents the culmination of a Celestial martial art, but a Sidereal who knows this Charm can *augment* it with a prayer strip (hence the use of the keyword). The character uses a strip on which is written the Scripture of the Expectant Maiden, infusing the strip with Essence when he activates the Charm and affixing the prayer strip to his weapon. The strip glows burgundy and conforms to the shape of the surface to which the strip is attached. While the prayer strip survives, successful attacks made with that weapon (or with the character's fist if he wraps the strip around it) subtract one Willpower point from the target. Also, the weapon cannot be destroyed.

If the target exists outside fate or has been reduced to zero Willpower points, using a prayer strip thus with this Charm subtracts 10 motes of Essence on a successful attack instead. If the target does not have 10 motes of Essence to lose, all of the attacker's unsoaked damage dice are inflicted as levels of damage instead.

Note: The prayer strip aspect of this Charm can only be used by Sidereals, or by Eclipse of Moonshadow Castes who learn Conclusion-Pursuing Approach as a Sidereal Charm rather than as a supernatural martial arts Charm. This is part of the Sidereal Exaltation, not the training in Martial Arts and Essence control that underlies the other Charms of the style.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE EXPECTANT MAIDEN

Once, there was a maiden...

...who was always looking forward to the way things would be.

She said, "Someday, I'm getting out of this place.

"Someday, I'm going to kill that boy that put me here.

"And while I wait, I don't much mind,

'cause it's better to dream tomorrow than to be there."

"I'm holding at bay," she said,

"what I know to be true.

"That I'll never get out.

"I won't let my dreams die!

"I'll hang on to hope," she said,

"until Time itself ends. But —"

"There's always an ending," said Time.

MEDICINE: THE CORPSE

PEACEABLE CONCLUSION

Cost: 2m (+ 1wp, 1lh); **Mins:** Medicine 2, Essence 2;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Touch

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With a touch, the Sidereal can instantly and painlessly kill a living creature that consciously and freely wants to die. No drug, Charm or unnatural mental influence can create such willingness where one doesn't already exist: the death wish must be the target's own. (Admittedly, the Sidereal or his agents can make the target's life such a living hell that death seems preferable.) The higher soul of the deceased is drawn off into the cycle of reincarnation. The Charm's target cannot rise again as a ghost or zombie.

SMOOTH TRANSITION

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2;

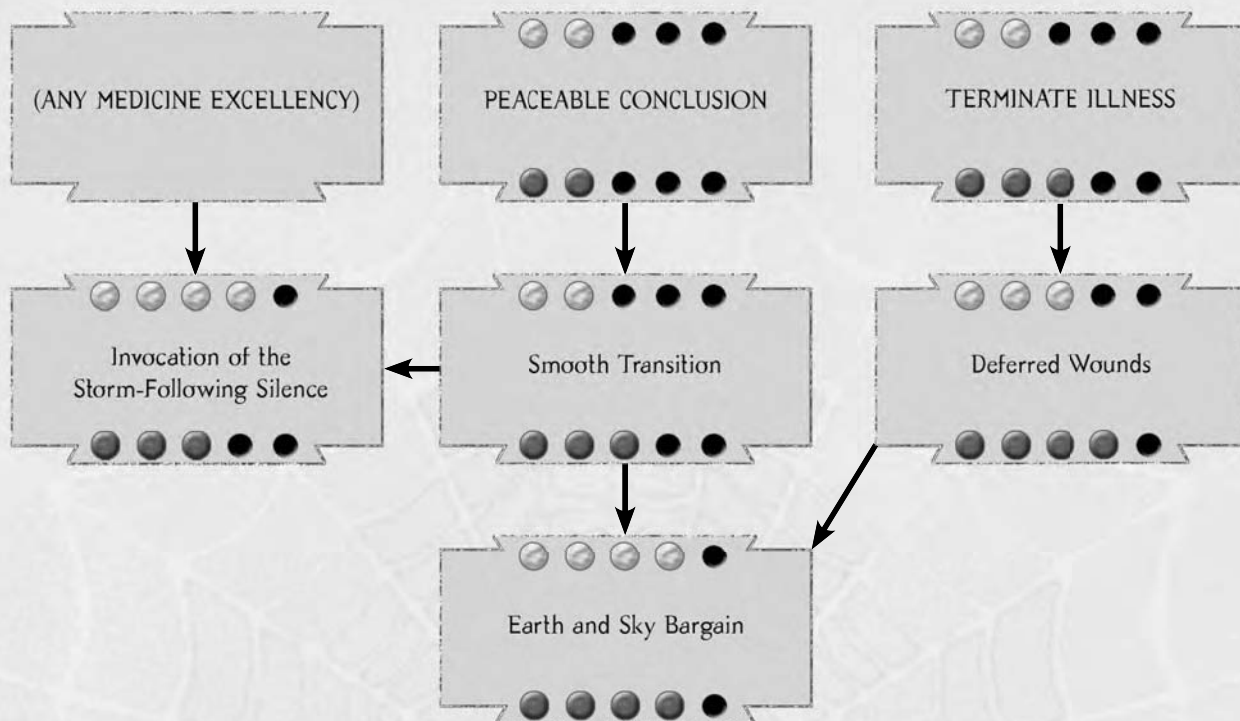
ype: Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)

Keywords: Touch

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Peaceable Conclusion

This Charm extends the effect of Peaceable Conclusion to creatures at the Incapacitated health level or who are dying. The person must be willing to die or be unconscious, however. Should the target's body lie upon naked earth or stone when the Sidereal uses the Charm, the body sinks into the surface, burying itself.



More importantly, anyone slain by this Charm cannot rise again, in body or spirit, to trouble the living: the Loom of Fate ties the person to Creation's proper cycle of death and reincarnation. If the Sidereal uses this Charm on a zombie, it remembers that it is dead, collapses in a heap and buries itself. Using Smooth Transition on the corpse of a troublesome ghost or hungry ghost can banish that ghost to the Underworld until the next night—but only if the Sidereal's player wins a resisted (Charisma + Medicine) roll against the ghost's (Willpower + Essence). Unusual corpses such as spine chains, however, are immune to Smooth Transition. The necromancy that animates them is too strong for the Loom to overcome.

INVOCATION OF THE STORM-FOLLOWING SILENCE

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 4;
Type: Simple (Speed 4, DV -1)
Keywords: Obvious, Compulsion, Virtue (Valor)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Medicine Excellency, Smooth Transition

The Exalted did not need to fight ghosts at the start of the Primordial War, because the Underworld did not yet exist. Later, the Maidens saw the need for Charms to affect the restless dead.

A bright flash of violet light radiates from the Sidereal to fill an area (character's Essence x 10) yards in radius. He brings a Smooth Transition to all valid targets in that area. Zombies collapse, and ghosts might vanish to the Underworld. The Sidereal's player makes a single (Charisma + Medicine) roll for all targets.

TERMINATE ILLNESS

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch, Virtue (Conviction)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal can use this Charm when a person is suffering from some normal disease—i.e., not a Charm's Sickness effect or the effects of an infectious martial art (from *Scroll of the Monk*, pp. 153–154). The Sidereal makes the Inferior Sign of the Corpse over the sick person, targeting the least god of that person's illness. The Sidereal's player rolls (Intelligence + Medicine + Essence) against the disease's listed Difficulty to Treat. If the roll succeeds, the illness's least god relinquishes its hold on the victim, and the victim begins to recover.

DEFERRED WOUNDS

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Fate, Obvious, Touch
Duration: (Wits + Medicine) hours
Prerequisite Charms: Terminate Illness

Fate decrees that attacks cause wounds, but the Loom of Fate records a creature's previous condition. The Sidereal carefully twists the weave of fate to remove a creature's wounds—but they are only held in a side-loop of fate, and inevitably return in a few hours. Each use of this Charm pushes one level of damage (Wits + Medicine) hours into the future, when the target's flesh re-opens and he suffers normal wound penalties. (The Charm also, incidentally, defers poisons and environmental damage.) If the target has suffered additional wounds since then, the consequences may be unfortunate.

EARTH AND SKY BARGAIN

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1lhl; **Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 4;

Type: Simple

Keywords: Obvious, Prayer Strip

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Deferred Wounds, Smooth Transition

The Sidereal activates this Charm with a prayer strip that bears the Scripture of the Maiden and the Road. She infuses the prayer strip with Essence, buries the strip seven yards beneath the ground and then covers the strip's grave-site with stones. Ten beams of violet light shine from the cairn to encircle the precariously perched star of a god or elemental of earth or air that must soon face death. (The Storyteller selects which type of spirit.) Within the next 24 hours, the whispers of the Maiden of Endings lead the Sidereal and the spirit to each other.

When they meet, the Sidereal offers the spirit the bargain that gives this Charm its name. If the spirit refuses, it dies in that same scene, and the spirit's star falls from the heavens. If the spirit accepts, it vanishes from sight and binds itself to the Sidereal's destiny.

Once the spirit accepts the bargain, the spirit remains bound to the Sidereal for as long as the Sidereal keeps the Essence committed. During that time, the Sidereal reflexively recovers one lethal or bashing health level per action. Also, the spirit's connection provides an additional +4L/+4B of soak. (The extra soak this Charm grants is not compatible with the use of armor.)

If she wants, the Sidereal can transfer the bond of fate between herself and the spirit to someone else, effectively binding the spirit to that person. (Neither the spirit nor the other person has any say in the matter.) For as long as the Sidereal continues to commit the Essence to maintain the Charm, the recipient of the bond enjoys the aforementioned benefits. Once the Sidereal transfers the bond, however, she cannot take it back. The person who received the bond cannot transfer it to anyone else, either.

Once the Charm's effect ends, the spirit is reborn from within its host, slightly changed but no longer facing imminent death. Whether the spirit feels indebted to the Sidereal depends largely on the spirit's own nature, the length of the spirit's servitude and whether the Sidereal herself placed the spirit's life in jeopardy as a way to force the bargain.

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE MAIDEN AND THE ROAD

Once, there was a maiden...

...who found herself climbing up an earthen path.

Her footsteps made no sound. There was a silence in the air.

She walked for years, and then, came to a cliff.

The road gave way to clouds, and she could go no farther.

"There's always an ending," she said.





I DO. I JUST DON'T REMEMBER HIS NAME.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DON'T REMEMBER HIM.

ARE YOU TWO AT IT AGAIN? WHAT IS IT THIS TIME?



MY SISTER'S LOSING HER WITS IS WHAT.

I AM NOT.



LOOK, IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS. THAT'S A LONG TIME FOR LITTLE DETAILS LIKE -

LIKE SOMEONE'S NAME? BESIDES, IT'S ONLY BEEN THREE YEARS. NOT FIVE.



ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT! WHAT IN CREATION ARE YOU TWO ON ABOUT?

THE SOLDIER WHO WAS HERE THAT TIME. YOU REMEMBER HIM, RIGHT?



SOLDIER? WHEN WAS THIS?

YOU REMEMBER... HE SHOWED UP RIGHT AFTER THAT BATTLE WITH THE ICEWALKERS.

HE WAS ON HIS WAY HOME AFTER HIS LEGION GOT WIPED OUT.



I GOT NOTHING.

"OH COME ON! HE HAD SHORT BLONDE HAIR, A SCAR ON HIS LEFT CHEEK..."

"NO, NO! IT WAS HIS RIGHT CHEEK. AND HIS HAIR WAS GRAY. LIKE HIS GOATEE."



OH! THE YOUNG MAN WHO SAVED US FROM THAT AWFUL THING IN THE FOREST!

YES! HIM!



WHAT GOATEE?



OKAY, YOU REMEMBER HOW HE PRETTY MUCH SAVED ALL OF OUR LIVES?

WELL, SHE CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER HIS NAME!

YES...



MUST BE GETTING OLD, DEAR. HAPPENS TO THE BEST OF US.

HEE HEE HEE!



FINE! I DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH THIS!

OOPS.

SO WHAT WAS THAT SOLDIER'S NAME?

HUH? OH, I HAVE NO IDEA. I HOPED YOU KNEW.





CHAPTER SIX ASTROLOGY

The special astrology of the Five-Score Fellowship appeals to the 25 colleges of pattern spiders who weave the Loom of Fate. Each college corresponds to one of Creation's 25 constellations. Sidereals manipulate each college's associations to catch the notice of the pattern spiders, who carry out the Viziers' requests to alter destiny.

SHAPING DESTINY

The Seers create three sorts of destinies: *ascending*, *resplendent* and *descending*. Ascending and descending destinies modify circumstance, and can affect individuals or whole populations. A Sidereal can even create ascending or descending destinies for herself... but never for other Sidereals. Resplendent destinies do not tweak circumstance; they instead create a new identity under which the Sidereal may live. No character may be under more destinies than her permanent Essence dots. (Other "destinies," such as the Destiny Background in *Scroll of the Monk*, don't count toward this limit.)

HOW IT WORKS

A Sidereal weaves a destiny (whether ascending, resplendent or descending) through two simple steps. She contacts the pattern spiders, and she tells them what to do.

STEP ONE: PRAYER ROLL

First, the Sidereal contacts the spiders through prayer. Roll the character's (Charisma + Performance). The difficulty begins at 6. The usual methods of sacrifice described on page 132 of *Exalted* are ineffective, so Sidereals use other means (see "Enhancing the Prayer Roll," starting on p. 207). Once the difficulty has been accounted for, every four successes or fraction thereof on the prayer roll adds a die to the effect roll in Step Two.

STEP TWO: EFFECT ROLL

When the Sidereal explains to the spiders what she wants them to do, her player rolls the character's (Essence + rating in the college she wishes to invoke). Every success on this roll provides one *effect point*. A destiny has

traits much as a character. Effect points raise these traits. You may find it helpful to write out a destiny's "character sheet" on a piece of scrap paper or an index card.

ASCENDING AND DESCENDING DESTINIES

Sidereals create ascending and descending destinies to shape events along certain pre-defined paths, rewarding or punishing specific behaviors. Ascending destinies introduce positive effects in a creature's fate, while descending destinies create negative effects. Mechanically, these two types of destiny are identical.

When creating an ascending or descending destiny, choose a college with appropriate symbolism. These are loose guidelines. *Any given destiny can fit under multiple colleges.* So, as long as the player-selected college seems appropriate, it matters not if another college seems *more* appropriate.

Ascending and descending destinies have six traits: Providence, Trigger, Scope, Duration, Frequency and Paradox. Three of these traits (Scope, Duration and Frequency) can be bought up with effect points.

During the formulation of a destiny, the Sidereal works out in broad terms what the destiny will do, but cannot be sure of what resources Heaven can afford to devote to the destiny. In game terms, this means the player need not commit to spending effect points until she makes the effect roll and knows how many points she has—a Sidereal begins with a broad idea of how a destiny will work, and tailors its specifics to the resources she's assigned. Should the player desire, she may discard effect points beyond those necessary to construct the destiny she wishes.

Once the Sidereal has created the destiny, it hangs on her pattern, inactive and *contagious*. Transferring the destiny to the target is a Touch effect (see **Exalted**, p. 183). Once transferred, the destiny activates. A Sidereal may carry only one contagious destiny at a time. If a single destiny affects multiple beings of Essence 2+, she must touch each one.

PROVIDENCE

Providence is what the destiny does. Every ascending or descending destiny has one *and only one* of eight Providences associated with it. A destiny's Providence costs no effect points, and effect points may not be spent to increase the destiny's potency. Although ascending destinies tend to involve blessings, and descending destinies tend to involve curses, artful Viziers create destinies whereby a subject's good fortune destroys him, or his ill fortune in



CREATURES OUTSIDE OF FATE

Entities that come from regions beyond the reach of fate—most notably demons, the dead and the Fair Folk—are immune to Sidereal astrology. The Viziers cannot force destinies upon creatures beyond the reach of fate; they see through the false identities created by Sidereal astrology, and ignore the powers conferred by those guises.

one area brings him favor in another. Whether a destiny incorporates a blessing or a curse has no bearing on whether the destiny is considered ascending or descending.

The eight Providences are as follows:

Artless Prodigy Blessing: -1 to the target number of a roll related to the destiny. +1 Defense Value if the “roll” is an application of an unrolled defense.

Blissful Idiot Blessing: -1 to the difficulty of a roll related to the destiny. +1 success on an opposed roll. +1 Defense Value if the “roll” is an application of an unrolled defense.

Hound-Chases-Rabbit Blessing: The target regains one temporary Willpower for succeeding on any Ability roll related to the destiny.

Fortified Spirit Blessing: The target gains +1 to a given Virtue for a roll related to the destiny. The Sidereal must choose which Virtue while creating the destiny.

Sloped-Floor Curse: +1 to the target number of a roll related to the destiny. -1 to Defense Value if the “roll” is an application of an unrolled defense.

Ruin Without Failure Curse: +1 to the difficulty of a roll related to the destiny. -1 Defense Value if the “roll” is an application of an unrolled defense.

Heart-Piercing Curse: Any failure on any Ability roll related to the destiny causes the target to lose a point of Willpower.

Name-Destroying Curse: Target suffers -1 to a given Virtue for a roll related to the destiny. The Sidereal must choose which Virtue while creating the destiny.

Providences from multiple overlapping destinies stack with each other and with every other bonus or penalty in the game. The only limit is target numbers, which may not be raised above 9 or reduced below 4.

TRIGGER

Trigger determines when and why the destiny functions. A Sidereal creating a destiny chooses between two types of trigger: simple and intelligent. Neither costs effect points. A simple trigger adds one die to the destiny's Paradox pool, while an intelligent trigger adds three.

A simple trigger is a set of three or fewer conditions under which the destiny applies. It is not itself guided by a pattern spider, but rather by a simple construct of Essence resembling that produced by the Efficient Secretary Technique Charm. For example, a Sidereal who lies with a mortal

SHAPING

Every power in this chapter is a Shaping effect.

Unfortunately for the Solars, that doesn't mean Integrity-Protecting Prana defends against all Sidereal astrology. Integrity-Protecting Prana only stops *attacks*—effects that harm or change the Solar's mind, body, spirit or traits. Defense Values, Virtues and temporary Willpower are traits. Difficulties and target numbers are not traits, nor is anything affected by the Greater Signs of the Five Maidens. On the positive side (for Solars), Destiny-Manifesting Method affects the difficulties of every roll the Sidereal's player makes during the process of shaping destiny.

Likewise, the moonsilver tattoos of the Lunars do not protect them against Sidereal astrology. The tattoos protect a Lunar's mind and body from transformation; they do not protect her fate. The Chosen of Luna remain part of Creation.

woman might bless her with the Artless Prodigy Blessing that all her children are successful in magic unto the seventh generation, but only if they are his lineal descendents and male. (The three conditions are “successful in magic,” “male” and “his lineal descendents.” “Unto the seventh generation” is a function of Duration, below.) Following that, every time the player of one of these descendants makes an Ability roll relating to success in magic, the destiny would provide -1 to the target number of that roll (to the limits of the effect's Frequency, also below).

An intelligent trigger is a destiny overseen by a dedicated pattern spider, assigned to do nothing else until the destiny lapses. Pattern spiders can be tremendously clever, and an intelligently triggered destiny is enormously beneficial or devious. The Sidereal may lay as many conditions as he wants on the destiny, and they are obeyed in spirit as well as letter. Intelligent triggers require cooperation between the player and Storyteller to determine the destiny's nature.

SCOPE

Scope determines the destiny's target. By default, a destiny affects one person, though it has inclement effects on the world around him. With a little more effort, a Sidereal can expand the destiny to encompass geographical areas: villages, towns or (under theoretical conditions) entire Directions. A destiny can also affect things other than people—gods, livestock, crops or geographical features such as hills or mountains. An ascending or descending destiny *cannot* be made to affect the weather, the seasons or Celestial bodies such as the sun or the moon.

A lower population does not make an area easier to affect. A village-sized area requires four effect points dedicated to Scope whether 100 individuals live there or 10,

as Heaven must accommodate the many complex fates of the region's trees, grass, and rocks.

Beings whose Essence rating exceeds 1 present the largest obstacle to Sidereal destinies. To affect such a being, the Sidereal must spend a number of effect points equal to the being's Essence score. This includes the Sidereal herself, should she wish to grant herself an ascending or descending destiny, or if she lives in the targeted area for long. Destiny cannot distinguish between the Essence rating of targets when assigning Scope. For example, laying a destiny on a village would normally cost four effect points. Should an Essence 3 Exalt live in the village, the cost would rise to seven effect points. The Sidereal has no way to exclude the Exalt short of chasing him away before she begins.

This is why entire Directions can only be affected under theoretical conditions. Hundreds of thousands of Essence 2+ beings live in each Direction, and a Sidereal attempting to lay a destiny across one would have to account for the Essence of each—impossible! Sidereals call this problem the *Essence burden*—sometimes with a few ripe expletives—and it's why so few destinies of great Scope affect areas with many Essence users, such as the Realm or the Scavenger Lands.

Gods and elementals obedient to the laws of Heaven do not create an Essence burden unless the Sidereal wishes to provide them the destiny's effects. Creatures outside of fate also do not count toward the Essence burden, since the destiny does not affect them.

Effect

Points	Scope: Number Affected
0	Individual: The destiny may affect the world around him.
1	Individual alone: The target lives in a private paradise or hell, his fortune or misfortune never affecting those around him.
2	Small group/clique: Up to 10 individuals.
3	Extended family/hamlet: Up to 25 individuals.
4	Clan/village: Up to 100 individuals.*
5	Town/neighborhood: Up to 1,000 individuals. • *
6	City: Up to 10,000 individuals. • *
7	Principality/prefecture: Up to 100,000 individuals. • • • *
8	Kingdom/dominion: Up to 1,000,000 individuals. • • • *
9	Local region: About 10,000,000 individuals. • • • *
10	Astrological Direction: About 100,000,000 individuals. • • • *

• One additional Paradox die.

• • • Three additional Paradox dice.

* The Sidereal invites censure.

DURATION

Duration is how long the destiny lasts.

When the target of a destiny expires with duration on the destiny remaining, the destiny falls dormant for a lunar month and then passes to the deceased's legal heir. Inheritance follows the law of the target's culture, or the predominant law of Creation (currently Imperial law) if the local culture has no inheritance policy. Under Imperial law, the spouse becomes the primary inheritor, with the eldest child inheriting next, and all Exalted inheriting before un-Exalted relations. Should the heir have an Essence score beyond the bounds of the destiny's Scope, transfer effect points to Scope from Duration until the Essence burden is paid. The lunar month delay exists to prevent particularly malicious destinies from spreading like wildfire.

If the subject of a destiny passes outside of fate or otherwise renders himself immune to a destiny's effects, the destiny's Duration continues. The destiny's effects resume as soon as his immunity lapses, but the spiders calculate its remaining Duration as if he'd remained under the destiny's influence for the length of his absence. Only spending a full year completely outside fate—in Malfeas, the Deep Wyld or the Labyrinth—extinguishes a destiny completely (a cure that is most likely deadlier than the disease).

For the purposes of the chart, one generation lasts 20 years. Laying a destiny on beings whose "generations" are longer (such as the Dragon-Blooded) does not extend the effect's duration beyond that period.

Effect

Points	Duration
0	One month
1	One season
2	One year. •
3	10 years. •
4	20 years. •
5	60 years. "Unto the third generation." • • •
6	140 years. "Unto the seventh generation." • • • *
7	260 years. "Unto the 13th generation." • • • *
8	600 years. "Unto the 30th generation." • • • *
9	1,000 years. "Unto the 50th generation." • • • *
10	2,000 years. "Unto the 100th generation." • • • *
	• One additional Paradox die.
	• • • Three additional Paradox dice.
	* The Sidereal invites censure.

FREQUENCY

Frequency determines how often the destiny manifests. The Sidereal's player *must* spend at least one effect point on this trait. When a destiny applies to a group, the frequency is measured per individual. For example, a Frequency 2 destiny

affecting a whole village will manifest for each person in that village once per day.

Effect

Points	Frequency of Manifestation
1	The effect manifests about once per week.
2	The effect manifests about once per day. •
3	The effect manifests about once per scene, or once every 20 minutes during downtime. • *
4	The effect is overpowering and manifests whenever its trigger is met. • • • *

- One additional Paradox die.
- • • Three additional Paradox dice.
- * The Sidereal invites censure.

PARADOX

During the course of choosing a destiny's traits, the Sidereal accumulates a pool of Paradox dice. After choosing the destiny's traits, roll this pool. The Sidereal gains one point of Paradox for every success, and 10s count as two successes. When calculating how much Paradox a given trait produces, look only at the trait's rating, and not at the ratings preceding it in the chart. For example, a Frequency 3 destiny provides only one Paradox die, not two. The effects of Paradox are fully described beginning on page 209.

RESPLENDENT DESTINIES

A resplendent destiny is a role a Sidereal assumes to emulate the traits of a given college. During the First Age, Sidereals used resplendent destinies as astrological focusing techniques and to acquire Charm-like astrological effects called Resplendencies. Since the Solar Purge, Sidereals have used resplendent destinies to bypass the effects of Arcane Fate. A resplendent destiny uses the Loom of Fate to create a shallow but powerful false identity, strong enough to withstand the Arcane Fate's corrosive effects on memory and evidence.

The target of a resplendent destiny is always the Sidereal herself. No matter her Essence, she must spend just two effect points on Scope. Once Scope is accounted for, resplendent destinies have only two traits: Duration and Endurance.

Duration functions identically for resplendent destinies as it does for ascending and descending destinies, save that if a Sidereal dies, her resplendent destinies end with her, instead of passing on to her heir.

Endurance measures a given resplendent destiny's resistance to Arcane Fate. Every effect point dedicated to Endurance grants the resplendent destiny one Endurance point. The Sidereal spends Endurance to power the destiny's Resplendencies. Should a destiny's Endurance ever fall to zero, the destiny immediately ends.

IDENTITY

Each of a Sidereals' active resplendent destinies carries with it an identity, which conforms to the archetype

represented by its college. The Vizier chooses this identity when she designs the destiny. For as long as a resplendent destiny persists, its identity remains consistent. For example, while wearing a resplendent destiny of the Captain, a Vizier may not appear as a harsh schoolteacher named Bitter Fruit one day, and a sweatshop manager named Rain the next. A Sidereal may never possess multiple, simultaneous resplendent destinies of the same college.

A Sidereal can *wear* her resplendent destinies, or she can *carry* them. She may wear only one resplendent destiny at a time, but may carry additional destinies, ready to assume if she needs them. When she is wearing a destiny, those she meets perceive that identity, and do not suffer the effects of the Arcane Fate. If the Seer merely carries a destiny, people see her as herself. Donning a carried resplendent destiny is a Speed 3 action costing a Willpower point. Shucking a worn destiny is a Speed 3 action with no cost. *Shucking the destiny does not end it.* A Sidereal who shucks a resplendent destiny continues to carry it, and may don it again whenever she likes.

The Sidereal receives +3 dice on rolls to convince others of the validity of this identity, even if it seems grossly inappropriate for her appearance, mannerisms or biology. Those she interacts with suffer a -3 internal penalty to disbelieve the identity, or a -2 Defense Value where appropriate. The exception is other Sidereals, who cannot see resplendent destinies at all.

A destiny's identity disappears when the destiny ends. A Sidereal can never again assume the identity associated with a past resplendent destiny: although she may create a new resplendent destiny of the same college, the name and face the past destiny granted her are gone from the Loom forever. Over months and years, fate conspires to erase all evidence the identity ever existed. Bystanders' memories fade at the same rate as those affected by the Arcane Fate (see pp. 119-121). Seers wearing resplendent destinies teach at the Heptagram, live as Immaculate monks, ride with the Wyld Hunt and raise families in the Threshold, and in every case must eventually give up the friends and loved ones they made outside the Five-Score Fellowship. This suits the Bureau of Destiny's agenda of secrecy, but plays hard on the psyches of Sidereals who must live with the knowledge that the person their friends knew never really existed.

RESPLENDENCIES

Each resplendent destiny grants three Charm-like powers called Resplendencies. A Sidereal under a resplendent destiny retains access to these Resplendencies at all times, whether she wears or carries the destiny, even while she wears other resplendent destinies. Since activating a Resplendency costs Endurance and wears away at the destiny, many Sidereals under multiple resplendent destinies draw a sharp divide between the destinies they use as identities and the destinies they use as sources of Resplendencies.

Some Resplendencies function as social attacks. These are marked with one of the mental influence keywords on p. 179 of **Exalted**. A Resplendency social attack bypasses the target's Mental Defense Value and affects him *automatically*, inflicting an unnatural mental influence (though some allow nonstandard defenses). Resisting this influence costs a number of temporary Willpower points equal to the Sidereal's rating in the college.

RESPLENDENT PARADOX

Sidereals under resplendent destinies accumulate Paradox in two ways: activating Resplendencies and acting out of character. The effects of Paradox are fully described beginning on page 209.

Paradox gain from Resplendencies is simple. Whenever a Sidereal activates a Resplendency with associated Paradox dice, her player rolls those dice and gains a point of Paradox for every success; 10s count as two successes.

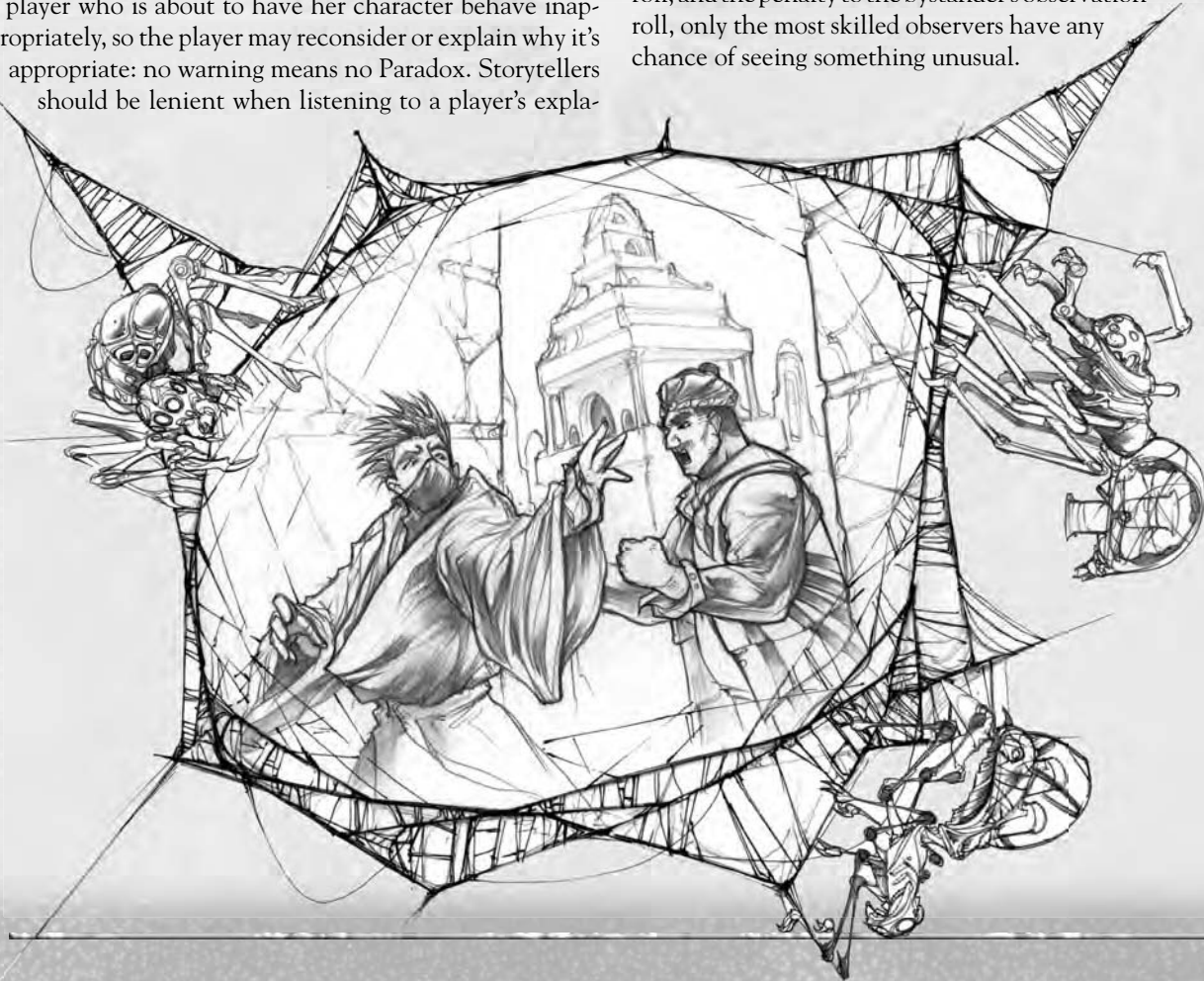
When a Sidereal acts out of character while wearing a resplendent destiny, the pattern spiders must adjust the destiny to account for this behavior. The Resplendent Paradox table tells how many Paradox dice to roll. To determine whether an act is out of character, ask yourself: If you saw that sort of person doing what she's just done, would you find it uncharacteristic? If so, it's an out-of-character act. However, resplendent destinies convey a sense for correct behavior when wearing them. The Storyteller must warn a player who is about to have her character behave inappropriately, so the player may reconsider or explain why it's appropriate: no warning means no Paradox. Storytellers should be lenient when listening to a player's expla-

RESPLENDENT DESTINY AND CHARMS

While in effect, Charms that dramatically alter a character's fate take precedence over resplendent destinies. A character Walking Outside Fate temporarily loses access to her identities and Resplendencies, as she has no destiny at all. A character using the Ceasing to Exist Approach must choose new identities for all her resplendent destinies—the only time in which a resplendent destiny's identity may be reassigned while the destiny is still active.

nations as to why a particular act isn't out of character. A Sidereal wearing a resplendent identity must remain in character at all times, even when unobserved, but may always just shuck the destiny if she truly needs to take an out-of-character action.

Those who meet a Sidereal under multiple identities (including her own) might recognize her, though only if their players succeed at a (Perception + Awareness) roll (suffering the -3 internal penalty). This can cause Paradox, so Sidereals with multiple resplendent destinies in a given area usually have a mundane disguise or costume associated with each identity. With the bonus to the Sidereal's disguise roll, and the penalty to the bystander's observation roll, only the most skilled observers have any chance of seeing something unusual.



Event	Paradox Dice
Out of character act.	1
Every month lived in a location the Sidereal has had a dozen or more known resplendent destinies during the last decade.	1
Allowing her anima banner to reach the four- to seven-mote level while wearing an identity.	1
...the eight- to 10-mote level.	+2
Confusing meeting as her Exalted self with someone the Sidereal's had contact with while wearing a resplendent destiny.	1
Confusing meeting as a resplendent destiny with someone the Sidereal's had contact with while wearing another resplendent destiny.	2
...and that person concludes the Sidereal's one identity is imitating the other.	+1
...and that person concludes the Sidereal's a supernatural being.	+2

THE COLLEGES

Each college is a constellation in Creation's horoscope. Each is also a group of pattern spiders, responsible for maintaining a particular area of fate and weaving destinies into the Loom. The colleges describe areas of influence, in which the spiders arrange the fates and destinies of all living things in Creation. These categories are fluid, and a destiny will most likely fit under several. Destinies of ambiguous purview are assigned to whichever appropriate college of pattern spiders has the lowest workload.

THE HOUSE OF JOURNEYS

The Captain
The Gull
The Mast
The Messenger
The Ship's Wheel

THE CAPTAIN

The Captain leads with strength, determination and order. With his firm hand and disciplined crew, he leads his ship to safety. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain overcome obstacles with organization and drill. In the descending aspect, they fall prey to obsession, paranoid desire for authority and organization for its own sake. The Captain is the constellation of the ship's officer, the professional soldier, the work gang boss and the stern matriarch.

WHAT MORTALS KNOW

Any mortal with at least Occult 1 knows each of these colleges as constellations, their associations and that they represent fate in some way. Mortals do *not* know about the Loom or the pattern spiders. Many mortal astrologers believe they can influence fate by engaging in prayer to whatever deities oversee fate—this is *usually* ineffective, as the pattern spiders always ignore prayers from unauthorized sources.

However, gods oversee most fate-planning, and many gods accept bribes. In the past, gods have arranged auspicious destinies for favored mortals, up to and including reincarnation in a body destined for Terrestrial Exaltation. In this way, mortal astrologers can influence fate in minor ways, but not with anything approaching the skill or potency of one of the Seers.

Mortal divination (using the thaumaturgical Art of Astrology) can never determine the nature of Sidereal astrological effects, though when a skilled mortal astrologer reads the horoscope of a character under these effects, the mortal will see the character's destiny obscured and difficult to read (-1 external penalty to relevant thaumaturgy rolls per Sidereal-created destiny in effect).

Trappings: The Captain wears an *emblem of rank* and carries a *token of authority* such as a scepter or wand of office. He is *fearless*, and he *shows no sign of fatigue*. He is not kind, but he is always fair and *concerned for the well-being of his followers*.

Correlations: Military command, fatherhood, tyranny, bureaucracy, discipline



Resplendencies

- **Ship-Commanding Attitude, one Endurance per week:** Add the character's Essence in dice to Presence rolls to command and control the crew, but only so long as she rules absolutely.

- **Choosing for Fangs, one Endurance per month:** Under the Captain's command, the men best able to work a man to death while convincing him to love it gravitate to positions of power. Underlings with a Valor lower than the Sidereal's Charisma will never complain of her behavior as a boss. This effect includes the Exalted, though Exalted cannot be intimidated into staying on the job if they wish to quit. This is a Compulsion effect.

- **Iron Drill Exercise, one Endurance per week:** Through personal example, the character trains her crew. For each week of drill, the followers gain 1 in an Ability, but they cannot gain a rating higher than the Sidereal's rating in that trait. This is a Training effect (see **Exalted**, p. 183). The Sidereal can train up to (her college rating x10) individuals simultaneously in this fashion. No individual can learn more points of Abilities from a Sidereal using this Resplendency than the Sidereal's Conviction.

THE GULL

The Gull wanders without regard for profit. Self-examination brings about inner change. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain find the freedom of the wanderer and the wisdom of the outsider's perspective. In the descending aspect, they are rootless, irresponsible and engage only in the most shallow of self-examination. The Gull is the constellation of the stray dog, the hobo, the monk walking his circuit, the wandering laborer and fish and migratory birds.

Trappings: The Gull carries a *staff* and wears a *traveler's cape*. He is *dirty* and *hungry* but also *happy*.

Correlations: Wandering, wind, irresponsibility, rakish charisma, unexamined life

Resplendencies

- **Honest Face Spirit, one Endurance per week:** When a prospective employer of migrant labor evaluates whether the Sidereal is trustworthy for some menial job or insignificant responsibility, the employer will always find in the Sidereal's favor. This is an Illusion effect.

- **Good Worker Spirit, one Endurance per month:** The Sidereal knows how to look as if she works an honest day. While this effect is in operation, no one will believe the Sidereal is slacking, no matter how little work she does. This is an Illusion effect. The Bureau of Destiny has persistent problems with Sidereals using this Resplendency on the job.

- **Joyous Grasshopper Spirit, one Endurance per season (three Endurance for the season of water):** The ant labors and saves for a long, hard life, but the carefree grasshopper eats while there is plenty, loves every night and if he dies of it, dies joyfully. For the purposes of regaining

Willpower only, the Sidereal gains an additional Motivation: "Enjoy myself and fully express it." In addition, she reduces by 1 the target number of her Conviction rolls to regain Willpower.

THE MAST

The Mast is raw physical exertion and pure muscular strength. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain apply strength of body and spirit to tasks at hand, without question or complaint. In the descending aspect, they apply strength without thought and refuse to question orders. The Mast is the constellation of the soldier, the ditch-digger, the scribe, the house servant and the insect.

Trappings: The mast is *drably dressed* and *unspeaking*. She is *strong* and *honest* but *ignorant*.

Correlations: Stoicism, tools, architecture, manual labor, silence, ignorance, male phallus

Resplendencies

- **Strength of the Mast, three Endurance, one Paradox die:** So long as she is the strongest person present, the Mast's strength is equal to any task. Multiply her (Strength + Athletics) by 10 to determine how much she can lift, provided she's not alone.

- **Structure of the Mast, one Endurance:** The Sidereal may add three dice to any attempt to aid another.

- **Invisible at the Center, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** The Sidereal knows how to work hard and do what she's told. In just a few hours of searching any populated area, she can find a menial job that will ensure she is fed, clothed and sheltered from the elements but nothing else.

So long as the Sidereal is employed as a menial laborer and lives meekly and without question, she will avoid all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and any attempting to find her must beat her player's (Stamina + Athletics) roll, with her Essence added as automatic successes. She must be in a state of virtual slavery, sleeping at the job and living only to perform, and has only seven free hours per week.

THE MESSENGER

The Messenger is the courier who endures great danger to deliver his precious information. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain are skilled professionals who offer brave service. In the descending aspect, they offer good service for bad ends, thoughtlessly abuse power (the Immaculate Philosophy associates this with the Inconsiderate Horseman) and abdicate moral responsibility. The Messenger is the constellation of the courier, the valet, the aide, the diplomat, the young Terrestrial living in the household of her cousins, non-migratory birds including raptors and owls and of service to one's family.

Trappings: The Messenger has a *mount* and *rides on urgent business*. She is *daring* and *armed*. She carries a *package*, from which she cannot be separated.

Correlations: Duty, bravery, arrogance, journeys, communication, selflessness, news

Resplendencies

- **Iron Heart, Iron Horse, one Endurance per month:** While carrying a message, the Sidereal and her mount will not fail. Valor rolls if failure would delay the message's delivery or lengthen the route.

- **Blow Wind Style, one Endurance per week:** Environmental effects do not penalize the Sidereal's Fatigue checks. She and her mount are well rested every morning, regardless of how poor the conditions under which they slept.

- **Field Mouse Rider, one Endurance, three Paradox dice per day:** The character may cause any familiar to bear and carry her, no matter how unsuitable it is for use as a mount. The familiar suffers no ill effects from this.

THE SHIP'S WHEEL

The Ship's Wheel is perseverance in the face of hardship. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain succeed in their persistence and hope. In the descending aspect, they obsess and cling to doomed causes. The Ship's Wheel is the constellation of the steersman, the furnace-stoker and those witlessly in pursuit of their beloved.

Trappings: The steersman at the wheel is *sleepless and unwashed*. He wears a *long cape or jacket* and *wristlets or a belt of rope*. He has a determined demeanor and is *unspeaking*, for none can share the burden of his post.

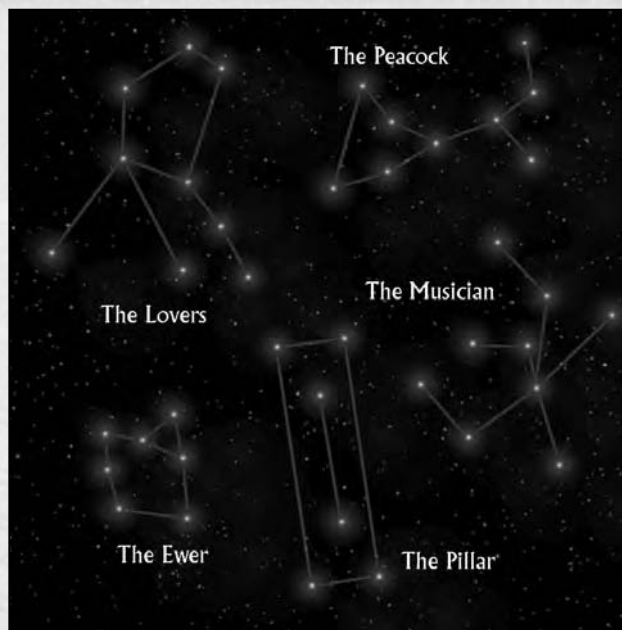
Correlations: Underdogs, cult beliefs, Solars, obsessive love, martyrdom, burdensome debt, wild animals as a group

Resplendencies

- **Stronger Than This Job, one Endurance:** So long as the Sidereal has a job to do, any Fatigue penalties she would suffer are treated as bonus dice, provided they would not (as penalties) reduce her dice pool to zero. After the task is done, the Sidereal takes unsoakable levels of bashing damage equal to the Fatigue penalties and is subject to those penalties as normal.

- **Marshaling Infinite Strength, one Endurance:** Any task the character can begin and reasonably hope to finish, she can finish, even if circumstances change during the task's execution. Regardless of penalty, the character can continue working as she did when she started; she is not immune to the negative effects of fatigue, injury or environmental conditions, but may continue despite them. Even if she is killed, her ghost continues to work at the task, as does her body as long as it isn't destroyed.

- **Poetic Sacrifice Insurance, two Endurance, one Paradox die per journey:** The Sidereal treats Extreme terrain as Difficult and Difficult terrain as Open. In addition, the player rolls the character's (Stamina + Survival) for overland travel or (Stamina + Sail) for sea travel; every success grants her an extra +1/8th movement modifier, regardless of how implausibly fast this may make her journey. The Sidereal cannot stop traveling during this time.



THE HOUSE OF SERENITY

The Ewer
The Lover
The Musician
The Peacock
The Pillar

THE EWER

The Ewer is romantic pursuit, partnership based in affection and love of dreams. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain flirt, seduce, engage in coquettish banter and keep their love through adversity. In the descending aspect, they seek impossible love, obsess and destroy what they adore. The Ewer is the constellation of the marriage-seeker, the idealist, the revolutionary, the good monk, incestuous couplings and amphibians.

Trappings: The Ewer bears *flowers* and a *work of poetry*. He is *blissfully happy* and *in love with love*. He wears his *finest clothing* to see his beloved.

Correlations: Love, motherhood, righteousness, idealism, monastic duty, obsession, seduction, dreams and fantasies

Resplendencies

- **Sweet Flirtation Smile, one Endurance:** The Sidereal's player adds dice equal to her character's Charisma to any Bureaucracy, Socialize or Presence roll, even if the roll is already based on Charisma.

- **Snappy Banter Approach, one Endurance:** A character can use this Resplendency if she or her partner has just failed a social attack, or failed to defend against a social attack. The character's Wits must equal or exceed the Wits of her partner. The Snappy Banter Approach enables either of their players to apply the benefits of the Third Excellency (see *Exalted*, p. 185) to the social Ability just used at no mote cost. This is not considered a Charm activation.

Neither character has to possess the Third Excellency for the relevant ability.

- **Frenzied Courtship Dodge, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** Within a day of wandering into any populated area, the character will find herself in the middle of an ongoing whirlwind affair or courtship. In cultures where marriage is strictly formal, the character will become embroiled in difficult marriage negotiations instead. The character will never marry while under the power of this effect, but the courtship will also never cease to be an all-consuming obsession.

So long as the character lives only for her beloved and their eventual blissful union, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her player's Wits + Athletics roll with her Essence added as automatic successes. She must live only for love, and has just seven free hours per week.

THE LOVERS

The Lovers represent physical lust, carnal indulgence and uneven relationships. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain engage in relationships that are symbolically or situationally uneven, such as sex acts. In the descending aspect, they engage in sexual depravity and sexual or social rape. This is the constellation of the fixed-price prostitute, the slave, the debtor, the beggar, the pedophile, all individuals engaged in sex acts, vermin, rodents and Ravagers and other victims of the Fair Folk.

Sidereals generally take this constellation to explain a great deal about the outlook of the Maidens.

Trappings: The lover is dressed in *silk robes*, and his *hair is rumpled*. He is *superficially friendly* and *attractive* but *betrays some sign of violence and restraint*, though it may only be in the form of love bites.

Correlations: Service, submission, slaves, lust, the sex act, rape, abuse

Resplendencies

- **Handsome Boy Eyes, one Endurance:** The Sidereal may make Presence-based social attacks with intent to seduce using nothing more than eye contact with her target. These are not Resplendency social attacks.

- **Celestial Bliss Trick, one Endurance per performance:** With this simple trick, the Sidereal may bring about total sexual ecstasy in her target in just three minutes (or three long ticks). This requires physical contact but works on either gender. Once she finishes, her target immediately develops an Intimacy phrased to put him under the Sidereal's sway. This is a Servitude effect.

- **Whore-and-Virgin Stance, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** According to the character's tastes, she becomes a god to be worshipped or an object to be possessed. By spending a day out and about in any

populated area, she can become a kept courtesan or a pimped prostitute.

So long as she lives an empty life of sex and submission, she will avoid all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her player's (Manipulation + Presence) roll, with the Exalt's Essence added as automatic successes. She must be in a state of virtually mindless self-indulgence, and has only seven free hours per week.

THE MUSICIAN

The Musician embodies contentment in the act of living. It is joy-in-plenty and enjoyment of the finer things. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain are gourmets and poets. In the descending aspect, they engage in hollow avarice, blind materialism and scandalous excess. Under Sidereal influence, this constellation is called the Painted Boy in Immaculate practice, for it is also the constellation of homosexual couplings. It is the sign of herbivores that travel in small family groups.

Trappings: The Musician wears *facial makeup*, *dresses outlandishly* and always carries a *musical instrument*. He is *cynically wise* and *uninhibited*.

Correlations: Excess, laughter, hedonism, music, homosexuality, drug use, finery, greed, extramarital pairings, contentment in living, theater

Resplendencies

- **Strange Days, one Endurance:** The character may force the player of a being presented with a possible source of gratification or intoxication to make a Temperance roll or succumb, even if the target would never normally consider the possibility. This is a Compulsion effect.

- **Impossible-to-Remember Party Approach, one Endurance per night:** While the character performs, either by being the center of attention, laying down a line of conversation or performing some sort of music or dance, the difficulty of all Temperance rolls for everyone in the vicinity increases by 1.

- **Brigand-and-Carouser Attracting Style, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** By going home with a waitress or going to a party with someone the Sidereal meets in a teahouse or tavern in a populated area, the character may attach herself to a family or friendship group of marginal personalities. They may be actual brigands, or they may just be louts or rejects. The character will quickly find a place amongst these addled personalities and eccentrics. By the end of the day, they will have accepted her as one of their own.

By wasting her days living large with the maniacs of her new troupe, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her player's Stamina + Presence roll, with her Essence added in automatic successes. The

marginal life is a full-time endeavor—she has but seven free hours per week.

THE PEACOCK

The Peacock governs practical alliance, thoughtful breeding and considered partnership. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain look carefully at the advantages of prospective mates. In the descending aspect, they are trapped in loveless marriages, forced alliances and other half-functional partnerships. The Peacock constellation governs the courtesan, the goodwife, the thoughtful matriarch, the established Dragon-Blooded household and predators who hunt in packs.

Trappings: The Peacock struts his *magnificent finery*, be it gang stylings, armor or court clothing. He is *proud* and has *excellent bearing*. He shows *discerning taste*, and is *obviously sexually available*.

Correlations: Greed, love for wealth's sake, procreation, dualities, alliances, bright colors, necessity, traps, distraction

Resplendencies

- **Proper Plumage, one Endurance, one**

Paradox die: As long as the character has access to a large closet, second-hand clothing store, pile of cloth scraps and so on, she can always look good enough to gain +1 Appearance for the duration of a social event, regardless of the event's dress code.

• **Spouse-Saving Grace, one Endurance:** Whenever the Sidereal is present with her mate and his player fails a Bureaucracy roll or succumbs to a social attack, her player may channel Conviction or Temperance once to reroll or re-apply Defense Value based on the Sidereal's traits.

• **Wife-Procuring Tailfeathers, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** The character is an obvious catch. Within a day of wandering in any populated area, the character will find herself married and managing a large and prosperous household. The character may not marry on the first day, but the tumultuous course of events will immediately begin to occupy all the character's time and result in marriage within the week.

So long as the character lives as the full-time manager of the family's affairs, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to follow her must beat her player's (Charisma + Bureaucracy) roll, with her Essence added as automatic successes. She must live for the job and has but seven free hours per week.

THE PILLAR

The Pillar represents partnership tested and found stable. In the ascending aspect, those under



its domain are virtuous empresses, righteous matriarchs and caring parents. In the descending aspect, they are bad parents or partners tested and found wanting. The Pillar is the constellation of the asexual partner (the mother, business partner or drinking buddy), service in the Thousand Scales and of herd animals such as mammoth and elk.

Trappings: The Pillar wears a *wedding ring* and *dresses plainly*. She is *perceptive* and *practical*. She is *firm but just*.

Correlations: Family, friendship, stability, civil society, unjust authority, stagnation, queens and princes

Resplendencies

- **Comforting Matriarch Embrace, one Endurance:** The character may hold and comfort another before putting him to sleep. When the target awakens, his player may roll the character's Conviction twice for him to regain Willpower.

- **Equitable Partnership, one Endurance, one Paradox die:** The character will always find a financial backer for a business plan, so long as the venture has plausible merit, she is competent and she has no intention of cheating the potential investor.

- **Best Friend's Couch, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** By ambling up to the nearest habitation where the character speaks the language, the Sidereal may present herself as a long-lost friend and will be fed as well as anyone in the house and allowed to sleep on the floor, the couch or a spare bed. The character can't stay in any one place for long, but at the same time, all of humanity is the character's friend, so she need merely move to a new house every few days when she begins to wear out her welcome.

So long as the character spends time with her newfound long-lost friends, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her players' (Charisma + Presence) roll, with her Essence added as automatic successes. Hanging out with friends is a full-time endeavor, so she has just seven free hours per week.

THE HOUSE OF BATTLES

The Banner
The Gauntlet
The Quiver
The Shield
The Spear

THE BANNER

The Banner deals with reputation, story and awe. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain gain glory, leadership and heroic renown. In the descending aspect, they inspire terror, panic and infamy; live on empty reputation; or do not inspire at all. The Banner is the constellation of the rumormonger, the crier, the witness, the martyr, the tyrant and all those possessing heroic renown.

Trappings: The Banner is *strikingly clad* and *always among you*. He is *fearless*, *victorious* and *larger than life*.



Correlations: Reputation, pageantry, leadership, epics, infamy, reigns of terror, philanthropy, tidings, symbols, heraldry

Resplendencies

- **Heroic General Presence, two Endurance per scene:** The Sidereal exhibits herself at the forefront of battle. The difficulties of all Valor checks for those under her direct command are reduced to 1.

- **Battle-Fellow Attitude, one Endurance per month:** By publicly posting that she is calling for troops, the character can draw back to her any soldier who has ever fought for her. Every week until this Resplendency lapses, the player of every soldier who has ever served in a unit she has directly commanded must resist the mental influence or come to serve beneath her banner again. This is a Servitude effect.

- **Tide of History, three Endurance, one Paradox die per month:** Those troops under the Sidereal's direct command never fail Valor checks of difficulty 1 or suffer wound or fatigue penalties. They can be worked or marched to death, but will not complain or slacken.

THE GAUNTLET

The Gauntlet is the choice between bad and worse. It is ruthless expediency and battlefield logic. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain possess the courage to undertake unpleasant necessities. In the descending aspect, they behave callously and ruthlessly, and justify as necessary their whims of the moment. The Gauntlet is the constellation of the sergeant, the martinet, the surgeon, the judge, the policeman, the thug in uniform and the practical matriarch.

Trappings: The Gauntlet is *bloodstained* and *brutal*. She wears a *uniform* and carries a *cudgel*. She makes *meaningless demands* and then punishes those who do not obey.

Correlations: Sergeants, confrontation, callousness, sacrifice of others, necessity, livestock management, pragmatism, surgery, the greater good

Resplendencies

- **Weak-Spine Sense, one Endurance per week:** The Exalt can know instantly who among the people facing her are intimidated by or frightened of her and to what degree.

- **Knuckle-Cracking Stance, one Endurance:** The character can add her Essence to an intimidation attempt, though the target sees it as an expression of physical might on the Sidereal's part and not a supernatural effect.

- **Thug Fist, two Endurance, one Paradox die:** Activated during Step 1 of combat resolution. If the Sidereal's next unarmed attack does damage, the target loses one Appearance dot permanently to disfigurement, though the dot can be repurchased with experience. This is a Crippling effect.

THE QUIVER

The Quiver is flexibility and fleetness of thought. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain are quick-witted and versatile, with many ideas and stratagems. In the descending aspect, they think in lockstep with their peers ("just another arrow in the quiver"), display stupidity or explain bad ideas convincingly. The Quiver is the constellation of the duelist, the know-it-all, the Dragon-Blood in secondary school, the socialite, the general, the quick-witted scholar and the urbane boor.

Trappings: The Quiver carries a *bow* or a *map case*. He is *clever* and *witty*. His valor is not so important as his *education*.

Correlations: Strategy, choices, haste, pride, archery, self-absorption, clever ideas

Resplendencies

- **Apologetic Feint, one Endurance:** The Sidereal can rephrase her demand again but make it look like an acceptable compromise. Her player may reroll a Presence-based social attack.

- **Instant Genius Style, one Endurance:** The Sidereal's player may immediately make any (Intelligence + Lore), (Intelligence + Occult) or (Intelligence + Bureaucracy) roll that normally requires long research time. She simply knows the answer.

- **Several Arrows of Reason, one Endurance per three arrows, one Paradox die:** The character is now armed with the Arrows of Reason. These target arrows ignore gossamer armor. Any creature outside fate struck and damaged by one falls under fate's purview until the end of the scene. The arrows, likewise, last only until the end of the scene.

THE SHIELD

The Shield is the ecstatic warrior, who seeks battle without regard for victory. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain possess courage and heroism without regard for consequences. In the descending aspect, they

battle without thought and display sadism, masochism, and suicidal bravery. This constellation governs scouts, assassins, heroic warriors, those who fight and die for their peers without regard for consequences and lone predators who hunt with claws and teeth.

Trappings: The Shield always carries a *shield* or a *leather strap* for biting. He is *always armed* and *always eager for battle*. He carries *trophies* of his kills.

Correlations: Barbarians and the barbarian code, fearlessness, protection, bragging, pain, heroism, heroic suicide, wrath, the Lunar Exalted

Resplendencies

- **Wounded Lion Strength, two Endurance:** During Step 7 of an attack's resolution, the Sidereal may add damage dice equal to the number of wound levels she currently suffers.

- **Hero's Iron Skin, three Endurance per scene:** So long as the Sidereal wears no armor, she has the effect of +9L/+9B armor. This is treated as natural soak.

- **Aspect of the Bear, two Endurance, one Paradox die per scene:** The character's anima banner is transformed into the shape of a great bear. Whenever the character's anima banner is visible, the players of all those who see it must make Valor rolls at difficulty 1 to face the Sidereal. This is a Compulsion effect. While in this state, the Sidereal cannot suffer Fatigue penalties, and her player can't fail Valor rolls.

THE SPEAR

The Spear is skill and discipline in armed conflict. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain display skill, professionalism and discipline. In the descending aspect, they display superficial professionalism, myopia and the inability to see alternate solutions outside their scope of interest. The Spear is the constellation of the bodyguard, the long-service professional soldier, the skilled militia-man, the arms instructor, the mercenary and other skilled professional competitors such as gamblers, gladiators and athletes.

Trappings: The Spear *wears a uniform* but possesses *no rank*. He is called by his *family name* or *nickname*. He is *disciplined* and *brave*.

Correlations: Bravery, professionalism, training, taking initiative, lack of vision, tactics, skillfulness, competition

Resplendencies

- **Someone's Son Style, one Endurance, one Paradox die per month:** People of all cultures know an honest soldier knows no politics. So long as the Exalt makes no pretensions, protects common folk with her weapons and avoids drawing war to them, they will aid and feed the soldier. They will do so with no questions asked, and without revealing her location to enemy troops, even if they share with her no common language.

So long as the character maintains this contract and keeps her weapon close at hand, she avoids all legal,

bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her player's (Stamina + Presence) roll, with the Sidereal's Essence added as automatic successes. This fugitive existence is a full-time endeavor, and the Sidereal has just seven free hours per week.

- **Hero-Supporting Performance, one Endurance per scene:** If someone in the Sidereal's unit can do something, the Sidereal can, too. For the rest of the scene, the Sidereal can choose to accept the highest number of successes anyone going before her has rolled on a given Athletics-related roll. Likewise, she can carry her share, and has the (Strength + Athletics) total of the strongest person helping her lift.

- **Battle-Carrying Presence, one Endurance per scene:** No one fighting under the Sidereal's immediate command can fail a Valor check unless the Sidereal fails such a check, or suffers a wound or Fatigue penalty greater than the Sidereal's wound or Fatigue penalty.

THE HOUSE OF SECRETS

The Guardians

The Key

The Mask

The Sorcerer

The Treasure Trove

THE GUARDIANS

The Guardians personify practical knowledge and rewards earned through long labor. As a constellation, it contains the wisdom of the beast and the elderly. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain exhibit a fundamental understanding of Creation from long observation or inbred wisdom. In the descending aspect, they exhibit meaningless superstition and promote or subscribe to quackery. This is the constellation of the shaman, the snake-oil salesman, the talisman seller, the midwife and the old duffer.

Trappings: The guardian is *uneducated* and *carries a talisman*. He is *suspicious*; he *knows the weather* and a *wisdom that can aid you* in your current task.

Correlations: Hearth wisdom, respect for the elderly, age, superstition, charlatans and mountebanks, tradition, patience, observation, inevitability

Resplendencies

- **Lazy Works Smart Style, one Endurance:** -2 to the difficulty of any Athletics roll to perform physical labor, but only if the extra successes are used to shorten the time the task takes.

- **Hayseed Eye, one Endurance per week:** The character can detect whether someone she is interacting with is planning to take advantage of her. This conveys no advantage in combat.

- **Talisman-Making Touch, one Endurance, one Paradox die:** The character creates a talisman of any type



from some personal possession or object she blesses (see **Exalted**, p. 379). She cannot keep it. She must give it to someone in need.

THE KEY

The Key represents wisdom discovered through scholarly study and intellectual understanding. The Key is rewards gained and tasks accomplished through cleverness. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain experiment, inquire, think sharply and create new solutions. In the descending aspect, they waste time on pointless experiments and tinker with things best left undisturbed. The Key is the constellation of the physician, the scavenger lord, the tinker, the junk seller and monkeys and other primates.

Trappings: The Key has a *measuring stick* and a *pen*, but no wax tablet or notebook. He claims he is *innocent*, but has a *dishonest expression*, so this is doubtful. He is a creature of *large appetites*.

Correlations: Innovation, hubris, automata and mechanical devices, books, libraries, medicine, curiosity

Resplendencies

- **Never Cease Moving, one Endurance per week:** So long as the character is making preparations for a Lore or Bureaucracy roll, she need sleep for only one heartbeat per day and can live on Essence alone.

- **Ascending Destiny Mien, one Endurance, one Paradox die per week:** The character can lower her difficulties by 1 when interacting with anyone whose Temperance is lower than the Sidereal's Intelligence.

- **Provable Location of the Gate, one Endurance, three Paradox dice:** The character proves through measurements and formula that the Calibration Gate should be present right at that moment in her current location, and so it is. There may be a slight delay if the gate is else-

where. This supersedes the spell Summon the Heavenly Portal (see **The White Treatise**, p. 82).

THE MASK

The Mask is secret wisdom and things known but concealed. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain know of religious wisdom, rites of passage and the secrets of the bed. In the descending aspect, they obfuscate deliberately. The Mask is the constellation of the spy, the priest and the librarian.

The Mask is damaged. The Sidereals twisted it shortly after the Solar Purge to create the Arcane Fate and protect themselves from the scrying eyes of the Dragon-Blooded and the Lunars. Sidereals cannot create for themselves ascending or descending destinies of the Mask, though they can create these destinies for others and benefit from resplendent destinies as normal.

Trappings: The Mask wears *clothes of soft fabric* and a *mask to conceal his face*. He is *quiet*, and he *does not announce himself*. The Mask *clings to sacred places* and lingers around manses and demesnes.

Correlations: Secrets, lies, security services, guarded individuals, religious worship, extortion, trickery

Resplendencies

- **Privacy-Enhancing Gesture, one Endurance:** The area within (Essence x10) yards of the character becomes proof against supernatural scrying, teleportation and other forms of intrusion. This includes observation using the Everywhere and Nowhere Technique.

- **Foot Treads No Twig, one Endurance, one Paradox die:** The Sidereal's player may reroll a single (Dexterity + Stealth) roll before it's compared to an enemy's roll.

- **Everywhere and Nowhere Technique, one Endurance, three Paradox dice per week:** The character can conceal herself in the most unlikely of places—between raindrops, between the moments of the hour and behind the curtains on a dusty stair in a faraway town. The character eats by dining on the food of others when they look away, and sleeps only in the secret places that the Division of Secrets salts across the Tapestry as safe houses. None can see her, but she sees much.

In any place where there are shadows and she is unobserved, the character can instantly disappear. So long as the character persists in this furtive existence, she avoids all legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver summonses to her are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her player's (Intelligence + Occult) roll, with her (college + Essence) added as automatic successes. This existence of supernatural occultation is demanding, and she has just seven free hours per week to spy and observe on those within a number of miles equal to her Essence, so long as those places are not proof against scrying and supernatural intrusion.

THE SORCERER

The Sorcerer is the Exalt, the god, the geomancer and the talisman maker. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain practice artifice, sorcery, thaumaturgy and geomancy. In the descending aspect, they summon demons, worship the Yozis and practice necromancy. The Sorcerer is the constellation of tasks accomplished through use of Essence.

Sidereals use this college to set up resplendent destinies as Sidereal Exalted so they can smoothly conduct business in Heaven and with other Exalted. Many who think they know a Sidereal Exalt may one day have a hard time naming or describing her. Most Sidereals don't keep such identities for longer than a century.

Trappings: The Sorcerer is one of the Exalted and a Prince of the Earth. He displays goods of the *magical materials*, a *caste mark* and *regal bearing*. He wears *armor* and carries a *daiklave*.

Correlations: Humanity, geomancy, artifice, demon summoning and infernalism, talismans, Essence use, egoism, Yozi-slaves

Resplendencies

- **Invincible Essence Core, one Endurance:** The character may reflexively block any effect that lowers her permanent Essence, causes her to lose her memory or makes her lose access to spells, Charms, Combos or Abilities, except for pattern bite or the weakening effect of her Greater Sign.

- **Prince of the Earth, one Endurance per scene:** The character has many peers but no superiors. +3 dice to all social rolls with the un-Exalted, so long as she acts the part of an Exalt. This implies no sense of superiority.

- **Seer, variable Endurance:** If the character takes part in astrology to determine or plan the future with another Sidereal, she may spend any amount of Endurance to give bonus dice to the attempt. This Resplendency's effect is a hallmark of major Sidereal gatherings.

THE TREASURE TROVE

The Treasure Trove governs revealed wisdom. It is understanding and knowledge held like a beacon. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain become erudite, educated and enlightened; they accomplish tasks and earn rewards through excellence. In the descending aspect, they become intellectual elitists, pointless celebrants, bookworms and know-it-alls. This constellation governs the teacher, the revolutionary, the prophet, the savant and animals that hunt by stinging or leaping upon their prey.

Trappings: The Treasure Trove carries a *book of wisdom* and wears *scholar's robes*. She is *poor* in terms of money but *educated* in formal learning. The Treasure Trove is deeply *impractical* but means well.

Correlations: Horoscopes, schools, scholarships, blight, blindness, inflexibility, secret societies, prophecies

Resplendencies

- **Stab the Seer's Eyes, one Endurance per season:**

The character is instantly aware of any mortal astrological reading about her and can cause it to give any result she pleases.

- **Dismissive Scholar's Sniff, one Endurance:** The character may always appeal to an authority yet unread. She may add her Essence to a Lore or Bureaucracy roll, provided she is arguing with one whose Lore does not exceed her own.

- **Professional Mien, one Endurance per month:** Those around the character will treat her as if she were cultured and educated and turn to her to resolve linguistic disputes, solve difficult problems and so on. This is an Illusion effect. The Sidereal's player may add the character's Essence to Presence or Socialize rolls, but only if her Lore is higher than the target's Intelligence.

THE HOUSE OF ENDINGS

The Corpse

The Crow

The Haywain

The Rising Smoke

The Sword

THE CORPSE

The Corpse is the end of lives and modes of existence. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain pass with planning, dignity and grace. In the descending aspect, they end in wailing agony. The Corpse is the constellation of the man on his deathbed, the affianced youth, the family moving house, the middle-aged man forced to change professions, the butterfly, the dragonfly and other non-amphibious creatures that metamorphose halfway through their lives.

Trappings: The Corpse wears *his best clothes*. He is *calm*, and he bears the emblem of a *butterfly* somewhere on his person. He carries a *textbook*, which may be a guide to a new trade or a guide to the Underworld. Just as the Sword, the Corpse is *unshod*.

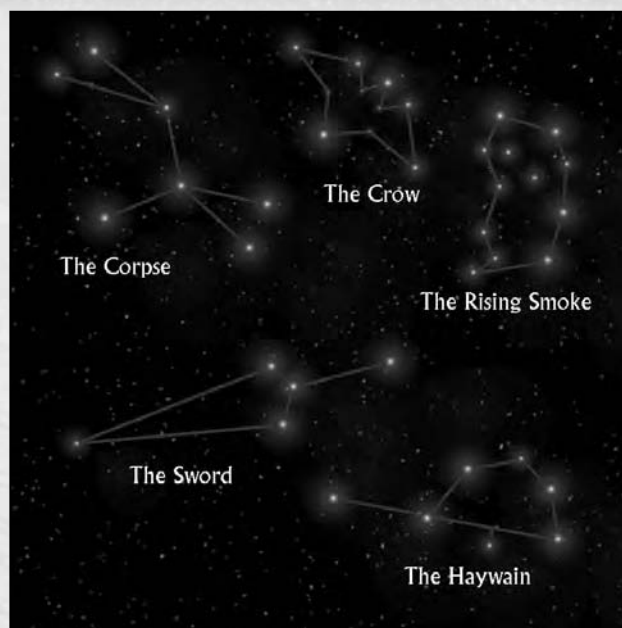
Correlations: Quick and painless deaths, exits, sudden change, transformation, unfinished business, shapechangers, the Second Breath

Resplendencies

- **Dignity of the Dead, one Endurance:** The character may ignore the effects of one social attack she does not successfully defend against.

- **Shadow of the Reaper, three Endurance, one Paradox die:** By making the Superior Sign of the Corpse, the character fills the target with intimations of mortality. The target loses all points of Willpower in excess of his Conviction.

- **Rising Butterfly Prayer, three Endurance, three Paradox dice:** By saying a short homily and burning a silk memorial to Lytek, the God of Exaltation, the Exalt can ensure that an individual's soul receives due consideration for reincarnation in a body chosen for Terrestrial Exaltation.



The Seer must offer the prayer at the formal funeral for the individual, simultaneous to the funeral or at the grave immediately afterwards—any more delay means the memorial probably arrives in Heaven too late for processing.

THE CROW

The Crow represents the end of illusions and dreams. It is inevitability and the recognition thereof. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain take comfort in death's release, morbid humor and the heroism of forlorn hope. In the descending aspect, they display false bravado, confuse despair for acceptance, and care nothing for the suffering of others. The Crow is the constellation of the ancestor and the ancestor cult, the young widow, the old man, the death masks of Calibration dancers and death by old age.

Trappings: The Crow carries *black feathers* and wears a *black cloak*. She is *morbidly humorous* and *clever*, and she is *attracted to shiny objects*.

Correlations: Slow but painless deaths, inevitability, orphans, acceptance of death, dark humor, depression, waking, indifference

Resplendencies

- **Reading Dead Eyes, one Endurance:** By eating the eye of a corpse, the character can know the last thing the corpse saw before it died. She sees the last scene of the target's life and becomes aware if the target left a ghost or a hungry ghost.

- **Bold Filcher, one Endurance, one Paradox die:** The character can take something from plain sight, and the players of those witnessing it must win opposed (Perception + Awareness) rolls against the character's (Dexterity + Larceny) to notice.

- **Feathered Cloak Trick, three Endurance, three Paradox dice per day:** The character makes the Superior Sign of the Crow and becomes a raven, crow or other cor-

vid. In this form, her Strength and Stamina are reduced to 1, but her other traits are unaffected. She has 0L/1B soak and may fly at triple her normal Move or Dash rate. Her equipment, clothing and gear pass to Elsewhere and travel with her until she changes back.

THE HAYWAIN

The Haywain is endings that cannot be easily described. It is gradual decline and the failure of systems with fuzzy boundaries and imprecise definitions. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain find opportunities for new growth in the ruin. In the descending aspect, they pass into stasis or bucolic decay. This is the constellation of death by sorcery, divinity and senescent senility, the broken circle, the faltering alliance, the deteriorating government, the troubled family and the Dragon-Blooded retiree.

Trappings: The Haywain wears *disheveled robes* and an *informal attitude*. It is *hard of hearing*, but *demands bribes*. The Haywain is *arrogant*, ambitious and unconcerned with the big picture.

Correlations: Muddled and difficult to categorize deaths, mystery, cover-ups, treachery, comebacks, aging and decrepitude

Resplendencies

- **Harvest Ripe Wheat, Father Falling Hay, one Endurance:** If the Sidereal stands in the reception area of a business, or visits its shop floor, she can instantly tell whether the business is “wholly corrupt,” “mostly corrupt” “somewhat corrupt,” “mostly honest” or “totally honest.” Only one answer is provided, and it pertains to the organization as a whole rather than any member or employee.

Pondering some bureaucratic or criminal misdeed, she can know if the deed “will not,” “may possibly” or “is certain to” receive official scrutiny. Only one of these three answers is provided, and it pertains to the deed only if the Exalt commits it immediately after activating this Resplendency.

- **Celestial Intervention Appeal, one Endurance, five Paradox dice:** With the Superior Sign of the Haywain, the Sidereal calls the attention of a lesser elemental dragon in its role as a Celestial censor; the sign also makes the dragon aware of the situation in which the Sidereal finds herself. The dragon arrives via the fastest possible means, and may or may not bring along a retinue of Celestial lions, thunderbirds or huraka. All censors have such a retinue available at short notice, even if none appear immediately.

This Resplendency calls the Bureau of Heaven’s aid, and constitutes an admission that the Bureau of Destiny cannot handle a situation alone. Censors don’t enjoy having their influence called upon lightly: should the dragon judge the call unnecessary, he may bring the Sidereal up on whatever charges he can think of, the least of which will be *wasting his time*. Sidereals have died rather than call for Celestial intervention—some situations are so politically sensitive that training a new Sidereal causes less trouble

for the Bureau of Destiny than dealing with the Bureau of Heaven’s full scrutiny.

- **Old Fellows’ Society Luncheon, one Endurance per week:** By marching up to any meeting of local public officials or merchants, the character may immediately ingratiate herself. By the end of the day, she has a position of great importance yet little responsibility in a government bureau or business concern. Thereafter, her existence becomes a whirl of meetings, junkets, presentations, luncheons, business dinners, parties and time with her mistress.

So long as the character immerses herself in purposeless upward mobility, she avoids all important legal, bureaucratic and official scrutiny. Those attempting to deliver significant summonses are powerless without supernatural tracking, and those attempting to find her must beat her player’s (Wits + Bureaucracy) roll, with the Sidereal’s Essence added as automatic successes. Such work is a demanding endeavor, and the character has just seven free hours per week.

THE RISING SMOKE

The Rising Smoke represents the end of journeys on both literal paths and metaphorical paths such as initiation, puberty and apprenticeship. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain achieve transformation and attain new states. In the descending aspect, their journeys end in pointless accident and misfortune. This is the constellation of the young man, the journeyman, the corpse on its way to burial, the pubescent Dynast who has not yet Exalted, those up on charges or entangled by lawsuits and death by accident, heart attack, stroke and murder.

Hundred Gods Heretics in the Realm risk terrible punishment to make secret sacrifices to this constellation upon the deaths of loved ones, hoping to persuade Heaven to grant the deceased Terrestrial Exaltation in the next life. Heaven listens not.

Trappings: The Rising Smoke carries *good luck prayer strips*, a *purse of money from her teacher* and *brand-new journeyman’s equipment*. She is *optimistic* and *naïve*.

Correlations: Quick and painless deaths, rest, stagnation, growth, new employment, fresh prospects, murder

Resplendencies

- **Record-Obtaining Inquiry, one Endurance:** When making any roll involving Charisma with a god, a judge or a magistrate, the Sidereal’s player may add the character’s Essence to the roll.

- **Superior-Entreating Memorial Style, one Endurance:** The character burns a letter written on fine silk, addressed to one of her fellow Sidereals. The letter appears discreetly hidden against the recipient’s skin and vibrates gently to announce the letter’s presence. If the recipient is unclothed at the time of sending, the letter waits Elsewhere for a more appropriate moment and appears then. Bystanders must succeed at a difficulty 6 (Perception + Awareness) roll to notice the letter’s



arrival. Within three days, the recipient may respond in a similar fashion by writing his reply on the letter in emerald-colored ink and burning it. The Sidereal receives the reply in the same manner.

- **Chains of Adorjan, three Endurance, one or three Paradox dice:** The character may touch a victim and make the Superior Sign of the Rising Smoke to summon Adorjan, the Silent Wind. The Yozi scours the target for his next three actions. See *Exalted*, pp. 130–131, for full rules on the effects of the Silent Wind of Malfestas. In Creation, Adorjan is weakened, and her Trauma trait loses the L tag, inflicting only dice of damage. When used against a demon, this Resplendency inflicts only one Paradox die and lasts 13 actions.

THE SWORD

The Sword brings the end of hope. In the ascending aspect, those under its domain find their hopes realized, but must then continue without the assistance and inspiration those hopes provided. In the descending aspect, their dreams wither and die. This is the constellation of the broken, the crushed, the worn down, the salesman, the has-been, the virgin, the ghost, the pregnant woman and death after prolonged suffering and illness.

Trappings: The Sword is *worn out*. She carries or wears a *withered flower*, and she dresses in *burial ceremonies*. She *weeps but cannot be consoled*, and is *unshod*.

Correlations: Slow and painful deaths, perseverance, failure, illness, tribulation, inheritance, resignation, the vanquished, Sijan

Resplendencies

- **Style-Discerning Eye, one Endurance, one Paradox die:** The Sidereal no longer merely hopes to study under a particular tutor, but can realize that dream. Activating this effect reflexively whenever she observes clearly as another individual activates a Martial Arts Charm, the Sidereal may realize the Charm's trick. Thereafter, she may learn it without a tutor provided she possesses its prerequisites—normal experience point cost and doubled training time applies. If the Seer doesn't learn the Charm within a year and a day, the realization fades.

- **Minimum Legal Defense Competence, one Endurance:** The Sidereal may apply her full Defense Value to any incoming attack, ignoring all penalties, effects that set the Defense Value to zero and other negative effects, provided she uses no Charm, Virtue, Willpower or similar effect to enhance her defense further.

- **Tears of the Blade, three Endurance, one Paradox die:** The Sidereal makes the Superior Sign of the Sword at a target. If mortal, the target is slain instantly or dies horribly within five days (the Sidereal's choice). If Exalted, the target is irrevocably slain when next any form of damage reduces him to Incapacitated or below. For Terrestrial Exalted, this curse lasts until the end of their lives, but for Celestial

Exalted, it lasts but a year and a day. This Resplendency has no effect on gods, elementals or those outside of fate.

PERMUTATIONS

The two-step process described at the beginning of this chapter suffices for simple, short-term destinies. At the cost of time, effort and resources, however, Sidereals can pull the strings of fate on a grander scale. Each of these processes is a way to engage the Celestial Bureaucracy more fully. They also give players a chance to stunt and otherwise add self-directed quests and plot hooks to the play experience.

ENHANCING THE PRAYER ROLL

The simplest methods of enhancing astrology more easily catch the manifold eyes of the pattern spiders, adding extra dice to the prayer roll or reducing its difficulty.

CHARMS

Though the effect roll has no Ability associated with it and cannot benefit from a conventional specialty or Excellency Charm, Sidereals have a variety of Charms, most notably World-Shaping Artistic Vision (see p. 141) and the Methodology of Secrets (see p. 166), that can aid or supplement the specialty or Charm.

EXTENDED PRAYER

The pattern spiders appreciate instructions given clearly and slowly. A Sidereal who makes a grand and long-winded ceremony of the prayer adds one die to the prayer roll for every three hours of prayer, to a maximum of three bonus dice. Stunt dice garnered from ostentatious prayer descriptions do not count toward this maximum.

PETITIONS

A written record of a destiny eases the task of carrying it out. Fate-planners and fate-weavers who can refer to logged copies of a destiny can better plan around it, decreasing the chance they'll attempt to input contradictory orders, which the pattern spiders despise having to reconcile.

A petition requires materials costing Resources ••, and the pattern spiders insist that each petition be created spontaneously during the process of shaping a single destiny. The roll to create a petition is difficulty 2, and either (Wits + Linguistics) or (Wits + Craft [Air]), at the choice of the player: Wits replaces Dexterity to satisfy the pattern spiders' desire for novelty and spontaneity (one of the few instances where they treasure such attributes). It defaults to a dramatic action taking 15 minutes. The player of a Sidereal in a hurry may shorten this process to a miscellaneous action (Speed 5, Defense Value -1) by increasing the difficulty of the roll to 4.

Excellent calligraphy impresses the pattern spiders. If the player scores 5 or more successes, the difficulty of the prayer roll decreases by 1. If the player scores 10 or more successes, the difficulty of the prayer roll decreases by 3

(these two difficulty reductions do not stack). Unfortunately, while excellent calligraphy impresses the pattern spiders, their ability to recognize it has limits—successes on the calligraphy roll past 10 offer no further benefit.

Cosignatories

For every signature of support a Sidereal gathers on her petition, her player gains an extra die on the prayer roll. The player of each cosignatory must succeed on a (Wits + Linguistics) or (Wits + Craft [Air]) roll to produce a signature the pattern spiders will accept. Cosignatories whose players fail this roll do not provide the bonus die, but still count toward the maximum number of cosignatories acceptable on a single petition (see below) unless the Sidereal wishes to scrap the petition and begin again.

The maximum number of cosignatories acceptable on a petition are as follows: one Sidereal of each of the other four castes, a number of fellow initiates of the destiny's college equal to the Sidereal petitioner's Essence, one Lunar Exalt and one Solar Exalt.

If a given destiny is an offense, Heaven considers cosignatories to have committed an offense of one Severity less than the Sidereal who files the petition.

Countersignatory

No more than one god may endorse a given petition. Most commonly, Sidereals seek the endorsement of one the heads of the five astrological houses. Persuading a god to sign off on one's petition requires its own prayer roll (see **Exalted**, p. 132). Sacrifices function normally. The Sidereal benefits from the effects of priesthood on this roll if she is of the caste associated with the divinity's house. Seeking a countersignatory subjects the destiny to official scrutiny, so a Sidereal occasionally seeks out the endorsement of a god other than the most obvious choice, to prevent her boss from learning what she's up to. Also, on occasion a Sidereal seeks to create a destiny at the behest of a particular god, in which case the Sidereal often seeks that god as a countersignatory simply to be sure he notices that she performed as she promised. Such bribes are technically offenses against Heaven, but the Bureau of Destiny has a longstanding policy to garner additional resources through favor-trading. When a Celestial censor decides to turn a discerning eye toward these bribes, the participants are in trouble, as astrological petitions are a matter of open record.

A countersignatory always adds three dice to the prayer roll, regardless of the god's identity.

ENHANCING THE EFFECT ROLL

With more effort, and through earlier planning, the Sidereal may enhance the effect roll directly.

COMPOSE PLANS

The Sidereal may draw up plans for a destiny, sending them along with her prayer to the pattern spiders. The initial planning session takes one day of work, with





only two free hours between waking and sleeping. A character may continue to plan for as many sessions as she likes, but each session beyond the first lasts twice as many days as the previous. For each period the character spends planning, her player makes an (Intelligence + Craft [Fate]) roll, at a difficulty equal to the Essence score of the highest single being the destiny will affect. Every four successes or fraction thereof on this roll add one die to the effect roll.

COMPUTE HOROSCOPES

The Sidereal may elaborate on her destiny blueprints by computing a horoscope for the target of the effect (she may do this even if the target is a whole population). The Exalt must have access to astrological instruments costing Resources •••, normally available only in major cities (but also available in most major towns in the Varang City-States). The Sidereal's player rolls (Intelligence + Occult). Every four successes or fraction thereof on this roll contributes one bonus die to the effect roll.

RITUAL BEHAVIOR

The Sidereal may bring herself under the purview of the college she wishes to affect. By donning a resplendent destiny (see pp. 193-195) of the college she wishes to invoke and wearing it for three days before making her prayer, the Sidereal grants her player three extra dice to the effect roll. To garner this benefit, the Sidereal may not flare her anima above the one- to three-mote level during this time and must openly display three of the college's five trappings for the duration.

MULTIPLE SIDEREALS

Sidereals who cooperate can create destinies mightier than Sidereals who work alone. Every Sidereal working to evoke a destiny must be a legal cosignatory of the petition backing the destiny, and each must have at least one dot in the relevant college. The Sidereal with the highest rating in the college leads the prayer (and her player makes the prayer roll); in case of a tie, the Sidereal with the highest Essence leads. When both college and Essence are tied, the player of every tied candidate rolls a single die, and the character whose player gets the highest result leads. Further ties necessitate rerolls. This is not optional, and it's possible the Sidereal who leads the prayer will not be the one with the highest (Charisma + Performance) score.

When multiple Sidereals work together to create a destiny, the secondary participants each add their Essence in dice to the effect roll. In addition, other tasks undertaken to enhance the effect roll may be divided amongst all the Sidereal participants, to ensure each task is performed by the most competent astrologer in that field.

In cases where the destiny being evoked is an offense against Heaven, all participants during this stage are held equally culpable.

CANCELLING ASTROLOGY

A Sidereal who wishes to end one of her astrological effects prematurely must submit a cancellation order. Mechanically, this is identical to drawing up a petition (see p. 207), though the prayer roll to have the spiders take note of the petition is only difficulty 3. Bureau of Destiny policy dictates that Sidereals should write up the cancellation order at the same time as the initial petition. A Sidereal may cancel only her own astrological effects. Cosignatories and countersignatories are immediately alerted to the effect's end.

If a Sidereal wishes to end an astrological effect created by multiple Sidereals, every participant must consent and be physically present when she submits the cancellation. If a participant is deceased, her next incarnation must consent and be present.

LOCATIONS OUTSIDE FATE

When creating a destiny for a target in the Bordermarches of the Wyld or within a shadowland, the difficulties of all rolls associated with Sidereal astrology increase by 1/2 of their bases, rounded *down*. Effects that reduce difficulties do not affect how much the difficulties increase—calculate the increase and the decrease separately, using the base difficulty, and sum them.

If the target is in the Middlemarches, or in areas where fate is governed by non-Loom processes that nevertheless remain compatible with the Loom in some fashion (such as the Underworld with its Calendar of Setesh, or Autochthonia with its design weavers), the difficulties of all rolls associated with Sidereal astrology increase by 3/4 of their bases, rounded *up*. Effects that reduce difficulties do not affect how much the difficulties increase—calculate the increase and the decrease separately and sum them.

In areas where completely alien processes govern fate, such as Malfeas, the Labyrinth and the Deep Wyld, and in areas with no fate, such as Total Chaos, laying astrological effects becomes impossible.

All of this applies only to creatures within fate's purview residing in locations outside fate. Creatures outside fate by their nature (see pp. 125 and 191) remain invalid targets for astrology regardless of where they stand.

THE COST

Nothing short of possibly the Maidens can stop a Sidereal from astrologically manipulating the Tapestry, but some things can deter her. The most obvious and feared is Paradox, the pattern spiders' revenge. Its twin is censure.

PARADOX

As far as the Children of Asna Firstborn are concerned, Sidereals should leave manipulation off fate to the spiders themselves. The pattern spiders are already overworked, having never received so much as a single break since Autochthon created them at the beginning of the First Age, and they resent Sidereals adding more work to their schedules.

As soon as a Sidereal accumulates 10 points of Paradox, whatever pattern spider she's currently bothering calls to its siblings. They rush to the Sidereal's thread in the Loom and jab it with their fangs. Roll a die and consult the Pattern Bite table, inflicting whatever penalty corresponds to the result. Once the spiders inflict Pattern Bite, the Sidereal's Paradox immediately drops back to zero.

PATTERN BITE

- 1 **Power-Neutralizing Venom:** The Sidereal loses all her motes and attunements, and cannot regain motes for one to 10 days.
- 2 **Blunted Mind Venom:** The Sidereal loses all her Willpower and cannot regain Willpower for one to 10 days.
- 3 **Burning Muscle Venom:** The Sidereal suffers a -3 wound penalty for one to 10 weeks. This cannot be neutralized or modified and stacks with other wound penalties.
- 4 **Divine Anesthetic Venom:** The Sidereal suffers -1 to permanent Essence for one to 10 weeks. She cannot raise her Essence during this time.
- 5 **Resolve-Decaying Venom:** The Sidereal cannot benefit from the effects of channeling Virtues for the remainder of the story.
- 6 **Essence-Weeping Venom:** +1 mote to the cost of each Charm activation for one to 10 days, and the character cannot activate Combos or take sorcery actions. Necromancy actions are unaffected.
- 7 **Visage-Twisting Venom:** The Sidereal is reduced to Appearance 0 for one to 10 months.
- 8 **Black Voyage Venom:** The Sidereal falls into a deep sleep for one to 10 days, dreaming terrible nightmares of endless toil at the Loom. No force can awaken her before the duration expires. When she does awaken, she has no temporary Willpower points, though this does not affect her ability to regain them.
- 9 **Essence Venom:** The character immediately suffers one to 10 dice of aggravated damage.
- 10 **Dead Wife Venom:** An Essence 1 mortal the character loves dies horribly. If the character does not love any such person, the venom lurks until she does, and then acts immediately. This is the only pattern spider venom to which one can cultivate immunity.

DISSIPATING PARADOX

Paradox dissipates naturally at a rate of one point every three months. Sidereals usually generate Paradox much more quickly than this, and so the Maidens have shown them two rituals by which they may mollify the Loom's eternal slaves.

Wrapped Fly

In order to perform the Wrapped Fly Ritual, the Sidereal must offer up 25 hours of her life to the pattern spiders, during which time she loses the protection of Loom-enforced causality. In order to initiate the ritual, the Sidereal must submit a written, apologetic prayer to the spiders, consisting of an artful rendition of one of their seven favorite poetic verses, which she creates during an eight hour calligraphy session and then burns. (No rolls necessary.)

Life during the next 25 hours is *strange*. Cause and effect surrounding the Sidereal do not behave as they normally should. It resembles time spent in the Wyld, or life during Calibration, but it may only be performed within Creation and within the bounds of the year. During the rite, the Sidereal must spend no Essence and may call upon no Resplendencies, for the price she offers up to the spiders is all thoughts they might have of her for the day. This reduces their workload by a tiny amount. More importantly, it reminds the Vizier how much she—and everyone else in Creation—relies on the constant, unseen labor of the spiders.

The very least of a Sidereal's problems during this rite would be all her food cooking backwards and liquids refusing to pour from containers. More often, old rivals enter her life, her place of residence permanently shifts its location by a city block or the Arcane Fate fails at awkward moments. Sidereals undergoing this rite usually travel with friends, for protection: the effects of walking beyond causality are seldom dangerous, but she may encounter other problems unrelated to the rite. The Wrapped Fly Ritual does not provide any of the benefits of existence outside fate—the Vizier stays under the purview of the spiders, even though they ignore her—only its drawbacks.

Assuming the Seer passes the 25 hours without spending Essence or invoking a Resplendency, her Paradox decreases by 1. Afterwards, she must see to the resolution of any lingering fate glitches herself (though she may have help from companions).

If performed during downtime, the Storyteller and player should determine exactly what the Sidereal encountered during the rite and what consequences linger, if any. Storytellers are advised not to allow downtime performance of the Wrapped Fly Ritual to reduce Paradox by more than one point without significant lingering consequences the Sidereal must deal with during play, though these consequences should not be punitive; rather, consider it an invitation to introduce hooks for new stories and subplots.



Wrapped Diamond

When the Wrapped Fly Ritual does not suffice, the Sidereal may perform the Wrapped Diamond Ritual through the same calligraphy session and prayer, though the pattern spiders require a different form of penmanship. Then, through the medium of a single cherished belief, she offers up a portion of her soul for consumption by the spiders. Mechanically, her player gives up a single experience point and a single Intimacy, whereupon her Paradox drops to zero. If she has no spare experience points, she can go into debt. The Intimacy must have been with the character for more than two sessions of play or one season of Creation's time. Sidereals often find it difficult to avoid reestablishing this belief once they've given it up, as it must have been truly cherished. The player must succeed at a Temperance roll, difficulty 2, to avoid the character taking an action the next scene to begin reestablishing the Intimacy.

Should she begin to reestablish this Intimacy within three months of completing the rite, her Paradox rises to its former level. The spiders are not totally heartless, however. (Or maybe they're just too busy to remember things for long.) After a season passes, the Sidereal can again take up this lost Intimacy without offending them.

CENSURE

While Paradox is the informally expressed disapproval of the pattern spiders, censure is the formally expressed disapproval of the Sidereal's peers and superiors. Astrological manipulation tangles the Loom of Fate and interrupts the planned flow of destiny. Every destiny a Sidereal creates means long days of fate revision sessions on the part of subordinate gods, whose attention might have been useful elsewhere. Large-scale destiny manipulation can render planned futures totally impossible, forcing destiny planning committees to repeat their work and fall behind in their schedules.

Heaven usually assumes a Sidereal has justification for every destiny she creates. The Bureau of Destiny does not discourage astrology for personal use—elder Sidereals see astrological manipulation as one of the perks of the job. The Bureau does discourage casual destiny manipulation without the appropriate paperwork. A Sidereal who regularly forges destinies without accompanying petitions (see p. 207) attracts the censure of her peers.

The Bureau also encourages restraint. Sidereals are expected to limit the number of people their destinies affect, keep those destinies short-lived and keep their effects subtle and infrequent enough that most people don't think to ask the gods for redress. This allows the Sidereals to maintain their mystique within Heaven, ensures Creation remains blind to the Sidereals' existence and reduces the workload of fate revision committees.

Finally, some areas are off-limits. The Bronze-Faction-dominated Capital Convention expects Sidereals to seek

written permission before laying destinies on the Blessed Isle or any elder Dynast. (In any case, most elder Dynasts already function under the maximum number of destinies allowed by their Essence.) For political reasons, it is illegal for Sidereals to lay destinies on gods with Essence 5 or higher or their mortal lovers, priests and playthings. Laying a destiny on a Celestial god violates that god's rights, and must be approved by a censor or else is an offense against Heaven.

Censure has no associated mechanics, but Storytellers are encouraged to consider it when Sidereal characters interact with the Celestial Bureaucracy. All else being equal, a character who avoids attracting censure should have an easier time requisitioning Heavenly resources and should be treated favorably when she seeks promotion or tuition in advanced martial arts techniques. Repeated censures, however, may provoke a Celestial audit (see Chapter Two)—a serious threat indeed. While censure itself does not contribute to the accumulated Severity of a Sidereal's offenses, censure can prompt a deeper search for prosecutable offenses or lead a censor to include low-Severity violations that normally would be ignored.

That ronin (if they exist) don't have to worry about censure only increases their mystique in the eyes of younger Sidereals.

THE GREATER SIGNS OF THE FIVE MAIDENS

During the war against the Primordials, the Sidereals used powerful astrological effects now mostly lost. When the Five Maidens commissioned the pattern spiders from Autochthon, the Maidens also asked for revisions to the Loom, rendering these ancient astrological techniques more difficult. The Maidens then instructed the Sidereals in easier astrological methods, and discouraged their Chosen from passing on the original signs. Millennia have passed since then, and the only remnants of the original astrology techniques are now called the Greater Signs of the Five Maidens. Originally used by the Maidens themselves and passed to their Chosen before the Primordial War, the five Greater Signs act directly upon the Tapestry, bypassing the paradox safeguard and altering reality fundamentally. In hushed tones, Sidereals theorize the Maidens commissioned the pattern spiders for no reason other than to limit the power of the Five-Score Fellowship. If the few surviving records are accurate, then the Greater Signs are the *least* of what the ancient astrological techniques could accomplish. In this Time of Tumult, each faction now seeks greater knowledge of ancient astrology, in the hope of finding it before the other.

In order to use a Greater Sign, a Sidereal must have an Essence trait of 4 or higher. She must be a Chosen of

the appropriate Maiden, and she must have at least three dots in each of the five colleges in her Maiden's astrological house. Using a Greater Sign costs 10 motes and, once the effect ends, reduces her permanent Essence and permanent Willpower by one dot each. The Greater Signs cannot be used with any of the five Lesser Signs (the Sidereal anima powers). Each calls into effect an aura of appropriate color, equivalent in brightness to an anima banner shining at the 16+ mote level.

THE GREATER SIGN OF MERCURY

By the Sign of Travel are all things set in motion. The Sidereal manifests a brilliant yellow aura, and may instantly move herself and any or all of her allies within (her Essence) miles from where they currently stand to any location within the bounds of fate, excluding the Jade Pleasure Dome and the Lotus of the Bureau of Destiny. She may not move her allies without journeying herself.

THE GREATER SIGN OF VENUS

By the Sign of Serenity are all things brought to rest. The Sidereal manifests a brilliant blue aura, and snuffs out all Essence effects within (her Essence) miles, with the following exceptions: Solar Circle Sorcery, Void Circle Necromancy, the workings of the Celestial Incarnae and

permanent enhancements to Exalted. Artifacts are rendered powerless for (the Sidereal's Essence) hours but not damaged. This effect is instantaneous.

THE GREATER SIGN OF MARS

By the Sign of War is peace transformed into victory. The Sidereal manifests a brilliant ruby aura, and all attacks against her allies made within (her Essence) miles and for (her Essence) hours have their raw damage reduced to a *maximum* of the attacker's Essence. (Hardness is applied before this reduction, however.) Enemies of the Sidereal who enter the aura after its establishment but before its conclusion come under its effects, but those who leave do not escape until the aura's duration elapses.

THE GREATER SIGN OF JUPITER

By the Sign of Secrets is the unknown made known. The Sidereal manifests a brilliant green aura, and within a radius of (her Essence) miles and for (her Essence) hours, all beings and locales outside fate are brought into it, suffering the full effects of fate for the duration. Beings outside fate who enter the aura after its establishment but before its conclusion come under its effects, but those who leave do not escape until the aura's duration elapses.



THE GREATER SIGN OF SATURN

By the Sign of Endings are all things brought to a close. The Sidereal manifests a brilliant violet aura, and within a radius of (her Essence) miles and for (her Essence) hours, her allies do not roll damage. Instead, after subtracting soak and other effects that reduce damage dice, every die in the damage pool becomes a success. Allies of the Sidereal who enter the aura after its establishment but before its conclusion come under its effects, but those who leave do not lose its blessing until the aura's duration elapses.

CRAFTING DESTINIES

Some mortals and Terrestrial Exalted carry a weight of destiny that guides them to perform particular deeds or experience certain events, and helps keeps them alive until

then. This is represented by the Destiny Background (described on p. 48 and in *Scroll of the Monk*, pp. 151–152). Just as other Backgrounds, a Destiny is rated from one to five dots. The Sidereal Exalted can create such Destinies, as can many of the gods who work at the Bureau of Destiny.

The procedure for crafting a Destiny closely resembles that for crafting an artifact. A character needs Craft (Fate), Lore and Occult scores of at least 3 for Destinies rated 1 to 3. For greater Destinies—the sort that affect great empires—these Abilities must be rated at least (Destiny rating + 2). The character's player makes an extended roll of ([Perception or Intelligence] + Craft [Fate]). The interval is one week, and the required number of cumulative successes equals that of an artifact rated the same as the Destiny. Craft Charms such as Excellent Implementation of Objectives,

STRATEGY: HOW DO I USE THIS?

Sidereal astrology is useful for some tasks and less useful for others. When used on an individual, it has effects comparable to low-powered Charms, save its scope and duration are potentially large and it requires no commitment of motes. Sidereals grant themselves and their allies good luck and inflict bad luck on their foes. However, when used on large populations, ascending and descending destinies can shape the history of nations.

Consider a Vizier who applies a high-Scope destiny granting a nation's farmers the Blissful Idiot Blessing, with a Trigger such as "So long as they attend Immaculate worship services weekly." To make sure everyone pays attention, she then poses as an itinerant monk and tells everyone how the Dragons favor their worshippers. Farmers who then follow Immaculate ways find their work easier and more successful... and other farmers might notice and join in.

On the other hand, consider a Seer who wants to destroy a town. (Sidereals who delete large population centers *always* face harsh censure, but it does happen.) He inflicts a Ruin Without Failure Curse with large Scope, Frequency 3 and the Trigger, "When standing on the ground." Several times a day, each mortal in Creation encounters *something* that could be dangerous, from crossing a road to chopping vegetables. These dangers are so easy to avoid that normally they require no roll—mechanically, you might call them difficulty 1 tasks with one automatic success on the player's roll. The descending destiny removes that success. In every scene outside their homes, some ordinary event becomes difficult—and maybe dangerous. After a few weeks of constant aggravations punctuated with deadly accidents, the survivors leave town.

Exalts and heroic mortals caught in the area of effect might escape this fate by, e.g., using stilts or crawling everywhere. Indeed, the taboos of some of Creation's stranger cultures may have started as culture-wide responses to survive devastating astrological curses.

Sidereals have difficulty setting up specific events through astrology. Declaring that the Eclipse Caste Solar called Admiral Sand will die on the third day of Descending Fire in a swordfight with a Lunar Exalt is beyond the effect of a single destiny. A Seer could, however, place a Sloped-Floor Curse on Admiral Sand applicable when he fights with a sword, a Ruin Without Failure Curse on him applicable when he fights against Lunars and a Heart-Piercing Curse applicable when he fights during the month of Descending Fire. Then the Vizier just has to find some way to arrange a fight between Admiral Sand and a Lunar on the third day of that month. Success becomes doubly certain if she provides a selection of ascending destinies to the Lunar, and *triply* so if she goads Admiral Sand into overconfidence by telling him of this prophecy and using Avoiding the Truth Technique (see p. 163) to make him disbelieve it.

However, while this assassination attempt has a better chance than a simple frontal attack, it represents tremendous amounts of time and resources. Unless Admiral Sand becomes *really* bothersome, it might be easier just to curse his mortal infrastructure, condemning his nascent Southern merchant empire to slow death by accidents and aggravation... presuming he doesn't recover from that to become a bigger threat later, leading the new Stilt-Merchant Caravans.

World-Shaping Artistic Vision and Craft Excellencies apply; so does Implicit Construction Methodology, but fate counts as a magical material. Most importantly, Sidereals can work together to weave a Destiny, using the rules for full cooperation.

Crafting a Destiny does not, however, require a workshop, Resources expenditure or exotic materials. Characters weave Destinies on the Loom of Fate itself; this feat cannot be performed anywhere else. (So far as anyone in Heaven knows, at least. No one knows if similar fate-weaving might be possible on the Underworld's Calendar of Setesh.)

A Vizier usually attaches a Destiny to a particular person, selected in advance. Sometimes, though, a Destiny picks its own host—or rather, the destinies already planned by the Bureau leave a Sidereal little choice about who shall

receive the burden of fate. Celestial Exalted cannot receive a Destiny: the Exalt's own force of Essence tears these constructs of fate like cobwebs.

Sidereals must also remember that giving someone a Destiny is a long-term stratagem for manipulating Creation. While Destinies can produce sweeping changes in the long run, they usually take time to have their full effect. Most of the time, a Sidereal can fulfill a mission or achieve a personal goal more quickly and easily using Charms than by giving people Destinies to achieve the desired result. Giving someone a Destiny also requires the approval of appropriate planning boards in the Bureau... and even if a Sidereal could somehow hide a fate-weaving from the rest of the Bureau, the Convention on Oversight would know.

HOW DO I USE THIS AS A STORYTELLER?

Sidereal astrology is designed for use by players with Sidereal characters. As a set of bonuses or penalties provided by Storyteller characters, it may be overkill. The easiest way to use it is not to use it: take the ideas and apply them to events already in place. Did the players seem to roll unusually well in a certain fight? Maybe their Solar characters received the anonymous beneficence of a Gold Faction patron. Does everything simply seem to go wrong for them? The Bronze Faction can take credit for it! Whether the machinations of the Viziers actually made a difference is subjective. Sidereals claim responsibility for nearly every event in Creation, whether these claims are plausible or not.

If you really want to use the mechanics as printed, remember to apply a variety of destinies to everyone. The Bronze Faction and the Gold Faction each apply destinies to the players' characters and to their enemies. If your players' Solar characters flee a Wyld Hunt, their pursuers no doubt labor under both curses and blessings. Providing just bonuses or just penalties, or astrology to just one side, will unbalance your game, as the lone group under astrological effects benefits from a variety of unique bonuses that soon drown out the importance of every other modifier.

Frugality is also advisable. The Sidereals are stretched for resources in this Time of Tumult. That situation with Admiral Sand is highly implausible—more likely, the Bronze Faction would inflict two short-lived curses on him and then discover they can't inflict a third, because his Essence of 3 allows for only three destinies and the Gold Faction already provided a blessing. The Bronze Faction Viziers would then point him in the general direction of something dangerous in the hope that he'll get himself killed, and move on to the next of the 500-plus Solars, Lunars and Abyssals running roughshod over fate.

MANDATE OF HEAVEN

Players and Storytellers who make extensive use of the Mandate of Heaven rules (from the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**) may wish to use dominion Magnitude instead of raw population size when determining Scope. In that case, a dominion's Scope equals its (Magnitude +4). This is an approximation, and subject to Storyteller judgment. Some dominions have an unusually high Magnitudes for their population due to prestige or wealth (Nexus, for instance has "only" a million people but is Magnitude 5, partially because of its importance as a trade hub and its staggering concentration of Essence users), while others languish in socioeconomic obscurity and possess unusually low Magnitudes. In all cases, the Essence burden still applies, and the effects of a large-scale destiny are usually outside the scope of the Mandate of Heaven system's purview anyway. Astrology can, if nothing else, reduce a dominion's population much faster than Dragon Devours Tail Recession ever could.

However, a destiny placed on a dominion's savant or sorcerer allows the application of the destiny's effects to action rolls where the ruler replaces her dominion's Ability with her own, provided the action aligns with the destiny's Trigger. Sometimes, all it takes to change the fate of the world is changing the fate of one mortal.

Applying a destiny's benefit to a Mandate action roll invites censure if the affected dominion's Magnitude is 4 or greater, and the Bureau of Destiny itself does not order the action.





AND WHAT MAKES THIS ONE DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE REST, ANYS-SYN?

ALL THE TERRESTRIALS BEFORE HIM HAVE DISAPPOINTED YOU.



THIS ONE IS SPECIAL, KEJAK. A PRODIGY.

I'VE CONTROLLED EVERY ASPECT OF HIS TRAINING, HIS DIET... HIS LIFE.

YOU'LL SEE...



...RAGARA MYRRUN WILL MAKE US PROUD.

WE'LL SEE.



WHAT CELESTIAL STYLES HAS HE MASTERED BEYOND THE IMMACULATE ONES?

VIOLET BIER OF SORROWS, MANTIS, CELESTIAL MONKEY, EBON SHADOW...

HE COULD TEACH THEM ALL.



AND THE SUTRAS? WHICH ARE YOU TEACHING HIM?

IF I MAY, SIFU?

BY ALL MEANS, MYRRUN.



MASTER, I HAVE INTERNALIZED THE STUDENT AND ELDER SUTRAS OF ESSENCE.

I SEE.



PRISMATIC
ARRANGEMENT
OF CREATION
STYLE?
AMBITIOUS.

NATURALLY.

RETURN TO
YOUR
MEDITATION.

YES, SIFU.



HIS ESSENCE
IS SHAPING
UP NICELY, I
SUPPOSE.

IF YOU CAN
DO THIS, THE
GOLD
FACTION
WON'T HAVE A
LEG TO
STAND ON
ANYMORE.



WHEN WILL HE BE
READY TO BEGIN
THE EXERCISES?

CALIBRATION. HE HAS
ONLY TO MEET WITH
FIVE DAYS DARKNESS.



YOU BROUGHT FIVE
DAYS DARKNESS
INTO THIS? HAVE
YOU LOST YOUR
MIND?

HE HATES THE ORDER
AND ALL IT STANDS FOR!

I KNOW HIS OPINIONS, BUT
WE'VE BEEN NEGOTIATING
FOR MONTHS.

HE'S WILLING TO MAKE
AN EXCEPTION FOR THE
GREATER GOOD HERE.



BESIDES, WE NEED
HIM. NOTHING ELSE
HAS WORKED.



WAIT, WE'RE NOT
FINISHED HERE!

DON'T WORRY SO
MUCH, KEJAK. I KNOW
WHAT I'M DOING.



CHAPTER SEVEN STORYTELLING

Similar to the **Exalted** Storytelling section, this chapter offers guidance to help you share stories about demigods of epic stature. Unlike the Solars, the Chosen of the Maidens prefer to shape Creation with a subtle hand. They have never ruled Creation, but neither have they suffered deadly defeat. The Sidereals forsake thrones to act as the shrewd advisors of sovereigns. Yet, these Starborn Exalted surpass mortal advisors as the Solars exceed mortal kings. The Sidereals' Celestial patrons give Sidereal Exalted a glimpse of the mechanisms behind the stage. Seduced by a taste of the sleights of Creation, possessed of Essences and granted a license to manipulate the Loom of Fate, the Sidereals enter a clandestine theater of war between the incarnate order of the world and the forces of entropy and chaos. Though the Sidereals' handlers in the Bureau of Destiny may desire flawless agents with unflinching allegiance, the stories of the Sidereals are as complicated by human feelings of love, hate and a desire to understand their purpose as those of

anyone else. These pages can help you and your players craft your own personal legends. If you haven't read the Storytelling chapter in **Exalted** recently, you can get a lot of ideas by referring back to that chapter. Then come back here for tips, tricks and information more specific to running a Sidereal series.

PLAYERS, TOO

Presumably, you picked up this **Manual of Exalted Power** because you want to run a game of Sidereal heroes and heroines. However, **Exalted** is a shared experience, and this chapter contains nothing secret. Players should peruse this section along with rest of the book. Ideally, that will help you run the **Exalted** game that you and your players will enjoy.

A REMINDER

This book contains all of the rules required to add Sidereal characters to a game of **Exalted**. The book describes the default way that Sidereals interact with Creation.

Nevertheless, Storytellers should always keep two cardinal laws of play in mind:

Rule 1: Have Fun. This is a game, and it's supposed to entertain all parties involved. If you don't have fun, stop and do something else.

Rule 2: If you don't like it, change it. This is also known as the Golden Rule. Nothing is more important than Rules 1 and 2, so players and Storytellers may freely customize the setting and rules for their own games. Players should note that the Storyteller is the final arbiter of her game.

GETTING STARTED

As a Storyteller, you should first decide what kind of game you can run that will be fun for *you*. If you don't have a good time, then your players won't, either. Try to come up with more than one idea, in case the first one doesn't work out. Hopefully, the **Exalted** main rulebook and this book have already inspired you with several notions. You may also want to look at some of those suggested resources mentioned in the Introduction in **Exalted** (see p. 19).

AGENTS OR REBELS

Probably the first thing you want to decide is whether you want to run a game in which the players' characters serve the goals of Yu-Shan or work against them. The chance to play characters who enjoy some degree of insight into the machinations of Heaven is a big part of what makes *Sidereals* different, and this aspect appears most strongly in games in which the characters support the Bureau of Destiny. The opportunity to play characters who know great secrets, bear the responsibility to act upon them and have the power to do so appeals to many players. Similar to James Bond or the agents of *Mission Impossible*, these *Sidereal* characters work for a powerful organization and enjoy the perks that entails. To help them perform their duties, they get the best training, equipment and intelligence that Heaven can buy. Whether you want to explore the gray areas that attend such duties or paint them as perfectly righteous, you can tell many wonderful stories of life in the Maidens' secret service.

On the other hand, *Sidereals* who turn against their nigh-omniscient patrons and exploit their insider knowledge are among the quirkiest of doomed rebels. Avoiding the wrath of their superiors almost certainly means escaping to the realms of the Underworld, the Wyld or other strange realms, but maybe you and your players have other ideas. Technically, a game could center on a group of *Sidereal* ronin who simply refuse to work for the Bureau of Destiny, but don't actually work against it. Such characters would face enormous opposition. The gods and older *Sidereals* who lead the Bureau don't appreciate *Exalted* who "squander" the talents the Maidens gave them or who exploit their talents for their own purposes. Sooner or later, a Seer who won't use her astrological talents in service to the Bureau is going to use them against the Bureau, if only to counteract



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the fates others try to weave for her. Once this happens, conflicts tend to escalate.

TO FACTION OR NOT TO FACTION

Consider what role the Bronze and Gold Factions play in your series, and how much influence they have on the Bureau of Destiny as a whole. If you like stories where the protagonists struggle to preserve the world as they know it, or even improve upon it without turning it upside down, then the Bronze Faction may best serve your purposes. Fair Folk and the Deathlords want to destroy Creation, while the Yozis strain against their cages to gain vengeance upon their jailors. Solar and Lunar Exalted threaten to shatter the stability of the world for their own selfish reasons. All Sidereals should protect Creation from chaos and dissolution, but the Bronze Faction finds those threats come from within Creation as often as they do from without—and the characters in this series get to do something about it. Such a series also proffers the chance to explore the limits of what the characters are willing to sacrifice to protect their vision of how things should be. Chejop Kejak and his compatriots incited the assassination and imprisonment of the demented Solar god-kings. What deeds will become necessary to deliver Creation from the current Time of Tumult?

Stories centered on the Gold Faction offer other role-playing opportunities. The leadership of the Gold Faction is not as entrenched as that of the Bronze Faction, so this series leaves more room for players' characters to impact the group's direction. If the Bronze Faction embodies the consequences of acting upon the future, then the Gold Faction represents the hopeful uncertainty of changing the future. When the characters cast down the established order of the world, what do they put in its place? What will they do when they discover that their plans are as imperfect as those of their opponents? How do the characters rationalize the deception that is the Cult of the Illuminated? What will the characters do *when* Cult Solars figure out they are being used? Before the Usurpation, the Bronze Faction convinced the Great Conclave of the Five-Score Fellowship to buy Creation a certain future at the price of lessening it. Gold Faction contemporaries argued that the chance for a grander future was worth the risk of catastrophic failure. The return of the Lawgivers offers the Gold Faction a chance to prove it, to their faction rivals and Cult faithful alike. What can Gold Faction heroes do to bring about the promised Golden Age in the face of such dark and inauspicious times?

Of course, you could also run a game about Sidereals who avoid both of the dominant factions. Perhaps the characters are loyal to the Maidens alone; factional politics bore or even disgust these characters. Indeed, many gods in the Bureau of Destiny would prefer such a state of affairs. In such a series, the factions hinder the proper administration of destiny, and the characters can gain the favor of gods who appreciate the characters' unfettered adherence to duty.



Of course, the ancient Sidereals who direct the Bronze and Gold Factions command great power in the Bureau, and those who thwart the Sidereals' aims without protection take a great risk by doing so. The Bureau's regulations punish fratricide severely, but cunning Sidereals have circumvented the regulations before. Even without resorting to violence, Chejop Kejak and Ayesha Ura (and their cohorts) can make the life of a young Sidereal difficult—investigations by censors, exclusion from important conventions, slashed budgets, missed promotions and other contrivances await those who anger entrenched elders.

Alternatively, the refusal to join one of the principal factions might have nothing to do with pure loyalty to the Bureau. Characters might hold views that simply disagree with both the Gold and Bronze Factions. Assuming the Lunars are being honest, the so-called Silver Faction sees the Lunars as the new hope for Creation, a stance that doesn't jibe with either group. Other shared ideas might unite a circle of Sidereals and drive them to push their designs upon Creation. Will those who walk another path reform the Bureau of Destiny or further fragment it?

TALK IT OVER

Don't pass up the opportunity to sit down with your players and discuss what everyone wants to get out of a Sidereals game. Tell them what you have come up with, but listen to what they have to say, too. If everybody absolutely hates your idea, then you have to face the fact that role-playing games are shared activities, and you need to go back to the drawing board. Usually your friends have some interest in your idea (or you probably wouldn't be friends in the first place), and including their concerns helps make a good game for everyone. Try to adopt any suggestions that don't interfere with the heart of your idea, but don't be afraid to veto those that do. If you build the game on a strong foundation, the game is more likely to satisfy all of you.

Telling your group about your idea doesn't necessarily mean giving them every detail. It is hard to duplicate the sense of anticipation created by mystery, so don't be afraid to keep the evolution of your plot a secret. Be honest with the players about what sorts of situations they might face, though, so they can make characters that will work well with what you have planned.

INITIAL QUESTIONS

Before you begin your Sidereal **Exalted** series, you and your players should answer some basic questions about the characters, the settings and the rules. To begin, reference the questions on p. 260 of **Exalted**—the more attention you give them, the stronger your game is likely to be. Next, consider these additional questions, which pertain especially to Sidereals:

- Why did the characters Exalt as Sidereals? Do they directly fit into the plans of the Five Maidens, or do the characters merely fit into the greater destiny of Sidereal Exaltation? Why did the particular Maidens in question choose

AGENTS OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

Players (and Storytellers) may wonder why the Sidereals matter so much to the Bureau of Destiny. Although the Bureau is not the largest branch of the Celestial Bureaucracy, the Sidereals number only 100. Their ranks are vastly exceeded by the massive staffs of the five divisions, which include everything from the trusted small gods that clean its secure halls to the celestial lions and lesser elemental dragons who deploy at the direction of the Convention of War. The Exalted aren't the most powerful beings in the Bureau, either: in particular, the five division heads exceed the supernatural might of most (or all) of the Exalted. Younger Exalted are no match for a celestial lion, much less a lesser elemental dragon. Wise Sidereals take care not to irritate the pattern spiders. Even the great and powerful Chejop Kejak regularly fails to hide from Nara-O, or to understand that mysterious being. The Chosen of the Maidens are a minority, in terms of numbers and raw power.

So, what makes Sidereals so special? The Mandate of Heaven dictates that the Exalted shall govern physical Creation and Heaven is the dominion of the gods. Strictly speaking, the gods are not supposed to interfere directly with the physical world, except in well-defined ways. Of course, gods frequently violate this restriction—just look at the Syndics who openly rule Whitewall and the three gods of Great Forks—but the Bureau of Heaven cannot endorse such behavior becoming the norm. Therefore, even as the Unconquered Sun put the Lawgivers in charge of physical Creation, the Maidens gave the Sidereals responsibility for the details of fate in the physical world. The Chosen of the Maidens can freely travel to and from Yu-Shan, in pursuit of Bureau business, without violating the word or spirit of the Mandate of Heaven. Certainly, the Bureau of Destiny engages in operations that technically violate the rule, employing gods on the ground when deemed necessary, but the Bureau prefers to keep such acts secret, off the record, unofficial and rare. Ultimately, the Sidereal Exalted serve as the special agents of the Bureau when it must take direct action in Creation.

to Exalt each Sidereal? What traits qualify each character to help plan the weave of one-fifth of the threads of destiny? As with all Exalted, their patrons have no direct control over them. Will the characters rebel against the Maidens

even as they once fought in the gods' rebellion against the Primordials? Might they try to seize the Loom of Fate for their own? Perhaps they see the Maidens as figures worthy of universal devotion, and seek to raise them above Gaia, Luna and the Unconquered Sun?

- The Chosen of the Maidens are innately tied to order and wisdom, even as the Five Maidens make sense of the Tapestry of the Creation. Groups of Sidereals often work together to ensure that every aspect of a situation will be addressed, and such groups sometimes form long-lived Circles. How do the characters' fates fit together? Do they share a larger destiny or will they be forced to counterfeit one? Hopefully the characters share the same faction, or lack thereof, but if they do not, then how will they balance discordant influences? Will they somehow bring the factions closer together, or will their illicit alliance incite open factional conflict? Which conventions include the characters and what contributions have they made? Are they known as innovative planners of destiny or diligently attentive to the details of fate?

- How much time, if any, have the characters spent in Yu-Shan? How has this altered their perceptions of Creation? Once they have experienced Heaven in person, can they value a mortal world that pales in comparison to Heaven's unearthly splendors? Have they grown comfortable around those gods with whom the characters share responsibilities, or do they remain overtly (or secretly) reverent? Have they come to grips with the fact that some of the gods of destiny dwarf the characters in power and were already old when they helped plan the origins of humankind? What are the characters' relationships with the other Bureaus of Yu-Shan? Do they exchange Heavenly favors, or remain aloof from Celestial affairs? If the characters have yet to visit the Heavenly City, do they resent this? Some younger members of the Bronze Faction raised on the Immaculate Faith may feel that it is improper for mortals (even the Exalted) to live in the Celestial realms.

- What are the characters' relationships with elder Sidereals? Do some of the characters keep close to their mentors? Have all of the characters rejected the wisdom of their elders? Is there a good reason for this, or is it merely a case of petulant students thinking they know better? What are the consequences they face for doing so? Would they mourn the loss of these ancients or rejoice in the opportunity to bring change to the Bureau of Destiny? What about the gods of the Bureau of Destiny? Do the characters respect the gods? How do the characters reconcile their human viewpoints with those of divine beings?

- What goals do the characters share? If they have nothing in common, then why are they working together? Are the Maidens inexorably pushing the characters together? Are these goals righteous or selfish in nature? How many people must die to accomplish these goals?



CHANGING THE RULES

Sidereal Exalted are extremely powerful individuals, easily capable of manipulating the world around them. Nonetheless, they are beholden to the Tapestry of Creation and the beings that ensure its continued weaving. A Chosen of the Maidens can refuse to help craft the future, but in doing so, she becomes part of a future crafted without her input. This might prove galling to anyone, but the Great Curse exacerbates the pride Sidereals take in shaping fate. This overweening need to impose order on the future eventually proves irresistible. But maybe that isn't the game you want to run?

The rules of the game are a set of guidelines, designed to give you and your players a framework within which to explore the awesome stories that **Exalted** offers. The rules are subject to change, though, according to the needs of the stories you plan to run. As noted on p. 261 of **Exalted**, direct changes to the rules should be considered carefully with an eye toward the interlocking nature of the game's rules. If you are comfortable changing the game's rules, though, then anything is possible.

Example One: Robert is a Storyteller who dislikes the fact that a Sidereal must touch his target in order to directly apply astrological effects. He revises this for his game, allowing the Chosen of the Maidens to generate astrological effects merely by manipulating the stars. He realizes that this will vastly magnify the power of the Five-Score Fellowship, and allow them to operate entirely from the halls of Yu-Shan, but he really likes the change in tone.

Example Two: Conrad is a Storyteller who doesn't want Sidereals to be able to operate completely independently of the Bureau of Destiny. He decides that the Maidens can override a Sidereal's access to the pattern spiders, depriving one of their Chosen of the ability to perform astrological effects. This doesn't change the pre-spider situation of the Primordial War, but it presents a serious obstacle to Sidereals who turn against the Incarnae in later eras. Unless a character somehow earns the enmity of the Maidens, the Storyteller's ruling has no effect.

KEEPING CHARACTERS UNIQUE

This topic is also discussed in the Storytelling chapter of **Exalted**, but some players may feel that the fact that the default expectation of service to the Bureau of Destiny makes it more difficult to differentiate their characters. As the **Exalted** Storytelling chapter suggests, there is much more to a character than her caste. Two characters may share the same caste yet be very different. The same can be said for characters who belong to the same faction or serve in the same division or convention of the Bureau of Destiny.

Example: Brent's character Brazen Wolf and Bunnie's character August Orchid are both Chosen of Battles loyal to the Bronze Faction. August Orchid served as a trusted bodyguard to the Dynastic Ragara family, and since her Exaltation she has put her intimate knowledge of Dragon-Blooded society to use more times than she can remember. August Orchid bears high-

quality weapons, as befits her cover as a bodyguard for figures whose destiny is important to the Inner Circle. She cannot afford to draw the suspicion of Dragon-Blooded, however, so none of her visible gear is supernatural. August Orchid makes do with a concealed starmetal chain shirt covered by a long leather coat. Her peerless skill with melee weapons, paired with a near-prescient ability to detect ambushes, has allowed her to prevent more than one inauspicious assassination attempt.

Brazen Wolf was born in Cherak, where he endured the hardships of northern life. Predictably, he developed a fierce pride in his culture and a hatred for the barbaric raiders of the North. Upon Exaltation, he was naturally assigned to the Convention of Air, and the Bronze Faction has tasked him with blunting the partisan activities of the Gold Faction's Crimson Banner Executioner. Brazen Wolf keeps his slim starmetal powerbow in a fur-covered case, and prefers to eliminate his enemies before they can close the distance across the wide flat tundra. Brazen Wolf suspects that divine influences are behind the meteoric rise of the Bull of the North, and hopes to get an opportunity to personally eliminate this threat to the Realm while investigating the widespread tangles of destiny that follow the Bull's witch Samea and her Second Circle demonic thralls. Brazen Wolf and August Orchid recently met when she was sent to Cherak to accompany Ragara Jasir as he personally attends to some business there.

GAME STYLES

The main **Exalted** rulebook discusses a number of play styles (see pp. 262–263) and many of those work well for Sidereal games. This section discusses how to adjust those styles for use with Sidereal games and offers some expanded styles particularly applicable to the Chosen of the Maidens. Remember that you can easily combine two or more styles to create your own varied and layered approach.

STYLES REMIX

"Vanilla" Exalted is a tale of two factions when it comes to the Sidereals. If the Storyteller and the characters favor the Bronze Faction, then the most obvious game involves the preservation of the Scarlet Empire. If the Scarlet Empress is Yozi-tainted, and she and Deathlords try to conquer or destroy the world but fail, then the Sidereals gain their goals—but which ones? After epic battles and great sacrifice, destiny might bring a new Empress (or Emperor) to the throne, and a new "Bronze" Age begins. The other road lies with the Gold Faction, and the return of the Solars. This scenario is already described in the main **Exalted** rulebook, but the game involves the Sidereals who help make it happen.

A Land Once Divided Must Unite normally entails the triumph of just rulers over tyrants. In a Sidereal game, the victory of fair and wise rule is probably a result of the machinations of the Seers of Heaven. The region involved might be anything from a single kingdom to the entirety of the Bureau of Destiny.

And I'll Form the Head! To evoke this style for a Sidereal game, the Storyteller need only give the characters full access to the firepower and splendor of a Celestial Bureau. Perhaps the Convention of War gains leave to activate the divine department's greatest weapons to stop the deadliest menace ever to threaten the Tapestry of Creation. This sort of series features flying armadas, formations of greater elemental dragons, armies of celestial lions and lion dogs and dematerialized warstriders warping into Creation. Victorious survivors return to the halls of Yu-Shan to dally with divine lovers and feast upon a buffet of Celestial wine and peaches of immortality. The delights of the Celestial City are the embodiment of perfection, and this series takes full advantage of them to push the game over the top.

Outlander draws on the most extreme realms of the Exalted setting. The most appropriate choice for a Sidereal game is surely Yu-Shan, where a Storyteller can easily host a series that focuses upon the home Bureau rather than its field operations. If the series focuses on a group that defies the Maidens, then it could go anywhere, from the depths of the Underworld or the Yozi hells to the metal corridors of Autochthon.

Project: Exalt filters Exalted through the lens of lightheartedness, being goofy rather than serious for the sake of fun. The *Austin Powers* series of movies combines comedy with the secret agent genre. *Charlie's Angels* makes for a sexier blend of less-than-serious spy action. To find even more inspiration, look to *Get Smart*, *Inspector Gadget* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Invasion! This scenario probably runs best if the otherworldly forces involved are diametrical to fate. Fair Folk, demons of the Second and Third Circles, and the Deathlords are particularly appropriate, as their activities slip beneath the astrological radar of the Bureau of Destiny.

The Solars Who Came in from the Cold can be run two different ways. One approach is to focus on Gold Faction Sidereals manipulating Solars in the Cult of the Illuminated. This offers a game of intrigue and espionage from the perspective of the puppet-masters. Alternatively, the Sidereals are pawns in the factional politics of the Bureau of Destiny. The characters discover that they are mere pawns in the ruthless intrigues of their elders, and the threads of conspiracy are woven as thick as the Tapestry of Creation. Fans of **Vampire: The Masquerade** or **Vampire: The Requiem** might draw inspiration from the Byzantine politics of the Kindred.

Sorcery & Sorcery is less of a stretch for Sidereals than for other Exalted, particularly if the characters are close to their mentors. Unless Chosen of the Maidens forsake their patrons, most enjoy access to some of the finest libraries of sorcery in Creation, and a special one in Yu-Shan (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**, pp. 28–30).

Walk the Earth is most easily run when the Storyteller assumes that the Sidereal characters are being constantly

fed information about situations that their Bureau superiors feel need immediate personal attention. Alternately, the characters might be a group of ronin Sidereals wandering from one place to another, forever trying to stay ahead of Celestial law while resolving periodic entanglements. However silly the premise, you might draw inspiration from *The A-Team* television series.

MARTIAL ARTS THEATER

Sidereals are the ultimate practitioners of martial arts, and **Exalted** is a kung fu movie. This game style features wise old masters, rival combatants and secret training montages. Storytellers should freely lift ideas from sources of supernatural styles, including the main rulebook, **Scroll of the Monk** and the **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded**. Perhaps the characters compete for renown in the martial arts world, or maybe they use these tournaments to discover prospective students.

Although this series revolves around stupendous feats of martial arts, it can easily include epic tales of love, vengeance or intrigue. Take a look at *Hero*, *The Last Samurai*, *House of Flying Daggers* or *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* for examples of epic stories armed with a full arsenal of high-flying acrobatic combat maneuvers. Cool martial arts make for flashy and exciting theater, but they don't prohibit fine storytelling.

Focus: Martial Arts Charms, Artifact (form weapons), Mentor

SECRET AGENTS OF DESTINY

For this series, the characters compose a highly skilled team of covert agents who carry out dangerous secret missions in the name of Maidens. With Sidereals' dedication to performing a duty unknown and inconceivable to most of its beneficiaries, and the obscuring power of Arcane Fate, Sidereals are tailor made for this style of game. *Mission Impossible* and James Bond make good inspirations for this series; just substitute the Bureau of Destiny for her Majesty's MI6 or the Secretary of the IMF. To help evoke the feeling of the genre, the Storyteller might choose or create a single highly connected director who directs most of the characters' actions. Nara-O or Wayang are good choices, although the Black Puppet Mask is not known to leave the Violet Bier of Sorrows. Alternately, their director might be a mysterious figure, such as the enigmatic Oversight (see Chapter Two), who always issues her orders through an enchanted mirror in one of the character's manses or distinctive scroll cases that inexplicably appear and disappear when nobody is looking. Look to the magitech of **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age** to give their gear a thematic "gadget" feel. Storytellers might even want to consider using the Arsenal Background, from **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded**, to give the Sidereals in this series the sort of rotating access to specialized equipment that is commonly found in secret agent stories. The missions



of the game should require intellect, suave maneuvering and deadly consequences. Seduction and cleverness play as much part in the characters' success as their ability to assassinate foes.

Focus: Stealth and Larceny Abilities, Social and Mental Attributes

THE FUTURE IS ART

This series is focused on the act of crafting the future. This style of game may particularly appeal to creative players who enjoy a high degree of collaboration with the Storyteller. The characters of this game care more about the art of building destiny and fate than such distractions as faction politics or nigh-endless practice of the martial arts. Compassionate characters may become attached to particular people, places and histories that the characters consider their own special projects. The characters might sympathize with a love-struck Sidereal who plotted out the success of the Scarlet Empress, and became enamored of his own work. Alternately, they might become engaged in bitter rivalries with other Chosen whose projects threaten the characters' own. Such a group is less likely to include a Chosen of Endings, but when it does, that Sidereal is sure to face

pressure to take revenge on anyone who damages the characters' favorite objects of desired destiny. Just as a good director, the Sidereals will be forced to provide direction to their cast if they want to ensure that the stories they create are perfect.

One interesting option you might consider is a vignette model, in which the Sidereals design a destiny or fate and then the players take up the part of the characters within it. Many of the destinies and fates that the Sidereals design will not be suitable for this, and the times the character spend producing such destinies and fates will serve as a reminder that the bigger story here is that of the Chosen of the Maidens. Every time, however, that the characters manage to design a particular element of fate that strikes the players and Storyteller as interesting to indulge, the overlaying game stops and the players create the characters who will take part in the sub-venue. Recurring elements are virtually inevitable, as the players and their Sidereal characters become attached to certain destinies. If you want to explore the idea, then you might even have the censors of Heaven investigate the favoritism being displayed.

Focus: Craft (Fate), Astrological Colleges

FACTIONS IN CONFLICT

The halls of the Bureau of Destiny are often disturbed by harsh debate, and this style draws from that. Even during the First Age, the Five-Score Fellowship was not united in purpose. Some Sidereals with a political bent saw the Bureau as a tool for their individual agendas. Indeed, the First Age was brought to a close by precisely this sort of conflict: the so-called Bronze and Gold Factions were originally just two sides of a great debate over what to do about the growing insanity of the Solar demigods. This conflict was essentially put on hold for 1,500 years while the Lawgivers were trapped in the Jade Prison, but the conflict always simmered in the background. A handful of Solar Essences remained free, and Sidereals with Gold Faction leanings tried to support these Solars now and then over the centuries. When the Essences of the Lawgivers escaped from the Jade Prison five years ago, the Gold Faction was seemingly predestined to spring back into prominence.

The separate groups within the Bureau of Destiny are really quite small, given that the entirety of Sidereal population is merely 100 in number. Nonetheless, the Chosen of the Maidens are Celestial Exalted, and this means that the power they wield is considerable. Many gods of the Bureau despair of the infighting, and others genuinely align with one of the factions, but some line merely up to take advantage of the situation. Whether the gods have favorite projects in Creation that they want the Maidens' Chosen to help further, or they simply want a promotion, these spirits see the Exalted as valuable allies. Even gods of the other Bureaus find it hard to ignore the influence of the Exalted, and the Sidereals represent an "in" with a Heavenly bureaucracy and powerful influence in Creation. The three censors of the Blessed Isle are arguably more loyal to the Bronze Faction than to the Bureau of Heaven from which their position derives.

For inspiration, the Storyteller might look to the real-world cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. For decades, the two superpowers circled each other like mighty beasts looking for weakness, while they sent agents to spy upon and corrupt the enemy. Meanwhile, they invested trillions of dollars in an ever-escalating arms race. Ultimately, this drove the Soviet government into virtual bankruptcy and left the United States with a debt from which it seems unlikely to ever recover. The political maneuvers and illicit activities of the Bronze and Gold Factions treat much of the serious business of Creation as indirect battlefields, while Heaven and Earth suffer the consequences. In this style of game, Sidereal agents do whatever they can to advance their faction's goals by means of treachery, misappropriation of Heavenly resources and even assassination of opposing Sidereals.

Focus: Social Backgrounds (Backing, Connections, etc.), Socialize Ability

CELESTIAL POLITICS

The Heavenly Bureau of Destiny entrusts the Sidereals with only a portion of its secrets. In addition, the other divine Bureaus continue to treat Sidereals according to their individual reactions to the results of the murder of the Solars. Many members of the Bureau of Humanity would like to restore the rule of the Solar Deliberative, though a few worry that the Solars would shove the Bureau aside as surely as the Immaculate Order does. The conservative Bureau of Seasons misses the direction the Solars once provided, and how much support the Bureau might offer to the returning Solars remains to be seen. Luminaries within the Bureau of Nature blame the Sidereals and their Dragon-Blooded cronies for destroying the Solar hegemony that kept Creation stable for so long, allowing vast swathes of Creation to dissolve into the chaos of the Wyld. This style plays up the inhuman, divine politics of Yu-Shan and the Sidereals' potential roles within them. The Chosen of the Maidens may be treated as pawns in interdepartmental squabbles or even targeted for elimination by those who want to manipulate the Bureau of Destiny. A series that uses this style may even take place entirely within the bounds of Yu-Shan. As an interesting option, this style is easy to integrate with the "Factions in Conflict" style.

Focus: Connections (Heavenly Bureau), Salary, Celestial Manse

PLAYING IN THE PAST

While the vast world of Exalted provides innumerable story opportunities, it also sports a rich history. You may want to run a series set in a time long past. From the Usurpation to the rise of the Scarlet Empress, the Sidereals have stood behind the thrones of Creation.

THE PRIMORDIAL WAR

Though the War's outcome is already determined—unless you decide to change it for your game—the Primordial War is full of opportunities. Quite plausibly, the Maidens gave Sidereals access to the flow of destiny specifically so that they could interfere with the fate of Creation even if the Primordials forced the Maidens to stop doing so. The Primordials probably never had time to replace the Five Maidens, but the plans of the Incarnae had to allow for every possibility. There would be but one chance to rebel. During the Primordial War, the Sidereals scried upon the Tapestry of Creation, and deciphered the likely future moves of the Primordials. The Sidereals turned the weight of destiny against the Primordials and their minions, and repeatedly wove victory for the Exalted into the threads of the world until that victory became inevitable.

A Storyteller could give Sidereals an even bigger role in the War. What if the Primordials could *not* be killed? The characters must somehow alter the very rules of the universe. Clever agents convince Malfeas, King of the



Primordials, to slay one of his own brethren, and weave the thread of possibility he introduces into the Tapestry of Creation. Thereafter, the Primordials may be struck down. Unfortunately, their deaths merely remove them from fate, and their necrotic forms descend into and create the Underworld.

THE HIGH FIRST AGE

Without a doubt, the Lawgivers dominated the High First Age. Nonetheless, Sidereal Exalted achieved great things. At the height of the Old Realm, the Chosen of the Maidens helped expand the walls of Creation, dragging new lands from the Wyld via Neighborhood Relocation Scheme. The Sidereals who would incite the Usurpation, including Chejop Kejak, were born early in the First Age. They studied at the feet of the wise war councilors who had helped defeat the Primordials, and watched the Lawgivers descend into madness. Agents of the Bureau of Destiny had to be particularly subtle during the Old Realm, as there was very real danger that the powerful Solar Exalted would uncover the full extent of the Bureau's activities and try to turn the Loom of Fate to their own purpose. The greatest story here, of course, is the Usurpation itself. Which side would your character choose? How would you kill a demented god-king—or try to save a revered leader?

THE SHOGUNATE

Although this era was certainly less grand than the Golden Age of the Solars, the Dragon-Blooded managed to hold everything together for seven centuries. In this period, Sidereals worked to guide the Dragon-Blooded while dealing with the dangerous legacy of the Solars.

Unfortunately, neither the Dragon-Blooded nor their Sidereal advisors could determine how to control the vast infrastructure left behind by the Lawgivers. The Realm Defense Grid lay uncontrolled for centuries, and the Fair Folk eventually noticed that the engine of Creation was quiet.

THE GREAT CONTAGION

Combined with the subsequent Fair Folk Invasion, the Great Contagion nearly wiped out the entire human race. Nine-tenths of Creation died from the plague itself, and the survivors faced a seemingly endless assault by the denizens of the Wyld. This is *the* incident that made some gods wonder if the Gold Faction might have been right when they argued for a risky attempt to re-form the mad Solars rather than the “safe” route of killing them. Here, the Starborn face their greatest battle since the Usurpation—maybe since the Primordial War—as they battle the hordes from beyond Creation's rim, and try to craft a destiny for the world's survival.

STRANGER OPTIONS

Perhaps you want to try some more unusual possibilities. Here are a few more plot threads that could take a Sidereal series in novel directions.

THE ELDERS ARE CRAZY OR DYING

As if the current Time of Tumult doesn't present enough problems for newly Exalted Sidereals, the mightiest of their kind are all dying of old age or trying to gain a stranglehold on the direction of the future. In this series, the Storyteller plays up the worst behaviors of older Sidereals, and the drastic changes that must come as their final years tick away. Indeed, you might consider starting the game with the death of the eldest, Chejop Kejak. Perhaps the players' characters literally discover his still-cooling body resting against his desk. If you play up the fading stars element, then he died of old age; if you want to play up the power-hungry elders, then the characters must discover just whose starmetal shuriken laced with Yozi venom is stuck in his back.

A MAIDEN REIGNS SUPREME

Whether due to the actions of overeager Bureau members or a malfunction of the pattern spiders, the Tapestry of Creation becomes woven too thickly with the threads of a single Maiden. The world is consumed with endless war, lazy hedonism, complete loss of shared knowledge, the transformation of all Creation into nomads or the dangerous preponderance of ends with no new beginnings. If you want to adopt the idea of the Unnamed Maiden, presented on p. 138 of **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. I—The Scavenger Lands**, then perhaps her emergence is the cause. Alternatively, the Maiden the Unnamed Maiden is to replace waxes strong in preparation for her inevitable exit, or to selfishly forestall it. The players' characters strive to return Creation to its normal state, saving it from the perils of extremes of fate.

THE UNLIKELIEST OF ALLIES

It seems rather coincidental that the Deathlords discovered the Jade Prison right when the Empress disappeared, and accidentally released its captives into the waiting arms of the Gold Faction. In this series, there was no coincidence. The Gold Faction knew the location of the Jade Prison and revealed it to the Deathlords, knowing that they would attack the prison in a manner that was invisible to fate. Thus, the Gold Faction could prepare their Cult of the Illuminated before the Bronze Faction knew that the Solars would soon return to the world. Unfortunately, the Gold Faction did not believe the Deathlords would manage to seize the Exaltations, and the terrible Abyssals were born. For an even darker twist, perhaps the Gold Faction bargained half of the Essences away in return for the freedom of the rest.

THE UNDERWORLD CONNECTION

At least a few Sidereals reside within or interact extensively with the Underworld. These necromantic dabblers serve (or pretend to serve) the Deathlords, or take a very hands-on approach to studying the Underworld. This series assumes that the Bureau of Destiny has conducted secret operations in the Underworld for some time. Perhaps they

hope to seal the tombs of the five Neverborn whom the Black Nadir Concordat awakened (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The Black Treatise**). Maybe they want to subvert the Calendar of Setesh so that the Loom of Fate can manipulate the destiny of the Underworld. The Deathlords are powerful and devious, however, and it is far too likely that they have corrupted one or more of the Seers. The players' characters must navigate a dangerous web of darkness to save Creation without damning their own souls.

TEN-SCORE SHY

In this series, the war broke out before the gods finished making the Sidereals, leaving only 100 instead of the intended number. Just as the Solars and the Lunars, the Incarnae originally planned 300 Sidereals. Unfortunately, the Primordials suspected that something was brewing, and the gods felt that they had no more time. They immediately launched the first strikes of the conflict, and the Maidens never finished creating the Sidereal Exalted. After the Primordial War, there seemed little reason to produce more. Eventually, Autochthon departed for Elsewhere, and the Incarnae no longer had access to the co-creator of the Exaltations. In the Time of Tumult, however, the Bureau of Destiny realized that 100 Sidereals are not enough to handle the rising threats to Creation. Now the Bureau of Destiny wants to finish the job—the Maidens send the characters in search of Autochthon in the hopes that he will help.

Another possibility, if you use the Unnamed Maiden option from **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. I—The Scavenger Lands**, is that Autochthon shaped more than 100 Sidereal Exaltations, but the extras disappeared when the Sixth Maiden was destroyed. At least 20 other Exaltations possessed a now-unknown caste, which completed the Tapestry of Creation. Or perhaps a new Maiden arises every so often to replace one of the Five. Each time this happens, a portion of the current Sidereals are lost or changed. Can the lost Sidereal Essences be recovered (perhaps from a hidden vault in the Orrery of Rathess)? What happens when the next Sixth Maiden comes into her own (and what might this mean for Nexus)? What if someone discovers a stash of 200

“blank” Exaltations? Deathlords, Yozis, elder Lunars and Sidereals, gods and the Incarnae themselves would dare much for such a prize.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fact that the Chosen of the Maidens are the de facto approved agents in Creation for one of the five powerful Bureaus of Heaven in the default moment of the setting means that Storytellers may find they need to consider the challenges and opportunities this may present.

TOO MUCH INFORMATION?

Between Charms, the Loom itself and Bureau of Destiny dossiers, most of the Sidereals have *enormous* information resources compared to other Exalted. Obviously, the amount of information available will vary according to the character's position within and relation with the Bureau of Destiny. Nevertheless, even the “lowliest” Chosen of the Maidens knows things that others might consider closely guarded personal secrets, or mystic secrets of the universe. This degree of information often poses special challenges to a Storyteller.

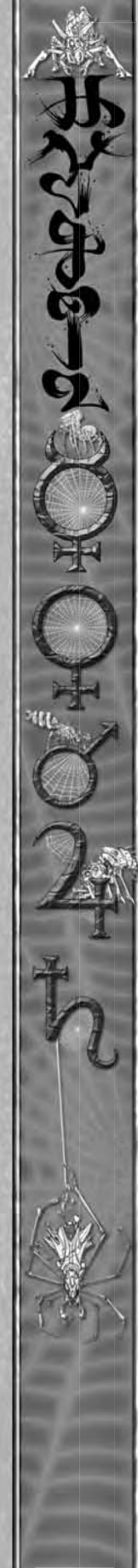
In many games, the players (and their characters) do not know some vital details about the forces or beings that oppose them. The act of trying to discover the secret of an enemy might become an entire chapter in the series. Sidereals, however, possess Charms such as Efficient Secretary Technique that pull information from the Tapestry of Creation itself. Because of this, a Sidereal character can easily discover the secrets of an enemy without ever engaging her foe or exercising her mental skills. Sidereals can even learn what *will* happen. Sometimes this is acceptable, as the story may flow better if the characters are not stymied by an inscrutable problem they cannot understand. It can become a crutch holding up a crippled story, though—if every question is answered merely by filing a quick request for a destiny dossier, then the game becomes about paperwork instead of epic adventure.

Storytellers running a Sidereal game should prepare for the increased access to information. Try to look at it as a resource you can use to drive the story. Approach the extra knowledge available to a connected Exalt as a boon, but one that is both limited and potentially harmful. Don't forget that the Sidereals have some very large and dangerous blind spots that you should not be afraid to employ whenever it improves the story. Information is a powerful tool and, just as all tools, can be wielded for you or against you.

The most common blind spot that the Sidereals face is that of forces from outside of fate. The entire body of the Chosen of the Maidens failed to foresee the Great Contagion, and they were cut down as surely as any other Exalted. You can use the “invisibility” of greater demons and the Wyld to maintain a sense of mystery that Sidereals might otherwise overcome via Bureau intelligence or Charms. For example,

YU-SHAN

For a book that mentions the Heavenly City of Yu-Shan so often, it might seem as though this text doesn't give a tremendous amount of detail about the city. Chapter Two of this book discusses Sidereals and their interactions with the Bureau of Destiny, but Storytellers and players are directed to **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. III—Yu-Shan** for comprehensive information about the Celestial City.



the fact that the widespread Yozi-worshipping Cult of the Darkness's Unseeing Eye receives many of its directives from the Second Circle demon Sondok makes their actions difficult to foresee even with the aid of the Loom of Fate. Similarly, the future of a god of Great Forks may prove entirely inaccurate, and abruptly abbreviated, should the god fall prey to the Deathlord Walker in Darkness. Even the future of a region of Creation might suddenly unravel if the area is swallowed entirely by the Wyld.

Unexpected elements from outside of fate are not the only things that blind the Sidereals. The Chosen of the Maidens may be important due to their mandate in Creation, but they are a tiny minority of the Bureau of Destiny. Legions of gods share responsibility for laying out the paths of history, and many of those gods are older than the eldest of the Sidereals and at least as powerful. Regardless of their power, many gods resent the power of the Exalted to a greater or lesser degree. Out of jealousy or outright hatred, a god might refuse to share information with the Sidereals or even falsify it. Some directives necessarily require that they remain secret from various entities, including the Sidereals, particularly those of the Division of Secrets and the Division of Endings. Clever and ambitious gods who understand such things may even manage to make it appear as though their false information is really the fault of interference by some force from beyond fate. In addition, powerful faction leaders, such as Ayesha Ura and Chejop Kejak, intentionally manipulate the intelligence available to younger Sidereals. Storytellers running series focused on intrigue will find this sort of misinformation especially useful.

The great secrets of sorcery and magitech also fall outside the Loom's purview. The sorcerer-engineers of the Old Realm drew on forces outside Creation to craft supernal artifacts such as the Thousand Forged Dragons and the Five-Metal Shrike (as described in **Wonders of the Lost Age**). Solar Circle Sorcery lies under seal from the Unconquered Sun as a petty (or prudent) response to the Usurpation. Necromancy, of course, draws power from the Underworld, beyond fate.

Most importantly, though, the right kind of story turns Sidereal nigh-omniscience from a bug into a feature. Instead of "What's going on?" the story becomes, "Here are the options; which do you choose?" As Storyteller, you just don't give the characters options that let them achieve every goal they want, the way they want.

For instance, suppose the Bureau sends a team to stop a rampaging horde of Wyld barbarians. The characters easily forecast that if the horde sacks a particular village, a local army can catch the horde still drunk and slaughter them. The Sidereals need only to nudge a few leaders, and can preserve the secrecy the Bureau demands. The characters only have to arrange the rape and massacre of several hundred innocent people. What? They don't want to do that? Well, the Loom points to other possibilities, less certain, less secretive and more dangerous for the characters themselves . . .

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Chosen of the Maidens who don't sidestep the system operate with the sanction of Heaven and work with gods great and small. The majority of Sidereals can literally visit the Celestial City, and treat with divinities on their home ground. Such familiar contact with the powers of the universe can be challenging to the Storyteller.

Similar to their access to special information, you should try to look at the Bureau of Destiny as a resource that is both a useful tool and a source of potential trouble for the characters. The Bureau is a vast body filled with gods, which can readily serve as helpful allies or deadly rivals. When your story is about to be derailed by the untimely death or one or more characters, you might arrange for a spirit that favors the Chosen of the Maidens to come to their aid. Some gods might do so out of simple loyalty to fate, while others are merely angling for the future favor of the Exalted. Higher gods within the Bureau are likely to outrank the characters, and thus allow the Storyteller to introduce story hooks merely by having the superior issue a directive.

As with easy access to too much information, helpful gods can ruin the story. Characters who are constantly saved by divine intervention aren't heroes anymore. They are dependents. If the Storyteller is too heavy-handed with the order giving, then players may feel as though they are merely pawns rather than the center of the story. By using gods only when they are necessary, you can help maintain the sense of mystery that makes the gods seem *divine* and reduce the chance that their actions will detract from the game. One middle ground is to provide a small number of weak gods with interesting quirks that make them memorable. Such characters can provide a continuous reflection of the Sidereals' relationship with the Bureau, yet remain incapable of matching the power of the Exalted. The characters might be able to save the Chosen in some situations, using minor spirit Charms, but are no match for the true threats of Creation and elsewhere. The characters may convey orders from superiors, but are not able to issue them.

As mentioned previously, not all gods favor the Exalted, and those who do favor Exalted but are aware of the Usurpation's architects are often especially antagonistic to the Sidereals. Many powerful gods in the Bureaus of Nature and Seasons feel that they have lost much to the chaos that followed the destruction of the Solars. Other gods simply grow tired of kowtowing to mortals and act accordingly. Powerful spirit Charms combined with millennia of experience ensure that the gods are a persistent threat to those who displease them. Angry gods can provide endless opportunities for story hooks. As the Storyteller, you should carefully consider how far to go with this approach. If the players are clearly enjoying themselves, then you have probably struck the right balance. Unless it is



an important theme of your series, though, you probably don't want to have gods who continuously harass the characters. Doing so could easily cause all of the Sidereals to question why exactly they would want to work with the gods at all.

TOO PERFECT

Sometimes things in the world of Exalted seem just too perfect, or even contrived. The Exalt Panther has an anima banner that looks like a panther, even though he possessed that name long before his Exaltation. The Bull of the North's anima resembles a mighty bull, and he's the greatest warlord of the North; and the god of war of the South so happens to be a god of cattle. Though many had reason to recall it, everyone forgot the name of the Scarlet Empress.

Of course, these are elements of storytelling, but they are also evidence of the Bureau of Destiny at work. The Exalted may bend, or even break, the fate held in store for them, but they are already shaped by it before the Exaltation even occurs. For the Storyteller, this can be a gift—if some aspect of your series seems just too perfect, then perhaps Heaven wanted it that way.

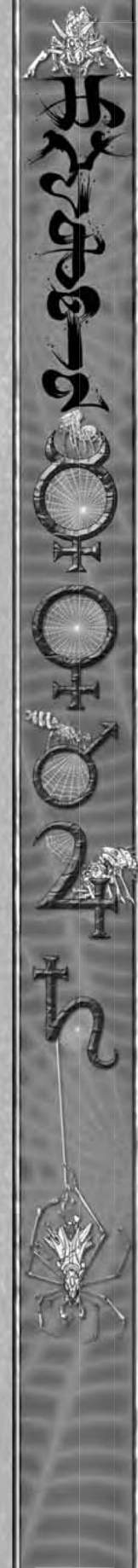
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

As mentioned in the **Exalted** Storytelling chapter, Creation is *huge*. Those Sidereals with access to Yu-Shan usually enjoy access to its divine methods of travel and communication. Chosen of the Maidens can enter one of Yu-Shan's Heavenly Gates, access its supernatural transit systems and emerge from another gate halfway across Creation. Nonetheless, Yu-Shan is monstrously huge as well, being equal in size to the Blessed Isle. Creation is designed to be huge, and too much speed diminishes it. Nevertheless, Yu-Shan offers easier access to a number of travel and communication options of which a Sideréal might avail herself.

RAPID TRANSPORTATION

Given the vast size of Creation, travel can consume a lot of time. As immortal beings of timeless nature, gods find that boredom poses more danger than hunger or thirst. The Primordial design of Yu-Shan, combined with more than five millennia of divine architecture, has ensured relatively easy access to a handful of rapid transit options. Details of these options are provided in **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. III—Yu-Shan**, but here is a short consideration of these factors.

Gates of Yu-Shan: The 12 gateways of the Blessed Isle lead to a mile-wide pavilion. If someone can enter one of these gates, and has appropriate clearance to pass



the celestial lions that guard them, then he can travel as much as 4,500 miles in the time it takes him to cross one mile, emerging from a gate far across the Isle. Other gates encircle the Celestial City and connect to various exits spread across Creation. A Sidereal might enter one gate, travel to another gate in Yu-Shan and emerge more than 13,000 miles away in Creation. Of course, Yu-Shan is huge in its own right. While the distance between those two gates is less than 13,000 miles, it may still be as great as 4,500 miles. The Divine City offers other speedy methods of travel, however.

Quicksilver Canals: A network of magical canals interlaces the city of Yu-Shan, and no place in the Celestial City is further than 50 miles from at least one of the canals. Each canal consists of a silver portion and a central gold one. For a fee (of Celestial nature), anyone may travel along the silver portions of the canals at 100 miles per hour. The gold path along the middle of each canal is restricted to special Celestial writs authorizing official heavenly business, but the speed is incredible even for Yu-Shan. Someone traveling the gold canal path can reach any point of the canal system in half an hour or less.

Aerial Rickshaws: These small vehicles are one of the most common means of short or medium distance transport in Yu-Shan. Easily piloted by any god of flight, fire or air (or Dragon-Blooded of Air or Fire Aspect), these artifacts travel at 50 miles per hour and carry two passengers comfortably or five in tight quarters. Other beings can power one with an appropriate hearthstone of at least level 2. Numerous lesser gods earn their keep in Yu-Shan by taxiing other gods (or Exalted) around the Celestial City.

Cloud Riding: The high gods and other beings of great power do not have to rely upon the canals or aerial rickshaws. Those who are authorized to do so can call clouds to carry them where they will. Such a cloud can carry the being that calls it and a number of other passengers equal to the summoner's permanent Essence, at a rate of 300 miles per hour to virtually anywhere in Yu-Shan.

Other Travel Methods: Various other means of travel are commonly restricted in Yu-Shan, with those who insist upon trying them being punished severely. The previously herein-mentioned methods are all accepted as quiet, integrated and generally discreet. Some supernatural travel methods will simply fail, as the defensive systems of various powerful deities prevent them from functioning. Many other techniques, such as the sorcery spell Stormwind Rider are forbidden because they are loud, disturbing or otherwise deemed inappropriate to the exquisite senses of the divine population of the Celestial City. On the other hand, assorted spirit Charms that enable rapid transit are often accepted provided they function at all within the metaphysical structure of Yu-Shan and its dominions.

CELESTIAL COMMUNICATION

Sidereal Exalted benefit from special methods of communication as well. Often these techniques use or abuse the prayer-based relationship of mortals to the gods. Of course sorcery is more common, per capita, among Sidereals than any other type of Exalted. Thus, the Chosen of the Maidens also rely upon spells such as Infallible Messenger to communicate from great distances.

To communicate via Celestial methods, a Sidereal might simply pray to one of the gods of the Bureau of Destiny and include a message for a compatriot. When the intended recipient finally contacts the god to whom the message was directed, she should receive it, barring problems caused by the god's politics, pride or memory. Unless the god involved has an infallible recollection, the contents of the message may be partly or wholly misremembered. If Holok sees a particular spirit only once every century, that god might not recall every detail of some missive left for him decades ago. Alternatively, a god with contradictory motives might choose to falsely state the message's contents, or share them with the Sidereal's enemies. Most lesser gods have to wait until they meet the intended recipient of the message in person before they can deliver it. More powerful deities may possess supernatural methods of communication, and might choose to use them if properly motivated. However, powerful gods usually resent the implication that they would act as someone's personal messaging service, and some Sidereals find it distasteful to humble themselves and heap praise upon more tractable lesser gods.

Although using prayer in this manner is hardly perfect, it is simply too useful to ignore. Sidereals use prayer to transmit directions to the pattern spiders, and there have been other attempts to refine the technique. Prayer Transceiver Modules are one example of prayer-based supernatural communication, using the services of the Bureau of Heaven goddess Taru-Kül (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 61). These artifacts provide the minor goddess with the ability to transmit the messages to the owner, and she actually enjoys the attention she might not otherwise receive.

IN OR OUT OF FATE

Although every Exalt must consider the dangers of her environment, the Chosen of the Maidens may find their inherent powers limited as well. Many Sidereal Charms, and *all* Sidereal astrology effects, are limited by the interaction of their target with Destiny. In particular, the location of a target has great bearing on whether the Loom of Fate is responsible for its "reality" or not. Disparate realms such as the Yozi hells, the Wyld or the Underworld are isolated from the reach of the Loom, and the powers of Destiny's agents are limited there. The natural flow of cause-and-effect in one of these realms is influenced by the Powers That Be therein, though sometimes this overlaps with Creation and the Loom of Fate's jurisdiction. See page 208 for details of how this works.

Unless otherwise specified, Martial Arts Charms are a safe exception to this situation. Supernatural martial arts generally operate the same wherever they are practiced. Combined with the nigh-impossibility of creating new Charms, this wide applicability is part of why Sidereals focus so much on the study and creation of Martial Arts styles.

THE CONSTELLATIONS AND THE CALENDAR

Twenty-five great constellations dominate the night sky of the world of the Exalted. Each sign corresponds to one of the colleges of pattern spiders that weave destiny upon the Loom of Fate. The stars of these constellations form an unchanging map of the fundamental forces of fate that guide Creation. Or at least, they *shouldn't* change; when the Sidereals broke the Mask, its stars shifted and flickered until the Maidens restored order.

The Sun, Moon and the five bright stars of the Maidens move among these constellations, recording the cycles of Creation. In addition, countless dim stars mark the fates of lesser beings. A star that moves with or into a constellation rests within its influence. A star that does not lie directly within a constellation, but lies along a north-south line with the constellation is aligned with that constellation. Most stars are dominated by one of the colleges and remain with their respective constellations throughout the lives of the soul to which the stars are tied. Occasionally, one might move to a new constellation, but most are so faint that no one notices except for astrologers who had reason to watch that particular star. A star that is aligned with a constellation is usually shorthand for a being whose fate is about to change significantly, although it is also the prescribed method for placing a being under the influence of more than one college. Sometimes stars moving with a particular constellation also align with another constellation as the great web of the horoscope turns.

The Celestial bodies of the Incarnae (the Unconquered Sun, Luna and the Five Maidens) typically trace a path across the sky from the East to the West. For the Sun and Moon, this generally means aligning with each of the constellations one at a time, one per hour of the day (albeit the alignments of the Sun are invisible to the eye, as are half of the Moon's). The five stars of the Maidens move about according to the inscrutable plans of their patrons, and sometimes they move from West to East instead.

CHARACTER CONNECTIONS

As discussed in the **Exalted** Storytelling chapter, the Storyteller should decide whether the characters will meet during the first session or already know one another when the game begins. Ultimately, this decision relies upon whether or not you can get your players to create their characters with built-in story connections. Games that begin with

characters already having common threads between them are generally stronger and possess greater internal consistency. However, doing so definitely requires some extra work on the part of the Storyteller and the players before the series even begins. Usually the best way to handle this is to ask players what preexisting connections their characters have to each of the other characters before the game begins. Even a vague connection can lend a lot of realism to the idea of the group acting together throughout the rest of the series. The payoff for this realistic pre-game bond is sure to make the entire series stronger.

Example: Brent and Bunnie decide that the game might improve significantly if their characters already share a common background of some sort. They decide that Brazen Wolf and August Orchid are most easily connected at the mentor level. Brazen Wolf's Bronze Faction mentor was a good friend and valuable ally for that of August Orchid. Allowing this element into the two characters' back story ensures that the Storyteller and the players both enjoy the ability to launch close audients.

SIDEREAL CIRCLES

Just as the Solar Exalted are often drawn together due to connections between their previous incarnations, so do the Sidereals share attractions based upon previous lives. Sometimes elder Chosen of the Maidens seek to subvert this impulse, but the Exaltation usually stores various degrees of attachment to the previous life. A group of Sidereals who have formed a friendship may pass fond memories on to future Sidereals through their Essences. The Chosen of the Maidens are the longest lived of the Exalted, so the bonds the Sidereals pass on to new Exalted are among the strongest. The demands of the Bureau of Destiny act against these bonds, by declaring that duty comes before the desires of a dead ancestor.

MIXED CIRCLES

Some groups may want to run mixed series, wherein some players portray Sidereal characters while others play Solar, Lunar or Dragon-Blooded characters. While lesser Exalted such as the Dragon-Blooded may prove problematic simply by nature of the large power differences between them, Solars and Lunars are closer in might. Solar Exalted are designed to be the most powerful of the Exalted. This isn't a matter of overweening pride or divine treachery. Each of the Celestial Incarnae worked with Autochthon to create the most powerful living weapons they could design with which to fight the Primordials. Simply by virtue of the fact that their patron, the Unconquered Sun, is the most powerful of the gods, the Solars are the most powerful Exalted. Nonetheless, the Five Maidens are second in power only to the Unconquered Sun, and their Chosen are mighty indeed. In particular, their children are skilled at the arts of astrology and supernatural martial arts to a degree that even the Solars might never achieve.

Being able to play a Sidereal in a series devoted to another Exalted type, or another Exalted in a Sidereal series is not a *right*, however. If your Storyteller wants to run a series with a specific focus, then trying to demand that you be allowed to bring in the odd-man-out Exalted type may cause problems for the entire game. If the Storyteller is trying to tell a game about the Cult of Illuminated training, and manipulating, a circle of young Solars, then insisting upon being one of those Solars might disrupt the game. While some players might have the maturity to portray another character's dupe, many will not be ready to deal with the challenge. Conversely, if your Storyteller wants to run an extremely challenging game in which your Sidereals risk their very sanity to pick through the city of Meru, then including a Dragon-Blooded could wreck the game if only due to her inability to survive the same circumstances.

EXPERIENCE

The long lives and intense training of the Sidereals produce immensely talented individuals. In addition, the

Chosen of the Maidens have special astrological colleges and access to Sidereal martial arts. This section discusses the Experience and training of Sidereal Exalted.

SIDEREAL EXALTED EXPERIENCE

Except as noted in this section, Sidereals gain experience points, spend them and train for new traits at the same rates that Solars do. **Exalted**, pages 272–275, covers the rules for gaining experience points, using them to increase traits and training your character. The accompanying Sidereal Experience Cost Table gives appropriate costs and training times for Sidereal characters, when they differ from the main rulebook values.

BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCE

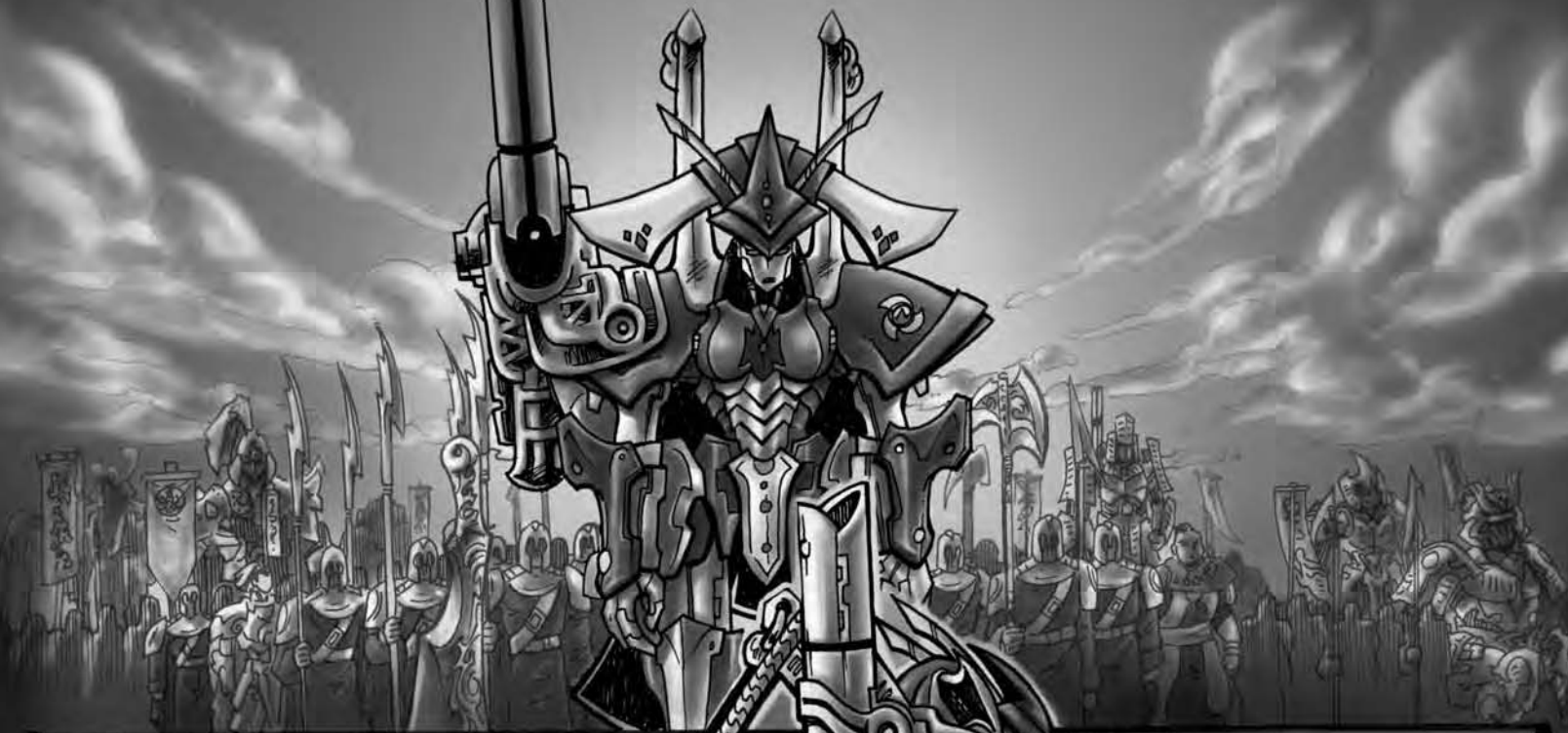
The **Exalted** main rulebook gives rules for purchasing starting Backgrounds, but does not discuss how to raise a character's Backgrounds once play has begun. The section on page 126 offers a basic approach; see also the free **Exalted Second Edition** errata, which are available for download from <http://www.white-wolf.com/downloads>.

SIDEREAL EXPERIENCE COST TABLE

Trait	Cost	Training Times
Caste/Favored Charm	10	(Min. Ability) days
Out-of-Caste Charm	12	(Min. Attribute + Min. Essence) days
Sidereal Martial Arts Charm (Caste/Favored)	10	(Min. Attribute + Min. Essence) days*
Sidereal Martial Arts Charm (Out-of-Caste)	12	(Min. Essence) weeks*
New Spell (Occult Caste/Favored)	10	(spell circle) weeks
New Spell (Out-of-Caste Occult)	12	(spell circle) weeks
Essence	current rating x 9	(rating) months
New Astrological College	5	3 weeks
Increase Astrological College	rating x 3	(rating) weeks

* These rates are for Sidereals learning Sidereal Martial Arts. Solars and Abyssals learning Sidereal Martial Arts must pay 12 for Favored/Caste or 15 for Out-of-Caste, and require (Min. Ability + Min. Essence) weeks of training time. See Scroll of the Monk for more information on supernatural martial arts.





WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL.
MAYBE I CAN PUT A
STOP TO THIS...

SHE'S GOING TO DIE,
ISN'T SHE KEJAK?
SHE AND ALL OF US
WITH HER.

DON'T BE ABSURD.
ISN'T THIS WHAT
WE'VE BEEN WORKING
SO HARD FOR?

"BE BRAVE, MNEMON. EVERYTHING'S
HAPPENING AS I SAID IT WOULD.

COME FORWARD,
DEMON QUEEN!
SHOW YOURSELF!
FACE ME!

AS YOU WISH.





VERY WELL, TO BUSINESS.



NO, MADAM— QUITE THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT.



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Sidereals™

NAME: _____ CONCEPT: _____
PLAYER: _____ MOTIVATION: _____
ASPECT: _____ ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH ●○○○○ CHARISMA ●○○○○ PERCEPTION ●○○○○
DEXTERITY ●○○○○ MANIPULATION ●○○○○ INTELLIGENCE ●○○○○
STAMINA ●○○○○ APPEARANCE ●○○○○ WITS ●○○○○

ABILITIES

JOURNEYS		SERENITY		BATTLES	
☐ RESISTANCE	○○○○○	☐ CRAFT	○○○○○	☐ ARCHERY	○○○○○
☐ RIDE	○○○○○	☐ DODGE	○○○○○	☐ ATHLETICS	○○○○○
☐ SAIL	○○○○○	☐ LINGUISTICS	○○○○○	☐ MELEE	○○○○○
☐ SURVIVAL	○○○○○	☐ PERFORMANCE	○○○○○	☐ PRESENCE	○○○○○
☐ THROWN	○○○○○	☐ SOCIALIZE	○○○○○	☐ WAR	○○○○○
SECRETS		ENDINGS		SPECIALTIES	
☐ INVESTIGATION	○○○○○	☐ AWARENESS	○○○○○	☐	○○○○○
☐ LARCENY	○○○○○	☐ BUREAUCRACY	○○○○○	☐	○○○○○
☐ LORE	○○○○○	☐ INTEGRITY	○○○○○	☐	○○○○○
☐ OCCULT	○○○○○	☐ MARTIAL ARTS	○○○○○	☐	○○○○○
☐ STEALTH	○○○○○	☐ MEDICINE	○○○○○	☐	○○○○○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS	○○○○○	CHARMS	
_____	○○○○○	Name: _____	Cost: _____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
COLLEGES		_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____
_____	○○○○○	_____	_____

WEAPONS

ANIMA

LIMIT BREAK

□□□□□□□□□□

FLAWED FATE

WILLPOWER

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

SOAK

B _____ L _____ A _____

HEALTH

-0 □□□□□
-1 □□□□□
-2 □□□□□
□□□□□
-4 □
INCAPACITATED □

VIRTUES

COMPASSION	TEMPERANCE
●○○○○	●○○○○
□□□□□	□□□□□
CONVICTION	VALOR
●○○○○	●○○○○
□□□□□	□□□□□

ESSENCE

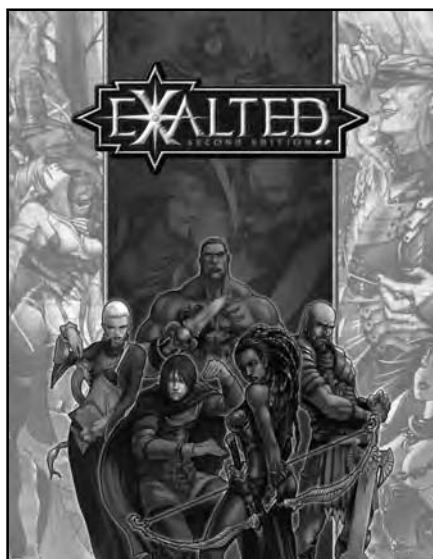
● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
PERSONAL _____
PERIPHERAL _____
COMMITTED _____

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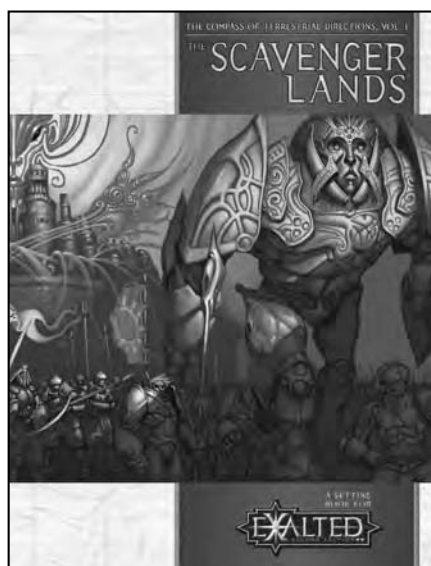
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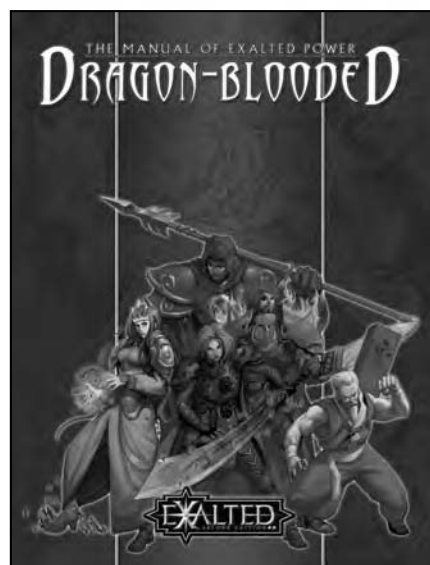
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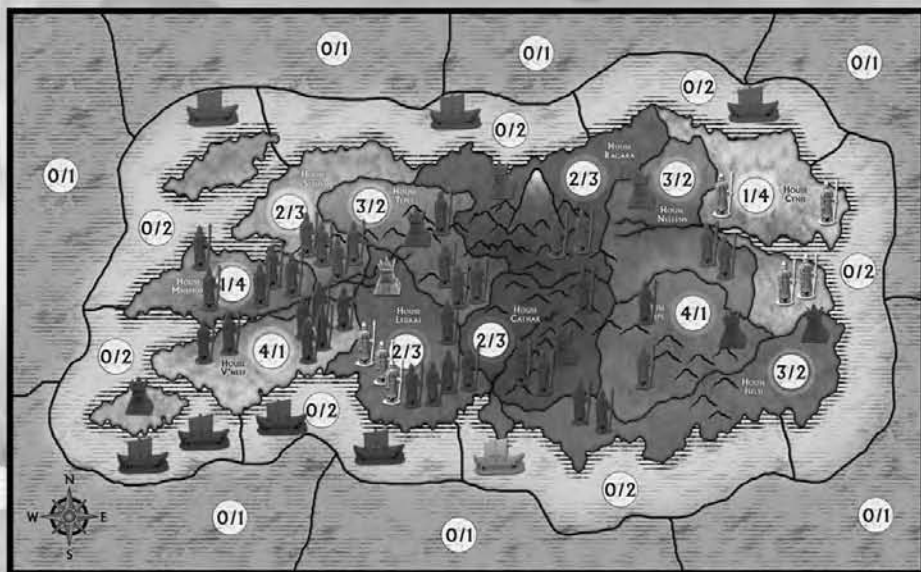
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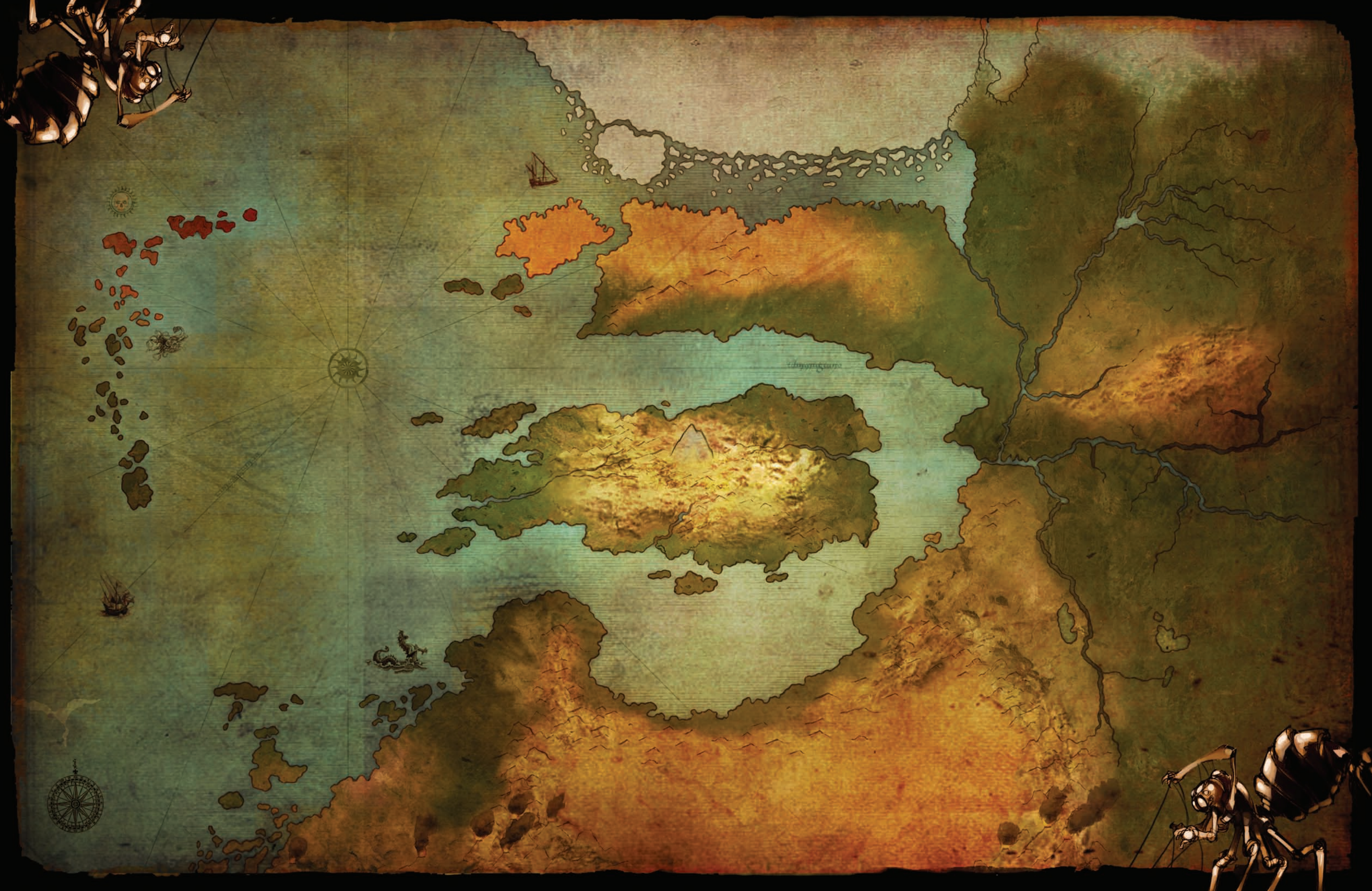
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