THE MANUAL OF EXALTED POWER

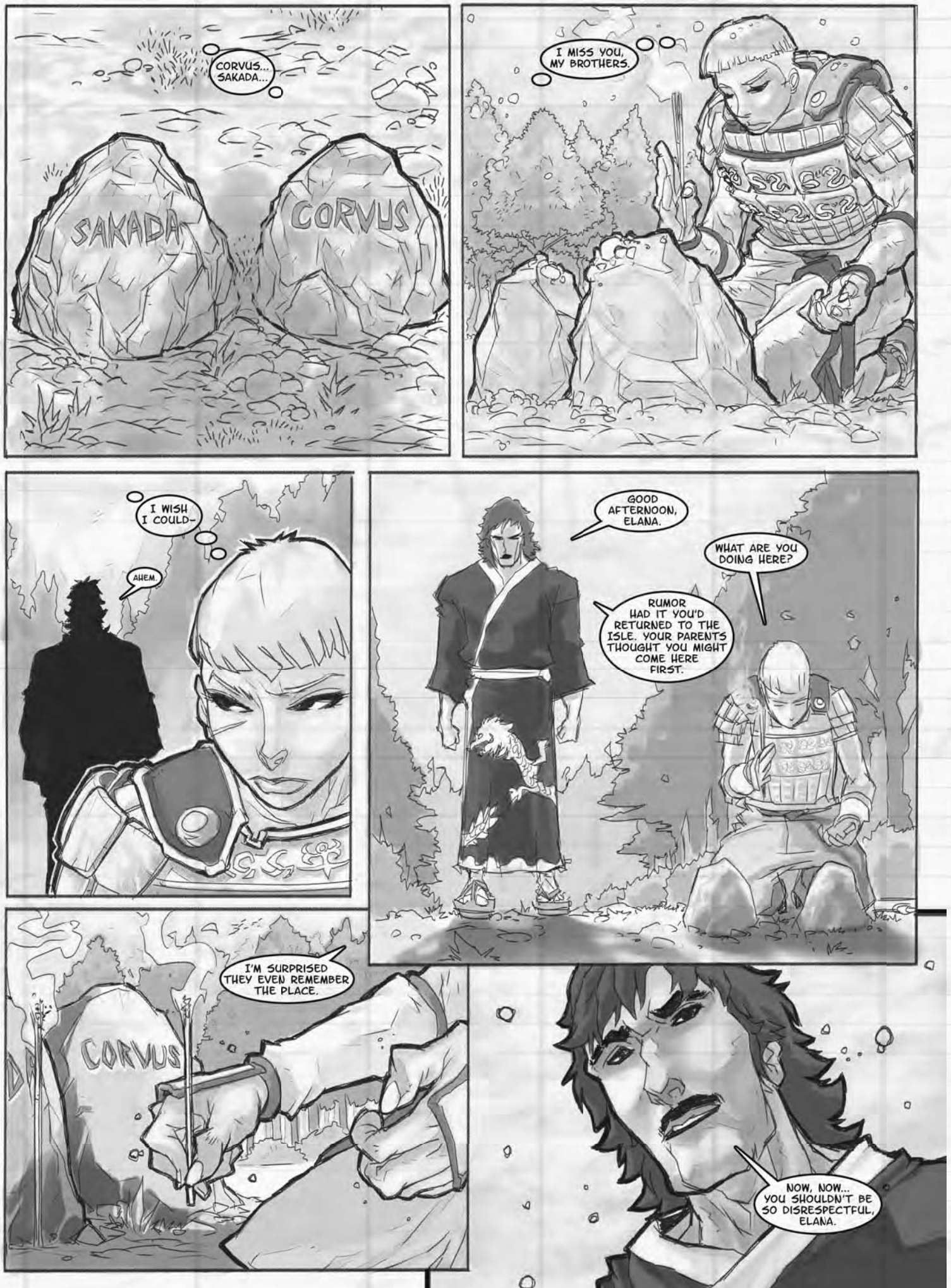
DRAGON-BLOODED™



EXALTED
SECOND EDITION



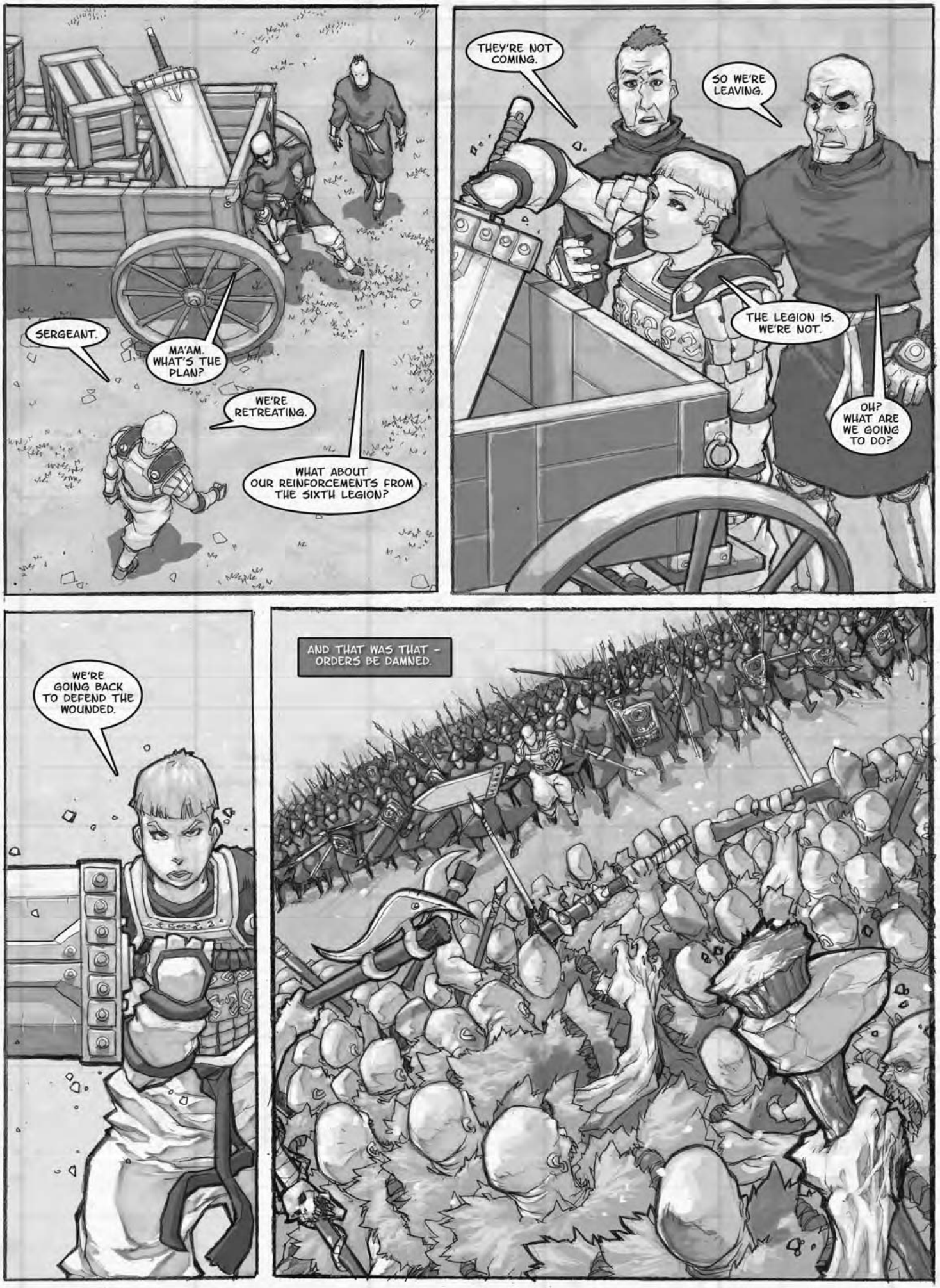
By Alan Alexander,
Kraig Blackwelder,
Peter Schaefer
and Scott Taylor


CORVUS... SAKADA...
SAKADA
CORVUS
I MISS YOU, MY BROTHERS.
I WISH I COULD-
AHEM.
GOOD AFTERNOON, ELANA.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
RUMOR HAD IT YOU'D RETURNED TO THE ISLE. YOUR PARENTS THOUGHT YOU MIGHT COME HERE FIRST.
I'M SURPRISED THEY EVEN REMEMBER THE PLACE.
CORVUS
NOW, NOW... YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO DISRESPECTFUL, ELANA.

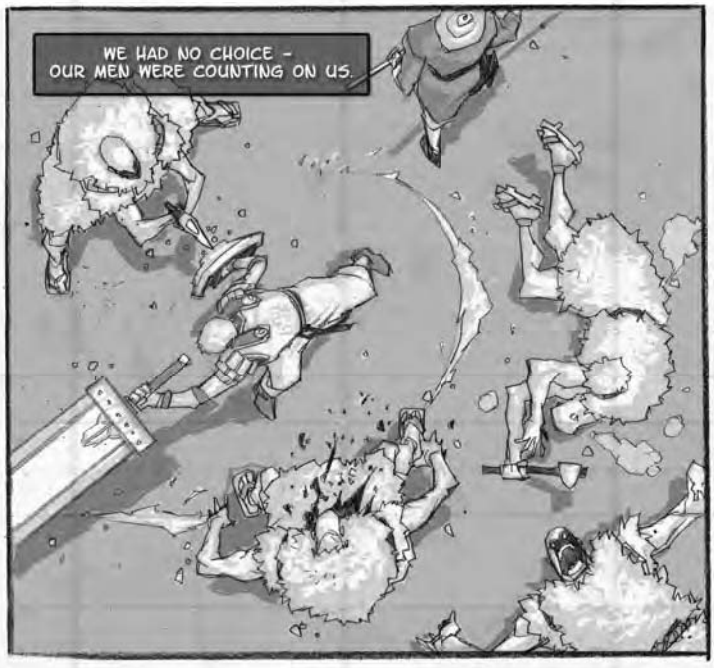

DISRESPECTFUL. RIGHT. AFTER ALL THEY DID FOR ME.
HERE, LET ME HELP YOU.
BACK OFF!
WHAT DO YOU WANT? TO SHAME ME WITH YOUR PITY?
NO... I JUST WANTED TO TALK.
ABOUT WHAT?
YOUR FAMILY, HOUSE TEPET. YOU'VE BEEN NEGLECTING YOUR DUTY TO THEM.
MY DUTY?
TO MARRY YOU, YOU MEAN?


WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO WED AND PRODUCE STRONG CHILDREN.
A RESPONSIBILITY.
TIMES BEING WHAT THEY ARE, OUR UNION WOULD CEMENT A VITAL ALLIANCE.
TIMES BEING WHAT THEY ARE.
YOUR PARENTS ORDERED YOU TO ACCEPT MY PROPOSAL. WHY DO YOU DEFY THEM?
HABIT?
THIS IS SERIOUS!
OF COURSE, I'M SORRY.
TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, LET ME TELL YOU A STORY.
WHEN MY BROTHERS DIED AT WAR, MY GRIEF EXPRESSED ITSELF THROUGH DISGRACEFUL BEHAVIOR.
SO MY PARENTS HAD ME DRAGGED TO THE PALACE OF THE TAMED STORM – A WRETCHED SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN SUCH AS MYSELF.
I LEARNED DISCIPLINE THERE, FORTUNATELY, BUT I ALSO RECEIVED THE GRACE OF THE ELEMENTAL DRAGON OF AIR.


AFTER SCHOOL, I SIGNED ON WITH THE IMPERIAL ARMY'S VERMILION LEGION.
I FOLLOWED ALL MY ORDERS, RISING STEADILY IN RANK.
I DID MY DUTY FOR YEARS... UNTIL THE BATTLE OF FIVE FANGS AT GETHAMANE.
MY DECISION IS FINAL, ELANA. SOUND THE RETREAT.
BUT GENERAL, WHAT ABOUT THE WOUNDED STILL ON THE FIELD?
THERE, I LEARNED WHAT DUTY WAS.
THEY'LL ONLY SLOW US DOWN. THERE'S NO TIME FOR -
BUT THE VARAJTUL ARE CANNIBALS! THE WOUNDED CAN'T DEFEND THEMSELVES!
YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS. FORM YOUR FLIGHT UP BEHIND THE LEGION TO COVER OUR RETREAT, THEN MEET US AT -
BUT YOU JUST SAID THERE'S NO TIME.
DO IT. THE WOUNDED WILL KEEP THE VARAJTUL BUSY FOR NOW.
I HAD MY ORDERS.
I LEFT THE GENERAL AND WENT TO FIND MY MEN.


SERGEANT.
MA'AM. WHAT'S THE PLAN?
WE'RE RETREATING.
WHAT ABOUT OUR REINFORCEMENTS FROM THE SIXTH LEGION?
THEY'RE NOT COMING.
SO WE'RE LEAVING.
THE LEGION IS. WE'RE NOT.
OH? WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WE'RE GOING BACK TO DEFEND THE WOUNDED.
AND THAT WAS THAT - ORDERS BE DAMNED.

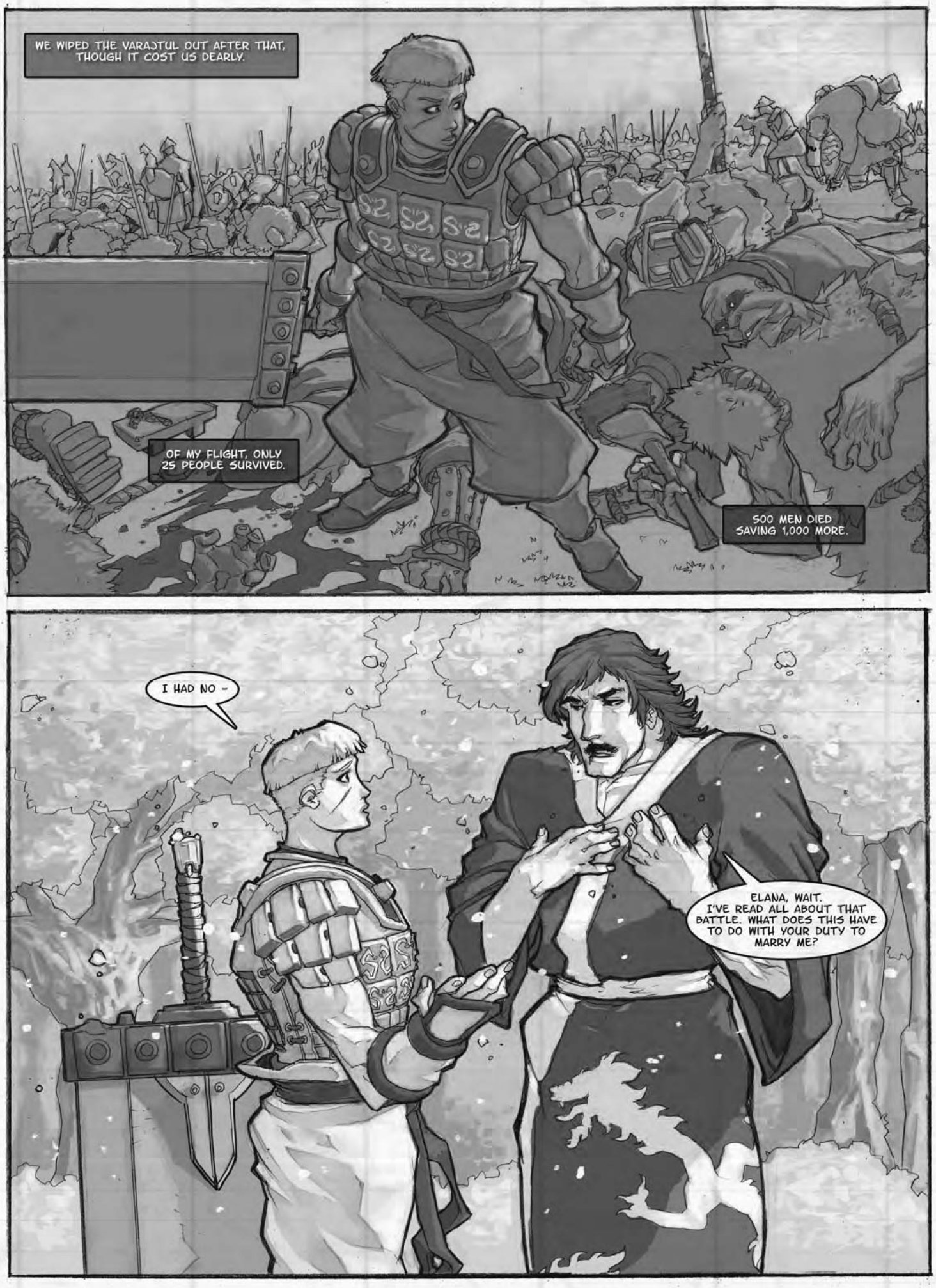

WE GAVE THEM EVERYTHING WE HAD.


WE HAD NO CHOICE - OUR MEN WERE COUNTING ON US.


WE FOUGHT ALL DAY AND NIGHT.
FOR EVERY SOLDIER WE LOST, WE KILLED TEN CANNIBALS.


WE FOUGHT TO EXHAUSTION AND BEYOND, BUT THERE WERE JUST TOO FEW OF US.
WITH OUR WHOLE LEGION IN RETREAT, ONE FLIGHT DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.
WE WERE DOOMED.


THAT IS, UNTIL THE GENERAL RETURNED WITH OUR DELAYED REINFORCEMENTS.

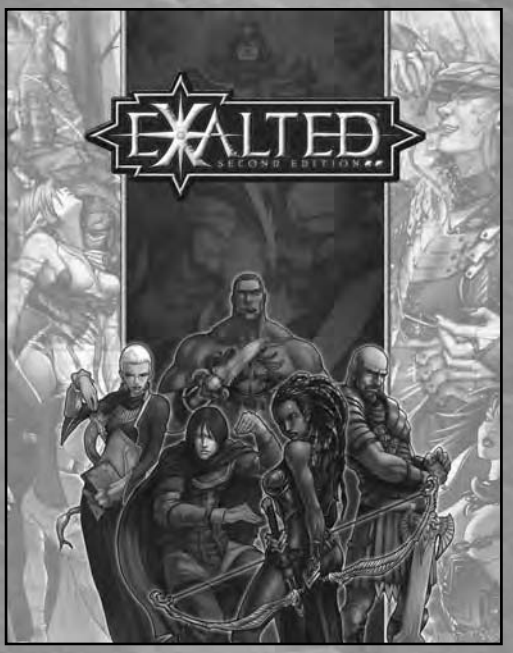

WE WIPED THE VARAJTUL OUT AFTER THAT, THOUGH IT COST US DEARLY.
OF MY FLIGHT, ONLY 25 PEOPLE SURVIVED.
500 MEN DIED SAVING 1,000 MORE.
I HAD NO -
ELANA, WAIT. I'VE READ ALL ABOUT THAT BATTLE. WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH YOUR DUTY TO MARRY ME?


"SIGH"
AT GETHAMANE, I SHOULD HAVE RETREATED WITH MY LEGION. THAT WAS MY DUTY.
BUT I STAYED TO HELP THOSE WOUNDED SOLDIERS. I HAD A GREATER DUTY TO THEM.
BUT YOUR HOUSE NEEDS THIS MARRIAGE. WHAT DUTY OUTWEIGHS THE ONE TO YOUR FAMILY?
I'M A MAGISTRATE NOW, KEREL - CHARGED TO UPHOLD THE EMPRESS'S LAW.
WITH THE EMPRESS GONE, THE REALM NEEDS ME MORE THAN EVER.
TIMES BEING WHAT THEY ARE, THERE IS NO GREATER DUTY.
OH...
I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND, KEREL.
WELL, I?
GOOD. THEN I MUST GO. I HAVE MUCH TO DO.
FAREWELL, KEREL.
BUT I... WELL, OKAY... PERHAPS MARRIAGE CAN WAIT A WHILE.
FAREWELL!
SO LONG, YOU PEACOCK. I'LL MARRY WHEN I'M GOOD AND READY.
AND NOT A MOMENT SOONER.

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For use with Exalted



WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING

1554 Litton Dr
Stone Mountain, GA
30083
USA

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PRINTED IN CHINA

THE MANUAL OF EXALTED POWER

DRAGON-BLOODED™

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AHEM... NAGEZZER.
HM? AH, YES.
WELCOME TO THE THRONE OF ROSES.


WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, SENATOR... NELLENS, RIGHT?
YES, BUT PLEASE CALL ME PORAMO, SIR.
IF YOU LIKE.


WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SPEAK TO ME ABOUT?
IT'S ABOUT GENERAL TEPET EJAVA, SIR.
THERE'S A MOVEMENT IN THE DELIBERATIVE TO CALL HER BACK HOME AND TRY HER FOR TREASON.


MMM... SO I'VE HEARD. WHAT HAS THAT TO DO WITH ME?
I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE A FRIEND OF HERS.
WE WERE IN SCHOOL TOGETHER. WE PLAYED GATEWAY A FEW TIMES. THAT WAS ALL.


OH... DAMN.
I SUPPOSE I'VE WASTED YOUR TIME, THEN. I APOLOGIZE, BUT THANK YOU FOR SEEING ME ANYWAY.


WAIT.
WHAT IS IT YOU HOPED A FRIEND OF THE ROSEBLACK'S WOULD DO FOR YOU?
WELL, SIR... I HOPED ONE MIGHT HELP ME CHANGE THE DELIBERATIVE'S MIND.
HM... WHY?
BECAUSE WHAT'S BEING DONE TO GENERAL TEPET ISN'T RIGHT.
IF THIS IS HOW WE TREAT OUR WAR HEROES, WHAT VILLAINY AREN'T WE CAPABLE OF?
I WON'T ALLOW IT!
NOR WILL I... PORAMO.
I WONDER. CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

INTRODUCTION

As usurpation is the exercise of power, which another hath a right to, so tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, which no body can have a right to. And this is making use of the power any one has in his hands, not for the good of those who are under it, but for his own private separate advantage.

—John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*

For centuries the undisputed masters of Creation, the Dragon-Blooded have received a series of wake-up calls in recent years that served to point out just how tenuous that mastery is. Between the return of the Solar Anathema and the destruction of the Tepet legions, the debut of the deathknights, the loss of Thorns and the mysterious disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, the Dragon-Bloods have been left reeling. All they believed to be eternal and unchanging is crumbling before their eyes, and it could be that the Realm will be next to fall in a war of succession.

It is into this milieu, this Time of Tumult, that the players' characters are dropped. Will they strive to stop the world from sliding further into chaos, or will they seek to profit from its descent? What legends will you tell of their deeds?

How to Use This Book

The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded contains everything one needs to run a game focused on the Terrestrial Exalted or to develop fully fleshed-out Dragon-Blooded antagonists for another style of **Exalted** game. Its contents are as follows.

Chapter One: The Scarlet Dynasty

This chapter focuses on the Terrestrial Exalted scions of the Realm's 11 Great Houses, descended from the Scarlet Empress herself. It also features information on those Dragon-Bloods in the Realm who Exalt outside of the Dynastic Houses, more commonly referred to as lost eggs.

This is Not a Complete Game!

Despite its size, **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded** is not a complete game. It is a supplement for White Wolf's **Exalted**, a game in which characters take the role of Solar Anathema, reborn demonic despots of the First Age in the view of the Realm's Immaculate Philosophy, but in truth, the Sun-blessed rightful rulers of Creation. This supplement does not include descriptions of the game's various core traits, rules on combat or a complete setting. It just has an in-depth treatment of the Dragon-Blooded, their societies and the rules necessary to create and play Terrestrial Exalted characters. You'll need to have access to the **Exalted** core rulebook in order to play.

Chapter Two: The Outcaste

This section covers those Dragon-Bloods outside the Realm's purview, offering insights into how the Terrestrial Exalted are treated in Creation's major states and giving a specific example of a Dragon-Blooded community located in each of the four cardinal directions.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

This chapter offers all the rules necessary for one to create a Dragon-Blooded character.

Chapter Four: Traits

This chapter describes the traits unique to Dragon-Blooded characters, as well as how existing traits are altered when applied to the Terrestrial Exalted.

Chapter Five: Charms

This section details the elementally powered Charms wielded by the Dragon-Blooded.

Chapter Six: Martial Arts

This chapter presents the Celestial martial arts styles practiced by the Immaculate Order, as well as five similarly aspected (if weaker) Terrestrial styles. It also presents the "natural" Dragon-Blooded style, called Terrestrial Hero Style, and the Five-Dragon Style common among members of the Realm's military.

Chapter Seven: Storytelling

The book's final chapter covers the special needs of storytelling a Dragon-Blooded game.

Lexicon

The majority of terms introduced in the core **Exalted** book still apply to the Dragon-Blooded. The following specialized terms, however, are used more exclusively by the Terrestrial Exalted, especially those native to the Blessed Isle.

Academy of Sorcery, the: Lookshy's answer to *the Heptagram*, this institution produces the sorcerer-technicians and sorcerer-engineers—and their mortal thaumaturge assistants—who are so vital to the upkeep of Lookshy's dwindling reserve of First Age armaments.

All-Seeing Eye, the: This organization is the Realm's elite secret police force, guarding the Scarlet Throne against corruption, sedition and treason. Though it employs countless mortal and Dragon-Blooded agents, its core is composed of spies and assassins from both House Iselsi and the Sidereal Bronze Faction.

arbiter: See *the Splendid and Just Arbiters of Purpose*.

armiger: An armiger is a supernaturally puissant arms-bearer assigned to protect a sorcerer-technician by the Seventh Legion. Although most are merely skilled thaumaturges, more fantastic beings, such as demons, elementals, God-Bloods and automata, sometimes serve in this capacity.

aspect: This term is used to describe the five elemental orientations of the Dragon-Bloods. It is functionally identical to the caste division among the Celestial Exalted, but it is more a distinction of physiology rather than the direct intervention of the gods.

Cloister of Wisdom, the: The *secondary school* designed to prepare its graduates for service in the Immaculate Order.

Forest Witches, the: A coven of rebellious Eastern outcastes who've come under the influence of a trio of unfathomable forces dating back to the First Age, if not before.

found egg: A *lost egg* successfully recovered by agents of the Scarlet Empire.

Heptagram, the: This is the Realm *secondary school* devoted to the study of sorcery and First Age lore.

Host of the Dragon-Blooded, the: A more formal term for the Scarlet Dynasty.

House of Ancient Stone, the: One of two Realm secondary school's for incorrigible Dragon-Blooded youths, the House of Ancient Stone is located outside Lord's Crossing. Using a combination of back-breaking work and harsh punishments, the school is much more effective at turning out productive members of Dynastic society than its sister school (i.e., the *Palace of the Tamed Storm*).

House of Bells, the: This *secondary school* prepares young officers for service in the Imperial Army and Navy. The school has a long-standing rivalry with *Pasiap's Stair*.

itinerant: A wandering Immaculate monk with special authority to look into matters of concern to the faith.

lost egg: According to the Realm, any Dragon-Blood who Exalts outside of the 11 Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty.

magistrate: A plenipotentiary official acting with the authority of the Scarlet Empress herself. Magistrates investigate corruption within the Imperial government at home and abroad, bring charges against and sentence criminals and watch for signs of treason.

numina: A numina is a former Dragon-Blood who has been irreversibly changed mentally, spiritually and physically by the Mist of *the Forest Witches*.

Obsidian Mirror, the: The headquarters of *the Splendid and Just Arbiters of Purpose*, located just outside Juche on the Blessed Isle.

Palace of the Tamed Storm, the: One of two Realm *secondary schools* for incorrigible Dragon-Blooded youths, the Palace of the Tamed Storm is located in the Imperial City itself. Though ostensibly devoted to reforming Dragon-Blooded troublemakers and ne'er-do-wells, it is more concerned with them mastering the art of keeping up appearances. Most graduates merely end up more skilled sadists and criminals.

Pasiap's Stair: Located atop Gray Mask Mountain, this military academy forges *found egg* Dragon-Blooded into elite Realm legionnaires—or it kills them. This school has a long-standing rivalry with *the House of Bells*.

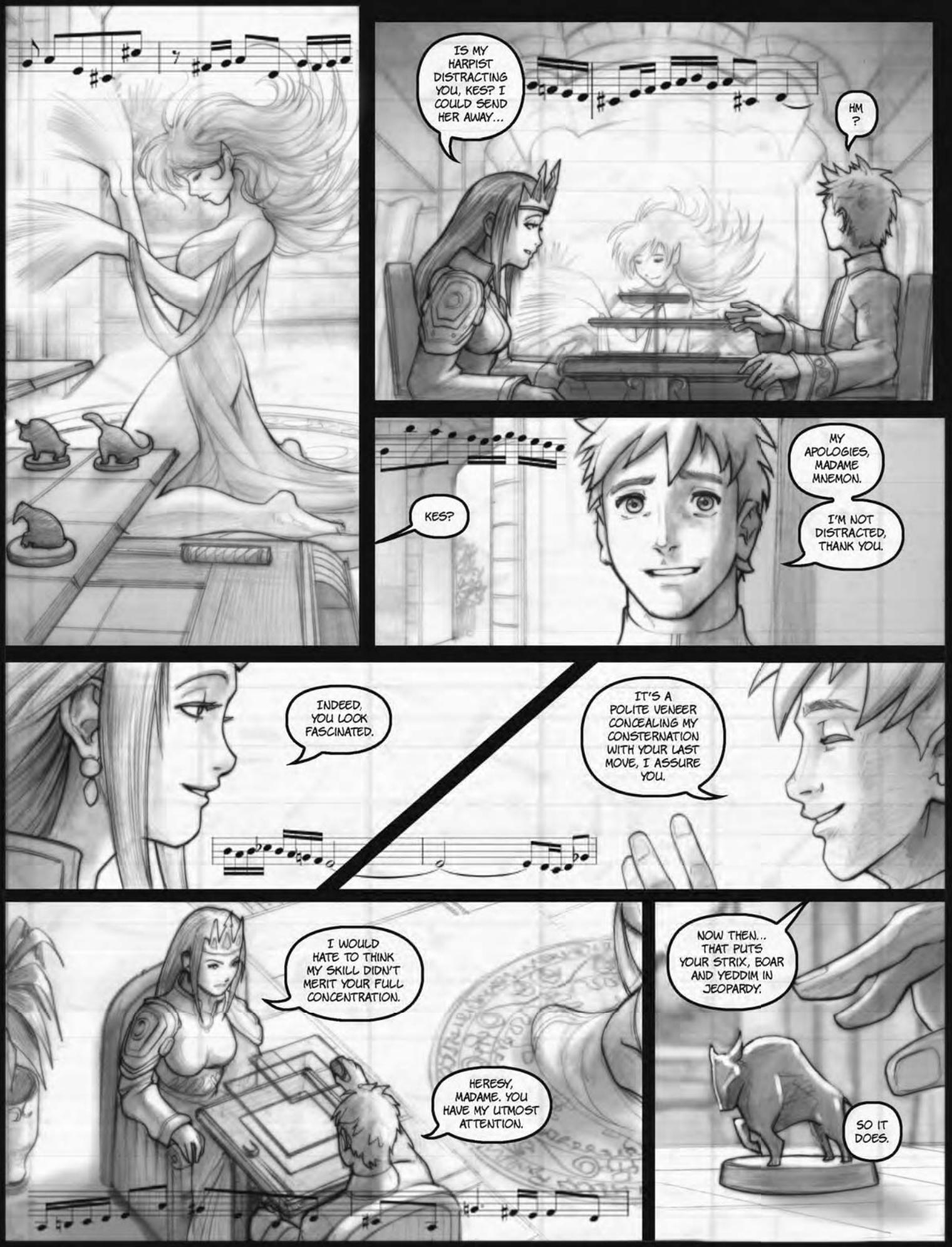
primary school: Each primary school is an academy with a general focus curriculum attended by patrician and Dynastic children between the ages of 9 and 14. After graduation, most Exalts go on to attend one of the Realm's four most prestigious *secondary schools*, while patricians and un-Exalted Dynasts either begin training with their families for the roles they'll fill or attend a less prestigious secondary school in order to continue their education. Most Dragon-Bloods Exalt during primary school.

secondary school: Each such school is a more advanced academy than a *primary school*. The majority of Dynastic Dragon-Bloods attend one of the Realm's four elite secondary schools, while patricians and un-Exalted Dynasts typically attend less prestigious institutions.

Seventh Legion, the: A rogue Shogunate-era legion that rebuilt the ancient city Deheleshen into the powerhouse of the Scavenger lands, Lookshy, following the Contagion and the subsequent wars with the Fair Folk. It is directly because of the legion's interference that the former River Province remains free of Realm control to this day.

Spiral Academy, the: This is a *secondary school* devoted to preparing students for a career in the Imperial Service. Its student body is also a source for cheap bureaucratic labor for the Scarlet Empire.

Splendid and Just Arbiters of Purpose, the: This is the ministry of the Scarlet Empire devoted to tracking down *lost eggs* and bringing them under Realm control.


IS MY HARPIST DISTRACTING YOU, KES? I COULD SEND HER AWAY...
HM ?
KES?
MY APOLOGIES, MADAME MNEMON.
I'M NOT DISTRACTED, THANK YOU.
INDEED, YOU LOOK FASCINATED.
IT'S A POLITE VENEER CONCEALING MY CONSTERNATION WITH YOUR LAST MOVE, I ASSURE YOU.
I WOULD HATE TO THINK MY SKILL DIDN'T MERIT YOUR FULL CONCENTRATION.
HERESY, MADAME. YOU HAVE MY UTMOST ATTENTION.
NOW THEN... THAT PUTS YOUR STRIX, BOAR AND YEDDIM IN JEOPARDY.
SO IT DOES.


I'VE WANTED TO PLAY YOU AT GATEWAY FOR YEARS, KES.
IS THAT SO?
EIGHT, ACTUALLY.
YES, EVER SINCE MY MOTHER CONDESCENDED TO PLAY YOU. HOW OLD WERE YOU? TEN?
OF COURSE. SUCH AN HONOR FOR ONE SO YOUNG.
I WAS VERY LUCKY, MADAME.
DID YOU AND THE EMPRESS PLAY OFTEN?
NEVER.
OH.
I THINK I WILL SEND THE HARPIST BACK WHENCE SHE CAME. HER MUSIC NO LONGER PLEASES ME.
EXCUSE ME A MOMENT.
OF COURSE.
TAKE YOUR TIME.

CHAPTER ONE
THE SCARLET DYNASTY

Every Dragon-Blood in the Realm is a descendent of a Terrestrial Exalted soldier in the most potent army Creation has ever seen. Even at this point in the Second Age, millennia after their most important battle was fought, the Dragon-Blooded exhibit an undeniably militaristic bent. Almost since their formation, the Realm's legions have been the mightiest military force in Creation. All of Creation pays tribute to the mighty Realm, and the Realm provides Creation with civilization, art, culture and, most importantly, protection.

Yet when the Realm's supreme and extraordinarily powerful figurehead, the Scarlet Empress, disappeared, the corruption, decadence and petty resentments that had long been simmering beneath the surface rapidly took their toll on the empire's might. It was as if the Scarlet Empire were a grand, ornate arch, and in the absence of its keystone, the rest began to crumble.

For now, though, the Realm remains intact and feared. Although the Threshold has its glorious cities and its shining wonders, the center of knowledge, power and wealth remains on the Blessed Isle. And the power structure upon which all else depends is the vast Dragon-Blooded family called the Scarlet Dynasty.

The Life of a Dynast

The members of the Scarlet Dynasty function best as an array of cogs in a vast, powerful mechanism of war. Too much individuality is hazardous to a military unit, and the Dynasty is nothing if not a vast military unit.

The Dragon-Blooded work best in groups, and much of the culture of the Realm revolves around forging Terrestrials into powerful teams called sworn brotherhoods. These units bind themselves together via sorcerous means and use their combined might to defend Creation against all those who would act against it.

Birth

The state-sponsored hardening of a Dynast into a Dragon-Blooded soldier starts almost immediately. Dynastic children are handed over to wet nurses within moments of their birth lest they form an inappropriate bond with their mothers. Infancy is spent among young, un-Exalted women of the household and nurses who attend to their every need. Few parents find their children particularly interesting until they Exalt, and most are happy to remain well away from their progeny until they prove that they're worth speaking to.

Childhood

As defenders of Creation, Dynasts must be prepared for anything, and childhood is when they learn many of the skills for which the Realm's Dragon-Blooded are famed. Starting at a very young age, both Dynastic and patrician children attend expensive academies where they learn all of their basics: reading, calligraphy, numbers, Realm history, the fundamentals of the Immaculate Philosophy and much more. Most young Dynasts see much of their nurses and tutors and very little of their parents. It is unbecoming for little soldiers to be overly fond of their parents—or anyone else, for that matter—as vulnerability of the heart is a major strategic disadvantage. The core value taught at this age is discipline. War demands discipline. Conquest demands discipline. Ruling Creation demands discipline. Any young Dynast who doesn't learn to behave like an adult and show an adult's self-control will likely die before the age of 10.

When all the extraneous layers of a child Dynast's life—the strategy games, music lessons, archery practice, calligraphy lessons, poetry recitals, catechisms of the Immaculate Texts, sparring matches and frenzied learning and practice—are peeled away, there is one thing left at its core: the desperate desire to Exalt. The entire childhood culture of the Dynasts is built around the expectation that those children will grow up to be members of the Dragon-Blooded Host. Childhood is filled with rituals, prayers to the Dragons and a range of odd superstitious behaviors thought to increase the chances of Exalting. The earliest Exaltations take place even before puberty, as early as 10 in children of exceptional breeding. From her 10th birthday until her Exaltation (or her 20th birthday, whichever comes first), every day could be the day it happens.

Children of Dynastic families who do not Exalt are ignored as much as possible. They are given a top-notch education, of course, so that they can at least marry well, but their real chance to serve their Houses has passed them by. They are disappointments, and there is no mistaking that fact. Their families find some relatively non-challenging jobs for them to do in one of the family's business interests and pay them a modest family stipend for the handful of decades that they live. Then they happily forget the failures once they've died. The best an un-Exalted family member can hope for is to marry an Exalt from another Great House.

Family

Dynasts live in extended families. The largest households comprise hundreds of members all living together in the sprawling opulence of an enormous manse. On average, Terrestrials live around 300 years, so it's possible for over 10 generations of a family to live in a single manse. In practice, the older generations often grow to loathe the noise and busyness of their younger family members, so they arrange for other lodging. Some families are so very close knit or financially strapped, that the generations are superimposed, stacked upon one another like books on a table.

The average Dynastic household has upward of 100 closely related family members, a dozen or so visiting distant cousins who have yet to strike out on their own, a handful of family friends and 30 to 40 mortals to take care of the cooking, cleaning, tutoring and secretarial matters. One thing a Dynastic upbringing is *not* is lonely. Privacy is nearly impossible, and where it *is* possible, it is usually considered suspicious. Solitude is an unheard-of luxury for the Dragon-Blooded.



Much of what a young Dynast needs to know, particularly etiquette and proper social behavior, is not taught by tutors, but by family members. Older siblings or cousins generally teach riding, sailing, hunting and sports or games. The only games young Dynasts are allowed to play are those that develop hand-eye coordination or strategic thinking.

At family gatherings, Dynastic children sit at the un-Exalted tables where they are treated as high-ranking mortals, and their manners must be flawless.

The family members a child sees least are his parents, but parents have learned through the Ages that some positive exposure is necessary if they hope to have a child's loyalty later in life.

Early Education

The rudiments of a child's education are provided at home by tutors. Dynastic children are expected to know basic calligraphy, arithmetic and how to read by the age of five. Five is also the age at which young Dynasts start to learn tumbling, basic dance and, usually, how to play either the flute or the sanxian. By age nine, when they leave for boarding school, young Dynasts are expected to speak two languages fluently (High Realm and one other, usually Low Realm). They are often taught a range of skills that could be useful later in life, such as sailing, riding, wilderness survival, archery, rudimentary self-defense and even swordplay. The life of a Dragon-Blood is long, and any of a number of skills could save the Dynast's life.

Primary Schools

Once their families have provided them with the basics of a Dynastic education, children are sent off to boarding school. Every prefecture in the Realm has a number of fine academies, and large cities might have specialty academies for parents who want their children to go into particular fields. There are even decent primary schools in the Threshold, but most Dynasts living in the Threshold prefer to send their children to the more prestigious schools on the Blessed Isle.

Much is expected of a teacher in the Realm, but teachers are accorded a commensurately high degree of respect. The knowledge of a good teacher is seen as a valuable gift, and good academies across the Blessed Isle are exorbitantly expensive. Patricians and Dynasts can send their children to such schools, but the investment is much too expensive for most others.

Dynastic and patrician families all send their children to the same schools. If there were some means of determining which children would Exalt and which would not, though, this would certainly not be the case. Given that the children of two patricians might eventually Exalt and that even the children of two Dragon-Blooded can remain un-Exalted their entire lives, however, it's important that all children are given the benefit of the doubt.

Primary schools won't take a child younger than eight years old and won't teach children older than 15. Most children hope to Exalt by the end of primary school. Those who do not are often of weak blood and suffer stigma from being a "late bloomer." Still, a late Exaltation can be forgiven; not Exalting at all may not be.

The curricula of all these schools include archery, swordplay, athletics, history, geography, political science, the Immaculate Philosophy, natural philosophy and spirit lore. Some schools even teach the basics of thaumaturgy.

Students cannot be failed out of primary school, although problem children might be returned to their families and told why. Once the family has shown the child the terrible alternative to succeeding in school, the child is then enrolled in the next best academy.

Secondary School

There are four elite secondary schools in the Realm to which a parent would want to send her child: the House of Bells, the Spiral Academy, the Cloister of Wisdom and the Heptagram. There are other schools, but they are for students who are deficient in one way or another. The four main schools are highly exclusive and turn away at least as many students as they admit. Only 20 percent of those who graduate from primary school continue on to secondary school, and the vast majority of these students are Dragon-Blooded. The Heptagram admits only Dragon-Bloods, while the other three schools admit only those mortals who meet exceedingly rigid admission criteria.

A description of the Realm's secondary schools can be found on pages **25-27**.

Adulthood

Once a Dynast has graduated from secondary school, she is considered an adult. Most such Dynasts either return to their household of origin at this point or go to live with distant relatives while beginning a career. This is also the point at which many Dragon-Blooded choose to travel. Traveling around the Threshold is a perfectly respectable way to spend the first few years after graduation from secondary school. After all, it shows an interest in the world that the Dragon-Blooded rule.

Dropouts

There are those for whom formal education is not a good fit. They tend to drop out after a year or two of study and turn to travel much earlier. This is troubling but forgivable. One of the strengths of the Realm is in making the most of every Dragon-Blood, even those who don't start their lives in traditional ways. Many dropouts go on extended ventures into their Houses' satrapies. Some never do find their niche and fall into the Immaculate Order, the legions or some minor wing of the family business.

A Dragon-Blood who drops out for a long period of time can still make a name for herself if she finally realizes what it is she wants to do and does it well enough to impress her family and others.

Disownment

Within the Dynasty, a child's behavior always reflects on its parents. Dynastic parents have exceedingly high expectations of their children and spare no expense to bring them up properly. Yet sometimes, this doesn't work out. Some children just have no drive—or too much drive in the wrong direction.

A child who does nothing at all of worth for one full century risks being disowned. He might also suffer that fate for being disruptive, for embarrassing the House in some blatant way or for being convicted of crimes, especially crimes against the House or the Realm.

If a child does something so bad or so disappointing that his parents can no longer tolerate him, he may be disowned. This may happen in one of two ways.

Informal disownment is simply done within the House. The parents of the child create and spread the fiction that the wayward child is not actually theirs. The child is stricken from the House registers, his family stipend is cut off, and the House's doors are closed to him. A child who has been disowned in this way cannot inherit from his parents, and they are freed of any obligations to him during the period of his disownment. Informal disownment can be reversed, but traditionally not for at least 20 years, and usually only after the child has proven himself capable of behaving like a proper member of the Dragon-Blooded Host and contributing responsibly to the well-being of the House.

Formal disownment is less common as it is both more work *and* irreversible. It requires the child's parents to file a formal complaint against the child with a magistrate or with the Imperial Court. This complaint must be agreed to by a senior member of the House and granted by the Empress (now either the Regent or the Deliberative). This process is irreversible and done only when the child has perpetrated something truly, deliberately malicious or perfidious against his House or the Realm.

Society

War without civilization is barbarism, and the Realm is anything but a nation of barbarians. On the contrary, the Blessed Isle is the place of origin for most of what Creation sees as sophistication and culture.

Dragon-Blooded who do not shine in the arena of war can often do so in the arena of social graces. House Cynis is not known for its great legionnaires, but its parties are the focus of much of Dynastic social life, which has served the House well for centuries.

The three events around which Dynastic social life orbits are galas, salons and visits.

Galas are enormous, lengthy parties to which it is traditional to invite every Dragon-Blood in a region. Getting or not getting an invitation to a major gala is a clear indicator of one's place on the social register. If a particular House always waits until a particular individual is out of town and unable to attend, it is usually assumed that there is a story there to be uncovered. Such rumors are the bread and butter of the Dynastic party set.

Salons are smaller gatherings comprising 10 to 20 Dragon-Blooded of the same age and interested in particular topics or activities. Salons can take the form of sanxian recitals, hunting expeditions, Gateway tournaments, orgies, political debates or epic indulgences in fine food, wine and drugs. A salon can be a brunch or dinner affair, or it might take several evenings to reach its completion. Salons are usually much less formal, much less festive and much less work than galas.

A visit is just that: a visit by one family member to another. As long as the visitor provides at least two weeks' notice, the host is expected to provide accommodations without hesitation. It's the civilized thing to do, after all. A guest who stays more than two weeks is expected to present a "visitor's gift" of some substance, enough to cover the costs of hosting her for so long.

Sworn Brotherhoods

Formed among groups of Dragon-Bloods linked by feelings of great loyalty, respect or fellowship, sworn brotherhoods are akin to the circles formed by the Solar Exalted, though they are not preordained the way many Solar Circles are. Close friends from school might choose to join a sworn brotherhood, as might an elite cadre of legionnaires, a group of Heptagram graduates or even a handful of close cousins who want to work together.

The brotherhood bond is both social and mystical, created through oaths of mutual service and protection. Often, a sworn brotherhood forms for a specific purpose, and oaths are taken regarding that purpose. The purpose of the sworn brotherhood might be tied to the characters' goals. A sworn brotherhood could form around hunting Anathema, improving the Realm, taking the Scarlet Throne, finding First Age wonders or any similar goal. The actual binding of a brotherhood, however, is the product of Terrestrial Circle Sorcery (see pp. **122-123**).

Adventure and Responsibility

As the defenders of Creation, Dragon-Bloods cannot avoid adventure. Any threat the mortal world cannot defend against, the Dragon-Blooded have to be able to surmount.

Travel and adventure are both expected of Dragon-Bloods. Even those who have grown older and burdened by responsibilities and family are expected to go away at least once a year to best a troublesome small god or hunt down a behemoth. Any Dragon-Blood who avoids such acts will likely suffer a reputation for cowardice sufficient to impact his social and political goals.

Love, Sex and Marriage

Love is not widely respected in the Realm. It is seen as a disordering force that leads young Dynasts into inappropriate, inconvenient and irrational behavior. That doesn't mean that Terrestrial Exalted fall in love any less than mortals—on the contrary, their passions tend to be a little grander than those of mortals. Nonetheless, it is seen more as a mild form of madness, common among the young and foolish, and is not considered a "legitimate" excuse for doing anything, *especially* not imperiling long-planned political alliances. If love develops between two Dynasts who have been promised to one another, so much the better. If it does not, then both parties are expected to do the responsible thing and make the most of things.

To a majority of Dynasts, sex is a physically gratifying form of play, an entertaining struggle for power and an ongoing hunt for the next conquest. Sex is a common pastime for many of the Realm's Terrestrial Exalts, like Gateway or training for combat. It is sometimes even a physical expression of love.

Homosexual liaisons are common among the Dragon-Bloods. Many Dynasts see such arrangements as a kind of noble, intimate camaraderie—with benefits. Many Dynasts are known to prefer homosexual affairs to heterosexual ones, as such trysts do not come with the risk of producing bastards that could imperil a political alliance, muddy a House's line of succession or take a bite out of the Dynast's revenue stream.

As long as a Dynast eventually marries and produces at least two children, his procreative duties to the Realm are considered complete, and the rest of his sexual adventures are considered none of the Realm's concern. The Empress herself was known to have a refined appreciation of a woman's touch, and though all of her legally recognized consorts were men, the majority of her lovers were women.

Homosexuality Versus Effeminacy

Same-sex encounters are both common and accepted in the Realm. Realm lore has a long history of celebrated warriors who were also lovers extending back to the Shogunate and beyond. Intimacy between battlefield comrades is almost an institution all its own. What is *not* accepted in Dynastic culture, though, regardless of sexual orientation, is weakness in women or effeminate behavior in men. Such softness is never tolerated, and is often harshly ridiculed and even punished. Whatever else they might be, the Terrestrial Exalted are warriors, and there is no room for those who assume effete mannerisms or deliberately portray themselves as "soft" in any way.

Dynasts have a reputation for being oversexed and some Houses, most notably House Cynis, are notorious for their odd and voracious sexual appetites.

Marriage is the cement that bonds Dynastic families to one another. It is through marriage that alliances are made (and broken) and aimless Dynasts are given direction. Most marriages among the scions of the Dynastic Houses are arranged years, if not decades, in advance of the union.

Marriage is the institution the Great Houses use to forge alliances. It is not seen as a religious union, but as a political one. Any other purpose of marriage is eclipsed by the necessity of this one. In this time of uncertainty in particular, the Great Houses are intermarrying at an astonishing rate in hopes of making one last round of alliances before the storm that's brewing breaks and changes the Realm forever.

Marrying for love is possible—provided the families involved approve of the match. Couples who marry without permission are tracked down and taken to a magistrate who annuls the marriage, and may the Dragons protect them if a child was conceived from their folly. Inadvertent alliances between Houses caused by such rash marriages can only lead to problems down the road. The only good marriage is a strategic marriage.

Originally, mortals were not considered proper marriage material for Dragon-Bloods. Mortals were expected to marry mortals; Terrestrials were expected to marry Terrestrials. Only thus would the Elemental Dragons' gift stay strong in the bloodline. Today, however, political liaisons often require intermarriage between patricians and a Dynastic House, and the ancient taboo has ceased to hold any relevance. Only the most hidebound and prejudiced Immaculates still espouse the stricture. Some young Dynasts are unaware that such a taboo ever even existed.

Dowries

Dowries are uncommon in the Realm, because any marriage of Dynast to Dynast is considered an arrangement of two equals, and money is not needed to balance the transaction. A dowry *is* necessary when a marriage is made between two unequal parties: a Dynast and a mortal. This happens most often when two children from Dynastic Houses are promised to each other at an early age and one fails to Exalt. Marriages are only rarely arranged between such young children for precisely this reason, and when they are, it's almost always the product of an important political alliance.

In circumstances where a dowry is necessary, the money is meant to soothe the pride of the Dragon-Blood's family and compensate for the decreased likelihood of the marriage producing Exalted. Depending on which Dynastic House and which patrician family are involved, even a single such dowry can effectively bankrupt even an unusually wealthy patrician family. The amount of the dowry is based on the House's rate of breeding Exalted. The cost to marry a mortal to a member of House Nellens would be high, but the cost to marry a mortal into House Mnemon or Cathak would be astronomical.

The inequality of such a marriage would also be underscored by the nature of the wedding gifts. Gifts presented to the family of the Dragon-Blood by the family of the mortal would be extraordinary and lavish (worth at least Resources 4). Gifts presented in the other direction, if there were any, would be relatively common items (worth no more than Resources 3, if that).

Adultery

Seen as the perfect answer to the fact that Dynasts cannot marry the ones they love, adultery is a tacitly accepted fact of life in the Realm. Provided one does nothing to damage the illusion of a happy marriage with one's spouse, there are few drawbacks worth mentioning. As long as nothing is done to damage the political alliance embodied by the marriage, all is well.

Extramarital affairs are quite common, almost to the point of being expected. As long as the participants in the tryst show proper discretion, most family scandals can be avoided. The first law of discretion, then, is that bastards are not tolerated. A female Dynast who gets pregnant by a man other than her husband has three options. Ideally, she should take a strong draught of herbs to induce a miscarriage as early as possible. Failing that, she needs either to convince her husband that the child is his or, in dire straits, take a long leave of absence to travel or "to inspect family holdings in the Threshold."

Male Dynasts have an easier time of it. As long as they quietly support their bastards out of their family stipend, they can usually keep enough distance from the child that no awkward questions ever come to light. Male Dynasts who leave a string of bastards in their wake, however, rapidly find their income stream sorely taxed and might have trouble affording the consequences of their dalliances.

Children

Having children, like getting married, is a Dynastic duty. Children are seen as symbols of properly consummated marriages. Any marriage that doesn't produce at least two children within the first 50 years is deemed null and void, as is any marriage that goes more than 50 years without producing additional children. Children are very important in Realm society. They are at once the embodiment of a political alliance, a sign of hope for the future and a symbol of the parents' obligation to the Scarlet Dynasty.

Among the Terrestrial Exalted, producing children is almost compulsory. The more children a couple produces, the more chance there is that one of the offspring will grow up to be another member of the Dragon-Blooded Host. Some Terrestrial women are known to take particular delight in producing child after child, although physicians have learned that Dragon-Blooded women need at least five years between children. Otherwise, it starts to age them unnaturally quickly. The average number of births is eight per century, or about one every 12 years. A Dragon-Blooded pregnancy lasts a full 15-month year. Given the sturdiness of Terrestrial physiology, a pregnancy only begins to show after five months, and an expectant mother may remain as active as normal for the first 12 months of pregnancy, with no significant danger to herself or the unborn child.

Drugs taken to induce long-term sterility are frowned upon, although those that induce short-term sterility are approved of when they prevent bastards or the impregnation of mortals. Abortion is illegal for a Dragon-Blood whose husband has made her pregnant or for a member of a lower caste who bears a Dragon-Blood's child, even if the child is a product of rape. Both the mother and the person who performed the abortion can be imprisoned or even executed, depending on their station, the situation and the magistrate involved.

Dragon's Rest

One thing Dynasts clearly are not is immortal. While they live much longer than mortals do, even the long life spans of the Dragon-Blooded come to their close eventually.

Retirement

Although the average life span of a Dynast is around 300 years, there are those who have lived to nearly 500 without even using sorcery. Through sorcerous means, the Terrestrial life span can be



extended further still. There comes a time, however, when even the mighty Dragon-Blooded have had their fill of work.

Those who have served their Houses long and well are welcome to take an earlier retirement without taking any cut in stipend. Those who have produced little for their Houses get a large cut in stipend upon retiring and again for every 10 years that they don't perform some significant act of service for their families.

There is an entire class of "semi-retired" Dragon-Blooded who have given up their former métier while remaining active in House politics, overseeing households or otherwise remaining busy in service to the House without holding an actual job. Many of these Dragon-Bloods are teachers of some sort, holding honored positions at the great academies. Others choose not to teach, but to learn, spending their final years studying subjects for which their early lives left no time.

The life of a Dynast is so perilous, however, that only about half even make it to retirement age.

Death

Due to the constant combat, the endless assassination attempts and the myriad dangers of the Second Age, only about a third of Dragon-Blooded Dynasts die of natural causes.

A Dynast receives one of two types of funeral upon her death. If she falls in battle far from the Realm, she is given "field rites." Prayers are said to the dragons, her body is burned, and her ashes are returned to her aspect element. Any equipment that might be considered heirloom-quality—such hearthstones, jade armor or artifact weapons—is sent back to her family. Theft is uncommon at times such as these, as stealing from fallen comrades is considered *very* bad luck. It also carries a high risk of earning the wrath of a comrade's hungry ghost.

The Passage Rite

Members of sworn brotherhoods make to each other a promise when they swear their loyalty: that nothing except death will prevent them from retrieving each other's bodies and making sure that they receive at least full field rites. In the past, entire brotherhoods would be lost trying to retrieve their companions' bodies, leaving no one to return for their own. As a result, a more recent tradition came about. If a brotherhood does everything in its power to retrieve a fallen member's body but it becomes obvious that it cannot succeed without being destroyed, it can perform a passage rite instead.

This rite requires that the remaining members of the brotherhood perform the basic field rites without the body as soon as they can. They must then seek out a parent, child, spouse, lover or sibling of each of the deceased, preferably someone about whom the deceased cared deeply or at least with whom she spent a great deal of time. To this survivor, they must then present five jade talents, any personal items belonging to the deceased and one item of importance from each member of the brotherhood. In his presence, they swear to always fight righteously in the name of their fallen comrade and to say a prayer for her at each temple or shrine they enter.

A Dynast who dies in the Realm is given a great, ostentatious funeral gala that reiterates the high points of her life. Her family might commission poetry, plays and music to be written specifically for the event that retell and hyperbolize the fallen Dynast's accomplishments. House elders deliver heartfelt eulogies remembering the departed, and swarms of hired mourners wail pitiably near the body. Such remembrances, it is hoped, help send the soul on its way to its next, and hopefully more enlightened, incarnation.

Most Dragon-Blooded agree that an unmourned and uncelebrated soul cannot move on. This is one of the reasons the popularity of lavish and elaborate funerals. The larger the display, the easier it is for the soul to move on to its proper destination. For this reason, some members of the Deliberative have suggested that a funeral should be held for the Empress. While it is all well and good to hope that she yet survives, if she's dead, her great soul will be unable to move on along its path.

Sorcery

Among the Realm's Dragon-Blooded, knowledge of one or two spells does not make one a sorcerer. Any Dragon-Blood might learn a single spell, and many make the effort to learn Emerald Countermagic, which most Dynastic schools teach to students who show the aptitude. Some Houses teach one or two spells to their members as a means of passing along the high culture of the Dynasty. After all, in the First Age, it was only the unschooled who *didn't* know a spell or two.

Among Dynasts, the demarcation between knowing a spell or two and being considered a full-fledged sorcerer is one's servants. The generally held belief throughout the Realm is that sorcerers can be recognized by their bizarre entourage of spirits, elementals or reactivated First Age automata. By that definition, true sorcerers are quite rare. Those with such an entourage are respected, even as they are shunned.

As a rule of thumb, about one Dragon-Blood in 10 knows a spell or two, while one in 25 knows a handful of spells and defines herself as a sorcerer, and one in 50 Dragon-Blooded is truly adept in the arts of Terrestrial Circle Sorcery.

There's a sense among Dynasts that sorcerers cannot be entirely trusted. With powerful students of sorcery such as Mnemon occupying the very highest levels of the Dynastic power structure, though, no one is likely to voice such concerns aloud. Still, order is one of the core values of the Scarlet Empire, and nothing embodies danger and disorder more effectively than the demon servitors that many sorcerers summon as the badge of their office. The obvious threat inherent in a sorcerer's vast knowledge makes others uncomfortable. Those with an inkling of just how much more sorcerers know tend to be more alarmed than those remain completely ignorant of what is taught at the Heptagram.

Realm culture sees sorcerers as those who parley with demons, enjoy delving into controversial pre-Usurpation history and delight in breaking the rules of Creation itself. For the rigid and rule-bound Realm, such behavior is almost intolerable. Nonetheless, the powers that be (especially the Empress, Mnemon and most Bronze Faction Sidereals) are still perfectly aware that sorcerers are some of the last connections Creation has to the glory of the First Age and the last great hope of reclaiming some of what was lost. More pragmatically though, all the Realm is aware that Lookshy has some of the most powerful sorcerers in Creation, and the Scarlet Dynasty cannot allow itself to fall behind in the sorcerous arms race. Were it not for those key factors, it is questionable whether the Realm would allow the study of sorcery at all. Be that as it may, those who've undertaken the study of sorcery have chosen a difficult path for themselves.

No student attends the Heptagram without realizing that she's setting herself up to be an outcast from much of Dynastic society. Mingled fear, resentment and disdain prevents many Dynasts from relating to sorcerers normally. Socially astute parents often try to dissuade their children from going off to study on the Isle of Voices, knowing that it will undermine their social and marriage options. Some sworn brotherhoods don't accept sorcerers in their ranks (ironic given that sorcery is required to formalize such a brotherhood), though some sworn brotherhoods consist solely of Heptagram graduates. Sorcerers form a discrete, dread nobility and their lives run parallel to those of "normal" Dynasts. To be a sorcerer in the Realm means to devote one's life to arduous and esoteric study. It means difficult hours spent studying the ancient and complex patterns of Essence that shift and alter Creation's fundamental principles. Not only is the Heptagram's training in sorcery rigorous, but it also removes certain blinders from the eyes of students (e.g., the presence of Sidereals in the Realm). Sorcery is one of the most potentially dangerous callings available to the Dragon-Blooded. At this point in the fallen Second Age, much of the information available about sorcery and its related fields is incomplete, and some is quite hazardous.

Most Dynasts are unclear about just how much sorcerers know or what they can do, and many sorcerers foster this mystique to their advantage. Realm sorcerers often have a reputation that far exceeds their actual abilities, and this reputation is responsible for much of the isolation sorcerers experience.

Many Great Houses provide separate quarters for the sorcerers in their family. This segregation is portrayed as a luxury for such a sorcerer, but it is just as much to keep her away from the rest of the family, particularly the children, as it is to reward her.

Marriage to a sorcerer is also an issue. Some Houses (notably Cathak and Peleps) strongly discourage marriage to sorcerers, while others, such as Mnemon and Ledaal, give extra consideration to suitors who are Heptagram graduates.

Charms are powerful manifestations of Essence, but most Terrestrials see them as *natural* abilities. They tend to view sorcery, the result of arduous study linked inextricably with the notion of demons and bad luck, as *unnatural*.

How sorcerers deal with their lot varies widely. Some make a point to use sorcery only (and obviously) for the common good to mitigate the stigma of their profession. Others never mention their training and carefully avoid saying anything that would expose them as sorcerers. The members of the final group bear the burden as regally as possible, surround themselves with an entourage of automata, elementals and demons in such a way that they almost challenge anyone to say anything. This last group is both the most numerous and the one that most Dynasts think of when they think of sorcerers.

The Sorcerer in Society

So many Dynasts are uncomfortable around sorcerers that Dynastic society has created a popular, comforting lie that it uses to avoid them. Sorcerers *like* being alone, Dynasts believe, as it gives them time to study and reflect on the mystic truths laid bare by their sorcerous training.

This belief is patently false, of course. Sorcerers don't like being alone any more or any less than architects, soldiers or merchants do. They recognize the lie for what it is: a socially acceptable excuse to forget to invite them to parties, a reason to put them up in the family manse's most distant quarters and a blame-free way to send them on long trips into the Threshold. The lie makes discomfort

and dislike look like consideration and concern for the sorcerer's well-being, while allowing the bulk of Dynastic society feel good about its bigotry.

Sentiments toward sorcerers vary by Dynast, of course. Some Houses make ample use of this lie to relegate all sorcerers to the farthest margins of daily life, while other Houses recognize the lie for what it is and refuse to use it. Some Great Houses are known to have particularly strong feelings toward those who study sorcery. Houses Mnemon, Ledaal and Tepet are sympathetic to sorcerers and generally have so many sorcerers in their Houses that they tend not to treat them any differently from any other Dragon-Blood. Sorcerers in House Tepet, however, are expected to keep the theatrical elements of sorcery (i.e., the demonic retinue) down to a minimum.

House Nellens adores sorcerers and crows its appreciation far and wide in hopes that those who feel snubbed by other Houses will be more likely to marry into Nellens. Nellens also provides its sorcerers with a particularly generous stipend. In return for this ostensible open-mindedness, House Nellens expects a great deal from its sorcerers and saddles them with incredibly hectic schedules and nigh-impossible tasks.

House Cathak, however, is unrepentant in its dislike of sorcerers. It does not invite sorcerers to its events, not even the few who belong to the House. Members are discouraged from marrying sorcerers, and even long pre-arranged marriages can be called off if the fiancé attends the Heptagram.

Sorcerous Societies

To make up for the isolation many sorcerers feel, they have taken to working together in sorcerous societies. Some such societies are open; some are well-kept secrets. The only thing they have in common is their devotion to sorcery and their quest for more lore pertaining to sorcery or the First Age.

Secondary Schools

Patricians who do not Exalt go on to any number of secondary schools to learn an assortment of petty trades ranging from business to law to thaumaturgy. While the schools open to patricians are good, rigorous institutions, they are not up to the task of training members of the Dragon-Blooded Host.

Four main secondary schools, and two alternatives, serve to prepare young Terrestrial Exalts for the defense and stewardship of Creation itself. The training in these places is appropriate to the skills and strengths of the Dragon-Blooded, and the un-Exalted—on those rare instances that they have been admitted—have not shown themselves to have the mettle to master the subject matter taught in these academies.

The Cloister of Wisdom

For those Dragon-Bloods who dedicate their lives to spiritual pursuits, the Cloister of Wisdom is where they familiarize themselves with the sutras—and the devastating martial arts—of the Immaculate Dragons.

Cloister of Wisdom Requirements:

In order to play a Cloister of Wisdom graduate, you must purchase at least Martial Arts 3, Integrity 2 (to reflect the self-mastery derived from meditation and self-abnegation), Medicine 2 (representing the monk's healing techniques) and Resistance 2 (to reflect the incredible hardiness developed by the arduous monastic life) for your character.

With the Storyteller's permission, Cloister of Wisdom graduates may take an extra dot of Martial Arts at no cost.

The House of Bells

No institution in the Realm better represents the martial prowess of the Dragon-Blooded Host than the House of Bells. As *the* school of war for members of the Scarlet Dynasty, it boasts a long history of cunning generals, relentless warriors and a lengthy catalogue of much-storied war heroes. Students of the House (as it is called colloquially) focus their studies on tactics, strategy, military history and battlefield logistics. They spend countless hours learning to build and maintain team cohesion. Everything these Dynasts do is centered on team dynamics. Under the tutelage of House instructors (or much older students) small units drill together practicing armed and unarmed combat, maneuvers, battlefield sorcery and endurance training. These young Dynasts live and sleep together in barracks; they fight and train together; they even bathe together as a unit. Personal space is unknown to students of the House of Bells. Individuality is a luxury for battle-tested generals. Everyone else must know how to be a cog in the Realm's great war machine.

House of Bells Requirements:

A player who wants to play a House of Bells graduate must purchase *at least* War 3 (to represent the House's intense focus on formation-based strategies and tactics) and Presence 3 (to reflect the command and authority wielded by those trained to lead the legions of the Realm) for his character.

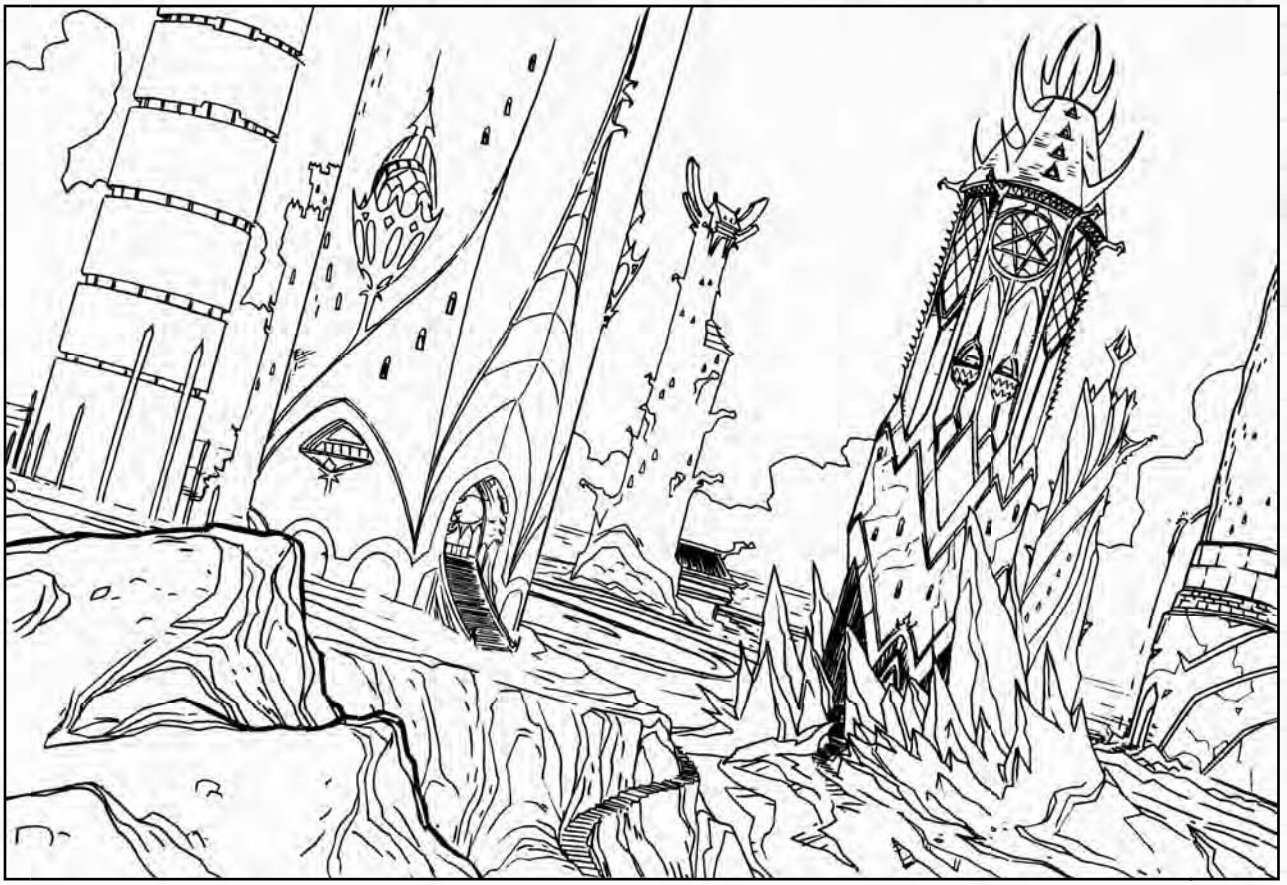
The Heptagram

The smallest of the Realm's four great academies, the Heptagram is located on the Isle of Voices, a small, craggy island off the north coast of the Blessed Isle. Demons and elementals alike see to it that the island is inadmissible to any who do not belong there, and the surprisingly deep channel between the Blessed Isle and the Heptagram is littered with the fish-nibbled bones of those who thought to go where they were not welcome. This academy guards its secrets jealously indeed.

Imperial Obligation

Attending the Heptagram is a luxury, and a very expensive one at that. Therefore, every graduate of the school is considered to owe the Realm one "Obligation" for footing the bill for a first-rate sorcerous education. (An Obligation is some return the Realm expects from a sorcerer on its investment, from a minor deed to an arduous, challenging task.) Some sorcerers are assigned their Obligation immediately upon graduation; others are assigned theirs years later, after they have become powerful veteran sorcerers. The Empress usually took the sorcerer's power and learning into consideration when assigning an Obligation, but she would sometimes use Obligations as a punishment, a reward, a training tool or for other reasons not directly linked to the well-being of the Realm.

In the Empress's absence, it is the Deliberative that calls in Obligations, and this it does in as Machiavellian a way as one might imagine. Some Houses are punished by having their sorcerers sent on suicide missions, while others are made to do the Realm's dirty work.



The Heptagram is known throughout Creation as the finest academy of magic, alchemy, demonology, divination and thaumaturgy in the Realm. Among the Terrestrial Exalted, only the sorcerer-engineers of Lookshy are as knowledgeable where sorcery and First Age secrets are concerned.

Heptagram Requirements:

A character who graduated from the Heptagram must start play with at least Occult 3, Lore 3 and Linguistics 1. Not every Dynast who graduates from the Heptagram knows sorcery, but no one graduates from the Heptagram without being fluent in Old Realm and knowing the basics of history and occult theory.

The Spiral Academy

The Realm does not maintain its position in Creation through the might of the Imperial Army alone. Arguments have been made that it is the Blessed Isle's complex web of magistrates, ministers, sub-ministers, satraps, governors, tax collectors and other bureaucrats that is truly responsible for the hegemony of the Realm.

Those intent on joining the Thousand Scales after graduation attend the Spiral Academy to learn advanced techniques of accounting, finance, oration, poetry, rhetoric, calligraphy, political science, and all of the other skills necessary to keep the Imperial Bureaucracy functioning smoothly.

Spiral Academy Requirements

Characters who graduated from the Spiral Academy must start play with Bureaucracy 3, Investigation 1 and Linguistics 3. At the Storyteller's discretion, a character who graduated from the Spiral Academy may get one free dot of the Resources Background to represent business advantages, contacts and the strategic exploitation of bureaucratic loopholes available to those who graduate from this school. This free dot cannot take the character above five dots in the Background.

Other Schools

While the four great academies are the most prestigious schools open to the Realm's Dragon-Blooded, they are not the only options. While the other schools lack prestige, they serve the Realm in other important ways.

Pasiap's Stair

The Realm is a hard place for those "found eggs" who Exalt from the lower classes or beyond the shores of the Blessed Isle. Such Dragon-Bloods represent a danger to the Scarlet Empire. They are spiritually enlightened (as reflected in their Exaltation) but unschooled, ignorant. Each one is a loose cannon in a Realm where order is precious and becoming more so.

Those outcastes who opt for military life train for 10 years at the fortress-academy known as Pasiap's Stair.

For more on Pasiap's Stair, see page **55**.

Schools for the Incorrigible

Lastly, there are two other schools on the Blessed Isle for students whose bad behavior is so beyond the pale, even for spoiled Dynasts, that no other school will take them. Built more like prisons than schools, both of these stern institutions show a great willingness to emphasize the whip over more conventional learning tools. No parent, regardless

of her standing, can send a child here without receiving the occasional glance of pity from her peers, because to do so is to admit to failure at a Dynast's most important job: the bringing up of young Dynasts.

It is common knowledge throughout the Realm that students leave these schools in one of three states: reformed, broken or dead. That said, the two schools vary a great deal in their approach to their grim work—and in their results.

The House of Ancient Stone

Located in the hilly farmland outside of Lord's Crossing is a sprawling, guarded, patrolled "school" called the House of Ancient Stone. The enormous, trapezoidal manse at the center of the school is clearly a First Age fortress of some sort. Composed of smooth slabs of black stone, it looks as though it rose up fully formed from the rich, black soil that surrounds it.

Run by Tepet Urono, a battle sorcerer who has served with the Tepet legions for nearly two centuries, the House of Ancient Stone is more akin to a work farm than a school, but all students do get an education in agriculture, history and geomancy. Taking advantage of the rich farmland around Lord's Crossing, the House of Ancient Stone routinely takes in as much for its crops and produce as it does in the extraordinarily costly tuition it charges its students' families.

Tepet Urono is a powerful Exalt, and he runs the House of Ancient Stone fairly, but with no tolerance for misbehavior or disrespect. He uses sorcery, dozens of elementals and a range of artifacts to monitor his charges at all times. One artifact in his possession makes it impossible to tell a lie within 20 feet of him, and older students traditionally let younger ones find this out the hard way.

Students rise two hours before sunup every morning, work in the fields for 10 hours "to rid them of excessive exuberance" and study intensively for the remainder of the day. Comprehensive tests are given at the end of every week. Students who refuse to work or master their studies are flogged until they change their minds or die. Unlike the Palace of the Tamed Storm, however, far more students graduate each year than die.

Urono stresses team-building efforts in all aspects of the curriculum. Bullies and braggarts, for example, are hung up by their ankles for 48 hours—or until a classmate frees them (as an object lesson in the importance of alliances). Cruelty and dishonesty are severely punished, but Urono also sees to it that kindness, cooperation and constructive leadership are rewarded in small but meaningful ways such as extra portions of food, increased authority over other students or, the rarest of privileges, trips to Lord's Crossing. Urono's goal is not to punish, or even to discipline, but to shape students into all that Dragon-Blooded should be.

If Urono has a soft spot, it is in his attraction to young men. While not a common occurrence, Urono has been known to "take it easy" on attractive male students who offer themselves to him sexually. If his lovers take advantage of his kindness, however, his resentment is both swift and brutal.

Graduates of the House of Ancient Stone routinely become skilled farmers, vintners and apiculturists. Many also become members of the legions in good standing, and several graduates every year opt to continue their education at the Heptagram, where Urono has many friends on staff.

House of Ancient Stone Requirements:

A character who graduated from the House of Ancient Stone must start with Bureaucracy 2, Lore 2 and Occult 1.

The Palace of the Tamed Storm

Contrary to Dynastic propaganda, the Imperial City does have a bad section, and at the epicenter of the worst of it is a vipers' nest referred to in polite company as the Palace of the Tamed Storm. Far less expensive than the costly House of Ancient Stone, the Palace of the Tamed Storm is a place where students learn to smile and succeed in the classroom even as they learn to extort, scheme, steal, maim and torture in the barracks. Criminality is the most effectively taught course in the Palace of the Tamed Storm. The second most effectively taught course is maintaining appearances.

Sesus Tokaiko is the harridan spider at the center of this web of misery. She is a cruel woman, prone to threatening her students with her fiery anima. The subtleties of reform and redemption are lost on her. Fear of disfigurement is her primary motivating tool.

One tired joke around the Imperial City is that Tokaiko is the most hated woman in the city now that the Empress has disappeared. Many are waiting and hoping eagerly for Tokaiko to follow in the Empress's footsteps.

Given their vicious sensibilities and tactics, Tokaiko's staff could easily be members of the Red Piss Legion, but somehow, they fell short of even that low calling. Many of her "tutors" are former students hardened enough to manage the crude and violent student body.

Students at the Palace of the Tamed Storm do master a wide variety of basic skills, however, because only by mastering the curriculum of the Palace of the Tamed Storm can they leave. It's up to them whether they do that in two years or eight.

Palace of the Tamed Storm Requirements:

Characters who graduated from the Palace of the Tamed Storm must start with a minimum of Larceny 3 and Socialize 2.

The Scarlet Dynasty

The Blessed Realm of the Scarlet Empire is easily the largest society of Terrestrial Exalts in Creation and, arguably, the most powerful. The Realm certainly claims to represent the high-water mark of Dragon-Blooded civilization on Creation's face since the fall of the Shogunate.

The Realm is the product of one incredibly powerful woman and her vast family. That woman is the Scarlet Empress, and her family is better known as the Scarlet Dynasty. Martial but spiritual, disciplined but decadent, powerful but imperiled, the Scarlet Dynasty is a mess of conflicting extremes.

The lives of the Realm's Dynasts are marked by luxury, opportunity and wealth—more so than even the Realm's comfortable patrician class and a far cry from the desperate lives of most mortals living in the fallen Second Age. The Immaculate Order maintains that the Terrestrial Exaltation is a sign of great spiritual advancement, and in so doing, it cedes the last major institution to the Terrestrial Exalted.

The founder of the Scarlet Dynasty, and its ruler for nearly 800 years, is the powerful Dragon-Blooded sorceress known as the Empress. Along with a handful of other Shogunate officers, she gained admittance to the long-lost Palace of the Anathema (since renamed the Imperial Manse), where she successfully activated the Realm Defense Grid at the moment of Creation's gravest peril. In so doing, she saved the world from the swarming chaos of the Fair Folk. Of those who entered the manse that day, only one emerged, and she would soon be known by only one title—Empress of the Realm.

No one on the Blessed Isle—Exalted or otherwise—is allowed the luxury of ignorance concerning the Empress's founding of the

Dynasty. Young children in primary school recite nursery rhymes about it, and children even younger recognize the five-pointed star that is the Empress's imperial seal.

Imperial lore has it that the scarlet star has long been the sigil of the Empress, a symbol of her Dynasty, and by extension the Realm, and by further extension, all members of the Dragon-Blooded Host.

Though the symbols of the Dynasty are well known throughout the Realm, its best-known facets are the Dragon-Blooded of the Dynastic Great Houses.

Households

It is a great blessing to be born into one of the Great Houses, and almost all Dragon-Blooded wear their family name so openly as to be accused of flaunting it. Extended families develop a very strong sense of family identity, and Dynastic households are often enormous, with seven to 10 generations of the same family simultaneously residing in a single vast manse.

At times, married Dynasts who have made a name (or a fortune) for themselves opt to escape the noise, congestion and family politics of a busy manse and establish a household of their own. In such cases, the brave Dynasts set off with the basics—their children, a handful of nieces, nephews and cousins, a small retinue of servants and slaves—and set up a household in whatever family territory they can request (or take) from their House elders. A household that can hold and administer a larger tract of territory is typically given more land as it proves its competence to the elders of the House. A household that shows itself incapable of managing its lands finds its holdings shrinking.

While members of these offshoot families still legally keep the last name of the House's founder as their claim to Dynastic birth, they are also known by the name of the founder of the household. Sometimes, for convenience or clarity of household affiliation, Dynasts go by a tripartite name: House name, household name, given name. Cynis Denovah Avaku, for example, bears the names of both his grandmother (Denovah) and the name of his great-great grandfather, the founder of the House of Cynis.

The Land Game

Farming remains the fundamental industry in the Realm, and land ownership is the key to income for patricians as well as Dynasts. When Dragon-Blooded households grow, they usually establish themselves on another tract of land owned by their Great House. If this new household is on strained terms with the House whence it sprang, though, it will acquire new lands for itself. Patricians grow very concerned when Dragon-Blooded acquire new tracts of land, because the Great Houses already control nearly 80 percent of the Blessed Isle. In theory, they control all of it, as the Realm itself belongs to the Empress, but the fact of the matter is that patrician families "manage" some real estate with enough control that they can be said to own it. The Great Houses could simply take any land they wanted, but such behavior would result in a near instant rebellion of every patrician household on the Blessed Isle.



Income

Throughout the Blessed Isle, Terrestrial Exalted can be found doing nearly anything for money except working hard. As spiritually advanced beings, Dynasts are above menial labor, which is the lot of mortals or summoned servitors. This is not to say that the Dragon-Blooded do nothing, just that they have the luxury of choosing how they want to serve their families and the Empress.

In theory, every Dynast gets a stipend just for being part of the Dragon-Blooded Host. In practice, those Dynasts who have shamed or offended their families are conveniently forgotten when the time comes to hand out jade. That said, only the laziest scion of the Dynasty is content with the minimum family stipend.

The amount of jade a Dynast actually receives from her family is determined by a ludicrously complex formula that takes many factors into consideration. Those factors include age, education, marital status, whether one's spouse is mortal or Dragon-Blooded, service to the family, service to the legions, service to the Wyld Hunt, service to the Empress, number of children produced, number of children Exalted and the rarity and strategic importance of any particular skills the Dragon-Blood possesses.

Young Dynasts, fresh out of secondary school, are often encouraged to travel and gain some experience in Creation, preferably beyond the shores of the Blessed Isle. Travel has historically been the unofficial first métier of most Dynasts as they determine what they want to do with their lives. As the self-proclaimed defenders of Creation, it behooves scions of the Dynasty to be familiar with as much of it as possible.

More driven or competitive scions of the Dynasty enter their chosen fields immediately. Graduates of the House of Bells are given a commission in the legions; graduates of the Spiral Academy enter government and business. Young Dynasts who graduate from the Heptagram may remain at the school to perform personal research in the presence of experienced instructors. Young sorcerers are often engaged by the Heptagram to obtain rare texts, items or substances from the Threshold. Monks who study at the Cloister of Wisdom simply don't need much in the way of financial resources, so they traditionally get less from their families than most other Dynasts would. Their every need is taken care of, though, and they often travel as well. They do so either to take up residence in a distant monastery, to wander as an itinerant or to act as support staff for the Wyld Hunt.

The Great Houses

The Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty are the celebrities, heroes and nobles of the Blessed Isle. They are larger than life because it is expected of them to be so. Of the 11 Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty, most are martial, social and bureaucratic powerhouses, great concentrations of political force that drive the heavy wheels of empire on the Blessed Isle. Combined, the Great Houses have nigh total control over the banks, the Imperial Army, the Immaculate Order, the Thousand Scales and the Realm's businesses. They are both church *and* state within the Scarlet Empire. A Great House can move against another and not be destroyed, but the un-Exalted are at the mercy of the Dynasts—a mercy that is often notably lacking. Noblesse oblige is little more than a quaint, heretical notion that occasionally, briefly comes into fashion among the Chosen of the Dragons. When it does, it is quickly abandoned when the Immaculate Order reminds the Great Houses that the Exalted are *supposed* to lord their power over the un-Exalted as a privilege of their great spiritual advancement.

House Aspect

All but one of the 11 Great Houses of the Imperial Dynasty clearly show the blessings of a specific Elemental Dragon, and this elemental affinity inevitably shapes a House's social, financial and martial interactions. For a number of reasons, however, including arranged marriages to off-aspect Dynasts, romantic dalliances and simple variation in the blood, all Great Houses produce scions of all five elemental aspects. An Exalted child *usually* takes after the aspect of whichever parent has the strongest blood. The affinity of each Great House reflects the aspect of the House's founder, and many, if not all, of the House elders share this affinity. When a young member of the House Exalts, it is assumed (and hoped) that she will share her House's elemental aspect. Many Dynasts see purity of aspect as a sign of a Great House's pedigree, and any House that produces too many Exalts who deviate from the House's traditional elemental aspect is quietly (and superstitiously) pointed out as losing the strength of its blood. Sidereal researchers have data disproving this superstition, but it doesn't serve their purposes to share that with members of the Dynasty just yet.

(In game terms, a character's aspect can differ from that of her House and she can still have five or even six dots in the Breeding Background, as long as both of her parents were Exalted.)

Blood and Pedigree

Bloodline and breeding are of the utmost importance to the Dragon-Blooded. At the beginning of the First Age, all offspring of the Dragon-Blooded also Exalted. Toward the end of the First Age, the Terrestrial Exalted bred much too frequently with mortals, diluting the gift of the Dragons. By this sad point in the Second Age, the blood of the Dragons has grown so thin that it is even possible for two Exalted parents to have children who do not Exalt. Should this dilution continue, there could come a time when the Gift of the Dragons is lost to Creation entirely.

Among other things dictated by purity of blood is the age at Exaltation. Stronger blood tends to cause earlier Exaltation (as early as 10 in a few children of exceptional breeding), while the thinnest blooded Terrestrial can Exalt as late as age 20.

The more hidebound Houses that guard the purity of their blood, such as Mnemon, Cathak and V'neef, reduce the family stipend of any Dragon-Blood who marries a mortal. Any children they have will be watched closely. If such a child does not Exalt, the couple's stipend will be reduced further. Should poorly bred children Exalt later in life (as weak-blooded children tend to), the stipend is restored and even paid retroactively.

Purity of Aspect

When two Dynasts produce a child and that child Exalts, much is made of that child's aspect. A child who "breeds true" is commonly believed to benefit from stronger blessings of its House's favored Dragon. Marrying outside of one's aspect always carries a risk of losing the favor of the Dragon who blessed one's House. An Exalt whose elemental aspect is different from that of both parents is considered very inauspicious, and the child is often sent away to be reared by a distantly located household in her family or sometimes to another House entirely.

The Eleven Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty

The 11 Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty are detailed here. Each description notes the Great House's leadership, its business dealings and alliances, and one or two of its best-known members.

House Cathak

Famed as one of the most militaristic of the Great Houses, House Cathak has been blessed by the Dragons with a better Exaltation rate than any House but Mnemon's. Even more auspiciously, House Cathak has produced more children than any other Great House for 80 out of the last 100 years. For other Great Houses, this would be a blessing. For House Cathak, it's necessary to offset the House's equally high mortality rate. The majority of young Cathaks (Exalted or not) enter the legions, where they strive to equal or surpass the legends of the House's great war heroes—and the House's casualty rate reflects that. More tragedies befall the young soldiers of this Great House than any other. Publicly, this is attributed to the fearlessness of House Cathak. Privately, it is often claimed that, while members of the House are long on bravery, they're short on judgment. Some members even secretly claim that it's an extravagant conspiracy engineered by Mnemon to keep House Cathak from taking control of the Dynasty simply by outbreeding the rest of the Great Houses.

Master of the House

Great grandson of Cathak himself, Cathak Cainan is the current patriarch of House Cathak and a true icon of the Scarlet Empire. Cainan is one of those rare, truly pious souls who obtained his schooling at the Cloister of Wisdom and then chose to be a soldier rather than a holy man.

Over a glorious career that has included leadership of the Cathak legions, massive battles with invading Fair Folk *and* vigorous participation in the Wyld Hunt, Cathak Cainan has earned the respect of his family and the obedience of the legions. He is one of a handful of Exalts in the Realm who can get an audience with the Mouth of Peace within an hour of requesting one.

Like his House, Cainan has proven himself unusually fecund, and a surprisingly high percentage of his children and grandchildren have Exalted.

Though he does not consider himself his House's ruler, per se, Cainan does guide his extensive family with a firm, but gentle hand. He's open to the input of other family members, but no one questions that his word is final.

Were he a younger man, Cainan would likely wind up on the Scarlet Throne thanks to the efforts of the Bronze Faction, which sees him as just the kind of pious mouthpiece it needs. As it stands, the Sidereals don't expect Cainan to last more than a few more decades, and they don't relish the notion of another succession conflict so soon.

Cainan is a tall man, heavily muscled, with long red hair and all the markings of an old and powerful Fire Aspect of excellent breeding.

Major Lines

The Cathak Garel Household

Cathak Garel is a respected military historian whose household is based in a sprawling manse outside Tuchara, in Arjuf Dominion. She and her family are renowned for writing the most accurate and complete histories of the Scarlet Empire's conquests and battles anywhere in the Realm. Gathered both through battlefield observation and exhaustive interviews, these histories read like hyper-detailed and thoroughly annotated skirmish-by-skirmish accounts. They are so accurate that they are considered sensitive information and guarded accordingly. Any time the Realm enters a conflict, chroniclers from the Cathak Garel household appear on or near the field of battle as dependably as hungry crows. On many occasions, the family has earned the ire of other Houses and households by being *too* honest in its histories, but Garel has always insisted that accurate records of battles are far more crucial to the Realm than flattering ones. If any member of the Cathak Garel household were ever to falsify a chronicle of a battle, both Garel and Cainan himself would be forced to take drastic action to defend the integrity of the household's reputation.

Several Garel historians have recently isolated themselves in the household's manse in Tuchara to complete the official account of the destruction of the Tepet legions at the hands of the Bull of the North, and many Dynasts are pressuring Cathak Garel herself to hurry the process along.

While many in Cathak Garel's line have followed her example and become historians, many have also made more active use of these historical lessons by becoming strategists and generals in the legions.

All of the major Cathak households are aspected toward Fire.

Economics

House Cathak has many satrapies in the Threshold, and that's where the vast portion of the House's funds come from. Cathak Cainan has a reputation for squeezing the House's satrapies harder than most of the Dynastic Houses, but also for providing more disciplined troops, less corrupt officers and a range of other services (road and bridge building, mostly). He sees the high tribute asked by his House to be fair, given the range of services the satrapies receive. For their part, the tributary states are less certain of that and have become suspiciously delinquent in paying tribute to the House in recent months. Others have forgotten to send portions of their tribute, claiming they have no more to send. They are clearly counting on the upheaval in the Realm to keep House Cathak at bay—and they may have figured things right. Should their gamble prove unfounded, however, House Cathak will certainly make its resentment known with a strong legion presence.

While the satrapies have been pondering a tax revolt, some Cathak households have started hiring out House troops to some of the House's other tributary states for money. Cainan dislikes this practice, comparing it to martial prostitution (as he calls mercenary activity). Still, he knows that a Great House does not make money simply by being morally upright. He is working to convince the House's other Dragon-Blooded to hire out these troops only in ways that further the Realm's interests, though his efforts have met with only moderate success. While the other Cathak scions hold Cainan in high regard, that respect won't put their children through expensive schools or keep them clothed in the luxurious silks to which they have become accustomed.

Goals and Alliances

Cathak Cainan is an honest man with a true concern for his House, and he leads House Cathak accordingly. He respects alliances and partnerships and eschews the paranoia that plagues many of the other Dynastic Houses. This isn't to say that the Cathaks rush into every deal they're offered, though. They vet their opportunities very carefully and make sure that the House benefits from any alliance it enters.



In recent years, Cathak has deployed its legions to guard other Houses' tribute caravans in return for a small cut of the take. Not only does this make money for House Cathak, but it helps make sure that the Realm's coffers stay full even during this Time of Tumult.

V'neef Aliset believes she has found a trove of First Age wonders deep in the Threshold, not far from Larjyn, and she is currently offering House Cathak a generous sum to help her transport her treasures back to the Realm for study and possible repair. House Cathak is very interested, but the political realities of the Realm make it very dangerous to deploy too many legions to the Threshold at the moment. Still, the possible payoff would likely make the risk worthwhile. A decision is forthcoming soon.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Cathak Cacek

As a young Exalt studying military strategy in the House of Bells, Cathak Cacek was plagued by insomnia. At night, to turn his inability to sleep to good use, Cacek designed a game that used the strategies he was learning in class and invited his fellow students to play, which they did in huge numbers. In RY 466, Cathak Cacek introduced this game, called Gateway, to the Realm at large, and it was instantly hailed as a masterpiece of strategic instruction.

Cathak Cacek served in the legions for many years and regularly played Gateway with his Dragon-Blooded peers, but he never realized how popular his game had become until he returned to the Realm. Cacek now heads a household of his own, and his descendents all prize themselves on being among the best Gateway players in the Realm.

Cathak Mae

It is rare that a profession as lowly as armorer would be seen as an acceptable trade for one of the Dragon-Blooded, but in Cathak Mae's case, exceptions have clearly been made. A graduate of the Heptagram, Mae specializes in creating powerful jade armor based on First Age designs. Every piece of armor she creates is a unique work of art, and she is easily one of the richest members of House Cathak.

Mae was engaged to be married to a young general in the Tepet legions before his death in the Battle of Fallen Lapis, where the Tepet legions were effectively crushed. Now, she shows little interest in anything beyond her extraordinary forge complex in Tuchara, despite a range of Exalted suitors from the best Dynastic Houses trying to get her attention. Some in her own House are hoping her mourning lasts quite some time, as the armor she has created in this period of grief has easily been of Shogunate quality.

House Cynis

There is no denying that House Cynis has made its own reputation, but it is equally true that the other Dynastic Houses have blown that reputation far out of proportion. Yes, the Cynis throw orgies, and yes those events are engineered to be spectacles. For the most part, though, those affairs are nothing like the unflattering accounts say they are.

Master(s) of the House

House Cynis is very loosely ruled by the three daughters of Cynis herself from their verdant Palace of Trees in Pangu Prefecture.

Cynis Wisel, Cynis Belar and Cynis Falen are devout hedonists who all agree that providing relaxation, entertainment and pleasure to the Realm is their House's true calling. On other matters, however, especially business, the three do not always agree.

Cynis Wisel tends to be nervous and conservative about changes in the House's course. She's not against taking action, but she does prefer to mull things over and look at all possible consequences before committing the House's resources. Her household, while great at throwing spectacular parties, does not share the Cynis propensity for depravity. That said, she has nothing against leveraging the depravity of others into profits for House Cynis.

Cynis Falen is the most optimistic of the three Cynis sisters. She is known for meeting threats and dangers head on and making the most of the resources the House now possesses. She is generally recognized as having the best economic sense of the three sisters, although maintaining that reputation has been known to drive her to some very amoral business decisions. She is prone to decisive action, which is good, but some of her actions are clearly not very well thought out. She believes, for example, that her House could steal the slave trade away from the Guild within only a few years if it really wanted to. Falen's branch of the family is known for its romantics, its dreamers and its musicians. It is said that the best lovers on the Blessed Isle descend from Cynis Falen, and Falen herself is quite proud of that reputation because she has trained most of her descendents in the arts of love at one point or another.

Cynis Belar is an accomplished Heptagram-trained sorceress. She is a quiet, pragmatic woman, and she often keeps her opinions to herself—only to make sure events unfold the way she wants them to later. Belar has a reputation for being somewhat secretive, but very shrewd in the ways of both business and people. When House Cynis needs information, it is Belar who gets it, either with sorcery or by hiring competent spies. Belar's household is known for being taciturn and more than a little paranoid, but very effective at anything to which its members turn their attention. Some of Belar's descendents have a reputation for sadism, and they don't hesitate to make that reputation work for them, especially when dealing with haughty satraps and self-important bureaucrats. Many of Belar's offspring appear to share her facility with sorcery as well.

In centuries past, the three sisters' "rulership" over the House rarely consisted of more than suggesting that one household or another hold another party. Recently, though, they have grown concerned about the state of the Realm, not to mention the more egregious excesses of their House, which they would like to curb in case the next ruler to sit on the throne considers them excessive or a threat to the public good.

Major Lines

Although only one is married at this point, all three sisters have enormous households that account for most of the Cynis Dragon-Blooded in the Realm.

All three Cynis households are aspected toward Wood.

Economics

House Cynis has traditionally made a great deal of money off the slave trade. It purchases slaves from the Guild and sells them within the Realm. The Guild smells weakness in the Realm, however, and has raised the price of slaves, causing the profits of House Cynis to plummet. While the House could easily obtain its own slaves, that would come at the risk of alienating the Guild entirely, something Cynis Wisel fears would be unwise, considering how indebted House Cynis is to the Guild at this point. Still, Cynis Belar has quietly and firmly made it known to some of the House's stingier satraps that any difference between tribute owed and tribute actually paid will be made up in young men and women of good breeding, who will be taken away and placed into slavery.

House Cynis hires out slaves to others who need cheap labor. Technically, the hiring party pays jade to buy the time of an overseer, who is then free to make use of his (or his family's) slaves as necessary. The overseer is generally a mortal or a young Exalt who needs to earn a stipend somehow, and watching others work is a relatively common pastime for Dynasts anyway. Ostensibly, it is the responsibility of the overseer to direct the slaves at whatever task he has assigned for them. More often, the overseer turns over direction of the slaves to the client household to use as necessary while he graciously accepts the client's hospitality. The primary responsibility of the overseer is to see to it that all slaves sent out to a client return alive and in good health. Any damage to the slaves or death among their number is charged against the stipend of the overseer. Consequently, a wise overseer is careful not to grow too blind while partaking of his client's hospitality.

Prostitution is a simple and obvious offshoot of the Cynis slave trade and one from which the House makes a moderate amount of money. Any decent-sized city has at least one pleasure house, and larger cities have more such establishments, some of which specialize based on the tastes and preferences in an area. On the Blessed Isle, all such places are owned by House Cynis, and they are all tied into a tight network that keeps careful records of important figures (including *all* Dragon-Bloods) who visit their establishment. More often than not, the best profit to be made by such places is in the knowledge of who was where, when, on what business and, of course, doing what with whom. Add to that the fact that some young clients have shown a convenient tendency to babble during sex, and House Cynis controls one of the key information networks on the Blessed Isle. In many instances, the best money to be had in prostitution is not in the fee paid for sexual release, but in leveraging information gleaned during the liaison for profit later.

Goals and Alliances

While renowned for the spectacles and exotic delights of its lavish parties, the hard fact of the matter is that, while others like to experience Cynis hospitality—and might even pay for many of the services provided by House Cynis—none of the other Houses especially wants to be associated with House Cynis enough to ally with it. One House, Sesus, regularly marries into Cynis, but even that has its political disadvantages at times. There's an appearance of dissolute weakness to the House, which runs contrary to the self-discipline and battle-ready ideals of the Dynasty. Even though those ideals aren't upheld the way they once were, no other House represents their *antithesis* the way House Cynis does. This makes the House vulnerable, especially if the next ruler to sit on the Scarlet Throne doesn't appreciate its business or reputation.

Obviously, the House would *like* to claim the throne, but Cynis has tapped into its own information network well enough to know that it doesn't have any viable candidates for the position. The best the House can do at this point is to use its connections and intelligence to glean advance notice of who the next Empress or Emperor might be and maybe cash in some favors or information to help roll with the coming changes.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Cynis Belar Rokujai

A brilliant but aimless youth, Rokujai first attended the Cloister of Wisdom (much to his family's amazement and chagrin), then

the Heptagram as soon as he finished his studies there. When he finished, he turned his years of education to being a prostitute.

The disdain of the Realm and its power brokers was palpable. His behavior was scandalous even for a Cynis, and even within House Cynis, pressure mounted to disown young Rokujai. Belar herself interviewed him to find out what was going on in his head, and the two of them talked for over four hours before he left. His answers satisfied her, because she refused to hear any criticism of him after that point.

After being a very well remunerated prostitute for several years, Rokujai retired from that profession and instead opened several popular brothels in major cities across the Realm, seven of which were in the Scarlet Prefecture. These brothels were places of pleasure, of course but they were primarily ready-made intelligence-gathering venues.

With a profound understanding of martial arts, sorcery and the hard realities of the street, Rokujai then combined his disparate fields of knowledge to become the closest House Cynis has to a spymaster. Through means both mundane and sorcerous, Rokujai would gather information on the patrons of his establishments and find out who might need that information. Rokujai doesn't care for competition and has surreptitiously done away with key intelligence figures in other Houses, especially those who took too keen an interest in House Cynis. While other spies are more established than he, Rokujai's understanding of multiple disciplines makes him a subtle and terrifying opponent.

Cynis Mond, Windtamer

Among the most prolific artificers in all of the Dynasty, Cynis Mond is a living legend among the Dragon-Blooded. No one expected this. He spent his early life as a man obsessed with the wind, both as a physical force and as a magical concept. He spent months building oddly shaped sails and studying flight patterns of immense kites. His family thought him useless and mad.

Toward what should have been the end of his natural life span, Mond unveiled a series of never-before-seen artifacts and Charms all predicated on his life's study of the flow of wind and Essence.

In the span of a few short years, Mond, now called Windtamer, went from being a marginalized crackpot to one of the Realm's most respected and best-known sorcerers, rivaled only by the likes of the Empress herself and her daughter Mnemon. The First Age windslave terminals and their more specialized variants, popularized and reproduced by Mond, are in use by geomancers, architects and the legions in every corner of the Threshold. Hundreds of Terrestrial Exalts learn Charms created by Mond for use in endeavors from sailing and combat to music and communication.

Though famous and highly respected, Mond is no less the eccentric visionary than he ever was. He remains flighty and rarely stays in one place for long. He occasionally teaches at the Heptagram as a celebrity senior savant. He maintains homes and workshops throughout Creation. Anywhere the wind blows, Mond can travel without difficulty.

Mond's command of Essence is said to have reached the pinnacle of Terrestrial potential, though those who have had any real interaction with him hint that he is more wind than man now, occasionally fading to transparency for minutes on end when he forgets to maintain his corporeal form. His blue-gray hair and beard have grown to a prodigious length, and they and his flimsy wrap constantly blow around him in the ceaseless winds that attend him. He no longer touches the ground for longer than a moment at a time, instead hovering and flitting above it.



House Iselsi

At first glance, it is tempting to refer to House Iselsi as a *former* Dynastic House, as it was shattered over four centuries ago following a failed attempt at disposing of the Empress and has never been allowed to regain its footing. It has no satrapies, no seat on the Deliberative and few obvious allies among the other Houses.

All of this ignominy has been due to one indiscretion. In RY 303, several House Iselsi spies conspired to assassinate the Empress. The attempt obviously failed, and the would-be assassins were tortured to death, but the rest of the House was placed under a dark shadow of suspicion for its ignorance of the conspiracy and for not moving to stop it. Every few decades or so, the Empress would execute another Iselsi on charges of spying and give one of the House's satrapies to another Great House. The House accepted its lot stoically, but its situation did not improve. On the contrary, after nearly three centuries of this, the Empress formally struck the House from the Imperial ledgers entirely, making sure that, among other things, the House lost its lands and would no longer get seats in the Deliberative.

The transformation that has taken place in the House over the intervening 450 years has left it unrecognizable. There was a time when House Iselsi was a burgeoning naval power with a veritable army of spies in the All-Seeing Eye. What little of the House remains in the public eye is nothing but a shadow its past glory.

Many of the Iselsi line were Immaculate martial artists and had long been supporters of the Immaculate Order, so it was not a stretch for the House's elders to seek sanctuary in the Palace Sublime once the last of its familial lands had been stripped away. Sanctuary was granted, and the House's freefall seemed to slow, at least a bit. With a core household in the enormous, ancient Palace Sublime, the House at least had a safe place to live.

Safety, however, does not appear to be enough to save the Iselsi. Most observers give the House another few decades before the remains of the Iselsi no longer have enough substance to hold together.

Master of the House

House Iselsi is so splintered that it cannot be said to have any real guiding hand directing its operations. The nucleus of the House's elders resides in the Palace Sublime, but those who really perform the House's work are wanderers, officials and spies with any name *but* Iselsi. Most of those have made their way to the Threshold since the Empress's disappearance. All households descended from the Iselsi line manage their own affairs. From time to time, elder Exalts in the Palace Sublime offer advice to their younger relatives located elsewhere, but these words have little weight and cannot be considered anything beyond suggestions.

Major Lines

In the Realm, there is only House Iselsi: sad, failing, lost. There were once three major households, but they've all grouped together behind the Iselsi name for numbers and safety.

In the Threshold, there is the Enuma household in Cherak and the Saraban operating out of Kirighast, but neither of those names would be associated with Iselsi. Both of these have become obsessive about preserving the purity of their blood and do not, under any circumstances, breed with mortals. While their numbers have shrunk, their Exaltation rate has gone up as their blood has grown more potent with the power of the Dragons.

Throughout most of its history, all Iselsi households were aspected toward Water. Since the shaming of the House, and the catch-as-catch-can betrothals that followed, the House has lost its purity of aspect. Now, many of the younger generation are Exalting toward Air and Wood, a phenomenon that would embarrass the House if it could sink any further. This dilution actually helps House Iselsi strategically, though, by allowing its members to pass as members of other Houses.

Economics

On the face of it, House Iselsi is a dying institution. It controls neither legions nor satrapies. It cannot openly run any business ventures. It has survived to whatever degree it has by associating itself with various para-religious organizations associated with the Immaculate Order. This is barely enough to support the House at the poverty level, but it works when combined with a few small-time spying and discrete smuggling operations.

Most of the jade once controlled by House Iselsi was long ago transferred to the House's "cover families" in Cherak and Kirighast. Both families receive a small "diplomatic stipend" from the Realm, but they have a range of shipping and mercantile interests that bring them most of their money. The House also has spies throughout the Threshold. Those spies are perfectly happy to sell information they collect, but they're just as happy to use the information they gather to further the House's business interests.

Goals and Alliances

The members of House Iselsi would like nothing more than to unify at this point. They have no power and too little standing to marry even into patrician families. Since the expected pardon of the House is unlikely ever to come now that the Empress has disappeared, there is increasingly less hope of ever regaining the standing of a full Dynastic House. The question now is how to safely get the last remaining desirable members of the House from the Palace Sublime to the Threshold without anyone catching on. With House Mnemon accruing power within the Immaculate Order on a seemingly daily basis, even the Mouth of Peace will soon have a hard time either preventing the Palace Sublime from being moved to the Imperial City or ensuring the safety of the remaining members of House Iselsi.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

The disgrace of House Iselsi is such that it cannot be considered to have any members who might be called "illustrious." More often than not, those in the Iselsi lineage have changed their names to shed the infamy that follows the Iselsi name. Those figures who play key roles in the Iselsi's situation now are mortal as often as Exalted.

Whitemane Vocal

Though not Exalted, Whitemane Vocal is a patrician and the governor of the town of Spider's Crossing. He was placed in his position only shortly before the Empress disappeared. Vocal is the son of one of the Iselsi elders living in the Palace Sublime, and he is entirely devoted to House Iselsi. He fits in at Spider's Crossing by assuming an accent, and he gathers what information he can for his family, although he has to be careful, lest he imperil his position.

Darako Moonrise

Perhaps the most promising of the recently Exalted Iselsi, Moonrise is a ship's captain, the daughter of a union between her mother, an Iselsi, and her father, a Peleps naval officer whom her mother seduced one night while he was drunk. The Iselsi ruse requires a great deal of running between Cherak, Kirighast and the Realm, and Moonrise is one of the most knowledgeable captains in the Inland Sea.

The Ruse

Although the family's situation is not great, particularly since the Empress's disappearance, House Iselsi hasn't been dismantled nearly as severely as outsiders have been led to believe.

Before the assassination attempt, House Iselsi had been one of the Empress's favorites, in part because it provided her with the timeliest and most accurate information on what was going on in the Realm and in the Threshold alike. After the poorly planned attempt on her life by a coalition of rash young Dragon-Bloods from the House, there was little the Empress could do to save face *but* to make the House suffer long and slowly. Doing so made an object lesson of the House, for one thing. It also gave the Empress the opportunity to make some improvements to her intelligence-gathering abilities. All of those who were allegedly executed were high-ranking members of the All-Seeing Eye. Instead of being killed, as everyone believed, they were given new identities and shipped to distant places (some as far away as the Threshold) where they continued to serve as the Empress's eyes and ears. Some members of House Iselsi, those the Empress was fond of, were given new identities and then made magistrates or archons.

This became a game for the Empress. She would strip House Iselsi of its rights and privileges on one hand and give members of the House enormous stipends or tracts of land in the Threshold on the other.

Many members of the House were just moved and made sleeper agents living in distant locales, just waiting for word from the Empress to collect information or destroy the enemies of the Scarlet Throne.

Key members of the House in the Palace Sublime are aware of the real situation, if not sure what to do, but they've carefully kept the truth from younger members of the House whose discretion they're not certain of.

While the Empress was still ruling, the plan was to engineer some great act of redemption for the House and bring large portions of the family back into the light. With the disappearance of the one woman needed to make that happen, hope for the future of the House is much bleaker. Only the Empress, her Sidereal advisors and a few of her trusted magistrates knew the truth, and the plan for House Iselsi's triumphant return is lost with her.

The other Houses, unfortunately, might not be so kindly disposed to the remnants of House Iselsi. All that keeps them from taking action against the House now is their concern that Iselsi spies—and assassins—could be hidden near them and ready to strike the moment they take hostile action against the House.

Luckily, House Iselsi has a solid presence in the Threshold, particularly in the satrapies that once belonged to them. While they might have given up obvious and powerful positions, they still possess many key roles. Now, they just hold them under different identities. Many garrison commanders, ambassadors, monks and the like once wore the name Iselsi and still feel a bond of fealty to their family.

The House's challenge now is to decide whether to attempt some last redemptive effort on its own or to give up the last trappings of being a Dynastic House and move to the Threshold, where those who blazed the trail have established a new household under another name.

At this point, more of House Iselsi has gone underground than remains in plain sight. Those who remain as visible symbols of the tragedy that has befallen House Iselsi are the less clever or trustworthy members of the House, and the tragic end of House Iselsi might be theirs to act out once the rest of the family has relocated to the Threshold.

Unknown to all but a few, her ship has a pair of copper handles attached to the bottom of the hull. When she gets a good wind in her sails, Moonrise activates her anima, dives overboard and holds onto the handles as the ship pulls her through the churning sea. That's one of the ways she has learned the topography of the bottom of the Inland Sea. She has also used this trick a time or two to avoid Imperial inspectors with whom she did not want to speak.

House Ledaal

Ledaal, the Empress's fourth child to survive to adulthood, was clearly a prodigy. To make sure that she was never bored, the Empress asked Chejop Kejak for a Sidereal tutor for her little girl. Ledaal absorbed everything the Chosen of Mysteries told her: about sorcery, about the First Age, even about the Usurpation. Though she never repeated all that she knew (a lesson she learned early on), Ledaal was powerfully shaped by what she learned from her tutor. She later asked that tutor, and some other Sidereals as well, to stay on with her and her family as trusted advisors.

That, along with the House's elemental aspect, has resulted in one of the most intellectually curious and investigative Houses in the Realm. Curiosity has been the bane of many in this House, but most Ledaals would find death preferable to boredom anyway, so they don't much mind the danger.

House Ledaal is one of the few Houses to realize the enormity of the threat posed by Deathlords. While its scions are trying to point out the danger to the other Houses, they have not been as effective as they need to be.

Master(s) of the House

Throughout its history, House Ledaal has consistently been run by a cabal of powerful, experienced Exalts. For the last several years, that cabal has included four Dynasts who epitomize both the worldly and intellectual seeking for which House Ledaal is known.

Ledaal Kebok Omeger

A scholar and a sorcerer, Omeger was a savant and archeologist at the Heptagram for many years before retiring to take a more active hand in the running of his House. Like many in his family, he is an avid student of First Age history. He spent most of his life in the wilds of the Threshold searching out lost historical texts and studying the ruins of the First Age. He returned only 20 years ago to

help lead his House, sporting a deep scar new on his cheek. Though everyone has asked to hear the story behind it, Omeger refuses to discuss the matter with anyone but his Sidereal advisor.

Ledaal Catala Gamam

Like most of House Ledaal, Gamam has a very low boredom threshold, which has made her something of an adventurer. She has spent most of her Exalted life in the Threshold. She's fascinated by the lack of any mention in history of the Deathlords, so she's curious if they're a new phenomenon. She has spent many years mapping the location and edges of several shadowlands, and during that time, she was also able to gather some intelligence on the Abyssal Anathema and their masters. Six months ago, after the joint Ledaal-Cathak victory at Scorpion Ridge, she was summoned home to join in the running of her House. She would prefer to continue her work in the Threshold, but she realizes that her family needs her knowledge and experience. This also gives her an opportunity to analyze the information she has gathered thus far in preparation for her next foray *and* to spread the word of the dangers presented by the deathknights.

Ledaal Caros

Caros is a strategist. He studied at the House of Bells, where he has since taught as well, and he has advised several of the Realm's great generals. House Ledaal's Sidereal advisors predicted his worth as a strategist at his birth, so he has never been allowed to choose his own path. He has suppressed his frustration and resentment over this, since he understands what is at stake. As a result, he has grown increasingly morose and peevish over the years.

Ledaal Cycel

With an eidetic memory and an uncanny ability to figure out who will do the most good where, Cycel runs most of the day-to-day operations of her House. She often consults with the Sidereals on which of the House's children should be encouraged to go into what fields. She has no compunctions about pressuring parents into dictating their children's career choices, and many parents and children alike have thanked her years after the fact for her meddling.

Major Lines

There are two major households and a number of smaller offshoots of House Ledaal.

The Ledaal Catala Household

When Catala opted to form a household, she was not content to remain on the Blessed Isle when most of what the Realm urgently needed to know was out in the distant parts of the Threshold. She established a household in a powerful Air-aspected manse in the hills where the north fork of the Great Forks River starts, and her many children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have come to prefer the role of pioneers to that of nobles with too much leisure time. This branch of the family finds it easier to study the Threshold and gather wonders and information when it doesn't have to travel back and forth to the Realm. The primary subject of study for the Catala household is the Anathema, the shadowlands and the Deathlords. Its members collect old texts and new intelligence, ferret out foreign business opportunities to keep the House vaults filled and make friends and allies in places where most Dynasts are afraid to venture.

So numerous are the sorcerers in this household that they've formed their own sorcerous society.

The Rings of Ledaal Catala

Several of the Exalted in the Catala household are Heptagram-educated sorcerers, and some younger members of the household are learning sorcery from their family *without* attending the Heptagram (which is several thousand leagues to the west). They have formed something of an extended sworn brotherhood in their Threshold homestead based around the discovery, collection and study of sorcerous lore unknown in the Realm. In some ways, this is their only option, as they often lack the resources of Realm sorcerers, but it has already been quite rewarding. These sorcerers are fascinated with the ways in which the apex of First Age sorcery eclipses even the most powerful spells they learned at the Heptagram, and they're hoping to find something to rival the spells they've read about. They have already found a number of First Age sorcerous manuscripts, a handful of complex wonders and some undamaged (but non-functional) automata. Their true desire, however, is to find the fabled *Book of Three Circles*.

Senior members of the Rings (as the group is called colloquially) have access to copies of *Oadenol's Codex*, *The Perfect Square* and a partially translated treatise on ancient theories of manse construction entitled *The House of the Noonday Sun*, written by the legendary architect Kal Bax. None of these texts has yet found its way to the Heptagram.

The Rings' quest is not for knowledge for its own sake—or at least not entirely. The Rings of Ledaal Catala intend to scour the Threshold for any sorcerous means to combat or defeat the Deathlords, their deathknights and the other Anathema. In this search, members eagerly follow any rumor or hint of spells, manuscripts or wonders from the First Age. They also engage in deep and dangerous periods of sorcerous experimentation. The society's location in the Threshold provides its members with easy access to remote places in which to experiment and opportunities to get their hands on items and substances that are difficult to acquire in the Realm. The tradeoff, of course, is that certain items that are readily available in the Realm are nonexistent this far out in the Threshold and must be obtained either in the Realm or in large metropolitan centers, such as Nexus, both of which require a great deal of travel.

The Ledaal Kebok Household

Another great Air-aspected sorcerer, Ledaal Kebok is a famed scholar and sorcerer, and he still teaches at the Heptagram from time to time. His household takes after his scholarly bent and collects historical texts, records oral histories (preferably from older Sidereals when possible), studies sorcery at the knee of the Sidereals and runs a solid intelligence-gathering network that boasts eyes and ears in most of the major cities around the Realm.

Though he will deny it to the end, there is a rumor that his eldest daughter, Sulco, took a demon as a lover, and that a strain of demon-blood taints all of her children. The rumor has some



truth to it, but Kebok can't accept the notion and refuses to hear it spoken in his presence.

All the Ledaal households are aspected toward Air.

Economics

House Ledaal controls several major ports in the south of the Blessed Isle, Arjuf in particular, and gains substantial funds from tariffs and taxes. The House also has a respectable handful of satrapies under its control, which it treats with commendable fairness. While House Ledaal doesn't drain its tributaries the way some Houses do, it does not tolerate lateness. Ledaal tributaries learn early on that it's inadvisable to antagonize a House of sorcerers.

The savants of Ledaal occasionally perform sorcery on others' behalf, or restore a First Age wonder to full working order for someone, but they charge dearly for such tasks. That price goes up precipitously if there is any danger to the sorcerer.

The Catala household, based out of Creation's Far Eastern edge, brings in much of its money by finding previously unknown First Age wonders and texts and selling them to the Heptagram for a spectacular sum, as well as arranging and overseeing trips into the deep Threshold.

Goals and Alliances

While it has no interest in governing an empire, House Ledaal has every interest in maintaining the integrity of the Realm. Most of the deals and alliances it arranges are made to achieve that end.

Ledaal would dearly love for Cathak Cainan to take the Scarlet Throne because its members respect his experience with the Wyld Hunt and they believe he would be open to focusing the Hunt's efforts on destroying the Deathlords and their deathknights. To further its connection with House Cathak, House Ledaal has many marriages pending with that Great House.

Thanks to its support of the Wyld Hunt, particularly against the deathknights, House Ledaal has the support of the Immaculate Order, right up to the Mouth of Peace herself. In return, Ledaal's Threshold archeologists keep an eye out for sutras or First Age documents that the Order might want—provided House Ledaal doesn't want them more.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Ledaal Kebok Coren

Recently graduated from the House of Bells, Ledaal Kebok Coren is already an astonishing prodigy with blades and in terms of her control of her own Essence. She scares many in her own household. While many Air Aspects seem to have a deep connection to the weather, Coren's goes far beyond the norm. Some Children of Mela have eyes that reflect the sky, but with Coren, the sky seems to reflect her mood. When she is happy, the sky is clear and blue as sapphire. When she despairs, it rains. And when she's angry, great bolts of lightning and raging thunder shake the heavens. She is slowly learning to control her emotions, but she's naturally very prone to strong, passionate feelings, so the process is slow and difficult. In their long talks together, her grandmother, Sulco, has confessed to Coren that her abilities come through the blood, and that her great grandfather is a powerful storm demon named Yan. Sulco has shown particular interest in Coren, and it's possible that Yan has as well.

House Mnemon

Within a week of their Exaltation, Mnemon herself gives to every member of her House a beautifully engraved white jade tile. It is small enough to fit comfortably in the palm, and in minute Old Realm calligraphy, it reads, "Power through knowledge, mastery through rigor, and conquest through diligence." That philosophy captures the essence of House Mnemon perfectly.

A large number of House Mnemon's scions are known as accomplished martial artists, and more members of this House enter the Immaculate Order than any other. At the same time, a strong flow of sorcerous talent has resulted in many in this House taking up the study of sorcery and the lost secrets of the First Age.

Any discipline that requires arduous, rigorous, systematic study is a welcome challenge for members of House Mnemon. They thrive on complex systems, be it First Age wonders, complex poetic forms, geomantic architecture, combat strategies or sorcery.

Education is one thing House Mnemon supports very strongly. The House even sends its un-Exalted members to study at the top schools in Tuchara, insisting that all members of House Mnemon are to have only the best education available to them.

Mnemon is proud of the fact that no other House has as many Exaltations as her own. She takes pride in the purity of her blood and views each Exaltation in her family as a personal gift to her from the Dragons.

Master of the House

Mnemon

House founder, extraordinary sorceress and frontrunner in the race for the Scarlet Throne, Mnemon is the eldest child of the Scarlet Empress who is still active in Realm politics. Of all the contenders for the Scarlet Throne, she is probably the most capable of taking her mother's place.

Only the arrayed might of the other Houses prevents her from simply taking the throne, although she believes she could easily take on the combined might of at least two other Great Houses with enough advance notice.

The only reason Mnemon has not yet taken this kind of action is that, in the end, she believes the Realm will fall into such chaotic disarray that political infighting will be forgotten. Once things get bad enough, she reasons, the other Houses will *beg* her to take the Scarlet Throne.

"Master of the House" fails to capture Mnemon's full role within her family and the Dynasty. Driven by her desire for the Scarlet Throne, she's possibly *the* political power player in the Realm, and she utterly dominates the Great House that bears her name. She knows the names, talents, loves, crimes and secrets of all of her descendants. She also knows by rote who has risen to what position in which ministry. She uses this information to get the most out of her family's achievement and to drive them to greater achievement. Those who do not obey her or who fail to reflect well on her have been known to suffer tragic accidents.

Mnemon is most definitely not a song of one note, however. She alternates the means by which she gets things done, lest she become too predictable. Sometimes, she's subtle as a thin layer of dust. Other times, she's direct as an avalanche.

Mnemon is secretly pleased with the timing of her mother's disappearance, since she believes that the Empress had chosen her much younger sister V'neef as successor to the throne, due to the unequalled purity of V'neef's blood. Mnemon has shared this knowledge with no one, however. Although Mnemon respects V'neef as a woman, she would kill her sister before letting her assume the throne.

Mnemon has mastered many, though by no means all, of her mother's skills with sorcery, and it's evident. Though she's very nearly 400 years old, she doesn't even look like she's reached 30 yet. She sustains her unnatural life span by drawing on the strength of the earth itself—one of many tricks Mnemon plucked from the Empress's vaults of lore. Mnemon has an astonishing array of demons and elementals serving her, though no one but Mnemon knows just how many or which ones. Those who can see non-materialized beings tell of a murky cloud of presences around Mnemon so thick that the sorceress herself is almost impossible to see through it.

Perhaps surprisingly, there remain some sorcerous options Mnemon has, thus far, refused to exercise in her pursuit of the Scarlet Throne. Mnemon *knows* what happened to her mother, and she has no wish to follow quite so far in the Empress's footsteps.

Major Lines

The Mnemon Caras Household

Far removed from his grandmother's political games, Mnemon Caras is a true believer in the Immaculate Order. Fully one third of the children who Exalt into the Mnemon Caras household attend the Cloister of Wisdom and become Immaculate monks. Mnemon Caras pushes the edge of safety in the degree to which he rejects his grandmother's control. Given a chance, Caras would love to lead his family in rebellion against his grandmother, whom he considers unstable. In the meantime, however, he watches his words, and his step, very carefully.

Most of the major households of House Mnemon are aspected toward Earth. A small few are Air-aspected. The stigma that sometimes results from such a mixture of aspects is moot in this case, as the House of Mnemon boasts the best Exaltation rate on the Blessed Isle. Mnemon herself would take umbrage at anyone who cast aspersions on the purity of her blood.

Economics

Mnemon controls some of the richest and most accessible tributaries that claim allegiance to the Realm, including Paragon and many of the northern coastal states. So far, House Mnemon has been able to keep the tribute flowing relatively freely by deploying its private legions (and, in some instances, demons) to quash signs of rebellion before a full uprising could take place. Since Tepet's disaster, however, Mnemon has been more cautious about deploying her legions beyond the shores of the Blessed Isle. As a result, her tributaries have become bolder about paying late or not at all. The satraps have little love for House Mnemon. Though it has decreased the legion protection significantly, House Mnemon hasn't reduced the amount of its expected tribute at all. And Mnemon has a very high opinion of just how much her protection is worth.

Though House Mnemon has its share of sorcerers, monks and bureaucrats, it also has a substantial share of merchants, and standard mercantilism has prevented the House from losing too much money in the upheavals that have shaken the Realm.

Thanks to the House's devotion to Pasiap, there is also a large number of architects in House Mnemon. While few Houses have the funds to build the way they once did, there's always someone who needs a manse repaired or a temple designed and built. Plus, with the Time of Tumult raging across Creation, there's no shortage of fortifications that need to be raised.

Goals and Alliances

Mnemon's arrogance is notorious. Rumor claims she has even demonstrated a tendency to look down on the Empress herself. She has not gone to any trouble to try to hide the fact that she does not see her sibling's children as her equals in any way. That arrogance is coming back to haunt her now, though, when she needs their support. What allows her to behave this way, however, is that Mnemon's arrogance—unlike that of most Dynasts—is well earned. Her House *is* among the most powerful on the Blessed Isle, and no Dynastic House can afford to alienate her.

Not only does Mnemon's House produce many children, it also boasts more Exaltations every year than any other House. Every single one of the other Houses wants the benefit of that kind of purity of blood. Needless to say, the children of House Mnemon have no trouble finding suitors. Every Dynastic House has married into House Mnemon somewhere along the way, producing hundreds of inroads into the other Houses for Mnemon—and thousands of potential informants, should any other House plot against her in earnest.

Mnemon's most solid ally is House Sesus, which takes particular pride in its connections to House Mnemon. Its support of Mnemon's bid for the throne, however, has thus far been underwhelming, leaving Mnemon questioning the value of all the connections she has fostered to that House.

Mnemon needs all the allies she can get, however, because she will not be satisfied with anything less than the Scarlet Throne. The thought of bowing down to any of her lesser relatives is completely galling and violates everything Mnemon cherishes about the Immaculate Philosophy. While she tries to maintain her composure over the matter, Mnemon is privately furious that the matter of her succession has not yet been settled.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Mnemon Harasa, Paragon of the Earth Dragon

Though she initially had no interest in the Immaculate Order, Mnemon Harasa was steadily drawn to it through the constant stream of reverent references by Mnemon herself. Harasa found the Order's chants soothing and its cycles and devotions the perfect source of solace and framework for her life. She initially attended the Heptagram, but found it not to her liking, as it didn't provide sufficient structure to keep her focused. Upon dropping out of the Heptagram, Harasa immediately went into the Cloister of Wisdom, where she proved to fit in perfectly. Harasa progressed through the Coils of the Immaculate Order rapidly, even proving herself a relentless and powerful leader of the Wyld Hunt. Between her own competence and a nudge from Mnemon, Mnemon Harasa was named the Paragon of Pasiap, a role she has held for years now in the Palace Sublime. To escape pressure from Mnemon to use her sway in the Order to support the founder's bid for the Scarlet Throne, Harasa left the Palace Sublime to tour the Immaculate Order's monasteries in the Threshold. In so doing, she has seen firsthand just how weak the Realm's presence in the Threshold has grown. Before she was able to make it back to the Realm to spread word of what she had seen (and throw her wholehearted support behind Mnemon), however, Mnemon Harasa was taken prisoner and most of her retinue of powerful Immaculate monks killed. The Immaculate Order has no idea who abducted Harasa, but they do know that no mortal has the power to take the Paragon of Pasiap against her will. The entire Immaculate Order, and Mnemon herself, wants Harasa back. Some Dynasts are hoping that Harasa's disappearance will



be a wakeup call to those who feel it's okay to let the Wyld Hunt grow weak even as the Anathema grow strong. Others are quietly pleased to see another Mnemon ally taken out of play.

House Nellens

Being a Dragon-Blood in House Nellens is a mixed blessing. On one hand, such individuals are beloved because they are automatic celebrities in their House. On the other hand, House Nellens has thrown its lot in with patricians and the un-Exalted, and despite being Princes of the Earth, Exalted can wind up feeling like second-class members of the House. The ambiguity of such status can anger Nellens Dragon-Blooded, and some of them have even left their House in disgust. Most, however, accept their awkward status gracefully and take pride in the advantages enjoyed by the Dragon-Blooded that others in their House will never know. Some even become advocates for the rights of the un-Exalted, although doing so borders on heresy in the eyes of the Immaculate Order.

Master(s) of the House

House Nellens is guided by a council comprising its four oldest patricians and three oldest Dragon-Blooded. While the other Houses assume that the Dragon-Blooded are the real decision-makers, they would be surprised to learn that the Dragon-Blooded are largely figureheads whose real purpose is to get the other Houses to take House Nellens seriously. The un-Exalted make the decisions and, except for rare moments of intense conflict, the three Dragon-Blooded go along with whatever the others agree upon.

Major Lines

Nellens is at a disadvantage in almost every way conceivable when dealing with the other Dynastic Houses, and members of the House consider it very important to project a unified front. For that reason, all members of House Nellens use the Nellens name, and there's strong pressure not to weaken the House by breaking into separate households. Most of the family lives in an enormous manse in the city of Juche, at the base of the Imperial Mountain.

The House founder was the only mortal with whom the Empress ever condescended to share her superlative breeding. She must have felt very strongly for him because even after his death, the Empress did not take steps against his bloodline. Nellens is largely a mortal House, seeing only a small fraction of the Exaltations of any of the other Great Houses. The most Exaltations ever recorded by scions of Nellens is precisely 10 in a single year. The House leadership has taken great efforts to improve its Exaltation rate, including strategic weddings and adoptions, and their efforts appear to be gradually paying off. Still, more Exalted blood comes into the House every year, and at some point in the distant future, Nellens might be blessed with an Exaltation rate similar to the other Houses. All the House has to do is survive that long.

The Exalted of House Nellens favor no elemental aspect over any other. This is exactly the lack of elemental focus that other Houses mock (and fear, and guard against), though such a burden is expected of a House as misbegotten as Nellens. As a result of this sorry state of affairs, characters born into House Nellens suffer a +1 external penalty to social interactions with Dynasts from other Houses.

Economics

With the Dragon-Blooded taking the lion's share of the more lucrative and glamorous business opportunities, House Nellens has learned to manage very well on smaller industries overlooked by the Houses with more Exalted. It has diversified into farming communities, fisheries, whaling expeditions, silk production, small textile operations, minor shipping and trade routes and so on. While none of these modest endeavors makes Nellens immensely wealthy, they all add up. They also see to it that Nellens is surprisingly well connected among the un-Exalted, a level of society that many Dragon-Blooded completely ignore. All of these factors help to make Nellens one of the very few Houses whose income is still growing, despite the economic hardship that has fallen on many of the other Houses.

Nellens controls only a handful of satrapies, but it is not unhappy with this state of affairs. Truthfully, House Nellens just isn't organized to deal with large shipments of tribute. Accordingly, instead of collecting tribute directly from those satrapies it does manage, Nellens often makes complex three- or four- party deals instead. These deals result in the House's satraps shipping goods to distant third parties who happen to be allies of the House. These allies then do other favors for House Nellens or provide the House with raw goods and services of every description. It's a complex maze of connections and trade that leaves Nellens not only in possession of more goods for less effort, but also helps keep its tributaries and satraps happy. The smaller trades and shipments are not only cheaper, but easier to protect. These arrangements even served to hide some of the House's income from the Empress, and Nellens elders are certain they will have even more success concealing their transactions from whomever ascends to the Scarlet Throne next.

Nellens also goes out of its way to ally itself with tributaries that are feeling squeezed by other the Houses. It has secretly underwritten a handful of tribute payments to other Houses in return for goods and favors of various sorts, most notably information and artifacts from the First Age.

Goals and Alliances

Because of its perceived fondness for the un-Exalted, House Nellens has powerful strategic sway over mortals on the Blessed Isle, including most patrician families and the businesses they control. The un-Exalted see House Nellens as their one window onto the Dynastic world. Even with its poor breeding rate, the House has far greater access to the resources of the Blessed Isle than even a mortal from another Dynastic House.

It's a well-known fact among the mortals of the Blessed Isle that the Dragon-Blooded take care of their own and screw over the un-Exalted at every opportunity. Patricians and other mortals, however, quietly do what they can to take care of House Nellens, which, in terms of sheer numbers, is *easily* the most popular House on the Blessed Isle, regardless of what Dynastic propaganda might claim.

Although they have to be incredibly discreet about doing so, members of House Nellens regularly make inroads into the other Great Houses by wooing the many un-Exalted (and resentful) members of those Houses. Those patricians who feel as though they have been screwed over by the Dragon-Blooded at some point—and most do—support House Nellens in whatever subtle, discreet ways they are able. Consequently, House Nellens often gets better prices for important goods and services from mortal families than other Great Houses do, and it has contacts everywhere. Some other Houses have been forced to assume that anyone who isn't Exalted is either a member or a supporter of House Nellens.

Nellens has learned to expect nothing from the other Houses, and it certainly won't count on them to defend its right to exist now that the Empress is gone. Nearly every member of House

Nellens desperately wants their House to take the throne or to have a solid grasp on the individual who does wind up sitting on it. Any other outcome puts Nellens' future viability as a Dynastic House in serious jeopardy.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Nellens Malakai

One of the few sorcerers in House Nellens, Nellens Malakai serves his House so that it may, in turn, serve him. He has learned the lessons of teamwork well. He is but an individual, and he has been taught that an individual is helpless. An entire Dynastic House, on the other hand, carries some weight. Shortly after his Exaltation by the Dragon of Fire, Malakai realized that the more valuable he became *to* his House, the more he could ask *of* it. Exalting was but the first step. Becoming a full sorcerer by graduating from the Heptagram was the second. Through his knowledge of sorcery and First Age wonders, Malakai opens doors to his family that had been closed before. In return, he is rewarded richly. His stipend, for example, rivals that of some House elders. Still, Malakai's House is uncertain just how to deal with him. Its un-Exalted members resent him for Exalting, and even the few other Exalted in the House resent him for stealing the spotlight from them. Were it not for his inarguable competence, his attitude of entitlement would make him insufferable. Malakai made a name for himself by being the lone Exalted survivor of an attack by a deathknight on a Realm ocean vessel. While he did nothing but finish off the severely wounded deathknight, he has somehow acquired the reputation for being wise in the ways of deathknights. Although that is a misconception, he is now doing everything in his power to live up to that reputation, including studying much of the material written by the savants of House Ledaal.

Nellens Siviri

The daughter of one of House Nellens' few Dragon-Blooded and a mid-level god from the Bureau of Seasons, Nellens Siviri is not Exalted. She is a God-Blood, though, and a first-rate thaumaturge. Siviri lives in the Nellens Manse in Juche where she practices her art with the family's blessing. She is renowned far and wide as the best exorcist in the area (much to the annoyance of the Immaculate Order), and she is also a learned alchemist and healer. Because she performs exorcisms without asking for any compensation, and because of her beauty and gentle ways, Siviri is an incredibly popular figure around Juche, so much so that House Nellens often sends her out as a goodwill ambassador. The Immaculate Order views her with extreme distaste, and it is pondering how to arrange a tragic exorcism disaster for her. Should this happen, House Nellens will use all of its might as a Dynastic House to find and punish those responsible.

House Peleps

Other Houses are not fond of House Peleps, as they generally see it as a House of cheats, liars, matchstick men and manipulators. While the Empress approved of this behavior, the other Houses do not. Unfortunately, with the utter destruction of House Iselsi, no other House is so prepared to manage the Imperial Navy.

In their defense, members of House Peleps are staunch supporters of the Realm, the Immaculate Order and the Empress. While they might take advantage of other Dragon-Blooded, or even whole other Houses, they would never knowingly do anything to weaken the Realm or its institutions. On the contrary, the House is known for the extraordinarily cunning naval tactics that it uses to defend the Realm's interests on a daily basis.

Master(s) of the House

House Peleps is led by a married couple. Cousins from distant ends of the family, both Dragon-Bloods are as cunning and difficult to oppose as the element they embody. Block them one way, and they rush to find another angle of attack, like a rogue wave. Both Peleps Febaris and her husband, Peleps Taxin, are clever politicians; both have been long-term and effective members of the Deliberative. They reared their many children in an environment of aggressive competition. Those who succeeded, by whatever means, gained their parents' approval and were rewarded. Those who failed, whether through simple inability or ethical hesitations, were ignored or subtly punished. The pair encourages trickery and back-stabbing, as long as the House itself (or at least its Dragon-Blooded members) suffers no harm. This, they believe, is the best way to train their family for a life in Realm politics. Many Peleps do, indeed, become key ministers and even Senators in the Deliberative. Many became magistrates as well, when the Empress was still naming them. Their approach to leadership in the larger context of House Peleps is much the same. Advancement within the House is directly proportional to one's cleverness and willingness to rewrite (or blatantly ignore) the rules.

Major Lines

Offshoots of House Peleps pop up all the time as young families either try to show how well they've mastered the family's tactics or escape its constant high-pressure political machinations. Most Peleps households last only a generation and then disappear, as either interior conflicts rip the young household apart or other Great Houses slap them down for excessive conspiring. Still, some households have made it long enough to be considered fairly well established.

The Peleps Najalin Household

The Najalin household is the oldest and probably most respected household of the Peleps. Najalin is the daughter of Peleps and founded her household on the principles of competition, respect and self-discipline. Though some of the other Peleps sneer at Najalin's household, it easily holds its own. The vast majority of Dragon-Blooded in this household attend the House of Bells and take command of a vessel in the Imperial Navy within a few years after graduation.

The Peleps Kaizoku Household

At any given moment, most of this household is out to sea. Peleps Kaizoku, and most of his offspring, are privateers—pirates tasked by the Realm with preying on enemy vessels, but without being an official tool of the Realm. Publicly, the Realm decries the actions of the Kaizoku; privately, it makes sure no one ever actually catches them. The Realm sends in the Kaizoku privateers in situations when actions by the Imperial Navy would be too politically awkward. The Kaizoku clan is effectively the unloved and illegitimate little brother of the Imperial Navy. Using its fast, light Shogunate ships, the Kaizoku household preys on ships from the Skullstone Archipelago as well as the pirates of the southwest and makes a very good living by doing so. Peleps Kaizoku is married to Mnemon Kuvon, and while the household is small, their line boasts the best Exaltation rate of any pairing in House Peleps. The household operates out of two large manses: one on a hill outside of the Eye of Creation and one First Age manse on the sea floor to the southwest of the Blessed Isle.

All Peleps households are aspected toward Water.

Economics

House Peleps has no problem keeping its coffers full. It receives a respectable sum for maintaining the Imperial Navy (which the House commands) and from its political endeavors and constant maneuverings with and against the other Houses. The Peleps are constantly offering political and legal aid to other Houses in return for political support, joint investments and marriage arrangements.

Peleps has no tributaries that are not coastal countries, so it can bring the might of the Navy against any tributary that withholds payment.

Smuggling and crime both seem to come all too easily to members of this House as well. Yet, while many Peleps households seem to have a hand in some manner of criminal activity—from smuggling to extortion to arranged assassination—all Peleps are careful to confine their criminal activities to the Threshold, lest they cast a shadow on the House's naval operations or political machinations.

Goals and Alliances

House Peleps sees every advantage in establishing short-term alliances but none in committing to one ally for any excessive period of time. It is impossible to predict with whom the House will forge, or break, ties next. Members of House Peleps are rigorous about keeping their word, but they are exceedingly careful about how they give their word in the first place and particularly cunning in the wording of their agreements. If they haven't very specifically promised to do something or given their word to do something, then they don't consider themselves bound. Still, those who do give their word can be counted on to keep it, and that's pretty much the only reason the other Houses are still willing to enter into agreements with House Peleps.

All of the other Houses have entered into significant business dealings with House Peleps at some point. Some need naval support for a military campaign, others need the powerful political support of Peleps in the Deliberative, and still others need access to Peleps' criminal contacts in the Threshold. All Houses know better than to expect a long-term Peleps alliance, however.

Its agreements with House Cynis notwithstanding, there is no way the Guild could do business in the Realm if House Peleps did not allow it. House Peleps is the undisputed master of the Inland Sea, after all. Although Peleps does not invest much effort in maintaining ties to the Guild, bribes from the Guild account for a respectable portion of the House's revenue.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Peleps Deled

As an Immaculate monk, martial artist and leader of the Wyld Hunt, Peleps Deled is a true force of nature in the Realm—despite what others point to as his egregious lack of true wisdom. He describes himself as one of the few truly orthodox member of the Immaculate Order. Others, however, call him a sadistic zealot who uses his faith as an excuse to beat down others over miniscule differences in the interpretation of the Immaculate Texts.

Deled is a ferocious but focused combatant and a relentless hunter. He can hold his own alone, but he also makes excellent use of the cooperative nature of Terrestrial Charms. He stops at nothing to see that his prey is destroyed, regardless of the quarry's power or any other mitigating circumstances.

If Deled has compassion in his heart, it is for the children of the Realm, whom he wishes to indoctrinate into the Immaculate Philosophy as he was.

House Ragara

Members of House Ragara are content to work behind the scenes in the Realm and avoid the kinds of spectacle on which other Houses seem to thrive. Their subtlety has paid off handsomely. Members of House Ragara take pains to get along with all of the other Dynastic Houses. They are just as likely to be found at a Cynis orgy as at a parade review of the Sesus legions or a tour of the V'neef vineyards. They take a polite interest in what all the Houses are doing and extend diplomats of all sorts to maintain a friendly ongoing relationship with every House and household. If other Houses are the bricks of the Scarlet Empire, House Ragara fancies itself the mortar keeping the Dynasty together.

Master of the House

Although Ragara, the Empress's firstborn, is still alive, he is happily retired, enjoying a life free of politics and manipulation. He is clearly at the end of his days and soon to pass on to his next incarnation. Until then, he lives with a handful of friends, scribes, guards and caretakers in a lavish villa provided for him by the Soras family. The Great House named after him is run by his favored son, Ragara Banoba. Banoba is a tall, powerfully built man whose slow speech and unhurried movement belie his quick and agile mind.

Banoba rejoices when others judge him to be stupid. It marks them as targets for his schemes. Though he is an unusually honest man for a Dynast, he does like to fancy himself a con man on occasion. Banoba's seemingly dull wit has led many powerful Dynasts to underestimate him—even once they should have known better.

Banoba has served his House through several financially rewarding marriages to wealthy patrician women who lived their little life spans and then died in some distant wing of the manse. His true love, and the Dynast he's grooming to take control of House Ragara, is a distant Dragon-Blooded nephew named Heral. For over a century, the two have shared a bed and a life and are nigh inseparable.

Major Lines

The opulence of the Imperial Palace is home to most members of House Ragara. There are two offshoots of the main family, however, that dwell elsewhere.

The Ragara Soras Household

Making its home on Chin Jai Ru, the smaller of the two islands northwest of Eagle's Launch (the larger one being Kyon), the Ragara Soras household has a clear appreciation for privacy. Primarily a merchant family, the Soras household manages most of the trade in the northern cities of the Blessed Isle, particularly in Eagle's Launch, Bright Obelisk and Chanos. The Soras household also oversees most of the trade conducted by the Realm with northern city-states, including Gethamane and Whitewall (via the port town of Wallport). It also ships food, supplies and First Age artifacts to the Heptagram. The household members who oversee this small but lucrative portion of the family's business are all Heptagram graduates themselves, well trained in the care and transport of First Age artifacts.

The Ragara Calel Household

The most diplomatic wing of a diplomatic family, the Ragara Calel family lives on a sprawling estate of ornate gardens in an otherwise wild section of Juche Prefecture. The Calels breed hunting dogs, spend much of their time at parties and happily entertain key politicians, merchants and Guild members for House Ragara.

The household also soothes egos and calms ire after House Ragara has been forced to take strong actions against debtors. The younger members of this household travel extensively, throughout the Realm and Threshold alike, actively keeping up contacts and alliances with other Houses, reminding debtors of their debts to the House, and otherwise providing Banoba with excellent oversight and control of the House's holdings.

All Ragara households are aspected toward Earth.

Economics

For the last 600 years, House Ragara has effectively played banker to the other Dynastic Houses, making itself very wealthy in the process. The House has been called "the Imperial Bank" in jest for so long that the humor has evaporated, leaving nothing but an uncomfortably naked truth—particularly since the disappearance of the Empress. Though the Realm is suffering through the worst economy in its history right now, House Ragara still has jade accruing in its oversized vaults.

House Ragara loans money to anyone, as long as it can get that money back with interest. That interest need not be jade either, as favors, goods and information can also count as interest.

When dealing with patricians and subject princes, House Ragara does not hesitate to hire enforcers and mercenaries to get its money back. If brutality is called for in such situations, then so be it. The drastic actions House Ragara takes to punish debtors sometimes result in unnecessary violence and financial losses, but the House has found that a single dramatic act of enforcement makes the next 10 debtors *much* more forthcoming with their jade. While members of House Ragara are fond of presenting an easygoing, friendly image, like a neighbor trying to help a person find ways of meeting financial obligations, the House does not forgive those who try to evade payment. From a mortal perspective, the difference between House Ragara and an organized crime family is negligible.

Some Ragaras take particular satisfaction in loaning money to those who clearly *won't* be able to repay it, simply so they can lure the debtor into repaying what he owes in some other valuable tender. Due to this practice, Ragara has an extensive list of favors it can call on from people in all walks of life. These favors are not left to memory, but carefully written down, catalogued, cross-referenced and constantly updated. The House might go years without mentioning such debts—leading a debtor to believe that the House has forgotten—only to call in the favor after the debtor has been promoted to a powerful new position. House Ragara is owed favors by thousands of mortals, hundreds of Dynasts, a respectable number of God-Bloods and Fair Folk, and at least three Anathema. House Ragara, of course, considers this knowledge absolutely classified and protects it at least as rigorously as it does the House's vast vaults of silver and jade.

While House Ragara is aggressive in getting its money back from un-Exalted debtors (at times to the point of brutality), it uses a different set of rules entirely when dealing with its Dragon-Blooded cousins. No one in the House wants to encourage other Houses to use violence in matters of finance, as House Ragara has the most to lose from that kind of development. Accordingly, the House eschews the use of thugs or enforcers when dealing with Dynasts or other Exalted who owe it money. In fact, it won't even refuse to do business with the debtor. It will continue to run him lines of credit until the House's accountants and actuaries determine that the debtor has been loaned an amount equal to his total real property. At that point, the House leans heavily upon the debtor for extensive information and favors. It does not offer to eliminate or even reduce the Dragon-Blooded's debt, and should he balk at



any of the House's demands, the House begins a campaign of whispers against him and closes down all lines of further credit. Ragara won't do further business with him, nor will those allied with, or indebted to, House Ragara.

This kind of treatment can destroy even a powerful Dynast's finances and his reputation (not to mention his family's reputation) in the space of a week or two. Once the problem gets this far out of hand, the debtor's family often intervenes, pays Ragara the principal, interest and a small fee equal to five percent of the total debt to drop the matter. At that point, the debtor and his family settle the matter privately, which frequently leads to the debtor's sudden disappearance—either to the Threshold's farthest yonder, or to his next incarnation. While most Dragon-Bloods pay their debts well before the situation degrades this far or simply let themselves fall into Ragara's welcoming arms as their financial viability collapses, some run for the Threshold. They do so desperately hoping to establish themselves well away from the network of Houses that they believe lured them into trouble. What they find is that House Ragara's Guild connections are much vaster than most Dynasts realize. Those who run often wind up as sustenance for wealthy Fair Folk nobles—or worse.

Ragara frequently sends un-Exalted family members as auditors to visit its satrapies. These family members tour the countryside and perform a precise accounting of a province's resources. They carefully calculate the precise amount they think the satrap can afford—while still allowing some room for the province to grow and invest—then they use the resulting figure to determine their tribute. Many satraps groan at the arrival of Ragara auditors, knowing that they'll be squeezed to their financial limits. Others are just grateful that the auditors at least take their economic growth into account. Even in the current Time of Tumult, the House is good about hiring high-end mercenaries to protect its investments, both from foreign threats and from the satraps' own greed. Because of this, Ragara is the only House that still receives full payments from all of its tributary states.

Goals and Alliances

House Ragara does not ally itself with the other Houses. Allies might be inclined to expect special treatment from the House that it is not prepared to extend. On the contrary, House Ragara would rather have all the other Houses indebted to it. Unfortunately, this dynamic is the key factor preventing Banoba from assuming the Scarlet Throne. Ragara's lending policies served the House well for centuries, but now the other Dynastic Houses are too fearful of Ragara's vast economic might to let it anywhere near the Scarlet Throne.

House Ragara has long sought to get House Tepet in its debt, and circumstances have finally made that likely. Although Tepet has yet to approach the House for money, such a move is expected any day now. House Ledaal, on the other hand, makes the Ragaras nervous. Its members' intellectual, analytical approach to everything, including financial matters, has kept them well out of Ragara's pockets, despite the House's many attempts to lure them in.

Besides money, House Ragara also extends its reach with strategic marriages. Ragara Felis, a high-ranking bureaucrat in the Thousand Scales, recently married Peleps Magaret, an inspired Dragon-Blooded sorcerer 140 years his junior. The two are very much in love, and their families took advantage of the situation to cement an alliance between some of the Peleps judicial influence and Ragara Guild interests. (The Guild is always delighted to trade goods and favors for favorable judicial rulings.)

House Ragara's most important alliance, bar none, is with the Guild. The Guild has money aplenty and needs House Ragara to get its wares into the Realm. The Ragaras own many ports and many port workers, particularly along the Blessed Isle's north shore, making it very easy to arrange for mutually beneficial business arrangements with the Guild.

Working with the Guild is not without its occasional disadvantages, though. House Ragara occasionally finds the Guild's blatantly amoral activities hard to stomach, for instance. Nonetheless, both parties are such powerhouses that each is willing to rely on diplomacy to see eye to eye rather than risk what could easily become a lengthy trade and influence war.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Ragara Myrrun

Grandson of the House founder himself, Ragara Myrrun surprised his family and declined an invitation to the Spiral Academy to enter the Cloister of Wisdom and the Immaculate Order immediately upon graduation.

The best his family could say of the situation, besides commenting politely on his admirable piety, was that he was pursuing his true aptitudes. This was inarguably true. Myrrun is an extraordinarily talented martial artist. He mastered the entire Earth Dragon Style in less time than it took most students to learn Earth Dragon Form. In the century that followed, Myrrun mastered the other four elemental styles with similar ease, making him one of the only three living Immaculate grandmasters.

Myrrun resides in the Palace Sublime, where he is considered something of a Realm celebrity and one of the most sought-after sifus on the Blessed Isle. When he is not teaching advanced students, he spends his time in meditation. He also writes training manuals used by martial artists throughout the Realm, giving Myrrun a great deal of sway in how martial arts (especially supernatural martial arts) are taught. The other monks see that he is not bothered by the world beyond the Palace Sublime so that his wisdom is not dulled by secular matters. As the Order sees it, Myrrun is nothing short of a Realm treasure, and one that must be protected.

The Immaculate Order's guiding Sidereals see him in a similar light. An ancient Chosen of Battles, long impressed with Myrrun's aptitude for martial arts, has been grooming Ragara Myrrun for initiation into Sidereal martial arts. No Terrestrial Exalt has ever survived that harrowing initiation, but Anys Syn, Myrrun's Sidereal sponsor, firmly believes that a careful regimen of meditation and close attention to diet could grant Myrrun the fortitude to manage such a feat. Anys Syn has already noted that Myrrun's Essence blurs and warps to accept the Blossoming of the Perfected Lotus. If he lives through the experience, it will assuredly change Myrrun's spiritual and physical nature in ways that elude even the Chosen of the Maidens. Were he to master his Essence to such an extent, and then pass those techniques along to other Terrestrial Exalted, the Bronze Faction would have an amazing weapon to unleash against the returning Anathema.

A powerful elder Aspect of Earth, Ragara Myrrun has skin of flowing granite, cracked by age where a mortal would bear wrinkles. He no longer grows hair, and his eyes look more like darkly glittering cabochons of obsidian than organs of sight.

Ragara Soras Heral

For many years, Ragara Soras Heral was a quiet, bookish boy. After he Exalted, his family assumed, correctly, that he would want to study at the Spiral Academy, where he graduated at the top of his class and proceeded on to advanced work in his family's banks. When he met his mother's cousin Banoba, both were smitten. It

only helped matters that Heral knew exactly how to manage the family's finances. Outside of Banoba, no one understands the current workings of House Ragara as well as Heral does, and that makes him one of the most powerful Dynasts in the Realm. Heral would like House Ragara to take the Scarlet Throne, if only because he knows he's effectively next in line for leadership of House Ragara. To that end, he has recently begun lining up his pieces to make a serious play to get the throne for Banoba.

Though everyone in the family knows of the loving relationship between Banoba and Heral, he is still obligated to marry and produce children, even though the very notion repulses him. He is currently set to marry a young Exalt from House V'neef, but he already has a contingency plan. A "body double" from House Mnemon (a young debtor quite pleased with the nature of his payment) has agreed to take his place in the marriage bed to relieve him of his reproductive duties.

Heral occasionally serves his family as something of a celebrity instructor at the Spiral Academy, where his good looks and dramatic speaking style make him a favorite.

House Sesus

Long the goal of House Sesus, military strength seems to have become something of a trap for the Dynasts of this House. Over centuries of neglecting most of its other interests, war has become the one thing that House Sesus does supremely well. It no longer even makes the attempt to seem like a well-rounded House. While this makes it a force to be reckoned with, the House suffers from its narrow range of competence. If things keep up in this vein for too much longer, Sesus could wind up being nothing but a legion for hire for its political allies—and nothing would please Mnemon more.

Master(s) of the House

House Sesus includes five distinct households, and the House as a whole is guided by the oldest couple from each household. All of these powerful Dynasts have a pronounced martial streak, but given that most of them are aspected toward Fire, this is no great surprise.

Major Lines

Each of the five Sesus households makes a point of being distinct from the other. While they all revel in being part of House Sesus when dealing with other Houses, they highlight their differences when the households interact.

The oldest household to diverge from the main Sesus line was formed by Sesus Kajak, a famous general and the eldest son of Sesus himself. The household is now run by Sesus Kajak Raves and her husband, Cynis Nesil. Once a proud military household, it now holds more interest in mercantile affairs. While it still bankrolls quite a number of troops, it mostly uses them as a source of income, loaning them out to other Sesus households, or to Houses Cynis or Mnemon, to browbeat satraps. This household still produces one or two extraordinary generals every generation.

Second to spin off from the Sesus line was the Alon household. Its founder, a granddaughter of Sesus and a powerful Senator in the Deliberative, maintains a clear focus on the spectrum of militaristic and political issues. The household has many Senators in the Deliberative, though Alon remains the most persuasive of these by far, partially due to her reputation as a close researcher of political issues and partially due to her rigorous ethics. Alon guides her family with her husband, General Mnemon Barin.

Sesus Magel started the third Sesus household. She is a politician, though not a member of the Deliberative. Her husband, Cynis



Parovar, was a patrician merchant with a keen and coldly calculating business acumen. The current head of the household is Sesus Magel Talor, a widowed politician thoroughly and happily in the pocket of the Guild. His wife, a dragonlord in the Sesus legions, was recently killed, and he has secretly taken a peasant lover to keep the loneliness at bay.

The fourth household to diverge from the main family line was formed by Sesus Chenow. Chenow was a bully even before his Exaltation, but Exalting and joining the legions brought out the worst in him. His love of pillage, rape and murder were so extreme that they became a scandal and a serious political liability to the House. When Sesus himself threatened to disown Chenow, the young Dynast appeared to pull himself together. Over the next few years, he started his own rigorously military household and began leading excursions into the Threshold, ostensibly to defend the Realm's interests. It soon became apparent that he'd done so in order to gain the means to carry on his brutality in distant Threshold lands, far from the Realm's wagging tongues and soft patrician bourgeoisie. Since that didn't cause the House any political hardship, Sesus allowed it. To this day, the household of Chenow deploys some of the most effective and brutal troops in Creation, and they live for deployment to the Threshold, where they can take sadistic liberties that would get them disowned or severely punished on the Blessed Isle. Chenow himself has recently retired from military service, and his youngest daughter, Sesus Chenow Mareq runs the household with her husband Cathak Catis.

The most recently formed, and least popular, Sesus household was started by Sesus Denerid, a rebellious youth with a great love of Cynis parties. The Denerid household maintains the House's "legion" of slave concubines and has a long-term contract for slaves with House Cynis. It has become traditional for the Denerid household to intermarry extensively with Cynis, and some consider the household to be almost as much part of House Cynis as it is a part of House Sesus, particularly since many of its recently Exalted generation are Wood-aspected. This household is currently under the control of Sesus Denerid Gutar and his wife, the un-Exalted Cynis Violas. If the household becomes any less popular within House Sesus, it might well defect to House Cynis entirely.

Most major Sesus households are aspected toward Fire. The Sesus Denerid household is a Wood-aspected exception and, consequently, suffers the contempt of the other Sesus households.

Economics

Historically, House Sesus has gone surprisingly easy on its tributaries. In return, the tributaries have made every effort to be timely with their tribute (if only to avoid the atrocities of the Chenow troops). If a particular region suffered a drought, for example, the House would allow the tributary to defer its tribute for a year and pay off the outstanding amount over three years. Such policies resulted in grateful goodwill toward the House. In the state of panic that currently holds sway in the Realm, however, Sesus is cracking down, and that's causing immense resentment and sporadic rebellions among the House's satrapies. Chenow's troops have thus far kept the tributaries in line, but they've reverted to their more brutal tactics to make their point, resulting in even more unrest.

Tribute is down and slipping, and there's a rumor that some of the family's tributary states in the Far East, emboldened by the defeat of the Tepet legions, are preparing for a full-fledged revolt. Even the militaristic House Sesus isn't sure if it wants to deploy the troops necessary to rectify the situation.

Sesus has focused its might so completely in military endeavors that its only non-military interests are the ones it has gained through intermarriage with House Cynis. Nevertheless, many of the elders in the House are beginning to think that Sesus is a little too intertwined with the decadent Cynis and would like to cool off their alliances with that House a bit. This is likely to cause the House to invest even more aggressively in military interests, which could take it to the Threshold more than might be wise in the current atmosphere of unrest.

Goals and Alliances

Sesus takes pains to guard its Dynastic blood, and it has grown increasingly averse to allowing its members to breed with anyone who is not Exalted. The House's scions are proud of their many marriage ties to Houses Mnemon and Cynis, although many in the House are casting a wary eye at the relentless decadence of House Cynis.

The ties between Sesus and Mnemon would be much more useful if Mnemon herself weren't so intent on claiming the Scarlet Throne. She's trying to treat House Sesus as though it were the military wing of House Mnemon, and Sesus isn't having it. Sesus doesn't want to hand the throne to Mnemon, but she would *never* consent to allow anyone else on the Scarlet Throne, so both Houses remain at an impasse.

House Iselsi, on the other hand, has offered Sesus the services of the All-Seeing Eye in its quiet conflict with Mnemon, provided House Sesus guarantees that the Immaculate Order will remain quartered at the Palace Sublime. Sesus still holds out some hope of working with Houses Mnemon and/or Cynis, so it hasn't responded to the Iselsi overture yet. If Mnemon *does* take the Throne, Sesus certainly doesn't want her to find out that it bargained with the Iselsi. Sesus would rather see *anyone* else on the throne, though, despite the many marital ties that connect the two Great Houses. The leadership of House Sesus strongly suspects that intermarriage wouldn't count for much if Mnemon were ever to take control of the Realm. The House is still hoping that the next ruler of the Realm will either be a Sesus or a Cynis, and it might be forced to deal with Iselsi if it is to have a chance at that arrangement.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Sesus Chenow

Though he has officially retired to an undisclosed location in the Western Isles, Sesus Chenow has unofficially joined with his old sworn brotherhood once more and gone back into the field for another few rounds of bloodshed and brutality. He swore in his youth that he would die fighting, and he isn't about to let old age creep up on him and deny him that right. Chenow is 279, just past his prime and barely starting to go gray. As soon as he developed his first wrinkles in the corners of his eyes, he retired with barely a farewell, secretly afraid that if he waited any longer he wouldn't be in any shape to return to his violent old ways. Chenow and his brotherhood have made it their personal mission to keep Threshold tributaries paying their tribute in full and on time, particularly those that belong to House Sesus. They might succeed, but they're making many enemies along the way, some of whom are Anathema who resent the Realm's presence. The Threshold through which Chenow is advancing now is not the same place it was ten, or even two years ago, and being a Dynast isn't the protection it once was.

Sesus Rafara

The spymasters of House Sesus, established early in the House's history by Sesus himself, wanted to perform an experiment. What vulnerabilities in the House and in the Realm might be found by

a spy who had not been raised in the Realm, burdened by all the blind spots that such an upbringing inevitably bestows?

Their means of answering this question was Sesus Rafara, a young Exalt taken from her family and raised as a complete stranger to her own nation and culture. Sesus spymasters reared Rafara at a First Age manse deep in the forests near Bright Obelisk. She was taught spycraft and a range of skills to aid in assassination, but of the Realm, she was kept ignorant, or else taught the very basics needed to get by. She was told *of* the Immaculate Philosophy, but not indoctrinated into its beliefs. She was repeatedly and intentionally betrayed as a way of teaching her not to let herself be vulnerable. And when she had become a perfect cipher, she was taken back to the Realm and unleashed as a master spy for House Sesus. After years of experience and dozens of missions, she is one of the top three spies in the House. She knows many things she ought not to know, and she has done things that others might call inhuman. And in doing all this, she feels she has lost her humanity—for which she blames her House. To them, she is a finely honed tool and nothing more. She resents that, and her means of acting out against the House is to use all the skills the spymasters taught her to undermine the House's efforts against the other Houses. Most recently, she sent a secret warning to a woman she had never met, Tepet Ejava, to warn her of conspiracies being hatched against her in the Realm. She warned Ejava not to return, even if summoned, unless she was ready to die.

Rafara has gained more satisfaction from her work since going rogue than she ever did when she was just a tool. She assumes that she will eventually be caught and that she will be executed when that happens, but in the meantime, she is taking great delight in seeing that the more self-serving and petty plans of her House never come to fruition.

House Tepet

For centuries, the Realm had three martial Houses that controlled the lion's share of the legions: House Cathak, House Sesus and House Tepet. And then, in the space of three months, the Tepet legions were wiped out, with very few survivors. In a short span of time, all that the Realm had taken for granted for so long was rendered invalid. What had once seemed reliable and absolute was now plagued with uncertainty.

With the destruction of the Tepet legions, a large portion of several generations of Tepets—officers, soldiers, savants, chroniclers and even a few bureaucrats attached to the legions—were annihilated, and thousands of lives back in the Realm were suddenly, horribly different. Power equations that had held true in the Realm for centuries suddenly had to be recalculated. House Tepet went from commanding five of the most powerful and well-equipped legions in the Realm and a small mercenary force, to commanding nothing but the highly irregular military unit humorously called the Red-Piss Legion.

The Dragon-Blooded of House Tepet were reduced to just over a third of their previous numbers, most of whom were retired elders in teaching positions or students in the academies. The remnants of the House are struggling to regain their footing. The other Houses, which once treated Tepet with respect, now look at members of the House with the same expression usually reserved for condemned men and the terminally ill. The other Houses grieve for House Tepet even as they look for ways to turn its misfortune into their gain. Meanwhile, the remaining Exalts of the House try to convince the Realm that the House is not dead, and they have commenced an aggressive adoption campaign to avoid this fate.

Master(s) of the House

Tepet himself has been dead for centuries, and the House is led by his five Dragon-Blooded children, Jita, Jyuko, Marek, Mokairo and Vergus. In better days, all five had radically different notions of what agendas they felt the House should pursue, but their goals overlapped just enough to keep real animosity from erupting.

Since the destruction of the Tepet legions, conflict among the elders has faded into silence. There is no more room for dissent, but even now, the five seem to be in a state of shock. Where once there was bickering and heated rhetoric, meetings of the five are now somber to the point of being stultifying.

Major Lines

House Tepet has seen five major offshoots from the main family line. Two produced by House elders Marek and Vergus, three produced by Tepet grandchildren, and a recent offshoot established just over a century ago.

The three most powerful and respected households, Tepet Marek, Tepet Vergus and Tepet Tilis, were essentially family units of the Tepet legions and lost all but a handful of their members, Exalted and mortal alike. Of the remaining three households, Tepet Nerigus and Tepet Berel are oriented around mercantile interests, while the small Tepet Deramol household is far more interested in leisure pursuits such as hunting and parties.

The remaining households have little idea how to deal with their tributaries now that House Tepet has lost its military wing. Not only is the barbaric Vermilion Legion inappropriate for legitimate military missions (in the eyes of the House elders, anyway), it cannot be redeployed from its campaign in the Southwest. Tribute, predictably, has stopped coming in from nearly three quarters of the House's tributaries. Morale in the House remains so low that no one has addressed the issue yet, although it's clear that something has to be done.

All Tepet households have traditionally been aspected toward Air, although the House's recent mass adoption campaign will likely change that.

Economics

The fortunes of House Tepet, which once seemed assured and perpetual, are now the stuff of history. The House has no means of enforcing the collection of its rightful tribute. Now that it lacks legions, or even the money for a larger mercenary force, it is unlikely that the House's satrapies will continue to send it anything at all.

The House's two merchant lines, Tepet Nerigus and Tepet Berel, and the strength of Lord's Crossing as a major trading center are the only things sustaining the House at this point. While the House can raid its coffers for now—Tepet was once a very rich House—it can't sustain itself for long at this rate.

The Regent, himself a Tepet, has arranged for a slight increase in imperial support for the House in the form of a "bereavement subsidy." The subsidy has slowed the emptying of the Tepet vaults a little, but the fact remains that Tepet needs to regain its footing through either a new source of wealth or a new source of power—neither of which appears to be forthcoming anytime soon.

The surviving military members of the House are enacting something of a draft on the remaining Tepet households in effort to rebuild the House's legions. The House is adopting dozens of lost eggs from across the Realm to replenish its numbers. The elders have placed their unanimous support behind these actions as a last-ditch effort to save the House from dissolving entirely. A number of old and renowned Tepet generals have come out of retirement to lead this

effort, and many young Tepets are being allowed to graduate early from the House of Bells to fill in the ranks. Some young Tepet Exalted are even being taken out of the Spiral Academy and placed instead in the House of Bells or the Cloister of Wisdom to prepare them for the life of a legionnaire that has now been chosen for them.

Goals and Alliances

Tepet is having trouble maintaining its alliances. Other Dynastic Houses once found it all well and good to marry into House Tepet, but that was when it was a major military powerhouse. In the wake of recent events, though, most Houses are breaking off long-held engagements as sons and daughters are now being offered to the scions of other Great Houses instead.

The proud elders of House Tepet don't want to appear desperate—though they certainly are. They are currently cashing in every last favor owed them by the other Dynastic Houses (and that's a lot of favors). Marriages arranged to take place many years hence are being moved up and performed now, before Tepet loses any further standing. Young Tepets are being sent out to explore any and all possibilities for new business opportunities (including some niches currently managed by House Nellens, which is causing a diplomatic rift between the two Houses).

In the wake of its recent losses, House Tepet is also proffering marriage into a Dynastic House to a number of outcastes at Pasiap's Stair in exchange for service in what might become the new Tepet legion. Although the House's elders dread the effects such marriages might have on the House's purity of aspect, it's preferable to weakening the blood even worse by marrying patricians.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

Tepet Arada

One of the great legion generals, much respected and much decorated, Tepet Arada has become a shadow of his former self in the wake of the destruction of the Tepet legions. It was he who commanded one of those legions to its destruction and survived only through a strange quirk of fate. While he feels he bears some responsibility for the defeat, he firmly believes House Tepet was deliberately set up to fail in order to lessen the House's claim to the Scarlet Throne. To say that he's bitter would understate the deep disillusionment, grief and rage that haunts him. Since the defeat, the one thing Arada has nursed more than his bitterness is his sake bottle. The House elders, including his father, have offered Arada many olive branches to come out of his monastic retirement and to serve his House one last time by helping to reestablish a legion for his family. While he resents the request on all levels, his dedication to military ideals and his family make it unlikely that he'll refuse.

Tepet Ejava, the Roseblack

Possessing all the native cunning of her military family as well as years of hard-won battle experience and a strategic genius that is hers alone, Tepet Ejava is a general commanding the ragtag force that House Tepet is trying to call a legion. While it does constitute the single largest body of troops surviving from the once-proud Tepet legions, her force is little more than a motley crew of mercenaries, the Red-Piss Legion and the few lucky Tepet legionnaires that survived the campaign against the Bull of the North. She is currently making war on various pirate and smuggler bases in the southwest. Ejava herself, having caught wind of a possible plot to have her killed before House Tepet can establish another "legion," is extending the mission as long as possible in hopes of outlasting the conspiracy.

House V'neef

Older Dynasts have trouble taking "House" V'neef seriously, although the Empress never had any such problem. On the contrary, the Empress showed House V'neef a great deal of favor and saw to it that her House was well provided for. Some of the other Houses thought V'neef was a little *too* well cared for, but V'neef herself is charismatic and disarms her siblings with wit and charm. That's the primary reason her House hasn't been beset by her power-hungry siblings since the Empress's disappearance.

Master of the House

V'neef herself, the youngest (and some have suggested favored) daughter of the Empress heads up this youngest and smallest of the Great Houses. Subtle and non-confrontational, V'neef manages her family more with carrots than sticks.

The Empress conceived V'neef specifically as an experiment in blood purity. V'neef's father had the purest Dragon-Blooded pedigree of any of the Empress's husbands, and with the Empress's strong blood, that gives V'neef the purest blood in the Dynasty. Thus far, all of her children who are old enough to Exalt have, and with numbers like that, V'neef's House could grow to be as popular as Mnemon's for breeding purposes.

As the Great House that bears her name grows, V'neef will inevitably find it more difficult to keep a direct hand in all operations, but she is set on doing so for as long as possible.

Major Lines

This Great House has not produced any other lines, major or minor. V'neef herself is only 60, and the entirety of House V'neef is smaller than a single household of some of the older Houses. V'neef has seven children (all fathered by her husband, one of the wealthier and less decadent Cynis), six of whom have Exalted thus far.

As the smallest of the Great Houses by far, House V'neef is careful to protect the purity of its elemental aspect. Since V'neef and her husband are both strongly Wood-aspected, her children have all followed suit.

Economics

House V'neef has three major sources of income: its extensive wineries, its satrapies in the South and its control of the Merchant Navy.

For years, Dynastic families were content to get their wine from the Threshold. When V'neef began making wine, the other Houses thought it a quaint idea. And then, the money began flowing in. Across the Realm, people were used to paying great sums for wine brought across the Inland Sea. V'neef could undercut that by just a small amount and still make a fortune. House Cynis alone keeps V'neef's coffers brimming by buying wine by the cask for its enormous parties. In recent years, V'neef wine has become popular in the Threshold, and business is booming.

House V'neef's satrapies are all in the South. Since V'neef asks very reasonable tribute, all of the House's tributary states are content to pay what they owe. More strategically, V'neef has a prime source of firedust, of which she is taking ample advantage. While other Dynasts learn to shoot bows, V'neef has secretly taught all of her children to use firewands and a handful of appropriate Charms as well.

V'neef's control over the Merchant Navy is a recent matter. In an effort to shake up the power structure (and punish House Peleps for some small slight), the Empress granted V'neef control of that post just a decade before her disappearance. The point of this gift was to



provide House V'neef with a source of revenue that would allow the young Dynast to support her burgeoning family. Whoever controls the Merchant Navy is entitled to a cut of the duties collected by its customs cutters. The Merchant Navy had previously been under the control of House Peleps, and its loss caused that House a great deal of hardship as it suddenly had to bear the cost of running the Imperial Navy without the benefits of customs duties. House V'neef's control of the Merchant Navy is a critical financial and military asset. V'neef carefully purged the chain of command of Peleps loyalists and replaced it with agents whose loyalties she knew lay with her. Recently, V'neef's eldest adopted son has taken the top position with the Merchant Navy after working his way up through the ranks.

Goals and Alliances

V'neef knows that she's not in the running for the Scarlet Throne, although she would at least like the next ruler to be sympathetic to her cause. So, while she watches the other Houses pursue the throne, she tends to her vineyards and encourages her children to rack up as many favors as possible with the other Houses.

Before House Tepet's disastrous defeat in the Threshold, V'neef was planning on a series of intermarriages with that House. Since the destruction of the Tepet legions, she has put all negotiations on hold. Although she thinks highly of many of the young Tepets, she does not want her children to be married to legionnaires—which seems to be what all the young surviving Tepets are trying to become these days.

V'neef has the luxury of waiting. Her appearance clearly marks her as one of extraordinarily strong blood, and all of her single Exalted children are already besieged with offers of marriage. She, and her children, simply have to pick the best of the lot.

Illustrious Dynasts of the House

V'neef Aliset

Though she graduated from the Cloister of Wisdom only a year after the Empress disappeared, V'neef Aliset is already showing herself to be a dynamic young woman. She has bright green eyes, spiky auburn hair and the green skin of a Wood Aspect of excellent breeding.

She has spent two years abroad in the deep forests of the Far East, and she prefers it to most parts of the Realm. She's an expert strategist, particularly with regard to the Hunting Cat variant of Gateway. Like her grandmother, she's very charismatic and amiable. She also happens to be the youngest and most eligible woman in House V'neef, so she is a magnet for suitors. Matchmakers for Houses Mnemon, Tepet, Cynis and Cathak have all engaged in lengthy discussions of marriage with Aliset's parents and grandmother. Aliset is happy to remain single for the moment, and she's spoken with her grandmother about attending the Heptagram. Still, she knows it will be good for her House if she marries soon and well.

Lost Eggs

Not all children born to Dragon-Blooded parents Exalt, and not all children born to mortal parents remain mortal. Throughout most of the First Age, this would have been considered a blasphemous state of affairs. In this current fallen Age, though, the Realm simply sees it as a problem to be worked around.

On the Blessed Isle, it is considered good and proper for all children of Dynastic Houses and patrician families to have a thorough education to prepare them should they prove themselves worthy of the Exaltation. The Blood of the Dragons, however, is no longer

predictable, and it can skip many generations before turning up as an Exaltation, and *that*, the Realm cannot prepare for.

Whatever might be said about the Blood of the Dragons, the seed of the Dragon-Blooded has been sown far and wide across the Blessed Isle. While the vast majority of Terrestrial Exaltations is planned and hoped for, some still come as a shock to everyone involved (such as when the daughter of the washer woman Exalts while being taunted by the favorite son of a patrician family, for instance). These are the so-called "lost eggs," the Exaltations that could not properly be prepared for, and they represent a small but persistent and growing problem for the Dynasty.

To fathom the nature of this problem—and to understand why it should never have become a problem to begin with—requires a glance back to the dawn of the First Age and the creation of the first Terrestrial Exalted.

The Origin of the Dragon-Blooded Host

The most ancient histories kept by the Sidereal Exalted (and corroborated by those of the Dragon Kings) state that, when the Elemental Dragons granted the Exaltation to their Chosen, the first generation of the Dragon-Blooded Host, it was a prelude to a war the likes of which had never been waged. The vast and powerful Elemental Dragons Exalted 100 strong and worthy mortal men, 20 of each elemental aspect, as well as 9,900 carefully chosen mortal women. This disparity of the sexes was not accidental, but strategic on their part. The Dragons knew that this host, this entire *race* of Exalted, had to reproduce quickly to attain the numbers necessary to fulfill their martial obligations to the Unconquered Sun. (Bronze Faction Sidereals take pains to see that the Immaculate Order *never* uncovers that part.) The extreme disparity between the sexes was to make sure that this new army might grow as quickly as possible. A single male Terrestrial could impregnate several female Terrestrials in a short span of time, but every child represented a *minimum* two-year investment for the Dragon-Blooded woman who bore it.

Accordingly, the very first generation of Terrestrial Exalts was Chosen not so much for the Dragon-Bloods' combat prowess (though many *were* warriors of one sort or another), but for their overall mental and physical fitness and their ability to breed. As part of that initial Exaltation, all of the Chosen of the Dragons were granted libidos of epic proportions. (There are those who say that this gift of the Dragons has been passed down through the generations.) The Elemental Dragons themselves expressly and forcefully forbade all Terrestrials from mating with mortals, lest the gift of Exaltation be watered down with weak mortal blood and thereby sullied. At that time, none could even fathom such a perversion of the Dragons' will.

For the entire first year of their existence, the lives of those who composed the Dragon-Blooded Host were more akin to never-ending orgies than anything resembling warfare. Solar generals found themselves fitting combat training in between the Terrestrials' extended bouts of rutting. Once all of the female Terrestrials were impregnated and well along in their pregnancies, however, the situation changed drastically. Mortal women might have been forbidden to the lusty Dragon-Blooded men but everyone (and every*thing*) else was fair game, and historians claim that the frequency of homosexual relations among the Dragon-Blooded dates back to this period. For centuries, the Dragon-Blooded Host reproduced only among their own number, at the behest of the Dragons themselves, so that *every* child born to them bore the spark of Exaltation.

At that time, all 10,000 Terrestrial Exalts possessed what would be considered, in game terms, legendary Breeding. The marks of the Elemental Dragons were strong upon them, and the potent elemental blessings of the Dragons ran thick and strong in their veins. It was a given that every child of such a union would Exalt, and usually by the age of seven, because both parents were pureblooded Exalts.

The first wave of births began to rectify the sex disparity among the Dragon-Blooded, and two years later, the 9,900 Terrestrial mothers handed their little Exalts-to-be to a small army of mortal and elemental nurses, and the breeding cycle began anew. To further expedite the growth of the nascent Dragon-Blooded Host, the second generation was pushed to breed as soon as its members had both Exalted and gone through puberty.

The fertility of that first generation of Dragon-Blooded women was and remains legendary. The average number of children born to each of those Terrestrial women is just over 30, and the most fertile of their number—a Wood Aspect called Masira, the Tree of Many Branches—bore over 100 children in her lifetime. She remains a figure of legend even in the Second Age. In a short period of time (as gods and Exalts measure it, anyway), the first generation of Terrestrial Exalted was well on its way to creating what would shortly become a vast and powerful Dragon-Blooded Host.

The Dilution

The strict command by the Elemental Dragons not to breed with the un-Exalted held firm through the war with the Primordials and for centuries beyond. Few sexual activities were off limits to the early Dragon-Blooded (a tradition House Cynis still revels in), even dalliances with elementals and demons. Tainting the Exaltation, however, or risking it with *any* potentially procreative sex with mortals, was held to be the worst crime against the gods and Creation that could be imagined. It was heresy, sin and perversion all wrapped up in a single act.

At some point, however, that prohibition weakened. Terrestrial Exalted were deployed throughout all of Creation as infantry for their Celestial officers. Every corner of Creation (and some corners of *other* places, for that matter) had its Dragon-Blooded overseer monitoring the area for his Solar queen, Lunar general or Sidereal spymaster. Sometimes, only one Dragon-Blood was stationed in an area otherwise populated only by mortals. And sometimes, those lone officers grew desperate for members of the opposite sex.

So grave was the sin of producing a child with a mortal that the first instances of the act, considered too foul to discuss, were kept very quiet. The expectation of the time was deceptively simple and hard to fathom by the standards of the fallen Second Age. Terrestrial children Exalted; mortal children did not. So when a presumably mortal child, of presumably mortal parents did Exalt, the young weak-blooded Exalt was usually killed, along with her parents (and any witnesses), to prevent a religious scandal of vast proportions. Eventually, that stopped happening, and something resembling apathy started to creep into people's attitude toward mortal-Terrestrial interbreeding. For a while, it seemed that even the children of Terrestrials and mortals would Exalt, but it was soon noticed that such children did not possess the same power as their Dragon-Blooded parent.

And then, it came to pass that a child of a mortal and a Dragon-Blood did not Exalt at all, and the true horror of what this could portend (i.e., the loss of the Dragons' gift entirely) resounded through the Dragon-Blooded Host.

Regrettably, however, by the time the taboo of breeding with mortals became a common concern, the problem had become so widespread that there could be no hiding it (or explaining it away) any longer. The Deliberative took up the question, and after much

lively debate by all Celestial Exalted and an exceedingly close vote by the Solars, Creation's ruling body made a judgment. Rather than undermine the legitimacy of the law any further, the Solar Deliberative ruled that, though it was better for Terrestrial Exalts to mate only with one another, sexual relations between Terrestrials and mortals was no longer an absolute taboo. Furthermore, the offspring of mortals and Terrestrial Exalts were not to be considered abominations any more, nor were they to be killed. Sidereal conspiracy theorists (mostly among the Bronze Faction) have long claimed that the countermanding of the Elemental Dragons' order was simultaneously a grave inversion of the natural order, a calamity for the entire Dragon-Blooded Host and a deliberate attempt to weaken the Chosen of the Elemental Dragons. Some have gone so far as to say that the day the first child of a mortal parent Exalted was the beginning of the end of the First Age of Man.

More Recent History

In the current Time of Tumult, interbreeding between Terrestrial and mortal is common and unremarkable. The last strong societal pressures against such behavior disappeared with the Usurpation and the introduction of the more bourgeois attitudes of the Shogunate.

The purity of the blood was forgotten entirely for several years after the Great Contagion, in the face of the urgent need to repopulate Creation. At this low point in the Second Age, even the most potent Dynastic bloodlines, Mnemon, Cathak and V'neef, are thin and watered down with mortal blood compared to their ancestors. Likewise, mortal bloodlines that don't have at least a hint of the Dragons' power are so rare in the Realm as to be nonexistent.

The biggest problem this situation presents is seeing to it that all who Exalt have the necessary training to fulfill their role as Princes of the Earth. Wisdom without power might be pathetic, but power without wisdom is dangerous. Since the Realm does not like loose Essence cannons, it continues to seek out those who have Exalted outside of the usual safety net of Dynastic and patrician institutions, bringing them into the fold and training them as proper Dragon-Blooded ought to be trained.

Terrestrial lives are very long, and the length of time it usually takes for a lost egg to do something dramatic (or stupid) enough to get found after his Exaltation is usually very short. Most lost eggs within the Realm either present themselves to an Immaculate monk or are otherwise found within two years of their Exaltation. Those who are *not* found in that time usually don't want to be found. Any lost egg who really doesn't want to be part of the Realm will usually realize very quickly how difficult it is to keep Exaltation a secret. He'll probably leave the Blessed Isle as soon as possible, at which point he becomes more properly known as one of the outcaste.

Once a lost egg is discovered, it's relatively simple to get this Exalt the training he or she needs. While the children of Dynasts receive training for years before the possibility of Exaltation ever arises, Exalted adults learn more rapidly than mortal children, and most skills learned by such children during their primary schooling can be imparted to Exalted adults in the space of a year or two.

Exalted Nation

Although they would never say so directly, most people in the Realm believe that all of Creation's Dragon-Blooded should unite under the Realm's banner. Therefore, loyal citizens of the Empire keep an eye out for lost eggs—on the Blessed Isle and elsewhere—in an effort to make them "found eggs." At the very least, these "recovered" Exalts make decent breeding stock for patrician families and deprive enemies of the Realm (Lookshy in particular) of Exalted allies.

A handful of the more devout Immaculate monks long for the Blessed Isle to be populated entirely (or at least mostly) by Dragon-Blooded, preferably Dragon-Blooded of good breeding and virtuous nature. They are welcome to dream, but that is not the direction the Realm is headed.

Still, the system established by the Empress early in her reign is very effective at "rehabilitating" lost eggs and making worthwhile Dragon-Blooded out of those who might otherwise have wasted their lives and talents in ways that didn't serve the Realm at all.

Lost Egg Character Creation

Since so-called found eggs are so rigorously trained by the Realm's very demanding learning institutions in a relatively short span of time, the primary difference between a Dynast and a found egg is one of social standing and career potential, not ability. A lost egg character uses one of two character creation templates. If she has been found by the Realm and trained, most likely at Pasiap's Stair, she uses the same character creation system as Dynastic Dragon-Blooded (pp. **96-97**). If she was born in the Realm, but has *not* been found and trained, she uses the character creation template used by Threshold Outcastes (p. **99**). Being on the Blessed Isle effectively makes it impossible to take the Cult Background, though.

The terms "lost egg" and "outcaste" had not been coined at the time the Empress established the Scarlet Throne. The term would not have made sense prior to that. The Shogunate had spanned all of Creation, so there was no real place to be either lost or cast out to.

With the retrenching of most Terrestrial Exalted to the Blessed Isle after the Great Contagion, that changed. All of Creation was no longer the home of the Dragon-Blooded, the Realm was. And since all of the Dragons' Chosen are well aware that they work better banded together than alone, there was a logical push to be a part of the Realm. So complete was the impression made by the Empress early in the Realm's history that all Terrestrials belonged on the Blessed Isle, that it could not even be conceived that Dragon-Bloods would live anywhere else unless they were lost or deprived of the opportunity to live in their proper homeland. What Terrestrial would forgo the civilized center of Creation for a solitary life in the perilous and chaotic Threshold states that had been devastated by years of war against a cold and inhuman foe?

Residents of Lookshy, obviously, did not agree with this assessment, but many other Terrestrials did. The first two centuries of the Realm's existence saw a constant influx of Dragon-Blooded to the Blessed Isle from all quarters of Creation. Anyone bearing the mark of Terrestrial Exaltation—disowned bastard, pious monk or combat-fatigued Shogunate officer—received the same offer to join the newly formed Realm. In this way, the Scarlet Empire very effectively absorbed the vast majority of the Terrestrial Exalted who had been spread across the wide face of what had once been the Shogunate. Once the Empress determined that those who were going to move to the Blessed Isle had done so, she made it known that those who had stayed in the Threshold were, at best, sad, lost creatures, irresolute and content to live in hovels when whole manses could have been theirs. At worst, they were potential traitors to their own kind—the category into which she placed



the Seventh Legion, which had held firm against the Empress in Realm Year 89.

Once the Empress reached the second century of her rule, the power of the Realm was well established. The first Dynastic children had come of age and Exalted. The social structures of the Realm were functioning so smoothly that the chaos and horror of the Great Contagion and the Fair Folk invasion seemed but a terrible, half-remembered nightmare. There was a clear assumption throughout the Realm that all Dragon-Blooded *should* live on the Blessed Isle, but a vague understanding that not all did, for whatever strange reasons. The term outcaste came into popular usage to describe those who had somehow remained unaware of the Scarlet Empire or eschewed it.

The Empress herself first used the term "lost eggs" in RY 212 in a speech, delivered by proxy, to the Deliberative. With great sadness, she declared every outcaste a lost egg. "The kind, the lucky, the enlightened, all these are delivered by the Dragons into the nest. Those whose prior incarnations were less pious or somehow misguided, these must confront the destiny they have made for themselves by having the inauspicious fate to be lost eggs born into the barbarism and madness of the Threshold." She brought her speech to a close by stating her devout wish that all outcastes one day be integrated into the Realm and worked smoothly into the rich fabric of the last truly civilized state on the face of Creation.

The Empress clarified her excessively poetic wording within days of her speech. As she saw it, Terrestrial Exalted were either born within the Realm, that they may enjoy the benefits of order and civilization, or into the Threshold, where they were forced to deal with hardship and chaos.

Patrician "Lost Eggs"

In reality, patricians have no opportunity to become lost eggs. These individuals have received the same training and have all the same advantages as the children of Dynasts. Their parents' money assures them access to the same secondary schools as Dynasts as well. In the blink of an eye, marriage and employment options both improve dramatically. Whatever they lack in the way of Dynastic benefits they can easily marry into. In all regards, as of the moment of their Exaltation, they may as well be children of a Dynastic House.

There is one difference, however. Their Exaltation makes them a target for the un-Exalted children of Dynastic families who hate them with an unfathomable rage, feeling as though the patrician unfairly got the Exaltation that was meant for them. While it might be possible for these children to have Exalted friends make life hard on the patrician Exalt, it's far more likely that the un-Exalted child will be forgotten by his Exalted friends until he Exalts too.

The Fate of Lost Eggs

Within the Realm and throughout most of the lands it controls, a Terrestrial who Exalts from the non-patrician, non-Dynastic classes is instantly considered a lost egg and treated accordingly from the moment she is discovered.

For one anticipating the hard, short life of a rice farmer or washer woman, the moment of Exaltation is transcendent, not just

The Found Eggs of House Tepet

In the wake of its recent massive losses, House Tepet has begun adopting as many young Exalts as it can. It has taken to outbidding other Great Houses for lost eggs and pulling strings to take younger Exalts out of Pasiap's Stair and the Immaculate Order to educate them and raise them at Tepets. Much to everyone's surprise, the Regent—himself a Tepet—has actually used his power to side with his family and grant every request for adoption, bypassing the Deliberative and its political games entirely. Needless to say, this adoption campaign is unprecedented in the history of the Realm. Some Dynasts are looking askance at House Tepet for doing what appears to be dredging the Blessed Isle for breeding fodder, but the other Houses seem to be allowing it for now (most likely out of pity for the fallen House). Not only does House Tepet avoid weakening its blood by breeding with patricians, but it benefits from a subtle gratitude dividend from its new members.

Many marriages arranged for young Tepets collapsed after the House's defeat. Making the most of this, House Tepet has taken to betrothing these jilted Dragon-Blooded to recent graduates of Pasiap's Stair, promising these young Exalts a place in a Dynastic House and a key role in the new Tepet legions. This arrangement marks an *enormous* step up for these Exalts, and the promise of such a change in status has heightened the already competitive environment of Pasiap's Stair considerably.

Most Tepet households have at least a couple of adopted Dragon-Bloods, and some have as many as five. This campaign will change the culture of House Tepet, but just how it will do so remains unclear.

The opinions of the Tepet House elders vary widely on this new policy. Most dislike the practice, but all of them agree on one thing: It beats watching their Great House dissolve before their eyes.

physically and spiritually, but socially. The lost egg had been a mere mortal child, and yet, she now finds herself physically, mentally and socially superior to her family and friends. In an instant, her hopes for the future expand by orders of magnitude. As might be expected in such cases, many of these newly fledged Dragon-Blooded are not ready to take their places as Princes of the Earth. It requires years of devoted training and preparation to transform such an individual from a peasant into a member of the Dragon-Blooded Host. The beginning of this process, however, can sometimes seem as harrowing as anything the young Exalt has experienced up to that point in her life, as she's taken from the care of her parents and sent to a school that's likely far harder than anything she's used to.

Clearly, the education of a peasant is insufficient for a Prince of the Earth, and steps must be taken to bring her education and social skills up to par with the highly educated, extensively groomed children of Dynasts.

Such youngsters are left with few options.

Adoption

Adoption is by far the better option for lost eggs under the age of 16 or so. Regrettably, it is also less common, as the blood of the Dragons is typically weak among lost eggs, causing them to Exalt closer to their 20s. When adoption is an option, however, it is the preferable one.

The transaction called adoption in this case is really more akin to the selling of the child to a wealthy Dynastic family. There may be some brief attempt at negotiations between the Dynast and the lost egg's family, but these are usually quite brief. Usually, the child's parents rave about the child's good qualities while the Dynastic officials nod sagely. Both sides know, however, that if the Dynastic family wanted to simply take the child, it could do so without consequence. The Great House involved pays the child's parents an annual stipend for 20 years to take the child and to make sure that the birth parents never try to see the child again. Seeking to make contact, they are told, would show a lack of integrity and violate the Perfected Hierarchy, but it would also embarrass a child who had far surpassed them, spiritually and intellectually as well as socially.

The amount of the stipend paid depends on the standing of the lost egg's family and on the apparent breeding of the young Exalt. Although the purity of blood in a lost egg is usually very low, pronounced elemental markings or a young Exaltation can suggest strong blessings from the Dragons. A peasant family might be paid an annual sum equal to Resources 2 (though a child of strong blood might fetch twice that). A well-to-do family of merchants might be able to demand an annual payment worth Resources 4 for giving up their child (Resources 5 if the family is on good terms with the Dynasty and the child is of reasonably strong blood).

In the past, adoptions were subject to the Empress's approval. Since her disappearance, the Regent is supposed to oversee this, though when he is busy with the Immaculate Texts, the Deliberative willingly takes up that role, turning what should be a simple agreement into a political drama. In some cases, this interference works to the birth family's advantage, as when Great Houses get into a bidding war for particularly well-bred or talented young Exalts. It can also delay an adoption for years, though, increasing the likelihood that a young Terrestrial will be too old for a proper adoption.

Once she is taken from her family, the lost egg is immersed in study: reading (if necessary), archery, mathematics and so forth—everything a Dynast's child would need to know. Tutor after tutor visits the child to educate her as a young Dynast ought to be educated. The adjustment period is inevitably difficult, but once the child adapts, she wonders how she ever suffered the boredom of her birth parents' tedious existence.

Once she's brought up to her appropriate developmental level, the formerly lost egg takes part in a formal ceremony during which she accepts the name of the Great House. Having done so, she benefits from all of the same advantages as a Dynastic child. Socially, the new adoptee is still on questionable ground with her peers, and the other children in her household might take great delight in making her suffer for her outsider status. She doesn't know the rules of Dynastic social games, and other Dragon-Bloods her age are all too happy to take advantage of that fact. Adoptees are often forced to deal with the worst behavior of their new siblings and cousins, from subtle snubs to outright cruelty, until they distinguish themselves in some way.

In the end, if she survives, it will all be worth it.

Officially, the adoption brings her into the family. Technically, however, she will never be considered entirely legitimate until she marries another Dynast. Since few Great Houses want to marry an adoptee, the found egg will usually marry another Exalt within

the same Great House, most likely another household with whom the family wants to strengthen ties. Their children, however, will be considered full and official members of the House, with all the traditional rights and privileges available thereto.

Adoptees are among the hardest-working members of the Dynasty. They know what a peasant's life (and workday) is like, and they don't want to return to that. Adoptees often get the impression that they are being watched and scrutinized, and they often are. Once adopted, everything—their education, marriage options, stipend and employment opportunities—depends on how well they assume the mantle of a Dynast. Most, as it turns out, outshine children who were actually born into one of the Great Houses, which is one of the key reasons that the institution of adoption continues.

Those Born Low

For older (or adult) lost eggs of low birth or from the Threshold, the options are not as promising as for those young enough to be adopted. The Empress decreed long ago that Dragon-Bloods were too powerful not to be brought into the Realm's service, and those lost eggs too old to be adopted have two choices: the razor or the coin. The terminology refers to the small jade pieces held in an Arbiter's hand when he makes his offer of citizenship in the Realm. The lost egg chooses either a small representation of a razor, like that used to shave the head of a new Immaculate, or a small jade coin representing the more secular life of a legionnaire. The razor or the coin, the life of a monk or the life of a soldier—these are the choices allowed older lost eggs.

The Splendid and Just Arbiters of Purpose

The task of seeking out lost eggs and outcastes throughout all of Creation and properly bringing them into the Dragon-Blooded Host is the province of the Splendid and Just Arbiters of Purpose, a small ministry within the Thousand Scales. These wandering ministers seek out the lost and bring them into the fold so that their strength becomes the Realm's strength.

Reclaiming lost Dragon-Bloods has long been a priority of the Realm. The Arbiters, accordingly, use every tool at their disposal (including sorcery and the Realm heliograph system) to find and bring back newly Exalted Terrestrials. When reports of Anathema turn out to be newly Exalted Dragon-Bloods, as happens occasionally, the Wyld Hunt turns over young Exalts to the Arbiters for training.

Newly recovered eggs are often frightened and sometimes violent, and the Arbiters are trained to disarm dangerous situations. All Arbiter teams have at least one Terrestrial among their number in case the situation turns violent.

Overseeing the Arbiters of Purpose is the Humble and Munificent Master of Orphans. The Master of Orphans originally reported directly to the Empress. Since her disappearance, he ostensibly reports to the Regent.

The Humble and Munificent Master of Orphans

The current Master of Orphans, Agama Orir, is quite independent, and he runs the Arbiters of Purpose wholly as he sees fit. Like his predecessor before him, Agama Orir was a lost egg who took the coin and studied at Pasiap's Stair. He is, consequently, familiar with the culture of the Stair's students. He is a popular minister, and before the Empress's disappearance, he was thought to be a likely candidate for magistrate. He keeps a small manse at the foot of Gray Mask Mountain, 1,000 feet below Pasiap's Stair.

Orir was in love with Tepet Shonin Laikitsu, a young legion commander, before her death in the Tepet slaughter. Since that House's fall, Orir has done everything in his power to aid House Tepet. He has allowed outcastes to be adopted into House Tepet directly out of the Obsidian Mirror, even if they would normally be considered too old for adoption. Other efforts in this regard have included guiding promising young Dragon-Bloods at Pasiap's Stair into the Tepet's House military and, more recently, suggesting suitable graduates of the school for marriage into House Tepet. His partisan actions, though subtle, have been noted by some in the other Houses, who are quite content with the notion of having one less Great House to deal with. Some of the other Houses are looking for a way to get Orir in their pocket or get him out of his position entirely.

For now, Orir splits his time between his manse and the Obsidian Mirror watching for promising young Dragon-Bloods to groom and nudge in the direction of House Tepet.

The Obsidian Mirror

After recovery, the Arbiters take a found egg to the Obsidian Mirror, the Arbiters' massive headquarters compound outside of Juche, where she is given whatever remedial schooling she needs. Those Exalted from the peasant class often lack even basic knowledge of letters or numbers, and their use of Charms is purely instinctual. Worse, their entire understanding of the world is based in mortal ignorance, a far cry from the spiritual, social and political insights appropriate to a member of the Dragon-Blooded Host.

At the Obsidian Mirror, Terrestrials have their old identities stripped from them. For most of their brief training, they are known only by a simple word that has been assigned to them—Tree, Stone, Leaf et cetera.

On the last day of their training, there is an enormous feast, the kind even Dynasts see only rarely, called the Feast of the Elect. During the feast, young Exalts take a new name, one they feel fits their new identity as an Exalt, and it is that name by which they are known thereafter.

After the feast, each Exalt is brought before the Master of Orphans, who is always seated on a magnificent golden chair, surrounded by five candles, each of which represents one of the Immaculate Dragons. In front of him are silver platters atop wooden stands. On the left platter is a jade razor, filigreed with bronze and platinum, representing the razor used to tonsure new Immaculate postulants. On the right platter rests a jade-enameled coin bearing the Empress's profile on one side and a strix on the other. The former side represents she whom the outcaste serves, while the latter symbolizes the inevitable end awaiting all who take the coin.

Each outcaste at the Obsidian Mirror is brought, alone, before the Master of Orphans and asked to choose between the tonsure and the coin. If the young Dragon-Blood takes the razor, she leaves the next morning for the Cloister of Wisdom to pursue life as an Immaculate monk. If she chooses the coin, she goes to Pasiap's Stair for military training.

The Razor

Those who take the razor arrive at the Palace Sublime after the Feast of the Elect and have their heads shaved as appropriate to a postulant. Their goal is not to learn the art of war, but to tread the path of enlightenment—a much more challenging task (at least in the eyes of the Immaculate monks).

Students spend their days poring over the Immaculate Texts and meditating. Those who master simple meditation advance to

the moving meditation of the martial arts, and those who excel there are initiated into Immaculate martial arts.

The postulant has no real choice but to succeed. Any Dragon-Blood who proves repeatedly unable to master the Immaculate Texts or learn basic martial arts is an embarrassment to the Perfected Hierarchy, unfit to serve the Realm—and is quietly killed in her sleep.

Aside from the high cost of failure, the life of one who takes the razor is very like the life of a Dynast who enters the Cloister of Wisdom. There are no class differences among monks, and progression through the coils is the sole indicator of an individual's success and value to the Order.

After completing their initial studies, these monks may go on to be itinerants or members of the Wyld Hunt, and there is no cap on their progression within the Immaculate Order. For more on the life of an Immaculate monk, see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Volume I—The Blessed Isle**.

The Coin

If it is true that the best warriors choose to train under the harshest conditions, then the students of Pasiap's Stair are surely some of the best warriors in the Realm. The training of those who choose the razor is brutal. Except for six hours every night, the students at Pasiap's Stair train in all forms of combat. They train to be infantry, and skilled students train to be the legions' special forces.

Upon arriving at the Stair, students are given a copy of *The Thousand Correct Actions of the Upright Solder*, a suit of heavy armor, a spear and a short sword, all of which must be kept in perfect condition. Every day begins with a run with all of the student's possessions on him. Breakfast follows, then instruction on strategy, tactics, team building, mathematics and all forms of combat. The Stair's curriculum is a study in constructive brutality. With each passing year, less of the day is taken up with study and physical training and more time is spent in field exercises. By the final year, students wage one mock battle after the other in preparation for their lives as legionnaires.

"Do or die" is a reality among these students. There are no safety nets. To fail here is to die. Death can come at any time, though those who consistently prove themselves incompetent are usually beaten to death by their classmates. The bodies of such failures are thrown from a precipice, and the death is almost always accepted as a tragic sleepwalking accident.

Instructors are all graduates of the Stair and veterans of the legions. Their job is to break down the lost, sniveling, rebellious individuals sent to them and rebuild them as crack troops for the legions over the course of 10 extraordinarily challenging years.

Pasiap's Stair

In the First Age, the fortress known as Pasiap's Stair was one of the primary military citadels of the Solar Exalted, one of the many War Manses on the Blessed Isle. Its deepest vaults were the setting of a terrible battle between a Solar Exalt and many Terrestrial and Sidereal Exalted. In the chaos that followed the battle, the tunnels were sealed, heavily warded against intrusion, and allowed to become a mass tomb. Having yet to be opened, they still contain much powerful First Age equipment. They also hide a small, secret shadowland, the only one in the Realm, and the hungry ghosts of those who died here. This is a carefully kept secret, known only to the Master of Orphans and his most trusted senior staff.

If students have ever made their way into the depths of these tombs, they've never come back to tell the tale. If one of the Solar Exalted sought to reclaim her weapons from this tomb, she would be sorely challenged to make it. One of the Abyssals, however, would have access through the shadowland, making the effort much easier, but still triggering the manse's defenses.

After Graduating

Those who graduate from the Stair can look forward to starting at least as a scalelord, and probably higher. The Empress herself insisted that the legions be a strict meritocracy, and the graduates of Pasiap's Stair, while fewer than graduates of the House of Bells, often go further in their careers. Needless to say, there is a constant, aggressive competition between officers from the two schools, and both take great pains to outshine the other. While graduates of the House of Bells obviously consider their highest calling to be to their Great House, graduates of Pasiap's Stair are loyal to the Realm itself, and much is made of this difference.




WELL, YOU'RE AN INTERESTING CHOICE FOR A CHAMPION, AREN'T YOU?
DON'T BE FOOLED. I'M ONLY AS STRONG AS I LOOK, NOT DUMB.
OKAY. LET'S GET THIS SHOW STARTED. SUPPER'S WAITING.
THIS IS NO SHOW, MORTAL! YOU'RE GONNA DIE TODAY!
YOU'RE WRONG...
ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU JUST SAID.
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!


IT'S NOT EVEN BLEEDING...
WHAT... ARE YOU?
HA! YOU THINK I FELT THAT? THIS ISN'T EVEN MY BODY, MORTAL!

CHAPTER TWO
THE OUTCASTE

To the average denizen of the Blessed Isle, the Dynasts are the Dragon-Blooded, and the Dragon-Blooded are the Realm—the Ten Thousand Princes of the Earth, elemental heroes of noble stature and rarefied spiritual enlightenment, born to rule Creation. Everything taught to citizens of the Realm—the Immaculate Philosophy, classes in history and political science, even popular entertainment—all reinforce the idea that the Dragon-Blooded are a fundamental part of the Realm. Some uneducated and ill-informed peasants even believe that the Terrestrials of the Dynastic Houses are the only Dragon-Blooded in existence, or that all other children of the Immaculate Dragons are by-blows of their epic love affairs and romantic dalliances in the Threshold.

This is, of course, incorrect. Anywhere mortals gather, the blood of the Dragons flows, however thinly. Millennia of breeding have spread the Terrestrial seed far and wide, and there are few places in Creation where it is impossible for a Terrestrial to spontaneously Exalt. These handful of societies are as artificially induced as the power of Realm Dynasts or the unusual fecundity of the scions of Lookshy, the results of careful breeding.

Demographics

It is nearly impossible to get an accurate view of population trends of any sort beyond the strictly local level—even cities as small as Celeren have problems keeping an accurate census of their populace. But on average, Terrestrial Exaltation tends to occur at a ratio of about one in five to ten thousand mortals. This ratio tends to skew toward population density—larger communities usually have more Terrestrials per thousand than a collection of smaller villages of equal population would. Partly this density is due to gravitation, as Dragon-Blooded are often drawn toward larger towns and communities. Larger groups of mortals also tend to concentrate the blood of the Dragons that is the heart of Terrestrial Exaltation, increasing its chances in those communities.

Childhood

The normally young age at which Terrestrials Exalt is a particular problem in much of the Threshold, where the support structures found in places where Dragon-Blooded frequent are rare or nonexistent. In those areas where the Immaculate Order has influence, Dragon-Blooded take their Second Breath in a place that is, if not exactly equipped to handle their special needs, at least tolerant and understanding of the basics of Dragon-Blooded life. In other parts of the Threshold, the young Terrestrials are forced to fend for themselves, learning how to master their powers through a combination of instinct and experimentation.

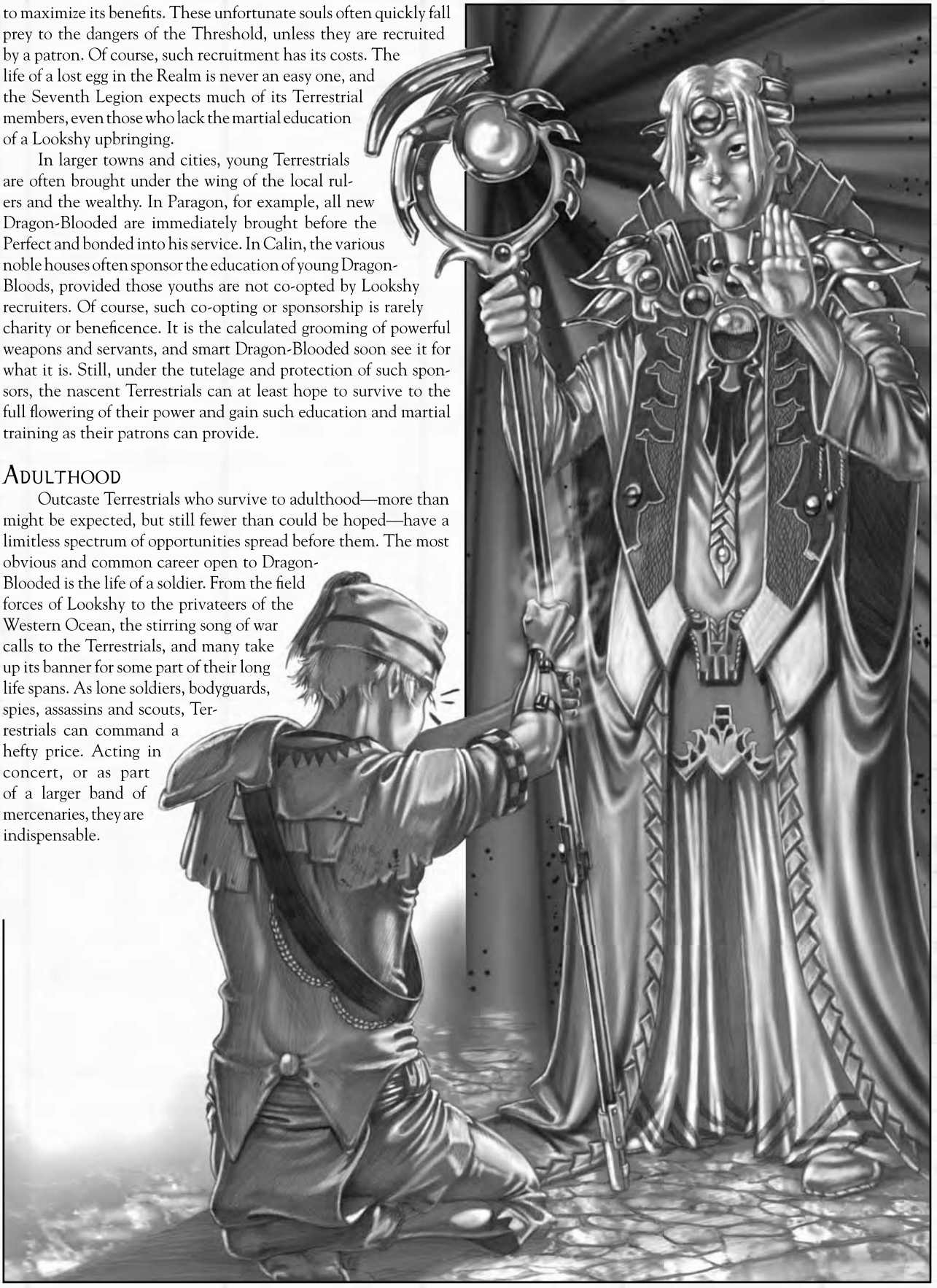
In small communities, nascent Dragon-Blooded have little opportunity to develop their powers or get the education they need

to maximize its benefits. These unfortunate souls often quickly fall prey to the dangers of the Threshold, unless they are recruited by a patron. Of course, such recruitment has its costs. The life of a lost egg in the Realm is never an easy one, and the Seventh Legion expects much of its Terrestrial members, even those who lack the martial education of a Lookshy upbringing.

In larger towns and cities, young Terrestrials are often brought under the wing of the local rulers and the wealthy. In Paragon, for example, all new Dragon-Blooded are immediately brought before the Perfect and bonded into his service. In Calin, the various noble houses often sponsor the education of young Dragon-Bloods, provided those youths are not co-opted by Lookshy recruiters. Of course, such co-opting or sponsorship is rarely charity or beneficence. It is the calculated grooming of powerful weapons and servants, and smart Dragon-Blooded soon see it for what it is. Still, under the tutelage and protection of such sponsors, the nascent Terrestrials can at least hope to survive to the full flowering of their power and gain such education and martial training as their patrons can provide.

Adulthood

Outcaste Terrestrials who survive to adulthood—more than might be expected, but still fewer than could be hoped—have a limitless spectrum of opportunities spread before them. The most obvious and common career open to Dragon-Blooded is the life of a soldier. From the field forces of Lookshy to the privateers of the Western Ocean, the stirring song of war calls to the Terrestrials, and many take up its banner for some part of their long life spans. As lone soldiers, bodyguards, spies, assassins and scouts, Terrestrials can command a hefty price. Acting in concert, or as part of a larger band of mercenaries, they are indispensable.



Possible Patrons

Young Dragon-Blooded often find themselves recruited by older, more powerful, or simply more cunning, patrons. Some even seek out these relationships, clever enough to understand that such a deal can provide needed protection until a Terrestrial is powerful enough to step out on her own—or achieve her own status in the organization of her patron. Some possible patrons include:

The Realm: The razor or the coin awaits lost eggs from the Threshold, just as they do those non-Dynastic Terrestrials from the Blessed Isle who fail to attract the attention of one of the Great Houses. Life in the Realm is harsh for a lost egg, but it has its rewards, and the opportunities, while not limitless, are great. Which option a fledgling Dragon-Blooded chooses often depends as much on her recruiter as her personal preference. While the soldiers of the Imperial legions are more forthright in explaining the options to newfound Terrestrials than Immaculate monks are, it is only from wandering Dynasts that a young Terrestrial is likely to receive a balanced examination of the benefits and disadvantages of the razor or the coin.

The Seventh Legion: Standing orders for all officers of the Seventh Legion include the duty of keeping an eye out for any prospective recruits of particular talent and potential. While this directive has certainly been taken to include both exceptionally gifted mortals and God-Blooded, special care is taken to try to recruit any Dragon-Blooded they encounter—especially young ones. Lookshy officers vary wildly in their approach and honesty. Some beguile youngsters with their stories of glory and a soldier's life, while others speak plainly of the costs of duty and service. What doesn't vary is the fees paid to the families of those recruited and the recruitment bonuses paid to those responsible for their induction into the Seventh Legion.

The Guild: Some Guild factors are eager to recruit Terrestrials into their organizations, seeing each new Dragon-Blood as a powerful addition to their repertoire of assets. Others avoid them, seeing the young Terrestrials as powerful potential rivals to their organization. Many recruit them, intending to hand them off at some future time to another factor in exchange for favors owed, debts repaid, other trade goods or resources, or some other valuable.

Local Dignitaries: Local nobles, merchant princes or other worthies sometimes take newfound Terrestrials under their wing, seeking an asset in local politics and trade. Others do so hoping for a means to catapult themselves out of the local political scene and into a more regional sphere of influence.

Mercenary Bands: Larger mercenary units often make a point of recruiting those with potential and demonstrated talent, in much the same way that the Seventh Legion does. While they can rarely offer as much, and are often much less trustworthy, they are often all that a young Dragon-Blood can count on.

Outcastes who choose to avoid the life of a soldier or champion still have many options open to them. Terrestrial sorcerers and thaumaturges are always in demand, to produce artifacts, talismans and all manner of alchemical wonders, to seal wards against the dead, the Fair Folk or hostile spirits, to cast spells of truth-seeking or to read the stars and discern the future. Terrestrial craftsmen of all sorts are easily able to make a successful living at their trade, their natural skills aided by Charms. The success of Dragon-Blooded politicians is dependent on the culture in which they try to make their career. Some cultures take great steps to obviate the power of Terrestrial Charms through countermeasures or by simply banning their participation in the political arena, while others simply acknowledge that Exalts will typically come to dominate any sphere in which they show interest. Terrestrial performers, courtesans and courtiers are all aided by the supernatural grace and presence afforded them by Charms, and Dragon-Bloods who chose to become spymasters, scouts or assassins are gifted with supernal prowess in stealth and investigation.

Status

Adult Terrestrials enjoy different levels of status depending on the society in which they find themselves, as well as the emphasis placed on their heritage. In places where the Immaculate Order holds sway—or has had substantial influence—they might not exactly be treated as Princes of the Earth, but are often accorded substantial rights and responsibilities beyond those of ordinary citizens. In other communities, such as Nexus in the Scavenger Lands, they are treated no differently than any other citizen of equivalent wealth and power is. Still other communities see Dragon-Blooded as little more than the weapons they were originally intended to be. (Such communities are likely capable of taming the Dragon-Bloods' powerful elemental nature, or suborning their fierce will, whether through thaumaturgy, bribes of great comfort and wealth that belie their status or ingrained ideals of society and culture.) Few communities outright denigrate or ban the Terrestrials, but it is not completely unknown. Terrestrials are not welcome in the Skullstone Archipelago, for example.

Children

Outcastes are usually interested in continuing and improving their bloodlines, even without the blandishments offered to Dynasts. Attempts at organized breeding programs are often stymied, however, by the lack of the massive genealogical records found in places with extensive Terrestrial populations (such as the Blessed Isle, Lookshy, Cherak or even Thorns before its fall to the Mask of Winter). An outcaste might understand academically that producing a child with another Dragon-Blood yields a better chance of that child also being Dragon-Blooded, but that understanding won't magically make a willing Dragon-Blooded partner appear for him. And without genealogical records tracking the spread and dilution of Exalted blood throughout the local mortal population, the outcaste's efforts to start a Dynasty in miniature on his own are largely up to chance.

Despite the difficulties, minor bloodlines thrive throughout Creation, creating small Terrestrial legacies and families in many places. These bloodlines can potentially survive for generations even without bringing in fresh blood from other communities to reinforce the blood of the Dragons, with each generation producing enough Terrestrials to continue the bloodline into the next.

Brotherhoods

The Elemental Dragons created their servants to be soldiers, which is reflected in a myriad of ways. One is that, even without the structure of Realm society or the discipline of the Seventh Legion, Terrestrials tend to gather and associate when given the chance, forming up into small groups almost without thinking about it. This can be a great asset for Dragon-Blooded with a mind for martial pursuits. While it is not unheard of to find lone Terrestrials working as mercenaries, it is more common to find small bands of three to ten operating in the same unit, either formally (as a band of champions) or informally (as the officers of a larger mercenary outfit).

Terrestrials who choose more sedentary existences as savants, performers or craftsmen still often find themselves gathering with other Dragon-Blooded, forming the core of artisans' guilds, merchant houses, traveling circuses or small universities. When there are no other Terrestrials in the area, Dragon-Blooded tend to build strong bonds with their mortal kindred or neighbors, forming ersatz brotherhoods to replace those they cannot build with their fellow Exalted.

In the end, Terrestrials are social creatures, ill suited to a solitary lifestyle. While Dragon-Blooded might sequester themselves for a time to meditate on life's mysteries, to avoid the repercussions of their shameful excesses or for other reasons, they inexorably find themselves drawn back to society, even if it's not the one from which they originally hailed.

The North

Cold and hard are the lives of those who live in the North; only slightly less hard are the lives of those blessed by Terrestrial Exaltation. The North is an unforgiving domain, full of shadowlands and Wyld places, where the dead and the Fair Folk roam with near impunity. In many places, a fledgling Terrestrial is the only defense a community has against the depredations the North has to offer. And all too often, that defense is lacking in training and sent out too soon to oppose threats that even experienced Dragon-Blooded would hesitate to face down alone. In some remote tribes, newly Exalted Dragon-Blooded are even seen as a threat. They might be mistaken for God-Blooded (due to their elemental powers), or the village elders might be well aware what a young Exalt is but wish to avoid the kind of attention such a one can bring down on a small village.

There is something in the underways of Gethamane that does not like the Dragon-Blooded at all. What it is remains a mystery few Terrestrials are willing to explore in any depth. Therefore, the priests who oversee Gethamane's temples strongly encourage outcastes to remain in the city for no longer than a month. Only a small number of Dragon-Bloods are willing to make their home in Gethamane on a long-term basis, and few stay more than a handful of years, complaining of dark nightmares and claustrophobia.

These few hardy souls still take great precautions, living in the chambers closest to the surface and furthest from the underways, traveling only during the day. Terrestrials who find themselves in the underways very rarely find their way out again. When they do, they are rarely intact in body or spirit.

Children who Exalt in Gethamane are immediately sent away—to the Realm or Lookshy if a representative from either nation is present at the time, or to Whitewall if the first two options are out of the question. A small handful of these "sent-aways" later return, but they often find themselves leaving again after a time. Usually, the *concept* of going back to their birthplace as successful Princes of the Earth is more satisfying than the reality.

One of the largest cities of the North, Whitewall, has a small but thriving population of Terrestrials, bolstered by the occasional sent-away from Gethamane (many of whom eventually make their way to the Realm). Approaching nearly 100 Dragon-Blooded, counting the members of the Realm and Lookshy diplomatic corps stationed there, Whitewall has several bloodlines that have proven to consistently, if irregularly, produce Terrestrial offspring. Although little trusted in the city, native Dragon-Blooded only rarely succumb to the temptations of Realm recruiters. Most find jobs in the Guard, as monster-hunters or as servants of the Syndics, who are less sanguine in their distrust of beings of magical prowess, offering great incentives both in cash and magical knowledge to those who would remain in Whitewall and aid in its defense.

Outcastes entering the city-states of the Haslanti League from outside face suspicion and doubt as to their motives, but they enjoy more than a bit of awe, bordering on worship. While the Immaculate Order is not as overwhelmingly powerful in the League as it is in Cherak or some of the other principalities of the Inland Sea's northern shores, it still holds considerable influence in several of the larger rural areas of the League. This influence gives the Terrestrials a level of respect not found in other parts of the North. At the same time, the Dragon-Blooded have inflicted more than their share of woe upon the peoples of the League, and Haslanti memories are long. Foreign outcastes are welcome in the League, and can easily find employment, but they are rarely trusted. Only rarely do they rise in power or influence in Haslanti society.

League-born Dragon-Blooded are inculcated with a fierce loyalty to their tribes, and then to the League, from the moment they Exalt. For this reason, they are preferred for nearly all duties of importance over their foreign cousins-in-blood. They serve in the Ears of the North, they command air boats and iceships, they preside over local councils, and they form a strong backbone of magical power to the largely mortal League.

Terrestrial children of the icewalker tribes face a difficult choice, and one not their own. Their fate is left in the hands of the animal master that watches over their tribe. They may stay if the animal master allows, and those who do stay tend to become great hunters, champions or even leaders of their tribes. If the animal master exiles them from the tribe, the young Dragon-Blooded must flee, often with little more than the clothing on their backs, or face their own families and friends in combat.

The icewalkers allied under Yurgen Kaneko, the Solar Exalt known as the Bull of the North, allow Terrestrials born of their tribes to remain as part of the growing warband. Those born in the small villages that dot his lands, however, are slain whenever the Bull's patrols discover them. As such, when Northern villagers in the Bull's path discover that one of their own has taken the Second Breath, that one is quickly sent into exile. The child is fostered with a relative in a far-away village not yet under the Bull's sway if possible, or sent south to Cherak or some other coastal city. Many never make it to their final destination, as travel in the North is dangerous even for armed bands, let alone an untrained child traveling alone or with strangers. Those who do make it to the southern colonies are welcomed with offers of training and education, as few in those hard cities can afford to do without every asset they can acquire.

House Ferem—
Wildcard of the Realm

The politics of the Realm, though disrupted by the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress, are nonetheless well settled and understood. Dynasts rule, patricians lead, citizens follow, and the Thousand Scales manage. Despite requiring constant management and supervision, it is a well-tuned machine that has endured for centuries.

House Ferem, one of the Cadet Houses of the North, plans to throw a wrench in the works. From their Northern strongholds, the Ferem seek to upset the balance of power between the Great Houses. They intend to topple the current holders of power, which see them as little more than half-civilized barbarians, instead of descendents of the same Shogunate legions from which the Scarlet Empress and the heads of the Dynastic Houses derive their lineage.

The Ferem are mostly untutored in the ways of Dynastic intrigue. They are subtle when they should be direct and direct when they should be subtle. Their schemes are always on the razor's edge of discovery. They have only a few advantages: a history of military success and personal power nearly as great (if not as overwhelming in scope) as that of the Realm itself, a devoted and gifted band of conspirators at its core. What's more, nobody in the Realm has any idea that House Ferem is ever up to anything, so few Dynastic schemers ever take the Ferem into account.

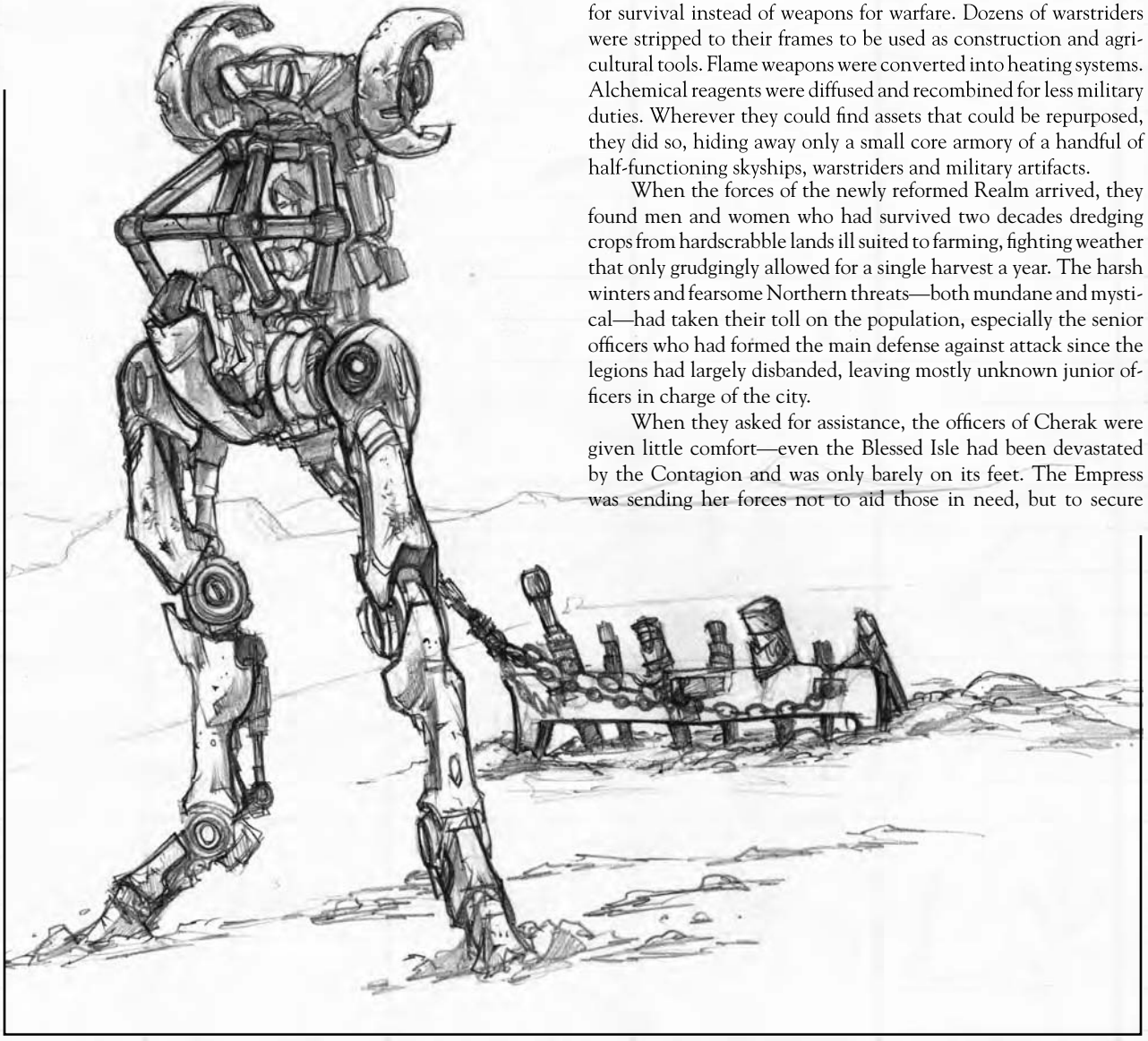
History

When the Contagion ended, the remnants of the Shogunate legions gathered to try to assess the damage, regroup, rearm and wait for the next move. Those with air- or seaworthy transports mostly made their way back to the Blessed Isle. In the North, however, those who could not evacuate gathered at Cherak, a small port city and mining center that had never been self-sufficient, even before the surge of military and civilian refugees that flooded its streets.

The remaining officers knew that without drastic measures, there was no way Cherak would survive until harvest, let alone last out the brutal winter. They needed to find some way to keep as many people alive as possible, and they understood that harsh discipline, long hours of work and strict rationing simply weren't going to be enough. The legionnaires threw aside any concept of retaining military worthiness as a Shogunate force. Sorcerer-engineers ruthlessly stripped down weapons and defenses, converting them into tools for survival instead of weapons for warfare. Dozens of warstriders were stripped to their frames to be used as construction and agricultural tools. Flame weapons were converted into heating systems. Alchemical reagents were diffused and recombined for less military duties. Wherever they could find assets that could be repurposed, they did so, hiding away only a small core armory of a handful of half-functioning skyships, warstriders and military artifacts.

When the forces of the newly reformed Realm arrived, they found men and women who had survived two decades dredging crops from hardscrabble lands ill suited to farming, fighting weather that only grudgingly allowed for a single harvest a year. The harsh winters and fearsome Northern threats—both mundane and mystical—had taken their toll on the population, especially the senior officers who had formed the main defense against attack since the legions had largely disbanded, leaving mostly unknown junior officers in charge of the city.

When they asked for assistance, the officers of Cherak were given little comfort—even the Blessed Isle had been devastated by the Contagion and was only barely on its feet. The Empress was sending her forces not to aid those in need, but to secure



The Arsenals of Ferem

Never overwhelming or extensive in makeup, the arsenals of Ferem are all but depleted by centuries of use and near-neglect. Much of the arsenal was turned over to representatives of the Scarlet Empress generations ago when ties with the Realm became a fait accompli. Much of what remains has moldered into uselessness as materials needed for maintenance were allocated elsewhere and methods of repair were lost by succeeding generations. Still, there are treasures to be found in the caverns where the arsenal is stored, and much of the arsenal's weapons and devices could be reclaimed by sufficiently motivated sorcerers or engineers.

resources to get the Realm itself back on a secure path to recovery. Some help could be had (mostly food, seed and livestock to help the city's agricultural assets), but the message was loud and clear. While no tribute would be demanded immediately, in deference to their hard-luck status and their history in the Shogunate, Cherak was largely on its own.

With this in mind, the members of the Cherak Survival Council—the loose affiliation of officers, senior bureaucracy officials, former merchant princes and others who had been directing Cherak's efforts—set about making a more formal arrangement of rulership and administration for the city. The Survival Council was dissolved, and after substantial deliberation (involving more than a little shouting, several fistfights and at least three blood duels), a daimyo was appointed. The daimyo then approved a slate of councilors, family heads and a deliberate re-creation of a typical Shogunate city-state's political structure—modified for the realities of Cherak's tenuous situation. The daimyo was not the most skilled military leader, but rather the most skilled survivor, and most of his advisors were more interested in farming and hunting than in warfare and intrigue.

The Great Families of Cherak evolved out of those first steps and thrived, contrary to expectations. A series of mild winters and fruitful summers, combined with increasing levels of aid from the Realm, allowed Cherak to grow and stabilize until it became an important trading partner and tributary of the Realm. Cherak's families took to the sea to improve their status, building the city as a maritime power capable of conducting operations even in the harsh weather of Ascending and Resplendent Air. Realm influence continued to swell over the centuries, even as the families of Cherak sought to limit its influence and cultural impact on Cherak's society, a fight that continues to this day.

The Cherak economy is tied up in agriculture, fishing and trade, particularly ocean-going trade. Cherak's port has expanded many times over the years, grown large on Guild trade and bountiful fishing harvests, until it is one of the largest single ports outside the Realm itself. Painstakingly constructed sea walls surround the port, keeping the harsh winter storms and floating ice floes from the vessels that winter here. In the depths of winter, only Cherak captains will put to sea to brave the savagery that is the northern Inland Sea.

The lands around Cherak are not exactly known for their fertility, yet quite a lot of it is well suited for farming. Such land is flat and easily tilled, and Cherak farmers have long experience at eking out palatable foods from even near-barren soil. The Cherak fields are known for their wheat and corn. While working the fields is a long, labor-intensive process, Cherak's largely slave-labor force not only raises enough to feed the city, but provides great surpluses for trade with the Realm as well. The single harvest they can grow each year is often planted just after last snow and harvested right on the edge of first snow.

Relations with the Guild

The Guild is an integral part of agriculture and trade in the Northern states, especially in Cherak. Cherak's port is vital to Guild operations in the North, and the famed skill of Cherak's navigators and sailmasters is the only thing that keeps some ocean trade routes open in the harsh storms of the Northern winters. Conversely, the only thing that keeps Cherak agriculture bountiful and profitable is cheap labor—and lots of it. Many landowners are more than willing to pay Guild factors princely sums for the drugs that keep their labor forces distracted enough to be useful.

This reliance does not blind Cherak to the real evils of the Guild, it simply forces Cherak to tolerate them. Some embrace the Guild, for the riches its trade brings to Cherak, for the treasures they can buy from faraway lands and for the opportunities and respect that having such close ties with the Guild brings them. But there are others—particularly merchants and craftsmen who are not tied to Cherak's agricultural holdings—who do not appreciate the Byzantine politics of the Guild, its structure of fees and tariffs or the trade opportunities it closes off.

The Great Families

Although they are "great" only in reference to Cherak itself, over three dozen families in Cherak have sufficient resources and influence in Cherak society to earn that lofty descriptor. Collectively, these families are known as House Ferem, and they use the same naming structure that offshoot families of the Dynastic Houses use. A member of the Taleki family named Solu, for example, would be known as Ferem Taleki Solu. He could correctly be referred to as Ferem Solu (especially in Realm documentation) or as Taleki Solu (especially in Cherak). Names can also be used as political referents. Insisting on using the Ferem house name (instead of the family name) can often indicate support or loyalty to the Realm and its ideals. Using only one's family name can be a sign of loyalty to Cherak and its society and culture. Insisting on the full name can mean nothing, a balanced approach to the situation, or simply that one is a pompous windbag.

The Great Families of Cherak are typically far more democratic—and chaotic—than the Dynastic Houses. Patricians have a voice at council, and family elders can be replaced if three quarters of the members of the council vote against their continued service. Terrestrial Exalts are a great power in Cherak, but they are not the only power. There are families where Terrestrials do not rule alone. Some families even have few Dragon-Blooded members but still wield considerable influence.

Members of these families are far more educated than the common Cherak citizens or serfs, but they lack the sophisticated educational techniques of the Realm and have differing goals and focus than those raised under the Dynastic educational system. Cherak Terrestrials are far more interested in crafts and survival than in warfare and are raised to handle sailing craft nearly from birth.

Realm Opinions of House Ferem

Dynastic opinions of House Ferem are complex and multi-layered. Many Dynasts see great potential in the bloodlines found there, though that potential is bound up in an exceedingly backward and rough-hewn culture. This opinion is bolstered by the polite but obstinate refusal of many citizens of Cherak to accept most Dynastic cultural norms and customs.

Reactions vary to this combination of inherent talent and stubborn adherence to outmoded ways of thinking. Some Dynasts have only derision and scorn for Cherak's Terrestrials, who should know better. Others find things of value in the Cherak society and are quick to adopt them—even when those things conflict with mainstream Realm mores. Most react with a combination of admiration and exasperation, denigrating Cherak society while admiring its accomplishments.

Many of the Great Families of House Ferem have been unofficially adopted by one or another Dynastic House. Such adoption is typically an informal arrangement. The Realm Houses occasionally sponsor talented members of the Cherak Great Families to attend a preparatory school (normally at the expense of the Cherak family) or provide influence in the legion or the Thousand Scales to smooth the career of a favored Cherak scion. In exchange, the Great Families agree to political marriages within the adopting Houses or use their influence in Cherak politics to aid the appropriate Dynasts. Such relationships are not exactly fair or equal. The Dynasts typically get far more out of the deal, and it is not unheard of for Cherak families to break off the relationship after some particularly egregious violation.

Despite these relationships, House Ferem speaks with one voice in the Deliberative. The Empress typically appointed a single member of House Ferem to the Greater Chamber, and a number of individuals would serve in the Lesser Chamber at any one time. Unlike most in the Deliberative, the Ferem members of the Greater and Lesser Chambers typically supported one another. Those appointed to the Lesser Chamber realized there was little chance of advancement in the Deliberative but much prestige to earned back home by currying favor for their city-state in the Realm. While the negotiating and bartering to determine who represents Cherak in the Deliberative was fierce, it was usually kept hidden from the rest of the Realm, as are most aspects of Cherak politics. Since the disappearance of the Empress, the representatives of Cherak have been largely silent in the Deliberative, working mostly behind the scenes and little participating in the spectacle of day-to-day politicking.

The Cherak Survival Council

Throughout history, when major threats to Cherak arise, a secret cabal of influential citizens meets in private, using their considerable resources to make sure Cherak weathers the problem successfully—emerging stronger than before if possible. The Council has no formal membership and no long-standing history. It is a temporary gathering of powers to deal with a particular crisis, rather than a standing alliance. Its membership has included representatives of the various Great Families, military officers, merchants, craftsmen and farmers, scholars and even members of the Immaculate Order who loved the city more than the Order—or at least saw no conflict between their duties to the Order and to the Council.

Rumors regarding the Council are widespread and as varied as the imaginations of the tellers. Its existence, composition, rules of behavior and current status are always up for discussion among Cherak natives. Outsiders rarely even know of the Council's existence, as it is not something commonly discussed with non-natives.

The Council, which currently numbering 56 members—the largest in nearly five centuries—started accumulating informally with the first suggestions of the Empress's disappearance. It formally incorporated itself (to the extent it is a formal organization) only nearly four years ago. Since then, its members have been preparing and scheming, looking for ways to profit from this turn of events and use the Empress's absence to the advantage of their city. In some cases, it does so even as their Great Family elders piously proclaim their loyalty to the throne and the Regent.

The Council's symbol is the same seal used to authenticate messages from the original Survival Council—a golden coin. On one side are a crossed ink brush and trowel; on the other are three wheat stalks crossed with three arrows, representing the five aspects of survival—education and knowledge, construction and labor, agriculture, military might and wealth. Either side of the coin, encircled with a broad band, can be used as a stamp, typically representing which aspect is being discussed. The foremost symbol is the most important in the missive sealed by the stamp.

Receiving a document—or coin—from the Council is both an honor and a great secret. Few in Cherak would impersonate the Council, if only because of the huge risks taken in doing so. Few speak of any actions taken "for the Coin" even long after their duty is done and the risks of revelation recede.

Conspiracies and Intrigues

Although the Cherak Survival Council has been gathering informally for nearly four years now, it has still gained no real consensus on what path to take moving forward. Every member agrees that the disappearance of the Empress and the resulting chaos in the Realm are great opportunities for Cherak. Yet, whether to strike out for the city's own freedom, to attempt to topple the current Realm political structure, to wage a war of subjugation against the remainder of the North or to take some other course of action is still a subject of much debate. The members of the Council know they have little time left in which to move, though. The situation grows more precarious and unsettled by the month.

The current slate of possible actions the people of Cherak could pursue has been whittled down to the following vague plans:

- **Secession:** Secession is largely seen as the plan of action most likely to succeed in the short term, and with the least long-term risks, but also some of the lowest gains. Cherak's tribute payments are high but not yet crippling, even after five years of successive raises by the Dynastic Houses. On the other hand, Cherak even now enjoys significant protection from the Realm, and maintaining a larger standing military to make up for the loss of Imperial Army protection would cut the savings enjoyed by stopping tributes to a token amount. Still, proponents argue that the soldiers hired would be Cherak soldiers, loyal to Cherak, rather than a thinly disguised occupation force.
- **Overthrow:** Overthrow is seen by all as the riskiest venture with the greatest chance of failure, and a massive price to be paid for that failure. Still, it is also the option with the greatest rewards. To stand as the rulers of the Realm, or even just significant players in its new political structure, would be worth every risk. (Plus, the opportunity to put paid to some old debts would not go amiss either.) Those seeking overthrow as an option also are most likely to suggest alliances, some of them risky ones.



• **Conquest:** It would not take much, some argue, to influence the local legion commanders to throw in their lot with Cherak. In so doing, they could raise up an army and begin their own war of conquest against the North. They would start with the coastal cities to shore up support and cut off supplies from the more powerful inland nations such as Gethamane and Whitewall. This option is somewhat popular, especially for not being aimed directly at the Realm. Still, detractors point out that the gods of Whitewall can be surprisingly prescient and proactive, and there are always the massive armies of the Bull of the North with which to contend.

• **Renegotiation:** Some seek merely to renegotiate the terms of the various agreements between the Realm and Cherak. They would sue for recognition of House Ferem as a proper dynastic House instead of a "Cadet" House, as well as reduced tribute payments and more favorable status for trade and loans with the various Great Houses. This option is generally seen by most on the Council as little better than the status quo. It risks little, gains almost nothing and is a gesture born more of fear than defiance.

Most within the Council understand that they are going to need allies to pull off any sort of major offensive. Exactly with whom to ally is a subject of nearly as much discussion as what to do. The Guild seems a natural choice, but there are those in the Council who are all too familiar with its avarice and misbehavior. They would prefer to sup with long spoons when dealing with that particular devil. Some favor Lookshy, which is remote and isolationist, but powerful. (The Lookshyans are even distant cousins in a sense.) Few would prefer the Deathlords. Those beings are powerful, but they're untrustworthy and likely to turn Cherak into their pawn. Some might consider the Bull of the North, who is also quite powerful, but he's already busy and he might just as soon destroy Cherak as ally with it. The Roseblack, Tepet Ejava, might even be an option, since she's skilled and well situated politically and militarily. She is distant, however, and few in Cherak can even guess at her true loyalty.

The goals of the Council are likely to be opposed, of course—most notably by the Realm and the Great Houses, but other threats are spoken of as well. Whitewall is likely to look dimly on sudden shifts of power in the North, particularly if Cherak gives the appearance of growing aggression. The Bull of the North might decide to take a personal stake in whatever outcome plays out, and he has the force of arms to settle things in a manner to his liking. The Haslanti could become involved as well, which could bring Lookshy into the picture in a way the Great Families of Cherak might not like.

The Reality of the Situation

The members of the Survival Council are smart, well-educated people who are capable of rationally following assumptions through to logical conclusions. Unfortunately, they lack both information beyond a large-scale overview level and intelligence-analysis skills commensurate to the tasks they are planning to undertake.

They make drastic over-estimations in some areas and significant underestimations in other areas. For instance, they have a vastly inflated opinion of Lookshy's ability to deploy strategic forces in large enough amounts to make a difference on the Northern battlefield. Conversely, they underestimate how useful Lookshy's intelligence and special-operations assets could be, even in unfamiliar terrain. They also overestimate the chaos the Empress's disappearance is causing. That they have neither tipped their hand nor been infiltrated is due as much to luck as to the fact that the All-Seeing Eye is distracted by other troubles in the Realm. What's more, the master of the Northern Wyld Hunt has grown suspicious

Cherak Education

Cherak Dragon-Blooded receive five fewer Ability dots at character generation than Realm Dynasts do, and they have a different set of required Ability minimums. (Archery 1, Craft 1, Lore 1, Melee 1, Sail 2, Survival 2.) They also use the standard Artifact and Manse Backgrounds, rather than the enhanced ones found on pp. **103-105**. They also pay double for the Breeding Background, although Cherak natives may purchase up to the fifth dot in this Background. Otherwise, they use the Dynastic character-creation rules and traits found in Chapter Three.

about what is going on in Cherak. Fortunately, his missives are falling on deaf ears in the Realm, as it's well known that he's an overzealous paranoid.

The Survival Council is aware of the former weakness, if not the latter. As a result, the Council is currently trying to improve its intelligence-gathering capabilities at the local level, although its members are amateurs playing at espionage. This lack of knowledge and skill, however, often leads to strategic paralysis that approaches hysteria at times. The Council believes it has only one chance to do whatever its members end up deciding on, so it wants to maximize its chances of success and minimize its members' chances of ending up with their heads separated from their bodies. So the Council dithers and quibbles and argues, always failing to actually accomplish much of anything.

Notable Members

Admiral Ferem Helkar

Helkar is a thick, barrel-chested Child of Hesiesh. He is in charge of Cherak's substantial fleet of longships, and his skill in battle is prodigious even without the use of Charms. Strong enough to swing a reaver daiklave without attunement and encased in super-heavy armor intended for use at sea (armor of aquatic puissance), he is a one-Exalt boarding party—a fact in which he sometimes puts too much faith.

Helkar is respected by men, idolized by children and loved by (most of) the women he meets. His passions are great, his appetites are enormous, and his humor is unending. People say he's a clever enough fellow, a decent tactician and strategist, but he's not always that quick on the uptake. When this comes up in conversation, he pauses, laughs and eventually quips that though he might not be the sharpest sword in the arsenal he's certainly the biggest. Then he downs another mug of ale and tips a lurid wink to the nearest pretty lady.

Sidereal Interference

The Sidereals are aware of the plans of House Ferem, in concept if not in detail. Thus far they have done nothing to tip off the Great Houses or the All-Seeing Eye. If House Ferem manages to unite enough major players to provide a true challenge against the Realm, these Sidereals reason, the challenge could spur the Dynasts into finally settling their differences long enough to squash their Northern cousins. And if Cherak should somehow manage to prevail… well, it would likely be far more tractable and more easily manipulated than the jaded Dynasts.

Thus is the illusory façade maintained. Helkar is far, far smarter than most ever realize, though he has grown to enjoy the act over the decades. Helkar's fierce, outspoken loyalty to the Realm is nearly as much an act as his apparent stupidity. Loyal to the *idea* of the Realm, he has no particular love for those in charge of it or for their current policies. If his beloved Cherak can find some way to upset the balance of power in the Dynastic Houses and bring about change, so much the better. Yet even as he throws his support wholeheartedly behind the Council, he schemes and plans escape routes and plots of vengeance should the Council's plans come to ruin. You can't bring change about, he notes to himself, if you're dead.

The Marmorean Circle

Thirteen Terrestrial savants, pale of countenance and uncompromising in nature, make up the core of the Marmorean sisterhood. Thirteen again are their paramours, descendents of the Hundred-Eyed Shouter of Blasphemies, also known as Eshemati. Thirteen twice times itself are their servants, skilled in craftsmanship, fearsome in battle or wise in thaumaturgy, but silent in word and deed. The Marmoreans reside in a dozen temple caves in the North, fortified redoubts whence they sally forth to gather secrets from the world of mortal men, bringing them back to their demon master, whose aspect is knowledge and whose sphere of influence is secrets.

Eshemati, it is said, was neither Primordial nor god, but a servant of the being now known as She Who Lives in Her Name. He once tasked a Maiden to stand watch over those secrets that were his alone, for he tired of his unceasing duty and wished to take comfort in the pleasures of Yu-Shan. But the Maiden betrayed him, spreading his secrets throughout Creation so that all could partake in mystery and deception and taking his mantle for her own even as her servants cast him into Malfeas. But Bagrash Köl freed Eshemati in exchange for some great secret (some say the location of the Eye of Autochthon). Now, *Eshemati's* Maidens seek out and attempt to retrieve all the secrets stolen from him in order to return them to him.

The Marmoreans speak little, communicating with their deaf servants only through sign language and preferring the written word to the spoken. The sisterhood knows many secrets. They know spells to permanently alter a person's visage or gender. They know alchemical recipes whose results remove memories from those who want them not. They know rituals penned by Dragon King heretics that allow them to learn the secrets of a victim by ritually devouring their brains. They know even more foul things that should not be known in Creation, but the total extent of their knowledge is one of the first secrets they were able to return to their master. Yet they are willing to trade many of these secrets for information that no Marmorean has ever heard. At least for a time—all secrets are Eshemati's and must be returned to him. For a mortal to hold onto a secret thing is to commit a minor blasphemy. For even an Exalt or god to speak a loaned secret aloud is heresy, sullying that secret and disgracing the Marmorean sister who loaned it.

The 13 sisters are all sorcerers and predominantly Water or Air aspected. When one dies, the rest have 169 days to find a replacement and present her (or him) before their master or suffer horrible punishments. Eshemati demands that only women serve him, but he is not overly demanding about what gender his servants were born to. They are not forbidden liaisons with men (or women) other than their paramours, but they may carry a child to term only twice: once when they choose to give birth to their lover's replacement, and once when they choose to try to bring a new sister into the circle. Each generation, the most powerful Marmorean is granted the

honor or bringing a fresh influx of her lineage into their bloodline. Some even survive the childbirth, but most do not.

The eldest sister does not have a citadel-temple of her own. Instead, she and her retinue travel from temple to temple, overseeing the actions and secrets gathered by the younger sisters. The servants of the Marmoreans—169 for each—are the descendents of a degenerate and cannibalistic tribe of Contagion survivors who fled to the caves they were found in. Though they still partake of human flesh, they are now stoic servants, trained in the arts and skills needed by the Marmoreans, and deafened at birth so that they may never hear a secret and inadvertently speak it to another. Marmorean warriors—about half of each retinue—are typically equal to regular troops, although some are elite, and every retinue boasts a handful of mortal heroes and thaumaturges. These special servants are the closest and most faithful the sisters have.

The East

While the East is a rough-and-tumble wilderness compared to the relative order and structure of the Realm, it is still far more civilized than much of the rest of Creation. Many large towns and cities are scattered throughout the region, as are plenty of places for young Dragon-Bloods to find opportunities for education, advancement and relative safety. Comparatively more Terrestrials find their way to maturity in these environs, and their influence can be strongly felt on the politics, militaries and social structures of much of the region.

Opportunity abounds wherever one looks in the East. The war between the Linowan and the Haltans provides plenty of chances for mercenary Terrestrials to make their fortune—or buy the farm. The widespread breakdown of the Celestial Bureaucracy in the East gives plenty of opportunity for savants skilled in the etiquette of the spirit courts—and in the Arts of Warding and Exorcism.

There are few Dragon-Blooded in the usually sleepy lands of Chaya, although the fire tree pollen that creates their unique society has as little effect on Terrestrials as it does on any other Exalt. While even young Dragon-Bloods are powerful enough to overwhelm all but the most determined bands of mortals under the influence of the pollen in blossom season, they can rarely do so without permanently injuring or killing friends, family or loved ones. Most Chayan Dragon-Bloods are fostered to families elsewhere in the East or to the Realm through the Immaculate temples located there.

The deciduous forests of the Linowan people are home to few Dragon-Blooded today. The Blood of the Dragons never flowed thickly in the veins of the Linowan, and many who did Exalt here made the choice to take "the coin" of a lost egg, rather than remain with their people. Those who did stay all too frequently ended up dying in some raid or another on the Haltans, often without having a chance to sire children of their own. When the Bull of the North invaded the region, the resultant conflict further strained Queen Arkasi's already limited force of Terrestrial warriors, as Yurgen's forces shattered sworn brotherhood after sworn brotherhood upon their shields. The invasion left few Dragon-Blooded alive in the employ of the queen, and many of those who survive do so at terrible cost to body and spirit. Of the various units assigned Dragon-Blooded champions, only the queen's personal guard of 15 Terrestrials survives without casualty, and only because she never committed it to the fight.

The endless war with the Linowan has done little to bolster Terrestrial numbers in the forest-cities of the Haltans, either. The Haltans' tradition of sacrificing Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded to the Fair Folk who rule the ground only exacerbated the dearth of Terrestrials in their lands. Deliberate meddling on the part of the Lunars who helped guide and shape Haltan society has further reduced their numbers. Dragon-Blooded are largely regarded as dangerous, erratic and prone to great elemental outbursts that can savage and kill even large redwoods. Although Wood-aspected Terrestrials are favored, marriages that bring forth any other type of Dragon-Blood—especially Fire Aspects—are often ostracized from Haltan society, especially in the less cosmopolitan cities and towns. Those Terrestrials who remain in Halta under this kind of scrutiny and prejudice almost invariably end up in the Haltan Guard. Those who do are often assigned to raiding parties crossing the Linowan border. The rest become merchants, carrying trade goods to faraway lands.

Before the sudden attack of the Mask of Winters, Thorns was a bastion of Realm influence in the southern reaches of the East. Several hundred years of Realm influence had left its mark on the city-state. While not as strong as the bloodlines of Ferem in the North, several distinct strains of Terrestrial heritage could be found among the noble families of Thorns. Lost eggs found in Thorns were often able to return to their city after their service to the Realm was completed, and Terrestrials of noble lineage were occasionally allowed to "evade" official Realm notice, as long as the right indulgences were paid to the right Dynastic officials.

Additionally, many Dragon-Bloods who had been banished from the Blessed Isle but had not completely lost the Empress's favor made their home in Thorns, preferring its weather to the sweltering heat of An-Teng or the frozen wastes of Cherak. Several dozen Terrestrials—Dynasts and outcastes alike—made their home in Thorns prior to the invasion.

Most died attempting to defend their doomed city. Of those who survived—and retained their freedom and sanity—some have returned to the Blessed Isle, where they strive ceaselessly to warn the Realm of the oncoming danger and mount a mission to retake their city. Others have allied themselves with Lookshy, forming a tenuous alliance of convenience with a power that appears to be taking the Mask of Winters far more seriously than the Realm is.

Only a handful of Terrestrials native to Thorns have allied themselves with the Mask of Winters, and they are reviled by their cousins who escaped. Despised even by natives who have submitted to the Mask of Winters are the mercenary Dragon-Bloods he has hired to act as his agents in the Scavenger Lands and the East. Even the Deathlord himself sees them as little more than useful pawns, and he sacrifices them in one plot or another as needed. Completely jaded and cynical individuals to a man, those who work for him understand this and see it as part of the risk of doing business.

Some of the less degenerate and Wyld-tainted Eastern tribes still have bloodlines strong enough to occasionally support Exaltation. Some of these barbarian Terrestrials walk out of the forests into Creation, seeking alliance with others of their kind, seeking adventure or just seeking understanding of who and what they are. Some are slain by fearful members of their own tribe, who confuse Exaltation with possession, mutation or something worse, or who simply don't want to deal with the problems a Terrestrial can bring upon a small tribe. Others become tribal champions, leaders, shamans, gods or all of the above, leading their tribes from the front or from the sidelines until they run into something big enough to put them down. Rarely do any of these Dragon-Blooded live out a full century.

Realm Vassal States

The Realm has always walked a fine line between desiring to recover "lost eggs" and desiring to keep the peace in its satrapies. On one hand, lost eggs bring new bloodlines into the Realm, and on a purely practical level, the more Dragon-Bloods the Realm controls, the better. On the other hand, those who run the Realm understand all too well the bonds between mother and daughter and have little interest in seeing the Threshold erupt because of overly draconian laws regarding the Terrestrial offspring of satrapy subjects.

For this reason, the Realm has typically offered a carrot rather than a stick when dealing with the subject. Much is made of the potential opportunities of life in the Realm, of the education the young Terrestrial will receive. Lavish payments are doled out to the families of lost eggs, used as both incentive and in lieu of the monies the Dragon-Blooded could bring into the family. In extreme cases, long-term pensions are set up for the families, guaranteeing them a permanent salary, usually based on that paid to the Dragon-Blood being turned over.

In all cases, the realities of life in the Realm as an outcaste scion are downplayed, if not outright whitewashed. Little mention is made of the harsh and specialized nature of the education provided at Pasiap's Stair or of the brutal and unforgiving discipline of the Cloister of Wisdom. Families are often led to believe their children will actually become Dynasts rather than second-class citizens with limited advancement potential.

For all that, many of the lost eggs serving the Realm—under the razor or the coin—still seek out and recruit Terrestrials in the Threshold with the same passion that Dynastic officials do. In their minds, life as a second-class citizen of limited opportunity is still far better than the life they left behind.

The Grass Spiders

In the savannas of the Southeast, around the Sandy River and the fertile plains of Chaya, four whispered words will garner more fear than rumors of far-away Deathlords or even the beast-king Ma-Ha Suchi. Those words are "Grass Spiders on you." Telling a man you have arranged a contract on him with the Grass Spiders is akin to telling him he is already dead. All that remains is for the assassination to occur and the body to be cremated. Some fight, some run, and others seek their solace in suicide, attempting to avoid the undoubtedly unique and imaginative death that is sure to follow swiftly on the word of the contract—assuming any notice is given.

For over a century, the Grass Spiders have been the most feared order of assassins in the region. Currently numbering two dozen Terrestrials, and perhaps 10 times that number in trained mortal assistants, thaumaturges and a handful of God-Blooded agents, the Grass Spiders operate through a network of spies and factors. These factors are often otherwise-honest businessmen who merely "happen to know someone" who can do work for a price. The connections they offer eventually lead through a labyrinthine web of agents and tests to the Three Elite Fiends, the elders of the order. The order's mysterious masters hold the power of life and death over each of their agents. They dictate diet and training regimens. They instruct the teachers who hand down the secrets of their martial-arts prowess. They even pass sentence on agents who fail to uphold the order's loose regulations or are incapable of successfully completing a mission. They also personally negotiate every contract for their clan's services.

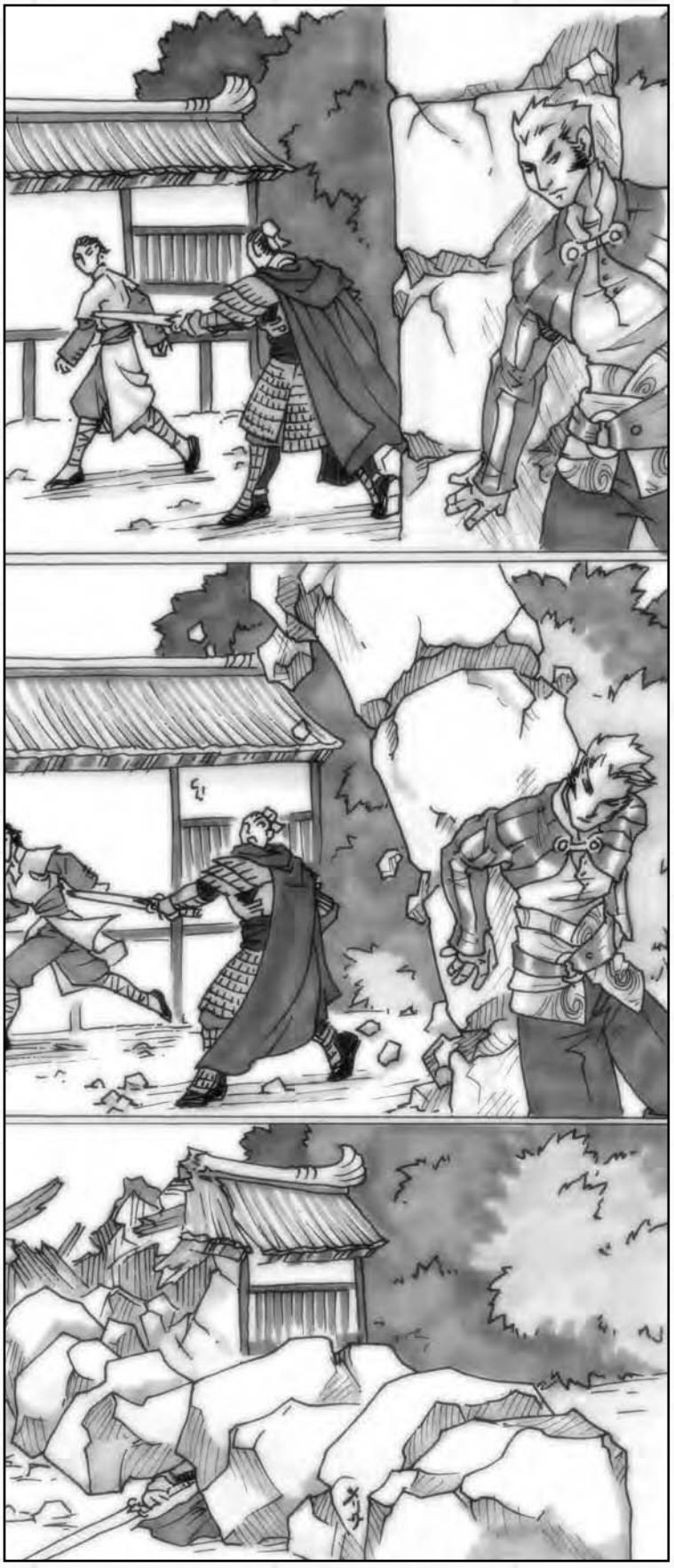
The Grass Spiders regard assassination as an art, a discipline to be mastered and studied like any other. They take its study as seriously as Immaculate monks take their study of the Texts or martial arts. Although they specialize in horrible accidents that can't be traced back to anyone and example murders meant to send a message, Grass Spider operatives also take on a number of other types of jobs for suitable incentives. Those jobs include theft of irreplaceable objects (artworks, artifacts, other unique objects), espionage and reconnaissance, and military intelligence. The main condition in taking a job is that it must be suited to the Grass Spiders' mindset and purpose, it must pay well, and it must not be seen as "common." They are assassins and high-class thieves, after all, not common bandits.

The Hallowed Order of the Grass Spiders (their preferred name) operates a variety of safe houses in cities throughout the region. Many of those houses are operated by servants who have no idea what their masters are, though some are run by agents who are fully complicit in their dealings. Their main center of operations is a series of fortified range houses centered around a small manse located on the Chayan border, outside Matetha. Here, the Grass Spiders train and study the arts of assassination. They also recover from missions there, using the downtime to relax and trade stories about their missions and pasts.

Although they are disciplined and studious, the Grass Spiders are an affable, even jovial, bunch. New disciples are either recruited (sometimes drafted) very young or are brought into the group only after careful observation to make sure they are compatible with the somewhat quirky outlook of the order's senior members. To the Spiders, assassination is no different than fighting as a mercenary, selling oneself as a prostitute or peddling slaves, drugs or weapons. It might be a distasteful, occasionally regretful, occupation, but it's necessary. If it has to be done, then, better it's done by a professional who enjoys his work.

The rules of assassination for the Grass Spiders are simple. Be unique, be interesting, be original, don't get caught, and don't hurt bystanders. This last rule is actually the only firm rule the order has; the others are only guidelines. The ban on harming noncombatants is steadfastly enforced because the order's founders know that they continue to exist only as long as the greater powers of the region see them as mostly harmless to the greater social order. It is a purely pragmatic stance—and taught that way—but it is also a firmly held one. As a result, the general opinion of most in the region is that if you stay out of the Grass Spiders' way when they're on the job, they'll bend over backward to leave you alone.

Rumors swirl around the order like leaves in a storm. Savants speak of strange forest gods who teach the clan's Terrestrials their weird martial arts style, based on the jumping attacks of the grass spider. Legends talk of necrotic poisons, the result of trade with faraway Sijan, toxins that rot away the flesh and devour the soul. Gossip speaks of deals with the bestial chauns of the Southeastern forests for green poisons that drive men mad, and alchemical reagents used in all manner of thaumaturgical tricks. The Grass Spiders just shrug, laugh and agree with every rumor, no matter how addled or contradictory it seems. Indeed, the more insane or



impossible, the more fervently they insist that no, this must be the truth, and never mind what they agreed to just last week.

Officially, the Grass Spiders are outlaws and assassins, wanted throughout the Scavenger Lands. Unofficially, many governments and organizations operating in the area have made use of their talents, through suitable layers of plausible deniability. Many Guild factors know how to make contact with the order, but the Grass Spiders are insistent that any potential Guild contracts be paid in full up front. Lookshy has a carefully unofficial "hands off" policy regarding the Spiders. It takes no contracts to go after members of the order, and its agents are instructed to avoid tangling with the Grass Spiders whenever possible. Some rangers operating in the area, however, occasionally engage in basically harmless—even friendly—contests of skill with Grass Spider operatives.

The Scavenger Lands

Although the influence of the Seventh Legion is felt throughout the East, nowhere has Lookshy more strongly laid its hand upon the Terrestrial population than in the Scavenger Lands. By some accounts, half of the Dragon-Blooded born in the Confederation of Rivers end up serving in the Seventh Legion or its janissary forces.

Plenty of unaffiliated Terrestrials still wander the countryside of the Scavenger Lands, though. From the mercenary champions of the Hundred Kingdoms to the elite bodyguards of Nexus and the necromantic craftsmen of Sijan, Terrestrials who seek adventure but wish to avoid service with the Seventh Legion still have plenty of opportunities to find their fame and fortune.

The Scavenger Lands' people are largely cosmopolitan and jaded. Beings of great power are not uncommon here. Gods walk freely among men, Terrestrials gather in strength, Anathema are considered nothing more than powerful entities, and indefinable things can be found around nearly every corner in Great Forks or Nexus. This is an advantage for young Dragon-Bloods, as they have more opportunity to concentrate on making a living and a name for themselves, rather than being swept up into political concerns. Unfortunately, it also means that there are beings about that can handily defeat even an experienced Dragon-Blood. Caution, cunning and friendship are the bywords of survival for Terrestrials in the River Province, and it is rare to find a Dragon-Blood working completely alone.

Some of the most successful scavenger lords in the Confederation of Rivers are Terrestrial Exalts. Their broad skills and Charms make them excellent archeologists, tomb-raiders, scavengers and looters, and their ability to aid and defend their compatriots and employees make them highly sought after as partners or employers. Many a Terrestrial has managed to unearth great wealth and magical stores before being betrayed by the wrong patron or failing to notice a

deadly trap. The problem, of course, is the lure of adventure and simple greed. Many fall prey to the endless temptation of taking just one more job before retiring. Still, some of the most famous businesses in the River Province were started by Terrestrials who made one last huge score, then quit while they were ahead and settled into a new line of work.

Terrestrials are in demand in all three Observances of the Funereal Order of Righteous Morticians and Embalmers in Sijan. As Funerists, their Charms allow them to converse with members of any culture in Creation and quickly master even the most complex of ceremonies and burial rituals. Craft and Medicine Charms give Dragon-Blooded who choose the path of the Mortwright the ability to quickly and precisely prepare not only the body for funeral, but the mausoleum in which it will reside—and the traps that will defend it. And while Terrestrials are incapable of unlocking the powers of necromancy available to the Celestial Exalted (let alone the Void Circle available only to the Deathlords and their Abyssal servants), their mastery of Essence can make them superb practitioners of the mortal Art of Necromancy. It also makes them excellent members of the Deadspeakers' Observance. The combination of their ability to master multiple arts of the Morticians' Order and the infrequency with which the Dragon-Blooded volunteer for this duty, has led to the creation of a special status for Terrestrial members of the Order. They, and they alone, may simultaneously hold rank in more than one Observance. Many hold rank in all three.

Sijan itself has little use for Terrestrials as guards or as military commanders. Between a dragon of the Seventh Legion's finest, the Black Watch and its status as city of the dead, Sijan has little to fear from invasion or raids. The funereal parties that escort corpses to the city often travel through dangerous terrain, however, and a handful of Dragon-Bloods serve as commanders of these escort groups. Another small group commands the black galleys of Sijan, safeguarding them on the rivers of the Scavenger Lands from those river brigands desperate or foolish enough to attack those vessels. These outcastes are typically mercenaries hired from other lands, as Sijan's living population is small enough that only infrequently do Terrestrials Exalt there. Those Sijanese who do so almost invariably either leave that ancient city or become members of the Morticians' Order.

Work can also be found occasionally as messengers traveling into the Underworld, using the edges of the Black Chase or one of several small shadowlands inside Sijan itself to bear messages to dead family members who cannot be contacted through normal methods. These missions are fraught with peril, and while the rewards are commensurately great, they are often insufficient given the hazards faced.

The Marukani are spread thinly through the lands they claim, residing mostly in small range towns—walled ranch compounds surrounded by pasturage and gardens. Because their population density is so low, the Blood of the Dragons rarely has a chance to concentrate, and Dragon-Blooded are uncommon. The Mayhiros clan, owners of Celeren Manse and the closest thing to a Great House in Marukan, boasts the largest collection of Marukan Terrestrials, though it numbers less than 30 Exalts among its members. Perhaps twice that are scattered through the remainder of the Alliance, and there are another 50 or so natives who have left the rolling fields of Marukan to seek adventure elsewhere. Marukan Terrestrials commonly make their living as ranch owners, circuit riders and infantry commanders. Their powerful anima banners hinder their ability to ride, though, so artifacts that grant the a mount immunity to the damage a Dragon-Blood's anima inflicts are highly sought after—as are teachers of the Charms that do the same. Curiously, Marukan Dragon-Bloods make no use of simhata, artifact steeds or other alternative mounts. To do that would be a slap in Hiparkes face, if not a venial sin against him.

It is impossible to fully detail the opportunities, pitfalls, cultural relations and Terrestrial populations of the various polities of the Hundred Kingdoms. Few nations in the Hundred Kingdoms maintain a policy of intolerance toward Terrestrials for very long. Although periodic mortal interregnums occur throughout the region, most commonly after the bloody reign of a particularly demented Terrestrial tyrant, nations ruled thus are typically enveloped by neighbors less worried by Terrestrial interference. Many polities

Mercenary Champions

One of the most common Terrestrial Exalted military occupations in the Hundred Kingdoms is that of champion. Many international conflicts in the Hundred Kingdoms are settled by carefully arranged duels between appointed champions—either singly or in small units of up to a talon in size. These duels are used instead of all-out warfare simply because, while a Terrestrial champion can be frighteningly expensive, paying him is still far cheaper than raising, arming and provisioning an army. These champions are also typically far less destructive to their surroundings than a series of pitched battles might be.

Informal rules of conduct and engagement are propagated throughout the Hundred Kingdoms and beyond as the idea spreads to other parts of the Scavenger Lands. These rules specify length of engagement for a given magnitude of unit, size of the engagement area, treatment of wounded and prisoners, scoring and regulations on unfair conduct and the sanctions that can be imposed. The most sophisticated versions even include a basic point-scoring system that allows the two sides to "even up" their teams prior to combat. Such rules supposedly make sure that neither side has simply bought itself an unchallenged victory.

The actual duels are often magnificent affairs, filled with pomp and spectacle, brightly colored and emblazoned pennons, and sporting events leading up to and following the actual fight. They are treated in many ways as a grand festival would be. In most cases, these duels provide the only opportunity people will have to observe Exalts in action, at least with any decent sense of safety. Duelists are encouraged to avoid actually killing their Exalted opponents if at all possible, though the treatment of mortal soldiers is often more problematic. Duelists are military combatants, after all, not pit gladiators.

Because duelists are so rarely killed, many of them eventually "retire" from the profession. These powerful combatants often take up arms as bodyguards, as commanders of mercenary units or security retinues, or as the leaders of military detachments for the Guild, other merchant houses or various kingdoms. Famous or skilled duelists carry their reputations with them when they leave—which is a mixed blessing. On one hand, a good reputation opens up doors and can help prevent conflicts. On the other hand, it can result in increased conflicts, as young, brash warriors attempt to prove their worth by killing famous duelists.

of the Hundred Kingdoms treat Terrestrials as powerful weapons, mighty champions or useful assets, seeking to acquire them in the same way they might seek to acquire First Age weapons. Some are ruled—at least for a time—by Dragon-Blooded, or are strongly influenced by outcastes, but many others have few or no Terrestrial Exalts who make permanent residence there.

The filthy, lawless streets of Nexus provide ample opportunities for daring Terrestrials to prove their mettle and earn their fortunes. The foundries always have need for skilled forge masters, and few can match the prowess of a child of the Earth Dragon who has turned her heart toward metalworking. The fortunes made in Nexus give the Dragon-Bloods occasion to try their hand as security experts and as thieves—sometimes at the same time. And the gladiatorial pits are always welcoming to an outcaste who is looking to hone his skills, make a name or simply fight his way out of debt. Handfuls of Terrestrials serve the Council of Entities, but these positions are rarely open to unsolicited applicants. The Council knows which agents it wants, and it seeks them out on its own terms. Others serve the wealthy and powerful, with roles and status that range from highly paid thug to most trusted servant. Whatever their position or status, it can certainly be said that Terrestrials in Nexus do not live boring lives. Short ones, yes; boring ones, no.

Great Forks is a city of opportunity and peril for the offspring of the Elemental Dragons, particularly those of a socially or educationally oriented disposition. Dragon-Blooded who make their home in Great Forks are often savants interested in the libraries and hospitals found there, or socialites, interested in the parties and festivals that fill its streets. Terrestrial courtesans command high prices and great respect in the hallways of Great Forks, and performers of every stripe can find meaningful employment on its streets.

Those of a martial bent can find their fortunes in the City of Festivals as well. Since the near-destruction of the Great Forks military at the Battle of Mishaka, Great Forks has relied on hired mercenaries to provide the city with additional protection. Dragon-Blooded mercenaries are preferred, because of their ability to keep up with the lesser gods and elementals that form much of the military's command. Additionally, strife between various sects and faiths in the city can sometimes lead to bloodshed, and Terrestrials are used both as disposable—and deniable—assets for conducting assassinations and other dirty tricks, and as bodyguards and investigators to prevent them.

Beyond the typical hazards to life and limb common to all who follow the paths of blood and steel, the city is not without its dangers. Some of the gods living in Great Forks have resented the Dragon-Blooded since the Usurpation, and they are more than willing to take their frustrations out on Terrestrials who fall into their clutches. Other residents are so desperate that even the risks of assaulting a Prince of the Earth can be worth the possible rewards in artifacts and goods. And there are always rumors of misbehavior on the part of the tripartite rulers of the city—suggestions that performers who fail to live up to their lofty expectations disappear, to be discovered as brain-savaged thralls in the service of some slave lord months or even decades later.

The Terrestrials of Lookshy

Five great Gentes and a dozen or so lesser ones form the spine of Lookshy's Terrestrial heritage. Mostly founded by the members of the General Staff and prominent Shogunate commanders who joined up with Lookshy after its founding (such as Taimyo Vondy Beulen), these families have guided and overseen Lookshy's development for centuries. Each family consists of dozens of Terrestrials



Societal Influence

The influence of the Gentes upon the Seventh Legion and Lookshy cannot be underestimated. Although the Gentes were not as directly responsible for shaping the society and culture of Lookshy as the Immaculate Order and the Great Houses were in creating the Realm, they have had a significant impact on how Lookshy has grown nonetheless. The fiercely militaristic civilization that has resulted was probably inevitable given Lookshy's original establishment as a military encampment, but the lengths to which the citizenry has embraced the ideals of the Shogunate military is certainly a result of the founders of the various Gentes. Even today, the General Staff and the Gentes elders work together to sculpt and manipulate the society of Lookshy. They oversee educational initiatives, emphasize or downplay cultural attributes they find important or harmful, and even use Charms and sorcery to manipulate society when they have no other recourse.

The General Staff sees nothing wrong in this. It is simply the business of maintaining proper discipline, morale and functioning order in a military unit. Lookshy operates on very thin margins of survival and can poorly tolerate societal illnesses such as corruption or widespread misanthropy. If preventing this requires that harsh measures be taken, so be it.

and hundreds or thousands of mortals, and by the standards of the Scavenger Lands, each is fabulously wealthy and well equipped with artifacts and weapons.

Overall Structure

The makeup of each Gens varies, but there are several similarities that run between most of the major and minor Gentes. Each is normally led by an elder member, typically known as a matriarch or patriarch. How this person is selected varies. Most of the Gentes have a family council, which might be a formal assemblage of selected leaders of the various sub-families, an informal arrangement between powerful members of the various families and houses that make up a Gens, or some other arrangement.

Most of the Gens are formed of several sub-families, branch lines spun off from the main family tree and lesser houses or bloodlines that have been absorbed into the Gens through adoption or marriage. Typically, a major Gens consists of a half-dozen major bloodlines and maybe as many as two dozen lesser houses or branch lines. A minor Gens might have as much as three-quarters of this number. Exactly how this representation is tracked is different in each Gens. Gens Karal takes great effort to make sure that exactly what part of the family tree a member hails from is known. The attitude of Gens Maheka and Yushoto is that no part of the family is more important than any other part—except when matters of marriage or breeding are concerned.

Gens Karal (Fire)

Karal Shan Zu was the officer chosen by Chumyo Nefvarin to act as Camp Liaison Officer for Deheleshen in the weeks immediately following the Seventh Legion's encampment there. Descended from a long line of military officers, Shan Zu passed those traditions down to his children—and they to theirs. Today, some families in Lookshy are larger or wealthier, but none that are more respected. The victories of the Karal's scions are well-known and well-spoken of, even by their enemies.

Karal is a military family in a society of military families. It has many shozei and kazei but comparatively few sorcerer-engineers or merchant princes. The focus of the family has always been military prowess and discipline. Even when dealing with matters of money, politics or the heart, members of the family are likely to take a tactical view on the subject.

Economic Power

Gens Karal's fortunes are based on bounties paid for recovery of weapons and other First Age and Shogunate supplies during the first few decades following the Contagion. These bounties and salvage fees were carefully invested in a wide variety of opportunities, and today, one can find Karal factors involved in many different industries, both in Lookshy and throughout the western sections of the Scavenger Lands. Karal outright owns few warehouses, shipping concerns or industries, but it has interests in a great number of different ones. In this way, the family has successfully hedged its funds against economic downturns and grown its fortunes slowly over the centuries. Today, it is the third wealthiest Gens in Lookshy.

Politics

Although openly dismissive of political posturing and brinkmanship, older members of Gens Karal are often surprisingly effective in the political sphere. Although they come to it from a military background, they apply the same rules Lookshy uses on the field of battle to the field of public opinion. Karal politicians can be deceptively deep, especially for a Fire-aspected house, and few underestimate them twice.

The Gens as a whole tends toward Mercenary political beliefs, with a strong strain of Interventionist leanings, though its members are not as outspoken in their beliefs as Gens Maheka is. Most senior members of the Karal family believe that while the time is not now, a resurgence of the Shogunate under an appropriately righteous Shogun would be in the best interests of not only the Seventh Legion, but Creation. Their typical outlook is guarded optimism. The Legion is beset on all sides by enemies, but it retains much strength and has diversified its position successfully enough to survive even if Lookshy is destroyed.

Most of the Gens' political battles are centered around increasing the distributed nature of the Legion—making sure that destroying Lookshy cannot be a fatal blow to the Legion. Their scions are supported in this by some members of Gens Maheka and several of the minor Gentes, but opposed bitterly by Gens Teresu.

Gens Karal is a favorite of the horselords of the Marukani, who appreciate the daring tactics and solid logistical sense of Karal commanders. They are less favored by some members of Great Forks, although Dayshield is known to have had a fondness for the Gens' founder that has occasionally shown through to his children's descendents. There is little love lost between the members of the Gens and the merchants and mercenaries of Nexus, as Karal officers bore the brunt of dealing with mishaps caused by Nexus mercenaries during the war with the Fair Folk.

Notable Scions

Karal Linwei is the youngest field force taimyo since Nefvarin himself and the youngest (and newest) appointee to the General Staff. Slight of build, Linwei is far tougher than she appears. Her fiery hair and demeanor conceals a razor-sharp intellect honed by years of field duty. Only a fool takes her fiery outbursts of rage as anything more

Major and Minor Gentes

The distinction between major and minor Gentes is not as strict as sometimes portrayed and is based on a wide variety of variables. The number of major Gentes is not even fixed. Several Gentes of those currently thought of as "minor" houses have been more important in the past, and two of the houses currently considered "major" ones have historically been of smaller stature. Overall size, wealth, importance in various arenas, resources and semi-abstract concepts of "purity"—in terms of their Dragon-Blooded lineage—all go into the consideration of a Gens' relative status. If a family has the fortitude to declare itself a major Gens and isn't laughed at, then it probably is one.

In reality, while there are some small benefits to major Gens status, most of the remunerations provided are in bragging rights and social benefits. It is more an acknowledgement of who sits on top of the social and economic ladder than a position to be greatly striven for because of some great sheaf of rights provided. In fact, the opposite is often true. Members of the major Gentes are usually held to higher standards of conduct than those of the minor houses, on the assumption that the most powerful families can afford to teach their scions better.

than a carefully rehearsed act. Although she is not head of her family, Linwei is often spoken of as "the Karal." It is strongly suggested that she will be the next Legion Chumyo in perhaps a half-century's time, provided she can weather the current crisis with her career intact.

Karal Fire Orchid is Linwei's favorite daughter, despite their growing estrangement. Her reputed status as an Anathema has plunged Gens Karal into controversy, and rumors suggest that her brothers, the twins, have been dispatched to ascertain the truth. One thing is known—Linwei's fearsome mien when confronted with allegations or slander regarding her daughter is no act. At least one case, it was only the actions of her subordinates that prevented her from breaking the Seventh Legion's ban on dueling.

Gens Teresu (Water)

Gens Teresu's traditional stranglehold over Lookshy's naval forces dates back to the city-state's founding, when Admiral Teresu Mitaki was the only fleet admiral to ally himself with Chumyo Nefvarin, bringing much of his small fleet—largely undamaged from its patrols in the frozen Northern oceans—with him. Since that day, the family has not only provided many of the Seventh Legion's most prominent naval commanders, but it has been centrally involved in Lookshy's merchant holdings and has turned modest beginnings into a thriving sea trade that reaches as far as the Western islands.

Despite their far-reaching trade connections, members of the Gens are frequently insular and close-minded. They're friendly enough, but little interested in the opinions or cultures of others except insofar as they might be useful in closing the deal or creating new markets. In Lookshy, Teresu is seen as something of an oddity. Its members are respected for their naval traditions and military prowess at sea but often seen as little more than common merchants and traders. They're necessary, but perhaps not respected so much as a "proper" military family might be.

Economic Power

Approximately three-quarters of Lookshy's merchant trade travels over the rivers of the Scavenger Lands or the blue waters of the Inland Sea, and Teresu is involved in nearly all of it. Teresu-owned businesses unload and load cargo from ships, manage warehousing space for cargo masters and provide all manner of support services—from provisioning to hull repair—for vessels docking in Lookshy Harbor. Gens Teresu also owns a number of shipping firms, including some that are not primarily water-based. Taken as a whole, Teresu's shipping and trade interests account for nearly half of the city's import and export business.

Politics

Although Matriarch Mai Lin is herself an outspoken Isolationist, the house is largely Mercenary in its outlook—privately, if not publicly. There are those in her Gens who support her but others who feel she is foolish at best. Some are not willing to keep their opinions to themselves. The increasing fractionalization between parts of the Gens is a problem that is likely to become only more serious as time passes.

The appointment of Sirel Sogrun—not only not a member of the Gens, but not even a member of *any* Gentes, minor or major—to command of Lookshy's fleets is seen as a serious blow to the family's honor. Some blame the Gens' Matriarch's writings, while others believe it is simply a matter of choosing the best man for the job.

The Gens has ties uneasy to the Realm Houses Peleps and V'neef. The Lintha and members of Gens Teresu have a long-standing hatred that has flared up into near warfare on more than one occasion. The Gens has not always been as circumspect in dividing private assets and Seventh Legion forces when pursuing its actions against the Lintha as would be hoped.

Notable Scions

Teresu Mai Lin is the matriarch of Gens Teresu. Unlike most family leaders, Mai Lin did not rise up through the ranks of the Seventh Legion before moving over to Gens politics. She served her mandatory duty in the navy, then retired to take over duty as one of the family's merchant princes, eventually inheriting leadership of the family's trade assets. She has been matriarch for only a decade, and her Isolationist views were something she kept to herself until her election as head of the family. Since then, she has made her opinions known in a series of printed treatises that outline her vision of Lookshy's future. She wants to move Lookshy to a peacetime footing, emphasizing Lookshy's mercantile strengths and eventually eliminating the mercenary arms of the economy. Her goals are seen as problematic in execution, if not necessarily desirability, even by members of her own Gens. She is enduring and patient, but she has little respect for those who refuse to even consider her views. Lately, she finds this to be anyone who does not wholeheartedly agree with them.

Teresu Zen Wu, Taimyo of the Fourth Field Force, is a rarity in Lookshy—a non-native whose service to the Legion has been so devoted and steadfast that he has become a trusted leader. An outcaste from the Northern enclave of High Falls who married into the family nearly a century and a half ago, Zen Wu has continued to impress the leaders not just of Gens Teresu, but all of Lookshy with his wholehearted adoption of his new home's culture and societal mores. His outsider's eye toward tactics and strategy has also been a

welcome gain, and his position in charge of the Fourth Field Force is a direct result of his contributions and unceasing efforts to get his officers to think around problems and find new solutions.

Gens Maheka (Earth)

Gens Maheka was begun by a well-placed combat engineer in Realm Year 323. Its engineering background was solidified through marriage and familial alliances, and it has institutionalized the heritage in most of the sub-families of the line. A solid backing in architecture, manufacture or some other craft is expected of every member of the Gens, even those who end up having no formal role in trade or craftsmanship. The rare exceptions are those who choose to specialize in agriculture, thaumaturgy or sorcery, which are uncommon but not unknown arts in the Gens.

Gens Maheka is the most religious and devoted of the Gentes. Where belief in the Immaculate faith is expected on an abstract level in most families, it is a solemn duty in Maheka. If there are apostates or followers of the Hundred God Heresies in the Gens, they do not speak of it openly or behind closed doors, and their prayers are quiet ones. Matriarch Maheka will forgive or overlook many things, but heresy is not one of them.

The Gens is conservative in many other aspects as well. The family's advocacy for and deference to the remaining Shogunate Bureaucracy is legendary and has even approached what some would call mutiny. Maheka scions would prefer to think of it as respecting the proper chain of command and honoring the oaths a soldier owes his Shogun. Although exposing deformed children is frowned upon in Gens Maheka, it is not actually punished as it is in many of the other major Gentes.

Economic Power

Gens Maheka's wealth is centered around several powerful foundries and smaller weapons forges that have produced some of the finest weapons in Lookshy for over three centuries. The Gens is involved in nearly every aspect of engineering and manufacture in Lookshy and has interests in foundries in Nexus, mines in the Rock River area and logging firms in the Eastern highlands and Farhold. The Gens has additional holdings—mostly agricultural—in Lookshy and the Great Forks area. Many of the lands the Gens has purchased since its founding are the locations of various demesnes or manses or were once Wyld lands that have been painstakingly reclaimed through a combination of sorcery, thaumaturgy and huge public works.

Politics

Gens Maheka is a politically simple and direct family. Its matriarch would have it no other way, so she makes little allowance for dissension or debate. Staunchly Mercenary in outlook, the Gens' political stance is rooted in the essence of the Legion's mandate and its fierce belief in the Immaculate faith. As a result, its members are the first to support the Shogunate Bureaucracy on those rare occasions it evinces an opinion and the last to support any measure that suggest the Legion is anything other than an arm of the Shogunate.



Gens Maheka maintains close ties with the Morticians' Order of Sijan and with several factors in Nexus. Hierarch Gavin Bast of the Guild is a member of a Gens sub-family, giving Maheka connections in the Guild as well. Unfortunately, Bast's enemies in the Guild—and there are several—are also willing to use his family ties against him. In similar fashion, there are those in Nexus who wish to see the family humbled or destroyed, either because of its economic power or because of its choice of economic partners. Relations between the family and Great Forks are understandably strained, but not as much as they might be. The sacrifice of much of Great Fork's light infantry at the Battle of Mishaka gave elements of the Third Field Force time to set up a counterstrike against Thorns' heavy infantry, and this has not been forgotten by the Maheka soldiers who were there.

Notable Scions

Maheka Lespa is tall where her protégé Karal Linwei is short, quiet where Linwei is loud, and is nearly as homely as Linwei is beautiful. Despite these differences, the two have been friends practically since Linwei was

Armigers

Seventh Legion sorcerer-technicians are considered precious resources, and their presence on the battlefield is a necessary evil in the eyes of the General Staff. Every sorcerer-technician lost in battle is one who could have been in Lookshy producing or maintaining weapons or other artifacts. Worse, sorcerer-technicians often have information that would be devastating if it fell into enemy hands.

For this reason, sorcerer-technicians, particularly those venturing into particularly dangerous situations, are often assigned armigers, or arms-bearers. These highly trusted assistants are authorized to carry weapons in every situation (even reporting to the General Staff) and serve as bodyguards, aides-de-camp, companions—even, in some cases, lovers, or so it is rumored.

At their most basic, armigers are thaumaturges highly skilled in both mortal magics and combat, but many are much odder. Free-willed elementals, uniquely bound demons, automata and powerful God-Bloods all serve as armigers. Some quietly suggest that some of the most powerful armigers are actually gods, though that would be heresy.

The common understanding among citizens of Lookshy is that armigers are more than just bodyguards. Although they are carefully vetted and handsomely rewarded for loyalty, sorcerer-technicians occasionally desert or defect, and despite all attempts to protect them, some are captured. It is rumored that armigers have a hidden duty to prevent either such occurrence—by any means necessary. The suggestion that an armiger might take the life of its charge rather than let her desert or be captured is one that is not discussed by the General Staff.

Lookshy characters with sorcerous training are not required to take an armiger. Those who wish to do so can easily use the Allies Background to represent them. A typical armiger ranges from two to four dots in rating, but the actual power of the ally is one dot lower. An armiger is less physically powerful and influential than a regular ally with the same rating, but the fact that the armiger is always standing by at the character's right hand makes up for the relative disparity.

born and are solid allies in the General Staff. Lespa has led the Third Field Force for nearly a century and shows no intention to retire, and her promotion to the title of matriarch of her Gens has done nothing to change this. Her soldiers call her "the Battleaxe," and few ask whether this is because of her age, her looks or the way she tends to leave bloody swaths of dismembered corpses in her wake on the battlefield.

Maheka Yoti is the newest addition to the Home Guard, a sorcerer-technician with a stout frame, a quick mind and seemingly no compassion whatsoever. He has already garnered a reputation as a harsh taskmaster, expecting perfection not only from himself but his troops as well. His armiger is a construct, a beautiful working of moonsilver and black jade that duplicates the female form in every way conceivable (or so the rumors say). Its powerful array of built-in weapons and its cunning wit are certainly no rumor, though.

Gens Amilar (Air)

The most cosmopolitan and well-traveled of Lookshy's Dragon-Blooded are often those of the Gens Amilar. A young house, barely four centuries old, Amilar is based on the bloodlines of Vondy Beulen. The Gens is known for its artificers, mechanics and scholars, and it sends savants and thaumaturges far and wide seeking out the mysteries of the First Age and remnants of Shogunate production or ruins.

In these quests, the young Terrestrials have ample opportunity to interact with learned beings from throughout Creation—even the Realm, when their paths cross those of Immaculate monks or Imperial Army officers. Unlike those of Gens Teresu, many members of Gens Amilar are willing to discuss the beliefs and culture of those they meet—not just their own. This gives them great flexibility and skill in negotiations, but it can also leave them open to manipulation and influence by others.

Economic Power

Gens Amilar's initial fortunes were based on the personal holdings of Taimyo Vondy and on the bounties paid by the Seventh Legion for recovery of First Age and Shogunate materials, although primarchs of the Gens concentrated more on manuscripts and documentation than on devices or vessels. Amilar derives most of its current economic power from education and knowledge—in addition to numbers of sorcerers, thaumaturges and artificers of various sorts the family has produced, the Gens controls nearly half of the salons, dojos, salles and other private schools of Lookshy. It also sponsors a variety of scavenger lords, taking a percentage of the rewards for artifacts recovered. Amilar is economically the weakest of the major Gentes, but it is rumored to have a substantial treasury and war chest available should it fall upon hard times.

Politics

Gens Amilar is moderately Interventionist in outlook. Its scions believe that careful intervention in particularly troublesome areas can bring about a more stable, if not necessarily more peaceful, situation in the Scavenger Lands. Gens members are involved in many of the salons that specialize in teaching metic children, and they are not above influencing the long-term development of local nations through their teachings. This behavior is not quite encouraged by the General Staff, but it is typically not condemned either.

As the Gens has grown older, it has grown increasingly influenced by the Immaculate Order—although perhaps not in ways it would like. Whether this is a conscious decision on the part of the Mouth of Peace or simply a side effect of the increasing contact between Immaculate Order monks and Amilar treasure-hunters is unknown. Some of the youngest and most talented members of the family are strident Purists. At their best, they seek to reconcile the differences between Order and faith, unifying the two priesthoods into a single Order stronger than either is separately. At worst, they seek a more forceful solution to the problems they see in the Scavenger Lands, such as the decadence and spirit-worship of Great Forks, the ancestor cults of Sijan and the vile depravity of Nexus. They look upon these evils with scorn and a fervent desire to cleanse them—by word and deed if possible, by fire and sword if not.

Gens Amilar has connections throughout Creation but few close allies or treasured alliances. There are those in the Immaculate Order who will listen when Amilar speaks, but those channels are slow and carefully treasured by those who hold them. There are also some in House Mnemon who pay attention to what members of Gens Amilar have to say, but they are mostly lower-ranking Dynasts.

Blood of the Disgraced

Few family names have fallen into disrepute in the history of the Seventh Legion. Some families have been disgraced for a time, but although memories are long in Lookshy, they do fade with time. Second chances must be earned, but doing so is not impossible. Still, a handful of families have earned such utter contempt that they have been struck from the roles of the Seventh Legion, including the following:

Gens Gherin: First among the fallen, it is unsure if the Gherin bloodline is still strong enough to warrant consideration. The Gherin relocated to a town not far from what is now the Guild outpost of Centak and passed from history. Eventually, even the Intelligence Directorate stopped paying attention to the family. If it is still an ongoing concern, the Gherin family could be a thorn in the side of the General Staff. Or it could be the General Staff's salvation. After all, if Fallaha Gherin's claims of descent from the last Shogun are correct, then the family still carries the true Shogun's bloodline.

Gens Marui: Pre-eminent weaponsmiths in Lookshy's second century, Gens Marui fell to corruption and infernalism and was eventually destroyed after a prolonged campaign of terrorism and guerilla warfare in the mountains outside Mishaka. It is believed that all members of the family were destroyed, but it is certainly possible that one or more might have been missed.

Gens Varil: The followers and descendants of the Chumyo prior to the Gunzota Incident were scattered during the quiet pogrom that followed the "accident." Although none of the few who yet live have any proof, many of them believe the detonation of the weapon that killed their Gens elder (and many others) was no accident. Still, those who investigate too closely tend to come to a poor end (and one that cannot be blamed on the rangers). Therefore, while the Varil have suspicions, they have no proof—and most have little incentive to investigate further, lest they too end up victims of the Varil Curse.

None of these connections reaches directly into Mnemon's inner circle—at least, not in any way that can be noticed.

Notable Scions

Amilar Vondy is claimed by some to be the reincarnation of the famous general that founded the line. The current patriarch of the Gens, Vondy grows increasingly worried about the strident tone that rises from the younger members of the family. He has always encouraged contact with other cultures, including the Realm and the Immaculate Order, but he is beginning to suspect that in making his family more cosmopolitan and worldly, he might have opened it up to ideas best left alone.

Gens Yushoto (Wood)

Gens Yushoto is built in large part around the bloodlines of Yushoto Baraka, the Seventh Legion's chief sorcerer-engineer during the Contagion. Yushoto himself was an Air Aspect, but most of his children were Wood-aspected, and that influence still strongly manifests in his descendents. Members of the Gens are twice as likely to Exalt as Wood-aspected Dragon-Bloods than any of the other types, which reflects strongly in the Gens makeup and history in other ways. Gens Yushoto has been the most socially mobile of all Gentes, gaining and losing the status of Great House more than 20 times since the formalization of the concept over five centuries ago. As the Gens has risen and fallen in standing, so too has it shifted in devotion to the Immaculate faith, alternating between steadfast devotion and decadent apostasy. These cycles often, but not always, coincide with the family's economic and political power.

Yushoto's scions have a reputation as lovers of most things decadent or desirable—they are frequent guests in Centak, the Guild's border station and resort town across the river from Lookshy. While not all, or even most, members of the Gens are sybaritic in outlook—and some of the most devout followers of the Immaculate faith are still found in the sub-families of Yushoto—the reputation is still well-deserved. Yushoto parties are grand affairs of fine food and fine drink, and Yushoto staff cooks are in great demand in the field forces for their ability to turn all but the harshest of rations into palatable fare.

Another Gens trait is deception. ("Sly as a Yushoto ranger" is a common appellation and epithet among Lookshy natives.) Yushoto strategoi take the Lookshy tradition of using misdirection and disinformation to a high art. Members of the Gens rarely *lie*, but they are more than willing to omit, misdirect or allow their enemies' assumptions and impressions to trip them up and into the Yushoto's real plan. This habit has a tendency to filter down into their personal life, and those who know the Gens intimately are careful to ask direct questions that require direct answers.

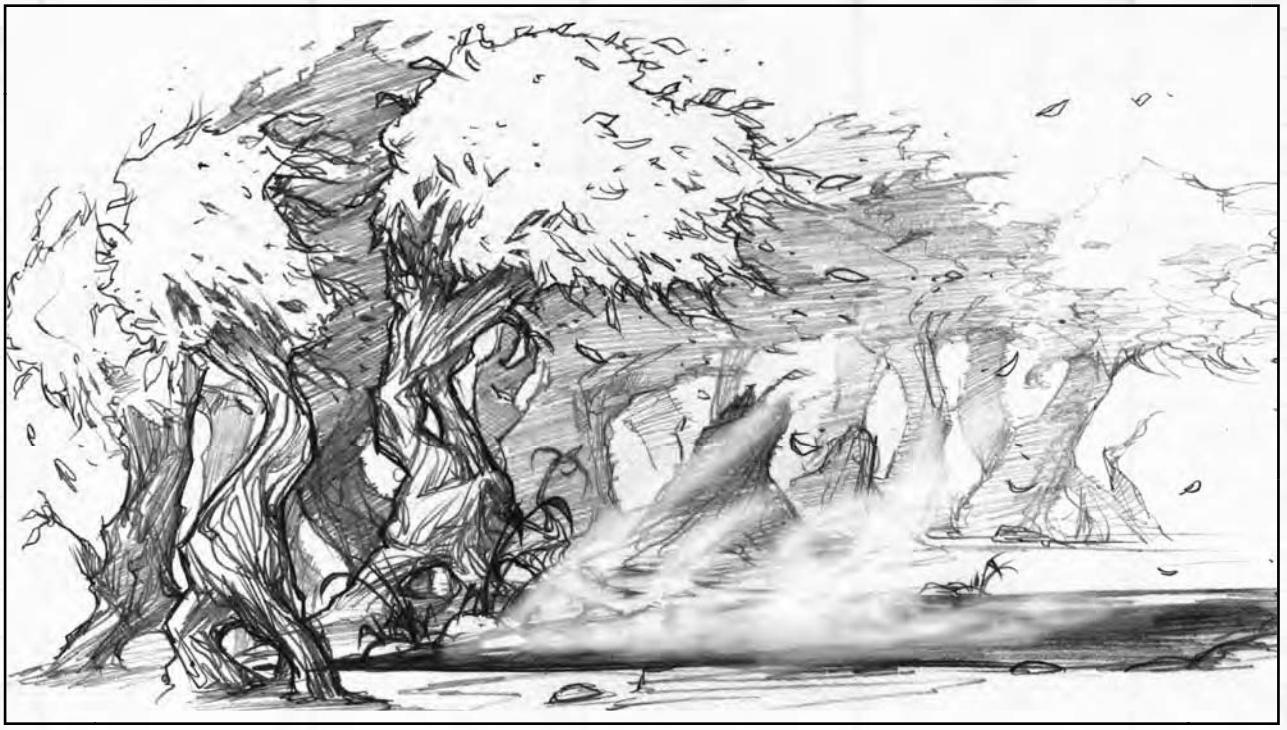
Economic Power

Yushoto is known for its sorcerers, producing (marginally) more sorcerer-technicians than any other Gens. The Gens' economic base is not centered in any single industry or endeavor, as the elders of the Gens have preferred to diversify their holdings in a wide variety of interests. While this diversification has left them less able to seize opportunities when they become available, it has also given them a reasonably stable economic base from which to operate. If the Yushoto have a specialty, it is in hospitality and vineyards. It is something of a cliché that Yushoto soldiers open teahouses, restaurants, caravansaries or hostels on leaving Lookshy service, and Yushoto wines and brandies are highly sought after even in the Realm.

Politics

Currently, Yushoto is a rising power among the Gentes, although little given to devotion or piety. The Gens as a whole has no notable overt political leanings or affiliations, being more inclined toward allowing each member her own say in things. A notably large number of Yushotos have made their way through the Academy of Sorcery in the last century. Their success and rising influence in the Academy, the armorers and the field forces is starting to make itself known, giving the Gens notable pull in these aspects of the Seventh Legion.

Gens Yushoto has few strong allies outside of Lookshy (or within its walls, for that matter). Although many in House Cynis see members of the Gens as somewhat staid and uptight, and many in Yushoto see the Cynis as decadent perverts, there are sufficient places where the two families overlap that they see some interaction. The gods of Great Forks have a solid if distant relationship with Gens Yushoto, on the whole, although some feel they are more interested in matters of parties than piety or worship. The Gens also has few enemies at present, outside of strictly commercial relationships, and few of them are large enough or powerful enough to be worth



mentioning. The Gens is happy to sell its products to whomever can meet its prices, and it only rarely enters into exclusive contracts (and then for no more than a decade at a time).

Notable Scions

Yushoto Terisa: Matriarch of Gens Yushoto, Terisa is nearly as old as the Matriarch of Gens Maheka. Unlike that grizzled veteran, she shows every year of it. Born into a decadent family, her early life was a whirlwind of parties and excess, and she pays for it now with a body wracked with infirmity. Her mind is still reasonably sharp, however, and she is a valued member of the General Staff—if one that needs to be shepherded a bit on occasion.

Yushoto Marana is the commanding officer of the Second Field Force. A competent battlefield commander, she has a better grasp of low-technology warfare than most of her counterparts do. She makes excellent use of her "steel and wood" forces but lacks somewhat in her deployment of more advanced units. As a result, she has slowly found herself stripped of all but the bare essentials, in terms of special units, something she finds moderately annoying.

Yushoto Bright Morning: It seems unlikely that Bright Morning was birth-named for his favorite drug, despite his infrequent assertions that this is so. Bright Morning affects the persona of a languid wastrel, one well suited to his role as a sorcerer-technician in the Fourth Field Force. His green hair is longer than regulation, his manner droll and uninterested, and the less said about his military demeanor the better. Little escapes his eyes, though, cunning even through their drug-haze, and if his appearance is effete, his skills with sorcery and his reaper daiklave Mourning's Edge is little questioned by those who witness their fury.

The Minor Gentes

Although smaller, less wealthy, less influential and less respected than the major Gentes, the minor houses are still forces to be reckoned with in Lookshy society and the Seventh Legion. Each of the minor Gentes still has a dozen or more Terrestrial members, hundreds of mortal members, several strong bloodlines and, in some cases, wealth to rival that of some of the smaller Hundred Kingdoms. There are over a dozen recognized minor Gentes and another dozen that stand on the verge of being recognized as such. Because of their smaller size, their political leanings are often more starkly evident those of the major Gentes. With fewer members, the loudest or most persuasive ones stand out all the more.

The Forest Witches

On the outskirts of the Great Eastern Forest, where Haltan redwoods give way to Linowan maples, there is a forest that is neither. The strange trees have ivory or pale yellow bark and broad fleshy leaves that are a dark green that is almost black for most of the year. In autumn, these leaves turn the rusty red of dried blood but do not fall. The branches of these odd trees, neither deciduous nor coniferous, are festooned with strange lianas that have the consistency of flesh and ooze a thick dark red sap when cut. The woods are frequently filled with a silvery fog that moves against the wind and occasionally whispers to those who wander into it of their innermost secret desires. Neither the Linowan nor the Haltans willingly travel in this forest, nor do they visit the strange lake at its center, whose obsidian waters sometimes hold fleeting glimpses of a great city or heroic deeds being performed. These are the woods of the Forest Witches, and outsiders are not welcome in them.

Although the modern history of the Forest Witches dates back some four centuries, it has its foundations in far earlier days. Three mysteries—which may in fact be three aspects of the same mystery—comprise the lands the Forest Witches call home.

The Forest

Oreithyia was the favored servant of an Anathema in the days before the Usurpation. She failed her mistress in a trivial fashion and was punished for it by having her every bone and sinew used as parts of a landscape composition, while she yet lived. *Something* beheld that work of art and captured in itself Oreithyia's personality and memory. The Forest Witches know that this thing cannot actually be Oreithyia, as it has powers far beyond those of

any ghost. Still, if it is not Oreithyia, it is close enough, and the forest walker responds only to that name. After a nearly disastrous beginning, the Forest Witches have entered into an arrangement with Oreithyia. They provide her with beautiful "servants," and she gifts the Forest Witches with her bounty—and does not drive them bleeding from her forest.

Oreithyia's power over the forest is all but complete—only the five small demesnes that reside in its borders resist her. In all other places, there is little she cannot do. Her fleshy creepers and runners can perform any task hands and arms can, and she is skilled in all crafts. Her bowers and trees sculpt themselves to create the temples and palaces in which the Forest Witches reside and build defenses and obstacles when necessary. All of the beasts of the forest obey her command, and if the spirits and elementals have an objection to this, they keep silent about it. They know what happens to those who displease Oreithyia.

The Mist

Lady Domnica carved away all that she was, in an effort to become "the mist"—i.e., the potential for others to become something else. How this was arranged and what powered it is unknown and perhaps unexplainable. What is known is that the mist has power and can grant it unto those who willingly accept it. The mist offers her bargain to each outcaste who enters the Forest, usually on his first night. "Join with me," Domnica offers. "Become part of the mist. Change your nature and shape your own destiny." Four outcastes accepted this bargain, trading treasures and their humanity for change and power. Two later failed and were replaced.

The numina of the mist (as those who accept the offer are called) have great powers, being somewhere between Terrestrial and god. They are worshiped after a fashion, for the Forest Witches are a pragmatic sort, granting them power. They retain their Dragon-Blooded heritage after a fashion, for while they retain their Charms, they no longer have a particular aspect and pay out-of-aspect surcharges for all of their Charms. They may change their form, although their countenance is always related to their aspect, and they are granted certain powers, equal to that of a strong Charm or a weak sorcery of the Terrestrial Circle, related to their chosen form.

The Sea of Mind

Once no more than a pond, the Sea of Mind is now a small lake, deep and dark, with oddly viscous and glistening water that resembles liquid obsidian. It has expanded over the centuries, as more potent artifacts have been fed into it. Those who bathe in the forest pool find themselves attuned to the Sea of Mind. When they raise their eyes from the pool's waters, they find not a pool, but a hill, upon which stands the glorious city Atsiluth Eternal. This attunement is permanent, unless the council of the city removes it.

Attunement to the Sea of Mind brings new glory and beauty to Creation, but it is an austere and stark beauty. Nothing petty exists in its version of Creation. Things are ugly because it is more striking that they be so, rather than simply because they are. Minor distractions simply do not exist. There are bonfires, but the sun does not beat down so fiercely. Colors are vivid and ever-present, and every word and gesture takes on new meaning and impact. Life in the Sea of Mind is a perfect reflection of Creation, with its blemishes and frailties removed. It is also eternal. When their physical forms die in Creation, those attuned to the Sea continue to exist in it, although as what—echo, spirit or dream of a sleeping god—even they are not sure.

The Sea of Mind's powers within its reflective Creation are near limitless, and it grants some aspect of those powers to anyone who partakes in its illusions—but those powers end within its "borders." The actions of those in the Sea of Mind have impact on Creation, but no more than they would otherwise have—and this dichotomy can cause divergence between what is and what the attuned perceive to be. Attuned members have emerged from the Sea of Mind to find they have lost friends, body parts—even their lives. In one extreme case, a Forest Witch was cast from the Sea of Mind for some minor infraction to find that she had never been born at all, her mother having died in childbirth.

The Sea's powers come at a cost, and that cost is artifacts and other sources potent in Essence. Maintaining the reflection of Creation is taxing on it, and the larger the number of people attuned to it is, the greater the cost becomes. The banditry of the Forest Witches is therefore dedicated first and foremost to acquiring artifacts and other magically potent materials or the monies with which to purchase the same. These goods are then dumped into the Sea of Mind to power it.

Atsiluth Eternal

Atsiluth Eternal is the city on the hill, the perfect city in the reflection of the Sea of Mind. Atsiluth Eternal has landmarks, but no maps. Outside of a few commonly known and observed locations, the city seems to contain an ever-shifting grid of streets and places that accommodates every need or desire of the Terrestrials who visit. It is the domain of the dead of the Forest Witches, and their power there is near absolute—in stark contrast to their power in Creation.

Everything a visitor can possibly need is available in Atsiluth Eternal. There are shops that sell wonders lost to the Second Age, armies of servants—or soldiers—to be recruited or hired, lovers, concubines, slaves and foes aplenty. What reality these individuals have when they are not in the presence of one of the dead or a visiting Forest Witch is difficult to say. Many believe they have little if any fundamental being and are little more than dream-constructs created by the Sea of Mind only as necessary. This does little to discomfit most of the Forest Witches.

The Living

About 60 years after the formation of the Realm, a group of religious dissidents—or unwitting dupes of the Fair Folk, depending on one's point of view—left the Blessed Isle, led by Cevis Ghandarva, a charismatic cult leader. This cult of self-perfectionists evolved into the Forest Witches over the course of several centuries. Currently, the Forest Witches number 87. Although many of them are all but apolitical, the Witches have five groups or organizations within their ranks:

- **The Company of Thrones:** The members of the Company of Thrones seek the overthrow of the Realm, basing their philosophy on the Blood and Spear Sutras, proposals laid forth by Cevis Ghandarva. Using the power of an artifact he owns, they infiltrate and subvert societies in the local area, seeking to procure treasures and influence and to undermine the local governments. Currently, its membership stands at an even dozen.
- **The Company of Messengers:** Followers of Vitali Proseria, these Witches wish to strengthen and empower the Sea of Mind until it is self-sustaining and capable of embracing an endless

number of minds in its depths, eventually bringing perfection to all—or, at least, to all who matter. Roughly 20 members strong, it too holds that empire is the eventual path of the Witches. Its members also proselytize the power and glory of the Sea of Mind, and securing further resources and preachers in its glory takes most of their energy.

• **The Table of Fiends:** Four members in strength, the Table of Fiends disagrees that the Sea of Mind should be open to all. These elitists feel that only those who have proven themselves worthy—who have walked the furthest paths in search of excellence and decadence—should be allowed to partake in the perfection and eternity the Sea of Mind promises. This philosophy is at odds with that of many of the other Witches, and only the truly talented—or truly depraved—are counted in its membership.

• **The Mandala Guard:** Nine members strong by decree, the mandate of the Guard is to watch over the Forest's five manses and to protect the woods from outside interference.

• **The Cult of the Mist:** The numina of the mist have their worshipers among the Dragon-Blooded as well as among the mortal members of the Forest Witches. Each takes one of the numina as her personal patron and studies its aspects, seeking to understand their original intentions and how they might have failed—preparing themselves for when they too might seek out the mist and the changes it brings. Eight Terrestrials currently number themselves amongst the cult.

The Dead

When Forest Witches die, their aspects and countenances leave Creation—but they are not precisely dead. Some aspect remains in the Sea of Mind, which retains volition and reason, if not the ability to make an impact upon Creation without the aid of artifacts known as walking stones. The dead are over 200 in number now, spending most of their days in the perfection that is Atsiluth Eternal. Most rarely wander outside its immediate environs, understanding that, while their actions have no effect in the real Creation, they can place strain on the Sea of Mind, reducing its available power. Since the Sea is life to the dead, they strive endlessly to increase its power. Their support for the Messengers is absolute.

The dead's only power against the living is the threat of exile from the Sea of Mind, and it is one they wield ruthlessly in the pursuit of their goals. They are aware that they have little corporeal power left, so they use the threat of removal from the Sea of Mind—something no Forest Witch relishes—to enforce their dictates upon the living. The most important of these decrees is a yearly tithe—equal in value to Resources 5, usually in the form of some minor artifacts or other sources of Essence, to maintain and expand the Sea of Mind.

The Blood Sutra and the Spear Sutra

These two teachings are the foundations of the Forest Witch belief systems—as Cevis Ghandarva sees it, anyway. The Blood Sutra states that to be worthy of rulership, a Forest Witch must be willing to sacrifice what she is, to make way for what she can become. This sutra is embraced by the Cult of the Mist, naturally, but is important to the Company of Thrones as well.

The Spear Sutra states that to rule by conquest is not rulership—those ruled must lack either the will or the ability to oppose the Witches. They must either fear the Forest Witches so utterly as to be without fortitude, or they must see the Witches as worthy of their status as rulers. Only in this way can the Forest Witches rule "without name"—without the trappings and hazards that are concurrent with "false rulership."

To an objective outsider, of course, these sutras have aspects of both truth and madness about them. The Blood Sutra rightly proclaims the Realm society as calcified and stagnant—though it is not so hidebound as Cevis claims—but it fails to recognize that that stagnation was deliberate and was maintained only with great effort. The Spear Sutra states obvious facts of rulership—fear or the acknowledgement of the ruled is necessary to rulership—but fails to acknowledge that, as long as fear persists, there will be hate, and hate can overwhelm fear, bringing revolution to even the most terrified populace. Still, the sutras are powerful guides to the Forest Witches, driven in part by the powerful personality of Cevis Ghandarva.

What the Hell is All This?

The Forest Witches are caught up in the remnants of dramas and magics that are far beyond their ability to comprehend or influence. They have gained a sort of rapprochement with the ghost of Oreithyia—or that which wears her bones—and are tangential to whatever arcane purpose Domnica might have, as she is able to use only those who willingly submit themselves to her gifts. As for the Sea of Mind, even the Solars at the height of their power had little concept of what precisely it was, but they were wise enough to give it wide berth.

What exactly the Forest, the Sea and the mist want is unknown—possibly even to themselves. They are shadows of times long past, echoes of the wonder and horror of the First Age. To the extent that they still have volition and reason, they have desires and wants, but those wants can be base and primal or esoteric.

If their desires are ciphers, their nature is enigmatic and unknowable. The savants of the First Age studied the Forest and came away confused and little enlightened as to its nature. In the Second Age, the outcastes who are now the Forest Witches have explored the limits of the Forest's powers but are little enlightened as to its history prior to the death of Oreithyia and the remaking of Domnica. It is perhaps a thing of the Primordials, perhaps some relic of the making of Creation, a sleeping unshaped Fair Folk that has lost itself in dreaming or something else entirely. In the end, its nature is perhaps not so important as its power. Storytellers are encouraged to decide for themselves exactly what the Forest is and what its ultimate purpose might be—if it has any at all.

Character Generation

Outside the Sea of Mind, Forest Witches make use of the normal rules for generating outcaste characters, save that they have access to the same Artifact and Arsenal Backgrounds used by Realm and Seventh Legion characters, as the Forest Witches have significant stores of artifacts plundered over the years and keep the best for themselves. They may also purchase the Cult Background, but only to the two-dot level. The mortal population of the Forest is not large enough to support higher rankings. Unfortunately, their access to manses is limited. The cost of each dot in Manse is doubled, the Background cannot be purchased above the three-dot level without Storyteller approval, and all Witches with a manse are either members of the Mandala Guard or have acquired a manse outside the boundaries of the Forest.

Inside the Sea of Mind, characters may be assumed to have whatever mortal resources might be required of them, and values for most Backgrounds are doubled. The Sea of Mind is a place for grand armies, unforgettable relics of great puissance, throngs of worshipers and legions of servants. This can lead to dissonance between the Creation-that-is and the Creation-that-is-created, as a character's Grand Daiklave of Conquest could in fact be a simple greatsword, or his fearsome legion a mere talon. The Sea takes steps to ameliorate this dissonance, but it can still be problematic. Characters inside the Sea can also spend Virtue points to achieve great deeds. A point of Compassion could be spent to bring someone back from the dead, for example. These actions have no effect in Creation, though.



Important Forest Witches

Cevis Ghandarva: Ghandarva is the leader of the living Forest Witches—insofar as they can be said to have a leader. He owns an artifact that allows him to choose the time and place of his death and rebirth known as Domnica's Mantle and he has used it several times over the centuries, as have several of his followers in the Company of Thrones. He desires nothing less than the downfall of the Realm and works ceaselessly toward that end, but he is very patient. Ghandarva's most recent mother was Great Forks' Spinner of Glorious Tales.

Vitali Proseria: As Ghandarva is leader of the living, Proseria is leader of the dead—those Forest Witches whose mortal bodies have perished, leaving only their immortal existences in the Sea of Mind. Her singular purpose is to expand the Sea of Mind into a self-sustaining reality that continues to obey the dead. The dream of Atsiluth Eternal is a paradise that the dead control and shape as they wish, and she wishes it to truly be eternal. Proseria is ruthless and single-minded in the pursuit of this goal but she realizes that she must work with the living to do so. While the dead do possess artifacts with which to interact with Creation outside the Sea of Mind, those artifacts are limited in scope and number.

The South

The influence of the Immaculate Order on many of the cultures of the South is a blessing for the Dragon-Blooded who take their Second Breath there. Even among "barbarian" tribes such as the Delzahn, Dragon-Blooded are afforded a level of respect and defer-

ence that is not often found in other parts of Creation. While they aren't worshiped or accorded the status due Princes of the Earth in the Realm, Dragon-Blooded can count on safe harbor and fair dealings in much of the South.

Terrestrials in the South often make their livings as mercenary captains and champions, savants and sorcerers, merchants and prospectors. Mercenaries are always in demand in the South, to protect the massive caravans of firedust, yasal crystals and other, more mundane cargoes that travel its roads. Champions are hired by the wealthy to act as surrogates in duels, to put paid to those who offend them and to protect their persons when they travel. Savants are popular in most of the cities of the South, as rulers try to unlock the secrets hidden in ancient libraries scattered throughout the scorching deserts, and sorcerers are always needed to propitiate unruly gods, to summon and banish demons and to forge artifact weapons. Merchants can make quick and large fortunes trading in yasal crystals, firedust or jade, and prospectors can make smaller fortunes selling these goods to the merchants. Prospecting is a common enough occupation that many Terrestrials who can survive the desert's dangers and swing a sword reliably well spend some time harvesting the mineral wealth of the South if they have no other current employment.

The Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro has decreed that all Terrestrials who Exalt in the glass city are under his personal protection and that an attack on any native Dragon-Blood is the same as an attack on any member of his extended family. Terrestrial Exalts from elsewhere in Creation are not afforded this level of protection but are treated as honored guests in the eyes of the law. It is simple for Dragon-Bloods to find work as mercenaries, craftsmen or bodyguards, and treasure-hunters, ghost-killers and savants sifting through the remnants of Chiaroscuro's once-great libraries are all respected. The Delzahn—those who occupy the city and its surroundings, or those found in the deserts outside Chiaroscuro's holdings—accord much respect to Dragon-Blooded. The Tri-Khan and his nobles surround themselves with gifted Terrestrials, particularly those skilled in armed combat, but any outcaste whose mastery of a subject meets with his approval may be invited to attend court functions. Given the open nature of the Delzahn nobility, liaisons and marriages with foreign outcastes are inevitable and little remarked upon. They have as yet had little impact on the overall number of Dragon-Blooded born in the city, though, or in the "True" Delzahn Horde (those Delzahn who have not settled in Chiaroscuro).

Paragon has a population of nearly 100 Dragon-Blooded, most of them outcastes who have come to the city of the Perfect seeking protection from some past misdeed, shelter from the intrigues that surround the powerful in other cities or some other danger or annoyance. As with every citizen, the Terrestrials have undergone the ritual of subservience to the Perfect and are loyal only to him. The Perfect is aware that Exaltation burns out the oaths that bind his citizenry to him, so he has decreed that all who take their Second Breath within the city must be brought before him to renew their oaths lest they face banishment. Surprisingly few accept banishment, as the status and wealth afforded to outcastes is great and the opportunities available as agents of the Perfect substantial.

Dragon-Blooded are considered a necessity in Gem, but an annoying one rather than a welcome one. A single Terrestrial Exalt can draw the same wages as 10 skilled craftsmen, and even if the Terrestrial is worth it, this still grates on the leaders of the ruling houses. Still, the outcastes are tolerated, if only because the city needs a constant stream of Dragon-Blooded sorcerers to engage in the treachery that surrounds politics in Gem. Mortal thaumaturgy cannot stand up to even the casual magics of the Exalted or the gods, so Terrestrials are needed to set wards and provide other protections against spies and assassins. They are also needed to break those protections and make off with important intelligence or to end the lives of particularly hated foes. These jobs rarely last long, and they carry substantial dangers. The rewards of such work are great, though, and the merchants of Gem rarely lack for employees when they need them.

Extraordinarily skilled outcaste craftsmen are occasionally brought in to work with the city's most precious jewels, creating new settings or other works of art, and outcaste mercenaries charge premium rates for their services escorting those treasures to their final destinations. A different sort of artisan is also in demand. The dreams of the Dragon-Blooded are highly sought after, and outcastes willing to allow others to experience the passion and power of the Terrestrials—if only for a time—are highly rewarded for their dreams and experiences. The traffic is heavily proscribed by the Immaculate Order and highly illegal, but this does little in practical terms to stem the traffic.

The Varangian astrologer-priests dictate that even Exaltation does nothing to change one's destiny, and that nothing, not even the hand of the Elemental Dragons, can change a person's caste and rank. This stricture does not endear Terrestrials locked into a low class and caste to the entire situation and has created rifts between the Varangian orthodoxy and the Immaculate Order in the city-states, as this obviously flies in the face of much of the Order's teachings. Many in the lower classes who take their Second Breath in Varang soon find themselves leaving the city, to serve in Chiaroscuro, Paragon, the Realm or even further points in Creation. Of those who do remain, the most notable and respected are those who have the potential and birth-forecast to be craftsmen, working on the complex clockworks and orreries for which the Varang City-States are famous.

Although Harborhead's relatively large population would suggest substantial numbers of Terrestrial exaltations, the nation has few Dragon-Blooded natives. When the Scarlet Empress's legions conquered the lands that became Harborhead, one of her first actions was to largely strip the families of the Five Peoples of their Terrestrial lineage, spreading all those whose bloodlines could be confirmed throughout the Great Houses and the patrician houses. Some minor bloodlines have resurfaced in the centuries since, however—sufficient that recruitment of Terrestrials into the brides of Ahlat was a consistent heretical thorn in the Immaculate Order's side.

The Legion of Saloy Hin

Two Realm legions—or significant elements of them—failed to honor the recall notice issued when the Great Houses attempted to consolidate their control over the Imperial Army. One of them was the Seventeenth, under the command of Saloy Hin. Rumors in the Realm suggest that he and his legion have taken up position in the Southwest of Creation, seeking out lost manses and stockpiling weapons and firedust while taking on military assignments as mercenaries.

Those rumors are more than just speculation. The All-Seeing Eye and the intelligence apparatuses of the various Great Houses know the truth. The Seventeenth Legion, under Saloy Hin, defected from the Realm mere hours ahead of the recall order that would have stripped him of his command. Since then, he has been amassing a military force that will quickly be unrivaled in the South.

The Seventeenth Legion

Few Realm units have as honored—or as brutal—a history as the Seventeenth. Stationed in the south of the Blessed Isle, elements of the Seventeenth have been involved in quelling more

than one bloody uprising in the Realm and are well known in the South for their fair negotiating, rigid discipline and utter ferocity against the enemies of the Realm. Under the command of Saloy Hin, they have added a reputation for daring tactics, as he wields his medium infantry like skirmishers, and his heavy infantry like scalpels. Unlike many Realm generals, he treats even his skirmishers and archers with respect, paying for extra wages, weapons and armor for them out of his own pocket. His legion followed the normal order of battle for Realm legions on paper, but in reality, his skirmishers were armed with slings, his slingers with shortbows and his archers with composite bows.

Additionally, General Saloy was careful to stockpile weapons and armor captured during his operations. He reported and turned in not quite as much as he seized, allowing his political officers and keepers to know about only a portion of what he didn't turn in. In this way, he was able to quietly swell his coffers—and his arsenal—beyond that which was allotted or expected. When he abandoned the Realm, he managed to transfer most of his armory's holdings and unit treasury to the transports he stole to move his forces, leaving behind only the worst scraps.

As a result, his Terrestrial officers—and the outcastes he has recruited since landing in the South—are well-armed with daiklaves, powerbows and artifact armor, even for a Realm legion. He has small stockpiles of other weapons as well, including a handful of warstriders, but he keeps these weapons in reserve, breaking them out of storage only in extreme circumstances or to keep their wielders skilled in their use. He has sufficient thaumaturges and savants on his staff to keep his troops equipped with a minimal level of alchemical and talismanic aid, but most of them are detached on special missions in the deserts currently.

The forces of the Seventeenth Legion have swelled drastically in the five years since the legion left the Realm, buying out mercenary contracts and recruiting soldiers—particularly outcastes—wherever they have traveled. They have also made alliances with several barbarian tribes in the Southwest, seeking out those with advanced knowledge of the fringes of the central deserts. Although Saloy Hin has made his base of operations the Steel Tower, much of the legion is currently based in Valen. A small city-state located off the main trade route between Gem and Chiaroscuro, on the edges of the deserts frequented by the Dune People, Valen is about a week's journey on foot from the Steel Tower. Valen has suddenly become one of the safest—if rowdiest—cities in Creation, as its population has nearly tripled in size with the coming of the Seventeenth and the mercenaries it has hired.

This population explosion would typically be a recipe for disaster, not just in terms of crime and poor relations with the local populace, but in terms of needed rations far outstripping the local food supply. But Hin has prepared for that eventuality, using his considerable wealth to bring in supplies, construction materials and large numbers of prostitutes to keep his forces happy. His engineers are also hard at work expanding the city's water-retention basins, improving its sewer systems and roads (sometimes at the same time) and generally bringing all the advantages of Realm construction and engineering to the former backwater. He uses whatever troops are on hand as construction personnel—partly to keep them too busy to get into serious trouble, and partly to keep the construction costs down by avoiding the use of large numbers of slaves.

As its work continues, the legion's efforts are having not-unexpected side-effects. Legion patrols drive off Dune People raiding parties, and their presence provides improved infrastructure and law and order. As a result, the city has once again become popular with canny traders who seek a trade route that is much less laden with transit fees, duties on goods, and graft and corruption than they would find in towns and cities along the main trade route. The increased trade further fuels Valen's burgeoning economy.

The rulers of Valen, however, worry that this prosperity is transitory. They worry that Valen will expand explosively, only to face economic catastrophe when the Seventeenth leaves, which it inevitably must. General Saloy has reassured them that he has no plans to abandon the city, but they are not so sure. They have heard similar assurances before.

Saloy Hin

Hin graduated from Pasiap's Stair over a century and a half ago and rose through the ranks further than anyone thought possible, taking over command of the Seventeenth two decades ago. A Fire-aspected Dragon-Blood, he is known for his fierce devotion to his troops and his insistence on fierce discipline from them. Off the battlefield, outside barracks or duty periods, he doesn't care what they do, as long as they don't bring disgrace to the unit. When muster comes, though, his troops are held to the highest standards of any in the Realm. They match those of any other units in Creation, but this discipline is bought at a fearsome cost. While fair in his judgments, he is ruthless in his punishments, and few second chances are granted by his officers.

The Steel Tower

The Steel Tower is a level-2 Earth-aspected fortress-manse located on what was once an important strategic confluence of dragon lines—the demesne upon which it sits is rated at five dots. Its hearthstone is a stone of the earthweb. The excess Essence provided by the demesne was used to power various defensive systems that might still be operational, though no one has dared to test them. All but five stories of the manse, which once stood 50 stories tall, are buried beneath endless tons of sand that has blown and drifted around it over the centuries since it was abandoned. This naturally renders any operational testing of the manse's defenses and weapons problematic.

The interior of the manse is sealed against the drifted sands, but it has been only partially explored. The lift tunnels that provided easy access between the levels have long since been rendered non-functional, and Saloy has been unable to recruit a sorcerer-architect capable of repairing them. Nonetheless, Saloy's men have uncovered many treasures in their explorations already, including several that will only be movable when the tower has been unearthed.

General Saloy has only just begun recruiting the engineers and workers that would be necessary to complete this herculean task. He lacks the sorcerers to properly manage a task group of demons, and he does not wish to move the massive number of slaves and overseers necessary to the task into close proximity of his headquarters. So, for now, progress on digging the manse out of the sands proceeds slowly.

Outcastes and the Seventeenth

The Seventeenth Legion aggressively recruits Dragon-Bloods of all stripes and kinds. Be they mercenaries, merchants, savants or sorcerers, if they have even an ounce of martial talent, they can find a home in the Seventeenth.

Once enlisted, outcastes find themselves treated largely as one of the guys, which has both benefits and disadvantages. The Dragon-Blooded officers of the Seventeenth are largely graduates of Pasiap's Stair or were selected for their broad-minded opinions of the Threshold. (Those who weren't mostly disappeared on the ocean journey to the South.) This gives them a more tolerant and expansive opinion of outcastes in general, and non-Dynast characters can expect to get fair treatment by their compatriots as long as they prove they can carry their own weight. On the down side, characters are given little time to adapt to the legion's strict discipline. Although their fellow officers try to head off problems before they happen, they can do little to protect their compatriots from whatever consequences might befall them. While General Saloy is an understanding fellow, he is unlikely to treat new arrivals much differently than he would experienced hands.

Still, life in the Seventeenth is good for the moment. There are plenty of artifact weapons to be had (the Arsenal Background is available to characters in the Seventeenth). The pay is good and the opportunities for training are excellent. Whatever else General Saloy has planned, his current operations include plenty of missions into which a Terrestrial looking for adventure can sink his teeth, such as tomb-raiding, exploration, mercenary jobs, diplomacy (of the aggressive and conventional varieties), trade missions and research into ancient secrets. There's something for nearly any Dragon-Blood to get involved in.



In the last 10 years—since his discovery of a sheaf of ancient notes rumored to be the writings of one of the Seven Tigers—he has grown increasingly interested in destiny, astrology and the stars in general. Some say that something he found in those writings has twisted his mind, leading him further and further into obsessions best left alone. Others suggest that he is merely distracted by the stress of commanding a renegade legion on a dangerous quest. Regardless, he has spent a considerable fortune to hire several Varangian astrologer-priests and to import various pieces of astrological equipment—timepieces, orreries and other more obscure devices—to the Seventeenth's permanent campsite. He also spends considerable amounts of his spare time with them.

The West

If the waters of the West hold terrible dangers, they also carry in their depths infinite opportunities for adventure and fame. The demand for the unique powers of the Dragon-Blooded is as great as the hazards faced by the communities that make their home in the depths of the endless Western Ocean. The Wyld is never far in the West, and if Terrestrials are less resistant to its allures and less adept at taming its endless chaos than Celestial Exalts, they

What Saloy Hin is Seeking

Saloy Hin claims to be looking for lost manses, tombs and other resources he can secure to aid in a possible invasion of the Realm. This is not a lie, exactly, just not the entire truth. What he truly seeks is as far beyond some Anathema's tomb and its treasures as the treasuries of House Ragara are beyond a simple collection of jade bits.

Saloy Hin has in his possession records from one of the Seven Tigers, manuscripts written on imperishable parchment that survived the Empress's attacks on the Tigers' encampments. In these manuscripts, the author records that scouts from one of her farthest detachments had located the lost city of Agat, in largely undamaged condition but hundreds of miles from where it should have been. The records were vague enough that Hin believes that the author did not entirely trust her compatriots, but they were detailed enough that Hin has a general idea where the city is located. His field teams have been instructed to keep detailed notes of anything they discover out of the ordinary and to report back to him using Wind-Carried Words Technique or other methods. He knows that the city is distinctive enough (the records include descriptions and a detailed set of sketches) that he will recognize it even from the most fragmented of reports.

Although Saloy is incorrect in some of his assumptions—most of the city dates to the early days of the Shogunate, rather than the High First Age, for instance—these errors are largely irrelevant in the grand scheme of things. The lost city is out there, and the information he needs to discover its location is in the documents he's found. When he discovers it, he will eventually have many of the resources of a Shogunate-era city at his disposal, including weapons far more terrifying than any currently extant in the Second Age save for the Realm Defense Grid itself.

And then, he will be ready to wage war against the Realm—and anyone and anything else that might get in his way.

can nonetheless be a far better defense than even the greatest thaumaturges. Dragon-Blooded warriors skilled at the arts of naval combat can seize amazing bounties as freebooters and privateers, or less substantial—but steadier—earnings commanding naval escorts for merchant fleets.

Many of the gods of the West—both the powerful and the merely influential—seek Terrestrials out as servants, couriers, troubleshooters, envoys and even lovers. Fakharu, Censor of the West, is known to have over a dozen Terrestrial servants of varying positions and responsibilities, and several of the storm mothers of the Western Ocean are known to employ at least a handful. The gods can be harsh taskmasters and employers, but they are often generous ones. Their imprimatur can grant a Terrestrial who seeks influence in the elemental or spirit courts a level of respect and attention that would never be granted to any but the most powerful scions of the Realm or Lookshy.

The waters of the West hold no large colonies or organizations of Dragon-Blooded like those that exist in the North or the East. There are few large cities in which a Terrestrial can grow into his power either. Most of the cultures of the West are glad to have any Dragon-Blooded presence, however, and few would turn their backs upon a newly Exalted member of their family. The only notable exception is the Skullstone Archipelago. The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water has no love whatsoever for the Chosen of the Dragons, and he only barely tolerates their presence in the Archipelago. No outcaste—or Dynast for that matter—may pass through the Bone Gate into the city of Onyx, on pain of torments only the dead can imagine. The pirates in service to the Silver Prince are known for their ferocity, but they reserve special tortures for the Terrestrials they capture. Freebooter captains working for the Bodhisattva may take no Dragon-Blooded on as crew and are paid handsome bounties for each Dragon-Blooded head they take—and even more handsome rewards for those captured alive. Wise Terrestrials give the Skullstone Archipelago a wide berth and make what negotiations and treaties they must make with the Bodhisattva on neutral territory—and surrounded by well-armed and warded guards.

Few ambitious outcastes take up the offer of impressive rewards offered by the Sea Lord of the Coral Archipelago, as the same regulations that prevent foreigners from achieving high rank also apply to Terrestrials. Dragon-Blooded captains are nearly always offered letters of marque, however. Native Dragon-Bloods are encouraged—quite strongly in the case of the Air and Water Aspects—to take to the seas, as pirates or as naval officers—or even as one of the rare merchants operating out of the Coral Archipelago's ports.

The Wavecrest Archipelago reveres its few Terrestrials—Air- and Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded particularly, but any Terrestrial who takes to the seas or crafts artifacts that sailors can use is a blessing in the eyes of Wavecrest. While the natives of the Archipelago have little to offer save their devotion and their thanks, those are given willingly to those outcastes who choose to make their home on the isles of Wavecrest.

Half a dozen Terrestrials make their home on the floating city of the Denzik, including two trained in sorcery. These Dragon-Bloods are something more than mercenaries but something less than full members of the Denzik Merchant Association. As with many outcastes, their status defies exact description. Their counsel is heard by the city's leadership, but they are permitted no vote. They inspect valuable cargoes for hidden defect or forgery but are not allowed to negotiate trade agreements or carry cargoes of their own. Instead, they have to work through a factor designated as "the Dragon's Favored." They plan and assist in the defense of the city but directly command only a small handful of troops and some Tya (who also serve as their aides, servants and concubines). Although they are kept carefully isolated from the day-to-day operations of the city-ships, they are well compensated for their efforts and are considered valuable assets of the Association.

The Emissaries of Perfect Water

A coalition of 40 powerful thaumaturges, Terrestrial Exalts and God-Bloods, the Emissaries have a simple set of tasks: to protect the islands of the West from the Wyld and the Fair Folk, to prevent the Guild and the Realm from subjugating the island kingdoms of the West, and to mollify and ally the gods and entities of the West to protect their island homes.

Simple—no problem.

Actually, they have had more success than any could have hoped to expect, but they face the reality that they are too few,

Dragon-Blooded Women

Many women who experience Terrestrial Exaltation in the West take on the role of the Tya eventually, as it is the only way for them to make full use of their power in such strongly patriarchal societies. This necessity is seen as a tragedy by Realm Dynasts, since Tya women are expected to sterilize themselves, rendering the Dragon's Blood in their veins useless for any future breeding. In the past, the Realm encouraged the adoption of lost eggs found in the West, especially young females, going so far as to heavily subsidize the education and upkeep of Western foundlings. Since the disappearance of the Empress, though, only House Peleps (and the disgraced scions of House Iselsi, working through cutouts and factors) continue the practice.

Dragon-Blooded membership in the Tya is also discouraged by the wiser and less tradition-bound members of many Western societies. Many of the Tya themselves understand that the call of blood to blood is more important than societal conventions. While most go only so far as to discourage Dragon-Blooded women from joining the Tya, others go further, encouraging their defiance of old ways and old beliefs. Some become Tya, but "forget" to take the shellfish toxin that is supposed to render them sterile, or they use Charms to burn it out of their blood before it can take hold. These women must choose their friends and lovers carefully. They must hide their pregnancies even more carefully, a task made easier by the realities of Dragon-Blooded gestation. Their children are usually given up for adoption, often with the families they left behind.

Others choose to stand on their own, without the protection membership in the Tya affords them, but also without the restrictions placed on them by the society. In this choice, they are aided by the power of even young Terrestrials. Few would provoke a Fire Aspect to rage on the decks of a wooden ship. As a result, a handful of strongly defiant Dragon-Blooded women make their own way through the cultural difficulties of the West, carving a path with Essence and steel when words and wit do not suffice. Their life is not easy, and is often short, but it is their own in a way that even the lives of the Tya are not.

There are women who walk another path, however. On the surface, they compromise and obey the rules of the society in which they grew up, obeying the dictates of the only life they have known. Yet they make use of their elemental heritage in myriad minor ways. They seldom step outside the bonds of their culture, but they bend them when possible, avoid them when feasible and break them only when necessary. Thus do they aid their society, defending it with wit and with Charms when necessary. There are those who see such women as failing their Terrestrial blood, but most who follow this path see themselves as instead honoring their history and their culture and doing what they can to improve their lives—within the confines of what they believe and hold true.

spread too thin and without enough power to single-handedly save the West. Nonetheless, they continue to strive, seeking alliances where possible, banding their forces together when necessary, overseeing each others' interests, and forming a petitioning block in the spirit courts of the various storm mothers and sea gods of the West that is always listened to, if not always heeded.

The leading Emissaries include a dozen outcastes, six of whom are sorcerers (two of whom are powerful enough to be recognized as noteworthy even by the tutors of the Heptagram). The remainder of the 40 who form the organization's core include powerful mortal thaumaturges, God-Bloods and a handful of minor gods and elementals who have decided to take a more direct hand in working against the Wyld in the West.

Although the rewards of membership in this coalition are sometimes meager, they are not always infinitesimal. The coalition itself forms a powerful network of allies and connections, and Emissaries can count on aid and friendship whenever they travel in another member's holdings. The coalition has no lack of magical prowess, and its members have access to a number of enchanted ships and longboats, including a pair of unique sailing yachts that apparently date to the First Age in their design and manufacture. These enchanted vessels swiftly travel through even powerful storms and dangerous seas and are often blessed—if secretly, in some cases—by members of the Celestial Bureaucracy, some of whom are sympathetic to the Emissaries.

Although membership in the Emissaries is considered prestigious and useful, few seek it out. As a result, the Emissaries have hard problems recruiting replacements for recent losses. Membership in the Emissaries is also seen as highly dangerous and eventually futile, as it deals so often with powerful Fair Folk and the hazards of the Wyld. The coalition plans to meet soon in the spirit court of Fakharu to discuss how to proceed, but recent developments in the West suggest this meeting may have to be postponed.

Eos and Ossissa

Some of the pirates of the Western Ocean are driven by greed, others by desperation. Some privateers are patriots, preying on the trading vessels of their enemies out of loyalty to their kingdoms. Some are driven by vengeance or the spirit of adventure and exploration. Eos Atitha, outcaste by birth, and Sesus Ossissa, outcaste by choice, reflect these latter drives.

Eos Atitha is an Air Aspect powerful far beyond her years. Her village attacked by Guild slavers, she can never return to what she once was. Now she takes her righteous anger out on all Guild captains and merchants she comes across, seeking to bring low their financial mastery of the West. Sesus Ossissa was once part of the same sworn brotherhood that claimed Sesus Chenow. Coming across Atitha and the destruction she wreaked upon a Guild convoy, he was struck by the purity of her vision and obsessed with her fury and vengeance. A seeker of dreams in the Wyld, he has become caught up in her dreams—and she in his. They are not lovers, exactly, but more than mere allies could ever be.

Since then, they have ravaged Guild ships and interests throughout the West, developing contacts and informants in every major port, as well as a web of dealers and brokers willing to take on their wares. They free slaves, avoid bloodshed whenever possible—except for Guild blood, of course—and occasionally perform great services or bestow great wealth upon one or another island village in need of assistance. As they have continued to succeed, the number of ships in their fleet has grown, and now, they number six swift warships, well armed and crewed, with a number of God-Bloods, Terrestrial Exalts and mortal heroes who stand behind them as ships captains, lieutenants and aides.



The Power of the Wyld

The Wyld does not always twist its victims physically, shattering their forms and mutating their shapes. Its power can be as great over the mind, the spirit—even the soul—of those who linger too long in its grasp as it is over their bodies, and Eos and Ossissa are perfect examples of this. The longer they dwell in the Wyld, the more iconic they become—each losing the depth and breadth of character he or she once had. Those who serve under them, even those who hunt them, are caught up in this effect. They become loyal servants, untrustworthy aides or dedicated hunters as the needs of the Wyld and their own natures demand. The Wyld burns away all complexity and "unnecessary" depth until all that is left is the epitome of their role in the story of Eos and Ossissa.

Their success has also brought them great wealth. Eos and Ossissa are perhaps the wealthiest pirates in the West, rivaling even the Lintha grandfathers in their fortunes. They have also earned great enemies. The Guild hunts them for the damage inflicted on its purses, the Realm hunts them for the damage inflicted upon its honor, and the Lintha hunt them for reasons they will not say. Even among the Fair Folk who feed on their dreams and encourage their desires, Eos and Ossissa's fleet has fostered animosities, although they know it not.

The fleet is known to make harbor on an island known as the Obsidian Hands, but its precise location is unknown, and perhaps unknowable except to the captains of their fleet, as it lies in the Deep Wyld. The island is a placid and fertile place, with a harbor well defended against storms, and it is sufficiently magical that no need is unmet, no desire untended. Those who reside on the island can soon become idle dreamers of dreams, their days spent in an idyllic haze. The Fair Folk who reside in the area have no reason to seek them out, ensnaring the permanent residents of the Obsidian Hands in glamours or tricks, for they are already ensnared, lulled into complacency and indulgence by the nature of the island itself.

Demon Captain Kasua

There is a ship around which even the Lintha tread carefully. There is a captain whom even the privateers of the Coral Archipelago defy only with reluctance. The ship's name is *Swift Madness*, and its captain's name is Kasua.

Who the woman now known as Demon Captain Kasua was before she started her Yozi-maddened trek through the West is lost to history. What is known is that she has terrorized shipping in the Western Ocean for the last two centuries, and the Realm has taken

Freebooters, Pirates and Privateers

Many Terrestrials take to the seas in search of adventure—and often, they take the role of predator. Some, such as Eos and Ossissa or the Rising Scarlet Wind Brotherhood, are nearly noble in their pursuit of fame and fortune, seeking to minimize bloodshed and conflict when possible, and using their winnings as much for decent purposes as for decadence and boisterous partying when in port. Others, such as the Dread Squadron of Peras or Demon Captain Kasua, are likened to Yozi-spawn even by the Lintha. They leave naught but destruction and tears in their wake.

One thing is certain. Nearly all of them eventually cross the Realm, the Coral Archipelago, the Lintha or the Guild, and when they do, they earn an enmity that can be hard to shake. Still, enough are successful, for long enough periods of time, that piracy remains a favored pursuit in the West.

no substantive steps to stop her. Some suggest she is a scion of the Scarlet Dynasty, but whether she was exiled for crimes, is fleeing justice or has been deliberately sent out as an agent provocateur differs depending on who tells the tale. Others suspect she is simply another lost egg who stumbled upon a cache of ancient tomes and taught herself sorcery enough to operate the First Age transport she has turned into a warship.

The *Swift Madness* is nearly a First Age ship in name only. While her hull is all but impervious and her sails impossible to puncture, she lacks the propulsion system, the weapons and the other protections that are the hallmark of those irreplaceable ships. Its crew, largely consisting of demons and the Demon- and God-Blooded spawn of Kasua, gives the ship its combat power. Erymanthoi act as the ship's heavy strikers, for example. Surprisingly, although Kasua certainly has no problems seeking union with demons, she has apparently never availed herself of the neomah's ability to enhance the chances of Dragon-Blooded Exaltation in her foul get.

Even more curiously, although she makes use of demons in nearly all aspects of her life and piratical career, she has shown no particular sign of infernal nature. Her weapons are black jade, not Malfean bronze or iron, and while her armor is forged of the flayed skins of her victims, it is merely horrible, not Malfean in nature. She has shown no power beyond that of a very old, very powerful Terrestrial sorceress with a substantial arsenal of spells and artifacts. Whether this is due to lack of opportunity or lack of desire is another question—one few have lived long enough to ask.

Kasua is known to make her home on a dark, cloud-shrouded island somewhere to the east and north of the Neck. It is here that she raises the spawn of her crew—both those she has carried herself and those born of the unfortunate victims of her crew's hellish appetites—and here that she stores the wealth she has captured over the centuries of her rampage. She is always seeking outcaste crewmembers, though few are so degenerate as to sign onto her maddened voyage of the damned.

Dragons of the Lintha

The history of the Yozi-spawned Lintha is scattered with periods of contact with the "lesser" mortals of Creation, and the offspring of these miscegenetic unions carried the Blood of the Dragons into the Lintha Family. Although Terrestrial Exaltation is rare among the Lintha, it is not completely unknown. At any given time, as many as three dozen Dragon-Blooded can be counted among their numbers, although the number is usually far lower.

These rare individuals are highly prized by the Lintha. The blood of the Yozis and the Immaculate Dragons perversely intermingles in their veins, and they are powerful even by the standards of pureblooded Lintha. From the time of their Exaltation, they are singled out for special training and education. The stark tasks assigned all Lintha children are doubled and redoubled again when given to those who have shown the sign of the Dragon. Most learn sorcery from an early age, and those few who do not are expected to make up for their lack of sorcerous knowledge with mastery of combat skills, ship handling and thaumaturgy. Those who survive their childhood are potent weapons of the Yozis in their wars against the South and West. While their upbringing is rough, no Lintha would needlessly waste the life of such precious resources, so these children are carefully guarded.

The Lintha only very rarely adopt adult—or adolescent—Terrestrials into their ranks as cousins. This is due partly to the Lintha's extremely insular nature and partly to the famed Exalted ability to recover from even the most heinous injuries—including castration. It is also a security measure. Both the Realm and Lookshy have used Dragon-Blooded agents to infiltrate the Lintha, at times managing even to penetrate Bluehaven itself. Although the agents were neutralized before they could call for an invasion fleet, the success of these missions shook the leaders of the Lintha. As a result, it is only with great hesitancy that the Lintha select even young Dragon-Blooded into their ranks. Even then, these Dragon-cousins as they are known are never allowed to see Bluehaven.


SO THEN HIS CANE BREAKS, AND HE FALLS RIGHT INTO THE PILE OF HORSE APPLES!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA!
RIGHT ON HIS WRINKLY OLD FACE!
CATHAK DROGATH, STOP THAT THIS INSTANT!
THESE CHILDREN ARE HERE TO LEARN, NOT TO LISTEN TO YOUR HORRIBLE STORIES.
BUT THEY'RE TRUE STORIES!
THAT ONLY MAKES THEM CRUEL AND SICKENING. THAT YOU FIND THEM FUNNY SHOWS YOU LACK ANY SENSE OF HUMAN COMPASSION.
THEY ARE FUNNY.
ENOUGH, YOU SPOILED BRAT! EITHER SIT THERE QUIETLY, OR LEAVE THIS CLASSROOM!
WHAT? WHAT DID YOU SAY TO ME, YOU...
PATRICIAN?


DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM? DON'T YOU KNOW WHO MY PARENTS ARE?
JUST A MINUTE NOW, CHILD...
I... I KNOW WHO THEY ARE. LET'S NOT BRING THEM INTO THIS, OKAY?
OH, IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT! GIVE ME THAT WHIPPING CANE!
DROGATH, DON'T DO SOMETHING YOU'LL REGRET WHEN YOU'RE OLDER.
YOU CAN'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO! MY PARENTS ARE EXALTED, AND YOURS ARE NOBODIES! I'M BETTER THAN YOU!
YOU WANT COMPASSION? I'LL SHOW IT TO YOU!
I'LL SHOW ALL OF YOU!
I DON'T GET PAID ENOUGH FOR THIS.

CHAPTER THREE
CHARACTER CREATION

Although they aren't its rightful rulers, the Terrestrial Exalted rule most of Creation as the Second Age winds down. The gods originally intended for the Dragon-Blooded to act as the aides and infantry for the Celestial Exalted, so they made the Terrestrials weaker than the Celestial Exalted. They were also supposed to work together—a fact made evident in the design of their Charms—and cooperation is in their very nature. One on one, an average Terrestrial Exalt will lose to an average Celestial Exalt. Yet by working together, they killed hundreds of Solar Exalted and drove the rest of the Celestials underground.

Such are the characters you'll make here.

When you create your Dragon-Blooded character, give some consideration to where your character comes from, what his life before his Exaltation was like and what he's done since receiving the Terrestrial Exaltation. The more personal history you come up with, and the more details you know about your character's life, the easier it will be to get into his head during a story.

Don't just think about where you want your Ability dots to go and how you want your character to crush his enemies. Give some consideration to where weaknesses might have dramatic potential over the course of the game, and place your dots accordingly. By making his weaknesses as interesting as his strengths, you'll find your character far more fun to play than you would if he's only good at kicking ass. In fact, if you're playing a Terrestrial Exalt, you're almost certainly not the most lethal character in the game, so you may as well make the most of the dramatic potential in your character's weaknesses.

Who Are the Terrestrials?

The Terrestrial Exalted can be found throughout Creation. The greatest concentration of their numbers resides on the Blessed Isle. A large number of die-hard holdouts of the Shogunate live in Lookshy across the Inland Sea. Lastly, the libido of the Dragon-Blooded is a boundless thing, and bastard children (and grandchildren and great grandchildren and so on) are born of their dalliances across the flat face of Creation almost every day. Most of these lucky children are given up to the Realm or Lookshy as soon as they Exalt, but some remain lost and make their own way through the world. Those who do are the outcaste.

Other subsets of Terrestrial Exalted with slightly different abilities and advantages can be found in Creation, but these three varieties account for the vast majority of the Dragon-Blooded throughout Creation.

Step One: Character Concept

Any gamer who's seriously interested in roleplaying realizes something after about his third character: Simply arranging a bunch of dots on a page and then stretching a thin veneer of personality over them is one of the more tedious ways of creating a character. More often than not, you wind up with a two-dimensional character who turns out to be pretty boring after about three gaming sessions. A much more challenging, and ultimately more enjoyable, way of creating a character is to home in on a concept that resonates with you, flesh out the concept with likes, dislikes, history and goals, then decide what the character's strengths and weaknesses look like in dots later on.

Coming up with an interesting and playable character concept is the first and most important step in creating an **Exalted** character. The more vividly you can imagine your character at this point, the more you'll be able to assume his persona when the game starts. Slipping into a character is like putting on a fine set of threads. If they're too loose, too tight or tailored to someone else's specifications, they're not going to work for you.

Players of Dragon-Blooded characters have an advantage where roleplaying is concerned. If you're playing a Terrestrial Exalt rather than, say, a Solar or Abyssal character, odds are that power gaming isn't your cup of tea anyway, so you're entirely free to come up with a character who really interests you—a character with depth, complexity and shortcomings. It's okay to start a character off with a broadly defined or stereotypical concept. There will be time to add depth soon enough. You can start with an idea you've picked up from mythology, anime, wuxia flicks or any other source that inspires you, and then you add the finer shading and intricate detail that you want on a second or third pass.

The Storyteller and Your Character

A roleplaying game is a cooperative effort at telling an imaginative tale. Give your Storyteller some notion of what kind of character you want to create before you go through the effort of generating a character. An ass-kicking Immaculate monk might be fine and dandy in the right game, but if your Storyteller intends to spin a tale of political maneuvering and court intrigues, you'll be bored, and he'll have a harder time modifying his game to make sure you're included.

A brief consultation with the Storyteller can make sure that your character is well suited to the unfolding series.

Origins

Creation is big, and Terrestrial Exalts come from all over it. Where your character comes from determines what he's seen, hints at what he knows and colors how he thinks.

Dynasts come from one of the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty, based on the Blessed Isle. Such characters likely come from the Realm, but they could just as easily be from a Realm garrison in one of the many satrapies in the Threshold. Scions of the Dynasty are known for their decadence and their excesses, but they are also rigorously trained from early childhood to be the defenders of Creation.

Lookshy's Terrestrials are the well-preserved holdouts and descendents of the Shogunate's famed Seventh Legion. The city-state of Lookshy is located in the Threshold, due east of the Imperial



City and due west of Nexus. Their overall familiarity with, and use of, First Age technology is much higher than the Realm's, and they're not afraid to use powerful artifact weapons to oppose the Scarlet Empire. Lookshy survives through rigorous discipline and order, and its martially inclined populace has long proved willing to do whatever is necessary to defend the city.

Outcastes are those Dragon-Blooded who Exalt without the benefit of any cultural framework to help them come to terms with being Exalted. They have the power but not the training provided by the Realm and Lookshy in how to focus those abilities. Dynasts might see these "lost eggs" as poor, ignorant backward cousins, but outcastes often see themselves as free of the indoctrination of the Realm and Lookshy, and pride themselves on their independence. The Blood of the Dragons can sleep in mortal veins for centuries without manifesting as an Exaltation, and many bloodlines in Creation hold a trace of the Dragons' Blood. Consequently, outcaste Terrestrials can and do show up anywhere in Creation, from the shores of the Inland Sea to communities located near the elemental poles themselves.

House

Knowing a Dynast's House (or the Gens of a Lookshy Terrestrial) doesn't *necessarily* tell you anything about that particular Exalt, but it's a better indicator than many other factors. Over the decades, the Great Houses have shown propensities toward certain behaviors often enough that they've developed a reputation. House Cynis is known for its decadence, for example, while House Cathak is known for its discipline and martial prowess. While a character need not fit the stereotype of her House, it's good to at least know the stereotype and then determine whether to play to, or against, type.

Elemental Aspect

Every Dragon-Blood belongs to one of five elemental aspects that correspond to the Elemental Dragons of Air, Earth, Fire, Water and Wood. Aspect gives the character a spiritual and physical bond with that particular element, which reveals itself in her appearance, her talents and the powers she wields as a member of the Dragon-Blooded Host.

Nothing impacts the life of a Terrestrial Exalt so much as the Elemental Dragon whose power she channels. Aspect plays a powerful role in determining the Exalt's temperament, aptitudes and the way she interacts with the world. Elder Terrestrials are much more prone to showing their elemental aspect through small unconscious habits than are recently Exalted Dragon-Bloods, who have not yet had the years of experience with their respective element to color their interactions with the world around them. So extreme are the differences between the elemental aspects that philosophers among the Dragon-Blooded have long asserted—rhetorically, of course—that the Terrestrial Exalted are not one race but five, bound together by tradition, necessity and shared blood.

Still, aspect reflects only a behavioral tendency, not natural law. Aspect is only one facet, along with history, family and natural temperament, that figures into a Terrestrial's behavior. Any Exalt may choose to follow or deny the urges of her elemental nature, and no Dragon-Blood is likely to go far in life if she is unable to deviate from her elemental inclinations. (For one thing, such rigidity would make her predictable and easy to manipulate.)

Choosing a House

Ten of the Dynastic Houses (and many of the Gentes of Lookshy) have strong affinities for particular elements, but Dragon-Blooded of all aspects come from all Houses, so you are not bound by a House's elemental affinity. If you like the youthful energy of House V'neef, but don't want to play an Aspect of Wood, you're free to choose any aspect that works with your character concept.

Motivation

Dragon-Blooded, like all Exalted, are larger than life and have goals and dreams bigger than mortals could hope to achieve. Every character has a range of goals, but your character's Motivation should be the primary desire that drives him. Exemplary Dragon-Blooded Motivations include assuming the Scarlet Throne, taming the Threshold, eradicating piracy from Creation's seas, mastering every sorcery spell in the Terrestrial Circle, expunging the Anathema from Creation or other aspirations of similar grandeur.

Keep in mind that your character's Motivation will come into play many times in a series, so choose wisely. For more on choosing, playing and changing your character's Motivation, see page 88 in the **Exalted** rulebook.

Step Two: Attributes

The Terrestrial Exaltation, the ultimate sign of spiritual mastery, grants the Dragon-Blooded much greater potential than their mortal counterparts have. And Creation is lucky that it does, because even the powerful Exalts of the Dragon-Blooded Host are, individually, no match for most Anathema.

As with all characters, all Dragon-Blooded characters start with one dot in each Attribute before they assign any other dots. Barring catastrophic in-game developments, a character will always have at least one dot in every Attribute.

In keeping with your character concept, decide how you want to assign your Attribute dots between Physical, Social and Mental Attributes. Pick one Attribute set to be primary, one to be secondary and one to be tertiary.

Physical: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina
Social: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance
Mental: Perception, Intelligence, Wits
(For a full explanation of Attributes, see **Exalted**, p. 101)

A Terrestrial Exalt has seven dots to assign among her primary Attributes, six to assign to secondary Attributes and four dots to invest in tertiary Attributes. A player may not assign more than five dots to any Attribute, but aside from that, she is free to assign points as she sees fit.

Step Three: Abilities

Dragon-Blooded have an affinity for the five Abilities their elemental aspect favors. These affinities are called Aspect Abilities. This elemental affinity is reflected in the ease with which a character learns those particular Abilities (i.e., dots in those Abilities are less expensive to buy with both bonus and experience points).

- **Air Abilities** are those related to subtlety in both thought and motion: Linguistics, Lore, Occult, Stealth and Thrown.
- **Earth Abilities** are those concerning stability, deliberation and construction: Awareness, Craft, Integrity, Resistance and War.
- **Fire Abilities** are defined by passion and swift action: Athletics, Dodge, Melee, Presence and Socialize.
- **Water Abilities** rely on fluidity of mind and motion and intellectual depth: Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny, Martial Arts and Sail.
- **Wood Abilities** are devoted to life, nature and the outdoors: Archery, Medicine, Performance, Ride and Survival.

There's more to a Terrestrial's life than just elemental aspect,

however. Dragon-Blooded characters also have an affinity with three additional Abilities (called Favored Abilities). These are Abilities that your character just naturally favors and for which she has a talent. Favored Abilities provide the same reduction in point cost as Aspect Abilities. Since Favored Abilities represent something your character knows well enough to have some talent in, you must assign at least one dot to each Favored Ability. You cannot get a double cost reduction by choosing an Aspect Ability as a Favored Ability. Favored Abilities must be different from Aspect Abilities.

Your character doesn't have to start with any dots in Aspect Abilities (except to meet certain minimum requirements determined by the character's birthplace and training).

You may not assign more than three dots to any Ability unless you buy the extra dots with bonus points. Bonus points may also be used to purchase specialties in the same manner as detailed in the **Exalted** core book.

Where You're From Determines What You Know

All Terrestrial Exalted start with the same number of dots in Attributes (with some variation coming from bonus point purchases), but the same cannot be said of Abilities. The number of points a Terrestrial starts with reflects the training she received while growing up. Consequently, not all Terrestrial Exalts begin with the same number of Ability dots, nor do they have to fulfill the same Ability minimums.

Abilities reflect learned skills, talents and knowledge acquired through study and training. A character with no dots in an Ability has no training in that Ability.

Depending on the circumstances of a Terrestrial Exalt's birth and background, he may need to meet certain minimum ratings in some Abilities to represent the intense training regimen of his birthplace.

Dynasts

Despite their decadence and infighting, the noble Dragon-Blooded of the Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty take their obligations to Creation *very* seriously, and they train from an early age to be the defenders of Creation. Children of Dynastic families spend hours learning at least the rudiments of sailing, archery, martial arts, language and many other skills besides. Consequently, Dynasts begin with an impressive array of Abilities.

These Dragon-Bloods benefit greatly from the Realm's educational infrastructure. Although the long list of expectations, demands, rules and myriad political intrigues that come with being a member of a Dynastic house can seem smothering at times, there can be no doubt that the Terrestrial Exalted brought up in the Realm are among the best-trained individuals in Creation.

Dynast characters begin with 35 dots to place into Abilities, and 13 of these dots *must* go into the character's Aspect or Favored Abilities. All Dynasts *must* have an *absolute minimum* of Archery 1, Lore 2, Martial Arts 1, Melee 1, Performance 1, Presence 1, Ride 1, Socialize 2 and War 1, to represent the basic training in the arts of war and the social graces that form the underpinnings of Realm culture. Most Dynasts will have *all* of these Abilities rated at two dots or more. Those who do not are generally regarded by their peers as deficient in critical life skills. They're also terrible embarrassments to their poor families.

Dots left over after these minimums have been met may be spent in whatever way best captures the essence of the character's concept. However, no Ability may exceed three dots without spending bonus points to do so.

Lookshy

The Dragon-Blooded of Lookshy, being the remnants of the Shogunate's rigorously disciplined Seventh Legion, train with a zeal similar to that of the Blessed Isle's scions. If anything, the Terrestrial Exalted of Lookshy are *more* disciplined than the decadent Dynasts of the Realm (but much less wealthy). Among the Dragon-Bloods of Lookshy, constant training and preparedness are the signs of good citizenship.

Characters originating in Lookshy begin with 35 points in Abilities, 13 of which *must* be distributed among Aspect and Favored Abilities. Again, no Ability may exceed three dots without spending bonus points to do so. Characters born in Lookshy must have a *minimum* of Archery 2, Linguistics 3, Lore 2, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2, Performance 1, Presence 1, Ride 1, Stealth 1 and War 2.

Lost Eggs and Threshold Outcastes

These are Terrestrials who Exalted but never received the education provided to their Dragon-Blooded cousins in the Realm and Lookshy. As a consequence, they are relatively untrained and ignorant. While they are capable of learning anything any other Dragon-Blooded can learn, and they are far superior to un-Exalted mortals, they start their lives with a knowledge deficit compared to their formally trained cousins.

These unschooled Terrestrials begin with 25 dots to distribute among their Abilities. At least 13 of these must go into Aspect or Favored Abilities. The rest may be spent as the player chooses, although no more than three dots may be placed in any Ability without spending bonus points to do so.

Specialties

While an Ability represents a general area of knowledge, a specialty is a narrowly focused area of expertise that can help your character more closely resemble the concept you have for him. A character might be generally good in Linguistics, but if you imagine him to be a great savant, he might have a specialty in Calligraphy. Likewise, if a character's history states that she emerged from the dense forests of the East, she might have a general knowledge of Survival, but a more specific specialty in Tracking or Camouflage.

Specialties can be bought at any time with either bonus points (at character creation) or experience points (once play beings). You don't have to take any specialties for your character at all, though. A character may not have more than three specialties for a single Ability.

For more on specialties, see **Exalted** p. 74.

Step Four: Advantages

Dynasts start life with every advantage that wealth and power can provide. The Terrestrials of Lookshy have great resources at their command, and even so-called lost eggs have advantages to which most mortals will never be able to aspire.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are advantages that the character possesses at the beginning of play. They are bought with bonus points at character creation and can't be bought thereafter, although they can be *acquired* in the course of play.

The Backgrounds of the Dragon-Blooded differ from those available to the foul Anathema. A full explanation of those differences can be found on page **102-111** of the Traits chapter.

Backgrounds vary significantly even among the Terrestrial Exalted. A lost egg in the Threshold does not have the options available to a spoiled Dynast. Those variations are described as follows:

Dynasts

The Great Houses of the Blessed Isle are among the wealthiest and most powerful institutions in Creation. Dynastic Dragon-Bloods begin with 12 dots of Backgrounds and may choose from Allies, Arsenal, Artifact, Backing, Breeding, Command, Connections, Familiar, Family, Henchmen, Manse, Reputation, Resources and Retainer.

Lookshy

The Dragon-Blooded of the Dynastic Houses might be the wealthiest of their kind, but the Terrestrial Exalted of Lookshy are easily the most disciplined population in all of Creation. Dragon-Blooded characters originating in Lookshy start with 13 points of Backgrounds and may choose from Allies, Arsenal, Artifact, Backing, Command, Connections, Familiar, Family, Manse, Mentor, Reputation, Resources and Retainer. No Background may be higher than three without spending bonus points.

Exalted blood does not run as pure in Lookshy as it does in the Realm. The Breeding Background is less common here as a consequence, making it more expensive for characters from Lookshy. The third dot costs four bonus points, the fourth dot costs seven bonus points and a player who wants five dots of Breeding must pay 10 bonus points.

Lost Eggs and Threshold Outcastes

Hard is the life of an outcaste. Lost eggs do not benefit from the educational advantages of their cousins. Compared to the Dragon-Blooded in the Realm, in Lookshy and in other civilized corners of Creation, these outcastes are ignorant savages.

Outcastes begin with seven dots of Backgrounds, and none can exceed three dots without expending bonus points.

Lost eggs do not have access to the many of the special Backgrounds available to Dynasts and the Terrestrials of Lookshy. Consequently, they pick from the same Backgrounds as the Solar Exalted (starting on p. 110 of **Exalted**), with two exceptions.

Breeding: Most outcastes are from relatively weak blood and have no close Exalted relatives, as represented by the extreme cost of the Breeding Background shown on the accompanying table.

Cult: While outcastes may take the Cult Background, it's more expensive for them than it is for Solars. Terrestrials do not have the sheer, impressive power to show of as the Celestial Exalted, so the higher levels of the Cult Background are more expensive (as the table shows). Any outcaste who creates a cult around herself will likely have to use showmanship and charisma as much as dramatic displays of elemental might.

Rare Backgrounds

Being from neither the Realm nor Lookshy puts outcastes in an odd situation. On one hand, they have access to the Cult Background (which other Dragon-Blooded cannot normally take), but on the other hand, the Breeding Background is *quite* rare, since their Exalted blood runs so thin.

The costs listed here may be paid in any combination of Background dots and bonus points.

Cult	Cost	Breeding	Cost
•	1	•	2
••	2	••	4
•••	4	•••	6
••••	7	••••	10
•••••	10	•••••	14

Charms

Dynasts

Most Dynasts start with seven Dragon-Blooded Charms (see the Charms chapter starting on p. **126**), four of which must be from the character's Aspect or Favored Abilities.

Members of the Order of the Immaculate Dragons, however, have learned at the Cloister of Wisdom to focus their Essence much more dynamically through their meditations, and they have undergone an initiation allowing them to learn Celestial martial arts. They get only five Charms from the Immaculate Martial Arts Charms (starting on page **196**), but such Charms tend to be slightly more powerful. **Note:** A character cannot typically learn Martial Arts Charms from a new style until he has learned all the Charms in a single Martial Arts tree. (See p. 196 for more information.)

Lookshy

All characters starting in Lookshy know the Charms Wind-Carried Word Technique and Elemental Bolt Attack, as those Charms are considered indispensable to military activities. They also get six additional Charms of their choice, four of which must be from Aspect or Favored Abilities.

Where sorcery is concerned, the spells known (and allowed) in the hyper-controlled environment of Lookshy are relatively few. Any spell that summons a demon or elemental, or that creates an automaton of any sort, is taught solely on a need-to-know basis, and only to the wai tan-junai (sorcerer-engineers), select chaplains and the senior shugan-junai (sorcerer technicians who work under the wai tan-junai).

The Dragon-Blooded of Lookshy do not have access to Sidereal masters the way monks of the Blessed Isle do, so they cannot begin play with Immaculate Martial Arts Charms. If a player wants his Lookshy character to learn such Charms, the character must find a sifu willing to initiate him in the ways of Celestial martial arts once the game has begun.

Lost Eggs and Threshold Outcastes

Outcaste Terrestrials begin play with seven Charms, four of which must come from Aspect or Favored Abilities. They may not, under most circumstances, learn Immaculate martial arts unless they can find a rogue master to teach them (see sidebar).

Virtues

All Terrestrial Exalted, regardless of their origins, start with one free dot in all four Virtues and get five additional dots to assign. No Virtue may be higher than three dots unless the player spends bonus points.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Wrap up the statistical aspects of creating your character by calculating her Willpower, Essence and health levels, then use bonus points to augment your character's traits and otherwise bring her more in line with your character concept.

Willpower

A Terrestrial Exalt's Willpower is equal to the sum of her two highest Virtues. If you use bonus points to increase your Virtues later on, remember to recalculate your Willpower accordingly.



Rogue Masters

Out in the Threshold of Creation, nearly anything can happen, including an outcaste learning what Dynasts call Immaculate martial arts. Out here, however, there's nothing immaculate about them. In the wilds of the Threshold, they're more accurately called Celestial martial arts, and they're taught by rogue monks and Anathema *far* more often than they are by members of the Order of Immaculate Dragons. *If* (and only if) a character has five dots in the Mentor Background (to represent a rogue monk or one of the Celestial Exalted who is willing to train him), the character may begin the game with Immaculate Martial Arts Charms. Such characters begin with five Immaculate Martial Arts Charms (instead of seven from Aspect or Favored Abilities), all of which must be from the same style. Like their Dynastic counterparts, outcastes are typically unable to learn Charms from another martial arts style until they have learned all the Charms from one style first.

Characters who learn Celestial martial arts through such unorthodox means often demonstrate small, nigh-imperceptible stylistic differences in the way they practice their martial arts, which some Immaculate Monks find curious and others find borderline heretical. Orthodox Immaculates will be *very* interested to learn where an outcaste learned his technique, and many become confrontational if they don't consider the character's training "legitimate."

Intimacies

Exactly as for Solar characters, as described on page 76 of **Exalted**.

Essence

All Terrestrial Exalts start with an Essence rating of 2. As with all Exalted, the character's Essence rating is used to calculate her Personal and Peripheral Essence. A Dragon-Blood can use her Personal Essence pool discretely, without giving herself away. Drawing from her Peripheral Essence pool, however, causes her elemental anima banner to flare up, revealing her spiritual bond with the Elemental Dragons for all to see.

A Terrestrial's Personal Essence pool is equal to the sum of the character's permanent Essence and her Willpower, plus any additional points granted by the Breeding Background (see pp. **105-106**). That is, (Essence + Willpower + points gained from Breeding).

A character's Peripheral Essence pool is equal to four times her permanent Essence plus her Willpower and the sum of her two highest Virtues, plus any additional points gained from Breeding. That is, ([Essence x 4] + Willpower + [sum of two highest Virtues] + points gained from Breeding).

Health Levels

Terrestrial Exalted possess seven health level, like any mortal: one -0 health level, two -1, two -2, a -4 and one Incapacitated health level. Additionally, Dragon-Blooded gain one -1 and one -2 health level for every purchase of Ox-Body Technique (a Resistance Charm found on p. **146**). A character may purchase Ox-Body Technique as many times as she has dots of Resistance.

Bonus Points

Assigning bonus points lets you fill in gaps between your character concept and the traits you've put together thus far. If you want to raise Abilities, Backgrounds or Virtues above 3 or raise Essence above 2 (at character creation) you have to use bonus points. If you intend for your character to be the most famed archer in the Realm, three dots in the Archery Ability isn't going to cut it. Spending a few bonus points, however, can bring your character's Archery Ability up to 5, and a few carefully chosen specialties can help you get to where you want to be.

You have 15 bonus points to spend, and you may use them to increase your character's Attributes, Abilities, Willpower, Virtues, Essence, Charms or sorcery spells.

Remember, this is just your beginning character. You're not expected to be the biggest, baddest Exalt on the block at this point. You will be able to increase your character's traits (but *not* Backgrounds) with experience points accrued through game play.

The Spark of Life

All of the number-crunching and dot-assigning is done once you've spent bonus points, but what you have at this stage is *not* a character, but a flat, lifeless golem of numbers and dots.

This is the point where you smooth out the blemishes in the clay and invest your character with life.

Bring the dots and numbers off of the paper and into your head. Figure out what they *mean* in the context of this specific character. Get to know her as you would a friend or a favorite character in a novel or film. You need to study her because you're going to *be* her. What does she look like? How does she move? What facial expressions would others find characteristic of her? An enigmatic smile? A haughty sneer? A pensive frown? In what way is your character different from you, and in what ways are you similar?

From the character herself, extend outward. What are her connections to the world around her? What was her life like before her Exaltation? Does she make friends easily? Does her family respect her, or is she a disappointment? What school did she attend? Does she command troops? Do her troops love, respect, despise or fear her? Why?

This is also the point at which you need to incorporate your character's Backgrounds fully into her concept. If she has a familiar, what is it and how did it come to follow her? If she has good breeding, what was her family life like? Is she related to the Empress? How closely?

Once you've answered all these questions (and dozens more besides), then you'll have a character into whose skin you can step, a vessel that will take you into hours of adventures and fun.

Then you'll have a character.

Character Creation Summary

Dynasts of the Blessed Isle

• Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, elemental aspect and Motivation.

Note aspect's anima powers.

• Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Note that all nine Attributes start with one dot automatically before you assign any.

Prioritize your Attribute categories: Physical (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina); Social (Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance); and Mental (Perception, Intelligence, Wits). You have 7 dots to assign to your primary Attribute category, 6 to assign to your secondary, and 4 to place in the tertiary category.

• Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Note Aspect Abilities.

Select Favored Abilities (3; may not be the same as Aspect Abilities.)

Choose Abilities (35—at least 13 must be from Aspect or Favored Abilities; at least one dot must be in each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points. Dynastic characters *must* have *at least* Archery •, Lore ••, Martial Arts •, Melee •, Performance •, Presence •, Ride •, Socialize •• and War •.

• Step Four: Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (12—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Charms (7 Dragon-Blooded Charms, at least four of which must be from Aspect or Favored Abilities; Immaculate martial artists get 5 Immaculate Martial Arts Charms instead, all of which must be from the same elemental tree) and Virtues (5—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2), Willpower (the sum of the character's two highest Virtues), Personal Essence pool (Essence + Willpower + any gained from Breeding), Peripheral Essence pool ([Essence x 4] + Willpower + [the sum of the two highest Virtues] + any gained from Breeding) and health levels (7 + any gained from Charms).

• Bonus Points

Spend bonus points (15) at any point during character creation. Bonus point costs may be found on page **99**.

Aspects

• **Air:** Nearly as aloof as they are insightful, the Children of Mela are almost uniformly brilliant, and prone to losing themselves in thought. Creatures of thought and subtlety, they embody the boundless creativity and idealism that can only exist in pure thought.

Aspect Abilities: Linguistics, Lore, Occult, Stealth and Thrown

Anima Powers: May triple leaping distance, take no damage from falls of any height, add Essence rating to Dodge DV against Archery and Thrown attacks.

• **Earth:** Islands of stability in the shifting seas around them, the Children of Pasiap are the very embodiment of constancy and fortitude, bringing order to the world around them with artifice and strategy. They form the bedrock supporting the individuals, causes and institutions to which they devote themselves.

Aspect Abilities: Awareness, Craft, Integrity, Resistance and War

Anima Powers: May soak lethal damage with full Stamina and add Essence trait to rolls to resist grappling attacks or to avoid knockback. May add Essence to Stamina for all rolls when standing on earth or stone.

• **Fire:** The passion and drive of the Children of Hesiesh are so great they can barely be contained, and the persuasive skills of a Fire Aspect can inspire armies. In the presence of these fonts of seemingly boundless energy, all is light and warmth, and once they've gone, all of Creation seems a colder, darker place.

Aspect Abilities: Athletics, Dodge, Melee, Presence and Socialize

Anima Powers: Becomes immune to fire and bursts into flame for scene. Touch inflicts (Essence) dice of lethal fire damage.

• **Water:** Common wisdom regarding the Children of Daana'd states that their minds are flowing and their hearts are overflowing. Quick to adapt to new ideas and suspicious of dogma, they are fond of mysteries of all sorts, and love solving puzzles.

Aspect Abilities: Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny, Martial Arts and Sail

Anima Powers: May breathe and move freely underwater. Suffers no penalties to any action for being underwater and may move full movement rate in all directions. May walk or run across the surface of water as easily as if it were dry land.

• **Wood:** Fascinated with life and its cycles and the nature and journey of the soul, Aspects of Wood often earn themselves a reputation for mysticism. Living as much in "might be" as "is," the Children of Sextes Jylis seem to live in a slightly different version of Creation from the rest of the Dragon-Blooded.

Aspect Abilities: Archery, Medicine, Performance, Ride and Survival

Anima Powers: Immune to plant-derived poisons. Skin produces a natural toxin. Adds Essence rating to Dodge DV against weapons with wooden shafts or hafts.

Dynastic Houses

The 11 Great Houses of the Blessed Realm are extraordinarily powerful. They compose that vast portion of the power structure of the most powerful nation in Creation.

Cathak (Fire)—A pious and disciplined House of generals, strategists and martial philosophers.

Cynis (Wood)—Decadent hedonists and traders in slaves, drugs and other contraband.

Iselsi (Water)—A disgraced and shattered House fighting for its very survival.

Ledaal (Air)—Historians, scholars and visionaries learning from the past and preparing for the Realm's turbulent future.

Mnemon (Earth)—An ambitious and cunning House of strategists and plotters headed by the Empress's most powerful daughter, the sorceress Mnemon.

Nellens (None)—Primarily a patrician House with very few Dragon-Blooded, resented by most other Dynastic Houses as untalented, undeserving bastards.

Peleps (Water)—Master politicians and overseers of the Imperial Navy.

Ragara (Earth)—Bankers and schemers, the wealthiest of the Great Houses.

Sesus (Fire)—A powerful military House, seething with political ambition.

Tepet (Air)—Formerly a great martial House, now a fallen power scrambling to recover its dignity and standing.

V'neef (Wood)—Merchants and traders. The youngest and smallest of the Dynastic Houses, but rapidly growing in wealth and influence.

Motivation

Choose a driving and epic goal for your character.

Virtues

Compassion—Empathy and forgiveness.

Conviction—Determination and emotional fortitude.

Temperance—Mental clarity and self-control.

Valor—Courage and bravery.

Backgrounds

• **Allies—**Friends and sympathetic associates who help you.
• **Arsenal**—Weapons or equipment issued from Realm armories for your use.
• **Artifact—**Wonders of the First Age or other tools or weapons forged by savants from the magical materials.
• **Backing—**The responsibility and power invested in you by a powerful or influential organization.
• **Breeding—**How richly the blood of the Elemental Dragons runs in your veins; the inherited strength of your Exaltation.
• **Command—**Authorization to lead soldiers.
• **Connections—**Well-placed sources of influence and information within a particular area of influence.
• **Familiar—**An animal companion.
• **Family—**The impact of one's family members upon one's life.
• **Henchmen—**Un-Exalted minions in your service.
• **Manse—**A place of power whose hearthstone you hold.
• **Mentor—**A powerful (or at least established) instructor or patron.
• **Reputation—**Your social standing.
• **Resources—**Wealth and material goods.
• **Retainers—**Loyal servants.

Lookshy's Terrestrials

• Step One: Character Concept

Choose concept, elemental aspect and Motivation.

Note Aspect's anima powers.

• Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Note that all nine Attributes start with one dot automatically before you assign any.

Prioritize your Attribute categories: Physical (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina); Social (Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance); and Mental (Perception, Intelligence, Wits). You have 7 dots to assign to your primary Attribute category, 6 to assign to your secondary one, and 4 to place in the tertiary category.

• Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Note Aspect Abilities.

Select Favored Abilities (3; may not be the same as Aspect Abilities).

Choose Abilities (35—at least 13 must be from Aspect or Favored Abilities; at least one must be in each Favored Ability; none may start higher than 3 without spending bonus points)

Characters born in Lookshy must have a *minimum* of Archery ••, Linguistics •••, Lore ••, Martial Arts ••, Melee ••, Performance •, Presence •, Ride •, Stealth • and War ••. Exiles or defectors from the Realm use Dynast character-creation rules *except* for Backgrounds, which they purchase as if they were from Lookshy.

• Step Four: Select Advantages

Chose Backgrounds (13—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Charms (Lookshy characters all start play with Wind-Carried Word Technique and Elemental Bolt Attack, to which they add 6 Dragon-Blooded Charms, 4 of which must come from Aspect or Favored Abilities; Lookshy's Dragon-Blooded may not start play with Immaculate Martial Arts Charms, but may learn them later on, provided they can find someone to teach them), and Virtues (5—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2), Willpower (the sum of the character's two highest Virtues), Personal Essence pool (Essence + Willpower + any gained from Breeding), Peripheral Essence pool ([Essence x 4] + Willpower + [the sum of the two highest Virtues] + any gained from Breeding) and health levels (7 + any gained from Charms).

• Bonus Points

You may spend bonus points at any point in character creation. Bonus point costs may be found on page **99**.

Aspects

Same as for Dynasts (see pp. **96-97**)

Gentes of the Seventh Legion

The Gentes of the Seventh Legion are smaller, less powerful and more numerous than the Realm's Great Houses. Five Major Houses and dozens of lesser Houses guide the vast portion of Lookshy's activity. The five major Houses are listed here, but players are welcome to design Houses of their own.

Amilar (Air)—A scholarly family producing many savants, engineers and artificers.

Karal (Fire)—A highly respected family of warriors and generals.

Maheka (Earth)—A powerful family of soldiers and industrialists.

Teresu (Water)—Directors of Lookshy's powerful navy.

Yushoto (Wood)—A Major Gens with a wide range of business interests, also produces many sorcerers.

Motivation

Choose a driving and epic goal for your character.

Virtues

Same as for Dynasts (see p. **97**)

Backgrounds

- **Allies—**Friends and sympathetic associates who help you.
- **Arsenal**—Weapons or equipment issued from the armories of Lookshy for your use.
- **Artifact—**Wonders of the First Age or other tools or weapons forged by savants from the magical materials owned by you (or your family).
- **Backing—**The responsibility and power invested in you by a powerful or influential organization.
- **Breeding—**How richly the blood of the Elemental Dragons runs in your veins; the inherited strength of your Exaltation.
- **Command—**Authorization to lead soldiers.
- **Connections—**Well-placed sources of influence and information within a particular area of influence.
- **Familiar—**An animal companion.
- **Family—**The impact of one's family members upon one's life.
- **Manse—**A place of power whose hearthstone you hold.
- **Mentor—**A powerful (or at least established) instructor or patron.
- **Reputation—**Your social standing.
- **Resources—**Wealth and material goods.
- **Retainers—**Loyal servants.

Outcastes

• Step One: Character Concept

Determine why your character has not joined the Realm or Lookshy.
Choose aspect and Motivation.
Note the anima powers provided by character's aspect.

• Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Note that all nine Attributes start with one dot automatically before you assign any.
Prioritize your Attribute categories: Physical (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina); Social (Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance); and Mental (Perception, Intelligence, Wits). You have 7 dots to assign to your primary Attribute category, 6 to assign to your secondary one, and 4 to place in the tertiary category.

• Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Note Aspect Abilities: Outcastes start with 25 Ability points, at least 13 of which must be from Aspect or Favored Abilities; at least one dot must be in each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points.

• Step Four: Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (7—except for Breeding, use Backgrounds from the main **Exalted** book; no Background may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Charms (7 Dragon-Blooded Charms, at least 4 of which must be from Aspect or Favored Abilities; an outcaste with a Mentor 5 sifu who opts to learn Celestial martial arts [see sidebar on p. **95**] get 5 Celestial Martial Arts Charms instead, all of which must be from the same elemental tree) and Virtues (5—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (2), Willpower (the sum of the character's two highest Virtues), Personal Essence pool (Essence + Willpower + any gained from Breeding), Peripheral Essence pool ([Essence x 4] + Willpower + [the sum of the two highest Virtues] + any gained from Breeding) and health levels (7 + any gained from Charms).

• Bonus Points

Bonus points (15) may be spent at any time during character creation.

Aspects

Same as for Dynasts (see pp. **96-97**)

Motivation

Choose a driving and epic goal for your character.

Virtues

Same as for Dynasts (see p. **97**)

Backgrounds

Lacking the support of the Realm or Lookshy, outcastes have fewer options for Backgrounds. Accordingly, they use the same Background options as Solar Exalted (see p. 110 of **Exalted**). Since they are Terrestrial Exalts, however, they also have access to the Breeding Background (though it's expensive, see p. **94**).

- **Allies**—Loyal friends
- **Artifact**—Wondrous devices of the First Age or weapons and savant-forged tools made of the magical materials
- **Backing**—Status and authority in a powerful organization.
- **Breeding**—Pure blood, a strong inherited link to the Elemental Dragons. Rare in outcastes.
- **Contacts**—Information sources and friends in useful places.
- **Cult**—Mortals who literally worship you. Unusual for Terrestrials.
- **Familiar**—An animal companion.
- **Followers**—Mortals who look to you for leadership.
- **Influence**—Your command of the world around you.
- **Manse**—A place of power and Essence to which you have the hearthstone.
- **Mentor**—A wise or helpful teacher and instructor.
- **Resources**—Wealth and material goods.

Bonus Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if Favored or Aspect Ability)
Background	1 (2 if Background is being raised above 3. Certain Backgrounds may cost more, depending on the character's history and circumstances.)
Specialty	1 (2 for 1 if Favored or Aspect Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Intimacies	3 to increase starting Intimacies to (Willpower + Compassion)
Essence	10
Charm	7 (5 if Favored or Aspect Ability)
Immaculate/Celestial Martial Arts Charm	10 (7 if Favored or Aspect Ability)


YOU KNOW, I'VE ACTUALLY HEARD OF YOU, KASIF. THAT WON'T SAVE YOU, BUT YOU SHOULD BE HONORED.
MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD THE STORY OF HOW YOU DESTROYED THE SKEWERED BOAR INN FOR DISPLAYING A GRAVEN IMAGE. IT MADE ME PROUD.
BUT THIS ULTIMATE BETRAYAL SADDENS ME. TO THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY DEFENDING HERETICS...
THEY AREN'T HERETICS. THEY'VE JUST BEEN MISLED. THEY'RE IGNORANT.
YES. THEY JUST NEED A PROPER EDUCATION IN THE IMMACULATE PHILOSOPHY.
WELL, I'M ABOUT TO GIVE THEM ONE.
PLEASE, WAIT. I CAN -
"WAIT"? DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
OH YES. THE NAME OF PELEPS DELED IS KNOWN EVEN TO WE HUMBLE ITINERANTS...


YOU'RE THE MASTER OF THE PINNACLE OF THE EYE OF THE HUNT.
IT WAS YOU WHO DEFEATED THE HERETIC CULT WORSHIPING BILE-BLACK STONE AT PORT CALIN.
IT WAS YOU WHO BROUGHT DOWN THE ANATHEMA BOSK AT THE THRESHOLD OF HIS ANCIENT TOMB.
AND IT WAS YOU WHO MURDERED SESUS BEEDITA, A FELLOW MONK WHOSE ONLY CRIME WAS TO DISAGREE WITH YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE IMMACULATE TEXTS!
LIAR! I SAW YOU DO IT. YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO PRETEND IT WAS ACCIDENTAL.
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG, KASIF.
I DIDN'T MEAN ABOUT THAT...
I MEANT YOU'RE WRONG TO THINK THERE'S SUCH A THING AS AN "INTERPRETATION" OF THE TEXTS.

CHAPTER FOUR
TRAITS

Most of the traits used in this book are identical to the ones used in **Exalted**. Virtues, Abilities, Attributes, Willpower, Essence and the like are all handled identically or nearly so. For the rules governing these traits, see the Traits chapter, beginning on page 88 of **Exalted**.

Expanded Backgrounds

Many Terrestrial Exalts have access to resources far above and beyond those available to most of the rest of Creation. The least wealthy and influential Dynasts of the Realm live in luxury beyond the imaginings of many shoguns of the Threshold, and the soldier-champions of Lookshy carry arms and armor of which most in Creation have only heard stories. Because of this, several Backgrounds work differently for most Dragon-Blooded characters than they do for Anathema or for mortal characters. Additionally, Terrestrials have several new Backgrounds that are either unsuited for other characters or not normally available to them.

Altered Backgrounds

As stated, the complexities of Realm society require the redefinition of certain Background traits. While some require only notes

Outcastes, Solars and Others

Although several Backgrounds are detailed here that give Terrestrial characters access to resources significantly better than those normally available to Solars (or other Exalted), this does not mean they are necessarily exclusive to Dragon-Blooded characters—or even that all Dragon-Blooded have access to them. A Solar who has sworn allegiance to the Cult of the Illuminated, for example, might be entrusted with weapons forged in Heaven (represented by the Arsenal Background). Alternatively, Dragon-Blooded characters with no special connection to the Realm, Lookshy or another sufficiently wealthy and influential society might have access to none of the Backgrounds listed here and be forced to rely on those found in the main rulebook.

As always, this is dependent on the Storyteller. It should be kept in mind that these Backgrounds help even the playing field between Terrestrial characters and other types of Exalted, especially in a mixed-Exalt series. Denying access to these Backgrounds without some other compensation can leave a character significantly weaker than the rest of the characters.

on how they apply specifically to the culture of the Realm, others work very differently. Unless mentioned here, existing Backgrounds work just as they do in **Exalted**.

Artifact

The scions of the Realm and Lookshy have access to massive remnants of First Age and Shogunate wonders. The ruins of Deheleshen included extensive armories of military hardware and a substantially intact Shogunate military complex, and the Realm is built upon the Blessed Isle, which though stripped of much of its mobile military assets at the end of the Contagion, still retained significant infrastructure and Shogunate-era resources. As a result, both states—and their satellites, such as Cherak—have access to substantial resources of jade artifacts and wonders.

This Background represents not only those artifacts the character has been given for one reason or another, but also those that they have had an opportunity to purchase, trade for or otherwise acquire before play begins. They are the character's property and may be traded or sold without overt problem (assuming the right paperwork is filled out, and the right bribes are placed)—though House or Gentes elders might still be annoyed that they were sold without permission.

The Artifact Background grants Terrestrials twice the number of dots worth of artifacts as normal, although any single artifact cannot exceed the Dragon-Blood's rating in Artifact. (A character with Artifact 3 cannot buy a four-dot artifact, but he can buy two three-dot artifacts.) Even Dragon-Blood with no rating in this Background will have a single one-dot artifact of the Storyteller's choice, so prevalent are jade wonders in these places.

Contacts and Influence

Dragon-Blooded characters do not use these Backgrounds. Instead, they use Connections.

Cult

It is exceedingly unlikely that any Realm-based Terrestrial Exalt—whether Dynast, lost egg or outcaste—will develop even a single dot in the Cult Background. Even the scions of the Realm—direct descendents of the Scarlet Empress—are not venerated by the Cult of the Scarlet Empress, and the dictates of the Immaculate Philosophy are designed to encourage obeisance and respect toward the Dragon-Blooded as a whole, rather than worship of any particular Terrestrial. Storytellers should allow Realm characters to choose this Background

Every Daiklave Has a Story

It is all too easy for Dragon-Blooded characters—even those who do not hail from the Realm, Lookshy or a cadet house—to accumulate quite an impressive panoply of artifacts. Jade weapons, armor, bracers and other minor wonders are found in sufficient quantities, even in the waning days of the Second Age, that it is not difficult for players to take such things for granted. Yet players shouldn't take their wonders for granted.

Every artifact—even those produced in large numbers during the Shogunate—has a unique story behind it. Shogunate-era artifacts—let alone those rare wonders of the First Age—were produced more centuries ago than Stradivarius violins, Gutenberg bibles or Muramasa katana were to us, and they have as much history behind them. Most artifacts can be identified as to the sorcerer-smith who forged/created them, and who has carried them (and in which battles they were used), using the same sort of resources antiquarians use to identify antiques in our world. New weapons and armor are specially commissioned, and the forge where they were constructed, which sorcerer-engineer oversaw the construction and the style and fittings chosen all tell the knowledgeable foe quite a bit about the character who paid the vast sums necessary to have new artifacts forged.

A character's choice of weapons and armor—not just in type, but in name and history—should be a personal one and should reflect the character's personality, his relationship with his family or unit and the lengths to which he's willing to go. He might have had to travel out into the Threshold to recover his fallen mother's panoply, for example, or have been issued a weapon once carried by a distant ancestor. The destruction or loss of such a weapon is not a trivial thing to be shrugged off, for most characters. It is a personal and familial disaster, a disgrace to the character's name and unit, and many Terrestrials will go to nearly any length to recover a weapon they lost, for reasons of face if not honor.

Purchasing Artifacts

It is certainly possible to buy, sell and trade artifacts—elder Dynasts, heads of the Gentes and Imperial Army officials do it all the time—but the market is closer to that of champion racehorses, rare antiquities or priceless artworks than trade in used weapons or furniture. Dealers in artifacts and wonders sell what they have on hand or can acquire. The market simply is too small, too expensive and too volatile for dealers to keep any sort of stock on hand for very long. Among other things, this means that high-Resources characters may not use their massive wealth to sidestep the Artifact or Arsenal Backgrounds just as play begins.

Typically, non-military and minor artifacts have a value in Resources dots equal to their Artifact rating +1. This can include minor weapons and armor (daggers, bracers, light armor and the like), but typically, military artifacts and those with serious agricultural, industrial or construction applications are valued at the wonder's Artifact rating +2. Truly impressive and singular artifacts—warstriders, First Age field artillery and other major artifacts—can be rated as high as Artifact +3 (effectively placing most of them beyond the means of any single individual), but they are only very rarely on the market in the first place. Most such devices have a buyer before they are even recovered.

All trade in artifacts carries with it significant oversight, taxes and duties in most nations, and most governments try to restrict or ban trade in powerful military hardware—with varying degrees of success.



only with a very good reason and might wish to charge as much as double the normal number of Background points to reflect how difficult this Background is to obtain and maintain. (The same is largely true of Seventh Legion and House Ferem Terrestrials, although they have more opportunities to develop cults in the Threshold.)

Outcastes in the Threshold, especially those far from strongholds of Immaculate teachings, have more opportunity and incentive to develop religious followings than Dynasts do. Because of their relative lack of power, such cults tend to be smaller ones. Three dots or less is the norm, and it would be nearly impossible for any Terrestrial, except a very old and very powerful one, to develop this Background to the five-dot level.

Followers

Dragon-Blooded cannot take the Followers Background. Dragon-Blooded who have troops or other large numbers of moderately talented but largely similar servants at their command should take the Command Background. Characters who have small numbers of highly skilled servants should take the Henchmen or Retainers Background.

Manse

The Blessed Isle has been civilized for Ages upon Ages, and it's geomantic resources have long been carefully mapped, tuned and optimized to enhance the countryside and its citizenry in any number of ways. Its demesnes have long-since been tamed and had manses erected over them—many of them dating to the early First Age in initial construction. The vast majority of these manses are held by the Great Houses, the Immaculate Order or the Scarlet Empress herself (now held in trust by Regent Fokuf). Therefore, Dynasts have great difficulty in claiming a manse as their own property. Most households and estates are built around manses, and being able to purchase the rights to one or more is an essential step in starting a new household or line.

Rather than representing a single manse to which the character has laid claim, the Manse rating of a Realm Dragon-Blooded character indicates generally the number of manses to which she has been attuned. Characters who carry the hearthstone from a manse probably don't actually own it, but are instead holding it on extended loan. In case of family emergency, the stone might be recalled, particularly if the hearthstone is powerful or unusual in nature. Level-1 and -2 manses are common throughout the Realm and typically used as vacation dachas, hunting lodges, manor houses for small estates and the like. Their hearthstones are unlikely to be recalled unless the Realm is at war or their particular powers are needed.

Non-Dynastic Terrestrials, including those of Lookshy (which devotes many of its hearthstones to defensive systems and weapons—use the Arsenal Background to reflect hearthstones issued by the armorers), use the normal Manse Background found on page 113 of the core **Exalted** rulebook. Realm Dynasts may be allowed to purchase the standard version (rather than this alternate) under certain circumstances. Those who have spent substantial time in the Threshold might have resources they have developed out there and not bothered to inform their Houses about, for example.

X The character is not welcome in any of the Realm's manses. Why?

• The character has been attuned to several lesser manses (level 1 and 2) and holds a single hearthstone of level 1 or 2.

•• The character has attuned to numerous lesser manses and has stewardship over three levels worth of hearthstones (none exceeding level 2)

••• The character has been attuned to a small number of moderately powerful manses or dozens of lesser manses. She has been granted rights over six levels of hearthstones, possibly including a single level-3 stone.

•••• The character has been attuned to some of the best manses of her House or legion and a number of lesser manses. She has eight levels of hearthstones granted to her, including a single level-4 hearthstone.

••••• The character is highly trusted and has been allowed to attune herself to some of the Realm's most powerful manses, possibly including those that power the massive war manses. She holds a single level-5 hearthstone, and additional lesser stones totaling 10 levels (including the large stone).

New Backgrounds

In addition to the standard Backgrounds presented in **Exalted**, the Dragon-Blooded have several additional Backgrounds from which to choose.

Arsenal

Where Artifact represents those wonders the character has managed to acquire or those that have been given to her, Arsenal represents weapons and equipment loaned to her by a larger organization—most commonly a Great House, Gens, field force or legion—to be used in pursuit of that organization's goals. Although their use is granted to the character, they remain the property of that organization and must be returned—in functioning order—on demand. While such assets might be reasonably static in nature (particularly for equipment issued to military commands), a character's superiors can withdraw and re-issue equipment as needed. Some characters even find themselves issued new equipment for particular missions as needed. Storytellers should keep in mind that this is a Background, bought and paid for, and that players should be allowed to get their value out of the Background. A character who steals, sells or otherwise fails to turn in equipment provided by this Background will face punishment. She might even be hunted down, especially if she has left the organization that originally issued the gear.

Dots provided by Arsenal may be used to purchase artifacts or hearthstones, with a maximum level per artifact equal to the rating in Arsenal. (Arsenal 3, for instance, allows the user to purchase artifacts or hearthstones of three-dot potency or less.)

Levels in this Background can also be used to equip a character's subordinates (Storyteller characters purchased through Command or Henchmen). When used in this fashion, each level provides a number of dots of Resources that can be used to purchase exceptional equipment, thaumaturgical supplies or other hardware (mounts, vehicles, etc.) as needed. Unlike normal Resources dots, these dots are spent when used, and the maximum level of expenditure is still limited by the level of the Background. So, three dots provided by Arsenal could be used to purchase 10 exceptional straight swords (Resources 3 each) or 10 exceptional reinforced buff jackets or some combination of the two.

Characters may choose to pool their Arsenal ratings, representing the combined treasury of a House military unit, legion payroll and arsenal, the assets of a trading company or other organizational unit. Those who do so gain additional benefits, in the form of an additional dot of assets per level per character pooling their resources past the first. So, for example, four characters' pooling three levels of Arsenal creates an asset pool totaling 56 dots of assets, with a maximum rating of 3. If this option is taken, each asset dot converts to eight dots of Resources.

These dots of assets can be spent on equipment, artifacts, hearthstones or other resources as the Storyteller deems appropriate and are entrusted to the characters as a group—and they will all share the burden of any losses or unexplained missing gear. Characters may develop separate pools of Arsenal assets (representing equipment entrusted to the character from another source, or merely additional trusts handed directly to the character), but the total number of dots purchased in this background may not exceed five under any circumstance.

X The character has not been entrusted with any special assets.

• The character has been issued some minor resources: two dots to spend on equipment. Alternatively, he may purchase 15 Resource dots worth of minor equipment

•• Three dots/ 25 Resource dots

••• Five dots/ 40 Resource dots

•••• Seven dots/ 60 Resource dots

••••• Nine dots/ 85 Resource dots

Managing Arsenal

Arsenal can be a very powerful Background if not managed by the Storyteller, and Storytellers are more than welcome to disallow it in their games if they feel the need—or to disallow combining the Background between characters for the synergistic effects.

Combined Arsenal Backgrounds are intended for characters who are managing or leading military units, trading companies or other organizations where they have numbers of followers who need equipping with non-standard gear. It is not intended as a way for players to load their characters down with more Artifacts and hearthstones than they can swagger under. Artifact-laden characters get plenty of benefit from the Artifact Background already.

The fundamental rule is that equipment provided by the Arsenal Background is not the property of the characters in any way and should never be treated as such by the players (although their *characters* may come to regard it as such) or the Storyteller. Storytellers can and should enforce reasonable in-game regulations regarding its deployment, use and penalties for its destruction, particularly regarding irreplaceable artifacts.

Breeding

Alone among the Exalted, the Dragon-Bloods are capable of directly passing their power down to their children. While the scions of powerful Celestial Exalts bear the mark of their heritage, it is no more than an echo of power and has as little to do with the Celestial's purpose or design as do the mutations bestowed on those who live too close to an untapped demesne.

Even in the First Age, arranged marriages and careful breeding programs were used to strengthen the Blood of the Dragons in the children of Terrestrial Exalts, increasing their chances of Exalting and the power of those who did. In the Realm, the Great Houses refined this process to a fine art. Careful use of marriage incentives, genealogical research and extended research into the inheritance of the Blood of the Dragons has resulted in Terrestrials with greater

numbers of Exalted in their ancestry and a higher concentration of the holy Blood of the Elemental Dragons.

In Lookshy, the Terrestrials of the Seventh Legion have taken a different route. Despite being the largest concentration of Dragon-Blooded outside of the Realm, they have always lacked numbers sufficient for their goals, and their breeding incentives have stressed prolificacy rather than power. Better a half-dozen Terrestrials of moderate power, than a single Dragon-Blood of great puissance. As a result, although they are as likely to have this Background as Dynasts are, they only rarely have it at great levels (meaning that the cost for a character to have four dots or five dots is doubled).

Other outcastes only rarely show signs of Breeding. It takes several generations of careful eugenics to reveal even low levels of improvement, and even in the Realm and Lookshy, this Background is not exactly common. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible. Just as the Blood sometimes springs forth in bloodlines that have not had an Exalt in them for generations, so too do feeble bloodlines combine in surprising ways.

On a metaphysical level, the more pure a character's bloodline is, the more powerful his connection to the elemental force of his aspect is. This elemental resonance manifests in both the character's appearance and his spiritual strength. The higher his Breeding is, the more obvious his elemental markings and anima banner become, as well as the higher his Essence pools are.

X Your family tree is unremarkable.

• Good blood. +1 to your Personal Essence pool; +2 to your Peripheral Essence pool. Although your parent might not be Exalted, your family line has spawned Dragon-Blooded recently.

•• Very good blood. One of your parents is certainly an Exalt. +2 to your Personal Essence pool; +3 to your Peripheral Essence pool.

••• You are the child of an excellent line, probably with numerous Dragon-Blooded in your immediate family, with almost all of them sharing your elemental aspect. +3 to your Personal Essence pool; +5 to your Peripheral Essence pool.

•••• Impeccable pedigree. The connection both you and your family have to your chosen element is undeniable. +4 to your Personal Essence pool; +7 to your Peripheral Essence pool; -1 mote from the cost to activate your anima banner; +1 on the roll to see if your child Exalts.

••••• Your bloodline is impeccable and includes numerous Exalted of great fame. You might be related directly to the Empress. Your aspect markings are unmistakable, making it clear to all who see that you are far more than a mere mortal. Add +5 to your Personal Essence pool; +9 to your Peripheral Essence pool; -2 motes to the cost of activating your anima banner; +2 on the roll to see if a child of yours Exalts.

Command

Because of the character's wealth, family backing or actual military rank, he has command of one or more military units. These units could be part of a legion or field force, members of a House or Gens private army, a character's mercenary command or some other assemblage of troops. If they are personal forces, the character should have Resources equal to his rating in the Command Background, to make sure he has sufficient funds to handle provisioning and outfitting a military operation (and see the "Building a Legion" sidebar). If the forces are part of a larger organization (House guard, Realm legion, etc.), they will be provisioned (at least in part) by that organization, but are also beholden to that group. In the end, legion forces belong to the legion, not the character.

Military units do not normally accompany the character everywhere. They have a barracks location and normally reside there when they are not on campaign. They answer to the character, though, they will come when called for, and they normally obey all but the most outlandish orders. Keep in mind that characters who occupy government buildings or use their troops to depose the local prefect will generally be considered to be participating in an armed insurrection and will likely be executed, disowned or both.

Troops that come from this Background use the "Elite Soldiers" template found on page 280 of **Exalted**. They are considered to be extras.

X None. Either you haven't earned the right to lead troops, or you have no interest in doing so.

• You command a single scale (25 soldiers).

•• A talon (125 soldiers).

••• A wing (250 soldiers).

•••• An entire dragon (500 soldiers) fights under your banner.

••••• You are a general or taimyo, and an entire legion or field force (5,000 to 10,000 soldiers and auxiliaries, depending on exact makeup) fights for you.

Building a Legion

An Imperial legion or Seventh Legion field force is more than just soldiers. There are auxiliary troops, weapons and harness for the soldiers, artifacts—both weapons and for support roles—and the officers and adjutants who handle the day-to-day operations of a fighting force. While much of this auxiliary structure is subsumed in the Command Background (units have competent mortal officers leading them, have basic fighting equipment suitable for their role, etc.), commanders of larger units—especially independent ones—will frequently have some combination of the following Backgrounds as well.

Allies—For God-Blooded or Terrestrial officers at the higher levels (winglords, shozei, dragonlords, etc.) of his organization.

Artifact and **Arsenal**—To provide the unit with siege weapons, warstriders and other major artifacts, as well as to provide crack units with exceptional hardware, alchemical potions and substances, walkaways and other minor thaumaturgical aids.

Connections—If the force is part of a larger one, a general who has no allies within other elements of that force will quickly find himself cut off from any support whatsoever. If the force is part of an independent operation, connections can help win contracts, avoid enemies, gather intelligence on foes and provide methods of quick escape or places to hole up when times are hard.

Henchmen and **Retainers**—For specialist mortal officers (thaumaturges, spymasters, geniuses at supply "acquisition" and the like) and the character's personal bodyguard and adjutants.

Resources—Because soldiers want to get paid, want to get fed, need replacement armor and weapons, and generally are a very expensive proposition to maintain in the field.

Storytellers should not necessarily punish characters who lack these Backgrounds (or should at least make it clear that they are expected beforehand). Nonetheless, having them gives flexibility and depth to a character's military unit, allowing it to be a more fully realized part of a series, rather than simply a screen of warm bodies to soak up Solar attacks.



Connections

Both the Realm and Lookshy are complex societies, with well-developed webs of institutions, cliques, foundations and social clubs. The ability to use those webs for one's personal benefit is a powerful one. Characters with connections can guide society in the direction they wish it to move and grow, protecting their assets or gaining special favors. Such ability also requires a serious investment of time and resources, though. Therefore, Dragon-Blooded must focus their attentions on certain areas of influence in order to fully manipulate any of the Realm's labyrinthine social structures.

Each area of influence (detailed below) is essentially a separate Background. A character can develop Connections (Military) 4, Connections (Gens Maheka) 2, Connections (Scavenger Lands Outlaws) 2 and Connections (Intelligence) 2, or Connections (House of Bells) 5, Connections (Military) 3 and Connections (Intelligence) 2, for example.

Connections are direction (North, South, East, West, Blessed Isle) specific, as few have webs of influence far-reaching enough to cover all of Creation. Like many social Backgrounds, connections are a two-way street. Characters with ties to the House of Bells, for example, might be asked to provide detailed accounts of unique battles or to sit a term as guest lecturers on some topic in which they are well versed. Failing to reciprocate when asked for favors or information can result in this Background degrading or being lost altogether.

Note that this Background serves the same function as both the Contacts and Influence Backgrounds in the main **Exalted** rulebook.

X	None. You lack any ties to the group in question.
•	You possess at least one major contact (and a handful of minor ones) in the group and are moderately influential on the local level.
••	Two major contacts and several minor ones within your area of influence, giving you a great deal of pull in your city.
•••	Three major contacts and a large number of minor ones, making you a person of importance within your region.
••••	Five major contacts and a horde of lesser ones. You are one of the most influential people in the region.
•••••	You know all of the major power players in your area of influence, and more importantly, they not only know who you are, but listen to you as well.

Areas of Influence

Areas of influence are divided into three groups: General, which are appropriate for any Dragon-Blooded with this Background; Realm, which are normally appropriate only for Dynasts and found eggs; and Lookshy, which are normally appropriate only for members of the Seventh Legion. At the Storyteller's discretion, Seventh Legion characters may develop Connections in the Realm, or Dynasts may develop Connections in Lookshy. While such characters are nominally hostile toward each other, there are still occasional exchanges of information, social or economic ties, and even the rare joint military operation (usually on an impromptu ad-hoc basis, rather than formalized missions of any sort). Such ties usually cost double, and should not be developed beyond three dots—and even that level should be rare.

General

• **Academics:** From the Heptagram to the dojos and salles of Lookshy to the academies of Chiaroscuro, you have influence in some institute or center of learning. This institute may be a single major school (like the Academy of Sorcery) or a number of lesser institutes, possibly spread over some distance (but usually within the same region). These connections can be used to influence curriculums, to draw upon the expertise of instructors and scholars or to create special programs or projects in that school's specialties. Large institutes (such as the House of Bells) will need to be developed separately, while a number of smaller institutes (dojos and salles in Lookshy, for example) could be lumped under a single listing of this Background.

• **Family:** Blood is not always thicker than water where the Dragon-Blooded are concerned, but there can be no doubt that family is an important part of their lives. The families of the Terrestrials can be powerhouses in their own right, rivaling or even superseding local governments in their influence or power. From the Great Houses of the Realm and Cherak to the Gentes of Lookshy, influence in the actions of these major Dragon-Blooded families can provide great power to a character. Even less well-situated houses can be substantially useful to an outcaste. Each major House or Gens must be developed separately, and connections in each bring with them their own strengths and weaknesses.

• **Finance:** Bankers, actuaries, brokers and loan sharks might not be the most exciting individuals in Creation, but they can certainly be useful connections to have. Even in minor cities far from the economic powerhouses of Nexus or the Imperial City, they can provide your character with the ability to manipulate markets and save or destroy businesses, all in the name of lining her pockets. A character's actual available money is a function of Resources, but he can use financial connections to start or smother businesses, gain lines of credit for plausible endeavors, crush or support banking institutions and alter credit records. Clearly, such power over money is not to be trifled with—fortunes are made and destroyed with this sort of pull.

• **Government:** The character has ties to local government. Depending on the locale, such ties could include the ear of a majordomo who is respected by the ruling daimyo, a seat at a Senator's table or the love of a minor—but well-placed—functionary. In any event, the character has the ability to influence diverse actions of the government, such as taxation, law enforcement, record-keeping, awards and mandates, or nearly any other aspect of law and governance, depending on the aspect of their connections. (Having direct connections to the local ruler normally requires at least three dots in Connections in all but the smallest of polities in Creation.) The character's exact level of influence depends on many factors, including synergy with other Backgrounds and Connections. (Sesus Nagezzer, for instance, has a great deal more influence in the Realm bureaucracies than any but the highest of Gens elders has in Lookshy.)

• **The Guild:** Rivaling even the Realm in its influence and power, the Guild is a powerful—and dangerous—tool. Characters can use their connections to influence trade at the local and international level, to gain access to illegal goods and services and to score lucrative contracts of appropriate kinds.

• **High Society:** In any city of size, social strata divide the social elite from everyone else. The Dragon-Blooded do not always travel in these circles of wealth and elegance—even in the Realm—but they are certainly well suited to them should they find a life of pleasure alluring. Access to social movers and shakers, celebrities and the idle rich grants a certain sway over fashion trends, who gets invited to the top parties and the reputation of friends and rivals. Combined with Reputation, a moderate number of high-society connections turns a Dragon-Blood into a debonair darling of the most exclusive social circles.

• **Industry:** Industrial power fuels the economic engines of Creation. Farmers, ranchers, miners, lumberjacks, blacksmiths, stonemasons, tailors and other workers endlessly churn out the staples of everyday living. Industrial connections can guide the character to profitable insider deals, sway the location of work projects, engineer material shortages and work stoppages and see to it that the character's society, company or organization has the raw materials for growth.

• **Intelligence:** Information is power. Connections in an intelligence agency—the All-Seeing Eye of the Realm, the Intelligence Directorate in Lookshy or the agencies of Cherak, the Tri-Kahn or any other organized intelligence-gathering group in Creation—represents collaborators and insiders in the halls of the spymasters, assassins and troubleshooters. By calling on these connections, you can have rivals investigated, access the secret intelligence archives, gain insight into military foes and become privy to the most dangerous secrets.

• **Merchants:** Although the Guild is certainly the largest merchant organization in Creation, it is not the only one. Local merchants might do business only in their own home town, but more ambitious merchant houses can have far-reaching influence, trading in goods from one or more directions away, and able to carry missives, contraband or precious cargoes far and wide—for the right price or the right reason.

• **Military:** The character has pull in a military unit. This military could be the Imperial Army of the Realm, the Seventh Legion of Lookshy, a champion-army of the Hundred Kingdoms, mercenary units or some other organized military unit. A few careful inquiries and you can uncover military operations. Some pulled strings and traded favors let characters requisition special equipment and alter procurement procedures.

Connections in the military, even at the highest levels, are not a blank check for revolt and insurrection in most nations. Rulers and House elders keep careful watch on the military, and politically suspect officers are often kept close to hand—or far from where they could create mischief. On the other hand, if a character simply wishes to line his pockets selling substandard hardtack or employing soldiers for cheap manual labor, it's unlikely to cause problems in many places. Seventh Legion officers are kept to heel through a combination of strict enforcement of (very harsh) military regulations, upbringing and a society that not only encourages younger officers to question their superior's actions when they seem out of line, but is very heavily armed.

• **Outlaws:** From the Lintha pirates in the Southwest to the bandit kings of the Rivers Province, from the crime lords of Nexus to the Prince of Thieves of Chiaroscuro, outlaws are everywhere in Creation. Although such groups rarely have Creation-wide scale or influence (the Lintha being a notable exception), they are often quite influential—if negatively—in their local region, sometimes rivaling or exceeding the power of the local military or law-enforcement agencies. Although they are never completely trustworthy, having connections in an outlaw group can provide ties to other criminal organizations, markets for ill-gotten gains, quick muscle when needed and numerous other useful—if often less than savory—benefits.

Realm

• **The Deliberative:** The Realm is ruled by the Dragon-Blooded, as evinced by the Dynasty's control over the Deliberative. A character with connections within the Deliberative can see to it that legislation favoring her interests is proposed and received favorably, she can gather favors from patricians and other Houses in exchange for her political support, and she might even be able to get herself appointed to the Greater Chamber.

• **The Immaculate Order:** The Immaculate Order is one of the most powerful institutions in the Realm, and its policies exert considerable influence over the direction of Imperial politics and society. Knowing the appropriate Immaculate allows insight into the doings of the Order, and the use of Immaculate connections can alter religious policy, affect the assignment of Immaculate lectors, lead to the denouncement of rivals as heretics and allow access to secret societies within the Order.

• **The Magistracy:** In the Realm, the Dragon-Blooded are the law. The magistrates enforce the rule of the Dragon-Blooded and of the Empress, acting as judge and executioner. Having friends among the Magistracy can shield characters from investigation or see to it that rivals find themselves under suspicion. Connections with the magistrates can be used to clamp down on (or aggravate) public disorder, commandeer necessary resources or even have enemies executed. The magistrates aren't what they used to be, but their personal power is still enough to make them feared.

• **The Thousand Scales:** The Realm is tied together by a massive Imperial Bureaucracy, and a character with the right connections within it can direct that bureaucracy to her own ends. By dealing with public servants, such a character can cut through red tape, bypass rules and regulations or twist bureaucratic regimentation to her advantage (or use such maneuvering to attack rivals). Connections within the Thousand Scales are useful for operating or shutting down businesses, forging or acquiring permits and imperial seals and manipulating or gaining access to imperial facilities.

Note that the All-Seeing Eye, the Imperial Army and the Magistracy are covered under different areas of influence (Intelligence, Military and the Magistracy, respectively) despite their ostensibly being part of the greater Imperial Bureaucracy. Storytellers running series focusing on the Thousand Scales will probably wish to make the other bureaus or ministries within a separate area of Connections.

Lookshy

• **The Base Liaison Staff:** If an officer wants to hassle a citizen, prevent his people from being hassled by citizens or simply arrange for some sort of council meeting, he is going to want to work through the Base Liaison Staff.

• **The Directorates:** Contacts in the various Directorates can be immensely useful. Having a friend in Intelligence can give a character access to reports that she normally wouldn't see. Contacts in the Adjutant General can get preferential treatment when new personnel are assigned to her unit. Contacts in Stores is vital for any character involved in supplying a unit, while contacts in Justice could be useful in any number of situations. Contacts must be developed separately in each Directorate.

• **The General Staff:** A character with connections in the General Staff might be a personal friend of a member of the Staff but, more likely, has contact support personnel who help the General Staff function on a day-to-day basis. Connections here can help a character get a feel for why her unit is being sent out on patrol, can help smooth her way with other branches of the Seventh Legion and even get orders changed or "lost" for a time.

• **The Shogunate:** Ties cultivated with the remnants of the Shogunate Bureaucracy, possibly with the Shogun's Governor himself, are largely useful in symbolic functions. Yet they can also get a character into dinners to which she would never be invited otherwise, and they can act as a buffer between her and serious problems. The Governor might be little more than a figurehead, but his word is respected, and he is not *entirely* powerless.

• **Special Operations Units:** The warstriders, dragon armor, rangers, cadres of sorcerer-technicians and other, more obscure (and secret) divisions of the Seventh Legion form an elite assemblage of military units, and their respect can be hard to earn. While they might not actually consider the character one of them, depending on circumstances, she is familiar enough with the procedures and rituals of the Special Operations groups that they haven't written her off as totally useless. They might just be willing to help her.

Family

It is said in Dragon-Blooded societies that the sins and boons of the mother are visited upon the daughter—and there may be some truth to this saying. It is certainly believed that the blood of particular lines is tainted not only by power but by certain predispositions—toward generosity or cruelty, toward valor or cowardice. Whether this is true or not is unknown. It is certainly true, though, that there are those who rise above their heritage, redeeming their bloodlines. Dragon-Bloods who live in communities where such things are valued—such as the Realm's Dynasts, Lookshy's Gentes and many small communities where a strong Terrestrial bloodline has existed for many generations—are often held to standards of behavior based as much on who they are related to as on how they themselves act. Each dot in this Background represents an immediate Dragon-Blooded relative or ancestor of some fame (or infamy). Even infamy can provide a benefit in some circumstances. Being known as the daughter of a brutal killer carries with it the threat that the same fate could fall upon those who cross you.

X There is no one notable in your family, either living or dead.

• There is one notable member of your family, either living or dead.

•• There are two notable members of your family, either living or dead.

••• There are three notable members of your family, either living or dead.

•••• There are four notable members of your family, either living or dead.

••••• There are five notable members of your family, either living or dead.

The player should work with their Storyteller to determine the nature, sex and status of the relation. It should be a blood relation no more than a generation or two removed, although exceedingly historic acts can resonate down four or more generations (and multiple centuries). The player should also determine what the character's notable relative was famous for (and in what context). The character receives a one-die bonus to all social dice pools where the relative's reputation could be relevant. For example, a character with an aunt known for cruelty to her servants would receive a one-die modifier when trying to intimidate the servants of the same household.

These dice modifiers can stack if appropriate. A member of Gens Karal with the right ancestors could end up with a sizable modifier for family bravery and strategic skill, for example, as could

a member of House Mnemon for sorcery and scholarship. The modifiers can also be stacked on a single individual, if appropriate. A character could have a mother known for her generosity and her scholarship, for example. This modifier is granted at the discretion of the Storyteller and should be fairly flexible and wide-reaching within its narrow focus—and occasionally surprise the character with its scope.

Example: Tepet Maravi Teris is the daughter of Tepet Maravi Sila, who was commander of the Cold Guard of the 16th Legion when it stood watch outside Cherak and defeated a large contingent of the dead who were attacking a mining community there (+1 Tactical skill). While studying tactics of the Wyld Hunt at an Immaculate cloister prior to setting out on a vendetta against the Anathema who killed her brother, she is recognized by one of the Immaculate monks. This monk is the son of a soldier whose life was saved by Tepet Sila, when the monk was just an infant. Teris benefits from her +1 modifier, even though normally its focus would not be relevant.

Henchmen

A number of un-Exalted characters of note have sworn oaths of fealty to the character. Who these characters are depends on the concept of the character with this Background, although almost any character concept can be justified. A legion winglord might count his officers as henchmen, but might also have an un-Exalted savant who just happens to have been his classmate in finishing school as another henchman as well. An Immaculate monk of some standing might attract several acolytes, but these seekers of wisdom might once have been bandits, socialites, soldiers or farmers. Henchmen can be employees or assassins, friends or investigators, deniable cutouts or trusted secretaries. In game terms, they are all (or can be) henchmen.

Henchmen are heroic mortals, so use the rules for generating them found on page 81 of **Exalted**. It is highly recommended that henchmen be allowed a single Favored Ability based on their roles. Immaculate acolytes would have Martial Arts, while a spy would have Stealth or Larceny, for example. Henchmen are typically extremely loyal, but see the "Questions of Honor" sidebar.

X None. You have no companions.
• One companion.
•• Three companions.
••• Six companions.
•••• Ten companions.
••••• Fifteen companions.

Reputation

Dragon-Blooded society is tightly knit, even incestuous—especially among the Dynasty—with news and gossip traveling at lightning speed. As a result, a character's notable exploits that she doesn't take pains to conceal will soon become well known by both her peers and the Dynasty, if not the Realm as a whole. This reputation can be positive or negative (or even both at once), and it affects the way others view your character. In situations the Storyteller deems it appropriate, a character may add her Reputation rating to her dice pool when making social rolls. In situations where the reputation is a liability, the character subtracts an equal number of dice.

It is important for the player and the Storyteller to work together to create as much detail as possible for the character's Reputation, as these details influence how and when the Background comes into play. If a character has a reputation for bedding every Dragon-Blood in the city, that reputation might help get him invited to



Questions of Honor

Allies, Command, Henchmen and Retainers are very similar Backgrounds, differing mostly in the types of Storyteller characters provided and their number. One significant difference in them is the depth and reasons for their loyalty.

By default, all Storyteller characters provided by Backgrounds are reasonably loyal, but the level of loyalty—and the reasons why it is given—differs in each case.

Allies are often the character's friends. They share common origins, bonds of friendship due to shared experiences or inexplicable ties that cement them together despite seemingly utter incompatibility. Their loyalty is the deepest, but it can be the most fragile, depending on any existing undercurrents of resentment, previous bad behavior or other issues. Other allies are merely friends of convenience, but even then, their reasons for allying with the character will be strong enough—and long lasting enough—to make betrayal or abandonment unlikely. They need the character as much as the character needs them.

Soldiers provided by **Command** are just that: soldiers. Although they answer to their commanding officer and might be fiercely loyal to him (in the abstract, if not specifically), they often have a higher loyalty to their legion or field force. Characters who command mercenary companies often find their soldiers more loyal to the silver dinar than to the unit's good name.

Henchmen are loyal to the character for the things she provides to them. They are her posse, her crew, and while bonds of friendship are probably involved, their relationship is often a mercenary one, even if it is rarely acknowledged as such. Although such relationships are often predicated around opportunities, gifts or simply hanging on a character's wealth, what she provides need not be monetary, or even physical. Abstracts such as reputation, the cachet of being associated with a hero (or villain) or the teachings of wisdom provided by a senior Immaculate can all be reasons for henchmen to stay with a character. When they feel they are being slighted, however—or that the character has no more to offer them—henchmen can be among the quickest to abandon a character.

Retainers are servants, but they are often incredibly loyal ones. The manservant taking over duties preparing the son when the father no longer requires his services, the maid who has helped raise the family's favored daughter since birth, the loyal bodyguards who have stood watch over their young mistress since she was a child and first sent to academy—these are all examples of retainers.

None of these factors are absolute. Every character's retinue is unique, and Storytellers should work with players to determine the limits and nature of the relationships involved in each case. These bonds of loyalty can change as the series progresses. Even the most loyal servant will eventually revolt if he is continually mistreated, and soldiers and henchmen who are supported and rewarded for good behavior—and justly and fairly punished when they step out of line—will respond to this treatment with continued (and increasingly personal) loyalty. The good commander or lord knows this and can gather around herself a cadre of unhesitatingly loyal underlings who will follow her straight into the heart of Malfeas. Conversely, fools end up being abandoned by all those who once called them friend, making them easy prey for those who have the support of their loved ones.

important social gatherings, but it's not going to help him during negotiations to buy a sailing ship. A general with a reputation for offering fair treatment to foes who surrender without a fight will find it easier to negotiate the surrender of opposing forces, especially if she also has a reputation for merciless brutality against any who dare stand against her. A reputation need not necessarily be true. A coward might luck into becoming known as a war hero, while a shady swindler could have the reputation as the most honest merchant in the city.

X You have yet to make a name for yourself.
• You're well known in your set.
•• Your name is bandied about in your part of the Dynasty.
••• Everyone in the Dynasty knows well your legend.
•••• Tales of your exploits have spread across the Realm.
••••• Your legend has preceded you even to the far corners of the Threshold.

Retainers

One constant in the lives of Dynasts is servants. From the moment he wakes in the morning, until he lays head to pillow at night, a Dynast is surrounded by a cloud of servants. Secretaries, bodyguards, cooks, stewards, armsmen, maids, concubines, aides-de-camp, farriers, drivers and a host of others wait on their every whim and insulate the Terrestrials from those with whom they do not wish to interact.

Officers of the Seventh Legion, while rarely as thoroughly surrounded, are still expected to maintain a personal staff befitting their rank. Even a taizei can be expected to have a steward, a cook and a pair of personal bodyguards unaffiliated with his command. He might also perhaps have a concubine or two, though some would see it as vaguely decadent.

Retainers are mortal characters—though not normally rising to the status of heroic mortals—so use the rules for mortal character generation found on page 81 of the main **Exalted** rulebook. They should not typically be treated as extras. Retainers can be used to represent highly trained, but mortal and non-heroic combatants, such as low-ranking officers in a legion, elite troops or rangers. Retainers are generally quite loyal to their master, but see the "Questions of Honor" sidebar.

X None. You have no retainers, being either of low rank, unsavory reputation or stoic disposition.
• Two retainers, usually a steward and an aide-de-camp.
•• Five retainers, normally including a cook and possibly a bodyguard
••• Nine retainers, likely incorporating a pair of bodyguards, a steward, a cook and a secretary.
•••• Thirteen retainers or a lesser number of more skilled aides.
••••• Twenty retainers, almost certainly incorporating armsmen, bodyguards, and concubines; the retinue of a general, or the spoiled child of a greater Gens.



Aspects of Air



Air permeates. Its presence is often forgotten, rarely perceived—until it leaves, or explodes into thunderheads of rage and fury. Air can be felt, but not seen, moved, but not held. The Children of Mela are quick of mind and subtle in action—except when thought calls for fury, when they explode with the anger of the storm.

Air-aspected Terrestrials are creatures of research and creativity, harnessing their creativity in service of their ideals. They think in grand—some say grandiose—fashion, seeking to elevate even lowly concepts into tremendous implementations. Their battle plans are intricate strategies that are studied for years to come, their sorceries are subtle displays of understanding, and their relationships are epic tales passed down through the centuries. Their schemes range from subtle arrangements as invisible as the eddies that make candle flames flicker to masterful and ornate plans with the fury and splendor of a hurricane.

The Children of Mela scorn mundane pursuits, their idealism and elitism leading them to goals more grand than base. An Aspect of Air pursues wealth not for its own sake, but for the things it allows him to do with it. He masters the art of warfare not to crush his enemies, but to earn the glories of victory. He studies sorcery not for base power, but for the spiritual understanding its mastery brings. Purely material goals are left to others.

Air-aspected Terrestrials are dreamers and schemers in societies, planners and strategoi. The ideas and plans they create become the work for their Terrestrial cousins or mortals to carry out. Children of Mela learn from the past, solve the problems of the present and create plans for growth and improvement in the future. Their visions are inspirations, exhorting their followers and peers to seek beyond the present, to revise the ideas of the past and to create a more perfect tomorrow. The winds they send to assure the future's greatness are sometimes tumultuous, scattering outmoded ideas and practices no matter how cherished, but this is meaningless to the Children of Mela—tomorrow is what matters.

An Aspect of Air who belongs to a sworn brotherhood does not see her brotherhood as it is, but rather how it could be. She inspires her brothers and sisters to greatness, imploring them to seek out their perfection.

Failings: Air-aspected Dragon-Blooded are great dreamers, but magnificent thought does not always translate into glorious action. More than one Aspect of Air has seen his grand ideas become nothing more than empty air because he was unable or unwilling to get his hands dirty to make his dreams a reality.

The Immaculate Dragons: The Air-aspected followers of Sextes Jylis are social engineers, directing their schemes toward the improvement of the society surrounding them. They are more willing to consider the costs of their plans on others than most Chosen are. Emulators of Pasiap seek enlightenment and spiritual awakening for themselves and those around them. Air Aspects following the path of Hesiesh are elitist even by the standards of the Children of Mela, conserving their mental energies for the most difficult and important problems or ideals. Those who follow Daana'd challenge their intellect beyond the breaking point, seeking mastery of esoteric, dangerous and even forbidden mysteries. Those Air Aspects who follow the path of their progenitor, Mela, are perfectionists beyond measure, endlessly refining and developing their plans and ideas until they are without flaw.

Aspect Markings: Aspects of Air are typically lithe and thin. Their skin has a natural bluish or whitish tint, strengthening in those of high Breeding. As their Essence increases, Air-aspected Dragon-Blooded begin to be surrounded by moving winds, a continuous breeze that increases in intensity as they become angry or agitated and can be stilled only with effort. Elder Air Aspects often have ice-cold skin and carry the scent of the breeze or lightning storms. The oldest, most powerful Terrestrials of Air carry with them a small storm of lightning, surrounding all they touch with a static charge.

Aspect Anima: An Air-aspected Dragon-Blood's anima radiates out in an aura of white and pale blue, taking the aspect of roiling clouds and wind gusts. Massive expenditures of Essence bring with them explosions of lightning, howling winds, phantasmal air dragons or gusts of snow and ice.

An Aspect of Air can spend five motes to attune his anima to the winds. For the duration of a scene, the Exalt is surrounded by a swirling vortex of air, which functions as a weakened version of the Stormwind Rider spell. The Dragon-Blood may triple his leaping distance, and he takes no damage from falls, as gusts buoy him and slow his descent. Finally, the Dragon-Blooded may add his Essence to his Defense Value against Thrown and Archery attacks, as the winds buffet ranged weapons in order to protect their master.

Aspect Abilities: The Exalts of Air are masters of scholarship and reason, and creatures of subtle action. Accordingly, their Aspect Abilities include Linguistics, Lore, Occult, Stealth and Thrown.

The Great Curse: Air Aspects whose curse lies in Compassion hold idealistic views of how the world should work, reacting poorly when confronted with the realities of life's cruelties. Those suffering the curse of Conviction can become so fixated on their dreams of the future that they cannot hear the screams of the present, driving them to acts of great brutality in pursuing their goals. The curse of Temperance inflicts great moral standards upon those who suffer it, and they can vent their frustrations at not living up to their lofty goals of purity with the fury of the hailstorm. Those who suffer curses of Valor take excessive pride in their mental abilities, and react with great storms of argument and violence, or place undue trust in their plans and abilities, placing their lives—and those of their followers—at great risk.

Associations: The color blue, the Maiden of Serenity, the season of Air and the northern direction

Sobriquets: Azure Dragons, Children of Mela, Tempestuous Knives

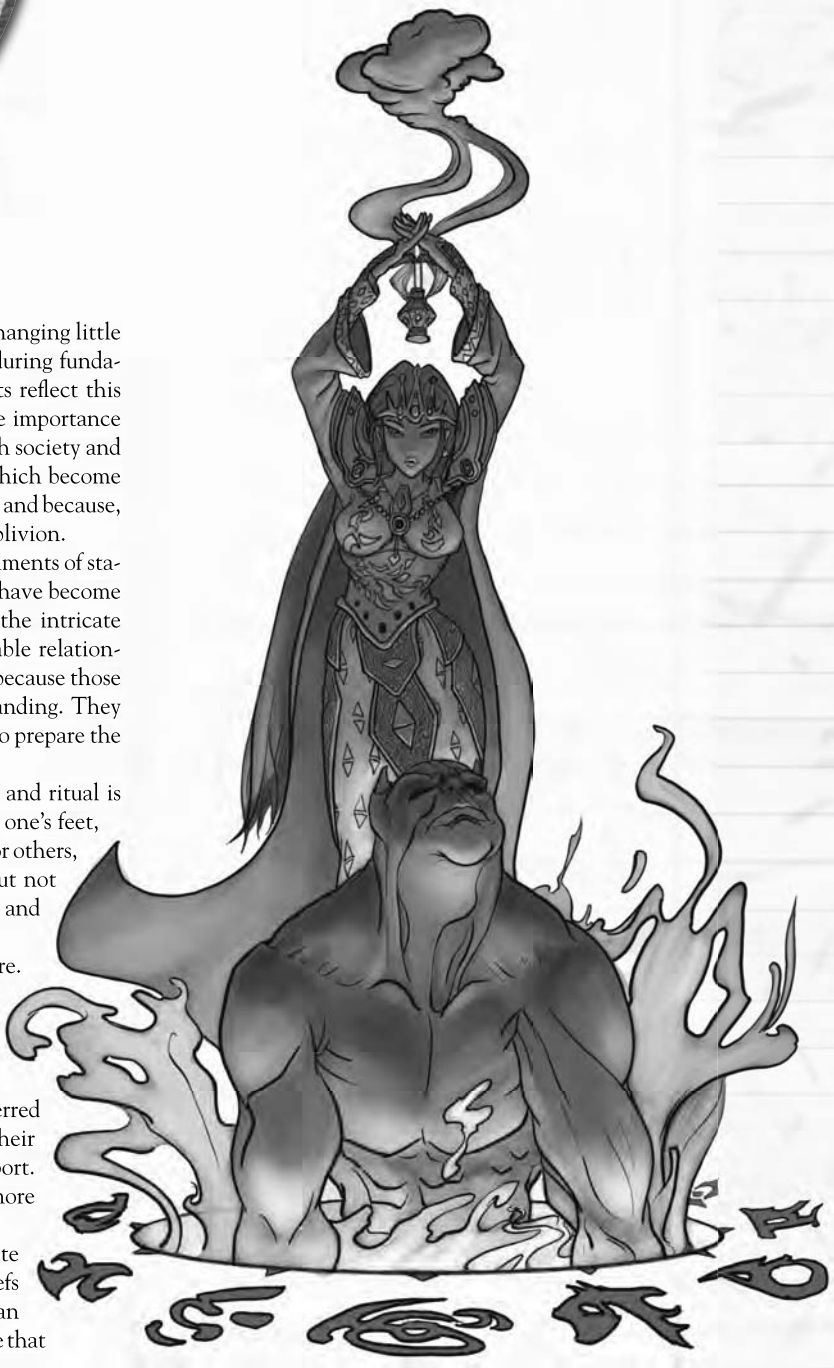
Concepts: Seeker after forbidden mysteries, sorcerer-engineer, criminal mastermind, idealistic bureaucrat, strategos

Our thoughts move as lightning,
and our words are carried on the storms.

Challenge us not.



Aspects of Earth



Earth abides. Mountains withstand the press of time, changing little even since the First Age. Stone and earth are the ever-enduring fundament upon which all Creation depends. The Earth Aspects reflect this unchanging nature. The Children of Pasiap understand the importance of tradition and ritual; they provide a framework upon which society and culture is supported and depends. Actions become habit, which become rituals, which become traditions, because they are important, and because, in the end, they work. Things that do not work pass into oblivion.

The Earth-aspected Terrestrial Exalts are living embodiments of stability and tradition, adhering to practices and methods that have become honored and time-tested over the centuries. They follow the intricate dance of courtship rituals because the process produces stable relationships. They study the teachings of the Immaculate Dragons because those teachings are proven methods of gaining spiritual understanding. They train themselves in martial arts because the study is proven to prepare the student physically and mentally for both life and war.

How exactly an Aspect of Earth approaches tradition and ritual is personal, of course. For some, ritual is like the dirt beneath one's feet, adapting and giving where necessary to smooth one's path. For others, it is akin to clay, malleable and shifting when necessary, but not without effort. And for many, tradition is like granite, solid and unyielding, fixed in form and function for the Ages.

The Children of Pasiap value those things that endure. Lasting friendships are more important than brief alliances. Centuries-old magic, tactics and weapons are encouraged over experimental sorceries, unproven strategies and untested arms. Obliteration of ones enemy is preferred to a temporary victory, and long-term economic stability is preferred to short-term windfall profits. Frivolities and fancies have their place, but they pale when compared to matters of lasting import. The eternal value of spiritual enlightenment is judged more important than any material matter.

Earth-aspected Terrestrials are the backbone and granite souls of their societies. Their staunch upholding of their beliefs forms a solid foundation to their culture upon which others can build. Traditional and steadfast, the Children of Pasiap believe that

the old ways are often the best ways, and they stubbornly defend the ways and beliefs to which they hold. If a new thing can stand on its own, they reason, it could be worthy of protection at some future date. If it cannot, then it was never worthy of consideration.

Earth-aspected members of sworn brotherhoods are the stony pillars from which their brothers and sisters draw strength—if not exactly comfort. Their iron conviction and steadfast devotion propels the group toward the completion of any action to which it commits. Earth-aspected Terrestrials rarely enter into the bonds of the sworn brotherhood lightly, out of respect for the traditions of the bonded circle, but once they commit to such a group, their dedication is unwavering and absolute.

Failings: Earth-aspected Dragon-Bloods are well respected for their devotion and dedication to that in which they believe. Unfortunately, this iron will can make them exceedingly difficult to work with. The Children of Pasiap are notorious for being stubborn and bullheaded. Once an Aspect of Earth has made up his or her mind about something, changing it can be like trying to move a mountain.

The Immaculate Dragons: Earth Aspects who follow the path of Hesiesh are hidebound traditionalists, placing little trust in the contemporary and untested, preferring that which is time-honored and proven. Those who walk with Daana'd press beyond their breaking point, seeking enlightenment through grueling ritual, asceticism and challenging sorceries. Emulators of Mela are seekers after personal perfection, seeing mastery of themselves in mastery of tradition. The followers of Sextes Jylis are inquisitors and missionaries, stressing the power of tradition while they strike down the unrighteous. And the followers of their progenitor, Pasiap, are builders and architects of great buildings, trade associations, armies and political coalitions.

Aspect Markings: Children of Pasiap tend toward two body types—the compact and stocky, and the massive and powerful. Their skin is often of a stony tint—the brown of freshly turned loam, the blue-gray of slate or the gray-white of granite. This tone becomes even more pronounced as they grow older. Their skin hardens as they age and grow in power, taking on a stony texture ranging from that of polished marble to the rough texture of sandstone or hewn granite. Aspect elders often smell of turned soil, moist clay or sand.

Aspect Anima: The anima of an Earth-aspected Terrestrial erupts in a mantle of yellow and white light, glittering like a gemstone or shifting like sands in the wind. Massive expenditures produce phantoms of badgers or bulls, great stone constructs, earth dragons or the Imperial Mountain. Such displays are often accompanied by the sounds of avalanches, earthquakes or volcanoes.

An Aspect of Earth can spend five motes to attune his or her anima to the nearby stone, taking on the durability of the earth itself. For the duration of the scene, the Exalt may soak all lethal damage with her full Stamina. She may also add her Essence to dice rolls to resist grappling attacks or to avoid knockback. Finally, she may add her Essence to her Stamina for all purposes, but only while her feet rest on either earth or stone.

Aspect Abilities: Earth Aspects are builders and makers. They carry the strength of the Earth in their blood and their beliefs, making them enduring beyond measure. Their insight and perception gives them a keen strategic sense. Aspects of Earth have an affinity for the Abilities of Awareness, Craft, Integrity, Resistance and War.

The Great Curse: Compassion drives the Earth-aspected to rage or despair when the institutions she cherishes are jeopardized. Conviction pushes the Children of Pasiap to cruel extremes to protect their traditions and ideals, and punish those who threaten them. Temperance leads them to focus their totality on the things they consider important and to destroy those that cannot or will not match these levels of devotion. Valor forces them to react with rage when beloved traditions are challenged or drives them to insane dangers in the belief that time-honored beliefs and practices will see them through.

Associations: The color white, the Maiden of Battles, the season of Earth and the central direction

Sobriquets: Children of Pasiap, Ivory Dragons, Stone Fists

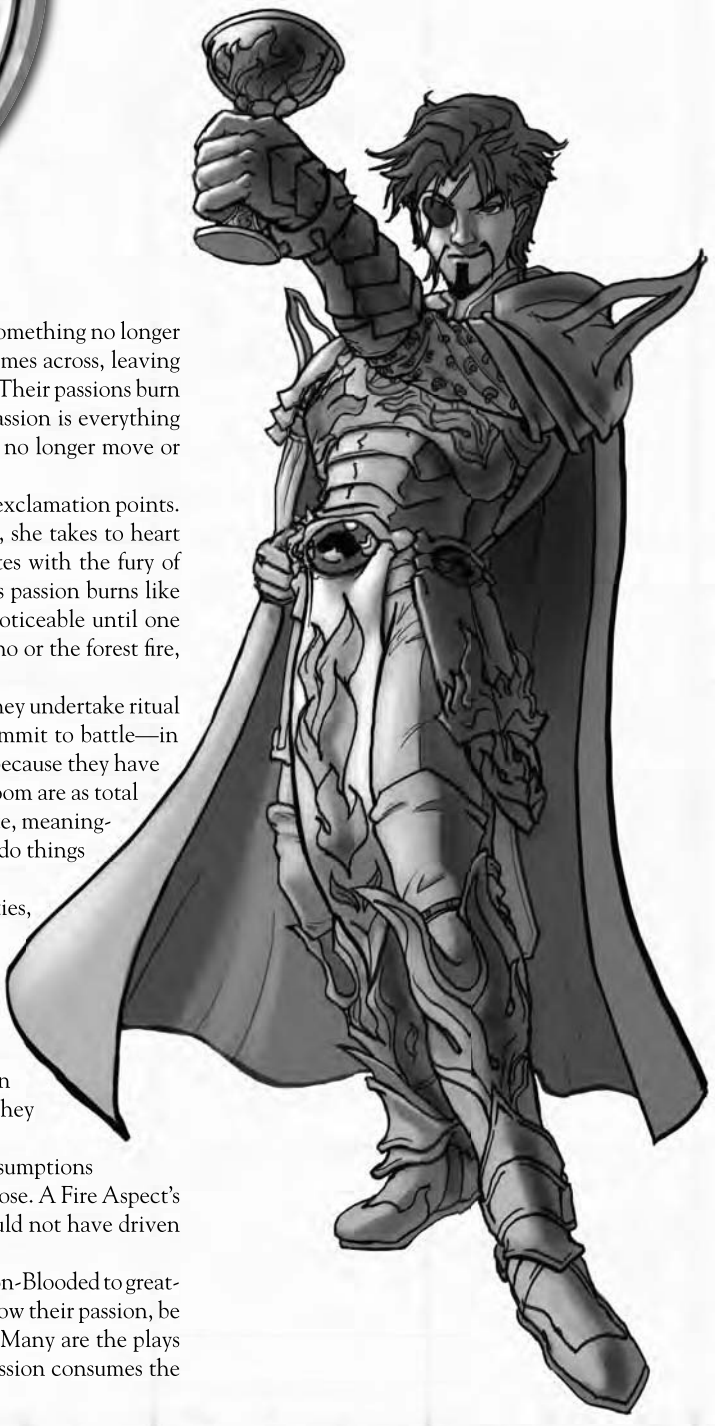
Concepts: Craftsperson, general, Immaculate monk, historian, judge

When the earth moves,
nothing but ruins remain.

Do you dare to challenge the Princes of the Earth?



Aspects of Fire



Fire burns. This is its essence—its very being. When something no longer burns, the fire is not resting, but dead. Fire engulfs all it comes across, leaving only ash as it lights its way. So it is with the Aspects of Fire. Their passions burn with a purity and light that few others will ever match. Passion is everything to the Children of Hesiesh. Motion is life, and those who no longer move or feel no longer live.

A Fire-aspected Dragon-Blood lives her entire life in exclamation points. When she loves, she loves completely. What she believes, she takes to heart with a zealotry none can match. What she hates, she hates with the fury of the Unconquered Sun himself. Sometimes, a Fire Aspect's passion burns like the damped embers of a sleeping hearth, its heat barely noticeable until one gets close. Other times, it burns with the fury of the volcano or the forest fire, scarring any who approach.

No deed is meaningless to the Children of Hesiesh. They undertake ritual and tradition because they believe in their faith. They commit to battle—in the boardroom, in the ballroom or on the field of honor—because they have faith in the cause or the people. Their passions in the bedroom are as total and singular as they are anywhere else, if more fleeting. Trite, meaningless activities are for colder, timid souls. The Fire-aspected do things because it is what their passions drive them to do.

The Fire Aspects are the driving forces in their societies, their passions sparking flames in the hearts of others. They challenge hallowed traditions, attack complacency and play devil's advocate to make sure that beliefs and traditions are re-examined, discarded when they become outmoded, and purified and strengthened if they are useful but incomplete. Those things that burn to ash in the scrutiny of the Children of Hesiesh were meaningless and of little value. Otherwise, they would have withstood passion's flames.

In sworn brotherhoods, Aspects of Fire challenge assumptions and renew passions, reminding their comrades of their purpose. A Fire Aspect's loyalty to her circle is rarely questioned—her passions would not have driven her to the oath if her loyalty was less than total.

Failings: Passion is what drives the Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded to greatness, yet it also drives them to destruction. Fire Aspects follow their passion, be it love or hate, even if it leads them to death and tragedy. Many are the plays in the Realm feature a Fire-aspected protagonist whose passion consumes the very thing she loves.

The Immaculate Dragons: Fire-aspected Terrestrials who follow the path of Daana'd focus and purify their passion—and seek to inflame the passions of those around them—through challenge and strife. Those who emulate Mela seek perfection in all aspects of their life, but are especially drawn to conflict, and are often zealous warriors. Followers of Sextes Jylis use their passions to strengthen their society and those who dwell in it. Those who revere Pasiap channel their passions toward enlightenment, sharing their blazing inspiration as instructors or priests. Finally, scions of the progenitor, Hesiesh, marshal their passions in the pursuit of those things they find most meaningful, allowing other, lesser things to pass them by.

Aspect Markings: The skin of the Children of Hesiesh typically has a reddish tint, and their hair is often a similar color. Breeding and age deepens this tone, growing a deep crimson in the most powerful. Some older Fire Aspects are known to exhale smoke as they speak, and in rare cases, their hair can take on the aspect of flame or their skin grow hot to the touch, as if the Terrestrial were taken with a deathly fever.

Aspect Anima: A Fire-aspected Terrestrial's anima banner is a blazing aura of fire—red and yellow, orange and white, flickering and dancing like a bonfire. Great expenditures of Essence result in massive eruptions of flame, flickering phantasms of phoenixes, tigers and fire dragons, and the scream of the blast furnace or the roar of a raging fire.

At the expenditure of five motes of Essence, the Children of Hesiesh can draw on their inner passions, forcing their anima banner to erupt. For the duration of the scene, the Exalt is surrounded by a corona of flames, which inflicts no damage on his body or possessions but affects anything else he touches as normal flames would. Any bare-handed or grappling attacks against the Exalt cause the attacker to suffer a number of lethal damage dice equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence, and any similar attacks made by the Dragon-Blood inflict an additional number of damage dice equal to his Essence as well. The Exalt can also ignite flammable materials with a touch.

Aspect Abilities: Constantly in motion, physically and mentally, Fire Aspects are the embodiment of passion and energy. They are paragons of physical activity and social interaction, giving them a natural affinity with Athletics, Dodge, Melee, Presence and Socialize.

The Great Curse: Compassion drives the Children of Hesiesh to rage or despair when those she cares about are threatened—or possibly merely when she witnesses great injustice or unrighteousness. Conviction pushes Fire Aspects to inflict widespread suffering in the pursuit of their passions, without regard for the damage they cause in pursuit of their goals. Temperate Fire Aspects are no rarity, their passions directed toward self-perfection and enlightenment. The Great Curse drives them toward scorching hatred of all those who cannot live up to their impossible standards—including themselves. Valor is perhaps the most common flaw in the Children of Hesiesh, and a valorous Fire Aspect in the throes of Limit Break becomes an immolating engine of devastation, as his hatred for his foes overwhelms all reason and thought of negotiation.

Associations: The color red, the Maiden of Journeys, the season of Fire and the southern direction

Sobriquets: Burning Swords, Children of Hesiesh, Crimson Dragons

Concepts: Fiery crusader, legion officer, passionate scholar, cunning socialite, contrary politician

You were fools to challenge me!
Fire consume your soul as Fire takes your life!

Aspects of Water



Water flows. It encompasses and covers all that it comes across. Its shape is fleeting and impermanent, taking the form of whatever holds it, but keeping that shape only as long as it is held. The Aspects of Water are as mercurial as the sea. They adapt and shift viewpoints rapidly, changing to react to every new development and piece of information. The Children of Daana'd fill every possible role, exploit every possible opening and wear away even the most resolute of resistance, until finally only Water stands triumphant. Change is life to the Children of Daana'd, and that which cannot or will not adjust and change as warranted is doomed to destruction.

Water-aspected Dragon-Bloods embody change. Challenge forces them to react and adjust, becoming stronger in the process. Social events teach them to excel in grace and poise. Combat instructs them in the art of warfare. Research and education extends their knowledge and their wisdom. Some Water Aspects are patient like the slow trickle of water down a mountain, eventually wearing grooves into even the greatest stones. Others are kin to the hurricane, rising up and smashing everything that stands in their path.

Failure is not an option to the Child of Daana'd. If one plan of attack fails to obtain the objective, she adapts and tries a different strategy. If a political opponent is obstinate, she allies with another of his enemies. If a subject of research proves itself intractable, she attacks it from another direction or seeks a different solution to the problem. Failure is for those who lack the flexibility and fluid nature to take the steps necessary to ensure success.

The Water-aspected Dragon-Bloods are problem solvers, bringing practical—if sometimes unconventional—solutions to the issues that face their society. Conflict—military, economic, social or political—is opportunity for growth, and the Children of Daana'd help their society navigate its way through these troubles. Without conflict, they reason, there is no challenge, and stagnant waters are dead waters.

Water Aspects take on a similar role within a sworn brotherhood, using their flexibility and adaptive nature to complement the strengths and shore up the weaknesses of their brothers and sisters, helping them to adapt and grow stronger in the face of adversity.

Failings: Although they are able nurturers, encouraging growth through triumph over adversity, Aspects of Water can become smothering. It is all too easy for them to become overbearing, fixated on solving others' problems for them, forcing needless conflicts and drowning any chance of individual growth.

The Immaculate Dragons: Aspects of Water who follow the path of Mela emphasize their flexibility and adaptive nature, especially in the arts of war. They are masters of unconventional and asymmetric warfare, striking from the shadows and disappearing as quickly as the receding tide. Those who emulate Sextes Jylis are nurturers and hunters, bringing aid and comfort to those in need—and death to heretics. Those on the path of Pasiap bring their ever-changing focus to the goal of enlightenment, becoming skilled—if unconventional—theologians and religious leaders. Followers of Hesiesh are traditionalists, reserving their quicksilver talents to protect their loved ones and culture. Finally, followers of the progenitor, Daana'd, are devoted believers in the concepts of self-sufficiency and growth through adversity. Their challenge is to excel in all spheres of conflict.

Aspect Markings: Aspects of Water tend to a sinewy, nearly hypnotic grace of motion, and a stillness in repose that is nearly immobility. Their skin and hair often have a blue-green tint, deepening with age, and the eldest and most powerful are often nearly ebony in color, reflecting the deep waters. Water-aspected Dragon-Bloods often smell of open waters—from the clean scent of a mountain brook or the crisp tang of the sea.

Aspect Anima Banner: The anima banner of a Water Aspect is a rippling halo of blues and greens, rolling like the ocean waves. As the banner increases in power, blacks and wave-cap whites mix into the colors, and phantom whirlpools, waterspouts and water dragons flash in the banner. The noise that accompanies the banner can be the roar of a flooding river, the cascading crash of the pounding surf or, sometimes, the stifling silence of the darkest waters.

At the cost of five motes of Essence, the child of Daana'd suffuses her being with the power of Water. For the duration of a single day, the Exalt has complete water freedom. She can breathe water as easily as air and is incapable of drowning. She also suffers no environmental penalty for any actions she takes underwater, including such improbable actions as firing a bow or throwing a chakram. As a final bonus, the Exalt can walk across the surface of a body of water as easily as dry land.

Aspect Abilities: Water Exalts have a shrewd understanding of complex systems, and their flexible minds give them the ability to navigate even the most difficult situations. Aspects of Water have a natural affinity with the Abilities of Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny, Martial Arts and Sail.

The Great Curse: Compassion drives the Children of Daana'd to focus on those things they seek to nurture to the exclusion of all else. They go to extreme lengths to protect these things, forgoing other tasks—and sometimes drowning them. Conviction can turn them into a great tidal wave, smashing aside and washing away anything that stands between them and their goals, regardless of the cost. Temperate Children of Daana'd are akin to the still reflecting pool, but turbulent riptides course beneath the calm surface, savaging any who disturb their tranquility. And the Water Aspect whose curse is based in her Valor becomes akin to the waterspout, seeking to batter and destroy any problem—or potential problem—she comes across.

Associations: The color black, the Maiden of Secrets, the season of Water and the western direction

Sobriquets: Children of Daana'd, Drowning Hands, Sable Dragons

Concepts: Uncanny martial artist, relentless magistrate, ship commander, deal broker, assassin

The surf leaves little in its wake but debris.

Do not challenge the tide,
lest you be dragged under.

Aspects of Wood



Wood lives. The Aspect of Wood is life itself—the cycle of birth, growth, maturity, death and rebirth that is fundamental to the natural way of things. The Exalted of Wood have an inherent understanding of this process that few others share. They are intimately familiar with the sacrifices that must sometimes be made to ensure a thriving ecology. That which does not grow—in power, knowledge, enlightenment or any other way—is dying.

The Children of Sextes Jylis crave experience and sensation, and every action they take is in pursuit of living life to the fullest. Life to the Wood Aspect is a banquet to be sampled from at every opportunity. Whether it is a fine wine, an excellent courtesan, a masterfully produced meal or the sensation of accomplishment brought on by enlightenment, all are equal in value to the Exalted of Wood. Some Aspects of Wood seek out experience and pleasure like an annual flower, knowing that life is fleeting even for the Terrestrial Exalted. Others emulate the mighty trees of the East, stretching their experiences out over decades or even centuries.

Every moment is an opportunity to experience and grow to the Child of Sextes Jylis, and nothing is taken for granted. Every conflict is a lesson in ability and limitations. Every meal is an opportunity to refine and enhance understanding of fine cuisine, and every affair a course in relationships, loss and love. Even death brings greater understanding of life's cycles. Those who blunder through life without truly understanding its myriad opportunities for new lessons are fools.

As a gardener prunes and cultivates his gardens to maximize its health, beauty and harvests, so too do the Exalted of Wood seek to improve their society, supporting those who help society grow in a pattern they find pleasing and weeding out those who might corrupt their design.

The Children of Sextes Jylis serve a similar role in a sworn brotherhood. They seek to shape the group into a thing of wonder, nurturing the traits in their sisters and brothers they find pleasing and pruning those that might threaten the health and beauty of their bonded circle.

Failings: While their love of sensation serves them well as a source of wisdom, it is all too easy to become trapped in wasteful debauchery. Many of Creation's most notorious hedonists are Wood-aspected Dragon-Bloods.

The Immaculate Dragons: Wood-aspected followers of Pasiap work to guide their society toward a deeper spiritual understanding and are often ruthless in their pursuit of heretics. Those who choose the path of Hesiesh are prudent in their choice of sensation, often seeking to extend each experience for as long as possible. Followers of Daana'd are devotees of the extreme, testing themselves through powerful experiences. The path of Mela is the path of the venomous garden—beautiful to behold, but deadly to the touch. Finally, those who walk the path of the progenitor, Sextes Jylis, are famous as healers and protectors, seeking to enrich society by nurturing its members.

Aspect Markings: Aspects of Wood often have a greenish tint to their skin, and their hair can vary from the woody brown of bark to the bright green of pine needles to all the crimsons and oranges of the Eastern forest in fall. As they age and grow in power, their skin deepens to a brilliant emerald. In extreme cases, it can take on the texture and aspect of bark, especially along the back and shoulders. Some sprout flowers in their hair, especially along the temples. Many have a natural scent reminiscent of pine, fresh fruit or flowers, or other plants.

Aspect Anima: The anima banner of a Wood Aspect blooms as a bright green glow, flexing and waving like leaves in the wind or the stalks of grass in a field. Great expenditures of Essence bring phantasms of thorn tangles, giant flowers, massive trees or wood dragons. The banner is often accompanied by the sound of a strong wind moaning through a great forest.

At a cost of five motes, the Wood Aspect can align his Essence with the power of all growing things. For the duration of a scene, the Exalt can render himself completely immune to the effects of any plant-based poison. This power is reflexive, and the Exalt need not know that he has been poisoned prior to activating this power. Indeed, while this effect is active, the Dragon-Blood becomes a walking plant toxin. If the Exalt makes skin-to-skin contact with someone while this power is active, the target's player must make a successful (Stamina + Resistance) roll against a difficulty equal to the Exalt's Essence or suffer the effects of poisoning. Finally, the Dragon-Blood can add his Essence to his Defense Value against Archery attacks and any attacks using wooden or wood-hafted weapons, as the wooden shafts themselves struggle to avoid hitting the Exalt.

Aspect Abilities: Wood-aspected Exalts have a natural connection with living things and are intimately tied to the cycle of life. Their connection to anything that lives—or once lived—gives them a natural affinity for the Abilities of Archery, Medicine, Performance, Ride and Survival.

The Great Curse: A Wood Exalt whose Virtue Flaw derives from her Compassion will often be one who focuses on the nurturing aspect of life, with her Limit Break resulting from witnessing the things she guides and protects being threatened or destroyed. One whose Flaw derives from Conviction focuses on weeding out and pruning those things that weaken her garden, and she becomes cold and cruel in the pursuit of her perfect garden. Temperance brings with it wild binges of excess or ascetic remorse and self-loathing at perceived weakness and lack of control. Valor-driven Children of Sextes Jylis seek out hazardous and extreme circumstances, heedless of the risk and dangers in which they place themselves and their loved ones.

Associations: The color green, the Maiden of Endings, the season of Wood and the eastern direction

Sobriquets: Ashen Bows, Children of Sextes Jylis, Emerald Dragons

Concepts: Inquisitor, healer, merchant prince, sybarite, bodyguard, courtier

Life's endless cycle cannot be denied,
and even in the harshest of climes, life thrives.

As long as there is life, there is hope—and life is everywhere.

Other Rules

A number of other, minor rules govern the use of Dragon-Blooded characters. Where these rules do not specifically say otherwise, Dragon-Blooded are treated exactly as any other sort of Exalted. This includes but is not limited to the rate at which they heal, their resistance to poison and disease, their ability to suppress bleeding, the speed at which they regain Essence, the visibility and size of their anima banner and the rate at which it dissipates.

Anima Flux

The anima banner of the Dragon-Blooded is a raw, powerful effect. While those of the other Exalted can be intense, and even have lasting impact on their environment, that of the Terrestrials can be so powerful as to inflict considerable damage on their surroundings. The effects of the damage is different for each type of Terrestrial, but the source is always the raw power of the character's Essence.

If the Dragon-Blood's anima banner is at the 8–10-motes level of display, it inflicts one die of lethal damage for every minute of contact to everything within a number of feet equal to the character's permanent Essence. This damage is sufficient to destroy cloth and soft wood in a minute or two. It can eventually reduce even treated hardwoods to junk (within five minutes). At the 11–15-mote level, the banner inflicts one die of damage for every nine ticks of combat. At these two levels, characters who are able to soak lethal damage with Stamina (such as other Exalts) ignore the damage inflicted by Terrestrial anima banners. At the 16+ level, however, the banner generates a lethal die of damage every tick, and all beings and objects (except the Exalt's personal equipment, which is immune to the effect at all levels) suffers this damage.

This anima flux effect has had obvious impacts on their Terrestrials' fighting style and architecture (among other things). Most Dragon-Bloods do not ride animals into combat, for instance. Some Ride Charms (see pp. **180-182**) can halt or delay the death of mounts, but they are not commonly used. Some Dragon-Bloods make use of artifact mounts or creatures (such as the simhata) that are specially bred to resist their anima banners, and specially designed chariots are used in some environments. Similarly, the homes of the Terrestrials are usually made largely of stone and are more often filled with sculpture, mosaics and other sturdier artworks than paintings or tapestries, particularly in places such as workshops or dojos where the Exalted are likely to use Essence in quantity.

Sworn Brothers' Oath

Cost: 10m + 1m from each Exalt bound by the spell
Target: Exalts to be bound

This Terrestrial Circle spell binds the Essences of a group of Exalts together and is used in the creation of sworn brotherhoods. The ritual takes one hour for a pair of Exalts, plus one hour for each additional Exalt. The sorcerer does not have to be one of the Exalted bound by the spell. Once the spell is cast, the sorcerer's player makes an (Intelligence + Occult) roll. The number of successes scored creates a new trait for the members of the sworn brotherhood, Oathbond, which reflects the strength of the spiritual bond between the members of the brotherhood. This trait has a number of effects on those who share the bond.

• **Familiarity:** Members of a sworn brotherhood are aware of each others' location. As long as a member of the brotherhood is within (Oathbond x 10) yards of another member, she knows exactly where he is. Beyond this range, a member's player can make an Essence roll



as a diceless action for the Exalt to get an idea of the direction and range to any other member. One success gives the sister a general idea of distance and direction, three is sufficient to get an accurate read on range and bearing, and five successes tell the sister exactly where her brother is.

• **Devotion:** Each member of the sworn brotherhood gains a Devotion dice pool, equal to their Oathbond rating, which refreshes once per story. These dice can be used—in any amount—on actions undertaken with the deliberate purpose of aiding another member of the brotherhood.

• **Loyalty:** A character must score successes equal to his Oathbond on an extended Conviction roll to take any action that he knows will harm—mentally, emotionally or physically—another member of his brotherhood. Each time this action is taken, it reduces his Oathbond rating by one. If this reduces the Oathbond to 0, the character is no longer part of the brotherhood—in any magical way, at least.

A sorcerer is limited to binding no more Dragon Bloods into a single sworn brotherhood than an amount equal to twice his Essence, and an Exalt cannot be a member of more than one brotherhood. If the spell is cast upon someone who is already a member of a sworn brotherhood, the target's Oathbond rating is used as a difficulty modifier for the ritual. Only those successes in excess of (the sworn character's Oathbond + 1) are counted in the new Oath. If no successes are rolled, the spell fails completely.

The effects of this spell are permanent, but if one or more members reduce their Oathbond to 0, the spell has no further effect on them. The Oathbond can be re-implemented, strengthening and deepening the bonds between members, but the cost is high. Each member must sacrifice a dot of permanent Willpower, and the caster of the spell sacrifices a dot of Permanent Essence in order to re-cast an existing Sworn Brothers' Oath. (These dots can be re-purchased later with experience.) Under no circumstances can a character's Oathbond rating exceed five times the Permanent Essence of the lowest Essence character in the brotherhood. Successes in excess of this rating are simply lost.

Brotherhoods with Oathbond ratings higher than 10 are extremely uncommon and considered unnerving by others, as the bonds between the members begin to permeate all aspects of their lives. Extremely strong brotherhoods begin to act in disturbingly similar fashion. They do not lose their individual personalities, but unconscious habits, mannerisms, preferences and other traits blend and merge, giving the members an eerie sameness to their behavior.

The Great Curse

Though Solar Exalted received the brunt of Primordial wrath, the Dragon-Blooded did not escape their notice. The more devious aspects of the Curse, which helped bring about the Usurpation, are story elements rather than game mechanics. Like their Celestial counterparts, however, the Terrestrial Exalted suffer ongoing effects from the Great Curse which may be quantified in game terms.

Dragon-Blooded receive points of Limit for violating or ignoring their primary Virtue, and for resisting supernatural mental influence, according to the same rules found in the **Exalted** core book, p.103.

Dragon-Blooded do not suffer the same Flaws as Solars, however. They do not choose a Virtue Flaw and do not have Limit Break Conditions. When a Dragon-Blooded character's Limit breaks, the impulses of his element and primary Virtue rule his actions. See the individual aspects in Chapter Four for the behaviors each Virtue induces when the Great Curse takes hold. Note that the lack of a Limit Break Condition means that Dragon-Blooded accrue points of Limit more slowly than Solars and therefore suffer Limit Break less often. When Dragon-Blooded Limit breaks, the duration is one full scene. Because Dragon-Blooded Limit Breaks are less restrictive than Solar ones, it requires Storyteller discretion to determine whether the character is trying to gain Partial Control or is overcome (and thereby gains bonus temporary Willpower points).


YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY.
NOT WHILE AN EMBER OF DRAGON'S FIRE STILL GLOWS WITHIN ME.
GUTTER THOUGH IT MIGHT.
DAMN IT...
SEE, I TOLD YOU I SAW SOMEBODY.


IS HE DEAD?
SURE LOOKS LIKE IT.
NOT... YET...
WHOA!
SURRENDER
COLD FROZE SOME SENSE INTO YOUR BRAINS, EH?
NO... YOU. YOU SURRENDER.
IS HE KIDDING?
MATE, YOU'RE UNARMED, LOST AND SPENT.
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING LEFT.
WRONG.
I'M A STUDENT OF HESIESH.
LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT THAT MEANS.

CHAPTER FIVE
CHARMS

In general, Terrestrial Charms work functionally the same as Solar Charms and obey all of the principles of Charm design outlined on pp. 178–185 of the **Exalted** core book. The major differences between Terrestrial and Solar are that Terrestrial Charms lack the raw power of Solar Charms, especially in the areas of perfect effects. The Dragon-Blooded have no true perfect attacks or defenses, nor do they have mind-controlling Charms that can create Servitude effects. While the magic available to the Children of the Dragons is less ostentatious than that of the Celestial Exalted, it is not to be underestimated. What Terrestrial Exalted lack in raw power, they make up for in versatility and in their capacity to join together into units that are more than the sum of their parts.

Charms in General

Unlike the Celestial Exalted, who are divided up into castes according to their predestined societal roles, each Terrestrial Exalt is elementally aligned with one of the Elemental Dragons. The original reason Dragon-Blooded of particular aspects are spiritually designed to favor certain Abilities over others is lost to antiquity, although the fact that each aspect has at least one Ability with combat utility suggests the Terrestrials' ancient role as support staff and shock troops for the Solar Exalted. Since the Great Uprising, Immaculate theology has attributed the arrangement of Aspect Abilities to the personalities and backgrounds of the Immaculate Dragons, the five ancient beings who led the Great Uprising and established the foundations of Dragon-Blooded society. The few Celestial Exalted whose memories reach back to the Primordial War reject such religious dogma and claim that each aspect was fashioned by one of the Elemental Dragons at Gaia's behest to fulfill an important support role in the armies of the Unconquered Sun.

The spiritual impact of having an elemental aspect rather than a caste cannot be overstated. Indeed, the five aspects are almost different forms of Exaltation instead of simply divisions within the same Exalt type. Aspect shapes not only one's preferred Abilities and Charms, but influences the development of one's character. For example, the degree of impetuousness tolerated of even an elder Fire Aspect as simply a part of her nature would be considered shameful in even the youngest Earth Aspect, as impetuosity is not a character trait expected or accepted from the more dignified Children of Pasiap.

The chief mechanical impact of having an aspect is that, in order to use a Charm associated with any Ability other than

one's own Aspect Abilities, the Dragon-Blood must temporarily harmonize his anima with that of an element different from his own. **Mechanically, this means that any Charms associated with Abilities other than Aspect Abilities cost one additional mote of Essence. If the Dragon-Blood uses a Charm multiple times on a single tick, only one additional mote need be paid. If more than one such Charms is used in a Combo, however, the character must pay an additional mote per out-of-Aspect Charm immediately upon activation of the Combo.**

For the Dragon-Blooded, all extra action, permanent, simple and supplemental Charms work fundamentally as they do for Solar Exalted, but Dragon-Blooded have the benefit of being able to use reflexive Charms more freely than any other Exalt type can. **A Dragon-Blood can freely use reflexive Charms at the same time as any other Charm without the use of a Combo, even when the reflexive Charms are associated with different Abilities.** The only limitation on this rule is that some reflexive Charms can be used only on the tick on which the Exalt acts and not reflexively on the ticks coming between actions. Each reflexive Charm notes the circumstances under which it can and cannot be used. Because of this advantage, the keyword Combo-Basic has no relevance to Dragon-Blooded and the keyword Combo-OK effectively applies to all reflexive Charms used by Dragon-Blooded. (Where those keywords appear, they are included only to describe how the Charm functions when used by an Eclipse Caste Solar or a Moonshadow Caste Abyssal.)

Generally, the Charms of the Dragon-Blooded are not as potent as comparable Solar Charms, although they are more efficient. For example, most Dragon-Blooded Charms that add to dice pools do so at a rate of two dice per mote spent. **However, a Dragon-Blood cannot use such a Charm to increase any dice pool by more than (her Ability + any applicable specialty).** As with comparable Solar Charms, any fractional motes of Essence are lost. If the Dragon-Blood uses a Charm that gives her two or more dice per mote spent but cannot utilize one of the dice due to pool-doubling restrictions, then that die is lost. This rule also applies to Terrestrial (Ability) Reinforcement, which allows a Dragon-Blood to give and receive additional dice to and from others. Additional dice a Dragon-Blood gains through such a Charm count toward the maximum number of dice that can be added to the Ability. **In other words, no combination of group-aid Charms and dice-adding Charms can raise a Dragon-Blood's Ability to more than twice her (Ability + applicable specialty).**



New Keywords

The following new keywords are applicable to some Dragon-Blooded Charms.

Cooperative: If a Charm has this keyword, then multiple Dragon-Blooded who all know the Charm can use it simultaneously while in close contact. By doing so, the animas of all participants interact, improving the potency of the Charm. Often, Elemental Charms (per the next new keyword) are also Cooperative Charms, and Dragon-Blooded using them in tandem can generate more sophisticated elemental effects over much larger areas than a single Dragon-Blood could while working alone. Only Dragon-Blooded can use such Charms cooperatively. Eclipse or Moonshadow Caste Exalted can learn these Charms, but the anima of a Celestial Exalt is not designed to interact with that of other Exalted so as to produce the same effect. Generally, Charms with this keyword can be used in Combos unless otherwise noted. A Cooperative Charm can never be used in a Combo if it is also being used in a cooperative

manner, though, i.e. with two or more Dragon-Blooded using it simultaneously to gain the cooperative benefits.

Elemental: A Charm with this keyword has an elemental effect. In some cases, this effect is purely cosmetic, and the underlying Charm functions the same way regardless of the aspect of the Dragon-Blood who uses it. More often, however, the Charm functions somewhat differently depending on the Exalt's aspect. For example, Elemental Bolt Attack (see pp. **133-134**) produces the same base damage effect regardless of who uses it, but if a Fire Aspect uses it, it inflicts additional burning damage, whereas the version fired by a Wood Aspect poisons the target with a plant toxin. The Charm descriptions explain how such Charms change by aspect. An Eclipse or Moonshadow Caste Exalt who learns an Elemental Charm understands only the version used by the Dragon-Blood from whom she learned the Charm.

General Charms

Excellencies and Related Charms

Like the Solar Exalted, Dragon-Blooded have Charms known as Excellencies that can be purchased once for each Ability. However, in addition to the three Excellencies common to all Exalted, the Dragon-Blooded have access to a special Charm, Terrestrial (Ability) Reinforcement, which allows a Dragon-Blood to temporarily boost the Ability traits of other characters with whom he is allied.

First (Ability) Excellency—

Essence Overwhelming

Cost: 1m per 2 dice; **Mins:** (Ability) 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Dragon-Blooded can invoke this Charm when making a roll based on the relevant Ability. The Charm adds two dice to the roll for each mote spent. The maximum number of dice that can be added to any one roll, however, is equal to the Dragon-Blood's Ability rating plus any applicable specialty. The Exalt can also use this Charm to enhance unrolled uses of the relevant Ability. The player rolls one die for every mote spent, up to a maximum number of dice equal to the relevant Ability plus any applicable specialties. **Each success on the roll increases the applicable DV by one.**

Characters cannot use this or other Excellencies or dice-adding Charms to "create" actions. For example, if a character attacks on tick 3 and will attack again on tick 8, she cannot buy dice for an attack on tick 4 that only exists because she used the Excellency to conjure dice for it. Yet a character who uses this or other reflexive Charms to add to an attack can also use it to enhance her defense until the next tick when she acts, but she must spend Essence for each separate roll she wishes to modify.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. The Dragon-Blood, however, is limited in using the Charm as follows: The Charm can be used to add dice to any Ability on the tick in which the Dragon-Blood acts. On the ticks between actions, this Charm can only be used to enhance unrolled uses of the Ability to increase an applicable DV or to add dice to an Ability used in a Counterattack Charm. This Charm can not, for example, be used to purchase Melee dice between actions to be used for extra attacks.

Second (Ability) Excellency—

Essence Triumphant

Cost: 2m per success; **Mins:** (Ability) 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Dragon-Blood can invoke this Charm when making a roll based on the relevant Ability. The Exalt can spend up to (Ability + applicable specialties) in motes. **The Charm adds one automatic success to the roll for every two motes spent.** If the Dragon-Blood uses Essence Triumphant in combination with Charms that add dice, each success purchased with Essence Triumphant reduces by two the maximum number of dice that she can add.

The Exalt can also use this Charm to enhance unrolled uses of the relevant Ability. For every two motes spent, the Dragon-Blood can increase the applicable DV by one, up to a maximum improvement equal to her Ability trait plus any applicable specialties.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. The Dragon-Blood, however, is limited in using the Charm as follows: The Charm can be used to purchases automatic success on any action made on the tick in which the Dragon-Blood takes a normal action. On the ticks between actions, this Charm can be used only to enhance an unrolled use of the relevant Ability to improve a DV or to add dice to an Ability used in a Counterattack Charm. This Charm can not, for example, be used to purchase automatic successes between actions to be used for extra attacks.

Third (Ability) Excellency—

Essence Resurgent

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** (Ability) 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 4 for attacker, Step 6 for defender)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

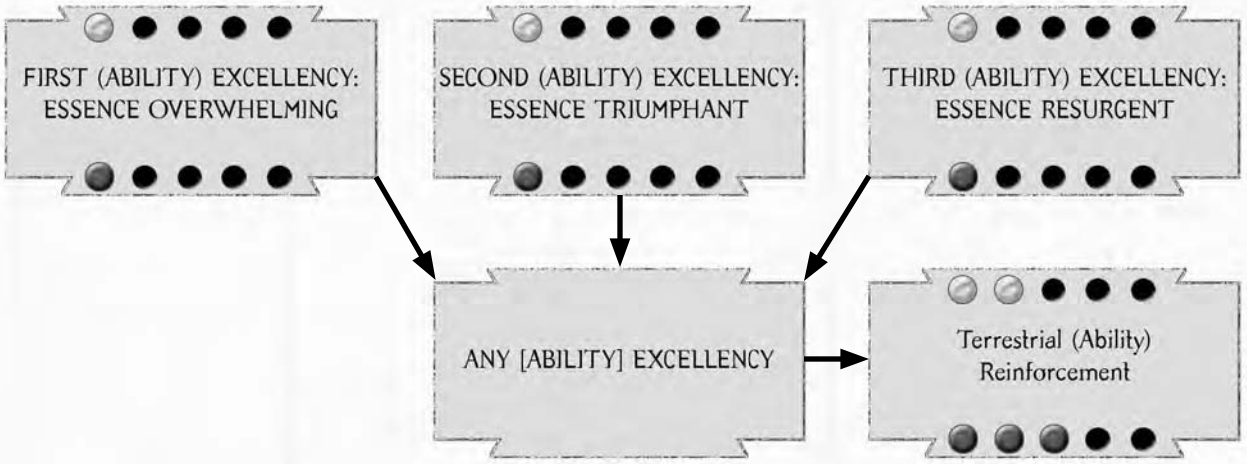
Dragon-Blooded with this Charm recovery smoothly from error. **The Exalt can invoke this Charm after making a roll based on the relevant Ability. This Charm allows the player to make a second roll, using the new result if the Exalted prefers it to the first.** The Exalted can also use this Charm to enhance unrolled uses of the relevant Ability. **By spending three motes, the Dragon-Blooded can increase an applicable DV by half the relevant Ability.**

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo, but the Charm can be used only on the tick in which the Dragon-Blooded uses the Ability for which a reroll is being purchased.

Terrestrial (Ability) Reinforcement

Cost: 1m per 2 dice + 1m per subject; **Mins:** (Ability) 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Excellency for the relevant Ability

The two greatest strengths of the Dragon-Blooded have always been their superior numbers and their boundless capacity for teamwork. In the First Age, the Terrestrial Exalted were the unit commanders who led troops into battle under the direction of Celestial generals. In the modern era, Dragon-Blooded retain the



capacity to elevate the mortals around them to greatness, if only temporarily. A Dragon-Blood with this Charm can improve the ratings of his allies in the relevant Ability for brief periods of time, effectively transferring the benefits of the First Excellency to another person for the duration of an entire scene. All allies to be affected must hold hands at the time of the Charm's activation.

The Dragon-Blood must spend one mote for every ally to be augmented and one mote for every two dice that are added to each person's rating in the relevant Ability. The maximum number of allies who can have their Ability ratings boosted at one time is equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. The Charm has two limitations. First, no ally's Ability rating can be raised above the Ability rating of the Exalt who invokes this Charm. Second, no ally's Ability rating can be increased to more than twice its normal rating. Therefore, the ally must have at least one dot in the Ability for this Charm to affect him at all. The extra Ability dots apply for an entire scene for all purposes. If the augmented Ability affects one of the ally's DV ratings, the relevant DV should be recalculated for the duration of the scene. As is normal for dice-adding Charms, fractional motes left over by pool-size restrictions are lost.

Air Aspect

The Immaculate Texts describe Mela as the eldest of the Immaculate Dragons, Exalting remarkably late in her mortal life. Prior to Exaltation, she was described as a teacher, scholar and tutor to the children of the Solar Exalted. Indeed, it was through her observations of the Anathema's mistreatment of their own children that Mela realized the Solars were completely corrupted. When she Exalted, she used her Dragon-blessed abilities to spy on the parents of her charges prior to the Great Uprising and later to steal away or sabotage many powerful artifacts from the Solars before they could be used against her fellow Dragon-Blooded.

Celestial Exalted who recall the Air Aspects of the Primordial War claim that they were bred by the Elemental Dragons to fill two primary roles: sorcerer's apprentice or personal assassin. Those Air Aspects who specialized in Linguistics, Lore and Occult were usually assigned as support staff for Twilight and No Moon Caste sorcerers, while those who excelled at Stealth and Thrown were prized by the Night Caste for their ability to slay targets with perfect discretion.

Linguistics

Language-Learning Ritual

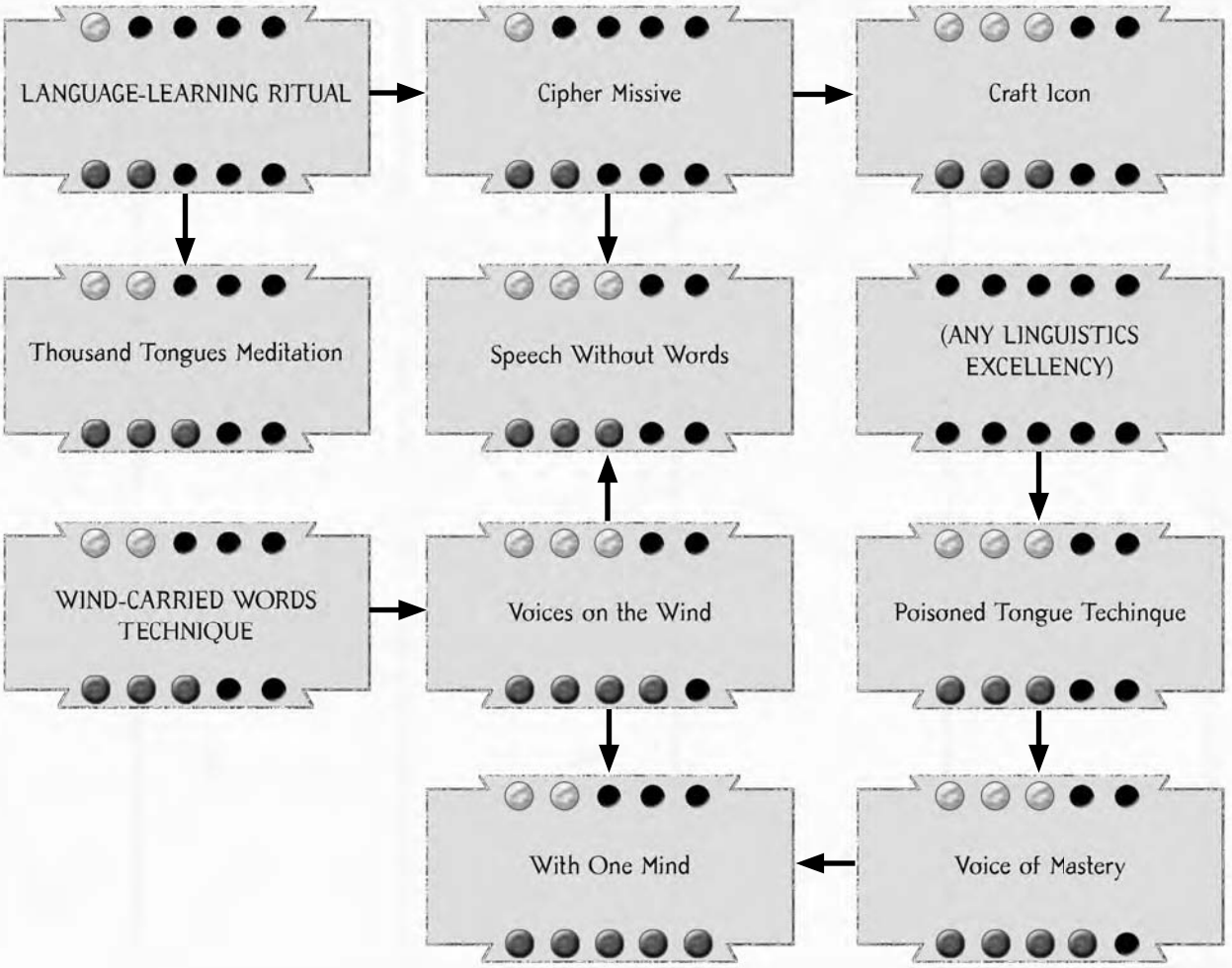
Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One week
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Children of Mela often serve as the diplomatic corps of the Dragon-Blooded Host, and while fluency in foreign tongues often requires years of study, this Charm can reduce the necessary time to just an afternoon. The Dragon-Blood must spend at least one hour meditating and listening to a foreign language being spoken. He can then "absorb" that language into himself, becoming completely fluent in both conversation and literacy. The Charm lasts for one week, at which time the knowledge gained fades completely.

Cipher Missive

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Linguistics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Language-Learning Ritual

Diplomacy is not the only purpose to which words can be directed, and the Children of Mela often make excellent cryptographers as well. With this Charm, an Exalt can hide sensitive material from prying eyes within a supernaturally complex code. The Dragon-Blood must fashion the document herself, and it can be no longer than a number of pages equal to her Essence. The player rolls (Intelligence + Linguistics), with the successes determining the number of successes needed for someone else to decipher the document. Additionally, each deciphering roll requires an (Intelligence + Linguistics) roll with a base difficulty equal to the permanent Essence of the character who fashioned the Cipher Missive (Each deciphering roll also represents a number of days equal to the Charm-user's permanent Essence.) The character who uses this Charm may identify a number of individuals equal to twice his Essence who can read the document without difficulty. Alternatively, he can identify a single class of individuals, which must be limited and specific, who can freely read the document. For example, such classes might include "only magistrates" or "only members of House Iselsi."



Craft Icon

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Cipher Missive

To the savants of the Dragon-Blooded, the efficiency with which information can be conveyed is almost as valuable as the information itself. With this Charm, an Air Aspect can convey complex information or directives to another with what appear to be only simple pictograms. In fact, the drawings are actually a complex arrangement of sigils that can contain surprisingly large amounts of information in a very dense package, from complex instructions for assembling a sophisticated piece of First Age technology to exacting directions revealing a hidden location.

For the character to employ this Charm, the player must roll (Manipulation + Linguistics) at a difficulty of 2. Successes above this difficulty determine the level of complexity encoded into the pictogram, with each success over the threshold providing the equivalent of one minute of careful instruction that can be obtained through later study of the pictogram. The icon can be drawn or carved into any media the creator wishes, but doing so requires the expenditure of Essence. As a result, no one else can reduce the icon without another application of this Charm or a similar one. Icons created with this Charm are about two square inches in size per success.

Thousand Tongues Meditation

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Language-Learning Ritual

While the Language-Learning Ritual grants total fluency in a tongue for an extended period, this Charm allows the Dragon-Blooded to quickly grasp the essentials of an unknown language for a brief period. For the duration of the Charm, the Dragon-Blood can speak and understand any foreign language. Furthermore, in the presence of multiple people speaking different languages, the Exalted can understand and be understood by all of them. The maximum number of speakers with whom the Dragon-Blood can interact using a single application of this Charm is equal to the character's permanent Essence. Communication is limited, however, and the Dragon-Blood suffers a -4 penalty on all social and communicative actions, reduced by one for each point of permanent Essence by which she exceeds the minimum. Also, this Charm affects only verbal speech. Neither written speech nor sign language can be conveyed with this Charm.

Poisoned Tongue Technique

Cost: 2m, 1wp, **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Social

Duration: Concentration
Prerequisite Charms: Any Linguistics Excellency

To the Children of Mela, words can be weapons just as deadly as a blade or an arrow. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can manipulate a conversation she overhears, causing other listeners to hear what she desires instead of what was actually said. The Exalt must be able to hear the conversation in order to manipulate it with this Charm, and while eavesdropping through Charms or other magical means is acceptable, the Dragon-Blood must be within (the Exalt's permanent Essence x 100) feet from all participants. The Dragon-Blood's player must roll (Manipulation + Linguistics), with the successes determining the level of control. One success allows the Dragon-Blood to alter minor details, enough to confuse, offend or even arouse one of the parties. Three or more successes allows the Exalt to alter significant details, perhaps enough to completely color one participant's impressions of another. With five or more successes, the Exalt can control any aspect of the conversation.

Participants in the conversation may notice the effect with a reflexive (Wits + Perception) roll against a difficulty equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence. On a successful roll, the participant knows that the conversation is being manipulated and can attempt to communicate this through nonverbal means. On a failure, none of the participants recognize that their own words are being changed or that the other parties do not hear what the speaker intends to say. In the Realm, abuse of this Charm is a serious breach of etiquette. In some situations, it is even considered a crime.

Voice of Mastery

Cost: 5+m; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Poisoned Tongue Technique

The elocution and charisma of Air-aspected debaters is astonishing to behold, and never more so than when Essence powers their words. For the duration of this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can add a number of dice equal to his Essence to any speech-related roll, be it seduction, persuasion or intimidation. The Charm can normally only affect one listener at a time, but each extra mote spent doubles the number of listeners who can be affected. If the Charm is used defensively in social combat, add half the Exalt's Essence, rounded up, to his Parry MDV. The Dragon-Blood must be able to speak the listener's language, either naturally or with Charms, in order for this Charm to have any utility.

Wind-Carried Words Technique

Cost: 1m per message, plus distance; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The wind carries many things, and for the Children of Mela, sound is one of them. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can whisper his words aloud and know that the winds will convey them to his intended listener, wherever that listener is. For a base cost of one mote, the character can transmit one message to the ear of any single person within range. The words actually do not need to be spoken, but the Dragon-Blood must at least mouth them. The base range of the Charm is equal to (the speaker's Essence x 100) feet. Also, each additional mote spent increases the range by a factor of 10. Therefore, a character with an Essence of 4 can transmit a message 400 feet for one mote, 4,000 feet for two motes or 40,000 feet for three motes. This total quantity of motes must be expended for each individual message, which can be no more than 25 words in length.

The sending character need not know the exact location of the intended recipient, but she must know her approximate location, which is defined as "within (sender's Essence x 5) miles." The targeted location can, however, be some place that the sender has never even been, such as "the command HQ of the Fourth Legion stationed in Arjuf." This Charm is considered essential to military operations for both the Realm and the Seventh Legion. Most Dragon-Blooded with any military background know this Charm, and all but the least proficient graduates of the House of Bells do.

Voices on the Wind

Cost: 3+ motes; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One minute
Prerequisite Charms: Wind-Carried Words Technique

A favorite of spies and intelligence operatives across the Realm, this Charm permits a Dragon-Blood to hear the faintest trace of words echoing through the air, allowing him to eavesdrop on conversations at seemingly impossible distances. The Essence cost of the Charm is determined by how far away the Exalt is from the conversation he wishes to hear. For the basic cost, the Exalt can clearly hear any normal speech originating anywhere within (listener's Essence x 100) feet, as well as pinpoint the approximate location of the speaker if he doesn't already know. Each additional mote of Essence increases the range by a factor of 10.

The Dragon-Blood must specify which speaker he desires to spy upon. He cannot indicate a general target such as "anyone plotting against me." Rather, he must name an individual and then listen to see if she is currently within range and speaking aloud. If he can hear a named speaker, however, the Dragon-Blooded can also automatically hear the replies of anyone in the speaker's immediate vicinity with whom she is conversing. This Charm cannot be used to listen to conversations taking place within airtight rooms, and it may also be defeated by certain supernatural warding effects. (Enchanted wind chimes are commonly used for this purpose.) Finally, spying with this Charm demands total concentration, and the listener cannot perform any other action while this Charm is being employed.

Speech Without Words

Cost: 2m + 1m per ally; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Cipher Missive, Voices on the Wind

With this Charm, a Terrestrial Exalt and a number of her allies can communicate complex information silently through the use of hand gestures and signals. The Exalt can enable silent communication between only herself and a maximum number of allies equal to her (Wits + Linguistics). Although the communication is silent, all participants must be able to see each other, and it is obvious to any onlookers that the participants are communicating with each other. Therefore, this Charm is of limited utility in a social setting, as opposed to a combat or stealth situation. Also, at the Storyteller's discretion, extremely complex or abstract ideas might require a (Wits + Linguistics) roll on the part of both the person sending the message and all who wish to comprehend it. "You take the guy on the left, and I'll take the two on the right"

should not require a roll, but the recitation of lyric poetry through hand gestures probably would.

With One Mind

Cost: 2 motes per dot of increase; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Voice of Mastery, Voices on the Wind

This Charm allows a unified group of Dragon-Blooded to "speak without words," moving as a single unit of such purpose that verbal orders are superfluous and a waste of the commander's time. Effectively, the individuals linked with this Charm share their surface thoughts, which conveys several effects. First, all observations made by any participant are shared by all—what one sees, all see. Second, in a combat situation, all commands, warnings or observations are nonverbal. Members of the group can trade opponents, execute flanking maneuvers or warn each other of impending sneak attacks instantly and silently. If one fighter is close enough, he can even parry or abort to parry any blow aimed at another, substituting his own PDV for that of his ally, provided he is close enough to the ally to plausibly do so.

Third, for every two motes spent, each ally affected gains one dot each in Wits, Perception and Melee, although no one can gain more dots in a single category than the Exalt's Linguistics rating, nor can any participant raise an Attribute or Ability above five dots. Also, the Dragon-Blood must spend two motes per dot of increase for every participant. Therefore, if the Exalt wishes to affect three allies, raising each of the affected ratings by three dots, she must spend a total of 18 motes (six motes per point of increase, multiplied by three for the number of participants). The Exalt cannot raise different allies' Abilities by varying degrees at the same time, and he can't increase his own ratings through the use of this Charm.

Lore

Elemental Concentration Trance

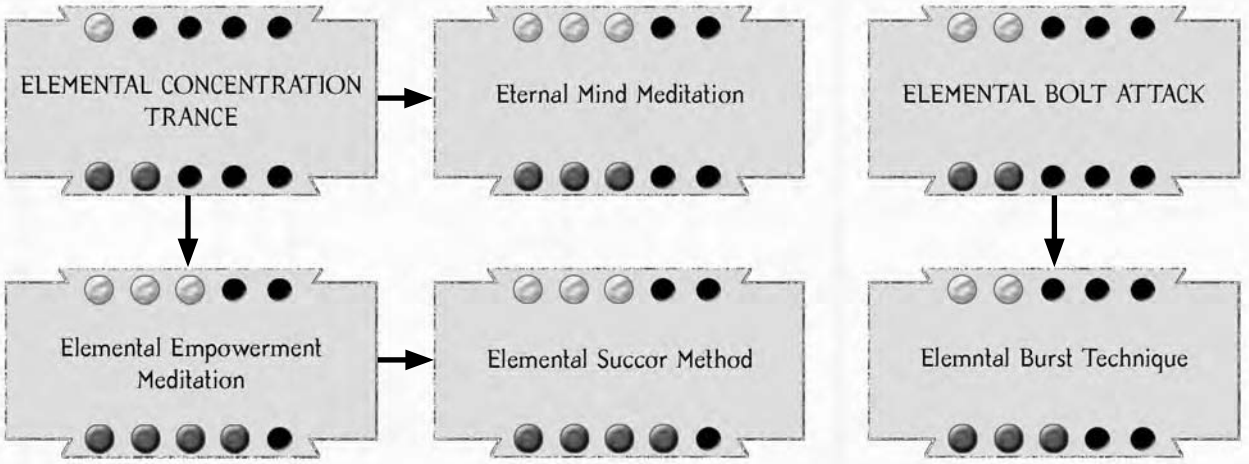
Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: None

The simplest of Lore techniques exercised by the savants of Air, this Charm allows a character to meditate on her aligned element to temporarily augment her capacity to absorb knowledge. Provided that the Exalt has all the necessary research material handy, she can absorb a week's worth of study in a single day. She can continue to use this Charm on subsequent days, but if she uses it more days in a row than a number equal to her Lore trait, she suffers one level of unsoakable lethal damage for each extra day. The Exalt cannot heal this damage while under the effects of this Charm.

Eternal Mind Meditation

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Concentration Trance





Given the vast ages to which most of the Dragon-Blooded will survive, it's not surprising that their minds can become somewhat cluttered. This Charm allows the Exalt to attain perfect recall of any event he has experienced or anything he has ever read or heard. After spending the required Essence and Willpower, the Exalt must spend a moment in quiet contemplation. The Dragon-Blood's player then rolls (Intelligence + Lore), with the difficulty determined by how far back into the character's memories he wishes to delve. One success is sufficient to recall a hurried conversation from a few years back, while five permits the Exalt to recall events even from early childhood with perfect clarity. Some Dragon-Blooded savants even claim to recall memories of time spent in the womb through the use of this Charm. Eternal Mind Meditation does not impair the character in any way. He experiences the events of his past as memories, rather than as an immersive experience that might adversely affect his DV or his awareness of his surroundings.

Elemental Empowerment Meditation

Cost: 1+wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Elemental
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Concentration Trance

The blessings of Terrestrial Exaltation allow the Princes of the Earth to draw energy directly from elemental sources, restoring their depleted Essence reserves in times of crisis. The Dragon-Blood can draw Essence directly from his aspected element, regaining a number of motes equal to his Lore Ability for every Willpower point spent. If the Dragon-Blood spends more Willpower points in a day than his Essence, each additional use of Willpower for this Charm will also inflict one level of unsoakable bashing damage. The character must be able to physically touch the element with which he is aligned in order to draw Essence from it.

Elemental Succor Method

Cost: 5m and 1wp per lhl; 2 motes per hl; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Elemental
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Empowerment Meditation

While Elemental Empowerment Meditation allows the Dragon-Blood to replenish her lost Essence, this Charm allows her to restore her own body, using the power of the elements to heal her injuries. The character must immerse herself in her favored element as much as possible (standing in a burning fire, submerging herself in water, etc.) and must spend five motes and one Willpower for every lethal health level healed or two motes per bashing level healed. This Charm cannot be used to heal aggravated damage, nor can it be used to restore lost limbs or heal other such mutilations.

An Eclipse or Moonshadow Caste Exalt who learns this Charm can use the Charm with only the element associated with the teacher of the Charm. That is, if an Eclipse learns Elemental Succor Method from a Fire Aspect, he cannot heal himself by immersion in any other element.

Elemental Bolt Attack

Cost: 1m per 2L; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Cooperative, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Sometimes referred to as "the Dragon's Claw," this Charm permits a Dragon-Blood to fire a bolt of elemental energy appropriate to his aspect from his hand toward a target. The bolt is targeted with (Dexterity + Athletics) or (Dexterity + Archery), whichever is preferred, with an Accuracy bonus equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence and a range of (Essence x 20) yards. The bolt inflicts 2L per mote spent up to a maximum number of motes equal to the Dragon-Blood's Stamina. The bolt also has an elemental aspect and triggers the following elemental effects: **Air** buffets the target, subtracting two dice from her next action. **Earth** triggers a tremor beneath the target's feet, forcing her player to roll (Dexterity + Athletics), difficulty 4, to keep the character from falling. **Fire** sets the target ablaze for a single action (+4L to the attacker's damage pool). **Water** fills the target's lungs with seawater, adding three ticks before her next action due to violent coughing. **Wood** exposes the target to a plant toxin, requiring a reflexive (Stamina + Resistance) roll, with a difficulty equal to (the Dragon-Blood's Essence), to avoid suffering a -1 penalty on all actions for the remainder of the scene.

Multiple Dragon-Bloods who know this Charm can combine their powers to generate a bolt of exceptional power. One Exalt (usually the one with the best attack pool or the one with the highest Stamina rating) must serve as the focus, with his (Dexterity + [Athletics or Archery]) used to determine the base attack pool. Additionally, the Stamina of the focus determines the maximum number of motes that each participant can spend, with the total number of motes spent determining the base damage pool. In other words, if the focus has a

Stamina of 4, then no participant can expend more than four motes to fuel the bolt. The Accuracy bonus of the attack is based on the Essence of the focus but gains a +1 bonus per additional participant. The range of the attack is equal to (the combined Essence of all participants x 20) yards. Finally, the elemental side effects of each separate aspect who aids in this Charm are inflicted upon the target. If multiple Dragon-Blooded of the same aspect aid in this Charm, however, their special elemental effect is applied only once. Therefore, if an Earth Aspect, two Fire Aspects and a Water Aspect combine to fire a single bolt, the player of the target—if successfully hit—must roll to avoid falling and will be delayed an additional three ticks before his next action due to the seawater, but only four dice are added to the damage pool due to fire damage, rather than eight.

Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, this Charm is always considered to be an Air-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies, and Dragon-Blooded can only learn the version associated with their aspects.

Elemental Burst Technique

Cost: 1m per 1L; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Cooperative, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Bolt Attack

This Charm is identical to Elemental Bolt Attack in all respects except the following. First, each mote spent on the burst inflicts only one level of lethal damage. Second, the burst inflicts damage across a circular area with a radius equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence in yards. The burst attack has a range increment of (permanent Essence x 20) yards and an Accuracy bonus equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. The burst also applies elemental effects identical to the Elemental Bolt Attack to each person caught within the burst radius. If multiple Exalted who know this Charm join together, the power of the elemental burst is calculated in the same manner as the elemental bolt, and the radius of the burst is equal to the combined permanent Essences of all participants in yards.

Occult

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Dragon-Blood takes Terrestrial Circle Sorcery actions. See **Exalted**, p. 252.

Spirit-Detecting Mirror Technique

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

After the Great Uprising, it fell to the savants of the Air to attempt to repair the Terrestrial Exalted's badly fractured relationships with the spirit courts. In both diplomacy and spycraft, they used this Charm, which allows a Dragon-Blood to see the reflection of unmanifested spirits in any reflective surface, such as a mirror, a polished sword or even a still pool of liquid. Furthermore, the Dragon-Blood can hear the voices of any spirits he can see, allowing for both conversations and, perhaps, discrete eavesdropping.

Harmonious Wind-Luring Song

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One hour
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Mirror Technique

Of all the spirit courts, the Air Aspects, have the greatest affinity for the courts of the sky. This Charm calls upon that elemental affinity to allow the Dragon-Blooded to invoke the power of the air spirits to summon a helpful wind. The wind summoned is not particularly strong, but it is powerful enough to interfere with Archery, adding half the Exalt's Essence to his DV against archery attacks. It is also powerful enough to affect the speed of a sailing ship, either adding or subtracting half the Dragon-Blood's Essence from the ship's Speed for the duration. The Air Aspect must spend about five minutes summoning the air spirits, usually through such activities as whistling, imitating the sounds of storms, whirling a bullroarer or simply playing a flute. The friendly spirits summoned will obey the Dragon-Blood's will (subject to their limited capabilities) for one hour. During that hour, the Exalt must spend one Miscellaneous Action (5 ticks) whistling or singing in order to change the wind's direction.

Water-aspected Dragon-Bloods have access to a functionally identical Sail Charm called Seven Seas Wind-Luring Chanty. The only differences between the two Charms are that the Water aspect version requires Sail 2 instead of Occult 2, has Hurricane-Predicting Glance as a prerequisite Charm in place of Spirit-Detecting Mirror Technique and requires the Exalt to be at sea.

Spirit-Grounding Shout

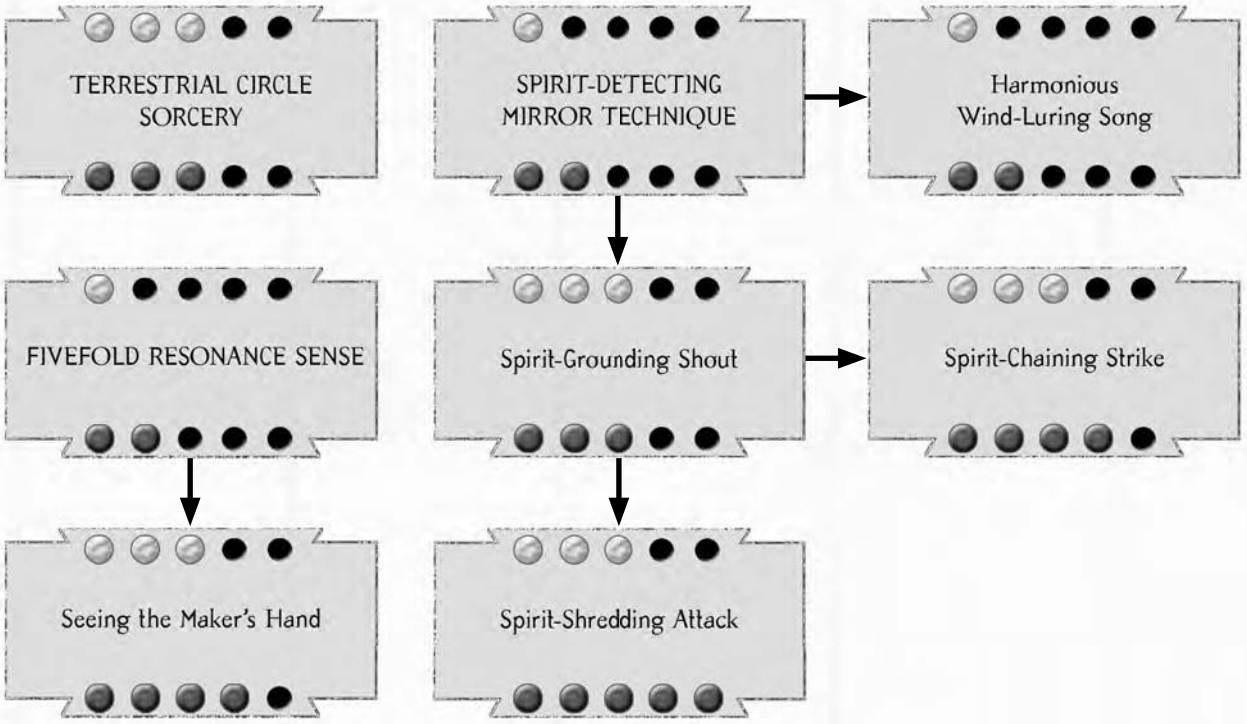
Cost: 5 motes; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Mirror Technique

Since the Usurpation, the Dragon-Blooded have accepted the role of defender of humanity against exploitation by spirits and ghosts run amok. This Charm has greatly aided the Dragon-Blooded in that role. When the character utters the Spirit-Grounding Shout, a reflexive opposed Essence roll is made for both her and the target spirit. If the Exalt wins, the spirit is forced to materialize and remain corporeal for a minimum of the character's permanent Essence in minutes. The Essence cost of the spirit's materialization is first paid for from the spirits' reserves. If the spirit does not have the Essence to materialize, then the balance is paid from the character's Essence pool. If the Dragon-Blooded and the target spirit do not have sufficient Essence between them to pay for the materialization cost, the Charm automatically fails, and the five motes spent by the character is lost. (Any motes that would have been spent by the spirit or the Dragon-Blood to pay for materialization remain unspent, though.) The Charm likewise fails if the Dragon-Blood's player fails to get more successes on the opposed Essence roll than the target spirit does, and the Charm never affects spirit whose permanent Essence is higher than the Dragon-Blood's.

Spirit-Chaining Strike

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Five minutes
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Grounding Shout

With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can temporarily immobilize a spirit, often as a prelude to more permanent measures. The character must successfully strike the spirit with an attack, then the player



can make a reflexive (Intelligence + Occult) roll with a difficulty equal to the spirit's Essence. Each extra success imposes a one-die penalty to all actions the spirit takes for the next five minutes. If the extra successes exceed the spirit's permanent Essence, the spirit is completely immobilized and unable to act for the remainder of the scene. Subsequent uses of this Charm have a cumulative effect as long as the original application of the Charm has not lapsed, as do applications of the Charm by other Dragon-Blooded. The Charm also affects unmanifested spirits, but the Exalted must be able to see and touch the spirit to bind it. The Charm does not automatically render an attack capable of affecting unmanifested spirits. Spirit-Chaining Strike is explicitly permitted to be made a part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

Spirit-Shredding Attack

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Grounding Shout

This weapon in the Dragon-Blooded arsenal is especially hated and feared by the spirit hierarchies and is a significant explanation of how the Immaculate Order was finally able to bring the spirits of the Blessed Isle to heel. The Dragon-Blood must first make a successful attack against a spirit, either while the spirit is materialized or with some weapon or attack capable of affecting dematerialized spirits. The attack inflicts its normal damage. In addition, the attacker's player reflexively rolls (the character's Willpower + Essence) against a difficulty equal to the spirit's Essence. Each success reduces the spirit's temporary Essence by an amount equal to the Dragon-Blooded character's permanent Essence. The character does not steal the Essence, it dissipates into the air. If the spirit is destroyed by this Charm, that spirit is irrevocably gone.

Fivefold Resonance Sense

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

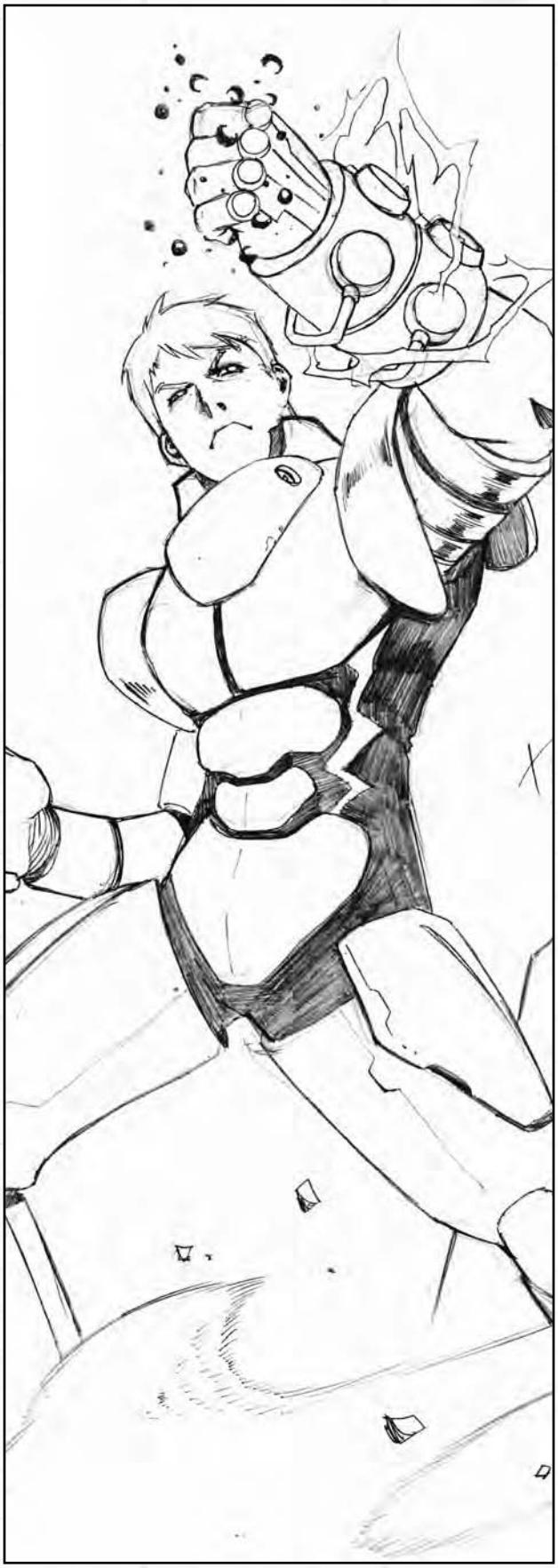
This Charm is most often used by independent surveyors and the professional jade sniffers of the Thousand Scales. For the duration of the Charm, the Dragon-Blood can detect the presence of jade within a radius of (Essence x 200) yards. If the jade to be detected is elementally aspected with the Dragon-Blood, no roll is required. If the jade is of a different aspect, the Exalt's player must roll (Perception + Occult) at a difficulty of 3. If the Dragon-Blood has an Occult rating of 3 and an Essence of 2, he can also detect other magical materials at a difficulty of 3, but only at a range of (Essence x 50) yards.

This Charm cannot be used to perceive magical materials that are already attuned to someone else, nor can it be used to detect any quantity of such materials that are being concealed through the use of Celestial or Solar level magic, including Charms or spells. If Terrestrial magic is being used to conceal the material, the Dragon-Blood's player must garner more successes on the (Perception + Occult) roll than successes on the roll made to conceal the material or the Essence of the character using the concealing magic (whichever is higher).

Seeing the Maker's Hand

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Fivefold Resonance Sense

This Charm is especially favored by the savants and engineers of Lookshy, who must often contend with relics of the First Age



discovered in the barrens of the Scavenger Lands. When confronted by an unidentified artifact, the character must handle the item in question as if he were attempting to attune it before spending the required Essence. The Exalt's player then rolls (Perception + Occult) for the character, with a difficulty rating equal to the item's Artifact rating. (Some artifacts are specially designed to conceal their functions, and analyzing such items carry a higher difficulty.) Success on this roll immediately gives the character a rough idea of the item's power level, as indicated by its Artifact rating, with additional successes giving greater insights into the item's capabilities. Large, powerful or exceptionally complex artifacts might require multiple uses of this Charm in order to fully understand their workings. This Charm is ineffective on artifacts that are already attuned to other people.

Stealth

Feeling-the-Air Technique

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Stealth 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

To the Children of Mela, every subtle breeze carries insight into the territory it crosses. The Dragon-Blood can perceive his immediate environment by reading minute eddies and currents in the air. In this manner, he may retain total spatial awareness even in complete darkness. He cannot read or observe color, but he can move freely, and he reduces blind-fighting penalties by half.

Soundless Action Prana

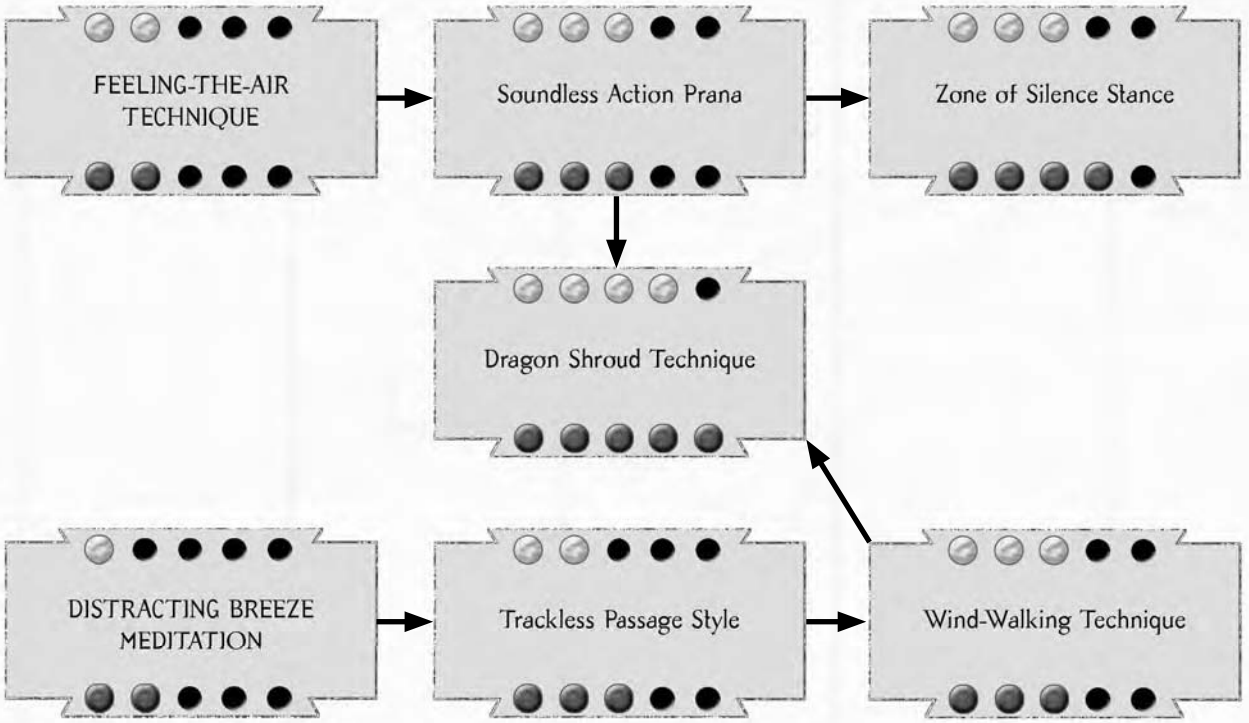
Cost: 1m per minute**; Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Feeling-the-Air Technique

With this Charm, the Air Aspect moves in perfect harmony with the air around her, suppressing the sound of her movements. For one minute per mote spent, the Dragon-Blood can eliminate any noise she directly produces, but not sounds she causes that are not connected to her person. That is, she could smash in a window with a rock in complete silence, but if she threw that rock through that window, the sound would be clearly heard. The Charm does not provide any direct benefit to Stealth rolls, but it will eliminate the chance of attracting attention in many circumstances, such as areas protected by alarms. The individual under the influence of this Charm is unable to speak while Soundless Action Prana is in effect and must communicate through nonverbal means, perhaps through Charms such as Speech Without Words or With One Mind.

Zone of Silence Stance

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One minute per point of permanent Essence
Prerequisite Charms: Soundless Action Prana

This Charm improves on the effects of Soundless Action Prana by totally suppressing all sound within (permanent Essence x 2) yards of the Exalt. Each extra mote spent increases the range by one yard, up to the maximum of the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. This zone of silence is centered on the character who invokes it, and it moves with him.



Distracting Breeze Meditation

Cost: 1m per 2 successes**; Mins:** Stealth 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows the Air Aspect to cause the wind itself to aid in his attempts at infiltration by disturbing and distracting those who might notice his passage. The wind might tickle the ear of a listener, cause a torch to gutter or go out, or blow papers off a desk. Regardless, the result is a minor environmental effect, incapable of damaging anyone or anything, which nevertheless is potentially distracting to those nearby. The Dragon-Blood can continue to trigger distracting effects for the duration of a scene. For one mote of Essence, the Charm adds two automatic successes to any Stealth roll made against a single target. Each additional mote spent allows the Dragon-Blood to distract one additional target at the same time, up to a maximum number of targets equal to the Exalt's permanent Essence. Therefore, if the Dragon-Blood spends three motes of Essence, he can add two automatic successes to any rolls made against up to three people, but if he encounters five people in a search party, he would not get the automatic successes against two of the five. The Charm cannot add more than two automatic successes to a single roll, no matter how much Essence is spent.

Trackless Passage Style

Cost: 2m per person per mile; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Distracting Breeze Meditation

The Dragon-Blood's preternatural stealth can now be extended to others. Moving with the lightness of a summer breeze, the Exalt and any allies to whom this Charm is extended leave no footprints, scents or other signs of their passage. By spending 2 motes, the Dragon-Blood can obliterate all signs of her passage for a distance of up to one mile. The Dragon-Blood can extend this concealment to her allies at a cost of an additional two motes per person, up to a total number of beings equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. When this Charm is activated, all non-supernatural attempts to track the protected characters fail automatically. Supernatural attempts to track the characters negate this Charm, and tracking is handled normally, as if neither party had used any supernatural effects.

Wind-Walking Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Until broken
Prerequisite Charms: Trackless Passage Style

Like the wind whistling through the trees or across the ocean, it is not in the nature of the Dragon-Blooded to fall or to sink. Once this Charm is activated, the Dragon-Blood gains perfect balance and can move across any horizontal surface (including water and quicksand) without difficulty. The manner of movement is irrelevant and can include running, crawling or swinging on tree vines. If the Dragon-Blood ever stops moving for even a single action, however, the Charm ends. The Dragon-Blood can carry his normal gear but no more than that.

Dragon Shroud Technique

Cost: 3+m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Soundless Action Prana, Wind-Walking Technique

The wind is not seen, but can only be detected through its effects on others. With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can bend light around himself to conceal his presence. The Exalt is not totally invisible, but can be detected as only a hazy blur. The Charm also muffles sound, masks scent, conceals body heat and generally protects against most forms of detection. Mechanically, the Dragon-Blood's identity is completely concealed by the blur, and every three motes spent adds one automatic success to Stealth-related rolls. However, the Charm does not actively conceal the character's passage, and he can be tracked normally unless Trackless Passage Style or other Charms are brought to bear.

Thrown

Loyal Weapon

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Thrown Excellency

The Children of Mela are renowned for their skill with thrown weapons, a puissance that makes such weapons seem to come alive in their hands. When the Dragon-Blood throws a weapon (including a thrown melee weapon) and activates this Charm, an invisible ribbon of air is attached to it, allowing the Exalt to summon it back to her hand when its path is spent. Whether the weapon strikes its target or not, it will immediately return to the Exalt and be available for reuse on her next regular action. Thrown weapons still attack with their normal Speed, however, and the weapon will not be available for any reflexive uses between the ticks upon which the Dragon-Blooded normally acts. Anyone in the path of the returning weapon can attempt to pluck it out of the air, but doing so requires a successful (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, followed by an immediate reflexive opposed (Strength + Athletics) roll against the player of the weapon's owner. If the person attempting to snatch the weapon fails on either of these two rolls, the weapon is unimpeded on its return journey.

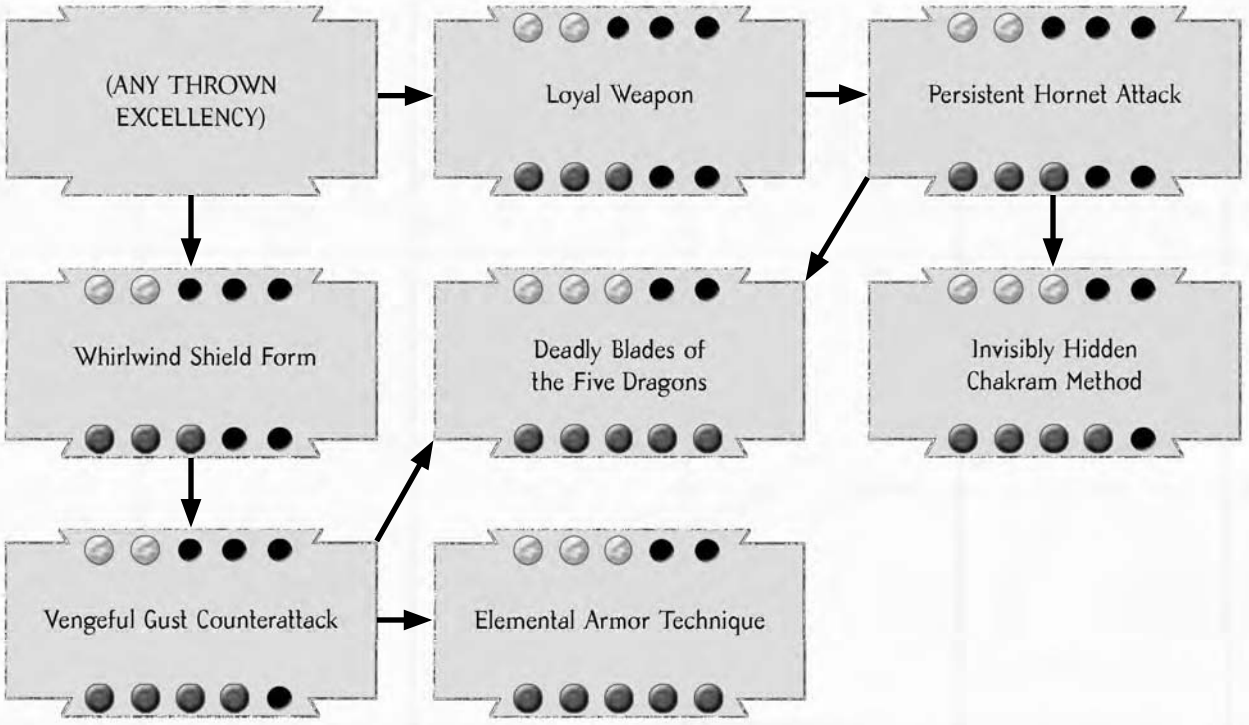
Persistent Hornet Attack

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: (Essence) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Loyal Weapon

The unearthly control of the Air Aspects over their throwing weapons continues to improve with this Charm. After the Dragon-Blood throws a weapon at a target, the weapon takes on a life of its own and continues to make extra attacks. The number of extra attacks is equal to the Exalt's permanent Essence, and each attack has the normal Speed for that particular weapon for determining the ticks upon which subsequent attacks occur. The attack roll made for the weapon is equal to the Dragon-Blood's (Perception + Thrown) pool. The Dragon-Blood can perform any other actions he desires as the weapon's independent attacks proceed, including using this Charm again on the same target with additional throwing weapons. The player must declare that he is invoking this Charm before rolling the first attack, and the target of the weapon cannot be changed during the Charm's duration. The target (or anyone else) can attempt to strike the weapon out of the air. Doing so requires an attack roll against a difficulty equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. If this attack roll is successful, the weapon is knocked to the ground, where it will rest inert. If a character uses this Charm as part of a Combo, he must pay the Essence cost for the other Charms each time the weapon uses them, and the additional Charms must be used on each attack made. The Exalt needs to pay the Willpower cost of the Combo only once, though. The Loyal Weapon Charm is an exception to this rule, and if Loyal Weapon is put in a Combo with Persistent Hornet Attack, the weapon will make all of its requisite attacks and only then return to the Exalt. The Essence for the Loyal Weapon Charm needs to be paid only once.

Invisibly Hidden Chakram Method

Cost: 10m per weapon, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple



Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Persistent Hornet Attack

The Dragon-Blood can conceal any number of thrown weapons Elsewhere and store them there for later use. Each weapon thus concealed costs 10 Essence and one Willpower. When the Dragon-Blood is ready to attack, he can reflexively summon any or all of them at no additional cost and attack on the same action. Such an attack suffers no penalties to the normal (Dexterity + Thrown) pool, and in fact, the Dragon-Blood remains free to use Charms to aid in the attack. The Dragon-Blood can hide a number of weapons equal to twice his Essence. These weapons cannot be detected except by beings or powers capable of perceiving items stored Elsewhere.

Whirlwind Shield Form

Cost: 3m + 1m per ally protected; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Thrown Excellency

The flawless skill of the Dragon-Blooded can even allow them to knock arrows and daggers from the air with a well-placed throw. The Exalt using this Charm can deflect ranged attacks aimed at himself or at allies at a cost of three motes plus one mote per each ally protected. While the Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood's Essence is automatically subtracted from any ranged attack dice pools rolled against him or his allies, in addition to the normal effects of DV. The Essence spent is committed for the duration of the Charm. This Charm does not require any actual weapons. Instead, the Whirlwind Shield is formed from the air itself, and any allies who are to be protected must be within (the Exalt's Essence) yards in order for the Dragon-Blood to shield them.

Vengeful Gust Counterattack

Cost: 2m or 4m**; Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Whirlwind Shield Form

A refinement of Whirlwind Shield Form, this Charm allows the Exalt to not only deflect incoming attacks, but to reflect them back on the attacker. If the Dragon-Blood is the target of a ranged attack, her player can opt to roll (Dexterity + Thrown) in place of relying on her normal DV. Each success on this roll subtracts from the attacker's successes, *and* if her successes exceed the attacker's, the projectile reverses course, attacking her opponent with a number of attack dice equal to her net successes. At a cost of four motes, the Dragon-Blood can also use this Charm in defense of an ally within a number of yards equal to her Essence.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used on any tick on which the Dragon-Blood or an ally is the target of an attack.

Deadly Blades of the Five Dragons

Cost: 3m per weapon**; Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Persistent Hornet Attack, Vengeful Gust Counterattack

The Dragon-Blood can summon throwing weapons out of thin air, fashioning them from the element to which she is aligned. Most commonly, the Charm summons throwing daggers, but some Dragon-Blooded summon more personalized weapons, such as shuriken, chakrams or throwing axes. Regardless of its external appearance, each weapon has a base Damage and Accuracy equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence and a range of (Essence x 10) yards. The Dragon-Blood can create up to (his Essence) weapons at a time. Once created, each weapon is thrown reflexively with the Dragon-Blood's full (Dexterity + Thrown) dice pool. If multiple weapons are created, they can all be thrown as part of a flurry. Elemental blades dissipate after the attack, but they can be put to uses other than striking a target during their brief duration, such as knocking an item out of someone's hand, slicing through ropes or even allowing the Dragon-Blood to parry lethal attacks.

Additionally, the weapons summoned have special properties based on the elemental alignment of their creator: **Air** blades buffet the target, subtracting two dice from her next action. **Earth** blades knock the target back, forcing her player to roll (Dexterity + Athletics), difficulty 4, to keep the character from falling. **Fire** sets the target ablaze for an action for an additional 4L. **Water** fills the target's lungs with seawater, adding three ticks before her next action due to violent coughing. **Wood** poisons the target, requiring her player to successfully roll (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty of (the Dragon-Blood's Essence) to avoid suffering a -1 penalty to all actions for the rest of the scene. (Subsequent successful uses of this poison effect are cumulative.) In order to inflict any of these penalties, the Dragon-Blood must successfully hit his target. He cannot inflict a particular elemental effect more than once per action, however, regardless of how many blades he throws at his target as part of a flurry.

Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, each Charm is always considered to be an Air-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies. A Dragon-Blood can learn only the version associated with his aspect.

Elemental Armor Technique

Cost: 1m or 2m per 1B/1L of soak, 1 wp**; Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Elemental, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Vengeful Gust Counterattack

The Dragon-Blood surrounds himself with a spinning vortex of material composed of his affinity element. Each mote of Essence spent adds 1L and 1B to the Dragon-Blood's soak, and the character can spend up to a number of motes equal to his dots in Thrown. The mystical armor is fully compatible with normal armor. The armor also has special additional effects based on the Dragon-Blood's aspect: **Air** armor consists of a swirling mass of ice crystals that buffet away ranged attacks, adding half the Dragon-Blood's Essence to his soak against ranged attacks. **Earth** armor consists of a cloud of swirling dust and particulate matter that obscures an attacker's view, adding half the Dragon-Blood's Essence to his DV against ranged attacks. **Fire** armor consists of a cloud of red-hot embers that impair the vision of attackers at close range, adding half the Dragon-Blood's Essence to his DV against melee attacks. **Water** armor surrounds the Dragon-Blood with a liquid cushion, adding half his Essence to his soak against melee attacks. **Wood** armor surrounds the Dragon-Blood with a cloud of choking pollen, allowing him to extend the effects of his anima-based plant toxins to anyone within a number of yards equal to his Essence.

The Dragon-Blooded can extend the benefits of this Charm to others, the Essence cost increases to two motes per point of soak,

and one Willpower must be spent for each individual protected by the Charm. The Exalt cannot use this Charm to provide armor to another Dragon-Blood of a different aspect, however, and no person can be the subject of more than one application of the Charm at the same time. Instead, the last application of the Charm takes precedence over any earlier applications.

Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, each Charm is always considered to be an Air-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies. A Dragon-Blooded can learn only the version associated with his aspect.

Earth Aspect

The Immaculate Order accords a special place to Pasiap as the de facto founder of Dragon-Blooded society, as he was the only one of the Immaculate Dragons who did not ascend to the Celestial Sphere at the end of the Great Uprising, opting instead to stay behind and lay the foundations of the Shogunate. The Texts describe Pasiap as a simple village blacksmith prior to his Exaltation, a man of great physical and moral strength but with nothing to suggest that he might become a warlord capable of matching the Anathema's greatest generals. Upon Exaltation, however, Pasiap instinctively understood the role that each soldier played in a military campaign, just as he previously understood how each piece of a sword needed to come together in his smithy. After founding the Shogunate, Pasiap withdrew from society in favor of monastic pursuits, and many Integrity and Resistance Charms are referred to collectively as Earth Meditation Charms due to the role they played in Pasiap's contemplations.

Returned Solars with memories reaching back to the Primordial War vehemently deny that any Dragon-Blood was ever as good a tactician as the Dawn Castes of old. Instead, the Earth Aspects of that era were simply unit commanders and adjutants for Dawn Castes, although a few of the more skilled craftsmen served Twilights as glorified blacksmiths, possibly the origin of the legends that surround Pasiap.

Awareness

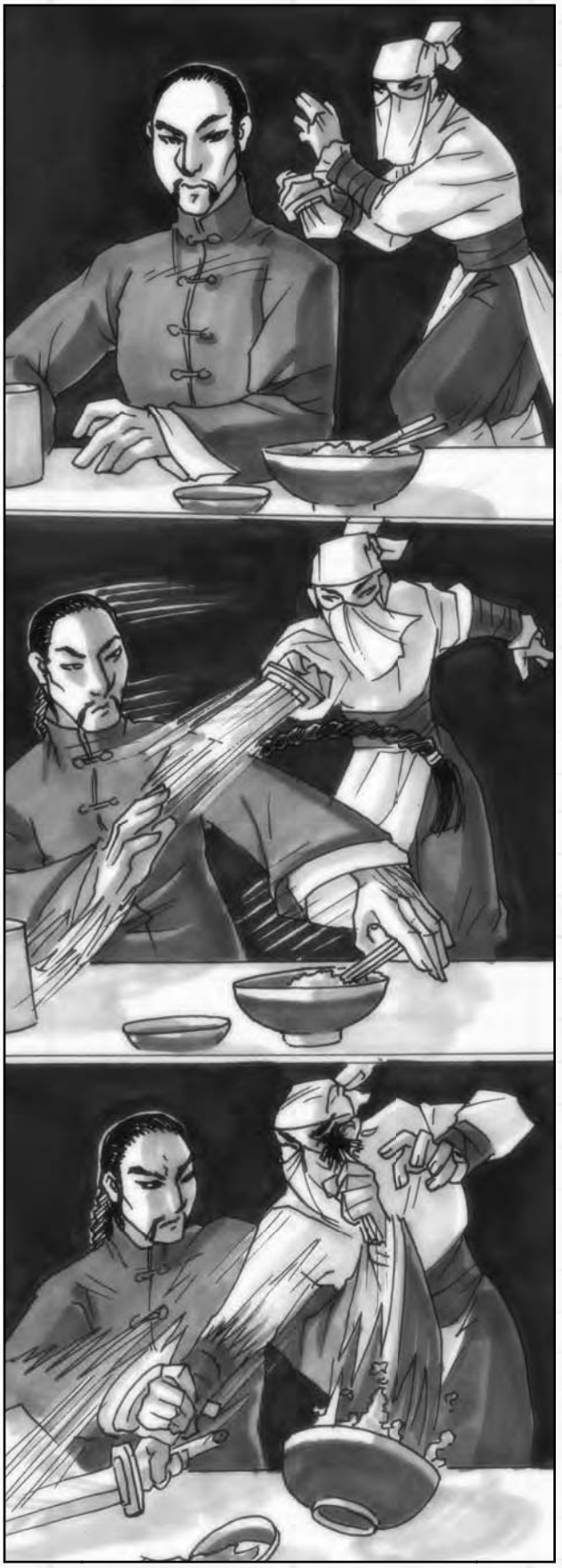
All-Encompassing Earth Sense

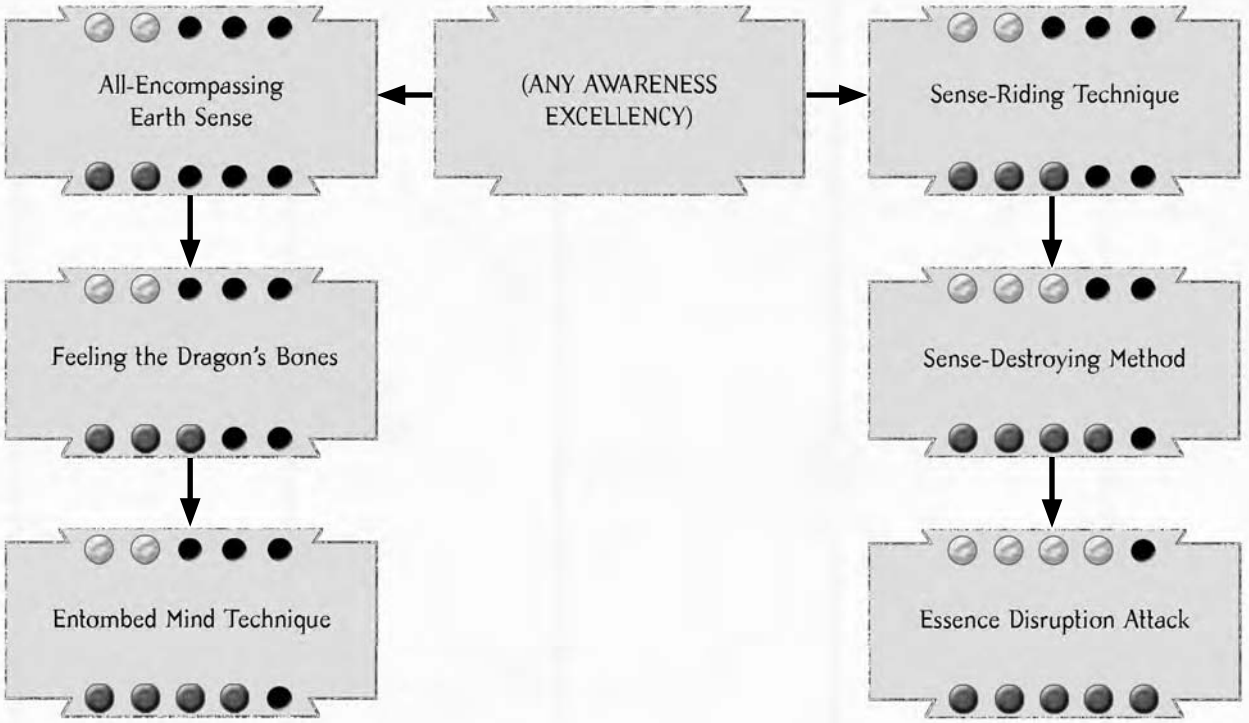
Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Awareness 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Awareness Excellency

The Earth whispers to its children and warns them of the footsteps of those who approach with hostile intent. While the Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood cannot be surprised by any means. The Charm draws upon the intimate connection between the Earth Aspect and the ground beneath his feet, making them as one. Consequently, in order to use this Charm, the Exalt's feet must rest on the ground. "The ground" includes earth, grass or the lowest floor of a building, but if the Dragon-Blood is at sea, up in a tree, on an upper level of a building or simply resting with his feet propped up on a table, the Charm confers no benefits. The Dragon-Blood may extend this benefit to companions at a cost of two extra motes per person, affecting a maximum number of people equal to his Essence.

Feeling the Dragon's Bones

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant





Prerequisite Charms: All-Encompassing Earth Sense

With this Charm, the whispers of the Earth grow louder and more informative. As long as she is touching the ground (or in a building doing so), the Dragon-Blood can sense anything else resting on the ground in a radius of (Awareness x 25) feet. The Exalt's player must roll (Intelligence + Awareness), with the character gaining more information with more successes.

Entombed Mind Technique

Cost: 5 motes; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling
Duration: Five minutes
Prerequisite Charms: Feeling the Dragon's Bones

To be aligned with Earth is to truly understand the concept of stasis, but such an understanding can overpower the minds of those not prepared for it. This Charm allows the Earth Aspect to infuse a person with the somnolent character of stone itself, thereby putting that person to sleep. The Exalt must somehow invoke the essential character of Earth prior to using this Charm, whether by capturing the subject's attention with a glittering jewel or simply speaking to him in a low droning voice. Regardless, the Exalt must somehow capture the subject's attention for at least five minutes, keeping him sitting still for this duration. The Dragon-Blood's player can then roll (Manipulation + Presence), with a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. Each success renders the target unconscious for one hour in a sleep so deep that nothing can rouse him. Once the magical duration has passed, the subject passes into normal slumber and can be awoken normally. While in the grip of this Charm, the sleeper will have strange dreams of underground caves and the mysteries within them. Often, the target of this Charm will awaken with insight on the location of a buried treasure or of where to dig a well that will never go dry.

Sense-Riding Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Until disrupted
Prerequisite Charms: Any Awareness Excellency

Using this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can ride the senses of another being. The subject must be within the Exalt's line-of-sight when the Charm is activated. Thereafter, the Exalt can see, hear, touch, smell and even taste whatever the subject experiences, provided that the subject remains within a number of miles equal to the Exalt's Essence. When the Charm is activated, the Terrestrial's player and that of the subject make opposed (Awareness + Essence) rolls. The Exalt's player must get at least one net success to enact the link. If the two tie, there is no effect. If the Exalt loses and the intended subject is also an Exalt, the subject's player gets a reflexive Awareness roll at difficulty 3 for the subject to know that someone was attempting to ride his senses. Mortal characters have no chance of knowing what the Exalt attempted.

The Terrestrial must maintain concentration for the duration of the Charm, and even riding on a slow-moving horse or sitting in a sedan chair can cause her to miss important details. Any actions more complicated than that are completely impossible. Furthermore, the Exalt is at a -3 penalty to remain aware of events happening around her own person. The Dragon-Blood cannot use any Charms or spells "through" the person she is riding, nor can she understand any languages she doesn't know even if the subject does know them. The Exalt can, however, gain the benefits of any supernatural improvements the subject makes to his own Awareness.

Sense-Destroying Method

Cost: 4 motes, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling

Duration: One action per point of permanent Essence
Prerequisite Charms: Sense-Riding Technique

Having mastered the capability of riding another's senses, the Earth Aspect can now close off those senses, denying his subject their use. The target must be within direct line of sight. The Dragon-Blood's player rolls (Awareness + Essence), with a difficulty equal to the target's Perception. Each net success subtracts one die from the target's Awareness rolls pertaining to a single sense, and if the net successes exceed the target's Perception, the sense affected is totally shut down for the duration of this Charm. The Charm must be applied separately for each of the five senses. The Charm lasts for one action for every dot of permanent Essence the Dragon-Blood has. While this Charm is most commonly used to disable an enemy by taking away their sight, neutralizing a target's sense of touch also allows him to ignore wound penalties (one level of wound penalties per success or all wound penalties if the successes exceed the target's Perception). Thus, Dragon-Blooded officers sometimes neutralize their subordinates' capacity to feel pain before sending them into battle. An Exalt cannot use this Charm on himself.

Essence Disruption Attack

Cost: 3+m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: None
Duration: Five ticks per dot of permanent Essence
Prerequisite Charms: Sense-Destroying Method

The ultimate form of Awareness is the ability to perceive Essence, and the ultimate form of Awareness manipulation is perhaps this Charm, which allows the Dragon-Blood to suppress her target's ability to perceive and manipulate the Essence around him. The Dragon-Blood must pay a minimum of three motes and one Willpower, and she can spend an additional number of motes up to her permanent Essence. The Dragon-Blood's player must then roll (Awareness + Essence) with a difficulty of 3 for the character to analyze the patterns of Essence that surround the intended target. The target must be in sight and no farther away from her than a number of feet equal to her (permanent Essence x 10). If the initial roll succeeds, the player can then roll (Willpower + Essence) against a difficulty equal to the target's Essence. Each net success on this roll increases the cost of all Charms and spells used by the target by one mote plus one additional mote for each extra mote of Essence the user spent activating the Charm. This surcharge is applied to every application of a Charm made by the target for a number of ticks equal to the Dragon-Blood's (Essence x 5). If the target uses a reflexive defensive Charm multiple times in a single action, he must pay the surcharge for each use. If he uses a Combo, he must pay the surcharge on each individual Charm that makes up the Combo.

Craft

Shaping Hand Style

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Craft 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One hour
Prerequisite Charms: Any Craft Excellency

The skill of a Prince of the Earth is so great that she doesn't even need tools to do her work. The Dragon-Blood can enchant one of her hands so that it will perform the functions of a tool—a pick axe, a hatchet, a hammer, etc.—while still functioning normally as a hand. The hand does not alter its appearance. Instead, invisible Essence flows around the hand to solidify in the shape of the desired tool according to the Dragon-Blood's will, dissipating into nothingness whenever she wants to use her hand for any normal purpose. The Charm must be used twice to affect both hands, and if the Exalt wishes to change tools, she must use the Charm again.

The Charm can be used to transform the Dragon-Blood's hand into a deadly weapon such as a hammer or a pickaxe, adding a maximum of +2 bashing or +1 lethal to her unarmed attacks, depending on whether the tool is bladed or not.

Stone-Carving Fingers Form

Cost: 1m per cubic foot; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Shaping Hand Style

Artisans often say that the essence of sculpture is to observe the rock that one wishes to carve and the simply slice away those portions that are not part of the desired end. This Charm brings truth to that aphorism, allowing the Dragon-Blood to engage in astonishing feats of stonecraft. The character must spend at least one minute carefully striking at a quantity of stone. Characters most typically use a tool of some sort, but a sword pommel or a rock will do, as will bare hands if the character has Martial Arts 2 or better. At the end of one minute, the character strikes the final blow, and the rock shatters, leaving behind whatever form the Dragon-Blooded wished to fashion.

The Exalt's player must roll (Wits + Craft). With one success, the character can blast an opening in a stone wall or quarry stone blocks ready for use in construction. With three successes, she can fashion a simple work of art or functional pottery (such as a jug already hollowed out for use) from living rock. With five successes, she can create artwork of astonishing beauty and complexity, including still-life sculpture so realistic that, on close examination, one can see pores and individual hairs. The Essence cost of this Charm is determined by the size of the volume manipulated: 1 mote per cubic foot of stone.

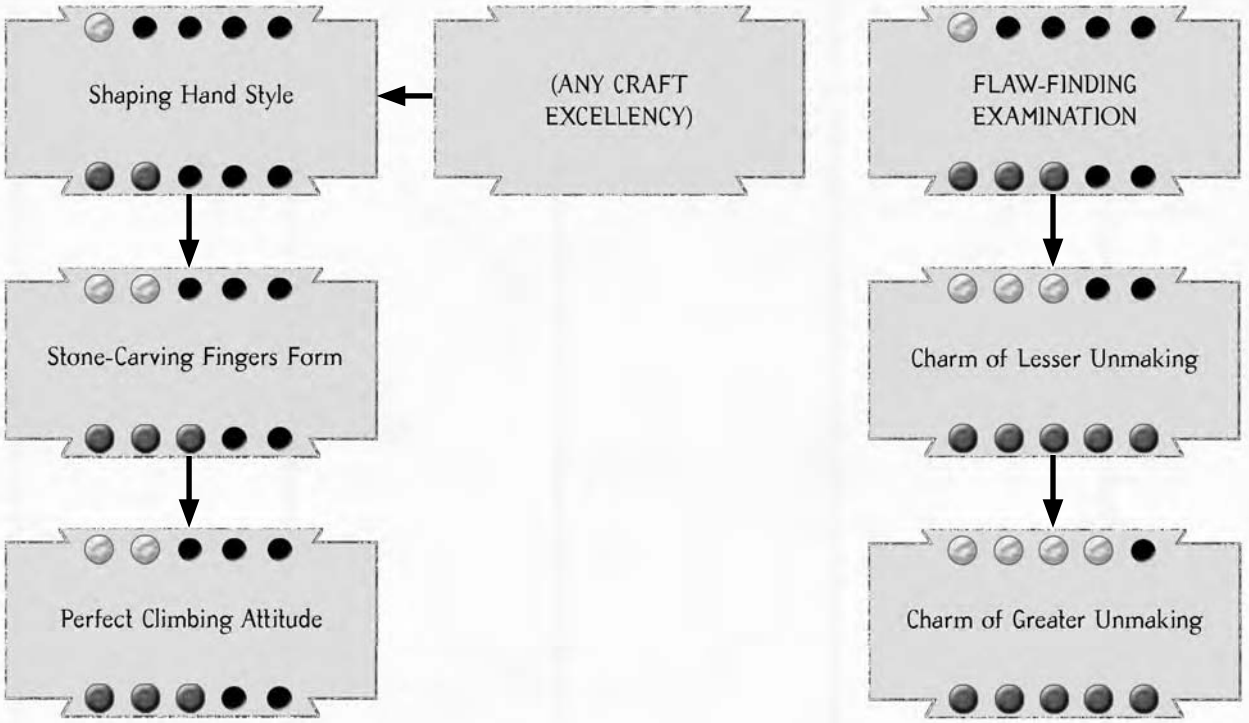
Perfect Climbing Attitude

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Stone-Carving Fingers Form

The bond between the Earth Dragon and its children is so great that it will not permit them to fall from great heights. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood becomes a flawless mountaineer and rock-climber. The Dragon-Blood's fingers pass easily into any rock face, leaving behind indentations that he and others can use as handholds. The Dragon-Blood himself can hang from any stone or earthen surface without a roll unless it is worse than sheer (such as an overhang or a cavern roof). Even then, he or anyone following him gains two automatic successes on an Athletics roll to crawl along such surfaces. The Dragon-Blood can move across such surfaces at a rate of 10 feet per action or twice that if the surface is already suitably rough enough for mountain climbing (or if someone has already used this Charm to make it so).

Flaw-Finding Examination

Cost: 1m for touch or 3m for sight, plus 1wp to repair; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One minute



Prerequisite Charms: None

The Dragon-Blood may attempt to find the weak spot in some object. If the Dragon-Blood wishes to eliminate the flaws in an object, his player must roll (Intelligence + Craft) and spend one Willpower point. With a single success, damaged items are repaired instantly, although some things might be so damaged that this Charm must be used multiple times. If the Dragon-Blood wishes to strike at the item's weak point, any damage inflicted on his next successful physical attack against the object is doubled. If used against armor or a weapon, treat this as a disarming attempt, with a success destroying the item.

Using this Charm requires the Dragon-Blood to spend at least one minute examining the item to be affected. It costs one mote if he can physically touch or handle the item or three motes if he must study it from a distance. This Charm is explicitly allowed to be made a part of a Combo with other Abilities.

Charm of Lesser Unmaking

Cost: 5m**; Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Flaw-Finding Examination

The Charm of Lesser Unmaking permits the Dragon-Blood to reduce any crafted item to its component parts, all arranged neatly in a pile as if ready for initial construction. Used on a heavy wooden door bound in steel bands, the result would be a stack of precut timbers, some hammered steel bands and a small pile of rivets and nails. Ropes bound in the tightest of knots are rearranged into neat coils, and a sword blade is separated from its hilt, guard and pommel. However, items that consist of a single component, such as a cup, are unaffected. Enchanted items are neutralized while their component parts are separated, but the enchantments themselves remain intact, and if the item is reassembled, the magic is restored.

The player of the character using this Charm must roll (Craft + Essence). The difficulty is 1 for simple items (crude stone hatchets, huts lashed together with vines), 3 for sturdily or competently made items (a well-made sword, chain links, a banded door) or 5 for intricate or masterfully created items (finely crafted jewelry, clockwork mechanisms, artifacts). If the object is enchanted or has an Artifact rating of 1, the difficulty increases by one, meaning that most enchanted items are difficulty 6 to disassemble. Artifacts with a rating of 2 increase the difficulty by two, and this Charm cannot be used to unmake an artifact with a rating of 3 or higher, nor can it be used against any artifacts made entirely of the magical materials, such as most weapons or armor. The maximum volume that can be affected with this Charm is equal to the Exalt's Essence in cubic yards. Using this Charm requires the Exalt to handle or remain in contact with the item for a number of actions equal to the difficulty of the roll. This Charm cannot be used as part of a combat maneuver.

Charm of Greater Unmaking

Cost: 10m, 1wp**; Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Charm of Lesser Unmaking

This Charm functions in a manner similar to the Charm of Lesser Unmaking, but its effects are more dramatic. Instead of simply disassembling an item into its component parts, items affected are reduced into their original raw materials. A heavy wooden door bound in steel bands will be reduced to a pile of uncut logs and hunks of raw iron. Fine jewelry is reduced to uncut gems and unprocessed gold ore. Fine pottery melts into clay.

The Exalt's player must roll (Craft + Essence). The difficulty is 1 for most items, 3 for exceptionally crafted or constructed things and 5 for artifacts, including anything forged from the magical

materials. The Exalt cannot, however, disassemble an artifact with a rating above that of her Essence. The Exalt must remain in contact with the item for a number of actions equal to the difficulty, and the maximum size of material that can be affected is a number of cubic yards equal to the Exalt's Essence.

Integrity

Unsleeping Earth Meditation

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Integrity 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: None

By bolstering her body and spirit with the inviolable spirit of the Earth Dragon, the Dragon-Blood using this Charm can go without sleep for 24 hours without any ill effect. The character suffers no penalties for lack of sleep or fatigue and is fully alert at all times. The Exalt must still rest due to exertion, however. The Dragon-Blood can use this Charm for a maximum number of sequential days equal to her (Integrity + Essence) without ill effect. Thereafter, every additional day the Charm is used causes the Exalt to lose one temporary Willpower per day, and Willpower lost cannot be regained until after the Exalt has slept for 24 uninterrupted hours.

Untiring Earth Meditation

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Unsleeping Earth Meditation

With this Charm, the Earth Aspect can imitate the constancy of the Imperial Mountain itself. As long as the Dragon-Blood's feet touch the ground at least once every six ticks, he incurs no fatigue penalties from any source, whether from armor, encumbrance, physical exertion or magical effect. The Charm does not negate any fatigue penalties that were already in existence when the Charm was enacted, but it prevents the Exalt from becoming even more exhausted. The Dragon-Blood can also ignore wound penalties up to his permanent Essence rating. The effect of this Charm ends instantly once the Exalt's feet remain off the ground for more than six ticks. Wearing shoes does not impair the link with the earth, nor do cobblestones or building floors sever the link, provided that they rest on the ground. Therefore, a Dragon-Blood under the effects of this Charm remains alert while standing on the stone surface of the bottom floor of an inn, but once he ascends the stairs to the second floor, the Charm is disrupted.

Oath of the Ten-Thousand Dragons

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Any Integrity Excellency

The devotion of the Princes of the Earth to their charges is unshakable. The Dragon-Blood holds a heightened sense of loyalty to a particular group of people (just as Righteous Lion Defense grants a Solar a heightened sense of loyalty to an ideal). The group may be the Dragon-Blood's House, his unit or ministry, his sworn brotherhood or even the Dragon-Blooded as a whole, although there is obvious danger in becoming preternaturally loyal to very large populations. Likewise, this Charm can be purchased multiple times representing occasions when the Dragon-Blooded swears a new oath of loyalty. The group to which the Exalt swears loyalty cannot be changed after it is chosen. When the Dragon-Blood is confronted by social attacks that go against his loyalty to his chosen group, he automatically adds his Integrity to his Mental Defense Value. The Integrity bonus can be added only once, even if the group he is being asked to betray falls under multiple groupings. That is, if a Dragon-Blood who has sworn loyalty to House Tepet and loyalty to the Third Legion is being manipulated into betraying a fellow soldier who is also a Tepet, the Dragon-Blooded still applies his Integrity bonus only once.

Ten-Thousand Dragons Fight as One

Cost: 4m**; Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Oath of the Ten-Thousand Dragons

For the duration of a scene, a Dragon-Blood can instantly dedicate herself to a new Intimacy—loyalty to another Dragon-Blood in her immediate vicinity. By doing so, the Dragon-Blood treats the loyalty as an additional Intimacy, with all the benefits and drawbacks thereof, even if this temporarily exceeds the maximum number of Intimacies the character can normally have. There need be no particular form of connection between the Dragon-Blood and her new Intimacy—indeed, she might not even know his name—but the fact that he is a fellow Terrestrial is a source of comfort and strength to her. A Dragon-Blood may forge a number of new Intimacies equal to her Conviction during a given scene.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any regular tick or on any long tick during social combat.

Unflagging Vengeance Meditation

Cost: 5m, 1wp (additional allies must each pay 1wp)**; Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 4**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Social
Duration: Until satisfied
Prerequisite Charms: Untiring Earth Meditation, Ten-Thousand Dragons Fight as One

Just as the hottest of flames can lose its intensity unless it is contained by the walls of a furnace, so too does the steady strength of the Earth Dragon help contain and focus the inner flame of vengeance. To activate this Charm, the Exalt must spend three motes and one Willpower while speaking aloud the terms of a vendetta to which the character commits himself with all his soul. The goal must be a simply stated purpose such as "Avenge my father's death at the hands of Tepet Arada" or "Humble Sesus Chenow Lahor for his insult on my honor." Swearing such an oath provides the Dragon-Blood with several benefits.

First, for as long as the vendetta lasts, it counts as an Intimacy for the Dragon-Blood with all the benefits and drawbacks of any Intimacy. Second, whenever confronted by any effect, magical or otherwise, that might deter the Dragon-Blood from pursuing his vengeance, he adds his Essence to his Dodge MDV. Furthermore, he can ignore any unnatural influence that would compel him to abandon the vendetta, treating such commands as unacceptable orders. Third, until the Exalt fulfills the vendetta or abandons it, he does not need to eat, sleep or rest as long as he remains in pursuit of his vengeance. The character incurs no penalties from any sort of fatigue, whether natural, magical or even from encumbrance or armor. Fourth, the Exalt can soak both lethal and bashing damage with his full Stamina, and he adds his Integrity to both his lethal and bashing soaks.

Unflagging Vengeance Meditation can be sustained without ill effect for a number of days equal to the Exalt's Essence. After that, the character suffers one health level of unsoakable bashing damage every time a number of days equal to his Essence passes. This damage cannot be healed while the Charm remains in force, and even after the Charm lapses, healing this damage takes twice as long as normal. When a Dragon-Blood swears a vendetta with this Charm, a number of additional characters equal to his Essence can join him. Each additional participant must pay one temporary Willpower point but need not expend any Essence. Once invoked, the Charm ends either when the vendetta is satisfied or when the Dragon-Blood who initiated it voluntarily abandons it. If anyone who is party to the Charm, including the Dragon-Blood who initiated it, terminates his involvement prematurely, he suffers a number of levels of lethal damage equal to the sum of the permanent Essences of all characters involved. This damage is unsoakable in any fashion.

Granite Curtain of Serenity

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Ten-Thousand Dragons Fight as One

A Dragon-Blood who has mastered this Charm can transform his mind and soul into unassailable towers capable of resisting all but the most potent of mind-altering powers. For the duration of a scene, the difficulty to use any supernatural effect against the Dragon-Blood that seeks to sway his emotions, control his mind or induce madness increases by the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. **This Charm has no effect upon the Great Curse.**

While this version of the Charm is Earth Aspected, Dragon-Blooded of the Wood Aspect have access to similar Charm called Verdant Curtain of Serenity. The Wood-aspected version is identical to Granite Curtain of Serenity in all respects except that its minimum Ability is Medicine 5 and it requires Purity of Mind Method (see p. **176**) as a prerequisite Charm instead of Ten-Thousand Dragons Fight as One.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick.

Inviolate Dragon Spirit

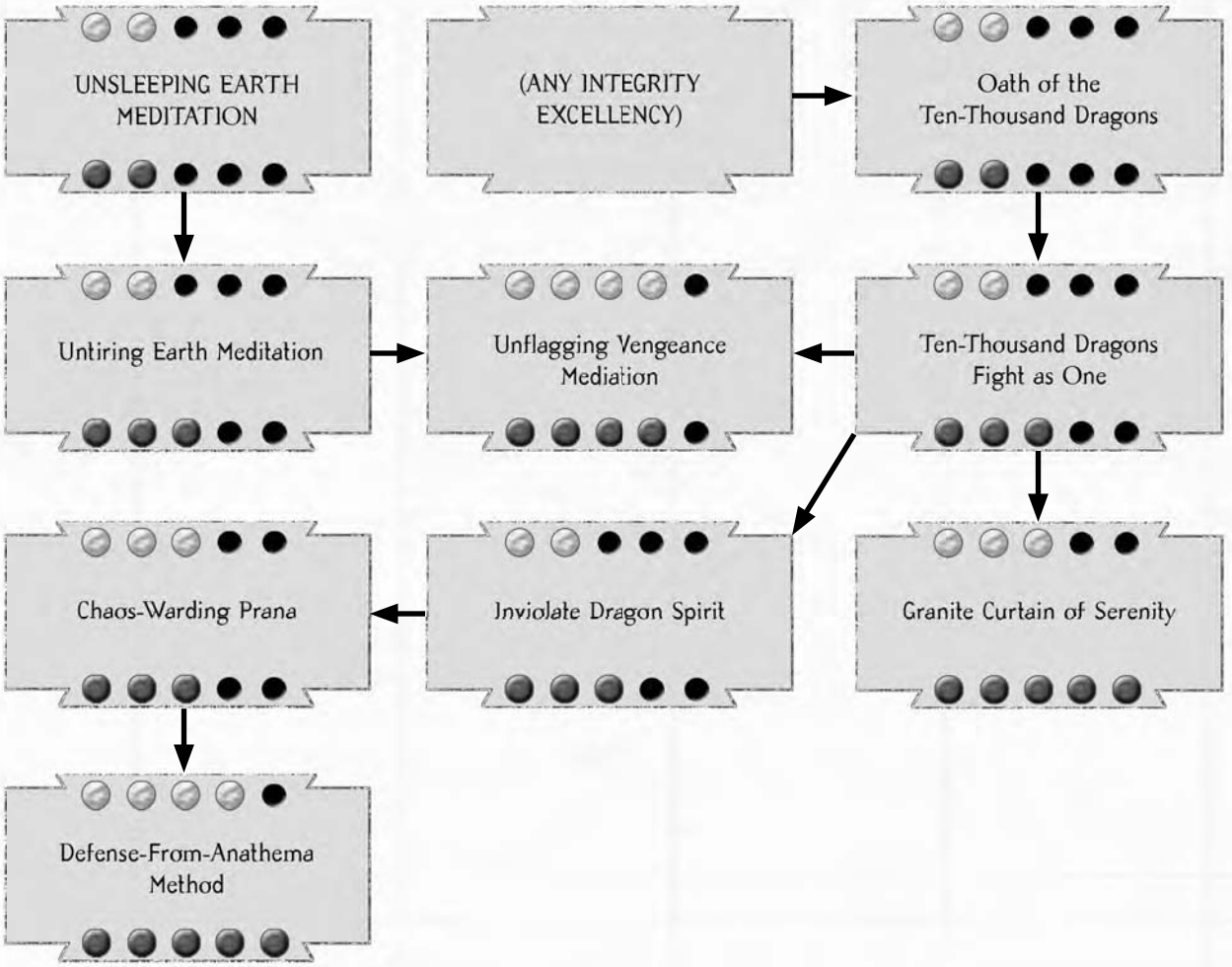
Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1 hl; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Ten-Thousand Dragons Fight as One

The Dragon-Blood using this Charm can instantly overcome the effects of any natural or unnatural compulsion. Most commonly used to instantly break the hold of narcotic or similar addictions without going through a lengthy withdrawal, the Charm can also act as a perfect parry against any social attack, including those that incorporate unnatural mental influence. This Charm, however, has no effect against unnatural mental influence Charms used by beings whose Essence is higher than the Dragon-Blood's. The Willpower point spent on this Charm does not count toward the two-point maximum on Willpower points that must be spent within a scene in resisting natural mental influence.

Chaos-Warding Prana

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene





Prerequisite Charms: Inviolate Dragon Spirit

Since the Usurpation, the Fair Folk and the other creatures of the Wyld have been the most persistent adversaries of the Dragon-Blooded. As the avatars of stability, it has fallen to the Earth Aspects to develop the means to counter the corrosive effects of Wyld energies. For the remainder of the scene after invoking this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can ignore Shaping effects, such as the mutational effects of the Wyld or the glamour sorcery of the Fair Folk. Both the Dragon-Blood's person and gear are protected and cannot be changed by such Wyld effects. The Charm does not protect against any Shaping effects brought to bear by Celestial Exalted, however, including Sidereal astrology. This effect can be extended to any number of other people by touching them and paying the full cost of the Charm for each of them.

Defense-From-Anathema Method

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Chaos-Warding Prana

Perhaps the most recent Charm developed for the Dragon-Blooded arsenal, this Charm was created for the express purpose of facilitating the Great Uprising. While it is in effect, a Dragon-Blood may add her Essence to her Dodge and Parry DV against any attacks made against her by an Anathema, including sorcery or Charm-assisted attacks. She can also add her Essence to her Mental Dodge and Parry DV if confronted with an Anathema using mind-altering effects.

Neither Eclipse nor Moonshadow Exalted are capable of learning this Charm, whose nature is fundamentally inimical to their Exalted natures.

Resistance

Ox-Body Technique

Cost: –; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Stackable
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: None

While the Terrestrial Exalted do not have the infernal resilience of the Anathema with whom they struggle, their capacity to endure punishment is still far greater than that of mortal men. This Charm grants Dragon-Blooded additional health levels. Each time this Charm is taken (up to the maximum of her Resistance Ability), the Dragon-Blood gains one -1 health level and one -2 health level.

Strength of Stone Technique

Cost: 2m per person; **Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Resistance Excellency

Like the element they emulate, the Children of Pasiap are pillars of strength and endurance. The Dragon-Blood must meditate for a moment while holding and contemplating some piece of earth as small as a pebble. Thereafter, he can add one dot each to his Strength and Stamina for the remainder of the scene. He can also grant one dot in Strength and Stamina to a number of additional people equal to his Essence, at a cost of two additional motes per person. To do so, all persons affected must hold hands with a pebble clasped in each pair of hands. An individual can benefit from this Charm only once per scene.

Mountain Toppling Method

Cost: 4m**; Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: Strength of Stone Technique

With this Charm, the Exalt can call upon the quiet strength of mighty mountains to augment his physical power. For one action, the Dragon-Blood's Strength increases by five, but only for the purpose of lifting or handling stone or earthen objects, such as toppling pillars, hurling boulders or stomping on the top of a hill to start a landslide. Also, for the purposes of this Charm, jade-alloyed weapons such as daiklaves are considered to be stone, and the Strength bonus does apply to attacks made with such weapons. This Charm is explicitly allowed to be put into Combos with Charms of other Abilities.

Impervious Skin of Stone Meditation

Cost: 1m per 2L/2B soak**; Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Strength of Stone Technique

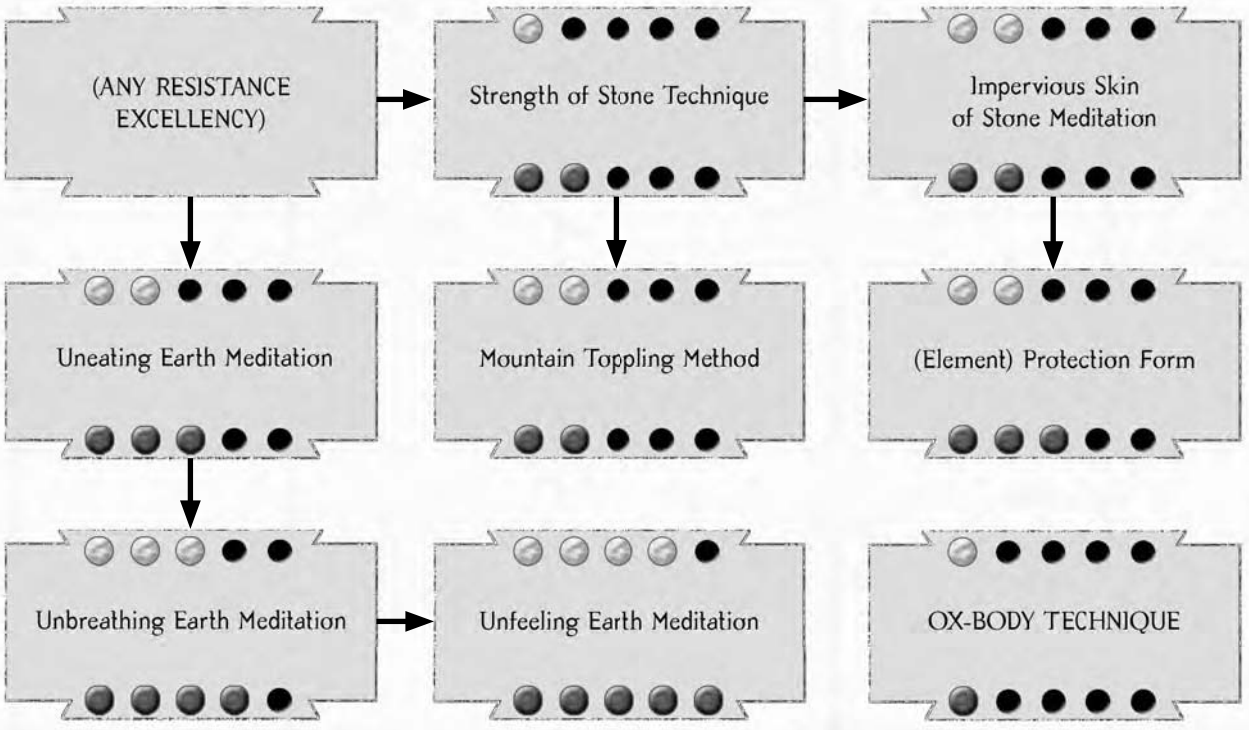
This Charm permits a Dragon-Blood to give her skin the toughness of unyielding stone itself while losing none of her normal flexibility. Each mote spent increases the Dragon-Blood's bashing and lethal soak by two. The bonus to soak cannot exceed the Exalt's Essence. Also, this Charm is weak against Essence, and the soak bonus granted does not apply to damage inflicted by sorcery or by attacks enhanced with Charms. This Charm is compatible with armor.

(Element) Protection Form

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Obvious, Stackable
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Impervious Skin of Stone Meditation

This is actually a cluster of five separate Charms. When this Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood's skin changes color to match that of whatever form of jade is associated with the element invoked. The character gets a bonus to his lethal and bashing soak equal to his Essence against elemental damage and attacks and an equal bonus to his (Stamina + Resistance) pool when resisting damaging environmental effects, provided that the character has purchased and activated the appropriate Charm for that element.

Air improves the Exalt's soak versus both Archery and Thrown attacks, attacks by any blue jade weapons and Air-based elemental attacks. Also, the Dragon-Blood's Essence is added to his (Stamina + Resistance) pool when resisting extremes of cold. **Earth** grants a soak bonus against Melee and Martial Arts attacks using metal weapons or any attacks with white jade weapons, as well as Earth-based elemental attacks. This soak bonus also applies to indirect damage from stone and dirt such as rockslides or simply falling to the ground from a great height, and the Exalt adds his Essence to his (Stamina + Resistance) pool to resist asphyxiation if he is buried alive. **Fire** improves the Exalt's soak versus firewands and other fire-based attacks, as well as red jade



weapons. The Dragon-Blood adds his Essence to his (Stamina + Resistance) pool when resisting extremes of heat. **Water** improves the Exalt's soak versus Water-based elemental attacks and any black jade weapons, as well as all attacks directed against him when he is fully immersed in water. If the Dragon-Blood cannot breathe underwater, this Charm will allow him to add his Essence to any (Stamina + Resistance) roll to hold his breath. Finally, **Wood** grants a soak bonus against Melee and Martial Arts attacks that use wooden weapons, any attacks using green jade weapons, "natural" attacks such as fists, kicks and teeth, and Wood-based elemental attacks. The Dragon-Blood can also add his Essence to his (Stamina + Resistance) when exposed to any poison or disease that might affect him.

The soak bonus granted by this Charm does not apply to attacks enhanced by Charms or sorcery of Celestial level or higher, but it is applicable to elementally aspected Charms such as Elemental Bolt Attack. Also, the soak benefits do not apply against artifact weapons made from magical materials other than whatever form of jade is associated with the element used in the Charm deployed. Normally, the Essence cost is three motes, but when an Exalt is using the version associated with the element of his own Aspect, the cost is only two motes. Stacking multiple versions of this Charm will not increase the soak bonus or the (Stamina + Resistance) bonus, but it will make certain the bonus applies to multiple hazards. This Charm does stack with Impervious Skin of Stone Meditation and is compatible with armor.

Unlike many elemental Charms, a Dragon-Blood can purchase more than one version of this Charm, and he is not required to purchase the version for the element to which he is aligned first. Indeed, most Dragon-Blooded do not, since they already gain some of these benefits through their elemental animas. Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, each Charm is always considered to be an Earth-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies.

Uneating Earth Meditation

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Any Resistance Excellency

The Earth needs no nourishment. Nor do the Children of Pasiap. While this Charm is active, the Dragon-Blood does not require food or water and suffers no ill effects from hunger or thirst. After a number of days equal to her (Essence + Resistance), however, each additional day inflicts one level of bashing damage on the Dragon-Blood, which cannot be healed while the Charm is in use.

Unbreathing Earth Meditation

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Uneating Earth Meditation

As the Dragon-Blood grows more like the mountains he emulates, he realizes that even breathing is a luxury he can do without. For the rest of the scene after the invocation of this Charm, the Dragon-Blood does not breathe. He can survive underwater, in clouds of poisonous gas or volcanic ash or even in supernaturally created voids. Yet, while the Charm is in effect, he not only does not *need* to breathe, he *cannot* breathe. Consequently, speech is impossible for the duration of the Charm. The Exalt can extend the effects of this Charm to other people by touching them and spending two additional motes of Essence per person. A target must be willing, however, or the Charm does not affect him.

Unfeeling Earth Meditation

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Unbreathing Earth Meditation

The ultimate expression of the Earth Aspect's relationship with his aligned element, this Charm permits the Dragon-Blood to shrug off the mightiest blows as if the attacker had simply swung his sword at a mountain. For the duration of a scene, the Dragon-Blood who invokes this Charm can ignore all wound penalties. The Charm does nothing to mitigate the damage actually suffered. It merely allows the Exalt to ignore the symptoms of injury.

This is a reflexive Charm which can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick.

War

Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings

Cost: 1m per ally affected**; Mins:** War 1, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Touch
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial War Reinforcement

It is difficult to achieve success as a military commander if one cannot avoid immolating one's own troops. For each mote committed, the Dragon-Blood may temporarily render one soldier partially immune to the damaging effects of her elemental anima. Any damage inflicted on a protected soldier by the Dragon-Blood's anima or by other elemental effects attributable to her aspect is reduced by the Dragon-Blood's Essence. The nature of this Charm is such that a Dragon-Blood can only protect a mortal soldier who is considered at least nominally "under her command." Therefore, neither bystanders nor fellow Exalts can be protected by it. When the Charm is activated, all participants must be holding hands.

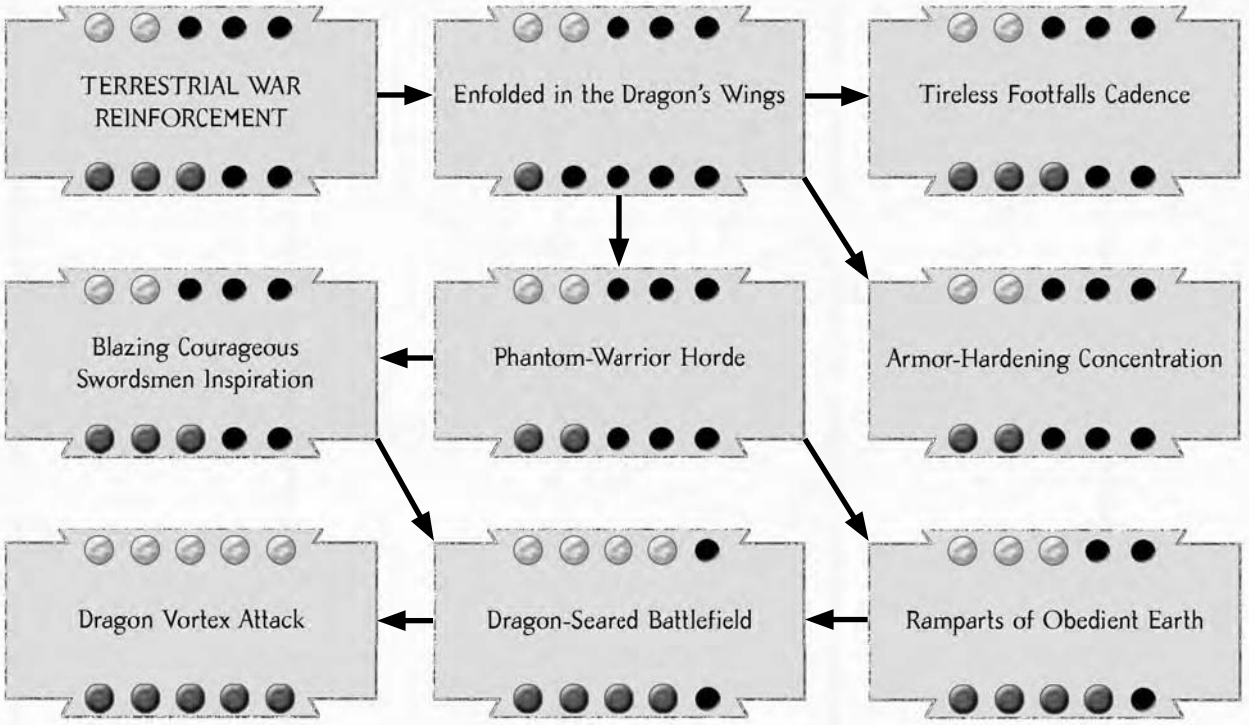
This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick.

Tireless Footfalls Cadence

Cost: 2m per fang; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Cooperative
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings

From lowly fanglords to the greatest generals, all Dragon-Blooded officers are gifted at motivating the soldiers under their command into extraordinary feats of endurance. With this cooperative Charm, one or more Dragon-Blooded begin a rhythmic cadence of some kind, such as a fighting song or a call-and-response chant. The affected soldiers find that their packs lighten, their resolve stiffens and their morale improves.

As long as the Exalt maintains the Charm, her unit gains a number of automatic successes on fatigue checks equal to her Essence – 2 (minimum 1). Also, the unit's movement rate is doubled. The Charm can be used to affect only infantry units, and a single Dragon-Blood can affect only a number of fangs equal to (her Essence + 2). If multiple Dragon-Blooded activate this Charm together, each participant can affect a number of fangs equal to (his Essence + 2), and the total number of automatic successes gained on fatigue checks is equal to (the combined Essence of



all participants – 2). The maximum number of participants who can join in a single cooperative use of this Charm is equal to the highest permanent Essence of any participant. The Essence spent is committed for the duration of the Charm, which can last for a number of hours equal to the lowest permanent (Essence + Stamina) total of any participant.

Armor-Hardening Concentration

Cost: 2m per person**; Mins:** War 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings

The Exalt focuses, invoking the durability of the Earth as an enchantment on his armor. The degree of benefit is determined by the composition of the armor as described in the following chart, as armor that is more durable to begin with can more easily resist having its nature altered by Essence. The Exalt can also extend this benefit to any ally within a number of yards equal to his (Essence x 3) by paying the same cost for each ally protected. A character can benefit from the application of this Charm only once during a scene, and the Charm ends prematurely if the armor is removed for any reason before the end of the scene.

Armor Type	Soak Bonus
Non-Magical Armor	1L/2B
Magical Armor	2L/2B
Jade Armor	2L/3B
White Jade Armor	3L/3B

Phantom-Warrior Horde

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** War 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 3)
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Elemental, Obvious, War
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings

The wise commander knows that sometimes the appearance of superior numbers is as valuable as actually having enough troops to outnumber the enemy. This Charm allows a Dragon-Blood to fashion illusory troops from her aligned element. The area around the Dragon-Blood appears to be filled with warriors fashioned out of the element to which he is aspected. Although the Charm is Elemental in nature, there is no difference in its effects beyond cosmetics. For example, fire warriors appear to be formed of smoke and embers, while earth warriors appear to be made of dust, and wood warriors of leaves and grass assembled into a roughly humanoid shape. While the phantoms are illusory, they are also quite intimidating, and the player of any enemy of the Dragon-Blood in the area must successfully roll his character's Valor or suffer a -1 penalty on all dice pools through his next action. Mortals must score as many successes on the Valor roll as the Dragon-Blood's Presence, while beings with an Essence higher than 1 need only a single success. The phantom warriors are spread out over an area with a radius equal to the Dragon-Blood's (permanent Essence x 10), and they affect everyone in that area who is not allied with the Dragon-Blood who created them.

If the Charm is deployed in mass combat, the opposing force must make an immediate rout check at a -1 penalty. If the roll is successful, the opposing force suffers no other penalty.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. However, the Dragon-Blood is limited in using the Charm as follows: The Charm can only be activated on a tick when the Dragon-Blood performs an action. It cannot be activated on the ticks between actions. In Mass Combat, it can be activated on any long tick in which the Dragon-Blood acts.

Blazing Courageous Swordsmen Inspiration

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple



Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Phantom-Warrior Horde

The Dragon-Blooded were fashioned by the five Elemental Dragons to serve as the ultimate troop leaders, and this Charm symbolizes their ancient responsibility of looking after their troops. The Dragon-Blood spends one mote per warrior that she commands, and each soldier gains one additional Bruised health level for the duration of the scene. The maximum number of troops who can be affected by this Charm is equal to the Dragon-Blood's (Essence + War). The participants must all hold hands while the Charm is activated.

Ramparts of Obedient Earth

Cost: 2m per cubic yard; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Phantom-Warrior Horde

To the Children of Pasiap, the battlefield is clay to be shaped according to the demands of military tactics. With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can stamp his foot or smite the ground with his fists, and the earth responds to its master. Up to a cubic yard of dirt or similar earthy material can be shaped to the Dragon-Blood's will. The earth can be wrenched up and compressed to form a crude barrier capable of providing cover against arrows or disrupting a cavalry charge or an infantry formation. It can be compressed beneath the feet of an advancing force, requiring all those caught within the resulting sinkhole to succeed on a (Dexterity + Athletics) to avoid knockdown. Finally, the Charm can be used for excavation, as the Exalt tunnels into the ground, compressing the earth away from him and leaving rock-hard tunnel walls in his wake. The compressed earth has a soak of 5L/8B and a Hardness of 4. Each area roughly a yard thick requires 20 health levels to damage and 30 to destroy. The Charm can be used to manipulate dirt, sand, pebbles and even mud, but it has no effect on actual rock of any density.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. The Dragon-Blood is, however, limited in using the Charm as follows: The Charm can be activated only on a tick when the Dragon-Blood performs an action. It cannot be activated on the ticks between actions.

Dragon-Seared Battlefield

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Cooperative, Elemental, Obvious, War
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Blazing Courageous Swordsmen Inspiration, Ramparts of Obedient Earth

The Dragon-Blood can impose his elemental anima on a large area equal to his (Essence x 50) yards in radius and centered on any outdoor location within his line of sight. Anyone who comes within this area suffers an environmental penalty on all actions equal to the Dragon-Blood's War Ability rating, as earth tremors, rainstorms, snow flurries, clouds of acrid smoke or simply fast-growing briar patches spring into existence to harry those caught within. The exact effect depends on the Dragon-Blood's aspect, but the environmental penalty is the same, regardless of aspect. Dragon-Blooded of the same aspect as the one who invoked the Charm are immune to the environmental penalty, as are any

individuals attuned to him through the Charm Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings. Dragon-Blooded of other aspects are immune if their anima banners are at the 8+ motes level.

This is a cooperative Charm, and multiple Terrestrials who know the Charm can activate it cooperatively to increase its effects. When they do, the area affected is equal to the combined (Essence of all participants x 100) yards, and the environmental penalty imposed is equal to highest War Ability rating of any participant, plus one for each additional participant. The maximum number of participants is equal to the permanent Essence of the Dragon-Blood who has the highest War Ability rating. Other Dragon-Blooded are immune to the environmental effects if they share the same aspect as any participant to the activation of this Charm, as are mortal soldiers protected by the use of Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings by any participant.

Dragon Vortex Attack

Cost: 15m + 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Cooperative, Elemental, Obvious, War
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Dragon-Seared Battlefield

This Charm is identical to Dragon-Seared Battlefield except as follows: In addition to the environmental penalty imposed on all persons caught on the battlefield when the Charm is invoked, the Dragon-Blood can direct the raging miasma of elemental energy to injure his enemies. On the tick that this Charm is activated, everyone within the area of effect suffers a number of levels of lethal damage equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence. The same amount of damage is inflicted again five ticks later and every five ticks thereafter while the Charm is in effect. This damage takes the forms of flying shards of stone or razor-sharp ice, swirling gouts of flame or steam, or even explosions of needles from enormous thorn bushes that spring from the ground. The damage cannot be dodged or parried except with perfect effects. The Dragon-Blood who initiates the Dragon Vortex Attack is immune to its effects, as are any Dragon-Blooded of the same aspect and any Dragon-Blooded regardless of aspect whose anima banners are at the 8+ motes level. If the Dragon-Blood who invokes this Charm has protected mortal soldiers with Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings, they too are protected from the vortex.

If several Dragon-Bloods who know this Charm use it cooperatively, their combined Essence is used to calculate the radius of the damage, and the damage inflicted is equal to the highest Essence of any participant plus one for each additional participant, in addition to the combined environmental penalty described under Dragon-Seared Battlefield. Also, if the participants have different elemental affinities, every Dragon-Blood within range who shares affinity with any participant is immune to the Charm's effects, as is every mortal soldier who is protected by an application of Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings used by any participant. Therefore, if an Air Aspect, a Water Aspect and a Wood Aspect combine their powers to invoke the Dragon Vortex Attack, the radius would be equal to their (combined Essence x 100) yards. Every Dragon-Blood within range who was an Air, Water or Wood Aspect would be immune, every Fire or Earth Aspect would be affected normally, and every mortal soldier who was protected by Enfolded in the Dragon's Wings by any of the three Dragon-Blooded would be immune. The maximum number of participants in the application of this Charm is five, so, common military practice is to have one participant of each aspect, thereby ensuring that every Dragon-Blood within the Vortex radius would be immune.

Fire Aspect

According to the Immaculate Texts, Hesiesh was a man of great temperance and self-control, particularly when compared to the typical Fire Aspect. A prodigy at swordplay even prior to his Exaltation, he refused to use Charms, even after the Second Breath, preferring to rely on his incredible skill with the blade, his flawless grace and his enormous personal charisma. Indeed, according to the Texts, Hesiesh used Essence only once in his life—when he immolated the bodies of the fallen Anathema to prevent them from returning as hungry ghosts.

Celestial Exalted and even a great many heretical or agnostic Dragon-Bloods scoff at the suggestion that an Exalt could "save his Essence" over an entire lifetime and then unleash it all in one massive burst. Likewise, some of the heretical Anathema cults that emerged after the Great Uprising claimed that the Fire Aspects were born to serve one of two purposes. Those Dragon-Blooded who were born with skill at Athletics, Dodge and Melee served on the front lines of martial combat against the Primordials. Those whose specialties lay in Presence and Socialize served a different role, which gives lie to the tales of Hesiesh with his dignity and restraint. Such Fire Aspects served as courtesans, gigolos and concubines for the Celestial Exalted.

Athletics

Effortlessly Rising Flame

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

As anyone can see, it is in the nature of flames to rise. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood propels himself away from the ground with a burst of fiery energy. The Dragon-Blood instantly rises from a prone position or adds two dots to his Athletics rating for the purposes of calculating jumping distance.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick.

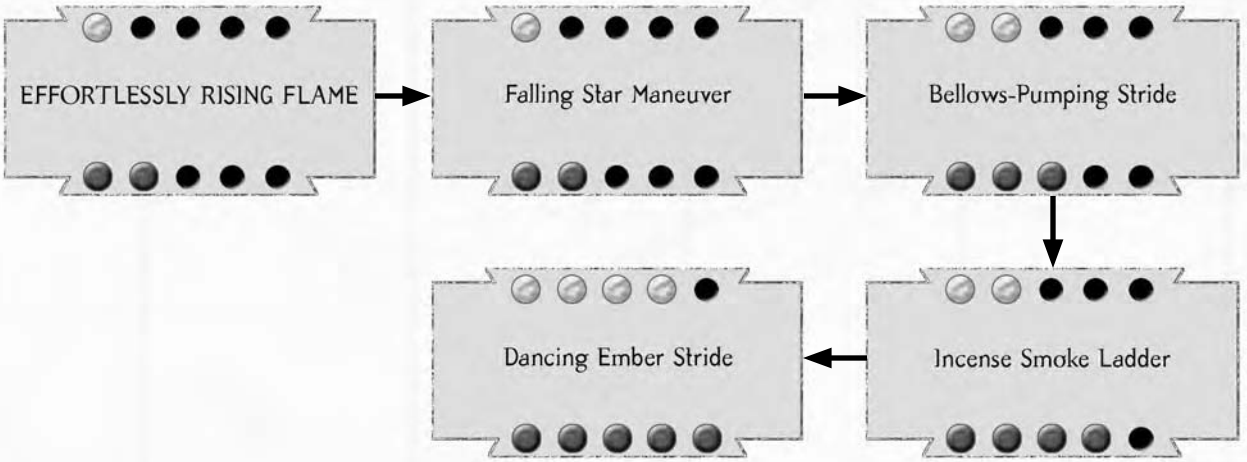
Falling Star Maneuver

Cost: 1 per 2 dice of damage**; Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Effortlessly Rising Flame

A Dragon-Blood with this Charm can move with the grace of a flickering flame, using his speed and agility to flank his opponent and gain the advantage in combat. Each mote spent (up to the maximum of the Exalt's permanent Essence) adds two dice of damage to a successful hand-to-hand attack. This damage is added before soak is applied. Normally, this Charm can be used only in hand-to-hand combat, but with a stunt, it may be applied to a Thrown or Archery attack. One can do so only if the target has no cover and has left himself open to a flanking maneuver, though. This Charm is explicitly allowed in Combos with Charms of other Abilities.

Bellows-Pumping Stride

Cost: 1m or 2m**; Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: One scene



Prerequisite Charms: Falling Star Maneuver

For a scene, the Dragon-Blood can double his movement rate on all Move and Dash actions. While the Charm is in use, the Dragon-Blood leaves a trail of fiery footprints behind him, which have the potential to start fires if he runs through dry brush. This Charm does not affect the Speed of any of the Exalt's actions, just his movement rate. If the Exalt has an Athletics rating of 4, an Essence of 3 and the Terrestrial Athletics Reinforcement Charm, he can extend the effects of this Charm to others at a cost of two motes per person.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated only on a tick when the Dragon-Blooded initiates an action, though. It cannot be use on the ticks between actions.

Incense Smoke Ladder

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Bellows-Pumping Stride

Fire is not restrained by gravity and can burn up walls as easily as across floors. Likewise, when she activates this Charm, a Child of Hesiesh can easily run up a tree or a wall as long as she can maintain a running pace and has at least two steps on the ground to establish her momentum. The Exalt cannot run upside down, and she dare not stop, lest she fall. The Exalt can run across water as easily as land, however, and she can even run across dangerous liquids such as lava or acid without sinking, although the soles of her feet will undoubtedly suffer injury.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated only on a tick when the Dragon-Blooded initiates an action. It cannot be use on the ticks between actions.

Dancing Ember Stride

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Incense Smoke Ladder

The Fire Aspect's affinity for movement continues to improve. With this Charm, the Exalt is capable of defying gravity. He can rise up and, buoyed by a hot updraft, fly at a rate equal to twice his normal movement rate. During the duration of the flight, the Dragon-Blood must remain within ([Essence + Athletics] x 3) yards of a solid surface. He can fly along the surface of walls and cliffs to gain a higher altitude, but the magic of the Charm will not function if he strays farther from a solid surface than the stated distance. Bodies of water are not a solid surface, and the Charm ends if the Exalt strays over large body of water, instantly dunking him. Also, the Dragon-Blood must remain in motion at all times. He cannot hover, and if he ever stops moving, the Charm ends. As the Exalt is dependent on warm air currents to remain in flight, his aerial maneuverability is relatively poor. He can engage in aerial combat or attack ground targets, but all actions suffer a -2 penalty while he is airborne.

Dodge

Threshold Warding Stance

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Dodge 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

It stands to reason that, if one wishes to dodge, one must have room to do so. The Dragon-Blooded defy this obvious logic. For the duration of a single tick, a Dragon-Blood using this Charm can ignore all environmental penalties to his Dodge DV, even in places where dodging would seemingly be impossible, such as on tree limbs or up to his knees in quicksand.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Hopping Firecracker Evasion

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Threshold Warding Stance

When this Charm is activated, the Dragon-Blood's ability to avoid danger becomes truly astonishing. When the Dragon-Blood is attacked and successfully evades injury through his Dodge DV, he can reflexively spend two motes to let his dodge carry him on and away from his attacker. The Dragon-Blood can instantly and reflexively execute a Dash action without suffering any DV penalty for doing so. Doing so usually takes him out of hand-to-hand combat range and allows him to evade most multiple attack Charms after

the first attack. This Charm must be activated as part of a dodge, however, so if the Dragon-Blood relies on his Parry DV instead of his Dodge DV, the Charm cannot be used.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Virtuous Negation Defense

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Hopping Firecracker Evasion

If an ally within normal leaping distance (about five yards) is subject to an attack, the Dragon-Blood using this Charm can attempt to move her out of the way. The Exalt's player must first roll (Dexterity + Dodge + Essence). If the player gets no successes, the attack proceeds normally. If the player gets any successes, the character can make himself the target of the attack instead of the ally. If his successes exceed the successes on the attack roll, both the Dragon-Blooded and the ally automatically dodge without a roll. Otherwise, the attacker's remaining successes are applied as damage against the Dragon-Blood (with soak applied normally).

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Safety Among Enemies

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Dodge Excellency

In close-quarters combat, a reckless opponent is sometimes as likely to hit an ally as the intended target. With this Charm, the Exalt can make this likelihood into a certainty. If a Dragon-Blood who is the target of an attack has a Dodge DV of at least half the attacker's dice pool (whether naturally or with the application of Charms), he can reflexively spend three motes to make the attack automatically miss him and instead strike another person. The new target is then affected by the attack as if he had been the original target all along (i.e., the new target's DV is subtracted from the attacker's dice pool). The new target must be within three yards of the Dragon-Blood, and the attacker cannot be made to attack himself. This Charm cannot be used if the Dragon-Blood has no viable alternative target.

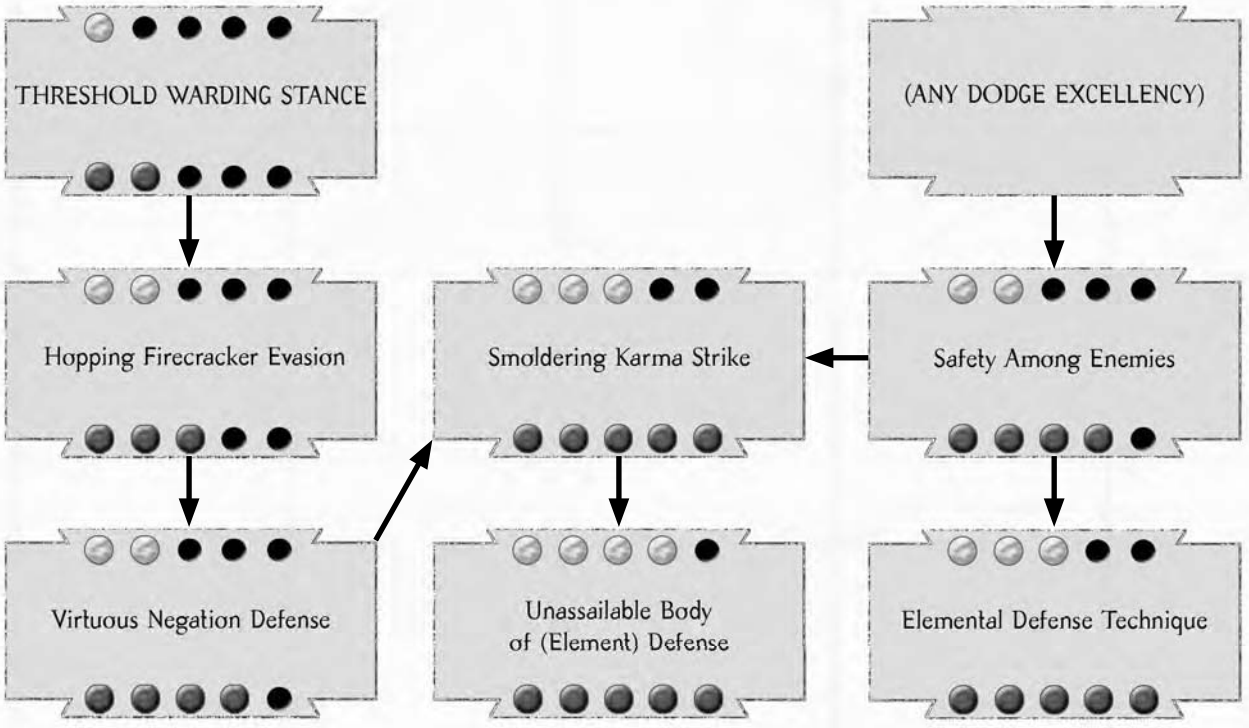
This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Elemental Defense Technique

Cost: 5m**; Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Elemental, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Safety Among Enemies

This Charm creates a glowing aura of elemental energy that radiates for a few feet around the Exalt who activates it and helps protect her from harm. The elemental energy created is determined by the aspect of the Dragon-Blood. Regardless of its nature, however, Elemental Defense Technique provides the following benefits. First, any Archery attacks are totally negated, as any incoming arrows are torn apart by the surging elemental force. Second, anyone attempting to make an unarmed attack against the Exalt suffers four levels of bashing damage, soaked normally. Third, the Exalt gains +2 to her lethal and bashing soaks against attacks with any weapon not made of the magical materials.

Finally, each elemental aura grants an additional benefit. **Air** buffets any close-range attackers, giving the Exalt a +2 to her Dodge DV against hand-to-hand attacks. **Earth** surrounds the Dragon-Blood



with a thick cloud of dust, which gives her +2 to her Dodge DV against ranged attacks. **Fire** inflicts two levels of lethal damage on any hand-to-hand attackers instead of the normal bashing damage. **Water** totally neutralizes any fire-based attacks directed against the Dragon-Blood and also cushions her against attacks, adding an additional +1 to lethal and bashing soak. **Wood** surrounds the Dragon-Blood with a thick cloud of pollen and other irritants, and hand-to-hand attackers who fail a (Stamina + Resistance) roll suffer a -1 penalty for the rest of the scene. A Dragon-Blood of the same aspect as the one who invokes this Charm is immune to these aspect-related effects, as is any Dragon-Blooded whose anima banner is at the 8+ motes level.

Unlike many elemental Charms, a Dragon-Blood can learn more than one version of Elemental Defense Technique, but she must learn the version associated with her aspect first. Only one version can be maintained at a time, and the activation of a different version cancels out the prior one. Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, each Charm is always considered to be a Fire-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies.

Smoldering Karma Strike

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 9)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Virtuous Negation Defense, Safety Among Enemies

The Fire Aspect's remarkable skill at dodging attacks approaches its pinnacle, allowing him to dodge an attack and instantly initiate a free counterattack. Whenever the Dragon-Blood relies on his Dodge DV and the attacker fails to hit him, the Dragon-Blood can spend the Essence and make a reflexive Martial Arts or Melee counterattack with his full dice pool. This Charm cannot be used to respond to a counterattack launched with any Charm nor can it be combined with any other Charm that allows the Dragon-Blood a free counterattack.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Unassailable Body of (Element) Defense

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Smoldering Karma Strike

The most potent of the Dodge Charms in the Dragon-Blooded arsenal, this Charm is actually a cluster of five elemental Charms. This Charm represents the closest a Dragon-Blood can come to the perfect dodges practiced by the Celestial Exalted. When the Charm is activated, the Dragon-Blood's entire body and everything on it transforms for an instant into the element to which she is aligned, shaped by magic into a human form. Whether the Exalt's body is composed of mist, dust, fire, water or swirling leaves, the attack passes harmlessly through her.

The Charm functions as a perfect dodge subject to two limitations. First, the attack must be dodgeable, as this defense will not apply to attacks that cannot be dodged. Second, each of the five Unassailable Body of (Element) Defenses is vulnerable to a particular type of weapon or attack or else suffers from a situ-



ation in which it will not apply. **Air** is vulnerable to Earth-aspected elemental attacks and to extremely large melee weapons that carry the Overwhelming tag, as the strong breeze caused by the passage of such weapons disrupts the Body of Air. **Earth** is vulnerable to attacks with wooden weapons such as arrows or clubs and to Wood-aspected elemental attacks, as even the toughest earth must yield to the burrowing roots of trees. **Fire** is vulnerable to Water-aspected elemental attacks, and also will not function while the Dragon-Blood is in the water or is otherwise wet. **Water** is vulnerable to Air-aspected elemental attacks and also will not function in conditions of extreme cold, as water inevitably loses its fluidity in such situations. **Wood** is vulnerable to Fire-aspected elemental attacks or simply to fire attacks such as flaming arrows.

Unlike many elemental Charms, a Dragon-Blood can learn more than one version of Unassailable Body of (Element) Defense, but the Dragon-Blood must learn the version associated with her aspect first. Only one version can be used at a time, however. Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, each Charm is always considered to be a Fire-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Melee

Dragon-Graced Weapon

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

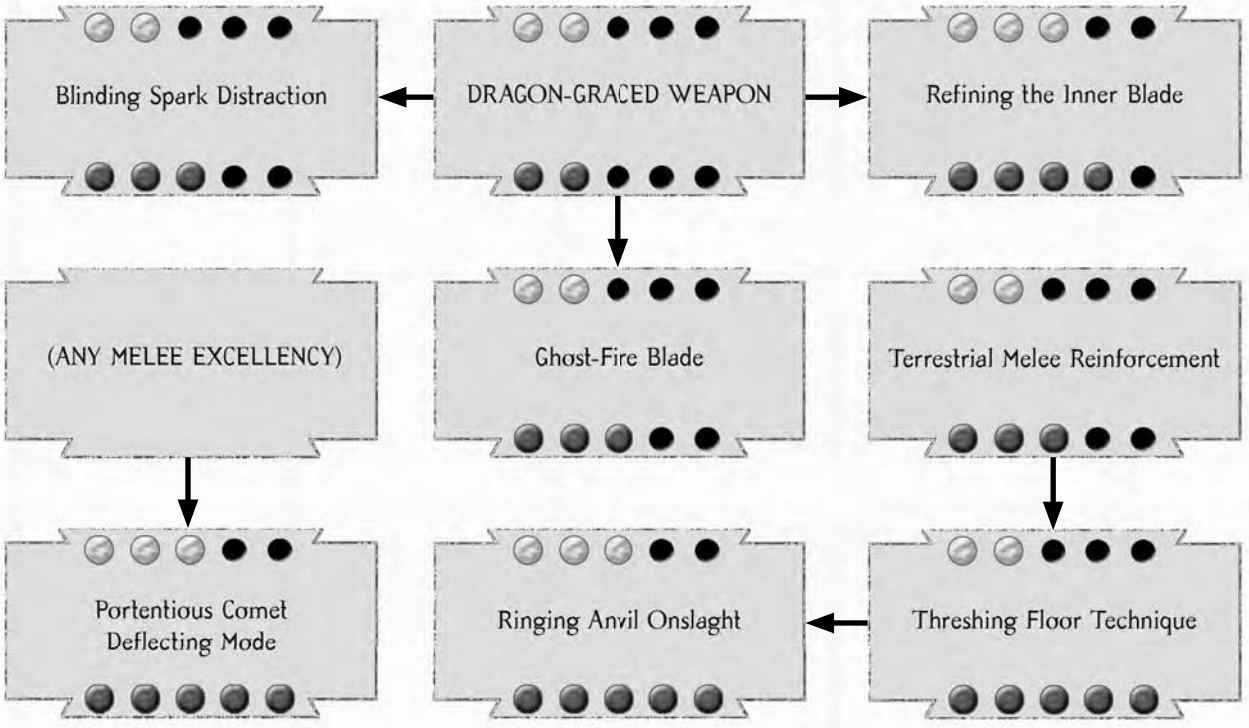
The Dragon-Blood has achieved a unity with his weapon that allows him to impart some of his elemental nature to it. On a successful melee attack, the Dragon-Blood may also inflict an elemental effect appropriate to his aspect on the target. **Air** buffets the target, subtracting two dice from her next action. **Earth** triggers a tremor beneath the target's feet, forcing her player to roll (Dexterity + Athletics), difficulty 4, to keep the character from falling. **Fire** sets the target ablaze for a single action, giving a +4L bonus to the Dragon-Blood's damage dice pool. **Water** fills the target's lungs with seawater, adding three ticks before her next action due to violent coughing. **Wood** poisons the target's blood, causing her to suffer a -1 penalty on all actions for the scene if her player fails a reflexive (Stamina + Resistance) roll.

Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, this Charm is always considered to be a Fire-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies, and Dragon-Blooded can learn only the version associated with their aspects.

Blinding Spark Distraction

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Dragon-Graced Weapon

When swords clash, they inevitably give off sparks. Ordinarily, these sparks are an annoyance at most, but few Dragon-Bloods are ordinary. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can manipulate such sparks, augmenting them into fiery luminescence with his Essence and then sending them cascading into his opponents eyes. The Exalt can activate this Charm reflexively whenever he successfully avoids an attack from a metal weapon with his Parry DV or simply when he strikes any metal or stone object with his sword, including successful parries. The Essence spent multiplies what would normally be a few flying sparks into a crackling blue and gold spray that flies into his opponent's eyes. The opponent is blinded for the following action, causing her to lose two *successes* from all attack rolls made



for her. If the player of the opponent succeeds on a reflexive (Wits + Dodge) roll to have the character look away, however, he suffers only a two-die penalty instead of losing two successes.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated only on a tick upon which the Dragon-Blood acts, on any intervening tick upon which the Dragon-Blood uses a Counterattack Charm or on any intervening tick upon which the Dragon-Blood evades an attack with his Parry DV.

Ghost-Fire Blade

Cost: 2m or 4m**; Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Holy, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Dragon-Graced Weapon

Since the Great Uprising, the Dragon-Blooded have accepted the burden of defending the masses of humanity against the depredations of angry ghosts and truculent spirits. Chief among their arsenal in this ongoing battle is this Charm, which permits a Dragon-Blood to charge his melee weapon with Essence so that it can damage ghosts and spirits even while they are dematerialized. Additionally, if the Exalt spends four motes instead of just two, the weapon is considered Holy for the Charm's duration and inflicts aggravated damage against creatures of darkness. The charge lasts for only a single action, although its effects do apply to each attack in a flurry. Essence for the Charm must be spent before the attack is initiated. The Charm provides no additional bonus against creatures not born of darkness.

Refining the Inner Blade

Cost: 3m, 1wp**; Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Holy, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Dragon-Graced Weapon

A Dragon-Blood who knows this Charm is never truly unarmed. The character must spend three ticks in concentration before spending three motes and one Willpower. Then, she can fashion a sword or other melee weapon out of thin air from the element to which she is aspected. The weapon has the traits of a normal weapon of its type, as well as the benefits conferred by the Dragon-Graced Weapon Charm (see p. **155**) appropriate to the Dragon-Blood's aspect and is also considered Holy against creatures of darkness. The conjured weapon lasts for the entire battle or for one scene, whichever ends first. At the conclusion of the Charm's duration, the weapon dissipates harmlessly into a puff of Essence.

Portentous Comet Deflecting Mode

Cost: 3m, 1wp**; Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Melee Excellency

Although this Charm is costly, it is still prized by Dragon-Blooded soldiers, as it is as close as mere Terrestrial Exalted can come to a perfect melee defense. After an opponent's hand-to-hand attack, the Dragon-Blood's player must roll (Dexterity + Melee). Regardless of the attacker's successes, if the Dragon-Blood achieves even one success, the attack is totally blocked. This Charm will not block either sorcerous attacks or attacks enhanced by Charms, but it is otherwise treated as a perfect parry.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated only on a tick on which the Dragon-Blooded is the target of an attack, though.

Threshing Floor Technique

Cost: 2m + 1 per targeted ally**; Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Melee Reinforcement

The Dragon-Blood can permit his allies to become preternaturally well-coordinated in their attacks on a single target, even to the point of overcoming the normal limit of how many people can attack a single target simultaneously. The Exalt must pay two motes plus one per targeted ally, and each ally will be able to make an attack on the target, regardless of how defensible the target's position is, provided that the ally is within normal move distance of the target.

Ringing Anvil Onslaught

Cost: 8m**; Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Threshing Floor Technique

The Dragon-Blood can focus his attention on a single target, and his player rolls the character's unmodified Melee Ability (no Attribute is added). Each success allows the Dragon-Blood to make one extra Melee attack against that target as part of a flurry, up to the maximum of his Melee Ability. Each attack in the flurry is made with the character's full dice pool. No flurry penalties apply.

Presence

Glowing Coal Radiance

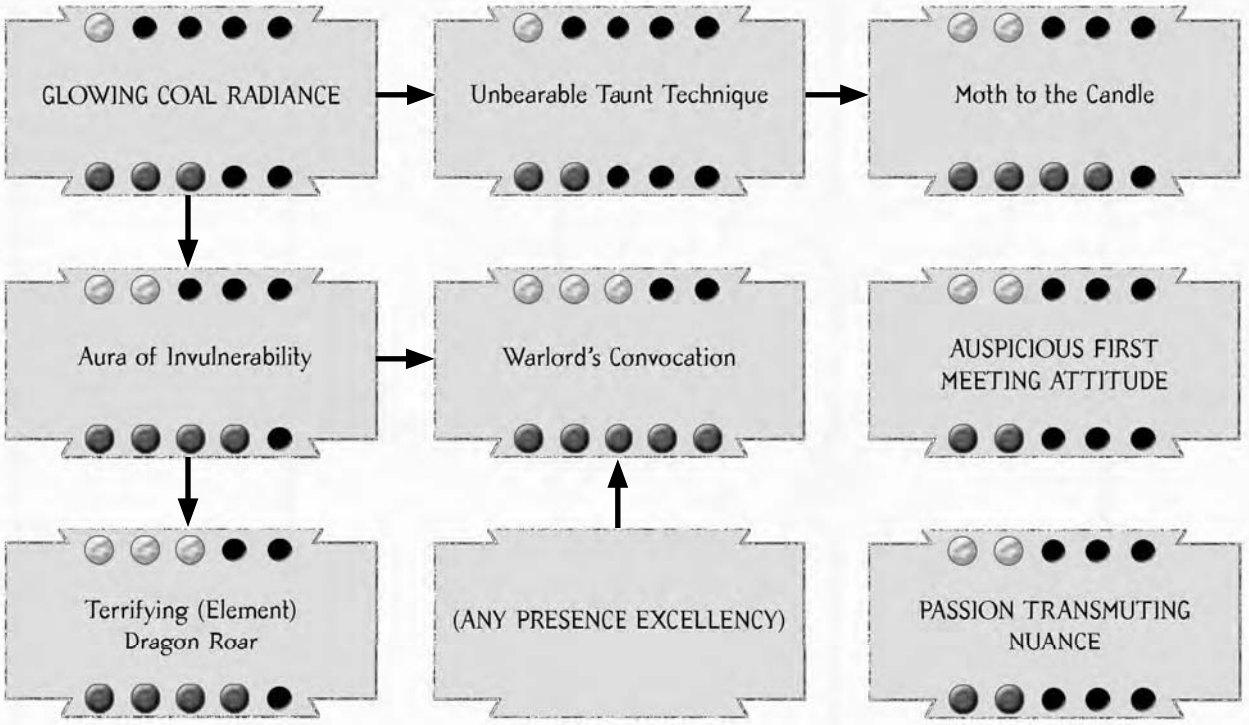
Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Presence 3, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Compulsion, Obvious
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: None

The blazing elemental fury of the Dragon-Blooded is such that lesser men are humbled by their mere presence. When this Charm is activated, the Dragon-Blood is surrounded by a nimbus of Essence with the color associated with her aspect. Anyone attempting to look at the Dragon-Blood or to make a melee attack against her must score at least one success on a reflexive Willpower check. Even if that roll is successful, any attack made on the Dragon-Blooded before his next action suffers a dice penalty equal to the Dragon-Blood's Presence. This effect lasts until the Dragon-Blood's next action. The Charm affects only those individuals within yards a number of yards equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence, and it doesn't impair ranged attacks.

Unbearable Taunt Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Presence 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Compulsion
Duration: Essence in actions (during regular combat) or long ticks (during social combat)
Prerequisite Charms: Glowing Coal Radiance

Most Dragon-Blooded consider their personal honor to be sacrosanct, and to such social and self-important creatures, a Charm such as this one is a terrible weapon. The Dragon-Blood need only gain her target's attention and insult or embarrass him in some way to cause the target to become irrationally fixated on her. The



Dragon-Blood's player must roll (Manipulation + Presence), adding her Essence in automatic successes. The results are compared to the target's MDV. In combat, only the target's Dodge MDV is applicable, and an affected target suffers a -1 penalty to both DDV and PDV when fighting anyone other than the Exalt who used this Charm against him. Outside of combat, the Charm can also be used simply to undermine a rival's social position. The Exalt's player must roll (Manipulation + Presence) against the target as a social attack roll, and only the target's Parry MDV is applicable. If the Exalt is successful, the target suffers grave embarrassment from whatever cutting remark she made, and he suffers a -2 penalty to all social rolls for the remainder of the Charm's duration. The Charm lasts for a number of actions equal to the Exalt's Essence during combat or for a number of long ticks equal to the Exalt's Essence in social combat.

Moth to the Candle

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Compulsion
Duration: Until the Dragon-Blood's next action
Prerequisite Charms: Unbearable Taunt Technique

Cunning Dragon-Blooded often use this Charm to draw their enemies into traps or simply to lure them away from overmatched allies. The target of this Charm becomes fixated on engaging the Dragon-Blood in hand-to-hand combat. The Exalt's player must roll (Manipulation + Presence), comparing successes to the target's Dodge MDV. Parry MDV is not applicable to this Charm. The Dragon-Blood must be within 10 yards of the target, who must have a lower Essence than the Exalt. Once the Charm is activated, the target can take no action other than to approach the Exalt at her normal Speed and attack him if she is able to do so. The target cannot be compelled to approach through obviously suicidal means (attempting to run through flowing lava to get at the Exalt, for example), but she is willing to cross dangerous hazards such as fires or raging rivers to reach the object of her ire.

Aura of Invulnerability

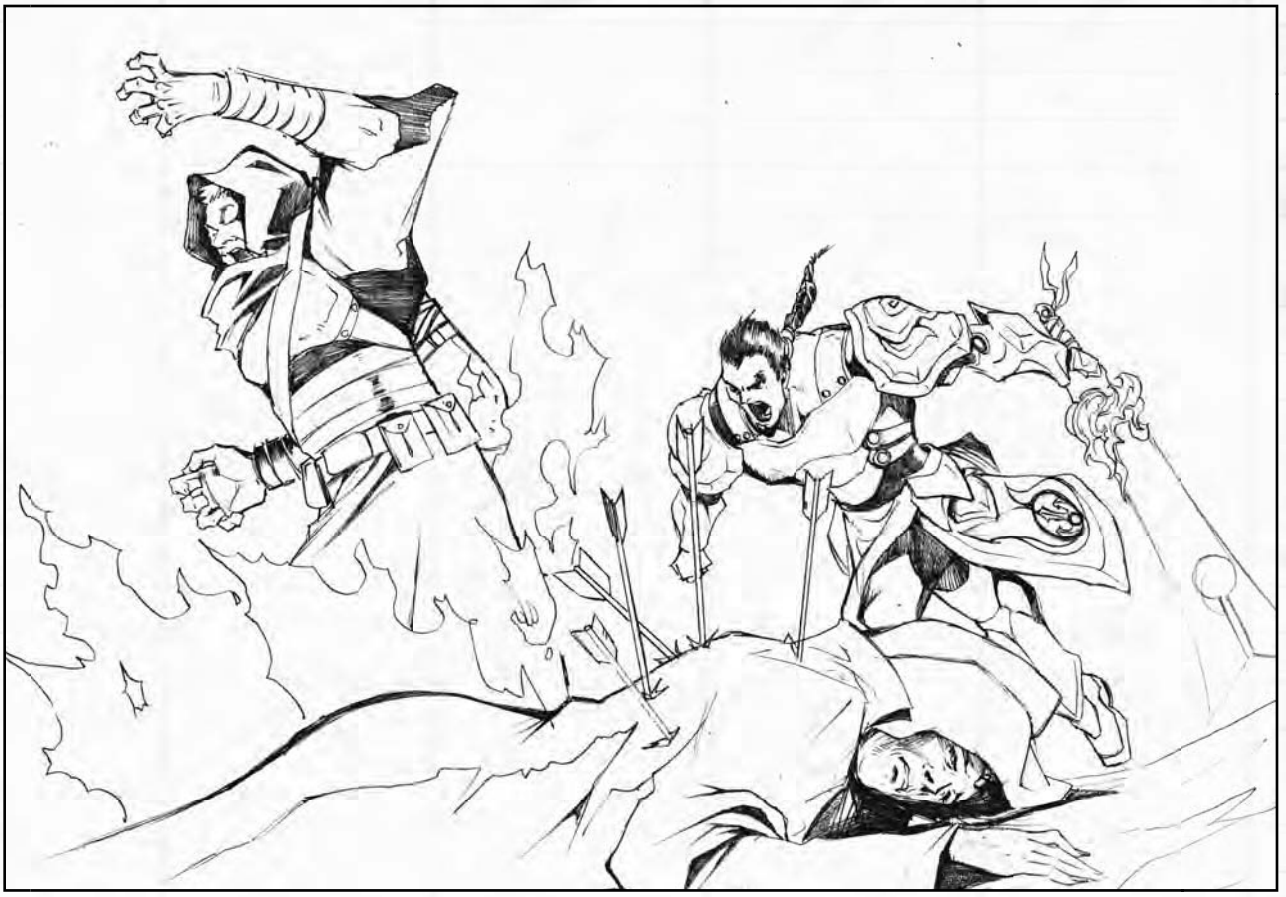
Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Glowing Coal Radiance

With this Charm, the peerless self-confidence of the Princes of the Earth can be backed up with pure physicality, as the Dragon-Blood's natural charisma physically bolsters his body. For the duration of the Charm, the Dragon-Blood gains +1 bashing and lethal soak and three temporary -0 health levels. The extra health levels are the first to be lost when the character suffers damage, and once lost, they cannot be healed back, even with Charms that permit instantaneous healing. At the end of the scene, the extra health levels fade automatically, even if they have not been used up. A character cannot benefit from this Charm more than once per scene.

Terrifying (Element) Dragon Roar

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Aura of Invulnerability

When little children in the Realm ask their parents what thunder is, the parents often say that it's the sound of the Elemental Dragons roaring down from Heaven to frighten away evil spirits. This Charm invokes the awesome power of the Dragons by letting a Terrestrial Exalt yell with the force of an angry god. The roar focuses the Exalt's elemental power on a man-sized target, which must be within a number of feet equal to the Exalt's (permanent Essence x 20).



The precise effect differs depending on the aspect of the Dragon-Blood. **Air** shatters glass and deafens living creatures for the remainder of the scene. **Earth** can blast a man-sized hole in a stone wall or explode the ground beneath the target's feet, inflicting four levels of bashing damage (which can be soaked). **Fire** can ignite flammable objects, and while the yell cannot damage flesh directly, if the target's clothing catches fire, she suffers two levels of lethal damage every action until she puts the flames out. **Water** will drench the target with enough water to douse a campfire, and the player of a living target hit by the yell must successfully roll (Strength + Athletics) at difficulty 4 to keep her character from being knocked prone by the force of the blow. Finally, **Wood** can shatter a wooden door completely or, if used against a living target, splinter any wooden bows, arrows or other weapons the target carries.

This Charm is actually a cluster of Charms, one for each of the five elements. A Dragon-Blood can learn multiple versions of this Charm, but he must learn the one associated with his aspect element first. Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, this Charm is always considered to be a Fire-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies.

Warlord's Convocation

Cost: 8m, 1wp**; Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Compulsion
Duration: One scene or instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Presence Excellency, Aura of Invulnerability

The Dragon-Blood's innate majesty is now sufficient to win almost anyone's loyalty, at least temporarily. The Exalt can spend eight motes and one Willpower to attempt to win the loyalty of a Storyteller character. The Exalt's player must roll (Manipulation + Presence), applying the target's MDV. The target of this Charm develops a loyalty toward the Dragon-Blood for a period of one week per net success, during which time the target is at -1 to her MDV to resist social attacks made by the Exalt. Furthermore, if the Dragon-Blood makes a point of asking only trivial or minor tasks from the target and makes a show of valuing the target's loyalty, the effect lasts for one month per success. Finally, if the Dragon-Blood's player achieves five or more successes, the affected character becomes a new henchman for the Exalted character (per the Background).

This Charm can be used against only mortals and other Terrestrial Exalted. It automatically fails against Celestial Exalted and spirits.

Auspicious First Meeting Attitude

Cost: 2m **; Mins:** Presence 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm can be used on a target only once, when the Dragon-Blood and the target first meet in a non-combat, social situation. During this initial encounter, the Dragon-Blood can read the subject perfectly, intuitively adjusting his behavior so as to make the best possible first impression. The target will be generally be open to the Exalt and will leave the encounter with a favorable impression of him. Even if the two never meet again, the target of the Charm will generally

speak well of the Dragon-Blood to others regarding his obvious good breeding and superior virtue. Mechanically, the Dragon-Blood's player gains two extra dice to roll on every Bureaucracy, Presence or Socialize roll during this first encounter and one extra die on the second encounter, if any. The Dragon-Blood may also gain indirect insights about the target's loyalties, Virtues and Motivations, as the Storyteller will warn the player ahead of time that an intended action or statement may affect the target's MDV (whether positively or negatively).

This Charm can be used only in non-combat and non-threatening social settings where a pleasant first impression can realistically be made. Consequently, it is unlikely that this Charm can ever be used effectively on a battlefield, though it might be useful in peace talks with a hateful enemy or when entering a rough tavern in a bad part of town. If the Dragon-Blood deliberately antagonizes the subject in any way, the effect ends.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It cannot be used in physical combat, but can be invoked during any long tick of social combat.

Passion Transmuting Nuance

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Presence 2, Essence 2; Type: Simple
Keywords: Emotion, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Dragon-Blood can transmute one strong passion (lust, rage or terror) into one of the other two. She must first engage her target in conversation for a number of long ticks equal to 10 – her Essence, then her player rolls (Manipulation + Presence) against a difficulty equal to the target's Essence, minus one for every point by which the Dragon-Blood's Essence exceeds the target's. If successful, the Dragon-Blood's player gains two dice on all subsequent social attack rolls against the target designed to play off the target's new emotional state. Also, a target who has been affected by this Charm acts as if his Temperance Virtue had been reduced to 1 for the duration of the scene.

Socialize

Sweeten-the-Tap Method

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Emotion
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Socialize Excellency

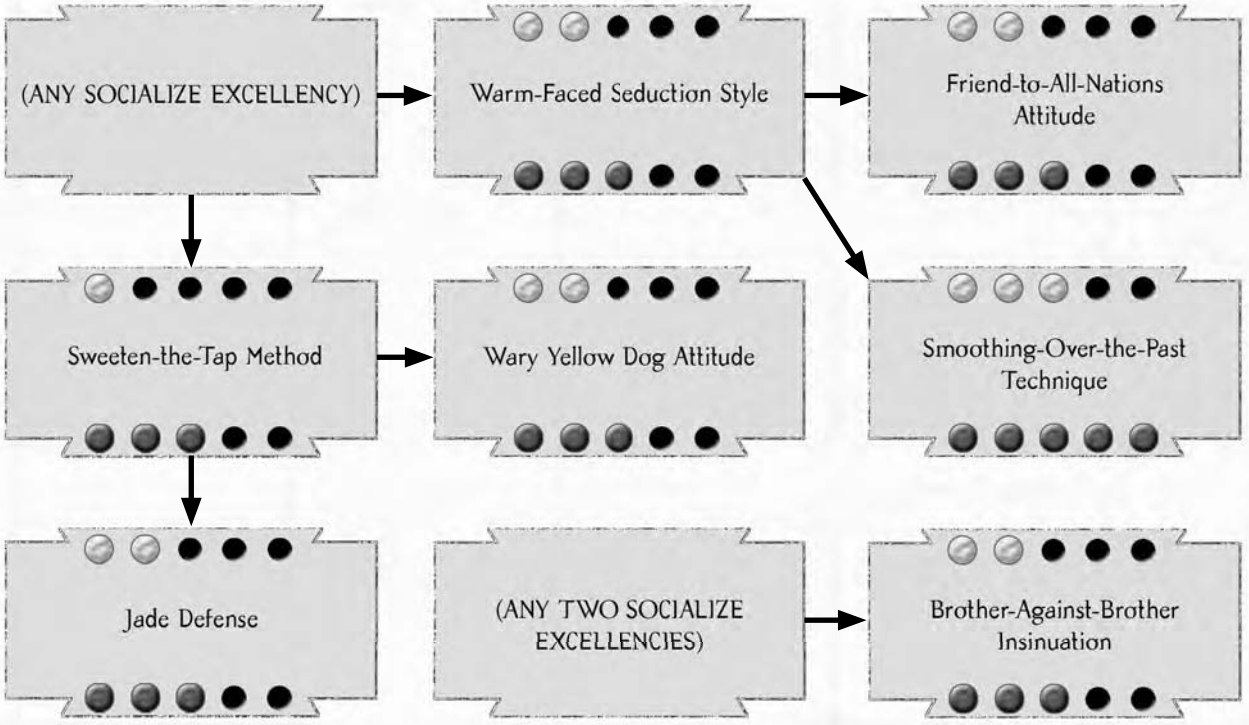
Overbold critics of Dragon-Blooded culture often complain that too many Dynasts are nothing but orgiastic dilettantes. Even when this is an accurate description of particular Dragon-Blood, however, one cannot deny that such individuals are supremely gifted hosts. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood spends the requisite Essence and instantly improves the quality, strength and taste of any nearby quantity of alcohol. Aside from the Epicurean advantages of this Charm, if the affected wine is drunk, the difficulty of any Socialize rolls made against the drinkers decreases by one for the scene.

Unfortunately, there is a downside. If any of the drinkers present botches a Socialize roll, the result will almost certainly be some degree of personal embarrassment, from a drunken brawl to an ill-advised seduction attempt.

Jade Defense

Cost: 5m**; Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Sweeten-the-Tap Method

Regardless of the Dragon-Blood's precise background, he will typically have seen more debauchery and spectacle than most mortals could imagine, often even before his actual Exaltation. As a result, most Dragon-Blooded can be quite blasé about social interactions. With this Charm, the Exalted can hone this sense of ennui and boredom into a potent defense against mental and social manipulation. When this Charm is activated, the Dragon-Blood can add half his Socialize rating (rounded up) to the difficulty of any Charisma, Manipulation and Socialize rolls made by others



attempting to manipulate him with either natural or unnatural mental influence. This includes attempts to use other Socialize Charms to compel the Dragon-Blood's response. The Dragon-Blood's Essence is also considered to be one higher than it really is for the purpose of comparing his Essence to other beings using Charms that do not affect individuals with a higher Essence than the one using the Charm.

Wary Yellow Dog Attitude

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Sweeten-the-Tap Method

The wise Exalt remains constantly aware of the ebb and flow of the social dynamics that surround her. Therefore, she is prepared when a genteel social encounter suddenly turns into a violent confrontation. During an unexpected combat situation (i.e., an unexpectedly violent situation that explodes out of an initially nonviolent interaction), the character who activates this Charm can add three dice to her Join Battle roll and gains a +1 DV bonus for the first three actions of combat.

This is a reflexive Charm which can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick.

Brother-Against-Brother Insinuation

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Compulsion, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any two Socialize Excellencies

A great many Dragon-Bloods, particularly among the Dynasts, are skilled at casually destroying deep and abiding relationships connecting other people. Often, such manipulations are done for fun as well as for profit. In order to activate this Charm, the Dragon-Blood must be in the same immediate area as his chosen target and whichever person he wishes to turn the target against. Once the Charm is activated, the Exalt need only make some comment to one individual about the other—perhaps snidely, perhaps with the most persuasive sincerity—calculated to make the listener doubt the intentions or loyalty of the other person. Augmented by Essence and Willpower, this single comment is sufficient to weaken the bonds of friendship between the listener and the other person. Exactly how this plays out is largely a matter of Storyteller discretion, but it should be fairly easy for the Dragon-Blood to provoke harsh words between the two or perhaps even a fight.

The Exalt's player must roll (Manipulation + Socialize), adding the Dragon-Blood's Essence in automatic successes. Only Dodge MDV is applicable to this social attack. Even one success is enough to stir up feelings of resentment in the target against his erstwhile friend. Three or more will almost certainly move the target to violence.

The effects of this Charm last for a scene, after which cooler heads prevail and the two characters' normal feelings reassert themselves, assuming of course that nothing has happened in the meantime to permanently sever those feelings. Neither party immediately remembers the role the Dragon-Blood initially played in starting the disagreement, but the character who was the original target might recall the Exalt's well-timed turn of phrase if his player makes a successful (Intelligence + Socialize) roll with a difficulty equal to the Dragon-Blood's Manipulation. This Charm is well known in both the Realm and in Lookshy, where its abuse can lead to social censure and possibly even the filing of criminal charges.

This Charm automatically fails when used against a being with a higher Essence than the Dragon-Blood. It also automatically fails when used to attempt to turn a Dragon-Blood against another member of her sworn brotherhood.

Warm-Faced Seduction Style

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Social (seduction only)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Socialize Excellency

The fire that burns at the heart of every Child of Hesiesh can inflame the passions of members of the opposite sex (and, often, members of the same sex). When this Charm is activated, Essence pulses through the Dragon-Blood's veins in sympathy with the heartbeat of someone he seeks to seduce. This Charm can be used only during a seduction attempt, but in such situations, the Dragon-Blood can increase her Socialize Ability by five or double its normal rating, whichever is less. Targets whose sexual orientation would not normally permit them to feel attraction to the Dragon-Blood gain a +2 bonus to MDV.

Friend-to-All-Nations Attitude

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Warm-Faced Seduction Style

A Dragon-Blood who knows this Charm can find himself at home wherever she roams, from the heart of the Blessed Isle to the most remote of barbarian territories. If the Dragon-Blood can speak the local language, she can ignore any social penalties caused by being a foreigner. Even if she cannot speak the local language, any social penalties caused by being a foreigner are reduced by her Essence, as she can intuitively adopt the basic cultural etiquette of the society through which she moves.

Smoothing-over-the-Past Technique

Cost: 3m, 1wp**; Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Social
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Warm-Faced Seduction Style

It is a rare individual who can make an enemy of someone and then blithely sit down with him as a friend. Those Fire Aspects who know this Charm can be counted among that rare breed. The Exalt using this Charm can cause a target to temporarily "forget" a single past event involving him that would reflect poorly on the current discussion. In other words, the Exalt can cause the target to forget a single past encounter for the duration of the current scene, whether to make the target forget how the Dragon-Blood cheated him out of a fortune or slept with his wife. Indeed, the Dragon-Blood can even compel his target to forget multiple encounters, although each separate encounter requires the expenditure of three motes and one Willpower. As this Charm is activated, the Exalt's player must roll (Manipulation + Socialize), adding the Dragon-Blood's Essence in automatic successes. Only the target's Dodge MDV is applicable to this role. If this roll is successful, the target forgets the event.

Once the scene is over and the target's memories return, he will certainly be aware of what happened and will undoubtedly regret any unwise bargains he made while he was confused. Therefore, future uses of the Charm require the Exalt to erase the prior usage of the Charm as well as the original event(s) that needed to be erased. This Charm automatically fails when used against any target with a higher Essence trait than the Dragon-Blooded using the Charm.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It cannot be used during physical combat, but it can be activated on any long tick during social combat.

Water Aspect

According to Immaculate dogma, Daana'd, Arbiter of the Immaculate Complaint, was both the youngest of the Immaculate Dragons at the time of her Exaltation and the last to Exalt. Before the Second Breath, she was the daughter of a Western trader and sea captain forced into piracy by the Eclipse Caste's corrupt domination of Creation's entire trade network. Daana'd was born at sea and could swim before she could walk. As she grew, her father taught her everything he knew about how to make an honest living through trade and a dishonest one through crime. She Exalted as a Dragon-Blooded while watching her father's execution for piracy and, according to tradition, she invented Water Dragon Style on the spot. At the end of the Great Uprising, Daana'd is credited with swimming to the bottom of the sea to seal the gates to the Underworld, thereby preventing the Anathema from ever returning, a legend that hints at the truth behind the Jade Prison.

Those who recall the Primordial War and its aftermath say that almost all of the Water Aspects were assigned to aid the Eclipse Caste Exalted, whether as naval officers aboard First Age vessels, as police or as bureaucrats who worked to establish supply lines and form the basis of trade routes in the post-Primordial era. Those with bureaucratic proficiency who did not serve Eclipse Castes were assigned instead to work as adjutants to Dawn Caste generals or Zenith Caste politicians. A few Water Aspects fought in other arenas besides the West, due to their natural skill with Martial Arts. Rarely, a Water Aspect would serve a Night Caste Exalt as a spy or saboteur, although the Night Castes typically preferred Air Aspects for such purposes.

Bureaucracy

Benevolent Master's Blessing

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Bureaucracy Reinforcement

To the bureaucratic masters of the Water Aspects, even a collection of complete dullards (or worse, a group of soul-drained victims of the Fair Folk) can be fashioned into an efficient workforce for the short-term operation of any business. By spending a single mote of Essence, the Dragon-Blood can divide his own Bureaucracy Ability dots among a group of underlings who have no Bureaucracy Ability dots with which to begin. The Dragon-Blood cannot give out more dice than he has, nor can he give any underling more than a single dot. The Dragon-Blood must supervise the work of the affected underlings, and while his Bureaucracy dots are farmed out, he is considered to have no actual Bureaucracy dots of his own.

Confluence of Savant Thought

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

To the Children of Daana'd, all bureaucracies are the same, differing only in surface details that result from the personalities of differing managers and staff. Once the Dragon-Blood grasps the essential character of the bureaucratic milieu, she can insinuate herself into almost any specific bureaucratic setting with ease. By activating this Charm, the Exalt may instantly understand the inner workings of the bureaucracy with which she is confronted, knowing such details as who is in charge of specific tasks and where equipment (including secret information) is kept. She may also substitute her Bureaucracy for her Socialize Ability for bureaucracy-related purposes. The Charm does not go so far as to grant unfettered access to locked or guarded areas, but it may aid the Exalt in finding someone else capable of securing such access.

Geese-Flying-South Administration

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple (Dramatic Action)
Keywords: Compulsion, Social
Duration: One task or three months (whichever is less)
Prerequisite Charms: Confluence of Savant Thought

While more martially inclined Dragon-Blooded look down on their kin in the bureaucracies and business centers, other Exalts understand that the business world can be as much a battlefield as any military setting. In such an environment, what matters is simply getting the job done. With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can articulate a single task: tax collection, troop recruitment, merchandising transactions or almost anything else that can be accomplished in a bureaucratic setting. The task must be one that is bureaucratic in nature, however, and within the normal purview of the bureaucracy to be affected. That is, the Exalt could declare as a task "acquire for me 2,000 straight swords" but not "construct for me 2,000 straight swords," as the latter instruction requires craftsmanship rather than bureaucratic acumen. Likewise, the Exalt could not order a tax-collection agency to engage in troop recruitment or to direct a mercenary company to completely reorganize a public library (at least, not without a fairly remarkable stunt).

For the duration of the task, the Dragon-Blood's agents and assistants work with exceptional skill and dedication. The Exalt's player rolls (Charisma + Bureaucracy), adding his character's Essence in automatic successes. The Dragon-Blood must then assign the task to one or more mortal individuals who are in some way subservient to him (employees, military subordinates, junior clerks, etc.). Each mortal who is present when the task is assigned and whose highest MDV is less than the successes achieved on the dice roll instantly gains a loyalty toward quickly and efficiently completing the named task. Also, any affected mortal may add the Dragon-Blood's Essence to her MDV when resisting either natural or unnatural attempts to divert her from working to fulfill the task. Furthermore, the loyalty is contagious in nature. Even a mortal who is not present when the Dragon-Blood activates this Charm will gain both a loyalty toward completing the task and the MDV Essence bonus if he is assigned to work on it by a superior and his MDV is less than the Dragon-Blood's successes. The Charm's effects last until the task is complete or until three months have past, whichever comes first.

The Charm can affect a given mortal only once for a single task, and if her MDV exceeds the Dragon-Blood's successes, she will be under no particular obligation to complete the task, nor will she gain any particular immunity against attempts to dissuade her. This does not mean that she cannot work freely on the task, which might be a normal part of her job, but she is not compelled to do so. On the other hand, if a mortal's MDV does not exceed the Dragon-Blood's successes, the mortal can resist only by spending a number of Willpower points equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence. Mortals who are not affected by the Charm do not act as vectors

for transmission of the contagious loyalty, but those who are can "infect" new employees throughout the duration of the Charm. Exalted and spirits are utterly immune to the effects of Geese-Flying-South Administration, as are mortals who are not part of the affected bureaucracy.

In addition to providing tangible protection for workers against sabotage by the Exalt's enemies, this Charm can also be used in the context of long social actions. By simply declaring the use of this Charm, the Dragon-Blood will find at the conclusion of the task that the results are even better than he could have hoped. Monetary profits from the venture increase by an additional one percent per success on an (Intelligence + Bureaucracy) roll. The exchange of commodities results in an additional two percent more goods acquired per success on the roll. Conscription and other recruitment measures are likewise improved by two percent per success on a (Charisma + Bureaucracy) roll. Alternatively, instead of improving the success of the task, the Dragon-Blooded can choose to reduce the time it takes to complete the task. In such a case, each success on the relevant Bureaucracy roll reduces by five percent the amount of time it will take to complete a long-term bureaucratic endeavor. The Storyteller must determine the base result of any such endeavor before the improvements granted by the Charm are added. This Charm does not confer any long-term benefits on the efficiency of the bureaucracy in general. It simply makes sure that the bureaucracy will perform this single task with aplomb.

Bestow the Saffron Mantle

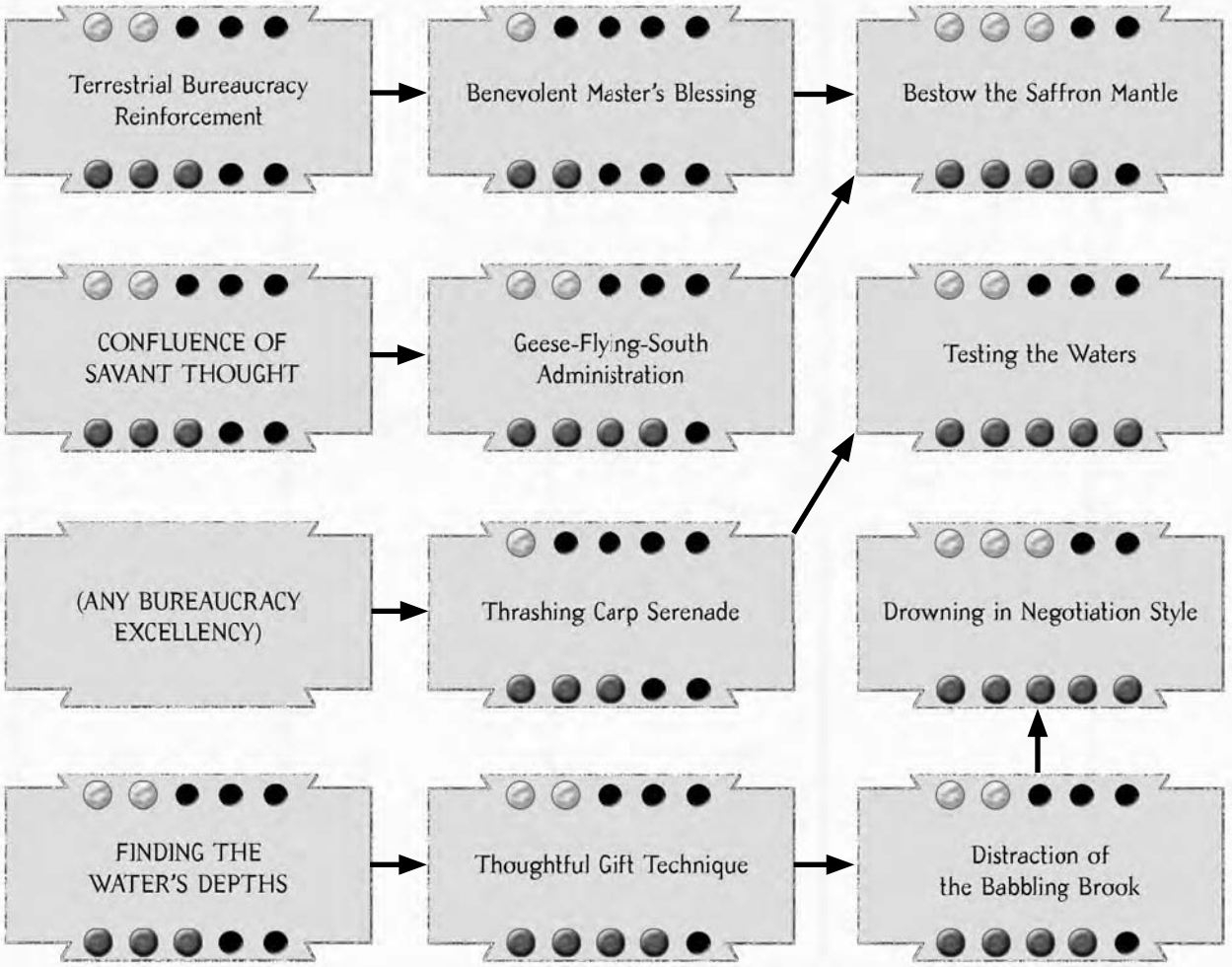
Cost: 1m + 1m per dot lent**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 3**;**
Type: Simple
Keywords: Touch
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: Geese-Flying-South Administration, Benevolent Master's Blessing

The Terrestrial Reinforcement Charm for Bureaucracy permits a Dragon-Blood to supernaturally augment the Bureaucracy skills of trusted retainers. Ultimately, however, the Dragon-Blood must trust to the personal judgment of such retainers in doing their jobs unless she micro-manages their work, a task beneath the dignity of busy Exalt. With this Charm, the Exalt can designate a single trusted mortal to serve as her proxy in business matters. For the duration of the Charm, the proxy will have the Dragon-Blood's Bureaucracy Ability rating, and the cost of the Charm is one mote plus one for every dot that the proxy's rating is improved. This Essence is committed for the duration of the Charm, which is equal to one week per success achieved by the Dragon-Blood's player on a (Perception + Bureaucracy) roll. The Exalt can terminate the Charm at any time, but the Essence spent is committed until the Charm ends. This Charm is completely ineffective on supernatural beings.

In addition to an improved Bureaucracy rating, the proxy automatically develops a Motivation to faithfully serve the Dragon-Blood for the duration of the Charm. This new Motivation completely supplants any prior Motivation possessed by the proxy as long as the Charm lasts. Most importantly, the proxy need not guess how best to serve the Dragon-Blood's interests, as he knows intuitively exactly what the Dragon-Blood would do if she were in his place.

The Charm confers one final benefit that is seldom discussed among the Dragon-Blooded, as its application is considered an affront to the Immaculate Philosophy. If the Dragon-Blood dies while this Charm is still in effect, the Dragon-Blood may transfer the remains of her consciousness to the proxy, seizing total control of his mind and body. (Doing so requires a successful reflexive Willpower roll.) She retains all of her memories and her normal Bureaucracy rating but none of her prior supernatural abilities. She can remain "alive" in the proxy's body until the Charm would normally end, at which time her soul moves on to enter the cycle of reincarnation and the proxy is left a mindless, soulless husk,





as if he had been a victim of the Fair Folk. Although this aspect of the Charm can allow a Dragon-Blood to fulfill some final task (often including avenging her own death), the Immaculate Order considers it a blasphemous and arrogant attempt to delay one's reincarnation. Therefore, surviving proxies are often preemptively executed by the Dragon-Blood's family as a precautionary measure before any scandal might attach.

Thrashing Carp Serenade

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Bureaucracy Excellency

As the Immaculate Texts say: "That which can be facilitated can also be impeded." This is as true for bureaucracies as anything else to which a Dragon-Blood applies himself. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood may bring any bureaucratic or administrative tasks going on within the sound of his voice to a standstill. The player of anyone attempting to succeed on a Bureaucracy action must overcome the Dragon-Blood's player in an opposed (Stamina + Bureaucracy) roll. While this Charm might be freely used in business-related settings or even against lesser agents of the ministries, it is a serious crime to attempt to delay the business of the Deliberative with this Charm.

Testing the Waters

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Thrashing Carp Serenade

In any political setting, from the storied halls of the Deliberative to humble town-council meetings, no insight is more valuable than knowing in advance how everyone plans to vote. To the Terrestrial Exalt, such knowledge is as plain as the nose on each voter's face. With but a single glance around the room, a Dragon-Blood who exercises this Charm can instantly know what the outcome would be if the issue currently under discussion were brought to a vote. The Exalt cannot perceive who exactly will vote for or against the proposition, but he can instantly tell how many yeas, nays and abstentions would be recorded if the question were called. This Charm works only on groups of seven or more. Also, since a person using this Charm is most likely still considering his vote, both the Dragon-Blood and anyone else using this Charm register as an "abstention" on the vote tally.

Finding the Water's Depths

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Sometimes, even the Princes of the Earth are forced to haggle over the sale or purchase of goods or over the fine details of a contract. On such occasions, this Charm is invaluable, as it lets the Exalt peer deep into the heart of the person with whom she is bargaining to determine how much the person is willing to pay or what he is willing to concede to allow the deal to be made. The Exalt's player must roll (Wits + Bureaucracy). With one success, the character knows whether the current offer on the table is half or more of the target's minimum or maximum offer. With two successes, the Exalt can identify the other party's limit within 10 percent. Three or more successes allow the Exalt to know exactly how much the other party is willing to pay or what is the lowest sum he will accept.

Thoughtful Gift Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Finding the Water's Depths

As a highly honor-bound and legalistic society, the Dragon-Blooded have developed elaborate customs and rituals concerning the exchanges of gifts. An appropriate present for a host can smooth one's way out of a difficult social blunder, while an auspicious gift to someone in dire straits might well obligate him to aid the gift-giver later, whether he wishes to or not. With a successful (Perception + Bureaucracy) roll made by her player, the Dragon-Blood can intuit what the perfect gift would be… or the perfect bribe. The Charm does not provide the gift, or even easy access to it, but knowledge of what sort of gift would secure a favorable response. If the Dragon-Blood knows the recipient reasonably well, the difficulty is only 1. If the Dragon-Blood knows the recipient only by reputation, the difficulty is 2. Identifying the perfect bribe for an anonymous official or a beautiful stranger across a banquet hall is difficulty 3. While monetary gifts might be sufficient for almost all mortals, the Dragon-Blooded have rarified tastes, to say nothing of beings such as spirits, demons or Celestial Exalts. Such beings will often require unusual items such as the first-born son of a hated rival or a ball gown designed by a renowned dress designer who resides some 2,000 miles distant.

Distraction of the Babbling Brook

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Thoughtful Gift Technique

Anyone who is not proficient at the arts of the deal is wise to be suspicious of any contract he does not fully understand. But even the craftiest of traders should be suspicious of contracts with the Dragon-Blooded, some of whom can draft fine print capable of ensnaring the most sophisticated Guild operative as if he were a country bumpkin. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can conceal penalty clauses, conditions, extra fees and almost any other sort of fine print into a contract without the other party noticing their presence until after he signs it. The added contract clauses must be reasonably subtle, which may call for Storyteller discretion. A clause stating that interest on a loan balloons to 50 percent compounded weekly if the other party is late on a single payment or that the other party's business is forfeit if he fails to complete a task within a certain deadline is permissible. A clause stating that the other party will sell himself into slavery for a nominal fee or that he agrees to buy a horse without noticing that it only has three legs is not permissible. Also, contract clauses that the Dragon-Blood knows to be impossible to fulfill automatically fail. The Dragon-Blood must define the clause when drafting the contract, and a contract can contain only one clause obfuscated by this Charm. When the other party reviews the contract, his player must successfully roll (Wits + Bureaucracy) roll against a difficulty equal to the Dragon-Blood's (Bureaucracy + Essence) in order to notice the clause or to grasp its import. This Charm automatically fails to conceal the fine print when the contract is reviewed by a party with a higher Essence than the Dragon-Blood or a party using Celestial-level Bureaucracy Charms. Such beings might still agree to the terms anyway, however, particularly if the other party desperately needs whatever the Dragon-Blood has to offer.

Drowning in Negotiation Style

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Distraction of the Babbling Brook

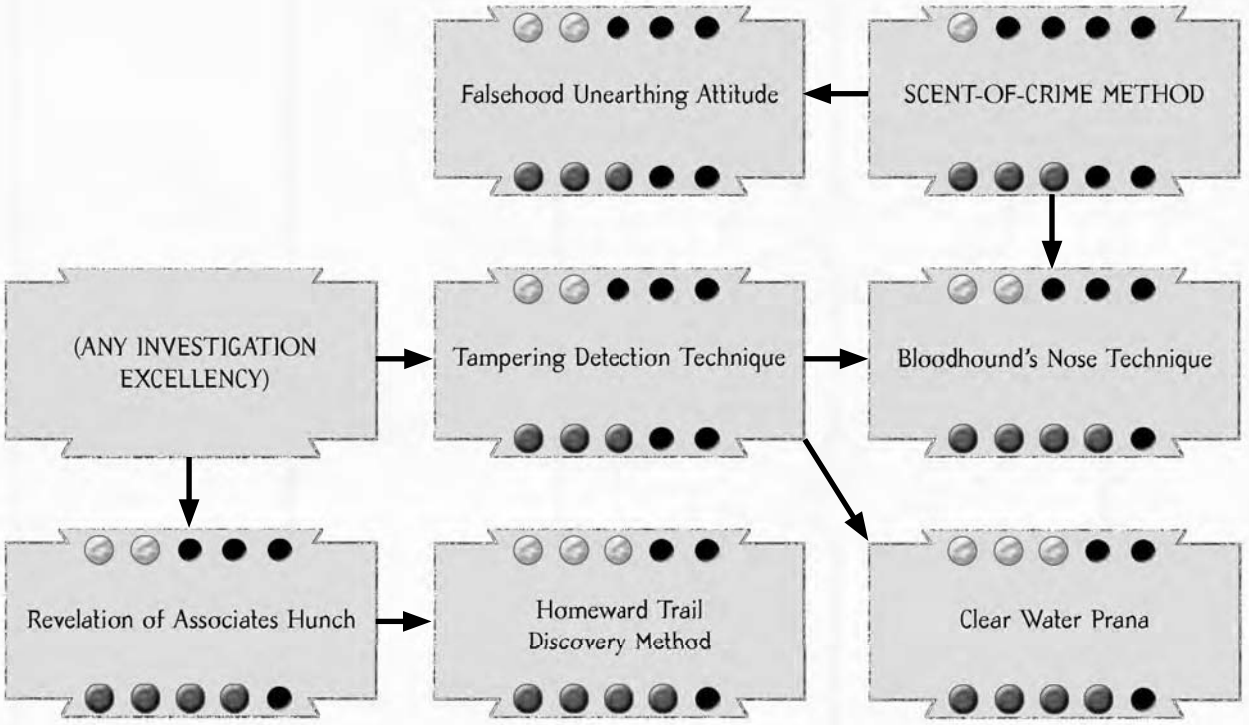
This Charm is not remotely as powerful as the oath-swearing powers of the Eclipse and Moonshadow Castes. Nevertheless, it is a potent aid in enforcing even the most odious of contract terms, even when the other party is determined to breach the contract outright rather than comply. The Dragon-Blood must draft a written contract and then charge it with Essence. When the contract is signed, all parties are bound to comply with its terms on their face. Deliberate breach of any of the contract's terms inflicts one point of unsoakable lethal damage on the breaching party for each point of Essence possessed by the Dragon-Blood using this Charm. An accidental breach will not inflict any damage *unless* the breaching party refuses to cure the breach within a reasonable period of time. The damage is inflicted on any breaching party only one time, even if the contract creates a continuing duty to perform. Also, all parties are subject to this penalty, including the Dragon-Blood who drafted the contract. A contract can be subject to both this Charm and Distraction of the Babbling Brook, either employed by the same Dragon-Blood or two different ones. Each Charm can be incorporated into a particular contract only once, however. Not even the Dragon-Blooded can negate a contract unilaterally once it is signed, but any contract can be voided if all parties verbally agree to it.

Investigation

Scent-of-Crime Method

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

The best criminals can conceal their crimes by suppressing any feelings of guilt beneath a cool exterior. The Children of Daana'd, however, can look past the most placid surface to see what lies within the depths of the criminal's soul. After spending the requisite Essence, the Dragon-Blood's player can roll (Manipulation + Investigation). Even one success indicates to the Dragon-Blood which of the people currently before him is suffering from the greatest guilt. This analysis is purely subjective, and sometimes, a suspect in a crime who feels guilt over some unrelated misconduct might lead the investigator astray. Also, this Charm is useless against true sociopaths who feel no guilt whatsoever for their misdeeds. At



the Storyteller's discretion, it might also fail to register the guilt of persons who feel completely justified in committing their crimes, such as a vigilante who has killed a particularly vile criminal.

Falsehood Unearthing Attitude

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Scent-of-Crime Method

With this Charm, no attempt by a miscreant to muddy the waters of an inquiry can obscure the Dragon-Blood's natural clarity. The Exalt can target a single individual and, after activating the Charm, instantly know for the rest of the scene if the individual is knowingly lying about some subject. The Charm cannot detect half-truths, skillful evasions or wrong answers founded on ignorance—the target must know that her statement is unambiguously false. Also, if the target knows that she is under supernatural scrutiny, she can conceal a lie by spending one point of Willpower per falsehood. Finally, the Charm cannot detect lies uttered by a target whose permanent Essence is equal to or higher than that of the character who activated this Charm. To the character, any lies detected register as a slight tingling sensation on the back of his neck.

Tampering Detection Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Investigation Excellency

A character using this Charm can instantly tell if any object has been tampered with and how the tampering was done. This includes both successful and unsuccessful attempts to pick a lock, open a safe, search a desk, forge a signature or alter a document. Only a single object can be studied at once per use of the Charm, but every change made within the past year is revealed. The Charm does not reveal who made the changes or why, and it gives only general information about when the tampering occurred.

Bloodhound's Nose Technique

Cost: 6m, 1wp**; Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Scent-of-Crime Method, Tampering Detection Technique

The Dragon-Blood must first spend 10 minutes investigating the scene of a crime (or any other event he wishes to investigate). The Dragon-Blood's player makes a normal Investigation roll for the Exalt to find ordinary pieces of evidence, although this roll can be augmented with other Charms. After spending the Essence and Willpower to activate this Charm, the player can then roll (Intelligence + Investigation), with even one success leading the Dragon-Blood in the general direction of the person who left the incriminating evidence. With three or more successes, the Dragon-Blood also receives a brief glimpse of the culprit at the scene of the crime. If the culprit uses some type of supernatural effect to protect her identity, this Charm fails automatically *unless* the Dragon-Blood has a higher Essence than the culprit. The Charm will *always* fail when confronted with a culprit using Trackless Walk Style (see p. **167**).

Clear Water Prana

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Tampering Detection Technique

As flowing water erodes dirt to reveal what lies buried beneath, so does the Essence of the Princes of the Earth wash away attempts at concealment to reveal what lies hidden. When this Charm is activated, the Dragon-Blood's Essence washes out over an area with



a radius no bigger than her Essence in yards. The released Essence glows briefly whenever it encounters anything that has been deliberately hidden. The Charm cannot locate items that have simply been lost. Instead, someone must have deliberately hidden each item. Also, there is no guarantee that any items discovered will be relevant to the current investigation. Therefore, if the Charm is used at the scene of a murder, it might reveal the victim's stash of opium hidden under a floorboard or her jewels locked up in a concealed wall safe. The Charm will not detect items concealed on someone's person, nor will it reveal items hidden by Celestial-level Charms or sorcery. Items concealed through lesser magic can be detected if the Dragon-Blood's player succeeds in a resisted (Perception + permanent Essence) roll against the Essence of the individual who used the concealing magic.

Revelation of Associates Hunch

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Investigation Excellency

Just as each individual drop of water in the ocean is connected to every other drop of water, so is each person connected spiritually to those close to her, from friends to family to accomplices. Upon meeting someone, the Dragon-Blood can gain an intuitive knowledge of the person's closest associates. Each success by the player on a (Perception + Investigation) roll gives the Dragon-Blood the name and a one-sentence description of two of the target's allies, contacts or employers, beginning with those most important to the target.

Homeward Trail Discovery Method

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Revelation of Associates Hunch

By simply meeting someone and coming with a few yards of him, the Dragon-Blood can instantly know where the person's home is. Most commonly, "home" is the character's primary residence. In the case of Exalted, or other characters with significant holdings, the Charm identifies the place that the subject emotionally considers to be home. Alternatively, if the subject has one or more manses, the highest-rated manse is considered the target's primary residence. It is possible to ward a particular residence from discovery by this Charm through sorcery, but doing so simply points to the target's next most emotionally attached home. The Charm can identify only a building, not a particular apartment or room therein, and some individuals, such as itinerant monks, wandering traders or the impoverished might not register as having any home at all.

Larceny

Observer Awareness Method

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Officially, this Charm's sole utility is to uncover spies and aid in preventing eavesdropping. Even the mere suggestion that this Charm is often used by Dragon-Blooded thieves, spies and assassins is a blasphemy to some Immaculate monks. With just one success on a (Perception + Larceny) check, the Dragon-Blood instantly knows if he is being watched. Additional successes will pinpoint the specific location of observers.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used on any tick.

Trackless Walk Style

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Observer Awareness Method

Notwithstanding the claims of Immaculate theology, Dragon-Bloods do make excellent spies and assassins, and all of the Great Houses have scions skilled at evading detection. While this Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood will leave absolutely no physical evidence of her identity at a location, such as a crime scene or the like. The Dragon-Blood will leave neither footprints nor fingerprints, even if he walks through mud or handles a sticky substance. Not so much as a single strand of hair will be left behind. The only exception is a clue that the Dragon-Blood may choose to leave at a crime scene, such as a calling card. Such deliberate clues can be left without otherwise weakening the Charm's effect. The Charm does not prevent supernatural tracking attempts, although it completely negates the effect of Bloodhound's Nose Technique (see p. **165**). The Charm is best used for short periods of time, however, as it is inefficient for such actions as fleeing across a large forest without leaving tracks.

Ears of the Snowy Owl

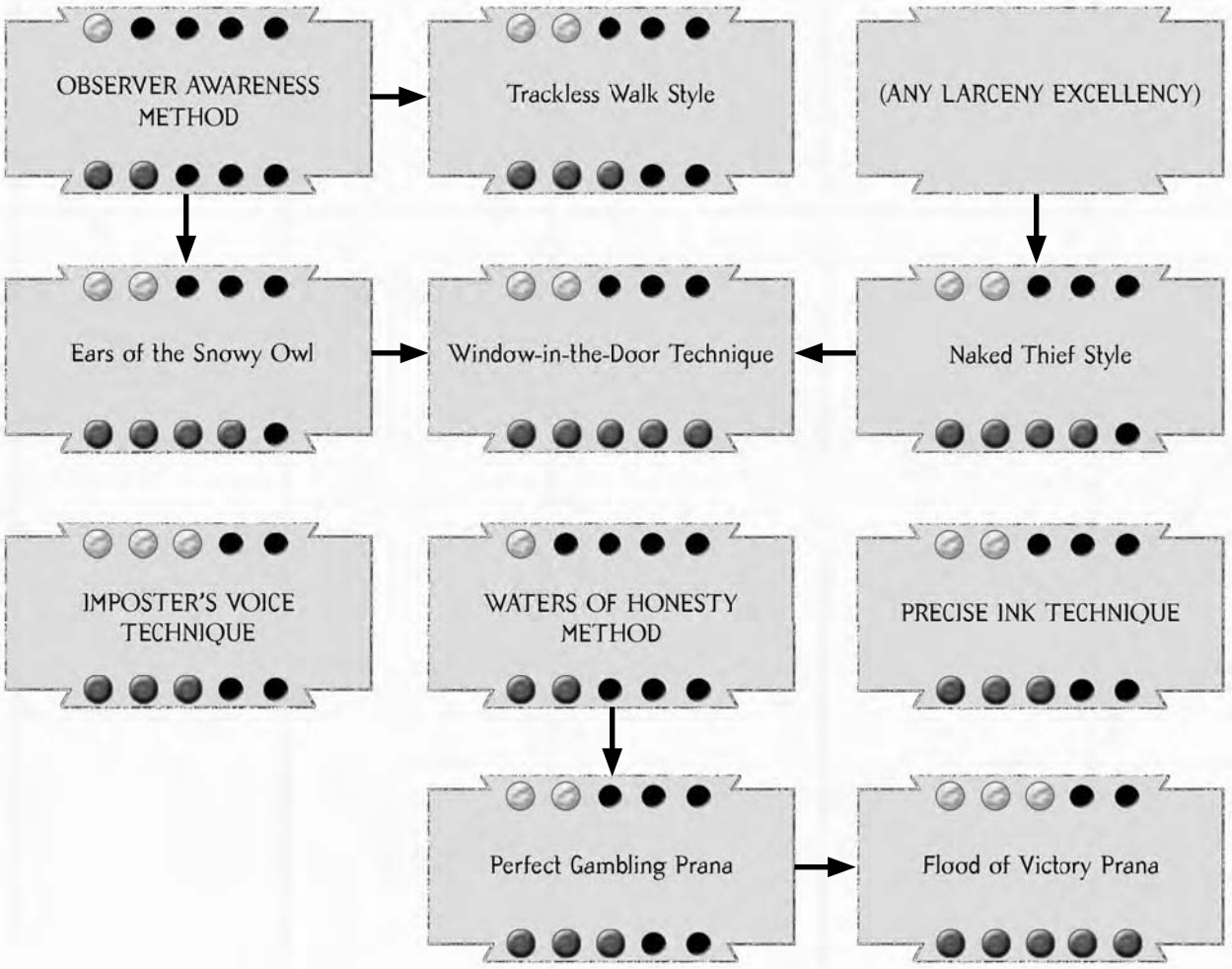
Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One minute
Prerequisite Charms: Observer Awareness Method

The ability to eavesdrop is the essence of effective spying, and none are better at it than the Children of Daana'd. While this Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood can hear conversations and other sounds going on in adjacent rooms as if there were no walls in place, ignoring any penalties associated with obstacles between her and the objects of her attention. The Charm does not eliminate penalties due to distance, just physical obstructions. Consequently, most Dragon-Blooded who rely on this Charm also learn at least one reflexive Awareness Excellency that can be used concurrently with Ears of the Snowy Owl.

Naked Thief Style

Cost: 2m, 1wp**; Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One task
Prerequisite Charms: Any Larceny Excellency

This Charm allows the Dragon-Blood to exercise his larcenous intent when stripped of his tools or even the clothes on his back.



The Exalt can fashion out of solidified Essence simple tools for picking locks, cutting through bars or jimmying doors. The Charm gives no particular benefit to the Exalt's attempt. It simply gives him access to tools of the trade he otherwise would not possess. The Charm requires a separate use for each individual Larceny task. If the Exalt summoned a hacksaw to cut through bars, it would last for the duration of the attempt. If, after bypassing the bars, the Dragon-Blood was confronted with a lock to be picked or even a separate set of bars to cut through, he would have to activate the Charm again.

Window-in-the-Door Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Three ticks
Prerequisite Charms: Ears of the Snowy Owl, Naked Thief Style

A wise thief always seeks to know what she is getting into before barging into a room or even opening a locked chest. Such questions are answered for Dragon-Blooded who possess this Charm. After the character spends the Essence, a one-foot radius area before his eyes becomes transparent, whether it is part of a door, a wall or a hidden safe. The maximum thickness that can be penetrated with this Charm is equal to three inches for stone, about six inches for wood or weaker materials, and only one inch for iron. The magical materials cannot be penetrated with the Charm, which lasts only three ticks and allows the character alone to see through the transparent circle. Walls, doors and containers can be enchanted with sorcery to prevent penetration by this Charm.

Imposter's Voice Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm elevates common mimicry to supernatural levels. For the duration of a scene, the Dragon-Blood using this Charm can perfectly duplicate another person's voice or the sound of any animal, spirit or other creature, as well any other sound he hears. The character must have heard the voice or sound at least once, and his player must succeed on a (Perception + Larceny) roll for the character to properly remember all of the sound's nuances. The difficulty of the roll is determined by the nature of the sound to be duplicated. Duplicating the voice of a person is generally only difficulty 1, while mimicking an unusual animal might require two or three successes. Imitating the sound of a three-mouthed god who speaks only in music might have a difficulty of 5. This Charm will not duplicate any supernatural effects associated with the sound duplicated, such as an animal roar that invokes supernatural fear, and each different sound to be imitated requires a new use of the Charm. The Charm will automatically fool any animals trained to respond only to the voice of the person imitated, and it will automatically fool any person, including the closest associates of the person imitated, unless a listener is using a Charm or spell that improves hearing.

Wood Aspects have access to a Performance Charm called New Voice Technique, which is functionally identical to this one except that it requires Performance 3 instead of Larceny 3.

Precise Ink Technique

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One task
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm is employed by spies and forgers across the Realm. A character using this Charm can duplicate both the handwriting and writing style of another person. The character must either currently have a specimen of the writing to be duplicated or else the player must succeed on a (Perception + Larceny) roll to recall a sample of writing the character has observed in the past. The Charm can be used to forge anything from a simple signature to a document with a maximum number of pages equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence. Therefore, while the Charm can easily be used to falsify a legal document, writing an entire novel in the target's handwriting and style would require many repeated uses of the Charm. It is impossible to tell the forgery from the target's normal handwriting by any mundane means. If Charms or similar magic are brought to bear on the forgery, the difficulty for any roll for a person analyzing the document to discover the truth is increased by an amount equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence.

Waters of Honesty Method

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

This simple Charm allows a Dragon-Blood observing some kind of game or competition to instantly know if someone is cheating and how the cheating is being accomplished. The Dragon-Blood can observe only one game or competition at a time, but the Charm can be used on any such event, from footraces to duels to any type of dice or card game.

Perfect Gambling Prana

Cost: 4m**; Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Waters of Honesty Method

This Charm, the use of which is highly illegal in both the Realm and Lookshy, permits a devious character to control a single event during the course of any game of chance, from a single throw of the dice to the draw of a single card. The Dragon-Blood using this Charm must be the one throwing the dice or drawing the card in order to get any benefit. Each new roll or draw demands a different use of this Charm, and frequent uses can exhaust the character's Essence pool rapidly.

Flood of Victory Prana

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Gambling Prana

The pinnacle of the art of illegal gambling, this Charm permits the Dragon-Blood to automatically win whatever game she is playing. The game in question must be a game of chance, be it dice, cards, roulette or anything else in which luck is a determining factor. If two characters both use this Charm in the same game, the one with the highest permanent Essence wins. If both have the same Essence, the outcome of the game is determined by opposed (Wits + Larceny) rolls. A Dynast caught using this Charm faces serious social censure. A Dragon-Blood in Lookshy is more likely to face criminal charges, while one foolish enough to use this Charm in a casino operated by a god or Exalt risks a very unpleasant death.

Martial Arts

The Dragon-Blooded collectively have access to more martial arts styles than any other Exalted group due to the existence of Immaculate training and the regimented lifestyle of the Seventh Legion. Some of the martial arts styles most commonly practiced by the Dragon-Blooded are described in Chapter Six (see p. **188**). The following Charms are special Dragon-Blooded Charms that are available to any Terrestrial Exalt regardless of what style she practices. Other Exalted martial artists cannot learn these Charms, regardless of the style they pursue, unless they are Eclipse Caste Solars or Moonshadow Caste Abyssals. **These Charms are always considered Water Aspect Charms regardless of whatever martial arts style the Dragon-Blood using them studies.**

Blade-Deflecting Palm

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Martial Arts Excellency or any Charm from any supernatural martial arts style

Lesser hand-to-hand combatants are forced to fall back when confronted by bladed weapons, but not the Princes of the Earth. When the Dragon-Blood activates this Charm, he can freely apply his PDV to parry any incoming martial arts or melee attack with his bare hands, even those that inflict lethal damage.

This is a reflexive Charm that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

Become the Hammer

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Blade-Deflecting Palm

This Charm focuses the Exalt's Essence into her hands and feet, transforming them into deadly weapons. A punch or kick delivered in conjunction with this Charm inflicts lethal damage instead of bashing damage and is considered an attack with a lethal weapon for the purposes of determining whether the target can parry. One mote must be spent per attack even if the attacks are part of a flurry.

Disarming Strike Prana

Cost: 3m, 1wp**; Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Become the Hammer

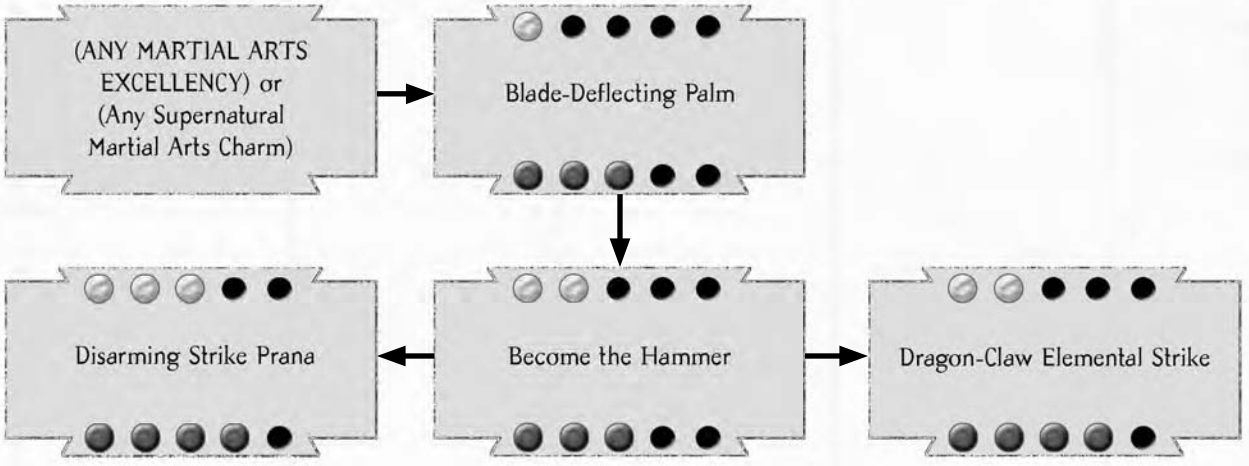
Even given the existence of Charms such as Blade-Deflecting Palm, an unarmed martial artist facing an armed opponent is usually in great danger. This Charm lets him equal the odds by disarming his opponent more easily by negating the normal -2 penalty for disarming an opponent (see **Exalted**, p. 158). The Charm does not allow the character to break or take the weapon, but he can choose in which direction the weapon will land, which will be (5 + 1 per additional success) yards away from its wielder.

Dragon-Claw Elemental Strike

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Become the Hammer

The Dragon-Blood's intimate connection with the Elemental Dragons permits her to inflict an elemental effect in conjunction with her hand-to-hand attacks. On a successful barehanded attack, the Dragon-Blood may also inflict an elemental effect appropriate to her aspect on the target. **Air** directs a mighty burst of wind at the target, forcing his player to roll (Dexterity + Athletics), difficulty 4, to keep the character from falling. **Earth** roots the target to the spot, preventing him from moving and inflicting a -2 penalty on his DDV and any actions he takes until the Dragon-Blood's next action. **Fire** sets the target ablaze for a single action, inflicting four levels of lethal damage in addition to the Dragon-Blood's normal damage dice pool. **Water** fills the target's lungs with seawater, adding three ticks before his next action due to violent coughing. **Wood** poisons the target's blood, causing him to suffer a -1 penalty on all actions for the scene if he fails a reflexive (Stamina + Resistance) roll.

This Charm is actually a cluster of Charms, one for each of the five elements. A Dragon-Blood can learn multiple versions of this Charm (and even combine two or more into a Combo), but he must learn the one associated with his aspect element first. Regardless of which version is used, the Charm is always considered a Water Aspect Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies. Therefore, a Fire Aspect who puts the Fire, Water and Wood versions of the



Charm into a single Combo must pay a total Essence cost of six motes (one mote per individual Charm plus one surcharge mote per Charm), while a Water Aspect with the same Combo need pay only three motes.

Sail

Hurricane-Predicting Glance

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Sail 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

With a glance toward the western sky and a quick whiff of the sea salt in the air, the Dragon-Blood can flawlessly predict the course of the weather for the day by intuitively sensing the currents of the ocean and the air. The Charm will not help the Dragon-Blood predict supernatural changes to the weather made after her prediction. It can, however, sometimes predict phenomena related in some way to the weather or to the seas, such as deducing when an enemy fleet is most likely to leave port by knowing the tidal patterns or predicting an earthquake by foreseeing the tsunami it will cause. In order to use this Charm, the Dragon-Blood *must* be on water. It automatically fails when she is standing on land.

Seven Seas Wind-Luring Chanty

Cost: 5m**; Mins:** Sail 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One hour
Prerequisite Charms: Hurricane-Predicting Glance

As per Harmonious Wind-Luring Song on page **134**. The Dragon-Blood must be at sea to use this Charm.

Storm-Outrunning Technique

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Hurricane-Predicting Glance

The Children of Daana'd are one with the oceans, and the winds and waves respond to their call. For the duration of a scene, the Dragon-Blood can double his ship's rate of movement. While not a long-term aid to travel, this Charm can make sure that one ship beats another into port or that the ship can outrun bad weather or pirates. If the ship is forced to take a path through dangerous waters at its accelerated speed, Sail rolls may be required to maintain control of the ship and keep it from running aground. This Charm has absolutely no effect if the ship is totally becalmed. It can double the current speed of a ship, but it cannot cause a ship to move without any wind or current at all.

Fine Passage Negotiating Style

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Hurricane-Predicting Glance

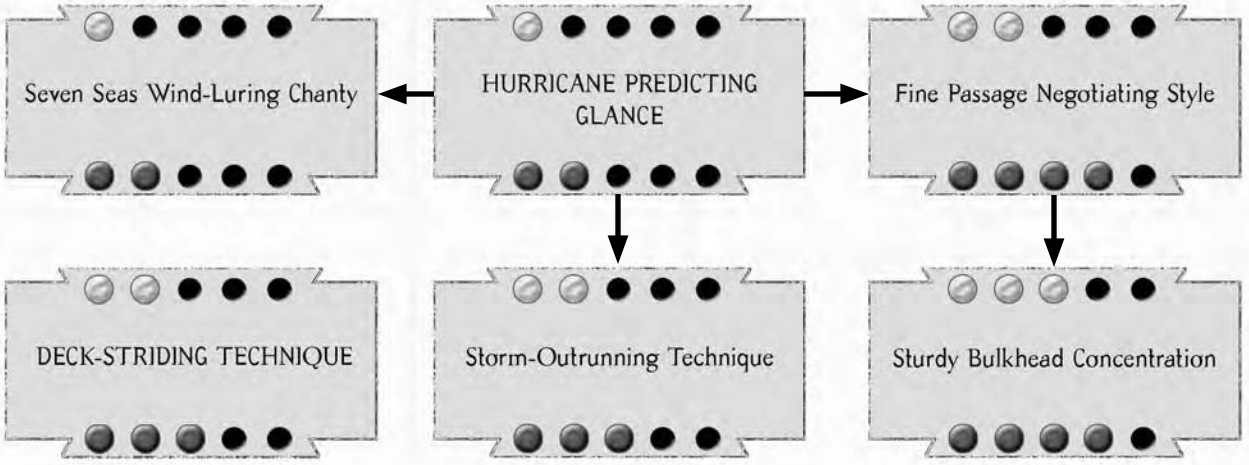
Being one with the ocean also attunes the Dragon-Blood to what lies beneath it. For the duration of a scene, the Dragon-Blood intuitively knows of any submerged hazards within five miles of her current location (assuming she is at sea, of course), effectively adding three dice to any Sail rolls that involve navigating through such hazards. The Charm does not automatically protect the ship from harm. A bad roll by the player might still cause the ship to be ripped asunder. Also, the Charm only gives an awareness of submerged static hazards. It gives no insight into the actions of the band of pirates preparing an ambush, the oncoming Resplendent Dolphin Undersea Courier full of Anathema or the hungry aquatic behemoth approaching from the depths.

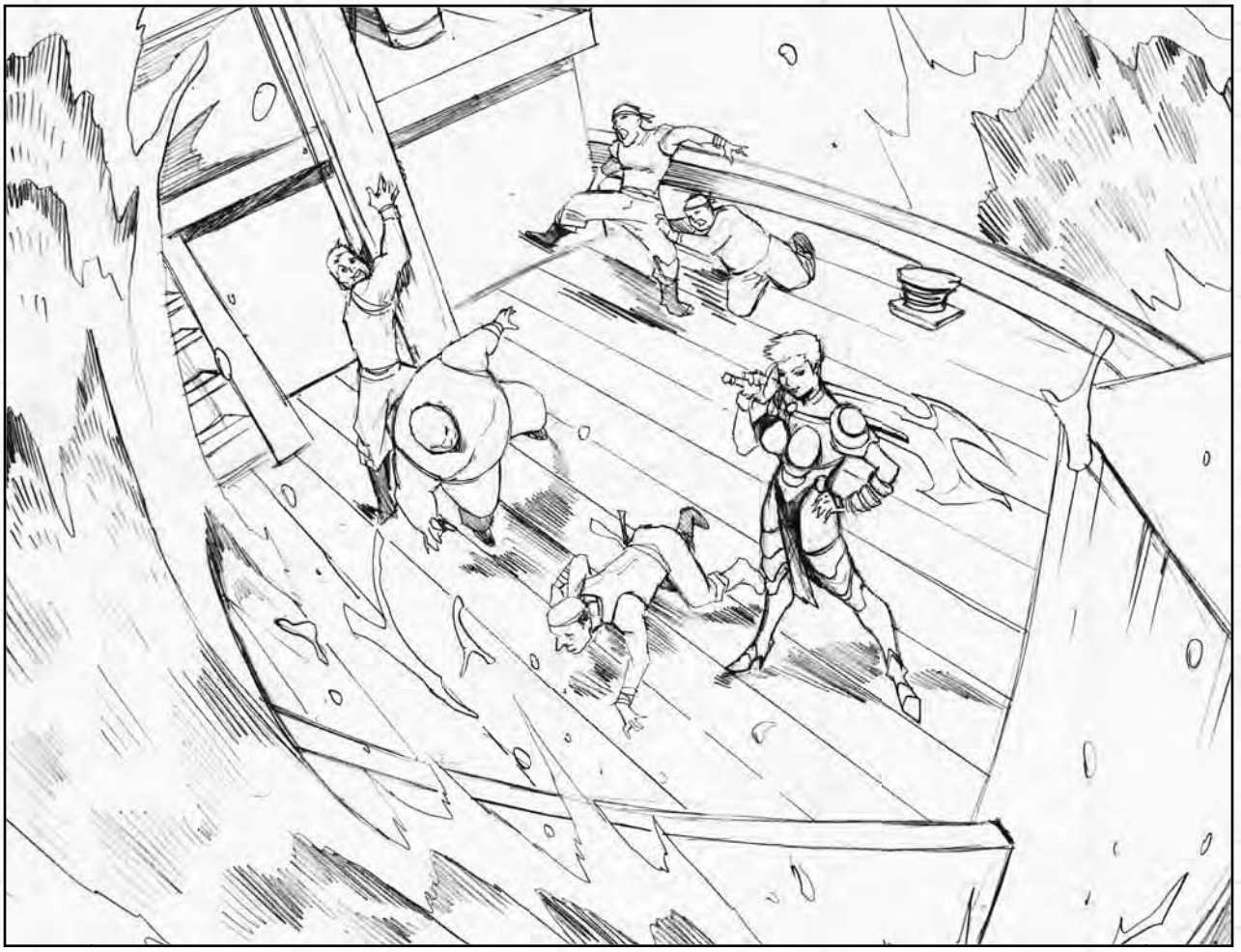
This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. If used during combat, it can only be activated on a tick upon which the Dragon-Blood acts but not on any of the intervening ticks that come between them. In mass combat, it can be used on any long tick.

Sturdy Bulkhead Concentration

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Fine Passage Negotiating Style

While Fine Passage Negotiating Style can warn an attentive Dragon-Blood of approaching hazards capable of tearing the ship asunder, such hazards are not always avoidable. At such times, Dragon-Blooded at sea are grateful for this Charm, which can augment the integrity of a ship's hull without reducing the ship's speed. When a character uses this Charm on a ship, its hull gains three additional health levels and two additional soak. The Charm lasts for a scene or until the Dragon-Blood leaves the vessel.





Deck-Striding Technique

Cost: 3m (or 6m)**; Mins:** Sail 3 (or 5), Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, (Obvious), Touch
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

A ship can be hazardous terrain even in the calmest of seas, as sailors constantly risk falling from the rigging, slipping on a wet deck or getting knocked overboard during rough seas. This Charm can negate such risks for both the Exalt and his crewmates. While this Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood can make any normal movements across the deck of a ship or up and down its rigging without any possibility of falling, even in the roughest seas or while the ship is under attack. The Charm also totally negates any movement penalties associated with environmental effects such as ice, snow, water or motion.

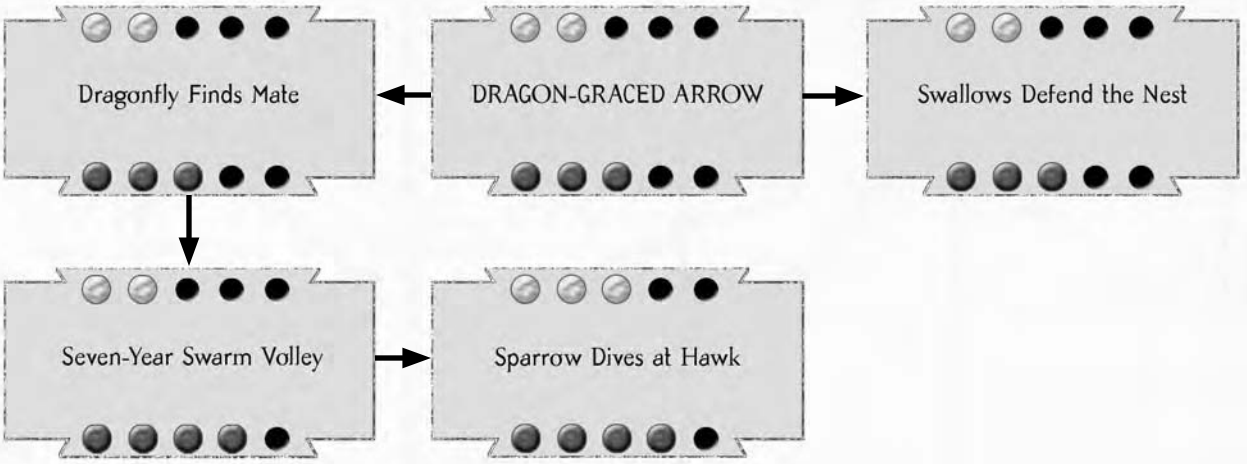
This Charm does not normally permit the sailor to perform impossible feats such as walking along the side of a ship's hull or up the canvas of its billowing sails. However, if the Dragon-Blood has Sail 5 and spends six motes instead of three, even these limits are overcome, allowing him to perform impossible feats such as standing horizontally on the ship's mast or upside down from the bottom of its crow's nest. The sole limitation is that this Charm can be used only aboard a ship of some sort, although exotic vessels such as Haslanti air boats count as ships. In addition to granting the aforementioned benefits of either version to himself, the Dragon-Blood can also grant them to anyone else provided he pays the same amount of Essence and touches the person to be affected.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. The Dragon-Blood can use it on himself on any tick. If he wishes to use it on someone else, he can do so only by touching the other person on a tick upon which he acts.

Wood Aspect

Sextes Jylis is credited by the Immaculate Order with a number of astonishing and miraculous feats, many well beyond what even the most powerful Terrestrial Exalted extant in the Age of Sorrows could accomplish. A "wild man who came from the woods" prior to his Exaltation, Sextes Jylis was thought to be a barbarian of some description who came from the Far East. A skilled tracker, archer and horseman prior to his Exaltation, the blessing of the Wood Dragon raised these skills to superlative levels, while also elevating his rudimentary knowledge of herbalism into an intuitive understanding of medicine surpassing that of the Twilights and No Moons.

According to other sources, Wood Aspects of the First Age were chiefly used as archers, rangers, cavalry or battlefield medics. Few Wood Aspects specialized in Performance during the time of the Primordial War, as such activities were deemed somewhat frivolous in the face of a battle against chthonic elder beings, but most Wood Aspects had some performance skills, which were relied upon to help maintain troop morale.



Archery

Dragon-Graced Arrow

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can channel the power of his aligned element into a shaft and unleash it on a target. On a successful Archery attack, the Dragon-Blood may also inflict an elemental effect appropriate to his aspect on the target. **Air** buffets the target, subtracting two dice from his next action. **Earth** triggers a tremor beneath the target's feet, forcing his player to successfully roll (Dexterity + Athletics), difficulty 4, to keep him from falling. **Fire** sets the target ablaze for an action, inflicting four levels of lethal damage. **Water** fills the target's lungs with seawater, adding three ticks before his next action due to violent coughing. **Wood** increases the damage of the Dragon-Blood's arrow by +2L due the thorns covering it. The Essence for this Charm must be spent separately for each arrow fired. Although this Charm can be put into a Combo with an extra action Charm such as Swallows Defend the Nest, a particular target cannot be subjected to more than one particular elemental effect at a time. A Fire Aspect, for instance, could fire three separate arrows at three separate targets inflicting four additional levels of fire damage on each one. An Air Aspect and Earth Aspect could each shoot the same target and each inflict their respective penalties on that target, but a Fire Aspect could not hit the same target twice and inflict +8L fire damage.

Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, this Charm is always considered a Wood-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies, and Dragon-Blooded can learn only the version associated with their aspects.

Swallows Defend the Nest

Cost: 1m per arrow**; Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Dragon-Graced Arrow

With this Charm, the Wood Aspect becomes one with her bow and arrows, and she can transcend the normal limits of what is possible with both wood and sinew. The Dragon-Blood can fire multiple arrows on a single tick as part of a magical flurry. Each arrow fired after the first costs one mote of Essence but is fired with the Dragon-Blood's full dice pool. The maximum number of arrows a Dragon-Blood can fire as part of a single action is equal to his permanent Essence.

Dragonfly Finds Mate

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Dragon-Graced Arrow

The peerless archery of this Wood Aspect is such that she can shoot projectiles out of the air, including arrows fired at her. If the Dragon-Blood wishes to deflect an incoming missile with an arrow of her own, the player must roll (Dexterity + Archery) and compare the results to the attacker's roll. The attack is parried *only* if the player's roll equals or exceeds the attacker. A partial parry achieves nothing.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack, provided, of course, that the Dragon-Blood has her bow and arrows handy.

Seven-Year Swarm Volley

Cost: 3m, 1wp + 1m per person defended**; Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: Dragonfly Finds Mate

Having mastered the art of protecting himself from ranged attacks by shooting projectiles out of the sky, the Dragon-Blood can now extend this protection to his allies. The Dragon-Blood must spend a base cost of three motes and one Willpower plus one mote per person to be protected, including himself. He must also have two arrows per person handy. His player then rolls (Dexterity + Archery). For every success rolled, the DV of *every* protected ally increases by one against ranged attacks. Once this Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood cannot take any other actions (such as combining his defense with another action as part of a flurry), nor can he undertake any non-reflexive actions until his next regular action, or else, the Charm's effect ends immediately.

Sparrow Dives at Hawk

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Steps 5 and 9)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Counterattack
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Seven-Year Swarm Volley

The Charm Dragonfly Finds Mate permits the Dragon-Blood to knock the projectiles of his enemies from the sky with well-placed arrows. This Charm goes one better, as the Dragon-Blood's arrow goes on to strike the foolish one who dared to strike at a Prince of the Earth. As with Dragonfly Finds Mate, the Exalt's player must roll (Dexterity + Archery). If the successes rolled by the player equal or exceed those of the attacker, the ranged attack is deflected. Furthermore, any successes in excess of those rolled for the attacker represent a reflexive archery attack made against that enemy. Also, the enemy's DV is *not* subtracted from this reflexive attack, *unless* the enemy has access to reflexive Charms that can be used to raise DV from zero or the enemy is already subject to a Charm with a persistent defense.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used on any tick. It is, however, an exception to the normal rules for Dragon-Blooded reflexive Charms. Specifically, on any tick upon which the Dragon-Blood uses Sparrow Dives at Hawk, he cannot use any other Charms, including reflexive Charms, except for additional uses of Sparrow Dives at Hawk. Naturally, this limitation does not apply if the Charm is part of a Combo.

Harvest of the Hunter

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Archery Excellency

The Children of Sextes Jylis rarely want for anything in the forests they love, least of all ammunition. When the Dragon-Blood requires arrows, he can approach any plant, from a common oak tree to exotic plants such as desert cacti or marsh reeds. Then, once he spends the requisite Essence, the plant will instantly "sprout" into a number of arrows equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. The Dragon-Blood can summon any conventional type of arrow into existence, and the arrows are perfectly normal, if somewhat strange-looking. The arrows can be shared with any of the Dragon-Blood's fellow archers.

Unobstructed Hunter's Aim

Cost: 4m + 1wp (optional); **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 3)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Harvest of the Hunter

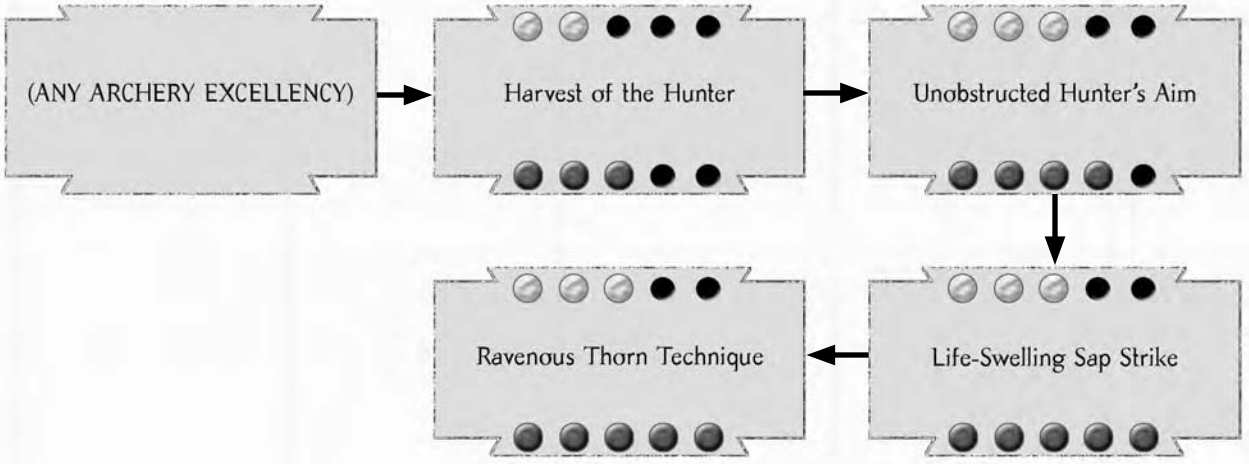
With this Charm, the archer and arrow truly become one, as the shaft can twist itself in flight to take a curved path toward its target, bypassing the enemy's cover. An attack accompanied by this Charm totally ignores all ranged cover modifiers granted by trees and wooden objects. Once charged with Essence, the arrow passes effortlessly through plants, trees, even wooden shields and timber fortifications, regardless of their thickness. It cannot penetrate objects containing or reinforced with the magical materials, though. Furthermore, if the arrow cannot go through cover, it can try to go around it. If the Dragon-Blood spends one Willpower in addition to the normal four motes of Essence, the arrow can alter its trajectory in mid-flight to curve around cover or find the tiniest eye slit in a reinforced bunker. The target's DV bonus acquired through being behind cover decreases by -1 per dot of the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. Only the DV bonus acquired from cover is affected this way, and regardless of the nature of the target's cover, it must be possible for an arrow to reach him by some trajectory. Arrows augmented by this Charm cannot be used to penetrate armor by "targeting its weak points."

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated only on a tick upon which the Dragon-Blood acts normally, however. It cannot be used on any tick falling between actions.

Life-Swelling Sap Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Unobstructed Hunter's Aim

Of all the Immaculate Dragons, none was as implacable a foe to the undead as Sextes Jylis, for it was his way as an embodiment of life itself to oppose the forces of death. When a Wood Aspect fires an arrow toward one of the undead and activates this Charm, the arrow sprouts leaves in mid-flight without affecting its trajectory. Upon striking an undead creature, it erupts into full bloom, ensnaring the foul thing in crushing vines. As a result of this magic,



the arrow inflicts aggravated damage on its undead target instead of lethal. This Charm is equally as useful against materialized ghosts, nemissaries and hungry ghosts. It has no special effect against Abyssals, Deathlords or the living, however, though a successful hit still inflicts normal damage.

Ravenous Thorn Technique

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Life-Swelling Sap Strike

With this Charm, the Wood Aspect can breathe new life into a wooden shaft, causing it to sprout writhing vines and hungry roots the instant it strikes its target. The arrow inflicts its normal damage, and if the archer's initial attack causes any damage to the target at all, the arrow sprouts roots and creepers that bore into the target's body. These tendrils inflict additional damage equal to the base damage type of the arrow (a minimum of 1L) on the tick upon which the arrow strikes. This additional damage ignores armor and may be soaked only with Stamina and other natural soak. The arrow inflicts this damage again five ticks later and again every five ticks thereafter until it is removed or until it inflicts the extra damage a total number of times equal to the archer's permanent Essence. The extra damage inflicted cannot be healed until the arrow is removed, which requires a (Dexterity + Medicine) roll with a difficulty equal to the permanent Essence of the archer.

Medicine

Infection-Banishing Prana

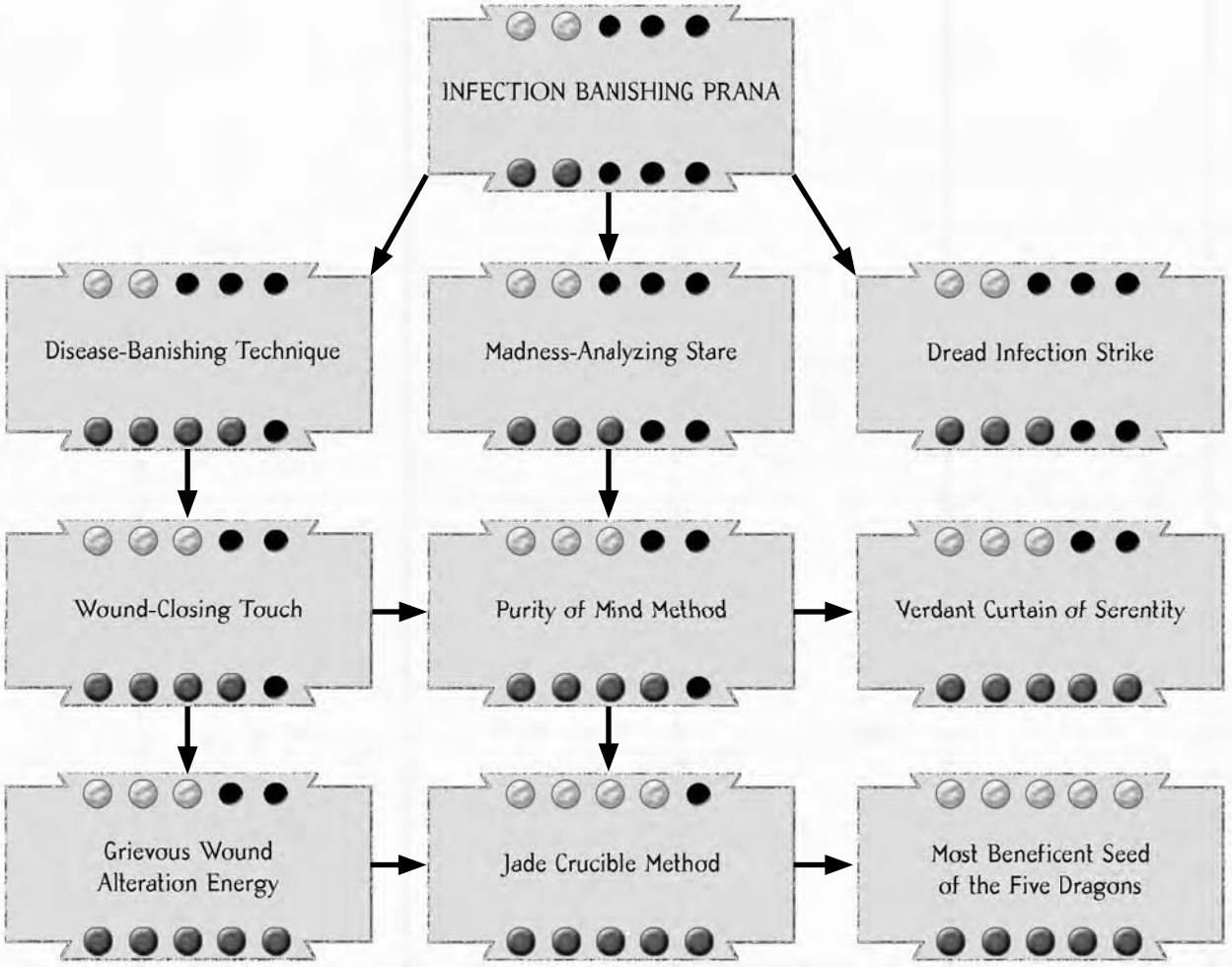
Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Medicine 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Even a person who survives brutal injuries can still suffer and die from the deadly infections that accompany such injuries unless he is protected by the blessings of the Elemental Dragons. The Dragon-Blood can instantly cure any existing infection with a touch and the expenditure of a single mote of Essence. Furthermore, wounded persons treated with this Charm will not become infected in the future as a result of any wounds they had when the Charm was used. This Charm does not heal the wounds that initially led to the infection, nor does it protect the patient from infections springing from future wounds.

Dread Infection Strike

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Infection-Banishing Prana

Medicinal knowledge can kill as well as heal, infect as well as purify. The Dragon-Blood using this Charm can enchant her weapon so that any wounds it causes are much more likely to become



infected. When this Charm is invoked, the difficulty to resist infection from a lethal wound inflicted by the Dragon-Blood increases by two, even for Exalted. The Essence must be spent before the attack roll, and the attack must inflict at least one level of lethal damage or the Essence is wasted. Using this Charm against a fellow Dragon-Blood is a sure way for the character to win enemies for himself, as there is no weapon more hated or feared in the Age of Sorrows than disease. This Charm is explicitly allowed to be used in Combos with Charms of other Abilities.

Disease-Banishing Technique

Cost: 4m, 1wp**; Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Infection-Banishing Prana

This Charm elevates the Wood Aspects to the status of healers of legend, although its failure during the time of the Great Contagion was a mighty blow to the Wood Aspects' collective pride. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can cure any non-magical disease with a touch. She must first make an ordinary diagnosis with her Medicine Ability prior to attempting to heal the disease, as she must understand what kind of plague confronts her. If the diagnosis is successful, the Dragon-Blood need only spend the Essence and Willpower and touch her patient to purge the illness from the patient's body. This purge is quite violent, and the patient is likely to convulse and expel the sickness, in the form of a repulsive ichor from his mouth, nose and elsewhere as soon as the Charm takes effect. If this occurs during combat, the patient is automatically rendered inactive for a number of actions equal to the disease's Treated Morbidity (see **Exalted**, p. 350). The Dragon-Blood can cure a magical disease only if his permanent Essence equals or exceeds the Magical Treatment Difficulty for the illness, and no Dragon-Blood is capable of curing the Great Contagion with this Charm.

Wound-Closing Touch

Cost: 2m per lhl converted, plus 1wp**; Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Disease-Banishing Technique

With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can instantly staunch the bleeding of herself or someone else and also facilitate the healing of wounds. For every two motes spent, the Dragon-Blooded can convert one lethal wound level into a bashing level. Healing even one level of damage also automatically closes any bleeding wounds. This Charm can be used on another just as easily as the Exalt uses it on herself. The Dragon-Blood need only spend one Willpower point per application of this Charm.

Grievous Wound Alteration Energy

Cost: 3m and 1wp per ahl converted**; Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Closing Touch

With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can cause himself or someone else to more quickly heal even the most serious of injuries. For every three motes spent, the Dragon-Blood can convert one level of aggravated damage into lethal damage. Healing even one level of damage also automatically closes any bleeding wounds. This



Charm can be used on someone else just as easily as the Exalt uses it on himself. The Dragon-Blood must spend one Willpower per aggravated health level converted. Damage converted from aggravated to lethal can be further transformed into simple bashing damage through a subsequent application of Wound-Closing Touch.

Madness-Analyzing Stare

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Infection-Banishing Prana

There is more to the healing arts than rejuvenation of the body. A good physician must also tend to his patient's mind. This Charm permits a Dragon-Blood to analyze another character and diagnose any external influences that cloud her mind. Such influences can include mind-effecting sorcery or Charms, as well as derangements. The Dragon-Blood's player must roll (Perception + Medicine) at a difficulty of 2. If the roll is successful, the Exalt can detect the existence of any external influences on the target as well as the nature of any derangements. With four or more successes, the Dragon-Blood can trace external magical influences back to their source or instantly understand the root cause of any natural derangement (adding two dice to any subsequent attempt to cure the patient of her mental illness). The Dragon-Blood cannot use this power on himself. The Charm can diagnose a patient suffering from a low-Willpower compulsion and even identify the approximate nature of any Exalt's Virtue Flaw while he is in Limit Break, but it can neither diagnose nor aid in curing any aspect of the Great Curse.

Purity of Mind Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Closing Touch, Madness-Analyzing Stare

With a simple kiss to the patient's forehead, the Dragon-Blood can exert mastery over the illness that plagues the patient's mind. This Charm can instantly remove any normally acquired derangement from the patient. The Dragon-Blood must first have used Madness-Analyzing Stare to isolate the root cause of the patient's mental problems, and the Charm must be used multiple times if the patient has multiple maladies. In addition to normal derangements, the Charm will instantly end the effects of any Charms exerting unnatural mental influence over the patient except for Servitude effects. The Dragon-Blood must spend 10 motes instead of five in order to defeat a mental influence Charm used by a Celestial Exalt. This Charm can counteract mental influences caused by sorcery, but only if the spell's effect was instant. Ongoing effects can only be countered by Emerald Countermagic or similar spells. This Charm has no power in the face of the Great Curse.

Verdant Curtain of Serenity

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Purity of Mind Method

As per Granite Curtain of Serenity on page **145**.

Jade Crucible Method

Cost: Special, 1wp**; Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Grievous Wound Alteration Energy, Purity of Mind Method

With this Charm, the Exalt approaches the Immaculate Dragons themselves in his understanding of the interrelationship between the physical body and the Essence that animates it. This Charm allows the Dragon-Blood to tap into the hidden wellspring of Essence within himself by sacrificing some of his own health and vitality to release new Essence for more immediate use. The player of the character invoking this Charm must decide how many health levels are to be sacrificed in its activation. He then rolls (the character's permanent Essence + Medicine). Each success on the roll grants one mote of Peripheral Essence per health level expended. The resulting damage to the Dragon-Blooded is considered lethal, and any resulting damage penalties do not apply until after the roll is made for this Charm. Essence gained in this way can increase the character's Peripheral Essence pool in excess of its normal limit, but any such excess Essence is lost at the end of the scene.

Most Beneficent Seed of the Five Dragons

Cost: 8m, 1wp**; Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 5**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Jade Crucible Method

The Dragon-Blooded are each attuned to one of the five elements, but like all living beings, each also contains a piece of all five elements. Having mastered the secrets of life itself, the Dragon-Blood who knows this Charm can cause the seed of any of the five elements to blossom within herself. For the duration of this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can assume the elemental aspect of any element other than the one to which she is normally aligned. The Dragon-Blood's anima power changes to that of the new element, and she will find that she need no longer pay the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms for the new aspect, but must pay it for her old aspect. If the Dragon-Blood has mastered an out-of-aspect Glorious Dragon Style, she can still use Charms of that aspect without paying a surcharge, and she cannot change her "extra" aspect with this Charm. Only her natural aspect is affected. The character can end the effects of this Charm on any tick during the scene as a reflexive action, but doing so will instantly terminate any benefits gained from the use of the new anima power.

Because the Charm lasts for only a scene, it cannot affect which Abilities are considered favored by the character for experience cost or training time purposes. Many elemental Charms have different effects depending on the aspect of the Dragon-Blood who uses them. Some only allow a Dragon-Blood to use the version associated with her normal aspect, while others represent a cluster of five elemental Charms that can all be learned independently. If a Dragon-Blood who deploys Most Beneficent Seed of the Five Dragons has any elemental Charms of the former group, the aspect of those Charms switches to the Exalt's new aspect for the duration of the scene. If the Dragon-Blood has any Charms of the latter group (i.e., Charms that can be learned for any aspect), those Charms are not altered. This Charm is explicitly allowed to be included in Combos along with Charms of other Abilities.

Performance

Talented Improvisation

Cost: 1m**; Mins:** Performance 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Simple

Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Performance Excellency

There are a vast number of musical instruments in Creation, more than any single Exalt could ever completely master. With this Charm, however, the Dragon-Blood can instantly become proficient (if not more so) at any single musical instrument. For the duration of the scene, the Dragon-Blood can apply his Performance Ability without penalty to any instrument for which he does not possess a specialty. He can also intuitively understand forms of musical notation that are alien to him, such as First Age compositions.

Dance of Flashing Swords

Cost: 2m, 1wp + 1m per extra foe**; Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Talented Improvisation

From time to time, an Exalted warrior finds herself in the difficult position of being forced to fight when it is undesirable to be seen fighting. Sometimes, the Dragon-Blood is forced to fight an ally under some kind of mind control and she does not wish to let enemies know of her circle's internal strife. Other times, the Dragon-Blood might be undercover in an enemy city and need to subdue her opponents in a public place without bystanders calling out the city guards. With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can place anyone observing her combat under the illusion that the combat itself is not a serious fight. Depending on the circumstances and how the Dragon-Blood chooses to manipulate the Charm, observers might believe that the fight is simply some kind of street theater or that an implacable enemy assassin is simply a "drunken friend who has had too much ale." Regardless of the context, affected observers believe that the fight is entertaining and nonthreatening, and they will generally refrain from attempting to intervene or from calling for the guards.

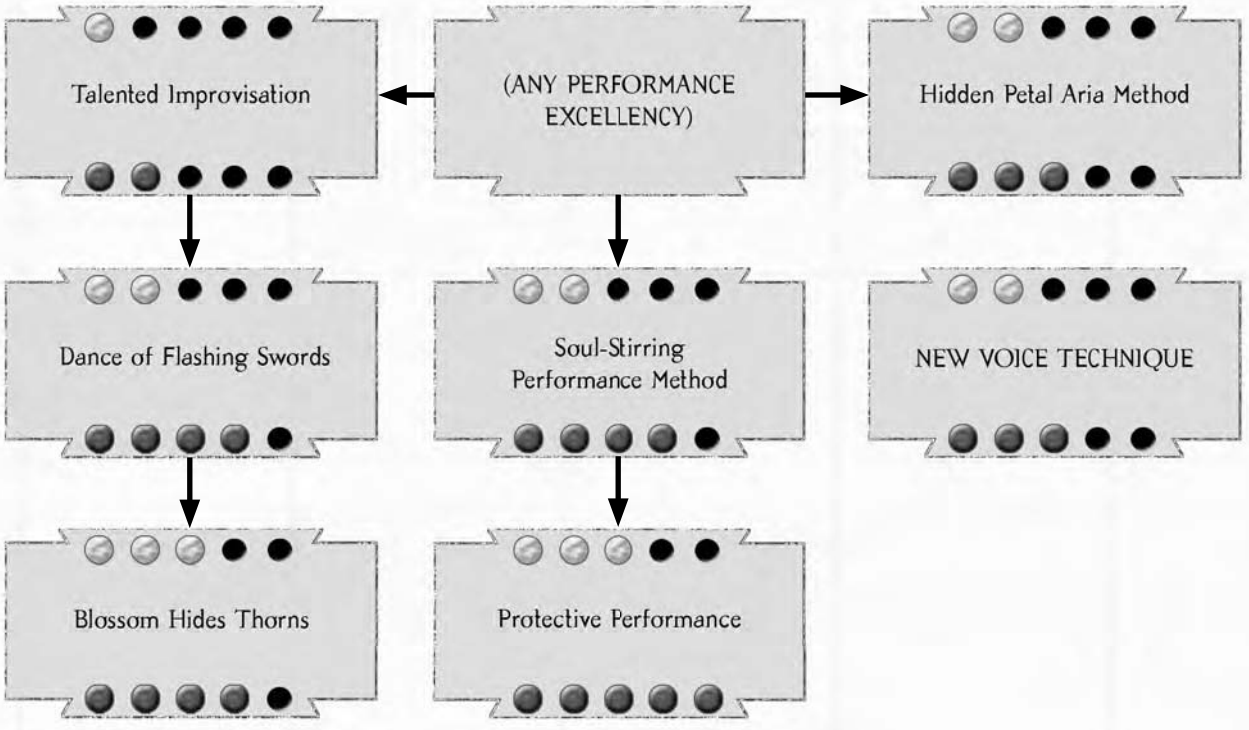
The Dragon-Blood can disguise a conflict between herself and a single person plus one additional extra per extra mote spent. She cannot disguise a conflict if her enemies include more than one character who is not an extra. The other combatants in the fight are not affected by this illusion, and nothing prevents one of them breaking off the fight to summon help while the others continue to fight. Anyone who knows for certain that the fight is real before the Charm is activated (such as allies of the other combatants who were not close enough to Join Battle at the time) is unaffected. Likewise, anyone who arrives on the scene later during the fight with reason to believe the fight is real (such as allies who were summoned by a combatant who ran off to get help) is unaffected. If someone does arrive after the Charm's activation, however, the Dragon-Blooded can add him to the "mock fight" with the reflexive expenditure of a single mote of Essence, so that the arrival of new combatants will not break the Charm's hold on bystanders. This Charm does not fool characters with an Essence rating higher than the character using the Charm, nor does it affect any character whose Dodge MDV is higher than the Dragon-Blood's (Performance + Essence).

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used on any tick.

Blossom Hides Thorns

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 3)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Dance of Flashing Swords

The Dragon-Blooded are social creatures, enamored of culture and art, but they are also creatures of violence, passion and cunning artifice. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood who is currently engaged in a performance of some kind can initiate a surprise attack on a target while disguising it as simply another part of



the performance. The player of the target can attempt a reflexive (Wits + Awareness) roll to anticipate the sneak attack, but the difficulty is equal to the Exalt's Essence. If that roll is unsuccessful, the target's DV is reduced to zero for the Dragon-Blood's surprise attack. Any target will realize that he has been attacked after he has taken any damage, but if an attack misses, the target might not even notice that it took place unless at least one success is rolled for him on a (Wits + Awareness) roll. Also, if the damage to a target is sufficient to kill the target with a single blow, bystanders might not even notice that an attack took place until the victim's body is discovered. This discovery might take some time if, for example, the target was slain in his box seat by a singer performing on stage at an opera. This Charm cannot be used after combat has begun. It can be used only while the Dragon-Blood is in the midst of some kind of performance activity.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used only on a tick upon which the Dragon-Blood acts.

New Voice Technique

Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

As per Imposter's Voice Technique on page **168.**

Hidden Petal Aria Method

Cost: 2m per subject**; Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 3)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: Any Performance Excellency

A truly gifted performance contains multiple layers of communication, as a single turn of an actor's head or a single note artistic flourish in a musical performance can contain nuances that only a true aficionado can appreciate. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can weave hidden subtexts and messages into his performance, ideas that only audience members of his choice can perceive. The Exalt must spend two motes per person with whom he wishes to communicate secretly, and the Charm can only be used in the course of a performance. Once the Charm is activated, he can deliver messages of almost any length, which the subject perceives subliminally, as if the Exalt were speaking in a slow monotone voice. The Charm does not permit the subject to communicate anything back to the Dragon-Blood, but if multiple Dragon-Blooded with this Charm are performing together on the same stage, they can have lengthy conversations or even arguments without the audience being any the wiser. Highly specialized or technical knowledge generally cannot be communicated with this Charm.

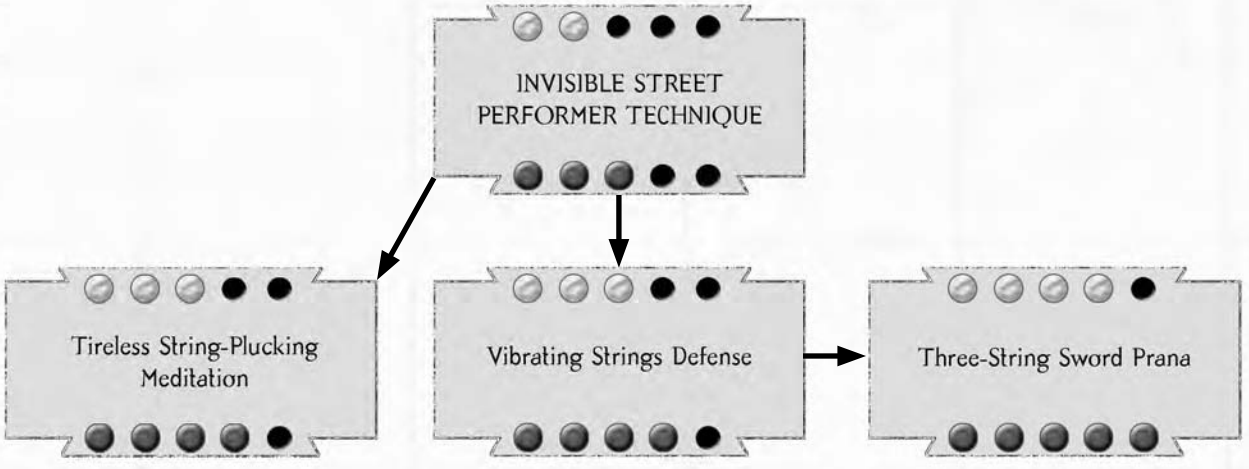
This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used only on a tick upon which the Dragon-Blood acts.

Soul-Stirring Performance Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp**; Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Emotion
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Performance Excellency

A Dragon-Blooded performer can invoke a powerful response in her audience, one capable of creating a degree of emotional control or even of inflicting a compulsion on the audience. There is virtually no limitation on the degree of emotional control that the Dragon-Blooded can exert over an audience with this Charm other than the fact that individuals cannot be overwhelmed with suicidal despair. A compulsion inflicted on the audience can be anything from "only buy goods from House V'neef" to "burn down this building." The Charm cannot induce any single audience member to violate a Motivation or breach an Intimacy, however, nor can it motivate the audience to do anything particularly dangerous other than to simply riot. Triggering a riot is not something one does lightly, though, as the Dragon-Blood using this Charm has no control over the audience once the riot breaks out. Beyond these limitations, normal mortals are virtually powerless to resist the effect, but any heroic mortal in the audience might be able to resist if his MDV exceeds the Dragon-Blood's successes on a (Manipulation + Performance) roll. Exalted and spirits are immune to this Charm.

The Dragon-Blood's player must roll (Charisma + Performance), and the difficulty is determined by the number of people in the audience—a single success is sufficient to affect a small crowd of only a few dozen, while three successes give influence over hundreds and five successes can reach thousands. The character can deliberately set out to affect only part of the audience (such as turning the poor people in the cheap seats against the patricians in the boxes), but this selectivity must be declared before the roll is made. The medium of the performance can be almost anything and does not even require the Dragon-Blood to verbally communicate with the audience. Plays,



sanxian recitals, ballets or poetry readings are all equally as capable of influencing the audience's collective mood. If the roll is successful, the Dragon-Blood can either inspire a deep-seated emotion in the audience or invoke a minor compulsion.

Protective Performance

Cost: 8m**; Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion
Duration: Until the performance ends, plus the Exalt's Essence in hours
Prerequisite Charms: Soul-Stirring Performance Method

This Charm was apparently created to allow Dragon-Blooded performers to interfere with their fellows who were attempting to improperly manipulate audience members with Soul-Stirring Performance Method. The effect of the Charm combined with the artistry of the Dragon-Blood's performance enacts a potent defensive magic on the entire audience. For the duration of the performance, the difficulty to affect any member of the audience with mind-controlling Charms increases by an amount equal to the Exalt's Essence. Additionally, after the performance ends, the difficulty to use unnatural mental influence to turn any audience member against the Dragon-Blood who used the Charm increases by two. This secondary effect lasts for a number of hours equal to the Exalt's permanent Essence.

Invisible Street Performer Technique

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion
Duration: Until performance ends
Prerequisite Charms: None

It is difficult for beings as naturally ostentatious as the Dragon-Blooded to escape notice. Fortunately, some musicians are skilled enough to lull the senses of an observer as easily as a lullaby stills a child into sleep. This Charm can be activated only while the Dragon-Blood is playing a musical instrument. As long as she continues to play, those around will not notice her presence. The knowledge that someone is nearby softly playing a musical instrument tickles at the edge of the observer's consciousness, but he simply doesn't give it much thought. The player of any character who might observe the Dragon-Blood must roll (Wits + Awareness) with a difficulty of (the Dragon-Blood's Performance + instrument specialty). Even if the roll is successful, the observer might still have no reason to notice the Dragon-Blood's presence unless the presence of a musician playing an instrument is somehow out-of-place (such as a lone musician strumming his sanxian on an empty street late at night).

In addition to a minimum of Performance 3, the Dragon-Blood must also have a specialty in some kind of musical instrument or else activate the Talented Improvisation Charm prior to beginning her performance. Also, this Charm cannot be used in connection with a particularly loud or piercing instrument. While a flute or sanxian might fade into the background, clashing cymbals or koto drums will not.

Tireless String-Plucking Meditation

Cost: 5m (+1m per attack); **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Invisible Street Performer Technique

Most Dragon-Blooded favor stringed instruments, and virtually all Dynasts are taught to play the sanxian as children. Essentially a three-stringed banjo, the sanxian normally requires either false fingernails or some sort of pick to play, and even the best musicians can develop pain in their fingers through extensive playing. With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood can play as long as she wishes without pain, exhaustion or even hunger as long as she can continue to pay the daily Essence requirement. Furthermore, she no longer requires any equipment to pluck the strings of her instrument, as her fingernails lengthen and harden into suitable picks. Finally, as an added bonus, the Dragon-Blooded can further improve the strength and sharpness of her fingernails to aid in hand-to-hand attacks. By reflexively spending one mote while the Charm is active, the Dragon-Blooded can cause a single attack made with her bare hands to inflict lethal damage.

Vibrating Strings Defense

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Reflexive (Step 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Invisible Street Performer Technique

Dragon-Blooded musicians rarely tolerate their performances being interrupted by anything so gauche as an attack by armed men. This potent Charm allows a Dragon-Blood to parry any attack with the music he creates through his instrument. Those foolish enough to attack the musician find their mightiest melee and ranged attacks turned aside by a particularly loud thrum of a sanxian's strings or a single mighty strike of a drum or gong.

For the duration of the scene, the Dragon-Blood can replace his normal parry Ability with his Performance for purposes of calculating Parry DV. Any dots the Dragon-Blood has in an applicable Performance specialty also applies to calculating Parry DV. Finally, any Performance Excellencies the Dragon-Blood has can be used to further improve Parry DV for the duration of the scene, exactly as if they were Melee or Martial Arts Excellencies.

In addition to a minimum of Performance 4, the Dragon-Blood must also have a specialty in some kind of musical instrument or else activate the Talented Improvisation Charm prior to beginning her performance.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick on which the Exalt is subject to an attack.

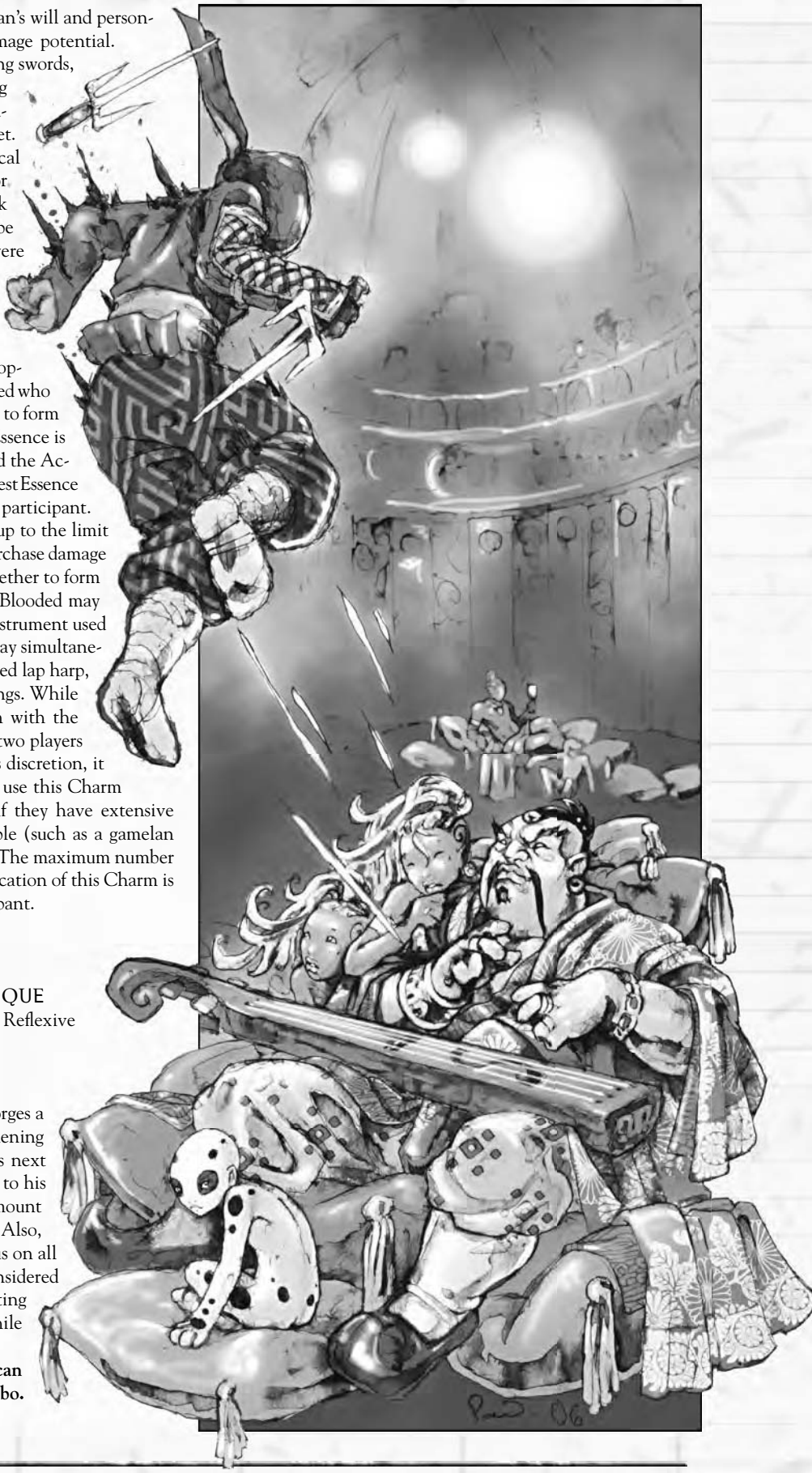
Three-String Sword Prana

Cost: 1m per 2lhl**; Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Cooperative, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Vibrating Strings Defense

A gifted musician understands his instrument in the same way that an archer understands his bow or a warrior his sword. For a Dragon-Blood who knows this Charm, this sentiment is more than a metaphor, as the Exalted musician can now launch deadly attacks armed only with a sanxian, flute or any other musical instrument. The attack is targeted with the Exalt's (Wits + Performance) and has an Accuracy bonus equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence. The attack also has a range of a number of yards equal to the character's (permanent Essence x 20), and it inflicts a base damage of two levels of lethal damage per mote of Essence spent. The musician cannot spend more motes of Essence than he has dots in the Performance Ability. Although the attack is actually made of sound powered by Essence, it typically manifests in some

more martial form according to the musician's will and personality, as well as by the potency of its damage potential. Such manifestations often appear as slashing swords, mailed fists, fiery arrows or even charging beasts, which come flying out of the Dragon-Blood's instrument hurtling toward their target. Because these manifestations have a physical component, such attacks can be parried or dodged like any normal attack, and an attack made with Three-String Sword Prana can be used in conjunction with a flurry as if it were any other form of attack. Because of the obvious nature of this Charm, it cannot be combined in any way with the Charm Blossom Hides Thorns.

Three-String Sword Prana is also a cooperative Charm, and multiple Dragon-Blooded who know the Charm can combine their powers to form greater effects. The characters' combined Essence is used to determine the maximum range, and the Accuracy bonus of the attack is equal to the highest Essence of any participant plus two per additional participant. Also, each participant can spend Essence up to the limit of his individual Performance Ability to purchase damage dice, with all the dice purchased added together to form the base damage pool. Generally, Dragon-Blooded may use this Charm cooperatively only if the instrument used is one large enough for all participants to play simultaneously. For example, the guzheng, an oversized lap harp, is about four feet long and has18 to 25 strings. While it is typically played by a single musician with the instrument on his lap, it is big enough for two players to play simultaneously. At the Storyteller's discretion, it might possible for a group of musicians to use this Charm cooperatively with separate instruments if they have extensive experience playing together in an ensemble (such as a gamelan orchestra or a quartet of street musicians). The maximum number of Exalted who can participate in the application of this Charm is equal to the highest Essence of any participant.



Ride

Heaven-Graced Riding Technique

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Ride 2, Essence 1**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

With this Charm, the Exalted rider forges a bond with his mount, fortifying and strengthening it with Essence. Until the Dragon-Blood's next action, he can add his Ride rating in yards to his mount's movement rate and also add that amount to the distance the mount can safely jump. Also, during that time, the rider gains a +2 bonus on all Ride-related dice pools, and his Ride is considered to be one dot higher for purposes of limiting his dice pools on other actions taken while on horseback.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used on any tick.

Ebony Spur Technique

Cost: 1m per 2 damage dice**; Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven-Graced Riding Technique

Those Exalted trained in mounted combat enjoy a great advantage on the battlefield due to their mounts' superior height and mobility. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood becomes more efficient at employing the advantages of mounted combat. After his player successfully makes a reflexive (Dexterity + Ride) roll, the Dragon-Blood can add his Ride Ability to his damage dice in hand-to-hand attacks made while mounted. This Charm can explicitly be included in Combos with Charms of other Abilities.

Charge of One Hundred Generals

Cost: 1m per mount/rider pair or 5m per point of Magnitude, plus 1wp**; Mins:** Ride 3, War 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, War
Duration: One charge
Prerequisite Charms: Ebony Spur Technique

This Charm represents perhaps the most common Dragon-Blooded magical cavalry tactic still in widespread use. Although its value cannot be denied, it is only a pale shadow of the many Charms defined by *The Thousand Correct Actions of the Upright Soldier*. The Dragon-Blood must pay one Willpower plus one mote per horse and rider affected, including the Dragon-Blood herself. For the duration of a single charge, the Join Battle roll made for the Dragon-Blood who initiates the Charm applies to every rider in the formation, and the attacks of any of the riders are automatically resolved before any delayed attack actions on the part of the defenders. Furthermore, the player of any defender who suffers any damage must make an immediate Ride or Athletics roll to keep his character from being unhorsed or knocked down. The Dragon-Blood must ride with the charging allies, who cannot number more than (his permanent Essence x 5).

If used in Mass Combat, the cost is five motes per point of Magnitude in the Dragon-Blood's force, and the Charm cannot be used to enhance any unit with a Magnitude higher than 2. Instead of the effects described above, the Charm increases the unit's Drill and Might by one each for the duration of the charge, as well as the cavalry unit's Morale. If the defending force is required to make a rout check, the difficulty of that check also increases by one (see "Mass Combat" in **Exalted**, starting on p. 158).

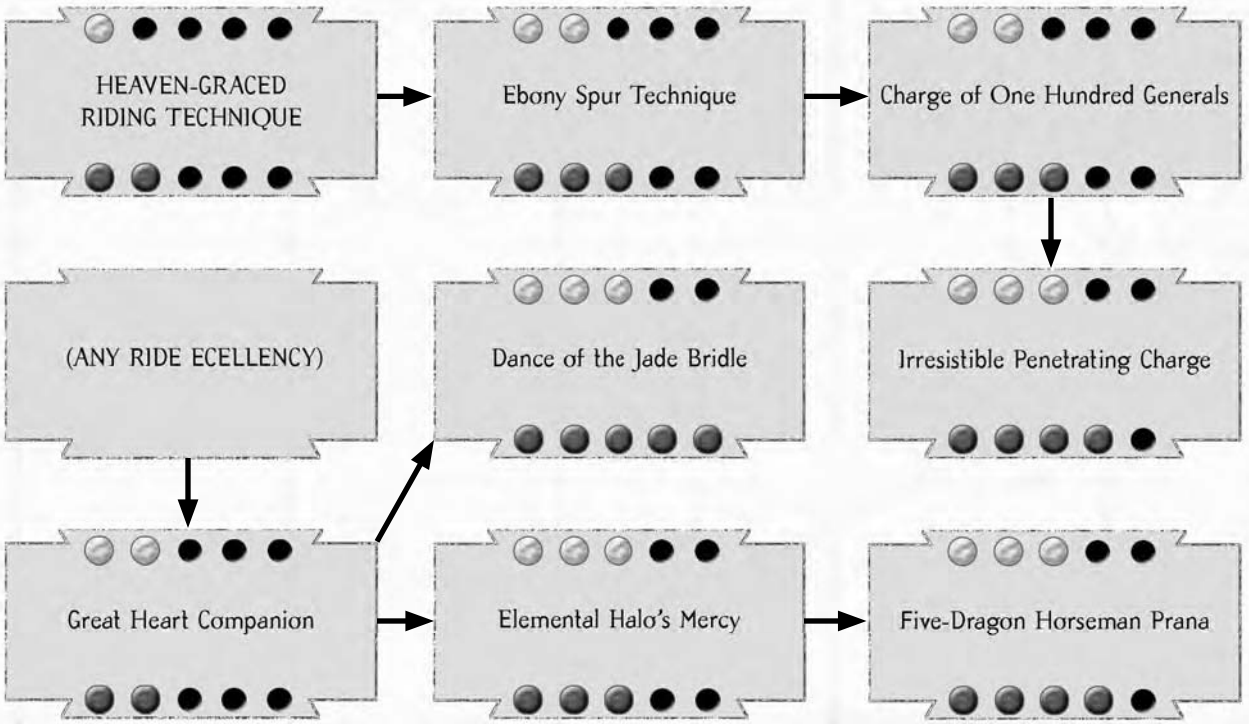
Irresistible Penetrating Charge

Cost: 3m per point of Magnitude, 1wp**; Mins:** Ride 4, War 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, War
Duration: One charge or the Dragon-Blood's Essence in long ticks, whichever is less
Prerequisite Charms: Charge of One Hundred Generals

This variation of Charge of One Hundred Generals can be used only for mass combat maneuvers. The Charm lets the Dragon-Blood temporarily boost the effectiveness of large groups of mounted cavalry. The Dragon-Blood must spend one Willpower plus three motes for each point of Magnitude the cavalry unit possesses. Beginning with the first action of actual combat and lasting for a number of long ticks equal to the Dragon-Blood's Essence, the Dragon-Blood's (Ride + Essence) is added to the unit's Join Battle roll, and his ([Ride + Essence] ÷ 3) is added to the unit's Close Combat Attack rating. This Charm can be used only during an actual charge and cannot be initiated once combat actually begins. The Dragon-Blood must be a part of the cavalry unit (although he does not have to be the leader), and a unit can benefit from only one use of this Charm at a time.

Great Heart Companion

Cost: 4m**; Mins:** Ride 2, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Any Ride Excellency



Typically, when a Dragon-Blood rides out to battle, she has quite enough to worry about without fearing that her steed will get spooked by whatever horror demands the Exalt's attention and throw the rider at an inopportune moment. This Charm can prevent such an ignoble possibility by bolstering the creature's natural bravery with Essence so that the mount truly becomes one with its rider. For the duration of the scene, the mount will not bolt or flee no matter what danger manifests, unless it is told to do so by its rider. Also, the mount will always act as if it is perfectly trained, regardless of the situation, and the Dragon-Blood will never suffer any penalty for trying to perform some action while maintaining control of the mount. Finally, while the Charm remains in effect, nothing can force the rider from her saddle short of the steed itself being killed out from under her. While a failed or botched Ride check might result in the rider losing an action or some other penalty, she will never be thrown, knocked or pulled from her saddle. The effect lasts for one scene or until the rider voluntarily dismounts.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be used on any tick.

Elemental Halo's Mercy

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Great Heart Companion

The baleful effects of the Dragon-Blooded anima banners usually preclude the use of horses in combat situations. This Charm can ameliorate those effects, ensuring that the Dragon-Blood does not face the specter of accidentally slaying his own mount in the midst of pitched battle. The Dragon-Blood spends three motes while mounted, and for the duration of the scene, the mount takes no damage from his anima flux.

Five-Dragon Horseman Prana

Cost: 10m, 1wp**; Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Elemental, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Halo's Mercy

With this Charm, the unity between rider and mount is perfected. Now, instead of simply protecting her mount from the damaging effects of her anima power, the Dragon-Blood can extend the power of that anima to the mount itself. For the duration of the scene, the Dragon-Blood's horse gains an elemental anima appropriate to the Dragon-Blood's aspect, giving it special abilities. The mounts of **Air** Aspects are immune to cold and multiply their jumping distances by an amount equal to the rider's Essence. The mounts of **Earth** Aspects gain a bonus to bashing and lethal soak equal to the rider's Essence, and a mount can also soak lethal damage with its full Stamina. The mounts of **Fire** Aspects multiply their movement rate by the rider's Essence and leave flaming hoof prints behind them that are capable of starting small brushfires. The mounts of **Water** Aspects gain complete freedom of movement in or on water, exactly like the Water Aspect anima power. Finally, the mounts of **Wood** can move through wooded areas without suffering any penalty or decrease in movement rate, and a mount's tracks will be untraceable absent the use of Charms. The normal cost of this Charm is 10 motes and one Willpower. If the mount to be protected is a familiar to the Dragon-Blood, the cost decreases to six motes and one Willpower, and the Dragon-Blood can choose to commit the Essence to make the Charm's effect last until he ends the commitment.

Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, this Charm is always considered to be a Wood-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies, and a Dragon-Blood can learn only the version associated with his own aspect.

Dance of the Jade Bridle

Cost: 10m, 1wp**; Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: Great Heart Companion

Despite the Wood Aspect's natural skill at horsemanship, it is very difficult for even the most able Dragon-Blooded rider to master an animal much bigger than a normal horse. Indeed, while a Dragon-Blood can attempt to master larger animals for brief periods of time, the only way to truly break such a beast and casually ride it as one would a horse is through this Charm. The Dragon-Blood's player must roll (Charisma + Ride), opposed by the beast's (Stamina + Willpower). The Dragon-Blood must also roleplay "breaking" the mount, which in the case of very dangerous animals or flying creatures can be quite dangerous if the attempt fails. If the attempt succeeds, the Dragon-Blood (and only the Dragon-Blood) can command the creature and use it as a mount, suffering no penalties on attempts to ride the creature. Generally, a tyrant lizard is probably the largest animal that can be mastered with this Charm, although the Storyteller may permit even larger beasts to be tamed at his discretion and with suitable penalties applied to the taming roll. A creature tamed by this Charm can be subjected to Elemental Halo's Mercy and Five-Dragon Horseman Prana, but the cost for activating those Charms increases by five motes.

Survival

Quarry Revelation Technique

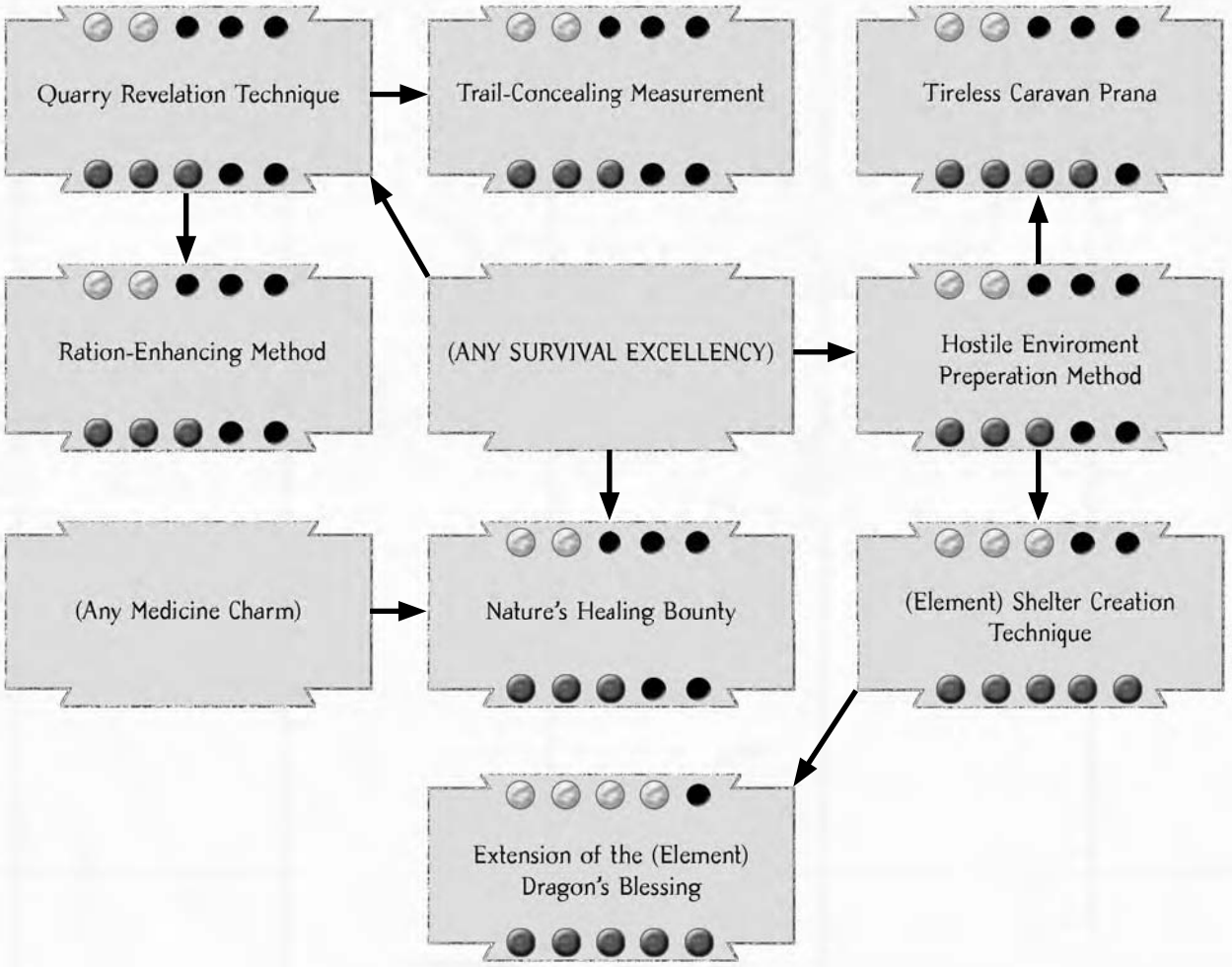
Cost: 2m**; Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Any Survival Excellency

The Children of Sextes Jylis are master woodsmen and trackers. With this Charm, a Dragon-Blood can track any quarry whose trail is less than a week old, regardless of terrain or weather conditions. Animal tracks and spoor literally glow to the Exalt's eyes, while broken twigs and other signs of a human's passage are equally as obvious. The tracker's player needs only a single success on a (Perception + Survival) roll for the tracker to successfully track any quarry not protected by supernatural stealth or evasion. Supernatural effects that hide a quarry's tracks are canceled by this Charm, allowing the Dragon-Blood to find his prey with a follow-up normal Survival roll.

Trail-Concealing Measurement

Cost: 3m**; Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Quarry Revelation Technique

Any Dragon-Blood who knows this Charm can blend effortlessly into the woods, instinctively hiding all evidence of her passage. While this Charm is active, persons attempting to track the Dragon-Blood without supernatural aid are completely unable to do so. If the tracker is using supernatural aid such as Quarry Revelation Technique, the two effects cancel each other out, and normal tracking rules apply. It is rumored that Lunar Exalted are not fooled by this Charm at all when they wear their animal forms.



Ration-Enhancing Method

Cost: 1m + 1m per additional hunter**; Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One hunt
Prerequisite Charms: Quarry Revelation Technique

The forests know their masters and do not hesitate to give up their bounties when asked. This Charm can greatly improve the success rate of any hunting or foraging expeditions in which the Dragon-Blood participates. This Charm lasts for the duration of a single hunt, in which the Dragon-Blood must be an active participant. The Charm can be used to aid just the Dragon-Blood, or it can be extended to include others in the hunting party at a cost of one mote of Essence per hunter. Only one application of this Charm can aid any single hunting party, however, and the Dragon-Blood can only aid one party at a time. While the Charm is in effect, the hunting party finds twice as much food as the results on any Survival rolls would otherwise dictate.

Hostile Environment Preparation Method

Cost: 3m + 1m per companion**; Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: None
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Any Survival Excellency

With this Charm, the Dragon-Blood's intuitive knowledge of how to survive in difficult climes allows him to protect his fellows in all but the harshest conditions. In a hot environment, the Dragon-Blood can make certain that he and his allies can avoid heat prostration and other hazards. In a cold environment, he can enable his friends to better preserve body heat and avoid frostbite. For one day, the Dragon-Blood and his companions get three automatic successes on Survival rolls to resist adverse environmental conditions. In other words, any environmental penalty of three or less is reduced to zero, and persons protected by this Charm never suffer an environmental penalty greater than two. The cost is three motes plus one additional mote per companion protected. The Exalt can protect a maximum number of allies equal to his permanent Essence.

Tireless Caravan Prana

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Cooperative
Duration: One journey
Prerequisite Charms: Hostile Environment Preparation Method

As master survivalists, Wood Aspect Dragon-Blooded are often called upon to lead their fellows through rough terrain, whether while on a trade caravan or while treasure hunting at the



edge of Creation. The Exalt using this Charm can improve the travel speed, endurance and morale of a group of personnel who travel with her.

As long as the Exalt maintains the Charm, she and all who travel with her gain a number of automatic successes on fatigue checks equal to (her Essence – 2 [minimum 1]). Also, all travel times decrease by five percent per point of the Exalt's permanent Essence. The Charm can be used to affect anyone who travels with the Dragon-Blood, but a single Dragon-Blood can affect only a number of people (and their mounts) equal to her (Essence x 10). If multiple Dragon-Blooded activate this Charm together, each participant can affect a number of travelers equal to her (Essence x 10), and the total number of automatic successes gained on fatigue checks is equal to the combined Essence of all participants minus two. Travel times decrease according to the highest Essence of any participant (five percent per point) and are further reduced by an additional two percent per extra participant. The maximum number of participants who can join in a single cooperative use of this Charm is equal to the highest permanent Essence of any participant. The Essence spent is committed for the duration of the Charm, which lasts until the destination is reached or until the Dragon-Blood withdraws the commitment.

(Element) Shelter Creation Technique

Cost: 5m**; Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3**; Type:** Simple
Keywords: Elemental, Obvious
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: Hostile Environment Preparation Method

This Charm allows a Dragon-Blood to reach out with her elemental anima to fashion a crude structure out of whatever elemental material is handy. Each different Charm is primarily useful in a particular environmental setting. **Air** is only useful in extremely cold, snowy climes and causes ice crystals to form out of the air itself into a simple igloo that retains heat remarkably well. **Earth** is most useful in open fields or on mountaintops and causes rocky slabs to slowly rise up out of the earth to form a lean-to. **Fire** is primarily used in the desert and causes sand to temporarily form into jagged silicate slabs that form a sheltered outcropping. The sandstone does not transfer heat to those taking shelter beneath it, and the outcropping is ideally situated to let wind flow through while keeping out sand. **Water** is primarily used on the ocean, although it can be used on other large bodies of water. The Charm causes seaweed, sunken debris and other material found within and beneath the waters to rise up to the surface and cling together, forming a remarkably buoyant life raft that can stay afloat in all but the most treacherous of weather. **Wood** can be used in any forest area, causing saplings to sprout from the forest floor to form a crude hut. The hut is camouflaged against observers, who must get more successes on a (Perception + Survival) roll than the Dragon-Blood's Essence in order to detect it. All versions of this Charm are warded against intrusion by mundane animals. Such animals will not attempt to enter the shelter absent some type of magical compulsion.

Once the Charm is activated, it takes about 30 minutes for the protective structure to form. The structure lasts for about a day, although the Dragon-Blood can extend the effect by committing the Essence indefinitely. The shelter is capable of protecting the Exalt herself and up to six other human-sized beings. If the Exalt wishes the shelter to hold more, she must spend an additional mote of Essence per extra person, although she cannot spend more extra motes than her Essence. Therefore, the maximum number of people who can fit in the same shelter consists of the Dragon-Blood herself, plus (Essence + 6) other people.

This Charm is actually a cluster of Charms, one for each of the five elements. A Dragon-Blood can learn multiple versions of this Charm, but he must learn the one associated with his affinity element first. Regardless of which version is used, the Charm is always considered a Wood-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies.

Extension of the (Element) Dragon's Blessing

Cost: 10m + 2m per ally**; Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 4**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Elemental
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: (Element) Shelter Creation Technique

The pinnacle of the survivalist's skill, this Charm is actually a cluster of five elemental Charms. The Charm confers near total immunity to adverse environmental conditions for the Dragon-Blood. For the duration of one day, the Charm negates all external environmental penalties to Survival rolls provided that the right version for that environment is applied. With the proper Charm, a Dragon-Blood could stand naked on the coldest glacier or cross the hottest desert while wearing furs with little chance of frostbite, sunstroke or any other similar penalty. The Charm allows those affected to easily find food and water, and it protects them against natural environmental conditions, though not direct environmental damage. Therefore, Extension of the Fire Dragon's Blessing allows protected individuals to cross a searing desert as if it were a verdant plain on a crisp autumn morning, but it will convey no protection at all to actual fire. Each version of the Charm is attuned to one of the five elemental poles and will protect the user from direct exposure to the conditions at that pole.

Air protects against extremes of cold and allows the Dragon-Blood to find food even on a frozen tundra. **Earth** permits the Dragon-Blood to walk through choking dust clouds without penalty and ensures that she will not accidentally trigger a rockslide no matter how loose the rocks are. If she is caught in an avalanche or otherwise buried alive, the Dragon-Blooded survives on an extremely limited air supply while the Charm lasts. **Fire** protects against extremes of heat and permits the Exalt to cross the hottest desert without sunburn and to easily find water there, as well as to ignore choking smoke and the tremendous heat produced by lava (although *not* direct contact with lava itself). **Water** protects against sunstroke and other maladies while the character is adrift at sea. It also allows the Exalt to ignore the effects of even the heaviest rains and practically guarantees that fish will jump into her nets. While the Charm is in effect, the Dragon-Blood can drink seawater as if it were fresh with no adverse effects. **Wood** lets her move easily through the most overgrown forest without so much as a bug bite and to ignore any natural (but not supernatural) poisons whose Toxicity does not exceed the Dragon-Blood's Essence. (While the Wood version grants improved resistance to all natural toxins, each of the other four versions grant the same immunity to poisonous plants and creatures indigenous to the region of Creation associated with those Charms.)

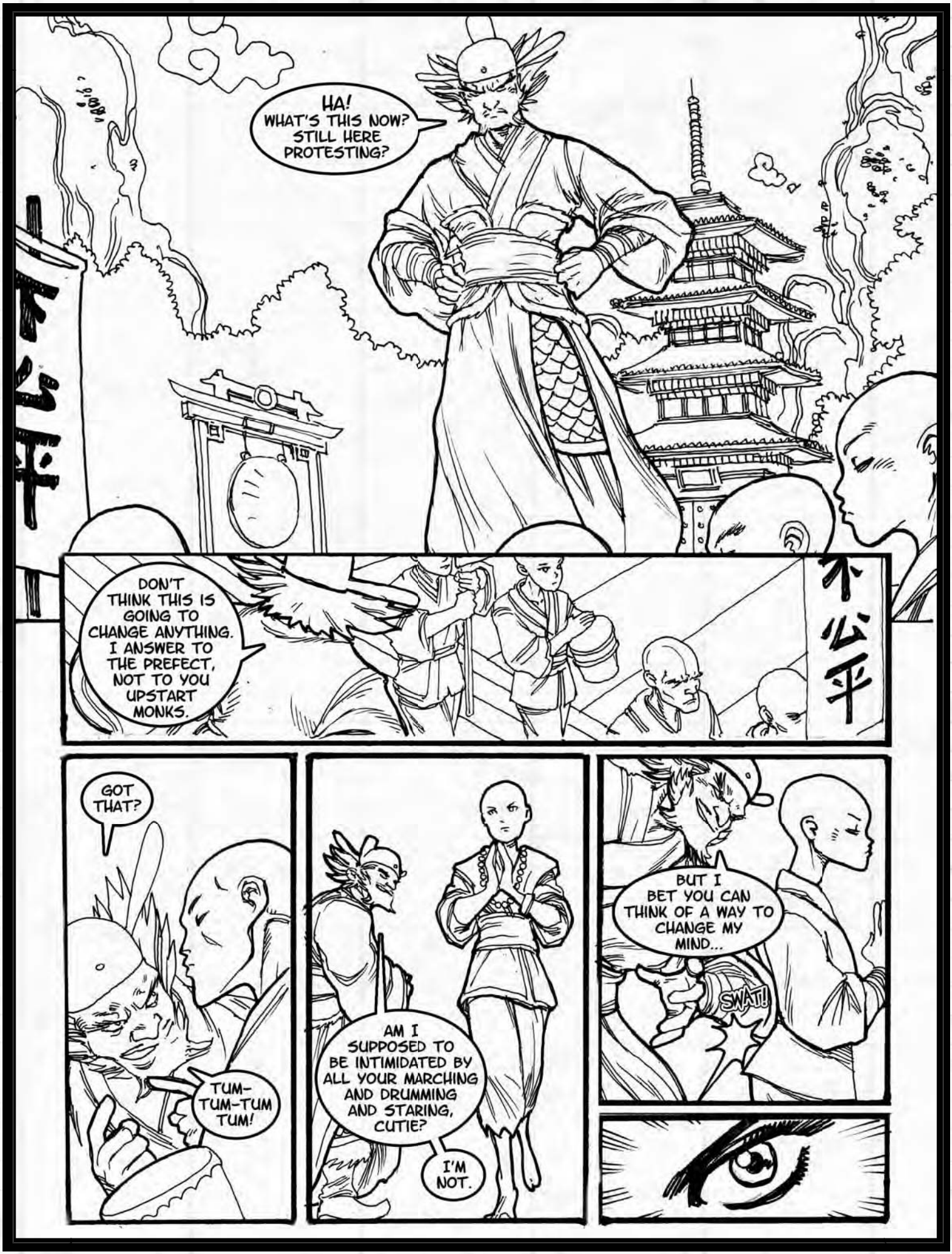
The Dragon-Blood can extend the benefits of these Charms to others at a cost of two motes per ally protected. All Essence spent is committed for the Charm's duration. Unlike many elemental Charms, a Dragon-Blood can learn more than one version of Extension of the (Element) Dragon's Blessing, but the Dragon-Blood must learn the version associated with her aspect first. More than one version can be used at a time, and they can even be activated simultaneously. Regardless of the specific elemental version learned, each Charm is always considered to be a Wood-aspected Charm for purposes of determining whether the one-mote surcharge for out-of-aspect Charms applies.

This Charm is a reflexive one that can be used freely without the need for a Combo. It can be activated on any tick.

Nature's Healing Bounty

Cost: 1m per 2 dice**; Mins:** Survival 3, Medicine 1, Essence 2**; Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Survival Excellency plus any Medicine Charm

Wood-aspected Dragon-Bloods are known for both their innate skill as physicians and for their natural communion with nature. This Charm represents the intersection of these two skill sets, as the Dragon-Blood's knowledge of plant life and herbal remedies can now be combined with his skill as a healer. The Dragon-Blood can improve his Medicine dice pools by two dice per mote spent, although he cannot spend more dice than his Survival Ability rating (plus any applicable specialty). **This Charm can stack with the First Medicine Excellency and is an exception to the normal limits on adding dice.** Therefore, if both Charms are activated, the Dragon-Blood's Medicine dice pool can be increased by a total of ([his Medicine + specialty] + [his Survival + specialty]). In order to use this Charm, the Dragon-Blood must have access to plants and herbs capable of fulfilling his medicinal needs.


HA! WHAT'S THIS NOW? STILL HERE PROTESTING?
DON'T THINK THIS IS GOING TO CHANGE ANYTHING. I ANSWER TO THE PREFECT, NOT TO YOU UPSTART MONKS.
GOT THAT?
TUM-TUM-TUM TUM!
AM I SUPPOSED TO BE INTIMIDATED BY ALL YOUR MARCHING AND DRUMMING AND STARING, CUTIE?
I'M NOT.
BUT I BET YOU CAN THINK OF A WAY TO CHANGE MY MIND...
SWAT!


YEARGH!
BOP!
OW!
OOF!
BITCH! YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE PLAYING WITH!
ON THE CONTRARY.
PLAYTIME IS OVER.

CHAPTER SIX
MARTIAL ARTS

Studying the martial arts means many things to many people. For some, it is a flowering of understanding, an expansion of one's perceptions to include the more esoteric and practically philosophical aspects of Creation. For others, it is a religious practice, a method for passing beyond one's body and communing with the various gods or ideals. Yet others consider the power of martial arts a testament to the strength of humanity, evidence that every one of them has an inner strength. And some simply enjoy kicking ass.

Whatever their intents, many Dragon-Blooded choose to pursue the supernatural martial arts. Schools for various styles exist in all of the five directions, attracting mortals who wish to practice the style and Dragon-Blooded with the desire to learn the style at an enlightened level (i.e., with Charms). The schools of each direction tend to focus on a style elementally aspected with the direction, but there are always exceptions. Southern schools teach a preponderance of Water- and Wood-emulating martial arts, because of the value ascribed to each of those elements in the hot South. Northern schools often practice Fire or Wood styles, as if to call those boons to themselves. Independent schools are rarest on the Blessed Isle. With the fame of the Glorious Dragon Styles concentrated there, few want to settle for studying lesser techniques. Those schools that do exist usually teach Five-Dragon Style, and Dynasts learn their other styles in person or through the military.

Ancient texts classify supernatural martial arts according to a number of manners. The "low styles," "direct techniques," "foundations" and "revelatory practices" were all terms once used to refer to Terrestrial styles, the weaker supernatural martial arts. Today, only the latter two remain in use (and use of the former two was weeded out by the Realm long ago). Some references to the "root of the perfected lotus" still remain in the literature.

Other texts once mentioned the "high styles," "primordial masteries" and "spiritually excellent practices." They referred to the Celestial styles, more powerful and varied in effect than the Terrestrial styles. All these manuals and treatises have been destroyed by the Scarlet Empire over the last millennium or, at the very least, concealed in the most secret libraries and suppressed. The only references to the styles that continue to exist mention the "bulb of the perfected lotus." Biased experts interpret these as the perfected styles bestowed upon the Immaculate Order by the Exemplars of the Elemental Dragons—the Fivefold Dragon Paths.

Terrestrial Styles

Created for use of the weaker Terrestrial Exalted by their more powerful Celestial companions, the Terrestrial supernatural martial arts should not be discounted. While their techniques are more basic that those of the Celestial styles, a master can still use them to great effect.

Water Aspects have an affinity with the Martial Arts Ability, and it is they who are best able to manipulate their Essence in a manner that properly utilizes a style's techniques. As a general rule, Terrestrial Martial Arts Charms are Water-aspected, and any Dragon-Blooded of another aspect who wishes to use them must pay a one-mote elemental surcharge for any action in which they invoke such Charms.

It is common, however, for Terrestrial martial arts styles to emulate one of the five elements. In this case, the Charms of that style incur no elemental surcharge on Dragon-Blooded of that aspect *or* aspected to Water. If this is the case, the style will note it.

Dragon-Blooded who wish to do so may learn how to properly focus their Essence into the various elemental patterns, if only for the purpose of supernatural martial arts.

(Elemental) Style Formulation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Obvious
Prerequisite Charms: Mastery of one Terrestrial style

Once a Dragon-Blood has completely mastered a Terrestrial style, she may shape her Essence skillfully enough to mimic the elemental nature of that style's elemental aspect. When using Terrestrial martial arts Charms with that affinity, she pays no elemental surcharge.

Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded retain the unique ability to pay no surcharge on any Terrestrial styles. Using this Charm to emulate water Essence does not eliminate the need to pay surcharge on any styles, though—only on Terrestrial styles that are specifically Water-aspected (such as Terrestrial Hero Style).

Note that this technique for overcoming elemental boundaries is inferior to that of studying the Glorious Dragon Styles, which can provide one with a far more complete mastery of one such element.

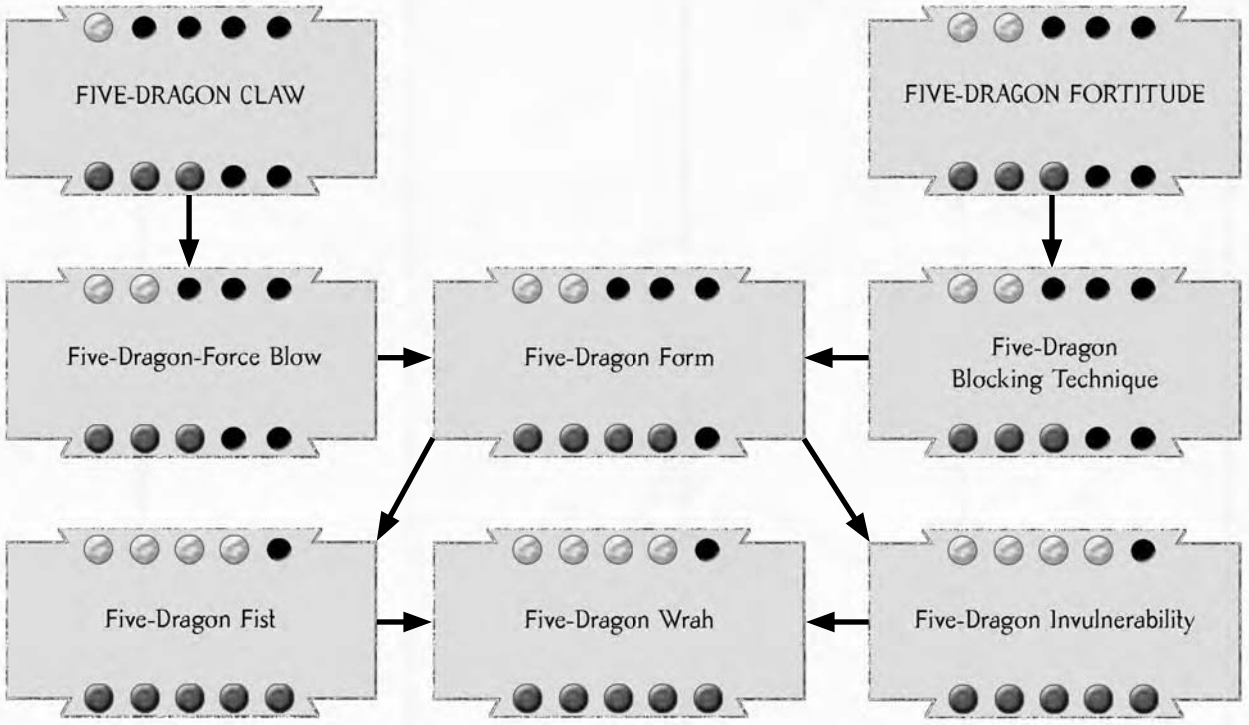
Five-Dragon Style

There is only one Terrestrial-level martial art officially endorsed and taught by the Immaculate Order: Five-Dragon Style. Created by the same Immaculate masters who developed the Five Glorious Dragon Styles, Five-Dragon Style represents all the elemental aspects. It carries with it some of the power of each of the Elemental Dragons, though it dilutes the strength and religious import of each.

One of the most favored styles among non-Immaculate Dynasts and on the Blessed Isle in general, monks and other Dragon-Blooded who walk the Fivefold Dragon Paths consider Five-Dragon Style something of a lesser cousin.

Practitioners of Five-Dragon Style consider the straight sword and the spear, and their artifact equivalents (the daiklave and the dire lance), to be form weapons for their style. They can use these weapons to supplement their Martial Arts attacks in lieu of more traditional martial arts weapons. Five-Dragon Style Charms treat attacks and defenses with these weapons as unarmed, and the style is compatible with armor.





Five-Dragon Claw

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Giving her fingers the aspect of the Five Elemental Dragons' claws, whose perfected natures slice through the thickest of god-hides, the Dragon-Blood's attacks cuts flesh to ribbons without concern for the armor before it. Attacks made with this Charm inflict lethal damage and ignore a target's Hardness.

Five-Dragon-Force Blow

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Five-Dragon Claw

With a brief invocation to the might of the Five Dragons, the Dragon-Blooded martial artist lays out his foe with a single attack.

This attack doubles the normal *base* damage from an attack (which does not include extra successes) before subtracting soak. Also, if the attack generates more *raw* damage than the target's (Stamina + Resistance), the roll to avoid knockdown is made at a difficulty equal to the attacker's Strength.

Five-Dragon Fortitude

Cost: 1m per 2B or 1L; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The impervious hides of the Elemental Dragons lend the practitioner of Five-Dragon Style a small portion of their strength. Invoking this Charm in response to a specific attack, the Dragon-Blood increases her soak by two bashing or one lethal for each mote spent.

Five-Dragon Blocking Technique

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5, -0 DV)
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Five-Dragon Fortitude

Letting the Dragons guide him, the Exalt aids his defense with Essence. For the rest of the scene, he adds half his permanent Essence to his PDV. If unarmed, he can also parry lethal attacks without a stunt or other magic.

Five-Dragon Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Form-type
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Five-Dragon-Force Blow, Five-Dragon Blocking Technique

Performing a quick series of motions that offer thanks and claim guidance from the earth, sky and sea, with the martial artist herself representing fire and life, the Dragon-Blood takes aspects of all five elements into her technique.

Her unarmed Martial Arts attacks inflict lethal damage instead of bashing, and she soaks lethal damage with her full bashing soak. If she's wielding one of the form's weapons, she treats it as though it has +1 Accuracy. Also, she adds her Essence to her Dexterity or Strength for determining running speed, jumping distance and feats of strength.

Five-Dragon Fist

Cost: 6m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Five-Dragon Form

Calling upon the Elemental Dragons of Earth and Fire, the Five-Dragon Stylist endows a single attack with streaking bands of white and red Essence that tear through his opponent's very soul. The martial artist makes a single punch or kick that inflicts aggravated damage. This Charm cannot be channeled through a weapon, even form weapons.

Five-Dragon Invulnerability

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Five-Dragon Form

Dragons are above the petty blows and mosquito-stings of their mortal enemies. Activating this Charm allows the Dragon-Blood to ignore *all* damage from a single non-magical attack. Against magical attacks (including weapons made of the five magical materials), the Dragon-Blood receives a soak and Hardness bonus equal to (Essence).

Five-Dragon Wrath

Cost: 1m per attack + 1hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Five-Dragon Fist, Five-Dragon Invulnerability

Calling upon the endless energies of the Elemental Dragons, the Exalt explodes into a furious assault. This rain of blows is the apex of the Five-Dragon Style and is immediately recognizable to any who have seen it in action before.

For every mote spent, the Exalt makes one attack at his full attack dice pool. All attacks must be against the same target. He may not spend more motes on this Charm than his Essence, and the defender does not suffer any onslaught penalty. Using this Charm inflicts one level of unsoakable bashing damage on the Dragon-Blood.

Terrestrial Hero Style

The techniques of the Terrestrial Hero Style are some of the easiest for Dragon-Blooded to learn. Sharing an aspect with the element of Water, there is no style that meshes more perfectly with the Water Aspects' blend of natural and relentless violence.

For Dragon-Blooded, Terrestrial Hero Style is a natural style—they treat its Charms like normal Charms for the Martial Arts Ability, and they can learn or create additional Charms in its cascade. Blade-Deflecting Palm and Become the Hammer are examples of Martial Arts Charms that Dragon-Blooded can add to this style. Charms outside the structure of the normal Terrestrial Hero Style can be learned only by Dragon-Blooded, Eclipse Caste Solars and Moonshadow Caste Abyssals.

This style is one of the most common among Dragon-Blooded throughout Creation, simply for the sheer utility of being able to create custom Charms for unarmed combat. It sees particular use among the Dragon-Blooded of the West, of course, but it is also taught in some schools on the Blessed Isle, in Lookshy and, surprisingly, in the hot South. Dragon-Blooded there sometimes prefer to emulate the element they find most rare and valuable.

Terrestrial Hero Style is an unarmed style, but it may be practiced while in armor.

Currents Sweep to Sea

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Knockdown
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Even the most tranquil shores have hidden currents, flows beneath the surface that are just waiting to snatch an unsuspecting victim and send her down to the Water Dragon. Students of Terrestrial Hero Style learn early on how to emulate this highly effective technique with low, sweeping attacks.

On a successful attack, the target takes no damage but automatically makes a check against knockdown, and she suffers an internal penalty equal to the attacker's Martial Arts rating. If the target is knocked down and the Exalt follows up with a clinch attack on his next action, the Exalt's player adds that many dice to his roll.

Pounding Surf Style

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Stackable
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Not even the Blessed Isle is immune to being slowly shaped by the lapping waves of the Inland Sea. It is the inexorable nature of water that no defense or armor can keep it out forever—and water is patient.

An attack or clinch that is supplemented by this Charm and hits ignores one point of soak from a target's armor. If the attack misses, the Exalt gains no benefit. Using this Charm against a single target multiple times within the same scene stacks the effect—the first attack ignores one point of armor, the second ignores two, and so on. The attacks do not physically harm the armor, just find wiggle-room through joints and between straps. Only the Exalt using the Charm gains this benefit. This Charm occurs before taking into account the effect of piercing attacks.

At Essence 3 or higher, the martial artist may spend one Willpower as a part of this Charm to also ignore an equal amount of Hardness for a single attack.

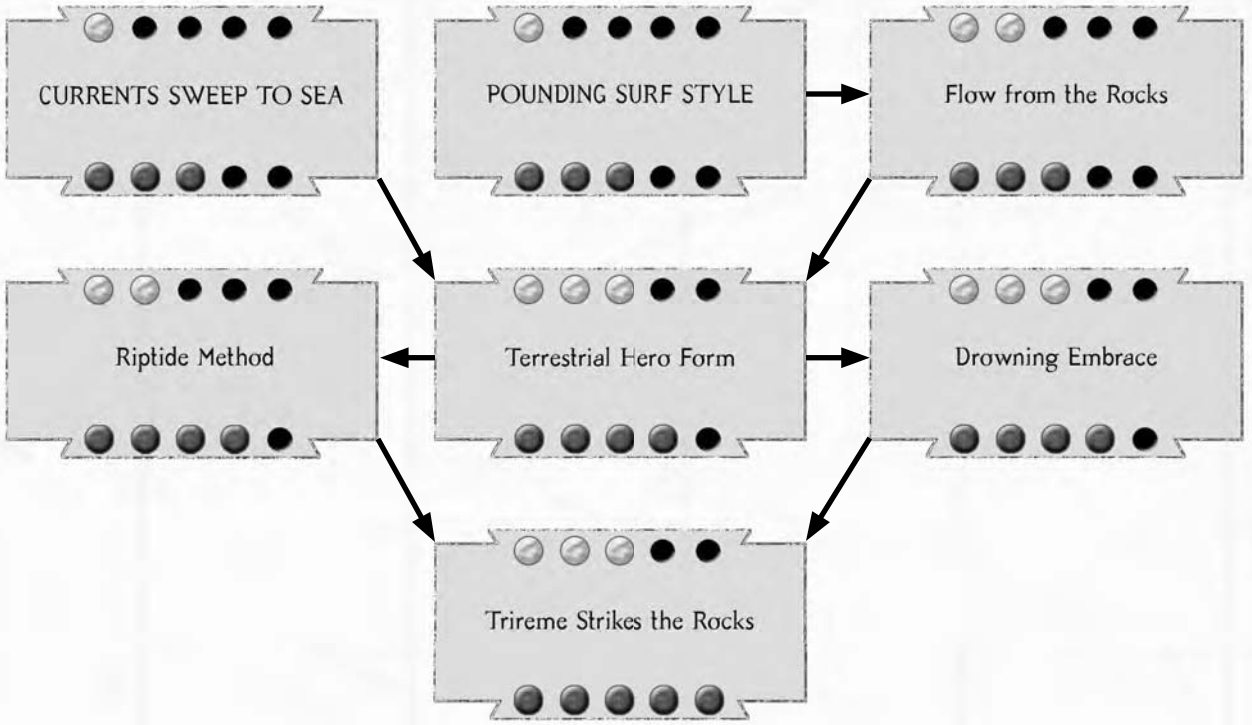
Example: Ragara Minh is working hard to keep the local tributaries in line, but they hired an outcaste mercenary to defend their interests. Her foe is wearing a jade reinforced breastplate, with a Hardness of 8. Minh has already landed four successful attacks using Pounding Surf Style, but she is having trouble getting through the armor's Hardness. In her next opening, Minh uses the Charm again and spends a temporary Willpower. She ignores five points of the armor's soak and treats her target as Hardness 3. The next time she uses this Charm (without spending Willpower), she ignores six points of armor but is again facing Hardness 8.

Flow from the Rocks

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Stackable
Duration: Until next action
Prerequisite Charms: Pounding Surf Style

At low tide, the waters of the Inland Sea pull away from the beach to reveal hundreds of shellfish living on shore. In this moment of vulnerability, the seagulls smash them against the rocks. It is in the same vein that the Exalt using this technique rolls a target's defenses away so that her friends can strike.

This Charm supplements a clinch attack or an opposed grapple check. On a successful attack, the martial artist gets her victim into a hold (she may not break the grapple or crush for damage). Extra successes on the roll reduce the victim's soak from armor by one



bashing and one lethal for each, effective until the martial artist's next action. If she uses this Charm as her next action in the same grapple, it continues to reduce the armor's effectiveness, and the effects stack. Losing control of the clinch or not using the Charm for one action ends the effect.

Terrestrial Hero Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Form-type
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Currents Sweep to Sea, Flow from the Rocks

Calm seas are safer to sail, but hitting the ocean does not hurt it. Raging oceans kill many sailors, but a sound ship and good crew can break them. Terrestrial Hero Form lets the martial artist mimic aspects of both.

When he assumes this form, the Exalt divvies up his Martial Arts score between aiding his grapples and adding to his soak. Each point spent on soak adds two bashing and one lethal to his soaks for the scene. A point spent on grapples gives him one extra die to all such rolls for the scene. His choice determines the form's appearance: more points to grappling gives him a rolling, violent aspect, while more points to soak lend a calm, roll-with-it attitude to his movements.

He can take a miscellaneous action (-1 DV) to refocus and reassign his dots, also changing the appearance of his style. Some who observe students of this martial art become convinced that the martial artist is practicing two different styles rather than one.

Riptide Method

Cost: 1m per attack; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Hero Form

An ocean is a hungry beast, and it feeds itself with riptides, the strong currents that drag unsuspecting swimmers and sailors under the sea. Exalted practicing this style learn to treat their enemies the same way, dragging as many as possible under their waves.

The martial artist becomes capable of wrestling several foes to the ground at once. For each mote she spends, she makes a grapple attack against a single target within range. She may hold, crush or throw anyone she successfully clinches, as normal.

On subsequent actions, the Exalt may continue to grapple all her victims (making multiple opposed grapple checks), but doing so requires her to use Riptide Method again and spend one mote per person. If she is grappling fewer than her limit, she may use the Charm and spend up to her maximum to grapple people who are currently free. Otherwise, she must release all of her victims but one.

Martial artists using this Charm may not spend more motes than they have functional limbs. For most, this is four.

Drowning Embrace

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Hero Form

The salty embrace of the sea is loving but deadly. Every minute spent in mother ocean's arms makes it increasingly hard to ever leave. Practitioners of this style learn how to make their clinches increasingly deadly as they seep inside their foes' defenses.

Initiating a clinch attack, the martial artist pulls his victim into an awkward position and puts pressure on her throat and diaphragm, forcing the air from her lungs and keeping it out. The victim begins to suffocate almost immediately, and her only recourse is to escape the clinch as quickly as possible. Clinch damage from this attack



is normal as the Charm's target uses the last of her air, but each successive action in which the Terrestrial Hero Style practitioner continues to control the grapple, the victim takes one additional level of unsoakable bashing damage from suffocation.

Drowning Embrace ends when the martial artist loses control of the clinch or chooses to end it. It has no effect on creatures that do not need to breathe, such as constructs or zombies.

Trireme Strikes the Rocks

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Riptide Method, Drowning Embrace

Lifting a grappled victim high into the air, the martial artist brings her victim down hard on her knee, head or another hard, unyielding object. With a sickening crunch, the target's bones break much as a ship's hull shatters against the rocks during a storm.

If the clinch attack or opposed grapple check goes in the Exalt's favor, she inflicts lethal damage instead of bashing. For each previous action in which the martial artist controlled the clinch, add one die to the damage roll, to a maximum equal to the Exalt's Martial Arts. If it causes the loss of even a single health level, her attack causes great damage, often irreparable, to the victim's spine, completely paralyzing him from the waist down. Victims of this Charm suffer the effects of having both legs amputated (see **Exalted**, p. 152) and usually cannot use their Dodge DV without stunts or special training, and then likely at severe internal penalties.

As usual, Exalted who suffer this Charm regain use of their legs as soon as the damage inflicted at the same time as the injury heals. Mortals never heal this injury without significant (and dangerous) surgery.

Celestial Martial Arts

Dragon-Blooded, known in ancient records as the Terrestrial Exalted, are easily able to master the Terrestrial martial arts styles, such as those recorded thus far. In general, that is the end of it. Much like a Dragon-Blood cannot learn Celestial Circle sorcery, she cannot learn Celestial supernatural martial arts. The required mastery of Essence is beyond the methods that come naturally to the elemental Dragon-Blooded.

But some can exceed that limitation. It requires years of arduous self-discipline as a Dragon-Blood changes the way he reflexively uses Essence, coming to know the patterns that accompany a higher level of understanding. Immaculate Philosophy dictates that this development represents a greater depth of sympathy with the Elemental Dragons and that the power of these techniques is a result of directly tapping the infinite depths of their might.

Since Dragon-Blooded are not physically restricted to learning only the Fivefold Dragon Paths, however, and there are methods for attaining this inner strength that do not include the processes dictated by Immaculate texts, the accuracy of that conclusion is suspect.

Training

The Five Glorious Dragon Styles are Celestial martial arts. To begin studying such powerful Charms, a Dragon-Blooded student must first be properly initiated. Methods vary, but such an initiation always includes a deep purification of the body and mind. The Terrestrial Exalt eats little other than rice, steamed vegetables and dough, water and various teas while meditating daily on such

distant concepts as "dust," "ash," "rainstorms," "death" and "the word," among others. Celibacy is often an additional measure to reinforce the purity of the body.

This is only a part of the process that advances a Dragon-Blood's level of enlightenment toward one that can comprehend the internal and external impacts of Celestial martial arts. The other significant portion of that study is to learn a pair of Charms that open her mind and soul to new, advanced methods for manipulating Essence. Once she recognizes the heights and depths to which Essence permeates and affects Creation, she can begin to transcend the natural limitation of her Terrestrial blood. Sifus share this wisdom with their Dragon-Blooded students by teaching them a pair of Charms designed to open their senses and experiences to a broader world.

In monasteries of the Immaculate Order, the oldest monks teach two Charms: Pasiap's Humility and the Moment of Daana'd. After learning these Charms and meditating on their usefulness and meaning for at least a year, a Dragon-Blooded monk is prepared to begin her study of one of the Fivefold Dragon Paths. These Charms, as with most Celestial martial arts, are unaligned with any element. Dragon-Blooded of all Aspects may activate them at the listed cost.

New Keyword: Enlightening

Once known, Charms with this keyword allow a Dragon-Blooded martial artist to begin learning Celestial-level supernatural martial arts.

Pasiap's Humility

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

Pasiap's humble nature caused him to remain with his disciples after the other Immaculate Dragons left Creation and the cycle of reincarnation behind. In learning his humility, an Immaculate monk achieves the necessary recognition that the world is wider—and deeper—than she may have previously known.

Activating this Charm lets the Dragon-Blood see immaterial spirits as though they were material and manifest. Unfortunately, use of this Charm renders the physical world more difficult to perceive. Immaculates practicing Pasiap's Humility suffer a -2 internal penalty to all actions intended to affect any corporeal target, even a materialized spirit. If necessary, monks can refocus their attentions on the real world as an unrolled miscellaneous action, ending the Charm early.

Moment of Daana'd

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Enlightening
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Pasiap's Humility

It was the hands of Daana'd that shut the gates of the Underworld, forcing the Anathema's souls to remain forever in the dark as punishment for their evil. That great feat is part of what guides the Immaculate Order on its contemporary mission: to correct those souls and spirits who stray, seeing that such wayward creatures suffer the proper punishment.

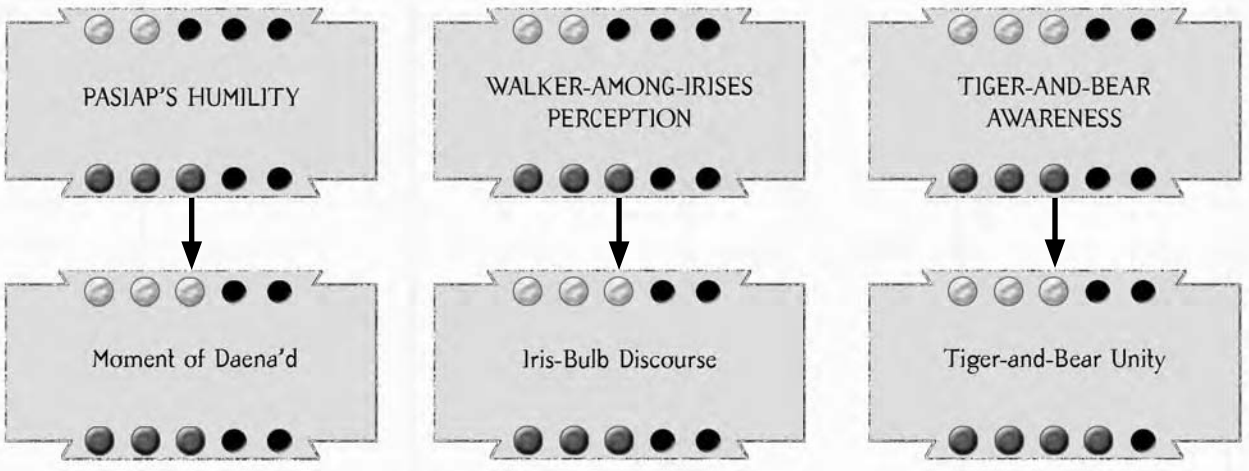
As it is difficult to punish an opponent that cannot be touched, Moment of Daana'd allows an Immaculate to walk in the mortal and spirit worlds simultaneously. When this Charm is active, a monk can interact physically with dematerialized spirits as if they were solid. Palm strikes and knife-hand blows that would normally pass through the god or demon connect as if the target were flesh and blood.

Monks must still utilize Pasiap's Humility if they wish to *see* their targets, however. Additionally, practicing the Moment of Daana'd helps prevent a monk from being overwhelmed by Pasiap's Humility, eliminating the -2 penalty while both Charms are active.

Shogunate Methods

Before the Immaculate Philosophy took hold, but after the Usurpation, there was still a call for such training. Dragon-Blooded of the Shogunate wished to expand their understanding of Creation (and some simply sought greater power). But because the Terrestrial Exalted still required exceptional training in order to harness these techniques, they studied another pair of Charms that opened their senses to the world's spiritual aspects.

These Charms were most common before the Great Contagion. Developed by the greatest Terrestrial martial artists of the Age, they replaced the like Charms of the First Age and were eventually replaced by the previously listed Immaculate versions. Today, Dragon-Blooded might learn these Charms from manuals penned during that period or from secret societies within or outside the Realm that have handed them down for generations.



Walker-Among-Irises Perception

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm is functionally identical to Pasiap's Humility, except that immaterial creatures and spirits appear not in their true forms, but as god-shaped silhouettes, filled with an endless field of blossoming irises. With this Charm, irises constantly grow at the edge of the martial artist's vision, providing the -2 internal penalty.

Iris-Bulb Discourse

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1 or 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Enlightening
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Walker-Among-Irises Perception

Though this Charm is nearly identical to Moment of Daana'd, its use carries with it some additional effects and connotations. First, this technique is obvious when in use because large, foot-wide irises blossom from wherever the martial artist steps, shattering into a cloud of purple-black Essence and sweet scent after a few moments or if someone touches them.

More importantly, this Charm was developed in a period after the Dragon-Blooded had betrayed and killed the Solar Exalted, their Heaven-mandated kings and lords. It was also before the Immaculate Order had the influence to restructure the relevant portions of the Celestial and Terrestrial Bureaucracies. During this period, the relationship between the Shogunate and the gods was in constant flux, so martial artists created for themselves an advantage.

In addition to making a martial artist able to strike and harm immaterial spirits, the practitioner of the Iris-Bulb Discourse increases her MDVs by the difference between her Essence and any present god or elemental with less Essence. Most members of the Bureaucracies take umbrage at such presumption, so when the martial artist is confronted by a god or elemental with *greater* Essence, that entity gains a similar benefit.

First Age Methods

In the time long before the Usurpation, at least 1,000 years or more prior, the Solar Exalted still reigned. The Lawgivers decided—and their advisors agreed—that the Terrestrial foot soldiers could be made more effective and given more responsibility for governing the Realm.

Although these Charms were the result of that decree, they fell out of practice after the Usurpation. By that point, the Dragon-Blooded had started monastic legacies and martial-arts schools among their own ranks and were able to pass on the traditions and Charms without aid from the Celestial Exalted. When they deposed the Solars, the Dragon-Blooded tried to move away from what their former masters and lords had taught them.

Today, a Dragon-Blood might learn this induction to the mysteries of Celestial martial arts from First Age entities: teaching automatons, the most ancient Lunars, mighty gods of war and possibly some Second Circle demons.

Tiger-and-Bear Awareness

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

The martial artist practicing this Charm is aware of all that surrounds him. He respires wisdom, and nothing escapes his notice. To an observer, the martial artist appears to walk more lightly on his feet, and the winds seems to whisper in his ears.

For the duration of the Charm, the martial artist is automatically aware of all beings within a number of yards equal to his Essence, unless an entity is expending Essence in an effort to conceal itself. Additionally, learning this Charm brings with it a sort of danger sense. A martial artist who knows Tiger-and-Bear Awareness can activate it reflexively when subject to a sneak attack in order to automatically notice the assault.

This Charm does not grant the ability to see immaterial spirits or dematerialized elementals in the vicinity.

Tiger-and-Bear Unity

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Enlightening
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Tiger-and-Bear Awareness

As she lets the Essence of Creation flow through her, the martial artist flows through it. As they are already one, she cannot fail to strike her target true and with great precision.

Attacks supplemented by this Charm gain a number of automatic successes equal to no more than the attacker's Martial Arts score. She chooses the exact number of successes to apply, minimum zero, after Step Six of combat resolution, allowing her to make her blow as devastating or subtle as she likes.

Who Teaches Them?

Not just anyone can impart these Charms and this sagacity upon Terrestrial Exalted. A sifu who desires to teach a Dragon-Blooded martial artist the lessons necessary must first meet a few requirements himself. He must first know the proper methods of purification and know the pair of Charms he wishes to use for enlightening his student. Finally, he must have mastered the full Celestial style that he is going to teach to the Dragon-Blood. Otherwise, he does not have an understanding of the style's Essence patterns expansive enough to impart those techniques on a being not normally equipped to comprehend them.

To initiate a Dragon-Blood, the tutor must have at least Martial Arts 5 and Essence 4. To develop new Charms for initiation (to replace Pasiap's Humility and Moment of Daana'd, for example), the sifu must have Martial Arts 5 and Essence 6, making such shifts in paradigm rare indeed.

Dragon-Bloods who learn the two favored Immaculate training Charms as part of their initiation are in the vast majority. Even outcastes learn Celestial martial arts by choosing the razor and joining the monasteries. In very rare cases, one of the returning Solar Exalted might recall the Tiger-and-Bear initiation Charms from a previous life, and some Lunar Exalted who survived the Usurpation likely still remember the methods. If either type of Celestial hero trains Terrestrial Exalted in these Celestial methods, a mighty force is in the making.

No matter how she expands her awareness of Creation, once a Dragon-Blood has been initiated into the bulb of the perfected lotus, she can learn any Celestial martial arts style with a proper tutor. Although only the Immaculate styles show up in this text, Snake Style and Solar Hero Style (see **Exalted** pp. 240–244) are equally fair game, if difficult to rationalize. Few Dragon-Blooded initiated into the Fivefold Dragon Paths would profane themselves to learn a style natural to the hated Anathema, and those who would must still find a tutor who has fully

mastered the style. Outcastes are far more likely to pursue such a path than are the loyal (and heavily indoctrinated) Immaculates.

Mixing Styles

After beginning study of a Celestial style, a Dragon-Blood may not learn any other Celestial Martial Arts Charms until she has completed her study in the higher art. Mastering a single such style requires a focus far too strong and pure to divide it among multiple forms. Once she masters the Celestial style (i.e., once she has learned all the Charms in the tree), she is free to begin studying another, but the same restrictions again apply.

Similarly, she should be strongly discouraged from learning any other Terrestrial Martial Arts Charms until her mastery of the Celestial style is complete. Every sifu in the Immaculate monasteries is very clear on that score, insisting that the monk remain focused in her quest to exemplify the Elemental Dragon. To do otherwise contaminates her learning, fouling the escalated techniques with baser methods. It diverts her focus from the needle-thin path the Dragon-Blood must walk in order to master that which is at the barest peak of a Terrestrial Exalt's potential.

She may learn such Charms if she chooses. Doing so, however, makes her study of the Celestial art that she pursues that much more difficult. Allowing even a single Terrestrial Martial Arts Charm to interrupt her study of the Celestial style adds one point to the experience cost of *all* Charms in the Celestial style that she has not yet learned. Each additional Martial Arts Charm outside of that style that she learns adds one experience point to the cost of the *next* Celestial Charm she tries to acquire. The farther one strays from the path of enlightenment, the more arduous the trek back is.

Form Charms

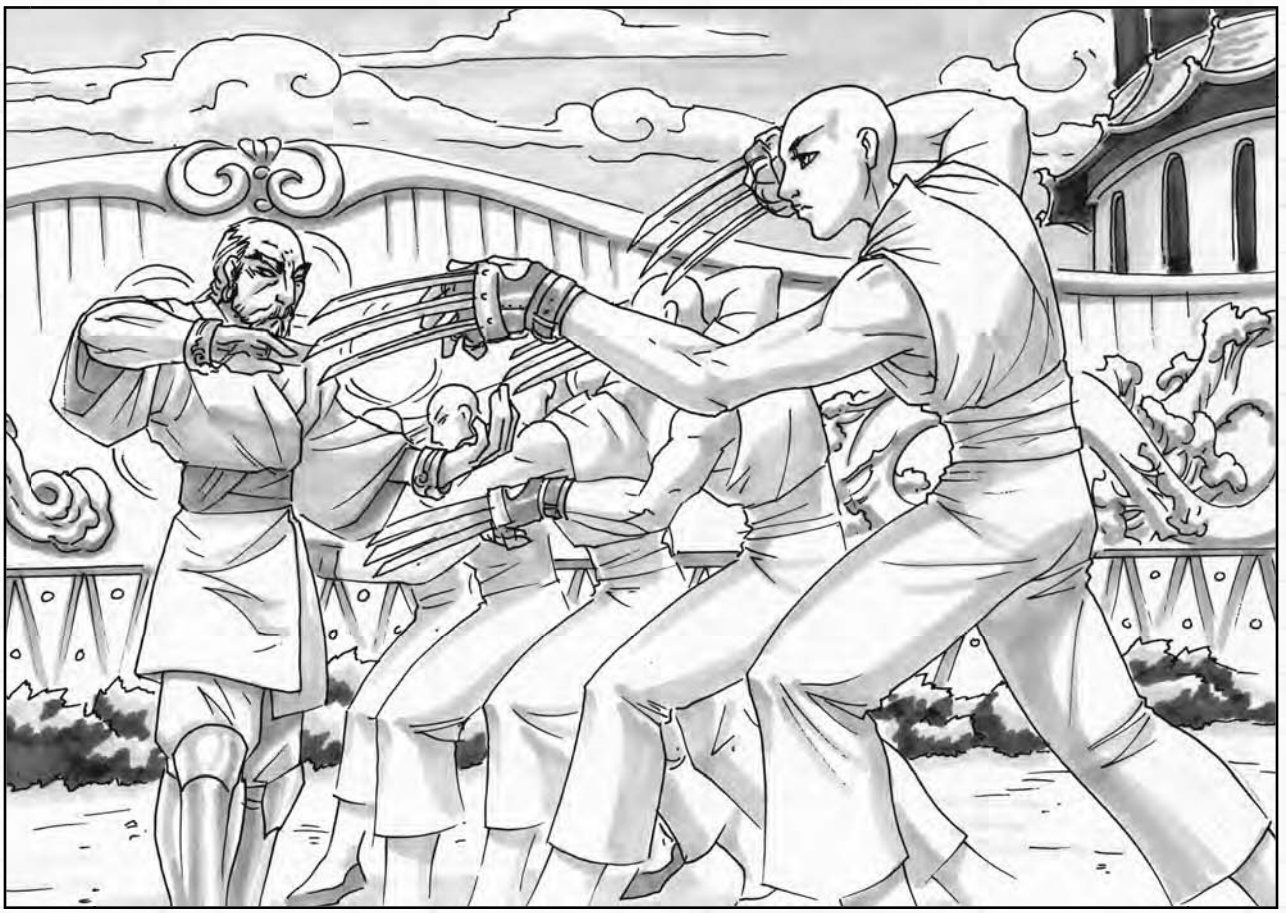
Finally, it is a martial art's Form-type Charm that represents the focus for its techniques. Until one masters it, one can only be called a student. As such, Celestial styles' Form-type Charms require the height of precision for a Dragon-Blood to use. When a Dragon-Blooded martial artist activates a Celestial style's form Charm, she must perfectly channel her Essence through the carefully memorized katas that she learned when mastering the style.

In short, the player of any Dragon-Blood who wishes to use a Celestial Form-type Charm must succeed at a (Dexterity + Martial Arts) roll. Failure indicates that the Exalt faltered in the form's execution; she does not spend the Essence, but she does waste her action. If successful, she spends the Essence and activates the Charm.

Though most Form-type Charms cannot be included in a Combo with any other Charms, the Dragon-Blooded ability to use reflexive Charms means that they are able to use their Excellencies to improve their odds or even ensure success. Many consider it a point of pride not to do so, and others refuse to waste the motes, but the option is there.

Immaculate Styles

Dragon-Blooded monks of the Immaculate Order are Creation's most renowned martial artists. They wield the power of the elements within their katas and forms, loosing the howling winds and making the earth tremble at their command. Even in the far reaches of the Threshold, where the people never get a chance to see one of these famed monks, all have heard of them. A Southern prince offers 100 talents of silver to see one practice her forms, and a barbarian war chief in the East claims loudly that he will kill one in battle so he



can claim its bald scalp, proof that the tales of Immaculate prowess reach the ears of men anywhere within the elemental poles.

Why are they so well known? First, to put it simply, their reputation is deserved. The Five Glorious Dragon Styles are powerful martial arts, and the Exalted monks have both the skill and the devotion to master them. They study for years, if not decades or centuries, to achieve the most powerful moves in their chosen style. Those who have the dedication to go forth and study yet another one of the Immaculate martial arts earn even greater respect from their peers.

Second, Immaculate monks who study the Fivefold Dragon Paths are the martial arm of the vast Immaculate Order. In the Realm, the Order is ubiquitous, and its monks are common sights. In the Realm's satrapies, Immaculate monks are less common but still seen with regularity. They conduct the religion's necessary rites, and the people of a satrapy see displays of the Dragon-Blooded monks' power as they put uppity gods into their rightful places. The strength of an Immaculate monk is a direct demonstration of her spiritual and religious correctness, and it has attracted several outcaste Dragon-Blooded to the Order and the Realm.

Elsewhere, Immaculate monks are scarce. The Immaculate Philosophy often precedes the Scarlet Empire into the Threshold, however, and where there are potential converts, there are monks. Immaculate Dragon-Blooded tend to feel the righteousness of their calling even more than their mortal counterparts, so some take it upon themselves to bring the opportunity for enlightenment to those souls unfortunate enough to live outside the aegis of imperial control. There, too, do the Dragon-Blooded monks demonstrate their martial and magical puissance, fighting little gods and overbrave bandits, and the stories spread further.

Who Wants to be a Monk?

From the treatment of the subject here, it might appear that only Dragon-Blooded who choose to devote themselves to a lifetime of emulating one or more of the Elemental Dragons pursue and master the Glorious Dragon Styles.

Not so.

Many more Dragon-Blooded attend the Cloister of Wisdom than actually go on to dedicate themselves as Immaculate monks. Some take a position in the Thousand Scales, others go to the military, and some become layabouts or wandering heroes. The only thing all graduates of the Cloister have in common is a superior understanding of their bodies, their Essences and (at least) the two foundation Charms necessary to learn one of the Dragon Styles.

Any Cloister graduate can seek out a mentor from whom she can learn additional Charms of her chosen Dragon Style, with all the benefits and difficulties that entails.

Most outcastes do not have the leisure (or the money, or the influence) to attend the Cloister of Wisdom as preparation for any unrelated future. Instead, they must dedicate themselves to the Order if they want the advanced training that would allow them to master the Fivefold Dragon Paths. Nearly the only way to avoid that is to study under a master keeping to the old ways of the Shogunate or by one who remembers the methods used before the Usurpation. Then, in fact, other Celestial styles are open (and potentially more likely) to the Dragon-Blood.

In short, your Dragon-Blooded Immaculate or Celestial martial artist doesn't have to be a monk. But she'll be in rarefied company if she isn't.

Signature Weapons

Most martial-arts styles have form weapons, which can be used with the Martial Arts Ability and are compatible with the style's Charms, even when the Charm text itself describes the effect as done with bare hands or performed unarmed. Because of the elemental affinity their practitioners have for them, the Five Glorious Dragon Styles take this to a level reflected nowhere else in the world of supernatural martial arts.

Each style has a signature weapon. Between the elements and the intense training given to young Immaculates, students of the Glorious Styles have unique skills with their signature weapons. Note that, though nearly any hand-to-hand Martial Arts Charms can be performed through a Dragon Style practitioner's signature weapon, Charms with the *Touch* keyword require that the attack actually be performed with bare hands. Unless the Charm states otherwise, such barehanded touches still inflict damage when used.

Begging the Dragons

With few exceptions, Immaculates become students of the Glorious Dragon Style that naturally befits their natures: Fire Aspects learn Fire Dragon Style, while Water-aspected Dragon-Bloods follow the path of the Water Dragon. Like calls to like, and it is the easiest path to follow to a destination that is already nearly impossible to reach.

Yet, there are those who feel the need to seek another way. An Earth Aspect feels the murmuring call of the Air Dragon in the depths of his soul, or a Child of Hesiesh can choose only to emulate the life-giving nature of the Wood Dragon. They sometimes choose harder paths. The great difficulties inherent in pursuing such a path cause some Immaculates to call it "begging the Dragons."

Because each Dragon Path has an elemental aspect, Dragon-Blooded of the appropriate Aspect pay no surcharge when using Charms from that style. Likewise, a Dragon-Blood of the wrong element who chooses to study it pays the one-mote elemental surcharge for all Charms from that path. Worse, because learning one of the Five Glorious Dragon Styles involves shaping one's soul, the elemental nature of the Dragon-Blood who chooses a style different from his aspect becomes upset—so he must pay that surcharge on *all* Charms, his element notwithstanding. Despite their affinity for the martial arts, Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded may not ignore either of these penalties.

This upset condition lasts until the Dragon-Blood achieves mastery over his chosen Dragon Path. At that time, he balances the differences between his natural element and his chosen element. He ceases to pay any surcharge on Charms from his style as well as normal Charms from *both* elements. Celestial Exalts who study these styles neither pay surcharges nor gain a respite from paying that surcharge on normal Dragon-Blooded Charms (in the case of the Eclipse Caste Solars who can learn them).

Air Dragon Style

The training to become a Dragon of Air emphasizes flexibility, acrobatics and awareness of one's surroundings. The wind never stops when it hits an obstacle, instead turning aside and continuing on its path, and the Immaculates dedicated to the Air Dragon attempt to flow in the same way. They train hard in acrobatics, flips, leaps and balancing, all in an effort to mimic their exemplar's speed and twisting motion.

Many Immaculates of the Air Dragon choose to fight without melee weapons, preferring to rely on their blindingly quick blows

and the thrown weapons they can buoy and direct through their mastery over the wind. When they do use weapons in personal combat, they often prefer the fighting chain, using its length and flexibility to entangle and trip their opponents.

The Air Dragon Style's signature weapon is the chakram. Chakrams come in a variety of shapes and visual styles. When each Immaculate Dragon of Air achieves his Form-type Charm for the style, he chooses his own pattern as his signature look.

In combat, the Immaculate may hurl two chakrams as a single attack. He must have both chakrams on his person to do so, or be using an infinite jade chakram (see **Exalted**, p. 389). Both projectiles have a single attack roll and are treated by the target as a single attack, but if the attack hits, the target suffers damage for both. The Immaculate is able to make such an attack in concert with appropriate simple or supplemental Charms, but he must spend an additional mote to make the attack apply to both chakrams.

Air Dragon Style may be practiced in armor.

Air Dragon's Sight

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

Even the smallest eddy of air carries volumes of information. An Immaculate of the Air Dragon can attune himself to the smallest variances in temperature and speed of the air around him, using the wind as his sight.

When this Charm is active, the Immaculate can operate perfectly, blindfolded or in pitch darkness, as long as he is surrounded by air. He never suffers from unexpected attacks unless he is so beset with foes that he cannot avoid all the blows (when surrounded by multiple opponents). When used outside of combat, the Dragon-Blood may add a number of dice equal to his Essence to any Awareness roll as long as the focus of his attention is within a number of yards equal to his (Essence x 10).

Wind Dragon Speed

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 1)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon's Sight

Moving with a grace available only to the wind itself, the Air Immaculate is able to act and regain her composure and balance more quickly than most of her opponents. She reduces the Speed of any single Martial Arts attack by one, to a minimum of three.

Breath-Seizing Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Crippling, Combo-OK
Duration: (Martial Arts) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon's Sight

Such is the martial artist's command of the wind that he can drive it from his opponent's lungs. With a series of properly placed blows, the Immaculate strikes meridians that contract and immobilize the lungs, denying his opponent breath.

If the attack is successful, it inflicts no damage. Instead, roll the Immaculate's (Strength + Martial Arts + Essence) against a difficulty of the target's Stamina. Each net success inflicts a cumulative -1 internal penalty on the target, and if penalties ever double the target's Stamina, the target is rendered unconscious.

Creatures who do not need to breathe, such as automatons, the undead and spirits or targets using magic to obviate that need, are unaffected by this Charm.

Shrouding the Body and Mind

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: (Martial Arts) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon's Sight

Air is invisible. In this, too, the Children of Mela emulate their element. By swathing herself with transparent air, the Immaculate can become nothing more than a ripple in her foes' view.

Upon using this Charm, the Immaculate becomes virtually invisible for a number of actions equal to her Martial Arts rating. Those who try to attack her suffer a +2 external penalty on their attacks, and she adds two successes to any attempts to reestablish surprise. Because of the blur she leaves in the air as she passes, those nearby still know where she is unless she attempts to conceal herself using Stealth.

The Storyteller may apply bonuses to those trying to find the Air Immaculate depending on when they last saw her. As a general guideline, someone who saw her disappear or who knows where she was on her last action adds three dice. Those who have no idea she's nearby add nothing. Each action in which an individual fails to locate or keep track of the Immaculate, he loses one bonus die (to a minimum of zero).

Air Dragon Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Form-type
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Breath-Seizing Technique, Shrouding the Body and Mind, Wind Dragon Speed

With a series of high, graceful motions combined with painstaking balance, the Immaculate dons the light, flowing motions of Air Dragon Form.

After successfully activating the form, the Immaculate adds a number of dice equal to his Martial Arts to any ranged attack, though this bonus cannot exceed the normal dice cap on such actions. The form also increases his Dodge DV by an amount equal to half his Martial Arts rating for the scene.

Tornado Offense Technique

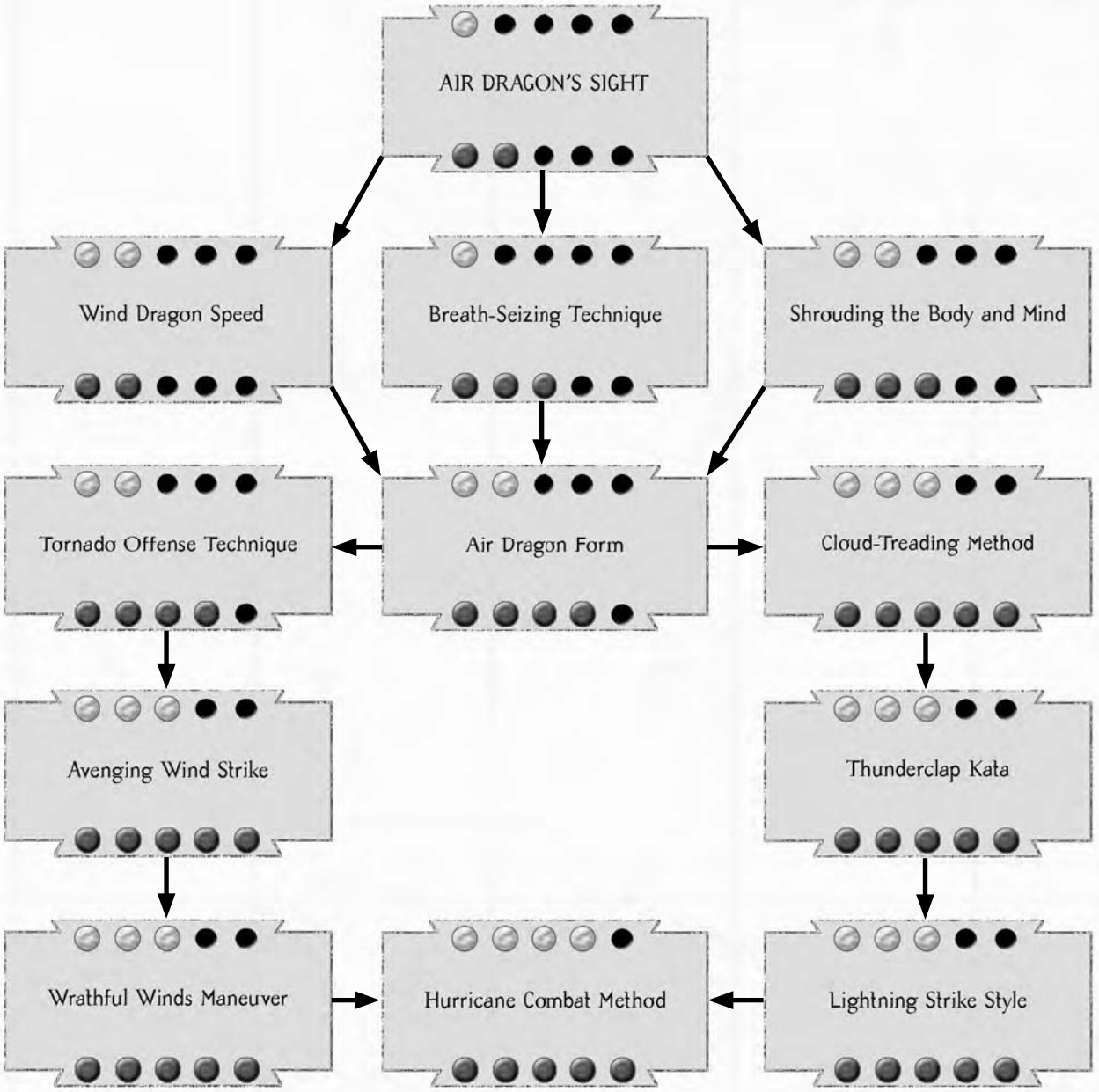
Cost: 3m per attack; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon Form

The Immaculate becomes a whirlwind of death and destruction, spinning around an opponent faster than the eye can follow and unleashing a series of devastating attacks.

This Charm is a magical flurry. For every three motes, the Immaculate makes an additional ranged or Martial Arts attack with his full dice pool, to a maximum number of attacks equal to his Martial Arts rating. The DV penalty for this flurry is equal to one-half the DV penalty for all attacks.

Avenging Wind Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental



Keywords: Combo-OK, Knockback, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Tornado Offense Technique

With superb command over her element, the Immaculate channels impossibly strong gusts of air behind her attacks. Air Immaculates favor wearing down their foes with chakrams while using this Charm to prevent their foes from closing with them.

For every point of raw damage the attack inflicts above the target's Stamina, the target suffers three yards of knockback. Targets may also have to check against knockdown, if the attack inflicts more damage than the target's (Stamina + Resistance) as normal.

Some Immaculates use the wind to carry their attacks farther. Using this Charm with a thrown weapon increases the attack's range increment by an amount equal to the martial artist's Essence in addition to the Charm's normal effects.

Wrathful Winds Maneuver

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Avenging Wind Strike

The Immaculate opens his mouth wide, loosing a fearsome shout that can shatter stone and eardrums alike. A gale-force blast leaves his mouth in a 90-degree arc, out to a distance of (Essence x 10) feet. His player makes a (Strength + Martial Arts) roll as an attack, which can only be dodged, not parried.

Players of anyone affected by the Charm roll their characters' ([Dexterity or Stamina] + [Athletics or Resistance]) against a difficulty of the total successes on the martial artist's roll (before subtracting DV). If both her Strength and Athletics are less than the monk's net successes, a victim suffers knockdown and her player must roll her (Wits



+ Resistance) at difficulty 1 to avoid immediately becoming inactive for a single action. Victims of this Charm who suffer both effects are also deafened for a number of actions equal to the Immaculate's Martial Arts. Deafened targets lose two dice from all actions.

By spending a point of Willpower, the Immaculate can focus the shout on a single target. The target cannot avoid the attack without a perfect defense, and the shout inflicts a number of health levels of lethal damage equal to the Immaculate's (Strength + Essence), which bypasses armor. In addition, add any levels of damage inflicted to the difficulty to avoid knockdown.

Cloud Treading Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: (Martial Arts) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Air Dragon Form

Air Immaculates are light on their feet, and the very wind itself carries them when they ask. Activating this Charm, the martial artist detects the smallest updrafts (or creates them) and uses them to buoy her steps.

This Charm doubles the Immaculate's movement rate and leaping distance for the duration, and the most flimsy surfaces can support her. She can run along a lake's surface, skip from leaf to leaf without falling and dash up smoke trails—as long as she keeps moving. If she does not move in each tick, she falls. She may continue to run along impossible surfaces as long as she re-invokes the Charm as soon as it ends.

Thunderclap Kata

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Cloud Treading Method

The Elemental Dragon of Air rules over the storms of Creation. Immaculate monks who emulate that Dragon learn to imitate some measure of that command. Spreading his arms wide for a moment to focus his elemental Essence and his breathing, the monk brings his hands together in a thunderous clap, which can deafen and stun those who hear it.

The thunderclap affects anyone within (Essence x 10) yards of the Immaculate (no attack roll required). The players of all such characters must make a reflexive (Stamina + Resistance) roll. If one gets successes equal to or greater than the Immaculate's Essence, the target immediately becomes inactive until his next action as the sound waves vibrate through her. Yet she suffers no further penalty. Otherwise, the violent sound also inflicts (Strength + Martial Arts) bashing damage that ignores armor. Targets also become deaf for a number of actions equal to the Immaculate's Essence, losing two dice from all dice pools due to disorientation.

Spirits are even more susceptible to the effects of this Charm. Double the Immaculate's Essence for all purposes when applying this Charm's effects to a god, demon or elemental. Air Immaculates do not need to be able to see or otherwise affect spirits in order for this Charm to harm them.

The Immaculate is immune to her own thunderclap, and he can render select persons immune to the Charm's effects at a cost of one mote per person. She cannot single out spirits for immunity to this Charm. If a spirit is in range, it is susceptible.

Lightning Strike Style

Cost: 4m, 1hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: (Martial Arts) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Thunderclap Kata

The Air Immaculate's fingertips spark with electricity, his eyes flicker with the light of a faraway electrical storm, and his motions take on the sudden, unexpected aspects of lightning. When he attacks, he looses brilliant bolts of lightning at his foes, even striking targets that are far out of reach.

For the Charm's duration, the Immaculate's Martial Arts attacks reach to a distance of (Essence x 10) feet. Such attacks inflict (Strength + Essence) in lethal electrical damage. If a target is in range for a *normal* unarmed attack, using a punch or kick adds to the attack's Accuracy and Damage as normal.

For an additional mote, the Dragon-Blood may use a chakram with this Charm to add its Accuracy and Damage to the attack. Wielding such a weapon with this Charm carries the lightning strike farther. Add the Immaculate's Essence to the weapon's Range. Doing so might increase or decrease the Charm's maximum effective range, depending on the Immaculate's Essence.

Hurricane Combat Method

Cost: 10m, 1wp + 1hl per action; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: (Martial Arts) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Wrathful Winds Maneuver, Lightning Strike Style

Air Immaculates unleash the hurricane on their foes through this Charm. The wind picks up around a monk until it reaches dizzying speeds, making her strides fleet, her leaps long and her blows so fast that they blur. The ferocious gusts are often strong enough to pick up small objects within a number of yards equal to the Immaculate's (Essence x 3) and fling them away, though not at the Immaculate's conscious direction.

For a number of actions equal to the Immaculate's Martial Arts, the Immaculate moves faster and leaps farther, tripling her movement and doubling her jumping distances. (The latter stacks with the Air Aspect anima ability to provide four times the distance.) Her blinding speed adds half her Martial Arts rating to her Dodge DV and halves the Speed of any Martial Arts attacks she makes. Each action, the Immaculate *may* make a number of extra attacks (martial arts or ranged) equal to her Essence. Each extra attack uses her full dice pool and does not prevent her from taking non-attack actions or performing an unrelated flurry. If she has Charms or Combos that can logically affect the extra attacks, she may use them, though she must still abide by the limitations on Charms per action.

Although the Immaculate pays the Willpower and motes up front as normal, she does not suffer damage from the Charm until the Charm ends. At that time, she takes one level of unsoakable bashing damage for *each action* the Charm lasted.

Earth Dragon Style

Earth Dragon is the most nakedly brutal of all the Fivefold Dragon Paths. It centers around strengthening the body, using its natural muscles to their absolutely greatest effect and inuring the skin and mind against pain of all types. Acolytes train by enduring the worst hardships their masters can conceive, from standing on the slopes of the Imperial Mountain during a blizzard to sleeping on beds of nails and suffering brutal beatings willingly.

The style is slower by far than its fellows. Its motions are measured and deliberate, and students take no step or strike without knowing its result beforehand. Despite the pace with which they prepare for their actions, their follow-through is as fast and thunderously unstoppable as a falling mountain.

Earth Dragons use the tetsubo as their signature weapon, a huge war club studded with iron. They often make their own upon mastering the style's Form-type Charm, and no two Earth Immaculates' weapons look alike. The artifact version of the weapon is a great jade-laced steel club (a grand goremaul) that is usually too heavy for a mortal to even budge. Masters of the style encourage their students to study Craft and Occult so that they can more easily make their own.

When wielding a tetsubo or a grand goremaul, Immaculates of Earth add one point to the Overwhelming quality of such a weapon. Earth Dragon Style may be practiced in armor.

Force of the Mountain

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Pure inward focus and slow, deliberate movement precedes this attack. Many onlookers are surprised by the great damage such a sluggish blow manages to inflict.

The Immaculate adds an amount of damage equal to his Essence on a single Melee or Martial Arts attack. He cannot use this Charm with weapons other than the Earth Dragon's signature weapons—the sledge, the tetsubo or the grand goremaul.

Unmoving Mountain Stance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 10)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: (Martial Arts) minutes
Prerequisite Charms: None

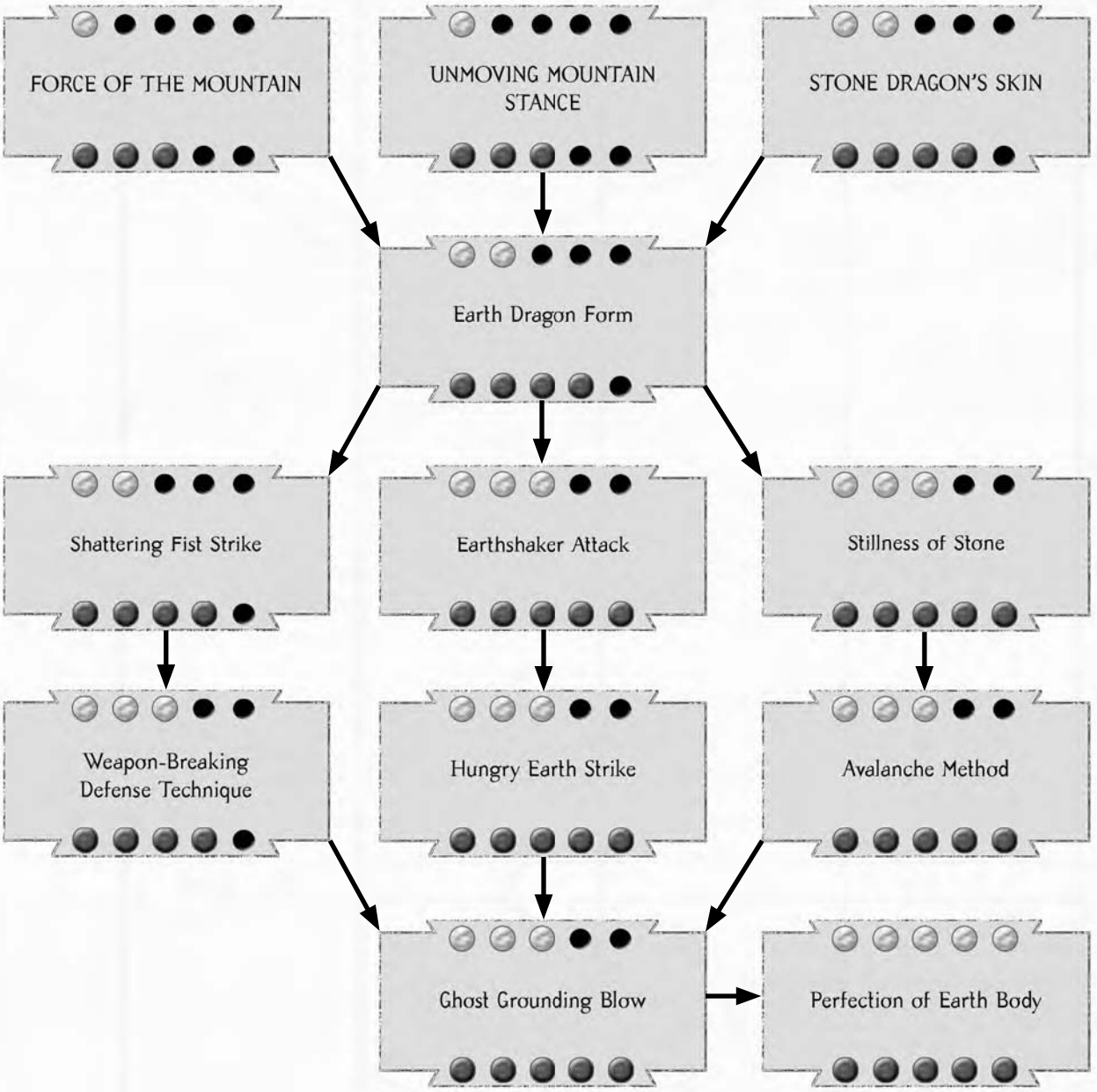
Like the Imperial Mountain and the Realm's impervious War Manses, those who emulate Earth are eternal. Steadfast, they study the art of stillness.

Invoking this Charm allows the Immaculate to stand stock still for the duration. Beyond its meditative use, an Immaculate using this Charm adds a number of automatic successes equal to her Essence to any attempt to resist being moved or knocked down, as from knockdown or knockback. Her ability to lock her joints and make her muscles as steel also adds these successes to any opposed check to maintain a grapple, as long as she is not attempting to break the hold.

Remaining perfectly still can also aid attempts at concealment. As long as the Immaculate has an appropriate hiding place, she adds a like number of automatic successes to her Stealth attempt as long as she does not move. Being able to remain perfectly still might come in handy at other times, as well—such as resisting disarms or holding on for dear life—at the Storyteller's discretion.

Stone Dragon's Skin

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
Keywords: Combo-OK



Duration: Until next action
Prerequisite Charms: None

Dragons of Earth spend months training their bodies to ignore pain and resist harm. After thousands of punches made into tuns of gravel and many hours spent lying between two massive sheets of rock, they learn to channel their Essence into their skin, hardening it against misfortune.

The Immaculate adds his Martial Arts rating to his natural lethal and bashing soak until his next action. Furthermore, hardening his skin in this way allows him to also parry weapons with his bare hands.

Earth Dragon Form

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (-0 DV)
Keywords: Form-type, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Force of the Mountain, Unmoving Mountain Stance, Stone Dragon's Skin

Taking a wide, low and very stable stance, the Earth Immaculate finds her center and uses her Essence to ground herself in the earth.

Successful activation of the Earth Dragon Form adds the Immaculate's Martial Arts to his bashing, lethal and aggravated soaks. This soak cannot be circumvented by any Charm. The monk also gains an equal amount of Hardness.

Shattering Fist Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: (Martial Arts) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Earth Dragon Form

Immaculates of Earth have an affinity for the inanimate. In many ways, they use objects as one facet of their ideal emulation: a propensity toward stillness, enduring construction and a long-term outlook.

This unique perspective gives Immaculates an advantage when taking the inanimate apart. For the duration of the Charm, double the raw damage the Immaculate inflicts on objects (but not living things). This effect stacks with others that increase damage done to objects.

Weapon-Breaking Defense Technique

Cost: Special, +1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Shattering Fist Strike

Hidden stones shatter plows, and striking a mountain breaks the blade. Immaculates learn similar tactics. After the Immaculate has activated this Charm, attacking him with a weapon becomes a risky proposal.

When the martial artist parries a weapon with this Charm, either barehanded or wielding his form weapon, his player makes a reflexive (Strength + Martial Arts) roll to destroy the attacking weapon. He needs one success to destroy normal weapons, three for fine, exceptional or perfect weapons and five for weapons forged of the magical materials. Whether or not the Immaculate fails to destroy the weapon, its bearer's player must make a reflexive (Wits + relevant Ability) roll opposing the Immaculate's roll or be disarmed (as per the disarming rules).

The Essence cost of this Charm is equal to the difficulty to destroy the weapon and must be paid before the attempt. If the Exalt does not have enough Essence to use this Charm on a weapon (i.e., he thought an artifact weapon was an unremarkable sword), he spends no Essence and the Charm does not activate.

Earthshaker Attack

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Earth Dragon Form

Standing on a surface of earth or stone, the Immaculate stomps her foot onto the ground. A shockwave ripples outward from her, and the players of everyone within a number of feet equal to the martial artist's (Essence x 10) must make a (Dexterity + Resistance) roll at a difficulty of the Immaculate's Essence to avoid knockdown. Anyone who falls takes bashing damage equal to the Immaculate's Martial Arts, soaked as normal.

Hungry Earth Strike

Cost: 5+m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Earthshaker Attack

The Immaculate's hand seems to swell and grow before he strikes the earth with an open palm. The ground shivers, and immediately after, the ground beneath his target opens up beneath her feet and to engulf and immobilize her. The Immaculate's player rolls (Strength + Martial Arts) against the target's Dodge DV—this attack cannot be parried. Each net success for the Immaculate adds one to the difficulty of all the target's physical actions.

A target affected by the Charm cannot take Move or Dash actions until her player succeeds in a (Strength + Athletics) roll at a difficulty equal to the Immaculate's net successes, which requires a miscellaneous action at -2 DV. If the Immaculate's net successes exceed the target's Strength, the attack draws her all the way into the ground. She can take no actions but to attempt to escape, and the difficulty of the (Strength + Athletics) roll doubles. At the Immaculate's discretion, the target might not have any air in her earthen prison. If not, she must hold her breath.

Allies may help to free a victim of this Charm, by trying to pull her from the grasping earth or prying at the stone over her head. Treat this as limited teamwork (adding one die to the escape attempt for each person helping).

For one additional mote each, the Immaculate can target multiple enemies with a single use of this Charm. He cannot target more victims than double his Essence. Obviously, both the Immaculate and any targets must be on the same earthen or stone surface.

Stillness of Stone

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Stackable, Touch
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: Earth Dragon Form

By interrupting a target's normal Essence flows with immobile earth Essence, the Immaculate can freeze her foes in place. If the Immaculate successfully harms a target with a barehanded attack, she paralyzes and renders him inactive, completely unable to move. The victim endures a number of inactive actions (including the first) equal to the levels of damage inflicted. If this attack kills a target, it turns his body to stone. His body petrifies completely, a permanent and frightening tribute to the Immaculate's martial prowess.

Avalanche Method

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: Stillness of Stone

Channeling the heaviness of earth into his opponent, the Immaculate tries to bury her beneath his massive attacks. At the very least, he forces her to assume an inferior fighting posture.

On a successful attack, the Immaculate's player makes a reflexive, opposed (Strength + Martial Arts) roll against the target's (Stamina + Athletics). If the Immaculate wins or ties, he successfully pours earth Essence down on her. In addition to the normal damage inflicted by the attack, each net success on the opposed roll inflicts a -1 internal penalty to all physical actions on the victim as long as she remains in the Immaculate's line of sight. Once she escapes the Immaculate's line of sight, the weight lifts.

If the net successes exceed the target's Stamina, the Charm immobilizes her completely. She must take only inactive actions, but only as long the Immaculate maintains physical contact with her—her form overflows with earth Essence, and he must prevent it from pouring out.

As long as the Immaculate maintains the proper eye or physical contact, the Charm can last indefinitely. When he releases someone made completely immobile, she still suffers the Charm's internal penalties until the Immaculate uncommits the motes spent on the Charm or she leaves his line of sight. Finally, trying to take other actions while maintaining contact with a single, immobilized individual is awkward, leveling a -1 external penalty on all physical actions. Holding multiple such victims increases the penalty commensurately.



Multiple invocations of this Charm on a single target are not cumulative. Only the most effective application counts. Earth-aspected Dragon-Blooded, already replete with earth Essence, cannot be affected by this Charm, though the attack behind it can still inflict damage.

Ghost-Grounding Blow

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: Avalanche Method, Weapon-Breaking Defense Technique, Hungry Earth Strike

Earth is the element of stability and physicality. Touching an immaterial target, the Immaculate uses his connection to the Elemental Dragon of Earth to draw this victim into the corporeal world.

Ghost-Grounding Blow does not provide the means to strike an immaterial target, so the monk must first activate Moment of Daana'd or another Charm that allows her to strike immaterial targets. On a successful, unarmed Martial Arts attack, the Immaculate's player makes an opposed roll of (her Wits + Martial Arts + extra successes on the attack) against the target's permanent Willpower.

If the Immaculate wins, her blow inflicts no damage but she instead forces the target into material form. When the target need spend no Essence to become corporeal (such as an elemental or Eclipse Caste Solar using Dematerialize), it happens immediately. If the target must spend Essence to don a physical form (such as ghosts, gods or demons using Materialize), the Charm forces it to spend that Essence immediately. When the target does not have enough Essence to use that power, the Immaculate must supply the rest. If the two parties combined do not have enough, both lose all their Essence, but the target remains immaterial.

Once material, the target must remain material for a number of hours equal to the Immaculate's Martial Arts Ability. She is in no way prohibited from using any Charms or powers, assuming she has the Essence to do so, apart from those that would dematerialize her.

On a tied roll, the entity becomes material as normal but may dematerialize again (if she has that ability) on or after her next action. If the target's player wins the opposed roll, the attack has no effect at all.

Neither gods nor demons are fond of this Charm, as it forces them into a weaker position and often precedes the Immaculate's attempts to destroy them. Creatures with permanent Essences higher than the martial artist's are immune to this Charm.

Perfection of Earth Body

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple (-2 DV)
Keywords: Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Ghost-Grounding Blow

The pinnacle of Earth Dragon Style, this Charm lets the Immaculate truly become one with the exemplar she emulates. Falling to her hands and knees, the martial artist touches her head to the ground to be fully in contact with the body of the Elemental Dragon of Earth. Her skin ripples and petrifies, making her into an Immaculate warrior of living stone.

This Charm doubles the Immaculate's Strength and Stamina and causes his hand-to-hand attacks to inflict lethal damage. She adds her Essence to the Accuracy, Damage and Defense values of her unarmed attacks. She soaks lethal damage with her entire Stamina and adds her Essence to her bashing and lethal soak and her Hardness. Finally, being made from stone deadens the Immaculate's senses and strengthens her joints. She ignores all wound penalties and Crippling effects for the Charm's duration.

This Charm is incompatible with armor.

Fire Dragon Style

Devotees to the Fire Dragon suffer the cruelest of the five training regimens. They learn early on that one must control fire, lest it consume everything in its path. The best-known lesson the Fire Immaculates suffer consists of setting the student on fire. She is forbidden to use anything other than her own willpower to resist the pain as the element she wishes to emulate bubbles her flesh and melts the fat from her bones. She hears the crackling fire and smells her charred flesh, and when she can endure no more, she need only speak before she is doused and healed. In general, Immaculates believe that the longer a student remains silent, the greater a warrior she will be.

Fire Dragons fight in a manner as wild and unpredictable as a forest fire, but the Immaculates themselves endeavor to always be in complete control. Their lessons teach them that they are the fire and to lose control would be devastating to their friends and their aims.

The signature weapons of Fire Dragon Style are paired short swords, each curved to a claw-like point at the end. Paired short daiklaves serve as the artifact version of these weapons. An Immaculate's combat with these weapons is ferocious, and the shimmering of light off the blades often reminds observers of the flickering fires of the element behind the style.

Immaculate Dragons of Fire become incredibly adept at using their blades for rapid slashing assaults. When one performs a flurry that consists only of attacks with their signature weapons, each attack suffers a multiple action penalty equal only to its number in the progression; i.e., the first attack suffers a -1, the second a -2 and so on. Fire Dragon Style may be practiced in armor.

Flash-Fire Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

In the dry season, fires can start in the blink of an eye with the merest spark. Nothing is so wet that an Immaculate of Hesiesh cannot set it alight. Moving as quickly as the sudden flame, the Immaculate adds a number of dice equal to his Martial Arts score to his Join Battle action.

Flame-Flicker Stance

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Until next action
Prerequisite Charms: Flash-Fire Technique

Obscuring her form behind the image of a flickering flame and rising smoke, the Immaculate shifts and dances like a candle's eager flame. Until her next action, each mote she spends (to a maximum of her Essence) increases both her DVs by one.

Searing Fist Attack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Stackable
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Strikes supplemented by this Charm hit very painful pressure points and further increase that red-hot agony with a lick of fire Essence. Such great pain draws the target's focus inward, away from the temporal world around her. After successfully inflicting damage with a blow supplemented by this Charm, the Immaculate causes such pain that his victim suffers a -1 internal penalty to all actions for the rest of the scene. This penalty comes on top of wound penalties, and additional uses of this Charm have a cumulative effect.

Perfect Blazing Blow

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Searing Fist Attack

A tongue of flame travels from the Immaculate's heart to her fist or weapon, making one attack burn through an opponent's defense. An attack supplemented by this Charm automatically hits targets with an effective DV of less than the Immaculate's Essence, as if the attack's roll had just enough successes to connect. If the attack roll has enough successes on its own, ignore the results of this Charm.

Fire Dragon Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
Keywords: Form-type, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Flame-Flicker Stance, Perfect Blazing Blow

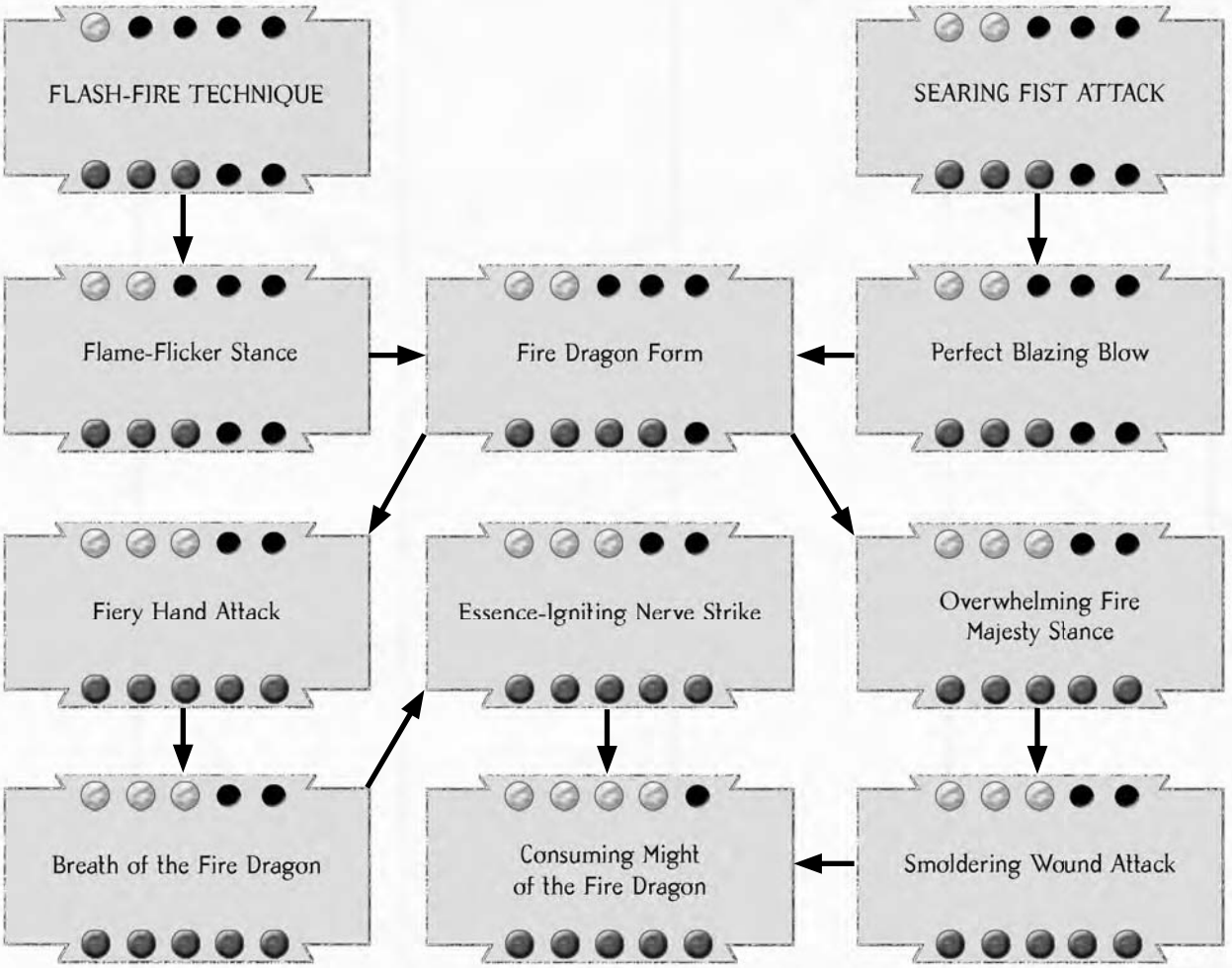
The Immaculate performs a brief kata and brings her arms together. When she releases the position, a light burst of warm, orange flame erupts from her. While the form is active, her movements are more like those of the fire she emulates, and attacks against her seem to only fan the flames.

After successfully activating Fire Dragon Form, the Immaculate increases her Dodge DV by half her Martial Arts Ability. Also, due to the great heat that surrounds her, the Immaculate's bashing attacks inflict lethal damage.

Fiery Hand Attack

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Fire Dragon Form

His hand or sword sheathed in flame, the Immaculate tries to cover a foe in that burning Essence. On a successful Martial Arts strike, the Immaculate adds his Martial Arts rating to the damage, and all damage inflicted is lethal. Additionally, the target's player reflexively rolls (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty of the monk's Essence. Beings with an elemental affinity for Water (such as Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded) add two dice to their Resistance rolls. If the roll fails, the target bursts into flame. Treat this effect as if the victim were standing in the middle of a bonfire. She suffers four levels of lethal damage per action for a number of subsequent actions equal to the attacker's Martial Arts score. A successful (Stamina + Resistance) roll at difficulty 3 reduces the damage from lethal to bashing on each action, which ignores armor.



The flames are magical, despite the entirely normal looks, smells, feelings and screams. Only the end of the Charm or magic (water Essence or magic that specifically douses flames) can put out the fire early. Otherwise, the poor victim will burn even underwater.

Breath of the Fire Dragon

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Fiery Hand Attack

Taking a deep breath and calling to rouse the Fire Dragon within her, the Immaculate spits a gout of flame that extends for a number of yards equal to her Essence. Her attack roll is her (Perception + Martial Arts), and she adds a number of automatic successes equal to her Essence. The attack inflicts a number of levels of lethal damage equal to her Essence for every mote the Fire Dragon Immaculate spends on the Charm. She cannot spend more motes than she has dots of Martial Arts. The rolling flame cannot be parried.

By expending a point of Willpower, the Immaculate gives the Breath of the Fire Dragon the ability to affect spirits as well as material objects.

Essence-Igniting Nerve Strike

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Breath of the Fire Dragon

This esoteric attack touches and activates a half-dozen potent chakras, causing the Essence contained within the target to flare and burn the body from within. On a successful strike, the attack does not inflict normal damage. Instead, the target suffers one level of lethal damage for every mote of Essence in her Personal Essence pool, up to a maximum of twice the Immaculate's permanent Essence. The damage ignores armor but is otherwise soaked normally. This Charm does not consume the motes involved, but simply uses them as a catalyst for damage.

Creatures without Personal Essence pools (such as gods and mortals) are immune to this Charm.

Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Fire Dragon Form

Fires cause great damage, and they are recognized and respected for their illimitable hunger across Creation. Taking this aspect of the Fire Dragon onto herself as flames swirl about her body, the Immaculate makes her foes afraid to strike her.

While the Immaculate maintains the stance, anyone trying

to attack her subtracts a number of dice equal to the Immaculate's Martial Arts from his dice pool when doing so. Anyone who tries to attack one of the Immaculate's clear allies within a number of yards of the Immaculate equal to the Immaculate's Essence subtracts half that number (i.e., the Immaculate's Martial Arts score). While this Charm is active, the Immaculate can defend herself and take other actions. Making an attack or taking a Dash action ends Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance, as does invoking any non-reflexive Charms or moving more than half her normal movement. Taking any health levels of damage from an attack also disrupts the stance. Once the Charm ends, the effects linger for another three ticks.

Smoldering Wound Attack

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance

The Immaculate endows a single wound with slow-burning Essence. If he successfully damages his opponent, the wound smolders like a dying fire. On the Immaculate's following action, the Charm's victim suffers any post-soak damage again. Soak does not apply to the second instance of damage.

Consuming Might of the Fire Dragon

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Igniting Nerve Strike, Smoldering Wound Attack

This Charm pulls pure elemental flame from the heart of the Elemental Dragon. An Aspect of Fire using this Charm triples the effects of his anima power. For non-Fire Aspects, the Charm allows the Immaculate to use the Fire Aspect anima power at its normal level. Also, anyone viewing the Immaculate, regardless of his aspect, is affected as if by the Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance, except that the effects last for an entire scene and the Immaculate is free to attack and/or use Charms.

Water Dragon Style

Immaculate Dragons of Water meld the crashing strength of the tsunami, the unutterable calm of a perfectly smooth lake and the cold, grinding force of a frozen glacier into a deadly martial arts style. Students of the style spend long hours contemplating water in all its forms: the cutting edges of ice, the flowing and indestructible nature of water, the gentle but deadly snowfall and the freeform essence of scalding steam. Swimming and sailing have their parts in the training, as a monk must come to fully understand his element.

When they enter combat, Water Immaculates seem to melt away from their opponents' blows, run through their grasping fingers and then strike with the force of a great wave. Though a single wave cannot topple a castle, Water Stylists wear their foes to the ground with an unending series of eroding strikes and kicks.

These Immaculates wield "dragon's claws" in combat, which are effectively stylized tiger claws (or razor claws). Water Dragons are so skilled in using these weapons that their flowing movements create glittering walls of slashing steel and jade, hypnotically beautiful but of deadly consequence.

Water Dragons wielding paired dragon's claws reduce the Speed by one and add two to the weapons' Defense. Water Dragon Style is compatible with armor.

Flowing Water Defense

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: (Essence) actions
Prerequisite Charms: None

Striking water is easy to do, but it is hard to do more than make a harmless splash. Similarly, soft water does not do more than flow past stone, but it always takes something with it. While the Charm is in effect, the Immaculate subtracts one die from all his attack pools, but anyone who tries to attack him subtracts three dice from all attack pools.

Rippling Water Strike

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Water Defense

Just as a pebble thrown through the surface of a pond sends ripples washing to shore, so can the Immaculate's blow ripple through Creation. When she connects with a strike aided by this Charm, the very air appears to ripple outward from the point of contact.

If an attack supplemented by this Charm successfully inflicts levels of damage on its target, everyone but the Immaculate within 10 feet of the target suffers dice of bashing damage equal to the number of health levels inflicted on the primary target. This damage ignores armor.

This Charm is not discerning—friends are as susceptible as foes. When the Immaculate raises her Essence to 4, she may spend Essence to make the Charm ignore her companions and friends. For each mote spent, the ripples ignore one creature. She may not exempt more targets than she has dots of Essence.

Drowning-in-Blood Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Stackable
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Rippling Water Strike

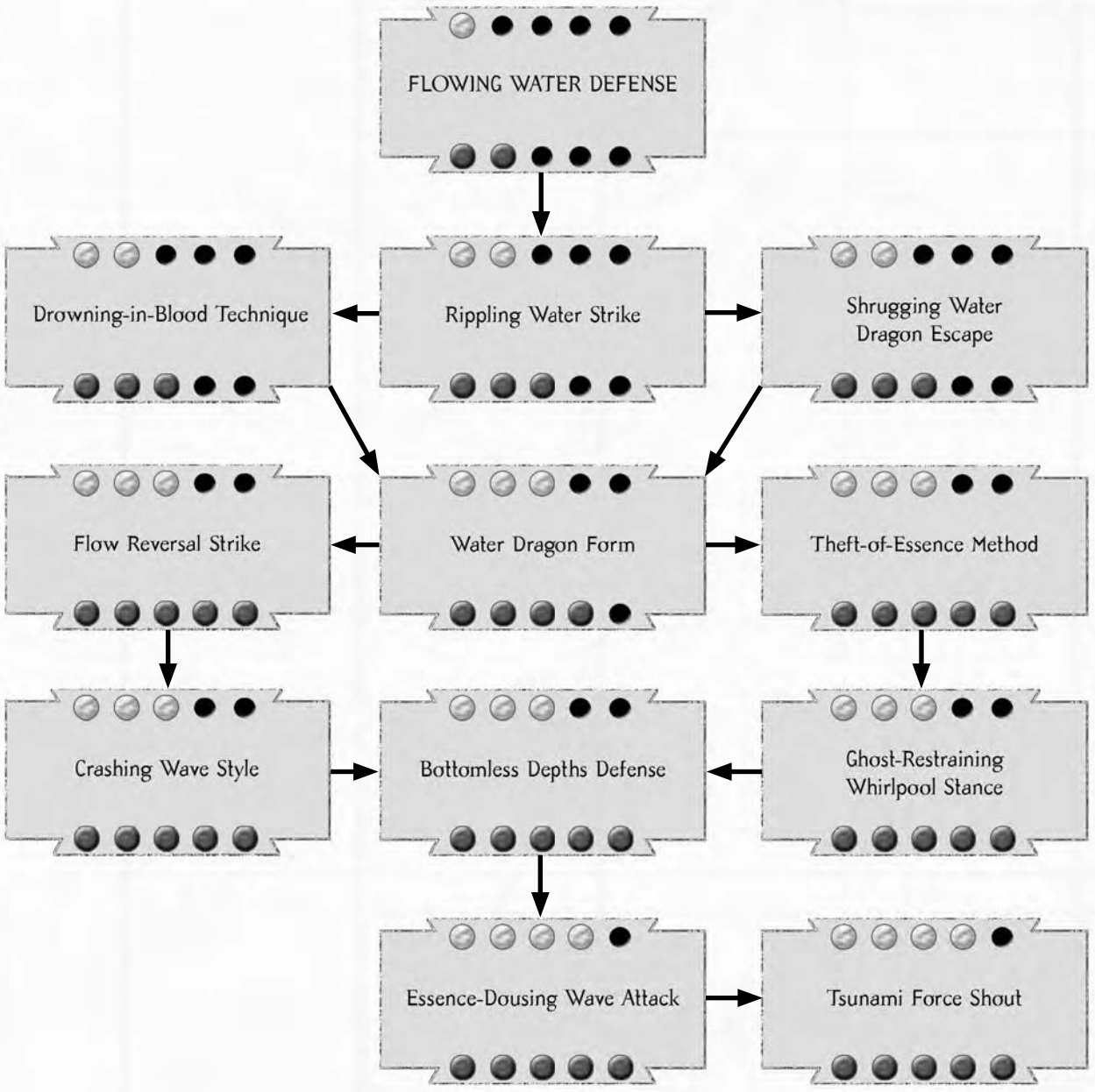
The body contains a great deal of water, in the form of sweat, tears… but mostly blood. Immaculates of Water learn the secret tides of blood, and they can strike a target in such a way that it disrupts and diverts a victim's blood. By channeling it into the target's airways and lungs, an Immaculate can actually drown his foe in her own blood.

After a successful Martial Arts attack, which does not damage the target, the Immaculate's player (Strength + Martial Arts) opposed by the target's (Stamina + Resistance). If the Immaculate wins, his target suffers internal bleeding and loses one dot of Stamina for a number of actions equal to the Immaculate's extra successes. Subsequent uses of the Charm are cumulative, and a target reduced to 0 Stamina is dead.

Shrugging Water Dragon Escape

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Rippling Water Strike

Water cannot be bound. Rivers flow through a man's fingers, ice melts away, and steam escapes into the air. The Immaculate tries to mimic this perfect freedom, using this Charm to prevent herself from ever being restrained. When she uses it, mundane chains



shatter, ropes snap, and handcuffs drop away. It also nullifies the effects of supernatural restraints for a number of ticks equal to the Immaculate's (Martial Arts x 3).

Water Dragon Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Form-type
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Drowning-in-Blood Technique, Shrugging Water Dragon Escape

With a few graceful body movements, the Immaculate becomes more like the liquid element he seeks to emulate. As that element, he can absorb and dissipate vast amounts of damage while suffering very little harm.

While this Charm is active, the Exalt adds his Martial Arts to his bashing and lethal soak and soaks lethal damage with his full Stamina. Also, when successfully attacked, he may further augment his soak by reflexively spending one mote per two points of soak. This soak applies to only a single attack, and he must spend the Essence in Step Seven of attack resolution.

Finally, the Immaculate's flowing motions make his attacks hard to evade and his defenses even harder to predict. He adds his an amount equal to his Essence to his Martial Arts Ability for the scene. This Charm is incompatible with any armor that has a mobility penalty of -2 or greater, because such armor constrains the martial artist and prohibits the natural flow necessary for this Charm.

Flow Reversal Strike

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Water Dragon Form

By influencing the water Essence inside her target's body, the Immaculate can completely—if only for a moment—reverse the blood in a person's veins. All she need do to enact this Charm is give the target the slightest touch. Some Water Immaculates find ways to begin combat by using this Charm amidst a handshake or other friendly gesture.

If an unarmed Martial Arts attack is successful (whether or not it inflicts any damage), the target's player rolls (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty equal to the Immaculate's successes on the initial attack roll, before reducing successes from the target's DVs. If the roll fails, he takes one level of unsoakable lethal damage. Whether or not the target succeeds, he loses two dice from all dice pools for a number of actions equal to the Immaculate's Martial Arts.

Mortals are less hardy than the Exalted, and those who fail the (Stamina + Resistance) roll die instantly, as do animals of less than twice the Immaculate's size. Most gods, automatons and undead have no blood and are immune to this Charm, but some (such as water elementals or creatures with great amounts of liquid in their forms) are still susceptible and take two levels of lethal damage if they fail the roll.

Crashing Wave Style

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Flow Reversal Strike

Wave after wave crashes up against the rocky shore, and after each rush of water, more sand and stone washes away. By the time the storm is finished, nothing is left.

On a successful Martial Arts attack, the Immaculate makes a second attack at -1 die to his pool. If the second attack succeeds, he can make a third attack at -2 and a fourth at -4. Each subsequent attack doubles the die penalty, and the Charm ends when the one of the Immaculate's attacks misses, his dice pool hits zero or below or the number of attacks equals his Martial Arts.

Theft-of-Essence Method

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Water Dragon Form

Certain texts of Daana'd suggest seeing beings that wield Essence as self-contained eddies in Creation, small vortices of power. Immaculates teach a method for interrupting those small whorls in Creation's flow, diverting that Essence to the monk's righteous use.

After a successful attack, the Immaculate's player rolls (Essence + Martial Arts), stealing three motes of Essence for each success from his target and adding them to his own reserves. This Essence counts as Personal for all purposes, but it may inflate his pool beyond its normal boundaries. He may use this Essence, but only on Charms from Water Dragon Style. Unused Essence gained from this Charm fades at a rate of one mote per minute.

Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool Stance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Stackable
Duration: Until abandoned
Prerequisite Charms: Theft-of-Essence Method

Just as a sinking ship can create a vortex that sucks down fleeing survivors, Immaculate martial artists can create a similar effect in the medium of Creation's Essence. By crafting a small ball of her water Essence and hurling it into the sea of Creation, she creates a temporary whirlpool of Essence that hinders spirits. As long as she maintains the proper stance, the effects remain.

The Immaculate's player rolls (Charisma + Martial Arts), and the players of all spirits within (Essence x 10) yards roll the creatures' Essences. Spirits who achieve more successes than the Immaculate may ignore the effects of this Charm. Any spirit who fails the roll suffers a -1 external penalty for each success by which the Dragon-Blood's roll beats his. Additionally, each success reduces the speed of the spirit's Move and Dash actions by one yard per success, unless the spirit is moving toward the Immaculate.

If the external penalty exceeds the spirit's Essence, the spirit becomes inactive for the duration of the Charm unless its permanent Essence is greater than the Immaculate's, in which case it suffers the normal penalties but can continue to act.

In order to sustain this Charm, the martial artist must take a -2 external penalty to all actions. When he drops it, the Charm's effects remain for three ticks before fading.

Use of this Charm is obvious to spirits.

Bottomless Depths Defense

Cost: 5m, 1ahl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Crashing Wave Style, Ghost-Restraining Whirlpool Stance

Activating this Charm allows the Immaculate to ignore *all damage* from any source for one tick, as he siphons the wounds into the limitless abyss of the Water Dragon. The effort is greatly draining, however, and he immediately suffers a single level of aggravated damage.

Practitioners of Water Dragon Style save this Charm for extreme circumstances. To perform such powerful techniques carries away a piece of the soul, and Immaculates are rightly wary of such consequences.

Essence-Dousing Wave Attack

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Bottomless Depths Defense

Smothering an opponent with the dousing power of pure water Essence, the Immaculate attempts to metaphorically drown and put out his opponent's magic.

The Immaculate makes a normal Martial Arts attack. If he inflicts damage, the Immaculate's player makes an immediate (Essence + Martial Arts) roll at a difficulty of half the target's Essence. For three ticks per success, any Charms or spells affecting the target cease to operate. If the number of successes exceeds the Essence of whatever individual invoked the Charm or cast the spell, the magic is completely dispelled. The durations of inactive Charms continue to count down.

Targets affected by this Charm can reactivate the Charms and spells that were cancelled. Unless the Charms are stackable, people who suddenly have the same Charm active twice (as Essence-Dousing Wave Attack ends) gain no special benefit. This



Charm can be used on friends to subdue unwanted effects, but the Immaculate must inflict at least a single level of bashing damage to trigger the effect.

Tsunami Force Shout

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Dousing Wave Attack

Filling her lungs with the life of the Water Dragon itself, the Immaculate summons all her strength and expels a low, rumbling, water-Essence-laden shout that shakes all who stand before her.

Tsunami Force Shout radiates out from the Immaculate in a 45-degree arc extending out a number of yards equal to her Essence, inflicting ([Essence + Martial Arts] x 2) levels of aggravated damage. The player of anyone within the area of effect makes a reflexive Essence roll. On a botch, any damage dice not soaked in Step Seven of attack resolution are automatic successes. If the Essence roll fails, the damage is soaked and rolled normally. If the roll succeeds, the damage becomes lethal instead of aggravated and is rolled normally. With a threshold of three or more on the Essence roll, the damage is bashing.

Wood Dragon Style

Followers of the Wood Dragon are mysteries among the mysterious. All Immaculates are curiosities for their dedication and their great power, but Wood Dragon Style practitioners exemplify the strangeness that follows Dragon-Blooded monks, often even to their fellows. Their training is no small part of this perception: Immaculates of Wood go far to understand the extremes of life and death, participating in both food and water deprivation and gluttony, and most also consume absurd quantities of hallucinogenic drugs while seeking the purity of Sextes Jylis.

To observers, Wood Dragon Style is not a particularly deadly or effective style. Immaculates who practice it rarely fell their opponents in a single strike or send their opponents fleeing a storm of blows. Yet, they win their combats nonetheless. With the power they hold over the flows and ebbs of life through Creation, the wise fear them.

An Immaculate of Wood fires her signature weapon, the bow, with deadly accuracy. Their training teaches them to fire backward, with the bow vertical or horizontal, from the saddle or while lying down, among others. When an Immaculate masters Wood Dragon Form, she usually constructs her own bow as a part of a ritual. Those who can construct powerbows often do so for their comrades.

When using her signature weapon, an Immaculate of the Wood Dragon adds two to its Damage bonus and 25 yards to its Range. This style may be practiced while in armor.

Eyes of the Wood Dragon

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 4)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Special
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Wood Immaculate is master of the patterns that govern life and survival. By using this Charm to examine a single foe, the Dragon-Blood finds that foe's weakest points. After invoking this Charm, the Immaculate must successfully attack his target within his five next actions or the Charm ends with no effect. On a successful attack, the Immaculate adds her Essence as *separate* damage dice.

This extra damage bypasses armor but may be soaked by Stamina and other sources of Hardness normally.

This attack affects immaterial spirits as if they had materialized. Also, this Charm is only effective against living beings—automata and the dead do not bear the life paths that this Charm uses.

Mind-over-Body Meditation

Cost: 2m per hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Eyes of the Wood Dragon

Followers of the Wood Dragon master the flow of life within their own bodies early in their training, healing minor wounds and bruises with ease by focusing wood Essence on that location to improve healing. For every two motes spent, the Immaculate heal one level of bashing damage that she has suffered.

Wood Dragon Vitality

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive (Step 7)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: Mind-over-Body Meditation

Immaculates see the Wood Dragon as more than the font of life in Creation—they also see its exemplar as a warrior without peer who can use the power of the trees to shield himself. After activating this Charm, the Immaculate adds his Martial Arts rating to his bashing soak and soaks lethal damage with his full Stamina until his next action.

Soul-Marking Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Stackable, Touch
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Vitality

To enact this Charm, the Immaculate need only touch her opponent, nothing heavier than a caress, and spend the Essence. The target feels a sharp pain in his head, but nothing more. In combat, touching a target thus requires a successful attack.

For the remainder of the scene, the Immaculate gains an automatic success on any attack she makes against a target who has been branded. Multiple soul mark effects are cumulative.

Soul marking is especially painful to spirits—as painful as a real brand is to mortals. In addition to the other effects, this Charm endows spirits with a (cumulative) -1 internal penalty due to the searing pain that refuses to go away.

For 24 hours after branding a target, the Immaculate can sense the direction to any being she has branded. The Immaculate adds a number of dice equal to her Essence to attempts to track such a subject, *or* she gains the ability to take part in a supernatural tracking contest. When such a being is within a number of yards equal to the martial artist's Essence, the martial artist can tell approximately where, and which being, it is.

Wood Dragon Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Form-type, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Soul-Marking Strike

Striking his own body in a series of precise, quick blows, the Immaculate removes all blocks on the flow of wood Essence through his frame. Even the tiniest misplacement of one such strike causes the Charm to fail. Thereafter, the Dragon-Blood almost glows with life, and green Essence sometimes flashes in his eyes or trails behind his body as he moves.

While Wood Dragon Form is active, the Immaculate regenerates one health level of bashing damage on every action and one health level of lethal damage every other action. If the monk is slain, the Charm ends, and he stops regenerating.

Unbreakable Fascination Kata

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Varies
Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Form

The motions associated with this Charm resemble both the way vines grow up trees in the Southeastern jungles and the movements of Southern snakes. So mesmerizing are the Immaculate's katas that she transfixes her opponents, rooting them to the spot.

The character's player rolls her (Charisma + Martial Arts + Essence) against the Dodge MDVs of all who can see her clearly. As long as the Immaculate continues to exercise the kata, those whose MDVs were not hardy enough become inactive as they do nothing other than stare at her with rapt fascination. While executing the kata, the Immaculate may speak, move at half pace or dodge with a -2 DV penalty. Any other action ends the Charm. Wood Immaculates often use this Charm to close with an opponent before attacking.

Enthralling Blow Attack

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Unbreakable Fascination Kata

Certain pressure points cause a subject to relax uncontrollably, momentarily losing all motivation to move or act. If the Immaculate makes a successful Martial Arts attack on his target, his player does not roll damage. Instead, add the Exalt's Essence to the number of successes on the attack (before reduction from DV). Should this value top the target's MDV, the target is enthralled and becomes inactive for a number of actions equal to the Charm's extra successes.

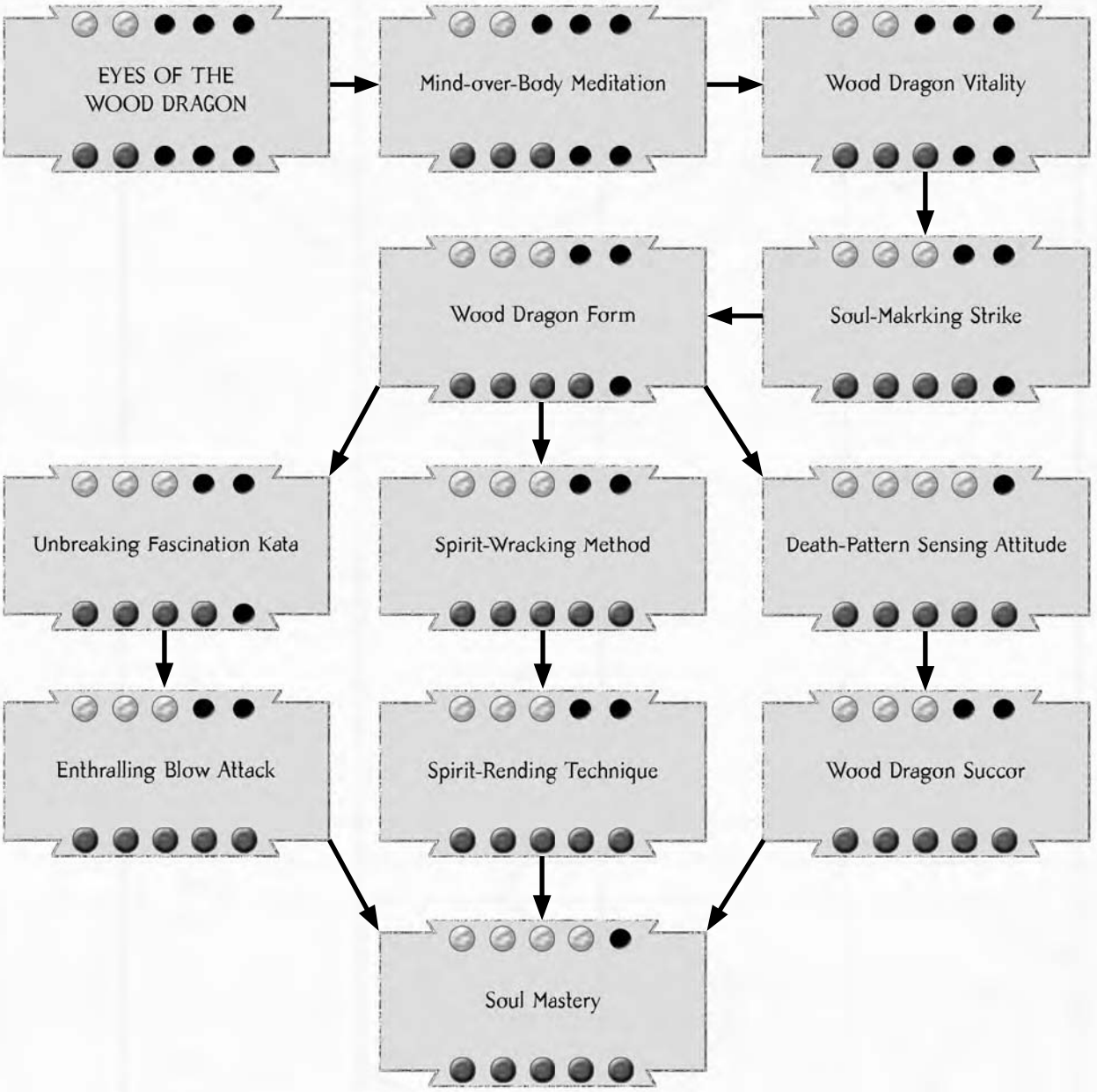
In subsequent actions, the target's player can attempt to have the target shake off the effects by rolling (Willpower + Integrity) at a difficulty of (1 + the successes rolled by the Immaculate's player on the opposed roll). This Charm works only on living creatures.

Spirit-Wracking Method

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Form

When combating a spirit, the Wood Immaculate's understanding of spirit Essence allows her to channel her own Essence through an attack into the spirit. Once there, that Essence blossoms and grows, temporarily disrupting the spirit's form.

On a successful Martial Arts attack that inflicts at least one level of damage, the Immaculate's player makes a reflexive (Essence + Martial Arts) roll against a difficulty equal to the spirit's permanent Essence. The spirit loses a number of dice from all actions equal to the roll's threshold. This penalty fades at the rate of one die per action the spirit takes. This Charm is able to strike immaterial spirits.



Spirit-Rending Technique

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Wracking Method

As a thin vine grows along a wall and inevitably destroys it, the Immaculate is able to tighten his Essence around a spirit-foe and tear its core to shreds. On a successful attack against a spirit, the Wood Immaculate does not inflict damage normally. Instead, her player rolls her (Essence + Willpower) at a difficulty of the spirit's Essence. Success indicates that the spirit suffers one level of aggravated damage. For every additional number of successes equal to target's Essence that the roll garners, the spirit suffers another aggravated health level. Spirits reduced to Incapacitated by such an attack are permanently destroyed.

Death-Pattern Sensing Attitude

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Wood Dragon Form

Attuning herself to the pattern of souls around her, her mastery over wood Essence allows her to also detect the patterns of death—death that has occurred, or death that impends.

For the rest of the scene, the Immaculate may reflexively spend a single mote to ignore all penalties to her Dodge DV against a single attack. She may do so no more than a number of times equal to her Essence between actions. She can dodge attacks only by beings that possess a spirit, however (including most undead). She cannot dodge traps, falling rocks or attacks by automata. Finally, she cannot dodge ranged attacks made from beyond a radius equal to her Essence in yards.



Wood Dragon Succor

Cost: 3m per hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple (Speed 5, -2 DV)
Keywords: Obvious, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Death-Pattern Sensing Attitude

The Immaculate uses this meditation technique to absorb others' wounds into his own body, where he can then heal them. All the Dragon-Blood must do is touch the injured subject and temporarily merge their Essences. The target then heals one health level for every three motes the Immaculate spends, and the wounds immediately appear on the martial artist's body. Such a gracious act is not without its "reward," and the Immaculate immediately suffers the appropriate wound penalties. Wood Immaculates can, of course, heal those injuries with Wood Dragon Form or Mind-over-Body Meditation, unless the wounds are aggravated.

Soul Mastery

Cost: 10m, 1hl; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple (-2 DV)
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious, Touch
Duration: (Essence) actions
Prerequisite Charms: Enthralling Blow Attack, Spirit-Rending Technique, Wood Dragon Succor

The highest mastery of Wood Dragon Style, this Charm is little more than a legend to most, even other Dragon-Blooded Immaculate monks. Few who see the Charm active live to tell others, because the perfect alignment of a Wood Immaculate with the forces of life gives her the power to completely and utterly *end* it.

After activating this Charm, a swirling, sizzling green-black aura lingers on the Immaculate's hands for a number of actions equal to his Essence. During that time, the Immaculate must successfully touch her target, either casually (if her victim is not expecting an attack) or as part of a hand-to-hand attack that inflicts normal damage. Once she does so, the Immaculate's player makes a reflexive (Essence + Martial Arts) roll against the opponent's (Stamina + Resistance). If the target loses, his soul becomes completely dissociated from his body, instantly killing him. Even if he wins, the attack still inflicts dice of aggravated damage equal to the Immaculate's Essence.

In addition to its effects on living creatures, spirits with a permanent Essence lower than or equal to that of the Immaculate are even more susceptible to Soul Mastery. Should the Immaculate strike such a spirit, her wrath rips its Essence asunder, permanently destroying it. Gods and elementals can sense the presence of Exalted who have mastered this Charm, and they fear them intensely.

Soul Mastery is harsh on the Immaculate. Beyond the considerable toll it demands, an Exalt must unleash the power on a target lest it destroy her own soul. Failure to discharge the effect on another target within the time allotted by the Charm forces the Immaculate to resist its effects herself.


IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE THIS JOB WORTHWHILE
DANGLING OUTSIDE STRANGERS' WINDOWS...
LISTENING TO THEIR INANE SMALL TALK...
SEEING THEM NAKED...
COME ON, I HAVEN'T GOT ALL NIGHT.
AH...THERE YOU GO.
AND NOW, OFF YOU GO FOR YOUR POST-CONNUBIAL CUP OF QAT TEA.
JUST LIKE CLOCKWORK.
NOW, LET'S SEE WHAT THAT NOTE YOU GOT FROM NELLENS BAEDEN SAYS.
I'LL SEE MYSELF IN, THANKS. DON'T GET UP.
SHIPPING MANIFESTS, TARIFF NOTICES... AH, HERE WE GO.
WELL WELL, SENATOR... IS THAT WHAT BAEDEN IS BRINGING YOU TOMORROW? FOR SHAME.


WHAT...?
....THE HELL?
WHAT...?


...THE HELL?
WHAT...?


WHAT THE HELL?!?
BAM!!!


UM...

CHAPTER SEVEN
STORYTELLING

So, you've picked up this **Manual of Exalted Power**, and now you want to run a game of Dragon-Blooded heroes and heroines? This chapter contains a few tips and tricks for Storytellers preparing to undertake such a task. Storytelling can be a daunting task, especially if you're new to it or—as is likely—new to this type of Exalt.

The first important step is to go ahead and read the Storytelling chapter of **Exalted**. It's a well-written introduction to running **Exalted** in a much more general fashion with many good ideas for type, genre, inspiration and simple logistics. Use that as a foundation, then come back here for assistance applying that foundation to the specialized flavor of the Dragon-Blooded. For those of you already familiar with the **Exalted** Storytelling chapter, read on.

Players, Too

Just like the core book's Storytelling chapter, there is nothing secret contained herein. Players are welcome to read through this chapter, hopefully to some benefit for the group and game.

Getting Started

Once your players have assembled and you're all excited to play a Dragon-Blooded game, sit down someplace comfortable and have a chat about what everyone wants to get out of the game. Do they want kung fu swashbuckling or parlor dealings for the Scarlet Throne? Should there be powerful allies behind them, or are all the characters on the run from the authorities and their families. Or are they all outcastes? You and your players can take any sort of game you want and make it a blast… so here are some suggestions to kick start your creativity.

Game Styles

The play styles sampled in the core book (on p. 262) are excellent suggestions for a Solar game, but they can require a little alteration for use in a Dragon-Blooded game. This section contains guidelines on how to use them with the Terrestrial Exalted and some expanded styles particularly applicable to the Dragon-Blooded.

Styles Remix

"'Vanilla' Exalted" is the only one that really doesn't work for Dragon-Blooded—unless they want to revamp the Realm, but there are other, easier ways for a Child of the Dragons to get that done, too. Is it easier to fight the 10,000 Dragons or to try to change their minds? Hmm…

"A Land Once Divided Must Unite" becomes almost the default for Dragon-Blooded, but with the explicit focus on the Realm itself. The Scarlet Empire is eating itself alive. Like a body in the cold, it draws its resources from its extremities to protect its important core—but sacrificing the satrapies might just be suicide for the Realm.

"And I'll Form the Head!" has a special power for Dragon-Blooded. Not only do the Terrestrial Exalted complement each other much more strongly (and necessarily) than do Solars, the Artifact Background for Dynasts is unequivocally better than that of Solars. When a group of Dragon-Blooded takes similar artifacts for this sort of game, the characters also get a bevy of interesting little (and sometimes big) toys they can add to the story. It can strongly emphasize the "artifact and upgrade" mindset of such a game.

"Outlander" remains largely the same. The Dragon-Blooded have the heroic instinct as much as any other Exalted, and a sworn brotherhood will eventually choose to delve into the mysteries of the Deep Wyld or explore the brass-and-acid depths of Malfeas. Masters of the other worlds don't afford Dragon-Blooded quite the same respect they do the Solar Exalted unless they march in numbers, so you can use this as an opportunity to emphasize that the Dragon-Blooded are weak individually but mighty together.

The Spy in the High Castle

As the highest beings in all Creation, the Dragon-Blooded rulers of the Realm have more power at their fingertips than nearly anyone else in Creation does. Some have such great influence that they can virtually command *other* Dragon-Blooded with that much power, making them the true movers and shakers of the Realm. But in order to use power correctly, one must have accurate information. Moreover, anyone who has accrued such political strength has surely learned that it is easier to demolish a tower by removing a buttress than by crushing it with a huge rock. In short, subtle leverage is not only more effective, it's also easier on the political pocketbooks.

"The Spy in the High Castle," therefore, is a game about the Machiavellian politics common to the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm. Minor misdirections shift armies and ruthless motions in the Deliberative discredit enemies and rob them of their power. Characters take on the roles of spies, assassins and in-the-dark politicians, working with their allies and/or for their Houses to achieve specific ends. They attend parties in the Imperial City so they can start rumors and watch their contemporaries, and they keep a close eye on the troop movements that are part of the language of today's Realm politics.

But whom do you trust? Cousins raised in the same Great House might be dependable enough to work with, but Dragon-Blooded family members have spent enough time trying to show each other up and leverage favor against each other that they'd rarely trust a family member *completely*. Instead, trust them as far as you can, and tell them only what you don't mind anyone else knowing. Dynasts are practiced at this level of mistrust and manipulation, but an outcaste character could easily be in over her head, forcing her to either find strength in her innocence or learn how to think in the convoluted way of the Dynastic Houses.

Over time, the characters earn power, respect and allies for themselves. They no longer have to rely on the support of their Great Houses, and they build up significant contacts who probably owe them favors (or have secrets they don't want to get out). After a good length of time in the operational side of things, the players' characters become the sort of people who were, just a short time ago, giving them the orders, hints and clues. Because no player wants



his character to sit back in a chair while other Dragon-Blooded do all the fun work, the characters can still get in on the action. They just let others do the little things, while they need only rouse themselves when it's *really* important, which ups the stakes when things do get physical.

Philosophical Differences

Sometimes, disagreements can't be settled with "You say tomato, I say…" Sometimes, maters of belief have to be hashed out, thrown back and forth and stomped into the ground before two people come to an agreement—or just agree never to speak again. This game lets characters *and players* throw philosophical arguments at one another until there's some solution. Here, one's philosophy is of paramount importance to the game, and it's only as powerful as one's kung fu. Hong Kong action sequences take place around and punctuated by explorations of the Immaculate Texts, inherent demonstrable truths of Creation and other ephemeral ideals.

This sounds hokey and hard to build an entire series around, but it can fit around any plot with a slight shift of focus. When an ancient Lunar attacks Whitewall, it becomes less about the defense of the city than about the Lunar's reasons for the act. The Lunar might be certain that the North should be the ultimate testing ground for humanity's resilience and that Whitewall is the keystone holding together a social structure that makes Northern survival too easy. That's a lot more interesting than a Lunar who assaults Whitewall because "he doesn't like civilization." The characters can then go ahead and defeat his attack, but if they also defeat his philosophy (by convincing him that Whitewall stands as proof of humanity's ability to survive the "testing ground" and even thrive) they prevent him from returning. They might even earn an ally.

What characters believe becomes as important as what they do. Immaculate monks can make perfect characters for this sort of game, as they loudly debate minutiae of the Texts and throw knife-hands and palm strikes at one another. But that may be a short game (unless the characters are attempting to restructure the face of the Immaculate Order). With a mixed group and a somewhat looser focus, the players' characters can go out into the world and preach of Dragon-Blooded superiority or stay at home and create a more egalitarian environment—with their strong philosophical kung fu.

Boarding School Drama

Dating, schoolwork, getting onto the sports team and showing up that hated rival are the most important things in the world to a character in this style game. All the characters are attending the same secondary school, where they strive to put their best face forward, learn valuable skills, make contacts for the future and not get caught stealing the dominie's seal from his desk. Fast friends, the characters skip classes and play tricks instead of battling Anathema.

Played for a lot of humor, this mimics certain popular manga series—*Boys Over Flowers*, *Cromartie High School*, *Tokyo Boys & Girls* and other shojo manga are good examples—and high-school television shows such as *Saved by the Bell* or *Boy Meets World*. Literary sources include Roald Dahl's *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, for its depiction of boarding schools, and the Bruno & Boots (or MacDonald Hall) books by Gordan Korman. The latter series is low on the drama but high on the shenanigans. Minor misunderstandings make friends upset with each other at least once every other episode, but everyone's friends again by the end. Things change slowly, but they do change. Mnemon Vissar *was* dating Ledaal Nesin, but their breakup was amicable (even if Vissar admitted to Peleps Heshid that she missed Nesin), and now, Nesin is sleeping with Cynis Reln and both Vissar *and* Heshid have been propositioned by one of their teachers…

Sure, it can be kind of shallow (if complicated, especially when the eyepatch-wearing twin brother joins the cast), but it can also be a lot of fun.

Variation: Stories upon stories upon stories star school-age heroes, youths who are supposed to be out of their league but somehow, despite the odds and the prevailing opinions on their worth, manage to prevail. By secondary school, most Dragon-Blooded have already become at least somewhat capable, but they're still not considered ready for the outside world. This'll show them.

Although it starts out light-hearted, this game gets things serious reasonably quickly. Maybe there's an Anathema subverting the school from within, or one of the kids has figured out exactly where the Empress is. And now the characters need to decide what's more important: their good standing in school (and the corresponding approval from their families) or doing what's got to be done. If they're good, they can balance the two of them, stopping the danger of the day while still getting decent marks—decent enough not to be sent home, anyway.

Placing this series in the Heptagram and mixing in the "Sorcery & Sorcery" style (mentioned in **Exalted**, p. 263) can be a great way of saying, "**Exalted**, meet Harry Potter."

All in the Family

One significant advantage Dragon-Blooded have over the Celestial Exalted is their ability to do a little dance, make a little love and pop out a new Dragon-Blood every few years. This style of game, unlike the others, can really *only* be played with Dragon-Blooded, because in such series, each player follows not a single Terrestrial Exalt, but an entire bloodline or family branch of them.

In this type of game, the players all create Dragon-Blooded characters and play through a story line with them, taking anywhere from one to five sessions (or more, depending on taste). Once a small story arc comes to a satisfactory end, the players all construct new characters—related to the first—who then explore something related to but separate from the previous tale. It is a different adventure that tells a new part of the old story.

You should specifically leave story arcs open-ended, keeping them from closing with any surety—or even closing at all. Meet minor goals instead of major ones, because a single major story can serve as the background and the binding tie between the players' multiple characters. Closing something off completely makes it hard to reference with other groups. Better to leave the possibility open until the very end of the game.

Because the game moves from one group of characters to another in reasonably short order, this style can borrow easily (indeed, it nearly must) from the other styles and themes. After one story about a war, filled with reasonably direct combat and tactics, the players can pick up characters dealing with fallout from the war on the Blessed Isle, deeply involving themselves with politics. Another obvious advantage is that, as long as all the players know what sort of play the next arc includes, they can prepare characters who are capable in that arena. It can be more fun than having a spread of characters, at least one of whom might be useless in any given situation.

It also offers a superb opportunity: the chance to monkey around with characters and parties of unequal experience. **Exalted**'s mechanics are quite intricate, and many tactical combinations are best discovered only through time and experimentation.

Here, it becomes easy. You can give the core group (if your players have or want a "core group" of characters) whatever starting experience level you like. One group could include only old, high-experience Dragon-Blooded with a lot of political sway, and another could consist of youths, light on Abilities and Charms but well-equipped to influence their parents or slip beneath the radar to do just what needs to be done.

It can be fun just to explore different facets of the Dragon-Blooded and their families, playing in dozens of different locales and styles. This type of game really shines for its ability to explore the "big picture," though, without having to drag your players' characters everywhere across the world or drag all your big plot points to the characters. The different groups of Dragon-Blooded can all explore different facets of the same cross-Creation mystery, or they can fight the same war on different fronts.

This style of game also provides an excellent opportunity for a little round-robin storytelling, where the members of the playing group take turns running the game so that everyone has a chance to play (or be Storyteller, if that's what's in demand). While a round robin can be done as a part of any game, this style is particularly suited to it because of the frequent character changes. It can then avoid the potential awkwardness of either having to excuse one character per session or having a Storyteller character with the group every session.

Although the many Dragon-Blooded don't *actually* need to be related by blood—they can easily just be various groups of characters with similar aims or compatible goals who've never even heard of each other—making them family lends that extra little tie. It also gives players the opportunity to complain about their other characters as siblings do, which can be good for a laugh.

This style isn't really complete without choosing one of the variations that follows.

Variation One: Across Creation

In this variation, all the Dragon-Blooded heroes are cousins, uncles, nieces and siblings. After the first story, each player creates one of the character's relatives, involved somehow in events connected to what occurred in the first story. After the first characters find an ancient tomb and recover a mysterious artifact, the Storyteller cuts to a distant satrapy where, suddenly, strange events require Dragon-Blooded assistance. After settling things (for a time) in that area, the scene might shift to a minor demonic incursion in the North. After four or five different groups spend time in the spotlight, the game can return to the original group of Dragon-Bloods, where the players connect the original artifact to the other strange events.

George R. R. Martin's series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, serves as an excellent example of this sort of narrative, as it follows dozens of characters struggling to shape and survive a devastating series of political uprisings and revolutions. Sound familiar?

Events that each group of characters encounters or causes ripple across Creation and affect another group, either through word or deed. It's a good idea to keep track of what noteworthy events happen to one group and note them down. A little cheap math provides the approximate travel times for couriers and rumors unless you decide that it was important enough for someone to utilize heliographs or magical communication. (Unless the information is alarming and important, give regular couriers horses and unremarkable ships. With rumors, note the fastest *possible* time that a person could get from one place to the other, and distort the information appropriately.)

These calculations can help you figure out when to begin the next group of characters' arc. Starting just before the couriers arrive gives the players a chance to determine how their characters react to the news, and starting a short period after lets you set the stage a bit more completely. Beginning concurrent with the original event forces the players to deal with information and assumptions that *they* know to be somehow faulty or incomplete, but their characters do not. It can be fun, but it can also be frustrating, so be wary.

You probably want to make sure that the multiple-character groups are a fair distance away from each other. Otherwise, you run the risk of placing two characters belonging to the same player running into one another. The biggest problem is that the player might want to play both characters, or he might just object to the way *you* run whichever character is currently not under his control.

That said, bringing all the groups together for a final big-boss fight could be a lot of fun. Though with that many Dragon-Bloods in one place, it had better be *big*. See also the last "level" of some *Final Fantasy* games, particularly *Final Fantasy III* (*VI* in Japan) for an example of multi-group final fights.

Variation Two: Generational Games

This game features not cousins across Creation, but ancestors and descendants across time. Each group of characters is involved in some sort of adventure in its contemporary age—as Dragon-Blooded are wont to be—and the players get to develop those adventures into full-fledged mysteries as they play. Or they simply turn their small family into a massive and important branch of the Scarlet Dynasty.

There is another choice to be made before beginning a generational game: Should the players have character groups as they would in an "Across Creation" game, moving back and forth between groups in order to explore some vast mystery or legendary tale? Or should they play a more straightforward hereditary game, wherein the next group of characters always comprises the children or grandchildren of the last?

Part of the fun in the former option isn't new: The players learn consistently more about that mystery as they play with each set of characters, whom they leave and to whom they eventually return. The simplest setup is to have three groups: one in the agreed-upon "present" and one in each of that present's past and future. Characters in the future live in a world of foreshadowing. Sure, they've lived for a while and read the histories that mention earlier character's exploits, but that knowledge doesn't have to be explicit in play. Instead, they can serve to whet the players' interests. Why are their children's children living in an arid wasteland at the foot of the Imperial Mountain (and why is there an enormous chunk missing out of the mountainside)?

Similarly, characters in the past provide exposition and history. The heroes of "today" are defeated in one episode by the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible; a subsequent episode might feature their descendants exploring the Underworld and encountering the Bishop in a different incarnation or mood. What the characters of the past learn should be available to the characters of today through written histories or personal diaries. Between the foreshadowing cast by the future and the knowledge of the past, today's heroes manage to overcome their foes.

Beware the future, though. Giving away too much—or even using a cast of future characters at all—can be dangerous to the story. It isn't a *Back to the Future*-type "keep your parents together" game. If everything ends up as a post-post-apocalypse world, the players have to be willing to play in a game that they *know* will end with that disaster. What's worse, knowledge that the world becomes a paradise might make them certain they cannot do wrong.

And you, as the Storyteller, must not fall into the trap of forcing the players to follow only a single path to victory. If the heroes

must hurl the N/A-rated artifact into the Ebon Dragon's mouth in order to send it back to Malfeas and bestow upon the world 1,000 years of light, but they can't figure that out, their inability to follow the path contradicts the "known" future. Leave a few extra doors and windows open so you don't fall into this trap.

One potential solution to these issues is to keep the episodes in the future vague. Creation could be a fecund paradise, but what is not said could be that the Solar Anathema use Dragon-Blooded as "the most dangerous game." If the world appears to be a wasteland, the players might not be aware that it's safe for the Dragon-Blooded… and that the alternative was worse.

Keep this flexibility in mind when creating futures and dealing with players who think they're doomed or believe they can't fail. Even when you know how it plays out, the future can *still* ride on the past.

The idea that decisions made by characters in the "past" can affect their descendants is an intriguing Storytelling challenge. Declarations such as, "I hereby found my own Great House!" and "Son? I have no son!" can *appear* to contradict the way the world clearly works in the game-world's "future." Creative inclusion of impossible statements can be a blast. If Character B just disowned Character A, what did Character A do to get back into it Character B's good graces—since everyone in the game knows that Character A has been a favored son since the series began? Retconning a statement to make it fit should be a last resort; some of the most involving complications come from these little missteps.

Another sort of hopping-across-time game focuses on the story of what's going on *now*, never mind the foreshadowing of how it turns out. Such a games escapes the parity necessary in a past and future game, opening up the possibility of having more character groups, stretching back from whatever "now" you choose to as far back as you want to explore. Like before, the characters in any non-primary time periods are used for exposition, answers, discovering weaknesses and sometimes just for a break from the core group and the threats hounding them today.

A hereditary game also has great potential. Players take on the roles of Dragon-Blooded, either all in the same family or members of different Houses but friends and companions. After they have their adventures, they are *assumed* to have children who eventually Exalt, and the players pick up the game with those characters later on. The game invariably takes scores of years between story arcs as the children of the last group mature into new young heroes. Earlier characters, now some 20 or so years older than before, become Storyteller characters, usually fond of their progeny but still outside a player's direct control.

Beginning such a game in the present (the assumed "now" in the **Exalted** core book) gives the players and Storyteller the opportunity to follow a certain family of the Realm as they fight the good fight for their nation—or spawn a legacy of terror and corruption in the wake of the Solars' return. The players can try, over several generations, to turn their small branch of the family tree into a new empire, to sacrifice the Blessed Isle and found a new Dynasty in the Threshold or simply to hide for ages from the murderous agents of the throne (can you say Iselsi?).

Of course, the game might not begin at the assumed present. You and your players could easily decide to start the game at the time of the Shogunate, playing out the process of leveraging one's military strength into a position of nobility in the fledgling Scarlet Empire. It's easy and fun to create an alternative timeline from that point, building a nation of Dragon-Blooded that rivals any the Scarlet Empress ever ruled or perhaps supplanting her before the Time of Tumult begins.



Either type is excellent for a gaming group that likes the urgency and danger of the standard setting for **Exalted** but still wants to explore the Shogunate, the Usurpation or even the height of the First Age.

Chrono Trigger, where a group of heroes travel throughout time and change the course of history, and *Eternal Darkness*, which carries the player through non-sequential time periods in order to explain the history of a powerful evil artifact both stand out as video game sources for this style. *The Cryptonomicon*, a novel by Neal Stephenson, is also good source material, conveying as it does a narrative through three characters and three different time periods.

Experience: One last point worth mentioning. When the players have control of multiple characters at varying levels of power, what do you do with experience? Here are a few ideas.

Standard experience method: Give experience to characters, not players, after each episode, and let the players spend it on those characters only during appropriate periods of downtime. Once the story arc is over and you're moving on to a new set of characters, give the old characters a story award and assume that they'll have a chance to spend it before the game returns to them. If there's been a notable period of time (in-game) between when you left a character group and when you return, award long-term experience depending on their status and the length of time. See **Exalted**, p. 275, for details on long-term experience awards.

Player experience method: The players get experience, not the characters. So a player may keep the stunt award earned for a contribution through Character A and later applies it to Character C. Training times still apply, but you might not want to include long-term experience awards. Since they only logically apply to a single character ("Sesus Nagezzer did nothing for a year, so young Tepet Ejava improved her Thrown?"), don't use them unless you want to keep track of player experience and character experience separately.

The weakness of this method is that players might focus on one character to the neglect of others, eventually resulting in unbalanced circles. In one group, the player's character has fallen behind all the rest; in another, he far outstrips them. If, however, you and your players like the feel of having one "main character" for each group, then allowing each player to focus all her experience on a single character could work.

No experience method: Don't hand out experience according to the **Exalted** Storytelling chapter. Either don't improve characters at all—which can work, but tends to reduce the players' excitement a little bit—or improve them by fiat, handing out a new Charm after a particularly involved session or letting players increase an Ability normally.

Alternatively, you can hand out experience in a lump sum each time the players return to a character. Before they pick up the characters for a second time (or a third or so on), hand them 20-50 experience points and say, "This is what your character learned since last time. Go ahead." Getting such large amounts of experience at once can be a rush and cloud players' judgments. If you want to keep them from going just a little bit crazy and flying all the way up a single Charm tree, use the long-term experience spending ration or return to the fiat method. Each character gets a couple of new Charms, a few new Abilities and an increased Attribute or a Combo, that sort of thing.

Drama point method: This method usually goes hand-in-hand with the previous one, and it substitutes for improving the characters by giving their players more sway over the game. Instead of handing out any experience at all, give each player one drama point (or two, for more powerful plot control). Feel free to hand out extras as bonuses for awesome stunts, good ideas and other player actions that aid the game. Players *expend* drama points to do the following:

• Create a minor plot twist. Minor plot twists include anything just over the level that the Storyteller would allow anyway. If your players have to keep track of arrows fired, then a reasonable minor plot twist includes finding a spare bundle or quiver. Falling off the cliff after failing two (Dexterity + Athletics) checks, the player spends a drama point for there to be a withered old tree branch that gives the character one last chance. Roughly, one drama point can give the player an opportunity to roll when he otherwise could not—be it by finding more ammunition or a last tree branch.

• Create a major plot twist. For *two* drama points, a player can alter the story in a meaningful way. Her character encounters an old friend who happens to have a merchant pass into Gem, giving the group a way to sneak past the ubiquitous guards. As the thief who just snatched their mysterious idol is about to escape their wrath, the door opens in his face, forcing him to drop the artifact and dive through a window. Major plot twists change the course of the story without breaking the game. That is, the thief doesn't stop, turn around and confess everything before swearing loyalty to the heroes—but he also doesn't get away with the idol.

• Make a single non-opposed roll an automatic success. When the player thinks it's absolutely necessary that his character filch the god-idol's ruby eye in silence, or when climbing to the top of the beanstalk would be much more exciting for Jack and the story line than falling partway through.

• Add three successes to any opposed roll, including combat and social conflicts. This is for when the hero really needs to strike the godling down or destroy the Malfean artifact in one blow. Players can spend a drama point for this purpose *after* making a roll, but only if the three successes will make the difference they want. When the player wants to kill his character's nemesis (who is at full health), three successes on an attack roll probably won't do it. But when all he wants is one good, dramatic wound before he's defeated and three successes will make the difference on the attack, go for it.

• Turn a die of damage into a level of damage, or make a social attack effectively unnatural. This takes place in Step 8 of attack resolution. It makes sure that the target either takes a point of damage from the blow or must spend a point of Willpower if she wants to resist successful mental influence—even if she's already spent two points of Willpower to resist natural mental influence in the current scene.

You might wish to restrict players from using drama points more than once for a single purpose. For example, the player who uses two drama points to "find" his friend outside the city gates could not then use drama points to hide perfectly from the customs officials. This restriction exists to prevent players from removing all the risk from their game. On the other hand, using a drama point to "create" a branch as you fall and then another to successfully catch it on the way down might not be so bad. Who wants to spend a drama point on a second (or third) chance and then have her character fall to her doom anyway? You and your players must figure out where to draw the line while using drama points.

Game Themes

The theme of a game differs from the game's style, though the two often overlap. Style is how the game is played and the outlook players bring to the table. Someone who wants to play

with monsters-of-the-week and an "I'll form the head" mentality probably isn't sitting at the same table as the fellow who expects mysterious occurrences around Nexus that lead to a cause that'll never be fully clear.

Theme, on the other hand, is the recurring message that the shared story reveals, whether it's subtle or grossly obvious. Themes include "Rebuilding the Threshold," "Death is inevitable—are the Deathlords?" and "Protect the mortals you care for." Games don't *need* consistent themes—a game can run from "Your family isn't safe" to "Gods are capricious" from week to week quite easily—but settling on or frequently returning to one can lend a series an impressive amount of focus.

Don't mistake theme for a moral. While a theme can be moralistic, pointing out that even the powerful have weaknesses or that love is the greatest strength of all, it can be a mistake to make the theme too much of a lesson. "Mystery without solution" or "Traversing and defeating the Byzantine Realm bureaucracy" are two examples of effective themes that clearly don't hold morals—at least not at their core.

What follows is a series of themes meant to grab your interest or spark your imagination. You will also undoubtedly touch upon many themes not mentioned here in the course of your experience with **Exalted** and the Dragon-Blooded.

For the Realm!

It's a secluded and deluded Dynast who hasn't yet realized that something's rotten in the state of Denmark. Almost every Dragon-Blood in the Realm (and elsewhere, but most don't think much about that) has some stake in seeing the corrupt empire *not* crumble into ruin. In this sort of game, the characters all work together to prevent the Realm from dissolving. The theme is preservation and reconstruction in the name of the Realm.

Decide before beginning whether or not all the characters should have the same interests at heart. Because some players prefer uncomplicated intra-party relationships and others revel in games where you have to wheel and deal with the people at your own table, it's a good idea to discuss this decision openly.

For games where the characters aren't all perfectly aligned, it can be interesting to mix outcastes—who have a (potentially) more objective view of the Realm—with Dynasts. Not that Dynasts have anything resembling uniform plans for the Scarlet Empire, of course. It might also be interesting to see how a group of like-minded outcastes (from the same Threshold community, perhaps) or Immaculates shape the future Realm. Does it become more egalitarian, or perhaps a religious police state?

This sort of game leans toward the "Spy in the High Castle" style, but it has some flexibility. Outcastes might actually *conquer* the Realm from the inside out, or a group of Dynasts could go searching for the one ancient artifact it needs to impose its will on the rest of the Blessed Isle.

Variation: An easy variation to make on this theme is to make it "for the House," or "for House and Realm," instead of for the Realm itself. The theme becomes advancement of the House at the expense of others—but hopefully without dooming the Realm. Characters walk a fine line as they try to gain any benefit for their family.

Unless the players are all eager to be very competitive and have a lot of intra-party conflict in a game like this, it's probably a good idea for all the characters to be clearly allied in some way. The simplest solution is to make them all members of the same House, but they can also be members of two or three allied Houses. The game becomes about how the character's can achieve their goals—often politically, but perhaps by acquiring strange allies (the Anathema and the Fair Folk certainly qualify as strange) or simply changing the face of the Realm's inner conflict—while fending off temptations and other Houses' schemes.

This variation, less altruistic as it is, makes it harder to integrate outcastes and Immaculates into the game. As they belong to no House, outcastes can be adopted into a Dynastic family and given due cause to strive for it. Or an outcaste might just be an influential outsider, an ally of one of the Dynastic characters or simply willing to assist them in exchange for future favors. Whether the outcaste is as loyal as the rest is up to the players and the Storyteller, and it can make for a good story line.

Immaculates aren't quite as difficult to work in, as many of them once belonged to Great Houses and might still maintain those ties of blood. Some Immaculates see no problem with allying themselves with a certain House. House Mnemon, for example, is well known for its piety, and might be an obvious choice.

Anathema-Hunter Robin

Anathema plague the Realm, its satrapies and the Threshold in record numbers—numbers that should shock even the most staid and religiously skeptical Dragon-Blood. The renewed efforts of the demons clearly indicate an imminent cataclysm or the turning of the Age, and it is up to Creation's heroes to make certain that it doesn't turn in the Anathema's favor. Dragon-Bloods travel Creation, seeking out and preventing the foul depredations of the Solar, Lunar and Abyssal Anathema. The theme of this game is hunting evil and laying it to rest.

In its most direct form, this game is about finding and killing the Solar Exalted. It tends to be a more direct game—characters ride into town, ask about any strange events and use these to track down, catch and defeat the Anathema. It can easily be a mission-style series, where an inscrutable and distant commander relays directions based on astrological findings or secure intelligence.

Whether or not they capture or kill the demons could be an interesting source of interpersonal politics, depending on how fervently some follow the Immaculate Philosophy and if others believe that the tamed power of an Anathema could benefit their Houses. Most Immaculates would rather kill the demons outright, while scheming Dynasts might seek some form of advantage—even if it's only a promise of political support in exchange for a vote to kill the demon. In places where the Anathema have assumed direct or indirect control of a society or government, the game takes on a significantly more political quality, which can be an excellent one- or two-session diversion for a more physical game.

The game can easily add "questioning accepted truths" to its theme. This brings up the question of whether the Anathema are truly demons, thieves of power from the sun and moon. Storytellers should first check to make sure the players aren't expecting a flat-out, rough-and-tumble brawl without moral quandaries, but it's a simple question to ask. Then she can introduce Anathema whom the mortals truly seem to appreciate or honor without any apparent magical influence, and others who seem to mean well. Let the conflicting emotions roll.

Variation: To make a game with this theme really like its title, one of the players can create a Solar, rather than a Dragon-Blooded character. Such a character can have various backgrounds—a Dynastic disappointment who joined the Wyld Hunt out of an urge to prove himself or just a young and talented officer who has rocketed through the ranks and become a close lieutenant to the "main character" Dragon-Blooded. The Solar helps as she can, perhaps wanting to



believe in her missions while knowing that either it can't all be true, or she must somehow be evil. The theme advances along the line of questioning accepted truths, but brings it much closer to home.

In such a game, all the players are ideally aware of the added complication. Keeping the Dragon-Blooded players in the dark is unlikely to turn out well, as they question why one player is a mortal, how he's surviving and why he's passing all those notes to the Storyteller. Much better (and infinitely easier on the Storyteller) is for everyone to be interested in developing such a story. It might take a little twisting for the Dragon-Blooded *characters* to remain plausibly unaware of their companion's identity, but a Solar built with a few Social Charms should function well in the role.

Keep in mind that a game like this—with one character who is fundamentally different from the others—runs the risk of making one player the star and all the others supporting cast. Unless all the players are okay with that, the Storyteller should take steps to balance out the focus of the game. All the characters should have important moments, even if the game does consistently return to the central theme.

Games that mix Dragon-Blooded and Solar characters, especially those with only a single Solar and several Dragon-Blooded, are particularly susceptible to the "main character syndrome." See the "Mixed Games" section on p. **233-234** for specific suggestions on how to deal with that.

Total Conversion Bomb

If only the entire world were devoted to the Immaculate Philosophy. If people were devout in believing the Five Noble Insights and exact in performing the Five Diligent Practices, there would be no handhold for Anathema to grasp at human hearts. Creation, now a chaotic, dangerous mess, would be safe and progress toward perfect enlightenment. Perhaps.

Whatever the truth, there are Immaculate monks out there who believe that the Philosophy and the Texts are the answer to all of the Realm's problems, starting with the resurgence of the Solar Anathema and ending with the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress. (Some say she defied the natural patterns of life and death by ruling for as long as she did, others suggest she might not have attended recitals of the Texts frequently enough, but most keep quiet. Even gone, her legacy is intimidating.) No matter what the ailment, the Order has the cure, and it's up to the characters in this game to bring the enlightened word to the people.

Conversion of the heathens and elimination of heresy is the theme of this game, and the players and Storyteller can come at it from many angles. The flexibility of this theme is both a blessing and a curse: The group can play a game about conversion and the fight against heresy (and, presumably, for truth) in so many ways that it can be difficult to settle on one. Jumping back and forth can be satisfying but can dilute the game's feel, so you might want to decide on a specific style that best fits your game.

A game devoted to direct confrontation, where the characters defeat the heathens on the battlefield and in personal combat in order to bring the Immaculate Philosophy to the masses, is simple. Unless the Storyteller or the players invite complication, it can be a fun fighting game. On the other hand, a game in which the characters "correct" the laymen of the Realm and satrapies, making sure they correctly follow the Immaculate Texts can be grimly entertaining. Burning down an inn because it displayed an iconic sign is the perfect example here.

It can be a blast to lampoon the deadly seriousness with which some people approach religion by creating overly pious, no-humor Immaculates for the culling of a heretical nation. Conversely, there are interesting and valid points of view that a group can explore using the core tenets of the faith and a "Philosophical Differences" play style. Research into some of the real-world religions that inspired the Immaculate Philosophy—Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism and other Eastern religions—can add depth to the game.

Discussing and defending different interpretations of the Immaculate Texts can also take place in the dojo, if the debaters choose to decide their arguments with their superior martial skill.

Having all Immaculate characters is the obvious solution for a game with this theme, but it's hardly necessary. Nearly every Dragon-Blood in the world is going to have an opinion on the Immaculate Philosophy, so a Dynast might travel with the group in order to prove his (potentially false) piety, while another (or a respected outcaste) might hang around to temper the Immaculates' overbearing devotion.

The Mad Tea Party

Foes of all that is have been trying to enter or end Creation for thousands of years, and they all certainly understand that one of the greatest potential threats to their success is the Realm. (Ten thousand trained, dedicated mage-warriors is something that should give anybody pause.) Unfortunately, the Empress has disappeared, and who really knows where she's gone? The Yozi-spawn, mind-eating fey, mysterious Deathlords and other chthonic threats might not care—they're just happy that the Realm's 10,000 Dragons are no longer united under one domineering woman's thumb. With the Empress gone, the myriad threats to Creation are probably working up their courage and strength to wipe the slate clean.

Not that they need to. Creation has its own perils. Between the Lunar threat on the world's horizon, the devilish Solar Anathema rallying the Threshold against the Realm and the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm itself, there's quite enough danger out there to slay the 10,000 Dragons twice over and shatter the Realm once and for all. None of them would dare rise against the Realm were it whole and strong, but the only person who can unite the Realm is the Empress…

So, your players' characters decide they have to find her.

This game is a variation on "For the Realm!", but it's specific enough that it deserves its own mention. The core theme is that of the most important mystery, frantic search and eventual rescue—or disappointment. Where in Creation is the Scarlet Empress… or is she even in Creation?

You can experience a wide range of styles. Unless the Storyteller decides to give the players a specific direction ("A magical cry for help drifted out of the Eastern Wyld" or "The Empress must be inside the Imperial Manse"), the game can easily begin with a "Spy in the High Castle" feel, as the Empress's would-be rescuers must navigate the twisty corridors of Realm politics to find out who isn't sharing all they know about the Empress' location. Equally opportune is a "Walk the Earth" style beginning, in which the Dragon-Blooded heroes explore the Threshold with little direction, under the assumption (which, in this game, should probably be correct) that important events are going to be related to the Empress's disappearance.

After some time in which the characters dredge up the buried truth or pick up clues from across Creation, the game can become a game of action. The characters have learned where the Empress lies, or at least where an important clue waits, and they have to fight their way through the Guild's mercenaries or across the Underworld's bleak, ghost-filled landscape in order to find her. "Outlander" can become the name of the game if the heroes have to spend an extended period exploring other worlds and dealing with their inhabitants. On the other hand, what the characters learn might send them back home to the Realm—she's been there the whole time, captive of a powerful consortium of Dynasts, or perhaps the seemingly tame Mountain Folk stole her as part of some terrible, long-quiescent plan.

This sort of game ends when the heroes find the Empress and free her, returning her to the Realm and successfully reuniting the Realm under her banner.

Any Dragon-Blooded are appropriate for this game, but Dynasts are the clearest choice. Immaculate monks might choose to join the hunt for a multitude of reasons, not least because the Empress was always good to the Order. Outcastes are harder to involve. Some might see the benefit of re-stabilizing the Realm, while others might wish to find the Empress in order to ask for a specific boon.

You Don't Own Me!

With the degree of control that elder Dragon-Blooded try to (and wish they could) apply to the fruits of their loins, it's almost a surprise that more Dynastic Children of the Dragons don't just leave home, never to return. But then, it *would* be hard to denounce and leave behind a place where everyone *really* believes you and your extended family are better than everyone else in the world.

This game is about those Dragon-Blooded who try it. For whatever reason, the characters choose to leave behind the rich (if demanding) life of a Dynast and flee beyond the immediate reach of their families. They run until they can no longer hear the disapproving utterances and stern commands of their "elders and betters," and they revel in the silence. The core theme for this game is a mix between "defying authority" and "escaping the overbearing family."

Much of this game (which typically takes place in the Threshold) is basic adventuring in the Threshold. The heroes wander the world, helping out when they want to and righting wrongs every once in a while. What separates this from a basic "Walk the Earth" style game are the occasional interruptions from the Great Houses. The Storyteller makes a point of aggravating the characters (not the players) by gently tugging at their family ties. By reminding them what they're giving up but also why they left, the game explores the heroes' true feelings with respect to their families and duty.

A message might arrive from one character's father, importuning him to help out in a nearby effort that would bring the House and anyone involved great honor. The hero might choose to do so, but he knows that if he does, his father will consider it a sign that the child can be controlled. Another character might encounter some beleaguered troops from her Great House, and she must choose whether to help them (and inadvertently help her House) or leave some soldiers who never tried to command or control her to their fate. Perhaps the group chooses to take up the *opposite* side of a conflict just to anger the relatives still on the Blessed Isle. They might even have to deal with assassins in the night when an ancestor grows too fed up with one's antics.

Though it's easiest to make this is a "Walk the Earth" sort of game, with the heroes far separated from the sources of their distress far across the Great Inland Sea, it's not the only option. "A Land Once Divided" offers the chance to have Dragon-Blooded heroes reshaping the Realm into *their* ideal form, rather than their families', and "Spy in the High Castle" features characters deeply



involved with the ebb and flow of espionage in the Realm while being (effectively) rogue agents from their Great Houses. The idea has possibilities.

"Outlander," on the other hand, is a bit harder to match with this theme. It isn't easy to communicate with your wayward children when they're fearlessly exploring Malfeas or the Underworld city of Stygia, which makes it a bit difficult to emphasize the rebellious aspect of this story. Trying to run this as an "All in the Family" game might sound strange, but it presents some interesting opportunities for the players to portray both sides of the story. Why do the House elders care so much about what the youths are up to, and how do they really feel about the young Dragon-Bloods' attitudes?

Clearly, this theme requires that *at least* one of the characters be born to the Dynasty and have strong (if unwilling) ties to influential members of a Great House. Focusing on this theme with only one such character might not be a good idea, as doing so runs the risk of giving that character "main" status, which rarely works for the entire group. With two or three out of four or five defying their parents, though, the other two can play the amused outcastes. Or those characters without Realm affiliations can argue the parents' position for them. They might see nothing wrong with doing the odd favor for a family member in exchange for a stipend and the backing of Creation's largest empire.

Group Composition

Once you and your players figure out what sort of game you're interested in playing, it's time to construct the group of protagonists. All the normal questions for a Solar game are worth asking here. Where do the characters come from, how did they meet, why do they still hang out together? These and other usual suspects (about family, goals, et cetera) should be worked out early on, probably before or during character creation. The following few additional points deserve special attention.

Elemental Spread

Just like watching Solar castes in a Solar game, the Storyteller and players will want to keep an eye on which elemental aspects the players choose. In a Dragon-Blooded game, it can be more important to get a good spread, as a Dragon-Blooded character is more strongly defined by her aspect than a Solar is by his caste. Aspect determines a character's strongest Abilities, and the Terrestrials' natural Abilities separate by elemental nature rather than purpose. Each has a combat Ability, but beyond that, Earth is enduring and hard to break, Air is silent and invisible, and so on. Moreover, a Dragon-Blood gets only *three* Favored Abilities to break out of her elemental archetype, less than the Solars' five. Even with the flexibility afforded by choosing Favored Abilities, a Dragon-Blood's aspect still determines which Charms she can use without spending an additional mote in elemental surcharge—a mote that most Dragon-Blooded, with their smaller Essence pools, can ill afford.

The elemental surcharge is the single reason that it's hardest for a Dragon-Blood to escape her aspect archetypes. In some areas, it's not such a pain. Any Dragon-Blood who wants to put some effort into Craft, for example, or Socialize, might be able to spend the extra mote without much trouble. Such actions take place on scales large and slowly enough that the increased price isn't an enormous deterrent. But when a Water Aspect tries to specialize in Melee, or any Dragon-Blood focuses on a combat Ability foreign to his element, things get more difficult. Spending an additional mote each time he uses a combat Charm adds up quickly.

For this reason, it can be a good idea for everyone to agree to play differently aspected characters. Doubling up on an element can create uncomfortable overlap where one luckier or somewhat more skilled character repeatedly shows up another in the same areas. What's more, characters who try to escape their elemental proclivities (a Fire Aspect practicing Archery Charms, for example) will be less effective than their comrades who stick to their guns. There's nothing wrong with playing a character who tries to expand her horizons or defy her birth, as long as the player understands and accepts that her character will not reach the same heights as a Dragon-Blood who stays focused.

And Who Might You Be?

Although each character's history is up to his player, it's a good idea to discuss personal histories during character creation in order to make sure they all mesh—at least well enough for players and the Storyteller. If you want the group to have some inherent social and ideological clashes, that's fine (if everyone agrees). While there are infinite possibilities for characters that fit well together or mix like oil and water, there are a few categories into which they can fit easily.

Dynastic Dragon-Blooded

The single best-known Dragon-Blood in Creation is the Scarlet Empress, and her vast armies of progeny share some of that renown. The 761 Realm census placed the number of Dynastic Dragon-Blooded in the Realm (included lost eggs adopted to Great Houses) near 10,000. This might be as many as half the entire world's population of Terrestrial Exalted, and the world knows that it's there.

Dynasts vary widely in personality and habit, but they usually share some general traits. For instance:

• They are loyal to some version of the Realm, if not necessarily the Realm in which the Dragon-Blood grew up. It might be an ideal government that earns the Dynast's devotion.

• They are usually loyal to their Great House. Most Dynastic Dragon-Blooded give some measure of obeisance to the House that spawned them. To be less respectful invites punishment from the House elders, usually in the form of diminished stipends and increasingly undesirable requests.

• They are *entirely* accustomed to being treated as demigods. When people show deference at the slightest twitch and are simultaneously frightened by and in awe of you when you walk close, it's hard not to let that affect you. Some Dragon-Blooded fight for the rights and empowerment of mortals, but even they still expect respect for their Exaltations.

• Dynastic Dragon-Blooded may be pious or irreligious (though they tend toward one or the other), hedonistic or ascetic (though they tend toward mild to awesome hedonism). They conflict with outcastes (and even lost eggs) who are not nearly as comfortable being served and waited upon. To a Dynast, Immaculate monks are often too devoted to religious, rather than political, ideals.

Outcastes

Although the Dynastic Dragon-Blooded are famous from Wood to Water, they are distant entities to those who don't live on the Blessed Isle and aren't in the rare and privileged positions that offer frequent contact with those Dynasts in the satrapies. More familiar to the rank-and-file inhabitants of the Threshold are the outcastes, those Dragon-Blooded who are born and raised outside the Blessed Isle and the Scarlet Empire's influence.

Outcastes have entirely different outlooks than those of the Dragon-Blooded lords of the Realm. Raised without the expectation of great things and glory, they are much more down to earth than most of their Dynastic kin. They have stronger connections with the people they rise above, and they have much greater senses of the human consequences of their actions (as opposed to the political, social or economic consequences, which might be the focus of a Dynast's decision).

This is not to say that they can't get big heads. There are enough mini-societies in the Threshold that herald Dragon-Blooded and treat them as demigods, sometimes even to a point that would make a scion of House Cynis feel jealous or awkward. It's just less common and less ingrained in the society.

Outcastes are less devoted to the Realm and more often have some connection to a smaller, more personally important society, such as the village that reared them or the "backward" nation of their birth. With greater ties to the people and (usually) less experience as a god among men, outcastes are often more humble. Dynasts find this humility appropriate, since outcastes usually don't know how to function too well in "polite" Realm society.

Because the Immaculate Philosophy is so widespread, an outcaste might or might not subscribe to it. Many do, first because of their upbringing and later because of the advantages it affords them. But as Exalted untied to the Realm, there's also the opportunity for Dragon-Blooded in the far Threshold to construct their own religions whole or to have been raised in a cult that follows some other belief system.

Typically, outcastes find Dynasts overbearing and pompous and Immaculate monks inconsiderate of the people, but there can always be exceptions. It's as easy for an outcaste to get along with Dynasts or Immaculates as it is for an outcaste to be actually more arrogant or inhuman.

Immaculate Monks

Some Dragon-Blooded are so pious and reverent of the Immaculate Texts and the Elemental Dragons that they accept no alternative but to devote their lives to the Immaculate Order. They become monks and spend their lives practicing their devotions and fostering belief in the Philosophy across Creation. The Empress was said to shed a tear for every Dragon-Blood who made that choice, mourning the end of their family lines as they took the oaths of celibacy. But it is also an incredible honor to the family to display such dedication, and the Realm and the Order need the strength of Exalted monks to champion their creed.

Immaculate Dragon-Blooded tend to uphold the reciprocation inherent in the Philosophy more than their Dynastic counterparts do. The Dragon-Blooded are the shepherds to the mortal sheep, and it is their duty to feed and protect the flock as well as shear it and, occasionally, eat of it. At the same time, though, Immaculate Dragon-Blooded are often more sure of themselves than even their Dynastic brethren are. Having spent years in careful study of the Immaculate Texts, a monk of the Order might believe that she knows *exactly* where she stands with respect to everyone else, as well as what she should do for them and what they should do for her. For that reason, monks often look with disapproval upon other Dragon-Blooded. A Dragon-Blood might be enlightened and unable to guide a mortal wrongly, but many could be guiding mortals *more* correctly. And the Dragon-Blooded who do not subscribe to the Philosophy are troubling indeed.

An Immaculate might not get along with a Dynast for any number of reasons: He's too irreverent, his House isn't pious enough, or he just treated that mortal like chattel (or with too *much* respect for its station). Outcastes are like heathens to any aggressive religion, if important heathens. Convert them or ignore them or, if they're actively turning people from enlightenment, stop them.

These really are just the extreme points of view. Not all Immaculate monks, even the truly devoted ones, are hard-asses. But it's a fun stereotype.

And Why Are We Here?

What makes the characters work with each other? As noted in **Exalted**, bringing characters together can often feel a little bit forced. For that reason, here are a few suggestions appropriate for Dragon-Blooded characters of various stripes.

Come Here, My Son...

Much to their dismay, young Dragon-Bloods don't have a great deal of influence over their destinies. Usually, they receive rather insistent direction from their parents and the elders of their Houses. Sure, a Dragon-Blood can run off and explore the world, ignoring any plans her family had for her, but she'll eventually suffer from the fact that the House gives her a miserly stipend and doesn't back her up when she needs it.

For that reason, more Dragon-Blooded are open to "suggestions" from the powerful members of their Houses. When Ragara Banoba recommends that one family member travel to Juche as a minor House representative or thinks it would be appropriate that another joined the ebbing Wyld Hunt to earn a bit of thanks from the Immaculate Order, her family members would be fools not to comply.

Given this background, it's entirely plausible that the Dragon-Blooded of one or several Houses might be directed by their elders to work together toward some end. What the heads of House really think about any given venture can determine not only how much support the players' characters receive, but also how the more influential House members really value them. Being sent as ambassadors to deal with the leader of another House or a powerful rival is prestigious; going to the North to serve as temporary garrison commander for Cherak is decidedly not. (It is, however, an excellent chance to prove that your character is worth more than the House elder thought—or to get out from under that pushy uncle's thumb so you can do your own thing.)

School Chums

Nearly all Dynastic Dragon-Blooded attend one of four secondary schools, and it is there that they first make the contacts and allies that they will call on later in life. Life in secondary school can be a raucous period for young Dragon-Blooded, and it is then that many of them forge friendships that will last until they die.

Elder Dragon-Blooded encourage their sons and daughters to take some time to explore Creation before they settle down into the Thousand Scales or otherwise begin their professional life. Most young Terrestrials who do so bring with them their best friends among their fellow graduates and close relatives from other schools.

New groups of players' characters can easily be graduates of the same academy, not quite ready to enter the world of a "grown" Dragon-Blood and instead ready to explore the world. Or they can all be eager go-getters, forsaking a few years of lusty adventure in order to get a jumpstart on the dragon-eat-dragon world of Dynastic politics.

Sworn Brotherhood

Through their magic and at the Empress's urging, the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm have formed a tradition: that of the sworn brotherhood. Despite the name, it is a sexually egalitarian group of companions, friends and heroes who are swear to work toward similar ends and aid each other in their times of need. Sworn brotherhoods come together to see a certain goal accomplished or just because they are all good friends, and they seal their devotion with a Terrestrial Circle spell.

Most sworn brotherhoods begin as secondary school chums, but there are a multitude of other reasons for a group of Dragon-Blooded to swear themselves to loyalty. A group of co-conspirators would reasonably take such an action, as would a group of legion commanders who have grown close over the course of many bloody battles. Enemies with a long history of (non-lethal) antagonism might form a sworn brotherhood before they all band together to prevent one thing that none of them want—if only to make the expected betrayal harder to pull off.

Sometimes, a sworn brotherhood remains magically bound even after the Dragon-Blooded disband their group and go their separate

Things to Remember: They are Princes of the Earth

It can be easy to forget that the Dragon-Blooded are *the Dragon-Blooded*. The blood of the creators of the world flows through their veins, and most of them don't let anyone forget it. If your plan for the next game depends on the group retrieving and then returning some stolen artifact that's protected a village on the Blessed Isle for generations, be careful. Upon taking the artifact from the thief's cold, dead hand, one character might simply reason that such an artifact is too dangerous for peasants and should be in the hands of someone who can command it. Namely herself, that is, and the village be damned.

In short, the Dragon-Blooded are in charge. The word of an Exalted Dynast might not be law on the Blessed Isle, but it's almost as strong. Any citizen of the Realm knows that to disobey or displease a Dragon-Blood is to invite her wrath. Peasants, slaves and the disenfranchised even more so, though slaves at least might have orders from their masters that countermand the whimsy of an Exalt. Even patricians must tread carefully, though abuse of a well-connected mortal would probably invite retribution from other Exalts.

Any Dragon-Blood has the influence to command his lessers—that is, everyone not an Exalt—and look upon their words and deeds with some disdain. Dynasts are raised to act that way. Likewise, the people of the Realm know to treat the Dragon-Blooded in a proper manner. One would be hard-pressed to find a merchant who would haggle with a Prince of the Earth, but they would be similarly surprised if a Dragon-Blood actually made the purchase himself.

The Realm's tributaries are not much different. Most of them have been under the Scarlet Empire's thumb for long enough that they know how to treat Dragon-Blooded as royalty, and the new ones are learning quickly. Even outside the Realm's direct and indirect influence, the lands of the Threshold respect and fear the power of a Dragon-Blood, and Realm-bred Dragon-Blooded will expect mortals to be obsequious.

Your players might choose to be humble and unassuming Dragon-Blooded who help people and never abuse their Exalted nature, but don't count on it. You can be unassuming when you're a Solar in the Imperial City—playing a Dragon-Blood is the perfect time to let it be known that you're better than those un-Exalted mortals.

ways. When something arises that interests all of them or otherwise demands their attention, the members of the sworn brotherhood join up again as easily as if they'd never parted.

It's the Order of Things

As the official state religion of the Realm, the Immaculate Order has indeed grown powerful since its inception. Between the vast amounts of coin it accepts from donators, the valuable lands granted it by will of the Scarlet Empress, its canny management of these resources and the immense influence that comes from being the arbiter of the *one true way*, the Order has a lot of sway.

The Order itself has many interests, quite varied. It constantly funds expeditions archaeological and adventurous to recover what might become the next addition to the official Immaculate Texts. Members of the Order have a vested interest in maintaining the Wyld Hunt to combat the Anathema threats, so they supply combat-trained Dragon-Blooded monks and pay the Great Houses to provide soldiers for these ordeals. The Order is also a staunch supporter of the Realm and all for which it stands, so its members are likely to act to keep the Realm from falling.

Those who lead the Order, however, have their own motivations. Once one reaches the highest monastic ranks, there is as much politicking as prayer, if not more. The Mouth of Peace can surely imagine a hundred favors she'd like to have done, and another hundred she'd prefer not to pay. Luckily, she likely also has a thousand people who owe her some debt or fealty, either because she gave a favor to them or because of simple piety.

When the Order speaks, in other words, people listen, and it can be an easy explanation for why a group is together. It's perhaps a bit more powerful if the characters are either Immaculate monks or otherwise pious Dragon-Blooded, but it can work for anyone in league with (or afraid of) the Realm and its watchdog religion.

So You Want to Run a Dragon-Blooded Game…

Well, before you get started, there are a few things you'll want to keep in mind when running a game for the Terrestrial Exalted.

Smaller Heroes

Terrestrial Exalted were the foot soldiers in the Primordial War. They were not the generals, famed assassins or inscrutable advisors—though Dragon-Blooded hold all these posts in the Second Age. They were the rank-and-file warriors in the fight against huge, impossible beings that treated Creation as a plaything. As a result, Dragon-Blooded are the least of the Exalted. With less of everything (except numbers), the Terrestrials' deeds and stories are smaller, though still great. Mighty compared to mortals, they are still less than the Anathema heroes of yesteryear. Therefore, they have:

Smaller Dice Pools

Their training often gives them an edge in Abilities, but the Dragon-Blooded still cannot achieve the massive dice pools of a specializing Solar Exalt. While a maxed-out Solar character can get as high as a 23-die attack using a First Excellency and a weapon with +0 accuracy, Dragon-Blooded are limited by their Ability and relevant specialties. At its most effective, this lands the Dragon-Blood only two dice below a similarly focused Solar, but it also requires the attack to fall under the Dragon-Blood's Specialty. If that's not the case, the Dragon-Blood loses six dice (the Solar loses only three). In general, even a focused Dragon-Blood will be able to add only four to six dice to an action (or half that many successes).

This also affects the character's Defense Values. The inability to add too many dice to a defense action reduces the heights to which a Dragon-Blood can raise his Dodge or Parry DVs, or his MDVs.

Smaller Essence Pools

Dragon-Blooded get less bang for their buck when it comes to Essence. Upping that trait does give them access to more powerful Charms, but each point of permanent Essence gives them only an additional five motes (one in the Personal pool and four in the Peripheral pool). Even at the start, they have fewer motes to throw around, and if the character decides to load up on artifacts, she'll end up with most of her Essence committed and out of reach.

This weakness really bites the Dragon-Blooded in the butt when it comes to Charms. The out-of-aspect mote surcharge required for a Dragon-Blood to use a Charm from any aspect other than her own increases the draw on an already-tight Essence budget. Especially when it comes to using reflexive Charms, which are often too useful not to invoke.

Lower Essence Ratings

Tied more strongly to the base elements than to the rarefied and pure Essence of Creation, Dragon-Blooded must spend greater effort to increase their permanent Essence ratings than Solars. Increasing Essence at character creation costs so much it prevents a Dragon-Blooded character from doing it more than once, and a Dragon-Blood doesn't have enough bonus points afterward to purchase anything more expensive than an in-aspect Charm. Post character creation development doesn't make it any easier. A Dragon-Blood must spend four experience points more than a Solar to get from Essence 2 to 3. That's an entire (average) session's worth of experience, and the gap only widens.

Weaker Charms

Dragon-Blooded Charms have greater focus than Solar Charms do, and less flexibility as a result. For instance, where the Solar Craft Charm Craftsman Needs No Tools says that a Solar may work without tools and drastically reduces the time necessary for the task, the similar Dragon-Blooded Charm Shaping Hand Style serves only to let a hand act as a tool for the duration of a scene. Solars have Charms, such as Fivefold Bulwark Stance and Flow Like Blood, that ward their Defense Values against onslaught and other penalties for an entire scene, while Dragon-Blooded have few scene-long Charms that are so effective. They must instead rely on reflexive Charms for magically aided defenses, a practice that takes its toll on their small Essence pools.

Additionally, Dragon-Blooded defenses are simply weaker, even when they seem comparable. Many of their soak- or defense-enhancing Charms are susceptible to Essence, failing against magic-based or -supplemented attacks. The Dragon-Blood version of Ox-Body Technique is not as strong as the Solar equivalent. Providing only one -1 health level and one -2, it isn't quite comparable to two -1s or one -1 and two -2s, making Dragon-Blooded yet more fragile than the Solar Anathema.

But Still…

Just because Dragon-Blooded got the short end of the power stick doesn't mean the Storyteller has to restrict the challenges she arrays against them, nor does it mean they can't prevail against the same threats and foes as a Solar. After all, the Terrestrial Exalted did defeat the Solar Anathema back in the day. It just means that they have to work harder to do it. And one of their advantages is…

Greater Freedom

Dragon-Blooded have more flexibility than the Solar Anathema ever will, at least without powerful (and potentially game-breaking) custom Charms on the latter's parts.

Backing

Solar Exalted can come from any walk of life—all they need to be is a hero for the Unconquered Sun's eye to fall upon them and elevate them above humanity. All Dragon-Blooded need is the right ancestry—even very, very distant ancestors will do—and some undefined spark that brings that elemental heritage to the fore. That spark very probably has something to do with heroism, dedication or strength to bear the weight, making Terrestrial Exaltation quite similar to Solar Exaltation, just with the little matter of parentage added in.

Once a Dragon-Blood realizes his power, he has the backing of two of the most powerful organizations in the world: the Scarlet Empire and the Immaculate Order. Even the most rustic outcaste is welcome (and desired) in the Realm, as long as he understands that he'll probably never be a Dynast. Even better, the incredibly widespread Immaculate Philosophy declares that the Dragon-Blood is a walking, talking bodhisattva, enlightened and incapable of steering mere mortals off the true path.

It can be an amazingly heady feeling.

While not everyone's going to obey a Dragon-Blood right off the bat, especially in the Threshold, most will give a second thought to making one angry. Even those outcastes who never associate themselves with the Realm can take advantage of that empire's reputation even without any real Dynastic contacts. Dragon-Blooded are, after all, the most famous Exalted in Creation.

Heroes, Not Demons

The popular Immaculate Texts don't declare the Dragon-Blooded to be demons, thankfully. Because of this, the Dragon-Blooded can be freer with their Peripheral Essence. Spending enough Essence to make oneself glow isn't such a big deal when mortals have all heard the stories of heroes with flaming auras or invincible warriors who can leap as if they were the wind itself. While Solars have to restrict themselves to Personal Essence, get ready for mobs or make real good friends real fast, the Dragon-Blooded can invoke any Charm they like until they run completely dry.

Furthermore, they can use Obvious Charms without worrying about observers. Since activating an Obvious Charm makes it clear that one is using magic, being a Terrestrial Exalt when doing so is the difference between hope (or fright, in one's foes) and fear (or terror, in one's foes).

Free Reflexives

Unlike the Celestial Exalted, Dragon-Blooded have the power to use reflexive Charms freely. A Dragon-Blood doesn't treat such Charms as his Charm usage for an action, and he need not wait for his DVs to refresh before using any other Charm. This is a mighty advantage for those who know how to use it. In combat, he can use a non-reflexive Charm to aid his attack without sacrificing the ability to improve his defenses with Charms.

Additionally, having free reflexives greatly slims a Dragon-Blood's Combos. While a Celestial Exalt must include any reflexive Charms she wants to use with her attack (or as a part of corresponding defense) in a Combo, Dragon-Blooded need only include supplemental, simple and extra action Charms, using the reflexives as they wish. This saves bonus points at character generation and, in the long run, saves experience points that the Terrestrials are then free to spend on purchasing other Charms, Combos or trait improvements.

Numbers, and Strength Therein

Also unlike the Celestial Exalted, the might of the Terrestrial Exalt passes through his bloodline to his children, and to his children's children, and on to the seventh generation—and further! This is, no doubt, what those who originally endowed them with their elemental power imagined when the Dragon-Blooded were created—weak alone, but capable of epic feats when they work together. And what better way to make sure that the Dragon-Blooded would always have teammates to aid and depend on than designing them to breed their own?

Yes, not only do the Dragon-Blooded have an entire society built around supporting and worshiping them, they almost have an entire society *composed* of them! Beyond the astounding social structure that provides, it also provides myriad reinforcements—most of them related. In short: Beware harming the dragon, for it has a thousand brothers and sisters eager to bite.

Preludes

If your players are into it, feel free to run preludes for their characters. As mentioned in **Exalted**, the prelude is a short session that gives the players a chance to get a feel for their characters without much in the way of dice rolls or threat. Here are a few ideas for preludes.

In-Character Action Sequence

Talk your player through one of her character's typical adventures from before the time she joined up with her circle of heroes. Her background should have ample fodder to make something like this up. Someone who was a court magician is obviously in court, a character who gathered exotic flora and fauna for research is trying to capture a dangerous karmeus.

Dragon-Blooded have significantly more range than Solars—who are generally assumed to have Exalted within the past year to six months—because they almost always Exalt in their teens, and then attend secondary school. Unless the game takes place in secondary school, the character has probably had several adventures through political and literal jungles since then. So make them up, or have the player make them up, and pick one for the prelude. A mostly social character might have a scene at an exclusive sanxian recital in the Imperial City, while an Immaculate might participate in a theologically motivated and suddenly lethal sparring match.

Storytellers might wish to tie these preludes into the main story line once it gets moving. If they leave any loose ends, these ends can make excellent plot hooks for the characters. They already have some life to them, and the player has a connection and memory of them. Even if there isn't any room for a deeper plot point (or you just don't want to let it muddy up the current story), you can still call back to the preludes. Even if the preludes occurred a while ago, players appreciate it on a subtle level when you refer to something they remember.

That lowly bureaucrat that a character just completely cowed? Well, he was so nervous because he's the same one who dared laud the virtues of Rippled Steel's Shogunate-period poetry at that sanxian recital, and you verbally disemboweled him then. The Immaculate monk who's been an unflappable political and martial opponent? She was watching when you crippled both your sparring partner and his theological support in the monastery, and you recognize her as one who interpreted the Texts in the same way. You don't have to change your plans or plots for them, just tie them in.

School and Home Life

A prelude can focus on an aspect of the Dragon-Blood's earlier life, such as an interaction with her family or one of her important experiences at school. You should be careful with using this as the sole prelude, because it gives a player less opportunity to settle into her character. It also fills out more of the character's history than a simple action scene, something that it's often advantageous to leave undetermined until later in the series. It's easy to invent something in a character's past, it's a bit harder to erase something.

But don't let that stop you from running a character's prelude at school or at home. The right scene at home can be the perfect setup for a character's history, future story or theme (see "You Don't Own Me!" p. **224**). At school, the character can have a small adventure trying to steal the answers to the next exam or excelling at his practicum (in kicking ass or exploration, no doubt).

Drawing the Second Breath

An excellent choice for prelude can be the event that brought Exaltation upon the character. Whether the elemental aspect takes him during a temper-tantrum at primary school, when he fights his way free of a small gang that wants to ransom him, or in the midst of some barbaric survival trial in the Far Northeast, Exaltation is a moving and defining moment for the character. The event surrounding her character's Exaltation is something that every player should know anyway, so why not make a short prelude of it?

Group Preludes

The real difference between an individual prelude and one played out with a group is that the Storyteller and single player have all the control over an individual prelude. There aren't (or shouldn't be) any conflicting goals between two people who are both focused on a single character. When you get more than one person, though, focus must dilute. All the characters are equally important in a group prelude, which is what makes this difficult.

One possibility for a group prelude is the ability for everyone to observe the time when the group comes together. In some games, this is the first session, but when the players write the reason for their allegiance to each other into their characters' histories, they can use this sort of prelude to take a look at it. This scene could be a better flashback than a prelude, as playing out the initial meeting will probably go much more smoothly after the players have all had a chance to settle, along with their characters, into the group. Once patterns and tactics begin to emerge, they're more than ready for this sort of prelude.

Instead of playing out the meeting, you could take a little extra time (expect half an hour to an hour) to show the group in some relevant environment. If they're explorers, make it the ruins of an ancient Dragon King temple. Socialites might be observing (and potentially reveling in) the unrecoverable meltdown of a rival Dynast's new moon party. This sort of prelude takes a little bit of effort, but it gets the players to focus on the group instead of their individual players. Discuss with them the group's goals in the matter, and talk plainly about how they're working together. Don't start throwing down the dice, but let them point out what Charms they might use or how they back each other up.

Montage Preludes

You don't need to choose only one sort of prelude. If you want a potpourri, mix each of the preceding ideas up into a montage of sorts. Start young and move forward in time, seeing the character's time as a child, in primary school, Exalting, in secondary school and in adventures and encounters afterward. This prelude can take longer than others, because it usually takes a minimum amount of time to get a decent amount of story into each different scene in the prelude montage.

Cousins to the Prelude

Preludes are really nothing more than a Storytelling device showing what the character is like, as well as a bit of her illustrated history. There are other, similar tools at the Storyteller's disposal that deserve a bit of a mention.

Flashbacks

A flashback is a lot like a prelude—it's a scene from the life of one character as it already happened, done without dice rolls in order to share some bit of background. You can use a flashback to show anything you can show in a prelude, but it's usually significantly more relevant to the current story (since it comes after the story begins). A flashback might take place to emphasize the rivalry between a character and her pious Immaculate cousin, or it might show how (and maybe why) the hero is uncharacteristically afraid of snakes.

Flashbacks are excellent times to bring a character's Exaltation into the story, if it hasn't already been played out in a prelude. Even when the player has detailed it in full, there's almost always room for you to invent an important surprise. Perhaps the desert queen who witnessed the Dragon-Blood's Exaltation from her harem of young men has been tracking him ever since his escape, and now she wishes to bed him. A quick flashback to that Exaltation can remind the character (and the player, who probably needs the reminder more) that he's facing the woman who once enslaved him.

Though it's not an unbreakable rule, a common difference between a flashback and a prelude is that the flashback is usually told rather than played. Typically, the Storyteller has something he wants to get across by bringing the past into the present, and letting a player control her own character in that scene can make it difficult to be sure that you're going to get across what you need to. Should the player forget that her history included a rival martial artist who watched her dashing hero dishonor his master, she might just choose when you try to portray that event to lose or tie in a way that lets both parties retain their honor. The lesson here is probably that you should be straightforward with what you want a dramatic device to accomplish, at least if you want the player to run her character.

The only danger in choosing to take full control of the flashback is that you might accidentally have a character act in a way that her player finds completely inappropriate to the character's temperament or motivation. This is another reason you should be open about what a flashback is trying to get across. The player will be less likely to complain if she knows that it's supposed to be one of the shaping events behind the character's current personality, or if the character's under order from her controlling parents.

Cut Scenes

Not a far cry from either the prelude or the flashback, the cut scene has two primary qualities: It shows a scene taking place now, as opposed to long, long ago, and it features Storyteller characters rather than the players' characters.

As a dramatic device, the cut scene should be used to show the players what else is going on in the world, ideally something related to their current quest or long-term goal. When the Dragon-Blooded are racing to collect a set of keys to enter the Inverted Sterling Sepulcher and retrieve a world-shaking artifact, the cut scene might reveal their rivals gathering one of the other keys. An-



other cut scene could feature a shadowed mastermind commanding his best-trained warrior to go and "hunt them down," leaving the players to worry who "them" really means.

There's always the danger when using cut scenes that the players won't be able to separate in-character from out-of-character knowledge, and will have their characters react to cut scenes that the characters never saw. Seeing members of a secret society meet under cloaks and hoods might cause one player's character to question suspicious Storyteller characters overly harshly or go through all of their wardrobes with little reason. If your players have this habit, you might want to forgo cut scenes.

Keep in mind, also, that cut scenes simply aren't right in all games. Cut scenes change the aspect of the players in the game. Because they see things that their characters don't, it creates a division between the two. Cut scenes separate players from their characters by creating more in-game but out-of-character knowledge that the player must keep separate, and it makes the experience more like watching a television show than playing a role. Your players have a valid complaint against cut scenes if they don't like this difference. Wanting to immerse themselves in a single character and group is a reasonable desire when roleplaying, and cut scenes have the potential to ruin that immersion.

Don't let this warning prevent you from giving them a shot, though. Many players enjoy the cinematic aspects of **Exalted**, and foreshadowing cut scenes are staples of cinema and anime.

The Mandate of Heaven

The **Exalted Storyteller's Companion** debuted a mechanical system for **Exalted** that allows you and your players to represent nations and their conflicts on a less personal level. This is what it's like when a hero rules a country and doesn't have time to leave every other week. Though most Dragon-Blooded don't control enough land or have enough direct influence to use these rules, some do. Realm satraps, House representatives in tributaries and Dragon-Blooded who control mighty bureaucratic entities all have the sort of power that could be well-represented with the Mandate of Heaven system.

There are several games in which using the Mandate of Heaven is appropriate and can add to the game. A game in which the characters deal with wars and politics between two dominions—perhaps between two satrapies, between one satrapy and the Realm, or between prefectures within the Realm itself—is an excellent candidate for use of the Mandate of Heaven between episodes. Whenever an appropriate length of downtime arrives, activate the Mandate of Heaven for a little game development while you sleep.

Of specific interest to Dragon-Blooded games and players of Dragon-Blooded characters are the Realm's many bureaucratic entities and political entities—which control little to no land and whose constituents do not actually live in one place together. The Mandate of Heaven is abstract enough to effectively represent these entities as well. All but the largest will have a Magnitude rating of no more than 1 or 2, and an average bureaucracy might have a 1 Military and Culture, and Government 2.

Here are a few examples: The All-Seeing Eye is a widespread intelligence service, well known on the Blessed Isle. It has Magnitude 3, making it quite large. Part of its fame comes from assassinations, and part from its organization of the Wyld Hunt, so it has a Military 3. The mere existence of the All-Seeing Eye (and the fact that it's been doing its job well for so long) gives it Culture 2, but its funding has faltered since the Empress's disappearance. Combining that with the new laws passed by the Deliberative and the Great Houses' attempts to purge themselves of spies, it's disorderly: Government 1.

House Tepet is severely weakened in all areas thanks to its defeat in the North. While still large, it no longer has its legions. Its effective Magnitude might be down to 1, and it might have Military 1, Culture 1 and Government 2. It's not nearly as strong a player as it used to be, but the House heads are keeping cool and working to minimize the damage.

The Order of the Immaculate Dragons is absolutely huge, including many thousands of monks, Immaculate administrators and devout followers across the Realm. Give it an enormous Magnitude 4 (which is about the largest a non-nation should go). It has Military 1—the monks might compose a fighting order, but they really have to focus and borrow money if they want to form up an effective Wyld Hunt. Culture 4 indicates how widespread the Immaculate Philosophy is, and how much it can really get done. Finally, Government 2 indicates that the Order has a relatively simple structure at local levels (readings at the temple, itinerant or permanent monks) but it gets a little convoluted in the upper strata.

Mandated Charms

The following Charms from those available to the Dragon-Blooded should be considered to have the Mandate keyword and can be used in dominion conflict.

Brother-Against-Brother Insinuation: The character rolls his (Manipulation + Socialize) as a dominion action against the target dominion's (Government + Temperance). If he wins, the target dominion immediately performs a **Savant's Pernicious Treachery** action against another dominion of the character's choice.

Confluence of Savant Thought: A character can use this Charm to supplement a **Serpent Stalks the Reeds Insinuation** dominion action. It adds one automatic success to the roll.

Distraction of the Babbling Brook: This Charm supplements **Tiger Welcomes Mouse Enticement**, reduces the external bonus points earned by the other dominion by one and increases that earned by the character's dominion by one.

Drowning in Negotiation Style: Using this Charm when creating a treaty forces both parties to spend one additional point of Limit and Willpower when taking any action that would eliminate that treaty.

Friend-to-All-Nations Attitude: This Charm eliminates penalties on a roll based on social bias or prejudice between dominions.

Geese-Flying-South Administration: Using this Charm in conjunction with a constructive dominion action adds one to the dots gained or recovered, or the points of Limit discarded.

Playing in the Past

You don't need to place your game in Realm Year 768, as the setting assumes you will. The history of the Realm and Creation has thousands of interesting facets, and if you want your game to be simpler—perhaps without the Empress missing and the Solars running amok and the Deathlords moving on Creation—doing so could make the game's setting a little bit less busy. You might also want to run a game in the past as a setup for the later game in the future—the creation of a central artifact, the founding (or destruction) of a pivotal nation or the presence of a specific recurring villain.

For whatever reason you want it, here are some suggestions on running Dragon-Blooded games in **Exalted**'s history.

The Shogunate

After the Usurpation, the first effective government that formed was the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate. Utilizing the Old Realm's command centers, methods of communication and tools of war, the Shogunate tried to reclaim the world under its flag. It was a time of heroes at war and tireless re-expansion, as well as refreshed hope. After all, Solars afflicted with the Great Curse had been ruling for all of living memory, and now that they were gone, the Dragon-Blooded wanted to return Creation to some semblance of working order.

Possibilities for a game in this setting go on and on. Exploration is a dominant theme, but there's no limit to what can be explored. There may be old nations that lost contact with the Realm before the Usurpation, and there are certainly caliphates and dynasties ruled by Solars who ignored the word of the Deliberative, so all of them must eventually be brought back to the fold. Monsters and indefinable forces that the Solars and their mighty constructs once held at bay must be fought back to the edges of the world, or under it. And there is much to explore *within* Creation. Mortals, used to honoring, revering and sometimes fearing the Celestial Exalted that ruled them, must be convinced to join a cult that portrays the Dragon-Blooded as superior and their old kings as foul demons. Heroes might have to breach a dead Solar's manse, now closed to the world, or the automaton that another one built so large that an entire city's populace could live inside. The Imperial Manse, of course, is a high-profile target, promising much honor to any who can open it for the Shogun. There is much to do as a Dragon-Blood in the young Shogunate.

During the reign of the Shogunate, society grew weaker. Proud Dragon-Blooded families decided to carve out their own kingdoms and had to be rebuked. Demons that were bound during the First Age completed their tasks or found loopholes, and made trouble for the Terrestrial Exalted. Certainly, there are thousands of adventures to be had in this time period.

And then the Contagion hit. Mortals and Exalted alike died by the bushel, and at the worst possible moment, the Fair Folk, swathed in steely gossamer and leading their Wyld-spun armies, rushed into Creation and laid all shaped things they could find to waste. Records are universally unclear on how long this catastrophe continued, providing plenty of time for stories of any length.

Such stories should reflect the dangerous and frantic nature of the period. Dragon-Blooded are falling to disease—something nearly unheard of—and they are being forced to fight for their lives without any warning. Death seems to wait for everyone around the next non-Euclidean, fey-concealing corner. Entire nations that once sat on the edge of Creation and held back the Wyld disappear from the map in a single, furious surge of chaotic energy, and no one can activate the Realm Defense Grid. Everything is falling to shit. What do you do?

The Usurpation

While the Usurpation was really an *event*, not a time period, it was the end of an era. It probably seemed like a lifetime to those who were actually there. Dragon-Blooded conspired against their maddened, unjust god-kings and philosopher-emperors, slaying them during one fateful Calibration that also saw frighteningly disproportionate numbers of the Terrestrial Exalted fall.

Even as an event, the Usurpation still took a non-instant length of time. Dragon-Blooded needed time to conspire and put their ducks in a row, and after the initial assault, it took far, far longer than they'd hoped to put the last of the Solar Exalted into the ground.

One game you might run in that time period is the conspiracy. How do Dragon-Blooded keep their hatred a secret in the face of people who can see through every lie and force the truth out of unwilling mouths? Can your character swallow his pride when called to a Solar's bed, and how does he stand by when he sees a friend beaten? Do the characters involved really hate their masters, or do they love them (perhaps through magical effects) and truly regret the necessary step of ending their lives and rule? Your players drive their characters through the setup, possibly losing friends to Solar inquisitions along the way.

Another potential story lies in the execution. The time for conspiracy is over, and now is the time for action. Fight against the nearly unbeatable Solar Exalted, gaining the edge through surprise and treachery. Once the initial assault is over, the characters do their best to track down and defeat the few Solars to escape. What happens when the Solar attacks with Dragon-Blooded troops, troops a character is sure would turn on their master if they only knew the rebels' true goals?

Or maybe you and your friends want to tell the story of what led to the Usurpation. When the bright reign of the Solar Deliberative begins to darken and the Lawgivers stop guiding wisely and start abusing their power for hedonistic pleasures, can your players' Dragon-Blooded characters survive Solar depredations long enough to realize that they should rebel, birthing the conspiracy that eventually brings the Solars down.

In a more ill-fated game, the players' characters could be Dragon-Blooded loyal to the corrupt Solar Deliberative, either because they enjoy the benefits of that corruption or because they've been deceived. They try to root out the traitors that their most honorable masters insist are undermining the Realm and ruining the Deliberative's good name. When the Usurpation comes and the black-blood-spilling, god-killing battles begin, they fight for the Solars.

You'll have to create some truly powerful effects for 1,000-year-old, Essence 8 Solars for these games, or just wing them, but be sure to give the players commensurately powerful Dragon-Blooded. Essence 6 or 7 should be the rule of the day, and they should have custom Charms that allow them to aid their co-conspirators both in battle and in concealment of their true motives.

If any of these scenarios engages your imagination, delve deeper! There's always something more to create.

The First Age

Before the Realm, before the Contagion, before the Usurpation and before everything went to hell, what was there to do? Short answer: a lot.

• **Politics and intrigue.** Before the Solar Deliberative began to falsely attribute its decrees to the Unconquered Sun and ignore the voices of the concerned, it was an august body that lent its ear to any who needed to speak. As Dragon-Blooded governors of the old Realm's principalities, the players work together (or compete) to navigate the mazy politics of the Deliberative, trading favors and secrets to earn the benefits their regions require.

• **Exercises in War.** Just because the Solar Deliberative ruled nearly all of Creation without any real competition, it doesn't mean that everything was nice and daisies. Dragon-Blooded governors and generals had command over many skilled troops, and for many political disagreements, it was easier (or simply preferable) for the Dragon-Blooded to solve them on their own. Some of these competitions were merely exercises, competitions with blunted or enchanted weapons and few casualties, intended to decide which Dragon-Blood would get his way.

• **Police of the Realm.** The Iron Wolves may have been the masters of spies and rulers of the night, but the Dragon-Blooded were some of their most loyal and favored spies and killers. And just because the Realm was stable, it doesn't mean that there were no rebellions, kings-of-thieves or traitorous Exalted who needed to be put down. Dragon-Blooded in this game work toward maintaining the security that the Solar Deliberative promised to all peoples.

• **Hunting for Danger.** While many of the external threats to the First Realm had been fought to a standstill or otherwise contained, there was always still another danger to face. As such, the Dragon-Blooded who sought heroic opportunities could always find them. They fought rampaging behemoths not yet brought to heel, terrible demons loosed upon the world by incautious sorcerers or inauspicious cracks in the Yozis' prison and unknowable things that spawned and fed beneath the rock-hard crust of the world. With a little bit of luck and a lot of courage and skill, the Dragon-Blooded could fell these threats, have honor heaped upon their heads and make Creation a safer place.

There are many, many other games that one could play in the First Age, but you can surely think of those on your own.

As a side note, if you like to emphasize the fall from glory to ruins that Creation suffered moving from the First Age to the Age of Sorrows, you should consider using some of the artifacts from **Wonders of the Lost Age** in your games set before **Exalted**'s present time. Showing the life-easing artifacts and tools available in the First Age, the incredibly destructive weapons used in the Usurpation or the fading level of magical expertise evident during the era of the Shogunate is a good way to make the point that the Age of Sorrows is a shadow of what it once was—and could be again.

Mixed Games

Not everybody wants to play a Dragon-Blood, even in a Dragon-Blooded game. If you try to run Dragon-Blooded games, eventually, sometime, somebody will say, "I wanna play a Solar!" Or maybe you want to give it a try, undercover Lawgiver style. Now, a mixed game isn't the easiest thing in the world, so here are some suggestions to make the whole thing less of a hassle.

Think before you go ahead. While **Exalted** definitely tends toward saying "Yes!" to just about anything and everything, that attitude should be more cautiously applied outside of game. Let the player know that it can severely change the game to let a Solar Exalt into the pen with a bunch of Dragon-Blooded. Answer the following questions:

• Do you really want to deal with the power disparities? A Solar has, as a general rule, five motes *more* per dot of permanent Essence than a Dragon-Blood at the same level of enlightenment, and then a few more on top of that. Then, their Charms not only *cost less experience* but are also typically more effective.

• Do you really want the in-game political fallout, or were you looking forward to a game where the players could use their powers without limitation? Anywhere in Creation, a Dragon-Blood is a demigod. Solars, on the other hand, might be heroes and might be demons, and if the game takes place in any of the common set-

tings for Dragon-Blooded—the Blessed Isle, Lookshy or any of the Realm's many satrapies—it'll almost definitely be the latter. If you don't want to deal with that crazy Wyld Hunt (except maybe from the other end), then you should cut out the Solars.

• Do you really want a Solar? The Solar Exalted have a few solid themes: returning god-kings, lawgivers come back to cleanse and repair Creation, that sort of thing. If that's really why you want a Solar in a Dragon-Blooded game, or why the player wants to play one, rethink it. You can do the same thing with a lost Great House or other legacies that you create. Even the idea of having an outcast hiding in the group's midst can be done without resorting to using a Solar Exalt. House Iselsi has half-hidden in Dynastic society for generations, and each member is hiding her true nature.

• Do the other players mind? Is it really acceptable to all the other players if this one player (or two, or whatever) has a Solar hero while the rest play Dragon-Blooded characters? Are they going to be worriedly asking the same questions you've just looked at, and coming up with less hopeful answers? There's only one way to find out—ask. If the other players are *all* willing to potentially play second fiddle to a Solar Exalt, then go ahead and make it so. When your players still have reservations, though, it's probably best to drop the entire matter.

Okay, maybe you've looked at those questions and not been convinced. You still want a Solar in your game, or your player is so vocal that you've decided to let him do it. Well, maybe. Unless everyone in your game is utterly certain that no minor matters of relative power are going to decrease their appreciation of the story you'll create, consider some of the following steps.

• Increase the Solars' experience point costs. If the player is spending (10 x current rating) or 10 experience points for a Favored Charm, the Solar character will advance no more quickly than the Dragon-Blooded characters. It doesn't address the relative strength of their Charms, so Solars will still be doubling their dice pools on the most important rolls and the Dragon-Blooded won't. This should probably be the first step in any attempt to even out the two types of Exalted.

• Give the Solar's player(s) less experience. It might sound unfair, but it certainly isn't arbitrary. One point of experience less per session is about right to balance out the combination of lower experience costs for more effective Charms and Essence rating with the less impressive numbers and powers the Dragon-Blooded have. If the balance doesn't feel right to you, adjust the amount of experience withheld. You might keep back one point every two sessions or three every two (though that's getting a bit heavy). You should still give the player stunt and bonus awards for good ideas. If you want them to keep happening, you should keep rewarding them.

• Reduce the Solars' dice pool limits and Essence pools to match that of the Dragon-Blooded. Keep in mind that if you do this, the Dragon-Blooded will have an advantage in mote cost (they spend only one mote for two dice when using Essence Overwhelming). You can always limit either the Solars' dice pools or their Essence limits, if you so choose. Beyond this point, there's very little you can do to adjust their Charms without rewriting them completely for power level.

• Remember, you don't need to do all this work. You can always bring the Solar in as a villain, or an occasional ally, and let the Dragon-Blooded play while the Solar's away. And if the player who wanted to play a Solar starts listening to your proposed changes and getting less and less excited… maybe he just wanted to be more powerful than the other characters.

Finally, maybe all of this wasn't necessary. Maybe all of your players are excited to play an "Anathema-Hunter Robin" type game (see p. 222), or they want to reenact the Dragon-Blooded following a Solar during the First Age (or reassembling such a relationship in the Second Age) and consider varied power levels par for the course. Well, why are you still here? Get gaming.

Unabashedly Mixing Exalts

Don't take this section *too* seriously. It's essentially a big, glowing and buzzing neon sign warning you away from starting a mixed Dragon-Blooded/Solar game frivolously. But that's the keyword—frivolously. If you know what you're doing, or if you and your players just don't care about the balance issues, then, by golly, do it! Run a mess of Solars and Dragon-Blooded hurtling across Creation, daring to do the impossible, and dash all the consequences!

Because, really, dashing the consequences is what **Exalted**'s all about.

Experience

There are a *lot* of Dragon-Blooded out there. And there are many, many adventures for people to have. But even so, you can't imagine that every Dragon-Blood in Creation is busy running around, slaying Fair Folk, building huge towers and otherwise being heroic *all the time*, right?

This doesn't apply to the heroes of your series, who really are running around being heroic all the time, but other Dragon-Blooded should probably use the long-term experience award chart, compared to their age, to determine how "large" to build them. For particularly active Dragon-Blooded, you might add one extra experience point per year. But be careful! One experience point per year adds up *very* quickly, since Dragon-Blooded can be around for several hundred years, and many Storyteller characters will have.

You might even want to reduce the amount of experience that your Storyteller characters receive according to the long-term award guidelines. If every Dragon-Blood not run by a character follows that pattern, your players' characters would be overshadowed in moments. Since nobody wants that, use the long-term award chart as what it is—a guide. Don't let it determine how powerful your Storyteller characters are, since only you know what's really appropriate.

For ease of use, assume that a Dragon-Blood Exalts at age 15. This gives him 850 experience points at the age of 100—honestly, that's plenty for all but the most mighty opponents, and you don't want to spend the time allocating all these points for anyone else.

Dragon-Blooded Experience Charts

Lesser Exalted than the mighty Solars, the Dragon-Blooded suffer from a more imperfect control of their Essence. However focused, contemplative, meditative and otherwise in tune with herself and her surroundings a Dragon-Blood is, it is *still* harder for her to deepen her natural bond to Creation's elemental Essence. Likewise, shaping this Essence comes less naturally to her. In order to learn a new way to channel it into the magical effects known as Charms or spells, the Dragon-Blood must spend more effort than her Celestial brethren do. Except where noted on the following table, Dragon-Blooded experience costs are the same as those on page 274 of the main **Exalted** book.

Dragon-Blooded Experience Costs

Change	Cost
Favored/Aspect Charm	10
Out-of-Aspect Charm	12
Celestial Martial Arts Charm	12
(Martial Arts Unfavored)	15
Essence	current rating x 10


SO HERE'S WHERE THE ROSEBLACK HAS TAKEN ROOT.
HIDING FROM YOUR MEN, GENERAL? FOR SHAME.
YOU'RE ONE TO TALK, OLD MAN. YOU WERE STILL SULKING IN HERMITAGE LAST I HEARD.
HMPH! IF YOU WROTE MORE OFTEN, YOU'D BE BETTER INFORMED.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, GRANDFATHER ARADA.
I KNOW IT IS. MOVE OVER.


SO HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
IT WASN'T EASY.
WHAT'S THAT YOU HAVE THERE?
DIPLOMATIC MAIL FROM THE DELIBERATIVE. IT ARRIVED THIS MORNING.
I FIGURED. LET ME SEE IT.
YOU HAVEN'T OPENED IT YET.
I ALREADY KNOW WHAT IT SAYS. IT SAYS IT'S TIME I RETURNED TO THE BLESSED ISLE.
PROBABLY.
YOUR POWER WORRIES TOO MANY IMPORTANT PEOPLE. THEY'LL WANT TO TAKE IT FROM YOU.
THEY DID THE SAME TO ME, SENDING ME UP AGAINST THAT ICEWALKER ANATHEMA.
THAT DEBACLE CRIPPLED OUR LEGIONS, AND MY FAILURE TARNISHED OUR ENTIRE HOUSE.


I DON'T WANT TO SEE THAT HAPPEN TO YOU.
IT WON'T.
DON'T BE SO CAVALIER. CERTAIN PEOPLE THINK YOU COULD BE THE NEXT EMPRESS. SOME WOULD DO ANYTHING TO KEEP THAT FROM HAPPENING.
I KNOW. I'VE BEEN WARNED.
FRANKLY, THOUGH, I DON'T EVEN CARE TO BE EMPRESS.
OH...
NOW, SHOGUN, ON THE OTHER HAND...
WHAT?!?
I KNOW MORTAL DANGERS AWAIT ME ON THE BLESSED ISLE, GRANDFATHER.
THEREFORE, IF I DO RETURN THERE, I WON'T GO ALONE. MY SOLDIERS WILL GO WITH ME.


YOU'RE SURE ABOUT THAT?
I'VE DISCUSSED IT WITH THEM. IF I MUST GO, THEY'RE BEHIND ME.
SO WHY THIS HESITATION? IF YOU'RE SO SURE, OPEN THE LETTER.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
TIME TO CAST THE DICE.
CRACK!
THIS ISN'T A SUMMONS HOME. IT'S NEW MARCHING ORDERS.
TO WHERE?
OH...
OH, THOSE BASTARDS...
WELL?
THIS... I DON'T...
WHAT'S IT SAY?

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Dragon-Blooded™

EXALTED SECOND EDITION

Name: _____ Concept: _____
Player: _____ Motivation: _____
Aspect: _____ Anima: _____

Attributes

Strength _____ ●OOOO
Dexterity _____ ●OOOO
Stamina _____ ●OOOO
Charisma _____ ●OOOO
Manipulation _____ ●OOOO
Appearance _____ ●OOOO
Perception _____ ●OOOO
Intelligence _____ ●OOOO
Wits _____ ●OOOO

Abilities

Air

☐ Linguistics _____ OOOOO
☐ Lore _____ OOOOO
☐ Occult _____ OOOOO
☐ Stealth _____ OOOOO
☐ Thrown _____ OOOOO

Earth

☐ Awareness _____ OOOOO
☐ Craft _____ OOOOO
☐ Integrity _____ OOOOO
☐ Resistance _____ OOOOO
☐ War _____ OOOOO

Fire

☐ Athletics _____ OOOOO
☐ Dodge _____ OOOOO
☐ Melee _____ OOOOO
☐ Presence _____ OOOOO
☐ Socialize _____ OOOOO

Water

☐ Bureaucracy _____ OOOOO
☐ Investigation _____ OOOOO
☐ Larceny _____ OOOOO
☐ Martial Arts _____ OOOOO
☐ Sail _____ OOOOO

Wood

☐ Archery _____ OOOOO
☐ Medicine _____ OOOOO
☐ Performance _____ OOOOO
☐ Ride _____ OOOOO
☐ Survival _____ OOOOO

Specialties

☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO

Advantages

Backgrounds

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Charms

Name	Cost	Name	Cost

Weapons

Anima

Limit Break

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Virtue Flaw

Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Soak

B_____ L_____ A_____

Health

-0	☐☐☐☐☐
-1	☐☐☐☐☐
-2	☐☐☐☐☐
	☐☐☐☐☐
-4	☐
Incapacitated	☐

Virtues

Compassion ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Temperance ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Conviction ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Valor ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐

Essence

● O O O O O

Personal ____ | ____
Peripheral ____ | ____
Committed _____

Experience

Gifted with power
by the Elemental Dragons,
the Terrestrial Exalted
once formed the backbone
of the Solar Deliberative's
grand army.

Then, when the Solars
went mad with power,
the Dragon-Blooded Host
rose up as one to slay
the tyrants and
set the world aright.

Can the Dragon-Bloods
hold onto the reins of power,
or does the return
of the Solar Exalted
mean the hegemony
of the 10,000 Dragons
is at an end?

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for **Exalted** featuring:

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