Once upon a time, two girls lived in a dark place: a place of stagnant water at the bottom of the world. Above them were stacks of ancient buildings; new buildings, piled up upon the old; and endless criss-crossing walkways, so many you could hardly see the sky. The sun was just a distant glitter. The moon's faces, just the same.

There in that place the sea was still; its waters were stopped up, its currents were broken. The sluice-streets down in the bottom-most layers did not run wet and then dry three times a day, like in the better districts, but simply sat there pooling, seeping, gathering bugs and gunk and plague. They who lived there were scarcely recorded by the men and women who kept the books in Heaven. "Some number of little people reside below," they'd say, or write, "—and bugs," and nod their heads.

When Suzu, the younger of the two, was four, she went out into the sluice-streets to play; only, instead of dying to the hungry dead, or falling into the hands of some flesh-taker, scavenger, or priest, she found a white pig (that her father said was likely sacred), with an earring that was a bell. She'd led it home, she'd loved to keep it, she'd ridden on it and confided in it and drawn great swirling patterns of black ink upon its flesh. She'd tugged on Sabriye's sleeve—that was the older girl—and told her all about it, and it was a precious pig to little Suzu, and come the winter when they cut it open they found oracles in silvered letters on its bones.

Sabriye grew older. She left, and she came back changed. There was all manner of consternation among the bookkeepers in Heaven at that change; it provoked great flurries of paperwork, anguished tugging of the beards, and Heavenly commotion—for in some moment, while they had not been paying attention, Sabriye had joined the ranks of legends; had done some great unrecorded deed and won *Exaltation*: drawn down into her body a portion of the essence of the divine Unconquered Sun. It was a legacy and a power that had been Liam Island-Tamer's before her, and Red Dove's before him, on back to the beginning of the world.

They'd found it burnt into the tapestry of fate that they kept in Heaven; no longer was she "Sabriye, a gutter-urchin," but rather, "of the Solar Exalted."

Such a to-do! And she scarcely even had records.

...for who in Heaven even bothered to track the gutter-folk of Wu-Jian?

Sabriye had been named a Solar in the books of Heaven but of course this datum had not reached her. Not one of the memos that flew about was even addressed *to* her. She understood only that she had changed. That her steps had lightened, her eyes gone clearer, and a sun-mark glittered on her brow. If she were to try to explain it—

...there was no explaining it. Words would fail her. Was it some sun-borne curse? The blessing of some small god of river, grass, or tree? Was she, as the Immaculate Faith would surely tell her, shamed and shameful beyond all measuring: indwelt, possessed, *inhabited* by some Anathematic demon-god?

If she knew the truth of it, deep in her soul, then to her mind it yet remained a mystery: a secret that lived beneath her tongue and in her throat. That *stuck* there, that weighed her down, that pooled in her like stagnant water.

The words would not come out.

And so, like anyone who has words they cannot speak, she sought out a kindred spirit to not say them to. She returned to Wu-Jian, hunting for the nameless house on the nameless street that her cousin had used to live in—rehearsing as she searched for Suzu all the words she would not say.

In this, she was not alone.

* * *

Ten floors above her, at that time, and three wards left, Jin chewed. Jin swallowed. “I don’t even know how to describe this,” Jin said. He put down his meat bun. He made an ancient finger sign against evil—most specifically, against Anathematic demon-gods—in its general direction. His partner Toad Rat snorted a laugh. “I want to describe it,” said Jin, “but—there are no words.”

“The Anathema aren’t exerting a sinister influence upon your *lunch*, Jin,” Toad Rat said.

“All I ever wanted—” Jin started to say; but then he sighed, and cut the thought short, and shook his head.

He stared at his meal. He shrugged, and picked it up again, and took another bite.

“One day,” he said, around it, waving the meat bun with a hand, “we will die, if we keep doing this. If we keep hunting these sun-marked monsters down. If we keep going to these terrible places. For what do we do this, Toad Rat, Eastern Star? Why do we risk our lives for things like this—for *cities* like this, where you can’t even get a half-decent meal?”

And he was looking at Eastern Star when he said this, because she was the one who’d dragged them there; but it was Toad Rat who’d answered.

“I think we are drawn to what we want least in life,” he said. “...That is courage.”

* * *

Let us speak of deeps and gutters; of starlight hidden in the darkness; of city piled *on* city:

Of *Wu-Jian.*

Its roots sink into the ocean, unto the beginning of the world. It hides that glory, shelters it like a watchman covering his red lamp up: you cannot see it when you sail nigh. Rather the jagged piles and stacks that comprise Wu-Jian heave up from the horizon and give the impression, not of ancient grandeur, but of a slum of beggars’ slouching hovels, all leaned and tumbled over one against the other: written large.

Yet it began in the first days, nearly the *very* first days, as the outcast islands.

They roamed free.

They swum like a pod of whales playing in the ocean. They knew no stability and no order. They drifted on the currents and the waves. Red Tiger tells us that they were renegade humans who had cast off the shackles of their subservience, grown tall as the smaller mountains, tossed their heads, proclaimed their anger at the earth, and swum off into the sea. The Scholar Clad in Irons tells us, rather, that they were untethered, unrooted, but... ordinary... islands, in the keeping of unruly gods. They did not rebel against the order of things, but partook in it neither; therefore, the great demon-gods and goddesses, the “Anathema,” came out to bind them to the sea.

Do they not groan now, in remembrance of that awful day? Do they not heave, and shudder, and tremble, because the city weighs them down?

The demon-gods came for them—so the Scholar writes. They stood upon the surface of the water and they were clad in vestments of gold.

The chiefest of the islands roared out a challenge. It came at them on the lip of a tsunami, hung over it like a ship at wave's-edge, and then plunged down; its fists were like the boulders of a landslide, like a trampling of great oxen, they tumbled down one after another and they were crested by the foam of waves. Not two of them but hundreds rather, each a writ of war and murder—but a young and slender demon-god, standing towards the front of them, took his pipe from his mouth, reversed it, and blocked each fist consecutively with its slender end. The island flew past him, lost its balance, flipped itself over like a turtle flounders and it was helpless then; in that moment of its defenselessness he replaced his pipe, seized a shaft of sunlight from the sky, made it gold, and plunged it like a pillar, like a needle, like a spear, through the body of the island, through the stone and through the sea beneath the island, and made it anchored to the ocean floor.

Each and all of them, then, all the wild islands: they pinned them with nails of jade and sun and shining metal until they ceased to move.

Such were the deeds of the "Anathema," before the Dragon-Blooded cast them down.

Atop that dusting of pinned-down land amidst the endless waters they built a crisscrossing maze of bridges, an iridescent web and stronghold, rising, falling, slanting, sloping, reminiscent in its many angles of a broken-legged spider crouching, injured, on the sea.

Lesser builders would later build their work upon it; would spread their warrens and their rookeries upon it; until the iridescent spires were hidden behind rough and modern structures, wood and stone. They burdened the islands down with city, weighted them down as if under a prisoner's yoke with it, and the city spread until the islands blurred with one another and the sea-lanes were as the sewers beneath the fortress: beneath Wu-Jian.

* * *

"Ten thousand dragons rule the world," Sabriye's aunt had said. "When a flight of them comes to Wu-Jian, its towers shudder underneath the weight of them.

"Where the dragons rule: civilization; beyond that: barbarity—

"And, Wu-Jian, somewhere in between."

Ten thousand dragons ruled the world... rather, ten thousand *Dynasts* with the *blood* of dragons, ten thousand infused and blessed by that Exalted gift—

Their legions stomped down the earth. Their navies' sails made white the seas.

"But Wu-Jian was too much for them," she'd always say; and Sabriye and Suzu had listened, eyes opened wide. "They couldn't keep our towers up; the islands shifted, the islands groaned, and our buildings shuddered and knocked about. They couldn't keep our people down—not the Scarlet Empress of 'em all herself—'cause to conquer the folk of Wu-Jian, well... that's worse than rootin' out the rats."

Sabriye had loved this tale best.

"We'd dug down," Sabriye's aunt had said. "They came in and they were wreathed in *animas* of wood and fire, earth and water, wind—they had armor forged in the ancient days and weapons

that could shatter buildings in one go—but we dug down, we hid ourselves; we gnawed and nested at the roots of their great grand house like rats. Hated and despised we were, but we were the unconquerable gold; raised up our bosses, us, to extort from them, our thief-kings to steal their goods from them and made our priests and murderers our saints. And in the end they gave in to us. They didn't have the steel in them to burn us out, to uproot Wu-Jian, and lose their great grand port in the western sea."

She'd grinned with the missing teeth of her, and glee.

Years later, Sabriye would remember that grin; hesitating, uncertain, on a roof not far from Suzu's one-time door, she would remember it, and match it with a smile of her own:

"The demon-gods could tame the sea," her aunt had said, "and the Dragon-Blooded cast them down—"

Jin and his heavy spear crashed down; shattered her reverie, burst the roof that Sabriye crouched on, tore through it as she rolled aside. A mantle of wind swirled up around him, sped his movements, he was already up and lunging at her again, striking in time to the sounds of crickets as she reached her feet... took three quick-steps back. She seized the spear, tried to unbalance him with it, but the thatch of the roof betrayed her: it was untended, slightly wet and moldered, and when she tried to shove the weight of him both feet pushed through the thatch instead. *Acceptable,* she thought; threw herself into that movement: twisting, falling, bursting through, and crashing down onto the mud-soaked mattresses below (and to the outrage of the toads).

She was up again and dashing through the rotten door. Her ankle turned on a slippery stone; she staggered to one of the eccentric, half-tended bridges that spanned across the sluice-streets below. The wind knocked her against the ropes that bound it, swung a lantern—her shadow wobbled like a dervish dancer—and gave him half a second to catch up. His next blow struck her cloak, it fluttered from her; he stabbed through it, but she was nowhere. He searched, he spotted her three floors up from him; the wind carried him to her side.

Her open palm struck his chest, but he was armored: awful, terrifying armor it was, black steel inlaid with jade. It rang with it, he brought his spear around, but she was too close to him, she writhed like an escaping cat, and he reached for her, but it was never clear to him, not even afterwards, what happened, save that her forehead glittered and she arced like a fish and her belt knife was out and he reached for her and he flinched from the knife and her weight fell on his forearm and on his hand and despite all his best intentions he found himself twisting in a fashion that nature had not intended for him to twist and his bone was snapping and his hand was numb like it was struck by lightning and his spear went clattering to the bridge. He lunged for it, trying to recover it before he died, but the girl's knife was in his face, or, rather, *almost* in his face, half an inch *shy* of being in his face, and he twisted, and he stumbled, and it wove in the air before him like a snake and for just a moment—when the knife *wasn't* directly in between them—he found himself lost inside her eyes. His heart beat hard and he was honest:

"All I ever wanted," Jin said, in that long slow moment—"All I ever asked for, out of life... was that I never have to hunt down and battle an invincible demon-goddess of war, and a good pork bun. Now and then."

She gave him a curious look. "Did you get the pork buns?" she asked him.

He spread his hands.

“Ah,” he said. “But... this is Wu-Jian.”

Two seconds ticked by. The crickets sang. An outraged civic pride bloomed slowly on her face. Then:

“You’re just saying that,” she said. “*People* just say that. Some *pirate* just said that, like fifty years ago: ‘You can get anything in Wu-Jian but an honest fence, a smoke-free house, or a meat bun worthy of the name.’ But *no.* Just, no. They’re *fine.*”

Jin eyed the knife at his neck. “...OK?”

Her eyebrow twitched, and perhaps she might have spoken further, then, or perhaps just killed him; but Jin’s partner Toad Rat—who’d never wanted anything more from life than to have his name well-regarded in society, and, never to have to hunt down and engage in battle with an invincible demon-goddess of war—had reached a decent vantage point at last.

Crouched precariously above them between a mossy overhang and a support beam, he drew out his great jade bow; in the same breath fired; and the stillness between the girl and Jin was broken.

Her hand lashed out. She caught the arrow. Another two came down. She leaned to avoid them. A fourth, and a fifth; the lean turned into a tumbling, flipping backwards roll. Space opened before Jin and he scrambled for his spear.

The girl steadied on her feet; caught her breath.

The crickets sang.

“Noodles,” she argued. It took Jin a moment to recollect the topic she was on. “Can’t go half a block up there without finding a decent noodle shop, or a perfectly acceptable black pepper soup.”

He had his spear again, he took a stance again, he felt the *rightness* of that movement pull straight and set the broken bone.

(Such were the benefits of the blood of dragons.)

“I don’t slurp noodles,” he said. “I am a hero of the Realm.”

“But you *could*,” Sabriye argued. She jinked a half-step back, forward, and forward again, as arrows passed before her face, behind her spine. “Because there’s nothing actually wrong with Wu-Jian cooking. There’s just the stuff that people *say.*”

An arrow came down; she caught it, spun, and threw it; Toad Rat gave a strangled cry; “I am *trying* to talk here—” Sabriye said.

Foolish to spin, he thought. He struck mid-motion, came in behind her, moved with the swaying and the creaking of the bridge as the wind blew; but her knife hand had come up behind her back to block him with unlikely speed.

The knife fell from her hand—

It was an awkward movement—

But she was already back facing towards him, had already finished up her turn.

“You synchronize your attacks to the ambient noises,” she noted. “You ought to stop.”

"...what?"

Then she moved. His balance shifted in what *should* have been a counter, if she were just a little slower, except she wasn't. If anything she was a little faster, and she had hooked the back of his leg with hers...

—no.

That is inadequate to describe it. To speak of the positioning of her legs, her hips, her hands, would be inadequate to describe it; in that moment, her Essence surged, a radiance—an *anima*—of sunlight flared up around her, and the whole of her Solar prowess became more than its individual parts.

She moved, and it was as if he were seized up by a giant hand. His stance shattered and his breath blew out; his armor seemed to slam tight around his chest; an absurd admiration welled up inside him as inexorably, impossibly, he was lifted up into the air, bent over double, and then slammed down straight.

The demon-gods could tame the sea, Sabriye's aunt had said, so many years ago; *and the Dragon-Blooded cast them down—*

But they could none of them not stand one whit against the people of Wu-Jian.

And Jin passed out.

* * *

Once upon a time, there was a girl who lived in a high and holy place: a place of gods and golden towers somewhere far beyond—above—the world. Her name was Eastern Star; she was a creature of Heaven: a bookkeeper, tapestry-minder, and assassin. She was fed on nectar and ambrosia and the mark of the stars was upon her brow and she hated girls like Sabriye.

Not so much because a Solar Exaltation had descended onto a lowly gutter-girl—

But for the Exaltation, in itself.

The Solar Exalted had ruled the world, and the age of their rule had been incomparable—her teacher, a dragon-horse, had said.

"If there is something in the world that you do not like," he'd told her, "then you may rest assured that it was handled better then. If you grow frustrated with the tiresome bureaucracy of Heaven, or angered by the lax and wayward gods; if you wake up one day to find that monkey-spirits have made off with your favored quill and inkstone, or that children no longer respect their elders; that farmland is failing, that barbarians use the libraries of old to wipe their bums—well, there was an age when it was not so. When we had great rulers. When we had *righteous* rulers, who'd held the mandate of the Unconquered Sun. Only, it was a burdensome thing to have such power, such perfection; the knowledge of it consumed them, the limitlessness of their own strength devoured them, and they sank into corruption or went mad."

That had irritated Eastern Star. "That's hardly a better handling of things," she'd said.

"Ah?"

The smirk of their imagined perfection had haunted her; she'd snarled at it. "I hate them," Eastern Star had said, when she was young.

Now she was older, cunning, strong.

Now, when she sped through the wards and warrens, in the shadows and the dank, on her way to kill the Solar, she did not think of it in terms of hatred.

It is lamentable, she thought. She let herself indulge in the poetry of that thought; rephrased it several times in her head in the language that they speak in Heaven. *It is lamentable,* she thought: *for she is one who will break the orders of empires and gods upon her fists, and build up wonders upon wonders lost to the darkness of fallen ages, and raise up the world again to meet the glory of the sun—and yet I must kill her before she blossoms to such greatness, lest that glory then destroy us all: burn men and nations and history itself to ash.*

She passed an alchemist beating his apprentice.

She passed an old man playing chess with his wife (long dead)... unaware, it seemed, of what would happen when he'd lost the game.

She passed a knot where the clotheslines-web between eight buildings had given rise to a little spirit—an elemental of wood, a *laundry-spider*—and she ducked its fangs, curled through its web, and plummeted towards a gallery four floors below.

She must die as an "Anathema," thought Eastern Star, *before the world learns to recognize her as a hero;* and she did not for even a moment let the words "I hate them" reach the surface of her mind.

* * *

Jin startled awake.

He took in a deep breath. His life had been passing before his eyes, he thought. He had just gotten to the good part—only—

"I'm not dead," he observed.

"My own *uncle* used to make perfectly good meat buns," Sabriye sulked. "And us poorer than untended graves."

He tried to move. It was not quite as possible as he'd expected.

"Tell me you did not leave me alive so you could continue arguing about meat buns," he said.

She was staring off at the city—her eyes had just caught a glimmer of distant light—and she did not answer, but only vaguely waved a hand.

"I have to kill you," Jin observed. "When I can stand up again, I mean."

"Oh, hush," she said.

"Have you even *had* a pork bun, here?" he asked. "It's fair to wonder where you even *get* your pigs, you know, out here at sea. I have, ah... suspicions... that—"

"That is a foul slander," she snapped.

She sulked, for a moment, which he didn't mind; perhaps, he thought, he could gather enough strength to move—

"I do not think it is good to kill," she said. "You know? —I have been blessed in the arts of war, I know this, but... I do not think that it is good to kill. How can you call me Anathema, even with

this sun-mark—how can I be a *demon-goddess,* when I don't even want to hurt you, much? I've never even drenched myself in the blood of children and dreamed to do impious things."

They will twist you with their words, Eastern Star had warned him; so he ignored the bulk of this.

"...it's fine to kill," he reassured her. "I kill monsters like you *all the time."*

She raised an eyebrow at him.

"Occasionally," he corrected, uncomfortably. "Sometimes."

He licked his lips.

"...once," he admitted. "And I'd got there sooner. Before he'd really figured out how his powers worked. But *I'm* just a Jin, you see; *he's* just a Toad Rat—"

Sabriye *moved.*

She was so terribly fast. It appalled him. She twisted sideways, her hand grasped at something in the air, he could train all his *life* and not move so fast—

But it was not fast enough to catch a certain needle, not before its poison found her neck.

"—*she,* though," Jin admitted, "has killed your kind... thrice?"

There were footsteps on the bridge; and Eastern Star was there, all ragged grin and lank unkempt hair; her sword was hanging from her hip. Her eyes flicked to Jin, went up to Toad Rat, and then back down, as Sabriye staggered.

Sabriye fell.

—Eastern Star did not stop.

She drew her sword, she moved, her blade traced amaranthine light upon the air, she struck; the Solar caught her wrist between two feet, twisted it, diverted it, bent the blow to the bridge's rail but her reactions were still off; the Solar's upper body flopped like a fish between the bridge and rail—dangled there for a minute, held up only by her feet, then slipped away to fall into the muck.

It didn't help.

The woman was like a descending comet; when Eastern Star landed the water of the sluice-streets burst up in every direction and the wounded girl was washed to slam against and through a wooden wall. She twisted out of sight, vanished through the building's rotten back, and was halfway down a mucky street when the woman closed the distance—or rather *didn't* close the distance; the girl turned a corner and the sword was just *there*, in front of her, and swinging.

Sabriye ducked. Her right leg gave out. Her knee twisted and she howled.

With a bit of broken board she'd seized up from a wall Sabriye blocked the next strike; bent her stance with it to keep the board from splintering in her grasp, lunged up and under and tried to spear the woman's stomach.

There was a shadow over them, in that moment; it was the shadow of the pig.

The gods of standing water are not kindly gods; rather, they arise from the water like a miasma, like a pestilence. They may be your friends, your patrons, or your servants if you have an edge to

you that suits the sharpness of them, a rot to you that suits the sickness of them: they may be allies of a sort—

But they are not kindly or gentle gods.

It came upon them like a white cliff in the light of the moon; it was tangled, covered in rotten wood and vines. Its teeth were wooden, like the roots of trees, and its body blurred into the water. It towered above them, standing seven of the eccentric half- and third-stories that made up the unbalanced levels of the lowest layers of Wu-Jian.

I do not like, said the pig, said the boar, said the sluice-street god, *to see the Solar Exalted once again.*

There was a long silence, then.

"Haha," laughed Sabriye, and glanced to the woman. "Is that what you are, then, a 'Solar Ex—'"

Eastern Star unfroze.

She took a step to the side, turned to watch them both, and opened her mouth to snarl something —but the snort of the pig drowned out her words like an avalanche's rumble might've done.

The snort carried in it the words of the pig:

I do not like to see the Lawgivers of old, it said. *With your sun-marks on your brows. Go. Go, girl. Go. And take your little lackey with you.*

"Screw this," muttered Eastern Star; moved; sliced in a great overhand blow at the bulk of the pig, but the sword was missing from her hand.

"Sorry," Sabriye said—*sotto voce*; thrust the woman's own sword out to gut her; found her wrist blocked, her foot pulled out, her body rolling to the ground; saw the woman skittering back, heard a needle sink into the pig's great eye; a roar of anger, then, as the pig began to charge.

Sabriye struggled to her feet—only, everything was tilted, her legs confused.

"'Bye," saluted Eastern Star; leapt—and stumbled, Sabriye clinging to her belt rope, surfing away from the path of the pig's charge, finding a foothold; effort reddened Sabriye's face, tightened her muscles, and blazed up in a golden *anima* around her as the Solar swung the woman round to slam against the great tusk of the boar.

It did not even daze the pig.

It swept past where they had been. It shook its head, the woman fell. It turned; the bridge shivered and Jin found himself sprawled, in what he considered an unnecessary complication to an already thoroughly difficult day, upon its back; he reached for his spear, thinking he could at least use it to anchor himself in place, but the world adjusted itself in a flicker of starlight and the woman was beside him, her belt slipped off, her robe now shapeless, Jin's own spear held in her right hand. She hurled it down to pin the girl's arm, right through its wristbones, into the muck-brown street.

Jin slid.

The boar turned. It scuffed its feet. It charged, and in that moment, Jin thought that he and Sabriye would die; and Sabriye saw a path of escape for her opening and closing in an instant:

I could pull my arm free, she thought. *And stagger* there*, against that wall, and be safe;*

But the woman had found her sword again; had reached the street again; was charging, wreathed in her *own* anima's violet glow, her sword sheathed again and her hand upon it, readied to draw and kill... not the Sabriye of *here,* not the Sabriye of *then,* but to kill the Sabriye who *would* wrench herself free and reach that shallow cover, and thus survive the pig.

And Sabriye thought—*I wonder why it said those things. The pig.*

The woman moved. The woman drew her sword; in that gesture, cut.

Sabriye was not there.

The sunlight was blinding. It roared out from her, towered in a great pillar above her like a flame, filled the lower levels for the first time in decades if not centuries; the dawn spilled golden and glorious out into the space the woman cut—

But Sabriye was not there.

Sabriye was braced against the metal floor, standing, straining, shining, *burning:* holding the pig's great tusk with both her arms: upending it, and swinging it—the whole great and limitless bulk of it—to slam into the woman; the hero; the bridge; the buildings; and on and on and past them to the ancient twisted wall of metal that in that place was holding back the sea.

'Solar...,' she was thinking, somewhere deep inside her; *'Lawgiver...?'*

And: *...oh.*

And it seemed to her, in that golden moment, like she might understand the secret that lived beneath her tongue; what it might be that she could tell her cousin Suzu—if she still lived there, if they ever met—before the great wall burst, and she saw the ocean beyond it, and the dawn; and water came rushing in to the sluice-streets, swirling, pouring, flowing, sweeping, pounding, raising her and all that muck towards Heaven like some great paean to the sun.

Wind at her back, Novia Claro raced across the rooftops of Nexus, her boots making no sound as they slid across the worn mud-brick. The crumbling remnants of Old Hollow stuck out like boulders in a sea of gems—great towers of clay and earth watching over the brightly colored market awnings like sentinels. Novia bounded past them like a swift hare, letting the wind guide her as she leapt from one rooftop to the next with supernatural grace.

Nexus was her city, her domain. She had walked each street, path, and alley from the slums of Firewander to the sprawling palaces of Bastion, and there were few establishments she hadn't set foot in, whether by invitation, clever ruse, or brute force. She held influence in nearly every syndicate, working the ranks for personal gain and using her resources to protect the wretched city she called home.

Nexus was her city, and she intended to keep it that way.

It didn't take long for her to reach the barely-standing warehouse at harbor's edge, padding across the thatched roof like a great cat. The building was supported more by the stacks of crates inside than the original structure, but the westernmost side provided a suitable perch as she crouched low to survey the goings-on of the harbor below.

As she’d anticipated, a large merchant ship flying Realm colors had docked just moments before, and already the Lawgiver was calculating her approach.

A cluster of deckhands passed close to the warehouse doors, providing the perfect cover as Novia dropped to the docks below. After securing her footing on the warped planks, she sauntered toward the ship, eyes fixed on the lone watchman stationed at the gangplank, a dogged master-at-arms (she imagined) dragging on a slender pipe.

Though well known throughout the city, Novia was more than adept at passing herself off as welcome in any situation. She knew better than to make a show of things, but if she was going to find a way aboard, she was at least going to have a bit of fun with it.

She slid out of the shadows and into a curtain of smoke, a smirk playing at her dark features as she drifted up to him, moving with the smoke as it wound through the air. She curled around him, light as air and dark as shadow, her hands sliding over his chest, her breath warm in his ear. He blinked, disconcerted, perhaps feeling the lightest caress of the breeze, and then dismissed it. As a fresh line of smoke shot from the dragon’s nostrils, the Lawgiver drifted away, as unnoticed as the eddies from his pipe.

Novia crept up the gangplank with careful steps, moving only where shadow would allow. Though she’d stolen past the guard, she had only a small window of time to get in and out while avoiding altercation. A lone patrolman paced the deck, the blade at his side glinting in the afternoon light. The Lawgiver followed his movements carefully, willing that no sound would come from the rustling of her coat or her heavy steps across the creaking planks of the salt-worn vessel. With a rush of Essence her surroundings grew quiet, each sound swallowed into nothingness.

Her hand was first a flash along her waist, passing over the brace of knives on her hip, and then it was a whip rising faster than the eye could see. A blade flashed through the air. With a loud crack the rigging nearest the guard snapped, sending the sail careening wildly upward, narrowly missing the patrolman. When he turned to look, the Lawgiver slid through the cabin door and into the captain's quarters.

Knowing she had only moments to secure her prize, Novia gathered the captain’s log and the ship’s rutters and began scouring the room for anything of worth. The documents would hold the true value, but jade was a better currency for pleasure seeking, and she planned on an evening of celebration.

A steady barrage of footsteps told her that she had only moments before the ship's officers discovered her, but she had retrieved what she'd come for and left a costly spark for those that might pursue her—a final word of warning to any that thought to use the Realm's leverage to sabotage Nexus trade. If sabotage was what they wanted, it would be at her hand.

Grinning as the cabin door opened, Novia blew past the guards like a sudden wind. Light on her feet even as she vaulted over the rail to the docks below, she vanished into the shadows as flames climbed the masts like sails, kissing the sky with fire.

Introduction

Many tales were recounted then of the Iron Princess who rode at the head of her army, and some were true and some were not. She was a mighty witch, she could take no wound, demons marched in the ranks behind her; she covered her face because one look from it would scald with fire or turn to granite or melt as with acid any who beheld it, though others said she was so beautiful no man could watch her and not lose his wits, and that one of her smiles could darken the moon and one frown could kill the sun.

—Tanith Lee*, Night's Master*

Nearly all men can withstand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.

—Abraham Lincoln

The First and Final Days

It has been said that Creation is doomed.

The world was raised from chaos, and one day it will fall just the same, returning to the chaos that birthed it. All the works of men and gods and all the spirits of Creation will be no more. This is how the story ends, they say, and none, not even the mightiest of the Chosen can change it. This is the tale of woe that is the capstone of this fallen era; this is why the world now lives in an Age of Sorrows.

But it was not always that way.

The Age of the Exalted

In the time before record, in the blank vastness of prehistory, the gods of Heaven created champions to carry their power and glory, wage wars in their name, and fight the battles they never could. These heroic men and women were called the Exalted, for they had been uplifted. For their service, the gods gave the Exalted rule over all Creation—over all the peoples and the beasts and the spirits dwelling there. All the lands which they could see and grasp were theirs. Having done this, the gods of Heaven retired to Yu-Shan, the Celestial City, and left the world of man to the Exalted.

The Exalted were many, their powers as diverse and unique as the gods who bore them. However, one caste of Exalted—the Solar Exalted—rose through the ranks of the Chosen to become their masters. With unsurpassed skill and power, the Solars conquered every corner of Creation. With unmatched magic and sorcery, they raised up a glorious First Age.

The First Age was an age of wonders and glories long lost to the current age. These splendors flowed from the hands and minds of the Solar Exalted, who ruled the world, its gods, and its Chosen as benevolent masters for five thousand years.

But then something went terribly wrong.

The Solars had labored for millennia under a great curse lain upon them by the vanquished enemies of the gods. In time the Solars grew wicked, deceitful and mad; their magnanimity turned to spite, their justice to tyranny. They began to turn against their subjects and each other, and the world was soon threatened by the very sorceries and machinations the Solars had used to protect it. As civil war loomed, the other Exalted saw no choice but to remove their masters. The Dragon-Blooded rose up against the Solars and slew them as they feasted the turning of the year.

Most of the Solars were murdered and their Essences sealed away in a jade prison—for such was their power that they could reincarnate upon death. But some escaped this initial ambush, and in the decades that followed the survivors waged terrible wars against the host of the usurpers. During that time, much of the magic of the First Age was lost—expended or destroyed in cataclysmic acts of revenge. In time, the last of the Solars were hunted down and killed, and with them died the First Age.

Nothing lasts forever.

The fall of the Solars left their Realm a smoking ruin. The curse that had eaten away at them had also eaten away at their works. Without the Solars to steady the sorcerous mechanisms that ran their world, the Realm began to disintegrate. This was no slow winding down, but the agonal throes of a beast mortally wounded. Cities collapsed. Manses rained brimstone on farmlands. Mountains buried themselves, dragging down nations with them. Whole islands were blasted from the seas as the sorceries that birthed them unwound themselves. The Sidereals, allies to the Dragon-Blooded, helped to steady the world against the First Age's dying. In the end, the world survived, yet it was vastly reduced.

In the ruins the Dragon-Blooded set up a military government and ruled for centuries. Their rule was without the grandeur of the Solars' shining Realm, but also without the horror and madness that heralded its fall.

The Sidereals, a powerful group of Celestial Exalted, were the authors of the Usurpation. After helping the Dragon-Blooded rise to power, the Sidereals erased themselves from the pages of history, destroying records of their own existence and twisting the very stars in the sky to bring about a forgetting. To maintain their influence, the Sidereals spun the Immaculate Philosophy, a religion that teaches the inherent spiritual perfection of the Dragon-Blooded. Posing as monks and servants of the Philosophy, the Sidereals wove themselves into the shadows of Dragon-Blooded politic.

The Sidereals kept a close watch for the few Solars who continued to be reborn into the world. With powerful astrology and mystical instruments of detection, the Sidereals guided armed strike forces of Dragon-Blooded to destroy newly emergent Solars before they had a chance to gain power. Such groups came to be called the Wyld Hunt, and their inquisitions became inseparable from the Immaculate religion. For centuries, the Wyld Hunt rode down, captured and slaughtered the Solar Exalted with impunity.

The Doom Out of the Darkness

Then the Great Contagion came.

A virulent disease that traveled by blood and by lung, the Great Contagion spread a black blanket of death across Creation. Nine tenths of all people and animals perished. There was no cure and no one to burn the bodies. Cities were draped and filled with corpses, and the screams of the bereaved soon gave way to silence. Those left alive believed it their darkest hour. They knew nothing.

Creation, it has been said, is doomed to fall into the chaos that birthed it. The Wyld—chaos, the inchoate precursor of reality—surrounds Creation. Creation floats upon it like an island. The Wyld licks at the borders of the world, forever nibbling away at its edges, always held back by the solid substance of human beliefs and mystical armaments that were remnants of the Solar Realm.

The Great Contagion put paid to these. Entire nations fell to ruin, and those who were charged with unleashing the defensive sorceries of the Realm had died at their posts. The borders of Creation cracked and fractured, and the Wyld flooded in. With it came the armies of the Fair Folk, who had always lurked beyond the edges of the world: watching, waiting, and hungry.

The Fair Folk swept across the lands in endless legions, and Wyld storms and vortices of pure chaos came with them, rending apart the landscape. Vast stretches of Creation crumbed and were lost forever. The lands and seas were reshaped, and everywhere the Fair Folk camped, Creation was left twisted. The beleaguered and sick-ravaged Exalted expended even more of the lost First Age's magic in trying to throw back the legions of chaos. Even the mighty Lunar Exalted, the former mates of the Solars, could do little more than slow their monstrous advance.

As the armies of the Fair Folk marched toward the center of Creation, a lone Dragon-Blooded officer braved the nigh-impenetrable defenses of an ancient Solar weapon system. By luck or by fate, she took control of one of the mightiest weapons the world has ever known, awakening it from its slumber. With the power of the Realm Defense Grid, she annihilated the Fair Folk hosts and sent them screaming and boiling back out of Creation.

With control of the Realm Defense Grid, the officer was now the mightiest being in Creation. There was little left of the old shogunate—the shogun whom she had served, and most of his children and children's children were gone. With fire and fury, she wrested the remnants of her world from the hands of her enemies and cowed oaths of fealty from the rest. From her isle at the center of Creation, she consolidated allies and resources and named herself Empress.

The Birth of the Realm

Through alliances and coups, the Scarlet Empress brought her enemies to heel. Through marriages and liaisons, she gave birth to a dynasty of heroes, who formed lesser and greater houses through which the Empress could filter her power. To keep her place, she set her children against one another in endless bids for power, resources, and favor. In time she seeded her legions with soldiers and commanders from her own household and from the houses of her closest children. In a matter of decades, her forces marched out into the Threshold—all the lands that were not her island—and forced her enemies to kneel.

One coalition of heroes in the East managed to resist her conquest. Of the rest, only the most remote barbarian kingdoms of the Lunar Exalted escaped her rule. Vowing fire and steel to her enemies, the Empress threaded the boundaries of her empire with legions and set about draining conquered lands of their resources so that her Realm could grow mighty and wroth for a return.

Throughout the centuries, the Empress kept the Sidereals close at hand. Their advice and protection afforded her great advantages in governing her mighty nation. In return for their service, she made the Immaculate Philosophy the state religion of the Realm, and through the Immaculate Order the Sidereals maintained the Wyld Hunt. In all the 763 years of her reign, the Wyld Hunt never once faltered, and the Dynasty grew vast and powerful on the yolk of Creation.

Into the Time of Tumult

Five years ago the Empress vanished.

Almost overnight, the Realm began to deteriorate. Through her sorcerous might, the Empress had planned to live forever. With no order of succession, the Realm entered into chaos. Some thought that the Empress had been assassinated, or fallen prey to the fell magic that gave her

such power. Others believed she was watching from the shadows to see who might try to take her place, or that she had reached a state of perfection and had left her Realm behind. There were rumors without end, but only one thing was certain: the Empress was gone, and her throne sat empty.

The Great Houses of the Scarlet Dynasty—each longing to place one of their own on the throne—began to summon their forces. Legions were recalled from the frontiers, satrapies were bled for every obol, and the heroes of the Realm were called home from vigil and from quest to take up the banners of their families.

A political stalemate saw a figurehead Regent placed on the throne while the Houses marshalled their resources and maneuvered their forces, built alliances and seeded the feasting halls of their enemies with spies and traitors. Forests were stripped to build siege weapons and ships, war machines were constructed, the old spells were chanted, and old warstriders rose from torpor to shake off their rust.

Meanwhile, the massive recall of Realm forces left certain borders of the empire manned by skeleton crews, often consisting of poorly-trained citizen soldiers and conscripts forced into service at spear-point. Sensing the mystical and military defenses of the Realm had weakened, many of the Dynasty's subject states began to withhold tribute, while others fell into open rebellion. At the same time, the Lunar Exalted, who had fought a long and bitter war with the Dragon-Blooded, began escalating their attacks. Barbarian hordes emerged from the outlands of the Threshold to test the might of the remaining legions, while the Realm's ancient enemies unveiled new fighting forces from states beyond the Realm's borders.

But the Empress's disappearance presages even more dire consequences than these.

In the dark heart of the Scavenger Lands, the Deathlord called Mask of Winters rose on his living corpse-mountain throne to march an army of the dead against the city-state of Thorns. It was sacked and taken. A tributary of the Realm, its Dragon-Blooded defenders died to a man, and their bodies were dragged into the corpse-flesh kingdom of the Deathlord's thrall.

Far and near, the enemies of the world have begun to rumble and quake, testing the chains of their bondage. The Fair Folk, still fuming from their last bitter defeat, have begun to speak war words and sing the chaunts of battle, from their septs within Creation and from within their halls in the deep Wyld, while the dark lords of the Underworld unleash horror and cataclysm never before seen.

The Return of the Solar Exalted

After a millennia of vigilance, the Wyld Hunt has lapsed.

This is the world into which the Solar Exalted have returned. After centuries of imprisonment, the doors of the jade prison have been kicked open, and the heroes of old have come again.

It has been said that Creation is doomed.

The world will end in fire and flames. Darkness will descend. The seas will dry up and the land will crumble into the maw of chaos. Nothing can stop this.

Nor could the Solar Exalted slay the enemies of the gods.

Nor could they master the sorceries which wrought the world.

Nor could they ever return from their endless death amongst the stars.

This is the world into which the Solar Exalted have returned—but will they save the world, or will they destroy it?

As the tale of Exalted continues…

Introduction

This section introduces the basic concepts and terminology of the game, as well as explaining its overall premise. You're reading the introduction right now.

Chapter One: The Exalted

There are many kinds of Exalted. This chapter discusses the histories, themes, and skills of a number of Chosen. Note that this book only contains the rules you'll need to play a Solar. Consider the other entries in this chapter a preview of future books.

Chapter Two: The Age of Sorrows

This chapter discusses Creation, the world of **Exalted**.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

This chapter provides instructions for how to create a Solar Exalted.

Chapter Four: Traits

This chapter describes in detail the non-magical characteristics of the Exalted.

Chapter Five: Systems and Drama

This chapter contains the core rules of **Exalted Third Edition**. Here are rules for practically everything—combat, large scale war and naval battles, and social drama. Everything you need to know about how to play **Exalted** can be found here.

Chapter Six: Charms

This chapter details the mystic might of the Solar Exalted.

Chapter Seven: Martial Arts and Sorcery

Creation is an ancient world that has not yet forgotten its secrets. This chapter discusses magic and the powers of the martial arts.

Chapter Eight: Antagonists

The enemies of the Exalted are numberless and fierce. This chapter contains descriptions and rules for many of the game's threats.

Chapter Nine: The Grand Panoply

This chapter details the weaponry and armor of the Exalted, and introduces Evocations—magic drawn from deep within the souls of artifact weapons and armor.

Lexicon

Age of Sorrows, the: See *Second Age, the*.

Anathema: The term used by the *Immaculate Order* to refer to the *Solar*, *Lunar*, and recently the *Abyssal Exalted*. Immaculate doctrine describes the Anathema as persons who have become conduits for dark power and whose souls have been forever tainted by the influence of evil *spirits*. This doctrine is typically accepted in the *Realm* and anywhere the *Dragon-Blooded* hold power, as well as *Threshold* states where the Immaculate religion holds sway, places the Lunar Exalted have terrorized since time out of mind.

anima: All living things are surrounded by a colorless, invisible aura called anima. When one of the *Exalted* uses *Essence,* the power often spills into her anima, making it visible. As a result, an Exalt who expends a great deal of power is usually engulfed by a display of anima that can range from a soft glow to a pillar of heatless flame bright enough to see for miles.

artifact: An object imbued with magic and generally forged of the *magical materials*. Many artifacts created in the *First Age* have been lost or destroyed, and those that remain are fiercely coveted in the current day.

Aspect: Many of the *Exalted* are divided by *Castes*, but some are known by their Aspects. Typically said of the *Dragon-Blooded*, an Aspect points to the nature of the *Chosen's* power, in how it manifests and how it behaves, as well as how it shapes the Exalted's appearance and personality. A Dragon-Blooded of the Fire Aspect may be an aggressive, flashy warrior or a passionate statesman. He may have fiery red hair, and wisps of smoke might follow his words when he is in a rage. A Dragon-Blooded of the Wood Aspect may be more at home with nature, better able to deal with loneliness, more capable at medicine and survival. She may have green hair and patches of bark on her skin. Chosen who share Aspects are usually much broader-ranging in their personalities and proclivities than those who share Castes, such that two Chosen of the same Aspect might have completely different roles and responsibilities.

Blessed Isle, the: The great island-continent at the center of *Creation*, once the home of the gods and now the homeland of the *Realm*.

Caste: Many *Exalted* are divided by role or aptitude into Castes—for example, *Solar Exalted* are Dawns, the greatest warriors to have ever lived; Zeniths, inspirational priest-kings and holy men; Twilights, great savants and engineers; Nights, thieves, thief-takers, spies, and assassins; and Eclipses, heralds, diplomats, merchantmen and troubleshooters. Almost all such Exalted display their roles via the *Caste Marks* upon their brows.

Caste Mark: Most sorts of *Exalted* bear a mark upon their brow indicating their *Caste*, which illuminates as their *animas* flare. Each Caste of each sort of Exalt bears a different mark, and the *Immaculate Order* teaches how to identify different sorts of *Anathema* by Caste Mark.

Celestial Exalted: The *Exalted* champions of the mighty gods of the sky—the *Solar*, *Lunar*, and *Sidereal* Exalted. The Solars are the mightiest of the Celestial Exalted, but their lesser kin are also the inheritors of enormous power.

Charm: The *Exalted* express their inherent magic through Charms. The Charms of the Exalted are as different as the powers and natures of their divine patrons. *Solars* express the invincible, inexorable nature of the *Unconquered Sun* through their Charms, while the *Lunars* manifest the ferocity, weaponry, and forms of *Creation's* greatest beasts.

Chosen: See *Exalted.*

Circle: A Circle is a group of *Exalted* brought together by oaths, pacts and sorcery, often as the collective answer to a terrible question. While memories of past incarnations sometimes guide reincarnated Solars back into the company of their fellows from previous lives, many Circles are creations of the current Age. Regardless of cause, most Solars will find themselves as part of a Circle at some point in their lives.

Creation: The world of **Exalted**. Creation is a flat world floating on a sea of chaos called the *Wyld*. Once, in the *First Age*, a great civilization spanned Creation entire, but in the fallen *Age of Sorrows*, shattered city-states scrabble to survive, struggling under the oppressive boot of the *Realm*.

Cult of the Illuminated, the: A *Creation*-wide mystery cult devoted to worship of mysterious saviors who will return the world to righteousness. Though they did not inspire it, *Sidereal Exalted* of the Gold Faction have covertly encouraged its spread across Creation and now use it to channel newly discovered *Solars Exalted* into their protection and influence, while the *Immaculate Order* deems it heresy and seeks to stamp it out.

daiklave (DY-klayv): The traditional weapon of the *Exalted*, each daiklave is a one-of-a-kind *artifact* sword, usually oversized, forged from *magical materials* and imbued with a unique *Essence* from which its *Chosen* wielder may learn to call forth *Evocations*. Other types of artifact weapon exist, such as direlances, grimscythes, and powerbows, but daiklaves are the most iconic and famously cited when discussing the war arsenals of the Chosen.

Deathlord: A cadre of powerful ghosts who have ruled kingdoms in the *Underworld* for centuries. Recently, several have become more active in *Creation*, fielding undead legions and releasing horrors from the bowels of death's darkness. Each is a monster of horrific power and nature, selected and upraised by the *Neverborn.* Erudite priests and sorcerer-kings, the Deathlords are behind the emergence of the *Abyssal Exalted*. The Deathlords may be the most powerful beings to walk the world in this Age.

demesne (di-MAYN): An enchanted place, a location where magical currents eddy together to create a natural vortex of power. Demesnes are rich in energy for beings who know how to harvest it. Most *Exalted* harness this power by constructing a *manse* on the site of a demesne.

demon: *Spirits* of alien majesty and deadly guile, demons are the sworn enemies of the *Exalted*. Demons are the countless inhabitants of *Malfeas* and the servants of the *Yozis*. However, they are trapped in service to the Exalted due to an oath they swore long ago. A demon who is in sorcerous thrall to one of the Exalted is unable to harm his master directly or indirectly, but may still work cunning wickedness to doom his master to courses of action that will imperil the Exalt's soul. Demons range in power from the lowliest of spirits to the world-shaking incarnations of a nightmarish and primordial Creation.

Dynast: A *Dragon-Blooded* related to the *Scarlet Empress* through descent or marriage. Dynasts are the ruling class of the *Realm*.

elemental: A *spirit* arising from the five elements of the natural world. Elementals labor to cycle Essence through *Creation*. They are physical beings that live in the same world as men and beasts.

Elemental Poles, the: The Five Elemental Poles are the anchors of material existence that border the world and hold it together. The icy Pole of Air borders the North, the Pole of Fire lies to the furthest South, the Pole of Water defines the uttermost West, and the Pole of Wood rises from the

farthest East. At the center of the world, the Pole of Earth pierces the heavens in the form of the Imperial Mountain. The Pole of Earth is the omphalos and axis of *Creation*, around which the world moves. It is dormant and steady, balancing the elements of Creation into a stable harmony. As one travels away from the Pole of Earth and closer to one of the four active poles, the active pole's influence grows stronger and stronger. Eventually the elemental effects are so strong that only the mightiest of the *Chosen* can survive them.

Essence: A current of energy that moves through all things, Essence is the creative charge from which all wonder springs. To channel Essence is to wield the power of the gods, and the *Exalted* channel the Essence of the mightiest of the gods.

Evocation: Miracles awakened within certain *artifacts*, generally weapons and armor, by the bond between the artifact and its wielder. The nature and power of an artifact's Evocations depends on the circumstances of the item's creation, the *magical materials* used in its construction, its relationship with its wielder, and the artifact's history of use through the years or centuries.

Exalted: The Exalted are mortal men and women blessed with the power of the gods. Once they were uplifted to fight the enemies of the gods, and for this service they were given rule over *Creation*.

• **Abyssal Exalted:** Strange new *Exalts* never seen before the Scarlet Empress's disappearance, the Abyssals have emerged from the *Underworld* as champions of the *Deathlords.* They come with the old laws of the dead, bringing ghost-fire and doom wherever they walk. Mysterious harbingers, warrior-poets and sacred priests, the Abyssal Exalted have rocked the world by slaying *Dragon-Blooded*, *Exigents*, and even *Lunar Exalted*, and each is easily a match in single combat to one of the *Solar Exalted*.

• **Exigent:** Those *Exalted* and empowered by the *Exigence*, the Exigents are a whole category of different types of Exalts, chosen by gods of field and river, vengeance and hope. Very few gods possess the strength to empower more than one *Chosen,* even with the power of the Exigence. As such, the Exigents represent a vast array of eclectic and unique heroes, many of whom are being seen for the first and last time. For a time, no new Exigents were created, but recently the Exigence has begun to flow and grant new champions.

• **Liminal Exalted:** Existing in small numbers since the end of the *Shogunate,* the Liminals are the mysterious Chosen-elect of a remnant of the *First Age* that sank into the darkness of the *Underworld* long ago. It is believed that they result from passionate attempts to raise the dead. The Liminals search for meaning in their new lives while compelled by their dark mother to police the boundaries between life and death. They are most commonly seen tracking rogue ghosts, fighting wicked spirits of death and plague, and hunting the undead.

• **Lunar Exalted:** The Chosen of *Luna*, the Lunars are shapechangers and iconoclasts. The *Usurpation* chased them to the edge of the world, where they now rule their own tribal dominions, waging unceasing war against the *Fair Folk* to one side and the *Realm* to the other. The Lunars look upon the *Solar Exalted's* return with uncertain hearts—during the *First Age*, the Lunars were the slaves, seconds, and consorts to the Solar Exalted. Their bond to the *Lawgivers* has been broken, but many yet fear a return to servitude.

• **Sidereal Exalted (sy-DEER-ee-ul):** The Chosen of the *Five Maidens*, the Sidereal Exalted are the stewards of fate and *Heaven's* agents in *Creation*. In the *First Age*, they served as advisors to

the *Solars*, but when they began to see indolence and madness in their rulers, they threw down the *Solar Exalted* and raised the *Dragon-Blooded* up in their place. Politically the Sidereals are divided between the Bronze Faction, who supported the *Usurpation*, and the Gold Faction, who argued against it and now move to support the returning Solars. Masters of fate, the Sidereals are unmatched prophets and viziers, and their attunement to the movements of destiny make them the practical embodiments of all the tenets of martial arts.

• **Solar Exalted:** The mightiest of the *Exalted*, Chosen by the *Unconquered Sun*, the Solars are mortals with great potential and ambition gifted with the power to fully realize their own excellence. They are warriors, orators, engineers, spies, and diplomats without peer. In the *Time Before*, they served as both the generals of the Exalted armies and the greatest heroes of the gods. Through fire, combat, and peacemaking, they rose above the Exalted to become their rulers. Through their unmatched sorcery and powers of invention, they raised up the *First Age*, but over time the *Great Curse* drove them mad. The Solars were overthrown by the *Dragon-Blooded* and their Exaltations imprisoned by the *Sidereal Exalted,* but now they have returned to try to save *Creation* from doom.

• **Dragon-Blooded:** The Chosen of the *Five Elemental Dragons*, and also known as *Terrestrial Exalted,* Dragon-Blooded are weaker than the *Celestial Exalted* but more numerous. Their power does not reincarnate, but passes on through the blood—the children of Terrestrial Exalted may themselves Exalt. They draw their power from the five elements. The greatest current lineage of Terrestrial Exalted is the *Scarlet Dynasty.* The Dragon-Blooded were convinced by the *Sidereals* to rise up and murder the *Solar Exalted,* an event that marked the end of the *First Age*. Almost no Dragon-Blooded living today knows the true history of these events.

Exigence, the: The Exigence is a force of divine fire and creative inspiration established by the *Unconquered Sun* so that lesser *gods* might have their own *Exalted* champions. Gods who tap the Exigence do not learn the secret of making Exalted, but through interaction with the Sun's medium, they are able to exude new kinds of *Chosen* from their own unique *Essence*. Some gods who petition to create an Exigent are destroyed by the process; they are simply too weak to produce a Chosen without spending their own lives. Others are powerful enough to make a single champion, though this effort leaves them drained and vastly reduced for a time. Still others may produce a single Exigent without wavering, while a truly mighty god might bring forth multiple heroes from his own Essence.

Fair Folk: Beings of unreal chaos native to the *Wyld*, the fae look with resentment at *Creation*, which defines itself as the center of the universe and imposes its own context on all that is, was, or might be. Those Fair Folk who venture into reality survive by eating dreams or souls. Many claim to seek the dissolution of the world, though a few seem happy to play at life among mortals. At the end of the *Great Contagion*, the Fair Folk mounted a great crusade against Creation, and were on the verge of destroying all the lands of shape when they were turned back by the heroism of the *Scarlet Empress*.

First Age, the: The golden age when men wielded magic far greater than the petty scraps they hold today. The First Age was raised up by the magic and genius of the *Solar Exalted.* It was an age marked by periods of enlightenment, peace, and discovery, but it ended in horror, murder, war, and the *Usurpation*.

Five Elemental Dragons, the: Children of *Gaia* and with power to challenge the *Incarnae*, the Five Elemental Dragons are the patrons of the *Terrestrial Exalted*. Each dragon embodies one of

the five elements, and is a creature of immense size and unfathomable power. It has been said that the Five Elemental Dragons were most active when the world was new, but over time they have grown distant and tired, and have fallen into slumber, allowing their power and wisdom to seep into the substance of the world. The *Immaculate Order* venerates the Elemental Dragons as the apotheosis of spiritual development of the *Terrestrial Exalted*.

Five Maidens, the: Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys; Venus, the Maiden of Serenity; Mars, the Maiden of Battles; Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets; and Saturn, the Maiden of Endings are the Five Maidens of Destiny. Among the *Incarnae*, they are the overseers of fate and destiny, of what will and must come to pass, and of what *Heaven* desires. They speak rarely and impart their secrets to few. Among the Incarnae they chose the fewest champions—the one hundred *Sidereal Exalted*. Though *Luna* is not numbered among them, she is considered their equal in power.

Gaia: A spirit of vast creative force, she is the mother of the *Five Elemental Dragons*. It is said that Gaia was one out of the tribe of the enemies of the *gods*, but she allied with the gods out of love for *Luna*.

ghost: A dead soul pulled out of the cycle of reincarnation by lingering attachments to the world, dark magic, an inauspicious death, or improper burial. Most such shades dwell in the macabre and foreboding *Underworld*, but some find their way back up to *Creation*, particularly in *shadowlands*.

god: A *spirit* acting as a divine representative of a place, thing, or concept. While all gods are formidable, they range from the little gods of road and field to mighty spirits of war and death. Lesser gods dwell in spirit-sanctums and temples in *Creation*, while the mightiest of gods reside in *Heaven*, ruled over by the *Incarnae*.

Great Contagion, the: Centuries into the *Second Age*, a catastrophic plague brought low the *Shogunate* of the *Dragon-Blooded*. Crossing species boundaries, it killed nine out of every ten living creature—fish and fowl, man and insect, leaving endless fields of desolation. Those with mastery over Essence were resistant, but were immediately faced with the invading hordes of the *Fair Folk*.

Great Curse, the: As they died, the enemies of the gods pronounced a curse against the *Chosen*. The Great Curse is unknown to all beings—save perhaps Jupiter of the *Five Maidens*—and though it has dogged the *Exalted* throughout history, it fell most heavily on the shoulders of the *Solar Exalted*.

Great House: The *Scarlet Empress* has divided her *Scarlet Dynasty* into Houses, each headed by one of her many spouses or children, eleven of which currently claim the status of Great House. The eleven in power now have not always been so; in the past she has engineered the fall of those she deemed too powerful, and raised new ones up in their place. Each House oversees a number of satrapies, raising legions for her armies, managing elements of her economy, and ruling portions of her *Blessed Isle*. As she never announced a successor, the heads of the Houses, long-accustomed to her pitting them against each other, now prepare to decide who will take her throne—raising taxes on their satrapies even as they call armed legions back to their homelands at the center of the world.

Guild, the: An association of mortal tradesmen and plutocrats, the Guild spans *Creation* entire, moving drugs, slaves, and sundries across the world. One of the most powerful economic forces in the *Age of Sorrows*, the Guild is governed almost entirely by mortals. They maintain the silver

standard of the dinar and promote economic stability worldwide even as they push opium on entire nations and enslave entire tribes. Based out of the *Scavenger Lands*, they are at times opposed to the *Realm* and at times work in concert with it.

hearthstone: In the heart of every *manse* forms a hearthstone, a token of solid *Essence* that grants its wielder some supernatural power. Rarely, hearthstones may also be found in the wild, usually to mark a place where a demesne had once existed.

Heaven: See *Yu-Shan*.

Immaculate Order, the: The state religion of the *Realm*. The Immaculate Order teaches its adherents that the cycle of reincarnation leads in an upward spiral to oneness with the *Five Elemental Dragons*, from animals through mortals through *Dragon-Blooded*. It also teaches that *spirits* are celestial functionaries, and worship is a dangerous activity fit only for the Dragon-Blooded—spirits follow *Heaven's* plan, so those spirits who demand worship are tyrants or con-artists, while mortals who expect better treatment through worship are deluding themselves or commiting bribery. Immaculate monks learn martial arts that they might keep unruly spirits in line and combat *Anathema* wherever they're found.

The Immaculate Order is the vector through which the *Sidereal Exalted* control the *Realm.*

Incarna: The greatest of *gods* and rulers of *Heaven*, the Incarnae are the gods of the great celestial bodies visible in *Creation's* sky. See *Unconquered Sun*, *Luna*, and *Five Maidens*.

Luna: The Changing Lady is an *Incarna*, the goddess of the moon and the premier goddess of night, luck, iconoclasm, and change. She is a legendary huntress and trickster and the patron of the *Lunar Exalted.* As the mistress of Gaia, Luna made her Chosen bestial, the children of her greatest union.

magical materials: Artificers recognize five magical materials particularly suited for the channeling of Essence—orichalcum, a superheavy gold attuned to the *Solar Exalted;* moonsilver, fluidic silver attuned to the *Lunar Exalted;* jade, a stone attuned to the *Dragon-Blooded;* starmetal, rare metal from the sky attuned to the *Sidereal Exalted;* and soulsteel, a metal mined from the *Underworld* with which the *Abyssal Exalted* seem to have an affinity.

Malfeas: Hell. A nightmarish kingdom of brass and obsidian under a sickening green sky. Malfeas sits outside the world, surrounded by an endless desert at the ends of eternity. The *Yozis* were imprisoned here with their *demon* legions after being vanquished by the *Exalted*. When a demon is summoned from Malfeas by a sorcerer, it may cross the sands of eternity in just five days, departing five days in advance of the sorcerer's call.

manse: Sorcerous construction created to channel the power of a *demesne*. Manses are often temples or fortresses, and in addition to forming *hearthstones*, they channel the *Essence* of their demesnes to work magical effects, from the frivolous to the useful to the dangerous.

Neverborn: Through the Exalted the enemies of the gods were slain and became the Neverborn, vast chthonic ghosts dreaming in the deepest part of the *Underworld*. Their whispers shape the afterlife, and their magic empowers the *Deathlords* and the *Abyssal Exalted*. They were the masters of the universe until the gods raised mortal champions against them. Whether they seek to drag the world into death so they can rule it once more, or obliterate it entirely to escape its fetters and find a final rest, none can say.

Old Realm, the: The government of *Creation* during the *First Age*, overthrown in the *Usurpation*. The *Scarlet Empress* suppressed usage of the term—she legitimized her claim to rule by insisting her *Realm* was a continuation of the old, and proclaims false any distinction between the two. Old Realm also refers to the oldest language of *spirits,* every syllable of which is charged with sorcerous power.

outcaste: Those *Dragon-Blooded* who do not claim fealty to the *Realm*, either by membership in one of the Dynasty's *Great Houses*, service as a monk of the *Immaculate Order*, or soldier in the legions are labeled outcastes. *Creation* holds many outcaste lines, from Lookshy's Seventh Legion to the Forest Witches of the deep East.

Realm, the: The mightiest empire in *Creation*, based on the *Blessed Isle* and ruled by the *Scarlet Dynasty*, the Realm controls hundreds of satrapies across the *Threshold*, nations under *Dragon-Blooded* boot. The Realm extorts taxes and tribute from almost the whole of the civilized world.

Scarlet Dynasty, the: The ruling class of the *Realm*, composed of those *Dragon-Blooded* who are descended from the *Scarlet Empress* or have married into her lineage. Organized into eleven *Great Houses* and many smaller houses.

Scarlet Empress, the: Until her disappearance five years ago, the woman called the Scarlet Empress was the unquestioned autarch of the *Realm* and the most powerful political ruler in *Creation*. At the climax of the *Great Contagion*, she took control of the *Realm Defense Grid* and single-handedly ended the worldwide invasion of the *Fair Folk* and the plague devastating the world. She then used her new weapon's power to crush all rivals to her throne and, through centuries of political maneuvering and conquest, founded the *Scarlet Dynasty*, which to this day serves as the ruling class for the greatest empire in Creation.

Scavenger Lands, the: The Scavenger Lands are the territory in the near East of the *Threshold* who proclaim independence from the *Realm*, having resisted multiple invasions. Its heart is the River Province, a region containing a series of mighty, loosely allied city-states lining the mighty rivers that run through the heart of the region.

Second Age, the: All the time since the *Usurpation* is marked the Second Age of Man, where mortals and *Exalted* war amid the ruins of the great fallen civilizations of the *First Age*. The Lunars call this era the Fallen Age, while savants call it the *Age of Sorrows*.

Second Breath: The moment of Exaltation, so called because infant mortals gain their souls at the moment of their first breath following birth.

shadowland: Where the *Underworld* touches *Creation* there are shadowlands, places where no barrier exists between life and death, and the living may treat with the dead. Those who leave a shadowland during the day find themselves in Creation, while those who leave its borders at night enter the Underworld.

Shogunate, the: The military dictatorship set up by the *Dragon-Blooded* in the wake of the *Usurpation*, which crumbled away in the face of the *Great Contagion*. The Shogunate was marked by endemic warfare between Dragon-Blooded daimyos and the catastrophic loss of *First Age* magic. Many *Terrestrial Exalted* savants lionize this period as an age of heroes and a flowering of Dragon-Blooded culture.

sorcery: While the *Exalted* use *Essence* reflexively and instinctually as *Charms*, savants of the *First Age* codified its manipulation into more rigid but powerful forms. Sorcery can be shared between *Exalted* of different types.

spirit: Divine beings of *Essence* and will. *Gods*, *elementals*, *demons*, and *ghosts* are all spirits.

Terrestrial Exalted: The *Dragon-Blooded*, the weakest and most numerous of the *Chosen*.

Threshold, the: The lands between the Inland Sea and the *Wyld* make up the Threshold, all those parts of *Creation* that are not the *Blessed Isle.* The Empress considers all of Creation just a precursor—a Threshold—to her home at the heart of the world.

Time Before, the: A nebulous span of time that includes all history from the dawn of existence to the rise of the *First Age*.

Unconquered Sun, the: The greatest of the *Incarnae*, the Unconquered Sun is the *god* of virtue and will, war and enlightenment, the day and the night, and excellence. He is the King of Heaven and the patron of the *Solar Exalted*. It was he who led the gods in rebellion against their masters in the *Time Before*. At the height of the *First Age*, he turned his face from *Creation* in anger at the excesses of the Solars.

Underworld, the: The lands of the dead, floating on the sea of the void, the Underworld is a shattered reflection of *Creation* and a capstone over the tombs of the *Neverborn.* Those who die and are unable to move on become trapped in the Underworld, where the souls and Essence of dead things have congregated, giving rise to malady and horror. The Underworld is where the *Deathlords* keep their kingdoms. In service to death, they have built their fortresses into Creation; in every direction, the spires of a Deathlord's citadel peers out over the skies of a shadowland.

Usurpation, the: When the armies of the *Dragon-Blooded* and their *Sidereal Exalted* allies overthrew the *Solar Exalted*. The backlash of this event was catastrophic and weakened the world against what would come later.

Wyld, the: Chaos and entropy, the infinite precursor to reality. *Creation* was raised up from the Wyld, and the Wyld was bound and subsumed into its substance. The Wyld still exists beyond the borders of the world, pressing inward and ever threatening to dissolve the lands of shape back into shifting unreality. Strange lands and strange things dwell within and emerge from the Wyld, including the *Fair Folk*. Pockets of the Wyld exist in Creation's interior, remnants of the Fair Folk's invasion long ago.

Wyld Hunt, the: A Wyld Hunt is a group of Dragon-Blooded who band together to hunt and kill the *Anathema*. The Wyld Hunt has been weakened by the impending war for the Realm's throne. It will not stay that way.

Yozi: Demon princes and lords of Hell, the Yozis are the enemies of the gods, who peer out at *Creation* with lust and hatred. Once they were the masters of the universe, but fell to the might of the *Exalted*. Those of them who were slain by the *Solars* became the *Neverborn*. The Yozis are imprisoned in a blasted kingdom of iron and black marble beneath a cold green sun, called *Malfeas*.

Yu-Shan: Heaven. The celestial city of Yu-Shan is home to the gods and the *Incarnae* who oversee the management of Heaven, *Creation*, and fate through a grand bureaucracy. Of the *Exalted*, only the *Sidereal Exalted* call it home.

How to Play This Game

Exalted is a roleplaying game for two to eight players. In a roleplaying game, players cooperatively work with one another and the game rules to tell a memorable story—in **Exalted**, this will be a story set in an ancient and forgotten age of magic, mystery, and danger.

Each player (with one exception—see below) creates a character to play during the game—one of the Solar Exalted, a mortal hero granted the blessings and power of the Unconquered Sun. Each player dictates what their character says, does, and thinks throughout the course of play.

The final player takes on the role of the Storyteller—they describe the world the other players' characters move through, and create and control all the other individuals, gods, and monsters that populate that world. The Storyteller's job is to challenge the other players' characters, embroil them in dramatic situations, present interesting people for them to encounter, and otherwise to help weave a story around their exploits. The Storyteller is also the final adjudicator of the game's rules, applying them to keep the story moving and to keep things unpredictable and exciting.

Exalted play sessions generally last between three and eight hours—it's something you get your friends together to make an afternoon or evening of. Sessions are sequential—you pick up the story again where it left off next time you play. Most groups like to meet once a week, or every two weeks, though there's certainly nothing stopping you from playing more (or less) frequently. Some groups will keep a game running until they resolve a single major storyline. Others may continue developing their characters and the complex stories around them for years.

Unlike most games, there's no fixed way to "win" **Exalted**. The goal isn't to advance your character to some ultimate victory-point; rather, the goal is to have fun telling an engaging story with your friends. As long as everyone at the table had a good time during the session, you've won.

Suggested Resources

Fiction

Night's Master, Tanith Lee

Night's Master and the rest of Lee's Flat Earth series were instrumental in the making of **Exalted**, and it's easy to see why. *Night's Master* is set in a world pervaded by weird magic, full of apathetic gods, wicked spirits, and wicked men, from which a tale of triumph may still be told. Superbly written and surprisingly brief, this novel has it all—substantive magic, sorcerers and demons, and the demon kingdom of Druhim Vanashta.

Hawkmoon, Michael Moorcock

Hawkmoon was another major influence in the making of **Exalted**. It gives a great example of a sorcerous empire hell bent on conquest. It also features a lot of strange, sorcerous mechanisms that are imperfectly understood, even by the few sorcerers who have a prayer of using them. The character Count Brass from the *Jewel in the Skull* is a perfect example of a Solar Exalted, particularly in demonstrating how one with such tremendous, anachronistic knowledge can build weapon systems that make him equal to the forces of the dark empire.

The Complete Pegāna, Lord Dunsany

Lord Dunsany's mythology has inspired countless works, and his gods were a major influence on the character of spirits in Creation. The Maidens of Destiny owe much to the gods of *Pegāna*, and more than one Yozi echoes the threat of Mana-Yood-Sushai, while certain Third Circle demons can often be compared to beings such as Skarl the Drummer, whose drum beats the rhythm of time and existence. *Pegāna* also takes a cynical view towards holy men, particularly in a world where gods exist and are indifferent to prayer at best, or hostile at worst.

Imajica, Clive Barker

A man awakens to his long-lost divinity and remembers lost lives and lost loves. With unmatched sorcerous talent, he travels across the broken landscape of the universe to unite all worlds as one, and bring magic back to Earth. Imajica is a great source for examples of Charms and sorcery, but it is a must-read for the battle that occurs inside the world-sized body of Hapexamendios, God and creator of the Five Dominions.

The Black Company, Glen Cook

The powerful, large-scale magic of this series was a major source of inspiration for **Exalted**'s sorcery. It also has great character development, and takes place in a gritty world, unromantic in its depiction of the lives of common men—something Creation shares.

A Song of Ice and Fire, by George R. R. Martin

The collected novels of this series have revolutionized fantasy fiction, and are recommended on their merit alone. However, they also provide a great example of how politics, lore, and geography all come together to set the stage for major events, some of which were set in motion years, generations, or centuries before. The rich sense of history and depth of immersion offered by Martin's Westeros is unparalleled today, and has served as a lamplight for the reconstruction of the **Exalted** setting in Third Edition. We also really like how it subverts or contradicts the normal expectations (and sometimes the logic) of the genre in order to remind us that magic is not to be taken for granted; it lurks around the edges of everything, and without control or understanding, it signifies instability and long winters full of darkness and terror.

The Coming of Conan the Cimmerian, Robert E. Howard

This collection of Conan stories is a major source of inspiration for the unsettled outlands of Creation, where the world is wild with ancient and heretical magic outside the Realm's purifying grip. It also gives a damn good representation of the pulp hero. Solars owe a lot of their DNA to Conan, an ostensibly mortal man who yet demonstrates superhuman might, quickness, and resistance to injury. The sorcerers of Conan are also particularly badass, and have played a major part in the reconceptualization of sorcery in **Exalted**. Thoth-Amon's thrall is a particularly good example of a blood-ape, while Yogah in "The Tower of the Elephant" is a good example of an ancient spirit or a pre-human sorcerer from the Time Before. Full of foul monsters, gigantic ancient temples to unknown gods, and wicked and terrible sorcerers, Howard's *Conan* stories have helped us put a lot of pulp conception back into the world of **Exalted**.

Classics

The Histories, Herodotus

A record of warfare, cultures and politics, and in some cases a bestiary, this work shows the complexities of the ancient world.

The Iliad, Homer

Achilles is sulky, self-centered, quick-tempered, and undefeatable. Watch the fate of the known world depend on how he feels on any given day.

Journey to the West, Wu Cheng'en

This story details the exploits of Sun Wukong, born of the Five Elements, master of many divine secrets, who uses cunning as much as his divine power. It serves as a limitless source of ideas for a world understood through spiritual pretexts and divine (and martial) allegories. Its first seven chapters are also the primary inspiration for Yu-Shan, **Exalted**'s Heaven.

The Book of Judges

This book of the Bible focuses on a number of divine heroes who led the children of Israel in victories against enemies who were vastly more powerful. While Samson gets most of the attention, one should not overlook Shamgar of Anath with his ox-goad, or Deborah whose leadership and cunning crushed the enemies of her people.

Manga

Rurouni Kenshin, Nobuhiro Watsuki

Kenshin Himura is a master of an ancient supernatural kenjutsu. He is an atavistic throwback to an earlier time, a warrior whose skills and prowess are no longer relevant to the rapidly-changing world. Kenshin is repeatedly thrown up against the remnants of the samurai era, and with each victory he slowly erases the last of Japan's ancient martial legacy. Though the falling action of this story is the exact opposite of **Exalted**, it serves as a poignant example of the return of the Solars by contrast. It also has fantastic fight scenes.

Inuyasha, Rumiko Takahasi

The yokai in this series provide an example of spirits and sorcery in Creation. It's also good inspiration for Artifact weapons. It can be a good source for more light-hearted takes on **Exalted**.

Claymore, Norihiro Yagi

This manga deftly illustrates life in a world of predatory supernatural beings. The earlier parts of the series are a good example of what life is like in the far-flung portions of the Threshold where the Fair Folk and other horrors openly prey on mortal communities, and where gods and heroes are usually only stirred to help by lavish bribes. The titular Claymore monster-hunters themselves are great inspiration for the Liminal Exalted, both in their powerful and grotesque fighting styles, and in the open fear with which they're regarded by the people they protect.

Anime

Ninja Scroll (1995)

This anime heavily influenced the Charms and supernatural martial arts of the Exalted. The Eight Devils of Kimon are particularly noteworthy in that their master, Gemma, has returned from Hell with physical immortality and a conqueror's ambition. But Gemma's methods are what makes *Ninja Scroll* such an enduring source of influence: his plan is to steal a gold shipment and use it to pay for guns to fund a revolution against the shogun. *Ninja Scroll* deftly reconciles a world of supernatural magic with a world driven by money, politics, and mortal men, by putting that magic in around the margins. Also, the fight scenes are a great example of what combat in **Exalted** looks like.

Samurai Champloo (2004)

Beautiful animation, fantastic fight scenes, and a great soundtrack, *Samurai Champloo* is noteworthy for its subtle and overt references to the supernatural. What seems like a straight-laced historical drama routinely becomes something more. Never before has an anime mixed realism and the supernatural into such a perfect union. The characters often struggle against hunger, poverty, and an oppressive government. Issues like plague and political corruption are addressed. Cultural xenophobia is demonstrated as Japan tries to deal with the influence of outsiders. Yet there are moments of incredible spiritual acuity that makes this a great example of contrasting power and skill, realism and myth.

Howl's Moving Castle (2004)

Howl is a great example of a Twilight Caste sorcerer. His castle played a large part in conceptualizing sorcerous projects. Howl also gives a good example of what it's like to deal with a Solar who is acting out a Virtue Flaw.

Television and Movies

Swordsman II (1991)

Starring Jet Li and Brigitte Lin, this martial arts fantasy exudes the look and feel of combat in **Exalted.**

The Bride With White Hair (1993)

A wuxia classic, this film is condensed **Exalted**: a hero moved by his passion to guard a magical mountaintop for years on end, a "wolf woman" heroine that serves as great Lunar inspiration, demonic sorcerers, and impossible mystical kung fu, all woven around a story of romance and politics.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)

Perhaps the most famous wuxia film in the Western Hemisphere, the wirework has been an inspiration for some of **Exalted's** visuals. The plot is one of drama and emotion and that makes it a good source for scenes driven by social influence.

Rome (2005)

A spellbinding look at Rome at the end of the reign of Julius Caesar, *Rome* shows off the decadence, filth, and corruption of the ancient world's most enlightened government. It is a must-see for players who are interested in Realm politics, social influence, political maneuvering, or showing how assassins and strongmen can have a huge influence on rule.

The Tudors (2007)

The political drama of this show played a large part in our conceptualizing the social influence system. *The Tudors* is full of back-room meetings, illicit liaisons, and secret conversations, and it shows how the wheels of government are turned by social actors working manipulations on one another.

Video Games

Dynasty Warriors series, Koei Tecmo

Based on the classic Chinese epic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, this series is a good visceral representation of the sheer power of **Exalted** characters. Play one of a host of protagonists, each with their own shifting loyalties and goals, as you slam through literally hundreds of nameless soldiers en route to confronting other, equally mighty heroes. Few other sources get across the sheer impact of an Exalt on the battlefield quite as effectively.

Final Fantasy VII, Square-Enix

Though the technology is far beyond what you'll find in Creation, *Final Fantasy VII* wins on atmosphere alone. Set in an eerily empty world, *Final Fantasy VII* has a number of elements worth paying special attention to. It is a world run by a powerful military government, with superhuman agents who derive their powers from a celestial being. A life force moves through all things and eventually returns to the Planet. Above all, the empty unsettledness of the world is thrown into stark contrast by the elements of basic technology that seem almost anachronistic: in all the world there is only one single small airplane, and a single rocket ship makes up the entirety of the space program. The Planet seems almost as if it were recovering from an unspoken apocalypse.

Assassin's Creed series, Ubisoft

These games span a gamut of locations and historical periods that serve as excellent inspirations for different sorts of **Exalted** games—the original could be lifted out of the wealthy trade cities of the South, while the sequels depict the political chaos of the Scavenger Lands and piratical adventure in the distant West. Setting aside the hugger-mugger of futuristic memory devices and alien technology, the *Assassin's Creed* games also do an excellent job depicting occult conspiracies at the highest levels of power, complete with stealthy, athletic heroes uncovering and undermining these powerful regimes with surgical strikes—a great source of Night Caste inspiration.

Dissidia Final Fantasy, Square-Enix

A host of heroes and villains drawn from many diverse origins battle one another for the fate of the universe—but whose fate are they fighting to impose? Will they consent to the choices set down for them, try to forge another path to break the endless cycle of battle, or simply achieve what personal goals they can while the world burns around them? And just what is it that distinguishes a hero from a villain, anyway? Dissidia's heroes wield giant weapons and over-the-top magic that fits right in with **Exalted**, and its agile, cinematic battle system was the single largest influence on Third Edition's combat rules.

For long centuries the claws of the storm had been tearing at the temple. The ordinary storms, the great storms, and the storms which were seen only every century or so, and which are never seen today. Those terrible primal things could tear a man to pieces with their force, or thresh him to the bone with their fearsome hail. Twelve times had they torn at the fabric of the temple. They had consumed the decorative surfaces in seven ravening visitations. For the last five such storms, they had gnawed hungrily at the jade and granite fabric of the manse, but to little avail. After each storm, the manse had dried, the clouds and the winds had receded, and the monument to the Unconquered Sun still slept under the vastness of the sky.

Every corner was rounded, every high place worn down. When Perfect Soul arrived, she came with the sense that she was making a final, perfunctory stop on a long and bootless errand. She had uttered many pointless beseechments, made many futile pleas; this would be her last. Some spirits had seen her, and spurned her or demurred her entreaties. Others had left her standing in her finery in the midst of empty shrines. All were wary of the Immaculates.

Perfect Soul entered the temple of the Unconquered Sun, a deity almost unknown in the present age. Too mighty for attention, in the Second Age it was the custom to consider him unapproachable and accord him no special devotion, certainly not enough to maintain a priesthood in his holy places. *That you have a temple at all chokes me*, thought the amirah, feeling a flash of anger at the feckless apathy of gods. But the First Age had been a different time, and they had taken the cult of the Unconquered Sun seriously then.

Before the wind-scarred altar, she placed the bowl and poured out the wine of the sacrifice. She lit a cone of incense and the heavy smell of burning herbs filled the space. The room grew larger around her, and she dismissed it as the effect of the fumes.

Unconquered Sun, Father of Morning, Reborn and Unvanquishable, hear my prayer. The Empress has disappeared and the Dragon-Blooded have discovered artifacts in my lands. Nothing restrains their depredations. They destroy what they please to excavate in the capital, and their demands for tribute have become outrageous. If I set my people against the Realm, they will be massacred and I will be deposed and slain, and some amenable cousin put up on the throne in my place. Aid me, Unconquered Sun, give me the strength to lead and defend my people.

And the four-armed statue, seemingly made of porcelain yet untouched by the centuries that had passed since the end of the First Age, unmarred by terrible storms, regarded her silently. Its face was set in a mute expression of fierceness and effort. It mocked her, another uncaring god, the heavens themselves set against her, the little gods terrified of the Immaculates, the great gods vast and uncaring.

“Damn you and your silence,” she hissed, clenching her fists until the nails bit and her blood speckled the floor. “Lord of ruins, you are as empty and pointless as your shrine!” Her anger and despair welled up out of her like a torrent. She screamed at the idol, grabbed her scepter and swung it with both hands against the effigy’s head.

And her blow shattered the head of the idol that twelve times had withstood the winds called Adorjan’s Sighs, the wind which had gnawed the granite of the shrine down to storm-smoothed arcs, without so much as the marring of its colorful paint.

Perfect Soul was Exalted at that moment, and the power of the Unconquered Sun entered her and remade her into a vessel of utmost power. Great was the event, total the remaking of her Essence,

yet it happened in an instant, as if it were the opening of a lock. And then the Unconquered Sun spoke to her:

“You who struck my likeness, I have seen your plight and felt your despair. You whom the gods have abandoned, your courage, your wrath, and your pain has made you one with the King of Heaven. Once, I felt the sting of betrayal. In my wrath I turned my face from Creation. Now I turn it back. Go forth from this place and know that my light goes with you, for the fate of all the world is yours to decide. Be now the hand of celestial vengeance, and bring righteousness to the world as you know best.”

And thus, in a wasteland shrine torn by the ages, was Perfect Soul made a servant of righteousness, and received into the Zenith Caste. Few marked the event at the time, but it was one of great moments, and its echoes would resound through the Time of Tumult.

Chapter One: The Exalted

The world needs heroes. It always has, and it always will. Sometimes mortal heroes rise from the ranks of humanity, beating back the petty evils of selfishness and greed. But sometimes mortal heroes are not enough. That’s when the Exalted rise.

The Exalted are mortal champions chosen by the gods to wield divine power. A virtuous teacher is empowered by the Unconquered Sun to spread enlightenment to the masses. A tenacious villager becomes a scion for the spirit of the fields, taking on the god’s very nature to protect her people from invaders. An ambitious young noble thrills to the fire that ignites in his blood, cleansing and invigorating him. All are Exalted.

Heroes who wield the power of the five natural elements are known as Terrestrial Exalts, individually the weakest but also the most abundant, while heroes who wield the power of the sun, moon and stars are known as Celestial Exalts, the greatest among the Chosen. In between are heroes of every imaginable stripe, from those who wield the terrifying magics of the dead to those bursting with the energy of the animistic spirits that exist in all things.

The Exalted are set apart from the mortals they once were in many ways. They can live for centuries or even millennia, they naturally heal even the most grievous of wounds, and they will never die of a mere passing sickness. But the most wondrous of these is the power to channel the fundamental force of the universe, called Essence. Essence ebbs and flows in all things—in living creatures, in rivers and mountains, in the patterns of storms and fate. It composes human beings and ripples with their every act, but most people cannot command it. It takes an Exalt to direct these raw, nescient forces into miracles.

Some of these miracles are innate talents, such as the Zenith Caste’s ability to cremate the dead with holy fire. Some are magics that must be learned over time but come naturally to an Exalt, called Charms. Charms allow the Exalted to perform all manner of amazing feats, from leaping mountains and singlehandedly defeating a hundred men in battle, to swaying the minds and hearts of a nation, to unlocking mysteries never meant to be revealed. All Essence is not created equal. Its character changes depending on its source and purpose. The Essence of the great elemental dragons is wild and primal, while the Essence of the dead is harsh and chilling. The Charms of the Exalts who channel these various flavors of Essence reflect their temperaments.

Exalts dedicated and willing enough to devote themselves to a difficult endeavor can delve into the occult secrets of reality itself, bending Essence to an even more world-shaking purpose

known as sorcery. The spells of a sorcerer can re-write the very laws of Creation, calling down storms of acid or commanding powers from beyond the world's rim.

But Essence is a limited resource for the Exalted, whose mortal bodies were not designed to wield such power. They can absorb the ambient Essence of the natural world around them, but this is a gradual process. If an Exalt uses up all of her stores of Essence, she becomes little more than mortal for a time. Once her stores are replenished, though, her enemies would do well to take heed. With Essence at her disposal, an Exalt can challenge the gods themselves, and even greater adversaries, for the fate of all Creation.

> Exalted Longevity
>
> How long do the Exalted live, on average?
>
> The answer varies. Those Chosen who strongly cultivate their Essence can exceed the "normal" lifespan of their kind by decades, or even centuries in the case of the Celestial Exalted. Some Exalts seek out magical anagathics with which to further extend their lives.
>
> **The Dragon-Blooded** live 250-300 years on average, though those with truly refined mastery of Essence, as well as those employing rare and expensive magical regimens, may live significantly longer. For example, the sorceress Mnemon, eldest surviving daughter of the Scarlet Empress, will soon celebrate her 400th birthday and is still in her prime.
>
> **The Solar and Lunar Exalted** both have an average lifespan in the range of 2,000-3,000 years, although this is, again, subject to significant variance—particularly in the First Age, when much research was devoted to anagathic sorcery, artifacts, and mystical drugs.
>
> **The Sidereal Exalted** live 3,500-5,000 years. Life-extending magic which benefits the other Exalted seems curiously ineffective on the Maidens' Chosen.
>
> As for the other Exalted, it's hard to say—the Exigents vary greatly from one to another, while Liminals seem oddly inconsistent in the span of their days and the ways in which they cease to be, although several are known to have been active for many centuries. The Abyssal Exalted may have the potential to live forever—this is the promise uttered by the Deathlords—but no one can say for certain, since none have been Exalted for longer than five years.
>
> Few Exalted die of old age—they're much more likely to die by violence, misadventure, betrayal, or even accidents (particularly where sorcery is involved) than to expire peacefully in bed. Regardless, the Chosen retain the appearance and vigor of youth for most of their great lifespans—the marks of advanced age don't appear until an Exalt's waning decades, and they remain spry and physically capable until their final few years.

Exaltation

Mortals in the world of **Exalted** are granted a soul with their first breath. It is telling, then, that the Chosen generally refer to the moment of their Exaltation as "The Second Breath." Exaltation is a moment of empowerment, but also a renewal, a rebirth. It doesn't re-make the Exalt, but

rather uplifts her, makes her a chain in a legacy of greatness stretching back to the dawn of human history.

But who does Exaltation come to? When? How?

Solar Exaltation is unpredictable, though a few generalizations can be made. Solars are often men and women who have already accomplished great things and displayed excellence in some discipline or other. This isn't universal—sometimes a Solar is simply a person of enormous potential who has never had the opportunity to exercise it, or who is possessed of greatness of spirit. Although it's rare for cruel blackguards to gain the Unconquered Sun's blessing, there's little consistency in the morality of those that are Chosen. Many consider themselves righteous, but their definitions of righteous behavior vary widely enough to have brought the Solar Exalted to war in the past—and will again.

Solar Exaltation usually arrives in a moment of great stress, danger, pressure, or turmoil. The Solar feels a great rush of energy suffusing her, and begins to instinctively draw on her Essence for the first time. Her Caste Mark erupts on her brow, and her anima banner quickly builds to the fullness of its radiant splendor—a state in which it will remain for several hours. Often the Solar finds herself facing a difficult or insurmountable trial of some sort, and Exaltation grants her the power necessary to survive or triumph. Solar Exaltation could bless anyone of sufficient mettle at any time and station of life—it has uplifted princes and paupers, children and great-grandfathers, savants and sell-swords, saints and assassins.

Solar Exaltation is normally wordless—the Solar finds herself with the boundless power of Essence roaring in her soul, but is given no mandate, instructions, or explanation. The Zenith Caste is an exception—each Zenith's Exaltation is accompanied by a short proclamation from the Unconquered Sun which echoes in the Exalt's mind and soul. He explains why the Zenith is worthy of his blessing, and exhorts her to go forth and make the world a righteous place, as best she knows how.

Exaltation is similar for many other Exalts, but there are always key differences. The Dragon-Blooded experience the Second Breath because they carry at least a trace of Terrestrial blood in their ancestry. The Elemental Dragons never speak during their Exaltation—it falls to their society and religion to explain their place in the world. By contrast, Lunar Exaltation behaves much as Solar Exaltation, save that the goddess Luna personally attends the Second Breath of each of her Chosen. Sidereal Exaltation is slow and subtle, unfolding over a matter of days or weeks, accompanied by strange omens, waking dreams, and mystical portents. Those few Abyssals who have been willing to speak of their Black Exaltation insist it occurred in a moment when they stood at the cusp of life and death, and that they faced a choice between taking the Second Breath… or their last. Liminal Exaltation is stranger yet, while Exigents vary tremendously.

Essence Fever

Commanding Essence is a heady experience. It's not like speaking an incantation, turning a key, or flipping a card. To be aware of Essence is to feel—to always feel—a new part of yourself, a part that is *alive* and *active* and *burning with power.* The Essence of the Exalted is as much a part of them as their blood or thoughts or breath, and young Exalts ache to use it.

Because an Exalt's Essence is a part of them, this takes the form of the urge to *act*. Most Exalted would never say "I use my Essence," any more than they would say "I use my muscles." A swordsman fights his enemies. An orator speaks words of revolution. Essence suffuses these acts.

Older Chosen know this phenomenon as Essence fever, (or, more dramatically, Essence possession). Solar Essence cries out for heedless glory, imparting a great desire *to act*, *to do*, to grasp and wield their newfound power to seize longstanding dreams, settle old grudges, and otherwise recklessly impose themselves on the world. If greatness is in the nature of the Solar Exalted, then their Essence pushes them to seize that greatness *now.* It's neither irresistible nor insurmountable, even for the very young—but the urge is there.

As a Solar gains experience with his power—generally within a span of months or years—he tames his Essence, quiets the voice that speaks out and urges him onward, *to glory, to victory, to more*. He makes that impulse serve him, rather than letting it drive him.

Other Exalted are subject to their own Essence fevers. Indeed, lessons on mastering one's Essence are a vital part of the educational curriculum of young Dragon-Blooded, and of the teachings of the Immaculate Philosophy in general. Without such rigidly-instilled discipline, the powerful elemental urges of the Terrestrial Exalted likely would have torn the Realm apart long ago.

> The Character of Essence
>
> To a Lawgiver, channeling Solar Essence brings a myriad of feelings and sensations. It is a kind of pure cosmic transcendence that is the order of the divine. It is soaring triumph and limitless joy; it is the harmony of all things, a song that lilts and lifts the soul, and the hum of raw, limitless power; it is a making and unmaking of the self, and an ecstasy of understanding.
>
> To a deathknight, channeling Abyssal Essence also brings a plethora of emotions. Abyssal Essence is pure unmitigated love of the darkness, the thrill of the endless night, and the certainty of death that begets a calming focus. It is an undying romance, the embrace of the grave. Death is a lover, and her touch holds no fear. It is the hymn of the dead impelling one's greatness, and a heightening of the real, such that colors burn brighter, scents are stronger, tastes are sweeter, and all living things radiate with beauty and glory before the eyes of the reaper.

Caste Marks

The Celestial Exalted possess symbols known as Caste Marks, which naturally appear upon their foreheads when their Essence burns hot. These marks signify the duties the gods wish to impress upon their Chosen, and in the First Age, acted as symbols of pride and badges of office; an Exalt can cause her Caste Mark to appear with only the slightest bit of concentration and exertion, should she wish to announce her nature to men or gods.

Dragon-Blooded lack Caste Marks, instead bearing a variety of markings expressing their elemental aspect. Such marks might include brilliantly red hair or eyes that glow like embers in dim light, for Fire Aspects; or a green tinge to the eyes and lips, or hair that smells of roses, or fingernails of living wood, for Wood Aspects; or tempers that manifest as localized winds, for Air Aspects.

Other Exalted vary. Some Exigents have sacred marks like the Celestial Exalted, while others bear physical indications of their divine station like the Dragon-Blooded, while yet others have no particular markings at all. Most disturbingly, the Abyssal Exalted display Caste Marks appearing as blackened versions of the Caste Marks of the Solar Exalted…

Caste Marks can manifest variously, depending on the circumstances and the mood of the Exalt. An Eclipse quietly revealing himself at the beginning of negotiations with a proud spirit might will his Caste Mark to fade slowly into full visibility upon his brow, announcing the legitimacy of his presence. On the other hand, an enraged Dawn Caste revealing the folly of those who have challenged him might have the arms of his sun-burst Caste Mark slam into visibility in rapid succession, each accompanied with a boom like thunder.

The Tools of the Chosen

An Exalt's command of Essence extends beyond the miracles of Charms and sorcery. The Chosen have long bent themselves to the study of the world and how to harness its Essence through mystic tools and structures. Most Chosen seek to bedeck themselves in mighty artifacts —miraculous arms, armor, and trinkets forged of the magical materials and wondrous rarities, which lend them magical blessings. The Exalted take particular pride in their weapons and armor, and often establish a deep rapport with their martial panoply, learning to awaken special miracles within the union of warrior and artifact, known as Evocations.

In the First Age, most Exalted owned a number of such wonders. Alas, many artifacts have been lost to the ages, and so today the Chosen fight and die for control of those that remain. The few artificer-smiths among the Exalted, those who have not forgotten the ancient ways of forging mighty daiklaves, imperishable armor, flying boots, or other wonders, can command whatever prices they desire—assuming they make their services available at all.

Even more coveted than wondrous artifacts are those rare places of power in the world where Essence pools and gathers, known as demesnes. Demesnes are often strange, uncanny places, and the strongest demesnes are easily identifiable as such even by mortals. Demesnes are often marked by an intensity of elemental power, featuring roaring waterfalls, glorious crystal caverns, fire-blackened trees which yet live and continue to grow, and similar prodigies.

An Exalt who has attuned herself to a demesne may partake of the thunderous outpouring of its Essence to empower herself, but this isn't the reason most Chosen covet demesnes. A properly trained geomantic architect may refine and harness the power of a demesne through the construction of a magical fortress, palace, or tower known as a manse. A manse's sacred geometry channels the untamed flow of a demesne into evoking particular miracles, which may render the manse into a home of unmatched luxuries and wonders, an impregnable magical fortress, a wide-reaching weather-control station, or any of a number of other uncanny designs. Some manses are designed to concentrate all of a demesne's power into a single point, where it crystallizes into a hearthstone—a magical crystal or jewel capable of empowering the mightiest and most complex of artifacts, fortifying their bearer, or radiating potent blessings or curses.

The Roll of the Chosen

What follows is an overview of the most numerous Chosen of the Age of Sorrows. It's not a complete list—there are more Exalted than the seven types detailed here, which will be spoken of in future supplements. ***Only* the Solar Exalted are playable using this book**. The other Chosen will become playable in upcoming books, the first of which is **Dragon-Blooded: What**

Fire Has Wrought. Simplified rules for using non-Solar Exalts as antagonists may be found in Chapter Eight.

[BEGIN SOLAR PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Solar Exalted

Forged from the power of the greatest of gods, the Solar Exalted are the spiritual mimesis of the sun and all it represents: glory, magnanimity, power, relentlessness, inspiration, creativity, and ascension. As the sun dominates heaven, so too do the Solars shine brighter than their peers. They are natural-born leaders, scholars, warriors, and builders, brought forth from the greatest heroes of mankind and set on high as the Unconquered Sun's own champions.

The Solar Exalted are the greatest of all the Chosen. Be they benevolent or tyrannical in their courses, the Solars' natural mastery of the world and their ability to uphold the loftiest principles has earned them the sobriquet of the Lawgivers.

The Solar Castes

The Unconquered Sun selected his champions to reflect all aspects of his majesty, and to express the totality of human excellence. As such, each Solar belongs to one of five Castes:

• **The Dawn Caste:** These Solars are the mightiest warriors and most fearsome strategists to have ever walked Creation.

• **The Zenith Caste:** Holy men, priests, leaders of men, founders of religions, and uplifters of nations, these Solars seek to make the world a righteous place, as best they know how.

• **The Twilight Caste:** Craftsmen, wise men, and binders of occult forces, these Solars are the most erudite savants and mightiest sorcerers to have ever lived.

• **The Night Caste:** These Solars walk unseen among the wicked, bending the tools of darkness to the service of Creation as assassins, spies, and thieves.

• **The Eclipse Caste:** Forgers of accords between the powers of the world, these Lawgivers are far-ranging diplomats, socialites, merchants, and adventurers.

Masters of the Martial Arts

All styles of combat with weaponry or fists become suffused with miraculous power when practiced by the Solar Exalted. With effort and proper tutelage, Solars are even capable of ascending into the ranks of Heaven and learning the greatest and most esoteric expressions of martial systems—Sidereal Martial Arts.

Masters of Sorcery

Solars are possessed of the greatest will to power ever known. The First Age was built on the back of their unmatched sorcerous prowess.

Masters of Evocations

Master artisans and warriors alike, the Solar's journey is one of spiritual expression through physical means. In touch with an Essence greater than all others, the Solar may evoke the greatest of powers sleeping within their immortal panoplies.

Masters of Creation and Beyond

The greatest age of prosperity and grandeur the world has ever known was brought forth by the vision and leadership of the Lawgivers. Their passion drives the rise of nations, and their acumen brings forth wealth and reforms. The Solar Exalted can even forge new lands to conquer, raising them from the chaos beyond the world.

Play one of the Solar Exalted if you want

• to be a reborn hero of legend, forging a new destiny.

• to be a master of martial arts, sorcery, or Evocations.

• to be a forger of nations, armies, religions, wonders, or even worlds.

• to face enemies on all sides, and struggle against an ancient curse.

• to be mightiest among the Chosen.

[END SOLAR PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN LUNAR PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Lunar Exalted

The Chosen of the moon were forged in the chains of bondage, but Luna only chooses those with the power to free themselves. Like the moon, they represent a struggle against form and definition, and a primal connection to the unfinished world. They wear the stolen forms of their foes. They bravely walk the tattered edges of Creation, where horrors tread. But they remain caught on the fangs of the past, and until they escape it, they cannot truly claim the freedom Luna has promised them.

Though they may live as legendary thieves, peerless hunters, opulent scavenger princes, terrible living gods, seekers of the world's secrets, bloody-handed warlords, and more, all Lunars feel the weight of the past. Once the Lunars were the guardians of the Old Realm, matching their specialized guile to the raw magnificence of their Solar lords and spouses. That time ended in blood and flames, and now the Lunars wage a crusade against those who stole the world that was theirs to protect.

The Lunar Castes

Once, the Lunar Exalted matched their aptitudes to their Solar counterparts, the better to protect the world they made. They were priests and courtiers, spies, observers, knives in the night. The Lunars shed those narrow definitions long ago, leaving them behind in the fallen ruin of the First Age. Lunar mystics developed three new Castes to replace them, each broadly powerful and better-suited to enabling Lunar survival in a hostile world:

• **The Full Moon Caste:** These Lunars rely on raw physical prowess to answer the challenges and enemies given them by the world. They are warriors among warriors, certainly, but they are also athletes, rugged survivors, and capable of thriving in otherwise unlivable environments.

• **The Changing Moon Caste:** Changing Moons rely on guile, cunning, charisma, and overwhelming animal magnetism to overcome their foes and take what they want from life. What they cannot overawe with their sheer majesty, they can trick and blind with lies and misdirection.

• **The No Moon Caste:** These mystics rely on cleverness and wisdom to outwit their opponents and solve the world's challenges like the riddles they are. No Moons tease power out of the spirit and meaning of things, and are the greatest sorcerers of the Lunar Exalted.

Broken Bonds

The Lunar Exalted were created to be the Solars' seconds, their spouses, and the sacred guardians of the Old Realm. The bond defined the Lunars; it sang within their very Essence.

So too did the bond's destruction. The Old Realm fell; the Solars were murdered, their spirits banished beyond Lunar ken. The Lunars *changed*. They're still changing. A deep rage lives in their Essence, and a deep wound. Their sleep is tormented by visions of loss, of murder, of the past. The Lunars are compelled to shatter the chains binding them to the past—to tear down the stolen remnants of the First Age, to raze the Sidereal and Terrestrial hegemony that dares to wear the ancient name of the Realm. The Silver Pact exists to facilitate this.

Some Lunars resist the primal howl that shivers in their Essence. They harness their rage to fight for that which *they* cherish, or bend their powerful instincts to their own benefit as they walk another road. There is tension between these Lunars and the Silver Pact traditionalists, but also common bonds; the two trade favors and mark debts more often than they shed one another's blood.

The return of the Solars changes everything for Luna's Chosen. Neither Lunar camp seeks to turn back the clock, nor wishes to return to defining themselves as the shadows cast by the Chosen of the sun. Something stirs in the Lunars' hearts, but none can yet say what it is or what it means.

Walkers in Ten Thousand Forms

Every Lunar is an accomplished shapeshifter. By drinking the heart's blood of man or beast, a Lunar learns to wear its skin. By unleashing the rage deep inside, Lunars may evoke monstrous battle-forms. Many learn to refine their shapeshifting talents even beyond these versatile blessings.

Terrors in the Night

Driven by vivid recall of the ancient past and a nagging ache of the spirit, Luna's Chosen wage war against the usurpers' Realm. Their preferred weapons are fangs in the night, massed forces of barbarian screamers, and terrifying miracles dredged from the hidden corners of the world and beyond.

Gods of the Untamed

The Lunars make themselves the champions and living gods of those the Realm despises. They protect and strengthen men living in the wild lands, arm them in iron and fervor, and seek to turn Creation's rim into a ring of claws and blades encircling their enemy.

Armored in Silver

The Lunars fix their Castes with mystical moonsilver tattoos shortly after Exaltation. These tattoos not only lend stability to their chaotic power, they also armor the Lunars against the transformative power of the Wyld. Thus the mad lands of chaos where all others fear to tread become the lairs and safe havens of the Lunar Exalted.

Play one of the Lunar Exalted if you want

• to be a master shapeshifter, wearing a thousand stolen forms.

• to be the inheritor of an ancient vendetta, empowered by rage to be nearly unstoppable.

• to walk the length and breadth of Creation with a freedom few others can claim.

• to be treated as a living god by barbarian tribes.

[END LUNAR PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN SIDEREAL PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Sidereal Exalted

The Sidereal Exalted don't exist. Long ago they removed themselves from the world of men and the courts of the little gods, erasing the record and memory of their passing. When someone turns up an ancient manuscript mentioning the Sidereal Exalted, it vanishes soon after. When rumors spring up mentioning the Sidereal Exalted, the details twist and change until nothing is certain.

Once, so the legends and whispered conspiracies go, the Sidereal Exalted were the loyal seers, mentors, and advisors of the Solar Exalted. Then they betrayed their lords, vanished into legend, and became hidden puppeteers pulling the strings of destiny and history. But now the Sidereals' pawns run amok, and the Solars have returned from their deathly exile. The Sidereals must emerge into the open once again if they are to tame a world sliding into chaos.

The Sidereal Castes

Rumor has it that each Sidereal belongs to one of the five Maidens of Destiny, focusing on that goddess's domain as part of the greater task of tending to fate.

• **Chosen of Journeys:** Set on the path of Mercury, these Sidereals concern themselves with travelers, roads, paths, and movements of people and forces throughout the world, ensuring that all things arrive in their proper places at the proper times.

• **Chosen of Serenity:** Celebrants of the ways of Venus, these Sidereals ensure that love, marriage, and joy bind together those things which must be bound together, or cleave apart those things that must be set apart.

• **Chosen of Battles:** Militants under the banner of Mars, these Sidereals oversee the march of armies, the swirl of conflict, and the outcome of wars, ensuring that all bloodshed furthers the needs of the world.

• **Chosen of Secrets:** Sworn to the silence of Jupiter, these Sidereals keep destiny's secrets from the eyes of men and gods alike, allowing that which is hidden to come to light only in the moment when destiny demands it be so.

• **Chosen of Endings:** Harbingers of Saturn's quiet footsteps, these mournful Sidereals ensure that all things end when their fated hour arrives—be they lives, nations, or even the vast sweep of an age.

Masters of Fate

Records which mention the Sidereals at all name them the weakest of the Celestial Exalted in raw displays of force. Yet those who claim to have survived their aggressions would swear the world itself conspires to support the Sidereals—it is as though the subtle threads of fate dance to a Sidereal's will, amplifying her modest power to accomplish whatever necessity demands.

Masters of the Martial Arts

Those who remember the Sidereals of old agree on one thing: they were martial artists whose genius was without compare. Only the Solar Exalted could boast equal prowess, and then only under the tutelage of a Sidereal mentor. Their mystical fighting systems, the Sidereal Martial Arts, are the whispered legends and ultimate secret styles of the martial arts world.

Masters of Astrology

Mortals may learn to read dim glimpses of their fortune or doom in the dance of the stars. The Sidereals, it is said, could both read the stars and dictate their course, penning a new destiny for men or nations and watching the heavens shift to answer their prayers, or even wearing a crafted destiny like a cloak and mask.

Agents of Yu-Shan

Though the Sidereals have vanished from history, they still act in the world. When destiny trembles in its course, the Sidereals appear to right it. They move through the world along hidden paths and through secret gates, and vanish when their work is done. On those occasions when they explain themselves, they claim to act as Heaven's agents. The resources they command support this claim.

Bronze and Gold: The Truth of the Sidereals

The Sidereal Exalted came together in the final days of the Old Realm and cast a great prophecy. Among all the possible futures they glimpsed, only those where they murdered and exiled the Solar Exalted assured Creation's survival, though its splendor would be forever diminished. And so they rallied the Dragon-Blooded to arms, and bound the Essence of the Solars into a prison of jade.

The return of the Solars has riven the ranks of the Sidereals. While the majority believes they must stay the course of their ancient prophecy, suppressing the returning Solars and holding together the crumbling Realm, many younger Sidereals have grown sickened by an Age of compromise and the steady lessening of Creation. This "Gold Faction" has broken with their comrades and mentors, and seeks out Solars in the vastness of Creation, hoping to guide them back to power. Under Sidereal guidance, they hope to avert the calamities that marked the end of the First Age.

Taking a page from the Bronze Faction's control of the Immaculate Order, the Gold Faction has built up a suppressed, heretical cult into a tool to serve their purposes. This Cult of the Illuminated preaches a doctrine that "The Shining Ones" will appear in a time of turmoil and lead the world to salvation; it acts as an ad-hoc support network for those Solars who encounter it, and alerts the Gold Faction to the movements of the Sun's Chosen.

Play one of the Sidereal Exalted if you want

• to exercise uncanny control over destiny.

• to be a wise, inscrutable stranger to all that you meet.

• to master ancient, secret martial arts of incredible power.

• to live in Heaven, and command the awe of gods.

[END SIDEREAL PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN ABYSSAL PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Abyssal Exalted

Conjured from the depths of a forgotten history, the Abyssal Exalted are the champions of death. They ride forth from the Underworld wearing the finery of long-buried kings, or clad in armor forged from forfeit souls. Funereal incense is their perfume. They are mighty warrior-poets, and their battle prowess, dark sorcery, and elegant words are a match for the Solar Exalted themselves.

The Abyssals represent a new threat to Creation—the Realm and its Sidereal masters can find no historical records which speak of these beings, not even those forbidden tomes dating back to the First Age. These deathknights first appeared at the siege of Thorns where they cut down the city's Dragon-Blooded defenders. Now they openly claim manses in Creation's shadowlands, and attend the courts of the Deathlords. Their purpose is clear: They are Death's Lawgivers, come to impose a new order.

The Abyssal Castes

The Abyssal Exalted bear Caste Marks identical to those of the Solar Exalted, save that Abyssal marks appear as black brands rather than icons of radiant glory. Their Castes, likewise, seem bleak mockeries of the stations accorded to the Unconquered Sun's Chosen:

• **The Dusk Caste:** These Abyssals are vicious warriors, elegant duelists, or battlefield reapers fighting amidst storms of blood and severed limbs.

• **The Midnight Caste:** Evangelists of the grave, speakers for the ancestor cult, and lords of the dead, these Abyssals exalt the glories of death and bring its blessings to Creation.

• **The Daybreak Caste:** Craftsmen, necrosurgeons, funerists, and forgers of souls, these Abyssals are wise in the forbidden lore of the Underworld and absolute masters of dread necromancy.

• **The Day Caste:** These spies and assassins walk unseen among the living, stealing the secrets of Creation for the benefit of their masters, and bringing swift and sudden death to their foes.

• **The Moonshadow Caste:** Masters of the old laws which bind the Underworld together, these Abyssals act as their masters' emissaries and formalize accords between the living and the dead.

Deathknights

When the Abyssals ride forth from their bleak citadels, it is most often as agents of the Deathlords. Most of the Abyssals have sworn fealty to one of these dark lords of the Underworld, and in turn have been raised high in their master's ranks—armed and armored in grim wonders, given estates in the shadowlands, and tutored in the mastery of death's black miracles. Other Abyssals forsake this master-apprentice relationship, riding alone and following their heart's urgings.

Rot and Beauty

The grave's touch marks the Abyssal Exalted. Many become pale as alabaster, dark as obsidian, or the delicate gray of old ash. Exaltation's mark is more extreme for some Abyssals: they become exemplars of the elegant beauty of death, with raven hair and rose-petal lips, while others embody the grave's decay, becoming drawn and withered, or even blooming into full and eternal rot.

The Romance of the Grave

Though they are death's champions, the Abyssals yet live, and feel the desires of the living. Some deathknights are moved by a strange romance, finding beauty and joy in the bleak silence of graveyards, the howling of wolves raised up to a cold and shining moon, the delicate work of spiders, the mournful arias of the dead. They may know love, perhaps even for one of the living.

But none should count on love or joy to save them when Death's Lawgivers come riding. Many Abyssals see only death in death, and are pleased by cruelty and blood.

Masters of Necromancy

Abyssals carry a natural authority over the dead. They bind ghosts to their service as a routine matter. When they march to war, it is often at the head of legions of animated corpses, supported by ingenious war machines of bone and sinew.

The Chivalry of Death

Classically trained Abyssals are given a code, which speaks to the truth of the grave. This truth is instinctive, and resonates even in those deathknights who forsake the Deathlords to walk alone.

Despair, futility, hopelessness in heroes and leaders and the hearts of men spread the Essence of the grave far more effectively than wholesale slaughter, which tends to renew vows of perseverance, survival, and commitment to the gods. Kill a wife and spare the husband, and you may have made an enemy for life, but you have also made the man questionable to everyone around him forevermore. And so the Abyssals sometimes stay their hands. They let their enemies live. They preach bleak sermons and move on without incident. They let the world move in its own course, touched by their darkness. This is the chivalry of death.

Few living individuals understand the chivalry of death, even when a deathknight patiently explains it. Who can say why one man or village is spared, while another is cut down or razed to

ashes? Why does an Abyssal let his foe live with the memory of defeat in one battle, and slay him in the next? The Abyssals are untroubled; they know, in their hearts, when they should stay their hand. They are unhurried; they know death's triumph to be inevitable.

Play one of the Abyssal Exalted if you want

• to walk with death as your constant companion.

• to be a warrior-poet of macabre passions and dark romance.

• to be a master of necromancy.

• to be a champion of the dark lords of the Underworld.

• to uphold the chivalry of death.

[END ABYSSAL PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN DRAGON-BLOODED PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Dragon-Blooded

To be Dragon-Blooded is to inherit greatness. It is to know that your parents were heroes, and their parents before them, in a line stretching back to the Ten Thousand Dragons who fought for men in a world of gods and monsters. The Dragon-Blooded exude the talents and traits of their legendary forebears, trained from birth to sharpen their innate excellence into sublime perfection.

If a Dragon-Blood's lineage gives her a great deal to live up to, then the breath of the Dragons conveys the sheer might to be equal to that task. Terrestrial Exaltation is the kiss of the elements —it challenges the Dragon-Blooded to cultivate the resilience of mountains, the patience of the river, passion like fire. Untamed, this power is little more than a chaos of the spirit; wedded to a hero's cultivated excellence, it becomes the directed fury of the breaking storm.

The Dragon-Blooded Aspects

The five elements dream in the heart of each Dragon-Blooded. Though a Terrestrial may harness any of their ways and lessons, she has a powerful affinity for one element above the others, and is greatly influenced by its nature.

• **Aspects of Air:** Heroes of quick thought and learned contemplation, Aspects of Air are as subtle as the breeze and dynamic as the thunderstorm.

• **Aspects of Earth:** Bastions of patience and stability, these resilient Exalts are the solid pillars holding up the Realm.

• **Aspects of Fire:** Passion and energy incarnate defines these Dragon-Blooded on the battlefield and in the court.

• **Aspects of Water:** Masters of adaptation and left-handed ways, Aspects of Water are deep as the ocean and relentless as the flood.

• **Aspects of Wood:** Beautiful as orchids and deadly as nightshade, Aspects of Wood share a deep affinity with the living world.

Dynasties of Power

The Dragon-Blooded organize themselves into ancient lineages of Exalted power. In the Realm, these are the Great Houses; in the wider world, there are the gentes of Lookshy, minor Realm offshoots, and small gatherings of hinterlands nobility. To be Dragon-Blooded is to live in a society of Exalted peers, and to be caught up in the machinations of centuries-old still-living ancestors.

An Ancient Arsenal

As the rulers of the world by right of conquest, the Dragon-Blooded hold the lion's share of all surviving First Age weapons: their greatest ships mount implosion bows and lightning ballistae on the bows; their most elite soldiers go into battle clad in ancient Dragon Armor; in the event of absolute calamity, the Realm and the Seventh Legion may even awaken and deploy their scant handful of unstoppable warstriders.

Inheritors of Evocations

The ancient Solars cultivated their soldiers for mastery of miraculous arms and armor, and modern Dragon-Blooded are the beneficiaries of these regimens. Most Terrestrials carry heirloom artifacts, and—with great effort—may build deeper bonds of rapport with their storied daiklaves and invincible jade armor than any other Exalts, save the Solars themselves. A rare few, including the Scarlet Empress, have even learned to draw forth secrets intended exclusively for the Solars alone.

Princes of the Earth

Dragon-Blooded lead charmed lives. Scions of the Realm are born to wealth and power, their inborn nobility acknowledged by all. Even those outcastes born to lost threads of the Dragon's blood in the rude hinterlands of the Threshold are openly recognized as Exalted heroes. No Dragon-Blooded needs hide his elevated station from the world, as the hated Anathema must do.

Beyond the Blessed Isle

The Scarlet Dynasty is the greatest unified assembly of Dragon-Blooded in history, but they aren't the only claimants to the lineage of Exaltation. The city-state of Lookshy is held by a number of ancient Terrestrial military families, while lesser bloodlines—generally claiming less than a dozen living Exalts at any time—can be found throughout the Threshold. Moreover, the dalliances and passions of the Dragon-Blooded have spread their blood wide and thin across Creation. Sometimes these lost bloodlines flare up unexpectedly after generations of dormancy, and a farm girl, shaman's apprentice, or junior scribe erupts with the power of the Dragons. These individuals may not enjoy the same training, education, wealth, or political advantage as members of established Terrestrial dynasties, but the teachings of the Immaculate Order ensure that they are still broadly recognized as heroes—and lack of family intrigues gives these young Exalts the freedom to make their own way in the world.

Play one of the Dragon-Blooded if you want

- to challenge the five elements that move in your blood
- to be embroiled in the intrigues of a dynastic family.

• to be the mighty scion of a world-spanning empire.

• to be openly venerated as a Prince of the Earth.

[END DRAGON-BLOODED PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN LIMINAL PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Liminal Exalted

Rage, agony, sorrow, madness: these are the parents of the Liminal Exalted, those born from grave's black womb.

Empowered by an ancient and forgotten power of the Underworld, yet crafted by living hands, a Liminal is not the sum of her parts or her memories; instead, she is a new being, instilled with grim purpose and set adrift into the world. These ragged Chosen pace the boundaries between Creation and the Underworld, hunting the dead and exorcising restless spirits. Beyond the sporadic messages of their dark mother, they have no greater organization among themselves. If a Liminal is to find greater purpose than the extermination of the Unquiet, she must find or forge it for herself.

The Liminal Aspects

The nature of the Liminal Exalted is rooted in elements of life and death, dictated by the passions of their creators. As such, each Liminal is governed by one of five Aspects:

• **Aspects of Blood:** These Liminals are born from lust, greed, and ambition. They are wellsprings of passion and vessels for forces that bind.

• **Aspects of Breath:** These Liminals arise from regret or repentance. Breath Aspects are reflective and reactive, and alive with the power to possess, motivate, and animate.

• **Aspects of Flesh:** Flesh Aspects are forged in rage, madness, and vengeance. Aggression and lust move them, and metamorphosis is their hallmark.

• **Aspects of Marrow:** Curiosity and obsession creates these Liminals. They are calculating and analytical, and see easily to the secret nature of things.

• **Aspects of Soil:** Soil Aspects are born in sorrow, blackest despair, and heartfelt yearning. They are introspective creatures of revelation and omens, masters of the cycle of decay and rebirth.

Set Apart

Made in madness and born from death, the Liminals have no place in the world of the living—given time and exposure to their Exalted might, humans come to abhor and fear them. It falls to each Exalt to try to make a place for herself somewhere, or to abandon such notions entirely and live a vagabond existence. However, life's flame may gutter in those who choose to live without hope, breeding new monsters for their fellows to hunt…

Ragged Men

The Liminals are assembled from patchwork corpses, and continue to replace body parts throughout their lives. Many can steal the cleverness from a liar's tongue, or the prowess of a

swordsman's arm. Others simply restore old body parts to keep themselves eternally refreshed and renewed.

Marked by Horror

Though she normally seems pristine and human, when a Liminal spends too much Essence, the horror of her nature rises to the surface and alienates observers. Aspects of Soil seem ancient, as though they've just risen from the black earth, while Blood Aspects become grave-pale, with blood-red eyes, and brackish water dripping from lips and fingertips. Their anima displays are similarly gruesome, varying by Aspect and including such unsettling displays as swirling clouds of blood, pulsing ropes of phantasmal muscle, or dark streamers of soil churning with white bones and worms.

Undying

No other Exalt is as resilient as a Liminal. So long as her brain remains intact, she may even come back from death, the spark of her Essence spontaneously reigniting herself. Water also interferes with Liminal resurrection; drowning will prevent the Children of the Soil from returning from the grave to exact revenge. However, such lore is unknown to most, including the majority of the Liminals themselves.

The Maker and the Lifeline

A strange, indelible link exists between a Liminal and her creator. The maker is branded by his act, tied forever to the life he has brought forth. Though the two may travel hundreds of miles apart, they remain linked by dreams and insights, which may serve as a source of comfort or torment—or both. Inevitably they will be drawn back together, though it may take years.

The death of a Liminal's creator casts her Essence into turmoil, setting her on a road to necrosis and monstrosity. If the Exalt doesn't manage to forge a new bond with another living soul, she faces an inexorable slide into ruin and undeath. Though the world may seek to turn away from the Children of the Soil, the Liminals cannot turn away from the world if they wish to retain their humanity.

Play one of the Liminal Exalted if you want

- to be created rather than born.
- to have a strange, powerful, patchwork body.
- to explore what it means to be human, and alive.
- to hunt the dead who walk among the living.

[END LIMINAL PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN EXIGENT PRESTIGE SPREAD]

The Exigents

Sometimes there is calamity beyond measure. Sometimes there is crisis beyond reckoning. Sometimes the world must have a champion, but does not. Then the gods themselves lift their faces to Heaven, and utter a prayer for deliverance.

If the need be sufficient, the god without any other recourse, and the heart of the Unconquered Sun moved by the prayer, he may answer, and send down a portion of his divine fire. This is the Exigence: a gift of Exaltation, an extreme sacrament handed down to answer the most urgent of disasters.

Exigence is…

• **Unique.** An Exigent will be the Chosen of the god who catalyzes the Unconquered Sun's divine power, her blessings and Charms fitting her divine patron. Almost all Exigents are one-of-a-kind —while there are 100 Sidereal Exalted, there exists only one Chosen of Masks.

• **Variable.** The power and properties of an Exigent are unpredictable. Many Exigents are little stronger than a Dragon-Blooded, while others equal the might of the Celestial Exalted. Most are unique, but on rare occasion, Exigence may produce a tiny handful of similar Exalts. On the other hand, two Exigents produced by similar gods—such as the gods of two different volcanoes —may vary wildly in blessings, power, and nature, though both will express the power of volcanism in some way.

• **Costly.** Exaltation carries a heavy price for the one who bestows it. The Exigence consumes some gods entirely, while others are weakened greatly. No immortal calls for the divine fire lightly.

• **Inconstant.** The blood of the Terrestrial Exalted spreads far across Creation, while the Celestial Exalted reincarnate endlessly. Few Exigents are so enduring; for most, their Exaltation will end with their life. For those who can pass on their power to a new hero, the method of transition is often strange and idiosyncratic, and some are susceptible to interference or even destruction between incarnations.

• **Corruptible.** Before being catalyzed into Exaltation, the divine power of the Unconquered Sun may be stolen or traded, perhaps even falling into the hands of criminal or forbidden gods. Some Exigents are the result of such illicit Exaltations, while others are worse—Exaltations altered or polluted as they passed through the divine black market, producing monstrous Exalts of terrible, blasphemous power and nature.

You might be…

• **Strawmaiden Janest, the Harvest Exalt.** Chosen by a lowly field god to defend a farming village from the Fair Folk, you are a wandering hero carrying a miraculous scythe with which to reap those who would menace the small folk of the world.

• **Nurlissa, the Chosen of Masks.** Your traded your face for Exaltation in the form of a mask. Your Charms are an array of magical masks which let you be anyone, including your old mortal self. Or you might don the beast-mask to become lord of animals, or the devil-mask to fight with the strength of a raging demon.

• **The Bleak Warden, Chosen of the Seals.** You were Exalted by the guardian of an ancient prison holding forbidden gods and cursed magic. You wield the power of seals—either placing them on your foes, or unleashing pandemonium long ago sealed away by Heaven. You try to bend this power to righteous ends, but some forces are hard to justify unsealing.

• **Thousand Venoms Mistress, Chosen of Toxins.** You are a divine assassin, the latest bearer of your Exaltation, title, and profession. You are the master of countless poisons, and may even transform your own blood into an array of toxins whose agonies bring divine revelation.

• **Willow Specter, Chosen of the Dice.** You won your Exaltation gambling with Plentimon himself. The god of gamblers has made you the luckiest man in the world, and you're out to get everything you can before your ways catch up to you—every gambler knows there's a bill to be paid some day.

• **Someone else.** The true fire of Exigence burns in your own creativity.

Play one of the Exigents if you want

• to be something unique in all the word.

• to define your own powers and agenda.

• to do or be something none of the other Exalts offer.

[END EXIGENT PRESTIGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN "OTHERS" PRESTIGE SPREAD]

And the tale of the Exalted continues…

There are yet other Chosen abroad in the world and beyond. Their tales will be told in time.

[END "OTHERS" PRESTIGE SPREAD]

Seven Devil Clever had come across a whole world to see this vista, and it pleased her greatly to have made the trip. She had twined herself around the upper branches of a vast and mighty oak, growing on a hillside far above Faxai.

The city was clearly defined below her, a brightly lit figure inside its formal walls. Outside the walls were the occasional light crystals and flaring torches of outriders, but otherwise, darkness. She exulted at the sight, knowing the vast expenditures of resources that must be required for the Realm to keep that little chunk of light burning so terribly far from home, with no ability to raise its own food or supply its own merchandise. When Faxai fell, the Caul would belong utterly to the Lunar Exalted.

She dropped down into the darkness where the others waited. There was another Lunar, an older Full Moon who had brought her here, no doubt at great risk. She had wanted to urge him to stay behind—it was not as if two of them could overmatch a Wyld Hunt together, any more than she could alone.

But if there were words that could demonstrate to a Lunar warrior without insult that he should abstain from a fight he clearly desired to court, Seven Devil Clever's tongue was not swift enough to utter them. He was here of his own accord; the law of the Lunar tribe was that he could have let her scamper to her death unaided. She was no sworn kin of his, this was not a mission requested by the Silver Pact. Yet here he was, with his personal guard as well. Seven Devil Clever thought he might want to bang her like a fine drum, but she didn't want to raise her tail to such a gruesome old buck, and had made that clear long before the journey started.

They walked for a while, Seven Devil Clever a grey ghost amidst the rangy, leaping gait of the ape-men that accompanied her. When they were well past the crest and downslope, he signaled for her to stop. Did he think the occupiers in their city could hear them whispering all the way out here, leagues away in the forest? A fact worth noting.

"Did you like what you saw?"

"Fantastic, Mangler. They're bottled up tight in there. Do they get out at all?"

"Oh yes. The night makes it look especially dramatic, that's why I chose to show you this vista during the hours of darkness, but don't be fooled. They've been fighting us for years and they're not dead yet. They have excellent light discipline and they are very aggressive about controlling the space outside their walls. They can't use it, but you had better think twice before you try to. There's a reason we're looking at it from so far away. Their operations can range out even as far as this. Wyld Hunts ride much farther, of course."

Seven Devil Clever nodded. "This is an awesome fight you're in." She meant it sincerely. She was watching the snake of the Realm held down by its head and strangled, and deftly at that.

"Thank you, I take great pride in it. I helped do that."

Ah ha. Now she knew why he was showing it to her. Bragging rights.

"How long until they're gone?"

"No more than five years, we think."

"Mouse in your pocket?"

“You could say I speak for the council of senior Full Moons, among whom I am the least. I am told our plans have the favor of His Divine Lunar Presence.”

Everything gained so much clarity.

“It’s true, then? The black lion is active again?” Neither of them quite dared to breathe the name Sha’a Oka into the night.

A smile revealed ivory fangs. “We want you to see what we can accomplish, Seven Devil Clever. We want you to think about what you could accomplish if you ran with us. This is the time for the strong to assert themselves.”

Chapter Two: The Age of Sorrows

Close your eyes and dream of the world as it was in its youth. Imagine a forgotten age of gleaming cities of stone and bronze; of heaving seas and demon-ridden storm-winds; of mighty heroes, blessed by the gods, and their wars which rent all Creation asunder. Dream of an age after the casting of the world from the stuff of chaos, after the fall of the first and greatest era of mankind, but before the gods and demons and their manifold champions vanished from reckoning. Imagine a flat world, floating atop the immensity of chaos. This is Creation in the Second Age of Man. This is the world of **Exalted**.

At the center of Creation lies the Blessed Isle, the gleaming heart of the greatest civilization known. The Realm’s decadent lords have dominated the world for seven centuries, laying it prostrate before their ambitions and appetites. Now their ageless Empress has vanished, and all eyes turn to her empty throne. Treasuries are emptied equipping armies and training assassins for the struggle to come.

Across the wide Inland Sea rests the immensity of the Threshold, those outer lands bounded by the Elemental Poles, ground for centuries beneath the heel of the Realm’s legions and subjugated by its mighty sorcery. Cast your eyes to the outer Directions—

The South is bordered by the Pole of Fire and dominated by an immense, hungry desert where the ambitious seek lost cities and precious gems. Its temperate coast is crowded with wealthy trade cities, while its outer regions are a poorly-mapped welter of steaming jungles, pirate coves, smoking mountains, and ferocious savannas.

The Pole of Wood blesses the East with fecundity beyond reckoning. Here farmers bring in three harvests in a lean year, and a great confederation of river nations maintains defiance against the Realm’s hegemony. Closer to the purity of the Pole, rolling hills and fertile plains give way to thousands of miles of primeval forest in which dwell lost tribes ruled by men who walk as both gods and beasts.

Freezing winds sweep in from the Pole of Air, scouring the North. This harsh land produces strong people, animals, and iron, but poor crops. The Realm has long been the undisputed master of the Northern cities, but can make scant claim to the blizzard-wracked tundra; here canny nomads eke out a living through raiding and ancient pacts with patron spirits. Their worship buys protection from both the killing cold and the unchecked appetites of the Winter Folk and the restless dead.

To the West stretches the immensity of the Great Western Ocean, and beyond that, storied islands, strange gods, and exotic riches. Few ships are up to the voyage, and so the West remains

shrouded in rumor and mystery. Even the Realm has only sporadic contact with its Western holdings. Legends proclaim that the Pole of Water rests somewhere beyond the farthest isle, where the sky touches the sea and the gates of the Underworld yawn wide.

The Spirits of the World

All about Creation are the spirits of the world. Gods watch the fall of leaves and the wars of women and men. Elementals ride storms and shake the world with earthquakes. If spirits make a place sacred, then the entire world is holy land.

Gods, elementals, and demons fill out the rolls of Creation's divinities, each from different origins and each with disparate desires, save for a universal lust for prayer and propitiation. All have found their places within and apart from the world, and each guards its portfolio and cult.

Gods

Gods are the overseers of the order of the world. They watch places, things, and ideas. They monitor the progression of events, existing omnipresent and immaterial. In Creation, gods of field, river, town, rice paddy, hot spring, apple orchard and summer storm report to the gods of Heaven, who manage concepts—in Heaven, gods of war, trade, craft, and passion plan the destinies of nations in a grand celestial bureaucracy.

Each god watches over a portfolio of responsibility, from the gods of the least wilderness trails to the goddess of the Imperial Mountain. They are invested with limited power over their domains, and garner more through worship or promotion. By the laws of Heaven, the gods of Creation cannot intercede in the world—the Creation-Ruling Mandate belongs to the Exalted, not the divinities of forest or city—but countless gods openly defy this ancient law in the Age of Sorrows. Men are fearful of divine wrath and eager to win godly favor, for while the gods of Creation are far from omnipotent, their power is great and their providence priceless. Gods, in turn, bestow boons to chosen peoples that they might reap worship, and levy banes to demonstrate the cost of disrespect. They grant favors to cults, sire or bear God-Blooded children to act as their agents, and seek Exigence that they might Exalt champions.

Once, the gods organized themselves into courts along lines of responsibility, and a few such courts remain—the Ocean Court in the West, or the Court of Seasons who watch the turning of the calendar. But in the Age of Sorrows, most spirit courts are ad-hoc gatherings of the weak beneath the strong—here a divine tyrant monopolizes all mortal worship while his lessers complete for favor and scraps; there the gods are leaderless and fickle, terrorizing mortals as they will. Heaven, the greatest of spirit courts, has grown ever more remote from Creation since the fall of the Old Realm, and its ministers and mandarins now spend their time expanding their portfolios and securing their political titles, choking the celestial bureaucracy on endless procedure while ignoring reports of divine misconduct in Creation.

The returning Solars worry gods who profit in the chaotic Second Age, yet the rolls of divinity are also filled with potential allies. Gods of diminished strength who wish to reclaim august positions may see the Solars as aids or tools, while gods who break Heaven's laws for the sake of their ideals might make stauncher allies.

Heaven

Once the home of the world's creators, the great celestial island of Yu-Shan floats beyond the world in an endless sea of quicksilver. Heaven is a city the size of a continent, teeming with ten million gods of all rank and title. At its center, in the Jade Pleasure Dome, the Incarnae wile away the centuries playing turns at the Games of Divinity, while the highest-ranking gods observe and wager from the stands.

The rest of Heaven devotes itself to the great work of recording and regulating all the doings of Creation and its peoples. Here the scribes and archivists of Heaven receive and file reports of terrestrial events, committees debate how best to schedule mortal destinies, and dragon censors stand vigilant against violations of Heaven's law—or, more often, accept bribes to ignore such crimes. Yet in the fallen Second Age of Man, millions of gods have lost their positions and dwell unemployed in divine slums, where the luxury of Yu-Shan is poor comfort in the face of a purposeless eternity. These little gods amuse themselves with criminal conspiracies or do the bidding of spirits who still enjoy official positions, and look to the return of the Solar Exalted with hope or jealous dread.

The Greatest of the Gods

The greatest gods of Heaven and Earth are the Incarnae, the patrons of the Celestial Exalted. These seven gods were the first to empower mortal champions to throw down the creators of the world. Now in Heaven they rest or wait, seldom emerging from the Jade Pleasure Dome or sharing counsel with their lessers. Some say they are still weary from the effort of creating their Chosen; some say they hide themselves from worldly affairs because they fear the power the Exalted wield. They deign not to address such gossip.

The Unconquered Sun

Highest of the gods, the Unconquered Sun once walked the borders of Creation, guarding it against threats from beyond. He was unbending and invincible, but could not raise a hand against his creators, who indulged themselves in every manner of amusement with the world they'd set him to protect. It was he who declared the gods would give men favor and make them champions against his enemies, and it was he who chose the greatest mortals as champions of his own.

It is known in Heaven that some great blasphemy by the Exalted of the First Age made him wroth, and so he turned his face from the world. Now he turns it back.

Luna

Luna tempers the Unconquered Sun's light and gives the world succor from his unbending righteousness. She is a huntress, seductress, liar, monster, saint and devil—all these things inside one skin or a thousand skins.

Luna is by far the most active Incarna and a figure of legend throughout Creation—she still attends the Exaltation of each of her Chosen, and men tell countless tales of her hunts and dalliances among the mortals of the world. But her greatest love was and remains Gaia—it was Luna who gave succor to the Emerald Mother and turned her to the side of the gods when Gaia grew tired of her siblings' misconduct.

The Five Maidens

Mercury, the Maiden of Journeys; Venus, the Maiden of Serenity; Mars, the Maiden of Battles, Jupiter, the Maiden of Secrets; and Saturn, the Maiden of Endings: These are the Five Maidens, the Ladies of Fate, most inscrutable of the Incarnae. They say little and speak in enigmas; what they love most is inevitability. Mercury loves the explorer venturing into the unknown; she loves the refugee fleeing atrocity. Mars loves the loyal soldier and the rebel; she loves the warrior gloriously triumphant and the warrior cut down.

They seem to walk a lonely road, the Maidens, keeping the world ever balanced on the path of what must be. Even their Chosen regard them with unease—whether Sidereal ventures fail or succeed, always the Maidens say it was fated to be so. Though they head the Bureau of Destiny in Heaven, they delegate many of their duties to subordinates and the Sidereal Exalted, and appear only when needed. When one of the Five Maidens is absent from the Jade Pleasure Dome, Heaven holds its breath.

Elementals

From storm fronts, forest fires, earthquakes, mudslides, from deep ocean currents, from lightning strikes and blizzards, from the heat-haze of the desert and the crushing force of the avalanche do elementals birth themselves into the world.

The elemental races are old beyond measure. Before men, before beasts, and some say before even the gods, elementals have stalked Creation. They coalesce from the interplay of the world's natural energies and begin as countless types and species; each elemental race carries a unique form. They are naturally material and live in the world—wind bears herd clouds while wood spiders lurk in ancient forests, and during the dry season of the South, vast stampedes of llama-yu fire orbs traverse the desert. They perpetuate the energies that birth them, and young elementals live as embodiments of the dynamism of nature.

If they survive the ages—unlike gods, they're ageless but not immortal—ancient elementals are almost completely unique, powers named and feared whose original forms are lost to time. At the apex of both power and enlightenment, elementals undergo a slow metamorphosis, assuming the serpentine forms of the lesser elemental dragons; no other shape could express their might. Respected by Heaven, the dragons often serve as censors in the courts of Yu-Shan, charged with overseeing celestial law in both Heaven and Creation.

In the fallen Age of Sorrows, under a fractured celestial bureaucracy, lesser elementals follow their instincts without guidance, sometimes pushing natural processes into imbalance. Greater elementals rule courts of their lessers or pretend at godhood over men. And the lesser elemental dragons are as prone to corruption as the gods, demanding bribes and turning a blind eye to their duties. Yet elementals' terrestrial origins give them a unique perspective among the spirits of the world—elementals are mortal in a sense, native to the material, and have more reason than gods to sympathize with the plights of women and men.

> Through Mortal Eyes
>
> Most people in the Age of Sorrows don't see elementals as a single category of being. Many, like the ifrit and the nymph, appear almost as exotic mortals—even when they're known as spirits, they're treated most often as strange foreigners or puissant heroes akin to God-Bloods or Exalts. Elementals with alien mentalities and inhuman forms are seen as exotic animals, fearsome monsters, or simply natural phenomena. And many pose as gods.

Most don't fall clearly into categories. A beast that stalks the local livestock unless propitiated is a monster and a god; an elemental who lives among a mortal community but seeks praise in payment for its deeds is both a god and a local champion. A savant may know that the former is a wood spider and the latter is an ifrit, and that both are elementals, but to mortals who toil and die in Creation's dirt, it's academic.

The same applies to mortal perceptions of gods and demons, and for that matter beasts, beastfolk, and the Exalted. By far the most common reaction shared by men confronted with the unknown or obviously supernatural is to assume it's a god and to seek a priest.

Demons and Demon Princes

Locked outside Creation in an endless city of vitriol and brass, lit by a mad green sun and bordered by an infinite silver desert, the Yozis, the overthrown creators of the world, rage in inviolate imprisonment. Demons are their souls and children—creatures of love and terror, as beautiful as they are alien, enslaved eternally to oaths the Yozis swore.

Though Heaven resents the admission, demons, too, are counted among the rolls of divinity.

Demons are not always malevolent, but they're most often indifferent to the wellbeing of men. Like gods, they desire worship, and like their progenitors they seek escape from Hell. Demons of the First Circle are simple and made for servitude; demons of the Second and Third Circles are mightier, and express the urges of the Yozis. These alien motives are far from human understanding—mortals treat with devils at their peril.

They most often enter the world through sorcerous machination—the oaths of the Yozis render demons vulnerable to enslavement. Demons build manses, manage estates, and serve as bodyguards, steeds, and concubines to the sorcerers among the Chosen.

Folklore repeats the motif of demonologists tricked and overcome by their slaves, releasing fell spirits into Creation or dragging foolish sorcerers into Hell, but summoning is a tool, and the Exalted have long devised procedures to keep safe from the vengeance of the bound—in truth, demons rarely get the better of their captors. Demons are capricious and alien in their motives, and often surrounded by inauspicious omens, but these inclement phenomena are more a problem for bystanders than for the sorcerer, who may not care what misfortune her slaves spread, provided they don't spread it to her.

Other Divinities

The divinities of Heaven, Creation, and Hell are not alone in the world. Strange prodigies abound, which confound the reckoning of savants and sorcerers alike. Foremost among these are the Five Elemental Dragons. The Immaculate Philosophy has much to say about these beings, but is silent on Gaia, whose mysteries even the greatest theosophists barely begin to address.

The Five Elemental Dragons

Not gods or demons, nor mere elementals rising from Creation's Essence, the Five Elemental Dragons are Gaia's children. They created the Terrestrial Exalted at history's dawn, breathing the Essence of the elements into the blood of heroes. After the imprisonment of the Yozis, Gaia bade

them slumber, to lessen their calamitous passage through the world. They honor her request still, and to this day sleep within the Elemental Poles.

The Immaculate Order teaches that the Dragons' nature sets them apart from the Celestial Bureaucracy and places them atop the cycle of reincarnation, and that this transcendent nature justifies the world-spanning rule of their Chosen, the Dragon-Blooded.

Gaia

Gaia was one of the gods' few allies. With her siblings she created the world; with Luna she escaped her siblings. For Luna's love she sided with the gods; for love of her family she pleaded the Incarnae show mercy—an act the Demon Princes will never forgive.

Ancient texts from the earliest First Age describe a majestic woman robed in green, always at Luna's side, but the Emerald Mother disappears from the records soon after. She does not appear in Heaven now, and Luna takes other lovers. Cults to Gaia are rare and guard carefully their mysteries, and the gods speak not of where she's gone.

Eyre of the Sleepwalker

In the Time Before, a young man lay on his sickbed, locked in the grip of the sleeping death. One cold night, as Saturn passed through the constellation of the Sorcerer, he awakened with starlight in his eyes, and was borne away on the wings of omen-birds.

They say that this is how Rakan Thulio, the Sleepwalker, entered the service of Endings.

What little they know for certain is this: Rakan Thulio Exalted in the first days, and was a hero amongst the Chosen. But when the love of his life chose another, he came to believe that Heaven had done him a great injustice. Believing his destiny had been written by another, his resentment for the cruel hands of fate became hatred for the entire Celestial Bureaucracy. Using forbidden martial techniques, he tapped into a power feared even by the Demon Princes, and marked himself as an enemy of Heaven. When Saturn made her Sign against him, he turned it aside with blasphemous power, and tore the thread of his destiny from the Loom of Fate. For this, Thulio was cast out of Heaven. Only then did Yu-Shan learn the scope of his ambitions.

Thulio has not aged a day since then. Yu-Shan fears what he has in store for the world, even as information on his plans is frustratingly sparse. What is known for sure is that Thulio loathes Heaven, and has sent his agents to tear it apart, piece by piece.

A War in Heaven

Rakan Thulio has been at war with Yu-Shan for centuries. He is far from alone. A handful of Sidereals have bolstered his ranks, each with their own reasons to betray Heaven. Collectively, the conspirators bring to bear intimate knowledge of the divine bureaucracies. They've turned the political landscape of Yu-Shan into a battleground, and the city itself into the site of a shadow war between those loyal to the Celestial Bureaucracy and those who wish to see it torn down. Dissident

and outcast gods flock to his banner; in exchange for their service, Thulio and his allies promise them new roles in the order to come.

Even more terrifying are Thulio's newer allies. Known as the Getimian Exalted, these mysterious agents are walking paradoxes, men and women whom Fate says should not exist. Their magic is every bit as arcane as that of the Maidens' Chosen, and their master claims that they outstrip the Sidereals in enlightenment and skill. The Getimians undermine the Maidens' Chosen at every turn, dogging their attempts to shepherd Creation's destiny. The Sidereals are uncertain where they end and where their foes begin; when they hunt for the Getimians in the patterns of the Loom, they see nothing but the ragged remains of destinies denied and fates rendered null.

The Realm

The Realm is the single greatest empire in all of Creation, and has dominated the world for centuries. Under the guidance of the Scarlet Empress, the Realm forces its will on the Threshold, smashing all opposition and bending conquered nations to the demands of its satraps. The Realm's legions are the greatest military force on the face of the world, led by ten thousand Dragon-Blooded commanding countless mortal soldiers in both the legions themselves and the armies of subjugated client-states.

And it doesn't rule by military prowess alone. Its economic might rivals the Guild (see p. XX), and talents-worth of goods travel through Realm-controlled ports each day, taxed by bureaucrats of the Thousand Scales. In addition to its domination of trade, the Blessed Isle, seat of the Scarlet Dynasty, is itself the breadbasket for much of Creation.

Finally, its state religion the Immaculate Order is the largest religion in Creation, commanding millions of adherents and coordinating the worship of countless gods via the Immaculate Calendar and its carefully managed holidays. The Immaculate Order preaches a social hierarchy which elevates the Dragon-Blooded, and specifically the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm, as the living, deadly saints of a glorious faith.

Pennants embroidered with the mon of the Scarlet Dynasty fly above capitals in countless lands. Soldiers in the red-trimmed armor of the Realm's legions march in lockstep across thousands of miles of foreign road, enforcing the Empress's will. In the lands that border the Inland Sea, the Realm has near-unquestioned dominance, and it is only the Lunar Anathema, nursing the wounds from their overthrow more than a millennia ago, who oppose its relentless spread.

The Realm has accomplished all this under the guidance of the Scarlet Empress through a policy of ruthless expansion and unhesitating force aimed at any who would gainsay the Scarlet Dynasty. The Wyld Hunt pursues any hint of the Anathema in the Realm's holdings. The Legions crush any organized military resistance to the Empress's will. Only the most powerful coalitions have ever offered challenge. Immaculate monks preach a social order that casts those who would speak against the Dragon-Blooded as heretics. Though the lands under the Realm and its satraps are too vast to control absolutely, any movement from dissent to rebellion is quashed quickly, brutally, and publicly.

All of this occurs in pursuit of an economic and social policy which puts the Dragon-Blooded, and specifically those Dragon-Blooded who have pledged obeisance to the Realm, at the top of

the social order in countless lands, and which puts thousands of talents of jade in the coffers of the Empress and her Great Houses. The Realm's power stems from its tireless pursuit of economic supremacy, a great predator opening wide its jaws to devour all the wealth of the world.

The Scarlet Dynasty

The Imperial Mountain rises hundreds of miles into the sky, and its foundations form the Blessed Isle, the seat of the Realm's power. The Blessed Isle is rich and abundant, and its millions of acres of arable land make it the breadbasket for much of the land surrounding the Inland Sea.

The Realm divides the Isle into prefectures and dominions, each administered by an Imperial Governor appointed by the Scarlet Empress. Every prefecture or dominion boasts at least one major city, a number of smaller cities, many more towns and innumerable villages. While much of the land has been cultivated, significant portions of the Blessed Isle are set aside for nature preserves, carefully cultivated woodland landscapes, and wildlife refuges.

While the Blessed Isle is insulated from the chaos of the Threshold by the Inland Sea, it is by no means completely safe—rogue gods, restless ghosts, monstrous beasts, and renegade Exalted are rare but not unheard of, and would-be Lunars assassins made it clear the Empress was not truly safe or free from care even in the heart of the Imperial City.

The Scarlet Empress

The Scarlet Empress founded her Realm after braving the former Palace of the Anathema to seize control of the First Age's Realm Defense Grid in the face of the Great Contagion. Over the ensuing centuries, it was she who built the Realm's innumerable offices, planned its strategies, orchestrated its social order, and guided it unswervingly. During the Calibration between the 763rd and 764th year after her ascension to power, she disappeared from the halls of the Imperial Manse.

> **[PRODUCTION NOTE: THE FOLLOWING SECTION SHOULD BE STYLED AS AN IN-SETTING DOCUMENT. IF ANY SPECIAL FONTS ARE USED, PRIORITIZE LEGIBILITY.]**

A Report on the Disappearance of the Scarlet Empress

My Lady:

In the wake of her disappearance, I have scrambled to prepare a dossier, at your request, on what we know of the Scarlet Empress and who could have been behind her abduction, if an abduction it was.

Concerning her origins, the Scarlet Empress swept from anonymity to seize control of the Realm Defense Grid amidst the near collapse of Creation during the Great Contagion. Nearly nothing of her is known from this period, except that she was a low-ranking officer in the army of some daimyo. With several companions, she traveled into what is today the Imperial Manse, and days later used its power to rally Dragon-Blooded forces and stop the advance of the Wyld. None of her companions were ever seen alive again.

• She used the military forces at her command immediately afterwards to defeat the Seven Tiger Rebellion and then swiftly consolidate her hold of the Blessed Isle, declaring herself Empress of Creation in the process.

• She allied with the Bronze Faction to take the scraps of government-sanctioned faith from the Shogunate era and built the Immaculate Philosophy, both to prop up her own rule and the rule of Dragon-Blooded who followed her, as well as to assist in putting Creation's shattered divine hierarchies back into position.

• She created the Immaculate Calendar, whose start date corresponds with the beginning of her reign, and by which worship of countless gods is ordered, thereby assisting the deities of Heaven in maintaining order.

• She rebuilt and strengthened the tradition of the Wyld Hunt, capitalizing on the Immaculate Philosophy's spread into the Threshold alongside her own armies.

• Each of the Great Houses of the Realm was founded either by one of her children or spouses. Literally, she is the mother of the Great Houses, a social construct she's capitalized on for centuries.

That list is a mere sampling of her accomplishments. No being in the last thousand years has had greater impact on Creation or played a more important role in its survival, even if many disagree with her tactics.

In the year since her disappearance:

• Several Exalted apparently imprisoned within the Imperial Manse have escaped. While many of them made for the shores of the Blessed Isle and stole immediate transportation to the Threshold, several more have disappeared into the thronging populations of the Isle's cities or into its vast farmlands or wilderness.

• There's been a thirty percent increase in deities embezzling worship outside of the prescribed dates of the Immaculate Calendar in Southern Threshold states. This has thrown the normal worship of various gods into chaos and resulted in a number of gods leaving the city of Yu-Shan to deal with this threat.

• The city of Avrus fell to a behemoth over two months ago. We know the Empress had been tracking its progress and planned to use the Defense Grid to redirect it back into the deep Threshold and bordermarches so as to occupy Lunar forces, but with her disappearance the behemoth continues forward unmolested.

• The city of Thorns has fallen to the Deathlord known as the Mask of Winters (see attached report), depriving the Realm of its most powerful puppet-state abutting the Scavenger Lands.

What happened to her? Has she been abducted? Murdered? Has she left of her own volition? A handful of times in previous centuries, she has disappeared, sometimes for as long as two years, but in many of those cases we suspect she still had her hands on the reins of power from wherever she went. Currently, our strongest suspicions are:

• The Empress was assassinated by a family member with an eye on the Scarlet Throne; attached are a list of the most likely candidates according to known ambitions.

• There have been three attempts on her life by Lunar insurgents in the last century and a half, two of which were very close, and our analysts predict with some assurance that there were two Lunars active near the Imperial manse recently (see attached files). One of them could have killed or abducted her.

• Verumipra reports agitation amongst certain factions in the Demon City, coinciding with the Empress's disappearance. Whether this is an effect of the chaos her absence has caused, or a response to moves within Hell itself that resulted in her disappearance, he cannot say for sure.

• The return of the Solar Exalted in roughly the same time frame suggests a returned Solar had a hand in it. She may be a casualty of her habit of bringing Anathema into the Imperial Manse for her own occult reasons.

• Most distressingly, there is a significant chance that with the return of the Solar Exalted, some cabal within our ranks took it upon themselves to remove the Empress and destabilize the Realm, providing the Solars an opportunity for a foothold. This is worrisome mainly because it's the most likely reason—only one of us has the skill to arrange her disappearance in the heart of Bronze Faction strength, the power to slip into the Imperial Manse and defeat her, and the knowledge to avoid Heaven's gaze while doing so.

Your Servant,

Tareus Slate

[PRODUCTION NOTE: END STYLED SECTION.]

The Regency

In the wake of the Empress's disappearance, the Great Houses agreed to place a figurehead on the Scarlet Throne to maintain the illusion of a single hand at the tiller, while they shifted real power to the Greater Chamber of the Deliberative and the Great Houses who controlled it. No House trusted any of the others to sit at the head of the table, but they finally agreed that House Tepet, weakened from a recent defeat in the North, could provide a regent who was easily pliable and whose Great House was too weak to try to cement its grip on the throne.

Thus, the current Regent is Tepet Fokuf, a middle-aged Dynast who possesses an unassuming personality but is attractive enough to suffice for public appearances. This handsome idiot, a failure at every post he's ever held, lacks the ambition and ego to do more than hold the Throne, and won't be missed if the Scarlet Empress returns and is wroth at his temerity.

Fokuf spends most of his days in his bedchambers pleasuring himself to the more erotic passages in the Immaculate Texts. Those who discover his habits and take umbrage at his prurience are corrected by Immaculate priests, who are privately as scandalized as anyone but publicly call it an elevated demonstration of faith. The rest of the time, Fokuf is a rubber-stamp for the senators in the Greater Chamber of the Deliberative.

The Deliberative

Underneath the Empress (and currently the Regent) are the Greater and Lesser chambers of the Deliberative. By the time of the Empress's disappearance, the Deliberative served chiefly to draft advisories she could accept or veto at her pleasure. At the same time, a term in the Deliberative was often a means of securing a high-paying place in either House affairs or in the Thousand Scales bureaucracy, and so there were no shortage of Dynasts who would fight to sit in the chamber.

The Greater Chamber of the Deliberative is largely made up of members of the Great Houses and a few outcastes who have risen up through the Legions, the Imperial bureaucracy, or the Immaculate priesthood. It was rare that an un-Exalted mortal made it to the Upper chamber, but

not unheard of if the mortal possessed the Empress's favor. Since the Empress's disappearance, the executive power formerly wielded by the Empress has accreted in the hands of the Greater Chamber's Dynasts, who now rule the Realm in the name of their respective Houses.

The Lesser Chamber is predominately made up of mortal members of the patrician class. The Empress guaranteed that the mortal populace saw the lower chamber as a means of redress against wrongs done to them and as a means of being heard by the Empress herself. Since her disappearance, the Lesser Chamber has found much of its power stripped away, and patricians occupying positions of real power have been removed and replaced by mortal members of the Great Houses. In response, the Lesser Chamber fiercely guards its remaining powers and privileges.

The Perfected Hierarchy

The Realm's social hierarchy is based on the ideals laid out in the Immaculate texts. According to the faith, a society which arranges itself according to the path laid out by the Five Immaculate Dragons is blessed with Heaven's mandate, while those societies which embrace the Anathema or which do not arrange themselves properly must be put right.

At the top of the pyramid are the Dynasts, those Dragon-Blooded who belong to one of the Great Houses. Members of lesser or fallen Houses, as well as outcastes adopted into the Realm, are considered second-class citizens by only the greater Dynasts themselves—to mortals of any social class, they are indistinguishable from the members of the Great Houses.

The next strata is made up of mortal members of the Dynasty, those who carry but don't express the blood of the Dragons. Each house treats its un-Exalted members differently—in conservative houses like Mnemon, they are second-class citizens, higher than other mortals but still expected to bend knee to the Dragon-Blooded. In younger, smaller, or more liberal houses, mortals will often take up positions of power over young or ill-favored Dragon-Blooded. And House Nellens, derided for being descended from a mortal lover of the Empress and chided for its weak bloodline, is quietly governed by an almost entirely mortal council.

Beneath the Houses are the vast patrician estates, run by powerful families descended from mortal military heroes, members of the Lesser Chamber of the Deliberative, and wealthy, successful merchants. The patricians have reached as high as mortals alone can in the Perfected Hierarchy—to reach further, they must marry into a House, which the most successful of patricians achieve by offering wealth, political connections, or evidence they carry Dragon's blood. For a patrician, the award of marriage into the Dynasty is the highest social achievement, whereas for a Dynast, an assigned marriage to a patrician is a sop or a slight.

Under the patrician class is the peasantry, bound to the land and serving a Great House in lieu of the Empress. Peasantry are forbidden the use of weaponry and may not legally travel from their home communities without documentation. Underneath the peasants are slaves, usually imported as tribute from Threshold satrapies and distributed within the Realm by House Cynis, who possess an Imperial monopoly on their sale. Slaves are not persons under Realm law but instead the property of their Dragon-Blooded owners—mortals, even un-Exalted Dynasts, cannot own slaves in the Realm.

Underneath slaves are the dispossessed, those who've been declared outlaw by an imperial magistrate, her archons, or a judge in the service of the Houses. The dispossessed's lives are even more miserable than slaves' or peasants.' They are completely valueless, have no rights under the

law, and are not protected by the Perfected Hierarchy from slight, theft, exploitation, violence, or even murder in any way—though the Immaculate Order often preaches against their abuse. Individuals are seldom dispossessed; the custom is to dispossess the entire population of a peasant community if it cannot keep its criminals, dissidents, and malcontents in check. Under the current economic strife, the Great Houses experiment with mass dispossession to seize land for development in ways previously denied them—a tactic already provoking peasant unrest.

To the majority of Creation, patricians—second or third-class citizens within the Perfected Hierarchy—lead lives of incredible privilege unrivaled by anyone but the rulers of the various Threshold states. Even the Realm's peasants enjoy lives of stability that many Threshold farmers could only dream of—or they did, until the disappearance of the Empress.

The Great Houses

The Great Houses (officially numbering ten) are now the powers behind the Realm. For centuries, the Empress played the houses against one another and kept them in check through her own cunning and skill, but now that she's gone, they're torn between cooperating long enough to administrate the Realm and civil war for control of the Imperial Manse and Scarlet Throne. The current front-runners for the throne are Houses Mnemon, Sesus, and Ragara, with V'neef, Peleps, and Cynis as potential spoilers.

House Mnemon: Strict traditionalists, whose balance of religious devotion provides them power in the Immaculate Order while skillful manipulation in the Deliberative and the Thousand Scales affords them political clout. Mnemon herself is the most prominent surviving child of the Empress and much like her mother in political savvy.

House Cathak: The strongest military house remaining in the Realm, Cathak can field the largest number of legions of any house and uses their military might to keep jade funneling into their coffers from their Threshold satrapies. House Cathak is famous for its heroes.

House Ragara: Ragara is the chief economic powerhouse of the Realm and a rival to the Guild in many Realm satrapies. It has adequate military might, but controls banks, insurance brokerages, and innumerable markets within and without the Realm, giving it leverage which was checked only by the Empress herself while she ruled.

House Peleps: The most powerful navy in the Realm belongs to the disciplined Peleps, who have used it to open up massive new trading corridors into the West. House Peleps is growing in power at an incredible rate, and other houses are torn between attempting to stymie them and allying with them.

House Sesus: Widely derided by the other Great Houses as brutes and thugs, the ruthless and savage Sesus are the second-most powerful military house in the Realm and deeply allied with House Cynis. What the Sesus lack in subtlety they make up for in brutality, and those who challenge them regret it more often than not.

House V'neef: The youngest Great House and most favored by the Empress before her disappearance, the eager and clever V'neef managed the mercantile navy for the Empress along the Inland Sea—the Empress was grooming them to

keep House Peleps in check while she strengthened her Dynasty's grip on the West. Without the Empress's favor, they are struggling to exploit opportunities for themselves in the West while avoiding open warfare with Peleps.

House Cynis: The second most powerful economic force in the Realm now behind House Ragara, the decadent Cynis trail Ragara in raw economic power but make up for it because of their ties to the Guild (giving them access to markets in the middle and deep Threshold) and their stranglehold on the Blessed Isle's slave trade.

House Ledaal: Famous for its subtlety and political acumen as well as its staunch support of the Immaculate faith, House Ledaal has eyes on the Throne but are content right now to play their enemies off against one another while seeking every advantage for themselves. House Ledaal is well-balanced economically, politically, and militarily. A significant contingent of House elders are much concerned with the loss of Thorns, dividing the House's attention in the face of looming civil war.

House Nellens: House Nellens is widely derided for its weak blood, but it makes up for this by avoiding fights and slowly cultivating (possibly forbidden) power. House Nellens is the most popular house with the patrician and peasant classes, and is willing to make secret overtures to powers outside the Blessed Isle in exchange for the ability to seize the Throne.

House Tepet: Formerly one of the most powerful military houses in the Realm, House Tepet's legions and many of its Dragon-Blooded heirs were slaughtered on a doomed campaign in the North. Now, House Tepet is a dark horse widely derided by the other Great Houses, and willing to do anything to climb back to power.

House Iselsi: In disgrace and officially dissolved, the Iselsi maneuvered against the Empress in a doomed power-play generations ago and now survive by her sufferance. Wholly disregarded by the other houses, Iselsi has spent decades cultivating a massive intelligence and assassination network both in the Realm and abroad in the Threshold, which they made available to the Empress and now discuss providing to whichever House they believe will treat them best upon taking the throne.

The Claws of the Dragon

The Threshold is most likely to experience the dictates of the Realm's government via satraps' announcements, conveyed through their local government. For the average mortal in the Threshold, the Realm is represented by three forces: the Imperial Legions, the Magistracy, and the Immaculate monks. With the return of the Solar Exalted, the reborn children of the Unconquered Sun have learned at great expense that even with the Scarlet Empress missing, the Realm is the best-coordinated empire in Creation. Anathema active in Realm territory or lands close to its satrapies are often first hit with a small military or Immaculate force, and if that fails, then a full legion or Wyld Hunt.

The Legions

The Realm's mailed fist, the legions of the Scarlet Dynasty are the premiere fighting force of Creation. Nearly every Dynast in the Realm is trained in armed combat, and even if they plan on serving out their adult years as a tax-auditor for the Thousand Scales or a priest in some quiet Immaculate temple, they're taught the basics of wielding pike and daiklave in heavy armor, and the rudiments of military strategy.

Under the Empress, there were forty Imperial legions, at least three dozen active and in fighting shape at any one time. Each House also possessed its own household military, which it used to either police its territory on the Blessed Isle or to enforce its power in the Threshold. The Imperial legions were meritocracies, and it was widely known that, free from household politics, only the best rose to their command. Many of the greatest generals in these legions were not of noble birth at all, but outcastes fetched from the Threshold and trained in the Realm from the time of their Exaltation, and amongst those outcastes, the legions were one of the few sure ways to advance. The House militaries had a reputation for varying levels of discipline and professionalism, with Houses Tepet, Cathak, and Sesus alone possessing a reputation comparable to the Imperial legions.

In the wake of the Empress's disappearance, one of the first thing the Great Houses did via the Deliberative was to take direct control of the Imperial Legions. In the wake of the surrender of military power to the Houses, at least one entire legion went rogue to make its own way in the Threshold, and others, while ostensibly obeying the Deliberative's mandate, have been "slow" to respond to orders and return home. This doesn't count innumerable soldiers in the Threshold who have gone missing or turned sellsword to various local powers.

The Legion Structure

Each *legion* is made up of ten *dragons* of five-hundred men apiece, meaning that each whole legion totals 5,000 men. Each dragon can be separated into two *wings* of 250 soldiers, which can be subdivided into two *talons* of 125 soldiers, and further subdivided into 25 man *scales* and 5 man *fangs*. Fangs rarely operate alone unless they are elite operatives. A legion is commanded by a general, a dragon by a dragonlord, a wing by a winglord, a talon by a captain, and a scale by a lieutenant. Fangs are often commanded by sergeants. In addition, these numbers do not reflect an ideal 2,500 man auxiliary force including cavalry, archers, slingers, and support staff, nor does it reflect camp followers or the slaves which inevitably serve Dragon-Blooded posted with the legion. High command—that is, dragonlords or higher—are always Dragon-Blooded, meaning there will always be at least eleven Terrestrial Exalted in a legion, although a legion can contain as many as forty or fifty if it is incredibly well-supported. This is rare unless the general is expecting Anathema, in which case the legion will summon Dragon-Blooded reinforcements and may also receive Wyld Hunt support.

The bulk of any legion is made up of the medium or heavy infantry for which the Realm is renowned across all Creation. Because of the destructive battle auras of the Terrestrial Exalted, as well as the enormous expense of shipping horses across the Inland Sea, the Realm's main forces do not use their own cavalry and often rely on mercenaries pulled from a compliant satrapy. Some nations base their whole reputations on providing the Realm with cavalry and archers, such as the death-riders of Medo. Because the Realm's forces drill constantly with the

Exalted, and because they are so often pitted against supernatural foes, they are well-trained and do not balk easily, if at all, at Exalted opponents, spirits, or monsters.

The Magistracy

The Magistracy ostensibly oversees the Empress's justice (separate from the court system in the Realm) as well as nominally heads the Thousand Scales. Their ambit is to investigate all "High crimes and illicit activity involving the Dynasty, wherever the Scarlet Empress's gaze penetrates." The Magistracy was a natural check on the Houses, the Immaculate priesthood, and the other powers of the Realm; as well they were investigators meant to monitor the satrapies in the Threshold. None could gainsay them other than the Empress herself, and she rarely saw a need to check them.

Magistrates were selected according to the Empress's own occult calculus. Many of them were high-ranking officials and Dynasts who had plotted against her. After a suitable time in exile, in prison, or at hard labor, they were offered a chance to redeem themselves by serving as the Empress's personal inquisition. The choice was simple—continue on as a prisoner, or experience a life of luxury and untold power serving the Empress directly. The choice for all but the most dedicated rebels was easy. Others were outcastes who had performed exceedingly well in the legions, bureaucracy, or priesthood, while the rest were high-achievers from large families kept out of power by more acquisitive siblings.

Each magistrate is personally puissant, inevitably both highly intelligent, keenly perceptive, and spiritually powerful. Each is assisted by several archons, usually younger Dragon-Blooded and useful mortals. Together they have a wide mandate to investigate corruption anywhere and bring those responsible to justice. Under the Empress, the magistrates had the ability to requisition artifacts, expert assistants, means of travel, and even commandeer military forces if the threat was great enough. If they overstepped their power, they answered personally to the Empress herself, whose wrath at corrupt magistrates was legendary.

A Magistracy of Hares

The Great Houses saw the Magistracy as a serious threat to their seizure of power, but were helpless to directly attack it, given its role as titular heads of the Thousand Scales and the enormous personal power each magistrate wielded. The Thousand Scales has resisted serious encroachment from the Great Houses by effectively giving the Houses most of whatever they want, but the one place where the bureaucrats have drawn the line is a direct attempt to eliminate the Magistracy. The bureaucrats see the Magistracy as the one check on the Houses simply absorbing the Thousand Scales' innumerable departments as they did the Imperial legions.

This means that the Great Houses still move against the magistrates and their archons, but do so quietly, and often through catspaws. Assassins working for the various houses abound in the Blessed Isle, and with each prefecture under house control it's very easy for a magistrate or her archons to be cornered. Because of this, the magistrates still active on the Blessed Isle often move about and investigate in disguise, rarely revealing themselves until they have their prey utterly trapped. The majority of magistrates have moved their activities into the Threshold, where they maintain the stability of Realm holdings and hunt Anathema and renegades.

Measuring Time

Time passes in Creation much as it does on Earth, with sun, moon and stars rising in the east and setting in the west. Most cultures divide the ensuing days into twenty-four hours. The idea of minutes and seconds as discrete units of time remain from First Age lore and folktales, but chronometers more sophisticated than sundials, sandglasses, and hour-candles are rare, leaving such units as vague abstractions to most.

The Realm measures the passage of years from the accession of the Scarlet Empress in Realm Year 1. It is now RY 768, five years since the Empress's disappearance. Other calendar eras are in use elsewhere in Creation, linked to a dizzying array of births, coronations, wars, celestial benisons, and other assorted events.

The traditional calendar year is comprised of fifteen lunar months, each 28 days long and divided into four weeks. These are arranged in five cycles named for the elements—Air, Water, Wood, Fire, and Earth—each divided into Ascending, Resplendent and Descending months. The year begins with the month of Ascending Air and ends in Descending Earth.

Creation shares our familiar seasons. Spring starts early in the cool, damp Water cycle and proceeds into the warm burgeoning of Wood, in which winter crops are harvested. Summer extends from the middle of Wood through most of the scorching cycle of Fire, a period long enough for Creation's more fruitful regions to manage another two or three harvests. The final harvest comes in the crisp autumnal months of Earth, followed by the icy cycle of Air.

Seasons vary by latitude. In the Southern deserts, summer encompasses half the year, with autumn extending well into the cycle of Air. In the far North, a mild summer occupies only a portion of the cycle of Fire, with winter's grip setting in during the Earth months and only relaxing during the cycle of Wood.

The year ends with the five days of Calibration, when the weather is in disorder and Luna hides her face. Calibration is a time of strange portents, ill fortunes, and broken destinies, when gods, ghosts, and demons walk the earth. Some cultures mark Calibration and the end of harvest with a five-day festival of dancing, loud music, and masks to scare away ill luck. Others spend it in solemnity or fear, beseeching whatever powers they trust to protect them from misfortune, catastrophe, and the coming winter.

Religion and Worship

Creation's animist cosmology makes the worship of spirits, and their interactions with their worshipers, a fundamental part of human existence. Every act is a ritual. Every deed is a prayer. Every single thing done within Creation shapes the Essence of the world and pays honor to action, object, and actor. The supernatural is omnipresent—even in the heartland of the Realm, gods are often manifest on their holy days and seen going about their duties, symbolically or otherwise. River gods lead the ceremonies at their headwaters, and elemental drakes manifest at terrestrial demesnes.

The Immaculate Order

The predominant faith of the Realm's sphere of influence is the Immaculate Philosophy, a reincarnationist creed which teaches that individual souls become spiritually enlightened over multiple incarnations until they are reborn first as humans and then as Dragon-Blooded. The Immaculates believe that after reaching perfection as a Terrestrial Exalted, the being's Essence joins with the Five Elemental Dragons. These terrestrial deities, the Immaculates claim, spawned the world and are masters over all of its elemental Essence flows. The soul is then said to strengthen Creation and serves to bring forth new souls.

The Immaculate Philosophy purports to provide a framework to encourage individuals' spiritual advancement. It seeks to do this by developing strong, supportive, orderly communities in which individuals can prosper materially—perceived as the first step on the road to spiritual prosperity.

This philosophy also holds that Dragon-Blooded are inherently suited to rule mortals, by right of their superior spiritual station. The Immaculate Order, which is the world's leading proponent of the philosophy, is the state religion of the Realm, its practice enforced everywhere the Realm's banner flies. The order is a centralized, bureaucratized faith based on the Blessed Isle, and also virtually the only church of the Immaculate religion. Other instances are local cults along the Northern coast of the Threshold and among outcastes such as the denizens of Lookshy (functionally similar to the Realm's practice), and the Pure Way, a Southeastern syncretism of Immaculate beliefs and local religious practices. Other than the Way, these local cults generally differ dogmatically only in that they are self-organizing and locally administered, rather than recognizing the Mouth of Peace as the executive of the faith. These schisms are broadly tolerated—they differ not from the establishment of the Order on the matter of Terrestrial spiritual and political primacy.

As well as justifying Dragon-Blooded political dominance and Dynastic imperial ambitions, the Immaculate Philosophy also serves an important role by restraining selfish or wicked deities from enslaving mortals. Left to their own devices, many gods would demand ruinous tributes from every mortal they could force themselves upon. Various gods delight in consuming humans as sacrifices or forcing victims to pray themselves to death. The Immaculates dictate to these gods that they will receive their fair share of devotion and prayer, while restraining their more abhuman appetites and checking their gluttony for Essence.

The Five Elemental Dragons

In the Immaculate understanding, the Five Elemental Dragons were incarnated in five specific individuals—the Immaculate Dragons—during the destruction of the Anathema and immediately afterwards. Their heroism helped banish the Anathema from Creation, and to rebuild civilization after the war against the demon spawn.

It is true powerful supernatural beings similar to the Elemental Dragons as described by the Immaculate faith were active during the Usurpation, although their actual nature is somewhat obscure. Students of sorcery often voice doubts that these beings were the actual Elementals Dragons of the five directions, but it is unwise to entertain this theory in the presence of devout adherents of the Immaculate Order.

In the Immaculate understanding, the Immaculate Dragons are not just historical figures, but the eternal ideals that persons of the faith are to strive to hold themselves up against. Veneration of the Dragons in these avatars is important to Dragon-Blooded culture, and many Exalted strive greatly to emulate their examples. Later Immaculate thinking introduced the notion of the

antitheses—the spiritual opposites of the Immaculate Dragons. These are not presented as real, historical figures, but rather as abstract examples of behavior to avoid.

Dragon-Blooded are invariably associated with the Dragon to whom their Aspect is aligned, but mortals are assigned one through a process that is part personality test and part self-selection.

Daana'd, Arbiter of the Immaculate Complaint: A headstrong youth whose spirit gave her the determination to swim to the bottom of the sea and lock the Anathema away in the Underworld forever. Devotees of Daana'd expose themselves to hardship, seeking to perfect their Essence through challenges. Daana'd's antithesis is the "Unmanly Babbler," who whines for others to fix his or her problems, when the real answer lies within—the individual is generating the situations he wishes to be rescued from.

Hesiesh, Reciter of Loud Prayers and Efficacious Hymns: Hesiesh was a powerful Exalt who used his powers only once, burning Creation clear of corpses after the first marches of the war against the Anathema, so the slaughtered billions would not breed hungry ghosts. His careful husbanding of Essence is held up as the core lesson for Fire Aspects, who have a tendency to dissipate themselves by racing in every possible direction. His antithesis is the "Illiberal Churl" who hoards up treasures without reason, and follows traditions blindly without truly understanding their wisdom.

Mela, Petitioner of Clouds Accordant to the Call of Battle: Mela was the first and the eldest of the Immaculate Dragons to appear. She first introduced the rigorous training that underlies mastery of the Immaculate Forms, and her protective winds defended the Terrestrial armies against the fiery wrath of the Anathema. Her antithesis is the "Sickly Whore" who squanders natural gifts in dissipation and selfishness rather than sharing them with the community.

Sextes Jylis, He Who Hath Strewn Much Grass: After the war against the Anathema, Sextes Jylis wandered the Blessed Isle and the Threshold, planting the seeds of great forests and vast meadows. Where the fires of war had scorched, he brought life back. He is seen as the exemplar of Exalted stewardship among Terrestrials, laboring endlessly—and successfully—to repair the vast scars of war. The antithesis of Sextes Jylis is the "Inconsiderate Horseman" who rides directly in the ruts of the road, giving himself easy passage but making conditions worse for everyone who comes after him.

Pasiap, He Who Illuminates Both Worlds with Majesty and Power: Pasiap was the last of the Immaculate Dragons to emerge. He appeared just as the war against the Anathema ended. He taught the Dragon-Blooded the secrets of geomancy and led them in constructing great manses and feats of civic engineering. He instructed the Dragon-Blooded in the perfection of their Charms, and is the ideal of the Dragon-Blooded who masters difficult arts and labors endlessly to transfer secrets to a new generation of heroes. The antithesis of Pasiap is the "Ostentatious Peasant," who gathers up the treasures of knowledge and skill, and spends her life extracting wealth from that knowledge without repaying society by passing it on.

The Order and the Realm

The Realm officially recognizes the Immaculate Order as the true religion of Creation, and defends its claims to spiritual primacy as a foundational tenet of the state. The Immaculate Philosophy validates Dragon-Blooded rule, and the Ten Thousand Dragons in turn lend their massive supernatural energies to buttress the faith's efforts to rein in renegade deities and ward off the aggression of the Lunar Exalted and other enemies of the Realm.

In theory, the Order is strictly separated from the Realm's machinery of state, a church that preaches inclusion of all Dragon-Blooded, Dynast and outcaste alike. In reality, the church's administrative locus is within the Realm and the vast majority of the faith's Dragon-Blooded devotees are members of the Dynasty. The order's universality is mainly manifest in its inclusive attitude toward groups of outcastes who accept the Immaculate Philosophy but reject the Realm's overlordship. The religion's amiable relations with these outcaste groups provide a conduit for intermarriage and cultural exchange.

Immaculate Beliefs

Though it serves as a spiritual validation for the often-predatory realities of Dynastic rule within the Realm, much of the Immaculate Philosophy is relatively wholesome and innocuous. It preaches a doctrine of spiritual elevation by service, humility, and abstemious behavior. The ideal Immaculate follows the example set by the Immaculate Dragons, is truthful, virtuous, kind, and seeks always to advance their community through diligent self-application appropriate to their station.

As practiced in the Realm, it is a faith that preaches that peasants should mind their business and obey the orders of their betters without question, but that does not mean its tenets are invalid or insincerely held. Most denizens of the Realm, *including most Dragon-Blooded*, are relatively sincere adherents of the Immaculate faith.

Where they stray—for example, the Dynastic tendencies toward cruelty and self-indulgence—this is seen as regrettable, and an offense against the natural order at some level. It is an excess to be restrained, enjoined against and compensated for. Certain things are tolerated, although the pious are urged to eschew them. Other things are forbidden, and the order deploys its considerable political clout to combat these offenses.

Thus, while the Realm's state faith serves to provide a moral validation for the Dragon-Blooded, it also serves to restrain their behaviors. It grants them social and political legitimacy, but limits the remit of the license it grants. As a whole, it is fairly effective at keeping the Dragon-Blooded focused on their task of bringing Creation to order and defending that order against encroachment by the Anathema, although this is of little comfort to an individual mortal victimized by some Dragon-Blooded's "Regrettable but understandable" moral failing.

Monks

Foremost among the devotees of the Immaculate Philosophy are its monks, who sacrifice much in life—the pleasures of gluttony and sexual license particularly—in order to seek perfect alignment with the Immaculate Dragons. All who wish to serve the Immaculate Order in this fashion must present themselves to the Mouth of Sextes Jylis in the Imperial City, but after their initial training, the monks may be sent anywhere in Creation.

The Immaculate monks are best known as master martial artists, and they take an active role in the communities around them. Monks strive to create orderly, just, and stable societies wherever they are active, and they have even gone into armed rebellion against the Realm's secular authorities to underline their objection to certain policies. At the same time, they serve the Realm's social order. Their presence in Threshold states forced to pay tribute to the Dynasty causes much resentment, particularly when the order is perceived to interfere in the relationship between local populations and the deities of their locales and trades.

Dragon-Blooded Monks

The power of Terrestrial Exalted who undergo the philosophy's martial art training is beyond question. The Charms that lie at the root of the Immaculate Order's fighting styles far exceed the normal Charms of the Terrestrial Exalted in terms of efficiency and power. Immaculates spend their lives developing their Essence, and use the natural Charms of their kind mixed freely with the proprietary Immaculate martial arts styles to perform feats of martial prowess notable even among the Exalted.

Dragon-Blooded monks are especially good at fighting Essence-wielding enemies, particularly gods. The Immaculates are well-equipped to exert their moderating influence on the rambunctious deities of the world. Whenever possible, Wyld Hunts are led by a master Immaculate martial artist.

Religious Order

The Immaculate Philosophy utilizes a fivefold internal division for its administrative machinery. These administrative divisions, called mouths, address the problems of the order in subject-wise fashion. This is in contrast to the order's geographic missions, which address discreet tracts of the order's influence. The staff of the Mouths provides planning, logistical support, and staff for special projects; while the missions provide regular services to their communities and ensure continuity of administration.

A Mouth's floating staff is very large—they number in the tens of thousands on the Blessed Isle—and its ability to move them is well-developed. They can be (and often are) concentrated to provide disaster relief, but even when not, their hands are still at work improving the countryside.

The Mouth of Sextes Jylis (Human Resources and Public Works) deals with human resources and the natural world. Sextes Jylis was a permaculture horticulturalist, and this is the philosophy under which the mouth operates.

This Mouth recruits for the order, sorts and trains recruits, assigns them to where it perceives they will serve themselves and the order best, and then monitors their personal development and general effectiveness across their career.

The Mouth also tends to the creation and maintenance of the natural wonders of the Realm. The Mouth has created endless food forests, coppice woodlots and resilient agricultural communities, and while general maintenance falls to the mission tracts, new projects and major renewals are part of the responsibility of the Mouth of Sextes Jylis.

These groundskeepers of the Realm are many in number and the Mouth of Sextes Jylis is the largest of the Mouths. The swarm of monks that appear after any disaster is generally drawn from the ranks of the order's foresters, horticulturalists and road-builders.

The Immaculate Order is run for the spiritual development of the entire world, including the members of the order itself, and so this Mouth has a constant, sometimes intrusive presence in the life of each monk, seeking to better their spiritual situation. They really are watching, and they really do care, and sometimes monks discover that everything that happened to them has been carefully arranged to teach them a lesson. This isn't always the most welcome feeling, particularly when the lesson-teaching goes wrong.

The Mouth of Pasiap (Manses and Facilities) tends to the order's many manses and also to its other, inert structures. The dividing line between the Mouth of Sextes Jylis and the Mouth of Pasiap is the order's fixed property line—the Mouth of Sextes Jylis tends to public works, while the Mouth of Pasiap tends to the things that belong strictly to the order.

The order controls many manses and other properties, and so this Mouth's operation is expansive. It consists of groundskeepers and other fixed personnel who perform maintenance at a given site, and also the travelling corps of architects and specialists who repair, refurbish, erect, and demolish structures for the order. With a real estate portfolio as diverse as the order's, its construction crews are numerous and busy, and the Mouth often undertakes commercial projects to fund its operation and retain skill among its teams.

The Mouth of Mela (Combat Training and Military Planning) is responsible for defending the order and for teaching its monks to defend themselves. It organizes and maintains the Wyld Hunt. It directs the training of Immaculate monks—both Dragon-Blooded and mortal—in the martial arts. Inasmuch as the order fields military forces—and it guards a number of manses and individuals quite heavily—the Mouth of Mela marshals them and commands them to battle.

As befits the largely pacifist and social engagement of the order, the Mouth of Mela is the smallest of the Mouths. The most terrifying of the Mouths' fighters are the dreaded Legion of Silence, who guard the person of the Mouth of Peace and other critical core assets of the order (including, until her disappearance, the Scarlet Empress). These individuals are bought as child-slaves and enhanced via drugs, Essence, and special exercise routines until they far exceed the physical capacity of a normal human. The price of this superhuman capacity is a short lifespan—most members of the Legion of Silence die of old age by the time they reach 40.

The Mouth of Hesiesh (Special Projects) is dedicated to special projects. This means any emergent need the order has not already established a procedure for, or that exceeds the regular means of the order. The Mouth of Hesiesh is the order's immediate response force, used to bulk out any effort that needs additional labor, and to stage instant intervention into new and unexpected challenges. It is also the branch of the Order charged with making use of "inauspicious assets," such as God-Blooded and Exigents—products of heretical intercourse and interaction between mortals and the little gods of the world, which are too useful to simply discard despite their shameful origins.

On one hand, this consists of individuals who are too old, infirm, injured or eccentric for deployment anywhere, and serves as an invalid's colony within the order. It also contains the fastest and most egalitarian command chain within the order, and possibly the Realm. These two organizational aspects are not discreet. In its collection of the old, the infirm and the odd-headed lies an immense reservoir of talent and unorthodox approaches that the Mouth does an excellent job harnessing.

To some extent, this is merely a function of having a large talent pool to draw from. The Mouth of Hesiesh is nearly the size of the Mouth of Pasiap and surpasses it when the Immaculate Order's demography goes through a particularly severe aging cycle, or after the outbreak of pestilences of various sorts, when many members of the order may suffer from lifelong crippling injuries due to the lingering effects of illness.

The Mouth of Daana'd (Human Community Development) is the Mouth that deals with the human context in which the order exists. It provides a wide array of social services—hospitals,

orphanages, retirement homes, training programs, daycares and hostels. The order is entangled in every aspect of the day-to-day life of everyone in the Realm, from cradle to grave, and this Mouth directs the overall arc of that involvement. While individual facilities are administered and staffed by the mission tracts, it's the Mouth of Daana'd that determines the standards and practices of the order's many human outreach programs.

In disaster response, the Mouth of Daana'd provides medical and humanitarian aid. It is second in size to the Mouth of Sextes Jylis and keeps a significant excess capacity in reserve to meet crises. As a result, like the Mouth of Sextes Jylis, its presence is announced by the appearance of swarms of monks—dozens or hundreds.

The intelligences that direct the order and formulate its policies are considerable. Its social entanglement with the society of the Realm is largely beneficial to that society. Through the Mouth of Mela, the order guides and guards the society of the Realm. It may enable the despotic reign of the Dragon-Blooded but it's not a one-sided bargain.

Anathema and the Wyld Hunt

The Immaculates apply the technical term Anathema—in the Realm it's a formal clerical finding—to anything that the order finds abhorrent to stable and prosperous life. Solar and Lunar Exalted are always Anathema; the label can also potentially encompass Fair Folk, beastfolk, elementals, and demons who threaten Realm interests, as well as gods and their Exigent champions who've gone into open rebellion against the Immaculate Philosophy.

In practice, most inhabitants of the Realm (and Immaculate-influenced cultures in general) associate the term "Anathema" exclusively with the Solar and especially Lunar Exalted. The Lunar Anathema in particular are great fearsome terrors used by peasants to frighten children into bed at night. Most individuals within the boundaries of the Realm are well-aware of the iconography of the Solar and Lunar Anathema—their Caste brands, and the golden and argent hues of their auras—the better to render assistance to the Wyld Hunt's investigators and trackers. On the subject of other sorts of "Anathema," the common folk are left ignorant, lest they be tempted to worship something they don't understand—it's enough for them to know that interaction with the supernatural is the responsibility of the Dragon-Blooded. Public duty when confronted with the unknown is to run and fetch a monk or Exalt.

The Wyld Hunt is a social institution where devotees of the Immaculate Philosophy gather together outside the framework of their political institutions, and cooperatively destroy the enemies of Terrestrial hegemony. The efforts are usually organized and led by Immaculate monks, and staffed by zealots of the philosophy who see the struggle as spiritually perfecting and the ultimate fulfillment of their compact with the human race as its protectors and defenders.

The activities of the Wyld Hunt are considered a matter of remark for the secular authorities of society, but the actual practice is a holy rite outside the countenance of law. It would be a crime to kill one's brother while engaging in a Wyld Hunt, and it would be a grave religious crime to declare a Hunt falsely, but the actual deed where a half-dozen Terrestrial Exalted and their personal retinues descend on a target the Immaculate Philosophy has deemed a threat to society and murder it, often in broad daylight before hundreds of witnesses, is not subject to censure.

The effect is akin to a church-sponsored death squad, and is extremely effective when properly executed. The order's efforts against the Lunar Exalted and residual Solars were meticulously planned and professionally staffed by Immaculate monks and various Dragon-Blooded elites;

zealots and others who wished to obtain combat experience against Essence-wielding enemies. Currently the staffing is much reduced, but most efforts are still spearheaded by a master Immaculate. The Wyld Hunt is spread thinner than it has been in centuries, but no less deadly than ever before when it does appear.

The institution is prevalent even outside the Realm—not only is it practiced by the Seventh Legion of Lookshy, it is the rubric under which rural outcaste Terrestrials form posses and assert protective solidarity and collective interests. The term Wyld Hunt also serves to effectively express the license Terrestrials feel, that whatever differences they may have between and among one another, their plight is existential in the face of Creation's vast scope.

In this meaning of Wyld Hunt, any defensive measures—including pre-emptive assassination—are justified if the targets are not Terrestrials, and the Exalted in question agree among one another that the menace threatens all of them collectively and cannot be tolerated. This sort of aggressive defense is not seen as especially holy, but it is expected behavior. These actions are not typically subject to censure unless it is practiced against some other Terrestrial's allies or interests.

> The Immaculate Philosophy and the Other Chosen
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> All Solar and Lunar Exalted are Anathema by decree of the Immaculate Philosophy, while the Dragon-Blooded are hailed as the rightful rulers of Creation by dint of spiritual elevation. Though the Abyssal Exalted are newly arrived in the world, their prominent role in the fall of Thorns and their Solar-like Caste Marks clearly announce them as Anathema and enemies of Creation as well.
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> According to the Immaculate texts, the Exigents were servants of the Solar Anathema in the time when those demon-gods ruled over Creation. But when the Dragon-Blooded rose up to end the age of the Anathema, some Exigents turned against their masters and joined the righteous cause of the Terrestrial Exalted. Though steeped in the dark power of their Anathema lords, the Exigents had proven they were not beyond redemption. Accordingly, the Immaculate Dragon Hesiesh demonstrated his wisdom by sealing the darkness of the Exigents when he unleashed his cleansing flames on Creation, and Sextes Jylis exercised mercy by weaving his brother's purifying power into the cycle of reincarnation. Each Exigent must labor over many lifetimes to purify the taint on his soul through correct living under the tenets of the Immaculate Philosophy—but such purification is made possible through the grace of the Dragons, ultimately leading to the potential for redemption and rebirth as one of the Dragon-Blooded… or so the Immaculate Order claims. Exigent recidivists who threaten the stability of the Realm are sorrowfully dispatched by the Wyld Hunt, perhaps to find greater wisdom in their next life.
>
> The Sidereal Exalted aren't widely known to exist, and as such, a Sidereal flaring his anima banner would likely be mistaken for an Exigent. Those who are aware of the Sidereals know them as rare and reclusive Chosen who labor in the shadows to uphold the proper, fated order of the world—that is, the dominion of the Realm as the rightful protector and ruler of Creation. Liminals are blasphemous aberrations against the natural order, but so are all things of the Underworld; the Wyld Hunt rides against them if they seem an active danger to

Dragon-Blooded hegemony, but pays them no special attention otherwise. Indeed, a few satraps have been known to hire Liminal mercenaries to resolve problems with the unquiet dead.

The Hundred Gods Heresy

The "Hundred Gods Heresy" is a blanket term applied by the Immaculate Philosophy to the worship of deities without Immaculate moderation. This is a term wielded by the Philosophy, and not by the devotees of particular gods. How strongly the Order exerts its control over expressions of worship depends on its local influence.

In developed areas of the Blessed Isle, virtually anything that can be interpreted as worship material is banned, and possession of certain common items in combination is considered unlucky and a sign of possible heresy. In the capitals of the Realm's tributary states and the Blessed Isle's hinterlands, no uncontrolled worship sites are permitted and private worship is discouraged or prohibited depending on the strength of the Philosophy's hold. In the rural hinterlands of the Threshold satrapies, worship of local deities goes unimpeded, although few large ritual worship areas are permitted—services are usually held in floating locations, and are small affairs involving a few hundred individuals at most, and not great festival events involving tens of thousands.

The Hundred Gods and the Exalted

Given the spiritual dimension of Terrestrial Exalted claims to rule, resistance against them has a religious and spiritual character. Worship of local and occupational deities in defiance of Immaculate rule is a highly typical act of resistance—a symbolic declaration that you think the cut the Terrestrials are taking is so severe you would rather worship gods directly than pay the Realm its rapacious price.

In the Threshold, the Immaculate Philosophy is used to provide a fig-leaf for Terrestrial death squads. There, the preaching of the Immaculate monks is and always has been in defense of the Realm's rapacity. Rejecting the philosophy's assessment of the bargain offered by the Terrestrial Exalted is a natural matter for Threshold populations, on whom the economic burden of Imperial occupation is heavy indeed. The Threshold previously funded the majority of the Realm's state operations, and currently bears the burden of the Great Houses' excess. The Terrestrial tendency to portray devotion to local deities as akin to demon worship or allying oneself with the Fair Folk only exacerbates the situation.

In turn, the gods are themselves moved by the current situation, and many countenance the possibility of resistance to Terrestrial rule. Some consider it openly, some consider it privately, but even the Threshold deities most loyal to the Realm must weigh their chances in case of rebellion.

A handful care for the mortals whose plight they witness. Many more fear for locales, trades, things or concepts they represent in the face of Dragon-Blooded civil discord, and seek an alternative to the increasingly erratic Terrestrial rule. Finally, some scent opportunity, seeking to better their station by allying themselves with Celestial Exalted insurgents who seek to overthrow established Terrestrial power structures and impose their own regimes. All these deities, seeking to assert themselves and defend the places and nations they are inextricably linked to, form natural allies of the resurgent Celestial Exalted. This is well known to the

Immaculates, who have increased their pressure on captive populations to cease all private worship. On the Blessed Isle, the number of emergent Anathema has engendered a witch hunt atmosphere.

Of Silver and Jade: Money in Creation

In the world of **Exalted**, there is less of everything than everyone wants, and as a result, there is economic competition. Individuals and groups attempt to satisfy their wants and needs at the expense of others, and so generate most forms of earthly conflict, and a fair number in Heaven as well.

Both a venue for and a mechanism of that competition, money serves two critically important roles—keeping score and defining what "score" means.

What is Money?

Creation practices a complex array of monetary arrangements. In many Threshold locales, informal economics prevails, while the Realm hosts a sophisticated financial infrastructure that most inhabitants take part in to some degree or another. What follow are the prevailing methods of exchange in Creation, in degree of increasing sophistication.

Informal Economics

In populations where there is too little wealth for anyone to own very much, provision of essential aid and supplies is usually allotted via an array of ritual exchanges; mutual gifting; patronage; and familial, clan, or tribal obligations. These populations will often possess coinage of some sort, but usually regard it as a trade or ritual good. The typical uses for hard currency in these situations are dealing with traders (who will have finished wares from outside the village economy, particularly metal goods), and ritually arranging social contracts by which familial obligations are spread and reinforced. Additionally, in areas near state influence, tax collectors often demand payment in state-backed currency unless they have an agreement for taxes paid as a specific resource (crops, pelts, lumber, slaves, etc.). Governments under the influence of the Realm almost always demand taxes be paid in government-approved currency, which the locals must obtain by selling service or resources at ruinous markdown.

75% of the population of the Threshold probably lives under these conditions, if you include all the sundry sorts of agricultural workers held in bondage into the total. Many of these individuals live in the larger context of an organized society practicing threshold economics (see below) but they and their immediate peers so lack economic opportunity that non-ritual hard currency is not a meaningful part of their existence.

Threshold Economics

In areas where there is enough developed economy that some individuals command significant economic surplus, a system will swiftly arise by which wealth is measured in the abstract. This exists to institutionalize status differences and simplify exchanges in contexts where all participants aren't known personally to each other. By the time prominent individuals are entertaining household establishments where the number of able-bodied adults enters the double digits, complex economic systems will begin to impinge and impose abstract measures of value. The system of measures will grow in complexity as the society's degree of wealth increases.

Even if individuals in these more complex economies still frequently practice informal economics, their context is monetized—they will generally reckon value exchanges in the abstract units of wealth that prevail in their locale, with the specific price of goods set by custom or market pressures. If someone is getting a "sweet deal," the sweetness of the deal will be reckonable.

> The Influence of the Empress
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> It must be pointed out that all organized economic activity on which the Realm had any influence had a strong tendency to resemble a conveyor belt feeding wealth into the coffers of the Scarlet Empress. No discussion of economics in the world of **Exalted** is complete without discussing the effect of the Empress's influence and desires on the process—though the Empress is gone, the system she created remains the economic context of all civilized existence in Creation.

Most Threshold economic systems use a standard of exchange that has little use to society as a whole, is difficult to counterfeit and is scarce enough that a reasonable amount of wealth can be transported in a small volume. Typically this means silver—gold is fairly common in Creation, and though it commands significant value, it is primarily regarded as a decorative material rather than currency. Coins are minted by individuals with political power, who strike coins from debased material, then force their acceptance at face value by people they make payments to or accept payments from.

The difference between the cost of the materials used in the blank and the face value of the struck coinage is called *signeurage*, and it is the "free" income of groups and individuals powerful enough to make operating their own mint an attractive proposition. Every ruler restricts the issue of coins by everyone but herself if she can, just as every ruler mints her own coins if she is able. The level at which mints operate is thus the level at which individuals can successfully assert themselves against the power of the central state.

In the case of most Threshold states, the central authority of the nation, or perhaps their provincial governors in the case of a fractious state, are the operator of the mints. A well-operated mint is a source of social stability and economic power. A mint striking coins made mostly of base metals, and forcing the currency into the economy by force of legal authority, is a sign of spendthrift or rapacious leadership. Debased coinage progressively strip-mines the wealth out of society to pad the budget of its owner.

The Empress did not like debased coinage, as she knew it was a gateway to political instability, which was ultimately her problem as Queen of Everything. It was also in any case hard to account for, as every debased coin has a separate real value. Threshold princes were accordingly held to minting at 95% purity or better by Imperial fiat. Assaying was done by a fearsome array of bound demons and Dragon-Blooded inspectors, and punishment was swift and horrible. As a result, the Threshold during the reign of the Empress featured a wide array of easily exchangeable, stable currencies, all easily counted and laid at the Empress's feet. This standard was also accepted and promulgated by the Guild, who enforced it in the Scavenger Lands and throughout Creation.

> The Silver Standard

The silver standard of coinage used in the Threshold has three formally recognized sizes of coin, of which 2 are actually struck. Some local variants are minted, but these are most commonly seen in Imperial clients who have recently redesigned their coins into smaller sizes while asserting them as having the same worth.

The **silver talent** is 64 pounds of silver. A talent is worth 4 dirhams, or 1,600 dinars. Talents are purely units of account; nobody goes through the trouble of making silver into 64 pound bars just so they can divide it back up into smaller coins again.

The **silver dirham** is brick of silver weighing 16 pounds. It is worth 1/4 of a silver talent, or 400 dinars. Dirhams are actually minted, although rarely seen by common individuals. This was the Empress's preferred form of payment when collecting tribute from Threshold princes, and it is a useful store of value for transactions on the national, prefectural, or city level. Note, however, that worth is typically transferred in kegs of coins, not silver bars.

The **silver dinar** is a silver coin weighing 1/25th of a pound. They are ovoid with milled edges. Dinars are frequently seen and used by individuals; however, their worth is rather great for common transactions and so they are halved, quartered and occasionally cut into eighths. The Guilds coins are scored to accommodate quartering, while the strikings of Imperial clients tend to have unscored faces, and generally lower strike quality. A dinar is the approximate monthly income of a commoner house with two skilled working adults and active cottage industry, and during times of economic security when food prices are stable, one dinar will pay the monthly food cost of four adults (or three adults and two growing children) with a little left over for necessities such as soap and lamp tallow.

The goal of the economy of the Threshold was plunder. The Empress allowed only rudimentary economic development outside the Blessed Isle. The Threshold provided cash crop foodstuffs and industrial raw materials. The tribute placed on it was a burden deliberately applied to the princes of the region to stunt their growth. It was increased in times of plenty, and lessened in times of hardship.

In addition, more direct means were employed to rob the Threshold and handicap it economically. Development of any sort of secondary economy was greatly suppressed. Refining, manufacturing, construction—were all kept as weak as possible. Over time, the Empress was forced to accede to greater and greater degrees of economic development, particularly in the East and South, where conditions were not so hostile to complex societies and economies. However, enterprise was always a hard-fought battle for Threshold entrepreneurs and nationalists.

Now that the Empress is gone, the complex and expensive bureaucracy for assuring the uniformity of struck coins has gone into eclipse. The various Houses are coming to understandings with their clients in the Threshold about what acceptable levels of debasement are, in exchange for payments from the Threshold despots and princes to their segment of the Dynasty. Many Houses and satraps are taking massive cash payments out of the system, but at the cost of the Realm's future wealth. Future streams of silver coins offered in tribute to the Scarlet Throne will be of highly uncertain value. For the Great Houses, this matters less than which is mightiest when the test of power comes—the victor in the struggle for the throne will

have the spoils of the Realm to pay their bills, and the military might of the Imperial Manse to wield if they choose to repudiate their debentures. In contrast, the Guild's mints are adhering strictly to the established standards for silver coinage, and avidly encourage the sentiment that Imperial clients are terrible debasers.

> Cowrie Shells and Stranger Things
>
> In the West, the red cowrie shell is used as the standard unit of value—a ritual currency that's made the transition to trade currency under centuries of Guild and Realm economic influence. The shells must be very fine to have much worth, and are drilled and strung together in groups of 25, 50 or 100. These shells are not much valued outside of the West, but in that region, they are valued at three silver dirhams to the shell, or six shells per obol. The Empress did not accept the West's tribute in cowrie shells, but their use has allowed the West to retain a functional means of exchange even as the Empress systematically stripped them of silver coinage. It is for this reason that silver is given a favorable exchange rate, and jade penalized.

Likewise, the Imperial prohibitions on the development of capital goods such as industrial works and shipyards is waning. She saw them as a key measure in keeping Creation prostrate to her will, as she always lacked the forces to occupy the entire Threshold. Her presumptive heirs see policing her eccentric prohibitions as a vast drag on cash flow.

The onrushing Time of Tumult has let the cat out of the bag in terms of human economic development in Creation. Assuming the wars of the Exalted don't reduce human civilization to ashes and broken stones, the long suppressed economic development of the Threshold has begun an inevitable march toward fruition. It's now obvious that the world will never be the same, and the ambitious seek to make hay while the Imperial eclipse persists. The Realm is much diminished, because the Threshold it once dominated has grown considerably since the Empress's departure.

To be clear, silver was not the only tribute that the Empress demanded from the Threshold, but the means by which she extracted tribute of more practical value—troops, slaves, and rare and exotic goods. Places with no material wealth to speak of paid her tribute in resources directly. Places that had great wealth, she forced to mine jade for her, or to otherwise obtain jade offerings to place before her throne. Jade, alongside the other Magical Materials, is the true coin of Creation—both scarce and valuable. As in the Realm, the Empress used payment in that true coin as a cudgel to punish those she wished to strip of their riches.

> The Guild
>
> Born less than a century after the Great Contagion, the Guild is the largest, most powerful trade association under mortal control, and the most influential mortal-run organization of any kind in Creation. This vast mercantile enterprise spans the entire Threshold and extends tendrils to the world's edges.
>
> The Guild's fleets and caravans tie Creation together. In cities and towns, Guild businesses employ vendors, accountants, and artificers—as well as a rotating pool of nonmember day laborers and slaves—while Guild wholesalers supply foodstuffs, timber, ores, and other essentials of urban life. Caravans provide

nightly markets in the hinterlands, offering otherwise unavailable goods and entertainments and wealth to the villages along their routes in exchange for provisions.

But while the Guild's efforts aid many of those under its umbrella, it is ultimately an engine of profit, and it wrings all the wealth it can from the world. Many Guildsmen deal in the "soft trade" of drugs and the "hard trade" of slaves; both offer steady and sizable returns that draw new brokers no matter how many slavers or drug dealers a hero might kill or drive off—the most daring Guild slavers even barter with the Fair Folk in their gossamer palaces; there's always a market for their dead-eyed, soul-eaten, quietly obedient victims. Guild leaders also use their economic influence as a weapon against rival mercantile interests—and against city-states that interfere with profits.

Caravans and ships largely travel between hub cities—sites populous and prosperous enough to make commerce profitable. In these places, merchants, artisans, and clerks apply for Guild membership, paying dues in exchange for access to an enormous network of contacts, talent, and information. Those of the highest ranks—master artisans, the venture capitalists called factors, and the wholesalers known as keeps—serve on the cities' nine-member Guild Councils.

The wealthiest and most powerful Guildsmen jockey for election to the role of hierarch. Meeting in the city of Nexus, the nine hierarchs of the secretive Guild Directorate set policy for the entire organization. The Exalted rarely achieve such heights, as Guild members resist placing the Chosen in position to use the organization as a tool for personal ambition rather than profit.

Realm Economics

In contrast to the Threshold, where plunder economics rule the day, the Realm has a complex financial system. The Realm's monetary systems feature central banking, financial instruments like bonds and equities, correspondent banking and the other trappings of an advanced trading and manufacturing economy.

The primary feature of the Realm's economics was that they operated at the behest of and for the benefit of the Empress. All policies were set to either enrich her personally, or to control her potential rivals by sapping their financial might while still giving them the wherewithal to labor at her behest.

The Realm's monetary system is bifurcated, with two circulating mediums of exchange. This is done to codify economic discrimination. Most individuals—not just peasants and slaves but even high ranking mortals—may legally have access only to a paper and copper-coin currency called "cash."

Dragon-Blooded and their assignees are permitted to transact business in "high" currency—actual jade. Many controlled objects are freely available with no meaningful oversight by the state, save that the price is by law quoted in jade, rather than cash. Slaves, chests of opium, exotic sorcerous reagents, all can be bought from shopfronts or salons in the right part of town—if one has access to the currency of the Dragon-Blooded. The Empress sold cash in exchange for jade at favorable rates, using scrip to drain real wealth out of the economy.

The ability to purchase most items sold only for jade would not be worth much to the average citizen of the Realm, as there is no way they would ever be able to afford a yasal crystal or the lease on a manse. However, it is also used for making sure petty objects considered socially dangerous never get far outside the control of the Dynasty. Addictive drugs, military weapons and armor and the general materials of religious worship such as incense, votive candles and sacrificial wine are all examples of items kept out of the reach of commoners by controlling the currency they're priced in.

The cash system and the jade system were both managed by separate bureaucracies within the Dragon-Blooded state. The cash system was operated by the Empress's Private Purse, while the jade system was supervised by the Imperial Treasury. Payments in silver were strictly segregated within the Bursar of Barbarian Tribute's office. The resulting morass created massive duplication of effort within the Realm's state apparatus, which was precisely as the Empress desired it. It is for this reason that, like many of the Realm's institutions, the financial system has had difficulty in its creator's absence.

The Imperial Treasury is still relatively functional. It commands massive resources and the currency within it—jade—is desired for its ability to be forged into war-gear and other miracles. None wish to subvert it; all wish to control it so that it can be pillaged to arm their house in rare splendor. If it is undone by the chaos of the Imperial civil war, its collapse will mark the finale of the financial and economic milieu defined as the reign of the Empress.

On the other hand, the Imperial Purse is a much riper target for subversion. The controls on the bureaucracy have remained relatively intact. Some wish to control its ability to issue new cash, but these efforts have not yet gained traction because the massive reward of controlling the Realm's central bank is obvious. However, different houses have begun to offer their own scrips, and the Purse lacks the authority or budget to suppress these alternative currencies.

They are all, for now, interchangeable, but the Houses are making a great show of favoring their own currencies, offering discounts for payment with house scrip, and forcing its payees to accept house scrip when they would have previously been paid in Imperial cash. Houses Ragara and V'neef have been particularly successful at promulgating their own currencies, and have done a good job keeping House Cynis's scrip a voucher for drugs and sex rather than a serious currency of exchange.

> The Cash System
>
> The cash system contains two coins and two paper notes. The coins are by far the most popular—the worth of notes is somewhat high for common transactions, and the depictive character of their decoration bothers devout Immaculates, who see iconic art as idolatry inviting illicit worship.
>
> The paper **koku** is worth 1/8th of a jade obol—the smallest coin in the Realm's formal jade coinage. A koku is worth 8 paper qian, 16 brown copper siu or 128 green copper yen. It is shot through with purple and gold threads that form the image of a crane, and it bears the black and green imprint of eagles nesting on the Imperial mountain. A koku is worth only slightly less than a silver dinar, and the two are roughly interchangeable at the scale of common household finance.
>
> The paper **qian** is a note worth 2 brown copper siu or 16 green copper yen. The threads in this note form the image of a lion, rather than that of a crane. The qian

is printed with a black and red design depicting the skyline of the Imperial City. A qian is a week's wages for a skilled commoner.

The brown **siu** is worth 8 yen. It is halved and quartered. A siu is adequate return for several days of labor by a skilled craftsman. The siu is struck from copper and specially treated to make the copper take on a dark brown color.

The **yen** is the smallest coin struck by the Realm. Yen are halved, quartered and divided into eighths. A yen is actually larger than a siu and struck from the same copper, but it is chemically treated to be bright green straight through. Yen are pierced so they are easily carried—you can keep your wallet on a long string. A yen represents the day wages of an unskilled laborer doing work of no importance and will buy about a day's worth of food. An eighth of a yen will purchase several beers or a jar of wine.

The Jade System

The Magical Materials represent what is truly precious to the Exalted. They are essential to the enchantments by which the Exalted make their influence upon the world more than a transient evanescence of their personal Essence. The Empress adopted it as a currency with the open and deliberate intention of making herself master of the Realm's stocks of the material. In this she was largely successful. Several of the houses have accumulated significant stocks of jade — particularly Ragara, which uses it as the working capital for their banking operations. However, even Ragara's bankroll paled compared to the Treasury's hoard, which totaled more than 50,000 talents.

A jade **talent** is the largest size measure of worth in the Imperial monetary system. In theory, it's a thin slab of jade weighing 68 pounds. Those cut by the Imperial Treasury are engraved with a number and a seal, and etched on all corners to defy shavers.

A talent is worth 8 bars, 64 minae, 128 shekels, or 1,024 obols. It's worth noting these values are for a ledger talent of jade—that is, a notional value of 1,024 obols easier to keep track of than writing "1,024" repeatedly. While a ledger talent is worth 8 jade bars, a true talent is worth 12 bars by weight—the difference is lost as a talent is cut down into smaller denominations. The vast majority of the time, the talent is a unit of account, used to represent large totals, rather than an actual discreet unit of physical jade.

The presence of actual physical talents is not unknown at the highest levels of Dragon-Blooded society, but they do not circulate commonly, both due to the difficulty of transporting them and their enormous value. When manses are constructed and need their interior geomantic structures fabricated, real talents are the raw materials, and for this reason the Empress only allowed the striking of physical talents from the finest and purest jade. Artificers and sorcerers who seek to purchase uncut jade talents for use as raw material have to pay *significantly* more than a ledger talent per block.

Reckoning its worth in Creation's other monetary systems, a jade ledger talent is worth 5 talents of silver (320 pounds) or 8,192 koku. In real terms, a talent is

sufficient to pay for 1 million man/days of unskilled labor, including all the administrative expenses implied by such a huge payroll.

The **bar** is one-eighth of a talent of jade. It is traditionally scored to show how to divide it into 8 minae, and those cut down from the Imperial Treasury are marked with its crest and an identifying number.

The **mina** is one eighth of a bar. It is marked with a central scoring and sixteen circles, describing how to split it into two shekels or how to carve sixteen obols from it. Minae are circulated in large enough numbers that they do not bear an identifying number, although those manufactured by the Treasury bear their crest, as per normal.

A **shekel** is simply half a mina. It is almost always marked with an eight-circle template that describes how to cut it down into obols. As implied by the marks, a ledger mina is worth 8 obols. In ledger reckoning, a shekel is worth about 1/6th of a silver dirham.

A clean, intact shekel is one of the most commonly seen forms of large denomination jade currency, and they command significant premiums over their 8 obol face value, if the jade is of the right color and of uniformly fine quality. The cutting-down process between shekel and obol is where the majority of the loss of the powdered jade known as “Imperial bootblack” happens. This is a critical material in the manufacture of magical weapons and armor, and comprises 1/3rd the mass of the shekel—many artifacts created during the Second Age are forged from so-called “Jade-steel alloy” created by adding jade dust to molten steel and cementing the alloying process with certain occult treatments.

An **obol** is the most commonly circulated form of formally recognized coinage among the Dragon-Blooded. Obols struck by the Treasury are graven with one of several emblems. There are many such coins that circulate, struck by individuals outside the Realm, with irregular or whimsical markings.

The **bit** is an informal splitting of the obol into quarters to make it more spendable. They are formally illegal for commoners to possess in the Realm, and ownership of them is nominally discouraged among the Terrestrial Exalted, as they have links to an ancient rebellion. This has done nothing to discourage their circulation, and they represent a meaningful fraction of the circulating jade coinage of the Realm—perhaps 40%. These 40% of the coins do a large amount of the work, however. Even the Dragon-Blooded of the Dynasty are not rich enough to throw whole full obols at their expenses casually.

The Threshold

The Threshold lies between the world’s edges and the Inland Sea which surrounds the Blessed Isle. In the North, in emerald valleys between icy mounts, men and women build nations from the scraps of empires past. In the East, they make their homes in great forests and fertile plains, fighting the feuds of a hundred petty warlords. In the South, jeweled cities built on the backs of impoverished millions spring from mediterranean hills and blistering deserts, and in the West, trade routes stretch between great archipelagos and smaller island chains, guarding against predacious pirates and aquatic mutants.

Across all four Directions mortals have built civilizations in the ruins of the First Age—at turns fragile and hardy, savage and decadent—as they struggle to raise the tribute the Realm demands and defend against the ever-hungry, world-unraveling Wyld.

The North

This is the cold, savage frontier. This is the harshest, most alien clime in all of Creation. Here the alluring Winter Folk ride to the hunt on steeds whose hooves never break the snow-crust, driving mortal prey to fearful death on bog and heath. Renegade gods stalk among coastal ports and tundra-dwelling tribes, extorting worship with threats of violence or misfortune.

From the temperate southern coast's pine scrub and prairie, the land grows ever more bitter as one travels northward. Outside of city walls and village palisades, untamed wilderness stretches beyond the horizon. Ghosts lure the living into trackless mires to steal their warmth and claim their company in death. Wolves and tigers haunt vast boreal forests beneath curtains of rain, fog, and snow. Whalers raise cairns to the spirits amid the scarlet sedges that drape the ocean's edge.

Still farther north, beyond the deadly reefs of the White Sea, it's said that neither people nor cities can find purchase, and yet there are both. Ships skate across lakes and rivers of ice amid an ocean of snow. Miners labor at the feet of miles-high impassable mountains, praying for riches. And in the uttermost North, beyond those peaks, earth and sky meet in the infinite frozen depths of the Pole of Air.

The Near North

Between the Inland and White Seas, the chill and isolation of the North meets the culture and population of the world's center. Even the satrapies along the Inland Sea, with their mellow summers and fine harvests, suffer from long, cruel winters. The peoples of these shores trade autonomy for security, bowing beneath ruinous taxes in exchange for protection from the ever-present Northern raiders.

Farther inland, villages of wood and peat crowd close against gloomy cities whose rooftops are thick with chimneys to keep out the chill. Folk huddle within damp, crumbling walls for warmth and for protection from mortal raiders, hungry ghosts, and Fair Folk. Out on the moors, the clangor of sword and shield echoes amid cold rain and fog, raitons circling by the hundreds overhead.

Across the long winter months, aristocrats intrigue while serfs drink, brawl, and pray for spring. But spring is also for war. Nomadic tribes and dispossessed raiders seize supplies from settled peoples to endure the next winter. Those same settled peoples war against each other; one hailstorm or harsh frost can bring famine, and any goods they seize from foreigners grants an iota of security.

Other than force of arms—such as the might of the Realm's legions or the power of the Lunar Exalted—most Northern warriors and reavers respect only holy ground, for even they fear the power of gods and ancestors. Northern divinities maintain a deadly grip on their worshipers, for a settlement can be snuffed out by one failed harvest or dire wolf pack—or a winter without fire, withheld by a vindictive god. Those who live beyond the bounds of civilization eke out a hungry, terrified existence, lacking even the spirits' dubious protection.

The greatest Northern cities shine like hothouse flowers amid these dreary climes. They draw upon strange sorceries to ward off winter's bite. Some warm and feed themselves through service

to the Scarlet Empire; others ally with warlords of the Silver Pact, or with spirits or stranger entities. From these disparate seeds grow cultures mixing Realm thought and fashion, barbaric culture and religion, and art and philosophy inspired by older, stranger epochs.

Near Northern Locales

The city of **Fortitude** is a scar on the face of the land. Once it was the mighty prison-fortress of an ancient empire. Its rulers believed that criminality was inherited, and so it filled the prisons with entire families of recidivists. That empire has long since fallen to dust, but the prison remains, and has taken on a life of its own. Over centuries, the prison and the walls meant to contain it expanded outward, while the tunneled wards beneath the surface spread like roots.

Fortitude is a place where the strongest and most ruthless rise to the top; where there is no law but what the strong decree, where entire tribes of prisoners toil in darkness, harvesting valuable plants and gems for the gangs that run the prison. The gangs in turn trade with the Realm and the Guild for necessary imports.

Fortitude is a place where the darkness is worshiped, the winter is hated, and every man believes he is cursed. It is a place where people are born believing that only their deaths can atone for their lives, and that the only way to erase the stain of darkness on one's soul is to lead a heroic life and to die an immortal death.

Deep in the underground, deep down in the farthest-reaching mineshafts, there are tunnels carved by no mortal man. Down in the black dust dwells the primal god of Fortitude. It is from this being that they derive their fatalist religion. Once every few generations, the prison produces an alliance of gangs that turn their gaze from controlling the prison to conquering neighboring provinces, and they rampage across the region until the Realm or another power puts a stop to them.

Prosper West stands on the western span of Skysong Bridge, a colossal First Age construction whose central span collapsed centuries ago into the Amber River. A high wall at the mouth of the span—which militia archers can quickly assemble to defend—shields the jumble of low buildings that crowd the bridge's imperishable pavement. Fishing lines dangle into the rushing waters below, while ropes and pulleys raise lobster traps and coracles. Soldiers guard the entrances to the bridge's western tower where the city's priest-lords make their abode.

A low ceremonial wall stands before the broken end of the western span. Looking eastward, over the river and the thicketed eyot left by the central span's collapse, one sees the rival city of Prosper East, its buildings sending up the rich smoke of industry, its tower aglow with sorcerous radiance.

The two cities war over the Camberlight, a hearthstone which once protected the entire bridge from wind, weather, and misfortune. But with the Skysong sundered, the stone can only protect one side or the other. Holding the stone for a generation has allowed the eastern city to flourish. Meanwhile, Prosper West suffers and its people will give anything to one who might reclaim the stone for them.

The allure of the miraculous White Elixir has infused new life and wealth into formerly stagnant **Grieve**. Thirty thousand souls, mostly artisans, merchants and laborers, dwell within the Northern port's Shogunate-era walls. Over the generations, citizens have cannibalized the ruins of the old city to reinforce Grieve's wood and thatch buildings and to pave its streets. The city's famous tame lynxes strut proudly in yards and gardens, warding off vermin and trespassers alike;

their feral cousins prowl the city's back alleys. Legend says that if the cats ever leave, Grieve will fall.

Ships from a score of cities creak upon the docks where merchants trade wool, leather, and metalware for all manner of foreign goods. This trade yields enough wealth for Grieve to pay tribute to the nearby satrapy of Shale Strand, as well as to the seafaring Yarag people who would otherwise raid—or even raze—the city for plunder, as they've done with other settlements in the region.

Grievian savants first revealed the White Elixir just a few years ago. It is purported to grant a macabre sort of immortality, preserving body and soul in the instant of death. Those of Grieve's richest citizens who have procured the Elixir are recognizable by their unusual pallor and the parasols they employ to ward off the sun. Foreigners arrive in increasing numbers to purchase immortality, trade in the Elixir's reagents, or seek wealth in the city's booming economy.

As a gift, the savants presented the Elixir to Grieve's queen, Shield Glory. Gossips whisper that the palace lynxes now hiss when she passes, and that she's responsible for the recent deaths and disappearances among her kin.

One thousand Immaculate temples gleam in the port city of **Pneuma**, their façades layered with arabesques. Bells ring; prayer wheels spin; the drone of sutras fills the air. Crowds part to make way for lines of monks as they pace from station to monastery to shrine, in an endless cycle of devotions to the little gods of the North.

When postulants of the Immaculate Order enter Pneuma's gates to begin their novitiate, they pass monks departing for distant lands. Vartabeds contemplate the needs of the Order in high-walled temple gardens; Order-run orphanages and workhouses accommodate hundreds of invalids and charlatans. And the Wyld Hunt maintains a major outpost to launch expeditions against the Anathema.

Pneuma's greatest temple, the Nail of Truth, is a looming tower of blue-white marble that overshadows the rest of the city. Carved from a single monolithic mass of stone, legend says that Mela hurled it from the sky like a spear to crush an Anathema beneath it. The Nail is off-limits to mortal petitioners, for it's there that Northern gods negotiate with Immaculate lamas over their place in the Order's calendar.

It is known that the Wyld Hunt maintains a prison beneath the Nail where captured Anathema are held for transport to the Blessed Isle. It is said to be a place of inquisition and torture, where the sutras of the Immaculate Dragons burn in the cursed flesh of the reviled, marking them as unclean. What is not known is that the Sidereals have long used the Nail of Truth for the processing and forceful recalibration of illegal Exigents.

The city also boasts the House of the Blue Wolf, one of the most illustrious schools of magistracy in the world. The House has trained some of the greatest investigators the Realm has ever known, and is a storehouse of forensic knowledge and techniques virtually unknown to the rest of the world.

Throughout Medo's long wet winters, rain lashes the brooding towers of the fortress-city of **Karasch** at the eastern terminus of the Hasancea Wall. In the overcast gloom of the day, sentinels clad in oiled hats and fur cloaks look out over tree-speckled hills, meadows, and valleys to row after row of distant mountains. But in the blackness of the Medoan night, Karasch's ancestor-

ghosts hold the wall in their phantom lamellar, the cold troubling them not at all, the rain passing through them like fog.

For centuries, the nomadic Medoan tribes roved the lands around the Almaj Mountains, in the shadows of three cyclopean walls—each hundreds of miles long, guarding against some forgotten threat from the north and east—raised ages ago by the fallen Shogunate. Various short-lived tribal alliances savaged the lands around them. Then the Touman Prince arose and united all Medo under his banner. In a single generation, his armies forced all the lands within a thousand miles—from Nariun and the Saltspire Cities to Damask and Laud—to submit to his rule. But when the Touman Empire met the legions of the Realm, even Medo's riders could not overcome the might of the Dragon-Blooded.

Today, the finest young Medoan warriors submit to conscription as janissaries in the Realm's legions. Upon their return, they are honored for their service and respected for their experience, but distrusted for their absorption of foreign notions and cosmopolitan attitudes. Only upon death are they Medoan once more; the blaze from a warrior's funeral lights up the hills as her clan feeds sacrifices to the pyre and sings her praises.

Karasch is far from the center of Medo and the eye of the satrap. Even so, a small Realm contingent remains garrisoned in a barbican at the city's edge. Tomaj, Voivode of the Karaschin Clan, fears that he will be shamed into calling upon the Realm for aid. The Karaschin ancestors, who have always guarded the city from the horrors of Medo's shadowlands, now prove unequal to the task, with monsters creeping out of the Underworld to bedevil Tomaj's people.

Horrors stalk the taiga beyond the marble battlements of **Whitewall**. To the north, where wooded hills rise to the mountains, antlered Fair Folk princes ride down from their palaces to reap mortals as slaves. To the south and east, where shadowlands pock the chill forests and icy plains, hungry ghosts creep forth to devour the living.

Whitewall thrives despite these threats. While winters here are deadly bitter, the land is fertile enough in its summer that surrounding orchards, farms, and pastures supply most of the city's food. The rest is imported from warmer climes by way of the Travelers' Road, an avenue of shining First Age material running hundreds of miles southward to the sea. Merchants travel the road each summer to obtain the ores Whitewall mines from the nearby mountains and the fine metalwork and jewelry produced in the city's workshops.

The Syndics, triplet gods made of silver and ice, rule the city. Their magic infuses the walls, holding supernatural enemies at bay. In accordance with an ancient pact the Syndics forged with the Fair Folk and the undead, no being may harm another on the Travelers' Road, guaranteeing trade. The region surrounding Whitewall is barred to the walking dead and Fair Folk during the day. At night, however, these creatures claim anyone found outside the walls. They can even enter the city if they can persuade someone inside to grant permission, whether through bribery, threats, or deceit. The Syndics, for their part, are sworn to set two dozen living people outside the walls each year for the Fair Folk and the dead. Whenever possible, these are murderers and other criminals, but when none such are available, they're foreigners or dissenters against the Syndics' rule.

Like any people living under siege, the folk of Whitewall are suspicious to outsiders, knowing as they do that any visitor—indeed, anyone at all—has the power to unleash the horrors of the night upon them. Repeat visitors receive a warmer reception once they've established trust. Only then

might one be welcomed into citizens' homes, havens of firelit warmth lined with thick dark tapestries and rugs.

The city's enchanted walls restrict its expansion, so Whitewall has grown up rather than out. Most buildings are stone constructions three to five stories high. Foreigners and the poor dwell out by the walls, crammed into tiny rooms or sharing apartments with multiple families. Meanwhile, the rich and powerful—including an ambassador and garrison from the distant Realm, to which the city submits—own entire structures in the city's center.

As a second line of defense against the supernatural, Whitewall maintains an order of monster-hunters. Trained in the ways of the creatures of death and the Wyld, these guardians track down monsters that stalk the city in secret, and lead the militia against more blatant incursions. Lacking the city's magical protections, other settlements within Whitewall's sphere of influence must struggle to survive. They hire monster hunters from Whitewall to deal with supernatural threats—sometimes paying with food, at other times by providing labor in Whitewall's farms and mines. With more and more creatures coming forth from the shadowlands in recent years, Whitewall's monster hunters have been spread thin, and the city charges ever more. Resentment festers among the surviving settlements, and youths from places denied Whitewall's aid have taken to flinging stones at travelers on the road—a transgression of the Syndics' pact, violators of which are to be fed to the creatures outside the walls.

Scholars pilgrimage to the Groaning Mountains to study the underground city **Gethamane**. When the ancestors of its current inhabitants fled into the frozen wastes to escape the ravages of plague and banditry that followed the Great Contagion, they found the city whole and uninhabited. None know who built it; the glyphs that coil their way across the inner walls are in no known tongue, and the only gods in the city are those the refugees brought.

Behind its gates, Gethamane has neither buildings nor streets. Instead, broad stone corridors wind like veins through the mountainside, ceilings encrusted with luminous crystals, walls engraved with strange sigils and images depicting long-extinct plants and beasts. Side passages open to hundreds of irregular chambers. The smaller serve as residences; the larger used as workshops for leatherworkers, sculptors, and engravers, or else as marketplaces, meeting halls, or shrines to the refugee gods of the city's people.

Gethamane's people speak little in public. Each has two sets of garments—heavy fur-trimmed leathers to wear outdoors, layered over the plain-cut colorful robes worn within the city. They remain insular and wary of outsiders, and retain their ancestors' deep-seated horror toward disease and walking dead. Instead of burial or cremation, they give their corpses to the sunken gardens in the deepest parts of the city, where beds of mushrooms lit by panes of glowing blue glass offer up a bounty year round. They supplement this diet with meat and berries gathered on the alpine heights outside, or with preserved food imported from afar.

Beneath the sunken gardens run the Underways. This web of slick black tunnels winds deeper than any of the Gethamanese have ever charted, and their depths are home to all manner of unknown creatures. The lords of Gethamane have walled up most of these entrances; the rest they leave open so that scavengers may seek ancient magic and wealth, a few finds of which have enriched the city considerably. Both open and sealed corridors are well guarded, for monsters occasionally force their way through even the most secure barricades to drag victims back down into the dark.

The city's other mystery resides at its heights. The uppermost chambers contain three ancient temples. The walls of these great rooms are inlaid with winged images made from gems and precious stones, but they contain no altars to any known god or spirit. What they do hold is an awe-inspiring presence without name or face.

Those who sleep in one of these temples are haunted by intense, disjointed dreams. Some find it brings answers to their questions or meaning to their lives. Others find themselves called to remain as acolytes. Members of this priesthood make offerings of flowers and animal blood, draw weird, elaborate patterns across the temple walls and floors, and chant in a language even they do not understand, filling the city's high places with echoes. Those who reject the call go mad, gibbering of horrors within the walls or beneath their own skin, or sinking into catatonia.

The Far North

On each dawn, shamans renegotiate tribal covenants with gods of animal herds. At twilight, fisherfolk make offerings to watery spirits of the shore or the mad dream-folk who ride the cold North wind. And expeditions from southerly civilizations labor through the night by the light of whale-tallow lamps, mining for eldritch metals, gems, and relics of ancient cities frozen beneath the ice.

Beyond the White Sea, the North's cold and isolation meets the tribalism and exotic resources of the world's outer rim. Coastal tribes and trading towns cluster along the White Sea's shores. Inland, tundra gives way to the Great Ice. Here people are found only in pockets—oases of warmth around volcanoes and hot springs, communities of igloos, or the huddled tents of scavenger camps. Outside these enclaves dwell Wyld mutants and inhuman beasts—skinchangers, monstrous insects made of ice, blue-skinned giants with brine for blood, and the handmaidens of the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears.

So perilous are these barren lands that people brave the mad sorceries of First Age ruins for the least scrap of security. They huddle amid the curse-haunted debris of Bagrash Köl's fallen sky-city, the glassy walls of the House Invisible, and the eternally smoldering embers of the Steeple of White Fire, braving the twisting currents running through those places to escape the cold and the dark. Desperate folk know they risk their immortal souls either way, for the Winter Folk lairing in great mountain palaces and the ghosts forever wandering the great snow sea ride the blizzards down to hunt men. Against these dangers, the shadows of such once-great places often form the only shelter.

Far Northern Locales

Moonlit snow blankets the far Northwestern port **Fajad**. The whiteness mantles the high stony places overlooking the bay and the docks far below; it drapes the minarets of the satrap's palace and the Grand Mosque; it gleams on the boughs of pine trees lining the city's avenues and clustered in its sprawling gardens. Amid the streets and bazaars, it's trampled to gray slush. But the heart of the city is free of snow and ice even in the deepest winter. There, steam wafts up from the inn-flanked hot springs at the base of the great unscalable tower Aqadar's Needle.

According to legend, the sorcerer Aqadar rode the Needle down from the stars to pierce the skull of the behemoth Pyrevein. As a behemoth, Pyrevein could not easily die. It lies dormant beneath the city, its blood warming the hot springs. But should Aqadar ever draw forth the Needle, legend says the beast will wake, so even Fajad's prince dares not contest the sorcerer's whims.

Only the city's priests speak openly against the sorcerer. The people of Fajad hold to the worship of their ancestral gods—Amku of the Lunar Egg, Uqbal Storm-Arrows, Nir-Netari the Underworld Sun—with fervor, and their clergy feel secure enough in their divine blessings to denounce any impiety, whether Aqadar's blasphemies or Immaculate doctrine.

Though Fajad stands poised at the edge of the known world, on the shore of the icy lands beyond the White Sea, the Realm grips it tight. Northern ships stop in Fajad on their way to the fabled Coral Archipelago. Immaculate monks also pass through to proselytize in the West, but Fajad's people are so firm in their religious beliefs that only seasoned Immaculates are allowed to engage them.

The sorcerer Aqadar has hated the Scarlet Empire for longer than any mortal in Fajad has been alive. The curses he pronounces against the Realm ring out from the Needle in a perverse echo of the mosques' call to prayer. Though the Wyld Hunt fells Lunar Exalted like dogs in the streets of Fajad, any Lunar who can reach the pinnacle of the needle will be taught whatever sorcery Aqadar deems them capable of learning.

Across the North, herds of elk, bison, reindeer, and mammoth migrate from green-dappled taiga to icy steppes, and the **Icewalker tribes** follow them. Each tribe pursues a specific beast, which they train for riding and harvest for meat, leather, sinew, and bone, and whose great avatar they take as their totem. While they treat other tribes with the same totem as siblings, they attack rival totems' tribes in lean times, slaughtering enemy warriors and animals alike. They have even less regard for settled peoples, and while they willingly trade their valuables—ivory, furs, and the like—for civilized goods, they raid unprotected settlements, massacring those who resist and making pyramids of their severed heads.

A change has come across the Icewalkers in recent years. Formerly adversarial tribes have banded together under a warlord known only as the Bull of the North. The Bull's forces have captured several cities on the White Sea coast with military precision. Reports suggest he possesses personal supernatural power such as that commanded by the Exalted, and his assaults are backed by spirits and sorcery.

The white-towered port of **Tusk** stands on the northern shore of Lake Longtail, one of the Fang Lakes—cold freshwater bodies large as seas. When the lake freezes over, Tusk's iceships ply its frozen surface, while during the short Northern summer, airboats skim overhead.

Tusk belongs to the Haslanti League, a loose coalition of city-states united in profiting from the ruins of the empire of Bagrash Köl—a mortal sorcerer who centuries ago dominated the Northeast. From those ruins, Haslanti scholars have unlocked magics and technologies far beyond their neighbors.

The people of many League cities, such as Icehome and Windcreche, descend from the Haslan tribes called to rebel against Guild hegemony by the Lunar visionary Gerd Marrow-Eater. But Tusk joined the alliance for political and economic reasons. Its people have always been merchants and warriors. Their iceships raid villages at the edges of the Haslanti sphere; their hunting parties attack Icewalker herds for meat, fur, and horn. Only the mammoth tribes are free from interference, as the ancient Tuskers forged a pact with the god of those tribes that forbids ever hunting mammoth again—or ever trading with the Guild. The oath was sworn on a massive gold-chased ivory tusk which stands at the center of the city's temple to its old gods.

The League has recently flexed its muscle, annexing nearby towns and raiding farther afield. Neighboring cities worry over the prospect of a Haslanti empire; their military leaders mull over defenses against airboat-borne Haslanti crossbowmen abseiling down behind city walls. But the Haslanti are troubled by Tusk. The city's people have intermarried widely with Icewalkers in the wake of the pact, and some fear the city will open its gates to the Bull of the North.

High up in the uttermost Northern mountains stands the city **Ascension**. Few foreigners dream that people could dwell here, well beyond the latitude of where most deem it possible to live. From the city's heights, one can look out from the rooftops upon the cloud-tangled, snow-blasted peaks of lesser mountains sweeping off to the south. But Ascension doesn't stand at the summit. Farther up still reach the groaning glaciers, glittering moraines, hovering mountains, and endless lightning-shot blizzards at the edge of the Pole of Air.

At this dizzying height, on the precipice of absolute zero, the city stands protected from the endless winter by still-functional Solar artifice. High walls shut out the cold and wind so that people need only plain woolen coats to walk the streets. Gnarled orchards tended by ancient wood elementals offer year-round fruit harvests. Forgotten magic keeps the air warm and dense at a height where, outside the city walls, travelers without proper gear can die of hypoxia or edema within days or hours.

As grueling as it is to reach the base of these mountains, the actual climb to Ascension is all but impossible. Few mortals can scale the mountain's face, with its miles of sheer slopes, rotten ice, avalanches, sinkholes, crevasses, and weird supernatural storms and beasts. Huge chain and pulley systems run up the mountainside in stages. They haul people and equipment to Ascension, beyond to the many mineshafts that pockmark the heights above the city, and they send ores and precious minerals down to the mining-camp city Footstep at the mountain's base.

Founded but a few centuries ago, Footstep is a haven for miners, explorers, gamblers, and thieves. It is the last stop for any expedition's needs—guides, supplies, drugs, prostitutes—before heading up the mountain. Only a fraction of those travelers attempt to reach Ascension itself. Most prefer to prospect among the poorer ores at breathable altitudes, to hunt for ice-tiger pelts, to proselytize among the stormcry elementals, or to relieve returning adventurers of their wealth.

Of those who journey up to Ascension, most are never seen again. Many prefer to remain in the city in the clouds rather than risk death on the long journey south across the mountains and ice. Others perish while seeking their fortunes. Cold things live in the tunnels beneath the mountains, hoarding weird ores in their underground cities, while jealous elementals haunt open-air mines on the heights, snatching prospectors and carrying them off into the endless polar storm. And some die more mundane deaths, slain by cold or anoxia—or by the mines' guards during attempts to steal the kingdom-toppling wealth of the magnates.

The Northeast

In the Northeast, the wintry isolation of the North meets the fecundity of the East. The Northern tundra gives way to great boreal forests of pine, spruce, and larch, broken by bogs, rich river valleys, and swaths of prairie. Hunter-gatherer tribes make camp in the sheltering shadows of the ancestor-trees beneath whose roots they bury their dead, while tree-city dwellers throw prisoners of war to hungry Fair Folk who haunt the forest floor.

Only in the last century have the urban cultures of the Threshold taken significant action to harvest the Northeast's resources. Loggers, miners, and farmers have established colonies

throughout the area. Some native peoples trade peacefully with the newcomers, while others regularly raid settlements and caravans. All contest the region with wolves and feathered lizards, soul-thieves and savage gods, and all manner of monsters born of the Wyld.

Northeastern Locales

The folk of the Gathering Sun tribes make pilgrimage across the wooded hills and tree-girt prairies of the Northeast to visit the hilltop city **Fade**. Here they pass through fields of squash, beans, and sunflowers to approach the city's brightly painted stockade, its gates guarded by braves bearing feather-tasseled lances. Within, they approach the Height of Light, the great mound at the heart of the city where temple roofs gleam with bright metal. Citizens and pilgrims alike pay homage to their people's immortal protectors, the Men of Gold.

The legendary First Age Queen Helaku constructed one hundred golden automatons to guard her descendants. Some were destroyed over the ages. Others have scattered across the region, as each new Gathering Sun town houses a Man of Gold in its central temple. The rest remain here in what was Helaku's domain, not far from the curse-blasted ruins where she ruled. Most of her descendants perished in the Contagion, and their lineage grew so thin thereafter that the Men of Gold now recognize only a few families as Helaku's descendants. These form the aristocracy of the Gathering Sun tribes; the Men of Gold bless their young, heal their sick, and train them in natural and magical lore.

A dozen slope-sided earthen mounds encircle the Height of Light. Atop these mounds stand the lodges of Fade's ruling shamans, the Shadowcasters. Here the shamans judge disputes, perform minor divinations, cremate the dead, and offer up prayers to the city's spirits and ancestors. More significant rites—gathering sacred herbs, seeking prophecies in the stars, negotiating with spirit courts—are undertaken out in the countryside, in henge-and-timber circles or sacred groves.

Less than a century ago, Gathering Sun families erected tent dwellings below the mounds when their nomadic lives brought them to the sacred city. Now, a tangle of dirt streets winds through a jumble of houses, markets, gardens, and game courts. Artisans weave patterned cloth, carve soapstone pipes, hammer elaborate copper jewelry, and bake gorgeous pots shaped like human heads. Warriors gather youngsters in practice yards to train with bow, club, and spear. Slaves—prisoners of war from rival tribes and descendants thereof—tend to menial tasks.

But outlying settlements, weakened by famine and disease, have fallen to invaders from faraway coastal lands. These foreigners, backed by warriors from rival tribes, march on the Gathering Sun heartland. The Shadowcasters tell the people to take heart, for the Men of Gold have prophesied that Queen Helaku has returned to the world. Soon, they say, she will come to Fade and lead the Gathering Sun tribes to a great victory over foreign invaders and neighboring tribes alike.

Merchants on the Silver River do not stint on hiring mercenaries, for fear of the **Linowan tribes.** These war bands supplement their hunter-gatherer lifestyle in the region's rich forests and prairies by raiding passing merchants, neighboring peoples, and other Linowan for plunder and slaves. But the Linowan are not savages. Some emerge from their fortified islet-villages to trade native wares—exotic hardwoods, woolen cloth, horn carvings—for metal tools and other goods. Others hire themselves out as mercenaries or set themselves as rulers of conquered foreign settlements.

The Linowan see excellence as the highest virtue. Noble rank goes to those who distinguish themselves, whether as a hunter, weaver, dancer, or lorekeeper. Nobles gain such benefits as

ownership of slaves or, for the most accomplished, a magical mask. Shamans bind small gods into these brightly painted masks to grant their wearers power, such as the bestial masks which give their war leaders the speed of leopards and the strength of demons. The Linowan reserve their harshest punishments for those who would steal such a mask—and for captives from the tree-cities of Halta, whose long-ago despoiling of Linowan holy sites with redwood seedlings has made the two peoples ancestral enemies.

The Linowan revere all manner of spirits, ranging from small gods and elementals—powers of earth, leaf, bird, beast, wind, and wave—to the Unconquered Sun and his celestial tribe. Over the past century, since the Realm established friendly ties with the Linowan through gifts and shows of force, Immaculate missionaries have converted a handful of Linowan chieftains. Converted tribes still worship their old gods, but they also press their heretical branch of the faith upon their brethren—at times by persuasion, otherwise at spear's point.

On a fortified island in the Silver River, **Rubylak** shines like blood against the greens and blues of its surroundings. Every surface is built of polished Haltan redwood, carved with the faces of men, women, beasts and gods. At night, they seem to shift in the torchlight as though alive. The city is thick with temples and the palatial abodes of Linowan shamans and elders. Murals blaze with brilliant colors; altars gleam gold.

Also called the Red City, it's the Linowans' most populous settlement and their greatest holy place, where their legends say the Unconquered Sun gave their ancestors his blessing. None go barefaced here, for this is the place of those Linowan who've earned their masks. Servants and petitioners wear hoods of undyed cloth, faceless before their betters. Linowan come to the Red City to seek wisdom and power from shamans and gods, to negotiate on neutral ground, and to participate in the highest ceremonies of their people.

One woman presides, resplendent in her golden sun-mask: Arkasi, High Queen of the Linowan. Once merely the cousin of a village chief, she has proved her worth—from risking her life to protect a foreigner's child from a bear to ending the blood feud between the Smokeless Fire and White Branch clans, turning the sky goddess Tayanesca's enmity to alliance, and personally slaying over a hundred foes in battle. A haughty reserve mastered through a decade of rule conceals her daring nature. With the Empress gone and the Houses free to act as they will, Arkasi courts Dynasts from afar, bargaining for their support in crushing Halta once and for all.

Taller by far than the surrounding redwoods, the Oracle Tree looms at the heart of **Chanta** like a living mountain. Its upper branches blot out the sun, massed evergreen foliage the size of a sloop's sail swaying in the wind. Paved avenues run along the backs of lower boughs, broad as a city block and lined with long, low buildings. Other structures cluster upon the great wooden platforms that ring the Oracle Tree's trunk. Green-haired Haltans throng along precarious rope bridges, uncaring of the distance to the forest canopy below.

The Oracle Tree is ancient. Its roots run far and deep. Its branches somehow touch the destinies of the Northeastern peoples—Haltans, Linowans, and many others—recording their lives within its rings. Haltans revere the tree, pressing their foreheads to its bark in respect and laying their dead to rest on vulture-thronged sky burial platforms in the highest branches.

The tree is wise, and shares its wisdom with the city's priests in entheogenic visions. But it is no god. The city's patron is Caltia the Eternal, goddess of the evergreen woods of the Northeast. Spirits in her entourage visit her temples to accept homage and offer their blessings. Caltia

herself comes to Chanta every few years, her weeks-long visit marked by festivities, drinking, dancing, and mock hunts through the city's streets. The goddess calls the Oracle Tree brother, and she descends beneath its roots to commune with its mysteries.

All the Northeastern peoples revere the tree—even the Linowan, who view it with awe and not a little fear. The Linowan would seize Chanta if they could. But Halta long ago formed a pact with the Fair Folk, granting the latter the forest floor while reserving the canopy to the Haltans, and the Fair Folk prey upon intruders with relish. Distasteful as soul-eating may be, the Haltans deem this just punishment for those who would invade their homes and kill their kin.

A sweet-smelling vapor known as pythein trickles at times from the Oracle Tree's heartwood. The gas has hallucinogenic properties, and the tree's priests breathe deeply of it to obtain visions. It is also lighter than air, and on those rare occasions when the priests predict large emissions of pythein, it is gathered and stored for practical as well as prophetic purposes. Oil-paper balloons swollen with pythein carry sky-barges laden with passengers and cargo between Chanta and other Haltan settlements. Lighter, leaner gasbags support the dreaded Haltan war balloons.

With the westernmost Haltan settlements destroyed and Chanta open to attack, the Haltans have accepted aid from Moon-Touched champions of nearby Osier against Linowan aggression—just as the Realm has established ties with many Linowan chiefs. The battles between Halta and the Linowan tribes are but a front in a larger war.

The East

The verdancy of spring pervades the East. All the vitality of the natural world finds fruition here, from the crops and herds of the Scavenger Lands to wildernesses thick with untamed beasts and spirits—and beyond, to the primeval forest of the Pole of Wood. In the wake of the Contagion, the region's political landscape has grown as tangled and thorny as its wilds. Like new forest growth choking out the old, the East's fractured states struggle with one another to thrive.

The Scavenger Lands

Carts laden with lumber, crops, and ore—escorted by soldiers to ward off bandits, wild beasts, elementals, and foraging enemy troops—trundle past vine-draped ruins and haunted woodlands to converge on the gaily-painted gates of market towns. Brown-water ships haul cargoes down labyrinthine tributaries of the Yanaze River to the crowded cities of the Scavenger Lands. The bustling alchemy of urban life turns grain to bread, lumber to houses, and ore to cups, statues, horseshoes, and plowshares—and spears to fuel the endless wars of the East's numberless principalities.

This rich, populous realm has been a cradle of civilization since humanity's dawn, and First Age ruins still yield wealth to scavengers canny enough to master their perils. Folk of the Scavenger Lands twice joined forces under the Dragon-Blooded soldiers of Lookshy to repel the Realm's legions, and by dint of magic, numbers, and tenacity, they prevailed—albeit at bloody cost. Today they remain a thorn in the Dynasty's side.

But without immediate external threat, the military powers of the Scavenger Lands turn against one another. Queens and merchant princes drag their people into war over land, wealth, slaves, glory, or spite. With each war's end, refugees and unemployed soldiers become bandits and mercenaries. Any thicket-flanked road or narrow defile may host ambush. This chaos offers fertile soil for the strong, charismatic or clever—bounty hunters, scavengers, assassins and

thieves, thugs, pretenders, charlatans and swindlers—to rise above their station, winning coin or crown sufficient to place heroes and petty gods at their call.

Scavenger Lands Locales

Under the eaves of a shadowland of leafless black trees stands the tomb-city **Sijan**. Here, morticians in concealing gray and silver practice the funereal arts, taking the affluent dead of the East and preparing them for burial. They know a thousand customs for embalming and cremation, enshrouding and visitation, eulogy and procession, mourning and inhumation. But their ultimate service lies on the other side of death, where their rites ensure the ghosts of the deceased retain wealth and status. Because the treasures entombed in the necropoli of Sijan attract grave robbers, they are protected by terrible traps and guardians—including the enslaved spirits of those who thought to despoil them.

The Funereal Order of Righteous Morticians and Embalmers, also called the Morticians' Order, is comprised of three Observances. The Funerists perform burial rites and maintain the city's renowned libraries and museums. The Mortwrights prepare bodies for inhumation and construct both the tombs that house them and the traps that secure their peace. Lastly, the Deadspeakers commune with the deceased. This smallest of the three Observances discerns the wishes of the intestate, negotiates with inadequately propitiated ghosts, and exorcises the most violent and troublesome of the dead.

Other citizens toil to support the Order's needs. They struggle to retain a sense of vitality in this grim place with vivid garments, blazingly spicy cuisine, and raucous festivals. Romances between the living and the dead are storied. Ghost-blooded offspring of such unions easily find employment in the Order.

The Liminal Exalted have established an alliance with the city's necrosurgeons, whose laboratories they visit to acquire and exchange new limbs and organs. These surgeons see the Liminals as a marvel and a wonder, beyond the reach of the city's sciences and sorceries. Sijan's savants offer access to their supplies and services to any Liminal willing to permit inspection.

After the Great Contagion, the forefathers of Sijan used their princely wealth to found crusades across Creation. They sent armies of exorcists and priests all across the world on a mission to gather and burn the corpses of Contagion dead. Their actions have been widely recognized as being a major factor in having saved Creation as a whole from sinking into the Underworld, and ever since, Sijan has been defined by its stoic service to the living and the dead.

For its fame, Sijan has known patronage from as far away as the West and as close as the Scarlet Empire. The Scavenger Lands has known no less than six occupations by Realm troops, and the Empress has never once forced a garrison on the city. But since the fall of Thorns, many have begun to look askance at the funerary mecca, fearing that the Order might ally itself with the Mask of Winters.

Sometimes called Decadence or the City of Temples, **Great Forks** is one of the three greatest cities of the River Province. Great Forks is a city of gods, and they have done their best to build in it the aspect of Heaven. The fantastic wealth and power of Great Forks makes it second only to Lookshy in raw military might, and though Nexus is an unparalleled economic juggernaut, Great Forks is known as one of the richest cities in the world.

Centuries ago, three tribal deities founded the city at the juncture of the Yellow and Rolling Rivers, where fertile soils support slave-worked plantations of marijuana and qat. The three still rule today, at the head of a bureaucracy of a thousand temples.

The entire city is shot through with temples and shrines, monasteries, stupas, pagodas, and sacred groves. The palaces of renowned celestial gods dominate the high hills of the city, while the apartments of major terrestrial spirits top the temples that crowd at their feet. Countless little gods and nameless spirits vie for favor and worship in the city's warrens and recesses. Elemental servitors lurk out of sight, ever-present, tending the city's cracks and ducts, roads and fonts, awaiting the call of the city's gods. A handful of Fair Folk make their homes here along with thousands of priests, monks, gurus, prophets, and charlatans, many of them by-blows of the city's spirits. Pilgrims and orgiasts throng at all hours amid the chanting, dancing, and feasting of each day's many festivals.

Above all, Great Forks is a place of heroes, where the blood of men and gods have mingled, producing mighty races. Until it was devastated in the Battle of Mishaka, Great Forks boasted one of the greatest fighting forces in the entire East. Though its levies have been shattered, the gods of Great Forks have vowed to repair them, offering tax benefits and divine favor to professional soldiers who sign long-term contracts with the state military.

With the return of the Exigence, heroes come to Great Forks from every corner of Creation to vie for the Second Breath, while Exigents empowered elsewhere have followed to meet with their own kind. The city's triumvirate has offered patronage to these heroes, and the services they perform in exchange gives the city new military and economic might—strength it will need to confront the threat of the Deathlord, Mask of Winters.

The Realm city of **Gloam** is in the twilight of its illustrious history, and no one knows it. The city stands on an island midway between Lookshy and the Blessed Isle, and has been a Realm port almost as long as there has been a Realm. But now an invisible horror stalks the streets, and the Dragon-Blooded of Gloam have become its victims.

The surrounding waters are alive with sails—fishing junks comb the waves while trading vessels from a hundred cities converge on their way to distant ports. Few of the many crews that moor their ships here realize the danger, but there is one clue that something is not right in this place—a veritable graveyard of ships in the west harbor. Lashed down and permanently anchored, hundreds of old trade vessels have become the dwellings of citizens who once lived in the city. Close examination of these ships reveals their places of origin: Port Calin, Sijan, Chiaroscuro, places farther and in-between. Ships for which there are no longer crews.

Though it does not realize it, the Scarlet Dynasty no longer controls Gloam. The seal of the Anathema beneath the city was broken. An old crypt was opened, and inside there lay something older than time. The worms in its breath have gnawed into the souls of the Dragon-Blooded of Gloam, and they belong to it now.

Luckily, only a small contingent of Dynasts were here when the vault was opened. The rest were drawn away by the impending war for the Scarlet Throne. The ones who remained now stalk the city streets by night. Their hunger for breath sates the unnatural appetites of the The Thing Below. They are its puppets, and their slavery has transformed their Exaltations. By day, however, they enact whatever pretense is necessary to keep the Realm from ever suspecting the darkness that has come to roost on its very doorstep.

The barbicans of **Lookshy** dominate the Yanaze's mouth. As cargo vessels arrive along the great river from the East or from the length and breadth of the Inland Sea, the massive chains running between the city's monolithic First Age breakwaters are lowered to allow passage. Even the largest ships on Lookshy's crowded docks seem diminished by the walls looming over the Lower City's wharves, warehouses, and travelers' inns. Switchback roads lead up to the even more imposing Upper City, its towers topped with firedust cannons, the disciplined soldiers patrolling its battlements led by Dragon-Blooded champions ablaze with jade.

Lookshy traces its history back before the birth of the Realm, to the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate —that roaring cavalcade of feuding, backbiting elemental dynasties that ruled the world after the First Age's fall. Its ruling gentes proclaim themselves descendants of shoguns, daimyos, and lesser officials from that bygone era. In the wake of the Great Contagion, the Shogunate's Seventh Legion established a military camp in the plague-shattered city of Deheleshen. That was the seed of Lookshy, and the city-state has since grown into the pre-eminent military power of the Scavenger Lands.

The General Staff, a hereditary oligarchy established by the staff officers of Seventh Legion commander General Nevfarin, remember their martial roots. Lookshy's architecture focuses sharply on defense. Structures are fortified and crenelated. Each of the city's districts stands higher on the promontory than the one before, with its own walls and towers garrisoned with troops and laden with military machinery. Visitors have little status in Lookshy and cannot enter the Upper City without authorization. Even the helots—a hereditary serf caste of farmers and laborers who comprise most of the city's population—hold higher standing. Above helots stand citizens, freedmen from whom the city's officer corps is drawn. But the highest rank is soldier, and even citizens stand aside when a helot man-at-arms passes.

Lookshy husbands its First Age legacy carefully. Artisans pass on methods for crafting exceptional swords and woodblock prints, warships and netsuke; armsmasters practice techniques developed by long-dead Exalted heroes; scholars maintain a library of battle magics at the Valkhawsen Academy of Sorcery. Vaults beneath the Lookshy Manse contain the city's dwindling store of First Age weapons—artifacts of dreadful power preserved against a time of desperate need. And the Dragon-Blooded gentes arrange marriages carefully to ensure their bloodlines do not grow too thin.

Throughout its history, Lookshy has served as the foundation of the Scavenger Lands' defenses. Its troops garrison weaker cities in strategic areas, offering stability to a politically volatile region —often at great expense to Lookshy itself. Despite the General Staff's periodically high-handed tactics and its demands for political and economic concessions, neighboring states welcome the Seventh Legion's unstinting efforts to safeguard the region's independence from foreign powers. But now, more forces converge on the Scavenger Lands than ever before. The Realm's Great Houses seek new satrapies along the Yanaze; Lunar warlords march armies into the Threshold; the Mask of Winters tests the region's defenses with military incursions. Lookshy begins to withdraw its forces from allied states to defend its own walls. In doing so, it opens the region to civil war and invasion.

A thousand miles south of Lookshy, past a score of nations, city-states, and tribes, stands the fallen city **Thorns**. Once this was a green and vibrant domain, its bazaars bustling with merchants and glittering with goods from across Creation, its tree-lined avenues framing the gilded minarets and onion domes of palaces and temples. Poets in basement teashops and

aristocratic boudoirs sang of love, both shared and unrequited; philosophers addressed their disciples beneath vine-drenched pergolas, extolling the virtues of honesty, charity, humility and forgiveness.

Now a black miasma boils up around the city, obscuring the gray fields, the leafless trees, and the grotesque foothills that rise, bloated and repellent, outside her walls. But they are not hills. These ragged slopes are mounds of rotten flesh; that promontory an elbow, those gorges the gaps between fingers like fallen spires. Thorns is now a shadowland, its panorama dominated by the vast and terrible undead giant called Juggernaut which slumps supine outside the city gates, from between whose shoulders rises the osseous castle of the Deathlord Mask of Winters.

Many of Thorns' people died or fled when the Mask conquered the city seven years ago. But over ten thousand remain. Some are trapped by poverty, sickness, or fear of worse perils elsewhere. Others find profit in the new order as servants, soldiers, informants, or thugs. But most are simply Thornsfolk through and through. They would rather struggle for a place in their homeland—whether by rebuilding their old lives or joining the insurgency—than seek their future in foreign realms.

These hardy people share their city with the dead. Some are Thorns' ancestral ghosts, walking the streets alongside their descendants. Others are refugees from foreign Underworld realms or servants of the Mask. All pretend that life in the penumbra of the dead is right and normal. To say otherwise has been forbidden by the Mask's regent, the blind deathknight Red Iron Rebuke, who has announced himself as the long-lost elder brother of the last Autocrat and the rightful heir to the throne.

Awnings of brilliant red cloth shade the avenues of **Jiara** from the sun. Chattering waterbearers move to and from wells, bearing vases calligraphed with prayers to the gods of water. A hubbub rises from marketplaces thick with merchants' stalls, where buyers weave along narrow paths between baskets of heady-scented spices and heaps of jewel-bright fruit. The clangor of steel rises from open-air temples to the Essence of Fire as sword-dancers venerate the divine through their art. But these city noises fall silent as soldiers pass—pale Medoan janissaries with sweat dripping down their moustaches, shifty-eyed mercenaries, and Realm legionnaires in service to House Mnemon.

The city-state of Jiara is the capital of the Jiaran Domain. Situated upon a high plateau, it stands at a conflux of roads, rivers, and bridges that gives access to the River Province and the rest of the Scavenger Lands, as well as the jungles between the Gray River and the Summer Mountains. The valleys of the Justice and Ondessics Rivers offer rich farmland and pasturage, while the surrounding mountains supply copper, iron, precious metals, and gemstones.

Mnemon holds Jiara. The palace-strewn acropolis called the Artahunara, once home to House Khidara—Jiara's royal family—now hosts a puppet prince and his Dragon-Blooded masters. In and around the city below, military encampments stand packed with Mnemon's forces. Her House soldiers are backed with mercenary units, masses of conscripts from other satrapies, and the forces of Jiaran princelings who have rebelled against House Khidara. Many soldiers have been billeted in the houses of suspected Khidara loyalists to watch for resistance activities.

Jiara's neighbors shed few tears over this indignity. Though Jiaran culture has much to recommend it—a reverence for truth and honesty, loyalty to their old gods of fire and water despite the best efforts of the Immaculates, broad proscriptions against many forms of slavery—

the state has a history of raiding neighboring cities and hill tribes, or demanding tribute for forbearing. Jiaran soldiers are feared and respected for their skill at arms, much of it drawn from their training in the ritual sword dance. For centuries, these soldiers formed an auxiliary to the Realm's legions. Now their skills trouble the Mnemon garrison as rebellion ferments amid the Jiaran countryside.

A year ago, the heir to House Khidara abandoned the capital to raise revolt. Her forces—a mix of mercenaries, Jiaran loyalists, and the royal guard—now occupy the lesser Jiaran cities of Daric, Naathul, and Parapet. Other settlements and states in the region set old resentment aside, seeing the uprising as a symbol of rebellion against the Realm. Mnemon's interest is more personal. The other Houses will take failure here as a sign of weakness, at a time when they could tear her House apart if they smell blood in the water.

> The River Province
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> Some speak of the River Province as coterminous with the Scavenger Lands. In fact, it describes that particularly rich and populous expanse surrounding the Yanaze, stretching from Sijan to Thorns, Lookshy to Great Forks.

Thronging like a mass of anthills, the city **Nexus** sprawls at the juncture of the Yellow and Gray Rivers where they feed the swollen Yanaze. Built on, around and under the ruins of a city older than the Exalted, the modern and ancient cities intertwine. Irimoya-roofed shrines and teahouses with elegant rice paper doors stand cheek-by-jowl with brick warehouses and shantytown shacks. Leonine gargoyles leer from the cornices of stone façades scarred by scavengers' chisels and sorcerous fires, while strings of paper lanterns blaze over the brightly colored awnings of the city's bazaars and the meandering length of the blue light district. Beneath it all, underground districts have been tunneled from the bedrock, full of "sunless folk" who rarely see the sky.

Though primitive by the standards of the Imperial City or Lookshy, Nexus's homegrown technology—fed by mercantile wealth and scavenged lore—outpaces that of its rivals throughout the Scavenger Lands. Blast furnaces light up the night like roaring, bloody suns; trip hammers crash on hot metal with the clangor of sword on shield; windmills and waterwheels groan like dying men; ventilation fans howl like banshees as they send wind through the undercity. The ground vibrates with the rumble of elevators and pulley-cars. Tons of finished goods pour out of Nexus's workshops every day, to be purchased in bulk lots at the city's markets and carried off by caravans and ships to every corner of Creation.

Though slavery is illegal in Nexus, backbreaking labor for a pittance is all that most can hope for. Work gangs labor beneath the whip to haul cargoes between docks and warehouses. Elephant and yeddim drovers risk crushing by their own beasts, whose power they harness to lift the city's massive gates or to raise drawbridges so cargo vessels can pass. The elderly eke out a precarious living selling goods in thief-ridden marketplaces, while youths sell their bodies in brothels and alleyways.

Just as industry drives the engines of Nexus, it also poisons and pollutes. Tanners, alchemists, and ironmongers fill the air with stench, smog, and soot—coal ash drifts down like snow, while the effluent from their workings taints the rivers. Trash and sewage blacken the Yellow River downstream; bathing is unsafe, and those with no other potable water boil it three times before drinking. With the city's First Age dams damaged and derelict, spring floods deluge the city's

lower districts. Some neighborhoods never dry out, so that citizens float their homes on rafts along canal-streets.

The wealthy live in a city apart from this muck. Their homes stand in hilltop districts. Pulley-cars draw citizens and their goods up to the heights, where household guards keep order around their masters' estates.

Nexus is central to the Guild and Eastern commerce. No princes rule here. Official power rests in the hands of the understated bureaucracy of the so-called Council of Entities and the deadly wonderworking of the mysterious, masked Emissary. There are no modern codes of law and precedent, only edicts propounded by Councilors and administered by Council-paid mercenaries and the Emissary's inscrutable whim. In practice, real power lies in the greedy hands of wealthy merchants, captains of industry, priesthoods, guilds, and street gangs. Their rules are enforced not by uniformed soldiers, but by legbreaking thugs and knives in the night.

> The Dogma
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> Six unchanging edicts—the Dogma—demonstrate the principles by which Nexus is ruled. These are taught to all citizens and inscribed prominently in public places. Like all edicts of the Council of Entities, they are subject to interpretation, but those who attempt to weasel their way around the spirit of the Dogma inevitably suffer the attentions of the Emissary.
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> • No taxes shall be raised, save by the Council.
>
> • None shall obstruct trade.
>
> • None shall bring an army into Nexus.
>
> • No one shall commit wanton violence.
>
> • None may falsely claim the Council's name or sanction.
>
> • None shall harbor a fugitive from the Council's wrath.

The great marble dome of the Council of the Concordat looms over the port city **Marita**. In its shadow gather manors, shops, embassies, teahouses, and sprawling docks where ships from a dozen beleaguered republics, a score of merchant houses, and a hundred petty dynasties disgorge ambassadors and their trains.

Two centuries ago, Marita was an insignificant market town. Then the nations of the Scavenger Lands almost succumbed to a Fair Folk invasion. In place of their former network of alliances, the survivors forged a new coalition, the Confederation of Rivers, to coordinate defenses against outside threats and to deliberate matters of state. Marita's central location and political neutrality made it an ideal meeting place for the Confederation's representatives.

Since then, catering to the needs and desires of wealthy Councilors—building summer palaces; securing supplies for feasts, festivals, and sacrifices; provisioning barges, courier boats, and councilors' yachts; feeding and housing courtiers, guards, servants, and slaves—has swollen Marita into a wealthy city of merchants and procurers. The Council itself is largely powerless, having no means by which to enforce its rulings. It serves nonetheless the Scavenger Lands' powers as a venue for negotiation and espionage.

Even among the countless vessels thronging Marita's wharves, with their bestiary of figureheads and their kaleidoscope of pennants, a handful of ships stand out. The ebon-sailed junk of the

Mask of Winters' emissary, there to buy allies for her master with promises of power and threats of destruction; a grim barge packed with refugees from Kardev, fleeing the sorcerer who slew their ruling dynasty and swathed the city in night; a jade-crusted galley conveying an envoy from House Ragara, rumored to be in negotiations to buy title to an entire city-state; and a barge that is a single living flower, home to a pantheon of far Eastern gods dispossessed by the Lunar warlord Eyes-Like-Knives.

Strange ships are not so strange here. New wonders arrive in Marita each day seeking the Council's aid. They are almost always disappointed by its ineffectuality, and have little choice but to return empty-handed—unless they accept offers from other quarters, whether that be individual ambassadors, swindling pretenders, or would-be heroes.

As one heads farther east, the polities of the western Scavenger Lands give way to the morass of principalities called the **Hundred Kingdoms**. A hundred foreign powers have conquered the region over the centuries; a hundred minor empires have risen and fallen. From the rich soil of this history has grown a riotous garden of cultures, aesthetics and governments. Here power lies fragmented across city-states, petty tyrannies, theocracies, communes, and other political structures all couched amid mountains, forests, steep river valleys, marshes, and heaths—terrain too wild to easily tame but too rich to ignore.

Many statelets claim legitimacy from the fallen Dragon-Blooded Shogunate through descent from governors and exarchs of the ancient provinces of Laris and Velen. Others trace authority back to different sources, or assert power on the basis of popular will, magic, or spear's point. Some of the stronger states, such as tree-girt Rake, mountainous Trimrode, lake-dotted Spandrel, and swampy Mire confer regularly on political and military matters, and in times of crisis a cluster of kingdoms may elect one of their number as dictator for the duration. But these are temporary pauses in an ongoing struggle by the region's princes to accumulate power at the expense of their neighbors and citizens.

Of all the cities of Vaneha—that rich mountainous country in the triangle between the Yellow and Maruto rivers—the capital city of **Jibei** is the most beautiful and most storied. It is the City of the Sword, home to the Imperial Daiklave that legitimizes the rule of Sword Prince Gensuji. Vaneha's finest warriors and weaponsmiths—ranked among the best in the world—live and labor here at the Sword Prince's command. This is a land arrayed by clans, and so long as Gensuji holds members of each clan's ruling family hostage, he is its master.

The city of Jibei spreads downhill from the Sword Prince's dragon-backed manse, its winding avenues lined with dogwood and weeping cherry. Hedgerows and elegant gardens encircle the manors of the clan lords; these mute the rasp of carpenters' saws, grunts and *kiais* of sparring warriors, and bustle of merchants trading at the markets for swords, fish, rice, and jade. From balconies one may watch clouds of birds rise above the marshes encircling Agate Lake—beneath whose waters divers extract from drowned mines the sacred metal used in Vanehan bladecraft—or see waterfalls cascading down from the sacred mountain Ama-ni-Traya, the enormous forested peak that Vaneha's people call the center of the world.

Ama-ni-Traya is a site of enormous geomantic potency. Elemental energies surge through its stones; disembodied souls ebb and flow around it in great tides. Of those manses raised by the Solars along its flanks, those which did not fall into ruin at the end of the First Age were claimed by the Grand Eastern Court of Earthly Spirits. This assembly of terrestrial gods and elementals, which once blessed Vaneha's people with their gifts, was overthrown by the Ninety-Nine Stars, a

coterie of celestial gods who sought Ama-ni-Traya's power. The old powers found refuge elsewhere—the fiery goddess Tsuruki-Muri in her cloud palace, the dragon Tamarind Fang atop the mountain named Dawn's Anvil, the monstrous fish-spirit Dai-Kiga beneath Agate Lake.

To hold off the jungle tribes that raid from the Far East, Vanehan laborers expand and extend the Great Palisade, a wall of sharpened boles running for hundreds of miles along the realm's eastern edge. Keeping the tribes at bay allows Vaneha's warriors to focus their efforts on a more profitable opponent: the Hundred Kingdoms. Vaneha's people have invaded that region many times before, even ruled it in the past as a conquering power. Now the Sword Prince raises the Imperial Daiklave to direct the clans northward once more.

Caravans laden with tea, spices, incense, tin, jade, and other treasures wind their way across jungle, mountain and swamp following the Great Southeastern Way—a braid of trade routes linking the Scavenger Lands to forest-strangled Ixcoatli and the wealthy states of the Dreaming Sea. Several cities sit astride the Way; one such is **Nechara**, among the Serpoletic city-states gathered between the Maruto and Sandy Rivers. The cities of Serpolet sometimes fight one another and sometimes ally against foreign powers; each has been at times the conqueror or the conquered.

As a trade city, Nechara blends peoples and cultures of the Scavenger Lands and the Southeast. Its architecture is a glorious melange of minarets, gable-roofed houses, and stepped-pyramid temples; its bazaars and caravanserais throng with foreign merchants. Like his predecessors, Prince Shule of Nechara invests much of the city's wealth in public works—magnificent gardens redolent with flowers, carved limestone stelae depicting gods and princes, high city walls, and paved roads linking the city to its peers.

Shule's eyes are huge and golden; they possess a hypnotic power to mesmerize the unwary. He inherits it from his mother, Ula-Erva, Owl Queen of the East. Serpolet's noble families have traditionally sought supernatural surrogates—gods, elementals, ghosts, Fair Folk, and stranger entities—to infuse their bloodlines with Essence. Some employ their inherited magics to heal and inspire, to enhance crops, to slay monsters and break invading armies. Others use them to manipulate or oppress their people, or barter with foreign states for glory or gain.

But supernatural surrogates often demand high prices for heredity, from prayer or jade to specific services or rarities. To meet these bargains, nobles indebt themselves to outside agencies, from mercantile factions such as the Guild to occult organizations like the House of Thirty Seals—an academy of demonology in distant Nathir. These foreign groups have leveraged such debts and their own influence over local spirits to gain influence within Serpolet's governments.

The most immediate threat to Nechara is military rather than political. The Broken Horn tribe, a people infused with Lunar blood, have harassed the Serpoletic city-states for centuries, attacking settlements and mercantile traffic along the Great Southeastern Way. Aside from their overall goal of undercutting the Realm by tearing up key Threshold societies, the Lunars behind the Broken Horns are eager to get hold of Serpolet's genealogical records. Moon-Touched warriors have stepped up their attacks since the Empress disappeared, and many fear Nechara and its sister cities will fall.

The Far East

At the world's Eastern edge, the varied terrain of the Scavenger Lands gives way to denser woods thronging with animals, feral spirits, and the endless riches of the Pole of Wood. Humans

form just one thread in the forest's tapestry of life. Hunter-gatherer tribes migrate betwixt rivers and lakes, warring with neighbors or trading poisons and medicines, pelts and amber. Their shamans bargain with the spirits, offering prayers and sacrifices for blessings upon trail, canoe, net, spear, hand, and womb.

The wealth of these lands has not gone unnoticed by the mercantile concerns of the Scavenger Lands—or those sophisticated Lunar domains lodged amid the uttermost East. At Guild trading posts, tribesmen with wolf's eyes and leaf-green hair exchange rare herbs and weird goods for metal tools and ornaments. Loggers and poachers battle walking trees, ink monkeys, and beastmen to harvest precious hardwoods and furs; beastmasters seek eggs and cubs from bizarre forest creatures; scavenger bands burn miles of jungle to loot overgrown First Age ruins.

Far Eastern Locales

Vines and mosses drape every façade of the lost city **Quiverch**, so that its cracked towers resemble nothing more than overgrown redwood stumps. Scavengers seek out this ruin for fabled wealth, as it was known in a former age as the City of Jade. But no mortal adventurer has ever returned, for despite its appearance, the city is not abandoned.

Between the aberrant local Essence and their own alchemy, the people of Quiverch have mutated over the millennia. Now they appear as weirdly tall and lean albinos with slitted crimson eyes and needle-sharp teeth. Jade rings glitter on their fingers, while their hair and garments are strung with beads of jade and bone.

The Quiverchi are descended from the city's First Age masters. Though many of their old sciences are lost—the city's flying machines molder in their hangars, and the great subterranean engines that provided light and heat are stilled—they retain a grasp of certain ancient magics. Fireflies grown to the size of dogs illuminate the laboratories where they manufacture salves of miraculous healing power, incurable poisons, and drugs that can enslave a mortal's will.

The elders of Quiverch are centuries old, sustained by a unique anagathic compound that requires mortal brains and marrow. Though they maintain a stable of slaves from which to harvest these substances, the Quiverchi assure their supply by raiding nearby forest tribes for captives to bring back to their laboratories.

In the uttermost East, beyond the city-states of Serpolet and fungus-ravaged Elytrum, stand the mounds and ziggurats of **Izahuaca**—the capital of Ixcoatli, the Empire of the Winged Serpent.

Travelers from dozens of tributaries and client states, from half-civilized tribes to ancient cities, make their way to the shores of Lake Achpilli. Merchants and pilgrims, nobles and vagabonds pass through the iron gates of Izahuaca's ivy-bearded wooden walls under the eyes of serpentfolk soldiers and their raitonfolk sergeants, clad in bronze breastplates etched with Old Realm glyphs, their faces concealed behind masks of jade.

Ages ago, the serpentfolk—a people of great builders, administrators and soldiers—battled the raitonfolk's scholarly warrior-priests across a thousand miles of forest, beyond the attention or interest of the Dragon-Blooded shoguns. Then the Contagion all but exterminated the feathered tribes, and the flood of Fair Folk that followed razed the cities of the serpentfolk to the ground and slaughtered most of their gods.

Years later, the serpentfolk encountered the surviving raiton clans. Rather than exterminate them, the serpentfolk accepted the remaining raitonfolk into their ranks. While the libraries of the

serpents had burned during the advance of the Fair Folk, the raitonfolk preserved scrolls, books, and song dealing with the shared history of the two peoples, making their lore indispensable.

The serpentfolk still overwhelmingly dominate modern Ixcoatli in terms of population. Meanwhile, the raitonfolk occupy an enshrined position in the nation's caste system—priests, scholars, military officers and occasionally assassins, their collective cultural wing is the theomilitary.

With Fair Folk stirring again and a general wind of chaos blowing through Creation, the empire has had more and more trouble keeping the tribute channels moving and administrating its outlying holdings. But their traditions press them to continue expanding and to cast about for new potential conquests.

The Southeast

The lands beyond the Summer Mountains mingle the fertility of the East with the riches of the South. This is a realm of tangled trees and wild beasts, girded by ape-ruled jungles and savannas lorded over by lions. Civilization seethes furiously around the cauldron of the Dreaming Sea—an ocean extending from the edge of the world, its depths teeming with fish, elementals, and things of the Wyld. The land is equally abundant, yielding a great wealth of crops, spices, precious metals, ivory and gems to bedeck the temples of Southeastern gods and the palaces of rajahs and ranis.

Empires burgeon across the Southeast, absorbing dozens of formerly independent city-states. Meanwhile, puissant gods spread their cults and influence, while Fair Folk reavers in ships of glass and iridescent chitin carry mortals by the hundreds to their courts on island citadels or beneath the waters of the Dreaming Sea.

Eastward, the sea grows wilder and weirder. Colored fires play upon the surface, while all manner of beasts monstrous and grotesque cavort beneath the waves. Where brightly burning empires give way to the embers of ancient civilizations are found such places as the sea-canyon city of Haven, whose tangle of crisscrossing bridges leads to halls and chambers carved into the walls over the course of ten thousand years; the calcareous island fortress of Shinjok, where the prehuman Backbenders warp human thralls into their own image through gruesome spinal surgery; and the ominous basalt towers of Dis, home to a primordial race of flesh-eating gigantes who enslave men and beasts alike with sorcery and soulgems. But age is no defense against ambition, and soon the young empires of the Southeast will cross blades with these elder powers.

Southeastern Locales

The city **Kamthahar**, capital of the empire of Prasad, is starkly divided by caste. One may discern each citizen’s caste and clan by color and cut of clothing, by profession and diet, by who stands aside for those of higher caste to pass along the ancient metropolis’s mazy side streets. Each clan maintains its own walled compound within the city. Untouchables and other low-caste clans dwell in squalor at city’s edge. Closer to the center, the manors of high-caste clans tower amid encircling gardens, their façades engraved with elaborate imagery. At Kamthahar’s heart rise the palatial compounds of the Dragon Caste, dominated by the twin fortresses of Clans Burano and Ophris. There the city’s Dragon-Blooded princes dwell in splendor, lounging in silken finery or accoutering themselves for war with dragon helms and daiklaves of jade. This is the farthest-flung of the Realm’s satrapies, and in many ways the most glorious. And yet most of these Dynasts have never set foot upon the Blessed Isle.

In the First Age, Prasad's noble families carried the bloodline of the earth dragon Brazen Guardian. They used their gifts to protect their people from the worst of the Contagion and the attacks of the Fair Folk. A century later, just as the region was beginning to recover, a pair of early Realm legions under the now-defunct Houses Burano and Ophris marched down the Vaniwayan River to conquer Prasad for its legendary wealth of jade, precious metals, gems, spices and magic. Remaining to maintain control of the region, the legionnaires intermarried with the ruling Dragon Clan. Though their descendants still send an annual tribute to the Blessed Isle—extracted from Prasad's client states around the western Dreaming Sea—they have few dealings with their homeland, seeing themselves as Prasadi first and foremost. The exceptions are the handful of Dragon-Blooded youths who travel to the Realm to study at the great schools of the Blessed Isle.

The Immaculate Philosophy has grown askew in this foreign soil. By the precepts of the so-called Pure Way, the Dragon-Blooded here are gods. Mortals may worship spirits as well, so long as such spirits acknowledge the preeminence of the Dragon-Blooded and the Immaculate Dragons. Immaculate monks consider the Pure Way deeply heretical. Some travel the length of Creation to challenge Prasad's Pure monks, proving their convictions through battle.

Merchants across the Dreaming Sea seek profit in **Champoor**, the Nighted City. But their eagerness to visit the ancient port is mixed with trepidation, for a thousand dangers haunt Champoor's shadowy teashops, hushed bazaars and mazelike streets—dangers to profit, life, and soul.

The Nighted City is aptly named. Shade covers the streets even on cloudless days, for the water dragon Tenepeshu, queen of the Court of Secrets, has cast her cloak over the bay. These shadows draw those who wish to disguise their motives or act unseen. Champoor's dockside district is a haven for smugglers and pirates, while the city proper attracts all manner of courtesans, charlatans, forgers, fences, assassins, and thieves.

The Court is deeply corrupt. Its umbral gods and undersea elementals offer their aid in exchange for commensurate sacrifice, and the city's criminal classes form their priesthoods and congregations. Captains, innkeepers, merchants, madams, dockmasters and gang leaders deploy divine magic to transport contraband, to sink rival ships, to bedazzle and brawl, to seduce and slay. In exchange they entertain and enrich their patrons, offering sacrifices of wine and scrolls, silver and jade, deflowering and death.

The city's old aristocracy is powerless to intervene in such matters, as its authority has long since been superseded by an unconcerned Prasadi satrap. Those who retain their crumbling old manors do so by dint of ancient familial pacts with the spirits of the bay. The city's longshoremen and beggars whisper of rites performed in those mansions at midnight, and of how the bodies of laborers and prostitutes who accept employment there are sometimes found the following morning floating by the docks, bloodless and pale.

High in the Chalcedon Mountains stands the ancient city of **Ysyr**. Buildings cluster like massed crystals on terraced plazas carved out of the mountainside. Avenues sunk into the stone lead to vaulted chambers within, ringed by many levels of galleries. The citizens of Ysyr move here among the signs and symbols of sorcery. Wyrdlights dart around them like insects, while coronas of cold fire crackle upon walls, statues, and balustrades. Golems haul heavy goods while flitting winged things like congeries of stained glass carry messages across the city, singing.

Ysyr was built upon the ruins of the First Age city of Pinnacle, sculpted by Solar artifice from the living rock. Years after the Contagion slew all within, the seafaring Ys people found the city and made it their own. But without the science of the Solars to regulate sorcerous engines beneath the city, Essence emanations warped the Ys, twisting their bodies and minds—and, through chance, attuning them to the power of sorcery.

But only a handful of Ysyr's people master the sorcerous arts. These few mage-lords form the ruling class, identified not merely by their elaborate finery, laden with jewels and precious gems, but also by their sorcerously endowed physical perfection. The rest of the city's people forever bear the marks of mutation—twisted limbs, bloated features, cracked and discolored skin. These are the marks of servitude, for in Ysyr, all who are not sorcerers are slaves.

No foreigners may take residence in Ysyr, lest exposure to the city's radiance grant them the knack for sorcery. The foreigners' quarter is a fortified compound in a mountain valley twenty miles downslope, linked to the city by a walled-in avenue whose ramparts are guarded by soldiers and sorcerous wards. A web of roads spills outward from there to city-states who pay fealty to their sorcerous Ys overlords. The mage-lords continue to extend their influence outward, pitting their forces against the preternatural champions of Volivat, the Dragon-Blooded princes of Prasad, and the other imperial powers of the Dreaming Sea.

Amid the isles linking Ysyr to the mainland stands the city of **Palanquin**. Four colossal inhuman statues, their features long since weathered away, hold a stony, edifice-encrusted landmass far above the sea—titans lifting an island from the waves. Webs of pier and quay stretch out from their feet through mats of merchant ships, fishing junks, and houseboats inhabited by the poor and by excommunicates seeking re-entry into the city above. Switchback roads and stairs climb past inns, shrines, and entire neighborhoods carved into the bodies of the statues or clinging to cantilevered platforms.

But this is merely a prelude to the city itself. Palanquin is a city of towering pagodas and vibrant shrines; the air is filled with chanting, singing, and the ringing of temple bells. Palanquin's folk are deeply religious, seeing themselves closer to Heaven than lesser peoples trapped below. This attitude is reinforced by the elemental cloudfolk of the windborne City of Blue Gauze, who visit Palanquin to trade with mortals. The city's noble families carry cloudfolk blood, giving them an otherworldly beauty and a capricious nature. They form the priesthoods of Palanquin's many temples, and grow rich from offerings given by congregants. But their power is not what it once was—Ysyr conquered Palanquin a century ago.

At Palanquin's heart stands the source of the people's piety, a defunct magical gateway said to lead to Heaven itself. But sealed beyond the portal is no place ever visited by the Sidereals. Instead, it leads to the ruins of a Heaven older by far than Yu-Shan—the celestial capital of fallen Zen-Mu, where the ancients dwelt in majesty before they ever dreamed of Creation. The original home of the gods, it is now a place of nightmare horrors and awful powers, and woe betide those who behold the gods that dwell there now.

The Solars of the First Age carved the city **Volivat** out of the sea. Standing off the shore of the Doorstone Peninsula, the floor of the city rests a hundred fathoms below sea level, kept dry by an encircling dam and system of still-functioning pumps. Enormous spires rise above the dam, visible not merely from the city's ring of docks, but from the shoreline miles away, where Volivat's alchemists stimulate farms and orchards to unnatural verdancy.

An age ago, Volivat's leaders flooded the city during the Great Contagion in an effort at quarantine, so that only the dam and the tops of the highest towers rose from the water like symmetrical islands. Nomads found the place years later and reactivated the pumps, reclaiming the city from the sea. Discovering relics and texts of the Exalted, they set out to recreate themselves in the image of the city's founders.

The people of Volivat are called the Yennin, which means "Children of Ten Fathers" in their language. The secrets their ancestors found in the city's central citadel included a formula for creating offspring with up to ten fathers, each contributing to the birth of a single child. They create supermen in this fashion, with only the strongest, wisest, and most gifted men contributing their seed to the next generation. The resulting cat's-cradle of clan bonds is largely incomprehensible to outsiders. Enhanced by the combined strength, wit, and Essence of eleven parents, the greatest Yennin champions are a match for the sorcerer-princes of Ysyr and the Dragon-Blooded warriors of Prasad.

Volivat's thaumaturges have labored to increase the number of fathers participating in conception, but the progeny have proven abnormal and unstable. Their most ambitious effort, the so-called Hundred Fathers, were born as abominations and banished to subterranean dwellings. There they breed in darkness, occasionally emerging to feed on human flesh and wreak wanton violence against their jailers.

The South

As the summer sun dominates all beneath it, so too does the South lie prostrate beneath the rule of mighty powers. Along the fertile coast, tyrants and priest-kings look down from glittering citadels upon city-states built on the backs of slaves. Farther south, where green valleys give way to dry plateaus encircling a vast sea of sand—and beyond, to the ultimate blaze of the Pole of Fire—nomads and oasis-dwellers bend knee to greedy gods. Everywhere, fresh water is scarce and passions fiery; slaves smolder with resentment, youths with wanderlust, and warriors with a fervor for glory.

The Near South

In the cool Southern night, lighthouses shine like suns from city harbors to guide ships home. With the dawn, hillsides smolder like jewels—amethyst vineyards; ruby fields of opium poppies; emerald orchards aflame with orange and lemon, pomegranate and persimmon. Workers labor in the noonday heat, the fruits of their toil brought to gilded treasury-temples for their gods to select the choicest portions. Caravans carry the surplus past brooding necropoleis and looming ziggurats to cities grown like termites' nests, their mud-brick abodes climbing toward the sun. In their shadow, forges blaze with new-minted metal and glass while bazaars glow with the rich hues of spices and fire opals.

Across the superstitious, tradition-bound Southern coast, queens and princes rule their city-states without question, owing fealty only to gods, ancestors and the Realm. They gather to their courts viziers, savants, generals, seneschals, poisoners and spies; they raise armies to ward off raiding nomads, crush slave rebellions and pillage neighboring city-states. Plunder stocks their harems with beautiful youths and fills their treasuries with silver and jade. Each trove's guardians are more impressive than the last—eunuch janissaries, trained tigers and basilisks, clockwork traps and baleful sorceries.

Near Southern Locales

Herds of cattle roam the veld around **Kirighast**, led by bulls that carry their horned heads high as princes. Warriors in patterned scarlet dashikis accompany them, tasseled spears doubling as ox-goads. Every adult in the realm is a warrior, and all nearby lands are their battlegrounds.

Kirighast is the capital of the satrapy Harborhead. Two steep hills rise like bulls' horns from amid the city streets. The northern hill, called the King's Mountain, is home to the Imperial Garrison—a fortified Realm outpost containing extensive docks and markets, an Immaculate temple complex, and the satrap's palace. Here Dynasts and their retinues assess tributes, socialize at galas, and organize safaris into the interior to hunt the province's beasts.

The southern hill, called the Bull's Mountain, supports the Palace of the Leopard Seat on its lower slopes—home to the Leopard (Harborhead's puppet prince), his courtiers, and the government bureaucracy. A brazen temple rises from its summit, sending up smoke bearing the sweet savory smell of roasted flesh. This is the Fane of the Upswept Horns, temple of ancient and terrible Ahlat, Southern god of war and cattle, patron of Harborhead.

Each hill is a fortified compound, their walls—tall as those ringing the city proper—containing the manors and estates of wealthy citizens and foreigners. The gorgeous Street of Palms, which connects the city's main gates, runs between them. Away from the Street of Palms, markets and parks give way to a labyrinth of alleyways crammed with a largely poor, ill-clad, hungry, and increasingly discontented populace.

Life in Kirighast is in many ways unlike that in the countryside. Its cuisine mixes the plains tribes' traditional diet of meat, milk, and bitter herbs with fruit and nuts from hill districts and with the coastal lands' fish and grain. Instead of herding and raiding, people engage primarily in handicrafts and trade. Many accept coin from foreign employers, such as Guild merchants and Realm officials. The most notable industries are shipping and metalwork—the city's foundries turn out great quantities of bronze tools, breastplates, and spearheads.

While the Dynasty's primary concern in Harborhead is to extract jade from the Bent Creek mine in the hinterlands, merchants from Realm, Guild, and other entities gather in Kirighast to deal in bronze, cattle, drugs, ivory, and slaves. But the people of Harborhead have seethed against their suzerain for all the centuries of Dynastic rule, and their uprisings have bloodied even the renowned Imperial legions. Now tribal chieftains offer their hecatombs to Ahlat, while Dynasts dare not leave Kirighast's Imperial Garrison without scores of armed guards.

Each of the **Five Peoples** of Harborhead is an agglomeration of tribes, with its own songs, dances, dialect, customs, heroes, totems, alliances, and vendettas. All of the Peoples, even those dwelling in the hills or on the coast, prize cattle as symbols of wealth and prestige, with a family's power measured by the size of its herds. Their most important function is as a sacrifice to Ahlat.

While the cosmopolitan denizens of Kirighast mingle freely, in the countryside the Five Peoples remain in their own villages. There they are too distant from other Peoples' settlements for assimilation, yet too close to ignore. Efforts to bring opposing tribes together through intermarriage and trade are overshadowed by blood feuds, execrations, and raids for cattle, water, and slaves. These rivalries are only set aside when marching to war against foreigners.

The line between free people and slave is drawn with a blade. All citizens train at arms from childhood, from the Brides of Ahlat—the land's most elite soldiers, whose chaste warriors are ritually wedded to the god—to nomads, artisans, clerks, and priests. No citizen goes unarmed,

for to be unarmed is to be taken for a slave. Slaves cannot bear arms, nor have they any right to defend themselves by any means.

Fully one quarter of Harborhead's population lives in slavery. Once, only criminals and battle captives were enslaved, and their children were trained at arms and raised as free folk. Now their offspring remain in bondage to feed the Guild's and Dynasty's hunger. Meanwhile, Harborhead's warriors extend their raids farther afield, often into other lands under Realm rule—from Terumah of the weaver-priests to towered Goliath—to seize more prisoners for the coffle block.

The city-state **Ember**, with its square houses of sandstone and wood, nestles amid the western slopes of the Summer Mountains. Here the jungles of the Southeast give way to chaparral, savannah, sagebrush steppes and plains of cacti. The fields below cultivate saffron and winter wheat; the mountains above yield silver, copper and precious tin. But to either side rise the true sources of Ember's wealth—the torch-pine groves gathered around steaming mineral springs, needles glimmering redly even at night.

Torch-pines have many uses. The bright-burning wood feeds jade-smelting furnaces as far away as the Blessed Isle; the sap forms incense, the flowers perfume; and the pollen is firedust. But the groves also serve another purpose. Rivals and enemies from across the region—Kitangaala's golden-helmed warriors, curse-drummers of Cadence, Shellrider nomads herding their gigantic tortoises—conduct negotiations in such groves, as few dare draw blades in a spot which even the slightest spark will set ablaze.

Ember's native people, the Nywera, are traditionally ruled by twins, with a new pair chosen by lot when one or both die. One of the current rulers, Queen Babirye, is Dragon-Blooded, and she seeks means to extend the life of Queen Nakato, her mortal sister. Babirye journeys longer and longer in pursuit of this goal, most recently into the Underworld, to the place called Cold House—from whence she has yet to return.

The great rivers of the Southeastern coast—swift-surging Nephesh; silty Shiphrah; tangled, marshy Helel—support the city-states of the Varang Confederacy, of which **Urim** is among the oldest and most storied. Ringed by irrigated fields webbed with canals, Urim gleams like a mirage, its outer walls glazed blue-green like the sea. At night, lamps hung upon the walls mimic the constellation of the Peacock, the city's emblem.

To a foreigner's eye, the so-called "Peacock City" greatly resembles its peers. The Varang people are obsessed with the celestial order around which they have built their civilization. Radial streets, arranged with geometrical precision, throng with people whose colored garments bear signs and symbols denoting their caste, as determined by the hour and minute of their birth, and their rank within it, as determined by their parents' caste and their place in the birth order of their siblings. The casteless—those whose exact time of birth cannot be established—perform menial tasks and are despised for lacking a place in the celestial order.

Though distrusted, foreigners hold a different place in Varang culture. The inscrutability of their true social role is said to bring luck to gamblers and lovers alike. They are often approached to perform tasks that natives deem beyond the pale, such as spying, kidnapping, and murder.

As in other Varang cities, when the mud-brick structures of Urim start to deteriorate, the people raze and build over them, elevating the low hill on which the city stands. A maze of structures remains intact beneath the earth, haunted by hungry ghosts and by the howls of tutelary spirits of buried, ruined places. Some vaults linger by accident, others by design. Among the latter is the

tomb of the Blue Seeress, named in Urim's legends as founder of the city and greatest of all Varangian prophets. For centuries, astrologers have descended from their clockwork-filled towers and priests from the temple spires of the city's star-browed gods to pay their respects before the bier where she lies in deathly sleep, her body rendered incorruptible by occult means. But now a stream of prophecy pours from her dead lips, her corpse raving of the gods of Yu-Shan and the deaths of stars.

Urim's thirteen vajaramas—the ruling council of princes—gather to discuss a more immediate prophecy. Two years ago, the city's greatest seers foretold of conflict with the serpent-tamers of Echidis in the barrens east, despite decades of peaceful trade that had enriched both peoples. Threats from the vajaramas, meant to put the Echidis in their place, only enraged them, and now Urim is at war. Worse, the struggle is on the verge of spreading across the region, as the Echidis invoke long-standing pacts with neighboring tribes and Urim calls for aid from the other Varang city-states.

Chiaroscuro is a vast shattered metropolis, rising from the ruins of First Age glory. Once, its shining towers of imperishable glass stood dozens of stories high, catching the light and glowing with all the hues of an eternal sunset. But now those towers have fallen and their ragged stumps rise from a confluence of shadows and rubble. Districts of softly-glowing magic glass are separated from one another by tracts and channels of ghost haunted shadow. Streets of blood-red vermillion coarse through the city, alive with the magic of old, the arteries of a heart that still slowly beats.

Chiaroscuro is the largest and wealthiest metropolis of the Southern coast. The city was founded in the First Age, where it was one of the greatest ports in the world, home to twenty million souls. Shattered and depopulated by the twin hammer-blows of the Usurpation and Great Contagion, Chiaroscuro was a haunted, war-torn ruin until the coming of the Tri-Khan and his Delzahn followers. The Tri-Khan slew the city's petty warlords, sealed Chiaroscuro's shadowlands with wards of precious salt, bought the goodwill of the Realm with lavish tribute, and reopened the city, declaring ten years free of taxation to entice settlers. The descendants of those pioneers still dwell in the city today.

Chiaroscuro is one of the most famous ports in the world, sitting at a confluence of land and sea routes. Its port and trade makes it one of the richest cities in Creation, with wealth that rivals even Nexus.

The current Tri-Khan is a clever and canny ruler, and his policies have prevented Chiaroscuro from becoming a mere puppet of the Realm. In the wake of the Empress's disappearance, he has further diminished the Realm's control by setting his minders against one another and covertly supporting rebellions in other parts of the Threshold. He has also allied himself with the Guild, using its support to weaken the Realm's control in exchange for opening his markets to any and all goods.

To avoid open conflict with the Realm, the Tri-Khan has outlawed all Anathema, but in practice, Celestial Exalted who hide their nature or open themselves to the service of the Tri-Khan are welcomed and even harbored in the city. As long as they are discreet, all manner of beings may trade or even settle in Chiaroscuro, though any disruption to the city will quickly be met with an attack by the city guard, or a visit by the Wyld Hunt.

Chiaroscuro itself is a treasure for the bold. Many of its ruined and haunted districts are still only lightly explored. Scavengers comb the ruins seeking out treasures that contain the barest hints of the city's former magic. Uncanny individuals from across Creation compete for the right to live in one of the coveted apartments of the Plaza, a neighborhood with functional First Age amenities; admission is permitted only at the whim of Grandmother Bright, a powerful and canny spirit who is always in need of services from the mighty.

Sorcerers, Fair Folk, outcastes and even deathknights make their way to Chiaroscuro, drawn by the light of life, the opportunity for trade, and the shadow of anonymity.

The **Delzahn nomads** remain tied to their urban brethren, as their tribes maintain cohorts in Chiaroscuro and on the Southern steppes. The nomads maintain their ancient way of life, herding livestock across a thousand miles of open range and raiding the farms and villages of foreigners who don't allow them to graze and water their herds. They often visit Chiaroscuro itself, both to sell their animals in the city markets and to visit their kin, and it's not unknown for nomads to settle there or urban Delzahn to abandon city life for horse and horizon.

The Delzahn maintain strict gender roles. Men rule everything outside the household, such as hunting, mercantile activity and war. They wear peacock-bright veils whose colors and patterns proclaim their bloodlines and achievements—the source of their honor. Delzahn women rule the household itself, from finances to marriage. Their honor derives from their beauty rather than deeds or lineage; they never conceal their faces, and many wear gauzy clothing to flaunt their bodies.

For those who feel mismatched to their gender and its roles, a Delzahn wearing clothing of the opposite biological sex, including at least one gray garment—often a scarf or a veil—is treated as a member of that sex. Those who "take the gray" are known as Dereth. They are viewed as unusual, but no more so than one who is left-handed or has mismatched eyes. Some say they're lucky at love. Others claim them beloved by the gods; many Delzahn priests and shamans are Dereth.

The Far South

The land grows hotter and water scarcer inland. Hill tribes engage in brutal wars amid the maquis. Horse-archers ride across the sweltering steppes, alert for game beasts or the dreaded Lion Folk. Nomads and merchants meet under oaths of hospitality in towns along the green banks of rivers and the shores of inland seas. Farther south, the last vegetation gives way to the many faces of the desert: barren ridges, stony plains and salt flats encircling a vast central sea of sand speckled with emerald and sapphire oases.

The farther south one goes, the richer the cities and tribes are in precious metals, gemstones, incense, ivory, spices, firedust, and silk, while fresh water becomes rare and valuable as jade. Merchants and scavengers alike hire guides and guards mounted on Southern steeds and beasts of burden, from camels and quaggas to giant aardvarks and flightless birds. They risk death from lions and scorpions, heatstroke and sandstorms, the trickery of desert gods and the hungers of the Fair Folk, all to win a share the deep desert's rewards—wealth, relics from lost cities, the wisdom of eremites and the blessings of the spirit courts.

Far Southern Locales

The boomtown **Zoatham** crouches amid the pitted Galta Hills where they jut up from the sands. A decade ago, slaver-priests from the Temple of the Gauntlet discovered rich outcrops of ore.

Prospectors flocked to the Galtas to claim veins of silver, gems, and gold; firedust deposits; and nodules of crystallized smoke.

Thousands of jumbled tents now flap in the desert wind. Among them rise a growing number of stone and adobe structures: inns, shops, and the fortified camps of the Guild, the Gauntlet Temple, the wealthy Batu family and other mercantile concerns. In addition to a floating population of prospectors, Zoatham is home to throngs of camp followers—provisioners, cooks, liquor- and drug-dealers, prostitutes—as well as miners and guards earning a living alongside all manner of gamblers, forgers, thieves and thugs.

Bandits lurk in the caves that pockmark the Galtas. Some are dispossessed natives; others are former prospectors, miners or guards. There are also inhuman dangers, from heat waves, sandstorms, typhoid fever and cholera to carnivorous giant bats, millipedes as large as river dragons, cacti that fling drugged seed-spines that sprout inside their victims, vicious hyena-like fire elementals and soul-thirsty leonine Fair Folk.

Though silver and gemstones remain plentiful around Zoatham, mining operations may soon cease. Excavations have broken into the deep places where earth elementals dwell, disturbing sonorous stony songs that have gone on unbroken since before the Sun and Moon were made. Now the hills rumble and shake with the slow words of the gemlords as they debate how best to crush those responsible for this indignity.

The streams that trickle down the eastern slopes of the Firepeaks, to be swallowed by the desert, water the cities and towns of those foothill lands. The greatest of these cities is **Gem**. Towers and terraces jut forth from the face of the mountain called Cinere, windows shining in the night like constellations, but most of the city lies underground. Ancient mines honeycomb the mountain, a tangle of smoky, lamp-lit corridors and chambers wherein houses and hovels have been built, and out of which new rooms and labyrinths have been carved over the centuries. Merchants haggle in the city's echoing gemstone bazaars; mercenaries and miners gather in cramped, musty drinking-halls. Eons of habitation have filled the place with curiosities, from sorcerous cisterns inhabited by half-slumbering water spirits to undisturbed chambers where explorers and vagrants sometimes unearth First Age treasures—obedient living statues carved from pink granite, a rod that projects a pulverizing ray, jewelry of demon-gold bearing the sigils of the Anathema.

The markets at Gem form a trade nexus for surrounding regions, from the Tsavo Cities to the Glister Sands, from the Saltblaze Plateau to the Dying Sea. Tradition makes Gem the center of the gemstone trade—a custom ruthlessly enforced by the local tribes, who violently thwart efforts to sell gemstones elsewhere. Successful smugglers are rare, but those who survive become wealthy. Other occupations are less profitable. The hills and mountains surrounding Gem are a wasteland of quarries and mines thronging like ants with prospectors, mercenary guards, overseers, indentured miners and slaves, their labor fattening the bare handful of merchants who buy and sell jewels, precious metals and firedust in Gem's markets.

All this wealth and wonder is at the command of one mortal: Rankar VII, Tyrant of Gem, War-Chief of the Sabaki Tribes, Suzerain of the Tsavo Cities. Through charm, cunning and martial prowess, this laughing bear of a man subdued the region's warring cities—Kandara of the Great Library; Origin, city of talking lions; demon-ruled Scathe—and drew their commerce to Gem not merely through force, but through the promise of profit. Secure in his strength and allies, he bargains fearlessly with outcastes, Lunars and Fair Folk, and rejects both blandishments and threats from the Guild. He may fall someday—perhaps tomorrow—but not today.

Beyond even Gem, so far south that the horizon shines ruddily at midnight with the distant glow of the Pole of Fire, ill-reputed **Dajaz** basks at the feet of the Firepeaks. It is a city of limestone and white granite, of pleasure palaces and oases, of endless music and fires burning into the night.

There is always celebration in Dajaz, though of who or what, no visitor can quite ascertain. Whether in the heat of noon or the icy hours before dawn, every bazaar, temple and caravanserai in the city throngs with revelers. Festivities are supplied with every conceivable need—food and drink, drugs and dancers, castrati and catamites—through the generosity of the elusive white-veiled Benefactors.

Perhaps through lost Solar artifice or some older, more insidious magic, the manic bacchanalia that grips the city touches the most temperate souls. Even in Creation, where self-indulgence is a matter of course for those with the means, Dajaz is seen as a place of iniquity, unclean excess, waste, and villainy. Talebearers say that even Lintha pirates and Great Forks sybarites are disgusted by the unholy impurity of the place.

Despite the city's purported curse—and its incredible crime rate—foreigners continue to make the long, dangerous journey to Dajaz. They come to revel and feast, to duel and tryst, to hire assassins or fence goods, or simply to disappear. Many disappear in truth. On nights when the stars turn strange, their last screams echo from beneath the pavements, to be drowned out by the sounds of revelry and merriment.

The Southwest

Realms west of the Firepeaks are as rich as the South and prostrate as the West. Foreign powers, whether Dynasts or Lunars, mortal princes or corrupt gods, subjugate the peoples of these humid lands—jungles and forests, marshes and savannahs—to claim their wealth and resources. Buccaneer fleets ravage shipping lanes while slavers and Fair Folk prey upon impoverished villages.

Near the center of things, the folk of wealthy satrapies hide their hatred behind adoring smiles, then kneel in secret before forbidden gods to call curses on their suzerains. Closer to the world's edge, towns and tribes lie scattered across coastal islands or encircled by monster-haunted marshlands and smoldering volcanoes. Here, where peoples are strange and their customs baffling to outsiders, any selfish godling, budding necromancer or ruthless sellsword can carve out a dominion.

Southwestern Locales

No place in An-Teng is as wealthy as the **City of the Steel Lotus**. Visiting Dragon-Blooded come to indulge their basest desires in this prostrate satrapy. The docks bustle with merchants bringing delicacies from across Creation. Emporia proffer *objets d'art* of ivory, teak, and precious stones. In brothels and teahouses, lovely youths wait on Dynasts hand and foot, concealing their resentment behind servile smiles.

In another age, An-Teng waxed powerful under Solar rule. When the loyal Tengese fought to protect their masters in the Usurpation, the Dragon-Blooded tore a savage trail of destruction through their land, exterminating the royal line and choking the soil with salt and blood. So when the Empress sent her legions after the Contagion, the Tengese bowed their heads to her rule rather than face further devastation.

From the City of the Steel Lotus, capital of An-Teng's Shore Lands, ships sail up the River of Queens to the rest of the province. In the fertile Middle Lands, scholars and priests meditate by the canals of the tree-girt city Adorned With Wisdom Like a Sapphire. The river spills from the stony peaks of the treasure-laden High Lands, where the temples of the Immaculate Dragons, the shining Golden Lord and the ghastly Pale Mistress loom over Thousand Dragons Lake.

In secret, the princes of the three lands ready their private troops—the Shadow Puppeteers, the Elephant-Riding Ghost Generals, and the Masked Commanders of the Animals—lest the Realm's garrison prove unreliable in this time of tumult. Meanwhile, other forces move furtively within An-Teng, from the ghosts of the City of Dead Flowers, where the last High Queen lies uneasy in her grave, to her hidden descendants in the demon cult called the Seven-Stranded Vine.

The vast expanses of Southwestern sargasso conceal the pirate city **Bluehaven**. The imperishable wrecks of a handful of First Age vessels float at the center of the morass, sparkling in the Western sun like cracked opals on green velvet. They are enmeshed with innumerable more recent hulks by webs of planking and rigging to form an artificial island-maze, whose location constantly shifts in accord with the sea's hidden currents.

Bluehaven is home to the dreaded Lintha Family, a ruthless piratical organization feared throughout the West. Ambitious buccaneers perform dangerous services or proffer exorbitant sums to win adoption into the labyrinthine Family, whose operations are directed by ancient "Grandmothers" and "Grandfathers"—once master marines, navigators, fences, smugglers, sea-priests and sorcerers, now architects of the Lintha Family's fortunes.

Membership is for life. Even if one leaves Bluehaven and its fleets behind, inevitably a Lintha contact will come to demand one more service for the Family. And if one violates the initiation oaths by revealing Family secrets or some more direct betrayal, no place in Creation is safe. Even those under constant guard at the farthest edges of the world will suffer the Family's vengeance.

Beyond their savage ways, the Lintha are known for unnatural powers. These range from the simple and misunderstood—such as water shoes that allow them to run across the waves, or gills cultivated through Wyld exposure—to sorcerous mastery of weather, command of sea monsters, and binding of elementals.

A grotesque and petrified husk towers, mountainous, over the hills of a small isle north of the Bay of Kings. It is all that remains of an ancient primal spirit, slain by the battle-arts of the Solar Exalted in forgotten antiquity. The people of **Lathe** have hollowed out the cavernous recesses of the stony cadaver and built their city within and upon its obdurate flesh and granite bones.

Sorcerer-architects hollowed the chambers, careful to preserve the Essence humors of its mystery organs. Its heart has become a temple, its stomach a consortium for alchemists, its lungs an amphitheater. An orrery has been carved into its mind, and here the Sidereals reference the night sky and the heavens of old.

Lathe is a vital Realm port. The city is a major gateway to the Cinder Coast, and the last port on the southern route to Faxai. It has also been plagued by Yozi cults and demon worship since time out of mind. The Immaculate Order has a major temple in the city, and the monks who dwell there are specialists in demonology, the occult, and exorcisms.

Though the Realm has done its best to suppress demon congress in the city, the Order knows that they would have to burn the city to ever fully erase it. Instead, the Order ignores the least

dangerous heresies, and uses connections within the cults of Lathe to keep abreast of diabolic activity and news from Malfeas. They have even at times aided and been aided by the demon slayers of the Meherest cult.

The West

Islands lie strewn like fallen leaves across the autumnal oceans of the West. Here, amid the remnants of ancient glory, a hundred maritime societies have developed largely untouched since the Contagion. From the civilized city-states of the great island-chain to weird isles overlooking the infinite mystery of the Pole of Water, these scattered realms are ripe fruits on the vine. As the strongest among them marshal fleets to harvest the resources of their weaker peers, they themselves remain prizes to be plucked by the rest of the world's powers in a new age of exploration and exploitation.

No other Direction is so isolated. Cut off by thousands of miles of open ocean, the West is a world unto itself. Until recently, even the Realm and the Guild have had only the most tenuous contact with its wealth and mysteries. But despite the distances involved, its allure resonates throughout the known world, for the West is renowned as a source for glamorous and exquisite treasures.

Most civilization in the West is to be found dispersed across the great chain that dominates maps of the Direction. The isles lie so near to one another that even primitive vessels can sail between them, and ships of a hundred styles cling close to fishing villages or glide from port to distant port. On the larger islands, among wooded hills and alpine meadows, farmers, miners, and loggers work the land without ever seeing the ocean that circumscribes their homes, knowing it only through dealings with coastal folk and from the depredations of seaborne raiders and maddened pelagic spirits.

Each island is unique, with its own peoples and princes, gods and monsters, traditions and treasures. Taken as a whole, they form a great cultural tapestry woven together by merchant ships and divided by hostile navies, pirates and privateers, typhoons, jealous storm spirits and marauding Fair Folk. As the West is the least populous and accessible part of the Threshold, Realm fleets and garrisons are few and independent island-states numerous. But the islands' riches—silver, coral, sea silk, pearls, exotic hardwoods, dyes, spices, slaves—attract more Realm merchants, Guild factors, and other mercantile and piratical enterprises every year.

Western Locales

The island city of **Wu-Jian** rises from the sea between the Blessed Isle and the West. Ships stop here for refitting and resupply, to offload merchandise, to replace missing crew or to indulge in shore leave. As a nexus for traffic from across the West, this teeming metropolis is one of the busiest blue water ports in Creation—and among the most lawless.

As most of the island that's not rocky and steep consists of walled-off Dynastic enclaves, the wide cove surrounding its main port has become a morass of massively overcrowded slums. Houses and shops pile one atop the other, doors accessible only through exterior stairways and catwalks, in towers that lean together drunkenly to cast the streets beneath in shadow. Other buildings meld into mazes of rooms, halls, stairs and airshafts strung together without rhyme or reason. Alleyways wholly enclosed by centuries of construction are pitch-dark but for lamps and torches. Shogunate-era suspension bridges extend the city to subsidiary islets off the coast, themselves hives of urban overgrowth.

There is little the satrap can do to police the slums. Magistrates only dare visit the most open areas such as the waterfront, and even then they travel in groups. In the rest of the city, the law is what the strong and the clever will. Here everything is for sale and anything can be taken. Pickpockets and cutpurses roam the seething marketplaces where almost any goods imaginable can be found; gangsters draw knives on sharpers in gambling halls; the owners of brothels and drug dens roll drunken sailors for pocket change. Abandoned structures host all manner of squatters, from beggars and pilgrims to outcaste sorcerers, demon worshippers, spies from the Undersea, cannibal mutants, soul-hungry Fair Folk, or even the Anathema.

The only real organizing forces are the Thirteen Schools, underground martial arts societies whose initiates swear mighty oaths to obey their teachers and elders. Some use their school's techniques to protect the downtrodden against thugs and thieves. Others form especially dangerous criminal gangs, commanding their territories through violence and intimidation. When bands from opposing schools meet, citizens scatter. A master's feet and fists can crack bricks and shatter wood; Wu-Jian's slums are shabbily built at best, and a large fracas can send entire tenements tumbling down.

Hamoji, greatest of Wavecrest's volcanoes, looms above the wealthy port of **Seahaven** on the island of Abalone. The caldera often sheds a bloody glow over roof slates and palm fronds, sea-foam and the unfurled sails of merchant ships; but sometimes the light is green or gold, or a shifting cauldron of colors like spilled paint. When Hamoji is particularly active, it shakes the earth like a giant tossing and turning deep underground. Sometimes it coughs forth smoke and ash; at other times snow, downy feathers, or yellow leaves.

Since the fall of the Shogunate, the volcano god Hamoji has aided the people of Abalone. Oral scriptures tell of how he scorched the plague cities with his fires and swept away the Fair Folk who'd snared his people in chains of dreams and spider-silk. But the madness of the Wyld blossomed in the heart of the great volcano, and Hamoji had less and less contact with his priestesses and prophets as it spread. He has not spoken since Seahaven submitted to the Realm, whose satraps exact a regular tribute of silver, foodstuffs, liquor and jade. Now the priestesses must guess at his will, knowing only that his anger stirs the volcano to violence that can be abated by nothing but human sacrifice.

The Feathered One, a sacral chief elected from Abalone's royal families, maintains strict and ruthless justice. All crimes are punished by a greater or lesser term of imprisonment, so when the volcano trembles, the priestesses have many sacrificial victims to choose from. If there are insufficient sacrifices available in the prisons—or if those sacrifices do not suffice to calm Hamoji—then the Feathered One must be ready to cast himself into the caldera to appease the god.

From afar, the seawalls of **Randan** glisten like mother-of-pearl. Every brick is glazed with fabulous images of monsters and gods in a hundred colors. In the city markets, stinking of fish and cinnamon and foundry-smoke, one can distinguish the native Randanese by their garments' rich hues—even common folk wear linen ablaze with madder, saffron and indigo, while their betters don rainbow silks flashing with jeweled embroidery. And as soldiers parade before the craft-lodges of the aristocracy, their leaders stand resplendent in armor of brocade as resilient as bronze or coats of ceramic plates as hard as steel, their masked helmets shining with silver, gold and gems.

Randan is ruled by hereditary lodges of artisans, each practicing a different craft. Artificers study the mysteries of their trades alongside the arts of war. Only those who master both martial and craft skills ascend into the ranks of the pekumi—the warrior caste that commands both the lodges and the state.

Randan's reputation comes from the quality of pekumi masterworks. Artisan-nobles incorporate thaumaturgy into their greatest creations to manufacture perfectly clear glass, indelible dyes, swords that never dull and bronze armor light as silk. But the pekumi create too few masterworks to support Randan's economy, and too few nobles master their crafts to fill out the officer corps' ranks. Most of the nation's real wealth comes from commerce. Randanese merchants—their ships carved with talismanic signs and hung with unbreakable sails—obtain hardwoods, incense, dyes, ivory and spices amid the farthest Western archipelagoes through trade, slave labor and plunder. But mercantile rivals and increasing pirate activity are cutting into Randan's profits. The island state is in a slow decline—and in the path of the Realm's expansion.

Still, the Randanese have hope for the future. They place their trust in their leaders, even as the pekumi are distracted by offers to join the Guild, campaigns against nearby Lintha strongholds and intrigues to see which lodge will ascend after the death of their aging queen Dove White Sky. They place their trust in their gods, even as the war-gods and craft-gods continue a centuries-long feud. And they place their trust in their three great mystic treasures, not understanding those treasures are themselves a source of peril—that their theft or destruction will open the way for the return of the demon queens of old.

> The Demon Queens
>
> Ages ago, three demons—Lanthild, Shaper of the Mind's Clay; Berengiere, the Weaver of Voices; and Alveua, Keeper of the Forge of Night—held the village of Randan in thrall. The people were helpless before the whims of the queens until three women stepped forward to confront them. "You claim that we are yours to toy with because we are not your equals," the women said. "But we say that we can match your gifts and your strengths." So they challenged the demons to a contest, wagering against Randan's freedom.
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> The demons laughed. What mortal could put dreams in a jar, or weave voices into fabric, or bind a soul into a blade? They accepted, seeing no harm in the jest.
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> Seven days passed before the first woman, a potter, brought a jug to Lanthild. "This is my best work," she said, "for as I threw it and turned it and fired it, I knew that all I love depended on my success. All my dreams are in this jug, for if it should fail, all my hopes fail with it." And Lanthild cursed, for she knew she had lost.
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> Fourteen days passed before the second woman, a weaver, brought a tapestry to Berengiere. She could not speak, so she drew her message in the sand. *This is my best work,* she wrote, *for as I spun it and wove it and embroidered it, I sang the songs of my people until my throat was raw, and then I sang further until my throat was a mass of scars. I have given my voice to my tapestry, for I can never speak again.* And Berengiere cursed, for she knew she had lost.
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> Twenty-one days passed, and the third woman, a blacksmith, did not come forth. Instead, her daughter brought a sword to Alveua. "This is my mother's best work," she said, "for as she heated it and hammered it and quenched it, she

> neither ate nor drank nor slept, giving all she had to her craft. And as she finished the blade, she died. She has given her soul to the sword." And Alveua cursed, for she knew she had lost.
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> Since then, no demon has held sway in Randan. And the potter, the weaver and the blacksmith were praised above all others, and their daughters were named chiefs of the village. It is for this reason that artisans now rule in Randan.

Like many of the northern isles, the city-state **Brightwork** is subjugated by the sea lords of Azure, capital of the Coral Archipelago. The ancient city-states of the Auspice Isles—Brightwork, Windspar, Pulse—weathered the Great Contagion better than most, preserving much of the Shogunate's knowledge of architecture, alchemy, mathematics, and astrology. Elegant buildings of wood, brick and plaster bustled with priests, philosophers, craftsmen and scribes. Bird-prowed ships carried porcelain, lacquerwork and other treasures across the length and breadth of the West. But their brilliant arts and subtle thaumaturgies were no match for Azure's mastery of canvas, iron, bronze and sinew. Today, outsiders see the Auspicenes not as warriors, sailors, traders or poets, but as educated slaves in Azurite households.

Revolts against Azure's rule are rare, as the mandarins and councils of the Auspicene city-states retain some measure of autonomy and have largely avoided Azure's taxes and the depredations of its privateers. But rumors have swept through the Auspice Isles that the ancient hero-admiral Tetram of Brightwork—whose long-ago empire encompassed half the West—has been reborn, sparking rebellion for the first time in decades. Crowds of Brightworkers gather outside Tetram's tomb, praying for his return.

The obsidian towers of **Onyx**, on the isle of Darkmist in the Skullstone Archipelago, gleam dully in the weak shadowland sun. Here the dead walk side by side with the living. Liveried corpses in polished metal masks, their garments anointed with scented oils, fetch and carry for the wealthy, while even a poor shopkeeper or family matriarch commands a skeleton or two. Out in the countryside, fisherfolk walk with their ancestors across black beaches, the latter leaving no footprints in the sand.

Onyx's people see death not as an end, but as a gateway to new life, for the aristocracy of Skullstone is an aristocracy of ghosts. Deceased who the Black Judges deem worthy return as spectral nobles and courtiers. Those who lack the proper spirit rise only as mindless walking dead. Such soulless creatures provide the labor that has made the lords of Onyx impossibly wealthy, combing the sea floor for days at a time to harvest pearls, coral, black jade and other undersea riches—including the cargoes of centuries of shipwrecks.

Above the city's crowded wharves, neighborhoods grow wealthier as one climbs the slopes of Mount Vashti, with low gray buildings giving way to the walled estates of wealthy nobles. At the city's highest point, the Deathlord Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water resides in a palace of silver and basalt. The Bodhisattva is no recluse; in addition to attending sessions of the undead Elder Council and the mortal Younger Council, he rarely misses a performance at the city's grand necrodramas, where mindless but carefully trained zombies emulate the living and the dead.

When the **Denzik city-ship** approaches a port, what seems at first a vague smudge on the horizon soon swells into a panorama as large as an island. It's a flotilla of hundreds of enormous custom-built sailing junks lashed together for stability, each broad enough to encompass a marketplace on its upper deck, and deep-drafted enough to hold many lower decks packed with

living quarters, storerooms, teahouses, whorehouses, gambling dens, and shrines. Together they form a floating city, a harbor equal to any coastal port, to which lesser vessels can moor as they would at the docks of Lookshy or the Imperial City.

Ten thousand sailors, merchants, artisans and their families live and work aboard the fleet as it traces its route along the Western isles to Faxai-on-the-Caul and the Meiyu Coast, then to the Inland Sea as far as Chiaroscuro, and back along the Blessed Isle's coast into the West. At each stop, scores of longboats and pinnaces head to shore carrying trade goods, crew on leave, and disembarking passengers, then return with new passengers, fresh cargo and vast quantities of supplies. The agricultural and pastoral outputs of entire city-states disappear into its holds to provision its endless journey.

Independent traders and members of other mercantile associations—from House Cynis's slaver ships to the Mercury cultists of the Golden Sail Consortium—often stop at the city-ship for trade and resupply, or accompany it for protection from privateers and pirates. Few actually trade at the same ports, lest they be swamped by Denzik merchants dealing in every conceivable good: sculpture and spices, cotton and slaves, ivory and armaments, paper and pearls.

The Denzik have little to fear from even the strongest pirate fleet, equipped as it is with catapults, ballistae, firedust cannons, well-armed citizen-sailors, and hired sorcerers. But as the rest of Creation grows more interested in the West, the heads of the century-old Denzik Consortium find themselves confronted by fiscal hostility—House Peleps demanding tribute, the Guild pressing the Denzik to join their organization. The Consortium's insistence on independence could embroil them in a trade war that could bankrupt the city-ship—or pit it against an armada beyond its capability to defeat.

> The Tya
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> Many Western cultures forbid women from working aboard ship for fear of the Storm Mothers' jealousy. Some, such as Azure, have established more directly sexist customs, restricting female power to the household. Women evade these strictures by joining the Tya, a society of women who live and dress as men. To evade the Storm Mothers' ire, Tya receive elaborate facial tattoos and take drugs rendering them infertile. This makes them male in Western eyes.
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> Tya guildhouses can be found throughout the West. Some Tya live in these guildhouses, taking work as guards and artisans, merchants and mercenaries. Others only visit for seasonal ceremonies. Gossips spread unfounded rumors that the Tya perform other rites in secret at the dark of the moon, performing grotesque deeds on behalf of supernatural patrons.

The Realm has but one foothold on the Western continent called the Caul. Named **Faxai** in the language of its people, or "Faxai-on-the-Caul" by foreigners, it is also known as "The Walled City" after its encircling fortifications—a rampart said to predate the First Age, its hieroglyphs tangled with ivy, crusted with moss, and blurred by rain, wind and time. Swaths of those hieroglyphs, reputed to contain the city's history, have been defaced by the Dragon-Blooded. Battlements where native warriors once paced now resound to the tread of Realm legionnaires, their eyes on the jungle, their ears pricked for the war-drums of the Moon-Touched and the siren songs of the fae.

Countless peoples mingle on Faxai's broad plazas and within its low stone buildings. The city is a gateway to the fabulous wealth of the Caul and the far Southwest. Merchants come from as far as Port Calin or the White Sea to procure spices and incense, gemstones and jade, ivory tusks as large as a man, tamed claw striders, petrified demon eyes, sapient crystals and other treasures.

The Walled City's old royal family claimed descent from the Unconquered Sun and worshiped a throng of solar deities—Nahundau the Lightbringer, Malinti Golden-Heel, Walanua of the Many-Colored Dawn, and the like. The bloodline was wiped out by the conquering Dynasty twenty years ago, though rumors persist of a surviving heir. Now a puppet prince rules at the bidding of the satrap. He looks the other way as the city's great wealth is shipped to the Blessed Isle, where gold statues and calendar wheels are melted down into jewelry and small-denomination coins.

The Guild is a major power here. Its factors bargain with Western merchants from Seahaven and Cabochon, meet with Lintha captains in hidden coves to purchase stolen cargo, or enter the dreaded Necropolis of the Black Reed to deal with partners in the Underworld. More prosaically, they arrange convoys to provision Faxai's Realm garrison. Nowhere else do the Realm and the Guild work together in this fashion, for nowhere else are they united by the common enmity of so many native powers—from mortal civilizations and Moon-Touched tribes to Fair Folk enclaves and the ancient Lunars who rule so much of the Caul.

Realm expansion has been thwarted by the Caul's difficult terrain—high mountains, jagged green hills, dense jungles, treacherous marshes and reptile-haunted pampas. Neighboring civilizations are far better suited to battle here than the Realm's legions, such as the toadfolk of Guchol, who drag their foes beneath the waters of their swamps to drown, or the warriors of Caligo, who hurl arrows and javelins from howdahs mounted atop the shoulders of colossal apes. But the single greatest factor in the Realm's failure to extend its control outside Faxai is the Lunar Exalted. Many of Luna's most puissant and legendary Chosen dwell here, and foreign Lunars and Moon-Touched alike make pilgrimage to the Caul to meet His Divine Lunar Presence or kneel at the Lion-God Shrine. Every Dynastic expeditionary force onto the mainland thus far has been routed, the survivors fleeing to Faxai to hole up against a long retaliatory siege.

On the green-cloaked crags outside the city **Makelo**, near the center of the island Sinti, slaves from coastal tribes labor under the watchful eyes of spearwomen clad in gleaming habergeons. Some gather breadfruit, bananas and taro; others herd domesticated moa, pigs and food dogs. Still others quarry blocks of stone to enlarge the city. Swaths of forest have been cleared away to accommodate new rows of low wood and stone structures roofed in palm fronds. Largest of all are the temples to the forge-goddess Ninegala who lives inside the mountain above Makelo's wooded valley. On a calm day, one can hear the clang of the goddess's hammer—except when she's set off for the coast in her flying chariot to drive away marauding Fair Folk with javelins of red-hot iron.

Service to Ninegala is a rite of passage for Makelo's youth. Each year, her priests drape young men and women in robes of gray and red, anoint them with sacred ashes, and lead them up the precarious path to the Cave of Judgment. Those few whom the goddess rejects are banished. The rest attend her for a year in her forge. There she teaches them the secret names of metals and the languages of flame. The goddess asks a few to linger in her service, often for many years. These return transformed, their skin darkened by the forge, their eyes lambent as burning coals. With the forgecraft learned in the mountain and the goddess's fire in their hearts, Makelo's people make weapons and armor of extraordinary hardness, resilience and beauty. These masterworks

have given their warriors victory after victory against neighbors, such that the entire island is finally theirs.

Though the Makeloans craft marvelous things from copper, iron, bronze and brass, they are merely human, and their works mortal. Her work is divine: swords that sever fire from fuel or shadow from substance; armor impervious to water, lightning and blades; statues that take up arms. When princes, gods and Exalts petition Ninegala to forge unique artifacts, she demands payment not in silver or jade, but in service. So peculiar and exacting are her demands that few will meet her price.

When a child of the **Kita tribes** sees her first sunrise, her parents bring her to the broad drummer-ringed dancing platform that is the village's largest structure. There she is held high to watch the lithe golden bodies of her people performing the Sun Dance, one of the countless dances taught them by their one and only god, Ratanga. This lesson is to show her the beauty and joy that is in her future, for all the Kita devote themselves to the occult art of the dance. When the same child sees her first sunset, her parents bring her to the shore to watch the tribe's statuesque warriors push their canoes into surf the color of blood, singing of each kill they've made in prior raids and of all the killing to come. For as much as Ratanga loves beauty and dance, he loves war even more.

There is a volcano god called Island Father, and each of his daughters was an island. Over time, his daughters and their islands drifted away from him across the wide, wide sea. The youngest daughter was headstrong and drifted farther from her sisters. One day Ratanga arrived on her shores, unwashed and uninvited. He drove the young goddess from her island with his boorish advances, and then presented himself to the indigenes as a god.

Ratanga may once have held the portfolio of a Current Herder or a Tide Shepherd, but he was on the wrong side of a great war. Where he should have been imprisoned or executed, he managed to slip out of Heaven's memory and its records. This cost him his purview and the bulk of his power, and indebted him to the celestial interests that aided his escape. Since then his debt has only worsened. Placing bets he could not cover with the oceanic powers of the West, he found himself owing the Storm Mothers, the Sleeping Wave Kings, and the Fault Lords sums of prayer he could not provide—at least, not until he seized Kita for himself.

A warlike god, Ratanga has made the people warlike. To woo a demon queen by luring her into Creation, he bid them dance endlessly. To this day he teaches the Kita new dances and new music, always in search of that perfect step or rhythm he once saw in the First Age but cannot quite remember. He extorts their prayers, making them believe it is he who holds off the storm, the tsunami, and the earthquake, through his interaction with those powers. In reality, he uses their prayers to pay his debts, and often lets them get rammed by each of those gods, then pretends that it was his wrath or scorn. In reality, Ratanga doesn't do much of anything.

There is another spirit on the island: Elder Stem, goddess of the miraculous berry called the Phoenix-Eye. Because Ratanga does not allow her a share of the prayer, she has grown weak and can bring forth her berry less and less. Where the people once knew how to refine the berry into a puissant medicinal agent, they have long forgotten how to use it for much more than a basic unguent paste. Ratanga has them sell the precious berry at criminally low prices to the Guild in exchange for slaves and sacrifices—both to slake his thirst for such things and in hopes of paying off his divine creditors, with whom he is constantly going deeper into debt.

His demand for worship, lack of tangible blessings, and ostensible power over the fortunes of the Kita tribes has informed their culture. They worship Ratanga as a supreme god, as though he were their Ahlat, their Siakal, their Unconquered Sun. In his service they pair for beauty, for he wishes to be surrounded by the famous beauty of the old courts of the Before. They develop more complex and elegant dances in order to find the one that will soothe his savage temper and bring him peace, not to mention ensure the sun rises and the tides stay on their course. As such, they are a race of dancers with rare beauty and a culture of war, preying on other islands, neighbors, and passing ships in the hunt for endless tribute.

Appearance by Region

Ethnotypes vary widely from place to place in Creation. A tall, heavyset people with pale skin and blond hair may live just across the river from a city of short, slim, black-skinned folk. Major trade cities see a mixture of peoples, with individuals and families transplanted from faraway lands. Nonetheless, there are general tendencies for certain ethnotypes to be found in each Direction.

Most Northern peoples have pale skin and light eyes. Hair is typically white, blond or light blue, though red or black are not uncommon. Builds vary widely; hunting peoples are often tall and well-built, wealthy settled folk run to fat to fend off famine, and impoverished villagers are as stunted as those in any other corner of Creation.

A melting pot even in the First Age, the Scavenger Lands have since accumulated invaders, refugees and slaves from across Creation. Many are of mixed stock, with skin the color of *café au lait*—albeit with varying proportions of coffee to cream—and brown or black hair. But one finds people of all shapes, sizes and colors here.

As one travels further East, bark-brown skin becomes more prevalent, paired with green or hazel eyes. Hair tends to be long and straight, its color varying from brown to blond, red or green. Folk are typically tall or well built, sharing the vitality infusing other Eastern creatures.

Those born beneath the Southern sun tend to be dark-skinned, ranging in color from olive to brown to black. Their hair—whether red, blond or black—tends to be wavy, curly or even kinky. Beards are common among men; most keep them well trimmed, as wild and unkempt hair is associated with the holy madness of hermits and those ridden by gods.

Westerners typically have bronze or golden skin. Their hair shares the many hues of sunset and sea—blues and greens, maroons and purples, grays and midnight blacks. Short and compact builds are common, as are epicanthic folds around blue, green or gray eyes. Some peoples in the far West have delicate webbing between their fingers, like on a frog's foot.

The native folk of the Blessed Isle at the world's heart tend to be light-skinned with dark hair and eyes, strong features, and slim builds. But the Realm is the center of a world-spanning empire that has, over the centuries, drawn in millions of citizens, concubines and slaves. The marks of foreign blood are common, even in the ranks of the Scarlet Dynasty.

Lunar Dominions

The Realm's hegemony is founded atop mountains of stolen money and magic, soaked through with blood. It has ripped all its possessions from others, including its very name. The elders of the Silver Pact have marked each crime down through the ages, each affront, each act of theft and murder in the name of the Realm the Lunar Exalted once swore to protect.

It will not stand.

The Silver Pact is an alliance of Lunar Exalted united in purpose: to tear down the Realm and free themselves from the ancient bonds they once failed to uphold. The Pact is founded on mutual aid, defense of Luna's chosen, and opposition to the Realm and its Sidereal masters. The most fundamental duty of any member is to find and rescue newly-Exalted Lunars—a daunting task, given the scope of Creation, but one the Lunar lifestyle is well-suited to. In addition to keeping an ear to the ground as a matter of survival, Silver Pact members have a long-standing practice of rewarding any spirit that brings them news of newly-Exalted brothers and sisters.

Once a young Lunar has been taken beyond the immediate reach of the Wyld Hunt, they're brought before a No Moon affiliated with the Pact, and given the true story of Luna's Chosen—what they were, what befell them, and why each Lunar Exaltation brings with it a hungry turmoil of the soul.

After the young Lunar's caste has been fixed by his No Moon mentor, the Pact's obligation to him ends unless he decides to participate in its loose, extended network of favor-trading, support, and anti-Realm operations. A young Lunar stands to reap benefits far in excess of what older Pact members ask in return—the Silver Pact's war against the Realm is a long-term stratagem, one that depends on today's boon-asking youth to grow into the next century's indoctrinator, strategist, and war-counselor.

The Dominions

The Pact's primary strategy is the creation of war dominions in those places beyond the Realm's control but adjacent to its holdings. This works roughly in line with what most young Lunars wish to do anyway—empowered by the blessings of Luna, they find themselves accumulating might and status, which the relentless aggression of the Wyld Hunt eventually seeks to strip away. The Silver Pact *doesn't* try to make its members operate according to some greater battle plan—Luna's gifts lend themselves to adaptability and unpredictability, not the grind of empire against empire, and the Realm's stolen magic and superior numbers make that a losing strategy in any case. Instead, Lunars operate according to their own plans and desires, calling upon other Pact members for assistance where necessary; success and generosity bring greater standing and influence within the Pact.

War dominions are ultimately about achieving what can be achieved today, then living to strike again tomorrow. The Lunars make themselves god-beast patrons of those the Realm despises—those it has pushed to the margins and deemed barbarians; those it has crushed and disenfranchised for daring to defy it; those who live at the rim of the Threshold, nervously listening to the marching of the scarlet legions and wondering if this is the generation in which the Empress will muster her forces to push beyond the mountain, jungle, swamp, or sea that has thus far sheltered them from the imperial yoke.

The Lunars use their mystic gifts on behalf of these people. They teach strength and instill pride. They spread truths the Immaculates seek to suppress. And they speak of the crimes of the Realm against the people of the margins—of the glittering riches taken at sword-point, of the youths enslaved, of the brave warriors slain. Lies and propaganda are rarely needed; if a tribe starves in the high mountains, it is likely because a satrapial garrison has forced them there.

Other Lunars raise up new groups from scratch, taking refugees and exiles and breeding among them, filling the ranks of their leaders with strong sons and daughters; or planting the seeds of a new tribe of beastmen to be tapped for war five generations hence. The Silver Pact has been at war for many centuries, and has learned patience.

In the end, a Lunar dominion is made into a weapon. Leather-armored screamers raid tribute caravans. Moon-blessed armies march on disputed border provinces. Realm garrisons chase skirmishers into malarial swamps, filled with ambush-points and boltholes. The legions are called in, and fight grueling campaigns in hostile terrain. Sometimes the dominions triumph. More often they fall, broken by the might of the legions or the spent power of precious, irreplaceable First Age weapons. Either way, the Realm bleeds its money, military, and magic beating back Lunar aggression.

And while the Realm counts the cost, the Lunar is standing in a wooded fane hundreds of miles away, speaking in her god-voice to another tribe, another cult, another fleet, another fledgling nation, stirring them to war.

"Ten thousand dragons rule the world," goes the chant of the Realm's military cadets. Ten thousand claws and fangs encircle that world at the behest of the Silver Pact.

The Tangle

The uncharted mass known as the Tangle is a forest of enormous thorn-bushes, some towering over 200 feet into the air, sporting spines as long as javelins and thick as a man's arm. To the Realm, it is an army-devouring nightmare, but to the lithe, laughing, brown-skinned folk known as the Suramoi, the Tangle is home. Raised among its massive deadly roots and trackless shadows, they alone know the trick of quickly and safely navigating the thorn-forest's depths. At home, the Suramoi are hunters of boars and tellers of great, week-long tales; abroad, the Suramoi are raiders, striking out into neighboring Harborhead with their thorn-spears and boar cloaks. They bring back cattle, metal weapons, whatever loot and lucre they can carry, and deeds for the boasting-fires.

A great broken temple-manse rests at the heart of the Tangle, slope-ceilinged, carvings long since worn down by the elements. Its shattered geomantic power is the source of the thorn-forest's freakish growth. The Suramoi do not approach it unless summoned or bearing gifts for the living god that dwells in its inner fane. Jyudo Far-Flung, a rolling mountain of a man, has made himself the patron of the Suramoi. He thanks them gravely for their offerings of cattle and gleaming jewels, but cherishes gifts of books most of all. He has amassed a great library in the utmost depths of the manse, where wind and rain cannot reach his treasures. On the four occasions when the Realm has marched its legionnaires into the Tangle, they've been met with traps, ambushes, and eventually, Jyudo himself: a great roaring bear, shoulders as high as a yeddim, smashing through thorns and shields and soldiers as though they were made of twigs. Sensing weakness from the Realm, Jyudo now calls the Suramoi chiefs to council, and makes plans to escalate from raiding to all-out war.

The Black Wave Reavers

The Black Wave Reavers are a small Western pirate fleet. They maintain a precarious independence, avoiding both ties to and aggression from the great powers of the Guild, the Lintha, and the Coral freebooters. The Reavers focus their aggressions on Realm treasure ships, attempting to stave off the Great Houses' expansion into the Western isles by depriving them of profits and naval power, but this is a dangerous game—the Realm's ships are well-built and well-defended. How fortunate, then, that the fleet is coordinated and led by a pack of young Lunar heroes.

Axura, a Chiaroscuran woman taken by Realm debt-slavers for use in the Western colonies, leads the trio. She cast herself overboard one night, preferring death in the shark-filled waters to the life of a concubine, only for Luna to draw her from the waters and gift her with the shape of a deadly hammerhead shark. Her companions are Kumo, a clever and erudite islander who survived becoming the prey and plaything of the Fair Folk but still bears lingering marks of his time in the Wyld; and Enemy Ghost, a quiet and deadly man raised by a savage panther god. The three are united in their hatred of any who oppress the weak, and see no greater oppressor than the Realm. Axura holds a special hatred for slavers, and enjoys casting them overboard and then taking on her shark-shape to leisurely chase them down.

Many of the Black Wave Reaver ships are heavily crewed by former slaves liberated from Realm vessels. The Reavers are a young group, still growing, though that growth is making it increasingly difficult to steer the fleet clear of conflicts with the tempting prizes of Guild vessels. The fleet's flagship is the *Black Water Mako*, a swift harrier captured from House Peleps.

Yena's Daughters

The Diamond Road is one of the greatest trade routes in Creation, funneling red jade, precious jewels, firedust, and mercenaries from Gem to the Lap, and crops from the Lap to the city-states of the great Southern desert. But three war-bands, calling themselves Yena's Daughters, have made the Diamond Road their hunting ground. The Realm publicly dismisses them as mere bandits, but if even half of the stories swapped by drovers and traders in the caravanserais and wine sinks are true, then these mere bandits have inflicted untold damage on the Realm in lost revenue and lives. Entire tribute caravans simply vanish into the desert, one after another. Realm-friendly trading posts are burned.

Yena's daughters are a trio of hyena-women, inheritors of their mother's ferocity and survival instincts. Red-haired Yataqa has assumed control of a mixed band of exiles from Harborhead, the Firepeaks, and the Delzahn tribes, and mounts lightning cavalry raids from the deep desert. While the rest of her band rides horses or camels, Yataqa has tamed a ferocious simhata for her own use. Janati, youngest of the sisters, leads a group of Wyld mutants, many of whom blend into the hills and dune-slopes when still. They specialize in ambushes, and have a hundred bolt-holes in the red cliffs and arroyos that line certain stretches of the road. Yataqa and Janati keep what plunder they fancy, distribute generously to their followers, and then either strew the rest of their stolen goods across the trackless waste, or amuse themselves by returning precious baubles to those who gave them up to the Realm, creating suspicions of collaboration. Ratana, by contrast, always keeps her prizes. She lacks the muzzle her sisters sport, and so fancies herself the loveliest of the three—she's fond of smiling after making this boast, showing the bone-cracking teeth she inherited from her mother. Her band is made up of crack mercenaries armed

with firewands and Chiaroscuran glass armor, and she keeps their loyalty with princely shares of all she steals.

Yena Bone-Breaker coordinates her daughters' efforts and leads their fiercest raids. Her laughter echoes among the red canyons and rolls across the burning dunes. Ten years ago, she bit off Sesus Venoq's legs as he rode honor-guard over a fortune of fire opals and exotic spices, and now he coordinates the hunt for her from a townhouse in the Lap. But Yena's Daughters frustrate every attempt to find their lairs and rally a Wyld Hunt. They stalk the walled villages and oasis-towns of the Diamond Road, leaving precious trinkets, stolen food, and heaps of silver on the doorsteps of the common folk to buy their goodwill. Yena herself descends in the night to devour the bones of any who inform the Realm of their movements. The losses continue to mount.

The Mountain of the Spider King

Multi-armed dervishes and pale-skinned bandits haunt the Black Shale Road that runs through the coastal foothills of the near North, connecting Pneuma, Gethamane, and Whitewall to the lands of Shale Strand, Fortitude, Grieve, and the sea routes to Fajad. The wealth of the West flows east along this vital road, toward Cherak and Gethamane, along with tribute-caravans belonging to houses Sesus, Ledaal, Nellens, and Ragara. But fewer make it through each year, their wealth carried away into the darkness beneath the earth.

The mountains that loom above the Black Shale Road are honeycombed with abandoned mines predating the Contagion. Aum-Ashatra, the Spider King, has made them his own. Aum-Ashatra dwells in the utmost depths of the tunnel system, an ebon-skinned youth reclining on silk cushions amidst gleaming treasures seized from the Great Houses, his six arms raised in meditation. He is attended by his spider-blooded grandchildren and great grandchildren, who speak with his voice. The Spider King takes in refugees, exiles, and disenfranchised families that he finds making the long journey down the Black Shale Road, granting them the shelter of his geothermally-heated tunnels and sharing the bounty of hidden alpine valleys and peat fens cradled deep in the mountains, accessible only by paths winding deep through ancient granite.

In addition to farming the land beyond the mountains, Aum-Ashatra's people have greatly extended the old tunnels, and now they run to countless lonely hillsides up and down either side of the Black Shale Road. The folk of the tunnels launch lightning raids from these warrens, and disappear into the hills just as quickly. The tunnels are a maze of dead-ends, traps, and cave-ins waiting to be triggered, and are strung from end to end in Aum-Ashatra's webs—as soon as the Realm or the Guild sends a punitive force into the tunnels, the Spider King feels the vibrations and mobilizes a response. Poisoned spears and a great many-limbed terror push intruders into dead-end tunnels, where they're entombed behind tons of cold stone.

The Nameless Lair of Ma-Ha-Suchi

A ruined temple-city thrusts up from the depths of the Southeastern jungles, its buildings choked with vines, its grand fane the lair of a violent god rising from a long somnolence. Once the place had a name, but now only Ma-Ha-Suchi remembers what it may have been, and allows no name to be marked on maps save his own.

The ancient Lunar has survived the destruction of the First Age, exile in the Wyld, the scourge of the Contagion and the armies of chaos, and he carries his scars with sullen pride. He greets visitors in his war form, a towering amalgam of man, wolf, and goat, and speaks in a voice like

silver bells. Those who rouse his attention without good cause die on the end of his moonsilver lance, Corpse Drill, and their skulls mark the boundary of his domain.

And what a domain he has claimed! Ma-Ha-Suchi's territory abuts the southern terminus of the Scavenger Lands, and shields the wealthy empires of the deep Southeast from the Realm-controlled coastal cities—not that the ancient Lunar harbors love for any of his neighbors. His beast-blooded children raid the surrounding lands ceaselessly. They suffer no permanent roads to be laid through their father's dominion, and harry what river traffic is bold enough to dare their wrath. Only those who purchase Ma-Ha-Suchi's temporary goodwill through lavish tribute may pass safely through his domain, and then only if the great beast is in the mood to be honored or flattered.

Made both wrathful and weary by the turning of the ages, Ma-Ha-Suchi shuns the politics of the Exalted. He will occasionally trade rumors or choice bits of magical plunder with respectful envoys from the Silver Pact, and has at times consented to take younger Lunars under his guidance for a year or two—but for the most part, he maintains his solitude. He does not speak of the personal significance of his jungle ruins, nor is he interested in the greater schemes of luminaries such as Sha'a Oka or the Queen of Fangs. Luna has granted him strength of arm, quicksilver wits, keen eyes to witness the decay of the world, and endless enemies who wish to spend their lives failing to take his territory for their own. For seven centuries, that has been enough. But now the dead march upon the living, the Realm turns its blades upon itself, and the gates of eternity have swung wide to admit the Solar Exalted back into the world—indeed, one bold young Solar general has already dared to challenge the ancient Lunar in his lair. The heroes, horrors, and betrayals of the past, long buried and forgotten, have risen to stride across Creation once again. None can yet guess what flame these visitations have kindled in the ancient Lunar's heart, or who will die to feed it.

The Caul

For centuries the Realm and the Silver Pact have warred mercilessly over the Caul, an island sacred to both sides. The Caul is a place where the march of time has, in some ways, been suspended; where the ravages wrought by the fall of the First Age and the march of the Fair Folk were not complete. It is a land of secret power, of wild demesnes, and of five ancient shrines where the Five Elemental Dragons were said to have once cloistered, and where the Silver Lady walked Creation hand in hand with Gaia in a paradise made to contain them.

Most of the fighting has been to control the shrines. For each side, it is a matter of survival. As their bloodlines decline in purity, the Dragon-Blooded seek to use the shrines to open the path to Feng-Yi, where they might stave off the waning that has threatened them since time out of mind. For the Lunars, those very same shrines are bound into the bloodlines of the beastmen who call the Caul home—the very races the Lunars have reared and harbored and protected since the beginning. These races form the might of Sha'a Oka's army. Without them, the Lunars' hopes of holding the Caul are lost. It is an impasse that has forced the Exalted into conflict for over five centuries.

Sha'a Oka, the legendary leonine warrior-king, deviated from the Silver Pact's war of attrition to claim the Caul as his battlefield. His resolve, fueled by age-old regret, is second to none. His followers are among the most zealous of the Lunar host, and they would fight for him—and for this land favored by Luna—to the end of the world. Over the years, Sha'a Oka's death has been confirmed many times only to be eventually proven false. No one has seen His Divine Lunar

Presence in over one hundred years, but wise Exalted know not to bank their plans on the truth of his demise—for Sha'a Oka is said to roam the Caul, directing its defense from the shadows.

For the Dragon-Blooded, to be chosen by the Empress as a pilgrim on the Caul was a great honor and a sacred responsibility. The Realm always strove to control the five shrine cities, to ensure that the route to Feng-Yi remained open, for at certain incalculable times, if she could complete the pilgrimage, the Dragon-Blooded pilgrim could be guaranteed that her next child would feel the Kiss of the Dragons.

But when the Empress vanished, her legions on the Caul were reduced, and each of the shrine cities was left with fewer defenders than ever before. When Sha'a Oka's lieutenants learned of this weakness, they erupted from their dominions with their beastmen armies and overwhelmed one city after another.

The Dynasts were finally able to dig their heels in at Faxai, the Walled City, whose port is the gateway to the West. Faxai's defenders know if the city were lost, the Anathema would have a way to launch an invasion of the Blessed Isle.

The Dragon-Blooded fight to prevent this from happening at all costs. But as the siege of Faxai drags on, the Realm's response to this threat has been divided. Some believe the Caul to be a waste of resources—what is the wisdom, they ask, in the deaths of many Dragon-Blooded heroes in exchange for the certain birth of a mere handful? Some even scoff at the might of the beastmen hordes. House Peleps has long signaled its certainty that the Realm Navy could shatter any invasion force before it ever reached the Blessed Isle. Others travel to the Caul even now, drawn by the tarnal silence out of the shrine cities, and their concern for the fates of those trapped by Lunar forces. Still a few of the most devout Immaculates and shikari believe that the way of the Dragons and the path to the Last City must be kept open—that this is not a matter of just the birth of a few Dragon-Blooded, but of the spiritual purity of the entire Dragon-Blooded race. To resist the Anathema at all costs is their purpose and their remit in the Immaculate Texts, and to fail in this is to fall from the grace of the Dragons and hasten the world's descent into darkness.

The Wyld

The world is a thin shell over an underlying sea of chaos. Beneath the veil of reality is the roiling primal energy of creation, the endless potential of the unformed. In the time before history, Creation was raised from this ocean of madness, trapping its energies into the fixity of shape and time, cause and effect. This infinitude is the Wyld.

Just as the Wyld is beneath the world, it is also within it. Wherever the minds and dreams of living things have been stripped away, the Wyld seeps in, burgeoning with twisting miracles. The ravages of Fair Folk armies impregnate it with seeds of impossibility. Where sentient life flourishes, reality is strong, but in places where dreamers are hollowed and their souls eaten away, Creation falls into chaos.

Within and beneath, the Wyld is also outside, surrounding the world. In the First Age, Creation was much larger, its borders well-guarded; but in the wake of the Great Contagion, the children of the Wyld launched a great crusade against the world, and much of Creation's hinterlands fell back into the chaos from which they were drawn. Today the borders of the world are a tattered and hazy interstitial realm of miracles and nightmares, where the tides of the Wyld grind away at the shores of the real.

Worse, the denizens of the Wyld have long regarded Creation with hungry eyes, gleaming with equally deadly love and hate. The Wyld is home to innumerable prodigies, many of which could only generously be called life—vast and magnificent beasts which could only be of singular nature; swarming horde- and hive-things; mad creators who bring forth land and song and sorrow with the beating of drums or the working of hands; countless hungry fangs, thirsting for passion and meaning; things which all of the above would name as monsters. The foremost among these beings, most commonly known as the Fair Folk, have mounted many invasions of Creation throughout the ages, and marked the bordermarches of the world with the shifting, dreamlike energies of the Wyld.

To live in these tainted lands is to risk becoming something other than human. Savage tribes carve bone and iron talismans in the hopes that they will offer some protection against the touch of chaos, and beseech whatever divinities will listen to keep them safe from the hungers of the Fair Folk. At the rim of the world, where reality is at its weakest, these measures often prove inadequate, and many tribes have been transformed into Wyld-twisted mutants.

The Face of the Wyld

Creation is most stable at its center, buttressed by the geomantic axis of the Pole of Earth and the millions of souls who live, work, pray, travel, and trade across the Blessed Isle. The farther one travels from the center, the more the fabric of reality thins. At the outermost edge of the world, reality grows thin as a sigh and the Wyld beats on Creation's shores, ebbing and surging with the cycles of the moon. Beyond that there is only raw madness, endlessly transforming and reconfiguring itself, free of the afflictions of reason and memory.

Those places where the world and the Wyld intersect are landscapes of wonder and terror, of fantasy given expression in scenery and flesh: beautiful, unpredictable, exhilarating, deadly. Here the sky burns with impossible colors. Rivers flow with wine, or blood, or simply backwards. Here animals grow from seed-pods on trees, or mate without regard for species and produce impossible offspring. The Wyld is a landscape of crystal flowers, of birds who sing daunting and transgressive philosophies, of trees whose sap brings sweet hallucinations and transformations of mind and body, of snakes with scales of gleaming diamond, of songs which can reweave a man's memories.

To live in the Wyld invites a form of ecstasy, a loss of the self into the tides of myth and archetype, a replacement of desires with a sense of belonging. This euphoria is addictive to many, even as the ongoing ebb and flow of the Wyld work steady and subtle transformations upon flesh and psyche. It is for this reason above all others that civilized men and free barbarians fear the touch of the Wyld, and shun those lands marked by chaos.

And yet, some live within the boundaries of the Wyld. Those who dwell in tainted lands are feared and hated as no others in Creation. Most are immediately distinguishable by the marks chaos has left upon their flesh; the ignorant fear their mutations and insanities are contagious, while the learned suspect them of being stalking-horses and agents of the Fair Folk.

Where the Wyld intersects with Creation, it draws from the nearest Elemental Pole; while hardly predictable or reliable, particular stretches of chaos tend to display repeating motifs and themes of miracle and transfiguration. The most successful such mutants breed true, giving rise to Wyld barbarian tribes such as the terrible Varajtul cannibals of the North.

Beyond Creation, certainties of distance and identity become distant rumors, and time's march is rendered slippery and unreliable. A man can be reduced to a flailing pile of limbs, or a living flame, or a song, all within a matter of hours; or might find his sense of self dissolving; or might be found and claimed by one of the Fair Folk, transformed into a hunting hound and brought back to a court of madness; or might wander, unharmed, through miraculous landscapes for a day and a night, only to find his way back to Creation with the dawn to discover that twenty years passed during his sojourn. Even among the ranks of the Chosen, only the Lunar Exalted venture beyond Creation's borders without careful preparation.

The Fair Folk

The Fair Folk are born of the chaos beyond the world—ravenous, beautiful, and immortal. They stride boldly into Creation, taking whatever they please by force or seduction. Also known as the raksha, they seem similar to men and women, but aren't human and could never be mistaken as such. Mortals don't wrap themselves in proud robes of woven poetry, nor move with the grace of a waking dream, nor wear all the blowing colors of autumn and fire in their hair and eyes.

The Fair Folk hate Creation, for it offends the children of the Wyld. When the world was raised up from chaos, it shattered the purity of the Wyld, inflicting upon it an immutable center; the certainties of time; and other, subtler transformations. What had been free was now fixed. The oppressive weight of Creation's certainties presses hard against those Fair Folk who enter the world; in its every aspect, reality announces itself as their enemy. The raksha have warred against Creation since its first dawn. Once, they came within a hair's breadth of victory; perhaps in the Time of Tumult they will succeed.

The Fair Folk love Creation, for it beguiles them and fills their essential emptiness—an emptiness of which they were never aware, until Creation existed to contrast them. The raksha are soulless, donning ethics and passions like masks and fashion; they're not real the way a mortal is real, and must endlessly invent themselves. To immerse in the life of Creation—and dine upon Creation-born souls—provides another, intoxicating existence, which many fae throw themselves into wholeheartedly. The souls and sagas of heroes satisfy them best of all, drawing Fair Folk to the Exalted in endless cycles of savage war and equally savage love.

So it is that Creation has learned that the love and hate of the Fair Folk are to be feared in equal measure.

The Hosts of Faerie

The raksha have long dominated the Wyld, but they are not its only children. The hosts of faerie are vast and diverse, describing horrors and beauties in countless variety. The raksha commonly enslave such lesser fae, or create them wholesale as servants, putting each to the use its nature or maker's whim dictates. Lesser fae generally excel at singular tasks—they are swift couriers, doughty wonder-smiths, lascivious paramours, savage warriors, feral hunting-beasts. The lesser faeries most familiar to the people of Creation are those the Fair Folk put to work as warriors and hunters, such as squat hobgoblins with flesh like twisted roots, shark-toothed oceanic reavers, and the wolf-faced howlers of the Winter Folk.

The churning vicissitudes of the Wyld and the dream-forges of the Fair Folk also sometimes birth colossal, monstrous terrors. These behemoths are distinguished by their uniqueness and overwhelming power. Most have no more intelligence than an animal, and often not even that much self-awareness—the Fair Folk tame them with little difficulty, despite their enormous

strength. To bring one of the more intelligent or willful behemoths to heel is a great accomplishment among the courts of madness, bringing forth accolades, envy, and rivals.

The raksha hold themselves above all other children of the Wyld. They see lesser fae as potential slaves and amusements—not kin or peers. But the raksha are no longer the undisputed lords of the Wyld. In the centuries since the failure of their last great crusade to end Creation, a new and terrible sort of faerie has emerged from the depths of the Wyld. These twisted and hungry beings —the hannya—count raksha as their preferred prey.

Fair Folk in Creation

The Fair Folk take on a host of forms as they enter Creation and rob substance from its Elemental Poles to sustain themselves. What follows are the most widely-known (and feared) generalities of the Fair Folk; individual raksha may bend or break the trends of their court. The Wyld is ever-inventive, and ever-treacherous.

The East: The raksha of the East and Northeast are much consumed with pageantry, garbing themselves in emblems of the forest and the seasons: cloaks of leaves and torcs of laurel, juniper-berry tassels, crowns of woven dead branches. They favor armor of magically hardened wood.

Fae of the Southeastern jungles become indolent in the heat, wearing rainbow feathers and red, black, and yellow skin colors. They prefer to lay ambushes, using blowguns and spears steeped in hallucinogens to capture mortal playthings. They regard the fevered visions provoked by their darts as a refined delicacy. Deeper Southeast, scattered tribes of bronze-skinned and devil-fanged nomads range up and down the shores of the Dreaming Sea, and roam across the great interior plains, kidnapping travelers and drawing out their souls in forced contests of chance and daring. They spare only the domains of Ysyr, where it is rumored the reigning thaumatocrats have learned to enslave their kind.

The South: Raksha of the Southern coast creep into towns and cities by night wearing the form of black lions. They infiltrate the houses of sleeping mortals to steal their breath, or whisper from the darkness to draw watchmen away from the fires, never to be seen again.

In the far South, the raksha are desert raiders on horses of flame and shadow, dressed in flowing robes of stitched dream and burnooses of woven poetry, wielding sabers edged with deadly omens. Only their love of riddles, bets, and challenges can offer hope of delivery from their hunger—alas, precious few count themselves sharper than the Fair Folk.

The West: The raksha of the West are divided between the aquatic fae of the ocean depths and wild cannibal raksha who dwell upon miraculous isles. The latter paint their bodies, carve terrifying and impressive masks to frighten away the hannya, and prefer to extract dreams and souls from boiled flesh. Their whale-bone outriggers cut the waves like swift arrows when they go a-raiding.

The fae of the open oceans wear whatever sea-life features take their fancy. Some are swift and terrible hunters, driving schools of sharks and barracuda before them as hunting-hounds; others use their beauty as a lure, drawing sailors and dock-girls into the sea with cruel, sweet songs, crimson-rouged lips and nipples, and the artful concealment and exposure of surging waves.

Most prideful and lovely of all the Western fae are those raksha who have named themselves the Pearl Court and made their home upon the coasts of the Caul. They adorn their flesh in shifting

nacreous hues, seduce the winds and waves into compliant alliance, and draw ships onto the jagged shores of the Caul with storm-song and false omens.

The North: In much of the North, the Winter Folk are feared even above the hungry dead. Villages shudder and reach for weapons or tribute at the tinkling of their sleigh bells and the creak of their ice chains in the night. The Winter Folk adorn themselves in ermine or mammoth fur, bedecking their bodies with great antlers, horns, wolf fangs, or bear claws; many sport cow or wolf tails, which they take some pains to hide. The loveliest of the Winter Folk often walk nude through the midst of howling blizzards, offering the warmth of their bodies to lost travelers in exchange for sips and bites of the unfortunate's soul. Such liaisons are addictive, drawing doomed "snow dolls" out into the killing cold again and again in desperate search for their lovers.

Lords of Dream

The Fair Folk speak occasionally of a caste of raksha beyond even their terrible nobility—uncontestable lords of the Wyld whom they dub ishvara. It is a marvel for even a single ishvara to appear within the span of an Age, and most raksha believe that none currently walk the lands of Creation or the depths of the Wyld. Should one emerge into the Time of Tumult, it would surely change the course of the world.

Prince Balor of the Terrible Gaze was the most famous of all ishvara, and indeed of all Fair Folk. He led the Crusade against Creation at the end of the Great Contagion, which brought the raksha to ruin in the face of the Scarlet Empress's counterattack; Balor himself is believed slain by the treachery of his advisors at the height of the Crusade. It is said that nothing could survive the glare of Prince Balor's terrible eye, and that a part of his Essence remains lost in Creation to this day, crafted into a weapon of flame and poison against which no defense is possible.

Prince Laashe, the Morning Star, rose to infamy in the early days of the world by crafting a woman from the dreams of the Unconquered Sun, who won the sun-god's heart. When the woman's crimes were revealed to the gods, the Most High was forced to pass judgment over her, or shame himself by granting her undeserved mercy. The woman took her own life to spare the Unconquered Sun either agony or shame, at which point Prince Laashe drank her soul and displayed it as a radiance about him. In so doing, he became a figure the Unconquered Sun could not raise hand against, and beat and reviled the heartbroken god before the eyes of Heaven.

It was only through Luna's intercession, wearing the face of the sun's lover, that the Most High rallied and cast Laashe out of Heaven, out of Creation, out of the Wyld. There came Luna, hunting with footsteps like drumbeats, and tore the soul of the woman out of Prince Laashe. She left him banished to a place beyond even that which is beyond the world, where he remains today.

The maddest and holiest of Fair Folk oracles speak of **Lady Zalat of the Galliard of Hours**. This is the substance of their sermons: In the future, at the final destruction of Creation, Lady Zalat will cast down the machinery of time and so will become ishvara, scattering herself into every liberated moment of history,

past and future. As such, she must already exist in the present, working to bring about the conditions of her own future victory and ascension. Followers of Zalat quest for evidence of her activity to confirm the truth of her legend and assist her in realizing her creation of herself.

The raksha **Niaza**, who wears the shape of a beautiful and hateful naga, is not ishvara, but seeks to become so. She has learned to consume memories, drawing from them strength and secrets. She conspires with the dreaded Lintha family; they believe Niaza has found a way to consume the human impurity which taints the family's bloodline, returning them to their ancient strength, when they were masters of the sea in the time before the First Age of Man. In truth, Niaza seeks to follow their racial memories down to the root of their blood, when they were spawned by one of the Ancients who made the world. By drinking at the font of that primal genesis, she hopes to steal that world-maker's power for herself.

The Grave and Beyond

All mortal men know death, but few truly understand it.

It is almost universally understood that souls reincarnate. The Immaculate Philosophy teaches that souls are weighed by Heaven according to their deeds in life and rewarded or punished—sometimes both—by the cycle of reincarnation. The goal of all souls, the Philosophy maintains, should be to escape the cycle of reincarnation through achieving spiritual perfection and becoming one with the Elemental Dragons.

In lands beyond the shores of the Blessed Isle, other beliefs abound. The Dune People of the great Southern desert hold that the memories of reincarnated souls are forged into glorious arms and armor by the gods, with which to fight a great battle at the end of time. The theomilitary of Ixcoatli teaches that Heaven weighs the virtue and excellence of each soul during the cycle of reincarnation, and that the souls of the greatest of heroes are removed from the cycle to become new divinities. The ancestor cult of Medo believes that reincarnation represents a second chance for the weak of spirit to live, learn, and become strong; dutiful and stalwart souls, by contrast, resist the pull of reincarnation, lingering in the world to advise and protect their living relatives. The people of the Skullstone Archipelago have made an aristocracy of the dead, to whose ranks the most accomplished among the living ascend through ritual suicide.

The Restless Dead

The cycle of reincarnation is imperfect. Some souls linger, refusing to pass on, chained to the living world by unresolved passions. Sometimes they're held back by bonds of dark magic. Sometimes they're simply caught on the fractured boundary of the land of the living and the land of the dead. Some are drawn to places whose existence has no place in the doctrine of the Immaculate Philosophy. These tarrying shades are known as ghosts, and the dark lands where they linger, the Underworld.

Ghosts come in a great diversity of forms, depending on the circumstances of their death, their fortunes in the Underworld, their lingering ties to the living world, and the strength of their will and spirit. The simplest restless shades are little more than repetitive echoes, anchored to Creation by a single inescapable memory or moment. They can rarely perceive the living, or even other ghosts, as they go again and again through the motions of their obsession. Stronger

ghosts may be nearly as complex as a living person, with plans and passions to carry them through their lingering afterlife.

Others shades are little more than beasts; the most common of these are known as hungry ghosts. They are the lower, animal elements of the soul, turned vicious and feral by improper treatment of their mortal remains. Funerary practices are of vital importance to all cultures because of the threat posed by such restless spirits; it's traditional for funerists to accompany armies on the march, lest the hungry ghosts of enemy soldiers left to rot on the field rise up and feast on their conquerors in the night.

Different sorts of lingering shades are subject to different rules governing their behavior, though none know what hand scribed these laws or why. Hungry ghosts, for example, must sleep away the day within their corpses or be destroyed by the touch of the sun, while all ghosts find the touch of salt repellent and the scent of living blood intoxicating.

Most ghosts ultimately have little more than their passions to sustain them. The dead yearn for the experience of being alive, but don't feel things in the same way they did when they lived. Still, they try; they throw themselves into passion plays in infinite variations, and if they cannot recapture the rich emotional palette of being alive, they can at least sip individually at its flavors: love, rage, and the bitter sting of betrayal may all be equally nourishing to different ghosts; each has its needs and desires. For all but the most self-aware and strong-willed of ghosts, sating these hungers comes above all else, though the means used to do so may be very sophisticated indeed.

Sometimes truly bizarre ghosts wander up from the depths of the Underworld, creatures that have been dead so long they have forgotten even the shape of their lost humanity; savants speculate that some may never have been human at all. When cannibal fogs roll across the hills, when raven-winged shadows gather on roofs and windowsills to steal dreams and sight from those sleeping within, when angry shades haul their corpses up on puppeteer-strings of necrotic Essence and force them to walk and kill—this is when exorcists are called to their work.

The Underworld

The Underworld is a great confluence of dead waterways. It teems with oceans of void and rivers of darkness, flowing ever away from Creation, carrying souls and memories into its depths… perhaps to reincarnation, but all too often, simply *away*. These tempest-wracked seas and torrents of anti-light divide the strange islets that make up the landscape of the Underworld—a multitude of paradises, purgatories, and stranger afterlives where the restless dead tarry, pinned by passion, trauma, slavery, or happenstance.

The abode of ghosts is an inauspicious place, by turns bleak as a bare skull or flush with heart-wounding beauty. Strange stars wind through a sunless sky (where there is a sky at all), turned by the massed force of the prayers of the dead. Mortals fear to venture here while still possessed of their blood and breath; to travel abroad between the isles of the Underworld is perilous even for the shades that dwell there, and vastly more so for the living. The ancient dead are envious of their blood and breath, and rest in the Underworld offers little renewal of mind or spirit.

Many ghosts seek passage back into the world of sun and flesh, either to fulfill their frustrated passions or to carry out the business of the lords of the dead; the Underworld is a land of many kings and riches beyond counting, and so the dead are never without ambitions or temptations.

The Ancestor Cult

The Immaculate Philosophy forbids contact between mortals and the dead; to linger as a shade is inauspicious and improper, and contact with such beings, the Immaculate Order maintains, can do nothing but pollute a mortal's spiritual health.

Still, the ancestor cult flourishes in the lands beyond the borders of the Realm, where the Immaculate Philosophy's hold is uncertain or altogether absent. Mortals there need supernatural patronage to protect them from the dangers of predators, disease, disaster, greedy neighbors, and malicious gods and fae; in the end, they often turn to their own dead to provide this support. It's unusual for a ghost to be as individually potent as a god, or as easily able to reach his living descendants, but what the dead lack in raw strength they make up for in numbers and familiarity. Where the Hundred Gods Heresy flourishes, an entire village is likely to worship the same upstart god; but in ancestor cults, most families maintain their own shrine and propitiate their own familial spirits.

The dead may be able to offer up small blessings, knowledge from beyond the grave, or strange treasures smuggled out of the depths of the Underworld. In return they demand veneration—care and maintenance of their graves and shrines and frequent prayer to fortify them in the Underworld are the normal foundation of any ancestor cult, with more particular favors for the living being solicited with the spilling of blood, or the burning or burying of tokens pleasing to the dead. Lavish funerals are the norm in areas dominated by ancestor cults, the better to arm the dead to later aid the living.

Fear of the ancestor cult isn't merely a matter of Immaculate propaganda. Ghosts are creatures driven by desire and passion, and lack for restraint. For every spirit motivated by love for those left behind, there is an ancient family matriarch willing to drive her descendants into poverty or worse to advance her status among the dead. Ghosts are often unreasonable, demanding, and vicious when they feel slighted—and the greater the congress between living and dead, the more easily a shadowland can flower should the proper circumstances present themselves. Shadowlands are almost always dominated by the ancestor cult, and the dead are usually the controlling members of that relationship.

Shadowlands

Perhaps there was once a time when death was the only means of passage between the lands of the living and the dead. If so, that time was long ago; the Underworld resides close by Creation in the Second Age, and where too many souls have passed into the lands below too quickly, or where the living world has been scarred by sufficient atrocity, the Underworld may bleed up into the sunlit world. These places, where death and life commingle, are known as shadowlands.

The topography of a shadowland is fundamentally the same as before falling into the embrace of the Underworld, at least at first. The course of rivers remains the same; the same hills and mountains continue to jut up from the land; the same roads lead from village to village, passing the same landmarks. But the Underworld leaves its mark upon all these things. Many wild animals will leave a shadowland, if they can; game animals are difficult to come by, while spiders, rats, and raitons thrive. Domestic animals eventually become listless and wan, or sleek and hungry. The people of shadowlands are often pale, and may take ill easily; in a shadowland it seems easier to let go of life.

Colors leech out over a span of decades, or become flush and violent in their intensity. Storms are unusually savage; those blown in from the Underworld may carry with them drops of blood,

mercury, or salty tears. Strange and winding designs impress themselves upon stones as generations go by, while boards and buildings stretch high and narrow and queer. The flavors of food grown in shadowland soil are often strange and bitter, or oddly intoxicating. The crops and goods of shadowlands are disturbing and distasteful to many, but some collectors, artisans, and exotic gourmands will pay high prices for the exports of lands touched by the Underworld, particularly if the mixing of boundaries produces some prodigy that may be obtained nowhere else.

The borders of shadowlands are frayed and unstable places. Crossing the boundary by day takes the traveler away from the shadow of the grave and into the lands of the living. By night, the borders of a shadowland lead out into the dark vistas of the Underworld.

Most importantly, shadowlands permit the dead to walk among the living—to speak, and touch, and do more than touch. By night, ghosts are as solid as mortals, though few could be mistaken for such. In most shadowlands, ghosts fade away with the rising of the sun, unable to be seen, heard, or touched by the living; in older or stronger shadowlands, the dead only fade away when sunlight falls directly upon them, and retire to windowless ancestor houses during the day. In either case, they return to full solidity with the coming of night.

The Deathlords

The Underworld is split up into countless dead dominions, many ruled over by ghostly princes, emperors, and generals from nations and armies long gone to dust. But the greatest number, by far, are controlled by a group of ancient and mysterious sorcerer-kings known as the Deathlords.

Ghosts know better than to speak openly of the lords of shadow—the Deathlords know their business and see no need for others to do so—but when they believe themselves secluded in the echoing darkness of the Underworld, the dead whisper. They whisper that no two Deathlords are alike, that some are gleaming alabaster angels with wings or cloaks of knife-edged steel and inscrutable tragedy-masks, while others shroud themselves completely in invincible soulsteel armor, or bare lovely ivory flesh that is the stuff of desire itself. They whisper that the Deathlords have sworn themselves to dead gods rotting forever at heart of a vast Labyrinth which winds beneath the Underworld, at the point where all rivers of oblivion converge. They whisper that the Deathlords feed the souls of those that anger them to these nightmare beings, and that their glittering chalcedony citadels are pushed up from the earth when the dead gods reach through the substrata of the Underworld to grasp at these offerings. Of the identities of the Deathlords before their demise, the dead are utterly silent—or are made silent.

The Deathlords perpetually fight among themselves, winding out long games of conquest, assassination, aggression, alliance, and betrayal. So it is that the dead are split into many shifting empires of bone and steel, rather than a singular engine that might be turned against the living.

Until recently, few living individuals had even heard of the Deathlords. Those that had regular contact with the dead knew the Deathlords as dark legends and dire rumors—ancient witch-kings of enormous power, ruling over the black and silent kingdoms of the dead. That changed four years ago, when the Mask of Winters led his bleak army to conquer the living city of Thorns.

> The Fall of Thorns
>
> Situated at the edge of the Scavenger Lands, Thorns is a proud, wealthy, and ancient city. It has been a lynchpin of regional trade and travel for centuries. The

city's beautiful architecture is widely held as a marvel of Second Age achievement. Thorns paid tribute to the Realm for better than twenty generations, and has served as the Scarlet Empress's largest and closest military outpost to the raw anarchy of the Scavenger Lands.

In RY 764, the year after the Empress vanished, Thorns fell to the dead.

The Mask of Winters advanced on the city at the head of an army of zombies and mercenaries, riding atop the back of the terrible and forgotten abomination known as Juggernaut. Juggernaut was a fearsome behemoth slain in the forgotten epochs of the First Age—a terror with fists the size of hills, the bulk of its flesh like a city wrought in muscle and sinew. The Deathlord found the behemoth's ancient corpse and enslaved it through unimaginably potent sorceries, raised his citadel upon its rotting back, then set it crawling toward the city.

The Dragon-Blooded of the Thorns garrison rode forth to confront the Deathlord's forces, only to be cut down in the space of an hour by the Abyssal Exalted who emerged from the corpse-fortress's shadow. This was Creation's first introduction to Death's Lawgivers.

The Mask of Winters could have conquered the city that same day: Juggernaut could have easily pulled down the walls, and the Abyssal Exalted gone reaving through the streets. Instead he settled in to siege. He sent rats to eat the city's food, and sickness to taint its air. As the people starved, he released pigs into the streets; the skeletons of those who ate of their cursed flesh died, and tore their way out from the screaming bodies encasing them. In the end, he made the people of Thorns open their own gates and invite him inside. He made them beg him to deliver them from the horrors he had brought.

The Mask of Winters was glad to oblige. Thorns is now the center of a new, swiftly-growing shadowland, and the capital of the Deathlord's nascent empire. His hungry and impatient eyes now settle upon the River Province to the north.

It's not clear how many ancient spirits number among the ranks of the Deathlords. The wildest rumors say that their numbers are legion; or that there are truly only two, playing out an eternal war from behind many masks, catspaws, and false identities. Most who concern themselves with the matter of the Deathlords suspect there are more than five but fewer than a score of these most ancient and potent beings. Ultimately, only the Deathlords themselves can say for certain. The following are a few of the more openly active and widely-known Deathlords:

• **The Mask of Winters** was a name unknown to the living and obscure among the dead until recently. For uncounted centuries, he commanded the fearful loyalty of a handful of remote dominions in the sunless lands, while he personally explored the most dangerous and obscure reaches of the Underworld—what he sought, no one knew. When he marched on Thorns wielding fearsome sorcery and the resurrected corpse-fortress Juggernaut, the scope of his ambitions became clear. Because of the Mask of Winters, the threat of the Deathlords is now on the minds of princes and generals throughout much of Creation. His fellow Deathlords resent his boldness, and move to frustrate his ambitions out of spite. His arrival has cast a pall of fear across the Scavenger Lands; while many nations and city-states brace for war, others seek alliance with the Mask of Winters, hoping to avoid his charnel march.

• **The Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears** claims many of the North's enormous shadowlands for herself. The Lover is a being of impossible alabaster beauty, of frustrated passions quenched at last, and lifelong loneliness answered—for a time. Under her influence, those who die in the North with great and unfulfilled passions find their souls bound to the living world, denied both reincarnation and the darkness of the Underworld. These tangible shades, known as the Loveless, wander the North in search of the warm comfort of life. By preference they seek out living paramours, exhausting their vitality one night at a time; denied such willing relief, they become feral cannibals, finding solace in living blood. The Lover opens her domains to those with nowhere else to go—the heartsick, lonely, and lost—and so the hollow husks of those who willingly go into the Lover's arms are a common sight in the North. Their eyes are dull and empty, their faces slack; they have seen and experienced such things that life and living have nothing more to offer them.

• **The Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water** rules as the eternal monarch of the Skullstone Archipelago, a series of Western isles covered by an ancient shadowland. He teaches that life is merely a preparatory period before the exaltation of death, and this belief is the foundation of his nation's religion and culture. The Bodhisattva is a canny trader, salvager, diplomat, admiral, and administrator; his wealth shames that of any other Western nation. He has expanded his territory for centuries, slowly but steadily, preferring to enmesh his neighbors in complex webs of debt, favors, and mutual oaths before moving to annex them once they inevitably break faith in some way. Since the disappearance of the Empress, his black fleet has become more active and daring, ranging farther abroad and deeper into the territorial waters of other Western powers.

Behemoths

A creature the size of a fortress and made up of equal parts batrachian nightmare and simian brute batters down the wall of an ancient city, its defenders powerless to even slow the beast's advance. It crushes the buildings and besieged populace in a rage; when its fury is spent, it digs a hollow in the city center and lays its enormous bulk down to sleep for months, before awakening to rampage again. A hideous mockery of a man stalks his prey across Creation, devouring their strength and growing stronger, the prototype for every predator to ever walk the face of the earth. A beshelled, piscine titan floats about the Western seas, until it grows hungry, at which time it devours whole ships and island populations in a feeding frenzy, turning the sea red with the blood of its prey. These are behemoths, discarded by the ancient world-makers who created them, immortal half-formed prototypes of the later life that would walk the face of Creation, often cast into the Wyld by the First Age Solar Exalted, and now massive threats to anything that crosses their paths.

Properly, behemoths are the byblows of a Creation that never happened, and include living mountains which prowl continents, an adamic man of clay meant to be the progenitor of the human race, and strange blind worms the length of a Guild caravan with a thousand heads. Each of these creatures is nearly indestructible, and its motives and drives are nonsensical or incomprehensible to mortal or Exalted. As is difficult for the average person to inquire into the origins of the walking nightmare devouring their family or destroying their city, the word "behemoth" is often also misapplied to living nightmares from the Wyld, or monstrous entities which fit no other description, such as the ghosts of behemoths slain by Solar Exalted in the First Age; strange, city-sized automata buried deep under the earth and prowling ancient caverns where the sun has never shone; First Age war-machines built by the Solar Exalted and which no

modern mind can comprehend or stop; and ancient cannibal gods cast out of Heaven with the overthrow of the enemies of the gods.

The sheer killing power and near-invulnerability of a behemoth gives even the most potent Exalt pause, and head-to-head clashes often end in the destruction of whatever chose to stand in the face of these ancient terrors. The clever often try to redirect the behemoth, rather than actually confront it, but even this is difficult, because many behemoths operate on a scale in which humanity is a mere trifle. Would an Exalt notice if a bee tried to turn him away from a hive, after all? Even the behemoths which are man-sized or smaller, of which there are a handful, are incredibly dangerous, with potent defenses and the same near unbreakable will and flesh.

Echoing Breath flinched at the cold splash of plasmic Essence across her cheek. It felt like icy mist, penetrating the leather of her cowl. Spectral armor splintering, the hungry ghost dissolved. Winter fog rushed to take its place.

“Five down,” she whispered. She shook the ice from her thin, bone-white blades. “Is that all?”

Heavy boots crunched through stale snow as she trudged across the frozen pond. The black bones of bare elms crowded close. Here and there, pale arms jutted from the ice, a few still grasping jade weapons. They need to be burned. Or the ghosts will rise. The blood was sluggish in her veins, breath hard won for ragged lungs. Her throat rattled in the silence. Her scarred neck ached. The Liminal pulled the cowl over her face, drawing deeper from the air around her. Half-formed visions sparked in her mind like a guttering flame—the elms lush, the pond sweet, the fields ripe, the dragons on the hunt, riding for glory. Yes, there had been five Dragon-Blooded, all armed to the teeth. Now here they lay. The villagers had abandoned the fields and spread tales of their ghosts. The tales had drawn a hunter equally terrible.

“It’s just you and me now,” Echo whispered into the fog, raising her blades.

The trees were moaning, branches cracking against each other. Her pace was silent and inexorable. Her final target would be lurking at the twisted feet of a naked elder tree, she knew—not only because she could smell it in the fetid air, but because she remembered. The heavy mist parted like a shroud, and Echo could see beyond to the sudden thread of gold in the mist—a magnificent weapon of solid sunlight. A building growl snatched her attention, and a hunched figure came prowling from the gnarled roots of the elder tree.

Echoing Breath flexed her sword hands. Her fingers were stiff and black with cold, but there was no time to scavenge new ones. The ghost started, its movements disjointed, a blur of gray light where its head should be. Degenerate power prickled the breath in Echo’s throat. Her scars began aching again.

A guttural sound, a flash—Echo’s daiklaves scraped against the shaft of a ghostly direlance, her shoulder grazed and stinging. The po howled, its strangled voice uncoiling from a missing neck, the formless mist of its face rearranging itself in more and more nightmarish configurations. The Liminal attacked, but her foe was unnaturally fast, even wielding a pale fraction of the power it held in life . The dreadful lance struck again and again, driving her back. Echo’s body was threadbare from pursuing the dead hunters, her bone-white daiklaves only just parrying the ghost’s onslaught. But her breath was even and the gloom flexed in time with her lungs, which now began to pump.

The po screamed and raised the shadow lance for the final blow. Echoing Breath reached deep between the folds of Creation and the Underworld, her exhalations mingling with the numbing promise of lethe, and thrust her blades. The lance tore into her shoulder, splitting flesh from bone, tearing away the cowl. Echo felt a killing cold ripping at her bare face. A scream rang through the winter night.

The trembling po sank to the hilts of her daiklaves. Its head solidified, briefly, nose to nose with her. Their faces were perfect mirrors. The ghost raked feeble claws against the Liminal’s neck, mouth gaping soundlessly.

“You must move on.” She breathed deep and twisted the blades, drawing the ghost toward lethe. “You must go.”

It melted into the mist, a look of repose on its remembered face. Echo shuddered, wrapped her wounded shoulder, and replaced the cowl. The foreign memories of green elms and golden fields lifted with the fog, drifting away on her breath.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

Whether you're beginning your first **Exalted** game or your hundredth, your first step is to create a protagonist for your chronicle. As the game progresses, you'll guide your character through the adventures that await her, deciding how she shapes and is shaped by the world. This chapter will help you create a lifelike, intriguing persona worthy of the title "Exalted."

Preparation

Before you begin, ask your Storyteller about her plans—will her crew of heroes brave the pirate-infested waters of Coral? Will they hunt death-sworn traitors in Whitewall? It's also a good idea to talk with your fellow players, and ask them about their character ideas. Getting a feel for the group's intended tone, setting, and goals for the game will help you make a hero everyone will enjoy playing alongside.

If you're new to **Exalted**—or to tabletop roleplaying in general—it might be a little intimidating to create your first character. Here are some tips to help get into the right mindset.

Think Larger Than Life

The Solar Exalted take cues from mythic heroes, but that doesn't mean you have to limit yourself to mythological sources. Exalted draws on many forms of media, ranging from pulp fantasy novels to modern anime—anything that tells an epic, sweeping story can serve as inspiration. Think of the larger-than-life heroes you enjoy. What passions drive them? How do they impact the world around them? What are their goals, and what sacrifices do they make to reach them? Thinking about questions like these can help you figure out what aspects of these characters you'd like to explore at your gaming table.

Additionally, you might want to consider the sorts of epic feats you want your character to perform. Do you want to deduce the methods and motives of a murder after a brief glance at a blood-soaked alleyway? Would you like to infiltrate a satrap's palace, quiet as a shadow and twice as elusive? Do you want to give a sermon that moves the most hardened hearts to tears? If you're stuck for ideas, or if you just want a better grasp on the sorts of things the Exalted can do, you might want to look through the Charms chapter for ideas.

Put it in Words

Even if you have a solid idea, it might be daunting to translate into numbers on a character sheet. Try describing your concept verbally before you begin, to give you a better idea of your character's strengths and weaknesses.

Example: "Veiled Sunrise is lightning-quick, witty, charming, and devilishly handsome. He has few equals in the field of swordplay, and he excels at the sort of acrobatic stunts you'd expect from such a swashbuckler. However, his naiveté makes him trusting, and he's easy to manipulate."

A brief description like this will help you nail down the key parts of your character concept—things that should inform your decisions when assigning dots and selecting Merits and Charms.

Points and Dots

Exalted's mechanical backbone is the Storyteller system, which uses dot ratings and points to describe a character's skill and aptitude.

Dot ratings work something like the 1-5 star rating system used in book and movie reviews. In general, a rating of one dot is poor, a rating of two dots is average, a rating of three dots is above-average, a rating of four dots is exceptional, and a rating of five is masterful. Dot ratings above two are important, and dot ratings above three are key elements of a character's concept. Dot ratings are permanent, and typically only change with the expenditure of bonus points (p. XX) or experience points (p. XX)—though certain supernatural effects may provide a temporary penalty or bonus.

Points, on the other hand, measure your character's available resources, such as his reserves of mental fortitude or the numinous energies that power his Charms. Your character spends points when the circumstances dictate—such as when he employs a Charm to guide his aim in combat, or when he shrugs off the magical wiles of one of the Fair Folk. Once spent, points may be regained through specific means. All of these traits are explained in greater detail in Chapter Four.

> What about other Exalts?
>
> The rules in this chapter will show you how to create one of the Solar Exalted, a long-lost champion returned to reclaim his ancient birthrights. Future supplements will give you all the rules you need to play the other types of Exalted described in Chapter One.

Step 1: Concept and Caste

Take some time to think of heroic archetypes you enjoy, and thumb through the setting information in Chapter Two to see what jumps out at you. Would you like to play a prideful swordsman, a silver-tongued spy, a scholar of forbidden lore? What corner of Creation does your character call home? The world is vast, but sometimes the Exalted have reason to venture to its farthest reaches; if your character is from another part of the world, why is she here? You should also sketch out your character's personality. What would she be like if you sat down to talk to her? Whom does she call family, friend, or enemy? Once you've thought all this out, try to boil it down to a few informative sentences—a sort of capsule description of your character.

Once you've got a solid concept, pick the Caste that suits it best. Some concepts can easily fall under more than one Caste, but keep in mind that your character's Caste is as much a measure of her methods as it is her strengths. Each Solar is chosen for her Caste because it fits her, one way or another. Chapter Four explains the five Solar Castes in full detail.

Step 2: Attributes

Once you have your concept, it's time to flesh it out with numbers. Attributes represent raw potential before skill and training come into play—grace, force of personality, and intellect, among other things. **Exalted** divides Attributes into three categories—Physical, Social, and Mental—and few heroes develop all of them in equal measure. Pick the category that's most important to your concept, and mark it down as primary. Next, pick the category that's slightly less integral, but still important, and mark it down as secondary. The remaining category

becomes tertiary. Each Attribute begins with one free dot. From there, distribute eight dots among your character's primary Attributes, six dots among your character's secondary Attributes, and four dots among your character's tertiary Attributes.

While distributing Attribute dots, keep in mind that a rating of two dots is average, and a rating of five dots is the pinnacle of human development. Solars may not start with more than five dots in any Attribute, nor can they raise an Attribute above five dots during play. Don't be afraid to play against type if it fits your concept—many Dawns have primary Physical Attributes, but your Dawn could just as easily be a genius scholar-tactician with primary Mental Attributes. Your ratings should make sense for your character concept, as well. Keep in mind that a rating of one dot is as significant as a rating of five dots, and that poor ratings can provide as many opportunities for character development as excellent ones.

Step 3: Abilities

Abilities measure a character's knowledge, training, and skill. As paragons of human endeavor, the Solars possess remarkable depth and breadth of competence, represented by Caste and Favored Abilities. Your character's Caste Abilities are the skills and talents that led to her Exaltation as a member of her Caste. Traditionally, each Caste has a wide range of duties, and few Lawgivers—especially freshly-Chosen ones—show talent in all of them. Find your character's Caste on the list below, and pick five associated Abilities. These are her Caste Abilities.

• **Dawn:** Archery, Awareness, Brawl (and Martial Arts), Dodge, Melee, Resistance, Thrown, War

• **Zenith:** Athletics, Integrity, Performance, Lore, Presence, Resistance, Survival, War

• **Twilight:** Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore, Medicine, Occult

• **Night:** Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Investigation, Larceny, Ride, Stealth, Socialize

• **Eclipse:** Bureaucracy, Larceny, Linguistics, Occult, Presence, Ride, Sail, Socialize

Now, pick five Favored Abilities. These Abilities represent skills and talents that don't necessarily fall within the duties of her Caste. A demon-hunting Night Caste might favor Occult thanks to his knowledge of the signs and portents that herald the arrival of demons in Creation. If you want, you can select some Favored Abilities from your Caste's Ability list, but you can't take the same Ability as both Caste and Favored. **Your choice of Caste and Favored Abilities is important to your character's development—it's less expensive to improve selected Abilities, and to learn Charms associated with them.**

Once you've picked your Caste and Favored Abilities, select one of your chosen Caste Abilities to be your Supernal Ability. Your Supernal Ability is the emblem of your character's legend, the thing she is the very best at. You have an easier time learning powerful Charms with your Supernal Ability than any other Ability— **Charms in your Supernal Ability treat your Essence rating as 5 for the purpose of meeting the prerequisites to purchase and upgrade them**, allowing you early access to very powerful Charms in that Ability.

Note: The Martial Arts Ability cannot be chosen as Caste or Favored—instead, any character with Brawl as a chosen Caste or Favored Ability treats Martial Arts as Caste or Favored as well. A player may choose Brawl or Martial Arts as her Dawn Caste character's Supernal Ability, but applies the benefits of that choice only to one or the other. Also, characters with Martial Arts dots

must possess the Martial Artist Merit (p. XX) —see the description of Martial Arts as a skill on page XX and also Chapter Seven for more information.

Once you've selected Caste, Favored, and Supernal Abilities, divide twenty-eight dots among your Abilities. **Each Ability starts with zero dots, and no Ability may be raised above three dots without spending bonus points.** You can't begin play with more than five dots in any one Ability, nor may an Ability be raised above five dots during play. **Favored Abilities must have a rating of at least one dot**—if your character isn't any good at them, they're hardly Favored! Zero dots in an Ability means that your character has no skill in that field, which is hardly a black mark against her—the Exalted have strengths and weaknesses, just as mortals do. One dot means your character's a beginner, two dots means she's competent, and five dots means she's at the pinnacle of human endeavor. As with her Attributes, you should explain any of her Abilities rated at three or more dots. Did your character train under a great master to achieve her five-dot rating in Melee, or is she a self-taught martial genius?

Lastly, choose four *Specialties* for your character. Specialties describe specific focus within an Ability.

Final tip: If your character is going to have any dots in non-Caste, non-Favored Abilities, it's best to buy them right now, rather than later when you're customizing your character with bonus points. Caste and Favored Abilities are *much* cheaper to buy with bonus points.

> Specialties
>
> Abilities represent broad knowledge of a given field, but few people go through life without acquiring unique talents and special interests. In **Exalted**, these areas of expertise are referred to as Specialties, and come into play when your character has a chance to benefit from his special talent. Each Specialty is attached to a specific Ability. When you make a roll with an Ability with an associated Specialty, you can add one die to that roll—if you can justify why your character's training gives him an edge.
>
> Specialties can be as broad or narrow as you like, but there must be notable situations where they can't apply. Melee (Swords) is perfectly acceptable, but Melee (While Armed) or (While Breathing) are not. Sure, your character can try and keep fighting while asphyxiating, or literally have his breath stolen by a Sidereal attacker, but those are edge cases. The Storyteller has the final say in whether or not a Specialty is acceptable.
>
> Only one Specialty can apply to a single roll, even if your character has more than one that could be useful—if your character is trying to carve an insult into his foe's flesh and has both Melee (Swords) and Melee (Humiliate Opponents), he could apply one or the other, but not both.
>
> You can buy as many Specialties for your character as you want, but you can't purchase Specialties for Abilities rated at zero dots.

Step 4: Merits

Merits represent a character's assets and quirks, encompassing everything from vaults full of gold to a stomach that can handle all but the most rancid food and drink. As with Attributes and Abilities, Merits are rated from one to five dots—some of them can be improved during play,

while others cannot. For example, a Solar might gain the adoration and worship of a small village (Cult •), and work at spreading her faith until the whole region venerates her (Cult •••). On the other hand, a character of enormous stature (Giant ••••) can't work to become *even taller* over time.

When selecting Merits, keep in mind that some of them—namely, those tied to other characters, objects, and organizations—might wax and wane as the story progresses. Your character might brave the demonic guardians of a former life's tomb to recover his long-lost daiklave, gaining the weapon as an Artifact •••. Your character's Cult ••• might be targeted by the worshipers of a jealous god, becoming a Cult •• as the faithful are killed or forced to forswear their Solar patron. For more information on Merits in play, see page XX.

Assign up to ten dots to your character's Merits. As with other traits, Merits can shape your character's background and circumstances, and they can also be consequences of your character's past. Be sure to tie them into your overall concept. Did your character earn his Ally through a previous act of selflessness? Has being Hideous shaped the way she sees others?

Step 5: Charms

A Solar's Charms are natural expressions of her heroic legend, powered by the very Essence of Creation. Think about the sort of feats your character's skill can make possible. Can he run for miles without tiring? Can he shoot a diving swallow at a hundred yards? Once you've got a mental picture of your character's legend, pick out fifteen suitable Charms, keeping in mind that each has prerequisites of enlightenment and skill. Don't be afraid to rearrange your Ability dots if your character doesn't qualify for a Charm that would liven up his concept!

If you took the Artifact Merit and selected an artifact with Evocations, you can select those as well, trading in one starting Charm per Evocation desired. Keep in mind the artifact's history, legend, and ultimate purpose—its powers should make just as much sense for its legend as a Solar's Charms do for theirs. See pages XX-XX for more information on Evocations.

The same principle applies to martial arts and sorcery (see Chapter Six). **You can begin with Martial Arts Charms and sorcerous spells (assuming your character has the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Charm—see p. XX), trading them for starting Solar Charms on a one-for-one basis.**

Step 6: Intimacies and Limit Trigger

Intimacies describe the important parts of your character's life, from long-held beliefs to feelings toward loved ones or mortal enemies. For more information on Intimacies, see page XX. Unlike other traits, there's no limit to how many Intimacies your character can start with. You *must* start with a minimum of at least four Intimacies, of which at least one must be Defining, one must be Major, one must be in some way negative (a thing the character opposes or dislikes), and one must be positive (a thing the character supports or likes).

Additionally, all Solar Exalted labor under a Great Curse spoken by the enemies of the gods as the Exalted slew them. As a result, your character has a Limit Trigger, a circumstance in which the lingering curse of the dead ancients may rise to trouble him. Select a Limit Trigger from the choices on page XX or work with your Storyteller to design your own.

Step 7: Bonus Points

You have 15 bonus points to spend on anything that makes sense for your concept. Bonus points can purchase almost any trait, but different traits have different costs.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Trait	Cost
Primary or Secondary Attribute	4 per dot
Tertiary Attribute	3 per dot
Caste/Favored Ability	1 per dot
Non-Caste/Favored Ability	2 per dot
Specialty	1
Merits	1 per dot
Caste/Favored Charm	4
Non-Caste/Favored Charm	5
Spell (Occult Caste/Favored)	4
Spell (Occult non-Caste/Favored)	5
Evocation	4
Willpower	2 per dot

[END TABLE]

Bonus points grant you flexibility to match your concept. If you don't have a solid idea of what you want to spend bonus points on, it's generally most cost-effective to use them to raise Caste and Favored Abilities; new powers such as Charms and spells give the lowest return-on-investment. Tertiary Attributes are a little bit cheaper to buy up than primary or secondary Attributes to make it easier to shore up unwanted shortcomings in your character. Finally, Merits are very affordable so you won't feel pressured to cut out parts of your character concept in order to meet a point budget.

Note: You're allowed to spend bonus points at *any time* during character creation. For example, if you want to buy a Charm during Step 5 but don't have a high enough Ability rating, you can go ahead and spend bonus points to bump up the Ability then and there.

Step 8: Finishing Touches

You're almost done! Only a few fields remain to be filled in. All Solars start play with a default Essence rating of one dot, a default Willpower rating of five dots, and seven Health Levels (-0, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, and Incapacitated). A Solar's pool of Personal Essence is ([Essence x 3] + 10), while their Peripheral Essence pool is ([Essence x 7] + 26). These traits are explained in further detail in Chapter Four.

> Everyday Heroes: Playing Mortals
>
> Though they lack the might of the chosen, mortal heroes have their own stories to tell. If you're new to Storytelling, you might want to get your feet wet by running a game where everyone plays a mortal. Alternately, you might want to run a

chronicle where your players' characters start off mortal and Exalt during play. Creating a mortal is similar to creating one of the Chosen:

Step 1: Concept. Think of a compelling character concept, and flesh it out with history, goals, and dreams. Figure out what your character's life is like, and what led him to take part in your Storyteller's chronicle. Mortal characters have no Castes.

Step 2: Attributes. Select primary, secondary, and tertiary Attribute categories. Assign 6 dots to your character's primary Attributes, 4 dots to his secondary Attributes, and 3 dots to his tertiary Attributes.

Step 3: Abilities. Divide twenty-eight dots among your character's Abilities. Mortal characters don't get Caste, Favored, or Supernal Abilities.

Step 4: Merits. Spend seven dots on Merits.

Step 5: Intimacies. Select your character's Intimacies. Mortal characters do not suffer under the Great Curse, and have no Limit Trigger.

Step 6: Finishing Touches. Mortal heroes begin play with a default Willpower rating of 3 dots, 7 health levels (-0, -1, -1, -2, -2, 4, Incapacitated), an Essence rating of 1, and no Essence pool. Spend 21 bonus points, using the same chart as for the Solar Exalted.

To convert a mortal hero into one of the Solar Exalted during play, select the Caste that best fits the character's concept and skills. Assign Caste, Favored, and Supernal Abilities as normal, keeping in mind his existing Ability ratings and previous development in play. Each Favored Ability must possess at least one dot. Select ten Charms that your character qualifies for. Choose your character's Limit trigger and calculate his Essence pools. At the end of the current story, add five more free Charms and two dots of Willpower, and assign two dots among Primary Attributes, one dot among Secondary Attributes, and one dot among Tertiary Attributes.

Things to Think About

Each Exalt was a human being before he was Chosen, and he remains so after Exaltation. Being Chosen doesn't make anyone perfect—as powerful as they are, newborn Solars have nothing to guide them except the moral codes instilled in them during their mortal lives and perhaps a few cryptic words from the Unconquered Sun. Think about your character's past and what he was like before his Exaltation. How did he see the world? How did he treat other people? How did other people treat him? Who were his allies, enemies, friends, and loved ones? What kind of culture did he grow up in? What was his station in society? What faiths and philosophies did his people follow? What other influences played a role in his life? No one is an island, least of all one of the Exalted.

Exaltation changes a person's life forever, and as with any life-changing event, it can have dramatic effects on that person's worldview. How does your character feel about his Exaltation, his divine patron, the fact that many see him as a dangerous Anathema? In what ways has his Second Breath changed him? What sort of future does he see for himself?

Been in the Sun for a While: Experienced Solars

Default character generation is designed to create Solars who've been Exalted for less than a year. As a Storyteller, you might want to run a chronicle where the characters start off with the first steps of their heroic careers already behind them. Maybe they've already established a kingdom of their own, or maybe they've made a name for themselves traveling Creation. Creating an experienced Solar is identical to creating a standard one, except for the following differences:

• Assign 13 dots of Merits.

• Select 20 Charms.

• Your character starts with a base Essence rating of 2.

• Spend 18 Bonus Points.

Circles: Putting Things Together

Your Circle will travel together over the course of the game, fighting common foes and accomplishing great deeds. This requires you to cooperate with your fellow players—before the game starts, it's a good idea to hash out the role each character plays within the Circle, and decide which character (if anyone) is its leader. Does the Circle have a name? Does it have an agenda above and beyond those of its members? If so, what sort of agenda is it? If you're the Storyteller, you should consider whether you want your players to play out the formation of their Circle, or if the Circle existed prior to the start of play. If it's been around for a while, does it have any achievements under its belt?

How Not to Get Your Character Killed

The Solar Exalted fight assassins in nighted streets, duel wayward gods, and cross blades with the Wyld Hunt. If your Storyteller is planning on including any combat in his game, you should invest in Charms to help keep your character alive. It's wise to select at least one combat ability as Caste or Favored, as the experience discount makes it easier to buy defensive Charms. Ox-Body Technique (p. XX) is a solid choice, as the extra health levels it grants will help your character survive injury. Generally, 3-5 combat Charms should be sufficient to keep your Solar from dying at the hands of the first bandit gang to come along and permit her to stand up in the face of basic supernatural opposition.

[BEGIN TWO-PAGE SUMMARY]

Character Creation Summary

Step 1: Character Concept and Caste

• Consult with other players and come up with an appealing, heroic concept.

• Pick out the Caste that fits best, and note down its anima effects.

Step 2: Attributes

• Mark down one dot in each Ability.

• Prioritize Physical (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina), Social (Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance), and Mental (Perception, Intelligence, Wits) Attributes as primary, secondary, or tertiary.

• Divide 8 dots among primary Attributes, 6 dots among secondary Attributes, and 4 dots among tertiary Attributes.

Step 3: Abilities

• Select five Caste Abilities from the relevant list.

• Select five Favored Abilities, which may not be the same as Caste Abilities.

• Select one Supernal Ability from among the chosen Caste Abilities.

• Divide 28 dots among all Abilities. None may be raised higher than 3 without spending Bonus Points, and each Favored Ability must have at least one dot.

Step 4: Merits

• Spend up to 10 dots on Merits.

Step 5: Charms

• Select 15 Charms, keeping in mind their requirements.

Step 6: Intimacies and Limit Trigger

• Choose at least four Intimacies, including at least one Defining Intimacy, one Major Intimacy, one positive Intimacy, and one negative Intimacy.

Step 7: Bonus Points

Spend 15 Bonus Points.

Step 8: Finishing Touches

Record Essence rating (1), Personal Essence pool ([Essence x 3] + 10), Peripheral Essence pool ([Essence x 7] + 26), Health Levels (-0, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, Incapacitated), and Willpower (5).

Castes

• **Dawn:** Peerless warriors, armsmasters, and generals, who long ago led and championed the armies of the Exalted Host. Dawns are forged in the crucible of conflict, and were often soldiers, warriors, or tacticians before their Exaltation.

Caste Abilities: Archery, Awareness, Brawl/Martial Arts, Dodge, Melee, Resistance, Thrown, War

• **Zenith:** Priest-kings, prophets, and orators, who long ago ruled and inspired the people of the Old Realm. Zeniths are natural leaders, who shared a love of justice and righteousness whatever their calling.

Caste Abilities: Athletics, Integrity, Performance, Lore, Presence, Resistance, Survival, War

• **Twilight:** Scholars, craftspeople, and occultists, who long ago built great wonders and pushed back the edges of the unknown. Twilights are makers, thinkers, and doers, often endlessly curious about the world around them.

Caste Abilities: Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore, Medicine, Occult

• **Night:** Investigators, spies, and assassins who long ago kept the Old Realm safe from threats within and without. Nights are often masters of going unseen, and moving in the shadowy circles outside respectable society.

Caste Abilities: Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Investigation, Larceny, Ride, Stealth, Socialize

• **Eclipse:** Far-rangers, diplomats and bureaucrats, who long ago built the institutions of the Old Realm, and ensnared its enemies with nets of intrigue and cunning words. Eclipses are social creatures by nature, who take pride in forging bonds between groups of people.

Caste Abilities: Bureaucracy, Larceny, Linguistics, Occult, Presence, Ride, Sail, Socialize

Intimacies

• Ties: Relationships with people, places, objects, and other concrete parts of the world.

• Principles: Ideals and other intangible qualities that shape behavior and worldview.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Bonus Point Costs

Trait	**Cost**
Primary or secondary Attribute	4 per dot
Tertiary Attribute	3 per dot
Caste/Favored Ability	1 per dot
Non-Caste/Favored Ability	2 per dot
Specialty	1
Merits	1 per dot
Caste/Favored Charm	4
Non-Caste/Favored Charm	5
Spell (Occult Caste/Favored)	4
Spell (Occult non-Caste/Favored)	5
Evocation	4
Willpower	2 per dot

[END TABLE]

[END TWO-PAGE SUMMARY]

Example of Character Creation

Let's bring it all together. This is Otso's first time playing **Exalted**. He sits down with his Storyteller, cracks open the book, and after looking over the Solar Castes, decides he has an idea.

Step 1: Concept and Caste

Otso wants to play an assassin, a blade-for-hire who grew up on the street. His Storyteller wants to run a game set in the Scavenger Lands, and the cutthroat, dog-eat-dog culture of Nexus makes it a natural choice for his character's origin. Otso decides to make his character a Night Caste, as the most straightforward option seems best. He names the character Isthus Fithi, loosely adapted from Greek words meaning "shadow serpent". Before he gets started on his character's stats, Otso takes a moment to sketch out Isthus's background and personality.

Isthus doesn't remember his parents. He remembers sleeping in any place that could hide him, and fighting stray dogs and vagrants for his food. The one bright spot in his life was a kindly woman named Winter Plum, whom Isthus met when he was thirteen. She let him sleep in her cellar, and gave him what little food she could spare. Two years later, Isthus found her dead in an alley—a pair of thieves had killed her for her purse. Isthus scoured the alleys of Nexus for Winter Plum's killers, and slit their throats when they were lying in a drunken haze. Killing soon became his vocation.

It wasn't long before Isthus caught the eye of the Ten Scar Palm Society, a cartel of assassins and hired blades. They recruited him, trained him, and turned him loose on target after target. Cold, professional, and quietly traumatized, Isthus Fithi was the last person one would expect to have a crisis of conscience—but it happened anyway. A high-ranking official told the Ten Scar Palm to kill one of his rivals, a business partner who'd been "wasting" funds on charity. Isthus remembered Winter Plum. He couldn't bring himself to kill someone who'd shown kindness to people like him. He turned on the Ten Scar Palm, and in that moment felt the touch of the Unconquered Sun.

Step 2: Attributes

Otso thinks about Isthus's background as an assassin, as well as what he wants to be able to do in-game. He wants his character to be good at sneaking around and killing people, as well as competent in a straight-up fight—all of these rely heavily on the Physical Attributes, so Otso marks them down as primary. A good assassin also has to be observant and quick-witted, so Otso chooses the Mental Attributes as secondary. The Social Attributes become tertiary by default, which makes sense for Isthus—his childhood has left him socially stunted, to say the least.

With his priorities assigned, Otso goes in to dole out dots to each individual Attribute. He has eight dots to assign to Physical, so he puts three in Dexterity, three in Stamina, and two in Strength—that brings Isthus to Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4. He's stronger than most, much tougher than he looks, and his work has sharpened his reflexes until they're plain scary. With those finished, Otso moves on to assign six dots to Mental. He puts three dots in Wits, two in Perception, and one in Intelligence—in total, Isthus has Wits 4, Intelligence 2, and Perception 3. He's solidly average as far as brains are concerned, but he's very good at thinking on his feet and catches details that other people miss. Lastly, Otso assigns four dots to Social. He places two in Charisma, one in Manipulation, and one in Appearance for a total of Charisma 3, Appearance 2, and Manipulation 2. Isthus is good at using forthright approaches, but otherwise average.

Step 3: Abilities

With Isthus's Attributes out of the way, Otso moves on to Abilities. He examines the chart of Caste Abilities, noting the selection available for Solars of the Night Caste. Otso selects Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny, and Stealth for Isthus's Caste Abilities. All are solid choices for an assassin. Athletics, Larceny and Stealth reflect his talent for breaking into secure locations without being detected, and Awareness reflects his natural alertness and sense for danger. Isthus only falls back on Dodge if things have gone awry, but it helps him stay alive when he's at his most vulnerable.

Otso then selects Isthus's five Favored Abilities. He picks Melee to reflect Isthus's natural aptitude with hand-to-hand weapons, including garrotes, knives, and other tools of the assassin's trade. Integrity represents Isthus's nascent skepticism of others' motives, a trait that has yet to come to fruition, but will as the character develops. Otso decides that Isthus picked up some

more unusual tricks from the Ten Scar Palm Society—he knows how to recognize warding magic, how to placate the murder-gods known as Bloody Hands, and how to treat a corpse so as to lessen the risk of its hungry ghost rising and hunting him down. All of these talents fall under the Occult ability, so Otso marks it as Favored, too. Isthus's criminal talents make him very good at recognizing evidence of others' misdeeds, especially if they're less skilled. Otso selects Investigation to represent this. Lastly, Otso picks out Brawl as his final Favored Ability—Isthus is good at fighting dirty.

That finished, Otso considers Isthus's Supernal Ability. He decides that Stealth is Isthus's greatest talent—he spent the first part of his life skulking in the shadows, surviving by avoiding notice, and later used those skills to excel as an assassin.

With Caste, Favored, and Supernal Abilities selected, it's time to assign dots. Otso starts by placing one dot in each of Isthus's Favored Abilities, just to make sure he's done so, leaving him with twenty-three dots to assign. He places three dots each in Dodge, Stealth, Larceny, and Awareness, and two dots in Athletics—he has nine dots left, so he'd better place them wisely. He puts two more dots in Melee and Investigation, and one more dot in Brawl.

With his Caste and Favored Abilities covered, Otso assigns dots to Isthus's other Abilities. He puts two dots in Resistance, representing Isthus's natural toughness. He also decides to place one dot in Socialize and one dot in Presence—the bare minimum Isthus needed to get by when dealing with other people.

All told, Isthus's Ability scores work out to Awareness 3, Athletics 2, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Investigation 3, Larceny 3, Melee 3, Occult 1, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Brawl 2, Socialize 1, and Stealth 3.

Now, Otso selects Isthus's Specialties. Melee (Knives) is a solid choice, as he has a lot of experience opening people up with small bladed weapons. Stealth (Ambushes) covers Isthus's talent for ambushing unsuspecting victims, while Awareness (Ambushes) reflects his knack for noticing when people try to do the same to him. After a bit of thought, Otso adds a second Stealth specialty, (Urban Environments), covering Isthus's familiarity with moving unseen through trash-littered alleys and silently crossing tiled rooftops.

Step 4: Merits

Now it's time for Otso to pick out Isthus's Merits. Danger Sense (•••) seems fitting for someone who's had to live on the edge for his entire life. Fast Reflexes (•••) reflects Isthus's calm nerves, and the fact that killing is second-nature to him. He wants Isthus to be able to fight with two weapons, so he also picks up Ambidextrous (•). Otso isn't sure what else to pick, so he takes a moment to think on what's happened to Isthus since his Exaltation. Otso decides that Isthus has acquired a mysterious patron since his violent departure from the Ten Scar Palm Society. Quiet Ash is even more adept in the arts of murder than he is, but she's also kind and gentle—and Isthus has never seen her turn her blades on anyone whom he feels didn't deserve it. She's earned Isthus's trust enough to begin teaching him. Isthus doesn't know that his Mentor (•••) is one of the Sidereal Exalted, a Chosen of Endings. What plans does she have for him?

Step 5: Charms

Otso takes a look through the Solar Charms, selecting the ones he feels are a good fit for his concept. Graceful Crane Stance and Monkey Leap Technique allow for incredible feats of athletics, the sort of stunts Otso's seen in wuxia films. Reed in the Wind and Drifting Leaf

Elusion will help keep Isthus alive during combat, and Reflex Sidestep Technique will help protect him against ambushes. Excellent Strike and Fire and Stones Strike increase Isthus's effectiveness in hand-to-hand combat, helping him strike telling blows against his opponents. Ox-Body Technique provides additional Health Levels, which are vital insurance against attacks that manage to hit him. Sensory Acuity Prana grants Otso an edge in cat-and-mouse games with any assassins the Ten Scar Palm Society might send after him. Seasoned Criminal Method nicely reflects Isthus's life-long immersion in the criminal world, as both victim and victimizer. Then Otso selects Perfect Shadow Stillness, Invisible Statue Spirit, and Easily-Overlooked Presence Method. The former are useful in any situation, while the latter is extremely useful if Isthus has a crowd to hide in. Then he selects Blurred Form Style and Mental Invisibility Technique, available because Stealth is his Supernal Ability. Otso realizes that Isthus doesn't meet the Ability prerequisites for these final two Charms, and makes a note to raise his Stealth rating with bonus points.

Step 6: Intimacies and Limit Trigger

Isthus Fithi is going through a period of transition, and he's not sure what he believes in anymore. Otso is going to take this into account when assigning Intimacies. First, he describes Isthus's relationships with other characters. Even though she's dead, Winter Plum is still very influential, so Otso marks her down as a Major Tie with a context of Grief. Quiet Ash came into his life much later, and hasn't had a chance to make a big impact. Otso describes that relationship as a Minor Tie with a context of Wary Acceptance. The Unconquered Sun gave Isthus a second chance that he never expected, and while he has only the vaguest idea of what he's supposed to do, he's thankful for it. Otso marks down a Minor Tie of The Unconquered Sun (Gratitude).

After thinking about it some more, Otso decides that Isthus does have at least one Principle—the one that drew the attention of the Unconquered Sun. He sums it up as "I will never turn my blade against someone who has shown love and kindness to people like me." It's a Defining Principle at the moment, one for which Isthus turned his life upside-down. Finally, Otso decides that Isthus harbors strong negative feelings for the Ten Scar Palm Society now that it has declared him outcast and traitor, and marks down a Major Tie of Resentment.

Otso then examines the list of Limit Triggers, and decides that the Great Curse stirs to trouble Isthus when he finds himself faced with an opportunity to profit by the suffering of innocents—this reminds him of his old ways and throws his heart into turmoil.

Steps 7 and 8: Bonus Points and Finishing Touches

The first thing Otso wants to do is bump up Isthus's Stealth score, to qualify for those Charms he took. While he's at it, he also decides there are two more Charms he really wants. He spends one bonus point to increase Isthus's Stealth to 4, four bonus points on the Charm Blinding Battle Feint, and four bonus points on Stalking Wolf Attitude. Now Isthus is an effective stealth-based fighter—an unusual approach, but one that looks like a lot of fun, and more in-line with how Otso envisions the character than just binging on Melee Charms right away.

With that done, Otso spends one bonus point to increase Isthus's Melee to 4, and four bonus points to increase his Dexterity to 5. Isthus is now a properly terrifying Exalted assassin. Finally, he decides that Isthus still has a few people from his home city's underbelly that are willing to talk to him, and spends his last bonus point on Contacts • (Street People of Nexus).

Otso then marks down a few remaining statistics—Isthus has an Essence rating of one dot, a Willpower rating of five dots, and seven Health Levels. Since Otso bought one Ox-Body Technique, Isthus has three extra Health Levels, and he marks those down too, for a total Health Track of -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incapacitated. Isthus's Personal Essence pool contains 13 motes, and his Peripheral Essence pool contains 33 motes. Isthus Fithi is now ready to play.

Prince Diamond glided across the churning surface of the river, his footfalls meeting the water as though it were smooth, solid stone. The chieftain of the Cloud Wolf Tribe lagged behind him on the winding course of the river's banks, creeping warily for fear of the cursed ground he walked upon. "Move a little faster, Six-Fangs. Otherwise, you'll more likely die of old age than anything else." The wolfman responded with a grudging snarl of assent and hastened his pace, though he still couldn't keep up with the straight path the Eclipse Caste walked down the face of the river. Diamond sighed. He would have found better conversation with his horse Ember, but the steed was no more able to walk on water than Six-Fangs. Still, if long silences were the worst they faced on this journey, he would count it as lucky.

By the time the sun had moved halfway towards setting on the western horizon, Prince Diamond and Six-Fangs had reached the river's once-hallowed origin, a waterfall cascading down from a small mountain peak. The wolfman eyed the falls warily, but there would be no need to make that climb. The gods did not live in the sky, as the superstitious chieftain presumed, nor would Prince Diamond be so rude as to intrude upon the river spirit's sanctum. Instead, he would call the god to him. He drew a sheet of colorful paper out of his robes and folded it into the shape of a crude boat, then began to speak into it—strange words, in a tongue the wolfman knew not. Then, the Eclipse Caste laid the boat upon the water, where the raging turmoil dragged it under in mere seconds. A faint glimmer of blue, like sapphires on the riverbed, told him that his call had been heard.

The river spirit emerged from the water with slow grandeur, towering over them both in a form of bracken and black water that wore a porcelain mask for its face. "Who would have words with Yanamo? Who intrudes upon my peace?"

Six-Fangs raised his hackles at this manifestation, stumbling backwards in fear, but the Eclipse Caste remained composed. "I am Prince Diamond, an envoy on behalf of the Cloud Wolf Tribe. It seems that the bridges across your river have somehow been swept away in the past few months, and its waters become entirely impassable. They would ask, humbly, that you calm the river, and let them cross over to the hunting grounds on the other side of the shore, as they have for years before now. Certainly, that can be arranged."

The god spat in contempt, hacking up a glob of sludge onto the riverbanks. "What does Yanamo care for such trifles? Let them starve, let them eat—they will all die in the end. All of them, just like White Eyes. My river rages with my grief, envoy, and you have not the words to quell either. Begone." Prince Diamond had no idea who White Eyes was, but the way the wolfman's ears had perked up when he heard the name told him all he needed to know. The god had taken a priestess-wife from the Cloud Wolf Tribe—hardly an unusual arrangement—and forgotten his bride's mortality, until she died.

"My condolences. I suppose there is nothing to be done, then. I will leave you—the Immaculate Order is nigh, and I must keep far afield of their hunt." He turned to leave, waiting for the river-spirit to break the silence.

"Wait," said the god, his voice quavering just enough to betray his fears. "The Immaculates—are they truly coming?"

The Eclipse Caste grinned, but composed his face into a mask of calm before turning back to face the god. "As we speak, I assure you. Their reach has spread even to these hinterlands, it seems. But you are mighty enough to contend with the Dragon-Blooded, no?"

The river-god hung his head in silent resignation.

“Well then, perhaps we could strike a bargain. The Cloud Wolf Tribe has worshipped you for years. With your blessings, and your river at their back, perhaps they could stand against the Immaculate Order. But of course, it is hard to fight on an empty stomach—”

“Very well,” said the god. At Prince Diamond’s beckoning, Six-Fangs came forth, placing his clawed hand within the immensity of the god’s own outstretched hand. “So long as the Cloud Wolf Tribe stands in my defense, they will have safe passage across my river, and my blessings in war.” As the god spoke, the words of his pledge scribed themselves into the air, burning with the white-gold fire of Prince Diamond’s anima as the Solar willed it to sanctify the oath, shining like reflected stars on the water’s face.

Chapter Four: Traits

Exalted uses a number of traits to describe characters, presented in this chapter. These include your character’s Limit track (which measures the buildup and terrible expression of an ancient curse placed upon the Solars by the enemies of the gods), the five Castes into which the Solar Exalted are divided, your character’s Attributes (natural talents such as strength and intellect) and Abilities (cultivated skills such as horse-riding, wilderness survival, and archery), Merits and Flaws (advantages and disadvantages that help or hinder your character), as well as Essence, Willpower, Health, and powers granted by the Solar anima. Finally, the end of this chapter contains ruled for gaining and spending experience points to strengthen your character over the course of the game.

The Great Curse and Limit Break

When the Exalted slew the enemies of the gods, those ancient monsters pronounced a terrible death-curse against the traitorous Incarnae. The Unconquered Sun and his compatriots had anticipated this, however, and crafted mighty magic to protect themselves. What they failed to notice was that the death-curse of the fallen ancients, thwarted by the gods, took root in the hearts of their Chosen. That Great Curse still haunts the Solar Exalted to this day, leaving a seed of darkness in each hero Chosen by the Unconquered Sun. The Curse expresses itself in moments of great stress and hardship, inflating the Solar’s passions into gross displays of unrestrained and destructive excess. The growing strength of the Great Curse is measured by a trait called Limit.

Limit

Limit is a measure of stress, self-doubt, and mental instability. As a Solar accrues Limit, the power of the Great Curse gains a stronger purchase on his soul. While this growing corruption may be invisible to others, the cursed Exalt finds his thoughts wandering in darker directions. When he reaches 10 Limit, the Curse spills over and can no longer be contained, erupting into Limit Break.

The Solar Exalted gain Limit in the following ways:

• Once per scene, when a character acts in a way that opposes one of his Major Intimacies, his player rolls a single die, gaining one point of Limit for each success (unless he’s already rolled for acting against a Defining Intimacy; see below). Note that weakening an Intimacy always

counts as opposing it, as does spending Willpower to resist an influence roll supported by that Intimacy.

• Once per scene, when a character acts against one of his Defining Intimacies, his player rolls two dice for Limit (or one die if he's already rolled for acting against a Major Intimacy). This otherwise functions as acting against a Major Intimacy, above.

• All Solars have a Limit Trigger selected at character creation, a special condition under which a character can gain Limit. When a character's Limit Trigger is met, his player rolls three dice for Limit, gaining one point per success.

Limit Triggers

Below are a number of potential Limit Triggers. This list is meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive—players should feel free to design their own Limit Trigger (with the Storyteller's approval). A Limit Trigger should be a situation that the character finds stressful, traumatic, or frustrating.

• The Solar is insulted, belittled, or deliberately frustrated by another character.

• The Solar tells a lie, deliberately deceives someone, or breaks a sworn oath.

• The Solar sees innocents suffering, and is either unable or unwilling to help them.

• The Solar is hindered or defeated by the self-indulgent and intemperate behavior of those around him.

• The Solar's allies suffer a setback or defeat because of a mistake he made.

• The Solar is faced with the opportunity to advance his own cause by harming an innocent or ignoring one's suffering.

• The Solar's emotions lead him into a course of action that he regrets.

• The Solar is denied a favorite pleasure or vice, either by circumstance, another character, or his own decisions.

Limit Break and Virtue Flaws

Once a character has accumulated 10 Limit points, he will enter a state called Limit Break—the manifest expression of the Great Curse. Limit Break may or may not manifest immediately; the Great Curse is insidious, and tends to erupt into full bloom only when the Exalt's actions have the potential to create significant turmoil or suffering. An Exalt in the midst of an argument with his Circle is likely to experience the full effects of the Great Curse immediately, while one trekking through the vast desert of the South might continue to travel for several days before the effects of his Limit Break manifest. The timing of such manifestations are ultimately up to the Storyteller.

The precise manifestation the Great Curse takes is known as a Virtue Flaw. Several potential Virtue Flaws are described below, and the Storyteller may create new ones as suits the needs of his story. A Solar's Virtue Flaw isn't fixed—the Storyteller should choose whichever one is most suited to the character's current situation or seems like the most dramatic choice. All Virtue Flaws share the following features:

• Each Virtue Flaw forces the character to act out some kind of behavior that is harmful to those around him or to himself. The behavior enforced by Limit Break is treated as a Defining Principle, applying a +4 or -3 to the character's Resolve against relevant influence rolls and allowing the character to treat certain types of influence as unacceptable.

• In addition, if a character *could* treat an influence roll as unacceptable due to Limit Break, he must—he does not have the option of letting it be resolved as normal.

• Being in Limit Break is an intensely emotional experience, a powerful cathartic reaction to whatever stress has driven a character to it—it *feels good*, or at least necessary, even as it is traumatic. As a result, when a character ends his Limit Break he resets his Willpower points to equal his permanent Willpower, regardless of whether this causes him to gain or lose Willpower.

• Each Virtue Flaw specifies a duration of either session or scene. Those that have a session-long duration last for the remainder of the session of play. If the Limit Break occurs towards the end of the session, or there isn't an opportunity for it to have any impact on the game, the Storyteller may choose to have it spill over into the next session as well. Those that have a scene-long duration last for a single scene of play. In addition, each Limit Break has a condition which can end it prematurely if met.

• Once a Limit Break ends, the character loses all points of accumulated Limit.

All-Consuming Grief

The Solar is overwhelmed by regret or sorrow, and can do nothing but stop to mourn what he has lost or to brood upon the injustices that have befallen him. He'll try to go off to be alone to grieve, if possible; if not, then the Solar ignores his surroundings and focuses inward on his pain. He stirs from his grief for nothing, not even to help his allies.

Duration: Scene. All-Consuming Grief can be ended prematurely if the Solar is attacked or if someone to whom he has a Major or Defining Tie is incapacitated.

Berserk Anger

The Solar rampages out of control, attacking and killing anything he sees. His killing spree begins with his enemies, but then turns to any innocent or uninvolved bystanders of the fight. He may spare characters he has a positive Tie towards from his rampage, but this protection vanishes if they try to impede him in any way.

Duration: Scene. Berserk Anger can be ended prematurely if the Solar runs out of valid victims to kill, or if he incapacitates someone he has a positive Tie toward.

Chains of Honor

The Solar is overwhelmed with regret for his past misdeeds, and cleaves to an unbreakable code of honor. He will not tell any lies, including lies of omission or half-truths, nor will he break a promise or sworn oath he has made. If he has deceived anyone in the past, he will strive to find them, tell them the truth, and do whatever he can to atone. Likewise, he will seek out those whom he has broken oaths to, and take on whatever labors or tasks they assign to correct his failure.

Duration: Session. Chains of Honor can be ended prematurely if the Solar is forgiven by someone to whom he has broken an oath or harmed by means of deception.

Compassionate Martyrdom

Consumed by overwhelming compassion, the Solar cannot see the suffering of others without intervening. Whenever he sees a suffering innocent, he must intervene to help them in the most dramatic way possible. If she is being harmed, the Solar must either intercede to take the blows meant for her, or else kill her aggressor. If her suffering is caused by poverty, sickness, or other prevailing conditions of her life, the Solar must find some similarly dramatic method in which to help her, working without cease to do so.

Duration: Session. Compassionate Martyrdom can be ended prematurely if the Solar sees that the actions he has taken have caused the people she is trying to protect to fear or reject her, or if she loses a combat that she started because of the Limit Break.

Contempt of the Virtuous

The Solar becomes unfalteringly sure in his own moral righteousness, and strives to correct the failings of those around him. If he sees another person engaging in immoderacy, indulgence, or dishonesty, he will strive to correct them, lecturing them on their failings. If his instruction is mocked or rejected, he may even turn to force in preventing them from sin.

Duration: Session. Contempt of the Virtuous can be ended prematurely if the Solar is forced to question the righteousness of his own actions, either because he is confronted with the unintended consequences of something he does, or because he is persuaded by another character.

Crushing Doubt

The Solar is crippled by self-doubt. He will seek the assistance of his allies in every task, no matter how simple, and will pass his duties and responsibilities on to others whom he believes are more capable than him. If he is separated from allies, he must try to return to them or else find some other companions, and will flee from any potential danger or obligation he encounters along the way.

Duration: Session. Crushing Doubt can be ended prematurely if the Solar is forced to face a significant danger alone and succeeds, or if he single-handedly saves an ally from a significant danger.

Deliberate Cruelty

The Solar is consumed by cold cruelty, no longer recognizing others as worthy of respect or life. He will harm others without a second thought if he benefits from doing so, and has no aversion whatsoever to the use of torture, terror, and mutilation. His manner is cruel and scathing, even to friends and allies, mocking and verbally tormenting them as a matter of course.

Duration: Session. Deliberate Cruelty can be ended prematurely if the Solar's actions cause harm to someone he has a Major or Defining positive Tie towards.

Heart of Flint

The Solar's heart is hardened against all emotion, becoming distant and utterly lacking in empathy or feeling. While in Limit Break, he is treated as having no Intimacies whatsoever, making his decisions based purely on what is most efficient. His lack of empathy imposes a -2 penalty on all social rolls.

Duration: Session. Heart of Flint can be ended prematurely if the Solar's apathy allows a character that he holds a Major or Defining positive Tie towards to come into life-threatening danger.

Rampaging Avarice

The Solar is filled with rampant greed, no longer willing to let anything come between him and what he wants. Whenever he is faced with the opportunity to indulge in a favorite pleasure or vice, he will do so. If someone would deny him a pleasure, he will take it by force, even if it would be trivial to obtain it otherwise. While he can restrain himself from committing acts of murder or rape, he will not hesitate to destroy property or physically harm others to get what he wants.

Duration: Session. Rampaging Avarice can be ended prematurely if the Solar harms an innocent in order to get what he wants—but only after he's done enjoying it.

Storytelling the Great Curse

The purpose of the Great Curse is to add drama and conflict to the player characters' lives in a way that emulates the genres of epic poetry and sword and sorcery which **Exalted** draws inspiration from. Limit Break is the Solar Exalted's equivalent to Achilles sulking in his tent when he is needed on the battlefield, Hercules slaying his family in a rage, or Elric of Melniboné being forced to kill by his cursed sword Stormbringer. As the Storyteller, you control much of this added conflict by choosing the manifestation of Limit Break, as well as determining when they begin and end. Keep in mind the point of Limit Break is never to punish players for taking Limit-gaining actions, nor to sour players' desire to play the characters they've made. Ultimately, the Great Curse should help serve to make your chronicle a story of flawed heroes and savage adventure. If the rules ever seem to be at odds with that, err on the side of making a more enjoyable story.

When one of the player characters reaches 10 Limit, try to either choose a Limit Break that will immediately produce dramatic results, or delay the onset of Limit Break until it will. Going into Berserk Anger in the middle of a crowded metropolis will obviously carry drastic consequences, but if the characters are wandering through desolate wasteland, it won't be so interesting. It's also important to consider what impact a Limit Break will have on a player's investment in his character—forcing Chains of Honor on a silver-tongued scoundrel or Rampaging Avarice on a Solar who's made a point of self-denial for the good of his circle has the potential for interesting character development, but also risks negating the player's whole reason for creating that character in the first place. While the Great Curse *can* force a character into completely uncharacteristic acts, more often it tends to exaggerate personal quirks, flaws, or even virtues into dangerous exaggeration; a violent scoundrel is more likely to experience Berserk Anger than an even-tempered monk, while the monk is more likely to experience Chains of Honor than the scoundrel. When choosing a Virtue Flaw, don't try to invalidate what's cool about a character, but try instead to set them up for dramatic moments and character development. If you're uncertain of which Virtue Flaw to declare, ask the player.

[BEGIN DAWN CASTE TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

Dawn Caste

The darkness quails and cowers as the sun's first rays illuminate the world. The scuttling horrors of the night flee in the face of the dawn, retreating to those few places its light doesn't touch. This will not save them from the Dawn Caste, whose arrows, blades, and fists are as relentless as the rising sun. Peerless warriors one and all, these Solars exemplify martial might, taking battle with them wherever they go. They leave behind fields soaked with the blood of their enemies, red as sunrise.

In the First Age, the Dawn Caste served as the Old Realm's warriors, champions, and generals. They led its armies against all enemies—horrors of the Wyld, monsters from the Underworld, behemoths left behind by the enemies of the gods, and even the might of the Undersea. Their martial prowess kept the Realm and its peoples safe for countless centuries. During the Usurpation, the Bronze Tigers unleashed their terrifying might on the Dragon-Blooded, turning well-planned ambushes into slaughter. None of them went to their graves peacefully, and some of their restless shades haunt the Underworld to this day.

Creation's greatest warriors have returned to a world of strife, ready and eager to test their mettle. Whatever their choice of arms, the Solars of the Dawn Caste are triumphant masters—many of them are military polymaths, achieving brilliance in multiple styles of combat. On the battlefield, the Spears of Morning are engines of destruction, beautiful and terrible to behold. Not all lead troops into battle, but those who do turn their men into soldiers worthy of the Sun.

Most Dawns were warriors long before their Exaltation, but some have been drawn to war in other ways. For every career soldier or seasoned mercenary, there's a young farm girl who took up a blade to defend her home. A Dawn is generally the most skilled combatant in a Solar Circle, protecting his Circlemates and leading them in battle. If a situation requires force, the Dawn Caste can deliver.

Anima Banner: The Caste Mark of the Dawn is an eight-pointed sunburst of purest gold, gleaming on the brow. Dawn Caste anima banners are often pale gold or white, tinged with rose red and subtle violet hues—the colors of the sunrise.

Anima Effects: The Unconquered Sun stood as the war-leader of the gods in antiquity, and his ferocity lives in the Essence of every Dawn Caste, sharpening their already-formidable battle prowess to an unmatched edge. See page XX for details.

Caste Abilities: As befits such peerless masters of combat, the Swords of Heaven show talent for Archery, Awareness, Brawl/Martial Arts, Dodge, Melee, Resistance, Thrown, and War.

Associations: The season of spring, the full moon, the Maiden of Battles, the colors of lavender and saffron, the East, the element of Fire.

Sobriquets: Ascending Suns, Children of the Dawn, Lightbringers, Spears of Morning, Swords of Heaven, Bronze Tigers, the Forsaken (derogatory).

Concepts: Bodyguard, genius tactician, city guardsman, wandering swordsman, barbarian warlord, repentant brigand, martial monk, former slave gladiator, veteran soldier, daring young farm girl, swordsmith, arena brawler.

The Forsaken

In Immaculate fables, the Dawn Caste were the most cruel and brutal of the Anathema. These monsters served as the gauntleted fist of their fellows' blasphemous hegemony. When the righteous Dragon-Blooded rose up against this tyranny, the other Anathema abandoned their warrior dupes, leaving them to die. As a reminder of this betrayal, these Anathema are forever known as the Forsaken.

[BEGIN QUOTE]

A hundred of them? And here I thought I was outnumbered. Stand back, this won't take long.

[END QUOTE]

[END DAWN CASTE TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN ZENITH TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

Zenith Caste

The noonday sun hangs high over Creation, its glory visible to all who walk in the light. In its sight, there can be no shadow—only endless radiance. So it is with the Solars of the Zenith Caste, heroes chosen to exemplify the Sun's divine authority. These priest-kings are masters of oratory, but their actions speak even louder than their words—lesser priests might be satisfied with delivering sermons, but the Resplendent Suns let their faith shine through in their deeds as well. Virtue is the Zeniths' duty, and they do not shirk it.

Long ago, the Zenith Caste presided over the people of the Realm, handing down edicts inspired by their patron's boundless virtue. They led their subjects in prayer and celebration, stoking their faith and inspiring them to strive for new heights of righteousness. Before great decisions, the Zeniths sought guidance from their divine patron, praying to the Unconquered Sun for wisdom and insight. The night the Usurpation came, the Zeniths were the last to fall—their faith sustained them until the bitter end. Worn down by the ceaseless attacks of the Dragon-Blooded, they were as mountains eroded by the sea.

The Unyielding have returned to a world in dire need of their example. The Zeniths walk among all peoples, equally at home in prince's courts and beggars' shantytowns. They bring hope to the hopeless, faith to the faithless, and justice to the unrighteous. They endure whatever Creation throws at them, trusting in the might bestowed upon them by the Unconquered Sun to carry them through these dark times.

The Unconquered Sun speaks to each Zenith at the moment of Exaltation, urging them to make the world a righteous place as best they know how. Some Zeniths lived inspirational lives before Exaltation, acting as living examples for their fellow men. Others dwelt in iniquity before they came to the light—knowing the despair and pain that lies down that road, they do their best to keep others from choosing it. The Golden Bulls often act as a Circle's backbone, supporting their fellows and calling them back when they stray too far from the Sun's path. Some are their Circles' official leaders, and they trust in their patron to help them guide their fellows wisely.

Anima Banner: A Zenith Caste Mark is a brilliant golden circle, shining like the noonday sun on the brow. Zenith anima banners are bonfires of bright white and majestic gold.

Anima Effects: The just and cleansing nature of the Unconquered Sun burns powerfully in the Essence of his priests, abhorrent to those things that lurk in darkness or rise from the dead. He also empowers the Pillars of Heaven to see righteousness done in the world, as best they know how. See page XX for details.

Caste Abilities: Zeniths are beacons of leadership, inspiring their people with words and deeds. They excel in Athletics, Integrity, Performance, Lore, Presence, Resistance, Survival and War.

Associations: The season of summer, the half moon, the Maiden of Serenity, the colors of cobalt blue and gold, the South, the element of Earth.

Sobriquets: Resplendent Suns, the Unyielding, Pillars of the Sun, Hammers of Heaven, Golden Bulls, the Blasphemous (derogatory).

Concepts: Firebrand revolutionary, master orator, two-fisted laborer, village chief, wandering mendicant, peasant rebel, itinerant physician, former priest or shaman of another god, inspirational artist, runaway slave, hermit, musician.

> The Blasphemous
>
> In Immaculate fables, these monsters enslaved the innocent with unholy power, binding mortals in servitude to their dark gods. They presided over the foul rituals of the Anathema, indulging in slaughter, human sacrifice, and hedonistic debauchery. When the Dragon-Blooded rose up, they shattered this vile cult, and slaughtered its masters to the last man. In its place, they taught mortals of the Immaculate Philosophy, sharing with them righteousness and hope. The dead cult's masters became known as Blasphemous for their crimes.

[BEGIN QUOTE]

A new future awaits our people. With the Sun's blessing, I will deliver us to an age where none fear sickness or hunger, and all walk in his righteousness!

[END QUOTE]

[END ZENITH TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN TWILIGHT TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

Twilight Caste

The proud institutions of the First Age lie in ruins, and knowledge is the province of an exclusive few. In this fallen world, a man can live and die knowing of nothing beyond his meager village. To the Solars of the Twilight Caste, this state of affairs is unacceptable—as scholars, craftsmen and sorcerers, it is their duty to carry the light of learning into the darkness of ignorance. They are among mankind's most brilliant minds, and they are not content to spend their lives in a library, sanctum, or workshop—they need to be out in the world, putting their learning to use.

During the height of the First Age, the Arrows of Heaven created wonders of infrastructure, granting Creation's people good health and lush farmlands. They built cities that reached to the heavens, and pooled their knowledge in schools and libraries so that all who wished to could

learn. Many Twilights were mighty sorcerers as well, plumbing the depths of reality with great workings. As the Usurpation unfolded, many of the Copper Spiders hid their greatest works, leaving caches of lore and treasure for their eventual successors. Most remaining First Age artifacts survived as a result of a Twilight's foresight and determination—though the Dragon-Blooded cut them down, fragments of their legacy survived.

Now the Twilights have returned, ready to reclaim their birthrights and build a glorious future. Whether they're constructing a manse or solving a murder, they approach their work with keen insight and dogged persistence. They remember the glories of the lost age and know those glories can be rebuilt. The process will take the work of many mortal lifetimes, but none are better-suited to it than the Twilights.

Many Descending Suns were well-educated before their Exaltation, but far more important is a desire to learn. Whether they're physicians, occultists, or savants, Heaven's Lamps are marked by endless curiosity and undeniable brilliance. Twilights often do most of a Circle's intellectual heavy lifting, recounting old lore to find a troublesome demon's weakness or deduce a captured spy's cipher. Twilights with a talent for artifice or sorcery supply their Circlemates with bound servitors and potent spells, or craft wondrous tools custom-made for their allies.

Anima Banner: The Twilight Caste Mark is a golden circle on the brow, filled in on top with the bottom half empty. Twilight animas are a splendid riot of evening colors, encompassing bright golds and reds, as well as subdued blues and violet hues.

Anima Effects: Recognizing the mark of the Unconquered Sun's divine authority over the cosmos that burns within the Essence of every Twilight, the universe bends to protect Heaven's Lamps from destruction. She may also bind lesser spirits to her service. See page XX for details.

Caste Abilities: A Twilight is sagacious, agile-minded and curious, always working to push back the darkness of ignorance. Bureaucracy, Craft, Integrity, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore, Medicine, and Occult come naturally to them.

Associations: The season of autumn, the crescent moon, the Maiden of Secrets, the colors of orange and black, the West, the element of Wood.

Sobriquets: Descending Suns, Children of Twilight, Copper Spiders, Arrows of Heaven, Solar Lightning, Heaven's Lamps, the Unclean (derogatory).

Concepts: Radical scholar, destitute student, master geomancer, child prodigy, architect, cunning tailor, blacksmith, demonologist, relentless detective, court astrologer, young scavenger lord, master chef, village wise woman.

> The Unclean
>
> In Immaculate fables, these Anathema were by far the most avaricious and power-hungry of their kind. In their wickedness, they struck bargains with demons and other vile spirits, gaining forbidden knowledge and the secrets of darkest sorcery. No sacrifice was too extreme for these Anathema—they fed entire cities to their patrons, and allowed horrors from beyond to sate carnal hungers on their own flesh. In the end, their ill-gotten power could not save them from the Ten Thousand Dragons, who stood fast against their wicked magic and slew them. To this day, they are remembered as the Unclean—forever stained by their perversions and by the vile forces they bargained with.

[BEGIN QUOTE]

You thought there were none alive who knew your weakness, demon? You were almost right. Now, back to Hell with you.

[END QUOTE]

[END TWILIGHT TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN NIGHT TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

Night Caste

Darkness seems welcoming to those who cannot abide the Sun's light. The night is home to many threats, from thieves and murderers to outcast gods and the walking dead. Some think themselves safe, for the eyes of the Sun are not upon them. They are wrong. The Solars of the Night Caste are the hidden hands of the Unconquered Sun—they fight the enemies of righteousness on their foes' terms, using the arts of spycraft and assassination to bring their quarry low. While some might think their methods unsavory, the Iron Wolves know they're simply doing what must be done.

At the height of the Solars' reign, the Night Caste kept the Old Realm safe from threats within and without. They spied on the princes of Hell, kept a watchful eye on rogue Exalted, and assassinated faerie lords in their courts. The Daggers of Heaven kept a hand on the pulse of the world's criminals, breaking up crime syndicates and watching their fellows for signs of subversion. When the Dragon-Blooded struck, many Nights vanished into the shadows. They waged a bloody guerrilla war against the usurpers, striking whenever the Terrestrials grew complacent. But even they couldn't hide forever, and one by one the Hidden Suns fell to Dragon-Blooded hunters.

The Solars of the Night Caste have returned to a world where the shadows have grown longer, and the things hiding in them have grown more vicious. They meet the challenge with sharpened blades, stalking through dark alleys and abandoned mausoleums in search of their quarry. But assassination is not their only means of dealing with such foes. It's no coincidence that the Nights are also famed for their skills at spycraft—they know that the right piece of information slipped to the right person at the right time can lay any foe low.

Nights are used to unconventional methods. Some were outlaws prior to their Exaltation, and some made a living hunting outlaws down. Others were information-brokers, members of secret societies, or spies. All Nights share an appreciation for subtle methods, regardless of who they were in their mortal lives. The Iron Wolves are often a Circle's eyes and ears, watching enemy movements and reporting back with their findings. They excel at finding effective and unorthodox solutions—though the legality of those solutions is often sketchy at best.

Anima Banner: A Night's Caste Mark is an empty golden circle on the brow. Night Caste animas are pale gold with hues of ghostly white, soft violet, and luminous grey.

Anima Effects: It is as difficult to find a Night Caste in a den of villains as it is to find the Unconquered Sun at midnight; shadows bend to conceal them, and their very anima colludes to keep their location and identity a secret. See page XX for details

Caste Abilities: Those of the Night Caste show great talent for Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Investigation, Larceny, Ride, Stealth, and Socialize—Abilities which allow them to work in secret against the enemies of the Sun.

Associations: The season of winter, the new moon, the Maiden of Endings, the colors of violet and grey, the North, the element of Water.

Sobriquets: Hidden Suns, Concealing Shadows, Nightbringers, Iron Wolves, the Daggers of Heaven, the Wretched (derogatory).

Concepts: Cat burglar, escaped fugitive, bounty hunter, nobleman's mistress, confidence man, vigilante hero, neglected youngest sister, smuggler, former prostitute, spy extraordinaire, underworld kingpin, assassin, highwayman, acrobat.

> The Wretched
>
> In Immaculate fables, some among the Anathema were so corrupt that they could not stand the touch of sunlight. These piteous beings served as enforcers, skulking unseen through cities and slave-pens to stifle dissent. As dawn broke, they left behind the mutilated bodies of their victims as a warning to all who would challenge the Anathema. Their cowardly tactics were no match for the Dragon-Blooded, who drove them from their lightless lairs and brought them swift death. In memory of their craven cowardice, these monsters are forever known as the Wretched.

[BEGIN QUOTE]

You sent me after an innocent man and thought I wouldn't find out. You were dead the moment you chose to trick me.

[END QUOTE]

[END NIGHT TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

[BEGIN ECLIPSE TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

Eclipse Caste

Few events in Creation are rarer or more portentous than a solar eclipse. The sun, the moon, and the stars share the sky, united in a grand display of celestial harmony. It is the duty of the Eclipse Caste to bring such harmony to the rest of Creation. As diplomats, they travel to the far reaches of the world—and beyond—braving the wilds and treating with strange peoples. The treaties they forge help bind the world together, encouraging the exchange of both riches and ideas. As ministers, they run cartels and nations with skill and aplomb, expanding their interests far and wide. As explorers, they seek out new opportunities for themselves, their Circlemates, and Creation. Regardless of his surroundings, an Eclipse is confident, versatile, and eager to rise to any challenge.

The Eclipses of the First Age kept the enormous Old Realm running at peak efficiency, ensuring that its bureaucracies were swift and fair. They traveled the length and breadth of Creation as goodwill ambassadors, fostering understanding between disparate peoples. Their journeys took them into dream-courts of the Fair Folk, the silent halls of the dead, and even the maddened

streets of Hell. They forged alliances between spirits and men, bonds of trust and mutual profit. In the face of Dragon-Blooded treachery, the Eclipses turned to their allies for shelter and protection, but the usurpers' influence reached far and wide; faced with betrayal at every turn, the Eclipses fought for their lives, and lost.

Harmony and understanding are rarities in the Age of Sorrows. The Crowned Suns have returned to a world wracked by centuries of strife, where treachery and duplicity are commonplace. Undaunted, they have begun to rebuild what was lost, ending wars and forging alliances. They broker agreements between gods and men, pacify faeries with ancient stories, and even act as ambassadors for the living in the land of the dead. All the while, the Eclipses seek out remnants of the First Age—living or otherwise—to integrate into the framework of society. Lost peoples and ancient wonders hide in the wilds of Creation, and the Eclipses are eager to find them.

Eclipses are people-savvy—they might be the sort who make friends everywhere they go, or they might simply be keen students of the human condition. A wizened society matron is as likely to become an Eclipse as a well-traveled merchant or a cunning diplomat. Eclipses are often the public face of their Circle, negotiating on its behalf and representing its interests. Their adaptability and knowledge of the world makes them an invaluable asset, whether the Circle is acclimating to the mannerisms of a foreign court or trekking through the jungle in search of a First Age ruin.

Anima Banner: The Eclipse Caste Mark is a disk within a circle, both of brilliant gold. Their animas resemble the corona of the sun during an eclipse—brilliant whites and golds, sparkling at the core and growing filmy and diaphanous at the edges.

Anima Effects: During an eclipse, the Unconquered Sun stands surrounded by all the splendor of Heaven—he and the world join together to create the mightiest of omens. The Eclipse Caste is likewise given sanction to command the glory of the world, and to bind it together in the cause of righteousness. See page XX for details.

Caste Abilities: An Eclipse is as home in the court as he is in the wilds, prepared to speak with men and spirits alike as he blazes new trails. Members of this Caste show talent for Bureaucracy, Larceny, Linguistics, Occult, Presence, Ride, Sail, and Socialize.

Associations: The period of Calibration, the gibbous moon, the Maiden of Journeys, the color of silver, the Center, the element of Air.

Sobriquets: Crowned Suns, Harmonious Voices, Wheels of Peace, Solar Winds, Quicksilver Falcons, Quills of Heaven, Heaven's Voices, the Deceivers (derogatory).

Concepts: Translator, ambitious young noble, village shaman, diplomat, merchant prince, adventurous sailor, royal advisor, gentleman explorer, speaker-to-gods, professional courier, government minister.

> The Deceivers
>
> In Immaculate fables, the empire of the Anathema was built on lies, and these monsters were its architects. Their honeyed tongues could convince men to abandon virtue and give themselves willingly to depravity. For centuries, they kept their slaves in a fog of lies, calling blasphemy art and murder justice. When the Dragon-Blooded rose up, they drove these Anathema into the wilderness and

hunted them down like the animals they were. The fruits of their wickedness have forever branded them the Deceivers.

[BEGIN QUOTE]

I know your people are suspicious of outsiders. I don't blame you. But hear me out and you'll see what you have to gain. We can help.

[END QUOTE]

[END ECLIPSE TWO-PAGE SPREAD]

Attributes

Attributes represent a character's innate aptitudes and talents—the raw capacity of his mind or body rather than any learned skill or cultivated technique. Attributes are divided into three classes: Physical, Mental, and Social. The Physical Attributes of Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina reflect the raw potential of the character's body. The Social Attributes of Charisma, Manipulation, and Appearance define his innate ability to sway and influence others. The Mental Attributes of Perception, Intelligence, and Wits embody the intellectual and intuitive faculties of the character's mind.

For mortal and Exalted characters, Attributes are rated on a scale of one to five dots.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Attribute Rating **Meaning**

• The character's Attribute is on the low end of the human average, or worse.

•• The character's Attribute is on the upper end of the human average—not remarkable, but what an ordinary person might be expected to have

••• The character's Attribute is a talent, visibly outstanding to others—he is "strong" or "smart" or "charismatic."

•••• The character's Attribute is truly extraordinary, putting even other notable individuals to shame. He casually out-wrestles strong men, outwits smart ones, or outshines the merely charismatic.

••••• The character's Attribute is at the apex of human potential—it's the stuff of legend! The character is a serious contender for world's strongest man, a once-in-a-generation genius, or a born leader whose charisma will change the course of history.

[END TABLE]

Strength

Strength represents a character's raw physical power, the sheer might of what he can achieve by muscle alone. In combat, Strength helps determine the damage a character can deal with his **withering attacks**, how well he grapples foes, and his ability to move through difficult terrain that requires bounding leaps, climbing, or similar exertions of strength to pass through. It's also used when a character wishes to lift, break, or heave any objects or obstacles that might stand in his way.

Dexterity

Dexterity is grace, agility, and coordination. In combat, Dexterity determines both the accuracy of a character's attacks and his faculty to defend against enemy attacks, as well as being used for movement that relies on swift or nimble maneuvering across terrain. It's also used for actions that require precise control of physical motions, such as hiding from a patrolling sentry or picking a merchant prince's pocket.

Stamina

Stamina is a measure of vitality. In combat, having a high Stamina rating reduces the damage of **withering** attacks. It's also used to fight off poison or disease, and more generally to endure the effects of anything that might weaken or assail the body, be it lengthy physical exertion, sleep deprivation, suffocation, exposure to the elements, or starvation.

Charisma

Charisma represents a character's ability to express and articulate his beliefs or commands, convincing others to see things his way or follow his orders. It's used primarily in social influence when a character wishes to make a sincere argument that he genuinely believes in, but can also be used in combat to lead armies from the front with rallying, inspiring speeches.

Manipulation

Manipulation is a character's innate talent for deception, passing off lies as the truth, or simply telling people what he knows they want to hear. It's used primarily in social influence when a character wishes to make a false argument, whether through outright lying or more complicated verbal misdirection, as well as any argument where the character is purely trying to evoke a desired response rather than to express his own feelings or outlook. It also represents a character's ability to remain composed and not reveal his true feelings, contributing to his Guile rating.

Appearance

Appearance is a measure of a character's striking looks and his ability to use them. Generally, this means a measure of how attractive the character is, but for certain characters (see the Hideous merit, p. XX), Appearance measures how intimidatingly unpleasant the character's looks are. Appearance is used when a character wishes to influence others through looks, beauty, overwhelming presence, or first impressions rather than reasoned debate or emotional manipulation.

Perception

Perception rates both the raw quality of a character's senses and his faculty for comprehending what he perceives. Perception is used for noticing details, whether it is a strange plume of smoke over a far-off village, a black-clad assassin lying in wait, a subtle tell in a courtier's manner of speech, or a fragmentary clue at the scene of a crime.

Intelligence

Intelligence measures a character's ability to think logically and rationally. It covers analytical thinking, drawing connections between disparate pieces of information, recalling pieces of knowledge or useful memories at opportune moments, and making judgments based on rigid logic. It is the province of strategoi, sorcerers, and savants.

Wits

Wits rates a character's intuition, common sense, and ability to react quickly to new circumstances or while under fire. In combat, Wits is used for the Join Battle roll that determines a character's starting Initiative, and it also factors into a character's capacity to remain unmoved by persuasion that goes against his intuitive understanding of the world, contributing to his Resolve rating.

> Yes, You Can Take a 5
>
> It's *incredibly* rare for someone in the world of **Exalted** to have an Attribute or Ability rated at five dots. A professional soldier enlisted in a standing army most likely has Melee ••, while a cunning courtier whose web of lies and blackmail have snared an entire court in his influence might only have Manipulation •••. A character who has five dots of raw talent in an Attribute or five dots of skill in an Ability is a prodigy even among other prodigies of his field, a living legend whose feats might defy belief.
>
> Sounds like the Exalted, doesn't it?
>
> If you want your character to be one of the strongest men in the world, the greatest savant in generations of scholarship, or an unsurpassed master of the martial arts, you can take five dots. While we encourage you to let your character concept define the ratings of their Attributes and Abilities, rather than the other way around, it is totally valid to buy a trait all the way up to five at character creation if that's what makes sense for your character.

Abilities

Abilities represent skills that have been developed and honed through training, education, and experience. While an Attribute embodies a character's raw aptitude for succeeding at a given task, an Ability represents the skill and technique she uses in applying that aptitude—thus, both are used in calculating the dice pool for any given action.

For mortal and Exalted characters, Abilities are rated on a scale of zero to five dots.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Ability Rating	**Meaning**
0	The character has no training or significant experience in this Ability.
•	The character has been trained in the fundamentals of the Ability, or is experienced enough to be familiar with using it. This is the level of apprentices, interested amateurs, and dabblers.
••	The character has trained in the Ability to a professional level, or has experience equivalent to a professional. This is the level of most soldiers, healers, savants, and merchants in the world of **Exalted**.
•••	The character's training in the Ability surpasses the competence expected even of professionals, marking her as an elite or veteran in her field.
••••	The character's mastery of the Ability sets her above even experts in her field. Seasoned veteran soldiers pale before her prowess; the top physicians of noble families consult her for guidance; clever and wealthy merchants envy her business acumen.

••••• The character is a legendary master of the Ability—or else, she will be once word of her skill spreads. She has a comprehensive understanding and utter command of every aspect of her skill.

[END TABLE]

While all characters benefit from their Abilities, the Solar Exalted are capable of drawing even greater power out of their skills. Practiced mastery and the empowering Essence of their Exaltation allow them to achieve feats of supernatural prowess, called Charms. Each Solar Charm is governed by an Ability, requiring a certain minimum rating in that Ability before it can be learned. See Chapter Six for more information on Solar Charms.

Archery

Konoko heard the demon's wings before she saw it, the unearthly sound of molten obsidian beating against the air. It slashed through the sky like a bolt of black lightning, bringing the shadow-feathered ravens that were its progeny in its wake. The archer reached for the first of many arrows from her quiver and sent it into flight, her hands blurring into a steady rhythm of nock, aim, release. With her first volley, she had put out one eye of the demon named Karsa, and pierced the hearts of his entire flock of heartgorgers. As it howled its pain across the horizon, Konoko nocked another arrow.

This Ability is important in combat.

Archery is the discipline of using ranged weapons. The bow is the dominant form of ranged weapon in Creation in all its different varieties, from the simple wooden self bows used by subsistence hunters to the composite bows carried by the Realm's archers. However, Archery also applies to the use of more exotic weapons. In the South, weapons fueled by a reagent called firedust shoot streamers of flame rather than arrows, and in the North, the nation-states of the Haslanti League favor the crossbow.

Athletics

"Anath—"

Before the word had left the Immaculate's tongue, Novia Claro was in motion, vaulting through the teahouse window in a burst of shattered glass. There were reinforcements stationed outside, ringing the teahouse to cut off any route of escape—so she went up, scaling the wall as if she had made the climb a hundred times. Once she reached the brick-tile rooftop, she took a moment to center herself. An archer of the Wyld Hunt was already there, poised to intercept—but since he had expected her to flee from the back door, a steel-shod boot to the back of his head was all it took to send him tumbling into the koi pond below, long before he could so much as nock an arrow.

With a single bound, Novia made her way to the treetops above, springing from branch to branch as she made good her escape. As she vanished into the foliage and the night mist, she cursed herself for not thinking to bring the cup of black tea with her.

This Ability is important in combat.

Athletics is the discipline of physical fitness and acrobatic maneuverability. It is used in performing feats of strength, such as lifting up a fallen cart or bending the metal bars of a prison cage. It is also used for movement both in and out of combat—racing towards a distant enemy,

jumping over a gaping chasm, climbing a brick wall, and swimming against a powerful tide are all uses of Athletics.

Awareness

Silver Dusk Returning felt something was wrong the instant she stepped out of the restaurant, but didn't let it change the pace of her stride. It wasn't until she had taken a feigned wrong turn into a dead-end alley before she addressed the figure tailing her in the darkness. "I know you've been following me. I heard the knives when you drew them five minutes ago, and you reek of black adder venom." She turned around, smiling broadly, making sure to lock eyes with the point in the darkness where she knew her would-be assassin hid. "And, from how hard you're breathing, I know you're slower than me. Whereas you," she said, unsheathing a length of golden metal from its leather scabbard, "know nothing about me. Who do you think wins this fight?"

This Ability is important in combat.

Awareness is the practiced discipline of alertness and wariness of one's surroundings. It is used for rolls to notice or pick up on sensory information, but is also important in combat, adding to the Join Battle roll that determines a character's starting Initiative and allowing her to notice hidden enemies.

Brawl

The tyrant lizard bit down hard on Noxx's right shoulder, huge fangs striking sparks off steel-alloyed jade. "All right, I gave you that one," the Dawn Caste said, gritting his teeth against the pain, "but I'm getting bored." Drawing his front leg back, he pivoted around the weight of the tyrant lizard's jaw, dragging it down with his dropping arm. In the same instant, he threw a crushing jab with his left hand, puncturing the giant lizard's eye and smashing through its skull to bury his fist in its brains.

This Ability is important in combat.

Brawl is used by unarmed combatants who fight based on instinct and a natural talent for violence, rather than any particular discipline or style. It's used for punches, kicks, head-butts, shoulder thrusts, grappling, and all similar methods of using one's own body as a weapon. Brawl also conveys an aptitude for brawling aides such as brass knuckles and improvised weaponry such as chairs and broken bottles. In addition to covering attacks, Brawl can also be used to calculate a character's Parry rating in combat, although parrying a weapon capable of inflicting lethal damage with one's bare hands requires a stunt.

Bureaucracy

Few understood the importance the numbers written in Rising Echo's ledgers held for the Lianhua Principality. A decimal slashed from a tax rate, and prosperity followed. So many talents of jade held in reserve from the coffers today, and Lianhua's people would have food in a year of blighted fields. A slight increase to the tariff rate, and the flow of heroin from Guild caravans dwindled down to nothing. Few understood the importance of Rising Echo's ledgers, and that was just the way he wanted it.

Bureaucracy represents a character's acumen in organizational, mercantile, and legal endeavors. Bureaucracy is used to assess and evaluate the resources—both wealth and manpower—available to one's self or one's rivals, as well as to understand the legal codes of a society or the bureaucratic structure of an organization.

Craft

The ethereal sound of barking boomed over the clangor of Yosef's workshop—the Wyld Hunt had found him at last. He silenced the alarm with a pat on the head of the lion-dog statuette, and took stock of his resources. A daiklave of black jade and behemoth-bone—no good, its blade still in need of tempering in glacial meltwater. A pouch of ornate eggs carved from yasal crystal, a starving, half-mad demon caged within each brittle shell… that might be useful. An orichalcum gauntlet, inlaid with the fangs of a storm serpent… oh yes, that would do nicely. The salvaged head of a First Age warstrider, severed from its body centuries ago, but re-rigged with a makeshift set of controls… well, it might make a useful distraction.

By the time the Dragon-Blooded reached the Twilight Caste's lair, they had no idea of the trouble they were in for.

This Ability is necessary to create artifacts.

Craft is used to create or repair objects through skilled labor, whether forging a sword, cutting the gem for a merchant prince's brooch, or planning and overseeing the construction of a temple. The Exalted and other supernatural beings are capable of using this Ability to create artifacts, treasures of legendary quality that possess powerful magic of their own.

Special rules: When a character first buys this Ability, she must declare an *area of expertise* to which her crafting skill applies. Potential areas of expertise include *weapon forging*, *armoring*, *architecture, tailoring, woodwork, carpentry, cooking,* and anything else a player might come up with, covering similarly broad (but not all-encompassing) concepts. Additional areas of expertise must be purchased as independent Abilities—thus, a character might have Craft (Weapon Forging) 4, and Craft (Gemcutting) 2. Of note are Craft (Artifacts) and Craft (Geomancy); these two craft skills in specific are needed to craft artifacts and design and raise manses, respectively.

For mundane crafts projects, Storytellers are encouraged to be generous in interpreting logical edge cases for uses of Craft. If a character needs to repair a horseshoe, but only has Craft (Armoring), it's reasonable to declare that the character's Craft rating encompasses basic metal fabrication and to allow her to use her Craft rating anyway, perhaps at +1 difficulty.

Dodge

It happened in a second—the click of a pressure plate, the oncoming rush of air, the countless guillotine blades descending from their niches in the ceiling of the subterranean passage. A second was all Fen needed. As the first blade descended, he flipped backwards, finding the few inches of safety between it and the next. The Shattered Mendicant of Dreaming Masks' manse was well-defended, but it would take more than traps to deny Handsome Fen his revenge.

The sound of the sprung trap summoned the manse's guardians, hulking abominations of stitched flesh. One on one, Fen would have trusted his knives against such monstrosities, but the Abyssal's lair teemed with dozens of them, held at bay only by the few seconds it would take for the traps to retract their blades. It was time to discover if he was faster. And, if he had to gamble, he would say that he was.

This Ability is important in combat.

Dodge is the skill of evading one's enemies, deftly maneuvering out of the way of attacks or managing to avoid the dangers of fighting on hazardous terrain. In combat, a character's Dodge

rating contributes to her Evasion, but is also used to escape from close-quarter conflicts with enemies or to take cover from the attacks of far-off foes.

Integrity

The faerie queen's eyes were pinpoints of light, colorful stars scattered carelessly across the swirling darkness of her countenance. These eyes surveyed Lance of Starfallen Justice as he entered her boudoir, with a polite nod to his salamander-headed guide. The warrior's garb—a polished orichalcum hauberk—was as splendid as his bearing, and the constellation of the queen's eyes could see the tongues of fire that burnt in his soul—surely a man to be tempted by power and glory. With a wave of a seven-fingered hand, she called up gossamer marvels from her treasure vaults: a mirror that whispered profound and terrible wisdoms; an ewer styled as a dragon's head that held liquid immortality; a black diamond that could beckon forth countless hobgoblin servants.

Lance of Starfallen Justice regarded her display politely, as he took a seat to negotiate for the souls of the villagers imprisoned in her palace. "No thank you, fair lady," he said.

This Ability is important in social influence.

Integrity is the Ability to remain resolute in one's beliefs, principles, and decisions when they are challenged, an active discipline of self-assurance and refuting opposing arguments. It contributes to a character's Resolve, which is used to resist the persuasion of socially skilled characters.

Investigation

Tenth Reed took a long drag on his hand-rolled cigarette, letting the tobacco smoke fill his lungs like the swirling clouds of confusion that filled his mind. It had been weeks since the Council of Entities had contacted him, and the facts of the case seemed plain enough—the ashes of a burnt letter, a midnight getaway, a murdered husband. But still, he thought, looking down from the rooftops of Nexus, there was something missing. If Izaya Nora had run off with some paramour, it would explain him killing his merchant prince lover, but not the apothecary robbery that had his lackeys' hands all over it, or the faint scent of rotten honeysuckle that clung to the stables like cheap gin on a drunkard's breath.

Realization hit hard, as if the cigarette's embers had suddenly cast a new light on the case. With all the facts together it seemed obvious. The stab wounds on Izaya's husband were too clean to be fresh—they had been made after the fact, to cover up the real cause of death, a dose of hemlock stolen from a disreputable medicine shop. The secrecy, the betrayal by poison, the otherworldly smell—this was no affair, and the author of the burnt letter had not been human. It was a ritual, a demon-summoning, and it clearly went further than the Council had imagined when they contracted him.

Investigation is used to uncover hidden or obscured details through close surveillance or examination, whether it is searching a magistrate's chamber for a hidden letter, unearthing clues at the scene of a murder, or reconstructing the details of a crime from the evidence presented before a magistrate at court.

Larceny

Three Shores was a quiet village between Ragara Akina's estate and the Imperial City. A few rice paddies and the hovels of the peasants who tended them; nothing that would delay her journey to

deliver the execution orders for magistrate Koizu to the capital. At worst, she would suffer the clinging hands of filthy laborers—a tolerable annoyance.

Mongoose had other plans. The lanky thief had no great love for the law, but she knew Koizu for a fair judge. She rubbed her wrists, remembering a verdict of imprisonment that would have been death but for Koizu's mercy. She would not let House Ragara dispose of him simply to further their designs on the throne. Disguised beneath a mud-stained shawl, a false hunchback, and enough make-up to add decades to her face, she approached the Dynastic procession, grabbing for the hem of the Dragon-Blood's robes in seeming supplication.

By the time Ragara Akina realized she was short one execution degree and several obols of jade, such was her rage that she scarcely noticed the urchin girl sleeping in the alleyways, resting on a bunched-up shawl.

Larceny covers a range of talents that fall under the general penumbra of criminal activity. Pickpocketing, lock picking, and sleight of hand are all uses of Larceny that rely on physical deftness, but it also applies to more intellectual tasks such as creating an effective disguise, hiding evidence at the scene of a crime, or navigating a society's criminal underworld.

Linguistics

"Trees that flowered in Spring,

as your children marched away,

now paint their graves red.

Mothers, if you cry,

salt will fill their coffers full.

Burn with rage instead.

Stain the earth with red.

Call your children back to sleep

with their killer's death."

—Excerpt from the poem believed to have incited the overthrow of Nyala's satrap, authored by the so-called Mirror Flag.

This Ability is important in social influence.

Linguistics is the Ability used to compose works of writing—literary epics, poetic verse, propaganda pamphlets, or even a simple conversational letter. It can be used to influence the thoughts and feelings of characters who read the work using social actions. **A character must have at least one dot of Linguistics to be able to read.**

Lore

"Once, mankind understood the workings of the world, and lived in an age of wonders beyond our comprehension," Ineffable Blossom said to her Circlemates, her eyes dark from sleepless nights of study. "The greatest libraries of the Realm are but droplets from that ocean of lost wisdom. The wonders of the Lookshy foundries are paltry toys compared to the treasures of our forebears." She brandished a map annotated with countless markings from weeks of study, Scribbled in the margins were broken ciphers, solved equations, and entire fields of mathematics

she had reinvented, centered around a bold, red X. "Which is why, once we have delved into the ruins of Is-Tagath, we will wield power beyond the dreams of any who'd oppose us. And I've found just where those ruins lay."

This Ability is necessary to create artifacts.

Lore represents a character's understanding of the world, covering academic disciplines of history, mathematics, geography, literature, science, philosophy, and similar scholarly pursuits. It can be used both to recall useful pieces of academic knowledge, as well as to perform scholarly research in a library or archive. It is also important in the forging of artifacts and the raising of manses.

Martial Arts

Sagacious Palm had wandered the Burning Rivers since his brother had killed their sifu. Black Peach Heart had always been the better fighter of the two—stronger, faster, more ruthless. When he decided to claim Lady Tiger's position as leader of their dojo by treachery, Sagacious Palm was powerless to stop him. Now, Sagacious Palm's journey found him back where he began, at the foot of the cracked stone steps leading up to a red-tiled pagoda. "I would have words with the master of this dojo," he announced to the wind, throwing off the traveler's cloak that concealed a lean, muscled body. "Tell him his brother is returned."

At once, the dojo's doors opened, and his brother's gang of thugs came rushing down the stairs. Sagacious Palm caught the curved blade of his first assailant between his hands, twisting it in a Crane style kata to send both the weapon and its wielder flying. A spinning kick swept the legs from under a pair of chain-swinging brutes and sent them tumbling. Then the mob of attackers held back, unsure of what to do. Sagacious Palm dispatched them with a powerful kiai that turned the dojo's steps to dust.

"Well, well, little brother," sneered Black Peach Heart, finally stepping out to face him. "You're sure to make Lady Tiger proud beating drunken bandits and peasant's sons. Now," he said, hefting up a tetsubo studded with steel spikes, "you can join her in death!"

Sagacious Palm entered a Crane stance as his brother leapt down at him, tetsubo falling in a vicious arc. "I think not, older brother," he said, and the mark of the Dawn flared on his brow.

This Ability is important in combat.

Martial Arts covers formal study of martial systems, such as the styles detailed in Chapter Seven. In addition to providing mastery of unarmed techniques, Martial Arts also facilitates the use of certain exotic weapons, such as the staff, the rope dart, sais, and hook swords. Like Brawl, it can be used to calculate a character's Parry Defense.

Special rules: Martial Arts is a special Ability, which a character must possess the Martial Artist Merit (p. XX) to purchase. Martial Arts cannot be taken as a Caste or Favored Ability by itself. Instead, if Brawl is a Caste or Favored Ability, then so is Martial Arts. If Brawl is a Caste Ability, then Martial Arts can be taken as a character's Supernal Ability, if desired—but if Brawl is a character's Supernal Ability, this benefit does *not* extend to Martial Arts.

Like Craft, when a character first buys this Ability, she must declare a *martial arts style* which her Martial Arts dots represent mastery of. Chapter Seven contains a number of example martial arts styles characters might choose from, such as *Snake Style, Tiger Style, Steel Devil Style,* or

Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Style. Additional styles must be purchased as independent Abilities—thus, a character might have Martial Arts (Snake style) 5, and Martial Arts (Tiger style) 3.

Medicine

"Wake up, old friend," Khabran said. "You don't get to die just yet." The freckled woman's eyes slowly blinked open, as Khabran let cool water trickle into her mouth.

"Khab… you idiot, get away…" The physician gave her some more water, but showed no sign of leaving the patient's side. After a few more swallows, Yarnsaxa could finally speak. "Khabran, I have the plague… just leave me behind." Her friend's smile caught her entirely off guard, even more than the golden mark that now shone on his brow.

"Not any more, you don't."

Medicine is used to diagnose and treat wounds, sickness, poisoning, and other ailments. In the Age of Sorrows, the state of Creation's medical practice is primitive, with bone saws, sutures, and scalpels representing the most advanced medical technology a physician might have access to. In some of Creation's cultures, methods of folk medicine such as herbal treatments, acupuncture, or therapeutic yoga take the place of traditional surgical implements, and can be just as effective, if not more so, in treating certain ailments.

Melee

The killer was a mad dog, driven to berserker rage by shadowland poppies and the whispers of murderous ghosts. When Ragara Anja first heard of the murderer, she had expected little more than a madman, but what she found in the alleyways of Chiaroscuro was far worse. The killer's eyes burnt green with pyre-flame, his shadow swollen into a monstrous silhouette by unholy powers. Flecks of raw meat stuck between the filed-down points of his teeth. Before the swordswoman could speak, the murderer was on her, heaving a great axe high overhead and bringing it down for a crushing blow.

"It can't be helped, then," said Ragara Anja. With a single fluid motion, she drew her daiklave into the path of the axe-blow, splitting the blood-stained steel in half against the imperishable edge of her orichalcum. Her stroke continued in an effortless follow-through, cleaving the madman's head from his body in a flash of crimson. With a disdainful flick of her wrist, Anja shook the drops of blood from her blade before returning it to its sheath. "How unpleasant."

This Ability is important in combat.

Melee is the Ability of hand-to-hand weaponry, covering swords, knives, hammers, axes, lances, and any other weapon used in close quarters. It is used both to attack with these weapons and to calculate a character's Parry rating when she blocks enemy attacks.

Occult

When the rest of his circle had left the chamber, Shen lingered a moment. "I can see you, you know," he said into the empty corners of the room, speaking to the revolving congeries of eyes and pedipalps that hung invisible in the air. "Who are you spying for? Mnemon? The Silent Ministry? If you tell me, I may be merciful." The demon ceased its revolutions, and let out a horrible ululation before it fell on him.

The Twilight Caste's Circlemates rushed back when they heard the monstrous screech, and were met with a blinding flash of sapphire that bled through the edges of the closed door. Volfer smashed it off its hinges, revealing only Shen contemplating a small pile of smoking, silver sand.

"What happened?" asked Perfect Soul.

"Nothing to be concerned with," the sorcerer replied.

This Ability is necessary to create artifacts or to use sorcery.

Occult represents mastery of forbidden and occluded knowledge, as well as an instinctive facility for dealing with Creation's mystical and otherworldly elements. It helps characters to understand the nature, powers, and behavior of spirits, and to navigate and survive realms of existence beyond Creation such as the Wyld or the Underworld. It also governs the art of sorcery.

Performance

"My word is final, and my word is the law," snarled the mountain god. "All who climb my heights or cross my paths will die, and their screams will be all the prayer I need. Why should I let you pass, when my shrine has gone untended so many long centuries?"

With that ultimatum, there was no more place for words. Yomiko reached for her sanxian, and began to pluck a sorrowful melody from its strings, a song of regret and loves long lost. Something new began to show in the countenance of the crag-faced god, a glimmer of surprise beneath the anger. Yomiko did not know what words she sang—only that they came to her lips, ancient syllables of the Old Realm called up from the memories of a past life. She knew not what they meant, but when she saw the first droplet of molten stone well up in the god's eye, she knew he had heard the song before.

"…Very well," he conceded, his voice choked with sobs. "They may pass. I missed you, Shining Bodhisattva. It has been far, far too long."

This Ability is important in social influence.

Performance is the Ability of influencing others through creative or artistic displays, covering both traditional forms of artistic expression such as music, dance, and poetry, as well as rhetorical speaking through prepared speeches or oratory. It can be used to influence the thoughts and feelings of other characters through social actions.

Presence

"Let me make myself understood," Perfect Soul said to the mixed throng of princelings, captains, and merchants that gathered in the smoky opium den that was House Khidara-in-exile. The mark of her Exaltation still shone fresh on her brow, golden light limning her features with furious dignity. "Jiara has been betrayed. The Realm lines their vaults with our gemstones, swells their ranks with our sons and daughters, and spits upon a throne that is rightfully mine. I intend to take it back, with the iron of our swords and the might of the gods. Are there any of you with enough of Jiara in your veins to join me?"

Every voice in the room—from the scions of House Khidara's former protectorates, to the soldiers of the royal guard, and even to the grey-bearded elder lost to opium dreams over in the corner—shouted its allegiance to Perfect Soul, the true sovereign of Jiara.

This Ability is important in social influence.

Presence is the Ability to effectively lead, intimidate, or persuade through force of personality. It can be used to influence the thoughts and feelings of other characters through social actions. When a hot-blooded general rallies her troops with an inspiring battle cry, a witty conversationalist charms those around her over the course of a party, or a thief blurts a convincing explanation for how she came into possession of a carved jade idol, all of these characters are using Presence.

Resistance

Stone Grey slumped in his cage, managing to find a comfortable position to rest his hands behind his head despite the manacles—being imprisoned was restful, after all. His captors had first tried crude intimidation, bludgeoning his face with truncheons and breaking bones. As if he hadn't faced worse pain than that living on the open tundra. Next had come the slower, subtler torments—days without food, nights without sleep. He certainly would have enjoyed the steaks his interrogators dangled before him in exchange for answers, but it would take more than a little pain in the belly for him to betray his Circle. Finally, his interrogators forced a blue liquid down his throat, a concoction of herbs and powdered tortoise shell said to extract the truth from even the tightest lips. "This isn't going to work, you know," the Icewalker said, after gulping it down.

This Ability is important in combat.

Resistance is the learned Ability of coping with pain, disease, fatigue, and other forms of physical weakness. In combat, it is useful for fighting through the deleterious effects of poisons used by dishonorable foes, or weathering the perils of fighting over hazardous terrain.

Ride

Prince Diamond kicked down on the flanks of his steed, hastening down the winding path of obsidian that cut through the desert. He regretted such ill treatment of his mount, but the spirit who kept the ancient road was capricious, and had promised sole right of passage to whomever could complete its span first—and the Guild's caravan, drawn by a dozen thoroughbreds, had far too great a lead on him. It had already reached Night's Bluff, where the path descended the side of a mountain over a dozen zig-zagging switchbacks. Drawing in the reins, Prince Diamond paused at the top of the bluff, contemplating an impossible scheme. "What do you think, Ember?"

With his mount's whinnied approval, Prince Diamond made a flying leap off the face of the mountain, man and horse plunging down hundreds of feet together. With every flick of his reins, Ember dropped in a bounding arc, hooves skidding up sparks against the stone before beginning another jump. Finally, all four legs made solid contact with the obsidian pavement at the mountain's base, and Prince Diamond let his steed break out into full gallop. The Eclipse Caste looked back, and permitted himself a slight grin. The rival merchant prince still had many, many switchbacks to go.

This Ability is important in combat.

Ride is used to ride on a horse, ox, or more exotic mount, as well as to maneuver in vehicles such as chariots or carts that are led by horses or beasts of burden. In combat, the Ride skill is used for moving across the battlefield while mounted.

Sail

Darktide cursed the horizon folk loudly as he spun the wheel, banking his warship out of the path of a living hurricane. He knew his ship was fast enough to make it to safe harbor before the horizon folk could take notice of it—but it was not his life he was concerned for. Beneath the lashes of its fae masters, the hurricane was advancing on the small island of Diquis, whose natives tended coffee plants on the slopes of a sunken volcano. They would have no hope against the oncoming storm—no hope except him. Moray Darktide barked new orders to his crew—orders to intercept. He would sail straight into the heart of the living storm, and teach its riders to fear the taste of orichalcum.

Sail is used to captain a seafaring vessel through the great oceans and rivers that make up much of Creation. It is used for both for maneuvering a vessel and for plotting a course using sea charts and navigational instruments. While the vast majority of vehicles in the Second Age are ocean-faring ships, the Sail Ability can also be used to pilot more exotic vessels, such as the hot-air balloon skyships used by the Haslanti League or many of the ancient, wondrous vehicles lost with the First Age.

Socialize

"My humblest greetings, o conquering one. This worthless thing would present itself before your presence." Admiral Sand had no fondness for groveling, but there were more important things than his dignity at stake. "As your majestic fury most certainly already knows, the Mask of Winters has sent envoys riding to meet you, asking you to join him in war against the Pagathi. I am slow of wits, and clumsy of mind, but it occurs to me that it would be an insult to the invincibility of your own armies to suggest they need any alliance to wipe out those milk-drinking herders—and what's more, it would empty your own pockets of the wealth the Pagathi might offer up in exchange for your most glorious protection. I dare not to make presumptions, but I believe…"

"Enough," said the warrior-queen, seated on a silk cushion and surrounded by countless captured blades. "Your words are understood, Admiral. Let us dispense with the formalities—there are many head of oxen on the fires, and I grow hungry." And with that, peace had been won.

This Ability is important in social influence.

Socialize is a character's understanding of the social context in which she acts, encompassing both knowledge of decorum and etiquette as well as how to use them to one's advantage in persuasion or manipulation. In formal social situations such as an aristocratic court or a ritualized ceremony, a character can use Socialize to influence the thoughts and feelings of other characters with social actions. Socialize is also used both to read the emotional tells or body language of other characters to discern their inner thoughts, and to conceal such tells on one's self, contributing to a character's Guile rating.

Stealth

No one noticed one more shadow amidst the darkness of Thorns. No one heard the soft padding of feet across the city's rooftops, or the sound of a diamond blade cutting through glass. Even the guard dogs were impassive to the intruder's scent, thanks to a tincture of valerian and poppy slipped into their supper. For all the guards stationed at their posts, not a one saw the flicker of motion that flitted just beyond the torchlight's reach. By the time the deathknight's servants found

him slain in his bed, his throat slashed with a single stripe of scarlet, Harmonious Jade was already countless miles from the gates of the cursed city.

This Ability is important in combat.

Stealth is used to avoid being noticed, evading the sight of one's pursuers through physical deftness and cunning. In combat, it can be used to catch foes unawares with sneak attacks or to hide from threatening enemies. Outside of combat, it can be used for covert surveillance, silently infiltrating a guarded building, or blending into a crowd after committing a crime.

Survival

The pale wolf was huge, bigger than any beast should have grown in the wild. Graceful Path did not know what had created such a monster, but she knew she did not have the strength left to fight it—her muscles groaned with exhaustion, her Essence had dwindled like the flames of a dying candle, and her spear lay abandoned beneath the waters of the river where she fled from the Wyld Hunt. As the great hound advanced on her, she reached into her pouch of rations, and offered the giant a hunk of salted meat. "Come here, pup," she said, forcing the words through a dry throat. "You look hungry."

By the end of the night, Graceful Path slept huddled against the white fur of her new companion, safe and warm for the first time she could remember.

Survival is the Ability used to traverse and survive in wilderness environments. It covers the basic rudiments of outdoor survival, such as finding shelter, finding fresh water, and gathering food, as well as tracking, navigation, and handling animals.

Thrown

The satrap's thugs spread out around Snow Blossom and the boy, brandishing their clubs and swords as the only authority they needed to "keep peace" in the high-walled capital. "You think you can steal from Satrap V'neef and escape his justice?" the shaggy-haired leader of the gang said—as if freeing a slave was an act of theft. "We'll have you—"

Snow Blossom's patience had finally run out. Her hands blurred through the air like a flight of doves, scattering numberless knives. Gently, she placed a hand over the child's eyes, so that he would not have to see the scarlet carnage left in the wake of her attack. "I think it is time for us to depart."

This Ability is important in combat.

Thrown is the Ability used for weapons designed to be thrown at an enemy, rather than those which fire projectiles. Throwing knives, shuriken, javelins, chakrams, and nets are all used with this Ability.

War

Magnificent Rose Ligara surveyed the map of the battlefield by torchlight, long after she had bid her soldiers sleep. After a string of defeats, they needed the rest—morale was low, and supplies lower still. If she did not win tomorrow, the Walker's army of marauding dead would break through the last line of defense that kept them from the River Province. Outnumbered by a dozen walking dead to every soldier she commanded, the Dawn Caste had no chance of victory in a fair fight. But Ligara had no intention of fighting fair. It had cost hundreds of lives to secure the position she now held, and even her most loyal lieutenants questioned her wisdom. Such a tactic

flew in the face of every page of The Thousand Correct Actions of the Upright Soldier. *But Ligara was resolute. On the next dawn, when the Walker's shambling legion reached her, they would have the high ground, true—but their high ground had been the southern shore of a saltwater sea in the First Age, and even today was rimed with crystalline salt. And everyone knew what salt did to undead flesh…*

This Ability is important in combat.

War is the Ability of understanding strategy and tactics. It is used both to direct the long-term progress of a war, planning battles to gain the upper hand over enemy forces, as well as to command the soldiers or warriors that serve a character directly in battle.

Merits

Merits are special features that add distinction to characters. Some Merits are physical advantages (such as Strong Lungs), while others represent specific learned aptitudes—additional languages the character knows how to read and speak are a common example. Still other Merits may represent social advantages, such as great wealth.

In addition to personal quirks and aptitudes, Merits also represent unusual supernatural features and capabilities. The most common source of such "Supernatural Merits" is the transformative power of the Wyld—a gift few seek. Other individuals might gain such features through divine parentage, sorcerous experimentation, or the blessings (or curses) of the many spirits of Creation. Supernatural Merits may offer great power, but those which obviously twist the mind or body also bring suspicion and hatred from the majority of Creation's residents, who fear the mad touch of the Wyld.

Each Merit has a number of dots (•) associated with it. These dots represent the number of points that must be spent to purchase the Merit. Some Merits allow for a range of dots (• to •••, for example). These allow players to purchase a low or high rating as appropriate—and often to raise low ratings over time during play.

All Merits can be purchased with Merit points or bonus points during character creation. After character creation, Merits fall into three categories, governing how they may (or may not) be obtained during play. Certain magical phenomena (especially the mutating power of the Wyld or sorcerous projects) might occasionally violate these rules, as described below.

Innate: Innate Merits can only be taken during character generation, with Merit points or bonus points. They can only be gained during play through some form of magical intervention—it's impossible to simply decide to cultivate such Merits.

Purchased: In addition to being purchased at character creation as normal, these Merits may be purchased or advanced with experience points (p. XX) during play.

Story: Once play begins, these Merits may only be obtained or advanced through the course of the story, at the Storyteller's discretion—Allies, for example, cannot be purchased with experience points, but must be gained through roleplaying and social influence.

Finally, some Merits have attached drawbacks—weaknesses or limitations inherent to their use or possession.

Standard Merits

These Merits are generally available to any character.

Allies (•, •••, or •••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Each purchase grants the character a single noteworthy Storyteller-controlled ally—a close friend or trusted companion with some useful capabilities. The nature of this ally must be defined at the time the Merit is purchased. One dot grants a mortal or very minor supernatural ally, who may possess useful contacts, political clout, refined expertise, or other resources he is willing to put at the character's disposal, within reason. Three dots grants a supernatural ally at least as powerful as a young Terrestrial Exalt. Five dots grants a supernatural ally as powerful as one of the Celestial Exalted. The Storyteller has final say over what constitutes a valid ally.

Drawback: Allies aren't automatons or flunkies. They have their own lives and concerns, and expect the character to provide the same assistance to them that they provide to her. A mistreated ally is likely to abandon the character or even become her enemy.

Ambidextrous (• or ••)—Innate

The character doesn't suffer a -1 penalty to actions using his off-hand. The two-dot version of this Merit provides fully prehensile feet as well as hands. This Merit is common to native Haltans, as well as the ape-men that inhabit the jungle-choked First Age ruins now known as Mahalanka—Lair of Raksi, Queen of Fangs.

Artifact (•• to •••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

The character owns a magical item—see Chapter Nine for more details.

A two-dot Artifact is a minor wonder with limited but still supernatural usefulness, such as a goblet that nullifies any poison within it, or a jeweled torc that keeps the wearer fresh and clean in any circumstances. Many such items were created in the First Age, and have become rare and highly-valued commodities in the Age of Sorrows, lusted after the wealthy and the mighty when they appear.

Three-dot Artifacts are what most individuals think of when the word "artifact" is spoken—they are broadly powerful wonders, such as most daiklaves, magical armor, hypnotic cloaks, and the like.

Four-dot Artifacts are legends unto themselves, with powers of significant complexity or depth. The most famous Artfacts of this rating are "hundred-year daiklaves:" weapons manufactured over a century of passion and toil, and possessing truly formidable Evocations. Other such Artifacts might include cloaks that allow their wearer to ride the wind, or veils that scatter light and deflect the eye.

Five-dot Artifacts are legendary treasures in the Age of Sorrows—magical vessels, lesser First Age siege weapons, and legendary "thousand-year daiklaves." Any character coming into possession of such an item will be defined as much by ownership of it as by any other element of his personality or legend, and as such, five-dot Artifacts may *only* be purchased with explicit Storyteller approval.

Artifacts of yet greater power may still be found in Creation on the rarest of occasions: mighty remnants of the long-fallen First Age such as invincible warstriders, "ten thousand-year

daiklaves," or magical warships. These are considered to be rated Artifact N/A, and cannot be taken during character creation by spending points—as these items are of chronicle-defining power, they may only make their way into a player's possession if the player and Storyteller both want to spin a game around that story, or if a player somehow forges or unearths such a world-shaking miracle during play.

Backing (•• to ••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

The character enjoys official standing in an organization, which is defined when this Merit is obtained. For example, she might be a government minister, a military officer, a Guild merchant, or a member of a spy network. Backing represents the support the character can call upon from the organization.

Two-dot Backing represents either a low-level position within an organization of significant power (such as a dues-paying Guildsman of no particular standing), or a solid post in a less powerful organization, with most disagreeable duties pawned off on subordinates (an officer within the market guard of Gem).

Three-dot Backing represents middling rank in a powerful organization (a merchant prince of the Guild), or standing as one of the elite in a smaller organization (a captain of the market guard).

Four-dot backing represents elite rank in a mighty organization (a Guild factor) with significant support.

Drawback: Backing represents membership rather than leadership. Characters will have to answer to superiors and uphold the duties of their station to retain it.

Boundless Endurance (••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Stamina or Resistance •••

Steady as an ox, the character keeps on going long after all others have dropped from exhaustion. The character reduces the difficulty of all rolls to resist fatigue or remain awake by 2.

Command (•• to •••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired to represent multiple distinct military detachments or truly enormous military forces.

The character is the recognized commander of an organized military force of some sort—generally one composed of ordinary mortal soldiers (traits for an average soldier can be found on p. XX). This Merit's rating determines how great a force the character commands. For more information on battle groups, see pages XX-XX.

At two dots, this Merit provides a military force of Size 3, Might 0, and Average Drill.

At three dots, this Merit provides either a Size 3, Might 0 group with Elite Drill, or a Size 4-5, Might 0 group with Average Drill.

At four dots, this Merit provides either a Size 4-5, Might 0 Group with Elite Drill, or two Size 5, Might 0 groups with Average Drill. Alternately, it may provide a Size 3, Might 0 battle group with Elite Drill and the traits of elite rather than average troops.

At five dots, this Merit provides either a Size 5, Might 0 group with Elite Drill and the traits of elite rather than average troops, or five Size 5, might 0 groups with Average Drill, or two Size 5, Might 0 groups with Elite Drill.

Note: Taking the Command Merit indicates that the soldiers are personally loyal to the Exalt—that they are "her" men, rather than forces belonging to an organization; military forces of that sort are acquired through the Backing Merit.

Contacts (•, •••, or •••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Each purchase grants the character a network of contacts willing to feed him information. The player must specify what sort of contacts he's purchasing at the time the Merit is gained. Examples might include contacts within the Immaculate Order, the Delzahn nomads, the court of the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro, the Guild, the craftsmen of Nexus, House Mnemon, Western ship captains, the Lintha family, a specific noble family of Port Calin, all noble families of Port Calin, or the smugglers of the Haslanti League.

One-dot contacts are generally confined to a single city-state or similar region. Three-dot contacts may span a broad area or indicate an organization with vast but specific reach and influence, while five-dot Contacts mean that almost anywhere the character goes within a Direction, he'll be able to find applicable contacts within the purchased field.

Cult (• to •••••)—Story

The character is the object of organized veneration by a group of mortals. Without additional magic, humans (including the Exalted) cannot actually hear prayers directed at them, although when deep in mediation they can feel the mute moth-wing fluttering of appeals, sacrifices, and words of adoration whirling about them.

The rating of this Merit dictates the size of the character's cult and the power she can draw from its prayers. A one-dot cult comprises only a few full-time priests and a handful of devout worshipers. A two-dot cult spans several hundred individuals, perhaps an entire large village. A three-dot cult means the character is venerated throughout a significant region, or perhaps openly rules a mighty city-state as its god-king (although this would require additional Merits to represent such influence). A four-dot cult means that an entire nation honors the character; tens of thousands offer up prayers to her, and the Wyld Hunt has surely heard her name. A five-dot cult spans much of a Direction; few Exalts indeed may claim such a vast bounty of worship, and at present, no Solar Exalt has yet done so in the Age of Sorrows.

The character may spend a Willpower point without actually losing the point a number of times per story equal to her Cult rating. Higher Cult ratings exist, allowing the character to spend one free Willpower point per scene, but such veneration is reserved for the mightiest of spirits—at present, no Exalt in the Second Age is so widely worshiped, and very few even among the mightiest of gods can boast such reverence.

Danger Sense (•••)—Innate

Prerequisite: Perception or Awareness •••

An indefinable "sixth sense" warns the character when she is in danger—a definite asset in the Time of Tumult! She enjoys a bonus die on rolls to detect danger.

Demesne (•• or ••••)—Story

The character controls a place of power in Creation. A demesne is a wellspring of incredible geomantic power, usually a site of incredible natural splendor. A demesne might be the heart of a primeval forest, a crystal cavern behind a mighty waterfall, a field of black glass where desert abuts an ancient volcano, or any other place of clear majesty and power. Most demesnes are strongly aspected toward one of the five elements, but certain rare demesnes resonate with the Essence of the sun or moon, of destiny, or even of death.

A character attuned to a demesne who stands within its boundaries enjoys certain benefits. Outside of combat, he respires an additional two motes of Essence per hour, and may reflexively roll (Perception + Occult, difficulty 3) to sense any active expenditure of Essence within the demesne's boundaries. The demesne can also be used as a Means for sorcerous workings which resonate with its nature (p. XX), granting one extra interval.

As a four-dot Merit, the character gains control of an exceptionally powerful demesne. She respires four extra motes per hour outside of combat, the difficulty to detect Essence-use becomes 1, and using the demesne as a Means grants two extra intervals.

> Attuning to a Demesne or Manse
>
> It takes six hours of meditation and careful co-mingling of Essence to attune to and claim ownership of an unclaimed demesne. The owner of a demesne can reflexively sense all attempts to attune to the demesne while present, and may automatically block them, permit them as sub-attunements which grant attunement benefits without bestowing ownership, or may even allow ownership to be taken. She can also sever any existing attunements with a moment's concentration and a difficulty 3 (Wits + Occult) roll. While the owner remains attuned but not present, she may remotely sense attempts to attune to the demesne, but may not block them; they automatically succeed as sub-attunements.
>
> Attunement to (and ownership of) a demesne fades (character's Essence) weeks after leaving its boundaries. Attunement to a manse functions in the same fashion, save that it takes (character's Essence) months for attunement to lapse, and attunement will never lapse if the character is carrying the manse's Hearthstone.

Direction Sense (•)—Innate

The character is never completely lost, and is able to naturally determine her orientation relative to the five Poles. In addition to always knowing her facing and acting as a living compass, she lowers the difficulty on attempts to navigate toward a fixed, known location or to retrace her steps by 2.

Eidetic Memory (••)—Innate

The character enjoys near-perfect recall, adding one automatic success to all attempts to remember details from previous scenes and events.

Familiar (• to •••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Creation is filled with beasts both prosaic and exotic, and the character has formed a deep and profound bond with one of them. Although the familiar is (probably) no more able to speak the

languages of men than any other beast, the character can roughly understand the chirps, pawings, barks, and gesticulations of his animal companion, and the familiar understands the character's commands in turn. He can even share his familiar's senses by concentrating and taking no other actions, so long as the familiar is somewhere within long range (see p. XX) of him.

One dot in this Merit provides a relatively weak familiar, such as a squirrel, owl, cat or dog. Two dots provides a formidable or useful beast, such as a riding animal or vicious predator—horses, simhata, tigers, and omen dogs are all appropriate two-dot familiars. Three dots provides a familiar that is in some way overtly exceptional or magical, such as one of the talking monkeys of Halta, an armored and fire-breathing ox mutated by the Wyld, a super-predator like a tyrant lizard, or a God-Blooded stallion fathered by the horse god Hiparkes.

Fast Reflexes (•••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Wits •••

Tempered by war or perhaps by growing up living on the edge, the character's steady nerves give him an advantage in battle. He adds one additional die to Join Battle rolls.

Fleet of Foot (••••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••

The character is particularly swift and nimble, moving through the world like a shadow racing the light. She adds one additional die to all rolls depending on sheer foot speed, most notably rush, disengage, and withdraw actions (see p. XX).

Followers (• to •••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Each purchase represents a number of mortal followers with some particular form of expertise that have flocked to the character's banner. The nature of these followers must be decided upon each time this Merit is purchased. Examples might include bureaucrats, bodyguards, assassins, merchants, spies, entertainers, smiths, or astrologers. Such followers are of average to above-average skill in their professions (two or three dot Ability ratings), but are personally loyal to the character (rather than to an organization the character might have Backing from, or might lead through Influence), and might be trained to greater expertise over time.

One dot grants up to a dozen followers, two grants up to 50, while three grants a group of up to a hundred.

Giant (••••)—Innate

Prerequisite: Stamina •••

The character is enormous, standing somewhere between seven and a half to ten feet in height. Her great size grants an extra -0 health level. This Merit may also be gained as a result of Wyld mutation.

Drawback: The character's great size is very distinct, imposing a -3 penalty on all disguise rolls to pass as anyone of lesser stature, and making the character memorable wherever she goes.

Hearthstone (•• or ••••)—Story

This Merit bestows ownership of a hearthstone—a gem formed of concentrated geomantic Essence, bearing potent magical powers. Most hearthstones radiate broad mystical benefits into the region surrounding them, but some rarer stones have more concentrated or direct powers, or even hide a handful of potent Evocations within their depths. Most hearthstones are deliberately formed through Essence concentration in manses, but a few hearthstones naturally form in demesnes or at sites where Essence has worked prodigious miracles upon the land. If a hearthstone is linked to a manse, and the manse's owner places the hearthstone in a specially-designed socket in an attuned artifact, then the character enjoys the benefits of standing within the manse wherever she goes (see the Manse Merit, p. XX).

Two dots in this Merit represents the power of most hearthstones in Creation, while four dots provides a greater hearthstone from an exceptionally powerful manse or demesne.

Hideous (0 dots)—Innate

This Merit has no cost, and may be taken for free.

The character is memorably ugly, possibly as a result of overt deformity, disfiguring scars, inhuman mutations, or just being born that way. His Appearance does not measure how attractive he is; instead, the more dots of Appearance he has, the more intimidatingly horrid he looks. The character adds his Appearance bonus (p. XX) to attempts to threaten or intimidate, rather than to instill and persuade actions.

Drawback: The character subtracts his Appearance rating from most seduction attempts.

Influence (• to •••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

This Merit reflects a character's standing and pull in society. It might derive from political office, notoriety, leadership of an organization, military conquest, or from awe or fear of the character's displayed power. Whatever the reason, people take heed of the character's wants and will. Most Exalted eventually gain some degree of Influence, if they don't start with it.

One dot describes a figure of local note—a tribal family head, a respected physician, a known sorcerer, or the owner of a very popular teahouse.

Two dots describes a figure of some pull in the city-state or satrapy where he resides—a politically connected magistrate, a shipping magnate, a mercenary company leader with an important contract.

Three dots describes an influential character, very important to the region in which he resides: a royal advisor, a general, a tribal chief, a merchant prince with investments everywhere in the region.

Four dots describes a major regional power, whose words carry great weight, and who may possibly rule a small city directly. This also represents leaders of tribal alliances, the right hands of princes, and Lunar Exalted who openly live as gods.

Five dots describes a character of vast influence, likely the ruler of a city-state with influence on neighboring principalities. Alternately, the character might be a widely-feared warlord, or the Lunar god-king of an all-consuming horde.

It is *possible*, though difficult, to cultivate Influence of different sorts in multiple regions simultaneously.

Iron Stomach (•)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Stamina or Resistance •••

The character can digest almost anything edible, from live insects and brackish water to raw meat or spoiled rations. She enjoys a -2 difficulty on Survival rolls to forage for herself, as well as Resistance rolls to recover from food poisoning.

Language (•)—Purchased

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Each purchase grants the character fluency in one language in addition to his native tongue. If the character possesses Linguistics 1+, then they are also literate in any written forms of the language.

The 'civilized' inhabitants of each of the outer Directions speak a different language (actually a number of closely-related regional dialects), while the Scavenger Lands has its own particular language and the mighty Realm has two official languages. There are also countless local languages that are only spoken by tribal or ethnic groups spread around Creation's rim.

The major languages of Creation are:

• **High Realm:** The formal language of Dynasts and patricians of the Blessed Isle, as well as their servants. All official business of the Realm is conducted in High Realm. Its written form is a phonetic alphabet of complex brushwork characters.

• **Low Realm:** The tongue of the Realm's commoners, generally constituting local bastardizations of High Realm drifted into near-incomprehensibility to outsiders. It shares the written stylings of High Realm, but often uses simplified character depictions which can be rendered without brushes or careful calligraphy.

• **Old Realm:** The native language of the spirits and those that created them, as well as of the Fair Folk. It was widely spoken in the First Age, especially by savants and sorcerer-engineers, and used for most official documents. Characters must have Lore 1+ or Occult 1+ to learn this language. There exist several styles for writing Old Realm, the most extravagant of which is a complex glyphic system where symbol arrangement is as important as symbol choice, and the same phrase might be read in several ways, often as a deliberate choice by the writer intended to impart subtle and layered meaning.

• **Riverspeak:** The language of the Scavenger Lands. The Guild has promoted this loanword-filled tongue as the unofficial "trade language" of the Threshold; it is probably the most widely-understood language in Creation. Its written form employs a simple glyphic alphabet whose characters can easily be shaped with a quill, stylus, or even a stick of charcoal.

• **Skytongue:** A language family spoken in the North. Its written form employs a simple runic alphabet.

• **Flametongue:** A language family spoken in the South. Its written form employs a sophisticated alphabet of flowing lines and curves; meaning can be greatly influenced by the manner in which characters connect to one another.

• **Forest-tongue:** A language family spoken in the East, beyond the bounds of the Scavenger Lands. Its written form consists of a wide array of branching ideograms, connected vertically and diagonally.

• **Seatongue:** A language family spoken in the West. Its written form consists of a simple alphabet of lines and dots whose connection to one another can be exceedingly complex.

• **Guild Cant:** A secret language spoken only by members of the Guild. Its written form is composed of simple horizontal and vertical lines, designed to be able to be written quickly and unobtrusively when necessary.

• **Local Tongues:** Creation contains countless languages spoken by specific "barbarian" tribes, insular ethnic enclaves, isolated island-dwellers, and various other small groups. Four such languages may be learned with a single Merit purchase.

Manse (••• or •••••)—Story

The character owns a manse—a magnificent magical tower, fortress, palace, or estate raised atop a demesne and designed to capture and channel its power. Many manses are designed to express minor magical powers to enhance the beauty or comfort of the building, such as columns of free-standing water filled with colorful fish, or floors which stay warmed with channeled fire Essence even in the depths of winter.

In addition to ownership of the manse itself, possessing this Merit at three dots provides the benefits of both the Demesne Merit (p. XX) and the Hearthstone Merit (p. XX), at two dots each, for no additional cost. With five dots, the character is the owner of a manse raised atop an exceptionally powerful demesne, with a concomitantly powerful hearthstone (replicating the benefits of the four-dot Demesne and Hearthstone Merits).

Mentor (• to •••)—Story

Another individual of greater experience regularly teaches and advises the character. Mentors may provide advice, assistance, and even training in mundane or magical fields.

A one-dot mentor is an expert within a particular noteworthy field, such as languages, swordplay, sorcery, or martial arts. A two-dot mentor is an expert in several notable fields, and may be an individual of notable power or influence. A three-dot mentor is a master of many things, as well as a significant regional power or universally respected authority in his areas of expertise.

Martial Artist (••••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Brawl •

The character has undergone systematic training in at least one formal combat art. Perhaps she was raised as an Immaculate monk, or studied in a dojo during her journeys. This Merit allows the character to purchase the Martial Arts Ability.

Mighty Thew (• to •••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Strength •••

The character can lift and carry incredible weight. When attempting a feat of strength (see p. XX) the character adds his rating in this Merit to the attempt's dice pool.

Natural Immunity (••)—Innate

Prerequisite: Stamina •••

Whether naturally hardy or blessed by a spirit, the character never seems to contract minor ailments such as the common cold, and easily bounces back from nastier afflictions. The character reduces the difficulty of all rolls to resist infection, sickness and disease by 2.

Pain Tolerance (••••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Resistance ••••

While the character still feels pain, he's better at coping with it than most. -2 wound penalties are reduced to -1, while -4 wound penalties are reduced to -3.

Quick Draw (• or ••••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Archery, Brawl, Melee, Martial Arts, or Thrown •••

The character possesses the lightning draw of a deadly duelist. At one dot, she suffers no Defense penalty for taking a draw/ready weapon action. At four dots, if she flurries a draw/ready weapon action and an attack action, the flurry penalty is reduced to -1 rather than -3. This Merit must be purchased separately for each of the attack Abilities.

Retainers (•• or ••••)—Story

This Merit may be re-purchased as many times as desired.

Each purchase grants the character a single Storyteller-controlled servant, an expert in their field with noteworthy and useful abilities. The nature of this servant must be defined at the time the Merit is purchased. They might be a courtesan, bodyguard, assassin, advisor, or even high priest of the character. Retainers are outstanding experts in their profession (four or five dot Ability ratings plus at least one applicable specialty), and are personally loyal to the character (or at least strongly motivated not to betray or abandon him).

Two dots grants a mortal or minor supernatural ally (such as a God-Blooded assassin or demonic advisor of the First Circle), who may possess useful contacts or experience, political clout, martial prowess, or other resources he is willing to lay on the line at the character's bidding.

Four dots grants a supernatural ally at least as powerful as a young Terrestrial Exalt, though always weaker than the character himself—peers are best represented as Allies rather than Retainers.

Resources (• to •••••)—Story

This Merit describes the extent of the character's financial assets. The world of **Exalted** is replete with complex financial systems and opportunities to accumulate significant wealth without being a feudal warlord controlling large stretches of land—see pages XX-XX for more detail. While this Merit does assume access to hard currency, it may also indicate such things as property, ships, commercial interests, and other valuable assets which might be liquidated or borrowed against.

Each dot of Resources roughly represents an economic bracket and grants a standard income beyond any equipment or money gained during play. The source of this wealth must be detailed (rents on property, sharecropping, government stipend, interest in a mercantile concern, tax farming, banditry), since it may be increased, decreased, or eliminated completely as the game's story plays out. Much like Influence, most Exalted have little difficulty accumulating some

degree of Resources if they wish to do so, but Resources at three or greater often makes the most sense when taken in concert with another Merit like Backing, Cult, Influence, or Followers.

One dot indicates less than 1 shekel a year in jade, less than 64 koku a year in cash, or less than 60 dinars a year in silver—up to four times the expected income of a household with two skilled working adults (see "The Silver Standard," p. XX). A character able to support an extended family by her own labor or business interests with enough left over for luxuries or investments is well-off by common standards and wealthy by the standards of peasant cultivars. This is the level of Resources appropriate to agrarian landlords, respected mortal craftsmen or artisans, renowned performers in local demand, owners of successful small businesses, mid-ranking criminals in urban cartels, or corrupt mid-ranking or honest high-ranking local government officials.

Two dots indicates roughly a mina per year in jade, 128 koku in cash, or 100 dinars in silver—around twice the income provided by the previous level. It represents the wealthiest people common folk are ever likely to interact with meaningfully, and is appropriate for urban slumlords, gang bosses, corrupt high-ranking local government officials, famous mortal artisan and performers, investors in successful regional trading concerns, or the stipend of a poor Dynast or a Realm patrician in good standing with her family.

Three dots indicates a talent or less per year in jade; 8,000 koku in cash; or under 5 talents per year in silver—more than fifty times the income of the previous level. This level of Resources represents a take in the spoils of empire. It's the income of the heads of established patrician houses or far-flung criminal syndicates, Guild merchant princes, the most famous of mortal artisans and performers who've made themselves the favorites of wealthy rulers, and is also the usual discretionary stipend or income for a Dynast of one of the Great Houses. Characters with this level of Resources are usually economies unto themselves, with entourages who help manage their assets and depend on them for a living. Beyond three dots, it's very unusual for a fortune to be measured in cash—most of the independently wealthy bond their riches in silver, or are able to do business in real or ledger jade.

Four dots indicates an income of 4-6 talents per year in jade; 16,000-50,000 koku per year in cash; or 20-30 talents per year in silver. Dynasts who've established successful business interests often possess this level of Resources, as do members of *especially* well-off patrician families, the most successful Guild merchant princes, the wealthiest and most fortunate scavenger lords, rulers of small but healthy Threshold states, and mortal craftsmen with skills of singular value to the Chosen and the will and connections to demand their worth—for example, renowned mortal manse architects.

Five dots indicates an income of 12-20 talents per year in jade; 96,000-160,000 koku per year in cash; or 60-100 talents per year in silver. The heads of the very richest patrician families, renowned and successful Dynasts (often serving vital positions within their Houses), established Guild factors, and the rulers of powerful Threshold kingdoms possess this level of personal wealth.

Many characters with Resources belong to organizations like Imperial Great Houses, the Guild, or Threshold state apparatuses with access to greater financial power than even this, but gains acquired with familial, corporate, or national funds belong to family, company, or nation. Only the heads of the Great Houses of the Dynasty, the very richest Guild factors, and the unquestioned rulers of the most wealthy and powerful Threshold city-states—dictators like the

Perfect of Paragon or Rankar VII of Gem—can personally and without oversight leverage effective Resource scores greater than five.

Selective Conception (•)—Innate

The character enjoys full conscious control over his or her fertility, never running the risk of unwanted pregnancy. Perhaps this is the result of years of cultivated control of body and Essence, a divine blessing, or simply the benefit of lucky birth. Both sexes may withhold fertility when they wish. Female characters may pay one Willpower to ensure conception, and will automatically know when they're pregnant; male characters do not gain this benefit.

Strong Lungs (•)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Athletics •••

The character is practiced at holding her breath for long periods of time, like the famed pearl divers of the West. She may hold her breath for (Stamina + Athletics) minutes before she begins to suffocate or drown; under duress, this becomes ([Stamina + Athletics] x 2) rounds.

Tempered by the Elements (••)—Purchased

Due to her upbringing, the character is at home navigating a certain harsh environment, selected when this Merit is taken. The character is able to cross one type of difficult terrain (such as deep snow, thick jungle, or broken ruins) at normal speed. While this Merit *can* be taken more than once, very few characters ever do so, as it takes years of intimate familiarity to cultivate—a mere few months spent in a swamp or on the tundra is inadequate to foster such skill.

Toxin Resistance (•••)—Purchased

Prerequisite: Stamina or Resistance •••

Perhaps the character is a poison taster, or perhaps she is simply hardier than most. Regardless, she adds two dice to rolls to resist poisons (see p. XX).

Drawback: The character's body can't tell the difference between recreational toxins and intentional ones. It's very difficult for her to become intoxicated.

Supernatural Merits

These Merits bestow supernatural capabilities, and may generally only be obtained by magical means. The most common source of supernatural Merits in **Exalted** is exposure to the Wyld. Few seek out such power, both due to the unpredictability of the Wyld's blessings, and because of the extreme stigma attached to obvious Wyld mutation throughout Creation.

These Merits are primarily presented to represent the warping power of the Wyld, and to aid Storytellers in putting together beastfolk, Wyld mutants, or similar characters. It's *very* uncommon for individuals with such Merits to experience Solar Exaltation, but not unheard of. **Characters can only begin play with supernatural Merits with explicit permission from the Storyteller**.

Chameleon (•••)—Innate

The character can change the color and pattern of her skin to match her surroundings. She adds a die to Stealth rolls, and to Survival rolls to hunt for game. If she's not wearing any clothes, she add two dice.

Drawback: When the character is nervous or stressed, she must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 1) to keep her skin from reflexively shifting a few shades toward the dominant color of the surroundings, giving her away as a likely Wyld mutant.

Claws/Fangs/Hooves/Horns (• or ••••)—Innate

The character gains some form of natural weaponry, generally in the form of horns, or short but sharp claws and fangs. The one dot version of this Merit allows the character to inflict lethal rather than bashing damage with either unarmed **decisive** strikes or **decisive** savaging attacks during a grapple (the latter represents fangs). The four-dot version of this Merit grants larger, more dangerous natural weapons, allowing the character's strikes or bites to both inflict lethal damage when savaging, and to be treated as a medium weapon for **withering** attacks.

Drawback: Natural weaponry granted by the four-dot version of this Merit imposes a -1 penalty on disguise attempts.

Enhanced Sense (•••)—Innate

One of the character's senses becomes preternaturally acute, like that of a wild animal. The character adds two dice to all Perception rolls related to that sense.

Drawback: This Merit is physically obvious in unusual eye color or shape, large ears, an elongated nose, or some other similar mutation.

Exalted Healing (•••••)—Innate

The character heals quickly and perfectly, with no risk of lingering complications. Only the most grievous of injuries leave any hint of scarring, and the character's healing is like a slow form of regeneration, flawlessly mending severed muscles and nerves, torn ligaments, and shattered bones. Unless a body part is completely severed or destroyed, it is restored to perfect working condition once healed. Finally, the character's wounds never become infected. For more detail on healing from injuries, see page XX. **All Exalted possess this Merit at no cost.** Spirits also universally possess this Merit, as do the Fair Folk.

Extra Limbs (•••)—Innate

The character possesses more than the normal allotment of limbs—generally in the form of extra arms or legs, but stranger manifestations are possible, such as prehensile tentacles or even an extra head. In all cases, the result is the same—when the character performs a flurry, one of her actions (of the player's choice) suffers only a -1 rather than a -3 penalty.

Gills (0 or •••)—Innate

The character possesses visible gills somewhere on his body, and may breathe comfortably underwater. The free version of this Merit causes the character's lungs to atrophy, preventing him from breathing air; out of water, he begins suffocating after (Stamina x 5) minutes. The three dot version makes the character amphibious, able to breathe equally well above or below the water's surface.

Poisoned Body (•, ••, or •••••)—Innate

The character's body is toxic in some way. This poison is equivalent to snake venom (p. XX), and the character is naturally immune to his own toxin.

For one dot, the character's blood is poisonous, and must be ingested to inflict damage.

For two dots, all of the character's bodily fluids are poisonous, and can be applied through ingestion or intimate contact.

For five dots, the character's blood becomes a contact poison. Anyone inflicting two or more levels of lethal damage on the character with a single attack, or grappling him when he has suffered lethal damage during the scene, must make a difficulty 3 (Wits + Dodge) roll to avoid being poisoned.

Drawback: This Merit tends to be its own drawback, since it can't be turned off.

Quills (•••••)—Innate

The character's body bristles with sharp quills in the manner of a porcupine. Her unarmed **decisive** attacks inflict lethal damage, her **withering** savage becomes a medium weapon and likewise inflict lethal damage when used **decisively**, and anyone attempting to initiate a clinch against the character automatically loses one point of Initiative per round of grappling.

Drawback: Disguise attempts suffer a -5 penalty, and close physical contact with others—of any sort—becomes difficult at best.

Subtlety (••)—Innate

Prerequisite: Another physically obvious Supernatural Merit, such as claws, quills, or extra limbs.

This Merit may be purchased as many times as desired.

Subtlety must be attached to another already-purchased Supernatural Merit; it makes that Merit non-obvious to observers when not in use. Examples might include fully retractable claws, extra limbs which fold up into easily-concealed pouches or cavities on the character's body, or gills that close up tight enough to be invisible when not in use. The Wyld is rarely kind enough to bestow this Merit on those who feel its touch; it is most commonly granted as a blessing of the Fair Folk to their human servants, though some sorcerers have also studied the art of infusing subtlety into the works of the Wyld.

Tail (• to ••)—Innate

The character has a tail, which might be scaly, furred, tufted, or fleshy like a rat. For one dot, the tail adds two dice to attempts to maintain balance. For two dots, the tail is also prehensile, and may act as a fully functional limb, although it suffers a -1 off-hand penalty. The tail may be hidden under clothes, although this negates its benefits.

Thaumaturgist (••••)—Innate

The character is able to wield a certain small magic, possibly as part of an ancient tradition, possibly as unique prodigy of the world. No one can quite say why one individual is gifted with thaumaturgy while tens of thousands aren't; perhaps the character is the seventh son of a seventh son, was blessed in the womb by a powerful god, or was simply born under a confluence of auspicious (or inauspicious…) signs. For more information on thaumaturgy, see page XX. Exalted characters who take the Charm Terrestrial Circle Sorcery (see p. XX) gain this Merit at no cost.

Unusual Hide (• to •••••)—Innate

One of the most common mutations bestowed by the Wyld, this Merit grants an unusually resilient hide of some sort. The character gains additional points of natural soak equal to the Merit's value. One or two dots generally represents fur, feathers, leaves, or light scales. Three dots indicate flesh far beyond the human norm—the leathery hide of a rhino or crocodile, or the exoskeletal carapace of an insect, perhaps. Four or five dots grant an armored hide which may be made of bony armor, an obsidian carapace, or perhaps even a body of living stone.

Drawback: The character obviously looks like a Wyld mutant, with all the stigma that accompanies such status, and suffers a penalty equal to her rating in this Merit on all disguise rolls to pass for normal.

Venomous (••• or ••••)—Innate

The character's body possesses a reservoir of deadly venom, which can be applied through natural attacks. The standard version of this Merit requires that the character also have some other Merit or power granting him natural weaponry capable of inflicting lethal damage, such as claws, fangs, quills, a tail-barb, or the like. This allows the character to poison his enemies on a successful **decisive** attack up to (Stamina / 2, round up) times per day.

Alternately, if the character lacks such natural weaponry, this Merit allows him to spit a contact poison as a difficulty 3 Gambit (see p. XX), aiming it as though it were a Thrown weapon. Success envenoms the target. This attack can be made up to (Stamina / 2, round up) times per day.

For four dots, a character with appropriate natural lethal weaponry may envenom his attacks *and* spit poison. Both attacks draw out of the same limited poison supply. Regardless, all poison supplied by this Merit has the same traits as snake venom.

Wall Walking (••••)—Innate

The character gains the ability to cling to, as well as walk or crawl across, walls and even ceilings. Ceilings and inherently slick surfaces with little purchase (such as Chiaroscuro glass) count as difficult terrain.

Drawback: The character's hands and feet become visibly nonhuman, possibly sporting sticky suction pads, tiny climbing claws, or spurs like a lizard.

Wings (••• or •••••)—Innate

At three dots, this Merit grants the character patagia or other weak, gliding wings. The character has little ability to maneuver in the air, and cannot effectively gain height, but may cover enormous distances with a leap, especially from high elevation—effectively, she may travel two range bands forward when gliding before she must descend one range band down, and as long as she has room to glide to the ground, need not fear falling damage.

The five dot version of this Merit grants powerful wings (or equivalent means of flight, such as gas-filled bags) and true, functional flight. A flying character in combat moves no faster than other characters; her advantages are in her ability to pass over most forms of difficult terrain with ease, and in the severe trouble many close-ranged fighters experience in reaching her to attack her.

Drawback: In addition to the stigma of mutation, the character suffers a -4 penalty to attempts to disguise herself as a non-winged individual. Actions taken in the air which require any degree of

finesse or precision (including attacks in combat) suffer a -3 penalty; drawing a bow or swinging a spear without getting in the way of one's own wings is more difficult than it looks!

Flaws

Flaws are particular debilities and drawbacks. Players *may* select one or more flaws for their character, if they desire, but don't have to. Flaws are completely optional and carry no cost in points of any kind.

Flaws can add interesting quirks or qualities to a character that make them more fun to play or which help characterize them. For example, a player might select the Blind Flaw if she wants to play a legendary blind swordsman whose preternaturally keen hearing compensates for his lack of sight.

If a Flaw comes up during play and significantly inconveniences or harms the character, this presents an opportunity to gain solar experience (p. XX). This *only* happens if the Flaw significantly harms or impedes the character—if the blind swordsman compensates for his blindness with Awareness Charms and triumphs over his enemies, then the Flaw has simply been a cool character detail in that scene—not a significant impediment or source of harm. If the same character had to follow a crimson-glass path through the Wyld to the freehold of a faerie noble, his blindness would become a significant problem once the road began to branch off into differently-colored paths leading to various dire fates, since, no matter how sharp his other senses, he has no way to "hear" or "feel" the color of the road.

A few example Flaws are listed below. Storytellers and players should feel free to design their own additional Flaws.

Addiction

The character is addicted to some substance. This is most often a drug such as alcohol or opium, but might be something more exotic or dangerous, such as Wyld addiction. Withdrawal symptoms impose a -1 penalty to all actions while the character is deprived of his fix, and the character may need to put himself in significant financial or physical jeopardy to satisfy his cravings.

Amputee

The character is missing a limb; whether this is a birth defect or a battle scar is up to the player. If missing an arm, the character suffers a -3 penalty to actions which demand two hands to perform properly. If missing a leg, the character treats all ground as difficult terrain (p. XX).

Blind

The character cannot see. Perhaps she was born this way, or lost her eyes in battle, to misfortune, or as part of a draconian punishment. All actions which primarily depend on sight suffer a -3 penalty.

Deaf

The character can't hear, and suffers a -3 penalty on all Awareness rolls which are partially dependent on a sense of hearing. She's also likely to have communication difficulties in hectic situations where she can't read lips, such as combat.

Derangement

The character is afflicted, suffering some malady of the mind. All Derangements are of either Minor, Major, or Defining severity, and may be exploited by social influence as though they were an Intimacy. Resisting a Derangement is possible, but costs one Willpower point per session or day (whichever is longer) for a Minor Derangement, one point per session or day (whichever is *shorter*) for a Major Derangement, or one point per scene for a Defining Derangement. A few examples are provided below:

Hysteria: The character's emotions swing out of control when he botches a roll or is subjected to extreme stress or anxiety, causing him to lash out at others or attempt to flee into isolation if he fails a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

Madness: Intense trauma has caused the character to withdraw from reality, experiencing hallucinations and violent emotional swings. These symptoms manifest when the character botches a roll, experiences intense anxiety, or runs out of temporary Willpower, unless she makes a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

Megrims: The character is prone to black moods and depressive periods of despair and lassitude. Whenever the character botches a roll or drops to zero temporary Willpower, she must make a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining). Failure prevents her from spending any Willpower for the next several days, except to temporarily suppress the Derangement.

Obsession: The character is fixated on a certain idea, person, action, or object. When it's present, the character will focus on it to the exclusion of more pressing concerns. When the character is out of temporary Willpower, he will drop what he's doing to seek out or indulge in the object of obsession unless he make a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

Paranoia: The character harbors delusions of persecution, and often mistrusts all those around her. Whenever the character is subjected to intense stress, this Derangement compels her to distrust all strangers, and negates the benefits of all her positive Ties unless she succeeds at a Willpower roll against difficulty 1 (for Minor), 3 (for Major) or 5 (for Defining).

Mute

The character cannot speak or make vocal utterances. All attempts at communication must be through writing or other non-verbal means (p. XX).

Sterile

The character is infertile, and incapable of reproduction. They may or may not be capable of sexual congress, at the player's discretion, but they can never sire or bear children. This Flaw is most directly relevant to Dragon-Blooded characters, but might prove to be a problem for other characters as well.

Wyld Mutant

The character is visibly marked by the strangeness of abhuman lineage or the touch of chaos, condemning her to the distrust, fear, and hatred of most people she meets. This Flaw is most often possessed by Wyld mutants and beastfolk, and imposes a -3 penalty to social interactions with strangers (or outsiders, in the case of beastfolk enclaves or Wyld tribes).

Willpower

Allies, magic, and even personal might will only take a hero so far—the rest comes from within. Your character's Willpower represents her drive and determination, quantifying her dedication on a scale of one through ten. Characters on the lower end of the scale tend to be meek and hesitant, while characters on the higher end are confident and certain. Like Attributes and Abilities, Willpower is a rating, and it may be increased by spending bonus points or experience. By default, Solar characters begin play with a Willpower rating of five dots—Exaltation does not favor the weak of heart.

Willpower also has an associated point pool, which represents how determined your character is at the moment—even the Exalted can be worn down if they constantly push their limits. All characters begin play with Willpower points equal to their permanent Willpower rating, but this is not a hard cap. As your character bolsters himself and achieves his goals, he gains Willpower points. **Willpower points gained in certain ways can raise the total number of points in your character's Willpower pool above his rating, to a maximum of 10.**

If a roll calls for Willpower as part of its pool, you generally roll your character's permanent rating, not the number of points in his pool, unless specified otherwise.

Spending Willpower

You can spend Willpower points to do the following things:

• Add one automatic success to a single roll. You can only spend one Willpower point per roll this way, and you must spend it *before* you make the roll.

• Increase a single static value (such as Defense or Resolve) by 1. You can only spend one Willpower point per opposing roll, and you must do so before your opponent's player rolls.

• Reject certain kinds of social influence (see Chapter Five).

• Use a Charm that costs Willpower.

Gaining Willpower

Your character gains Willpower when the following conditions are met:

• A good night's sleep restores one Willpower point, but cannot raise a character's Willpower points above his permanent Willpower rating. Certain characters might not require sleep—in their case, six to eight hours of rest or meditation will suffice, although this bonus can only be gained once per day.

• Your character gains one Willpower point if he undergoes significant hardship or sacrifice to uphold a Major or Defining Intimacy. He may only gain one Willpower point per scene this way. Willpower gained in this fashion may exceed his permanent Willpower rating.

• Achieving a major character or story goal is grounds for gaining Willpower. The Storyteller may award one to three points of Willpower, depending on the scale and significance of the goal, and these may exceed the character's permanent Willpower rating.

• Performing a two-point stunt grants one point of Willpower, while performing a three-point stunt grants two. These awards may exceed the character's permanent Willpower rating.

Additionally, there are several conditions which will refresh a character's Willpower points. At the beginning of a new story, if your character's Willpower points are lower than his permanent

rating, they're refilled to equal it. The catharsis of Limit Break also resets the character's Willpower to its permanent rating—even if this means losing excess Willpower.

> Willpower Across Creation
>
> Like all Traits, Willpower varies considerably across the populace of Creation. Most individuals have a Willpower rating of 2-3, with ratings of both 1 and of 4-6 being uncommon. Willpower ratings of 7-8 are rare, while less than one person in a hundred will have a rating of 9 or 10.

Intimacies

Intimacies represent loves, hatreds, ideals, and goals—the things in this world people feel strongly about. **Intimacies are important to social influence actions (p. XX), as they help determine what kinds of influence will affect your character.** They come in two basic types:

• **Ties** describe your character's attachments to people, objects, organizations, and other concrete entities. They have an emotional context which describes your character's feelings towards that entity. Ties are generally written as the subject of the Tie, followed by a parenthetical clarifier to establish context. Examples include Great Forks (Hometown affection), My mysterious benefactor (Wary respect), My wife (Love), Peleps Deled (Hatred), and The Immaculate Order (Admiration).

• **Principles** describe your character's beliefs and ideals. Principles are generally written as a statement of the Principle. Examples include ideals such as "Honesty is my watchword" and "Pragmatism rules my actions," and beliefs such as "The Immaculate Philosophy is the true guide to righteous living" or "I believe everyone looks out for number one."

The basic mechanical function of Ties and Principles is identical, but some Charms and other special rules may differentiate between them.

Intimacies come in three levels of intensity: Minor, Major, and Defining. Minor Intimacies are notable parts of your character's worldview, but only come into play when the subject of the Intimacy is directly relevant to her current situation. Major Intimacies hold more influence over your character, coming into play even if the subject is only indirectly or tangentially related to the situation at hand. Finally, Defining Intimacies hold sway over every aspect of your character's life—they're the pillars of her worldview, and often things she would lay down her life to protect.

Intimacies help characters to regain Willpower, and govern what actions they can be persuaded to take via social influence. For more information on Intimacies and their role in social influence, see pages XX-XX.

Charms will sometimes become empowered by Intimacies, such as by granting a character extra strength to fight to protect his loved ones. In these circumstances, **Minor, Major, and Defining Intimacies are "valued" at two, three, and four points, respectively**—thus, a Charm granting dice equal to an Intimacy's rating would grant three dice if keying off of a Major Intimacy.

Gaining Intimacies

Characters start with whatever Intimacies their players feel are appropriate, with a minimum of four Intimacies, of which at least one must be Defining, one must be Major, one must be in some

way negative (a thing the character opposes or dislikes), and one must be positive (a thing the character supports or likes). Characters may gain new Intimacies in several ways, all subject to Storyteller approval. The key to changing Intimacies is that the change must make sense given the roleplaying going on during the scene and in the broader context of the story. Characters can't gain beneficial new Intimacies if it doesn't match how they've been played.

• Intimacies can be created at Minor intensity or strengthened by one level by the social influence of other characters (p. XX).

• Whenever the player feels it is appropriate and the Storyteller agrees, the character may add a new Minor Intimacy or intensify an existing Intimacy at the end of a scene by one degree.

• In extraordinary situations, the character may gain a new Intimacy at Major or Defining Intensity based on the events of the story—when an Abyssal murders your brother, it's probably acceptable to go straight to a Major or Defining Tie of hatred toward him.

Losing Intimacies

Losing Intimacies is similarly simple, and likewise subject to Storyteller discretion.

• Intimacies can be degraded by one level or removed entirely (if Minor) by the social influence of other characters (p. XX).

• Whenever the player feels it is appropriate *and the Storyteller agrees*, the character may remove a Minor Intimacy or degrade an existing Major or Defining Intimacy at the end of a scene—the character just doesn't care about that thing as much anymore. Generally, this should follow several sessions in which the subject of the Intimacy hasn't come up—characters should rarely drop or degrade an Intimacy right after it has been created, even if the Intimacy is undesirable. Alternately, this might follow several sessions showing the character resolving or working to conquer unwanted Intimacies, such as Intimacies of fear or hatred.

• Whenever the Storyteller judges that a player hasn't reflected an Intimacy in her roleplaying for a while, she may declare that it has degraded even disappeared completely. This is mostly to keep characters from accumulating a lot of Defining Intimacies, which should be reflected in the character's actions at least once per story. Few characters can sustain the kind of intensity needed for more than a small handful of Defining Intimacies, and the Storyteller's pruning helps keep down the clutter.

> Intimacies and Roleplaying
>
> Characters in **Exalted** are complex and multi-dimensional. The Intimacy system should be seen as an attempt to capture this depth and nuance, rather than as a mechanic for programming characters with a set social script. The more that players engage with the system from this perspective, the more it will help them in roleplaying interesting characters. As a way to facilitate this, starting characters begin with a minimum of four Intimacies including at least one Defining Intimacy, but players shouldn't be discouraged from taking more. While no hard mechanical rules require characters have a certain number of Ties or Principles, nor mandate minimum intensities, the Storyteller should keep in mind what these labels mean in terms of character definition. A complete absence of any Ties suggests a current state of total emotional detachment, while the absence of Principles suggests an apathy that precludes any goals, beliefs, or distinctive

character traits. Some characters may occasionally experience these states, but they aren't conducive to player characters. Also keep in mind that not everything needs to be an Intimacy—"I need to eat to avoid starvation" is a truism of most living things, not a character trait worthy of being enshrined in an Intimacy, while sexual preference doesn't necessarily need to be represented with an Intimacy to be meaningful. (See also the Red Rule, p. XX)

The Storyteller should be mindful of extremely broad Intimacies such as a Principle of "I bow to no one" or "No compromise with those who oppose me." While these may be legitimate a few characters, their broad applicability makes them very powerful traits, and thus increases the incentive for players to take them at a higher intensity than is actually applicable to the way he plays the character. Also, some Intimacies simply break the system, and should be disallowed entirely, such as Intimacies that are excessively vague or generic in a way that lets the player define their applicability ("Some people just rub me the wrong way," as opposed to "Nothing's weaker than a bully"), use exploitative wording to manipulate the system rather than trying to represent character traits (A Tie of hatred against "People trying to manipulate me in ways I don't like"), or explicitly engage with system terminology (the Principle "I balk at social influence enhanced by Charms"). Similarly, a player might try to avoid letting other characters engage with him socially by not taking any Intimacies at all, treating them as mechanical weaknesses rather than character traits. To curtail such disruptive issues, the Storyteller may reassign the intensity of a valid-but-overplayed Intimacy if she notices that a player is not roleplaying his character in a way that makes sense given the current intensity of the Intimacy, reword or clarify an abusively phrased Intimacy, or assign an Intimacy to a character if it fits the way he's being roleplayed—especially, but not only, if that character has no other Intimacies.

Health

Your character's health track represents his current physical condition: how hurt he is right now, and how much punishment he can take before being rendered unconscious or dead. Characters can't keep functioning at peak efficiency when wounded. The pain and mounting systemic damage of severe injuries can cripple even the hardiest warrior; this is represented in the form of *wound penalties*. **As your character accumulates damage in his health track, he receives a dice penalty to all rolled actions, indicated by the highest number associated with a health level which has received damage. This wound penalty also applies to all of your character's static values, such as Defense and Resolve. Damage rolls (p. XX) are exempt.** Characters have seven levels in their health track: one -0 health level, two -1 health levels, two -2 health levels, one -4 health level, and one Incapacitated health level. Exalted characters can gain more health levels by purchasing the Charm Ox-Body Technique.

Losing Health

Characters lose health levels when they take damage from **decisive** attacks (see Chapter Five), environmental hazards, poison, or when they otherwise suffer bodily trauma. There are three sorts of damage to which characters' Health Tracks might be subjected: *bashing*, *lethal*, and *aggravated*.

Bashing damage is inflicted by blunt trauma, contusions, and extreme stress placed on the body which doesn't inflict gross physical injury. Examples of sources of bashing damage include fists, short falls, and heat exhaustion or severe cold. Bashing damage is recorded in the health track by marking through the box with a slash (/). If a character's Incapacitated health box is marked through with a slash, the character is rendered unconscious.

Lethal damage represents lacerations, punctures, burns, and massive tissue trauma. Potential sources of lethal damage include blades, arrows, falls from extreme heights, fire, and the claws and fangs of wild beasts. Lethal damage is recorded in the health track by marking through a box with an X. If a characters Incapacitated health box is marked through with an X, the character is either dead or dying (which one is up to the Storyteller).

Bashing damage is always marked in the next unmarked box on the health track, while lethal damage always "enters" at the left end of the track. Thus, a character who has taken three bashing damage already, and who then takes two levels of lethal damage, would mark through his left-most health boxes, "pushing" the bashing damage two boxes to the right, as shown in the illustration on page XX.

A character whose health track is full of bashing damage, and who continues to take bashing damage, upgrades his existing damaged health levels to lethal damage on a one-for-one basis, moving from left to right across the health track.

Finally, some injuries are considered *aggravated damage*. Aggravated damage is usually a result of powerful magic modifying damage that would otherwise be lethal. Any aggravated injury cannot be healed by magic, nor can its healing be sped up by magic—only natural rest and healing will mend it. Aggravated damage heals at the same speed as lethal damage, but is always the last damage to heal—mark it on the health track with an asterisk, "pushing" bashing and lethal damage to the right.

Health Tracks

Below are two example health tracks. On top is a standard health track with seven health levels, as possessed by most people in Creation. Below is the health track of a Solar with Stamina 5, who has purchased Ox-Body Technique (p. XX) twice.

[INSERT ILLUSTRATIONS INSIDE OF BOXED TEXT]

These health tracks, meanwhile, are damaged. The one on top has taken three bashing damage, while the one below it has taken three bashing damage followed by two lethal and one aggravated, "pushing" the bashing damage to the right.

[INSERT ILLUSTRATIONS INSIDE OF BOXED TEXT]

Regaining Health

Quickly regaining lost health is difficult, requiring rare and powerful magic. The more severely injured a character is, the longer healing takes. Characters heal bashing damage before lethal, and their most severe injuries before their less serious ones—thus, healing "proceeds" across the health track from right to left. The Exalted, gods, and other magical beings with the Exalted Healing Merit (p. XX) replenish their lost health levels at the following rate:

• Recovering a -0 health level takes one hour if bashing, or one day if lethal.

• Recovering a -1 health level takes 12 hours if bashing, or two days if lethal.

• Recovering a -2 health level takes one day if bashing, or three days if lethal.

• Recovering a -4 health level takes two days if bashing, or five days if lethal.

• Recovery from Incapacitation is up to the Storyteller—in the case of being knocked out by bashing damage, it usually happens at the end of the scene, but might happen in the same scene shortly after the end of combat (if the Storyteller wants to get the player back into the action), or could potentially occur hours later. Incapacitation by lethal damage is usually fatal, though the Storyteller can allow the character to linger at death's doorstep for a few rounds, giving other characters a chance to stabilize him with emergency medical treatment. In this case, it might take hours, days, or even weeks before the character regains consciousness and heals his Incapacitated health level.

These times assume characters are primarily resting and avoiding strenuous exertion. If the character remains fully active while injured, double any healing times.

> Mortal Healing
>
> The bodies of the Exalted are far more resilient than mortal flesh. Mortals cannot heal lethal damage to their -2 and -4 health levels at all unless resting, and will bleed to death at a rate of one point of lethal damage per minute if they suffer any single injury which inflicts lethal damage equal to or greater than their Stamina rating (stanching such bleeding is an Intelligence + Medicine roll with a difficulty equal to the mortal's wound penalty, minimum 1 and maximum 5; the difficulty increases by 1 if the mortal is treating himself). Additionally, mortals heal at a slower rate than the Chosen, as detailed below:
>
> • Recovering a -0 health level takes 12 hours if bashing, or two days if lethal.
>
> • Recovering a -1 health level takes one day if bashing, or four days if lethal.
>
> • Recovering a -2 health level takes four days if bashing, or one week if lethal.
>
> • Recovering a -4 health level takes one week if bashing, or one month if lethal.
>
> • Recovery from Incapacitation is up to the Storyteller, as with the Exalted. Recovering from lethal Incapacitation almost always leaves some sort of permanent debility, though skilled medical treatment may minimize this.

Essence

Exaltation instills a mortal soul with the power of the gods, opening the recipient's eyes to the energies within. This Essence grants an Exalt power, and as the Chosen grow in power and enlightenment, so too does the Essence within them. As they perfect and purify their inner might, they can accomplish ever greater feats. Your character's Essence rating represents both the cultivation of her Essence, and her overall level of Exalted prowess. All Exalted begin with an Essence rating of one dot. **Essence rating is one of two main prerequisites for your character's Charms—as her Essence rating increases, she can purchase more powerful Charms.** Additionally, Essence rating helps determine the capacity of her Essence pools.

Mote Pools

Essence is the fuel of the Exalted, transforming heroic feats into divine miracles—but even the Chosen are limited by the amount of power that a human frame can contain. Savants recognize that an Exalt can channel only a limited amount of Essence without causing friction between himself and the world around him. When an Exalt calls upon his Essence, it escapes from him—and if it is drawn too rapidly, it passes through his anima, causing a brilliant display.

Your character's surface Essence is known as his peripheral mote pool, while the Essence residing in the depths of his spirit is called the personal mote pool. Both pools contain a reserve of *motes*, which power Charms. It's helpful to have a piece of paper or two handfuls of differently-colored beads or poker chips to help you keep track of how many motes you have remaining. **When your character activates a Charm or other power, you may spend from either pool, but you can only split the cost between them if you don't have enough motes in your chosen pool to pay the full cost.** Spending peripheral motes might cause your anima banner to flare (see below).

Mote pools replenish themselves over time. **Characters with mote pools regenerate five motes of Essence per round while in combat**, as the dynamism of battle stirs the world around them. **Outside of battle, characters regain five motes per hour.** In the most relaxed of times—such as when a character is asleep, meditating, or quietly reading—they respire Essence at a rate of 10 motes per hour. Motes in the peripheral pool are replenished before motes in the personal pool.

A Solar's personal mote pool is ([Essence x 3] + 10) motes, while her peripheral mote pool holds ([Essence x 7] + 26) motes.

The Anima Banner

As an Exalt taps into the Essence at her command, her soul ignites, revealing her nature to the world. All of the Chosen possess an anima banner: an invisible, intangible aura that flares to vibrant life when exposed to their unleashed glory. Gods and other natural Essence-users lack anima displays, but the Exalted are neither wholly mortal nor entirely divine; extreme expenditures of Essence eventually stokes their souls into brilliant visibility. As the display builds in power, it might reveal an Exalt to everyone in the room, then everyone in the building, and finally everyone in the city! At its most intense, an Exalt's anima banner becomes a blazing icon, an immense, coruscating image visible for miles.

Your character's anima is a reflection of who she is, incorporating colors, sounds, and imagery suited to her temperament, ideals, and Caste. The anima of a Zenith priest-king might blaze like the noonday sun, a molten-gold light that burns away all shadows. As he spends Essence, the light takes shape, surrounding him with the image of a sacred mandala inscribed with the vows he's sworn to the Unconquered Sun and his people. As he makes pronouncements, phantasmal offering-smoke rises to Heaven, and soft voices sing hymns of praise. The anima of a Night Caste assassin might shroud her in a flickering glow like torchlight, casting dancing shadows every which way. As the display intensifies, the shadows grow longer, turning into cloaked, blade-wielding silhouettes that mirror her every move like puppets in a shadow-play.

When your character spends five or more motes of Peripheral Essence in an instant, her anima ignites and intensifies by one level for every five Peripheral motes spent. Personal motes don't agitate the anima, nor do smaller expenditures of Peripheral. Some Charms may only be used at specific anima levels, while others can mute, diminish, or extinguish the display entirely.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Anima Level Effects

Dim The Solar's anima is invisible to all senses, masking her Exalted nature. This is the default level at which a Solar's anima resides when not spending Essence.

Glowing The character's anima glows and pulses, outlining him with the colors of the sun. His Caste mark appears on his brow, shining through anything placed over it. Any attempts at stealth or disguise suffer a -3 penalty.

Burning The character's anima blazes brightly, subsuming his Caste mark into its radiance, though the mark may reappear when he uses powerful Charms. Wisps of bright power coil off his body and rise into the air. Anything subjected to his anima may become warm to the touch afterwards, or take on the faint scent of a summer afternoon. Stealth becomes impossible.

Bonfire/Iconic The Solar's anima ignites in a grand display of iconic splendor, depicting personal iconography chosen by the player—one Solar warrior's anima may depict a tiger whose roar shakes the heavens, while a savant may be surrounded by a storm of whirling parchment covered in the lore of bygone ages. This phantasmal display then collapses into a raging bonfire of spiritual power stretching high into the air, visible for miles. This level of display illuminates the area around the Solar out to short range, banishing shadows. His Caste Mark behaves as in the previous progression, and the iconic display may also reappear at dramatic moments.

[END TABLE]

It takes about an hour for the anima to vanish from its full brilliance—fifteen minutes to recede from bonfire to burning, the same length to go from burning to glowing, and then about half an hour until the glowing anima dims and vanishes.

Anima Effects

A character's anima is her most instinctive expression of Essence, granting access to a number of small miracles. A few of these are available to all Solars, while most are unique to a Caste. Where anima effects enhance a dice pool, they do *not* count as dice added by a Charm (p. XX).

By feeding a mote of Essence into their anima, all Solars can evoke the following effects:

• The Solar may feel the brilliant presence of the sun relative to herself and know the exact time of day thereby. This works even if she's underground or in the Wyld beyond Creation.

• The Solar may cause her Caste Mark to appear and display itself for as long as she desires.

In addition to these universal effects, Solars of each Caste enjoy a number of innate benefits:

Dawn Anima Effects

• At bonfire/iconic anima display, the Dawn adds half her Essence score (round up) to her base Initiative upon resetting to base after a successful **decisive** attack.

• For 10 motes, all of the Dawn's combat and movement Charms with outstanding reset conditions are automatically reset. This effect can only be used once per day, becoming available again at sunrise.

• The Dawn Caste inspires terror in her foes. She adds half her Essence score (round up) in dice to all intimidating social influence. She may also intimidate targets which do not feel fear, such as automatons, golems, and certain undead.

Zenith Anima Effects

• For one mote, the Zenith's anima leaps from her hand to a corpse she's touching, igniting it in Solar flame. This power incinerates the corpse and ensures the soul of the deceased will not return as a hungry ghost. In addition, the Zenith may perceive the strongest Intimacies of the deceased and may choose to accept them. When she is ready, she may pay one mote, touching a target of those Intimacies to pass on feelings of peace, love, and assurance, shedding them in the process. She may also transfer them to an object, allowing it to convey comfort or a sense of duty to the subject. Conversely, she may touch someone who caused the deceased to suffer, paying one mote and rolling ([A social Attribute] + Presence) with three automatic non-Charm successes against their Resolve to transfer pain suffered by the deceased back on the one who caused it. The Storyteller is free to dictate the length and weight of such attrition.

• For 10 motes, one Willpower, the Zenith channels her Essence into an aura of divine retribution, surging around an attack. This power supplements a successful **decisive** attack against a creature of darkness, preventing the Solar's Initiative from returning to its base value after the attack. When the Zenith's anima is at bonfire, reduce the cost of this power by five motes and ignore the Willpower. This power may only be used once per day, resetting when the sun is at its zenith.

• For seven motes, the Zenith may order a dematerialized spirit to manifest using a (Charisma + Presence) persuade action with (Essence) automatic successes. All spirits inherently recognize the Unconquered Sun's authority in the priest-kings and are compelled as if by a Defining Intimacy, but may still have Defining Ties or Principles which counter this advantage. If successful, the Zenith's very command draws the spirit into the material world, so that it does not need to pay the cost to materialize.

Twilight Anima Effects

• For five motes, the Twilight projects an aura of pure force, reflexively gaining five Hardness for one turn. At the bonfire/iconic level, this power activates itself automatically at no cost. This effect doesn't stack with other magic that raises Hardness, but it can be used during Initiative Crash.

• For 10 motes, one Willpower, the Twilight's anima flares blue and white and consumes her body over the course of the round. On her next turn, she vanishes into her anima and ceases to exist. If the Exalt moves or suffers knockdown before the action is completed, it fails and the effect is wasted. After using this power, the Twilight will not reappear until the following sunset. When she does, it will be at a place of power within 10 miles of her vanishing point, chosen by the Storyteller. She might appear at a temple, a demesne, a major crossroads, the door of a god's sanctum, the precise center of a city, etc.

• For 10 motes, the Twilight may touch an Essence 1-3 elemental or a demon of the first circle, conjoining its Essence to her anima. Roll Intelligence + Occult against the creature's Resolve. If successful, this creates a pact that changes the spirit into her familiar, allowing her to target it with applicable Survival Charms. In addition, the Twilight can reflexively summon the spirit instantly for three motes, drawing it through the Essence of the world to appear beside her. She

may banish the creature again, reflexively, for free, returning it to the tides of Essence that suffuse Creation until needed.

Night Anima Effects

• For two motes, the Night can dampen her anima, treating all Peripheral Essence expenditures as if they were Personal for one instant.

• For three motes, the Night can ignore up to (higher of 3 or Essence) penalties to a Stealth attempt for one instant. These motes are always considered Personal, regardless of the pool they're spent from.

• When the Night's anima is at the bonfire/iconic level, it wraps around and suffuses her form, hiding her figure and masking her visage in flame. She is merely a fearsome silhouette shrouded in all the hues of evening. It becomes impossible to discern her identity. This is considered a perfect effect, and cannot be pierced by Eye of the Unconquered Sun (see p. XX) or other all-seeing magic.

Eclipse Anima Effects

• For 10 motes, one Willpower, the Eclipse sanctifies an oath she has witnessed. The Exalt touches the oath-givers (or their words, as they pass through the air), her caste mark flashing imperceptibly. If she wishes, her anima briefly flares, swirling with the words and runes by which Heaven has given her the right to arbitrate such matters.

Oaths-givers who break pacts sanctified by the Eclipse (including the Exalt herself) are subject to a terrible curse. The details of the curse are devised by the Storyteller, ideally reflecting the oath broken. A woman who breaks a hospitality oath might find herself incapable of rest beneath any roof for a year and a day, while a man who murdered the one he swore to protect may find his defenses utterly failing him when he must next fight for his life.

• The Eclipse has diplomatic immunity when treating with the enemies of Creation. So long as the Eclipse approaches them on legitimate business of some kind, shades, spirits, the demon princes of Hell, and the Fair Folk may not attack the Eclipse or her companions without just cause, and such creatures must observe the local rules of hospitality. Such beings may still attempt to provoke members of the Solar's embassy into breaking the peace, thus voiding this effect's protection.

• The Eclipse represents all the subtle movements of Essence under Heaven, the strange and self-referencing powers that stir when night merges with day. Eclipses can learn the Charms of spirits, Fair Folk and similar supernatural beings which have the Eclipse keyword for eight experience points each.

Character Advancement

If the Solar Exalted were merely heroes blessed by the Unconquered Sun, this alone would make them the most dangerous men and women in Creation. But they're much more than that. The might of Exaltation is an inseparable part of each Solar; as the world challenges the Lawgivers and forces them to sharpen their skills, so too does their supernatural might grow.

Experience Points

Character growth is expressed with experience points, given out at the end of every session, which players spend to increase characters' traits, as well as to buy new Charms and spells. Each

character gains **five** experience points at the end of every session. These points may be spent immediately, or saved to be spent later.

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[BEGIN TABLE]

Trait	**Experience Cost**
Attribute increase	current rating x 4
Non-Caste/Favored Ability increase	current rating x 2
Caste/Favored Ability increase	(current rating x 2) - 1
New Ability	3
Specialty	3
Purchased Merit	new rating x 3
Willpower	8
Solar Charm	10 (8 if in a Caste or Favored Ability)
Martial Arts Charm	10 (8 if Brawl is a Caste or Favored Ability)
Spell	10 (8 if Occult is a Caste or Favored Ability)
New Evocation	8

[END TABLE]

[END BOXED TEXT]

Solar Experience

In addition to normal experience points, players have the opportunity to gain Solar experience in each session. Solar experience may be spent on anything *except* Solar Charms—Attributes, Abilities, Specialties, Merits, Willpower, Martial Arts Charms, Evocations, and spells are all valid, as are things like spirit Charms learned with the Eclipse anima power, sorcerous workings, or Charms with experience point costs in their activation.

Players have two opportunities to gain solar experience per session. They may earn up to one Expression Bonus, and one Role Bonus, for a total of up to four Solar experience per session:

Expression Bonus

Characters can gain 2 points of solar experience by fulfilling *one* of the following criteria per session:

• Expressing, supporting, or engaging a Major or Defining Intimacy in such a way that it reveals something about the character, develops the character's personality, or provides a character moment that everyone at the table enjoys.

• Being significantly challenged, endangered, or harmed in the course of protecting or upholding a Major or Defining Intimacy.

• Being significantly impeded, endangered, or harmed by a Flaw.

Role Bonus

Characters can gain 2 points of solar experience by fulfilling *one* of the following criteria per session:

• Intentionally ceding the 'spotlight' of the scene's focus to another player's character in such a way that it makes that character shine in the role of their Caste, or directly supporting them in a cool and dramatic expression of their Caste's function.

• **Dawn Castes**: Defeating a powerful enemy, defending a vulnerable Circlemate through skill of arms, using martial prowess to directly advance a Major or Defining Principle, or using martial prowess to directly protect a Major or Defining Tie.

• **Zenith Castes**: Inspiring others to uphold one of your Major or Defining Principles in a significant way, enduring great hardship in the name of a Major or Defining Intimacy, accomplishing a great deed that furthers a Major or Defining Principle, or creating some edifice or institution that expresses or furthers a Major or Defining Principle.

• **Twilight Castes**: Learning lost lore of the First Age or similarly valuable knowledge, discovering a supernatural being's mystic secrets (such as a ghost's lingering passions, the obsession that drives a demon's nature, or an ancient oath that still binds one of the Fair Folk), solving a significant problem or crisis through the application of knowledge or through education, or creating a lasting and meaningful work of mystical power in the world (such as forging a sorcerous working or artifact, or binding a demon to protect a valley until the end of the age).

• **Night Castes**: Removing a major impediment to the character's or Circle's goals through assassination, blackmail, or other underhanded means; stealing something that directly furthers the character's or Circle's goals; gaining a significant advantage over a dangerous enemy through infiltration or stealth; upholding or protecting a Major or Defining Principle through "criminal" means (larcenous association, robbery, poisoning, and so forth).

• **Eclipse Castes**: Bringing two or more parties with a meaningful dispute to accords, gaining a noteworthy advantage for the character or the Circle through diplomatic means, successfully navigating and thwarting social or geographical obstacles preventing the character or Circle from achieving a significant goal, exploiting a cultural tradition or legal system in furtherance of a Major or Defining Intimacy.

Training Times

While experience points are an abstraction to provide satisfying pacing for advancement and a sense of reward for players, character advancement has to make sense in the context of the story. It doesn't make sense for a character to raise his Melee score from 2 to 3 if he hasn't drawn his sword in months, even if he has enough experience points to do it.

The following training times assume characters spend a significant portion of the quoted time working on the talent in question, though they need not do so exclusively—a character can study to improve his Lore without being chained to a desk all day. Also, many forms of training may potentially benefit multiple Traits—Strength training is also a good reason to raise Athletics, for example. Finally, practical experience also counts as a significant amount of training; while drilling and practicing with the blade is certainly beneficial, there are some vital lessons that can only be learned in battle—but likewise, while time in battle provides insight, training is when

those insights are contemplated, practiced, and perfected; neither training nor experience alone is sufficient for mastery. Treat these training times as a rough guideline rather than absolute quotas. Mentors and similarly skilled trainers should also reduce training times, proportionate to their skill at teaching. Likewise, these training times assume that characters balance their training time with getting other things done—a character who retreats from her other duties to pursue nothing but training could raise her traits significantly faster than the times given here.

Finally, a word on advancing mystical traits. While it is possible to give instruction in Charms, most Chosen, and certainly most Solars, develop their own Charms through instinctive cultivation of skill rather than through rigorous practice. As such, while Charms can certainly be trained like any other skill, many characters 'train' their Charms by exercising the Ability in question under duress. Evocations usually require extensive training with the Artifact they're attached to, but also demand that the Exalt establish a rapport with his equipment, often on the field of battle. Martial Arts Charms always require rigorous training, and learning spells requires a mentor or a text copy of the spell in question and many hours of intense study.

[BEGIN BOXED TEXT]

[BEGIN TABLE]

Trait	**Training Time**
Attribute	(new rating) months
Non-Caste/Favored Ability increase	(new rating) weeks
Caste/Favored Ability	(new rating) days
Specialty	two weeks
Purchased Merit	(new rating) weeks
Willpower	one month
Caste/Favored Solar or Martial Arts Charm	(Ability minimum) days
Non-Favored Solar or Martial Arts Charm	(Ability + Essence minimum) days
Spell	Two weeks per Circle
New Evocation	(Essence minimum x [Circle + 3]) days

[END TABLE]

[END BOXED TEXT]

Raising Essence

Rather than spending experience points or even Solar experience to raise Essence, **characters' Essence ratings increase automatically once they have earned and spent enough experience points on other traits**. Essence is the core of a Solar's power, the beating heart of his enlightened will, and it becomes stronger only when the Solar has grown as an overall hero of Creation, rather than being cultivated directly. The higher a character's Essence climbs, the greater she must become before she might ascend to yet greater heights.

Essence doesn't generally rise immediately after spending sufficient experience. While it's possible for a character's Essence rating to increase in a dramatic moment of blazing glory as he

accomplishes some character-defining goal, it's more common for a Solar to retreat into temporary seclusion in order to commune with his inner divinity. This is best accomplished on mountain peaks, atop desert plateaus, or in other elevated places where the Solar can contemplate the face of the Unconquered Sun and his own burgeoning power. This period of enlightenment-seeking seclusion might last only a few days, in the case of exceptional prodigies, or for weeks or months. A few Solars have even spent years in isolation, communing with their Essence, before finally unlocking a greater power within themselves.

The chart below shows how many experience points are necessary before a Solar becomes eligible to raise his Essence. **Solar experience does not count toward this total.** If using the option for advanced Solar characters found in Chapter Three, reduce all values by 50 points.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Essence Rating	**Experience Points needed**
Essence 2	50 experience points
Essence 3	125 experience points
Essence 4	200 experience points
Essence 5	300 experience points
Essence 6+	Only available at Storyteller's discretion

[END TABLE]

Storyteller Characters and Advancement

A final word on Storyteller characters and experience points: the rules above are intended to make playing and advancing characters exciting and rewarding. They're *not* an attempt to model the average growth curve of Exalted power within the setting. Storyteller characters grow at the rate the events of the story, their personality, and their inherent potential dictates, rather than according to training times or expenditure tables, and **Storyteller characters don't track or spend experience points**.

To be clear, players' characters are likely to be exceptional individuals relative to other Chosen. Unless your game features a lot of downtime, your players' characters are likely to ascend to heights of power within a year or two of Exaltation that the average Exalt takes decades to attain. The rest of the setting isn't intended to keep pace with them (although their most direct rivals might).

On average, most Celestial Exalts who don't fall to the Wyld Hunt in their early days manage to reach Essence 3, though it takes decades or longer for many to get there. Of those that survive beyond the span of a mortal lifetime, a significant number eventually reach Essence 4. Essence 5 is a mark of extreme prowess, vanishingly rare among the ranks of the comparatively short-lived Dragon-Blooded and noteworthy even among centuries-old elder Celestial Exalted. To achieve such power in a matter of years rather than decades or centuries is the mark of a great prodigy.

To climb beyond the earth-shaking power of Essence 5 to even greater heights was a remarkable feat even for the ancient heroes of the First Age, and such matters are beyond the scope of this book.

Her mother always said that rain was the tears of Daana'd—one droplet for each transgression against the Immaculate Philosophy. It had been raining more, lately.

Her name was Peleps Marani. By the grace of the Scarlet Empress she served the Realm as magistrate. She had walked down every road on the Blessed Isle, and her bones were growing tired—like the Realm's own bones, she feared.

With the Empress missing, the protection of the magistracy had vanished, and her enemies were many. Her duty was all she had left, faithfully protecting her treacherous charges. And they needed her sorely. The Anathema were spreading. Stories spread, truths hidden among rumors and deceptions.

Mere weeks ago, a student at the Spiral Academy had burst into golden light. The death toll from her escape was terrible. Among sailors, she had heard rumors about a ship that sailed against the wind, faster than any other vessel, and whose rag-tag crew fought with the skill and discipline of elite Realm soldiers. And from the southeastern Threshold, she had received a missive detailing a new heresy: the Cult of Hesiesh, Dragon of Light. A sun-god.

The village huddled in fear next to the bay. Garish paint couldn't hide the state of dilapidation, nor the thin layer of grime that covered everything.

She walked into the plaza. Empty, but for one figure—a beautiful young man whose robes hung open to show his slender, muscular torso, his lack of a right hand only accentuating his perfection.

Her commanding voice rang out: "I would speak to the village elder."

The young man smirked, and nodded to someone unseen. She heard footsteps behind her. "You will speak to me, magistrate." His voice was as smooth as his skin. On his forehead appeared a glowing symbol. Solar Anathema. Forsaken Caste.

She turned to run. A spear whispered towards her neck without warning, but her hand flew up instinctively and swept the tip aside with two fingers. She struck at her attacker, a surly-looking man who was probably portly once, and embedded her bare hand in his chest up to the wrist.

Her loping run was spry for someone of her age, and doubly so for her full suit of armor. She drew her hook-nosed hammer from its hoop at her thigh, and raised it firmly.

With a crash, another assailant leapt out of a window behind the magistrate. The attacker's axe swung in a wide arc, but the magistrate spun around, presenting her sturdy breastplate to the blow. A strike from the hammer left the young warrior gurgling, coughing up water.

The old soldier rounded a corner, a clear run to the harbor—freedom. With the blessing of Daana'd, she could stay close to the bottom and swim for a few hours. She doubted even the Solar could emulate that.

Her legs carried her forward with a speed mortal athletes could envy. Only a few dozen paces…

The man seemed to come from thin air. He dropped down in front of her, drew his blade and flourished it, grinning a roguish grin. Such a pity that those looks were wasted on an Anathema.

"My dear magistrate, you are resourceful. My name is One Million Perfect Petals, and it shall be my pleasure to cross blades with one of your caliber."

He dashed, and left his image in the air. The blade lashed out, and her reflexes were only just sufficient—the sword nipped at her sleeve. She swung at his head, but his blade moved faster than she could perceive and intercepted the blow. He crouched and swept at her legs. She jumped clear, and lashed out with a spinning back-kick. He slipped under it and slashed her armored thigh, chest, and wrist, striking three points in one motion. She fell heavily on her back, her hammer flipping out of reach. The tip of his sword was at her neck.

"You have been betrayed." His expression grew grim. "So have I. They never seem to appreciate devotion, even centuries-long. This is not the Realm you swore your life to protect, magistrate. And I have need of a… well, a second-in-command."

He sheathed his blade and offered her his hand.

"Join me. Let us have our revenge together, and put things right."

The rain kept beating down.

Chapter Five: Systems and Conflict

Now that you're familiar with the world of **Exalted** and how to make a character, this chapter explains the rules by which the game is played. The purpose of these rules is to heighten dramatic tension by introducing an element of chance and uncertainty, particularly in the face of opposition or difficult circumstances. Taken as a whole, these rules comprise the Storyteller System on which **Exalted** operates.

Before we get started, here are the three most important rules:

The Golden Rule: If you don't like one of these rules, change it. If a rule is getting in the way of having fun, throw it out. If you have an idea that would work better for your group than one of the rules here, go with that. Nobody knows better than you what you'll find fun.

The Orichalcum Rule: This is a big game with lots of rules, set in an even bigger and more complex world, and players are endlessly inventive. If you ever find that by following the letter of the rules, you get a result that *doesn't make sense* in the course of the story, *the rules are wrong, the story is right*. If the rules suggest something dumb or nonsensical or just plain not fun, ignore them or change them. Story comes before adherence to the rules.

The Storyteller's Rule: A lot of the rules in **Exalted**, especially the combat engine, are heavy abstractions rather than faithful simulations. Storyteller, if it seems to you like a player is using the letter of the rules to muck up the spirit of the game and the fun of the story, then that particular rules loophole doesn't work. You are explicitly empowered to call shenanigans whenever it seems necessary—the rules can't account for everything, and any interpretation of a Charm or other mechanic away from its intended function isn't legal unless you say it is.

Before We Begin

Exalted is a big game with lots of rules. The intention is to provide a built-in sense of style, some challenge, and lots of tactical options when the game gets competitive, such as during combat. We don't recommend trying to memorize all these rules at once—start simple, and then add in more nuanced bits like taking cover, stealth, and naval combat as you go. Here's what you *really need* to get started:

• Basic action resolution, setting difficulties, and how penalties work, on pages XX-XX.

• The fundamentals of combat, including attack, defense, and movement, on pages XX-XX.

• The basics of social influence—how to alter Intimacies and how to persuade people to do things. This is on pages XX-XX.

• **If you are the Storyteller**, you should know how battle groups work, detailed on pages XX-XX.

For other stuff—crafting, sailing, environmental hazards, poison, combat gambits—try adding one or two of these rules in with each game session, and you'll have a much easier time than if you try memorizing it all at once.

Glossary

A number of specific terms appear repeatedly throughout this chapter. The most common and important are collected here for easy reference.

Ability: A trait representing learned skills or knowledge. Abilities are added to an *Attribute* to determine your basic *dice pool* for most tasks.

action: Something a character does that's resolved within the Storyteller system. There are several types of action, described in more detail on page XX. Additionally, two particular types of actions are important in combat—*combat actions* and *reflexive actions*.

aggravated (damage): Produced by certain magical effects that modify *lethal damage*, aggravated damage cannot be healed magically.

Attribute: A trait representing innate capabilities, Physical, Social, or Mental. An Attribute is added to an *Ability* to determine your basic *dice pool* for most tasks.

base Initiative: The value that a character's Initiative resets to after landing a successful ***decisive*** *attack*. This is usually 3 Initiative.

bashing (damage): Produced by ***decisive*** *attacks*. The least severe variety of *Health Track damage* a character can suffer, representing blunt impacts, contusions, and bruising. A character whose *Health Track* is filled with bashing damage is rendered unconscious.

botch: A roll which has failed in some dramatic and notable fashion, due to gaining no successes and displaying one or more results of 1.

combat action: The action a character takes on her turn in combat—usually an attack. A character can take only a single combat action per round, unless she flurries.

damage: The result of attacks launched by one character against another. Damage may be applied either to a character's *Initiative* score or to his *Health Track*. The latter comes in three varieties: *bashing*, *lethal*, and *aggravated*.

decisive attack: A risky, pivotal attack within a combat scene, which may decide the outcome of a fight. Attempts to *damage* an opponent's *Health Track*.

Defense: A *static value* which establishes how difficult it is for others to attack the character, based on the higher of the character's *Evasion* or *Parry*. See page XX.

dice pool: The number of dice rolled to determine failure or *success* (and the degree of success) for a character's *action*. Dice pools are usually determined by adding an *Attribute* to an *Ability*, plus any relevant modifiers.

difficulty: The number of *successes* required on a roll for an action to succeed.

Double 10s: A result of 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*. This rule applies to almost all rolls save for **decisive** damage rolls.

Double 9s: When this rule is in effect, a result of 9 or 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*.

Double 8s: When this rule is in effect, a result of 8, 9, or 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*.

Double 7s: When this rule is in effect, a result of 7, 8, 9, or 10 on any rolled die is counted as two *successes*.

Evasion: A *static value* describing how well a character can dodge attacks. Can be used to determine *Defense*.

flurry: A rule allowing characters to take two combat actions in a single turn in exchange for suffering certain penalties. See page XX.

gambit: A special maneuver whose execution is similar to a ***decisive*** *attack*, but which is intended to shift the tactical parameters of battle, such as by disarming or unhorsing an opponent.

goal number: The total number of cumulative successes necessary to complete an extended action.

Guile: A *static value* which establishes how difficult it is for others to read the character's intentions and motives. See page XX.

Hardness: A value establishing a character's incredible toughness, due to magic, mystical armor, or superhuman prowess. Protects against ***decisive*** *attacks*.

Health Track: A series of boxes measuring a character's physical well-being. When these are all filled in with *damage*, a character is unconscious, dying, or dead.

Initiative: A trait abstracting combat advantage, and determining the order in which characters take turns during combat. This very important trait changes rapidly during battle. See page XX.

Initiative (damage): Produced by ***withering*** *attacks*, Initiative damage causes the character's *Initiative* rating to drop (and usually the attacker's Initiative rating to increase by an equal amount).

Initiative Break: An *Initiative* bonus granted for forcing an enemy into *Initiative Crash*.

Initiative Crash: A state wherein a character is on the ropes and losing a fight, signified by an *Initiative* value of 0 or below.

Initiative Shift: A dramatic reversal of fortune which occurs when a character in *Initiative Crash* Crashes the enemy who Crashed him.

inspire: A social action which inflames passions, often with unpredictable results.

instill: A social action which creates or modifies Intimacies.

interval: The amount of time between rolls in an extended action.

Intimacy: A trait which describes people, places, things, or ideals that are important to a character.

lethal (damage): Produced by ***decisive*** *attacks*. Severe *damage* to a character's *Health Track*, representing edged weapons, arrows, and other attacks which inflict grievous bodily harm. A character whose *Health Track* is filled with lethal damage is either dead or dying.

minimum damage: The lowest possible number of damage dice a ***withering*** *attack* can roll. *Soak* cannot reduce a ***withering*** *attack* below this value. Minimum damage is normally equal to the Overwhelming value of the weapon used to make the attack—see page XX.

onslaught penalty: A -1 penalty to a character's *Defense*, lasting until his next turn, that is incurred every time he suffers an attack.

Parry: A *static value* describing how well a character can block or parry attacks. Can be used to determine *Defense*.

persuade: A social action which convinces characters to do things.

reflexive action: An action that takes little to no time or concentration, or which occurs automatically.

Resolve: A *static value* which establishes how difficult it is for others to change the character's mind through argument or emotional appeal. See page XX.

soak: A value which determines how well-protected the character is from injury, due to toughness and armor. Soak only protects against ***withering*** *attacks*.

static value: A fixed value generated by a character's traits, used as a difficulty rating for hostile individuals attempting to act on the character in certain ways. **Exalted** has static values: *Defense*, *Evasion*, *Guile*, *Parry*, and *Resolve*.

stunt: An action which is described in a dramatic fashion, granting the player a bonus.

success: (1) A die which matches or exceeds a roll's *target number.* (2) A roll whose number of successes match or exceed the *difficulty* of the *action*.

target number: Abbreviated as TN. The number which a *dice pool's* dice must match or exceed in order to produce *successes*. Virtually all dice pools are rolled against TN 7.

terminus: The number of rolls allowed during certain extended actions (p. XX).

threshold successes: Successes in excess of the minimum number required to succeed at an action. These are relevant to some types of actions, particularly attacks.

withering attack: An attack or series of attacks which move a combat *scene* toward its conclusion, but which will not end the fight in and of themselves. Attempts to *damage* an opponent's *Initiative*.

General System Structure

Creation is an enormous, diverse place where almost anything might happen—and need to be resolved by the players and Storyteller. Although **Exalted** has many rules, they almost all refer back to a simple resolution system, explained below.

Time

Exalted has five general measurements to describe the division of time within the game, progressing from the largest to the smallest unit:

• **Chronicle**—A complete game focusing on a continuous series of characters or events. Similar to the full run of a television series of cycle of books.

• **Story**—A discreet portion of narrative that often takes several sessions to play out. Stories generally have an overall goal or framework, such as "Overthrow the satrap," "Find the ancient ruins of Lost Zarlath," or "Escape from the Wyld Hunt after being ambushed and trapped in the city."

• **Session**—A single evening of gaming, generally encompassing several scenes.

• **Scene**—A segment of action and roleplaying that takes place without a cut in time and location, like a scene in a film. A scene takes as few or as many *rounds* as are necessary to resolve events—in-setting, a scene might be as short as a few minutes or as long as a few hours.

• **Round**—A unit of time used to measure combat scenes, considered long enough to take one action. A round normally lasts about three seconds in combat situations, but could potentially represent more time during fights involving large battle groups. The point during a round when you declare your character's action is called your *turn*.

Existing outside of this scale of progression, there is also:

• **Downtime**—Time between scenes or sessions that pass without roleplaying, which is narrated in an abstract fashion—"Three weeks later, you finally arrive in Nexus," or "My character spends the remaining days before the festival rigorously practicing martial arts on the mountaintop."

Dice

The **Exalted** Storyteller system uses 10-sided dice; each player should have at least 10 dice of her own, though dice can be shared in a pinch. 10-sided dice can be purchased at most hobby outlets, or from online retailers; alternately, countless free virtual dice-rolling applications are available online.

Traits

Characters possess a variety of *traits* describing their innate capabilities, trained skills, and other measurable qualities, such as their Strength, Intelligence, and Stealth ratings. Most traits are rated in dots (•) ranging from 1 to 5, much like the "five-star" system critics use to rate movies, wherein • is a low or poor rating, •• is average, and ••••• denotes superlative excellence at the outer edge of human potential. These traits are explained in greater detail in Chapter Four of this book.

Dice Pools

When a character takes an action in **Exalted**, her chance of success is represented by her *dice pool*, which is normally formed by combining the most logically applicable Attribute and Ability that pertain to the task. For example, a character attempting to pick a lock (a task requiring nimble hands and criminal expertise) would combine her Dexterity rating with her Larceny rating. Assuming she has Dexterity 3 and Larceny 2, she then has a dice pool of 5 dice.

Which Attribute and Ability should be combined to attempt an action is generally up to the best judgment of the Storyteller.

Determining Difficulty

Having determined what dice pool to use, the Storyteller then considers the task the player wants his character to attempt and assigns it a *difficulty rating*.

As great heroes, **Exalted** characters are assumed to possess abundant confidence and competence. Tasks which run-of-the-mill individuals in Creation would consider challenging (such as picking a lock or removing a patient's appendix without killing him) are ordinary fare for heroes. Such tasks are appropriate for **difficulty 1**.

Performing challenging tasks under significant duress (such as picking a lock or removing an appendix in the dead of night, without sufficient light, in the midst of a howling storm) is appropriate for **difficulty 2**.

Tasks which might daunt even heroes, by contrast, are appropriate for **difficulty 3**. Examples might include plucking a gem from a nest of writhing serpents without being bitten, or breaking a man-eating horse born in the depths of the Wyld so it accepts the hero as its rider.

Performing such tasks under significant duress (such as plucking the aforementioned gem while the temple collapses around the intrepid thief, or breaking the man-eating horse in the midst of a raging forest fire) are appropriate for **difficulty 4**.

Near-impossible feats, even by heroic standards, are appropriate for **difficulty 5**. Examples might include reading a letter in pitch blackness by feeling the texture of ink on the paper, leaping over the rail of a sorcerer's flying chariot to land safely in a hay cart hundreds of feet below, or running for three consecutive days and nights without succumbing to exhaustion.

> Static Values
>
> Rather than generating dice pools, characters occasionally generate *static values*—fixed ratings which are recorded on the character sheet. These are normally used to determine the difficulty for hostile individuals to act on the character—for example, a character's Defense rating determines the difficulty of attempts to attack her. **Exalted** has the following static values: Evasion, Parry, Defense (which is equal to the higher of Evasion or Parry), Resolve, and Guile, detailed on page XX for Defense and XX for Resolve and Guile.

Rolling the Dice

Now that you know what to roll and how to determine the difficulty of an action, here's how to read the results.

Roll a number of dice equal to your dice pool. Each die that shows a 7, 8, 9 or 10 is considered a *success*. In fact, each die showing a 10 usually counts as *two successes* (this is known as the *Double 10s* rule). For an action to succeed, the player must accumulate a number of successes equal to or greater than the action's difficulty rating.

Success: To return to our earlier example of the lock-picking hero: Let's say she's picking the lock at twilight in the midst of a storm. The lighting is poor and the rumble of thunder masks the sounds of the tumblers turning. The Storyteller determines that the action is difficulty 2. Since the character possesses Dexterity 3 and Larceny 2, the player rolls five dice against difficulty 2, garnering results of 1, 3, 6, 7, and 10—three successes. The door opens.

Successes in excess of the number required are known as *threshold successes*. In the above example, the thief succeeded with one threshold success. Threshold successes are relevant to certain actions detailed later in this chapter, such as combat.

Failure: If the roll generates no successes, or generates fewer successes than the difficulty set by the Storyteller, then the action has *failed*. Depending on whether it makes sense, the character might or might not be allowed to attempt the action again. In the example of the thief, the Storyteller might rule that the character may attempt to pick the lock again, but now hears a guard approaching—if she doesn't succeed this time, she won't have time to hide before the guard comes into view.

Botch: If the roll generates no successes and one or more dice come up showing a result of 1, the action has *botched*. A botch means that the action has failed in such a way that it dramatically complicates the story—perhaps the thief's attempts to pick the lock have caused her picks to break off inside, jamming the lock so it cannot be opened at all! The character will have to find another way to reach her objective.

> Automatic Actions and Difficulty 0
>
> Many actions that a character takes aren't dramatic at all, and aren't worth breaking out the dice for. A character can generally lace up her boots, navigate stairs, and cook breakfast without needing to roll to determine success—she's simply assumed to be competent at things she does on a regular basis, and the story moves on.
>
> Sometimes, however, thanks to magic, penalties suffered by enemies, or very low static values, characters may occasionally find themselves attempting a rolled action with at difficulty 0. Treat this as a difficulty 1 action which cannot be botched. The most common sources of difficulty 0 are low-Defense (p. XX) combatants suffering penalties due to armor or magic.

Stunts

Exalted is a game of cinematic action and mighty heroes who go crashing through the world and look cool doing it. Characters needn't choose between doing the sensible thing or the stylish thing—the coolest course of action is also the optimal one. Such actions are known as *stunts*.

For an action to qualify as a stunt, it must fulfill two criteria, as approved by the Storyteller:

• The action must be cooler than a basic declaration of intent (see below for examples).

• The action cannot be boring. This is not meant to act as a harsh quality bar players must strive to jump over—mostly it means repetitive stunts stop qualifying as stunts, as they're no longer entertaining. This also means **any stunt so long and overwrought that it bores rather than excites isn't a stunt**.

Stunts may be used as often as desired—and to be clear, the average player can *and should* use a stunt to enhance almost every action her character takes. Storytellers are encouraged to err in the player's favor when deciding what is or isn't a stunt.

• **One-Point Stunts:** The benefits of stunting are simple: any rolled action enhanced by a stunt gains two extra dice. If the stunted action is the application of a static value (such as using

Defense to block an opponent's leaping sword slash), then that static value rises by 1. Players should be able to use a one-point stunt on almost every action.

• **Two-Point Stunts:** A two-point stunt stands above and beyond other stunts. These are intended to be less common than one-point stunts; to be a two-point stunt, the action needs to stand out memorably as a highlight of the scene. Exceptional stunts on rolled actions are rewarded with two extra dice and one automatic success. Exceptional stunts on static value applications raise the static value by 2. A player might get two or three of these in an evening of play.

Whenever a player describes a two-point stunt, her character gains a point of Willpower, up to a maximum of her permanent Willpower rating.

• **Three-Point Stunts:** These are stunts so cool that everyone at the table is impressed. These stunts are intended to be rare and memorable; to be a three-point stunt, the action needs to stand out as probably the coolest thing that's going to happen during the entire session. Three-point stunts on rolled actions are rewarded with two extra dice and two automatic successes. Three-point stunts on static value applications raise the static value by 3. A player probably won't manage a three-point stunt in every session—it's rare to see more than one out of the entire group in the course of a night of play.

Whenever a player describes a three-point stunt, her character gains two points of Willpower, which may take her above her permanent Willpower rating.

Finally, when a character performs an unnecessarily dangerous stunt (such as leaping over a roaring bonfire to strike at her opponent, or hurling herself off a tall building in an attempt to grapple a flying enemy), the Storyteller is urged not to level devastating consequences should the stunt fail. In the above examples, the character might have an opportunity to beat out the flames kindling on her clothing before suffering any damage, or should be provided a roll to grab onto a ledge or other surface to keep from plummeting to a messy death. **Exalted** players shouldn't avoid reckless heroism for fear of the obvious danger.

Stunt Examples

Not a stunt: I attack the archer by the tree.

Stunt: Ducking under another arrow, I race up to the archer and swing my daiklave across his torso, slamming him into the tree. Blood stipples the falling leaves that rain down around us.

Not a stunt: I release him from the grapple by throwing him.

Stunt: I hoist the Exigent into the air and slam him down through the table with a ringing crash.

Not a stunt: I parry the soldiers' attacks.

Stunt: I swing my daiklave left-to-right, scattering the soldiers' spears like toys.

Not a stunt: I climb up onto the roof.

Stunt: I run halfway up the wall, leap, grab the edge of the roof, and flip myself up to land easily on the red shingles.

Not a stunt: I try to bribe the clerk to let me in without an appointment.

Stunt: I walk up to the clerk's desk. "I'm here to see Magistrate Chen—promptly." I let the coins in my hand ring audibly against the surface of his desk to punctuate my words.

Not a stunt: I cast Invulnerable Skin of Bronze.

Stunt: A storm of whirling Essence coalesces into a scrawl of Old Realm characters printed upon my skin, which then spread and harden into an invulnerable shell of living bronze.

Action Complications

The rules above detail a normal dice roll. They're used to resolve the vast majority of all actions and circumstances in **Exalted**—but not all. What if another character is trying to stop your action from succeeding? What if your action is merely one step in a long and complex series of actions intended to produce a specific outcome? What if you have magic helping you out—or hindering you?

Bonuses and Penalties

Your dice pools may be changed by *modifiers*—bonuses or penalties that increase or decrease a character's likelihood of success by adding or subtracting dice from her dice pool. The most common sources of modifiers in **Exalted** are *situational penalties* (penalties based on the circumstances in which the action is attempted), *equipment modifiers* (bonuses or penalties based on tools used to assist or hamper the action), and *Charm modifiers* (bonuses or penalties based on the use of magic to assist or impede the action).

Bonuses or penalties add to or subtract from the character's relevant dice pool by the number indicated. For example, a character suffering under a divine curse that levels a -2 penalty to all attempts to transgress the laws of the city Great Forks would lose two dice from her dice pool every time she attempted an action that broke the city's laws.

Bonuses and penalties also occasionally affect a character's static values. In these situations, the static value is simply raised or lowered by the amount specified.

Equipment and Charm modifiers are generally pre-set, depending on the magic or equipment being employed. Situational penalties, on the other hand, are set by the Storyteller whenever it seems appropriate to do so (see below).

Penalties cannot reduce a character's dice pools or static values below 0. Charm bonuses are subject to some special limitations—see page XX in the next chapter.

When and How to Use Situational Penalties

Most of the time, advantageous or disadvantageous environmental factors will simply determine the difficulty of an action, rather than producing penalties or bonuses. A character navigating his ship into a narrow cove with a favorable wind and a calm sea would be facing a difficulty 1 action—no bonus is necessary. If the waters are choppy and the wind seems to want to carry the ship into danger, this would produce a difficulty 2 action rather than a penalty.

Penalties are applied when the difficulty of an action is already pre-set—usually by a static value possessed by another character. For example, an attempt to shoot another character with an arrow always has a difficulty equal to the target's Defense. But what if the Night Caste hero

Harmonious Jade attempts to shoot a marauding Abyssal in the middle of a cloudy night, with a high wind blowing? In this case, the difficulty of the action remains unchanged, but the archer suffers a penalty to her dice pool.

Penalties may also be applied when there is no difficulty, as in the case of opposed rolls. For example, if one character is rolling (Dexterity + Stealth) to hide, and another is rolling (Perception + Awareness) to find the first character, there's no difficulty.

A list of example penalties follows, demonstrating how characters might be hampered by certain factors:

Example Martial Penalties

-1: Character fights in poor lighting, or attempts a ranged attack in high wind. Character attacks on poor footing, such as slick rocks.

-3: Character attacks while standing on perilous terrain such as a narrow tree limb or balancing on a rope. Character suffers multiple minor complications, such as fog *and* high wind. Character is trying to fight while blind, and must rely on other senses.

-5: Character is fighting in the sweltering haze of a burning building, choking on smoke and avoiding nearby flames. Character is fighting blind in an environment full of noise or other factors that make her other senses unreliable.

Example Social Penalties

-1: Character's requests or actions represent an unknowing social *faux pas* in the culture he's dealing with.

-3: Character's bearing is inappropriate for the circumstances (showing up to a royal court in stained traveling clothes and smelling of sweat and horses).

-5: Character's bearing is *wildly* inappropriate for the circumstances (showing up to a royal court naked and covered in blood).

Example Opposed Roll Penalties

-1: Character engages in a riddle contest, but the riddles draw on cultural idioms and symbolism alien to the character.

-3: Character runs a foot race against an opponent across harsh terrain such as deep snow or heavy underbrush.

-5: Character attempts to notice an assassin sneaking up on him, but the assassin is perfectly, supernaturally silent and concealed in shadows.

Extended Actions

Sometimes *whether* a character can do something isn't as important as *how fast*. Extended rolls exist to measure such situations—how long does it take to scale the side of a manse while under fire from archers? In a foot race, who can reach the finish line first?

An extended roll has a dice pool and a difficulty just like a normal roll, but also has a *goal number*, an *interval*, and sometimes a *terminus*.

An extended roll's goal number is a number set by the Storyteller. When a character takes an extended action, the player rolls her dice pool not once, but repeatedly, until she accumulates a

number of successes equal to the action's goal number. Difficulty determines how difficult it is to make any advancement at all in the action, while the goal number describes how much work it will take to complete the task. When determining a character's current success total, count only those successes that **meet or exceed** the action's difficulty. For example, a player attempting an extended action with difficulty 3 who rolled four successes would accumulate two cumulative successes toward her goal number.

An extended action's interval measures how much time elapses in-game between rolls. For two characters climbing up a tree to retrieve a goddess's golden arrow, an interval of one turn might be appropriate. For two ship captains racing across the Great Western Ocean to follow directions to an island lost since the First Age, their navigation rolls might be made at intervals of one week.

If a character fails a roll on an extended action, her effort isn't for naught—she simply doesn't make any appreciable progress during that interval. A botch on an extended roll ruins the entire effort, however, and forces the character to start over.

Finally, some extended rolls also have a *terminus*—a limit (usually time-based) on how much effort the character can put into the roll before overall success or failure is determined. An extended roll's terminus is the number of rolls the character can make before the extended roll is finished. An extended action with a terminus of 4, for example, would automatically fail if the character hadn't met her goal number after four rolls.

Opposed Actions

Sometimes, two characters attempt to act and there can only be one winner. Whether it's tug-of-war or two rival singers attempting to impress a god with their skills, such contests are decided through opposed rolls. Opposed rolls are simple—they work just like normal rolls, except they don't have a difficulty. Instead, it's a straight competition to see which player's action generates more successes.

In the event of a tie, the Storyteller awards victory to the player with the best stunt.

Reflexive Actions

Most of the time, you can only take one action in a round, on your turn. Some rolled actions, however, happen automatically or **by reflex**. These are called *reflexive actions*, and a character can take them at **any** time they'd be appropriate. Rolling (Perception + Awareness) to spot another character attempting to hide from you is one example of a reflexive action—you're constantly perceiving your environment whether you're trying to or not. Another might be rolling (Stamina + Resistance) to fight off an illness. You don't need to concentrate to do that—your body does it automatically. The most common reflexive action in the **Exalted** system is the basic movement action, which carries a character across a range band (p. XX).

Combat

The Solar Exalted have returned to a world teeming with enemies, from the hired armies of greedy princes and the elite assassins of the Wyld Hunt to hostile Exalts determined to halt the Solars' rise to power. Battle is unavoidable.

How Combat Works

Combat in **Exalted** is a dynamic and cinematic affair. Heroes leap into battle, daiklaves flashing. They knock opponents through teahouse railings in showers of splintered wood; they're hurled through stone walls by the blows of terrible demons, only to rise and rush back into the fray. Nimble demigods run across treetops or race over the massed arrow barrages of armies. Swordsmen drive each other through rain-slick streets in symphonies of ringing steel, until a final, fatal blow settles the fight.

In order to win a battle in the **Exalted** Storyteller System, characters must seize the upper hand during the course of battle (by raising their Initiative) and then find the proper moment to capitalize on their advantage with a decisive blow (filling an enemy's Health Track with damage). A character whose Health Track is completely filled with damage is Incapacitated—unconscious (if his last Health Level is marked off with bashing damage), or dead or dying (if filled with lethal damage). In any event, he's not a threat any more.

Combat proceeds in a series of rounds, during which each combatant acts once; the order in which characters take turns acting is determined by their Initiative ratings (in order from highest to lowest). Generally each combatant will attempt to attack another character in each round, attempting to either bolster her Initiative at the expense of an enemy's Initiative (known as a **withering** attack), or to "cash in" a high Initiative value to damage an opponent's Health Track and hopefully defeat him (known as a **decisive** attack).

When no enemies remain to offer resistance, the battle is over.

Withering and Decisive Attacks

Whenever a character attacks, his player must decide whether the attack is **withering** or **decisive**. **Withering** attacks attempt to damage their target's Initiative score, raising the attacker's Initiative by the same amount of damage inflicted on the target. **Decisive** attacks inflict damage directly to an opponent's Health Track, but their potential to inflict that damage is determined by the attacker's current Initiative rating.

Withering attacks model the rising tension of cinematic combat, allowing drama to drive the mechanics of battle. Daiklaves and armor ring in showers of sparks. Near-misses cleave and shatter the fighters' surroundings, as the two drive one another across the battlefield. These are the exchanges that escalate a battle toward its conclusion—in cinema, it is the beginning of the fight where martial artists exchange blows that sting and stagger, or where two swordsmen clash and attempt to force an opening.

Because **withering** attacks determine the ebb and flow of battle, they factor in all the advantages that combatants brings to the battlefield—the strength of their weapons, their fighting prowess, and the protection of their armor. The more advantages a combatant has in a fight, the easier it is for him to seize the upper hand!

An opponent who is 'struck' by a **withering** attack is disadvantaged in some way. He may be left off-balance as his desperate avoidance leaves him backing toward a corner, or landing on unstable footing. He may suffer a glancing blow from a weapon that sets him off-balance, or suffer an unarmed strike that winds him, but doesn't put him down for the count. Because **withering** attacks only damage the target's Initiative, they never inflict more than superficial damage to the opponent—a dramatic scratch or slight bruise at most.

If **withering** attacks are the cinematic build-up which makes up the majority of clashes between heroes, **decisive** attacks are the turning points or conclusions of such battles. In a **decisive** attack,

the character makes a dramatic play to end the fight; the result of the dice roll tells whether he succeeds completely, partially, or not at all.

Successful **decisive** attacks inflict damage to the opponent's Health Track. A daiklave rips through the opponent's chest or beheads him entirely; a warhammer staves in ribs; a martial artist lands a brutal spinning kick to the opponent's temple, staggering him or knocking him out. One character seizes the Initiative he's accumulated and uses it to end the fight—or tries to. A character that attempts a **decisive** attack and fails cedes some of his advantage, and may soon find himself facing a comeback from his opponent.

Because **decisive** attacks are the result of seizing the Initiative provided by **withering** attacks, the quality of the combatants' arms has only a limited effect on their outcome. Even a lowly mortal hero armed with a knife may strike down one of the Solar Exalted, should the battle have brought him to the right moment.

Withering Attacks and Drama

To be clear, **withering** and **decisive** attacks are a game abstraction used to model the cinematic nature of combat between heroes in Creation. Individuals within the world of **Exalted** would recognize no such distinction; setting aside feints and the like, characters absolutely intend for most **withering** attacks to injure or kill their target. The players and Storyteller declare attacks as **withering** or **decisive** to create satisfying and exciting battles; for characters, each cut and thrust is made in deadly earnest.

The default assumption is that a **withering** attack depicts a glancing blow—something that grazes the character, or strikes his armor without wounding. Players might use stunts to also depict successful **withering** attacks as near-misses that characters unbalance themselves avoiding, or put themselves into bad tactical positions parrying at the last moment, but the usual assumption is that it's a glancing blow.

Withering attacks must be described as serious combat maneuvers—they're usually intended as killing or disabling blows by the characters who make them. You might also describe a **withering** attack as a feint to draw your opponent off-guard, or an intricate kata intended to force an opening for a finishing blow. What's *not* valid, ever, is "I wither him to steal some Initiative." Initiative is a system abstraction of momentum and tactical advantage—you have to *do things* to establish that advantage. It isn't something combatants directly interact with in the setting.

Resolving Attacks

Explained below are the steps in resolving attacks, followed by an explanation of the elements involved.

Resolving a Withering Attack

First, you decide what combat Ability your character is attacking with—Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee, or Thrown. Based on this decision, you make an attack roll:

Step One: Roll (Dexterity + [relevant combat Ability] + weapon's accuracy and any other modifiers) against a difficulty of the target's Defense (see p. XX). If the roll produces fewer successes than the target's Defense, it fails.

Step Two: If attack succeeds, determine its raw damage. Raw damage is an attack's damage rating before soak (see p. XX) is subtracted. Raw damage is usually calculated as (attacker's

Strength + weapon's damage value + threshold successes on attack roll in Step One.) A few weapons, such as firewands and crossbows, omit Strength from this calculation—see Chapter Nine.

Step Three: Subtract target's soak from the attack's raw damage. This cannot produce a result lower than the weapon's Overwhelming rating (see p. XX). Roll a dice pool equal to whatever damage remains after soak. **Unlike decisive attacks, the Double 10s rule *does* apply to withering damage rolls.**

Step Four: First, you gain one point of Initiative simply for landing a successful **withering** attack. Then count up the successes on the damage roll. Subtract that amount from the target's Initiative, and add it to your character's Initiative.

Resolving a Decisive Attack

Decisive attacks carry a penalty if used unsuccessfully—choose your moment to launch **decisive** attacks carefully! As with a **withering** attack, you start by selecting which combat Ability your character is attacking with.

Step One: Roll (Dexterity + [relevant combat Ability] + any modifiers) against a difficulty of the target's Defense. You do *not* add your weapon's accuracy to this roll. If the roll fails, and your current Initiative is 1-10, your character loses 2 Initiative. If it's 11+ and the attack fails, your character loses 3 Initiative.

Step Two: If attack is successful, roll your current Initiative value as a dice pool. **The Double 10s rule (p. XX) does not apply to this roll.** If your target has Hardness (p. XX) equal to or greater than your damage pool in this step, you inflict no damage but your attack is still considered a success; proceed to Step Four.

Step Three: Count up the successes on the Initiative roll. Apply that many levels of damage to the target's Health Track. This damage will be bashing or lethal, as determined by the weapon used (see p. XX).

Step Four: If the attack was successful, reset your character's Initiative value to 3 (also known as "Resetting to base value.")

Elements of Combat

Combat contains a number of special rules and traits, each of which are explained in more detail below:

Combat Timing

Timing is key to battles in **Exalted**—those who control the tempo of a fight are most likely to seize victory. It's thus important to understand how time is measured during a fight:

• **Scene**—Sometimes a battle constitutes a scene unto itself, while other times it is merely part of a larger scene. Any effect stating that it lasts for one scene will effectively persist at least for the rest of the current battle.

• **Join Battle**—Join Battle is a roll (detailed below) which precedes every fight. All participants in the fight make this roll before the first *round* begins. The results of this roll dictate characters' *Initiative* ratings in the first round.

• **Round**—A round is the basic measure of combat, during which characters take *turns* acting, from highest *Initiative* value to lowest. Characters with identical Initiative values act simultaneously. A round ends when all characters have taken their turns.

• **Tick**—The smallest measurable unit of time in the **Exalted** system, ticks are used to measure certain actions taken within a *round*—generally magical actions (see Chapter Six). Ticks are numbered, and correspond to characters' *Initiative* ratings. For example, a Dawn Caste with an Initiative value of 7 will take her turn on tick 7 of the round. A Night Caste with Initiative 5 will take his action on tick 5 of the round—two ticks after the Dawn.

• **Turn**—The tick on which a player declares her character's combat action for the *round*. Characters' *Initiative* ratings determine the order in which they take their turns. A character may only take one turn per round, no matter how her Initiative may rise or fall.

Order of Action

Combat proceeds in rounds, with the characters acting in order of highest Initiative to lowest. Characters with equal Initiative values act simultaneously. Although a character's Initiative may shift during the course of a round, she may only take a single combat action during a round. Initiative values persist until something happens to change them, or until the end of the scene. Once all participants in the fight have acted ("Taken their turn"), the next round begins.

> Advanced Troubleshooting: Changing Initiative and Simultaneous Actions
>
> Once Charms get into play, a character's Initiative value can bounce up and down very quickly during a round. What if a character who has not yet taken her turn suddenly gains a great deal of Initiative, and finds herself with a higher Initiative value than other characters who have already taken their turns? What if this Initiative value is higher than the current tick the round is moving through?
>
> Characters cannot be forced to miss out on taking a turn during a round because of situations like this. If a character's Initiative suddenly changes in such a way that it indicates she should have already taken her turn, she takes her turn on the following tick.
>
> Finally, what if two characters act on the same tick and it becomes important to determine whose action resolves first, as in the case of two characters both attacking the same opponent, and both Crashing him simultaneously? They can't both get an Initiative Break bonus—so who attacked first? If one player wants to allow the other to go first, then he get to do so. If both players want to act first, flip a coin or have each simultaneously acting player roll a die to break the tie.

Join Battle

Join Battle is a reflexive action that automatically occurs for all characters at the beginning of combat. It measures a character's responsiveness and readiness when violence breaks out and things turn ugly—how fast can she drop into the mindset of a fighter, and how ready is she to take command of the pace of battle?

Join Battle is a (Wits + Awareness) roll. Count out the successes gained on this roll, then **add three.** This is your starting Initiative rating in the first round of battle. Because Join Battle is a commonly-used value, a space is provided to record it on your character sheet. Join Battle cannot be botched.

If a character joins the scene in the middle of an already-ongoing fight, her player immediately rolls Join Battle to determine starting Initiative.

Initiative

Initiative is possibly the most important element of combat. It not only determines what order characters take their turns in, but more importantly functions as an overall measure of the tempo of battle and a character's confidence and advantage within the fight. A character with high Initiative controls the flow of combat, forcing opponents to respond to his tactics and assaults; a character with low Initiative is on the ropes, clawing for an opening to turn the tide in his favor. Sudden reversals of fortune are not only possible but frequent, so it's normal for a character's Initiative rating to change from round to round. Gaining a high Initiative and then using it well is the key to victory in **Exalted**.

There is no limit on how high a character's Initiative may rise, nor on how low it can fall—Initiative may be driven down to 0 and even below, into negative numbers. This state is known as Initiative Crash.

Initiative Crash

A character whose Initiative value drops to 0 or below is in a state of Initiative Crash. He's on the ropes, having utterly lost control of the fight. So long as a Crashed character remains in that state, the following special rules apply:

• A Crashed character is considered to have Hardness 0 (see p. XX) regardless of any magic or equipment employed, unless it explicitly states that it provides Hardness in Crash.

• A character in Initiative Crash cannot launch **decisive** attacks.

• A character in Initiative Crash can't use Charms with the Perilous keyword (see p. XX).

• **Withering** attacks continue to affect a Crashed character normally, driving his Initiative deeper into negative values and granting Initiative to his attackers. However, if the Storyteller decides that a Crashed character has no hope of recovery against his opponents, and that his continued presence will only serve to give the players a "free" source of Initiative, she can declare the Crashed character defeated the next time he suffers a successful **withering** attack.

• If a character survives three consecutive turns spent in Initiative Crash, his Initiative resets to 3 at the beginning of his next turn. This is known as "Resetting to base Initiative."

• If a character enters Initiative Crash as a result of his own actions (such as by using a disengage action, which costs 2 Initiative to attempt, with only 2 Initiative remaining), he immediately loses another 5 Initiative.

Initiative Break

When a character forces an opponent into Initiative Crash with an attack, he gains what is known as an Initiative Break bonus. An Initiative Break bonus is a +5 bonus to Initiative. A character cannot gain an Initiative Break bonus from an enemy during the round that enemy recovers from Crash, or during the round that follows that.

If a character forces himself into Initiative Crash (such as by using a Charm which costs Initiative to activate), then the Initiative Break bonus is awarded to the opponent most directly

responsible for provoking the action which caused the character to Crash, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Initiative Shift

While suffering Initiative Crash, if you are able to Crash the opponent who Crashed you, you instantly return to base Initiative (unless this would cause you to lose Initiative) and make a Join Battle roll, adding the result to your Initiative. Your turn is then refreshed: any combat or movement actions you have used that turn are reset, allowing you to act again, immediately; however, should this renewed action be used to attack, you can only attack the character you Shifted against.

A character who entered Initiative Crash as a result of his own actions (such as by using a disengage action) cannot achieve Initiative Shift.

> Friendly Fire and Other Shenanigans
>
> **Question:** Can allies whomp on one another with **withering** attacks to manipulate Initiative values? For example, can a Circle's Twilight drop his Defense and let the Dawn beat on him to raise the Dawn's Initiative value quickly?
>
> **Answer:** No. **Withering** attacks are an abstraction of advantage against the enemy. They don't actually exist—and what's being abstracted in the above example doesn't make sense. Why would the Dawn attack his allies, if not under some form of mind control? The Twilight isn't an enemy, and so there's no advantage to be gained.
>
> Use common sense when adjudicating such situations—for example, a training duel between two friendly martial artists is an obvious exception to the above. Ultimately, if it seems like shenanigans to the Storyteller, it doesn't net anybody Initiative, as per the Storyteller's Rule on page XX.

Defense

It's safe to assume a character in a fight is trying to stay alive as best he can. As such, self-protection doesn't require any action taken—it's always happening! This is represented by a character's Defense static values.

Characters can protect themselves by attempting to parry or dodge attacks. Their skill at doing so is measured by their Parry and Evasion ratings.

A character's Parry rating is ([Dexterity + Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee, whichever is appropriate to the character's current armament] / 2, round up) + weapon's Defense bonus, if any. Characters wielding ranged weapons such as bows or chakrams cannot parry.

A character's Evasion rating is equal to ([Dexterity + Dodge] / 2, round up) – armor's mobility penalty, if any.

The highest applicable number among the two values is the character's overall Defense static value. The difficulty of all attacks made against the character is equal to her Defense value.

Any applicable specialties add +1 to the calculation before dividing by two and rounding up. Thus, an unarmored character with Dexterity 3, Dodge 3, and an "Unarmored" specialty would have Evasion 4.

Some bonuses or penalties will specify that they apply to your Parry or Evasion, while others modify your Defense, meaning that it modifies both Parry *and* Evasion.

Finally, there is a special kind of penalty that Defense ratings commonly suffer, known as an *onslaught penalty*. Every time an opponent attacks a character, that character suffers a cumulative -1 Defense penalty until his next turn. As a result, even mighty heroes should be wary of facing too many opponents all at once.

> Unblockable, Undodgeable
>
> Certain attacks, particularly attacks modified by some Charms, are unblockable, undodgeable, or both. An unblockable attack bypasses Parry entirely, necessitating an application of Evasion to defend against. Likewise, an undodgeable attack bypasses Evasion. Using an attack that's rolled but both unblockable and undodgeable is a difficulty zero action (p. XX).

Soak

Characters possess a trait called soak. Where Defense measures a character's ability to avoid harm altogether, soak determines how well-protected the character is from successful **withering** assaults. As such, soak is determined by a character's Stamina rating and the quality and type of his armor.

Natural soak: Characters can use their natural toughness to resist some amount of damage—a burly sailor or battle-conditioned soldier can shrug off more abuse than a small child or an overweight savant. As a result, all characters gain natural soak equal to their Stamina rating.

Armor soak: A character wearing armor enjoys the value provided by the armor, in addition to his natural soak—see page XX for a list of different armor types.

Total soak: A character's overall soak total is (her natural soak + her armor soak).

Using soak: Soak is only applied against **withering** attacks, representing the difficulty of gaining a **decisive** advantage against a sturdy or well-armored target.

Hardness

Certain Charms and magical armor grants a trait called Hardness. Hardness offers protection from **decisive** attacks; it has no use against **withering** attacks. If a **decisive** attack's damage dice pool is equal to or lower than the target's Hardness, the **decisive** attack can't inflict damage. A **decisive** attack that strikes but fails to penetrate the target's Hardness is still considered a successful attack, and causes Initiative to reset to 3 as normal. Unlike soak, Hardness does *not* subtract from an attack's damage.

Hardness doesn't stacks unless it explicitly says so. If a character has Hardness from multiple sources, he simply uses the best Hardness value.

Damage

Characters can suffer three kinds of damage from attacks in **Exalted**, detailed below.

Initiative damage: This is an abstracted kind of damage inflicted by **withering** attacks. It mostly represents bad positioning, tactical disadvantage, and discomfort—at most it might

represent a character getting banged around or scratched. Initiative damage causes the character's Initiative value to drop.

Bashing damage is inflicted by blunt force trauma such as fists or clubs, as well as sources of harm which don't inflict immediate severe bodily trauma, such as severe cold. **Decisive** attacks with bare hands and certain blunt weapons inflict bashing damage, which is applied to the character's Health Track.

Lethal damage is inflicted by attacks which cause blood to flow and flesh to tear, or which inflict immediate severe damage—swords, arrows, and fire all inflict lethal damage. **Decisive** attacks with swords, spears, arrows, and similarly lethal implements inflict lethal damage, which is applied to the character's Health Track.

Aggravated damage is a rare quality sometimes applied to lethal damage, usually by spells or Charms, which prevents magic from aiding in recovery from that damage.

> Useful Combat Calculations
>
> You'll use these values in combat a *lot*. It's a good idea to write them down so you don't have to calculate them at the table constantly.
>
> **Join Battle:** Wits + Awareness (plus 3 successes to determine starting Initiative).
>
> **Withering attack pool:** Dexterity + (Combat Ability) + weapon's accuracy
>
> **Decisive attack pool:** Dexterity + (Combat Ability)
>
> **Parry:** ([Dexterity + (Brawl, Martial Arts, or Melee)] / 2, round up) + weapon's defense.
>
> **Evasion:** ([Dexterity + Dodge] / 2, round up) - armor's mobility penalty
>
> **Rush pool:** Dexterity + Athletics
>
> **Disengage pool:** Dexterity + Dodge

Combat Actions

Characters can normally take only a single combat action per turn, and receive only one turn per round.

There's an exception to this rule. Characters are allowed to declare that they're taking a **flurry**. When you flurry, you're allowed to take two combat actions on your turn. However, a character can never flurry two of the same action—you can't attack twice, for example, even if they're different kinds of attack (a thrown knife and a sword slash can't be put in a flurry). Further, when a character flurries, he suffers a -3 penalty to both actions, and his Defense is reduced by 1 until his next turn.

Below is a comprehensive list of available combat actions:

• **Attack:** The most common combat action. An attack may be **withering** or **decisive**—see page XX for more details. Attacks may be made with one of four Abilities. For **withering** attacks: Archery attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + Archery + accuracy modifier based on range). Melee attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + Melee + weapon's accuracy modifier). Thrown attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + Thrown + accuracy modifier based on range). Finally, Brawl and Martial Arts attacks are rolled as (Dexterity + [Brawl or Martial Arts] + weapon's accuracy modifier).

Unarmed attacks fall under Brawl and Martial Arts; "Unarmed" is considered a light weapon (p. XX).

Decisive attacks use the same pools, save that they don't add an accuracy modifier.

• **Aim:** The character spends a few moments taking aim at his intended target. The player must declare which target he is taking aim at when he uses this action. Should his character attack that target on his next turn, the attack gains a +3 bonus. If the target moves out of the weapon's range or behind full cover (see p. XX) before the character's next turn, this action is wasted. An aim action is required before an attack can be made from medium or greater range (see p. XX), even one assisted by magic; attacks from medium or greater range don't gain a +3 bonus unless two consecutive turns are spent aiming. Characters cannot move and aim during the same round without some form of magic to permit it. *This action cannot be placed in a flurry.*

• **Defend Other:** The character protects an ally within close range (see p. XX), interposing himself to deflect attacks. The defending character may apply his Parry against any attacks directed at his ward until his next turn. Should an attack defeat the guardian's Parry, the *attacker* may choose either to apply the attack to the guardian, or may attempt to strike his original target by using his threshold successes to attempt to overcome the original target's Defense. If he chooses to strike his original target with a **decisive** attack, he loses one Initiative die from his damage roll for each two points of the protecting character's Defense.

• **Draw/Ready Weapon:** The character draws a close-range weapon, or readies a long-range weapon for use (stringing a bow, adjusting a brace of throwing knives, and so on). If a character wishes to change weapons during battle (sheathing a sword and unslinging a bow, for example), he must use a draw/ready weapon action to do so. This action reduces a character's Defense by 1 until his next turn. **Characters are assumed to begin combat with a weapon of their choice already drawn or readied**, unless they are ambushed (p. XX). Natural weapons such as fists and claws **never** need to be readied before use, making unarmed fighters very resistant to being blindsided.

• **Full Defense:** The character dedicates himself completely to protecting himself. Until his next turn, his Defense rises by 2. Using Full Defense causes the character to lose one Initiative point. **This action cannot be placed in a flurry with anything save social influence actions (p. XX), nor used during Initiative Crash.**

• **Miscellaneous Action:** This is a 'catch-all' category for a wide variety of possible actions. The character takes some non-combat action which can still be completed in a matter of only a few seconds. Examples might include picking a lock or searching a fallen opponent's pockets. The Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter of what is or isn't possible in the span of a single miscellaneous action. The character's Defense is reduced by 1 until his next turn.

Ranged Attacks

Melee, Brawl, and Martial Arts attacks can only be made from close range, barring the use of specialized magic. Thrown and Archery attacks can be made from a greater distance; the weapon used determines a ranged attack's maximum range, usually medium range for Thrown weapons and long range for Archery weapons. Ranged **withering** attacks determine their accuracy bonus (or penalty) based on the range they're made from, rather than the weapon's innate accuracy.

Archery and Thrown attacks made from medium or greater range become very inaccurate unless the character takes care to aim first. A character must take an aim action before launching an

Archery or Thrown attack from medium range or greater, or the attack automatically misses. This aim action doesn't provide an accuracy bonus—it only allows the character to draw an accurate bead on her target so she has a chance of hitting at all. Taking two aim actions in a row before attacking at such range provides the normal accuracy bonus.

Delaying Actions

A character may delay his turn, waiting until a point later than his Initiative to act, if he desires. The delayed action may be deployed on any tick later in the round that the player wishes. This is an excellent way to force Clash Attacks (see p. XX), for characters who know powerful Clash-enhancing Charms. However, delaying an action drops the character's Initiative by 2.

Combat Movement

Exalted combat is a dynamic affair where heroes duel while racing across rooftops, leaping from branch to branch in primeval jungles, or rampaging up and down the stairs and throughout the opulent halls of manses. Taking cover from archers, advancing on fleeing foes, and riding down terrified enemies atop trumpeting mammoths are just a few of the options available to the canny fighter.

Most of these actions are fertile ground for stunts, and because of the great variety of movement possibilities available to characters, **Exalted** uses an abstracted system to represent movement and positioning.

Positioning

Positioning is measured by the general distance between various combatants—keeping track of character locations down to the exact yard or meter generally isn't important, especially given how quickly Exalts can move around during battle; remembering general relative positions is good enough. There are several ranges that two characters can potentially occupy in relation to one another:

When a character is at **close range**, he is in an opponent's face, close enough to easily attack with a hand-to-hand weapon such as a sword, spear, or his fists. This doesn't mean that the characters are necessarily within arm's reach of each other at all times, but rather that they are able to close such a distance in moments. If an opponent is within close range of a character, that character is *embattled*, and must use a disengage action if he wishes to move away from the opponent (p. XX).

When a character is at **short range**, he is outside of the immediate reach of an opponent wielding a hand-to-hand weapon, but close enough that the opponent could reach him with a quick sprint.

A character at **medium range** is a fair distance away from an opponent. This is the range band of the most far-reaching Thrown weapons, and less powerful Archery weapons, and at this range it's impossible for two characters to communicate with one another without shouting. Characters cannot make Thrown or Archery attacks from medium range without first taking an aim action, or the attack will automatically miss. This aim action provides no accuracy bonus; to gain an accuracy bonus, two aim actions must be taken in a row before the attack.

A character at **long range** is very far away from his opponent. Combat at this range can only occur through powerful Archery weapons such as longbows, and is the favored range of snipers. Closing with a character at long range can be quite difficult! Complex communication is generally impossible without signaling devices, energetic pantomime, or magic. Characters

cannot make Thrown or Archery attacks from long range without first taking an aim action, or the attack will automatically miss. This aim action provides no accuracy bonus; to gain an accuracy bonus, two aim actions must be taken in a row before the attack.

A final range, **extreme range**, also exists. At this range, opponents are distant specks; communication is generally impossible, as is combat. All range bands beyond long range are considered extreme range, and a character might potentially be several extreme range bands away from another character in a scene ranging across a very large area. In the event that some form of magic or specialized weapon makes an attack from extreme range possible, characters must take an aim action first, or the attack will automatically miss. This aim action provides no accuracy bonus; to gain an accuracy bonus, two aim actions must be taken in a row before the attack.

Movement Actions

A character can take only one of the following actions per round, unless otherwise noted. A character could not, for example, use a disengage action and a move action during the same turn. All movement actions may only be taken on the character's turn, regardless of whether they are reflexive or a combat action.

Characters may remain stationary *in terms of range bands* while stunting dramatic movement, if desired—circling an opponent at close range, stepping back from a powerful attack, or otherwise engaging in acrobatic stunts are all possible without changing relative positioning or using a movement action.

• **Move (Reflexive Action):** The character may move one range band toward any other character or landmark present in battle once. This action can only be taken on the character's turn. It is the most commonly-used movement action.

• **Rush (Combat Action):** This action may only be directed at an opponent within short range of the character, and it may explicitly be used even after taking a reflexive move action. A rush action is a contested (Dexterity + Athletics) roll between the character and an opponent at short range. If the rushing character is successful, then as soon as his opponent moves a range band, he will immediately and reflexively move one range band toward that opponent, keeping pace. This reflexive movement does not count as a movement action, and so it can occur outside the character's turn, regardless of whether he has already taken a movement action that round.

Characters must have some means of reaching an opponent in order to rush him—if the opponent is a winged Lunar Exalt who travels a range band upward into the sky, most characters would not be able to follow him.

• **Disengage (Combat Action):** This action *must* be taken when a character at close range with one or more hostile opponents wishes to retreat to short range—the standard reflexive move action cannot be used to do so. Disengaging is an opposed roll of (Dexterity + Dodge) against the (Dexterity + Athletics) of all opponents who wish to contest the disengage action. If the character defeats all of his opponents, then he moves out to short range; furthermore, if one of the opponents he disengaged moves toward him on her next turn, the character immediately and reflexively retreats one further range band away from her, even if this means he would move outside of his turn. Like a rush action, this reflexive movement does not count as a movement action. It occurs only the first time after a disengage action that a disengaged opponent moves toward the character.

If any opponent beats the character's disengage roll, he is incapable of moving away—there's simply no opportunity for the character to safely escape his enemies.

Taking this action causes the character to lose 2 Initiative points regardless of its success.

• **Rise From Prone (Combat Action):** Certain attacks may leave a character prone on the ground, such as Smashing attacks (see p. XX). Rising from a prone position requires a combat action. This action is usually automatic, but if an opponent is at close range then the character must roll (Dexterity + Dodge) against difficulty 2 to rise from prone successfully.

• **Take Cover (Combat Action):** This action is used to seek cover from attackers, such as by crouching behind a rock, tucking into a doorway, standing behind a tree, or moving behind a wall. Taking cover requires a (Dexterity + Dodge) roll—the Storyteller sets the difficulty according to how easy it is to find and reach appropriate cover. Cover may be light, heavy, or full.

Light cover protects a significant portion of the character's body, such as leaning into a doorway or standing behind a waist-high wall. **Heavy cover** protects the majority of a character's body, leaving at most part of the head and an arm and shoulder exposed—shooting through an arrow slit would provide heavy cover, as would shooting around the edge of an ancient redwood tree. **Full cover** protects the character's entire body—standing behind a six-foot-high wall or retreating inside of a building are examples of full cover.

Cover raises a character's Defense against attacks by 1 for light cover or 2 for heavy cover. Full cover makes ranged attacks impossible. Attackers at close range also enjoy equal cover against attacks from the character in cover—crossing blades across a fence or around a tree is equally impairing for both parties.

Cover is subject to common-sense limitations. If a character has full cover because he's standing behind a wall, for example, that cover only protects him from enemies on the *other* side of the wall; he gains no cover bonus against opponents at his back. It may or may not be possible for a character to move without losing the benefit of cover. A character taking cover behind a tree will have to break cover to go anywhere, since he can't take the tree with him; one taking cover behind a waist-high stone fence, on the other hand, can freely range up and down along the fence without losing his cover.

Attempting to keep an opponent who's in cover at short or longer range while circling around him to obviate his cover requires a number of movement actions determined by the Storyteller—generally, the farther away an opponent is, the longer it takes to circle around to flank him.

• **Withdraw (Combat Action):** This action is used to escape from the battlefield completely, losing any pursuit that may be following. It is an extended (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, difficulty 1, goal number 10, interval one round. It may only be attempted if the character is at medium or greater range from all opponents. Using a withdraw action moves the character one range band away from his enemies, and causes the character to lose 10 Initiative per round—this can be done even if it would result in a negative Initiative value. Succeeding at the extended roll causes the character to move an additional range band away from his opponents. If the character succeeds at a withdraw action's extended roll while at extreme range from all opponents, he successfully escapes the battlefield for the rest of the scene, evading all pursuit.

Difficult Terrain

Moving around fields, roads, and even inside buildings isn't normally that difficult—at least not compared to climbing over deadfalls, slogging through thigh-high water, trudging across muddy swamps, or advancing through prepared fortifications. Deep snow, thick foliage, and panicked crowds may also constitute difficult terrain, at Storyteller discretion. Using a move action to travel through a band of difficult terrain takes two move actions rather than one. Difficult terrain may also be used to model objects which will force a character to make a significant detour in order to advance or retreat from another character—for example, if a character's enemy is on the other side of a locked building, the Storyteller may decide to declare the building difficult terrain —the extra time needed to advance on the opponent will represent time spent going around the building, rather than through it.

Attempts to rush, disengage, or withdraw across difficult terrain suffer a -3 penalty; by contrast, difficult terrain is often very easy to take cover in.

> Positioning, Movement, and Common Sense
>
> Movement in **Exalted** is heavily abstracted, and as such, requires a bit of common-sense adjudication. Changing position relative to one character may easily change an individual's position relative to other characters as well—if you advance from short to close range toward two swordsmen fighting each other, then you're now close to both of them, not just the one you advanced on. If you retreat away from those same figures, from short to medium range, then you're now at medium range from both—and at long range from the bowman behind them, who is himself at short range from the swordsmen, but on the opposite side of the battlefield.
>
> Likewise, certain forms of unorthodox movement may obviate certain kinds of difficult terrain. A Lunar Exalt that transforms into a bird, for example, will be able to easily fly over most kinds of difficult terrain, while certain Charms make normally-difficult terrain easy to navigate. Ultimately, use common sense.

Complications

While the above rules detail all the nuts and bolts of combat in **Exalted**, there are a few other unusual complications that may arise from time to time, which certain sorts of characters are likely to specialize in.

Gambits

Gambits are a special sort of **decisive** attack. Rather than inflicting Health Track damage, gambits are used to execute special maneuvers which can significantly shift the course of battle, such as disarming or unhorsing an opponent.

Four "universal" gambits are detailed below, but gambits are customizable—if a player wants to do something crazy during combat that the rules in this chapter don't cover, and the Storyteller is left going "I have no idea how to represent that"—it's generally good to make it a gambit. Some Charms require gambits to execute. Forthcoming supplements will also contain new situational gambits—for example, there might exist gambits that represent fighting the corpse-fortress Juggernaut, allowing characters to disable parts of the behemoth's gigantic undead body, bit by bit.

To execute a gambit, the player must declare what he's attempting and then make a **decisive** attack against his opponent. If the attack fails, he loses Initiative as normal (p. XX). If it succeeds, then he rolls Initiative. Rather than inflicting Health Track damage, however, this roll is trying to match the gambit's difficulty rating. If it does, the gambit goes off! If not, then the Gambit is unsuccessful. Regardless of the gambit's success, the character loses a number of Initiative equal to the gambit's difficulty + 1. A character cannot attempt a gambit whose cost would place him in Initiative Crash.

The following maneuvers are presented as examples of how gambits work:

• **Disarm (difficulty 3):** A successful disarm gambit allows the character to knock an opponent's weapon out of his hand, flinging it away to short range. Retrieving a disarmed weapon normally requires moving to the weapon's location and using a draw/ready weapon action to reclaim it.

• **Unhorse (difficulty 4):** A successful unhorse gambit allows the character to knock an opponent off his mount. An unhorsed character suffers one level of bashing damage and is rendered prone, and the mount usually flees in the confusion. This is generally an easier and less-costly option than trying to target a mount with a **decisive** attack to kill it. (While this is perhaps unrealistic, players generally don't enjoy having their trusty horses shot out from under them, especially if the animal is a familiar. Storytellers running especially gritty games may want to allow the unhorse gambit to be used to shoot mounts out from under riders as well as forcibly dismounting opponents, at difficulty 5.)

• **Distract (difficulty 3-5):** The character leads, threatens, or feints his target into the path of an ally's **decisive** attack. The attacker declares an ally (who is not in Initiative Crash) as the beneficiary of this distraction; that ally gains the Initiative the character loses as a result of successfully executing this gambit. The transferred Initiative *must* be used to attack the gambit's target on the ally's next turn, or it is lost. A character can only benefit from one distraction bonus at a time.

• **Grapple (difficulty 2):** The character seizes her opponent in a clinch, limiting his movement and gaining the opportunity to do truly severe damage. Grapples are a bit more complicated than other gambits, and are explained in greater detail below.

If you want to design your own gambits, it helps to keep the following guidelines in mind:

Gambits are always delivered via **decisive** attack, and so they need to have a definite target. Gambits are mostly there to give a framework for advantageous maneuvers that are difficult to balance if characters can do them over and over again (such as disarming; if disarming could be attempted nonstop at no cost, it would either be incredibly powerful—which produces odd, unenjoyable battles in which everyone loses their sword constantly—or would need to be weakened to the point of uselessness for balance's sake). Finally, remember that 7 successes on a **decisive** damage roll is normally enough to incapacitate or kill—if your custom gambit is difficulty 7+, then its primary advantage over a normal **decisive** attack is going to be that it doesn't reset Initiative, unless it is custom-designed to be used against something with more than 7 Health Levels, like a behemoth.

Grapples

While most martial arts battles in the world of **Exalted** consist of a ballet of devastating striking techniques, some unarmed fighters learn to specialize in holds, clinches, slams, and other

wrestling moves; such attacks are also a long-standing staple of self-taught brawling masters, and are dangerous to underestimate.

Grapples are initiated through a grapple gambit. Upon succeeding at the gambit, the grappler makes a **control roll**, which determines how long she can keep the grapple locked on. This is an opposed (Strength + [Brawl or Martial Arts]) roll between the grappler and her target. Should the target win or tie, then the target escapes the grapple on his *next* turn. Should the martial artist win, she gains control of the grapple during her current turn, and for a number of additional rounds equal to the number of successes by which she beat her target. After those turns elapse, the grappled target automatically escapes the grapple. A grapple will also immediately end if the grappler suffers Initiative Crash.

While grappling or being grappled, both characters suffer a -2 penalty to their Defense and cannot perform flurries. Victims caught in a grapple cannot take movement actions, and suffer a -1 penalty to all attacks, or a -3 penalty to all attacks using two-handed weapons.

Each time the grappler suffers an attack and/or damage from any source, she forfeits one turn of control of the grapple. For example, a wrestler who clinches an opponent and wins the control roll by a margin of 5 successes will maintain control for 5 additional turns. In that same round, she is attacked twice; one attack misses, while the other inflicts 3 points of Initiative damage. Because she was attacked twice and damaged once, she forfeits three turns of control—the victim will now escape after only 2 turns.

During each turn in which the grappler maintains the clinch, **including the turn** on which she initiates it, she must choose to apply one of the following effects: she may **savage** the opponent, **restrain and drag** him, or **throw** him. She may also **release** him at any time. She can take no other movement or combat actions so long as the grapple persists.

Savage: The grappler injures her opponent, choking him, wrenching his limbs, stretching his joints, or bashing him into nearby scenery. The savage action applies **withering** or **decisive** damage to the grappled opponent without chance of failure or opportunity for defense. If the grappler chooses to inflict **withering** damage, she makes an unarmed attack roll against Defense 0 for the purpose of determining extra damage. Again, this attack hits the opponent automatically, even if the character generates 0 successes on the attack roll. With a **decisive** attack, no attack roll is necessary—just roll Initiative, apply damage, and reset to base as usual.

Restrain/Drag: This action uses up two rounds of control, and can't be used if the victim wins the control roll. The attacker locks the victim up in an immobilizing hold. This inflicts no damage, but prevents the victim from taking any action at all on his next turn. While restraining her opponent, the character may take a movement action, and in doing so, drag the victim with her. This might be used for abductions, to haul a target out from behind cover, or perhaps even to drag an individual into an area that is harmful to the victim but harmless to the attacker (such as a Water Aspect Dragon-Blooded pulling an opponent into a river to drown him).

Throw/Slam: The grappler ends the clinch prematurely, slamming the victim into the ground or a nearby surface within close range. This inflicts damage in the same fashion as savaging the opponent, with the following difference: the attack's damage dice pool is boosted by 2 dice per turn of control forfeited by ending the clinch prematurely if **withering**, or by 1 die per turn if **decisive**. The opponent is left prone (p. XX) by this maneuver. A throw/slam maneuver can only benefit from a maximum of up to (Strength) turns of control forfeited; any greater number of

turns are simply lost with no benefit. **Decisive** slams normally inflict bashing damage but can inflict lethal damage if the chosen impact point is particularly deadly (such as into a bonfire, or onto a spike).

Release: The attacker simply releases the clinched victim without harming her. Release is a reflexive action rather than a combat action, and may be performed at any time.

A final note: Characters cannot grapple any opponent where a grapple simply doesn't make sense given the relative scales involved (so grapples would be inapplicable against an army of a hundred Realm legionnaires, or against the Mask of Winters's corpse-fortress Juggernaut; likewise, a toddler can't effectively grapple a grown man, nor could a grown man grapple an eight-ton tyrant lizard).

Crippling

The Chosen of the gods heal most injuries perfectly. It takes a truly profound wound to even leave a scar as a reminder, much less to permanently cripple an Exalted hero. Moreover, crippling injuries can change a character's image and concept, ruining a player's enjoyment—he didn't sign up to play a one-armed boxer, or a prince with no nose!

As a result, crippling injuries are *voluntary* in **Exalted**, and may be taken at the behest of the player controlling a character. Your character won't lose an eye, a hand, or a limb unless you want him to.

So why would you want that? You might decide that losing an eye would be a cool long-term reminder of an epic duel. Or you might think it's better to suffer a terrible, debilitating injury than to die. While crippling injuries are difficult to mend, they're not impossible once Exalted physicians or gods with powerful healing miracles enter the picture. Here's how it works:

Once per story, a player whose character has just suffered physical damage may choose to ablate it by accepting a crippling injury instead. The character *must* take a minimum of two Health Levels of lethal damage to accept a crippling injury, after the damage negated. If this would leave him Incapacitated or dead, he instead simply marks off his last health box before Incapacitated.

1-2 Health Levels: By negating this much damage, the character suffers maiming that impairs the function of some body part or sense. He might lose half the fingers on one hand, or an eye, or half a foot.

3-4 Health Levels: By negating this much damage, the character loses an entire sense or useful extremity. He might be blinded completely, have his tongue cut out, lose a hand, or suffer maiming of his generative organs.

5 health levels: By negating this much damage, the character loses a limb—most of an arm or a leg, gone.

A character's wound penalties are doubled for the rest of the scene in which he suffers any crippling injury by negating 3 or more health levels of damage. Accepting a crippling injury is basically accepting debility in the name of either producing an interesting plot hook, or attempting to save a character from death. Storytellers, it's *usually* poor form to have enemies immediately finish off a crippled character, though you know the needs of your own story best. See the Amputee, Blind, Deaf, Mute, and Sterile flaws (pp. XX-XX) for the permanent effects of crippling injuries.

Being Prone

Certain attacks (such as Smashing attacks made by hammers, or being thrown by a grappler) can leave a character prone—knocked forcefully to the ground. A prone character must take a rise from prone combat action (see p. XX) to regain his footing. As long as a character is prone, he suffers a -1 penalty to his Parry, a -2 penalty to his Evasion, a -3 penalty to attacks, and cannot take any movement actions other than to rise from prone. He also automatically fails all attempts to resist dash and disengage actions.

> Ammunition
>
> There are two ways to track ammunition for ranged fighters in **Exalted**. The first is to keep track of how many arrows, throwing knives, and so forth the character has on him, taking pains to retrieve ammunition and weapons from fallen enemies, or ensuring the character arrives with more than enough arrows to suit his needs.
>
> A less math-intensive and more dramatic method is to periodically make a roll to see if the character is running out of ammo. This roll should occur every five rounds or so, though modify this up or down if the character hasn't been shooting much, or has been spraying volleys of missiles into enemies.
>
> As more-skilled characters tend to waste fewer shots, roll Archery or Thrown with a mounting -1 penalty each time it repeats. Failure indicates that the character is out of ammunition, and must resort to other means of combat, or scavenge more ammunition by some means. Increase the penalty to -2 if the character is using very limited ammunition stockpiles, such as a bundle of javelins or pouches of firedust charges.
>
> Scavenging for more ammunition is a (Wits + [Awareness, Survival, or War]) action with a difficulty dictated by the Storyteller based on availability of the needed sort of ammunition nearby. Scavenging more arrows might be difficulty 1 to 3 depending on the battlefield, scavenging rocks for a sling is almost certainly always difficulty 1, and scavenging firedust is likely impossible on most battlefields.

Clash Attacks

Clash Attacks are a special roll used when two characters attack one another on the same tick. In these situations, the quality of a character's defensive prowess becomes irrelevant—victory goes to the fighter whose strike is superior.

Clash Attacks ignore both characters' Defense. Instead, the two attacks act as an opposed roll (p. XX). The character who accumulates more successes wins, striking his opponent, while the loser's attack is thwarted. If a Clash Attack is **withering**, then it adds the threshold by which the winning fighter beat his opponent's roll to its raw damage.

A successful **withering** Clash attack adds 3 additional points of Initiative damage *after* damage is rolled. A successful **decisive** Clash attack adds one additional automatic point of Health Track damage after damage is rolled. Finally, in addition to suffering damage, the loser of the Clash Attack suffers a -2 penalty to his Defense until his next turn.

Mounted Fighting

Opponents fighting from horseback (or from atop any similarly-sized mount) enjoy a number of advantages and a few disadvantages over combatants on foot.

Movement: Mounts are generally faster than human warriors, particularly when moving at a charge. As a result, most mounts grant a movement bonus to rush, disengage, and withdraw actions. These bonuses are listed in the stat block of any creature suitable as a mount as a mount's Speed Bonus, and the most common Speed Bonuses are summarized below. The Ride Ability replaces Athletics and Dodge for any movement rolls made while mounted.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mount	Speed Bonus
Austrech	+2
Camel	+3
Horse	+4
Mammoth	+1
Simhata	+4
Tyrant Lizard	+2
Yeddim	+1

[END TABLE]

Combat: Mounted fighters employing close-range weapons enjoy a +1 bonus to **withering** attacks against non-mounted opponents of human scale, or +2 against battle groups (p. XX) not armed with weapons with the reaching tag (p. XX). Mounted fighters also enjoy a +1 Defense bonus against attacks from close-range weapons wielded by non-mounted opponents, so long as those weapons lack the reaching tag.

Unusual Mounts: Some rare mounts render these rules unsuitable. Flying mounts, such as the giant hawks employed by the famed hawkriders of Mount Metagalapa, grant no combat bonuses, instead offering only superior mobility. Enormous mounts such as mammoths, yeddim, or tyrant lizards prevent their rider from being attacked at all by short-range weapons not possessing the reaching tag, unless opponents first use a miscellaneous (Dexterity + Athletics, difficulty 3) action to climb aboard the huge mount (this counts as the character's movement for the round). However, riders atop such mounts similarly cannot attack opponents on the ground with short-range weapons which lack the reaching tag.

Attacking Mounts: Mounts generally don't have their own Initiative track, though the Storyteller may waive this if it seems appropriate (such as a Fair Folk noble entering battle on the back of a behemoth more dangerous than its rider). Unless a mount has its own Initiative track, all **withering** attacks against it are considered to target its rider. **Decisive** attacks can be used to target mounts with the intent of killing them out from under their riders; in many circumstances, however, the unhorse gambit (p. XX) is a more effective option.

Equipping and Fighting with Mounts: Characters may obtain specialized defensive equipment designed for mounts, called barding. They may also wish to equip their mount with weaponry such as fortified crowns, horns, or fixed lances.

In general, barding for mounts works exactly the same as armor for any other character—light, medium, and heavy barding is available, with the same traits as armor for humans. Barding's mobility penalty is applied to the mount's Speed bonus, and in certain cases might even turn it into a speed penalty (such as with heavy barding on a mammoth). In the likely event that a barded mount isn't tracking Initiative, it's suggested that barding subtract raw damage from incoming **decisive** attacks against the mount (-2 for light, -4 for medium, -6 for heavy).

Weapons, by contrast, give access to special advantages. Horns or spikes grant the gore technique used by ox-dragons, aurochs, and other horned beasts (p. XX). A lance, by contrast, is a heavy weapon detailed on page XX; mounting it to the saddle makes it impossible to disarm, and enables the impale technique. To impale an enemy, the character must make a **withering** or **decisive** attack with a fixed lance after moving two consecutive range bands toward her target; this adds +5 to the attack's raw damage if **withering**, or +3 if **decisive**.

Commanding the mount to attack or use an attack technique uses up its rider's combat action. This is considered an attack action, and can be placed in a flurry.

> Tacking and Barding Mounts
>
> Mounts usually need saddles. Working at speed, it takes a master stabler five minutes to tack a horse—a process that involves affixing a blanket and saddle, bit and bridle, crown and boots. Barding, similarly, is applied after tacking, and even the fastest cataphract requires a minimum of five minutes to fully deck a destrier in armor. After that, if the animal is to carry any special weapons, they take a minute each to affix.
>
> Mounts of a similar size to horses—agata, claw striders—take about the same amount of time to equip. Larger mounts such as mammoths or tyrant lizards take twice as long. Page XX has the rules for characters themselves equipping armor; rushing a mount's equipment uses those rules.

Stealth

Stealth is a powerful advantage in battle, affording the opportunity to strike when an opponent least expects it, or when he doesn't realize he's in danger at all.

All stealth attempts consist of opposed rolls, generally (Dexterity + Stealth) against (Perception + Awareness). Stealth rolls can easily take penalties if the conditions aren't amenable to sneaking or hiding—dry underbrush, bright light, and scant cover can all make stealth more difficult. Likewise, Awareness rolls can take penalties due to cluttered or noisy environments (such as market crowds or stormy nights)—Stealth and Awareness are both very context-governed Abilities.

Assuming that a character has successfully concealed himself, he may then attempt to make an **unexpected attack**. Unexpected attacks are either an *ambush* or a *surprise attack*.

An ambush is defined as an attack against a target completely unaware of the attacker's presence—generally only possible during the first round of a fight, against a target with a lower Initiative value than the attacker. An ambush attack completely ignores the target's Defense; the target is considered to have Defense 0 against the attack.

A surprise attack, on the other hand, is an attack launched from hiding against an opponent who knows he's in battle and who is actively on the lookout for attacks, even if he isn't sure exactly where all of his opponents are at the moment. A target faced with a surprise attack suffers a -2 Defense penalty against that attack.

Once opponents are already aware of a character's presence, it is difficult to hide again; all attempts to do so suffer an automatic -3 penalty, and may not even be attempted unless the environmental conditions are favorable to hiding (a dark area with many opportunities to break line of sight and conceal oneself, in other words; re-establishing surprise in the middle of an open, sunny pasture is generally impossible).

Attempting to re-establish surprise is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry.

A character in stealth cannot take Rush actions. If he wants to move normally in combat (see pp. XX-XX for more on movement in combat) while maintaining concealment, he must have some adequate place to hide in the spot he's moving to, and must make another reflexive (Dexterity + Stealth) roll when he moves, to keep from being spotted while moving. If this movement crosses wide-open terrain with no appreciable cover, the Stealth roll's penalty climbs from the usual -3 (for attempting stealth while already in combat) to -5.

Hold at Bay

A permutation of an ambush, to hold someone at bay is to succeed at an ambush without attacking, choosing instead to hold the target hostage for a number of rounds. The character points her weapon at her target's vital organs; the target knows he will suffer a deadly attack if he so much as moves, allowing the character to speak her mind before battle commences. The character may interrogate, threaten, cajole, or otherwise detain her opponent for a number of rounds equal to the difference in their Initiative. If the target chooses to struggle or try to escape before these rounds are finished, the character may make an immediate **decisive** ambush attack against him with onerous results: not only is the target's Defense set to 0, but his Hardness is set to 0 as well, and the attack gains +5 automatic damage. If the character chooses to attack her target before the rounds are up, he may defend normally.

If the target chooses to cooperate, the hostage-taker's Resolve and Guile are at +1, while the target's are each at -2 until the specified number of rounds have passed. When the hold at bay rounds have passed, if the target has not agreed to surrender, both roll Join Battle to determine who will act first, with the hostage suffering a -2 penalty to his results. If the hostage-taker wins, she can immediately execute a standard ambush attack.

A dramatic overview of Hold at Bay:

The character's ambush may be an elaborate trap: she arranges for her target to be in a certain room at a certain time, and sits in a darkened corner with a crossbow aimed at the door. It might also be a spur of the moment grab: a Night Caste reaches out of an alley to snare a passer-by and put a dagger to his throat. In all cases, for a character to be held at bay, he must be intelligent enough to feel fear, or otherwise competent to understand a threat. The action won't work on mindless automata, beasts, or mindless monsters. While holding a person at bay, his mental faculties are concentrating on survival, or on looking for a way out, so his Resolve and Guile is weakened, while the person holding him at bay has the social upper hand. In this type of scenario, the target will generally agree to all simple commands such as "Turn around" or "Move over there" which do not directly cause him harm, but can still resist agreeing to things which

would harm him or deprive him of safety. When the character's control rounds end, if the target has not surrendered, the new Join Battle roll reflects a shift in the drama, at which one character or the other figuratively blinks. If the target wins this roll, it means he's seized a moment to fight for his life. If the character holding him at bay wins, she can continue to talk for a number of rounds equal to the new Initiative difference, or she can choose to attack. In this case, the target is only at Defense 0.

Go to Ground

Sometimes a character needs to get out of a fight, but surrender isn't an option and the hopes of escaping by way of a withdraw action seem slim. In these situations, the character may attempt to escape the fight by going to ground.

A character who goes to ground is attempting to hide somewhere on the battlefield and to avoid detection until the fight is over (and, hopefully, any hostiles have left). In order to attempt to go to ground, a character must already be in stealth. His player must then declare he is attempting to go to ground, and then make a successful (Dexterity + Stealth) attempt to maintain concealment over the next three turns. The first roll is at a -3 penalty, the second at -4, and the final roll at -5. If all of these rolls successfully defeat the (Perception + Awareness) rolls of the character's enemies, he is considered so well hidden that there is no hope of finding him until he voluntarily emerges from concealment.

This climbing difficulty can represent either the increasing difficulty of maintaining a single hiding place in the face of concerted efforts to find the character or the risk of moving about from hiding place to hiding place to evade searching opponents. Players are encouraged to think about how their characters attemp to go to ground, and to stunt appropriately—they'll need all the help they can get to deal with the penalties.

A character who goes to ground successfully, but then emerges from hiding to re-join the fight in the midst of the same combat, re-enters the fight in Initiative Crash, at -10 Initiative.

Uncountable Damage

Sometimes an avalanche sweeps an entire town off the side of a mountain. Sometimes a manse is converted into a geomantic bomb. Sometimes you're standing beneath the miraculous floating mountain Metagalapa when suddenly it falls on you. These situations produce *uncountable damage*—apocalyptic destruction totally out of scale with what combat resolution, environmental hazards, and Health Tracks are designed to deal with.

When a character is subjected to uncountable damage, the Storyteller decides what happens to him (usually death, although in some cases it might be reasonable to permit a roll to reduce a sure demise down to mere incapacitation). Luckily, the Chosen have a number of Charms which allow them to deal with uncountable damage, such as Adamant Skin Technique (p. XX).

> Storyteller Advice: Resolving Battles
>
> While the **decisive**/**withering** attack division is an abstraction and doesn't represent different sorts of attacks within the **Exalted** game setting, Initiative is an abstraction of something that *is* more measurable—who's pressing the advantage in a fight. Observant combatants can usually tell when they're in trouble, or when they've got an opponent on the ropes.

Most combatants in the world of **Exalted** aren't fanatics—they're soldiers doing their job to make a living or because they didn't seem to have any other course to follow in life, or they're thugs hoping for an easy mark, or they're heroes with ambitions they hope to live to fulfill. While life is cheap and death is common in the Age of Sorrows, few people want to fight to the death if it means their *own* death. As a result, it's worth keeping the withdraw, go to ground, and surrender (p. XX) actions in mind. Once it becomes clear that a fight can't be won, or that the cost of doing so is unacceptably high, many opponents will attempt to lay down arms and beg for mercy or to simply run.

Players have no obligation to let their characters' enemies get away or to accept a surrender, but actions build reputations. Those said to be bloodthirsty and merciless can often expect no mercy on the day they find themselves outmatched.

Battle Groups

Bands of mountain bandits. Mobs of angry rioters. Squads of hired mercenaries. Vast armies. The Wyld Hunt itself. Sometimes battles in the world of **Exalted** consist of only a tiny handful of heroes, but more often they feature a great many combatants, far too many for it to be practical to keep track of each fighter's traits individually. These mobs, gangs, and armies are represented by battle groups.

Battle groups are an abstraction used whenever there are more than two combatants on the battlefield who are reasonably similar to one another in terms of capabilities and equipment, who aren't especially noteworthy to the story as individuals, and who aren't potent supernatural beings such as Exalts. Battle groups can represent small groups, such as a squad of a dozen of the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro's palace guards, or vast forces such as 1,000 men-at-arms riding to war.

Simply put, a battle group is treated as a character with the traits of the average combatant making up the group, plus a few other traits which modify these capabilities.

Quick Overview

Before we get down to details, here's a basic idea of how a battle group works: A battle group is a group of fighters who are mechanically represented as one character. A group of soldiers, for example, is basically a single soldier, except this soldier gets a number of bonuses to his attack, damage, soak, and Defense based on his battle group traits. He always uses **withering** attacks against you (which start inflicting Health Track damage once you run out of Initiative). By contrast, your **withering** attacks don't take his Initiative, but instead directly damage his "Health." He's got a special Health Track (called a Magnitude Track) that can absorb a lot of punishment, and it's likely that a battle group will break and run before being totally destroyed—whenever you empty the Magnitude Track, there's a chance they'll flee or surrender. If they don't, their Magnitude refills, but their combat bonuses become weaker, and it gets harder for them not to rout next time they run out of Magnitude.

Battle Group Traits

There are only four differences between a solo character's traits and those of a battle group: battle groups have three special values that individual heroes don't (Size, Drill, and Might), and instead of a Health Track, they have a Magnitude Track.

Size

Size is simple—it measures how big a battle group is, in terms of how many fighters are in it. The greater a battle group's Size, the harder it hits and the tougher it is; Size is the single greatest source of a battle group's power. Battle groups enjoy a bonus to their **attack rolls**, **raw damage**, **Magnitude** (see below), and **soak** equal to their Size. Thus, a Size 3 battle group adds +3 to its attack pools, +3 to its raw damage, +3 to its soak, and has 3 extra points of Magnitude.

Size 0: One or two fighters. These should be modeled as individual combatants, not as a battle group. Any battle group reduced to Size 0 through Magnitude loss effectively ceases to exist—all of its members are either dead, fled, or surrendered.

Size 1: A small group: a half-dozen thugs in an alley, a fang of Realm legionnaires, a bar brawl, ten Dune People lying in wait beneath the sand. A dozen or fewer combatants.

Size 2: A modest group: a late-night lynch mob, a scale of Realm legionnaires, a Harborhead war-band, an aristocrat's house guard. Several dozen combatants.

Size 3: A moderate group: a mercenary company, a talon to a wing of Realm legionnaires, a sweeping riot, a war band of the Fair Folk. Over a hundred combatants.

Size 4: A large group: a mercenary army, a dragon of Realm legionnaires, an entire Delzahn clan and its bannermen rallied to war, most of a small town slain and raised as the undead soldiers of an Abyssal. Several hundred combatants.

Size 5: A full army: two dragons of Realm legionnaires, a barbarian horde, a city-annihilating plague of fae or undead. Over a thousand combatants.

If *appreciably* more than a Size 5 battle group worth of combatants are present, they are represented by creating an additional battle group (or groups). 20 extra combatants are a drop in the bucket, but if an extra 300 are present, that's worth starting up a second Size 3 battle group.

Drill

While the traits of the average character making up a battle group determines the quality of the group overall, Drill measures how well the combatants within that group work together. In mass combat, Drill is one of the most important traits a group of fighters can have. It represents hours of training and familiarity—the ability to know what the soldier to the left or right of you will do at any given moment because you've been through these maneuvers with them countless times. Well-drilled units hold together better in the face of sudden catastrophe, respond more readily to orders, and are generally much more difficult to defeat than low-Drill units of greater Size. As a result, Drill modifies rout rolls (p. XX), provides modifiers to command actions (p. XX), and enhances a unit's Defense. In short, high-Drill battle groups are tougher to defeat, and respond better to commands.

There are three categories of Drill:

Poor—A unit with poor Drill has no training in fighting together, or no capability for such training. This is the Drill quality of rioting mobs, of impromptu peasant conscripts tossed directly into battle, of most village militias, of many bandits, of raiders who fight without any sort of coordination, of groups of experienced fighters brought together without any particular familiarity with fighting alongside one another, and of mindless undead.

Poor-quality battle groups inflict a -2 penalty to order and rally for numbers actions (p. XX), do not modify their Defense, and raise the difficulty of all rout and rally rolls by 1.

Average—A battle group with average Drill has some training fighting together, either in the field or through extensive training and practice. In a fight, they know what to do and they move with ease and precision. The majority of military forces in the world of **Exalted** have average quality Drill. This covers standing armies, common mercenary groups, well-trained guards, Guild caravan security, and the war-bred minions of the Fair Folk.

Average-quality battle groups inflict no penalty to command rolls and enjoy a +1 Defense bonus.

Elite—Elite battle groups have drilled extensively with one another, and have probably gone through a number of battles together. The members of the battle groups often eat, sleep, and relax together, and spend far more time honing their skills as a group than the average band of soldiers. As a result, these battle groups are often small, prestigious units or semi-religious orders. The Realm's elite Imperial Guard, Harborhead's Brides of Ahlat, the warrior-brotherhoods of Medo, and the very best mercenary companies employed by the Guild are all elite-quality battle groups.

Elite-quality battle groups add a +2 bonus to command rolls and enjoy a +2 Defense bonus.

Might

Might is an uncommon trait in the Age of Sorrows, measuring the supernatural power of a battle group. A battle group only possesses might if the average member composing it is supernaturally powerful in some martially relevant fashion. As a result, the overwhelming majority of battle groups have Might 0; very few battle groups with Might above 2 have been fielded since the founding of the Realm. Might goes from 0 to 3, and adds to the accuracy, damage, and Defense of a unit.

Might 0: The Might rating of battle groups primarily composed of ordinary mortals. This rating has no effect on the battle group's traits.

Might 1: The Might rating of battle groups lightly touched by the supernatural or whose members are slightly superhuman. This is the Might rating of groups of beastfolk and martially-enhanced Wyld mutants, or units which fight under divine blessings of a martial nature—something only very potent spirits are able to grant to battle groups above Size 2.

Might 1 bestows a +1 bonus to accuracy and damage and a +1 bonus to Defense.

Might 2: The Might rating of battle groups composed primarily of supernaturally potent beings, such as lesser spirits. This is the rating of groups made up of first circle demons, war ghosts, or lesser elementals, as well as the armies of the Fair Folk.

Might 2 bestows a +2 bonus to accuracy and damage and a +1 bonus to Defense.

Might 3: This is the Might rating of battle groups composed of Terrestrial Exalted or similarly potent beings. Such battle groups have rarely been seen since the First Age—in the Age of Sorrows, such beings simply don't gather in sufficient numbers to require abstract representation, and are almost always depicted as individual heroes, even when three or more are present.

In the event that such a battle group appears, Might 3 bestows a +3 bonus to accuracy and damage and a +2 bonus to Defense.

Noncombatants and Trivial Opponents

Not everyone on a battlefield is necessarily a combatant. Fights sometimes break out when individuals are present who have no meaningful combat capabilities and no real interest in fighting. Such individuals are considered bystanders, or noncombatants. For the most part, they're scenery—screaming crowds, panicked partygoers, confused shoppers in a Nexus market. Most notably, noncombatants have a permanent Initiative rating of 0 and cannot yield Initiative when targeted by **withering** attacks; if it becomes important to resolve an attack against a noncombatant for some reason, treat them as a Size 0 battle group—**withering** attacks simply inflict damage directly to their Health Track. Generally, though, this shouldn't be necessary—bystanders are mostly there to provide stunt opportunities for the players' characters and their opponents.

For games featuring particularly powerful and experienced characters, certain combatants might also be declared *trivial opponents*. A trivial opponent is a character vastly less powerful than other combatants on the battlefield—for example, a single mortal soldier of ordinary skill on a battlefield where every other fighter is a Fair Folk noble or Celestial Exalt. Any opponent the Storyteller decides is trivial is treated as a noncombatant, using the rules above; they have some slight chance to wound or impede the heroes around them, but thwarting such a minor adversary offers no meaningful opportunity to shift the initiative of the battle overall.

Fighting Battle Groups

To keep things straightforward, fighting a battle group in most ways resembles fighting an ordinary character with its traits inflated a bit by Size, Drill, and possibly Might. There are a few key differences, detailed below:

• **Making Attacks:** Battle groups can only launch **withering** attacks. While these can damage a target's Initiative as usual, the lost Initiative is *not* gained by the battle group—it vanishes. Any damage the battle group inflicts against a target that has fallen into Initiative Crash, however, is instead applied directly to the target's Health Track as bashing or lethal damage, whichever is appropriate to the standard armament of the battle group.

Battle groups *never* enjoy the Double 10s rule on damage rolls.

Area Attacks: Like other characters, battle groups can only make a single attack on their turn, but these are often *large* attacks, consisting of hundreds of flashing blades or sheets of arrows darkening the sky. As a result, when a battle group makes a close-ranged attack, it makes a single attack roll and applies that roll's results to all enemies in direct contact with the group (depending on the battle group's Size, this could potentially cover a considerable area). When a battle group makes a ranged attack, it must select a single primary target for the attack. If this target is another battle group, the attack resolves normally; if it's an individual, then the attack is also applied to all other individual characters (friendly or hostile) within close range of that target. Huge mobs of archers make poor precision snipers.

• **Inert Initiative:** Because battle groups can't make **decisive** attacks and can't take Initiative from other characters, their Initiative rating is used entirely to determine when the group takes its turn during each round. On the other hand, all **withering** attacks launched against a battle group

instead directly damage its Magnitude (see below). Successful **withering** attacks directed against a battle group still generate one automatic point of Initiative for the attacker.

• **Magnitude and Damaging Battle Groups:** Battle groups don't have Health Tracks. Instead, they have a number of points of Magnitude equal to the number of health levels contained in the Health Track of the average fighter in the group (usually seven), plus their current Size.

Withering attacks directed against a battle group are resolved normally, save that their damage is applied to the group's Magnitude rather than its Initiative. **Decisive** attacks directed against a battle group also resolve normally, save that they, too, are applied to its Magnitude, and inflict one additional level of automatic damage per four damage dice rolled (round up).

When a battle group loses all of its Magnitude, it must check for rout (see below). If the battle group survives its rout check, its Magnitude rating re-fills completely, and it loses a point of Size. Any damage in excess of the unit's Magnitude Track during a rout check 'rolls over' into the new Magnitude Track—it's even potentially possible for a strong enough attack to fill up this new track immediately, forcing another rout check!

It's important to understand what Magnitude damage represents. Partially, it means dead or unconscious fighters, but it also represents damage to the group's morale—having the allies on either side of you cut down tests a person's resolve to stand and keep fighting, despite the dangerous likelihood that you may be next; in fact, without your fellows-at-arms, you're *more likely* to be next. Thus, Magnitude damage is a mixture of incapacitated combatants and those who have lost the will to fight, or have stopped fighting effectively.

If a character causes a battle group to lose a point of Size or to dissolve, she gains an Initiative Break bonus (p. XX), just as though she'd sent an opponent into Initiative Crash.

• **Damage and Rout:** Few large-scale battles end when all the soldiers of one side kill all the soldiers of the other side. At some point in almost every battle, one side breaks, and soldiers begin to flee, or if that is impossible, to cast down their weapons and attempt to surrender. These moments when a battle group's will is tested are known as rout checks.

A rout check occurs whenever a battle group's Magnitude Track fills up with damage and it loses a point of Size. Having so many of its soldiers whittled away causes the group to hesitate, and there's always the danger that this hesitation could spread into full-blown panic and retreat—a sufficiently daunting assault by a small, elite group may even cause a vastly superior force to panic and collapse into disorder.

A rout check is normally a Willpower roll, using the Willpower rating of the average fighter in the battle group, as modified by the unit's Drill. The difficulty of a rout check begins at 1, but may be modified in a number of ways:

Difficulty Modifier	Condition
+1	Another allied battle group has already suffered dissolution during the fight.
+1	One or more of the battle group's leaders or heroes have been incapacitated or killed during the battle.
+1	per point of Size the battle group has already lost during the scene.
+1	The rout check is provoked by a devastating supernatural area-of-effect assault such as the spell Death of Obsidian Butterflies (p. XX).

If the rout check succeeds, the battle group loses a point of Size and restores all points of Magnitude. If it fails, the battle group suffers *dissolution* on its next turn and attempts to surrender or run—either way, it's no longer a meaningful participant in the battle.

• **Taking Actions:** Battle Groups may take most of the same actions as normal characters. Notably, they can't take aim or grapple actions. Rather than grappling, battle groups may take "Engage" actions, in which the battle group swarms the target, encircles him, or otherwise pins him down with force of numbers. Engage works the same way as a grapple, with the following exception: no Initiative roll is required to confirm the action (the gambit automatically succeeds, deducting an appropriate Initiative cost), savaging and control rolls use the group's standard armament and combat Ability rather than unarmed attacks, and the restrain/drag and throw options aren't available. Engage is primarily useful for pinning an enemy in place and preventing movement.

> Why Battle Groups?
>
> Lone heroes fighting many times their number in nameless mooks or lackeys is a staple of many of the sources **Exalted** draws on, from wuxia and kung fu films, to action anime, to the larger-than-life heroes of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Additionally, because of the scope of martial conflicts often present in **Exalted**, it's impractical to depict each soldier in a war scene individually. Battle groups satisfy the demands of both huge-scale mass combat scenes and more modestly scaled scenes where the heroes smash up two dozen lackeys in a furious display of their martial prowess.
>
> The astute may notice that the primary advantage of large battle groups is that their great Size gives them a great deal of Magnitude, assuming they can weather repeated rout checks, and may wonder if it wouldn't be more useful to divide, say, a Size 5 group up into ten Size 3 groups, netting ten attacks per round instead of one stronger attack. It may very well be—but battle groups are a gameplay abstraction, and military minds within the world of **Exalted** don't plan their battles around the battle groups system. Battle groups are primarily there to reduce the amount of combatants the Storyteller has to keep track of during a fight, and splitting 1,000 soldiers (one thing for the Storyteller to keep track of) into ten 100-fighter groups (10 things for the Storyteller to keep track of) defeats that purpose. The only circumstances under which similar mobs of fighters should be represented as separate battle groups is if they are so widely separated in terms of geography (say, two armies of infantry fighting at opposite ends of a mile-long valley) that it becomes impractical and implausible to combine them. Otherwise, gaming the system to split battle groups down into smaller units for greater offensive power should be avoided.

Battle Groups and Movement

Battle groups use the same movement system as individual heroes, but they take up a *lot* more space than a single person does. Depending on their Size, they can be truly enormous, potentially covering hundreds of yards of ground.

As a general rule, a battle group can direct attacks with its full strength at any character or group within range of any edge of the group. Also as a result of this enormous size, individual

characters are capable of moving *through* the space occupied by a battle group, crossing it as difficult terrain at a cost of 1 Initiative per round spent doing so (battle groups can't move through one another). Storytellers must use common sense when deciding what sort of positioning-based actions to allow individual characters to take—two characters at close range to a 500 man battle group on opposite sides of it, for example, may well be at long range with regard to one another.

Battle groups can potentially spread out to cover truly enormous amounts of ground, allowing them to direct close-range attacks at a greater variety of characters, but if the members of the group spread out so much that the average space between group members is 10 yards or more, the group loses all Size advantages to its attacks.

Battle groups *don't* need to take disengage actions to move away from opponents two or more points of Size smaller than themselves.

Command Actions

Battle groups are mostly self-contained and self-directed entities, under the Storyteller's control —even battle groups allied with or "owned by" players' characters. Sometimes, however, individual heroes wish to exercise more direct command over a battle group. This is done with command actions.

To issue a command action, a character must be either the recognized leader of a battle group—such as the boss of a gang or the commander of an army—or must be a known hero to the members of the group, whom they would be willing to trust and rally around in the midst of battle.

A command action is a one of three different combat actions: Either an *order*, a *rally*, or a *rally for numbers*. None can be placed in a flurry. In order to direct command actions to a battle group, a character must have some way of making himself understood—shouting to subordinate officers from the front of battle, using signal relays from a back-line command post, and battlefield magic are the most common methods.

Issuing an order is a ([Charisma, Appearance, or Intelligence] + War) roll against difficulty 1. Intelligence is used by rear line characters who are not actively participating in the battle, generally characters protected somewhere behind the battle group they're issuing orders to. Charisma and Appearance are used to lead from the front, by characters actively participating in the battle. Charisma directs troops through impromptu speeches and valorous exhortations, while Appearance leads by example, such as charging at the enemy while calling for troops to follow. An order action both determines what the targeted battle group will do on its next turn and adds its successes to the battle group's dice pools for all actions taken during that turn.

Rally actions can be taken after an allied battle group has failed a rout check, but before dissolution occurs (remember, a battle group dissolves on its next turn *after* it fails a rout check). They effectively give a unit a second chance to rally back. A rally action is a ([Charisma or Appearance] + War) roll, against the same difficulty as the failed rout check. If the rally action succeeds, then the targeted battle group recovers as though it had succeeded at its rout check.

Finally, a rally for numbers action can be taken after the Battle Group has suffered Magnitude damage, to stiffen the resolve of hesitating soldiers or to call warriors who have begun to break formation and flee back to battle. It is a ([Charisma or Appearance] + War) roll against difficulty 1. Every two successes rolled restore one point of Magnitude. Rallying for numbers can't give a

battle group more Magnitude than its current maximum rating, nor can it restore a lost point of Size—that can only be done by recruitment or rounding up deserters after the battle. A battle group can only benefit from one rally for numbers action per battle, though losing a point of Size resets this limit.

Complications

There are two additional factors to consider when using battle groups:

• **Perfect morale:** Some rare battle groups possess a quality called *perfect morale*. A battle group with perfect morale is made up of fighters incapable of fear. Such a group automatically succeeds at all rout checks, and simply will not retreat unless ordered to do so. Fearless battle groups enjoy a +3 bonus to their Magnitude, but cannot benefit from rally for numbers actions (since all of their casualties represent fighters killed or injured too badly to continue fighting).

The most common groups with perfect morale seen in the Age of Sorrows are mindless undead, although legends of the First Age speak of fearless groups of clockwork legionnaires and similar wonders of mystic artifice. If such a force could be excavated and restored to working order in the Second Age, it would be a treasure beyond price.

• **Slaughter:** While a battle group that has suffered rout and dissolved is no longer a meaningful actor in battle, the surviving fighters that made up the group still exist—they're usually either laying down arms or running away from the fight in an uncoordinated manner. In the latter case, if allowed to escape, they may very well re-form and offer battle again at a later date. As a result, the standard military response to a rout is to run down the fleeing survivors and slaughter them.

This gruesome practice consists of simply directing attack actions at the fleeing battle group, which suffers a -3 penalty to its Defense. As the group no longer has any Magnitude, the Storyteller simply looks at the damage inflicted and the number of fleeing soldiers, and estimates what it amounts to in terms of dead enemies—the more damage, the more carnage inflicted against the routing battle group.

Of note, if the fleeing group is of a Size greater than 2, then only other battle groups can generally attempt slaughter attacks against it—an individual hero just can't cut down enough fleeing soldiers to make much of a dent in a 600-man retreat, at least not without powerful magic such as battlefield sorcery.

> Storytelling Advice: Skip It
>
> Having gone through all of the above rules, we offer one final word of advice: sometimes you should ignore them. In some situations, breaking into a detailed blow-by-blow battle would hurt the pacing of the story or simply slow things down, rather than spicing the game up. For example: Six months into an ongoing chronicle, a mighty Dawn Caste warrior wielding a formidable artifact weapon comes upon an inexperienced sentry walking the walls of a fortress the Solar is storming. Deciding there's little doubt as to the fight's outcome (and knowing that the evening's real action waits further within the fort), the Storyteller decides to simply offer the Dawn's player a chance to make a difficulty 2 (Dexterity + Melee) roll to dispatch her hapless and outmatched foe before he is able to raise an alarm.

This principle can also apply to other situations where full-on combat doesn't seem appropriate—it's all down to deciding when such abstraction is desirable, which is ultimately the province of the Storyteller. If an infiltrating Night Caste wants to sneak up on a patrolling mortal house guard and knock him out with a sap or headlock, a simple (Dexterity + [Brawl, Melee, or Martial Arts]) roll will probably take care of the problem. If he wants to knock out Octavian, the Living Tower… that's a job for the combat engine.

Strategic Warfare

Long before armies and heroes clash on the field of battle, the strategies of their generals shape the conflict to come.

What follows is a simple system for strategic conflict for use whenever a battle between two military forces is imminent. This is intended to shape the clash of armies—it's not intended to be used by a Circle of Solars preparing to fight a Circle of Abyssals, or for any similarly small-numbers conflicts.

Overview

This is how strategic conflict works:

• The strategic decision-maker (generally a general or strategos) for each side decides upon a desired stratagem.

• The players of each involved general tally up any advantages they may have that would provide modifiers to their attempt to implement their strategy.

• The players make a opposed (Intelligence + War) Strategic Maneuver roll. If one side or the other manages to triumph, then the battle that follows plays out according to the terms of the stratagem they've selected.

• The battle is then played out in the combat system as usual, subject to the selected stratagem.

Potential Modifiers

The following is a list of potential modifiers to the Strategic Maneuver roll. This list is not intended to be exhaustive—the Storyteller should feel free to add additional modifiers if they seem appropriate.

Modifier	**Condition**
-1	General knows nothing at all about opposing general
-1	General knows little to nothing about the forces he is to face.
-1	General commands troops with poor Drill.
+1	General has extensively studied his opponent's past strategies
+1	General has spies and informants within the enemy's ranks
+2	General has a high-placed traitor within enemy ranks

+1-3 The players have roleplayed one or more scenes in which they obtained some concrete advantage over the enemy or harmed the enemy army (stealing its secrets, devastating its supply lines, killing a famous hero of the opposing forces, etc).

Potential Stratagems

What follows is a list of potential stratagems. Each has a listed *threshold*—a number of successes by which the opponent's Strategic Maneuver roll must be exceeded in order to successfully implement the stratagem. If you roll more successes than your opponent, but fail to accumulate enough to implement your stratagem, then the battle simply occurs with no stratagem in place and no particular advantage accorded to either side.

Back to the Sea (*threshold: 1*): The victorious general confronts his enemy on terrain that makes escape or retreat impossible. The enemy may literally have his back to the sea, or might be forced to fight at the edge of a cliff or river, or inside of a box canyon, or similar environment. The enemy force cannot take withdraw actions; Size loss indicates massive deaths or surrenders rather than soldiers fleeing the battlefield, so that later regrouping and recovery becomes vastly more difficult if not impossible. Slaughter actions are vastly more effective than normal. Rally for numbers actions require three successes per point of Magnitude restored.

Strategic Placement (*threshold: 1*): The victorious general forces the fight to occur somewhere advantageous by dint of its nature—generally this is used by Fair Folk strategoi to force their opponents to pursue them into the bordermarches of the Wyld, or by Abyssal Exalted to force confrontations inside shadowlands. This stratagem offers no mechanical advantage in and of itself—it's up to the general to have a battle strategy in mind to exploit the ground she's chosen.

Demoralized (*threshold: 2*): The victorious general demoralizes his enemy's forces before the battle begins. Perhaps their supply lines have been ravaged and they must fight hungry; perhaps vengeful ghosts have been sent to haunt their camps. In any event, the enemy takes a -1 penalty on all rout checks and all command actions.

Fortifications (*threshold: 2*): The victorious general leaves her enemy with no choice but to confront her on a battlefield she's prepared in advance to confound her foes. This may be an entrenched camp on a hill surrounded by palisades of stakes, or it may mean street-to-street fighting in a city where the victorious force has prepared avenues of swift movement with which the enemy is unfamiliar; it may even indicate warfare across a series of collapsible trenches. In any event, the opposing force begins the fight at long range, and treats the entire battlefield as difficult terrain, whereas the victorious force treats the battlefield as normal terrain.

Ambush (*threshold: 3*): The victorious general tricks his enemy into a trap, joining battle when it is least expected! All attacks launched by his forces during the first round of combat are considered ambush attacks. All attacks launched by his forces in the following 3 rounds are considered surprise attacks.

Pincer Attack (*threshold: 3*): The victorious general arrays her forces to attack her opponent on several fronts simultaneously. The enemy force is considered to suffer a -1 onslaught penalty throughout the entirety of the battle.

Social Influence

In **Exalted**, the words of prophets, courtiers, and princes carry as much power as a warrior's sword or a sorcerer's magic. Social influence is the system used for resolving interactions in

which characters attempt to manipulate, persuade, or coerce each other. With the social actions listed below, characters can gain the trust of others and then use that to influence them, changing or shaping their beliefs over the course of a conversation, oration, or artistic performance.

The core of the social influence system is the **influence roll**. The dice pool for an influence roll is always one of your social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation, or Appearance) plus a relevant Ability, against a difficulty of the Resolve rating of the character you're trying to influence. Successful influence rolls allow you to alter a character's feelings or beliefs or to convince him to do something for you, based on the social action or Charm used. Occasionally, you will use other Attributes and Abilities to take actions that are not influence rolls, such as rolling (Perception + Socialize) to read a person's personality, beliefs, or agenda. All of these social actions are described in more detail below.

Overview

Social influence in **Exalted** revolves around Intimacies. In terms of gameplay, you're either going to be *influencing someone's outlook* (by creating, destroying, strengthening, or weakening Intimacies), or using Intimacies to *persuade someone to do what you want*.

Intimacies are the key to this system—defined in full on page XX, a character's Intimacies dictate what they believe and care about. By studying and interacting with other characters, you can figure out what makes them tick. By engaging other characters socially, you can try to change how they feel about things, and thus change their Intimacies.

Without exploiting an Intimacy, persuasion isn't possible. No matter how charismatic you might be, a stranger won't give over his life to your cause just because you say so—there has to be a reason to make him take such course of action. Perhaps they *trust and respect* you; perhaps they *hate someone* you've set yourself against; perhaps by doing so, they'll *further their own goals* or *stand up for what they believe in*. All such motives are described by Intimacies. In short: You need to play on an Intimacy to be able to talk people into doing things you want them to do. The stronger the Intimacy, the more you can convince people to do in its name.

The resulting gameplay can depict anything from angering a great warrior into declaring war, to gaining the martial support of your sworn brothers because they respect you, to alienating a queen from her consort (to lessen his influence), to using propaganda to stir a revolt, to making a mighty bodyguard distrust and abandon the man he's sworn to protect.

In such a milieu, enormous charisma and forthright conviction might win the day, but it's often more effective to first learn what people want and what they care about. You might use your personality to win over a merchant prince, the better to convince him to back your agenda—or you might find it simpler to seduce his favored and trusted concubine, who can whisper your desires into his ear.

This also means Storyteller characters will seek to influence your character's opinions and actions. Creation is a world of strife and turmoil, full of heroes with their own agendas. Some characters will seek to use or recruit you, and some will offer and take advantage simultaneously—it's up to your character's judgment to determine who to trust, who to shun, who to follow, and who to turn away. Creation is a world that thrives on social influence, and no Exalt is an island.

Social Influence at a glance

Social influence is about:

- Discovering the Intimacies of others.
- Protecting your own Intimacies from discovery.
- Exploiting others' Intimacies to persuade them.
- Instilling others with new Intimacies to affect their feelings or beliefs.
- Strengthening or weakening the Intimacies others already hold.

In short: The social influence system is all about discovering, building or weakening the beliefs or emotional connections of others in order to convince them to do what you want them to do.

Order of Actions

Social actions don't usually have special timing—there are no "Social turns." When a player's character tries to seduce a beautiful youth or convince a despot to ally with his fledgling kingdom, he'll probably be the only person rolling dice—everything else is roleplay between his character and the Storyteller character. When multiple characters attempt social actions in the same scene, who rolls when can be decided by the natural flow of the conversation, or by procedure (in a court, for example, there are strict rules regarding who speaks when). If two characters are both trying to present different arguments to a single individual, then that individual's player decides who to listen to first. If it's *still* not clear who acts in which order, then the characters with the highest (Wits + Socialize) go first, with the Storyteller breaking any ties.

Resolve

The Resolve trait represents a character's mental solidity and strength of will, her ability to resist being influenced by the persuasion and manipulation of others. A character's Resolve rating is the difficulty for any influence roll made against her. Resolve is calculated as the character's ([Wits + Integrity + specialty] / 2, round up). If a character is applying her Resolve, then it means she's resistant to or skeptical of the influence being applied—there's no need to roll against a character's Resolve if she's happy to accept whatever influence is being offered. **Resolve is mainly used to resist instill, inspire, persuade, bargain and threaten actions.**

Guile

The Guile trait represents a character's ability to conceal his thoughts and innermost feelings. A character with high Guile reveals little about himself through his expression, posture, and speech, while a character with low Guile wears his heart (and Intimacies) on his sleeve. A character's Guile rating is the difficulty for actions that attempt to figure out his Intimacies, emotions, or thoughts. Guile is calculated as the character's ([Manipulation + Socialize + specialty] / 2, round up). **Guile is typically used to defend against the read intentions action.**

Intimacies

Intimacies represent a character's relationships, beliefs, ideals, and goals. A character's Intimacies help determine what types of influence will affect him.

Intensity

The strength of an Intimacy is defined by its **intensity**—Minor, Major, or Defining. When a character is targeted by an influence roll that opposes one or more of his Intimacies, add a bonus

to his Resolve based on the intensity of the most applicable Intimacy. On the other hand, if one or more of a character's Intimacies *supports* an influence roll applied against him, then he suffers a corresponding penalty to Resolve based on the most applicable Intimacy.

If more than one Intimacy supports or opposes a social action, only the most relevant Intimacy modifies the target's Resolve. For example, if you have a Major Tie of hatred against the Realm, and a Defining Tie of hatred toward Ragara Jirun, and Ragara Jirun tries to convince you to act in support of the Realm, both Intimacies would logically oppose the influence, but only the Defining Tie of "Ragara Jirun (Hatred)" boosts your Resolve, as it has the strongest intensity.

Sometimes Social influence is supported by one Intimacy and opposed by another at the same time. For example, if Righteous Thorn has a Defining Tie of hatred toward the Realm, but the Major Principle "Violence solves nothing," then an attempt to convince him to support an armed revolt against Realm occupation would face no bonus or penalty to his Resolve since the two cancel one another out (-3 for the Defining Intimacy in support, +3 for the Major Intimacy in opposition).

The effects of these different Intensities are listed below.

• **Minor** Intimacies are notable relationships or beliefs that have some influence over a character's actions without being an integral part of who he is. Characters will usually let their Minor Intimacies dictate their behavior in situations where it is directly relevant, as long as it does not act against a stronger Intimacy or their own self-interest. A man with a Minor Tie of "My Wife (Love)" has a real and profound relationship with his spouse, but it doesn't have a strong influence on his actions outside the context of his romantic and family life. A peasant with a Minor Principle of "The Immaculate Philosophy" believes sincerely in the teachings of the Immaculate Order, but her reverence has little sway over her non-religious behavior. Minor Intimacies apply a +2 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, or a -1 Resolve penalty against rolls that align with them.

• **Major** Intimacies are relationships or beliefs that influence the way the character acts in many areas of life. Major Intimacies influence the behavior of characters even in situations where they are only tangentially or indirectly relevant, and might lead a character to act against their own self-interest as long as they do not face severe harm or life-altering inconveniences because of it. A man with a Major Tie of "My Wife (Love)" has a strong relationship that dictates how he acts outside of just the context of the relationship. A peasant with a Major Principle of "The Immaculate Philosophy" applies the teachings of the Immaculates to almost every aspect of her life. Major Intimacies apply a +3 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, or a -2 Resolve penalty against rolls that align with them.

• **Defining** Intimacies represent the most important things in a character's life, the relationships or beliefs that they place above all others and refuse to compromise. Defining Intimacies influence the greater part of a character's behavior in all fields of life. If there's something for which a character is willing to lay down his life, then it is best represented by this level of intensity. A man with a Defining Tie of "My Wife (Love)" is not just a committed spouse; his relationship influences almost everything he does. A peasant with a Defining Principle of "The Immaculate Philosophy" is defined as a person by her reverence for Immaculate tenets. Defining Intimacies apply a +4 Resolve bonus against influence rolls that oppose them, or a -3 Resolve penalty against rolls that align with them.

Transparency

By default, **Exalted** assumes system transparency—players know what kind of dice pools they're facing, when their enemy has used a Charm, and so forth, and this applies to social influence as well. However, some Storytellers may prefer more opaque social results in the interest of heightening drama and tension—perhaps you think it's more interesting if players don't *know* whether they really convinced the Lunar warlord, or if he simply took their bribe but plans to betray the characters. Perhaps you've got a player who can't resist acting on out-of-character knowledge.

In these circumstances, you might not announce when Storyteller characters spend Willpower to reject social influence, or might even roll players' social actions yourself, behind the screen, so that nobody is sure how well their attempt was received—in this style of play, read intentions actions become even more vital not only to gauge a character's attitude before approaching them, but afterwards as well!

Social Actions

The following is a list of social influence actions, what they can accomplish, and what conditions must be met to retry them after they fail ("Retrying Social Actions," p. XX).

• **Instill:** The instill action is used to change the feelings and beliefs of others. When a player takes an instill action, he declares what he wants to make his target feel or believe. The Storyteller may apply penalties to the roll if this belief is particularly implausible or hard to accept, up to a maximum penalty of -5 for truly unbelievable claims. On a successful roll, the target forms an Intimacy towards that belief.

However, there are limits to what someone will believe when they already have strong opinions to the contrary. The character may need to lessen existing Intimacies before instilling new ones. While the instill action can always be used to create new Minor Intimacies, altering existing Intimacies is more difficult:

—Strengthening a Minor Intimacy, or weakening a Major Intimacy, can only be done if the target has a **different** Minor or better Intimacy that supports the attempted influence.

—Likewise, raising a Major Intimacy, or weakening a Defining Intimacy, is only possible if the target has a **different** Major or better Intimacy that supports the attempted influence.

—Strengthening an existing Intimacy requires that the evidence raised or argument made in favor of strengthening it be **more** compelling than whatever caused the Intimacy to arrive at its current intensity. For example, if a shopkeeper gained a Minor Intimacy of distrust toward the Guild after learning that they often undercut local merchants, he would need even stronger evidence in order to strengthen his Intimacy to Major. Perhaps he learns that a Guild merchant plans to buy out his shop, or speaks to a man who once partnered with a Guildsman and was betrayed and sold into slavery.

• **Persuade:** The persuade action allows you to convince other characters to perform an action or task that you give to them. **The extent of the action you can compel with persuade depends on the Intimacies of your target.**

Without an Intimacy to support your influence roll, you can only convince others to take relatively trivial and risk-free actions—begging a coin from a passing stranger is about the limit. On the other hand, characters who have an appropriate Tie or Principle can be convinced to undertake great risks, dedicate their lives to a cause, or even die in your name. There are three categories of tasks characters might be asked to undertake, each based on the Intimacy being exploited:

Inconvenient Tasks: Characters who have an appropriate Minor Intimacy can be convinced to perform tasks that pose some mild danger or hindrance to them, as long as it is not severe enough to seriously disrupt their life or livelihood—the prospect of a severe injury, an angry superior, or heavy financial loss is still more than they will allow. With this level of Intimacy, you can persuade people to do things that take longer than a scene to complete, if the amount of time needed is not so long as to disrupt the target's life.

Example: "I need you to deliver this parcel to that big house in Cinnabar District, with the red jade lion statues by the door. If the man on the door has a scorpion tattoo, don't leave it with him —insist to see the master of the house."

Serious Tasks: Characters who have an appropriate Major Intimacy can be convinced to perform even tasks that carry the risk of extreme harm or impediment. At this level, a farmer could be convinced to join your personal militia despite the risk of dying on the battlefield, while an apothecary might provide you with poisons even though he faces imprisonment or corporal punishment for doing so. However, they will still balk if the risk of death or ruin is almost certain. Tasks that take extended amounts of time are possible at this level, even if they require a long-term commitment such as joining an organization.

Example: "Just because he's your father doesn't make you his slave—why should his fear deny you a place in An-Teng's glorious uprising against its oppressors? This nation needs heroes; men like you!"

Life-Changing Tasks: Characters who have a Defining Intimacy can be made to do almost anything. At this level, you could convince a devoted follower to hold off a Wyld Hunt long enough to buy time for your escape, or make a wealthy noble donate the better portion of his fortune to your personal cult. Only in cases where death or utter ruin are absolutely, unavoidably certain will they balk, and even then the Storyteller might decide they're willing to do it despite all odds.

Example: "I know the old scrolls said the heart of this temple is guarded by a fearsome beast of brass and flame. I know it's frightening, but isn't this why we came so far and spent our fortunes, to be the first ones to scavenge the Great Ziggurat of Lost Zarlath? I'll never make it into the final chambers with my leg like this—you'll have to dare it for both of us!"

• **Bargain:** Bargaining is similar to the persuade action, but doesn't depend on your target's Intimacies. Instead, you must offer a bribe, gift, or favor that the character you're convincing believes is worth the difficulty or danger of the task you're asking him to perform. The Storyteller should take into account the Intimacies, wealth, and social status of the character in deciding what they will consider sufficient payment (a wealthy noble is not going to be moved to favor your cause in court by the gift of an apple, though a starving beggar might be).

• **Threaten:** When all else fails, pain and intimidation are brutally effective motivators. Sometimes also called an intimidate action, threaten works like a bargain: You can convince

people to do things without having to appeal to their Intimacies, only rather than offering something they want, you present them with something they *don't*—usually the threat of bodily harm, although social blackmail, economic ruin, and general intimidation will also do the job. It can also be used as an instill action which gives the target a Tie of fear towards you, or intensifies such an Intimacy he already has. For a threaten action to be effective, the target must be more afraid of the consequences of refusing you than he is of whatever you want him to do. If the target has any awe- or fear-based Intimacies you're aware of, that's usually a good place to start.

Blackmail and bullying won't make you many friends. Using the threaten action on someone almost always causes him to form an immediate negative Tie towards you, with a context chosen by the target's player, regardless of whether the attempt succeeds or fails. It can also often weaken any existing positive Ties the target might have, although that's ultimately up to his player (p. XX).

• **Inspire:** The inspire action is used to incite emotions and strong passions in the hearts of others, usually with the Performance Ability, which those others then act on. When a player takes an inspire action, he chooses which emotion he is attempting to inspire—anger, sorrow, hope, lust, hatred, delight, or any other. On a successful inspire roll, the target is impassioned according to the emotion evoked—but the *target's player* chooses what form that passion takes.

An impassioned character might form a new passion, or act upon an existing Intimacy that aligns with the emotion evoked. A tribal warrior-queen who is inspired with anger after hearing a Dawn Caste's roaring oration against her enemies might decide to lead a raid against a hated rival clan, or might decide to begin harassing a political enemy within her own tribe. A merchant prince who is filled with sorrow by the song of a Zenith Caste playing outside his window might spend the rest of the scene weeping with longing for a dead wife or might resolve to undertake some act of generosity with his fortune in remembrance of her kind-hearted ways.

A character doesn't *have* to drop everything he's doing to act upon an inspire action, but he must be genuinely resolved to action. If a devout follower of the Immaculate Philosophy is inspired to make a pilgrimage to the Imperial Mountain, he will generally set his affairs in order, supply himself for the journey, and explain to his family where he is going before setting off.

Inspiration doesn't automatically create or strengthen Intimacies, but it's often appropriate for it to do so as characters act upon their inflamed passions. An inflamed passion may be treated as a Major Intimacy for the purposes of modifying Resolve and enabling persuade actions, for as long as the character is acting on it.

The inspiring character *doesn't* automatically know what passions he has inspired in his audience; he must use read intentions (see below) to find out. Because a character does not—and without magic, cannot—tailor the outcome of an inspire action to a specific target, inspire actions aren't subject to the penalty for group influence detailed on page XX, unless specified by a Charm or other effect.

• Read Intentions: The read intentions action allows a character to discern what another character wants to achieve in a scene of interaction. Reading someone's intentions is not an influence roll—instead, it is a (Perception + Socialize) roll against the target's Guile. On a success, the Storyteller should give a brief description of what the character wants out of the

interaction: “He’s seducing you to get you alone,” or “She’s making polite small talk and waiting for this party to end.”

Alternatively, this action can be used in order to determine what Intimacies a character has. Before rolling for the action, the player should generally describe what kind of Intimacy he wants to discern (“Does he love anyone?” “How does he feel about me?” “Is he a devout Immaculate?”). On a success, the Storyteller chooses and reveals one of the target’s Intimacies that fits those criteria. If there is no Intimacy that does, the Storyteller should let the player know this.

The read intentions action is not a form of magic. The character using it is analyzing the target’s words and behavior to get a better feel for his motives and Intimacies, and the Storyteller should use common sense in deciding how much information can be gleaned from a character’s behavior and appearance. You might deduce that a young princeling is in love from a look of longing in his eyes or a wistful sigh, but discerning his paramour’s identity might be impossible unless she’s physically present or if he’s carrying some evidence of her identity.

Finally, a character who is unaware he’s being observed suffers a -2 penalty to his Guile.

> Roleplaying: A Reminder
>
> There are a lot of rules here dealing with aggressively cultivating Intimacies, convincing people to do things, or tricking people into abandoning things they care about. These mechanical hooks exist to help facilitate persuasive character concepts, from tricksters to grand orators; moreover, we’ve crafted these rules to determine when it’s fair for such characters to fail in their aims. These rules are *not* a replacement for roleplaying or organic character growth, however. Just because we’ve devoted a number of pages to rules about provoking Intimacy growth or loss, don’t forget—your character can (and *should*) intensify, weaken, gain, and lose Intimacies based on the course of the story and character development, without anyone using any social actions to goad such change. Likewise, characters are constantly evaluating the words and deeds of those around them when deciding what to do, even when not targeted by persuade actions.
>
> In short: Remember that these rules are there to supplement good old-fashioned roleplaying, not to cast a net over it or box it in.

Appearance

While the Appearance Attribute may be rolled as part of social actions, it also has another function in social influence, granting a bonus against weak-willed characters. Those of low Resolve are more easily impressed and awed by striking, beautiful individuals, or easily intimidated by the profoundly ugly (see the Hideous Merit, p. XX).

If a character’s Appearance rating is higher than his target’s Resolve, then he gains a dice bonus on all instill and persuasion attempts against that individual equal to the difference. Thus, a character with Appearance 5 attempting to use a persuade action on an individual with Resolve 3 would gain a +2 bonus. This comparison is made before any bonuses to Resolve are factored in.

If addressing a group (p. XX), compare Appearance to the average Resolve of the group (usually 2 or 3) to determine any appropriate bonus.

What Does Influence Mean?

Successful influence is explicitly *not* any sort of mind control. The changes produced by successful influence rolls represent the way in which people can be affected by the opinions and attitudes of others. When a Zenith Caste prophet takes an instill action to convince a warrior-prince of the righteousness of the Unconquered Sun, he is making reasoned arguments or emotional appeals that the warlord will agree with, not brainwashing the prince into his cult.

Resisting influence means you're exerting effort to override your feelings or better judgment. You may be convinced by a person's argument or moved by his emotional appeal, but the stakes are too high and your idealism is too strong for you to back down. Alternately, an application of Resolve can be seen as rejecting an appealing or well-supported claim that contradicts one of your own strong beliefs (hello, Intimacies). However, a character need not strongly object to an idea to apply Resolve. She may just be uncertain about a course of action, wary of an unforeseen risk, or may simply hate the speaker despite his wisdom.

That said, **Exalted** does feature mind control and other forms of severe influence. This is always the province of powerful and dangerous magic, generally marked with the psyche keyword.

Resisting Influence Rolls

The base difficulty for an influence roll is always the Resolve rating of the character targeted by the roll. On a failed roll, the character is unimpressed or unmoved by whatever argument or offer was made. On a successful roll, the target is persuaded or moved by your words.

Spending Willpower

Even if a character's Resolve is overcome, he may still have an opportunity to deny the influence. If the influence is trying to change how he *feels*, such as by creating, destroying, or changing his Intimacies, he may spend a point of Willpower to:

• Stop a new Intimacy from being created. Although the character is moved, he just can't afford to invest himself in a new person or cause!

• Stop a Major or Defining Intimacy from being weakened. Even though the influence was convincing, the character just has too much invested in the Intimacy to give up now, even if he wants to!

• Reject a successful inspire action—the character uses his force of will to deny his swelling passions.Decision Points

Refusing successful influence to make the character *do something* is trickier. When a character fails to resist such influence with his Resolve, he enters into a special state called a Decision Point.

In the Decision Point, the player must choose an Intimacy and explain how it justifies resisting that specific influence. The Intimacy he chooses must be of equal or greater intensity than the Intimacy which supported the influence roll, and it **can't** be the one that strengthened his Resolve against the roll in the first place—the influence already overcame that particular source of reluctance when it beat his Resolve, after all.

If those requirements are met, and if the Storyteller accepts the player's argument for why one of his Intimacies would make him reject the influence, then the character may spend one Willpower point to resist the influence roll. Otherwise, resistance is impossible.

As an example Decision Point, consider Son of Wolves, a Zenith Caste whose Resolve rating has just been overcome by the influence roll of Naya, a scheming Sidereal. The Sidereal seeks to turn him against his Circle (a serious task), and her persuade action is supported by Son of Wolves's Major Principle of belief in the Immaculate Faith, which manifests as a lingering and unshakable conviction that he and his fellow Solar Exalted are Anathema. Unless Son of Wolves can match this with an Intimacy of Major or Defining intensity, he will be powerless to defy the truth he hears in Naya's words. While he has a Defining Tie of loyalty towards his Circlemates, he already used that Intimacy to bolster his Resolve, rendering it unavailable in a Decision Point. Luckily, he also has a Major Principle of "I can't abide a traitor," owing back to a terrible betrayal he suffered long ago. His player argues that this allows him not to betray his Circlemates even if they are Anathema. The Storyteller accepts this argument, and Son of Wolves is able to spend a point of Willpower to resist.

Lengthy Debates

Sometimes after a character has spent Willpower in a Decision Point in order to reject influence, the initiate will return with a new or stronger argument. When this happens, the initiate is engaging the reset rules for social actions ("Retrying Social Actions," p. XX). If the *same* issue is being argued as a result, the target may **not** use an Intimacy which boosted his Resolve against the initial roll. After all, that logic was not enough to stop him from being forced into the Decision Point in the first place. To boost his Resolve against the initiate's second attempt, he must find another Intimacy to raise his Resolve—or use the one that allowed him to reject influence in the Decision Point. Remember that according to the rules of Decision Points, the Intimacy a character uses to raise his Resolve **cannot** be invoked in a Decision Point. This rule continues to apply throughout the story—as long as the initiate can find new angles with which to demonstrate the rightness of her persuasion, she can cause her target to use up all of his valid excuses over the course of a story. When a character has no valid Intimacies with which to enter a Decision Point, beating his Resolve will finally convince him to agree with the initiate's arguments. Thus a prophet may soften the heart of a prince over time.

Special note: Because your Intimacies are the key to avoiding influence you absolutely cannot abide, it's important to spend a few moments thinking about good "safety net" Intimacies when making your character. For example, if the idea of your character violating his sworn oath is antithetical to how you imagine him, you probably want a Major or Defining Principle along the lines of "My word is my bond" or "Once I give my word, I never go back on it."

> NPCs and Willpower
>
> NPCs don't have limitless reserves of Willpower to spend on resisting influence rolls. The average mortal has only a precious few points of Willpower at any given time, and even an Exalt is unlikely to empty his entire pool of Willpower without good cause. As a rule of thumb, most minor mortal characters won't spend Willpower to resist successful influence rolls—if every peasant, innkeeper, and hired goon is paying Willpower to defy the players' characters, it only bogs down the game.

For more significant or powerful characters, the Storyteller should base the decision to resist or not on the character's Intimacies—the higher the intensity of Intimacy that opposes the influence roll, the more likely the character is to resist. For example, a wandering Abyssal swordsman will almost always spend Willpower when his Defining Tie of love to his dead husband is opposed. However, against an influence roll that only opposes a Minor Principle of greed, he might conserve his Willpower if he believes he will need it for future conflicts. If an influence roll isn't opposed by any of the character's Intimacies, he's unlikely to resist it unless he has a pressing reason to do so.

Unacceptable Influence

There are limits on what can be achieved with social influence. No amount of charisma is sufficient to talk someone into suicide, or to convince a die-hard patriot to betray his cause. If a request is so antithetical to the nature and personality of its target that it cannot possibly succeed, it is said to be **unacceptable influence**. A character targeted by unacceptable influence may reject it outright without spending Willpower, even if his Resolve would not normally be high enough to defend against it. A *player* can still choose to have his character follow the course of action put forward by unacceptable influence, but only because he thinks it makes sense—the character cannot be coerced into doing it. Some powerful Charms and spells can also compel characters into bowing to unacceptable influence.

Unacceptable influence includes:

• Any instill action to strengthen or weaken an Intimacy which doesn't exploit an appropriately strong Intimacy to do so.

Example: A Deathlord's agent sits down next to a Solar in a teahouse and intimates that the Solar's Lunar companion is not to be trusted, but she gives no reasons—only dim intimations. The Solar has a Major Tie of trust toward the Lunar. Because the Abyssal exploits no Intimacies to support her suggestions, the Solar can ignore her attempt at weakening his Intimacy toward the Lunar.

• Any persuasion attempt which doesn't exploit an Intimacy strong enough to support the proposed task.

Example: A zealous Immaculate missionary attempts to convince the high priestess of Hamoji, great volcano god of the Wavecrest Archipelago, to abandon her life of worship. This would be a life-changing task, and the priestess has no Defining Intimacies which would support the missionary's exhortations. As such, the priestess is free to reject the proposed influence at no cost, without the need of a Decision Point.

• Any bargain attempt which fails to offer a properly enticing incentive or threaten action which is insufficiently threatening.

• Any influence that would cause a character to kill himself, or to do something that he *knows* would result in his certain death.

• Any influence that would cause a character to completely abandon or end one of his Defining Intimacies is unacceptable. A farmer with a Defining Tie of love to his wife might be seduced by another person, but could not be convinced to abandon or murder his wife. A Solar with a Defining Principle of "I will win the allegiance of the sorceress Raksi" could not be convinced to

kill her, as this would make fulfilling that goal impossible. Weakening a Defining Intimacy is still allowed, making it possible to first degrade an Intimacy from Defining to Major and then issue the otherwise unacceptable influence.

• Any seduction attempt that violates a character's sexual orientation (as defined by the player, or by the Storyteller in the case of Storyteller characters) is unacceptable.

• Certain Charms allow characters to define special kinds of influence that they may treat as unacceptable.

Seduction

The Exalted are often driven by their desires, inflamed by passions that span the centuries. Many Chosen while away the years in pursuit of torrid love affairs and whirlwind romances. With some of the Chosen, seduction is an art form, and with others it's an instinct. In the social influence system, seduction can be accomplished a number of ways. The seducer might rely on the instill action—through suggestion, innuendo or poesy, she plants a seed of interest in the mind of her love interest. She may then use the persuade action, insinuating herself into the comforts of her target. Others may find it easier to simply attract interest at social gatherings, through seductive gestures or facial expressions, perhaps accentuating their most provocative clothing or their favorite features in other to draw attention. In these and many other cases, the character need not use the instill action, and if a persuade action is required, it can often be perfunctory—characters who respond to such signals are usually eager to explore their significance. Generally, when the seducer's target is already interested in sex, no roll is needed. Seduction can also be accomplished through the bargain action, in a roundabout way. The Empress herself once wrote of her frustrating attraction to the "boorish" Brem Marst, whose wealth drew her as surely as his handsome brow.

The Red Rule

In almost all aspects, **Exalted** doesn't mechanically distinguish between Storyteller characters and those the players control. Here's the exception:

A player-controlled character can *only* be seduced or otherwise put in a sexual situation if the player is okay with it. Otherwise, any such attempt fails automatically.

This is completely up to the player's discretion, and they can waive this rule's protection if they want their character to be seduced, if they think it would improve the story, or for whatever other reason. This is entirely up to the player, and on an attempt-by-attempt basis—waiving the rule once doesn't void your ability to call on it later against the same character, or even in the same scene. If no one in your group ever invokes this rule, that's also fine—but players don't have to watch their character put into a sexual situation they're not comfortable with.

Groups that feel comfortable in doing so should allow player characters the full range of their seductive prowess when entangled with Storyteller-controlled

characters… although remember that the Storyteller is also a player and their boundaries should be respected.

Social Complications

A number of considerations may arise when winning friends and influencing people:

One Target vs. Many Targets

Much of the time, an influence roll only affects one character. An envoy warns a prince of a coming war; a smuggler bribes a magistrate to overlook his cargo; a hedonistic noble seduces an innocent farm boy. Sometimes, however, a character may wish to make a single influence roll against multiple characters. He can choose to target only a select group, or to apply the influence roll against anyone who hears him. However, people find it easier to ignore arguments that are not directly addressed to them. **Whenever an influence roll targets more than one character, it suffers a -3 penalty.**

Because the different targets of an influence roll can have varying Resolve ratings, the success or failure of the action is determined separately for each target. A Dawn Caste who rolls four successes to threaten a mercenary cadre into backing down from a fight might successfully intimidate the rank and file with Resolve 2, but not the unit's God-Blooded leader with Resolve 5.

Playing to the Audience

Sometimes, a player will attempt to simply sway a mass of people with social influence, rather than appealing to any one character or specific group. While a player character or significant NPC should always be allowed to resist influence with her Resolve, if all the characters in the audience are effectively minor, unimportant characters who would not normally be given their own mechanical definition, the Storyteller can simply treat the entire audience as a single entity with a single Resolve rating.

Most mortal audiences will have a Resolve of 1 or 2, while audiences of exceptional mental resilience, such as ascetic monks or spiritually powerful beings, may have a Resolve of 3 or 5 (though there are few cases when it would be appropriate to lump magical creatures into an audience) The Storyteller can assign Intimacies to the audience based on the general feelings of the crowd—an audience composed of Gem citizens is likely to have a Tie of patriotism towards Gem, for example.

Generally, when the rules for targeting an audience are brought into play, the Storyteller shouldn't bother with the rules for rejecting influence with Willpower, but instead define what percentage of the audience is convinced, usually based on how it aligns with their Intimacies. This might range from the entire crowd, if the influence aligns with a Defining Intimacy, to only a sizable minority, if it opposes a Defining Intimacy.

Any character who has her own individual traits always resists social influence using her own Resolve and Willpower, even if she's a member of an audience being targeted by such an action. In the case of magic that specifically targets an

audience, such characters are treated as separate targets, rather than automatically following the actions of the crowd.

Written Social Actions

The written word can be used to persuade or manipulate others just as easily as speech or whisper. Characters who wish to convey influence through a letter, pamphlet, book, or other written work do so as a written social action. The time taken to create a written missive varies based on the form and length of the work. The Storyteller decides how long it takes, with a minimum time of five minutes in most cases. Likewise, the time needed to read the missive is decided by the Storyteller based on length.

The Ability used when rolling for a written social action is always Linguistics. When a character reads the message, compare the successes rolled for it to his Resolve to determine if it succeeds, as with normal influence rolls. Written social actions can be written to apply either against a single intended reader or against anyone who reads them, with the usual effects for targeting multiple characters (p. XX).

Gestures and Body Language

When a character attempts to communicate through gestures, appearance, and body language alone, the target of such silent influence adds +2 to his Resolve. This is normally only useful for attempts at intimidation or seduction, but players are free to be creative and think up with other applications. Many things are impossible to communicate silently—no amount of hand-waving or quirked eyebrows can explain the intricacies of a First Age relic or the intricate politics of a Dynastic household. This penalty doesn't apply to inspire actions using dance.

Overturning Influence

Imagine this scenario—Rellus the Glorious Mantle of Dawn, warrior of the Dawn Caste, is speaking with his Lunar lover, who has a standing grudge against the Mask of Winters. She persuades him to round up his Marukani followers and ride against the Mask's armies, using a persuade action. Upon hearing of his forces mobilizing, a Sidereal approaches Rellus and attempts to convince him that his planned war is ill-omened, and that he would be better off seeking allies rather than taking on the Deathlord alone. Rellus has already been persuaded—how to resolve this situation?

Characters in the world of **Exalted** are generally loathe to abandon a course of action one they've set themselves upon it, and so overturning existing social influence with additional social influence is difficult. First, a character who has already been persuaded to do something receives a +3 bonus to his Resolve against any influence that would cause him to abandon or disregard that persuasion. This bonus stacks with the Intimacy bonus from a relevant Intimacy. Second, a petitioner who wishes to overturn existing persuasive influence must spend a point of Willpower before making her argument and roll. So, in the above example, the Sidereal must spend a point of Willpower to impress upon Rellus the dire urgency of the omens she has foreseen—and Rellus's Resolve is automatically at +3 to resist her influence, **before** Intimacies come into play.

If the contradictory persuasion succeeds, the targeted character may use a Decision Point to resist it by citing a conflicting Intimacy, *without* spending a point of Willpower to initiate the Decision Point—it's easier to stand by a hard-fought decision than to abandon it and reverse yourself. Conversely, if he wants to abandon his present course of action and accept the new influence, the

character must *spend* a point of Willpower and cite the Intimacy which was used to change his mind.

It's possible to use these rules to model several reversals—if Rellus were to listen to the Sidereal and order his forces to stand down, his Lunar lover would have to spend a Willpower point to convince him to ignore the Sidereal and follow her original advice! However, the Lunar can't use the same argument she did the first time around—that has already been rejected, and so she'll have to come up with a new tack, playing off of a different Intimacy to get Rellus to change his mind again.

These conditions remain in place for one story after a character has been influenced to take a course of action—once the next story begins, any lingering influence can be overturned with an ordinary persuasion, bribery, or intimidation attempt.

> Contradictory Intimacies
>
> Can a character have contradictory Intimacies? Can you love someone, and also fear them, or even hate them? Can you admire the Scarlet Empress and hate the Realm she's built? Can you trust Panther (a former gladiator) as a friend, while distrusting gladiators and other men who live by violence?
>
> Absolutely! Characters frequently hold contradictory feelings close to their hearts —it's part of the complexity of good drama. In the case of contradictory Intimacies and social influence, these conflicting Intimacies act upon a character's Resolve just the same as in any other situation where influence is supported by one Intimacy and opposed by another (p. XX).

Retrying Social Actions

When a scheming courtier's bid to gain the trust of a prince goes awry or a young lover fails to seduce the object of her desires, they cannot simply repeat their old arguments and expect a different result. Instead, they must change the situation in a way that allows them to try again. Below are retry conditions for each of the social actions. Once this condition has been met, the character may attempt to retry. For example, Shan Min, an Eclipse Caste merchant, tries to win the favor of a barbarian warlord with an offering of steel weapons and horses—a bargain action. However, he fails his (Charisma + Presence) roll. The warlord still takes the weapons, but refuses to ally with Shan Min. As described below, he cannot retry the roll until he can make a better offer to the warlord, such as an armory of enchanted weapons or a jade daiklave. Having done so, he can make a new roll, and win the warlord's tribe over to his cause.

The Storyteller should use common sense in adjudicating retry conditions. Once Shan Min has failed his bargain roll, he couldn't simply send one of his circlemates to offer the same bribes to the warlord in hope of a second chance—even though that character didn't make the initial roll, common sense dictates that he must still bring a bigger bribe to win over the chieftain.

Instill: If you fail an instill action, you must present your target with substantially greater evidence for whatever you are trying to convince him of before you can retry. A Solar who wishes to make the people of a small farming village trust him might need to defend them from a predatory god or greedy Imperial tax collector before they will accept him. A strategist who fails to convince a general that a war with An-Teng would be a disaster would need to bring back

intelligence reports that prove his point before he will be heard. A suitor trying to win a prince's affection would need to present a much grander display of love.

Alternately, you can try again after the current story has ended.

Persuade: There are three ways to retry a failed persuade action. One is by making a different argument, playing on a different Intimacy of equal or greater strength. Another is to wait and try again during the next story. The final route is to wait until the Intimacy that supported your influence roll has been strengthened to a higher level of intensity—either by using a different social action to strengthen it, or by waiting until the character has strengthened it himself—and then try again.

Bargain: You can only retry a failed bargain roll by making a new offering that's substantially greater than your previous one. If a peasant is unswayed by a gift equivalent to a day's wage, then perhaps he will listen to a week's or month's pay. A courtier who rejects an offer of marriage to a minor noble might be convinced by a wedding contract with a young Dragon-Blood.

Threaten: You can only retry a failed Threaten roll if you significantly escalate the threat used to coerce your target. A torturer might progress from light cuts to broken bones to potentially lethal torture. A scheming eunuch who fails to cow a court rival with the threat of revealing an illicit affair might threaten to frame him for treason. A Solar might flare his anima banner, revealing that the threat behind his menacing glare is far, far greater than his foes first realized.

Inspire: You must wait until the scene has ended to retry an inspire action.

Read Intentions: Once a Read Intentions action has failed, it can't be retried on the same target for the rest of the scene.

Social Actions in Combat

All of the social actions described above work normally during combat, although within the dictates of common sense—you can certainly shout out a fast, desperate offer to triple a mercenary's pay if he'll switch sides in the midst of battle (a bargain attempt), or even confess your hopeless love for the beautiful Abyssal trying to take your head (an instill action), but trying to engage in complex contract negotiations in the space of a single turn is probably absurd.

All social actions are considered combat actions, and may be placed in a flurry. They're resisted as normal. One special case is worth independent consideration: surrender.

Pleading for mercy can convince enemies to accept your surrender rather than killing you. This might be a persuade action, or even a bargain ("My family will pay a great ransom for my safe return!"). On a successful roll, your enemy will allow you to surrender, taking you captive or letting you retreat rather than killing you. In most cases, this doesn't require an Intimacy to exploit at all—letting a defeated stranger run away is no great hardship. In some cases, it might require exploiting a Minor Intimacy (when the enemy has some particular reason to want you dead rather than merely captured or vanquished), or even in extraordinary cases a Major Intimacy (such as a Solar trying to surrender to the Wyld Hunt—a course we don't generally recommend, since the master of the Hunt is likely to have a valid Intimacy to cite in the resulting Decision Point as grounds to deny you mercy.)

Common Social Penalties

As mentioned near the beginning of this chapter (p. XX), penalties can and should frequently be used to reflect difficult or awkward social situations. While this list is by no means complete, here are some of the most common social penalties:

A -1 penalty might represent: Showing up at a formal affair in improper attire, addressing a character with improper honorifics or titles, committing a minor cultural faux pas.

A -3 penalty might represent: Showing up at a formal affair in offensive attire, addressing character with open rudeness, giving sketchy or shifting justifications for requests, committing a major cultural faux pas, giving a performance with a musical instrument you're unfamiliar with, trying to convince someone to do something he doesn't know how to do, trying to convince someone to believe something despite significant evidence it's false.

A -5 penalty might represent: Showing up at a formal affair naked and covered in blood, trying to get favors from a character you are openly antagonizing, trying to convince someone to do something when he knows you're lying, breaking a major law or cultural taboo through your social behavior, trying to convince someone to do something *dangerous* that he doesn't know how to do, trying to convince someone to believe something blatantly and obviously false.

Crime and Investigation

Larceny

Conceal Evidence

A character who wishes to hide an item or cover her tracks after a crime can do so with a conceal evidence action, rolling (Intelligence + Larceny) as a dramatic action that takes fifteen minutes. The Storyteller should note how many successes she rolls, and apply it as the difficulty of any case scene actions (p. XX) used to search that area. To save time, the Storyteller does not need to roll for evidence concealed by NPCs, but can simply assume the difficulty is equal to that character's Larceny rating.

Disguise

A character can roll (Intelligence + Larceny) to create a disguise that masks her true identity. Doing so requires about five minutes spent in costuming, applying make-up, and getting in character. She may take penalties on the roll if her fake identity is of a different sex, race, or body type—in general, a -2 penalty for each that applies. On a successful roll, the disguise works. Anyone who interacts with the disguised character for around five minutes or more is entitled to a (Perception + Awareness) roll to notice that the character is in disguise and get a sense of what she really looks like. The difficulty of this roll is equal to the number of successes rolled on the initial (Intelligence + Larceny) roll.

Creating a disguise that specifically imitates another person uses the same rules, but is more involved. The character takes a -4 penalty on the roll, but reduces it by -1 for each week she spends observing the person she wishes to imitate. In addition, if an observer who knows the person she's impersonating sees her acting "out of character" then he may make an additional (Perception + Awareness) roll to see through the disguise, and receive 1-3 bonus dice based on the severity of the lapse.

Lockpicking

Picking locks or bypassing other mechanical security devices requires a successful (Dexterity + Larceny) roll. Most mundane locks have a base difficulty of 1-2. Those found in powerful manses or First Age ruins might range as high as difficulty 3 or 4. Lockpicks are an obvious necessity for this action. A character can attempt to make do with improvised tools or unorthodox picking methods, which adds +1 to the difficulty of the roll.

Pickpocket

Stealing an item from another character's person is a (Dexterity + Larceny) roll opposed by the target's (Perception + Awareness). If the thief's roll succeeds, he is able to retrieve the item without his victim noticing. If it fails, not only does he not steal the item, but his victim realizes that he was trying to steal from her. It is impossible to pickpocket items that are in active use by a character without magic, nor is it generally possible to steal clothing, armor, or any other item too bulky to feasibly remove without its wearer noticing. These rules can also be used to steal unattended items from a store without the shopkeeper noticing, or to perform simple feats of prestidigitation that seem like magic to those who fail their rolls.

Investigation

Case Scene

A character can use a case scene action to search an area for anything of interest that might be hidden: an incriminating letter hidden in a vizier's chambers, the concealed lever that disarms a First Age deathtrap, or a cache of contraband on a smuggler's ship. The character's player rolls (Perception + Investigation) as a dramatic action that takes fifteen minutes of searching. The base difficulty is determined by the Storyteller, and the conceal evidence action (p. XX) may be used to increase it. On a success, the character finds anything hidden.

The case scene action can also be used to uncover clues when pursuing a mystery or solving a crime. The character must actually be in a location relevant to his case in order to do so, and must have at least some idea of what he's trying to find. A successful roll uncovers a piece of information at the site that will somehow advance the investigation, allowing him to proceed to a new scene. The Storyteller should narrate the character's deductions, rather than just giving him the clue itself. Instead of telling a player "You find a smear of yellow mud," tell him "You find a smear of yellow mud—whoever did this must have come from the docks!"

Profile Character

The profile character action can be used to read people, examining them for any clues in their posture, demeanor, or appearance. After spending at least five minutes interacting with or observing the person he wishes to profile, the character's player rolls (Perception + Investigation) against her Guile (p. XX). On a success, the Storyteller should give the player a brief rundown of basic facts about the character that aren't immediately obvious—social class, occupation, where he was an hour ago, or similar. This isn't mind reading or magical divination, but it will allow a character to get a basic idea of what someone does, and possibly notice some incongruous details.

The profile character action can also be used to look for clues, as described in the case scene action. As long as the character is observing someone involved in the mystery or crime he is pursuing, a successful roll will give him a clue that will advance his investigation.

Leadership

Even the most modest Exalt tends to accumulate power as a rock gathers moss; those with the ambition to rule find little difficulty in amassing followers and authority. The challenge is in ruling well and holding power once gained. The following rules help to tell stories about Exalts dedicated to the leading of companies, cities, cults, and empires.

What Do Leaders Do?

Aside from enjoying the perks of authority such as luxury and respect, leaders conceive of ambitions and delegate the work necessary to realize them. In other words, they *undertake projects*, using their available assets and resources to push these projects to completion.

What is a Project?

A project, for the purpose of these rules, is any action a leader causes the group she leads to undertake with the aim of achieving a particular goal. Projects might be to impose law on a newly-conquered and rebellious city, to raise up a manse on a powerful demesne, to establish a trade agreement with a foreign nation or the Guild, to seed a rival city with spies, to recruit new members into a cult, or any other task. A successful project grants the character who initiated it some form of measurable gain; this usually means obtaining a new story Merit, raising the rating of an existing story Merit, or procuring some advantage relevant to the current story (such as uncovering the location of a lost First Age tomb, recovering a valuable sorcerous manual, or discovering a rival nation's state secrets).

Step One: Is the Project Possible?

Before determining the success or failure of a project, the first step is for the Storyteller to determine if the project can even be attempted. Does the character have the necessary resources to undertake the project? If so, then the project begins. If not, then why not? What is she missing?

Let's say the character is trying to raise a manse. There are a number of reasons this project might not be feasible. Is she short of the money necessary to pay laborers to construct the manse, having beggared herself purchasing the construction materials? Does she lack the necessary architectural and geomantic expertise to design blueprints for a manse in the first place? Unless the character is attempting a *wildly* impossible project (such as overthrowing the Tri-Khan of Chiaroscuro armed only with the loyal but otherwise unremarkable staff of a dockside teahouse), the Storyteller should inform the player of what her character lacks to make the project possible. It remains up to the ingenuity of the character to resolve this deficiency—in the case of the would-be manse-builder lacking Resources, the character might try to start a different project to increase her Resources rating, or might raid neighboring settlements to obtain slave labor.

Finally, there is the all-important element of time. How long would the project take? Is there enough time to get things done? The ruler of a mighty nation blessed with wealth, material, workers, and docks cannot construct a fleet of warships in time to stymie an invasion by sea if he tries to implement his project two days before the invading fleet arrives. This element of time must always be considered, especially when there are other ongoing projects tying up crucial resources and manpower.

Step Two: Does the Project Succeed?

After determining viability, the player doesn't need to roll anything to see if the project goes forward—if she has the assets necessary, her subordinates carry out her orders.

By default, projects succeed if undertaken properly. If you have the necessary assets, expertise, manpower, and enough time at your disposal, then the normal result of issuing an order or initiating a project is that it succeeds. But sometimes projects are threatened by *failure conditions*—complications that threaten to ruin the project.

When do failure conditions appear? Storyteller, this is your call, with the rule of thumb being: a failure condition only happens when its appearance would make the story more interesting. If you don't have a cool idea for complications in a ruler's attempt to negotiate a trade agreement with a neighboring nation, the negotiations resolve successfully and a trade agreement is signed. If you have an idea for a story wherein an agent of the Realm attempts to poison the neighboring nation's ruler against dealings with the player's character, thus threatening the negotiations—that's a cool story idea, and a good reason to present a failure condition.

Another good rule of thumb is that the more the ruler stands to gain from a project's successful resolution, the more likely it is that a failure condition will be tense and interesting, and thus should happen. (Also it's more likely that there will be parties opposed to the project's success. Indeed, players' characters might even create failure conditions for their Circlemates' projects due to infighting, jealousy, or hostile social influence!)

Failure conditions can be almost anything—a project to construct a fleet of warships could be threatened by sabotage, resource shortages, or even by a hurricane smashing the docks and ships to splinters. A manse's construction might be threatened by any number of mundane problems, or even by the sudden Exaltation of one of the slaves constructing it. The point is, a failure condition challenges the ruler instituting the project to respond to it.

Step Three: Responding to Failure Conditions

Once a failure condition appears, it has to be dealt with somehow, or else the project will fail. Advisors can provide counsel on how to best handle a crisis when rulers aren't certain of how to proceed. In courts with multiple advisors, this is resolved through the social influence system—a crisis is a ripe time for ambitious members of the court to attempt to bend a ruler's ear and suggest solutions which will both salvage the project and help advance their own agendas.

Contacts and advisors can also help the character learn more about the nuances of the failure condition before she attempts to address it, and knowledge is almost always helpful in resolving a crisis. Say a ruler's manse-construction project is being disrupted by hauntings. While there are a number of ways to deal with ghosts, knowing *who is haunting the site* and *why* will give the ruler a major edge in dealing with the situation properly. Armed with knowledge of the cause of the hauntings, a ruler who is about to hire expensive exorcists might, instead, be able to resolve the issue simply by re-interring bones disturbed by the construction project. A ruler whose city is plagued by a mad prophet would do well to discover that the figure is one of the Abyssal Exalted before trying to have her soldiers eject the man from her city—otherwise she's going to have a mad prophet *and* slaughtered soldiers to deal with.

Most often, a ruler will use her Merits to address the failure condition: the character draws on her Resources, calls in favors from Allies, deploys Followers with skills well-suited to the situation, and so on. A leader encountering difficulties in negotiations with a neighboring city-state might cite her high Resources rating to offer lavish bribes to officers of the foreign court, securing their

secret loyalty; or she might deploy a band of skilled assassin Followers to murder an agent interfering with her negotiations. Finally, the character might attempt to address failure conditions directly with her own Abilities and Charms, or through mighty sorcery. This is often an attractive option, given the prowess of the Exalted, but a leader off personally resolving problems may be neglecting other matters close to home.

Step Four: Dealing With the Result

After the leader has implemented a solution, there are two questions to be addressed: Did her solution resolve the failure condition? And regardless whether or not the project succeeded, what are the consequences of her solution?

Success and Failure

If a character's response to the failure condition is inadequate, or if he's convinced to take no action at all, then the project fails. The leader doesn't get whatever she wanted to get out of the project, and assets expended are wasted. Trying again may or may not be possible, depending on the circumstances—once more, time is important to consider. If there's no hard deadline for a project, its duration could be extended and the leader might try again, but this usually means allocating even more resources and assets to get the project back on track, which might stretch the organization thin.

If the leader's actions resolve the failure condition, or if there was no failure condition at all, then the project succeeds, and the leader gets what she was after—new or increased Merits, story advancement, or whatever else the project aimed to achieve.

This is fairly straightforward, but it's also not the only thing to consider when a project ends. The consequences of how the leader went about reacting to unexpected failure conditions can often have more far-reaching consequences than the success or failure of the project itself.

Consequences and Complication

Complications can arise as a result of both failed *and* successful projects, generally as a result of reacting to failure conditions. The wise ruler carefully considers the consequences of the solutions she implements when faced with a problem—otherwise she may find that by solving a problem today, she stirs up much greater turmoil in her future.

Complications arise naturally from a leader's actions. There's no dice roll—it's up to the Storyteller whether complications appear. As a general rule, the more carefully and appropriately a situation is handled, the less likely it is that a negative complication will emerge afterwards; indeed, particularly skillful resolution may even turn a failure condition into an opportunity for greater profit or success than the project originally encompassed!

Examples of complications that might appear in the wake of an attempt to deal with a failure condition include, but are by no means limited to:

• **Political unrest.** This often occurs when a leader implements solutions which may be efficacious, but which outrage the people or upset major elements of her own organization. Solving outbreaks of disease by burning entire plague-ridden districts to the ground may halt the spread of infection, but it is also likely to leave the people questioning their leader's humanity. Political unrest can also occur when a ruler addresses failure conditions personally (that is, with her Attributes, Abilities, and Charms) rather than using her assets, if doing so takes her away from her responsibilities for so long that her organization suffers as a result of neglect.

Political unrest makes it difficult to implement projects, radically increases the likelihood of failure conditions, and may lead to the erosion of Merits such as Influence or Contacts.

Left unchecked, political unrest can also lead to: Assassins, Enemies, War.

• **Loss of assets.** This often occurs when a leader implements an ineffective solution due to lack of information, such as sending soldiers to fight an opponent they have no hope of defeating, or sending lavish bribes to an incorruptible priest-king. The expended resources are simply lost, and their associated Merit, if any, is depleted or vanishes. Loss of assets may also occur on successful projects, of course—sometimes it's necessary to expend one asset to secure another. Seasoned rulers often try to cultivate re-usable assets such as Allies, Contacts, Followers, and Retainers for this reason—attempting to solve all problems through vast expenditures of wealth (in the form of Resources) or political capital (in the form of Influence or Backing) can quickly deplete any leader's strength.

• **War.** This often occurs when a leader implements solutions which outrage or threaten a foreign power or rival organization. War can just as easily come from successful projects as unsuccessful ones; assassinations and violent solutions most often breed war, but successfully gaining control of limited regional resources can also provoke it. War is arguably the worst of consequences, as it can threaten the very survival of an organization.

War, if not resolved quickly, can lead to: Assassins, Enemies, Political Unrest.

• **Enemies.** This often occurs when a project's success (or failure) directly harms some powerful individual who develops a grudge over it. Perhaps a leader ordered a Guild factor's son assassinated in order to secure undisputed access to a vital port; perhaps her decision to raze a hostile city-state with sorcery has earned her the undying hatred of an Exalt whose family perished in the conflagration; perhaps her ostentatious displays of wealth in resolving a dispute causes one of her ministers to covet her throne.

Enemies will work against the leader's interests when the opportunity presents itself, making failure conditions more common until they're dealt with somehow. Some enemies can be won over through social influence or bribery; others must be dispatched with force. Of course, incautiously disposing of one enemy can lead to the appearance of others…

Enemies, left to fester, could potentially lead to Assassins or War.

• **Assassins.** This often occurs as the result of trying to undertake projects while suffering the un-addressed consequences of previous projects, such as political unrest or enemies. Assassins represent direct attempts to take a leader's life, or at the very least, remove her from power. These don't tend to threaten projects (although they can, if aimed at key personnel rather than the leader herself) so much as they threaten the leader's continued ability to draw breath, and are often confronted in combat scenes, when least expected. The Second Age is full of those willing to kill for money, and so resolving assassins is often contingent on resolving the pre-existing complication giving rise to them; simply killing the assassins may not be sufficient (although bribery might work).

• **New Merits.** Sometimes complications are good. These often occur as a result of hands-on intervention, as the leader recognizes opportunities for gain outside the initial scope of the project and seizes them. New Merits often take the form of new Allies (won over through social influence), additional Resources (gained through quick and cunning action), or even Artifacts (seized from the battlefield).

Environmental Rules

Not all heroic feats are directed at men or gods—sometimes Creation itself is the fodder for epic deeds or presents itself as a deadly obstacle. Sometimes the Chosen must bend or break the world before them and sometimes they must learn to become one with it.

Feats of Strength and Demolition

Sometimes the myth-hero narrative of **Exalted** turns to a certain kind of character—one who is physically mighty, drawing tremendous strength from iron will and iron thew. Such characters may call upon their gods, or the god within—their own tremendous Essence—to perform truly heroic feats of strength.

Feats of strength and feats of destruction are Strength + Athletics actions, with a difficulty determined by the chart below. Light objects can just be picked up—no roll is necessary to lift a sword or saddle. If you want to lift a boulder blocking a mountain pass, that's a feat of strength. If you want to kick down an iron-banded oak door, that's a feat of strength. **Characters must have a Strength rating of at least 3 to attempt a feat of strength**—such heroic endeavors are ill-suited to the merely average. Extraordinarily impressive feats of strength may require even higher Strength minimums—see the chart, below.

In the case of feats of strength to destroy an object, using a tool that would logically assist in breaking the thing (such as using a sledgehammer to smash a statue, or an axe to break down a door) adds one automatic success to the attempt. If the tool is an artifact weapon, add two.

In combat, it's generally a good idea (and a lot of fun) to ignore these rules and allow characters to use stunts to automatically break things, as long as those things aren't tactically significant to the battle or important to the story, and so long as it's within the scope of what the character might be able to accomplish. Let characters get knocked through doors in a hail of splinters, slash down stone lampposts with their daiklaves, and crack walls by hurling opponents into them. Also, you can allow feats of strength to automatically succeed if the character's dice pool is three times the difficulty or more—a character with Strength 5, Athletics 5 really shouldn't ever fail to break a board or lift a man.

Note that even though the Exalted may be able to exercise divine strength beyond the limits of mortal men, they're still constrained by their size—no matter how strong a Solar is, he still can't uproot a mountain, because there's no way for him to get leverage on something that big. At best, he could tear loose great boulders, or rip open a seam in a cliff face with his hands.

Finally, while these rules establish a baseline, Storytellers are encouraged to modify them to represent particularly dramatic situations or according to common sense. For example, a Solar hero might attempt to hold up a collapsing building while her Circlemates rescue the mortals trapped within. The Storyteller decides to model this as an extended (Strength + Athletics) roll with an interval of one minute and a terminus of 5, but no goal number. At each interval, the Solar must successfully match the given difficulty to hold up the collapsing building, with failure causing the Lawgiver to take bashing damage and the terminus to decrease by 1, and a botch signaling the complete collapse of the structure. At the action's terminus, the Solar takes even more damage, and then the feat begins anew with a higher difficulty. This adaptation creates a tense and dramatic rescue scene, highlighting the Solar's incredible strength and dedication. In another, simpler example, a martial arts tournament challenges its competitors to break various hard substances (such as wood, blocks of ice, and finally stones) with their fists to prove their

fitness to compete. Since this is a test of a character's Martial Arts prowess, it becomes appropriate to substitute (Strength + Martial Arts) in place of (Strength + Athletics).

[BEGIN TABLE]

Successes Example Feat

Strength 3+ feats

1 Lift a full-grown man or an anvil. Break a pine board with a kick.

2 Tote a bale of cotton on one shoulder. Kick an oak door open.

3 Lift a mule. Break a sword over your knee.

4 Lift a full-grown warhorse or carry a log on one shoulder. Bend an iron bar with both hands.

Strength 5+ feats

5 Lift an ox. Pull a fully laden wagon. Bend a horseshoe into a pretzel.

6 Throw a mule. Snap an axe haft over your knee. Kick an oak door to splinters.

7 Lift a boulder. Throw a full-grown warhorse.

8 Lift a rhinocerous. Snap iron manacles. Slowly bash through a brick wall.

9 Throw an ox. Twist a steel lock off a door with your bare hands. Kick down an iron-shod door.

Strength 7+ feats

10 Lift an elephant. Raise a drawbridge by hand. Punch through a brick wall.

11 Raise a locked portcullis by hand. Punch through the wooden gate of a fortress.

12 Pull a fully laden wagon from a sand trap. Rip iron bars out of their stone settings with one hand. Rip loose the stone supports of a city gate.

13 Lift a boulder with one hand. Tear down the pillars holding up a mighty temple.

14 Lift a tyrant lizard. Carry an enormous statue on one shoulder. Tip over a Guild wagon. Push open a locked and reinforced fortress gate.

Strength 10+ feats

15 Uproot a mighty tree and carry it under one arm. Slowly bash through the stone wall of a fortress.

16 Lift a mammoth. Hurl an elephant. Tear apart the welded steel bars of a portcullis.

17 Pull an entire caravan, chained cart-to-cart. Snap a mighty tree in half.

18 Lift a mighty tree with one hand. Crack a boulder in two. Rip a portcullis from its setting.

19 Throw a mammoth. Slowly push over a stone tower. Tow a boat away from a waterfall while on the shore.

20 Tear open the earth to create a crevasse. Smash through ten feet of solid stone. Lift a yeddim or outpull a team of them. Tow a boat away from a waterfall while swimming.

[END TABLE]

Survival

Most of the time, it can be assumed characters traveling or camping in the wild have taken sensible precautions to keep from starving, dehydrating, or being gnawed on by wildlife. When characters *haven't* prepared for being thrust into the wilderness, or are trying to forge their way through particularly hostile environments, a simple ([Intelligence or Wits] + Survival) roll is sufficient to take care of the necessities of life—food, water, shelter. The difficulty is, as usual, determined by the harshness of the environment; trying to provide for a handful of unskilled individuals in addition to oneself is likely to raise the difficulty.

It's generally not fun to outright kill players' characters in response to failed Survival rolls; instead, treat failure as opportunity to introduce interesting plot complications. Perhaps the only apparent source of fresh water is a mountain pool… right at the mouth of a tyrant lizard's lair. Perhaps a poorly-weathered sandstorm injures a hired guide, or inadequate shelter results in disease-carrying insects descending on the travelers. Perhaps hostile locals appear once the characters have finally secured some game, to contest them for it.

Tracking

Tracking (and avoiding trackers) is also a Survival action. Tracking is a contested action—(Wits + Survival) for the party attempting to cover their tracks, against (Perception + Survival) for the tracker. The terrain might inflict penalties on one party or the other, if it is particularly easy to track in, or to avoid leaving tracks in.

Environmental Hazards

Sometimes you don't have to worry about the creeping dangers of foraging, tracking, or finding shelter. Sometimes the world is trying to kill you outright—it's unendurably cold, or scouring away your skin with a sandstorm, or everything is on fire. These are environmental hazards.

Environmental hazards are represented as areas that inflict damage on any character within them. They can generally be mitigated to some degree with a resistance roll, which characters are permitted every time an environmental hazard attempts to harm them. Perhaps the character is tough enough that the sweltering heat of the desert or numbing cold of the glacial tundra doesn't faze him; perhaps he's swift enough to dance through the maze of swinging blades in a manse's trapped hallway—the exact roll used to try to mitigate the hazard is up to the Storyteller. (Stamina + Resistance) and (Dexterity + Dodge) are the most common, but (Wits + Survival) (for weathering extreme temperatures) or even (Strength + Athletics) (for holding open crushing traps) might be used in some situations. A character who succeeds at a mitigation roll manages to avoid injury, at least until the next roll.

Environmental hazards are presented with a damage value, an interval, and a difficulty to avoid or mitigate.

An environmental hazard's *damage* is the number of dice rolled against characters subject to the hazard, as well as what kind of damage is being inflicted. This damage ignores soak and hardness, and is applied directly to the character's health track, like a **decisive** attack.

An environmental hazard's *interval* denotes how often its damage is applied. Some hazards, like numbing cold, kill characters slowly, while others are more immediately lethal, like fire or acid. If a hazard lists an interval of one round, it is applied to characters on their turn.

Finally, an environmental hazard's *difficulty* describes the difficulty of the roll to resist the hazard. A number of example environmental hazards are listed below:

[BEGIN TABLE]

Name	Damage/Interval	Difficulty
Acid bath	3L/round	5
Severe heat/cold	1B/hour	1
Bonfire	4L/round	5
Lava	6L/round	5
Severe sandstorm	1L/minute	3
Supernatural ice storm	2L/minute	3
The Silent Wind of Hell	4A/round	4

[END TABLE]

Traps

Traps work the same way as environmental hazards, save that characters are allowed a (Perception + Awareness) roll to spot them before setting them off, and they *usually* take effect instantly, with no ongoing interval.

Falling

Sometimes you don't need fire, acid, or the killing winds of Hell to put an end to a hero—gravity is more than able to do the job. For whatever reason, Exalts seem particularly prone to reckless acrobatics near long drops.

Rather than having to figure out exactly how many feet a character falls and how much damage that translates to, falls in **Exalted** are evaluated by how many range bands the character falls before hitting the ground. A character facing falling damage suffers a number of levels of automatic damage, as well as a number of dice of damage. All such damage ignores soak and hardness and is applied directly to a character's Health Track, as though it were a **decisive** attack. At longer ranges, Storytellers may adjust the damage suffered up and down at their discretion.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Fall	Damage Levels	Damage Dice
Close	None	None
Short	3B	5B
Medium	4L	7B
Long	5-7L	8-12L
Extreme	7-10L	10-14L

[END TABLE]

It's often a good idea to give characters who can come up with a good stunt an opportunity to make a roll to avoid or mitigate a deadly drop—perhaps they manage to land on something softer than the unforgiving earth, or stab a dagger into a ship's sails to slow themselves down before impact.

Deprivation

Exalts and mortals both share the basic necessities of life—air, water, and food. A character will suffocate or drown after (Stamina) minutes without air, die of dehydration after (Stamina) days without water, and perish from starvation after (Stamina) weeks without food.

Characters suffer a -3 penalty to all actions after (Stamina) days without food, as well as in their final hours without water.

Characters undergoing heavy exertion (such as combat) or who didn't manage to get a deep breath before having their air cut off can drown much faster than those who are holding their breath while undergoing normal exertion (such as diving). A character who is being forcibly drowned, or who is engaging in combat underwater, will perish after (Stamina x 2) turns without air.

Poison

Whether it is a serpent's venom, an assassin's weapon, or the distilled malevolence of a Demon Prince, there are ten thousand poisons to be found throughout the world of Creation. Mighty as the Exalted may be, even they can be laid low by such means.

In **Exalted**, a poison is treated as a debilitating status effect that deals damage to a character over an extended period of time. Each poison has four main statistics:

• **Damage/Interval**, the amount of damage that the poison deals at each interval of its duration. For example, a poison with a Damage/Interval of 1L/round deals one die of lethal damage to its victim on each round he suffers from it (soak and Hardness are never applied against damage from poison). Characters cannot naturally heal the damage dealt by a poison while that poison's duration is still in effect. Despite the name of this trait, some poisons may not damage the victim's Initiative or health track directly, instead draining Willpower, Essence, or some other resource—but these are generally the exception.

Note that most poisons that have an interval short enough to recur multiple times throughout a combat deal Initiative damage, rather than bashing or lethal damage. In combat, poison damage is rolled at the end of a round, after all characters have acted. While a character is in Initiative Crash, Initiative poisons instead apply their damage directly to the character's health track—usually as lethal damage, although some poisons may deal bashing damage, as noted in their description.

• **Duration**, the base duration that the poison lasts. When characters roll (Stamina + Resistance) to resist a poison, their rolled successes will be subtracted from this value to determine the actual time the poison lasts.

• **Penalty**, a penalty that is applied to all actions the character takes while poisoned.

• **Vector**, the usual means by which the poison is contracted. Common vectors include damage (for weapons that can be applied to poison), touch, inhalation, and ingestion. Poisoning someone with an envenomed weapon requires a successful **decisive** attack.

When a character is first exposed to a poison—whether he is cut with an envenomed blade, inhales noxious fumes, or eats a poisoned meal—he rolls (Stamina + Resistance). Each success rolled subtracts one unit (rounds, minutes, etc.) from the duration of the poison. The Exalted and other supernatural beings can reduce the duration of a poison down to zero; mortals can, at best, reduce the duration to half its base value, rounded up. At each interval of the poison's duration, the Storyteller rolls its damage, with each success inflicting one level/point of the appropriate type of damage (non-standard damage, such as Essence or Willpower loss, is not rolled, but subtracted directly from the character's resources).

Multiple doses of the same poison stack their durations—if a character is already suffering from arsenic poisoning, consuming a new dose will simply add to the length of the preexisting condition.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Name	Damage/Interval	Duration	Penalty	Vector
Arrow Frog Venom	3i/round (L in Crash)	5 rounds	-2	Damage or ingestion
Arsenic	2L/day	7 days	-0	Ingestion
Curare	1i/round (B in Crash)	10 rounds	-2	Damage
Hemlock	2L/hour	5 hours	-4	Ingestion
Snake Venom	2i/round (L in Crash)	3 rounds	-3	Damage
Yozi Venom	1L/minute	10 minutes	-5	Damage

[END TABLE]

Example: While wandering in the warped forests of the Eastern Wyld, Illustrious Aya finds herself ambushed by a raksha who wields a flail of biting coral snakes. As he attacks her, she is exposed to snake venom, and reflexively rolls (Resistance + Stamina) to reduce its duration. She only rolls two successes, for a total duration of one round. On that round, the Storyteller rolls two dice, and deals one point of Initiative damage to Aya for each success rolled.

Disease

In a world of capricious gods, restless dead, and nameless horrors baying at the edges of Creation, common disease still numbers among the greatest enemies of mankind. Cholera breeds in unclean water; lepers wrap their misshapen bodies in rags as their living flesh rots; plagues wipe entire villages out of existence. The gift of Exaltation makes the Chosen immune to the worst perils of disease—they suffer no risk of death from any sickness, save perhaps from extremely potent magical diseases. However, this does not mean they have nothing to fear.

In **Exalted**, a disease is treated as a debilitating status effect that progresses in severity over time. Each disease has three main statistics:

• **Virulence**, the difficulty which characters must overcome to avoid contracting the disease,

• **Morbidity**, the difficulty which characters must overcome to keep their symptoms from worsening.

• **Interval**, the duration of time after which a character must roll when to see if the disease's effects intensify.

The progress of a sickness is analogous to the increasing intensity of Intimacies—a disease first begins as a minor symptom, then progresses to a major symptom, and finally to a defining symptom. While the actual symptoms of each disease vary, **Exalted** treats them as things to be roleplayed by the player of the diseased character, rather than attempting a realistic model of real world sickness. As such, the following three stages are the same for all diseases:

• **Minor Symptom**: While the character has felt the onset of the disease's symptoms, they have not yet begun to impair his ability to function. It is sufficient for his player to simply play out the uncomfortable effects of the disease in game, with no mechanical penalties. If the Storyteller feels that the player has not done so, he may deduct a point of Willpower from the character up to once per session, to represent a general malaise.

• **Major Symptom**: The disease has progressed to the point of a serious problem. Once per session, the Storyteller may declare any action that the diseased character takes to be an automatic botch, describing how their symptoms flare up to impede their action. Alternatively, he may instead subtract a point of Willpower from the diseased character, as with minor symptoms —this option is primarily for sessions when an opportune moment for a botch never comes up, or if the Storyteller forgets until the end of the session.

• **Defining Symptom**: The disease defines the character's lifestyle, interfering in almost everything he does. Now, the Storyteller may declare an automatic botch once per *scene*, rather than once per session, a penalty that may render the character largely helpless in many situations. Note that is purely at the Storyteller's option—if it doesn't make sense for a botch to occur, there's no need to force one in ham-handedly. As with major symptoms, the Storyteller may substitute draining a point of Willpower for a botch, but should be judicious in doing so—grinding a character down to zero Willpower over the course of a session isn't going to make the game very fun. Try to limit Willpower drain from disease to once or twice per session, and stick to botches most of the time.

• **Death**: While the Exalted and other supernatural beings are immune to death from disease, mortals do not have such good fortune. Once a mortal's ailment has progressed to the level of a defining symptom, the next step is death by disease, as narrated by the Storyteller.

Not all diseases are capable of reaching all stages of this progression, with their maximum level of intensity noted in their description. In addition, some exotic or supernatural diseases may have additional effects based on symptom intensity.

Putting all this together, here's how disease works: When a character is first exposed to a vector of disease, he rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against that disease's virulence. On a successful roll, he avoids succumbing to the sickness. On a failed roll, he contracts the disease at the level of a minor symptom. After each interval of the disease has passed, the character makes another (Stamina + Resistance) roll, this time against the disease's morbidity. On a failed roll, the symptoms intensify by one step; on a success, they grow one step less intense (or are overcome entirely, if they were already at the minor symptom level).

Incubation

Most diseases don't take effect instantly—instead, they incubate inside their victim's bodies for hours, days, or even weeks before manifesting their symptoms. Rather than modeling this mechanically, the Storyteller can simply handle incubation by waiting until a dramatically appropriate moment to call for a character's first roll to resist the disease. For example, while a circle of Exalted might first be exposed to malaria while trekking through a mosquito-ridden jungle, the Storyteller may choose to put off calling for rolls to resist the disease until they have reached the lair of the forbidden god who haunts the jungle, upping the stakes of the boss battle. Alternatively, he might wait until after they have successfully struck down the wicked spirit and returned to the nearest seraglio to celebrate their victory before calling for the roll, tarnishing their heroic victory with real world consequences.

Common Diseases

Consumption (Virulence 2, Morbidity 2, Interval: One week): Consumption is a wasting disease. Its victims cough up blood and suffer fever and weakness, dying over a course of weeks or months. Victims die when their lungs cease to pump, or when they literally drown in their own blood and phlegm. Consumption is an airborne disease, spreading through the sneezes, coughs, and spit of the infected.

Cholera (Virulence 4, Morbidity 3, Interval: One day): Cholera is contracted from drinking water contaminated with filth or cursed by angry water-spirits, or by eating marine life caught in such tainted waters. Victims suffer fever or a constant, watery diarrhea, eventually dying of dehydration unless they receive fluids and medicine. Cholera can become epidemic in rural villages without a sanitary source of water, as the excrement of the disease taints the same rivers that the villagers drink from.

Hemorrhagic Fever (Virulence 5, Morbidity 5, Interval: One day): At first, hemorrhagic fever might seem like nothing more than a sudden flu, causing fever, nausea, and chest pains. Soon, though, the disease spreads throughout the body, causing internal bleeding and massive hemorrhaging that soon lead to an agonizing death. Blood pours out of almost every orifice, and every droplet is a potential vector for new infection.

Infected Wounds (Virulence 3, Morbidity 1, Interval: One week): Sometimes, the worst consequences of battle are not wounds dealt on the battlefield, but the diseases that fester within them. Characters who take lethal or aggravated damage in combat run the risk of sepsis. Sterilizing wounds with alcohol after a battle reduces the virulence of the infection to 2, while cauterizing them with a flame or heated iron prevents infection altogether—at the cost of an unsoakable level of bashing damage from the minor burn. The Exalted and other supernatural characters never suffer infected wounds.

Leprosy (Virulence 1, Morbidity 5, Interval: One month): Leprosy rots the flesh. It begins with fever, aching, and exhaustion. Slowly, over the courses of months, the nerves go dead, wounds fester with infection, and fingers and toes begin to fall off. It's not the leprosy itself that kills most victims, but the gangrene that follows. Leprosy is not highly contagious, spreading only through close personal contact. Healers can tend to the diseased with little fear of becoming

infected themselves, and the sickness can be contained by isolating lepers in closed communities or colonies.

Rabies (Virulence 2, Morbidity 4, Interval: One day): Victims of rabies suffer from intense thirst, high fevers, and eventually delirium and animalistic frenzy. By that point, death is all but inevitable. The disease is known to originate in the bites of animals who foam at the mouth with madness (though human bites can spread rabies as well), leading many to blame the Lunar Anathema or Wyld taint for the sickness.

Plague (Virulence 4, Morbidity 5, Interval: Three days): It begins with fever, diarrhea, a rash, and swollen glands. The plague could easily be mistaken for another disease in the first few days. By the end of the first week, however, it has become unmistakable—delirium, dehydration, blackened glands. Death follows soon after. Plague is extremely communicable, spread through the air by diseased rats and infected corpses.

Syphilis (Virulence 3, Morbidity 1, Interval: One year, never fatal): Syphilis is a venereal disease, spread through sexual contact with the infected. Symptoms begin with a painless genital lesion, but progress over weeks into rash, fever, malaise, weight loss, or any other of a host of possible symptoms. Chronic patients may develop dementia or seizures as the syphilis spreads to their brain after years of infection.

Supernatural Disease

Supernatural diseases born of curses, Charms, or pestilent monstrosities have magical effects above and beyond ordinary disease progression. At each step of their intensity, these supernatural diseases have additional effects noted in their description.

Puppeteer's Plague (Virulence 4, Morbidity 3, Interval: One week): Born from the accursed meat of cattle fed on human flesh and made infamous as a weapon of war by the Mask of Winters, puppeteer's plague slowly seeps through the marrow of its victims, bringing their bones to accursed unlife within the bodies of their still-living hosts.

• Minor Symptom: The victim's bones begin to stir with malicious intent. Insatiable itches seem to flare up along the bones of his limbs and spine, and he dreams of committing the most horrific atrocities. Each night, the victim must roll (Stamina + Resistance) at difficulty 3. On a failed roll, he cannot regain any Willpower from that night's sleep.

• Major Symptom: The victim's skeleton begins to take on an unlife of its own, seizing control of his body to commit acts of sadism and wickedness. In addition to the above effects, whenever the Storyteller could inflict a botch on the victim from this disease, she may instead compel him to commit a physical action that is cruel or malevolent in nature—lashing out to strike an enemy in combat, stealing from a merchant, crushing a small animal beneath a boot heel. This urge can be resisted by spending a point of Willpower, but the character must enter a Decision Point to do so, drawing on a Major or stronger Intimacy.

• Defining Symptom: The victim's body houses an undead monster, constantly struggling to escape. This level functions as the major symptom, but now only defining Intimacies can be drawn on in a Decision Point to resist the evil impulses—which can now occur every *scene* in place of a botch.

• Death: The victim's skeleton wrests itself free from the constraints of muscle and nerve, killing him as it rips itself out of his body as a bonesider (p. XX)

Medicine

Treating Wounds

While mundane medicine can do little to speed the healing of actual wounds, certain procedures can drastically increase the likelihood of survival for the injured. A character who is bleeding out from his wounds can have the flow of blood stanched with an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll as a miscellaneous action, with a difficulty equal to his current wound penalty (minimum difficulty 1, maximum 5).

Treating Disease

Treating disease is a protracted process, requiring the physician spend at least one hour treating the patient for each day of the sickness's interval. Depending on the disease, this may require access to medical equipment or costly treatments, the absence of which may increase the difficulty of the roll. At the end of the course of treatment, roll (Intelligence + Medicine). When the victim makes his own roll to resist the disease, he may substitute the result of the physician's roll for his own if it is higher.

Example: Shen is treating a young boy suffering from plague at the level of a defining symptom, tending to him over the three days of the sickness's interval. Young and frail, the child's (Stamina + Resistance) roll yields only one success, a failure that would lead to his death. However, Shen's skills as a master physician allow him to roll five successes on his (Intelligence + Medicine) roll to treat the child. Instead of dying, the boy begins to recover, as his symptoms are reduced to major intensity.

Treating Poison

Physicians can treat cases of poisoning by administering remedies and antivenins, hoping to neutralize the harmful venoms with their medical skill. Ordinarily, treating a victim of poisoning requires at least an hour and access to appropriate remedies. At the conclusion of the treatment, the physician rolls (Intelligence + Medicine) at a difficulty based on the severity of the poison—common or relatively harmless poison may be only difficulty 1 or 2 to treat, while life-threatening poisons, exotic venoms, and magical toxins might be difficulty 3 to 4. Every threshold successes garnered on this roll reduces the duration of the poisoning by one interval. Multiple instances of treatment cannot stack their benefits—only the highest reduction of duration is applied.

On the battlefield, there is rarely time to properly treat an ally wounded by a poisoned blade or a venomous monster. A physician can treat an ally for poison as a miscellaneous action, but doing so adds 2 to the difficulty of the roll, above and beyond any difficulty increases he might suffer for lacking access to proper medical materials.

Example: After being poisoned by the snake-headed scourge of a raksha, Illustrious Aya attempts to treat herself, drawing vials of antivenin and beneficent herbs from her bandolier. While her own (Stamina + Resistance) roll has already reduced the duration of the poison to one round, the (Intelligence + Medicine) roll is made at a steep difficulty: a base of difficulty 2 for the relatively common snake venom, +2 difficulty for rushing treatment with a miscellaneous action, +1 difficulty for not having access to her full supply of medicines and treatments, for a total of difficulty 5. Her (Intelligence + Medicine) succeeds with one threshold success, reducing the duration of the poison to zero and curing her of it.

Diagnosis

Sometimes, the cause of an ailment is obvious—it requires no great skill to realize that a soldier whose arm has been hacked off is missing an arm, or that a Circlemate who was just stung by a giant scorpion might be suffering from its poison. Other times, however, the cause of a malady is less obvious, requiring diagnosis before proper treatment can be administered (forging ahead without diagnosis adds +2 to +4 to the difficulty of treating the ailment). Diagnosing a patient can be made with a (Perception + Medicine) roll to notice hints of the ailment's origin, or with an (Intelligence + Medicine) roll to interpret the probable cause of overt symptoms, based on whatever the Storyteller deems most appropriate. Usually diagnosis requires at least a few minutes of examination. It can be rushed to a miscellaneous action in urgent situations, but doing so increases the difficulty of the roll by +1 or +2.

Lore

Introducing a Fact

One of the basic functions of Lore in **Exalted** is to allow the player to spice up narrative drama, forward the plot, or become the object of positive Intimacies by demonstrating valuable knowledge. Once per scene, a character with Lore 3+ and a relevant specialty or backstory can attempt to "know" something useful about Creation's history, geography, cultures, etc.

The player states a fact she would like to introduce. If it is a fact the Storyteller deems admissible, roll the character's (Intelligence + Lore) against a difficulty set by the Storyteller. Note that the context of this roll is important. A character with Lore 5 may have a background in the subject being discussed, or their Lore 5 may apply little or not at all. (See the description of the Lore skill on p. XX.) The Storyteller should increase the difficulty and levy penalties as she sees fit; conversely, if a character specializes in a certain subject, the Storyteller may declare success without a roll. In any case, if the roll succeeds, the character may introduce her fact as knowledge she knows or uncovers in the scene, allowing the plot to progress, and perhaps leaving those around her in awe of her acumen. For each extra success on the roll, she may introduce an additional fact, again subject to Storyteller approval.

Storytellers be warned! Facts introduced in this manner must remain internally consistent. Once a character has successfully introduced a fact, that information should not be contradicted; another player cannot then choose to introduce a completely contradictory fact by rolling an even better result. Once a fact about the setting has been introduced, it becomes concrete. Therefore, Storytellers, it is up to you to decide what facts to allow into the game, and to what degree. You might deem a Solar's "Sidereal Exalted" hypothesis to be more than the character should know, while being more comfortable with a theory that tends toward something more vague, such as speculation about "Exalted conspirators behind the world's events." In this case, you should clarify which facts you will allow before the roll is made.

To be clear, no matter how many dice your player is able to roll, and no matter what Charms her character wields, you can always veto knowledge of certain events or the introduction of facts that would ruin your story. If an introduced fact contradicts a canonical fact you'd prefer to keep canonical in your game, contradicts a fact from your personal setting history or a future plot development you've yet to reveal to the players, or is something you are undecided or uncertain about, you can veto it. In the former cases, you are upholding the integrity of your story. In the latter, you are allowing yourself time to decide if you want to incorporate an idea that might

change your view of that story. You should also veto knowledge of any canonical information you think it would be impossible for the character to know. That said, **remember that players take Abilities because they want their characters to succeed at what those abilities represent**. You don't have to treat the setting like a piñata, and Lore like a bat that will split its colorful shell and spill all the delicious secrets within, but you should always treat your character's Lore rating as a chance to make the character look good, and as a chance to make the player feel satisfied with her character.

Challenging a Fact

Similar to the rules that allow the introduction of a fact, a character with a Lore rating of 3+, or Lore 1+ and a relevant specialty, has the potential to notice any information that rings false. A peasant farmer (Lore 1, with a specialty of sowing) could hear a deceitful spirit trying to mislead a Dynast into ruining his crop yield with bad information. Any time the Storyteller introduces suspect information within notice of a character with an appropriate Lore rating, the Storyteller can call for a reflexive (Intelligence + Lore) check to see if the character notices. A basic success means that the character notices the falsehood, but not exactly *why* it is false. If the character is able to, on that same roll, succeed with enough successes to clear the difficulty as if she were introducing a fact, the character can then not only know that the information she's read or heard is false, but also *how* it is false.

Unlike introducing a fact, the Storyteller decides exactly what the character is able to discern in this instance. Like introducing a fact, the Storyteller may waive the need for a roll if he feels the character is overqualified for the knowledge in question.

Assigning Difficulties to Lore Rolls

"What can a character know?" has been a tetchy question since Gary Gygax had the floor. There are too many factors involved to come up with a pat mechanic to quickly encapsulate where exact difficulties should sit. After all, one might contend that, in a world where the Sidereals can alter the very course of history, it is nearly impossible to say exactly what is true.

In **Exalted**, difficulty on Lore rolls should be based on two things, primarily:

• How thrilling is it if the character knows this fact or understands this thing, solves this riddle or answers this question? If it doesn't really matter, but it is within the realm of possibility, you probably shouldn't even roll.

• How applicable is the character's knowledge? If their knowledge of a culture comes from a dusty tome written a century ago, their knowledge of that culture today is going to be severely hampered.

A player character's Lore background—the subject their Lore rating primarily reflects—and their specialties should generally reflect information that is as accurate as possible. In most cases, if the character is challenging a difficulty that falls under her expertise, it is her expertise that makes the roll possible in the first place. If it is interesting to the Storyteller to use a difficult roll to demonstrate to a character how her knowledge might be inaccurate, flawed, biased, or in need of an update, then the Storyteller should raise the difficulty, and use it as a way of leading the character to better, more accurate information, that ultimately updates or corrects the character's knowledge without experience cost.

All in all, the difficulty settings should slide up and down based on what is dramatically appropriate. The Storyteller should not expect to get the difficulties perfectly right the first time; learning how to gauge them is just a matter of experience. Lore difficulties should not be consistent, as if run off a chart of values, because there isn't a consistent base line for truth. In general, however, a crucial fact that forwards the plot should be revealed at difficulty 1-4; at 5-7 difficulties should be reserved for challenges to the greatest minds and should be used to excite players to rise to the occasion, while Lore 8-10+ challenges should be the proving grounds of Solar masters, riddles which unlock or reveal the greatest secrets of Creation's history. Note again that it is the character's Lore background and specialty that makes such rolls possible; characters with inaccurate knowledge or different backgrounds experience much greater difficulties, if they are allowed to roll at all.

Crafting

From repairing a wagon wheel to forging a daiklave which will be carried into battle for centuries to come, crafting in **Exalted** is encompassed by four categories describing the nature and difficulty of a project, each with its own demands and rewards. The categories of crafting projects are:

• **Basic projects** are the simplest tasks a craftsman can undertake, such as making a chair, forging basic tools, shoeing a horse, cooking a meal, or fletching an arrow. They normally demand little from the character in time or crafting materials.

• **Major projects** are significant endeavors within a craftsman's trade. They include forging battle-ready arms and armor, preparing a banquet fit for a prince's table or a god's festival, or sculpting a statue. They place a significant burden on the character in terms of time, materials, or both.

• **Superior projects** describe two sorts of endeavor. The first and most important are artifacts—superior projects govern the creation of wonders such as magical armor and daiklaves. Second, superior projects also govern large-scale construction such as building a warship or raising a palace; these latter endeavors are the only superior projects mortals are capable of attempting.

• **Legendary projects** deal with the creation of the mightiest works of magical artifice known to the Chosen, and the resurrection of the lost glories of the First Age. Arduous and demanding even for the creative masters of the Twilight Caste, few legendary projects have even been attempted since the murder and exile of the Solar Exalted, and their undertaking is widely considered a lost art in the Realm.

Elements of Crafting

Crafting projects have two special concerns, described below: *project slots* and *crafting experience*. In brief, characters can only support a certain number of simultaneous crafting projects, which take a toll on their creative energies—these are abstracted into project slots. By contrast, successfully finishing projects renews the character's inspiration and helps further her skill and ambitions, allowing her to take on greater numbers of projects and to see more difficult and demanding projects to completion. This is modeled as the character gaining crafting experience.

Crafting Experience

Characters earn crafting experience for successfully completing crafting projects, which can then be spent to engage in more powerful crafting projects (described below). In short, there are three types of crafting experience:

• **Silver experience points** (sxp) are primarily earned from completing basic projects, and can be spent to finish major projects.

• **Gold experience points** (gxp) are primarily earned from completing major projects, and can be spent to finish superior projects.

• Finally, **white experience points** (wxp) are primarily earned from completing superior projects, and can be spent to finish legendary projects.

Crafting experience points can't normally be used to buy traits such as Attributes, Charms, and the like—they're only useful for further crafting.

When a character finishes a crafting project, there are three *basic objectives* to be aware of. For each of these objectives a character triggers, he is eligible to earn a crafting experience reward. These rewards stack—if a character triggers only one objective, he is rewarded once, while if he triggers all three with his crafting project, he gets rewarded three times. The exact values awarded depend on the sort of project undertaken.

• When finishing your project causes another character to gain or strengthen an Intimacy toward you (for example, a Solar craftsman strengthening a young soldier's armor on the eve of battle, producing a minor Intimacy of gratitude in the man), you gain crafting experience.

• When finishing your project produces a clear in-game gain for your character, such as a monetary payment, or a new Merit like Allies or Contacts, you gain crafting experience.

• When finishing your project upholds, furthers, or protects one of your character's Intimacies, you gain crafting experience.

Additionally, crafters may earn crafting experience at the end of a story. At the end of a story, characters gain three silver experience points for each Craft Ability rated at 3+ that was used to complete a project during the story, five silver experience points for each Craft Ability rated at 5+ that was used to complete a project during the story, and five gold experience points per artifact successfully created during the story.

Project Slots

Project slots are an abstract representation of how well the character can split focus between multiple significant projects at once. There are three sorts of project slots:

• **Major project slots** are used when a character undertakes a major project.

• **Superior project slots** are used when a character starts a superior project.

• **Legendary project slots** are required for legendary projects.

When a character starts a project, it occupies a relevant slot until the project ends in either success or failure.

Normally, characters have only three major project slots to work with, but they can spend crafting experience to temporarily push their boundaries and obtain additional slots. The pricing and rules governing this are described under the rules for the various types of projects, below.

Basic Projects

Beginning a basic project: To begin a basic project, the character must have the proper tools, materials, and Craft Ability to attempt it. These material costs are usually minor, as are the project's time and energy demands. As such, basic projects do not require the use of any project slots.

Finishing a basic project: The character must work for an amount of time deemed appropriate by the Storyteller, usually ranging from several minutes to several hours. Then, when the character is ready to finish the project, she makes an (Attribute + [Appropriate Craft]) roll against a difficulty set by the Storyteller according to the usual rules for establishing an action's difficulty (p. XX). Attempting to finish a basic project has no crafting experience point cost.

Reward: Successfully completing a basic project grants the character two silver experience points per basic objective triggered. If the project was completed exceptionally well (the character's successes were three or more higher than the project's difficulty), then she instead gains three silver points per basic objective.

Major Projects

Beginning a major project: In order to begin a major project, the character must have sufficient tools, parts, and the right Craft Ability. The material costs of a major project are often significant, as are the time and energy demands. As such, major projects require the use of a major crafting slot. If all three of the character's major slots are currently in use and the character wishes to begin another major project, an additional major slot can be purchased at the beginning of the project for 5 silver points. Such an additional slot vanishes when its project ends.

Finishing a major project: The character must work for a period deemed appropriate by the Storyteller, usually ranging from several hours to several days—occasionally, a major project might even require weeks of labor! Once the character is ready to finish the project, she must spend 10 silver experience points in order to make an (Attribute + [Appropriate Craft]) roll against a difficulty set by the Storyteller. If this roll fails, the character can spend another 10 silver points to try again after a small amount of additional work to bring the project back on-track, if desired.

Reward: Successfully completing a major project grants the character two gold and one silver experience point per basic objective triggered. If the project was completed exceptionally well (the character's successes were three or more higher than the project's difficulty), then she instead gains three gold and one silver point per basic objective.

Superior Projects

Beginning a superior project: Creating artifacts requires the crafter be a character capable of manipulating Essence (such as an Exalt or sorcerer), have at least Lore 3, Occult 3, a relevant Craft Ability rated to at least 4, and must then purchase dots of Craft (Artifacts). In addition, all artifacts require high-quality tools and significant amounts of the magical materials; most also demand various exotic or mystical reagents such as frozen flame, behemoth bones, the captured love of a raksha noble, or other such wonders. Designing and building an artifact is a massive drain on a crafter, and as such these superior projects require a superior crafting slot.

Creating a superior slot requires that the character temporarily fuse together a number of major slots equal to the rating of the artifact she wishes to create, and spend a number of gold points

equal to the artifact's rating. If Shen wanted to design an Artifact ••• daiklave, he would need to fuse three major slots and spend 3 gold experience points in order to create a superior slot capable of sustaining the project. If the character lacks sufficient major slots, she can temporarily create new major slots for 5 silver points each, as with starting a major project. Created superior slots vanish when the superior project they're sustaining ends.

Finishing a superior project: Creating artifacts is an intensely demanding art, part craftsmanship, part spiritual communion. The character not only labors through the work-intensive task of shaping and tempering the magical materials, she also coaxes the artifact's spirit into being and forges its Essence to suit her vision. As such, artifacts require a *minimum* time spent laboring over their construction before a character can attempt to finish them. Artifact •• items require at least six weeks of work, Artifact ••• items require three months, Artifact •••• items require one year, and Artifact ••••• items require a bare minimum of two years of labor before the character can attempt their completion. These times assume the character is spending several hours each day actively working on the artifact—if the character takes a month off from work on an Artifact 4 daiklave, then the minimum time before she can attempt to complete it increases by a month. In practice, it often takes much longer than the minimum allotted time to complete an artifact.

Once the character is ready to try to finish the project, she must spend 10 gold points and roll (Attribute + [Lower of Craft (Artifact) or the highest-rated most appropriate mundane Craft skill she possesses]). Unlike basic and major projects, finishing a superior project is an extended roll. This roll is difficulty 5, has a terminus of 6, and a goal number depending on the artifact's rating: 30 for Artifact 2, 50 for Artifact 3, 75 for Artifact 4, and 100 for Artifact 5. The roll has no set interval; each time the character pays 10 gold points to attempt to complete the project, she can roll once, and may attempt her next roll once she can pay another 10 gold points to try again. A botch immediately ruins the project, while failure to complete the artifact before the terminus means that the artifact's spirit has failed to kindle, its Essence has not aligned, and that the artifact cannot be created—the character must scrap the project and start over. If the intended artifact was one-of-a-kind, such as all daiklaves and similar weapons are, the character can never attempt to build that specific artifact again. She might one day create a different daiklave, but the dream she strove to realize with that particular failed project is gone forever.

Reward: Successfully completing a superior project in such a way that the character triggers at least one basic objective automatically grants the character a number of white experience points based on the artifact's rating: 3 for Artifact ••, 5 for Artifact •••, 7 for Artifact ••••, and 9 for Artifact •••••. Additionally, for every unused interval remaining in the project, the character gains (Artifact's rating x 2) gold points. Thus, if a character successfully made an Artifact ••• suit of jade armor in only three rolls, she would gain 5 white points and 18 gold points.

Unlike basic and major projects, the character doesn't gain any additional rewards for triggering multiple basic objectives.

> Large-Scale Projects and Manses
>
> Large-scale undertakings such as merchant ships or palaces are undertaken as superior projects. Unlike artifacts, they only require a proper Craft Ability (such as architecture) and sufficient materials (including, for most such projects, significant funds and manpower) to attempt. Starting a large-scale project requires a superior craft slot costing two major slots and two gold points, and attempting to

finish it follows the same rules as trying to complete an Artifact 2 superior project, save that the Storyteller dictates an appropriate amount of time spent working on the project before an attempt to finish can be attempted, and the project has no terminus.

Manse construction follows the same rules as artifact construction with the following exceptions: Craft (Geomancy) replaces Craft (Artifacts) for all requirements (Geomancy works much like Artifacts, save that Architecture is the only relevant Craft that Geomancy can derive from), a three-dot manse requires at least a year of construction while a five-dot manse requires at least two years, and a three-dot manse has a goal number of 50 while a five-dot manse has a goal number of 100. Under incredibly rare circumstances, a Solar might attempt to raise an N/A-rated manse atop an N/A-rated demesne, harnessing the raw energies of Creation to fuel unique feats of architectural power. This follows all of the same rules as completing a legendary project, save that it requires Craft (Geomancy) rather than Craft (Artifacts).

Legendary Projects

Beginning a legendary project: Legendary projects create N/A-scaled artifacts—wonders of such earth-shaking potency that the secrets of their design have been lost since the end of the First Age. Now, with the return of the Solar Exalted, craftsmen once more walk the face of Creation with the skill, insight, and power to birth these transformative miracles and divine cataclysms into the world.

In addition to the requirements of artifact crafting, attempting a legendary project requires Lore 5, Occult 5, Craft (Artifacts) 5, a relevant mundane Craft at 5, and an even greater volume and potency of magical materials and mystical prodigies. Then, once the project is ready to begin, the character spends five white experience points to create a legendary crafting slot. Unlike superior slots, these slots require no fusing. Once a legendary project ends in success or failure, the slot vanishes.

Finishing a legendary project: Attempting to finish a legendary project works like attempting to finish a superior project, with the following exceptions: The character must labor for at least ten years, attempting to finish costs 10 white points, and the extended roll to finish the project has a goal number of 200.

Reward: Successfully completing a legendary project in such a way that the character triggers at least one basic objective automatically grants the character ten white experience points. Additionally, the character rolls a full free Craft Excellency. For each success, she gains one gold point. For each die that does not show a success, she gains one silver point.

Unlike basic and major projects, the character doesn't gain any additional rewards for triggering multiple basic objectives.

Repairs

Repair works largely the same as creation—repairing a simple tool is a basic project, while re-forging a broken sword is a major project. Repairing artifacts, similarly, requires a superior or legendary project, although depending on how badly damaged the item is, the Storyteller may opt to set the goal number lower than if the character were forging the artifact anew. The

Storyteller may also significantly reduce the minimum time spent working on repairs, again based on the severity of the damage. Unlike standard superior or legendary projects, artifact repairs have no terminus.

Repairing damage to structures such as manses or ships requires a series of major projects, as the character repairs damaged rooms or elements of the vessel one by one. Such repairs generally require hours or days of work. When dealing with ships, a single major project is sufficient to restore one lost hull point (p. XX).

Repair Rewards

Repairing items generally requires a smaller investment of time and materials than making them anew, and as such, offers smaller rewards.

• A basic repair project awards one silver point per basic objective triggered.

• A major repair project grants one gold point per basic objective triggered.

• Repairing a broken artifact with a superior repair project awards (Artifact's rating - 1) white • experience points.

• Repairing a broken N/A artifact with a legendary repair project grants no crafting experience points—the reward for such endeavor is restoring the Essence and power of a lost wonder of the ages.

Craft and First Age Wonders

In the lost, long-ago height of the First Age, the Solar Exalted combined artifice, sorcery, geomancy, and a Creation-spanning infrastructure of powerful magic to create artifacts of enormous complexity and precisely-calibrated function. These marvels of First Age artifice harnessed the power of manses and demesnes from afar, projected shattering Essence bolts from the decks of warships, and even hauled mighty vessels aloft to soar among the clouds on beams of focused power.

That Age is long gone today. In the Solars' absence, the infrastructure they forged and maintained crumbled while their precisely-calibrated spells and crafts were lost, forgotten, or simply proved beyond the ken or power of the remaining Chosen. In the Second Age, functioning examples of First Age artifice are surpassingly rare, and jealously coveted by princes, Exalts, gods, and would-be warlords of all sorts. Only the crudest examples survive in any numbers, such as the implosion bows mounted by the Realm on the decks of a bare handful of their most powerful warships or the scant few suits of gunzosha battle armor fielded with the most elite mortal soldiers of Lookshy.

Creating and repairing such First Age wonders requires a depth of genius and resources largely unavailable in the current Age. It follows the same rules as creating or repairing any other artifact, with the following important exceptions:

• The character must perform these repairs and construction with the Craft (First Age Artifice) Ability. The character cannot begin buying this Ability unless she possesses Lore 5, Occult 5, Craft (Artifacts) 5, and is capable of at least Terrestrial Circle Sorcery (p. XX).

• All crafting and repairs must be done with white points, regardless of the artifact's dot rating.

• Each attempt to finish the project or to roll to repair such an artifact must generally be preceded by a sorcerous project (p. XX) to design key components or replacements for damaged parts (the Storyteller may opt to waive this requirement for very basic repairs). The most standard example is to use sorcery to craft a slate of solidified Essence which can be carved or fused into circuit-like channels, conductors for the artifact's subtle miracles. Crafting or repairing an artifact rated 2 or 3 requires Terrestrial Circle workings, 4 and 5 require at least one Celestial Circle working in addition to Terrestrial Circle workings, and an N/A example of First Age artifice requires at least one Solar Circle working and multiple Celestial Circle workings.

Sailing

Sail is a bit of an odd Ability—it's generally either central to a chronicle or not used at all. The following rules and guidelines exist to add excitement and drama to a sailing-centric chronicle, such as tales of piracy and naval conquest among the Western archipelagos or the Dreaming Sea, or trade, travel, piracy, and war along the great rivers of the near East. If you're going to run or play in a game focusing on palace intrigues, greedy merchants, and scheming sorcerers in a shining city deep in the Southern desert, you can probably skip this section.

Sailing Rules

For the most part, sailing works like any other Ability—a player wants to do something and the Storyteller asks for an (Attribute + Ability) roll and sets a difficulty. (Intelligence + Sail) might be used to gauge the weather and tides, while (Wits + Sail) might be used to navigate through treacherous rocks. In addition, the quality and nature of your ship has a significant impact on your rolls, adding modifiers in many situations.

Ship Traits

Ships are built for countless purposes, from fat-bellied cargo vessels to sleek couriers to the Realm's deadly ship-hunting triremes. A number of traits are used to distinguish them:

• **Speed**—Many elements govern the speed of a ship—currents, deployed oars, wind in the sails. Rather than a simple rating, speed is listed as a set of conditions—ships in dead calm waters and with no oarsmen have Speed 0, and raise this rating for each applicable variable listed in the ship's traits. Speed is added to rolls where getting from one place to another in a hurry is important, as well as to attempts to pursue another ship or to evade pursuit.

Example: A fast courier vessel, running before the wind along a known trade current would have Speed +5—+1 from the current, +1 due to its small, nimble design, and +3 due to its proportionately huge sail. If it were not sailing along with the current, it would only have Speed +4.

• **Maneuverability**—This is a relative measure of how difficult a vessel is to handle properly. It's rarely used when navigating the open ocean, but is vital in combat maneuvering, or when attempting to steer through treacherous shallows or similar conditions. Under these circumstances, Maneuverability adds to a character's Sail rolls.

• **Hull**—Hull is a measure of how much damage a ship can sustain, much like a character's Health track. As a ship loses Hull points, it suffers penalties to all Sail rolls to control it. With no Hull points left, a ship is dead in the water.

Note: A ship dead in the water is not *necessarily* sinking or sunk—it might have lost its oars and mast, or its deck and rigging might be consumed in flames without the ship being burned down to the water line yet (a process that can take well over an hour). Context matters.

• **Crew**—A ship's crew isn't as intrinsic to the vessel as the rigging of her sails or the draft of her keel, but they're no less vital to her operation. A ship's captain may add a +2 bonus to all Sail rolls to command her vessel if the *average* Sail score of her crew is 4+. If her crew has an average of Sail 1 or below, by contrast, she takes a -1 penalty to all Sail rolls.

Pursuit

Before a pirate can plunder her prey, or a naval vessel interdict another ship, they must first close with their quarry. Pursuit is an extended, contested (Wits + Sail + Speed) roll, with the first ship to accumulate 10 more successes than its antagonist accomplishing its goal—either escaping beyond sight, or catching up to combat range.

Troubled Waters

Exalted captains must often navigate their ships through hazards at sea—storms, deadly reefs, fields of Sargasso. Navigating through a hazard requires succeeding at a number of Sail rolls against a difficulty set by the Storyteller—the more deadly the hazard, the higher the difficulty, while the larger the hazard, the more rolls are required. Navigating through an overnight gale without being blown off-course might require five (Wits + Sail) rolls at difficulty 1, while a terrible storm would be difficulty 3, and a hurricane difficulty 5; steering through a deadly reef to reach the shores of an uncharted isle might call for a pair of difficulty 3 (Wits + Sail) rolls; navigating the legendary Sargasso sea around Bluehaven to find the hidden pirates' lair might require ten rolls at difficulty 5. Success leads the ship closer to safety or its destination. Failure may blow a ship off-course, leave it stranded in tangling weeds and in need of breaking free before it can proceed, or might inflict a point of damage to the hull, depending on the hazard.

> Sailing Speed
>
> So how fast does a ship travel, when going from place to place? As a general rule of thumb, a ship's cruising speed is twice its Speed bonus in miles per hour. Thus, a trireme moving under sail (Speed +2) along a trade current (Speed +1) with oars stowed (Speed +0), moving at Speed 3 total, will travel from isle to isle at about 6 miles per hour.

Naval Combat

Once two ships have closed to combat range with one another, they have entered naval combat. Naval combat proceeds in rounds; during reach round, each ship's captain declares an enemy ship he wishes to oppose. The players then select a stratagem from the list below to enact, and make the indicated roll. If she garners more successes than the ship she's picked to oppose, her stratagem succeeds. This is the Naval Maneuver roll.

The key to naval combat is *Momentum*, a pool of points gained from *positioning* stratagems. Momentum is required to attempt most stratagems, and so the goal of naval combat is to accumulate Momentum faster than one's enemies, then expend it to damage their ship or board them.

Selecting a different ship to oppose than you selected during the last round causes you to lose all your Momentum.

Stratagems

Listed below are the naval stratagems available to most ships:

• **Positioning (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: None)**—The ship attempts to maneuver itself into a more favorable position to harm its adversary, whether by ramming them, raking them with arrows, boarding them, or whatever other tactic the captain has in mind. For each success by which the player exceeds her opponent's Naval Maneuver roll, she gains one point of Momentum.

• **Broadside (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 5 Momentum)**—The character's ship draws alongside its opponent and savages it with anti-ship weaponry, such as catapults or ballistae. This inflicts one level of Hull damage, or two levels of Hull damage if deploying anti-ship combat sorcery or First Age weapons such as lightning ballistae or implosion bows. A ship must *have* anti-ship weaponry or a crewmember capable of making such magical attacks to take this stratagem. Acquiring and installing non-magical ship weaponry such as catapults is usually a Resources ••• expense (see "The Resources System," p. XX).

• **Escape (Roll: Wits + Sail + Speed; Cost: 12 Momentum)**—The ship splits out of the battle, leaving her opponents confounded as she catches the wind and attempts to escape. Successfully executing this stratagem removes the ship from battle; catching it again requires a fresh pursuit.

• **Ram (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 7 Momentum)**—The character rams her opponent with her ship's prow, inflicting one point of Hull damage, plus one additional point per three successes above her opponent's Naval Maneuver total. Performing this maneuver without a ram affixed to the ship's prow inflicts equal damage to the attacker's vessel.

• **Concealment (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 2 Momentum)**—The ship conceals itself from its enemy, perhaps diving into a heavy fogbank, or placing other ships, rocks, or sunken vessels between itself and its foe. This stratagem isn't possible on the open ocean with no concealment to utilize. If used successfully, concealment acts as both a positioning stratagem and adds +3 dice to the next Naval Maneuver roll.

Boarding Actions

Boarding actions are enacted by winning a Naval Maneuver roll, just like any other stratagem, but warrant a bit of additional discussion. There are several ways to mount a boarding action, each of which is its own separate stratagem.

When a player boards a ship or has his ship boarded, drop from naval combat down to regular combat and resolve the battle according to the stratagem employed (this works much like the strategic warfare system, p. XX). When a Storyteller character's ship boards another Storyteller character's ship, the Storyteller should generally just dictate the results according to the mettle and quality of the fighters in question—it's less impartial than letting the dice dictate the results, but few players want to take a fifteen-minute break to watch the Storyteller roll dice against herself.

All boarding actions subject both forces to the rules of the Back to the Sea stratagem detailed on page XX—to wit, rally for numbers actions restore one point of Magnitude per three successes,

and slaughter actions directed at a routed battle group are extremely effective since there's nowhere to flee on a ship but over the rail.

• **Boarding Action (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 8 Momentum)**—Using ropes and hooks, the crew lashes their ship to another, then climbs aboard to attack the enemy. The battle plays out under no particular special conditions.

• **Seize the Initiative! (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 10 Momentum)**—The attacking ship's crew surges across the rail and onto the deck of the enemy's ship with a terrible momentum, whipped up into a frenzy by their officers. The enemy crew takes a -2 penalty to Defense during the first round of battle.

• **Shock and Board (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 12 Momentum)**—The attacking ship slams the enemy vessel, throwing its crew down to the deck. The enemy crew begins the resulting combat prone unless they can pass a (Dexterity + [Athletics or Sail]) roll with a difficulty equal to the attacking captain's (Sail + Threshold successes on the Naval Maneuver roll).

• **Drowning Tide (Roll: Wits + Sail + Maneuverability; Cost: 15 Momentum)**—The attacking ship executes a perfect boarding action, both upsetting the enemy ship *and* boarding it with uncanny precision and ferocity. This stratagem combines the benefits of both Seize the Initiative! and Shock and Board.

> Naval Combat in Troubled Waters
>
> So what if you're fighting in the midst of jagged rocks or reefs or in the midst of a raging storm?
>
> Before rolling for Naval Maneuvers each turn, all participants must make a roll to safely navigate through the hazards of the sea. Failure causes either a -3 penalty on the Naval Maneuver roll (in the case of situations like storms or weeds), or the loss of a hull point (in the case of deadly hazards like jagged reefs or rogue waves).

Sample Ships

Below are a number of common types of ships found sailing the seas of the Time of Tumult.

Fast Courier

Role: Military, diplomatic, or civilian courier; pirate scout vessel; fast-attack craft

Speed: Current +1; light hull (when sailing) +1; large sail +3

Maneuverability: +0; **Hull:** -2/-4/Incapacitated

Cargo: Virtually none. Provisions are cold or precooked, while sleepers must strap themselves into small cots.

These small ships are built for one thing and one thing alone: speed. Sporting masts disproportionate to their hulls and operated by small, five-man crews, they are used to deliver priority messages or vitally important passengers; they have room for little else, and can't mount catapults or ballistae on deck. Pirates sometimes use them as scout ships.

Large Yacht

Role: Pleasure craft; personal or official blue-water transport; small pirate corsair

Speed: Current +1; sail +2

Maneuverability: -1; **Hull:** -1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

Cargo: Three well-appointed cabins for six passengers, plus dining and entertaining facilities. Pirates pack in many more crew in much less comfort.

These large, fast ships serve as pleasure barges for the very rich, but many are converted into cargo transports or swift pirate vessels, valued for their speed and stowage.

Blue-Water Merchant

Role: Seagoing merchant vessel; troop carrier.

Speed: Current +1; sail +2; empty cargo hold +1

Maneuverability: +0; **Hull:** -/1/-1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

Cargo: 2,000 tons or more. Troop transports carry 125 soldiers and their gear in lower-decks stowage.

This model of ship is broadly representative of the long-range merchant vessels that ply the waters of the Great Western Ocean, carrying cargo from port to port, or transporting troops to distant shores. Pirates also occasionally prize these ships for their balance between speed and maneuverability, but tend to pair them with scout ships, operating in packs.

Large Merchant Vessel

Role: Heavy seagoing merchant vessel; large troop carrier.

Speed: Current +1; Sail +1; empty cargo hold +1

Maneuverability: -2; **Hull:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

Cargo: 3,000 tons or more. Troop transports may carry between 250-500 troops, depending on the length of the voyage.

What these wallowing ships lack in speed and agility, they make up for in sheer bulk transport capability. Such prize ships are often accompanied by more nimble protective vessels; alternately, they may transport armies abroad, or act as floating artillery platforms.

Imperial Trireme

Role: War galley.

Speed: Current +1; sail +2; oars +2; no marines aboard +1

Maneuverability: +2; **Hull:** -1/-2/-4/Incapacitated

Cargo: Triremes carry 25 marines, but no other cargo to speak of.

The Imperial trireme exists for one purpose alone: to kill other ships. All mount reinforced rams on their prow, and while they are capable of sailing, they deploy a bank of 100 oars in combat, giving them unmatched maneuverability. The trireme's standard tactic is to smash into the enemy and then disgorge its marines. Having no cargo capacity to speak of, and being unsuited for surviving violent storms, triremes deployed beyond coastal waters travel in the company of

enormous supply ships known as trireme tenders, which keep them provisioned with food, water, and a place to safely tie up during dangerous weather.

Make These Rules Your Own

While the above rules provide a framework for exciting ocean adventures and naval conflict, they're just a framework. You're encouraged to come up with your own stratagems—indeed, a clever player can stunt to create a new stratagem to suit unique circumstances. Just assign an appropriate dice pool and Momentum cost, and go with it. Adapt these rules to suit your game!

Example:

Mnemon Valen's ship is rushing to pick up a load of recovered First Age relics from a dig on a small Western isle when it encounters a mighty behemoth—something like a whale, but also like an island.

One player wants to use a Naval Maneuver to frighten the beast away with a loud, flashy display of sorcery, and the Storyteller begins devising an Intimidate stratagem—he thinks that (Wits + Sail + Maneuverability) is appropriate to get the ship into place just in time for the sorcerer to launch a spell to shock and threaten the behemoth, and that it should cost 10 Momentum—comparable to an Escape stratagem, but a bit cheaper, because the Storyteller thinks the behemoth might remember the threat, and become a problem later in the chronicle. He'll treat the behemoth like an enormous, powerful warship for the purpose of this encounter, and quickly sketches out traits for it—Speed +4, Maneuverability +1, Hull -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incapacitated, and decides that its stony brow acts as a ram which inflicts two points of Hull damage before extra successes.

However, before that plan can go anywhere, Mnemon Valen's player comes up with a more daring idea—since the behemoth seems to be headed in the same direction as the Circle, he wants to use harpoons and rope lines to attach the ship to the behemoth's shell and ride it toward their destination, cutting down on travel time immensely! The Storyteller judges this a risky plan, likely to anger the behemoth, and decides will require tricky maneuvering to pull off. He decides the stratagem will use (Wits + Sail + Maneuverability), and cost 15 Momentum—it will, after all, resolve the encounter in one stroke *and* get the ship to its destination much faster.

The players gather up the dice and begin getting their ship into position…

All conversation came to a halt when Volfer entered the teahouse, and with good reason. The muscled, scarred warrior wore all the garments of a barbarian pig—which is to say that he was practically naked.

The teahouse was packed with the elite troops of House Mnemon, fresh in from the Imperial City. Their eyes followed him as he marched to the head of the room and sat atop an empty table, splaying his legs to fully display the leather subligar that encircled his manhood, and the crimson Imperial Mon that had been crudely stitched there.

The mon was a symbol used with exclusivity on the Blessed Isle; it could only be displayed on goods the Empress had personally approved. Volfer's meaning was not lost on Mnemon's house guard. Their awe-struck silence presaged a palpable hatred.

In Volfer's fist was a bottle of sake he'd swept from the table of an Imperial officer. He raised it over his lips and tipped it back as he drank noisily, his throat rising and falling in a slow and deliberate way as he reached down with his other hand to scratch at his inner thigh. The silence grew thick. A fly buzzed in the empty quiet.

An infantryman rose and put a hand on his sword as he approached the place where Volfer sat. "You bastard son of dogs and opossums—" Volfer brought the bottle down on his head like a hammer, silencing his words.

Mnemon's finest leapt to their feet and surrounded him in a crescent. Volfer wore a wicked grin, but his lack of armor left a cold fear at the pit of his stomach. He overwhelmed it with a surge of adrenaline, and from the trip-hammer of his pulse, Essence spread invisibly across his skin until it was hard as diamond.

They came at him at once but with discipline, keeping just enough space between them to swing their weapons and not an inch more. Escape was impossible. A dash for the door would take him through a gauntlet of swords, pikes, and mauls. But he never planned on escaping.

The first man to reach him had a weapon too slow to make much of it. His mistake. Volfer kicked his knee in before he could raise the hammer, and swept off his half-helm as he fell.

Volfer caught the first sword slash with the helm around his fist, holding it by the lining and swinging it like a cestus. A spear thrust in at his side and he tried to spin around it, but the hooked and murderous head caught him and opened him up with a gout of blood—and would have dragged his guts out if his skin wasn't so hard. Growling like a beast he whirled with his helmeted fist and smashed it into the spearman's shocked face, shattering his nose and teeth. Volfer wrenched the spear and twisted, catching the blade of an axe with the haft, and kicked its owner in the chest, sending him back into a comrade. They both fell.

Volfer was surrounded at the center of the room. The movement of light across the floor drew his eye. He glanced up at a line of swinging lanterns, and slashed overhead. They came down around him and shattered, burning oil splashing over the floor. Suddenly the room was in flames.

Volfer dipped his fingers into the wound at his side. His blood flickered in the flames. He liked the way it looked. He flicked it into the face of the nearest guardsman, blinding him and sending his slash askew. The soldiers struck on all sides, but now that he was armed it was as if he had been reborn. He whirled the spear overhead and brought it down behind him, blocking two strikes in front, one at each side and one at his back. With each move to parry, the wicked hooked blade of his stolen spear licked out, dealing strikes in eight directions.

One man was gored in the leg. Another was raked through his armor, and another lost his sword (along with two fingers), while another lost an eye. Those who had not been struck danced back, coughing. An entire table had caught fire and the flames had found the wall and were climbing. A quarter of the room was an inferno. The remaining soldiers lost their wind and began to retreat, their weapons between themselves and the barbarian.

Volfer grinned malevolently. “Don’t like the look of me when it’s not twenty to one? Well, at least the flames will hide your cowardice.”

“Nobody fights a lion in his den.” It was a woman’s voice, coming from the flames. Its owner came through the burning wall, naked and wreathed in fire that resolved into a full suit of red jade plate. The woman’s hair was redder than blazes. She raised a reaver daiklave casually and pointed it at him. “But will you dance with a dragon in the flames?”

“Any day, sweetheart,” he said, and turned to face her.

Chapter Six: Charms

The first and most irrefutable truth of the Solars is this: they are mighty. Their punches shatter stone while their sword blows cleave through the heaviest armor. Guided by well-honed instinct alone, they can spot a god hiding in the bark of an ancient tree or sidestep an unseen assassin’s blade. Their songs can move the stoniest of hearts, and a Solar thief can steal the jewels from a prince’s hands and throat and leave him none the wiser. A Solar’s fists may strike like thunderbolts, while her leap can carry her from plaza to balcony to confront a wicked lord in a single bound. As they grow into the fullness of their power, the Solars can single-handedly fight armies and gods, make allies of enemies, confound the searching eyes of vengeful ghosts, know the secrets of a noble court with a glance, forge mystical artifacts, and even master the mightiest secrets of sorcery.

This chapter places that divine might in the hands of your Solar characters. It details the rules through which the Solars’ awesome power is represented: a vast web of legendary feats called Charms, which mark the dividing line between a mortal hero and one Chosen by the Unconquered Sun. Solar characters begin play with only a handful of Charms, but quickly expand their Exalted prowess as the game proceeds and they refine their mastery of skill and Essence.

However, for all their power, Solars remain ultimately human. Charms are an abstraction, representing skill beyond mere mortal ken; though they’re packaged and presented as individual rules and given memorable and evocative names for player convenience, in the world of Exalted Charms are more of a holistic mixture of personal prowess and the harnessing of Essence than a group of discrete techniques or “powers.” Those who behold a Solar throwing aside a boulder would remark on her incredible strength, but not her use of Increasing Strength Exercise or Ten Ox Meditation.

Depicting Charms

Magic, techniques, powers—Solar Charms are all of these, and none of them. They are the descriptors that allow us to depict the Solar’s lightning-fast movements, perfect balance, and thunderous might sufficient to shake down the walls of a fortress.

Solar Charms aren't necessarily a known commodity in the world of **Exalted**. It may be that they don't exist. Each is a pretty package, depicting a magical feat which some Solar has been or will be capable of. But it is a feat belonging to that Solar—the very Solar you create. A Charm rises from your Solar's prowess. It is derived from her ratings in one of the 25 Abilities, which govern her skill at any field of endeavor, and the power of her Essence. Charms which exist at higher levels of Ability and Essence describe the feats, abilities, and the know-how of Solars with vastly more experience, skill, and power.

Simply put, we talk about Charms as power and magic and techniques, but it may be that the Solars are unaware of such codifications. When a player has her character use Monkey Leap Technique, the Solar leaps high into the air, high enough to clear a rooftop. It is easy to mistake the Charm for doing the work of hurling the Solar into the air, giving her magic legs or a boost of power, like a spell. But Charms aren't magic spells, and in the setting, the Solar is unaware of any such thing as Monkey Leap Technique. She has simply derived from her Athletics and her Solar Essence the power to leap very high and very far. It is through her prowess, excellence, and Essence that all Charms proceed. When we say things like "The magic of the Solars" we are speaking to you, the reader, for your convenience. Solar Charms aren't necessarily what passes for magic in Creation. Beyond the fact that the Exalted are divine, all things have Essence—but it is the Chosen who can move and channel Essence, and it is the Chosen who can perceive and draw upon the different Essences of Creation, each with different powers and natures, to channel different kinds of powers and unleash different types of effects.

Solar Charms don't "do" anything—it is always the Solar. Charms are a way of describing the Solar's capacity for mythic feats and incredible actions, but they only exist as a codification to help describe the Solars themselves. Sometimes a Charm's text includes a phase like "This Charm does this" or "When used, this Charm has this effect," but in reality, Charms do nothing. They don't act on their own and they aren't powers which confer some boon independent of whatever the Solar is doing, or whatever the Solar's player is stunting or describing. This type of phrasing is a kind of shorthand that means "This power represents a Solar who is able to this thing."

Charm Style

Solar Charms exist to build on one another, to be combined, stacked together, and used tactically. The more experience points a player pours into the Charms of an Ability, the more they are committing to the creation of a Solar who breaks all boundaries and exceeds all limitations in a certain field. A player who buys dozens of Melee Charms is building a Solar weapon master and god-slayer. The Charms allow the *player* to describe and depict a Solar with greater and greater levels of power and skill, but it is not the Charms which allow the *Solar* to have such power and skill. The Charms are just a medium through which we see, describe, and create the Solars. In-setting, the Solar's true might comes from her Essence—the sum of all things that she is. If the Solar visualizes her otherworldly prowess as techniques which she trained, honed, and codified, or supernatural tricks—the rights of divinity—or even as Charms as we see them, that is up to the player and the Storyteller.

Charms have minimums: Ability and Essence requirements. They also have costs: costs in motes of Essence; Essence which is the purest and most absolute form of the Solar's being—her skills, her physical attributes, her memories, her emotions, her very existence—and which she must

draw from in order to fuel her supernal actions. Charms are derived constantly and always from the Solar's personal Abilities and her living Essence.

Now that you've been primed on Solar Charms, note that there are many kinds of Chosen. What may be true for the Solars might not be true for anyone else. In the specific case of Martial Arts Charms, for example (detailed in Chapter Seven), these Charms are known to the Exalted by name and are passed among them, with an Exalted sifu training younger Chosen in the ways of her style.

Remember as you read on: different types of Exalted manifest different Charms. This chapter deals with the Charms of the Solar Exalted—great manifestations of supernal excellence, divine might, and impossible prowess. For the most part, Solars lead, rule, and fight. Other types of Exalted use different Charms; the Dragon-Blooded manifest mastery of the fundamental elements of Creation, for example, while the Lunar Exalted are cunning shapeshifters, and the Charms of the Getimian Exalted rend apart the strands of fate, replacing what-is with what could have been. Other beings, such as gods, manifest unique Charms all their own. A small sampling of such effects can be found in Chapter Eight of this book; a detailed examination of the Charms of the other Exalted will be found in upcoming books, such as **Dragon-Blooded: What Fire Has Wrought**.

Using Charms and Charm Limitations

Canny Chosen learn to wield their divine might with surgical precision, while the newest among the Chosen often burn through their mystical power with reckless abandon, devastating their foes but leaving themselves exhausted and vulnerable. In game terms, during combat, Exalts may use as many Charms during a single round as they like, so long as they obey the type restrictions of those Charms, or any other restrictions present within the text of the Charm itself, and so long as they can pay the cost of those Charms.

Players (including the Storyteller) must openly declare which Charms their characters are using, and all Charms (unless their text indicates otherwise) must be declared, and their costs spent, *before* any dice are rolled.

Many Charms raise a character's dice pool or static values. The magic of the Solar Exalted cannot add more dice to a roll than the relevant (Attribute + Ability) total affected by the Charms. For example, a Solar with Dexterity 4, Melee 3 could not add more than seven dice to a Melee attack roll, while a Solar with Dexterity 5, Melee 5 could add up to 10 dice. **The only exception to this rule exists in the form of rare magic which adds "non-Charm" dice to certain rolls.**

When Solars use magic to enhance a static value, such as Defense or Resolve, they can only raise that value by half the (Attribute + Ability) total that creates the static value, rounded down. Another way to understand this is that each point by which the Solar raises a static value "counts" as two dice added by a Charm—the result is the same regardless. Thus, a Solar with Resolve 3 (from Wits 2, Integrity 3) could only raise her Resolve through magic by a further 2 points, while a Solar with Resolve 5 (from Wits 5, Integrity 5) could raise her Resolve by 5.

Occasionally, a Charm will directly add successes to an action. **Unless specified to be non-Charm successes, treat each success added by a Charm as two dice for the purpose of dice-adding limitations.**

Specialties do *not* count as part of a Solar's (Attribute + Ability) total for the purpose of determining dice-adding limitations.

These limits are absolute unless a Charm explicitly contradicts them, and apply to any magic used to enhance a Solar's dice pools or static values—which normally means Solar Charms, but also applies to sorcery, Evocations, Martial Arts Charms, and helpful Charms used by other sorts of Exalted to aid the Solar.

Order of Operations

Charms that reroll or otherwise remove numbers from a roll's result perform this action before other Charms can act upon them. If an attacker's Charm rerolls 1s, a defender's Charm which turns 1s on the attack roll into negative successes will not function unless the Charm's text specifically says that it does. One example of a rerolling Charm is Excellent Strike (p. XX), while Rumor of Form (p. XX) is an example of a Charm that preys upon 1s. In a contest, Rumor of Form would be unable to affect an attack supplemented by Excellent Strike.

As a rule of thumb, any Charm that acts on the effects of other actions considers that action after all modifiers have been put in place. If a character has a Charm that increases the base damage of her next attack for every success an opponent rolls, then she would wait until her opponent has used all (if any) rerolling effects before her Charm starts counting successes and turning them into base damage.

Presentation Format

Charm Name

The name of the Charm. Names only reflect our codification of the Solar Charm set and only in a few cases do they represent what the Exalted think their Charms are called.

Cost: Most Charms require an exertion of effort on the part of the Chosen, generally in the form of motes of Essence. Some powerful Charms may list other costs as well, such as points of Willpower, Initiative, anima or even health levels! The Charm Costs chart explains the shorthand used to list Charm costs.

In order to activate a Charm, the character must be able to pay its full listed cost. Characters cannot spend Initiative below 0 to activate Charms—a character with Initiative 3 could not activate a Charm with a cost of 5i, for example, while a character in Initiative Crash is unable to pay the cost of *any* Charm which lists an Initiative cost, unless the Charm specifies otherwise.

Charm Costs

[BEGIN TABLE]

Label	Cost	Example
#m	motes	(4m for four motes)
#wp	Willpower	(1wp for one temporary Willpower)
#hl	bashing health levels	(2hl for two bashing health levels)
#lhl	lethal health levels	(1lhl for one lethal health level)
#ahl	aggravated health levels	(1ahl for one aggravated health level)

#a anima levels (3a for three levels of anima)

#i Initiative points (2i for two Initiative points)

#xp experience points (3xp for three experience points)

#sxp silver crafting experience points (2sxp for two silver points)

#gxp gold crafting experience points (3 gxp for three gold points)

#wxp white crafting experience points (15wxp for fifteen white points)

[END TABLE]

Mins: Certain Charms demand a greater refinement of skill or might than others. The minimum level of skill and spiritual power necessary to learn a Charm is listed as an Ability and Essence rating—for example, a Charm might list minimums of "Melee 3, Essence 3." If a character does not possess at least three dots of Melee and three dots of Essence, she cannot learn the Charm.

Type: Charms come in one of four types, which determine when and how the Charm can be used. A Charm will be simple, supplemental, reflexive, or permanent. These are detailed below:

Simple—A simple Charm counts as a combat action in and of itself, and obeys the normal timing rules of combat actions: it can only be used on the character's turn. Simple Charms cannot be placed in a flurry, and as a result, a character can only use one simple Charm per round.

Supplemental—Supplemental Charms enhance a non-magical action, such as an attack roll, crafting roll, or social influence roll. Supplemental Charms can generally only benefit rolls using the Ability they're listed under, unless otherwise stated. A character may use as many supplemental Charms as she desires during a round, so long as she is taking valid actions for them to enhance. She cannot, however, activate the same Charm on the same action multiple times to stack its effect—a Solar could *not*, for example, activate Hungry Tiger Technique five times to enhance the same **withering** attack, multiplying its damage by five.

Reflexive—A reflexive Charm creates a reflexive action or enhances a non-dice action, such as applying Defense against an attack, or holding one's breath. In some cases, such as reflexive Charms to anticipate surprise attacks or to passively notice hidden details, the character may not even realize she is using the Charm until she already has! Characters may use any of their reflexive Charms at any time, so long as it makes sense for them to do so, but they can't "stack" enhancing reflexive Charms in the same way they can't stack supplemental Charms.

Permanent—A permanent Charm is just that—a permanent enhancement to the character's prowess, normally costing nothing to enjoy and providing its benefits passively at all times. The best example of a permanent Charm is Ox-Body Technique, which permanently grants characters additional health levels.

Keywords: Keywords are used to quickly and easily denote that a Charm is using a special rule, or belongs to a particular category that other effects may interact with. A list of keywords follows:

• **Aggravated:** The Health Track damage inflicted by this Charm cannot be healed magically, nor can magic be used to speed up the natural process of healing it.

• **Clash:** Cannot be used simultaneously with a Charm with the Counterattack keyword.

• **Counterattack:** Cannot be used in reaction to a Charm with the Counterattack keyword.

• **Decisive-only:** If it's an attack Charm, the Charm can only be used with a **decisive** attack. If it is a defensive Charm, it can only be used to defend against a **decisive** attack.

• **Dual:** This Charm has two different functions, one for **withering** and one for **decisive**.

• **Mute:** This Charm's cost will not add to the Exalt's anima level unless she wants it to.

• **Pilot:** The character must be the captain or the helmsman of the sailing vessel to use this Charm.

• **Psyche:** A power with this keyword is an unnatural, hypnotic, or sorcerous power that magically influences, controls, or cripples an opponent's thoughts or feelings.

• **Perilous:** Be cautious about your reliance on this Charm! Charms with this keyword *cannot* be used in Initiative Crash.

• **Salient:** This keyword indicates that the Charm's cost requires silver, gold, and white points for major, superior, and legendary craft projects, respectively.

• **Stackable:** This Charm's effects can stack.

• **Uniform:** This Charm has the same function for both **withering** and **decisive** attacks or defenses.

• **Withering-only:** If it's an attack Charm, the Charm can only be used with a **withering** attack. If it is a defensive Charm, it can only be used to defend against a **withering** attack.

• **Written-only:** A Charm with this keyword can only be used to enhance, supplement, or create written social influence.

Duration: The miraculous effects of Charms only last for a limited period of time—this section says how long. Most Charms are "instant," meaning that they act upon the world and then are over. This doesn't mean they can't have lasting effects—an instant Archery Charm which is used to shoot someone dead will most assuredly leave them dead once the Charm has ended! But the magic used to execute the Charm is only unleashed into the world for a moment, like a flash of lightning.

Other Charms may have longer-lasting effects, perhaps lasting for an entire scene. Charms with a duration of "one tick" act only on the Initiative tick when they are activated; Charms with a duration of "one turn" last until the Solar's next turn, while Charms with a duration of "one round" last only until the end of the round in which they're invoked. Other Charms may be "indefinite" in duration, lasting until the Solar decides to allow the magic to unravel, or until some pre-determined trigger explained by the Charm causes it to end. Permanent Charms are, of course, permanent.

With the exception of permanent Charms, any Charm with a duration longer than "instant" requires that any Essence spent on it be committed. Committed Essence is "tied up" for the listed duration of the Charm—it cannot be regained until the commitment has been released. Solars may reflexively end any of their Charms prematurely by deciding to release the Essence committed to sustaining them unless the Charm text specifies otherwise.

Prerequisite Charms: Some Charms are fairly straightforward acts of miraculous power; others are significantly more demanding or complicated, and build on the principles established by simpler or weaker Charms. If a Charm lists another Charm (or Charms) as its prerequisite, the

character must already know all of those Charms before they are able to learn the Charm claiming them as prerequisites. **If a Charm designates a number of non-specific prerequisite Charms, Excellencies *never* count toward this total.** Furthermore, if prerequisites include a specific Charm and a number of non-specific Charms, **Charms that serve as prerequisites for the specific Charm don't count toward the non-specific Charms.** For example, a Charm that wants Peony Blossom Technique + "Any two Melee Charms" will exclude One Weapon, Two Blows from being claimed as one of its "Any two Melee Charms," because One Weapon, Two Blows is itself a prerequisite for Peony Blossom Technique.

Other Terminology

Repurchases and Upgrades: Some Charms describe an extra effect upon repurchase. This means if a player pays the experience point cost of the Charm again (which sometimes requires meeting a higher prerequisite), the character unlocks new functionality for the Charm. Other Charms merely describe an extra effect with a higher prerequisite, in which case no repurchase is necessary and new functionality unlocks once the new prerequisite is met.

Attack Reset: Some Charms reset a character's attack. When this happens, the character may immediately take another attack action.

Elsewhere: Some Charms allow a character to send objects or equipment Elsewhere, defined categorically as someplace in existence that is not here. An object sent Elsewhere is inaccessible to everyone except whoever put it there.

Excellencies

The Chosen enjoy a fundamental power called the Excellencies. When a Solar uses an Excellency, she channels pure Essence into her endeavors—the fundamental power of the sun quickens and strengthens her blows, sharpens her sight, or steadies her hands. Her own prowess is amplified directly. Excellencies can produce dramatically potent results, but are unrefined and inefficiently costly expressions of power. Still, often they are the only recourse available to a very young Exalt, and brute force is often sufficient to carry the day. Excellencies remain an important tool for even the most experienced and skilled Exalts.

The Solar Exalted may use their Excellencies to enhance any rolled action, or any application of a static value. To enhance a rolled action, the Solar simply spends one mote of Essence per die added to the roll. The Solar may spend up to (Attribute + Ability) motes, subject to the normal limitations on adding dice to a roll with magic (see "Using Charms and Charm Limitations," above). When using an Excellency to enhance a static value, the Solar spends two motes of Essence for every point by which she raises the static value, and may spend up to (Attribute + [Ability that contributes to the static value]) motes, again, subject to normal static value-raising limitations. All Excellency use is of instant duration. If the Excellency is being used to enhance a dice roll it is considered supplemental. If it is being used in a defense it is considered reflexive.

Gaining Excellencies: Solars *automatically* gain an Excellency for each Caste and Favored Ability in which they possess at least one dot, as well as any Ability for which they have learned at least one Charm. This costs no experience points during play and does not count against starting Charms at character creation. Other sorts of Exalted also have Excellencies, which function somewhat differently, as detailed in Chapter Eight.

Example Excellency:

Excellent Solar Larceny

Cost: 1m per die; **Mins:** Larceny 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: None
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any one Larceny Charm or Larceny as Caste or Favored

The Exalt channels Essence into her hands, making them deceptively fast or nimble, capable of switching tiles, palming objects, or pickpocketing goods right under the nose of an adversary. She may also use this power to quicken her wits in order to formulate deceptions, to increase her cunning, identify likely targets for robbery or deceit, or to devise and apply a convincing disguise.

Designing Charms

When helping players create custom Charms, Storytellers should keep the following rules of thumb in mind.

Efficiency: The Charms here describe the Solars at the peak of their power. Players should not be allowed to design Charms which are simply an existing Charm, but less expensive or more powerful for the same cost. These Charms also act as an effective power-to-efficiency benchmark. If a custom Charm is somewhat similar to an existing Charm, why is it more powerful, or weaker? Has it gained or lost features? Does it have higher prerequisites? More stringent restrictions on when it can be used?

Coherence: Solar Charm trees work along a theme. A grab-bag assortment of whatever a player wants her character to do is not a proper Charm tree—new effects should grow logically from existing effects, or build sensible new trees to reach desired complex or powerful effects.

Theme: Solars are the heroes of the dawn. They are the savants, warriors and god-kings of old, wakened from the sleep of ages in order to save their world from the darkness that threatens to consume it. Their power takes the shape of the Unconquered Sun's: infinite in its excellence, but not infinitely changeable. For all of their power, the Lawgivers are extremely mortal heroes. Each has the power to become a Prince of the Universe, but none may fully shed her humanity or become superhuman indefinitely. Each expenditure of Solar power requires effort, concentration, and exhausting expenditures of inner strength and spiritual energy. The Solars only come by such power through their own excellence, and indeed, each Charm is an expression of what each can naturally do, and each Charm's cost is a reflection of what such tremendous power costs the mortal hero behind that power. Solars can bend the cosmos, truck casually with soul-shattering horrors, duel with gods, hurl boulders, and slay armies, but they do not exist in states which are casually supermortal. Their divinity is as apparent as the marks that blaze upon their brows, but their power is in fact derived from their mortality and their closeness to their own unchanging humanity. As the Unconquered Sun is an unchanging being of five phases, so too are the Solars an Exalt of five Castes broken into 25 Abilites—a human interpretation of the sun's five aspects and dominions.

No matter how they work at it, Solars can't use their Charms to grow fanged mouths on their palms with which to drink the life-force of their enemies. A Solar may not permanently raise her

strength such that she can effortlessly snap the mightiest oak, for her power is derived from effort. A Solar might shout loudly enough to shatter bones or wreath her fists in glorious Solar flame, but she cannot develop Charms to grant her raw command of the elements, a warped and demonic body, or other such strange powers; such feats require sorcery or the Evocations of puissant artifacts.

> **Limits:** There are certain miracles that are beyond even the incredible might of the Solar Exalted. Solar Charms do not permit long-distance teleportation; though a Solar might outrace a horse or clear a river with a single mighty leap, she must actually travel where she wishes to go. Solar Charms cannot defy the flow of time, either to step backwards into the past or to skip forward into the future. Finally, Solar Charms cannot resurrect the dead. Indeed, no magic in the world of **Exalted** has ever been able to definitively restore true life to the deceased, though countless sorcerers and savants continue to attempt to defy this most cruel of mystical limitations.

Archery

Wise Arrow

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Archery 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With skill and effort, the Exalt guides her arrow to its mark. The Exalt may use this Charm to supplement a **withering** or **decisive** attack, reducing the benefits of cover. The defense bonus of heavy and light cover is reduced by one, while characters under no cover suffer a -1 penalty to their normal defense.

In addition, after taking an aim action, the Solar may activate this Charm to strike an opponent in full cover. The Exalt shoots along an arc or angle that perfectly matches her opponent's position. So long as there is *some* opening where an arrow can get through, Wise Arrow treats a character in full cover as if he merely has +3 Defense.

Sight Without Eyes

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One tick

Prerequisite Charms: Wise Arrow

The Exalt opens her eyes not to the visual world, but to the world of Essence, sensing her target in that fashion. She may make an Archery attack without penalties for visual conditions. Smoke, fog, and pitch darkness are no longer a problem for her, though other factors such as high winds and cover still apply against the attack.

At Archery 5+, Essence 3+, the Solar can momentarily see through cover, perceiving her targets as silhouettes the colors of bright anima.

Blood Without Balance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sight Without Eyes

Drawing upon the perfect moment to shoot, the Solar sees nothing but her target. Upon becoming the beneficiary of a distract gambit (p. XX), if the Solar's new Initiative would allow her to act immediately, she may use this Charm to fire a ranged **decisive** attack from up to long range without an aim action. In addition, if the Lawgiver has under seven Initiative, the base damage of this attack gains (Essence) bonus dice.

Force Without Fire

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sight Without Eyes

The Solar nocks an arrow with purpose, sending a tremulous pulse through her surroundings as she gathers hurricane force into her bowstring. The Solar makes a **withering** attack from short or close range, and a pulverizing bolt of force surrounds her arrow as it leaps from her bow. If the attack does at least as much damage as her target's Stamina, that Initiative is lost rather than transferred to the Solar, and the target is knocked down and back an entire range band. This force is sufficient to end a rush against any target.

Accuracy Without Distance

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Force Without Fire

The Solar extends her anima through her hands and into her weapons, joining archer, target and arrow into a single being. This Charm allows the Solar to complete an aim action instantly, and converts the subsequent three bonus dice into automatic non-Charm successes. An Essence 5+ repurchase allows the Solar to fire a **withering** version of this attack against a crashed opponent. This attack rolls damage even if the attack roll generated no successes. This effect may only be used on a target once per crash period.

Seven Omens Shot

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Accuracy Without Distance

Clearing her mind of all thoughts, the Solar focuses only on the arrow drawn back against her bowstring, feeling for the flow of Essence she needs to make an incredible shot. The Solar must take three consecutive aim actions against the same target in order to use this Charm. Invoking Seven Omens Shot coverts the normal +3 bonus dice from aiming into three automatic non-Charm successes and adds any extra successes on the attack roll to the attack's raw damage. Killing an opponent with this Charm awards the Solar one point of Willpower.

Dust and Ashes Sleight

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seven Omens Shot

The Lawgiver may use this Charm to shorten the aiming period of Seven Omens Shot by one, forfeiting three automatic non-Charm successes to make the attack faster. An Essence 5+ repurchase allows the Solar to add the lost successes back into the attack.

There Is No Wind

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sight Without Eyes

The Solar graces her shot with unerring precision and fires it along a flow of Essence, causing it to slice through the air between the arrow and its mark. Her attack ignores penalties from non-visual conditions such as high winds, bad weather, flawed ammunition, and so on. In addition, her **withering** attack accuracy is calculated as if it were made from short range regardless of the distance she's firing from. With appropriate Awareness Charms, the Solar may use this Charm to make attacks from extreme long range.

Trance of Unhesitating Speed

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wise Arrow

The Solar strums her bow and fills the air with sharp notes. This Charm allows the Exalt to attack multiple targets, or a single target multiple times, by spreading her total current Initiative between **decisive** attacks. Each attack must contain at least three Initiative, and extra Initiative must be spread as evenly as possible between shots. For example, an Exalt with 11 Initiative attacking three targets could make two **decisive** attacks with four raw damage, and a third with only three. In addition, each 10 she rolls on an attack increases the base damage of that attack by

one. The Exalt's Initiative does not reset until she has completed every attack, and she may not make more attacks than she has ammunition or Dexterity. This attack can be made without an aim action.

Arrow Storm Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Trance of Unhesitating Speed

Seething with remonstrative ire, the Solar palms a storm of Essence and fills the sky with demonstrative fire. With this attack, the Solar unleashes a barrage of arrows around a focus, striking up to (Essence * 3) targets up to medium range from her initial target. Roll a single attack against the defenses of every target, and then apply damage.

These extra **decisive** attacks carry a base damage of her Perception—divvy up her current Initiative evenly among the remaining shots to determine the total raw damage of each attack. Arrows reaching out to medium range from her initial target are expressly allowed to ignore the range limitations of her weapon without penalty. The Exalt's Initiative does not reset until every damage roll has been completed.

Revolving Bow Discipline

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Arrow Storm Technique

Holding a host of arrows between each finger, the Solar draws down on her target, firing with profound speed and focus. The Solar may draw and attack a single target repeatedly, launching multiple **withering** attacks until she either misses or crashes her opponent. Revolving Bow Discipline can only be used within short or close range.

At Essence 4+, the Solar gains one point of temporary Willpower when she crashes a foe with this attack.

Heavens Crash Down

Cost: 6m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Perilous, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Revolving Bow Discipline

When the Lawgiver is cornered and fighting for her life, the burning power of her judgment becomes even more terrifying. Drawing the burning Essence of her life from her very wounds, she can unleash a powerful, Essence-laden shot from her bow that can override other attacks and overwhelm her attackers. The Solar may use this Charm to clash attacks against her from short or close range, but only when she is in her -4 health levels. This clash gains (Essence) automatic

successes, and the damage roll doubles 9s. However, Initiative damaged by this roll is not transferred to the Solar; it is instead rerolled as **decisive** damage against her target, ignoring hardness and doubling 10s.

An Essence 5+ repurchase of this Charm removes the Perilous keyword, allowing the Solar to spend herself into lower negative Initiative numbers while crashed.

Phantom Arrow Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Archery 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Palming a mote of Essence, the Lawgiver pulls a thorn from her heart and fires it at the breast of her enemy. With this Charm, the Solar may continue firing her bow even when she has run out of arrows.

In addition, once per scene, the Exalt may suffuse a phantom *or* physical arrow with the import of one of her Intimacies. Doing so gives her attack a number of non-Charm bonus dice equal to the Intimacy's strength, but also temporarily numbs her to that Intimacy. She may not use this attack again until she has spent significant effort in restoring or remembering the Intimacy, or in the case of a negative Intimacy, has been reminded of her motivation for her ire.

Adamant Arrow Technique: At Essence 3+, the Solar may infuse a single phantom *or* physical arrow per scene with her enduring Essence. So long as she lives, the arrow cannot be destroyed or pulled from the target. Such arrows can be moved by cutting away the base into which they have landed—a tree can still be cut down, a wall still reduced to rubble—but the arrow will remain inviolate. Only the Solar who fired this arrow, or one blessed with her permission, may remove it from its resting place.

Immaculate Golden Bow

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Arrow Technique

Honing her skill and focusing her will, the Exalt births a stunning varicolored bow from her palm. This Charm creates a weapon with stats identical to a powerbow, described on page XX. The weapon is made of solidified Essence forged in all the colors of Solar anima, and glows like a torch.

For additional purchases, players may add custom Evocations to Immaculate Golden Bow. Players should work with their Storyteller to create Evocations that fits the character's personality or iconic anima manifestation. In addition, Immaculate Golden Bow has the following power:

Sky-Eater's Crest: For four motes, Immaculate Golden Bow is transformed for a single turn, growing wings, spines, fins, or other appendages appropriate to the Exalt's iconic manifestation, providing a barrier of heavy cover against ranged attacks.

Fiery Arrow Attack

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Archery 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Arrow Technique

Charging her arrow with Essence, the Exalt fires a heavy shot that rends the air as it passes onto her target, lighting the arrow on fire. If the arrow strikes flammable materials, a violent blaze instantly seeks to consume the struck object. This fire is natural, and may spread to surrounding objects or cause combustible materials to explode. When used in a **decisive** attack against a target, it adds one automatic success to the damage roll. If the attack does at least three health levels of damage, the target catches on fire, and must contend with (Solar's Essence) lethal dice of damage every turn until he's able to extinguish himself.

Dazzling Flare Attack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fiery Arrow Attack

The Solar shoots from her heart; the arrow is part of her. As such, she can sometimes reach out and draw her Essence across an arrow in flight, causing it to flash and flare, surging toward its target like a smite from the sun. This Charm can only be activated on an attack supplemented by Fiery Arrow Attack; when the attack generates at least one 10, this Charm adds one automatic success to the attack, and for each 10 in the attack roll it adds one die to the attack's raw damage. As the name suggests, Dazzling Flare Attack goes off like a spectacular flare that can be seen for miles—every target using shadows for cover within two range bands must roll Stealth, with a -2 success penalty to the attempt, or be revealed.

Shadow-Seeking Arrow

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dazzling Flare Attack

During combat, if the Lawgiver's Awareness check uncovers an opponent, she may make an attack against that opponent regardless of the Initiative order, without using her attack action for the round, and without having to use an aim action. The Solar may pay to use this Charm multiple times to attack multiple opponents she has uncovered in a single Awareness check.

Searing Sunfire Interdiction

Cost: 4m, 1i, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dazzling Flare Attack

The Lawgiver fires an arrow that courses with burning Essence, streaking down like a falling star to explode at her enemy's feet. This attack is a difficulty 3 gambit that requires no aim action. However, if the Exalt aims before using the Charm, she may act first on the next round, regardless of her place in the Initiative order. The Initiative roll on this gambit is made with double 9s. If successful, it blasts the target out of position, forcing him to act (2 + extra successes on the gambit's Initiative roll) ticks later than he would have. If Searing Sunfire Interdiction drops the target to a tick of 0 or less, he loses his turn for the round. Searing Sunfire Interdiction cannot be used on the same target twice consecutively.

An Essence 3+ repurchase of this Charm lowers the difficulty of the gambit to 2 and waives the Initiative cost upon success.

An Essence 4+ repurchase of the upgraded Charm resets the Solar's attack if she drops an opponent from a higher Initiative tick to a lower Initiative tick than her own.

An Essence 5+ repurchase of the second upgrade allows the Solar to use Searing Sunfire Interdiction twice consecutively on the same target, dropping the Willpower cost from the second shot. If the Solar delays her opponent with both shots, he's also forced backwards a range band, even if this would force him off a cliff or a rooftop.

An Essence 6+ repurchase of the previous upgrade allows the Lawgiver to use this gambit repeatedly against a single target: each time she successfully hits with this gambit, she may immediately fire the gambit again, so long as she has ammunition. If she misses or forces her target to lose a turn, the Charm ends. As with the previous upgrade, waive the willpower cost from all but the first shot. If the Solar stops an opponent from acting, award her a point of Willpower. As above, for every two shots the opponent is delayed, he's forced back a range band.

An Essence 6+ repurchase of the previous upgrade allows the Solar to immediately target a new opponent with the above effect upon dropping another opponent to tick 0 or lower with Searing Sunfire Interdiction.

Solar Spike

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dazzling Flare Attack

The Lawgiver draws a blazing bolt of Essence across her bow and fires it. The attack ignores the range of her weapon, and can be made from medium or long range without an aim action, or extreme range with an aim action. The Exalt must have higher Initiative than her target to use this attack; the conjured Spike does not use the Solar's Initiative to do damage, but instead has a raw damage equal to her current temporary Willpower multiplied by one *or* the rating of any Intimacy she is trying to uphold or protect. Solar Spike is incompatible with Fiery Arrow Attack

and Rain of Feathered Death, and does not reset the Exalt's Initiative to base on a hit. Solar Spike may only be used once per scene, but can be reset by landing a **withering** attack with six 10s rolled across the attack and damage rolls.

Heart-Eating Incineration

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Solar Spike

The Solar's judgment scourges her target with devouring flames. She may only pay to use this attack when unleashing Solar Spike, and when her anima is at bonfire. Instead of conjuring Solar Spike, the Solar draws her anima as if she were pulling an arrow from a quiver, her iconic manifestation taking the form of a living, screaming missile. This attack follows the rules of Solar Spike, but adds the Solar's Initiative to the raw damage of the attack. This *does* cause the Lawgiver's Initiative to reset on a hit, but if Heart-Eating Incineration kills her target, the target's body and soul are engulfed in a torrent of flames and burned away completely, restoring a number of motes to the Solar equal to her Intimacy rating for the target plus his permanent Essence score. Using Heart-Eating Incineration resets the Solar's anima to the dim level. Spirits destroyed with this attack may still reform as they normally might.

Rain of Feathered Death

Cost: 3m per duplicate, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Arrow Technique

The Lawgiver hones her killing prowess, splitting an arrow into a devastating barrage. The Exalt only needs a single arrow to fire this shot; her one arrow splits into multiple arrows and all are directed against a single target. The Solar may split her shot into a maximum of (Dexterity) arrows. If the attack hits, each **created** arrow hits with a raw damage equal to the Solar's current Initiative minus her successes on the previous damage roll. Therefore, if she rolls 10 damage dice and gains two successes on the first roll, the second roll will feature eight damage dice. If that gains four successes, her third damage roll will be four dice. If the Exalt runs out of damage dice due to successful hits, her created arrows cannot do less than (Essence) damage each.

Flashing Vengeance Draw

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Trance of Unhesitating Speed

To invite the wrath of the Lawgiver is to invoke one's own doom. The Solar gains (Essence) automatic successes to her Join Battle result, and if she acts before her target, her first attack is

unblockable. Flashing Vengeance Draw is expressly permitted to be used in combination with Charms that boost Join Battle results, so long as they are not based in Melee, Thrown, or Brawl.

Hunter's Swift Answer

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Vengeance Draw

The Lawgiver suffers no impunities; with terrific speed and ferocious import, she may answer the blades of her transgressors. When the Solar succeeds at a disengage action, she may unleash a **withering** or **decisive** Archery attack from close range, even if she has already attacked that turn. This attack must be directed at the one she broke away from.

Finishing Snipe

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Hunter's Swift Answer

With instincts honed for the kill, the Exalt feels the momentum of battle break and flee her target. When an opponent within range suffers crash, the Lawgiver draws on this moment to attack again, even if she has already used a combat action that turn. This attack requires no aim action, but if she wishes to use Finishing Snipe, the Lawgiver must not be engaged in a Simple action that would prevent her from attacking.

Streaming Arrow Stance

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Finishing Snipe

The Lawgiver feels the channels of her bow open when her prey falls into peril. This Charm allows the Exalt to fire on a crashed target from medium or long range without using an aim action.

Whispered Prayer of Judgment

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Archery 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Streaming Arrow Stance

After using an aim action, the Solar may use this Charm to charge her shot with wrathful Essence, adding (Essence) damage to the attack.

When do I need to aim?

Characters at medium or long range must typically take an aim action before they can attack. But this is not always true. A character does not need to aim if:

• She is casting a spell.

• She is using a Charm from an Ability or martial art that is not typically ranged to create a ranged attack. Examples: Apocalypse Flare Attack (p. XX), Blazing Solar Bolt (p. XX).

• The ranged Charm in question is triggered by some event, objective, or dice result and must be performed instantly. Typically this type of Charm is Reflexive, but not all Reflexive Charms qualify. Examples: Fallen Weapon Deflection (p. XX), Savage Wolf Attack (p. XX).

• The ranged Charm in question creates bonus attacks or immediate attacks as a reward for a good dice roll, and it wouldn't make sense for such attacks not to happen instantly. Example: Swarm-Culling Instinct (p. XX).

• If a Charm resets her combat action.

• If a Charm states she can waive the aim action.

Athletics

Graceful Crane Stance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar draws Essence through her pores and into her bones, suffusing and lightening her form and steadying her step. For the rest of the scene, she has perfect balance, and can stand or run on things too narrow or weak to support her normally, with no chance of falling or breaking through. She can run on a guy wire, stand on a crumbling parapet, balance on the tip of a pine tree, and perform many similar feats without needing to roll (Dexterity + Athletics).

Monkey Leap Technique

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt leaps with the speed and grace of a striking hawk. Using this technique, a Solar may automatically leap forward or straight up one range band. A Solar using this Charm can easily leap to the top of a twenty foot wall or cross a Nexus street over rooftops, without having to roll. This Charm counts as the Solar's movement for the turn. If the Solar continues to leap to a different range band each turn, the cost is reduced to one mote after the first activation.

Soaring Crane Leap

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Monkey Leap Technique

Striking an efficacious pose, the Exalt catches the wind to slow a fall. This allows her to drop down two range bands without taking damage. In order to survive a very long fall with this Charm, the Solar must use it at least once every three bands. The Exalt can also use this Charm to drift long distances through the air, expending her movement action to float forward a single range band even as she continues to fall. With an adequate amount of thrust, the Exalt can glide across long horizontal distances without falling, equaling her initial movement forward. For example, if she were to leap out over a chasm two range bands across with Monkey Leap Technique, she could then activate Soaring Crane Leap to glide across the second range band on her next turn. Appropriate stunts can increase straight-across movement before the Exalt begins to drop.

Unbound Eagle Approach

Cost: —(2m); **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Soaring Crane Leap

It is the Solar's nature to rise above. Meditating on the tyrannical bonds of gravity, the Exalt learns to separate her Essence from that which pulls her down. By paying two extra motes to the activation of Soaring Crane Leap, the Exalt may drift across a horizontal range band without initial thrust, allowing her to plane along low ceilings or avoid traps that might detect a more wild leaping motion. In addition, she can use this Charm on each round after activating Soaring Crane Leap to continue to glide across range bands without dropping down.

Mountain-Crossing Leap Technique

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Until she stops leaping

Prerequisite Charms: Unbound Eagle Approach

The Solar gathers enormous spiritual pressure into her legs and launches herself skyward. The Exalt makes a wild leap four range bands forward or three straight up. As the force of her leap is almost uncontrolled, she may not leap fewer than three range bands with this Charm. This Charm stays active every turn until the Solar stops leaping across range bands, making it possible for the Exalt to cross a mountain range in minutes. If this Charm is combined with Monkey Leap Technique, the Exalt can make a controlled leap to the second range band. If opponents are within close range before the Exalt activates this Charm, she must succeed at a disengage action before it can be activated. All minor opponents within close range when the Solar uses this Charm suffer automatic knockdown, and more impressive opponents may need to roll to keep their balance.

Eagle-Wing Style

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Mountain-Crossing Leap Technique

Focusing her Essence down her spine and through her lower extremities, the Exalt repels the ground with a tremendous leap. The Exalt locks onto an aerial target, whether it be a Haslanti skyship or a Stormwind Rider, leaps toward it and begins to soar. This moves her up to two range bands, expending her movement action, and allows her to continue flying one range band through the air on subsequent turns by paying two motes or two Initiative per turn. Once she is within combat range of an opponent, attacking is sufficient enough movement to keep her airborne. If she is a ranged fighter, she may also use Unbound Eagle Approach, paying two motes in order to hang in the air, planing along an air current as she takes an aim action. Lastly, the Solar can also channel a burst of speed for two motes, allowing her to rush or disengage from appropriate distances.

If she fails to activate the Charm, gets knocked off-course or otherwise begins to fall, Eagle-Wing Style cannot be reactivated until she touches down and is able to leap again. Eagle-Wing Style can be activated at the apex of Mountain-Crossing Leap Technique, in which case it costs only four motes to activate.

Bonfire Anima Wings

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Eagle-Wing Style, Onrush Burst Method

Relentless in pursuit of her ideals, the Lawgiver's anima becomes like a pair of burning wings that carry her across the sky. When using Eagle-Wing Style to engage in aerial combat, and when her anima is at the bonfire level, the Solar's attacks benefit from the effects of Onrush Burst Method, generating motes that can be used to pay the activation costs of Athletics Charms. When in use, the Solar's anima typically resolves into wings that resemble an eagle's or something else appropriate to the Solar's iconic manifestation.

Foe-Vaulting Method

Cost: 3i; **Mins:** Athletics 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Crane Stance, Monkey Leap Technique

Fearless in combat, the Solar leaps over her stunned opponent. At close range, if the Exalt has higher Initiative (before cost) than her foe, she may use this Charm on her turn, rolling Dexterity + Athletics against her opponent's Evasion. If successful, she leaps over her target, creating an opening, and may make a surprise attack (see p. XX) overhead or at their back. This Charm may

only be used once per combat, but is reset by landing a **decisive** attack and building Initiative to 6+.

Lightning Speed

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Like a flashing bolt, the Exalt streaks toward her goal, trailing streamers of anima. This Charm can be used to enhance a rush action (see p. XX). The Exalt moves with terrific speed—add one automatic success and reroll all 5s and 6s until 5s and 6s fail to appear. Lightning Speed can also be used each interval of a foot race or other test of speed (see p. XX).

Racing Hare Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Speed

Attuned to Essence currents that flow through the world, the Solar moves as if in a waking dream. She travels in flashing sprints and sparking leaps, moving from branch to branch like a skipping stone and leaving dust clouds in her wake. This Charm lasts one hour. During this hour, the Solar moves up to three range bands per turn, depending on the terrain and her ability to move at an uninterrupted clip. If she joins battle, her speed is greatly slowed, as she must focus more completely on her environment. The Solar resumes moving one range band per turn, but the Charm still has an effect: double 9s on rush attempts, and for every 10 rolled on a rush, the Solar gains a point of Initiative. If the Exalt knows the Charm Triumph-Forged God-Body, the rushes instead gain (Essence) bonus dice. These benefits also apply to each interval of a test of speed. If the Lawgiver chooses to renew this technique at the end of an hour, ignore the Willpower cost.

Demon-Wasting Rush

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Racing Hare Method

A Solar with this Charm can attempt a rush from medium range. If successful, she will automatically move one range band closer to her target on his next two turns, in addition to her normal movement.

Onrush Burst Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Speed

The Solar learns to channel the exhilaration she feels at chasing an opponent into a burst of adrenal power that restores her spirit. On successfully rushing an opponent, the Exalt gains three motes to be used on Athletics Charms. These motes last until she has taken her next turn.

Winning Stride Discipline

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Speed

Racing against herself, the Solar exults in leaving her competitors behind. In a test of speed, each interval in which the Solar accrues more successes than her fastest opponent garners a spirit-restoring surge: two motes to be used on Athletics Charms on her next turn, or two Initiative.

Arete-Driven Marathon Stride

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Winning Stride Discipline

The Solar trains her body to feel the Essence of those she would outrun, matching their strength with her stride. When she falls behind in a test of speed, every 10 her fastest opponent rolls also counts as a single success to the Solar's own roll. This Charm also functions in rushes, to aid in countering the target's attempts to avoid the Solar.

Hurricane Spirit Speed

Cost: 1i per success; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Arete-Driven Marathon Stride

Like a living storm, the Exalt gathers momentum and speed as she races over land. In combat, the Exalt may spend Initiative for successes to rush a target. In a test of speed she may use it at each interval.

Godspeed Steps

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Arete-Driven Marathon Stride, Racing Hare Method

The Exalt projects herself forward on a pulse of Essence, faster than a heartbeat, moving like a blur. The Exalt may attempt a rush against an opponent up to three range bands away. If successful, she flashes out in a burst of speed, and flashes in at close range to her target that same instant. This Charm removes the flurry penalty for an attack made after a rush. If used in conjunction with Racing Hare Method, the Exalt can rush an opponent up to four range bands distant.

One Extra Step

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Godspeed Steps

Once per scene, the Exalt may take a second movement action on her turn.

Living Wind Approach

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: One Extra Step

Once per scene, the Solar may reflexively channel a burst of impossible speed to automatically succeed at a rush. In a test of speed, she may use this to generate one more success than her opponent on any one interval. If multiple Solars use this on the same interval, they all assume a result one greater than the highest number of successes.

Leaping Tiger Attack

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Crane Stance, Lightning Speed

Meditating on the frozen moment, the Lawgiver sees the universe aligning around the neck of her target. Through strength, balance and control, she pulls at the distance between herself and her foe, and flashes in for the kill.

The Exalt may use this Charm as far away as medium range, to instantly flash past her opponent, striking him at close range. If her attack is **withering**, it deals double damage after soak, but before damage is rolled. If it is **decisive**, it adds her Essence score to the base damage of the attack.

As the Solar slides past her opponent, she ends the attack standing at close range. This counts as the character's movement for the round.

In order to use this Charm, the Solar must be at higher Initiative than her opponent, and at 6+ Initiative. Leaping Tiger Attack is explicitly allowed to be used in combination with the Charms of other Abilities, but is incompatible with Thunderbolt Attack Prana and Eagle-Wing Style.

Increasing Strength Exercise

Cost: 3m or 3i per dot; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar draws remarkable strength from deep within her core. For every three motes of Essence or Initiative the Exalt spends, her Strength score increases by one. Each dot of increase also raises the base damage of her **decisive** attacks by one. The Solar's Strength cannot be increased by more than her Essence rating through use of this Charm, and may not grant her more than double her Strength score. Through use of Increasing Strength Exercise, Solars can reach the Strength minimums required to attempt certain feats of strength (p. XX).

Armor-Eating Strike

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise

Channeling her strength through her Essence, the Solar's attacks strike harder and deeper. This Charm supplements a close range **decisive** attack, allowing the Solar to ignore (her Strength) hardness.

Thunderbolt Attack Prana

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise, Monkey Leap Technique

The Exalt draws down on the Essence around her, pulling it through her upper body, her lungs, her core and down into her legs, and then explodes skyward, rising in a brilliant, Essence-laden arc. This Charm supplements a non-ranged attack which can be made against aerial targets up to short range, or ground targets at short range. The Solar leaps at her target, striking with incredible force—damage is doubled after it is rolled. If the Exalt uses this attack to move to short range, it counts as her movement action for the round. After striking an aerial opponent, the Exalt may fall one range band without taking damage.

Thunderbolt Attack Prana is expressly permitted to be used in conjunction with Charms of other Abilities, and it is suggested that the player use it to create a signature attack that fits the character's attitude and style.

Ten Ox Meditation

Cost: 2m, 3 successes per dot; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: One feat

Prerequisite Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise

The Solar magnifies her physical Essence, increasing her ability to move massive loads. This Charm supplements an attempt to lift or break something, allowing the Solar to attempt an action with a prerequisite beyond her current Strength rating. Pay two motes and roll the Exalt's (Strength + Athletics) as normal, converting each three successes into a dot of Strength as needed, until the Solar meets the prerequisite. This bonus Strength does not enhance her current dice pool, as this momentary surge of might only establishes whether she can succeed with her current dice. Note that she must still have enough successes remaining, after increasing her Strength, to meet the difficulty requirement of the feat.

On Ten Ox Meditation

> For example, the Solar sees a laden wagon sinking into a sand pit. She has Strength 5, and no time to activate Increasing-Strength Exercise—perhaps someone will die if she does not act instantly. According to the rules on page XX, this feat requires Strength 7, and twelve successes on a (Strength + Athletics) roll. She grabs the hitch, channeling from deep within her reservoirs of might to try to pull it free anyway. The player invokes a full Athletics Excellency, Thunder's Might and Ten Ox Meditation, rolling eighteen successes. The player spends six of these successes to raise the Solar's Strength by two—the minimum needed to accomplish the feat. Because the player still has twelve successes left over, and has raised the Solar's Strength to 7, the Exalt is able to pull the wagon from the sand trap immediately.

Thunder's Might

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise

Through intense muscle control, the Solar's insides erupt with surging Essence power. Reroll all non-successes on a feat of strength.

Power Suffusing Form Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Thunder's Might

The Exalt's body is momentarily framed with surging power. This Charm supplements a feat of strength, adding (Strength) non-Charm bonus dice to the attempt. This is explicitly compatible with the bonus granted by Increasing Strength Exercise.

Legion Aurochs Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Power Suffusing Form Technique

Striving toward physical and spiritual perfection, the Solar is an exemplar of physical might. When performing feats of strength, the cost of the Athletics Excellency is permanently reduced to one mote per two dice.

Aegis of Unstoppable Force

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Legion Aurochs Method

The Solar's might is permanently enhanced, lowering the difficulty of all feats of strength by two.

Nine Aeons Thew

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Aegis of Unstoppable Force

Summoning the might of untold forces, the Exalt crosses the threshold of legend. This Charm is the gateway to outrageous shows of physical prowess—the Solar gains double 7s to attempt a feat of strength, and she counts as meeting its Strength prerequisite (p. XX) no matter how high that requirement might be.

Feather Foot Style

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Until the Exalt stops running

Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Crane Stance, Lightning Speed

Lightening her step and balancing carefully, the Exalt may run across fluid surfaces. She may dash over unstable surfaces as if they were solid and move over surfaces no thicker than rice paper without breaking through. At full speed, she may also move across lava or other dangerous

surfaces without getting hurt. This effect lasts until the Exalt stops dashing. As long as she is moving at a quick pace, she need not pay the activation cost again.

At Athletics 5, Essence 2+, the Exalt can pause on unstable surfaces without breaking through, changing the duration of this Charm to "one stunt." She can walk slowly across the surface of a still pond, pause on the crumbling parapet of a castle to give a speech, and so on. This means if she's using the Charm to dash across the water to reach a boat, then decides to pause on the water's surface to address the captain, she must use the Charm twice. If the Exalt is still standing on an unstable surface and is unwilling or unable to renew Feather Foot Style, she becomes subject to the normal laws of gravity and buoyancy. Also note: while she may safely dash across a caustic or burning surface, standing on top of lava and other dangerous surfaces will cause harm.

Spider Foot Style

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Athletics 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: (Essence +1) turns

Prerequisite Charms: Feather Foot Style

With speed and balance heightened to the Nth degree, the Solar's Essence may bond with a surface, allowing her to run up walls or stand upside down on horizontal surfaces such as tree branches, bridge bottoms or overhangs, or to lay flat against a ceiling looking down at her prey. Like Feather Foot Style, if the Solar is unable or unwilling to renew this effect, her preternatural grip dwindles and she may plummet and be subject to falling damage. Spider Foot Style's effect can be extended for one round by a well-described stunt during a turn in which the Charm is active.

Triumph-Forged God-Body

Cost: —; **Mins:** Athletics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Arete-Driven Marathon Stride, Ten Ox Meditation, Unbound Eagle Approach

The Solar possesses a body and spirit intensified by thousands of hours of vigorous exercise and meditation. This Charm applies the double 9s rule to every Athletics roll.

Awareness

Sensory Acuity Prana

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Awareness 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

A breath of Essence seals the five senses into a more perfect form. The Solar's senses are heightened and attuned to minute motions and sounds, dim and noisy conditions. She can differentiate between subtle tastes and textures with only the slightest variation. Thus sharpened, it is more difficult for characters to escape her notice, or to deceive her hunting senses. For the rest of the scene, the Exalt's Awareness rolls benefit from double 9s. If the effect of any Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline applies, reroll 6s until they cease to appear. Use of Sensory Acuity Prana comes without the danger of sensory overload; the Charm helps the Solar manage her senses more effectively.

Surprise Anticipation Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sensory Acuity Prana

Upon learning this technique, the Solar's senses guard her from threats she is not consciously aware of. Whenever the Solar is in danger—even if she is not consciously aware of the threat—her relevant senses will home in on the source of danger, enhancing her Awareness to make the threat known to her. Surprise Anticipation Method has two functions. First: for every 9 she rolls on an Awareness check to reveal a hidden enemy, trap, or *any* source of harm not readily apparent, she gains a single mote of Essence, and for every 10 she gains two. This charge of Essence can *only* be used to offset the cost of activating Awareness Charms to reveal a threat. Motes returned in this fashion may retroactively lower the cost committed to Awareness Charms of a scene or longer duration, both lowering the committed cost and returning the discounted mote(s) to the Solar's mote pool. Second: her senses function even when she is asleep or Incapacitated, allowing her to use any of her Awareness Charms subconsciously. A threat revealed to the Solar while she is asleep or unconscious automatically revives her, allowing her to defend herself.

On Surprise Anticipation Method

> That's not a typo. This *is* a Reflexive Charm with no cost. Surprise Anticipation Method represents a Solar who has honed her senses to a near psychic degree. They act on her behalf to reveal threats to her. Remember, though, *Charms* are not actors—it is simply easier to communicate the idea to the player in terms of what a Charm does. In reality, Charms only represent the naturally enhanced proclivities of the character in question, pre-existing, validated by the player's investment of experience points.

Keen Sight Technique

Cost: 3m or 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Sensory Acuity Prana

The Solar's visual acuity is heightened to several times that of a normal mortal. This Charm represents an array of mechanical benefits: the Solar may perform difficulty 2 or 3 sight-based actions without a roll. She gains an additional two dice to notice hidden persons or devices, to catch sleight of hand and see through disguises. In dim conditions, she sees as well as in broad daylight. Deeper visual hindrances such as dense smoke or fog represent less of a struggle: reduce the difficulty of seeing in such conditions by 1, and remove the -1 penalty to detect hidden threats in such environments. These effects reflect the Exalt's ability to notice and process hundreds of minute details, as well as to focus and manage light sources more effectively. The Solar's visual range is also increased: she can see tiny details at 100 yards, quickly count masses of troops, and notice threats well in advance of her position.

Special activation rules: The player may choose to activate Keen Sight Technique by paying six motes, one willpower. Doing so sets the duration of this Charm to Indefinite. Despite being Simple type Charms, each Keen (Sense) Technique can be activated simultaneously by paying the full cost of each. In addition, these Charms are compatible with Sensory Acuity Prana as well as with each other.

Unswerving Eye Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Sight Technique

The Iron Wolf's gaze cannot be misdirected, and her focus cannot be dissuaded. Even the greatest feats of stealth pale before her genius eyes. When a character attempts to hide from the Solar, steal from her, or cheat her with a quick motion, revert (Essence) of his double successes —typically 10s, but 9s under the effect of double 9s and so on—to single successes. This effect can even contest magic that is considered impossible to notice. The benefit of this Charm only applies to the Solar—it is *her* eye which is unswerving. The player can choose to activate this Charm after the opposing roll has been made.

Inner Eye Focus

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unswerving Eye Method

With flawless gaze and unswerving eye, the Exalt's vision corrects itself, eating away impurities and anomalies to give her the most perfect view. When contesting a Stealth or Larceny action against the character, this Charm can be used to create a cascading reroll, eliminating non-successes from the Awareness roll as the Solar's vision corrects itself. After an Awareness roll, record successes and reroll (Essence) non-successes. For each of these dice that turns up a success, reroll another die until the cascade fails to produce any successes. Dice rerolled by Sensory Acuity Prana are not included in the cascade. This Charm may also be used in Join Battle against an opponent the Lawgiver can see.

Blink

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Inner Eye Focus

Cast down into the darkness, the Lawgiver has known an absence of sensation greater than the deepest abyss. The wicked cannot hide; their shadows avail them nothing. With but a thought, the Solar can impel her senses toward greater form. The player may reroll *any* Awareness roll, maintaining the effects of any Charms she paid for on the initial roll and activating any Charms she wishes to pay for to enhance her second attempt.

Unsurpassed Sight Discipline

Cost: —; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Sight Technique

This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite. The Exalt has the eyes of the steeliest raptor. She can spot a field mouse a mile away, read a letter at a hundred yards, and critique the mating habits of insects. In zero visibility environments—such as a silt cloud in the belly of a sunken ship—she sees as if she were in a dense fog, using the rules of Keen Sight Technique. She may pick a face out of a crowd with a casual glance, predict a flash flood by counting distant raindrops, and tell if someone is alive by seeing the blood flow through his skin.

Special activation rules: When Keen Sight Technique is active, any sight-based Awareness Charm is reduced in cost by one mote, to a minimum of one. If the character has learned all three Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline and activates all three Keen (Sense) Techniques, this discount applies to *any* Awareness Charm.

Keen Taste and Smell Technique

Cost: 3m or 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Sensory Acuity Prana

The Exalt's senses of taste and smell are capable of flawless identification of flavors, textures, and scent profiles. This Charm represents an array of mechanical benefits, as well as two distinct functions of the senses taste and smell. The Solar can recognize an individual by scent alone, and she can tell older scents from new ones, enabling her to tell how recently an individual was present. Add +2 successes to Survival rolls to hunt for food, track a character, or find water, using her sense of smell. This Charm automatically extends the range of these actions to (Essence * 200) yards.

This Charm also creates a library of scents which your character can reference. Upon learning this Charm, the library is populated with the scents of any Major or Defining Intimacy the character may have, but it can also include scents outside the confines of intimacies if the Storyteller deems them reasonable, including any scent the character has encountered in the last 24 hours, the smell of a favorite food or drink, or scents linked to strong memories such as love or pain. Entries in a Solar's scent library can be used to aid in Investigation and Survival rolls, as well as in the smell-based Awareness Charms further up the tree.

This Charm also creates a taste index. Similar to the scent library, the taste index allows the Exalt to immediately recognize any taste she has experienced within the realm of reason. The Solar can identify obscure, complex, or similar flavors and she can deconstruct a meal she has eaten to its basic ingredients, so long as she has experienced most of the flavors at some point in time. The taste index isn't populated the same way as the scent library; most characters do not have Major or Defining intimacies for flavors. Rather, the Solar may perfectly recognize any flavor the Storyteller considers reasonable. If the character has been a master chef all of her life, her palate is going to be considerably more robust than that of an islander with little contact with the outside world. Conversely, those who have lived or traveled in remote locations may have had access to rare and exotic food, drink, and poison.

This Charm follows the **special activation rules** of Keen Sight Technique (p. XX).

Genius Palate Summation

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Taste and Smell Technique

The Solar's sense of taste is so intense that she can analyze the emotions that went into preparing a meal or beverage. In a bit of overcooked meat, she might sense the cook's turmoil; that his mind is not on his work. In a sip of soup salted with arsenic, she might sense the cool, murderous intent of one who is not her normal chef. This Charm acts as an automatically successful read intentions action to determine the emotional state of the one who prepared a meal or poured a drink. The Solar need only sample a single bite of a meal or take a single sip of a drink to gain this understanding.

Foe-Scenting Method

Cost: 0m or 2m; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Taste and Smell Technique

The keen nose of the Iron Wolf seeks out those who would attempt to hide. Before an Awareness roll to detect unseen characters, the Solar's nose automatically counts heads, telling her how many people are in the room, or are within medium range of her. If any scents belong to a person in her scent library, she automatically identifies him. For any unknown, she can further make generally accurate discernments about what kind of being each scent belongs to. Beasts, for

example, smell different than humans, as do the undead and spirits. If a scent is not in her library, she can still form a general idea about the creature it belongs to. At this point, the player can choose to pay two motes to enhance the Lawgiver's sense of smell, aiding her in scenting the direction and distance of each target. This adds one automatic success to an Awareness roll to uncover hidden targets, and to Join Battle if necessary.

At Awareness 5+, Essence 3+, the Solar can detect dematerialized spirits with this Charm.

Scent-Honing Prana

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Foe-Scenting Method

The Lawgiver knows the scent of her kith with the warmth of a lioness, the smell of her enemies with the familiarity of a shark. This Charm adds automatic successes to an Awareness roll to detect hidden characters based on their level of intimacy with the Solar. Minor Intimacies add 1 success, while Major and Defining Intimacies add 2 and 3 respectively. The Solar need not suspect that one of her Ties is hiding nearby; Scent-Honing Prana automatically lends itself to applicable rolls without the Solar knowing, though the player may always choose to disregard its use.

Unsurpassed Taste and Smell Discipline

Cost: —; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Taste and Smell Technique

This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite. The Solar can track her prey's scent with the unerring accuracy of a bloodhound, or find her victim's scent with the methodical sipping of a serpent. The Exalt adds her Perception or a minimum of 2 automatic successes to any Survival-based rolls to track a character or hunt for food or water using her sense of smell, and extends her range for doing so to (half her Essence rounded up) miles. She also gains the ability to scent moods, making an automatically successful scent-based read intentions action to determine a target's disposition.

She can add scentless, tasteless subjects to her scent library and taste index. She can also add items to her taste index by merely smelling them, as well as reference those tastes by smell alone. With a harmless drop on her tongue, she can identify a poison she has tasted, and she can detect a tasteless poison by the way it dilutes a drink or acts as an unknown ingredient in a meal whose flavors are well known to her.

In addition, bleeding characters (those with a wound penalty of -1 or greater) and characters who are severely injured (-4 wound penalty) are easier to find. Add 1 or 2 dice to an Awareness roll against the target's Stealth.

This Charm follows the **special activation rules** of Unsurpassed Sight Discipline (p. XX), discounting the cost of taste and smell effects instead of those which enhance sight.

Keen Hearing and Touch Technique

Cost: 3m or 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Sensory Acuity Prana

The Lawgiver listens with the intensity of an owl, and feels movement in the world like a spider feels a touch against its web. The Exalt may identify fabrics and minerals she knows with a cursory touch, and can hear at frequencies several times lower than a human. She can listen clearly to conversations through thick stone walls, hear creatures burrowing in the ground, ants marching on the branches above her head, and other, similar feats. For many actions that would require success on a roll at difficulty 2, the Solar can succeed without a roll. For more difficult actions, the difficulty is lowered by 1, and the Solar gains one automatic success. If she has a specialty that can be logically applied to the roll, the difficulty drops to 1. For example, a Solar who is unfamiliar with art crime will find it more difficult to identify a faked painting by touch than a Solar with an Investigation specialty in detecting forgeries. These benefits do not apply to detecting opponents in stealth.

This Charm follows the **special activation rules** of Keen Sight Technique (p. XX).

Studied Ear Espial

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Hearing and Touch Technique

The Lawgiver's ears are attuned to the passage of motion. Anything which disturbs the stillness is hers to notice. When a character attempts to move in stealth, the Solar gains +3 dice to spot him.

Knowing Beyond Silence

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Studied Ear Espial

Even the least sounds fail to escape the Lawgiver's notice. When attempting to seek out a hidden character with her Awareness, all 1s rolled by her target act as 10s rolled by the Exalt, and all her target's 2s act as 9s. These 9s are explicitly doubled by Sensory Acuity Prana. Knowing Beyond Silence can be activated *after* the hiding character's dice roll. This Charm can be used to enhance a Join Battle roll against a character whom the Exalt is listening for but cannot see.

Space-Saving Concession (Developer 5, Essence 3)

Multiple Charms are considered to have the following special activation rules: When a Solar is confronted with multiple concealed enemies, her senses are further heightened. The Awareness Excellency and each Reflexive Awareness Charm with an instant duration—*except* for Blink and Roused Dragon Detection—can have their durations extended to one turn by paying an extra two motes upon activation. If such Charms are combined, a single two mote surcharge extends all of them.

Eyeless Harbinger Awareness

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Awareness 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Hearing and Touch Technique

The Solar's sense of touch is attuned to movement in the world around her. When a hidden character attempts to move across a surface connected to one the Solar is touching, he accrues an additional -2 penalty to his Stealth roll, in addition to the regular -3 penalty detailed on page XX. This Charm functions within short range of the Solar. She can touch a tree trunk and feel something moving in the lowest branches, sense footsteps approaching her in a pitch black hallway, and other, similar feats. If the target is within range of the Solar's extended touch upon rolling Join Battle, the Exalt gains three non-Charm dice to her Join Battle roll so long as she cannot see her opponent.

If the Exalt has learned Unsurpassed Hearing and Touch discipline, she can feel such movements out to medium range, and can determine the size, shape, and velocity of her target. She can feel a siaka circling beneath her ship, and she can differentiate between a gecko or an assassin lizard climbing down a wall she's leaning against.

Living Pulse Perception

Cost: —; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Eyeless Harbinger Awareness

The Exalt feels the air current around her, and senses even the slightest disruption. In an enclosed space, such as a burial chamber, or a place where high walls or dense foliage stifle gusts of wind, the Exalt can feel the presence of a hidden person displacing the air around her. Add one automatic success to an Awareness roll to detect or Join Battle against such a character.

Roused Dragon Detection

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Knowing Beyond Silence, Living Pulse Perception

When fighting blind, the Solar's second sight rises to see through the Essence of the world, momentarily revealing her target's location and allowing her to strike. During combat, the Exalt may use this Charm on her turn to strike at a hidden foe within range. If this attack is successful, it does not knock her opponent out of stealth unless he's incapacitated by the blow. Instead, it forces him to change hiding places, making him subject to the penalty for moving in Stealth (p. XX). If the target can find a different hiding place without changing range bands, this does not use up his movement action for the turn.

Unsurpassed Hearing and Touch Discipline

Cost: —; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Keen Hearing and Touch Technique

This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite. The Lawgiver can listen in on a whispered conversation a mile away in still air, or in noisy conditions, such as a raging battlefield, out to long range. She can hear a thunderstorm burgeoning, an army decamping, a tyrant lizard roaring, and other loud noises at (Essence * 5) miles. She can read by passing her fingers over a page and feeling the ink beneath her fingertips. This Charm also confers the following techniques to the Solar:

Conjure Image: For one mote, the Exalt can visualize an object she is touching, in sections no larger than a horse's head. She can identify a familiar face in a pitch black crypt, but might need several activations to visualize the fossil skeleton of an ancient behemoth in a lightless cavern.

Sense Current: For one mote, the Exalt can feel the lightest motion of air, orienting herself to the exit in even the most lightless of conditions.

Read the Web: For five motes committed, the Exalt can listen in on a conversation behind a thick door, just by touching a connecting wall or surface. She feels the vibrations in her fingertips, and her senses translate them to words she can hear. This is a scene length effect, and its range can be extended up to (Essence x100) yards by running a wire from the Exalt's fingertips into a chamber where her targets are speaking.

Sound from Stillness Meditation: For six motes, one Willpower, the Solar can take a Simple action lasting five minutes to filter Creation, listening for specific sounds or conversations that have already happened. The Exalt draws audio from the vibrations of sounds stored in her surroundings—usually rocks and trees—and may listen for noises or conversations that happened up to (Essence x5) hours prior to her arrival with a difficulty 5 Awareness roll. For the duration of the technique, the Solar must remain still, listening intently as she filters out the garbled static and unwanted sounds to reach the reverberations she's searching for. As this technique only lasts five minutes, the Solar can only glean up to half that amount in useful audio.

Unsurpassed Hearing and Touch follows the **special activation rules** of Unsurpassed Sight Discipline (p. XX), discounting the cost of hearing and touch effects instead of those which enhance sight. This Charm can never discount the cost of its own techniques.

Dedicated Unerring Ear

Cost: 3m per exchange; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Unsurpassed Hearing and Touch Discipline

The Lawgivers can listen across vast spaces for the sound of a favored voice. The Exalt must have activated Keen Hearing and Touch Technique in order to use this Charm. Upon doing so, the Exalt becomes aware any time she is addressed by someone for whom she holds a Major or Defining positive Intimacy, no matter how far away he is. So long as she's on the same plane of existence as they are, the Solar can hear the words of her favored people clearly, as if they were in the same room, so long as they are addressing their speech to her. This Charm's duration is Indefinite: each time a character addresses the Solar, she has an instant in which she feels a tingle in the base of her skull, telling her to tune her hearing and *listen.* Upon activating the Charm, she can hear everything her compatriot wishes to say to her, until the character has been silent for ten seconds or longer. The cost of this Charm cannot be reduced by its prerequisite.

Awakening Eye

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any two Keen (Sense) Techniques

At the confluence of mastered senses, the Solar feels second sight growing in her heart. In the moment battle begins, her Awakening Eye reads the flow of Initiative and makes her aware of attacks that will happen in the near future. This Charm supplements a Join Battle roll with a free full (Perception + Awareness) Excellency, and by creating a cascading reroll of 10s. For every 10 rolled, reroll one non-success. Non-successes which reroll 10s provoke more rerolls until a 10 fails to appear in the result. In addition, mark down how many non-successes became successes during the reroll process; every rerolled success adds one to a pool of automatic successes the Solar may use to detect hidden opponents until combat ends. These bonus successes are depleted when the Exalt uses them, though she may choose when and how many successes to use, spreading a number of successes over a number of attempts.

Eye of the Unconquered Sun

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Awareness 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Awakening Eye + Any 3 non-Excellency Awareness Charms

Solars are the legacy of the Unconquered Sun. It is their destiny to see the world through this age of darkness. When this Charm is used, the Solar's Caste Mark blazes like a tiny sun, cancelling any Essence-muting magic the Solar may be using, and removing her from stealth. Eyes blazing white, Caste Mark burning, her gaze shines a wide beam of light across everything she searches, twin lamps moving over the terrain out to long range. Everything caught in her stare is subject to the following effects:

• All magical and mundane Stealth effects are cancelled. Solid walls and other opaque objects grow transparent as the Lawgiver's gaze passes over them, rendering all forms of Stealth automatically unsuccessful.

• Fog lifts, smoke parts, and clouds dissolve under the Solar's intense focus.

• Dematerialized spirits are forced to materialize, at full cost of the Dematerialize Charm, or as much of the cost as they can pay.

• All disguise magic is stripped. Mundane disguises tatter and melt away.

• Shapeshifters are forced back into natural form, resplendent destinies are temporarily forced into dormancy, personas (p. XX) are suppressed, and other innate or native transformative magics of the Exalted are similarly deactivated.

The *only* way to avoid Eye of the Unconquered Sun is to successfully dodge the Solar's gaze by applying Evasion against the Solar's Awareness roll. The Solar's Awareness roll is enhanced by (Essence) dice, and any 1s rolled are rerolled until 1s fail to appear.

Every character within long range of the Solar who fails to dodge when she uses Eye of the Unconquered Sun is subject to the above effects.

The range of this Charm is extended to extreme range by Unsurpassed Sight Discipline, however, this Charm does not depend on eyesight and may be learned and employed by a blind Exalt. Anyone spotted by Eye of the Unconquered Sun automatically knows it; a bright white glare piercing through a fortress wall or an airship hull is impossible to miss.

Brawl

Fists of Iron Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Brawl 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows the Exalt to parry lethal damage with her bare hands. In addition, her bare-handed **decisive** strike does lethal damage and her **withering** damage ignores (Essence + Intimacy) soak. The Intimacy in this context can be a Tie (as the Solar strikes a hated enemy or defends a beloved friend) or a Principle (as the Solar exults in the thrill of violence).

Iron Battle Focus

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Fists of Iron Technique

Though she may take a beating, the Exalt's resolve is tougher than iron. The Solar may activate this Charm to become immune to further onslaught penalties until her next action.

Reckless Fury Discard

Cost: 3m, 1i; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Iron Battle Focus

Channeling her rage, the Exalt strikes away a blow at the last second, or steps between strikes to get at her target's throat. This Charm can be activated after an opponent's attack roll, raising the Solar's Parry or Evasion by a number equal to the 1s in the attack roll. This Charm takes precedence over those that reroll 1s.

Dancing With Strife Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Reckless Fury Discard

Empowered by violence, the Solar exults at the song of death in her ears. Once per scene, if the Exalt successfully defends against an attack that rolls (Solar's Essence or five, whichever is greater) or more successes, she may use this Charm to gain one point of temporary Willpower. This Charm can be reset by defending against a **withering** attack when the Exalt has only one Initiative.

Ox-Stunning Blow

Cost: 4m, 1i, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fists of Iron Technique

The Solar pulls explosive Essence from her extremities, causing them to lance through the point of her strike. Her blow enjoys one automatic success on the attack roll and (Essence) bonus dice to damage. Ox-Stunning Blow can only be soaked with the target's Stamina, but unlike a normal **withering** attack, the Solar does not reap Initiative from damage successes. Rather, any Initiative she strips is rolled again as dice, and for every two success, the target suffers a -1 penalty to his defenses and dice pools until his onslaught penalty wears off.

An Essence 3+ repurchase allows the Solar to gain Initiative in addition to penalizing her opponent with rolled successes.

Knockout Blow

Cost: 5m, 1wp, +1m, 1i per die; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ox-Stunning Blow

The Solar sees a perfect opening and strikes a blow, the apex of her attack suffused by battering Essence. This attack is like a normal **withering** attack, but the damage is bolstered by doubled 9s. In addition, if the Solar drives her opponent into crash with this attack, he is immediately knocked unconscious. The Solar may further enhance the ferocity of this blow, reflexively paying one mote, one Initiative per die to add to the damage of this attack, to a limit of the Initiative gained by the attack.

For example, if the Solar rolls four successes on the damage roll, she may spend up to four motes, four Initiative to add four additional dice to the damage roll.

Knockout Blow can only be used once per fight, but can be reset by dodging, parrying, or soaking a **withering** attack with three or fewer Initiative without suffering crash.

Cancel the Apocalypse

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Knockout Blow

Tearing at an opponent's anima, the Solar rips away an enemy's chance for victory. The Exalt can use this Charm upon driving a target into crash, reaching into his soul to rip away at the Essence suffusing him. This Charm deactivates an ongoing Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee, or combat Attribute Charm of the player's choosing, but cannot target permanent effects.

Ferocious Jab

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar strikes her opponent with a fury-enhanced blow. This Charm supplements a physical strike, and adds a number of dice to the damage of a **withering** or **decisive** attack equal to the target's current onslaught penalty.

Wind and Stones Defense

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Jab

The Solar dances around her foe's attacks, or buffets them away with vicious disdain. When the Exalt's Initiative is higher than her opponent's, she may use this Charm to raise her Evasion or Parry by an amount equal to her foe's current onslaught penalty.

Blade-Rebuking Wrath

Cost: 5m, 1i; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wind and Stones Defense

The Lawgiver may clash a **withering** or **decisive** attack with such fury that she knocks her foe's weapon from his hands. This clash attack does no damage, but for every three extra successes on the attack roll, the opponent's weapon is hurled an extra range band. There is no limit to how far it can be hurled. Using this Charm counts as the Solar's attack action.

Burning Fist Burial

Cost: 4m + 1m per die; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Jab

The Solar's blow sends a surge of Solar Essence crashing and burning through her foe's bones and internal organs. This Charm adds extra successes from a **decisive** attack to the damage roll at a rate of one mote per die, and is activated after the attack succeeds.

Adamantine Fists of Battle

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Fist Burial

Hardening her fists until they are unbreakable, the Exalt strikes a shattering blow. When this Charm supplements a **withering** attack made with the Solar's bare hands, her strike gains an Overwhelming bonus equal to her Strength. For example, the Overwhelming value of a punch attack is 1. If the Solar's Strength is 5, then her Overwhelming for this attack is 6. On a **decisive** attack, her damage is lethal, has double 10s, and rerolls 10s. On the tick she uses this Charm, the Lawgiver can parry lethal attacks with her bare hands without a stunt.

A repurchase allows the Solar to use a Simple version of this Charm with a duration of one scene and a cost of five motes, one Willpower. This version may be activated reflexively for two motes, one Willpower if the Solar uses the supplemental version to successfully damage an opponent.

Incarnated Fury Attack

Cost: 10m, 3a, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Adamantine Fists of Battle

Drawing down on a crashed opponent, the Lawgiver channels all the fury of her anima into her fists and strikes a world-rending blow. This is an unblockable, undodgeable **withering** attack

with double 7s on the damage roll. The Solar's anima must be at bonfire in order to use this Charm, as she sheds her entire anima into the attack and returns to the dim level.

Orichalcum Fists of Battle

Cost: 8m, 3a, 1wp +1m per turn; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Adamantine Fists of Battle (x2)

While using the scene-long version of the prerequisite, the Solar may channel the raw fury of her iconic anima down into her fists, suffusing them with blazing Solar Essence. For the rest of the scene, her **decisive** attacks ignore hardness, and her base Initiative is increased by one. In addition, when she is at base Initiative or lower, her **decisive** damage gains (Essence) bonus dice and rerolls 1s and 10s until 1s and 10s fail to appear, retaining any successes from rerolled 10s. This effect costs one mote per turn to maintain. This Charm requires three levels of anima to use, and use of this Charm returns the Lawgiver's anima to the dim level. While this Charm is active, the Solar's fists glow gold-to-white and her Caste Mark shines brightly. These effects cannot be muted.

Heaven Thunder Hammer

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Jab

At the moment of impact, the Solar sends a surge of Essence up her arm or down her leg, multiplying the force of her blow many times over. This Charm is activated after a successful **decisive** attack. If the damage roll generates at least one success, the target is knocked prone by the force of the blow, and loses a point of Initiative, which is added to the Solar's base value (typically 3) when her Initiative resets. This blow is strikes with the force of a hurricane condensed into the Solar's fist. The more damaging the blow, the more forcefully her opponent will be knocked away from her:

For at least three successes, the opponent is lifted and bodily hurled into an object or surface within close range, hitting it with an impact equivalent to falling a short distance (see falling damage, p. XX), destroying any less-obdurate objects he collides with, such as wooden furniture.

At four or more successes, the foe is knocked into an object at close range with *tremendous* force, or is sent sailing a remarkable distance by the force of the blow. If the former, the opponent hits a surface with force sufficient to leave cracks in a stone wall, impacting with a surface as if he had fallen from a medium distance. If the latter, the force of the blow throws him to short range with a short-distance falling impact.

At five or more successes, the foe is thrown to short range *and* suffers an impact like falling from a medium height.

The Solar can use Heaven Thunder Hammer to knock her opponent into a high ceiling, forcing him to contend with falling damage on the way down. She might also choose to smash him

through a weak point in a nearby wall, causing him to suffer a collapse. She might aim to hurl her opponent into a spike protruding from a surface, turning the damage lethal, or knock her enemy from a rooftop, causing him to suffer a fall from a much greater distance. The player should include the environment in her stunts to enhance this Charm's effectiveness.

At Essence 3+, double the successes for determining the distance the victim is hurled. At 7+, the victim can be hurled to medium range with a medium height impact.

Felling Gigantic Foes

Heaven Thunder Hammer is written in reference to foes that are as large or not much larger than the Solar. Unless the Solar is extremely physically strong, even the mightiest god-felling blow will only send a tyrant lizard or other giant opponent crashing into scenery at close range. In order to launch such a gigantic foe with Heaven Thunder Hammer, the Solar's incredible strength should be surging and demonstrable at the moment of the attack. Athletics Charms such as Nine Aeons Thew (p. XX) help with this effect. When used in conjunction with Heaven Thunder Hammer, such Charms allow the Exalt to launch gigantic foes exactly as if they were of a relative size to the Exalt.

> Of course, combining a number of strength-boosting Charms with Heaven Thunder Hammer may allow the Solar blast opponents across spectacular distances, causing them to leave impact craters in thick stone surfaces. How far an opponent can be hurled, and how much additional damage this does, is up to the Storyteller. Storytellers should use the basic rules of Heaven Thunder Hammer to decide what works best for their games. The exact same principle applies to the Charm Crashing Wave Throw, though characters need the Charm Dragon Coil Technique or an acceptable activation of Athletics Charms to successfully grapple gigantic foes in the first place.

Sledgehammer Fist Punch

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Heaven Thunder Hammer

The Exalt concentrates her anima around her fist, increasing its weight and hardness as she strikes a blow against an object. This attack is neither **withering** nor **decisive** and adds (Strength) automatic successes to the damage roll. This Charm greatly enhances a (Strength + Athletics) based attempt to punch through an object; if the Solar's totals approach viability for such a feat, this Charm allows her to greatly speed up the demolition, based on the durability of the object she strikes and the stunt she performs. For example, a Strength 3, Athletics 3 character who is properly motivated could use this Charm to dash a heavy iron lock from a coffer with the heel of her boot, where a simpler feat might involve a brawler who draws her fist along the cobbles of a street or the stones of a wall, pulping the stony surface into a fine sand to blind her opponent with a punch.

Using Sledgehammer Fist Punch to enhance an attack in such a way does not count as the Solar's combat action, but using it to cause harm indirectly (by e.g. collapsing a pillar or kicking a stack of barrels down onto someone) does.

Force-Rending Strike

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Jab

The Exalt glances into the aura of violence before her and knows the course of her opponent's strike, meeting it with a greater violence of her own. This Charm allows the Solar to make a reflexive Brawl-based clash attack (p. XX) against an incoming **decisive** attack. This does not count as the Solar's combat action.

Intercepting Fury Smite

Cost: —; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Force-Rending Strike

As violence and destruction goes, the Solar is an artist and a savant. This Charm permanently enhances Force-Rending Strike; so long as she is wielding an improvised weapon for the clash, Force-Rending Strike's cost is reduced to four motes, and the Willpower cost is dropped. Using Intercepting Fury Smite to succeed at a clash forces the Solar to discard her current weapon; it is either destroyed or dropped, forcing her to retrieve it or choose another.

Fire-Eating Fist

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Intercepting Fury Smite

The Solar's strike is guided by the violence she feels in her foe's onslaught. This Charm supplements a clash attack. Any 1s rolled by the attacker are converted to automatic successes on the Solar's clash. If the Solar dissolves an energy attack or burning elemental bolt, her fist becomes wreathed in her attacker's Essence, enjoying (opponent's Essence) bonus attack and damage dice on her next attack. Attempting to clash a bolt thrown by an assailant out of range of the Solar's fist lowers the cost of Force-Rending Strike to four motes, and drops the Willpower cost. Fire-Eating Fist does not create a clash attack on its own, and is expressly permitted to enhance Martial Arts Charms with the Clash keyword. At Essence 4+, this effect becomes stackable to a limit of (Stamina) stacks. Therefore, clashing four elemental bolts from an Essence 3 opponent, a Stamina 4 Lawgiver's fists would be wreathed with twelve bonus damage worth of pain. In addition, the Exalt may clash away ranged attacks in the exact same manner, treating

them as if they were elemental bolts. Note that in all instances of Fire-Eating Fist, clashing a projectile attack by an opponent who is out of range does not result in damage to that opponent.

Apocalypse Flare Attack

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fire-Eating Fist

The Lawgiver reaches deep into her Essence, drawing forth a mountain-crushing surge of spirit pressure that burns like a small sun between her hands. The Solar then hurls this flare of burning Essence like a comet to strike a foe she can perceive at any range. The base damage for this attack is any damage the Solar has gathered with Fire-Eating Fist. In addition, the Exalt may choose to pour three levels of anima banner into the attack, shedding them to give the attack three automatic successes and (Essence) additional damage. This attack does not include the Exalt's Initiative and does not return her to base value.

Vicious Lunge

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

In a burst of violence, the Solar launches herself at an opponent, seizing him with tremendous force. This Charm supplements a grapple gambit, adding one automatic success to the attack roll, and (Essence or three, whichever is greater) dice to the Initiative roll.

Unbreakable Grasp

Cost: 2m per round preserved; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Vicious Lunge

The Solar tightens her Essence around her limbs, making it nearly impossible to pry her off her opponent. The Exalt may use this Charm when her clinch control is threatened by incoming attacks (see p. XX), paying two motes for every round of control preserved. These motes are paid after the opponent's attack and damage rolls as needed.

Oak-Curling Clinch

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Vicious Lunge

Locked in a deadly struggle with her opponent, the Exalt draws on the inner fire of her Essence, channeling savage might into her limbs. This Charm may be used after the Solar has succeeded at a grapple gambit, converting extra successes on the attack roll into bonus dice on the control roll.

River-Binding Wrath

Cost: 2m or 4m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Oak-Curling Clinch

The Exalt leaps through her anima like a burning apparition of glorious anger, capturing a foe in her iron grasp. For two motes, this Charm enhances a grapple attempt or the control roll, allowing the Solar to reroll 5s and 6s until 5s and 6s fail to appear. For four motes, it enhances both rolls.

Devil-Strangling Attitude

Cost: —(3m); **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Vicious Lunge

The fury-driven might of the Lawgiver can crush the life from even the gods. This Charm allows the Solar to roll (Strength + Brawl) to attack with a grapple gambit. At Essence 2+ she may pay three motes to double extra successes on the control roll when using Oak-Curling Clinch.

Dragon Coil Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Devil-Strangling Attitude

The Solar wraps her mighty arms around an opponent and attempts to crush the life from him. The Solar gains (Essence) automatic successes to land a grapple attack, and on the control roll, she treats the opponent's 10s as her own single successes.

In addition, when the Solar controls a clinch with Dragon Coil Technique, her **withering** and **decisive** savaging attacks and slams enjoy (Essence) bonus dice of damage. The Exalt can choose whether this damage is bashing or lethal. In addition, if the Exalt uses Dragon Coil Technique to defend herself from a grapple and wins control, she can keep control of the grapple rather than merely escaping.

Finally, if the Solar uses her (Strength + Brawl) to land a grapple attack, Dragon Coil Technique expressly allows the Solar to grapple characters of prodigious size—tyrant lizards, river dragons, siaka and other similarly sized beasts are all valid targets for the Solar's dread grasp. However, creatures of truly titanic proportions such as Juggernaut or Mount Mostath can only be gripped in

bits and pieces, with the most likely result being that the Solar tears away a massive chunk of her opponent, rather than being able to exert enough force to hold or throw such a gigantic being.

Ten Calamities Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Until the grapple ends

Prerequisite Charms: Dragon Coil Technique

While controlling a clinch, the Solar locks a ruinous hold on her captive in an attempt to force his submission. The player can describe this as any kind of signature joint lock, chokehold, or scenery-assisted torment she can imagine, applying the damage roll normally. Remember, savaging attacks always hit, and serve only to boost the damage result, per the rules described on page XX.

Each consecutive round the character inflicts damage with a grapple, her raw damage grows—+2 per round for **withering** or +1 for **decisive**. Thus, a character who made three **withering** attacks and then a **decisive** attack would enjoy bonuses of +2, +4, +6 and +4 respectively. **Decisive** attacks made with this Charm ignore hardness. Ten Calamities Technique does not enhance throws or slams.

Titan-Straightening Method

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ten Calamities Technique

Channeling primal strength through a surge of Essence, the Lawgiver winnows and thrashes a clinched opponent in an attempt to shake him apart. The Solar immediately expends all remaining turns of control and makes an equal number of **withering** savaging attacks.

Learning Titan-Straightening Method permanently enhances Dragon Coil Technique, allowing the Solar to use it to grapple impossibly huge opponents for the express purpose of using Titan-Straightening Method. This Charm does not confer the power to lift, slam or hurl such opponents.

Raging Wrath Repeated

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ten Calamities Technique

The Solar's surging, destructive Essence is redoubled when she breaks an opponent with her own hands. If the Solar crashes an opponent she is clinching, she may reflexively activate this Charm, resetting her combat action, and restoring all the rounds of control that she had at the start of the clinch.

Crashing Wave Throw

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Vicious Lunge

The Solar concentrates her anima around the arc of a throw, hurling her opponent like a meteor to the ground. When the Exalt aborts control of a grapple to make a **withering** or **decisive** throw (see p. XX), the damage pool is boosted by +2 damage per round of control forfeited by the throw. The Exalt can throw her opponent up to short range. If she used Dragon Coil Technique to establish control of a clinch, she can hurl truly massive opponents across the battlefield. At Essence 3+, the Exalt may expend two or four rounds of control, decreasing the throw's damage in order to increase its length, allowing her to throw a foe to medium or long range, forcing him to contend with short or medium distance falling damage—assuming she didn't hurl him into an abyss, an empty well, an open cave mouth, or some other deep fissure.

Shockwave Technique

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crashing Wave Throw

The Solar burns with Essence, launching a captive at a group of foes. When the Solar hurls her captive at a group of foes, the damage roll is enhanced by 4 dice per round of control forfeited by the throw, as described on page XX. The Solar throws her opponent at a target within short range; her captive goes from her like a meteor, blasting through her target and every opponent within short range of him, applying a single Dexterity + Brawl **withering** attack with a base damage of seven to all **additional** opponents. Foes struck by this explosive impact are knocked to the ground, and the damage of the throw is applied to each of them separately. If the Solar is crashed when she uses this attack, she still damages each foe, but she only gains Initiative from a single target. When used in combination with Crashing Wave Throw, not only is the damage of this throw enhanced, but also its range, allowing the Solar to strike enemies out to medium range without spending rounds of control per the rules of Crashing Wave Throw.

Special activation rules: Shockwave Technique can be used once per combat. In order to reset it, the Solar must deal 10+ health levels of damage on a single **decisive** Brawl attack.

Lightning Strikes Twice

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crashing Wave Throw, Heaven Thunder Hammer

After launching an opponent with one of the prerequisite Charms, the Solar channels Essence through her arms and legs and rips through the space between, flashing into her opponent to

make an additional attack using any Ability and allowing the Exalt to reflexively draw a weapon to do so. When the Exalt uses Lightning Strikes Twice after using one of the prerequisites to unleash a **decisive** attack, her Initiative does not roll over until after the extra attack has been completed.

Making this attack has slightly different effects depending on whether the Charm was triggered with Crashing Wave Throw or Heaven Thunder Hammer:

Crashing Wave Throw: The Solar strikes her opponent *after* he bounces off a hard surface and take damage from Crashing Wave Throw. If the Exalt uses this version of Lightning Strikes Twice, she may meet her falling opponent in the air and make a grapple attack with his Defense set to 0. Succeeding in the roll for clinch control means the Solar must make an immediate throw or slam, hurling her opponent into further hard surfaces or driving him bodily into the ground.

Heaven Thunder Hammer: The Solar *must* knock her foe to short or medium range on the attack in order to use this Charm. Doing so allows her to flash in to range *before* he impacts, cancelling his impact with scenery to strike him again. In this case, the Solar cannot grapple her opponent, but makes a strike against him as if it were a surprise attack.

Using Lightning Strikes Twice counts as the Exalt's movement action, but note that it's possible to move several range bands while chaining multiple uses of this Charm.

Lightning Strikes Twice can only be used once per combat, but can be reset by gaining 10+ Initiative on a single tick.

Burning Proof of Authority

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Unbreakable Grasp

During a clinch the Solar controls with at least two rounds of control remaining, the Lawgiver forces her anima into her hand, gloving it in the scarlet, violet and gold radiance of Solar fire, before driving it into her opponent's flesh, branding him with the mark of her dominance. This mark is painless and inflicts no damage, but instigates the immediate release of the captive, knocking him prone. So marked, the victim is subject to the Solar's immediate grasp—when she is in close range of the mark, she may reflexively release the motes committed to the Charm, pulling the opponent back into the clinch. There is no grapple roll, nor a roll to reestablish control; the Exalt resumes control over the captive with the number of rounds of control she had when she branded him.

If the Solar does not invoke this power, the brand fades away at the end of the scene and the motes return to her Essence pool. Removing the brand requires that the marked character succeed at a grapple with the Solar and wins at least as many rounds of control as those associated with the brand.

Rapturous Cradle

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Proof of Authority

Lifting her hand, the Solar reaches across the shroud of the heavens to find the one she has marked. Pulling on a brand created by Burning Proof of Authority, she may draw a captive into her grasp from as far away as long range. The target does not travel the distance between himself and the Lawgiver, but blurs into her steel embrace as if he had never left it. Using Rapturous Cradle automatically releases the Solar's commitment to Burning Proof of Authority, removing the brand and resuming its effects in total.

Wicked Dissolve Dust

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: River-Binding Wrath, Intercepting Fury Smite

Feeling the tide of momentum turn against her, the Solar draws a shield against her doom. When in control of a clinch, the Exalt can use Wicked Dissolve Dust to interpose her captive between herself and an incoming **decisive** attack, enacting a reflexive Dexterity + Brawl clash attack. If her clash succeeds, rather than doing damage to the attacker, all of the damage of the opponent's **decisive** attack is transferred to her captive.

Thunderclap Rush Attack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Brawl 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar's aggression fuels her Essence, quickening her movements, allowing her to blur into combat range of an opponent to make a first strike. This Charm allows the Solar to move a single range band without consuming her movement action, to make an attack regardless of her position in the Initiative order. This attack counts as her turn for the round. If contested by another character using Thunderclap Rush Attack, the better stunt wins. **The target of Thunderclap Rush Attack may not use a Clash (p. XX) to defend against the Solar's attack unless he's using a Charm with the Clash keyword.**

At Brawl 5, Essence 3+, the character may add one Willpower to the cost of this Charm—when she uses it against her opponent, it automatically strips (Essence or 5, whichever is lower) Initiative from her target and awards it to her, before the attack is made.

This Charm can be used once per target, per scene, but can be refreshed against a single target by crashing that target.

On Thunderclap Rush Attack

> It is possible to crash someone with the Brawl 5, Essence 3+ upgrade without making an attack. This counts as crashing him with an attack. The Solar is

awarded the crash bonus, and any Charms which would trigger by crashing someone, or by gaining a crash bonus are applicable before she makes her attack roll.

Falling Hammer Strike

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Brawl 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Thunderclap Rush Attack

The Solar is as relentless as the coming storm. This Charm supplements a **withering** or **decisive** attack, preventing the onslaught penalty to her target's defense from fading on his next turn. The Solar's onslaught can only be abated by escaping her long enough to suffer no attack for at least one round. If the Solar is unable or unwilling to attack her target, the effect ends and the target's defense refreshes as normal. Falling Hammer Strike does not maintain onslaught penalties from other characters' attacks, nor does it supplement grapple attacks.

An Example of Falling Hammer Strike

> The Solar lunges at her target with a vicious left, enhanced by Falling Hammer Strike. On the next round, he attacks first, but his defense doesn't refresh. She uses the Charm again, and snaps his head back with a shattering uppercut. For this attack, his defense is still at -1. Because she used the Charm twice consecutively, he will be at -2 defense on her next attack.

Hammer on Iron Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Falling Hammer Strike

The Lawgiver suffuses her body with Essence, becoming a virtual killing machine, her arms swinging like trip hammers. This Charm creates a series of up to ([half Strength or Stamina, rounded up] + 1) attacks against a single target, dividing the Solar's Initiative up evenly for each strike, then adding bonus Initiative sufficient raise the damage of all of them to equal the highest's. In addition, for every blow that lands, the damage of the next is increased by the number of 10s in the previous damage roll. Attacks created by this Charm ignore hardness.

Fivefold Fury Onslaught

Cost: —; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Hammer on Iron Technique

This Charm permanently upgrades the prerequisite, allowing the Solar to make ([Strength or Stamina] +1) attacks, and adding bonus damage to each strike—+1 on the first, +2 on the second, +3 on the third, and so on.

Rampage-Berserker Attack

Cost: 7m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fivefold Fury Onslaught

The Solar shatters her opponent's limbs and torso with a barrage of Essence-fueled blows. Roll a normal Brawl-based **withering** attack, but instead of using extra successes for damage, each extra success determines how many times the Solar strikes her opponent and how many times the damage of her attack is repeated. This attack may only be used once per scene, but if can be reset if the Solar incapacitates a powerful or impressive opponent.

Heaven Fury Smite

Cost:—; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rampage-Berserker Attack

Sensing her opponent is near collapse, the Exalt lashes out with a lightning fast **decisive** attack. Heaven Fury Smite can be used when the Lawgiver lands an attack that drives her target into crash. It automatically resets her attack action, allowing her to attack again instantly, so long as she launches a **decisive** attack against the crashed opponent. This attack may be made with any viable Ability—the Solar experiences a burst of speed that allows her to reflexively draw a weapon, be it a sword or a nearby tree branch.

One With Violence

Cost: —; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Falling Hammer Strike

The Exalted brawler does not meditate as the monks do, but her violent ruminations are no less weighty. Hers is not the way of blind instinct, but the force-honed circumstance of a natural disaster. This Charm enhances the crash bonus the Exalt earns for driving any target into crash with a Brawl or Martial Arts attack, awarding her extra Initiative equal to (her Essence or five, whichever is smaller).

Striving Aftershock Method

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: One With Violence

Driven on by the flow of violence, the Solar hones her Essence into her limbs, assuming a more perfect position for her next strike. After landing a **decisive** attack which resets her to base Initiative (usually 3), the Solar may use this Charm, adding +2 to her base Initiative value.

Superior Violent Knowledge

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Striving Aftershock Method

The Lawgiver looks beyond her next attack and sees the battle's course unfold. She may use this Charm at any time to reflexively store up to (Stamina) Initiative. Thenceforth, upon making a **decisive** attack, she may choose to reflexively release her commitment to Superior Violent Knowledge, pouring stored Initiative into her attack's raw damage to boost it. This Charm expressly allows the Exalt to launch a **decisive** attack while crashed.

Special activation rules: Using Superior Violent Knowledge at the start of her turn does not affect her place in the attack order of the current round but will be reflected in subsequent rounds. Stored Initiative cannot be targeted or stripped by **withering** attacks. Unless used, this Charm's effect wears off at the end of combat.

Inevitable Victory Meditation

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Superior Violent Knowledge

The Solar takes a moment to assess her surroundings in order to determine the most effective channel for violence. Roll (Wits + Brawl) and store the result. The Exalt can reflexively use this result in place of a Brawl roll at any time. Stocked successes can be used to bolster defense at a rate of two successes per Parry or Evasion. These successes fade at the end of the scene. At Essence 4+, the roll gains (Essence) automatic successes.

Special Activation Rules: This Charm becomes Reflexive if the Solar beats all of her opponents in a Join Battle roll, or if she knocks an opponent prone.

Supremacy of War Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Inevitable Victory Meditation

Once per ascent to iconic anima, the Lawgiver may use a free full Brawl Excellency to enhance her attacks or defenses. This Charm is reset each time the Solar returns her iconic anima to the dim level.

Ascendant Battle Visage

Cost: 15m, 3a, 1wp; **Mins:** Brawl 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Supremacy of War Meditation

Channeling her anima through her physical form, the Lawgiver merges with her iconic manifestation to become a visage of divine wrath. Her hair may lengthen and change colors while her skin darkens toward the spectrums of Solar anima. Her eyes glow white, her voice echoes and thunders, and her body becomes the blazing imprint of tattoos and markings that represent her iconic form, alive and glowing with inner fire. During this time, her anima licks the air as if it were burning, but will neither rise to iconic or fall to dim so long as this Charm's mote cost is committed. During this time, the Exalt moves with terrific speed. She may rush with double 7s, and may rush with her Strength instead of Dexterity, flying toward her opponent in great leaps. If her opponent is three or more range bands away, she may move two range bands to approach him until she is within medium or short range. During this time, she may clash any attack as her combat action, without having to delay, and if she successfully clashes a ranged attack she immediately flashes into close range with her opponent, clashing, blurring over the distance and striking her target all in the same instant. Furthermore, Ascendant Battle Visage makes the Solar incredibly resilient. For the duration of the Charm, no amount of **withering** damage can crash her unless it is delivered from close range. If the Solar knows Orichalcum Fists of Battle, she may activate that Charm and its prerequisite reflexively when she assumes this Charm, paying only six motes and ignoring the anima and Willpower cost to do so. In addition, if she knows the Charm Fire-Eating Fist she may store damage from any attack she clashes, with or without Charms. If she knows the Charm Apocalypse Flare Attack, she may unleash that attack at the iconic level without expending her anima or ending this Charm's effect.

Bureaucracy

Frugal Merchant Method

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With a cursory examination, the Lawgiver can determine the exact quality of any good offered for sale. She can tell if it is in poor, average, or excellent condition. However, this grants her no knowledge of the market value of any particular good, nor does it tell her the purpose of an object. By inspecting a scavenged mechanism of the First Age, she could tell if it was functional, but not how it functions.

Insightful Buyer Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Frugal Merchant Method

Through use of this Charm, the Solar gains an intuitive feel for a marketplace at a given instant, allowing her to intuit roughly how much a given object will fetch in any one market. Though the Exalt need not be physically present in the market, this Charm must be used with a particular sales venue in mind. The Solar cannot discover previously unknown markets through use of this Charm. She can, however, review distant markets to determine which would be the best to sell a good. The more specific the venue contemplated, the more accurate the forecast. A Solar using this technique can make a perfectly accurate assessment at the moment of sale, but the longer she waits between using this Charm and the actual sale of the goods, the larger her margin for error, as economies shift with time.

Consumer-Evaluating Glance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Frugal Merchant Method

The Lawgiver can evaluate a buyer's intention and budget with a glance. This enacts a ([Perception or Wits] + Bureaucracy) read intentions action against the target's Guile. If successful, the Exalt can tell if the target plans to betray or cheat her. If he does, the Solar's Resolve is raised by her Essence against all bargain action attempts by that character. She may also use this Charm to determine a character's Resources rating and whether he intend to buy or whether he needs to be swayed into attempting a bargain action.

All-Seeing Master Procurer

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Consumer-Evaluating Glance

Through use of this Charm the Solar broadcasts her ability to evaluate and fence any good, and to estimate the viability of any good or service in any market. This Charm makes characters naturally assume the Solar is a master merchant, someone who should be approached in order to receive the best deal or gain information about any certain product. This Charm does not confer knowledge of any good the Solar is unfamiliar with, but it does allow her to reflexively employ Insightful Buyer Technique for one mote, in order to speculate on the value of goods in local or foreign markets, even those that may not be physically present.

Illimitable Master Fence

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: All-Seeing Master Procurer

By spending a day in a market, the Lawgiver can sense the ebb and flow of commerce, guiding her to knowledge of hidden or illegal markets. By observing normal transactions, speaking with merchants and customers, and watching the general course of economic dalliance, she becomes aware of the bureaucratic specialties of everyone connected to a specific market. The Lawgiver even becomes aware of the special market knowledge of characters whose names she doesn't know and whose faces she has never seen.

Ungoverned Market Awareness

Cost: —; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Illimitable Master Fence

The Solar is so attuned to the flow of trade that she can sense any time a character within range of her senses uses the Bureaucracy or Larceny Ability to make a transaction. This does not overwhelm her in market settings. She may simply ignore the proceedings, but she may also choose to sweep for particular transactions. This may aid her in locating characters with market specialties indicated by the prerequisite.

Irresistible Salesman Spirit

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Consumer-Evaluating Glance, Insightful Buyer Technique

This Charm depicts a Solar who is an irresistible high pressure salesman. This Charm supplements a bargain action with double 7s. If the Exalt's bargain is successful, she gains a point of temporary Willpower.

Empowered Barter Stance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Irresistible Salesman Spirit

Once a day, the Solar gains a point of temporary Willpower for succeeding at a bargain action.

Soul-Snaring Pitch

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute, Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Irresistible Salesman Spirit

The Solar can sell sand to a Delzahn. This Charm is a persuade action to convince a character that a particular thing is his heart's desire. The Solar can sell literally anything at outrageous prices. If the character's permanent Willpower is equal to or lower than the Exalt's Essence, no roll is required. The Exalt can cause the target to sell himself into slavery for a handful of potsherds or a kiss. If the target's Willpower is greater than the Lawgiver's Essence, the Solar rolls a (Manipulation + Bureaucracy) persuade action with (Essence) automatic successes against the target's Resolve. If successful, the target is not only convinced that he *must* attain whatever the Solar is selling, but its value in his eyes is multiplied by the number of extra successes on the roll. In order to resist this effect, a character must spend (the Solar's Essence) in Willpower. Resisting Soul-Snaring Pitch makes a character immune to the Charm for one week.

Deft Official's Way

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver becomes preternaturally adept at navigating through bureaucracies. She can naturally sense who to talk to in order to produce results, who expects or is amenable to bribes, which functionaries are actually useful or friendly and which are officious tyrants abusing their meager sliver of power. The Solar may add her Bureaucracy score to the read intentions actions of any Ability so long as it helps her in producing a desired bureaucratic result, such as obtaining a license, gaining a passport or securing an audience.

Enlightened Discourse Method

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Deft Official's Way, Frugal Merchant Method

The Exalt's understanding of business language and commerce makes her seem worldly and wise. Add half her Bureaucracy score (rounded up) in dice to all social influence to affect bargains, trade, create business partnerships, create good will between organizations, communicate effective orders, mediate, and so on.

Semantic Argument Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Enlightened Discourse Method

The Lawgiver's understanding of rules and the semantics of language makes her an effective and persuasive speaker. Add half the Solar's Bureaucracy in dice (rounded up) to any social influence that engages a character's adherence to laws or rules he's known to observe. This can refer to organizations he identifies with, but it can also be used to exploit Defining Principles he holds, if the Solar is aware of them.

Eclectic Verbiage of Law

Cost: —; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Semantic Argument Technique

The Solar's understanding of bureaucratic procedure is immense and complex. She may draw on this well of knowledge to enact a free full Bureaucracy Excellency once per season. This Charm can be reset by the Solar aiding in the success of a particularly difficult project (see p. XX) as determined by the Storyteller.

Subject-Hailing Ideology

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Eclectic Verbiage of Law

The Lawgiver gains power through knowledge of the roles and identities of others. This Charm supplements any social influence that appeals to an Intimacy the Solar is aware of, at a former intensity, so long as the social influence is intended to make the subject act in some official capacity. For example, the Lawgiver could attempt to persuade her bodyguard-turned-assassin to put down his weapon, invoking an Intimacy of loyalty he once held but holds no longer. She could convince an ex-spouse to act in some capacity as if they were still married. She could even make a once-loyal member of her organization remember his role and even make him wish to return to his former position. However, she could not use this Charm to convince two enemies who have become lovers to remember their hate for one another. The Charm only functions if there is some relevant official capacity being invoked. Thus the subject is hailed into a former role.

Measuring Glance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Deft Official's Way

The Solar can sum up the member of an organization with perfect incision. This Charm creates a ([Social or Mental Attribute] + Bureaucracy) read intentions action adding the Solar's Essence in automatic successes. This Charm is automatically successful unless resisted with magic, and cannot be resisted by characters whose temporary Willpower is currently lower than the Solar's.

Upon reading her subject, the Exalt can determine the exact strongest or most relevant Intimacy he holds for the organization in question.

Enigmatic Bureau Understanding

Cost: —; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Measuring Glance

The Exalt can govern an organization with preternatural awareness. With this Charm, the Lawgiver is made aware when the member of an organization has his Intimacy for the organization challenged by any kind of social influence that does not involve the Psyche keyword. This awareness is contingent on the Solar having used read intentions actions to uncover the relevant Intimacies of the character in question. The Solar's awareness extends to the moment the character's Intimacy is challenged if and only if the character is currently functioning in some capacity for the organization. If the subject is not presently working for the Solar, she only notices that someone has attempted to influence him when he returns to his role or functions as a member of the organization. This clarification applies to current as well as former members—the Exalt only immediately notices influence against a character who is currently on duty. This Charm does not convey any knowledge of the substance of such social influence, or whether it was successful—only that it happened.

Speed the Wheels

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One task

Prerequisite Charms: Deft Official's Way

Through the use of this Charm, the Solar can cause a bureaucracy to finish a task in record time. Using this Charm causes the organization to work faster by a number of degrees equal to a Solar's Essence. A task that would be accomplished in a century takes only a season; a task that would be accomplished in a season takes only a month; what would take a month takes only a week; what takes a week only takes day, and what could be accomplished in days just takes minutes. Any request that would take less than a day is processed immediately; the Solar is literally moved to the front of the queue and is transferred into the services of an organization the moment she makes her request. Therefore, at Essence 3, a Solar could obtain records from a Fair Folk freehold that would normally take a century in just a week. At Essence 5, she could obtain it in minutes.

Bureau-Rectifying Method

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One investigation

Prerequisite Charms: Speed the Wheels

The Solar may use her bureaucratic prowess to reform an ailing or corrupt bureaucracy. The Lawgiver must participate in an investigation of the organization, attending or leading inquiries, reviewing records and interviewing involved parties. For the duration of the inquest, add the Solar's Bureaucracy in automatic successes to her Investigation and Socialize rolls to conduct this investigation. In addition, while this Charm is in effect, members of the organization will automatically perceive the Solar as a subject of confidential trust with regards to the bureau—someone they should both confide in and should speak truthfully to. This registers as a Major Intimacy with most, but those with strong will and reasons to want to hide the truth will clock in with no more than a Minor Intimacy of respect for the Lawgiver's authority.

Bureau-Reforming Kata

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bureau-Rectifying Method, Enigmatic Bureau Understanding

The Lawgiver may use this Charm to sort an organization she controls, moving personnel and dropping its weakest members. This Charm may be used after Bureau-Rectifying Method to instantly cleanse an organization of any hostile magic such as Indolent Official Charm or astrological curses. Whether the Solar is able to determine the presence of such magic depends on the thoroughness of her investigation. If the Storyteller is satisfied that she has uncovered evidence of malignant forces at work, this Charm automatically succeeds at clearing all such effects and making the organization immune to them for one season.

Woe-Capturing Web

Cost: —(Varies); **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Bureau-Reforming Kata

The Solar becomes automatically aware any time a curse or other magic is laid against her organization. She may not be aware of the exact details of such a power, or where it comes from, but she does know where to look for evidence using Investigation Charms or Bureau-Rectifying Method. At the moment the Solar first becomes aware of fell magic, the player may also guess as to its source if it is reasonable that the Solar would know what the player suspects. If correct, the Solar instantly knows the source of the magic and may use Bureau-Reforming Kata instantly. The Solar may, at the same time she uses Bureau-Reforming Kata, spend a number of motes equal to those used to launch the curse. By committing these motes, the Exalt traps the motes committed to the effect, preventing the source from relinquishing the curse before its normal duration has expired.

Omen-Spawning Beast

Cost: —; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Woe-Capturing Web

The Solar becomes fused with her organization at the unconscious level. Her Essence flows through all aspects of her bureaucracy, subtly altering her existence as she alters it in turn. If the Exalt has captured magic using Woe-Capturing Web, this Charm allows her to discover profiling information among her immaculately-kept paperwork, revealing the identity of the one whose magic has been snared.

Infinitely-Efficient Register

Cost: —; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Omen-Spawning Beast

As long as the Lawgiver's organization has succeeded at one challenging project in the previous season, her bureaucracy automatically completes one project within its scope without ever undertaking it. Once per story, the Exalt may travel to an isolated section of her business headquarters where she will find the proof of a completed task. She might find useful tools, resources, deeds, valuable paperwork, and so forth. The Storyteller should select items which will prove of some use to the Solar each time she decides to invoke this Charm. The more powerful her organization, the better the discovered spoils will be. Note that use of this Charm does not itself count as completion of a challenging project.

Indolent Official Charm

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Deft Official's Way

The Lawgiver may use her power to slow as well as hasten a bureaucracy. Through use of this Charm, the Solar may bring the wheels of a government to a grinding halt with regards to a single task. Documents will be lost at every turn, every petty official who could possibly interfere or request a bribe will do so, and petitions and important requests will inevitably end up neglected at the bottom of the pile. For every point of Essence the Exalt possesses, the investigation is delayed by one degree, from days to weeks, weeks to months, months to seasons, and seasons to years. Thus an Essence 2 Solar could delay an investigation that would take a week, causing it to take an entire season.

The Solar need not be party to a matter to delay it. She can speculate on an investigation she is unaware of, committing motes against the possibility of such an investigation in the future. For example, she could stymie "The ongoing secret police investigation into my business" without being certain such an investigation were occurring. However, even though this Charm will defend her against such intrigues, this Charm will not inform her as to whether such an investigation exists or is ongoing. The Solar may stack this Charm (Essence) times, protecting herself against an equal number of different investigations.

Foul Air of Argument Technique

Cost: 13m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Indolent Official Charm

The Lawgiver can arrest an entire arm of government with one deft stroke. The Solar targets a project she's aware of and dooms it with a flash of her Caste Mark. Roll ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Bureaucracy) against the Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny or War (whichever is applicable to the project) of each character responsible for leading the project. For each success, that character will experience (Solar's Essence) botches trying to carry out that project. As failure manifests, the first result is that communication breaks down, becoming hostile, ineffective, or completely impossible (as with the collapse of the information arm of a military establishment). A project that is a monumental failure may threaten the stability of an entire organization. This Charm may not be used on a single organization more than once per season.

Taboo-Inflicting Diatribe

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Foul Air of Argument Technique

The Lawgiver may pass down laws to her agents which are sacrosanct. The Solar repeatedly inveighs against a certain action, making it anathema. It then becomes impossible for members of her organization to carry out that action—but only in the context of functions of the bureaucracy. Furthermore, the Solar must be specific in citing those behaviors which are banned. Thus, she could not ban all theft, but she could ban "Theft from the company coffers" or "Embezzlement of client capital." Likewise, while these bans would prevent members of her organization from stealing from her organization, they do not prevent those members from committing such crimes outside the jurisdiction of her organization. Characters affected by this Charm can treat any social influence to break a defined taboo as an unacceptable one. The Solar may stack this Charm (Essence) times to protect her organization thusly.

Order-Conferring Action

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: Taboo-Inflicting Diatribe

The Solar's effective delegation of power bolsters the might of Creation. To use this Charm, the Solar must confer advice to a bureaucracy either directly or through mediators (letters, messengers, etc.). The Lawgiver proposes bureaucratic reforms and operating sequences that are efficacious and skillful: roll (Charisma + Bureaucracy) against a difficulty of 5. If successful, the organization's leaders gain a number of non-Charm dice equal to the roll's extra successes. These dice can be used on (Solar's Essence) Bureaucracy, Investigation, Larceny, Lore, Medicine or

War rolls dealing with running a relevant organization or project. The Solar may enhance her own actions with this Charm, and if she or any other Solar is a beneficiary of this effect, the organization becomes a "Creational bulwark" on the spot. The Wyld cannot penetrate its territories, diseases struggle to cross its borders, and Shadowlands encroach upon it more slowly. This effect lasts one week.

Craft

Efficiency

Tireless Workhorse Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar expands her mind, body, and spirit to encompass the drain of more difficult tasks. This Charm permanently grants two major project slots for each dot of Essence the Solar possesses.

Efficient Craftsman Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Tireless Workhorse Method

This Charm permanently reduces the cost of temporary major slots to three silver points.

Arete-Shifting Prana

Cost: 4m, 1sxp, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver may glean knowledge from her existing mastery and use it as the foundation for new works. Upon evoking Arete-Shifting Prana, roll (Intelligence + [relevant Craft]). For each success, the Solar may temporarily convert dots from one of her known Crafts into a conceptually related Craft ability—for example, changing armoring into weaponsmithing, or shifting leatherworking into tailoring, or tailoring into tapestry-weaving. Conversions where no logical relationship can be established are impossible, such as converting Craft (Cooking) dots into Craft (Tailoring). These converted dots remain useable for the duration of one basic or major project; they cannot be used to support any higher form of crafting project.

Supreme Celestial Focus

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Arete-Shifting Prana

The Solar expands her mind and awakens her flesh, unlocking the brilliance that sings in her Essence. This Charm allows the Exalt to raise an additional Craft rating from one to five by paying gold points instead of experience. The Exalt may raise up to (Essence) additional Craft ratings in this fashion, but each one after the first costs double the amount of gold points.

Sublime Transference

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Arete-Shifting Prana

Meditating calmly for five minutes, the Solar erases all thought and function; her conscious mind recedes to nothingness. During this time, the player may rearrange the Solar's crafting points in the following way: two silver points can become one gold point; two gold points can become one white point; one white point can become two gold points, and one gold point can become two silver points. However, each use of this Charm only allows the Solar to shift one type of experience to another; in five minutes, spending six motes, she could convert silver points to gold, but she would have to activate the Charm again to transfer gold points to white. The Exalt may activate this Charm while she is asleep or incapacitated.

Ages-Echoing Wisdom

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Efficient Craftsman Technique, Sublime Transference

The Solar's return to Creation is a time of expanding her mind and senses. Through her immaculate Essence, she becomes a conduit to the lost magic of a vanished age. Upon the purchase of this Charm, the Exalt gains a number of gold points equal to her permanent major slots. This bonus recurs at the end of each story.

Dragon Soul Emergence

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Ages-Echoing Wisdom

With this Charm, the Solar reaches a confluence of ancient wisdom and future enlightenment that increases her ability to encompass greater efforts. Purchasing this Charm grants the Chosen one permanent superior project slot. This Charm may be purchased up to (Essence) times.

Copper Spider Conception

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dragon Soul Emergence

The Exalt's understanding of greater wonders is increased. She may use this Charm before beginning a superior project, taking a ten minute dramatic action to conceptualize the task at hand, plan for future stages of the project, and organize necessary materials. This Charm lowers the cost of creating a superior slot by two gold points and two major slots, to a minimum of one major slot and one gold point.

Clay and Breath Practice

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Copper Spider Conception

As the Solar works with greater wonders, she achieves a sublime, renewing focus. On each interval of a superior roll, when the Solar rolls more successes than the price to finish (typically ten—see "finishing rolls" on p. XX), she earns silver points equal to the rating of the Artifact under construction plus her current Essence score.

Spirit-Gathering Industry

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Clay and Breath Practice

Crafting Artifacts requires an extreme commitment of one's own spiritual energy. Husbanding her resources, the Exalt's Essence becomes more readily powerful when she rises to the task. This Charm permanently reduces the cost to finish a superior project by (Essence) gold points, to a minimum of three.

God-Forge Within

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Gathering Industry

Similar to Dragon-Soul Emergence, this Charm represents the expansion of the Solar's physical and spiritual Essence, which allows her to encompass greater and more difficult creations. This Charm may be purchased (Essence) times. Each purchase grants the Exalt two permanent legendary project slots.

Sun-Heart Tenacity

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: God-Forge Within

Completing a legendary project provides the Exalt with new insights to the mysteries of the universe. Each time the Solar completes such a project, this Charm provides ten automatic non-Charm successes to the next superior or legendary project she attempts to finish.

Unwinding Gyre Meditation

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Gathering Industry

After successfully completing a superior project for which the Solar earned gold points, the Solar may consume the entire gold point bonus to experience a surge of new potential. Using this Charm voids the Solar's gold point bonus, but reduces the goal number of the next superior project by (Essence + 5), while adding an additional interval to the roll's terminus (for extended rolls, see p. XX). Using this Charm also increases the gold point bonus calculation for finishing the project from Artifact Rating * 2 * remaining terminus to Artifact Rating * 3 * remaining terminus. White points gained through superior projects are unaffected by use of this Charm. This Charm only applies to projects of an identical Artifact rating: if the Exalt voided the bonus from a two dot Artifact, this Charm **only** applies to the next two dot Artifact she attempts. The Exalt may void subsequent bonuses gained with this Charm to increase the Artifact Rating multiplier by one each time (* 3, *4, *5, etc.), reducing the goal number by the current Essence rating (Essence + Essence + 5), and adding an additional terminus (two added instead of one the first time the bonus is voided, three the second time, and so on).

Exegesis of the Distilled Form

Cost: 25sxp, 15gxp, 10wxp + all remaining wxp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unwinding Gyre Meditation

After completing five legendary projects, the Exalt may expend a tremendous amount of creative energy to renew the power of her Essence. After spending the cost of the Charm, roll a number of dice equal to the Solar's **remaining** white points. Successes are converted to experience points and added to the Solar's total experience. This roll counts as an expenditure of white points; all of the Solar's white points are cleared by using this Charm. The Exalt may not accrue more than twenty experience points through a single use of this Charm, and this Charm may not be used more than once per story.

Spirit-Stoking Elevation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Exegesis of the Distilled Form

This Charm allows the Solar to replace the experience points costs of certain Charms with an expenditure of white points at a rate of 1:1. This Charm supports the costs of Lore Charms such as Flowing Mind Prana and Wyld-Shaping Technique, and hypothetical Charms with experience costs in Occult or Medicine. However, it does not cover experience costs from sorcerous projects or from the Charms of other Abilities.

Summit-Piercing Touch

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Ages-Echoing Wisdom

Through diligence, effort, and connectedness to the Essence of her art, the Solar learns to adapt the unfathomable least wonders of the cosmos to the trades which she has mastered. By using this Charm before she begins a superior project to build a two-dot Artifact, she can place that project in an unused major slot. Motes committed to this Charm remain committed until the project is finished. If she relinquishes commitment, she must create a superior slot to carry the unfinished artifact, or otherwise risk a catastrophic failure of the project. At Essence 5+, she may use this Charm to craft three dot Artifacts.

Vice-Miracle Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Summit-Piercing Touch

The Solar crafter is constantly giving form to the wonders that live inside her mind. A Lawgiver with this Charm is particularly fecund: once per season she may produce a completely finished two dot Artifact of the player's choosing (or design). The Solar need not pay gold points to complete the project; the Artifact is already complete; the Storyteller should treat this as a piece of work she designed and completed in the margins of all her other projects, using expertise and efficiency to complete a wonder as an unspoken side project. The Solar earns no craft points for producing Artifacts in such a manner. However, if the player produces this Artifact in response to a problem, a question, or otherwise introduces her new invention as part of a socially-driven stunt that makes her character seem like a miraculous wonder-worker, she earns five gold points. At Essence 5+, this Charm can be used to produce a two or three dot Artifact.

Special Activation Rules: This Charm can only be used by a character who has already constructed at least one Artifact rated two or higher, and is in the process of building at least one other.

Wonder-Forging Genius

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: God-Forge Within, Vice-Miracle Technique

As proof of her illimitable soul, the Solar may induct a new infinite god-weapon into the world of mortal matter. When she has ten or more legendary projects under way, she may use this Charm to complete one of them without further rolls or expenditures of craft points. This Charm has a similar function for Artifacts of a lower rating, so long as each of the ten Artifacts is the same rating. This Charm may only be used once per story, and may not be used again until at least half of the current projects have been completed. Prematurely abandoned or failed projects do not count as having been completed. Using this Charm awards no craft points; the finished artifact is its own reward.

Dual Magnus Prana

Cost: 30wxp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Occult 3, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, Wonder-Forging Genius

With this Charm, the Solar's player may retroactively describe the process by which the Lawgiver created a perfect simulacrum of herself through an elaborate sorcerous project. This description occurs the moment the Solar's incapacitated health level is checked off; instead of dying, the slain character is revealed to be a perfect double of the Solar. The real Solar may then be located anywhere the player chooses, so long as the Storyteller deems it plausible.

Momentum

Brass Scales Falling

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar's efforts fleet and flash before her eyes, bringing her closer to an ineffable truth. For each 10 on a Craft roll made without using the Craft Excellency, the Exalt earns a silver point, to a limit of (Essence *2) points. This Charm may be repurchased, increasing the cap to (Essence * 3).

Red Anvils Ringing

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Brass Scales Falling

The Solar is permanently attuned to the Essence of her workmanship, making her instinctively aware of how her creativity moves the Essence of the world. This greater insight into productivity increases the amount of silver points she may gain from each basic objective by one. For rules on basic objectives, see page XX.

Chains Fall Away

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Red Anvils Ringing

Each time the Solar achieves all three basic objectives on any Craft project, she gains one gold point.

Peerless Paragon of Craft

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Chains Fall Away, Craftsman Needs No Tools

As the Solar works deeper into the soul of her craft, she unlocks wisps and flashes of greater wonders, ancient genius, and dim visions of a lost age. Upon purchasing this Charm, roll a free full (Intelligence + Craft) Excellency and convert successes to silver points. In addition, each 10 on this roll also rewards the Solar with a gold point. This roll is repeated at the end of each story.

Supreme Perfection of Craft

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Peerless Paragon of Craft, Supreme Celestial Focus

Upon purchasing this Charm, the Solar earns one gold point and (Essence + 2) silver points for every Craft Ability she has rated at 5. This bonus recurs each time the Exalt gains a full night's sleep, but can be earned no more than once per day, nor can it be earned more than once during a period of narrated downtime (for example, if the Storyteller says "It takes a month for your ship to reach its destination," and the character crafted throughout that month of sailing, he would be eligible for one bonus, not 28 of them).

Divine Transcendence of Craft

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Supreme Perfection of Craft

This Charm instantly grants the Solar three white points when purchased, and five additional white points at the end of each story.

On Point-Generating Charms

> Charms such as Supreme Perfection of Craft only function if the Solar is actively using Craft in each story. A character who sleeps a thousand years will not awaken to an infinity of craft points awaiting her. Likewise, a character who spends a season lazing about Dajaz and romancing the revelers there should not accrue very many points in general. These awards are specifically furnished for those who are extremely hard working crafters and inventers by nature. Characters who also spend many scenes studying, researching, tinkering, or performing sorcerous projects or medical experiments also qualify for these rewards, as long as they use Craft intermittently.

Craftsman Needs No Tools

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One task

Prerequisite Charms: None

A Solar who has mastered this Charm can work directly with her chosen material, shaping it with hands, breath, and voice. Without the need for tools or a workshop, the Exalt can start basic and major projects as soon as she has the proper ingredients, and can complete such works with blazing speed, often in just minutes or seconds. Using Craftsman Needs No Tools does allow for the Solar to gain craft point bonuses from her handiwork, and can be used equally well in both building and repair projects. Additionally, if the Solar uses tools to assist her work, the cost of the Charm is reduced by two motes. This Charm does not meaningfully speed the completion of superior or legendary projects.

Thousand-Forge Hands

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Craftsman Needs No Tools

The Exalt's hands flow with the Essence of a thousand craftsmen; her urge is legion and her well is bottomless. When she creates a superior or legendary slot, she may use this Charm to greatly speed her efforts to begin the project (p. XX). This may be represented as the Exalt thinking, planning, and working with impossible speed. Though it cannot dictate the speed at which she gathers materials or performs tasks not directly associated with Craft, this Charm guarantees that given all such materials are provided, and all such tasks have been completed, the design and

forging work that comes before she can roll to finish takes no longer than (6 - Essence) months for N/A and five dot Artifacts, and no more than (6 - Essence) weeks for all else.

Words-as-Workshop Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute, Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Craftsman Needs No Tools, Vice-Miracle Technique

The Solar speaks the implements of her trade into existence. Upon using this Charm, the Exalt describes Artifact tools she needs to complete the present task, be it one of Craft, Lore, Medicine, Occult, or Investigation. The Essence of the world shapes itself into an artifact matching her description, with powers and active Evocations commensurate to the Exalt's description and the Storyteller's whims. The Exalt may use said Artifacts without paying an attunement cost, but if she wishes to lend them out, the borrower must pay an attunement cost in order to use them. Such Artifacts can be as simple or complex as needed, and may even have personalities. With each use of this Charm, the Solar may describe up to (Essence) tools, but the Storyteller should be aware of diminishing returns; the overall effectiveness should be based on the player's stunts and descriptions. In any case, these Artifact assistants allow for unspecified bonuses ranging from non-Charm dice, to the ability to listen for a daiklave's heartbeat, to holding a patient's soul in place while the Solar performs continual, complex surgery to fix horrific injury. Using Craftsman Needs No Tools with appropriate created Artifacts may allow the Exalt to work on superior or legendary Artifact projects at inopportune moments, with a stunt. Artifacts created by this Charm vanish in a blaze of Essence as soon as the Exalt is finished using them, or at the end of the scene, whichever comes first.

Repairing and Reforging

Shattering Grasp

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One task

Prerequisite Charms: Craftsman Needs No Tools

An Exalt with this Charm knows the strengths and weaknesses of her chosen materials and may rend them down with a mixture of light, precise touches and wringing blows. She may rend apart stone with her hands, destroy a door by crossing it with her palms and may disassemble a steel portcullis with her fingertips. The two former examples represent basic tasks, while the latter represents a major project. In any case, she needs no tools to perform such tasks, only an appropriate Craft Ability and a few moments time. Disassembly does not accrue the Exalt any craft points, though if she uses the rent material to build new objects or to repair the ones she has damaged, she may earn craft points accordingly.

Durability-Enhancing Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Craftsman Needs No Tools

The Solar's keen understanding of an object allows her treat it with skill and Essence, greatly increasing its durability. The Exalt may temper a blade, reinforce a door, or make a sail fireproof or nearly impenetrable to mundane attacks. She may make an inscription in marble that will not fade even after a hundred years of wind and rain. The Solar spends five minutes to an hour treating an object no larger than (Essence) yards in radius, increasing the difficulty to damage it by two or (Essence), whichever is larger. Objects which are fortuitously protected during the course of a scene, or which prove in some way to raise the Exalt's social standing, accrue her a silver or gold point for basic or major objects, respectively, regardless of whether she built them or not. Durability conferred by this Charm is conferred permanently. The edges of blades strengthened by this technique do not dull after an entire day of hacking, and a reinforced helm may not shatter when struck by the blow of a mace.

Object-Strengthening Touch

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Durability-Enhancing Technique

With a bare touch, the Solar can infuse an object of (Essence + 2) yards in radius with hardening Essence, greatly increasing its durability. Using this Charm increases the difficulty to destroy the object by the (Solar's Essence + 1). If the Solar is holding the object, it becomes nigh-unbreakable without magic. Objects strengthened with this Charm also become resistant to fire, acid, freezing, and other forms of damage. The benefits of this Charm last only one scene, but they stack with the effects of the prerequisite for that scene. Use of this Charm does not accrue craft points.

Chaos-Resistance Preparation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Object-Strengthening Touch

The Solar can reinforce an object so that the Wyld cannot touch it. The Lawgiver spends up to an hour treating an object no more than (Essence) yards in radius. If the object is worn or wielded, it protects itself and the wielder/wearer from the twisting effects of the Wyld. This protection is limited: in the bordermarches a character can go (Solar's Essence) days without ill effect. This resistance is halved in the middlemarches, and reduced to hours in the deep Wyld. If the character only has partial protection—say a caravan guard wielding only a treated pike—then this protection is reduced to hours and minutes respectively. Chaos-Resistance Preparation can also be used to treat objects, and like and labeled objects traveling in auspicious arrays stack their protections, allowing groups of treated objects to survive Wyld journeys with the same

benefits of a character wearing multiple treated items. At Essence 3+, the Exalt may pay fifteen motes, one Willpower to use this Charm on the project scale (p. XX), working for (10 - Stamina) hours to cover a considerable number of goods and vehicles or arms and armor. She may protect the hull of a small trade ship, as well as its rigging and sails, and need not protect the cargo or provisions below decks, or she may protect several wagons, single-handedly preparing a small caravan for a trip through chaos-tainted lands.

The Art of Permanence

Cost: 6m, 1wxp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Chaos-Resistance Preparation

A Solar who uses this Charm can invest her works with magic, causing them to endure forever. Candles spun by her hands burn forever, and a horse wearing shoes from her forge need never be shod again. This Charm only affects basic and major projects, and does not prevent created items from being destroyed by direct attack or overwhelming traumatic damage such as being caught in an explosion or buried under a mountain. In addition, such objects are indelibly marked by the Solar's touch. If she claims to be the builder of a torch that never ceases burning, or a roof that never leaks, characters instinctively know it to be true without needing further proof. Such objects may also render the Exalt's identity to beings with particular Investigation or Occult magic. If she encounters her own works from a past life, the Lawgiver will automatically recognize them as her own.

Crack-Mending Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Crack-Mending Technique depicts a Lawgiver whose talent and touch is such that she can repair even impossibly destroyed things. This Charm can't restore things that were completely unmade (for example, by powerful sorcery, digestion in a behemoth's gullet, or immersion in molten rock) but it can remake extremely damaged things like shattered crystal, burnt paper, splintered wood and twisted metal. As the Solar works with the remains of a broken or destroyed object, she may slowly piece it together with word, touch, and Essence over the course of (10 - Essence) hours. If used while under the effect of Craftsman Needs No Tools, this time is reduced to minutes or seconds, and eliminates both the need for tools and in many cases for materials. This Charm can restore magical objects but not metaphorical concepts: it cannot mend a broken heart, nor can it put the magic back into a First Age construct whose magic has fled or faded away. This Charm may lower the difficulty of repairing Artifacts that are fragmented or shattered, while also making such a repair possible, but otherwise does not remove the material requirements or affect the goal number.

Time Heals Nothing

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crack-Mending Technique

The Lawgiver can press aside the veil of time to deliver the world from its ravages. This Charm allows the Exalt to instantly create a major project slot for the purposes of repairs. This slot vanishes when the repair is completed. An Essence 3+ repurchase allows the Solar to alternately pay six motes, one Willpower to create a temporary superior repair slot.

Blood Diamond Sweat

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Time Heals Nothing

As the Exalt raises her world from ash and ruin, she is renewed by her own labor and sacrifice. This Charm depicts a Solar who draws greater understanding from the restoration of objects than mortal crafters. After completing a repair, the Exalt gains one additional craft point for every basic objective completed. If she is repairing an Artifact, she earns (Artifact's rating) gold points and one white point. Legendary Artifacts offer no repair rewards.

Breach-Healing Method

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One task

Prerequisite Charms: Time Heals Nothing

With the return of the Solar Exalted comes the return of old magic. The power of the Sun's Essence flows in Creation once more. With this Charm, the Solar establishes a field of (Essence * 2) yards in radius, in which the Essence of the world is quickened with Solar power, where old things come alive again, and truly wondrous things may happen. Anyone standing in this field gains a non-Charm dice bonus to their Craft, Lore, Occult, and Medicine rolls equal to the Solar's Essence. In addition, repair and Medicine rolls are made at one less difficulty. The Solar must be attempting to repair an object or treat an injury to use this Charm, and its effect lasts until her work is finished. Characters who stand within the circle of the Solar's influence see her work with greater clarity and understanding.

Realizing the Form Supernal

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Breach-Healing Method

The First Age was raised by the hands of the Solar Exalted, and they alone can restore its lost glories. When using Breach-Healing Method to repair an Artifact, the Solar may use this Charm to lower the repair difficulty by one. The moment she touches the damaged Artifact, the goal number to repair it is reduced by her (Intelligence * Essence)—the Artifact is seen to partially reform, its shattered parts flying together in her hands. This can fully restore certain objects. This Charm may be used once per story, but may be reset by completing an Artifact repair without it.

Design Beyond Limit

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 3xp; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crack-Mending Technique, Craftsman Needs No Tools

A Solar who has the power to build an Artifact may also temper it with greater power. To use this Charm, the Exalt must have an Artifact weapon to work with, and the owner of the weapon must have unlocked all of its Evocations. Typically this means the Artifact has a rating of three or four dots, as Artifacts rated five or N/A usually have no known limit to their number of inactive Evocations. With this Charm, the Exalt spends (10 - Essence) hours reforging the weapon in her workshop. When she is finished, the weapon gains one new Emerald, Sapphire, and Adamant Evocation. Each of these Evocations is inactive and must still be learned. If the weapon does not belong to the Solar, the experience points cost can be paid by the weapon's owner. This Charm may not be used twice on the same weapon until the added Evocations have been mastered. The nature of added Evocations will reflect the wielder's spirit, the weapon's attitude and character, and the forger's design.

Celestial Reforging Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 3xp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Design Beyond Limit

Carrying a daiklave or other Artifact weapon into her forge, the Solar may enact a working of hammer and flame, blood and Essence, to coax and reshape the nature of an Exalted weapon, reshaping its current active Evocations. This process takes (10 - Essence) hours, and allows the weapon's owner's player to change the weapon's current active Evocations. If the Solar does not own the weapon she is reforging, the owner can pay the experience point cost of the Charm's activation. This Charm may only be used on a particular weapon once per story.

Hero-Forging God-Weapon

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Design Beyond Limit

When using the prerequisite, the Exalt may instead temper the weapon with one Sapphire and two Adamant Evocations, but the latter two must build from one another and must be based on at least one already-mastered Adamant Evocation. In addition, the Solar may roll (Essence) dice, and if at least one of these comes up a success, she may add a third inactive Adamant Evocation to the weapon.

Soul-Forge Tempering

Cost: 15m, 1wp, 4xp, 4wxp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Hero-Forging God-Weapon

The Lawgiver can temper a blade with even greater magic. Using this Charm often requires the Solar be provided particular magic materials or even more esoteric physical expressions of magic such as carved motes (see the rules for sorcerous projects on p. XX). The Storyteller may make the required materials as daunting as the process requires—upon tempering, sharpening and working the weapon in her shop for (10 - Essence) hours, the Solar can unlock one inactive Emerald Evocation, causing it to go live. In addition, she may roll (Essence) dice, and if she accrues at least one success, she may unlock an additional Sapphire Evocation, and if she gains at least three she may cause a Sapphire and Adamant Evocation to go live. If the Exalt is tempering a weapon belonging to another character, the experience points cost can be paid by the weapon's owner. This Charm may not be used twice on the same weapon until the owner has learned at least twice the number of unlocked Evocations through normal means.

Power

Flawless Handiwork Method

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Craft 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar capitalizes on her own genius. Her hands and Essence flow in tune with the spirit of her craft, turning even the shoddiest materials into sublime masterworks. Craft rolls supplemented by this Charm reroll 10s until 10s fail to appear. At Craft 3+, this Charm may be repurchased, allowing the Exalt to also reroll 6s until 6s fail to appear.

Triumph-Forging Eye

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Handiwork Method

The Exalt sees forward to her success and approaches a problem with an unerring clarity of vision. Once per week, the Exalt may apply a free full Craft Excellency to any one roll.

Bright-Forging Prana

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Handiwork Method

The Lawgiver reaches beyond herself to touch the creative energy that lies just beyond her reach. This Charm may be used once per story, allowing the Solar the use of (Essence or three, whichever is greater) Craft Charms she has yet to learn. The Solar does not need to meet the Essence minimums for these Charms, though she must still meet the Ability minimum. Also, she must know the prerequisite of each Charm she wishes to use. Charms enabled by Bright-Forging Prana do count as the prerequisites of other Charms the Solar might enable through use of this Charm. Once Bright-Forging Prana has been used, the Solar must pay the activation cost of each Charm. Charms enabled by Bright-Forging Prana may be used for the rest of the story, but only on the project they were initially employed for. Bright-Forging Prana does not function to give the Solar automatic craft point bonuses from Charms such as Peerless Paragon of Craft.

Experiential Conjuring of True Void

Cost: 4m, 4s/g/wxp; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Salient

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Handiwork Method

Through tapping the elemental, refined forces of her own experience, the Solar may access the most pristine and formless center of her own Essence, from which all things may be derived. This Charm may be used after an (Attribute + Craft) roll, and grants one automatic non-Charm success and (Essence) non-Charm dice. This Charm may not be used on basic projects. At Essence 3+, the dice bonus for this Charm is increased to (Intelligence + Essence).

Unbroken Image Focus

Cost: 3m + 1s/g/wxp per success; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Salient

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Experiential Conjuring of True Void

After making an (Attribute + Craft) roll, this Charm may be invoked to add a supernatural burst of precision, skill, and inspiration to the Solar's hands. This Charm allows the Exalt to purchase a number of additional non-Charm successes equal to ([her Essence] + successes) on the initial roll. This Charm does not factor in "double numbers" effects from other Charms. If the Lawgiver is using a double 9s effect, and rolls three 9s and no other successes, she would be able to purchase (Essence + 3) successes, not (Essence + 6).

Essence-Forging Kata

Cost: 2m per mote, 1wp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Unbroken Image Focus

The Solar channels Essence through her hands and tools to make the final product of her work a matter of legend. Powering this Charm requires a dramatic action lasting at least five minutes, in which the Exalt meditates on future tasks, steadies her mind, feels the weight of her tools, readies her forge for the day, and other similar preparatory actions. While this Charm is active, every two motes committed discounts the cost of the Craft Excellency by one.

Mind-Expanding Meditation

Cost: 1sxp per cap increase, 1wxp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Forging Kata

The Lawgiver is a master of her trade, and uses the work she pours into her craft to inspire her towards new and greater achievements. This Charm may be invoked before an (Attribute + Craft) roll, allowing the Solar to raise her dice cap at a rate of one silver point per die, to a limit of her current Craft rating.

First Movement of the Demiurge

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Experiential Conjuring of True Void

This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite. The Solar's genius inspires her to greater heights, making her aware of patterns and possibilities unforeseen by mortals. For every three of a kind successes (ex: three sevens, three eights, etc.), the player may choose one non-success die and convert it to a 10, adding two successes to the result. If Flawless Handiwork Method is used, 10s created in this fashion are also rerolled until 10s fail to appear.

Supreme Masterwork Focus

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Craft 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Handiwork Method

By shearing away all distractions, the Exalt may recognize the strongest elements of her design as she brings them forth, enhancing them to the betterment of the entire project. This Charm allows the Solar to supplement (Attribute + Craft) rolls for basic and major projects with double 9s. At Craft 5, Essence 2+, it may be repurchased, allowing the Exalt to alternatively spend five motes, one Willpower, and one gold point to supplement a basic, major, or superior project roll

with double 8s. At Craft 5, Essence 3+, it may be repurchased a third time, allowing the Exalt to pay two motes and one white point to grant any one (Attribute + Craft) roll double 7s.

Divine Inspiration Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: First Movement of the Demiurge, Supreme Masterwork Focus (x2)

Each time she uses her talents to build or repair, the Exalt comes closer to the core truth of her existence. For every three successes earned on a Craft roll, the Solar earns an additional non-Charm die. This effect is recursive; if generated non-Charm dice create at least three successes, another die is generated.

Holistic Miracle Understanding

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Divine Inspiration Technique

The Solar shapes wonders from the very fabric of the world. This Charm enhances the prerequisite; if the non-Charm dice generated by the initial roll turn up three or more successes, the new non-Charm dice are augmented by an additional three non-Charm dice.

Inspiration-Renewing Vision

Cost: 12m, 1wp, 2wxp; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Forging Kata, Supreme Masterwork Focus (x2)

A moment of creative satori allows the Solar to cleanse her creative vision of all flaws, perfectly attuning her Essence to that of the unborn wonder she wishes to birth. This Charm can be used to supplement a superior or legendary Craft roll, so that it does not count toward the project's terminus. This Charm can be used once per story, but can be reset by completing a superior or legendary project with a goal number of 50+ without use of this Charm.

Horizon-Unveiling Insight

Cost: —; **Mins:** Craft 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Inspiration-Renewing Vision

This Charm expands the Lawgiver's already illimitable mind, allowing her to experience Essence flows in patterns that stabilize and adapt the form of any legendary project she undertakes. This Charm permanently raises the terminus of superior and legendary projects to seven.

Dodge

Reed in the Wind

Cost: 2i per 1 Evasion; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt draws upon her own momentum to bend and flow with opposing forces. For every two Initiative spent in response to an attack, the player may raise the Exalt's Evasion by one. Reed in the Wind raises the cap on how much the Solar can enhance her Evasion by her Essence. At Dodge 5+, Essence 3+, a successful dodge with Reed in the Wind restores one mote. This bonus may only occur once per round.

Dust Motes Whirling

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Reed in the Wind

The Solar is as elusive as a dust mote whirling through a ray of light. This Charm supplements a disengage attempt, granting double 9s.

Shadow Dancer Method

Cost: —(1m); **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Dust Motes Whirling

The Lawgiver dances in and out of the whirling blades of her enemies like one consigned to death. For one mote, she retains the two Initiative that are lost with each disengage attempt. In addition, upon using a disengage action to move away on her opponent's turn, if she then chooses to move to close range of her opponent as her next movement, she gains two Initiative automatically, regardless of whether she spent a mote on this Charm's cost.

Fleet Dreaming Image

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dust Motes Whirling

The Solar moves ahead of her enemies and tempts them with the illusion of her presence. This Charm allows the Lawgiver to attempt a disengage action from short range on her turn.

Sunlight Bleeding Away

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fleet Dreaming Image

The Solar melts across the landscape in a fluidity of motion. This Charm can be activated upon succeeding at a disengage action, allowing the Solar to reflexively retreat in the face of enemy movement twice, rather than once. Thus, if the Solar disengaged successfully, she would move back the first and second time an opponent approached on his turn.

Searing Quicksilver Flight

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Reed in the Wind

The Solar's skill at evasion is such that her dodges wither away at her opponent's momentum. When she successfully dodges an attack, her opponent loses one point of Initiative in addition to any other Initiative he may have lost for failing the attack.

Force-Stealing Feint

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Searing Quicksilver Flight

This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite; the one point of Initiative lost by the opponent is gained by the Solar.

Seven Shadow Evasion

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Force-Stealing Feint

The Solar's perfect form is quicker than an eyeblink and more tractile than water. Once per scene, the Solar may invoke this Charm to dodge any attack from any source without a contest. The Solar's anticipation of harm is so perfect that she can even evade recurring uncountable damage with a single use. As a cyclone tears apart a mountain, the Exalt steps through the vortex

unharmed. As the Pole of Earth spills down atop her, she escapes into the seeps and fissures of the world, moving like a fleeing shadow. This Charm may be reset by using Reed in the Wind to dodge three **decisive** attacks from dangerous opponents.

Refinement of Flowing Shadows

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seven Shadow Evasion

The Exalt becomes one with the nothingness and is reborn. Upon using Seven Shadow Evasion to dodge an attack, the Solar gains a point of bonus Initiative, as well as one extra point of Initiative on her turn, each round until she is struck by a **withering** or **decisive** attack. This bonus is cancelled if the Solar enters concealment or is at long or extreme long range from her closest foe.

Safety Between Heartbeats

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Force-Stealing Feint

In making herself untouchable, the Lawgiver exploits the slightest hesitation, even the pause to draw breath, maximizing her opponent's failure. The Exalt may use this Charm upon successfully dodging an attack, causing her opponent to lose one Initiative for each 1 in the attack result.

Thousand Steps' Stillness

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Safety Between Heartbeats

Drawing in all possible avenues of motion, the Solar's perfect stillness is broken by a ribbon of anima that courses through her body, causing her to flicker and treble like heat haze. When the Exalt successfully dodges, she may use this Charm to gain Initiative equal to the 1s and 2s in the attack roll.

Unbowed Willow Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Thousand Steps' Stillness

Harm passes through and over the Lawgiver. Untouched, she only grows stronger. When the Exalt successfully dodges a **decisive** attack without using a Charm, she steals all of the attacker's Initiative and crashes him. This Charm does not work against gambits, battle groups or trivial opponents.

Reflex Sidestep Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Reed in the Wind

The Solar's preternatural awareness of her surroundings makes her nearly impossible to harm. Even when struck unaware, she may part herself from her foe's attack, undoing the damage that was done to her. This Charm may be activated in response to an ambush attack, a trap, or other damaging effect the Solar is completely unaware of, setting her Evasion to two against the attack and adding an additional point of Evasion for every 1 or 2 in the attack (before Charms such as Excellent Strike). If the Solar's Evasion recovers to its full value, she may apply additional Dodge Charms if necessary.

Drifting Shadow Focus

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Reflex Sidestep Technique

Like a shadow moving in the darkness, the Lawgiver drifts through the ranks of her enemies, sowing terror and confusion. This Charm is declared before an attack and lasts until the Exalt's next turn. Upon a successful dodge, it allows the Solar to redirect an attack made against her to any other target within close range.

Leaping Dodge Method

Cost: 1m, 2i; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Reflex Sidestep Technique

The Exalt feels the coursing Essence of Creation moving through her. With a thought, she grasps the flow and is carried away. Upon a successful Dodge, the Solar may invoke this Charm, burning her momentum to create a sudden burst of movement. She may leap backward, forward, up or down (if applicable) a single range band.

Drifting Leaf Elusion

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Dodge 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt slips away from an attack that would have struck her. When using this Charm, the Solar successfully evades an attack roll bearing successes equal to her Evasion. This Charm may be invoked after the attack roll is made.

Fourfold Shiver Binding

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Drifting Leaf Elusion

The Solar enacts a skill which doubles and trebles her body in a shimmering blur, placing it together outside of an attack. Upon successfully applying her Evasion, the Solar may activate Fourfold Shiver Binding to raise her Evasion score by one for the rest of the scene. This bonus is not stackable, and does not count as dice added by a Charm. Fourfold Shiver Binding is incompatible with armor.

Shadow Over Water

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Dodge 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Drifting Leaf Elusion

Like a shadow on water, the Solar's presence haunts her enemies with dreams of the untouchable. For an instant, this Charm removes any penalties to the Exalt's Evasion.

Flow Like Blood

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Over Water

The Exalt permeates her being with Essence, becoming partly atomized. For the rest of the scene, when dodging attacks by opponents with lower Initiative than her own, the Lawgiver ignores all penalties to her Evasion. Attacks which miss her often seem to pass harmlessly through her dreamlike form. While this Charm is active, Reed in the Wind costs only one Initiative per Evasion, and each round that the Solar remains within close range of an enemy without being struck by an attack—either due to her Evasion, or due to not being attacked—she gains a point of Initiative.

Rumor of Form

Cost: 3m per -1; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Over Water

The Exalt moves her physical Essence around the flow of an attack, partially discorporating. For each 1 that appears in the result of an attack roll, the Exalt may pay three motes, converting that 1 into -1 success to the attack. Rumor of Form also acts as a Stealth attempt—as the Solar passes around the strike, she also vanishes in its wake. For every success the Exalt steals from her opponent's attack, she gains an automatic success on a reflexive (Dexterity + Stealth) action.

Way of Whispers Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Rumor of Form

The Exalt's burgeoning mastery of Dodge releases two of her Charms from the burden of consideration. Upon learning this Charm, using Drifting Leaf Elusion and Rumor of Form no longer count as the use of a Charm in conjunction with certain other Dodge Charms such as Unbowed Willow Meditation.

Vaporous Division

Cost: 4m per damage die removed; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rumor of Form

Some even claim to have struck a Solar. This Charm allows the Exalt to remove damage from a **decisive** attack after damage has been rolled, at the cost of four motes per cancelled success. A blow cancelled by this Charm appears at first to strike the Solar before missing entirely. Unless using an attack with special Initiative reset rules, an attack negated by this defense will return the attacker to base Initiative.

Living Bonds Unburdened

Cost: 3m, 3i +1m, 1i per hl; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Vaporous Division

The Solar casts away her physical bonds and revels in dreams of dissolution and the whirling freedom of flight. Upon using this Charm, the Lawgiver begins to channel her anima into her flesh and must remain immobile until her next turn. During this time, her Evasion becomes inapplicable and her Parry suffers a -1 penalty. On her next turn, roll (Wits + Dodge) dice to create a number of temporary -0 Health Levels equal to the roll's successes, paying one mote and one Initiative per Health Level. This roll cannot be enhanced by Dodge Charms, and any Health Levels the Solar is unwilling or unable to buy are discarded. While using this Charm, a Solar

who suffers damage solely to any of her -0 Health Levels is considered to have successfully dodged the attack even though the Health Levels are still checked off. A dodge created solely by Living Bonds Unburdened does not count as the use of a Charm. This Charm's effect does not stack and may not be replenished until all of the created Health Levels have been damaged.

Unbridled Shade Attitude

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Living Bonds Unburdened

Like cloud-shadows driven by the sun, the Solar passes over all obstacles, unchanged in her course. The Solar gains one point of Initiative for every -0 health level damaged by a **decisive** attack.

Harm-Dismissing Meditation

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Living Bonds Unburdened

Once per scene, the Lawgiver may deny the very wounds that assail her, striking them from her body's record. This Charm allows the Solar to retroactively dodge damage she has already received. Standing still and silent, the Exalt focuses on her wounds for a single round in which she does not attack and does not apply her Parry or Evasion. Applying such defenses cancels the Charm. At the end of the round, roll her (Dexterity + Dodge), unmodified by Charms, and convert the successes into healed -1 and -2 health levels. The Solar steps outside of the moment when she was hurt, casting aside her wounded form and denying its existence.

Hundred Shadow Ways

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Dodge 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Vaporous Division

After successfully dodging an attack, the Exalt may activate this Charm to remember a single Charm used in the attack. She feels its spiritual form and pressure as a physical thing and understands how to dodge it. For the remainder of the scene, she perfectly evades the effects of that Charm. Hundred Shadow Ways cannot be used against the Excellency Charm of any Ability, nor can it be used against sorcery or Evocations. Furthermore, if the Exalt falls into Initiative Crash, this Charm ends.

Say you've used this Charm to lock out Hungry Tiger Technique. An attack enhanced solely by Hungry Tiger Technique automatically fails. Now the opponent throws a combination of Hungry Tiger Technique and Fire and Stones Strike—the attack still occurs, but Hundred Shadow Ways automatically removes the benefit of Hungry Tiger Technique from the attack. This Charm *can* be used to "learn" as many Charms as the Exalt's mote pool can afford.

Integrity

Enduring Mental Toughness

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Integrity 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Even in extreme pain, the Exalt does not succumb to despair. The Solar may ignore wound, illness, and crippling penalties to her Resolve or Guile for one tick.

At Integrity 3+, Essence 1+, this Charm can be repurchased, giving it an alternate cost and duration. The Exalt can even endure torture. For five motes, one Willpower she may extend this effect to one scene.

At Integrity 5+, Essence 3+, this Charm may be repurchased a second time, allowing the Exalt to pay eight motes, one Willpower to extend the effect to one day.

Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver

Cost: 5m per 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Enduring Mental Toughness

The core of the Solar's will is so great that she can survive sustained mental assault. When resisting social influence or any magic which seeks to force itself upon the Solar's will or mind, she may use this Charm to aid in resistance, paying five motes for every one Willpower she would have to spend in order to resist.

Transcendent Hero's Meditation

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver

The Solar looks within and beyond the core of her Essence, to the pure white spark of her divinity. In doing so, she shatters delusions and sees all things truly. This Charm allows the Solar to break any control effects which grip her mind, body or soul. This Charm does not allow her to

reverse social influence, but rather it combats persuasion that is considered unnatural, hypnotic, or sorcerous. In order to use this Charm, the Solar must first be forced to take an action against one of her Intimacies as a result of the effect's control. She must then spend at least five minutes meditating on the core of her existence, during which time she sees the blight on her Essence for what it is. She may then activate this Charm to assert the purity and truth of her inner self, shattering the fell magic and freeing her soul from its grip. This Charm may be used once per story, but it is reset after the Solar experiences Limit Break. The Exalt cannot use this Charm to notice or expunge the Great Curse.

Stubborn Boar Defense

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver's resolve cannot be easily broken. Once the Solar has resisted a persuade action, she gains +2 to her Resolve if the issue is raised again. The Solar's Lunar mate is always capable of insinuating herself into the Solar's graces and may ignore this Charm's effect.

Temptation-Resisting Stance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Stubborn Boar Defense

The Solar Exalted rise above the poisons of a wicked world. Corruption, lust, and greed; vice and the addictive soul-stroking caresses of the raksha—the Lawgivers stand resolute against all such threats. This Charm raises the Exalt's Resolve by one against all social influence which would tempt her to turn against her ties or sway her from her principles. In addition, when multiple Solars working toward the same overall goal in a social scene each activate this Charm, their bonuses stack together, to a limit of five bonus Resolve—the traditional number of Solars in a Circle.

Steel Heart Stance

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Integrity 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stubborn Boar Defense

The Solar hardens her heart, forcefully reinstating her values in the face of successful influence. After being persuaded to take a major or defining course of action, this Charm allows the Solar to deny the influence, even if this means asserting the Intimacy that might have been used to raise her Resolve. Her opponent's argument was compelling, but she cannot deny her own principles. This Charm may only be used once per story, but is reset if the Solar witnesses the defense or upholding of a Defining Principle as a result of changing her mind. For example, a

Lawgiver who is persuaded to withdraw her army from the border might reject that persuasion, going back on her decision to withdraw. When a beastman horde suddenly rushes the border and her army is still there and able to prevent the invasion, and if she has a Defining Principle such as "I will defend my kingdom from foreign invaders," she will see that her decision to change her mind was justified and necessary, and Steel Heart Stance will be reset.

Righteous Lion Defense

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Steel Heart Stance

Around a certain issue, the Solar cannot be moved, shaken, swayed or tempted. Upon purchasing this Charm, the player selects a Defining Principle that exemplifies the Solar in such a way that she should never act against it. Righteous Lion Defense allows the Exalt to treat any persuasion which would cause the Solar to act against the selected Principle as unacceptable influence. This effect may not be routed through principles that are overly broad. "I will never kneel," is too broad, but "I will never kneel to Zhao Li," is not. Likewise, "Creation must be conquered," is too broad, while "Great Forks must be conquered" is not.

The Solar's zealous resolution daunts even the most relentless opposition. Any attempt to decay the inviolable Intimacy with an instill action must be rerolled, forcing the opponent to take the lower result. The opponent may enhance the second roll with additional Charms as necessary, but even if he's able to penetrate the Solar's Resolve, the Intimacy still does not decay. However, success in this regard allows the Solar to be targeted with persuasion to convince her to act against the protected Intimacy, and this weakness persists until she has taken major or defining action in the Principle's defense.

The Solar may always choose to act against her Intimacies, or change them. If her Principle is downgraded, destroyed, transformed or reconciled as a result of roleplaying or Limit Break, this Charm ceases to function until the Intimacy is restored, or until the Solar dedicates herself to a new Principle. At Essence 3+, this Charm may be repurchased a single time, to protect one additional Principle.

Unhesitating Dedication

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Lion Defense

So steadfast is the Solar that those who would sway her find their efforts undone by their own uncertainties. After a character uses an instill action in an attempt to diminish one of the Solar's Defining Intimacies, the Exalt may use this Charm to select one of the initiate's non-success numbers. If she selects 1s, (Essence) 1s in the roll act as -1 success to the attempt. If someone speaks ill of that which she loves, the Solar will find a flaw in his arguments. If she selects any non-success number other than 1s, instead of negative successes she can force the initiate's

player to reroll up to (Essence) successful dice, starting with the target number (usually 7) and moving up. In this case, the initiate always keeps the lower of the two results.

This Charm cannot be used in combination with Righteous Lion Defense. The Exalt may only use this Charm to successfully defend an Intimacy once per Intimacy, per story. She can use this to defend the honor of her Lunar mate and uphold her dedication to the Mask of Winters' fall, but she may not use this Charm to defend either the Lunar or her enmity for the deathlord more than once per story. This effect can be reset by exploring the claims that were made on the back of an instill action. If it was claimed that her Lunar was adulterous, she might elect to begin an investigation. If the Solar confirms such claims to be false, the Charm is reset.

Integrity-Protecting Prana

Cost: —(5m, 1wp); **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

Exposure to Wyld energies can cause hallucinations, addiction, insanity, and even terrible mutations. When the Exalt is exposed to such energies, she immediately senses the warping danger that surrounds her. She may then choose to pay five motes, one Willpower to immunize her mind, body, and equipment against the Wyld's twisting power for as long as she keeps motes committed. The Solar's sense of such danger becomes instinctive; she may even activate this Charm while she is asleep or incapacitated. This Charm can also be used to shield the Solar against other environmental effects which would warp her mind or body, such as the twisting choral of the demon prince with voice like crystal facets, or the tainted Essence emanating from the intestines of a malfunctioning First Age manse. But be warned: once the Lawgiver is addicted to the Wyld or mutated by twisting energies, this Charm will not discontinue such effects; it will only prevent her condition from worsening.

While Integrity-Protecting Prana protects the Solar and her possessions from being subject to environmental twisting powers, it does not allow her to ignore Wyld phenomena. She can still be torn apart by Wyld-spawned ravenous cyclones of burning teeth and giant hundred-armed mantises. This Charm also does not defend against attacks that might warp her mind or body directly, such as the Wyld-Mind Strike of the Thousand Venoms Mistress, or fiat-level changes to her existence caused by alterations to the Loom of Fate.

Destiny-Manifesting Method

Cost: —(3m, 1wp); **Mins:** Integrity 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Ten Charms from any one Ability

The Solar reborn is the heritor of a legend that cannot easily be erased. When struck with a reality-shaping or fate-weaving attack that would permanently alter her mind or body, the Solar's destiny manifests to override the changes. This Charm does not completely nullify deleterious effects. Paying this Charm's cost merely downgrades or slows the effect. Destiny-Manifesting

Method guarantees two things: First, the Solar cannot be *immediately* changed beyond her ability to represent the character concept implied by the ten prerequisites from which she derived this Charm. Second, no matter how fatal or permanent the effect may be, fate itself will generate a condition by which the Solar may shatter any curse. This condition is decided by the Storyteller. The Storyteller should also provide the Solar ample time—seasons or even years—to pursue a cure. The Solar is not guaranteed to know the shattering condition of her curse, but characters with appropriate Lore, Medicine, and Occult Charms may be able to aid her in this regard.

This Charm may be repurchased for every ten different Charms the Solar knows, amplifying its effects. This Charm is also stackable; a Solar who purchases it off the back of ten Melee Charms may purchase it again by using ten different Melee Charms. In this instance, the Storyteller should further lessen any changes wrought to the Solar. Repurchasing this Charm while under the effects of an ongoing condition has no lessening effect on that condition, however.

On Destiny-Manifesting Method

The Solar cannot be changed beyond her ability to represent the character concept implied by the ten prerequisites from which she derived this Charm. This means, literally, that if a Solar daiklave master who derived this Charm from ten Melee Charms is struck by an attack that would have transformed her into a cat, she is instead changed into a feline beastwoman, allowing her to continue to wield daiklaves and, by extension, to continue to function as a person and a Solar, using Charms, channeling Essence, and so on. Likewise, a legendary Solar courtesan struck by a curse that would wither away her beauty, drying her to a crone-like husk, might experience only a slight downgrade to her Appearance—an unprepossessing feature she can conceal, for example. Furthermore, multiple repurchases, stacking repurchases, and the Solar having a higher Essence rating than her attacker can reduce such effects to nothing or almost nothing when such effects should be completely ignored. In these instances, the Storyteller should give the Solar a temporary dice penalty or make her player roll a few damage dice and move on.

> Because there are many different such effects, the Storyteller has ample latitude to interpret the results. When in doubt, the following things should be considered: this Charm exists for the purpose of telling interesting stories. It is boring and disappointing if a Solar is slain by being turned to stone, and it is equally boring if the Solar runs no risk at all from a secret stone touch or granite-imbuing glance. With this Charm she is instead made obdurate; stony patches mar her skin, and her soak increases by three while her Dexterity is reduced by the same. Given seasons unanswered, this condition might worsen and cause her death, but the Solar at least has a chance to break the curse, manifesting her true destiny. Likewise, a character struck with the killing gaze of Balor might instead experience slow, continuous damage to her health track each time she is rolled into battle. Such characters face crushing adversity as a result of these curses, but may also derive interesting Storyteller-approved benefits from them, aside from the opportunity to explore their character in the face of such a deep and transformative crisis.

Legend-Soul Revival

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Destiny-Manifesting Method

Upon purchasing this Charm, the Solar becomes nigh immune to any curse she has broken with Destiny-Manifesting Method. Such effects either affect her not at all, or apply paltry damage or a small dice penalty lasting no longer than a round.

Phoenix Renewal Tactic

Cost: —(Varies); **Mins:** Integrity 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Destiny-Manifesting Method

The Solars went down into a darkness never-ending, but were reborn again in flames. If the Solar is threatened by a warping, shaping, or twisting attack with no clear defense, then this Charm allows the Exalt a chance at such a defense, turning the attack into a contest of wills. Roll the Exalt's temporary Willpower with double 9s against that of the attacker, treating non-successes on both Willpower rolls as temporary Willpower spent by both parties. The Solar also rolls an additional (Essence) dice, for no Willpower cost, with double 9s, adding successes to her total result. If she wins the contest, she casts off the attempted curse and gains a point of temporary Willpower. She also gains a point of Willpower if all dice on the Willpower roll turn up successes.

Succeeding at this Charm lowers the cost of Spirit-Maintaining Maneuver by two motes for the rest of the scene, and immunizes the Solar from being struck by any unrolled effect for (Essence) days. The Solar does not need to be aware of the attack to use Phoenix Renewal Tactic; the Charm makes her automatically aware. She can even use this Charm when she is asleep or otherwise incapacitated.

This Charm may be repurchased at Integrity 5+, granting the Exalt one non-Charm automatic success while allowing the Solar to choose to convert two Willpower dice to three automatic successes as well.

Sun King Radiance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Integrity 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Any five Performance, Presence, or Socialize Charms

In every word and action, the Solar manifests a core of magnificent integrity. Even the hearts of the wicked are filled with awe. Each time the Solar succeeds at social influence or successfully applies her Resolve, any witness who considers himself a follower of, subservient to, or less powerful than the Solar might be profoundly and forever changed in that moment. If the Solar's action resonates with the character, he may accept an automatic Major Intimacy of respect for the

Solar. On the back of this, he also gains a temporary boost of excellence on a scene of his choosing. During that scene, while acting toward a goal he wishes to fulfill, while using the Solar's actions as a model, the character gains three bonus dice to all social influence rolls for the rest of the scene, and has his Resolve boosted by one.

Investigation

Watchman's Infallible Eye

Cost: —; **Mins:** Investigation 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver is attuned to her subconscious, and is preternaturally aware of her surroundings. If the Exalt possesses this Charm, she feels an instinct each time she encounters a scene in which a case scene or profile character action (p. XX) should be used. At this point, the Storyteller informs the player which action is appropriate, and vaguely *why*—if danger is present, the player is informed that the Solar senses a trap and should use a case scene action; if there is a suspicious character, the player is made aware of that character so that a profile action can be used. This Charm does not entail automatic success at each prospective action. It merely informs the player which action should be performed, and why. As the Solar notices many things the player does not, this Charm can be used to generate reasons for investigations it would otherwise be impossible for a normal character to perceive.

Inquisitor's Unfailing Notice

Cost: —; **Mins:** Investigation 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Watchman's Infallible Eye

The Lawgiver has an instinct for the perfect moments to commit a crime. Any time the Larceny Ability is used in her presence, she notices the character using it. This does not tell her how Larceny is being employed, but provides her (Essence) non-Charm dice to an Awareness or Investigation attempt to notice the deception for one instant, on each instant the Ability is employed. This only functions against disguises if the disguised character attempts an action he would be unable to attempt without using a disguise.

Crafty Observation Method

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Investigation 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Watchman's Infallible Eye

By examining the undisturbed physical evidence of an event, the Solar can flawlessly reconstruct the physical process behind that event. Finding a corpse with a knife wound, she can tell what

sort of knife was used, and from what angle the blow was struck. She can differentiate between blood spatters, assigning each to a different stroke of a weapon made at a different time, and so on. This Charm is not limited to crime scenes. The Solar can likewise reconstruct the evidence left behind by a liaison, examine the leavings of a camp site, etc. This acts as a normal case scene action, save that the Lawgiver does it in a handful of seconds, and gains (Essence) automatic successes and double 9s to her attempt.

Divine Induction Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Crafty Observation Method

The Lawgiver draws wisdom from the very whispers of Heaven. Once per scene, the Exalt may use a free full Investigation Excellency. This Charm may be reset by succeeding at any Investigation action with a difficulty of (the Solar's Investigation -1) or greater. Note that this Charm has the mute keyword; the Solar's insights are never subject to censure, and are never obvious. It is as if she draws her wisdom from the very cosmos.

Miraculous Stunning Insight

Cost: —; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Divine Induction Technique

The Solar's deductions are as sharp as a razor and as sure as daylight. Once per scene the Exalt may enhance a single Investigation roll with double 8s.

Dauntless Inquisitor Attitude

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Miraculous Stunning Insight

The Exalt is relentless in her pursuit of the truth. This Charm adds her Essence in automatic successes to her Investigation rolls for the rest of the scene.

Judge-General's Stance

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dauntless Inquisitor Attitude

Once per day, the Exalt may use this Charm to reset any Investigation Charms which are currently "down." Doing this also grants her one point of Willpower.

Evidence-Discerning Method

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crafty Observation Method

By sorting through possessions, physical evidence and so on left by a particular person, the Exalt may construct a psychological profile of the character who left the evidence. This Charm allows the Lawgiver to profile a character who is not even present, at a difficulty based on the dissonance of the scene. If the character has left little or misleading evidence of himself behind, the difficulty is raised. However, extra successes on the Exalt's (Perception + Investigation) roll allow her to disregard inconsistent evidence at a rate of one success per one erroneous item eliminated. The Exalt may continue to use this Charm until she has the clearest picture possible, ignoring the Willpower cost on additional uses, however, this requires that there be material for her to continue sorting through. Once her investigation is completed, the Storyteller informs the player of the Exalt's overall success. If she has accurately profiled the character, then she will automatically notice any and all characters who meet that profile, or scenes of events which fit that character's profile, through the use of Watchman's Infallible Eye.

Watchful Justiciar's Eye

Cost: —(4m, 1wp); **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Evidence-Discerning Method

The Solar is able to sense inconsistencies in a character's behavior. After profiling a character with the prerequisite or Ten Magistrate Eyes, the Solar senses each time a character acts outside of that profile in a scene. She may then pay four motes, one Willpower to activate this Charm. The Storyteller then informs the player as to whether the character's behavior is normal, allowing the Solar to revise her target's profile and restoring one point of temporary Willpower, or whether the inconsistency is genuinely odd and worth looking into. This does not tell the Lawgiver why he's acting out of character, only that he is. The Storyteller should explain the dissonance in the character's behavior—how the character "should" be acting compared to how he's actually behaving.

Evidence-Restoring Prana

Cost: —(6m); **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: Evidence-Discerning Method

The Lawgiver is preternaturally aware of the connections between objects. She is so keenly aware of these connections that she can sense when the flow has been disturbed. This sensation comes across as a momentary visualization of Essence flows, fixating on the remains of evidence that's been destroyed, which the Lawgiver perceives as a well of negative energies, a disruption in the flow of Essence. She may then pay six motes to touch this well, momentarily restoring the flow of Essence to glimpse the evidence in its complete state. This Charm can momentarily restore evidence no larger than that which the Exalt can normally lift and carry, but it allows her a full examination of the destroyed object. Once her examination of the restored object has concluded, her commitment is dropped and the Essence of the object disperses.

Judge's Ear Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Investigation 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crafty Observation Method

The Lawgiver can evaluate the truth of any statement she hears. This Charm is infallible within limits: if she hears a lie the speaker believes to be true, she won't detect the untruth. Her sense of lies is keen enough that if a character speaks in half-truths, she'll know which part of the statement is false. Any magic which contests this effect goes to a roll-off against the Lawgiver's (Perception + Investigation), with (Essence) automatic successes on the Solar's roll, and 1s in the opposed roll acting as 10s to the Solar's result.

Irresistible Questioning Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Judge's Ear Technique

The Lawgiver may wring the truth from a subject with piercing, impossible-to-resist questions. This Charm supplements a persuade action (p. XX) in the form of a question. Roll the Solar's (Wits + Investigation) against the target's Resolve. Success means that the character must answer truthfully and to the fullest extent of his knowledge. In addition, each extra success on this roll constitutes an additional question the Solar may ask, and each of those questions is likewise irresistible. The target of this Charm may pay one Willpower to resist answering a single question, but this grants no immunity to further questioning, or even the same question posed repeatedly. No Willpower is required to resist this question if the character is able to escape the scene or leave freely; in combat, the power is compelling but costs no Willpower to resist. Likewise, a character who feels compelled to stay, even if they may leave freely, must pay Willpower to resist a question. This Charm may only be used on a specific character once per session.

Ten Magistrate Eyes

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Evidence-Discerning Method, Judge's Ear Technique

Attuning herself to the ambient Essence of the world, the Solar can see the order of and links between objects. This Charm supplements a case scene action, making that action infallible, and reducing the time it takes to just seconds. Even if the Exalt's (Perception + Investigation) roll turns up no successes, she gains at least one clue to her investigation. For each additional success, the Storyteller describes the Solar's mind racing from clue to clue, making logical connections that would be impossible for most people, and describing how those connections work to advance the Solar's inquest. Such clues should provide the player with information that constitutes leads to characters, places, and events that will automatically trigger Watchman's Infallible Eye when encountered. The Solar can also automatically tell if there has been an attempt to conceal evidence.

This Charm may also be used to supplement a profile character action in an identical fashion, extra successes creating an incredibly precise, detailed and accurate analysis of the target. Ten Magistrate Eyes is enhanced by Awareness Charms, allowing the Solar to notice truly improbable details, like differentiations in heartbeat in concert with a character's behavior, variations in the mud color of footprints that give away a person's earlier location, and so on.

Unknown Wisdom Epiphany

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ten Magistrate Eyes

By visiting the scene of an event and attuning herself to local Essence flows and residues, the Exalt can psychically reenact history, reconstructing an event to the point of gaining insight she could not receive from evidence alone. The Solar must have time to go over the scene, to touch and examine evidence and retrace steps in order to empathize with and adapt the perspective of one of the involved parties. The Lawgiver experiences flashbacks of the event from the perspective of the party she is emulating, and gains insights into the character's persona, including his emotions over the course of the re-enacted event, and the basic meaning behind the behavior he enacted. An Exalt reenacting an event is rarely dangerous, but if disturbed she may very briefly cling to the adopted persona before snapping back to the current moment.

Enlightened Touch Insight

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unknown Wisdom Epiphany

By touching a piece of evidence and stirring its Essence with her own, the Lawgiver gains a psychometric vision related to the object. This is a (Wits + Investigation) read intention action against a difficulty equal to the number of days since the evidence was placed. If successful, the

Exalt feels the exact emotion of the one who left the evidence behind at the moment it was produced.

Empathic Recall Discipline

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Enlightened Touch Insight

By piecing together the evidence of a crime scene, the Exalt can channel the perpetrator's perspective. This Charm may be used after a case scene action. The Lawgiver congeals what she has seen into a moment of clear understanding of the perpetrator. This is treated as a (Wits + Investigation) based read intentions action with a difficulty of the perpetrator's Larceny. On a success, the Solar understands the meaning behind the event—that is, what the perpetrator intended by the crime. Even if the roll fails, the Exalt is able to adapt the perpetrator's perspective automatically upon using Unknown Wisdom Epiphany.

Mind Manse Meditation

Cost: 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Investigation 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Empathic Recall Discipline, Evidence-Restoring Prana

The Solar builds a palace of her memories. Upon using this Charm, she mentally perceives this palace as an archive of gathered evidence, research, character profiles and investigations which she can mentally traverse in order to conduct a thorough investigation. While inside her Mind Manse, the Solar is entranced and unaware of her physical surroundings. She may recall anything that she knows in order to conduct her investigation forward, compiling evidence, research, and associating ideas at a rate of roughly (Essence) hours per ten seconds. During this time, the Lawgiver can access any information the Storyteller deems that she knows, based on any of her other Abilities and anything she has learned over the course of the story, in order to make psychic connections between evidence, ideas, and facts that would otherwise be impossible. The effects of this Charm are largely dramatic. Entering the Mind Manse allows the Exalt to find the solution to a riddle or mystery that allows her to forward her investigation. This Charm may be used once per story.

Larceny

Seasoned Criminal Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Larceny 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt adapts the nature of the iconic criminal, who must one day become a master of her craft. She is a creature of the criminal element; duplicity is in her every word and step. This Charm allows the Solar to invoke and discard a number of special distinctions at her leisure, which allow her to gather information, infiltrate criminal society, and protect her position there.

The distinctions are as follows:

Familiarity: To a member of a criminal organization, she *seems familiar*—that is, she can play on a Minor Intimacy to make her target believe she is a criminal with whom to be treated: a member of the organization, a prospect for initiation, etc.

Dissonance: Magistrates or other officials seeking to establish her identity suffer a -2 penalty to their Bureaucracy and Investigation actions. Persons who do not know her personally but may have spotted her or seen her hanging around the scene of a crime find her unrecognizable and cannot remember doing so.

Vulnerability: The Exalt makes herself seem the best possible target for a type of crime dictated by the player. Confidence men will see her as an easy mark, gamblers will seek to engage her with betting gossip or games of chance, thugs will try to mug her, and so forth. This effect has a visual component: thieves are less likely to steal from an Exalt wearing armor and a battle axe, while a serial killer might find a person who wears her hair a certain way irresistible.

Receptivity: Similar to vulnerability, interested parties perceive the Exalt as a local player. Rather than prey on her directly, she may be identified as a drug buyer or seller, or a person looking to make a bet, hire a prostitute, or take part in other illicit or seedy activities. Such parties will be interested in providing her with information about where to go and who to talk to.

Spurious Presence

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Seasoned Criminal Method

Even amidst the Imperial Treasury, the Lawgiver projects her right to be there. This Charm makes it nearly impossible to voluntarily question the Exalt's presence. As long as the Solar is dressed and behaving as expected for the present circumstances, she cannot normally be considered suspicious. Characters who do suspect something "off" about her may try to read her intentions, but the Exalt's Guile is at +2 against such attempts. The player may reconstitute the character's Guile using Larceny instead of Socialize; Charms that protect against read intentions actions are explicitly allowed to enhance this effect. Which characters suspect the Lawgiver depends entirely on the dramatic whim of the Storyteller.

Preying on Uncertainty Approach

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spurious Presence

When the Lawgiver is caught somewhere she doesn't belong, she may use this Charm to immediately become aware of a gap in her inquisitor's knowledge she can exploit. Stopped at a picket, she realizes the soldier questioning her is expecting a messenger he has never seen. She can then claim that messenger's identity. Confronted by a tenant when creeping through the glass towers of Chiaroscuro, she realizes there are vacant rooms and assumes the role of a squatter. Uncertainty of this kind counts as a Minor Intimacy when it is exploited.

Phantom Hood Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Preying on Uncertainty Approach

The Lawgiver can mask her anima to evade detection. Once per scene, the Exalt can activate this Charm to mute five peripheral motes in an instant, causing them to act as if they were motes spent from her personal mote pool, so long as the magic is aiding her in Larceny-based actions. This Charm is reset by a three point social stunt in which the Lawgiver uses Larceny, or in which she uses subterfuge enhanced by any other social ability in order to aid her in criminal behavior. This reset must occur after the Charm has been used.

Clever Bandit's Rook

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seasoned Criminal Method

A master of the sublime, the Lawgiver hooks a mark with her charisma and genuine seeming. When used, this Charm supplements an instill action to make a person believe an object or structure belongs to the Exalt. This Charm cannot force an assertion on someone that directly contradicts what he knows. However, a character who does not know the truth cannot benefit from any Intimacies that would bolster his Resolve against the attempt. A character may not spend Willpower to contradict this belief unless he sees direct evidence to the contrary.

Doubt-Sealing Heist

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Clever Bandit's Rook

Upon successfully robbing a person of something he own, the Exalt may attempt to unwind the owner's memory of attachment to the item. The player rolls a (Manipulation + Larceny) instill action against the target's Resolve. On a success, the Lawgiver convinces the target that the object belongs to her (and always has). The target may not pay Willpower to shake off this belief until (Solar's Essence) minutes have passed.

Living Shadow Preparedness

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar becomes the light which swallows the shadow. The player rolls (Wits + Larceny), doubles and banks any successes. Banked successes can be reflexively applied to a single Larceny or Stealth action. This effect lasts until the Exalt sleeps, and can be renewed only once per day.

Unshakable Rogue's Spirit

Cost: -1 Initiative per success; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Living Shadow Preparedness

The Lawgiver can borrow against her own talent to bolster larcenous action. This Charm can be used to aid in protecting the Lawgiver's disguise during a roll off, to pick a lock, to pickpocket, or to establish Stealth. It can also be used to enhance any social action contrived to swindle a target. For every one automatic success the Charm adds to the selected action, the Solar loses one Initiative from her next Join Battle result. The maximum number of successes a Solar can add between battles is half her Join Battle pool, rounded up. This debt is automatically cleared after completing a full night's rest. Unshakable Rogue's Spirit cannot be used in combat.

Master Plan Meditation

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Unshakable Rogue's Spirit

The Exalt's meticulous preparation forms a bulwark against failure. This Charm can be triggered after performing any of the valid listed actions below. The player rolls (Intelligence + Larceny), converting each success to a pool of contingency points which can be spent on features listed below.

Valid actions include a scene spent: forging or counterfeiting; preparing an alibi; pursuing information about a person without using violence; obtaining blueprints to a location the Exalt plans to infiltrate; making a plan to enter and escape a dangerous location; plotting to confuse or undermine local law enforcement or criminal syndicates.

Contingency points can be spent in the following ways:

• Distorting a single piece of evidence (5 points)

• Destroying a small piece of evidence (3 points)

• Erasing a small piece of evidence (7 points)

• Raising Resolve by two for one scene (5 points)

• Raising Guile by two for one scene (5 points)

• Door-Evading Technique cost: 5m, 1wp (5 points)

• Disguise attempt +1 automatic success (3 points)

• Flashing Ruse Prana cost: 0m, 0wp (7 points)

• Retroactively leaving one's calling card (mark, sign, etc.) in a dramatic location. (1 point)

Once the Exalt begins spending contingency points, this Charm may not be used to gather new contingencies until the Exalt has spent all the points. The Exalt may not use Master Plan Meditation twice for the same type of valid action in a single session.

On Master Plan Meditation

In each instance of altered evidence, the player is able to respond to the introduction or discovery of evidence, retroactively changing the narrative. This is not a Creation-time alteration, but rather a retroactive continuity of the Storyteller's narrative or Investigation action results by another player. Literally, as a character discovers some evidence of your crime, you can pay contingency points to alter the evidence, changing what he found (even if that means he found nothing).

Destroying evidence is different from erasing evidence; destroyed evidence may be reconstructed by various Charms. Erased evidence is treated as though your Solar carefully covered her tracks. Feel free to gloatingly describe how she outsmarted her pursuers by convincing an army of ants to right the blades of grass she walked over that day, or how she snatched up that single strand of hair before it could fall to the floor.

Distorting evidence causes it to point at another character connected to the crime scene location. The Exalt's player does not determine at whom it points; that determination is instead made by the player of the detective. If the only other character known to have visited the scene is the detective, the evidence will point to his guilt.

This Charm models the Solar's serious attention to detail and overqualification for mindgames. Each use should be depicted as the Lawgiver channeling a preternatural sense of preparedness and foresight and meditating on future plans to make her tactics flawless.

> The duration of each listed contingency is one instant, unless stated otherwise. The Exalt must know the Charms enhanced by contingencies in order to benefit from them.

Swift Gambler's Eye

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Larceny 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt's jaded insights give her a talent for seeing through the gambits of her opponents. This Charm supplements a read intentions action against an opponent in a game of chance or strategy, lowering the target's Guile by two. If successful, it tells the Lawgiver how her opponent feels about his current chances. For example, a target who is acting morose but feels exultant is almost certainly bluffing.

Lightning-Hand Sleight

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Swift Gambler's Eye

The Solar's patience hides intense speed. Between breaths, eyeblinks, even *thoughts*, the Exalt's hands flash out, changing tiles, switching dice results, trading cards out of dealt hands, moving game pieces, etc. The Exalt's cheating goes unnoticed so long as she cheats plausibly, skewing the results of only a single round. This deception cannot be realized by onlookers until (Essence + 1) hours have passed. Each time the Solar uses this Charm in a single game, she lowers that expectation by roughly one hour. At Essence 1, she may not be caught immediately on her third use of the Charm, but while her foes still cannot see her cheating, they *can* notice the effects of her slick dealing.

This Charm doubles as Poison-Hand Sleight, which allows a Lawgiver to lace a target's food or drink with sedatives or poison. It differs in that onlookers will begin to notice the work of a poisoner as soon as people begin to pass out or drop dead.

Proof-Eating Palm

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Lightning-Hand Sleight

The Solar's genius hands can outwit even the sharpest eye. This Charm allows her to hide any object small enough to palm. She may appear to swallow the item, fit it under her tongue, hide it up her sleeve, etc. The object vanishes. It does not go to Elsewhere. It merely ceases to exist until the Exalt needs it again, at which point she may will it into her hand with just a thought. The Exalt may hide no more than five objects, but each object must be hidden in a separate space.

Fate-Shifting Solar Arete

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Lightning-Hand Sleight, Unshakable Rogue's Spirit

The Lawgiver adjusts the scales of balance in her favor, and fate is made her accomplice. This Charm enhances any kind of action. Before rolling, the player chooses a number from 2 to 5. That number is treated like a 10 each time it appears in the subsequent roll. The Solar may use this Charm once per full night's rest.

An Essence 4+ repurchase allows the Solar to change two different numbers from 2 to 5 into 10s.

Lock-Opening Touch

Cost: 1m or 5m; **Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt may open a mundane lock simply by touching it and paying five motes. Alternately, she may challenge a sorcerous lock with her picking tools, paying one mote to gain double 9s and (Essence) automatic successes. This version of the Charm guarantees that she successfully picks the lock even if her roll fails, however, a failure constitutes some unwanted occurrence—perhaps she springs a trap, breaks the lock loudly, snaps her lock-pick, etc.

Door-Evading Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Lock-Opening Touch

Some doors are not locked by conventional means; some are sealed by complex sorcery or mechanisms hidden out of sight; still others are bounded by dozens or even hundreds of locks, making it implausible to pick them all. Yet no door may bar the Lawgiver's entrance. The Exalt reaches for the door as if to touch it, and then steps forward. When her foot falls, she is on the other side of the portal. The Solar can use this talent to pass through a locked window, a sewer grate, a dropped portcullis or even an archway that drips lightning. This Charm is based on the Solar's illimitable skill for infiltration; she cannot pass through solid walls or reach into a sealed chest and fish around.

Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Larceny 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With hands quicker than the eye, the Exalt relieves a hapless soul of his material burden. This Charm enhances a normal pickpocketing attempt (see p. XX). Unless contested by magic, this attempt cannot fail; when such a conflict arises, this Charm adds the Solar's Essence in automatic successes. To use this Charm, the Exalt must be close enough to touch her target. In

every other way, this Charm follows the rules of a normal pickpocketing attempt. The character may not steal items that are in use or artifacts that have been attuned.

Characters using ordinary senses cannot detect this theft with Awareness. Characters with inhuman sensory acuity, such as a spider feeling vibrations in its web, or those using magic, like a Celestial Lion's Intemperate Gaze, suffer a -4 dice penalty to spot the theft. Flawless Pickpocketing Technique is also completely immune to magic that detects Larceny-based actions, unless the user also knows Flawless Pickpocketing Technique.

Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

Long ago, the Solars stole the implements of their virtue from beneath the gaze of the gods' own masters. This Charm is similar in all ways to its prerequisite, except that it allows the Solar to steal an object from plain sight. The Exalt might swipe a book from a table or take a sword from a soldier's scabbard. Such a theft cannot be noticed for (Solar's Essence) minutes unless circumstances call attention to it, such as a soldier attempting to draw his stolen blade.

Magpie's Invisible Talon

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stealing from Plain Sight Spirit

The Exalt moves with imperceptible speed, manipulating Essence flows to steal an object out of reach. This Charm supplements a normal attempt to steal or pickpocket, save that it gives the Solar's attempt double 9s and allows her to reach an object (Essence) yards away. She may even steal objects behind glass without disturbing the glass through use of this Charm.

Skillful Reappropriation (Phantom Sting Search)

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Magpie's Invisible Talon

The Exalt can plant evidence on a target's person infallibly. The mechanic modeling this Charm is identical to a pickpocketing attempt enhanced by Flawless Pickpocketing Technique—with the same rules for supernatural detection—save that it hides an object on the target's person. Such an action cannot be noticed for (Essence × 10) minutes, unless circumstances call attention to it. Trying to hide an anchor in an old man's rucksack will have undesired effects.

In addition, as long as the object remains on the target's person, the Exalt can reflexively retrieve the item without contest, so long as she is close enough to touch the target. Though the Lawgiver

does this with incredible speed, to all onlookers it will be obvious that she lifted the object from the target.

Reversal of Fortune

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

Stealing from the Lawgiver is a risky proposition at best. With this Charm, the Exalt gains two automatic successes to an Awareness roll to detect *any* attempt to pickpocket from her person.

Upon successfully noticing an attempted theft with this Charm, the theft is not only thwarted, but the thief is left open to reprisal. If the thief is close enough to touch, the Lawgiver becomes aware of every object on his person that may be stolen (as per the rules of pickpocketing on page XX) and can attempt to steal one of these objects with all of the same advantages as Flawless Pickpocketing Technique.

Iron Wolves' Grasp

Cost: 3m, 4i; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stealing from Plain Sight Spirit, Reversal of Fortune

This Charm demonstrates the skill of a Lawgiver to steal the very weapon from her foe's hand. When used, this Charm alters a disarm gambit (see p. XX) in the following ways:

• The cost of the gambit is replaced by the cost of the Charm.

• The gambit is considered a reflexive action rather than a combat action, leaving the Exalt free to attack in addition to disarming. Doing so carries no Defense penalty.

• The Lawgiver's Initiative roll gains double 9s.

On a success, the Exalt steals her target's weapon. If the stolen weapon is an artifact, it breaks the target's attunement and allows the Exalt to commit motes to instantly attune the weapon. If the Exalt cannot or will not pay these motes, the weapon is merely cast aside as if it were disarmed normally.

A Solar who uses whips, lassos, rope darts or other prehensile weaponry may use this Charm at the range of her weapon.

Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Larceny 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Until the Exalt sleeps

Prerequisite Charms: None

Master chameleons, the Solars donned disguises and attended the fetes of the raksha, to hear them confess their nefarious plans for Creation. This Charm recreates a disguise attempt (see p. XX), but allows the Exalt to make a myriad of extraordinary changes to her appearance. She may change her gender, double her age or halve it, alter her height by ten inches in either direction, change her ethnicity, adjust her voice and alter her accent. She can even change her scent. The Solar gains two automatic successes to her disguise attempt, ignores penalties for adapting a different race or gender, and gains double 9s.

This disguise cannot be pierced by mundane senses. Nor can it be thwarted by inhuman sensory acuity, such as the nose of a hound or the eye of a hawk. Senses heightened to supernatural levels by Charms such as Keen Sight Discipline have a chance to pierce this deception, but subtract 2 successes from their attempts. Magic which pierces this effect does not reveal the Solar's identity, only that the Exalt is not what she appears to be.

Typically Solars used this Charm to hide their identities or to appeal to specific criteria such as "Only women are allowed into the sept." However, should it be used to impersonate a specific character, magic which pierces this effect will only reveal the apparent body double of the Charm's subject. For example, if the Solar disguises herself as the Scarlet Empress, magic which pierces her disguise will see her as a tall, porcelain-skinned red-haired woman with cunningly accurate makeup, as opposed to what the Solar actually looks like.

Flashing Ruse Prana

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

With a rending of air, the Solar sweeps away the mask she once wore. This Charm supplements a disguise attempt by reducing the time it takes from five minutes to instant. When used in combination with another Larceny-based disguise Charm, ignore the Willpower cost.

Perfect Mirror

Cost: —(5m, 1wp); **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

The Exalt shows only what she wishes to be seen. Discarding all other facets, she becomes a continuous unity of form.

This Charm upgrades its prerequisite, replacing the cost and allowing the Exalt to disguise herself as a specific person without suffering a penalty for impersonating a specific character, or for changing her body type significantly. In addition to the bonuses associated with Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise, it also adds (Essence) non-Charm successes to the roll to establish the disguise.

The impersonation is perfect. It cannot be pierced by mundane or inhuman sensory acuity. Characters are not entitled to attempt to see through the disguise unless the Solar behaves in a

grossly inaccurate way. Even so, a witness using Charms or other magic to penetrate the disguise suffer a -4 dice penalty to do so. In addition, should he fail at this attempt, his next attempt suffers an additional -1. This penalty cannot exceed -5.

In addition to these effects, the Exalt may adapt Essence-based visual dynamics not covered by simple makeup or disguise. Her hair might stand on end and crackle with lightning; she might hover inches off the ground or display the anima of a different kind of Exalt. None of these displays are real. That is, displaying a Fire Aspect's anima will not actually burn anything, though witnesses will feel the intensity of its heat. She may appear to float, but her feet are still touching the ground.

Split Deception Method

Cost: 5m per disguise; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Mirror

The Lawgiver walks through the valley of the wicked wearing a thousand faces. This Charm allows the Exalt to place a second disguise over the one she is wearing by attempting a second disguise action per the rules on page XX. This attempt may be supplemented by disguise Charms as usual. When she is seen wearing two or more disguises, the player dictates which disguise each witness sees. The Solar may sustain no more disguises than she has dots of Essence.

Null Anima Gloves

Cost: 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Iron Wolves' Grasp, Proof-Eating Palm, Skillful Reappropriation (Phantom Sting Search)

The Solar walks among the wicked as a demon and a saint. Gathering all the speed and skill of her hands into the channel of her Essence, her talent is forced out through her skin, manifesting in a burning corona that coats her hands in the fires of her anima.

For a moment, the gloves suffuse her hands and blaze. For the next thirty seconds or two rounds, whichever comes first, no member of a criminal organization nor creature of darkness may Join Battle against the Lawgiver or roll to attack her. During this time, each of her allies gains +3 automatic successes to any attempt to escape the scene.

After this effect ends, her hands continue to blaze. She may mute the effect with just a thought: her Null Anima Gloves fade to invisibility. They are still there, however. Should she use her hands to block an attack, land a strike, or steal an object, they will flash and hum back into existence, and remain that way until she banishes them. This is merely a visual display, however…

Null Anima Gloves convey the following powers:

• **Raiton's Unerring Claw:** Once per full anima progression, she may reroll any Larceny-based action involving her hands.

• **Flashing Whip, Silent Whip:** Once per day, she may use a free full Larceny Excellency to enhance an attempt to pickpocket or steal from plain sight.

• **Seize the Day:** In combat, she may use a gambit which costs three Initiative to make a (Dexterity + Larceny) based **decisive** attack against her opponent, with double successes on the Initiative roll. If she succeeds, she regains four Initiative and steals an additional amount from the opponent equal to her Dexterity, adding it to her own total. The Exalt must be close enough to touch her opponent to use this technique and must use her hands to make the attack. Seize the Day can only be used once per battle, but is automatically reset when the Solar climbs to 15+ Initiative after landing a **decisive** attack which returns her to base Initiative.

• **Dream-Ending Gesture:** With a curt flash of her hand, the Solar rips away the proof of her foe's divinity. The Exalt uses a gambit costing five Initiative, making a (Dexterity + Larceny) based **decisive** attack against her opponent, with double successes on the Initiative roll. If the Exalt's gambit succeeds, she steals a number of motes equal to her extra successes on the attack, adding them to her peripheral or personal motes. Dream-Ending Gesture can only be used once per scene.

• **Steal Inertia:** Once per battle the Exalt may reflexively enact a (Dexterity + Larceny) Clash against an attack. This Clash is enhanced by (Essence) automatic successes. If her successes cancel her opponent's, she can be seen to stop the blow with her blazing, anima-suffused hands, and may automatically respond with a disarm gambit at no cost, using extra successes on the Clash as automatic successes to her gambit's Initiative roll.

• **Hand-Spear Convocation:** Upon stealing an artifact, she experiences a rush of power that surges through her body and floods into her hands, supplying the motes needed to attune the artifact, effectively reducing the cost of attunement to 0. This may only happen once per scene.

Night's Eye Meditation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Null Anima Gloves

The Solar is a master of deception, and is aware of any challenge to her position. Each time a character attempts to counter a Larceny based action or disguise with Investigation or Larceny, the Lawgiver may use this Charm to add 10s on her opponents' attempts to her own results for one turn. This retroactively makes her disguises harder to pierce and actively makes her sleight-of-hand and pickpocketing harder to notice.

Unbroken Darkness Approach

Cost: —; **Mins:** Larceny 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Night's Eye Meditation

In the deepening Age of Sorrows, the Lawgiver shines in the darkness. This Charm allows the Exalt to apply a free full Larceny Excellency to any action once per scene. This Excellency has the mute keyword. This Charm also has the special property of muting any Charm the Exalt uses that same instant, if she so chooses.

Linguistics

Written vs. Spoken Effects

Many Linguistics Charms feature both written and spoken delivery methods. A Linguistics Charm using the written method must be read to be effective, while a spoken delivery need only be heard. In most cases, these types of deliveries use identical rules, typically a roll of ([Social Attribute] + Linguistics). However, because social influence written into a letter, a missive, a book etc. may sometimes require minutes, hours, or days before the target actually receives and reads the writing, the rolls are timed differently.

With written social influence, roll (Attribute + Linguistics) the moment the character finishes the composition and record the successes. The character must use any enhancing magic she knows at the moment this roll is required, because once she has finished encoding her work with magic, she may not alter it again without magic specifically for this purpose. After any relevant Intimacies are applied to lower the target's Resolve, the total successes are then compared to the target's Resolve to see if the Charm takes effect.

> **Spoken social influence** works exactly like any other kind: roll (Attribute + Linguistics) the moment the character speaks to her target.

Whirling Brush Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Linguistics 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

A Solar with this technique writes with superhuman speed. The Exalt pens brief social influence or short communiqués with incredible speed—she can write a full-page letter in just seconds, while shorter missives may be constructed almost instantly. She can also quickly copy massive volumes of information. This Charm does not allow her to produce new work longer than a few pages, but she may flawlessly copy a written work of any length as she reads it, writing quickly enough that she may copy a large book in a single day, or prepare a document that would take hours to transcribe in a matter of minutes. The Solar can even perfectly transcribe a rapid conversation between multiple parties. The Solar may also quickly copy maps—though this Charm lends nothing to her artistic ability, she is able to convey all the information the original conveys, such that one could be substituted for the other, in function if not in form. This Charm does not destroy quills from writing too fast, but writing instruments do wear down at the regular speed, and the Solar's writing consumes the normal amount of ink. As this Charm entails a dramatic action in which the Solar copies a work, the duration of the effect varies. In a scene where the Solar has used Whirling Brush Method, additional activation costs only one mote.

Flawless Brush Discipline

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Whirling Brush Method

The Solar concentrates all of her talent into a perfect expression of form. With this Charm, she may perfectly copy any written work down to the finest detail. Her flawless precision makes her script impossible to tell apart from the original, allowing her to create a perfect replica of a work. If the Exalt focuses intently on aesthetic elements, she may even use this Charm to copy them, flawlessly reproducing pictograms, illustrations and even maps. The Exalt may also forge signatures effortlessly, but cannot use this Charm to forge seals or other impressions affixed to a document. It is impossible to pierce this deception through normal means. Magic which can detect the Solar's forgery must overcome a difficulty equal to the Solar's (Linguistics + Essence) score at the time of writing.

Artistic Talent: Linguistics or Craft?

> Linguistics is not the "Art" skill, any more than Investigation is the "Sight" skill. Linguistics does entail a very specific artistic skill—in the ability to produce elegant calligraphy, and the ability to produce, translate, or reproduce very specific aesthetics. Language in itself is a representative of such aesthetics: words evolve from pictograms to ideograms, hieroglyphs form and refine into runes that make up descendent languages thousands of years later. Very specific forms of art are also constructs of language: maps, diagrams, and supplemental illustrations fall into these categories. Where art is concerned, Linguistics mainly provides the ability to produce beautiful and complex letters, and extremely complex, detailed informational illustrations. Drawing one's Lunar mate gobbling cake, or painting a gorgeous landscape or the Circle's Twilight as he poses seductively, are all examples of the Craft Ability.

Stolen Voice Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Brush Discipline

The Lawgiver's keen ear, sharp eye and steady hand makes her an inveterate thief of words. With this Charm, the Solar can adapt the writing voice of another character. The Solar need only have read one manuscript or three smaller examples of the character's writing in order to perfectly mimic his writing style. This Charm does not mimic the effects of Flawless Brush Discipline, so the Solar may need to use that Charm to make her script all the more deceiving. Like the prerequisite, the difficulty to pierce this deception is the Solar's (Linguistics + Essence) score at the time of writing. Combining this Charm with its prerequisite raises that difficulty by one.

Stolen Voice Technique's deception is automatically successful unless the target has a reason to scrutinize the writing.

Moving the Unseen Hand

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stolen Voice Technique

The Exalt pens a message in a hand so artful and deceptive that she can cause her reader to make an automatic assumption as to the writer's identity. Upon writing the message, roll (Manipulation + Linguistics) with (Essence) automatic successes to determine the strength of the deception when compared to the target's Resolve. To use this Charm, the Exalt must not sign the missive in question; the unsigned letter invites the assumption that allows this Charm to take effect.

The Exalt may use this technique in three different ways: She can make readers believe a message was written by a specific person of whom they're aware—they do not need to know this character on a personal level. She can also make readers assume the letter was written by the person they most want the letter to be from. Lastly, if the Solar has Bureaucracy 3+, she can make readers assume the letter was written by a hierarchical superior.

Despite being a Simple-type Charm, Moving the Unseen Hand can always be used in combination with its prerequisite; failure to see through Stolen Voice Technique makes the character automatically subject to Moving the Unseen Hand's deception.

Power-Snaring Image

Cost: — (1m, 1wp); **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stolen Voice Technique

When the Lawgiver is using Flawless Brush Discipline, she may channel this power to perfectly copy any magic encrypted into the document she is copying, so long as she is capable of producing that magic herself. She does not need to pay the costs of any Charms her copy reproduces—those effects are reproduced automatically and perfectly. At Essence 5+, she may reproduce the written magic effects of the Charms of *any* being, even those who are not Solar Exalted, so long as her traits meet or exceed the magic's minimums.

Flashing Quill Atemi

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One minute

Prerequisite Charms: Power-Snaring Image

The Lawgiver strikes a body of text with her fingers, reshaping the language to serve her purposes. With this Charm, the Solar may edit a manuscript, letter, or tome with untraceable

precision. Where she draws her fingertips through lines, words lift from pages as if they were never written. Where she draws her fingertips through runes, ink chases itself into the shapes of new words. Through use of this Charm, the Solar can change the targets of written social influence, and can redefine what is intended by any social influence she encounters. Modifying a work encrypted with magic allows her to redirect the targets of that magic. If she wishes to alter magic she is incapable of producing, she must possess Essence 5+ and must use Power-Snaring Image in combination with this Charm. This combination explicitly allows her to alter magic for which she does not meet minimums.

Perfect Celestial Author

Cost: —; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Quill Atemi

While using Flashing Quill Atemi, the Lawgiver can edit a manuscript to combine Simple-type Charms or effects which could otherwise not coexist. Thus, she could use Letter-Within-A-Letter Technique and Cup Boils Over to kill someone with what appears to be a love letter.

Letter-Within-A-Letter Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

By carefully injecting allusions, subtle stresses and loaded word choices, the Exalt can imbed a secret message in a document of seemingly innocuous character—a shopping list, a bill of lading or even a quickly dashed note. The Solar must be familiar with the recipient in order for him to see the hidden missive. The hidden message can be no longer (in words) than half the length of the cover document. Magic that can break the Solar's code automatically costs an additional Willpower and must beat a difficulty of the Solar's Linguistics or the highest difficulty of any magical encryption inscribed into the text.

Essence-Laden Missive

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute, Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Letter-Within-A-Letter Technique

The Exalt can infuse a short statement with Essence, such that the Essence travels through the reader's mind to escape through his tongue. A character who reads such a missive will immediately and unironically repeat the statement he just read without realizing he's doing so. This is not a Charm which simply forces the character to read aloud, but rather causes him to announce the missive. The roll to determine whether the reader blurts out the missive is treated

as a ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Linguistics) inspire action with (Essence) automatic successes.

Voice-Caging Calligraphy

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute, Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Laden Missive

The Solar binds her words with Essence, folding language into form so winding and deep that all meaning falls into the abyss. This Charm may be used to supplement the writing of letters or other brief works. The information contained in such writing cannot be repeated. The reader momentarily loses his ability to process or remember the contents of the message if he tries to speak it aloud or write it down. Any attempt by the reader to communicate what he knows is rendered useless unless he sees an action occurring in which a Defining Intimacy is threatened by withholding what he knows. Only then may the reader pay (Solar's current Essence rating) Willpower to shake off the effects of this Charm.

That Burning Question

Q: What happens if you combine Essence-Laden Missive and Voice-Caging Calligraphy?

A: You tell me.

Mind-Swallowing Missive

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Psyche

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Laden Missive

The Solar unwinds language with her Essence, writing in such a way that it unbinds the pattern of her reader's understanding. This Charm supplements a letter written to a specific target, the Solar rolling (Manipulation + Linguistics) to determine its accuracy. If her target reads the letter, he must roll his (Perception + Linguistics) to defend against a swarm of unbinding words that penetrates his mind where languages live. If he fails, his knowledge of all languages is unbound, causing him to forget every language he's currently able to speak. In addition, the subject develops a completely new language on the spot. This language is both functional and logical—and has letters and grammar mechanics—but it is known only to the Charm's victim. An Exalt may break this control by paying (Solar's Essence rating) Willpower, instantly recovering one of his spoken languages and another every hour until his knowledge has been restored. Otherwise, this effect lasts until the Solar lifts the commitment. When Mind-Swallowing Missive is broken, the subject's new language vanishes from his memory. This Charm does not affect spirits.

Cup Boils Over

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Written-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mind-Swallowing Missive, Voice-Caging Calligraphy

The Lawgiver pens a soul-shattering missive, convicting her subject he leads a pointless existence. This Charm can only be directed at a specific target. Roll the Exalt's ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Linguistics), rerolling 6s until 6s fail to appear. If she beats her target's Resolve, his soul falls off and sinks directly into lethe. This Charm only targets characters who have unintelligibly abstruse Intimacies or no Intimacies at all; however, its effect depends on such an unfulfilled soul's yearning for purpose and meaning—characters who are *incapable* of feeling (such as the soul-eaten victims of the Fair Folk) are not valid targets for this Charm.

Strange Tongue Understanding

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Tuning Essence through her language centers, the Exalt reconciles a character's vocal tone, inflection, and gestures into a clear statement of intent. This allows her to accurately interpret statements made in languages she doesn't know. As the Solar's concentration congeals into a moment of perfect clarity, she must evaluate each statement separately. Each activation of this Charm allows her to understand three or four simple sentences or one long, complex sentence. The Solar may also use this Charm to reflexively lower the Guile of a speaker using abstruse language to conceal an issue or artificially inflate the importance of a topic, reducing his Guile by one.

Poetic Expression Style

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Strange Tongue Understanding

Through gesture, movement, and carefully shaped facial expressions, the Solar may clearly communicate short, simple sentences through body language and pantomime. This Charm ignores the penalty for such communications, and allows for additional complexity, but does not allow for poesy. Therefore, "Open the gates now, or I will return with an army," is valid, while "Fill your hands with steel and prepare to dance, you devils," is not. As such, all social influence made with this Charm suffers a three success penalty.

Mingled Tongue Technique

Cost: 4m, 1wp, plus 3m per language; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt can bind together any two languages she knows into a third language which is intuitively understood by those listeners who understand at least one of the base languages. For four motes, one Willpower, she uses her Essence to fuse two such languages together. For each additional three motes committed, she may fuse an additional language into the strain. A Solar who is gifted with knowledge of many languages can become the unifying voice of nations.

Single Voice Kata

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Mingled Tongue Technique

There is a point in the infinite distance where purity and entropy touch. That point is both "before" and "after" but the Solar may reach it with a thought, to draw forth perfect language. While this Charm is active, the Solar speaks a language that can be understood by all who hear it. Knowledge of this language is purely instinctual; characters understand the Solar's words as she shapes them. Her perfect language cannot be learned, as it has no intelligible words, letters or mechanics. Consequently, it cannot be repeated back to the Solar such that she would comprehend it. This Charm allows purely one way communications, imparting no knowledge of languages the Solar has not yet learned. Spirits despise being addressed by a Solar using this Charm, and the Fair Folk feel physical pain to hear it spoken. A Solar should only use this Charm against such beings if she deliberately intends to cause offense.

Excellent Emissary's Tongue

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Single Voice Kata, Strange Tongue Understanding

With this Charm, the Exalt may learn to speak and understand a language just by hearing it spoken. The Exalt must spend at least an hour being exposed to the language conversationally. She does not need to be the target of such talk, and can gain this exposure any number of ways: sidling a group of strangers, listening to a carnival barker, and attending a play are all valid examples. After an hour, the Exalt may activate this Charm. At that moment, her understanding of language congeals. As her Essence races to encompass this new system of words, she can speak and understand her new acquisition perfectly, though she retains a -3 penalty to social influence until she has retained and practiced the language intensely for a week. The Solar's understanding of this language is predicated by her commitment of Essence to the effect. Should she release the motes she has committed to this Charm, her knowledge of the language fades within the hour. However, if she works with an acquired language for a season or more, she learns it permanently and for free, and may safely end her commitment to the effect.

Subtle Speech Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One idea conveyed

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar speaks in a roundabout fashion, stressing particular words, inflections and allusions to convey ideas and concepts that may have nothing to do with what she is saying. Only the intended recipients can understand the true meaning of the Solar's words; everyone else just hears what the Solar says on the surface. Thus an Exalt using this Charm could appear to discuss the weather while laying out the details of an assassination plot. This Charm does not confer the ability to communicate across language barriers.

Sagacious Reading of Intent

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar's wit is incisive and her mind is canny. By reading a text, she also may read its author. The Solar may invoke this Charm after reading a text but before any social influence is rolled or checked. This allows the Solar to make a ([Wits, Charisma, or Manipulation] + Linguistics) read intentions action that is automatically successful. In that moment, she instantly knows if the writing indicates any of the author's Intimacies, and what those Intimacies are. This may come across as a clear slant or bias in the narrative, or a sense of mood or emotion in the writing which highlights the context of a Tie. This Charm does not reveal the writer's hidden motives behind any work, but it can reveal the absence of any Intimacies in the writing, potentially denoting that the work is a forgery, a copy, or that the author didn't believe what he was writing.

Word-Shield Invocation

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sagacious Reading of Intent

If the Exalt suspects she is about to suffer negative influence, she may use this Charm after using Sagacious Reading of Intent, raising her Resolve by half her Linguistics, rounded up, before her Resolve is compared to the influence's recorded successes.

Vanishing Immersion Style

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Word-Shield Invocation

The Solar dwells in a temple of words. With this Charm, she may affect a textual absorption so complete that her Guile becomes perfect and unbreakable. So long as she is reading, she cannot be read. This effect lasts for moments after she has finished reading, allowing the Exalt to

completely hide her reaction to what she just read. Using this Charm with Perfect Recollection Discipline allows the Solar to phase out completely, evading prying questions and other attempts to gauge her. In this instance, her defense is no longer perfect, and her Guile may be engaged. However, without magic to pierce her deception, characters will only notice that she is extremely preoccupied or distracted.

Discerning Savant's Eye

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Sagacious Reading of Intent

The Exalt can make out the minute traces of writing that was once readable but has now been damaged or erased. Examples include palimpsests, water-soluble inks that have been left in the damp, and stone monuments that have been rendered unreadable by vandalism or the elements. This Charm cannot read the writing on inscriptions that have been crushed into sand or letters that have been burned to ashes. This Charm does not convey the ability to understand a language the Solar cannot normally read, but she may use this Charm in concert with Flawless Brush Discipline to make a perfect, undamaged copy of the original script for later translation.

Perfect Recollection Discipline

Cost: 1m per work; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Discerning Savant's Eye

Binding a written work or illustration into her consciousness, the Solar creates a perfect memory. A character using this Charm can perfectly memorize such a work in the time it takes to read or study it, activating this Charm to store a mental record of the completed subject. She may then pay one mote to reference any part of the work. As long as she continues to reference the stored work at least once a week, she maintains a perfect memory of any part of it. Once she has maintained such use for a season, the information becomes ingrained and innate, and she may release her mote commitment. If such knowledge fades, the Solar need only pay one mote to revive her memory of the work. Note that this Charm is not a generally eidetic memory: it only conveys memories of that which has been recorded through a medium of language. She can remember what was written on a road sign, but she might be unclear as to where she encountered that sign or what the sign itself looked like. Likewise, memories created in relation to this Charm are not necessarily dependent on magic. Knowledge of a book's contents, and specific phrases which were significant to her, or which she accessed with this Charm, may stay in her memory after knowledge of a work fades.

Mind-Scribing Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Recollection Discipline

Even chained in a lightless dungeon, the Lawgiver can write a book that transforms the world. This Charm allows the Solar to engage an extended roll to produce a long work (p. XX) without requiring that she have any writing instruments. The Exalt stores her progress mentally, and may copy it down at her earliest convenience. There is no limit to how many novels, epics, and dogmas the Exalt may store in this fashion. As the Solar is copying her own work, she may use a combination of Whirling Brush Method and Perfect Recollection Discipline to copy a remembered work with tremendous speed. The Solar is explicitly permitted to enhance any writing she composes in her head with other Linguistics Charms, even those with the written-only keyword.

Heaven-Drawing Discipline

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mind-Scribing Method

The Essence of the universe flowing through her mind, the Solar draws on a library of words as deep as the celestial vault. This Charm magnifies the Solar's ability to compose massive volumes of complex information, allowing her to complete difficult manuscripts with increased speed. This Charm supplements an extended roll to produce such work (see p. XX), automatically reducing the interval by one unit, from years to seasons, seasons to months, and months to weeks. While this Charm greatly speeds the Solar's efforts, it does not directly influence the mechanical speed with which she lays down words—her speed is increased by a streamlining of thought processes and an amplification of the mental faculties that surround vocabulary and dissemination skills, rather than an increase of manual dexterity. The Exalt must use this Charm against each interval she wishes to shorten, and must be able to dedicate the required time and writing instruments to the task. If this Charm is used in combination with its prerequisite, ignore this Charm's Willpower cost.

A repurchase at Essence 4+ allows the Exalt to pay twelve motes, one Willpower, to reduce an interval by two units. Reducing the work of years to months, or seasons to weeks is a challenging feat if the Solar does all the work mentally; if she is physically writing, she may need Whirling Brush Method to keep up with the speed at which she can process ideas. The Lawgiver may not yet reduce production time of a tome to less than a unit of weeks.

A second repurchase at Essence 5+ allows the Exalt to pay fifteen motes, one Willpower, to reduce an interval by a full three units of time. An Exalt with this Charm can reduce the time it takes to produce work from weeks to days, and from days to hours. If the Lawgiver is writing as she works, she will not get the full speed of her creative process without the use of Whirling Brush Method, and even then, she may be seen to spend several sleepless nights constructing single massive works.

Swift Sage's Eye

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One text

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Recollection Discipline

Mind quickened by flowing Essence, the Exalt reads at superhuman speed. She can read a scroll as quickly as she can unroll it, and a book as fast as she can turn the pages—approximately three pages per second.

Flowing Elegant Hand

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Linguistics 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute, Written-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Drawing on the Essence of her formidable mind, the Exalt perfects her arguments and sharpens her words, so that her writing is pristine, flawless and precise. This Charm supplements written Linguistics actions with double 9s.

At Linguistics 5+, Essence 3+, she may repurchase this Charm, learning a three mote version that doubles 8s. This repurchase requires that she know Flawless Brush Discipline.

At Linguistics 5+, Essence 5+, she may purchase this Charm a third time, learning a four mote version that grants double 7s.

Twisted Words Technique

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Elegant Hand, Letter-Within-A-Letter Technique, Subtle Speech Method

Concentrating on the formation of sounds and the weight of certain meanings, the Solar shapes her words like a weapon. This Charm is a mental attack disguised as social influence, entailing a written or spoken action made with (Manipulation + [Linguistics or another relevant Social Ability]). The Solar must target an Intimacy when using this Charm—exploiting something the character cares about to get him to accept influence. However, upon success, the target will feel overwhelmingly compelled to act in a way that is the opposite of what she agreed to, as if her Intimacy had been inverted. For example, a Solar convinces an Immaculate priest of the evils of the harlotry in Great Forks, convincing her to shun the temple prostitutes. The priest agrees vehemently, and then goes to live with them. Likewise, a Solar forced to brainwash a Circle member could outwardly torture him, while actually strengthening his Intimacies of love for her and his understanding of why his suffering is necessary. Once successful, persuasion caused by this Charm can't be resisted with Willpower until another character successfully dissuades the target from a chosen course of action (p. XX), and upon doing so, the target must pay (Solar's Essence) Willpower to break free. Intimacies tainted by this Charm are more insidious—they are both harder to root out, but also indecipherable from what a character truly believes. While Transcendent Hero's Meditation (p. XX) can shatter persuasion caused by this Charm, it can't change the Solar's Intimacies, though it does make her realize how she's been influenced.

This Charm doesn't actually invert Intimacies, though it ultimately causes characters to behave as if it did. When used to instill beliefs, this Charm may strengthen or weaken Intimacies as a normal instill action would. The difference is that it appears to strengthen an Intimacy when it is actually weakening it, or strengthens an Intimacy that it appears to weaken. For example, "You certainly look noble in purple," convinces someone that he looks like a fool in purple, while "I can't stand you, you're insufferable," only increases his desire to be around you. Just as a normal instill action, it may also be used to create contradictory Intimacies, though it appears to create an Intimacy which agrees. For example, one might get a monk with a Defining Intimacy for the Immaculate Order to agree that temple harlotry in Great Forks is bad far more easily than one might convince him that it's good. By using this Charm to convince him that it's bad, once convinces him to *behave* as if it's good, giving him an Intimacy that, in some way, contradicts his core belief in the Immaculate Faith.

Unbreakable Fascination Method

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Linguistics 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Twisted Words Technique

The Solar speaks in such a magnetic and engaging fashion that those who can hear her become powerless to do anything but listen. Roll the Solar's (Manipulation + Linguistics) with (Essence) automatic successes, ignoring the penalty for group influence. The Solar may not exploit targeted Intimacies to lower Resolve, nor may Intimacies be invoked to raise Resolve against this effect. Those who fail their Resolve checks are entranced by the Solar's voice and are held enraptured until she ceases speaking for more than a few seconds. Even characters who don't understand the Solar's language can succumb to this power.

This Charm may also be used to ensnare and captivate a reader: if a character reads so much as a single line of writing reinforced with Unbreakable Fascination Method, he must engage his Resolve, and if he fails, he must continue reading what the Solar has written in its entirety, though this Charm may only hold a reader rapt for (Essence) minutes.

This Charm may not be resisted with Willpower. Attack cancels the Charm, but only *direct* physical danger disrupts the effect. A brave or suicidal Exalt could keep a platoon of guards with her in a burning building until it was fully engulfed, but they would not stand there listening as the flaming timbers started crashing down around them.

Lore

Wyld-Dispelling Prana

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver is the embodiment of order. With her knowledge and will, chaos is cast asunder. Through use of this Charm, the Exalt may fix her notice on any object, structure, or character (including herself) at the moment it is first affected by the twisting power of the Wyld. The Solar's solid knowledge flows out in a rush of Essence, sluicing away the Wyld's influence. In addition, roll ([the Solar's Mental Attribute] + Lore) with (Essence) non-Charm bonus dice, with a difficulty based on the source of the warping, with the bordermarches being difficulty 3 and the deep Wyld being difficulty 5. Any extra successes on this roll equates to a number of turns (in combat) or minutes (out of combat) for which the target of Wyld-Dispelling Prana becomes immune to further twisting. This Charm may affect a character at up to medium range, and requires multiple uses to protect objects or structures larger than a horse.

Special activation rules: After using this Charm once in a scene, the Solar does not need to pay to use it again unless she fails the subsequent Lore roll; she may continue to direct sluicing bolts of Essence at targets for free, until the subsequent Lore roll fails to produce any successes.

Chaos-Repelling Pattern

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Dispelling Prana

By asserting her existence against the ravages of chaos, the Solar makes her person sacrosanct. Through use of this Charm, the Solar protects an area around herself out to short range in every direction. Characters within this area of focus cannot be twisted by the Wyld, nor can their minds be torn asunder by its influence. Chaos-Repelling Pattern also forces the environment within its area of effect to behave with the physical laws of Creation. The ground will not transform beneath the Solar's feet, nor will she suddenly fall into the sky. However, this Charm does nothing to stop creatures of the Wyld from attacking the Solar, nor will it do anything to change their composition. At the end of an hour, if the Exalt chooses to reactivate this Charm, ignore the Willpower cost.

Harmonious Academic Methodology

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar's mind covers a spectrum of mastered topics. With this Charm, add the Solar's Essence in non-Charm automatic successes to any Lore roll that involves a Lore specialty. In addition, the player may add an additional Lore specialty to her list of Lore topics at the end of each story. The Storyteller may veto any particular topic, in which case the player is allowed to choose another specialty that's more acceptable. Finally, at any point in which the Solar succeeds at a moderately or extremely difficult roll to introduce or challenge a fact (p. XX), the player

may request to add a related topic to the Solar's library of known topics. As with all other topics, this is allowable only at the Storyteller's discretion.

First Knowledge's Grace

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Academic Methodology

Affecting a calm and patient demeanor, the Solar is able to project the light of her knowledge into the darkest of places. While affecting this Charm, the Solar ignores all penalties to teach someone. She can educate a person who is deemed medically incapable of learning, such as someone who is developmentally disabled, or someone who has suffered traumatic injury or privation by the Fair Folk. This Charm does not affect social influence rolls to persuade a character of something.

Flowing Mind Prana

Cost: 1xp+; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: First Knowledge's Grace

The Lawgiver is a master instructor, capable of passing on truths and talents as surely as the sun passes daylight. To activate this Charm, the Solar commits a number of experience points from her own unspent experience total. She may confer these experience points to another character by delivering a lesson she has constructed, allowing her to train a character's Attributes or Abilities up to a rating of 5, even if this puts the character beyond her own rating. However, for each three experience points the Solar spends on the character in question, that character must adopt, at the Minor level, an Intimacy the Solar holds. The Solar may choose which Intimacy is conferred. For each three experience points conferred, the Solar may confer individual Intimacies, or she may increase a single Intimacy's intensity from Minor to Major, or from Major to Defining, so long as she holds that Intimacy at the Major or Defining level herself. Intimacies conferred in this manner cannot be decayed for any reason until the character has performed at least one task equal to that Intimacy's intensity (p. XX).

The Solar has sole discretion over who is able to benefit from the experience points on offer. Refer to training times on page XX to determine how long each training session should take. At the end of each story, the Solar may roll a number of dice equal to experience points spent on this Charm, regaining a number of experience equal to her successes, but not beyond the total amount of experience she expended in training. A Solar with Socialize Charms related to the creation of personas may use this Charm while in the guise of a persona, but she must pay from both her main unspent experience total and the persona's unspent experience total to do so. Lastly, the Solar cannot benefit from this or any other experience-granting training Charm in the same story in which she uses it to benefit someone else.

Hidden Wisdom Bestowal

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Mind Prana

A Solar is not safe to pass on her knowledge. This Charm supplements an effort to train characters with the prerequisite, disguising subversive or dangerous lessons as something they're not. The Lawgiver might appear to be giving a lesson on Immaculate catechisms while actually training itinerants to resist the Realm; a lesson on eroticism might hide insights into demonology. Only the targets of the Solar's training can understand the true meaning of her lesson.

Tireless Learner Method

Cost: 1xp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Mind Prana

In a flash of insight, the student becomes the master. As per Flowing Mind Prana, when the Solar rolls to regain experience points at the end of the story, she may pay one experience point to activate this Charm, reflecting on her student's progress. This allows her to reroll all non-successes on the roll to regain experience a single time. This Charm explicitly allows the Solar to gain back more experience points than she invested in training.

Legendary Scholar's Curriculum

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Mind Prana

This Charm upgrades the prerequisite, allowing the Solar to offer the committed experience points to (Essence) different characters, vastly reducing her cost to train multiple specialists. She may also offer half the amount (rounded down) to (Essence * 5) additional characters. Bear in mind that the Lawgiver still has to commit sufficient time to training all of these characters, or the experience points cannot be spent to improve their traits. With this Charm, the Solar can confer Intimacies she does not personally hold.

Selfsame Master Instructor

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Scholar's Curriculum

This Charm upgrades Flowing Mind Prana, allowing the Solar to use her experience points to teach a single character any spell or Charm she knows, so long as the character qualifies for that spell or Charm. The Lawgiver may not teach Sidereal Martial Arts.

Essence-Lending Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Lore 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver fortifies her allies with actions as surely as with words. Upon touching a target and paying three motes, the Solar may transfer up to (Essence * 3) motes from her mote pool to her target's. In addition, once per scene she may roll Wits + Lore, generating a number of motes equal to her successes and awarding them to her target. If the target cannot accept all the motes transferred by Essence-Lending Method he has until his next action to spend them before they dissipate.

Will-Bolstering Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Lending Method

With this Charm, the Lawgiver may bolster the mind and spirit of her charge, lifting him up with inner strength. Upon paying this Charm's cost, the Exalt may transfer up to her Essence in temporary Willpower to another character. In addition, roll a single die and add any successes to the recipient's Willpower. The Exalt must always transfer at least one point of Willpower from herself to her target when using this Charm. Will-Bolstering Method can explicitly increase a character past his maximum Willpower, and even past a rating of ten.

Wound-Accepting Technique

Cost: 3m per health level, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Will-Bolstering Method

The Lawgiver can channel her very life-force into another. The Solar must touch her target to use this technique, healing up to (Essence) damaged health levels in her target and taking a like amount of damage herself. It is possible for an Exalt to kill herself with this Charm.

Injury-Forcing Technique

Cost: 5m per health level, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Accepting Technique

This Charm functions as its prerequisite, but in reverse: the Solar can force up to (Essence) damaged health levels onto a target, healing her own health levels in turn. When done in combat, this is a difficulty 5 gambit done with the Solar's chosen hand-to-hand combat Ability.

Essence-Draining Touch

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Injury-Forcing Technique

The Exalt may draw the Essence from a target with a touch. If the target possesses a mote pool, the Exalt may touch him and pay one Willpower to roll (Wits + Lore) against his Resolve (unmodified by Intimacies), stealing motes equal to the extra successes from his peripheral mote pool (defaulting to personal if their peripheral Essence is depleted). In combat, this is a difficulty 5 gambit executed with a hand-to-hand combat Ability of the Exalt's choice.

Force-Draining Whisper

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Draining Touch

The Solar's knowledge of the world's secrets allows her to gainsay any force that would strike her down. As she is struck with a **decisive** attack, the Solar glances into the underpinnings of the universe, and utters a cipher she sees there. Roll the Exalt's (Wits + Lore). Each success removes a single die of damage from the attack and converts it to a point of Initiative granted to the Lawgiver. Solars have been seen to walk unharmed through direct hits from offensive sorcery through use of this Charm. Force-Draining Whisper may be used once per scene, but is reset if the Solar or any of her allies reaches their last undamaged health level. At Essence 4+, the Solar may use this Charm to protect an ally at up to long range.

Will-Shattering Illusion

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Chaos-Repelling Pattern, Force-Draining Whisper

Drawing from the deepest well of her existence, the Solar conjures forth a riddle or apparition from her ancient Essence and channels it against a single target. Roll the Solar's (Wits + Lore) with (Essence) bonus dice. The successes on this roll create the difficulty of the riddle or illusion posed to her target. The character must answer this effect with his own Intelligence or (Wits + Lore). If he fails the roll, his mind is momentarily shattered, and he loses two points of temporary Willpower. When done in combat, the target also loses four Initiative, awarded to the

Solar. If the target has equal or greater Essence than the Exalt, the Solar also gains a point of Willpower. This Charm may be used once per scene.

Essence-Twining Method

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Draining Touch

The Exalt may touch a willing target who has an active mote pool, and may use this Charm to switch a number of his motes from peripheral to personal motes and vice versa. Roll a free full (Intelligence + Lore) Excellency with (Essence) automatic non-Charm successes to determine how many motes are converted. The Solar may not use this Charm on herself until Essence 5+, but if Lore is her Supernal Ability, waive this requirement.

Essence Font Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Will-Bolstering Method

The Solar becomes a conduit for tremendous power. This Charm turns the prerequisite and Essence-Lending Method into Reflexive Charms, allowing them to be combined. Furthermore, when they are combined, ignore the three mote cost of Essence-Lending Method and the Willpower cost of Will-Bolstering Method. In addition, each roll in this cascade gains recurring 10s. That is, if a 10 appears, roll another die. Keep rolling dice until no further 10s appear.

Immanent Solar Glory

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Essence Font Technique

The Solar draws strength from her own recurring Essence. Any time the Solar rolls a 10 for any Lore-based roll, or any Lore Charm, she gains a mote of Essence.

Flowing Essence Conversion

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Immanent Solar Glory

At the iconic anima level, the Solar may draw in her anima, internalizing it and then pushing it outward in a surge of Essence. Doing so returns her anima to the dim level, and resets the once-per-scene effect of Essence-Lending Method. This Charm's cost never generates anima display.

Power-Restoring Invocation

Cost: 2i; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Essence Conversion

When her anima is blazing, the Solar sees the flows of power clearly. While in combat, she may use this Charm to release her iconic anima. The blazing tendrils of her power race in every direction, striking her allies and drawing new power to them. The range of this effect is unlimited, within the same scene. Roll the Solar's (Perception + Lore) with (Essence) automatic successes. Convert generated successes into motes of Essence and divide the awards amongst applicable allies. Using this Charm returns the Solar's anima to the dim level. At Essence 5+, remove the Perilous keyword. If the Solar has set Lore as her Supernal Ability, waive this requirement.

Surging Inner Fire

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Power-Restoring Invocation

The stresses of mental violence draw power from the recesses of the Solar's mind. Once per scene, the Solar may use this Charm to restore a number of motes based on her current temporary Willpower. For each permanent Willpower dot she possesses *above* her current temporary Willpower score, she gains two motes of Essence. When used in combat, this Charm adds an extra mote to the Solar's per-round regeneration, upping it from five to six. This effect lasts until she is struck with an attack that does successful **withering** damage. This Charm is reset by earning three or more points of temporary Willpower through stunts, Charms, and so on.

Surging Essence Flow

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Essence Conversion

The Solar's mastery of Essence flows allows her to guide the movements of pure spirit force. This Charm enhances Essence-Lending Method and Will-Bolstering Method permanently, allowing both Charms to be used on targets at short range, without having to touch them. This Charm also lowers the cost of its prerequisite to eight motes.

Seal of Infinite Wisdom

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Surging Essence Flow

The Lawgiver unbinds a lost vision of glory and rises to greater power. The next time the Exalt stands to benefit from Immanent Solar Glory, that Charm now counts 8s, 9s and 10s for the purposes of restoring essence. Also upon using this Charm, the Solar's anima automatically increases by one level, an effect which cannot be muted by any means. This Charm may be used once per scene, but can be reset by a two point stunt which may include the activation of this Charm. At Essence 5+, this Charm becomes Reflexive and may be used during phases of Wyld-Shaping Technique.

Incalculable Flowing Mind

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seal of Infinite Wisdom

Once per story, the Solar may use this Charm to channel an inner wellspring of restorative knowledge. This Charm awards three points of temporary Willpower to the Solar, and may increase her current Willpower past her permanent rating.

Unstoppable Magnus Approach

Cost: 5m, 10i; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Incalculable Flowing Mind, Surging Inner Fire

With mental skill beyond comparison, the Solar deftly converts the flow of combat into restorative power. In combat, the Lawgiver may use this Charm to gain one point of temporary Willpower.

On Unstoppable Magnus Approach

> Note that any use of this Charm which causes the character to be roleplayed as if she's aware of Initiative as a resource is illegal per the rules on page XX. This means that if the player defers attacks against an opponent, prolonging combat in order to restore a character's Willpower, this Charm doesn't work.

Power-Awarding Prana

Cost: 5m + 1m per 1xp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute, Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Essence Font Technique, Selfsame Master Instructor

The Solar can uplift another Lawgiver, making him a vector for her power. With a touch, the Exalt grants the target a Solar Charm he qualifies for, even if the initiating Exalt does not know the Charm herself. If the initiating Solar has a higher Essence rating than her target, or has selected Lore as her Supernal Ability, the recipient may learn Charms at one Essence higher than his current rating.

To use this Charm, the Solar commits five motes plus a number of motes equal to the experience points cost the target would have to pay to learn the Charm. The recipient pays the activation costs of such Charms from his own mote pools.

At any time she wishes, the initiating Solar may end commitment to this effect, causing knowledge of the conferred Charm to fade from the recipient's mind. Power-Awarding Prana can never be forcefully dispelled or prematurely ended by any sort of magic. At Essence 5+, the Solar can use this Charm on herself. If Lore is her Supernal Ability, waive this requirement. If the target is Essence 5 and beyond, Power-Awarding Prana does not allow the training of Charms at higher Essence ratings than the character's current maximum. For example, an Essence 5 Solar cannot teach herself Essence 6 Charms, but she can still confer Essence 5 Charms to an Essence 4 character.

Order-Affirming Blow

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The ravages of the Wyld and alterations to the Loom of Fate can be reversed by the Solar Exalted. With this Charm, the Solar can shatter the twisting effects of magic and the Wyld, stripping away all such effects and restoring a target to his natural state. If the target does not want to be touched, this can be executed socially with a successful Larceny vs. Awareness contest to clandestinely touch the target, or if the target is a bit more incautious, the Solar may attempt to seduce him in order to deliver the touch. In combat, this Charm is a difficulty 5 gambit made with the Solar's chosen hand-to-hand combat Ability. Fair Folk touched by this Charm are not undone, but experience a temporary transformation lasting (Solar's Essence) scenes, whose severity is based on an Intimacy the Fair Folk has for the Solar, as well as its context. If the Fair Folk has no Intimacy for the Solar, the Storyteller may decide how it is changed. The Fair Folk's player may also veto any changes to his character that makes him virtually unplayable or helpless.

Bottomless Wellspring Approach

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Academic Methodology

The Solar is a living font of vital knowledge. This Charm enhances rolls to introduce or challenge facts. She can now roll to establish a fact whenever her knowledge of historical events, cultural norms, local myths and rumors, number systems, etc. is challenged. If the topic in question falls into the Solar's Lore expertise—that is, the background reflected by her Lore rating—or any of her Lore specialties, she gains one automatic success on the roll, and any extra successes she generates are doubled. However, the criteria under which Storytellers may veto introduced facts remain unchanged.

Lore-Inducing Concentration

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bottomless Wellspring Approach

The Solar draws the legend of Creation from deep within her consciousness. This Charm supplements an attempt to introduce or challenge a fact (p. XX), awarding one automatic success and rerolling 6s until 6s no longer appear. If the Exalt has learned Immanent Solar Glory (p. XX), the Solar may always roll to establish her knowledge, even if the Storyteller determines she succeed without a roll.

Truth-Rendering Gaze

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Lore-Inducing Concentration

By focusing intently on a subject, the Solar can produce a sudden insight. This Charm is a ([Mental Attribute] + Lore) based read intentions action against a difficulty based on whether the subject of this examination falls into the Solar's area of expertise. This read intentions action can be used on an object to reveal its purpose and function, such as with a mysterious artifact, though it does not reveal how to use it. It can also be used on geography which the Solar has studied, to give the Lawgiver or the person she is advising (Solar's Essence) non-Charm bonus dice for Survival or War rolls for the rest of the scene. If she is a student of Shogunate architecture, she could tell that a dilapidated structure being used for a market was a Shogunate-era Immaculate temple. If she is a mathematician, the numbers speak to her; she may solve a complex proof in her head, in a matter of seconds. With this Charm, the Solar polymath awakens the world from its dark slumber.

Heaven-Turning Calculations

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Truth-Rendering Gaze + Any two Lore Charms

This Charm is special, in that it requires the Solar's Lore rating to reflect a background of intense mathematic study. With this Charm, the Exalt's study of number theory and proofs unlocks her ability to approach complex problems mathematically. Add (Essence) non-Charm bonus dice to her Craft, sorcery, and speculative Bureaucracy rolls, to Lore rolls which require logic or mathematics, and to any use of Wyld-Shaping Technique.

Prophet of Seventeen Cycles

Cost: 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Truth-Rendering Gaze

The Lawgiver's knowledge of the past and her understanding of physical laws allows her to make nigh-flawless general predictions. To use this Charm, the Exalt must spend a day studying a subject from an authoritative or definitive source. Her player may then make a pronouncement against an ongoing project based on knowledge her studies reveal, creating bonuses for those who act in accordance with her accurate predictions, and penalties for those who go against them. For example, after reading about the patterns of weather, hostile elemental activity and famine in Jiara during the summer months over the last thousand years, she predicts that Mnemon will not attack Jiaran rebels until fall at the earliest, and will instead spend the summer months consolidating her forces while conserving water and gathering resources for a winter campaign. If Mnemon enacts a project to consolidate her forces while gathering resources until winter, the Storyteller should consider Mnemon's project vastly more successful and easier to complete than otherwise. If Mnemon instead decides to invade Jiaran rebel territory in the summer, her invasion will be met with project difficulties, such as resource shortages, elemental attacks, inclement weather, and more specifically, mechanical penalties to the first War rolls her generals make in the conflict. Conversely, if Mnemon harbors her forces and the Jiaran rebels instead try to attack her, it is their commanders who will suffer penalties to their opening War rolls. Once the Solar has made a prediction, it may not be cancelled with a conflicting use of this or similar Charms, though it may be counteracted with Sidereal Astrology or similar powerful fate-bending magic. Though this Charm has an instant duration, the motes spent activating it are committed until the Exalt has had a full night's rest.

God-King's Shrike (Dogstar Ruminations)

Cost: 30m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Prophet of Seventeen Cycles + any three Lore Charms

Sage-emperors returned from their long slumber, the Solars' great beards have shattered their stone tables. In their great and terrible throes, they may call upon the forces of doom in order to save their world. The Solar must spend a full week contemplating and researching a region's history, climate, geography, etc. before using this Charm. Casting her gaze toward a foe, the Solar draws deep from the well of her experience, her knowledge of this life connecting to her knowledge of lives before. Through this Charm she reaches realization of a certain calamity that

must happen, and her consciousness is recognized, in turn, by the universe. In this instance, what the Solar realizes she causes to happen. Roll the Solar's (Intelligence + Lore) against difficulty 5. A basic success is tantamount to the Solar predicting a natural disaster that has relatively damning effects: flash floods ruin roads, a drought destroys crops, an earthquake disables a vitally important manse, and so on. Two to four extra successes results in a more devastating cataclysm: a tsunami wipes out a fleet of battleships; a series of earthquakes devastate the infrastructures of several cities and roads; a volcano detonates and wipes a city entirely off the map, etc. Five or more extra successes equates to the Solar predicting one of the seven great dooms: a star falls and annihilates a region; a behemoth rises from its slumber and plows through a number of predicted cities; an army of the dead spills from its Shadowland during Calibration to wreak havoc, and so on. Though this Charm's duration is instant, the motes spent activating it are committed for one week. This Charm may only be used once per season.

Sacred Relic Understanding

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Truth-Rendering Gaze

By examining a relic of the past, the Lawgiver can unlock the secret of how to use it. Using this Charm requires that the Solar touch an artifact whose purpose or use is unknown, rolling (Intelligence + Lore) against a difficulty of the artifact's rating. If successful, the Exalt gains a vision that reveals how to activate or employ the artifact. If the object or structure's rating is N/A, the difficulty is 8-10, and rather than revealing exactly how the construct functions, the Solar only learns a fact about it which brings her closer to understanding it. This latter use can only be employed once per story.

Wake the Sleeper

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sacred Relic Understanding + Any two Lore Charms

The Solar can unlock the true potential of an artifact. Grasping an artifact to which she is attuned, and which is capable of Evocations, the Lawgiver sends her Essence surging through the relic's chakras, merging its spirit with her own. Roll the Solar's ([Intelligence or Wits] + Lore) against a difficulty of (the object's rating + 2), or 10 if it's N/A. If the roll gains at least one success, the Solar automatically unlocks one of the artifact's Evocations without spending experience points. If the Solar rolls successes in excess of the difficulty, she unlocks half the extra successes (rounded down) in Evocations. This Charm may be used once per story, and may not be used again on the same artifact until an amount of experience has been invested in it equal to the cost of the Evocations that were unlocked for free. The Exalt may not use this Charm to aid another character in awakening Evocations until she is Essence 5+. Waive this requirement if Lore is her Supernal Ability.

Wyld-Shaping Technique

Cost: 15m, 1wp, 2xp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Chaos-Repelling Pattern, Order-Affirming Blow, Truth-Rendering Gaze

Of all the Chosen, the Solar Exalted alone have the power to stem the tides of chaos with their force of will. This Charm represents a Solar whose mind flows with a command of knowledge so potent it can reverse the decay of Creation. Channeling endless lore through unsurpassed Essence, the Solar stands at the edge of the world and forces shape into the howling teeth of the storm.

System: Through use of this Charm, the Solar can fashion the raw forces of chaos into practically anything—so long as her mind is able to conceptualize the reality of her desire and force it to take shape. This Charm occurs in and depends on phases to accomplish such a feat. Wyld-Shaping Technique consists of a dramatic action lasting about a minute, in which the Solar forces her will upon the Wyld, pays the cost of the Charm, and makes an (Intelligence + Lore) roll against a specified difficulty. Each time she succeeds at this roll, a phase is completed. Some things can be shaped in a single phase. Others require that the Solar continue to use Wyld-Shaping Technique, phase after phase, in order to reach an appropriate phase on which to accomplish her goal. Each time she reaches a new phase and repays the cost of the Charm, her results from the previous phase are dissolved and reshaped. Essentially, the Solar must shape and reshape the Wyld in order to create larger, more powerful, or more specific results.

The base difficulty of using Wyld-Shaping Technique is 5. At each new phase, the difficulty increases by one. Therefore, at phase three the difficulty would be 7, and phase six would require overcoming a difficulty of 10. During each phase, the Solar must remain near the relative epicenter of her shaping action. She can defend and attack, and she can move in response to her own environmental shaping, but she cannot engage in other extended actions such as sorcery. If she is incapacitated or fails the difficulty roll, the consequences are severe. She loses the cost of her Charm, including any invested experience points, and the shaping action fails completely. Moreover, she will experience a backlash if she botches, provoking an immune response from the Wyld—whatever she was trying to shape will turn against her and try to strike her down. The higher the phase at which this occurs, the more powerful the Wyld's response will be.

Considerations: In order to activate this Charm, the Solar must be standing at the absolute border of the middlemarches, facing the deep Wyld, or must otherwise be within the deep Wyld itself. Wyld-Shaping Technique requires the pure, inchoate resonance of chaos to work; the bordermarches and middlemarches of Creation are too solid to shape. Therefore, the more complex or large a thing the Solar wishes to shape, the deeper into the deep Wyld she needs to go. It would suffice for her to shape a gold ingot at Creation's rim, but to raise an island of Creation from the Wyld, she would need to travel several miles into chaos.

Use of Wyld-Shaping Technique automatically ends use of Chaos-Repelling Pattern in every direction around the Solar for three range bands. While the Exalt is employing this Charm, the Wyld is suborned by her supernal will. As with Chaos-Repelling Pattern, her immediate atmosphere will remain stable, and will adhere to the laws of physics for the Charm's duration. Unlike Chaos-Repelling Pattern, the Lawgiver can be affected by body- and soul-shaping magic while working this Charm, unless she is under the aegis of Charms such as Integrity-Protecting

Prana or Wyld-Dispelling Prana. As with Chaos-Repelling Pattern, the Solar can still be attacked by Wyld-spawned denizens while using Wyld-Shaping Technique. In fact, use of this Charm almost certainly guarantees that she will be.

Encounter Roll: At the start of each phase, after the Charm's cost has been paid but before the player has made the Charm's roll, there is an encounter roll to determine whether the Solar is challenged by denizens of the Wyld. Roll a single die and add the Solar's Essence to the result to determine the outcome. At each subsequent phase, remove 1 from the roll result. 8+: No encounter. 7: A small group (3-5) of weak enemies such as hobgoblins or pumpkin-men attacks. 6: A more powerful Fair Folk appears with a number of weaker minions. 5: A raksha hunting party (3-5 members) with a number of hunting beasts and minions appear. 4: As 5, but the force is slightly larger and led by a raksha noble. Alternately, a powerful Wyld-spawned monster appears. 3: A number of powerful Fair Folk (hannya, noble raksha or otherwise) or other Wyld denizens emerge. Alternately, multiple Wyld-spawned monsters emerge. 2: The Solar is swarmed by hundreds of weaker Fair Folk or other Wyld denizens, joined by a number of powerful fae creatures; alternately, a dozen monsters are shaped by the Wyld to go on the attack. 1-0: A behemoth stirs from its slumber to attack the Solar.

Phases: The Solar must reach a certain phase of Wyld-Shaping Technique in order to raise substance from chaos. For example, if a shaping project must be completed on phase two, the phase is successfully completed after the Exalt succeeds at the Charm's roll.

Land: The Solar can create non-specific land much more easily than she can raise very specific tracts. It is much easier for her to call forth massive amounts of general land than it is for her induct very specific geography, and smaller, more specific geography is much more difficult than larger masses of land simply exuded from her formidable unconscious. For non-specific land, she can create (Essence x10) square miles of land in the first phase, and every successive phase multiplies this by three until phase eight. From phase eight and onward, each successive phase adds (Essence x1000) square miles.

Additionally, the Solar can spend extra successes in each phase to add ten square miles to the land's area at a rate of two successes per ten square miles. After phase seven, the cost decreases to one success per one hundred square miles.

With non-specific land, the climate, geography, wildlife, spirits, and sentient beings that exist there will correlate with the nearest Pole. Until phase three, no demesnes are guaranteed to form, though previously generated land can still be geomantically sculpted to produce demesnes. After phase three, non-specific land will generate at least one additional minor demesne each phase, and any non-specific land created at phase six or beyond is guaranteed to have a number of major and minor demesnes. The Solar may spend three successes in *any* phase to roll a single die; success guarantee a demesne forms, with 7s and 8s equaling a minor demesne of appropriate aspect, 9s equaling a major demesne of appropriate aspect, and a 10 equaling a major demesne with an aspect specified by the Solar. The Solar may not add more demesnes to a created landmass than she has spent on upgrades to its area (ie, she must spend two extra successes on increasing land size in order to add an extra demesne). The larger a landmass the Solar is able to create, the more natural resources it will have. The more demesnes it has, the greater the chance it will contain veins of the five magical materials.

The Lawgiver may not begin to create very specific land until phase four; she must first generate three phases of non-specific land in order to generate specific land, at which point she starts

completely over, losing all generated land, creatures, and demesnes, generating (Essence x5) square miles in the first phase, and multiplying the preceding area by five in each successive phase until phase seven. In phase seven the area increases as above, at a rate of (Essence x1000) square miles per phase. Increasing square miles in this calculation costs three successes per ten square miles, and the cost of demesne generation is four successes per demesne. With specific land, the Solar can designate the kind of terrain, resources or lack of them, the kind of climate and the kind of denizens. The Solar may specify the aspect of all minor demesnes created by rolls or those that naturally occur at later phases. At phase six, she can designate the kinds of sentient creatures living in her world, and such creatures will have both positive and negative Intimacies toward her. She has no control over the spirits inducted into her reality, but each that intrudes on her domain at this phase or beyond will automatically have an Intimacy centered on her of the Storyteller's choosing.

Legendary Demesne: Without Charms specifically dedicated to the creation of legendary demesnes, a Solar must succeed at a phase seven or higher roll for specific land to create a legendary demesne, and she must have at least five major, roll-generated demesnes to do so. If successful, she loses all of her roll-generated demesnes and all minor demesnes, and half her land's area, to shape a legendary demesne. She may then start building land mass again at phase one, using the above rules.

Mundane Wealth: Creating wealth is a process similar to creating land. Each resources value increase requires that the Solar reach a certain phase by synthesizing appropriate precursor materials. For example, a silver dirham (worth a bit over Resources 2) is required in order to make five silver talents (Resources 3).

At phase one, the Solar can make wealth in excess of Resources 2. Examples of such wealth include a silver dirham, a single well-cut diamond, or half a dozen gold ingots. Extra successes can be used to personalize or specialize such material wealth, giving exquisite, exotic shape and cut to a single diamond or fashioning a number of ingots into jewelry at a rate of two successes per transformation. At phase two, Resources 3 mundane wealth can be created; at phase three, materials in excess of Resources 3 can be created; at phase four, Resources 4 wealth can be created, and at phase five, wealth in excess of Resources 4 but below Resources 5 can be created. A phase six transformation of materials is required to create Resources 5 wealth. Phases in excess of six do not greatly increase the wealth generated by Wyld-Shaping Technique.

Five Magical Materials: In order to create an instance of one of the five magical materials, the Solar must create a minor demesne of the appropriate aspect using the rules above. She may then completely obliviate the land and attached demesnes in order to create enough ore to process it into a single mina in phase one. A phase two synthesis lets her turn the approximated magical material into a single bar of the same type of material; a phase three synthesis allows her to create as much as a talent, while a phase four synthesis allows her to create two talents, and so on. It takes approximately five talents of a magical material to build a grand daiklave.

Artifacts and Manses: Artifacts, manses, and certain other wonders require special Charms in order to create with Wyld-Shaping Technique.

Everything Else: Wyld-Shaping Technique works through a process of conceptual graduation. In order to raise a fortress, the Solar must first create land to stand it on. The Solar may create anything within the realm of possibility, her logic, or her know-how by following these basic rules. To create a mighty warship, she must raise a cradle to set it on in phase one, or otherwise

must have created a body of water to float it in using specific land. The boat is then created in phase two. The deeper into the phases of specific land she goes, the more warships she is able to raise in a single phase, so long as she continues to grow the body of water with each successive phase. A Solar who spends the effort and experience points to create an ocean can also raise up an armada on its waters. The creation of land can be foregone in instances where the Solar can conceptualize some other base for beginning her project, such as the cradle for a ship, but the most powerful expressions of Wyld-Shaping Technique work by way of graduating from one concept to the next. It is much easier to create a number of warships by first creating the waters they sail upon. This process is reversed in order to build even more insane constructs. To raise up marvels such as golem manufactories, the Solar must catabolize something much more powerful, such as a legendary demesne.

Fate of the Middlemarches

> What happens to the middlemarches and bordermarches of the Wyld if a Solar raises the borders of Creation? In some cases, these border regions weaken over time, and eventually the Wyld influence fades. In other cases, the power of the Solar's shaping completely dispels the Wyld from these regions. Yet in some further cases, the Wyld remains strong in these pockets of unreality. The result should be decided on a case-by-case basis, and should be determined by the intention of the Solar, as well as the phase at which she concludes Wyld-Shaping Technique and the amount of success with which she completes it.

Wyld-Forging Focus

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Shaping Technique

With this Charm, the Lawgiver is capable of greater works of Wyld Shaping. Each time she uses the prerequisite on a new shaping attempt, she starts at phase two.

Demiurgic Suspiration

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Forging Focus

The Solar learns to draw Essence from her nascent world to empower greater acts of Creation. After each successfully-completed phase, roll (Essence + completed phase) dice. Each success restores two motes of Essence. This bonus stacks with Immanent Solar Glory.

Savant of Nine Glories

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Demiurgic Suspiration

The Solar is forever transformed by the knowledge that has awakened inside her. This Charm permanently lowers the mote cost of Wyld-Shaping Technique by five motes.

Wyld Cauldron Mastery

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Shaping Technique

The Lawgiver's greater understanding increases her power to more easily shape the Wyld. This Charm grants (Essence) automatic successes to each phase of Wyld-Shaping Technique.

Sevenfold Savant Mantle

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld Cauldron Mastery

The Solar is a force of living lore that compels the Wyld into shape. Once per attempted Wyld-Shaping Technique, the Exalt may ignore the Willpower cost of the Charm, and apply a free full Lore Excellency to the phase.

Power Beyond Reason

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Sevenfold Savant Mantle

The Solar may call upon her vast stores of knowledge to greatly enhance Wyld-Shaping Technique at phase three or beyond, aiding her roll with double 8s. She may call upon this power during one phase per attempt. A repurchase at Essence 5+ allows her to call on this power during an additional phase, aiding it instead with double 7s.

Hero-Induction Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Shaping Technique

The Solar can teach the land to hone its masters. With use of this Charm, each time the Exalt uses Wyld-Shaping Technique to build a place of trade, practice, or service, her creation will also

produce a specialist to work there. This works through a system of conceptual graduation: if she shapes forest lands, the people who rise from her working will be forest people. If she creates a blacksmith's forge, one of the arisen mortals will be a blacksmith with an appropriately high Craft score. If she creates a hunting lodge, her working will produce hunters. If she creates a medicine hut, her land will produce a shaman-healer, and so on.

Tome-Rearing Gesture

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Linguistics 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Shaping Technique, Mind-Scribing Method

With this Charm the Lawgiver may instantly shape from chaos a single copy of a book she has mentally written with Mind-Scribing Method. This can be done without a roll to create a tome with an average cover and simple font, though a (Wits + Lore) roll against a Storyteller-defined difficulty can change the cover's material and design, give the book multiple lingual translations and a striking font, illustrations, color-edged pages and so on. This Charm does not require an activation of Wyld-Shaping Technique—the Solar is simply powerful enough to unleash the story in her mind upon the Wyld and shape it page by page. This does however require that she be in at least the bordermarches of chaos.

Wyld-Called Weapon

Cost: 7m, 1wp, 8xp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Shaping Technique

In order to shape a daiklave or other Artifact weapon from the Wyld, the Solar must be capable of a greater refinement of Wyld-Shaping Technique. This Charm models Solars who have mastered one such refinement. In order to create an Artifact four weapon with one active Evocation, the Exalt must reach phase four and use this Charm before the roll is made. To draw forth a greater weapon such as a Thousand-Year Daiklave, the Solar must proceed to phase five, while a Ten-Thousand Year Daiklave can only be made at phase six. All weapons created in this manner possess one active Evocation. If the Solar intends to shape such a weapon, each phase is spent creating a narrative vector through which the weapon can be materialized. The form this description takes is entirely up to the player.

Manse-Raising Method

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 10xp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wyld-Called Weapon

Similar to the prerequisite, the Exalt may raise a manse from chaos. In order to do this, the Solar must be on at least phase four of Wyld-Shaping Technique in which she has created land with at

least three major demesnes. She may then use this Charm, consuming three major demesnes back into the Wyld and raising an exceptional manse in their place.

Where's Martial Arts?

> With the exception of Excellent Solar Martial Arts, which they develop under the same conditions as other Excellencies (p. XX), the Solar Exalted don't develop native Martial Arts Charms; rather, they partake of the rich tradition of martial arts techniques shared between all the Exalted. Chapter Seven presents eleven of Creation's many supernatural martial arts styles.

Medicine

Ailment-Rectifying Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Medicine 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Disease and pestilence cannot stand against the Solar Exalted. This Charm represents an hour spent treating a patient for an illness the Exalt has properly diagnosed. Roll the Exalt's (Intelligence + Medicine) against the disease's morbidity (p. XX) and add half the extra successes to the patient's Resistance roll at the next interval. Through this Charm, the Solar can weaken or even cure supernatural maladies such as the Great Contagion. However, the target must remain in bed, and must be bathed, fed, and otherwise given care for the duration of the next interval. These ministrations can be performed by the Solar's assistants. The Exalt may use this Charm to treat her own diseases, though some may require a stunt or special instruments to treat.

Plague-Banishing Incitation

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ailment-Rectifying Method

If the Lawgiver generates at least double her patient's Stamina or Resistance (whichever is greater) in successes through the use of the prerequisite, she may use this Charm to demand that a malaise leave her patient's body. This causes the disease's interval to conclude immediately, and allows the patient the benefit of all rather than half the Solar's extra successes from Ailment-Rectifying Method. If successful, the pestilence immediately vacates the host, and the patient begins to recover over the course of a day. If the Solar saves a character from death's doorstep through the use of this Charm, she gains one point of temporary Willpower.

Contagion-Curing Touch

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Plague-Banishing Incitation

The Solar permanently gains (Essence) successes to treat forms of disease, even if she does not have the proper tools or medicine to do so. Her efforts still must be efficacious and logical, but even if she lacks the most ideal instruments, she can still attempt to cure a plague or other sickness. Once a patient has been treated by the Solar, if he recovers, he gain four automatic non-Charm successes to resist disease virulence for the rest of the season.

Wound-Mending Care Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Through mastery of Essence flows and a keen understanding of the body, the Solar can repair even the most ruinous damage at an incredible pace. The Solar spends fifteen minutes to an hour doctoring the patient, depending on the severity of the wounds. She still requires the normal medicines, bandages, and any tools that might be needed for more complex operations, but her results are nonetheless miraculous. Roll (Intelligence + Medicine) with double 9s at the end of the treatment. This is the number of bashing or lethal health levels that will be restored if the patient remains in bed for the rest of the day. In addition, if the Solar's treatment would raise her patient two or more wound levels, she gains a point of Willpower.

Wound-Cleansing Meditation

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Mending Care Technique

The Solar's advanced medical techniques allow her to draw the poison from unnatural wounds. With this Charm, the Solar spends an hour cleaning and wrapping wounds, disinfecting and draining injuries and preparing the patient for more complex internal treatment. At the end of the treatment, convert the patient's aggravated damage to lethal damage. This allows the Solar to treat damaged tissue and to attempt to reattach severed limbs with Wound-Mending Care Technique. This Charm does not allow the regrowth of lost tissue.

Instant Treatment Methodology

Cost: 5m, 1wp or 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Cleansing Meditation

This Charm allows the Solar to complete up to an hour of medical treatment in a handful of seconds. Using this Charm lowers the treatment time required for one Simple-type Medicine Charm. The Solar still requires the proper medicines and surgical tools, but may eliminate the need for such with a properly medical stunt, such as tapping her patient's pressure points to increase the flow of Essence or massaging a person's heart until it starts beating.

Anointment of Miraculous Health

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Instant Treatment Methodology

Where the Exalt's Essence-charged hands go, shattered bones are made whole and torn flesh is instantly mended. With each use of this Charm, the Solar can convert (Essence) aggravated damage to bashing or lethal, or she can cure the same number of lethal or bashing health levels. This Charm can be used once per scene, but can be reset by a two point stunt to treat a patient, so long as it does not involve Anointment of Miraculous Health.

Body-Sculpting Essence Method

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Anointment of Miraculous Health

This Charm functions as Instant Treatment Methodology, but also lowers the convalescence of the Solar's patient to just seconds, allowing her to rebuild a ruined body and stand it upright in the time it takes to lace on boots. This Charm may be used once per scene, but can be reset by a two point Medicine-based stunt that does not involve Body-Sculpting Essence Method.

Wholeness-Restoring Meditation

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Anointment of Miraculous Health

Through repeated treatment, the Lawgiver can restore lost tissue, and may even challenge congenital debilitation. Correcting some forms of blindness or deafness can be done in as little as an hour. The Solar can recalibrate optic tissues under a compact of earth, while ear bones align themselves to the movements of her fingertips. Such a feat is usually impossible, but the Exalt may roll (Intelligence + Medicine) against difficulty 5 to heal such conditions. Regrowth of lost or missing tissues is a much more challenging affair, as is the repair of deformities, Wyld mutation or mental Derangements. However, the Solar's prowess is such that of these, only Derangements cannot be fully cured. In each case, the Storyteller should decide if the wound, malady or defect is Minor, Major, or Defining. Defining would include paralysis, lost limbs, missing eyes, complete lunacy, and mutations that renders a person completely incapable of a

normal human life. The Solar must dedicate four hours a month to treating such conditions through whatever medical means and stunts seem appropriate. This begins an extended roll with a goal of 20, an interval of one month and a difficulty of 5. Under wraps, earth compacts, and acupuncture, a Solar can rebuild the lost tissues of destroyed eyes and missing limbs, and can even aid a target in growing organs that he was born without. Each time the Solar succeeds at the goal number, the malady decreases in intensity. Once it the goal has been met at the Minor level, a condition vanishes. Missing limbs are fully regrown, paralysis victims are able to walk, mutations wither and slough away or become easily operable. Only Derangements remain at the Minor level, though the Solar may continue to treat her patient at the Minor level to keep his symptoms at bay.

Healing Trance Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Contagion-Curing Touch, Wholeness-Restoring Meditation

The Solar invokes the power of the unbeheld other, her Solar Essence flaring. Roll (Wits + Medicine) and add the successes to the Exalt's mote pool, even if this would temporarily increase the size of her pool. In addition, add any 10s she rolls to her temporary Willpower, even if this would increase her Willpower past 10. Finally, for the duration of the scene, every 10 the Exalt rolls on a Medicine action restores a mote of Essence, until she fails to roll at least one 10. If she knows Healer's Unerring Hands, she may avoid breaking her trance through use of that Charm. The majority of the motes and Willpower generated by this Charm must be used on Medicine actions. Healing Trance Meditation can be used once per story, but may be reset by paying three experience points.

Flawless Diagnosis Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Medicine 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar hones her medical abilities to an unearthly degree. By examining a patient closely and hearing about his symptoms, the Exalt can flawlessly diagnose his illness. This Charm supplements a (Perception + Medicine) attempt to generate a formal diagnosis, preventing the Solar from making any error in her analysis. Note that this Charm does not provide the Exalt with a vast storehouse of medical knowledge, but is based on her Lore and Medicine ratings. If the character encounters an unfamiliar disease, she is able to determine its general type and whether it is magical in nature. Though she may not always know exactly what she is looking at, this Charm guarantees she will never misdiagnose a patient. Lastly, if she encounters a disease which she specializes in treating, or which she has flawlessly diagnosed more than five times in a season, then she gains one mote each time she diagnoses it through the use of this Charm.

Touch of Blissful Release

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Medicine 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Diagnosis Technique

With just a touch, the Solar can alleviate the suffering of a sick or wounded individual. The patient feels a narcotic surge as the pain of his symptoms dulls away almost completely. This allows the Solar to ease the pains of childbirth, surgery, or invasive illnesses and other injury for up to (Essence) hours. This Charm removes up to -3 in wound or illness penalties. This effect wears off if the patient engages in any activity that would require him to leave bed for more than a handful of minutes.

Feit of Imparted Nature

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Medicine 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Touch of Blissful Release

Striking her patient's anima with Essence-laden fingers, the Solar imparts a surge of new life. This Charm grants the target a number of -0 health levels equal to the Solar's Essence. These -0 levels are the first to be checked off when the character is injured, and fade immediately when the Solar releases her commitment, taking any damage with them. This Charm can be used to staunch wounds and stop the flow of blood.

Life-Exchanging Prana

Cost: 1lhl per 3m; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Feit of Imparted Nature

With this Charm, the Exalt may trade her very vital energies for Essence to fuel Medicine Charms. Motes gained in this manner dissipate if the Solar attempts to use them on any other form of magic. This Charm may not target temporary health levels created by other Charms.

Body-Purifying Admonitions

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Touch of Blissful Release

The Solar can draw the most vicious and noxious of poisons from her victim's body—even those that are supernatural in nature. Roll the Exalt's (Wits + Medicine) against the toxin's duration. If the Solar fully succeeds in lowering the duration, venoms and intoxicants seep from their point of entry, while poisons boil to the surface wherever the Solar touches her patient. This Charm does not completely remove all traces from a target's system—the Exalt may still need to treat

residual effects, and the patient may experience one final attack to his health levels. But it does ensure that the toxin fully leaves the body after its next interval. If the Solar strikes a supernatural poison from her target's body in one attempt, she gains a point of Willpower.

Anodyne of Celestial Dreaming

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Touch of Blissful Release

The Exalt can completely banish a target's pain with but a touch. When she uses this Charm, her subject is suffused with Essence that flows through his nerve endings, transforming pain signals into those of euphoria. This prevents a character from feeling pain, removing all wound penalties. However, it also puts stress on the Solar. Should her target engage in strenuous activity such as combat, the Solar takes a -1 penalty to all actions as long as she keeps the Charm committed. This penalty stacks; if the Exalt supports multiple characters in this way, then her penalty mounts.

Master Chirurgeon Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Any Medicine Charm

The Exalt hones her Essence through her medical knowledge to save lives. Through practice and meditation, internal vows and moments of celestial focus, she calibrates her spirit. This Charm permanently lowers the cost of the Medicine Excellency to one mote per two dice.

Benison of Celestial Healing

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Master Chirurgeon Meditation

Once per scene, the Solar may use one Simple-type Medicine Charm without paying motes or Willpower. This Charm can be reset by saving a dying character (one whose Incapacitated health level has been checked off) through medical care.

Life-Sculpting Hands Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Benison of Celestial Healing

Once per scene, the Exalt may use a free full Medicine Excellency.

Healer's Unerring Hands

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Life-Sculpting Hands Technique

While repairing damage or treating illness, the Lawgiver can correct even the tiniest mistake before it is made. This Charm allows the Exalt to reroll all non-successes on a Medicine action. If she eliminates half or more of her non-successes, she gains a point of Willpower.

Immaculate Solar Physician

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Healer's Unerring Hands

When she needs it most, the Solar physician can infuse her actions with limitless Essence, making her every movement and action flawless. Once per day, the Solar may double the successes on any Medicine roll.

Perfect Celestial Chirurgeon

Cost: —; **Mins:** Medicine 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Healer's Unerring Hands

When pressed to the utmost, the Lawgiver may draw on her vast stores of medical knowledge, condensing them down into a single surge of Essence. Once per story, the Solar may apply double 7s to a single Medicine action.

Melee

Excellent Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt channels Essence through skill, honing her accuracy in order to strike true. Her attack gains one automatic success. Additionally, all 1s are rerolled until 1s no longer appear.

Fire and Stones Strike

Cost: 1m per die or success; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Excellent Strike

The Solar strikes with telling force, burning Essence surging into the body of her target and shattering it from within. On a **withering** attack, the Exalt spends up to her (Strength) score in motes before making the attack. If the attack hits, each mote spent adds a single die to the post-soak damage of the attack. This strike has the potential to increase minimum damage (p. XX).

On a **decisive** attack, the Exalt may spend up to (Essence or three, whichever is greater) motes before making the attack to transfer an equal number of extra successes from her attack roll into the raw damage of the blow.

Rising Sun Slash

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fire and Stones Strike

At the apex of her strike, the Solar channels an inexorable flow of offensive Essence through her weapon, increasing the speed and ferocity of her attack. This Charm is activated after an attack roll has been made, before a defense has been applied, and only when the Exalt uses a full Melee Excellency. If the attack's result contains at least one 7, 8, 9, and 10, add one non-Charm automatic success and roll (Essence) non-Charm dice.

Foe-Cleaving Focus

Cost: —; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Rising Sun Slash

The Solar's existence is one of violence; she leads a life poised on the blade's edge. Given that her life is one of strife and war, she must draw peace and clarity between swings of her blade. This Charm is triggered each time the Exalt uses Rising Sun Slash, awarding a mote for every 10 in the attack roll.

Hungry Tiger Technique

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rising Sun Slash

The Solar charges her body and weapon with Essence, unifying the two to unleash a brutal strike that rends her opponent. This Charm can only be used on a crashed target. On a **withering**

attack, extra successes are doubled after the attack roll for the purpose of determining raw damage. On a **decisive** attack, extra successes from the attack roll are added to the damage roll. If used in conjunction with Fire and Stones Strike, the Exalt simply duplicates up to (Essence or three) extra successes when paying for damage dice.

Scene of Destruction

> Sometimes it becomes dramatically appropriate to use a Charm with an Initiative cost outside of battle. When this happens, ignore the Initiative cost.

One Weapon, Two Blows

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Melee 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Excellent Strike

Sensing an opening, the Solar strikes with surpassing speed. Immediately after making a **withering** attack which lowers an opponent's current Initiative from a value greater to a value less than the Solar's own, she may use this Charm to unleash a second attack against that opponent. This second attack may be **withering** or **decisive**.

Peony Blossom Technique

Cost: 1m, 1wp, 3a; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: One Weapon, Two Blows

Drawing her raging anima inward, the Solar's offense is renewed in a sudden burst of flashing, streaking fire. When the Exalt's anima is at bonfire, she may use this Charm to make an additional attack, even if she's already attacked that turn. The Exalt moves like ice on hot metal, expelling her anima with her attack and returning her to the dim level.

Agile Dragonfly Blade

Cost: —(3m); **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: One Weapon, Two Blows

Once per scene, the Lawgiver may use this Charm to enhance the prerequisite. This Charm treats the Exalt's Initiative as being three higher than it really is for the purposes of triggering One Weapon, Two Blows.

Iron Whirlwind Attack

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Peony Blossom Technique

The Solar becomes a killing blur, unstoppable as she whirls through a storm of blood and steel. This Charm splits the Exalt's Initiative to make a series of (the lowest of her Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) **decisive** attacks. These attacks may be directed at a single target, or multiple targets as the player desires. The player divides the Solar's Initiative between the attacks when she activates the Charm, for the purpose of determining the damage of each attack. Each attack must have at least one Initiative allocated to it, and unlike normal **decisive** attack resolution, the Solar does not return to base Initiative until the final attack is resolved, and only loses Initiative for missed attacks if *all* of her attacks fail to connect. In the case of such a miss, the Exalt loses two Initiative per attack attempted.

Special activation rules: Attack-enhancing Charms such as Excellent Strike and Hungry Tiger Technique need only be paid a single time to enhance every attack in this sequence, but the Melee Excellency must be paid per attack. Iron Whirlwind Attack can be activated directly after using Peony Blossom Technique as if it were a Reflexive Charm.

Invincible Fury of the Dawn

Cost: —; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Iron Whirlwind Attack

Drawing in Solar Essence, the Lawgiver is possessed by the soul of combat and moves across the battlefield like a killing wind. This Charm enhances its prerequisite: the Solar may make up to (the highest of her Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) attacks, and may move a single range band to make each attack. In addition, when she activates Iron Whirlwind Attack, she gains an amount of Initiative to spread between her attacks equal to the number of attacks she intends to make. This extra Initiative vanishes after the attack is completed.

Heaven Sword Flash

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Invincible Fury of the Dawn

With limitless speed and inexorable spirit, the Solar's weapon flashes in an arc, striking opponents on all sides. This Charm allows the Solar to roll a single **decisive** attack against all opponents at close range, using half her current Initiative value (rounded up) as the base damage for every attack. Against minor opponents, use the Solar's full Initiative for the base damage of each attack and ignore hardness.

At Essence 5+, the cost of this Charm is reduced by one mote.

Circle of Bright Reaving

Cost: 6m, 1a, 2i; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Withering-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Heaven Sword Flash

If the Lawgiver slays even one foe with Heaven Sword Flash, she may instantly unleash Circle of Bright Reaving, striking opponents on all sides within close range with a single **withering** attack. The Solar gains full Initiative reward from only the most damaging dice roll, and no more than three Initiative for each additional roll that does successful damage. If she manages to crash even a single opponent with this Charm, she has the option to unleash Heaven Sword Flash reflexively.

Call the Blade

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Melee 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Extending her hand, the Solar may summon her weapon with but a thought. This Charm can reach a weapon within short range. Roll (Wits + Melee) at difficulty 4. On a success, the weapon flashes to hand instantly, without traversing the space between. On a failure, the weapon leaps to the Solar's hand, overcoming friction and gravity to do so. However, it is unable to defeat doors, chains, or other similar obstacles, and even if the path is unobstructed, the weapon does not return until the Solar's next turn. The Exalt cannot use this power to steal weapons, only to call her own weapon to hand.

Summoning the Loyal Steel

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Call the Blade

With a moment of concentration, the Solar may banish a weapon to the void of Elsewhere. She may reflexively lift commitment to this Charm, summoning her weapon to hand in a flash of Essence.

Glorious Solar Saber

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Summoning the Loyal Steel

Honing her skill and focusing her will, the Exalt shapes her Essence into the form of a blade. This Charm creates a weapon with stats identical to a daiklave, described on page XX. The weapon is made of solidified Essence forged in all the colors of Solar anima, and glows like a

torch. Even a darkly-colored weapon such as a violet blade with a swirling hilt the color of blue flame will exude a shining aura.

For additional purchases, players may add custom Evocations to Glorious Solar Saber. Players should work with their Storyteller to create Evocations that fits the character's personality or iconic anima manifestation. In addition, Glorious Solar Saber has the following power:

Molten Sun Blade: For one mote, one willpower, the weapon becomes superheated and drips molten flame that burns whatever it touches. The Solar's next attack will destroy any mortal blade or shield that attempts to parry it. While the effect is active, the Solar may use a blade or spearhead like a blowtorch, melting through stone walls or steel gates at a rate of two feet per turn. If Molten Sun Blade is used in combination with a clash attack against a battle group, and the clash succeeds, the Solar is seen to strike a burning arc around her position, cleaving through the weapons of foes on all sides. The battle group may not attack her again until it has succeeded at a rally action.

Immortal Blade Triumphant

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Glorious Solar Saber

The Lawgiver channels the blinding radiance of her anima banner through her weapon, binding blade and soul in a glorious physical manifestation of terrifying power. The Solar may only use this Charm when her anima is at the bonfire level. Her anima crawls over her weapon, suffusing it, and her iconic avatar can be seen to emanate from the blade. For the rest of the scene, her anima is focused around her blade, fluxing and rising with the use of Charms that expel her aura and returning with expenditures of Essence.

While Immortal Blade Triumphant is active, her weapon cannot be disarmed or destroyed, and when she makes attacks, her damage is boosted greatly. Any stunt bonuses to her attacks are also added to her damage rolls, and if she is at the bonfire anima level, (Essence) damage dice are converted into automatic successes.

Should the Solar need even greater power than this, she may force her anima out through her blade, releasing the Essence committed and terminating this Charm in a single devastating **decisive** attack. Doing so *adds* (Essence) automatic successes to the damage roll instead of converting (Essence) dice to automatic successes, and allows the attack to bypass hardness. This attack can only be made at the bonfire anima level. Calling upon this power ends this Charm and resets the Solar's anima banner to the dim level.

Iron Raptor Technique

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Call the Blade, Excellent Strike

The Solar hurls her weapon across the sky to seek her foe like a bird of prey. This Charm allows the Exalt to make a **withering** or **decisive** attack at medium range without aiming. In addition, if Iron Raptor Technique is used to crash an opponent, the Exalt gains one point of temporary Willpower. Usually the weapon returns to the Solar's hand on the same tick she makes the attack. However, if the attack roll is a botch, the Lawgiver's weapon becomes embedded in scenery at close range to the defending target.

Sandstorm-Wind Attack

Cost: 5m, 2i; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Call the Blade, Excellent Strike

Channeling power into her weapon, the Solar strikes a blow against a distant foe. A colorless ribbon of concentrated force leaps from her blade and arcs toward her target. This Charm allows the Solar to launch a **decisive** attack against opponents at short range. This attack ignores hardness, and does (Essence) automatic successes in damage to scenery, passing through objects it destroys to strike targets behind cover. Furthermore, if the Exalt withholds her attack in order to clash (p. XX), she may launch this attack reflexively in order to clash a ranged opponent's attack.

Edge of Morning Sunlight

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sandstorm-Wind Attack

The Lawgiver concentrates on manifesting her Essence through the medium of her weapon. Investing her attack with Solar power, she strikes a vicious blow against demons, undead, and other creatures of darkness. On an attack that accrues at least one success on the damage roll, she may activate this Charm. Her weapon glints at the point of impact, slicing her foe's corpus with purifying Essence. Roll (Essence) damage dice against her target's health track. This damage roll ignores hardness.

Corona of Radiance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Edge of Morning Sunlight

The Lawgiver draws her weapon through the air, focusing Essence through her aggression. Her flesh coruscates with Solar energy which gathers around her hand and her weapon when she parries. For the rest of the scene, her parry Defense is raised by 1 against creatures of the night, the Abyssal Exalted, demons and the impure residents of Creation's underways. In addition, if

such creatures strike her without a weapon, they must contend with damage dice equal to the Solar's Essence. This damage ignores hardness.

Sharp Light of Judgment Stance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Corona of Radiance

Through meditation and practice, the Exalt learns to tap and refine her Solar Essence, sharpening her attacks against the forces of darkness. This Charm permanently enhances Corona of Radiance, Sandstorm-Wind Attack, and Blazing Solar Bolt. Attacks made during Corona of Radiance have their minimum damage increased by the Solar's Essence, while Sandstorm-Wind Attack and Blazing Solar Bolt gain an additional bonus to raw damage equal to the Solar's Essence. In addition, the Lawgiver may unleash Edge of Morning Sunlight and the aforementioned Charms against characters for whom she holds negative Major and Defining Intimacies, treating them as if they were creatures of darkness, if they are not already.

Blazing Solar Bolt

Cost: 5m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Corona of Radiance

The Lawgiver hones the force of her judgment into a lambent charge of pure Solar power, and raises her weapon to strike. A powerful stream of energy leaps between her weapon and her Caste Mark and is unleashed by her attack, flying through the air to lance through her opponent. This attack is made with the Solar's (Dexterity + Melee), and does lethal **decisive** damage with a base damage of (Essence + extra successes on the attack). Blazing Solar Bolt can strike an opponent from short range, ignores hardness, and cannot be dodged or blocked without a Charm. In addition, the Charm's range can be increased by spending anima levels at a rate of one level per increase, allowing the Solar to strike opponents four range bands distant. Against residents of Malfeas or the Underworld and other creatures of darkness, this Charm gains the Aggravated keyword. Damage done by this attack does not include the Solar's Initiative and does not return her to base Initiative upon success.

Special activation rules: Blazing Solar Bolt can only be used once per combat, but can be reset by landing a **decisive** attack with 7+ Initiative and then building Initiative to 12+.

Dipping Swallow Defense

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Melee 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

With speed and grace, the Exalt flashes to her own defense. Even when she is beleaguered she strikes away blows with preternatural accuracy. The Solar can ignore all penalties to parry an attack with her full Defense. In addition, any attack she successfully parries with Dipping Swallow Defense grants her one point of Initiative. This Charm cannot by itself remove the penalties from a surprise attack.

Hail-Shattering Practice

Cost: 1m per success; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense

The Solar can see the flaws in any strike, and use them to turn aside even the surest smite. The Exalt may pay one mote per 1 or 2 in the attacker's dice result to remove up to (Essence) successes from the attack. This Charm can be activated after the attack roll is made.

Bulwark Stance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Melee 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense

The Solar's mastery of defensive Essence flows guides her weapon to intercept all blows. Until her next turn, the Lawgiver ignores all penalties to her Parry Defense. The Chosen's definitive guard dampens her foes' strikes. Any damage roll made against the Solar takes a -1 penalty for each 1 rolled on the attack roll, up to a maximum of the Solar's Essence rating.

Fivefold Bulwark Stance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Bulwark Stance

Accepting no form of defeat, the Solar gazes along the edge of her blade and sees what it would see. The ebb and flow of battle becomes clear to her; she sees the arcs of incoming attacks as glowing trails of Essence, and moves with impossible, fluid speed to strike the path of all harm. For a full scene, the Exalt may apply her full Parry Defense to all attacks, ignoring all penalties, and reducing the cost to use Bulwark Stance by two motes and Dipping Swallow Defense by one. In addition, when she uses Dipping Swallow Defense, it raises her Parry Defense by one.

Heavenly Guardian Defense

Cost: 1i per success +4m or 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bulwark Stance

The Solar may strike aside even the falling sky. When struck with a **decisive** attack, the Solar retroactively channels her Initiative to strike away harm—burning away successes on the damage roll at a rate of one success per one point of Initiative. Any successes she is unable or unwilling to strike away still register as injuries, removing an equal number of levels from her health track. An attack which is completely nullified by Heavenly Guardian Defense seems to strike the Solar at first, but then is turned aside by the blurring interposition of her blade. Heavenly Guardian Defense allows the Solar to guard against damage deemed impossible to parry, such as unexpected attacks, hurled bolts of acid or lightning, the burning curses of Kimbery and so on. This Charm may also be invoked in or out of combat for four motes, one Willpower, to strike away uncountable recurring damage without using the Solar's Initiative. As an island is disintegrated by the sky-shattering blast of a supervolcano, the Solar turns aside the heart of the explosion with the skill of her blade. Use of Heavenly Guardian Defense causes no harm to the Exalt's weapon.

Protection of Celestial Bliss

Cost: —(4m, 1wp); **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Heavenly Guardian Defense

When the Solar successfully parries **decisive** damage using Heavenly Guardian Defense, she gathers an amount of bonus Initiative equal to the 1s and 2s on the damage roll. This Initiative is not transferred to her current Initiative value, but is instead recorded and set aside until she must use it. She may gather up to (Essence) Initiative in this manner, and may use it only to enhance Heavenly Guardian Defense. The Exalt may choose to expend any or all gathered Initiative into paying the cost of Heavenly Guardian Defense, but doing so expends the bonus Initiative. In addition, the Solar may pay four motes, one Willpower to double the bonus Initiative she has already gathered for one tick, allowing her to further enhance the prerequisite. This Charm explicitly allows the Solar to use Heavenly Guardian Defense in crash, up to a limit of her gathered (or double gathered) bonus Initiative.

This bonus Initiative may not be used to amplify the instance of Heavenly Guardian Defense from which it was gathered, nor can it be targeted by **withering** attacks; the Initiative is gone until the moment in which the Solar chooses to summon it.

War Lion Stance

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense

The Solar learns to defend others upon learning to defend herself. Like a pacing lion, she represents a formidable obstacle. The Exalt may take a reflexive defend other action to protect an ally within close range. This effect lasts a full scene, but only applies while the Solar and her

charge are close to one another, and is cancelled if she moves out of close range. The Solar must drop commitment to this Charm to defend a different character.

Guard-Breaking Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: War Lion Stance

The Solar makes a spectacular feint attack that opens her enemy's guard to an ally's blow. When using defend other, the Exalt may use this Charm to use a distract gambit (p. XX) on her charge, with double 7s on the Initiative roll. In addition, when her distraction is successful, her charge's next attack gains (Solar's Essence or three, whichever is greater) bonus dice.

Calm and Ready Focus

Cost: —; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: War Lion Stance

The Unconquered Sun sent the Lawgivers to take Creation back from the hands of the wicked. They protect their charges with growing clarity—a natural sense of understanding that is theirs—allowing them to unleash havoc on the heads of their foes. If the Exalt successfully parries an attack while using the defend other action, she gains one Initiative.

Unassailable Guardian Posture

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: War Lion Stance

When the Lawgiver draws her blade in defense of another, her charge becomes nigh untouchable. When using War Lion Stance to defend another, the Exalt may use this Charm to make her charge an inapplicable target. All incoming attacks must target her until her next turn. During this time, if her defense is penetrated, her charge cannot be attacked. At Essence 3+, the Exalt may even defend her charge from sufficiently large sources of damage such as explosions with a stunt.

Solar Counterattack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Melee 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense

The Exalt draws focus from her foe's temerity. To strike her is to invite death. The Exalt may use this Charm in response to any attack she attempts to parry, creating a counterattack that occurs after the opponent's attack result, but before damage has been rolled. This attack functions as a regular **decisive** attack. Solar Counterattack does not count as the Exalt's combat action and cannot be used in response to another counterattack.

Ready in Eight Directions Stance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Counterattack, Decisive-only

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Solar Counterattack

Like lightning spilled from the cup of a storm god, the Solar strikes in all directions. Until her next turn, the Solar may counter all incoming attacks exactly as if she were using Solar Counterattack, save for one major difference—should any of her counterattacks do damage, her Initiative will not return to its base value until the next round begins. If she does not successfully counter an opponent in the first round, this Charm fades when the second round begins.

Flashing Edge of Dawn

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: One Weapon, Two Blows, Solar Counterattack

The Solar moves her blade with the speed of her scorn, cutting through her foe in the moment he choses to strike. The Exalt may use this Charm in response to any attack she attempts to parry, creating a counterattack that occurs after the opponent's attack result, but before damage has been rolled. This attack acts as a special **withering** attack, with successes on the damage roll reducing the target's Initiative. However, rather than being added to the Solar's Initiative, these points are converted immediately to **decisive** damage dice and rolled against the target's health track, ignoring hardness. This damage occurs independently of the Solar's current Initiative and does not return her to base.

Flashing Edge of Dawn does not count as the Exalt's combat action and cannot be used in response to another counterattack.

Fervent Blow

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Edge of Dawn

The Lawgiver moves with the speed of a striking hawk to intercept a blow with one of her own. This Charm allows the Solar to make a reflexive clash attack against an attack directed at her,

regardless of her place in the Initiative order. This does not count as the Solar's combat action. The rules for clash attacks can be found on page XX.

Over-and-Under Method

Cost: —(7m, 1wp)**; Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Fervent Blow

This Charm allows the Solar to use Flashing Edge of Dawn in the same instant that she uses Fervent Blow. If the clash is successful, resolve the counterattack's attack and add the damage (if any) to that of Fervent Blow for a single damage roll. Over-and-Under Method's cost replaces that of Flashing Edge of Dawn and Fervent Blow.

Perfect Strike Discipline

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Melee 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense, Excellent Strike

Tuning her understanding of martial Essence through her dedicated weapon-mastery, the Solar can momentarily achieve flawless combat efficiency. Once per scene, the Exalt may use a full Melee Excellency, paying only a single willpower to activate the Charm. Perfect Strike Discipline can be reset by incapacitating an opponent with a Melee attack.

Occult

Spirit-Detecting Glance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Occult 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar can look through the pall of reality to glimpse the realm of spirits beneath. With this Charm, the Solar can see (but not touch) immaterial spirits.

Spirit-Cutting Attack

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Glance

The Solar infuses her attack with the emotive force of her anima, to strike an immaterial spirit. This Charm supplements a single attack to strike a spirit which has not materialized. If the Solar

is not using the prerequisite or another similar magic, this attack is made at -3 dice. Spirit-Cutting Attack may be used in combination with the Charms of other Abilities.

Spirit-Draining Stance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Cutting Attack

The Lawgiver has the power to draw cold entropy and ethereal power from ghost and spirits, adding swiftness and surety to her attacks. While this Charm is active, the Solar's successful **withering** attacks against spirit opponents generate one automatic level of **withering** damage. At Occult 4+, Essence 2+, the Exalt can choose to drain a mote instead of a point of Initiative.

Breath-Drinker Method

Cost: 4i; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Draining Stance

The Solar's understanding of corporeal Essence allows her to channel her forces to rend spirits at the point of impact. Breath-Drinker Method supplements a **decisive** attack, allowing the Solar to steal a number of motes from a spirit equal to the number of health levels damaged by the attack. The Exalt may not steal more than (Essence x2) motes on a single attack.

Uncanny Shroud Defense

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Cutting Attack

On the verge of death, the Exalt draws uncanny Essence around her like a shroud, stepping between worlds. When struck with any kind of damage or attack that would remove her last health level, the Exalt may use this Charm to stop the final level of damage. This Charm cannot be used if the Solar is currently on her last uninjured health level.

Spirit-Repelling Diagram

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Cutting Attack

Striking at an unseen movement, the Exalt draws a formless pattern from the depths of the universe. A blazing white-gold Essence diagram extends in a circle around the Lawgiver,

spreading out to short range. Spirits with Essence ratings equal to or lower than the Exalt's must materialize or leave the circle. Spirits with a higher Essence rating than the Exalt must apply their Resolve against the Solar's (Wits + Occult) in order to resist, with the Solar's influence gaining (Essence) dice against normal spirits or (Essence) automatic successes against demons and other cursed spirits. This mandala stays fixed on the location the Solar is standing for one scene, and vanishes if she leaves the circle. Spirits of equal or lower Essence than the Solar cannot attack characters inside the circle while standing outside it, and spirits forced to leave the diagram may not attack characters within it.

Nine Specters Ban

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Repelling Diagram, Uncanny Shroud Defense

The divine flame of the Solar's Essence marks her as the greatest power in Heaven. Though she is made of mortal substance, her Essence is materially inviolate. When she uses this Charm, an immaterial being must struggle to strike her. Any attack made against her by such a being costs an additional point of Willpower.

Spirit-Caging Mandala

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Repelling Diagram

The Lawgiver inverts Spirit-Repelling Diagram, creating a pattern that binds a spirit in place. This Essence diagram forms around a target up to two range bands from the Solar. An intricate pattern in the diagram traps and binds the spirit's Essence, sealing it within the mandala. Pay the cost of this Charm once and roll the Solar's (Wits + Occult) against a difficulty of the spirit's Essence. If successful, the spirit is bound on the spot for a number of turns equal to (extra successes + 1), upon which the Solar must roll (Wits + Occult) against the spirit's Essence to maintain the cage. Each time the Solar succeeds at this contest, the binding effect is extended as above, but the difficulty also increases by one on each subsequent attempt. During this time, the Solar may approach the spirit, but if she moves more than two range bands away from it, the mandala fades and the spirit is freed. An immaterial spirit trapped in the Spirit-Caging Mandala may be perceived by characters who cannot normally see spirits, and may be struck by characters who cannot normally strike immaterial foes. As the spirit is rendered incapable of moving across range bands, spirits trapped in the cage can only attack characters outside the diagram if they have the ability to attack at range, and only then if they are attacked first. Foes who enter the mandala at close range are always fair game.

Spirit-Draining Mudra

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Caging Mandala

The Solar may draw on the Essence of a creature she has bound into the Spirit-Caging Mandala to power her Occult magic. Until the bound character is free, the cost of the Exalt's Occult Charms are reduced by the Essence score of the trapped entity. These motes are taken from the bound character to fuel the Solar's Charms. The Solar may also invoke this power each time she takes a shaping action in order to cast a spell.

Demon-Compelling Noose

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Draining Mudra

The Lawgiver's binding pattern stifles the will of her captive, weakening its Resolve. When using non-Occult based social influence on a target bound with Spirit-Caging Mandala, the Solar gains one automatic success to her influence, while the trapped spirit is at -1 Resolve until it escapes. If the captive is a creature of darkness, the Solar gains two automatic successes while the creature's Resolve is reduced by -2.

Spirit-Shredding Exorcism

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Draining Mudra

After capturing a being within the Spirit-Caging Mandala, the Lawgiver strikes apart the pattern, inverting the mandala to rend apart the being's Essence. Roll the Solar's (Intelligence + Occult) against the target's Resolve. This attack can neither be enhanced nor defended against through an application of Intimacies—nor can it be resisted with Willpower. If successful, the target's permanent Essence is reduced by one until it escapes the pattern, and if the difficulty of binding the target has increased due to a number of successful (Wits + Occult) rolls (as per the rules of Spirit-Caging Mandala), then the difficulty returns to its base number, the spirit's Essence -1. Spirit-Shredding Exorcism may not be applied more than once to a single target. If this Charm reduces a being's Essence to 0, it's unable to act until it escapes the mandala.

Wyld-Binding Prana

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Caging Mandala

The Exalt infuses the Essence pattern of the Spirit-Caging Mandala with gossamer and iron, allowing it to trap formless denizens of the Wyld, temporarily forcing them to manifest a form as substantial as a materialized spirit.

Ghost-Eating Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Cutting Attack

This Charm is the technique by which the Solars slew the enemies of the gods, and spirits hate and fear it. An attack supplemented by this Charm does aggravated damage against spirits, and draws a number of motes from the spirit equal to the highest wound penalty inflicted by the attack. For example, striking off a number of -1 health levels would give the Solar one mote. Striking off a number of -2 health levels and a -4 would give the Solar four motes. If a spirit is slain by this attack, it is destroyed permanently, and the pattern of its Essence is subsumed by the Solar's anima. Destroying a spirit with this Charm grants the Exalt (Solar's Essence + spirit's Essence) motes.

Carnal Spirit Rending

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ghost-Eating Technique

Upon destroying a spirit with Ghost-Eating Technique, the Solar may activate this Charm to draw the rent and torn Essence of the spirit into her limbs and through her chakras, embodying it. For the rest of the scene, the Exalt gains (Essence) powers or traits based on the Charms and themes of the destroyed spirit, to be decided by the Storyteller. This power explicitly allows the Solar to utilize magic effects that cannot be learned through the Eclipse anima power, but the Exalt may not take powers with a prerequisite higher than ([Solar's Essence] + 2).

Burning Exorcism Technique

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Carnal Spirit Rending

Sometimes those who are physically ill or mentally weak become prey to spiritual possession or another malaise of the soul. The Lawgiver may draw the malevolence from such a victim, rolling (Wits + Occult) against the Resolve of the possessing spirit, or the morbidity of a spiritual malaise. If she succeeds, the Solar draws a malaise or a spirit of equal or lower Essence into her anima, neutralizing it until she wishes its release. If the spirit is of a greater Essence than the Solar, then it is automatically forced out of the host, and may not return to the victim's body for a

season, but it is otherwise free. The Exalt may not capture more spirits than she has points of permanent Essence.

Soul Projection Method

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Exorcism Technique

The Solar may cast her spirit from her body to save a target from corruption. The Solar steps forward and touches her target, enacting a (Wits + Occult) battle against the character's Resolve, in which Intimacies do apply. Upon success, both the Exalt and the target become completely entranced, as the Solar casts her spirit into the body of her target. The exact effect of this dramatic action is up to the Storyteller—the Lawgiver may use this to enter a raksha to retrieve the soul of an eaten loved one, or she might enter the body of her Lunar mate to do battle with a Derangement created by a past incarnation. More specifically, the Exalt may use this to cast a spirit into her target, forcing a possession of that character, or infecting him with a spiritual malaise if he fails a Resistance check against the virulence of the attack. This attack requires the Exalt to have previously captured such a spirit or disease using this Charm's prerequisite.

Immortal Soul Vigil

Cost: —(7m); **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Soul Projection Method

The Solar may use the prerequisite to enter the psyche of another, examining his dreams and memories, no matter how distant or forgotten, for traces of spiritual taint, demonic possession, or other signs of haunting. While entranced, the Solar experiences the dream or memory of her subject in first person, and may interact with the world of her subject's mind using Awareness, Investigation and Occult Charms to look for signs of spiritual predation. Though she cannot use her presence in her subject's mind to change his memory's outcome, she can use what she discovers as a basis for further action. Furthermore, if she is able to confirm the presence of a spirit actor in her subject's past, she may also commit seven motes to create a doorway which opens in her mind the moment her subject is approached by the spirit. The moment she steps through it, the Exalt falls into a trance and experiences a dematerialized state that allows her to enter the scene through the dreamscape of her subject, where she may confront the spirit with all of the force that is hers to wield. While the Solar may not interact with any other physical beings in this state, if the spirit attempts to escape her by materializing, the Solar may still perceive and attack it by using Charms such as Spirit-Detecting Glance.

Phantom-Seizing Strike

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ghost-Eating Technique

The Exalt suffuses her target's body with Solar Essence. An immaterial opponent struck by this technique becomes material for two turns. The Solar may activate this Charm after landing an attack with Spirit-Cutting Attack. So long as the damage roll generates at least one success, she may trigger this Charm.

Spirit-Slaying Stance

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Phantom-Seizing Strike

The Lawgiver may expertly hunt the things which slink and slide through cracks in the world. When this Charm is active, the Exalt gains (Essence) dice to her attacks against spirits.

Uncanny Perception Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Glance

The Solar's senses are preternaturally attuned to the movements of spirits and other uncanny beings. Whenever a spirit or Fair Folk is within the range of the Exalt's senses, she experiences a strange sensory phenomena; she might hear bells tinkling, smell a particularly strong or unusual scent, or taste something resonant. The Solar gains half her Occult (rounded up) in successes to an Awareness-based attempt to notice such a being. The warning signaled by this Charm occurs even when a spirit is immaterial, allowing the Solar to use Spirit-Detecting Glance.

Keen Unnatural Eye

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Uncanny Perception Technique

Immersion into the occult opens the Lawgiver's eyes to evidence of spirit actions. She more readily and easily sees the handiwork of ghosts and demons, and can more skillfully detect the footsteps of spirits. When using Survival or Investigation to track a spirit or uncover evidence of its actions, the Exalt gains (Essence or three, whichever is greater) bonus dice to the attempt.

Spirit-Manifesting Word

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Occult 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar speaks an unutterable word that pulls one spirit familiar or sorcerously-bound demon into the physical world. This Charm allows a spirit ally to materialize without having to pay a cost or use its own magic.

Material Exegesis Prana

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Manifesting Word

With a greater expenditure of control, the Exalt may rend the veil with word and voice, giving physical form to a number of immaterial spirit allies. Roll the Solar's (Wits + Occult). Each success materializes a single sorcerously-bound demon or familiar spirit. If the Exalt rolls three sixes—no more, no less—all of her spirit allies materialize at once, regardless of the number of successes, and she gains two points of temporary Willpower.

All Souls Benediction

Cost: 16m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Material Exegesis Prana

The Lawgiver speaks her authority into the world, and her words work through the moorings and bindings of Creation to bring forth spirits. Every spirit or immaterial being within six range bands must succeed at a (Wits + Dodge) check at a difficulty of ([the Solar's current temporary Willpower] + Essence). Beings who fail this check are forced to materialize, though without paying the cost of materializing magic. Ghosts struck with All Souls Benediction have the option to go immediately into lethe to avoid facing the Lawgiver's wrath. Creatures struck with All Souls Benediction may not dematerialize until the Lawgiver permits it, or until the scene ends.

Ancient Tongue Understanding

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt expands her knowledge of the realm of spirits to all corners of her mind, shunning knowledge that binds her understanding. While this Charm is in effect, the Lawgiver automatically speaks and understands Old Realm, even if it is not a language she has learned, but loses her ability to comprehend any other language. In addition, the Solar also naturally comprehends other spirit languages as old and strange as Old Realm, languages for which there exists little to no record. While this Charm is in effect, the Solar gains (half her Essence, rounded down) automatic successes to all Occult rolls and shaping actions.

Supernal Control Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ancient Tongue Understanding

The Exalt directs the flow of her Essence out of the world and draws it in, bringing back a quickening breath of realms beyond. Once per scene, the Solar may enact a free full Occult Excellency. This Charm may be reset by raising the Exalt's anima to iconic and shedding it back to the dim level.

Dark-Minder's Observances

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ancient Tongue Understanding

Walking the haunted roads of Creation, the Lawgiver learns to hear the Essence of the world. These sounds govern her understanding of everything that is not said. With this Charm, the Solar may learn up to (Essence) thaumaturgic rituals without paying experience points.

Gloaming Eye Understanding

Cost: 3m per Charm; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Dark-Minder's Observances

The Solar channels her Essence into a perfect medium. At the center of day and night, she may be taught up to (Essence) spirit Charms that are applicable to the Eclipse anima power. She need not pay experience points to learn these Charms; she maintains the power to perform such magic as long as she keeps motes committed to the effect. Releasing these motes causes knowledge of the Charm to fade. In order to learn these Charms, the Exalt must meet the trait requirements for the Charm, but does not need to have learned the Charm's prerequisites.

Ephemeral Induction Technique

Cost: 20m, 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Carnal Spirit Rending, Gloaming Eye Understanding, Wyld-Binding Prana

The Solar reaches into the Essence of the world to rip new life from the very fabric of Creation. This Charm allows the Solar to induct a single spirit into the world. She draws this creature from her surroundings, but may also use the Essence-patterns of spirits she has captured with Burning

Exorcism Technique or absorbed with Carnal Spirit Rending to determine the being's nature and magic. The spirit begins the game with the Solar's Essence rating and half her total experience, but may only use the most basic spirit Charms until the Storyteller has had sufficient time to approve the spirit's stats, Intimacies, and magic, as determined by the Solar's player. This spirit is bound to the Solar as a familiar and becomes an applicable target for certain Survival Charms. A spirit created by the Solar is her thrall for a season. She may then choose to keep it as her familiar or release it. Freeing the current familiar allows her to use this Charm again to create a new familiar. If she decides to retain a bond with the original creature, then she keeps it for another season. Each season that comes and goes, she may choose to retain or relinquish her bond with the spirit so that she may attain a new familiar. Otherwise, the spirit remains as her familiar and is in all senses another character, gaining experience points as any character would. Alternately, the Solar may also induct a Fair Folk into the world. In the Wyld, this Charm usually entails the creation of a raksha, but in Creation, where many denizens of the Wyld were bound into place by the elemental fusion of the Poles, the result is bound to be more unpredictable.

All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Glance

The Exalt gazes into the Essence of the world and sees the patterns of magic that make up Creation. For a few seconds after activating this Charm, the Solar can see Essence flowing through the world. She can perceive immaterial spirits, but moreover, she can see the workings of spirit energies around her. If a character is using a shaping action or Evocation, the Solar may make an Intelligence + Occult roll at a difficulty of the effect's Essence minimum to determine how the power works. This Charm may also be used to identify the presence of ongoing sorcerous effects such as mystical barriers and levitating platforms, revealing not only the presence of magic, but how it functions. This power also allows the Exalt to see places where Creation is thin—the borders of shadowlands and the Wyld appear as hazy, gauzy distortions of light. The Solar may also detect the entrance to spirit sanctums within her range of vision. This Charm does not reveal the working of the Charms of the Exalted.

Burning Eye of the Deliverer

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

The Solar's keen eyes burn through deception. This Charm enhances All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, aiding the Solar in an attempt to see through magical disguises, shapeshifting, or any other magic which allows a character—even another Exalt—to appear to be something or someone other than who he is. This Charm makes it possible to notice such effects with Awareness, adding the Solar's Essence in automatic successes to the attempt. For the difficulty of

seeing through disguises, see page XX. Unless stated otherwise, seeing through all other kinds of magical identity-deceptions is a difficulty 5 feat.

Sorcerer's Burning Chakra

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Eye of the Deliverer

The Solar sees all things truly. When she is at the iconic anima level, she automatically gains the effects of All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight for free. Furthermore, using Spirit-Detecting Glance in combination with All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight allows the Exalt to discern the nature and Essence rating of a spirit if she succeeds at an Occult roll with a difficulty of the spirit's Essence.

Spirit-Drawing Oculus

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sorcerer's Burning Chakra

The Solar may channel the Essence of the world through her body, becoming a momentary vector for incredible power. While her anima is iconic, the Exalt perceives the flows of Essence around her. Even as she recognizes the inherent genius of cosmic design, she sees its flaws—loose or wasted motes, cast off from expelled Charms or sorcery, or flowing from fissures in the dragon tracks. For one Willpower, she may cast off her anima, shedding it to the dim level. It dissipates, flowing out across the world in all directions, and every loose mote it passes is drawn back to the Solar. Roll a free full Occult Excellency of the Solar's (Perception + Occult); successes on this roll determine how many motes the Solar is able to gather. These motes may only be used to power Charms from Craft, Investigation, Medicine, Lore, and Occult, or added to the mote total of a shaping action by the Solar. Spirit-Drawing Oculus may only be used once per day.

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar steps through the First Circle and is forever transformed. Upon learning this Charm, the Exalt gains the ability to learn and cast spells from the Terrestrial Circle of sorcery. In addition, the Solar learns one shaping ritual (p. XX) and one Terrestrial spell for free. The spell selected becomes the sorcerer's "control spell," and may feature in the anima iconography and be referenced in the mechanics of certain Charms.

Celestial Circle Sorcery

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

The Solar ascends to the Second Circle and becomes an avatar bearing aspects of Heaven and Hell in her mind. In all the world, there are only a handful of sorcerers at this level of power. Upon learning this Charm, the Exalt gains the ability to cast spells from the Celestial Circle of sorcery. In addition, the Solar learns one shaping ritual and one Celestial spell for free. The spell selected acts as an additional control. Celestial Circle Sorcery may not be learned prior to Essence 3 by selecting Occult as a Supernal Ability.

Solar Circle Sorcery

Cost: —; **Mins:** Occult 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Celestial Circle Sorcery

The Solar rises to the Third and final Circle of sorcery and becomes a herald of untold power. Spells of the Solar Circle are the most powerful sorceries ever imagined. Only the Solar Exalted have the power necessary to master spells of this magnitude. Learning this Charm grants the ability to cast spells from the Solar Circle of sorcery. In addition, the Solar learns one shaping ritual and one Solar spell for free. The spell selected acts as an additional control. Solar Circle Sorcery may not be learned prior to Essence 5 by selecting Occult as a Supernal Ability.

Performance

Don't Get Stage Fright

> Unless they say otherwise, Solar Performance Charms ignore the penalty for group influence detailed on page XX.

Omni-Applicable

Masterful Performance Exercise

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar's talent is not free or instinctual, but rather the hard-won excellence that comes from a lifetime of practice. This Charm supplements a Performance-based action, granting one

automatic success and rerolling 1s until 1s fail to appear. This Charm also makes the Exalt's 1s unavailable to magic that might interfere with her performance.

Soul-Firing Performance

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

With revelatory ardor and revolutionary sound, the Solar's performance sends a shock through her audience. This Charm's timing differs through various mediums: oratory requires a speech of at least six minutes in length, whereas a piece of music need only be three minutes long and dance need only be two. Roll (Charisma + Performance) with (Essence) automatic successes against the group's Resolve. If successful, the group is struck with an emotion conveyed by the performance, and each affected target reconsiders a decision he made in his past, connected to that emotion. The Storyteller chooses what each character is forced to reconsider, putting each affected character into a Decision Point based on past influence. This Charm may only be used once per story.

Stillness-Drawing Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Solar draws power from the spirit of her audience. Whenever she successfully influences a large group with a Performance-based action, she regains (Essence) motes.

Trance of Fugue Vision

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Stillness-Drawing Meditation

In the throes of a harrowing performance, the Solar is wracked with the zeal-fired alleluias of a revival. The Solar may activate this Charm when she has 10+ motes committed to sustaining other scene-length Charms. While this Charm is active, every time she attempts a social influence action of any kind, she gains a mote of Essence. In addition, for every two minutes she spends in performance, she gains a mote. Finally, the Exalt gains a mote of Essence for every 10 she rolls on a Performance action against a difficulty of at least 4, to a maximum of three 10-derived motes per action.

Penultimate Unity of Form

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One Performance Action

Prerequisite Charms: Trance of Fugue Vision

Channeling Essence through her mastery of Performance, the Exalt can momentarily meld all performance styles into a single action. This Charm allows the Exalt to switch methods between oration, dancing, singing, and playing an instrument. What she could previously only accomplish with oration, she can now accomplish with a dance. Strumming her sanxian, she could start a riot, activating Fury Inciting Speech without ever saying a word. This does not change the definitions of supplemental Charms; the Exalt can perform Shining Expression Style by singing instead of dancing, but can't use Graceful Reed Dancing to enhance her voice. If the Exalt's influence is successful against her primary target, be it a group or a specific individual, she gains a point of temporary Willpower.

Soul-Bracing Momentous Power

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Penultimate Unity of Form

The Exalt reaches into the core of her being, tapping a primal harmony of Essence that makes her nearly impossible to resist. Before taking a social influence action, roll the Exalt's Willpower, rerolling non-successes once. Remaining non-successes determine the Charm's activation cost in Willpower points. Successes act as non-Charm successes on the Exalt's next social influence attempt. In addition, if this influence is successful, the affected character must pay three Willpower on (Solar's Essence) different days before he can overcome the influence, and may only do so if confronted with how his actions might be damaging to his Major or Defining Intimacies.

Unmatched Showmanship Style

Cost: —; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Trance of Fugue Vision

Filled with the power of the ages, the Solar's divine Essence pours out through the fulcrum of her performance. Once per scene, as a mute effect, the Exalt may use a free full Performance Excellency. This effect may be reset by using Performance to achieve one of the Solar's defining goals.

Soul Voice

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One Performance action

Prerequisite Charms: Unmatched Showmanship Style

Calling upon the divine other, the Solar dwells in the temple of her body like a burning icon. Activating this Charm reduces the cost of all the Lawgiver's Performance Charms to zero motes for one performance. This Charm may be used once per day, but may be reset when the Storyteller introduces a major element to the scene that changes a scene for the worse, such as the sudden arrival of Immaculate monks mid-performance.

Pivotal Encore Performance

Cost: 1wp, 1 lethal health level; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Soul Voice

Once per day, the Solar may reach down deep, buffeting her spirit with renewed power. Using this Charm resets Unmatched Showmanship Style and Soul Voice.

Utility

Respect-Commanding Attitude

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Performance 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: One Performance action

Prerequisite Charms: None

The return of the Solars is a miracle never before seen. The universe inclines to hear their voices once again. When this Charm supplements a Performance action of any length, characters are inclined to stop and listen. This does not guarantee that the Lawgiver is persuasive in her arguments, but it does guarantee that her audience listens respectfully to her entire performance. Characters may pay one Willpower to leave the performance, but if they wish to interrupt or attack the Lawgiver, they must pay two Willpower, and may only approach her by blending into her demonstration, capping the actions of each affected character by their individual (Charisma + Performance) ratings until one of them is able to successfully stop her act. This Charm does not function after combat has started, but if activated beforehand, it remains active after Join Battle has been rolled, up until the Solar is forced to stop her performance.

Phantom-Conjuring Performance

Cost: —(1m); **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise, Respect-Commanding Attitude

While under the effect of at least one of the prerequisites, the Exalt may pay one mote, conjuring phantom images from the Essence of her surroundings. These phantoms coalesce within short range of the Solar, and aid in illustrating her narrative. Apparitions might appear as small animals, person-sized characters, and allusions of scenery in a chiaroscuro.

At Performance 5, Essence 3+, the Lawgiver's apparitions grow larger and more robust. She can depict larger beasts and monsters and more substantial scenery. Phantoms may appear to curl from the smoke of her breath, the light of her eyes, or her very anima.

Memory-Reweaving Discipline

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Psyche

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any five Essence 2+ Performance Charms

The Exalt weaves a narrative so plausible and compelling that those who hear it forget the truth and believe the narrative. The Solar speaks for at least a minute, though more complex narratives may require longer. Roll the Exalt's ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) against the group's Resolve, subtracting successes instead of dice (p. XX) for truly outrageous claims. Mere success entails a simple belief in the facts as the Solar has presented them. Extra successes, however, increase commitment to this belief. Affected characters gain a Resolve bonus equal to half the extra successes, rounded up, to defending their belief in the Solar's narrative. Until that belief is shattered, they will act in direct agreement with the Solar's version of events. In order to break his commitment, a character must present direct evidence to the contrary and defeat the character's boosted Resolve. Failing to do so makes the character immune to further attempts to erode this belief for the rest of the day. Each time an unsuccessful attempt is made, the affected character's bonus Resolve is diminished by two. Once the Solar has successfully changed a target's memories, she may not make additional changes to that character's mind with this Charm until the initial belief has been completely broken. The Solar may target herself with this Charm, but doing so earns her a single point of limit in addition to the Charm's cost.

At Essence 4+, the Solar may use this Charm up to (Essence) times on a single character, including herself.

At Essence 4+, the Solar may repurchase this Charm, teaching herself a five mote, one Willpower, instant, reflexive version of this Charm that may only target a single character. The Solar distills an entire soul-binding speech down to a single statement, allowing her to change a target's memories mid-conversation.

Demon-Wracking Shout

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Any five Essence 2+ Performance Charms

Long ago, the Solars slew the enemies of the gods. Now those demons lie ancient and forgotten, dreaming beyond the pale of time. What language may name the ancient nemeses? What words have erased, music will never forget. Sometimes, when a Solar is performing an exceptionally difficult or creative song or dance, she becomes aware of a memory older than herself. The presence of demons can also trigger the sensation of knowing the form of this technique. Upon perceiving this Charm, the Solar reaches out and grasps the tendril of its Essence, drawing it into

her mouth, swallowing and binding it into her throat. The Charm is learned instantly (at the normal price), and may be unleashed by paying its cost. Demon-Wracking Shout unleashes a sonic blast that is merely terrifying to most creatures, but constitutes a non-physical (Charisma + Performance) **decisive** attack on all demons and spiritual creatures of darkness within long range of the Solar, with (Essence) automatic successes. The attack cannot be dodged, only parried, and adds ten dice to the Solar's Initiative for determining base damage. This attack strikes dematerialized demons as easily as the material. This Charm may only be used once per fight.

Oratory

Impassioned Orator Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Solar speaks with the voice of Heaven, magnifying her authority. This Charm supplements a Performance-based speech, granting it double 9s.

Fury Inciting Speech

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Impassioned Orator Technique

The Lawgiver speaks out against injustice, and a spirit of divine wrath falls over her audience. The Exalt harangues a crowd for at least ten minutes, exposing an injustice that has been done—typically playing on those specific principles of faith, tradition, or morality that are popular with her audience. This acts as a ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) inspire action against the average Resolve of the crowd. If successful, the speech ignites anger at a specific cause, but leaves the mob as a disorganized, riotous mass. However, for every three extra successes on the roll, the Solar's player can direct the mob at a single target linked to the crowd's anger. For example, with nine extra successes, the Solar could lead a mob in Nexus to attack the Guild Hall, set fire to the docks as a distraction, and free the slaves on auction row.

Dogmatic Contagion Discipline

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fury Inciting Speech

The Solar's arguments and invocations resonate with her audience so profoundly that they're filled with her fiery passion. When the Solar uses oration to inspire a crowd, she may supplement the roll with this Charm. Extra successes on the roll are passed as bonus dice to those characters who she's able to successfully influence, for the express purpose of passing on the Solar's

influence. Such characters will retain these bonus dice for (Essence) days. Anyone they are able to successfully influence with the Solar's arguments gain the same bonus to do so to others, although not the impetus. If this Charm is used with any other that requires an expenditure of Willpower, ignore this Charm's Willpower cost.

Infectious Zealotry Approach

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dogmatic Contagion Discipline

The Lawgiver distills all the power and passion of an entire speech into a single statement, striking her target with an all-consuming fiery ambition. When the Solar perceives a character who is about to put off making a social influence attempt that the Solar believes should be attempted *now*, she may use this Charm, rolling a ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) based action against her target's Resolve. The Solar inveighs against inaction and scorns all dereliction. If successful, her feverish contagion of will causes the target to forget all other concerns, goals, and ambitions, focusing socially on a single social objective for the rest of the scene. This effect can be resisted by paying one Willpower, but the affected character may only pay this Willpower if confronted by some circumstance that would force him to abandon a Defining Intimacy in order to carry out his social influence action.

On Infectious Zealotry Approach

> In Presence, the Charm Mind-Wiping Gaze (p. XX) momentarily blanks out a character's mind, erasing his social impetus. If used in combination with Infectious Zealotry Approach, the character is rendered catatonic unless attacked. In this state, Hypnotic Tongue Technique (p. XX) or Memory-Reweaving Discipline (p. XX) may be used on the target without a Resolve check.

Music and Singing

Perfect Harmony Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Solar can shape her voice, or the voice of her instrument, into a perfect harmony of sound. This Charm supplements musical performances, granting them double 9s.

Mood-Inducing Music

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One song

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Harmony Technique

Taking up a musical instrument, the Exalt pours her Essence through her fingers as she plays, evoking the soul of a composition. This Charm supports social influence being employed by other characters in the scene. The player names a mood which the song should induce, with an intended effect. It can be a calming song to prevent hostility, a market song to induce trade, a romantic song to aid in seduction, and so on. After the player has named the effect of the song, the Storyteller can decide how it affects the scene, adding or subtracting bonus dice equal to the Solar's Essence. For example, a song with a calming influence will penalize social influence that attempts to provoke anger, while romantic music enhances sexual persuasion. This Charm enhances and penalizes the social influence of *anyone* who can hear it. The Solar's music can also instead be tailored to enhance a dance or a song sung by a specific character.

Battle Anthem (of the Solar Exalted)

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One song

Prerequisite Charms: Mood-Inducing Music

The Lawgiver draws down the Essence of battle and manifests it through the medium of her instrument. While playing this song in combat, the Solar and her allies each automatically gain one Initiative per round, and their successful **withering** attacks each award an additional point of bonus Initiative. Allied battle groups who can hear the Solar's music enjoy (Solar's Essence) bonus dice to their attacks. While using this Charm, the Solar can't take any non-Reflexive actions. This song does not stack with itself when played by more than one ally. Under the effects of Soul Voice, allies automatically gain two Initiative per round, and battle groups gain (Solar's Essence) automatic successes to their attacks.

Plectral Harbinger's Approach

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mood-Inducing Music

At any point during a song played with the prerequisite, the Lawgiver may channel and focus the song on a particular character, intensifying the mood of the music into that character's social influence. Roll the Solar's ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) with (Essence) automatic successes against the Resolve of the beneficiary's target. If the Solar is enhancing a Presence or Socialize action, this is typically the Resolve of a single character, but it can be the group's Resolve if the Solar is enhancing another character's performance with her own music. If successful, convert the Solar's extra successes into non-Charm bonus dice on the beneficiary's social influence. If the beneficiary is successful on a roll so enhanced, the Lawgiver regains a point of Willpower, though this does not confer any knowledge of that success to the Exalt.

Heart-Compelling Method

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Harmony Technique

The Lawgiver's music pulls at the soul of her target, impelling him to act on his deepest desires. This Charm creates a inspire action in which the Solar performs a song with instrument, voice, or both. Her song must continue for at least one minute before it affects anyone—roll ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Performance) against the target's Resolve. If her song is meant to convey sadness, it will automatically target an Intimacy in her target that reflects sorrow or regret, and may even revive a long-forgotten hurt to do so. The Solar's player may define the character's intent with the song, but on a success, the Storyteller gets to determine the exact Intimacy that is targeted and what behavior will manifest. As the Solar continues to play her most sorrowful tune, a prince might endlessly mourn his dead husband. With an aria that inspires hope, she might cause the prince to open his husband's private gardens to the city's children, in honor of an old wish.

Soul-Stirring Cantata

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One song

Prerequisite Charms: Heart-Compelling Method

The Solar draws a song from deep within her soul, and frees it with her flawless voice. While the Exalt sings, the Solar and each ally who can hear her gain a single additional mote of Essence per turn in combat, if applicable, or one mote for every two minutes of song out of combat. Outside combat, Soul-Stirring Cantata can only be used once per day. While using this Charm, the Solar can't take any non-Reflexive actions. Singing Soul-Stirring Cantata is guaranteed to draw the attention of local spirits, and members of the Wyld Hunt are trained to listen for the sounds this song produces. This song does not stack with itself when sung by more than one ally. Under the effect of Soul Voice, this Charm grants two motes per turn or per minute.

Heroism-Encouraging Ballad

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One song

Prerequisite Charms: Battle Anthem (of the Solar Exalted)

The Lawgiver's music is a benison against fear. While playing this song, the Lawgiver is immune to terror, and may target another character who can hear her song, making him completely immune to fear-based effects as well. Alternately, the Solar can inspire heroism in multiple allies, doubling Intimacy-derived Resolve bonuses from any applicable Tie or Principle: so long as there is a reason to be brave, her allies are emboldened against threaten actions and supernatural fear-based effects. Lastly, when the Lawgiver plays this song on the battlefield, allied battle groups gain (Solar's Essence) automatic successes to rally for numbers (p. XX).

While using this Charm, the Solar can't take any non-Reflexive actions. Bonuses from this Charm count as dice added by a Charm.

Dance

Graceful Reed Dancing

Cost: 1m; Mins: Performance 3, Essence 1; Type: Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Exalt moves and sways with the Essence of the world, affecting a perfect rhythm. This Charm supplements a dance, granting double 9s.

Battle-Dancer Method

Cost: 1m; Mins: Performance 4, Essence 1; Type: Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Reed Dancing

When dancing, add half the Exalt's Performance, rounded down, to her Parry or Evasion. If she is dancing by herself, this Charm can also raise her Resolve.

Shining Expression Style

Cost: 2m, 1wp; Mins: Performance 4, Essence 1; Type: Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Reed Dancing

The Exalt's skill is such that she can condense an entire emotional range into a single dance that embodies its very meaning. The Solar must dance for at least two minutes in order to use this Charm, rolling (Charisma + Performance) with (Essence) automatic successes against the group's Resolve. If successful, the group is struck with an emotion conveyed by the dance, each member becoming explicitly aware of one Tie he has which inspires that emotion in him. For instance, if the Solar does a dance that inspires fear, characters recall that which makes them most afraid. If she does a dance which inspires joy, they recall that which brings them the most happiness. If characters do not possess such an Intimacy, the Storyteller may assign one. Affected characters will feel inclined to discuss or act upon their feelings until they are affected by emotional influence that inspires a different mood. Characters who reveal an Intimacy in this fashion lower their Guile to 0 for the purposes of detecting and confirming that specific Intimacy. Note that the Solar is not necessarily going to be the beneficiary of the character's sudden openness, as she might not be directly involved in the conversation. For all her dancing, the Solar is never seen as the *deliberate* source of the target's thoughts. Not even All-Encompassing Sorcerous Sight can reveal the power of this Charm.

Winding Sinuous Motion

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shining Expression Style

The Solar channels Essence into her steps and motions, insinuating herself into the minds of her audience. The Solar winds through the motions of a dance. Roll ([Manipulation or Appearance] + Performance) with one automatic success against the target's Resolve. If successful, the target's Resolve or Guile is lowered by two against the Exalt's next social influence attempt.

Monk-Seducing Demon Dance

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Thousand Courtesan Ways, Winding Sinuous Motion

The Solar moves sensually through the eight steps of silken ecstasy, provoking her spellbound audience. This is dance lasting three minutes, ending in an (Appearance + Performance) roll with (Essence) bonus dice against the group's Resolve. If successful, it inspires intense lust for the Exalt. Success guarantees that characters who are sexually attracted to the Lawgiver will attempt to seduce her. Characters who are not sexually compatible with the Solar instead experience strong admiration for her, and will be inspired to speak with her at least once.

Acting

Master Thespian Style

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The greatest actors have the talent of making their audience *forget*. The Solar spends five minutes getting into character, psyching herself up, tuning her voice, repeating lines or otherwise practicing dance moves or musical movements. As long as she stays in character, this Charm raises the Exalt's Guile by one for the rest of the scene. Characters who fail to read her intentions while this Charm is active will pick up on false Intimacies or motivations that align with the role the Lawgiver is playing, and be convinced they are real. If the Exalt enters a scene with a dramatic stunt befitting the role she wishes to play, she may activate this Charm reflexively. This Charm is expressly permitted to be combined with Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise (p. XX).

Voice

Voice-Hurling Method

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

With skill to humble a master ventriloquist, the Exalt throws her voice. With this Charm, the Solar can cast her voice out to short range, making it appear to come from particular objects, locations, people or animals. Voice-Hurling Method supplements a single social influence action or regular dialogue lasting no longer than ten seconds. When the character is concealed, she may use it to speak without giving away her position, penalizing her opponent's Awareness by two successes in the process.

Cunning Mimicry Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Solar's unerring ear and perfectly tuned voice allows her to flawlessly mimic the normal speaking voice of someone she is familiar with. For this mimicry to be flawless, she must spend at least an hour memorizing the speech patterns and vocal inflections of the character whose voice she wishes to copy. This Charm supplements a single social influence action or regular dialogue lasting no more than ten seconds.

Most Excellent Mockingbird

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Performance 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Cunning Mimicry Technique

Clearing away her senses, the Solar attunes herself to a single mimicry. For one scene, the Exalt can perfectly mimic a single person whom she could perfectly copy with the prerequisite. While this Charm is active she may still choose to speak with her own voice, and may use Cunning Mimicry Technique to mimic the voices of other characters.

Splendid Magpie Approach

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Lawgiver's genius voice is capable of fascinating mimicry. This Charm supplements an attempt to mimic the calls, songs, or sounds of a small to medium animal or insect. She need

only hear the sound once to perfectly copy it. This Charm delights and amazes audiences and may aid in wilderness survival, by attracting food or a potential familiar.

Sex

Thousand Courtesan Ways

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Performance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The Solar suffuses her form with Essence, intensifying her every angle and motion. This Charm raises her Appearance by one for the rest of the scene, even if this increases it past five. An erotic vision made manifest, she may attempt and succeed at seductive persuade actions without targeting an Intimacy. In addition, she may make her movements and words effortlessly erotic, subtly or overtly sensualizing her social influence actions. She might be using a read intentions action to draw out someone's opinion on a social issue while subtly enticing him with an instill action, or she might play a song to remind a prince of his homeland while using an inspire action to stir a fire in the belly of his wife. In such cases, her social influence is made with a single roll, each different action sharing the roll's results.

Celestial Bliss Trick

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Performance 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Thousand Courtesan Ways

The Exalt performs the body-mudra of sighs and whispers upon a lover, unleashing a torrent of unimaginable ecstasy. This intense lovemaking lasts at least three minutes, inducing a world-shaking climax in her partner. In the afterglow, the Exalt becomes the object of a temporary Defining Tie of lust that lasts for (Essence) weeks, and gains (Essence) automatic successes to social influence actions targeting her lover for the rest of the scene.

Presence

Listener-Swaying Argument

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Presence 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar's passionate appeals can soften even the stoniest of hearts. This Charm supplements an instill or persuade action, granting the Solar one automatic success and additionally granting one

non-Charm bonus die for every two points the target's Resolve is boosted by *any* means. The Solar cannot gain more than three bonus dice in this fashion.

Impassioned Discourse Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Listener-Swaying Argument

The Solar argues from her beliefs, persuading listeners with the depth of her emotion. This Charm supplements a persuade action, granting the Solar one automatic success. In addition, when the Solar argues from a Principle she holds, she gains two, three, or four bonus dice, based on the intensity of the Principle. In essence, this Charm persuades a character to act as the Solar would act. She might argue from her own compassionate principles to convince her target to be merciful or generous, or principles reflecting temperance, to convince the target to abstain from debauchery, vice, dereliction or iniquity. Likewise she might invoke valorous Intimacies to urge courageous action, or she might sell a course of action with the force of her conviction.

Empowering Shout

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Impassioned Discourse Technique

Even bound in chains, the Lawgiver can inspire a subject to the heights of prowess. This Charm is a simple turn-length action in which the Solar exhorts a character to his true greatness. Such a character gains a +1 non-Charm bonus to one Attribute and Ability until his next turn. The Solar might call upon a strongman to lift rubble from a trapped family, increasing his Strength and Athletics by one each, or empower her guardian to strike swift and true, increasing his Dexterity and Melee, and so on. The Solar may also choose instead to raise her charge's defense by one, but if this raises it past seven it counts as dice added by a Charm. Empowering Shout does not stack.

At Essence 4+, the Exalt can use this Charm to grant +2 to one Attribute and Ability or +2 to a defense.

Fulminating Word

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Impassioned Discourse Technique

When the Lawgiver argues from one of her defining principles, it is nearly impossible to disagree. Her words sow dissent within a target's soul. Upon successfully beating a target's Resolve with a bargain, threaten or persuade action, but before a Decision Point has been

entered, she may activate this Charm to magnify the impact of her argument. Doing so raises the cost of the Decision Point to two Willpower. If the target acquiesces to the Solar's demands, then the Exalt gains a point of temporary Willpower when she realizes her success.

Crowned King of Eternity

Cost: —; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Authority-Radiating Stance, Fulminating Word

The Lawgiver sits at the cycle of events, shining with a spirit that casts all others in relief. Once per scene, she may use this Charm to enact a free full Presence, Performance, or Socialize Excellency.

Harmonious Presence Meditation

Cost: 5m or 7m; **Mins:** Presence 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver embodies virility, magnetism and grace, empowering her forces of persuasion. For five motes, this Charm grants three bonus dice to all forms of social influence from all Abilities except Stealth. In addition, the cost of all social influence Charms are reduced by one mote, to a minimum of one. The seven mote version of this Charm extends the duration to indefinite.

Excellent Friend Approach

Cost: —; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Presence Meditation, Listener-Swaying Argument

The Lawgiver inspires tremendous devotion. A Solar with this Charm is held high in the esteem of her allies. Anyone who holds a positive Defining Tie to the Solar can be persuaded to do inconvenient tasks (p. XX) without a roll.

Tiger's Dread Symmetry

Cost: —; **Mins:** Presence 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver is a singular and terrifying being, awesome to behold. Learning this Charm grants one bonus die to all Presence rolls and allows the Exalt to reroll (Essence or three, whichever is greater) non-successes on rolls to intimidate. In addition, if the Solar has activated Majestic

Radiant Presence, a character must resist an automatic intimidate attempt before he's able to attempt an ambush attack. This effect does not make the Solar aware of her attacker—it simply means that, as her assassin draws a bead on her from the shadows, her fierce look and deadly grace emanates forth to cow him. The intimidate action may only be supported by Charms that are ongoing or otherwise can be used unconsciously.

Majestic Radiant Presence

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Presence Meditation

Her incandescent spirit magnifies the Lawgiver with aspects of glory and terror. While this Charm is active, characters must pay a point of temporary Willpower to speak against her or attack her. Her enemies need only pay this price once per scene. In addition, all threaten actions against her suffer a penalty equal to her Essence.

Enemy-Castigating Solar Judgment

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Impassioned Discourse Technique, Majestic Radiant Presence

The Exalt sears her target with the caustic force of her judgment. This Charm supplements a social influence roll or an attack against a creature of darkness, lowering its Resolve or its defense by one. If the attack is **decisive**, the damage is aggravated. If the influence is successful, it costs an additional Willpower to resist. In addition, if this Charm is combined with other Charms or magic which harm creatures of darkness, then the Solar may use this Charm against characters or ideas for whom she has a Defining Tie of hatred, even if they are not creatures of darkness. This makes those targets susceptible to the effects of all such Charms for one instant.

Blazing Glorious Icon

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Majestic Radiant Presence

The Solar's glory burns like the very sun in the sky. When her anima is at the glowing or burning level, her Presence-based attempts to threaten, persuade, or instill gain one non-Charm automatic success. When she is at bonfire, these actions gain an additional extra non-Charm die as well. The Solar is glorious and terrible; this power does not aid seduction attempts unless the Exalt channels her glory into amplifying her magnificence with a stunt, using her Appearance on the roll. This Charm never aids a bargain action.

Mind-Wiping Gaze

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blazing Glorious Icon

The Solar sheds the entire force of her presence out through her eyes. Her intense stare penetrates the soul of her target, momentarily blanking out his memories. When the Exalt perceives a character who is about to make a social influence attempt she disagrees with (or wishes to stifle for whatever reason), she may use this Charm, rolling a ([Charisma or Appearance] + Presence) action against her target's Resolve to extinguish the candle of his mind. If successful, her target forgets his social objective for the rest of the scene, and may only remember it if reminded and then by paying one Willpower. The Solar may only use this Charm on a given target once per scene. If her target spends a Willpower to resist, the Solar regains the Willpower she spent activating the Charm. Mind-Wiping Gaze may be enhanced by Presence Charms that enhance persuade and threaten actions.

Hypnotic Tongue Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Psyche, Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Mind-Wiping Gaze, Fulminating Word

With no other recourse, the Solar dominates another with the force of her presence. The Solar's Caste Mark flashes and her eyes blaze as she casts her relentless spirit out into the world. It flows forth and strikes her target. Roll ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Presence) against the target's Resolve. This non-specific effect cannot lower the target's Resolve by exploiting an Intimacy, nor can the target invoke an Intimacy to raise his defense. If the roll is successful, the target goes catatonic for a moment, allowing the Solar to program him with instructions delivered via (threshold successes +1) short, clear sentences. These instructions may be complicated as the Solar is able to convey, but all must be carried out at the same time. If the Solar does not use a sentence to designate *when* the target should act, he will carry out this process immediately.

Characters who complete given tasks or take actions on the back of this Charm do not remember why they did such things or even that they were ordered to do them. A character may spend three Willpower to reject the Solar's programming, but this also results in his completely forgetting the Solar's attempt. Characters who resist this Charm by any means cannot be confronted with it again for (target's Integrity) days.

Underling-Promoting Touch

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Majestic Radiant Presence

With a touch, the Exalt raises a servant to the role of a champion. By using this Charm and touching a person who serves or follows her, the Lawgiver temporarily makes her subject the beneficiary of respect and admiration usually reserved for the Solar. Characters who have ties of loyalty, respect or admiration to the Solar now also feel the same way toward her charge. Additionally, the character also inherits any social station or role it is within the Solar's right to grant, and all characters who are subject to that station instantly recognize that they are subject to the promoted one's authority.

Worshipful Lackey Acquisition

Cost: —; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Underling-Promoting Touch

As the sun rises in prominence, shadows grow long upon the earth. Whenever the Solar achieves a goal through lecture, prophecy, oration, or other forms of performance, those who conspire against her are twisted against themselves. Enemies who witness her success must roll (Wits + Integrity) with a penalty of the Solar's Essence, against a difficulty of the Solar's strongest Social Attribute. Those who fail become enthralled with the Solar's wisdom and greatness and are inclined to follow her and do as she commands as if they had a Principle defining them as one of her acolytes. The character does not stop hating the Solar, but must grovel, cloy and defer to her for (Essence) days. Occasionally when this effect ends, if the character was treated well by the Solar, his negative Intimacies for her are diminished or destroyed and he becomes one of her true allies.

Prophet-Uplifting Evocation

Cost: 4m, 1wp, 2xp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Underling-Promoting Touch

With a gesture, the Solar uplifts a favored follower and grants him true power. This Charm permanently empowers a character under the effect of Underling-Promoting Touch, granting him a personal Essence pool of four motes plus up to five more, provided by the Solar upon using this Charm. The character becomes inured to supernatural terror, and may resist it with a +2 bonus to her Resolve. In addition, if the character has Integrity 3+, then he's granted a Charm called Unhesitating Dedication. This Charm allows the prophet to defend a Defining Principle from being decayed by reflexively paying three motes. The Lawgiver may have (Essence x2) prophets. If a prophet is slain, the Solar recovers experience points spent in the Charm's cost.

Shedding Infinite Radiance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Prophet-Uplifting Evocation

The flames of Solar passion run deep. Sometimes they burst forth, igniting the greatness in others. With this Charm, the Solar prepares an acolyte, follower, student or agent for some great task. This is a simple dramatic action in which she exults and extolls the virtue of her cause, invoking a Principle which she has instilled upon her target. This is not a social influence action, merely the way in which she pours excellence into her subject. For as long as she commits Essence, her charge gains three automatic non-Charm successes to apply to action taken on behalf of a Principle granted by the Solar. The character may use these successes all on one roll, or may spread them out. Once all the successes have been spent, the Solar senses it, as commitment to the Charm ends. Successes granted by this Charm have certain limitations:

• The character may not invoke more successes on an action than he has dots in the relevant Ability. For example, the Solar's envoy, having Performance 2 and Thrown 1, could apply two successes to his address to the corrupt senate of Paramour, before using his last automatic success to fling a hidden stiletto into the legate's neck. He would not be able to put more than one success into the assassination attempt, and each action would have to be done in upholding or advancing a Principle given to him by the Solar. (In this case, perhaps the legate was holding the senate hostage, preventing them from accepting the envoy's influence.)

• This Charm is stackable, but the Solar may not stack it on a single target more than (Essence) times.

• Even if the character is benefitting from multiple applications of this Charm, he may not enhance a single action by more than three granted successes.

The Solar may enhance as many characters with this Charm as she has motes to pay the cost.

Favor-Conferring Prana

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Empowering Shout, Underling-Promoting Touch

This Charm copies the effect of Empowering Shout, but allows the Solar to empower an ally indefinitely. The subject's Attribute and Ability ratings may not be increased past five with this Charm, nor may he begin to learn Charms or magic he doesn't truly qualify for. Because this is a different Charm than its prerequisite, it may be used in conjunction with Empowering Shout.

Authority-Radiating Stance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Majestic Radiant Presence

The Lawgiver exudes rightful authority. This Charm prevents every ally within medium range from succumbing completely to fear. As long as they can see the Solar or hear her voice, they suffer no fear-based penalties to their actions. The Exalt's rally rolls (p. XX) are also enhanced,

gaining one automatic success. This Charm does not protect characters from supernatural terror or from being threatened by a Dawn Caste.

Terrifying Apparition of Glory

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Majestic Radiant Presence

The Solar burns with fearsome power, transforming her into an icon of terrible majesty. The Solar activates this Charm when her anima is at bonfire. This Charm inflicts supernatural terror upon all who see the Solar. This is modeled as a threaten action, but requires no words, and suffers no penalty from being unspoken or without specific gesture; the Solar is simply terrifying to behold. This effect also ignores the penalty for group influence. Trivial opponents and most animals, even attack animals, will simply flee the Solar's presence. Those who fail their Resolve checks also flee. In combat, this effect can be perceived out to long distance, recurs every round without the need of a flurry, and may be resisted for the rest of the scene by paying one Willpower and five Initiative. Finally, a terrorized battle group suffers a loss of three dice from its rout checks (p. XX) when faced with the Solar's immense and terrifying spiritual force.

Countenance of Vast Wrath

Cost: 6m, 3a; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Terrifying Apparition of Glory

While under the effects of the prerequisite, the Solar draws in her anima, shedding it completely. As she ends the Charm's commitment, she draws her power inward, channeling it into a new and more terrifying form. This Charm adds (Essence) dice to the Lawgiver's single-target threaten actions, and allows her to terrorize even those creatures who are incapable of fear. In combat, opponents suffer the loss of a single point of Initiative on each round in which they do not direct an attack at her.

At Essence 5+, when the character returns to bonfire, she resumes the effects of Terrifying Apparition of Glory automatically and for free. Characters who fail their Resolve checks must pay additional Willpower and Initiative to remain in battle.

This Charm cannot be muted with the Night Caste anima or other magic.

Threefold Magnetic Ardor

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Presence 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Presence Meditation, Listener-Swaying Argument

The Solar's intense sexuality magnifies her powers of persuasion, making *any* instill or persuade actions made with Presence, Performance or Socialize more compelling. Normally when a character has higher Appearance than her target's Resolve, she enjoys a non-Charm dice bonus equal to the difference of the two values. This Charm converts the difference into automatic successes. This bonus counts as dice added by a Charm. Note that this Charm still works if the character has the Hideous merit, as the amplification of her horrifying Appearance has an equally profound effect on persuasion. In this case, Threefold Magnetic Ardor also supplements threaten actions.

Awakened Carnal Demiurge

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Threefold Magnetic Ardor

Through intense preparation, the Lawgiver magnifies her own appearance, increasing the magnitude of her presence. The Solar enacts a simple dramatic action lasting five minutes, in which she verbally induces her inner greatness to external form. For as long as she commits Essence, the Solar's Appearance is increased by one, even if this raises her Appearance above five. In addition, any seduction attempt she makes treats her target as if he had one less Resolve, both lowering his resistance and increasing the effectiveness of her Appearance rating.

Rose-Lipped Seduction Style

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Presence 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Awakened Carnal Demiurge

With a provocative word and gesture, the Exalt amplifies her form with Essence, treating the target of such intensity to the fullness of her desires. This Charm supplements a persuade action to seduce a target, granting double 9s. The Solar may even seduce a character for whom such influence is unacceptable.

Remember the Red Rule!

> The Red Rule (p. XX) states that no matter the magic, no matter the circumstances, no player character can *ever* be seduced if the player disagrees. Although not every sexualized mechanic in the game is a seduction attempt, whenever you come across such an effect, use the spirit of the Red Rule rather than the letter. Respect your fellow players first and foremost.

Resistance

Durability of Oak Meditation

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: One tick

Prerequisite Charms: None

A child cannot cleave a tree with a dull knife, nor can a foe hope to strike down the Solar with his petty blade. Against a **withering** or **decisive** attack, this Charm reduces raw damage by two. Against a **decisive** attack it also grants the Exalt four hardness. Note that the hardness bonus cannot be applied during crash.

Spirit Strengthens the Skin

Cost: 1m per damage die removed; **Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Durability of Oak Meditation

The Solar channels Essence through her enduring toughness, hardening her skin and muscles beyond their mortal limits. After an attack hits her, but before damage is rolled, she may increase her soak at a rate of one mote per die. She may no more than double her natural soak in this fashion. This effect is incompatible with any magic that allows the Exalt to soak a **decisive** attack with withering-only magic.

Iron Skin Concentration

Cost: 2m or 6m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant or Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit Strengthens the Skin

This Charm hardens the Exalt's skin, making it incredibly difficult to cut or pierce. Against a **withering** attack, the Solar can pay two motes to apply her Stamina as soak against unsoakable damage as an instant effect. Against a **decisive** attack, she may pay six motes after damage has been rolled to create (Stamina) -0 health levels, which take damage first, effectively shunting the attack away from her bones and vital organs. She still feels the pain of the strike, but a blow that appears to run her through may be shrugged off while drawing a mere trickle or no blood at all. If the created health levels exceed the damage successes for that attack, subsequent attacks' damage is automatically applied to remaining created -0's before damage begins registering with her regular health levels.

The motes for the **decisive** version's cost are committed indefinitely. The Solar keeps her commitment to this Charm for as long as she remains injured; after combat ends, the health levels convert from -0 to -1 wounds, requiring the Solar to seek rest or treatment in order to end the Charm. These health levels are the first healed by any kind of rest or magical healing. Healing these levels is the only way to end the Charm; once they are healed they vanish. Undamaged health levels vanish at the end of the scene. The Solar may choose to continue fighting while carrying shunted injuries, but each day she does so increases the wound penalty by -1.

At Essence 3+, the Solar may create up to (Stamina + Essence) health levels, but choosing to do so changes the cost of the Charm to five motes + one mote for every -0 created beyond the Solar's Stamina.

Diamond-Body Prana

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Dual

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Iron Skin Concentration

The Exalt inverts her anima, turning the substance of her existence into something far beyond normal harm. For the rest of the scene, basic scenery damage, such as crashing through a window, running through a bramble, or stepping through a burning corridor (flames of less intensity than 4L per turn) does her no harm. The Solar can't be hurt by light contact with normally damaging edges. Her skin is tough enough for the claws of a tiger to skid off harmlessly, so long as the tiger isn't actually striking her.

This Charm provides the following protection against **withering** attacks: when activated, the Solar rolls (Stamina + Resistance) dice with (Essence or three, whichever is higher) automatic successes and adds the successes to her soak for the rest of the scene. This roll cannot be enhanced by other magic.
Against **decisive** attacks, this Charm provides (Stamina) hardness, and can stack with Durability of Oak Meditation, reducing that Charm's hardness bonus to +2. Diamond-Body Prana is incompatible with armor.

Iron Kettle Body

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Iron Skin Concentration

Striking the Solar is like striking a piece of iron. For one round, all post-soak **withering** damage is halved (round up). This Charm must be invoked when an attack is directed at the Solar, but before it is rolled. At Essence 3+, less accurate blows glance and rebound painfully from the Solar's body—1s on a successful attack roll subtract from the attacker's Initiative at a rate of -1 for each 1 rolled, to a maximum of half the Solar's Stamina, rounded up. At Essence 4+, Initiative points lost striking the Exalt's Iron Kettle Body are awarded to the Solar.

Triggering Adamant Skin Technique cancels Iron Kettle Body's effects for one tick. Iron Kettle Body's bonuses may not be used to enhance Adamant Skin Technique.

Adamant Skin Technique

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Diamond-Body Prana, Iron Kettle Body

Driven by purpose, the Solar refuses to be defeated. Channeling Essence through her Resistance, she may apply her full (Stamina + armor soak) to a **decisive** attack. As this Charm is a counter to **decisive** attacks, the weapon's overwhelming damage does not apply without a Charm. This effect is incompatible with Charms that increase soak except for Diamond-Body Prana, and Adamant Skin Technique can't be invoked against an ambush attack; however, it grants total immunity to scenery-based uncountable damage, allowing the Solar to escape seemingly-impossible recurring damage, like that of an explosion or a collapse, or falling from a great height. Such impacts still daze the Solar, knocking the wind from her, and giving her a -3 penalty for (7 - Stamina, minimum of 1) turns. Invoking Adamant Skin Technique sets the Solar's hardness to 0 for one instant.

Ruin-Abasing Shrug

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Adamant Skin Technique

Flesh imbued with impenetrable Essence, the Solar turns aside harm with forceful derision. After damage is rolled, the Solar may use this Charm to force the attacking player to reroll, keeping his non-successes, rerolling only successful dice. Damage on this reroll cannot exceed that of the initial roll. This Charm can be used once per scene, but may be reset by taking no **withering** or **decisive** damage on three separate damage rolls.

Aegis of Invincible Might

Cost: —; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Dual, Perilous

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Adamant Skin Technique

When her life is threatened, the Solar channels her fury to make herself nigh invulnerable. After using Adamant Skin Technique, the Solar's hardness is raised to 20, and her **withering** soak is raised by her (Stamina + Resistance), while also cancelling (Stamina) post soak damage. This massive increase in toughness is based on a surge of Essence through the Solar's body. In order to maintain it, the Solar must either unleash a **decisive** attack each round on her turn, or pay 8+ motes on offensive Charms. This effect ends if the Solar is crashed or fails to take continuous combat actions.

Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the practiced motions of a master, the Lawgiver dons her armor with supernatural speed. With this Charm, it takes a character ([armor's mobility penalty] + 1) turns to don or remove a suit of armor.

Hauberk-Summoning Gesture

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

The Solar can call her armor from Elsewhere, allowing her to don each piece of armor as if she were putting it on normally. If the Solar owns a shield, she may call it to hand as well. The Lawgiver can also send her armor Elsewhere through use of this Charm.

Armored Scout's Invigoration

Cost: 4m or 6m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

The Solar slides into her armor like it was second skin, Essence smoothing the way. The Exalt invokes this Charm when she equips her armor. So long as she wears her armor, its mobility is treated as if it were 0, removing the penalty to her movement, Stealth actions, and Evasion. If the Exalt is wearing light or medium armor, this Charm costs four motes. If she is wearing heavy armor, it costs six motes. If her armor's mobility is already 0, she can reroll a single non-successful die on her Join Battle roll.

Glorious Solar Plate

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Hauberk-Summoning Gesture

The Solar bends her anima into a suit of armor in the form of hardened sunfire, bearing all the glorious colors of Solar anima. This armor has stats identical to artifact heavy armor (+11 soak, 10 hardness, -2 mobility), and if the Exalt has mastered the Armored Scout's Invigoration, Glorious Solar Plate activates its effects for free.

Glorious Solar Plate may graft itself over a suit of armor, appearing as a series of interlinked cosmic runes that describe the ascent of the Unconquered Sun to the zenith of heaven at the birth of the universe. This upgrades the armor's traits if they are lesser than that of Glorious Solar Plate, and adds the armor-enhancing powers of this Charm to the Lawgiver's current set. If the Solar's current armor is attuned, grafting Glorious Solar Plate onto it replaces the commitment cost, releasing the attuned motes.

For additional purchases, the player may grant Glorious Solar Plate custom Evocations. The player should work with the Storyteller to create Evocations that exudes the nature of the Exalt's iconic anima manifestation.

In addition, Glorious Solar Plate has the following power:

Unbreakable Sustaining Grip: The armor automatically treats crippling damage to joints and limbs, setting and stabilizing broken bones with binding Essence and channeling the Solar's pain out through her anima. As a result, the Solar's limbs cannot be hacked off and her bones and joints can't be rendered dysfunctional while she is wearing Glorious Solar Plate.

Special activation rules: Glorious Solar Plate is expressly allowed to be used in combination with Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana, so that a suit of armor can be quickly donned and simultaneously enhanced by this Charm's effects. Used on its own, Glorious Solar Plate appears already-equipped, perfectly fitted to the Solar's form.

Poison-Resisting Meditation

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt's metabolism is strengthened by Essence, allowing her to easily endure the effects of toxins. The Solar gains one automatic success and three bonus dice when rolling (Stamina + Resistance) against a toxin's duration (p. XX).

The Solar can also use this Charm at the toxin's interval, to reduce or change the anticipated symptoms of a poison or venom. For example, damaged health levels might be converted instead to a dice penalty until the venom runs its course, or poison-induced blindness might be bled out in viscous tears or a gout of sickly black Essence.

Illness-Resisting Meditation

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Poison-Resisting Meditation

The Lawgiver's immune system is fortified by inexorable spirit energies that purge her body of malaise. This Charm adds (Essence +1) automatic successes to the Exalt's attempt to resist a disease's virulence, as well as its morbidity. If the Exalt wishes to get sick, she can choose to apply this Charm's effects solely to the morbidity roll.

Immunity to Everything Technique

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Illness-Resisting Meditation

Through exposure and resistance, the Solar trains her anima to eat toxins and neutralize sicknesses. When activated, this Charm makes the Solar invulnerable to any toxin or illness she has ever been exposed to previously. She cannot be injured by familiar venom and cannot contract prior illnesses. She can sprinkle poison on her food as a condiment or walk hand-in-hand with a plague victim and be unaffected—so long as she has had exposure to these maladies.

This Charm also assists the Solar in fighting toxins and disease she is unfamiliar with. When exposed to new toxins, the expected duration is reduced by one. When exposed to a new disease, the morbidity rating is lowered by one. In addition, if the Solar's Stamina is at least 3, she encounters incurable and irresistible diseases as if they had a morbidity of 5.

Essence-Gathering Temper

Cost: 1i; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt is resistant to all forms of damage, and empowered by them. When an attack makes it through her defense, she may pay one Initiative to draw Essence from deep within the core of her body. The Exalt gains a number of motes equal to half the damage (round up) of the attack before soak, but may gain no more than (Stamina) motes in a single round. Once the Solar has used this Charm, she may not use it until it has been reset by soaking a **withering** attack of 10+ raw damage without suffering Initiative loss.
At Resistance 5, Essence 3+, the total number of motes the Solar may gain per round increases to (Stamina x2).

Willpower-Enhancing Spirit

Cost: 2i; **Mins:** Resistance 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Gathering Temper

The Exalt remembers past lives and past failures, and knows that her death is the death of the world. Once per scene, the Exalt may pay two Initiative when struck with a **decisive** attack, instantly regaining a point of temporary Willpower. This Charm is reset by surviving a **decisive** attack of 10+ raw damage without taking a single health level of damage.

Fury-Fed Ardor

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Willpower-Enhancing Spirit

When struck, the Solar can absorb the force from a **decisive** attack, increasing her combat momentum with empowering wrath. This Charm may be activated before a damage roll, converting half its non-successes before rerolls (rounded up) to Initiative and awarding it to the Solar.

Battle Fury Focus

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Willpower-Enhancing Spirit

The Solar taps a replenishing well of inner rage, infusing her anger with primal magic, making her capable of superhuman feats. For the duration of the scene, the Exalt has +1 die to all pools related to combat and subtracts -1 from all wound penalties. However, the Exalt must be engaged in combat, or attempting to engage in combat, to become so engaged, and is compelled in all her desires toward battle. Intimacies that compel her to fight, including negative Intimacies that drive her to attack and positive Intimacies that reflect her love for combat, are more powerful, increased by one in their intensities, with Defining Intimacies representing a +5 or -4 rating instead of the usual +4 or -3. However, the Solar is unable to use social influence for commands unrelated to combat or persuasion more complicated than “Give up or die.”

Battle Fury Focus does not make the Solar inelegant or stupid. The Exalt can make tactical disengage actions in order to kill someone or change targets, even gaining the +1 bonus to do so, but she must end the Charm in order to take a withdraw action.

Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Battle Fury Focus

While channeling Battle Fury Focus, the Solar drops to a deeper level of consciousness, sinking into a meditation on violence and destruction. In this fugue state, her world narrows to a tight red tunnel with things that must die at the far end. On top of the +1 bonus from Battle Fury Focus, the Solar gains an additional +2 dice to all of her combat actions, ignores all wound penalties, and generates one mote per turn, which must be spent each turn on combat-related actions or physical actions in pursuit of combat, violence or destruction.

In this state the Solar cannot be safely dissuaded from combat. Should friends or allies choose to stand in her way, she won’t slaughter them unheedingly, but will use any force necessary to remove them from her path so she can continue to assault her original target. She will not, and cannot end her assault until her targets are dead or fled, and if she is convinced by an impassioned plea to drop her commitment to this Charm, she will go into immediate Initiative crash. If she crashes herself in this fashion, her Initiative is set to -3. Ending this Charm while already crashed does not change the Solar’s Initiative value.

When tremendously outnumbered, Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit affords the Exalt renewed power: each time she empties a battle group's Magnitude track, she may roll Join Battle.

Ox-Body Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Resistance 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The bodies of the Exalted are much more durable than those of mere mortals. To help simulate this, an Exalt may buy extra health levels with this Charm. The purchasing choices are based on the character's Stamina rating:

At Stamina 1 and 2: One -1 and one -2 health level.

3 and 4: One -1 and two -2 health levels.

5: One -0, one -1, and one -2 health level.

The Solar may purchase Ox-Body Technique (Resistance) times. If she increases her Stamina after purchasing Ox-Body Technique, her health levels automatically change to reflect the new rating.

Body-Mending Meditation

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Resistance 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ox-Body Technique

Even when unconscious, the Solar's body and Essence work in unison to knit wounds and mend broken bones. Roll the Solar's (Stamina + Resistance) to speed her natural healing by a factor of (Essence x successes). Alternately, successes on this roll can be added directly to the successes of Wound-Mending Care Technique on page XX. The Solar must spend an hour at rest for this power to take effect, but the boosted healing lasts for one day, so long as the Solar remains at rest.

Front-Line Warrior's Stamina

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Resistance 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ox-Body Technique

Once per day, the Exalt can draw from the deep well of her vitality to restore her momentum. Roll half the Solar's total health levels, rounded up, and add successes to her Initiative score. Do not include temporary health levels created by Iron Skin Concentration, Living Bonds Unburdened, or similar Charms. This Charm is reset when the Solar awakens from a full night's rest.

Tiger Warrior's Endurance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Body-Mending Meditation, Front-Line Warrior's Stamina

The Exalt's resilient anima encompasses her every cell and fiber, rejuvenating her at the brink of death. When the Exalt recovers from Initiative crash, she automatically heals two health levels, starting with -2s and continuing to her -1 and then her -0 health levels. This Charm does not heal wounds with penalties greater than -2, but will heal wounds even when the Solar is at -4—a Solar using this Charm with a "gap" in her damage track continues to suffer from her highest wound penalty but takes new wounds in the first available health box. This power may be invoked once per fight, and the player may dictate when this effect triggers, choosing to save it for a later crash. Once it has been used, Tiger Warrior's Endurance can be reset by gaining 20+ Initiative.

Wound-Knitting Exercise

Cost: 1m per -0 health level; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Until fully healed

Prerequisite Charms: Tiger Warrior's Endurance

The Lawgiver shuns lesser forms of harm, fighting through injuries as though they never happened. This Charm slowly compensates for greater wounds by healing -0 health levels. The Exalt must pay the full cost of the Charm upon activation, paying one mote for every damaged -0 health level she wishes to heal. This Charm heals one -0 health level every (7 - Stamina) rounds.

This Charm works even if the Solar has taken damage to her -1 or greater health levels.

Unbreakable Warrior's Mastery

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Resistance 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Knitting Exercise

Through the course of lifetimes, the Solar has felt a rain of blows that would shatter any mortal. Through this Charm, she knows all harm at once, and yet the greater truth is that she still exists, unbowed and unbroken. When struck with a crippling attack, the Solar may use this Charm to trade irreparable or permanent harm for a lesser effect of a shorter duration. Instead of her eye being gouged out, it is closed by a glancing blow; instead of her arm being shattered, it simply hangs limp. Halve the penalty (round down) associated with a successful crippling attack, applied as a Crippling keyword effect that remains for (7 - Stamina) turns.

Ride

Master Horseman's Techniques

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt has the talent of a veteran equestrian, knowing a handful of ancient and proven techniques to control, console, and sustain her mount through the most arduous circumstances. Purchasing this Charm provides the Solar with three of the listed techniques, and the player may work with the Storyteller to expand the techniques available through this Charm. Additional techniques can be purchased for 2xp or a single bonus point.

Harmony of Spirits Style: The Lawgiver can spend one mote reflexively to stop herself from falling off a mount. The Exalt can activate this effect when she is asleep, unconscious or otherwise incapacitated, and will not fall off the mount from being asleep or otherwise unconscious during ordinary travel. Against any attack which might knock her from her mount, she gains +1 defense.

Horse-Summoning Whistle: The Lawgiver can spend one mote reflexively to call a loyal mount to her side. The mount makes its way to her as circumstances best allow.

Master Horseman's Eye: The Solar can spend one mote reflexively when evaluating a mount to perfectly recognize its strengths and weaknesses.

Speed-Sustaining Technique: The Lawgiver can spend one mote reflexively and touch a mount to sustain it for two hours. Effort during that time does not exhaust the creature, and it does not suffer harmful random incidents such as thrown shoes and injured hooves.

Spirit-Steadying Assurances: The Solar can spend one mote reflexively to stop a mount from panicking. For one instant, the mount shakes off all natural or supernatural fear, and may not be intimidated by direct effort for (Essence) rounds, or indirect circumstances for the scene's duration.

Blood Rider's Toughness: The Solar and her mount are as a single being with one skin. The Solar will never chafe or develop sores from long rides, and both the Lawgiver and her mount may ride for twice as long without food, water, or rest.

Phantom Steed

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

At the Lawgiver's command, the Essence of the world opens to release a phantom steed into her custody. This mount's coat is as black as coal, but its eyes burn with the light of twin suns, and its mane carries all the colors of Solar anima. This Charm creates an exceptional war horse (p. XX) that never tires, hungers, or thirsts, and need not sleep. This horse cannot be intimidated, nor can its loyalty be shaken. Its existence is an extension of the Solar's own.

Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Ride 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

By tapping her own spirit, the Solar can imbue her mount with endless energy. The mount can run at full speed for an hour without becoming fatigued, and gains an automatic success toward all movement and balance-related actions. Furthermore, while this Charm is active the Exalt may use the Athletics Charms Graceful Crane Stance and Monkey Leap Technique (p. XX) while mounted, allowing her mount to keep its footing on the worst terrain and to leap across gaps or over obstacles.

Elusive Mount Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

The Solar draws her mount back as quick as the wind and as light as a sparrow. This Charm allows the Exalt to reflexively disengage while mounted.

Untouchable Horseman's Attitude

Cost: 3m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Elusive Mount Technique

The Lawgiver may use her skill to flawlessly evade an oncoming threat, automatically succeeding at a disengage action, so long as there is no more than one opponent at close range.

Phantom Rider's Approach

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Untouchable Horseman's Attitude

When using her mount to disengage, horse and rider seem to melt away, their very Essence converging with the scenery in an excess of speed. This Charm supplements a successful disengage, moving the Exalt and her mount two range bands should an enemy approach.

Wind-Racing Essence Infusion

Cost: 2m, 1wp or 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

The Solar draws the Essence of the world through her reins, drawing herself toward her destination with incredible speed. This Charm lasts one hour, but the motes are not committed. If the prerequisite is active, it costs only two motes, one Willpower to activate, otherwise the mote cost is four. It adds (Essence or three, whichever is greater) successes to any Ride-based commands, and to each interval of a race (see p. XX). Also, when she succeeds at a mounted rush (see p. XX), she gains two point of Initiative. If her mount is rolled into combat, it gains two points of Initiative as well.
Outside of combat, the Solar can travel at dramatic speeds. In narrative time, a distance that would take her mount an hour to cover can be cleared in ten minutes. What would take her a day can be covered in a handful of hours, and what would take a week can be covered in a single day. At the end of the hour, if the Solar chooses to renew Wind-Racing Essence Infusion, ignore the Willpower cost.

Immortal Charger's Gallop

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wind-Racing Essence Infusion

Feeding Essence through her mount's form, the Exalt greatly increases its speed for an instant. Convert the mount's Speed Bonus to automatic successes on a single movement action or one interval of a race. If the mount has a negative Speed Bonus, this Charm reverts it 0. This Charm does not affect the penalty to a mount's mobility that comes from heavy barding.

Supernal Lash Discipline

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Charger's Gallop

The Lawgiver holds the reins of Heaven and rides with the skill of divinity. Her skill allows her to draw supernatural levels of performance from her chosen steed, doubling its Speed for the scene. If this Charm is used without Flashing Thunderbolt Steed, mortal mounts will almost surely perish at the end of the scene. Used in conjunction with this Charm, the mount will still be tired and need to rest at the scene's end. This Charm ends if the Solar is crashed.

Speed-Fury Focus

Cost: —(3m); **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Charger's Gallop

Feeling her mount's agitation and its intense need to run, trample, and win, the Solar uses her Essence to focus its aggression into a wild burst of speed. This Charm permanently upgrades its prerequisite, allowing its effect to be used in a Join Battle roll for three motes.

Fierce Charger's Pulse

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Speed-Fury Focus

Feeling her mount's fury piqued at a rival's temerity, the Lawgiver is empowered. For each 10 an opponent rolls in an interval of a race (p. XX) or in a rush or disengage action (p. XX), the Solar gains a mote of Essence which can only be used to fuel Ride Charms. Motes generated in this fashion fade if they are not used on the Exalt's next turn.

Grizzled Cataphract's Way

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Speed-Fury Focus

So long as she sits a saddle, the tireless Lawgiver need not give way to flawed senses or exhaustion. The Exalt may roll Join Battle using the higher of her Ride or Awareness, and by doing so, she eliminates all Awareness penalties to the roll relating to exhaustion.

Inexhaustible Destrier's Gait

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Charger's Gallop

One of the advantages of going mounted is that wound penalties to the rider do not hinder the movement of her steed. Inexhaustible Destrier's Gait also removes the steed's wound penalties and penalties for unsteady footing for one round, making the mount's movements flawless.

Coursing Firebolt Flash

Cost: 3m or 4m, 1a; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wind-Racing Essence Infusion

The Lawgiver whips her reins and strikes against the world with her Essence, pushing aside all external forces to drive her mount forward with blistering speed. This Charm supplements a rush,

disengage, or withdraw action (p. XX), or a single interval of a race (p. XX), adding one automatic success and rerolling all 1s until 1s fail to appear. For four motes, the Solar may unfurl a single level of her anima, leaving a trail of fire in her wake. This flame will not consume the scenery, but will burn steadily, for an hour, even in a driving rain, and does damage identical to a bonfire (p. XX). These flame trails are visible from a mile away, and can be seen by completely sightless characters.

When using Coursing Firebolt Flash, and provided she knows Onrush Burst Method (p. XX), the Solar benefits from the latter Charm exactly as if she were using Athletics, save that she must use the gathered motes to power Ride Charms.

Rapid Cavalry Approach

Cost: 7m or 12m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Coursing Firebolt Flash

Infusing her chosen mount with Solar Essence, she lightens its body and magnifies its strength, allowing it to run at tremendous speeds. To activate this Charm, the Exalt must be at extreme range from all opponents. For seven motes, this Charm allows a naturally fast mount such as a horse or a great cat to move three range bands per turn. For twelve motes, it can confer the same effect to a slow or gigantic mount such as an ox or an elephant. Once within long range of any opponents, the Lawgiver's mounted speed is reduced to two bands per turn. This Charm ends if the Exalt or the mount attacks a target, or if the Solar is crashed.

Sometimes Horses Fly Approach

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Coursing Firebolt Flash

The Solar touches her mount with a mote of purefic power, opening its mind and teaching it the trick of running on air. The horse can gallop on water, clouds, and even an open gap across a chasm, allowing the Solar to take mounted movement actions across gulfs that would otherwise be impossible to cross.

Soaring Pegasus Style

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sometimes Horses Fly Approach

Their spirits conjoined, mount and rider streak toward their target with a powerful Essence-infused leap. This Charm allows a Solar using the prerequisite to attempt a rush action on an aerial opponent or target (such as a Haslanti skyship) at any range. If successful, the result is

identical to a successful rush; if the target is moving away, the Exalt follows an additional range band. If the Solar pursues a target for more than two turns using the prerequisite, drop the Willpower cost from this Charm.

Single Spirit Method

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

The Lawgiver and her mount are as a single being, nearly indivisible. Should her mount lose its footing, the Solar may use this Charm to allow it to reflexively rise from prone. The Solar will neither be thrown from the saddle in this instance, nor will she be injured by her mount rolling on her.

Saddle-Staying Courses

Cost: 4m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Single Spirit Method

Gripping the reins of her loyal steed, the Solar rides inexorably through the tides of chaos and the uncertain forces that buffet Creation. This Charm allows the Solar to recover from a successful unhorse gambit without falling from the saddle. The Solar is seen to fall from her steed, only to flip in the air or rebound off scenery to reunite with her mount. This Charm is also effective against attacks which would knock the Solar from her mount, but not those which would launch or bodily drag her from the saddle.

Horse-Stealing Leap

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Saddle-Staying Courses

With a cavalier leap, the Exalt unhorses a rider and takes the reins. This Charm supplements an unhorse gambit. If the Lawgiver has higher Initiative than her target, it also lowers the difficulty of the gambit by 1. Upon success, the Solar leaps onto an enemy mount, knocking the rider from the saddle and taking the reins in one smooth motion. If the Exalt is on foot, this gambit only works from close range. However, if she is already mounted, her steed can throw her an extra range band, allowing her to attempt the gambit from short range. The range of Horse-Stealing Leap can also be enhanced by appropriate Athletics Charms. If the Exalt is trying to steal back her own horse, this Charm automatically succeeds.

Harmonious Tacking Technique

Cost: 2m to 6m; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

With skill, flair, and Essence, the Exalt instills a mount's gear with harmonious movements, causing straps to flow together and cinch, latches to buckle, blankets to smooth and armor to settle perfectly in line with her dramatic tacking and barding actions. Normally, it takes minutes to tack and bard a mount, as described on page XX, but the entire process can be shortened through use of this Charm. Roll the Exalt's (Dexterity + Ride) against a difficulty of 3. On a success, she can tack a mount in a single turn, while failure sees it tacked in two turns.

After tacking a mount, the Solar may reuse this Charm to affix its armor. Quickly armoring a steed works the same way—the Lawgiver armors the mount in one or two turns, depending on her success.

Finally, the Exalt may use this Charm again to arm a fully tacked and barded steed with as many as three weapons in a single turn upon success, or one per turn if she fails. The steed she prepares with this Charm need not be her own.

Whirlwind Horse-Armoring Prana

Cost: 1m to 3m or 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Tacking Technique

The Lawgiver may draw her horse's tack, armor, and weapons from conceptual Elsewhere, causing them to hover and leap onto her mount's body over the course of three rounds. She pays one mote for each set of gear—first tack, then barding, then up to three weapons. If the Solar is riding when she activates this Charm, she need not dismount. Her mount's saddle and armor flows into place, growing beneath her like second skin. She may also pay three motes to instantly send her mount's panoply Elsewhere.

At Essence 3+, she may pay five motes, one willpower to instantly clad her mount in the entirety of its gear.

Whirlwind Horse-Armoring Prana is explicitly compatible with the Resistance Charm Glorious Solar Plate (p. XX). After using Whirlwind Horse-Armoring Prana, she may use Glorious Solar Plate reflexively on the same instant to apply the armor's effects to her steed's barding for only five motes.

Barding-Lightening Prana

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Whirlwind Horse-Armoring Prana

With an infusion of Essence, the Solar lightens her mount's barding, removing its mobility penalty.

Hero Rides Away

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Techniques

Enduring hardship, pain, and even loneliness, the Lawgiver draws renewing strength from the bond she has with a trusted mount. Each time the Lawgiver ends a combat scene riding, and each time she engages a dangerous situation with the aid of her mount and survives, she gains a number of motes equal to her Essence, and a single point of temporary Willpower. When a scene ends in which the Solar has accomplished a major goal with the help of her mount, subtract a point of Limit as well.

Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Drawn steadily to the pulse of battle, the Lawgiver and her mount's heart beat as one. Normally, if a rider wishes to let her mount attack, it uses up her attack action for the turn. With this Charm, activated when the player rolls Join Battle, the Exalt's mount gains an Initiative track with a starting value equal to her own, and may make attacks on its own turn. In addition, when the Solar commands her mount to perform a Ride-based movement action, it no longer uses up the Exalt's movement action for the turn.

Immortal Rider's Advantage

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach

The bond between the Exalt and her mount is intrinsic. So long as the Exalt sits in the saddle and they are connected as horse and rider, half of either partner's Initiative (rounded up) can be transferred reflexively between them to stave off Initiative crash or to deliver telling **decisive** attacks.

Untouchable Solar Steed

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Rider's Advantage

So long as she sits atop her horse, the Lawgiver knows its life is threatened. Through intense training of evasive maneuvers, the Solar learns to transfer the effects of attack-evasive Dodge Charms through her mount, allowing her to use them on her steed's behalf.

Wrathful Mount Invigoration

Cost: —; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Rider's Advantage

The Lawgiver's mount brooks no challenge to its authority, for it carries the sun on its back. After using Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach to Join Battle, the Solar's mount gains one Initiative per turn. In addition, when the mount succeeds at a Ride-based movement action or gains more successes than its opponent in an interval of a race, the mount gains Initiative equal to the Solar's Essence.

At Essence 4+, the mount's base Initiative value is set to 4 or its Stamina, whichever is higher, to a maximum of 6.

Worthy Mount Technique

Cost: —(1i); **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach

The Solar is one with her mount. Through her skill and the bond they share, the mount can take reflexive defend other actions to defend the Solar, paying one from its Initiative to prevent attacks which would harm her. These defend other actions increase the mount's Parry and Evasion by 1, but cannot raise them past 5. In addition, while it is in a position to guard the Solar, its damage totals gain a number of dice equal to the Solar's Essence.

Rousing Backlash Assault

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Worthy Mount Technique

When the Exalt's steed is using Worthy Mount Technique, and has been rolled into battle using Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach, the mount may unleash a **decisive** counter attack against anyone who directs a close range attack at the Solar or itself.

Seven Cyclones Rearing

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rousing Backlash Assault

Infuriated by an attacker's temerity, the Lawgiver's mount strikes an attack aside with one of its own. When the Exalt's steed is using Worthy Mount Technique, and has been rolled into battle using Seasoned Beast-Rider's Approach, the mount may unleash a **decisive** clash attack against any attack directed at the Solar. If the mount is clashing a **withering** attack while its rider is at base or lower Initiative, ignore the willpower cost of this Charm.

Woe and Storm Evasion

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Ride 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Worthy Mount Technique

Snapping the reins and drawing her mount back from an attack, the Lawgiver salvages her companion's precious life. A **withering** attack that would have crashed her mount instead leaves it with 1 Initiative. A **decisive** attack that would have slain her mount leaves it with a single health level. This Charm cannot be used to stop a **withering** attack if the mount already sits at 1 Initiative, nor can it save the steed from a **decisive** attack if the steed has only one health level left.

Resilience of the Chosen Mount

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Woe and Storm Evasion

The Solar blesses her faithful companion with fortifying Essence. The Exalt may pay two motes after a damage roll against her mount to remove a number of successes equal to the 1s and 2s in the roll.

Iron Simhata Style

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Resilience of the Chosen Mount

The Lawgiver raises her hands over her mount and draws away the Essence of softer substances, hardening its skin, giving it muscles like granite and turning its coat and mane into a fine mail of steely strands. Add (the Solar's Essence +1) to the mount's soak.

Mount Preservation Method

Cost: 1hl per three successes; **Mins:** Ride 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Worthy Mount Technique

The Solar feels the thread of her life is intertwined. When her mount suffers a **decisive** attack, the Solar may reduce the damage the mount suffers, trading one of her own health levels for every three successes on the damage roll so neutralized. The Solar must be riding her mount to use this Charm.

Horse-Healing Technique

Cost: 4m, 1hl or 4m, 1lhl; **Mins:** Ride 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mount Preservation Method

The Lawgiver trades blood and life to sustain her honored companion. With a dramatic action lasting a scene, in which the Exalt cares for her mount, treating its wounds and soothing it with words, she can heal her mount of (Essence) lethal or bashing damage, taking a single lethal or bashing damage in exchange. This Charm can be combined with Survival and Medicine Charms to treat injured mounts.

Sail

Salty Dog Method

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar is the consummate mariner, seasoned by hardships, tried by adversity and proven true. This Charm gives the Exalt the following advantages:

• The Solar's expertise often saves the ship. Reroll any 6s in the result of a Sail roll until 6s no longer appear.

• She is inured to supernatural horror. Fear effects caused by monsters, behemoths, demons, Yozis, and other existentially terrifying beings have less of an effect. Add half the Exalt's Sail (rounded up) to her Resolve against such influence.

• If she fails a balance check on land or sea, she still falls down, but then she immediately falls up, landing on her feet. In addition, she can never fall from a ship. Even the most stumble-footed bastard will find a way to keep from going overboard.

• By land or by sea, the Exalt knows the exact distance and route to anywhere she's been before.

Shipwreck-Surviving Stamina

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

Hardened by cruel elements and biting privation, the Solar has given her blood to the sea and been blessed by its life-giving forces. The Solar's Stamina is considered two higher than its true rating when resisting suffocation, dehydration, and starvation. The rules for surviving without oxygen, water, and food can be found on page XX.

Fathoms-Fed Spirit

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

The Lawgiver's resolve is steeled by a life spent on the deck of a ship, rocked to sleep by the hand of death. This Charm permanently enhances the Exalt's willpower. So long as she started the day by waking up shipboard, on the water, she may ignore the willpower cost to resist one form of social influence per day. Note that this power is discretionary: the Exalt may always allow herself to be persuaded by mental influence, so that the player can husband this Charm's potential against more dangerous persuasion.

Ship-Imperiled Vigor

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

The Lawgiver has weathered storms and faced many crises on the open sea. With this Charm, the Exalt is quickened by peril and reacts to disaster with unhesitating action. When the vessel she is aboard has taken hull damage, the Exalt gains a number of bonus dice equal to the hull penalty. For example, if the hull penalty is -1, the Solar gains +1 to certain actions. These bonus dice can be applied to *any* action in defense of the ship or its crew, from combat to social influence to rolls to repair damage to the ship and stop its sinking. These bonus dice *cannot* be applied to Naval Maneuvers or pursuit rolls, although they do apply to Sail rolls to avoid hazards and navigate to a destination.

Perfect Reckoning Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Until the hazard has passed

Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

Through skill and resolve, the Solar conquers the darkest dominions of the sea. This Charm starts an ongoing dramatic action in which the Solar navigates a ship through a hazard such as a coral reef, the living sargassum around Bluehaven, the hidden rocks in a storm-tossed bay, and so on.

The Exalt gains two bonus dice to navigate dangerous features she's unfamiliar with, or two automatic successes to clear a hazard she's navigated flawlessly in the past. Flawlessly means without taking hull damage and without using Charms or other magic to negate hull damage. Bonuses from this Charm are applied to each roll to evade the hazard. These bonuses do *not* count as dice added by a Charm.

Example Hazard

> The Mirror Court is a maze of mirrors left behind by the Wyld's retreat. Ships that sail into the Mirror Court are almost inevitably lost forever. Each round of sailing through the Mirror Court is made at difficulty 5. Each time the player fails a roll, the ship's crew—possibly disoriented by hundreds of reflections—steers into one of the mirrors, causing the ship to impact with its reflection exactly as if having been struck with the ram maneuver on page XX. Other hazards exist in the Mirror Court. Perfect Reckoning Technique vastly reduces the threat of these and any other hazards the Solar has bested.

Weather-Anticipating Intuition

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Reckoning Technique

The Solar's Essence is tied to the waves. Through this bond, the water speaks. By touching a body of water, the Solar can see through its eyes, and may predict the weather along her course of travel for the next (Essence * 10) hours. The only thing that will cause this forecast to err is the influence of powerful weather-changing magic. The Exalt may foresee even freak squalls and unexpected fogs.

Tide-Carried Omens

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Weather-Anticipating Intuition

The Solar sails upon the merciless tides, far from the comforts of hearth and temple, and so her eyes are keen to omens that will guide her to safety. The Solar can foresee danger in the wheeling of gulls, the pattern of the clouds, the rush of currents, the contents of the fishing net and the gavotte of stars. She becomes aware of danger to ship, self, or crew (Essence) minutes before it arrives, gripped by an increasing sense of foreboding, though she does not know what the danger is. While shipboard, the character gains (Essence) bonus dice to Awareness rolls to detect danger, such as ambushes, rogue waves or poisoned meals. This Charm does not allow the Exalt to detect threats it would be impossible for mortal senses to notice, but it will *aid* Awareness Charms that can detect such dangers.

Wind-Defying Course Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Mariner's Advantage or Salty Dog Method

The Solar charges her ship and sails with wind-slicing Essence. Fueled by her defiance, the ship may sail almost directly into the wind. This Charm cuts wind-based penalties to the ship's speed and maneuverability, reducing such penalties by three.

Current-Cutting Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Wind-Defying Course Technique

With an infusion of Essence, the Solar breaks the water's grip on her vessel. The Exalt may sail against a current, reducing penalties to the ship's speed by two. This Charm also helps the ship resist violent suction such as that employed by certain sea monsters, subtracting two successes from rolls to pull the ship through the water by means of a vacuum, whirlpool, or other suction.

Storm-Weathering Essence Infusion

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Current-Cutting Technique

Much like hazards described on page XX, storms represent a major source of damage to ships. Storms can snap masts and oars, capsize ships or smash them beneath vast swells. While this Charm is active, the Solar can protect a ship no larger than a trireme, adding (Essence) automatic successes to each Sail roll to evade storm damage.

Ship-Claiming Stance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Essence of a ship knows its master. This Charm claims a ship. If it was not owned by one of the Exalted, the ship disregards its former master. Those who do not bear the Exalt's remit suffer a -1 penalty to all actions taken on the Solar's ship until she has formally welcomed them aboard. The Exalt may renounce her welcome at any time, restoring this penalty at her pleasure. In addition, if the Lawgiver's positive intimacy toward the ship achieves Major or Defining status, the Exalt may draw up to five motes from her bond with the ship, once per day, but she must be

shipboard to do so. Drawing motes from more than one ship or familiar in a day causes all motes past five to dissipate at the end of the round.

Ship-Sleeking Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Sail 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Claiming Stance

The Solar channels her Essence through the ship's hull, smoothing the timbers with a thin layer of frictionless anima and causing it to glide more easily through or over the water. This Charm increases the ship's speed by one for its duration.

Orichalcum Letters of Marque

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Claiming Stance

The waters of Creation abound with the dark dross of Heaven's judgment: galleys crewed by corpses, barges pulled by demons, and ships helmed by the Abyssal Exalted. Heaven recognizes the Lawgiver's authority to recruit such creatures. This Charm upgrades the prerequisite, allowing the Solar to welcome residents of Malfeas and the Underworld, Abyssal Exalted and other cursed Chosen to the crew of her ship. While engaged in the operation of the Solar's ship, such characters no longer count as creatures of darkness when targeted by social influence that would exploit this condition.

In addition, while such characters may be deeply discomforted by the Solar's anima, they are not driven to dematerialize, nor do they suffer any automatic damage from the Exalt's iconic displays or area-effecting magic which would harm all creatures of darkness in the vicinity. In case of a mutiny, the Lawgiver may revoke this boon at any time. While her crew may be protected from social magic, this Charm provides no defense against attacks which harm cursed spirits and benighted creatures.

Tide-Cutting Essence Infusion

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Sleeking Technique

The Solar's anima enshrouds the ship, concentrating around the bow and waterline and causing it to cut through the water more effectively. The ship's speed is increased by one for the Charm's duration. This Charm is incompatible with Wave-Riding Discipline.

Wave-Riding Discipline

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Sleeking Technique

The Solar's Essence suffuses the hull, mast and sails, lightening the ship until it rises out of the water and planes over the top of the waves. While this Charm is active, the ship's sails are more effective, doubling the ship's sail-derived speed bonus. The ship also gains an additional point of speed for favorable currents. However, the ship's speed bonus for having oarsmen (if it has any) falls to one (if it is higher), and the ship may not benefit from being pulled by a sea monster or other beast which would drag the hull back down into the waves. This Charm is incompatible with Tide-Cutting Essence Infusion.

Hull-Preserving Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Claiming Stance

By bracing herself against the ship and channeling Essence through it at the moment of impact, the Solar can cause her anima to absorb the damage, leaving the ship unharmed. The Exalt triggers this effect at the moment of impact, negating all damage to the ship's hull and masts. The Solar may only protect an area of the ship within (Essence * 20) feet of her current position. Some hazards, such as coral reefs or hidden rocks may cause continuous damage to the ship, forcing the Lawgiver to trigger this effect repeatedly. If so, ignore the willpower cost for repeated consecutive uses.

Hull-Taming Transfusion

Cost: 2m, 3hls per 1hul; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Hull-Preserving Technique

In a desperate effort, the Solar conjoins her Essence to that of the ship's, trading life for life. By paying two motes at the moment of impact, the Solar opens a channel between body and hull, transferring damage from ship to self at a rate of three health levels per one level of hull damage ablated.

Blood and Salt Bondage

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Hull-Taming Transfusion

Drawing on ancient wards and pacts between the Essence of sea and sky, the Solar awakens the anima of her ship. Over the course of the next month, the Solar and her crew experience an increase in vitality, as the ship's Essence feeds and strengthens their flesh. Each member of the crew, including the Exalt, gains a number of health levels identical to the ship's hull rating. These health levels remain in place even if the Solar or her crewmates disembark; only characters who are off the ship for a month or more lose this benefit, bonus health levels fading as their bond with the ship diminishes. If the ship should suffer hull damage while this Charm is active, the bonus levels are summarily stricken from the Solar and her crew. Such indirect damage does not generate wound penalties, however—simply discard bonus health levels until the ship's hull is repaired.

Chaos-Cutting Galley

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: Hull-Preserving Technique

The Wyld often lures ships into unstable waters where the crew becomes monstrous and the ship transforms into something that can no longer float. A Lawgiver who knows this Charm will automatically sense the Wyld approaching her ship at least one round before passing into it. She may activate this Charm, thinning her anima into a crackling, stabilizing field that crawls over the deck, mast, and surrounding atmosphere, making it immune to the Wyld's shaping influence before fading out of view. This protection extends to the ship's crew as long as they remain aboard the ship. The Solar may activate this Charm even while she is asleep.

Ship-Leavening Meditation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Hull-Preserving Technique

Concentrating on damage to the hull, mast, or rigging, the Exalt sends her Essence lancing into the ship's wounds, suffusing them to strengthen timbers, tighten bolts and gaps, and hold frayed gear and sails together. This Charm negates the ship's hull penalty, and must be dropped and renewed each time that penalty increases.

Ship-Sustaining Spirit

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Leavening Meditation

With binding Essence, the Lawgiver makes her ship as tireless and unstoppable as she is. This Charm is triggered in response to an attack or impact that would destroy her vessel. Ship-Sustaining Spirit holds the ship together as long as the Solar remains on board and keeps the

Essence committed. If the ship takes even one level of damage, it will fall apart, although the Exalt may continue to send her Essence spearing through the ship's frame to hold it together, maintaining multiple commitments to the Charm.

Burning Anima Sails

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Blood and Salt Bondage, Ship-Sustaining Spirit

Anima burning with righteous condemnation, the Lawgiver casts her blazes into the air, igniting her sails in a pennant for the world to see. The Exalt's anima must be at the bonfire level to use this Charm. The moment the Solar activates this Charm, her iconic anima crawls up the mast, rendering it invincible to all damage for an instant. If the sails are still flying, her anima crawls over them, suffusing them and igniting them in a massive display that can be seen for (Essence * 5) miles. If the sails are gone, the Lawgiver's anima flies in their place, restoring the ship's sail-based speed. While the Burning Anima Sails are flying, the ship is supernaturally terrifying to demons, the undead, and other benighted creatures from the recesses of Creation. All naval maneuvers attempted by such creatures suffer a dice penalty equal to half the Lawgiver's Essence, rounded up. In addition, any creatures of darkness who board the Solar's ship suffer a -1 penalty to all actions. Using this Charm drops the Solar to the dim anima level. When the Charm ends, the iconic anima dissipates, leaving the ship's fabric sails perfectly restored, even if they were completely destroyed.

Indomitable Voyager's Perseverance

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Mariner's Advantage or Salty Dog Method

Sensing a fault in her actions, the Solar's indefatigable spirit sets a new course of action. With this Charm, the Exalt can reroll any Sail-based action, keeping successes and rerolling non-successes, activating additional Charms on the reroll if she chooses to do so.

Ocean-Conquering Avatar

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Indomitable Voyager's Perseverance

Channeling deeply from her unending Essence, the Solar realizes her true potential. Eyes and Caste Mark blazing white, her nautical prowess expands tremendously. This Charm grants the Exalt one automatic success and applies a full free Sail Excellency (-2 dice to account for the automatic success) to her next Sail roll. This Charm may only be used once per scene.

Immortal Mariner's Advantage

Cost: 1 or 2m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Talents honed by lifetimes of effort and sacrifice, the Exalt channels her experience into perfected motions of hand and sail, cunning naval attack plans, and decisive marine gambits. For one mote, the Exalt may use this Charm after any Sail-based roll, allowing her to either apply the double 9s rule or to reroll 1s until 1s fail to appear. For two motes, she may do both.

Legendary Captain's Signature

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Immortal Mariner's Advantage

The Exalt fashions her skill into a perfect Essence-fueled maneuver. The Solar's naval skill is such that she can overcome a ship's design flaws. Even a trash barge moves like a sleek pirate cutter in her capable hands. This Charm supplements a naval maneuver, doubling the ship's maneuverability rating and increasing its speed by one. If the ship's rating is zero or less, its rating increases to one.

Invincible Admiral Method

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Captain's Signature

The Solar is master of the sea and all that sail upon it. Her actions ignite fervor in her followers, impelling them toward emulation of her perfect form. Through use of mirrors, flags, and other signaling devices, the Exalt signals orders to ships in her fleet, preparing them for a series of naval maneuvers to combat their enemies. Roll the Lawgiver's ([Charisma or Intelligence] + Sail); all allied ships that can see the Exalt's orders add a number of dice to their naval maneuvers equal to half the successes, rounded up. This bonus also applies to the Solar's own ship.

While this Charm is active, the Solar must make this roll each round, renewing her orders to her fleet. Because of the mobile nature of combat, the same ships probably won't always be able to see the Solar's orders, and if the Exalt's own ship falls under attack, she may be unable to signal for rounds at a time.

Sea Devil Training Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Invincible Admiral Method

Once, the nations of the sea rose up to drive the Chosen from the world as the Exalted had driven the gods' masters before them. The Solars answered this piracy by training a host of marine-warriors to sweep the Niobrarans back across the sea. Through the use of this Charm, even the most degenerate blackguards can be trained into an elite crew. This Charm is an enhanced training regimen. The Solar's methods are brutal, harsh, and yet inspiring, teaching her initiates fear and respect in equal measures and strengthening them against the hardships to come. With this Charm, she can invest her crew with *one* of the following skills after a training period of one month:

• Sail 4.

• Soldier-level combat prowess described on page XX.

• Two Integrity specialties: one to resist supernatural horror, the other to resist hypnotic magic.

• Larceny, Resistance, or Survival up to the Solar's rating -1.

• Willpower 6.

Superior Positioning Technique

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Captain's Signature

The Solar guides her ship along a flow of Essence in opposition to an enemy vessel. This Charm supplements a positioning maneuver (p. XX), treating the opponent's 1s as 10s on the Solar's roll. In addition, this Charm automatically evades a ram maneuver, even if the opponent's roll succeeds. To avoid transparency, the player should not declare this Charm aloud, but should write it on a piece of paper for the Storyteller to keep face down until the dice have been rolled.

Implacable Sea Wolf Spirit

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Captain's Signature

Steering into combat, the Solar's ship devours her enemies. This Charm lowers the momentum cost of naval maneuvers by two for the rest of the scene.

Sea Serpent Flash

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Superior Positioning Technique

The Lawgiver sees the course an enemy vessel will take outlined in a flow of Essence and moves her ship into a near perfect attack position. This Charm supplements a positioning maneuver, doubling momentum gained from extra successes on the roll.

Ship-Rolling Juggernaut Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Implacable Sea Wolf Spirit

Normally when a ship changes targets during naval combat, it loses all of its momentum. The Solar's ship only builds a greater head of steam. Upon launching a naval maneuver which incapacitates an enemy vessel, the Solar may use this Charm to keep all of her ship's momentum, and adds an additional momentum bonus equal to the enemy captain's Essence.

Ship-Razing Renewal

Cost: —; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Ship-Rolling Juggernaut Method

The Solar is invigorated by the annihilation of her seafaring foes. Upon successfully incapacitating an enemy ship with a naval maneuver, roll a free full Sail Excellency. Successes on this roll restore an equal number of motes to the Solar's Essence pool, to a limit of motes she has spent on Sail Charms in the scene. In addition, the Solar may trade four of these motes for a single point of willpower, but may gain no more than a single point of willpower for the defeat of a single enemy ship.

Ship-Breaker Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Captain's Signature

Infusing the prow and ram of her ship with hardening Essence, the Solar empowers her ship to cut through the enemy's hull like a spear. This Charm supplements a ram maneuver, causing the attack to do one extra level of damage. In addition, this Charm automatically defeats a broadside maneuver, damaging the enemy ship and canceling the broadside attack completely. To avoid transparency, the player should not declare this Charm aloud, but should write it on a piece of paper and keep it face down until the dice have been rolled.

Deadly Ichneumon Assault

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ship Breaker Method

The overwhelming Essence of the Solar guides her ship on the attack, maximizing its momentum. When she succeeds at a ram maneuver, she may trigger this Charm to enact an automatically successful shock and board action (p. XX).

Rail-Storming Fervor

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Deadly Ichneumon Assault

Capitalizing on a perfect moment to strike, the Solar rallies her crew into a precision assault. This Charm supplements a Join Battle roll, adding three bonus dice to the Join Battle rolls of herself and her crew. Bonus dice from this Charm do not count as dice added by a Charm. Rail-Storming Fervor is expressly allowed to be combined with Join Battle-enhancing Charms of other abilities.

Deck-Sweeping Fusillade

Cost: Varies; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Captain's Signature

The Solar's commands ignite a desire for victory in her crew, steeling their senses and honing their training into an awesome ballistic onslaught. This Charm supplements a broadside maneuver (p. XX), adding bonus dice to the naval maneuver roll, and treating the result as if it were (Essence) successes higher than it really is. The bonus dice on this Charm are equal to the Solar's Essence, but the price changes based on her permanent Essence. From Essence 1-4, the cost of this Charm is two motes. At Essence 5+, it costs three motes, and at Essence 8+ it costs four.

Sea Ambush Technique

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Pilot

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Legendary Captain's Signature

Sight of the Lawgiver's ship strikes dread into the heart of her enemies. Its sudden disappearance is a presage to disaster. This Charm supplements a concealment action in which the Exalt's ship quickly vanishes behind a piece of scenery, adding the ship's speed as bonus dice to the roll.

Black Fathoms Blessed

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Sail 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Any ten Sail Charms

The Exalt taps deeply of her Essence, merging ship, sea and self into one form. For the rest of the scene, as long as she is on her ship, add the vessel's Speed as automatic successes to her movement actions, and the ship's Maneuverability to her defenses. Any magic which increases these values cannot increase the bonus to these traits by more than +1 each. In addition, regardless of whether she is aboard her ship, she may speak in an ancient maritime tongue that is instinctually understood by oceanic spirits, aquatic raksha, the Lintha family and members of the Niobraran League. She may drink salt water as if it were fresh, and though she can be incapacitated by drowning, she can never die by being submerged, neither from running out of oxygen or by the crushing weight of the depths.

Socialize

Mastery of Small Manners

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar attunes herself to the patterns of social interaction, allowing Essence to guide her responses. While this Charm is active, the Exalt adapts to the expectations of a host culture, and is able to instinctively and reflexively follow its customs, behaving appropriately for the situation at hand. This Charm does not grant the Exalt perfect understanding of a society, but covers greetings, eating and gift customs, and flirtation mores. This Charm eliminates all penalties incurred by unfamiliarity with cultural expectations and group dynamics, and prevents a character from committing any major faux pas. In addition, those who hold positive Intimacies for the culture the Solar has attuned herself to gain a temporary positive Minor Tie of respect or admiration for the Solar, while those who hold negative Intimacies for foreigners or outsiders have that Intimacy temporarily lowered by one level of intensity.

Culture Hero Approach

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mastery of Small Manners

This Charm allows the Solar to make a special read intentions action while observing an unfamiliar ritual to discern its purpose. This action has a difficulty of the obscurity of the ritual, and can be lowered by a relevant Lore rating. For example, an expert on the Skullstone Archipelago could interpret the ritual of bone and ivory more easily than someone who has never

visited Onyx. This Charm can also pick up ritual subtexts: an expert in cults might recognize a demon-worshiping dance disguised as a harvest ritual. Basic success on this roll tells the Solar the meaning of the ritual. For every two additional successes, she understands an additional one-sentence fact about the ritual. If she is expected to perform the ritual, each fact she uncovers in this manner amounts to a single automatic success on a Performance roll to participate.

Unimpeachable Discourse Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mastery of Small Manners

The Solar is the guardian of her thoughts. If she's in a situation where Mastery of Small Manners would apply, she may use this Charm to supplement a persuade or instill action that speaks to group policy, changing cultural attitudes or steering future courses. This Charm ensures that her arguments are logical and extremely well thought out: reroll all 1s until 1s fail to appear, and deny the benefits of the Solar's 1s to the magic of her enemies.

Friend of a Friend Approach

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Any four Essence 3+ Socialize Charms

The Solar is a world-walker of some renown, and her good standing precedes her. Upon encountering a perfect stranger who has a positive Major or Defining Tie to a character who has a positive Defining Tie to the Solar, the stranger gains an automatic Minor Tie of respect for the Lawgiver. This automatic Intimacy is contingent on the stranger's awareness of his friend's Defining Tie to the Solar, as well as his recognition that the Lawgiver is who she claims to be. This automatic Minor Tie is fragile and can be destroyed instantly upon meeting if the Solar is offensive or demanding.

Indecent Proposal Method

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unimpeachable Discourse Technique

The silver-tongued charisma of the Solar Exalted allows them to say things others would normally suffer to speak. This Charm supplements an instill, persuade, or bargain action. It does not aid the Solar's persuasion in gaining acceptance, but it does guarantee that her offer will sound delightful, charming, or at least a necessary evil coming from her lips. This prevents any Intimacy toward her from being decreased as a result of her persuasion. This Charm affects everyone who witnesses the social action, even if they were not the targets. Characters must pay a point of temporary Willpower in order to take offense.

Cunning Insight Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unimpeachable Discourse Technique

Any time a Lawgiver witnesses another character dispute or reject a claim—typically a successful application of Resolve against a social influence action—she may activate this Charm, allowing the player to speculate on one of the character's attached Intimacies. For example, a Solar who witnesses a magistrate refusing to take a bribe might guess that he values justice. The Storyteller then must truthfully affirm or deny the accuracy of the player's speculation. This Charm does not guarantee success, but allows the Solar to piece together a clearer picture of a target by association or at least elimination. Intimacies guessed correctly become known to the Solar without a doubt.

Doubt-Sowing Contention Method

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Cunning Insight Technique

Sometimes a Solar must act quickly to prevent a disastrous incident. When she suspects a character intends to make a social influence roll she disagrees with, the Solar may use this Charm to prevent her target from making a social influence roll. Roll a (Manipulation + Socialize) persuade action, adding (Essence) automatic successes. If the roll succeeds, the target's intended social action—be it to persuade, bargain, threaten, instill, or read intentions—is treated as if it has already failed and must be reset (p. XX). This Charm is capable of defining influence without employing an Intimacy, but carries no inherent power to lower a target's Resolve on its own. This influence costs three Willpower to resist in a Decision Point and requires a Defining Intimacy to reject. Once a character has been hit with this Charm, if he successfully resets his social action or he pays Willpower to resist, this Charm can no longer prevent him from attempting the social influence he was initially denied. The Solar may however prevent him from taking *other* social actions through continued use. All uses of this Charm are reset when a new story begins.

Effective Counterargument

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unimpeachable Discourse Technique

Once per scene, the Solar may intercede in a persuade action she is witnessing in order to change the target's mind. After the initiate has rolled his persuasion but before Resolve is applied, the

Solar may make a (Wits + Socialize) roll to persuade the subject to reject the initiate's influence. For every two successes she gains on this roll, the target's Resolve is boosted by one.

Wise Counsel (Flashing Soul Reform)

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Effective Counterargument

The words of the Lawgiver turn the wheels of the world. When the Solar advises another character on social etiquette or group or cultural policy, roll ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Socialize) dice and add her successes as bonus dice that the target may use to enhance a Socialize roll, or to increase his Guile or Resolve for a single tick at a rate of two successes per point. The target of this assistance may spread this bonus out over the course of several scenes and multiple actions, or he may choose to use all of the dice at once. If the target applies any part of this bonus to an action, any positive Intimacy he has for the Lawgiver is increased in intensity and if one does not exist he gains one automatically.

Endless Obsession Feint

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wise Counsel (Flashing Soul Reform)

This Charm embodies the awe-inspiring resonance of the Solar Exalted, whose very presence shapes the flow of nations. This Charm is triggered by a Solar's success in a social scene, where through social influence she achieves a significant objective. She might broker an alliance, arrange a wedding, cancel an assassination or convince the local Guild to decrease opium production. Any objective success she attains at the expense of another social actor in the scene leaves that character in a state of obsession. The Lawgiver is an enigma, and though he can't remember the substance of her arguments, her casual wit haunts his dreams. For (Essence) days the character suffers a -2 dice penalty to all Bureaucracy, Craft, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore, Occult, Performance and Socialize rolls, with 1s on these rolls each counting as -1 success. When this obsession wears off, the target automatically develops a positive or negative Intimacy for the Solar, depending on how the days went. This effect may apply to multiple characters in the same scene.

Aspersions Cast Aside

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unimpeachable Discourse Technique

The Lawgiver is ever blameless. With this Charm she can cast aside all 1s and 2s after making a Socialize roll, forcing them onto a target within five feet. This target must then make a (Wits +

Socialize) roll with a difficulty of the Solar's Essence to keep his composure, with foisted 2s replacing the lowest successes (typically 7s) and 1s replacing the next digit up (usually 8s). The Solar gains these successes to her initial roll, while her target appears to be the one who said something ridiculous, upset his wine cup into the gravy bowl, or so on. The Solar may use this Charm in response to another Solar using Aspersions Cast Aside, but may not direct the impending botch back at the initiate.

Asp Bites Its Tail

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Aspersions Cast Aside, Effective Counterargument

When the Solar's name is impugned, she may turn those claims back on her accuser. When the Solar witnesses another character attempting a social action intended to harm the Solar's reputation or convince others to take action against her, she may invoke this Charm, rolling ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Socialize). If this roll gains more successes than the aggressor's, then the aggressor's claim is turned back against himself. If he were using an instill action to convince someone that the Solar is untrustworthy, the target would be instilled with an Intimacy of distrust for him instead. If he were trying to persuade the prince to have the Exalt taken into custody, he himself would be arrested. This consequence always follows in a way that make sense in the context of the scene, i.e. the target's accusations come off as suspicious, or he accidentally incriminates himself while trying to incriminate the Solar.

Motive-Discerning Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm supplements a read intentions action (p. XX), applying the double 9s rule to the Solar's roll. In addition, the Exalt may substitute Wits for Perception when she is reading the intentions of a person with whom she is speaking.

A Socialize 4+ repurchase enhances this Charm's performance. When the Solar discerns the intentions of her target, the player may speculate on the existence of one of the target's related Intimacies. If the player is correct, the Solar becomes aware of that Intimacy as per Cunning Insight Technique.

A Socialize 5 repurchase enhances this Charm when it is used to speculate about a target's Intimacy; if the player's first speculation is incorrect, the player may inquire about the existence of a second Intimacy.

Quicksilver Falcon's Eye

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Motive-Discerning Technique

With a supernaturally keen sense for social interaction, the Lawgiver can gauge a character's response to any social influence. She can even tell conspirators from rivals at a glance. With this Charm the Solar can intuit when a character applies Resolve or Guile against social influence actions and when he doesn't. When she makes an argument she believes her target will readily accept, but he applies his Resolve, she senses his hesitation. When he applies his Guile to occlude his intentions, she knows he's hiding something. When characters engaged in an argument seem to disagree yet she sees no application of Resolve, this is a clear sign of a sham performance.

Umbral Eyes Focus

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Quicksilver Falcon's Eye

At a glance, the Exalt can tell when an Intimacy she has created or modified with an instill action has changed in intensity. This Charm supplements a read intentions action to discern the intensity of all such Intimacies, supplying one automatic success and two bonus dice.

Dauntless Assayer Method

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Motive-Discerning Technique

Upon failing a read intentions action, the Solar may use this Charm to reset her attempt, allowing her to try again. If the player describes a stunt in which the Solar re-engages her target—perhaps by spilling a drink on him, or posing lost beside a road as his carriage rolls up—then the cost of this Charm is reduced by a number of motes equal to the stunt level.

Preeminent Gala Knife

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Dauntless Assayer Method

The Lawgiver is a master of social theatre, drawing strength from her success like prayer from the cup of the gods. Each time she succeeds at a read intentions action, defends her Guile, or succeeds at a Socialize action with a difficulty of 0 or higher, she gains two motes of Essence. The Solar may not gain more motes of Essence than she has used activating Socialize Charms in the scene.

Humble Servant Approach

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Motive-Discerning Technique

When taking a read intentions action to discover what a target wants from her, the Solar may reflexively activate this Charm, applying a -2 penalty to the target's Guile. In order to use this Charm, the Solar needs to have already succeeded at a read intentions action against the target in the scene, reading his intentions while he was interacting with someone other than the Solar.

Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Humble Servant Approach

The Exalt can master the social currents that surround her to gain a greater understanding of the situation. The Solar makes a read intentions action with (Essence) automatic successes, applying a single roll against the Guile of all targets in the scene of whom she is aware. Success reveals surface attitudes, ("She is nervous and impatient about something"), emotions ("He is angry at her"), and Ties ("Those two are besotted with one another"), revealing this information at a glance. The Solar can also discern what her targets want from one another ("He is trying to seduce her; she wants to buy his horse").

This Charm does not read minds—rather, it models the skill of a Lawgiver who can read the thousandfold nuances of social interaction with breathtaking ease.

Failing to read a target's intentions with this Charm does not count as failing a read intentions action for the purposes of a reset. The Solar may only use this Charm once per scene, but she may reuse it if the scene changes significantly in some way.

Fete-Watcher Stance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

The Lawgiver is the guardian of the peace. With this Charm she empowers herself to grant pre-emptive powers to her allies and subordinates. Any time the Exalt uses read intentions to notice hostile intentions which might result in violence, she gains three non-Charm dice to her Awareness for detecting a trap or assassination attempt, as well as three non-Charm dice to her next Join Battle roll. She may also confer this bonus to her allies through discrete warning at least one round before any hostile action occurs.

Night Passes Over

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Socialize 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar may reflexively ignore all penalties to her Guile from fatigue, surprise or other emotional states. This Charm does not remove penalties incurred through physical injury or from being observed by hidden characters.

Shadow Over Day

Cost: 1m or 2m; **Mins:** Socialize 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Night Passes Over

The Solar flenses herself of emotion and expression, shedding her façade to become inscrutable. The Solar may reflexively raise her Guile by one point. At Essence 2+, the Solar may pay two motes for two points of Guile.

Intent-Tracing Stare

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Motive-Discerning Technique, Shadow Over Day

The Solar becomes preternaturally aware of the social scene, able to read invisible subtexts and sense the intensifying focus of another's scrutiny. Each time the Solar or a character within five feet is the target of a read intentions action, the Exalt feels a tingle at the base of her skull telling her to activate this Charm. Upon doing so, she can discern not only who the target of the action is, but who is watching them. The Solar must be aware of the initiate to notice him—this Charm does not grant the ability to spot hidden characters, though it does allow the Exalt to reflexively apply a (Perception + Awareness) check to try to notice hidden initiates.

Discretionary Gesture

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Intent-Tracing Stare

Through a sharp movement, a pointed glance, a whisper or a command to silence, the Lawgiver can raise the Guile of another. When the Solar perceives an ally being targeted by a Guile-piercing effect, she may use this Charm to reflexively raise his Guile. This Charm is facilitated by the urgency of the Lawgiver's stunt: if she glares or makes a cutting gesture, her ally's Guile

is raised by a single point. If she distracts him from speaking through means both dubious and clever, his Guile is raised by two. If she slaps him full on in the face, his Guile is raised by three.

Deep-Eyed Soul Gazing

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Intent-Tracing Stare

After successfully defending herself through an application of Guile, the Solar's next read intentions action against the initiate gains (Essence) dice and one automatic success. This advantage vanishes at the end of the scene.

Seen and Seeing Method

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Deep-Eyed Soul Gazing

When the Exalt successfully defends her motives or Intimacies through an application of Guile, she may reflexively make a read intentions action against the initiate, and if she pierces his Guile she gains a point of temporary Willpower. The Solar may only use this Charm to respond to actions she is aware of. The Solar may use this Charm against a character even if she has already failed to read his intentions in the scene.

A repurchase of this Charm allows the Exalt to notice a read intentions action from a source she is unaware of, reflexively ignoring the -2 penalty and noticing the general direction from which the action is being made. She may even attempt to discern the motives of a character she cannot perceive—even one on another plane of existence—but will only pick up the surface emotions of a character she can't actually see.

An Essence 4+ repurchase allows the Solar to respond to a read intentions action with one of her own, even if the target pierces her Guile.

Face-Charming Prana

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seen and Seeing Method

The Solar bares her soul to another, inviting him to read her intentions. This Charm is a special Socialize-based persuade action made as if it were exploiting a Defining Intimacy. Success causes the target to attempt a read intentions action on the Solar. Resisting this influence in a Decision Point costs the target two Willpower.

Knowing the Soul's Price

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seen and Seeing Method, Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

With a glance the Solar discerns those passions that sit hidden in the soul of her subject, desires for which he'd take great personal risks or engage in behavior he would normally resist. This Charm is a read intentions action with (Essence) automatic successes, rerolling 5s and 6s until 5s and 6s fail to appear. If successful, the Solar learns her target's price—that is, what will motivate him to undertake some specific task. The subject's price might be the recovery of a lost possession, sex with an unachievable object of desire, aid in a personal endeavor, simple flattery and so on. If the Exalt knows Cunning Insight Technique, she may activate it in an attempt to confirm up to (Essence) Intimacies suggested by the subject's price.

Understanding the Court

Cost: 20m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Culture Hero Approach, Knowing the Soul's Price

With this Charm the Solar gains a near-total understanding of a court. The Solar must spend (10 - Essence) days in the court observing its members before activating the Charm. Doing so synthesizes everything she has witnessed, discarding unimportant memories and magnifying the intensity of details which she may not have initially noticed. The Exalt gains a mind-map of the relations between the court's subjects. She discerns the strongest Tie each holds for the next, and the chief Principle relevant to each's purpose for attending court. These Intimacies come to her through understanding the social dynamics of her subjects. She not only perceives an Intimacy of respect or fondness between two members, but she sees how their banter creates its own positive Intimacy in other members. Her mind can draw out the interplay of connected Intimacies in this fashion as far as the Storyteller deems relevant.

In addition, she perfectly recalls any customary roles or procedures performed by members of the court, even if that seems irrelevant. She might notice that one member takes leave at the same hour every day to walk in the sun, while remembering how another member drinks her tea—both how she holds the cup and what taste she favors. Overall, she is able to predict the movement, placement, mores and usual attitudes of her subjects perfectly, and has a strong understanding of their values and goals. This Charm also reveals the influences, Principles, and Ties of absent major players—observed members of the court hold Intimacies for members who are not present, whose role and impact the Exalt can guess by recalling conversations and comparing the Ties each member holds for the absentee.

Societal Influence and Group Dynamics

> Many Socialize Charms describe functioning to change policy, or having an effect on a character's standing in a particular culture. These Charms apply equally to small groups such as "The local fishermen," "Members of the Guild hall," "The

Nimble Raiton Company," and so on. Keep in mind that small groups have their own distinct cultures and rituals and that these terms do not refer exclusively to the politics and mores of nations. Charms such as Understanding the Court work equally well in a tea shop where peasants congregate as they do in the palace of Chiaroscuro's Tri-Khan.

Unbound Social Mastery

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Understanding the Court

When driven to action, the Solar brings the experience of timeless ages. Her wisdom is the torch that lights the world. Once per scene the Solar may invoke a free full Socialize Excellency. This power may be reset by achieving a legendary social goal such that she vents a point of Limit (p. XX).

Even-Touched Prophet

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Unbound Social Mastery

The Lawgiver speaks from wisdom granted to her by the very fabric of the world. Once per scene she may use this Charm to apply the double 8s rule to a single Socialize-based action. This Charm may be reset by overturning social influence made against another character on the Defining level.

Elusive Dream Defense

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Even-Touched Prophet

Like day that turns to night, the Solar sinks into herself and becomes a perfect cipher. Once per story, the Solar may use this Charm to add her Resolve to her Guile, or her Guile to her Resolve. While this Charm is active, exploiting her Intimacies does not lower her Resolve, nor may she call upon an Intimacy to raise her Resolve.

Venomous Rumors Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Understanding the Court

The Lawgiver may cast the wicked from the fetes of the righteous, or turn the knives of thieves against their king. The Solar speaks against a group member for whom she holds at least a Minor negative Intimacy, accusing her target of some major betrayal, dereliction or perversion. The player rolls a single ([Charisma or Manipulation] + Socialize) instill action against the Resolve of all present group members, ignoring the penalty for group persuasion. To characters whose Resolve is beaten by this roll, the Lawgiver's claim appears to be true: when the target interacts with affected characters, his social actions are penalized by twice the Solar's Essence score in dice, with botches inevitably reflecting the truth of the Solar's words. Affected characters may pay one Willpower to resist this influence, but that still does not remove the curse. The target must either present direct evidence with a successful persuade action to each individual member in order to cancel the effect, or leave the group for (Solar's Essence) days—when he returns he'll no longer suffer the Charm's penalty, but will still suffer the effects of the group turned against him, which he can counter with normal influence. This Charm can only be used on a single character once per story.

Easily-Discarded Presence Method

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Over Day

When the Exalt defends herself against a read intentions action, she may activate this Charm to make the initiate believe he saw through her Guile. Instead of seeing the Exalt's true motives, he sees cluelessness, failure, or pursuit of vice, and disregards her for the rest of the scene.

Selfsame Master Procurer

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Easily-Discarded Presence Method

Similar to its prerequisite, this Charm compels the initiate to a certain belief upon failing a read intentions action. Instead of seeing the Lawgiver's true motives, the target sees her as a route through which he can achieve his goal for the scene. This Charm allows the Solar to gain the confidence of her mark. By acting as a facilitator she may be privy to a number of secrets her target would otherwise not disclose.

Guarded Thoughts Meditation

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Over Day

The Exalt shrouds her mind, concealing her inner thoughts behind fivefold walls. This Charm indefinitely raises her Guile by three points.

Penumbra Self Meditation

Cost: 3m per Intimacy; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Guarded Thoughts Meditation

Through concentration and practice, the Solar sheds a piece of her soul into the lightless blaze of her anima, dimming it. From that point onward, no read intentions action can uncover it. The Solar must meditate for an hour in order to bury a single Intimacy in this fashion. The Solar may eclipse as many Intimacies as she can afford to hide. Note that this Charm does not make it impossible to notice a Solar's overt tendencies—her Intimacies can still be revealed through her own actions.

Inverted Ego Mask

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Penumbra Self Meditation

When her soul is glimpsed, the Solar may twist the very perceptions of her subject. The Solar may invoke this Charm when a character pierces her Guile, supplying a false purpose for her true motives. If the initiate inquires as to one of her Intimacies, and manages to uncover one, she may also use this Charm to misdirect his interpretation, changing the context of a Tie or the wording of a Principle to mislead him. This causes the initiate to make incorrect assumptions about the Solar's loyalties, interests or objectives, causing his social influence against her to be less effective or completely implausible. For example, he might discern that she is a devotee of the Immaculate Faith when in reality she holds the Order in contempt. His persuasion to get her to aid the Order by informing on her fellow Solars would then experience a boost in her Resolve, rather than a weakening. Though this Charm is paid instantly, the Solar's false Intimacy lingers until the end of the story. She is not compelled by this Intimacy and may freely act against it, nor is her Resolve lowered through its exploitation. However, should she experience Limit Break before the end of the story, the Intimacy becomes real, capable of influencing her until the story ends.

Soul-Void Kata

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Face-Charming Prana, Inverted Ego Mask

Upon defending her Intimacies or her motives with an application of Guile, the Solar may activate this Charm. Doing so convinces the target he has seen into the Solar's motives for a

moment, but when his gaze returns he finds himself staring into an empty, indescribable gulf of mist and lights. This leaves the target character completely hypnotized and inert. During this time he cannot be socially influenced, and will remain in this hypnotic state for the rest of the scene, unless harshly shaken or worse.

Heart-Eclipsing Shroud

Cost: —(10m, 1wp); **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Inverted Ego Mask

The Exalt creates a new persona with a set of false Intimacies she can use to change the way she thinks and acts. These Intimacies are purchased as a permanent effect, but the Solar must activate them by taking a dramatic action lasting four or more hours, in which she cloisters herself in a place of solitude and meditates or talks herself into her new persona. Upon entering her new persona, she gains her new Intimacies and temporarily voids her true Intimacies, and gains the following benefits:

While this Charm is active, the Solar can act against her true Intimacies without eroding them or having to roll to gain Limit at the end of a scene. Furthermore, the Exalt cannot be impressed or persuaded by her true Intimacies—as if she were another person.

The Solar may use her persona's Intimacies to void social influence against her, but doing so causes her to drag the affected Intimacy or Intimacies into her next persona change, or back to her true set of Intimacies, resulting in confusion as her identities begin to overlap and she begins to think competing thoughts in different voices.

Heart-Eclipsing Shroud can be purchased (Essence) times, to create (Essence) personas. Motes spent activating this effect are not committed: reverting to her true Intimacies or changing to another persona requires that she use the Charm again.

Special rules: Upon purchase, the player creates a persona with a number of Intimacies. The player can invest it with as many or as few Ties as needed, but must create a number of new Principles equal to the number of Principles held by the Solar. When creating these Intimacies, the player should think of the persona as a different character with its own thoughts, feelings, and ideas. It is recommended that the player give the persona its own character concept to be reflected in the persona's Intimacies. The player should aim for a concept and Intimacies which will serve the Solar in her desired social milieu.

Hundred-Faced Stranger

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Heart-Eclipsing Shroud

This Charm permanently upgrades all purchases of Heart-Eclipsing Shroud, allowing the player to assign Abilities and specialties to each persona with the following rules:

• Assign the persona's favored Abilities—ten which can be placed anywhere.

• Count the Solar's dots in Integrity or Presence, Bureaucracy or Linguistics, Ride or Sail, Socialize, and one Dawn Caste Ability. This is the number of Ability dots the player may assign to the persona's character sheet. The persona cannot have a Craft, Lore, Occult or a Dawn Caste Ability rated higher than the Solar's own, and may not have a higher number of total dots spread across Dawn Abilities than the Solar has. At least half the dots (rounded up) must go into Eclipse or Zenith Abilities.

• Halve the Solar's total experience (round down) and grant this as bonus experience to the persona. This experience cannot be used to change the persona's Attributes, increase her Willpower or purchase Charms or Merits, but can be used to upgrade Abilities using favored and non-favored prices. Where the persona shares Abilities with the Solar, it automatically knows Charms the Solar already knows. With the exception of Craft, Lore, and Occult it may also learn Abilities the Exalt does not herself know.

• Assign specialties: three that line up with the persona's concept. Additional specialties cost three experience points each.

Please note: The Solar inherits these traits upon using the prerequisites to change personas. The first time a Solar undertakes this transition, she does not automatically possess all of the allotted Abilities afforded by this Charm. Immediately after creation, the persona only has access to those traits it shares with the Solar. All other Abilities and specialties must be acquired by spending the normal amount of training time learning them while wearing the persona's guise. Any outstanding dots in requisite Zenith and Eclipse Abilities must be trained first. Naturally this requires that the Solar spend a considerable amount of time as her alternate self.

Once a persona becomes active, it grows along with the Solar, gaining one experience point for every two the Solar accrues. Experience points gained while in the guise of the persona contribute their full amount to the Solar's experience total, not the persona's.

Personas and Limit Break

> If the Solar reaches Limit Break while in the guise of a persona, she cannot change personas or revert to her normal Intimacies until the Limit Break has completed.

Legend Mask Methodology

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Hundred-Faced Stranger

This Charm permanently upgrades all purchases of Heart-Eclipsing Shroud. The player can now purchase Charms for each persona using the experience granted by this Charm's prerequisite, paying favored or non-favored prices as the persona's character sheet dictates. With this Charm, the persona may learn Solar Charms the Exalt does not herself know.

Knowledge of this Charm increases the Solar's deep mental and spiritual investment in her many personas. When she shifts into such a persona, she becomes increasingly vulnerable to her created passions. While in the guise of a persona, each time the Solar vents a point of Limit through an epic defense of one of her persona's Principles or Ties, the corresponding Intimacy is transferred to her list of true Intimacies, temporarily voiding the strongest opposing Intimacy or the strongest Intimacy which is antithetical to her persona's character concept. The voided Intimacy cannot be restored until the transferred Intimacy has been eroded away, but the Exalt is as compelled by this Defining Intimacy as any other, and acting in accordance with it may cause her personality to transform even further.

Special activation rules: This Charm retroactively lowers the cost of Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise to three motes when it is activated during the four hour dramatic action described in Heart-Eclipsing Shroud. If Perfect Mirror is used during that time, ignore that Charm's Willpower cost.

Draw the Curtain

Cost: —; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Legend Mask Methodology

The Solar's inner self rises closer to the surface. This Charm can be purchased to upgrade one of the personas enhanced by Legend Mask Methodology, granting it an additional 25% of the Solar's experience points and increasing its experience gain to two for every three the Solar earns. However, purchasing this Charm grants the persona a new Limit Trigger in addition to the Solar's own. Draw the Curtain can be repurchased once for each persona the Solar wishes to enhance.

At Your Service

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Draw the Curtain, Knowing the Soul's Price

Upon gazing into her subject's heart's desires, the Solar may reflexively transform into an all new persona. The Solar becomes a new character, shaped by the ambitions of her subject. If he needed a pirate captain, she might imbue herself with Sail, Larceny and relevant Intimacies toward anarchy and a love of plunder. The Solar creates this new persona by taking from the traits and Charms of personas created by Heart-Eclipsing Shroud. The persona she devises must have an equal number of traits and Charms as her strongest persona—one which has been enhanced by Draw the Curtain—but may borrow aspects from her true character sheet. If the Solar uses any Larceny Charms to change her appearance at the moment she activates this Charm, her subject is completely incapable of perceiving this change. He may wonder vaguely why that person vanished so suddenly, but will be more concerned with the new figure standing before him, as if they were cut from his dreams to make his wishes come true.

Fugue-Empowered Other

Cost: 1 Limit; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Draw the Curtain

With this Charm, the Exalt can draw deeply from her psyche to uplift the Essence of one of her inner selves. Activating this Charm allows the Lawgiver to borrow the Ability rating of one of her personas for a single tick, and she may activate any Charms from that Ability which her persona has learned. Limit Break suffered as a result of Fugue-Empowered Other gives the Solar access to the full Charms and Abilities of her persona for the rest of the scene, but when her Virtue Flaw concludes, she will be genuinely confused as to who she is, without immediately realizing it. The Storyteller should represent this by randomly shuffling the Intimacies of the Solar and her persona.

Soul Reprisal

Cost: 16m, 1wp, 20xp; **Mins:** Socialize 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fugue-Empowered Other

Once the Lawgivers were driven into the darkness beyond the edge of death. No longer. Upon being struck down, the Solar grasps the light of her divinity before it can flee and is drawn into her next incarnation without ever leaving her body. Instead she sheds her entire current set of Intimacies, Abilities and Charms, inheriting the traits, Charms and Intimacies of one of her personas. This Charm is activated the moment her last health box is checked off: her anima blazes to iconic one last time, and then is vented back to dim. When it goes, roll (Stamina) dice with one automatic success, restoring an equal number of health levels. From that moment onward the Solar is a new person, and remembers her last incarnation as if it were a persona created by Heart-Eclipsing Shroud. This Charm can only be invoked once per story. Using it changes the Solar's iconic anima manifestation permanently. This Charm's anima display cannot be muted by any means.

Personas: Rules and Limitations

Personas are a tool developed by the master socialites of the Solar Exalted to more comfortably and effectively lead multiple lives. The Solar can use personas to maintain a number of different alliances, loyalties, and ways of thinking. She can use a persona to solve problems that are not suited to her natural disposition, and to more comfortably and invisibly ally herself with the enemies of her friends in order to learn their weaknesses. Though there are a few Charm-based exceptions, personas are not metaphysically different people from the Solar. The Solar's masks, genders, and personalities are all entirely performative, and created through her social environment. Through her mastery of social skills, she is able to adapt to a situation so completely that her true self almost disappears.

Such freedom and flexibility also has a few downsides:

• Personas cannot use Hundred-Faced Stranger to create their own personas.

• Personas do not benefit from Supernal Abilities.

• If a persona wishes to use a Charm that has an experience points cost, the experience is spent twice—from both the persona's experience as well as the Solar's.

• When the Exalt uses Hundred-Faced Stranger to become a persona with different Charms than her own, any ongoing effects are terminated at the moment she changes, unless her persona also knows the Charm. This includes the effects of permanent Charms.

• If the Solar and her persona share a Charm with a reset condition, use of the Charm by either character places it in a "down" state for both. Likewise, resetting it for one resets it for both.

• Craft points earned by the Solar are shared with her personas, and craft points earned by her personas are shared with the Solar. Charms which award craft points over time—after sleeping, after a story ends—are only awarded once, no matter how many times the Solar purchases them across various personas.

• Lastly, if the Solar enters into an agreement bound by the Eclipse oath anima power (p. XX), her persona is bound by it, and vice versa. Likewise, if the Solar is struck with a curse, she may not escape it by taking the guise of a persona. If the Exalt has been prevented from speaking certain knowledge by Corrupted Words, she can't switch to a persona in order to speak her mind.

Stealth

Perfect Shadow Stillness

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver's stealth technique is honed until it's flawless. Perfect Shadow Stillness allows a reroll of any Stealth-based action, preserving the 10s from those results and rerolling the remaining dice. At Stealth 5, succeeding at a stealth attempt with this Charm awards the Solar one point of temporary Willpower.

Invisible Statue Spirit

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Shadow Stillness

Assuming perfect stillness, the Solar fades from sight. A Solar with this Charm can affect true invisibility. However, the Exalt cannot move, nor can she take violent action without breaking

this deception. Characters using Invisible Statue Spirit are not immaterial and can still be detected by touch, scent, taste, or hearing.

Blurred Form Style

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Invisible Statue Spirit

The Solar sinks into the colorless field of her Essence, joining with the form of nothingness. This Charm allows the Exalt to make a Stealth attempt even if there is no cover available—so long as the Solar is standing still or moving slowly, she blends perfectly into her surroundings. While this Charm is in effect, her Stealth attempts garner (Essence) automatic successes.

Extreme movement renders her temporarily visible. Any time she attacks or changes range bands, she can be seen and targeted by opponents until her next turn in which she doesn't. If she is struck by a **withering** or **decisive** attack, the Charm ends.

Sun Swallowing Practice

Cost: 2m per anima level; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute, Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Blurred Form Style

Taking a single short breath, the Solar drinks in her anima to restore the shadows. This Charm costs two motes per anima level the Exalt wishes to consume. Releasing this Charm causes the Solar's anima to leap into view.

At Essence 5+, if the Solar has swallowed four or more levels of anima, she can release her commitment to this Charm by spitting her hidden anima into the air, creating a massive heatless flare that can be seen up to ten miles away. This method of release sheds her anima completely, and inflicts a (number of anima levels expelled + 3) penalty to the Awareness rolls of all characters within long range of the Solar until the next round. A Solar using Eye of the Unconquered Sun is immune to this effect.

Easily-Overlooked Presence Method

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Lawgiver evades detection by hiding in plain sight. A Solar with this Charm is able to drift unnoticed through crowds or alone. This Charm models her talent for blending in and remaining unobtrusive. When active, characters cannot notice her unless she takes overt action. Such actions include any display of prowess—leaping from the street to the rooftops, braving a snowstorm in summer clothes, etc. Join Battle always counts as an overt action.

This skill does not work against alert guards or those who intend to stop everyone (as with a checkpoint), but can be overcome by magic only if the user has a Minor or greater Intimacy to the Solar or a Major or Defining Intimacy to a cause the Exalt's presence directly threatens.

Certain Charms may aid in detecting the Exalt. Roll the Lawgiver's ([Wits or Dexterity] + Stealth) against her opponent's relevant (Attribute + Ability) or Resolve, if the attacking Charm is based on the opponent's Integrity.

Mental Invisibility Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Easily-Overlooked Presence Method

The surreptitious Exalt may even hide in the spaces between thoughts. Roll the Exalt's (Dexterity + Stealth) against her subject's Resolve. On a success, she vanishes from her subject's notice, and cannot be perceived. This effect applies to every witness whose Resolve is surpassed by the Solar's skill.

Not even overt action can reveal the Exalt to those affected by Mental Invisibility Technique. The Lawgiver may step out of her coat in a snowstorm or leap to the rooftops from the street without being noticed. However, rolling Join Battle or taking violent action ends this Charm's effects.

Additionally, subjects may spend one Willpower to break free of the Solar's deception if the Exalt's presence is pointed out to him, the Solar intentionally reveals herself to him, or the Exalt attempts to harm or steal something he values at the level of a Major or Defining Intimacy.

Vanishing From Mind's Eye Method

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Mental Invisibility Technique

One of the greatest of all deceptions—the Solar vanishes from memory. Roll the Exalt's (Dexterity + Stealth) and add her Essence in automatic successes to the result. Record the result. The Exalt slips out of the thoughts and memories of everyone who has ever known her, hiding in their minds. Upon meeting, she is unrecognizable to those who should know her.

Once per day, individuals affected by this Charm may attempt to recognize the Exalt or remember her involvement in a past event. Roll the subject's (Wits + Lore) against a difficulty equal to the Exalt's result. If the roll does not succeed, he does not recognize the Solar, and the Exalt remains a nameless, shadowy distortion in his memories.

Solar princes beware! Woe to the Solar who loses her crown by vanishing from the minds of her subjects. This Charm is not selective. Until the Solar voluntarily terminates the Charm, *everyone* forgets her.

Sound and Scent Banishing Attitude

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute, Stackable

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: Blurred Form Style, Vanishing From Mind's Eye Method

The Exalt conquers her foe's senses, leaving only his eyes to settle the contest. The Solar enacts a technique allowing her to defeat one sense, rendering her undetectable to it. She can defeat the senses of hearing, smell, touch, and taste. However, she cannot use this Charm to overcome a target's sight.

If she uses her sound-banishing technique, she is completely silent; not even the heightened sensory acuity of a guard dog's ears can detect her. Likewise, if she banishes touch, then someone who bumps into her in a pitch black room will be completely unaware. If she banishes taste, then the probing taste organs of an octopus or the flicking of a great serpent's tongue will not find her.

This Charm may be stacked twice, allowing the Solar to banish up to two senses. If the player stunts the Charm description in such a way that it explains the nature of sensory muting as an extension of her skills, the cost of the Charm is reduced by two motes.

Ten Whispers Silence Meditation

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Sound and Scent Banishing Attitude

The Lawgiver whispers the ten koans of utter stillness, each quieter than the next. When she is finished, her concentration is improved, allowing her to swallow even the tiniest sounds. For the duration of this Charm, any Awareness attempt to detect her by hearing alone loses one success for every 1 and 2 the opponent rolls.

Fivefold Shadow Burial

Cost: —; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Sound and Scent Banishing Attitude

The legend of the Icon Unbeheld, the Solar is a master of stealth deception, capable of defeating each of the five senses. This Charm represents the Solar's mastery of stealth by subtracting 2

successes for every 1 rolled in any Perception- or Awareness-based attempt to spot her. This penalty does not stack with the penalized 1s affected by Ten Whispers Silence Meditation.

Blinding Battle Feint

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar leaps in and out of battle with nigh untraceable speed. The Exalt may use her (Dexterity + Stealth) to Join Battle. Her Join Battle result also acts as an attempt to enter Stealth. If she beats her opponent's Awareness-based Join Battle roll, she is automatically concealed, so long as there is a viable place to hide. If her foe uses a Join Battle roll modified to use any other Ability than Awareness, then he must make an Awareness roll to spot her, suffering a penalty equal to the difference in their Initiative, even if he rolled higher. If he fail the Awareness check, the Solar still vanishes from view.

Stalking Wolf Attitude

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Blinding Battle Feint

The Solar stalks her prey unseen, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. While concealed, the Solar uses this technique to focus on an opponent. Feeling along the pulse of the world's Essence, she stalks her target from the shadows, her veins coursing with lethal readiness. With this Charm, the Solar ignores the -3 penalty to Stealth rolls for moving while concealed. In addition, on each round in which she succeeds at the contested roll to evade detection by her mark, she gains an amount of Initiative equal to her extra successes on the roll. When the Exalt senses the perfect moment to strike, she may then leap from concealment to unleash a **decisive** attack, as long as she's been hidden by this Charm for at least a round.

For each round that she remains under the effects of this Charm, the Solar gains a mounting -1 penalty to her Stealth rolls, and if she is discovered or if she voluntarily leaves concealment or terminates the Charm without making a **decisive** attack, she loses all of the Initiative she gained through her most recent activation of the Charm.

Hidden Snake Recoil

Cost: 1wp or 2i; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stalking Wolf Attitude

Like a flashing viper, the Exalt strikes and is gone. Upon incapacitating a target, the Solar may reflexively attempt concealment by rolling (Dexterity + Stealth), adding (Essence) automatic

successes. This Charm contributes four motes total to the cost of any Stealth Charms the Solar uses to aid in this attempt.

Shadow Victor's Repose

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blinding Battle Feint

Standing unseen in the midst of her enemies, the Exalt revels in her control of battle's flow. Once per scene, while concealed during combat, the Exalt may roll Join Battle and add her result to her current Initiative, so long as she has landed at least one **decisive** attack. Any Charms the Exalt uses to enhance her roll are automatically muted.

Flash-Eyed Killer's Insight

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Victor's Repose

Triumphant, the Lawgiver's eyes flash upon hidden places, showing her the way to victory. Upon incapacitating an opponent, the Lawgiver may trigger this Charm. If she has already used Shadow Victor's Repose in the scene, she may reuse it.

Mind Shroud Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Flash-Eyed Killer's Insight

Meditating on future combat, the Exalt speaks a design into her soul that erases her from combat's flow. This Charm permanently upgrades Shadow Victor's Repose. When the Exalt uses it to reroll Join Battle, she also momentarily vanishes (Essence) rounds from the short term memories of all opponents, allowing her next unexpected attack to act as an ambush provided it occurs within that period.

Guardian Fog Approach

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Stealth 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blinding Battle Feint

Through quick action, the Solar may obscure someone with her own efforts to remain hidden. The Solar must be touching the one she wishes to hide, and must herself attempt a Stealth action

at the same time. The Solar works to obscure her charge, covering him with her body, shrouding him with her cloak, or guiding him into a cleverly concealed niche. Add half the Solar's successes (rounded up) and any stunt bonuses on this action as dice to her charge's own Stealth roll.

Dark Sentinel's Way

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Stealth 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Guardian Fog Approach

While using a defend other action on a subject, a hidden Solar may use this Charm to conceal her defense of that subject. Upon parrying an incoming attack, the Solar flickers briefly into view, then vanishes, returning her to concealment as if she had never left it. The Solar must be within close range of her subject or otherwise using Charms which allow her to apply defend other benefits from beyond close range.

Shadow Replacement Technique

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Dark Sentinel's Way

Gripping her foe like a vice, the Lawgiver's penetrating gaze opens a rift into her target's soul, allowing her to hide there. This technique requires the Lawgiver be in control of a grapple, after which she must then successfully execute a (Dexterity + Stealth) roll which surpasses her target's Resolve, with a number of automatic successes equal to the Exalt's Essence and a number of bonus dice equal to half the remaining rounds of clinch control, rounded down. If successful, the Solar appears to step into her target's shadow and bleed away. The Solar takes possession of her target's senses and motor functions, and can make her victim act against a negative Intimacy or act against something to which he has a positive Minor Intimacy without contest. If the Solar attempts to make her host act against a Major or Defining Intimacy, use the social influence system as normal, though the subject can terminate this Charm by successfully resisting such influence. Abstract Intimacies such as "I refuse to be controlled" or "I cannot be forced to take action" are not valid for the purpose of this Charm—when resolving the effects of Shadow Replacement Technique, treat such Intimacies as nonexistent. (See also the "Intimacies and Roleplaying" sidebar, p. XX.)

Unlike other forms of control, a Solar can use Shadow Replacement Technique to force a victim to harm or even kill himself; however, the Solar is subject to damage equal to any suffered by her subject while in possession. While this Charm is active, Vanishing from Mind's Eye Method can be targeted to the host alone, and costs only five motes to activate.

Shadow Replacement Technique still works on targets that do not have a shadow. Replacing someone's shadow counts as being concealed within full cover for the purposes of Shadow-Crossing Leap Technique.

Smoke and Shadow Cover

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dark Sentinel's Way

The Exalt is at one with the shadows, drawing safety from even the most intangible concealment. While this Charm is active, the Solar treats concealment as cover. Mild concealment (such as hiding in partially obscuring shadows, behind light foliage, or in obscuring fog) is treated as light cover, while heavy concealment (such as deep, full-body covering shadows, undergrowth that obscures all but the character's eyes, or thick, opaque smoke) is treated as heavy cover. Completely pitch-black, lightless environments count as full cover. Using concealment as cover requires a take cover combat action (see p. XX) replacing Dodge with Stealth unless the character is already concealed. In that case, her hiding place counts as cover until she moves out of it or something happens to obviate it, such as flames banishing the shadows she's crouched in. Furthermore, this Charm also penalizes non-ranged attacks by one success in addition to any dice penalties the attack might accrue from fighting in low visibility conditions.

Shadow-Crossing Leap Technique

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Smoke and Shadow Cover

Unfurling her unseen anima, the Solar leaps to join the darkness she has conquered. While concealed, Exalt may move up to one range band, from one place of cover to an equal place of cover, without penalty. There *must* be a path for the Solar to make this leap: she cannot leap through solid walls or closed doors. This transition is instantaneous, the Solar blinking out of one location and flashing into another without passing through the space between. This Charm is incompatible with Blurred Form Style.

At Essence 4+, the Solar can flash into hiding places that do not have a clear path to move by passing through structures that are transparent or partially opaque, such as windows or gates.

At Essence 5+, the Solar may use this Charm even when she is not concealed, as long as she is moving through places where visual penalties might apply. If she is not concealed and not actively trying to stay concealed, this Charm no longer costs a point of Willpower to use. Crossing a range band with Shadow-Crossing Leap Technique always counts as the Exalt's movement action for the round.

At Essence 6+, when concealed, the Exalt may move one range band per turn using this Charm, and an additional range band using her normal movement. This use always costs a point of Willpower.

Flashing Nocturne Prana

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Mute

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow-Crossing Leap Technique

The deadliest Solars use this legendary stealth technique to evade discovery. When in a place of concealment, the Exalt may use this Charm to anchor the thread of her Essence to the spot. Should she relinquish her commitment to the Charm, so long as she is within three range bands of her hiding place, she is carried there instantly on wings of anima. She does not travel the space between. This counts as an automatically successful Stealth attempt. After the Solar flashes back to her anchor point, others may not attempt to detect her for two rounds.

False Image Feint

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Stealth 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Hidden Snake Recoil, Vanishing From Mind's Eye Method

A hair's breadth from the blade's edge, the Exalt fades from harm. Only her anima is struck. When hit with a **decisive** attack, the Solar may use this Charm if the attacker rolls a combined total of six 1s and 2s across her attack and damage rolls. Roll the Solar's (Dexterity + Stealth) against her attacker's (Perception + Awareness). If she succeeds, she slips out of sight and into concealment, evading the attack as if she had dodged it. If she succeeds with at least one 10 in her result, she enters stealth while her opponent strikes an afterimage left by the Solar's anima, transferring the damage result harmlessly away from the Solar and returning her opponent to base Initiative. The Solar may leave an object concealed within her anima to receive the strike, reducing the Charm cost by one mote—two if the player makes a clever substitution.

At Essence 5+, forcing an attacker down to base Initiative with this Charm nets the Solar a temporary point of Willpower.

Survival

Food-Gathering Exercise

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Survival 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Prerequisite Charms: None

The land gives its strength to the Lawgiver. The Solar may use this Charm to make a ([Charisma or Wits] + Survival) roll against a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller. Each extra success on this roll represents enough food gathered to feed a single person for a day. The fare guaranteed by this Charm is of a meager sort—berries, grubs, nuts, seeds, insects, and small animals—but the Solar has no need of a spear or bow or net to hunt such game. If the Storyteller decides there simply isn't any sort of sustenance in the region, or the player fails the roll, the Solar still finds enough food to feed at least one person. In addition, for every hour the Solar continues to use this

Charm, the Solar works toward a climactic encounter with the rawest expression of survivalist skill possible. This guarantees that after repeated use, the Solar will have at least one chance per day to catch a large fish, kill a game animal, trap a large bird or find a fruit-bearing tree. This encounter will happen regardless of Storyteller decree, but is still contingent on a difficulty 6 roll in the worst case scenario.

Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the Solar becomes able to survive in even the most hostile conditions without special preparation. This Charm negates all environmental penalties to Survival rolls and eliminates the deleterious effects of exposure to extreme climates. The coldest glacier and the hottest desert are no more deadly to the Solar than the gentlest rolling plain. She ignores inclement weather even when lightly dressed, and does not suffer undue blisters, bug bites or plant poison even when walking barefoot through the jungle. This Charm does not protect the Exalt against environmental damage.

In addition, Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit lowers the difficulty to forage and find shelter by 2, to a minimum of 1.

Element-Resisting Prana

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

Through this Charm, the Solar becomes able to survive in any environment. When the prerequisite is active, the Solar can withstand the heat and toxic fumes in the caldera of an active volcano, can walk underwater with no ill effects, and can even withstand the hostile and inimical climes of the Elemental Poles. While Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit is active, reduce damage from all elemental sources of environmental damage by the Exalt's Resistance rating.

Trackless Region Navigation

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

The deepest wilds are no mystery to the Solar Exalted. With this Charm, the Exalt can find her way safely through even the worst terrain. The Solar and a group of up to (Essence * 2) followers can travel up to 10 miles a day across the harshest terrain, and 20 miles per day across normal

wilderness. The Solar automatically succeeds at any Survival roll to find the next oasis, natural shelter, river or other topographical feature the region might include.

Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Trackless Region Navigation

The Solar can track someone through the wilderness following the most minute signs, or sometimes no sign at all, following unerring instinct. This Charm supplements the (Perception + Survival) roll described on page XX. Reroll all 5s and 6s until 5s and 6s no longer appear, and treat 1s rolled by the opposing player as 10s on the Solar's result. This Charm can even contest perfect track-covering effects such as Traceless Passage.

Traceless Passage

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

An Exalt with this Charm can vanish into the wilderness. This Charm affects the Solar and up to (Essence x2) followers, supplementing a (Wits + Survival) roll to cover the Exalt's tracks (p. XX). This roll gains (Essence) automatic successes and is bolstered by the double 9s rule. The Solar cannot be tracked conventionally, not even with the aid of tracking animals or other means —mundane attempts automatically fail. Only those with supernatural prowess can hope to find the vanished Lawgiver.

Eye-Deceiving Camouflage

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Traceless Passage

With this Charm, the Solar can camouflage herself or an object (Essence + 1) yards wide so perfectly that they cannot be detected by mundane senses while immobile. Even the acute senses of a claw strider or other famed hunting beasts will fail to detect the Exalt (or her shelter, or her hidden cache of food, etc). Preparing this camouflage takes the Solar an hour. The player rolls (Intelligence + Survival) and records the successes, rerolling all non-successes a single time and all 1s until 1s fail to appear. These successes directly counter any magical Awareness-based attempts to pierce the Lawgiver's camouflaging efforts.

Friendship with Animals Approach

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Survival 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the Exalt can deal with nearly any wild animal. Herbivores and smaller omnivores will not break and run when the Solar approaches, and will even become somewhat docile, allowing the Exalt to pet or handle them. Predators are less susceptible to this Charm, and most will simply let the Solar pass unmolested through their territory. This Charm does not work on sentient animals or familiars, animals that are trained to attack, or animals that are maddened by pain, hunger, or disease.

Spirit-Tied Pet

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 1xp; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Friendship with Animals Approach

An Exalt with a familiar has experienced the gift of having been chosen twice. The Exalt reaches through her anima to touch the bond she shares with her companion animal, elevating its spiritual status and according herself the following powers:

Unbreakable Loyalty: The familiar gains a Defining Tie of loyalty to the Solar, if it does not already have one. No influence of any kind—other than that of the Solar—can make the familiar act against this Intimacy.

Essence-Drawing Method: The familiar becomes a font of spiritual energy. The Solar may reflexively draw up to five motes from her pet once per day. The Exalt must be within short range of the familiar she wishes to tap. If the Exalt taps more than five motes from multiple pets in a scene, the motes she draws will only last until her next turn.

Power-Renewing Bond: The Solar draws strength from her familiar bond. Once per day, through interaction with her familiar, the Exalt may draw a single point of willpower as a simple action lasting at least a few seconds. This contact renews the Solar's mental energies and can even negate a -1 crippling penalty to the Exalt's social influence actions. The Solar may only use this power once per day, no matter how many familiars she has.

Sense-Riding Discipline: The Exalt may borrow the senses of a familiar through a moment of intense concentration. This simple action requires the Solar to concentrate on pushing her consciousness into the mind of her familiar, rendering her incapable of taking any other actions until she has returned to her own mind. This power can be invoked when the character is asleep or otherwise inactive, and has no known range limitation. At Survival 5, the Exalt further extends her influence into the familiar's motor functions, merging seamlessly with her charge in order to control its actions.

Beast-Mastering Behavior

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One week

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Tied Pet

The Solar holds dominion over the beasts of the field. With this Charm she can train an animal, familiar or otherwise, to follow her commands. Through exercise and repeated practice, she can also train the beast to use special abilities that are latent, such as an eagle's disarm ability (p. XX), or techniques designed by the player or the Storyteller which are appropriate to the animal.

Normally, training an animal to unlock its latent potential requires a minimum of Survival 3, and two specialties: one in animal husbandry, and another specific to the animal—falconry for a hawk, lion taming for a great cat, and so on. The trainer makes an extended roll with an interval of one month and a goal of 10, modified by the animal's attitude—docile and tamed beasts presenting no penalties, familiars representing a number of bonus dice equal to the trainer's Intimacy to the animal, and hostile, wild, or otherwise untrainable animals representing a penalty of -2 or -3. The trainer must spend the entire month interacting with the beast, teaching it words, signals, commands, and running it through exercises daily. Any significant amount of time the trainer spends away from the beast during this time saps successes away at a rate of one success for every two or three days. Success at the extended roll means that the animal learns to use the technique and can be order to do so on command.

A Solar with Beast-Mastering Behavior gains (Essence) automatic successes to this roll, and shortens the interval of the roll to one week. Using this Charm exempts her from the specialty requirements of normal training, while the Charm Friendship with Animals Approach may eliminate the penalty associated with wild or hostile animals.

At Survival 5+, Essence 3+, the Solar can teach a familiar she has enhanced with Spirit-Tied Pet to use magical abilities, such as the eagle's special ability Iron Wings Carry. Doing so costs the Solar two experience points per ability trained. The player and the Storyteller can work together to develop new and appropriate abilities for the Solar to teach her familiar.

Also at Survival 5+, Essence 3+, the Exalt can use Beast-Mastering Behavior on a familiar she has enhanced with Bestial Traits Technique, to teach it to use a special ability that it can only use during Deadly Predator Method, for a cost of two experience points. Such abilities need not be wholly appropriate for the animal in question. A flying squirrel might gain the power to generate a charge like an electric eel, while a tyrant lizard might learn to spit a fireball from its mouth.

Deadly Onslaught Coordination

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Beast-Mastering Behavior

The Lawgiver trains her familiar to strike on command. With a flash of Essence, they strike in tandem, delivering a terrible blow. With this Charm, the Exalt can call her familiar to strike on the same instant she attacks—so long as her familiar has not attacked that round, she can call it from any position in the combat order to attack her target immediately before or after her own strike.

Red-Toothed Execution Order

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Deadly Onslaught Coordination

Sending a moment to strike, the Exalt orders her familiar in for the kill. Though it is a reflexive, this Charm supplements a familiar's **decisive** attack, adding extra successes to the attack's raw damage. Using this Charm sets the familiar's Initiative to base after the attack, even when it's under the effect of Deadly Predator Method. This Charm may not be used once per scene, but resets if the familiar raises its Initiative to 10+.

Bestial Traits Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp, 2xp; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Tied Pet

With this Charm, the Solar can invest her Spirit-Tied Pet with traits beyond its natural capacity. This Charm supplements a normal beast-training roll (see p. XX), rerolling all 1s until 1s fail to appear. In addition to teaching her charge a new command, she can also increase one of the following traits upon the successful completion of the extended roll.

• Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, or Perception +1. This may not be repurchased for the same Attribute more than once, and may not give a familiar an Attribute rated higher than 10.

• Athletics, Brawl, Larceny, Martial Arts, Performance, Resistance, Stealth, or Survival, by one dot, to a maximum of the Exalt's rating in that Ability.

• Steeliness (Merit): This special merit permanently raises the familiar's Resolve against intimidation or other fear-inducing effects by 1. This may only be purchased once.

A Familiar Investment

> Nothing's sacred. Sometimes familiars get killed. Many of the Survival Charms featured here require the Solar to make an investment of experience points in a familiar. These Charms do not represent a poor investment, nor a guarantee of painful regret in the future. Should the Exalt's familiar die, the experience points invested into the familiar return to the Solar.

Ghost Panther Slinking

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Beast-Mastering Behavior, Bestial Traits Technique

When the Solar controls a familiar using the Sense-Riding Discipline effect of Spirit-Tied Pet, she can indict the senses of her enemies. While taking the form of her familiar, the Exalt may activate any Stealth Charms she knows to protect her familiar-self from detection. Familiars

which are large, unusual, or otherwise unsuited to stealth may incur penalties to normal Stealth actions based on unfavorable circumstances—a claw strider slinking through a forest can be difficult to notice, but a claw strider skulking through the shadowed streets of Nexus suffers a -2 penalty.

Hide-Hardening Practice

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Bestial Traits Technique

The Solar reaches into the substance of her familiar, and draws out that which is soft and vulnerable, hardening muscle, bone and hide. The familiar's soak increases by three, and its hardness by one. The Solar may enhance a single familiar with this Charm (Essence) times.

Life of the Aurochs

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Bestial Traits Technique

The Solar taps a wellspring of Essence to increase her familiar's vitality and stature. Each purchase of this Charm increases a familiar's health levels, adding one -1 health level and two -2 health levels to its health track. In addition, each repurchase increases her familiar's size by 10%, to be manifested normally or only during Saga Beast Virtue and Deadly Predator Method. The Solar may enhance a single familiar with this Charm (Essence) times.

Saga Beast Virtue

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Hide-Hardening Practice, Life of the Aurochs

The Exalt infuses her familiar with Solar anima, unlocking the form of the sacred beast. Her familiar grows in size by 25%, and gains +1 to all Attributes, and both defenses. It also gains up to (Essence) mutations, determined by the player upon purchase of the Charm. The Exalt can choose to activate Saga Beast Virtue with as many or as few of the designated mutations as she chooses. While in Saga Beast form, the familiar is completely immune to fear-inducing effects.

Familiar-Honing Instruction

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Tied Pet

The Solar can inspire zealous devotion, even in the beasts of the wilderness. Conveying her wishes to her familiar through a brief command, the Solar orders her companion to attempt an action of which it is capable. Roll the Exalt's (Charisma + Survival) and add her successes as dice to the familiar's attempt to follow the Solar's order. Unlike normal Simple Charms, this Charm may be placed in a flurry. At Essence 3+, this Charm can be used reflexively.

Spirit-Hunting Hound

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Familiar-Honing Instruction

Though the Solar's eyes may be blind to the spirit world, the eyes of her familiar can see into the realm of Essence. With this Charm, the Exalt invokes the familiar's senses, feeding them with the forces that primed Creation. For one turn, the familiar can attempt to detect immaterial beings with a (Perception + Awareness) roll, against a difficulty of the target's Essence or five, whichever is lower. If the Solar's familiar detects the target, it continues to do so for the rest of the scene.

Phantom-Rending Fangs

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One turn

Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Hunting Hound

Reaching into the Essence of the world, the Solar channels condemnation through a bestial agent. Though it is a reflexive Charm, this Charm supplements a familiar's attack against an immaterial foe. If the familiar successfully grapples and establishes clinch control of the immaterial, it is rendered temporarily vulnerable to physical attacks for the clinch's duration. If the Exalt has enhanced this Charm with Familiar-Honing Instruction, the player may choose to lower the cost of this Charm by one mote per success, reducing the bonus dice added by Familiar-Honing Instruction by one for each less mote she pays to activate Phantom-Rending Fangs. This can reduce the cost of this Charm to zero.

Ambush Predator Style

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Survival 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Familiar-Honing Instruction

Following the pulse of Essence that forms at the moment of battle, the Solar guides her familiar on the attack. This Charm enhances a familiar's Join Battle roll, allowing it to use the Solar's (Wits + Survival) dice pool for the roll, and granting it (Exalt's Essence) non-Charm successes. Furthermore, if the Solar has used Familiar-Honing Instruction to order the familiar into battle,

thereby enhancing this roll, each bonus die creates a cascading reroll— for each of these dice that turns up a success, reroll another die until the cascade fails to produce any successes.

Force-Building Predator Style

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Ambush Predator Style

This Charm permanently enhances a familiar rolled into combat with Ambush Predator Style. For the rest of the combat scene, this familiar automatically generates one Initiative per turn. This Charm temporarily ceases function when the familiar is under the effects of Deadly Predator Method.

Crimson Talon Vigor

Cost: —; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Force-Building Predator Style

The Lawgiver and her familiar fight as one. With this Charm, the familiar learns to read the Exalt's momentum, flowing with her attacks as if it were part of the Solar's Essence. For each successful **withering** attack the Solar lands against an opponent, the familiar gains bonus Initiative equal to half the Initiative drained by the attack, rounded up. This bonus may not exceed the Solar's Essence score. This Charm must be repurchased for every familiar the Solar wishes to enhance with its effect.

Deadly Predator Method

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Survival 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Talon Vigor, Red-Toothed Execution Order, Saga Beast Virtue

Opening her palm to a beam of pure Solar Essence, the Solar crushes a tiny star in her fist, releasing a massive amount of spiritual force into the world around her. Her surroundings become primal, shifting in modes and methods unseen since the dawn of time, and her familiar remembers an ancient time and an earlier form in which beasts were the life that beat at the heart of a supreme being. Channeling the Essence of the ancient world through her familiar, the Solar's honored companion is transformed into a primal beast of war.

Deadly Predator Method has the following advantages:

• The familiar grows immense. Its size grows by 15%, and an additional 10% for every repurchase of Life of the Aurochs. The Solar may waive the growth bonus if she chooses.

• The familiar's appearance becomes magnificent and terrifying. Its markings become more extreme, its colors explosive and vibrant. Natural armor such as a shell or carapace becomes spiked and ridged, while natural weaponry such as horns, fangs and tusks grow even more pronounced. The familiar gains (Solar's Essence) automatic successes to intimidate targets. Against much smaller or cowardly opponents, the familiar is automatically intimidating—such enemies suffer a -1 penalty to their attacks against the familiar.

• The familiar cannot be intimidated, and ignores all fear-inducing magic.

• The familiar gains (Solar's Essence) automatic successes to all movement-based Athletics rolls. Mighty familiars such as bears and boars gain (Solar's Essence) in successes on (Strength + Athletics) rolls. Gigantic familiars gain all of these advantages and increase their minimum strength by (Solar's Essence x2) for the purposes of which feats of strength they can attempt.

• The familiar's **withering** and **decisive** attacks gain (Solar's Essence) automatic successes. The creature's **withering** damage gains a bonus equal to the Solar's Essence. For the duration of the Charm, its Initiative does not reset on a successful **decisive** attack unless the Solar uses Red-Toothed Execution Order.

• The familiar's hide grows tough as iron, its bones as hard as diamond, its flesh like granite. It gains five soak against **withering** attacks, and it becomes invulnerable to **decisive** attacks. During this time, the transformed familiar can only be hurt by falling from extreme heights or by being crushed by massive vertical tonnage. Even so, such damage will not exceed the familiar's final health box, leaving it incapacitated but alive when the Charm ends.

• The familiar may roll Join Battle upon transformation, keeping the higher of its current value or the roll's result. Smaller animals that do not usually attack gain dice pools comparable to smaller predators and can use appropriate special attacks associated with such animals. For example, a hummingbird gains access to the eagle's Death Dive attack (see p. XX). Familiars enhanced with Beast-Mastering Behavior may also gain access to a special ability denoted in that's Charm's text.

While Deadly Predator Method is active, the familiar loses one point of Initiative per round, and if it suffers Initiative crash, Deadly Predator Method ends, and the beast reverts to its mundane form. Deadly Predator Method can only be used once per battle, but can be reset by killing an opponent with Red-Toothed Execution Order.

Thrown

Precision of the Striking Raptor

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Thrown 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar imbues her chosen weapon with Essence, to feel its every angle and weight as part of her body. Its strike becomes an extension of her will. The Solar's accuracy is calculated as if it was made from close range, regardless of the distance from which she is throwing. If Precision

of the Striking Raptor is used at close range, the target's defense is lowered by one. This Charm does not allow the Exalt to strike a target beyond the range of her weaponry.

Steel Storm Descending

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Thrown 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Precision of the Striking Raptor

The character harnesses the spirit of her throwing weapons, allowing her to strike a perfect blow at the moment of release. To use this Charm, the Solar must win Join Battle and make a **decisive** attack. Winning Join Battle means beating the roll results of all enemies present in the scene. Steel Storm Descending supplements this attack, granting a number of bonus dice equal to the difference between her Initiative and the Initiative of her target.

At Thrown 5+, Essence 3+, this attack does not reset the Solar to base Initiative.

Flashing Draw Mastery

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Steel Storm Descending

The breathtaking speed with which a Lawgiver calls a weapon to hand is often the last miracle her opponent sees. This Charm adds a single automatic success to the Solar's Join Battle roll, and treats her roll as if she scored (Essence + 1) additional successes for the purpose of determining attack order in the first round of combat. These successes are not "real"—they neither increase her Initiative, nor do they count as dice added by a Charm. Flashing Draw Mastery is expressly permitted to be used in combination with Charms that boost Join Battle results, so long as they are not based in Archery, Melee, or Brawl.

Swarm-Culling Instinct

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Draw Mastery

The Lawgiver answers the call of battle with a swarm of deadly steel. This Charm supplements a Join Battle roll, allowing the Solar to reroll a number of non-successes equal to the number of 10s in her result. 10s occurring in rerolled dice spark additional rerolls. In addition, if the Solar wins Join Battle, she may attack (Dexterity) opponents, rolling each attack separately so that she may alternate effectively between **withering** and **decisive** attacks. Swarm-Culling Instinct is expressly permitted to be used in combination with Charms that boost Join Battle results, so long as they are not based in Archery, Melee, or Brawl.

Shrike Saving Discretion

Cost: —; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Swarm-Culling Instinct

This Charm represents the blinding speed of the Solar's genius hands, honed by a lifetime of practice. Shrike Saving Discretion permanently enhances its prerequisite—when the Solar launches a successful **decisive** attack with Swarm-Culling Instinct, upon returning to base Initiative, she gains bonus Initiative equal to the 9s and 10s on the previous attack's damage roll.

Joint-Wounding Attack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Crippling, Decisive-only, Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Precision of the Striking Raptor

The Solar marks her target and strikes with deadly purpose. If her attack does at least three damage, it adds a -3 penalty to all of her opponent's dice pools for the rest of the scene. This can be portrayed as a stunning blow to the head, a scratched eye, injured hand, or other similar injuries. Any particular wounding does not automatically heal at the end of the scene; the target may need special care to restore lost sight or use of a hand suffering nerve damage.

Elected Targets

> Certain Charms like Joint-Wounding Attack don't make sense when applied to a battle group. Instead of having a single dagger knock the eye out of ten thousand people, refer to the Orichalcum Rule on page XX. In addition, the Storyteller may elect a single target to take the strike instead of the battle group, assigning that character an amount of Initiative, combat skill, and weaponry appropriate to the drama at hand. If this character is crashed or given wound penalties that makes it a negligible threat, he recedes back into the swell of the battle group and can no longer be targeted.

Mist on Water Attack

Cost: 2m per turn; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Joint-Wounding Attack

The Solar pours the cold instinct of her training into a blade, suffusing it with stifling Essence. This Charm supplements a **decisive** attack, silencing the struck target up to (Essence) turns. A victim of this attack cannot produce sound. He can neither cry out nor raise alarm, nor will his fist through a window produce the sound of shattered glass, nor will his body plummeting from the rooftops to the street make even the tiniest sound of thud or splatter.

Characters thus affected may not be detected by any hearing-based Awareness, and those who are killed will die in an unnoticeable fashion, determined by the Storyteller: they may die standing up, reclining naturally, or their bodies may simply fall soundlessly out of sight. In any case, the target's death cannot be discovered until the effects of Mist on Water Attack have passed.

Observer-Deceiving Attack

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mute, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Joint-Wounding Attack

The art of misdirection comes naturally to a master of throwing weapons. Through the use of this Charm, the Solar can conceal a thrown attack, causing her opponents to believe it was made from a completely different angle or direction. Characters who want to spot the true course of the attack must succeed at a (Wits + Awareness) roll at difficulty of (Solar's Essence + [the number of 10s on the attack roll]). Any 1s rolled by her opponent subtracts from his successes.

At Thrown 5, Essence 3+, successful misdirects allow the Exalt to attack without breaking stealth.

Mist-Gathering Practice

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Joint-Wounding Attack

The Lawgiver lives in a haze of ghostly memories, of lives lost and battles won. Calling these fatal moments to hand, she makes her strike momentous. This Charm enhances an aim action from cover or stealth, adding (Essence x2) Initiative to the Solar's next **decisive** attack for the purposes of determining raw damage. If her attack misses, or she does not make a **decisive** attack following the aim action, this bonus Initiative is lost.

Falling Icicle Strike

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Mist-Gathering Practice

Picking the perfect moment to strike, the Solar winds a killing flow of Essence around her blade and hurls it from the depths of her heart. To use this Charm, the Exalt must succeed at an ambush (p. XX) and launch a **decisive** attack against her target. Falling Icicle Strike doubles successes on the damage roll.

Cutting Circle of Destruction

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Falling Icicle Strike

The Exalt hurls her weapon along a course designed to do the utmost harm. It screams through the air, careening from target to target, gathering momentum and Essence until it strikes a final, furious blow. For this attack, the player must designate a final target to be the recipient of a **decisive** attack, and up to (Dexterity) other targets her weapon will strike before reaching its final destination. For each of these other targets, Cutting Circle of Destruction creates a **withering** attack, and as long as each **withering** attack generates more damage than the last, her weapon continues on to the next target, until it launches itself against the final target with the gathered Initiative for a final **decisive** attack.

If at any point her next **withering** attack fails to gain more Initiative than the last, Cutting Circle of Destruction aborts immediately to the last target in the string and the player rolls out a **decisive** attack against the designated final target.

Special activation rules: Each **withering** attack in this string can be enhanced by supplemental Charms as if those Charms were reflexive, allowing the player to control how many motes she wishes to spend on any attack in this string.

Sharp Hand Feint

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Observer-Deceiving Attack

Through a feinting gesture, the Exalt lashes out with her anima, disrupting her opponent with a pulse of spirit force. This Charm supplements a distract gambit so that the attack succeeds without a roll. The Solar must still succeed at the Initiative roll for her gambit to be effective, however. Sharp Hand Feint is short range, but the Exalt may spend levels of anima display to increase its range at a rate of one range band per display level, without the need of an aim action.

Shadow Wind Slash (Shadow Wind Kill)

Cost: 2m or 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Clash, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sharp Hand Feint

With a snap of her wrist, the Lawgiver hurls two blades, one in the shadow of the other. For two motes, this Charm allows the Solar to make two **decisive** attack rolls and choose the better of the two results for determining damage. For one mote, one Willpower, she may use this Charm to benefit a disarm gambit in exactly the same manner. With either use of the Charm, the Lawgiver's first weapon forces the target to parry or dodge, creating an opening for the second attack to strike, but this does not create an additional onslaught penalty.

For one mote, one Willpower, the Exalt may also use this Charm to reflexively clash a close or ranged attack, though without the reroll effect. The Solar may choose to disarm her opponent on a successful strike—a technique called Shadow Wind Slash—or she may direct her second blade at the target's vital points for **decisive** damage, a technique called Shadow Wind Kill. The clash version of this Charm can only be used once per scene, but can be reset by using Steel Storm Descending to successfully damage an opponent.

At Essence 5+, the Lawgiver may pay three motes on a successful clash to direct one weapon into her target's hand and the other into his neck (or other exposed regions), both disarming and doing **decisive** damage.

Shadow Thrust Spark

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sharp Hand Feint

When executing Sharp Hand Feint, the Exalt expels her anima with a burst of Essence, causing it to strike her opponent's weapon as it passes. The Solar can invoke this Charm when a distract gambit supplemented by the prerequisite succeeds, automatically disarming the opponent and throwing his weapon to short range, to a location dictated by the Solar's player.

Flying Steel Ruse

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Observer-Deceiving Attack

The Solar feels the lines of Essence between her hand and her opponent's, allowing her to more effectively draw her opponent's guard. This Charm supplements a distract or disarm gambit, granting one automatic success and allowing the player to reroll a number of 6s equal to the number of 7s displayed on the roll.

Empty Palm Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Observer-Deceiving Attack

With a deceptive flick of her wrist, the Lawgiver can casually disarm even the heartiest grip. This Charm allows the Exalt to keep her Initiative upon succeeding at a single disarm gambit (p. XX). This Charm can only be used once per scene, but can be reset by rolling Join Battle.

Fallen Weapon Deflection

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Empty Palm Technique

The Exalt hurls a flashing missile at a fallen weapon, knocking it through the air. Any time a weapon is disarmed within range of her attack, she may use this Charm to strike it from the air, causing it to fly one further range band than where it would have landed. She may conversely use this to send an ally's weapon flying back toward him. Using this Charm allows the Exalt to act out of turn, but acts as her combat action for the turn. A repurchase allows the Exalt to target a weapon that has already fallen, knocking a grounded weapon to the next range band by hitting it with a thrown weapon of her own. At Essence 3+, if the Lawgiver's Initiative is higher than the disarmed opponent, she can use this Charm even if she has already attacked for that round. Additionally, at Essence 3+ the Lawgiver may expressly use this Charm after successfully disarming an opponent with a Thrown-based attack or gambit.

Savage Wolf Attack

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fallen Weapon Deflection

The Solar marks a weapon that has fallen and dares its owner to try and retrieve it. This Charm can only be used after the Solar successfully disarms an opponent with a Thrown disarm gambit, and only if the owner takes a draw/ready weapon action to retrieve the weapon. When he does, he becomes subject to an unblockable, undodgeable **withering** attack. The Solar hurls this attack at the moment he picks up his weapon, and may make this attack even if she has already attacked in the round. The Solar may *only* make this attack from close or short range. Savage Wolf Attack may be used once per scene, but can be reset by using a Thrown-based gambit to disarm a crashed opponent.

Crimson Razor Wind

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Observer-Deceiving Attack

As killing momentum winds itself around the tip of her blade, the Solar sees a perfect opening and strikes, hurling it with a streak of scarlet anima. When the Solar successfully misdirects an opponent with Observer-Deceiving Attack, she can use this Charm to make an immediate **decisive** attack against that opponent, striking as if from ambush (p. XX). She may only attack a single opponent with Crimson Razor Wind, even if she deceives more than one target with her throw. Using Crimson Razor Wind does not break the Solar's concealment.

Angle-Tracing Edge

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Precision of the Striking Raptor

The Solar perceives the angle of her enemy's attacks as broken arcs of faintly glowing Essence, and uses them to guide her own. Through the use of this Charm, the Exalt completely removes all cover benefits from a target, banking her weapon off of walls and other solid surfaces to make near-impossible attacks. If Angle-Tracing Edge is used against a target in full cover, unless deemed completely impossible by the Storyteller, her attack finds its mark, but is made as if she had attacked from long distance.

Triple Distance Attack Technique

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Thrown 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar imbues her weapon with Essence, lightening the weapon at the moment of launch and perfecting its course. This Charm extends the range of a thrown weapon to long range. At Thrown 5, Essence 3+, the Solar can use this Charm to make an attack across four range bands.

Cascade of Cutting Terror

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Triple Distance Attack Technique

Once per combat, the Solar can unleash this attack against a single target, giving her the full dice benefits of having used a full Thrown Excellency. This attack cannot be dodged, only blocked. If successful, the attack is joined by dozens or hundreds of copied weapons, striking points all around the target, doing twice the damage successes to all significant objects and insignificant opponents within short range of the initial strike. If the Exalt wins Join Battle and opens with this attack, she does not need to take an aim action to launch it from medium or long range.

The Solar can reset Cascade of Cutting Terror by hurling away her last missile and then recovering at least a single throwing weapon with a stunt.

Shower of Deadly Blades

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Cascade of Cutting Terror

The Lawgiver hurls a barrage of throwing weapons, centered around a single target, but striking every enemy within short range of that target. This is rolled as a single **withering** attack against

all targets, but damage is only rolled against the initial target. Damage to all other targets is determined by this roll: foes struck by the attack automatically lose an amount of Initiative equal to the initial target, but not exceeding the Solar's Essence. This extra Initiative is not rewarded to the Solar upon success; she only gains Initiative from her initial target. This attack is generally used to scatter groups of enemies, and tends to leave dozens of throwing weapons embedded into the scenery.

Using Shower of Deadly Blades forces an ammunition check (see p. XX) which cannot be enhanced by a Charm, and if she fails the Solar may not use this Charm again until she has taken at least three turns scavenging weaponry, as described on page XX.

Fiery Solar Chakram

Cost: 5m, 1wp, 1+a; **Mins:** Thrown 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Cascade of Cutting Terror

Gathering her anima into a screaming, burning loop of surging enmity and power, the Solar hurls it at her foe in a blazing **decisive** attack. This attack requires no aim action, gains a number of automatic successes equal to her current anima levels greater than dim, and cannot be used at the dim level. Extra successes on this attack are added to the Solar's Initiative to determine raw damage. In addition, if is used against demons, ghosts, or other creatures of the night, it does a number of automatic successes on the damage roll equal to the Solar's Essence.

Fiery Solar Chakram can only be used once per fight unless reset. After discharging it, the Solar's hands glow and burn painfully, gloved in intensely-colored anima as it flees her body. Using this Charm sets her anima back to the dim level, and in order to use it again, the player must make three separate stunts in which her anima grows while she begins to produce the strength to unleash another fiery chakram.

War

War God Descendent

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** War 1, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Solars descend from the highest war god in Heaven. They speak armies into existence, and their mere presence is a call to arms. This Charm supplements the Strategic Maneuver roll (p. XX); as the Lawgiver develops a tactic for victory, fighters of the world are drawn to her call to glory. Ignore the -1 penalty for troops with poor drill, and increase the battle group's effective Size by one upon joining battle.

Immortal Commander's Presence

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** War 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: War God Descendent

By drilling with a ballista squad, catapult crew, or other team of siege weaponry operators, the Lawgiver burns an image of perfect actions into their minds. This simple action can last for one minute or one hour. The Solar drills her charges in loading, aiming, and firing siege weaponry and ballistae, giving each crewman an automatic success on the firing roll, and allowing him to reroll all non-successes. If she drills the crew for one minute, they gain this benefit for a single attack. If she drills them for an hour, they gain it for an entire combat scene.

Holistic Battle Understanding

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** War 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: War God Descendent

Looking into the Essence of the battlefield, the Solar tactician knows the forces arrayed against her, if not in fact then in unerring instinct. This Charm supplements the Strategic Maneuver roll (see p. XX) to establish a stratagem, allowing the Solar to ignore all penalties from unfamiliarity with the opposing force or its generals.

Redoubt-Raising Gesture

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Holistic Battle Understanding

The Lawgiver knows the path to victory is through efficiency and planning. With less time for preparation, and fewer tools, she can quickly turn a battlefield into an abattoir. By supplementing a Strategic Maneuver roll with Redoubt-Raising Gesture, the Solar can complete a specific stratagem with one less success than is required.

General of the All-Seeing Sun

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Redoubt-Raising Gesture

Poring over maps and strategies real and remembered, the Solar sees perfect stillness beneath the chaotic Essence of combat. This Charm supplements the Strategic Maneuver roll, adding one automatic success plus (Essence) dice. In addition, the Exalt may choose to split her successes into multiple stratagems. The Solar may deploy no more stratagems than her Essence rating.

Four Glories Meditation

Cost: —; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: General of the All-Seeing Sun

The Chosen meditates on the never-ending cycle of strife and conflict until her form is instilled with the Essence of war. Any War-based roll she makes rerolls any 6s in its result until 6s no longer appear.

League of Iron Preparation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: War God Descendent

Reaching out to the hearts of her charges with an impassioned speech and fatal purpose, the Solar invokes their reasons for fighting. This Charm is activated when the Exalt begins the long, arduous process of drilling her soldiers. As she toughens them with want and rain, she reminds them of the hardships they have endured at the hands of their tormentors. When they hunger, her words feed them. When they shiver, her exhortations warm them. Fed by the Solar's will, they suffer less from long marches, empty bellies, or harsh climates. When the Lawgiver is finished drilling these troops, her commitment to the Charm ends, and her soldiers are forever improved: they cannot suffer demoralizing effects (such as the Demoralize stratagem on page XX) that are not created by Reflexive or Simple types of magic. In addition, ignore penalties on the Strategic Maneuver roll having to do with hunger, bad weather, or the physical exhaustion associated with long marches over difficult terrain.

Tiger Warrior Training Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: League of Iron Preparation

At the dawn of the world, man knew nothing of the gods save that they were inviolate and could not be vanquished. The Solar Exalted changed that. Through the use of this Charm, even the worst gutter-sweepings and bandits can be trained into an elite fighting force. This Charm enhances the effects of Drill (p. XX). The Solar's training regimens are brilliant, ingraining her troops with perfect actions codified from a peerless mind for war. With this Charm, she can train an undisciplined unit up to Average after just a week, and she can instill an Average unit with Elite status after only a month. Any unit which gains Average Drill under the aegis of this training also gains the combat traits of battle-ready soldiers, while any unit raised to Elite Drill gains the combat traits of elite troops (p. XX).

In addition, at Essence 3+, the Solar can further enhance an Elite battle group with her transforming will.

Demon-Fighting Principle: For 2xp, she can train her elite units to be more effective at fighting ghosts, demons, and other nighted creatures from the haunted tracts of Creation. The battle group gains +2 Might against such foes.

Giant-Slaying Tactics: For 2xp, the Exalt's elite are versed in battle tactics having to do with fighting gigantic opponents. Her forces gain +2 Might against behemoths or other titanic foes. This effect does not stack with Demon-Fighting Principle.

Glory of the Inevitable: The Solar's Tiger Warriors need no truth but life is death, and death comes on the battlefield. For 3xp, she can instill her elite battle group with perfect morale (p. XX), making it impossible to fail a rout check without powerful magical influence.

Rout-Stemming Gesture

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** War 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: War God Descendent

The Solar strikes at the heart of panic, dissolving it with the force of her warrior's Essence. The Solar makes a reflexive rally action (p. XX) with (Essence) automatic successes.

Magnanimity of the Unstoppable Icon

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rout-Stemming Gesture

The Lawgiver walks the battlefield as a legend, feared and respected by friend and foe alike. After an enemy general takes a rally for numbers action (p. XX), the Solar may use this Charm to restore an amount of Magnitude to her battle group equal to the 1s and 2s in her opponent's roll. This new influx of soldiers is pulled from the ranks of her enemy's forces as they switch sides.

March of the Returner

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Magnanimity of the Unstoppable Icon

The Solar represents a new dawn on the last day of Creation. Her coming foretells the battle's end, a day of blood for the wicked and light to vanquish darkness from the world once more. When her army is routed, the Lawgiver may call upon glories past—in this life and those that came before—to create a rallying tactic that miraculously reforms her army. This Charm is an automatically successful rally action (p. XX). It can be used once per scene, but it can be reset if the Solar succeeds at vanquishing a terrible foe or conquering a powerful enemy through the might of her army.

Supremacy of the Divine Army

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: March of the Returner

The Exalt inspires loyalty such that the very beasts of the field flock to her call. Once per combat, the Exalt may make a reflexive rally for numbers action (see p. XX), adding (Essence) automatic successes. While this Charm cannot restore a dot of Size, any successes beyond the battle group's total Magnitude will be restored in the rounds following the battle group taking additional damage, at a rate of up two Magnitude levels per round. A Solar whose appeals are sufficiently compelling—a level two stunt—will see wild animals leaping into the fray on her behalf, while a Solar whose call for retribution strikes with resounding force—a level three stunt—will be answered by the very rocks and trees, as elementals and other strange spirits rise up to join her ranks.

Ideal Battle Knowledge Prana

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** War 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sun's Chosen speak in tongues of valor and know the ways of war. As one who has studied or waged war for a lifetime, the Solar simply knows what to do in any combat situation. This Charm applies the double 9s rule to all of the Solar's order actions (p. XX). At War 5, Essence 3+, the Exalt may pay six motes, three Initiative to enhance her orders with double 8s.

Immortal Warlord's Tactic

Cost: 4m, 4i, 1wp; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ideal Battle Knowledge Prana

Once per battle, the Lawgiver may enact a signature stratagem that may not be counteracted by prophetic magic or Charms such as Battle-Visionary's Foresight. This roll may be a unique strategy described by the player, or it may be one of the template strategies on page XX. In any case, the Strategic Maneuver roll is made with double 7s.

Battle Path Ascendant

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** War 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ideal Battle Knowledge Prana

The tide of battle turns, and the Lawgiver feels her body exult with renewing power, her very Essence moving to join the flow of battle. Whenever her army unleashes an attack which causes a battle group's Magnitude to empty, the Solar may use this Charm to roll Join Battle.

Transcendent Warlord's Genius

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Battle Path Ascendant

Reaching into a past filled with glories and terror, the Exalt shapes a divinely-inspired order for her army to follow. Whenever the Exalt uses Battle Path Ascendant, she may use this Charm to create and employ a stratagem with a threshold of half the successes of her Join Battle roll, rounded up. This stratagem must make sense in the context of the battlefield.

Battle-Visionary's Foresight

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** War 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: General of the All-Seeing Sun, Transcendent Warlord's Genius

The Solar taps a legacy of war greater and longer than the length of her life. Her battle-hardened visage stares into the Essence of the world through ancient eyes, seeing primal battles play out in ages lost. This Charm is used during strategic warfare, and requires one to five minutes to complete—the Solar concentrates on her foe, her army, the battlefield, and her memories, merging them into a single interlinked tactic that allows her to create a perfect response to enemy stratagems. The player *privately* chooses two stratagems (p. XX) and writes them down, not revealing them to fellow players. The selected tactics are hidden face down.

If the opposing player wins the Strategic Maneuver roll and chooses to employ one of the strategies the Solar's player has selected, the enemy finds that his stratagem has led him into a terrible mistake: the Solar general is ready with a perfect counter-tactic. In this case, treat the battle as if the Exalt's player had won the strategic roll and deployed a stratagem of equal value to the one she just countered.

The Solar's player may also choose stratagems that are listed in later publications. Opposing players may not opt to choose "No stratagem." However, armies led by the Chosen may gain access to special, mystical stratagems, such as the divine miracles allowed by the Chosen of Battles. Such tactics are rare, and upon encountering one, the Solar may trade two prepared tactics to counter one of these reflexively.

The neighborhood had once been an affluent district just outside the secondary gate of a frontier county seat. The last half-decade of raiding and civil uncertainty had driven most of the inhabitants away, but the structures—or parts of them—still stood.

Before barbarians, vandals and the elements had their way with the structure Shen inhabited, it had been a small mansion not unlike a tiny keep, with a central building and a nine-foot wall around it. The building had burned, but the wall still stood, and the compound made it a fine residence for Shen, who had caused the gate to be repaired and put the well back in operation, among other renovations.

Shen made his home in a storage hut that had escaped destruction. The sorcerer masqueraded as a hashish dealer posing as a cure-all seller, and practiced an unsuccessful trade in nostrums and salves by day, while bricks of hemp resin passed through his hands by night. In this latter trade he was notably more successful, and his wares were compared favorably with the local greats of the trade. Shen had to admit privately his pride in his work.

But life in that stratum of society brought certain obligations, as it did at every level. Earlier that evening, as the sun colored the ruins scarlet but before the hashish smokers began to assemble for their evening purchases, one of his guards brought him a struggling orphan, who had in turn led him to a sickly woman. Shen at first had attended to the matter out of the sense that it behooved him to have excellent relations with the neighborhood jackals and urchins. But after a few minutes of examination, and several more minutes reassuring his hirelings that there was no possibility of contagion (and promising generous dollops of hashish all around), he had his toughs put the urchin's ailing sister onto a canvas stretcher and carry her through the streets to his hut.

Her body was ravaged. Though there were few evident marks, Shen's expert eye saw that her liver was covered with pustules, her brain swollen, and her intestines virtually dead within her. He had set his apprentice Tiger and his guard Flatiron to selling the evening's wares. Even the most fascinating intellectual challenge could not come before his obligation to his habitués—not if he wanted to keep his clients.

Now Shen shook the specimen bottle in his hand. The yellow bile within sloshed viscidly, and he grinned as he made his way into the burned-out shell of the mansion. Within the charred ruins, he pulled up the ring-bolted door and descended the stairs to his laboratory.

There, he slid the presses and molds out of the way and rolled up the rush mats, revealing the carefully prepared summoning floor. For hours, he busied himself lighting candles, casting purifying aspersions, and fumigating with pungent herbs much rarer and more expensive than those he sold in either of his more regular trades.

The ceremony was brief but powerful, and by the end the Twilight Caste was burning with a scarlet radiance as intense as the sunset. He cast his arms upwards and shouted in the Old Tongue, "Ashafethe, demon of the Second Circle, I call you up from Malfeas. Days ago you began your walk, canny slave, now I command you to attend upon my presence. By the oaths of service your soul swore in uttermost extremity—appear!"

And Ashafethe was there, within the circle.

“You call me forth, Exalt, and I come as I am required to. Yet I must observe you are alone, weakened by the exertions of summoning, while I am fresh and strong. What do you think to demand of me?” The terrible thing within the circle showed its smile.

“There is a disease that ravages a woman here. Her liver is pustulated, her intestines die, her brain-sheath swells within her head. This has all the hallmarks of your hand.”

“It surely does, Exalt. What do you wish of me? Do you seek to command me to cure this wretched mortal?”

“No, demon, I know well that you set this woman’s sickness as a snare for me. Do you really think I would fall for such a trifling ambush? I have already cured her disease. I return it to you now!”

Still burning with unbearable scarlet radiance, Shen flicked the specimen at the summoning circle. The demon recoiled from the spatters. Shen shook his head, “Not immune to your own poisons, Malfean cockroach? A shame.”

He raised his hands and the bonds of Essence sealed the circle again. The road to Malfeas opened at the feet of the demon. Miracles danced around the room as vast quantities of concentrated Essence brought motion and action to the space. Shen held his hands in mudras of burning power as he held the wall between the worlds asunder. “Back to Malfeas’ wastes with you, plague-bringer. May you perish on the restless sands.”

And then Ashafethe was gone, and the room was silent once again. Shen panted, glowing with a brilliant golden radiance.

Chapter Seven: Martial Arts and Sorcery

Martial Arts

Creation’s martial arts are the stuff of legend, powerful fighting styles that emulate the ferocity of mighty beasts or follow paths of esoteric wisdom. Martial artists come in many forms throughout the world. The vast majority are mortal men and women who’ve attained extraordinary martial prowess through intense study, discipline, and training. In the hands of the Exalted, the martial arts rise to even greater peaks of power, allowing supernatural martial artists to harmonize themselves fully with the Essence of a style to master its full potential.

Martial Arts and Other Abilities

Creation’s martial arts stand apart from the bare-handed fighting of brawlers or the weapons training of soldiers. Each one is a unique combination of precise, esoteric katas that stand on the boundary between fighting style and art form. In short—Martial Arts Charms are not compatible with Brawl, or any other combat Ability, unless they explicitly state otherwise. A bare-handed attack cannot benefit from both the maiming precision of Snake style’s Crippling Pressure-Point Strike and the devastating force of the Heaven Thunder Hammer; wielding twin blades in the katas of Steel Devil style is entirely unlike the pragmatic fundamentals of the Melee Ability. However, while the Martial Arts cannot be combined with other combat Abilities, they can be

freely combined with one another, limited only by the constraints of style weapons and armor restrictions (see below).

Martial Arts Charms

The Charms of a style are organized into a single tree, which can be learned by any of the Exalted (and certain other powerful supernatural beings). As a general rule, the Charm tree of each style is complete, the totality of the style's teachings that have passed down for generations or more. While characters may experiment with creating new styles, they cannot add additional Charms to existing styles. However, at the Storyteller's discretion, it may be possible to find lost Charms known only to ancient masters or long-lost repositories of wisdom, or for a character to achieve a new understanding of a style by seeking inspiration from an epic quest or unexpected source.

Style Weapons

Unlike the more universal Charms of the Exalted, each martial arts style is limited in the range of weapons it can be used with. For example, Tiger style can only be used with unarmed attacks and tiger claws, while Black Claw style cannot be used with any weapons at all. Whenever a Martial Arts Charm refers to enhancing an "attack," it always means an attack made with one of that style's weapons. Similarly, Martial Arts Charms that enhance a character's Parry only apply when they block with a style weapon. Artifact weapons are always compatible with any style that uses their mundane equivalents (Tiger stylists are equally adept with tiger claws and razor claws, and so on).

In addition, some styles allow characters to deal lethal damage with their unarmed attacks, as long as the attack benefits from a Charm of the style. This is also noted under the description of the style's weaponry.

Martial Arts and Armor

Many martial arts cannot be practiced while wearing armor, while others can only be used with armor of up to a certain weight. If a martial artist is wearing armor incompatible with a style, he cannot use any of that style's Charms, and gains no benefits from any that are already active or permanent in nature.

Martial Arts Keywords

The following keywords are specific to Martial Arts Charms.

• **Celestial:** This keyword denotes that certain elements of the Charm are so potent that they require the might of Celestial Exaltation, granting a lesser or restricted effect when used by Dragon-Blooded martial artists. Certain masters of the Immaculate Order have developed spiritual initiations that allow them to overcome these limitations.

• **Form:** Each style has a Form, a scene-long Charm that aligns the martial artist wholly with the spirit or principle of the style. As such, a character can only have one Form Charm active at a time—activating a new one during the same scene ends the old one. However, when this happens, **all motes committed to the previous Form Charm are counted towards the cost of the new Form,** requiring that the martial artist pay only the difference. For example, a character

transitioning from the eight-mote Snake Form to the 10-mote Tiger Form would only need to commit an additional two motes to pay the cost of Tiger Form. Conversely, if that character later transitioned from Tiger Form back to Snake Form, he would not need to pay any additional motes at all, with the two excess motes becoming uncommitted as usual. Note that cost transfer does not apply to other Charms that enhance or modify Form Charms, such as Snake style's Essence Fangs and Scales Technique or Tiger style's Angry Predator Frenzy.

• **Mastery:** This keyword denotes Charms that have a greater effect when used by those Exalted who are masters of mortal Abilities: the Solar Exalted, and their dark reflections, the Abyssal and Infernal Exalted. The Sidereal Exalted, peerless masters of the martial arts, have their own esoteric methods for accessing these effects.

Snake Style

Snake style is swift and agile, moving with the speed of a striking serpent to fell stronger or better-armed foes before they even have a chance to act. Its strikes emphasize precision over brute strength, and a master of the style can pierce through armor, paralyze an enemy with a pressure-point strike, or even deliver poisonous Essence through her fingertips. It flourishes in dojos of the South and the East, where students learn to emulate the motion and tactics of the native serpents, but as one of the ancient animal styles whose lineage dates back to the First Age, its practitioners can be found throughout all of Creation.

Snake Weapons: Snake style's unarmed attacks are usually two-fingered fang attacks that stab at pressure points and exposed tendons. It can also be used armed with a seven-section staff or hooked sword, which are wielded with extraordinary speed and finesse. Any unarmed attack enhanced by a Snake Charm can always be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: Snake style is compatible with light armor.

Serpentine Evasion

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Ducking and weaving, the snake confounds predators' attempts at violence. Serpentine Evasion adds +1 to the martial artist's Evasion against a single attack. If the attack is made after the martial artist has already taken her turn that round, she may declare this Charm after the attack has already been rolled—enemies who cannot even keep pace with her in battle have no hope of striking her.

Mastery: Successfully evading an attack after using this Charm lowers the cost of subsequent activations of it by one mote until the martial artist's next turn.

Striking Cobra Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual, Mastery

Duration: One round

Prerequisite Charms: None

The snake claims its victory not by striking hardest, but by striking first. Against an enemy with lower Initiative, Striking Cobra Technique adds the martial artist's Dexterity to the raw damage of a **withering** attack, or one die to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack. Against enemies in Initiative Crash, the **withering** damage boost is added after soak, while the **decisive** damage boost is converted to an automatic success.

Mastery: Add the martial artist's (Essence + 2) to her Initiative when determining if she can use this Charm against an enemy.

Snake Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Serpentine Evasion, Striking Cobra Technique

The martial artist steps back into the posture of a wary snake—head back, ready to attack or retreat. Her motions become sinuous and hypnotic, as mesmerizing as they are deadly. Enemies are entranced by this posture, taking a -1 penalty on all attack rolls against her—which increases to a -3 penalty if their Initiative rating is lower than the martial artist's. In addition, this flexible pose makes it easier to roll with attacks and thus minimize their impact, adding the stylist's Dexterity rating to her soak.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist makes a **withering attack** which lowers an enemy's current Initiative value from greater than her own to less than her own, she may reflexively activate Snake Form.

Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form

Essence hardens the Snake stylist's fingers into fangs capable of piercing through steel. The Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike allows a **withering** attack to ignore all of an enemy's soak from armor.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood may only use this Charm once per scene, unless she resets it by dealing 3+ levels of damage with a **decisive** attack and then builds back up to Initiative 12+.

Crippling Pressure-Point Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form

Striking quick, rapid jabs to nerve clusters and pressure points, the martial artist leave her foes numbed and deadened, as if they had actually been bitten by a venomous snake. Crippling Pressure-Point Strike allows the Snake stylist to use one of the following gambits, crippling vital pressure points and disrupting meridians of Essence with painful fang strikes.

• **Blinding Fang Strike (Difficulty 3):** A finger-fang strike to each of the enemy's eyes leaves him blinded for the rest of the scene. The enemy suffers a -3 penalty on all actions. He may recover his sight by spending a turn rubbing his injured eyes, a miscellaneous action which cannot be placed in a flurry.

• **Nerve-Deadening Venom Atemi (Difficulty 4):** A lightning-swift flurry of fang strikes along an arm leaves it paralyzed until the end of the scene. The victim immediately drops anything he was holding in that hand, cannot use it to perform any actions, and suffers a -2 penalty on any actions that would normally require the use of both hands. It is possible to paralyze both (or sometimes, all) of an enemy's arms with repeated use of this Gambit, leaving him unable to wield weapons at all without clever stunting on his part.

• **Withering Venom Paralysis (Difficulty 6):** A single devastating fang strike to an enemy's sacral chakra leaves his lower body paralyzed or the rest of the scene, causing him to immediately fall prone. Even on a successful rise from prone action (which must always be rolled, against difficulty 3), he is only capable of propping himself up on arms and elbows to crawl across the earth. He may take other movement actions at a -3 penalty, and treats all ground as difficult terrain, but still suffers all other penalties of being prone.

Celestial: In order to use this Charm, a Dragon-Blood must first successfully dodge a **decisive** attack. On her next turn, she may take advantage of the opening in the attacking enemy's defense to unleashing the Crippling Pressure-Point Strike against him.

Essence Fangs and Scales Technique

Cost: — (+1m, 1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form

The martial artist's anima coalesces into thick layers of scales, and needle-sharp anima fangs extend from her fingertips or weapon. When Snake Form is activated, the martial artist may pay an additional mote and a point of Willpower to enhance it with this serpentine display. Doing so adds the martial artist's Essence to her soak in addition to the base soak bonus of the form, and adds +2 to the raw damage of all **withering** attacks she makes.

Mastery: The damage bonus of this Charm applies to **decisive** attacks against any enemy whose Initiative is at least two points lower than the martial artist's.

Uncoiling Serpent Prana

Cost: 7m, 3i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Essence Fangs and Scales Technique

Striking a menacing blow in the direction of a distant enemy, the martial artist send a serpentine ribbon of anima flashing towards him, bearing her wrath on its fangs. Uncoiling Serpent Prana can be used to attack an enemy with lower Initiative out to short range with a **withering** or **decisive** attack. If this deals 5+ Initiative damage or any **decisive** damage, the martial artist may drag that enemy into close range with her, twisting the ribbon of Essence to coil around him and draw him in.

While Essence Fangs and Scales Technique is active, the range of this Charm is extended to medium.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood does not enjoy any additional benefit when Essence Fangs and Scales Technique is active.

Snake Strikes the Heel

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Clash, Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form

Those who tread on serpents may not live to repeat their error. This Charm allows the martial artist to reflexively make a **withering** or **decisive** clash attack. A **withering** clash does not grant any Initiative to the martial artist, only serving to disrupt the momentum of her enemy with the blurring violence of her unexpected attack. A **decisive** counterattack can only be used to execute a gambit, potentially including a reflexive activation of Crippling Pressure-Point Strike to use one of its gambits.

If the martial artist knows Uncoiling Serpent Prana, she may activate it as though it were a Reflexive Charm to allow her to clash against a ranged enemy with Snake Strikes the Heel.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood treats the clash attack granted by this Charm as her action for the round, and cannot make another. If she's already acted this round, then it counts as her action for her next turn.

Countless Coils Evasion

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Snake Strikes the Heel

Moving with the reflexes and raw speed of a startled snake, the martial artist leaves no flaw in her defenses. After the damage roll of a **decisive** attack against her, the martial artist may use this Charm to roll (Essence + Initiative). Each success on her roll negates a level of damage from the attack, after which she is reset to base Initiative. If this successfully negates all damage from the attack, then the martial artist emerges unscathed, revealing that what her opponent struck was only an afterimage, and adds +2 to her base Initiative when she resets. This Charm is incompatible with any other effect that reduces the damage of a **decisive** attack.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must use this Charm before the damage of an attack is rolled, with each success subtracting a die of raw damage, and may only use it once per scene.

Essence Venom Strike

Cost: 6m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Aggravated, Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike, Countless Coils Evasion, Crippling Pressure-Point Attack, Uncoiling Serpent Prana

Distilling her killing intent into venomous Essence, the Snake master delivers a blow as quick as lightning and as deadly as the strike of a dozen serpents. Essence Venom Strike poisons an enemy, envenoming him as long as a single level of damage is dealt. The poison deals one die of aggravated damage each round and inflicts a -2 penalty, with one round of duration for every two dice of raw damage rolled. Characters in Initiative Crash do not receive a (Stamina + Resistance) roll to lower the duration of the poison

An enemy poisoned with this Charm is treated as having a lower Initiative than the martial artist for the purposes of Essence Fangs and Scales Technique, Snake Form, and Striking Cobra Technique until the venom has run its course.

Celestial: When used by a Dragon-Blood, the duration of the poison created by this Charm can be no higher than five rounds.

Mastery: Once an enemy has been poisoned by the martial artist's Essence Venom Strike, she can advance its progress with precise strikes to Essence meridians and pressure points. Damaging the poisoned enemy with a **withering** attack causes one die of that poison's remaining damage to be immediately rolled and applied against his health track; **decisive** attacks increase this to (Essence) dice. Applying damage early does not reduce the duration of this Charm. If an enemy has five rounds of poison remaining, and the martial artist causes him to roll three dice of damage with an attack, then he would continue taking damage from the poison for two rounds, then spend three rounds only taking the penalty from it.

Tiger Style

Tiger style emulates the ferocious strength and swift, pouncing strikes of the predatory cats. A Tiger stylist treat combat as a dance between predator and prey, pursuing her foe with unmatched speed and unrelenting patience. Once she close in on her victim, she brings him down like a tiger fells its prey—knocking him to the ground, crippling his limbs, and moving in for the killing

strike. Many who follow the path of Tiger style become arrogant, impatient, or cruel, as their trust in their killing power becomes absolute. Others learn different lessons, adapting the patient bearing of a cat stalking its prey through the jungle.

Tiger Weapons: Tiger style uses unarmed attacks—generally raking claws strikes—or tiger claws to slash the flesh of enemies. Any unarmed attack that is enhanced by a Tiger Charm can always be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: Tiger style is compatible with light armor.

Complementary Abilities: Tiger stylists make great use of the Athletics Ability to move across the battlefield and chase down their foes. Some also use Stealth, ambushing enemies to end fights before they have even begun.

Crimson Leaping Cat Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Moving with the speed and agility of a leaping tiger, the martial artist closes the distance to her prey. Crimson Leaping Cat Technique steals a point of Initiative from an enemy upon successfully rushing him. If the martial artist makes an attack against that enemy on the same turn, any extra successes on the rush are added as bonus dice to her attack roll.

Mastery: The martial artist suffers no flurry penalties for combining a rush supplemented with this Charm and an attack.

Striking Fury Claws

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1, **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Rigorous training, intense discipline, and the suffusing Essence of the tiger gives the martial artist's claw strikes the force to rend flesh and disembowel fallen enemies, making her a bare-handed killer. Striking Fury Claws converts up to (Strength) extra successes that would be added to the raw damage of a **withering** attack to post-soak dice of damage instead. Against an enemy who took a disengage or withdraw action on his last turn, these post-soak dice are instead converted to successes added to the damage roll.

Mastery: Extra successes converted by this Charm add both to the raw damage of the attack and to post-soak damage (or successes against fleeing enemies).

Tiger Form

Cost: 10m, **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Leaping Cat Technique, Striking Fury Claws

Dropped into the crouched, predatory pose of a tiger preparing to pounce, the martial artist's Essence comes to embody the pinnacle of predatory grace. Her fingers seem like claws as they move through their strikes, and her eyes narrow to cat-like slits. While Tiger Form is active, the martial artist may double up to (Strength) extra successes when calculating the raw damage of **withering** attacks, and takes no penalties for fighting while prone.

She also adds (Essence) dice to rush actions and all rolls to contest a disengage. She gains any Initiative spent by an enemy attempting to disengage from within range of him.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist lands a **decisive attack** that deals 3+ levels of damage, she may reflexively activate Tiger Form.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood may double up to the lowest of Strength, Dexterity, and Wits extra successes when calculating the raw damage of **withering** attacks.

Celestial Tiger Hide

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2**; Type**: Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Tiger Form

Essence strengthens the martial artist's skin, suffusing it with the toughness of a tiger's hide. Celestial Tiger Hide adds the martial artist's Strength to her natural soak, and grants her Hardness equal to her Essence. She adds +2 to both values against attacks made from long or extreme range.

When the martial artist is struck with a **decisive attack**, she may pay a point of Willpower to deny it to her utmost, shattering the Essence of this Charm against the blow. This final defense, called the Undying Predator's Roar, immediately ends this Charm, but subtracts the martial artist's Hardness from the raw damage of the attack. After using the Undying Predator's Roar, Celestial Tiger Hide cannot be activated again until the martial artist has taken 3+ levels of damage to her health track over the course of the fight.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot use the Undying Predator's Roar.

Iron Claw Grip

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2, **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Tiger Form

The martial artist seizes hold of her enemy's joints with a forceful claw strike, digging fingertips or blades into vulnerable connective tissue. Iron Claw Grip can be used after successfully landing a grapple gambit, but before the roll to establish control. If the martial artist successfully gains control of the clinch, then every extra success on the gambit roll adds one round to her control over it, to a maximum of (Essence) bonus rounds.

Mastery: Iron Claw Grip doubles 9s on the grapple's control roll.

Prey-Maiming Frenzy

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3, **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Iron Claw Grip

Once the martial artist has seized hold of an enemy, she lays in with a flurry of brutal strikes, flaying skin and smashing bone until little but a bloody pulp remains. The martial artist makes a **decisive** savaging attack against a grappled enemy, adding her Strength to the raw damage of the attack. Every round of control she has over the clinch adds +1 to her base Initiative when she resets, although this cannot bring her above her Initiative at the time she made the attack.

Special activation rules: Prey-Maiming Frenzy can only be used once per fight, unless reset by crashing a grappled enemy.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot add more than her Essence to her base Initiative with this Charm.

Raging Tiger Pounce

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Tiger Form

A downward claw strike shatters the pillar of an enemy's balance, sending him sprawling to the ground—exactly where the martial artist wants him. An enemy damaged by the Raging Tiger Pounce is knocked prone. As long as he remains in close range to the martial artist, he must pay two points of Initiative to take a rise from prone action. The martial artist gains these points of Initiative if she has Tiger Form active.

Mastery: Raging Tiger Pounce can also be used to supplement any attack against a prone enemy, rendering it undodgeable. The brutal impact of a successful **withering** hit on a prone target inflicts one die of bashing damage that ignores hardness, or the Charm adds one success to the damage roll of a **decisive** attack.

Spine-Shattering Bite

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Raging Tiger Pounce

Severing tendons and snapping bones, the Tiger stylist's brutal strikes leave her enemies helpless. When the martial artist rolls 3+ levels of lethal damage on a **decisive** attack, she can use Spine-Shattering Bite to paralyze her enemy, slashing through tendons, smashing joints, or rending connective tissue and shattering vertebrae at the base of the spine. She forgoes two of the rolled levels of damage, and instead cripples an enemy so that he cannot take movement actions.

The enemy may spend a turn trying to shake off the crippling agony, paying two Initiative to roll (Stamina + Resistance) at a difficulty of the martial artist's Strength, recovering only if he succeeds. This action is treated as disengaging for the purposes of Leap From Cloaking Shadows, Striking Fury Claws, and Tiger Form.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use Spine-Shattering Bite once per fight, unless reset by rolling four or more 10s on a **decisive** damage roll. She may then use it to enhance that attack.

Stalking Cat Movement Meditation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Tiger Form

The martial artist's terrifying presence radiates across the battlefield, leaving her foes wary and unsure. Do they dare turn their backs on her, when at any moment she could suddenly be right behind them? Enemies who are at short or medium range to the martial artist must disengage to move away from her as though they were at close range, intimidated by her deadly elusive presence. They also take a -1 penalty to their Defense against surprise attacks made by her.

Mastery: The martial artist may rush enemies while in stealth.

Leap From Cloaking Shadows

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Stalking Cat Movement Meditation

The Tiger stylist strikes with such speed that her hands seem little more than blurs of violence, no more substantial than a fleeting pattern of orange and black between the shadowed boughs of the jungle. What enemy can hope to defend against *that?* Leap From Cloaking Shadows doubles up to (half Strength, round up) 9s on an attack roll. Double the same number of 8s if the attack was unexpected *or* made against an enemy who disengaged or withdrew on her last turn; double that many 7s if both are true. For example, a Strength 5 Tiger stylist made an unexpected attack

against an enemy who withdrew on her last turn; she could double up to three 9s, three 8s, and three 7s.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot double 7s with this Charm.

Mastery: Every die doubled on the attack roll (including 10s) adds one to the raw damage of the attack.

Angry Predator Frenzy

Cost: — (+5m, 1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Celestial, Mastery

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Celestial Tiger Hide, Prey-Maiming Frenzy, Spine-Shattering Bite, Leap From Cloaking Shadows

The apex of Tiger style is nothing less than predation in its purest form. As the martial artist enters the Tiger Form, she may pay an additional five motes and a point of Willpower to unleash the Angry Predator Frenzy, roaring with bestial fury as she casts aside the restraints of humanity. Her muscles surge with newfound strength, while her eyes narrow to red slits of berserker rage. While in the Angry Predatory Frenzy, the martial artist may add up to (Strength) extra successes to the raw damage of **decisive** attacks, and gains a Defining Tie of savage hatred towards her enemies. In addition, she can rush as a reflexive action, in addition to her usual movement action for the turn. Conversely, while enraged, she cannot disengage or withdraw.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood add may add up to (lower of Strength or Essence) extra successes to the raw damage of **decisive** attacks.

Mastery: Whenever the martial artist resets to base Initiative after making a **decisive** attack while in this rage, she adds (her Strength/2, round up) to her base Initiative. In addition, while her anima is at the bonfire level, it takes on a bestial or destructive form that lashes out and rends the animas of her enemies. Whenever she damages an enemy with a **decisive** attack while at bonfire, his anima fades by one level, ripped apart by the claws or destructive vortices of her totemic display of fury.

Single Point Shining Into the Void Style

Single Point Shining Into the Void is a sword style that emphasizes blinding speed and deadly-perfect finishing moves. Students learn to draw their blade as though it were an extension of their own body, transitioning effortlessly from the draw to a strike or parry. When a master duels a lesser swordsman, the fight often ends in a single stroke, the blade sheathed almost in the same instant it's drawn. When faced against a foe who matches her in skill, the Single Point stylist fights with swift blows and an almost meditative focus, seeking the single moment of weakness in her foe's defenses that will allow her to slash through him entirely.

Single Point Shining Into the Void Weapons: This style uses slashing swords and their artifact equivalents, reaper daiklaves, delivering lightning-fast attacks from the draw. It cannot be used unarmed.

Armor: This style is compatible with light and medium armor.

Gathering Light Concentration

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The clashing steel and ferocious blows of the swordsman's enemies do not disrupt her focus—rather, she welcomes them, gleaning the weaknesses of each foe's fighting style from their offense. After successfully parrying an attack, the stylist can use Gathering Light Concentration to reverse the onslaught penalties inflicted by it. Instead of applying them to her Defense, she applies them to her attacker's Defense until his next turn.

Mastery: At Essence 3+, the Solar may spend an extra 3i when activating Gathering Light Concentration to cancel *all* onslaught penalties she's suffering from, and inflict them on her attacker.

Shining Starfall Execution

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Committing fully to a lethal blow, the swordsman cleaves through her enemies with killing speed. Shining Starfall Execution adds (her Dexterity/2, round up) to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack. If she is at Initiative 15+, she adds her full Dexterity instead. However, if the attack misses, then the stylist adds (Dexterity /2) to the amount of Initiative she loses.

Mastery: Shining Starfall Execution also doubles 10s on the damage roll at Initiative 15+.

Single Point Shining Into the Void Form

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Form, Mastery

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Gathering Light Concentration, Shining Starfall Execution

Sheathing her blade for a brief moment, the swordsman centers her mind and Essence. As she draw her sword once again and enters this form, it is as a lightning bolt of flashing steel, moving with unimaginable speed and control. While in this form, it is customary to sheathe one's sword after each strike, and draw it anew for each new one—not merely as a show of this style's formidable speed, but to contain and dissipate the overwhelming buildup of Essence that might erupt beyond the stylist's control without such restraint. The first time the swordsman uses this Charm in a fight, she rolls her sword into battle with a (Wits + Martial Arts) Join Battle roll,

giving it its own Initiative track separate from her own. This does not represent the sword gaining intelligence or agency of its own, but rather, the superior speed of the stylist allowing her to strike twice during each round. When the sword's turn comes up in Initiative order, the swordsman may choose to make an attack with it, or to delay the action until later in the round. No other actions can be taken (including movement actions), and if the stylist does not choose one of these options, the sword's turn is wasted.

The sword's Initiative is separate from the swordsman's own—**withering** attacks made by one cannot add to the other's Initiative, and **decisive** attacks made by one do not reset the other to base Initiative. The base raw damage of **decisive** attacks made on the sword's turn cannot exceed the swordsman's own Initiative, even if the sword's is higher. When the stylist is dealt Initiative damage, the character who damaged her may choose whether to apply it to her own Initiative or the sword's, but cannot split the damage across both pools. The sword also loses a point of Initiative at the end of every round it was not used to successfully land an attack. If the sword's Initiative is reduced to zero, then the stylist is forced out of this form, and cannot reactivate it again for three rounds. When she does, she does not reroll Join Battle, but only sets the sword to base Initiative. If the swordsman leaves this form voluntarily before the end of the fight, note the sword's current Initiative rating. If it is reactivated later during the scene, the sword's Initiative is reset to this value, rather than making a new Join Battle roll.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist achieves the highest Join Battle value at the start of a fight, she may reflexively activate Single Point Shining Into the Void Form.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must pay a point of Willpower each round she wishes to attack twice. Otherwise, she may only make one attack per round, choosing whether to "use" her own Initiative or the sword's each round.

Mastery: The martial artist gains the following benefits:

• When using the sword's turn to make a **decisive** attack, its damage is not capped by the stylist's own Initiative.

• The sword does not lose Initiative on turns it did not successfully land an attack.

• If the sword's Initiative is reduced to zero or less, the stylist loses the benefits of this form, but it still remains active. Once three rounds have passed, its benefits resume without the swordsman needing to activate it or pay its cost again. Additionally, if the swordsman crashes an enemy who reduced his sword's Initiative to zero, then he may immediately roll Join Battle for it again and take an action with it on the same tick, as per the usual rules for Initiative Shifting (p. XX).

Fatal Stroke Flash

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Single Point Shining Into the Void Form

Seizing the crucial moment, the swordsman lunges forward into an all-or-nothing attack, her blade blurring into a flash of crimson-flecked steel. Against an enemy with lower Initiative, Fatal

Stroke Flash adds the difference to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack against him. The bonus damage cannot exceed the swordsman's own Initiative. However, if the attack misses, then the stylist's own Initiative falls to equal the enemy's before he suffers the usual Initiative loss for missing a **decisive** attack.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use this Charm after parrying an attack that caused the attacker's Initiative to fall beneath her own. Upon doing so, she may use Fatal Stroke Flash against him on her next turn.

Mastery: The martial artist may also double up to (Essence) 9s on the attack roll.

Liquid Steel Flow

Cost: 5m (+1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Dual, Mastery

Duration: One round

Prerequisite Charms: Fatal Stroke Flash

Moving faster than her foes can even blink, the stylist's blade seems like a flowing river of steel. Liquid Steel Flow adds the stylist's Dexterity to the raw damage of all her **withering** attacks. After landing a successful attack, she may pay a point of Willpower to extend this Charm's duration to one scene. Making a **decisive** attack ends the Liquid Steel Flow, as the swordsman focuses all her speed into one deadly-perfect strike that converts up to (Dexterity/2, round up) dice of raw damage to automatic successes. If Fatal Stroke Flash is used to enhance this **decisive** attack, its Willpower cost is waived if the stylist paid Willpower into Liquid Steel Flow.

While this style's form is active, if the stylist and her sword both act on the same tick to make **decisive** attacks, then the benefits of this Charm apply to both attacks before it ends. The swordsman does not seem to make two attacks, but a single stroke of steel that can fell even the mightiest enemies.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot pay Willpower to extend this Charm's duration.

Mastery: As long as the martial artist is at Initiative 11+, he also adds one automatic success on all attack rolls he makes against enemies of lower Initiative.

Void-Slicing Wind

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Single Point Shining Into the Void Form

As one heartbeat begins, the stylist draws her sword from its scabbard. By the heartbeat's end, the blade is already stained with the blood of her enemy. The swordsman may attack an enemy out to medium range, drawing her blade and flashing to the enemy's side in a single lunge that counts as her movement action for the round. She adds one automatic success to both the attack and damage roll for each range band she crosses, channeling the devastating momentum of her

advance into the strike. However, if the attack misses, the swordsman loses control of her momentum, sliding past her target to end her movement at short range beyond him.

When the stylist and her sword take their turns together on the same tick, they may unleash the devastating attack known as the Countless Strikes Sheathed, combining the two turns into the single action of activating this Charm. The swordsman makes the attack roll before beginning her movement, and chooses whether she will use her own Initiative or the sword's to make the final **decisive** attack. If the swordsman's movement toward her target brings her within close range of other enemies whose Defenses would be hit by her attack roll, she may choose to reflexively strike them. Against each such enemy, she may choose to make a **withering** strike, which deals her Essence in Initiative damage and adds to the Initiative pool chosen for the final attack (including any Initiative Breaks received), or a **decisive** strike, which lets her forgo up to (her Dexterity) points of Initiative from the chosen pool and roll it as damage which ignores hardness. If one of these preliminary **decisive** strikes incapacitates a non-trivial opponent, the Initiative invested in it is recovered. Once the swordsman has cleared all enemies between her and the final target, she concludes with a **decisive** attack against the final target. Those struck by the Countless Strikes Sheathed do not even realize they have been attacked until the swordsman sheathes her blade at the conclusion of the final strike, at which point their wounds burst open.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot use Countless Strikes Sheathed.

Horizon-Swallowed Star Flash

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Clash, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Single Point Shining Into the Void Form

Moving without the least sign of effort, the swordsman repels the blows of her attackers in a flash of steel before sheathing her sword, as if to seal away the wasted force of their strikes. Horizon-Swallowed Star Flash allows the martial artist to make a reflexive clash attack. A successful attack grants Initiative equal to her extra successes, up to a maximum of her Wits. This Initiative is added before calculating the raw damage of the attack.

While this style's form is active, the stylist chooses whether to use her Initiative pool or her sword's when making this clash attack. If she clashes, and then in the same round uses the other Initiative pool to make a **decisive** attack against the same enemy, that attack also receives the +1 damage bonus of being a clash attack. This combination move is known as the Shattered Mirror Nova-Strike.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood treats the clash attack granted by this Charm as her attack action for the round, and cannot make another. If she has already attacked this round, then it counts as her attack for her next turn.

Mastery: The martial artist's attacker loses Initiative equal to the amount that the swordsman gains with this Charm.

Six-Demon Scabbard Binding

Cost: 1m, 1wp (or 4m); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Clash, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Horizon-Swallowed Star Flash

Sweeping her blade through the motions of an intricate Essence-channeling pattern, the stylist forces hostile magic to condense itself into form, taking on shape as a howling devil which she swiftly dispatches and seals away as she sheathes her sword. The Six-Demon Scabbard Binding allows the swordsman to defend against a warping, twisting, or shaping effect that would alter her mind or body by making a clash attack against it, opposed by the activation roll of the effect. If the magic has no roll, its user rolls (Essence + Willpower), or a more suitable dice pool chosen by the Storyteller. Success on the clash attack allows the swordsman to strike through the manifest devil of the magic and its master with a single stroke. She may even clash against distant enemies, sending the devil howling back at its creator to deliver her wrath (which can strike dematerialized enemies as well as material ones).

The Six-Demon Scabbard Binding can also be used to cut a clear path through ambient or environmental transformative magic, such as the warping effects of the Wyld, at a cost of 4m. The stylist rolls (Dexterity + Martial Arts) against the difficulty to resist the effect, or an ad hoc difficulty set by the Storyteller. Success lets the swordsman cut a metaphysical path for herself, rendering her immune to that magic for one scene. It was with this Charm that Eternal Nova, the mythic creator of this style, defeated his own shadow to carve a path out of oblivion, giving this style its name.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood may only use this Charm to defend against hostile magic, and cannot make a clash attack against the character using it unless she uses Horizon-Swallowed Star Flash along with this Charm.

Blinding Nova Flare

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Liquid Steel Flow, Six-Demon Scabbard Binding, Void-Slicing Wind

The deadly finishing move of this style is a unique dual strike which can only be used when the swordsman has entered this style's form, and acts on the same tick as her sword to attack a single enemy. She makes a single attack that slices between all hope for defense, splitting the air like a thunderhead. The first part of the Blinding Nova Flare is the overwhelming spiritual and physical pressure that proceeds the edge of the swordsman's blade as she strikes, a difficulty 5 gambit made using the lower of the two Initiative pools. **The swordsman need not roll an attack to execute this gambit.** A successful gambit leaves the enemy incapable of any defense against the next part, a **decisive** attack made using the higher Initiative pool, rendered unblockable and undodgeable. Even if the opening gambit fails, the swordsman's enemy suffers a -2 penalty to his Defense against the attack.

Special activation rules: Once the Blinding Nova Flare has been used successfully, it cannot be used for the rest of the fight until both the swordsman and his sword have reached Initiative 11+. If the opening gambit fails, this Charm does not need to be reset.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood who succeeds on the opening gambit does not render her enemy's defenses inapplicable, but instead imposes a -1 penalty to his Defense for every success on her Initiative roll, up to a maximum -5 penalty.

Mastery: After the successful completion of this Charm's opening gambit, threshold successes on the gambit roll are transferred into the pool used to make the **decisive** attack, after which both reset to base Initiative.

White Reaper Style

White Reaper style uses the long reach of a spear or scythe to take on great numbers of enemies at once. Students of the style are not only capable of fighting when hopelessly outnumbered, but thrill in doing so, fighting their best when surrounded on all sides or single-handedly holding off an army. While it is still formidable to face one on one, the style is strongest when used against battle groups, cutting them down like a reaper harvesting wheat. The distinctive visual signature of this style is the white halo that engulfs its masters as they slay their foes, a corona of Essence that waxes as the martial artist slaughters her enemies and wanes as she uses powerful Charms that discharge it.

White Reaper Weapons: White Reaper is used with scythes and spears. It can also be used with the staff or with unarmed strikes that emulate the wide reach of polearms in whirling strikes, for Reapers who prefer to show mercy to their enemies. Any unarmed attack enhanced by a White Reaper Charm can always be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: White Reaper style is compatible with all armor.

Falling Scythe Flash

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

After taking a moment to icily judge the optimal point to apply force to an opponent, the White Reaper strikes without restraint. When used with a **withering attack**, Falling Scythe Slash doubles the martial artist's Strength rating for calculating its raw damage. Alternatively, on a **decisive** attack against an enemy with lower Initiative, it adds the martial artist's (Strength/2, round up) to raw damage.

Revolving Crescent Defense

Cost: 4m, 1i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The White Reaper is most at ease when surrounded by enemies, turning their strength of numbers to her own advantage. The Revolving Crescent Defense cancels all onslaught penalties to the martial artist's Parry against a single attack, instead converting each point of penalty into a +1 bonus to her Parry.

Mastery: This Charm's duration is extended until the martial artist's next turn.

White Reaper Form

Cost: 8m, **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Falling Scythe Flash, Revolving Crescent Defense

The martial artist rears up into a grim and terrifying battle posture, regarding her opponents as little more than grass to be scythed down before her. She receives double 10s on all **decisive** damage rolls and can easily fight large groups single-handedly, treating the Drill of any battle group she attacks as one step lower for calculating their Defense bonus. Groups that already have poor Drill instead take an additional -1 Defense against her attacks. She may also move through the space filled by a battle group without needing to spend Initiative.

More spectacularly, whenever the White Reaper incapacitates or crashes a non-trivial enemy, a halo of sizzling, silver-white Essence surges around her like a second skin. Damaging a battle group also grants her a halo. The martial artist may have up to (higher of 2 or her Essence rating) in halos, up to a maximum of five, with each one adding +1 to her Resolve.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist begins her turn in close range of three or more non-trivial opponents, or in the space filled by a battle group, she may reflexively activate White Reaper Form.

Bleeding Crescent Strike

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: White Reaper Form

Condensing the swirling corona around her into a single, blindingly bright line, the White Reaper suddenly strikes with preternatural accuracy. Bleeding Crescent Strike doubles up to (Strength) 9s on an attack roll. When attacking a battle group, she adds its Size to the number of dice that can be doubled, and may double 8s as well as 9s.

While White Reaper Form is active, Bleeding Crescent Strike adds one die to the attack roll for each halo the martial artist has. However, at the end of the turn, all halos the martial artist has burn away into wisps of silver Essence, consumed by the ferocity of the attack (except for any halos received as a result of making the attack).

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use this Charm once per scene, unless reset by stocking three or more halos.

Mastery: Any dice added to the martial artist's attack roll from halos do not count as dice added by a Charm.

Greatest Killer Attitude

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bleeding Crescent Strike

The White Reaper's corona flashes, then surges in one vast rush to the leading edge of her strike. A **withering** attack converts up to (Strength) dice of post-soak damage to automatic successes, and ignores any soak bonuses a battle group receives from its Size. **Decisive** attacks convert (lower of Strength or Essence) dice of raw damage to successes, and also double their effective raw damage for calculating how many extra levels of damage they deal to a battle group (p. XX).

While White Reaper Form is active, Greatest Killer Attitude adds an additional die of post-soak damage to a **withering attack** for every halo the martial artist has. However, at the end of the turn, all halos burn away, as with Bleeding Crescent Strike.

Enemies Like Grass

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: White Reaper Form

The martial artist swings her scythe through the ranks of her foes, trailing argent afterimages as she waters the earth with blood. Enemies Like Grass allows the martial artist to make a **decisive** attack against up to two separate enemies, making a single attack roll but rolling damage separately. Each attack has a base damage of the martial artist's Strength, and her Initiative is divided evenly among them. She does not reset to base Initiative until she has completed all attacks in this deadly onslaught. Alternatively, she may choose to make two **withering** attacks against a battle group, rolling each attack individually.

While White Reaper Form is active, Enemies Like Grass allows the martial artist to make an additional attack—**decisive** or **withering**—for every halo she has. However, at the end of the turn, all halos burn away, as with Bleeding Crescent Strike.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use this Charm to make multiple attacks against battle groups.

Flickering Corona Barrier

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: White Reaper Form

Executing a lightning-fast kata, the White Reaper bends the arcing nimbus of power around herself into a flickering shield. Flickering Corona Barrier adds +1 to the martial artist's Parry against an attack. If the martial artist is defending against a battle group, that group does not add its Size to the attack roll.

While White Reaper Form is active, the martial artist may expend all her halos to add (halos expended) to her Parry as well.

Mastery: The Solar may activate this Charm *after* her opponent has rolled his attack.

Impenetrable White Shroud

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Flickering Corona Barrier

Taking a deep, measured breath, the martial artist draws the flickering aura of power around her tight against her skin. Impenetrable White Shroud adds (2 + [current halos x2]) to the soak of any armor the martial artist wears. If she is unarmored, she instead adds (3 + [halos x3]) soak, and gains (halos x2) hardness. In addition, battle groups do not add their Size to the raw damage of attacks made against her.

Snow Follows Winter

Cost: — (+1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Enemies Like Grass, Greatest Killer Attitude, Impenetrable White Shroud

A brilliant flare of scarlet suffuses the silver halos of the White Reaper's corona, as if stained with the blood of countless enemies. Then, in an instant, it flickers out, vanishing into her wounds and sealing them with a hissing burst of steam. The martial artist must have White Reaper Form active and at least one damaged -2 health level to use Snow Follows Winter, paying a point of Willpower at the start of her turn to heal (current halos) levels of bashing and lethal damage. Doing so expends these halos at the end of her turn. This healing surge can only be used once per scene. Additionally, for the rest of the scene, the martial artist gains the following benefits while she is in White Reaper Form:

• The martial artist reduces any wound penalties she suffers by the number of halos she has.

• Enemies who have witnessed the awful power of their seemingly invincible enemy lose their courage in battle. Any rout check provoked by the martial artist's attacks are made at (1 + [halos/2, round up]) difficulty.

• Whenever she resets to base Initiative after making a **decisive** attack, she may add +1 to her base Initiative for each halo she has. Doing so expends all halos at the end of the turn.

Special activation rules: Snow Follows Winter can only be used once per fight.

Mastery: Using Snow Follows Winter for the first time in a fight gives the martial artist a surge of (Stamina x halos) motes, which must be spent that turn on White Reaper Charms or Excellencies. Additionally, the martial artist may reset the healing power of Snow Follows Winter if she makes an attack that would cause her to gain a halo while she already has the maximum of (Essence) halos, but only if she currently has a -4 health level filled with damage or is in Initiative Crash.

Ebon Shadow Style

Ebon Shadow style is the art of fighting from stealth, vanishing into shadows or dashing behind cover before moving out to deliver a deadly, unexpected strike. While other martial artists hold their ground in fights, a student of the Ebon Shadow fades in and out of combat, hiding when the tide of battle turns against her and emerging from stealth when an opportune moment presents itself. Many who practice it in the Second Age are assassins and knaves, clinging to the cover of darkness to hide their wickedness, but there are still some who remember the righteous origins of the style as that which taught evildoers to fear the shadows and delivered restitution to those who suffered at their hands. With the return of the Solar Exalted, this legacy shines only brighter amid the shadows of the Time of Tumult.

Ebon Shadow Weapons: Ebon Shadow style uses fighting chains to deliver painful, lashing blows, or moves in close to use unarmed attacks, sais, tiger claws, and knives to deliver strikes to the jugular, solar plexus, and other weak points of the body. Any unarmed attack that is enhanced by an Ebon Shadow Charm can always be stunted to deal lethal damage.

Armor: Ebon Shadow style is incompatible with armor.

Complementary Abilities: Stealth is essential to the practice of Ebon Shadow style—no matter how great a stylist's fighting prowess as a deadly assassin may be, it means nothing if she lacks the skill to evade the notice of her victims.

Nothing But Shadows

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Students of the Ebon Shadow style fade in and out of sight in combat, emerging as if from nowhere to strike before vanishing back into the shadows. When the martial artist takes a Stealth action in combat, she may use Nothing But Shadows to apply a penalty equal to (higher of 3 or

her Essence) to the opposed roll of any enemy with a lower Initiative than her, to a maximum of -5.

Alternatively, when the martial artist is hit with a **decisive** attack, she may use Nothing But Shadows to play dead, slowing her heart rate to nearly nothing. This is treated as an attempt to go to ground by faking death, rather than seeking concealment. The usual penalties apply, but the martial artist applies the benefits of this Charm on all rolls she makes to go to ground for free, and also adds any wound penalties she is suffering as bonus dice on all rolls—the more damage she has taken, the more convincing her false death.

Mastery: Every 1 that a non-trivial enemy rolls on his (Perception + Awareness) opposing the supplemented action gives the martial artist a point of Initiative, up to a maximum of (Stealth) points per activation.

Seven Points of Weakness Strike

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Pinpointing a seam or flaw in an enemy's armor, the martial artist strikes through it with the expert precision of a trained assassin. Seven Points of Weakness Strike subtracts (the martial artist's Stealth) from her enemy's armored soak. Unexpected attacks double the amount of soak ignored.

Mastery: If this Charm reduces an enemy's armored soak to zero against a **withering** attack, any remaining points of soak reduction are converted to post-soak damage dice.

Ebon Shadow Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form, Mute

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Nothing But Shadows, Seven Points of Weakness Strike

The martial artist's outline begins to distort and flicker, as if it were a shadow cast by a candle's unsteady flame. She moves with eerie speed and unnatural grace, making her enemies question whether she is even human. If her anima banner flares, it seems shapeless and dark, an umbral mantle enveloping her in its depths. Any enemy who fails an opposed roll to spot her when she enters stealth loses a point of Initiative, and she adds (her Stealth/2, round up) to her base Initiative when she resets after make a **decisive** unexpected attack. She also adds +1 to her Defense.

If the martial artist is killed while in the Ebon Shadow Form, her body evaporates into an acrid black smoke, leaving behind no physical remains by which she might be identified.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist makes a Stealth roll in combat that beats the opposing rolls of all enemies in the combat, she may reflexively activate Ebon Shadow Form. Enemies within range lose Initiative for failing their roll as described above.

Elusive Flicker Evasion

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ebon Shadow Form

The Ebon Shadow moves in flashes, evading an enemy's attack without seeming to ever cross through space. Elusive Flicker Evasion forces an enemy to make two attacks rolls for a **decisive** attack against the martial artist, taking the lower result.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood may only use this Charm once per scene, though it can be reset by incapacitating a non-trivial opponent with an unexpected **decisive** attack.

Mastery: When an enemy misses the martial artist, he loses points of Initiative equal to the difference between the two attack rolls, up to a maximum of the martial artist's Stealth.

Shadow-Body Dissolution

Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Elusive Flicker Evasion

The martial artist's body becomes tenebrous and insubstantial, dissipating and deforming to let blows pass harmlessly through her. Shadow-Body Dissolution subtracts the martial artist's (Essence + Stealth) from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack against her. If the martial artist takes no damage at all from the attack, she may reflexively make a Stealth attempt. On a successful roll, what her foe struck at was nothing but a shadowy illusion, while she had been hidden elsewhere all along. This Charm is incompatible with other effects that reduce **decisive** damage.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must roll (Essence + Stealth), with each success subtracting one die of damage. If all damage is negated this way, then the successes from this roll are used as her stealth attempt, rather than having her make a (Dexterity + Stealth roll).

Shadow-Stepping Motion

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Mute

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ebon Shadow Form

The Ebon Shadow crosses from hiding place to hiding place as though she could walk through shadows, vanishing and reappearing across the battlefield. Shadow-Stepping Motion can supplement any movement action taken while in stealth, applying double 9s to the roll and negating the increased penalty for crossing wide-open terrain. If the martial artist uses Shadow-Stepping Motion to close in on an enemy before making an unexpected attack against him, her sudden lunge doubles the penalties inflicted by a surprise **decisive** attack, or adds the martial artist's Stealth to the post-soak damage of surprise **withering** attack.

Throat-Slitting Shadow Atemi

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow-Stepping Motion

Shrouding her weapon in a penumbra of Essence, the martial artist strikes before her foes have even realized they are under attack. For each extra success on a **decisive** attack roll, she converts one die of raw damage to an automatic successes, up to a maximum of (Essence) dice. Unexpected attacks have no upper limit on how many damage dice can be converted to successes. An enemy killed with this Charm dissolves into smoke, leaving behind no corpse.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use this Charm to enhance unexpected attacks, and these attacks may convert a maximum of (Essence) dice.

Umbra Noose Execution

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Body Dissolution, Throat-Slitting Shadow Atemi

Moving her hands through lightning-quick strikes to an enemy's shadow, the martial artist corrupts it with her own Essence, warping it into a weapon of silent murder that betrays its master. When the martial artist makes an unexpected attack against an enemy, she may unleash the Umbra Noose Execution, a **decisive** attack that warps the enemy's shadow into a razor-edged chain that coils around its master's neck, raising him into the air. The umbra noose adds a number of dice equal to the total successes she received on her Stealth roll to the raw damage of the attack (to a maximum of [Essence x 2]).

Mastery: In addition to inflicting damage, the next five motes the opponent spends during the scene are funneled away by his traitor shadow and given to the Ebon Shadow stylist. The stylist may only spend these motes to pay for Ebon Shadow style Charms, and vanish at the end of the scene if still unused.

Crane Style

Crane style is a defensive style, emulating the grace of the crane in avoiding the blows of an enemy. Its student learns not just to fight with physical blows, but to empathize with her enemy, speaking or debating with him in an attempt to bring the fight to an end without violence. However, those who mistake the Crane master's restraint for weakness find themselves quickly meeting the ground. When she must, a student of this style can unleash devastating counterattacks, flowing with the force of an enemy's blow so she can strike back in turn.

Crane Weapons: Crane style practitioners typically dual wield a war fan and hook sword, using the fan for defense while disarming enemies with the sword. Unarmed attacks usually consist of graceful kicks, but a Crane stylist lacking his usual weapons might use one hand to deliver rapid chops while holding back the other for powerful lunges and sweeping blows.

Armor: Crane style is incompatible with armor.

Complementary Abilities: Many Crane stylists use Presence, Performance, or Socialize in combat to sway their opponents into peaceful resolution or compromise, and later Charms of this style empower such efforts.

Empowering Justice Redirection

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Crane stylists do not initiate hostilities—they end them. Empowering Justice Redirection can supplement any attack against an enemy who has attacked the martial artist or a character she is protecting with a defend other action since her last turn, as well as any counterattack. It adds one successes to the attack roll, and one die to the post-soak damage of the attack. This increases to two successes and two post-soak dice of damage if the provoking attack successfully landed.

Mastery: The dice of damage added by this Charm are converted to automatic successes.

Fluttering Cry of Warning

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: One round

Prerequisite Charms: None

The sheltering wings of the Crane stylist shield her allies from the aggression of their enemies. Fluttering Cry of Warning adds +2 Parry whenever the martial artist parries an attack directed at an ally protected by one of her defend other actions for the duration of the round. Additionally, an enemy who overcomes the Crane stylist's Parry and chooses to attack her ward rather than the martial artist must pay a point of Initiative to do so.

Mastery: Fluttering Cry of Warning allows the martial artist to take a defend other action reflexively, even if it is not her turn.

Crane Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Empowering Justice Redirection, Fluttering Cry of Warning

The crane embodies not violence, but elegance. The martial artist takes on its peaceful demeanor as she enters the stance of the Crane Form, presenting a defense that carries no hint of hostile intent, nor any sign of weakness. While in Crane Form, the martial artist adds +1 Parry, and if she is wearing clothing with long, flowing sleeves, her garment will never be torn or stained in combat. In addition, the Initiative cost for the martial artist to take a full defense action is reduced by one point.

After taking a full defense action, the martial artist may respond to any attack against her until her next turn with a **withering** or **decisive** counterattack. Likewise, taking a defend other action allows her to respond to any attack against her ward with a counterattack.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist successfully defends against an attack that causes her attacker's current Initiative to fall below her own, she may reflexively activate Crane Form. If she took a full defense or defend other action on her last turn, this potentially allows her to make a counterattack, if the conditions above are met.

Crossed Wings Denial

Cost: 6m, 4i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Crane Form

The perfection of the martial artist's defense is like the beauty of the crane, so absolute in its calm refinement that seemingly nothing could ever disturb it. The martial artist makes a (Wits + Martial Arts) roll that cannot be enhanced by magic, and banks all successes. Until her next turn, she may spend successes to add to her Parry on a one-for-one basis. Alternatively, she may expend a success after successfully blocking an attack to respond with a **decisive** counterattack.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must expend two successes to add +1 to her Parry. The cost to make counterattacks is unchanged.

Feather-Stirred Arrow Deflection

Cost: 2m (+1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crossed Wings Denial

With a mighty beat of its wings, the crane shames feathers bound to arrow shafts. Whenever the martial artist could validly make a counterattack in response to a ranged attack, she may use Feather-Stirred Arrow Deflection to extend the counterattack's range to equal the maximum range of the original attack, sending arrows or spears back at the foes who cast them. Making a counterattack against a foe at extreme range requires a stunt describing how the martial artist accomplishes this feat.

Additionally, the martial artist may pay a point of Willpower when she uses this Charm to direct her ranged counterattack at an enemy other than the one who originally attacked her, as long as her chosen target is within the expanded range of the counter.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot make counterattacks at greater than long range.

Wings Spread to Sky

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crossed Wings Denial

Majestic and beautiful as the soaring crane, the martial artist leaps into the air, flying on the invisible currents of Essence that flow through it. Wings Spread to Sky may supplement any movement action, allowing the martial artist to fly through the air to complete the movement. If the martial artist is protecting a character with a defend other action, she may choose to carry him along with her, if he is willing and she has at least one hand free to carry him (or stunts around this limitation). On the offense, if the Crane stylist uses this flight to close the distance before making a **decisive** attack, she doubles 10s on the damage roll.

If the martial artist ends her movement in mid-air or on a structure that could not support her weight, she may retain a stable footing there until her next turn. If she then uses a movement action to descend or alight on a viable footing, she suffers no impairment. Otherwise—for example, if she uses Wings Spread to Sky a second time to soar upward and attack an aerial foe—she falls gracefully to the earth at the end of her turn. She (and anyone with her) still takes falling damage, but may ignore up to (Dexterity) range bands of descent for purpose of calculating it. This Charm can be used reflexively to mitigate the damage from a fall in this manner, even if the martial artist was not in flight beforehand.

Humbling Enlightenment Commentary

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crane Form

The grace of the crane inspires those who bear witness to it. Humbling Enlightenment Commentary adds any stunt dice awarded to a **decisive** attack to its damage roll as well, as long as the stunt is based on verbally analyzing the enemy's fighting style or the conflict as a whole in

the style of an illustrative lesson or parable. If the damage of the attack exceeds the enemy's Resolve, the martial artist may count it as an automatically successful instill action to build a positive Minor Tie to a group or a Principle representing a philosophical or ethical belief, based on the stunted commentary. If the enemy spends Willpower to resist or already possesses the Intimacy the martial artist is trying to create, he loses (the Crane stylist's Charisma) Initiative (which the martial artist does not gain) as his attention is split between physical and philosophical conflict.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use this Charm to enhance counterattacks granted by Crane Form or Crossed Wings Deflection.

Mastery: If the martial artist herself possesses the Intimacy she wishes to instill in her enemy with Humbling Enlightenment Commentary, she adds its rating in bonus dice to the attack roll.

Kindly Sifu's Quill

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Humbling Enlightenment Commentary

Gentle masters write their lessons in bruises, not wounds. Kindly Sifu's Quill applies the double 10s rule to a **decisive** damage roll, and causes **decisive** attacks to always deal bashing damage. An enemy who has an Intimacy as described in Humbling Enlightenment Commentary takes a penalty to his Defense against the attack as though it were his Resolve, as long as the attack is stunted in a way that includes dialogue or actions that exploit this vulnerability.

Mastery: At Essence 3+, exploiting an Intimacy improves the damage bonus of this Charm based on the Intimacy's rating: Double 9s if it is Minor, 8s if it is Major, and 7s if it is Defining.

Mournful Crane's Cry

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Humbling Enlightenment Commentary

Violence begets violence. If there is to be an end to the suffering and sorrow which afflicts the world, something must stop this cycle. Drawing the hostile Essence and killing intent of an attack into his defense, the Crane stylist weave an intricate kata to break the flow of her opponent's aggression. Sorrowful Crane's Cry enhances a counterattack, providing a varying effect based on the weapon used to deliver it:

• **Feather-Strewn Path (Unarmed):** The martial artist's unarmed counterattacks turn the momentum of her foe's attacks against him, tossing him up to two range bands horizontally in any direction at the conclusion of the attack and knocking him prone (assuming it succeeds). The

Feather-Strewn Path is a gentle one, and enemies flung by it suffer no further damage when they touch down.

• **Beak Spears Frog (Hook Sword):** Using a hook sword to counter with a disarm gambit, the martial artist applies double 9s to the Initiative roll, and halves the Initiative cost of the gambit.

• **Fluttering Wing Flourish (War Fan):** Catching an enemy's weapon on the edge of her war fan, the martial artist sends it back to its master. Instead of making a counterattack, the martial artist rebounds the original attack back on the character who made it. She may still enhance the redirected attack with the Charms of this style, but not any others. This doesn't actually protect her from the attack, it merely allows her to return its fury to her attacker.

Wisdom of the Celestial Crane

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Feather-Stirred Arrow Deflection, Kindly Sifu's Quill, Mournful Crane's Cry, Wings Spread to Sky

The crane is sacred in its beauty, a bird of celestial splendor and serene repose. Such are the virtues that the Crane master may teach to her disciples with the final move of this style. Wisdom of the Celestial Crane can be used when the martial artist makes a **decisive** counterattack in response to an enemy's **decisive** attack. Gambits, as well as the attacks of battle groups and trivial opponents, do not provide the opportunity to use this Charm. The martial artist adds her enemy's Initiative to the raw damage of the attack in addition to her own. Incapacitating an enemy with Wisdom of the Celestial Crane is always nonfatal, and allows the martial artist to choose any of her opponent's Intimacies that fit the criteria set out in Humbling Enlightenment Commentary, and strengthen it to Defining intensity. Alternatively, she may leave her foe with a Defining Tie of love towards all Creation.

Special activation rules: Wisdom of the Celestial Crane can only be used once per combat, unless reset by going three rounds without being hit by an attack or making an attack (not including counterattacks).

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot add more bonus dice to the raw damage of the attack than her current Initiative with this Charm.

Mastery: If the martial artist successfully defends against the attack that triggers the counterattack, then his enemy loses all Initiative and is crashed.

Silver-Voiced Nightingale Style

Silver-Voiced Nightingale style is an esoteric art, focusing on the use of the stylist's voice in both song and warfare. Through rigorous training in breath control, circular breathing, and long, sustained chants, students of this style learn to fight with kiais, powerful shouts with the strength to kill. They are also consummate performers, singing on the battlefield to strengthen the morale of their allies and shatter that of their enemies. While the style's appellation honors the eponymous martial artist who created it in the distant past, the full title is only remembered by

those of the Exalted with memories of past lives in the First Age, or who lived through it themselves. In most dojos across Creation, it known only as Nightingale style.

Nightingale Weapons: Nightingale style attacks are made unarmed, each strike accompanied by a powerful shout. For Essence-users, the style is unique in not relying upon either weapons or unarmed strikes—instead, its practitioners learn to deliver powerful kiai attacks through the force of their voice alone, enabled through mastering the first Charm of this style.

Armor: Silver-Voiced Nightingale style is compatible with light armor.

Complementary Abilities: Performance is essential to Nightingale stylists, as many of the style's Charms revolve around using it to take social actions in battle.

Voice of the Night Bird

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The nightingale is no bird of prey, to swoop down with curved beak and cruel talons. Its greatest virtue is its song—and with that song, the students of Nightingale style give voice to their victory. This Charm allows the martial artist to make kiais, unleashing forceful waves of sound that strike her enemies like physical blows. A kiai has the traits of a mundane light weapon with the bashing and thrown (short) tags, save she rolls its attacks with Martial Arts (Silver-Voiced Nightingale style) rather than Thrown. The martial artist may flurry a kiai attack with Performance-based influence without the usual flurry penalties, as long as the content of the social influence is woven into the lyrics or emotional tenor of her song.

Mastery: The martial artist's kiai has the traits of a light *artifact* weapon.

> Silver-Voiced Nightingale Remix
>
> Silver-Voiced Nightingale style, as written, assumes that its stylists must sing to use its Charms. However, over the ages, offshoot branches and deviant schools of this style have developed that use other forms of musical performance. If you want to fight as a sanxian player who draws razor-sharp winds forth with each pluck of the strings, a flute-player whose scales burst eardrums and shatter bones, or a freestyle poet whose rhymes sear themselves into the skin of his enemies as characters writ in fire—go for it!

Inspiring Battle Hymn

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Voice of the Night Bird

As battle breaks out, the Nightingale raise her voice in a song that promises triumph, steeling the hearts of her allies so that they may fight more fiercely. Inspiring Battle Hymn rerolls all 1s on the Join Battle roll of the martial artist and all allies capable of hearing her. Characters who received this benefit add +1 Resolve against threats, supernatural fear, or similar forms of influence for the duration of the fight.

Mastery: If the martial artist wins Join Battle, she may gain a single point of temporary Willpower, or grant it to an ally who also won Join Battle. This can raise characters above their permanent Willpower.

Terrifying Battle Shriek

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Voice of the Night Bird

The Nightingale's voice rings out in a deafening overture or in mocking lyrics, promising a horrible death to her foes. The martial artist rolls (Charisma + Performance) to intimidate a single enemy. A successful influence roll strikes fear into the enemy's heart, forcing him to take a movement action on his next turn to move away from the martial artist or hide from her, if possible. Very weak or cowardly opponents may surrender or retreat entirely.

Unlike other Simple Charms, Terrifying Battle Shriek may be placed in a flurry, and benefits from being used against enemies who have been hit with a kiai attack on the same turn. The target of this Charm is treated as having a Minor Tie of fear towards the martial artist if he has been hit with a kiai on the same turn, or a Major Tie if the kiai attack was **decisive**.

Mastery: An enemy who yields to the Nightingale's influence and retreats or cowers from her loses Initiative equal to her (Charisma/2). She does not gain this Initiative.

Silver-Voiced Nightingale Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Inspiring Battle Hymn, Terrifying Battle Shriek

Standing straight and pitching her voice to reach all listeners, the Nightingale begins a song that rings out with exquisite clarity, a melody in perfect synchronization with her every movement. This perfect harmony of music and motion adds +1 to her Evasion, while the circular breathing used to maintain her song in the midst of battle adds her Performance to the raw damage of her **withering kiai** attacks. Finally, whenever an enemy pays Willpower to resist a Performance-based influence roll made by the Nightingale, she gains three points of Initiative.

Special activation rules: Whenever the Nightingale successfully overcomes a non-trivial enemy's Resolve with Performance-based influence relevant to an ongoing fight, she may

reflexively activate Silver-Voiced Nightingale Form. She gains Initiative from any characters who pay Willpower to resist the initial influence roll, as described above.

Hearing the Heart's Song

Cost: 5m, 2i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Perilous, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Silver-Voiced Nightingale Form

Honing her senses, the Nightingale hears the music of her foe's heart, catching a strain of melody that betrays his intent to attack. Hearing the Heart's Song adds (the martial artist's Performance/2, round up) to her Evasion against a **decisive** attack. If she successfully defends against the attack, she gleans insights into her enemy's heart, making a reflexive read intentions action against his Guile and adding her (boosted) Evasion in non-Charm bonus dice.

Mastery: Successfully reading an enemy's intentions with this Charm allows the martial artist to steal one point of Initiative from him for each extra success on her roll.

Harmony in Opposition Stance

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Hearing the Heart's Song

Acting with preternatural timing and the grace of a trained dancer, the Nightingale moves in perfect counterpoint to an enemy, mimicking the rhythm of his movements and predicting his every attack. When the martial artist uses Harmony in Opposition Stance, she chooses a single enemy to synchronize her movements with. She may always apply her full Evasion against attacks made by the chosen enemy, ignoring all penalties, and applies double 9s on rolls to rush him or disengage from him. Finally, whenever the chosen enemy gains Initiative, the martial artist gains a single point of Initiative, unless he gained that Initiative by attacking her.

The martial artist may choose to synchronize her movements to those of a different enemy as a miscellaneous action, which cannot be placed in a flurry. If she incapacitates the enemy she is synchronized with, or causes him to flee, surrender, or otherwise become removed from combat through influence rolls, then she may reflexively designate a new enemy.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must activate this as a Simple Charm. Successfully defending against an attack made by an enemy whose intentions she has successfully read this scene or in the preceding one gives her an opportunity to activate it reflexively against that attacker. The Essence minimum of this Charm becomes 3 for Dragon-Blooded.

Haunting Heart-Rending Melody

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Silver-Voiced Nightingale Form

Singing a stirring melody that rouses passion and deep emotions, the Nightingale suffuses each note with the resonant hum of aural Essence. The martial artist rolls (Charisma + Performance) to inspire all enemies who can hear her with sorrow, regret, despair, or some other emotion that would impede their will to fight. She is not hindered by targeting multiple enemies and adds her Essence in bonus successes to the roll. An enemy who yields to these emotions takes a -3 penalty to Defense against any kiai attacks the martial artist makes, as long as she stunts them in a way that exploits the inspired emotion. Once an enemy has paid Willpower to resist this influence, he remains immune to it for the remainder of the scene.

Unlike other Simple Charms, Haunting Heart-Rending Melody may be placed in a flurry.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood gains no bonus successes when using this Charm.

Resounding Songbird's Cry

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Haunting Heart-Rending Melody

Throwing back her head and closing her eyes tight, the Nightingale shrieks out an awful cry. Glass and crystal shatter spectacularly, metal warps, and enemies bleed from the ears as her devastating crescendo rises to its conclusion. Resounding Songbird's Cry applies a sonic environmental hazard against all enemies within short range of the martial artist. The hazard has damage 2B and a difficulty of (the martial artist's Essence + 2), resisted with (Stamina + Resistance). Stunting the hazard to destroy scenery such as large stained glass windows, crystal chandeliers, or similar can render the damage inflicted by this hazard lethal.

On the turn after using Resounding Songbird's Cry to unleash an environmental hazard, the martial artist may use this Charm a second time at no cost to make a **withering** kiai attack that is dispersed through the lingering sonic resonance of the initial cry, known as the Shattering Echo Refrain. The attack is rolled against all enemies who failed their roll to resist the hazard, and doubles up to (the martial artist's Charisma) 9s.

Special activation rules: Resounding Songbird's Cry can only be used once per fight, unless reset by landing a **decisive** kiai attack and then building up to Initiative 10+.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood cannot use the Shattering Echo Refrain.

Flashing Blade Harmony

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Silver-Voiced Nightingale Form

Humming deeply in her throat, the Nightingale causes an ally's weapon to resonate with vibrations of Essence, redoubling the force of his attacks. Whenever an ally within short range of the Nightingale makes a **decisive** attack, she may use Flashing Blade Harmony to apply the double 10s rule to the damage roll. **Withering** attacks benefit from double 9s.

If the martial artist makes a kiai against an enemy who has already been hit by one or more of her allies' attacks that benefitted from Flashing Blade Harmony in the same round, the resonance of the multiple attacks combines to create a devastating vibration. She adds one die to the post-soak damage of the kiai for each such attack, and applies double 10s or double 9s on her own damage roll, as appropriate to the attack type. She does not need to activate Flashing Blade Harmony to gain this benefit on her own attack.

Mastery: The martial artist may transfer up to (Essence) points of Initiative to an ally when she enhances his **decisive** attack with Flashing Blade Harmony.

Aria of Victory

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Flashing Blade Harmony

Singing softly in a minor key, the Nightingale's voice cuts through the clangor of the battlefield, stilling the hearts and calming the nerves of her allies. Then, shifting into a major key with a triumphant flourish, her voice swells with glory and wrath, a battle-anthem to turn the tide of wars. The martial artist and all allies who can hear the song gain a single point of Willpower at the start of each turn, which must be spent to resist influence or add a success to an action before their next turn. This can raise characters above their permanent Willpower. This bonus Willpower disappears after one turn if unused.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must pay four motes for each round after the first she wishes to maintain the effects of this Charm, in addition to its committed cost.

Shattering Discord Cacophony

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Until the enemy's next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Aria of Victory, Harmony in Opposition Stance, Resounding Songbird's Cry

An eerie calm chills the Nightingale's voice as she moves through countless scales of song, seeking to find the one deadly note that will unravel the Essence of her foe. The martial artist makes a difficulty 4 kiai gambit against an enemy. Every success on the Initiative roll delays that enemy's next turn by one tick. The enemy's physical form begins to decohere, his features become blurry and amorphous, trailing behind him in streaks as his very existence threatens to dissolve into nothing more than a few notes of music. Any **decisive** attack made against that

enemy before he acts also adds one die to its raw damage for each success rolled on the Nightingale's Initiative roll. If he's incapacitated, the target's body dissolves in a cacophony of disparate noises as his heartsong is ripped apart note by note, leaving only silence behind.

Mastery: The martial artist may breathe in the ruin of a destroyed enemy's heartsong, making it a part of her own. This restores a number of motes equal to that character's Essence, and provides the Nightingale with any knowledge she could have obtained with a read intentions action against that character.

Celestial: Only up to (Performance) successes on the Dragon-Blood's Initiative roll are counted for determining how many dice of damage are added to her ally's attacks.

Righteous Devil Style

The Righteous Devil is a figure of burning fury and solemn judgment, a wandering hero who protects the innocent and banishes the wicked into a fiery hell of their own making. Students of the style master the firewand (p. XX), wielding these exotic weapons with a deadly precision that's more art than archery. However, the heart of the Righteous Devil style is not in its fiery attacks, but in the judgment that precedes them. When the strong and powerful use their positions to oppress those beneath them, when the selfish put their own needs above those of the community, when the once-righteous turn from their ideals to pursue their own desires—these are the crimes which the Righteous Devil judges most harshly, and his verdict is spoken in cleansing flames. Many students of this style have a Principle encompassing this code of ethics, though there are some who turn against the moral teachings of their sifus, or who simply learn the martial techniques of the style with no heed for the ethics behind them.

Righteous Devil Weapons: Righteous Devil style uses firewands, as well as any other flame-discharge weapons.

Armor: Righteous Devil style is compatible with light and medium armor.

Blossom of Inevitable Demise

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Drawing in a quick breath, the Righteous Devil tastes the wickedness of a world in need of judgment. As she exhales, pulling down hard on the trigger, she burns that world clean with fire. Blossom of Inevitable Demise applies double 10s on the damage roll of a **decisive** attack. It can also extend the range of a firewand attack to medium, although doing so still requires an aim action as usual (p. XX).

Cloud of Ebon Devils

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Ebon grains of firedust stream from the stylist's hands as she moves like lightning, sighting and reloading faster than her enemies can blink. When the stylist aims with a firewand, she may also reload it (and/or draw it), without needing to take a separate action. If there are any enemies at close range to her, she must succeed on a (Wits + Martial Arts) roll at difficulty 2 to successfully execute this maneuver. On a failed roll, she successfully loads the weapon, but does not gain the advantages of aiming. Enemies whom she has successfully intimidated or chastised with social actions during that fight do not count for this restriction (even if they spent Willpower to resist).

Mastery: Cloud of Ebon Devils can be used to supplement a Join Battle roll, in which case it allows the Righteous Devil to reflexively aim and draw or ready a weapon before any character acts in the fight.

Kiss of the Sun Concentration

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Sighting along the flows of Essence that connect her weapon with its mark, the Righteous Devil sends her will down a fine line of possibility, transforming it into inevitability. Kiss of the Sun Concentration adds any dice from aiming to the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack, or converts them to a single die added to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack. Disarm gambits, or any other gambit that could benefit from superhuman precision, add the full amount of aim dice to their Initiative roll instead of a single die.

Mastery: When used with a **decisive** attack, the full amount of aim dice are added to the raw damage of the attack. **Withering** attacks and precision-based gambits convert the aim dice to automatic successes on the damage roll.

Righteous Devil Form

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Blossom of Inevitable Demise, Cloud of Ebon Devils, Kiss of the Sun Concentration

Creation itself seems to hold its breath as the stylist cloaks herself in the majestic and terrible stillness of the Righteous Devil Form. An inescapable gravity seems to exude from her confident, unwavering posture, sending the innocent scurrying away to safety and calling the unjust to reap the whirlwind of judgment they've sown. The first time the Righteous Devil enters this form in a fight, she may roll (Charisma + Presence + Essence) to intimidate all enemies or inspire them

with an emotion of shame, guilt, or remorse as appropriate to their sins. Affected enemies take a penalty equal to the stylist's Charisma on disengage, withdraw, or Stealth-based actions unless they pay Willpower to resist. Additionally, at the beginning of each turn, the Righteous Devil may reflexively aim against any enemy whose Resolve was overcome by the activation of this form, or by a similar influence roll made in combat (even if he resisted).

Additionally, while in this form, the Righteous Devil can use firewands effectively in close combat, using the butt or handle of a flame weapon to effectively bludgeon enemies. When used in this way, they are treated as medium weapon with the bashing, martial arts, and shield tags. Firewands with an affixed bayonet instead have the lethal tag. While this use is not compatible with effects that specifically modify ranged attacks, such as the range extension of Blossom of Inevitable Demise, it can still benefit from other Charms of this or other staff or spear-compatible styles.

Special activation rules: Whenever the stylist successfully lands a **decisive attack** after taking an aim action on her previous turn, she may reflexively activate Righteous Devil Form.

Azure Abacus Meditation

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Celestial, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Devil Form

Closing her eyes, the Righteous Devil perceives the ebb and flow of Essence around her through a mandala of blue rings, nine notched discs of silver-blue light that spin around her foes in her mind's eye. If her anima banner is at the bonfire level, this azure abacus becomes visible to all within its light, the silvery rings orbiting around the stylist and aligning as she lines up a shot. Firing through this reticule mandala hones in on an enemy's weakest point, granting benefits commensurate to the enemy's level of cover.

• Enemies that do not benefit from cover lose all soak against the attack, except for that provided by Charms and other magical effects. Artifact armor is not considered a magical effect.

• Enemies under light cover halve their mundane soak and hardness against the attack.

• Enemies under heavy cover subtract -1 from their mundane soak and hardness for every extra success on the attack roll, but not below half their full value.

• Enemies under full cover are unaffected.

Azure Abacus Meditation may only be used once per scene, unless reset by successfully landing a **decisive** attack against an enemy under light or heavy cover and then building up to Initiative 12+.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood always treat enemies as having at least light cover with this Charm, preventing her from fully negating soak.

Burning Judgment Halo

Cost: 5m, 4i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Devil Form

Those who'd raise a hand against the Righteous Devil must walk through the fire of their own iniquities to do so. Pointing the tip of her firewand at the ground, the stylist draws the Burning Judgment Halo, a ring of flames that encompasses all characters at close range to her, with the traits of a bonfire (p. XX). It is not necessary to create the full circle of flame—if the stylist is standing between a brutal slaver and his victims, she may choose to create only a semi-circle of fire, for example.

The flames created by this Charm will continue to burn for as long as the Righteous Devil remains at their center. Once she takes a movement action to move from that point, they will continue to burn for a single round more, then die down on her next turn. Moving through the blaze created by this Charm never damages the stylist—the devil walks through hell unscathed.

Celestial: The fires created by this Charm only last until the Dragon-Blood's next turn, unless she pays an additional four Initiative to renew it at the start of each of her turns.

Phoenix Flies on Golden Wings

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Devil Form

A halo of gold and cobalt Essence rings the tip of the firewand's barrel as the Righteous Devil sights a foe, sending six golden wings spiraling forward to speed the tongue of flame towards him. This Charm boosts the damage of an attack based on the distance it's made from, adding +4 against an enemy at close range, +3 against an enemy at short range (and so on, if magic is used to extended the range of the attack). This bonus is added as successes on a **withering** attack or dice on a **decisive** attack.

Dancing Devil Trigger Finger

Cost: 10m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Phoenix Flies on Golden Wings

Fire seems to take on a wrathful life of its own as it pours from the barrel of the Righteous Devil's weapon, flaring off into howling, winged devils of fire that spiral hungrily towards her foes. Dancing Devil Trigger Finger allows the stylist to apply a **decisive** attack against all enemies in a ninety-degree arc. She may catch up to one enemy at close range, two enemies at short range, and three enemies at medium range (if extended using Blossom of Inevitable

Demise), but only if they are positioned on the battlefield so that this targeting makes sense. She makes a single **decisive** attack roll, rolling damage separately against each enemy.

Special activation rules: Dancing Devil Trigger Finger can only be used once per fight, unless reset by upholding an Intimacy that represents dedication to Righteous Devil style's philosophy or a similar code of ethics.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood must divide her Initiative evenly among all targeted enemies when rolling damage, and cannot assign more than (Essence + 3) damage to any enemy. Any points of Initiative that cannot be assigned over this maximum are not wasted, but converted to motes after she resets to base Initiative.

Caress of 1,000 Hells

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Aggravated, Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Azure Abacus Meditation, Burning Judgment Halo, Dancing Devil Trigger Finger

There is no sin beyond redemption in the fires stoked by the Righteous Devil. The Caress of 1,000 Hells sets an enemy ablaze with the fires of judgment, engulfing him in a swirling vortex of cobalt and gold flames. Within this hellish pyre, disembodied voices recount his sins and misdeeds, and offer him a single choice—repent, or burn.

If the enemy chooses to repent, the flames fade away, leaving him changed but unscathed. He forms a Defining Intimacy reflecting the nature of his atonement, chosen by that character's player. A Guild merchant prince who has made his fortune in the slave trade might form a Defining Tie of hatred for all slavers, while a hedonistic Abyssal mass murderer might form a Defining Principle of pacifism and simple living. An enemy who's atoned will generally retreat or surrender, and crashes to -10 Initiative if he attempts to reestablish hostilities after repentance.

On the other hand, if an enemy chooses to burn, the aftermath is far simpler. He suffers a number of levels of aggravated damage equal to the Righteous Devil's Essence in addition to the damage of the attack, as the fires erupt in a blinding conflagration.

Celestial: Enemies who chose to burn in the flames created by a Dragon-Blood take dice, rather than levels, of aggravated damage.

Mastery: An enemy who chooses to repent also forms a Major Tie towards the Righteous Devil appropriate to her role in his atonement—fear, grudging respect, unwavering loyalty, or so forth. Those who choose to burn also suffer a crippling penalty from the pain of their burns on all actions, equal to the levels of aggravated damage that remain in their health track. This penalty persists until the end of the scene.

Black Claw Style

Black Claw style is one of the rare few martial arts created by a demon, taught to the Exalted in the First Age by Mara, the Shadow-Lover. It uses misdirection, misperception, and love as its

primary weapons. Black Claw stylists seize victory by opening themselves to their enemies' aggressions, casting themselves as innocents who suffer the strikes of callous brutes or sadistic madmen. Defeat is mollified by exposing the perfidy of the victorious. Throughout the course of a fight, a Black Claw stylist manipulates the emotions of those watching her, turning them against her enemies and winning their love. A master of the style can pick a fight against the most noble of opponents, yet walk away beloved, while her foe feels the scorn of the crowd—even as his heart crumbles to ashes in the master's hand.

Every student of the Black Claw style has a Tie of love to the sifu who taught it to her. It is impossible to know the secrets of this style without being exposed to the innermost heart of one's instructor, and impossible to understand that knowledge without accepting what's within that heart. This love is both genuine and unbreakable. While the Intimacy can be weakened down to Minor intensity, it cannot be completely removed or have its context altered by any means, mundane or magical. Such is the nature of Mara which pervades every Charm of her style.

Black Claw Weapons: This style uses exclusively unarmed attacks, emphasizing claw strikes and sudden, lunging kicks.

Armor: Black Claw style is incompatible with armor.

Complementary Abilities: Black Claw stylists often feign the appearance of fighting on the defensive, using Dodge to both evade attacks and disengage from close combat. Presence is also useful to them, as many of their Charms allow them to sway the hearts and minds of enemies and bystanders alike in combat.

Open Palm Caress

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

From the very beginning, things start to go wrong. Righteous heroes find themselves cast as vicious bullies when they fight a student of the Black Claw—even when she starts the fight. Open Palm Caress can be used whenever the martial artist rolls Join Battle. As long as at least one enemy received more successes on the roll than the martial artist did, he and his allies are seen as having initiated hostilities, regardless of how the fight actually began. This applies both to any bystanders to the fight and to the enemies themselves, who might suddenly find themselves confused as to why they are attacking the Black Claw stylist. Characters may see through this deception with a reflexive read intentions roll against the martial artist's Guile. The Black Claw stylist gains a single point of Initiative for each opponent or bystander who was fooled by this ruse, up to a maximum of her Manipulation.

Mastery: The martial artist's performance is so convincing that if she uses her first turn to make a clinch or **decisive** attack against an enemy who beat her Join Battle and failed to overcome her Guile, she may pay a point of Willpower to treat that attack as an ambush.

Torn Lotus Defense

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Counterattack, Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Every Black Claw student must submit to her sifu. As one who heart is already conquered, she knows that any greater defeat is impossible. Drawing on this memory of love, the martial artist projects an unmistakable but fragile resolution. Whenever the martial artist successfully defends against an attack, she may use Torn Lotus Defense to make a counterattack with (Manipulation + Presence) to instill her attacker with a positive Tie towards herself, adding a number of dice equal to the attacker's Essence (maximum five). The context of the Tie, be it respect, admiration, or even unexpected love, depends on the circumstances of the situation and may be chosen by the attacking character's player. If the attacker already has a positive Tie towards the martial artist, this influence roll is also treated as a special **withering** counterattack that deals (Manipulation) points of unsoakable Initiative damage, as the martial artist plays on her enemy's sympathies to throw him off balance and gain the upper hand.

Using Torn Lotus Defense while Black Claw Form is active allows the Black Claw stylist to also apply the influence roll against all enemies and bystanders who witnessed the attack, without suffering the usual penalties for targeting multiple characters. Bystanders only face the social influence aspect of the counterattack, and never take **withering** damage from it.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood enjoys no extra benefits from using this Charm while Black Claw Form is active.

Mastery: The martial artist may declare this Charm prior to the attack roll, adding +1 to her Defense and then making the influence roll if she succeeds.

Flexing the Emerald Claw

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Open Palm Caress, Torn Lotus Defense

Even for the unjustly wronged, there comes a time to strike back. Scratching over the invisible lines of her enemy's Essence meridians with an attack, the Black Claw stylist taints them with a bilious green poison, distilled from her own malice. The poison created by Flexing the Emerald Claw has Damage 2i/round, Duration (Essence + Manipulation) rounds, and a -2 penalty. While Black Claw Form is active, any Initiative damage dealt to an enemy by this poison awards that many points of Initiative to the martial artist (even if the damage is converted to lethal against a crashed enemy).

Black Claw Form

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Flexing the Emerald Claw

The martial artist slips into a defensive posture, making clear both her unwillingness to fight and her readiness to defend herself regardless. The martial artist adds +1 Evasion, and one success on rolls to disengage or withdraw, reducing the Initiative cost of both actions by one point. If she attacks an enemy who is in close range to another enemy that has a positive Tie towards the martial artist, then the victim of her attack takes a -1 penalty to his Defense, as he fears his allies have begun to turn on him. Enemies who themselves have a positive Tie towards the martial artist also take this penalty, unable to put up a whole-hearted defense.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist successfully defends against an attack that causes her attacker's current Initiative to fall below her own, she may reflexively activate Black Claw Form.

Doe Eyes Defense

Cost: 4m, 1i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Black Claw Form

Understanding that vulnerability is her greatest defense, the Black Claw stylist exploits it ruthlessly, falling back in exaggerated response to an attack. Every movement accentuates her inferiority in the face of the oncoming assault, unnerving or unduly exciting her aggressor depending on his temperament. Doe Eyes Defense imposes a penalty equal to the martial artist's Guile on an attack against her. Enemies who have a positive Tie towards her add its intensity to the penalty they suffer.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood uses the lower of her Essence or Guile when calculating the penalty inflicted by this Charm.

Mastery: Successfully defending against an attack with this Charm grants the martial artist (1 + the enemy's Intimacy) Initiative.

Storm-Calming Embrace

Cost: 2m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Until released

Prerequisite Charms: Black Claw Form

Despite being cruelly assaulted, the martial artist clasps her foes to herself. Swallowing her rancor, she seeks no revenge for her wounds—such virtue! Storm-Calming Embrace applies double 8s on the (Strength + Martial Arts) control roll of a grapple and adds one success to the roll. However, it also limits the martial artist's options in the grapple, preventing her from

savaging her enemy or throwing him. An enemy who's poisoned does not count rounds clinched by the Storm-Calming Embrace against the duration of the poison—although he still suffer damage, the poison's duration doesn't decrease.

Mastery: Storm-Calming Embrace doubles up to (Manipulation) 8s and 9s on the attack and Initiative roll for the grapple, in addition to enhancing the control roll. An enemy caught in the clinch takes lethal damage from poisons, as though he were in Initiative Crash.

Table-Turning Reversal

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Black Claw Form

Only a coward would use a weapon to strike down an unarmed man. All Creation rejoices to see a bully given a dose of his own medicine, and the Black Claw stylist is the one to do it. Table-Turning Reversal can be used to respond to an attack with a disarm gambit, adding one automatic success to both the attack roll and Initiative roll. If the martial artist successfully disarms her enemy, she may reflexively ready his weapon instead of throwing it aside. Stealing an artifact weapon breaks its wielder's attunement and allows the martial artist to reflexively commit the motes needed to attune to it. As long as she wields it, it is considered a Black Claw style weapon. The first time she uses a stolen weapon to land a successful **decisive** attack against the enemy she stole it from, she also treats her attack roll as an instill roll against the Resolve of all witnesses, either creating a positive Tie towards the martial artist or eroding positive Ties towards her victim (her choice).

Outrage-Kindling Cry

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Counterattack

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Doe Eyes Defense, Storm-Calming Embrace, Table-Turning Reversal

Who can stand idly by while a fragile beauty endures torment and aggression from her brutish foes? Outrage-Kindling Cry can be used in response to a **decisive** attack against the martial artist, allowing her to counterattack with a (Manipulation + Presence) persuade roll against all characters who can hear her, adding (her enemy's Essence) dice to the roll. She doesn't suffer the usual penalties for targeting multiple characters. If the martial artist suffers any wound penalties after the resolution of the attack, then the same penalties apply to the Resolve of all targets. Any character whose Resolve is overcome turns on the enemy that attacked the Black Claw stylist, depending on the strength of his Intimacy for her. Characters with a Minor Tie or no Tie will attempt to restrain the enemy or talk him down, but will not turn to violence. A Major Tie might lead them to attempt to attack him, but only to subdue him or drag him away so that he cannot continue fighting. With a Defining Tie for the martial artist, they will go so far as to kill the enemy if no other recourse presents itself. A character must enter a Decision Point to resist, and

treats the intensity of any positive Tie he has to the martial artist as one level higher for determining what Intimacies he can use to justify spending Willpower. If his Intimacy is already at the Defining level, then resisting costs an additional point of Willpower instead.

Special activation rules: Outrage-Kindling Cry can only be used once per fight, but can be reset with a two or three-point stunt that emphasizes the Black Claw stylist's appearance of vulnerability, fragility, or her nature as a righteous underdog taking on cruel or cowardly foes.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood may only target a single character, or an audience of trivial opponents who might fight effectively as a battle group, rather than all witnesses.

Heart-Ripping Claw

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Aggravated, Celestial, Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Outrage-Kindling Cry

Eight wisdoms lie at the heart of the Black Claw style: Love is a lie, innocence is a lie, blame is a lie—lies are inescapable; children betray their parents, gods betray their makers, students betray their teachers—betrayal, too, is inescapable. Those who are truly wise are always first to strike, and strike to kill. The Heart-Ripping Claw wreathes the martial artist's hand in screaming black shadows, lashing and razor-edged. She adds half her current temporary Willpower to the raw damage of the attack (round up). If the victim has a positive Tie for the martial artist, double the damage, or triple it if the Tie is Defining. Incapacitating a character with this Charm is a gruesome spectacle, as the Black Claw master tears the victim's heart from his chest, clutching it in her fist as it crumbles to ash.

Special activation rules: Once the martial artist has revealed her Heart-Ripping Claw, she cannot use it again against any character who witnessed the attack for the rest of the fight, unless she successfully uses social influence to strengthen a victim-to-be's positive Tie towards her, or to cause him to form or strengthen a pre-existing negative Tie towards the enemy she attacked with the earlier use of this Charm.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood uses the lower of her Essence or temporary Willpower when calculating the damage added by this Charm.

Mastery: Holding the still-beating heart of a slain enemy in her hand, the martial artist draws vitality and beauty from it. Incapacitating an enemy with this Charm allows the martial artist to heal one level of damage, and adds +1 to her Appearance for the rest of the fight.

Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Style

Dreaming Pearl Courtesan is a subtle style—graceful, elusive, and lethal. A student learns to maneuver herself into the perfect position to strike, gaining the confidence and trust of her victims as she navigates the veils of defenses they put up between themselves and the world. Once the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan has reached her victim at his most vulnerable—whether that is in the tangle of his boudoir's sheets, a friendly conversation in a tearoom, or a secret meeting

at court—she reveals her true nature as a killer, fighting with a deadly grace and the elusiveness of a dream.

Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Weapons: Dreaming Pearl Courtesan style uses elegant unarmed strikes that seem more like dance moves than attacks, as well as war fans and whips. Courtesans also learn to wield numerous improvised weapons with this style through the use of the Charm Elegant Weapon Repertoire, strangling enemies with a silken sash or slashing them with the jagged edge of a broken teacup.

Armor: Dreaming Pearl Courtesan style is incompatible with armor.

Complementary Abilities: Many Dreaming Pearl Courtesans use Dodge, both to evade the attacks of their enemies and to withdraw from close combat. It is also common for them to use Performance or Presence to make influence rolls both in and out combat, which later Charms of this style enhance.

Demure Carp Feint

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Dreaming Pearl Courtesan dances away from the blows of her enemies without effort, as if her body was nothing more than so many cherry blossoms caught on the wind. Demure Carp Feint adds +1 to the martial artist's Evasion, or adds one success on a roll to disengage. If the martial artist's Appearance is higher than the Resolve of her attacker, or of all enemies she is disengaging from, this increases to +2. Successfully defending against or disengaging from an enemy whose Resolve is beaten by the martial artist's Appearance grants her a point of Initiative, as her provocative elegance and sinuous grace gain her an improved footing.

Mastery: When the martial artist gains Initiative with this Charm, her attacker loses a point of Initiative as well. When disengaging, all enemies whose Resolve is beaten lose the point of Initiative (although this does not increase the amount the martial artist receives).

Elegant Weapon Repertoire

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

A paper fan, a colorful sash, a pair of chopsticks, a ball gown's train—all of these can be killing weapons in the hands of a student of this style. Elegant Weapon Repertoire adds the accuracy bonus of a weapon to the raw damage of a **withering attack** made with it, or one die to the raw damage of a **decisive attack**.

Alternatively, this Charm can supplement a ready weapon action to suffuse an accessory, garment, or some similar ornamental object with Essence, allowing the martial artist to wield it as a weapon. For the rest of the scene, it is treated as a mundane light weapon, with tags based on the exact nature of the item, as described below. While several examples are provided for each category, the Storyteller is encouraged to reward creative ideas that fit within the aesthetics of this style.

Disarming: The disarming tag applies to garments or accessories that can be used to leverage weapons out of their wielder's grip—primarily sashes or sleeves that have had lead weights sewn into them for this specific purpose (which overrides the usual tag they would receive). These weapons usually also have the bashing and flexible tags.

Grappling: The grappling tag applies to accessories and garments that could conceivably be used to entangle or tie up an enemy, such as the sash of a kimono, a long scarf, a ball gown train, a blanket or sheet, or a length of silken rope. These weapons usually also have the bashing and flexible tags.

Piercing: The piercing tag applies to accessories that are small or sharp enough to conceivably slip through the defenses of armor, such as hairpins, cutlery, a broken teacup, knitting needles, or elegantly decorated false nails. These weapons usually also have the lethal tag.

Shield: The shield tag applies to accessories and garments that seem well-suited to fending off attacks with their broad surface, such as paper fans, hand mirrors, or the long sleeves of a robe. These weapons usually also have the bashing tag.

Mastery: Elegant Weapon Repertoire adds +1 to the Overwhelming value of any weapon readied with it for the duration of the fight.

Pearlescent Filigree Defense

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

An iridescent sheen comes over the martial artist's garments as Essence enfolds them, turning silk as strong as steel. Any clothing the martial artist wears while this Charm is active is treated as mortal light armor. This is explicitly compatible with this style, but not with any other styles that forbid armor. In addition, whenever the martial artist is hit by an attack, she may spend up to her (Appearance) in motes, adding one point to her armored soak against that attack for each mote spent this way.

Mastery: The first time the martial artist uses this Charm to defend against a **decisive** attack in a fight, she reveals the supernal resilience of her seemingly vulnerable figure, gaining hardness 10 against the attack as well as a surge of three motes that can be spent to add to the armor's soak, or on similar effects, such as many Solar Resistance Charms. These motes vanish at the end of the scene if not spent.

Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Demure Carp Feint, Elegant Weapon Repertoire, Pearlescent Filigree Defense

The Dreaming Pearl Courtesan embodies grace and beauty even in the midst of bloodshed, weaving through melee as if dancing through steps of a ballroom waltz, cutting down foes with gestures so delicate they can scarcely be noticed. The martial artist may make attacks out to short range, slashing a fan to unleash a razor-edged wind, letting a silk sash flow like a weaving serpent to strike enemies, or sending needles of nacreous Essence spiking from her fingernails. Any clothing she enchants with Pearlescent Filigree Defense gains the traits of light artifact armor, while weapons readied with Elegant Weapon Repertoire gain light artifact traits.

Special activation rules: Whenever the martial artist successfully disengages with 5+ successes, she may reflexively activate Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form.

Flurry of August Leaves

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

Just as there is beauty in the budding and blossoming of flowers in the springtime seasons, so too is there a melancholy elegance in the fall of leaves as the autumnal seasons come in turn. It is with this mournful grace that the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan dispatches her victims. The Flurry of August Leaves enhances an attack based on the tags of the weapon used to make it. If the weapon has multiple valid tags, the martial artist can only choose one of the available options.

• **Clearing the Banquet Table (Disarming):** A successful disarm gambit allows the martial artist to fling her enemy's weapon out to medium range (or long range, with Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form active). The Initiative cost of the gambit is waived.

• **Lethal Paper Fan Attack (Shield):** As part of the attack, the martial artist may reflexively take a full defense action at no Initiative cost, effortlessly blending offensive and defensive motion in an elegant fan dance.

• **Unraveling Loose Threads (Piercing):** A successful attack with a piercing weapon neutralizes the enemy's armor, setting its base soak and hardness to zero against her for the next two rounds.

• **Resplendent Sash Grapple (Grappling):** Upon landing a grapple gambit with a grappling weapon, the martial artist may waive the Initiative cost of the gambit and roll (Initiative + Essence) to determine how many rounds of control she gains (if this would be a higher pool than her usual control roll). If the enemy is at short range or further from her (for example, if she is

using Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form to attack from range), he is immediately dragged to within close range of her as the weapon coils around him.

Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flurry of August Leaves

Once a man has let the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan into his heart, his bedchamber, or his confidence, he is all but dead. Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book applies the double 10s rule to the damage roll of a **decisive** attack after the attack roll has been made. In addition, for each of the following criteria met, the next number down is doubled. For example, meeting one of the listed conditions would apply double 9s, while meeting three or more would apply the maximum of double 7s.

• The martial artist is making an ambush attack against a character who already knows her.

• The martial artist possesses some knowledge of the victim's personal life or dealings that could be potentially embarrassing or ruinous for him, and he knows that she knows it.

• The martial artist stole a point of Initiative from her victim with the Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata on her last or current turn.

• The martial artist used the Seven Storms Escape Prana and successfully overcame the enemy's Resolve on her last or current turn (regardless of whether he spent Willpower to resist or not).

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood can only use Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book once per fight, unless reset by successfully defending against a **decisive** attack with 15+ dice on its attack roll.

Mastery: The martial artist treats being in Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form as an additional criterion for doubling damage successes with this Charm. Additionally, once the martial artist has reached double 7s, any further criteria she meets add +1 to her base Initiative upon resetting.

Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

Moving through the sultry, languid forms of a hypnotic kata, the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan beguiles her enemies with ethereal music and the fragrant scent of flower petals. Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata adds the martial artist's Essence in bonus successes to an inspire roll made to fill enemies with emotions of love, lust, mercy, distraction, or similar, and suffers no penalties for targeting multiple characters. With appropriate stunting, it may also enhance other types of social actions that align with the hypnotic, seductive nature of this Charm. In combat, an enemy whose Resolve is overcome by the influence roll loses a point of Initiative, even if he spends Willpower

to resist. The Dreaming Pearl Courtesan gains all Initiative lost this way, up to a maximum of her (Appearance).

Special activation rules: Once an enemy has been exposed to the Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata, he is immune to further uses of it for the rest of the scene, regardless of whether he succeeded or failed in resisting it.

Seven Storms Escape Prana

Cost: 4m, 2i; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata

Catching hold of the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan is like trying to remember last night's dream—at first, one might be able to grasp it hazily, but as time passes, it slips away into nothingness. The Seven Storms Escape Prana subtracts dice equal to the martial artist's Appearance from a roll made to oppose one of her disengage attempts, to rush her, or from the control roll of a clinch against her. If the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan's successes on the opposed action exceed the Resolve of the opponent, then he must pay a point of Willpower to maintain his focus or else automatically fail the roll.

Mastery: The duration of this Charm is extended to one round, imposing the penalty on all applicable opposed actions.

Invoking the Chimera's Coils

Cost: — (+8m, 1wp); **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Celestial, Mastery

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Seven Storms Escape Prana, Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book

Mastering the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan style means mastering the countless layers of veils and facades that people place between themselves and the world. Students learn to insinuate themselves behind these veils and pierce through these facades to see the pearl of truth at their victim's heart, the fragile, vulnerable thing that is the self. But there is a deeper wisdom in the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan's enlightenment. When she must, she may cast off her own veils of selfhood, revealing the dreaming pearl that is her true Essence, a dread and beautiful truth to behold. In order to use this Charm, the martial artist must be in the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form, and must either have Initiative 15+, or have all of her -2 health levels filled with damage. With these conditions met, she may commit the cost of this Charm at the start of her turn to Invoke the Chimera's Coils. Her neck lengthens up towards the heavens as she grows up to five times her normal height, while her head becomes that of a delicate, gold-beaked foal. Four sets of spiraling gazelle's horns adorn her brow, and her arms and legs vanish while opalescent fins like those of a carp hold her new form aloft in the air. Countless eyes run down either side of her

narrow snout and continue down her back, ranging from the size of small pearls to that of goose eggs, blazing like sapphires in the noonday sun.

While in this transformed state, the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan may fly, floating effortlessly on her gold-veined fins, and adds her Essence to her natural soak. She retains these benefits even if her Initiative falls below 15+, or if her -2 health levels are healed—those conditions are needed only to invoke the transformation, not to sustain it. In addition, her transformation unlocks additional benefits when using the Charms of this style:

• **Demure Carp Feint:** Internalizing the grace of this Charm, the martial artist no longer treats the bonuses it provides as successes added by Charms.

• **Elegant Weapon Repertoire:** Instead of enchanting props to serve as weapons, the martial artist may use this Charm to attack with dream-like ephemera of any form she can imagine, treated as a light artifact weapon with the tag of her choice (from the four options) and a +3 bonus to its damage.

• **Pearlescent Filigree Defense:** Armor enchanted by this Charm gains the traits of medium artifact armor, but with no mobility penalty.

• **Flurry of August Leaves:** The martial artist may convert up to her (Appearance) extra successes on an attack roll supplemented by this Charm to dice added to the damage roll.

• **Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book:** Every die that comes up a doubled success on the damage roll allows the martial artist to reroll a failed die.

• **Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata:** The Initiative stolen by this Charm is set equal to the martial artist's (Essence), and she may gain up to (Appearance x 2) points of Initiative from an activation. Characters must enter a Decision Point to resist the influence, calling upon a Major or Defining Intimacy that represents temperance, asceticism, or rejection of beauty to resist.

• **Seven Storms Escape Prana:** This Charm can now be used to supplement any movement action, allowing the martial artist to dissolve into pastel fumes as she becomes a vortex of swirling light and vapor. She disappears, then reappears at her destination, without crossing the intervening space, and with no regard for any barriers or hazards in her way.

However, there is a danger in baring the truth of one's soul in this esoteric apotheosis. Some have been so caught up in their ecstatic bliss that they forget they were ever mortal, vanishing from the world. If the martial artist suffers any damage (even bashing) to any -4 health level while in this form, she loses all hold on reality. She vanishes from Creation in a flash of pearlescent light, never to be seen again except in fragmentary, half-remembered dreams.

Mastery: The martial artist rolls (Appearance + Performance) the first time she uses this Charm in a fight. This is treated both as a Join Battle roll that adds to her total Initiative, as well as an instill roll against all enemies that can witness her. Those whose Resolve is overcome form a Major Tie of obsessive fascination towards her.

Celestial: A Dragon-Blood who has assumed this form must maintain an Initiative rating of 11+ to maintain the transformation, lest she return to her human form. If her Initiative is reset by making a **decisive** attack, then she is given a grace period until the end of her next turn, but if she

does not return to Initiative 11+ by its end, this Charm ends. Once it has ended, she cannot use it again for the rest of the fight.

> …What?
>
> Invoking the Chimera's Coils is a strange Charm. Monstrous transformations, divine auras, the potential threat of unwanted enlightenment—this type of thing is the high-water mark for how strange martial arts can get. Other styles might feature powerful capstones that reach similar levels of esoteric effects and bizarre powers, but those are exceptions rather than the norm.

Steel Devil Style

The Steel Devils are the unquestioned masters of twin blades, staining both battlefields and dueling grounds red with the blood of slain foes. The motions of the style have all the elegance and grace of a ceremonial dance from afar, but those who face the Steel Devil up close see only the impossible speed with which her weapons slice through the air, cutting off every vector of defense and bringing down death with a thousand blows. Some claim that the masters of Steel Devil style learn to concentrate their fighting skill in one hand, and to contain their killing intent in the other.

Steel Devil Weapons: Steel Devil style can be used with paired, dual wielded swords. Otherwise, the stylist cannot use any Charms of this style to enhance her attacks or parries. Unarmed attacks are not compatible with this style.

Armor: Steel Devil style is compatible with light and medium armor.

Naked Fang Draw

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 2, Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt grasps a blade in each hand and makes a lightning speed draw—a technique designed for ending a fight before it starts. This Charm supplements a Join Battle roll made with any Ability, adding (Essence or two, whichever is greater) successes to the result, and allowing the Exalt to shift successes from her Initiative pool directly into that of her Offhand Charge. In addition, if her result beats that of all of her opponents, she gains one automatic point of Charge.

> What is the Offhand Charge?
>
> Warriors using Steel Devil style store Initiative in their offhand weapon. This stored Initiative is called Charge. Charge cannot be withered away, cannot be used for **decisive** attacks without specific Charms, and is used to create a damage bonus on certain Charms. In order to increase her Charge, the Exalt must do successful **withering** damage. She may then reflexively move up to (Essence or two, whichever is greater) Initiative to her Offhand Charge. This is the secret of

Steel Devil style. The Exalt **cannot store more than (Dexterity + Essence) Charge** unless stated otherwise in a Charm's text.

Double Attack Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 3, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Naked Fang Draw

Moving with deceptive speed and feinting strikes, the Exalt slashes with one blade and strikes with another. This Charm creates a normal **withering** attack that has a chance to land an additional second strike. On a hit, if the threshold successes meet or exceed the target's Defense, this is treated as landing a second attack. If both attacks land, however, only a single damage pool is created and a single damage roll is made. On a successful double attack, add (the Exalt's Dexterity + [Charge/2, rounded down]) to the attack's base damage. Note that both attacks incur onslaught penalties (p. XX)—a strike against a Parry of 5 would only need to generate four extra successes to penetrate the resulting rating of Parry 4. Likewise, the successes used landing the second attack are not calculated as extra successes when determining damage.

Celestial: When used by a Terrestrial, this Charm's base damage is increased by (2 + [Charge/2, rounded down]).

Triple Attack Technique

Cost: —; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Celestial, Mastery, Withering-only

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Double Attack Technique

Moving with blazing speed, the Steel Devil makes three attacks in succession. This Charm upgrades Double Attack Technique, allowing extra successes from the second blow to roll over the target's Defense again and create a third attack. If Triple Attack Technique is successful, add (Dexterity + Charge) to the attack's base damage. This Charm can trigger Steel Devil Strike and Empty Mind Strike in an identical fashion to Double Attack Technique.

Celestial: When used by a Terrestrial, this Charm's base damage is increased by the Exalt's (Dexterity + [Charge/2, rounded down]).

Mastery: Reroll (Essence) non-successes on the attack's damage roll.

Steel Devil Strike

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 4, Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only, Mastery

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Double Attack Technique

The ultimate killing technique of this style is a swift, hidden strike that occurs directly after a successful use of Double Attack Technique. This Charm can only be triggered when the damage done by Double Attack Technique is equal to or greater than the amount of Offhand Charge capacity that has yet to be filled with Charge. If this occurs, the Exalt may pay the cost to launch a **decisive** attack with (Essence) automatic successes, which ignores hardness and uses only the Initiative gained from Double Attack Technique's **withering** damage as base damage. If this attack is successful, all of the Initiative expended in making it is lost.

Mastery: When in Steel Devil Form, if the Exalt successfully damages an opponent with Steel Devil Strike, he gains a point of temporary Willpower.

Steel Devil Form

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Steel Devil Strike

Spinning her blades into an underhand or overhand grip and drawing them in alongside her arms, the Steel Devil coils her body in an attitude of lethal readiness. Assuming this form automatically increases the Exalt's Offhand Charge capacity by two, so that it becomes (Dexterity + Essence + 2). In addition, while the Exalt is in this stance, each time she crashes an opponent, her Offhand Charge's capacity increases by one for the rest of the scene—but this benefit may occur no more than once for any single crashed opponent. In addition, using this stance allows the Steel Devil to ignore penalties for attacking with the off-hand. Lastly, this Charm reduces the cost of Double Attack Technique by one mote and Steel Devil Strike by two.

Seconds Between Strife

Cost: 4m, 1 charge per success; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Steel Devil Form

The Steel Devil's killing blade hums with lethal readiness, carrying her swiftly toward prey. This Charm supplements a rush action (p. XX), allowing the Exalt to pay one point of Charge per automatic success on the rush. If the rush succeeds, the Exalt retains the points of Charge that were spent.

Sonic Slash

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Celestial, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seconds Between Strife

After successfully using the prerequisite, the Exalt's Offhand Charge surges. When she moves forward in a response to the opponent moving away, she may activate this Charm reflexively at the end of her motion. Crossing her blades, the Steel Devil Draws them apart with impossible speed, blistering the air with a razor-sharp arc of force that hits all targets in front of her out to medium range with a **decisive** attack that has damage equal to her current Charge. This attack does not include the Exalt's current Initiative, nor does it reduce her to base Initiative.

Celestial: A Terrestrial's Sonic Slash only reaches out to short range.

Dual-Slaying Stance

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Celestial, Form

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Steel Devil Form

Considered the lesser of two forms, Dual Slaying Stance provides an offense that is passive but no less terrifying. While in this stance, the Exalt's Parry is increased by two, and it cannot fall below two, no matter how many times she's attacked. In addition, on any turn on which she foregoes an attack, she may react to any attack she attempts to parry with a **decisive** counterattack that has a base damage equal to her current Charge. This counterattack may be augmented with the Exalt's Initiative—the Exalt may reflexively devote up to (Essence x2) from her Initiative pool to the damage of each successful counterattack. If she successfully damages a foe with such a strike, she does not return to base Initiative, nor is her Charge affected—only any spent Initiative is lost. Lastly, this form allows the Steel Devil to ignore penalties for attacking with the off-hand.

Celestial: A Terrestrial may augment counterattacks with up to (Essence) Initiative.

Twin-Blade Defense

Cost: 3m, 1 charge per success; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dual-Slaying Stance

The Steel Devil narrowly parries away a strike with her second blade. This Charm can be used after failing to parry an attack; the Exalt pays three motes and converts points of Charge into an impromptu second Parry at a one-for-one rate, in order to deal with the attack's remaining successes. If the Exalt is able to expend enough Charge to nullify the remaining successes, she strikes away the incoming attack with her second blade. If she can negate the attack with at least three Charge remaining, she is seen to cross her blades, catching the opponent's blow between them, a technique called the Cross-Blade Catch.

Iron Lotus Unfurling

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Twin-Blade Defense

After performing Twin-Blade Defense's Cross-Blade Catch, the Steel Devil may pay five motes, one Willpower to twist her blades apart with supersonic force, disarming her opponent and hurling his weapon two range bands hence. This Charm is modeled as a disarm gambit (p. XX) with double 9s on the Initiative roll. If it succeeds, the Exalt may pay three motes to unleash a point blank Sonic Slash, adding two automatic successes to the attack roll and (Essence) damage dice to the attack's base damage. The Exalt must know the Sonic Slash Charm to use this attack.

Empty Mind Strike

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Steel Devil Form

This Charm is an attack similar to Steel Devil Strike, occurring after Double Attack Technique. This Charm can only be triggered when the damage done by Double Attack Technique is equal to or greater than the amount of Offhand Charge capacity that has yet to be filled with Charge. However, unlike Steel Devil Strike, this attack expends Charge instead of gathered Initiative to create the attack's damage pool. In addition, if the Steel Devil expends all her Charge in this attack, the damage roll gains (Essence) bonus dice. Alternately, the Exalt may choose to use this attack after unleashing a Steel Devil Strike that does at least half her current Charge (rounded down) in successful damage.

Dervish Blade Frenzy

Cost: 12m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Mastery, Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Empty Mind Strike

If the Exalt lands a damaging Steel Devil Strike followed by a damaging Empty Mind Strike, she may use this Charm, wrenching her blades free to pause for a moment in a harmony of carnage and serenity, before unleashing a furious onslaught of strikes. Invoking this Charm automatically adds one point of Charge to the Exalt's Offhand Charge and allows her to immediately attack the same target with Triple Attack Technique, regardless of whether she has learned it. If she has, she is able to attack with a Quadruple Attack Technique, which uses Triple Attack's damage bonus and adds (Essence or three, whichever is lower) automatic successes to the post soak damage roll.

Mastery: Dervish Blade Frenzy can chain into Steel Devil Strike or Empty Mind Strike.

Whirling Guillotine Dance

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Martial Arts 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Form, Mastery

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Dervish Blade Frenzy, Iron Lotus Unfurling, Sonic Slash

The Steel Devil enters the stance of 108 Sharp Deaths. In his mind, he sees angles of incoming attacks that haven't even been launched yet, and every jugular lies exposed. Entering this form combines the effects of both Steel Devil Form and Dual-Slaying Stance.

Mastery: The Steel Devil may reflexively enter this stance upon crashing someone with Double Attack Technique or one of its variants, and gains one point to his current Charge as well as his Offhand Charge capacity.

Sorcery

Across Creation, sorcerers are known and feared as figures of great and dangerous power, said to be capable of slaying a man with a gesture or calling up storms with a glance. The magic of sorcery is fundamentally different from Solar Charms. A Solar Charm is an expression of the Solar's own Essence through supreme mastery of skill. Sorcery is the art of shaping the Essence of the world itself, willing it into accordance with the sorcerer's whims. To work sorcery is to command essential forces, consort with strange spirits, and call up impossible wonders.

Spells and Sorcerous Workings

The powers of sorcery are divided into spells and sorcerous workings. A spell is a discrete power with a defined cost and effects. Sorcerous workings, on the other hand, are great feats and projects. Workings require considerable time and effort to complete, and their expansive scope often requires the Storyteller and the sorcerer's player to work together in defining its precise effects.

The Three Circles

Sorcery is divided into three circles of understanding and power. In the Old Realm, these were called the Terrestrial Circle, the Celestial Circle, and the Solar Circle—for only the Solar Exalted could master the last. Realm-trained sorcerers sometimes speak of these as the Emerald, Sapphire, and Adamant Circles, though the last is spoken of only in legends and rumors since the disappearance of the Sun's Chosen.

Solar Exalted must begin by mastering the Terrestrial Circle, then progress into higher circles of understanding. The Lunar and Sidereal Exalted may master the Terrestrial and Celestial Circles, but the final secrets of the Solar Circle elude them. Dragon-Blooded, Liminal Exalted, and mortals are only capable of initiating into the Terrestrial Circle. The Abyssal Exalted command similar raw power to their Solar counterparts, but focus on the dread secrets of necromancy.

Becoming a Sorcerer

Sorcery is a mountaintop of enlightenment to which many paths lead. Most sorcerers are guided along their path by an instructor—promising young talents receive instruction from master sorcerers of the Realm at the Heptagram Academy, while others are taught by demons, elementals, or stranger things yet. A few sorcerers forge their own path—following contemplative or meditative disciplines that purify and enlighten the mind, mastering relics or domains of power, or seeking out lost libraries and ancient grimoires. All paths demand effort, dedication, and the willingness to abandon old views and deeply-held beliefs. Those who attain sorcerous enlightenment see the world through new eyes, gaining a deeper insight into the nature of all things. For the Solar Exalted, this is expressed by learning the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Charm (p. XX). Other Exalted have their own equivalents.

Sorcerous Motes and the Shape Sorcery Action

When a sorcerer turns her skin to bronze, calls up a fiery kraken from the molten depths of the earth, or bind the greatest demons of Hell, she is not drawing upon her own Essence. Sorcery manipulates the energies of the world around the sorcerer, shaping it into patterns and matrices that achieve her ends. When a sorcerer casts a spell, the motes that power it are not drawn from her own Essence pools. Instead, she must take shape sorcery actions to manipulate the flow of Essence around her and channel sorcerous motes into the casting of the spell.

To take a shape sorcery action, the sorcerer must first declare the spell she is attempting to cast, and then roll (Intelligence + Occult). Each success contributes one sorcerous mote to the casting of the spell. If this is sufficient to meet the spell's cost, it is cast immediately. If not, the sorcerer must continue focusing Essence into the spell in subsequent rounds. She may choose to take additional shape sorcery actions, rolling and adding successes towards the total, until she has enough to cast the spell. Once she has reached the total, she unleashes it immediately and reflexively.

The shape sorcery action itself is a combat action which cannot be included in a flurry. A sorcerer *can* pause in the act of gathering sorcerous motes to perform other actions, such as attacking or disengaging from an enemy, but loses three sorcerous motes at the end of every round where no sorcerous motes were gathered. If she uses a ritual that allows her to reflexively gather sorcerous motes for a turn, this counts as if she had used a shape sorcery action—sorcerer-assassins often find such techniques efficacious in their chosen trade, allowing them to fluidly switch between fighting and shaping spells.

If the sorcerer begins casting a different spell from the one she has started shaping, then her current spell is prematurely aborted, and all gathered sorcerous motes disperse and are lost. If she simply stops gathering motes, she will continue losing three sorcerous motes per round until she has none remaining, at which point the spell is lost.

Some spells require an extended period of shaping Essence to cast, generally on the order of hours or longer. Keeping track of the accumulation of sorcerous motes in these cases is less relevant than the time invested in the spell, and so they are simply noted as having a cost of "Ritual."

Additional Spell Casting Rules

• **Willpower:** Most spells cost at least one point of Willpower, as it takes a significant investment of the sorcerer's will to grasp and wield the Essence of the cosmos. This cost must be paid up front, when the sorcerer first begins shaping the spell. **If the spell is cast successfully, the realization of the sorcerer's design fulfills her, restoring one point of Willpower spent to fuel the spell.** If the spell is lost, aborted, or countered, then all spent Willpower is simply lost.

• **Commitment:** Sorcerous motes are never committed, regardless of a spell's duration.

• **Casting in Crash:** A sorcerer in Initiative Crash regains no Willpower spent on her spells, even when she casts successfully. Additionally, all spells cost an additional three sorcerous motes to complete while crashed.

• **Control Spells:** All sorcerers have at least one control spell. A control spell is a signature spell at which a sorcerer excels beyond all others, imbuing it with some special measure of her mystic will and personal prowess. Many spells enjoy special benefits when selected as a control spell, and many shaping rituals (see below) give special benefits to a sorcerer's control spell.

Countermagic

One sorcerer can unravel another's spell as it's being shaped. Countering a spell as it's cast is an (Intelligence + Occult) roll, with every two successes draining one sorcerous mote from the spell's completion. **If the sorcerer knows the spell she is attempting to counter, then each successes drains one mote.** She must be within short range of the sorcerer whose spell she wishes to counter, and she must be initiated into that spell's circle. If countermagic reduces the total sorcerous motes invested in a spell to zero, the casting is broken, requiring the enemy sorcerer to attempt casting it anew. Also, the mystic backlash of a shattered spell prevents the enemy sorcerer from taking a shape sorcery action on his next turn. Countermagic is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry.

Distortion

Once a spell has been cast, its effects cannot be undone, but a skilled sorcerer may mute, twist, or weaken them with a distort action. This is an extended (Intelligence + Occult) action, with a difficulty based on the circle of the targeted spell—1 for Terrestrial Circle, 3 for Celestial Circle, and 5 for Solar Circle. The goal number of the action, as well as the precise effects, are specified in the text of each spell if it can be distorted, often diminishing the spell's advantages or inflicting a drawback on its caster. Other spells, such as those that last only for an instant or that summon a being that exists independently of the spell, cannot be distorted. **Distortion has a terminus of five rolls**—if a sorcerer fails to achieve her goal, she cannot attempt to distort the spell again. As with countermagic, the sorcerer needs to be within short range of the spell's target or effect, and must be initiated into that spell's circle. **Attempting to distort a spell that the sorcerer does not know imposes a -2 penalty on all distortion rolls.** Distortion is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry.

Undoing a Spell

Sometimes, a sorcerer may want to completely revoke the effects of a long-term spell—for example, lifting the curse of Corrupted Words that prevents one of the sorceress Mnemon's minions from revealing the details of a secret alliance. Such feats require a sorcerous working (p.

XX) of Ambition 3 and the same circle as the spell to be undone. The Storyteller may adjust these guidelines to better suit the circumstances or narrative, making it harder or even impossible to dispel an effect if doing so would utterly undermine the functionality of that spell, or making it easier to undo effects that he feels the players should be able to remove more easily.

Shaping Rituals

As the sorcerer grows in knowledge, her mastery of the universe opens new paths to power, allowing her to perceive and draw upon new sources of Essence to fuel her magic. These are shaping rituals, a catch-all term for alternate ways in which a sorcerer may gain sorcerous motes. Shaping rituals can be used to represent a sorcerer's unique path to power—a bargain with a spirit, a legendary relic, a taboo that must be kept. Five sample archetypes are listed below. Each has multiple shaping rituals associated with it, along with Merits and other benefits that may be purchased by any character who has mastered one of the archetype's shaping rituals. (All such sorcerous Merits are of the purchased variety.) These archetypes are not meant to be comprehensive or confining—they're an illustration of what a sorcerer might look like, included to help players realize their character concepts.

> Multiple Shaping Rituals
>
> The Charms that initiate the Solar Exalted into sorcery also give them a free shaping ritual, which is how most of the Chosen gain access to them. As a Solar sorcerer rises through the three circles, he gains more shaping rituals. These can be taken from rituals offered by his original archetype, but by no means is he limited to those. If the character has used his sorcerous power to make pacts with spirits, create great strongholds of knowledge, or transcend the mental confines of petty humanity, then it's entirely fitting for him to gain rituals that reflect those achievements.

Bargain with Mara

You have met the demon Mara, the deer-footed creature of shadows who pursues lovers marked by dark destinies and feeds them stolen souls. You may have met her as she sojourned through Creation, or seen her lovely, wicked face in dreams—perhaps you even summoned her yourself to make your bargain. Through cunning, charisma, or pleasing offerings, you have made a pact with her, taking the power of the Shadow Lover for your own.

Shaping Rituals

• Like Mara herself, the sorcerer draws power from those who love her. The Essence of their adoration is clay in her hands, taking form in her sorcery. Whenever she takes a shape sorcery action while within medium range of a character with an unrequited Tie of love (or a similar emotion) towards her, she may reap additional sorcerous motes equal to that Intimacy's value (for example, four motes from a Defining Tie). Intimacies can only be tapped for motes in this fashion once per day, and the sorcerer cannot harvest power from love she reciprocates. Normally she may only drain one Intimacy to fuel the casting of a spell, but she may draw power from any available Intimacies when casting her control spell. She cannot draw more than ten sorcerous motes per scene with this ritual.

• When the sorcerer seduces and sleeps with a willing mortal, she may choose to draw the soul out of his body, leaving it an inanimate husk that soon dies of deprivation. The extracted soul lingers invisibly around her, tethered to her by umbral chains. As a miscellaneous action, the sorcerer may offer up one of her bound souls to Mara in exchange for power once per scene, rolling (Essence + Willpower) and gaining that many sorcerous motes. She retains these motes until the end of the scene, and may spend them towards any spells she casts. Additionally, a bound soul may be reflexively expended in place of a point of Willpower when paying the cost of the sorcerer's control spell. She cannot have more than (Essence + Occult) souls bound to her at one time.

• The sorcerer draws power from shadow and darkness, weaving it into her spells. Whenever she begins a scene in darkness or shadow heavy enough to qualify as concealment for attempting stealth, she gains three sorcerous motes, which last until the end of the scene and can be spent towards any spells she casts. Additionally, whenever she takes a shape sorcery action to shape a spell while in stealth, she gains an additional sorcerous mote as long as the spell's target is unaware of her. She also receives these benefits while under the night sky during the new moon or Calibration, even without being concealed.

Other Benefits

• **Infernal Nobility** (Merit •): Demons recognize the sorcerer as one favored by Mara. First Circle demons are treated as having a Minor Tie of terrified awe towards her, while Second and Third Circle demons have a positive Minor Tie of respect, or some variation suited to their nature.

• **Dark Paramour** (Merit ••): Mara appears in the sorcerer's dreams, feeding her with fragments of stolen souls. Once per story, the sorcerer's player may declare that she is visited by Mara in a dream while sleeping. She does not recover Willpower from that sleep, but receives some significant benefit determined by the Storyteller—tutelage in a new spell in a single night, double 9s on all shape sorcery spells for the next day, the service of a First Circle demon as a gift from Mara, or something similar. She also wakes with a Minor Principle of "I take pleasure in death and suffering," or strengthens that Intimacy if she already possesses it.

• **Demonic Tattoos:** Mara has marked the sorcerer, taking one or more of her own souls and rendering it down into a midnight-black tattoo that spirals around her chakras. The sorcerer may unlock Evocations from these tattoos that allow her to manipulate or gain power from shadows or darkness, alter her control spell to incorporate elements of darkness and subversion, or manipulate or empower summoned demons, such as by turning them into living shadows.

Pact with an Ifrit Lord

You have stood in the court of one of the ifrits or another elemental lord of fire. Beneath the judgment of his burning eyes, you passed whatever test of righteousness he saw fit to impose. The pact you struck lets you draw strength from the element of fire and shape its destructive power to your will.

Shaping Rituals

• Whenever the sorcerer takes a shape sorcery action, she may draw an additional (Essence) sorcerous motes from any fire within medium range, coaxing its power into her spell. This diminishes the flame—a hallway of torches will be extinguished by a single invocation, while a bonfire might die down to small flames after the first, then go out altogether after the second. However, if the sorcerer is fighting near (or in!) a burning building, she has a nearly endless source of sorcerous motes to draw on. She may draw from fire elementals or other spirits of flame as well, draining (Essence) motes from their pools, but only if her shape sorcery roll exceeds their Resolve, and no more than once per scene against any one spirit. When the sorcerer draws Essence to fuel her control spell, flames are not diminished, and spirits do not lose the motes drawn from them.

• The sorcerer's patron offers her power in exchange for burnt offerings, breathing in the smoke of her tribute and rewarding her with glory. The sorcerer may make a prayer roll (Charisma + Performance, difficulty 5 minus the Resources value of any sacrifices offered along with the prayer) seeking power from her patron. Success grants her sorcerous motes equal to (her Essence + extra successes on the roll). These motes last for the duration of the story, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. She cannot pray for power more than once a day, and receiving new motes replaces any granted by past prayers.

• The sorcerer has learned to cultivate the flames of passion in her own heart, using them to stoke the power of her spells. Whenever she would gain a point of Willpower from upholding an Intimacy that represents a passionate emotion or fervent belief, she may instead claim 5 sorcerous motes. These motes last until the next sunrise, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. Additionally, she may shed a level of intensity from such an Intimacy to channel its fire towards a spell she is shaping, adding sorcerous motes equal to the (original) intensity of the Intimacy. She cannot tap an Intimacy more than once per day this way.

Other Benefits

Unburnt Majesty (Merit ••): Having contracted with a lord of flame, the sorcerer commands the fealty of lesser fires. She doubles 8s on rolls to resist environmental hazards based on fire or heat, and adds her Essence to both soak and hardness against purely flame-based attacks such as firewand blasts.

The Burning Name (Merit ••): With the utterance of her patron's name, the sorcerer may call forth flames, sending them streaming from her eyes, fingertips, or mouth. She might use this to light a campfire or incinerate ropes that bind her hands, and can also use it as an attack, rolling (Intelligence + Occult) to direct the flames, which are treated as a light mundane weapon with the lethal, thrown (short), and mounted tags.

Suzerain of Endless Flame (Merit ••): Fire answers readily to the sorcerer's will. Whenever the sorcerer casts a spell that creates or manipulates fire as its primary effect, or summons a fire elemental, its cost is lowered by three sorcerous motes. If it's her control spell, she may also waive a single point of Willpower from its cost once per day.

Scarred by Nightmares

Perhaps you were a child lost in the warped depths of the Wyld or a hero treading where the logic of the world crumble away. Perhaps you were already an initiated sorcerer, wracked by

maddening dreams or secrets best left unknown. However it happened, you saw *it*. Something numinous, a forgotten god or primal monster that spanned the horizon, more beautiful than anything you've ever seen and more horrifying than anything you've seen since. You caught only a glimpse of this outer thing, but it has marked you. A sliver of the Wyld now resides within the deepest dreaming parts of your mind, and the power of chaos serves your sorcerous will.

Shaping Rituals

• When the sorcerer sleeps, her player may describe the strange visions that haunt her. She recovers no Willpower from sleep, instead rolling (Wits + Occult) and gaining one sorcerous mote per success. These motes last until the next time she sleeps, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. If the sorcerer spends all of the sorcerous motes granted by a dream casting her control spell, each counts as two motes towards meeting the spell's cost. Once per story, the sorcerer's player may stunt to describe how the current situation was somehow symbolized by her dreams, essentially declaring that her past dreams retroactively foreshadow the present. Doing so awards her a number of sorcerous motes equal to (her Essence x [stunt level + 1]), which last for the duration of the scene.

• The sorcerer abides by an esoteric taboo or is victim to a delusional belief inspired by the Wyld energies inside her mind, a Defining Derangement which cannot be removed or altered (p. XX). If she works her delusions or taboo into the description of a stunt, she gains sorcerous motes equal to the stunt's rating. If she is stunting the casting of her control spell, add two to the bonus. These motes last until the next time she sleeps, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. If the Derangement causes in-character hardship that would be sufficient to gain solar experience from the Flaw (p. XX), she gains 10 sorcerous motes, which last for the duration of the story. After the first time this bonus is awarded in a story, subsequent awards are lowered to the sorcerer's (Essence).

• The sorcerer may feed on emotional energies like the raksha, shaping the passions of others through spellcraft. Once per scene, when another character forms, strengthens, or weakens an Intimacy that represents an emotional feeling, the sorcerer may feed from it, gaining sorcerous motes equal to the intensity of the Intimacy (its new rating if it was strengthened, or the old one if weakened). These motes last for the duration of the story, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. The fervent passions of the Exalted represented by Limit are even more potent nourishment. Whenever a character, including the sorcerer herself, gains a point of Limit, the sorcerer may draw power from that, gaining sorcerous motes equal to the character's current Limit. She may draw ten sorcerous motes from a character in Limit Break, but only once during the duration of that Break.

Other Benefits

Child of Madness (Merit ••••): The sorcerer is immune to the twisting power of the Wyld, and need never fear mutation, delusion, or addiction from time spent in chaos. However, her Wyld affinity makes her vulnerable to iron, causing her to take aggravated damage from weapons made of it as though she were one of the raksha.

Miracles of Shadow and Chaos (Merit ••••): The sorcerer may warp the substance of chaos to her will. She doubles 8s on any shape sorcery rolls made in the Wyld, and can perform sorcerous

workings without needing to pay experience costs. However, such miracles fade to shadow outside the Wyld. If she used a free working to give herself opalescent wings, they would fade away as soon as she entered Creation, only to reappear when she returns to the Wyld. A palace enchanted to fly could do so freely through the skies of chaos, but would fall subject to gravity in Creation. The Storyteller may retroactively charge the player experience points for any working that circumvents or cheats this limitation in play.

Soul-Perfecting Elixir

Through study of the arts of alchemy and the bodily humors, you have brewed the Soul-Perfecting Elixir, a draught that transformed your body into a living cauldron. Yours is a sorcery rooted in the corporal, sustained by the balance of vital forces and the flow of Essence along meridians. Through the consumption of alchemical catalysts and adherence to ascetic practices, you maintain your body as a pure vessel through which sorcerous forces may be channeled into the world.

Shaping Rituals

• The sorcerer can brew a draught that catalyzes an upswell of power from within. Creating a single dose of this potion is a difficulty 2 (Intelligence + Craft) roll that takes a few hours, with an increased difficulty if the sorcerer lacks access to a wide range of alchemical components and/or a properly stocked workshop for brewing. Brewing a larger batch increases the difficulty by 2, but provides the sorcerer with effectively as much of the potion as she needs. Drinking this potion is a miscellaneous action, rolling (Stamina + Occult) and gaining a sorcerous mote for each success. These motes last for the duration of the scene, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. She may only benefit from one draught each scene, and the balance of reagents to humors means the potion only benefits the sorcerer who brewed it. A prepared draught retains its efficacy for about a week, meaning that even a large batch will soon become dilute and powerless. The sorcerer may prepare special elixirs that permanently retain their efficacy, but provide sorcerous motes that can only be spent casting her control spell.

• By abstaining from rich foods, drugs, sexual intercourse, and other indulgences that compromise the balance of forces within her body, the sorcerer may draw greater power from within. So long as she abides by this ascetic lifestyle, she receives (Stamina) sorcerous motes after a night of sleep, plus additional sorcerous mote for every point of deprivation penalties she suffers. These sorcerous motes last until she next sleeps, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. Additionally, once per story, she may spend a scene in meditation to unlock (Essence + Stamina) sorcerous motes which last the duration of the story. Compromising the ascetic lifestyle of this shaping ritual causes the sorcerer to lose all motes granted by it, and denies her its benefits for the remainder of the story.

Other Benefits

Deep Breath Cultivation (Merit •••••): The humors governed by the element of air reside in the lungs, nourishing the entire body with vital energies. As long as the sorcerer abides by an ascetic lifestyle, she may completely refill her Essence pools with an hour of meditation, and adds her Stamina to the number of motes she recovers each hour while active.

Flowing Intention Cultivation (Merit ••••): The humors governed by the element of water gather in the kidneys, the corporal embodiment of the sorcerer's perseverance and effort. As long as she abides by an ascetic lifestyle, she may waive the Willpower cost to add a bonus success to an action once per day.

Living Spirit Cultivation (Merit •••): The humors governed by the element of wood reside in the liver and are the physical medium of spiritual awareness. the sorcerer rolls (Stamina + Resistance) against a poison or disease, her mastery over these humors adds her Occult in bonus dice to the roll.

Pure Heart Cultivation (Merit ••): The humors governed by the element of fire find their seat in the heart, animating the body and bridging the boundary between flesh and mind as blood flows from the heart to the brain. Once per day, when her Resolve is overcome by influence that opposes an Intimacy based on temperance or abstinence, she may lower the Willpower cost to resist it by one point.

Vital Focus Cultivation (Merit •••): The humors governed by the element of earth rest in the spleen, the bodily fulcrum through which the mind's intelligence permeates through the spirit. Deprivation penalties and wound penalties do not apply to any mental actions that the sorcerer takes, including shape sorcery actions.

The Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes

A phylactery of great sorcerous puissance, this talisman is wrought from rune-etched orichalcum and set with a gleaming ruby of ten facets. Each facet seems to reflect ten more within its depths, which reflect even more, creating the illusion of infinity that gives this relic its name. You have claimed the talisman as your own, using it either to initiate yourself into sorcery or as a wellspring of power to draw upon. Its ten thousand eyes are ever watchful, giving warning when malefic forces roam unchecked, and serving as a lens through which you may cast your sight or presence.

> Crafting Sorcerous Relics
>
> While the a character may gain the Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes at character creation by learning one of its shaping rituals, rather than investing dots in the Artifact background, it is still a four-dot artifact, as are any other relics of comparable sorcerous power. A character attempting to craft such a wonder must first design the perfect shape of a relic to channel mystical energies. This is an Ambition 1 working of the Celestial Circle. If the sorcerous working succeeds, the character may then begin crafting the artifact using the usual rules (p. XX), unlocking one of its shaping rituals for free upon completion. If the working fails, then the design is intrinsically flawed, and the sorcerer may not attempt to recreate it again without some source of inspiration for a new design.

Shaping Rituals

• The sorcerer may hone her senses through the talisman to open her inner eye, paying a point of Willpower whenever she makes an Awareness roll to Join Battle or notice a hidden threat while wearing the talisman. She gains one sorcerous mote for every two successes on this roll. These

motes last for the duration of the scene, and can be spent towards any spell she casts. If she is joining battle against or searching out malevolent sorcerous forces—enemy sorcerers, bound demons, strange beings created by sorcery—she also adds her Occult in bonus dice to the roll.

• When the sorcerer takes the first shape sorcery action to begin casting a spell and stunts it with a description of how she casts the spell through the talisman or draws on its power, she gains (stunt rating + 2) sorcerous motes towards completing this spell. This benefit can only be received once per scene. Stunts to enhance the sorcerer's control spell do not count against the once per scene limit.

• A sorcerer with an Essence pool may spend a scene in meditation to commit ten motes to the talisman. Once she begins shaping a spell while wearing the talisman, she may draw on the power she's invested, contributing up to (Essence + 2) sorcerous motes towards the spell until the full commitment of ten motes has been converted into ten sorcerous motes, or the spell is cast (or countered). Committed motes are converted to sorcerous motes on a one-to-one basis normally, but are converted into two sorcerous motes when casting the sorcerer's control spell. The sorcerer must wait until she's had a full night's sleep before she can charge the talisman again.

Other Benefits

Astral Meditation (Merit •): The talisman serves as a gateway through which the sorcerer may send her presence to distant corners of Creation. Once per day, while wearing the talisman, she may waive the Willpower costs of a spell that allows her to sense things remotely or project her presence from afar, such as Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares.

Eye of Crimson Warning (Merit ••): The ruby set in the talisman pulses with warning light when it comes within ten miles of dangerous sorcerous forces—a sorcerer wreaking havoc with spells, a demon bound to ill ends or unbound and rampaging, an ancient curse fallen upon the land. Any tracking rolls the wearer makes to pinpoint or chase down such perils enjoys double 9s.

Evocations: Exalted sorcerers may master Evocations of the Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes. These Evocations typically enhance the wearer's senses, both mundane and spiritual, or directly enhance or alter spells.

> Mortal Sorcerers and Shaping Rituals
>
> Mortal sorcerers initiate into the Terrestrial Circle by mastering a shaping ritual, which they may purchase as a five-dot Merit that requires Occult 3. The first spell they learn becomes their control spell. Most mortal sorcerers only ever attain one ritual, but at the Storyteller's discretion, they might be able to gain more from the same sorcerous archetype, or even different ones.

…And Many More

The archetypes above are only examples of what sorcerous initiation might look like. Here are a handful of assorted shaping rituals that players might use to fit their concept for a sorcerer or as a starting point to design a new sorcerous archetype.

• The sorcerer has been tutored in the arcane arts at the Heptagram or a similar sorcerous academy. Once per story, she may perform sorcerous research and then roll (Intelligence + Lore), gaining sorcerous motes equal to the successes that last for that story's duration. Access to a library or a mentor adds one to two bonus dice to this roll.

• The sorcerer may draw power from the forces of wind, rain, and storm, gaining two sorcerous motes each turn she takes while exposed to a thunderstorm, heavy winds, or other harsh weather. Rain showers or light gusts still offer some power, allowing her to gain (Essence) motes at the start of the scene but not on any subsequent turns. Taking damage from a weather-based environmental hazard gives her five motes per level of damage. These motes last for the duration of the scene.

• The sorcerer may bathe in the geomantic fires that burn in her manse's heart to gain (Essence + Willpower) sorcerous motes, at the price of taking a level of aggravated damage. These motes last for a fortnight, or until she next claims motes from the manse. While within the bounds of the manse, she also gains one additional sorcerous mote each turn while casting a spell.

• The sorcerer builds on the emotional resonance of song through her spells, gaining (Performance) sorcerous motes towards a spell once per scene after using song or music to inspire an audience with an emotion that resonates with that spell or with the purpose she's using it to achieve.

> Example: Two Sorcerers
>
> Will decides that his Solar learned sorcery before even Exalting, serving as a cultist to the demon Glafira, the Zodiac of Blood. This is just a name and a title he made up, but he and the Storyteller work out that Glafira is a Second Circle Demon who dwells in the stars of Hell, and hungers for the end of time itself. Will takes Terrestrial Circle Sorcery at character creation, and decides to pick a shaping ritual that represents his infernalist past. He decides to use the second ritual from "Pact with an Ifrit Lord," gaining power by praying to the Zodiac of Blood. He also picks a few Merits that he and the Storyteller agree fit that background: Infernal Nobility from "A Bargain with Mara," and a modified version of Eye of Crimson Warning from "The Talisman of Ten Thousand Eyes" that lets him sense infernalist cults, demons, or secret paths and portals to Hell.
>
> Elliott, meanwhile, waits until a few sessions in before his Solar character learns sorcery. Over the course of the game, the circle has defeated and imprisoned a powerful raksha noble, and Elliott asks the Storyteller if he could compel the raksha to initiate him, and just use the "Scarred by Nightmares" archetype to represent this, even though the background isn't quite the same. This is reasonable, so the Storyteller agrees.

Terrestrial Circle Spells

Cirrus Skiff

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Until ended

The sorcerer calls down a Cirrus Skiff to bear her skyward, a small white puffy cloud just large enough for her and one other passenger to ride upon. The cloud descends from the sky and hovers near the sorcerer like a faithful puppy until she steps on, at which point it rises into the air, obeying her mental commands. It is slow-moving, managing a pace of only (Essence x 6) miles per hour, but is virtually unlimited in its flight capability, able to rise upward with no limit other than the ability of its caster to endure the rarefied air of the upper atmosphere. In combat, the sorcerer rolls (Wits + Occult) in place of standard movement rolls to mentally direct the cloud, but otherwise faces no complications or penalties.

If the sorcerer wishes to sleep, study, or otherwise rest on the Cirrus Skiff without having to give it constant instructions, she may give it a set command, such as "Fly a mile up into the air and stay there" or "Circle around the satrap's palace," which it will obey until she gives it new orders. The sorcerer may disembark from the skiff for up to one scene without ending this spell, but any absence beyond that ends the spell, sending the cloud flying back up into the stratosphere.

A character who knows Cirrus Skiff as her control spell may cast it with an Indefinite duration. Her conjured cloud will follow after her after she disembarks, eagerly awaiting her return without ever leaving. It will follow simple instructions from the sorcerer, even when she's not riding it, and can be summoned by the sorcerer's call from anywhere in Creation, proceeding to her side at the best speed it can manage.

Distortion (Goal Number: 7): Distorting a Cirrus Skiff weighs it down, turning the cloud into a heavy, dense fog for a scene. The sorcerer suffers a -3 penalty on the (Wits + Occult) rolls to control the distorted skiff's movement, and it cannot fly above long range from the ground. If it is already higher than that, it begins dropping at a rate of two range bands per round, in addition to any other movement the sorcerer takes.

Corrupted Words

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: Psyche

Duration: Indefinite

The sorcerer speaks words that bind the tongue—she evokes a seething, bilious mass of green Essence between her hands and casts it down the throat of a victim at short range, where it dissolves into a ward that censors that character's mind. As she does, she forbids the victim from speaking of a single subject, which may be as specific as "The letters I secretly send to the All-Seeing Eye at the end of every month" or as broad as "The existence of Sidereal Exalted." It is impossible to defend against this curse barring magic that can perfectly dodge or parry uncountable damage such as Heavenly Guardian Defense, but the sorcerer must roll (Intelligence + Occult) against the victim's Resolve to successfully bind his will.

A cursed character feels waves of nausea if he even thinks of trying to communicate anything about the topic. If he tries to do so despite this warning, he becomes overwhelmed with wracking pain and begins vomiting up dozens of fat, white maggots, rendering that action or any other impossible for at least a turn. This applies to all forms of communication—speaking, writing, telepathy, or any desperate signals the victim tries to use to circumvent the restriction of this curse—and persists until the cursed character ceases trying to violate the ban. This spell may be ended by the sorcerer's death or may be willingly released, as the sorcerer reaches a hand down the victim's mouth and recites the last word of this spell backwards to extract a slimy egg-sac full of squirming larvae that is the physical embodiment of this curse.

A sorcerer who knows Corrupted Words as her control spell may cast it with no obvious display of magical intervention other than a faint flash of green in her eyes, leaving her victim uncertain as to the affliction's source.

Distortion (Goal Number: 15): Distorting this curse makes it possible for the victim to speak around the forbidden subject matter for five minutes. He must speak using circumlocutions, flowery metaphors, or cryptic symbolism to communicate the broad gist of the topic, and cannot go into any level of detail beyond the most superficial. This does not avert the inevitable tide of maggots, but gives the victim enough time to speak before he must disgorge them.

Death of Obsidian Butterflies

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant

Sculpting Essence into volant black glass, the sorcerer unleashes a cascade of obsidian butterflies. She rolls (Perception + Occult) as an undodgeable **decisive** attack applied in a line against enemies out to medium range. This line is wide enough to strike all opponents within the width of a single range band and reaches high enough to strike aerial enemies who are at short range to the ground (medium range enemies in the air can still be targeted by directing the butterflies to fly along an upward path, rather than a horizontal one). Battle groups are especially vulnerable to being cut down by this spell, taking a -2 penalty to Defense against it.

The attack deals raw damage equal to the sorcerer's (Essence + extra successes), or (Essence + Occult + extra successes) against a battle group. It does not reset the sorcerer to base Initiative. Scenery made of wood, glass, or other fragile materials is generally destroyed. After this spell has been cast, the obsidian butterflies fall to the ground and shatter, creating terrain that may be hazardous for barefooted characters to traverse—treat as an environmental hazard inflicting two dice of lethal damage, difficulty 2 to resist with a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll, and if the character is barefoot, difficult terrain as well. Any character wearing armored boots can generally ignore the debris.

A sorcerer who knows Death of Obsidian Butterflies as her control spell gains (Essence) bonus dice to the spell's attack roll. When her emotions run hot, butterfly silhouettes rise from her shadow. When she is angry, her fingernails turn to sharp volcanic glass, making it possible to cut cloth or paper, rend wood or flesh and other similar stunts.

Demon of the First Circle

Cost: Ritual, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

The sorcerer conjures one of the least monsters of the Demon Realm into Creation, breaking and binding it to her will. This spell requires a ritual that begins at sundown, and ends at the stroke of midnight. A faint green glow traces out a rift between Creation and Hell, and a First Circle Demon of the sorcerer's choice is drawn forth, howling with rage, fear, or sorrow.

Demons summoned by this spell must be bound with an (Intelligence + Occult) roll against their Resolve. The sorcerer may choose to make the demon her personal slave for a year and a day, giving it a Defining Tie of loyalty to her that cannot be weakened or altered by any means and setting its Resolve to 0 against any influence rolls she makes. Alternatively, she may assign it to complete a specific task—"Construct a tower using these plans," "Murder Magistrate Yang," "Dig a tunnel through this wall"—for as long as it takes to complete. Task-bound demons form a Defining Principle of "I must complete my task," which is similarly impervious to tampering. On a failed binding roll, the sorcerer is unable to bind the demon, and must make a (Wits + Occult) roll against a difficulty of the demon's Willpower to banish it back to Hell. If she fails, then the demon is unleashed, unbound, into Creation—and is most likely very angry at her.

> The Right Demon for the Job
>
> Demon summoning isn't a trap, a Faustian bargain, or a surefire path to corruption. Most sorcerers view it as an easy source of supernatural slave labor, and for the most part, they're right. A bound demon follows both the letter *and spirit* of the sorcerer's commands to the best of its will and understanding. The greatest difficulty faced by most demon summoners is coping with the alien natures and inhuman desires of their bound retinue, making it important to choose the right demon for any given task.
>
> *Example:* Lord Sky of Urim calls to a pair of bound blood-apes and says, "The city is not safe, and my people are watched. I must send my son to Chiaroscuro, to dwell with my ally Prince Nahim of the Seven Pearls, until the current troubles are over. Yet were I to send him out escorted by my men, his guards would surely be ambushed along the road and he would be taken hostage or slain. Smuggle him out of the city tonight, and see him safely to the door of Prince Nahim in Chiaroscuro."
>
> The blood-apes understand that Lord Sky values his son, and that their job is to see him safely into the care of Prince Nahim. Lord Sky can rest assured they're not going to devour or beat his son for annoying them along the way. They also understand not to leave his son unattended on Prince Nahim's literal doorstep.
>
> But… they're *blood-apes. They're crude, vicious, stupid brutes with little understanding of children, summoned up from the depths of Hell and eager to do their master's bidding.*

It's a coin-toss whether they're going to realize eating the guards on the city's postern-gate will to leave a suspicious trail. Assuming they think that far ahead, they may well decide to smuggle the child out through the sewers—they'll find the muck and stink comfortable and homey, after all. Then they're going to negotiate the best stealthy journey to Chiaroscuro they can. This is apt to involve lots of off-road travel with Lord Sky's son clinging to the matted, stinking fur of a blood-ape's back as it goes loping through hilly light forest and broken foothills to avoid the major roads—and he's only going on the demon's back once they realize he can't keep the pace they want to set on foot without breaking his legs in the dark or collapsing from fatigue. The child will almost certainly see his two guards kill any loners or small groups that spot them along their journey in the interests of secrecy and security (and also because they're bored and hungry). The blood-apes are *likely* to offer him a haunch of whoever it is they're eating after they conduct these security operations, because Lord Sky favors his child, and the demons, as his genuinely loyal servants, will try to be polite. They're not going to understand all his whining and complaints along the way. They won't raise a hand to the child, as they understand he's not to be harmed, but they're going to lose their patience and bellow at him periodically. Once they hit Chiaroscuro, assuming they manage to make it there without any kind of major catastrophe befalling the group, there's going to be some trouble if Lord Sky neglected to tell them how to find Prince Nahim's residence in the city, as a blood-ape's idea of asking for directions involves lots of death-threats and biting skulls open.

Lord Sky would do well to send a trusted lieutenant or a smarter demon along to manage the expedition. The two blood-apes *can* get the job done, and they *will* mercilessly kill anything that threatens his son if it's within their power to do so, but when they're not fighting to protect him, blood-apes make for incredibly poor, trauma-inducing nannies.

Flight of the Brilliant Raptor

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant

The sorcerer shapes flames of diamond and ruby into the form of a majestic bird of prey, evoking the elemental majesty of the garda birds. The player rolls (Perception + Occult) as a **decisive** attack against an enemy at up to long range, then sends the raptor streaking forth to consume her foe in deadly flames. The brilliant raptor embodies the sorcerer's will, with a base lethal damage equal to (her Initiative + current temporary Willpower), and resets her to base Initiative on a successful attack. As long as the raptor deals 3+ levels of damage to its target, it ignites a bonfire (p. XX) that engulfs him and all terrain within short range of him, and burns until the end of the scene.

A sorcerer who knows Flight of the Brilliant Raptor as her control spell may use it to attack a target one range band beyond long range by paying an extra 5sm when casting the spell.

Infallible Messenger

Cost: 5sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Until message is delivered

The sorcerer shapes a small, six-winged messenger spirit to convey her words to another character. The spirit flies with immense speed, capable of crossing hundreds of miles in an hour or all Creation in less than a day—only the boundaries between realms of existence will stop it from delivering its missive. Upon arrival, the cherub is visible only to its intended target, to whom it can deliver a message of up to five minutes in length before dissipating. Sorcerers can convey social influence through the Infallible Messenger, but cannot normally use their Charms to enhance the roll.

A sorcerer who knows Infallible Messenger as her control spell may pay an additional point of Willpower to project her senses through the cherub's own, allowing her to use Awareness and Investigation Charms while delivering the missive. Having this spell as her control will also cause a number of tells to begin manifesting in the sorcerer's vicinity, even when the spell has not been cast. It may appear in murals or paintings that she owns, carven amongst the gargoyles of her residence, or briefly fluttering in the periphery of a mirror's reflection.

Invulnerable Skin of Bronze

Cost: 20sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

The sorcerer suffuses the void between her skin and the surrounding air with Essence, weaving a second skin of shining bronze, supple and flexible as silk but cold and impervious as any metal. The Invulnerable Skin of Bronze gives the sorcerer +6 natural soak and Hardness 6, while rendering her immune to poison delivered through contact. Her metal-armored limbs deal lethal damage and use the traits of medium weapons when she makes unarmed attacks. While her mobility is not normally impaired, she is considered wearing medium armor, which might deny her the use of certain Martial Arts styles or other effects. Her bronze skin is also heavy—she will sink in water or mud, and fragile surfaces won't support her weight.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

• **Brazen Aegis Rebuke** (3m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Counterattack, Decisive-only): Even hardened steel recoils from the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, ringing off its indestructible surface. After being hit with an attack in close combat, the sorcerer may use this power to counterattack with a disarm gambit. This counterattack is both unblockable and undodgeable.

• **Invincible God-Metal Flash** (10m, 2a or 3a; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only): When even the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze cannot withstand the force of an enemy's blows, the sorcerer may shed it in a burst of protective Essence. While her anima is at the burning or bonfire level, she may use Invincible God-Metal Flash to reduce the raw damage of a **decisive** attack by her

(Essence + 5), discharging her anima through the spell. The skin of bronze shatters as it absorbs the attack, and the sorcerer cannot cast it again until its original duration has elapsed. Her anima is returned to the dim level.

• **Sorcerer's Impervious Mantle** (4m; Reflexive; Instant; Withering-only): The sorcerer's Essence surges through her armored skin, reducing the minimum damage of a **withering** attack by one.

A sorcerer who knows Invulnerable Skin of Bronze as her control spell may add her Essence to the soak and Hardness bonus she receives as long as she is unarmored. Even without the spell, her skin takes on a faint bronze tint. She may also add her Essence to her soak when the spell is not in effect.

Distortion (Goal Number: 12): Distorting the spell forces the sorcerer to feel the full weight of her metal skin bearing down on her, imposing a -4 mobility penalty for one scene. If her total mobility penalty exceeds (the higher of her Strength or Athletics), then she loses the ability to take reflexive move actions, and must take a miscellaneous action to cross a range band even under normal circumstances. Distortion also disables all three of the spell's special powers.

Mists of Eventide

Cost: 7sm, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Three rounds

The sorcerer lulls the Essence of air into sleep, transforming it into an opalescent fog of slumber. Mists of Eventide creates a cloud centered on a point out to medium range from the sorcerer, spreading to engulf all characters within short range of the center. Each round that a character breathes or has skin exposed to the mist, he must roll against its poison (Damage 3i/round, Duration 6 rounds, -3 penalty). Characters who are crashed while suffering from the Mists of Eventide's effects do not take damage from it—instead, they fall into magical slumber, rendered comatose for a single day.

Special activation rules: Mists of Eventide can only be cast once per scene, unless reset when a Mists-poisoned opponent falls into Initiative Crash.

A sorcerer who knows Mists of Eventide as his control spell can control the dreams of anyone who sleeps within his mists, causing them not only to dream what he commands, but to physically act out those dreams while sleepwalking. They can even be forced to battle their allies. The sorcerer may also reflexively release a spume of the mists from his breath once per scene; a target who breathes in these mists suffers the effects of the spell as though it had been cast. Sorcerers with Mists of Eventide as their control spell sleep fitfully with their eyes wide open unless surrounded by the mists.

Distortion (Goal Number: 5): Distorting the mists weakens their efficacy, halving the duration of each dose. Additionally, an opposing sorcerer may wake a character forced into magical slumber with distortion actions targeting him, made at the same goal number.

Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares

Cost: Ritual, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One dream

Staring into a polished mirror, still pond, or other reflective surface, the sorcerer brandishes a scrap of clothing, lock of hair, or similar symbolic link to another character, using it to gain power over that person's dreams. The next time the target sleeps, he experience an especially vivid and memorable dream created by the sorcerer. She rolls (Intelligence + Presence) to instill, persuade, or inspire the dreaming character, as best fits the imagery and emotional tenor of the dream she creates. He cannot apply any Intimacies to enhance Resolve against this influence, nor can he pay Willpower to resist unless the influence threatens one of his Intimacies. The symbolic link to the dreamer is burnt to a fine white ash upon his waking, requiring the sorcerer to procure another before she can cast this spell on him again.

A sorcerer who knows Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares as her control spell may cast it without needing a link to her target, so long as she has interacted with him in person previously. Once she has done so, she must meet with him once more before she can cast this spell without a link again.

Distortion (Special): Distorting the Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares requires the opposing sorcerer to find either the character who cast it or the spell's victim before he sleeps. Instead of having a set goal number, every two successes the distorting sorcerer accumulates before the terminus of the action elapses adds +1 to the victim's Resolve against the dream's influence, up to a maximum bonus of +4.

Stormwind Rider

Cost: 15sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One hour

Bending the winds to her will, the sorcerer creates a servile dust devil to ride. The Stormwind Rider is treated as a flying mount (p. XX), although it cannot take the sorcerer to more than short range above the ground. (Wits + Occult) replaces the usual rolls for all combat movement actions. The whirlwind can carry up to (Essence x 2) additional characters, or one hundred pounds of cargo in place of a single passenger. While it cannot soar as high as the Cirrus Skiff, the Stormwind Rider can travel at nearly 100 miles an hour and maneuver through forests or cities. In a race with other characters, the sorcerer rolls (Intelligence + Occult + current temporary Willpower) for each interval. In combat, characters within the Stormwind Rider are treated as having light cover against attacks made from outside of it, and vice versa. A passenger who is crashed or hit with a **decisive** attack is knocked out of the whirlwind, and suffers falling damage if applicable.

A sorcerer who knows Stormwind Rider as her control spell is buffeted by winds whenever she is beset by strong emotions. Sudden movements cause a small vortex powerful enough to scatter papers, upset furniture and topple someone caught off-guard. Her vertical leaps are buoyed by

wind, allowing her to leap upward a single range band as her movement action; she can do so up to (Stamina) times before needing to rest.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

• **Enduring Tempest** (5m; Reflexive; Instant): Once this spell's duration has elapsed, the sorcerer may use Enduring Tempest to extend its duration for another hour. She may do so for as long as she has Essence to continue using this power.

• **Zephyr Rush** (1m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant): The sorcerer whips the Stormwind Rider into a sudden frenzy of speed, allowing her to move up to two range bands with a single movement action in combat or doubling 8s on one interval of a race.

Distortion (Goal Number: 15): Distorting a stormwind rider causes it to buck and swerve violently in its flight, threatening to throw off its riders. All characters carried by the whirlwind must succeed at a difficulty 4 (Dexterity + Athletics) roll to maintain balance, although the sorcerer who cast it may substitute (Wits + Occult). Characters who fail their roll fall out of the whirlwind.

Summon Elemental

Cost: Ritual, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Drawing and shaping Essence through one of the five elements, the sorcerer calls an elemental into being and binds it to her will. Casting this spell requires a ritual of four hours as the sorcerer channels Essence through icons of the element, draws up sigils of creation and binding, or communes with the appropriate Elemental Dragon. At the end of her ritual, she summons an elemental of up to Essence 3 into existence, creating it out of pure Essence rather than calling it from somewhere else.

Once summoned, the elemental must be bound to the sorcerer's will, as per Demon of the First Circle (p. XX), except that an elemental cannot break free—if the binding fails, the elemental simply disperses back into raw Essence, and the sorcerer doesn't regain the Willpower spent on the spell. At the end of a bound elemental's term of service or assigned task, it usually undergoes the same fate of dissipation, although elementals who have developed a fully-formed personality and identity may persist past the end of their binding at the Storyteller's discretion. Summon Elemental can only be cast once per day.

> Summoning and Battle Groups
>
> A sorcerer with summoning spells such as Demon of the First Circle or Summon Elemental can easily amass large forces of spirits bound to her will. In combat, keep in mind that these should usually be represented as battle groups (p. XX) rather than giving each spirit its own turn, unless it is a distinct and powerful being such as a Second Circle demon.

Wood Dragon's Claws

Cost: 5sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Until dismissed

The sorcerer transforms her hands into huge, gnarled claws of thorny oak, like those of the majestic elemental dragons of wood. Slashing with these claws uses the traits of a light artifact weapon with the same traits as an unarmed attack, save that its damage tag is lethal rather than bashing. They do not count as unarmed attacks for the purpose of martial arts, and also render the sorcerer's hands incapable of fine manipulation such as writing, wielding a weapon, or turning a doorknob.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

• **Bramble Hell Torment** (10m; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): When the sorcerer makes a **decisive** savaging attack against a clinched enemy, her claws explode into impaling spikes, adding (Essence) successes to the damage roll. This power can only be used once per grapple.

• **Living Thorn Transformation** (3m; Reflexive; Instant): Warping and twisting her claws, the sorcerer may grant them the tag of her choice for the rest of the scene. She might extend them into a lash of scourging brambles to grant them the flexible tag, reshape them into a bludgeoning club-fists to grant them the smashing tag, or similar. Only one tag can be granted by this power at a time.

A sorcerer who knows Wood Dragon's Claws as her control spell may create and master Evocations for the claws, which can only be used while this spell is active.

Distortion (Goal Number: 12): Distorting the Wood Dragon's Claws causes them to begin growing wildly, engulfing the enemy sorcerer's arms in a tangle of twisting roots. He cannot take any actions that require the use of his arms, including attacking, until he has succeeded on an extended (Strength + Athletics) roll (difficulty: 2; interval: one round; goal number: 10) to break free of this entanglement. If he is grappling an enemy when the distortion occurs, the distraction of his own spell turning on him allows that character to reflexively break free. The spell cannot be dismissed while it is distorted.

Celestial Circle Spells

Cantata of Empty Voices

Cost: 15sm, 2wp

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant or until ended

A choir of silver-white wraiths surrounds the sorcerer, inciting utter agony with their keening song. This is an environmental hazard against all enemies within short range, with a resistance difficulty equal to the sorcerer's Intelligence (use [Stamina + Resistance]) and Damage 2L.

Characters who fail the roll lose a point of Willpower, while battle groups instead immediately check for rout.

Once the sorcerer has begun the Cantata of Empty Voices, she may sustain it with an unrolled shape sorcery action taken on each subsequent turn at no additional cost. As she continues the song, its range expands—to medium range on the first subsequent turn, then to long range. Every three turns after that, it expands to cover another range band, until it ultimately spreads to a maximum radius of one mile. At this point, the Storyteller should not make individual rolls for each trivial opponent or hapless bystander caught in the cantata, but simply describe the mass deaths and panicked, fleeing mobs that result.

A sorcerer who knows Cantata of Empty Voices as her control spell may maintain it even during Initiative Crash. As long as she recovers from the crash without being hit with a **decisive** attack, the casting of the spell proceeds uninterrupted.

Distortion (Goal Number: 10): Distorting the cantata neutralizes its killing power, converting all damage dealt by it to bashing and preventing it from rolling over to inflict lethal damage. While the enemy sorcerer might be able to inflict wide-scale harm, the spell will not result in death by itself, and recovery will be much easier for its victims.

Demon of the Second Circle

Cost: Ritual, 3wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Celestial sorcerers may call upon demons of the Second Circle, baleful spirits that serve the Yozis. The ritual to summon a Second Circle Demon is much like that described in Demon of the First Circle, save that it can only be performed on the night of the new moon (and then only once per lunar cycle), or once during one of the five black nights of Calibration. Instead of pulling the demon through a glowing green glyph, tongues of green fire trace out a mandala that is the demon's name written in the alphabet of Hell, and it emerges from this circle at the sorcerer's call.

The roll to bind Second Circle Demons is the same as with First Circle Demons, but failure is more dangerous. If the sorcerer fails her (Intelligence + Occult) roll against the demon's Resolve by three successes or more, then she is unable to banish the demon, and must contend with its wrath or wiles.

> No Shortcuts in Hell
>
> Demons of the Second Circle and other entities that can be summoned by powerful sorcery are sometimes initiated into sorcery themselves. A player might think that he could just have a demon perform a sorcerous working for him, allowing him to reap the benefit without having to pay the experience point cost of the working. Sadly for him, this isn't the case. The experience spent to finalize a sorcerous working represents the sorcerer's time and effort to bring the working into being, and summoning a demon to aid in undertaking the working is just

another aspect of that effort. While having a bound demon will certainly help complete the working successfully—enhancing the sorcerer's Means, generally—it won't let the sorcerer avoid having to pay the experience point cost.

Impenetrable Veil of Night

Cost: 30sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

A twisting nexus of living shadows takes form between the sorcerer's hands. As she completes the spell, she casts the umbral tangle upward, where it expands into a column of ebon darkness centered on the sorcerer that extends out one mile in horizontal diameter and immeasurably high vertically. Within the Impenetrable Veil of Night, torches, lanterns, and even anima banners cast light out only to half their usual range, while speech and noises echo in strange, unnatural ways. Even characters with supernatural senses capable of seeing in mundane darkness still suffer a -2 penalty on all Awareness or Perception-based rolls made within the veil. A battle group that is caught within the darkness immediately makes a rout check at +1 difficulty.

A sorcerer who knows Impenetrable Veil of Night as her control spell speaks with a distorted voice, as if she were always standing within the nihil of the spell. Light subtly flees her body. She gains three bonus dice on Stealth rolls made to stay hidden while moving in combat at night or in shadowy environs, but loses the same amount of dice in broad daylight while in open spaces. She also gains a +2 bonus to movement actions made at night, but a -2 penalty to movement actions made in open daylight.

Distortion (Goal Number: 15): Distorting the veil causes the darkness to part around the sorcerer, out to medium range from her, for up to an hour.

Incomparable Body Arsenal

Cost: 30sm, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: (Essence) hours

The sorcerer reshapes her body into a clanking metallic form of rust-streaked black iron, mimicking her human appearance but roughly cast, studded with rivets where segments of her metal skin meet. While in this form, the sorcerer may reflexively produce any manner of mundane weapons from her body—rusty iron spikes burst from her skin, knives extend from fingertips, an arm lengthens into a broadsword or warhammer, and jagged metal blades fire from her mouth. None of these weapons can be disarmed or destroyed. The spell grants her benefits equivalent to heavy artifact armor (p. XX), while rendering her capable of functioning without air, completely immune to mundane poisons, and unaffected by extremes of temperature, even when they manifest as environmental hazards. She doubles 9s on all ([Strength or Stamina] + Ability) rolls, and adds one success to all **withering** and **decisive** attack rolls.

A sorcerer who knows Incomparable Body Arsenal as her control spell may create and master Evocations for it, which can only be used while this spell is active. These Evocations can enhance the armor-nature of this spell, its weapons, or a combination of both.

In addition, characters with an Essence pool gain access to the following powers while this spell is active:

God-Weapon Armament (8m; Reflexive; Indefinite; Stackable): When the sorcerer manifests a weapon from her Incomparable Body Arsenal, she may use this Charm to grant it the traits of an artifact weapon. The weapons created with this Charm can take on exotic and overtly magical forms—an artifact firewand might manifest as a dragon-headed helm that spit fires, while razor claws might take the form of foot-long serrated claws extending from the fingers of one hand. Multiple invocations of this Charm can be stacked to create multiple artifact weapons.

Metal Behemoth Might (10m; Supplemental; Instant): When the sorcerer attempts a feat of strength, she may add +2 to her effective Strength for determining what feats she may attempt. This is not added to her dice pool.

Unstoppable Juggernaut Endurance (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite): The sorcerer may reinforce her vitality with this spell, gaining one -2 health level and two -4 health levels. Damage fills these temporary health levels before the sorcerer's natural health levels of the same wound penalty, and the levels fade away when filled with damage. This power can only be used once during the spell's duration.

Distortion (Goal Number: 15): Distorting the Incomparable Body Arsenal wreaks a terrifying transformation on the opposing sorcerer as the metallic components of his transformed body spike inwards, goring innards and mutilating limbs. This inflicts a crippling comparable to an amputation (chosen by the original caster), as the enemy's arms are rendered useless by the jagged metal spikes exploding inside them or metal plates weld themselves over his eyes to blind him. Once the spell ends, the distortion's mutilation is undone along with the usual transformation. The caster may attempt to recover the distorted spell to full functionality by making an extended roll with (Wits + Occult), with a difficulty of 3, an interval of one action (which cannot be flurried) and a goal number of the total number of cumulative successes achieved on the distortion roll, rounded up. If she succeeds, the distortion is reversed.

Ivory Orchid Pavilion

Cost: Ritual, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One day

As the sorcerer spends a few minutes tracing the borders of this spell with her footsteps, a spire of ivory rises from the ground like the calyx of an immense flower carved from marble. Once she completes the circuit, the central pillar unfurls its petals to reveal a splendid mansion. Ornate furniture, silk curtains, and fine beddings adorn the chambers of the palace, and the pleasant scent of fresh orchids is everywhere. Feasting tables within the mansion's dining room are replete with fresh fruits and nuts and bowls of wine, never seeming to run empty, though vanishing if taken outside. Any character who enters the Ivory Orchid Pavilion and partakes of

its amenities or sleeps within it is treated as having a Major Tie of blissful contentment towards dwelling within it until the end of his stay—most spirits and cultured sorcerers consider this a luxury rather than an imposition, relishing the chance to forget their troubles. Once this spell ends, the mansion folds back into the ground, safely depositing all guests outside. For five years after the casting of the spell, white orchids will grow from the ground where it was cast.

A sorcerer who knows Ivory Orchid Pavilion as her control spell may cast it with a duration of Indefinite. The mansion will remain standing for as long as she stays within it.

Distortion (Goal Number: 10): Distorting an Ivory Orchid Pavilion subtly inverts the blissful atmosphere of the sanctum, transforming the Intimacy imposed by this spell into a Major Tie of suspicion and distrust of all other characters within the pavilion. This inversion lasts until it leads to a scene in which built-up suspicion comes to a head in a dramatic fashion.

Magma Kraken

Cost: 30sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Calling to the Essence of fire and earth that roils deep beneath her, the sorcerer wills ten tentacles of lava to erupt from the ground, shaking the earth as they burst forward in torrents of molten stone. She designates where each appears, out to as far as long range from her. Together, these form the Magma Kraken. It is rolled into battle with the sorcerer's (Wits + Occult), and has a base Initiative equal to her Essence. As it erupts from the ground, any character who is at the point where a tentacle emerges must make a difficulty 2 (Dexterity + Athletics) roll to avoid it, or else be flung one range band away and knocked prone by the eruption.

The Magma Kraken may act on its turn to make a **withering** or **decisive** attack, grapple an enemy, or wreak general havoc on the scenery. It uses the sorcerer's (Intelligence + Occult + Essence) for all attack and feat of strength rolls, and each tentacle can strike out to short range from its location. If it becomes necessary for the kraken to make a roll for another action, such as opposing an enemy's stealth attempt, its dice pool is equal to the sorcerer's ([Relevant Attribute] + Occult + Essence).

• **Withering** attacks made by the Magma Kraken are treated as medium artifact weapons with the lethal, grappling, and reaching tags. If the kraken uses multiple tentacles to attack, it makes a single attack roll and divides the successes among all targets to determine who is hit, before rolling damage separately for each.

• **Decisive** attacks add the sorcerer's Essence to their base damage. If the kraken attacks multiple enemies, it makes one attack roll and does not divide those successes, but instead divides its Initiative among each enemy that it strikes to determine the raw damage of the attack. It must assign at least three points of Initiative to each enemy.

• The kraken may only attempt to grapple a single enemy each turn, and receives a flat total of (five + sorcerer's Essence) successes on the control roll. The kraken suffers no penalties from grappling, but a tentacle being used to clinch an enemy cannot make attacks against anyone else.

• Destroying scenery such as setting fire to vegetation, melting through stone walls, or uprooting statues counts as a feat of strength. The kraken is treated as having Strength 10 for determining the feats it may attempt, and doubles 7s on the roll. It may use multiple tentacles together to perform a feat with no penalty.

The Magma Kraken cannot be targeted by **withering** or **decisive** attacks, nor is it possible for it to be grappled, but enemies may attempt to destroy a tentacle with a difficulty 5 gambit as long as they are armed with an artifact weapon or some form of magic that could reasonably disrupt a living pillar of molten stone. At the Storyteller's discretion, attacks or hazards that affect an area or multiple targets and deal 5+ levels of damage can also destroy any tentacles within their range. Destroying a tentacle frees any character being grappled by it. If all ten of the kraken's tentacles are destroyed, the spell ends. At the end of the scene, the tentacles or their broken remains harden into obsidian and remain fixed where they stand or lie.

A sorcerer who knows Magma Kraken as her control spell is forever chased by magmatic flame. An open fire curls into tentacles around her, or a torch flame licks out from its sconce to light her pipe. When she is angry, the walls or ground become blistered and hot, with faint tentacle shapes writhing in rising smoke. The sorcerer can use these effects to intimidate, set fires, melt minor obstacles and perform other similar stunts.

Distortion (Goal Number: 10): Distorting a Magma Kraken renders it incapable of perceiving and attacking the distorting sorcerer as well as all allies within close range of her (though this is of limited use if it is already grappling her). If this distortion renders the kraken incapable of perceiving any enemies at all, it will begin using its tentacles to lash out at random in hopes of striking a hidden foe.

Shadows of the Ancient Past

Cost: 10sm, 2wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

The sorcerer calls up the lingering echoes of the past to reenact themselves before her. The sorcerer may choose a specific time in the past she wishes to view, such as "One hundred years ago, on the first day of Ascending Air," or a subjective time that relates to something in the scene, such as "When this corpse died." The spell creates translucent, insubstantial illusions that fill the room or area and display the events of the specified point in time. The sorcerer may mentally pause the action for detailed examination with Awareness or Investigation actions, or accelerate the flow of time within the illusion so that up to an entire day passes by in the space of the scene. Attempting to view events from more than five centuries ago call only vague, indistinguishable images that rarely convey useful details. The events of the recent present—within the past year or so—have yet to form substantial echoes, providing only the barest of imagery conjured.

A sorcerer who knows Shadows of the Ancient Past as her control spell may mentally record all illusions conjured by any casting of this spell. She may cause them to reappear at a later point at any time by taking a shape sorcery action at no cost.

Distortion (Goal Number: 5): Distorting this spell allows the opposing sorcerer to falsify the illusions for the duration of the spell, warping and obfuscating the truth. While she cannot totally eliminate the information the casting sorcerer is attempting to discern, she may introduce all manner of contradictory evidence, red herrings, or misleading images in an attempt to throw him off the trail.

Travel Without Distance

Cost: 25sm, 2wp

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

The sorcerer shapes a blazing corona of Essence around herself through mudras that describe the warp and weft of space. As she completes the spell, she is engulfed in whirling clouds of Essence and energy, and then is gone. She may reappear in any location within (Essence x 10) miles, as long as she has seen it before, either firsthand or through scrying magics. She appears in a safe location at the chosen duration in a swirling vortex of light sure to impress the locals. Travel Without Distance is mildly disorienting—the sorcerer suffers a -2 fatigue penalty on all actions for (6 - Stamina) hours afterwards, and cannot cast it again until this penalty has run its course. This spell is highly valued by both the Sidereal and Lunar Exalted, who maintain hidden meeting-places that can only be reached with this spell.

A sorcerer who knows Travel Without Distance as her control spell may bring up to (Essence + 1) willing characters within short range along with her when she casts this spell. All transported characters suffer the fatigue penalty from disorientation.

Solar Circle Spells

Benediction of Archgenesis

Cost: Ritual, 3wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Chanting from one sunrise to the next, the sorcerer calls down a soft, warm rain that carries life-giving Essence. Over the course of this spell's ritual, the rain falls on up to (Essence x 100) squares miles of land which the Solar wishes to revitalize with the Benediction of Archgenesis. If the land is infertile, such as an arid desert, marshy bog or rocky mountain face, then the Benediction transforms it into arable terrain, encouraging plant growth and making it possible to sustain a productive agricultural community off the land. Weather is temperate, with only enough rain to keep crops well-watered and unseasonably pleasant temperatures year-round. Animal populations from other regions migrate to the newly-fertile ground, while indigenous species have been known to grow to prodigious sizes off the bounty conjured by the benediction. Even the spirit world is affected—elementals become far more likely to arise from the blessed land, while displaced gods may seek to find a position of stewardship over the terrain, flora, or fauna of the region.

If the land is already fertile, Benediction of Archgenesis causes life to grow at an almost impossible rate. Fields of wheat grow to tower over those that tend them, while man-sized pumpkins and gourds become a common sight. Animals flock to the lush vitality of the region to the point of overpopulation. While this swell is enough to multiply the bounty of a single year's harvest by nearly a hundredfold, the surge of growth can easily deplete the soil of nutrients and create ecosystem imbalances that will persist for years. Unless the sorcerer is vigilant in counterbalancing the effects of this lush growth, she may leave famine in her wake for years thereafter.

Benediction of Archgenesis can only be cast once per story. The geomantic upheaval it causes prevents the sorcerer from casting it within one thousand miles of any region that she has previously blessed with the spell within the same year, with the exception of performing a second casting of the spell to transform a barren region made fertile into a supernaturally lush overgrowth.

A sorcerer who knows Benediction of Archgenesis as her control spell reduces the distance requirement to one hundred miles. Wherever she goes, life tends to spring up in her wake—flowers grow around her when she sleeps, grasses become taller in her footsteps and her home becomes a veritable wildlife sanctuary if she isn't careful.

Distortion (Goal Number: 30): Distorting the Benediction of Archgenesis causes all plant life within (Essence) miles of the distorting sorcerer to wither and die, leaving a barren dead zone within the blessed land. Animals in the blighted region are driven outwards as the ecosystem collapses in an instant. Herbivorous creatures may stampede or raid the food supplies of settlements within or near the blessed lands, while predators respond to the flight of their prey by turning man-eater, attacking any human settlements they can find. Even the spirits of the blighted land are corrupted, each one gaining a Major Derangement (p. XX) that somehow turns them against their original purpose or makes them harmful to humankind, assigned by the Storyteller. Note that spells can only be distorted once—an enemy sorcerer could create a rotting nexus of corruption at the heart of the Benediction of Archgenesis, but she could not utterly undo the spell without a sorcerous working.

Death Ray

Cost: 25sm, 2wp

Keywords: Aggravated, Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Instant or until ended

The Solar Exalted devised this spell to terrify the enemies of the gods. Holding her arms out before her and her hands closely together, the sorcerer makes a series of motions with her fingers that turns her conjoined hands into a channel for a flow of destructive energy. The sorcerer unleashes a violent stream of red Essence that pours from her hands, slicing through scenery and incinerating those who stand in its path. Wherever the Death Ray passes, it leaves a trail of molten slag behind it. Only the strongest magical substances are immune to the melting and carving power of this attack. The sorcerer rolls Intelligence + Occult as a **decisive** attack roll, adding Essence successes. The attack strikes all enemies in a line out to short range from her, adding extra successes and the Solar's current temporary Willpower to the raw damage roll.

Mundane weapons cannot parry the attack and are immediately destroyed upon such an attempt. Any enemy that takes 3+ levels of damage from the Death Ray is blown back one range band and falls prone. Making this attack does not immediately reset the Solar to base Initiative. Death Ray is a tremendous torrent of power. While it is being released, the Solar may not move herself to a different range band without ending the spell, though she may be conveyed to another range band by other means (atop the deck of a ship, for example).

On the Solar's next turn, she may continue casting this spell by rolling another shape sorcery action—maintaining the spell for another round costs 5 sorcerous motes. Each additional round of casting extends the range of the spell by one band, out to a maximum of six. The Solar may continue focusing the attack along its original path, or change its direction to a different angle, even an aerial one. She keeps the successes of her original attack roll, but rolls damage separately for each new round. If the sorcerer lacks the sorcerous motes needed to continue casting this spell or chooses not to continue it, then she immediately resets to base Initiative (if not already lower). Her turn is then delayed appropriately.

In addition to incinerating enemies, the destructive energy of this Charm also wreaks havoc on the terrain. A single round of exposure to Death Ray will reduce anything made of earth or stone into molten slag, creating a lava hazard (p. XX). Death Ray can scythe through oak trees like stalks of grain and can cut a wooden ship in half with relative ease. The Storyteller may adjudicate alternative, but equally punishing, effects for terrain that cannot be sliced or melted into lava. Sorcerers may take advantage of this stone-melting power to carve messages into mountainsides, liquefy fortress walls, or perform similar feats of massive but precise destruction.

A sorcerer who knows Death Ray as her control spell may gain sorcerous motes whenever the Essence blast directly incapacitates a character or deals damage to a battle group. She gains sorcerous motes equal to the Essence of an incapacitated character, or the Size of a damaged battle group. These last for the duration of the scene, but may only be spent to pay the cost of subsequent castings of Death Ray.

Distortion (Goal Number: 10): Distorting the Death Ray gives the opposing sorcerer a measure of protection from it, causing the destructive energy to bend and warp around him before continuing on its original course. This causes Death Ray to automatically miss the opposing sorcerer for one round.

Demon of the Third Circle

Cost: Ritual, 4wp

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

The Demons of the Third Circle are the very souls of the Yozis themselves. They are beings of world-shaping power and apocalyptic fury. The ritual to summon one of these dread fiends into Creation can only be performed on a night of Calibration, the five days of darkness that takes place between years, and only once each Calibration. Each Third Circle Demon has its own unique manifestation upon being summoned. Ligier, the Green Sun, appears in a pillar of emerald flames that descends from the starless sky to strike the earth. Ienimea, the River of

Faces, condenses as a cloud of mist from the breath of all present before erupting forth from its ephemeral depths. Erembour, That Which Calls to Shadows, rises out of the sorcerer's own shadow, laying an inhumanly alluring hand on her shoulder.

Failure to bind a Third Circle Demon is catastrophic. Reversing a failed summoning is impossible, leaving the demon unbound to fulfill its malevolent urges or alien agenda.

Rain of Doom

Cost: 40sm, 3wp

Keywords: Aggravated

Duration: Until sunrise

The Rain of Doom can be called down only as the setting sun touches the horizon, as the sorcerer stands at the boundaries of what she'd consign to destruction. The sky darkens at an unnatural pace, with thick, oily clouds that roil with thunder forming over an area the size of a small city (or a major district of a metropolis such as Nexus). The storm gathers for an hour, building in intensity, until it finally climaxes in a downpour of apocalyptic devastation that lasts until sunrise. The spell can be countered by any opposing sorcerer within the affected area during the one hour period in which it takes form, assuming a sorcerer can recognize the signs of an oncoming Rain of Doom.

The Rain of Doom has the following effects:

• Caustic rain falls, a difficulty 4 environmental hazard that deals one die of aggravated lethal damage per round to anyone beneath the open sky. Even after a character has found shelter, he continue suffering from the corrosive rain at a reduced difficulty of 2 until he's stripped off all clothing and armor worn in the downpour. Most mortals and animals die within seconds of exposure, and the Storyteller need not roll dice for each individual victim.

• The Rain of Doom wreaks mass destruction on any structures or objects caught in its downpour. Any mundane object left unattended in the rain is destroyed. Wooden structures may be dissolved entirely by the downpour, while even stone and metal are damaged, their faces burned and pitted. Only manses, magically reinforced structures, or deep subterranean buildings are safe from this desolation. If it becomes dramatically relevant to see if a structure will remain intact to provide shelter to characters, the Storyteller can make a roll of five dice at intervals of an hour. One success is sufficient to damage structures made of wood or any weaker material, three successes will damage structures made of stone, and five successes will damage those made of metal. It takes two intervals of damage to destroy a house-sized structure, and five to collapse a mighty palace—prior to total collapse, the structure may begin to partially dissolve, creating openings in the roof and walls through which the rain might enter to menace those within.

• Any character bold or insane enough to try and fight while exposed to the storm must contend not only with the corrosive rain, but with harsh winds that impose a -3 penalty on all actions he takes. In addition, at the end of each round that a character spends under the open sky, the Storyteller rolls one die. On a 1, that character is struck by a lightning bolt, and takes ten dice of lethal damage which ignores Hardness.

• The runoff from the Rain of Doom remains potent until neutralized by the touch of daylight, causing any character who comes into contact with the runoff to roll against the environmental hazard of the rain. Even after sunrise, the rain's poison guarantees that nothing but stunted scrub will grow on the land washed by the storm's runoff for years or even decades to come.

A sorcerer who knows Rain of Doom as her control spell may move the storm through the sky at a rate of (Essence x 3) miles in an hour. She is often followed by dark clouds and natural light becomes gray in her presence, making others feel uneasy. When outdoors, she takes a -2 penalty on all social influence actions other than threaten.

Distortion (Goal Number: 20): Distorting the Rain of Doom creates a break in the storm's downpour surrounding the sorcerer, large enough to shelter a single structure or a large group of people. Within this break, no acidic rain falls and lightning will not strike, although the mundane effects of the storm's winds still remain in force.

Unity of the Closed Fist

Cost: 20sm, 1wp

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Opening her mind to the boundless unity of all things, the sorcerer becomes a living vessel for the merging of her allies' form and Essence, combining them to create a single, sorcerous entity. Each character, including the sorcerer, must willingly pay a point of Willpower (in addition to the cost of the spell) to enter into the Unity of the Closed Fist, vanishing into the sorcerer's anima in a flash of light. The sorcerer can merge with up to four other characters of the same type of being as her. A Twilight Caste sorcerer could merge with four other Solars, while a Third Circle Demon powerful enough to use this spell could fuse with other demons. Unity of the Closed Fist has the following effects:

• The five characters merge into a single being, with a stature twice as tall as the tallest character included. Its physical features are a combination of the individuals that compose it, and may also feature overtly sorcerous traits such as glyphs of white fire that burn along its limbs or a halo of five burning eyes.

• Each character included in the composite being retains her own separate Initiative total, Essence pools, and Willpower. Whenever a character's Initiative comes up in turn order, the composite being may act, effectively allowing that character to take her action for the round. However, any roll she makes is made using the highest Attribute and Ability ratings of any characters included in the composite being, and she may access any Charms, Evocations, spells, or similar effects known by any member of the composite, even if she does not meet prerequisites or minimums.

• Each character retains her own health track and all levels of damage in it, but these are temporarily put aside for the duration of the merger. Instead, the composite being has its own health track, with the highest number of health levels possessed by any member of the merger plus four additional -1 and -2 health levels. If the composite being is reduced to its incapacitated

health level, then all damage in its health track is divided among the health tracks of the characters included in it (rounding down).

• Whenever the composite being takes Initiative damage, the players of the merged characters may choose whose Initiative pool the damage is dealt to (the sorcerer chooses if this can't be settled easily). A crashed character is immediately ejected from the composite, falling prone at its feet. A fifth of the damage in the composite's health track, rounded down, is transferred to that character's health track.

• Artifacts wielded by any of the merged characters combine into a single composite weapon or armor with the most advantageous traits of each individual weapon. These generally take on the form of spectacular, exotic weapons or armor that combine the most striking features of each character's panoply.

• Any ongoing effects, such as active Charms, astrological blessings, poisoning, or so forth that applied to any of the five characters apply to the composite being.

• The Storyteller may adjudicate other effects of the merger—such as whether a member might gain Limit from another character's Limit trigger, or whether a member of the fusion can keep secrets from the mental gestalt of the others—at his discretion, preferably choosing for whatever outcome makes for a better story.

A sorcerer who knows Unity of the Closed Fist as her control spell may merge with beings of another type of Essence, such as a Solar bonding with a summoned Third Circle demon or his Lunar lover. However, the fused characters cannot activate Charms belonging to other types of entities on their own turns unless those Charms possess the Eclipse keyword.

Distortion (Goal Number: 10): Distorting the Unity of the Closed Fist lets the opposing sorcerer warp and distort the flesh of the combined being, remaking it in a hideous spasm of sorcerous power. The opposing sorcerer chooses one physical Attribute, one social Attribute, and one mental Attribute. For the remainder of the spell, whenever a fused character makes a roll or applies a trait based on an affected Attribute, the use the *lowest* rating among all the merged characters, rather than the highest. Undergoing this transformation is extremely painful for all merged characters, forcing them to roll their current Initiative totals and keep an amount equal to the successes rolled.

Sorcerous Workings

Sorcerous workings allow characters to permanently reshape the world through their occult skill, enacting blessing, curses, or transformations. Renewing the fertility of a barren field, creating life in a vat of alchemical reagents, raising a city up from its foundations to sit in the sky—all of these miracles can be achieved through sorcerous workings.

Every working begins with the sorcerer's intention: what she wishes to accomplish. Once this intention has been established—usually between the player and the Storyteller, if the sorcerer is a player's character—the working is then assigned three separate traits of Ambition, Finesse, and Means, which are discussed below. Enacting the working is an extended (Intelligence + Occult) roll, with a difficulty set by the Finesse of the working, a goal number set by its Ambition, and a terminus set by its Means. It has a base interval of one week.

While most of the actual process of performing the sorcerous working over a span of weeks can be relegated to downtime or off-screen, the sorcerer must remain active in its completion, spending time performing ritual actions, arcane experiments, or whatever methodology fits her aesthetic of sorcery to bring about the working. If the sorcerer is unable to attend to these duties for at least part of an interval—for example, a pressing crisis draws a Twilight Caste away from his sorcerous laboratory for a month of heroics elsewhere—then no roll can be made for that interval (though it does *not* count towards the terminus). If a sorcerer persistently ignores a working in progress, the Storyteller might introduce complications as a result of this—hostile demons might emerge from a half-finished portal to Hell, or an incomplete blessing of fertility over a field might vent into the local wildlife, causing them to grow huge and aggressive. This should be thought of not as a way of penalizing the sorcerer, but as a way to bring narrative focus back to the working in a dramatic way.

Once a sorcerous working has been successfully completed, the sorcerer must pay experience points to finalize it. An Ambition 1 working costs 2xp, an Ambition 2 working is 4xp, and an Ambition 3 working is 8xp. Experience points spent on a working are not meant to be a poor investment—if a supernatural minion is slain, an enchanted bridge is washed away, a village under the sorcerer's blessing is put to the sword by a deathknight, or a working is otherwise made irrelevant, **the experience points spent on a neutralized working are refunded to the sorcerer at the end of the current story**. If the sorcerer is performing a working of a Circle below her level of mastery (for example, a Solar Circle sorcerer performing a Terrestrial Circle working), the cost is reduced by two experience points per Circle of difference, to a minimum of 1xp.

> Sorcerous Workings and Botches
>
> Unlike most extended actions, **botching a roll to complete a sorcerous working doesn't automatically ruin the entire effort**—instead, it adds a *complication* to the outcome of the overall project, whether it is a success or a failure. If the working is completed successfully, then the Storyteller should come up with one complication to its outcome for each botch. A loyal minion created by a botched working might require a diet of solid gold, or a blessing laid on a field might be disrupted by the presence of any steel tools. These complications shouldn't negate the core benefit of the working, but should introduce narratively interesting difficulties for the players to work around. On a failed working, each botch becomes a disastrous consequence of the working. A failed working to create a servitor results not in a useless heap of inanimate flesh, but in a sorcerous creation that is berserk and hell-bent on the destruction of its creator. A failed enchantment to fortify the walls of a town against dematerialized spirits turns patches of the walls themselves immaterial, breaching them for opposing armies.

Ambition

The *Ambition* of a sorcerous working is the power and scope of the miracle the sorcerer wishes to perform. Ambition is rated on a scale of 1 to 3, but each circle of sorcerous working has its own separate scale of Ambition—what might be a trivial feat of spellcraft for a master of the Solar

Circle is a nigh-impossible feat for a newly-initiated sorcerer of the Terrestrial Circle. For each circle, an Ambition 1 working is what most sorcerers might consider a simple feat of magic, similar in power to what might be achieved by a spell of that circle. An Ambition 2 working is an exceptional feat of magic, with considerable power or scope beyond what any spell could achieve. An Ambition 3 working is the highest and most difficult feat of that circle's magic that can be imagined, defining the upper bound of what that circle of sorcery can accomplish. The Ambition of a working is set by the Storyteller based on the effect the sorcerer's player wishes to create, and determines the goal number of the working, listed in the tables below.

• **Terrestrial Circle Workings:** Workings of the Terrestrial Circle are generally rooted in transforming, enhancing, or weakening pre-existing elements of the natural world, rather than directly invoking supernatural forces. When outright supernatural forces are invoked, their intervention is generally constrained or specialized in some significant way. Emerald Circle workings are typically limited either in power or scope. An Emerald Circle working might enchant all the fields of a village, but only with a minor blessing—something that would still be a marvel to the inhabitants of the village, but augments the natural properties of that area or protects it against a mundane threat or nuisance, rather than completely overwriting the nature of that region through magic. Conversely, the most powerful workings of this circle are confined to the scope of a single chamber within a larger structure or the transformation of a single character. As a general rule, any sorcerous feat the Storyteller feels should be routine for a Dragon-Blooded or mortal sorcerer should fall under this circle. Below are some examples:

Ambition 1 (Goal Number 5): Create or bind magical entities capable of performing mundane, household chores, but not much else, in service to a person, organization, or structure. Enchant a path to prevent travelers from becoming lost or lead them to a particular location. Invite an unbound First Circle demon into Creation in a ritual that culminates at midnight. Make permanent but small-scale geographical alterations, such as drawing up a freshwater spring or flattening a hill. Ward a town or neighborhood-sized region against a particular type of mundane nuisance, such as forest fires, crop-eating pests, or rabid animals.

Ambition 2 (Goal Number 10): Cross two different species of plant or animal to create a hybrid species with the best traits of both. Grant mutations to oneself or a willing subject. Instill a plant, animal, or object with human-level intelligence. Ward a chamber against scrying, teleportation, or intrusion by a particular type of spirit.

Ambition 3 (Goal Number 20): Bless a region to enhance its natural properties, causing a field to always deliver a bountiful harvest or a freshwater river to always run clean. Create a completely new but mundane form of life, or breed a specimen of an existing species with a minor supernatural power that augments its strongest traits. Place a curse on a small region in a way that diminishes, warps, or blights its mundane aspects such as flora, fauna, or natural resources, making it all but impossible to make a livelihood off the cursed land. Create a rift between two realms of existence that allows communication, possession, or similar forms of limited interaction, but not actual transportation.

• **Celestial Circle Workings:** Workings of the Celestial Circle are miracles of outright supernatural power, either rewriting the laws of the natural world on a relatively large scale or instilling supernatural power into the mundane world. They can have scope sufficient to place

powerful blessings or curses upon an entire village or a particular neighborhood or feature of a city, and their power is either an overt manifestation of supernatural magic, or a dramatic and drastic change to the properties of the natural world. As a general rule, this is the circle for sorcerous workings that the Storyteller feels established Lunar and Sidereal sorcerers, as well as accomplished Solar sorcerers, should be capable of achieving without excessive effort, or that an exceptionally potent Dragon-Blood or mortal might be capable of attaining with great dedication, skill, and risk. Examples include:

Ambition 1 (Goal Number 25): Create a sorcerous bond between two characters that allows them to mentally communicate at any distance, or bestow a similarly useful but limited supernatural blessing. Create persistent illusions that haunt a structure or town-sized region. Invite an unbound Second Circle demon into Creation in a ritual that culminates on the night of the new moon. Transform a chamber so that its interior emulates the environment of any natural terrain within Creation. Ward a chamber or structure against all intruders with magical traps or barriers.

Ambition 2 (Goal Number 30): Alter the weather of a town-sized region over a long duration, extending the harvest season by a month every year or making every winter exceptionally harsh. Enchant fortifications to strengthen them against mundane assault or give them a measure of resilience to supernatural powers. Grant a supernatural power to one's self or to a willing subject, such as a burning gaze, a hypnotic tongue, or cursed blood that turns into deadly scorpions when shed. Make alterations to the nature of a willing supernatural being, such as imbuing a fire elemental with the aspect of earth to turn it into a being of molten magma, or reshaping a demon to express a different facet of its oversoul and altering its Charms to match. Spread mutations throughout the mundane flora and fauna of an entire ecosystem.

Ambition 3 (Goal Number 35): Create a loyal minion with supernatural powers comparable to a Second Circle demon or notable god. Enchant the architecture of an entire structure to grant it limited mobility, the capacity to rearrange its internal structure, intelligence comparable to a human, or similar powers. Open a permanent portal between two different realms of existence, such as a small shadowland or a faerie ring that leads travelers into the deep Wyld.

• **Solar Circle Workings:** Solar Circle workings are the height of what can be accomplished by sorcery. They can rewrite the laws of reality, or write new ones into being. Their scale can be huge, encompassing entire cities at the low end of Ambition 1 or the whole of the cosmos at its upper, nigh-unattainable end. Its power can bend time, space, or the boundaries of worlds to the sorcerer's will, and manipulate the fine workings of Essence down to the level of changing a being's very soul. As long as the Storyteller feels that something should be possible through a sorcerous working, it can be attained through workings of the Adamant Circle. Examples include:

Ambition 1 (Goal Number 40): Completely transform the terrain of a region to raise lush tropical paradises out of deserts, curse forests to wither away into scrubland, dry up seas, and so on. Enchant a village or small city-sized region to emulate the nature of another realm of existence, possibly acting as a point of meeting between the two worlds. Purify a hundred miles of shadowland or Wyld zone. Extract the soul of a willing mortal from his body and transfer it into a new vessel, such as an automaton, manse, or similar form. Restore someone's body to the

prime of its youth. Ward an entire city against invasion with supernatural traps, barriers, or concealment.

Ambition 2 (Goal Number 50): Alter major metaphysical properties of a city-sized region: make it capable of moving across Creation, cause it to rise up and float in the sky, alter the nature of space within it so that it's bigger on the inside of its borders than the outside, meddle with the flow of time within it, make it invisible or intangible to those who do not meet certain conditions. Enchant a city-sized region or a group to change the nature of the afterlife for those who die within it, such as designating particulars of how they reincarnate or transforming the souls of the dead into elementals. Lay a potent curse on a city, region, or group of people that can only be broken when specific circumstances are met. Utterly transform the nature of a supernatural being—remaking a demon as a god, or turning an elemental into a specter composed of the corpse-elements of the Underworld, or similar.

Ambition 3 (Goal Number 75): Make subtle alterations to the metaphysics of the entire cosmos. Create a supernatural being of a singular nature and considerable power. Cast a city-sized region into a different realm of existence, or outside of time and space altogether, with set conditions for when it returns or how it can be accessed.

The Limits of Sorcery

Some things are beyond the power of even the mightiest sorcerers. While this is ultimately a matter for the Storyteller to decide, a few specific prohibitions are listed below, along with the reasoning behind the restrictions.

• **Immortality Has A Catch:** Sorcery *can* make a character immortal, but never in an unconditional, guaranteed fashion. There may be periodic rituals needed to renew a character's immortality, certain conditions under which he can die, a regional restriction he cannot travel outside of without risking his immortality, or similar. This does not mean that immortality is a trap or a waste of effort—instead, the purpose of this is to preserve the relevance and power of death as a dramatic element within the game, even if the players do bestow immortality to all their friends, allies, and family.

• **No Resurrection:** Dead is dead. A sorcerer might try all manner of clever tricks—binding someone's ghost into a sorcerously-created vessel, imprinting his memories onto a cloned body, even altering the nature of reincarnation within a region so that souls retain all memories of their past lives—but once someone has died, he can never be truly brought back. While a sorcerer's most powerful workings might create a simulacrum or duplicate of him as he was in life, it will never be the same as the original person. The purpose of this restriction is to maintain the dramatic significance of death as a narrative element within the game, and to prevent players from reversing the consequences of their actions.

• **No Time Travel:** What has happened, happened. Sorcery cannot be used to travel back into the past or to rewrite past events. The purpose of this restriction, like that on resurrection, is to emphasize the importance of the players' choices and their consequences, as well as to avoid the tangle of narrative confusion that

comes from introducing time travel and altered pasts into a collaborative narrative.

Finesse

The *Finesse* of a sorcerous working is the extent to which a sorcerer controls how its effects manifest and what form they take, rated on a scale of 1, 3, or 5 and set by the player. **The base difficulty of the (Intelligence + Occult) roll to perform a sorcerous working at each interval is equal to the working's Finesse**. While every sorcerous working is defined by the sorcerer's intention or goals in performing it, Finesse determines the extent to which the sorcerer's player gets to dictate *how* this intent is fulfilled by the working. If, for example, a sorcerer wished to ward a chamber against demons, a Finesse 1 working and a Finesse 5 working would both be equally efficacious in fulfilling that goal—but the nature and mechanics of the Finesse 1 working would be decided almost entirely while the Storyteller, while those of the Finesse 5 working would be decided by the sorcerer's player.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Finesse	**Effect**
1	The Storyteller determines how the working manifests in the world. This will always be in accordance with the basic intent of the working—a sorcerer wishing to create a magical servant from clay who succeeds at a Finesse 1 working will never end up creating something that refuses to serve him—but all details of the final result are in the Storyteller's hands.
3	The sorcerer's player comes up with a rough description of how the working plays out in the world, which the Storyteller can then polish or embellish with catches, quirks, or twists that make the working more interesting or flavorful without undermining the core intent of the working.
5	The sorcerer's player defines exactly how the sorcerous working plays out in the world, subject to Storyteller approval.

[END TABLE]

If the success of a sorcerous working is in jeopardy, the sorcerer's player may choose to lower its Finesse mid-project, abandoning some of her control over the outcome to make it more easily attainable. However, there are consequences to taking this patchwork approach to sorcery—each step of Finesse the sorcerer drops counts as one botch to complicate the final outcome of the working, as the sorcerer's abandoned designs leave metaphorical rough edges on her finished project.

Means

The *Means* of a sorcerous working are the resources that a sorcerer has available to put to use beyond the baseline of her own sorcerous power. Means can take many forms, but all of them have the same benefit—adding to the working's terminus. Multiple Means stack their benefit, and it is intended that more ambitious workings will require the extra rolls from these to succeed. **A sorcerous working with no Means has a terminus of 5 rolls.**

Common Means include:

• **Complementary Abilities:** A sorcerer who's mastered an Ability that naturally lends itself to the sorcerous working she'sundertaking may claim that as one of her Means, allowing her to make one additional roll. Examples include using Medicine for a sorcerous working intended to create a new form of organism, or Performance for a working to fill the air around her home with songs which befuddle those who approach uninvited. In order to claim this benefit, the sorcerer must have a rating of 5 in the complementary Ability, or a rating of 3+ along with an appropriate specialty. At the Storyteller's discretion, a sorcerer who's invested in a significant number of Charms or other supernatural powers that are either based on or enhance the complementary Ability may instead receive an additional *two* intervals from that Ability.

• **Complementary Spells:** A sorcerer may claim one of her known spells as a Means if its function is related to the working she is trying to perform, allowing her to make one additional roll. A sorcerer attempting to breed a species of obsidian butterflies would obviously benefit from knowing Death of Obsidian Butterflies, while one attempting to create a rift through which demons can possess mortal cultists could claim benefits from knowing the spell to summon demons of the same circle as those brought through the rift.

• **Cooperation:** The assistance of another sorcerer initiated into the Circle of the working allows for one additional roll. Alternatively, the sorcerer could receive assistance from a supernatural entity who, while not a sorcerer, possesses powers that naturally lend themselves to the completion of the working—a sorcerer trying to revive a dry riverbed might seek the assistance of a river god or water elemental, while one attempting to open a portal into the Underworld might seek help from an Abyssal Exalt. As a third alternative, a character might use a group of characters who are not sorcerers, but are well-versed in Occult, such as an infernal cult or a Heptagram class. Each of these alternatives can add one roll, but they don't stack with each other. In theory, a sorcerer who had access to a large organization of fellow sorcerers initiated into the Circle of the working could add two additional rolls from this Means, but such organized networks are few and far between in the current, fallen era.

• **Extra Time:** A sorcerer willing to invest months or even years of preparation, research, and diligent practice into a sorcerous working may claim that extra time as one of her Means. Extending the interval of the roll from one week to one month allows the sorcerer to make one additional roll, while extending the interval to one cycle (three months) allows for two additional rolls. A sorcerer could receive three additional rolls by extending the interval to one year, but only the most dedicated of sorcerers are willing to retire from the world for that long.

• **Exotic Components:** Esoteric or rare materials that the sorcerer has accumulated over the course of the story may be consumed in the process of a working to count as a Means, allowing the sorcerer to make one additional roll. What counts for this category is left largely to the Storyteller's discretion, as he will generally be the one introducing these exotic components into the game. The severed head of a Wyld behemoth, carved with glyphs of abjuration and displayed prominently from the walls of a city, might aid in warding that city against the influence of the Wyld, while an orichalcum lantern lit with a tongue of sunfire found in a First Age ruin could be used as part of a working to purify a shadowland. At the Storyteller's discretion, exceptionally rare or powerful components, such as the withered corpus-fragments of a slain Deathlord, can add two additional rolls to an appropriate working.

• **Sorcerous Infrastructure:** Sorcerous laboratories or ritual chambers stocked with esoteric texts, occult reagents, and other tools of the sorcerer's trade add one additional roll to a sorcerous working. It is no easy thing to assemble such infrastructure—even among the opulence of the Realm, most sorcerers must make do with basic, rudimentary study chambers tucked away in the far wing of a family manse. For a newly-Exalted sorcerer to assemble her own sorcerous infrastructure would be an adventure in itself. Sorcerous infrastructure from the First Age could provide two additional rolls to a working, if repaired and restored to full functionality.

> Losing Means
>
> Sometimes, a sorcerer might lose access to her Means mid-working. A cooperating sorcerer has a change of heart and ends his collaboration; the sorcerer's laboratory is raided and razed by her enemies; a pressing issue denies the sorcerer the luxury of taking her time, forcing her to change the interval of her rolls from months to weeks. Losing Means obviously denies the sorcerer the extra rolls they also grant, but also counts as a botch to complicate the final result of the working, representing the complications of adapting to the loss of the resource.
>
> If the sorcerer has already completed the base five intervals, and is working on the extra intervals granted by one of her Means when it is lost, then her working is placed in dire jeopardy. She is allowed to finish the last interval, but cuts the number of threshold successes she receives in half (rounded up). If this is not enough to finish the working, then it has failed.

Beyond the Boundaries

Unlike spells, which demand initiation into the proper circle before they can be learned, it is possible for a sorcerer to perform a working of a Circle that she has yet to master. Working beyond the boundaries is difficult, dangerous, and always requires extraordinary effort on the part of the sorcerer. The sorcerer's player must describe the extraordinary efforts of her character and the great lengths to which she goes as she describes the enactment of the sorcerous working —it's not something that can be done routinely, easily, or safely.

Going beyond the boundaries of one's sorcerous initiation has the following consequences:

• The base difficulty of the (Intelligence + Occult) roll at each interval is increased by 2 for each Circle beyond the sorcerer's own initiation. For example, a Terrestrial Circle sorcerer attempting a Solar Circle working would make rolls at a difficulty equal to (4 + Finesse), rather than (Finesse). Because of this, most sorcerers deliberately choose a low Finesse for such workings.

• Each failed interval roll on a working counts as one botch to complicate the final outcome of that working. Actually botching a roll completely ruins the effort, in addition to adding disastrous consequences to that failure.

• Even the extraordinary efforts of working beyond the boundaries has limits. A Terrestrial Circle sorcerer cannot attempt Solar Circle workings of Ambition 3. Aspiring to such world-shaking miracles requires the sorcerer at least be initiated into the Celestial Circle.

• The default interval of such workings is increased from one week to three months, if reaching one Circle above the sorcerer's capacity, or one year if reaching two levels above the sorcerer's mastery. The requirement to gain additional means by dedicating extra time and effort to the working rises to one year, three years, or five years (for those reaching one Circle above their mastery), or three years, five years, or ten years (for Terrestrial Circle sorcerers attempting Solar Circle workings).

• The experience point cost of such workings are increased by four points per Circle the sorcerer has not mastered.

Undoing a Sorcerous Working

Sorcerous workings are permanent marvels of magic. Once created, they cannot be countered or distorted. The closest thing to dispelling a working that a rival sorcerer can do is performing a working of her own intended to achieve the opposite effect. For example, if a Dragon-Blooded sorcerer of the Heptagram has blessed a trade route to speed travel along it, a Solar sorcerer might contest this working with one of her own to slow travel along that route to oppose the Dynast's working. However, while the mechanics of this might equate to the two workings canceling each other out, the Storyteller should keep in mind that both workings are still in place within the world. For example, if the Dynast's working was described as speeding travel by binding the native spirits of the region to tend to the road and provide aid to travelers along it, while the Solar's was as a curse of fear that panicked any steed brought onto the path and forced an irrational caution on travelers, then the Storyteller might narrate the interaction of these two effects. A merchant prince's horses refuse to set hooves upon the enchanted road, but eventually he finds minor elementals willing to haul his caravan. His heart is struck with worries and anxieties, but spirits whisper soothing reassurances into his dreams. In effect, he is able to complete the journey in the normal time it would take, neither benefitting from the Dragon-Blood's working nor hindered by the Solar's, but the effects of both workings make his journey very strange.

Of course, the easiest way to stop a working is to prevent it from being completed. Sabotaging a sorcerer's Means makes it more difficult for her to complete the working, while killing her before it's complete ensures its failure. This will most often come up in the context of players attempting to stop a working being enacted by an enemy sorcerer. Such preemptive measures require realizing that a working is taking place at all. Noticing the encroaching effects of a sorcerous working over a region is a difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Occult) roll, while discerning the exact effect of the working is difficulty 5. Lower both difficulties by one for characters who are sorcerers themselves, and by an additional one for characters who witness the sorcerer or his subordinates performing the ritual actions needed to enact the working.

A Sample Working

Ivory Eyes, a Twilight Caste initiated into the Celestial Circle of sorcery, wishes to imbue her workshop with limited intelligence and mobility. The Storyteller, consulting the Ambition tables above, determines that this would be an Ambition 3 working of the Celestial Circle, requiring a total of 35 successes to complete. Ivory Eyes's player assesses her Means—she has a Craft rating of 5 and has invested in numerous Craft Charms, which the Storyteller agrees qualifies her for two additional rolls, for a total of seven intervals. Knowing she needs an average of about five

threshold successes per interval to succeed on the working, Ivory Eyes's player decides to set the Finesse of the working at 3 to make sure she succeeds—risky, but she has a particular image in her head for how she wants the working to play out, so she's willing to gamble and hope her Occult Excellency can pick up the slack.

Over the next seven weeks, Ivory Eyes performs numerous arcane experiments and sorcerous modifications to her workshop. She successfully attains the 35 successes needed to complete the working, but also botched one of the rolls. Because the working had Finesse 3, Ivory Eyes's player describes how the working plays out in the world—she wants her workshop to be able to move around on spindly metallic limbs animated by sorcerous energies, and to have an intelligence that speaks to her through the flame of the forge. However, the Storyteller determines the exact details, such as how fast it can move and what dice pools its animating intelligence has access to, and might make some twists to the player's concepts—for example, deciding that the fire of the forge doesn't just speak, but becomes a living fire elemental bound inside the workshop, controlling its movement. However, because the intention of the working was to create a mobile, intelligent workshop, the bound fire elemental's personality should remain generally amicable to the purposes of moving the workshop where Ivory Eyes commands, and assisting in its operation.

However, there is one botch from Ivory Eyes's attempts, which complicates the outcome of the working. The Storyteller decides that this manifests as the workshop's animating elemental being hopelessly in love with the sorcerer, having a Defining Tie of obsessive infatuation towards her. While this doesn't hinder the working's ability to fulfill Ivory Eyes's original intention, it may lead to awkward situations and dramatic twists in play (or possibly to a very strange love story).

Thaumaturgy

While this book devotes itself to the greater magic of the Exalted—Charms, Evocations, and Sorcery—there is a fourth type of power, a species of unique occult miracles and holistic, ritualized magic known collectively as thaumaturgy. Thaumaturgy refers to efficacious rituals and useful tricks that can be deployed by those who have a special communion with the occult world. Those who can perform thaumaturgy are properly known as thaumaturgists.

Thaumaturgy is unique. As a form of magic, it is nowhere near as versatile as the Charms of the Exalted, nor as powerful as sorcery. Thaumaturgy is a bit of a cipher in that regard—most thaumaturgists are mortals who, for unknown reasons, form an instinct for a single mystic ritual, a communion with an occult secret of Creation that remains invisible to anyone else.

As thaumaturgists are unique individuals, so too are their rituals. This means that the instinctive secret or trick developed by one thaumaturgist might be completely unique to him, unseen in the world before his birth, and lost to the world after his death—unless he passes it on.

Thus thaumaturgy bears another distinction: books of thaumaturgy are useless for teaching thaumaturgy. A thaumaturgic ritual known to one thaumaturge may **only** be passed to another through direct teaching and practice. Simply observing the ritual in practice, or reading about it in a book isn't sufficient. Such rituals are directly communicated and transmitted from thaumaturgist to thaumaturgist in a fashion that is one part spiritual communion, one part demonstration, and one part teaching lesson.

A thaumaturgist who is so inclined may keep his unique power a secret, never revealing the procedure behind his art. Such a specimen may rely on his unique talent for his daily bread, or even to curry the favor of sorcerers or the Exalted, who need the use of his power.

While this is sometimes the case, there is nevertheless a certain traffic in occult mysteries, particularly in places like Sijan, where the order of funerists depends on the induction of thaumaturgists into their ranks, so that they might pass on the secrets of the funerary arts to future generations. Sijan puts a high premium on persons of such talent, offering them excellent housing, education, and official placement in the ministry of morticians. Fortune tellers, soothsayers, exorcists and shamans may all be examples of thaumaturgists who have used their unique power to take on a role in their environs, though such titles are not exclusive to those with power, any more than a mortician need also be a sorcerer.

On Sorcerers and Thaumaturges

Mortal thaumaturges are exceedingly rare. In system terms, a mortal with thaumaturgy has the Thaumaturgist Merit (p. XX). When one of the Chosen unlocks the power of sorcery, she gains this Merit automatically. Mortal sorcerers do **not** gain this Merit automatically, and it cannot be taught, either to mortals or the uninitiated Chosen. One is either born with the power of thaumaturgy or one is not.

A character with the Thaumaturgist Merit may learn thaumaturgic rituals. One-dot rituals cost three experience points to learn. These rituals represent the simplest and purest ritual magic available. Two-dot rituals are slightly more complex or difficult, and cost five experience points to learn.

Example rituals

Reading the Tea Leaves (• or ••)

The one-dot ritual involves the taking of tea in order to divine a character's destiny. The character whose destiny is to be read must empty tea leaves into a hot teacup, then dwell over the steam and reflections in the cup, and drink it down while emptying his mind of clutter. When the tea is gone, only the leaves remain, and the mystic may divine her target's greater destiny with a difficulty 2 (Perception + Occult) roll. A greater destiny informs the character's next defining accomplishment. It is not a prediction of where the character's life will end, but rather the next major course it will take. The mystic may also read a character's immediate destiny to get an idea of the most important life-event the character will engage in that day, though it is difficulty 4. Failing this roll still gives the thaumaturgist an accurate result, but the details are extremely hazy. Even when successful, the tea-reader often cannot explain or doesn't understand what she sees. She might see her client bumping into a woman on a nearby dock at sunset, but this doesn't mean she knows who the woman is or why the event is significant.

The two-dot version of this ritual has almost the exact same procedure, but a different use. The mystic can use different flavors of tea with different seasonal associations to divine the best opportunities for success and failure a character has during a certain month. The mystic cannot dictate exactly what the tea will show her—she can't tell whether a merchant taking a trip down the Diamond Road to Gem will be beset by Yena's daughters—but she can generally see either

the largest failure or success in the merchant's life during the time in which he plans to take the trip. This is a difficulty 3 roll, and failing it still gives accurate but hazy information, with the potential for misinformation. A botch for either ritual *always* misinforms.

Reading tea leaves is *generally* common. In a populace of ten thousand, there will be at least one tea reader if tea consumption is an important part of regional culture.

Unquenchable Flame (•)

The mystic gathers kindling into a circle of rocks arranged so that the largest stones point to the four corners of Creation, and speaks a guttural, instinctual word. The kindling leaps to flame, even if it is soaking wet. If it is raining, the rain refuses to fall within a five foot radius of the fire's edge.

Unquenchable Flame is fairly uncommon. It was last seen practiced over ten years ago, by a huntsman of the Tenjosi Wetlands.

Second Bread (•)

One who has this gift holds a piece of bread in his hands and tears it perfectly in half, then turns and tears the resulting ends, and continues turning and tearing according to his instinct. The resulting pieces equal twice the bread he started with. It costs one Willpower to use this ritual on a single large loaf of bread or several smaller hanks.

Almost every century since the rise of the Scarlet Empress has seen a prophet with the gift of Second Bread. The most recent was a madman in Nexus, who used old crusts to feed starving children until a Guildsman beat him into a coma for slowing down foot traffic.

Exorcism (• or ••)

With the one dot ritual the exorcist may attempt to banish a ghost with chanting, ritual gestures, and a variety of mystical appurtenances. She may pay one Willpower to begin an extended action with a difficulty of the ghost's Essence and a goal number of its Willpower, rolling (Intelligence + Occult) dice at each interval. Each roll is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry. She must remain within short range of the ghost she's exorcising, which takes a -3 penalty on all actions while the exorcism is underway. Success dispatches it back to the Underworld. The exorcist must maintain concentration, and automatically fails if she is damaged by a **decisive** attack or crashed.

The two dot ritual allows an exorcist with a specialty in demonology, and with a specialty in knowledge of a specific demon, to drive that demon out of a host, causing spirit to flee into a clay vessel, statue, tree, cattle or other proxy for a month and a day. This ritual's procedure is the same as that of one to drive out a ghost, save that it uses the demon's Resolve as a difficulty. A sorcerer who has bound a sealed demon may free it by commanding it out of the containing vessel—if she can find it.

There is another two dot version of a demonic exorcism that involves forcing a spirit back into its sanctum, but this works for no more than a single night, has a goal number of (the spirit's Willpower x2), and a terminus of three, after which the same exorcist may not attempt to banish it for a year and a day.

Exorcists are uncommon, but not extremely so, and tend to be born near shadowlands.

Speak With Ozashun (••)

There is a stream running through the mountains ten miles west of Medo's capital. The Frozen Spring pass overlooks a section of this stream, where it runs into an open-mouth cave in the side of the mountain. This is the place where Ozashun may be called, during the night of the new moon, by thrusting a burning branch into the muddy shore opposite the cave and speaking the name of a child who trusts you. The darkness intensifies and drinks what little starlight makes it down through the towering pines, giving the impression of a wrinkled, ancient face, gape-mouthed, toothless. From its mouth comes a shadow on the water, four-legged, a predator like a fox or a wolf. Ozashun knows all the secrets of the mountain and the stream running through it, but only back through the last new moon. For every question it answers, it gains the power to enter a child's dream, to speak with and influence them. Perhaps it is a coincidence that the mountains and especially the area around the Frozen Pass are thick with child ghosts.

Speak with Ozashun is extremely rare, though it has been recorded more than once as a gift among the hill tribes of Medo.

The Seven-Degreed Physician of Black Maladies took in the reeking air from a balcony on the side of the corpse-fortress mountain called Juggernaut. He pushed his gloves into the pockets of his apron and pulled his hands free. Then he began to pack a bowl full of marijuana, to smoke while he took a rest from his efforts.

Tens of thousands of tons of reeking meat hung viscidly over the bones of the great dead man-beast. The Seven-Degreed Physician was merely a youth himself, in terms of his powers. He could not even begin to imagine how the Mask of Winters kept the gigantic corpse animate; what the vast cost in Essence must have been. The Physician concerned himself, as he had for weeks, with the most basic elements of fundamental necromancy.

The Abyssal Exalt lit his bowl and leaned on the iron railing, breathing in the unspeakable charnel aroma of Juggernaut's presence when he wasn't inhaling the smoke of his piece. The Mask of Winters provided his living servants with charms against the odor, which was strong enough to kill some men immediately. Those it did not kill swiftly would sicken and die within days. Even with protective magic in place, the air was cloying with the stink of rotting flesh. The Physician knew from experience that anything exposed to the aroma for just a few hours would stink for weeks or even months.

That the stench of the air outside could be considered "fresh" spoke volumes about the sort of ingredients and processes the Abyssal used in the course of his necromantic workings. He adjusted the pack of the pipe with his thumb, and puffed on it again.

The quotas had been raised again. Spine chains, particularly, were required for the Deathlord's war machine, and so spine chains the Abyssal provided; hacking the legs off the corpses of sacrificial victims, sewing the torsos together, breathing a terrible parody of life into the tissue through the use of black sorcery.

At first, it had been delicious evil, but currently the sheer desperation of the effort had made it absolute torture, sorcerous enslavement. The Physician had given up on the psychological manipulation of his victims when living beings were used. It was easier to just impel the Essence to consummate the act of animation through brute force than to go through the pantomime again and again.

The Mask of Winters was also frequently busied with necromancy, and that did everything to exacerbate the situation. The tireless ghost of a monstrously powerful sorcerer, his robes studded with countless hearthstones, the Deathlord saw no reason why his apprentice could not perform similar prodigies.

The Physician reflected that the hellish part of his experience was that he could not tell what part was logistical desperation, what part was intended to act as a training course in fundamental necromancy, and what part sprang from the fact that his master was a mad, evil ghost intent on fulfilling his ambition on the world. There was no doubt in the Exalt's mind that all three were a distinct part of his current experience. When was the raising of the quotas mere arbitrary madness, and when was it designed to force the Abyssal to learn what corners could and could

not be cut in production line necromancy? Was that uncertainty itself somehow part of whatever twisted scheme the Mask of Winters harbored for the development of his Chosen?

The Exalt looked downwards, toward the marshalling yard, where the hundreds of spine chains that the Deathlord's efforts had produced were drawn up together. The Seven-Degreed Physician wasn't entirely sure where they would be scuttling off to, but they'd be going there soon. Off to terrify some frontier or cow a tributary perhaps. He hoped whoever they horrified into submission or infected with terrible plagues appreciated just what an incredible amount of work had been put into the weapons used to kill them.

You see that all over Creation these days, the Abyssal reflected. People just didn't respect the value of craftsmanship. The Physician knocked the ashes out of the bowl and on the balcony railing, pulled on his gloves, and got ready to return to his sewing. Who would have known that practicing black magic would involve so much cobbler's twine?

Chapter Eight: Antagonists

Quick Characters

Not all Storyteller characters are created equal. Some are intended to play grand roles in the group's story, while others will only appear for a single night of gaming, or even a single scene. Many won't even be named. While a Storyteller is certainly free to render every bit player in her stories with the same level of detail as the players' Exalts or important Storyteller characters, this isn't necessary. The Quick Character (QC) system presents a faster, simpler alternative for putting together minor characters in a hurry.

We recommend that QCs be used for unimportant characters who aren't intended to stick around for long or who play unimportant roles—minions, merchants met on the road, nameless bandits, demon bodyguards, even Exalts who pass briefly through the story and are never seen again, such as Dragon-Blooded riding with the Wyld Hunt. Ultimately, though, the choice of how often to use QCs is up to you.

Traits

Rather than having a full character sheet, Quick Characters use the simplified mechanics described below.

Essence, Willpower, Join Battle, and Health Track

Each QC stat block begins by listing a Quick Character's Essence rating, Willpower, Join Battle dice pool, and Health Track. These are determined as follows:

• **Essence:** The Storyteller simply assigns what seems like an appropriate value. Mortals are Essence 1, as are the newest of Exalted and the weakest of spirits and Wyld denizens. Most supernatural beings possess Essence 2-3. Essence 4 or 5 indicates that a being is very experienced, puissant, and mighty in its command of supernatural forces—it's the hallmark of

accomplished, centuries-old Exalts, demons of higher Circles, and the great potentates of the Wyld.

Essence 6+ is exceptionally rare, denoting the mightiest of spirits, the most terrible prodigies of the Wyld, and Exalts who have spent countless lifetimes focusing their Essence—such beings probably shouldn't be Quick Characters.

• **Willpower:** This value denotes the amount of Willpower the QC has available to spend when it encounters the players' characters. The Willpower chart on page XX explains the commonality of different Willpower ratings; the Storyteller simply picks something that seems typical for the QC. QCs should rarely have Willpower in the 8-10 range—even if their Willpower *rating* ought to be 10, it's unlikely that they'll be completely rested and relaxed at the time they meet the players' characters.

• **Join Battle:** This describes the QC's Join Battle dice pool. It's determined according to the normal methods for determining dice pools (see below).

• **Essence Pool(s), if any:** If the QC has an Essence pool, it's determined here, according to the chart in the relevant section (p. XX for spirits, p. XX for Fair Folk, p. XX for Exalts).

• **Health Track:** This section describes the size and makeup of the QC's Health Track. Most beings have seven Health Levels (-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/Incapacitated); some small creatures have fewer, while larger beasts (as well as many supernatural beings) might have more.

Dice Pools

QCs don't have Attributes or Abilities listed. Instead, their description lists their dice pools for particular actions that they're expected to engage in. These include any bonuses a character would receive from equipment, specialties, and Merits. A QC's dice pools can cover broad or specific actions, ranging from "Archery" and "Combat movement" to "Seduction" or "Climbing."

In general, QCs will only have pools listed for actions likely to be germane to their role as stock characters. A burglar's QC description, then, might list his dice pools for breaking and entering, stealth, desperate knife-fighting, and running away, but would not bother to describe the character's prowess (or lack thereof) with oratory, bureaucratic know-how, or field medicine—they're just not important things to know about a burglar who's only going to show up for one scene to try to steal something.

In order to settle on a dice pool for a QC, consult the table below and pick a number that looks right. Don't worry too much about precise bonuses from things like weapons and specialties—if the QC is using good equipment or is specialized for a task, just feel free to nudge him toward the upper end of a given dice pool range. They're Quick Characters, not Precise Characters.

If it becomes necessary to declare a QC's dice pool for some action not listed, it's generally safe to default to 3 dice.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Dice Pool Description

1-2 The QC is untrained or otherwise deficient in this area. He has a good chance of failing even low-difficulty actions, and will be easily overcome by players' characters with even a moderate investment in that area. This rating is intended to highlight a character's lack of capacity with something of importance to their function as QCs.

3-6 The QC is skilled in this area, with competence to rival well-trained mortals or the heroic prowess of the Exalted. He is almost certain to succeed on low-difficulty actions, and is a fair challenge for players' characters who are moderately to significantly invested in that area. This is the range most QCs will probably fall into for most actions.

7-10 The QC is exceptional. Mortals with this level of skill are rare, true masters of their art—even Exalts will rarely have this degree of competence in more than a few areas. He has a fair chance of success even at high difficulty actions, and is a match for highly-invested specialists. This is the rating of skilled veterans (at the low end) and of elite masters (at the high end), such as the Brides of Ahlat on the field of battle or a Guild factor during financial negotiation.

11-14 This level of competence is the absolute maximum of what can be achieved through a combination of skill, specialization, *and* equipment. A QC with this dice pool is likely to defeat even specialized player characters if they're not equally optimized or using magic—the Storyteller should be cautious in using them, so that players do not feel forced to maximize their stats just to have a fighting chance. Such ratings should be uncommon and noteworthy even among the ranks of the Exalted.

[END TABLE]

Social Actions

If a character is expected to engage in social influence, any social actions they're likely to use (such as instill, persuade, intimidate, and bargain) should be listed. Dice pools for these abilities are determined the same as any other QC dice pools.

Social QCs will also list their Resolve and Guile. 1-2 indicates a weak-willed or average character, 3-4 indicates a character who is comfortable resisting social pressure or who is adept at hiding his motives, and 5-6 indicates characters who are unshakable pillars of resolve or inscrutable masters of manipulation.

Combat Actions

The dice pools for combat actions (such as "Sword attack" or "Unarmed attack") are determined the same way as the dice pools for any other QC actions (don't bother altering dice pools for **withering** and **decisive** attacks). However, these actions will also list a damage rating, which acts as the base damage of **withering** attacks. Damage is determined according to the weapon used, with the chart below provided for quick reference:

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Weapons	**Damage**
Light	+7
Medium	+9
Heavy	+11

Artifact Weapons	**Damage**
Light	+10
Medium	+12
Heavy	+14

[END TABLE]

Weapons have access to whatever tags are appropriate (see chapter 10). Add 1-5 to the weapon's damage value to reflect the character's Strength, and you have a QC's combat actions. If an attack has an Overwhelming value higher than 1, this should also be noted. Thus, a hulking street tough might have Unarmed Attack 5 (Damage 11) to reflect his moderate fighting skill, considerable strength, and the fact that unarmed attacks do light damage.

Finally, a QC's Combat Actions will list his Parry and Evasion ratings and his Soak/Hardness. The two Defense ratings, Parry and Evasion, are like dice pools in that they reflect a character's general martial prowess, and are chosen by the Storyteller eyeballing and consulting the following chart:

[BEGIN TABLE]

Parry/Evasion	**Description**
0-1	The QC is an unskilled combatant who may be relying on armor and nothing else to protect him.
2-3	Violence is part of how the QC gets along in the world. This is the rating of bandits, militia, thugs, low-rent mercenaries, and Exalts who don't focus on martial prowess.
4-5	The QC is a seasoned fighter, such as a veteran soldier, a duelist, a high-priced bodyguard, a gladiatorial champion, or an Exalt who can carry himself well in battle.
6-7	The QC is a world-class fighter with an excellent weapon or shield. This is the Defense value of the Ream's elite troops, the Brides of Ahlat, and the mightiest warriors among the Chosen.

[END TABLE]

Soak/Hardness is determined by selecting the appropriate values off the following list, and then adding 1-5 to Soak to reflect the character's Stamina.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Armor	**Soak**
Light	3
Medium	5
Heavy	7

Artifact Armor	**Soak**	**Hardness**
Light	5	4
Medium	8	7
Heavy	11	10

[END TABLE]

Powers

Finally, should a QC have any Charms, spells, or other miscellaneous powers, these will be listed here. QCs appearing in this book and in supplements will usually list all necessary mechanics in the power itself, and may simplify the mechanics of certain Charms for the sake of making the QC easier to run. For example, if a Solar Charm adds the Exalt's Stamina in automatic successes to a certain kind of action, the QC power may simply say "Add three automatic successes." It's about in the right ballpark for the QC in question, and it lets the Storyteller get the action resolved faster—making sure all the modifiers line up perfectly isn't that vital.

Writing powers for your own QCs is a matter of either eyeballing existing written Charms, powers, etc., or grabbing published powers and plugging in reasonable numbers. If a spell, for example, requires you to roll (Wits + Occult) and there's no indication of what the QC's Wits or Occult ratings are, just plug in a dice pool that makes sense.

Specific areas of this chapter will give further guidelines on what sorts of powers are appropriate for various QCs.

This is the general format for a QC power:

Name *(cost, type, duration, any relevant Keywords): Rules.*

For example,

Dragon-Graced Weapon *(3m, supplemental, instant): Wreaths daiklave in flames, adding +5 raw damage to* ***withering*** *attacks, or +1 damage die to a* ***decisive*** *attack.*

Finally, some QCs, such as Exalts, are able to spend Essence to raise their dice pools or static values. The cost to do so and the motes necessary will be listed after the dice pool in question. Later sections of this chapter will describe how different sorts of supernatural beings can raise their dice pools.

Mortal Antagonists

Brigand / Conscript / Militia

The distinctions between village militia, conscripts, and bandits are political and situational. By and large, they're ill-equipped, have little to no training, and would rather go back to their farms or shops than fight.

After the Spandrelese army killed his family and burned their farm, Rook joined No-Nose Chou's bandits to fight the invaders. Demanding money from passing merchants is unfortunate, but he accepts its necessity to fund the rebellion. Some of his new comrades were brigands even before the war—criminals, outlaws, killers, and thieves—but most, like him, are ordinary dispossessed citizens. All are his brothers and sisters now, and their camp has become his home.

Rook bears a patchwork panoply of scavenged gear—self bow, short sword, battered breastplate and pot helmet. He fights aggressively against foes associated with Spandrel, rushing to melee and hanging in with high morale. Against anyone else, he hangs back to plink away with his bow, and is liable to flee or surrender.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 4 dice; Stealth: 5 dice; Threaten: 4 dice; Tracking: 4 dice

Appearance 1, Resolve 1, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Self bow): 8 dice at short range (Damage 9)

Attack (Short sword): 6 dice (Damage 11, minimum 2)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Buff jacket)

Battle-Ready Troops / Medium Infantry

Footsoldiers include well-trained militia, solidly equipped peasant levies, and mercenaries. Few city-states can afford to maintain standing armies indefinitely, so common troops spend much of

the year in agricultural labor, going to war only between harvests or when princes can afford wartime pay. Unpaid soldiers often turn to banditry.

Most Realm legionnaires are peasant volunteers seeking a hot meal and a roof over their heads, but caught stealing rice to feed her husband and daughter, Rain Plum chose the legions over the shaming her family would face if she went under the lash. Now she serves stolidly, waiting only for her term's end so she can go home.

Rain Plum is a soldier, not a warrior. She obeys military discipline and fights in formation with her fang, all of them equipped with long spear, chopping sword, tower shield, reinforced buff jacket and pot helmet. Though loyal to her officers and fangmates, if faced with overwhelming odds she will surrender or flee rather than fight to the death.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 4 dice; Threaten: 4 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Chopping sword): 7 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Long spear): 5 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Shield bash): 6 dice (Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Reinforced buff jacket)

Nomadic Horse-Archer / Medium Cavalry

Mounted troops are generally better-trained than infantry levies, as riding skill typically comes with good health and skill at arms—either from military training, or from the rough upbringing of nomadic peoples. Cavalry forces range from lightly equipped irregulars, used primarily for scouting and skirmishing, to heavily-armored cataphracts employed as shock troops. All rely heavily on their mobility, making them superior to infantry for seizing (though not holding) key locations, outmaneuvering enemy formations, and serving as a tactical or strategic reserve.

Raised in a sheep-herding clan amid the Ghadan, a hilly region southeast of Chiaroscuro, Zaidi Farid learned many skills—riding and hunting, foraging and orienteering, archery and swordsmanship. But his foremost lessons were of Delzahn honor, and he took those to heart. "Never withhold hospitality or reject a gift," his uncles taught him. "Never forget an obligation or betray a guest. Never yield to pain or fear. And always, always repay an insult—whether to yourself, your kin, or your tribe—with blood."

Farid rides to war clad in leather and silk lamellar, armed with bow, lance, and sword. He and his comrades employ skirmish tactics against large forces or unnatural foes, loosing arrows and falling back to stay out of melee range. Against seemingly weaker or outnumbered opponents, they advance in a disordered rush, ready to fight to the death to win glory through valor. He wears his sword and gray veil even off the battlefield, ready to cross blades with anyone who impugns his character—or to cut them down if they refuse an honorable duel.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Read Motives: 4 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 9 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Long spear): 8 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Scimitar): 9 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Self bow): 11 dice at short range (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (8 dice while mounted)

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Lamellar)

> Fighting Mounted Opponents
>
> Combat rules for mounted characters can be found on page XX.

Lintha Reaver / Brigand Leader / Grizzled Mercenary

Not every brigand is a starveling peasant who barely knows which end of the spear to point. Even without formal training, years of fighting—and perhaps a little talent—can harden an ordinary bandit or soldier into a ruthless killer.

When he killed a high-ranking citizen who'd refused to repay a gambling debt, the Azurite sailor Xu Han fled his homeland to escape execution in the Kraken's Pool. After a few years of petty crime in the Auspice Isles, he obtained membership in the Lintha Family through an initiation marked by the swearing of dread oaths and a gruesome castration. Now he sails aboard the *Coral Jaw* out of a Lintha sea-fort, raiding merchant ships among the archipelagoes.

Xu Han is a brutal, ruthless fighter. In boarding actions he rushes forward in concert with his shipmates, uttering bloodcurdling cries to alarm and demoralize foes. Under other circumstances he attempts to gain surprise. He has an eye for markers of status, knowing who to kill and who to ransom. His salt-corroded panoply includes javelins, axe, dagger and a reinforced buff jacket—he favors armor because, like many sailors, he cannot swim.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Assess Wealth: 6 dice; Climbing: 7 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Threaten: 7 dice; Sailing: 5 dice

Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Axe): 7 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Dagger): 9 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Javelin): 8 dice at close range (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Reinforced buff jacket)

Elite Troops / Champion / Elite Bodyguard

Military elites receive the finest arms and training, the better to support their role as shock troops or personal guards. Some are handpicked from the citizenry for size and strength, or from the rank and file for skill and valor. Others are raised for war—usually social elites groomed for great things, or indoctrinated janissary slaves.

Shigira Mizue was raised in the Weaver's Lodge of Randan. Although she was a prodigy with the sword, her impatience with the loom and her lack of talent for thaumaturgy closed off access to the highest ranks of the lodge. Instead of struggling to overcome her weaknesses, she focused on her strengths, training relentlessly to become a master duelist. Now she serves as her aunt Okita's bodyguard and champion.

Mizue's brocade armor—enchanted to the strength and weight of steel—is so brilliantly dyed that it seems to glow from within, while her scabbard blazes with gems. She requires this rich panoply to be seen in the company of the artisan-nobles of Randan, where she advises her aunt in matters of violence and danger. If called upon to defend her mistress or to stand in for her in a duel, she will fulfill her obligations unto death.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 9 dice; Threaten: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Slashing sword): 11 dice (Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 10/0 (Enchanted brocade)

Bride of Ahlat

Duah Omorose wears her order's black and red tasseled cloak and horned turban with pride. She did not join Harborhead's royal guard out of adolescent adoration of the god to whom she has been ritually wed, nor out of family tradition. She craved the respect of her peers and the terror of the enemy. The vow of chastity she took upon joining Ahlat's brides seemed a trivial sacrifice.

But Omorose now harbors a deadly secret. She is no longer a virgin; she has forsworn her vow to love none but Ahlat and her fellow brides. Should her liaison be discovered, that would normally mean death for her and her lover. But he is a Prince of the Earth, one whose power may suffice to save them from the bull-god's altar.

Like all brides of Ahlat, Omorose is strong, swift, and resilient. Her war-gear includes sling, firewand, spear, ox-hide shield and turban-wrapped horned steel helm. In battle, she utters terrifying roars as she and her fellows swarm the foe in close formation. All maintain strict discipline, though some refuse to retreat due to battle-madness or to protect fallen comrades.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command: 5 dice; Senses: 4 dice; Threaten: 7 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Short spear): 10 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Shield bash): 5 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Firewand): 9 dice at short range (Damage 11, minimum 2)

Attack (Sling): 8 dice at close range (Damage 11)

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Merits

Blessing of Ahlat: A Bride of Ahlat may sacrifice a bullock and pay a point of Willpower before a battle to gain double 9s on three rolls made in that fight. If an entire battle group partakes in

this rite, they gain Might 1 for the duration. Should a Bride fail to fight bravely after making this prayer, she is struck bedridden with palsy for a day by Ahlat's wrath.

Scavenger Lord

Adventurers who seek wealth in the ruins of the past are known as scavenger lords. Theirs is a dangerous profession, for the relics of the First Age are often guarded by traps and monsters, or by mundane dangers—wild animals, cave-ins, bad air. Surviving this gauntlet requires a good mix of courage, caution, and cunning.

Kurokami is a small, spare man whose pouches and pockets bristle with a multitude of obscure tools. His dark eyes are as opaque as his past. If pressed regarding his history, he regales listeners in his soft voice with anecdotes encompassing a range of contradictory backgrounds—mudlark, second-story man, adventurous merchant, dilettante aristocrat or disgraced thaumaturge. Acquaintances suspect a more common and prosaic background as another scavenger's apprentice.

Though he prefers to avoid confrontation and hires bodyguards whenever he has valuable cargo or sizable wealth, Kurokami stays prepared for unexpected attack. He wears a short sword on his belt, a chain shirt under his tunic and several protective talismans around his neck. His final defense is information: he can offer secret knowledge of ancient caches—including the tomb of a First Age Solar—and how to bypass some of their defenses. In all cases he negotiates bluntly but with full awareness of the values of his skills and his wares.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Ancient History: 5 dice; Assess Goods: 9 dice; Avoid Traps: 9 dice; Read Intentions: 7 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Short sword): 5 dice (Damage 10, minimum 2)

Combat Movement: 4 dice (6 dice to disengage or withdraw)

Evasion 2, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Chain shirt)

Merits

A scavenger lord may have access to weakened or damaged artifacts plundered from ruins of the ancient past. These are generally useful—a full-sized clay horse that moves with the speed of a living stallion but never tires, a daiklave scabbard that can sheathe a blade of any size, a black pearl ring that can make its wearer's hand invisible—but not comparable to those of a fully-functional artifact, unless repaired by an extraordinarily skilled craftsman.

Sijanese Deadspeaker / Exorcist / Shaman

Ghosts and other possessing spirits can threaten the integrity—or the survival—of a community. Exorcists labor to protect the living from the dead, whether by negotiation or more direct supernatural methods of coercion. (Shamans have similar tools at their disposal for use against gods, demons, and other spirits.)

Apprenticed to the Funerists' Observance at a young age, White Poem was trained in the funereal traditions and burial rites of dozens of cultures. But she lacked aptitude for the work, eventually botching a funeral service and unleashing a hungry ghost. To impress upon her the consequences of such errors, her superior reassigned her to the Deadspeakers' Observance for a year's duty as an exorcist's assistant. She found she had both talent and inclination for the job, and she volunteered to remain an exorcist indefinitely.

White Poem possesses several tools to repel the angry dead. Her staff and silver rank-bracers bear enchantments making them tangible to ghosts. Her satchel contains salt, incense and other substances useful in warding and banishing rites. But her primary weapons are words and wit. It's better to calm or trick a furious spirit than face it in combat, and if battle proves necessary, a silver tongue may persuade other skilled individuals—such as the players' characters—to join the fight.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Funerary Ceremonies: 7 dice; Knowledge of the Undead: 6 dice; Prayer to Ghosts: 5 dice; Read Intentions: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve: 3, Guile: 3

Combat

Attack (Staff): 6 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Unnarmed): 10 dice (Damage 8)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Breastplate)

Merits

Exorcism: The exorcist may attempt to banish a ghost with chanting, ritual gestures, and a variety of mystical appurtenances. She may pay one Willpower to begin an extended action with a difficulty of the ghost's Resolve and a goal number of its Willpower, rolling six dice at each interval. Each roll is a combat action that cannot be placed in a flurry. She must remain within

short range of the ghost she is exorcising, which takes a -3 penalty on all actions while the exorcism is underway. Success dispatches it back to the Underworld. The exorcist must maintain concentration, and automatically fails if she is damaged by a **decisive** attack or crashed.

Ghost-Hunter's Tools: As long as the exorcist is armed with her silver-inlaid staff and bracers, she may pay a point of Willpower to make them capable of striking dematerialized ghosts for one action. She still suffers a -3 penalty on attacks if targeting a ghost she cannot see.

Warding Talisman: The exorcist carries a talisman of blue glass filled with salt that carries a sorcerous enchantment laid on it by a master of her order. If she would be possessed by one of the undead or fall under a Psyche effect used by one of them, she may pay a point of Willpower to shatter the talisman and negate the effect.

Monk / Warrior-Priest

It's not uncommon for religious orders, from the Immaculate Order to sizable Threshold cults, to provide their members with martial training. This is, to some extent, an ascetic or meditative exercise. It also helps priests and monks protect their temples and flocks, oftimes by passing along their training to the peasantry.

Raised near the ghost-plagued ruins of Gildei, a Northern city massacred centuries ago by the Anathema Jochim in his war against the Realm, Arrow witnessed the suffering of the unquiet dead and the horrors they inflict on the living. This inspired him first to seek ordination as an Immaculate monk in distant Pneuma, and later to volunteer for the Wyld Hunt. He sees his work in the Immaculate Order—educating the peasantry, interceding on their behalf with small gods, succoring the plague-stricken, demanding respect and dignity for outcasts and untouchables—not as a duty, but as a privilege.

Arrow wears no armor, relying on martial arts skill and hook swords for both offense and defense. He fights with calm determination to protect the innocent and oppose wicked spirits. He is willing to debate with Anathema—not in hopes of converting them, but to dissuade onlookers who have entered their service. He will not throw his life away recklessly, and if outmatched, he surrenders in hopes of an opportunity to continue such proselytization.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Knowledge of Spirits: 4 dice; Medical Treatment: 5 dice; Prayer: 4 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Hook swords): 6 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Unarmed): 8 dice (Damage 8)

Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Guru / Lama / Martial High Priest

Through decades of austerities, elder monks hone both body and mind. Princes and heroes seek them out for training; acolytes call upon them for insight; peasants beg their aid in dealing with the ravages of bandits and spirits alike.

When Deepali was but a novice, her guru sought to temper her gentle, acquiescent nature through nivedana—the traditional year of service to a god—by assigning her to the minor war deity Blind Sword. Her time in the god's sanctum taught her many things: courage, martial skill, and the knowledge that even gods are imperfect and fallible.

Decades have passed since she left Blind Sword's fortress. Now Deepali is a guru herself, one of many at the Gaharai Monastery, where she instructs monks and warriors in philosophical and martial techniques. But she must occasionally absent herself to serve in the Prasadi Wyld Hunt, battling rogue gods, Fair Folk, and other supernatural entities that refuse to submit to the Pure Way's strictures.

On the Hunt, Deepali bears a composite bow and bronze-shod staff. The two fingers missing from her left hand—lost fighting the elemental Frost Cracking White—impair her skills not a whit. Her mastery of mortal martial arts makes her no less deadly unarmed, but conflicts at the monastery are typically social or intellectual in nature.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Knowledge of Spirits: 6 dice; Prayer: 6 dice; Read Intentions: 7 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 5, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Staff): 8 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Self bow): 8 dice at short range (Damage 10)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 9 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 9/0 (Reinforced buff jacket)

Assassin / Spymaster

Professional assassins and spies, like artisans, typically require the patronage of wealthy masters to pursue their trades. Instead of murdering or surveilling full-time, they serve their patrons in a variety of covert roles.

Parayar Irumporai is a ruthless killer. Born to a servant in a wealthy Champoor household, he befriended the heir, Thangam Ari, by doing the other boy's dirty work—lying, spying, manipulation, theft and violence. As an adult, he stands at Ari's left hand and performs the same tasks—only now they extend to murder. As wealthy patrons are few and unscrupulous thugs are many, he feels fortunate in his position and offers prayers and sacrifices to the murder-god Pitiless Bronze.

Irumporai wears his chopping sword openly and conceals throwing knives and a breastplate beneath his clothes. His assassination strategy relies as much on social skills as stealth. He uses guile, bribes and threats to reach targets in vulnerable moments, such as while bathing or in a lover's embrace. When working with hired thugs or other assassins, he assigns some to hold bodyguards at bay while the deed is done. Persuading him to betray his employer is not impossible, but he knows the value of loyalty and is loath to sever a lifelong relationship.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command: 5 dice; Disguise: 5 dice; Lockpicking/Pickpocketing: 7 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Stealth: 9 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Knife): 9 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Slashing sword): 7 dice (Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Breastplate)

General / Admiral / Staff Officer

At the highest ranks, military officers rarely involve themselves directly in battle if they don't wish it. Instead, they dedicate themselves to leadership, strategy, and logistics. Some are promoted through the ranks. Others gain their posts through bribery, nepotism, or repayment of political favors.

Whelk the Younger has been elected to Brightwork's council of strategoi on several occasions. He lacks the political ambitions of his peers, seeing the role as a distraction from his genealogical research tracing the descent of his city's leading families from the hero-admiral Tetram and the god-kings of the First Age. Still, he dare not ignore his duties—training, logistics, commanding Brightwork auxiliaries on Azurite military campaigns—lest he suffer exile.

At least two loyal bodyguards—all cousins, nieces, or nephews—always accompany Whelk in public. His battlefield panoply includes a short sword, reinforced breastplate and masked helm. He relies on elaborate fortifications when defending and makes good strategic use of terrain on the attack. Whelk bears no love for the Azurites; he's far more likely to surrender when fighting under their banner than when defending his homeland.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command: 7 dice; Read Intentions: 5 dice; Sailing: 8 dice (Admirals only); Senses: 5 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice; Strategy: 7 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Short sword): 8 dice (Damage 11, minimum 2)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (8 dice while mounted, generals and staff officers only)

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Reinforced Breastplate)

Prince / Oligarch / Minister

From town elders to empresses, officials of the highest rank typically have decades of experience with politics. While they have some use for skill at governance, affairs of state can be handled by subordinates; the prince's primary tools are bribery, image, and ruthlessness.

Lapis of Rake started her reign by slaying her elder brother on the battlefield. She has since dedicated herself to expanding her domain through marriage alliances, espionage, and war. A large, strong woman, she holds a reputation for powerful appetites, personal dynamism, and a hot temper. Her generosity toward loyal servants is matched only by her merciless treatment of rebels and personal enemies.

Her battle regalia—mace, target shield, articulated plate, and slotted helm—are all of the finest quality, inscribed by priests and savants with blessings and purportedly puissant runes. Even in her palace, she always keeps a sword at her hip, a breastplate beneath her shirt and a dagger up her sleeve, for while she retains a host of guards, she does not rely wholly on their skill or loyalty.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command: 7 dice; Read Intentions: 7 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 8 dice; Strategy: 5 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Mace): 7 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Short sword): 6 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Knife): 8 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 3 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 10/0 (Articulated plate)

Merits

Princes of great power and wealth sometimes retain the services of rare mortal sorcerers or local gods as allies, thus obtaining enchanted or blessed arms, armor, or other appurtenances. While not comparable to the artifacts forged by the Exalted, such wonders might include a flaming sword, warding talismans, or gemstones that warn against poison or betrayers.

Strange Folk and Monsters

Wyld Barbarian

Survival on the fringes of the Wyld is a constant struggle. Not only do mortals risk being warped by chaos, they're constantly threatened by mutated beasts, labyrinthine mirages, unwholesome foodstuffs, and Fair Folk or other chaos-kind. Tribes survive here only through strict loyalty to kin, ready violence against outsiders, and aid from local supernatural powers—gods, elementals, ancestors, renegade Fair Folk, or idiosyncratic entities. By civilized standards, Wyld barbarians are all somewhat mad. Even those whose minds aren't broken by chaos are off-kilter; they expect treachery not merely from outsiders, but from reality itself.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice; Tracking: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Axe): 7 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Javelin): 8 dice at close range (Damage 13)

Attack (Shield bash): 5 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 7/0 (Studded hide armor)

Merits

Exposure to the warping energies of the Wyld gives some borderland barbarians strange mutations (pp. XX-XX). These can be a considerable advantage in battle, but inevitably alienate them even further from civilized society, and sometimes even their own clan. Common mutations include claws, extra limbs, or an unusual hide.

Snakefolk Merchant

Smoking Crescent comes from Calani, an ancient Ixcoatli client state near the heart of the empire. Once a porter and caravan guard, she invested her pay in the caravan's operations until she had a large enough stake to enter the trade herself. Now she accompanies caravans as a merchant, carrying Ixcoatli woodwork to Serpolet and bringing back copper, bronze, and salt.

When traveling beyond Ixcoatli's sphere of influence into the near Threshold, Smoking Crescent goes veiled to conceal her brightly patterned scales and slitted green-gold eyes. She wears a buff jacket on the road and keeps a short sword at her side at all times, but relies on guards and diplomacy rather than personal combat acumen.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Assess Goods: 6 dice; Disguise: 5 dice; Read Motives: 6 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice; Senses: 4 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Short sword): 5 dice (Damage 10, minimum 2)

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 10 and poison when **decisive**, damage 2i/round, duration 3 rounds, -3 penalty)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 9/0 (Buff jacket over scales)

Aquatic Beastfolk

Gentle has lived her whole life in the Greenfin Shallows among the Seven Meyu Tribes. While her elder sisters hunted sharks and rays, or accompanied the occasional raid on the surface people, she remained in her family's coral-encrusted dolmen-house to perform domestic tasks—harvesting kelp, weaving baskets, knapping flint. But a legion of crustacean folk has swarmed up out of the deep to seize the Greenfin Shallows, their hard-shelled soldiers outmatching the Meyu warriors. When all the neighboring sea peoples—from the city-dwellers of Cavort Reef to the peripatetic Dolphin Tribes—refused to help the Meyu, Gentle set off to seek aid from the air-breathing folk of the surface realm.

Though her features are those of the tribal peoples of the southern Caul, Gentle has rubbery magenta skin, an elongated skull, gill-slits along her neck and suction cups on her palms, fingertips and the soles of her feet. She carries a spear but wears no armor. Other than a pouch-laden belt, her only garment is a cloak to ward off the sun and to soak so as to remain comfortable out of the water. Though her reflexes have yet to fully adjust to moving about on land, a life spent underwater has left her far stronger than most surface-dwellers.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Social Influence: 4 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Swimming: 7 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Long spear): 4 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Unarmed): 8 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Merits

Benthic Expertise: Aquatic beastfolk add two bonus dice on Join Battle, attack, and movement rolls while underwater.

Gills: Aquatic beastfolk can breathe both underwater and in air.

Walking Statue / Jade Effigy / Man of Gold / Automaton / Golem

When a Wyld storm swept through the Eastern city of Arashon—built amid the ruins of the Shogunate city of that name—a bronze statue of the city's founder, the daimyo Tahaki Shant,

came to life. When the statue entered the palace and evicted Arashon's prince from the throne, the people hailed it as Tahaki returned and worshipped it as a god.

More recently, a neighboring city hired the outcaste Dragon-Blooded general Saffron Ground to lead an army against Arashon. When she squared off against the statue, the air rang with the sound of their duel. Though powerful enough to give the experienced Exalt a ferocious fight, the statue found itself pressed back until, battered and beaten, it knelt before its conqueror. Saffron chose that moment to renounce her role as mercenary and claim Arashon for her own. Now the statue stands at her right hand as her most trusted advisor.

The statue of Tahaki Shant resembles an eight-foot-tall sculpture of an elaborately mustachioed man in Shogunate costume, all of bronze with a deep green patina. Paired bronze swords hang at its waist. Though it cannot speak, its deeply expressive features exhibit the intelligence—and the ferocity—that Arashon's people attribute to the original Tahaki.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Health Levels: -0x4/-1x4/-2x2/-4x2/Incap.

Actions: Appear Inanimate: 10 dice; Command: 6 dice; Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Threaten: 7 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 5 (see Automaton), Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Slashing sword): 8 dice (Damage 16, minimum 2)

Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 13/7

Special Attacks

Colossus Strike: The automaton may make a powerful but slow-moving blow, devastating enemies but leaving itself vulnerable to attack. It may double 9s on a **decisive** attack, but takes a -2 penalty to Defense until its next turn.

Merits

Automaton: Automatons are immune to poison and disease, and have no need to eat, drink, breathe, or sleep. As a general rule, they treat all social influence as unacceptable, unless following the orders of their master or faced with magic such as the Dawn Caste anima power. Automaton battle groups have perfect morale. Independent sapient automata, such as the statue of Tahaki Shant, are exceptions, but usually remain immune to fear.

Fogshark

The fogshark prowls the chill shores of the White Sea. Whenever the mists rise, it ascends from the spume and spray of the surface waters to swim through the fog and feed on land-dwelling creatures. Its lean white body is almost invisible in the brume—at least until it's stained red with blood. Only rarely are such creatures beached when a fog bank dissolves; their instincts lead them back to the water when the mists recede.

A related species, the rainshark, is rumored to dwell in the storm-swept jungles of the farthest Southwest, emerging from its aquatic feeding grounds to hunt through the monsoon rains.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 6 dice (see Blood Scent); Stealth: 8 dice; Tracking: 4 dice (see Blood Scent)

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 16)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Soak/Hardness: 9/0 (Shark skin)

Evasion 4, Parry 2

Special Attacks

Frenzied Bite: The fogshark may pay a point of Willpower when it makes a **decisive** attack against a character with at wound penalty of -1 or higher to double 8s on the attack roll and add all extra successes to the raw damage of the attack.

Merits

Blood Scent: Fogsharks adds three automatic successes on any Perception-based roll to scent blood, and can track it from miles away. If one is specifically attempting to track or detect a character who is bleeding, it adds an additional automatic success for each point of wound penalty that character is suffering.

Fog Swimmer: Fogsharks ignore any visual penalties or other environmental impediments from fighting in fog—usually a one-die penalty on any roll involving vision.

Mist, the Eternal Revolutionary

Generations ago, the tyrant Storm Hawk seized power in the city of Kahla at the fringes of the world. Unable to oppose Storm Hawk's rule, the young farmer Mist sought power in the Wyld to set his people free. He returned a changed man, taller and handsomer, with a strange fire in his eyes. Like something out of a folktale, he raised an army of his downtrodden countrymen,

stormed the palace, and slew Storm Hawk in single combat on the ramparts in full view of the people.

Though he could easily have claimed Kahla for himself, Mist moved on to other lands at the world's edge, overthrowing rulers wherever he went—whether cruel despots or benevolent elected officials. Fortune aligns to aid him in his quest, while unlikely events follow at his heels. Although sometimes defeated, he is never destroyed, escaping from every confinement and recovering from every injury.

Though decades have passed since he freed his homeland, Mist has not aged a day. Now, for the first time, he has ventured from the backwater borders of Creation into the Threshold proper, the sword Interregnum in his hand, to pursue his endless quest.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 20

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x4/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: "Overthrow all tyrants."

• Major Principle: "My past all seems like a dream."

Actions: Command: 8 dice; Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Motives: 7 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 6, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Interregnum sword): 11 dice (Damage 15, minimum 5)

Attack (Unnarmed): 8 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 11/7 (Lucky breastplate)

Merits

Implacable Drive: Mist's Defining Principle of "Overthrow all tyrants" cannot be changed or eliminated by non-magical means.

Never Found the Body: If Mist would die under circumstances where his death can't be verified —he falls off a cliff, is trapped in a burning building, or is impaled and left to bleed out—he survives through some inexplicable stroke of luck.

Offensive Charms

Denounce the Tyrant (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only, Shaping): With a successful difficulty 4 gambit, Mist delivers a stinging slap to an authority figure's face, leaving a pale indelible mark. Thereafter, those who serve the target regard her as domineering and cruel, which is equivalent to a Minor Intimacy in strength. Any battle groups serving under that leader add +1 to the difficulty of rout and rally rolls while acting under his orders. The ruler may flee this curse through abdication, though the magic of spirits or sorcerers may also be able to lift it.

Prince's Doom (2m per die; Reflexive; Instant): When a ruler or the direct agent of a ruler makes a roll in Mist's presence, he may use this Charm to convert dice that came up successes to 1s at a cost of two motes per die, starting with the character's 10s and moving downwards. He cannot convert more dice than the original 1s on the roll. If a roll fails because of this interference, it is automatically considered a botch.

Zicnal of the Asmani

According to legend, when the elder powers first shaped Creation, they set the asmani to hold up the four corners of the sky. When the Contagion came and the Fair Folk poured over the edges of the world in an unstoppable tide, the asmani were swallowed up by the Wyld. Warped and reshaped almost beyond recognition, they wander as vast protean colossi through the shallows of chaos.

Zicnal appears as a titanic man fifty feet high. His three faces are white-haired and bushy-bearded; his many hands hold parchment and brush, plumb line and measuring cord, scepter and sword. Where most of his kin remain in the deepest Wyld, meandering mindlessly or making war against things of chaos, Zicnal dwells upon an island of stability beyond the world's edge. There he rules the demented city of Marakanda, home to ten thousand mutated mortals and an endless variety of inscrutable goblin-things.

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 50

Health Levels: -0x10/-1x20/-2x20/-4x10/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: "Though I am fallen from my former state, I still deserve respect from the powers of Creation."

• Major Tie: The Fair Folk (Wary Resentment)

• Major Tie: Marakanda (Exasperated Responsibility)

• Minor Tie: Other Asmani (Disappointment)

Actions: Command: 8 dice; Feats of Strength: 15 dice (may attempt Strength 10 feats); Knowledge of the Wyld: 6 dice; Long Memory: 8 dice; Read Motives: 7 dice; Senses: 10 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Colossal sword): 11 dice (Damage 24, minimum 5)

Attack (Giant's scepter): 11 dice (Damage 24, minimum 4)

Attack (Plumb line): 9 dice (Damage 23, minimum 5)

Attack (Unarmed): 8 dice (13 dice to control). Asmani automatically win control of grapples against enemies of smaller size, and roll unopposed to determine how many rounds of control they establish, unless their victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 15/5

Merits

Legendary Size: Asmani take no onslaught penalties from attacks made by smaller opponent, unless magically inflicted. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop asmani below 1 Initiative unless the attack has a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage against asmani, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Threefold Focus: Whenever Zicnal spends a Willpower to enhance a dice roll, instead of gaining an automatic success, he adds three dice to his pool.

Wyld Resistance: Asmani are immune to the warping and addictive properties of ambient Wyld energies, save for when they enter Pure Chaos at the outermost edges of the Wyld. They double 9s on rolls to resist shaping inflicted by creatures of the Wyld.

Offensive Charms

Limb-Wrenching Grasp (10m, 2i; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): When an asman throws a grappled enemy, it may first tear them asunder, doubling the bonus dice of damage it receives from forfeited rounds of control. If the rolled damage exceeds the victim's (Stamina x 2), double the total levels of damage unless the victim accepts a crippling injury, which does not count against the once per story limit (p. XX). Dead or alive, the victim is flung aside afterwards, ending the grapple.

Scything Blow (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): With one blow of its weapons, the asman makes a **decisive** attack against two enemies, dividing its Initiative evenly between both to determine the raw damage of the attack. Once per fight, unless reset by building up to Initiative 20+.

Triple Threat (15m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Withering-only): Zicnal makes three separate **withering** attacks, each of which must use a different weapon and be directed against a unique target. He gains Initiative as normal from the attack that dealt the highest amount of damage, but the other two attacks cannot award more than 5 Initiative each (not counting Initiative Breaks). Once per fight, unless reset making three separate **decisive** attacks over the course of the scene.

Social Charms

Elegant Goblin-King Brushstrokes (20m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Written-only): When Zicnal writes an edict of law into the code of Marakanda, his persuade roll is applied against the Resolve of all Wyld mutants and creatures who inhabit the city without them needing to read it. Those who are convinced to follow his dictates act as though the law had always been in place. Once per story.

Miscellaneous Charms

Sky-Shouldering Exertion (20m, 1wp or 4i, Supplemental, Instant): The asmani doubles 7s on the roll for a feat of strength.

> Other Asmani
>
> Zicnal's traits are representative of the asmani in general, although the warping power of the Wyld may cause others to have mutations, Charms, panoplies, or domains far different from his own. The twelve-armed asman Sanek, for instance, lacks Zicnal's three faces, but instead has the lower body of an immense scarlet worm, her underbelly lined with unblinking faces, and wears an armored raiment woven from honeybees. She wanders the Wyld as a penitent, hoping to reclaim her former glory through deeds of what she perceives as virtue.

Mouse of the Sun

The Mice of the Sun appear similar to ordinary mice—they have stark white fur and bright golden eyes. Though they live and breed like normal animals, they bear the blessing of the Unconquered Sun, and have an affinity for the returned Solar Exalted. A Lawgiver who bonds with one of the mice will have a companion for life. These tiny creatures are clever, inconspicuous, and loyal to a fault—more than capable of slipping into a prison cell with a lockpick, or spotting an assassin that their master has missed. The mice also serve as a vector for the Unconquered Sun's divine judgment: the Plague of the Sun, a disease that falls upon those who have displeased him.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap. Mice of the sun are fearless in battle, no matter how badly injured they are.

Actions: Complex Thought: 4 dice; Gnaw Through Things: 4 dice; Scurry Through Tight Spaces: 7 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 9 dice (see Slink Away and Tiny Creature)

Resolve: 4, Guile: 1

Combat

Attack (Gnaw): 5 dice (Damage 2). Damage increases to 5 against any enemy housecat-sized or smaller.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 3; Parry 1 (see Tiny Creature)

Soak/Hardness: 1/0

Special Attacks

Distracting Scurry: The mouse of the sun can attempt a distract gambit (p. XX), adding two automatic successes to the attack roll against an enemy who is larger than a housecat. An enemy who is successfully distracted by the gambit also suffers the penalties of being blinded until their onslaught penalty has refreshed, as his attentions are so thoroughly focused on the small pest assailing him that he cannot notice anything else in his immediate surroundings.

Plague of the Sun: An enemy damaged by a **decisive** gnaw attack must also roll for exposure to the Plague of the Sun if they have offended the Unconquered Sun with prayers unworthy of the Most High or wicked deeds committed in his name. This is generally an issue of Storyteller discretion, rather than something the mouse's master can decide.

> The Plague of the Sun
>
> The Plague of the Sun is a supernatural disease with virulence 4, morbidity 4, and an interval of one week. In addition to the usual traits of a disease, it has the following effects:
>
> • Minor Symptom: The victim is haunted by a sense of judgment as the sun rises into the sky, causing him to lose a point of Willpower every day when the sun reaches its noonday zenith unless he is totally cut off from all natural light at the time. In addition, once a character has contracted the Plague of the Sun, even the most powerful healing magic cannot reduce it below the level of a minor symptom. A sincere prayer made to the Unconquered Sun asking for forgiveness can lower the intensity of the disease by one step or cure it entirely for those who have it at a minor symptom, but only for those who have committed sufficient atonement for whatever sin originally drew down the Sun's wrath. Such prayers can be made no more than once per interval of the sickness.
>
> • Major Symptom: In addition to the above effects, the victim takes a -2 penalty on all actions when exposed to daylight. This penalty is decreased to -1 if he

wears thick, concealing clothing or uses other similar means to keep the sun off the flesh.

• Defining Symptom: In addition to the above effects, the victim is considered a creature of darkness for the purposes of Charms that have additional effects against them, such as Edge of Morning Sunlight or Fiery Solar Chakram.

Scampering Misdirection: Scampering across the enemy's body, the mouse of the sun frustrates him into striking at himself. After successfully executing a distract gambit against an enemy, the mouse of the sun may redirect any attack made by that enemy that it successfully evades back at its attacker until its next turn. The mouse must remain within close range of the distracted enemy to use this special attack.

Flashing Sun Clash (Latent): By paying 1 Willpower, the mouse of the sun moves at the speed of sound to clash an attack. The mouse may move anywhere in her master's line of sight to make this attack, even over air. This clash is **decisive** and adds her master's Initiative to her own for the purposes of ignoring hardness, though only the mouse's damage is rolled. If the mouse fails, she is struck by the attack instead of the original target.

Orichalcum Fang Strike (Latent): When the mouse of the sun attacks demons, undead, or other creatures of the night with its gnaw attack, its **withering** attacks have a base damage of 5 regardless of the enemy's size, and its **decisive** attacks deal aggravated damage. If the mouse spends Willpower to enhance the attack, it may apply the double 10s rule to the damage roll.

Paw of Judgment (Magical): When the mouse of the sun's master successfully damages an enemy with a **decisive** attack after receiving Initiative from a distract gambit made by the mouse against that enemy, the damaged character must roll against contracting the Plague of the Sun.

Merits

Faithful Servant: All mice of the sun have a Defining Tie of loyalty to the Unconquered Sun, which cannot be weakened or altered by any influence rolls or magic.

Fed by Virtue: The mouse of the sun does not sleep, but she does tire. She may sate hunger and thirst by normal means, eliminating any fatigue penalties, but she may also feed and quench her thirst by acting compassionately or courageously to aid another. Additionally, her hunger pains may be allayed by witnessing her master do the same. In times of trouble, an Exalted master may also feed her a single mote of Essence to restore her vigor for a single day.

Keen Nose: The mouse of the sun applies the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Slink Away: When the mouse of the sun attempts to go to ground in combat (p. XX), the penalty for doing so begins at -0, instead of -3.

Sunlit Fur Warmth: Once per story in which he somehow upholds the principles or virtues of the Unconquered Sun, the player of the master of a mouse of the sun who spends a scene petting and playing with his familiar may roll a single die, removing one point of Limit for each success.

Tiny Creature: The mouse of the sun adds +2 Evasion against any attack made by any foe larger than a housecat. In addition, characters of that size subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice the mouse.

Dancing Mouse Fury (Latent)**:** If her master is one of the Solar Exalted, when both she and her master roll Join Battle, she gains two Initiative for each 10 in her master's Join Battle roll.

Resplendent Solar Avatar (Magical): The Solar may grant the mouse any of the benefits of his anima banner for free when he uses them himself, or may pay separately to activate them on the mouse's behalf. This is not compatible with anima effects that allow characters to acquire permanent traits, such as an Eclipse's ability to learn certain spirit Charms or a Twilight's ability to bind spirits as familiars. In addition, the mouse may reflexively surround itself with radiance emulating its master's anima banner at the burning level.

Sun's Shadow Companion (Magical, 1wp): The mouse can learn to use effects equivalent to the Solar Charms Invisible Statue Spirit, Lock-Opening Touch, and Stealing from Plain Sight Spirit, paying a point of Willpower in lieu of the mote cost of these Charms. Each Charm the Solar wishes to teach to his familiar requires a separate use of Beast-Mastering Behavior.

Vanishing Flare (Magical): The mouse of the sun has the Essence of Solar flame. It may unknit its physical substance to vanish into a curl of Solar flame until its master calls it back. In addition, if the mouse would be killed, it instead vanishes into the fires of its anima, slowly reforming over the course of the story. Once the next story has begun, the mouse emerges at an unforeseen moment to aid its Solar master.

The Dead

Zombie

When the plague came to Vesper, Dare perished like many of his kin. In the plague's wake walked a necromancer who raised the disease-ridden dead as mindless servants. When Dare's wife took up arms against the defiler, she hesitated when faced by the walking carcass of her love. Now the thing's face is crusted with her clotted gore and scraps of her flesh cling beneath its fingernails. Though maggots cluster around its eye sockets and the left side of its face is torn away to expose ragged muscle and bone, it remains recognizable as something that once was human.

Though the necromancer has equipped some of the burlier zombies with weapons and armor, Dare's corpse wears only a few ragged scraps of burial robe and fights unarmed. Driven by unnatural forces rather than muscle, it can absorb punishment that would incapacitate a mortal warrior and then strike back with inhuman strength. Worse, the ichor oozing from its putrid flesh still carries the plague. Its greatest weakness is its mindlessness. It can only obey the simplest

commands, and it gnaws at slain foes despite its handlers' best efforts, as though the flesh and blood of the living might somehow fill the emptiness within.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 1; **Join Battle:** 2 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 4 dice; Threaten: 4 dice; Tracking: 4 dice

Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 1, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 5 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 2 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 0

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Special Attacks

Deathly Stench: The first time a living character comes into close range of a zombie in a fight, he must roll (Stamina + Resistance) at difficulty 2. On a failed roll, he loses a point of Initiative and takes a -1 penalty on all rolls for the rest of the fight from nausea. Characters who have fought zombies more than once acclimate to their stink and become immune to this attack.

Plaguebearer: Infected wounds left by a zombie's bite have virulence 5 (p. XX).

Merits

Mindless: Zombies treat all social influence as unacceptable. Zombie battle groups have perfect morale.

> The Benefits of Being Dead
>
> Undead creatures—ghosts, hungry ghosts, zombies, and the like—are immune to poison and disease, have no need to eat, drink, or sleep, and are otherwise immune to things that only affect living creatures. They are likewise unaffected by powers and techniques based around inflicting nerve strikes, damaging vital organs, or otherwise affecting things that spirits don't have and corpses no longer use.

Hungry Ghost

Kina of Swanmare served as a soldier for most of her adult life. Her superiors found her ideally suited to atrocious tasks, for while she lacked the desire to commit such acts—making her unlikely to develop a taste for them on her own time—she could be relied upon to do her duty. Now, with her sword set aside and her health broken by age and illness, Kina's flesh cannot keep

a firm grip on a lower soul bloated from decades of death. It oozes from her body in the night and creeps through the town, committing the killings that Kina herself no longer performs.

As with the more typical hungry ghosts that rise from improperly buried corpses—or from those ritually tortured to death by necromancers for this purpose—Kina's lower soul appears as a smoky, translucent image of herself as a young warrior. (This youthful manifestation is unrecognizable to her neighbors.) Its buff jacket and polearm are merely cosmetic. The trappings of armament and mortality fade when it attacks, revealing a leathery, vulpine body with enormous talons and slavering jaws.

The lower soul thirsts for living blood, fleeing only from overwhelming force and turning aside only from unbroken lines of salt or germinated grain, which it cannot cross. It dematerializes at sunrise to return to Kina's body, as other hungry ghosts would return to rest in their improperly-interred corpses, for the light of the sun would blast it to ash. If it drinks mortal blood, Kina awakens refreshed and in rare good health. But wounds delivered to the thing are reflected on her body, and she dies if it's destroyed.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Disguise: 4 dice; Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 5 dice (see Blood Scent); Tracking: 6 dice (see Blood Scent)

Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Claw): 10 dice (Damage 13)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Merits

Blood Scent: Hungry ghosts adds three successes on any Perception-based roll to sense the presence of spilt blood, and can smell battles or massacres from five miles away. If it is specifically attempting to track or detect a character who is bleeding, it adds an additional success for each point of wound penalty that character is suffering.

Earthbound: At night, hungry ghosts will naturally materialize upon sensing potential prey (see Blood Scent, above). They become immaterial when no prey is present, and may pass through solid obstacles in order to flee back to their corpse once the light of dawn begins to brighten the horizon, even while materialized. The touch of sunlight inflicts 3 automatic levels of lethal damage to a hungry ghost per round, unless the hungry ghost is resting in its corpse or vessel.

Hungrier Ghosts

Hungry ghosts that arise from the lower souls of potent humans such as the Exalted or who have amassed power through ages of existence are more puissant than their common kin. A hungry ghost born from an Exalt or who has spent over a century in existence might have Essence 3, a pool of eighty motes, and knowledge of several Charms possessed by other undead creatures in this section. Most relevant dice pools are increased by two from the base traits, and they may have other pools at five to eight dice reflecting skills of the Exalt they arose from or talents they have cultivated over the span of a long unlife.

Honored Ancestor

In life, Zoria served as a priest of Agate Plover, one of the nine hot spring gods of Luster. She has used the town's new shadowland to return home and bless her descendants with fertility, healing and prophecy, both from compassion and to feed on the delicious warmth of their prayer. In doing so, she puts herself at odds with the priestly order to which she once belonged and the gods whom she once served.

Though she appears translucent during the day, at night one could easily mistake Zoria for a living woman, albeit one of unusual pallor. She wears no armor, and the knife at her hip is more for leechcraft than combat. Luster is a peaceful place; she fears no violence while surrounded by her people, especially when her grasp of ghostly magic is well known.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Medicinal Treatment: 8 dice; Read Intentions: 5 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Knife): 7 dice (Damage 9)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Merits

Cult 1-2: Ancestor ghosts generally have small cults made up of their families, although ancient ghosts whose descendants are dedicated in their worship may have Cult 2.

Voice of the Oracle: At times, an ancestor ghost may utter a dire prophecy concerning a person, place, or group she sees, the words spilling unbidden from her mouth and heard by all, even if she is not materialized. If a character takes steps to prevent the foretold doom by making preparations that take the ghost's prophecy into account, he may add a bonus die on relevant rolls to resist or oppose the threat (or to bring it about, if that is his wish).

Offensive Charms

Chilling Touch (7m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 1): The ghost's strikes pass through metal, leather, and flesh to freeze blood and soul, allowing her **withering** attacks to ignore up to four points of natural or armored soak.

Curse of the Dead (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Eclipse, Psyche; Essence 2): Uttering a dreadful imprecation, the ghost curses her victim to dream of the direst horrors of the Labyrinth, making a threaten roll against the Resolve of a victim within medium range. A cursed character cannot regain Willpower from his nightmare-haunted sleep, and gains Paranoia as a Minor Derangement after (Integrity) days of this restless sleep (p. XX). An occultist may break this curse by succeeding on a difficulty 3 (Intelligence + Occult) roll to conduct an abjuring ritual by the light of dawn.

Miscellaneous Charms

Apparition (1m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): Few ancestor ghosts are capable of materialization. Instead they may use this Charm to become visible, but not corporeal, for one scene.

Honorable Descendant Blessing (1m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): An ancestor ghost may bless one of her living descendants with this Charm, granting him a pool of three bonus dice that he may spend on a single dice roll within the next day. She may invoke this to benefit any descendant she perceives, or who makes a successful prayer roll to her.

> Ghostly Existence
>
> The dead rarely change much from their living days. Storytellers can represent many ghosts with an appropriate mortal Quick Character template, adding only an Essence pool of (50 + [Essence x 10]) motes and a few ghostly Charms. A typical ghost cannot cross a line of salt or germinated grain. An especially powerful ghost may cross such a line by spending one Willpower.
>
> Ghosts are naturally immaterial, and use the same rules for materializing as other spirits (p. XX), but few ghosts are capable of doing so. Most either use the Apparition Charm, or else possess corpses, objects, or the living when they wish to interact with the material world.

War Ghost

A peasant footsoldier in the last days of the Shogunate, Sard died of the Great Contagion. Those few of his kin that survived the plague perished in the ensuing collapse of civilization and passed into Lethe. He has since served in the armies of one ghostly warlord after another, as if he might expiate through battle his long-ago inability to protect his family.

Sard appears as a short, firmly built man of indeterminate age. His skin bears the greenish tint of the Contagion dead; his eyes are hard and cold. In the Underworld, he wears grotesquely adorned armor of black iron. When in the living world, he animates a suit of mundane armor, so that it moves eerily without a body visible within.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Personal Motes: 60

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats): Senses: 5 dice: Stealth: 4 dice: Threaten: 5 dice

Combat

Attack (Sword): 7 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: Special (see Forge-Born Form)

Offensive Charms

Chilling Touch (7m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 1): The war-ghost's blade flickers ethereal for a moment, ignoring up to four points of natural or armored soak.

Miscellaneous Charms

Forge-Born Form (20m 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 1): Most war-ghosts cannot materialize, but interact with the living world by animating a suit of armor. In this form, it cannot speak, forcing it to rely on body language if it wishes to communicate (p. XX), but may otherwise act as though it were materialized. It soak and hardness become equal to those of the armor. Taking more than four levels of damage while using this Charm ends its duration, as the armor clatters to the ground and leaves the ghost bodiless.

Doppelgänger

Long ago, the sea lords of Azure conquered the Auspice Isles and claimed the people as chattel. One enslaved Auspicene priest used curses, trickery, and poison to work such subtle revenge on his new masters that many died before he was discovered and executed in the Kraken's Pool. He continued his revenge even after death until the Azurite ancestors drove him from their shores.

Western mortals call him the Blue Shadow. He has mastered the art of moliation—the shaping of ghostly flesh—to copy others' countenances. Making himself visible to mortals, he uses false faces to gain their confidence and plays on their passions with clever lies. Murder alone no longer satisfies him; he relies on seduction, treachery and deceit to induce his victims to destroy themselves and those around them. He also practices the nemissary arts, stealing the bodies of the freshly dead for more tangible charades.

His name is lost to history, as is his old shape. Should magic tear his false faces from him, his visage is as blank and featureless as the moon.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Disguise: 8 dice; Lockpicking/Pickpocketing: 6 dice; Read Intentions: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 3, Guile 6

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 7 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Grapple): 3 dice (4 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 5/0 (or 11/0; see Monstrous Mein)

Merits

Cult 0-2: Doppelgängers and other actively malicious ghosts are often propitiated by mortals who fear the ghost's depredations.

Offensive Charms

Monstrous Mien (8m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Essence 2): In an instant, the doppelgänger's body expands into a horrid shape. His skin grows scaly, his visage bestial, his limbs long and bandy and tipped by vicious claws. This transformation grants the ghost the Hideous Merit for its duration, doubles 8s on unarmed attack rolls and threaten rolls, and adds six points to the ghost's soak.

Soul-Thieving Method (1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 2): Stealing his victim's Essence, the doppelgänger does not receive any Initiative from a **withering** attack, but instead converts each point into a mote stolen from his enemy's Essence pools and added to his own.

Miscellaneous Charms

Apparition (1m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): A doppelgänger may become visible, but not corporeal, for one scene with this Charm.

False Face (8m; Simple; Instant, Essence 2): Ghostly flesh flows beneath his fingers like clay as the doppelgänger alters his appearance to assume the guise of another ghost or mortal, negating all penalties for imitating a specific character and doubling 9s. False Face doesn't work on dead flesh possessed via Nemissary's Ride, and its Disguise bonus is only compatible with Monstrous Mien if the doppelgänger is imitating a similarly monstrous creature.

Nemissary's Ride (20m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 1): The doppelgänger moves into a human corpse, animating it. He uses the physical Attributes, soak, and health track of the corpse's former life in place of his own, but otherwise retains his own statistics. If the body is freshly dead or expertly embalmed, this imposes a -1 die penalty to disguise actions; more advanced decay increases the penalty or make disguise impossible. The possessor is ejected if the animated corpse runs out of health levels. Attacks capable of striking the immaterial damage both the corpse's health track and the possessing ghost's.

Mortwight

Those whose hearts are consumed in life by hatred, fear, or despair are touched in death by oblivion. Those who succumb to its call are twisted into mortwights. These specters haunt the Labyrinth, traveling alone or in short-lived packs, howling as they hunt down stray ghosts, weird Underworld beasts, and one another. Some come to serve the dark powers of the Underworld—the Deathlords, the nephwrack priest-kings, or any of a thousand other hellish entities. Others serve only the whispers in their own skulls. Whatever their masters, mortwights are often sent to the Underworld, the shadowlands, or Creation proper on missions of kidnapping, defilement, or murder.

A mortwight soon abandons all resemblance to its living shape, becoming an avatar of the hateful hungers of the void. These fiercely clawed and barbed creatures are long-limbed and skeletal, their bodies gleaming as palely or as darkly as jade. Maddened by hatred and the black fires of oblivion, they have little sense of self-preservation, and may fight to obliviation unless their survival will serve some greater purpose.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 5 dice

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 8/0

Offensive Charms

Black Breath of the Abyss (8m; Simple; One scene; Eclipse; Essence 2): A cloud of unnatural darkness forms around the mortwight out to medium range. While the dead may see through it, the living suffer the penalties of blindness unless Awareness-enhancing Charms augment their sight. A Solar anima banner at the bonfire level instantly disperses the cloud.

Flying Time Technique (15m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Perilous; Essence 2): Like something out of a nightmare, the mortwight moves with impossible speed as everything around it seems to slow to a crawl. Treat its Initiative as three points higher than it actually is when determining turn order each round. It adds two automatic successes on any attack roll against a character that has not acted yet during this round, and adds +2 Defense against attacks made by characters that act after it in turn order.

Thrashing Ghost Tantrum (8m, 4i, 1wp; Simple, One round; Perilous; Essence 2): Small objects—clods of earth, firewood, cobblestones, swords—rise and whirl through the air in a violent storm, creating an environmental hazard that applies against all material creatures within medium range. This hazard has a default difficulty of 3 and damage 4B, but the Storyteller may adjust this based on the scenery.

Miscellaneous Charms

Apparition (1m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): While some mortwights are capable of materialization, they may also use this Charm to become visible, but not corporeal, for one scene.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): Only particularly old and powerful mortwights are capable of materializing. Many lack this Charm.

Echo / Haunt

Merchants cross Harden Ford only when the sun is high in the sky, and make sure to camp far from the site. Hundreds have died here over the centuries in wars and raids—soldiers, traders, herders, pilgrims. Each night, their ghosts rise to re-enact the battles and the slaughter.

Haunts—also called “Echoes” or “Drones”—are as shadows even among ghosts. Lost in death, they can do nothing but repeat their last moments over and over. Only those things that were important to them in life will stir a spark of awareness. Confronted by the face of a lover or the banner of a hated foe, a haunt may turn its attention from the recurring tableau of its death to act in the living world.

Sadly, all too many of those slain at Harden Ford defined themselves through bloodshed. The passage of the living draws their eyes and their ire. Taking on substance and solidity, these haunts eagerly turn their spectral blades on passers-by, darkening the ford's waters with blood.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 1; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Personal Motes: 60

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 4 dice

Appearance 1, Resolve 5, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Short sword): 6 dice (Damage 12, minimum 2)

Attack (Shield bash): 5 dice (Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 8/0 (Ghostly hauberk)

Note: Echoes usually have some other dice pools relating to their actions at the time of their death. The highest of these dice pools are generally six dice, while others are four or five dice. These combat traits assume an echo that died in battle or by violence. Those who did not are generally incapable of deviating from their morbid routine to engage in combat.

Merits

One-Track Mind: A haunt treats all influence unrelated to its dying moments or its perpetual labor as unacceptable. It can be made to realize that it is dead with an instill roll that must contend against the +4 Resolve bonus it receives from its Defining Principle of belief to the contrary. Such a haunt typically then passes into Lethe, the cycle of reincarnation.

Miscellaneous Charms

Apparition (1m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): Haunts may use this Charm to become visible, but not corporeal, for one scene. They are not generally capable of materialization, but a few haunts have been known to do so if it is necessary to act out their post-mortem "script."

Susurrus

Ghosts are not immortal. Some surrender to Lethe and rebirth, while others are consumed by oblivion or forged into soulsteel. And then there are those subjected to such terrible forces, from earth-shattering sorcery to a hekatonkhire's jaws, that they are torn asunder. Most such ghosts are too badly dismembered to recover, but when many are riven apart at once, their surviving fragments can come together to form a patchwork whole—a susurrus.

A susurrus at rest spreads itself thinly across its haunting-place, manifesting as whispering voices and a chill in the air. If provoked, it coheres into a tattered mass of shadows, faces, and wisps of spectral flesh fluttering like banners in the wind. Hungry to be whole, a susurrus will thrust its sprawling piecemeal bulk into a human body as a possessing spirit, its fractured mind driving the victim to erratic bouts of elation, sorrow, lust, shame, homicidal rage, and suicidal melancholy.

The dead have more to fear from the susurrus than the living. It rips ghosts to fragments that it incorporates into its own piebald frame. The more ghosts a susurrus consumes in this manner, the larger and more powerful it becomes. More than once, ancestral spirits have begged an Exalted descendant to free a shadowland from a susurrus's hunger.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4/Incap.

Actions: Read Intentions: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 5 dice; Stealth: 8 dice; Tracking: 7 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 5, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Rend): 12 dice (Damage 17, minimum 3)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 10/3

Offensive Charms

Patchwork Possession (30m, 1wp, Simple, Indefinite; Decisive-only; Essence 2): A susurrus cannot materialize, but it may attempt to possess a living character, pouring itself through his orifices and overwhelming his mind to take control of his body. This is a gambit with a difficulty equal to the higher of the target's Resolve or Willpower. Success allows the susurrus to take over the victim's body, using his physical Attributes and health track in place of its own for the duration of the possession. Attacks capable of striking the immaterial damage both the victim's health track and the possessing ghost's. The susurrus cannot take advantage of any of the possessed character's magic, but it may pull knowledge from his mind with a read intentions action rolled against his Guile. Possession victims may roll (Wits + Integrity) at difficulty 3 at the end of each scene as an extended action to force out the possessing ghost, doing so upon attaining a goal number of 10. The host may make an additional roll whenever the susurrus tries to force him to act in opposition to any of his Intimacies, adding that Intimacy's rating in dice to his roll.

Defensive Charms

Devour the Dead (1m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): When a ghost is destroyed or discorporated within short range, the susurrus uses this Charm to absorb the disintegrating remnants of the ghost's corpus, rolling dice equal to the ghost's Essence and healing one level of damage per success. Damage dealt to a battle group made of ghosts also allows this Charm to be used, rolling dice equal to (the points of Magnitude lost + the group's Might).

> Gorging on Ghosts
>
> A susurrus that devours large numbers of ghosts will grow in size and gain additional health levels. This typically occurs over long periods of time, but a susurrus that tears into a ghostly battle group may grow amidst combat, gaining a new -1 or -2 health level (whichever it has fewer of) whenever it uses Devour the Dead in response to major losses to the battle group. Upon obtaining ten additional health levels, a susurrus generally gains a dot of Essence and the Legendary Size Merit possessed by tyrant lizards and other large monsters (p. XX) A susurrus of legendary size may use Patchwork Possession to take control of a human's body via an ectoplasmic pseudopod without having to physically merge with them. The number of humans it may control this way is limited only by the cost of the Charm.

Bonesider

Mortals eschew the meat of animals that have feasted on human flesh, for tainted animals may carry the puppeteer's plague (p. XX). The disease and the creatures it creates have been used as terror weapons throughout this fallen age. In the modern day, warlords from the Bull of the North to the Mask of Winters have driven infected cattle to the gates of besieged cities, using starving citizens' hunger to bring about their doom.

The bones of an infected victim die, taking on an evil existence of their own as a skeletal creature still clothed in their host's living flesh. Soon the skeleton begins to move, dragging the body along with it to commit mayhem—a struggle the host inevitably loses, as muscles tire but the bones do not. Insanity born from atrocity and the endless maddening itch of unliving bones is a blessing; it spares the victim from full awareness of the disease's final stage, when the skeleton tears free from its husk of meat to continue its wicked work.

Fleshless, these coal-black skeletons creep through thinly populated regions in the North and East, haunting small villages and isolated farmsteads. They feed on fear and pain, horror and madness—cravings they satiate by stalking, torturing and slowly slaying helpless mortals.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Stealth: 7 dice; Tracking: 5 dice; Threaten: 6 dice

Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Claw): 6 dice (Damage 11, see Osseous Contagion)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Special Attacks

Osseous Contagion: Living characters that take damage from a **decisive** claw attack are exposed to the puppeteer's plague (p. XX).

Walkure

Born of death-dreams on Northern battlefields, the walkuren appear as ghastly, majestic syntheses of divine warrior and carrion bird. Some manifest as winged and clawed avatars of battle; others are terrible men and women soaring astride black-plumed hippogriffs, their swords bright as pain, their hauberks red as blood. All dwell at the borderlands between life and death, prowling battlefields and shadowlands—alone or in flocks—in search of ghostly prey. And if all they find are the living, new ghosts can always be made.

Frarithi strikes more subtly than many of its ilk. Tall and gaunt, swathed in furled black wings resembling a hooded feather cloak, it leans on its spear like an old man with a staff. But it moves swift as death on its stilt-like bird's legs, while its horrid, shifting face is that of a killer seen through the eyes of a fever-struck child.

Most walkuren bring captured ghosts to their larders to assuage their own weird hungers. But Frarithi is bound to the service of a mighty master, and it carries its victims aloft to that dark monarch's citadel.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 9 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Fly: 9 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Tracking: 6 dice; Threaten: 7 dice

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Long spear): 9 dice (Damage 14)

Combat Movement: 9 dice (11 dice while mounted)

Evasion 2, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 9/0 (Spectral hauberk)

Offensive Charms

Horrific Wail (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): If a walkure successfully threatens an enemy, it drains three points of Initiative from him as terror overwhelms even the steeliest nerves. One use per fight, unless reset by crashing an enemy or landing a **decisive** attack.

Sky-Catch Talons (6m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Perilous; Essence 2): The walkure may flurry a rush to swoop down on an enemy from above with a grapple against that enemy, without the usual flurry penalties, adding any extra successes on the rush roll as bonus dice to the roll to establish control over the grapple. If it successfully establishes the clinch, its first action must be to drag the target into the air, carrying them in its own talons or those of its mount, depending on its form. If it fails to establish control, it reflexively moves one range band away from the target in any direction. One use per fight, unless reset by spending two consecutive turns moving upwards to build altitude.

Defensive Charms

Shadow-Veiled Stroke (3m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 1): Streaming shadows behind its spear, the walkure adds +1 Parry against an attack. Against attacks made from close range, the bonus increases to +2.

Rantai

From a distance, a rantai resembles a tangle of red ribbon or scarlet thread drifting on the breeze. Then it comes closer, moaning as it moves against the wind, and its true shape is revealed—an airborne mass of blood-drenched chains, each link a barbed loop of bone. Dozens of ghosts writhe on these hooks, their shrieks blending into a cacophony of woe.

The rantai collect ghosts for no discernible reason and put them to no visible use. Hundreds or even thousands dangle from the barbs of the most ancient of their breed. The agony of these fettered spirits only ends if some lesser Underworld predator snatches them, shrike-like, off the hooks and devours them—or if they should somehow be freed, either through violence or parlay.

Centuries of carrying screaming ghosts have taught the rantai most of Creation's tongues. Though they cannot speak, they compel the ghosts bound to them to give word to their wishes. But their desires are as alien as their natures, and they may demand peculiar terms to release a prisoner—a test of skill that pits the petitioner against the ghost to be freed, the planting of a living tree in Underworld soil, the right to name a first-born child.

Though rantai most often trouble the dead, they can also imperil the living. A wounded rantai seeks out a shadowland inhabited by mortals and strips out their skeletons, which it reshapes into new rings of bloody bone to replace those it has lost.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 80

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Fly: 8 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 8 dice; Underworld Lore: 8 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 5, Guile 6

Combat

Attack (Chain lash): 11 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 11/3

Offensive Charms

Cascade of Chains (10m, 1wp; Simple; Withering-only; Instant; Essence 2): The rantai makes a single **withering** attack against any number of enemies in close range. It gains Initiative as normal from the damage roll that inflicted the highest amount of damage, but the total Initiative it receives from all other damage rolls cannot raise the total award above 10 (not counting Initiative breaks). Against a battle group, this doubles 7s on the damage roll of an attack. Once per fight, unless reset by incapacitating an enemy.

Ghost-Gaoler's Leash (3m per ghost; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): The rantai unspools the lengths of chain that bind ghosts to it, sending them forth to fight on its behalf. Each ghost rolled into battle with this Charm has the traits of a war-ghost (p. XX) unless the rantai uses a specific ghost it has bound. It cannot send out more chained ghosts than it has points of temporary Willpower, although if its Willpower falls below the current number of ghosts it does not have to retract any. A character capable of striking dematerialized enemies may attempt a difficulty 4 gambit against a ghost that has been sent out with this Charm to sever the chain. Success frees the ghost, which may either flee or fight alongside its liberator, and deals one level of damage to the rantai.

Impaling Barbs (4m, 1wp; Supplemental; Until released; Essence 2): On a successful grapple, the rantai doubles its extra successes to determine how many rounds of control it establishes, and takes no Defense penalties for clinching. Attacks that fail to damage it do not cause it lose any rounds of control. If it savages a clinched character, it adds +2 damage to a **decisive** attack or +5 damage to a **withering** attack. A ghost that is Incapacitated or crashed while grappled is imprisoned on the rantai's hooks, becoming a slave to the rantai.

Skeletonize (3m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 3): As the rantai kills a living creature with a **decisive** attack, it strips out the victims' skeleton in a shower of gore. The bones crack and writhe as they reshape themselves into new barbed links to repair the rantai's blood-drenched chains, healing a single health level. Any **decisive** attack against a battle group made up of living

characters offers the opportunity to use this Charm, healing one level of damage per point of Magnitude lost.

Symphony of Woe: (5m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): The rantai may treat its Join Battle roll as an inspire roll against all enemies to fill them with sadness, terror, or dread. Characters who pay Willpower to resist this influence lose three Initiative. Those who don't pay lose two Initiative at the start of each round as they succumb to their dark emotions.

Ghostfisher

Out in the gray wilds of the Underworld, travelers may encounter a seemingly benign ghost requesting aid, such as a maiden chained to a stone or an old man trapped beneath a fallen log. This ghost is merely a simulacrum, a lure maintained by the dreaded ghostfisher. Come too close, and the monster's true form—an enormous worm as massive as a redwood, its striated flesh gleaming fish-belly white—bursts from the barren Underworld soil to feed. The ghost lure, now shriveled as a prune, dangles above an enormous many-fanged maw.

Ghostfisher burrows form vast three-dimensional labyrinths. Ghosts occasionally use these tunnel networks—which intersect with other corridors and chambers of diverse origins—as shortcuts to other Underworld realms. Such journeys are perilous, as the traveler risks encountering ghostfishers or even worse creatures down below.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x5/-2x10/-4x15/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 11 dice (may attempt Strength 7+ feats); Disguise: 8 dice; Read Motives: 5 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice (lure only)

Appearance 2 for lure, 4 (Hideous) for the ghostfisher; Resolve 4; Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Bash): 8 dice (Damage 18)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (12 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 16/4

Merits

Tunneling: The ghostfisher can burrow through earth and stone alike. It can establish stealth in combat by rolling its combat movement pool to dig down into the earth, and does not need to make new rolls to remain concealed while moving underground.

Offensive Charms

Spectral Lure (1m; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 1): Like an anglerfish, the ghostfisher extends an alluring organ from its snout to attract prey while the rest of its body remains concealed. The lure, which takes the form of any ghost the monster has ever consumed, is only semi-intelligent; it becomes confused if conversation diverges from a simple script. If a character touches the spectral lure, the ghostfisher may pay a point of Willpower to emerge from the ground and ambush him with a grapple attack. The ghostfisher makes a disguise roll when it creates the lure to determine the quality of the simulacrum. Any character who overcomes the roll notices something strange about the lure without spotting the submerged monster; three extra successes makes the ghostfisher's subterranean presence apparent.

Swallow Whole (15; Reflexive; Decisive-only; Instant): After dealing 3+ levels of damage to a grappled enemy by savaging it with a **decisive** attack, the ghostfisher may use this Charm to swallow them alive. Within the beast's gullet, they must contend with its digestive acids, an environmental hazard with the traits of an acid bath (p. XX). A swallowed enemy may attempt to cut his way free with a difficulty 5 gambit rolled against the ghostfisher's Defense, but cannot otherwise attack it while inside unless the Storyteller allows them to with a stunt. Even then, they must contend with its full Defense and soak. The ghostfisher is not large enough to swallow more than one human-sized character at a time.

Quaking Slam (10m, 1wp; Simple; Withering-only; Instant; Essence 1): With its massive bulk, the ghostfisher slams itself downward with such force that the earth trembles and shakes. It makes an unblockable **withering** slam against each earthbound character within medium range. It does not roll damage; instead, each character struck is knocked to their feet and loses Initiative equal to (3 + extra successes). Once per fight, unless reset by going three turns above ground without taking a movement action or taking damage from a **decisive** attack. Enemies that lose more Initiative than their (Stamina + Resistance) tumble towards the ghostfisher as the earth cracks beneath their feet, causing them to move a range band forward.

Nephwrack

The enemies of the gods lie forever dying in the Underworld, and the nephwracks are their prophets. Ancient, powerful ghosts who have delved deeper than any being ever should into the world-carcasses of the slain ancients, the nephwracks have been broken by the revelations found within. What emerges from the cracks of the Underworld's depth are the priest-kings of oblivion, deranged but coldly intelligent, wielding power beyond any ghost save the Deathlords.

Nephwracks are as twisted in body as they are in mind, embodying the nightmarish forms and inchoate horrors that dwell within the sleep of the Neverborn. Ornaments of soulsteel and tarnished jade hang from them, treasures gathered over centuries of slaughter and conquest. Within the Underworld and shadowlands, they gather death cults from the ranks of the desperate and suicidal, build dominions and strongholds to consolidate their power against kingdoms both ghostly and mortal, and stir up hungry ghosts, hekatonkires, and other undead horrors as their minions.

The Prince of the Red Chamber holds court in a shadowland cavern-palace beneath a mortal city, attended by the rotting corpses and hungry ghosts of those mortals whom its minions have kidnapped over the years and brought down into the dark. It is a mighty necromancer, and its servants labor tirelessly to aid it in its great work. They capture savants from whose minds and souls it wrings every scrap of sorcerous lore; merchants and thieves who might reveal the locations of precious books and relics; or youths ripe with fresh young blood and an untempered potential to know terror.

Though it hates the sensations of the living world and is in any case immersed in its great necromantic working, on occasion the Prince's craving for cruelty drives it forth to act without intermediaries. Its preferred mode is to confront its victim while wearing the body of one of her loved ones, whose soul it has already devoured. When its business is done, it sheds the stolen flesh to appear in its own form—tall, bone-pale, skeletally thin, imperially robed and masked in scarlet and black. Its shattered right foot drips a yellow ichor; it leans on a red jade daiklave shot through with black, spidery veins.

At the center of its palace stands the pool of blood that is the heart of its magic, to whose surface it brings forth the faces of those whose lives were bled into it and whose souls drown endlessly in its red depths. When the pool holds enough deathly Essence, the Prince will perform its dark rite. And it has learned so many rites from its tutelage on the edge of the abyss—Heart-Binding Miasma, Ten Thousand Wingéd Serpents, The Beast That Was a City, The Kinslayer Plague. Ancient and steeped in the perilous cruelties of the cities of the Labyrinth, it has many plans for many contingencies, each more dire than the last.

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 9; **Join Battle:** 11 dice

Personal Motes: 100

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x3/-2x6/-4x6/Incap.

Actions: Command: 5 dice; Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Read Motives: 8 dice; Prayer: 11 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Shape Sorcery: 13 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Strategy: 8 dice; Underworld Lore: 10 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 5

Combat

Attack (Soulsteel daiklave): 12 dice (Damage 17, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 9 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 17/10 (Soulsteel articulated plate)

Merits

Cult 1-2: Most nephwracks are attended by sizable cults.

Void-Eaten Soul: The nephwracks have seen the void at the end of all things and dreamt the dreams of dead gods. They are insane, almost always having one or more Derangements (p. XX), but their madness only makes them more dangerous. Any social influence opposed by a Derangement or the nephwrack's absolute enmity to life is unacceptable, as is any Psyche effect, sorcerous control, or healing magic that would undo their madness.

Sorcery

Nephwracks are almost all initiates of the Terrestrial Circle of sorcery, their tattered minds realizing the dark truths that underly the cosmos. Most know at least a few spells, while some will know all listed in this book and potentially more (though as spirits, they cannot learn Demon of the First Circle or Summon Elemental). Common control spells include Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Corrupted Words, and Mists of Eventide (pp. XX-XX).

A nephwrack may draw power from its madness once per scene, reflexively rolling its current Willpower and losing a point for each die that does not come up a success to gain (10 + [Willpower lost x 2]) sorcerous motes that last for the duration of the scene or until spent, whichever comes first. Whenever they kill a living creature, they gain sorcerous motes equal to (its Essence).

Offensive Charms

Accursed Wraith Body (2i; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 4): The nephwrack may double 9s on any dice roll it makes while in combat, or add +1 to either of its Defenses.

Clinging Shadow Miasma (5m, 4i, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Perilous; Essence 4): An unnatural darkness radiates from the nephwrack out to medium range. While the dead can see through this, the living are treated as blind—and worse, shadowy hands rise up from the ground to cling at them. The nephwrack's shadowy aura is treated as difficult terrain, and any character who fails a movement action through it is dragged prone by the hands, with difficulty 4 to rise. This ends if the nephwrack is crashed and cannot be reused in the same scene.

Dawn of Dead Stars (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Psyche; Essence 5): The nephwrack unleashes its madness into the world, filling the mind of everything living or dead with the dark dreams of the Neverborn. Undead battle groups under its command gain +1 Might, and it doubles 9s on all command rolls to issue orders to these. Enemies, on the other hand, must contend with terrifying hallucinations and dark urges, rolling (Wits + Integrity) against difficulty 4 at the beginning of each turn. On a failed roll, they lose two points of Initiative, which the nephwrack gains, and take a -3 penalty on all actions that turn. Enemies crashed by this lose a point of Willpower—or gain a Derangement at Minor intensity, if they have none to lose.

Soul Destruction (5m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Aggravated, Decisive-only; Essence 5): The nephwrack annihilates the souls of the living it slays. Soul Destruction doubles 9s on a **decisive** damage roll. Double 8s if the victim is crashed or out of Willpower; double 7s if both are true. If

this incapacitates the enemy, his soul is utterly destroyed, leaving his body nothing more than a comatose husk and restoring two points of Willpower to the nephwrack.

Thousand Deaths Curse (8m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Psyche; Essence 4): To glance into the eyes of a nephwrack is to see one's death a thousand times. At Initiative 20+, the nephwrack may roll nine dice against the Resolve of an enemy within medium range. Success forces that character to live out his death in waking nightmares, rendering him unable to take any actions other than flailing around and seeking cover from imaginary threats for the rest of the scene. The cursed character automatically fails rolls against Dawn of Dead Stars. Allies can break this illusion with 10+ successes on an instill action. Thousand Deaths Curse also ends if the victim takes damage. It resets the nephwrack to base Initiative if successful.

Defensive Charms

Broken Mirror Tragedy (7m, 4i; Reflexive; Instant; Psyche; Essence 4): The nephwrack clouds the mind of an attacker with shadows and paranoid impulses, rolling nine dice against his Resolve. If it succeeds, it may redirect the attack to any other character within range. Eye of the Unconquered Sun or comparable effects render characters immune to this illusion. Waive the Initiative cost of this Charm if Dawn of Dead Stars is active.

Social Charms

Black Heart's Call (—; Permanent; Essence 3): Nephwracks are so deeply in tune with their own dark urges that they can perceive that same darkness in others. When the nephwrack interacts with a character who shares with it a Major or Defining Intimacies that is a negative Tie or a malicious or nihilistic Principle, it adds three bonus successes on rolls to discern such Intimacies.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 5): The Nephwrack fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its master's lair at the heart of the Labyrinth.

Materialize (50m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 4): The Nephwrack can manifest itself in the living world in a chilling, liquid surge of anti-light.

Nemissary's Ride (20, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 1): While nephwracks can materialize, they may also possess human corpses. They use the physical Attributes, soak, and health track of the corpse's former life in place of his own, but otherwise retain their traits. Freshly dead or well-embalmed bodies suffer a -1 penalty on rolls to disguise their dead nature; this penalty rises with advancing decay until disguise becomes impossible. The possessor is ejected if the animated corpse runs out of health levels. Attacks capable of striking the immaterial damage both the corpse's health track and the nephwrack's.

Spirits

A suppliant approaches a malachite altar in one of the pagoda-shrines of Great Forks, startling back and dropping his offering as a woman with eyes of blue flame appears out of the air to greet him. An infernalist cult spills the blood of two unblemished twins onto a mandala of sand, opening one of the cracks in the world through which an unbound, hungry denizen of Hell may enter. A petty thug succumbs to panic as he sees his victim's ethereal face reflected in the mirror, slowly descending into madness as his vengeful victim haunts him. All of these are spirits—the mystical, powerful forces that move above and below the world of humanity. Savants divide the spirits into four main categories (though unclassifiables abound): gods, elementals, demons, and ghosts. Most spirits are immaterial by nature, invisible and intangible to the mortal denizens of Creation. Most are capable of assuming material forms when they have need, though ghosts and lesser spirits may sometimes need to possess the corporeal form of a person or object to interact with the world. The elementals, born from the physical substance of Creation, are an exception, existing in a material form just like any human or beast. They cannot usually dematerialize, though they may enter places such as spirit sanctums that are normally barred to material beings.

A slain spirit is often not dead forever—instead, his Essence will slowly gather and re-form over the course of weeks, months, or even years, weakened but not gone. Gods who tend to domains in Creation and keep sanctums there reform within those sanctums, while the celestial deities that govern their domains from Yu-Shan reappear within the celestial city. A god's immortality may be threatened if his domain is destroyed or stripped from him, in which case it must rely on the worship of its cult to sustain it beyond death. A slain elemental disperses into the natural Essence flows of the world, and cannot reform unless it has the worship of a cult to sustain it, or a powerful patron willing to sacrifice part of their Essence to restore it. Demons of the Second and Third Circles, the most powerful, reform in Hell if slain, while a demon of the First Circle perishes forever unless sustained by a cult or mighty patron, as with an elemental. Ghosts can sometimes survive destruction, reforming at the site of their first death or some other meaningful location such as their grave, but just as often are unable to maintain the stubborn will that sustains their unlife, and pass into the cycle of reincarnation.

The details of spirit reformation are largely left to the Storyteller's dramatic choices—if he wishes, he might have the slain spirit roll Willpower or (Willpower + Cult) to determine if it reforms, how long it takes, and how much it is weakened by its destruction.

Finally, most gods, as well as certain other spirits, have access to three common Charms:

Hurry Home instantly carries the spirit back to its sanctum—a tiny dimensional pocket with a fixed entrance somewhere in the world, which is only visible and accessible to other spirits (and occasionally to Exalts with appropriate magic).

Materialize allows the spirit to take on flesh, and is explained in detail in the Materialization sidebar.

Measure the Wind enables a spirit to measure someone's "nature." This reveals, broadly, *what* the individual is—a mortal man, a demon, another god, a denizen of the Wyld, and so forth. If an

Exalt is scrutinized, Measure the Wind provides a strong "feeling" of their patron, allowing the Charm to tell a Solar from a Dragon-Blooded (and, incidentally, to tell what Elemental Dragon or Maiden a Terrestrial or Sidereal derives from, although the Castes and Aspects of other Exalts remain indistinguishable to the Charm). Measure the Wind can pierce mundane disguises, but not any deception created or reinforced by Essence, such as Solar Larceny Charms or Lunar shapeshifting.

> Materialization
>
> Many incorporeal spirits such as gods, demons, and ghosts are capable of assuming a material form, allowing them to interact with the mortal world. Doing so is equivalent to a Simple Charm activation and costs half their total mote pool and one point of Willpower, but this cost is not committed. Reverting back costs half as many motes as materializing, requires another Simple activation, and causes the spirit to fade back to its natural state over the course of a round, becoming fully immaterial on its next turn. Solars may learn Charms such as Spirit-Manifesting Word (see p. XX) to let allied spirits materialize without having to pay this steep cost.

Gods

Disease Spirit

The gods of disease are tasked by Heaven to oversee the progress of diseases, so that neither too many nor too few become sick, or in special cases to ensure certain destined persons remain healthy or fall ill. But few remain in contact with their celestial superiors, let alone feel inclined to obey. Many arrange protection rackets, disseminating their diseases so mortals pray for their families to be left untouched or obtain a cure. Their priests typically propitiate them to remain at a safe remove, though a few deranged or heartless cultists collaborate with their patrons to propagate their illnesses.

These gods appear as men or women afflicted by the worst strains of their diseases. Smallpox and leprosy spirits look ghastly and horrific, while spirits of lesser ailments such as anemia or the common cold merely seem pathetic. Disease spirits' size and power vary with virulence and lethality. Spirits of minor sicknesses look dwarfish and withered, while plague spirits are as massive and mighty as elephants.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Knowledge of Diseases: 8 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 8)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

Merits

Cult 1-3: The potential cult of a disease spirit can vary widely based on the disease it oversees, the size of nearby human populations, and its level of proactiveness in seeking out prayer. A syphilis god trading protection for prayer in a back-alley Nexus brothel might only have Cult 1, while a plague god who actively extorts worship from multiple large cities in the Scavenger Lands in exchange for leaving them alone might have Cult 3.

Walking Vector: Disease spirits of illnesses that can be spread through personal contact or proximity—influenza, consumption, venereal disease, and many others—are always considered carriers of that disease, though they suffer no ill effects from it.

Offensive Charms

Festering Revelation (5m; Simple; Instant; Uniform; Essence 2): The claw of the disease spirit awakens dormant sickness. With a touch (which may require an attack roll), disease spirits may use this Charm on any character who was exposed to a vector of their disease but succeeded on the roll to resist it. That character must then make a second roll against the disease's virulence (p. XX). Failure reveals that he was infected all along, and the disease was simply in incubation. Success renders him immune to further use of the Charm.

Social Charms

Blight Decree (10m; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): The disease spirit conveys a malign influence, making an inspire roll and adding three automatic successes. It does not have to speak, and may even use this Charm while dematerialized. This influence does not inflame passions, but instead causes those affected to act in ways that will create vectors for the spirit's disease, such as fouling a river to spread cholera, killing cats to hasten the spread of a rat-borne plague, or simply being seized with the urge to spend all day in a café while infected with early-stage smallpox.

Miscellaneous Charms

Contagion-Honing Methodology (15m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Stackable; Essence 2): Disease spirits may hasten the spread and progression of their disease within an area about the size of a village or a neighborhood of a larger city. Contagion-Honing Methodology can be used either to make vectors of the disease more potent, adding +1 virulence, or to quicken the decline of infected victims, halving the disease's interval. The spirit may commit Essence separately to

two activations of this Charm to stack both benefits. A disease spirit could also use this Charm to weaken their disease, doubling the interval and lowering morbidity by one for infected patients, though most are loath to do so, considering it a dereliction of duty—this is a serious task for purposes of social influence (p. XX).

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The spirit fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The disease spirit may take on flesh, solidifying out of swarming darkness.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The disease spirit can discern the nature of someone infected by its disease.

Scent of Plague (1m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): Disease spirits can tell with a whiff if someone is infected with or incubating their disease, or discern the last time a healthy individual came into contact with a vector for their disease.

Dog of the Unbroken Earth

These night-black deities stand as large as tigers, with feral eyes blazing like emeralds or rubies. They are small gods of the wilderness; only those places uninhabited by mortals for a century or more lie within their purview, and they guard their territory jealously. Even their sanctums resemble wild places—caves or thickets adorned with trophies of their prey. Those who would carve away the wilds to build homes, farms, or roads may seek to propitiate the dogs with regular sacrifices of meat, alcohol, and grain. But if the offerings are insufficient or the intrusion too great, one had best curry favor from the gods of civilization—spirits of city and hearth, field and road, bridge and canal, all eager to extend their influence—as protection from the dog-gods' fangs.

Travelers, too, must fear the dogs of the unbroken earth. They particularly despise roads, and all who travel man-made routes had best obtain the protection of a road or caravan god. Still, the dogs are not fundamentally antagonistic to mortals. Folk that do not raise structures in the wild—such as hunter-gatherer tribes and hermits—are safe from their wrath, and may even forge alliances with them.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Speed Bonus: +2. Dogs of the unbroken earth cannot be tamed, but might consent to carry riders to battle if the need is great enough.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Resist Poison/Illness: 9 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Stealth: 10 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 10 dice

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 10 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (12 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 10/2

Merits

Cult 1: Most dogs of the unbroken earth receive a trickle of propitiatory prayers from humans who build on their territory, and the hermits or tribesfolk that live in the wilderness often worship them.

Offensive Charms

Fangs of the Hunt (6m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 1): This Charm doubles 10s on a **decisive** damage roll, and inflicts a crippling penalty on all movement actions the victim takes equal to the levels of damage dealt. If the penalty exceeds a character's Dexterity, he can no longer move reflexively, and must take a miscellaneous action even to take his normal movement each round. The penalty lasts until the wounds are healed or the character receives adequate medical treatment.

Mobility Charms

Swift Hunting Stalker (10m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 2): The dog may roam the wilderness unhindered, walking secret ways of the earth and speeding over the wild soil. It may travel overland through wilderness at a speed of sixty miles an hour, and ignores hindering terrain. It may run over quicksand, brambles, and even the surfaces of lakes unimpeded. In combat or a test of speed, it adds two successes on all movement rolls, in addition to ignoring hindering terrain.

Miscellaneous Charms

Broken Earth's Anguish (8m, 1wp; Reflexive; Indefinite; Eclipse; Essence 2): The dog may sense when trespassers intrude upon its domain, including traveling roads that run along its borders. It makes a (Perception + Awareness) roll with its senses dice pool at difficulty 3 to notice the intruder as a dark intimation at the edges of its mind. Trespassers who enter under stealth add their successes on the (Dexterity + Stealth) roll to the difficulty the dog must overcome. If any hermits or barbarians who have made allegiances with the dog of the unbroken earth come under attack within its domain, it may also use sense this. Eclipses who use this Charm may use it while in any area that falls under the domain of the dogs of the unbroken earth, not just that of the dog who taught it to him.

Five Winds Scent (4m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): The dog of the unbroken earth may double 7s on any Perception-based roll using scent. In addition, simply by breathing in a character's scent, the dog gains a general measure of their magical puissance—it can tell a Solar Exalt is far more powerful than an ordinary human, or distinguish a Third Circle demon from one of the First Circle. It must overcome any stealth or disguise being employed to gain this benefit. Using this Charm to track a trespasser detected with Broken Earth's Anguish is free.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The dog fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Natural detritus (leaves, soil) swirls together and becomes the living form of a god.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The god can take the measure of anyone intruding upon its domain.

Steel-Shattering Fangs (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): The dog of the unbroken earth may double 7s on a feat of strength to destroy a man-made construction.

> The Eclipse Keyword
>
> Solar Exalted of the Eclipse Caste are capable of learning certain Charms belonging to spirits, raksha, and other beings through their anima power (p. XX). Charms that qualify for this are marked with the Eclipse keyword.

Field Guardian

Arising in patches of cultivated land, field guardians devote themselves to that land's care. They send dreams to farmers instructing them in how best to improve crop yields, and to ward off pests and blight. In exchange, they ask that a small part of the field—which serves as a sanctum—remain unharvested, and that no structures be raised in the field without a suitable offering of animal blood and strong drink. To violate these simple rules is to risk death, for these spirits can slay mortals as easily as a farmer reaps grain.

Field guardians appear as hale and strong mortals, though touched by the nature of the fields they guard. They may have hair of leaf green or wheaten gold, and skin peach-pink or eggplant-dark. Some are beanpole-thin, others round as cabbages or sturdy as apple trees. Spirits of grain fields may be skittish, orchard spirits merry, or vegetable-patch spirits phlegmatic. All wear farmer's garb and bear accouterments to match—a rake, spade, wood-axe, or scythe.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Personal Motes: 60

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x4/-4/Incap.

Actions: Agricultural Knowledge: 9 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 5 dice; Tracking: 8 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Scythe): 10 dice (Damage 20)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Merits

Cult 1-2: Field guardians typically have only the least of cults, although those whose fields provide for entire villages might have Cult 2.

Offensive Charms

Good Earth Resilience (10m; Simple; One scene; Essence 1): While standing on the earth of its field, the spirit gains the resilience of the land itself, adding 10 to its soak value.

Harvest Moon Sickle (8m; Supplemental; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 1): The field guardian may add a success to a **decisive** damage roll made with its scythe. If its enemy is bleeding on the field it guards, it also adds their wound penalty to the damage roll. Enemies slain by this Charm dissolve into the soil, leaving that patch of earth particularly fertile for years to come.

Towering Wheat Blessing (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Eclipse; Essence 1): A field guardian may bid plants to grow far beyond their usual size in an instant. Some use this blessing to provide food for their worshippers in times of famine, creating a bounty that can sustain a dozen people or so for a day if properly prepared. At other times, they use it to snare enemies in patches of elephantine wheat stalks or overgrown tree-roots. The spirit chooses a point within long range, and creates a patch of overgrowth from existing plant life that spreads out to medium range from that point. The ground counts as difficult terrain for enemies, but the plants part and make way for the god's allies. This Charm can be used once per scene.

Miscellaneous Charms

Dream-Sown Wisdom (5m; Simple; One growing season; Essence 1): Field guardians may bless farmers with dreams that reveal how best to tend to their fields. Certain words whispered to seeds might encourage them to grow, while raiton-bones strung up in a certain design might repel blights. To the extent that any rolls are made for agriculture, this blessing adds one success for any farmer who heeds the god's advice, but for the most part, it simply improves the harvest. In a good season, a farmer might harvest twice as much as usual under this blessing, and their crop is slightly more resistant to poor weather, vermin, or disease. Field guardians can also use this Charm to send dreams that reveal secrets hidden in their domain, like treasure buried in a field, at Instant duration.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The spirit fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

Materialize (30m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The field guardian grows up from the earth in a matter of moments.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The field guardian can take the measure of anyone who sets foot in its field.

Legendary Reaper (30m, 1wp; Simple; One day; Eclipse; Essence 1): While they are loathe to do so, a field guardian may use this Charm to harvest an entire field with a single day's work. The Storyteller determines exactly how many people this can feed based on the size of the field and quality of the harvest, and crops like wheat must still be baked into bread or other commodities before they can be eaten. Most field guardians consider this exertion a serious task (p. XX) for purposes of social influence—in their eyes, the harvest is the farmers' work, not theirs.

Market God

Gods of marketplaces and bazaars are among the more puissant gods of city, town, and village. Each market is a crossroads for all manner of goods and currencies, and these gods bear witness to each transaction. It's said that in the First Age, the patterns formed by money flowing across Creation helped hold back the Wyld. Today, these gods' reports to Heaven gather dust, and they attend more to offerings and prayer than any higher concern. Merchants who fail to tithe at the god's shrine—sheaves of paper money to burn at the altar, or silver coins to be forged into sacred emblems—soon go out of business as customers unaccountably reject their wares. Pickpockets who fail to make a similar tithe suffer more tangible agonies.

These gods typically resemble the merchants attending their domains. Spirits of dynamic markets look fat and happy, their round bodies richly clothed and ornamented, while gods of impoverished markets appear ill-clad, bony, and skittish. All carry some sort of salable goods, from bolts of silk to trays of dried fish, and wear purses of coin—some bulging with jade, others with only two copper bits to clink together. These things convey their divine magic, inspiring wonder or greed in customers and merchants, or blessing the bargains of wandering peddlers and Guild factors.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 80

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Knowledge of Markets: 12 dice; Read Intentions: 10 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice; Stealth: 6 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 5

Combat

Attack (Blackjack): 9 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

Merits

Cult 2: Market spirits are worshipped throughout the villages and cities that are home to their domains, but lack the regional significance to attain higher levels of Cult. However, they are canny bargainers, and some have managed to convince a more powerful spirit to share a portion of its worship with them in exchange for some gift or service.

Social Charms

Bazaar of Wonders (8m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): Market spirits may inflame greed or awe-struck wonder in a crowd, making an inspire roll without speaking and even while dematerialized. Inspired characters take a -1 Resolve penalty against bargain rolls to sell them goods and services on top of the usual effects of an inspire action.

Enticing Offer (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): Market spirits are themselves master merchants, adding two bonus successes to any bargain roll they make to sell a good or service. The cost to resist a successful offer in a Decision Point equals (4 - chosen Intimacy) points of Willpower.

Riotous Avarice Incitement (15m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 3): A market spirit may abide dishonest merchants, pickpockets, and all manner of unfair trades, but should anyone try to shut down trade, they will face its full fury. If an attempt is made to forcibly close or shut down the market, the spirit may use this Charm to rouse a mob intent on keeping it open, uniting all merchants and customers present who are not significant characters into a battle group to fight off the opposing force. They almost always have poor Drill, but fight with the traits of battle-ready troops and gain Might 1 under the spirit's blessing for the duration of the scene (p. XX). The god may also automatically employ a stratagem of up to threshold 3 based on the location or set-up of the market.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The spirit fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly back to its sanctum.

Materialize (40m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The market god appears in a swirl of paper money or minor knickknacks.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The market god can assess the nature of anyone who barters with it.

Spinning Coin Decree (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 3): The market god may place its blessing on a character, granting them one bonus success on any bargain roll to sell goods or services as well as on any Perception-based roll to notice theft of their wares. An aura of divine favor makes the merchant seem trustworthy to potential customers while frightening off thieves or cheats, which acts like a Minor Intimacy. Alternatively, market gods may curse those who earn their ire with an inverted effect, subtracting successes rather than adding them, while making customers distrust the merchant and marking him as easy prey for theft.

Straw-to-Silk Deceit (1m per object, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Eclipse; Essence 1): The market god may place an illusion on an object or collection of similar objects it sees, making them seem more valuable. Rotten fish appear fresh, iron resembles steel, and a ragged robe seems fit for an emperor. Onlookers must succeed on a (Perception + [Awareness or Bureaucracy]) roll at difficulty (5 or the Eclipse's Manipulation) to see through this illusion, although it may become obvious to them in certain cases, such as tasting a rotten fish.

Storm Mother

Storm mothers are unlovely creatures, with their scaly greenish skin, balding pates, and eyes like a storm-shot cloudy night. Even so, some are more inhuman and grotesque than others, exhibiting hunched backs, bulging eyes, or broad mouth full of jagged teeth.

These aquatic gods love the storms for which they're named, surfacing on wet, foggy evenings to call down wind, rain and lightning for their own pleasure. At other times they will do so on a mortal's behalf. When passing through a storm mother's territory—which is wide enough to take days for a ship to cross—islanders, merchants, and pirates pray to the storm mothers for safe passage, or (with greater success) for an enemy's vessel to founder.

Experienced sailors know what arouses a typical storm mother's temper. Failure to offer a sacrifice is one; harming a mortal the spirit favors is another—so long as the favored one fights back, as a storm mother has no use for the weak. They have a weakness for ravens and black dogs, and hurting one for any reason other than sacrifice arouses their rage. Many grow jealous of beautiful women. Lastly, they cannot abide the sound of a crying child.

It's said that storm mothers have no power over red-haired women. For protection, many female sailors dye their hair red, while captains adorn their ships' prows with crimson-daubed feminine figures.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 80

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice; Swim: 10 dice; Tracking: 6 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 8/2

Merits

Cult 3: Storm mothers rarely have cults proper, but are propitiated by sailors the world across, allowing them to partake in a considerable sum of communal prayer.

Spirit Companion: Each storm mother has a familiar, traditionally either a raven or a black dog, which may act as friend, helper, and lover. These familiars are themselves minor spirits, though with animal traits. They are naturally dematerialized, materializing along with their master. They may travel underwater along with her, and benefit from the unbreakable loyalty and sense-riding discipline powers of the Charm Spirit-Tied Pet (p. XX).

Offensive Charms

Storm-Stirring Lash (15m, 1wp; Simple; Essence hours; Eclipse; Essence 3): The storm mother bids black clouds to darken the sky and strong winds to rage, creating a heavy rainstorm at sea with a radius that can range from half a mile to three miles. The storm forms over the course of about half an hour, generally too slowly to be applicable in combat. The precise effects of the storm are narrated by the Storyteller, but it generally imposes a -3 penalty on ranged attacks and vision due to rainfall and heavy winds, while denying ships any Speed bonuses from sails and imposing a -2 Speed penalty. Each hour of the storm, a ship's captain must succeed at a (Wits + Sail) roll at a difficulty of the storm mother's Essence to avoid suffering shipwreck, being blown off course, or a similar fate. The storm mother herself is immune to the inclement effects of her own storm, though this does not extend to any ships she is on.

Wrath From the Sky (8m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Eclipse, Perilous; Essence 3): A storm mother may use this Charm during an ongoing storm, either naturally-occurring or created by her magic, to call down a lightning bolt to strike an enemy or object within long range. The lightning strike is treated as an environmental hazard with a difficulty of the storm mother's Essence and (Essence + 3)L damage, and can also be used to set wooden structures ablaze or wreak similar havoc. Once per fight, unless reset with a two or three-point stunt that interacts with the storm.

Miscellaneous Charms

Clear Sky Benediction (5m; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 3): Storm mothers may place their blessing on a seafarer or a ship. This ensures generally fair weather for the sailor's vessel or the blessed ship, dispelling minor storms or disruptive winds before they have a chance to begin. Severe weather such as hurricanes or magically-created storms are undeterred by this blessing,

but the blessed mariner or ship adds one bonus success on any rolls to steer through these hazards. For an additional point of Willpower, the storm mother may use this Charm in answer to a prayer without needing to be physically present.

Hurricane-Hunted Wanderer Malediction (3m; Reflexive; Indefinite; Essence 3): A storm mother's wrath marks its victim as the prey of violent seas, roiling storms, and furious winds. Laying this curse requires touching the victim, which may require an attack. As long as he is at sea, foul weather will follow him wherever he goes, subtracting -1 from the Speed of any boat he is on, and generally causing minor foul weather whose effects and hazards are left at the Storyteller's discretion. Additionally, once per story, a storm mother may use Storm-Stirring Lash from afar to create a storm centered on a cursed character's boat. Unlike the stationary storms created by ordinary uses of that Charm, this one will follow the vessel that the cursed character is aboard, forcing the ship to either endure the full duration of the storm or throw the storm mother's victim overboard. Red-headed women are thought to be immune to this curse, even by the storm mothers themselves, though the truth of this is left to the Storyteller to decide.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The storm mother fades away and vanishes on her next turn, returning to her watery sanctum.

Materialize (40m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The storm mother manifests with a rumble of distant thunder, in a whirl of black water.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The storm mother can take the measure of anyone caught within a storm, save for red-haired women.

> Storyteller Character Intimacies
>
> The Intimacies listed for Storyteller characters are only a suggestion for Storytellers. Feel free to add others that are relevant to your portrayal of them, or to change the printed ones if they contradict your take on the character. If a conflict between Ahlat and the war god of the West or East is relevant to your game, he might have a Major Tie of enmity towards that god, while his Tie towards Harborhead might be eliminated or reduced if you wanted to portray him as more aloof and uncaring toward his mortal worshippers.

Ahlat, Southern God of War and Cattle

Though Ahlat is worshiped throughout the South, and even as far as Ysyr and Goldenseal, the center of his cult is the great nation of Harborhead. There, cattle raids are part of everyday life and skill at arms is part of coming of age. He views those innumerable warriors who swear themselves to him as his sons and daughters. But virgin girls may swear vows of chastity to join Harborhead's royal guard and the ranks of Ahlat's brides.

Ahlat has no pity for weakness. His curse falls upon worshipers who disobey orders or flinch in the face of battle. But to those who die heroically, he offers immortality of a sort. He sends his spirit aurochs to devour their corpses; his other servants draw forth the spirits of the dead and

weave them into the tassels that adorn his cloak. A petitioner may perform a quest for the god—something requiring great courage, ideally involving the sacrifice of cattle—in order to borrow a tassel, allowing her to draw upon the dead warrior's spirit and legend. Otherwise, he rarely interferes with mortal wars except to counter another god's meddling.

The god of Harborhead appears as a massive bull-headed man with dark skin, red eyes, and golden horns; he wears only a kilt and a tasseled red-and-black cloak. His spear is of ebony and blood-red metal, his bow of lion bone inlaid with gold. He dwells in the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, in a steppe-girded palace guarded by spirit aurochs and crammed with trophies of ancient battles.

Essence: 7; **Willpower:** 10; **Join Battle:** 11 dice

Personal Motes: 120

Health Levels: -0x10/-1x10/-2x10/-4/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: "War is the crucible of heroes."

• Defining Principle: "I suffer neither cowards nor traitors."

• Major Tie: Harborhead (Protective Interest)

• Minor Tie: The Brides of Ahlat (Possessive Affection)

Actions: Command: 10 dice; Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Read Intentions: 8 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 14 dice; Senses: 11 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice; Strategy: 12 dice; Tracking: 9 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Bloodspike spear): 14 dice (Damage 21, minimum 5)

Attack (Glad-of-War bow): 14 dice at short range (Damage 19, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 11 dice (13 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 22/10 (Soul-tasseled cloak)

Merits

Cult 5: Ahlat receives worship from warriors and their families all across the South, and is especially revered by the nation of Harborhead, where he demands his worship in the form of the hecatomb: the sacrifice of 100 head of cattle in his name.

Offensive Charms

Auroch King's Wrath (1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 7): Ahlat may call upon the blood sacrifices of cattle offered unto him to roll Join Battle at any point during combat, doubling 9s and gaining motes equal to the number of successes. This can be used even while he is in Initiative Crash, and ends the crash if it restores him to his base Initiative or above. This Charm can only be used once per season, but is reset whenever a hecatomb of one hundred sacrificed cattle is offered up to him.

Blood Kisses Sand (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): When Ahlat makes a **decisive** attack with his spear, Bloodspike, he may gore an enemy, leaving a wound that bleeds ceaselessly. All extra successes on the attack roll are added to the raw damage of the attack. As long as it deals 3+ damage, the victim suffers heavy bleeding, taking another level of lethal damage at the end of each subsequent round and losing Initiative equal to her current wound penalty. This damage will never fill a character's Incapacitated health level—Ahlat curses his enemies with endless bleeding, and prefers to take the lives of fellow warriors by his own hand. Medical treatment can stop the bleeding with a difficulty 5 (Dexterity + Medicine) roll, which cannot be placed in a flurry.

Boundless War-God Arete (1m+; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 4): Ahlat may add dice to any action in combat. He cannot add more dice to a roll than his current Initiative, to a maximum of ten dice. Join Battle rolls prior to combat may always have up to ten dice added.

Horizon-Breaker Shot (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): When Ahlat makes a **decisive** attack with his longbow, Glad-of-War, each aim action he has taken prior to the shot adds one success to the damage roll, to a maximum of three. He may also attack from extreme range, ignoring any penalties from foul weather or visual obstruction as he does so.

Horned God's Prowess (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Ahlat may double extra successes on a **withering** attack for the purpose of determining damage. With at least 5+ extra successes (after this Charm's effect), he may double 9s on the damage roll. 10+ extra successes doubles 8s, while 15+ doubles 7s.

Ruin-Smiting Strike (15m, 5i, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Aggravated, Decisive-only; Essence 7): At Initiative 16+, Ahlat may invoke the image of the Southern sun behind him as he strikes, searing an enemy with overwhelming radiance. He doubles 9s on both the attack and damage rolls of a **decisive** attack. Every 9 or 10 on the attack roll adds one success to the damage roll, while every 9 or 10 on the damage roll adds +1 to the base Initiative he resets to afterwards.

Whispering Warrior Souls (1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 7): Ahlat's cloak is tasseled with the souls of fallen warriors whose bravery and might impressed him. He may use this Charm to call on the memories, skill, or legend of the countless heroes he bears on his back. This can provide a wide variety of effects, adjudicated by the Storyteller. The most generic bonus is providing him with an instant Initiative Break bonus of five Initiative, but it could also include effects such as granting him temporary knowledge of a Martial Arts style or letting him using all the Evocations of a fallen hero's weapons for a scene, unlocking useful memories or tactical

knowledge, or gaining a unique advantage to counter the abilities of an extraordinarily powerful foe. Once per fight.

Defensive Charms

Aegis of Invincible Authority (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Dual, Perilous; Essence 5): Ahlat may reduce any **withering** attack against him to its minimum damage as though he had infinite soak while halving any damage dice added after soak, or halve the damage of a **decisive** attack against him. Once per scene, also add his current Initiative to his hardness against a **decisive** attack.

Bellowing War-God Mien (15m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 4): Ahlat radiates a terrifying prowess, subtracting two success from all attack rolls made against him. Characters may resist this aura for one scene by paying two Willpower. Characters with an Intimacy representing valor, courage, or a reason to fight fearlessly need pay only one Willpower. Against battle groups, this Charm also forces them to make a rout check before they can even make their attack roll, denying them the chance to strike if they fail.

Whirlwind Dervish Defense (1i+; Reflexive; Instant; Uniform; Essence 5): Ahlat may pay up to five points of Initiative when defending against an attack. Each point spent adds +1 Defense against it, and reduces the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack or the raw damage of a **decisive** attack by one.

Thousand Strikes Dance (15m, 1wp; Simple; Until next turn; Clash, Perilous; Essence 7): When outnumbered, Ahlat uses this Charm, which allows him to make a reflexive clash attack (p. XX) in response to all attacks made against him until his next turn. He may clash using any of his weapons, and may reflexively draw or switch weapons to attack if necessary.

Unbroken Warrior's Will (8m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 7): Whenever Ahlat recovers from Initiative Crash, he regains a point of Willpower and rolls his Essence. Each success heals a level of damage.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ahlat fades away and vanishes on his next turn, reappearing on the steps of his divine estate in Heaven.

Materialize (60m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ahlat appears in a wash of brilliant crimson light at the heart of a cloud of dust.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ahlat can take the measure of any warrior who prays to him, as well as anyone who stands before him bearing arms or armor.

Might of the Bull God (1i+; Supplemental; Essence 5): Ahlat may draw on a surge of divine might when he attempts a feat of strength in combat, adding one to his Strength for every point of Initiative he spends. This bonus both adds to his dice pool for the roll and increases his effective Strength rating for attempting epic feats. Initiative spent on this Charm does not lower

the maximum amount of dice Ahlat may add to his roll with Boundless War-God Arete. Once per scene, if he has spent at least 5+ Initiative increasing his Strength, then he may attempt a feat of strength regardless of its Strength prerequisite.

War-God Mandate (50m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 7): Ahlat may bestow a powerful blessing on an army, granting all battle groups that are part of it +2 Might and adding three bonus success to any Strategic Maneuver rolls the army's general makes. The war-god's blessing is also a curse on traitors and deserters, causing any character who flees the ranks or turns on his fellow soldiers to begin bleeding out horribly, as per Blood Kisses Sand. He may use this blessing on an army that stands at attention before him, or in response to a prayer, though he tends to avoid granting such favor unless another god is meddling in a war. Ahlat may also bestow a blessing on individual warriors, though he generally requires them to prove themselves on a quest of martial prowess before he will do so. He may grant the warrior a tassel from his robes, which allows her to invoke the benefits of Whispering Warrior Souls. The Storyteller should define the effect the tassel can grant at the time of the blessing, and may limit it based on the Essence and nature of the blessed warrior. A mortal Bride of Ahlat might receive a tassel that grants her a dot of Strength and numerous specialties taken from the warrior's soul, while a mighty Dawn Caste might gain one that lets him channel all the Evocations of the legendary daiklave Volcano Cutter whose Essence minimum he meets through his weapon for a scene. This use of War-God Mandate requires no committed motes from Ahlat.

Ninegala, Smith-Goddess of Makelo

This ancient goddess once labored at the forge of one of the makers of the world. When the Exalted cast the ancients down, she exiled herself to Creation, using the panoply she brought with her to raise a sanctum on the distant Western isle of Sinti. Eventually an enterprising mortal hero persuaded her to forge him a weapon in exchange for a year of service; once word spread of that exploit, others trickled in over the centuries. During the Contagion, she opened her doors to an entire tribe of survivors. In gratitude, when they founded the city of Makelo, they took her as their sovereign god.

Other than some affection for her adopted people and an ancient loathing of the Fair Folk, Ninegala has little interest in the outside world. She seeks only to be permitted to craft wonders in peace, aided by those Makeloans who devote themselves to her personal service. When petitioners come seeking to purchase her impossible marvels, she sends them on long, weird, and often dangerous quests—partially to obtain rare materials to use in her craft, partially in hopes that they will give up and leave her alone.

Ninegala has charcoal-black skin, ash-gray hair, and fiery eyes that blaze up when her passions are aroused. She wears little in the heat of the forge, but when she travels abroad, she arrays herself in arms and armor of her own devising as she takes up the reins of her flying bronze chariot.

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Personal Motes: 100

Health Levels: -0/-1x7/-2x7/-4/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: “Only in shaping metal can one find true meaning.”

• Major Principle: “I do not care to be disturbed while at my work.”

• Major Tie: The Fair Folk (Antipathy)

• Minor Tie: The Makeloans (Fondness)

Actions: Crafting Wonders: 14 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Knowledge of Crafting and Exotic Reagents: 10 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Forge-Mother’s hammer): 9 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5)

Attack (Boundless javelin): 10 dice at short range (Damage 17, minimum 4)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (11 dice while riding the flying bronze chariot)

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 16/10 (Ur-Golem armor)

Merit

Artifacts: Ninegala has a panoply of artifacts that spans thousands of years at the forge. This includes the forge-mother’s hammer, boundless javelin quiver, and ur-golem armor listed in her traits above, as well as her flying bronze chariot, which is capable of traveling at one hundred miles an hour. The Storyteller may also provide her with unlimited access to any number of two-dot artifacts as he sees fit. To produce greater artifacts from her extensive collection, she uses her Five-Thousand-Year Panoply Charm.

Cult 4: The worship of Ninegala spans not just the city of Makelo, but the outlying Makeloan clans and the peoples they have conquered, providing her with tens of thousands of cultists.

Legendary Craftsman: Ninegala is one of the greatest craftsmen in all Creation, with millenia of experience working the forge. As a Storyteller character, she does not track or gain crafting experience—she has sufficient experience when it serves the story, and is taking time to gather more when it doesn’t. She has ten major project slots and five superior project slots.

Offensive Charms

Smouldering Metal Offensive (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Essence 3): The heat of the forge radiates from Ninegala’s hands to superheat any weapon she wields, adding +4 to the raw

damage of both **withering** and **decisive** attacks. Mundane weapons burn to ashes or melt to slag at the end of the scene if wielded with this Charm.

Defensive Charms

Fire Knows the Forger (5m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 3): Having weathered the fires of her forge for millenia, Ninegala may shrug off flame, adding successes equal to her Essence on a roll to resist an environmental hazard based on flame or heat and subtracting that many dice from its damage. Against attacks such as firewands or the breath of an elemental dragon of fire, this Charm instead halves their final damage.

Steel Knows the Shaper (5m, 2i; Reflexive; Until next turn; Essence 3): Any weapon forged knows better than to strike its patron mistress. Invoking this authority, Ninegala gains a +1 bonus to Defense against all attacks made with weapons until her next turn. If a character attacks her and fails, he is automatically disarmed, as the weapon flies from his hand lest it strike the forge-goddess again. Unarmed attacks and improvised weapons are immune to this Charm.

Miscellaneous Charms

Forge-Mother's Grace (1m+; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 4): Whenever Ninegala uses an item that she has made herself, she may add bonus dice to the roll as with a Solar Excellency (p. XX). The amount of dice she may add is based on the level of project used to create the item:

• +2 dice for 2m with mundane tools and weapons created as a basic project.

• +4 dice for 4m with mundane items created as a major project.

• +6 dice for 6m for artifacts created as a superior project.

• +8 dice for 8m for any wonder she might create as a legendary project.

Hammer-and-Anvil Genesis (25m, 1wp; Simple; One project; Stackable; Essence 5): Ninegala is one of Creation's greatest craftsmen, capable of producing wonders that even the Exalted seek out. On a basic or major project, this Charm allows her to automatically succeed on the roll to complete it. Superior and legendary projects instead benefit from double 7s, and double the extra successes received at each interval. Ninegala adds two rolls to their terminus. This Charm can be stacked to benefit multiple projects.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ninegala fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly back to the sanctum within her forge.

Materialize (50m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ninegala appears as a white-hot statue of iron, which quickly cools into the form of the goddess.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Ninegala can discern the nature of anyone setting foot in her forge, or who touches one of her creations.

Scripture of the Forge (10m, 1wp; Simple; One month; Essence 3): Ninegala's apprentices learn from one of Creation's greatest smiths. This Charm grants a group of un-Exalted disciples

trained by Ninegala over the course of a month a rating of 4 in a Craft of her choice as a training effect, along with with 10 silver experience points to spend on crafting projects. They also gain a resistance to flame, becoming immune to minor burns and adding +2 soak and hardness against attacks based on fire for one year. Exalted characters gain only 10 silver experience points and resistance to flame. A character cannot benefit from this training more than once per story. Students who train under Ninegala repeatedly over a course of years take on fiery eyes and charcoal-dark skin, marking them as masters of the forge.

Five-Thousand-Year Panoply (—; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 5): Ninegala has crafted countless artifacts and exotic devices over the centuries, most of which linger in her vaults. Once per story, if she has need for an artifact with specific powers, or if someone wishes to procure one from her, she may roll her Essence against that artifact's rating. Success allows her to find it amid her vaults; failure turns up an artifact of similar function, but whose rating is only equal to her successes on the roll.

> Steal This Charm
>
> Why do these Charms list a minimum Essence? While it's useful to know for the Eclipse anima power and Charms like Carnal Spirit Rending, the real reason is to provide guidance to Storytellers when designing Charms for spirits of their own creation. All these Charms can be reskinned or altered to suit another god's portfolio, or simply serve as a benchmark for the power of effects at each level of Essence. Keep in mind, though, that the nature of a god influences their Charms as much as their Essence. The patron god of fertility might equal or exceed Ahlat in Essence, but they are unlikely to have combat Charms as formidable as his own.

Elementals

Cloud Person

Hedonistic and aloof, the cloud people spend their ageless lives in aerial cities—masses of filmy structures built upon the largest clouds. There they indulge in all manner of airy luxuries, while away the hours amid philosophy and revelry, and study the movements of the upper air and the stars. Concerning oneself with the lands beneath—or with the affairs of the spirit courts of air—is deemed gauche.

But for all their condescension toward the mortal world, cloud people feel a strong pull toward the evanescent beauty of Creation. Lovely youths, freshly blooming flowers, opulent jewels, and the clamor of battle can all draw them down to the earth below. Though they quickly tire of mortal affairs, more often than not they bring home keepsakes or guests, infusing them with airy Essence that they may hover with the cloud people in their gauzy cities. Sadly, anything—or anyone—infused thus for more than one month per year will dissolve into dust.

Cloud people resemble slender mortals made of white cloudstuff, such that they are often mistaken for patches of mist. Their eyes are large and bright, their nebulous hair dozens of feet long, their voices faint and bemused. With their impalpable bodies, a cloud person can assume any form (though they always remain diaphanous and cloud-pale) or ride effortlessly on the wind. Their foodstuffs are equally insubstantial, consisting of scents, breezes, and flickers of color.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Fly: 6 dice; Philosophical and Astrological Knowledge: 7 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice; Stealth: 5 dice; Writing: 7 dice

Appearance 4, Resolve 3, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 7 dice (Damage 8)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 1/0

Merits

Libraries of the Cloud Cities: The aerial cities of the cloud people hold libraries of countless books and star charts written on pages of mist, unreadable to all but the eyes of these air elementals. As long as the cloud person has access to such a library, she adds three dice on Philosophical and Astrological Knowledge rolls she makes to introduce a fact, including through the use of the Sky-Hidden Secrets Charm.

Offensive Charms

Wind-Whistling Trick (5m; Simple; Instant; Eclipse, Essence 2): Cloud people may call up small breezes or even powerful gusts of wind to do their bidding. In combat, this can be used to attack out to medium range, rolling the cloud person's (Intelligence + Occult) pool of eight dice with a base **withering** damage of (10 + Essence). Conjured winds cannot be used to execute damaging **decisive** attacks, but they can be used for all manner of gambits. This Charm can also be used outside of combat to perform feats such as lifting small objects with a pillar of air, blowing a scholar's books from their shelves, or blowing over a table at a banquet. The dice pool for these actions is still (Intelligence + Occult), with a difficulty set by the Storyteller. When used by an Eclipse, this Charm's cost becomes 5m, 1wp.

Defensive Charms

Dissolving Mist Body (10m, 4i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): A cloud person may dissolve and reform her body around an attack with a physical weapon or projectile, adding +2 to her Evasion. Even if she is hit, subtract two dice from the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack or the raw damage of a **decisive** attack. Against a grapple, she instead subtracts five successes from her enemy's roll to establish control, flowing out of his grasp and denying him the opportunity to take any grappling action against her if this reduces him to 0 successes.

Miscellaneous Charms

Cloud-Body Shapeshifting (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): A cloud person can transform their vaporous body into any number of shapes. She can seep under a door as a thin sheet of mist, hang in the sky as a cloud to spy on those below her, or expand her body into a fog bank that conceals her summoner. Supernatural senses are required to discern a transformed cloud person for what it truly is, requiring the aid of a Charm such as Keen Sight Technique (p. XX) and a difficulty 5 (Perception + Awareness) roll. This Charm is not intended for defensive use; such shapeshifting is covered by Dissolving Mist Body. Reverting back to her humanoid form is free and reflexive.

Cloud Feather Blessing (1m per person or object, 1wp; Simple; One month; Essence 2): Cloud people may enchant willing people or human-sized objects with the Essence of air, making them light enough for a cloud person to carry them in flight or for them to walk in the aerial cities of the air elementals. This enhancement makes the person almost weightless, which has no intrinsic mechanical effects but can be exploited through stunts. However, this blessing can only be endured for one month out of every year—if the cloud person attempts to maintain it longer than that, the recipient crumbles to dust.

Downward Glance (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): Cloud people can make out the details on the ground of Creation from miles above, taking no penalties on Awareness rolls to do so. Additionally, add one bonus success on rolls to make out minute details, such as identifying the individual meeting with a courtier behind a teahouse, or three successes on rolls to make out large-scale details, such as the movement of an army on the ground or an oncoming hurricane churning beneath the cloud person's aerial city.

Sky-Hidden Secrets (30m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 2): Through a combination of natural prescient gifts and the immaculately kept star charts of their aerial cities, the cloud people are adept at prophecy. Using this Charm works like rolling the cloud person's Philosophical and Astrological Knowledge pool to introduce a relevant fact (p. XX), but is used to introduce a fact about something that will happen up to a season in the future, rather than something about the present or past. The Storyteller should treat the introduced fact as something that is likely to happen if the roll achieves enough successes to meet whatever difficulty he sets, but the oracles of the cloud people are not infallible, due to the intrinsic instability of prophecy, the inescapable minor errors in their star charts, and their unfamiliarity with the ways of the world outside their cloud cities. Once per story.

Garda Bird

The garda birds are wise beyond reckoning. This is because they are immortal beyond the agelessness common to elementals; when one dies, it is reborn nine days later in a flowering of flame. They only truly perish when two garda birds unite in fire, becoming a single new individual—a sacrifice born out of love, and thus rare indeed.

Brilliant plumage drapes their six-foot bodies and twenty-foot wingspans, with feathers that shed a cool indigo glow. They can take male or female shape, but most often appear in the so-called "Emperor" form, as a gold and purple peacock with a pheasant's head. When threatened, they take on the "Empress" form—a silver pheasant with lethal claws. Rage calls forth the "Phoenix" form: a many-armed human body with an eagle's head, wings, claws and tail.

Garda birds have no interest in mortals and their societies. They inhabit isolated places like mountain peaks, volcanic calderas, and desert plateaus, consuming only morning dew and gathering no material possessions. Mortals who approach them seeking wisdom gain little, for though they never lie, they are whimsical and proud, typically responding with silence. Even the spirit courts see them but rarely.

Essence: 4; **Willpower:** 10; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Personal Motes: 90

Health Levels: -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Fly: 10 dice; Lore: 5 dice; Occult: 6 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Secret Wisdom: 7 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice; Threaten: 10 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 4, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Phoenix sword): 12 dice (Damage 13, minimum 2). Phoenix form only.

Attack (Talons): 9 dice (Damage 11). Empress or phoenix form only.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 9/0

Merits

Born of Flame: Garda birds are immune to any environmental hazard based on fire damage or heat, and automatically reduce any **withering** attack made with firewands, sorcerously-conjured fire, or similar to minimum damage. **Decisive** attacks from such sources can only ever deal bashing damage to them and can never fill their Incapacitated health level.

Offensive Charms

Blazing Wing Flash (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 4): With a beat of its powerful wings, the garda bird sends burning feathers falling on its foes. This is a **decisive** attack rolled against up to three enemies within short range, dividing the garda bird's Initiative evenly among all of them and doubling 9s on the damage roll.

Fiery Talon Strike (15m, 3i; Supplemental; Dual; Instant; Essence 3): The garda bird's attacks burn enemies to ashes. On a **withering** attack, it does not add extra successes to its raw damage, but instead rolls them as dice of lethal damage against its enemy, which ignore hardness as they burn the enemy alive. A **decisive** attack adds extra successes to its damage.

Immolating Pyre (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Eclipse; Essence 4): Garda birds may call up an eruption of flame, forcing all enemies within medium range to roll against a hazard with the traits of a bonfire (p. XX). Allies are unburnt, the flames washing over them harmlessly. Upon being Incapacitated, this Charm activates reflexively and for free, burning the garda bird's body to ashes. Nine days later, it rises out of the ash, unless slain with Charms such as Ghost-Eating Technique. Once per fight, unless being used upon Incapacitation. Eclipse Castes who learn this Charm do not gain the ability to return from death, though they may still invoke it reflexively upon being Incapacitated.

Defensive Charms

Fiery Terror Aura (8m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 4): While in its phoenix form, the garda bird may emanate a terrifying aura, subtracting one success from all attack rolls made against it. Characters may resist this aura for one scene by paying two Willpower. Characters with an Intimacy representing valor, courage, or a reason to fight fearlessly need pay only one Willpower.

Miscellaneous Charms

Threefold Firebird Form (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): A garda bird may use this form to shift between its three forms. The emperor peacock form is beautiful but harmless, the form it wears in repose or when making a show of non-aggression. In the empress pheasant form, it may use its deadly talons to strike foes. In the dreaded six-armed phoenix form, its full wrath is unleashed. Upon shifting into empress or phoenix form, the garda bird may reflexively pay to invoke Immolating Pyre, cloaking the transformation behind an eruption of flame.

Greenmaw

These elementals are creatures of the deep forests and jungles of the East and the Southwest. Despite their vegetative nature, young greenmaws feel an overwhelming hunger for meat, and they seek out and consume animal matter—living or dead—with unrelenting vigor. Most perish at the hands of incensed mortals or wilderness gods, or under the fangs and hooves of underestimated prey. But as greenmaws grow larger and older, their appetite fades. Most of their elders have not troubled mortal communities in millennia, preferring to tend strange wild gardens and ponder philosophical conundrums.

The greenmaw's body is thick as a tree trunk but green and flexible as a young vine. Its tail is a mass of prehensile roots; its head—rising from a ruff of leaves—has the sticky jaws of a venus flytrap, with a great honeyed tongue like a sundew. Galls dot the bodies of older greenmaws; these contain objects of metal or stone, like dinars or jewelry or weapons, which the creatures can neither digest nor remove unaided. The very eldest, which are monstrously large, contain treasures dating back to the First Age—or earlier.

Baby greenmaws are occasionally born from stray root fragments or from flowerings in forest demesnes, but a dying elder may give its life to create new elementals. Dozens of newborns erupt from its body, unleashing a greenmaw plague upon the region.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Personal Motes: 80

Health Levels: -0/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 8 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Resist Poison/Sickness: 9 dice; Senses: 9 dice; Threaten: 6 dice; Tracking: 10 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 19, minimum 2)

Attack (Tail slam) 10 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 10/3

Merits

Older greenmaws grow considerably in size as they eat more and more organic matter throughout their lifespan, gaining both higher Essence and increased physical mass. Eventually, they are capable of attaining the Legendary Size Merit possessed by creatures such as tyrant lizards (p. XX). However, these are generally the greenmaws least likely to cause trouble for human settlements.

Offensive Charms

Swaying Sundew Tongue (5m, 3i; Simple; Instant; Essence 3): A greenmaw may use the adhesive tip of its prehensile tongue to grapple an enemy or lift up objects. The greenmaw may double 8s on both a clinch attack roll and the roll to establish control using its tongue. It suffers no penalties while grappling an enemy on the end of its tongue, and may drag that enemy along with its movement without needing to take a restrain/drag action. If the greenmaw uses Thorn-

Toothed Maw to savage an enemy grappled with this Charm, the Initiative cost is waived and each round of control remaining over the grapple adds one die to the damage roll.

Thorn-Toothed Maw (7m, 3i; Simple; Instant; Essence 3): A greenmaw may attempt to swallow an enemy whole with a **decisive** bite attack, doubling 9s on the damage roll. As long as it deals 3+ levels of damage, the enemy is swallowed alive. Within the greenmaw's digestive tract, they must contend with its digestive acids, an environmental hazard with the traits of an acid bath (p. XX). A swallowed enemy may attempt to cut his way free with a difficulty 5 gambit rolled against the greenmaw's Defense, but cannot otherwise damage the elemental while inside it, as the digestive tract is completely dissociated from its vitals. This may be bypassed with appropriate stunts, but the swallowed character must still contend with the greenmaw's full Defense and soak.

Titanic Coils Crush (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): When the greenmaw uses its coils to savage a grappled enemy, it doubles extra successes on a **withering** attack or adds them to raw damage on a **decisive** attack. This Charm is incompatible with Swaying Sundew Tongue.

Defensive Charms

Unbroken Root Endurance (4m, 1i; Reflexive; Until uprooted; Essence 2): The greenmaw may dig into the terrain with its roots to become almost immovable. It adds +5 soak and cannot be thrown or dragged in a grapple, but may not take movement actions without ending this Charm. If the greenmaw is hit with an attack or effect that would forcibly move it, such as Heaven Thunder Hammer, it may negate this by paying two points of Initiative per range band. If it does not negate all of the forced movement, this Charm ends as it is forcibly uprooted.

Voracious Flesh Feeding (—; Permanent; Essence 3): A wounded greenmaw may heal by consuming organic matter, new growth covering over old wounds. Whenever a living enemy is killed by its bite attack or dies while swallowed whole, the greenmaw rolls one die, healing levels of damage equal to the successes. Attacking a battle group made up of living characters also allows it to roll a die to heal. If it makes a slaughter attack against a fleeing battle group or devours a large group of helpless creatures such as a herd of cattle, it automatically heals two levels of damage.

Miscellaneous Charms

Prey-Tasting Premonition (8m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): A greenmaw may add three bonus successes on any Perception-based roll to find living prey, whether this is an Awareness roll to notice a hidden enemy in combat or a Survival roll to track down the nearest human settlement. If it is attempting to find a character or group of characters suffering a wound penalty, the highest wound penalty is also added as bonus successes to the roll.

Thousandfold Serpent Strength (5m, 1wp or 5m, 4i; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): A greenmaw may make two rolls for a feat of strength and combine the successes from both as

long as the nature of the feat allows it to take advantage of its powerful, crushing coils or its dextrous, adhesive tongue.

Tidemare

These oceanic elementals resemble enormous seahorses, measuring dozens of feet from head to prehensile tail. Unlike their mundane equivalents, tidemares have enormous, brightly colored fins that shimmer with many brilliant colors, and can stretch out behind them in miles-long rainbow trails before retracting to their usual length. They're inordinately proud of their fins, and spend much of their time preening. Gatherings of tidemares typically involve elaborate contests and games in which they form webs and labyrinths of colored streamers across miles of open sea.

Sorcerers and pearl divers alike bargain with tidemares for transportation, for when one wishes, it can distend its belly large enough to encompass a dozen mortals. Its belly is a glassy membrane through which others can easily pass, as if through a thick soap bubble, and within which the air is always as fresh and crisp as the ocean breeze. Tidemares can communicate with their passengers, though they tend toward gossip regarding other elementals and prattle about the magnificence of their own fins.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Inspire: 8 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Swim: 11 dice; Tracking: 6 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Venomous spines): 10 dice (Damage 10 and poison when **decisive**, damage 1i/round, duration 5 rounds, -2 penalty)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 11 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

Merits

Living Ship: A tidemare may swim tirelessly without need for rest or sleep. More impressively, it can carry other characters in its belly—up to about two dozen—providing them with the air and atmosphere they need to survive even as it plumbs the deepest depths of the seas. It travels at a pace of about twenty miles per hour. In combat, the tidemare is not treated as a mount, but as an individual character, though its movement actions also move all characters riding in its belly.

Depending on the scale of the battle, the tidemare's belly may consist of one to three range bands itself, and enemies may move into it with a difficulty 5 gambit against the tidemare, allowing them to enter melee with its passengers or make unblockable, undodgeable attacks against the elemental. It is also possible to attack through the membrane of its belly from either side, though these take a -3 penalty.

Offensive Charms

Coiling Tail Strike (10m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The tidemare may add an automatic success to both the attack and control roll for a grapple. It cannot savage or throw an enemy clinched with this Charm, but may restrain/drag them as a reflexive action.

Defensive Charms

Billowing Veil Defense (5m, 2i); Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): The tidemare obstructs an attack with its shimmering fins as a diversion, subtracting dice equal to its Appearance from the attack roll. Each time this Charm is used against a **decisive** attack but the tidemare still takes damage, its fins become shredded and tattered, lowering its Appearance by one until the damage from that attack is healed.

Mobility Charms

Prismatic Sea-Spoor Streamers (8m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Eclipse; Essence 2): The tidemare lets its glowing, rainbow-colored fins trail behind it for miles, leaving luminous trails under the sea. This can be used to confuse enemy ships chasing the tidemare in a naval pursuit (p. XX), subtracting one success from their roll at each interval. Alternatively, it can assist other ships in sailing through a hazard at sea that the tidemare has already navigated, adding three successes to their rolls if they follow the trail of light. The Storyteller should provide similar bonuses to reward clever uses of this Charm. Eclipses may use this Charm to exude a rainbow streamer from their anima, but its luminescence is only visible when the streamer passes through water.

Racing Sailfish Surge (4m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Eclipse; Essence 2): The tidemare shepherds the water at its back into a surge that drives it forward, allowing it to move two range bands. In a test of speed or naval pursuit, this doubles 9s on the tidemare's roll. Unlike other Simple Charms, this may be placed in a flurry. Once per scene unless reset by successfully disengaging while at Initiative 3 or less. Eclipses may learn this Charm, but can only use it underwater.

Vaktri

The glittering, deadly vakrtri serve as emissaries to the subterranean spirit courts of earth elementals and deep gods. They appears as statues of varicolored prisms, each gemstone segment no larger than a mortal's thigh bone. Rows of crystals slide in and out like pistons as a vaktri moves. It has three legs and five arms, though it can shift its crystals around to flow around obstacles or through narrow spaces as a long, snake-like pillar of crystalline spars. Its voice sounds like glass breaking. Its heart is a single fist-sized jewel. It has no face.

These taciturn, expressionless beings seem to have unlimited patience in discharging their duty, whether that be investigation, negotiation, or assassination. At rest, a vaktri's utter stillness is disquieting, such that onlookers wonder whether it ever moved at all. But it is no automaton. Though the passions of the cold, calculating vaktri are slow to rouse, once aroused they are equally difficult to appease. The heart-jewel shines with an inner light equal to its ardor, colors shifting to divulge its emotional state.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice; Navigate Underground: 7 dice; Social Influence: 8 dice; Senses: 8 dice (see Earthsight); Stealth: 6 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 4, Guile 6

Combat

Attack (Crystalline fist): 9 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 12/0

Merits

Crystalline Anatomy: The gemstone body of the vaktri does not bleed, and is immune to all mundane poisons and diseases. Some crippling effects may not apply to it due to its unique anatomy.

Earthsight: Vakrtri do not have the conventional senses of sight, hearing, or smell, but instead perceive the world through vibrations travelling through the ground. This sense is acute—they can dodge an arrow by sensing the vibration of the archer's feet as he looses it, or hear a person's words through the subtle resonance that travels from their throat to the ground. However, in cases where earthsight would not apply—such as being attacked by an aerial enemy—the vaktri suffers the penalties of blindness and/or deafness.

Offensive Charms

Diamond Needle Strike (7m; Simple; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 2): The vaktri extends a single needle of its gemstone body as it makes a **decisive** attack. Every extra success on the attack roll allows it to reroll one die that turned up a failure on the damage roll. The vaktri may

pay three Initiative to actually fire the spike from its limb, allowing it to attack out to medium range.

Shattered Crystal Spray (15m, 1wp: Simple; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 2): Once the vaktri has taken any levels of damage to its health track, it may use this Charm to unleash an eruption of broken fragments from within its body. It rolls a **decisive** attack against all enemies within short range, dividing its Initiative evenly among them to determine the raw damage of the attack and adds any wound penalties it suffers to the damage of each attack, resetting to base Initiative only after all attacks are completed. Once per fight, unless reset by taking enough damage to increase its wound penalty.

Defensive Charms

Unbreakable Gemstone Armor (5m, 3i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 1): The vaktri gains bonus soak and hardness against an attack equal to the number of dice that turn up failures on the attack roll. This Charm must be invoked before the attack roll is made.

Mobility Charms

Needle-Body Extrusion (15m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite; Essence 2): The vaktri may reconfigure the crystalline spars that make up its body to enter narrow or tight spaces, allowing it to move through any opening the size of a man's forearm. It cannot actually bend the crystals of its body, making it impossible for it to maneuver through extremely twisty spaces. If the vaktri uses this Charm to assist in a feat of strength to tunnel through a structure or barrier, it doubles 7s on the roll.

Stone-Spider Grip (5m; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 2): The vaktri may climb up stone or metal surfaces as easily as it can walk, its crystalline limbs merging seamlessly with the surface before releasing. It is even possible for it to climb upside-down across a roof or scale an otherwise unclimbable surface with no need for a roll.

Social Charms

Faceless Envoy Proclamation (8m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): The vaktri serve as emissaries of earth elemental lords or subterranean deities, for they are the most excellent messengers among the earth courts. Whenever the vaktri makes a social influence roll on the orders of another character, it may add that character's Essence in bonus dice to the roll. Most of the spirits that the vaktri serve are of Essence 4 or 5.

Many-Faceted Radiance (10m; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 2): Glowing with the radiance of its diamond heart, the vaktri becomes a beautiful living mosaic, converting any bonus dice it receives from its Appearance on social influence rolls to successes and doubling 8s on all Appearance rolls. However, the luminous glow is telling of the crystalline being's emotions, imposing a -2 penalty to its otherwise impeccable Guile, and it cannot use stealth at all. If the vaktri's passions are inflamed by a successful inspire action, this Charm activates automatically and for free, but the vaktri cannot willingly end it.

Fakharu, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Water, Censor of the West

The dragon Fakharu holds the post of censor, making him responsible for investigating misconduct in the spirits courts of the West. He once served Heaven loyally, but since the breakdown of the celestial hierarchy, lesser spirits have seduced him with bribes and gifts. Now, instead of pursuing improprieties, he dwells in a luxurious golden palace on a distant Western isle, whiling away the years in artistic and scholarly pursuits.

For all his size and might, Fakharu is a graceful creature. His scales are the green and silver of sun-spangled ocean, his eyes the ruddy gold of the setting sun. His body glides like silk on glass, and his claws are deft enough to handle delicate porcelain and produce the most elegant calligraphy. His voice is warm and good-humored, his conversation witty and thoughtful.

Aside from his mortal lover Amarel and her handmaidens, Fakharu has little use for humankind. He has grown accustomed to favorable treatment from lesser spirits—servants and visitors alike—and has little cause to interact with his divine superiors in the Celestial City. The only guests he regards as peers are the occasional Lunar or Sidereal Exalted, whom he greets with genteel hospitality. He would doubtless offer Solars similar treatment.

Essence: 6; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 110

Health Levels: -0x5/-1x10/-2x10/-4/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: “I have earned this furlough.”

• Major Tie: Amarel (Love)

• Minor Principle: “What is more precious than erudition and the arts?”

• Minor Tie: The Celestial Exalted (Wary Respect)

Actions: Craft Sculptures: 10 dice; Feats of Strength: 15 dice (may attempt Strength 10 feats); Fly: 15 dice; Knowledge of Spirit Courts: 12 dice; Read Intentions: 8 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 13 dice; Senses: 10 dice; Social Influence: 12 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Swim: 15 dice; Writing: 10 dice

Appearance 4, Resolve 5, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Bite): 11 dice (Damage 22, minimum 5)

Attack (Claws): 15 dice (Damage 18, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (12 dice to control). Fakharu rolls unopposed against smaller enemies to determine how many rounds of control he establishes, unless his victim uses magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 15 dice (see Soaring Dragon Flight)

Evasion 7, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 24/10

Merits

Cult 4: There is no cult of Fakharu, but his position as censor entitles him to a tithe of worship from all spirits across the West (as well as bribes from miscreant gods hoping for him to turn a blind eye) that amounts to a sizable sum of prayer.

Legendary Size: Fakharu's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage him in combat. He takes no onslaught penalties from attacks made by smaller opponent, unless magically inflicted. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop him below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Soaring Dragon Flight: An elemental dragon is both tireless and graceful, capable of traveling up to five hundred miles an hour through the sky or its native element. In combat, it doubles 9s on all movement rolls and may rush enemies on the ground from two range bands above them while flying. If one deigned to accept a rider, it would have a +5 speed bonus

Offensive Charms

Claw-Fang Maelstrom (25m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): Fakharu may make three **decisive** attacks, two with his claws and then a single bite. Each attack must be directed against a different enemy, unless he is savaging a grappled foe. His Initiative does not reset until all three attacks have been completed. Once per fight unless reset by being attacked 5+ times in a single round by non-trivial opponents.

Drowning-in-Coils Constriction (10m, 5i, 1wp; Reflexive; Until released; Perilous; Essence 6): Upon successfully grappling an enemy, Fakharu may turn the coils of his body into liquid water that engulfs them for the duration of the clinch, causing them to begin drowning (p. XX) for as long as they remain grappled. Fakharu may choose to spare a character who runs out of air while grappled, leaving them merely unconscious instead of dead.

Raging Dragon Strike (12m; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform; Essence 4): Fakharu adds his current temporary Willpower to an attack roll, and doubles 9s on the damage roll. At Initiative 20+, he adds 10 dice to attack and doubles 8s on damage instead.

Seven Venoms Exhalation (25m, 4i, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Withering-only, Perilous; Essence 6): Fakharu exhales a torrent of venom, rolling 15 dice as a **withering** attack against all enemies in front of him out to medium range. In general, his breath can target up to one character at close range, three at short, and five at medium. The attack has a damage of (20 + extra successes over

each individual enemy's Defense), and exposes all damaged characters to a poison with damage 3i/round, duration 10 rounds, and a penalty of -4. Points of Initiative damage dealt by the attack are not awarded to Fakharu, but are instead converted to a dice penalty on the victim's roll to resist the poison. Characters that take 5+ Initiative damage from the torrential blast are knocked back one range band and fall prone. Once per fight unless reset by going three rounds without taking any **withering** or **decisive** damage.

Defensive Charms

Flowing Body Dispersal (4m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 6): Fakharu's body becomes liquid as he is struck, letting attacks pass through it as though it were water. Every die that came up a 1 or 2 on the attack roll subtracts a success from both the attack and damage rolls.

River-Drinking Renewal (30m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Perilous; Essence 6): Fakharu may drain the water from a large cistern, lake, river, or similar body of water within medium range in order to heal wounds, rolling his Initiative and healing levels of damage equal to the successes. Healing 10+ levels of damage with this Charm also resets Seven Venoms Exhalation if it is currently down. If he is submerged in a body of water, invoking this Charm is Reflexive. Once per fight unless reset with a two or three-point stunt that alters the battlefield to introduce a new source of water to draw from.

Social Charms

Censor's Geas (20m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 5): Fakharu may double 7s on a roll to persuade a character by invoking his authority, whether through appeal to an Intimacy or simply stunting the influence appropriately. Persuaded characters cannot abandon the task unless they fully erode the Intimacy that supported it and then pay three Willpower. Spirits subordinate to Fakharu—technically almost all gods and elementals in the West—treat the influence as exploiting at least a Major Intimacy, and cannot abandon the task once persuaded.

Miscellaneous Charms

Clothed with Humanity (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Fakharu may assume a human form to interact with guests, courtiers, and lovers. He loses much of his physical prowess and offensive magic while in this form, but may revert to his true draconic nature reflexively and at no cost.

Draconic Might (4m, 1wp or 4m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Essence 6): Fakharu may double his Strength rating for a single feat of strength, both adding 10 bonus dice and allowing him to attempt legendary feats that would require Strength 20.

Dematerialize (60m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Fakharu may shed his fleshly body, becoming as immaterial as a god. This effectively works like the Materialize Charm, but in reverse. When he vanishes or reappears, his vast body weaves or unweaves itself from flows of glistening water.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Fakharu can take the measure of anyone brought for judgment before him in his role as Censor of the West.

Demons

Agata, the Beauteous Wasp, Demon of the First Circle

No one forgets their first glimpse of an agata. The demon shimmers like a giant wasp carved from rainbow crystal. Its wings hum like cascading water; its voice is birdsong at dawn. An uncanny golden nimbus crowns it with a dream of glory.

Lovely as they are, the agata are perilous to approach. Their minds work on an abstruse level beyond the understanding of mortals, while their emotions are fluid as quicksilver. Thus, for all their brilliance, their philosophies are largely untranslatable, while their behavior often appears childlike, eccentric, or even mad. A beauteous wasp may destroy a thing it treasures or abandon a friend in time of need, then laugh or weep, or continue on its way as though nothing had happened. To the agatae themselves, such actions are both normal and reasonable, such that they stare uncomprehendingly at those who question their motives.

The agata is a riding-beast by nature. It feels an immediate bond to its rider, an intense love mixed with wild, overwhelming outbursts of other emotions. It is rare indeed for an agata to harm its rider, but they have been known to shake mortals off to their deaths—sometimes to mourn thereafter in deep and elaborate ways, at other times to shrug off all thoughts of mortality and move on to other things.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Speed Bonus: +3

Actions: Demon Lore: 6 dice; Flying maneuvers: 12 dice; Inspire: 6 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 8 dice; Senses: 7 dice; Tracking: 5 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 3, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Claw): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Sting): 5 dice (Damage 13 and poison when **decisive**, damage 2i/round, duration 5 rounds, -3 penalty). Agatae can only sting while airborne.

Combat Movement: 6 dice (12 when airborne)

Evasion 3 (5 while airborne), Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 8/0

Merits

Shimmering Crystal Beauty: Anyone who looks upon the agata is treated as having a Minor Tie of wonder towards it for purposes of social influence rolls.

Vigorous Steed: The agata can bear two fully armored people on its back while flying at a speed of thirty miles an hour. It may use its Evasion in place of its Parry to protect a rider with a defend other action.

Offensive Charms

Principle of Motion (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): The agata moves with blinding speed, taking a flurry without the usual restrictions—it can flurry two of the same action if desired, and it ignores the usual penalties to dice pools and Defense.

Defensive Charms

Kaleidoscopic Dodge (5m, 3i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): For a moment, the beauteous wasp seems to disintegrate into rainbow brilliance, as though it were refracted through a prism, adding +2 Evasion against an attack. A successful dodge allows the agata to reflexively move one range band in any direction, if it wishes.

Jeweled Heart Allure (6m; Reflexive; One scene; Essence 2): The agata radiates beauty that dumbfounds even battle-hardened warriors, forcing characters to pay a point of Willpower before they can attack it in a scene unless they have an Intimacy that represents ruthlessness, pitilessness, or a desperate reason to fight it that is greater than the Minor Tie created by Shimmering Crystal Beauty.

Mobility Charms

Wind-Stirring Wing Tempest (5m, 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The agata doubles 9s on a movement roll. If it is moving downward while airborne, it doubles 8s as well.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The demon fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to its summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when the demon is unbound.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The agata solidifies itself in a flash of prismatic light.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The agata can discern the nature of anyone who rides it.

Erymanthus, the Blood-Ape, Demon of the First Circle

An erymanthus has the body of a massive, gnarled ape. Tufts of rust-red fur spatter its rubbery black hide, while jagged spurs of black bone jut from its shoulders, spine and skull. Its heavy, twisted limbs end in great black talons, and its pupil-less eyes glow as golden as a snake's.

Though its shambling gait appears clumsy, it moves with uncanny speed to match its unnatural strength. When pressing itself to its utmost, the blood-ape can leap or strike faster than the eye can see, or bellow with such force that its voice alone shatters stone or steel.

Most erymanthoi prefer to remain in physical form. Even when compelled to dematerialize, their thick animal stench hangs heavy on the air. Their snuffling and grunting likewise remains audible, as does the scrape and thump of their lumbering gait, and one can sometimes catch glimpses of them out of the corner of the eye.

These vicious, brutal creatures prize hot fresh gore. While a few have unusually eclectic or catholic tastes, most favor the blood of humans and cats. This craving makes them difficult to control. If a blood-ape grows hungry enough, only its master's express command will hold it back from satiating its appetite.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Climbing and Brachiation: 7 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Resist Poison/Illness: 8 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Stealth: 6 dice; Threaten: 7 dice; Tracking: 5 dice

Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 7/0

Offensive Charms

Brutal Ape Pounce (4m; Simple; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 1): If the blood-ape deals 5+ damage to an enemy with this **withering** attack, that character is knocked prone. If the Initiative damage brought them below the demon's Initiative, the blood-ape may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a **decisive** attack against them. The reflexive attack power of this Charm can only be used once per fight unless reset by landing three successful **withering** attacks.

Principle of Motion (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): The blood-ape moves with blinding speed, taking a flurry without the usual restrictions—it can flurry two of the same action if desired, and it ignores the usual penalties to dice pools and Defense.

Rending Claw Slash (5m, 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform; Essence 1): When the blood-ape savages a grappled enemy, it doubles 9s on the damage roll. If it receives 6+ extra successes on the attack roll, double 8s as well.

Shattering Roar (15m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Dual; Essence 2): The blood-ape emits a howl potent enough to pulp flesh and pulverize bone, attacking an enemy out to medium range with a roll of nine dice. **Withering** howls have a base damage of 20. **Decisive** attacks add extra successes to their raw damage, and deal bashing damage. Once per fight, unless reset by moving to pursue an enemy after a successful rush.

Miscellaneous Charms

Destructive Force (3m or 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The erymanthus adds three bonus successes on a feat of strength to destroy an object or obstacle.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The demon fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to its summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when the demon is unbound.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Bloody, stinking ropes of muscle and flesh lash themselves together from thin air, building the blood-ape a physical form.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The erymanthus can discern the nature of anyone whose blood it tastes.

Fulope, the Choral Equestrian, Demon of the First Circle

A fulope's body is a mass of flexible, shifting fibers like spun glass, each strand aglow with tawny fire, flexing like a luminous horse's mane adrift underwater. When calm, it swims through the air like an eel. But fits of passion drive it to tangle itself into knots, with each snarl blistering into a burning eye with a lamprey-like maw as its pupil.

Like many demons descended from Adorjan—that dreadful demon queen called the Silent Wind—the choral equestrian brims with music and the urge to sing. But as its own voice is a harsh buzz, it prefers to employ the bodies of others to make music. Fastening itself to the nape of another creature's neck, it sends its nerve-fibers winding through skin and flesh into the victim's brain and larynx, seizing control of body and senses. This possession is painless, but the host cannot escape the throbbing heat of the fulope's nerves running through his tissues.

Each fulope loves to sing and to prove its mastery of music. Confronted with another singer—whether a skilled minstrel, a mother's lullaby, or the aimless meanderings of a child—it sings at them until they give way. Two fulope encountering one another engage in hours-long duels of song, leaving their hosts' throats bloody and raw.

It's not uncommon for a fulope to find itself obsessed with some creature, object, or place that serves as its muse. The most enticing—and regrettably common—subject for such passion is the demon realm's green sun. Left to itself, a choral equestrian seizes a flying demon's body and

soars into Hell's sky, singing to the sun for days at a stretch. Those that fly too high are immolated; their stolen bodies plummet, blackened and blazing, to burst like meteors upon the city below.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 2 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x4/-4/Incap.

Actions: Beautiful Song: 10 dice (3 dice if the demon must use its own voice); Fly: 5 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice; Social Influence: 6 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 5, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Tendril slash): 10 dice (Damage 8)

Attack (Scream): 9 dice (Damage 11, minimum 2). The fulope can make scream attacks out to short range.

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (4 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Offensive Charms

Withering Scream (10m, 1wp; Simple; Withering-only; Instant; Essence 2): The fulope emits a hideous wail, making a **withering** scream attack against every enemy within close range. It gains Initiative as normal from the damage roll that inflicted the highest amount of damage, but the total Initiative it receives from all other damage rolls cannot raise the total award above 10 (not counting Initiative Breaks). Alternatively, it may direct the **withering** scream against a battle group, doubling 7s on the damage roll. Once per fight, unless reset by incapacitating an enemy with a **decisive** attack.

Neural Reins (20m 1wp, Simple, Indefinite; Decisive-only; Essence 2): The fulope makes a **decisive** savaging attack against a grappled enemy, expending all rounds of control over the clinch to add that many dice of raw damage. This attack does not deal damage—instead, if the demon's successes exceed the higher of the victim's Resolve or Willpower, it possesses the target, merging with his body. It gains total control over the victim, using his physical Attributes and health track in place of its own for the duration of the possession. It also gains the benefit of the victim's voice. It is visible only as a small glassy lump embedded in the nape of a victim's neck, noticeable with a (Perception + Awareness) or Medicine roll at difficulty 3. Possession

victims may roll (Wits + Integrity) at difficulty 3 at the end of each scene as an extended action to force out the fulope, doing so upon attaining a goal number of 10 (terminus 3, interval one minute). The host may make an additional roll whenever the demon tries to force him to act in opposition to any of his Intimacies, adding that Intimacy's rating in dice to his roll. It is also possible, but extraordinarily difficult, to extract an embedded fulope surgically if its host is restrained or subdued, an extended (Intelligence + Medicine) roll with difficulty 5, goal number 10, and an interval of one hour. The patient suffers two levels of lethal damage per roll.

Uncoiling Glassy Thread (10m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The fulope's strands momentarily elongate to grapple a human-sized enemy at short range, adding three bonus successes on both the attack roll and the roll to establish control. A successful clinch drags the target to close range with the demon.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The demon fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to its summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when the demon is unbound.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The demon weaves itself into being from stolen snatches of song in a hundred foreign voices.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The fulope can discern the nature of anyone it possesses.

Neomah, the Maker of Flesh, Demon of the First Circle

When a neomah enters a new place—whether some new region of the Demon City or a summoning sorcerer's demesne in Creation—its first act is to rebuild its home. Upon finding an open space, it spins a thread of brass and fire from its throat like a spider building a web, which it weaves into a tower over the course of an hour. From there it conducts its business as an infernal courtesan.

The makers of flesh appear as sleek and hairless androgynes. Elegant and alluring, their graceful movements and entrancing scent appeal to mortals across Creation—and to a range of other beings besides. Indeed, one may become male or female, both or neither, in accordance with its current companion's desires.

The typical neomah has little interest in money. Instead, it offers its services as a concubine in exchange for some small part of its client's substance—blood or seed, flesh or nails. When it has collected enough materials, it casts them together into the fire burning atop its nautilus-horn tower, where it shapes them into an infant, a hybrid child made from many parents. Once this is done, the neomah unweaves and inhales its tower, then moves on, leaving the baby behind.

Some sorcerers summon the neomah for licentious purposes. Others procure their services as bodyguards or spies. But these demons are most often called upon to create children. Through their magic, barren women or sterile men can have children of their own flesh and blood, while

couples of the same gender may likewise mingle their lineages. Such children are wholly mortal. Not so the other creations of neomah artifice! Many a sorcerer has guarded her lair with bizarre beasts born in the neomah's fire.

All neomah are creatures of passion. Most invest their fervor in their craft, seeking to master the arts of love and procreation. A few find themselves enthralled by other arts—music, dance, painting, poisons. Rarely do their passions involve lovers and progeny, for whom they feel at most a cool, distant affection.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Personal Motes: 70

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Disguise: 7 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Read Intentions: 7 dice; Sensual Amusements: 10 dice; Social Influence: 5 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Weave Flesh: 11 dice; Writing: 7 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 3, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Brass hairpin): 7 dice (Damage 8 and poison when **decisive**, damage 1L/hour, duration 6 hours, -3 penalty)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Defense: 5

Soak/Hardness: 5/0 (Unarmored)

Merits

Alluring Scent: Neomah are universally attractive to all creatures, regardless of species. Their beauty compels humans, demons, raksha, and stranger things yet. When taking a persuade action to seduce a character, the neomah is always treated as exploiting a Minor Intimacy, and never faces penalties for seduction across lines of species.

Expressive Demeanor: Neomah takes no penalties for communicating via body language, and can communicate even complex messages or carry out conversations with nothing more than their extraordinarily expressive faces and posture.

Weave Flesh: Neomah may shape infants from a combination of flesh and sexual fluids, creating the hybrid offspring of two or more parents. The demon shapes an infant from some combination of flesh, semen, or menstrual fluids. The more people that provide the flesh, and the more types of creatures among them, the greater the odds that the child—though appearing normal—will develop *strangely*, its personality aberrant in some unexpected manner. This is treated as a crafting project, using the weave flesh dice pool listed above. Creating a human or human-like child is a basic project that typically takes a day of labor. More unusual or monstrous prodigies

take major projects to create. Neomah receive five points of silver crafting experience to spend on these projects when they conclude their business as demon concubines.

Offensive Charms

Spit Fire (5m; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 2): A neomah may spit the same flames it uses to weave its tower at its enemies. This is a **decisive** attack that can target enemies out to medium range, with an attack roll of eight dice. An enemy damaged by the attack is set ablaze, taking one die of lethal damage each turn until they find a way to extinguish themselves. This damage ignores hardness.

Social Charms

Seductive Shapechange (8m; Simple; One scene; Eclipse; Essence 1): Once a neomah has read a character's intentions to determine their ideal sexual mate, it may use this Charm to sculpt its body into that form. Its demonic nature remains recognizable, but it may alter gender, height, build, facial features, and similar aesthetic traits. While this Charm is active, it adds +2 Appearance when making social influence rolls to seduce the character whose preferences it has tailored itself to, or that play on Intimacies of lust towards itself. This can raise the neomah's Appearance above 5, but is not compatible with other Appearance-enhancing effects.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The Neomah fades away and vanishes on its next turn, drawn instantly to either its nautilus-horn tower *or* to its summoner's side.

Materialize (35m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The neomah weaves itself a physical form out of threads of burning flesh, which cool and resolve into a body.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The neomah can measure the nature of any that comes to it seeking to trade flesh for pleasure.

Alveua, the Keeper of the Forge of Night, Demon of the Second Circle

The hum of insects accompanies Alveua wherever she goes, for she hammered out many of Hell's arthropods on her forge, and her creations love her still. Indeed, there seems something insectile about her slender limbs, her glittering eyes, her dark glossy skin. But her delicate frame belies her strength. Indeed, the massive red-hot hammer she carries seems as light as a feather in her hands.

Mortals call upon Alveua for a singular service. Should she answer a summons, she brings the petitioner back with her across the endless Hell-girdling desert to her forge of night. In that lightless place, beyond even the Demon City's emerald sun and alien stars, she lays the mortal upon her anvil and reshapes him into a tool of gleaming black metal, of a shape—sword, flask, coin, ox-goad, or any other thing—that befits the petitioner's nature. She then returns the thing to Creation, there to find its way into hands that will, through roundabout means, fulfill the dreams

and desires of the one from whom it was forged. Sorcerers may call upon her to work wonders of hellish power for their own uses, in exchange for mortals willing to be reborn on her anvil.

She expresses the philosophy of such workings, and her very existence, thusly: “If I had the shaping of all things, as I have for those I reforge, then the Yozis would not be imprisoned; the gods would not rebel against them; the mortals would not be so bold; and both harmony and happiness should fill the world. Sadly, as Erembour and the Ebon Dragon are held, so held am I; and I can fix only certain aspects of Creation.”

Essence: 6; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Personal Motes: 110

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x6/-4x4/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: Her philosophy

• Major Tie: Erembour (Filial Devotion)

• Major Tie: Her work (Satisfaction)

• Minor Principle: “My time is precious.”

• Minor Tie: Sunlight and moonlight (Loathing)

Actions: Demonic Lore: 9 dice; Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Forging Hellish Wonders: 12 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Stealth: 6 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice

Appearance 4, Resolve 5, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Ember of Perfection hammer): 12 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 9 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 12/0

Merits

Cult 1: The prayers of those who offer themselves unto Alveua’s forge resound forevermore in the clangor of her hammer and anvil.

Keeper of the Forge of Night: Alveua is a master of the forge. As a Storyteller character, she does not track or gain crafting experience—she has sufficient experience when it serves the story, and is taking time to gather more when it doesn’t. She has five major project slots and one superior project slot.

Offensive Charms

Forge-Born Fury (7m; Reflexive; One scene; Dual; Essence 4): Alveua's hammer, Ember of Perfection, blazes red with heat, adding one success to all **withering** damage rolls and one die of raw damage to all **decisive** attacks.

Hammer Beats Blade (6m, 1wp; Supplemental; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 4): Alveua halves the difficulty and cost of a disarm gambit made with her hammer. With three extra successes on the Initiative roll, she may shatter a mundane weapon, or fling an artifact weapon out to medium range.

Plague of Shining Insects (10m, 1wp; Simple; Decisive-only; Instant; Essence 4): A swarm of hellish insects descends, biting and stinging, upon one who has harmed Alveua. This Charm can be used to make an (Intelligence + Occult + Essence) attack roll of fifteen dice to enact a difficulty 3 gambit against an enemy out to medium range who has attacked Alveua this scene. Success covers the enemy in a swarm of metallic insects that are treated as an environmental hazard, with damage 2L/round and difficulty 4 to avoid. Each round that the victim fails his roll to resist, he takes a -2 penalty on all other dice rolls that turn. The victim and his allies may attempt to destroy the insects with their own attacks, which is treated as a difficulty 3 gambit. A successful gambit reduces the hazard's difficulty by one, and the swarm disperses once the difficulty is lowered to zero. Once per fight, unless reset by taking damage from a **decisive** attack.

Defensive Charms

Night-Black Carapace (5m, 1wp; Simple; Decisive-only, Eclipse; One scene; Essence 4): Darkness swirls in from every corner to clothe Alveua in night-black armor with the traits of light artifact armor. If Alveua is hit with a **decisive** attack, she may let the armor shatter as a counterattack, rolling ten dice plus her enemy's extra successes on the attack roll as a **decisive** attack against all characters within short range. Each character suffers a base damage equal to the extra successes Alveua's attack roll received against their Defense, and her Initiative is divided evenly among all characters to determine the total damage. This destroys her armor, which she cannot summon again that fight unless she establishes stealth in darkness and shadow.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hell-Forging Clangor (30m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 6): Alveua doubles 7s on a crafting roll and may reroll all 1s until they fail to appear. She may complete basic or major projects in a handful of hours, while artifacts require only half their normal time investment before she may begin rolling to complete them if the first interval is supplemented with this Charm. If at least three dice turn up a 10 on a roll to work towards a superior or legendary project, then it is not counted towards the terminus of the project. This Charm cannot be used in sunlight or moonlight, nor while forging orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal, jade, or soulsteel—the magical materials of Creation and the Underworld are inimical to her nature.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Alveua fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly to the forge of night or to her summoner's side.

Materialize (55m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Alveua appears from somewhere in the shadows, arising from a shadowy mass of insects. She cannot materialize in the direct light of the sun or moon.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Alveua may discern he nature of anyone who submits to be beaten out on her anvil, or who handles one of her creations in her presence.

Willing Souls Tempered (Permanent; Essence 6): When a mortal petitioner sacrifices at least one innocent life and succeeds on a prayer roll to Alveua, she may use this Charm to appear before him for an instant before dragging him back to her forge in Hell, hammering his soul out on her anvil. Though Alveua does not track crafting experience normally, in terms of the strength of the artifacts she may forge from a mortal, his sacrifice contributes the equivalent of either ten silver craft experience points, five gold points, or one white point towards the completion of whatever project Alveua uses him for. A willing mortal who presents himself to her in person may also be put to this end. Characters may be convinced to make this sacrifice through social influence, but Psyche effects or similar mind control magic is invalid.

Mara, the Shadow-Lover, Demon of the Second Circle

Mara's appearance changes with each visit to Creation. Sometimes she wears heavy wools and furs, at other times gauzy silks—green in the summer, of ruddy hues in the fall, or white in winter. Her skin may be pale or dark, her hair of any hue, her form old or young. But her face is always lovely to look upon, her eyes are always bright as sapphires, and her long skirts always conceal the hooves of a deer.

Folk across the world tell tales of Mara. Some say she is a tree-spirit, for she favors Creation's woodlands. But she is a demon, a seductress, visiting folk in the night and sapping their strength with arts of love learned in the seraglios of Hell. Sometimes, at the height of passion, she draws forth a lover's soul with a kiss. It emerges as some small living thing—such as a sparrow, frog, snake, bat, butterfly, or even a swarm of insects—that she may bring back to her summoner for his pleasure.

Mortals with dark destinies attract Mara's attention. She takes such people as her lovers, but does not destroy them. Instead she feeds them stolen souls from her lips, strengthening them and giving them a fascination with cruelty and death.

Essence: 5; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 100

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x4/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: "I take pleasure in death and suffering."

• Major Tie: Lovers with dark destinies (Eager Interest)

• Minor Principle: "I am a creature of woodlands and kin to deer."

• Minor Tie: Beautiful mortals (Loveless Attraction)

Actions: Demonic Lore: 10 dice; Disguise: 8 dice; Read Intentions: 6 dice; Senses: 6 dice; Shape Sorcery: 12 dice; Social Influence: 10 dice; Stealth: 9 dice

Appearance 5, Resolve 4, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (Damage 11)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 7/0

Merits

Cult 2: Mara's worship comes in part from infernalist cults in Creation and the lips of her paramours, but also from misguided humans who pray to her as a peaceful spirit of the woodlands.

Martial Arts

Mara is the creator of Black Claw Style, and knows all of its Charms (p. XX). Her nature as the icon of dark grace which the style emulates grants her the Mastery benefit of Charms with that keyword, although this is a true rarity even among martially powerful demons of her rank or higher.

Sorcery

Mara is a skilled sorcerer of the Sapphire Circle. Her control spells are Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares and Impenetrable Veil of Night. She knows all spells of the first two circles printed in this book (see Chapter Seven), save for those that summon elementals and demons, which she, as a spirit, is incapable of using. She has all the shaping rituals listed under "Bargain With Mara" (p. XX), although she takes souls using her own unique Charm, rather than with the method listed among the shaping rituals.

Offensive Charms

Siphon Soul (10m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): Mara draws forth a mortal's soul with her kiss. She may steal the soul of a sleeping character or anyone who willingly kisses her, or as a **decisive** gambit against an enemy in a grapple she controls, expending all rounds of control and adding them as bonus dice to her Initiative roll against a difficulty equal to that character's Resolve. A siphoned soul emerges in the form of a tiny creature that Mara swallows and can bring forth intact, either to nourish another with it using her Soul Feeding Charm or to return it to its original body, which remains alive but inanimate until it dies of deprivation. She may also devour souls to gain sorcerous motes from them, as per her shaping rituals. Once per scene.

Social Charms

Devil Seraglio Ways (15m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 5): Mara doubles 8s on a persuade roll to seduce a character or any influence roll that exploits a Tie of love or lust towards her, and treats her target as having Resolve 0 for determining how many bonus dice her Appearance adds.

Handmaid of Dark Fates (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 4): Mara may add three bonus successes on a persuade roll to convince one of her lovers to take an action that will bring about death or suffering (whether directly or indirectly). Additionally, each time she has used Soul Feeding to benefit that character in the past imposes a -1 penalty on his Resolve against the roll.

Miscellaneous Charms

Hundred-Faced Shadow (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): The Shadow-Lover can make significant changes to her humanoid form, altering her face, build, or apparent ethnicity, or shifting her age anywhere between 15 and 50. Her bright blue eyes and hooves always remain unchanged. If she uses this Charm to assist in disguising herself as another character, she cancels all penalties to do so. Alternatively, she may transform into a housecat (p. XX) or into a swirl of mist. While in mist form, she cannot attack or cast spells, but adds +3 Evasion against any attack not enhanced by magic.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Mara fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly to her summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when she is unbound.

Materialize (50m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Mara appears in a drift of seasonal leaves.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Mara can determine the nature of anyone she kisses.

Soul Feeding (10m, 2wp; Simple; One month; Essence 5): Over a period of weeks, Mara nourishes a mortal with fragments of stolen souls. This grants the recipient improved traits as a training effect, depending on their existing level of competence. A peasant boy taken as a lover might gain dots of Attributes and Abilities; a mortal sorcerer who binds Mara for this service might learn new spells or gain dark powers as supernatural Merits. The recipient also gains a Major Principle of "I take pleasure in death and suffering." Gathering souls and feeding them to the recipient occupies her for approximately eight hours per day, and she may only use this Charm on one recipient at a time.

Octavian, the Living Tower, the Quarter-Prince, Demon of the Second Circle

In a court of malachite and basalt, the odors of charring meat and the frantic prayers of manacled slaves fill the air. Octavian stands ten feet tall, but seems a giant even when seated on his alabaster throne, its whiteness long since stained indelibly black by the oil that oozes from his stone-hard skin. He is monstrous, muscular and elephant-tusked; he wears little more than a

loincloth from which the skull of a slain Solar Exalt hangs on a strand of jade beads, a cracked hearthstone set in its forehead. The black oil that coats his skin—that drips down to blight the earth beneath his feet and to spoil his feasts—is also a potent venom that annihilates the senses. But his brutish figure belies a calculating intellect. Once a champion of the demon princes, he rose to become a general of their monstrous armies, and from there he amassed his own empire. He commands a full quarter of a layer of Hell, an empire whose size staggers the imagination.

Over the centuries, Octavian has waged war against rival lords of Hell, fought single-handed against champions of the gods, torn dragons asunder, and ripped the wings from behemoths. Yet he remains unsatisfied. He loved, once, when the world was young, but no longer pursues conquests of the heart. All that remains to him is testing his strength against the world, and he has reached the limits to which he can do so in Hell. He grows weary upon his throne, lacking the temperament for governance. He seeks new nations to conquer and new worlds for his empire to encompass, making him an eager ally for sorcerers seeking a battle-champion or bodyguard. Even when bound to stand guard duty or murder some insignificant mortal, the Living Tower views each foray into Creation as a glimpse of what he will one day command.

Essence: 6; **Willpower:** 10; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 110

Health Levels: -0x5/-1x10/-2x10/-4x5/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: “I will test my strength against the world.”

• Major Principle: “Strategy and cunning are no match for brute force.”

• Major Tie: His empire (Ambition)

• Minor Principle: “Love is unnecessary.”

Actions: Administrating his Empire: 6 dice; Command: 8 dice; Feats of Strength: 14 dice (may attempt Strength 10 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 12 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice; Strategy: 7 dice

Appearance 5 (Hideous), Resolve 5, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Equitable Resolution staff): 14 dice (Damage 19, minimum 4)

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (Damage 15 and poison when **decisive**, see Black Oil)

Attack (Grapple): 11 dice (12 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (14 dice while mounted)

Evasion 3, Parry 7

Soak/Hardness: 17/10

Merits

Agata Mount: Octavian rides an agata (p. XX) named Damaskenos. When he is summoned or bound, so is she, and she dematerializes and materializes along with him. The largest broodmother of her demonic line, she has three extra -1 and -2 health levels above the usual for agatae and has a diamond carapace that grants hardness 6.

Bane of the Earth: Octavian once loved the earth, but his passion was spurned. Now, it has no foe more bitter. Any attack made by Octavian becomes aggravated against earth elementals or other spirits of earth, and such creatures take a -2 Resolve penalty against his threaten actions.

Black Oil: Octavian's body is coated with a black oil that annuls the senses. When he strikes an enemy with an unarmed **decisive** attack, they suffer a dose of poison with damage 3i/round, duration 5 rounds, and a -2 penalty. Worse, the poison inflicts a permanent crippling if the enemy is Crashed while suffering from it. Depending on whether Octavian strikes his enemy's eyes, ears, or forehead, he may choose whether this crippling blinds them, deafens them, or obliterates their memories of the last day. The Exalted and other characters with Exalted healing may make a difficulty 5 (Stamina + Resistance) roll at each sunrise to recover from these debilities. The difficulty drops by 1 each day.

Cult 2: Octavian's empire contains enough mortal prayer-slaves to grant him a degree of worship beyond that most demons of his station enjoy, won through conquest and extortion.

Earth-Beast Talisman: Octavian wears an acorn talisman around his neck that lets him speak to and command all animals that live upon or burrow beneath the ground—wolves, deer, moles, snakes, beetles, and the like. They will obey to the best of their ability, but they gain no special intelligence or ability to apprehend complex instructions. Should the talisman be taken from him, it crumbles into dust, and a new one begins growing over the course of a season within his palace in Hell.

Offensive Charms

Crimson Spray Blur (10m, 4i; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): With a stroke of his staff, Equitable Resolution, Octavian reduces the arms, wings, or heads of his enemies to nothing more than a bloody mist. Crimson Spray Blur doubles the total damage of a close range **decisive** attack unless its victim accepts a crippling injury (p. XX). She must accept an injury that cancels the most damage possible from the attack to avoid the doubled damage. This does not count against the once per story limitation on taking crippling injuries. Once per fight, unless reset by crashing an enemy.

Falling Tower Rain (7m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Withering-only; Essence 6): Octavian batters an enemy with repeated blows from his staff or a rapid series of pummeling strikes. Count the extra successes on his **withering** attack roll. Instead of adding them to the raw damage of the attack, Octavian multiplies the final damage of the attack by the number of extra successes (or adds a point of damage, if he only received one extra success). The damage added by this Charm does

not award points of Initiative to Octavian. Once per fight, unless reset by landing a **decisive** attack while at Initiative 12+ and then building up to Initiative 17+.

Horizon-Hurled Stars (15m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): When Octavian deals 3+ levels of damage to an enemy with a close range **decisive** attack or throws a grappled enemy to deal **decisive** damage, he may hurl them two range bands back from himself, or knock them into the air to fall at his feet. Either way, that character is knocked prone, and suffers damage as though she had fallen from medium range (p. XX). Octavian may also choose to hurl an enemy at a character within medium range, in which case the damage is split evenly between the two. The targeted enemy may avoid being hit by the hurtling body of her ally by applying an Evasion high enough to defend against Octavian's original roll for the attack.

Infernal Might Unleashed (2m+; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 4): Octavian may add up to three successes to any roll at a cost of two motes per success. If he is either upholding an Intimacy, spending Willpower to add a success to the roll, or paying for a Charm that enhances it, he may instead purchase up to five successes.

Mountain-Breaking Roar (15m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 6): Octavian's roar blasts solid rock apart and bursts still-beating hearts inside the chests of those who hear it. Once an enemy has attacked Octavian, the demon may use this Charm to make a **decisive** attack against them from out to long range, rolling fifteen dice for the attack roll. The attack has a raw damage of (10 + extra success), adding an additional die for every range band between Octavian and the target. Making this attack does not reset Octavian to base Initiative. Once per fight, unless reset by being hit with a **decisive** attack made from medium range or further.

Principle of Motion (10m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 2): Octavian moves with blinding speed, taking a flurry without the usual restrictions—he may flurry two of the same action if desired, and it ignores the usual penalties to dice pools and Defense.

Reigning Terror Majesty (8m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 6): Upon successfully making a social influence roll to threaten a major enemy such as an Exalt in combat, or lethally incapacitating a non-trivial enemy, Octavian may use this Charm to roll Join Battle. Once per fight, unless reset by recovering from Initiative Crash.

Defensive Charms

Invincible Iron Bastion (7m; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 6): When attacked, Octavian may roll his Initiative. For every success, he may pay a point of Initiative to add +1 Parry against the attack (to a maximum of +5 Parry). A mundane weapon that is blocked this way is destroyed; against an artifact weapon, Octavian may instead reflexively attempt a disarm gambit as a counterattack, adding all of the wielder's successes on the attack roll as bonus dice to his Initiative roll.

Superior Strength Reversal (10m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant; Clash, Perilous; Essence 6): Octavian may reflexively make a clash attack to grapple an enemy, grabbing her by her weapon or

outstretched arm as she strikes at him. Succeeding on the clash roll adds all of Octavian's extra successes as bonus dice on the control roll and allows him to roll unopposed. Once per scene, unless reset by marking off his final -2 health level.

The Tower Still Stands (10m, 4i; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive, Perilous; Essence 6): Weathering attacks with unyielding resilience and growing rage, Octavian gains a point of Initiative for every level of damage dealt to him. In addition, if a single attack would deal enough damage to completely fill all his health levels of one type and then spill over to the next, then all excess damage is prevented—but he still gains Initiative from it.

Mobility Charms

Earth-Smiting Stride (9m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 4): The earth trembles beneath Octavian's feet as he crosses it. Earth-Smiting Stride doubles 8s on a rush, and allows the total successes of the action to be applied as a reflexive feat of strength to destroy any obstacle between Octavian and his target. Stomping difficult terrain flat so that it can be traversed normally requires 5 successes as a general rule, but the Storyteller can adjust this upward or downward to account for specific types of difficult terrain.

Miscellaneous Charms

Devil-Thews Exertion (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 5): Octavian may convert all dice on a feat of strength to successes, reveling in the strength that is the proof of his superiority over all rivals.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Octavian fades away and vanishes on his next turn, drawn instantly to his summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when Octavian is unbound.

Materialize (55m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Octavian manifests from a crumbling pillar of shattered stone.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Octavian is able to read the nature of anyone who raises weapon or fist against him in battle-readiness.

Sigereth, the Player of Games, Demon of the Second Circle

The demon Sigereth appears as nothing more than a small, elegantly enameled box. When the box opens, her voice—a warm throaty contralto—echoes from deep within. The box holds a seemingly endless supply of game pieces, from intricately painted boards and cards to gem-encrusted dice, pawns and stones. Some are warm and pliable as flesh, others slick and hard as bone. All throb in time with the demon's pulse, for they are a part of her.

A creature of games herself, Sigereth is among the finest gamesters of the demon realm. But as much as she loves games, she may well love gambling more, and she gladly stakes all manner of things—both mundane treasures and intangible qualities—on a throw of the dice. If a mortal wagers himself in a game and loses, they are sucked into the box that is Sigereth and transported

to Hell. There the unlucky player becomes one of the demon's soulless servants, a process reversible only by winning the victim's freedom in another game.

Essence: 6; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 110

Health Levels: -0x10/Incap.

Sample Intimacies

• Defining Principle: "I enjoy seeing adversaries of great skill in competition."

• Defining Principle: "It is forbidden to win a game by cheating."

• Major Principle: "Intrigue and intricate stratagems trump brute force."

• Major Tie: Games and gambling (Genuine Enjoyment)

• Minor Tie: Her pawns (Expectation of Obedience)

Actions: Command: 9 dice; Gaming: 14 dice; Read Intentions: 10 dice; Senses: 8 dice; Social Influence: 9 dice; Strategy: 10 dice

Appearance 4, Resolve 4, Guile 6

Combat

Sigereth is incapable of attacking, defending herself, or moving by default, unless carried by her steadfast servant. She may pay a point of Willpower to levitate for a scene, gaining a combat movement pool of 12 dice and Evasion 5.

Soak/Hardness: 10/5

Merits

Cult 1: Sigereth is an esoteric demon, little-known in Creation. Her cultists are mostly decadent gamesters and gamblers who have turned to infernalism.

Incorruptible Arbiter: Sigereth may treat any influence that opposes or would alter her Defining Principle of "It is forbidden to win a game by cheating" as unacceptable influence—even the commands of a sorcerer who has bound her.

Steadfast Servant: When summoned, Sigereth appears in the hands of a hairless, blank-eyed youth with neither breath nor heartbeat, whose wounds bleed a milk-white sap. This is one of her pawns. Despite its slight frame, it is a potent combatant equivalent to a walking statue (p. XX). The servant materializes or dematerializes along with Sigereth. If it is destroyed, she brings forth a new one at the next sunset.

Offensive Charms

The Game is Real (10m, 1wp; Simple; One scene; Essence 6): Sigereth imposes the rules of a board game upon a battlefield, causing all participants to assume the roles of various game

pieces. Combatants use (Intelligence + War) for all combat actions instead of whatever (Attribute + Ability) combination would normally apply. Charms can still be used to make and enhance valid actions, but the limit on bonus dice that can be added by Excellencies or other magic is based on the character's War pool, not their standard dice pool. A character may pay one Initiative to use their normal dice pool for a single action, cheating the rules of the game.

Pawn-Directing Order (20m, 3i; Simple; Instant; Essence 6): Sigereth makes a command roll to issue an order to a battle group fighting under her, doubling 8s. She may also add a single bonus die for every point of Initiative a character has spent to violate the rules of The Game is Real since her last turn. If the battle group incapacitates a non-trivial enemy or deals enough damage to an enemy battle group to cause it to lose one or more points of Size, she may roll Join Battle.

Penalize Transgression (25m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 5): Colors flare across Sigereth's surface and lash out in an arc of rainbow fire. She rolls fifteen dice to make a **decisive** attack against an enemy who has spent Initiative to bypass the effects of The Game is Real since her last turn. All extra successes on the attack roll are added to the raw damage, and every success both inflicts a level of lethal damage and a point of Initiative damage. All Initiative reaped by this Charm is added to Sigereth's base Initiative when she resets. She may also use this Charm reflexively as a counterattack against any enemy who attacks her.

Pieces on the Board (5m, 5i, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 6): A handful of Sigereth's game pieces expand into full-sized guardians. Treat this as a battle group of walking statues (p. XX) with elite Drill, Might 2, perfect morale, and Size of either 1 or that of the largest battle group arrayed against her, whichever is higher. If she is using The Game Is Real, the game pieces (as well as her steadfast servant) use a dice pool of eight dice for all actions. At the end of the scene, the guardians return to the box, game pieces once more. Once per fight, unless reset by the battle group incapacitating a significant enemy. A subsequent use refreshes the battle group to its maximum Size if it still exists, rather than creating a new one.

Victory-Promoting Rule (4m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant; Essence 6): Whenever a battle group created with Pieces on the Board incapacitates a non-trivial enemy or deals enough damage to an enemy battle group to cause it to lose one or more points of Size, Sigereth may use this Charm to promote one pawn from that battle group to a champion. It is rolled into battle as a separate character from the battle group, and adds one bonus success to all (Attribute + Ability) rolls it makes for the duration of the scene.

Social Charms

Binding Rule Geasa (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Psyche; Essence 3): If the loser of a game reneges on whatever agreement was made as to the winner's reward, Sigereth may use this Charm to make a persuade roll against him, adding three bonus successes. Success forces that character to fulfill his obligations. He may only resist if fulfilling his obligations would bring him into conflict with a Major or Defining Intimacy, and he must pay three Willpower to do so.

Miscellaneous Charms

Impose Stakes (5m, 1wp; Simple; One game; Shaping; Essence 6): This Charm allows willing participants in a game of skill or chance to wager intangibles on the outcome. Legitimate stakes include skills, memories, relationships, sensory acuity, fractions of one's lifespan, or any other transaction the Storyteller accepts. Mortals may wager their lives against Sigereth, being transformed into her pawns and drawn through her box into Hell if they fail. These transferences are permanent and irreversible except through further wagers or other powerful magic. The effect fails if any participant is immune to the Charm or was drawn into the game through a Psyche effect or similar mental control. This can be used in concert with The Game is Real, if both sides agreed to the combat beforehand.

Hurry Home (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Sigereth fades away and vanishes on her next turn, drawn instantly to her summoner's side. This Charm is unavailable when Sigereth is unbound.

Materialize (55m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Sigereth snaps into view—where there was thin air before, there now rests Sigereth.

Measure the Wind (5m; Simple; Instant; Essence 1): Sigereth can take the measure of anyone seeking to game with her.

Creatures of the Wyld

Fair Folk Cataphract

These militant Fair Folk are champions, warriors, predators, and terrors. Fear is their weapon and their banquet. Munificence, for them, is to sup on the cast-off fear of victors and survivors. But when they would drink deep, they cut every shred of courage from a victim's soul and feast on his terror.

Some play at honor. Others are cunning, ruthless, or cruel. All are inhumanly deadly, possessed of unnatural strength and skill, backed with panoplies forged from glamour and dreams. Cataphracts vary in appearance, though coteries and courts tend to share similar forms. They may be leonine desert riders with eyes of fire, queenly warriors astride winged nightmare-beasts, or owl-faced knights driving chariots pulled by naked mortals.

Cataphracts in Creation assume many roles—they may be hunters, tyrants, monsters, or even heroes. Among their own kind, most swear themselves to the service of raksha nobles. Some ride as captains and generals amid armies of lesser Fair Folk. Others are armsmasters, bodyguards, or masters of the hunt.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 11 dice

Personal Motes: 20

Health Levels: -0x4/-1x6/-2x6/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Battle Groups: 12 dice; Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Threaten: 12 dice; Resist Poison/Illness: 12 dice; Senses: 11 dice; Stealth: 6 dice; Strategy: 8 dice

Appearance 4, Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Horizon-cutter sword): 16 dice (Damage 16, minimum damage 2)

Attack (Curdling dream bow): 14 dice at short range (Damage 16)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (9 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (12 dice while mounted)

Evasion 3, Parry 7

Soak/Hardness: 14/0

Merits

Cold Iron Bane: Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the raksha, but most armies in Creation use bronze or steel weaponry.

Fae Nature: As a raksha, the cataphract is ageless and need not eat or drink. Its body heals as one of the Exalted and cannot die from mundane disease, but does need to breathe and sleep as mortals do. In Creation, it slowly withers and calcifies to death, but can stave off this fate indefinitely by feeding on mortal souls. It is incapable of breaking the letter of a sworn promise.

Offensive Charms

Dreadful Fanged Maelstrom Approach (6m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 2): After successfully making a close range **decisive** attack with at least one extra success, the cataphract may use this Charm to splinter into a thousand dancing reflections, dividing the extra successes among any number of enemies within short range. The raksha makes one damage roll, applying it against the main target and any enemy whose Defense was overcome by the extra successes assigned to it. At the end, the raksha resets to base Initiative and may reform at any point within short range of where it began.

Insidious Terror Mien (3m, Supplemental; Instant; Dual; Essence 1): Corrosive nightmares bubble up from the raksha's weapon, forcing the victim to confront their worst nightmare in his stead. The enemy uses his Resolve (modified by applicable Intimacies) in place of his soak and hardness against the attack, if it is lower. Characters with a Major or Defining Intimacy representing courage, valor, or a similar resilience to fear may pay a point of Willpower to become immune to this Charm for a scene.

Marching Fever Dream Nightmare (10m; Simple; One scene; Essence 2): The cataphract weaves dreamstuff and the dregs of nightmares into a makeshift army, a legion of faceless soldiers or a parade of monstrous grotesques. It makes a command roll, creating a battle group

with the traits of battle-ready soldiers (p. XX) and rolling it into battle. The battle group has one point of Size for every two successes on the roll (maximum 5), Average drill, and gains Might 1 if fighting in the Wyld. The marching fever dream is vulnerable to iron weaponry—an enemy armed with it treats the battle group as having Defense 0, and may move through its space without paying Initiative, carving a swathe through the illusionary forces. The battle group dissipates at the end of the scene. Once per fight.

Defensive Charms

Storm-Slaying Rebuke (2m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant; Counterattack, Decisive-only; Essence 1): All onslaught penalties to the cataphract's Defense are cancelled against a single attack. At an onslaught penalty of -3 or greater, a successful defense allows the raksha to respond with a **decisive** counterattack.

Writhing Ego Inversion (7m; Reflexive; Instant, Essence 1): The cataphract adds its current temporary Willpower to its soak against a **withering** attack, or subtracts half that value from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack. Once per fight unless reset by paying Willpower to add a success to an attack or defense.

Fair Folk Lorelei

Inhumanly beautiful, impossibly lovely, these faerie tempters wield desire as a weapon. They embrace mortals in order to feed on love and lust, infatuation and longing. But their affection is not kindness; their warmth is not pity. While a rare few loreleis learn to live with equanimity in mortal society, subsisting on a taste of passion here and there, their wild kin crave it all. To fall into such hands is to perish of pleasure—to have dreams and soul alike wrung out over weeks of exquisite torment, or devoured in an instant amid the throes of ecstasy.

Each direction has its own loreleis. Those of the West, draped in pearls and shells, sing sweetly to fisherfolk and sailors to lure them onto the rocks. Flower-decked Eastern loreleis, hypnotic and pitiless as serpents, draw their prey into the woods with their eyes alone. Bejeweled southern loreleis entice travelers to glamoured oases, offering kisses cool as water. The naked, supple bodies of northern loreleis are fiery and warm amid the snow.

Wild loreleis may ply their trade alone, or gather in coteries to coax whole caravans into the sands or to sing shipfuls of sailors to their deaths. Others serve as courtiers in the freeholds of the Fair Folk. There they dance and preen, carouse and gossip, scheme and intrigue, all in the service of the raksha nobility. These serve as their masters' playthings, but the leash of addiction and the reins of desire can reverse this role, bending the master to the lorelei's will.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Personal Motes: 20

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap

Actions: Disguise: 12 dice; Inspire: 14 dice; Instill or Persuade: 13 dice; Read Intentions: 12 dice; Seduction: 16 dice; Senses: 12 dice; Stealth: 11 dice

Appearance 7, Resolve 5, Guile 7

Combat

Attack (Glittering knives): 12 dice at close range (11)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Merits

Cold Iron Bane: Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the raksha, but most armies in Creation use bronze or steel weaponry.

Fae Nature: As a raksha, the lorelei is ageless and need not eat or drink. Its body heals as one of the Exalted and cannot die from mundane disease, but does need to breathe and sleep as mortals do. In Creation, it slowly withers and calcifies to death, but can stave off this fate indefinitely by feeding on mortal souls. It is incapable of breaking the letter of a sworn promise.

Social Charms

Beguiling Idyll (5m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Psyche; Essence 2): When the raksha inspires a character, it may also cloud his mind to obfuscate any dangers or perils that contradict the inspired mood. An infatuated sailor might be blinded to the danger of the sea that separates him from the object of his desire, while an enraged hero might fail to notice the lorelei's hobgoblin bodyguards. This alone will not force characters into dangerous courses of action, but it makes persuasion easier. Convincing a captain to wreck his ship against the rocks would normally be unacceptable no matter how alluring the lorelei is, but if he is made blind to their danger, it would only be an inconvenient task. Resisting the deceiving inspiration costs three Willpower. If another character points out the danger, the cost to resist is lowered by one point, and touching iron also lowers the cost by one.

Heart-Eating Kiss (1m, 1wp, Reflexive; Instant; Psyche; Essence 1): Whenever a character engages the raksha in a passionate kiss or intercourse, the lorelei may use this Charm to force an opposed roll of (Essence + current temporary Willpower). A victim who loses becomes obsessed with the lorelei as a Major Derangement (p. XX). Characters with permanent Willpower lower than the raksha gain the Derangement at the Defining level instead.

Thousand Tiny Hooks Technique (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 2): When the raksha receives bonus dice from its Appearance on an instill or persuade action, it may exchange bonus dice to increase the cost to resist, trading two bonus dice to add one Willpower to the cost to resist (maximum three Willpower).

Untouchable Performer Technique (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 1): The lorelei may use its instill pool to roll Join Battle. In addition to determining starting Initiative, this builds a Tie of adoration in characters whose Resolve is overcome. Characters that do not resist this influence will not fight against the raksha, and will attempt to restrain or talk sense into allies who try to do so. They will not violently turn against their allies unless they have been instilled with a Defining Tie towards the raksha.

Raksha Noble

Raksha nobles are princes among the chaos, rulers of the Fair Folk. They preside over eerie courts called freeholds, reigning from thrones carved of translucent poetry amid the decadent ruins of fallen amethyst towers or holding debauched revels in flame-lit caverns beneath enchanted hills. Cataphracts lead gibbering armies against Creation or rival faerie courts at a noble's command, while loreleis sing their most heart-breaking melodies for its pleasure. The raksha take to intrigue like sharks to water, and those who rise to prominence are those who prove themselves more cunning, more powerful, and more charismatic than all rivals for the throne. The raksha noble traits presented below represent a mix of combat and social prowess along with potent reality-warping curses; the Storyteller can customize for a more martially-focused noble by adding Charms from the cataphract's list or use the lorelei's Charms for a noble more skilled in intrigue.

One such noble, the warrior-princess Moriamh of the Wildflower Court, rides across the Threshold in search of heroes. She tells the tale of her mother's murder at the hands of Queen Nathair, and of her own subsequent flight into exile. She seeks to return home, overthrow Nathair, and free the Wildflower Court from tyranny, but she cannot do it alone. Over the years Moriamh has gathered many bands of heroes for this game between herself and Nathair. All have perished.

Moriamh bears all the trappings of a Chosen One. She is inhumanly beautiful and well formed, her lean limbs sheathed in glittering golden armor filigreed with diamonds and dreams. There is a birthmark on her neck in the shape of a crown, though as one of the Fair Folk she was never truly born. Against meaningful opposition, she attempts to instill a Tie of respect or admiration to her, then persuade foes to join her quest—or, if all else fails, to accept her surrender.

Essence: 4; **Willpower:** 9; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 40

Health Levels: -0x6/-1x8/-2x8/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command: 11 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Instill: 12 dice; Persuade: 14 dice; Read Intentions: 8 dice; Senses: 12 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Strategy: 9 dice

Appearance 6, Resolve 5, Guile 4

Combat

Attack (Behemoth-fang direlance): 15 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 11 dice (13 dice while mounted)

Evasion 3, Parry 7

Soak/Hardness: 14/7 (Oath-sworn raiment)

Merits

Cold Iron Bane: Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the raksha, but most armies in Creation use bronze or steel weaponry.

Fae Nature: As a raksha, the noble is ageless and need not eat or drink. Its body heals as one of the Exalted and cannot die from mundane disease, but does need to breathe and sleep as mortals do. In Creation, it slowly withers and calcifies to death, but can stave off this fate indefinitely by feeding on mortal souls. It is incapable of breaking the letter of a sworn promise.

Offensive Charms

Impinging Web of Dream (8m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Essence 4): While at Initiative 20+, the noble may speak a dire curse against an enemy in combat, rolling 12 dice against the Resolve of an enemy within short range. On a success, it rolls (Essence + Initiative), with every two successes subtracting a point of Willpower from that enemy. If the noble successfully reduces an enemy to zero Willpower, it may twist that enemy in mind or body. It might inflict a Defining Derangement (and possibly other Minor Derangements to taste), transform the enemy into a small animal, marble caryatid, or similarly demeaning form, or impose another Storyteller-defined curse of similar potency. Trivial opponents lose all Willpower and are cursed without requiring an Initiative roll. Using this Charm resets the raksha to base Initiative. Once per fight.

Defensive Charms

Sapphire Emptiness Kata (—; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 4): When an attack would check off the noble's Incapacitated health level, it may use this Charm to reveal that what was being attacked was nothing more than an illusion, negating all damage dealt by that attack. The noble steps out from concealment or throws off its disguise as a trivial character within medium range of its location, and resets to base Initiative. Once per story.

Tension-Building Warrior's Advance (6m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous; Essence 2): The noble forges its martial legend through the strength of its foes. After a **withering** or **decisive** damage roll against the raksha, it may use this Charm to gain one point of Initiative for every 9 or 10 rolled. It may exchange five points of Initiative reaped from a single use of this Charm to heal a level of damage.

Social Charms

Crippling Destiny Burden (1m, 1wp; Reflexive, Indefinite; Essence 3): After persuading a character to undertake a task, the noble may use Crippling Destiny Burden to bless them with glorious purpose. They add bonus dice on all actions taken to complete that task equal to the

Intimacy that supported the persuasion. The raksha may also grant up to (Intimacy x 2) mutations to aid the vassal in its quest, which remain even after this Charm ends.

Mind's Grip Rigor (10m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Psyche; Essence 3): When the noble instills a character with a Tie towards itself, it may use this Charm to make it a Derangement. While this carries no intrinsic harmful effects, it makes it impossible for the Tie to be weakened or removed by ordinary social influence. Its intensity can still be increased by social influence. Once per scene.

Hobgoblin

These twisted creatures swarm like hounds in the vanguard of raksha hunting parties, or slink like jackals in their wake. Others, separated from their masters over the years, lurk alone or in packs throughout Creation's wilderness. Though the details of their appearance vary from place to place—furred and bestial in the North, scaly and jewel-bright amid the Eastern jungles and the Southern sands, finned and gilled in the West or by the Dreaming Sea—they typically appear as gnarled manlike things with twisted dexterous limbs and viciously sharp talons and teeth.

Though hobgoblins can sustain themselves on the radiant energies of chaos, they find the terror of humankind far more nourishing. In combat, they flurry attacks with threaten actions to enrich that banquet of fear, play cat-and-mouse games with their victims rather than effect a clean kill, and carry off prisoners whenever possible to torture at their leisure.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice; Stealth: 4 dice; Threaten: 6 dice

Appearance 3 (Hideous), Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Talons) 9 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

Special Attacks

Nightmare Ravages: Fear is a banquet to the hobgoblins. When the hobgoblin makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy it has successfully threatened earlier in the fight or that has an applicable Tie of fear, it gains a point of Willpower upon resetting to base Initiative. Hobgoblin battle

groups instead regain a point of Magnitude when they deal **decisive** damage to a frightened enemy in Initiative Crash (this cannot increase their Size).

Sadistic Fervor: Hobgoblins relish the pain of living things. When a hobgoblin pays Willpower to add a success to an attack or rush against an enemy capable of feeling pain, it may add that enemy's current wound penalty in bonus dice to the roll.

Merits

Cold Iron Bane: Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to hobgoblins.

Silverwight

Packs of silverwights hunt at the edges of the world, loping on limbs so slender as to seem malnourished. Shriveled, predatory things with reverse-jointed limbs and a vaguely canid skull, they come up to knee-height on grown men, making it easy for them to stalk their prey unseen. The argent gleam of fang and claw—every bone in their bodies, in fact—gives them their name. Though they hunt in packs, they are no animals. Each silverwight is of near-human intelligence in its own right, and they share a collective overmind they call the dreamweft, a nexus of sensation and emotion that unifies them all. The eerily silent coordination of a silverwight pack makes them favorite minions of some raksha warriors, who send them hunting after enemies in the shadows.

It is a common taboo among knowledgeable barbarian tribes to forbid pregnant woman from traveling the Wyld or Creation's uncanny, haunted reaches, for labor pangs draw the silverwights. The mother and her companions are almost inevitably devoured, but the infant child is brought back to the silverwights' glassy warrens with almost tender care. A baby's soft, undeveloped mind can be brought into the dreamweft. This does no harm to the child (who will usually be returned under cover of night to some borderland village or settlement) save for granting it transient flashes of alien emotion and abstract hallucinations. As the baby grows and leads a full human life, its experiences and passions nourish the dreamweft, feeding the silverwights as a whole.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Senses: 5 dice; Stealth: 6 dice (see Tiny Creature); Tracking: 4 dice (see Birthing Call)

Appearance 2 (Hideous), Resolve 1, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 5 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Claws): 9 dice (Damage 8)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3 (see Tiny Creature)

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Special Attacks

Pack Hunting: Silverwights add one success to attack rolls for every allied silverwight or other Wyld creature in close range to its victim, to a maximum of three successes. They may pay a point of Willpower to also add that many dice to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack, as flanking allies take opportunistic swipes at victims.

Merits

Birthing Call: Silverwights can sense a woman's labor pains from hundreds of miles away in the thin places of the world, and add three successes on rolls to track her down. While they will eagerly attack and devour anyone accompanying the mother, they will not harm her, and may even aid in difficult deliveries. Once the child has been born, the mother is fair game.

Cold Iron Bane: Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to the silverwight—and, curiously, to any children brought into the dreamweft.

Dreamweft: All silverwights partake in a shared higher consciousness, allowing them to communicate sensory experiences or emotional states to each other across distances of miles. Any roll that could benefit from this, such as a (Perception + Awareness) roll to notice a hidden enemy that another silverwight has spotted, benefits from double 8s. Silverwight battle groups have elite Drill because of the extraordinary coordination this entails.

Tiny Creature: Silverwights add +2 Evasion against any attack made by a larger foe. In addition, larger characters subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice them.

Mata-Yadh, the Congeries of Obsidian and Aurora

The Wyld births countless strange monsters and freakish prodigies, great terrors that the Fair Folk hunt and tame. Mata-Yadh is a young monstrosity, freshly born and broken to a raksha's will, representative of the low end of the unique beasts that the Fair Folk might send to head their armies or ride into battle. Its body is a swirling congeries of many-colored aurora large enough to engulf a house, with a ridge of calcified obsidian at the top, where a daring cataphract might stand to ride. It has twelve clawed feet, each one sculpted from obsidian and standing high as a man, but not joined to the monster's body by any physical limb—only a few wisps of aurora fire at its uppermost edge. While the eyeless beast is blind, it may sense the shadows cast by its own light, allowing it to perceive the world unimpeded except in conditions of total darkness or such complete illumination that no shadows can exist.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Personal Motes: 30

Health Levels: -0x25/Incap (see Obsidian Body)

Speed Bonus: +2

Actions: Feats of Strength: 15 dice (may attempt Strength 10 feats); Senses: 8 dice; Threaten: 6 dice

Appearance 3, Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Obsidian claws): 13 dice (Damage 22, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (15 dice to control). Mata-Yadh makes unopposed control rolls against enemies of smaller size, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 25/10

Merits

Cold Iron Bane: Weapons made of iron deal aggravated damage to Mata-Yadh.

Legendary Size: Mata-Yadh's immense size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. Attacks from smaller enemies do not impose onslaught penalties. **Withering** attacks from smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to it, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Obsidian Body: As a being of living glass, Mata-Yadh lacks the anatomy to make it susceptible to mundane poison and disease, deprivation, and conventional wound penalties. However, heroes may attempt to cripple the beast by shattering one of its twelve limbs, a difficulty 5 gambit. Each time a limb is shattered, Mata-Yadh loses 3 points of Initiative from the sudden shock of amputation. Every two limbs destroyed this way impose a -1 wound penalty, up to a maximum of -4, at which point the behemoth will attempt to flee to heal. If all of its limbs are destroyed, Mata-Yadh is immobilized, unable to attack as well as effectively prone and unable to right itself.

Offensive Charms

Prismatic Pyre Immolation (15m; Simple; Until grapple is released; Essence 3): When Mata-Yadh successfully grapples an enemy, it may throw him into the central aurora of its body, where he hangs suspended in mid-air. The behemoth suffers no disadvantages for such a grapple, and while it cannot attack or throw a suspended enemy, its aurora imposes an environmental hazard with difficulty 3 and damage 4L each turn. The behemoth's Defense is 0 against attacks made by grappled enemies, as it has no way to stop them from hacking away at its obsidian carapace, but the attack penalties they take for being grappled subtract successes rather than dice when they attack it.

Raking Obsidian Shards (10m; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only; Essence 3): Mata-Yadh's claws whirl around it in a vortex of razor-sharp obsidian, a **decisive** attack applied against all enemies in short range. The behemoth may divide its Initiative among enemies as it chooses when calculating raw damage. If it is suffering any wound penalties from having legs destroyed, then these also subtract from the raw damage of each attack made with Raking Obsidian Shards. Once the penalty has reached -2, this attack only covers close enemies.

Mobility Charms

Unstoppable Many-Legged Pursuit (6m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): Mata-Yadh may rush an enemy with lower Initiative from medium range, automatically moving one range band closer on each of its target's next two turns in addition to any other movement it takes. This Charm cannot be used if the behemoth has a wound penalty of -2 or higher from having its legs destroyed.

Miscellaneous Charms

Wall-Rending Claws (15m; Supplemental; Instant; Essence 3): When Mata-Yadh attempts a feat of strength to destroy something, it rolls its dice pool twice and adds the successes from both rolls together.

Buck-Ogre

These grotesque, two-headed brutes haunt the Northeastern woods and scrublands. Each is as large as a bull, its hirsute manlike torso supported by goatish legs, with a pair of wild-eyed bucks' heads sprouting from its shoulders. A charge with its forward-pointing antlers can eviscerate a mammoth. But these are intelligent tool-using creatures, relying more often on massive weapons such as axes, hammers, clubs, and spears. Buck-ogres may raid human settlements for metal or sophisticated goods, or for food in times of deprivation, but generally avoid needless aggression—unless driven forward by the lash of a raksha master.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 8 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Buck-ogres are fearless but not suicidal, and will attempt to escape after taking 6+ levels of damage.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 11 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Senses: 8 dice (see Two-Headed); Threaten: 8 dice; Tracking: 9 dice

Appearance 2 (Hideous), Guile 1, Resolve 4

Combat

Attack (Great axe): 7 dice (Damage 18)

Attack (Shield bash): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Antlers): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (11 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 5 (see Two-Headed)

Soak/Hardness: 13/0 (Makeshift armor)

Special Attacks

Dual Strikes: A buck-ogre may pay a point of Willpower to make a flurry of two different attacks. Each attack must have a different target and be made using a different weapon. A buck-ogre wielding a shield may instead flurry an attack with a full defense action.

Gore: The buck-ogre's **decisive** antler attacks add extra successes to damage against enemies with lower Initiative, as long as it has not taken any other actions (including reflexive movement actions) that turn.

Merits

Mighty Thews: A buck-ogre can wield a two-handed weapon in one hand, and never suffers off-hand penalties. Some use this to wield a shield along with a heavy weapon, while others dual-wield massive weapons.

Two-Headed: A buck-ogre doubles 9s on any Perception-based roll where having two heads would be of use, such as spotting an enemy trying to hide behind it. It also halves any onslaught penalties.

Manticore

Southern nomads know a scorpion's sting threatens more than those it slays. They dispose of such bodies as quickly and thoroughly as possible, whether by cremation, dismemberment or feeding the remains to wolves and jackals. When the hero Ghufran lay dying in the deep desert, he commanded his escort to consume his flesh for their own safety. For if a lion devours a scorpion-slain corpse, sometimes the powers of the Wyld transform the beast into that most terrible of creatures—a manticore.

The manticore has a lion's body, the head of the devoured mortal, and a scorpion's tail. It hunts alone, springing on prey from ambush to bite and sting. Manticores have no fear of mortals or any other creature. Their venom is far deadlier than any mundane scorpion, capable of taking down a bull elephant in seconds, and only supernatural stamina or healing magic can save a victim. When cornered by a manticore, a mortal's one slim hope is clever repartee, for the beast is as intelligent and capable of conversation as the scorpion-stung mortal it once devoured.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 10 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4x2/Incap.

Actions: Consumed Knowledge: 5 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 6 dice; Social Influence: 8 dice; Stealth: 7 dice; Tracking: 6 dice

Appearance 4 (Hideous), Resolve 5, Guile 3

Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Claw): 13 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Sting): 8 dice (Damage 11 and poison when **decisive**, damage 3i/round, duration 5 rounds, -2 penalty)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (10 dice to control). Manticores cannot throw or slam grappled enemies.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 9/0

Special Attacks

Leaping Pounce: If a manticore moves into close range with an enemy of the same size or smaller and deals 5+ damage to it with a **withering** attack on the same turn, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a clinch attack against its prey.

Scorpion Lash: When the manticore savages a grappled enemy with a **decisive** sting attack, that character does not receive a roll to resist its poison.

The Exalted

A sworn brotherhood of monster-slayers, armed with century-old weapons of jade and wreathed in auras of elemental fury. A monstrous hunter that stalks the night, ripping throats with bare fangs and calling nightmares to fight by his side. A harmless-seeming drunkard whose straw hat's brim hides starry eyes that have seen a future that must be stopped. From the returned Lawgivers of the Unconquered Sun to the countless Dragon-Blooded soldiers of the Realm, the most dangerous foe that any Exalt can face is another of her own kind. There are no weak Exalted, though not all of them focus their strength in raw battle-prowess. Each of the Chosen is a sort of demigod, a human hero raised up and made mighty by some force divine or unholy. An Exalted enemy is a deadly threat to face—they fight with the strength of a god and the ferocity of a demon, use social influence to subvert the alliances and plans of their enemies while consolidating power for themselves, and can scheme with cunning and savvy to shame the Fair Folk. At the same time, not all Exalted need be enemies, even to the returned Solars—some might appear as willing companions, wary observers, patrons with ulterior motives, or unlikely allies who share a common goal. The power, versatility, and humanity of the Exalted makes them excellent candidates for a role as recurring Storyteller characters in a game, and can be embellished and fleshed-out more than the usual quick character would be—at the bare minimum, every Exalt should have a name and a desire.

While the quick characters below approximate the capabilities and strengths of the various Chosen, each possesses a full set of Charms comparable to that of the Solar Exalted in scope, if

not in power. More details will appear in later books dedicated to specific Exalted, such as the forthcoming **Dragon-Blooded—What Fire Has Wrought**.

Essence Cheat Sheet

Here's a quick reference for how many motes a given Exalt will have at a particular Essence rating. More specific details are given in each section.

Solar and Abyssal Exalted

[BEGIN TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	13	33
2	16	40
3	19	47
4	22	54
5	25	61

[END TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Dragon-Blooded

[BEGIN TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	12	27
2	13	31
3	14	35
4	15	39
5	16	43

[END TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Lunar Exalted

[BEGIN TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	16	38
2	17	42
3	18	46
4	19	50
5	20	54

[END TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Sidereal Exalted

[BEGIN TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	11	31
2	13	37
3	15	43
4	17	49
5	19	55

[END TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Liminal Exalted

[BEGIN TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

Essence	Personal	Peripheral
1	13	27
2	16	31
3	19	35
4	22	39
5	25	43

[END TABLE WITHIN SIDEBAR]

The Dragon-Blooded

The Chosen of the Dragons are the most numerous Exalted found in Creation. They command the legions of the Realm and Lookshy; they lead the dreaded Wyld Hunt in pursuit of Anathema; they vie for power amid the intrigues of empires and reign as Princes of the Earth. They are among the most common Exalted antagonists that many Solars will face. While they are individually weaker than the Celestial Exalted, the advantage of numbers, experience, and worldly power makes them a force not to be underestimated.

Essence

Dragon-Blooded have a personal mote pool equal to (Essence + 11), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 4] + 23).

Excellencies

The Dragon-Blooded can use their Essence to fortify their mortal skills much as the Solar Exalted can (p. XX). While the heights of prowess they can attain are not as high, they can seize

triumph from the jaws of defeat with great exertion of will. The maximum number of dice they can add to a roll is equal to the Ability used, +1 if they have an applicable specialty. After making a roll, the Dragon-Blood may pay a point of Willpower to reroll up to (Essence) dice that came up failures, paying one mote for each re-rolled die. Thus, an Essence 2 Dragon-Blooded with Dexterity 5, Melee 5 (Specialty: Swords) could raise his melee dice pools by up to +6 dice. After rolling, he could spend one point of Willpower and up to two motes to re-roll two failed dice.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Dragon-Blooded QC Dice Limits

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
1-2	+0
3-6	+2
7-10	+4
11-14	+6

[END TABLE]

When enhancing a static value, a Terrestrial Exalt can raise it by up to a maximum of (Ability used, +1 if they possess an applicable specialty) / 2, round down. Thus, a Dragon-Blooded with Dexterity 5, Dodge 5 (Specialty: Avoiding Arrows) dodging an Archery attack could raise his Evasion by up to 3 points.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Dragon-Blooded QC Static Value Limits

Static Value	Excellency Limit
0-1	+0
2-3	+1
4-5	+2
6-7	+3

[END TABLE]

Anima Flux

The animas of the Dragon-Blooded manifest as roiling auras of elemental power, capable of laying waste to the scenery around them and posing a potent danger to those who'd fight them. This destructive force is known as anima flux. While the Dragon-Blood's anima is flaring at the bonfire/iconic level, she rolls one die on each turn to inflict **withering** damage on all non-

Dragon-Blooded within close range. This die instead inflicts lethal damage to enemies in Initiative Crash and trivial opponents. Anyone with at least hardness 1 ignores anima flux.

> Terrestrial Animas
>
> The elemental auras of the Dragon-Blooded seem much more rough-hewn than the spiritual mantles of other Exalted, and are visually distinct from those of the Solar Exalted. **Air Aspect** animas are light blue, and often whirl about as though stirred by mighty winds. **Earth Aspect** animas are white, varying from the fine-grained texture of sand to the blocky shifting of a landslide. **Fire Aspect** animas are red and orange, and dance and leap like flames. **Water Aspect** animas are black to blue-black, and swirl like ocean currents. **Wood Aspect** animas are lively shades of green, and dance and sway like branches in the wind.

Young Dynast

This quick character can represent a young Dragon-Blood of the Realm, fresh out of secondary school and trained in combat, warfare, and social intrigues, but still relatively weak in supernatural might.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

Personal Motes: 12; **Peripheral Motes:** 27

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Commanding Soldiers: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Senses: 5 dice (+2 for 2m); Social Influence: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Jade daiklave): 9 dice (+4 for 4m; damage 15, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m; 10 dice while mounted on a warhorse, +4 for 4m)

Evasion 1, Parry 4 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 11/7 (Jade lamellar)

Offensive Charms

Raging Firestorm Blade (6m, 3a; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): While anima is at bonfire, discharge it to convert all post-soak damage dice of a **withering** attack to successes, or one die on a **decisive** damage roll to a success. Resets anima to dim.

Stoking Bonfire Style (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): A burst of flames add four dice to the raw damage of a **withering** attack, or one die to a **decisive** attack. At Initiative 11+, add two dice to **decisive** damage instead.

Social Charms

Loyalty-Reading Meditation (3m; Supplemental; Instant): When reading a character's intentions to determine where her loyalties lie, any applicable Intimacies modify her Guile as though it were her Resolve.

Overwhelming Presence Approach (2m; Supplemental; Instant): Add one to the Resolve penalty from a social influence target's Ties to the Dragon-Blood, or Intimacies that relate to a strong passion against an influence roll.

Shikari of the Wyld Hunt

The following five quick characters can represent monks of the Immaculate Order, trained in the deadly Elemental Dragon styles. A Wyld Hunt led by one of these shikari can threaten even a skilled warrior of the Solar Exalted. All five of them working together present a peril that might overwhelm even a full circle of young Solars.

Immaculate of Air

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

Personal Motes: 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Stealth: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 2, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m), Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 10)

Attack (Jade chakram): 14 dice at short range (+6 for 6m; damage 13, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (+4 for 4m; 8 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 5 (+2 for 4m), Parry 5 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 7/4 (Jade chain shirt)

Offensive Charms

Air Dragon Form (9m; Simple; One scene): The Immaculate's unarmed attacks add +2 **withering** damage and extend to short range through pulses of air or cutting winds. Chakram attacks convert aim dice to successes. She adds +1 Evasion and one success on movement actions.

Avenging Wind Strike (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform): Double 8s on damage against a close range enemy and knock them back two range bands to fall prone. At short range, double 9s and knock back one range band.

Breath-Seizing Technique (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Stackable, Withering-only): A **withering** attack that deals more damage than its target's Stamina inflicts a cumulative -1 penalty on physical actions for the rest of the scene. If the penalty rises over a character's Stamina, they begin to suffocate (p. XX), but only pass out for the rest of the scene, rather than dying, if they run out of air. Each time the target gains 5+ Initiative from a **withering** attack, this penalty decreases by one.

Wrathful Winds Maneuver (6m, 3i; Simple; Instant): Shouting or slamming hands together creates a sonic environmental hazard applied against all enemies in medium range. Hazard is difficulty 3 to resist, damage 3B. Once per fight, unless reset by making a successful **decisive** attack and building up to Initiative 13+.

Defensive Charms

Air Dragon's Sight (3m; Reflexive; Instant): The Immaculate may ignore up to -3 in penalties to her Evasion. Penalties imposed by unexpected attacks are canceled without counting towards the maximum.

Wind Dragon's Speed (4m; Supplemental; Instant): Double 9s on movement action; waive Initiative cost of successful disengage action if all opposing characters have lower Initiative.

Immaculate of Earth

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m)

Personal Motes: 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Immaculate Monks: 10 dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 8 dice (+4 for 4m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Preaching the Immaculate Faith: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Resist Poison/Illness: 7 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 1, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 11)

Attack (Jade tetsubo): 12 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 18, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (+4 for 4m; 9 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 4 dice (+2 for 2m)

Evasion 0, Parry 6 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 16/10 (Jade articulated plate)

Offensive Charms

Earth Dragon Form (8m; Simple; One scene): Add +2 dice to smashing attack rolls and attacks against prone enemies. Add +4 soak, and gain soak 2 against **decisive** attacks made by enemies with lower Initiative. May reflexively protect allies in close range against attacks made by lower-Initiative enemies as per a Defend Other action.

Earthshaker Attack (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): Create a seismic tremor forcing all enemies in short range to make a (Dexterity + Athletics) roll at difficulty 4 or fall prone, losing two points of Initiative to the martial artist. Then, focus the tremor into a **decisive** attack against one enemy. Once per fight, unless reset by gaining 10+ Initiative in a single round.

Force of the Mountain (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Add two dice to the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack, or double up to two 9s on 10s on a **decisive** damage roll. Against prone enemies, this increases to four.

Shattering Strike (2m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Subtract -8 from the armored soak of an enemy. On a feat of strength to destroy something, allows the Immaculate to attempt feats one category higher than their Strength rating and adds one non-Charm success.

Stillness of Stone Atemi (6m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Double 9s on a **withering** damage roll. The Immaculate gains no Initiative, but inflicts a -1 mobility penalty for every 4 points of damage that lasts until the end of the enemy's next turn, or for the duration of Initiative Crash if caused by the attack.

Defensive Charms

Stone Dragon's Skin (5m; Reflexive; Until next turn; Perilous): Add +4 soak and +2 hardness until next turn. This explicitly stacks with existing hardness.

Unmoving Mountain Stance (3m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous): Deny an attacker up to 2 points of Initiative they would normally gain from a successful **withering** attack. Also negates being knocked prone or back by an attack unless it dealt 5+ damage.

Immaculate of Fire

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Intimidation: 8 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 4 dice (+2 for 2m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 11)

Attack (Short daiklaves): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 14, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (+4 for 4m; 9 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 9 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 3 (+1 for 2m), Parry 6 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 10/7 (Jade reinforced buff jacket)

Offensive Charms

Essence-Igniting Strike (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only): Add enemy's Essence to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack; double the bonus against an enemy with a full personal Essence pool. Once per fight, unless reset by parrying an attack enhanced with 10+ motes worth of magic.

Fiery Blade Attack (3m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; One scene): Ignite a bonfire (p. XX) around an enemy upon successfully landing a **decisive** attack. She must disengage to move out of the fire even if no opponents are in close range (difficulty of Dragon-Blooded's Essence) and subtracts two successes from her roll. The fires burn until the enemy moves out of them.

Fire Dragon Form (9m; Simple; One scene): Enemies with an Initiative three points or more below the Immaculate's own take a -2 onslaught penalty to Defense against him, while the Martial Artist gains +1 Parry against their attacks.

Flash-Fire Technique (4m; Reflexive; Instant): Roll the Immaculate's Initiative at the start of a round. Each success raises his turn by one tick in round order, and he doubles 10s on **decisive** damage rolls against enemies with lower Initiative. He gains 2 Initiative if he acts before all enemies. Must wait three rounds to use again, unless reset by making a **decisive** attack.

Perfect Blazing Blow (1m per die doubled; Reflexive; Instant; Uniform): After an attack roll, the Immaculate can pay one mote to double a 9. Against enemies with lower Initiative, he can double an additional 9 for every two points he has over their Initiative, paying one mote per 9 doubled. He can double 8s against enemies in Initiative Crash.

Searing Edge Attack (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Add two points to the Initiative damage of a **withering** attack. The Immaculate does not receive Initiative from this bonus damage.

Defensive Charms

Flame-Flicker Stance (2m, 1i; Reflexive; Instant): Add +1 Parry and cancel onslaught penalties against an attack. Each previous use since the Immaculate's last turn increases the Parry bonus by one.

Overwhelming Fire Majesty Stance (6m; Reflexive; Until next turn): Enemies take a -3 penalty on attack rolls against the Immaculate, and take one die of lethal damage if they hit him.

Enemies may pay a point of Willpower to immunizes themselves to the penalty (but not the damage) for the rest of the scene.

Immaculate of Water

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Investigation: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Persuasion: 7 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 2, Resolve 2 (+1 for 2m), Guile 3 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 9)

Attack (Jade dragon claws): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 14, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (+4 for 4m; 8 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m), Parry 7 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 12/7 (Jade lamellar)

Offensive Charms

Drowning-in-Blood Technique (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only): Add up to five extra successes to raw damage. Dealing 3+ levels of damage doubles the victim's wound penalties for the rest of the fight.

Flow Reversal Strike (6m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only): Add one success to a **decisive** damage roll. If total damage exceeds victim's Stamina, they take a penalty equal to the difference for the next three rounds and lose that much Initiative.

Rippling Water Strike (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Add one die of post-soak **withering** damage or **decisive** raw damage. If 5+ points of **withering** damage or 1+ levels of **decisive** damage are dealt, the attack's onslaught penalty applies against all enemies in close range of both the Immaculate and her target.

Theft-of-Essence Method (1wp; Reflexive; Instant): After crashing an enemy, steal (5 + his wound penalty) motes from his pool and add it to the Immaculate's own.

Water Dragon Form (10m; Simple; One scene): Up to two 1s on damage rolled against the Immaculate each subtract a single success and grant her a point of Initiative. She may pay Initiative to add successes to attack rolls, two points of Initiative per added success.

Defensive Charms

Bottomless Depths Defense (1m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only, Perilous): Roll (Initiative + 4) dice and subtract the result from the successes of a **decisive** damage roll. Once per fight unless reset by recovering from being crashed.

Flowing Water Defense (1m, 2i; Reflexive; Instant): Impose a -2 penalty on an attack roll or rush against the Immaculate, or a roll opposing her disengagement.

Shrugging Water Dragon Escape (4m; Reflexive; Instant): Double 9s on a roll to disengage or control roll against a hostile grapple. Double 8s if opposing a character with lower Initiative.

Immaculate of Wood

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 11 dice (+6 for 6m); Tracking: 11 dice (+6 for 6m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+1 for 2m), Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 10)

Attack (Jade staff): 14 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 14, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (+4 for 4m; 7 dice to control, +4 for 4m)

Combat Movement: 7 dice (+4 for 4m)

Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m), Parry 7 (+3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 8/4 (Jade breastplate)

Offensive Charms

Eyes of the Wood Dragon (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Add three dice to raw **withering** damage and ignore natural soak from Stamina.

Soul-Marking Style (5m; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only, Stackable): An attack that deals 3+ levels of damage leaves a spiritual mark that adds one success on the Immaculate's rolls to attack, notice, or track the enemy for the rest of the fight.

Spirit-Wracking Method (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): Dealing 5+ **withering** damage inflicts a -2 penalty from spiritual pain, which falls by one point at the end of each of the victim's turns. Using Spirit-Wracking Method against a character still suffering this penalty instead adds three dice to the damage of the attack after soak.

Unbreakable Fascination Kata (1m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): Roll 8 dice + 2 successes against the Resolve of all enemies with lower Initiative who can see the Immaculate. Overcome enemies

have their next turn delayed by (1 + extra successes) ticks, and lose their turn if reduced to a tick of 0 or less. A character must enter a Decision Point and call on an Intimacy to pay one Willpower to become immune to this Charm for the rest of the scene.

Wood Dragon Form (8m; Simple; One scene): Gain two temporary -0 health levels that last until the end of the fight. Gain a point of Initiative at the end of every round no **decisive** damage is taken; while Initiative is at 20+, heal a level of bashing damage or convert a level of lethal damage to bashing at the end of each round.

Defensive Charms

Death-Pattern Sensing Attitude (2m; Reflexive; Instant): Negate all penalties to Parry against an attack made by a living or undead enemy. Any soul marks on the attacker add +1 Parry each.

Mind-Over-Body Meditation (4m; Reflexive; Instant; Dual): Add +7 soak against a **withering** attack, or subtract two dice from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack.

Wood Dragon Succor (2i per level; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous): When an ally in short range would take non-aggravated damage, the Immaculate may redirect it to his own health track at a cost of two Initiative per level transferred.

Wood Dragon Vitality (1wp; Reflexive; Instant): After crashing an enemy, roll two dice and heal a health level for every success. Once per fight unless reset by taking damage to a -4 health level.

Experienced Dragon-Blood

This is a Dragon-Blood who has been Exalted for over a century and has grown into formidable elemental power, the battlefield prowess of a fire-proven general, and the social savvy needed to stay afoot in the intrigues of the Realm.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 14; **Peripheral Motes:** 35

Health Levels: -0/-1x7/-2x7/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Soldiers: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Feats of Strength: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Read Intentions: 6 dice (+2 for 2m); Resist Poison/Disease: 9 dice (+4 for 4m); Senses: 7 dice (+4 for 4m); Social Influence: 8 dice (+4 for 4m); Strategy: 8 dice (+4 for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 4 (+2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Jade goremaul): 11 dice (+6 for 6m; damage 18, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m)

Evasion 0, Parry 5 (+2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 16/10 (Jade reinforced breastplate)

Offensive Charms

Ringing Anvil Onslaught (6m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous, Withering-only): After a successful **withering** attack, make another attack against that enemy with a pool of (5 dice + 1 die per extra success), up to a maximum of (Essence x 2) extra dice, which cannot have dice added to it by any other magic. The Dragon-Blood may continue attacking until he misses or crashes his enemy. If he crashes his target he may pay a point of Willpower to make a normal **decisive** attack against them. Once per scene.

Thousand-Ton Hammer Smash (3m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Double 10s on **decisive** damage, or double 9s on all damage against a prone enemy. Can make smashing attacks with no Defense or Initiative penalty.

Defensive Charms

Impervious Skin of Stone (4m; Reflexive; Instant): Add +6 soak against a **withering** attack, or convert up to five lethal **decisive** damage to bashing.

Indestructible Battle Mantle (5m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant): Reduce the raw damage of a **decisive** attack by 5 (half the Dragon-Blood's armor hardness).

Battle Group Charms

Deadly Wildfire Legion (3m; Supplemental; Instant): Successfully using a command action to order a battle group to attack an enemy lets the Dragon-Blood activate Ringing Anvil Onslaught or Thousand-Ton Hammer Smash to enhance that attack.

Social Charms

Grinding Millstone Argument (4m; Supplemental; Instant): Add +1 Willpower to the cost to resist an instill or persuade action against characters with a Resolve lower than the Dragon-Blood's (temporary Willpower/2, round down). Once per scene.

Undaunted Dragon Hero (2i; Reflexive; Instant): The Dragon-Blooded resists the blandishments and temptation of his foes on the battlefield. Add +1 Resolve against influence that does not align with an Intimacy, or +1 Resolve against influence that opposes a Major or Defining Intimacy. These bonuses stack.

The Lunar Exalted

The Lunar Exalted are the dread warlords of howling barbarian armies, skinwalkers who dance through forms of man and beast alike, and mystics versed in the secret lore of night. Some wage all-out war against the Realm and its hidden Sidereal patrons, while others strive to achieve more personal or worldly ambitions. In the Lunar Exalted, young Solars might find potential allies eager but wary to rejoin their fallen mates, or enemies driven to destroy something a Solar seeks to use or protect.

Essence

The Lunar Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to (Essence + 15), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 4] + 34).

Excellencies

The Lunar Exalted tap into the raw potential of their Attributes to bolster their heroic feats, and can add up to (Attribute) dice to any action. However, with a stunt, they may add a second Attribute to the limit as long as the action is described in a way that fits the combination. For example, a Full Moon rolling (Dexterity + Brawl) to smash a Dragon-Blooded shikari would normally have a dice limit of (Dexterity), but could increase this to (Dexterity + Strength) if he described the attack in a way that evoked his raw brawn and mighty thews. Since QCs don't track precise their Attribute values, simply abtract this to an additional +2, +3, or +5, depending on how skilled the Lunar is.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Lunar QC Dice Limits

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
1-2	+1
3-6	+2 (+4 with a stunt)
7-10	+4 (+7 with a stunt)
11-14	+5 (+10 with a stunt)

[END TABLE]

When raising static values, Lunars can add up to (Attribute)/2, round down to the static value. With a stunt, they can draw upon a second Excellency, allowing them to add up to (Attribute + Second Attribute)/2, round down. Thus, a Dexterity 5, Dodge 5, and Intelligence 5 Lunar who attempts to evade an attack and describes how his keen mind discerns the rhythm of his opponent's blows, helping him to avoid them, could raise his Evasion by up to 5.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Lunar QC Static Value Limits

Static Value	Excellency Limit
0-1	+0 (+1 with a stunt)
2-3	+1 (+2 with a stunt)
4-5	+2 (+4 with a stunt)
6-7	+2 (+5 with a stunt)

[END TABLE]

Shapeshifting

The Lunar Exalted may take the heart's blood of humans and animals, stealing forms to wear at their pleasure. A Lunar may pay five motes to assume the any form it has taken. This transformation lasts indefinitely, until the Lunar reverts to his true human form (which is free and reflexive) or shifts into a different shape. Shapeshifting can be flurried, but not with an attack.

Animal forms grant the Lunar access to all physical dice pools, as well as the animal's special attacks and Merits. Latent or magical abilities are not granted by shapeshifting, but can be unlocked with training or Charms. Animals with Legendary Size are beyond the skill of most young Lunar shapeshifters, though this limitation can be overcome.

Spotting a shapeshifted Lunar for something other than what it appears to be is treated as a roll to recognize a disguised character (p. XX), with a flat difficulty of 7. This can't be attempted unless the observer is already aware of a unique tell or physical give-away that the Lunar possesses in his true human form, which subtly translates in some way into his other shapes.

> The Mark of Luna
>
> Lunars are at once both remarkably subtle and very distinct. The Lunar Exalted solidify the power of their Castes with mystical tattoos of moonsilver. When their anima flares, these tattoos glow with an unearthly radiance. The Lunar anima itself is much like a Solar anima display, complete with burning caste mark and an iconic manifestation. In addition to these features, each Lunar's human form carries the mark of Luna—some mystical or bestial marking depicting their patron's favor. This might take the form of a distinctive musk, golden eyes like a wolf, sharp fangs, clawed hands, a predatory gait, a shock of silver hair, an animalistic shadow, or a multitude of other divine signifiers. And yet, when they wish to walk in another shape, or simply walk abroad in their own skin, the Lunar Exalted are adept at hiding all signs of their true nature. Only some tiny hint of Luna's mark tends to remain.

Barbarian Warlord

These traits are suitable for a Lunar who is worshipped as a living god by barbarian tribes and leads them howling into battle—against the Realm, kingdoms ripe for conquest, or whomever his enemies may be.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 8 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m)

Personal: 17; **Peripheral:** 42

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x4/-4x7/Incap.

Actions: Command Barbarian Hordes: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Feats of Strength: 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidation: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for

7m); Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Strategy: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Guile 1 (+1 for 2m with a stunt)

Combat

Attack (Battle axe): 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; damage 14)

Attack (Unarmed): 12 dice (+5 for 5m, +10 for 10m; damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; 10 dice to control, +4 for 4m, +7 for 7m)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Parry 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m)

Soak/Hardness: 11/7 (Moonsilver reinforced buff jacket)

Powers

Shapeshifting: The warlord's main animal form for combat is a grizzly bear (p. XX). He also has an eagle form (p. XX) or similar indigenous bird of prey for aerial scouting and combat, and any number of small to medium local predators for combat and indigenous fauna to blend into the wilderness. He has human forms taken from enemy commanders or heroes he's slain, which he might use to infiltrate a satrapy or kingdom under the guise of its own protector.

Offensive Charms

Deadly Beastman Transformation (5m, 1wp; Simple; Indefinite): The Lunar may shapeshift into a ferocious battle form that is half-man, half-bear. He adds +4 to the raw damage of all **withering** attacks he makes, his combat movement pool, and his soak. He adds +2 to his Strength for feats of strength, both for the dice pool and determining what feats he may attempt. Wound penalties are halved on attacks and movement rolls, and he heals a single level of damage whenever he resets to base Initiative after making a **decisive** attack with 11+ Initiative or recovers from being crashed.

Spine-Breaking Technique (3m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): The Lunar may make a **decisive** savaging attack against a grappled enemy without resetting to base Initiative once per fight.

Terrifying Beastial Visage (4m; Reflexive; Instant): The first time the Lunar transforms into a predatory animal shape or his beastman form in a fight, he may use Terrifying Bestial Visage to roll seven dice. Successes are applied as an intimidation roll against the Resolve of enemies who witness the transformation, frightening weak-willed foes into fleeing, and as a command roll to either command or rally a battle group the Lunar commands.

Defensive Charms

Impenetrable Beast Armor (5m; Reflexive; Instant; Perilous): Impenetrable Beast-Armor halves the post-soak damage of a **withering** attack against the Lunar, or subtracts three dice from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack.

Mobility Charms

Predator Grace Method (3m; Supplemental; Instant): The Lunar doubles 9s on a rush, and doubles 8s as well if his enemy has a wound penalty of -2 or more. He may move across surfaces that could not normally bear his weight for the duration of the rush.

Shapeshifting Trickster

These traits can be used for a Lunar who focuses on shapeshifting as a weapon of social intrigue, stealing the forms of others to gain access to positions of power or secrecy and telling lies with a moonsilver tongue.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 16; **Peripheral Motes:** 38

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x/-4/Incap.

Actions: Convincing Liar: 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Read Intentions: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Stealth: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Appearance 3, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Guile 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m)

Combat

Attack (Moonsilver dagger): 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; damage 12, minimum 3)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Evasion 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m), Parry 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m)

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

Powers

Shapeshifting: The Lunar uses the form of a cat (p. XX) to slink beneath the notice of others and conduct subtle surveillance. He may wear other subtle forms, such as a poisonous snake (p. XX) or a songbird, and likely has one predator form such as wolf (p. XX) or tiger (p. XX) that he relies on in combat. He also has numerous human forms that grant him access to power and influence, such as a satrap's trusted advisor, a Guild merchant prince, or the mastermind of an underground crime syndicate. In addition to taking forms by drinking the heart's blood, he has learned to temporarily steal a person's form through seduction or as repayment for a service or favor done.

Social Charms

False Burrow Pursuit (1m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant): When the Lunar persuades a character to take an action with an outright lie or cleverly-worded deception, that character takes a -1

penalty to Resolve. If the Lunar's lie is awarded a stunt, then the stunt's rating is subtracted from Resolve as well.

Moonlight Curtain Drawn (2m; Reflexive; Instant; Mute): Add +1 Guile against a read intentions roll, or +3 if the roll would reveal something contradictory to the Lunar's current shape or identity.

New Friend Aroma (6m; Simple; One scene; Mute): Any character whose Resolve is less than or equal to the Lunar's Appearance becomes enthralled by his pleasant, pheromone-laden scent, and will seek to approach him to either befriend or seduce him. Characters who already know the Lunar (or the current identity he is assuming) instead take -1 Resolve and Guile against him. Characters may resist for one Willpower.

Tale-Spinning Mastery (7m; Supplemental; Instant; Mute): The Lunar weaves an especially convincing lie, duping even the most skeptical listeners. Double 9s on an instill roll to convince people to believe in a lie, and add a point of Willpower to the cost of resisting. Once per scene.

Wandering Shaman

These traits are for an experienced Lunar mystic, versed both in sorcery and in the ways of spirits. She may use them to oppose the Realm and its Immaculate Order, strengthen ties between tribal peoples and indigenous nature spirits, or simply to gain potent supernatural allies for whatever agenda she pursues.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 18; **Peripheral Motes:** 46

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x4/-4x3/Incap.

Actions: Read Intentions: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Shape Sorcery: 11 dice (+5 for 5m, +10 for 10m); Senses: 8 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m); Social Influence: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Tracking: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Appearance 2, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Guile 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Staff): 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +7 for 7m; damage 12)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Evasion 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m), Parry 4 (+2 for 4m, +4 for 8m)

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Powers

Shapeshifting: This Lunar takes the shape of a strix (p. XX) for both combat and winged travel, and has acquired numerous other animal forms in traveling the wilderness, ranging from humble squirrels to fearsome predators such as wolves (p. XX) or great cats (p. XX). She has enough

human forms to seem like a native in almost any quarter of Creation, and may have stolen the shape of a god's priest in a bid for that spirit's favor.

Sorcery: This Lunar is initiated into the Celestial Circle of sorcery, and knows the spells Death of Obsidian Butterflies, Demon of the First Circle, Magma Kraken, Shadows of the Ancient Past, and Silent Words of Dreams and Nightmares (see Chapter Seven).

Shamanism Charms

Secret Sense Intuition (1m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant): Whenever a dematerialized spirit or a hidden character comes within short range of the Lunar, she may use Secret Sense Intuition to reflexively read their intentions, detecting their presence on a successful roll. She may also make a reflexive influence roll addressing the hidden character, which imposes a -2 penalty to their Resolve. Once per scene.

Two Worlds Penumbra (6m; Simple; One scene): While the Lunar's anima is at the glowing level or higher, all dematerialized spirits within long range become visible as shadowy figures against the silver aura. At bonfire, these shadows solidify to the point that material characters may physically interact with them, and vice versa.

Sorcery Charms

Waking Nightmare Invocation (5m; Supplemental; Instant): When the Lunar takes the first shape sorcery action to begin casting a spell (p. XX), she may roll her temporary Willpower, with each success converting one die on the shaping roll to an automatic success. Additionally, if the spell targets a character who has a Tie of fear to the Lunar or her current form, she may convert (Intimacy) additional dice to successes. Once per scene, unless reset by changing into a form that an enemy or relevant bystander fears.

Shadow Walker's Revelation (10m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): If the Lunar has been in another shape for at least an hour, she may use Shadow Walker's Revelation to return to her true form and cast off the umbra of that shape through sorcery, instantly casting any non-ritual spell she knows without needing to shape it. Once per day.

The Sidereal Exalted

Guardians of destiny and agents of Heaven, the Sidereal Exalted are living mysteries, seers of the future and masters of martial arts.

Essence

The Sidereal Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to ([Essence x 2] + 9), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 6] + 25).

Excellencies

The Sidereal Exalted can only add (Essence) dice to a roll with their Excellencies, honing their Essence through spiritual cultivation. However, though they usually cannot match the sheer

might of other Celestial Exalted, they have fate on their side. In addition to adding dice, a Sidereal can reduce the target number of an action (the number that a die must come up to count as a success) at a cost of one mote per point of reduction. The lowest a target number can be brought is 4. Thus, an Essence 1 Sidereal might spend one mote to add a single die and three motes to reduce the target number to 4, letting him count every die that comes up 4 or higher as a success.

When modifying static values, the Sidereal Exalted can raise these values by up to their Essence rating. Thus, an Essence 3 Sidereal attempting to block a sword blow could raise his Parry by up to 3, for 6 motes.

Arcane Fate

The Sidereal Exalted fade from the memories of those who meet them soon after they leave, fleeing the mind like the vestiges of a half-remembered dream. Some use powerful astrological magic to clothe themselves in destinies spun from archetype and imagination, appearing in Creation as stock figures such as "The friendly town drunk" or "That handsome soldier," revealing their true nature only when they must.

> Sidereal Animas
>
> The spiritual mantle of a Sidereal is far more subtle than their Solar counterparts. Their caste marks only shine through coverings at the burning level or higher, making scarves, turbans, hoods, and headbands popular among the Maidens' Chosen. They have no iconic displays—at the strongest level of manifestation, a Sidereal anima is a hazy envelope of light. **Chosen of Journeys** sport solid yellow animas. **Chosen of Serenity** have peaceful sapphire animas. **Chosen of Battles** display crimson animas. **Chosen of Secrets** have deep green anima banners. **Chosen of Endings** display violet animas. The pupils of the Sidereal Exalted are faintly flecked with the same color as their anima—upon close examination, their eyes seem to glint with a field of stars.

Bronze Faction Assassin

This is a dangerous Sidereal assassin who might be sent to execute an important personage whose time is up, hunt down a dangerous demon or otherwordly monster, or to lead a Wyld Hunt against an especially dangerous Anathema.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 9 dice

Personal Motes: 15; **Peripheral Motes:** 43

Health Levels: -0/-1x5/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Read Intentions: 5 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 5 dice; Senses: 9 dice; Stealth: 8 dice; Tracking: 8 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 4, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Starmetal reaper daiklave): 14 dice (Damage 14, minimum 4)

Attack (Throwing knives): 9 dice at close range (Damage 9)

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 7

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

Offensive Charms

Blade of the Battle Maiden (2m, 1i; Supplemental; Instant; Withering-only): The target number of a **withering** damage roll is lowered by one.

Life-Severing Blow (2m per die; Reflexive; Instant; Decisive-only): Add up to three extra successes to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack after the attack roll is made.

Metal Storm (4m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Decisive-only): Make a string of up to five unblockable **decisive** attacks against an enemy. A successful attack does not reset Initiative, but reduces the Sidereal's Initiative by one for each success on the damage roll. If the Sidereal reaches 0 Initiative, she cannot make any more attacks and resets to base Initiative.

Violet Bier of Sorrows Form (8m; Simple; One scene): Add +1 to Overwhelming value of **withering** attacks. Enemies double their wound penalties on actions opposing the Sidereal, including defending against his attacks.

Defensive Charms

Death-Parrying Stroke (3m per die; Reflexive; Instant): Subtract up to four dice from the raw damage of a **decisive** attack, at a cost of three motes per die. Each die cancelled grants a point of Initiative to the Sidereal.

Gold Faction Benefactor

This is a young Sidereal who might help arrange to put Solars in contact with the Cult of the Illuminated or provide them with counterintelligence against the Wyld Hunt.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Personal Motes: 13; **Peripheral Motes:** 37

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Investigation: 8 dice; Recall Knowledge: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Social Influence: 7 dice; Stealth: 5 dice

Appearance 2, Resolve 3, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Staff): 8 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Defensive Charms

Avoidance Kata (2m; Simple; Instant; Psyche): Roll 8 dice against a difficulty of 5 + turns already taken in the scene. Success causes the Sidereal to vanish, reappearing somewhere else she might have plausibly gone today instead. Witnesses remember the Sidereal being present, but also remember that she was never present at all, and find this contradiction unremarkable. Once per scene.

Trouble Reduction Strategy (5m; Reflexive; One scene): Reflexively protect all allies in close range with Evasion, as with a Defend Other action. Allows them to be included in withdrawal via Avoidance Kata, but each individual carried along raises the difficulty by 1.

Information Charms

Efficient Secretary Technique (2m; Simple; Instant): Call up an emerald spider that retrieves any objective fact or piece of information that is publicly available and known.

Of Truths Best Unspoken (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): Spend three hours in meditation to make a recall knowledge roll about any topic to learn what its importance will be in the future, from the perspective of the end of the Second Age. Once per story.

The Abyssal Exalted

The dread Abyssal Exalted are fearsome but beguiling enemies, capable of matching the Solar Exalted in power. Some serve the Deathlords, who reign over dark empires in the Underworld, while others rove Creation as unbound agents of death and disaster.

Essence

The Abyssal Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to their ([Essence x 3] + 10), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 7] + 26).

Excellencies

The Excellencies of the Abyssal Exalted are just as formidable as those of the Solars, with a maximum dice limit of (Attribute + Ability).

[BEGIN TABLE]

Abyssal QC Dice Limits

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
1-2	+2

3-6 +5

7-10 +7

11-14 +10

[END TABLE]

Abyssals likewise enhance their static values in the same fashion as Solars.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Abyssal QC Static Value Limits

Static Value Excellency Limit

0-1 +0

2-3 +1

4-5 +3

6-7 +5

[END TABLE]

The Trappings of Death

The Abyssals appear as dark mirrors of the Solar Exalted. Their caste marks mirror their Solar counterparts, though they manifest as black brands rather than shining beacons. Abyssal animas are swirling spiritual nullities, so dark that the world around them seems faintly luminous by contrast. Finally, the Abyssal Exalted are uncomfortable in the sun-lit world of the living—they take a -3 penalty to all daytime actions outside of shadowlands and the Underworld, unless they surround themselves with the morbid trappings of death or master dark magic to allow them to travel incogntio. Thus, most Abyssals met wandering abroad are found wearing funeral colors, cerecloth windings, or clad in armor decorated with bones, spiders, or other similarly morbid motifs.

Wandering Deathknight

These traits are for a deadly Abyssal errant wandering the lands of the living, either at the orders of a Deathlord or as part of a personal quest.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 9 dice (+7 for 7m)

Personal Motes: 16; **Peripheral Motes:** 40

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x4/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 7 dice (+7 for 7m, may attempt Strength 3 feats); Poetry: 9 dice (+7 for 7m); Senses: 7 dice (+7 for 7m)

Appearance 2, Resolve 4 (+3 for 6m), Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Soulsteel direlance): 12 dice (+10 for 10m; damage 17, minimum 5)

Attack (Longbow): 9 dice at short range (+7 for 7m; Damage 12)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (+5 for 5m; 13 dice mounted on skeletal warhorse)

Evasion 2 (+1 for 2m), Parry 6 (+5 for 10m)

Soak/Hardness: 15/10 (Soulsteel reinforced breastplate)

Offensive Charms

Artful Maiming Onslaught (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only): Add three levels to the final damage of a **decisive** attack *unless* the target chooses to take a crippling injury from it. Once per fight.

Savage Shade Style (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Double extra successes on a **withering** attack against a crashed opponent or double 10s on a **decisive** damage roll.

Defensive Charms

Elegant Flowing Deflection (2m; Reflexive; Instant): Negate all penalties to Parry against a single attack. Successful defense strips a point of Initiative from the attacker.

Hundred Razor Circle (5m; Simple; Until next turn; Counterattack, Decisive-only): Make a **decisive** counterattack in response to any incoming attack until the Abyssal's next turn. A successful attack does not reset his Initiative until his next turn.

Master Necromancer

This is an Abyssal necromancer, raising armies of the dead to ravage the land. These traits are not for a formidable personal combatant, but for a character who lets his hordes of undead minions fight for him.

Essence: 3; **Willpower:** 8; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (+5 for 5m)

Personal Motes: 19; **Peripheral Motes:** 47

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Actions: Command Undead: 9 dice (+7 for 7m); Intimidation: 7 dice (+7 for 7m); Medical Treatment: 9 dice (+7 for 7m); Senses: 6 dice (+5 for 5m)

Appearance 1, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m), Guile 3 (+1 for 2m)

Combat

Attack (Scalpel): 7 dice (+7 for 7m; damage 8)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+5 for 5m)

Evasion 3 (+1 for 2m), Parry 2 (+1 for 2m)

Soak/Hardness: 12/7 (Soulsteel lamellar)

Defensive Charms

Flickering Wisp Technique (7m, 1wp; Reflexive; Instant): Perfectly dodge any attack or source of harm by dissolving into formless mist and reforming one range band away. Once per fight, unless reset by dodging three **decisive** attacks without using other Charms or Excellencies.

Flitting Shadow Form (2m; Reflexive; Instant): Negate all penalties to Evasion against a single attack.

Necromancy Charms

Life-Mocking Assembly (5m, 1wp; Simple; Touch): The Abyssal makes a medical treatment roll, and is able to reanimate a collection of corpses to form a battle group of loyal zombies with one point of Size for every two successes. He must have access to sufficient corpses, and the process generally takes (Size x 2) days of work.

The Risen Hunger (3m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant): The necromancer doubles 9s on a roll to command an undead battle group to attack another group. A successful attack restores two points of Magnitude to the undead group, as slain enemies are reanimated as makeshift zombies to restock the ranks. A command to slaughter a retreating group instead restores Magnitude equal to the successes rolled, although this cannot increase the group's size.

Hope-Rending Teeth (6m; Reflexive; Instant): Whenever an undead battle group under the Abyssal's command empties another battle group's Magnitude track with an attack, he may use this Charm to receive an Initiative Break bonus of 5 points, and to immediately employ the demoralized stratagem (p. XX) against opposing forces, who falter before the horror of his undead force. When used together with The Risen Hunger, he may combine the demoralized with the pincer attack stratagem, as the survivors find themselves with the reanimated corpses of former friends at their backs.

The Liminal Exalted

Born out of death, the Liminal Exalted must struggle to find a place in the world of the living. In their quest for identity and hunt of the woken dead, they might encounter the Solars as strange allies, or oppose them if their goals or passions should come into conflict.

Essence

The Liminal Exalted have a personal mote pool equal to their ([Essence x 3] + 10), and a peripheral pool equal to ([Essence x 4] + 23).

Excellencies

The Liminal Exalted can draw on the power of their patchwork bodies to add up to (Attribute) dice to an action. This increases to (Attribute + Essence) once their anima banner has begun to shine, revealing the horror that marks them.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Liminal QC Dice Limits

Dice Pool	Excellency Limit
1-2	+1 (+Essence with anima)
3-6	+2 (+Essence with anima)
7-10	+4 (+Essence with anima)
11-14	+5 (+Essence with anima)

[END TABLE]

Liminals can strengthen their static values by up to (Attribute / 2, round down). When their anima has begun to emerge, this increases to ([Attribute + Essence] / 2, round down).

[BEGIN TABLE]

Liminal QC Static Value Limits

Static Value	Excellency Limit
0-1	+0 (+Essence/2 with anima)
2-3	+1 (+Essence/2 with anima)
4-5	+2 (+Essence/2 with anima)
6-7	+2 (+Essence/2 with anima)

[END TABLE]

Undying Bodies

Born from death, the Liminal Exalted will claw their way out of the grave if they have the chance. Their bodies are capable of recovering from incredible damage—all it takes to heal a crippling injury such as losing an arm is finding a suitable corpse to harvest a replacement limb, and a few hours to graft it onto the stump. Even death is only a temporary obstacle. A lethally incapacitated Liminal will reignite the guttering spark of its Essence and rise again within a matter of days, although they may need to spend some days or weeks repairing their damaged bodies with scavenged parts before they're ready to fight again. The only certain ways to truly kill a Liminal are to destroy its brain or drown it, facts of which even most Liminals are unaware.

The Liminal Aspects are a diverse collection of oddities, with only the repugnance of their unnatural Essence unifying them. Once a Liminal's anima begins to appear, their appearance becomes distinctly disturbing and inhuman—one might adopt the carved sheen of an ivory manikin, while another seems crusted with ancient grave-soil. This tends to horrify mortal bystanders, making it nigh-impossible to form positive Intimacies for the Liminal as a result of any deeds they perform with their animas flaring, while negative Intimacies develop easily. **Aspects of Blood** have dark red animas that flow slickly around them. **Aspects of Breath** have constellations of blue-green wisps drifting around them. **Aspects of Flesh** manifest pink animas that pulse slowly. **Aspects of Marrow** have grey animas that manifest yellow or red threads when in motion. **Aspects of Soil** are enwrapped in churning clouds of primordial darkness, in which luminous bones or worms can sometimes be faintly glimpsed.

Liminal Ghost-Hunter

These traits are appropriate for a roving Liminal hunting the undead at the sporadic command of his Dark Mother, or else serving as a mercenary to a Guild prince, satrap, or some other personage with the wealth or power to recruit an Exalted bodyguard.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +6 for 6m)

Personal Motes: 16; **Peripheral Motes:** 31

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 8 dice (+4 for 4m, +6 for 6m; may attempt Strength 3 feats); Resist Poison/Sickness: 10 dice (+5 for 5m, +7 for 7m); Read Intentions: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Senses: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m); Tracking: 7 dice (+4 for 4m, +6 for 6m)

Appearance 1, Resolve 3 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m), Guile 2 (+1 for 2m, +2 for 4m)

Combat

Attack (Soulsteel grimscythe): 9 dice (+4 for 4m, +6 for 6m; damage 17, minimum 5)

Combat Movement: 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Evasion 3 (1 or 2 for 2m or 4m), Parry 4 (+2 for 4m, +3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 11/7 (Soulsteel reinforced buff jacket)

Offensive Charms

Black Soil's Claim (4m, 1wp; Supplemental; Instant; Decisive-only): Wounds left by the Chernozem rot with unnatural speed. A **decisive** attack that deals 3+ levels of damage also causes its victim to take one die of lethal damage per turn over her next (1 + wound penalty) turns, ignoring hardness. If the victim's wound penalty increases, so too does the duration of this effect.

Undead creatures instead suffer an additional (1 + wound penalty) dice of aggravated damage added to the Liminal's attack.

Stitched-Flesh Juggernaut (4m, 1wp; Reflexive; One scene): A surge of unliving Essence courses through stolen flesh and muscle, grafting the strength of another to the Liminal's frame. The Liminal adds +2 to his Strength for the scene, which counts as bonus dice added by Charms (this improves Strength-based dice pools, **withering** damage, and feats of strength). The bonus increases to +4 if the Liminal's anima banner is flaring. At the end of the scene, the empowered muscle mass rots away. The Liminal may reset it by touching a corpse and expending five motes, causing strands of corpse-muscle to spit forth and braid themselves crudely onto the Chernozem's bones.

Weeping Crimson Gaze (5m; Supplemental; Until next turn; Uniform): Bursting blood vessels fill the Liminal's eyes with red as he hones in on a foe. Weeping Crimson Gaze doubles up to three dice that came up 9 on an attack roll, and allows the Liminal to perceive and attack dematerialized undead for an instant. This Charm's cost is reduced by the Liminal's wound penalty, thanks to the easy access to blood.

Defensive Charms

Patchwork Body Reconstruction (3m; Reflexive; Instant): After lethally incapacitating a non-trivial living enemy or an undead creature that still has flesh, the Liminal may use Patchwork Body Reconstruction to rip muscle and bone from the corpse and patch it over his own wounds, healing two health levels or a crippling injury.

Skeletal Spike Embrace (6m; Reflexive; Until next turn): Bones burst out of the Liminal's flesh to form a cage of ossific spikes, granting him the benefits of light cover against all attacks until his next turn. Any enemy that hits him with an attack at close range or is grappling with him during this time takes one die of lethal damage, ignoring hardness. If the Liminal has taken damage to his -4 health level, he may extrude his entire skeleton as an all-encompassing carapace, increasing the cover provided by this Charm to heavy and the damage to three dice.

Mobility Charms

Clambering Horror Chase (4m; Supplemental; Until rush is completed): The Liminal becomes grotesquely double-jointed, bones breaking and reforming or slithering free of sockets to extend the reach of their pursuit. He may rush an enemy from medium range, moving one range band closer to the enemy on each of that character's next two turns, and may climb up walls or other vertical surfaces effortlessly for the duration of the rush. The Liminal may commit the cost of this Charm to extend its duration to one scene, but the stress of this burns out a limb chosen by the Storyteller, ruining it until it is replaced.

Exigents

The Exigents created by the gods of Creation are varied and unique, both in the magnitude of their supernatural power and the ways in which they express it. There are no shared rules for Excellencies, Charms, or other magic—each Exigent has its own.

Revana Quin, Architect of Wu-Jian

Revana Quin was Chosen by the city father of Wu-Jian, the overgrown Western city where crime runs rampant and unchecked. The daughter of a notorious smuggler and pirate captain, Revana had all her mother's bravado and cunning, but had a gift of perspective that saw beyond individual profit and the next day's haul. It was this that drew the spirit of Wu-Jian to her, seeking a champion to protect the city from both internal dissolution and threats from beyond. Revana accepted—but it was not just the city father's lesser divinity that empowered her. For an instant, she glimpsed the chatoyant towers of Yu-Shan, the heavenly city, and saw the face of the god of the shining metropolis, her true patron and her second mother. Now, she is a power to be reckoned with, doing her best to keep peace between all who call Wu-Jian their home.

Essence: 2; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +4 for 4m)

Personal Motes: 14; **Peripheral Motes:** 33

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap.

Attributes

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

Abilities

Awareness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Integrity 3, Larceny 3 (Disguises), Lore 1, Presence 2 (Intimidation), Sail 3 (Sailing by Night), Socialize 4 (Criminal Organizations), Stealth 3

Combat

Attack (Unarmed): 10 dice (+2 for 2m, +6 for 6m; damage 10)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (+2 for 2m, +6 for 6m; 7 dice to control, +3 for 3m, +7 for 7m)

Combat Movement: 5 dice (+2 for 2m, +5 for 5m)

Evasion 1 (+1 for 2m), Parry 4 (+1 for 2m, +3 for 6m)

Soak/Hardness: 6/0 (Buff jacket)

Powers

Excellencies: As an Architect, Revana may add up to (Attribute) dice to an action with her actions. If she is in an urban area and stunts an action in a way that describes how she uses the environment to her advantage, this increases to (Attribute + Ability). For example, pummeling a bloodthirsty Lintha pirate by slamming him against a wall or smashing a brick over his head would increase the dice she could add to the attack from (Dexterity) to (Dexterity + Brawl).

Raising static values works similarly—(Attribute / 2, round down) is her normal limit, but an urban stunt brings it to ([Attribute + Ability] / 2, round down).

Offensive Charms

Brick-Knuckle Brawler (4m; Supplemental; Instant; Dual): Revana's fists become hard as stone, adding her temporary Willpower to the raw damage of a **withering** attack or adding up to (Strength) extra successes to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack.

Crashing Demolition Barrage (2m; Supplemental; Instant; Uniform): Revana may wield a mundane object as though it had the traits of an artifact weapon for one attack, with the weight and tags assigned by the Storyteller based on the object. Any stunt bonus added to the attack roll are also added to damage. The force of the attack destroys the weapon, either pulverizing it completely or wrecking it beyond usage as a weapon.

Defensive Charms

Living Wall Fortification (3m; Reflexive; Until next turn): Revana gains +4 soak and hardness 4 until her next turn. If she is touching any part of a city's architecture, she may commit this Charm's cost to form a second skin out of the stone, wood, or metal of that structure, extending this Charm's duration indefinitely.

Social Charms

Blue Light District Sex Appeal (4m; Supplemental; Instant): Revana adds +2 to her effective Appearance when comparing it to the Resolve of a character targeted by an instill or persuade action. Persuasion attempts that play on an Intimacy through seduction or physical temptation cost an additional point of Willpower to resist.

Where the Heart Is (3m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): Revana may make a read intentions roll against a character who is not present by observing his home or a city locale that he frequents. The -2 Guile penalty for being observed unaware applies to her target. She cannot use this against the same character more than once per story, unless reset by succeeding on an influence roll or read intentions action against him in person.

Covert Charms

A Face in the Crowd (6m, 1wp; Simple; Instant; Mute): Revana may make a disguise roll instantly and without need for any props simply by walking into a crowd of people dense enough to obscure observation, and then walking out with a changed appearance. If she is attempting to disguise herself as a specific person who is present in the crowd, the penalty for doing so is negated.

Every Door Opened (5m, 1wp; Simple; One day; Mute): Communing with the Essence of a city, Revana may become a living skeleton key, gaining access to anywhere within the city's bounds. Any mundane lock that would bar her entry into a location in that city unlocks itself at her approach. Characters that would normally prevent her from entering let her pass as though

they were expecting her, unless this opposes an Intimacy or they have been specifically warned about letting her in.

Watchful Gargoyle Premonition (5m, 1wp; Simple; Instant): Revana may make a read intentions roll against an urban building or structure by spending five minutes walking within or around it. A successful roll reveals if there are any actions taking place within it that would disrupt the order of the city or if there are any malevolent intentions directed at the structure or its contents (like a gang of thieves planning to rob a palace's vaults). This roll is opposed by the Guile of whatever character is leading the act in question. Once per story, unless reset by foiling an uncovered action.

Animals

The animal life of Creation ranges from scurrying rats and baying hounds to rare megafauna and gargantuan saurian beasts. They are pets, beasts of burden, trained combatants, and roaming terrors. The Exalted often ride mounts far more exotic than the everyday horse, or build ties of trust and friendship with powerful animal familiars. There are also beasts capable of threatening even the Chosen, perilous monsters that must be slain, driven away, or tamed.

> Speed Bonuses
>
> Animals which can be used as mounts have a trait called Speed Bonus. Using an animal as a mount adds the listed bonus to all (Dexterity + Ride) rolls to take or oppose rush, disengage, and withdraw actions.

Latent and Magical Abilities

Some animal traits list latent abilities. While an animal might be physically capable of performing these, it has no instinctive drive to do so, and thus requires training to use them. Training an animal to unlock its latent abilities requires a minimum of Survival 3 and two specialties: One in animal husbandry, and another specific to the animal—falconry for a hawk, lion taming for a great cat, and so on. The trainer makes an extended roll with an interval of one month and a goal of 10, with a difficulty determined by the animal's attitude—docile and tamed beasts would be difficulty 1, a wild wolf would be difficulty 2, while a tyrant lizard would be difficulty 5. Training a familiars provides a number of bonus dice equal to the trainer's Intimacy to the animal. The trainer must spend the entire month interacting with the beast, teaching it words, signals, commands, and running it through exercises daily. Any significant amount of time the trainer spends away from the beast during this time saps successes away at a rate of one success for every two or three days. Success at the extended roll means that the animal learns to use the technique and can be order to do so on command.

In addition, the Charms of the Exalted can unlock magical powers in some animals that take their innate potential and capabilities to new heights of supernal might.

Sample Latent Abilities

The latent abilities listed in animal traits generally represent those that are unique to the animal in question. The following latent abilities are appropriate for multiple different animals. In addition to these, some of the special attacks or Merits that animals possess might be taught to others as latent abilities—for example, training a serpentine benthic knifetooth to use a giant constrictor's crushing coils attack, or a horse to use the trample attack.

Alighting Hunter's Ascent: Flying animals small enough to perch on their master's shoulder or gloved hand can be trained to add one successes to Join Battle when they begin combat with him, and reflexively ascend to medium range from the ground as part of the Join Battle roll.

Crushing Embrace: Large predators that rely on clinching can be trained to make a **decisive** savaging attack upon grappling an enemy, with raw damage equal to the extra successes on control roll. This attack ignores hardness and does not reset the animal to base Initiative. Once per scene.

Fling Aside: Common among large predators that rely on grappling, such as bears, this attack allows the animal to make smashing attacks (p. XX) with claws or similar natural weapons, and to throw grappled enemies out to short range.

Gambits: Animals can be trained to make tactical use of the disarm, distract, and unhorse gambits, assuming they are physically capable given relative size and anatomy. Each gambit requires separate training to unlock. Once per scene, the trained animal may pay a point of Willpower to double 10s on the Initiative roll for the gambit and waive its Initiative cost if successful.

Peck Out the Eyes: Birds of prey or large ground birds can be trained to forgo one level of damage on a **decisive** peck attack to blind the victim for the duration of the scene, savaging his eyes with their beak. Trivial opponents are permanently blinded by this attack.

Predator's Menace: Animals with an intimidate pool can be trained with this attack, causing an intimidated enemy to lose Initiative equal to the extra successes over his Resolve, even if he pays Willpower to resist. Once per scene.

Tighten Clutches: Animals that rely on clinches can be trained to pay a point of Willpower to maintain their grip, preventing them from losing rounds of control from being attacked (p. XX) for one round. Damage still causes it to lose rounds of control as usual.

Wing-Rushing Strike: Flying predators may be trained to add any extra successes on a rush roll that brings them into close range with an enemy to the raw damage of their first a **withering** attack against that opponent following the rush.

Sample Magical Abilities

In addition to the unique magical abilities listed with specific animals, the following represent powers that are common among the familiars of the Exalted.

Devouring Leviathan Maw (10m): Gargantuan megafauna and massive apex predators with a deadly bite can receive this power, letting their master pay 10 motes to render a **decisive** bite attack unblock and double 10s on damage. If the attack's raw damage exceeds the victim's (Stamina + Resistance + number of health levels), the victim must accept a crippling injury on top of the rolled damage, or else be swallowed whole, killing them instantly barring magic or stunts that would let them survive.

Earth-Shaking Behemoth (4m): Animals with stomp attacks or similar natural weapons can gain this power, allowing their master to pay four motes when they make a **decisive** attack to create a shockwave, forcing all characters in medium range to roll (Dexterity + Athletics) opposing the attack roll or fall prone.

Invincible God-Beast Hide (12m): Common to beasts with great endurance or powerfully armored bodies, this power lets the animal's master pay 12 motes to reduce a **decisive** attack's raw damage by it soak rating. An attack that fails to deal any damage grants the beast three points of Initiative.

Legendary Titan Prana (7m): Huge, powerful animals can gain this power, adding +3 to their effective Strength for attempting a feat to smash through a wall, natural scenery, or other obstruction and doubling 8s on the roll for a cost of seven motes.

Primeval Vitality Lifeblood: Extraordinarily resilient and hardy animals can gain this power, granting them the benefits of the Solar Charm Immunity to Everything Technique (p. XX), but not the ability to resist incurable diseases.

Midnight Claw Prana (3m): Stealthy hunters can gain this power, allowing their master to pay three motes to double 10s on the damage roll of a **decisive** surprise attack and to transfer up to (Essence) points of his own Initiative to the animal before it makes the attack.

Raging Devil-Beast Empowerment (5m): Strong and powerful predators can gain this power, which allows their master to pay five motes to grant them incredible strength for one scene. They gain double 9s on feats of strength and rolls to establish control of a grapple, and can grapple enemies of legendary size like tyrant lizards and siaka.

Throat-Ripping Execution (3m): Predators that rely on clinches can gain this power, allowing their master to pay three motes to add the number of rounds of control the animal has over a grapple to the raw damage of a **decisive** savaging attack against that enemy, and allow that attack to ignore hardness. Once per scene unless reset by crashing a grappled enemy.

Unerring God-Hound Scent (5m): Animals with the Keen Nose Merit can gain this power, letting their master pay five motes to magnify their senses a thousandfold for a Perception-based roll. Each 10 rolled grants three successes, and 1s are rerolled until they no longer appear. This can oppose even perfect track-covering magic.

Angler-Lizard

Its great serpentine neck makes up over half of this twenty-foot lizard's body. Angler-lizards lounge on Eastern riverbanks and Western shorelines, plunging their long, toothy snouts into the water to snare fish and other aquatic creatures. Muscular rear legs and corpulent rumps help steady them, the meat from which is a delicacy served at the tables of Serpoletic merchants and Vanehan princes. Those unfamiliar with the animal may fear its predatory appearance, but it is far more meek than it appears, sometimes domesticated by island or riverside peoples to help in hunting fish.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap. Angler-lizards will flee upon taking any damage, often shedding their tails to distract potential predators.

Actions: Find Water: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Aquatic Vision); Stealth: 7 dice; Swim: 4 dice

Resolve 1, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (5 dice to control). Angler-lizards are too weak to grapple enemies of larger size effectively, but will clinch aquatic prey and drag them onto land before devouring them.

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Special Attacks

Lunging Bite: An angler-lizard's neck is around ten feet long, allowing it to make both bite attacks and grapple gambits against enemies at short range. Enemies grappled at range are automatically dragged to close range.

Tail Decoy: An angler-lizard can shed its tail to distract predators. When it takes a withdraw action, it may accept a level of bashing damage as it drops its tail, contributing one success towards the goal number of the action and lowering the Initiative cost to one point per round. Shed tails usually regrow after a season, allowing this ability to be used again, but can also be restored by any magic that heals crippling effects.

Merits

Aquatic Vision: The eyes of the angler-lizard are adapted to spot prey swimming near the shore, adding three dice on any roll they make to spot a character underwater while they are on dry land. They can be trained to keep a lookout for underwater assailants or predators as a latent ability, warning their master with agitated screeching when a threat is spotted.

Armored Terror

The armored terror is dreaded throughout the West and even as far as the Blessed Isle, a massive fish that can grow more than thirty feet long and four tons in weight, and that hunts smaller fish in coastal waters, bringing it into more than occasional contact with fishing vessels and even shoreline populations. Its scales are thicker than steel or bronze armor, and it has a bony, beak-like pair of fangs that sever limbs easily.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x8/-2x8/-4/Incap. Armored terrors are ferocious predators, and are willing to fight without fleeing against smaller enemies, retreating only when wounded by large aquatic predators such as a siaka or giant squid.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 11 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Senses: 4 dice; Swim: 6 dice

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 10 dice (Damage 17, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (11 dice to control). The armored terror makes unopposed control rolls against smaller opponents, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 17/10

Special Attacks

Crushing Bite: The hard, bony jaws of the armored terror can rip through hardened shells and steel armor alike. Any **withering** bite attack it makes ignores four points of armored soak, plus an additional point of armored soak for each extra success on the attack roll.

Whirlpool Maw: Snapping its mouth open with superhuman speed, the armored terror creates a sudden influx of water that draws its prey towards it. It may spend a point of Willpower to attempt to make a bite attack against an enemy at short range that is immersed in water. That character must succeed on a reflexive (Strength + Athletics) roll opposed by the attack roll, or else be drawn into close range of the armored terror, losing three points of Initiative in the process (which are not granted to the terror).

Hull-Crushing Chomp (Latent): An armored terror that has been trained to attack ships can tear through even the armored hull of a Realm battleship. The armored terror receives the benefits of the Charm Sledgehammer Fist Attack (p. XX) when attempting to bite through the hull of a seafaring vessel.

Essence-Piercing Bite Prana (Magical, 5m): The armored terror's master may pay five motes when the beast makes a **decisive** attack against an enemy who is benefitting from an ongoing Charm, Evocation, spell, or similar attack that improves his soak or ability to withstand damage, such as the Charm Diamond-Body Prana or the spell Invulnerable Skin of Bronze. As long as the attack deals more levels of damage than the Essence rating of the character who used the effect, it is canceled. Permanent effects and shintai are immune to negation with this attack.

Merits

Impenetrable Armor: The minimum damage of any **withering** attack made against the armored terror is reduced by one die, to a minimum of zero.

Legendary Size: The armored terror's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the terror with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Sea-Devil Armor Saga (Magical, 4m): As its master pays four motes, the armored terror's bony shell is etched with the strength of the myths told of its invulnerability, granting it hardness equal to its base Initiative. Invoking this power resets the armored terror to base Initiative.

Austrech

The austrech is one of the largest predators in the Southeastern deserts—the average specimen stands just over nine feet tall, and bears talons that put fine knives to shame. Though well-adapted to its arid home, these flightless birds are equally at home in plains, scrublands, and forests. Relatives of the desert austrech are common along the southern coast of the Inland Sea, even ranging as far as An-Teng. In addition to hunting their own prey, they've been known to squabble with lions and claw striders over kills. Wherever they're found, these territorial beasts are an important natural resource for neighboring human tribes. They can make an abundant source of food or leather for tribes that can feasibly hunt them, while any hero brave enough to tame the so-called "Terror bird" will earn a fiercely loyal mount.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap. Austreches will generally flee after taking five levels of damage.

Speed Bonus: +2

Actions: Endure Arid Conditions: 7 dice; Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Find Water: 5 dice; Senses: 5 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Peck): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Talon kick): 8 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Special Attacks

Brutal Kick: Enemies smaller than human size that take 5+ damage from the austrech's **withering** talon kicks are knocked back one range band and fall prone.

Flesh-Rending Beak (Latent): Austreches hunt large prey animals, such as camels and wild dogs, by kicking them savagely with their taloned feet to weaken them before finishing them with their huge beak. Once the austrech has crashed an enemy with a **withering** talon kick attack, it adds two automatic successes on any **decisive** peck attacks it makes against them until they recover from being crashed.

Swift Advance: Whenever the austrech moves to keep pace with an enemy it has successfully rushed, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a **decisive** attack against that enemy.

Iron Talon Stomp (Magical, 6m): The austrech's master may pay six motes to allow it to use its brutal kick special attack against enemies of human or near-human size. Additionally, if the austrech successfully knocks an enemy prone, it may reflexively move one range band closer to it and make a grapple gambit against it. The austrech can only take restrain or savage actions against the clinched enemy, and cannot move without ending the grapple.

Aspect of the Garda (Magical, 5m): The austrech's master may pay five motes to imbue it with the fiery-winged aspect of the garda, causing its feathers to become dancing sprays of flame. The garuda may use its movement action to fly through the air, and its fiery glory adds one automatic success to all attack rolls and one die to all damage rolls. These benefits last for one round. If the austrech does not end its movement on the ground, its master may activate Aspect of the Garda again on the next round, or else the bird falls.

Merits

Desert Endurance: An austrech is adapted for survival in deserts where water can be a scarce commodity, allowing it to survive for a week without water. Even in its final hours, it ignores the usual -3 penalty for dehydration, allowing it one last chance to make it to a water source.

Oasis Rider (Latent): An austrech whose master succumbs to dehydration will take him to the nearest source of water it can find—carrying him on its back if he fainted on the saddle, or dragging him with its beak if not.

Bear

Creation's bears can be found across the map, from the ferocious grizzlies that hunt in Eastern forests to the massive white bears that roam the Northern tundra and the islands of the northwest. Even the wilds of the Blessed Isle are home to bears, though generally of the smaller species, and some Dynasts hunt the beasts for sport, for it is a worthy threat even for the Chosen. A threatened bear will attempt to crush an aggressor in a grapple, breaking their bones with its powerful limbs and savaging them with its deadly fangs.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x5/-4x2/Incap. Bears will flee after taking six levels of damage, unless protecting their young.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 7 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Keen Nose); Tracking: 4 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (9 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 10/2

Special Attack

Crushing Bear Hug: When a bear deals 5+ damage with a **withering** claw attack, it may choose to forgo receiving any Initiative it would normally receive from the attack and instead make a reflexive grapple gambit against that enemy, with no need of an Initiative roll or cost to lock in the clinch. Each point of Initiative it would have gained instead adds one die to the control roll.

Mauling Bite: When the bear makes a **decisive** savaging bite attack against a clinched enemy, it adds +4 to the raw damage of this attack. It can receive this bonus only once per grapple, unless reset by crashing the clinched enemy.

Devour the Weak (Latent): The bear may apply the damage bonus of its mauling bite to any **decisive** attack against any enemy in Initiative Crash even if it is not grappled, making it an

invaluable ally in combat. Once it has successfully used this attack, it cannot do so again for the remainder of that enemy's Initiative Crash.

Merits

Berserker: Wound penalties that would apply to the bear's attack rolls are instead converted to bonus dice.

Ferocious Cub Guardian: When the bear is protecting its young with a Defend Other action, it adds +1 to its Parry rating and ignores any penalties to Defense from flurrying. The bear can be trained to receive the benefits of this Merit when protecting its master as a latent ability.

Keen Nose: Bears applies the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Benthic Knifetooth

These serpentine sharks are true terrors of the deep. Feeding on squid, large fish, and even other sharks, they earn their name and their kills with their unique teeth, each one sporting countless recurved hooks that snag the flesh of prey to deny them any escape. They are nocturnal hunters, and the sight of a twenty foot long serpent swimming alongside a ship, its head frilled with large, distinctive gills, is enough to drive seafarers to madness and superstition. While these deadly, majestic creatures dwell mainly in the deeper reaches of Creation's oceans, competition from other aquatic predators, the curses of ocean gods, or even simple curiosity sometimes send them upwards to attack sailing vessels.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x8/-2x8/-4x2/Incap. A benthic knifetooth will flee after taking 10+ levels of damage

Actions: Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 6 dice (see Night Vision); Stealth: 4 dice; Swim: 5 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 5 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 8/0

Special Attacks

Needle-Tooth Bite: The benthic knifetooth's jaws have sharp, recurved fangs that snag the flesh of wounded prey. When a knifetooth deals 5+ damage with a **withering** bite attack, it may choose to forgo receiving any Initiative it would normally receive from the attack and instead

make a reflexive grapple gambit against that enemy, with no need of an Initiative roll or cost to lock in the clinch. Each point of Initiative it would have gained instead adds one die to the control roll.

Shadow Fang Ambush: The benthic knifetooth swims with its mouth open, its fangs camouflaged against the inner flesh of its maw to fool stronger prey into attacking it first. The first time an enemy makes an attack against the knifetooth in a fight, it may clash with a **decisive** bite attack. This attack can be reset by spending three successive rounds in stealth without making an attack.

Merits

Depth Lurker: Any character attempting to notice the knifetooth while it is deep below them subtracts three success from any Perception-based rolls they make to do so. In combat, this applies as long as the knifetooth is at long range under the water relative to the character, or if it is moving up from long range while already hidden. It may also rush enemies from long range beneath them underwater, as long as the horizontal distance between the two is no more than one range band.

Night Vision: Knifetooths can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Shark Sleep: Knifetooths do not every truly sleep, remaining constantly active. Instead, they may enter a resting phase, during which they remain conscious and can still move, but cannot attack or take other involved physical actions without disrupting their rest. Eight hours spent in this resting phase is equivalent to a night's sleep for the knifetooth.

Boar-Tusk Crocodile

The boar-tusk crocodile is similar in appearance to its aquatic cousins, but is a strictly terrestrial predator, roaming the arid plains of the South and Southeast. As apex predators, boar-tusk crocodiles attack and eat any animal they can reach, including fellow predators like lions and claw striders. The three elongated fangs that give it its name are capable of biting through the thickest hide or scales. Their ungainly forms—twenty feet long and weighing well over a ton—are deceptive, for they can put on sudden bursts of speed capable of catching otherwise-faster creatures unprepared, ramming them with their bony snout.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x4/-2x4/-4x4/Incap. Boar-tusk crocodiles are ferocious predators, and will not back down until they have suffered 10+ levels of damage.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 6 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Sharp Sight); Tracking: 5 dice (see Sharp Sight)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Slam): 10 dice (Damage 14). The bony growths that cover the boar-tusk crocodile's snout can be used to make smashing attacks.

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 13/0

Special Attacks

Crushing Bite: The three elongated fangs that give the boar-tusk crocodile its name have formidable biting pressure. Any **withering** bite attack it makes ignores up to four points of soak, plus an additional point of soak for each extra success on the attack roll. This cannot reduce an enemy's soak below his (Stamina).

Killing Strike: The boar-tusk crocodile takes down prey by ramming them to the ground, then biting at their exposed vitals. Any **decisive** bite attack it makes against a prone enemy adds +5 raw damage.

Ramming Blow: On the turn that a boar-tusk crocodile moves into close range with an enemy, it may make a smashing attack with its bony snout without taking the usual Defense penalty for doing so.

Crushing Bulk (Latent): While boar-tusk crocodiles instinctively go for the kill on any prey they knock prone, they can be trained to immobilize them instead. Whenever it knocks an enemy prone with a smashing attack, it may pay a point of Willpower to make a reflexive grapple gambit that can't be blocked. If successful, it can only restrain the crushed enemy and cannot move without ending the clinch, but the enemy takes a single die of bashing damage that ignores hardness for each round that it is held.

Merits

Sharp Sight: The boar-tusk crocodile applies the double 9s rule on all Perception-based rolls made using sight.

Sundering Bite: The boar-tusk crocodile applies double 8s on all feats of strength to destroy something with its bite.

Bunyip

The bunyip is a gigantic marsupial found in island chains of the West and the grasslands of the East. It's built like a rhinoceros, with a bear-like snout full of grinding teeth, used to eat foliage or dig up roots. The largest specimens are ten feet long and six feet high, weighing three tons. Bunyips typically travel in family groups with a single larger bull male. Lesser males live alone.

Hunters use projectiles to slay the beasts to stay out of reach of their powerful, thick skulls, and wear the teeth as talismans of victory.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4x5/Incap. Bunyips are large enough to fight off dangerous predators, and will not back down until they have taken at least 8+ levels of damage. Females will generally retreat at the first sign of danger if carrying their young in their pouches, but are otherwise just as ferocious as males.

Speed Bonus: +1

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Resist Poison/Disease: 9 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Claw): 7 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Headbutt): 5 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (6 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Special Attacks

Head Bash: When the bunyip deals 3+ levels of damage to an enemy with a **decisive** headbutt attack, that character is knocked back to short range and falls prone. If the enemy's turn comes after the bunyip's, then it is delayed by a number of ticks equal to (levels of damage dealt - Stamina), with the enemy losing his turn if this reduces him to a tick of zero or less. If the bunyip moved into close range with an enemy as part of a successful rush on the same turn it made the attack, double the effective damage dealt for determining how many ticks are lost.

Merits

Keen Nose: Bunyips apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Marsupial: Female bunyips use a pouch to carry their offspring, which are about the size of a large dog. Its young receive the benefits of being protected with a Defend Other action in their mother's pouch, with an effective Parry of 5. Characters of a similar size could potentially gain this benefit if allowed into the bunyip's pouch. They may be trained to accept animals other than their own young as a latent ability. A human child could fit into a bunyip's pouch, as could a small, unencumbered adult.

Sturdy as Stone: A bunyip cannot be knocked back or prone except by magical effects and by creatures of extraordinary size, such as tyrant lizards. Similarly, a grappled bunyip cannot be thrown or slammed unless magic such as Dragon Coil Technique is used, or if the grappling creature is extremely large.

Cat

From bobcats that prowl the Northern mountain ranges to jagarundi that stalk through tropical forests, Creation's fiercest predators are sometimes its smallest. These traits cover small predatory cats as well as domesticated housecats, a common sight in any farming community where rodents threaten the harvest as well as in the palaces of nobles.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap. Domesticated cats will flee after taking any damage, while wild cats will flee after taking three levels of damage.

Actions: Climbing and Jumping: 7 dice; Senses: 7 dice (see Night Vision); Stealth: 8 dice (see Tiny Creature); Wriggle Through Small Spaces: 7 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 4 dice (4). Damage increases to 12 against enemies of the cat's size or smaller.

Attack (Claw): 6 dice (2). Damage increases to 8 against enemies of the cat's size or smaller.

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control). Cats can only grapple enemies of their size or smaller. They cannot throw/slam grappled enemies.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 1 (see Tiny Creature)

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

Special Attacks

Ambush Hunter: The cat adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

Batting Paws: Whenever the cat makes a **decisive** savaging attack against a clinched enemy, it uses its rear paws to bat at it and snap its neck, adding +5 to the raw damage of the attack.

Leaping Pounce: If a cat moves into close range with an enemy of the same size or smaller and deals 5+ damage to it with a **withering** attack on the same turn, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a clinch attack against its prey.

Stalking Shadow Hunter (Latent): When the cat makes a **withering** attack from stealth against a larger enemy, it uses the higher of the two damage ratings for its attacks. This does not allow it to grapple larger characters.

Underfoot Menace (Latent): The cat treats any attack it makes against a larger enemy as being made from stealth for the purposes of its Ambush Hunter and Leaping Pounce special attacks.

Merits

Keen Hearing: Cats double 9s on hearing-based Perception rolls.

Lands on its Feet: Cats apply the double 8s rule on all balance checks. When a cat suffers falling damage, it ignores all dice of damage associated with the fall, and converts automatic levels of damage from the fall to dice that must be rolled.

Night Vision: Cats can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Tiny Creature: Cats add +2 Evasion against any attack made by a larger foe. In addition, larger characters subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice it.

Claw Strider

These reptilian predators are pack hunters of the open plains and savannas, each one as tall as a man and with foot-claws that can gouge out the throat of a horse or camel in a single slash. Packs hunt by running down their prey until exhaustion leaves them weakened, or lying in wait around an oasis to pounce upon a thirsty beast. Elephants, yeddim, and even the rare tyrant lizard have all been felled by coordinated packs of claw striders. The same intelligence that gives rise to these group tactics also makes them tameable, with some desert tribes using them as deadly, but ill-tempered, mounts.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap. Claw striders will flee after taking four levels of damage.

Speed Bonus: +1

Actions: Feats of Strength: 5 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice (see Sharp Sight); Stealth: 6 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Claw): 12 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (7 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice (see Darting Leap)

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 7/4

Special Attacks

Ambush Hunter: The claw strider adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

Distract: The claw strider can make distract gambits to assist its packmates. If it makes a successful gambit from stealth, the bonus it provides increases by two dice. With training, it can also use this special attack to benefit its master as a latent ability.

Pack Hunting: When the claw strider attacks an enemy, it adds one automatic success to the attack roll for each allied claw strider in close range to that enemy, to a maximum of three successes. On a **decisive** attack, it may also pay a point of Willpower to add that many dice to the raw damage of the attack, representing its packmates joining in the attack. A claw strider can be trained to use this special attack in conjunction with human allies as a latent ability.

Swift Advance: Whenever a claw strider moves to keep pace with an enemy it has successfully rushed, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a **decisive** attack against that enemy.

Merits

Darting Leap: When closing with their prey, claw striders move with terrifying speed, leaping and bounding across even rough terrain. They receive double 9s on all rushes.

Sharp Sight: The claw strider applies the double 9s rule on all Perception-based rolls made using sight.

Death Moa

The death moa is a terrifying carnivorous land bird of the Western islands, towering over men and horses. One lunge of its beak shears through flesh and shatters bone, ensuring its status as apex predator on almost every isle where it's found. Death moa predatory tactics are brutally simple—chase down prey and savage it until only carrion is left.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Death moas are ferocious, and will only flee after taking 7+ levels of damage. If they have already incapacitated an enemy, they may fight on longer to defend their kill.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Intimidate: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Sharp Sight); Tracking: 6 dice (see Sharp Sight)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Peck): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 9/0

Special Attacks

Blade-Beak Frenzy: Whenever the death moa makes a **decisive** peck attack, it may convert one extra success to a die of raw damage for every two points of Initiative it has over the target. Against enemies in Initiative Crash, it adds all extra successes to damage and applies double 10s to the damage roll.

Furious Rampage: Whenever the death moa attacks or rushes an enemy who is in Initiative Crash, it adds two automatic successes on the roll.

Lunging Beak: A death moa may make both peck and clinch attacks against enemies at short range. Enemies grappled at range are automatically dragged to close range.

Unstoppable Doom-Bird Might (Magical, 10m): Whenever the death moa receives an Initiative Break, its master may pay ten motes to use Unstoppable Doom-Bird Might. For the next five rounds, it treats all enemies as being in Initiative Crash for its Blade-Beak Frenzy and Furious Rampage attacks.

Merits

Sharp Sight: The death moa applies the double 9s rule on all Perception-based rolls made using sight.

Dog/Wolf

Canines are among the most common animals found in Creation, from the wolves that hunt the wilds to the loyal hounds that serves as hunting beasts, war animals, guards, and pets. These traits are appropriate for a dog bred for hunting or warfare, or for a wild wolf or similar canine predator.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x2/-4/Incap. Dogs will usually flee after taking two levels of damage, unless fighting to protect their master or at his command. Wolves generally flee after taking four levels of damage.

Actions: Intimidate: 3 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 3 dice; Tracking: 7 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 9)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (5 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Special Attacks

Harry: Biting at the heels of its prey, the canine denies it the chance to flee. On the turn that a hound or wolf moves into close range of an enemy, if it deals 5+ damage to them with a **withering** attack, that enemy cannot disengage or withdraw on their next turn.

Pack Hunting: When the hound or wolf attacks an enemy, it adds one automatic success to the attack roll for each allied pack member in close range to that enemy, to a maximum of three successes. On a **decisive** attack, it may also pay a point of Willpower to add that many dice to the raw damage of the attack, representing its packmates joining in the attack. Ordinarily, this special attack can only be used with other canine allies. Using it in conjunction with human allies is a latent ability that can be developed through training.

Hold at Bay (Latent): After successfully impeding a foe's movement with its harry attack, the canine may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively attempt to grapple them, converting extra successes on the attack roll to bonus dice on the control roll. The hound can only restrain or savage an enemy clinched this way—it cannot throw, slam, or drag them.

Snarling Guardian Attack (Latent): Whenever an enemy attacks the dog or wolf's master while it is protecting him with a defend other action, the animal may respond with a **decisive** counterattack. It may use this counterattack to make a disarm or distract gambit.

Foe-Maiming Guardian's Fangs (Magical, 1m): Whenever the canine makes a **decisive** bite attack against an enemy who has attacked or threatened its master, the Exalt may pay one mote to apply the double 10s rule to the damage roll. If he is currently suffering any wound penalties due to a confrontation involving that enemy, then his wound penalties are added as bonus dice to the hound's attack roll.

Merits

Keen Nose: Dogs and wolves apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Discerning Scent (Latent): The dog or wolf has been trained to pick up on a specific type of scent—human scents picked up from clothes, poisons, drugs, undead flesh, firedust, or so forth. Its Keen Nose allows it to apply the double 8s rule when smelling out the chosen scent, rather than double 9s. Additionally, if the canine has been trained in Wary Watchdog Vigilance, its effects also apply to such rolls. A dog can be trained in this Merit multiple times to pick up multiple distinct scents.

Loyal Guardian (Latent): The dog or wolf may flurry a defend other action with any other action without suffering the usual penalties of a flurry.

Wary Watchdog Vigilance (Latent): The dog or wolf adds one automatic success on any roll to notice a hidden character. Upon doing so, it barks loudly enough to wake its master and his allies from sleep, if needed.

Heroic Guardian-Beast Resilience (Magical): Throwing itself between its master and an attack, the hound's loyalty diverts a fatal blow. If an enemy overcomes the canine's Defense while it is protecting its master with a defend other action, he must choose to attack the beast, rather than its master. Additionally, such an attack cannot reduce the hound to its Incapacitated health level—any levels of damage that would go beyond its -4 health level are prevented. Once this protection has been invoked the first time in a scene, the hound is vulnerable to being incapacitated until it has healed at least one health level naturally.

Eagle

Eagles soar across much of Creation. Diving downward from the sky, they seize their prey, ranging from rats to rabbits to small dogs, and either kill it outright with their talons or let a long fall do the work for them. Tales of them attacking children or horses are common throughout the Western isles and the forested Northeast, though discounted elsewhere. Eagles are a common sight on the Blessed Isle, the West, and the North. They are found in the East as well, but competition with the mospid and the strix makes their predation less prevalent.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2x2/-4/Incap. Eagles will usually flee if struck for more than two health levels of damage, unless cornered or defending their young.

Actions: Fly: 10 dice; Stealth: 5 dice; Tracking: 5 dice (see Eagle Eye); Senses: 6 dice (see Eagle Eye)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Talons): 10 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (4 dice to control). An eagle can carry seized enemies the size of a housecat, rodent, small monkey, or similar prey indefinitely. They can grapple enemies up to the size of a dog or small gazelle, but only for an instant, relinquishing the grapple at the end of their turn (which may cause falling damage if the eagle ascends). Eagles cannot slam or throw clinched enemies.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 2/0

Special Attacks

Death Dive: As long as the eagle is able to soar up to long range from the ground, it may dive down at an enemy with devastating force. The first time it moves down into close range with an enemy while airborne and makes a **decisive** attack, it may add four dice to the attack roll and

apply the double 10s rule on the damage roll. Once it has used this special attack, it must regain altitude, returning back to vertical long range before it can do so again.

Swooping Descent: An eagle that flies downward to make a **decisive** surprise attack or ambush against an enemy adds two automatic successes to the attack roll. Note that an eagle soaring high in the sky is generally beyond the range of sensory detection for characters who lack superhuman sight, ensuring an ambush on first strike and providing the possibility of reestablishing stealth in combat by simply flying higher than enemies can see.

Iron Wings Carry (Magical, 3m): The eagle's master may strengthen it by spending three motes. The eagle adds (its master's Essence) to all rolls to establish control of a clinch, and can grapple enemies of human size normally. In addition, it may carry even heavy weapons such as daiklaves in its talons, which is useful in conjunction with its disarm ability. Dropping a weapon (or other large object) from a great height is imprecise, but potentially devastating. The eagle receives only four dice for such attack rolls, but the damage is equivalent to suffering a fall from the height of the dropped object (although the Storyteller may reduce or waive damage outright for particularly small objects). The empowerment of Iron Wings Carry lasts for a number of rounds equal to the master's (Essence x 2).

Merits

Eagle Eye: While soaring high in the air, the eagle receives five bonus dice on any visual Perception-based rolls made to notice things, and can make out the fine details of far-off objects even when it is flying potentially miles above them. It also automatically succeeds on any roll to track a character while airborne, unless that character is employing perfect track-covering magic.

Eagle Wing Rush: An eagle may rush enemies from long range above them, as long as the horizontal distance between them is still at short range.

Elephant/Mammoth

Elephants and mammoths are respected and revered as totems of strength and power throughout all Creation, from the savannas of the south to the arctic wastes of the far North. Full-grown bulls, who typically travel alone or in loose groups, stand twice the height of a mortal and weigh up to seven tons. Females gather in intimate family groups with one another and their young; they have two-thirds of a male's height and mass. Tusks—found on male Southwestern elephants, or both genders elsewhere—are used to guard against predators, engage in mating battles, and tear up roots and bark for fodder. They gather near rivers, lakes, and other water sources.

Elephants live for decades, and their intelligence, memory, and emotional sophistication are akin to a human's. They gather food and use tools with their prehensile trunks, and though they cannot speak, they exhibit love and grief, generosity and humor. Many are kept in captivity to haul goods, transport passengers, or trample foes in war. Hunters kill wild elephants for their valuable ivory. Many northern tribes also use the mammoth as a valuable meat source.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x6/-2x6/-4x6/Incap. Elephants or mammoths will flee after taking 4+ levels of damage, unless protecting their young.

Speed Bonus: +1

Actions: Feats of Strength: 13 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Find Water: 13 dice; Intimidate: 5 dice; Senses: 5 dice; Endure Arctic/Desert Conditions: 7 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Stomp): 10 dice (Damage 16, minimum 4)

Attack (Tusks): 7 dice (Damage 20, minimum 5)

Attack (Trunk): 8 dice (Damage 15). An elephant's trunk can be used to make smashing attacks (p. XX).

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (9 dice to control). The elephant makes unopposed control rolls against enemies of smaller size, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 16/6

Special Attacks

Gore: The elephant's **decisive** tusk attacks add extra successes to damage against enemies with lower Initiative, as long as the elephant has not taken any other actions (including reflexive movement actions) that turn.

Rampaging Stampede: The elephant may pay a point of Willpower to flurry a **withering** stomp attack followed by a **decisive** tusk or trunk attack. Each attack must have a different target.

Trample: When the elephant closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

Trunk Grapple (Latent): An elephant can be trained to clinch enemies with its trunk. It does not take a Defense penalty for grappling an enemy held in its trunk, but cannot make savaging attacks against them—it can only hold or throw them.

Merits

Keen Nose: Elephants double 9s on scent-based Perception rolls.

Legendary Size: Elephants' and mammoths' size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage them in combat. They do not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop them below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to an elephant or mammoth with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Emperor Sloth

While the tree sloths that slowly amble among the branches of Creation's forests are ridiculed for their preposterous slowness and lazy behavior, their gigantic cousins the emperor sloths are feared. Rivaling elephants for size, they rise up on their hind legs to forage among the leaves of trees that their smaller kin climb, and scavenge on the carrion left behind by Eastern predators to supplement their diet with meat. When given the opportunity, they may turn carnivore, using their immense strength and deadly claws to fell hapless prey such as deer, cattle, or humans.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 2 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4x5/Incap. Emperor sloths are dangerous but not particularly ferocious, and will retreat after taking 3+ levels of damage. If they are attempting to prey on another animal (or human), they may persist until they have taken 6+ levels of damage.

Speed Bonus: +0

Actions: Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats); Scare Away Predators: 6 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Keen Scent and Night Vision); Tracking: 6 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Claw): 9 dice (Damage 15, minimum 3)

Attack (Slam): 7 dice (Damage 17, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (10 dice to control). The emperor sloth makes unopposed control rolls against smaller enemies, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 12/3

Special Attacks

Sloth's Rage: Emperor sloths are not known for their quick reflexes or killing speed, but they are dangerous enemies nonetheless. At the end of each turn, the sloth loses a point of Initiative (to a minimum of Initiative 1). However, each point of Initiative lost this way adds +1 to the raw damage of all **decisive** attacks the sloth makes that fight, to a maximum bonus of +5. If the emperor sloth loses Join Battle against all enemies, this damage bonus begins at +3 for the duration of the fight, and can be increased up to a maximum of +8.

Rampaging Death-Sloth Frenzy (Latent, Magical, 10m): The first time the emperor sloth falls into Initiative Crash in a fight, its master may pay ten motes to avert the crash, resetting the sloth to its base Initiative and rolling Join Battle for it with his (Charisma + Survival). The rampaging death-sloth frenzy stops the Initiative drain of sloth's rage, but maintains any damage bonuses from it. If the emperor sloth crashes the enemy who crashed it at any point in the next three rounds, its combat action is reset as though it had Initiative Shifted (but it does not roll Join Battle again).

Merits

Keen Nose: Emperor sloths apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Legendary Size: The emperor sloth's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the sloth with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Night Vision: Emperor sloths can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Giant Constrictor

Legendary terrors of the Eastern jungles and Western bogs, giant constrictors refer to any variety of constricting snakes such as the anaconda or boa that can grow to monstrous sizes in Creation, reaching extremes of fifty or sixty feet in isolated ecosystems. They use their massive coils to crush the breath out of prey such as deer, capybaras, and unfortunate humans, while swallowing smaller animals like fish or birds whole. Some make their home among the treetops, blending in with foliage before falling onto an unsuspecting victim, while others hunt in rivers, swimming under the surface of water before lunging out to claim a hapless animal that stopped for a drink.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x2/-2x3/-4x3/Incap. Giant constrictors will flee after taking 6+ levels of damage, unless they are in the middle of crushing their prey to death.

Actions: Climbing: 6 dice; Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice (see Thermal Sense); Stealth: 5 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (14 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 8/0

Special Attacks

Crushing Coils: Giant constrictors take no Defense penalties from grappling, and can drag an enemy on the same turn it makes a savaging attack against it.

Uncoiling Serpent Rush: Every turn the constrictor does not take a movement action, it stocks a single success, up to a maximum of three. Each successes it has stocked adds +1 Evasion. If it rushes an enemy, it adds all stocked successes to the roll, and to the roll of any grapple attack it makes on the same turn in a flurry. If it received the maximum bonus of three successes, it may also reflexively move one range band closer to an enemy without it counting as its movement action for the turn. Any other movement actions waste all stocked successes.

Merits

Camouflage: Giant constrictors double 9s on Stealth rolls while hidden amid treetops or dense foliage. Aquatic variants of the species gain this benefit while swimming or slithering through mud.

Thermal Sense: Giant constrictors may sense the body heat of their prey, doubling 9s on any Perception-based roll to notice a warm-blooded character and allowing them to ignore penalties for visual obstacles such as darkness or mist.

Gorilla

Gorillas range from the mountains of the Northeast to the lowlands of the Eastern threshold and the Blessed Isle, greatest of the great apes in strength in size. A group of gorillas is generally led by its oldest male, the silverback. While usually herbivorous and peaceful, a silverback will respond to a perceived threat with an intimidating display of savage howls and chest-beating, and will seize on any perceived weakness to savagely attack an intruder. Humans who wander into gorilla territory have met gruesome deaths for the mistake of trying to flee from a raging silverback, but those wise enough to stand resolute against this display can force the ape to back down, and find the troop to be peaceful, almost accepting after that. Legends of children raised by gorillas are a testament to the gentle, intelligent nature of these beasts.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/Incap. When a troop of gorillas comes under attack, the oldest male will fight to the death to defend the rest as they retreat.

Actions: Climbing: 4 dice; Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidation: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 4 dice

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Fists): 10 dice (Damage 13)

Attack (Grapple): 10 dice (10 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Special Attacks

Furious Rampage: Gorillas relentlessly pursue any enemy who displays weakness, adding three successes on attacks and rushes against crashed enemies.

Howling Aggression: A gorilla may Join Battle with its intimidation dice pool, attempting to frighten enemies into fleeing by shaking large tree branches, beating its chest, or baring fangs. It may take its turn on the first round before that of any enemy whose Resolve was overcome by the roll, regardless of its actual Initiative rating.

Mauling Bite: When the gorilla makes a **decisive** bite attack against a clinched enemy, it adds +4 to the raw damage of this attack. It can receive this bonus only once per clinch, unless reset by crashing the clinched enemy.

Savaging Strength (Latent): A gorilla that has been trained for combat can put its strength to use in denying enemies escape. It may a point of Willpower to convert up to five dice on the control roll of a clinch to automatic successes.

Ape-Hand Mastery (Latent): A gorilla can be trained to wield medium or heavy weapons that require minimal finesse, such as clubs or tiger claws, with an attack pool of (4 + weapon accuracy) for attacks made with them. Each training regimen teaches it how to use a single weapon.

Merits

Keen Nose: Gorillas apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Great Cat

Sabertooths tigers in the North, jaguars and panthers that prowl the treetops of dense Eastern forests, lions and cheetahs roaming the Southern savannas—all these and more make up the great cats of Creation, deadly ambush predators that generally keep to the wilderness, wandering into human settlements only when forced by hunger or divine curses. The traits below are appropriate for a generic great cat, but the Storyteller may customize them to reflect a specific breed, such as giving a cheetah the swift advance attack, or a panther the agile climber Merit.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (see Stalking Cat Advantage)

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Great cats will typically flee after taking six levels of damage.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidating Growl: 5 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Scent and Night Vision); Stealth: 7 dice (see Camouflage); Tracking: 6 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 3, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Claw): 13 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (10 dice to control). Great cats cannot throw or slam grappled enemies.

Combat Movement: 10 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Special Attacks

Ambush Hunter: The great cat adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

Leaping Pounce: If a great cat moves into close range with an enemy of the same size or smaller and deals 5+ damage to it with a **withering** attack on the same turn, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a grapple gambit against its prey.

Mauling Bite: When the great cat makes a savaging **decisive** attack against a clinched enemy, it adds +4 to the raw damage of this attack. It can receive this bonus only once per clinch, unless reset by crashing the clinched enemy.

Pouncing Shadow: Great cats may pay a point of Willpower when they roll Stealth to ignore the usual -3 penalty for moving while concealed. In addition, each turn it spends in stealth, it stocks a single die, up to a maximum of three dice. On the turn that it breaks stealth, it adds these dice both to any movement actions it makes and to the raw damage of any grappling or **decisive** attacks it makes.

Merits

Camouflage: The patterning of a great cat's fur allows it to blend into the scenery. Whenever it is in its native territory—a tiger in a jungle, a lion on the savannah, a sabertooth in the plains or tundra—it applies double 9s on Stealth rolls. A great cat can be trained to stalk through unfamiliar environments as a latent ability, allowing it to apply double 9s to any Stealth roll it makes while hiding under cover, and double 8s while in its native territory.

Keen Nose and Hearing: Great cats apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent or hearing.

Night Vision: Great cats can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Stalking Cat Advantage: Great cats adds one automatic success to any Join Battle roll made while in stealth.

Battle Cat (Latent): Great cats in the wild rely on ambush tactics to take down weaker prey, and generally avoid animals capable of fighting back against them. With training, they can be taught to defend against the tactics of trained combatants, adding +1 Evasion against any attack made by an enemy with lower Initiative and +1 Evasion against any attack made from medium range or further. These bonuses stack.

Hellboar

Hellboars are one of the most feared beasts of the East and Blessed Isle, extreme omnivores that can crack human bones between their tusks just as easily as they gruffle up roots and tubers. Hellboars will cripple their prey with a bite that crunches through ligaments and bone, then stomp them to death before eating the remains. Hunters are not foolish enough to try to take down these beasts—save perhaps for Dynasts with more foolhardy pride than good sense—but sometimes follow behind them, waiting until the boar has eaten its fill before scavenging carrion or root vegetables upturned by its wandering snout.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x5/-2x5/-4/Incap. Hellboars will wander away from any prey that seems like too much trouble to subdue, generally fleeing after taking 5+ levels of damage in hopes of finding carrion or foliage to devour instead.

Speed Bonus: +1

Actions: Feats of Strength: 13 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Hide Food For Later: 5 dice; Intimidating Grunt: 6 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 5 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 14, minimum 5).

Attack (Stomp): 6 dice (Damage 11)

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 2

Soak/Hardness: 12/5

Special Attacks

Bone-Crunching Bite: The hellboar's heavy incisors and powerful molars can easily shatter bone with a bite, crippling its prey before the beast finishes it off. An enemy damaged by a **decisive** bite attack is inflicted with a Crippling penalty to all Strength and Dexterity-based actions equal to the extra successes on the attack for the rest of the scene. This penalty can stack up to a maximum of -5.

Death Stomp: The hellboar's **decisive** stomp attacks deal +5 damage against prone enemies.

Trample: When the hellboar closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

Femur-Smashing Crunch (Latent): When the hellboar delivers an attack that raises an enemy's crippling penalty from Bone-Crunching Bite to -5, it may pay a point of Willpower to fracture their legs or spinal cord, knocking them prone and leaving them unable to take any movement actions for the rest of the scene. A character may recover from this crippling paralysis with a miscellaneous (Stamina + Resistance) roll action at difficulty 4.

Merits

Berserker: Wound penalties that would apply to the bear's attack rolls are instead converted to bonus dice.

Iron Stomach: Hellboars can eat anything from bones to offal to poisonous foliage, and come off little the worse for it. They apply the double 8s rule on all rolls to forage for food or to resist an ingested poison.

Keen Nose: Hellboars apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Predator's Hunger: Whenever a hellboar rolls Join Battle against an enemy it could conceivably eat, if it has not eaten within the last day or more, it may reroll any 1s until they fail to appear. A hellboar's master can train it to apply this Merit to all Join Battle rolls as a latent ability by conditioning it to equate successful battle with a feast of carrion.

Horse

Renowned for grace and speed, horses are high-strung creatures; strong smells, fire, or other stresses can madden them unless calmed. They can gallop at top speed for a couple of miles at most; pressing them further without rest can result in permanent harm or death. Horses are intelligent and curious, with senses keener than a mortal's.

Domesticated horses are trained from birth to accept people, wear tack, and perform various tasks. Fully grown, they serve many purposes: steeds, beasts of burden, plowbeasts, and sources of meat, milk, hair, and leather. Dozens of distinct breeds range from nimble, hot-blooded riding horses—typically five feet tall and weighing more than half a ton—to patient, physically powerful draft animals and war mounts that measure up to six feet and over a ton. Hooves are shod with leather, bronze, or iron shoes to protect against damage. They require daily grooming and exercise.

Feral horses, wild horses, and other equines (such as the quagga and zebra) move in small family groups or large herds across plains and savannah. These beasts are smaller and more lightly built than domesticated horses. Breaking them to the saddle is quite difficult, but within the capabilities of a master trainer.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4x2/Incap. Wild horses will generally flee after taking 2+ levels of damage.

Speed Bonus: +4

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Senses: 5 dice

Resolve 1, Guile 1

Combat:

Attack (Kick): 6 dice (Damage 14)

Combat Movement: 12 dice (see Swift-Hooved)

Evasion 3, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Special Attacks

Brutal Kick: Enemies smaller than human size that take 5+ damage from the horse's **withering** stomps are knocked back one range band and fall prone.

Merits

Swift-Hooved: Horses apply the double 9s rule on all rolls to disengage or withdraw. When trained, they may apply this Merit to rush rolls as well as a latent ability.

Ichneumon Hunter

The terrifying ichneumon hunter is the scourge of Southern herders. While the male of the species is a harmless fly, the female is a flying wasp the size of a small dog, with an ovipositor as long and sharp as a dagger. It uses this to puncture the flesh of sheep, goats, cattle, or whatever warm-blooded hosts are common throughout the region, and implant its eggs to grow, hatch, and eventually feed on their unwilling host. While it is not common for them to implant their brood

in a human host, the agonizing deaths of those who suffer this fate are more than horrific enough to make up for this. Herders protect their flocks (and children) from the ichneumon by burning foul-smelling herbs in huge firepots day and night, while physicians and medicine men prescribe infusions of wormwood to kill off implanted eggs before they have a chance to hatch.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 2; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap. Ichneumon hunters will not flee from a chance to implant their eggs, mindlessly putting the propagation of the species above their own lives, but will otherwise retreat after taking any damage.

Actions: Fly: 7 dice; Senses: 4 dice (see Host Scent); Stealth: 9 dice; Tracking: 3 dice (see Host Scent)

Resolve 1, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Sting): 8 dice (Damage 10)

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 2

Soak: 1/0

Special Attacks

Ambush Hunter: The ichneumon hunter adds three dice on all attack rolls made from stealth.

Buzzing Advance: The ichneumon hunter adds one automatic success on any rush against a warm-blooded mammal that could host its eggs, and does not take penalties for flurrying a rush and a sting attack on the same turn against such prey.

Infestation: A living enemy damaged by a **decisive** sting attack must roll to resist having the ichneumon hunter's eggs implanted in its body, a parasitic infestation modeled as a disease with virulence 4, morbidity 2, and an interval of one month. Fully-grown ichneumon hunters emerge from the corpse of anyone who dies of the infestation.

Corpse-Hive Prana (Magical, 1m): When the ichneumon hunter makes a **decisive** sting attack against an undead creature with flesh such as a zombie (but not a materialized ghost or Abyssal Exalt), its master may pay one mote to quicken the hunter's eggs as they are implanted in dead flesh, causing them to quickly hatch and devour the creature alive. In addition to the damage of the attack, the undead is filled with flesh-eating wasps, dealing one die of lethal damage (which ignores hardness) to it every time it takes a turn. Fire will drive the wasplings away from the afflicted undead, allowing a zombie's master to drive them away by spending a miscellaneous action to brandish a torch or similar source of flame if it is available.

Merits

Host Scent: Ichneumon hunters are keenly attuned to the scent of warm-blooded prey that can host their eggs, adding three automatic successes on any Perception-based roll to notice or track them. This does not apply to rolls opposing stealth attempts.

Brood-Sense Meditation (Magical): The ichneumon hunter is conjoined to the Essence of its parasitic brood, and can sense their emerging lives as they grow within its prey. Against any character infested with the hunter's eggs, the bonus granted by Host Scent increases to five automatic successes, and allows its tracking to contest even perfect track-covering magic such as the Charm Traceless Passage.

Mospid

This flying, feathered lizard is smaller than an eagle, but far more nimble, with a two-foot wingspan and feathered tufts on its tail and thumb that allow for precise maneuvering. They are fearsome nocturnal hunters in their native forests, swooping down to catch prey and savaging it to death with their sharp claws. While they are far more difficult to tame than any falcon, they are favored as hunting animals by the Dragon-Blooded nobles of the Realm, both for their killing prowess and as a symbol of their master's own might.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2x2/-4/Incap. Mospids will usually flee after taking any damage, even those that have been trained as hunting beasts.

Actions: Fly: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Eagle Eye and Night Vision); Tracking: 5 dice (see Eagle Eye and Night Vision)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Claw): 9 dice (Damage 9)

Attack (Grapple): 5 dice (5 dice to control). A mospid can carry seized enemies the size of a housecat, rodent, small monkey, or similar prey indefinitely. They can grapple enemies up to the size of a dog, but only for an instant, relinquishing the grapple at the end of their turn (which may cause falling damage if the mospid ascends). Mospids cannot slam or throw clinched enemies.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 4/0

Special Attacks

Death Dive: As long as the mospid is able to soar up to long range from the ground, it may dive down at an enemy with devastating force. The first time it moves down into close range with an enemy while airborne and makes a **decisive** attack, it may add four dice to the attack roll and

apply the double 10s rule on the damage roll. Once it has used this special attack, it must regain altitude, returning back to vertical long range before it can do so again.

Harry: Mospids hunt aerial prey by denying them any chance of escape. On the turn that a mospid moves into close range of an enemy, if it deals 5+ damage to them with a **withering** attack, that enemy cannot disengage or withdraw on their next turn.

Dread Clutches (Latent): When the mospid savages a clinched enemy with an attack, it may also choose to drag him along with any movement actions it takes.

Hold at Bay (Latent): After successfully impeding a foe's movement with its harry attack, a mospid may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively attempt to clinch them, converting extra successes on the attack roll to bonus dice on the clinch roll. The mospid can only hold or savage an enemy clinched this way—it cannot drag them, unless it knows and uses Dread Clutches.

Merits

Eagle Eye: Mospids receive five bonus dice on any visual Perception-based rolls made to notice something while soaring high in the air, and can make out the fine details of far-off objects even when flying miles above them. They also automatically succeed on rolls to track a character while airborne, unless that character is employing perfect track-covering magic.

Eagle Wing Rush: An eagle may dive to rush enemies from above at long range, provided the horizontal distance between them is still short range.

Night Vision: Mospids can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Precise Maneuvering: Mospids apply double 9s on all movement actions made while in flight. If they are in an environment where they must maneuver around obstacles or tight passages, such as a heavily forested area, apply double 8s instead.

Ox-Dragon

Ox-dragons shake the mighty cedars of the forests with their passage, clearing a wide swathe through any underbrush and scattering both man and beast alike. These massive saurian quadrupeds grow up to over a dozen tons in weight and thirty feet long from beak to tail. Two long horns and a distinctive bony frill jut out from their skull, while a smaller, third horn tips the front of their snout. Their formidable strength and natural weapons makes them more than a match for almost any predator. The ox-dragon itself is foul-tempered and easily provoked—though it usually feeds by knocking down young trees and large plants before stripping them bare using its powerful beak, like the boar it's an opportunistic omnivore, and will devour carrion or attack smaller, vulnerable animals.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x8/-2x8/-4x6/Incap. Ox-dragons will generally flee after taking 10+ levels of damage, unless protecting their young.

Speed Bonus: +3. Ox-dragons have the potential to make mounts of extraordinary quality, but are all but untameable.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Senses: 7 dice

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Horns): 7 dice (Damage 19, minimum 6)

Attack (Stomp): 9 dice (Damage 17, minimum 4)

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (6 dice to control): The ox-dragon makes unopposed control rolls, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 12 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 13/7

Special Attacks

Deadly Charge: Every range band that the ox-dragon moves towards an enemy in a straight line grants it two points of Initiative. This Initiative continues to build until it closes to close range with that enemy and makes a **decisive** attack. If the ox-dragon takes a movement action that does not bring it directly closer towards the charged enemy, makes a **withering** attack, or attacks a different enemy, it loses all Initiative built up with this attack.

Gore: The ox-dragon's **decisive** horn attacks add extra successes to damage against enemies with lower Initiative, as long as it has not taken any other actions (including reflexive movement actions) that turn.

Trample: When the ox-dragon closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

Horn Toss (Latent): After dealing 3+ levels of damage to an enemy with a **decisive** horn attack, the ox-dragon may reflexively grapple and immediately slam him for additional damage, catching him in its horns and tossing him aside. The ox-dragon makes a control roll, and may then throw the enemy out to short range. Once per fight.

Merits

Legendary Size: The ox-dragon's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a

post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the ox-dragon with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Pestletail

These herbivores, found largely in the Northeast and the Eastern forests, inhabit any terrain capable of sustaining their enormous appetites. An adult pestletail is ten feet long and weighs two tons. Its round, inch-thick bony shell is shaped like a turtle's, covered in bony plates like an armadillo's. Similar plating caps both head and tail.

Pestletails are largely inoffensive herbivores, consuming grasses, foliage, roots, shrubs, or even small trees. Most predators leave them alone, both because of their shells and because they fight back with short, powerful clawed limbs and beaked snouts, but human hunters find pestletail shells valuable, hollowing them out for use as weatherproof shelter.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 3 dice

Health Levels: -0x4/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Pestletails are gentle-natured, and will attempt to retreat from any enemy strong enough to pierce its powerful nature defenses after taking 6+ levels of damage.

Speed Bonus: +0

Actions: Feats of Strength: 14 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Resist Poison/Disease: 7 dice; Senses: 4 dice

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Claws): 6 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Tail slam): 5 dice (Damage 17, minimum 4). A pestletail's bony tail can be used to make smashing attacks (p. XX).

Combat Movement: 3 dice

Evasion 2, Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 17/10

Special Attacks

Claw Stomp (Latent): A pestletail that has been trained for combat adds two automatic successes to the attack roll and two dice to the raw damage of any claw attack it makes against a prone enemy.

Smashing Tail Hammer (Latent): The pestletail may pay a point of Willpower before making a **decisive** tail slam attack to grant the attack the benefits of the Solar Charm Heaven Thunder

Hammer if it hits. Using Smashing Tail Hammer counts as making a smashing attack, and incurs the additional Defense penalty for such.

Merits

Bony Shell: Withdrawing into its heavy shell affords a pestletail extraordinary defense. It may take Full Defense actions without losing any Initiative. In addition, Full Defense actions add four to the pestletail's soak and hardness as well as increasing its Defense.

Impenetrable Armor: The minimum damage of any **withering** attack made against the pestletail is reduced by one die, to a minimum of zero.

Sturdy as Stone: A pestetail cannot be knocked back or prone except by magical effects and by creatures of extraordinary size, such as tyrant lizards. Similarly, a grappled pestletail cannot be thrown or slammed unless magic such as Dragon Coil Technique is used, or if the grappling creature is gigantic.

Hardened Shell Superiority (Latent): Whenever a **withering** attack against the pestletail fails to deal any damage, the attacker loses a point of Initiative which is granted to the beast. Whenever a **decisive** attack fails to damage it, the pestletail gains an Initiative Break of 5 points.

Quoll-Lion

Vaguely feline in appearance, the quoll-lion's stocky frame is more like that of a bear. Though typically little larger than a jaguar, it's deadlier than other natural predators of its size. Its jaws are as powerful as a lion's, and it can stand upright on its hind legs and tail to lash out with massive forelimbs tipped with huge retractable claws.

These nocturnal hunters stalk the deep forests of the East, their striped fur blending into the foliage. Others haunt wooded Western islands and the jungles of the Caul. Much of their lives take place above ground as they leap upon prey from above, then drag carcasses into the lower branches.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice (see Stalking Cat Advantage)

Health Levels: -0/-1x4/-2x4/-4/Incap. Quoll-lions will typically flee after taking six levels of damage.

Actions: Climbing: 8 dice (see Agile Climber); Feats of Strength: 7 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Hiding Carcasses in Trees: 6 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Scent and Night Vision); Stealth: 7 dice (see Drop Predator); Tracking: 7 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Claw): 11 dice (Damage 10)

Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (5 dice to control). Quoll-lions cannot throw or slam grappled prey.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

Special Attacks

Ambush Hunter: The quoll-lion adds three on all attack rolls made from stealth.

Falling Fang Strike: A quoll-lion may jump down to attack characters from short or medium range with a single movement action, and takes no falling damage from doing so. Each range band crossed adds one automatic success to the damage roll of the attack. If the quoll-lion ambushes an enemy in this way, the target instead take damage equivalent to the falling damage for the distance of the descent. All characters who witness the attack are stunned by this sudden attack if they were not aware of the quoll-lion, losing three points of Initiative. Falling Fang Strike can only be used once per scene unless reset by spending three consecutive rounds at medium range above all enemies.

Merits

Agile Climber: Quoll-lions apply double 8s on all rolls to climb through trees and other foliage.

Drop Predator: In environments where the quoll-lion can climb into trees above its prey, it hides over them, imposing a -4 penalty on any rolls made to notice it. Characters native to the quoll-lion's habitat, or who have a native guide, may reduce this penalty to -2 if they are careful to look out above them, though this halves the speed at which they can move. Characters with superhuman hearing, scent, or applicable exotic senses ignore this penalty entirely.

Keen Nose: Quoll-lions applies the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent. If the roll is made to pick up the scent of prey, apply the double 8s rule instead.

Night Vision: Quoll-lions can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Marsupial: Female quoll-lions carry their young in a pouch. Quoll-kits gain the benefits of being protected with a Defend Other action in their mother's pouch, with an effective Parry of 5. Other creatures the size of a housecat or smaller could potentially gain this benefit if allowed into the quoll-lion's pouch. They may be trained to accept animals other than their own young as a latent ability.

Stalking Shadow Advantage: Quoll-lions adds one automatic success to any Join Battle roll made while in stealth.

Raiton

These small, black-feathered reptiles have clawed wings and a beak full of small, sharp teeth. Omnivores, they hunt rodents and other small ground creatures, gather fruits and seeds, and

scavenge dead meat. Flocks circle battlefields and slaughterhouses alike, driving off other carrion-eaters from the feats of carcasses below. This gives the raiton an ill-omened reputation—across Creation, raitons are taken as portents of future death or strife.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap. Raitons scatter when attacked, even if they are not actually harmed.

Actions: Fly: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Carrion Hunter); Stealth: 4 dice (see Tiny Creature); Tracking: 6 dice (see Carrion Hunter)

Resolve 1, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Peck): 6 dice (Damage 3). Against creatures of its own size or smaller, the raiton's peck deals 9 damage.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 1 (see Tiny Creature)

Soak/Hardness: 1/0

Merits

Carrion Hunter: Raitons add three automatic successes on any Perception-based roll to detect, locate, or track the scent of dead flesh, making them a common sight at battlefields. This bonus also applies on rolls to identify diseased carrion.

Tiny Creature: Raitons add +2 Evasion against any attack made by a larger foe. In addition, larger characters subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice them.

River Dragon

The river dragon is a ferocious predator of river mouths and freshwater bays in the East and Southwest, more than thirty feet long with jaws lined with hundreds of spiky teeth. Large fish, seals, and the occasional whale that becomes trapped in fresh water are their predominant prey, but they will also lurk out of sight by the shore, waiting for an animal to come near before lunging out to seize it. Once the river dragon has caught a victim in its jaws, it will twist until limbs are torn from sockets or spines shatter, exerting tremendous killing force. Humans keep a wide berth from waters rumored to harbor river dragons, but this still does not save the occasional fishing vessel that's attacked and capsized.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0x4/-1x6/-2x6/-4x5/Incap. River dragons will flee if dealt 10+ levels of damage, but refuse to release their hold on any prey they have grappled, dragging it back into the water with them to drown it if necessary.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 10 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 5 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 8 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Nose and Night Vision); Stealth: 5 dice (see Undertow Menace); Tracking: 6 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 9 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 9 dice (11 dice to control). The river dragon makes unopposed control rolls against smaller opponents, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 6 dice

Evasion 0, Parry 4

Soak/Hardness: 16/10

Special Attacks

Clamp Down: A river dragon that deals 3+ levels of damage to a victim with a **decisive** bite attack may pay a point of Willpower to begin grappling them, making the opposed roll to establish control over the clinch. A successful clinch adds +1 to the base Initiative it resets to for every round of control it gains. Once per fight.

Death Roll: A river dragon that has grappled an enemy and built up to Initiative 11+ may use the terrifying death roll, a **decisive** savaging attack that benefits from double 7s as the dragon twists to forcibly rip off chunks of flesh. The death roll inflicts a crippling injury (p. XX) on its victim, but with the river dragon's player choosing how severe an injury to inflict and forgoing the appropriate amount of damage. Once per fight.

Lunge From the Depths: While the river dragon is underwater, it may rush enemies on land from out to medium range, moving one range band towards its victim on each of that character's turns in addition to its normal movement. If it is concealed from its victim, it adds two successes on the rush roll.

Merits

Bottomless Lungs: A river dragon can hold its breath underwater for fifteen minutes before it needs to surface. In a scene of combat or intense physical exertion, it may hold its breath for the entire scene, but must then surface at the end of the scene.

Keen Nose: River dragons apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent.

Legendary Size: The river dragon's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a

post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the river dragon with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Night Vision: River dragons can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduce the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Undertow Menace: The river dragon gains double 8s whenever it attempts to establish Stealth while underwater.

Siaka

Gigantic sharks that grow up to fifty feet in length, the siaka is the apex predator of much of Creation's oceans, hunting whales and giant squid in deep water. Their massive, man-sized mouth has five rows of dagger-like teeth, which they often plunge into the unprotected underbellies of their prey as they swim up from below them. They can scent even a few drops of blood in water from hundreds of miles away, and will swim up from the deep if incensed by its tantalizing scent, making them a dreaded sight in the aftermath of great sea battles.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0x4/-1x8/-2x8/-4x4/Incap. Siaka will flee upon suffering 15+ levels of damage unless enraged by the smell of blood in the water.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 13 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats, see Sundering Bite); Senses: 6 dice (see Blood Scent); Stealth: 2 dice; Swim: 7 dice; Tracking: 3 dice (see Blood Scent)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 10 dice (Damage 22, minimum 5)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control). The siaka makes unopposed control rolls against targets of smaller size, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 3, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 10/5

Special Attacks

Blood Frenzy: The siaka is driven to the point of near-madness by the smell of blood. Whenever it makes a **decisive** attack against a bleeding enemy, it adds a number of automatic successes to the roll equal to that character's current wound penalty. The same bonus applies on its rolls to gain control of a clinch.

Death From Below: When the siaka makes a surprise attack, it adds extra successes on the attack roll to the raw damage of the attack. On a clinch, these are instead added as bonus dice on the roll to gain control. This cannot add more than five dice to the raw damage of a **decisive** attack.

Killing Surge: Whenever the siaka joins battle, if any of its enemies are bleeding, it may convert one die to an automatic success for each point of wound penalty suffered by its enemies, and treat the roll as a reflexive rush attempt against a bleeding enemy.

Massive Fangs: Whenever the siaka deals 5+ damage to any enemy with a **withering** attack, it may pay a point of Willpower to roll one die of lethal damage against its victim as well. This damage ignores hardness.

Rip to Shreds: When the siaka makes a savaging attack against a clinched enemy, it may expend rounds of control to add that many dice to the damage roll.

Crew-Devouring Rampage (Latent): A siaka that has been trained to fight against large numbers of organized enemies treats all battle groups as having a wound penalty equal to their Size for the purposes of its abilities.

Thrashing Predator Aggression (Latent): The siaka may spend a point of Willpower to reflexively make a clash attack against any attack made at close range. If it deals 5+ damage with a **withering** clash attack, it may use Massive Fangs at no cost, and it rolls three dice of lethal damage instead of one.

Merits

Blood Scent: The siaka adds three automatic successes on any Perception-based roll to sense the presence of blood in the water, and can smell even a drop of blood from hundreds of miles away. If it is specifically attempting to track or detect a character who is bleeding, it adds an additional automatic success for each point of wound penalty that character is suffering.

Depth Lurker: While the siaka is unskilled in stealth, any character attempting to notice it while it is deep below them subtracts three success from any Perception-based rolls they make to do so. In combat, this applies as long as the siaka is at long range under the water relative to the character, or if it is moving up from long range while already hidden. It may also rush enemies from long range beneath them underwater, as long as the horizontal distance between the two is no more than one range band.

Legendary Size: The siaka's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels

of damage to the siaka with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Shark Sleep: Siaka do not every truly sleep, remaining constantly active. Instead, they may enter a resting phase, during which they remain conscious and can still move, but cannot attack or take other involved physical actions without disrupting their rest. Eight hours spent in this resting phase is equivalent to a night's sleep for the siaka.

Sundering Bite: The siaka applies double 8s on all feats of strength to destroy something between its crushing jaws.

Siege Lizards

Siege lizards are great reptiles that can be found in scattered regions from the forests of the East to the Cinder Isles. While they are herbivores, their powerfully-muscled tails are tipped with three-foot long spikes, and a ridge of armored bone plates interlock over the beast's spine in a distinctive kite shape. Siege lizards are rare, generally living in small herds, grazing on ferns and low-growing vegetation. While there are few creatures large or powerful enough to prey on the siege lizard, humans who encounter the great beasts are often awed by them. Remote tribes worship them as totem-beasts or carry out ritualized hunts in a foolhardy attempt to consume the siege lizard's strength. The beasts are stupid, stubborn, and ferociously independent, making their domestication extremely unlikely. Those foolish enough to think to lead these lizards into battle most often die trampled underfoot by their own would-be engines of war.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 5 dice

Health Levels: -0x1/-1x5/-2x5/-4x5/Incap. A siege lizard will flee combat after taking 8+ levels of damage, even if it is fighting to protect its young.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 5 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 10 dice; Senses: 6 dice (see Keen Scent)

Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Stomp): 6 dice (Damage 16, minimum damage 6)

Attack (Tail Slam): 7 dice (Damage 19, minimum 5). The siege lizard's tail can be used to make smashing attacks.

Attack (Grapple): 6 dice (10 dice to control): The siege lizard makes unopposed control rolls, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 4 dice

Evasion 1, Parry 5

Soak/Hardness: 20/10

Special Attacks

Death Stomp: The siege lizard's **decisive** stomp attacks deal +5 damage against prone enemies.

Spiked Plate Fortress: After taking a full defense action, a siege lizard may use its spiked plates to fend off an attacker, making a reflexive **decisive** counterattack in response to a single attack from close range. Against enemies who are airborne, jumping, or climbing on the siege lizard, double the damage of the attack. Once the siege lizard counterattacks, it loses the full defense bonus until it next acts.

Spiked Tail Slam: When the siege lizard makes a smashing **decisive** tail slam attack while at Initiative 12+, that attack gains the benefits of Heaven Thunder Hammer (see p. XX).

Trample: When the siege lizard closes in on a rushed enemy and makes a stomp attack on the same turn, a successful hit knocks that enemy prone. The penalties for being prone are applied to that character's Defenses retroactively when calculating extra successes on the attack.

Merits

Impenetrable Armor: The minimum damage of any **withering** attack made against the siege lizard is reduced by one die, to a minimum of zero.

Keen Nose: Siege lizards apply the double 9s rule on Perception-based rolls made using scent. They double 8s instead on rolls to detect the smells of edible plants.

Legendary Size: The siege lizard is extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to a siege lizard with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Sturdy as Stone: A siege lizard cannot be knocked back or prone except by magical effects and by creatures of equal or greater size.

Simhata

The simhata is a proud and majestic creature, combining the best aspects of lion and horse in its build, with vicious tempers and a predatory gaze. They roam Southern savannas and Eastern grasslands, disemboweling prey with powerful claws before moving in for the killing bite. While they are fearsome predators, they have an uneasy relationship with nearby humans—though a simhata is by no means averse to preying on human flesh, they can also be tamed to serve as ferociously loyal mounts. The affinity between human and simhata goes back to their origins in distant prehistory as the war-mounts of the Exalted, and even in the Time of Tumult, the lion-

horse seems to have an inborn desire to serve any of the Chosen who prove themselves worthy of it.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 6; **Join Battle:** 6 dice

Health Levels: -0x3/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap. A simhata will flee after taking 7+ levels of damage, but will never abandon a bonded rider, even if it must sacrifice its own life to save his.

Speed Bonus: +4

Actions: Feats of Strength: 9 dice (may attempt Strength 5 feats); Intimidate: 10 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Nose); Tracking: 4 dice (see Keen Nose)

Resolve 4, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 8 dice (Damage 17)

Attack (Claws): 10 dice (Damage 14)

Attack (Grapple): 7 dice (8 dice to control)

Combat Movement: 13 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 6/0

Special Attacks

Brutal Kick: Smaller enemies that take 5+ damage from the simhata's **withering** claw attacks are knocked back one range band and fall prone.

Savaging Maw: Any **decisive** bite attack that the simhata makes against an enemy who is prone or in Initiative Crash adds extra successes to the damage roll.

Swift Advance: Whenever the simhata moves to keep pace with an enemy it has successfully rushed, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a **decisive** attack against that enemy.

Raging Lion-Horse Fury: Whenever damage fills one of the simhata's -2 or lower health levels, it enters a state of frenzy. A simhata who witnesses its bonded rider being killed (see below) also enters this berserker state. It ignores wound penalties and gains a point of Willpower on each turn, which must be spent before its next turn to add a success to a combat-related action or to resist influence that would cause it to cease fighting or impede its ability to fight. An enraged simhata will not flee from even the most desperately impossible battles. However, a rider who has bonded to the simhata may attempt to calm its rage with a (Charisma + Ride) roll at difficulty 4, which cannot be placed in a flurry.

Foe-Maiming Guardian's Fangs (Magical, 1m): Whenever the simhata makes a **decisive** bite attack against an enemy who has attacked or threatened its bonded rider, the Exalt may pay one mote to apply the double 10s rule to the damage roll. If he is currently suffering any wound

penalties due to a confrontation involving that enemy, then the amount of his wound penalties are added as bonus dice to the hound's attack roll.

Merits

Keen Nose: Simhata double 9s on scent-based Perception rolls.

Predator's Hunger: Whenever a simhata rolls Join Battle against an enemy it could conceivably eat, if it has not eaten within the last day or more, it may reroll any 1s until they fail to appear. A simhata's master can train it to apply this Merit to all Join Battle rolls as a latent ability by conditioning it to associate battle with being given free rein to devour his enemies.

Bonding (Latent): A wild simhata that is successfully tamed—a task that involves a great deal of hard effort and raw meat—bonds to its rider, forming a Major Tie of loyalty to them. While it may not be well-tempered or easy to handle, its devotion is unwavering, it will accept no other rider, and anyone foolish enough to attack its master will answer to its claws. However, the simhata were bred in the ancient past as war-steeds of the Exalted. Even a bonded simhata will allow an Exalt to ride it if his anima is flaring, and when bonded to an Exalt, the Tie they form is Defining and overrides any existing bonds to un-Exalted riders.

Cloud-Crossing Leap (Latent): A simhata that has been trained to jump can achieve incredible heights. As long as it has two effective range bands of movement prior to a jump to build up speed, it may pay a point of Willpower to leap a distance comparable to what a Solar can achieve with Monkey Leap Technique (p. XX).

Strix

Giant forest owls with fifteen-foot wingspans, strix hunt simply by diving down from the skies and carrying their prey aloft with them—prey that can range from deer, to wolves, to isolated travelers. Mottled dark-brown feathers that make no sound in flight and large, round eyes that see clearly in the dark make them deadly nocturnal ambush predators, while their wicked claws have more than enough strength to seize and savage prey.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 5; **Join Battle:** 7 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1x3/-2x3/-4/Incap. A strix will attempt to flee upon suffering 5+ levels of damage, carrying away anything still caught in its claws.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 6 dice (may attempt Strength 3 feats); Fly: 8 dice; Intimidate: 5 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Eagle Eye and Night Vision); Stealth: 7 dice; Tracking: 6 dice

Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Peck): 7 dice (Damage 15)

Attack (Talons): 11 dice (Damage 11)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (7 dice to control). A strix cannot throw or slam grappled enemies, but may instead release them from a great height to cause falling damage.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion 5, Parry 3

Soak/Hardness: 3/0

Special Attacks

Carried Away: When a strix deals 5+ damage with a **withering** talon attack, it may choose to forgo receiving any Initiative it would normally receive from the attack and instead make a reflexive clinch attack against that enemy. Each point of Initiative it would have gained instead adds one die to the control roll if the clinch attack successfully hits.

Dread Clutches: When the strix savages a clinched enemy with an attack, it may also choose to drag him along with any movement actions it takes.

Swooping Descent: A strix that flies downward to make a **decisive** surprise attack or ambush against an enemy adds two automatic successes to the attack roll. Note that a strix soaring high in the sky is generally beyond the range of sensory detection for characters who lack superhuman sight, ensuring an ambush on first strike and providing the possibility of reestablishing stealth in combat by simply flying higher than their enemies can see.

Merits

Eagle Eye: A strix receives five bonus dice on any visual Perception-based rolls made to notice something while it is soaring high in the air, and can make out the fine details of far-off objects even when it is flying potentially miles above them. It also automatically succeeds on any roll to track a character while airborne, unless that character is employing perfect track-covering magic.

Eagle Wing Rush: A strix may rush enemies from long range above them, as long as the horizontal distance between them is still at short range.

Night Vision: A strix can see in dim conditions as though they were in broad daylight, and reduces the difficulty of Perception-based checks made in deeper darkness by one.

Tyrant Lizard

From the jungles to the lower grasslands where they roam, there is no creature more legendary or more feared than the rare tyrant lizard. The rumor of a tyrant is enough to panic villages and caravans, who flee following huge flocks of birds or stampeding packs of beasts retreating from the lizard's approach. Enormous, swift-moving, and ravenous, the tyrant lizard is too dumb to fear anything but fire, and so mighty as to have little need to fear anything else. They run on their two larger, rear limbs, while using their clawed forelimbs, bludgeoning tails, and enormous mouths to hunt. Solitary predators, these beasts will pursue and attack anything if hungry enough —the stomachs of tyrant lizards that succumb to old age or are slain by great heroes have been found to contain river dragons, elephants, and even daiklaves.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 7; **Join Battle:** 10 dice (base Initiative 5)

Health Levels: -0x5/-1x5/-2x7/-4x7/Incap. Tyrant lizards will attempt to flee upon suffering 15+ levels of damage, unless cornered or protecting their young.

Speed Bonus: +2. Actually training a tyrant lizard to accept a rider is nigh-impossible without legendary skill, divine blessings, or the prowess of the Chosen.

Actions: Feats of Strength: 12 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats, see Incredible Might); Hide in Dense Forest or Swamps: 8 dice; Intimidation: 10 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 10 dice; Senses: 5 dice (see Relentless Pursuit); Tracking: 8 dice (see Relentless Pursuit)

Resolve 3, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 11 dice (Damage 16, minimum 5). A tyrant lizard's bite can easily puncture armor, allowing it to make piercing attacks (p. XX).

Attack (Slam): 12 dice (Damage 14, minimum 4). The tyrant lizard uses its head or tail to bash an enemy, and can make a smashing attack (p. XX).

Attack (Talon rake): 13 dice (Damage 12, minimum 3)

Attack (Grapple): 8 dice (10 dice to control). The tyrant lizard makes unopposed control rolls against enemies of smaller size, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 4, Parry 6

Soak/Hardness: 15/5

Special Attacks

Brutal Stomp: Whenever the tyrant lizard knocks an enemy prone with a smashing attack, it may pay a point of Willpower to reflexively make a grapple attack that cannot be parried. The tyrant lizard can only restrain the stomped enemy and cannot move without ending the clinch, but the stomped enemy takes six dice of lethal damage that ignore hardness for each round the tyrant lizard holds it. This special attack is not compatible with deadly thrash.

Deadly Thrash: The tyrant lizard may shake a clinched enemy back and forth, shredding it with razor-sharp teeth before flinging it to the ground. The tyrant lizard may savage its clinched victim with a **decisive** bite attack before flinging it with a **decisive** throw or slam action. The tyrant lizard's Initiative does not reset until it has completed both attacks, and it gains an additional point of Initiative for each round of control forfeited after the reset.

Ferocious Bite: When the tyrant lizard makes a **decisive** bite attack against an enemy with a lower Initiative rating, it adds +10 to the raw damage of the attack. This bonus does not apply to

attacks made as part of a deadly thrash. Once per fight, unless reset by rebuilding from base Initiative to Initiative 15+.

Furious Rampage: Whenever the tyrant lizard attacks or rushes an enemy who is in Initiative Crash, it adds three automatic successes on the roll.

Iron Jaws: The tyrant lizard does not take Defense penalties from grappling smaller enemies, and can reflexively take a drag action to move them whenever it moves, carrying them in its mouth (this does not apply to clinches initiated with brutal stomp). Additionally, being attacked only causes it to lose rounds of control over a clinch if that attack successfully damages the tyrant lizard.

Terrifying Dragon Roar (Latent): The tyrant lizard unleashes a roar that can be heard for miles, rolling its intimidation pool against all enemies and adding a number of dice equal to its Initiative. Mortal bystanders and natural enemies automatically flee from the roar, as does any enemy whose Resolve is overcome unless they pay a point of Willpower to resist. Even if they do, they lose one point of Initiative for every success by which the tyrant lizard's roll beat their Resolve. After using this attack, the tyrant lizard is reset to base Initiative.

Legion-Devouring Maw (Latent): Swallowing up soldiers in between its jaws, the tyrant lizard decimates the ranks. When the tyrant lizard makes a **decisive** bite attack against a battle group, it automatically forces a rout check at a base difficulty of 3. If the attack depleted the group's Magnitude, instead add +3 to the difficulty of the resulting rout check.

Merits

Apex Predator: The tyrant lizard regains a point of Willpower every time it crashes or incapacitates a non-trivial opponent. This cannot raise its current Willpower above the amount it had at the beginning of the fight. It is also immune to any non-magical influence roll meant to intimidate, provoke fear, or play upon fear.

Incredible Might: The tyrant lizard applies double 8s on any feat of strength to lift, carry, or crush something between its jaws.

Legendary Size: The tyrant lizard's immense size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop the tyrant lizard below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt). **Decisive** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the tyrant lizard with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Relentless Pursuit: The tyrant lizard applies the double 8s rule on any scent-based Awareness roll or on any roll to track by scent. It adds five automatic successes on any roll made to oppose an enemy's (Dexterity + Stealth) roll using scent.

Thick Scales: The sheer size of the tyrant lizard makes it difficult to strike at its vitals, no matter how wounded the beast is. The tyrant lizard does not subtract wound penalties from its Defense. In addition, attacks made from short range or further reduce their minimum damage against the tyrant lizard by one unless they benefit from an Aim action.

Venomous Snake

Creation teems with thousands of species of poisonous snake—the asps and cobras of the Southern desert, the rattlesnakes and deadly coral snakes of the East, sea snakes that swim in Western waters and adders that lurk in the mountains of the near North. These snakes almost universally prey on smaller animals, but if startled or provoked by an unwary traveler, will lash out with a deadly bite.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 3; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap. Most species of venomous snake will flee after taking any damage.

Actions: Senses: 5 dice (see Keen Nose); Stealth: 7 dice (see Camouflage and Tiny Creature)

Resolve 2, Guile 2

Combat

Attack (Bite): 7 dice (Damage 3 and poison when **decisive**, damage 2i/round, duration 3 rounds, -2 penalty). Damage increases to 9 against enemies the snake's size or smaller.

Combat Movement: 7 dice

Evasion 1 (see Tiny Creature), Parry 1

Soak/Hardness: 5/0

Merits

Camouflage: While in their native environment, venomous snakes double 9s on Stealth rolls.

Keen Nose: Snakes double 9s on scent-based Perception rolls.

Tiny Creature: Snakes adds +2 Evasion against any attack made by any foe larger than a housecat. In addition, characters of that size subtract two successes from any Awareness-based roll made to notice it.

Yeddim

Huge, shaggy, and amiably stupid, the yeddim is domesticated throughout the world as a beast of burden. Standing eighteen feet tall at the shoulders and weighing fifteen tons, they have vast endurance and need very little feed or water, making them ideal for hauling caravans or carrying hundreds of pounds of goods or gear. Wild yeddim are generally found grazing in savannas, with the same even temper and stoic nature as their domesticated cousins—the only difference being a rank odor long since bred out of the tame yeddim.

Essence: 1; **Willpower:** 4; **Join Battle:** 4 dice

Health Levels: -0x2/-1x6/-2x6/-4x4/Incap. Yeddim will generally attempt to flee upon suffering 3+ levels of damage, unless their young are threatened or they fail to notice the source of the harm.

Speed Bonus: +1

Actions: Feats of Strength: 14 dice (may attempt Strength 7 feats, see Beast of Burden); Senses: 3 dice; Resist Poison/Disease: 7 dice (see Epic Vigor)

Resolve 2, Guile 1

Combat

Attack (Bite): 4 dice (Damage 16)

Attack (Stomp): 8 dice (Damage 12)

Attack (Grapple): 4 dice (5 dice to control). The yeddim makes unopposed control rolls against smaller opponents, unless its victims use magic that allows them to clinch larger enemies, such as Dragon Coil Technique.

Combat Movement: 8 dice

Evasion: 1, Parry: 1

Soak: 16/10

Merits

Beast of Burden: Yeddim apply double 8s on any feat of strength to haul or carry a heavy burden.

Epic Vigor: Yeddim are huge and hardy, capable of going without feed for a week before suffering penalties, and for eight weeks before starving to death. Likewise, they can last a full week without water before dying of dehydration. They also apply the double 9s rule on all rolls to resist poison or disease.

Immense Guardian: While a yeddim is generally too dumb and clumsy for its Defend Other actions to significantly increase the Defense of its wards, they have an additional benefit when used to protect its young, allowing the ward to substitute the yeddim's soak and hardness for its own when resisting the damage of the attack. The yeddim can be trained to receive the benefits of this Merit when protecting its master as a latent ability.

Legendary Size: The yeddim's size makes it extraordinarily difficult for human-scale enemies to engage it in combat. It does not take onslaught penalties from any attack made by a smaller opponent, although magically-inflicted onslaught penalties still apply against it. **Withering** attacks made by smaller enemies cannot drop it below 1 Initiative unless they have a post-soak damage of 10 dice (although attackers can still gain the full amount of Initiative damage dealt).

Decisive attacks made by smaller enemies cannot deal more than (3 + attacker's Strength) levels of damage to the yeddim with a single attack, not counting any levels of damage added by Charms or other magic.

Chejop Kejak stood on a precipice, feeling all his years. He had lived so long and so many lives that that he often wondered if he hadn't lost himself somewhere along the way. A thousand lives and a thousand faces, breathing in the Essence of the morning and the knowledge of the stars; days and lives and secrets all flowing in my mind like blood.

Sometimes the Chosen of Secrets felt as if he were no more than fate's creature. The "creature" that gazed down across the slopes of the Imperial Mountain was old indeed. So ancient, so burdened with memories. Thousands of years had passed before its eyes. Five thousand years? He tried not to mark the time—eventually he had concluded it was tedious and he was certain of his feelings, having examined them countless thousands of times.

Kejak faced toward the rising sun. He stood on the geomantic line that arose between it and the axis mundi, and he bathed in the glory of the return of life to Creation after the darkness of night. Yes, I suppose that is your special trick, he whispered within his own mind. The sun rose, and the vast power of that conjunction flowed through him, bathing his soul in Essence.

The East was where he let his eye rest. He weighed its threats against one-another, weighed the turns fate might take. He had an insider's view of the workings of history, and he abused his position gravely as a matter of course.

Lunars—the most numerous; one of the most dangerous as well. He was keenly aware of the Full Moons out there doing who-knows-what, maneuvering for some plan hidden even from Kejak's eyes. They were hidden in the West, too, there on the Caul. The Caul had held so much promise in the wake of the Usurpation, but all those halcyon dreams had come to ash and blood along with the rest of the age, and now they were at the brink of a war that would send even more cracks through the fabric of his Creation.

His eyes sought out all of the flaws forming in the weft of his great working. In the East, he saw the antique military kingdoms stirring from slumber, the Dragon-Blooded playing with fire, the angry ghost of Larquen Quen riding a corpse the size of a mountain, Guild mercantile interests, misbehaving gods with a hand on the Loom of Fate, and other powerful influencers. Absent from his eye, somewhere out there: Rakan Thulio and his tainted followers. The sheer mad amount of it made him wonder. One thing he learned managing history was that it had a lot of improbable events in it, but these last few years had seen fantastically crazy turns. The aggressive self-assertion of the Solars had been a real surprise—the biggest since the Contagion.

He let observations come and go without judgment. The purpose of this exercise wasn't planning, it was meditation. For five thousand years, Chejop Kejak's pleasantly late middle aged face had gazed out on the world, seeing these interplays of power. He had humbled the grandest kingdom that would ever be. He had watched the world die. He had sculpted a new future for that world after the horrors of the Great Contagion. He managed the stars and destiny on a level more fundamental than even his superiors, the Five Maidens, would be comfortable admitting. This was his place in the natural order, and he greeted the new day with an assessment of his plans for it in its totality, as was his purpose in existence.

Kejak looked over it all and sighed. So beautiful. Then he used his sorcery to transport himself away, while the geomantic power of the line could still be used to fuel his magic. He was gone, and then sun had passed the horizon, and the line of power winked out.

Kejak was sorry he cut his audience with the morning short, but he had tomorrow to plan and a strict deadline.

Chapter Nine: The Grand Panoply

Regardless of whether someone is an impoverished mortal or a wealthy and powerful Exalt, proper tools and equipment are always essential. Transporting an army across an ocean requires boats to carry them in; musicians need instruments to play. The finest warrior requires weapons and armor, and outfitting an army requires an abundance of both.

The Resources System

The prices attached to items are tremendously variable based upon the exigencies of supply, demand, politics, and haggling. As such, each purchase is assigned a Resources value. The number given indicates the rating necessary for a character to view a purchase as *a significant but not ruinous* expense—higher-rating characters can often absorb lower-rated Resources expenditure with ease.

Resource values are contextual. Things usually purchased immediately or which must be re-purchased frequently (animal fodder, drugs, fancy clothing, travel costs) are counted against monthly income, while infrequent purchases bought for long-term use or as investments to boost earning power are compared to expected income for a year (military field commands, large caravans, slaves) or even a decade (ships, villas, palaces, jewelry), as folks often take loans or mortgages to afford large buys. As such, a purchase's Resource value is not a hard cap on affordability—for example, passage across the Inland Sea is a Resources **••• purchase out-of-pocket, but a poor patrician on a Resources • stipend seeking economic opportunity in the Threshold could afford it as a major investment costing most of her yearly budget.**

In the world of Exalted, loans, credit, and debt are standard, from a laborer running up a tab buying alcohol, to peasants seeking credit from a landlord to help pay taxes during a lean year, to a merchant prince financing a caravan with backing from a Guild factor, to a Dynast paying for a military commission with a loan from a wealthy aunt. Very few people pay for everything with silver, cash, or jade on the barrel, and characters who frequently make purchases of value equal to their rating in the Resources Merit are almost always in some kind of debt. Debt doesn't necessarily reduce one's Resources, but it does create plot complications for the Storyteller to capitalize on—players who wish to play characters with dangerous debts may consider taking it as a custom Flaw (p. XX).

Silver, jade, and cash costs assume direct sale and are calibrated for the great marketplaces of Creation, such as the shops of the Imperial City or the Little Market in Nexus. As such, they're modestly inflated. More provincial markets may offer better prices on available goods, but with worse selection. Jade prices assume ledger values.

The Resources Merit needn't pay for all a starting character's mundane equipment—a destitute former soldier may retain her arms and armor, a pair of smugglers might have won their ship in a bet, or the last scion of a broke and fading noble family may own title to an ancestral manor house (albeit with no money for servants' salaries). Characters begin play with whatever possessions are appropriate for their concepts, within reason.

Mundane Equipment

The following is a list of non-combat items characters are likely to wish to purchase. This list covers everything from the fine clothes to the luxury yachts used by the wealthiest nobles. Unless a character is entirely destitute, she is assumed to be able to be able to afford minimal

food, clothing and shelter. A character with Resources • or more can afford any reasonable number of common household objects.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Clothing and Jewelry

Item	Resources	Silver	Cash/Jade
One set of fine clothes	•	**3/8 dinar**	**3 qian**
Wardrobe of fine or fancy clothing	••	**7 dinars**	**7 koku**
Wardrobe of courtly fashions (Silk)	•••	**120 dinars**	**1 mina**
Royal raiment (Cloth of gold studded with gems)	••••	**3 dirhams**	**1 bar**
Noble jewelry (Electrum and pinhead-size gems)	•••	**15 dirhams**	**6 bars**
Royal jewelry (Gold and pea-sized gems)	••••	**33 talents**	**7 talents**
Imperial regalia (Magical material and pigeon's-egg-sized gems)	•••••	**70 talents**	**15 talents**

Slaves and Animals

Item	Resources	Silver	Cash/Jade
Unskilled slave	•	**8 dinars**	**1 obol**
Skilled slave (Healthy, smart, Craft •••)	••	**20 dinars**	**3 obols**
Concubine (Skilled, attractive, disease free)	•••	**1 talent**	**1 1/2 bars**
Keep for a slave for a year	•	**4 dinars**	**2 bits**
Domestic animal (Camel, horse, ox)	•	**5 dinars**	**5 koku**
Fine horse or other mount (War or racing)	••	**45 dinars**	**6 obols**
Elephant/mammoth or yeddim	•••	**3 dirhams**	**1 bar**
Fodder for a domestic animal for a month	—	**1/8 dinar**	**2 siu**
Keep for a fine mount for a month	•	**3/8 dinar**	**3 qian**
Fodder for a yeddim or elephant for a month	••	**1/2 dinar**	**4 qian**
Fine simhata (Lion-horse)	••••	**10 dirhams**	**4 bars**
Meat for a simhata or claw strider for a month	••	**1 dinar**	**1 koku**
Fine small exotic pet (Gravehound, strangler's serpent)	•••	**2 dirhams**	**6 minae**

Property and Ships

Item	Resources	Silver	Cash/Jade
Buy an estate	••••	**25 talents**	**5 talents**
Build a country villa or townhouse	•••	**3 3/4 talents**	**6 bars**
Staff a country villa or townhouse for a month	•••	**25 dinars**	**3 obols**
Furnish a plain townhouse or villa	•••	**5 dirhams**	**2 bars**
Furnish a *posh* townhouse or villa	••••	**15 talents**	**3 talents**

Build a palace	••••	**75 talents**	**15 talents**
Staff a palace for a month	••••	**1 dirham**	**3 minae**
Furnish a palace or manse (Meager)	••••	**20 talents**	**4 talents**
Furnish a palace or manse (Posh)	•••••	**90 talents**	**18 talents**
Lavish high society feast for two dozen	•••	**2 dirhams**	**6 minae**
Grand high society banquet for 200	••••	**4 talents**	**6 bars**
Erect a manse	•••••	**100 talents**	**20 talents**
Passage across the Inland Sea	•••	**80 dinars**	**12 obols**
Buy a small yacht or boat	••	**250 dinars**	**2 minae**
Buy a large ship	•••	**5 talents**	**1 talent**
Buy an airboat (Haslanti only)	•••	**10 talents**	**2 talents**
Crew and provender for a yacht for a month	••	**3 dinars**	**3 koku**
Crew and provender for a ship for a month	•••	**10 dinars**	**10 koku**
Employ a scale of guards or mercenaries for a month	•••	**25 dinars**	**3 obols**
Hire a crack mercenary talon for a month	•••	**250 dinars**	**2 minae**
Raise a new legion	••••	**20 talents**	**4 talents**
Keep a legion armed, fed, paid, and in the field for a year	••••	**15 talents**	**3 talents**

Guild and Business Expenses

Item	**Resources**	**Silver**	**Cash/Jade**
Small caravan	••	**33 dinars**	**4 obols**
Dozen-wagon caravan	•••	**4 dirhams**	**2 bars**
Caravan of two dozen wagons, 100 guards and hangers-on	••••	**3 talents**	**5 bars**
Caravan of 100 wagons traveling for half a year or more	•••••	**15 talents**	**3 talents**

Realm Expenses

Item	**Resources**	**Silver**	**Cash/Jade**
Price of commission (Field command)	•••	**60 dinars**	**1 shekel**
Price of commission (Legionary command)	••••	**5 dirhams**	**5 bars**
Donatives necessary to be named an Imperial satrap	••••	**15 talents**	**3 talents**
Donatives necessary to have a child accepted at a good school (per annum)	•••	**2 talents**	**3 bars**
Dowry for a mortal family marrying into a Dynastic house	•••	**10 talents**	**2 talents**

Common Recreational Drugs

Item	**Resources**	**Silver**	**Cash/Jade**
Coca leaves for a month	• (— in the East)	3/8 dinar (1/8 dinar)	7 qian (2 siu)

Cocaine for a month	••	**1 dinar**	**1 koku**
Heroin for a month	••	**7/8 dinar**	**7 qian**
Marijuana for a month	—	**1/8 dinar**	**2 siu**
Opium for a month	—	**1/8 dinar**	**3 siu**
Qat for a month	—	**3/8 dinar**	**3 qian**

[END TABLE]

Cost of Living

In the world of **Exalted**, most people spend most of their money staying alive and maintaining their lifestyles. A common urban laborer spends much of her money on food and shelter and spends what little remains ensuring her safety, whether that last be paying into a protection racket or participating in games of dice she seldom wins but plays lest she be ostracized from the friends she depends on. A merchant pays tariffs, bribes, and other associated administrative costs, while a successful businessperson dines with potential partners and pays the wages of assistants and employees. The upper classes keep their mansions in good repair, keep their slaves and servants fed and clothed, pay guards and thugs, throw galas, patronize the arts, indulge in drugs and vices, and finance the business excursions and expenses of younger family members and other hangers-on. And *everyone* pays taxes.

Players may want to spend all their characters' money on items of tangible benefit to their immediate goals, but as a general rule, any character who spends less than half her income on the cost of living is in danger of being judged by her peers as eccentric, stingy, or unworthy of her station and failing in her responsibilities to family, friends, or social class. This may lead to social snubs, to disintegrating business deals, or to attempts on her fortune, livelihood, or even life from contemporaries who begin to view her as an outsider and fair game.

Everyday Wonders

Mortal miracle-workers practice alchemy, geomancy, astrology, warding, weatherworking and other crafts, and they've also found ways to create drugs and charms that contain some degree of power.

Age-Staving Cordial (Resources •••••)

Created from the sap of a vine from the jungles of the Far East and the poison of a species of clam from the Southwest coasts, this drug is sold as small packets of dark red powder. When mixed with water or wine, it creates a brew that slows aging. Anyone taking weekly doses of age-staving cordial will live 25 percent longer than someone who doesn't have regular access to the drug. Other anagathics are similarly expensive and difficult to procure.

Ghost Flower Tea (Resources •••)

This rare and unusual drug consists of the ground dried petals of the luminous, palm-sized ghost flower, which grows only in shadowlands in the temperate portions of the East. Users steep ghost flowers with water, creating a faintly luminous tea that drink just before sleep. The first few times it's used, ghost flower tea produces vivid dreams in which the user can see and communicate with any ghosts nearby. Continued use (more doses than the user's [Stamina +

Resistance] in a single season) means that the user builds up enough resistance to the drug that she can remain awake under its influence and see and communicate with ghosts while awake. Taking more than ([Stamina + Resistance] x 3) doses in a single season allows the user to touch and be touched by ghosts. She can fight duels with ghostly opponents, or even take ghostly lovers. Frequent users appear pale and sickly, and their lips glow faintly in dim light. Ghosts can also take ghost flower tea and use it to communicate with the living in a similar way. Anyone who dies from taking ghost flower tea becomes a ghost herself.

Maiden Tea (Resources •• to ••••)

A common name for a wide variety of drugs used to render a woman infertile for roughly a month or a man infertile for periods varying from a day to a week depending on the specific brew, maiden tea is a favorite of concubines, courtesans, soldiers, travelers, adolescents and men and women who wish to avoid conception as a result of affairs. Taking three or more doses at once makes the user mildly ill (one level of bashing damage, and subtract one from all rolls until this heals). This level of dosage also induces miscarriage. Large overdoses (six or more doses) make the user violently ill (two levels of bashing damage, and increase the difficulty of all rolls by one until this heals) and renders the user permanently sterile. Cheaper versions of maiden tea are widely available and easy to prepare, but of varying efficacy. The most expensive and effective form of maiden tea requires extracts from venomous clam beds only found in the West, and is a lucrative import everywhere else in Creation.

Talismans (Resources ••• to ••••)

Some occur naturally, and many are fakes, but gifted thaumaturgists can create talismans that provide minor but useful benefits to any who carry them. Talismans against disease provide the user with an additional die to all rolls to resist disease and infection. Good luck charms protect the wearer from one botch per story, and charms designed to ward the wearer against the Fair Folk, spirits, elementals, demons or the walking dead cause beings of the appropriate type to suffer a -1 penalty to all their dice pools when attempting to affect the wearer, up to (talisman's Resources value) times per scene. Each warding charms can only affect one type of creature. Talismans that provide greater bonuses also exist but are rare and extremely difficult to create.

Mortal Weapons

Mortal weapons can be made by anyone skilled at crafting the appropriate materials. They are purchased with Resources and lack the special properties of artifact weapons and armor. In addition to the obvious categories of melee weapons and missile weapons, all mortal weapons are divided into three broad damage categories—light, medium, and heavy—depending on their size and power. All weapons in the same category have the same basic combat traits.

Individual weapons are distinguished by tags, which denote special qualities possessed by that particular item. Every weapon has several tags listed after its description. See the list of tags immediately after the weapon descriptions for explanations. Weapon descriptions always include a tag denoting whether the weapon does bashing or lethal damage, as well as a separate note of the weapon's cost in Resource dots.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Melee Weapons

Category	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Overwhelming
Light	+4	+7	+0	1

Medium	+2	+9	+1	1
Heavy	+0	+11	-1	1

[END TABLE]**Accuracy:** Add this many dice to the (Dexterity + Ability) dice pool when making **withering** attacks with this weapon.

Damage: Add this many dice to damage rolls when making **withering** attacks with this weapon.

Defense: Add or subtract this number to or from the wielder's Parry.

Overwhelming: The minimum damage of **withering** attacks made with the weapon, after soak has been applied. Soak can't reduce a weapon's **withering** damage pool to below its Overwhelming value.

> Exceptional Weapons and Equipment
>
> The finest armorers create weapons and suits of armor superior to anything lesser craftsmen can make. Exceptional armor and weapons provide no bonuses, but are exquisitely made, often elaborately decorated or sufficiently durable they require only minimal care.
>
> Other forms of exceptional equipment also exist. A burglar might have exceptional lockpicks forged by the finest master thief in Nexus, and a musician might have a flute or lyre made by a brilliant crafter who also makes musical instruments for the best performers in the Realm. **All exceptional equipment other than weapons and armor provides a +1 bonus to all rolls to use it.** All exceptional equipment costs one dot more than ordinary equipment. All artifacts are by definition exceptional, so artifact traits already take any bonuses from exceptional construction into account.

Melee Weapons

These are weapons used in close-quarter combat. Most use the Melee Ability, but a few use Brawl or Martial Arts.

Light Melee Weapons

Cestus

The cestus is an arrangement of leather straps that fits around the hand like a fingerless glove. These straps are covered in brass or iron studs, serving to enhance the wearer's punches. The metal gauntlets that are part of most forms of heavy armor can also be designed to work as cestuses. They're usually used in pairs. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Brawl, Smashing, Worn

Club/Cudgel/Baton

A club may be a simple billet of wood, or it may be wrapped in metal bands with a leather grip. Clubs are popular among barbaric tribes, peasants in revolt and relatively poor outlaws. Well-constructed clubs with thick metal spikes or heavy bands should be treated as maces. A club may be balanced as a thrown weapon (using the Thrown Ability). Small improvised weapons like chair legs are treated as clubs, but gain the Improvised tag. **Cost: —**

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Smashing; sometimes Thrown (Short), Improvised

Khatar

The khatar, also known as the punch dagger, is a single-bladed knife with a hilt assembly perpendicular to the blade. Held in a closed fist, the blade juts from the front of the character's fist so that the character's punches deliver deadly stabs. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Brawl, Piercing

Knife

A knife is a weapon with a chopping and stabbing blade about a foot long, which can have a single or double edge. Most adults in the world of **Exalted** carry a knife, for utility as well as personal defense. Knives are used as tableware and to cut and pry, as well as for combat. Knives can also be used as thrown weapons. **Cost: —**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short)

Sai

Sai are three-pronged, fork-shaped weapons as long as large daggers. They are specially designed to twist weapons out of an opponent's grasp by catching the blade between the prongs. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Disarming

Short Sword

Short swords are chopping weapons with blades about two feet long. Some are single-edged, while others have cutting edges on both sides. They are typically carried as weapons by soldiers and as tools by barbarians. Soldiers use short swords because they make excellent formation-fighting weapons—longer weapons are difficult to manage in close quarters. Barbarians use them as tools because they're small enough for skinning, butchering and brush-clearing and large enough to fight with in a pinch. Short swords are also favored as backup weapons by spearmen and archers. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

Tiger Claws

Tiger claws consist of a glove or gauntlet with three or four curved talons extending from the back. Tiger claws are most common in cultures that live close to big cats, but their intimidating appearance and the terrifying wounds they leave have spread them throughout Creation. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Brawl, Worn

Unarmed

The most basic of all weapons, this "weapon" models strikes and kicks made with the character's fists and feet.

Tags: Bashing, Brawl, Natural

Whip

A whip is a handle with a coil of leather thongs or tightly woven cord, primarily used by drovers to control beasts. Whips inflict more pain than damage, but a skilled user can entangle foes or wrench weapons from their grip. Most whips are between two and five yards long. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Disarming, Flexible, Grappling, Reaching

Wind and Fire Wheel/War Fan

This weapon can be as simple as an undecorated steel ring, but it typically has handles built into it and sharpened protrusions jutting from the top, bottom and front. These weapons are often wielded paired; they deliver crushing or slashing blows and can block or catch enemy weapons. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Martial Arts, Disarming, Shield

Medium Melee Weapons

Axe/Hatchet

A broad-bladed weapon balanced for use in one hand, an axe is easy to manufacture and of great utility as a tool as well as a weapon. Axes can also be thrown. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Chopping

Chopping Sword

This weapon is a sword with a chopping blade about three feet long. Some versions have a square or angled tip, while others sport a curve with a wicked back clip. Unlike the slashing sword, chopping swords are designed not for fencing and agility, but for delivering solid blows that hack through armor and bone. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping

Dagger-Axe

A dagger-axe is a polearm designed for the user to swing. It consists of a foot long narrow blade like a spear head mounted perpendicular to a five- to six-foot-long pole. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching, Two-Handed

Fighting Chain

Fighting chains are slender, sturdy chains with small weights on either end. Most fighting chains are between three and five yards long. In addition to making ordinary attacks, fighting chains can be used to perform clinches and stunts involving grabbing, pulling, and swinging from objects. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible, Grappling, Reaching

Hook Sword

The hook sword is similar in appearance to a straight sword, except it ends in a J-shaped hook that curves back along the inside of the blade. They're usually wielded paired. **Cost: ••• (for a pair)**

Tags: Lethal, Martial Arts, Disarming, Shield

Javelin

The javelin is a small, light spear designed for throwing. It can also be used in close combat if necessary. **Cost: • (for a brace)**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Medium)

Mace/Hammer

A mace is nothing more than a heavy weight on the end of a handle. Hammers are better balanced but lighter. Both weapons deliver crushing, stunning blows to targets. In the world of **Exalted**, the heads of maces and hammers are often elaborately decorated. Some are sculpted

into the shape of animal heads, while others have been cut so that, whatever angle they're viewed from, they depict a symbol important to the wielder. Large or bulky improvised weapons like tables or chairs are treated as a mace or hammer, but with the improvised tag. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Smashing; sometimes Improvised

Seven-Section Staff

This weapon, which can actually have from three to 12 sections, is made up of a number of metal or wood segments connected by very short lengths of chain. It's wielded as a combination of staff and flail and is difficult to master. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible

Shield

A relatively flat weapon of metal or wood that the wielder holds or straps to her arm and used to deflect attacks and bash foes. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Shield

Short Spear

A short-hafted weapon used primarily for stabbing, the short spear often has a long head so that it can be used for slashing and chopping in a pinch. Short spears are versatile weapons and much-favored by warrior cultures and elite troops. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Piercing

Slashing Sword

A slashing sword has a single-edged blade about three feet long. These swords are quick and used primarily for arcing cuts. The slashing sword is favored by cavalry, as its shape and length make it suited for use from horseback. Cost: **••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

Spear

One of the most versatile and simple weapons ever produced, the spear is a foot-long head attached to the end of a five- to six-foot-long pole. The head of the spear typically has extensions built into the sides to prevent it from going too deep into a target. Spears are inexpensive and effective and, as a result, are one of the most common armaments of soldiers everywhere. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching

Straight Sword

A straight sword has a double-edged blade about three-feet long, usually with a narrow blade or one that tapers slightly toward the tip. The tip is either pointed or chisel-shaped. Straight swords are well-balanced, accurate weapons, capable of deadly thrusts as well as slashing attacks. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

Staff

A staff is a length of sturdy wood, sometimes wrapped in metal bands or leather. Many staves are clearly weapons, but more than one thug has been thrashed by a traveler's well-worn walking stick. Staves are also excellent defensive weapons. **Cost: —**

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Shield

Urumi

A razor-sharp ribbon of steel four to five feet long and roughly an inch wide, this weapon is usually carried wrapped around the user like a belt. When used correctly, the blade swings in wide, difficult-to-parry arcs. **Cost: •••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Flexible, Reaching

Heavy Melee Weapons

Wielding a heavy weapon requires at least Strength •••.

Great Axe/Scythe

These fearsome long-hafted weapons are typically used for striking downward or for wide, sweeping blows. The great axe is a narrow-bladed axe designed for use in both hands, and it is a favorite weapon of the Realm's heavy infantry, which uses them during sieges and assaults. Scythes are thick, curved blades attached to a long handle, used by farmers for cutting swathes of grain—and occasionally employed on the battlefield to do the same to troops. Cost: •

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping, Reaching, Two-Handed

Great Sword

A great sword is a two-handed weapon used for hacking blows. These massive swords can be either single- or double-edged. Although these weapons are slow and unsuited to fencing, a strong blow from a great sword can cut a man in half. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced, Reaching, Two-Handed

Lance

The lance is a strong-shafted spear designed to be used from horseback. Lances are typically not used against other cavalry, but to ride down infantry. Using a lance effectively when on foot requires two hands. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching; Two-Handed when on foot

Poleaxe

Similar to the great axe but equipped with a longer haft and a heavier blade. While less deadly than the great sword, the poleaxe is considerably cheaper. As a result, it's a popular armament for heavy infantry. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping, Reaching, Two-Handed

Sledge/Tetsubo

The sledge is a two-handed mace or hammer whose powerful strikes are slow and unwieldy. Like maces, many sledges are elaborately decorated. Their huge heads are often carved with battle scenes or fabulous beasts. The tetsubo, favored by pragmatists for its simpler construction, is a massive war-club studded with iron knobs. Cost: ••

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Smashing, Two-Handed

Tags

The following tags are available for melee weapons.

Balanced: The power and leverage provided by this weapon give it an Overwhelming one point higher than normal. For example, a Balanced mundane medium weapon would have an Overwhelming value of 2. This tag is normally found on swords.

Bashing: This weapon normally does bashing damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack.

Brawl: Attacks with this weapon normally use Brawl.

Chopping: This weapon is capable of making chopping attacks. A chopping attack costs one point of Defense until the attacker's next turn, as well as one point of Initiative, but raises a **withering** attack's raw damage by 3, or allows a **decisive** attack to treat Hardness as two points lower than its true value. This tag is primarily found on weapons with heavy blades, such as axes and chopping swords.

Disarming: This weapon reduces the difficulty and cost of disarm gambits by 1.

Flexible: This weapon ignores the Defense bonus granted by full defense actions.

Improvised: Useable with both Brawl and Melee, these simple weapons can be created out of anything sturdy, heavy and roughly well balanced. Because they are not designed for use as weapons, improvised weapons cost 1 Initiative to use in an attack.

Grappling: This weapon can be used to make grappling gambits by wrapping around the target.

Lethal: This weapon normally does lethal damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack. Lethal close combat weapons can deliver bashing damage with an appropriate stunt, by e.g. attacking with the pommel or with the flat of the blade.

Martial Arts: Attacks with this weapon don't use Melee *or* Brawl. Wielding it requires an applicable Martial Arts Ability. For example, the hook sword requires facility with a style like Martial Arts (Snake Style) or Martial Arts (Crane Style); Martial Arts (Tiger Style) wouldn't do.

Melee: Attacks with this weapon normally use Melee.

Natural: This weapon is part of the user's body. It cannot be disarmed, and never requires a draw/ready weapon action to prepare for use.

Piercing: This weapon specializes in defeating armor, either by punching through it or slipping through its weak points. A piercing attack lowers the attacker's Defense by one until his next turn, and costs one Initiative to attempt. The resulting **withering** attack ignores 4 points of soak from armor.

Reaching: This long weapon negates the advantages of mounted combatants (p. XX).

Shield: A weapon with this tag allows the character to place the "full defense" action in a flurry, although this flurry can't also contain an attack action. This is normally used to furry full defense and rush actions together.

Smashing: This weapon can make smash attacks. Smash attacks sacrifice one Defense until the character's next turn, and cost two Initiative to attempt. If successful, they knock the opponent back one range band, *or* knock them prone. Targets may be knocked back into dangerous or deadly threats, like lava pits or steep cliffs.

Thrown: This weapon can be used to make ranged attacks using the Thrown ability. All Thrown weapons also have their maximum range listed in parenthesis, such as Thrown (Medium). When throwing a weapon, the wielder doesn't benefit from the weapon's normal Accuracy bonus; see Thrown Weapons, below.

Two-Handed: This weapon requires the user wield it with both hands, preventing them from holding a shield or another weapon at the same time. Two-handed weapons grant a +2 bonus to Clash attacks.

Worn: Wearable weapons can be removed, but while worn they count as natural weapons. Equipping or removing a weapon with the worn tag takes an action.

> Dual Wielding
>
> Characters can wield one melee weapon in each hand as long as both weapons lack the two-handed tag. Even with a weapon in each hand, characters can still only make a single attack on each turn. However, if the character is wielding a different weapon in each hand, she is free to choose between the weapons and their associated tags each time she attacks or parries, and may stunt her attacks and defenses however she wants, as with a Crane stylist defending with her hook sword's Parry value while describing her blocks as performed with her war fan. Characters who dual-wield two identical weapons gain a +2 bonus to Clash attacks.

Thrown Weapons

Thrown weapons use the Thrown Ability and include everything from javelins to staff slings. Thrown, weapons don't use the usual Accuracy bonus for their weapon class, and cannot be used to parry attacks unless they also carry the Brawl, Martial Arts, or Melee keyword. Instead, the accuracy of Thrown weapons is based on the range table below.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Thrown Weapons

Category	**Damage**	**Overwhelming**
Light +7	1	
Medium	+9	1

[END TABLE]

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Thrown Weapon Ranges

Close	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**	**Extreme***
+4	+3	+2	-1	-3

* Mortal thrown weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms or similar abilities.

[END TABLE]

Light Thrown Weapons

Chakram

A chakram is a small disc or ring of steel with razor sharp outer edges. **Cost:** •

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Mounted

Dart

Essentially a shorter, lighter javelin, typically around one foot long. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Concealable, Mounted, Poisonable

Needle

Needles are the ultimate in subtle assassination instruments. These tiny spikes are as long as a small finger and as wide as a housecat's fang. They can be thrown with the flick of a finger or even held in the mouth and spat at a target. While they inflict very little damage, most assassins will equip their needles with poison. **Cost: •**

Tags: Subtle, Thrown (Short), Concealable, Poisonable

Shuriken

Shuriken are small star-shaped blades that can be thrown easily. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Short), Concealable, Mounted, Poisonable

Sling

Slings are small pouches with thongs attached to either side. A stone or metal sling "bullet" is placed in the pouch, and the sling is swung in a circle at high speed, hurling its projectile at great velocity. Slings are inexpensive and can use any rock of approximately the correct size as ammunition, but they are less accurate than bows. By taking an additional aim action before firing, this weapon's range can be extended to long for one attack. This aim action provides no benefit beyond enabling long-range attacks. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Thrown (Medium), Concealable, Special

Medium Thrown Weapons

Staff Sling

This weapon is essentially a sling on a shaft between three and five feet long. When the wielder swings the shaft, the sling releases its stone with greater force than a normal sling. By taking an additional aim action before firing, this weapon's range can be extended to long for one attack. This aim action provides no benefit beyond enabling long-range attacks. **Cost: •**

Tags: Bashing, Thrown (Medium), Special

War Boomerang

These weapons are curved, flat pieces of sharpened metal or specially hardened ironwood that spin through the air with deadly force. While not normally designed to return, highly skilled characters can perform this impressive feat. Players of characters who have three or more dots in Thrown may make a second, reflexive (Dexterity + Thrown) roll if the boomerang misses its target. If this second roll succeeds, the boomerang curves around and lands within close range of the thrower. If the thrower's player rolls three or more successes, then the boomerang actually returns to the thrower's hands. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Mounted, Special

Thrown Weapon Accessories

Atlatl

This flattened stick with a hook at the end is designed so that users balance a dart, javelin, or short spear on the stick and throw it. Using an atlatl increases the range of short spears from short to medium, and the range of darts and javelins from

medium to long. This range extension requires an extra aim action, as with the sling and staff sling. **Cost: •**

Blowgun

A blowgun is a tube three to six feet long which allows wielders to fire needles with greater force by propelling them by blowing. It increases the range of needles from short to medium. **Cost: •**

Tags

Bashing: This weapon normally does bashing damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack.

Concealable: The weapon can be easily hidden on the user's person (difficulty 1 to do so with a Larceny roll).

Cutting: This weapon has a large blade that can cut ropes, sails and similar objects the user throws it at.

Lethal: This weapon normally does lethal damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack. Lethal thrown weapons can be used to make bashing attacks with an appropriate stunt, e.g.by throwing a knife so it hits pommel-first or using a chakram to cut a rope holding a heavy object over an opponent's head.

Mounted: The wielder can use this weapon while mounted on a horse or other steed.

Poisonable: This weapon is designed so that it can be poisoned. See the poisoned weapon rules on page XX for further information.

Special: The weapon has some unusual property explained in the description.

Subtle: Ignore any damage this weapon would inflict; it can only make attacks in order to poison its target.

Thrown: This weapon can be used to make ranged attacks using the Thrown ability. All Thrown weapons also have their maximum range listed in parenthesis, such as Thrown (Medium).

Archery Weapons

All archery weapons require the Archery skill. Archery weapons don't use the listed Accuracy bonus for their weight class, and cannot be used to parry attacks. Instead, the accuracy of archery weapons is based on the range table below. Bows are by far the most common archery weapons and are available all across Creation. Flame pieces and firewands can be found across much of the South, but are rare elsewhere.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Archery Weapons

Category	Damage	Overwhelming
Light	+7	1
Medium	+9	1
Heavy	+11	1

[END TABLE]

[BEGIN TABLE]

Mortal Archery Weapon Ranges

Close	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme*
-2	+4	+2	+0	-2

* Mortal archery weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms or similar abilities.

[END TABLE]

Light Archery Weapons

Hand Crossbow

Most hand crossbows are small pistol-shaped crossbows that can be used in one hand. A few specially made and more expensive hand crossbows are designed to strap to the user's forearm and can be concealed in a loose sleeve. These concealable crossbows are most often used by assassins. **Cost: •• (••• for concealable hand crossbows)**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Medium), Crossbow, Mounted, One-Handed, Piercing, Slow; sometimes Concealable

Self Bow

A stout length of spring wood about three feet long, the self bow is bent along the wood's natural shape. Of simple construction, it's is not very powerful. **Cost: •**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long), Mounted

Medium Archery Weapons

Composite Bow

Composite bows are made of layers of different woods, often reinforced with layers of horn. This reinforced construction gives them more power in a smaller size—like the self bow, they're about three feet long. The only weakness of a composite bow, other than its expense, is that it's held together with glue. If it becomes wet, the glue weakens, and the bow can come to pieces. As a result, most composite bows are bound in waterproof leather covers, and very few cultures native to humid climes make common use of them. **Cost: •••**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long), Mounted

Crossbow

Crossbows are large weapons that require both hands to load and fire. **Cost: •••**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long), Crossbow, Piercing, Powerful, Slow

Flame Piece

A flame piece is a small firewand, made for one-handed use. Most are wielded by elite Southern cavalry. Like larger firewands, this weapon uses firedust or specialized alchemical reagents as ammunition. See the entry for firewands for further information. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Mounted, One-Handed, Slow

Long Bow

Longer than a self bow, the long bow is harder to pull and offers considerably more power. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long)

Heavy Archery Weapons

Firewand

Firewands are one-shot flamethrowers powered by firedust, a substance found naturally occurring deep in the Southern deserts or synthesized from a variety of exotic reagents found elsewhere in that Direction. Made from finely turned brass with wooden or metal stocks, firewands are the prized possessions of any soldiers lucky enough to own one. All firewands are muzzleloaders. The firedust must be loaded down the front of the barrel, and the weapon can hold only a single shot. Also, while readily available in the South, firedust can be expensive and difficult to find elsewhere (Resources • in the South, •• or higher elsewhere). Many soldiers fit bayonets on the ends of their firewands and use them as spears once the weapon has been fired (treat as a short spear). **Cost: •••**

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Slow

> Fowling Arrows and Bolts
>
> Arrows and crossbow bolts normally do lethal damage, but blunt arrows and bolts also exist and are used for catching birds or by skilled archers who do not wish to kill their targets. Both fowling arrows and fowling crossbow bolts do bashing damage. Fowling crossbow bolts lack the piercing tag that ordinary crossbow bolts possess.

Tags

Archery: This weapon can be used to make ranged attacks using the Archery ability. All Archery weapons also have their maximum range listed in parenthesis, such as Archery (Medium).

Bashing: This weapon normally does bashing damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack.

Concealable: The weapon can be easily hidden on the user's person (difficulty 1 to do so with a Larceny roll).

Crossbow: Crossbow weapons do not add Strength to the wielder's damage roll. Instead, add +4 to the to the weapon's damage to calculate the raw damage of **withering** attacks with a weapon that has the crossbow tag.

Flame: This weapon shoots a narrow blast of fire, which can ignite flammable objects, but is extremely limited in range. Charms that increase weapon range cannot increase the range of any weapon with the flame tag unless the Charm specifically says it can; also, no Charm can increase the range of weapons with the flame tag to more than medium. **Flame weapons do not add Strength to the wielder's damage roll.** Instead, add +4 to the weapon's damage to calculate the raw damage of **withering** attacks with a weapon that has the flame tag. Also, mundane flame weapons have an Accuracy of +0 at Close range (rather than -2), while artifact flame weapons have a Close Accuracy modifier of +1.

Lethal: This weapon normally does lethal damage when used to deliver a **decisive** attack, but fowling arrows and bolts allow bows and crossbows to inflict bashing damage.

Mounted: The wielder can use this weapon while mounted on a horse or other steed.

One-Handed: Most archery weapons require wielders to use both hands to fire. However, this weapon can be wielded in one hand, leaving the wielder's other hand free.

Piercing: Piercing weapons specialize in defeating armor, either by punching through it or slipping through its weak points. A piercing attack costs 1 Initiative to attempt, and ignores 4 points of soak from armor.

Powerful: At close range, a powerful weapon inflicts damage like a heavy weapon.

Slow: This weapon takes extra time to reload. The character must spend an action reloading this weapons. Reloading can be part of a flurry, including a flurry with an attack.

Special: The weapon has some unusual property explained in the description.

Special Materials

Various unusual materials can be found all across Creation. Armaments made from these usually cost one dot of resources more than normal, and this cost can increases to two dots in regions far from where they're normally found.

Chiaroscuro Glass

In portions of the South, especially near the city of Chiaroscuro, armorers make weapons and armor from crimson shards of the city's almost indestructible First Age glass. Unlike metal armaments, which rust, chip and require regular polishing and oiling, weapons and armor made from Chiaroscuro glass require almost no care because the glass is so durable.

Feathersteel

In portions of the far North, especially in the Haslanti League, miners find veins of feathersteel in the ice-covered mountains. Feathersteel is a light metal that also has the virtue of not rusting. Feathersteel armaments never rust and are somewhat lighter than normal. All armor made from feathersteel gains the silent tag (p. XX).

Ironwood

In portions of the forests of the East, especially near the regions ruled by the Republic of Halta, woodworkers know the secret of making wood as hard as steel. Ironwood arms and armor require as much care as similar metal equipment, but are made from wood. Ironwood armor gains the buoyant tag (p. XX). Unlike other special materials, in the region where they're made, ironwood armaments cost no more than normal. Elsewhere, they costs one resource dot more.

Mundane Armor

Armor protects the wearer from harm. The heavier and more durable the armor, the better protection it provides. However, heavier armor is also more cumbersome. Armor is also tiring to wear and impossible to sleep in restfully.

[BEGIN CHART]

Mortal Armor

Category	Soak	Mobility Penalty	Hardness
Light +3	0	0	
Medium	+5	-1	0
Heavy +7	-2	0	

[END CHART]

Soak: This is how much the armor adds to the wearer's soak roll.

Mobility Penalty: This is the number of dice heavier armor *subtracts* from all nimbleness-based Athletics rolls, as well as from any rolls involving chases, running, and dodging. Most armor is noisy and this same number is subtracted from Stealth rolls involving attempts to move silently. Finally, this value is subtracted directly from the wearer's Evasion score.

Hardness: Hardness offers protection from **decisive** attacks; it has no use against **withering** attacks. If a **decisive** attack's damage dice pool is equal to or lower than the target's Hardness, the **decisive** attack can't inflict damage. A **decisive** attack that strikes but fails to penetrate the target's Hardness is still considered a successful attack, and causes Initiative to reset to 3 as normal. If a **decisive** attack's damage pool exceeds the target's Hardness, then damage is rolled as normal; Hardness is *not* subtracted from the damage pool.

> Donning & Removing Armor
>
> Armor is inherently complex. It takes ([armor's mobility penalty] +1) minutes to put a suit of armor on. Characters who rush can don armor in half that time, but any botch the player later rolls almost certainly indicates that something has gone wrong—a poorly fastened strap may have come undone, or an inadequately tightened greave may have turned around. At the Storyteller's discretion, this botch can deprive a character of the armor's benefits or cause her significant penalties, like adding -1 or -2 to the armor's mobility penalty as it hangs awkwardly on her body.
>
> Removing armor takes half as long as donning it, which may be important if the character is busy trying to get out of her armor in a hurry to e.g. avoid drowning or hide it from the guards outside in the corridor. Rushing armor removal halves the time required but doubles the time needed to don it again.

Light Armor

Breastplate

Nothing more than a pair of fitted metal plates that cover the character's chest and back, this armor provides excellent protection for the character's vitals. Breastplates are common among military officers and scouts, both of whom need more protection than a chain shirt offers but still need a full range of motion. **Cost: ••**

Tags: None

Buff Jacket

One of the most common types of armor in the world of **Exalted**, the buff jacket is a knee-length leather garment typically made from the hide of a mammoth or yeddim. The front of the coat overlaps completely—the inner and outer layer both fasten at the opposite shoulder. This setup doubles the jacket's protection across the wearer's vitals, as well as making it impossible to slip a blade through the seam where the jacket fastens. Most buff jackets have high, overlapping collars as well, to protect the wearer's neck. **Cost: •**

Tags: None

Chain Shirt

A chain shirt is a pullover shirt made from links of extremely fine mail. This garment protects the wearer's chest, abdomen, shoulders and back. The armor's sleeves reach only halfway down the upper arm. Because they are unobtrusive and can be worn beneath most clothing, chain shirts are common among those who have reason to fear assassins. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Concealable

Medium Armor

Hauberk

A long-sleeved chain shirt, covering the character's arms, chest, abdomen and upper legs, the hauberk also typically includes greaves, to protect the character's lower legs. Hauberks are not worn directly against the skin—they typically include a layer of padding underneath to spread blow impacts. **Cost: •••**

Tags: None

Lamellar

Lamellar armor is a breastplate composed of a series of interlocking horizontal bands. Lamellar is lighter and more flexible than a standard breastplate and allows better air circulation. Lamellar armor is assumed to include greaves to protect the wearer's lower legs, a skirt to protect his upper legs and bracers to protect his wrists and arms. **Cost: •••**

Tags: None

Reinforced Breastplate

A breastplate with attached shoulder guards, this armor also includes a skirt that protects the character's crotch and upper thighs, a pair of greaves to protect the lower legs and a pair of long bracer's to protect the character's forearms. The reinforced breastplate offers excellent protection to the areas it covers, but this protection is balanced by the fact that significant portions of the character are totally unarmored. The reinforced breastplate is the standard armor of the Realm's heavy infantry. **Cost: •••**

Tags: None

Reinforced Buff Jacket

A heavier version of the buff jacket, the reinforced buff jacket is a common armor among light cavalry, post-riders in dangerous territory, heavy scouts, brigands and mercenary infantry. It is also the standard armor of the Realm's light infantry.

The reinforced buff jacket is cut along the same pattern as the standard buff jacket, but the shoulders, neck and vitals are armored with swatches of chain or small metal plates. The overall effect is a heavier, more protective armor that isn't much more fatiguing than the standard buff jacket. **Cost: ••**

Tags: Silent

Heavy Armor

Articulated Plate

Articulated plate covers the wearer in interlocking metal plates held together by hinges and pins. Chain is only used to cover areas such as the armpits, groin and the back of the knees, where there's no way for plate armor to mimic the human range of motion. Articulated plate provides superior protection and maneuverability to plate-and-chain and is less fatiguing to wear, but

requires much greater skill and time to forge. It's commonly available only in the Realm and in great cities such as Nexus and Lookshy. **Cost: •••••**

Tags: None

Chain Swathing

Chain swathing is composed of layer upon robe-like layer of overlapping mail. The character's torso and abdomen are covered by three to five layers of chain, while her arms and legs are protected by only two or three. This armor is massively fatiguing and cumbersome. Un-Exalted characters wearing it can march only short distances and usually need assistance to climb steps. Chain swathing is occasionally used in siege warfare but is more commonly seen armoring Exalted warriors who do not have access to the skilled armorcraft needed to forge articulated plate. **Cost: •••**

Tags: None

Plate-and-Chain

Plate-and-chain is similar to a reinforced breastplate, except that chain and padding is added to the armor to cover the areas that would otherwise be exposed. Plate-and-chain is the strongest commonly available armor and is the standard of heavy cavalry outside the Realm. **Cost: ••••**

Tags: None

Tags

Like weapons, different types of armor are distinguished by tags.

Buoyant: Most armor is made from metal, which means it's heavy and dense, and its mobility penalty applies to swimming. Armor with the buoyant tag is much lighter and does not inhibit swimming at all.

Concealable: Most armor is obviously armor. It can be decorated, but not disguised. Armor with the concealable tag can be worn under clothing so as not to reveal that the character is wearing armor.

Silent: All armor can be camouflaged with paint, grease or even dirt, but most armor is noisy. Armor with the silent tag causes no penalties to silent movement.

Artifacts

These powerful items were never common, even in the First Age. Today, they are rare indeed. Most surviving wonders are war gear because such items were built to survive the rigors of divine battlefields and the passing of the ages. Many others artifacts were lost or destroyed long ago. Yet many powerful figures and states in the Age of Sorrows, from scavenger lords and other Threshold heroes to the Dragon-Blooded scions of the Realm, still make use of artifacts to impose their will on Creation, and many other artifacts lie undiscovered in caches across the world. And even in the Age of Sorrows, the greatest of craftsmen among Exalts and gods still possess the witherwal to forge items of power equal to the lesser artifacts of old.

Artifact Weapons

All of the artifact weapons listed here are, at minimum, 3-dot Artifacts. Like mortal weapons, artifacts weapons are divided into light, medium and heavy, but are considerably more effective than their mundane counterparts. Artifacts weapons also have tags much like those found on

mundane weapons. Most artifact weapons are capable of producing Evocations, which are explained in further detail on page XX.

[BEGIN CHART]

Artifact Melee Weapons

Category	Accuracy		Damage		Defense	Overwhelming	Attunement
Light +5	+10	+1	3	5			
Medium	+3	+12	+1	4	5		
Heavy +1	+14	+0	5	5			

[END CHART] **Accuracy:** Add this many dice to the (Dexterity + Ability) dice pool when making **withering** attacks with this weapon.

Damage: Add this many dice to damage rolls when making **withering** attacks with this weapon.

Overwhelming: The minimum damage of **withering** attacks made with the weapon, after soak has been applied. Soak can't reduce a weapon's **withering** damage pool to below its Overwhelming value.

Defense: Add or subtract this number from the weapon wielder's Parry.

Attunement: To use this weapon, the wearer must commit five motes to make it respond to her desires more easily. Without this commitment, subtract -5 from the weapon's Accuracy and its Defense, and lose two Initiative per attempted attack or defense. These penalties can only be negated by attunement.

> Attunement
>
> In mortal hands, a daiklave is an unwieldy, oversized sword which weighs far too much to wield with any sort of ease or finesse, while artifact armor is nigh-impossible to move in. The secret of such items is in their attunement—a few motes fed into the artifact establish a spiritual link between weapon or armor and Exalted user, making 40 pounds of golden sword feel light as a dagger and swift as a breeze. Attunement can be established in a matter of a few heartbeats, and persists until the Exalt drop her commitment or is separated from the artifact for a full day.

Artifact Melee Weapons

All of these weapons are much larger and swifter than their comparable mortal equivalents, in addition to being nigh-indestructible; daiklaves are designed to strike against the armor of demon princes without dulling their edges and to pierce the hearts of volcano gods without melting. For explanation of the tags, see the list of tags for mundane melee weapons, page XX.

Light Melee Weapons

Direlash

This braided cord of rare leathers and hair-fine wires of the magical materials can slash through flesh and steel. Immaculately responsive to its wielder's motions, these artifact whips can disarm, entangle, and injure with equal ease.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Disarming, Grappling, Flexible, Reaching

Razor Claws

This pair of deadly weapons is a set of razor-sharp tiger claws that strap onto the wearer's hands. Razor claws always come in pairs and consist of fingerless leather gloves fitted with three slightly curved blades extending three or more inches beyond the wearer's knuckles. In addition to causing horrific rending wounds, these claws also add two dice to all climbing rolls made by the wearer. Wearers can retract the claws, transforming this weapon into a pair of heavy fingerless gloves.

Tags: Lethal, Brawl, Concealable, Worn

Short Daiklave

The short daiklave, often called a cunning serpent knife or a flickering silver razor, has a blade about three feet long. Their best-known users, Fire Aspect Immaculate monks, generally wield short daiklaves as a pair. Purchasing this artifact gives the owner a pair of these weapons.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

Slayer Khatar

Made from an alloy of one or more magical materials, the blade of this punch dagger is between two and three feet long. This swift and brutal weapon is designed to punch through armor and deliver terrible stab wounds to the target. Some slayer khatars are incorporated into bracers, leaving the wielder's hand free.

Tags: Lethal, Brawl, Piercing, sometimes Worn

Smashfist

These fighting gauntlets are composed of articulated plates of alloyed magical material. They're always used as a pair.

Tags: Bashing, Brawl, Smashing, Worn

Medium Melee Weapons

Daiklave

Daiklaves are elaborately decorated swords with blades between four and six feet long and often up to six inches wide. They are forged from magical material alloyed with the finest of mundane steel, bronze, or other metal—or more exotic substances. They are large and clumsy unless attuned to the user's Essence, but once attuned they become swift and deadly.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

Dire Chain

The dire chain is a fighting chain composed of an alloy of one of the five magical materials. The chain is relatively thick and would be much heavier were it not buoyed by the wielder's Essence.

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible, Grappling, Reaching

Goremaul

These artifact hammers and maces dwarf their mundane counterparts and inflict deadly blows, crumpling most armor. Their heads are forged from blocks of magical materials that are often carved in the form of the heads of rams or other animals or decorated with images of deadly wild beasts.

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Smashing

Grimcleaver

A grimcleaver is a thick-bladed axe forged of an alloy of one of the five magical materials. Like its mundane counterpart, the grimcleaver can be a useful tool as well as a deadly weapon. Unlike the common axe, the grimcleaver is too large to be used as a thrown weapon.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping

Hidden Dagger-Axe

Dagger-axes are deadly weapons, but like all polearms are cumbersome to carry and impossible to hide. However, this weapon was designed for portability and concealment. The user can fold down the blade so that it lies flush with the shaft, transforming the dagger-axe into a wrackstaff or a walking stick. When in the form of a staff, the user can also unlock the weapon and fold it in half, where it is less than a yard long and easy to conceal or carry. The user must take one action to transform this weapon from a wrackstaff to a dagger-axe or the reverse.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Concealable, Piercing, Reaching, Special, Two-Handed

Longfang

A longfang is a sharp and deadly one-handed spear forged with an alloy of magical material. It can be thrown, but unlike most artifact thrown weapons, it does not return to the user.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Thrown (Short), Piercing

Reaper Daiklave

These long, narrow daiklaves have curved blades with a single edge. These elegant weapons appeal to wielders who prefer finesse and flashy displays of consummate skill over raw power.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced

Reaver Daiklave

Some Exalted are disinterested in fast and nimble blades, preferring instead raw killing power. The weapons favored by these Exalted are cleaver-like single-edged blades, four-feet long and, in some cases, a foot wide, with square or angled tips. Slow and clumsy compared to normal daiklaves, these weapons are brutally powerful.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping

Serpent-Sting Staff

These seven-section staves are usually made completely of metal rods composed of an alloy of magical materials held together by short segments of chain.

Tags: Bashing, Martial Arts, Disarming, Flexible, Reaching

Wrackstaff

These staves are often taller than their wielder and are forged or created from exquisitely carved blocks of magical material alloys. Most are both works of art and comfortable walking sticks in addition to being deadly weapons.

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Shield

Heavy Melee Weapons

Direlance

A direlance is a massive spear forged with an alloy of one of the magical materials. Its sturdy construction allows it to be used to make mounted charges like a lance or be wielded as a long spear in melee. If used like a lance, the direlance may be used single-handed during a mounted charge. If used as a spear, a direlance requires two hands to wield.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching; Two-Handed when on foot

Grand Daiklave

Sometimes called a battleblade or foecutter, the grand daiklave is the ultimate expression of the philosophy behind the daiklave—one needs no defense against a dead opponent. Two-handed weapons with blades six feet long and over a foot wide, it is only the lightening effects of Essence that allow these weapons to be wielded at all.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Balanced, Reaching, Two-Handed

Grand Goremaul

These huge sledges deliver horrifying crushing blows, designed to crumple armor and drive back even the most powerful foes. Even most Exalts cannot lift these weapons without attuning to them.

Tags: Bashing, Melee, Reaching, Smashing, Two-Handed

Grand Grimcleaver

These enormous two-handed axes have blades a yard across and can be used to fell both huge trees and most foes in a single blow. Their blades are typically engraved with scenes of battle and conquest.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Chopping, Reaching, Two-Handed

Grimscythe

These huge and terrible scythes have wickedly pointed blades that can be up to five feet long. The weapon's point is capable of tearing through the toughest armor with ease and its blade can bisect unarmored foes.

Tags: Lethal, Melee, Piercing, Reaching, Two-Handed

Artifact Thrown Weapons

Because a unique weapon that the wielder throws and then must recover before she can use again is not particularly useful, most of these artifacts are designed to return to the user. Thrown weapons don't use the listed Accuracy value for their weight class, and cannot be used to parry attacks unless they also carry the Brawl, Martial Arts, or Melee keyword. Instead, the accuracy of thrown weapons is based on the range table below. For explanation of the tags, see the list of tags for mundane thrown weapons on page XX.

[BEGIN CHART]

Artifact Thrown Weapons

Category	Damage	Overwhelming	Attunement
Light +10	3	5	
Medium	+12	4	5

Heavy +14 5 5

[END CHART]

[BEGIN CHART]

Artifact Thrown Weapon Ranges

Close	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme*
+5	+4	+3	+0	-2

* Artifact thrown weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms, Evocations, or similar abilities.

[END CHART]

Light Thrown Weapons

The Ever Useful Shuriken Belt

This woven belt of the magical materials has a small pocket near its jade buckle. The pocket contains a single shuriken of the same material as the belt itself. As soon as this shuriken either misses or strikes its target, it vanishes and instantly reappears in the pocket, ready to throw again.

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Concealable, Cutting. Special

Infinite Chakram

This weapon is similar in appearance to a normal chakram, except that it is larger, made from the magical materials, and often of baroque design. As soon as it either misses or strikes its target, it ricochets its way back to the thrower's hand.

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Medium), Cutting, Special

Sling of Distant Surprise

This magical material sling hides itself from view when not in use. It gives the user a +3 bonus to Stealth rolls conceal it.

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Long), Concealable, Special

Medium Thrown Weapons

Glorious Staff Sling

This staff sling is made of white jade, carved so that it perfectly fits its user's hands. It also functions as a beautifully made walking stick.

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Long)

Skycutter

Virtually unknown outside of the East, each skycutter is fashioned from a single two-foot piece of metal alloyed with one of the five magical materials, hammered or carved according to precise geomantic angles that focus Essence along its cutting edge. Unlike conventional boomerangs, a thrown skycutter almost always returns to its master's hand—only if the wielder botches her attack roll does the weapon need retrieving.

Tags: Lethal, Thrown (Long), Cutting, Special

Artifact Archery Weapons

All of the following weapons use the Archery Ability. Archery weapons don't use the listed Accuracy value for their weight class, and cannot be used to parry attacks. Instead, the accuracy of all archery weapons is based on the range table below. For explanation of the tags, see the list of tags for mundane archery weapons, page XX.

[BEGIN CHART]

Artifact Archery Weapons

Category		Damage	Overwhelming	Attunement
Light	+10	3	5	
Medium	+12	4	5	
Heavy	+14	5	5	

[END CHART]

[BEGIN CHART]

Artifact Archery Weapon Ranges

Close	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme*
-1	+5	+3	+1	-1

* Artifact archery weapons cannot be used to make attacks at extreme range without using Charms, Evocations, or similar abilities.

[END CHART]

Light Archery Weapons

Short Powerbow

Although it is as large as any other weapon made for Exalts, this powerbow is just small enough for use while mounted.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long), Mounted

Medium Archery Weapons

Flametongue Repeater

This beautiful and deadly weapon is designed to use either firedust or special alchemical reagents. It shoots blasts of fire like a flamepiece, but can hold five shots—the magical materials in its construction help prevent the tremendous heat of one firing charge from igniting the others. After five shots, the wielder must use an action to reload it.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Special

Powerbow

Standing at least as tall as the archer, this bow is a masterwork of Exalted craft. The design of the bow directs Essence into the arrow, hurling it with deadly force.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long)

Siege Crossbow

The stock of this large crossbow is often carved in the likeness of a leaping predator, while the short thick bow is a single piece of one of the five magical materials.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Long), Crossbow, Piercing, Powerful, Slow

Heavy Archery Weapons

Dragon Sigh Wand

Designed to use either firedust or special alchemical reagents, this long and exceptionally deadly firewand is often sculpted to resemble a serpentine dragon, its body coiled around the weapon's barrel and its mouth yawning open to form the muzzle.

Tags: Lethal, Archery (Short), Flame, Slow

Artifact Armor

Like mundane armor, artifact armor is divided into light, medium and heavy armor and differentiated by tags. See the list of tags on mundane armor (p. XX) for explanations. All artifact armor listed here are 3-dot artifacts at minimum. All of these types of armor closely resemble their mundane counterparts, except they are considerably more elaborate and far more durable. Artifact armor can also offer Evocations, though their Evocations are rarely as extensive or elaborate as those found on artifact weaponry (p. XX).

[BEGIN CHART]

Artifact Armor

Category	Soak	Hardness	Mobility Penalty	Attunement
Light +5	4	-0	4	
Medium	+8	7	-1	5
Heavy +11	10	-2	6	

[END CHART] **Soak, Hardness, and Mobility Penalty:** These work the same as with mundane armor.

Attunement: To use this armor, the wearer must commit the listed number of motes to allow the armor to respond to the wearer. Without this commitment, artifact armor is bulky, rigid and immobile and imposes a -5 penalty to Defense and to all actions, which cannot be negated by any means save attunement.

Artifact Light Armor

Breastplate

A pair of solid and extremely sturdy plates made from various magical materials and alloys that cover the character's chest and back.

Tags: None

Chain Shirt

These shirts of exceptionally fine chain are as light and as flexible as heavy silk.

Tags: Concealable

Discreet Essence Armor

This armor consists of a pair of elaborately decorated bracers and a matching set of anklets, all made from one or more magical materials. Whenever the wearer is attacked, the bracers and anklets automatically surround the wearer with a glowing aura of protective Essence that deflects blows. This aura's glow also negates all attempts to hide or

otherwise avoid being seen**. Creating this protective aura** draws three motes from the wearer. Once activated, the armor continues to glow and to protect the wearer for one scene unless the wearer commands it to cease functioning earlier. If the wearer does not have three motes, this armor cannot function.

Tags: Silent, Special

Artifact Medium Armor

Lamellar Armor

Made of small plates or bands connected by wire, all made from the magical materials, this armor looks striking and is highly effective.

Tags: None

Reinforced Buff Jacket

Made with leather from some vast and powerful creature and reinforced with plates and rivets made from one or more magical materials, this armor is both tough and flexible.

Tags: Silent

Artifact Heavy Armor

Reinforced Breastplate

This exceptionally durable and elaborately decorated magical material breastplate also includes attached shoulder guards as well as a skirt that protects the character's crotch and upper thighs, a pair of greaves to protect the lower legs and a pair of long bracer's to protect the character's forearms.

Tags: None

Articulated Plate

This suit of armor consists of dozens exquisitely crafted interlocking plates of one or more magical materials. Only the finest Exalted crafters can create these precisely made wonders. Most are decorated with scenes of their wearer's triumphs or images of their divine patron.

Tags: None

Additional Artifacts

Not all artifacts are designed for combat. Exalts and gods create artifacts for a wide variety of purposes. Here are only a few examples. Unless otherwise specified, any bonuses granted by the following artifacts count as dice added by a Charm. These artifacts range in power from minor two dot artifacts to unique and incredibly powerful five dot wonders.

Artifact ••

These minor wonders are the most commonly found artifacts—although no artifacts in the Age of Sorrows can be truly described as "common"—but also by far the least powerful.

Collar of Dawn's Cleansing Light

This artifact comes in a variety of forms including studded bands, chokers, torcs, collars or delicate necklaces. Although no artifacts are common, these collars are sufficiently simple that the Realm's Dragon-Blooded artisans can create them without vast amounts of difficulty.

Wealthy Dynasts own and wear them when possible, not just for their useful properties, but also as displays of fortune and opulence.

The purpose of this collar is to keep its wearer clean in every respect. She could spend weeks living beneath a rubbish heap and emerge at the end as though she had just spent hours preparing for a grand ball. The artifact negates all penalties to Social rolls that would be applied due to the character being dirty or unkempt. Attuning to the collar extends its powers beyond the Exalt's clothing to her physical body. The artifact's cleansing light adds two dice to (Stamina + Resistance) rolls made against disease or poison. The wearer must commit one mote to use this artifact.

Hearthstone Amulet (Tiara, Bracer, etc.)

A wide variety of decorative artifacts exist whose sole purpose is to provide a socket into which an attuned hearthstone may be placed. The most common form of these artifacts are amulets wrought of the five magical materials, though hearthstone bracers are nearly as popular, and some Chosen—particularly Sidereals—prefer circlets or tiaras which fix the hearthstone in the center of their forehead, directly over their Caste Mark. All such items cost a single mote to attune.

If a character wears magical armor of the same material as a worn hearthstone amulet (tiara, bracer, etc.), then the amulet's socket is considered "part of" the magical armor, for the purpose of hearthstones with the Linked keyword (p. XX).

Traveler's Staff

This gnarled staff is an enchanted branch from an ancient tree found in a Greater Wood Manse located on the Blessed Isle. It can be used as a mundane quarterstaff in combat, but this is not its intended purpose, which is to provide food, firewood and shelter. At sunset, the user may plant the staff into the earth and commit three motes. The branch then grows into a fruit tree—usually apple—and sprouts enough wondrous fruit to feed the owner and several others for the evening. If she needs firewood, the owner can use the tree's branches to provide it—wood gathered this way burns readily. Come morning, she can cut off a large branch to replace the original staff. The tree then dies and rapidly rots away. By sunset, no sign of its presence remains.

Yasal Crystal

This extraordinarily valuable yellow gemstone can trap minor spirits and newly made ghosts. To imprison a spirit, the user must touch the spirit and spend a point of temporary Willpower, then make a contested Willpower roll against the spirit; success imprisons the spirit in the crystal. The spirit cannot typically have an Essence greater than 2. Each stone can hold only a single spirit at a time, and anyone holding the stone can free the spirit at will.

Once imprisoned in yasal crystal, spirits can communicate with anyone who touches the stone, but they cannot escape on their own or use any of their Charms. Instead, whoever touches the stone can use a captive spirit's powers as if they were his own, if the holder of the stone has the spirit's permission. To obtain this permission, the holder must usually bargain with the spirit, typically requesting the free use of its powers for a set number of times. After exhausting all the uses, or after a set time period (rarely more than a month), the holder agrees to free the spirit. While the holder is under no obligation to keep this promise, those who break it end up with uncooperative spirits inside useless rocks. Also, spirits who break free from such an oathbreaker will undoubtedly attempt to take dire vengeance on him and might have the help of friends and allies.

On rare occasions, yasal crystals of exceptional purity may be found in powerful demesnes, particularly in the South. These crystals are capable of capturing more powerful spirits, and carry higher Artifact ratings accordingly. Yasal crystals do not need to be attuned.

Artifact •••

These artifacts are roughly as powerful as artifact weapons and are similarly rare.

Belt of Shadow Walking

Night-blacks belt made from leather from the wings of giant bats, trimmed with black jade and soulsteel, these artifacts can control shadows and cause them to conceal the wearer. Whenever she wishes, the wearer can add three dice to all stealth rolls. However, this is the least of the belt's powers. When the wearer expends ten motes, she can transform into a living shadow for one scene. In this form, she can slip under the space beneath a door or slide through the thinnest crack. In well-lit regions, observers notice the existence of an unusual shadow if they make a (Perception + Awareness) roll at difficulty 3, unless the wearer conceals himself in a larger shadow.

When the character is a shadow, she is dematerialized and can only affect or be affected by other dematerialized creatures or by Charms and weapons capable of attacking dematerialized foes. If the wearer uses such a Charm or weapon while dematerialized, she can use it to affect a materialized foe. Otherwise, she is immune to all materialized threats, although she can be trapped in a room that is sealed tightly enough. The character can wear any armor and take any object she can carry into the shadows with her. However, she cannot transform other living things into shadow. Once the scene ends, the character must remain in solid form for at least ten minutes before transforming back into a shadow. The wearer must commit five motes to use this artifact.

Bracers of Universal Crafting

These bracers are carved from green and white jade and are each a quarter inch thick, and two inches wide. Once activated, they create temporarily projections of Essence that can act as both tools and extra hands. This item allows the character to add four dice to all rolls involving fine manipulation. Such rolls include picking locks and surgery, as well as many craft rolls, including any rolls involving calligraphy, cooking, embroidery, making jewelry, repairing complex devices, or any other careful task where precision matters more than strength. The tools and other manipulators created by these bracers vanish the instant they are not needed and the character wearing these bracers can control them as easily as she can manipulate her own fingers. In addition to being compatible with all Craft Charms, these bracers negate the need for any additional tools and eliminate all penalties for performing an action without proper tools. Attuning to this artifact costs five motes, but once attuned activating it can be done at will.

Essence Glider

This fragile-looking construct of magical material, feathersteel, and Essence has a wingspan of 20 feet. It appears to be an exceptionally slender and delicate glider frame that lacks a cloth covering. It weighs less than half as much as a conventional folding glider, and folds small enough that the user can wear it underneath a cloak. When the user spends one mote of Essence, the glider automatically unfolds and the framework is covered with a faintly glowing fabric of solidified Essence. The glider remains active for one full scene, and the user can easily extend this duration by spending one additional mote per scene.

Because the glider is so responsive, it adds four dice to the (Dexterity + Athletics) roll necessary to control it. It can can soar on thermals and also multiplies the distance the user can jump horizontally by five (if the user has room to unfold its wings – this bonus is added to other bonuses gained from Charms or Anima powers)—this usually amounts to a gliding distance of four range bands, at a rate of one band per round, though launching from great heights can dramatically expand this range. For long distance travel, an Essence glider has a speed of 50 mph. The user must commit two motes to use this artifact.

Artifact ••••

Mortal princes have mobilized for war over the ownership of wonders at this artifact rating.

Folding Ship

This ocean-going vessel has a hull of strong, gold-tinged wood and brilliant white sails. It requires no crew: the ship handles its own sail, bilge and maintenance. It needs only a captain. From the helm, the captain can verbally command the rest of the ship using her Sail skill.

At its owner's command, this ship can fold itself up in a visual spectacle, completing the one-minute process as a 1' x 6" x 6" box that weighs 20 pounds. It takes just as long for the boat to unfold. The ship has the traits of a standard, nonmagical vessel decided at the time of its creation or purchase—several models of folding ships were created in the long-ago days when the Exalted made such wonders, from fast couriers to war triremes. The vessel repairs all damage if it spends one full day as a box. The captain must commit seven motes to use this artifact.

Artifact •••••

These earth-shaking prodigies are the stuff of legend, rare as an honest Guildsman, and may shift the course of nations.

The Wondrous Globe of Precious Stability

Only a handful of these rare and precious artifacts survived the First Age. They are all jade spheres the size of small human head, covered in dozens of complex occult symbols inlaid with orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal and soulsteel, with socket for a Hearthstone on top and mounting brackets that can unfold from the bottom. Activating this artifact requires either placing a standard Hearthstone in the socket or for one of the Exalted to commit ten motes to attune it. A hearthstone used in this fashion provides no other benefits.

Once activated, the sphere begins to glow and rotate. Then, either the Exalt who committed Essence to it can command it to orbit around her or someone can mount it on a vehicle or building. If orbiting around an Exalt, it protects everyone and everything within Short range from the effects of the Wyld. In addition, every creature or object inside this radius gains five dice to resist any Charms used by one of the Fair Folk and none of the Fair Folk can enter the protected area or affect the artifact in any fashion.

If attached to a vehicle or building, it protects the entire structure and everyone inside it in the same manner. This artifact can be used to protect any vehicle, including the largest First Age ship. Alternately, it can be attached to any single building that is no larger than the Imperial Palace or one of the sealed towers of the city of Rathess. However, it cannot be used to protect an entire city or even a large town.

Hearthstones

Hearthstones are foci of geomantic forces. These crystals grow in the hearts of manses or in centers of incredible geomantic power and are usually about the size of a hen's egg. Most are

exceptionally beautiful, growing naturally in precise cuts. Many hearthstones influence the region around them. Others channel the power of Creation into more targeted and specific miracles. Most manses create standard hearthstones, while the most powerful manses create greater hearthstones. Most artifact weapons and armor have a single empty socket into which a hearthstone might be placed, conveying the Essence of a distant manse and its geomantic miracles, though those rated at •••• or ••••• occasionally have two or even three sockets.

For more information on hearthstones and manses, see Chapter Four.

Hearthstone Keywords

Hearthstones are of diverse origins—most are accreted in a specially-designed chamber in the heart of a manse, but others occur naturally over a span of centuries in unusual demesnes. This produces some differences in hearthstone behaviors, and different types of stones can be found in different places, and behave differently. These differences are denoted by special keywords, detailed below:

Dependent: Hearthstones of this type channel their mystical benefits from their parent manse. If the manse is destroyed or disrupted, the hearthstone becomes inert and ceases to function. An inert hearthstone crumbles to ash within a matter of days. Dependent hearthstones can only be grown in a manse, and never occur naturally in demesnes.

Independent: Hearthstones of this type sustain their own miraculous power. Disrupting their parent manse or demesne has no effect upon them.

Linked: The complex magic of a hearthstone with this Keyword only kindles and activates when socketed into an attuned artifact that already contains another hearthstone which lacks this Keyword. For example, the Hierophant's Eye could grant its benefit if placed in a daiklave with two hearthstone sockets, one of which already contains the Freedom Stone, but not if simply placed in a single-socket suit of armor.

Manse-born: Hearthstones of this type can only be grown in a manse, and never occur in the wild.

Wild-born: Hearthstones of this type can only form naturally in demesnes—no geomantic architect has ever learned to duplicate them in a manse. All wild-born hearthstones are also independent.

Any hearthstone which lacks keywords might be dependent or independent, and could originate in a manse or in a demesne, as the player and Storyteller desire.

> Destroying Hearthstones
>
> As near-perfect constructs of pure geomantic Essence, hearthstones are incredibly hardy, and cannot normally be destroyed in the heat of battle—even a direct strike with a daiklave won't normally shatter a hearthstone. Breaking a hearthstone requires several days of close examination by a character with a minimum of Occult ••• and Craft (Jewelry or Gemcutting) ••• in order to find a flaw or seam in the stone, which may then be split with precise strikes with an implement of one of the five magical materials. A few special jade chisels were designed for this purpose in the First Age, but in the Age of Sorrows such acts of destruction are generally performed with the point of a daiklave or similar magical weapon.
>
> Dependent hearthstones can also be destroyed by heavily damaging or destroying the manse that sustains them. If this occurs, and the manse is later repaired, it will

begin to grow a replacement hearthstone over the course of the next season. Independent hearthstones are much more difficult to replace.

Hearthstones of Air

The Orb of Cool Breezes (Standard)

Keywords: Independent

As long as this stone is exposed to the open air, it causes cool breezes to play within two miles. These breezes make hot days more comfortable and particularly blow through windows and ventilation shafts to cool the interiors of warm houses and blow fresh air into cellars and mineshafts. In the winter these breezes moderate cold temperatures somewhat but also produce cool drafts even in well-sealed houses. If the stone is sealed somewhere airtight, its effects cease until it is again exposed to the open air.

The Memory Stone (Standard)

Keywords: Dependent

This hearthstone is outwardly clear and colorless, with a shifting prismatic radiance held deep within. It perfectly reflects and stores all of its bearer's memories within its facets, so long as it resides within an attuned hearthstone socket and those memories were made while carrying the stone. The bearer of the Memory Stone may draw pristine recollections from the stone's depths whenever she chooses, granting her perfect recall. If the stone ever falls from attunement for more than a day, all stored memories within it fade away, and the stone's former master must once more rely upon her own fallible recollections.

Aetherial Sphere (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

This clear, perfect sphere seems to swirl with prismatic facets when viewed from different angles. If the owner knows the Charm Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, this hearthstone grants knowledge of one spell of the Terrestrial Circle (excluding Demon of the First Circle or Summon Elemental) while placed in an attuned socket. Once a spell has been cast using this hearthstone, it remains imprinted on the hearthstone until the owner learns to cast the spell on her own.

Gem of Fair Winds (Greater)

Keywords: Manse-born

This azure blue stone has a small white swirl on one side. It ensures that all winds within three miles of this stone blows in the direction the swirl is facing. The wind blows no harder or softer than normal, but always blows in the correct direction. If someone changes the stone's orientation, the direction of the wind shifts gradually over the next 15 minutes until it blows in the new direction

Twice-Striking Lightning Prism (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

This prism-shaped, translucent crystal feels metallic to the touch. Whenever an Exalt who has placed this hearthstone in an attuned socket uses a Charm, Evocation, or spell in direct support or furtherance of a Defining Intimacy, geomantic power surges forth from the gem to empower the magic, treating the character's Essence rating as though it were one higher than its true value for

the purpose of effect calculations (such as the duration of Red Reaper Aegis on p. XX). This doesn't allow the Exalt to access magic they're not powerful enough to wield.

Hearthstones of Earth

The Stone of Stability (Standard)

Keywords: Independent

This stone causes all structure within three miles to become unusually sturdy and stable. In addition to surviving all but the worst earthquakes without harm, bridges are able to bear more weight than normal and mineshafts are unlikely to collapse even if poorly reinforced and shored up. This stone does not allow entirely unstable structures to stand, or a flimsy bridge to support a caravan of yeddim. Instead, it roughly doubles structures' strength and durability. This stone only affects structures like houses, mineshafts and bridges that are built on or into the ground and cannot be moved without great effort. Also, this stone provides no protection against deliberate physical attacks on what it reinforces.

Iron Soul Stone (Standard)

Keywords: Wild-born

This highly-coveted hearthstone looks like a perfectly smooth grey stone plucked from a riverbed. It grants complete immunity to the passive transformative power of the Wyld to everyone within 100 yards (or long range, in combat), even preventing the onset of Wyld addiction. The fae find the stone's radiance unpleasant, and gain a Minor Tie of aggression against its bearers while within the field of effect.

The Earth Shaping Jewel (Greater)

Keywords: None

This stone allows anyone who has touched the jewel within the last day to turn unworked stone into clay or transform dirt or clay into stone. To accomplish this feat, the jewel must have been in the same location for at least one full week and people who have touched the jewel can only affect earth or stone within three miles of the jewel. Anyone using the power of this jewel must touch the stone or earth they wish to transform. Each touch can transform up to one cubic yard of earth or stone. This transformation takes roughly a minute to complete.

Mountain-Burden Stone (Greater)

Keywords: None

This unusual, chalky-black jewel offers no benefit when placed into a hearthstone socket. Rather, it is a weapon. If placed into an open hearthstone socket on an enemy's equipment (a difficulty 3 Martial Arts or Brawl-based gambit in combat), the stone locks into place with an audible ringing crash, and dramatically increases the artifact's weight. This automatically disarms weapons, sending them smashing to the ground where they cannot be retrieved so long as the hearthstone remains in place. It makes armor so heavy that movement actions become impossible and all other actions suffer a -3 penalty. Forcibly prying the stone loose requires a difficulty 4 feat of strength that cannot be placed in a flurry.

Sword-Soul Gem (Greater)

Keywords: Independent

This unusual stone appears chalky-white while held, but assumes the same hue as the dominant magical material of an artifact it's socketed into. While socketed into an attuned artifact, it awakens the next Evocation for which the artifact's bearer qualifies. Note she cannot naturally proceed to learn the next Evocation in the tree using this hearthstone's Evocation as a prerequisite. She must first complete any requisite training required and learn the Evocation with her own experience points in order to advance to the next Evocation.

Hearthstones of Fire

The Firestop Stone (Standard)

Keywords: Independent

Within three miles of this hearthstone, fires spread more slowly and become more difficult to ignite. Even with optimal tools and kindling, starting even the smallest fire is a difficulty 1 task, and accidental fires are extremely rare. Marking a stove, hearth, kiln or forge with a special sigil and saying a short prayer once a month at noon allows fires to be kindled and to burn normally in these locations, but these fires are unlikely to spread beyond these locations. Arson and attacks with flaming projectiles cause at most minimal damage in a region protected by this stone, while forest fires and prairie fires are exceptionally rare.

Sphere of the Revolutionary Dog (Standard)

Keywords: Independent, Manse-born

This is a brilliant orange orb which seems to be filled with slowly billowing tongues of flame. When socketed into an attuned artifact, the owner may pay one mote upon falling asleep to send the point of recovered Willpower that she regains during her rest into the hearthstone rather than gaining it herself. At any later point, she can pay another mote to retrieve and spend this stored Willpower point. The Sphere of the Revolutionary Dog can only hold one Willpower point at a time.

Cinder of Burning Mind (Standard)

Keywords: Linked

This hearthstone appears as a glassy black stone, smouldering with red-green in its heart. If the owner knows the Charm Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, this hearthstone grants knowledge of one fire-type spell of the Terrestrial Circle (excluding any spells which summon minions, such as Summon Elemental) while socketed in an attuned artifact. Once a spell has been cast using this hearthstone, it remains imprinted on the hearthstone until the owner learns to cast the spell on her own.

Gem of Endless Summer (Greater)

Keywords: None

The presence of this hearthstone warms the land and air around it to the temperature it would normally assume in the height of summer. Both day and nighttime temperatures mirror summer equivalents. This effect extends for four miles around the stone and ends abruptly at the edge. If someone moves the stone, the warmth moves with it, but snow and frozen ground thaw only as fast as they would if exposed to normal summer temperatures. The effect extends several yards down into the soil, allowing normal plant cultivation in the frozen depths of a northern winter.

Candent Carbuncle (Greater)

Keywords: None

This irregularly rounded stone looks like a glowing coal, and is always warm to the touch. When socketed into armor or a decorative artifact such as a hearthstone amulet or bracer, the Candent Carbuncle grants the opportunity to awaken the following Evocations:

Burning Coal Fist

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt may draw the illimitable heat of Creation into her body, momentarily wreathing an attacking fist or leg in flame. This Evocation supplements an unarmed attack, granting three additional raw damage to **withering** attacks, and permitting **decisive** attacks to re-roll up to (Essence) 10s.

Incandescent Lance

Cost: 7m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Coal Fist

Drawing on the geomantic power seething in the hearthstone, the Exalt sets her Essence ablaze and hurls it at a foe. This may take the form of a searing fireball or a roaring plume of flame, as desired. The character makes a (Dexterity + [Brawl or Martial Arts])-based unarmed attack at a target out to short range, with the benefits of Burning Coal Fist attached.

Hearthstones of Water

The Purity Gem (Standard)

Keywords: Independent

All water drawn from wells or rainwater cisterns within three miles of the stone tastes pure and sweet and never contains poisons or disease. Any toxins or diseases added to this water are instantly neutralized, and the water retains this property as long as it remains within the area affects by this gem. Even water in mugs or cookpots neutralizes all poisons and kills all diseases.

The Fountain-Summoning Stone (Standard)

Keywords: Independent

This hearthstone is a dark oval emerald, cold and moist to the touch. If the Fountain-Summoning Stone is buried in the soil and left undisturbed for a short period (ranging from a minute in fertile riverlands to half an hour in the desert), it will presently spring back to the surface atop a gushing fountain of water, which persists until the sun rises and sets. The Fountain-Summoning Stone won't operate anywhere that a spring couldn't possibly appear, such as a balcony garden or in a barrel of soil aboard a ship.

The Orb of Calm (Greater)

Keywords: None

For four miles around the stone, seas remain relatively calm, rain is never heavy, and winds remain light. Waves never become higher than three yards high and winds are never stronger than 25 miles per hour. This stone only functions if it is within two miles of an ocean or of a lake at least 50 miles across in its smallest dimension. If placed on a ship, seas around the ship remain as a moving zone of calm. The stone does not create doldrums; it merely prevents weather from becoming dangerously powerful.

The Freedom Stone (Greater)

Keywords: Manse-born

This hearthstone is a murky blue-black, full of shifting shades. When mounted in an attuned hearthstone socket, the Freedom Stone grants the opportunity to awaken the following Evocations:

Rain-Grasping Evasion

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

If the Exalt manages to roll more successes than his attacker during the control roll of a grapple, she may spend a single mote to immediately slip free and end the grapple before she can be savaged, restrained, thrown, or otherwise affected.

Sinuous Liquid Escape

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Rain-Grasping Evasion

The Exalt is slippery indeed, and can be nigh-impossible to hold once caught. This Evocation allows the character to use (Dexterity + Dodge) in a hostile grapple's control roll.

Chains Cast Into Water

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Innate

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt permanently gains two automatic successes on attempts to escape from inanimate bonds, such as ropes, chains, or binding cuffs; they slide across her skin as though it were slick with water. This Evocation doesn't help with escaping from more general restraint, such as a dungeon cell, though it could get the Exalt free of a leg manacle within the cell.

Hearthstones of Wood

The Health Stone (Standard)

Keywords: Manse-born

This stone is mahogany red and marked with a black spiral. It repels spirits of rot and disease within two miles of the stone. Food keeps at least twice as long and is always obviously foul before it can make anyone sick. Also, every within this area who wears an amulet marked with a spiral like the one on the stone gains two additional dice to resist and recover from all diseases and infections. This stone does not prevent desired fermentation or aging, but aged meat is less likely to rot and wine and beer are less likely to go off.

The Monkey Stone (Standard)

Keywords: Dependent

This stone is a rich reddish-brown, with a surface that feels like soft, furry bark, and grants its bearer the agility and balance of its namesake. When socketed into armor, it negates the armor's mobility penalty for the purpose of climbing, leaping, or other acrobatic or arboreal actions, though not movement actions on relatively flat ground. If the armor has no mobility penalty, then the Exalt instead gains one automatic success on all rolls to climb, leap, swing, and perform other acrobatic or arboreal actions. Finally, the character never treats tree branches, limbs, crumbling ramparts, or other elevated and treacherous ground as difficult terrain.

The Harvest Gem (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

Any fields within five miles of this stone are exceptionally fertile. On good or average years all crops regularly produce yields more than twice as large as their normal best, and even in bad years, harvests are equal to the best yields that could normally be produced with the same tools and effort. This stone does not reduce the need for labor or seed, but it guarantees this labor will always be well rewarded.

Rose of Millions (Greater)

Keywords: None

This hearthstone appears as an eight-sided pink and black tourmaline cross-section. When placed in an attuned hearthstone socket, the bearer may enshrine one of her Major or Defining Intimacies in the gem as she falls asleep by spending four motes. Thereafter, she automatically knows when she perceives another character who shares that same Intimacy, though she doesn't learn what intensity they hold the Intimacy at. The Rose of Millions can only hold one Intimacy at a time.

Solar Hearthstones

Stone of Innocent's Protection (Standard)

Keywords: Wild-born

Within two miles of this stone, no creature of darkness can enter any dwelling containing either a child under the age of ten or someone currently asleep.

The Gem of Day's Light (Greater)

Keywords: Independent

This Solar hearthstone is a yellow gem burning with an inner light. It allows the Exalt who owns it to travel confidently, knowing that the light of the Unconquered Sun will be with her. She has only to concentrate on the gem to make it glow like a miniature sun, illuminating everything within up to a mile's radius with the light of day. The Exalt can determine how far the effect

stretches by concentrating on the gem. The effect lasts for as long as needed. Concentrating to activate the effect is a miscellaneous action, though it can be ended reflexively. Hungry ghosts react to this light as they do to the actual sun.

Hierophant's Eye (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent, Linked

This black octagonal stone blazes with orange-gold light along each of its perfect edges. The Hierophant's Eye grants one automatic non-Charm success to every shape sorcery action while socketed into an attuned artifact.

Gem of Inner Power (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

This gleaming red-gold gem's facets focus the eye inward toward a core that gleams and glows when it catches the light. When the Gem of Inner Glory is socketed into an orichalcum weapon and two motes are committed to it, one Evocation awakens at no experience cost, and remains for so long as commitment is maintained.

Glory Sphere (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent, Linked

This brilliant white-gold sphere adds +1 to the owner's Essence rating for the purpose of learning the next Charm or Evocation for which they qualify, so long as it remains socketed into an attuned artifact. Charms which unlock Sorcery are not applicable. Once the bearer's Essence rating increases, he may use this hearthstone to learn a new Charm or Evocation.

Abyssal Hearthstones

Stone of the Nightly Reunion (Standard)

Keywords: Independent

Every night, people can visit any graveyard within three miles of the stone and speak with the dead buried there. The dead can hear and respond and can also create slightly transparent images of the way their bodies appeared in life. However, without using any special abilities neither the dead nor the living can touch or affect each other in any way.

Walking Corpse Stone (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

This rough-hewn grey hearthstone feels leathery to the touch, and is shot through with crimson flaws. When placed within a corpse just prior to burial (the grave may be as shallow as desired, but the corpse must be completely buried), this jewel will cause the corpse to rise as a zombie at the next sunset, under the control of the one who buried it. The stone need not remain with the corpse for it to stay animated and loyal, and may be used to raise another zombie at the next sunset.

Gem of Ghostly Protection (Greater)

Keywords: Manse-born

Within three miles of the stone, phantoms harass anyone who does not live within the area protected by the stone and who attempts to harm or steal from anyone living inside this region. These ghosts are immaterial and are only active between dusk and dawn. However, during that

time they can create spectral forms to scare or distract that outsiders, shout or howl and throw small objects that cannot do damage but are extremely distracting. In addition to making stealth impossible, the ghosts' attentions increase the difficulty for all actions by the invaders by 2. Invaders cannot hide from these ghosts using mundane stealth, but any Charms or other abilities that allow characters to hide supernaturally prevents the ghosts from noticing them.

Lunar Hearthstones

Stone of Nature's Bounty (Standard)

Keywords: Wild-born

Anyone who falls asleep within three miles of this stone awakens the next day with an intuitive understanding of how to find nutritious food and pure water in their current environment. While it doesn't allow someone to find food or water where none exists, the stone grants a +2 bonus to all Survival rolls to find food or water in the area around the stone. This knowledge lasts until next time the person falls asleep.

Chameleon Stone (Standard)

Keywords: None

This triangular prism is colorless in itself, but takes on the colors of whatever surface it touches. When placed in an attuned hearthstone socket, the character may spend a point of Willpower to change his skin, hair, and eye colors to blend in with the natives of the area where he travels. Facial structure may also very slightly change to facilitate this blending-in if necessary, producing epicanthic folds or the like. Removing the gem or spending another point of Willpower returns the character to their true appearance.

Beast Gem (Greater)

Keywords: None

All trained animals within three miles of this stone are unusually healthy and fertile. More importantly, they give birth to exceptional offspring. The offspring of trained animals born in this area are all obedient, good-tempered and as smart as monkeys, while also being as healthy and strong as the best members of their breed. This stone only affects the offspring of animals who are born in this region and at least one of whose parents were trained as a riding animal, beast of burden or guard animal.

Sidereal Hearthstones

Gem of Luck (Standard)

Keywords: None

This gem causes everyone within the village, town, or city where it's is located to be resistant to bad luck. Dropped plates are less likely to break, lost items are easier to find, stray sparks and dropped lanterns are less likely to start large fires and people performing difficulty 1 tasks never botch. This stone has no effect on any forms of deliberate malice and also cannot undo curses or prevent large disasters, unless those disasters were precipitated by a single small accident.

Jewel of the Celestial Mandarin (Standard)

Keywords: Manse-born

This transparent, faceted square stone glows with a violet light. Any individual bearing it in an attuned hearthstone socket may glimpse the abodes of spirits—the doors of the sanctums where

gods dwell become visible to her eyes. Although this hearthstone doesn't grant the power to enter such sanctums, she can speak and her voice will be heard within, booming with celestial authority—any command to come forth is treated as though it aligns with a Minor Intimacy.

Sphere of Red Rain (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

Appearing as a black gem shot through with countless tiny red flaws, this hearthstone has a four mote attunement cost, and grants the Exalt knowledge of the next combat Charm for which she qualifies. Note that she cannot naturally proceed to learn the next Charm in the tree using this hearthstone's Charm as a prerequisite. She must first complete any requisite training required and learn the Charm with her own experience points in order to advance to the next Charm.

Stone of Hidden Safety (Greater)

Keywords: Dependent

This stone protects a single settlement, which can be as large as a small city or as tiny as a village of a dozen people. It cannot be used to protect a vast metropolis like Nexus, Chiaroscuro, or the Imperial City, because such settlements are simply too large to be hidden. This stone protects the city against anyone traveling there via mundane means with an intent to conquer, rob, harm or disrupt the city as a whole or a large number of its inhabitants. It has no ability to deter anyone with a supernatural ability to locate places, but everyone else hostile to the city will become lost. A seemingly straight road to the city seems to twist and double back upon itself in impossible ways. This stone increases the difficulty for hostile people to locate this settlement to 5, even if they are traveling on a road that seems to head directly to the city or town. Anyone without hostile intent must still make a difficulty 1 roll to locate this settlement. If a hostile person or army accompanies a guide with no ill intent, the guide is almost certain to become separated from the bandits or invaders. Merchants, pilgrims, performers and other travelers have little trouble locating the city; only those who seek to harm it will be unable to locate it.

Evocations

Evocations are a special class of Charms associated with artifact weapons and armor. They sleep within an artifact, an inchoate potential of Essence, roused as the artifact's wielder establishes a rapport and connection with the wonder. The particulars of how an artifact expresses Evocations depends on the nature of the artifact, but also the nature of the hero who wields it—when Tepet Jayat passes on his ancient and storied daiklave, Lightning's Edge, to his grandson Tepet Marat, the Evocations that Marat teases forth from the blade will be similar to those Jayat mastered, but probably not identical. The patient and analytical swordsmanship of Jayat forges a different legend for Lightning's Edge than the wild aggression of his grandson.

Evocations exist because the forging of battle-artifacts is as much a spiritual communion as a physical act of beating metal into shape or carving Essence channels into a blade. While artifacts aren't truly "alive" in the sense of beasts, people, or spirits, there's still a character and motive to their Essence and a spirituality that kindles within them. This spark can be fanned to greater prominence—and power—through extended use by and rapport with an Exalted wielder.

The Evocations an artifact manifests are dependent on a number of factors—the magical materials used in its forging are the most fundamental determinant of an artifact's nature, but the circumstances and techniques that forged it, the personality and combat style of the one who wields it, and the deeds it's used to perform also play a role. A daiklave used to hunt and slay

ghosts for decades after its forging will likely develop into a different sort of blade than one used primarily for honor duels, and a murderer's weapon is apt to be different from either.

Rules of Evocations

Evocations vary tremendously from artifact to artifact, but all have a few elements in common.

• Only a character who is attuned to a particular weapon or armor can awaken its Evocations.

• Evocations are divided into three tiers of ascending power—Emerald, Sapphire, and Adamant. A character must awaken a certain number of Emerald Evocations before gaining access to Sapphire Evocations, and must awaken a number of Sapphire Evocations before gaining access to Adamant Evocations. These numbers value from artifact to artifact, but in general, the higher the artifact's rating, the more Evocations must be awakened before the next tier becomes available.

• Emerald Evocations tend to be of Essence 1-2, Sapphire Evocations range from 2-3, and Adamant Evocations span from 3-5… and possibly even beyond, in the case of the mightiest of artifacts.

• Evocations vary in number and power from artifact to artifact. For weapons, artifact ••• is the lowest rating at which an artifact is capable of producing Evocations, and such weapons may sustain 9 to 12 Evocations. Artifact •••• weapons can sustain from 13-16 Evocations, while Artifact ••••• and N/A weapons can sustain an unlimited number of Evocations. The higher an artifact's rating, the more powerful its Evocations tend to be. Artifact armor is rarely more powerful than Artifact •••, and tends to express fewer Evocations than artifact weapons—the passive tie between armor and bearer tends to harness less power than the more active interplay of wielder and weapon.

• Characters can normally only use Evocations while wielding or wearing the associated weapon or suit of armor. Permanent Evocations only operate while the character is wielding or wearing the associated item. Supplemental Evocations will only supplement attacks made with the artifact, unless otherwise noted. Simple Evocations which create attacks generally create attacks using the weapon itself. Reflexive defensive Evocations will only assist in defenses made with the artifact, unless otherwise noted.

• There is an exception to the above rules—the **Innate** keyword. Sometimes, over years of fighting alongside an artifact, a Solar forges such an intense bond with it that some measure of its mystical nature permanently bleeds into the Solar, leaving an indelible impression. After carrying a blue jade longfang into a hundred battles and casting its lightning-wreathed form at her foes a thousand times, a Solar might one day find herself deprived of her honored companion, scoop up a mortal spear of wood and steel, and find that when she hurls it, it is wreathed in lightning.

Evocations with the Innate Keyword may be repurchased to become Charms known by the Solar, rather than remaining tied to the weapon, and may be used to enhance attacks made with any reasonably similar weapon or armor (an Innate Evocation to wreath a daiklave in lightning could be used to shroud any blade in crackling power, but couldn't be used with arrows or bare fists), unless more specific restrictions are listed. Evocations rarely possess this Keyword outright, and instead most often gain it when the Exalt begins to awaken a new tier of Evocations, as detailed in the individual artifact descriptions beginning on page XX. **The Solar Exalted *alone* may utilize the Innate Keyword**—other Exalts cannot internalize the miracles of their equipment in this fashion.

The Five Magical Materials

The five magical materials are the most mystically potent substances known to the craftsmen and savants of Creation, and they almost universally form the basis for artifact creation. The dominant magical material used in an artifact has an enormous impact not only on its character, but on who most strongly covets the item—for while the Solar Exalted are equally adept with all artifacts, other varieties of Exalted have powerful affinities for a particular magical material, and limited aptitude in establishing a bond with artifacts not of that substance.

It's also not unheard-of for an artifact to be forged of an alloy of different magical materials, or to incorporate multiple magical materials into different parts of its substance. Such nuanced artifacts are highly valued by some Exalted, as those with perfect blends lent new, hybrid strength to the Solars, while those that incorporated small amounts of an additional magical material to support or shade the power of a dominant material were greatly valued by their fellow Chosen.

That said, an artifact's dominant magical material is a heavy influence on its Evocations, but not the only influence—the guidelines below can be modified by the artifact's construction, history, and the rapport it establishes with its wielder. They're a starting point, not a set of hard constraints.

Jade

Jade is the most common of the magical materials, found in quarries and deposits all across Creation. It resonates with the Dragon-Blooded, and is used not only to forge their artifacts, but as the true currency of the Realm. Jade is the most diverse magical material, appearing in five varieties—while all Dragon-Blooded are equally adept with any variety of jade, most prefer to adorn themselves with jade matching their inborn Aspect. All varieties of jade are adept at manifesting and channeling their associated element—there are enough red jade weapons in the Realm which manifest flames that the Empress held a tournament every 50 years to determine who among her Dynasty deserved the title of Master of Limitless Flames—but beyond that commonality, the Evocations of jade differ significantly. These secondary qualities, combined with its availability, make jade the most common magical material used in composite artifacts.

• **Black jade** resonates with the element of water. Its Evocations grant control over water, flexibility, the ability to communicate with or beckon spirits, the power to flood things or draw the moisture from them, and occasionally the manifestation of destructive liquids such as acid or boiling water.

• **Blue jade** resonates with the element of air. It can be used to stir the air, create blasts of wind, lower the temperature or create ice, harness or manifest lightning, or anticipate the intent of opponents or even briefly glimpse their thoughts.

• **Green jade** resonates with the element of wood. Its Evocations control plants, make things grow or wither, produce manifestations of wood, establish rapport with the natural world, siphon Essence from living things or transfer it into them, and manifest toxins.

• **Red jade** resonates with the element of fire. Its Evocations frequently control, manifest, or grant protection from flames. They also heighten reflexes, raise temperatures, grant a controlled battle-fury, quicken movements, and grant explosive power to attacks and evasions.

• **White jade** resonates with the element of earth. It grants control over or allows manifestation of earth, sand, dirt, and stone, hardens things, immobilizes, strikes with enormous force, grants calm and mental clarity, and mesmerizes opponents.

Moonsilver

Moonsilver is a silvery metal, harder than steel in its unworked state, with a liquid, quicksilver sheen when viewed in dim light. It resonates with the Lunar Exalted, and in the past, Luna's Chosen felt that for any non-Lunar to carry moonsilver arms and armor burdened them with proving themselves worthy of the substance—it was common for Lunars to challenge the bearers of moonsilver to contests and competitions. In the modern day, the Lunars are prone to simply stealing or seizing any moonsilver artifacts they become aware of, making such wonders dangerous to own.

Moonsilver's Essence is protean and wild. Its Evocations often unite wielder and weapon in a bridge of primal instinct or mystical insight. Its attacks are often either flamboyant and barely-restrained, or else subtle and insidious, laced with poisons, slivers of heart-seeking metal, or ever-bleeding wounds. Many moonsilver Evocations produce physical manifestations in the weapon—while it's unusual for a moonsilver artifact to flow and reshape itself like water or clay, a longfang might flex to strike around interposing blades, a daiklave might stretch to drive its point deeper into vital organs, and a grimcleaver might release its mighty ax-head to fly into the Lunar's foes like a moth, only to draw it back in the next moment.

Orichalcum

Orichalcum is a super-hard, bright, golden metal to which only the Solar Exalted feel a natural affinity. Although they can wield all of the magical materials with equal facility, the Solars much valued orichalcum, for it resonated with their own Charms far more strongly than any other substance. Orichalcum can sometimes be found in naturally-occurring veins, often on mountains, plateaus, and other elevated locales. In the First Age, a process was known that could refine gold into orichalcum by using lava and mystical mirrors to concentrate the light of the sun, but those refineries were destroyed or abandoned during the Usurpation and the centuries of collapse that followed.

Orichalcum's properties lead to diverse and powerful Evocations. The substance is a natural amplifier for power, and was frequently used for this purpose in mixed-material artifacts. It is the best magical material for empowering sorcery. Orichalcum has great potential for harnessing the power of light while taming shadows, channeling divine judgment to burn away that which is tainted or unclean, and channeling elemental power into stored energy, then unleashing it as omni-elemental or non-elemental force. Powerful orichalcum artifacts can harness celestial and terrestrial phenomena, provoking earthquakes, calling down shooting stars, or raising a tempest. Orichalcum can unleash cutting or smashing Essence-pressure like no other substance, and can take on the qualities of other magic; it was often called "wishmetal" by those who worked with it, for its diverse applications.

When the Solars were murdered, they were buried in lavish tombs to appease their powerful ghosts, and most of their orichalcum panoplies were sealed away with them as grave goods. Solars reborn in the Age of Sorrows sometimes dream of these tombs' locations, and the wonders hidden within.

Starmetal

Starmetal, once refined and worked, is the least ostentatious of the magical materials—it looks like top-quality steel, with an unusually reflective and polished surface. When light strikes starmetal just so, it gleams in the prismatic colors of the Five Maidens. Starmetal is the rarest magical material, refined from the ore found in fallen stars. The Sidereal Exalted find starmetal alone resonates with their Essence, and use their astrology and sorcery to predict and chart the course of falling stars, then venture out into Creation to recover the meteoric ore. Due to its extreme rarity, most starmetal artifacts sport delicate and minimalist designs, and when starmetal

appears in composite artifacts, it is usually in the form of wire filigree or etched designs rather than amalgamated alloy.

Starmetal Evocations are adept at binding spirits and exuding god-miracles, at revealing hidden truths or unraveling intricate tactics, at striking at or harnessing ephemeral concepts, at translating one kind of power into another, and at deferring unacceptable fates by substituting some lesser loss—starmetal armor might protect its wearer from a certain killing blow by instead diverting the attack to slay a cherished memory or bond of love, for example. Certain starmetal artifacts also harbor Evocations that duplicate spirit Charms.

Soulsteel

Soulsteel is a gruesome magical material, appearing at first glance like black steel. When light strikes it, however, tortured faces can sometimes be glimpsed deep in the metal, and under extended scrutiny, they can be seen (and in the heat of battle, occasionally heard) to writhe and scream. Alone among the magical materials, soulsteel cannot be found in naturally-occurring deposits in Creation, but is instead made in the soul-forges of the Deathlords, pounded together from rare Underworld ores and the souls of those who have angered the lords of the realm of tears and dust. The Abyssal Exalted find that soulsteel resonates with their nature, and are rarely seen in Creation without it. Soulsteel artifacts dating back to the First Age are exceedingly rare, but not unknown.

Soulsteel Evocations excel at binding and harnessing the powers of violence and death. They summon or bind ghosts, call up the dark power of the Underworld, cause injuries to fester, animate dead flesh, transform the wielder's injuries into a source of power, amplify pain, hold death at bay so their master can fight on, and drain the vital energies of those they harm.

Example Artifacts and Evocations

Below are a number of sample artifact weapons and armor, and their associated Evocations. The Evocations listed for each artifact are meant to serve as examples of Evocations the artifact *could* manifest—they aren't a comprehensive list of its "true" Evocations, or of all Evocations capable of being manifested by the artifact. Storytellers (or players working with the help of their Storyteller) should free to expand, exchange, or modify Evocations in any cascade to better represent the bond between their character and his signature weapon or armor.

Black Wind (Soulsteel Skycutter, Artifact •••)

Black Wind is a very old weapon, dating back to the First Age, where it was used to bring death to traitors and outlaws. This soulsteel skycutter's killing edge spans nearly a yard, and gleams red when it catches the light of the sun. Its surface is glossy, almost featureless for soulsteel, until blood graces its edge. Then the faces of the one hundred murderers whose souls were forged into its substance may sometimes be glimpsed, mouths open soundlessly somewhere beneath the crimson and black. Those who have wielded Black Wind wrote of their difficulty attuning to it, of its cold hunger, and how the weapon only ever comes alive when the prospect of reaping lives is laid before it. Its killing intent has historically been tempered by wielders with a mind for justice, but the skycutter could serve just as easily as an assassin's tool.

Black Wind's Evocations draw strength from inflicting bloody wounds on its foes, creating a swarm of blades of frozen blood that wheel and slash in its wake. The skycutter is largely impotent against foes that cannot bleed, such as sorcerous golems or carnivorous plants.

Black Wind possesses a single hearthstone socket on the left side of the blade.

Emerald Evocations

Blood-Reaping Slash

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only, Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

This Evocation supplements a **decisive** attack, causing it to animate its target's shed blood. Should the attack inflict damage, Black Wind tears free a long arc of blood after striking; this blood immediately glows with crimson Essence and becomes a looping blade which flies through the air in the skycutter's wake or orbits its wielder while she holds it, lasting for the rest of the scene. The weapon's **withering** raw damage is enhanced by +2 for each blood blade trailing after its strikes.

At Essence 3+, the wielder can pay one Willpower point when activating this Evocation to produce two blood blades with a single attack.

Sanguine Hammer

Cost: 2m, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blood-Reaping Slash

Charged with fortifying Essence, Black Wind slashes into and past its target, trailing blood blades which erupt on impact, one after another, hurling the weapon's target across the battlefield. After making a successful attack, the character decides how many blood blades to expend. The target is hurled back one range band per blade expended, and left prone once the attack is resolved.

Life-Drinking Resurgence

Cost: 2m, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Blood-Reaping Slash

After striking with a **decisive** attack, when her Initiative resets to base, the wielder may consume her artifact's blood blades as they return to her waiting hand, using them to fortify her fighting spirit, heighten her reflexes, and understand the weaknesses of her foes. For each blood blade consumed, the wielder's Initiative resets to a base value two points higher than normal.

Seven Traumas Technique

Cost: 3m, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Life-Drinking Resurgence

Hardening her blood blades with killing Essence, Black Wind's master returns her sanguine projectiles to their source with deadly results. Each blood blade expended to power this Evocation raises the base damage of a **decisive** attack by two dice, and causes the attack to ignore one point of Hardness. If this Evocation is used in conjunction with Blood-Reaping Slash, then Blood-Reaping Slash produces one additional blood blade.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Black Wind's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking Black Wind's Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Blood-Reaping Slash.

Red Reaper Aegis

Cost: 4m, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Higher of (Essence) or three rounds

Prerequisite Charms: Life-Drinking Resurgence, Sanguine Hammer

Plucking her blood blades out of the air, Black Wind's master sets the Essence-forged weapons to wheeling and slashing in a protective circuit around herself. For each blade expended in this fashion, the character gains three points of soak and two Hardness (which does not stack with other sources of Hardness, as usual). If this Evocation is activated again before its duration expires, then the mote cost need not be paid, the duration resets, and the additional blades stack their effects with the existing blades.

Stolen Life Detonation

Cost: 3m, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Red Reaper Aegis

The wielder of Black Wind draws her blood blades into a swirling revolution about herself, then channels explosive Essence into them, violently detonating them. Each opponent within close range must make a reflexive (Dexterity + Dodge) roll against a difficulty of (number of blades detonated x3) or be knocked back one range band and left prone. Additionally, all affected enemies lose an amount of Initiative equal to the expended blades, and the wielder gains this Initiative.

Errant Orbit Scythe

Cost: 5m, 1wp, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seven Traumas Technique

Seizing her blood blades, the master of Black Wind sends projectiles winging out on independent missions of destruction. The character makes a number of **withering** attacks equal to the number of blades expended, to a maximum of (Essence or 5, whichever is lower) attacks. These attacks may be directed at multiple opponents or at a single opponent. If all attacks are directed against a

single target, then the final attack in this string can be a **decisive** rather than **withering** attack, if desired; if that attack is enhanced by Blood-Reaping Slash, then Blood-Reaping Slash produces one additional blood blade.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Black Wind's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking Black Wind's Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Seven Traumas Technique and Errant Orbit Scythe.

Awakened Blood Blade

Cost: 5m, 1wp, 5 blades; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Errant Orbit Scythe, Red Reaper Aegis

Binding Black Wind's gruesome blades together with Essence and will, the artifact's master forges five blood blades into a full-sized, independently mobile skycutter, imbued with a killing will of its own. The created weapon has the same traits as a skycutter hurled by Black Wind's master, but is rolled into battle independently, tracks its own Initiative, and makes its own attacks. If targeted by enemies, it has an Evasion rating equal to the character's Thrown score, and (Essence) -0 health levels. The Awakened Blood Blade persists until destroyed, until the Essence animating it is withdrawn, or until the end of the scene—whichever comes first. It can be enhanced with Black Wind's own Evocations, such as Blood-Reaping Slash, paid for by the skycutter's master—though it cannot create another Awakened Blood Blade.

Savage Blood Swarm

Cost: 3m, 1+ blades; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Awakened Blood Blade, Sanguine Hammer

Gathering Black Wind and its subsidiary blades to hand and hurling them as one great killing swarm, the Exalt makes an attack that is nearly impossible to avoid. An attack supplemented by this Evocation ignores one point of the opponent's Defense per blood blade spent. If **decisive** and supplemented by Blood-Reaping Slash, then Blood-Reaping Slash produces one additional blood blade.

Brilliant Sentinel (Orichalcum Heavy Plate, Artifact •••)

Long ago, a bloody war was waged between Chosen. The reasons have been lost to the pages of time, but the treasures of god-kings remember the stories that history lets slip through its fingers. One among the Twilight Caste was forced to defend all that she cherished from an invading army of peerless Tiger Warriors.

She failed.

A lone survivor amid the broken towers of her kingdom, she stood beneath the shattered skylight of her temple workshop and lifted her eyes to see the dust of her ruined creations suspended in a sunbeam. Never again, she vowed.

She summoned forth a majestic dragon from the Pole of Fire. In its blazing suspiration, she forged a suit of orichalcum plate fashioned after her own iconic banner, the chestplate resembling a stylized lantern, each smaller plate bearing the abstract semblance of flickering flames. This armor can absorb the very substance of an Exalted anima and use it to shield its wearer from deadly force. Once thus infused, it can channel that natural brilliance into a bold, bright challenge to all comers, empowering the Exalt to stand as an unyielding sentinel between the enemy and the innocent.

Brilliant Sentinel possesses a single hearthstone socket, located just below the throat.

Emerald Evocations

Luminous Soul Warden

Cost: 1m per 1a; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only, Stackable

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: None

Inspired by the Copper Spiders' natural ability to shield themselves with their animas, Brilliant Sentinel can soak up the wearer's exultant expression of personal power and use it to fortify her defenses. This Evocation only functions if the Exalt's anima is flaring at the glowing level or higher. For each mote the Exalt spends, she vents one display level of her anima into the armor, dimming her display by that much. The armor can hold up to three levels of anima flare, and when it is filled to its maximum capacity, it glows visibly, inflicting a -3 penalty to stealth attempts. Each level of anima flare contained within the armor negates one die of **decisive** damage rolled against its wearer. At any time, the Exalt may reflexively end Luminous Soul Warden, emptying the armor of all anima flare and reinstating her anima at a level equal to the number of display levels that were contained in the armor.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Brilliant Sentinel's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least one of its Emerald Evocations.

Dawn of a Hundred Rebukes

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Withering-Only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Luminous Soul Warden

To look directly at the sun is to dare beyond daring, inadvisable at the best of times and downright deadly at the worst. Whenever the Exalt is hit by a **withering** attack, she may activate this Evocation to perform a counterattack as long as the opponent is at medium range or closer. This counterattack acts as a gambit with difficulty 3, uses (Charisma + Presence) as its dice pool, and expends as many anima flare levels from the armor as the Exalt chooses to create in a blinding flash. If the gambit is successful, the target cannot look away in time and his vision is hampered for the rest of the scene, taking a situational penalty to any action that requires sight. The penalty is -3 if one anima flare level was expended to create the counterattack, blinding the

target; -4 if two were expended, adding a measure of painful heat to the flash; and -5 if three were expended, also causing a period of nausea or dizziness as of sun poisoning.

Unconquered Guardian Defense

Cost: 4m or 4i, or 0m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Luminous Soul Warden

As the Sun remains unconquered, so too do those who awaken this armor's power of aegis, allowing harm to come to none unless they wish it to be so. Even when the Exalt's defenses fail her, the inexorable draw of her inner flame forces her foes to deal with her, rather than the innocents she guards. While taking a defend other action, the Exalt may spend either four motes or four Initiative and expend one anima flare level from the armor to force an attacker to target the Exalt rather than her ward, if the attack is successful. Her anima surges forth from Brilliant Sentinel, arresting the attacker's full attention with her undeniable presence and attracting the blow like a magnet—at that moment, she is the only other being in her foe's universe.

Alternatively, the Exalt may choose to spend zero motes and expend one anima flare level from the armor to willingly set her Defense to 0, throwing herself into the line of fire with superhuman speed and automatically taking the hit in her ward's place. When using this Evocation, the Exalt is considered to have one extra dot of Stamina for the purposes of Essence-Gathering Temper's maximum mote gain per round, if she knows that Charm.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Brilliant Sentinel's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least two of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking Brilliant Sentinel's Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Unconquered Guardian Defense. The Innate version of Unconquered Guardian Defense only functions when the Exalt's anima is flaring at glowing or higher, and dims her anima by one level when activated rather than expending a level of anima flare from the artifact she's not wearing.

Foes-to-Moths Provocation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Dawn of a Hundred Rebukes, Unconquered Guardian Defense

Like moths to the flame, the Exalt's enemies have no choice but to bask in the terrible glory of her radiance, no matter how much it burns. With this Evocation, Brilliant Sentinel releases a rolling shockwave of light across the battlefield, issuing an unspoken challenge to all who would dare oppose its wearer. The Exalt spends five motes and expends three anima flare levels from the armor to roll a threaten action using (Charisma + Presence). This roll does not suffer any penalty for multiple targets or for using no words. This challenge burns like a taunt in the minds of the Exalt's enemies, intimidation prompting shame and a need to prove oneself unafraid. For the rest of the scene, any foe within short range of the Exalt or closer whose Resolve is lower than the number of successes the Exalt achieved on her threaten action must make her a target of any attack he attempts. Attacks with only one target must target the Exalt; attacks with multiple

targets must include her, and the attacker takes a -2 penalty against all other targets. Affected targets remain under this Evocation's influence until the effect ends even if they move out of range, and any negative Intimacies they may have gained toward the Exalt in the process last as long as they normally would. Foes who close in to Short range must compare their Resolve to the threaten roll as soon as they arrive.

An affected target who spends one Willpower to resist the threaten action is immune to the effect for the rest of the scene. If the Exalt knows and uses the Charm Countenance of Vast Wrath (p. XX), opponents who resist or are unaffected by Foes-to-Moths Provocation lose *two* Initiative per round that they do not attack him instead of one.

The Dawn Fangs (Orichalcum Razor Claws, Artifact •••)

The Dawn Fangs are a paired set of razor claws named Leaping Tiger and Stalking Jaguar. To the eye, the claws are identical, with smooth orichalcum surfaces and gently curved, razor sharp edges that taper down to hooked points well-suited for climbing trees as easily as slaying foes. Those who have wielded the Dawn Fangs would attest that the two claws could not be more different. A vast love of violence dwells in Leaping Tiger's Essence, and it imparts an urge to strike forcefully and relentlessly when confronted with its wielder's enemies. Stalking Jaguar is the more patient of the two blades, normally worn on the off-hand; it waits, carefully measuring the battle until its brother creates the perfect opening to decisively strike. It is said the Dawn Fangs were created in a long-lost city in the far East, quenched in the blood of the fiercest of predators, with the hunting-screams of jungle cats folded into the metal of the blades during the forging.

The Evocations of the Dawn Fangs weave together into an elegant and relentless killing dance. They lend themselves to brutal and unceasing offense which creates an opening in one strike and seizes it with the next, creating even further opportunities. Those who cannot break free of the claws' mounting offense are doomed; however, the battle rhythm they weave, once disrupted, is difficult to re-establish.

Stalking Jaguar possesses a single hearthstone socket, while Leaping Tiger lacks one.

Emerald Evocations

Relentless Killing Claws

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Stalking Jaguar and Leaping Tiger draw strength from the Solar's aggression, hungering for the blood of her enemies. This Evocation functions exactly as Falling Hammer Strike (p. XX), save that it may be used to enhance both Brawl and Martial Arts-based attacks. If the Solar already has Falling Hammer Strike, this Evocation costs only two experience points to awaken.

Raging Fang Offensive

Cost: 3m, 2i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Relentless Killing Claws *or* Falling Hammer Strike

The Dawn Fangs burn with killing Essence, driving foes to ruin. An attack enhanced by this Evocation inflicts one additional point of onslaught penalty.

Leaping Tiger's Bite

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Raging Fang Offensive

Capitalizing on her foe's weakness, Leaping Tiger drives its wielder on to deliver a blinding follow-up slash. This Charm may only be activated after the character makes an attack which causes her target to suffer an onslaught penalty of 3 or more. It allows her to make a follow-up **withering** or **decisive** attack with Leaping Tiger at her full dice pool. This Evocation can't be used more than once on the same turn, nor can it be used to follow up any attack utilizing any of the Evocations of the Dawn Fangs other than Relentless Killing Claws and Raging Fangs Offensive.

Stalking Jaguar's Strike

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Raging Fang Offensive

Waiting until the perfect moment, the Solar strikes a telling blow against her reeling opponent with Stalking Jaguar, ruthlessly exploiting the advantage created by her relentless onslaught. A **decisive** attack supplemented by this Evocation adds the target's current Onslaught penalty to its base damage, and causes the Exalt to reset to (base + half the opponent's Onslaught penalty, round up) Initiative. If the attack inflicts damage, the Solar gains one point of Willpower. Stalking Jaguar's Strike can't be used in conjunction with any of the Dawn Fangs' other Evocations, save for Relentless Killing Claws and Raging Fang Offensive.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock the Dawn Fangs' Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking the Dawn Fangs' Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Relentless Killing Claws and Raging Fang Offensive.

Foe-Spilling Talons

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Leaping Tiger's Bite, Stalking Jaguar's Claw

Essence and killing fury sharpen the already-immaculate edge of the Dawn Fangs, opening long, bleeding gashes on a reeling foe. This Evocation must supplement a **decisive** attack made on the turn after successfully striking a foe with either of its prerequisites. In addition to dealing normal

damage, it opens long, bleeding gashes which cause the target to suffer an additional die of automatic lethal damage on his turn in each subsequent round for a number of turns equal to his current onslaught penalty. This damage ignores Hardness. These wounds can be stanched with a difficulty (3 or Solar's Essence, whichever is higher) Medicine action, stopping the bleeding prematurely.

Savage Battle-Pressing Lunge

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Leaping Tiger's Bite, Stalking Jaguar's Claw

The Solar presses her foe with one claw, then delivers a terrible felling stroke with the other, driving her enemy back and to the ground, leaving her poised to strike again. This Evocation creates a **withering** or **decisive** attack, and must be used on the turn following a successful use of one of its prerequisites. If it strikes its target, it automatically knocks him back one range band, leaves him prone, and allows the Solar to instantly lunge after him, remaining in close range. This Evocation can be used even if the Solar has already moved, and will allow her to move away from close-range enemies without need of a disengage action. The difficulty for the opponent to rise from prone on his next turn (p. XX) is equal to his current onslaught penalty.

Dual Stunning Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Leaping Tiger's Bite, Stalking Jaguar's Claw

Pulling both of her claws back and drawing strength from them, the Solar leaps into a devastating dual strike that staggers her enemy. This Evocation must supplement a **withering** attack made on the turn after successfully striking a foe with either of its prerequisites. If this attack strikes the opponent, he suffers a penalty to all dice pools on his next turn equal to his onslaught penalty at the moment of the strike.

Ripping Slash Technique

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Foe-Spilling Talons, Savage Battle-Pressing Lunge

Driven by the unerring battle-instinct that she shares with the Dawn Fangs, the Solar strikes when her foe is at his weakest. This Evocation must supplement a **decisive** attack made on the turn after successfully striking a foe with either of its prerequisites. If the target is prone, the attack's damage roll gains Double 9s. If the target is bleeding due to Foe-Spilling Talons, then the Solar causes that Evocation's bleed damage to expend itself instantly as automatic levels of damage, at the moment Ripping Slash Technique strikes (if the target had three rounds of bleeding damage left, he would suffer three lethal damage immediately and the bleeding effect

would end), and when her Initiative resets, she resets to (bleeding rounds expended) Initiative higher than normal.

Foe-Staggering Frenzy

Cost: 2m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Dual Stunning Strike, Savage Battle-Pressing Lunge

The Dawn Fangs scream an instinctive battle-hymn, guiding their gleaming edges and the fists of their wielder to create a mandala of flashing blows that overwhelm the enemy. This Evocation must supplement a **withering** attack made on the turn after successfully striking a foe with either of its prerequisites. If the attack is successful and the opponent is either prone or suffering an onslaught penalty higher than 2, then on his next turn, the target completely loses the ability to take any combat actions (including activating simple-type Charms).

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock the Dawn Fangs' Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking the Dawn Fangs' Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Leaping Tiger's Bite and Stalking Jaguar's Strike.

Two Fangs Kill as One

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Foe-Staggering Frenzy, Ripping Slash Technique

Wielder and weapons move as one, plunging both of the Dawn Fangs into the opponent's heart in a final, perfect strike. This Evocation must be used on the turn after successfully striking a foe with either of its prerequisites. The Solar makes a **decisive** attack which adds twice the opponent's current onslaught penalty to its base damage, and allows the Solar to re-roll (opponent's onslaught penalty) damage dice.

Freedom's Cadence (Starmetal Chain Shirt, Artifact •••)

Though most Solars slept in their prison of jade for long centuries, a few remained free to make trouble for the Bureau of Destiny. One such troublemaker raised an army and marched on a place that destiny had claimed for a greater purpose. The Bureau sent Arcadia, Chosen of Journeys, to ensure that a rival army would intercept in time. She enlisted the aid of Gu-Shaiyen, Celestial Daimyo of the Drums of War, to spur their steps onward; but ultimately, the only route to the mission's success lay in Gu-Shaiyen sacrificing his very being to create an Exigent of his power to aid the Sidereal.

Arcadia mourned the loss of her companion. As a gesture of respect, she searched the Manifest of Divine Miracles to see whether any fallen star had been recorded that carried echoes of the dead god's power. Finding such, she crafted the starmetal into a tunic of mail and pale yellow silk with flowing sleeves, its threads interwoven with strands spun from her own itinerant Essence to grant it Mercury's gifts. The chain rings shimmer in the light even if their wearer is perfectly still, and whenever it is worn into battle, those who are close may hear the distant

pounding of drums. This armor lends its wearer the power of momentum and forward motion, ensuring that the Exalt will finish what she started.

Freedom's Cadence possesses a single hearthstone socket.

Emerald Evocations

Stepping Through Strife

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: None

The Exalt who dons this armor becomes aware that battle is only a means to progress along a path, not an end unto itself, and does not dwell. Once she takes one step toward the end of the fight, the next follows easily, so long as she does not falter. The wearer gains (Essence) bonus dice on any attack or social influence action she takes against an opponent that she gained Initiative Break for Crashing, as long as that opponent is still in Initiative Crash. However, if the opponent achieves an Initiative Shift on the Exalt, she instead takes a penalty of (Essence) dice on any such action she takes against that opponent while *she* is in Initiative Crash.

If Pound the Drums is active, she also gains one bonus success on the first attack or social influence action she takes against an opponent she Crashed.

Snow-Gathering Elusion

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous, Stackable, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: None

The more snow accumulates in an avalanche, the more unstoppable its course down the mountain. Likewise does this armor carry the Exalt forward to her destiny, regardless of what lies in her path; the more momentum she builds, the more advantage she gains. Whenever the wearer successfully uses her Evasion to avoid an attack, she may activate this Evocation to add one to the armor's soak for the rest of the scene. She may stack one additional use of this effect, for a maximum of +2 soak, so long as she has successfully Evaded attack twice in a row before activating the Evocation again; this second use does not need to immediately follow the first, though it can.

If Pound the Drums is active, the Exalt may stack this Evocation's effects a third time by paying 5m instead of 3m to activate it and dodging successfully *three* times in a row, as above.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Freedom's Cadence's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least two of its Emerald Evocations.

Destination-Hunting Impulse

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Stepping Through Strife

The mercurial Essence flowing through this armor is at its most potent when pushing its wearer on to her fated destination. With this Evocation, once the Exalt has succeeded at one rush action, each additional one she takes in the scene gains one bonus success, even if she takes other actions in between. These successes are cumulative so long as the rush actions are successful; if she fails one, the bonus success count resets to zero. The same is true of disengage actions that the wearer takes. However, the bonus successes from successful rush actions cannot be cross-applied to disengage actions or vice versa unless the Exalt repurchases this Evocation at Essence 3+. Destination-Hunting Impulse's effect immediately ends if the wearer enters Initiative Crash.

Clear Path Defense

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Snow-Gathering Elusion

The more time a single Exalt spends with Freedom's Cadence, the more accustomed the armor becomes to the obstacles that stand in her way, and thus accustomed to nudging her out of alignment with them. When the Exalt awakens this Evocation, the armor gains a permanent +1 increase to its soak and its Hardness. Any time the wearer avoids taking any damage from a successful **withering** or **decisive** attack that targets her, she gains 1 Initiative.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Freedom's Cadence's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least two of its Sapphire Evocations.

Falling Star Percussion

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Perilous, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Destination-Hunting Impulse

Just as a star that crashes to the ground can gouge great holes in the earth with its momentum, so too does the Exalt propelled by her armor make a powerful impact when forces collide. With this Evocation, the wearer may add her soak in dice to a Clash attack that she makes, as contrails of yellow Essence follow her every movement. This dice bonus may exceed the cap on dice added from Charms by (the Exalt's Essence) excess dice. For every 5 that shows on a die in the attack roll, she gains 1 Initiative.

If Pound the Drums is active, the wearer also reduces the target number of her Clash roll by 1, to a minimum of 6.

Objective-Shifting Weave

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Destination-Hunting Impulse, Clear Path Defense, any Sidereal Athletics Charm

Any Exalt who sheathes herself in starmetal gains a faint connection with fate, but for the Sidereal Exalted, the connection is pure and potent. The Vizier who awakens this Evocation can spin out the threads of Journeys-touched Essence woven into the silk to replace the threads of fate that represent a wrong move that she made, as though it never occurred. This Evocation only functions for the Sidereal Exalted. At the end of any turn during combat (not including her own) that occurs between one of the Exalt's turns and the next, the wearer may activate this effect and undo one movement action she took on or since her last turn as though she had never taken it. She immediately returns to wherever she was before taking the action. However, incidental consequences of that movement, such as damage taken in an attack suffered in her temporary location, remain. This effect must be activated after the character whose turn has just occurred resolves all of her actions (it cannot therefore be used as a defense). This effect does not function if the Sidereal is grappled or otherwise restrained.

Example: Arcadia the Chosen of Journeys successfully rushes an opponent and follows him one range band as he runs away. However, upon following him, she realizes that she has inadvertently run directly into an ambush! She is attacked by a hidden assailant and takes damage. At the end of the attacker's turn, she uses Objective-Shifting Weave to return to where she was standing before she took her rush action. She retains the damage she took from the ambush, but at least now she's not surrounded by foes.

If, after using this Evocation, exactly five of the same number appear on dice in an opponent's attack roll against the Sidereal before her next turn, that opponent subtracts one success from the roll result.

Sifu's Graceful Accord

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Clear Path Defense, Falling Star Percussion

The Exalt who has mastered the ebb and flow of combat momentum need no longer suffer hindrances at the hands of Freedom's Cadence. It recognizes her as a kindred spirit and flows in harmony with her movements. Once the wearer has awakened this Evocation, this artifact no longer counts as armor for the purposes of using Martial Arts Styles that are incompatible with armor.

Once a Solar Exalt has awakened *Sifu's Graceful Accord*, she may purchase it again in order to awaken it in another suit of armor that is made primarily of starmetal, moonsilver, black jade mail, or mystical cloth, with no prerequisites. This second suit of armor must be rated at least Artifact 3 and cannot feature any plates or other heavy pieces.

Spirit Powers

Pound the Drums

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Clear Path Defense

Tapping into the spirit energies lingering in the starmetal she wears, the Exalt may harness a yet-smoldering shard of Gu-Shaiyen's power and share it with those who fight at her side. As she invests her Essence in the armor, the faint sound of drums grows louder and louder, until it rings out vigorously across the battlefield. This effect creates an inspire action that only affects the wearer's allies, who may as usual decline to apply their Resolve. This inspire action is made using (Charisma + [Dodge or Athletics]) and may target up to (the Exalt's Essence) allies. Those affected feel their hearts pound in time with the exhilarating drumbeat, and each gains one Initiative per turn as long as he's within Short range or closer of the Exalt. The wearer does not benefit from this effect.

Shining Ice Mirror (Blue Jade Reaper Daiklave, Artifact •••)

Shining Ice Mirror is beautiful and minimalist by the standards of most daiklaves, with a thin, slightly curved jade blade the color of ice catching the afternoon sun and a hilt woven with the thinnest of precious starmetal wires. Forged in a manse nestled high in the mountains of the Blessed Isle's northern coast, it has passed through the ranks of House Ledaal for generations, from mother to daughter and onwards. It's a blade of deliberate nature, rewarding elegance and foresight in battle while disdaining those who seek to artlessly hack and rend their way across the battlefield. Shining Ice Mirror was carried into battle against the forces of the Bull of the North a short few years ago, and lost in the carnage that followed.

Though Shining Ice Mirror's Evocations include some manipulation of ice, this blue jade daiklave isn't primarily an elemental weapon. Perhaps made thoughtful by the trace amounts of starmetal present in its construction, it instead focuses on the secondary characteristics of ice—it slows, it impedes, and most of all, it reflects.

Shining Ice Mirror possesses a single hearthstone socket at the bottom of its hilt.

Emerald Evocations

Shining Ice Guardian Technique

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt raises Shining Ice Mirror to block an attack, its hilt pointed skyward, its tip touching the ground, and channels the hostile Essence of the attack through the purity of the weapon's blue-white blade to trap her foe. This Charm is used to enhance an attempt to block an attack; if the Parry succeeds, then the attacker's feet are encased in a sudden eruption of ice, preventing any movement. Breaking the ice created by this Evocation requires a difficulty 3 feat of strength, and causes the attacker to lose 1 Initiative every turn he spends trapped in the ice.

Cold Moon Slash

Cost: 6m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Stackable, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt sets her feet, raises Shining Ice Mirror to her shoulder, and unleashes a powerful slash, sending a crescent wave of freezing Essence to strike a foe at up to short range. In addition to inflicting the normal damage of a **withering** or **decisive** attack, any foe stuck by Cold Moon Slash is instantly numbed, suffering a -2 penalty to all forms of mobility (p. XX) and to feats of strength for the rest of the scene. This stacks with any existing mobility penalties, either from armor or from previous uses of Cold Moon Slash. Successfully striking the opponent with this Evocation grants the Solar one point of Willpower. During her turn, the Exalt may move before using this Evocation, but not afterwards.

Flame-Drinking Stance

Cost: 2m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Shining Ice Guardian Technique

Shining Ice Mirror's blade glows with an inner light, drinking in hostile flames and trapping them within its limitless, frigid depths. This Evocation enhances a Parry attempt against a flame-based attack, enhancing the wielder's Parry value by as much as her dice cap will allow, and allowing her to attempt to block even unblockable attacks. Should the Parry attempt succeed, Shining Ice Mirror extinguishes the hostile flames by drawing them into its blade, unless those flames are part of a magical being (such as a Fire Aspect Dragon-Blooded's anima, or the burning fists of a flame elemental), in which case the flames are not consumed, but repelled instead.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Shining Ice Mirror's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking Shining Ice Mirror's Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Shining Ice Guardian Technique and Cold Moon Slash.

Frost-Reaping Attitude

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Cold Moon Slash, Shining Ice Guardian Technique

Shining Ice Mirror catches the light as it swings, reflecting the Essence of its frozen depths upon the ground. This Evocation supplements a **withering** or **decisive** attack against a close-range opponent, creating an ice slick under the wielder's feet that carries her away one range band in the direction of her choice. This will allow her to glide away from opponents without a disengage action, and can even be used if she has already used up her movement for the current round. The ice remains behind the character after she moves, but its slick surface merely acts as difficult terrain for all who would follow her.

Frozen Flame Evasion

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flame-Drinking Stance, Frost-Reaping Attitude

This Evocation may be used in conjunction with Frost-Reaping Attitude if the weapon has consumed any flames with Flame-Drinking Stance during the last day. The icy slick created by Frost-Reaping Attitude is imbued with the Essence of the consumed flames, causing the ice to come alive with leaping, frozen flames in the wake of the Exalt's movement; these frozen flames persist for the rest of the scene, and represent an environmental hazard with traits equal to a bonfire (p. XX), although the flames blacken flesh with instant, withering frostbite rather than heat.

Frost Phantom Strike

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Cold Moon Slash

This Evocation may be used to supplement a **withering** clash attack. If the clash attack overcomes her opponent, then the Exalt glides past her foe, and in her wake a phantom double of herself forged of mist and ice appears and launches an attack on the following tick. This attack must be rolled independently, but benefits from any Charms other than Frost Phantom Strike that the Exalt used on the original attack.

Heart-Freezing Crescent

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Cold Moon Slash

This Evocation permanently strengthens its prerequisite, causing foes struck by Cold Moon Slash to also lose one point of Initiative on their turn for the rest of the scene per -2 penalty they suffer on that turn due to Cold Moon Slash. Effects which negate or lessen Cold Moon Slash's penalties will also lessen or negate this Initiative loss.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Shining Ice Mirror's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking Shining Ice Mirror's Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Frost-Reaping Attitude and Frost Phantom Strike.

Killing Mirror Stroke

Cost: —(3m); **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Frost Phantom Strike

This Evocation allows the Exalt to pay an extra three motes to upgrade Frost Phantom Strike, enhancing the frost phantom's attack with every Charm or Evocation (including Excellency use)

the opponent used to enhance his defeated attack, save for decisive-only Charms. If this causes a conflict with other effects enhancing the frost phantom's attack (for example, both the wielder and her opponent used an Excellency with differing die values), then the option which produces a superior attack takes precedent.

Killing Moon Rebuke

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Counterattack, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Killing Mirror Stroke, Shining Ice Guardian Technique

This ultimate Evocation can be used to enhance any attempt to Parry any energy- or Essence-based attack, from a gout of flame to Blazing Solar Bolt. If the Parry attempt succeeds, then the energy attack is immediately reflected back at the one who launched it, using the attack's original dice pool. If the original attack was **withering**, the reflected attack is also **withering**, and grants Initiative to the wielder of Shining Ice Mirror. If the original attack was **decisive**, the reflected attack is also **decisive**—and should it strike, it will reset the attacker's Initiative rather than the wielder's, as he strikes himself down with his own reflected attack.

Dauntless (Orichalcum and Jade Lamellar Armor, Artifact ••••)

When Zan the Invincible, Sword of Heaven, stood alone against an army of thirty men, his Circlemates worried. When he stood alone against an army of sixty men, they asked him to wait for them next time. Finally, when he stood alone against an army of *one hundred men*, they knew they must act. While the Dawn's back was turned, Arem Bear-Arms, the silent Nightbringer, collected strands of hair from every soldier in the single-handedly crushed battalion in the blink of an eye. He gave them to Zhui the Traveler, the industrious Copper Spider, who used them to fashion arcane fibers that would lash together orichalcum plates in a suit of shining lamellar armor, enchanted with a blessing from the spirit of zeal for the challenge of battle. To this, Zhui added great domed pauldrons etched with Old Realm runes depicting tales of grand triumph, and a hauberk of red jade to wear beneath the plates.

From then on, Zan's Circlemates were assured that though he would continue to leap headfirst into overwhelming odds, he would have their aid even in their absence. An Exalt who revels in the thrill of combat and possesses unparalleled valor finds that this armor amplifies her natural ability to throw herself wholly into strife and emerge victorious.

Dauntless possesses two hearthstone sockets, one on each shoulder.

Emerald Evocations

Pounding Heart Triumph

Cost: 3m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Withering-Only

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: None

Those who risk nothing gain nothing in return, while those who risk everything win the chance to prove it was all worth it. Upon activating this Evocation, the Exalt can push herself past her normal limits by drawing strength from Dauntless' innate encouragement. If it is activated while

the Exalt is in Initiative Crash, the cost simply drops her Initiative further into the negative. For the rest of the scene, she may reflexively reduce the armor's soak by three points to gain one non-Charm success on a **withering** attack made with Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts. The armor's soak cannot be reduced past three less than its soak value.

In addition, successfully gaining the upper hand over her opponent reinforces the Exalt's confidence and drive to press her advantage as far as possible. Each time she successfully hits a target with a **withering** attack made with Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts, she may increase the armor's soak by 1. The armor's soak cannot be increased past three more than its soak value.

Taste of Victory Rhythm

Cost: 2m per successful attack; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Until next turn

Prerequisites: Pounding Heart Triumph

Like a boulder rolling down a mountainside, the Exalt who gets one taste of victory cannot help but crave more. Dealing a blow to her enemy creates a positive feedback loop of adrenaline with her armor, pushing her onward through even the most overwhelming barrage unscathed. Whenever the wearer successfully hits an opponent with a **withering** attack made with Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts, she may activate this Evocation to reduce any onslaught penalty she incurs before her next turn by 1. Whenever she successfully hits an opponent with a **decisive** attack made with Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts, she may activate it to reduce that onslaught penalty by 2.

Taste of Victory Rhythm can be awakened again with a repurchase at Essence 2+, allowing small triumphs to carry the Exalt even further in battle. With this repurchase, the wearer may instead pay five motes when she successfully hits an opponent with any kind of attack made with one of the abovementioned Abilities in order to negate *all* onslaught penalty that she would incur until her next turn. However, setbacks can interrupt the flow of battle-induced adrenaline—if the Exalt is hit with a counterattack or loses Initiative for any reason before her next turn, this effect ends prematurely. If the wearer knows the Solar Charm Bulwark Stance, then activating this Evocation's repurchased effect immediately marks the opponent she hit, as the adrenaline rush from the armor combines with faith in her mastery of defensive combat to transform her into an unstoppable force that her daunted foe cannot hope to overcome. Any onslaught penalty that would have been negated by this Evocation before her next turn is transferred to the marked opponent, as though attacks against her had targeted the foe instead. If the wearer knows the Solar Charm Fivefold Bulwark Stance, then while that Charm is active, the cost of this repurchased Evocation effect is reduced by 2m.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Dauntless's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least two of its Emerald Evocations.

Champion's Fatal Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisites: Taste of Victory Rhythm

The heady thrill of combat supremacy brings a fight to a stunning conclusion once the Exalt proves that she is worthy of the win, as her armor floods her with purpose and removes any obstacles that stand between her and delivering the finishing blow. This Evocation allows the wearer to ignore all wound and illness penalties on one attack against a Crashed opponent. If she brings that opponent down to his Incapacitated health level or lower with this attack, she gains one temporary point of Willpower.

Fearless Warrior's Revival

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Taste of Victory Rhythm

To the warrior who thrives on conflict, suffering a premature end to that conflict is a failure that cannot be borne. Upon awakening this Evocation, the Exalt may feed on Dauntless's drive to keep going even when she's on the ropes. Whenever the wearer is in Initiative Crash and spends a Willpower to gain a bonus success on an attack against the foe who Crashed her, she gains two bonus successes instead. Anytime she achieves an Initiative Shift, she gains one bonus success to any action she takes on her refreshed turn immediately following the Shift.

Daredevil Bravado Defense

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-Only

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Champion's Fatal Strike, Fearless Warrior's Revival

With this Evocation, the unique thrill of staring down danger and surviving it causes Dauntless's inherent structural stability to concentrate in one area briefly, defying blows that should by all rights be too strong to be deflected. When this Evocation is activated, the armor's soak and Hardness are reduced by 2. For the rest of the scene, the wearer may apply the armor's Hardness as soak against **decisive** attacks instead, though this **decisive** soak cannot be enhanced with Charms that improve normal **withering** soak. This **decisive** soak does not function against ambushes, and still counts as Hardness for all other purposes. If the Exalt knows the Solar Charm Adamant Skin Technique and this Evocation is active, she reduces the cost of that Charm by 2m.

A repurchase to awaken Daredevil Bravado Defense again at Essence 4+ allows the decisive soak granted by this Evocation to function while the wearer is in Initiative Crash.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Dauntless's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least three of its Sapphire Evocations.

Unyielding Hero's Defiance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisites: Daredevil Bravado Defense

Even insurmountable odds cannot break the will of a fervid fighter, one whose very blood cries out for a challenge and the clash of worthy opponents. She refuses to surrender, no matter the cost. With this Evocation, the Exalt can draw on Dauntless's unwavering Essence flows to find the resolve to carry on, through pain and hardship. Whenever the wearer drops a wound penalty level while engaged in combat, she may reduce either the soak or Hardness of the armor by one point to gain a temporary point of Willpower; this effect does not work if she is ignoring wound penalties at the time. This can take her above her permanent Willpower rating. All Willpower points gained through this Evocation vanish when the effect ends.

Army-Shattering Prowess

Cost: —(2+m); **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisites: Daredevil Bravado Defense

Nowhere is the warrior truly more at home than directly at the center of the fray—the bigger the fray, the better. When the Exalt engages in a fight that caution would advise against, Dauntless only encourages her further, filling her mind with dreams of glory. Whenever the wearer is fighting as an individual combatant against a battle group at least one Size tier larger than the group that comprises her and her allies, or against an opponent at least twice her size, she adds the battle group's Size or the large foe's Essence rating to her Resolve against fear effects and social influence that would convince her not to fight them, and gains one Initiative and one extra mote every round. This extra mote may only be spent to power Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts Charms. For every fear effect or social influence action that targets her beyond the first in a scene, she must reflexively pay a cumulative 2m cost to gain this Evocation's bonus to Resolve —that is to say, the first bonus is free, the second costs 2m, the third costs 4m, and so on.

> Dauntless and Innate Effects
>
> Once a Solar Exalt has awakened Army-Shattering Prowess, she may purchase Fearless Warrior's Revival again in order to awaken it in another suit of lamellar armor with no prerequisites. This second suit of armor must be rated at least Artifact 3, and must be made primarily of orichalcum, moonsilver, or jade. The same can be done with Daredevil Bravado Defense. The Exalt does not need to have awakened the Essence 4 repurchase of Daredevil Bravado Defense, but in order to access that repurchased effect in the new suit of armor, she would need to purchase it again at Essence 4+.

Heartflame (Orichalcum Daiklave, Artifact ••••)

Created in the same volcano-forge in the uttermost South where its orichalcum was refined from gold, Heartflame is a well-balanced daiklave with a smoothly curving blade, double-edged and symmetrical. It lacks a point, instead ending in a rounded head, razor-sharp, designed for powerful slashing blows and for beheading with a thrust. One side of its blade is graven with the daiklave's name; the other with alloyed orichalcum-and-moonsilver Essence channels which, over a span of years of use, realign themselves to depict the wielder's totemic anima display. Heartflame, like almost all artifacts, is an amalgam of orichalcum and steel, but it contains an unusually high pure orichalcum content. There are those who claim that the weapon contains no

other miraculous substances in its construction, having instead substituted an unusually high amount of orichalcum; others disagree, believing that the Solar who created it folded a bit of his own spirit into the blade.

Heartflame exemplifies orichalcum's ability to draw out and amplify the strength of its wielder. Its power fluctuates along with the manifestation of its wielder's anima banner, and many of its Evocations flourish when fed with its master's fighting spirit or the roaring energy caught in his anima. Its strongest Evocations weaponize iconic manifestations of the wielder's anima, and it excels at strengthening Solar Melee Charms.

Heartflame possesses two hearthstone sockets, both located side-by-side in the middle of the blade.

Emerald Evocations

Inner Divinity Blaze

Cost: 1m, 2i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Fire and Stones Strike

The Solar may trigger this Evocation in the moment she launches an attack enhanced with its prerequisite, wreathing her blade in holy flames of all the hues of her anima. If this attack is targeted at a denizen of Hell or the Underworld, or a similar creature of darkness, then on a successful strike, the target loses a number of motes equal to the motes spent activating Fire and Stones Strike, in addition to any other damage. If the Solar's anima is at the burning or bonfire/iconic level, lower the cost of Inner Divinity Blaze to one mote, one Initiative.

Ghost-Eating Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Inner Divinity Blaze

This Evocation functions as the Solar Charm of the same name (p. XX), save that it may only enhance attacks made by Heartflame, and can only be used while the Solar's anima is at the bonfire/iconic level.

Moment-Seizing Surge

Cost: 2m, 1+i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Wedding aggression to precision, the Solar and her weapon flash and strike as one, crashing into her opponent in a wave of flaring Essence, momentarily blinding and staggering the foe. On a successful attack, the opponent suffers a penalty to all dice pools on his next turn equal to the Initiative spent on this attack. This Evocation may only be used when the Solar's anima is at the

glowing or burning level. If used at the glowing level, a successful strike refunds up to 2 points of Initiative. If used at the burning level, the penalty persists for two turns.

Wild Spirit Reflection

Cost: 2i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Momentum-Seizing Surge

Heartflame stokes or drinks the fires of its wielder's spirit, shouting its elation or mustering its strength when a foe staggers before its onslaught. Whenever the Solar crashes an opponent with an attack made using Heartflame, she may use this Evocation to flare her anima banner up or down by one level. If she intensifies her anima, she gains back one point of Initiative. If she diminishes her anima, Heartflame adds two dice of raw damage to its next **withering** attack during the scene.

Burning Sky Corona

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Dual

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: None

Heartflame remembers its forging, heated by the reflected light of the sun, and still holds some measure of that harnessed sky-flame. The Solar condenses her anima, producing a burning nimbus that roars along Heartflame's edge, fed by the daiklave's radiant inner power. All **withering** attacks made with Heartflame while this Evocation is active add (3 or the Solar's Essence, whichever is higher) to their raw damage. All **decisive** attacks ignore hardness and enjoy double 10s. This Evocation may only be used while the Solar's anima is at glowing or higher, and ends should her anima become dim.

Blood of Mountains Mantle

Cost: 4m, plus 1m/round; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Sky Corona

Heartflame remembers its forging, shaped by the unimaginable heat of the earth, and shares the lingering kiss of fire with the Essence of its wielder. The Solar's anima tightens around her and becomes a mantle of roaring flames. This Evocation must be used at the same time as its prerequisite, and costs one uncommitted mote per round to sustain, paid at the beginning of each subsequent round. While it remains active, all enemies striking the Solar with their bare hands suffer one die of automatic lethal damage, anyone striking her with a weapon suffers one die of **withering** damage, and any opponent who grapples the Lawgiver is treated as being exposed to a bonfire (p. XX). If the Solar has also mastered Inner Divinity Blaze, that Evocation's damage gains the aggravated keyword against creatures of darkness while Blood of Mountains Mantle is active. This Evocation ends if the Lawgiver is separated from Heartflame for more than a single turn, or if her anima becomes dim.

Spirit Totem Defense

Cost: 4m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Sky Corona, Inner Divinity Blaze

Heartflame reaches into it wielder's very soul to draw forth an ultimate protector. The Solar raises the daiklave into a defensive posture, and an enormous Essence-sculpted avatar of her iconic anima appears before her, intercepting a **decisive** attack and dispersing its killing power harmlessly into her anima. Her Hardness becomes (higher of 15 or her current Initiative rating), and any attack that overcomes her Hardness loses five dice of damage before being rolled. This Evocation can only be used when the Solar is at the bonfire/iconic level, and it returns her immediately to the dim level.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Heartflame's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking Heartflame's Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Inner Divinity Blaze.

Heart-Burning Strike

Cost: 2m, 1+ahl; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Moment-Seizing Surge

The Solar momentarily compresses the totality of her spirit into the core of her daiklave, then strikes a massive, staggering blow, leaving her body and spirit drained and her opponent reeling. If this Evocation supplements a **withering** attack that knocks its target into Initiative Crash, then the duration of that Crash is extended by one additional round per health level spent on Heart-Burning Strike's activation cost, to a maximum of (2 or wielder's Stamina, whichever is higher) additional rounds. This Evocation can only be used while the character's anima is at the burning level.

Infinite Sun-Flame Slash

Cost: —(1m, 1wp); **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Sky Corona, Glorious Solar Saber

By wedding her skill with the blade to her daiklave's ferocious spirit, the Solar may enhance Heartflame with the effects of Molten Sun Blade (p. XX). Molten Sun Blade's benefits may only be evoked while Burning Sky Corona is active, and they linger for two attacks if the Solar's anima is at the glowing or burning levels, or one attack if at bonfire/iconic.

Burning Soul Pillar

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Sky Corona, Heart-Burning Strike

Taking her daiklave in both hands, the Solar delivers a massive overhead strike which gathers her anima about itself and drives the enemy to the ground, wreathed in killing flames. If a **decisive** attack enhanced by this Evocation strikes its target, the opponent is automatically knocked prone and engulfed in a pillar of flames that does damage as a bonfire (p. XX). The Solar is immune to these flames no matter how close she draws to her fallen foe, and the opponent must rise from prone before he can attempt to move out of the pillar of sunfire. The pillar continues burning for (Essence) rounds before finally flaring away, although any secondary fires it might start will continue to burn. This Evocation may only be used when the Solar is at the bonfire/iconic anima level, and it resets her to dim.

Ferocious Guardian Icon

Cost: —(7m, 4i, 1wp); **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Decisive-only, Perilous

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Blood of Mountains Mantle, Spirit Totem Defense

Awakening this Evocation deepens the Solar's link with Spirit Totem Defense, enabling vastly greater protection to be summoned from the depths of her heart. By activating Spirit Totem Defense with a cot of seven motes, four Initiative, one Willpower, the Evocation's duration is changed from "Instant" to "Until the Solar's next turn." Moreover, this form of the Evocation spreads its defensive effects to all characters the Solar is protecting with defend other actions.

Perfect Unity Cut

Cost: 5m, 1+a; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Heart-Burning Strike, Wild Spirit Reflection

Folding her blazing spirit into the orichalcum of her blade, the Lawgiver achieves perfect unity of arm and soul with her daiklave, and strikes a perfect blow. For each level of anima display consumed by this attack, an attack supplemented by this Evocation ignores one point of the enemy's Defense. Perfect Unity Cut cannot be used with any other effect that automatically changes the Solar's anima level (such as Burning Soul Pillar resetting it to dim).

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Heartflame's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking Heartflame's Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Burning Sky Corona and Infinite Sun-Flame Slash.

Sun and Sword Halo

Cost: 4m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Soul Pillar

Slashing Heartflame through the blazing pillar created by this Evocation's prerequisite, the Solar sends a whirling halo of blazing Essence flying toward an enemy. This Evocation allows the Solar to make a standard **withering** attack with hearthflame, directed against an enemy at range. If her anima is at glowing, this attack can be made out to short range, or medium range if burning. The Evocation can't be used at any other level, or if no pillar exists within close range of the Solar.

If this Evocation crashes its target, he's knocked prone and engulfed in flames, as with Burning Soul Pillar, although these flames dissipate after a single turn. The Solar may expend a single level of anima when using this Evocation to extend the duration of the bonfire by one round.

Heart Flare Slash

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Sun and Sword Halo

Taking Heartflame in both hands, the Solar concentrates her manifest divinity into the blade, and then swings a great overhand strike into a flame pillar created with Burning Soul Pillar. The pillar becomes a roaring, leaping wave of killing sun-flames, leaving only pillars of flame and ash where her enemies once stood. To use this Evocation, the Solar must be at the bonfire/iconic level and within close range of a flame pillar. She rolls a **decisive** attack, and applies its effects to every character in an arc before her, out to medium range. Roll (half Initiative, round up) against each opponent struck; in addition, each struck target suffers the effects of Burning Soul Pillar. Using this Evocation returns the Solar to the dim level.

Anima-Drinking Edge

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Stackable, Uniform

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Burning Sky Corona, Ferocious Guardian Icon

Heartflame's cold and shining edge swallows the Essence of the Solar's enemies, intensifying the fires of her spirit. A successful attack enhanced by this Evocation reduces its target's anima display by one level. So long as the Solar maintains commitment to the Evocation, Burning Sky Corona's **withering** attacks enjoy a +2 raw damage bonus per level of anima consumed. Multiple activations of Anima-Drinking Edge stack their bonuses and their commitment cost. This Evocation can only be used while the Solar's anima is at the dim level.

Twofold Victory Mantle

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Guardian Icon, Heart Flare Slash

In the moments immediately after using Ferocious Guardian Icon, the Solar sends her Essence surging through her daiklave to grasp the fading tatters of her personal totem, and to guide it into launching a powerful killing blow in tandem with her own attack. This Evocation must be used on the turn following the activation of Ferocious Guardian Icon. The Solar makes a **decisive** attack with Heartflame, followed immediately by her fading iconic anima display making a **decisive** attack of its own on the same tick, using the same dice pool and the same Initiative value. This Evocation may only be used once per scene, but may be reset by performing a three-point stunt involving the Solar manifesting her iconic level of anima display.

Fivefold Victory Mantle

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Twofold Victory Mantle

This Evocation permanently strengths its prerequisite, enhancing the anima icon's base damage by (dice of **decisive** damage directed against the icon while it was manifest, divided by two and rounded down).

Orichalcum Hunting Hawk (Orichalcum Powerbow, Artifact ••••)

Though few records speak of it today, there once stood a forge-manse called Skyfire, built upon the peak of the highest mountain in the West. Its master, the artisan Shan Irrak of the Golden Forge, made it his goal to master working of orichalcum. He drew up the fires of the earth to the heart of his manse, and its walls were exactingly cut and mirrored, focusing the light of the midday sun into his forge so that its heat and purity were magnified a thousandfold. He kept no mortal assistants, for none could survive the forge's blazing power. It came to be, in time, he fell in love with a predator-spirit of the skies named Red Wing, and forged a magnificent weapon in her honor: a powerbow carved in the likeness of a hawk, with perfect rubies for eyes, glittering orichalcum claws, and flawlessly carved and polished wings. He made Hunting Hawk a gift of his love, but that love survived the ages no more than did Shan Irrak or his fantastic manse. Red Wing was torn asunder when the Fair Folk invaded Creation, and the magnificent bow fell from the pages of history.

Hunting Hawk's Evocations are primarily those of a lord of aerial combat, allowing its wielder to hover and drift in the air while raining down death on her foes; to conceal herself above her enemies; and to strike down with unstoppable force. Unlike many powerbows designed for snipers, Hunting Hawk is a brave weapon, and possesses some aptitude for fighting at close range; those who the bow truly acknowledges as its master can even bring forth the spirit of the weapon to fight on their behalf. It is, if nothing else, a weapon of devotion.

Orichalcum Hunting Hawk possesses a single hearthstone socket on its 'back,' where its wings meet.

Emerald Evocations

Glittering Ruby Eyes

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: None

Hunting Hawk's gleaming eyes see with cut-ruby clarity, piercing through all earthly haze and distraction, and the powerbow shares this acuity with its master. Any attack made with the bow which benefits from an aim bonus ignores all penalties due to poor visibility—up to and including being able to instinctively sight and target in pitch blackness, or when blind, guided by Hunting Hawk's unearthly vision.

Wing Buffet Retreat

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Glittering Ruby Eyes

The Solar grasps her powerbow with both hands as an enemy closes, using its gleaming wings to strike at her foe's legs with a powerful buffeting wind. The character makes a (Dexterity + [Lower of Melee and Archery]) roll against a close-range enemy's Defense. If successful, the target is knocked prone; if no other opponents are within close range, the Solar may reflexively move one range band away from her downed enemy, even if she has already moved this round (although if she hasn't moved, this retreat uses up her movement action). The Solar is always considered to be attacking from an elevated position against a foe that is prone because of this Evocation.

Orichalcum Wings Elevation

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Monkey Leap Technique

Hunting Hawk's wings brace against the air, and the force of its attacks may carry its wielder into the heavens. If this Evocation is used to supplement an attack made from the apex of a Monkey Leap, the Solar is carried up one additional range band.

Cloud-Blending Camouflage

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Glittering Ruby Eyes

As the Solar meditates on the stillness of the predator, the color leeches out of Hunting Hawk's brilliant orichalcum limbs, and thence out of the Solar herself, until she vanishes into the network of sky and leaves. The Solar rolls (Wits + Survival) to establish stealth, and may re-roll up to (Archery) failed dice. This Evocation only functions if the Solar is elevated above those she wishes to conceal herself from—such as crouching on a tree branch, standing on a flying carpet, or otherwise lurking somewhere off the ground. Any elevated position counts as sufficient concealment to attempt to use this Evocation.

Drifting Hawk Tactics

Cost: —(2m); **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Orichalcum Wings Elevation

Hunting Hawk's wings burn with lambent Essence as the Solar unleashes a withering barrage of midair attacks, their force carrying her up and back one range band away from her target. The Solar may pay two motes to use this Evocation whenever she deploys a storm of rapid Archery attacks while in midair, such as with Revolving Bow Discipline or Arrow Storm Technique, so long as the majority of the shots target individuals somewhere below her.

Crimson Arrow Strike

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Glittering Ruby Eyes, Orichalcum Wings Elevation

Merciless Essence streaks from Hunting Hawk's taut string to the gleaming tip of an arrow, and thence into its target. This Evocation supplements an attack made from an elevated position above the target, allowing the Solar to re-roll a number of failed dice equal to her Essence rating. If the attack successfully strikes its target, the Exalt gains one point of Willpower. If a **withering** attack supplemented by this Crimson Arrow Strike crashes its target, the Solar is considered to occupy an elevated position relative to him for the duration of Initiative Crash, no matter where he truly stands. If used to supplement a successful **decisive** attack, the target's wound suffers automatic infection (p. XX), even if the target is Exalted or a spirit.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Hunting Hawk's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking the powerbow's Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Orichalcum Wings Elevation and Cloud-Blending Camouflage.

Rending Talon Attack

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wing Buffet Retreat

An archer facing a sword may be all but defenseless, but a hawk is forever equipped to strike and maim. The powerbow's ornate, orichalcum-wrought talons open as the Solar makes a desperate strike at her foe's legs, slashing and rending. This Evocation allows the Solar to make a difficulty 3 gambit; if successful, this gambit inflicts one level of lethal damage, and causes the target to suffer a -2 mobility penalty for the rest of the scene. The Solar is always considered to be attacking from an elevated position against a foe suffering this penalty.

Floating Hawk Evasion

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Orichalcum Wings Elevation, Rending Talon Attack

Hunting Hawk was wrought to be a worthy weapon of a killing lord of the skies; it will allow no earthbound foe to strike its master down. This Evocation may be activated in response to any attack directed at the Solar by a foe she is elevated above. The bow's wings flash with Essence, helping propel her out of the attack's path and raising her Evasion by 2.

Screaming Arrow

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Arrow Strike

Hunting Hawk's eyes gleam with predatory joy as the Solar draws and looses. The arrow cuts through the air with a killing scream, chilling the marrow of those it races toward. The attack roll supplemented by this Evocation is not only compared to the Defense of its target to determine if it strikes, but is also compared to the Resolve of the target and all enemies within short range of both Solar and her target. Anyone whose Resolve is overcome by this roll suffers a -2 penalty to all attacks and a -1 penalty to all static values for the next (wielder's Essence) rounds. The shuddersome terror inflicted by this Evocation can be suppressed for one round at a time by spending a point of Willpower.

Screaming Arrow's terror effect is automatically successful against the attack's primary target if the Solar attacks him from an elevated position.

Red Swarm Unbound

Cost: 6m, plus 1m per round; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Screaming Arrow

The Solar floods Hunting Hawk with Essence and killing intent. Its eyes burn, its beak opens, and its immaculate gleaming feathers part to release a swarm of flying, crimson, Essence-sculpted vermin: wasps, flies, and gnats stream forth from the powerbow and streak toward a selected target in a cloud covering one range band, moving at a rate of one range band per round. The cloud persists so long as the Solar continues to spend a mote on her turn to sustain it for another round. It follows its initial target wherever he goes, and while in close range, the stinging, biting swarm causes the target (and any other enemies close to the target) to lose one success from all rolled actions and to lose one point of Initiative per turn. This swarm can be destroyed by a difficulty 2 gambit in which the attacker smashes the swarm beneath some enormous object, sears it with a wide blast of flame, or otherwise directs a unleashes a large, sweeping attack capable of destroying the majority of the swarm at a stroke. If no such attack is possible, the gambit cannot be attempted. Only one swarm can be unleashed at a time.

Arrow Hedge Nest

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Glittering Ruby Eyes

Kneeling, the archer fires a single arrow into the ground at her feet. Nourished by Hunting Hawk's Essence, the arrow instantaneously erupts into a thorny hedge, sweeping out to form a tangled nest encircling the Solar and filling the close-range area around her. The Arrow Hedge Nest counts as heavy cover, although the Solar can see and fire through its miniscule gaps with no penalties of any sort, and can move through it with ease; to all others, the hedge counts as difficult terrain. Moreover, so long as she is within the cover of the hedge, the Solar can draw out its long, sharp, perfectly-balanced spines and use them as arrows, granting her nearly limitless ammunition. Finally, the Solar is always considered elevated above any opponent entangled in the Arrow Hedge Nest.

If set ablaze, the nest becomes a bonfire hazard (p. XX) for two rounds before burning away to ash and Essence; otherwise, it persists for as long as the Solar commits Essence to sustain it.

Hedge-Cultivating Measure

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Arrow Hedge Nest

With a sweeping gesture and a focusing of her will, the Solar can sculpt and direct the growth of an arrow-hedge created with this Evocation's prerequisite on her turn. The Exalt focuses, and the hedge grows into an adjacent range band, assuming a shape the Solar desires. This might be a high rearing wall, an arching tunnel—even a spiraling stair winding up into the branches of a tree. Repeated use of this Evocation can create elaborate hedge-structures or mazes in which to entrap her foes.

Needle Nest Eruption

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Arrow Hedge Nest

Hunting Hawk's proud wings shiver and its talons flex as it momentarily becomes one with its nest of thorns and needles. The Solar draws back the string with no arrow set to it, concentrates her will into the powerbow, and fires. Her Arrow Hedge Nest explodes into a spray of deadly needles and arrow-barbs, scything down her foes. The character rolls a single **withering** attack with Hunting Hawk, and this attack targets every enemy within short range of an arrow hedge (damage is rolled independently). The Exalt gains Initiative equal to half the total damage inflicted on her enemies by this eruption (round down).

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Hunting Hawk's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking its Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Crimson Arrow Strike.

Sun-Gilded Hawk Soul

Cost: 5m, 3a, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Floating Hawk Evasion, Red Swarm Unbound

Bringing together a union of bow, Essence, will, and spirit, the Exalt raises Hunting Hawk with a triumphant cry, and her anima flies free as an enormous, brilliant golden hawk, which joins the Exalt in battle. This avatar of the powerbow immediately rolls Join Battle and gains its own Initiative pool. It has the traits of an eagle (p. XX), and is in all ways considered the Solar's familiar—including being a valid subject for Survival Charms, even those that permanently empower a familiar. At Essence 4+, the Solar may pay for Hunting Hawk's instant-duration Evocations by spending points of the anima hawk's Initiative in place of motes on a two-for-one basis. If the anima hawk is incapacitated, it vanishes and cannot be called forth again until one full cycle of the moon has passed. During that time, the cost of all of Hunting Hawk's Evocations rises by one mote, as the powerbow's wounded spirit strives to mend itself.

Gilded Nest Renewal

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Hedge-Cultivating Measure, Sun-Gilded Hawk Soul

Once this Evocation has been awakened, Arrow Hedge Nests become a source of power and renewal for the anima hawk unleashed by Sun-Gilded Hawk Soul. By using a combat action to land in an arrow hedge and absorb its Essence, the anima hawk destroys one range band's worth of hedge and heals one bashing or lethal health level.

Sun Shrike Assault

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Solar Spike, Sun-Gilded Hawk Soul

The Exalt must draw forth a Solar Spike within close range of the anima hawk in order to use this Evocation. The anima hawk alights atop Hunting Hawk and merges with the Solar Spike, becoming a living projectile of unfathomable destructive power. The Solar Spike is automatically considered to uphold a Defining Intimacy. Moreover, the anima hawk unfurls from the projectile as it reaches its target, unleashing a reflexive **decisive** attack of its own in the heartbeat after impact. This **decisive** attack ignores half the target's Defense, rounded down (*after* factoring in the onslaught penalty inflicted by the Solar Spike), and if successful, knocks the target prone and doesn't reset the hawk to base Initiative.

Spring Razor (Green Jade Daiklave, Artifact ••••)

Long ago, in the uttermost East, there once dwelt a hateful dragon named Vasshir. Its claws were cracking oak, its eyes two glittering emeralds, and its mane was a fragrant and beautiful wash of

drifting petals. Its breath was sweet and heavy with poison, and in its wake it left towns filled with peacefully smiling corpses. A sworn brotherhood of Dragon-Blooded heroes slew Vasshir, and one of their number, Shoku Pan, carved out its most fragrant and poisonous fang and carried it home. Carefully calibrating the flames of his forge, he smelted down a small fortune in green jade and the finest steel imported from the Blessed Isle, and began to make a weapon worthy of commemorating his brothers' triumph. Month by month he labored, coaxing together wood and Essence and molten jade, for it was his intent to never once scorch or scar the wood dragon's tooth as he made it the core of Spring Razor. So delicate and laborious was the process that when his daimyo summoned him to war for the final time, he left the forging to his son, Shoku Rawam. Rawam heated and cooled the steel and jade and chanted efficacious chants to the wood, and in the course of decades, passed on the labor to his daughter, Cynis Katen. At last, in Realm Year 232, having passed through three generations of Exalted labor, Spring Razor was quenched in the sap of a tree planted on the same day its forging began, and deemed ready for battle.

Spring Razor is a double-edged daiklave with a slight curve to its blade, and is a deep and shining green from tip to hilt. Its guard is fashioned as a tangle of flowering brambles. The weapon's Evocations uniformly deal with poison or narcotic hallucinogens, and are often remarkable for their deadly beauty. Cynis Katen insisted that Spring Razor is the most pure expression of a venomous artifact to have emerged from a forge during the reign of the Scarlet Empress, though the wielders of other weapons such as the longfang Helltooth and the powerbow Green Death beg to differ.

Spring Razor boasts a single hearthstone socket, hidden within the brambles of its guard.

Emerald Evocations

Poison-Leeching Rapport

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: None

Drawing on the link between itself and its wielder, Spring Razor may draw poisons out of its master's body and channel them into its cutting edge. This Evocation cancels one poison the wielder suffers from, sending it instead to dwell in the blade, where it lingers until the wielder stops committing Essence to Poison-Leeching Rapport. If Spring Razor is used to strike a **decisive** attack while this Evocation is active, it discharges all "held" poisons into the target. The target is then poisoned, with each poison having a Duration equal to their remaining intervals at the time they were banished into the blade. Spring Razor may simultaneously store up to (wielder's Essence) poisons in itself through this Evocation—its wielders commonly dose themselves with poison before battle to take advantage of this Evocation, to their occasional regret.

Swirling Petal Defense

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Spring Razor sighs as it flickers and weaves to defend its wielder, releasing a spray of pink Essence petals into the air from the point of contact when it blocks an attack. This Evocation may be used to enhance a Parry attempt against an enemy at close range; should it succeed, the attacker is caught in a spray of narcotic Essence petals. The fragrance of these petals induces confusion and momentary hallucinations, inflicting a -3 penalty to all dice pools and a -1 penalty to Defense until the end of the attacker's next turn.

Essence Blossom Escape

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Perilous

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Swirling Petal Defense

Leaping back from her myriad foes, the wielder of Spring Razor strikes her blade against the ground as she retreats, producing a whirling screen of Essence petals. This Evocation may be used to supplement a disengage attempt, inflicting a -2 penalty to all attempts to contest the disengage. If successful, all opponents who contested the disengage must contend with the same penalties levied by Swirling Petal Defense, and the wielder regains one point of Willpower.

Howling Lotus Strike

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Spring Razor's edge burns with venomous emerald Essence as it delivers a fateful, poisonous strike. A **decisive** attack supplemented by this Charm poisons its target on a successful hit. This toxin possesses the traits of arrow frog venom (p. XX).

Venom-Intensifying Stroke

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Stackable, Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Howling Lotus Strike

A rippling haze of emerald-and-scarlet Essence roils around Spring Razor's edge as the wielder slashes at her foes. On a successful attack, this nimbus of power intensifies the effects of any poison currently afflicting its target: the poison increases both its damage and duration by +1 until the toxin has run its course. Multiple uses of this Evocation stack—thus, three attacks with Venom-Intensifying Stroke would extend the duration of a poison by 3 rounds, and increase its damage by +3.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Spring Razors's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking Spring Razor's Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Poison-Leeching Rapport.

Shedding Fever Dreams

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Swirling Petal Defense, Venom-Intensifying Stroke

The Essence petals created by Swirling Petal Defense become more potent and profuse, intensifying the penalties levied to -4 from all dice pools, -2 from Defense, and causing these debilities to last until the end of the target's second turn after exposure to the petals.

Seven Widows Venom

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Shedding Fever Dreams, Venom-Intensifying Stroke

This Evocation permanently intensifies the poison produced by Howling Lotus Strike, giving it traits of damage 4i/round (L in crash), duration 7 rounds, and penalty -3, and ensuring that no matter how well the target rolls to resist the poison (p. XX), its duration cannot be reduced below one round.

Deadly Flowers Blooming

Cost: 1m, 1i; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Shedding Fever Dreams

This Evocation must be used on the wielder's turn, and may only be used once per round. The Exalt feeds her Essence into Spring Razor, causing beautiful pink-and-crimson flowers to begin to bud across the surface of its blade. After three activations, these Essence-wrought buds come into full and deadly bloom, intensifying the poison that lives deep within the weapon's Essence. While the flowers are in full bloom, the poison delivered by Howling Lotus Strike increases its damage and duration by one each. The flowers adorning Spring Razor can be destroyed with a specially-targeted disarm gambit (which does not remove the weapon from its wielder's hand), ending the Evocation prematurely.

Delicate Crimson Execution

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Deadly Flowers Blooming

Veins of pink-and-crimson Essence flash across Spring Razor's edge as it makes a fateful cut, granting its target the gifts of beauty and death. After being successfully struck with this attack, flowers begin to slowly appear and blossom across the target's body. On each of the target's subsequent turns, these flowers lessen the duration of all poisons afflicting the target by 1, and

grow closer to achieving full bloom. After consuming four intervals of poison, the flowers unfurl and flood the victim's system with concentrated, Essence-enriched toxins, immediately inflicting poison damage equal to *twice* the damage they prevented by consuming intervals of active poisons. If the victim has no poison intervals in his system for the flowers to consume, their growth stalls. In either case, they sublimate into Essence at the end of the scene. This Evocation can't be directed against the same target twice in a scene.

Whirling Petal Storm

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Until end of next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Essence Blossom Escape, Howling Lotus Strike

The Exalt whirls Spring Razor through the air in a graceful loop, shedding a great billowing storm of pink, Essence-laden petals. The wielder rolls (Dexterity + Melee); all characters within short range must make a reflexive (Dexterity + Dodge) roll at a difficulty equal to the successes rolled, or suffer the effects of Swirling Petal Defense. If this attack successfully afflicts at least two targets, the Exalt gains one point of Willpower.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Spring Razor's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking Spring Razor's Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Howling Lotus Strike.

Spirit-Drinking Blossoms

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Delicate Crimson Execution

This Evocation permanently strengthens its prerequisite. When Delicate Crimson Execution's flowers come into full bloom, they consume one point of their victim's Willpower and five motes of his peripheral Essence (or personal Essence, if no peripheral is available), in addition to their usual effects.

Flying Petal Tempest

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Until end of next turn

Prerequisite Charms: Whirling Petal Storm

This Evocation may only be used on the turn immediately following the activation of its prerequisite. It functions exactly as Whirling Petal Storm, save that the Exalt adds two automatic successes to her (Dexterity + Melee) roll, the resulting petal storm billows out to encompass everything out to medium range, and she must afflict at least three targets to gain a point of Willpower.

Bedecked in Death and Beauty

Cost: 5m, 2i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Delicate Crimson Execution, Whirling Petal Storm

Where Spring Razor's beautiful, Essence-forged petals touch flesh, deadly crimson-and-pink flowers begin to bloom. This Evocation may be used on any tick wherein one or more opponents suffer the effects of Swirling Petal Defense, whether as a result of that Evocation, Whirling Petal Storm, or otherwise. All characters who are afflicted by the petals in that instant automatically also suffer the effects of Delicate Crimson Execution, as the petals touch their bodies and begin to transform into flowers.

Field of Crimson Death

Cost: 10m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Bedecked in Death and Beauty, Flying Petal Tempest

This Evocation can only be used on the turn after Flying Petal Tempest. It momentarily spreads the effects of Flying Petal Tempest out to long range, after which all Essence-petals drift to the ground and begin to transform into Essence-forged blossoms. Their full flowering takes three rounds, at which point they unfurl into a field of beautiful pink-and-crimson flowers. At the end of the round they blossom, these flowers unleash a great cloud of pollen upon all characters standing within the field of flowers save for Spring Razor's wielder. Any character caught within the pollen immediately suffers the effects of Howling Lotus Strike. This effect is repeated at the end of every subsequent round until the end of the scene, unless the flowers are prematurely destroyed by fire.

Volcano Cutter (Red Jade Reaver Daiklave, Artifact •••••)

Forged primarily of red jade quarried from the base of the Imperial Mountain in the closing days of the First Age, Volcano Cutter is a reaver daiklave tempered in the battles of the Usurpation, where it was wielded by Exalts fighting on both sides of that bloody conflict. Its hilt features a core of polished white jade, while the blade itself is single-edged, tapering to a curved point, with a second grip mounted at the back of the blade for better control when stabbing or slashing in close-quarters, or to more easily plunge the daiklave into the earth and draw it back out.

Volcano Cutter's Evocations exemplify the iconic elemental daiklave, with its eruptions of flame slanted toward cataclysmic destruction by the weapon's awakening during the Usurpation.

Volcano Cutter has two hearthstone sockets, one mounted on each of its grips.

Emerald Evocations

Wake the Flame

Cost: 5m, 1i or 5m, 1i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: None

Swung at an opponent and stoked with its master's Essence, Volcano Cutter issues a wave of raging flames from its cutting edge. An attack supplemented with this Evocation can strike opponents out to short range, and negates (attacker's Essence + 2) soak on a **withering** attack. Used on a **decisive** attack, Wake the Flame can strike an opponent out to short range and grants the Double 10s rule to the damage roll. If this Evocation is used to strike at an opponent at short range, its cost increases to five motes, one Initiative, one Willpower.

Seething Earth Edge

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: One scene

Prerequisite Charms: Wake the Flame

Taking a moment to concentrate and align her Essence with that of Volcano Cutter, the Solar awakens the flames sleeping within the blade's edge, limning the weapon in an orange-white haze. For the rest of the scene, the weapon adds +1 to its Overwhelming value and inflicts an additional two dice of raw damage.

Searing Brand

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Seething Earth Edge

Having awakened the blade's inner flames, the swordsman stokes them to explosive fury, causing Volcano Cutter's striking edge to glow white-hot and rumble with the repressed fury of elemental flame. This Evocation can only be used while Seething Earth Edge or Lingering Flame Shroud are active; it causes a **decisive** attack to ignore half of the target's Hardness (round up), and adds (Essence or 5, whichever is lower) to the attack's raw damage. Additionally, so long as the attack strikes, whether or not it inflicts damage, the target suffers a -3 penalty to all actions and a -2 penalty to Defense on his next turn as he reels from the blade's extreme heat.

Grand Eruption

Cost: 5m, 4i; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Uniform

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Wake the Flame

Driving the point of Volcano Cutter into the ground, the wielder send a pulse of elemental Essence through the earth, provoking a fiery eruption beneath her opponent's feet. This attack can strike opponents out to medium range. In addition to inflicting standard damage for an attack with Volcano Cutter, this Evocation knocks any opponent it strikes prone.

The swordsman cannot take any sort of movement action during the same round that he uses Grand Eruption. The character may opt to leave Volcano Cutter point-down in the ground when this Evocation is finished, if desired, in order to set up other Evocations such as Dragon Tongue Retrieval.

Molten Rage Core

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Grand Eruption

Mastery of this Evocation permanently strengthens Grand Eruption, imbuing it with even greater explosive fury. Grand Eruption ignores half of its target's Parry value (round up), and inflicts one additional level of automatic lethal damage on any enemy knocked down by its **decisive** variation.

Dragon Tongue Retrieval

Cost: — (+3m); **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Wake the Flame, Call the Blade

This Evocation modifies Call the Blade when three extra motes are paid to activate it to call Volcano Cutter to hand. The daiklave traces a raging path of flames through the air as it returns to the Solar's hand (if Call the Blade's activation roll is unsuccessful), or becomes a pure streamer of spiritual flames which streaks instantly through the air to reach the Solar's waiting grasp, where it reforms into the shape of a daiklave (if successful). In either case, Call the Blade's activation roll is also treated as a **withering** attack roll against all characters within close range of the daiklave, and the path it must take to reach the Solar. This attack uses the Solar's Essence rating in place of his Strength to determine its damage.

Dragon Tongue Retrieval cannot be triggered if the Solar is within close range of her daiklave.

Lingering Flame Shroud

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 1; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Withering-only

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Dragon Tongue Retrieval

When Volcano Cutter is recalled with a successful Call the Blade roll enhanced by Dragon Tongue Retrieval, it briefly becomes an elemental expression of purest flame. Upon awakening this Evocation, the raw power and majesty of that transformation lingers for a few moments after the blade becomes a daiklave again, placing the weapon in a momentary liminal state—jade and steel and fire, all at once. Until the end of the Solar's next turn after the weapon's retrieval transformation, Volcano Cutter's Overwhelming value is raised by +1 and it inflicts (Essence or 5, whichever is lower) additional damage.

Sapphire Evocations

In order to unlock Volcano Cutter's Sapphire Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Emerald Evocations. Unlocking Volcano Cutter's Sapphire Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Grand Eruption.

Flesh and Bone Ignition

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Searing Brand

The swordsman spills Volcano Cutter's raging Essence out of the blade's edge and tip during an attack, igniting her opponent's flesh from within. This Evocation may only be used while Seething Earth Edge or Lingering Flame Shroud are active; if a **decisive** attack enhanced by this Charm damages an opponent, his wounds continue to burn for his next (attacker's Essence) turns. At the beginning of each of these turns, the target must make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll, and suffer (4 - successes) lethal damage.

The corpse of anyone slain by this Charm is quickly burned away to whirling ashes and cinders.

Soul Pyre Commitment

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Flesh and Bone Ignition

Volcano Cutter's flames now burn away both the target's flesh and his Essence in equal measure. This Evocation may only be used while Seething Earth Edge or Lingering Flame Shroud are active; if used to enhance a **decisive** attack, then that attack causes the target to lose one mote for each level of damage inflicted by the attack. If the attack is also enhanced by Flesh and Bone Ignition, then this mote-destroying effect is also extended to any damage inflicted by that Evocation's extended burn effect.

A person slain by Soul Pyre Commitment cannot leave behind a ghost; his soul is rendered into scattered pyre-flames drifting across the depths of the Underworld. A spirit slain by this Charm is likewise permanently destroyed.

Earth's Shattering Roar

Cost: — (+2m, 1wp); **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: Dual

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Molten Rage Core

By paying an additional two motes and one Willpower when using Grand Eruption, the swordsman can provoke a larger explosion, striking all individuals within close range of her target. She makes only one attack roll, applying the effects to all targets equally. If this is a **decisive** attack, the character must spread her Initiative among all struck opponents, with one die of base damage added to each target. She must allocate at least half of her Initiative (round up) to the "focal" target of the Grand Eruption, but may otherwise divide her Initiative as she pleases.

This Evocation may be purchased a second time, at Essence 4+, as an Adamant Evocation. This allows the character to spend another two motes on top of Earth's Shattering Roar's normal cost (for a total of +4m, +1wp) to expand its blast radius to hit everything within short range of the target.

World-Splitting Flame

Cost: 8m, 3i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earth's Shattering Roar, Searing Brand

Swordsman and daiklave move as one, a perfect unity of unbound destruction. The character slashes the ground, opening a burning chasm that stretches across the battlefield and consumes her enemies. This Evocation may only be used while Searing Earth Edge is active; the character makes a single unblockable **decisive** attack against every target in a direct line before her out to long range, as a line of flame gouges its way deep into the earth along the line of her slash. This attack adds one base damage die to every target struck; the character must then split her Initiative between targets as she chooses.

On the following turn, the earth splits open with a grinding roar, filling the battlefield with leaping flames and roiling lava. The line drawn by the original attack becomes a lava hazard (p. XX), while the range bands directly adjacent to this lava-filled trench become bonfire hazards (p. XX). This hazard persists for the rest of the scene before its volcanic fury cools and its flames die away.

This Evocation may only be used once per scene. It can be reset by slaying an Essence-using opponent with Soul Pyre Commitment.

Earth Pyre Anticipation

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Indefinite

Prerequisite Charms: Dragon Tongue Retrieval, Grand Eruption

Exercising cunning and tactics, the Solar may impregnate the earth with Volcano Cutter's geothermal fury by paying one mote while the daiklave is thrust point-down into the ground. This creates an "eruption point" of invisibly simmering Essence, which may later be ignited in destructive fury. This eruption point remains active as long as the Solar commits a mote to it, and she may create as many eruption points as she desires. Making an eruption point while executing another Evocation where the Solar thrusts Volcano Cutter into the ground, such as Grand Eruption, is reflexive; it otherwise requires an unrolled miscellaneous action to thrust the daiklave into the ground.

All established eruption points ignite when the Solar next uses Dragon Tongue Retrieval, creating a blast of flames that strikes everything within close range of the eruption point. This eruption is resolved as though Volcano Cutter were being retrieved from that spot with Dragon Tongue Retrieval, save that it creates no flame trail leading to the Solar.

Flame Spirit Awakening

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Pyre Anticipation, Lingering Flame Shroud

This Evocation permanently strengthens Lingering Flame Shroud, extending the duration of its transformation to one turn, plus one additional turn per eruption point ignited by Dragon Tongue Retrieval.

Adamant Evocations

In order to unlock Volcano Cutter's Adamant Evocations, the Solar must first awaken at least four of its Sapphire Evocations. Unlocking Volcano Cutter's Adamant Evocations adds the Innate Keyword to Dragon Tongue Retrieval and Earth Pyre Anticipation.

Flame-Feeding Requiem

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Soul Pyre Commitment

Upon awakening this Evocation, whenever an Essence-wielder is slain by Soul Pyre Commitment, the character gains motes equal to three times the victim's Essence rating, which may only be spent on Volcano Cutter's Evocations. If unused, they vanish at the end of the scene.

Lost Soul Conflagration

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Soul Pyre Commitment

This Evocation permanently enhances Flesh and Bone Ignition. Whenever an individual under the effects of Flesh and Bone Ignition dies, his corpse immediately explodes into a torrent of flame. This is treated as a bonfire environmental hazard which lasts for one round, and which everyone within close range of the corpse must reflexively roll (Dexterity + Dodge) to avoid being seared by. If the target was under the effects of Soul Pyre Commitment, these flames can burn immaterial beings as well.

Bones and Hope to Ash and Flame

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: Stackable

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Pyre Anticipation, Lost Soul Conflagration

The character may now reflexively spend one mote to consume an eruption point, using it to enhance Flesh and Bone Ignition or Lost Soul Conflagration. Each eruption point consumed to power Flesh and Bone Ignition adds one additional turn of duration to its burn effect. Alternately,

two eruption points may be spent to expand the size of the bonfire created by Lost Soul Conflagration to encompass everything within short range of the exploding corpse.

Pyroclastic Holocaust Judgment

Cost: 10m, 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: World-Splitting Flame

Summoning the total power of Volcano Cutter and her own fighting spirit into a single act of destruction, the Solar plunges her daiklave into the earth. The ground shines for a moment, radiant with the terrible forces welling up beneath, and then explodes into a cataclysm of unbound flames.

The character cannot take a movement action on the same turn she uses Pyroclastic Holocaust Judgment. To use this Evocation, the character must have Seething Earth Edge active and must have at least 20 Initiative. She must target a point at up to long range with this Evocation, and then make a **decisive** attack. This attack is applied equally to all characters within medium range of the eruption point. The attacker rolls half her total Initative (round up) as damage against every individual struck by Pyroclastic Holocaust Judgment. The character's Initiative resets even if the attack fails to strike any targets, and after the attack resolves, the two central range bands of the afflicted area are treated as a lava hazard (p. XX) while the outermost range band is treated as a bonfire (p. XX). These hazards persist for hours.

Pyroclastic Holocaust Judgment can only be used once per scene. The attacker herself is *not* immune to the attack; caution should be taken in selecting a point of ignition for the Evocation.

Earth Fountain Cremation

Cost: 1m per point; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive

Keywords: None

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Pyre Anticipation

Volcano Cutter agitates the very Essence of Creation by wounding the ground, drawing the hot blood of the earth up to the surface. When using Dragon Tongue Retrieval to ignite eruption points left by Earth Pyre Anticipation, the character may pay an extra mote per eruption point to leave behind bubbling fountains of magma at the enhanced points. This transforms those points into lava hazards (p. XX) which melt anything within close range for the rest of the scene.

Magma Burial

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent

Keywords: None

Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Earth Fountain Cremation

This Evocation permanently strengthens Dragon Tongue Retrieval and Lingering Flame Shroud. Dragon Tongue Retrieval now causes a streamer of flame to flow from each eruption point detonated into the Solar's waiting hand, further fortifying Volcano Cutter. This streamer strikes

every enemy in a direct line between the burning eruption point and the Solar, exactly as Volcano Cutter does with Dragon Tongue Retrieval. Additionally, while the daiklave is burning with the effects of Lingering Flame Shroud, it ignores a number of points of soak equal to the eruption points ignited by the Evocation's activation.

All Creation Turns to Ash

Cost: 15m, 5i, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 5; **Type:** Simple

Keywords: Decisive-only

Duration: Instant

Prerequisite Charms: Magma Burial, Pyroclastic Holocaust Judgment

Activating this Charm requires that the character have at least 30 Initiative. The Solar plunges Volcano Cutter into the tortured earth and unites her spirit with that of the daiklave in a momentary meditation on absolute annihilation. Then, every active eruption point on the battlefield erupts into a Pyroclastic Holocaust Judgment, producing an overlapping apocalypse of flames within which nothing mortal may live. This Evocation may be used only once per scene.

The farming village was nestled at the end of a fertile valley, water-fed and cradled by two mighty mountains. It had been 768 years since the Scarlet Empress threw back the Wyld hosts, and now they had returned, marching their unreal armies through the mountains and scouring the valleys one by one. The Realm had withdrawn from the region the year before, first recalling its soldiers, and then the Immaculate missionaries; when the tax-man failed to appear to demand the dragon's share of their harvest, the farmers knew for certain they'd been abandoned. The village lay open and defenseless, ripe for the taking.

Janest paused for a moment at the top of the great high hill above the town, peering back down the way she'd come. The sun had set an hour ago, and she could see a vast and sprawling constellation of unearthly lights spread across the valley, rivaling the stars above in number and majesty—the camps of the Fair Folk. They would be upon the village with the dawn.

The field-maiden set her back on the sight, regarded the shrine ahead of her. It was a simple thing, built of deeply-polished wood, framed beneath a red-painted torii. One of the High Reavers had come and drawn her away from her preparations that afternoon, where she drilled with her field-sisters. Like the rest of the field-maidens, Janest had been taken as an infant in a raid on a settlement in a neighboring valley, and raised by the High Reavers—priests, augurs, and judges who watched the weather, proclaimed the first day of planting and the first day to reap, and spoke the will of the harvest god. She had grown up in the town, tilling the soil and working the fields, and training also to defend them. They were simple farm-folk, and so trained with the weapons of their trade: threshing-flails, pitchforks, winnowing-fans… Janest herself favored the scythe.

Ten Sheaves demanded her presence, she had been told.

"I can't go," Janest had said, glancing back to her sisters, "I have to make ready to defend the town."

“The god says that your presence is necessary if we are to be saved,” the High Reaver had replied. And so the field-maiden had made the long climb up to the shrine.

Janest stepped forward, placing a hand upon the ancient wood of the torii. It tingled beneath her fingertips. The harvest god had lived up on the hill for as long as anyone could remember, and they had always honored him according to the calendar demanded by the Immaculates—and given him extra worship as well in the lean years, hiding their prayers and libations from traveling monks. But Janest had never seen the god with her own eyes, and couldn’t think of why he might want to see a simple field-maiden on the eve of the town’s annihilation.

She stepped through the torii with the sensation of crossing some subtle boundary, like passing through a shaft of sunlight or a stream of water. Golden wheat surrounded her now, stretching on and on in rambling rows. The sky overhead was a pure and perfect black, scattered with bright, unfamiliar stars that gleamed like winter ice. She looked back, and saw no torii, no hill: the rows wound away in every direction.

A voice spoke from her right, deep, crackling like breaking stalks: “Janest. Walk with me.”

Janest glanced toward the voice by reflex and caught a glimpse of a silhouette in another row, a figure with hair like straw and hemp-woven sleeves—she quickly pulled her gaze away. The High Reaver had instructed her to keep her eyes averted unless the god bid her otherwise, and so she did. Ten Sheaves began to walk, and Janest fell into step alongside—the god in his row, the field-maiden in hers.

The rich smell of growing things surrounded them as they walked; from time to time a cold wind would blow through the rows, a reaping-wind, and Janest would shiver. Presently, Ten Sheaves began to speak: He spoke of a long life overlooking the fertile valley and the farms beneath, watching the ages unfold in extravagance and poverty, describing times and people Janest could scarcely imagine; he spoke of the Games of Divinity and how the sky of Heaven turned by their listings, and though Janest knew not of these games, she could hear the wonder and longing in the god’s voice; he spoke of the Exigence, a divine fire, a miracle even to the gods, handed down from On High that the gods might raise champions and protectors; he spoke of what it meant to be a god and to believe in justice in an age of the unjust. “Long ago,” Ten Sheaves said, “there were great champions, men and women of profound might, who carried the fire through the pitch. But when they left they took the light of the world with them.”

Janest cleared her throat, spoke for the first time since she had arrived. “What happened to them, these champions?”

“They were struck down,” the god said, “butchered, bound away. The world was eroded in their absence—even the fires of the Exigence guttered. Now they have returned; they walk the world again but they have come too late, too late for me. Look.” She felt more than saw a hand pointing to the horizon. Janest looked.

The field-maiden realized she could see something dreaming upon the limits of the horizon—a great gleaming edifice of lights. She had the impression of towers and heart-breaking beauty. “That is the Celestial City of Yu-Shan, which men and gods alike know as Heaven,” the little god said. “I have never walked its streets, and now I never will; perhaps you might, one day. For now, we can stand here, and look upon its lights.”

Unschooled in how to properly address divinity, Janest hesitated, then asked: “God of the harvest, why have you called for me?”

Ten Sheaves gave back a question of his own: “Have you any relatives of blood in the valley?”

“No,” Janest said. She realized the god was farther away, had slipped back to a more distant row at some point, though he sounded as close as ever.

“Yet it is not yourself you fear for.”

Janest’s jaw worked. She wasn’t normally a woman of words, and seldom explained herself. “The people of the village… they’re still my family; it doesn’t take blood. I want to protect them.”

“A field-maiden’s duty?” the god asked.

It was, but… Janest shook her head. “The people and the land together are my kin; separate, they’re not themselves. They’re precious to me. Without them, I am lost.”

Ten Sheaves seemed satisfied. “Field-maiden Janest. I have prayed to the Most High, and he has approved my petition. You are to become Exalted—my champion, my Chosen—and the salvation of your people. If you live, perhaps the salvation of much more.”

Janest stared ahead, eyes wide and focused on the row ahead as she spoke into the wind the way a blind woman might. She felt blind. It was a new terror, the fear of not knowing the way. “Ten Sheaves—I’m—I’m not the best fighter among the field-maidens, Amalon with her threshing-flail—”

“You fight well enough. Strength of arm is common in this age,” Ten Sheaves said, “and not the strength I desire.” A pause. “I am a god, Janest, but I am small among the ranks of immortals. When I call upon the divine flame, its price will be my consumption.” The night-sounds of the spirit field faded away—the crickets, the sigh of the wind—and it became very quiet. “There’s no other way. Come the dawn, the Fair Folk will erase this place if not stopped. This is my final day either way.”

Janest got the sense that the god was looking again at the distant lights of Heaven—at the streets he would never walk and the towers he would never climb. “I’m sorry,” she said, and though she had only today met the god on the hill, she meant it.

“It’s a strange thing,” Ten Sheaves said, “to die. It’s a strange thing for immortality to end, and to go into the darkness.” Janest could no longer see the god when she looked into the rows, he was receding, receding. “I will not come again, but is the wheat truly gone when it spills its kernel upon the ground? This is a wicked age; as my final act, I would sow it with hope. Turn toward the lights of Heaven, Janest, and walk. The Unconquered Sun stands prominent in the Games of Divinity; let his fire guide you.”

The field-maiden lingered a moment, searching for any sign of Ten Sheaves, but the god was gone. She turned and advanced into the rows as he bid. There was darkness for a time, and she felt fear, but she could see the sun rising through the stalks. It was the sign of a god whose name she had never heard until now—but hadn’t she known him all along, toiling under his gaze and thanking him for the life that sprang from the fields? In the sense that the light was familiar; she felt neither blind nor alone. Then she remembered—the valley, the village. I must go back. They need me—and the fear of not knowing her course melted away like dew under sunlight. She pushed onward.

At last the rows parted and Janest stepped into a clearing where the stalks had been beaten flat. In its center stood a strange lady scarecrow, born up by a brace of beams and spreading her arms as if to bear up the sky on her back. Her hair was dark like Janest’s, and what she had taken for straw was actually skin. She looked past these features, partly out of fear, partly out of consumption. She reached out to it, and in turn its arms came together between them, bearing up

an offering, a final gift. Ten Sheaves's voice was in her head, impelling her to take it—and take hold of her destiny. She reached out and grasped the perfect obsidian hilt, and the lady of straw met her gaze, her hat falling away. Janest saw that she was looking at herself.

Almost immediately she saw and felt it—the pulse of eternity, a spark leaping, lightning unfurling in jagged tongues between Heaven and earth, connecting them. The essence of Ten Sheaves exploded from her like fire: amber-gold changing into a ghostfire of blue-white. For a moment, Ten Sheaves was in her senses, crackling through her cells, changing everything he touched. Blood rushed in her veins, and it was not just blood but the mountain streams that tumbled down into the valley and fed the fields. She flexed her fingers and they were full, ripe stalks of wheat nodding beneath a passing breeze, the crops she had tended all her life. She felt also the seeds sleeping in the earth, felt the pregnant promise of the soil beneath her feet, and the call of rains drawn up from the oceans—and that too faded away as the last of Ten Sheaves fled down into the recesses of her soul, sending up a bonfire to mark his passing. The amber-gold light was all around her now, spilling out from her. As she stood under the rising light of the Unconquered Sun, she sensed the kinship between the small god that had Exalted her and the source of the fire that had empowered her and ended him. She knew that to be even the least among gods was still a wondrous thing, now ended, now passed to her, now kindling anew.

She took the gift to hand, and the world faded into the purity of the dawn.

* * *

Shortly after midnight, the spring that flowed from the top of the harvest god's hill dried up, first slowing to a trickle, and then ceasing altogether. The creak-and-thump of the waterwheel slowed and finally groaned to a halt, its uncharacteristic silence awakening those few in the village who had managed to sleep. The wind that spun the prayer wheels outside the High Reavers' hall hesitated and then died; the wheels ticked to a stop. The village was silent and still for hours after these grim omens, waiting without hope for the coming dawn.

An hour before the sun came up, the doors of Ten Sheaves's shrine opened, and a young woman stepped out, walking with purpose.

* * *

The armies of the Fair Folk came on with the rising of the sun. They sang as they marched, knowing that the day promised a banquet of pain and fear—such was the meat and drink of the hobgoblins and silverwights and lesser panjandrums that made up the majority of the horde. The nobles leading the expedition hoped for more refined sport—the souls of mothers, torn raw and agonized by the deaths of their babes, perhaps; or the vengeful flailing of young boys burning to avenge atrocities. Either would make for appropriate amusement.

They marched under war-banners woven of flame and dreams of glory, and set up a great strange riot of drums and flutes played by wizened, hideous musicians dredged from the Lands Beyond Creation, capable of creating beauty only in their music; all else they did was crude and cynical and base. As the army reached the edge of the fields before the town, the jeweled and beautiful noble that led the war-band raised one elegant hand, signaling a halt. Slavering, fanged skirmishers beat the ground around him with their bone clubs and barbed blades, eager for slaughter.

A lone girl stood at the edge of the glebe, body toned and hardened by a life in the fields. Her amber-gold eyes flashed in the light of the rising sun, and her chestnut hair waved in the rising breeze. She carried a great and terrible scythe, a god-weapon, its haft shot through with veins of green jade, its long and wicked blade gleaming with a ruddy inner light. Its grips displayed the

unmistakable hollows of empty hearthstone sockets. The weapon was taller than a man, yet she hefted it as though it weighed nothing at all.

The lords of chaos signaled the advance. Strawmaiden Janest crossed the field to meet them.