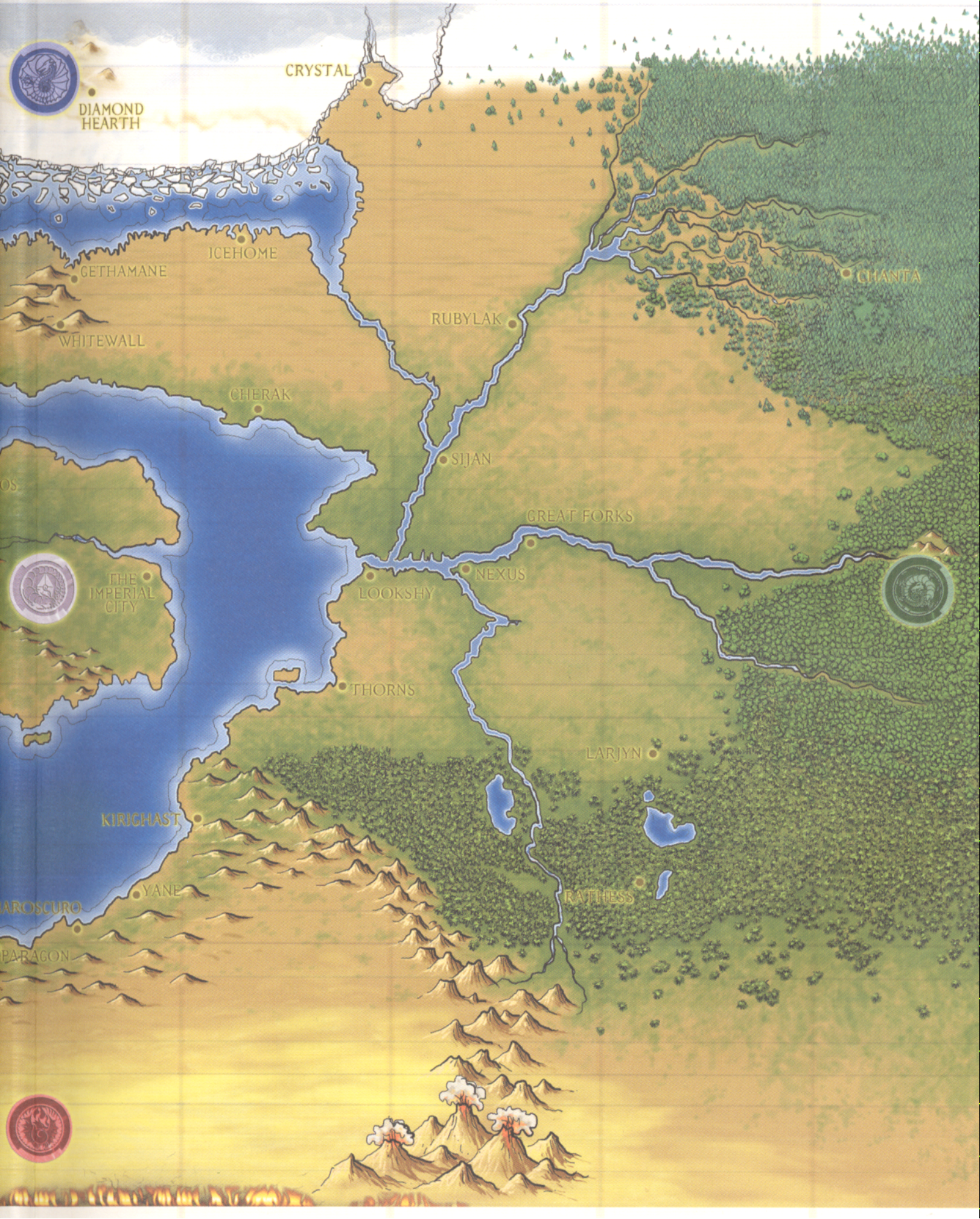
EXALTED




ONYX
THE CORAL ARCHIPELAGO
THE NECK
ABALONE
CHANOS
JUCHE
LORD'S CROSSING
ARJUF
BLUEHAVEN
THE LAP
GEM


CRYSTAL
DIAMOND HEARTH
ICEHOME
GETHAMANE
WHITEWALL
CHERAK
RUBYLAK
CHANTA
SIJAN
GREAT FORKS
NEXUS
LOOKSHY
THE IMPERIAL CITY
THORNS
LARJYN
KIRIGHAST
YANE
RATHESS



Once, centuries ago, Chiaroscuro was a jewel of the Old Realm, and they say that 20 million souls had lived within its dazzling towers of glass. Then the Contagion came, and the city was humbled. The brilliant towers were toppled, and the population was cut down by the twin scythes of war and disease.

After the plague, the streets were choked with rubble, bones and broken glass. The ruins proved an irresistible target for looting, and for centuries, the city was a nest of tiny bandit kingdoms. The brigands lived by picking through the rubble for the wonders of a bygone age and using weapons whose power they could no longer comprehend to annihilate their rivals for control of this block or that building.

But eventually, the weapons were exhausted. Without the danger of First Age magic to keep their armies at bay, the city's beautiful harbor and imperishable glass breakwater had drawn conquerors as surely as it had drawn looters 200 years before. Four centuries ago, the Tri-Khan of the Delzan nomads led his armies into the city and put the bandit-kings and their people to the sword. He then bowed his head to the Realm and declared the city open for settlement. Any who would live in peace might settle there and be exempt from taxes for 10 years.

A great migration occurred, and Chiaroscuro was reborn. In a few generations, it grew as mighty as the other southern metropoli of Paragon and the Lap. The Tri-Khan commissioned the casting and erection of great brass firedust cannons to guard his city's harbor. These titanic weapons were the mark of prosperity in the South and made the city the dream and envy of much of the world. Yet, even now, less that a million people live within Chiaroscuro. Though some neighborhoods had escaped destruction or been cleared of debris, most of the city's dwellers dwelt in shanties, crouching beneath the indestructible ruins of the vanished Golden Age.

• • •

Aesha raced through the ruined streets of the city, and the imperial infantry's hobnailed boots hammered on the cobbles behind her. She was giddily aware of the world around her, laughing inside that she should notice how the air that rushed past her smelled of jasmine and desert sand. The breeze blew from inland tonight and carried the stink of Chiaroscuro out to sea with it. Such winds were thought unlucky by the people of the city — the sirocco could blow ceaselessly for weeks, shortening tempers and bringing sand and spirits of madness with it from the southern deserts. Sometimes, it even brought sandstorms, ruining crops and choking the air with grit.

But whatever sort of luck this wind brought Chiaroscuro as a whole, it was the favor of the gods for Aesha — it was a beautiful night for running. The stiff, dry breeze carried the sweat away from her skin, and the cool air added to her endurance, rather than sapping it. Behind her, the armored infantry crashed and labored, cut off from the cooling wind by their protective gear.

The infantry were nothing compared to her power, but they were spreading systematically through the streets. Aesha could defeat any one of the detachments with almost casual ease, but the troops were merely the hounds of the Wyld Hunt. The Dragon-Bloods of the Hunt trailed behind the foot soldiers — resplendent in their jade armor and bearing wicked daiklaves, they stood ready to converge on any sign of the fleeing Solar. The Dynasts wanted her to fight, wanted her to burn Essence until she could no longer conceal the divinity within her. Or to run, flying heedless and instinctive through the night, until she fell into some ambush they had laid.

• • •

Minutes later, Aesha stopped her flight, and sweat instantly coated her body. She looked behind her and heard the distant clatter of the imperial troops. She had drawn up short before one of the city's haunted districts. Even centuries after the Contagion, the streets were still strewn with shattered glass and thick with hungry ghosts and wicked spirits bred by the horrors of the plague. She walked forward, until her toes almost touched the place where the Tri-Khan had ordered a groove cut into the cobbles and filled with cake salt, to contain the evil of the place.

There were several such districts in the city, and the barriers around them were inspected daily for breaks by the city's Immaculate priests. Even with the safety of the city at stake, that much salt would have attracted thieves, except that Grandmother

Bright and the other spirits of the city were as concerned with Chiaroscuro's safety as its mortal inhabitants.

Twice in living memory, salt had been stolen from the wards, and twice, Grandmother Bright had left her plaza and walked up and down the streets, sniffing for the thieves. One thief had been a beggar, who had stolen the salt to feed his wife and children. He and his family were driven mad as punishment. After running through the streets, they had plunged headless into the same neighborhood the beggar had stolen the salt wards from. Those who lived near the area reported that the family's ghosts could be seen stalking the streets at night. The other thief had been a greedy merchant, who sought to evade the city's wrath by sailing away in a fast galley. Grandmother Bright had spoken with the spirit of the city's waters, and the ship had been drawn instantly to the bottom of the harbor.

Aesha had been a teenager then and had seen the ship go down. She had watched the crew attempt to escape, swimming desperately for the shore. And one by one, whatever force had destroyed the ship pulled them down as well. Grandmother Bright claimed that the souls of the drowned were given to the Fair Folk to use as playthings, and Aesha knew in her heart that the spirit's words were true.

The fugitive stared down at the salt barrier glittering whitely in the pavement before her. She remembered a childhood playmate, Clove, who used to skip back and forth over the barrier. She would laugh at the other girls in the neighborhood and tease them from hiding places in the ruins. Eventually, Clove had stopped going home, and her mother had stood at the edge of the ward for days, calling out her daughter's name. The other mothers shook their heads and looked away, and even the other children knew that Clove belonged to the ghosts now.

Aesha had heard Clove's voice now and again in the years since, calling out from this ruin or that, chanting her name in childish taunts. Such sounds were common in Chiaroscuro, and Aesha sometimes laid awake at night and wondered if each of the voices had once been a person like Clove or if some or even most of them were just sounds the place itself made, the way the ocean roared as the waves crashed into the beach.

There was only one way to find out. If the Dragon-Blooded wanted her, they could come find her in the belly of the beast. Aesha wiped a nagging bead of sweat from the tip of her nose and stepped deliberately across the warded line. She took a deep breath and then was gone, running deep into the ruins — her tread as light as a feather and as fleet as the wind.

• • •

Aesha crouched in the darkness, peering down at the street below. She was almost 40 feet above the pavement, lurking in the darkness behind a half-pane of shattered glass, with the shadows pulled tight around her like a robe. Somewhere out in the night, the Wyld Hunt was paying for its pride. It must not have had a guide, or must have ignored her advice, to have pushed into this area without waiting for dawn. The shrieks and hisses of the hungry dead mixed with the shouts and screams of the hunters. The battle had been going on for minutes now. Aesha suspected that the dead couldn't triumph over the hunters, but every second of combat tired her foes.

There was a flash of light bright enough to show through even the panel of black glass she sheltered behind and a clap of thunder that brought momentary silence — one of the Dragon-Bloods must have used a Charm that called lightning, or perhaps, one had discharged some powerful First Age weapon. Whatever it was, it signaled the end of the battle. The laughter and wailing of the dead was suddenly gone, leaving only a single human scream, going on and on until it faded with the dying man's life. Another ghost for the ruins.

• • •

It hadn't always been like this. Once, Aesha had been nothing more than a master criminal, a thief and kidnaper earning a fast fortune and looking for a path to legitimacy. As a successful criminal, she had been hunted as a matter of course — but only by the Tri-Khan's troops and a virtual army of bounty hunters, not by Dragon-

Blooded troops from the Blessed Isle. The Wyld Hunt came only for the Anathema, and Aesha had joined their ranks just a year ago.

And the hunters would be here soon. She could hear them, moving through the ruins outside — infantry — maybe as stalking horses for Dragon-Blooded killers, trying to spook her into moving where they could see. Aesha didn't spook — she waited. She waited and turned the memories of her Exaltation over in her mind again and again. The pounding pressure in her head from hanging upside down, the terrible joy of knowing that the rope around her ankles was too short but feeling the perfect rightness as she reached for the gem anyway. And then it was there, in her hand, and she was tugging for her assistant to pull the rope up.

Aesha had been able to feel the Caste Mark, then, burning on her forehead under the robber's hood. But when she had arrived home, it had already faded away. That day, as she slumbered, the dreams had come. Scattered fragments of the time before, of towers and lovers, intrigues and whirling battles. Awakening, she could remember nothing, but some part of her said that this was her inheritance, and she accepted it without question.

• • •

The recruiter had come almost before the dreams subsided. Aesha's newfound senses had told her he was mortal, acting for some cult he fervently believed in. She couldn't tell if the beings who controlled him were others like herself or some other power, and she didn't want to know. Whatever they were, they had been able to sense her emergence and send a servant from the Lap almost before her powers had manifested. From the messenger, she learned a new name for herself, Solar, and had a fear confirmed — her kind were labeled Anathema by the Immaculates.

The Immaculate Order was the imperial cult of the Realm. It taught obedience to the social order and venerated the Dragon-Blooded as spiritually elevated over mere mortals. Those faithful to the Immaculate Philosophy did not pray to spirits or gods, instead delegating such matters to the priests of their faith. Here in Chiaroscuro, only expatriates and toadies paid it more than lip service, but on the Blessed Isle, its words were holy writ. And among that holy writ was an injunction to destroy the Anathema, the incarnate devils who had ruled the world centuries before the Contagion. The mightiest among the Dragon-Blooded faithful scoured Creation for Anathema like Aesha, banishing them to their next incarnation.

Doubtless, they would have arrived before even the messenger had, save for the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress. The immortal ruler of the Realm had vanished almost five years earlier, and the empire was preparing for its first civil war. Dragon-Blooded powerful enough to serve in the Hunt were important personages, and the affairs of house and nation preyed on them. Their political maneuvering left them little time for personal crusades, and so, Aesha had been given time to hone her powers. She had no illusions of her ability to defeat the Hunt, but it had brought her to bay, and she could only hope that a few casualties would send it in search of weaker prey.

• • •

And so, Aesha waited as the sounds of the Hunt grew closer. She flexed her hands, shifted her position and listened to the sounds of the spirits as they roamed the ruins. They were attacking the hunters again, and there were more of the hungry ghosts this time. She smiled in the darkness as the ghosts shrieked and howled and the thunder and fire blossomed. Let the hunters waste their power in the dark, she thought. I will be here afterward.

• • •

Aesha saw the Wyld Hunt approaching long before it came into view. The Dragon-Blooded had spent far too much Essence fighting their way through the ruins to conceal their animas. There were only two of them, but they were impressive enough for that. One was clad in red-jade armor and carried a jade-tipped spear. His anima roared red and orange, billowing around him like a bonfire. The other's armor was of green jade, and he carried a double-bitted axe with a black jade head. His anima was the vibrant green

of growing things in spring, and it flowed like a field of grass in a stormwind. From the sheer power of their auras, it was clear why the Dragon-Blooded did not fight mounted — no horse could have survived the displays that whirled around the two Exalted.

Their escorting infantry had been thinned out considerably — most showed signs of injury, and they all looked skittish and haggard. They shied away even from their Dragon-Blooded leaders, and peering into their hearts, Aesha could see nothing but terror. In the shadows, Aesha smiled and tensed into a crouch. She waited, as the hunters passed below her, and now was the time to strike. She slowly drew her throwing knives from her belt and sprang upon the hunters like a cornered lion.

Aesha fell from the darkness like a star, streaming golden fire as she burnt Essence to fuel her combat magic. Her anima was a blazing sunset fading into night, all gold and purple and full of dying-fire reds and flickers of black. She released her knives in midair, and her magic multiplied them so they fell like rain upon the soldiers below. The armor of the Dragon-Blooded would surely turn her blades, and so, she aimed her fury at the soldiers who accompanied them. If her enemies were hunters, then let them hunt her without hounds.

Six soldiers died instantly, torn to pieces by the hail of blades. Aesha's knees flexed slightly as she landed, and the Dragon-Blooded looked at her through narrowed eyes. The street was wet with blood and day-bright with the glare of the Exalteds' animas. She assumed the fluid postures of the snake stance, and then, the Dragon-Bloods were on her. The fiery one struck her with his spear, but Aesha turned from the blow, and her skin of iron deflected the lethal jade. The other swept his axe at her knees, but she leapt above it. She kicked off from the wood-dragon's axeblade and struck him with fingers like a serpent's sting. Her blow slipped between the plates of his jade armor and bit him deeply. Blood welled up through his body armor, and he stumbled backward with the shock of the blow.

The Fire Dragon-Blooded's spearhead struck Aesha in her shoulder, biting deep and drawing streams of blood. The stab threw her backward, and she smashed through a ruined window with crushing force. The bottom floor of the ruins burned gold and sunset with the brilliance of her aura. She shook, and the shards of glass scattered from her shoulders like great flakes of snow. The fire-wrapped Exalted plunged toward her, spear ready to impale, but she twisted, ducked and used the lance as leverage to leap backward. Her feet struck the unyielding surface of an unbroken window, and she bent her legs. For a moment, it seemed as if she was standing on the horizontal surface, then she sprang forward, tumbling. In midair, she straightened and plunged like a burning golden javelin toward the Wood-aspected Dragon-Blood. Fingers extended, she struck him in the chest, and her hands plunged through his armor and ribcage alike. She pushed herself off of the still-upright corpse and twisted in midair to land facing her remaining opponent.

In the purple-golden light above Aesha towered a great burning lion, and her fire-wrapped foe's eyes glittered hatefully at her in the sunset radiance. He tensed and sprang backward several dozen yards. He struck the ground running, and as Aesha laughed in victory, the lion above her roared its triumph.

She did not pursue him — there were sure to be other Dragon-Bloods about, to say nothing of the hungry ghosts, and she had no desire to fall into an ambush like the one that she had executed. Better to go to ground until her anima faded, then slip quietly from the city while the hunters turned the ruins upside-down in search of her.

Aesha willed it, and the bleeding from her shoulder wound became a trickle and then stopped. She dropped her hand and grabbed the jade-headed axe that lay on the pavement, near the Dragon-Blooded corpse's feet. Even if she had little use for it, such a weapon would surely command a high price from interested buyers — perhaps from the cultists who had attempted to recruit her? Whatever may have come from the evening, it was clear her life in Chiaroscuro was over. Having something to pad her bankroll wouldn't hurt a thief on the run.

And then, Aesha was gone into the ruins, fleet as a doe, silent as an owl.



CREDITS

Original Concept and Design: Robert Hatch, with Justin Achilli, Andrew Bates, Dana Habecker, Sheri M. Johnson, Chris McDonough, Richard Thomas, Stephan Wieck

Exalted (Phase 2) Design: Geoffrey C. Grabowski, with Ken Cliffe, Richard Thomas, Stephan Wieck

Authors: Bryan Armor, Andrew Bates, Kraig Blackwelder, Geoffrey C. Grabowski, Dana Habecker, Robert Hatch, Sheri M. Johnson, Steven S. Long, Alia Ogron, Ethan Skemp, Lucien Soulban, James Stewart

Storyteller Game System Designed By: Mark Rein•Hagen

Charm Design Advice: Christopher Carter, John Chambers, Jess Heinig, Aaron Bleys Ingram, Amul Kumar, William Van Meter, Phyllis Rostykus, Dean Shomshak

Consultants to the Design: R. Sean Borgstrom, Dan Quackenbush, Heather Smith

Developers: Geoffrey C. Grabowski and Robert Hatch

Editor: John Chambers

Art Direction: Richard Thomas

Artists: Ghislain Barbe, Leanne Buckley, Guy Davis, Langdon Foss, Jeff Holt, Pat Lee and Dreamwave Productions, David Leri, Vince Locke, Leif Jones, Rich Thomas, Josh Timbrook, Melissa Uran, Tracy Yardley

Cover Art: Pat Lee with Rob Armstrong and Matt Milberger, William O'Connor

Cover Design: Matt Milberger

Layout, Typesetting and Interior Page Design: Matt Milberger

Playtesters:

Adders' British Cutthroats: Allison Barfield, Thérèse Ganghan, Simon Goddard, Toby Jones, Martyn Meeks, Anne-Marie O'connor, Adam Tinworth, Karl Wilding

The Aspects: Chris Carter, A. Bleys Ingram, Amul Kumar, Michael "Finger" Leyer, Marichristine Storch, William Van Meter and William Wulf

Jess' Merry Pirates: Charles Kelley, John Larkin, Lee Ledbetter, Josh Snyder and Christopher Tang

Jim's Gang: Bill Fisher, Ellen Kiley, Jim Kiley, Alia Ogron, Brett Smith and Mike Yacht

Josh's K-Street Posse: Steve Bates, Anthony Burlingame, Steve Dettart, Dan Fischer, William H. horne, Dave "Freak" Jose, Josh Kablack, Rob Lasedlin, Noah McLaughlin, Michael Meudier, Rebecca Pickard, Tom Stitler, Alik Widge, Benjamin Withmann, Stephen M. Ziger

The Research Triangle Stalwarts: Brian Goodson, Huey Hoague, Brooks Miller, Brett Murphy, Richard Stratton and Dave Weinstein

The White Wolf Irregulars: Tim Avers, John Chambers, Jess Heinig, James Stewart and Mike Tinney

Zach's Criminal Empire: Zach Bush, Aaron McConnell, Brian Orban, Mark Sumimoto, Matthew Taylor and Matthew E. Tice

WHITE WOLF GAME STUDIO
735 PARK NORTH BLVD.
SUITE 128
CLARKSTON, GA 30021
USA

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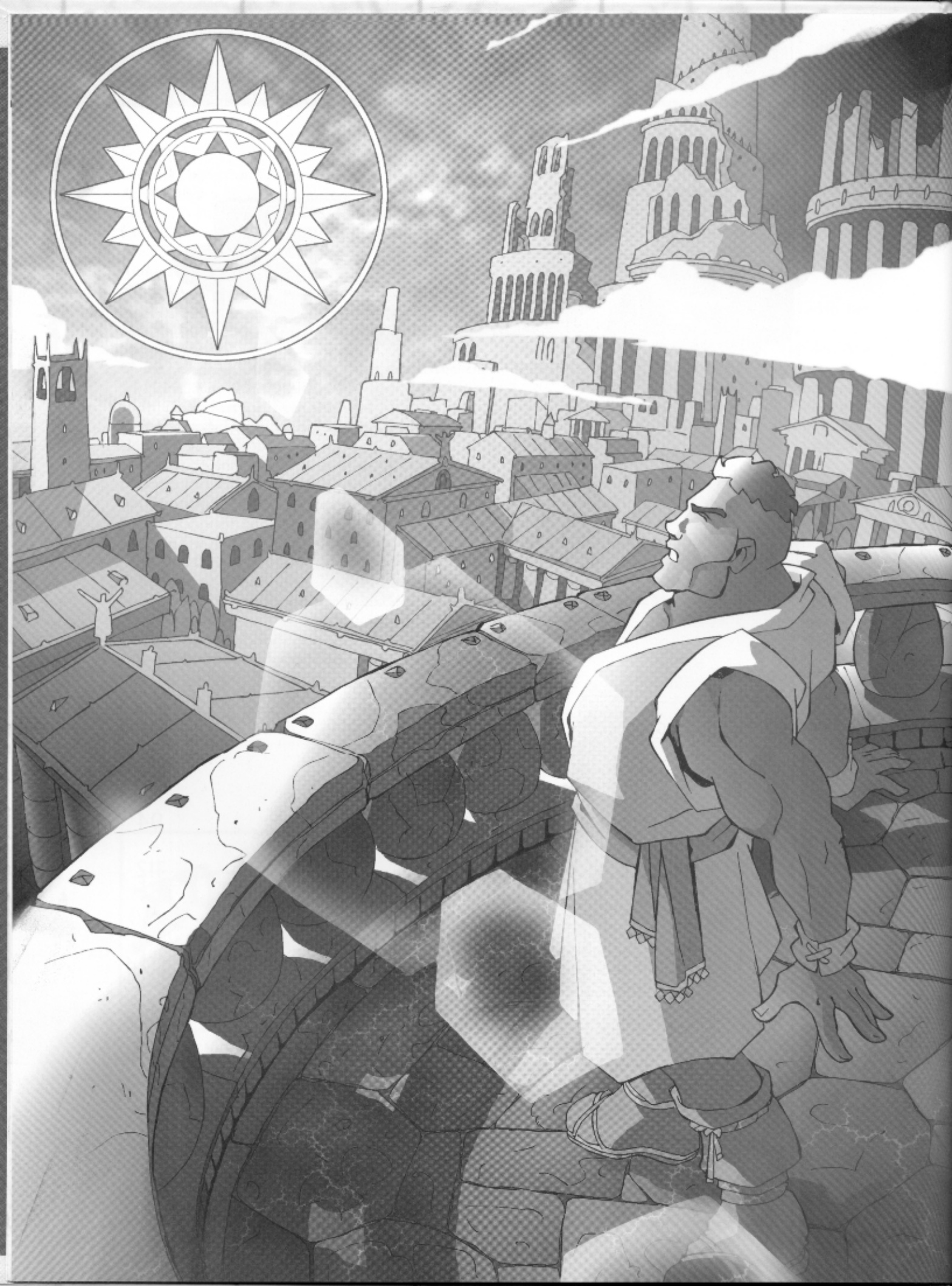
Table of Contents

Introduction	8
Chapter One: Setting	18
Chapter Two: Systems	84
Chapter Three: Character Creation	94
Chapter Four: Traits	112
Chapter Five: Charms and Sorcery	150
Chapter Six: Drama	224
Chapter Seven: Storytelling	260
Chapter Eight: Antagonists	274
Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment	322



The black-skinned man lay atop the hill, watching the world below. The crowds in the arena had given him his name when he was a pit-fighter, calling him Panther for his animal grace and savage fighting style. He showed the same catlike habits now as he lay in the bush, patient and boneless relaxed beneath the dawn sun.

He had never thought of himself as a wise man. He knew why he had been Chosen. Panther looked out across the valley, to where he could see the hamlets burning and smell the rich tang of smoke on the morning wind. Whatever the barbarians looted, they burned afterward. Since sunup, Panther had lain there, watching the pillars of smoke grow closer, seeing the ragged refugees stream past on the road below.

Perhaps there was a reason for it, he reflected. After all, everyone needed to live. The barbarians raided for food, for metal — for the things they needed to survive. Panther had been there, before he went into the pit and won a fortune in other men's blood. He had stolen to eat. He could understand the need to live.

But this wasn't the violence of one man against another. This was the death of the world. The barbarians would continue south, burning as they went, until someone stopped them. Perhaps they would destroy a city or three and wipe away a few more legacies of the world that had once been.

Once, the Dragon-Blooded would have come. This land, like most others, was tributary to the Realm. Eventually, the legions would have landed, with their discipline and Exalted leaders, to throw back the barbarian host in a welter of blood. Though they brought their greed and their pride and their sterile religion, they were the rulers of the world. A tributary who had been overrun by barbarians would pay no further tribute. But since the Empress vanished, the legions had been dispatched rarely, and those that had been sent to the Threshold were the worst troops.

Panther remembered when the voice had first spoken to him. He had been lying in his apartment when it came upon him — the glorious golden radiance. The sense of dizzying claustrophobia from sharing the space of his penthouse with the immense voice that spoke to him. He could remember every detail: the creak of the bed as he rose to his feet, the feel of sweat on his skin, the dry smell because it hadn't rained in weeks, the stink of Nexus and the catcalls from the Guild brothel down the street.

Panther remembered the dizzying walk to the sun-washed balcony as the voice said, "Go and see. Look at the face that has chosen you." He remembered the giddy stumble toward the balcony door, stepping out onto the patio and looking to the thunderous radiance of the Sun.

"You who have no father," it had said to him in a voice like the roar of a vast crowd, "I am your father now. You who shed blood and know not why, I give you a reason. In my anger, I turned my face from the world of men, but I shall do so no longer. Know you are among my chosen priests. Go, and make the world a righteous place as you know best. Take light into darkness, and know you act with my blessing."

Panther had gone east that night, traveling for days without sleeping or resting. He walked until he reached the edge of the wood and, then, further, until the forest darkened around him and became a holy place of trees and silence. He had meditated there in the stillness, fasting and drinking the water of a nearby spring, until he understood his mission. He had left the forest then and walked back to the lands of men. There was a great task that needed to be done.

Panther looked out across the burning valley and was driven to do something. That was why he had been chosen.



INTRODUCTION

The legend of Mmatmuor and Sodosma shall arise only in the latter cycles of earth, when the glad legends of the prime have been forgotten. Before the time of its telling, many epochs shall have passed away, and the seas shall have fallen in their beds, and new continents shall have come to birth. Perhaps, in that day, it will serve to beguile for a little the black weariness of a dying race, grown hopeless of all but oblivion.

— Clark Ashton Smith, "The Empire of the Necromancers"

Do not believe what the scientists tell you. The natural history we know is a lie, a falsehood sold to us by wicked old men who would make the world a dull gray prison and protect us from the dangers inherent to freedom. They would have you believe our planet to be a lonely starship, hurtling through the void of space, barren of magic and in need of a stern hand upon the rudder.

Close your eyes to their deception. The time before our time was not a time of senseless natural struggle and reptilian rage, but a time of myth and sorcery. It was a time of legend, when heroes walked Creation and wielded the very power of the gods. It was a time before the world was bent, a time before the magic of Creation lessened, a time before the souls of men became the stunted, withered things they are today.

This is the story of that time.

This is the story of the Exalted.

What Is a Storytelling Game?

Storytelling is a sophisticated way for adults to play make-believe. Rather than playing soldier or house and running around in your backyard or the alley behind your apartment, you and your friends sit around a comfortable room and describe the heroic feats your characters accomplish. To help make sure you all share the same vision of what's going on, there's a mediator and narrator (the "Storyteller"), who describes events and keeps the story moving along. In order to prevent arguments of who did what first and if an action is possible, there are rules that describe what your character can and can't do. In order to prevent bitterness over someone beating someone else in a fight, the characters are usually allies against imaginary opposition that the Storyteller tries to portray as even-handedly as possible. In order to prevent jaded adult imaginations from being bored quickly, the setting is much more intricate and complex than most people's childhood fantasies.

But just because **Exalted** is like something children do doesn't make it any less serious. Kids build little forts and treehouses, while adults build skyscrapers. If you want, your storytelling can be as serious as improvisational acting. It doesn't *have* to be terribly serious, but there's nothing wrong with taking it seriously.

To play **Exalted**, you'll need between three and six people. One person assumes the role of the Storyteller. It's her job to describe how things unfold, play the bit characters and the supporting cast and moderate any disputes over the rules. Everyone else makes up a "character" (the game term for the imaginary person you portray) and thrills vicariously to the heroic deeds of their alter egos. The reason the game is best with four to six people participating is that there tend to be a lot of awkward silences with less than three players, while a game with more than five players can be very hard for the Storyteller to manage.

Exalted is a continuing game — the basic assumption in this book is that you'll play your character more than once. Most people who play Storytelling games meet between once a week and once every two weeks and play for between four and eight hours a session. Most people seem to enjoy playing the same character for between six and eighteen months.

The Disclaimer

Exalted is not really the secret history of the world. You cannot really cast spells. You should not hit your friends or loved ones with swords. This game is not intended to be played by people who can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality.

The Age of the Exalted

Exalted is set during the Second Age of Man. The First Age was a golden time of peace and harmony, when men anointed by the gods themselves ruled the world with an even and benevolent hand. These beings were known as the Exalted, and they were given their powers in the time before history to fight against the enemies of the gods.

When the Exalted were created, they were of two sorts — Terrestrial and Celestial. The Celestial Exalted were the Chosen of the great gods and could command the power of the heavens, but their power was too mighty to travel through the blood. Instead, when one died, her power was quickly made manifest in a new individual — a reincarnation, but into a mature adult rather than a newborn. The Terrestrials, also called the Dragon-Blooded, were the chose of the Elemental Dragons. They were less powerful but more numerous, for their children stood a good chance of becoming Exalted when they entered puberty.

The Exalted triumphed over the enemies of the gods. As reward for their heroism, the gods gave the Exalted dominion over the Earth. For a timeless age, the Exalted ruled justly over Creation, and their invincible kingdom was called the Realm. But a terrible curse had been pronounced against the Exalted by the enemies of the gods as they died. This dark magic slowly ate away at the Realm and at the hearts of the Exalted. The benevolence of the Realm's rulers turned to tyranny, and peace turned to civil war. Seeing no alternative, the Dragon-Blooded rose up and slew the Solar Exalted, who were the rulers of the Realm at that time.

Some Solars survived the initial ambush, and there were terrible wars as these survivors fought back against the Dragon-Blooded. For decades, strife wracked the Realm as the last remaining Solars fought against destruction. Much of the glory of the First Age was lost then, and much of the knowledge as well. In the ruins, the Dragon-Blooded set up a military government and ruled for centuries. It was not the grandeur of the Realm's heyday, nor was it entirely peaceful, but it was devoid of the vast atrocities and terrible indulgences that had driven the Dragon-Blooded to regicide.

A powerful group of Celestial Exalted, the Sidereals, had aided the Dragon-Blooded in their murder. Shortly after the Solars' destruction, the Sidereal Exalted made a concerted effort to fade from view. Texts mentioning them were destroyed, and memories of them were allowed to vanish over mortal lifetimes, until they were only a legend. To retain their influence in the world, the Sidereals hid behind and directed a religion, the Immaculate Order, that preached to its mortal flock the innate spiritual superiority of the Dragon-Blooded.

A close watch was kept for those few Solars who continued to be reborn into the world. This watch, called the Wyld Hunt, used powerful astrology and magical instruments of detection to pinpoint the emergence of Solars. Heavily armed strike forces descended on these newly emergent Solars and destroyed them before they had a chance to gain power — in many cases, the target was destroyed before he even realized he had changed at all.

The Great Contagion

Then the Great Contagion came. It spread across the world like wildfire. Nine people out of every ten died. There was no cure, and none to tend to the sick in their suffering. The world groaned in agony, but the horror had only begun.

In the unshaped chaos beyond the edges of Creation, the Fair Folk had always lurked. They were held back from Creation by the massive solidity of human belief, as well as by the powerful sorcerous defenses of the Realm. But when the Great Contagion struck, the population was decimated, and the controls of the defense grids were manned only by corpses. The Fair Folk forced open the gates at the four corners of the world and came forth in their endless legions.

With them, the fey brought great vortices of chaos and laid waste to the land. Vast stretches of the world were lost forever, and the lands and seas were reshaped. Even in the places that were not destroyed, wherever the armies of the Fair Folk had marched or bivouacked, reality was left crazed and fluid, scarred forever by the chaos of the Fair Folk's passing.



As the Fair Folk's armies raced toward the center of the world, a Dragon-Blooded officer dared the impenetrable defenses that guarded the central controls of the Realm's defense systems. By luck or fate, she seized control of those systems and threw back the Fair Folk host. Scattering like chaff and melting like wax in a forge, they fled howling back into the chaos beyond Creation.

With control of the Realm's defense systems, the officer was the most powerful being in the world. From her isle at the center of Creation, she accepted pledges of fealty and proposals of marriage. Consolidating her power, she proclaimed herself Empress, and that has been her name since that day almost eight centuries ago.

Among the Empress' first and most important allies were the survivors of the Sidereal Exalted, who shared their knowledge with her and advised her. In return, the Immaculate Order was made the state religion of the Realm, and the Sidereals were given great authority in conducting and maintaining the Wyld Hunt.

The Founding of the Realm

The Empress easily seized control of the Blessed Isle, but she had too few loyal troops to dream of conquering and holding the entire, war-wracked world. Instead, she demonstrated her power, using her handful of Dragon-Blooded troops and her control over the Realm's defenses to obliterate several of her most obstinate opponents. From the rest, she extracted pledges of peace and of tribute and left them subjects of her Realm.

Though it took many decades, the world was eventually made to kneel and pay her homage. Only in the former heartland of the Old Realm, now called the Scavenger Lands, were the inhabitants successful in their resistance to the Empress' forces. Unwilling to sacrifice more of her limited resources, the Empress left the Scavenger Lands to their own devices.

To secure her position, the Empress engaged in a series of political marriages and extramarital liaisons. The results of her efforts became known as the Dynasty. A large and tightly intermarried extended family, the Dynasty wields almost all political power within the Realm. Though it started with only a few ragged survivors, the Dynasty grew. In the modern day, it comprises 11 major Houses and countless smaller bloodlines and contains thousands of Terrestrial Exalted.

For over 760 years, the Empress manipulated her descendents, setting them to war about her feet to gain her mercurial favor. Yet, if retaining her position was foremost in her mind, she made sure she was secure against external foes as well as against internal challenges to her power. In all her centuries of rule, the Wyld Hunt never failed, the Realm was never seriously menaced by a foreign enemy, and the Dynasty grew fat and powerful on the cream of Creation.

The Disappearance of the Empress

Five years ago, that all changed. The Empress vanished one morning, gone without a trace. Almost overnight, the Realm's empire began to crumble. The government of the Realm was not built for a succession — there were

simply no mechanisms to put a new ruler on the throne. There wasn't even any proof the Empress was dead.

Weeks of indecision turned into months of political wrangling, until a figurehead regent was put on the throne. The provinces were bled white, as garrisons were withdrawn from the tributary states and brought home to the Blessed Isle. Any attempt to deploy the legions abroad was seen as a maneuver in the struggle for control of the throne — the armies of the Realm were paralyzed. Even the Wyld Hunt has fallen to the wayside, as the contenders for the throne gather their every iota of power.

Realizing that the Realm's armies and magical defenses were mere paper tigers, the Realm's countless subject states began withholding their tribute. But the tributaries are not the only enemies to realize the weakness of the Realm. The barbarians tribes who lurk beyond the pale of civilization have begun to raid more frequently without the Imperial Foot to retaliate against their attacks. From their strongholds within Creation, and from those outside it, the Fair Folk murmur of war. The lords of the Underworld unleash new monstrosities against the living, and everywhere, there are omens of war and dark times.

This is the world into which your character has come. After millennia of vigilance, the Wyld Hunt has lapsed. And at this moment of weakness, the Solar Exalted have returned. Not a tiny handful, but a great mass of them. It is as if a gate was opened and the heroes of old rushed through it and returned to the world.

Your character is among those individuals who have become Solar Exalted. You are a being a legend, as powerful as a demigod and as cunning as an asp. Will you be the savior of Creation or one of the terrible menaces that beset your world?

How to Use This Book

This book is divided into chapters, each of which covers some portion of the information you need to play the game. Some contain pure setting, but most contain a mixture of rules and setting material. You don't need to read all this material as a player, but if you're planning on acting as Storyteller, you should try to be as familiar as possible with the rules.

Introduction

This provides an introduction to structure of the book and the basic terminology and concepts of the game. It's what you're reading now.

Chapter One: Setting

This chapter describes the geography, history and inhabitants of the world of **Exalted** in greater detail.

Chapter Two: Systems

This section describes the most basic rules used to determine if your character succeeds or fails at a task — what are often called the "mechanics" of the game.

Chapter Three: Character Creation

This chapter gives step-by-step instructions to create your own **Exalted** character.

Chapter Four: Traits

This chapter describes in greater detail the various non-magical characteristics an **Exalted** character possesses.

Chapter Five: Charms and Sorcery

As the Traits chapter describes mundane characteristics, so the Charms and Sorcery chapter describes the mystical characteristics of the Exalted.

Chapter Six: Drama

This section expands on the material presented in the Systems chapter. It provides rules for resolving combat and detailed suggestions on how Storytellers can use every Ability in play.

Chapter Seven: Storytelling

Direct advice for the Storyteller. It includes suggestions for running everything from effective sessions to extended campaigns.

Chapter Eight: Antagonists

The world of **Exalted** is a dangerous one. This chapter provides game statistics and descriptions for many of the game's hazards, human and otherwise.

Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment

Weapons, armor and magical items are all described here, along with a lot of useful mundane equipment.

Lexicon

Anathema: The term the *Immaculate Order* uses to describe the *Solar*, *Lunar* and, recently, *Abyssal Exalted*. In the catechism of the Immaculates, Anathema are individuals 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 without question in the *Realm*. It was previously observed in the *Threshold* because the Realm forced its tributary states to pay lip service to the Immaculates. Today, few Thresholders unquestioningly accept the doctrine of the Anathema.

anima: An aura, normally invisible, that surrounds all living things. However, when an *Exalted* uses *Essence*, the power often spills into her anima, making it visible. As a result, an Exalted who expends a great deal of power is usually surrounded by a display of power that can range from a glow to a billowing pillar of heatless flame bright enough to see for miles.

Blessed Isle, the: The great island at the center of the Inland Sea that is directly ruled by the *Dragon-Blooded* and is several weeks sail from the nearest *Threshold* port,. The Blessed Isle is the stronghold of the *Realm*, and even in these dark days, no pirate has yet survived an attempt to raid it.

Caste Mark: All *Exalted* are branded on their foreheads with a mark of status. This Caste Mark is typically invisible, but can be seen when the Exalted expends *Essence*. No two types of Exalted have the same Caste Mark, and it can be used to distinguish one type of Exalted from another.

Chosen: See *Exalted*.

Charm: A primal form of magic, focusing *Essence* through the character's Abilities rather than purely by her will. Charms allow a character to perform feats of superhuman heroism and are the most basic form of magic used by the *Exalted*. They contrast with the more sophisticated magic of *sorcery*.

Circle: A group of *Solar Exalted* brought together by oaths and mutual need. Many believe that most modern Circles have the

same membership as Circles from the *First Age* and that the Solars are drawn to the sides of their reincarnated companions. While there is some evidence to indicate that this is the case, some Circles are definitely creations of the modern age. Regardless of the cause, most Solar Exalted find themselves part of a Circle at some point in their early existences.

Creation: The world and everything in it. Beyond Creation lies the vast, formless chaos of the *Wyld*.

Cult of the Illuminated, the: A millenarian cult devoted to the worship of the Illuminated Ones, mystical saviors who will come to lead the world into a new golden age. This heretical cult is a front for a number of exiled *Sidereal Exalted*, who use it to help gather up and hide newly emergent *Solar Exalted*. These Solars are trained in one of the cult's several secret bases and used to further the goals of the Sidereals who control the cult.

Deathlords: The sorcerer-kings of the *Underworld*. Their power springs from their *Malfean* masters and from their matchless erudition. The Deathlords are probably the most powerful beings to walk the world of men in this Age.

Demesne: An enchanted place, a location where magical currents eddy together to create a natural vortex of power. These places of power are rich in energy for beings that know how to harvest it. Most *Exalted* harness this power by constructing a *Manse* on the site of a Demesne.

Dragon-Blooded: The term the *Terrestrial Exalted* use to describe themselves because they are "of blood" with the *Elemental Dragons*. This term once referred to the origin of the Terrestrial Exalted, who were created by the Elemental Dragons at *Gaia's* behest to aid the gods in their war against those who came before the gods. In the modern day, however, the Dragon-Blooded consider it to describe how they partake of spiritual closeness to the Elemental Dragons.

Elemental Poles, the: The five cardinal points of Creation. In the North lies the Elemental Pole of Air, in the East lies the Elemental Pole of Wood, in the South the Elemental Pole of Fire, and in the West the Elemental Pole of Water. The Elemental Pole of Earth is the Imperial Mountain of the *Blessed Isle* and the omphalos, the axis of creation, around which the world revolves. As one moves away from the calm and stability of 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 *Exalted* can survive them.

Essence: Magic. The most basic building-block of Creation, Essence is the power that links all things and from which all wonders spring. To channel Essence is to wield the power of the gods, and the might of the *Exalted* springs from their ability to shape and channel Essence.

Exalted: The warriors of the gods. The Exalted were given custodianship of Creation in the time before history for their service in the war against those who came before the gods. Exalted are divided into two groups: the Terrestrial Exalted, who are weak enough that they may breed as men and animals do, and the Celestial Exalted, whose spiritual Essence is too great to travel through the blood.

The divine might that empowers Celestial Exalted is inextinguishable — when a Celestial Exalted's body dies, the fragment of divinity flees to a new body whose destiny is great enough to accommodate it. This act is not reincarnation so much as transfer of power — the spirit carries few memories, and the new Exalted retains her personality and free will.

Abyssal Exalted: Champions of the *Deathlords*. The Abyssal Exalted have only recently appeared, yet these warrior-poets of the *Underworld* bear *Caste Marks* similar to those of Solars and have been seen to use *sorcery* of the Celestial Circle. Not even the wisest of the *Sidereal Exalted* knows from whence the Deathlords summoned them, but the deathknights are mighty warriors — each the equal of one of the Lunar or Solar Exalted and more than a match for even the mightiest of the *Dragon-Blooded*.

Lunar Exalted: Champions of *Luna*. The Lunar Exalted were once the spouses of the *Solar Exalted* and the generals of the armies of the *First Realm*. The Lunars fled into the wilderness after the murder of the Solar Exalted or were slain fighting to avenge the memories of their fallen mates. Today, these shapeshifting warriors live as barbarians, dwelling together in small packs or ruling savage nations of their bestial offspring.

Sidereal Exalted: Champions of the *Five Maidens*. The Sidereal Exalted are the sages and astrologers of the *Exalted*, as well as peerless martial artists. The Sidereal instigated the murder and imprisonment of the *Solar Exalted* almost 1,500 years ago in an attempt to avert an apocalypse their astrology foretold. Since then, the Sidereals have lurked in the shadows, attempting to shape the destiny of the world by manipulating *the Realm*. Those who disagreed with the murder of the Solars fled into exile. Many of these Sidereals seek to use the returning Solars to advance the exiles own goals. The most prominent among these exiles are the Sidereals who secretly support *the Cult of the Illuminated*.

Solar Exalted: Champions of the *Unconquered Sun*. Once lords of *Creation*, the Solar Exalted became decadent and corrupt and were slain by the *Dragon-Blooded* and the *Sidereal Exalted*. The divine spirits of a vast majority of the Solars were imprisoned, and for centuries after, the *Wyld Hunt* of the Dragon-Blooded slew those who had escaped as soon as they were reincarnated.

Terrestrial Exalted: Champions of *the Five Elemental Dragons*. The least among the Exalted in power, the *Dragon-Blooded*, alone among the *Chosen*, can increase their numbers through reproduction. The Dragon-Blooded were the rank-and-file of the champions of the gods in the war against those who came before the gods. In the late *Old Realm*, the Dragon-Blooded murdered the *Solar Exalted* at the behest of the *Sidereal Exalted* and usurped the rulership of the *Realm*. The Dragon-Blooded branded the Solar and *Lunar Exalted* Anathema and made the *Immaculate Order* the state religion. Today, almost no Dragon-Blooded know of these events, instead believing the stories of the Immaculate Order.

Fair Folk: The faerie. A term used to describe the beings who dwell in the unformed madness beyond the edges of *Creation*. Those who remain beyond the borders of the world are creatures of the *Wyld*, hostile to all things of set shape and constant form. However, many of the Fair Folk have entered the world and have

taken on shape to do so. Most of these beings are tricksters and hunters of men, but some coexist with mortals, ruling them as lords in some places and living among them as citizens in others. The unshaped Fair Folk invaded Creation en masse once, during the *Great Contagion*, and would have destroyed the world had the *Scarlet Empress* not used the defenses of the *Realm* against them.

First Age: The Golden Age, when men wielded magic far greater than the petty scraps they hold today. The First Age is popularly thought to stretch from the beginning of history to the *Great Contagion* almost 800 years ago. However, most savants consider the murder of the *Solar Exalted* some six centuries before that to be the true turning of the Age.

Five Elemental Dragons, the: Children of *Gaia*, the Elemental Dragons are the lords of the world and are responsible for overseeing the hierarchy of *spirits*. Like most of the gods, the Dragons have become decadent and self-involved since the end of the *First Age*. Rarely do the Elemental Dragons inquire into the state of their subjects, and with every passing year, the spirits ignore their duties more and grow more independent. The *Immaculate Order* venerates the Elemental Dragons as the apotheosis of spiritual development and the princes of Creation.

Five Magical Materials: Orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal, jade and soulsteel comprise the five known Magical Materials. These materials are all easily enchanted and resonate with the animas of the appropriate *Exalted*. Though each material is especially resonant to a particular type of Exalted, an item made from any of the Magical Materials can be made to resonate with the anima of any type of Exalted. This resonance makes the item preternaturally deft and sure in a character's hands, as well as activating any *Hearthstones* set into the item.

Five Maidens, the: Five divinities second in sheer power only to the *Unconquered Sun*. The Five Maidens are 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). Though *Luna* is not numbered among the maidens, she is considered their equal in power. Though the Maidens are venerated in many places, the Immaculate Order officially disapproves of their worship by the unExalted.

Gaia: The spirit of creation, the mother of the *Elemental Dragons* and all those things that live and grow. It is said that Gaia is one of those who came before the gods but that she aided the gods in their war against her fellows out of love for her consort, *Luna*.

Great Contagion, the: A terrible plague created by the *Deathlords* that devastated the world almost eight centuries ago. In its wake, the *Fair Folk* cast open the gates at the edges of *Creation* and marched across the world. The Fair Folk were stopped only by the *Scarlet Empress*, who dared the Imperial Manse and used the defenses of *the Realm* against them. The Great Contagion is popularly considered to mark the end of the *First Age*.

Great Curse, the: When the *Exalted* slew those who came before the gods, their victims cursed the *Chosen* as they died. Though this Curse was elaborate and vast, its core was that the Chosen would forever be cursed with the hate, immoderacy and treachery they displayed in the murder of the enemies of the gods. Though this Curse has dogged the Exalted as a group since that day, the Curse settled primarily on the shoulders of the *Solar Exalted*. Since then, the Solars have been subject to terrible, dark moods and uncontrollable outbursts of emotion.

Guild, the: A vast network of merchants, trading in every imaginable good — from ore, grain and textiles to slaves and addictive drugs. The Guild knows no good or evil, only supply and demand. It even trades slaves to the *Fair Folk*, who feed on their hopes and dreams and then sell the soulless husks back to the Guild as docile servants useful for simple manual labor. Though the Guild's headquarters is in the trading metropolis of *Nexus*, its representatives are present in nearly every corner of *Creation*.

Hearthstone: A crystal of pure magical energy, formed at the center of a *Manse*. If an *Exalted* is attuned to the Manse from whence a Hearthstone springs and carries the Hearthstone with him in a focal device made from one of the *Five Magical Materials*, then he may draw on the power of the *Demesne* to perform miraculous feats. The power and basic nature of these feats are set by the natural tendencies of the Demesne. The exact manifestation is determined by the Essence-focusing architecture of the Manse built atop it.

Immaculate Order, the: The state religion of *the Realm*. The Immaculate Order preaches that an individual's soul is reincarnated again and again through successes lives, until it reaches perfection and joins the *Elemental Dragons*. Humans are more advanced than animals, and the *Dragon-Blooded* are more advanced than humans. The Immaculates frown on any sort of popular worship or veneration of *spirits* because they believe spirits to be celestial functionaries rather than divinities — instead, the Immaculate Order sees that the local spirits are given the proper offerings at the predetermined times. Immaculate monks are known for their deadly mastery of the martial arts, and Dragon-Blooded monks are particularly feared for their mastery of elemental style martial arts.

The Immaculates serve as a front organization for those *Sidereal Exalted* who originally instigated the murder of the *Solar Exalted*, allowing the Sidereals to continue to shape the destiny of the Realm. The order has allowed these hidden Exalted to manipulate the course of the empire since they helped found it nearly 1,500 years ago.

Luna: Consort of *Gaia*, Luna is a many-faced trickster. A shapechanger and a warrior almost the equal of the *Unconquered Sun*, Luna is the mother and patron of the *Lunar Exalted*.

Malfeans: Cousins to the *Yozis*, the Malfeans were slain in the time before history and, in dying, created the *Underworld*. They sleep forever in their temple-tombs far beneath the land of the dead, dreaming endlessly of the day when all of *Creation* will join them in death.

Manse: A structure of occult architecture built to channel and focus the energies of a *Demesne*. The energies are focused into a *Hearthstone*, a crystal of concentrated magical energy that grants power to an *Exalted* who carries it.

mote: A unit used by sorcerers and savants to measure *Essence*.

Nexus: The largest city in the world, outside of *the Realm*. Nexus is a city that knows only one law — thou shalt not obstruct trade. Ruled by the mysterious Council of Entities through its representative the Emissary, Nexus is a filthy hive of crime and treachery, where life is cheap and death is free. It is also a shining jewel of commerce and opportunity, where anyone with enough determination and luck can earn a fortune. Nexus is famous for its markets, its metal goods and its mercenaries, all of which are the best in the known world.

Old Realm: Also called the First Realm. Used to describe the empire that ruled the world in the *First Age*, before the *Great Contagion*. It is forbidden to use this term in *the Realm*, which considers itself to be the same government.

Realm, the: The empire that, until recently, controlled all of civilized Creation. The Realm never really "ruled" more than the *Blessed Isle* directly. Instead, it exacted tribute from countless local governments, which did it homage and were, in theory, independent but were, in reality, little more than puppet states.

Since the disappearance of the *Scarlet Empress*, the Realm has been in a state of flux. There is a weak regent on the throne, and the various powers of the junta that supports him conspire endlessly, each attempting to build up enough power and influence to crush its rivals and seize open rulership of the Realm.

In this chaos, the Realm's many tributaries have been stripped of their garrisons and left to their own devices. While a few remain loyal subject states, some have declared independence, and many others have effectively done so, sending only token tribute rather than their full tax duties. Whoever seizes the throne of the Realm will be confronted with the task of reconquering the vast majority of its territory.

Scarlet Empress, the: The woman who braved the Imperial Manse during the *Great Contagion* and who unlocked the long-forgotten secrets of *the Realm's* defenses and used them to defeat the armies of the *Fair Folk* and save *Creation* from their wrath. It is possible she had the help or advice of the *Sidereal Exalted* in accomplishing this. After the Fair Folk were banished, she crowned herself Empress of the new Realm and ruled her kingdom for almost 800 years. Five years ago, she vanished inexplicably.

Scavenger Lands, the: An alliance of petty kingdoms and city-states in the East who have never paid homage to the *Realm*, though the Realm has repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) attempted to subjugate them. Most powerful among these princedoms is the great trading metropolis of *Nexus*, though there are many other states who take part in the alliance. The dogged independence of these lands is all the more irritating to the Realm because the Scavenger Lands were once the heartland of the *Old Realm* and have large caches of *First Age* magic.

Second Breath: In the world of **Exalted**, the soul enters an individual's body when she draws her first breath. When a being is Exalted, the rush of divine energy is very similar, and Exaltation is, thus, often called the Second Breath.

Sorcery: A more sophisticated and demanding form of magic than *Charms*. When using Charms, the *Exalted* focuses Essence through her skills, while when using sorcery, she focuses it by will alone.

Spirit: More accurately known as the little gods, spirits are lesser divine entities charged with the maintenance of *Creation*. Once, there was a well-ordered spirit hierarchy, but today, matters are in decay. In many places, spirits accept sacrifices and demand worship as though they were greater deities. In other places, powerful spirits even rule men as their lords.

Threshold: Savants use this term to refer to all of *Creation* that lies between the shores of the *Blessed Isle* and the uninhabitable purity of the *Elemental Poles*. In more common usage, it refers to the ring of countless kingdoms and city-states that abut the Inner Sea. At one point, all of these states were tributaries to the Realm. However, in the five years since the disappearance of the *Scarlet Empress*, the *Realm* has withdrawn many garrisons to focus on internal troubles. Today, most of these states are subjects of the Realm in name only, and many have declared independence.

Unconquered Sun: Mightiest among the gods, the Unconquered Sun was their leader when they rebelled against those who came before the gods. He created the *Solar Exalted* and advised them when they ruled the world during the *First Age*, until the Solars' overweening pride caused him to turn away from them. His temples were pulled down after the murder of the Solar Exalted, and his worship was banned. Today, the veneration of the Unconquered Sun is practiced only by savages and isolated bands of heretics.

Underworld: The land of the dead, ruled the *Deathlords*. The Underworld is a place of shadows and great silent oceans, a dark dreamland full of wonders and dangers unknown to the living. In many places, called shadowlands, the wall between the living and the dead has been worn through by too many crossings and recrossings. In these places, the dead walk freely among the living, and those who stray too far afield can easily find themselves traveling in the land of the dead. Mortals who dwell in shadowlands are sickly, weak things, who pay homage to the Deathlords and spend their lives looking forward to death's embrace.

Wyld: In the usage of the wise, the Wyld is both the corrosive madness that lies beyond the edges of *Creation* and inchoate potential as an elemental force. There are many areas in the *Threshold*, typically those that were the sites of bivouacs or battles during the Fair Folk's invasion, where reality is still soft and malleable, and these areas are also often called Wyld.

In common usage, "the Wyld" is a general term for the large tracts of wilderness and unsettled lands that lie between the petty kingdoms on the shores of the Inner Sea and the *Elemental Poles*.

Wyld Hunt: A powerful group of battle-hardened and devout *Dragon-Blooded* that the *Immaculate Order* used to hunt *Anathema*. Now that the *Scarlet Empress* has disappeared and the various lesser powers of the *Realm* have begun to vie for the throne, most of the Dragon-Blooded who served in the Wyld Hunt have, instead, chosen to stay close to home, to lend their might to the various contenders for rulership of the Realm.

Yozi: Demon prince. Cousins to the *Malfeans*, the Yozis are forever imprisoned outside Creation in their blasted kingdom of iron and black marble beneath a mad green sun. The Yozis plot constantly to escape their prison and overthrow the gods.

Suggested Resources

Fiction

Night's Master. Tanith Lee.

One of the most finely crafted fantasy novels ever written. *Night's Master* and the rest of the stories of Tanith Lee's Flat Earth were the single largest literary influence on **Exalted**.

Hawkmoon. Michael Moorcock. White Wolf Publishing. Atlanta, GA. ISBN 1-56504-193-3.

The other major literary inspiration for **Exalted**. *Hawkmoon* has it all — fantasy set in the ruins of a lost golden age, a decadent empire whose twisted sorcerous rulers seek to conquer the world and lots of strange artifacts of the time before the fall.

Resurrection Man. Sean Stewart. Ace Books. New York, NY. ISBN 0-441-00339-7

The Night Watch. Sean Stewart. Ace Books. New York, NY. ISBN 0-441-00554-3

Galveston. Sean Stewart. Ace Books. New York, NY. ISBN 0-441-00686-8

These books are really unexcelled in their ability to show just how terrifying living in a world full of spirits and fairytale magic is like. The depiction of spirits in **Exalted** was very strongly colored by these books, and they are highly recommend, particularly the second two.

The Black Company. Glen Cook. Tor Books. New York, NY. ISBN 0-81252-139-0.

The Lady and The Ten Who Were Taken are excellent inspirations for **Exalted**. Shapeshifter would make an excellent Lunar Exalted, and The Lady would make an very fine Solar. Also, the slow but very powerful magic of this world is a good inspiration for Storytellers trying to imagine what **Exalted**'s sorcery looks like.

The Complete Pegana. Lord Dunsany. Chaosium, Inc. Berkeley, CA. ISBN 1-56882-116-6.

Arguably the most influential fantasy writer in the history of the sword-and-sorcery genre, and probably neck and neck with Tolkien for his influence on fantasy in general.

Lord Dunsany's work is seminal to almost everything in the genre. If you like fantasy, you really owe it to yourself to check it out — this guy is the bomb.

Shadow & Claw. Gene Wolfe. Orb. New York, NY. ISBN 0-31289-017-6.

Sword & Citadel. Gene Wolfe. Orb. New York, NY. ISBN 0-31289-018-4.

Set in an unimaginably distant future of our own world, these books (collectively known as The Book of the New Sun) are an absolutely fabulous combination of magic and science-fiction elements.

Classics

The Histories. Herodotus. Penguin Books. New York, NY.

An amazingly good illustration of how cosmopolitan and advanced the ancient world was, compared to the squalor of the medieval period.

The Iliad. Homer. Penguin Books. New York, NY.

Pretty much the classic story of a flawed hero. If you just can't bear to read it in a verse-type presentation, Penguin produces a very fine prose-format *Iliad*.

Volsungasaga. Penguin Books. New York, NY.

Later mixed together with a different version of the same story and synthesized into Wagner's "Ring Cycle," the original is far more relevant to **Exalted** and a pretty good read, too.

Videos and Movies

Ninja Scroll (1995).

An absolutely stunning anime — the supernatural martial arts in it were very strong inspirations to **Exalted**'s combat and Charm system. This is a really good movie to show your players before they make up characters, telling them "characters in **Exalted** can do things like *this*."

Swordsman II (1991).

Starring Jet Li and Brigitte Lin, this film is to live-action swordplay what *Ninja Scroll* is to anime. The wirework, the superbly choreographed swordplay and the amazingly cool martial-art moves make this film great. Another "the game feels like *this*" movie.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)

While long on dialogue and somewhat short on action, this film, starring Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Yeoh, is a masterpiece of wirework. While it isn't nonstop swordplay, this film's lavish costuming and complex and passion-driven plot make it an excellent inspiration for character-centered games.

Streetfighter (1996).

The anime, not the live-action movie. Set in the modern day, but it has some absolutely great supernatural martial arts fights. Also worth seeing for the totally deadpan way it handles a world full of martial artists who are vastly more powerful than any normal mortal.

Grave of the Fireflies (1988).

A really terribly serious animated drama about two Japanese children struggling to survive in World War II Japan. It's not really related to **Exalted**, but if you're reading this and going, "nah, anime can't tell serious stories," you'll want to see this film. Fair warning — you will cry.

Other Media

Final Fantasy VII. Squaresoft.

The huge weapons and the over-the-top special-effects of the magic are absolutely the best.

Thief. Looking Glass Studios.

A quirky game with an incredibly cool feel. A decaying pseudo-Edwardian fantasy setting.


CRYSTAL
DIAMOND HEARTH
ICEHOME
GREYHAMANE
WHITEWALL
RUBYLAS
SHAN
GREAT FORKS
THORNS
ARTHE
THE IMPERIAL CITY
PARAGON

This is the world of Exalted.

At the center of the world lies the Blessed Isle, and at the center of the Blessed Isle lies the Elemental Pole of Earth, the axis of creation and the stable center of reality. The Isle is the stronghold of the Realm, the decadent empire whose rulers, the Dynasty, have held the world in their thrall for almost seven centuries.

Around the Blessed Isle is the Inland Sea. A peaceful and shallow ocean, it is a week's good sailing from the Realm to the sea's outer shores. The countless city-states and petty kingdoms near the shore of the Inland Sea are largely tributary to the Realm. The area beyond the Inland Sea is known as the Threshold.

The northern Threshold is a frigid land with short summers and long winters, which produces strong animals but poor crops. Most of the petty kingdoms here subsist on agriculture and mining and are loyal tributaries — one is even governed by a refugee minor house of the Realm.

To the uttermost north lies the Elemental Pole of Air, alleged to be a precipice beyond which there is naught but air and snow. The land grows progressively colder as one travels closer to the pole. It is so cold that all but the southern reaches of the White Sea are forever locked beneath a sheet of ice. The Far North is a land of ice and blizzards, peopled only by the icewalker tribes and the stolid people of the Haslanti League.

The eastern Threshold is a temperate region, with long summers and short but harsh winters. When cultivated, the land produces bounteous harvests. If it is left fallow, it rapidly returns to its natural, forested state. The most powerful group of kingdoms in the East are the Scavenger Lands, an alliance of small kingdoms that have never paid tribute to the Realm.

In the uttermost east lies the Elemental Pole of Wood, said to be a great cathedral of trees stretching as far up and down as the eye can see. The forest grows progressively denser as one travels closer to the pole, until it is a maze of deadfalls and undergrowth. In the Far East dwell only savage tribesmen, who live from the fruits of the forest.

The southern Threshold is a scorching land, where snow never falls. Even on the shores of the Inland Sea, the temperature drops below freezing only rarely. Near the coast, the land produces an abundance of foodstuffs, but beyond the shore, rain becomes increasingly rare.

In the uttermost south is the Elemental Pole of Fire, a precipice beyond which there is naught but colorless, smokeless flame. As one travels closer to the pole, the land becomes less arable, and Mediterranean hills give way to dry, sandy desert. The cities of the South are great, teeming metropoli, whose wealth is matched only by their decadence. These kingdoms guard their harbors with great brass cannons that use the elemental powder called firedust to hurl stone balls as far as a mile.

The western Threshold is a land of water. The Inland Sea gives way to the Western Ocean, and the plane of the water is broken only by strings of islands. Few are large enough to support much cultivation — those who dwell in this region subsist primarily on the bounty of the sea. Some of the West's inhabitants are stolid traders and merchants, while others are fierce pirates. Regardless, almost all who live here take their livelihood from the waves.

In the farthest west lies the Elemental Pole of Water, where the sky becomes the same color as the sea and no more islands disturb the water's grace. Those who have traveled in this region report that the water is so still that the sun seems to rise in both directions from the horizon, and to meet itself at sunset. These travelers say it is almost impossible to tell if one sails atop the face of the waters or beneath it.

Some hopeful individuals say that beyond the uttermost west lie the Far Shores, where the spirits of those who were just and peaceful recline in harmonious repose. Most educated people put no stock in this myth, however. Those with any learning know that beyond the edges of the world lies the unformed madness from whence the Fair Folk spring.

CHAPTER ONE
SETTING

Before the world was bent but after the Great Contagion, there was a civilization built in the image of the First Age. It sought to emulate the splendor of the bygone Golden Age, but it was in all ways less. It was a time of sorcery and heroism, of fabulous wonders and treacherous betrayals. Ruled by a decadent empire, it slipped inch by inch into barbarism and darkness, until one last cataclysm blotted it out forever. Yet, in its sunset, it was a splendid thing, and glorious were the deeds of the Exalted.

The Exalted

There are those who excel beyond their peers, and then there are these who excel all men, being paragons of what a human might hope to achieve. And then, there are the Exalted.

Exalted are those humans deemed worthy by the greatest of the spirits to taste the sting of power. Since the truth of the nature of the Exalted has never been made known, at least not since the beginning of the current Age, their precise nature can only be speculated upon. Mystics and madmen ramble on about one superstitious theory or another, but most of them are lying, deluded or, perhaps, something in between.

What is known is that the Exalted command the fundamental forces of the Tellurian. Additionally, their lifespans are greatly lengthened; the Dragon-Blooded live hundreds of years, while the lifespans of the Celestials are orders of magnitude longer than those of humans. Some Celestial Exalted exist who retain memories of the First Age.

The Illuminated Preceptors of the Immaculate Order claim that, in the earliest of the human ages, before the beginning of oral history, certain noble or profoundly virtuous individuals from across the populated territories were shown favor by the great spirits of water, fire, air, earth and wood. Others were taught to harness the power of the heavens: the sun, the moon, even the very stars themselves.

The spirits instructed their charges in the ways of manipulating Essence, the fundamental substance of the Tellurian, in such a way as to make the world change in accordance with their will. They were given this power, the story goes, with the expectation that they would use it in the cause of righteousness. in exchange for the power to channel the Essence of the sun, the moon and the stars, they would continue to embody the virtues they had shown all along, thereby holding up those virtues for emulation by the rest of humanity.

The time when the Exalted embodied those virtues was called the First Age, and it was a golden age of peace and wonder. But the virtue of the Celestial Exalted — those Exalted who had been taught to harness the power of the heavens — waned. It was eaten away by their decadence and powers and, some whisper, by a terrible curse laid on them by the enemies of the Elemental Dragons. They became twisted, mad things — the Anathema — and were destroyed or exiled for the good of the world.

Within the Realm, this is the stuff of myth and legend. Even the tales of the Celestials' greatest feats have been lost to the common folk. The majority of the Realm's inhabitant believe only in what they see — the semi-mythical Anathema, who lurk at the edges of Creation, the Terrestrial Exalted, called the Dragon-Blooded, who rule, and the mortal men, who are born to strive and die.

But the Celestial Exalted are real, and they are returning, and they have the power to make the world tremble at their passing. In the mad scramble for their empire's vacant throne, the Dragon-Blooded have failed to maintain their age-old purge of the Celestial Exalted. Now, the children of sky are surviving long enough to realize their vast powers.

The primary difference between human and Exalted — Terrestrial or Celestial — consists of the ability of the Chosen to channel the fundamental force of the universe, called Essence. The Exalted's power depends on both their skill at manipulating Essence and having adequate Essence to work with. Though humans are composed of Essence and are ruled by its ebb, flow and vicissitudes, they are unable to consciously command its nature or direction. An Exalted's power corresponds directly to the strength of her connection to the Essence around her. A young and inexperienced Exalted may seem like a moderately talented magician, capable of only a few practical tricks or simple feats of sorcery. Older, more experienced Exalted, with a greater understanding or command of Essence, are like unto the Incarna in their ability to shape the world.

The Exalted's abilities are constrained, however, by the amount of Essence available to them. Without Essence to command, even the greatest of the Exalted is little more than human. Essence exists within all facets of the natural world and flows through all healthy living beings; Exalted typically breathe in the ambient Essence that flows through the world, storing it up until they need it. The amount of Essence an Exalted can hold within her body at any one time is determined both by her magical ability and her force of personality and is an important measure of her strength.

The Essence powers of the Exalted take three forms: innate abilities, Charms and sorcerous spells. The innate abilities are talents that the Exalted exercise simply by flooding their animas with Essence. For example, a Solar Exalted of the Dawn Caste can use her anima to appear to be a fearsome warrior, so terrifying that enemies literally cannot bear to look directly at her.

Charms refer to the ways in which Exalted can imbue their own actions with Essence. With the aid of Charms, the Exalted uses Essence to empower her otherwise normal skills or talents, thereby making them extraordinarily powerful. For example, an Exalted who was a blacksmith can forge amazing weapons, an Exalted warrior can perform mighty feats in battle, and an Exalted leader can command anyone and expect to be obeyed.

Spells are the most difficult and powerful means of channeling Essence, and they can be devastating. When an Exalted casts a spell, he manipulates Essence with his words and gestures, according to the laws and principles of magic, and in so doing, he reweaves reality itself.

High and Low

The life of one of the Solar Exalted is a whirl of cataclysmic ups and downs. Suddenly, an individual who was merely gifted is Exalted to tremendous stature. The Chosen are unaging and of unfailing health. They possess tremendous physical stamina and can quickly heal from even the most grievous wounds. In all things, they are excellent, and in that which they favor, they are unexcelled. No mortal could hope to best one in combat, and the Solars may challenge the mettle of the Celestial Exalted or bring the tyrannical Realm to its knees. In these individuals is the power to change history and remake the world.

Yet, they are hunted creatures. Regarded as akin to demon princes in many regions, the reborn Solars must live like shadows. Cosmic beings, they must work their plans among men subtly and walk unseen if they are able. The Wyld Hunt of the Dragon-Blooded is hardly their only fear. They might be stoned or ridden down — no matter how mighty the hero, enough men with bows will eventually wear him down. Also, countless are the snares of those who would involve the newly reborn Solars in their schemes. From the Gold Faction's training of Sidereals to oppose the Realm and the Deathlords to the political schemes of the Dragon-Blooded houses and the spirit courts, there are countless powers and interests who would gladly use the Solars as their agents and puppets. Young Solar Exalted who wish to prosper must carefully balance the amount of patronage they receive with the magnitude of the obligations they develop in return to those who tutor them in their infancy.

Thus goes the existence of the Solar Exalted — to wield the power of the Sun but to do so with the greatest economy possible, showing their true mighty only when the need is great. Traveling the roads as mendicants, pilgrims and fugitives, they tread lightly and fight when they have no choice or when their consciences compel them to. Some have crowned themselves kings and queens, but so far, their reigns have been brief and ended by the knives of the Wyld Hunt or by some regional power fearful of competition. Those Solars who wish to survive the maturity of their power must play a game of high and low — living as vagabonds, bandits and troubadours while they master their great power and learn the secrets of their Exalted state.



SOLAR EXALTED

The Solar Exalted are the mightiest of the Exalted, and during the First Age, they were the rulers of the world and the leaders the Exalted. Their great enlightenment was intended to be a beacon and inspiration to all of humanity — they shine brightest who are meant to be seen by all. Their power flows from the sun, and the day belongs to them. Logic, heroism, inspiration and nobility are their spheres of influence.

The Dragon-Blooded murdered the Solars at the fall of the First Age. Though a few continued to reincarnate again and again, they were always dispatched quickly by the forces of the Realm. Only since a year or two after the disappearance of the Empress have the Solars been reappearing in significant numbers. With newfound numbers and the Realm beset by foes and instability, the emerging Solars have an opportunity to make their power known.

DAWN

The Dawn Caste is made up of the warriors of the Unconquered Sun, carrying the pennants of the Sun's glory into battle and dark places. In ancient times, before the usurpation by the Dragon-Blooded, the Dawn Caste Solars were the generals of the Realm, who guarded its borders and led its armies.

Dawn Solars are almost always fierce warriors, though their ferocity does not make them bloodthirsty or stupid. Of those who have been recently Exalted to this caste, there have been bloody-handed killers, but none who were without redeeming characteristics. Others are scholar-generals, hard-bitten militia who fought to protect their homes, monks who practiced the martial arts for spiritual reasons, pit fighters, street warriors who led gangs rather than armies, even heroic city guards who carried out their own war on the corrupt officials and criminal parasites who infest the cities of the world.

Dawn Castes are universally skilled in all forms of fighting. They are natural masters of the bow, the sword and of unarmed combat. When they channel Essence to manifest their anima, they seem to become terrifying giants — harbingers of destruction with eyes like molten gold, who only the bravest of warriors can bear to regard directly.

The Dawn Caste corresponds to the season of spring, when its members are strongest, the colors saffron and lavender and the east direction.

ZENITH

The Zenith Caste was made up of the priests, mystics, prophets and seers of the Exalted. Like the Unconquered Sun at noon, they openly displayed their might and glory. It was they who led the Solar Deliberative, the ancient governing body of the Realm, and they ruled by consensus and with the blessing and the wisdom of the Unconquered Sun, the now-forgotten patron of the Solar Exalted.

But the Zeniths grew prideful and claimed that they spoke for the Unconquered Sun when they did not. In his anger, the Unconquered Sun turned his back on them and set the hearts of the Dragon-Blooded against them. The rule of the Solar Exalted was ended, and the rule of the Terrestrial Exalted began.

Yet, those Zenith Castes who are Exalted today have all been granted visions of the Unconquered Sun. They have seen that he has come to regret his harshness of judgment, and they have beheld his visions for a righteous tomorrow. They bear the seeds of this righteousness, and each knows that she must do her best to make that vision come to pass.

The Zenith Castes are the most varied of the Exalted types. Many were once shamans or priests of the Immaculate Order, while others were simply passionate individuals with a thirst for righteousness. Though they are priests, the Zenith Caste are more missionaries, evangelists and rough-jawed crusaders for justice than self-righteous scholars or pretentious theologians.

Zenith Caste Solars excel in public speaking and persuasion, but that is not their only forte. They are also incredibly durable, able to resist immense hardship and pain and to survive in the wilds as they pursue their missions. By channeling Essence through their animas, Exalted of this caste can cause fire to consume the bodies of dead foes, so they their souls can reach the afterlife rather than rising as hungry ghosts or walking dead. Also, the Zenith Castes are fierce enemies of demons and the undead, and they may channel Essence through their auras to scorch and repel these horrors.

Zeniths correspond to the season of summer, when the Sun is strongest, to the colors gold and cobalt blue and to the south direction.

Twilight

Twilight Caste Exalted are the scholars and sorcerers of the Solar Exalted. In ancient times, they were the battlefield magicians and the demonologists of the Old Realm. Though the Lunar Exalted can outmatch them in their mastery of illusions and the delicate magic of the Sidereals can see the future with far greater clarity, none can match the raw power of the Twilight Exalted at simple magic, enchantment and summoning. From their hands tumbled the countless artifacts of the First Age, and to their beck and call, the princes of the demon realm and the lords of the elements ran hither and yon.

Twilight Caste Exalted are not prophets and wise men, for it is the Zenith Caste that was privy to the secrets of the Unconquered Sun. Nor are they seers and scholars, for the Sidereal Exalted were far more talented at astrology and learning than any others. Instead, the Twilight Exalted are learners and doers, adventurer-scholars, warrior-mages and meddlesome cunning men.

Most Twilight Caste Exalted were learned before their Exaltation, though they are by no means all scholars. Storytellers, architects, merchants and engineers have all been Exalted to this caste. While there are a certain number of bookworms in this caste, most of them are durable enough to endure the hardships of campaigning and the stress of life as powerful public figures.

The Twilights excel at sorcery but are more than simple scholars. They are learners, meddlers, doctors and tinkers. They not only work magic with Essence, but with tools, needles and thread and with their wit and insight. By channeling Essence through their animas, they may protect themselves from attack, an important power given their active and dangerous lifestyles.

Twilights correspond to the season of autumn, when they are strongest, the colors orange and black and to the west direction.

Night

Night Caste Solars are the spies, scouts and assassins of the Solar Exalted. In the days of the First Age, they managed the security apparatus of the Realm. They were also the advisors on the health, as well as the security, of the state. Their seats in the Solar Deliberative included not just matters of security, but also of health, welfare and the contentment of those the Realm governed.

Night Caste Exalted are often tricksters and vagabonds, though they are not necessarily thieves and killers. They are often peddlers, hunters, guides, police officers and the like — anyone partaking in an active life for whom stealth and ingenuity are more important than raw strength. Note that there are a fair number of cutpurses and assassins among those Exalted to this caste, but they are by no means the sole members of the caste.

Night Caste Exalted are unexcelled in stealth, acrobatics and getting where and what they shouldn't. These Exalted also possess a preternatural awareness of their surroundings. By channeling Essence through their auras, Night Caste Exalted may conceal their presence, making them difficult to sense. Night Caste Solars may also mute their animas, allowing them to more easily use Charms without revealing their true nature as Exalted.

Night Castes are strongest in the winter, the season to which they correspond, and they prefer the colors violet and gray and the north direction.

Eclipse

The Eclipse Caste is made up of the ambassadors and negotiators among the Exalted. During the First Age, they negotiated treaties for the Realm among the barbarian kingdoms that eddied around its borders, as well as with spirits, the Fair Folk and other supernatural beings. They also served as the ombudsmen and censors of the Realm, negotiating pacts and treaties between the various types of Exalted and keeping government honest and fair.

Eclipse Caste Exalted are typically chosen from among those who make their living through words and negotia-

tions. Merchants, diplomats, bureaucrats, confidence men, beggars, peddlers, teachers — any of these can be Exalted into the Eclipse Caste.

The Eclipses are as masterful at governance, business and politics as the Zenith Caste is at persuasion and leadership. Though they are not charismatic, they are intuitively able to sense and exploit the flows of power and influence in an organization. These Solars also demonstrate amazing language skills and are master horsemen and sailors — in order to negotiate a treaty or make a deal, the negotiator must first arrive at her destination. By channeling Essence through her anima, an Eclipse may swear or witness oaths which neither party can break without incurring a terrible curse. Members of this caste may also walk among spirits and demons without fear, protected by ancient and inviolable treaties of safe passage sworn during the height of the Old Realm. Eclipses may even learn the Charms and powers of other Exalted, and even of spirits, to aid their dealings with these beings. Though this learning is not as easy as mastering the tricks of their own kind, it allows the Eclipse Caste unparalleled flexibility.

Eclipse Castes favor the period of Calibration, the color silver and the center direction.

Lunar Exalted

In the First Age, the Lunar Exalted were the most powerful emissaries of the Exalted Court. They acted as the viceroys, generals and primary agents of the Solars. On those occasions when the Solars' will had to be enforced and the Dragon-Blooded weren't up to the task, the Lunars would be dispatched to rectify things. Lunars often considered the Solars the rulers of the day Realm and themselves the rulers of the night Realm, keeping order while the Solars were at rest. Moving through the night like ghosts, the Lunar Exalted accomplished with their harshness what the Solars could not bring themselves to do.

Commonly, Lunars were also the consorts of the Solars. Throughout the history of the Old Realm, it was traditional for Lunars and Solars to marry and form households together. Such an arrangement was believed to bring balance and good fortune to the house; it also reduced the competitive tension which occasionally arose between the Lunar and the Solar Exalted by granting them frequent contact and allowing them to share authority over the land they ruled.

When the Old Realm fell, the Lunar Exalted foreswore the defense of the Realm and became its enemies, fleeing into exile in the depths of the Wyld, where they could walk and others could not. Here, the ancient enemies of the Realm kept the Dragon-Blooded at bay, and their own powers over beasts and illusion were strengthened by the vast array of dangerous animals and the shifting and malleable nature of these regions. Alas, many succumbed to the maddening influences of the Wyld, and the rational minds of these unfortunates were rendered warped and animalistic. Many of these Lunars quickly became some of the most dangerous monsters in the Wyld. Those that did not give up rationality made themselves rulers of barbarian tribes or else became solitary hermits and sorcerers.

Once powerful defenders of civilization, the murder of their mates and their time in the Wyld has left many of the Lunars, particularly the eldest, with a deep-seated hatred for civilization in general and for the Dragon-Blooded in particular.

Lunars are master shapeshifters capable of taking the form or partial form of any animal whose blood they have tasted. This ability alone makes Lunars dangerous enemies, but in conjunction with their dominion over beasts and their familiarity with the night and the wilderness, they are among the most dangerous opponents in the world. Those Lunars who retain their sentience also have a deep connection with the unconscious mind, and they can use this to create complex and deadly illusions or to evoke primal emotions — love, rage, despair and the like — in the minds of those around them, friend and foe alike.

Lunars are among the most dangerous opponents the Realm has. They have a disdain for society and the forces of civilization; worse, the eldest remember the insolence and treachery of the Dragon-Blooded at the fall of the Old Realm and take every opportunity to strike at the Terrestrials and the Realm itself. Many Lunars allow themselves to be worshiped as gods by the barbarians of the Wyld; not only does this grant them access to Essence, but it gives them ready armies with which to attack the Realm. Lunar Exalted take great pride in being the vagabonds and warriors of the Wyld, and there is little that can dissuade them from their rampages.

Many Lunars have been deeply warped by the Wyld's odd energy. While feral Lunars are often bestial, mad or both and may not even remember that they are Exalted, all remain dangerously cunning. Of all the Exalted, Lunars have the worst reputation for being monsters and stalkers of the night, for many of them are. The worst of them stalk men like beasts and think of humans as prey.

The Lunar Exalted are, by their very natures, creatures of intuition, mystery and flux. They embody the night, both its mystery and its dangers. Three is their number, denoting the new moon, the full moon and the moon in flux. Their skin is commonly silvery white, as is their hair. Those who have lived in the Wyld for a great deal of time may also have developed certain bestial features: feline eyes, a tail or claws. It is inarguable that those Lunars who took refuge in the Wyld have been forever changed, and bringing them back to the fold of the Exalted will challenge even the greatest among the Celestials.

Sidereal

Most inscrutable of all the Exalted, the Sidereals are masters of the strategic disappearance and the exigencies of statecraft. In the First Age, the Sidereals were viziers and advisers to the Solar monarchs. Their great insight into destiny was the star by which the Solars steered the ship of state.

Where Solars are masters of leadership and the inspiration of their followers, Sidereals are masters of intrigue, subterfuge

and subtle persuasion. It is not only their ability to channel Essence and truck with spirits that makes them powerful, but their vast subtlety and guile as well. Their powers of prophecy and farsight grant them advantages in the arena of intrigue that are unsurpassed by human or Exalted. The precision and deft control the Sidereals possess over fate also makes them terrifying masters of the martial arts. These deadly warriors taught their lesser techniques to the monks of the Immaculate Order, adapting their fighting forms to the weaker and more elemental powers of the Dragon-Blooded. Today, Dragon-Blooded Immaculates are some of the most fearsome martial artists in Creation, and it is said that even unExalted Immaculates of great experience can channel Essence to a limited degree.

When the Old Realm approached the height of its decadence, the Sidereals came together, made a great reading of the stars and drew from it a prophecy of three possible futures. In one future, they persuaded the Dragon-Blooded to participate in the murder of the Solars, and the world lessened but continued. In another future, the Sidereals attempted to reform the Solar Exalted but failed, and the Realm was torn by a vast civil war, until the world was little more than a splintered ruin, over which the tide of the Fair Folk swept like a great wave. In the third future, they did nothing, and the Realm continued to degenerate. In this future, the world itself was corrupted, becoming a world of darkness and, as entropy set in further, a lifeless, black husk.

Thus, the Sidereals persuaded the Dragon-Blooded to murder their rulers and, then, slipped out of sight behind the newly formed Immaculate Order, there to hide while the knowledge of the Celestial Exalted faded from the memory of the common folk. Only a few disagreed with the actions of their brethren and fled into exile beyond the borders of the Realm.

The power of the Sidereals flows from the stars and the Five Maidens of the night sky. Prophecy, insight and spirits are the Sidereal Exalted's spheres of influence. Their number is either zero or infinity, representing either the emptiness of the well-controlled mind or the number of stars in the night sky. Sidereals consider themselves crossers-of-thresholds; they are the liminal ones who are the attendants of beginnings and endings. Prophecy is the gift that begins things, and fate is the force that ends things — and it is through these things that the Sidereals define themselves.

Among the Exalted, the Sidereals are the prophets, warlocks, rogues and spirit-binders. While they maintain relatively close communication among themselves, they remain silent to most other Exalted, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

The Sidereals have a great understanding of magic and use it frequently and competently. They are capable of affecting the powers of fate directly, or alternatively, they can have spirits do their work for them. Of all the Exalted, the Sidereals have the greatest connection to spirits, and they utilize this very carefully. Each Sidereal must forge a relationship with the spirits or courts of spirits she wants to deal with.



The greatest strength of the Sidereals is their connection to the stars and to the spirits of the five Celestines of the night sky. Each of the Five Maidens is favorably disposed to the Sidereals, and their gifts are many and varied.

Mercury, The Maiden of Journeys: The Maiden of Journeys is the god of going and doing. Those who are driven or struck with incurable wanderlust are often said to have been be touched by Mercury, as are those who are given to manic fits.

Venus, The Maiden of Serenity: The Maiden of Serenity is the god of dreams and relaxation, of leisure time and joy. Goldbricks and slackers of various sorts were once known as the churls of Venus.

Mars, The Maiden of Battles: The god of war and strife, Mars' hands are forever wet with the blood of the slain. Even today, the mark of Mars, a stylized spear and shield, is used to designate weapons shops and armories.

Jupiter, The Maiden of Secrets: Jupiter is the god charged with measuring out the allotted span of all things, even the span of the gods and the world, though if she has shared this information, it has not yet reached the ears of men. When depicted, Jupiter is typically shown as a homely-handsome woman smiling lopsidedly.

Saturn, The Maiden of Endings: Darkest and least loved of the Celestines, Saturn is the god of death and endings. It is said that at the end of each thing's allotted span of time, Saturn makes her sign against it, and it is undone. Saturn is also the god of other endings as well — of harvest, rites of passage and the new year.

Dragon-Blooded

The Immaculate Order teaches that the Terrestrial Exalted are spiritually advanced beings, halfway between mortality and the perfection of the Elemental Dragons. In truth, it is simply a matter of heredity.

The most common of all the Exalted, the Dragon-Blooded are at once despised and feared. They are significantly more powerful than any mortal and have used that power to establish a mighty Realm of their own. They hold most civilized nations as tributary and wield tremendous political and economic influence. A family squabble among the most powerful Dragon-Blooded can result in nations warring in the Threshold.

History

It is ironic that the Dragon-Blooded rule the Realm at all. Contrary to common belief, the Dragon-Blooded were the lowest of the Exalted in the Old Realm, the footsoldiers of the Celestial Exalted. The Five Elemental Dragons of fire, water, air, wood and earth gave them just enough power over elements and certain spirits to act as the knights and servants of the Celestials. Their lifespans, while three or four times longer than those of normal humans, remained only a fraction of those of the Celestials.

The strength of the Dragon-Blooded, however, was the inherited nature of their power. The power of the Celestials was too great to pass from parent to child through the blood, but the Dragon-Blooded need only breed to create more of their ilk.

There are five kinds of Dragon-Blooded, each with an affinity for one of the five elements. Each type of Dragon-Blooded has power over the earthly elements and certain of the elemental spirits as well. While they aren't as proficient at spirit-mastery as the Sidereals, many of the higher-tier aristocrats are capable of calling on ages-old pacts and agreements made with the elemental lords in the First Age.

With the disappearance of the Empress, the Dragon-Blooded are being forced to enter into actual combat with the forces that threaten the Blessed Isle. While their magic is notably weaker than that of many of their new enemies, particularly the deathknights and many of the invaders from the Wyld, the Dragon-Blooded have maintained a rigorous regimen of martial training that, when combined with their elemental talents, makes them formidable opponents on the field of battle.

Abyssal Exalted

It is unknown how these Exalted were created, but they have appeared only recently. Indeed, it is not certain if they are Exalted at all. Dragon-Blooded soldiers have had a number of encounters with the Abyssals and tell of the dark ones manipulating Essence to speak with ghosts and to control the bodies of those already dead. While this makes it highly likely that they are Exalted of some variety, no such creatures are mentioned in any of the books that have survived from the First Age, and where such a twisted thing would come from is an enigma, and a disturbing one.

The Abyssal Exalted are the antithesis of what the Exalted are in every particular. Where the Celestial Exalted channel radiance and foster life and growth, deathknights are masters of darkness and necromancy. They are capable of manipulating shadows for diverse purposes, and their command of the dead is like a nightmare version of the Celestial rule. Most terrifyingly, the Abyssals do not appear overly inclined to use the natural flow of Essence through the world, even in Manses and Demesnes. While they are capable of pulling Essence from the Underworld to replenish their reserves, they gain Essence fastest when drawing it from living beings, and they appear to prefer, even enjoy, it. They feed in a variety of ways, including drinking blood from living creatures, stealing souls and eating the flesh of men.

Once they've stolen Essence from a living creature, deathknights can then channel that Essence into Charms and sorcery just as other Exalted do, though they seem to have a particular faculty for commanding ghosts and the bodies of the dead. While Abyssals generally consider themselves above living followers, they are frequently

served by ghosts, zombies and other creatures associated with death and night. While that alone would make them dangerous opponents, deathknights are also formidable in hand-to-hand combat as well — some are as mighty as Lunar Exalted or Solars of the Dawn Caste.

The Abyssals have an affinity for soulsteel in the same way that other Exalted have their own favored metals. In their pallid hands, soulsteel is as powerful as orichalcum or moonsilver. In battle, the Abyssal Exalted wield weapons and armor forged out of hewn black iron, many bearing the faces of demonic beings or tormented souls to make them all the more terrifying. In the fashion of the dead, Abyssals typically go about with their faces concealed when they are able — wearing cowls, helmets and (most commonly) masks.

The Exaltation

While anyone can manifest as one of the Celestial Exalted, the weaker Terrestrial Exalted are born only to Dragon-Blooded parents, though normally not all of a Dragon-Blooded family's children will be Exalted. Both Celestial and Terrestrial Exalted rarely manifest before early adolescence. The rules of Terrestrial heredity are complex and poorly understood, and the only rule of Celestial Exaltation is that the Exalted individual is already far above average — always in term of potential, and usually in term of life-accomplishment as well.

Those Exalted who do manifest during childhood tend to grow powerful (and wilful) very quickly and can be extremely difficult to control. Very few Exalted of any type are inherently malicious, but young and untrained Exalted whose powers outstrip their maturity can seriously endanger those around them. In the case of Celestial Exalted, whose parents have no want to understand what is happening, the child may be diagnosed as the victim of spirit possession and dealt with accordingly — assuming, of course, that the community has the power to deal with an angry Exalt.

When a human undergoes her Exaltation and manifests her Exalted state, the transformation is not a subtle one. The Caste Mark often appears and lingers for weeks or months when the character initially Exalts. For Lunar Exalted, the change is even more drastic, as their dramatically increased instincts drive them to live their lives almost like beasts.

When the Empress reigned, these signs virtually ensured the death of the Celestials from the Wyld Hunt of the Dragon-Blooded. For under the reign of the Empress, the Dragon-Blooded watched closely for signs of recently Exalted Celestials and hunted the Celestials wherever they were found. These Celestial Exalted were either killed or captured and taken to the Empress. It is whispered among the Dragon-Blooded that the Empress devoured their souls, for her understanding of Essence was such that she was able to strengthen herself and lengthen her existence with each such meal. Only the Sidereals successfully hid from the scourge, due largely to the central role those Sidereals allied with the Realm had in the imposition of the Wyld Hunt.

The purge was remarkably effective, and very few of the Chosen evaded detection. Some Lunar Exalted were rescued by their fellows and taken into refuges in the Wyld lands, where the forces of the Realm dared not pursue. The Sidereals, who had long slipped behind the façade of the Immaculate Order or vanished into exile, invested special effort into finding and hiding newly manifested Sidereal Exalted. The Solars, however, were seemingly annihilated, and only in the last five years — since the disappearance of the Empress — have children bearing the marks of the Solar Exalted been able to escape the Wyld Hunt of the Dragon-Blooded.

Since the disappearance of the Empress, the feuding houses of the Realm have begun to divert all the empire's resources to fuel their internecine squabbles and their jockeying for the throne. The once-ubiquitous network of spies and informants with which the Empress searched for the Celestials has begun to unravel, subverted by the intelligence apparatuses of the various houses or reassigned to deal with the nobles' growing disloyalty. And at this dark moment, it seems as if a great flood of Solars, more than have ever been seen before, has entered the world, at the one moment when the Dragon-Blooded are no longer in a position to do anything about it. Today, the Wyld Hunt must often rely on mortal assassins and outcaste bounty hunters, rather than the massive and well-armed hunting parties of the past.

Why the Solars have been growing more numerous since the disappearance of the Empress is unknown. Certain Sidereals hint that the souls of the Solars are reincarnated into worthy recipients. They assert that the souls of the murdered Celestial Exalted have made an impossibly long journey to rebirth and are only now returning to right the wrongs done to them in an earlier Age.

Causes of Exaltation

The powers of an Exalted frequently manifest after a period of stress — severe injury, terrible illness, terror. The trigger events vary greatly from Exalted to Exalted. At his hour of greatest need, it is as if the character is given the strength to triumph and endure. Some Celestials also manifest when they are exposed to a large amount of magic or when a great deal of Essence is moved or channeled near them. Finally, some seem to manifest due to vast exposure to their element — many Solars are Exalted during a period of overexposure to sunlight for example.

Essence

The world is not still; it flows, expanding and contracting with the interaction of a thousand tiny cycles. Essence is the power behind those eternal cycles. Every storm, every birth, every wave in the ocean is nudged by the flow of Essence through the universe. The Exalted, unlike most humans, are gifted with the ability to perceive

and manipulate the flow of Essence, and it is this ability that distinguishes them from the dull chaff of humanity.

The perception and manipulation of Essence is not a simple matter, nor is it without danger. Tapping into or controlling the flow of the forces of nature must be done with reverence and subtlety. Some Exalted describe the experience of manipulating Essence as being like picking the pocket of a god. Many Dragon-Blooded refer to the act of controlling Essence as "riding the dragon." Those Exalted who overstep their skill or who utilize insufficient finesse when channeling Essence can easily find themselves with an angry force of nature on their hands. Nature is more forgiving toward Exalted than to others, but there are limits.

Essence is too primal to be sentient. Without the guidance of the Exalted's reason, it is simply an urge, a will that hungers for the fulfillment of its natural purpose. Irritated Essence has no qualms about using hapless Exalted as the medium for its fulfillment. The outcome of an experience of this type depends a great deal on the type of Exalted involved. Solar Exalted are prone to megalomania, condescending vanity and destructive rage. Lunar Exalted in the thrall of Essence are prone to hallucinations and all manner of madness. They are often bestial and murderous until the Essence-rage leaves them. Sidereals often succumb to seizures, catatonia and glossolalia, though a great deal depends on which Maiden the Exalted is Chosen of. Those who follow the Maiden of Serenity are not prone to the same behavior as those who are marked by the Maiden of Battles, though their behavior may be no less dangerous.

The Dragon-Blooded typically seek their element of aspect when overcome by Essence. Earth-aspected Dragon-Blooded seek to bury themselves, Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded seek to immolate themselves, etc.

Exalted under the influence of Abyssal Essence seek to surround themselves with death. For some individuals, this means a killing spree, while others wrap themselves in funerary trappings.

The Signs of Power

The power of the Exalted does not hide. On the contrary, it seeks to shine forth and mark the user. Though an Exalted can use some power and remain hidden, those Exalted who exert themselves must necessarily give themselves away. Citizens of the Realm are taught to be on guard for any child exhibiting these traits or markings, particularly those of the Solar Exalted, who are to be destroyed wherever they are detected.

Solar Caste Marks

Of the Celestials, the Solar Exalted are perhaps the most easily discovered. All of them bear a so-called "Caste Mark" on their forehead, as if it were a burning third eye. This mark manifests whenever the Exalted channels Essence and can sometimes be seen during the time of day to which the Exalted's caste is affiliated. Similarly, each Solar burns with a brilliant aura, their "anima," which increases in intensity as the amount of Essence they channel grows. When an Exalted burns large quantities of Essence, it may even become depictive, taking the shape of a great fire or of the animal that the Solar most closely resembles.



Dawn Caste Solars are marked by a brilliant golden sunburst that adorns the center of their brow. Their anima tends to be bright white and pale gold, sometimes tinged with red or light violet.



Zenith Caste Solars are known by their large, bright-gold circular Caste Marks. Their animas are a brilliant burning white or a thick, majestic gold.



Twilight Caste Solars have a golden circle, filled in with gold on the top, but having only an empty ring on the bottom half. Their animas tend to the most spectacular colors, containing bright golds as well as bright and dark reds, purples and even blues.



Night Caste Solars have an empty golden circle as their Caste Mark. The animas of these Exalted are ghostly whites and golds, tinged with purple and purple-gray.



Eclipse Caste Solars have a golden disc within a circle for their Caste Mark. Their animas are brilliant whites and golds, almost sparkling, but filmy and fluctuating, like the corona of the sun during an eclipse.

Lunar Caste Marks

Lunars vary the most in their appearance, tending most commonly to the extremes of bestial or otherworldly appearance. In their natural shape, most Lunar Exalted have a hint of the bestial about them, be it a musky odor or the feral eyes of a cat. Many bear the sharp teeth of beasts, while others have a strangeness about them that leaves most humans and animals on edge. They often have opalescent eyes and silvery white skin and hair, and many have features described as angular, noble or cruel. All bear silvery Caste Marks on their foreheads, and though these have been seen to differ from individual to individual, the Lunars do not share the meaning of these insignia. All older Lunars are also marked with extensive tattooing, scars and brandings, which are believed to be of ritual significance in their savage religion of moon-veneration.

Sidereal Caste Marks

The Sidereal Exalted may be known by their star-filled eyes or, occasionally, by the faraway, distracted look that frequently washes over their faces as visions assail them. When they channel Essence, Sidereals are marked by a Caste Mark the color of their patron Maiden. Chosen of Mercury radiate yellow, those of Venus blue and those of Mars red. Chosen of Jupiter burn green, while those of Saturn glow with the orange of a banked fire.

Abyssal Caste Marks

The Abyssal Exalted bear marks that give them away clearly to anyone bothering to look. Some Abyssals have an appearance that suggests a rotting corpse. Ironically, however, as they grow older and more powerful, Abyssal Exalted appear less decayed and develop a cold allure. The most powerful Abyssals are stunning creatures of dangerous beauty, with skin like alabaster, hair the color of onyx and lips like fallen rose petals. They bear black, eternally visible versions of the Solar's caste markings, and it is believed the Deathlords do this to mock the former rulers of the world or to terrify the Dragon-Blooded.

Terrestrial Caste Marks

Like the Celestials, the Dragon-Blooded have clear marks that distinguish them from one another and from mere mortals. The features of the Dragon-Blooded have a certain coarseness not seen in those of the Celestial Exalted, and their appearance directly reflects their affinity for their element.



Aspects of Air are surrounded by gusting winds. While they can calm these gusts for short periods with concentration, they find it difficult to do so while performing any other activity.



Aspects of Earth have the coarsest features of all the Terrestrial Exalted. Their bodies are frequently compact or stocky, and they smell of freshly turned soil.



Aspects of Fire are marked by a clear reddish tint to their skin. It is not uncommon for older Dragon-Blooded of this aspect to emit puffs of smoke from their mouths as they speak.



Aspects of Water are characterized by hypnotic grace and beautiful iridescent skin. Their skin often takes on a slight blue-green tint as they get older.



Aspects of Wood sometimes have a light layer of bark on their skin, especially on the back and the shoulders. The young or less powerful among them may have a greenish tint to their skin.

Manses and Demesnes

Throughout most of the world, Essence flows across, beneath and through all things, clear and quiet as an artesian spring. Essence is in the tides of the sea, the light of the sun and the solidity of the earth. Moreover, it is the source of spirit that animates all living things. All life, dreams and emotion arise from the ebb and flow of Essence. Essence is the rhythm the world moves to, the mad and vital dance that holds the void at bay.

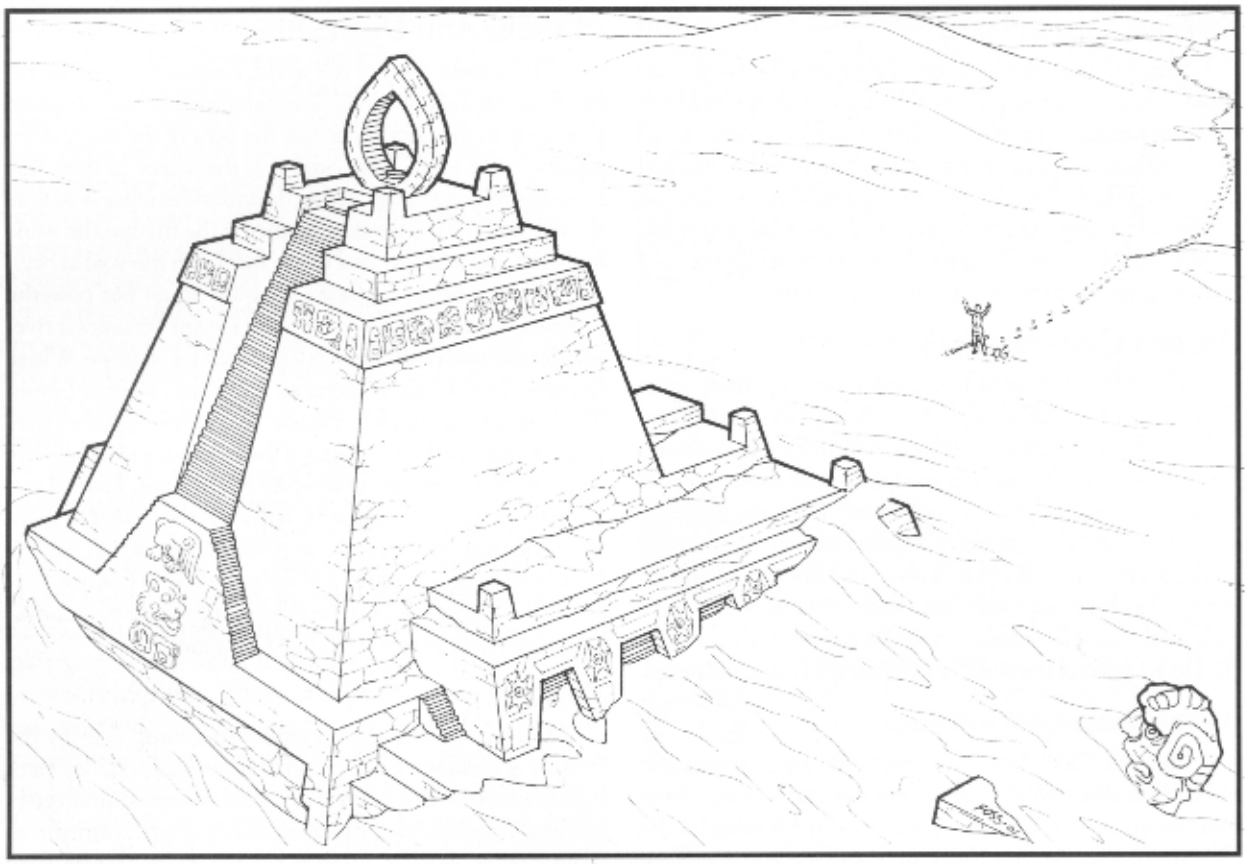
While Essence is usually invisible to all but powerful Exalted, there are places where the stream becomes a river and the raw power of Creation is manifest for all to see. Where Essence roars through Creation, it creates places of power. These are sacred sites, full of magic. In the First Age, they were often the sites of the mansions of the Exalted, and today, they are frequently the sites of temples and shrines. Exalted can sense such places at a distance, and even the dullest humans feel something akin to awe in these places. When edifices have been built to channel and focus the flow of Essence, they are called Manses. When the power is untamed by architecture, these holy places are called Demesnes.

Manses

Manses are typically enormous structures, built by the Exalted as centers for life, power and spirituality. They combined the most civil elements of temple, university and monastery and were populated by the Exalted and those who learned from them. Investments of Essence prevent most Manses from deteriorating over time, keeping them intact while buildings around them rejoin the dust. More problematic to the Dragon-Blooded, most have intricate sorceries built into them that allow only powerful Exalted to enter them and tap into the rich upwelling of power that they embody. Typically, the more powerful the Manse, the more powerful an Exalted needs to be to enter and *attune* himself to it. Any number of characters can be attuned to a Manse or Demesne, but every additional attunement must be done with the permission and assistance of everyone who is already attuned.

There was a time when Manses were quite close to one another, and every confluence of Essence flows was marked by a greater or lesser Manse. That time was long ago. Some few Manses have not stood the test of time; their stores of protective Essence were expended, and they crumbled away. The Essence flow remains strong in those places, but without the architecture of the Manse to clarify and focus the flow, they are mere Demesnes and provide only a small benefit to Exalted who attune themselves to it.

Other Manses, left untapped for too long after the overthrow of the Chosen, built up too much unused Essence and exploded, in some cases destroying entire cities in the process. During the Great Contagion particularly, it was not unheard of for towns and villages limping along in the days after the plague to be destroyed utterly when a Manse near the city — full of freed spirits and Essence — exploded in a blast of magic and stone.



Demesnes

Unlike a Manse, the Essence of a Demesne has not been shaped by any architect or builder, but only by the flow or passage of Essence through and around the natural setting. In the Threshold and other areas where the Wyld is strong, Essence shapes the natural world around it in awesome and majestic ways. Trees, stone, ice and other natural phenomena take on shapes unseen elsewhere. All manner of outcast Exalted, twisted creatures and powerful spirits are drawn to the power of natural Demesnes. Control of these powerful and sacred sites is marked by a continuous succession of conflicts that allow only the fittest to survive, thrive and rule. For this reason, they can be some of the most dangerous places in the Threshold.

Artifacts

The Old Realm lasted for millennia and spanned vast leagues — more land, it is said, than currently comprises the world. In that time, the Celestials and their servants manufactured objects of astonishing power. Weapons, jewelry, books and any other sort of item could have been enchanted in such a way as to channel Essence for myriad purposes. That was another Age, and the products of that era have become exceedingly rare and valuable. Time, the warring of the Dragon-Blooded and the encroachment of the Wyld have seen to it that most of the powerful artifacts have been used up, hidden or destroyed. Fair Folk have seized many of them, while others lie deep within Wyld regions, worshiped or hoarded by warped creatures that have no comprehension of the devices' true value or power.

While possessing one of the immensely powerful artifacts of the Old Realm frequently brings trouble down on the head of the bearer, there can be no mistaking the fact that the tools of the ancients can be valuable in any of a thousand different ways.

The various types of Exalted have affinities to different materials. Consequently, the construction of an artifact often indicates the type of Exalted the creator of the item was. Artifacts were devised as needed by the Exalted, and they are items of immense personal significance.

Solars are attuned to the golden metal called orichalcum and used it in all manner of amazing devices. Swords, armor, musical instruments, crowns, rings, torcs, masks and other items were frequently invested with Essence to achieve the ends desired by their creators. When the Solars were murdered, there was much concern that if they were not properly buried, the outrage of their powerful ghosts would cause the destruction of the prison within which their souls had been bound. Thus, the remains of the Solars were given burial in sumptuous tombs, and then, the tombs were sealed forever and hidden away by sorcery. Most orichalcum items today lie as grave goods in the forgotten and near-impregnable tombs of the Solar Exalted.

Lunars use a silvery, steely substance they call moonsilver for creating their artifacts. A great number of Lunar artifacts are weapons, enormous blades that have any number of

Dragon-Blooded Artifacts

Aspects of Air use blue jade for their artifacts, which often allow control over the wind or weather or may allow for the reading of minds of those near the possessor.

Aspects of Earth utilize white jade in the manufacture of their artifacts, which commonly grant control over the earth or let their owners hypnotize their enemies or put them to sleep.

Aspects of Fire create their artifacts from red jade. A red jade artifact commonly grants its user control over fire or it may also increase her speed and agility to inhuman levels.

Aspects of Water use black jade in their artifacts, which often have some degree of control over water or impart the ability to speak with spirits.

Aspects of Wood make use of green jade to control living trees or to pull Essence from an area.

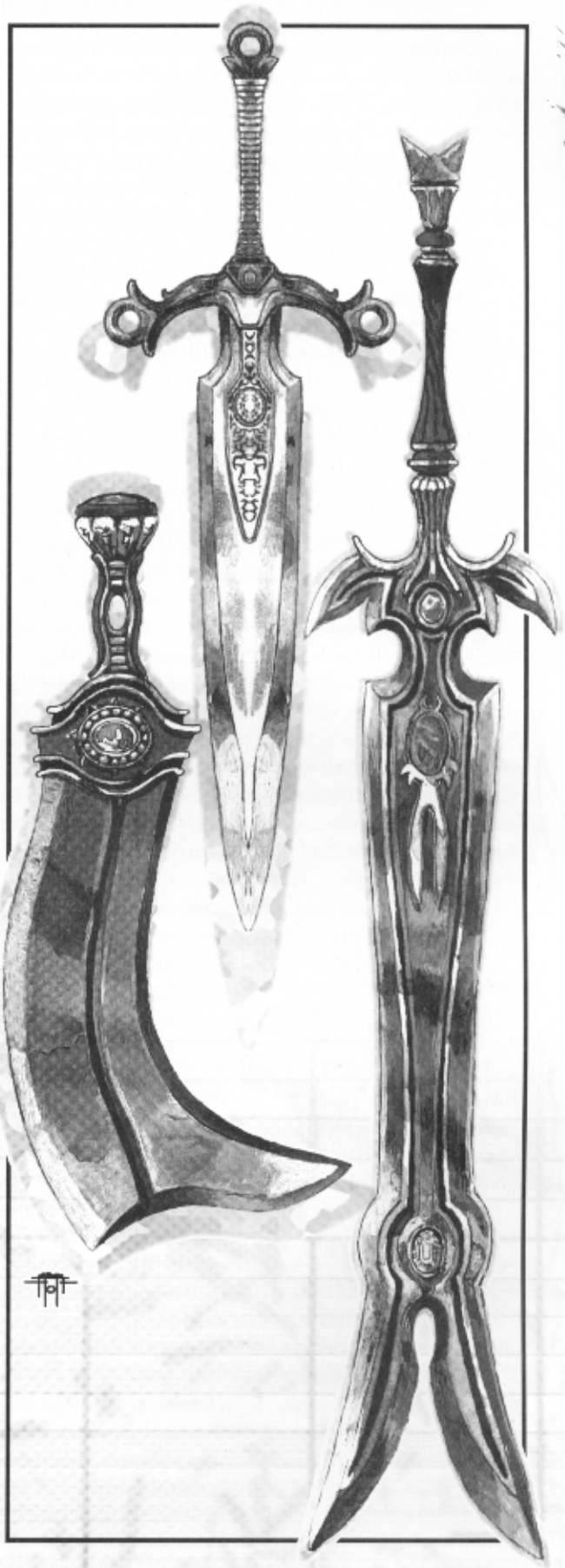
dangerous or miraculous abilities. The Lunars carried their weapons and tools into exile with them, and those few that are seen today are typically in the hands of hostile Lunar Exalted. Lunars, of all the Exalted, resent others using items created by Lunars and will often go to great lengths to recover found (or stolen) moonsilver artifacts. For that reason, these are without a doubt the most dangerous artifacts to possess.

Sidereals, for all their wisdom and stealth, are the most limited in their ability to create artifacts. While the other Exalted make artifacts by attuning relatively common substances, Sidereals can only attune starmetal, or meteoric iron, to themselves and their sorcery. Most artifacts that bind or command spirits, therefore, are likely to be made from this substance, as are those that scry or reveal the future. While Sidereals typically make very few artifacts due to the scarcity of meteoric iron, more of their artifacts are recovered, since the Sidereals' foresight allows them to narrow down their searches considerably.

The artifacts of the Abyssal Exalted are made of a black metal called soulsteel, the rarest of all the Five Magical Materials. Those few soulsteel artifacts that have been seen seem to have great powers to contain, command and banish ghosts and zombies and to manipulate shadows. Some are also strictly for combat use and allow their wielders to absorb immense amounts of damage before sustaining injury.

The Dragon-Blooded fabricate their artifacts from different varieties of jade, each color corresponding to an appropriate element. Since there has been no interruption of the Dragon-Blooded reign over the Realm, Terrestrial artifacts are relatively common, but they tend not to be particularly powerful, possessing perhaps a minor power or two; Dragon-Blooded artifacts lean more toward the handy end of the spectrum than the indispensable.

Examples of artifacts are included in Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment.



The History of the World

The Realm Historian Speaks

Our history begins in a very dark place, both in that it was a time of evil and a time from which we know few hard facts. Most of the knowledge of the Old Realm was lost to the Contagion and the years afterward, and we find ourselves relying on folklore to compensate for lacunae in the ancient records. The understanding we arrive at when we look at these two sources is that the world we now inhabit was originally infested with great malevolent spirits or demons and their insidious thralls, whom we have come to call the Anathema.

The Anathema, it is said, used bizarre and unnatural rituals to steal power from the spirits of the sky — sun, moon and stars — as a means of proving their worth to their hideous masters. Once that inversion of the natural order took place, the Five Great Elemental Dragons realized that the loathsome elder gods and their powerful servants must be overcome if any progress or good were to come of this world. They regarded the nascent species called humanity, sought out the noblest warriors among them and breathed into them power over the elements. In that way were the Dragon-Blooded born. The Dragon-Blooded are the first and, despite what you may hear in certain mistranslated old folk-tales, the only true Exalted. While we may take them for granted, it is important to remember that the Dragon-Blooded are our benefactors, our guides and our defenders.

With the powers of the Dragons, the first Exalted met the servants of the old gods in battle. One by one, the Solar Anathema fell before the power of the Dragon-Blooded. Seeing their warriors fall, those Anathema who had stolen power from the moon and the stars scattered and were largely destroyed. Once their servants were vanquished, the demons themselves became the target of the Dragon-Blooded. They, too, soon gave way to the elemental onslaught, and the Terrestrials made the world safe for the creation of the Old Realm.

With the riddance of the demons and the banishment of their servants, the Dragon-Blooded turned their attention to nurturing the young civilization. The Dragon-Blooded established a society that would protect the common man and foster mankind's higher nature. Farmers thrived when their crops were protected from wild beasts, merchants thrived when their trade routes were patrolled by the soldiers of the Realm, and under the aegis of the Dragon-Blooded, civilization expanded to cover the face of the world.

Sadly, the Realm, led then by the predecessor to the Scarlet Dynasty, was not aggressive enough in its pursuit of the Anathema sorcerers who fled to the Wyld and to the Threshold. The Dynasty was yet young and had little notion of the ramifications that would follow from allowing the Anathema to survive.

The weird night-magicians, finding protection in the bizarre Wyld lands, continued to hound the distant colonies of the Realm with sorcerous incursions and guerrilla tactics. This approach gained them nothing. However, their worship of malevolent spirits and constant disturbance of the spirit world eventually called down the rage of Heaven. The Realm was held accountable by Heaven for its lax approach in dealing with the subversive Anathema. Heaven's punishment took the form of the Great Contagion.

The Great Contagion was a virulent disease that killed over 90 percent of the population of the Realm. Whole cities were wiped out to a man, particularly those in the outlying lands. The Dragon-Blooded suspect that some of the beast sorcerers may have worsened the Contagion by sending vermin to spread it more effectively.

At the end of Heaven's sentence, when all those who would die had done so, the Great Contagion ended. There was to be no peace for the survivors. The maw of the Wyld opened wide and swallowed entire provinces. Swarms of barbarians flooded into the Threshold and the mainland provinces, wiping out many small pockets of humanity that had managed to survive the plague. Great cities of old disappeared, destroyed by sorcerers and monsters, and only the timely intervention of the Empress saved the Realm.

Of those glorious cities, only ruins remain — most are overgrown, covered with woods or jungle, and still infested with the weird creatures of the Wyld. The years that followed the Contagion were spent fortifying the Realm and consolidating the citizens from outlying provinces into the relatively strong bulwarks of civilization on the Blessed Isle.

The Dynasty of the Scarlet Empress grew powerful, both politically and magically, and it was she who prevented the forces of the Wyld from encroaching on the Blessed Isle. With her great elemental magic, the Scarlet Empress was able to defend the island and protect the citizens of the Realm, even as pirates and barbarians tried to launch incursions onto the Realm island itself. From her Manse in the Imperial City, the Scarlet Empress was able to push the Fair Folk back to the madlands where they belonged.

But while civilization on the Blessed Isle grew strong, the magic of the Empress could not reach across the ocean to defend the far provinces, many of which came under the control of barbarians and Wyld savages of all description. Those beyond the reach of the Dynasty developed powerful criminal undergrounds, which used their influence to turn the people against the Dynasty.

Though these Threshold areas were once part of the Realm, most of their cultures are too debased to merit direct imperial rule. Instead, they are governed by their own princes and potentates, who rule with the advice of the Realm and pay tribute to the coffers of the Scarlet Empress. In return, the Realm protects them and allows them to bask in the glory of flying the flag of the Realm higher than their own.

To better manage the growing threats to the Realm, the Scarlet Empress recently placed other members of the Dynasty at the helm of state and entered into a period of reflection, during which she will determine how best to defend the Realm and retake the barbarian provinces. It is expected that the day she emerges from her meditations, she will have discerned how best to deal with the new threat posed by the Anathema. Once they have been dealt with, it is expected that she will instruct the Realm navy to retake the impudent eastern provinces, and the Realm will once again begin to grow.

The History of the World

The Second Sutra of the Proscribed Blossom of Ages

1. This is the history that has, like a river, passed.

2. The world began in madness. There was neither form nor cohesion. This is the state called the Wyld, and it is change without respite and potential without end.

3. From the formlessness of the Wyld came the children of the world, called the Primordials. They were twisted and far from human.

4. When humanity arose, enslavement was its fate until the gods instructed the most noble among humanity to manipulate the Essence of the universe. Those blessed were raised up above the base and ignoble among their kind, and thus, they were Exalted.

5. Chosen for nobility and virtue, the greatest spirits of Heaven gave unto the Chosen the gifts of the limitless sky.

6. First among the Celestial were the Solars; greatest in virtue, they were chosen to rule, to lead and to teach. It was they whom the spirits made mighty and they who were given the first share of responsibility for the moral guidance and edification of humanity. The Unconquered Sun was their father, and he lent them his wisdom.

7. Next among the Chosen stood the Lunar Exalted, Luna's sharp and stealthy children. Lieutenants to the Solars, these were great generals and formidable sorcerers — the enforcers, the emissaries and the evangelists of the Solar word.

8. Lastly, there came the Sidereal Exalted, the Sighted Ones, the Chosen of the Five Maidens, to take up the role of viziers and advisors to the Old Realm.

9. Beneath the Chosen were placed the more common Terrestrial Exalted, limited both in power and in virtue but still wise and possessed of the might of the Elemental Dragons.

10. The Exalted were blessed by the Unconquered Sun, by Luna, by the Five Maidens and by the Five Great Elemental Dragons. The spirits sought not just to lift squalling humanity from the dust through the noble example of the Exalted, but to vanquish the Primordial demons into the outer darkness.

11. In mighty tandem, the Celestial and Terrestrial Exalted made war, with sorcery, thunder and flame, and they banished their Primordial foes from the face of the civilized world. The Chosen assumed their place as rulers, kings and wise men, while the Terrestrial enforced their word.

12. From that moment, for ages on, the cosmic balance was perfect, and the Solar kings nurtured the human race and guided its explorations across the face of the world. For centuries, the Old Realm flourished, with the Exalted leading humanity from ignorance and savagery to knowledge and civilization.

13. It is not the way of this quicksilver world for harmony to dwell over long, and the great Realm contained the seeds of its own undoing. The Dragon-Blooded grew jealous of the Chosen, and certain of the Chosen were arrogant and lacked compassion.

14. The Dragon-Blooded rose up like waves and, with treachery and elemental might, sundered the Celestial hegemony.

15. The fate of the Exalted of the Sun was destruction.

16. The fate of the Exalted of the Moon was exile to the places of the Wyld.

17. The fate of the Exalted of the Planets was victory, for their hands had guided the hands of the Dragon-Blooded.

18. After much murder and making of war, the Dragon-Blooded stood decimated but victorious.

19. The echoes of treachery would not be still. The servants of the Solars were wrathful at the Terrestrials' perfidy. The spirits made war upon the Realm then, and there was no peace in Creation.

20. The stentorian din was deafening, and the battle was cruel. Mountains trembled. Cities fell. The Terrestrials made use of the mighty artifacts of the very Solar Exalted they had slain, and by so doing, they forced the raging demons away and caused the elementals to slumber in the world's far crags.

21. By might and force, the Dragon-Blooded claimed the Realm's throne. Less in number than they once were, the Terrestrials fought to tame the fractious and enraged provinces. The people's rebellion echoed the Terrestrial's revolt, and harmony fell into chaos.

22. The Old Realm was not surpassed, nor was it equaled, neither was it remade in any way. Dragon-Blooded quarreled with Dragon-Blooded, and human fought with human, and nowhere was harmony nurtured.

23. A grave peace enforced itself upon the coming of the Great Contagion. The dead became more numerous than the living, and cities fell into ruin. Sickness bested war. Death vanquished rebellion, progress and the Dragon-Blooded's rule.

24. The people sickened and died. Nine men in ten tasted death.

25. Sensing great weakness, the beasts of the wood and the Fair Folk, vigorous in the face of Contagion, swept over the cities from nests in the Wyld and brought cities down by the score.

26. Hope of returning the glories of the Old Realm withered like blossoms in winter's relentless first frost.

27. Across the Realm, the Wyld surged forth and extinguished what little light lingered.

28. The sorcerous moon-children waxed ascendant, while the Dragon-Blooded waned and retreated.

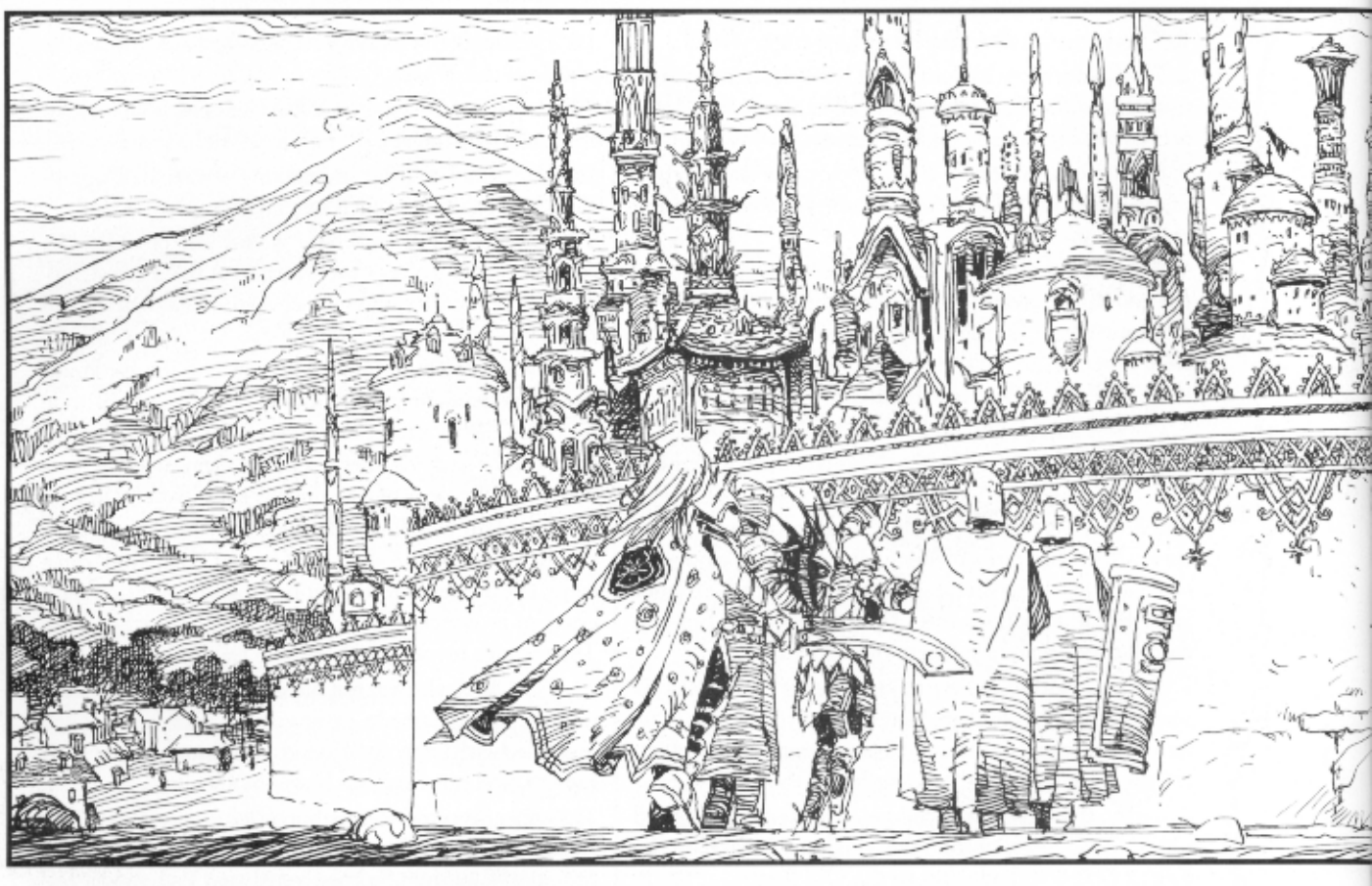
29. It was humanity that acted as its own savior. Through relentless work and vigilance, the fields were plowed, planted and reaped.

30. The Scarlet Empress, the Dynasty's matriarch, opened the doors to the Solars' great Manse. Repelling the Wyld, the Blessed Isle was defended by sorcerous protections of old.

31. Strength fed aggression. The great sense of entitlement felt by the Scarlet Empress rendered her mad to control of the lands once possessed by the Old Realm.

32. The Empress, with foes at the ready, made bargains better left unmade. Her absence portends cycle's change.

33. With the end of the Cycle of Night comes the light of the Cycle of Day. The Chosen return. The Children of the Sun and the Moon and the Maidens shall prevail, and the Realm shall be as it was.



THE REALM

A majestic and decadent empire, the Realm is nothing less than the hub of reality itself. A hallowed consensus governs the heart of the empire, keeping the unreal, the uncertain and the unholy to the lands of the periphery. The Realm is also the hub of political reality: From the labyrinthine streets and towering spires of the Imperial City to the vast standing legions sent to secure tribute from the Threshold, the Realm is the undisputed center of power in Creation.

Or at least, it used to be. Since the disappearance of the ruling Empress five years ago, usurping nobles, petty conquerors and unruly tribes have picked apart the once-unified hierarchy of the empire. For the Dynasty, things have never been worse; for ambitious patricians waiting to seize power for themselves, the current instability gives them the perfect opportunity.

The Realm has known nothing but economic and political growth since its birth from the plague-pits of the Contagion. Now, the empire crumbles, and the powers that kept the Wyld at bay ebb by the day. While a strong Dynasty might have endured even after the Empress vanished, the Dynasty's 11 houses have set upon one another, further destabilizing an already precarious situation. Who will control the Realm? Scholars worry that the Cycle is about to turn again, returning the Realm to the dust from which it arose.

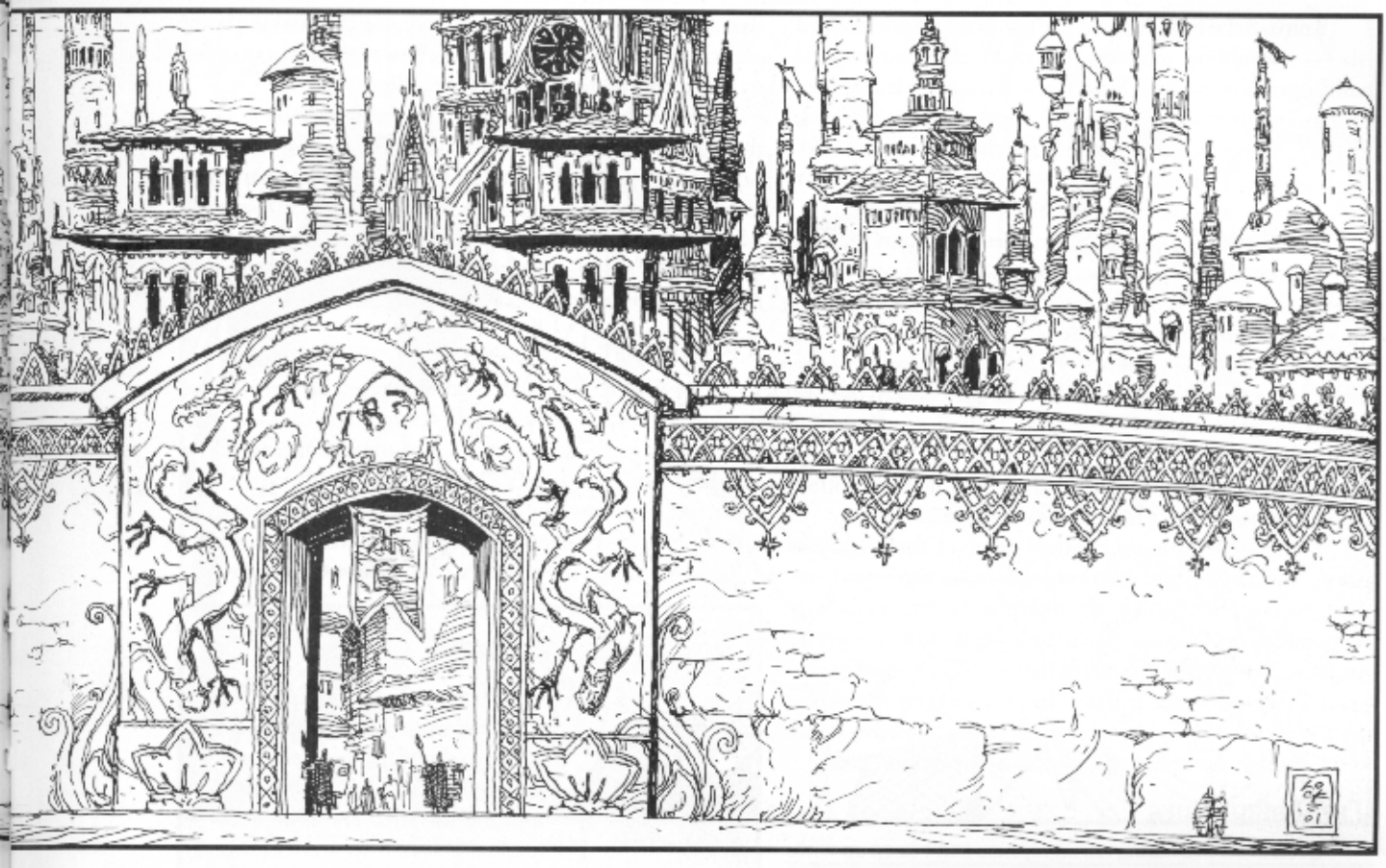
The average citizen of the Realm has white skin, black hair and brown eyes. Full lips and strong noses are typical, and most men and women stand nearly six feet tall when full-grown. Builds are generally slim, but men tend to develop a paunch later in life. Bear in mind, however, that the Realm is a conquering empire. Many of its inhabitants — even members of the Scarlet Dynasty — show signs of alien blood from foreign concubines.

THE EMPIRE IN DECLINE

A coalition of Exalted despots that ruled the Realm in its infancy, the Dynasts quickly rose to rank their power according to the size and prosperity of their estates or the magnitude of their Charms. These noble families were as querulous as their modern counterparts in the Dynasty — the authority of the Empress was all that kept their ambitions in check.

The Scarlet Throne enforced its rule by making it more expensive to refuse the Realm than appease it. The Empress demanded only moderate payment from her tributaries and was swift to dispatch her legions to protect her vassals. Her tendency to send those same legions to rearrange local governments at the first sign of disloyalty resolved any lingering doubts her vassals may have had.

Since her disappearance, the Dynasty, through the decrees of its figurehead regent, has increased tributes from the outlying provinces to outrageous levels. Barbarian and



bandit raids, along with the tributary lords' faltering confidence in the empire, sapped the imperial treasury. Even with the heavier tributes paid by the lords that remain loyal, seven of the Realm's legions have been decommissioned to compensate for the disruption of trade and tax revenues. Why pay the Realm's tribute when it offers no stability? Far better, think some tributaries, to cultivate their own power and grow stronger (and richer) without the interference of the Realm.

In theory, the Realm still controls the Blessed Isle and the surrounding lands. In reality, it has as much influence outside the isle as its legions allow it. A hierarchical system of leadership governs the Realm, from the smallest village to the Imperial City itself. Imperial influence remain absolute on the isle, but grows less sure farther away from this center.

The Blessed Isle

The majority of the Realm's population lives in farming communities on the Blessed Isle, the largest of the various islands that constitute the heart of the Realm. Most of the cities of the Realm line the coast, able to support large populations with their robust trade. Thanks to the Empress' efforts to promote trade, the inland trading center of Lord's Crossing has become the third-largest city in the Realm.

Places to Come From: The Realm

Arjuf: The largest port in the Realm, this city is the headquarters to the merchant navy, as well as to countless merchant fleets and argosies.

The Imperial City: The largest city in the world, the Imperial City is an unparalleled collection of wonders. It is the site of the Imperial Manse, which is both the palace of the Regent and the headquarters of the Thousand Scales.

Lord's Crossing: A prosperous inland trading town, Lord's Crossing is the third-largest city in the Realm.

Juche: A city at the foot of the Imperial Mountain. A laboring town, Juche is famous for its great quarries, some dating back to the First Age. Most of the stone used to build the Imperial City, along with most of the jade used to form the Realm's coinage, is mined and carved here. The last four years have been excellent for Juche because all of the houses are repairing their fortifications. Juche has a small colony of Mountain Folk living in it, who serve as their people's representatives to the Realm.

Chanos: A northern port city, Chanos is a military town. Most of the business in this town comes directly or indirectly from the naval squadrons and marine legions based there. Because they payroll the troops who keep the city alive, Chanos is strongly loyal to House Ragara.

Ruins of the First Age dot the landscape of the Blessed Isle — crumbling temples, shattered monuments and buildings whose original function still confounds scholars. Peasants tend to avoid these places, thinking them blighted. Exalted, however, flock to them for the power they offer their owners. Dynasts claim these ruins, and the power within them, as soon as they're discovered.

If too little of the original structure is left, an Exalted usually arranges the construction of a Manse on the site. Manses are batteries for Essence; these buildings are designed according to Immaculate principles that allow them to absorb and contain Essence — though the Manses of the First Age were much superior, those of the modern day are adequate. The largest Manse ever built is the Imperial Manse, a vast relic of the glory of the First Age. The Imperial Manse is followed closely by the Palace Sublime, the mother temple of the Order of Immaculate Dragons.

Though the Dynasty controls many of these ancient places, some are beyond their grasp. Many are incomprehensible, or their defenses are too mighty to be breached at an economical cost. Ruins in the Threshold, Wyld and Scavenger Lands present their own challenges. While most of the major Demesnes in the tributary lands have been secured by the forces of the Dynasty, many more lie unclaimed or stand as the strongholds of beings inimical to the Realm.

The Tributaries

Even Lord's Crossing cartographers can't keep up with the fluctuating borders of the Realm's overseas tributary states. The dozens of princedoms, potentacies, dominions, estates and plantations that pay homage to the Realm constantly change hands through financial voodoo, inheritances, marriages and border disputes. These tributaries, often called provinces or satrapies, rarely fought protracted wars with one another — the Empress quickly chose sides and dispatched legions to settle these disagreements in the past. However, such conflicts are more common at the moment, as the Realm's weakness becomes apparent.

While some Dragon-Blooded of lesser bloodlines rule provinces, most tributary lords possess no such gifts. Lordship is usually inherited, though, in reality, most Threshold thrones go to the individual most likely to continue paying the Realm its tribute. Although each lord is supposed to conduct the affairs of her holding in accordance with imperial law, the rules and, sometimes, even the customs change from province to province. Some are relatively liberal trading centers; in other places, the ruler's whim is the only law.

The imperial law concerning tributaries covers only a few aspects of their governance. The Realm is about acquiring power, not telling people how to use it. Each province pays some tribute to the Realm in exchange for protection but is expected to keep order within its borders. Imperial law used to be most concerned with methods of tax collection and trade issues such as tariffs and currency. Recently, however, the Deliberative, the law-making body of the Realm, has instituted many new regulations in order to avert insurrections in a variety of provinces.

About a third of the current provinces are related through blood to the Dynasty. The rest belong to lesser nobles. While the Dynasty is obsessed with its own superiority, treating its vassals more like worshipers, those lords who are tied to the Dynasty through marriage are treated less like second-class citizens than those who have only their oaths of submission to tie them to the Realm.

The Blessed Isle

The Blessed Isle itself is administered directly by the Realm, rather than by subject kings. It is divided into prefectures, each administered by a prefect appointed by the Empress (or, in her absence, the Deliberative). A governor, appointed by the prefect, oversees each town or city within the prefecture. A prefecture usually contains 10 to 12 farming villages and a walled city or two. Particu-



The First Age

What was the First Age like? All mortal and Dragon-Blooded scholars have to go on are the ruins left standing and the texts that survived the turning of the Age. The Cult of the Illuminated sees it as a golden age when the Solar Exalted brought the land enlightenment and harmony. The Dragon-Blooded see it merely as an older civilization than the one that has succeeded it, a civilization that had time to mature and prosper. Most individuals, particularly those who follow the teachings of the Immaculate Order, venerate it as a long-lost paradise that will be reclaimed when the world is set aright.

Certainly, many of the Celestial Exalted who survived through the calamities remember the First Age, but few of them are willing to share their memories. Some argue that the wisdom of the First Age is not gone, but merely, that the complex civilization that made the Age possible has passed away. Others contend that the world changed irrevocably when the Great Contagion struck and that, even if the lore of lost First Age were reclaimed and put to use, it would mean little. So far, neither group is organized or determined enough to put their theories to the test.



larly large provinces, called dominions, are rare, but coveted positions. The Prefect of Lord's Crossing, for example, is one of the most influential people in the Realm. The governors collect taxes from the citizens and portions of crops and materials from the peasants. The prefects of the provinces, in turn, collect tribute from the governors. This tax-farming system was largely administrative, as the Realm was kept afloat primarily by tribute. But now, as the tribute wanes, the system is being forced to actually perform after centuries as a dumping ground for political appointees.

The problems are especially evident in areas too sparsely populated to merit a governor. Isolated areas are, instead, usually visited by roving tax collectors. These bureaucrats, reviled even in the days of the Empress, are now meeting all sorts of cruel ends as they try to go about their duties in a suddenly hostile landscape.

The Imperial Mountain

At the center of the Realm lies the greatest peak in the world, the Imperial Mountain. It is said to be the axis mundi and the omphalos — the center and the navel of the world. It is the Elemental Pole of Earth, and it embodies that element's perfection, stability and harmonious stasis.

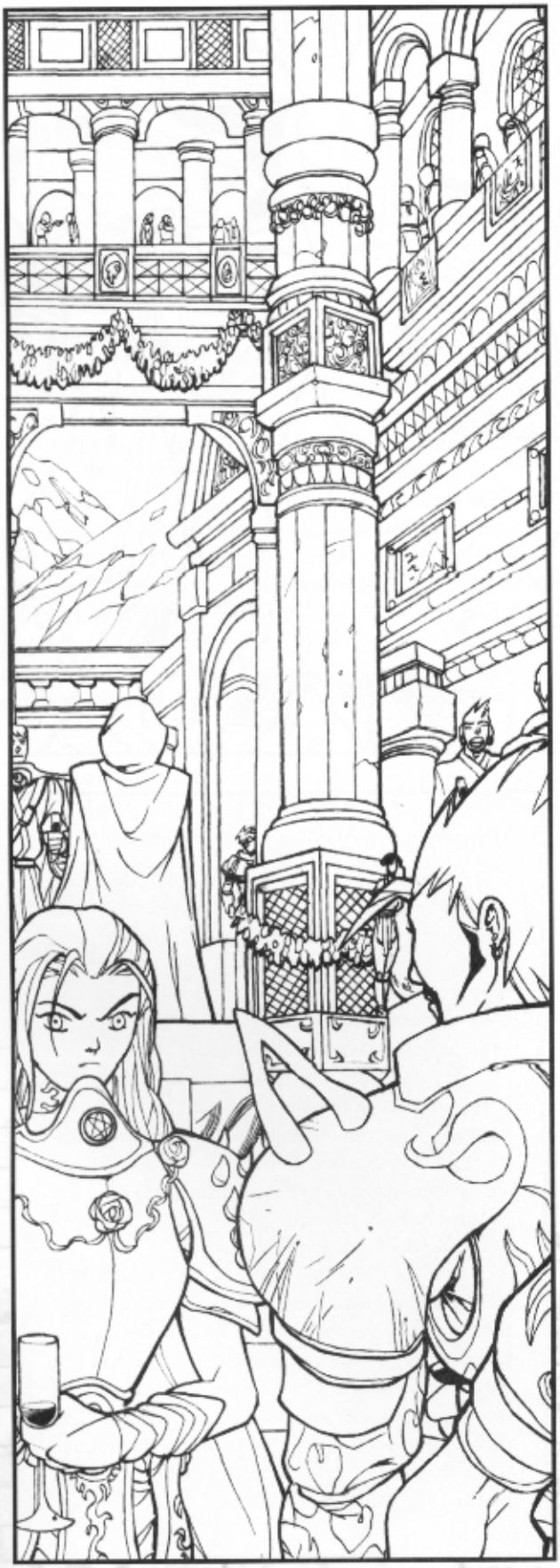
The Imperial Mountain can be seen from all across the Isle, and its profile serves as the seal and mon of the eternal, unfailing Empire. All imperial documents and monuments bears this seal, it is depicted on imperial

The Mountain Folk

Within the roots of the Imperial Mountain dwell a group of beings whose very normalcy and harmony renders them alien to the world around them. They are those Fair Folk who take on the aspect of Earth when they enter Creation, and they are creatures of tranquility and balance, so unlike their tempestuous cousins.

Though they are few in number, they are loyal subjects of the Realm. Ruled by their own princes, they nevertheless recognize the suzerainty of the Scarlet Throne — 1,000 of their stony warriors serve in the imperial army, and the Mountain Folk pay unto the Realm a tribute of 100 talents of jade every year.

Few see these quiet beings, save when their stocky soldiers issue forth to war under the banner of the Realm. Yet they labor forever in their silent kingdom, eternally polishing the roots and the teeth of the world. Their forges produce some of the most magnificent works in Creation, and those sorcerers who can bear the expense have those things they would enchant crafted for them by the People of the Mountain.



banners, and a huge version in iron and enamel looms behind the throne in the Imperial Manse.

The Imperial Mountain is a holy place, and the forces of the Elemental Pole bring harmony and peace of mind to those who visit it. Many elderly aristocrats retire to its slopes, and many who seek spiritual perfection come to climb it and bathe in its holy radiance.

The Imperial City

The human eye cannot ingest the full majesty of the Imperial City. Built by the Charms of the Exalted and the ingenuity of the Realm's most talented architects, the buildings of the city are constructed from fragile but beautiful materials and reinforced with Essence. The result is a looming, enormous and ornate metropolis. Its palaces are carved of ostentatious jade and blind those who stare too long at them. Its tenements and shops are made from obsidian quarried from the Imperial Mountain. Its fortifications are of the mightiest granite, cut from the roots of the world by the Mountain Folk and invulnerable to even sorcerous attacks.

The city itself was built atop and around the ruins of a First Age city — a vast stockade made to resist barbarian attacks that savants have dubbed the "Seat of Splendors," despite its apparently military purpose. The Dragon of Earth, Pasiap, taught the Exalted to use their Charms to construct the great city and showed them what materials to use. Supposedly, the techniques taught by Pasiap are still used on new construction within the walls of the Imperial City.

But the city's majestic design has since become claustrophobic. Economic opportunity brought peasant families that were unable to sustain themselves on the fruit of the land to seek employment. The result has been rapid and constant construction, threatening to spill beyond the limits of the walls. Architects now find more space by constructing buildings "up" instead of "out." The fewer floors a building has, the older it is. The oldest temples are sprawling mazes of corridors and chambers, while the new ones are multi-tiered cathedrals with layers of balconies, which resemble stadiums more than temples.

Moreover, buildings must be raised wherever there is available room, which often means using the irregular spaces between older buildings. This, more than anything else, accounts for the snaking streets that suddenly turn and end, then resume half the city away. Five Talons Road, once the main artery of traffic and one of the grand byways of the Realm, is now a few dozen broken sections interrupted by newer buildings. As more immigrants flood the city, the streets become narrower, the buildings higher and the sprawl outside the walls — the only real estate the poor can afford in the increasingly crowded city — grows unchecked.

The Perfected Hierarchy

The Immaculates preach that there is a natural order to things — an order in which everyone has his place. The stratum of society an individual is born into is the place where he belongs. While some wealthy citizens can buy their way into the nobility, social mobility has little place in the Realm.

The Immaculate Philosophy, the state-mandated religion of the Realm, holds that the Dragon-Blooded are superior beings who have traveled farther down enlightenment's road. The law forbids citizens, peasants, slaves and the disenfranchised from looking them directly in the eye. Even today, while no one worships Dynasts as deities, their advanced spirituality and frightening powers inspire awe among the peoples of the Realm. Some citizens flock to any public ceremony that promises a glimpse of one of the Dragon-Blooded, while others will go to any lengths to avoid their Exalted presence. Many peasants, rationalizing the fact that they could never afford to travel to the Imperial City, declare that they'd never visit a place so full of the terrifying Dragon-Blooded.

The Immaculate Pasiap wrote in the Immaculate Texts that nature has provided humanity with the Perfected Hierarchy. Since every rank of society fulfills a necessary role in the survival of all, no caste of the hierarchy is superior to any other. Though the Dragon-Blooded exist in greater harmony with their Essence and are further along the road to enlightenment, they still cannot prosper without the other parts of society, for what use is a ruler without a nation or a teacher without a class?

The Dynasty

The Eleven Houses of the Scarlet Empress

During her centuries-long reign, the Scarlet Empress had four husbands and dozens of lovers. The 11 houses of the modern Dynasty descend from the Empress's brood. These houses constitute the aristocracy that governs the Realm. Once these Dragon-Blooded lineages lorded over their growing empire like enthroned gods. Since the Empress's disappearance, however, it seems as if the Realm has begun to unravel at the seams.

Although a regent oversees the Realm in the Empress's absence, in reality, each of the 11 houses wants to control the throne. What makes this struggle for supremacy more complicated is that the Dragon-Blooded may live for hundreds of years. The Empress lived a long time, even by Exalted standards — she crowned herself almost 769 years ago. She gave birth to children with similarly long lifespans. Certainly, most imperial offspring are just normal humans, but those born Exalted tend to rise to prominence and stay there for a century or two. The genealogies of such long-lived families are twisted, tedious and — given the incestuous tendencies of the Dynasty — sometimes loop back into themselves.

Imagine an extended family of 10 generations, all coexisting at the same time and intermarrying with families of similar size. Now picture them all squabbling over the favor of a rich old matriarch who can give or take away that favor with a single word. Now, imagine them fighting over the inheritance when she finally dies.

If the Scarlet Throne were a hereditary honor, Ragara, the eldest surviving son of the Empress, would be crowned emperor. That's not the case, however — the Realm has never before had a crisis of succession, so there's no precedent for the matter. And in the fine tradition of manipulative monarchs, the Empress never undermined her position by declaring a successor.

Though all the houses are rather decadent and given to backstabbing and dirty deals, each has its own distinct character. The explanations below reflect the opinions the houses have of each other — in reality, houses are made up of individuals with their own priorities, and the houses are more alike than their members want to believe. Also, some Dynasts are products of marriages between members of two houses. From these unions, children can side with one house or another, remain aloof or play them both off one another for the Dynasts' own gain.

Aside from House Nellens, each house associates itself with an elemental aspect of one of the Five Dragons. In the early days of the empire, most Dragon-Blooded Dynasts emulated the Dragon of their house's particular aspect. Now, however, a house's identification with a certain element is largely ceremonial. While a few individuals still maintain the hallowed ways, most Dragon-Blooded — Dynasts and outcastes alike — emulate an Immaculate of their choice, rather than the one traditionally venerated by their bloodline.

The 11 houses, with one exception, take the name of the child of the Empress from whom they descend.

House V'neef

Elemental Aspect: Wood

House V'neef, the youngest of the legitimate houses, has had to find its power in places overlooked by the older houses. The head of the family, the 60-year-old Exalted daughter of the Empress, spent most of her formative years overseeing the vineyards that service the Imperial Manse. V'neef used what she learned about the wine trade to make deals with patricians to buy out vineyards across the Realm and with the Guild to arrange for exclusive import licenses.

But a few vineyards do not a Scarlet House make. The V'neef also control the merchant navy that protects traders in the isles from pirates, enforces customs duties and barricades ports that haven't paid the proper taxes. House Peleps, which controls the much larger imperial navy, recently saw their wine prices skyrocket after an unsuccessful petition in the Deliberative to grant the Peleps jurisdiction to hunt pirates on the Inland Sea. If this

petition had become a decree, the sea dogs of House V'neef would have lost one of their most important sources of income: the sale of ships and goods seized from pirates.

House V'neef has one last source of influence that might prove to be the most important as the struggle for the Scarlet Throne progresses: The Order of the Immaculate Dragons loves it. The family secured this loyalty in several ways: It bankrolled the construction of many new temples and scholarly expeditions into the Threshold. Also, when it seizes a pirate stash that contains any looted texts from the First Age, the V'neef invariably donate them to the order's library in the Imperial City. Finally, in those rare disputes in the Deliberative that involve the Immaculates, House V'neef invariably sides with the order.

House Ragara

Elemental Aspect: Earth

The Ragaras, descended from the Empress's eldest son, are the financial bulwark of the Dynasty. When the other houses are short of funds, House Ragara is always prepared to make a loan. The Ragaras are in bed with the Guild and have many ports in their debt; in the worst economy in the history of the Realm, the Ragara treasury still overflows.

In the contest for the Scarlet Throne, the Ragaras use their wealth to keep the other houses in their debt. They also enjoy considerable military power if given enough time to hire mercenaries (see the "Legion Organization" sidebar on page **XX** of this chapter). The Ragaras' fortunes allow them to quickly commission soldiers for their talons or bribe lesser nobles to loan them their personal legions. Concerned over the reductions in the military, the Ragaras have recently taken over the funding of three rapid-response marine legions stationed on the Blessed Isle. This house has gained the most from the imperial system and has the most to lose if the tributary lords rebel against the empire.

Banoba, son of Ragara, speaks for the family on Dynastic matters and is assumed to control the political interests of the house. Ragara himself, one of the Empress' first offspring, is long retired and reported to be in bad health. Most of the family resides in the Imperial Manse, but Ragara and some of his cronies live in the house's province in the northern isles.

House Cynis

Elemental Aspect: Wood

Even in the decadent Dynasty, House Cynis stands out as a hedonistic family. The Cynises, more than the members of any other house, makes sure everyone knows how rich they really are. The house is known for its wild orgies, which sometimes last for days. Members of this house exploit the wealth their birth affords them to squeeze the most out of life. Even their religious observances are known to be wine-drenched and carnal.

House Cynis is the most deeply involved in the slave trade. Its members choose the best gladiators and concubines for themselves, then sell the rest on the auction block. The Cynises daily existence hinges on the exploitation of conquered peoples. A train of beautiful and exotic slaves usually accompanies a member of House Cynis.

But with the economic turmoil the Threshold and the Realm have experienced lately, House Cynis now finds it more expensive to buy slaves than it used to be. The house's profit margin is shrinking, and there are rumors that, in order to maintain profitability, it's paying the Guild in favors, as well as jade. There are rumors of Guild influence in the actions of Cynis courtiers, and Guild hierarchs have finagled invitations to orgies that, by their place in the Perfected Hierarchy, they have no right to attend. If the Cynises are inaccessible gods, they're gods short on jade.

Descended from an Exalted daughter of the Empress, the family is also one of the most active in the struggle for the Scarlet Throne. It's launched more than one senatorial career with an outrageous orgy. While the behavior of some nobles and senators at Cynis gatherings might make excellent fodder for blackmail, the Cynises guarantee that whatever occurs at one of their soirees stays there. This discretion puts them in an implied position of power over their guests and seems like a boon, even though the Cynises haven't actually done anything. Most of the family resides in the Imperial Manse; this keeps them close to the action and provides the requisite grandeur for their entertainment.

House Cynis produces a fair number of senators but few generals. Rare members of the family, disgusted with the hedonism they grow up around, join the order — those who do so are usually among the most devout and literal emulators of the Immaculates.

House Cathak

Elemental Aspect: Fire

Throughout the history of the Dynasty, the Cathaks have been generals, strategists and military philosophers. This house believes most strongly in the imperial system and believes that no force can possibly withstand the imperial legions indefinitely. If a Cathak emperor ever takes the Scarlet Throne, no doubt, the legions would be restored to their former numbers, and the empire would expand under the conquering rule of House Cathak.

The house's power base lies with its legions. Beyond its private barracks, House Cathak bankrolls 5 of the Realm's 30 standing legions. No other house besides Sesus controls as many. Cathak also has considerable clout within the Order of the Immaculate Dragons because many of the followers of the Immaculate Mela, Petitioner of Clouds Accordant to the Call of Battle — the Immaculate path that most emphasizes martial strength — are related to this house. This veneration is a far cry from their historical association with the aspect of Fire.

Although the most belligerent of the houses, this is not to say that the Cathaks sit around and plan conquests all day. They are skilled players at the games of the

Dynasty, since their control of so many legions invariably elevates them to prominent roles in the decisions of the Realm. Cathak also produces a fair number of historians and savants; a mind bred for the challenges of war can sort through other intellectual dilemmas just as well.

While Cathak Cainan, titular elder of the house, wouldn't mind being emperor, House Cathak enjoys being kingmaker rather than king. With so much military strength, any serious contender for the Scarlet Throne must have its support. The Cathaks prefer to have a definite role in any future government rather than risking everything by attempting to assume a lead role.

House Nellens

Elemental Aspect: None

House Nellens is the spoiler house and a pariah among the other families of the Dynasty. The house has only an obscure claim to nobility as the children of the Empress's second consort Nellens, from whom they take their name. They aren't related to the Empress by blood and claim only a handful of Dragon-Blooded (probably from a strain of lesser Exalted nobility that married into the house somewhere in the distant past). The house appeared almost 200 years after the death of Nellens to petition for house status. It's uncertain why the Empress agreed to the family's complaint — perhaps some fond remembrance of her late consort or a secret incentive that made the breach of Dynastic etiquette worth her while. Regardless, the two houses directly descended from Nellens and the Empress, Houses Sesus and Ledaal, despise these pretender nobles and work hardest to expel them from the ranks of the Dynasty.

Since the Empress's disappearance, however, the other houses have begun a not-so-subtle push to remove the Nellens from the Dynasty. Nellens' representation in the Deliberative shrinks yearly as the Regent approves fewer of its candidates. While some families remain openly gracious when visited by members of this house, the Nellens are certain that any requests they make fall on deaf ears.

In the Dynasty, House Nellens has been described as a strangling weed — apparently, it's a weed that's hard to kill. The problem with expelling House Nellens is that, aside from the Ragaras, it is the only house making any money in the economic turmoil that has followed the Empress's disappearance. The Nellens' business acumen overcomes some of their disadvantages as a bastard house. At the insistence of Dragon-Blooded General Cathak Tamet, no Nellens has ever served as general of any imperial legion, although the spoiler house is wealthy enough to maintain its own standing garrison. While the Dynasty resents it, Nellens is the most respected house among the patricians of the powerful but unBlooded families because it doesn't take such pains to demonstrate its superiority. If a rebellion of the lesser nobles ever takes place, there's a good chance that House Nellens will lead the charge. And in a time of disunion and insurgent nobility, a Nellens emperor might be just what the Realm needs.

Although the house is currently in a defensive posture, it continues to consolidate its wealth, private legions and, most of all, relationships with dissatisfied tributaries. Of all the houses that want the Scarlet Throne, the house with the weakest claim wants it the most.

House Nellens is currently negotiating with the Ragaras to occupy a wing of the Imperial Manse. For now, the family lives in Juche, a town at the foot of the Imperial Mountain.

House Tepet

Elemental Aspect: Air

Once a powerful house with as many legions as the belligerent House Cathak, the Tepet legions were recently destroyed during a disastrous campaign to subdue a rogue noble who had been financing bandits near the border of the Scavenger Lands. The soldiers who survived would barely constitute a talon. While no house reigns preeminent among the 11, Tepet is clearly the weakest. Its former influence, based on military might, is now in ashes. Worse, the family's policy of maintaining troop morale by positioning Dragon-Blooded Tepets at the head of legion formations cost it many of its best and brightest young leaders. Until it can rebuild its decimated formations, House Tepet resembles an elderly wolf, fearing the day that its weakness shows and it is eaten for slowing down the pack. The analogy is imperfect, of course; the other houses are well aware of the Tepet's vulnerability.

Given the house's complete lack of ambitions beyond military excellence and its limited power base (it collected no tributes beyond those of a few principalities in the East), it was regarded as neutral in the struggle for the Scarlet Throne. Therefore, during the weeks of debate that followed the Empress's disappearance, the Deliberative appointed a Tepet as regent to oversee the Realm in the Empress's absence. Regent Fokuf, the chosen Tepet, was a compromise candidate even within his own house. A mortal and great-great-great-grandson of the long-dead Tepet, Fokuf is given to certain peculiarities. He takes… considerable pleasure in the words of the Immaculate Texts and spends most of his day in his private chambers within the Imperial Manse.

House Tepet isn't out to win the Scarlet Throne. It's in no position to do so. Its best hope is to hold the rudder steady on the ship of state until someone better suited to rule appears. The younger (greedier) members of the family think House Nellens would ensure their fortunes, though the older Tepet vigorously support the Ragaras, seeing in that house the best chance for stability and a return to their own military authority, since a ruling Ragara would probably seek to bolster the house of Tepet as a counterbalance to the might of the Cathak family.

REGENT FOKUF, ASSIDUOUS READER OF THE IMMACULATE TEXTS

The current reigning regent is the titular head of one of House Tepet's most prominent lines. In a house that prides itself on military acumen, Fokuf is generally counted to be a terrible embarrassment. He avoided censure and probably assassination by members of his own family simply because his ambitions matched his talents — that is to say, they were nonexistent. When the time came to appoint a regent, he was chosen because there was absolutely no danger of him entertaining ambitions on the throne. A commonly circulating joke is that he was made regent so that his daughter (the actual head of his branch of the house) could run matters more efficiently without maintaining the polite ruse that Fokuf was actually issuing the orders.

Fokuf's is an inactive regency. He speaks with senators for a few minutes each day and agrees to whatever decrees they support. He spends most of his time in his bedchamber in the Imperial Manse, masturbating to the explicit passages in the Immaculate Texts. Some say the pressures of the throne have unhinged his mind, while others see him as particularly devout. The Mouth of Peace has endorsed the act as a holy one to complaining senators, but within the order, she decries it as an awful blasphemy.

HOUSE MNEMON

Elemental Aspect: Earth

House Mnemon produces more Immaculates than any other Scarlet House. Perhaps this is because it's so hard to gain preeminence within the family. The Mnemons descend from the Empress's eldest surviving daughter, who remains at the height of youthful beauty despite her almost 400 years. She sustains her unnatural lifespan by drawing upon the strength of the earth itself. Indeed, the Mnemons are among the most magically talented Dragon-Blooded, and even the ones who don't leave to join the Immaculate Order dutifully emulate Pasiap, the Earth Dragon.

While the Mnemons have fewer resources than some of the other houses, their skill at the politics of the Empire keeps them in the contest. Besides Immaculates, House Mnemon produces more than its fair share of merchants and generals.

If Mnemon herself ascended to the Scarlet Throne, her first decree, no doubt, would be to redouble the efforts against the Hundred Gods Heresy and relocate the center of Immaculate worship within the walls of the Imperial City. She feels that House Iselsi is too close to the Mouth of Peace and only by relocating the order can she rescue it from the clutches of those pretenders.

Mnemon, who has watched most of her siblings grow old or die, remains the most prominent member of her family, a virtual goddess even within the Dynasty, and occasionally appoints herself to the Deliberative when convenient. She has already surpassed her siblings, most of whom weren't Dragon-Blooded, and she won't allow their ill-begotten children to deny her what is clearly her right to rule. Mnemon, with her long life and Exalted acumen, is clearly the most like her mother, the Empress.

Although the Mnemons sponsor no imperial legions, the house maintains several legions of private troops, and their excellence at Charms and sorcery gives them a great deal of leverage in the conduct of wars. The family home is the Crystal Palace in the Imperial City.

HOUSE SESUS

Elemental Aspect: Fire

House Sesus seems to be among the best positioned to secure the Scarlet Throne. Since the disappearance of the Empress, it has assumed sponsorship of five imperial legions and doubled its own troop strength. Though its troops are not so well trained, they are as numerous as those of House Cathak. Unfortunately, House Sesus's obviously excellent position to seize the throne is also a liability — of all the houses, Sesus is the least liked and the most closely watched.

The Sesus family has more than its fair share of Dragon-Blooded children. While members of other houses marry to suit their whims, Sesus prides itself as the best-bred family in the Dynasty. The Sesus favor Mnemons as mates, probably because of their high percentage of Dragon-Blooded births. They also favor Cynis, for the house's commercial acumen. And so, the three grow ever-closer through marriage after marriage.

The Sesus enjoy the Cynises taste for orgies as well as their talent for commercial success. The Sesus family penchant for orgy and unapologetic atheism combine in the ironically titled Legion of Saints and Halloweds, a collection of slave concubines that service the nobility of the house. The Sesus occasionally gather in the Brazen Stronghold on the north wall of the Imperial City for a night of pleasure with their concubines. Many Cynis and V'neef regularly attend.

The family resides in the port city of Eagle's Launch, in the Palace of Burning Wind.

HOUSE ISELSI

Elemental Aspect: Water

Long ago, a scandal involving an assassination attempt on the Empress forced House Iselsi to evacuate the Imperial Manse. The family relocated to the Palace Sublime, the main temple of the Order of the Immaculate Dragons. Public boosters of the religion, the family is in fact only moderately devout. It exploited the order's principle of sanctuary, and the Immaculates simply couldn't turn down the influence that comes with housing a Dynastic family.

Many Iselsis join the order, though this family also produces more than its fair share of outcastes. The older members of House Iselsi rarely leave the Palace Sublime. When they do, they usually travel incognito. Though the offense happened almost 200 years ago, the charge could still be used by other houses seeking advantage in the contest for the Scarlet Throne as justification for destroying the family.

That's not really necessary; House Iselsi has done a splendid job of destroying itself. In its exile, the family has neglected its holdings. Many of the Threshold lords who now trouble the Dynasty were once the bailiwick of House Iselsi. The family insisted that its tributes be maintained, but its absence from the Deliberative, its distance from the Imperial Manse and its noninvolvement with the military made its protection worthless. The only time an Iselsi senator has spoken in the Deliberative in the last 100 years was to oppose a forced relocation of the order's mother temple to the Imperial City.

Recently, House Iselsi has cultivated relationships with smaller provinces possessed of particularly religious populations on the Blessed Isle itself. These relationships have sustained the family's coffers. The family's leverage with the order allows it to dispatch Immaculates to these oft-overlooked areas, keeping the peasants quiescent and the local governance secure.

From the Palace Sublime, a few of the elder Iselsi maintain their control of the Realm's intelligence organization, the All-Seeing Eye. This service, established by the Empress long ago, infiltrates the courts of foreign lords and sometimes Dynasts to watch for signs of insurrection. Its agents also pose as peasants to sabotage and divide rebellions among the inhabitants of the Blessed Isle. Although the All-Seeing Eye is nominally under the control of House Tepet, the senior officers of the organization are Iselsi. Their loyalty to the Iselsi is ironclad — the family lost everything in order to protect them after they conspired to assassinate the Empress.

House Ledaal

Elemental Aspect: Air

The Ledaal family doesn't want the Scarlet Throne. Students of history, the Ledaals know that being the figurehead of power in a fractured empire is more trouble than it's worth. They used to be very vocal about this indifference until the other houses decided that it was just a ruse and redoubled their surveillance of the Ledaal family. Now, the Ledaals make token moves in the struggle — the occasional subtle advance to let the other families think they're still in the contest. They hope these ploys are enough to satisfy the paranoia of their relatives.

House Ledaal has bigger problems to deal with. Ledaal, the fourth child of the Empress, was raised by a Sidereal tutor. Since then, the family has kept a contingent of Sidereals to advise it in matters of state. With the possible exception of the Sesus, the Ledaal family is the only one that fully understands the full significance of the threat the Deathlords pose. Their attempts to explain this danger to the other houses has been met only with suspicion. The family knows that the other houses will join the crusade only when the Deathlords arrive at the gates of the Imperial City.

House Ledaal controls several large trading cities along the southern coast of the Blessed Isle, including Arjuf, the largest port in the Realm. It uses the tariffs and taxes of these busy ports to fund expeditions into the Threshold. The family seeks some ancient text that might reveal the true nature of the Anathema. The younger, more capricious members of the family attend the gladiatorial contests, the Cynis orgies and the backroom meetings of the Deliberative to maintain the illusion of monarchial ambition, while the elders of the family and their Sidereal advisors prepare for the Realm's last stand.

This is not to say, however, that House Ledaal is filled with do-gooders and martyrs. It wants to preserve the empire that is its heritage. No other house so vigorously hunts down the Anathema.

House Peleps

Elemental Aspect: Water

The Peleps family is largely responsible for the design, maintenance and leadership of the imperial navy. A family descended from the Empress's second daughter and bearing a large number of Water-aspected scions, House Peleps would doubtless be the strongest house, both militarily and financially, except for a Ragara-backed decree from the Deliberative that the family can have no role in the sea trade lest they develop a monopoly on the waters of the Realm.

The Peleps are coalition-builders and masters of the Deliberative. They don't take action until they know they have the votes to guarantee success. They've conspired with every family at one time or another, even the Ragaras, who fear their military influence, and the V'neef, who resent their efforts to usurp the Inland Sea trade. During scandals at festivals or moves in the Deliberative, there's probably a Peleps in the middle of things.

The family also has another source of power — most of the judges of the imperial courts are Peleps. This gives House Peleps broad interpretative power, as the courts decide on how to read the laws — courts in the Realm maintain no illusions of objectivity, and judges need not recuse themselves from decisions that they have an interest in. Not only does this mean that the Peleps often have disputes resolved in a favorable manner, it means that they have an excellent view of precisely what is taking place in the legal system of the Realm. Far more than any other house, Peleps has an excellent perspective on which patrician families are prospering and which are on the rocks. This serves the Peleps well in making alliances and strategic marriages.

The Peleps family lives on the Isle of the Wrack in the northern isles. This island also serves as the chief docks for the imperial navy.

OUTCASTES

Not every member of the Dragon-Blooded is a Dynast. Through accident of birth or ancient consanguinity with the Dynasty, the Dragon-Blooded pop up in all levels of society, even among the slaves and the disenfranchised. Similarly, some Dynastic Dragon-Blooded, sick of the politics of the imperial court, resign from the plots of their kin and take up lives away from the conspiracies of power.

These rare Dragon-Bloods who take up lives separate from the Dynasty, called "outcastes," invariably leave their mark. The greatest pirates of the Threshold, Sesus Ossissa and Eos Atitha, are two such Exalted. Ossissa, a son of the Dynastic House Sesus, and Eos, a peasant girl born as an aspect of Air, have joined in an alliance to rob the Guild of its riches. Outcaste bandits form many such unlikely alliances. They draw both nobles ousted by the politics of the provinces and peasants displaced by war or famine.

Sometimes, ousted lords and their former servants pillage side by side. Although the "Forest Witches" — who operate mostly to the north of the Scavenger Lands — live dangerous lives, they've amassed wealth to rival some small kingdoms and provide a home to outcastes from any stratum of society. In a realm so concerned with rank and privilege, bands such as the Forest Witches enjoy the most egalitarian cultures around. Why worry about accent or taste when there's plenty of loot to go around?

The Dynasty despises outcastes and considers them members of the disenfranchised. The Order of the Immaculate Dragons teaches that a being who has reached such a sublime Exalted state only to squander it by rejecting his place in the Perfected Hierarchy has alienated himself from enlightenment's road. Far from higher powers, outcastes waste their spiritual potential on pillaged jade.

THE PATRICIANS

Below the Dynasty is a caste of rich or otherwise influential families. While some are distantly related to one of the 11 houses, most are simply wealthy aristocrats who gained their titles after the Great Contagion. Only a third or so of these families have ever produced Dragon-Blooded offspring. Some are fabulously wealthy — wealthy enough even to rival the great houses of the Dragon-Blooded. However, ultimately, these patricians are second-class citizens, like all subjects of the Realm. Without Dragon-Blooded patronage, they cannot raise troops, own more than three slaves, seek redress from the Deliberative or address the throne.

THE DELIBERATIVE

A hundred years into the rule of the Empress, she established the Deliberative Senate of Exceedingly Judicious Nobles (commonly referred to as the Deliberative or, in noble circles, the Senate) to quell a rebellion of several tributary states that now ally themselves with the Scavenger Lands. Those tributaries still left the empire, but the idea of the Deliberative had already floated through the heads of the lesser nobles. There was no avoiding a check, or at least the illusion of a check, on Dynastic power.

The Deliberative consists of a Greater Chamber and a Lesser Chamber. The Greater Chamber is composed entirely of members of the Dynasty, appointed by the houses and approved by the Empress. The Lesser Chamber, appointed by the Greater Chamber and approved by the Empress, consists of patricians and tributary lords. In the words of the Empress: "In this way shall all the interests of the Realm be best represented."

In the Greater Chamber, senators sponsor petitions. If the petition is approved, it moves to the Lesser Chamber, where it can be overturned by a two-thirds vote. If the petition passes both chambers, it becomes an imperial decree and law of the land.

Members of both chambers are usually picked to neutralize political threats. The best way to deal with noble upstarts is to put them in positions within the establishment. Conversely, putting representatives from each of the 11 houses in the Deliberative keeps the Dynasty happy. The result is exactly what the Empress intended — a querulous Lesser Chamber and a Greater Chamber full of compromise candidates seeking sinecure.

Of course, the Empress designed the Deliberative as a figurehead that maintained her power, rather than undercutting it. She could propose any petition, and her sponsorship was often critical to the passage of the more controversial ones. She also had a veto that could only be overturned by a nearly unanimous vote in both chambers — nearly unanimous because the Deliberative long ago approved the "Obstructive Naysayer" rule: If only one senator votes in a way opposite the rest of his fellows, the vote is still considered unanimous.

The Empress had one last check on senatorial power: There's no fixed number of senators. Since the purpose of the body is to appease upstarts, she wanted the flexibility to make lots of appointments if a situation demanded such. In prosperous times, the Deliberative stays relatively small; in bad times, the Deliberative swells. Shortly after Regent Fokuf came to power, both chambers were renovated to add more seats.

As a false concession of power at the Deliberative's founding, the Empress gave it the power to approve the succession to the Scarlet Throne. Both chambers must approve new emperors by a two-thirds majority. The long-lived Empress never envisioned this process actually being used. Now, the chambers can only muster a majority to back a weak regent. Still, if the Scarlet Throne is to be won peacefully, it must be won in the Deliberative.

The Thousand Scales

The Dynasty's Thousand Scales bureaucracy is one of the foundations of its rule. Each level of government is responsible for the one immediately below it. In theory, this chain of command means that everyone's looking out for corruption on the level below them. The Thousand Scales consists of the tax collectors, judges, surveyors, wardens, rangers and other functionaries who execute the decrees of the Deliberative.

The Dragon-Blooded themselves have little place in the Thousand Scales. Their talents are of much greater use elsewhere. However, three branches of the Thousand Scales recruit any Exalted they can find: the magistrates, the All-Seeing Eye and the military.

Magistrates

The magistrates roam the satrapies and prefectures of the Realm, hunting down bandits and officials who abuse their offices. They also investigate potential uprisings, catch tax-dodgers and root out dangerous beasts — problems that the tributary lords are usually ill equipped to handle. Magistrates also assist judges in complex investigations, help manage crisis situations in times of disaster and civil disturbance and otherwise act to ensure stability in the Realm and the tributary states.

Magistrates are extraordinarily influential individuals. All are Dragon-Blooded, appointed by the Empress and invested with plenipotentiary powers of search and arrest. During her reign, if they or their assistants identified themselves and present credentials, they were entitled to commandeer any of the empire's resources. They could also execute other Dragon-Bloods without recourse to the judiciary — a power usually used to execute traitors when there wasn't time to receive formal approval.

Originally, they were answerable to the Empress for such actions. Now that the Empress has vanished, the magistrates are answerable to no one. However, this situation is hardly an asset. Many of these individuals were criminals or outcastes before their appointments — dragon's teeth harnessed by the Empress as her special tools. Most have powerful enemies, and without their patron's protection, those enemies are making their presence felt. Though all continue to pay lip service to the magistrates, in reality, they are hunted men. Those with designs on the throne and those who have been wronged by magistrates are settling up scores. At the same time, the members of the empire's rival intelligence agency, the All-Seeing Eye, have used the opportunity to take a bite out of the magistrates' power. Since the Empress' disappearance, a number of magistrates have been assassinated, and others have been arrested, tried and executed for malfeasance, real or otherwise. Only the great political influence, skill at espionage and personal mastery of Essence common to the magistrates has protected them so far from an outright purge.

Few magistrates act alone. Most appoint so-called archons to aid them. These individuals may be Dragon-Blooded or otherwise but are typically criminals or outcastes. Most were saved from execution or exile by a magistrate. These individuals owe their survival and freedom to the magistrate's influence, and their fortunes are tied to the magistrate's. Magistrates often use these individuals' special skills, deploying them as spies and agents or using them as bodyguards and assassins.

The All-Seeing Eye

Working side-by-side with the magistrates is the All-Seeing Eye, the imperial secret police. In theory, the Eye reports to the Esteemed Minister of the Treasury, who oversees much of the Thousand Scales. In reality, before the disappearance of the Empress, the Eye reported directly to her. Now, its members report to no one. Their missions are many and include monitoring the tributary states of the Threshold for possible rebellion, spying on the houses of the Realm and maintaining the Wyld Hunt. The Eye's agents include some of the most skilled spies and killers in Creation, including Sidereal Exalted assassins whose control of fate is so developed they are said to be able to end an enemy's life with the touch of a fingertip.

The Eye's missions overlap closely with those of the magistrates, and there is a fierce rivalry between the organizations. As with so much of the empire, the Scarlet Empress maintained her power by playing one organization against the other, throwing her favor behind whichever was weaker at the time and using the magistrates to check the ambitions of the Eye and the Eye to watch and oversee the magistrates. However, the Eye's agents are far more numerous than the magistrates and their archons. But the bureau's power is much more strictly circumscribed by its structure and charter, and much of its resources go into auditing the day-to-day operations of the Thousand Scales, a responsibility that the magistrates never had to deal with.

Since the disappearance of the Empress, the Eye has suffered hard times. Though the thought of it still causes terror in the leaders of the houses and the directors of the Thousand Scales' various bureaus, it is losing ground by the day. Without the Empress' patronage, its agents are being assassinated or subverted by the security forces of the houses. Day by day, its slush funds are raided or depleted, its budget is cut and its operations in the Threshold are curtailed by widespread discontent and the active manipulation of houses who wish to conceal how much of their tax-farming receipts they're turning in. Even the operation of the Wyld Hunt has decreased in efficiency, as the Eye's Sidereal astrologers are forced to turn their attention to the doings of the houses, rather than the emergence of the Anathema. It many cases, the Wyld Hunt must rely on outcaste assassins, reserving its deadly Sidereal and Dragon-Blooded killers for the most dangerous of targets.

The Legions

By far the largest and best-known branch of the Thousand Scales, the 30 standing legions of the Realm have allowed the empire to expand to its current size. Although seven legions have recently been decommissioned to save the shrinking treasury, the legions that remain constitute the most formidable fighting force in the world. Both men and women serve in mixed-sex units operating under the colors of the Realm.

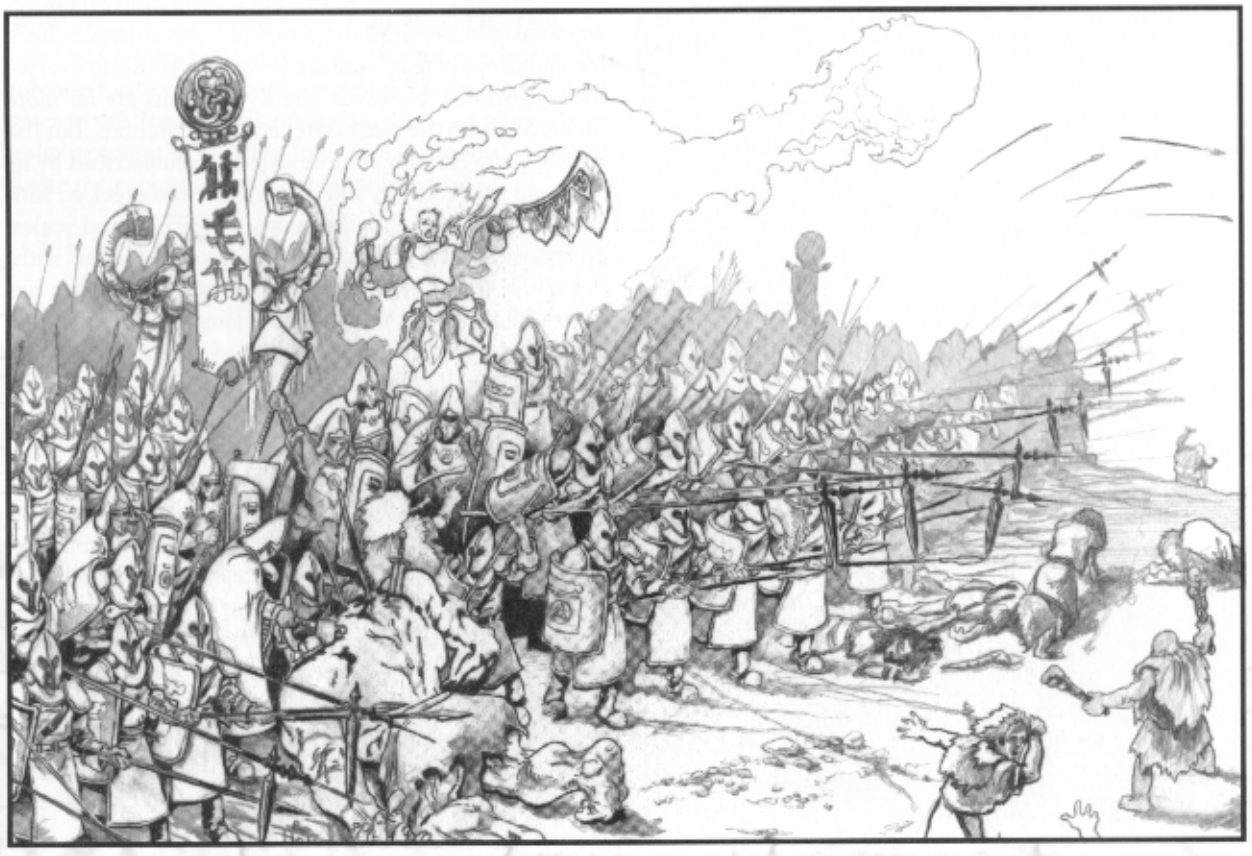
To prevent the Lesser Chamber of the Deliberative from vetoing military actions suggested by the Dynasty, the 11 houses often fund the upkeep of individual legions from their own treasuries. Although the Lesser Chamber can vote to deploy imperial legions when it sees fit, actually controlling the legions gives the Dynasty the ultimate veto. Houses Cathak and Sesus each maintain five legions, with the other nine houses funding the other 20 legions. Typically, a member of the house funding a legion serves as the general for that legion.

Legions can be dispatched for a variety of purposes. The Realm's military isn't a defensive force, the Empress' magic was always more than enough to defend the Blessed Isle. The legions are sent out to subdue dangerous portions of the Threshold and the Wyld, to guard critical trade routes beset by bandits and to quell rebellions in tributary lands. Currently, the two legions maintained by House Ledaal are engaged in operations in the North, attempting to destroy a third that was formerly under the house's control. That rogue legion turned to looting the province of Senator A'dran after the Ledaal family informed its general that the family could no longer afford the upkeep the legion required.

Legion Organization

The legions maintained by the Realm contain 5,000 soldiers by regulation, though the actual complement is usually somewhat lower. Each legion has 10 *dragons* that consist of 500 soldiers each. A dragon is further divided into *wings* of 250 soldiers. Each wing contains two *talons* of 125 soldiers each, and each talon is further subdivided into five *scales* of 25 soldiers. Each scale can be broken down into five five-man *fangs*, but fangs rarely operate alone.

Because they often travel overseas and because they must often make long, fast marches, the imperial legions do not generally use cavalry. They often requisition the cavalry of whatever prince's crown they're protecting, but they themselves field no cataphractoi or skirmishers. The beasts are simply too hard to transport and slow down a marching army too much. Not even the officers go mounted — after all, what horse can withstand the elemental anima of the Dragon-Blooded?



The Vermilion Legion

Known everywhere but in official documents as the Red-Piss Legion, this unit is made up of the scum of the Realm — little more than gallow's bait and gutter sweepings. The Dynasty has sent this legion to the farthest reaches of the empire, but it just won't die. Its soldiers survive even the most suicidal missions and multiply like maggots in rotten meat.

History blames House Cynis for rounding up these uncouth bastards in the first place. During the Realm's conquest of the world after the Great Contagion, the decadent Cynis looked for inexpensive ways to keep order on the Blessed Isle, while his real legions were campaigning across the sea. Cynis sent a call out to all of his villages that a new legion was being formed to protect the interior of the Realm. The soldier's pay for this legion was about a fourth of what professional soldiers earned. Those villagers who answered the call were a ragtag band of country boys-*cum*-mercenaries.

The legion's first assignment was to guard the growing trade center of Lord's Crossing from bandits and to maintain peace within the city. The legion didn't see many bandits, so they secured the peace by rounding up all the drunks in the streets of the town. Rather than throw them in jail, the legion's general, a farmer from Falcon's Bluff, decided to press these drunks into service to teach them the virtues of military discipline.

Since that first assignment, the legion has used similar recruiting practices in all the cities in which it has been stationed. While it seems like the tributary lords might appreciate the removal of the local vagrants, the hell this legion raises when it passes through makes a few drunks in the streets seem like a boon.

The legion survived the latest round of military cuts because it's so cheap to maintain. Besides, it occasionally makes a little money — several tributary lords, having hosted the Red-Piss Legion once, actually paid House Cynis not to station the legion within their provinces. Although the Red-Piss Legion is the one that's always sent on whatever suicide missions the Deliberative orders imperial troops committed to, the drunks of the Red-Piss Legion refuse to be vanquished.

The Citizenry

Below the Dynasty, the patricians and the Thousand Scales is the class of people known as the citizenry. These city-dwellers tend to be more sophisticated than their rural kin, looking down on peasants as backward and superstitious.

In those few prefectures that democratically select senators, the citizens are the ones to vote. Practically any crime committed against a peasant by a citizen garners a minimal sentence, unless the crime was particularly heinous. Crimes with little evidence are dismissed entirely. However, if a peasant is accused of wronging a citizen, the matter is reversed, and the peasant is considered guilty until proven innocent.

Citizens typically earn their money by fulfilling an economic role in the cities, the hearts of the Realm's commerce and the lifeblood of its currencies. Although the Thousand Scales is the largest employer of citizens, other common jobs include artisans, traders, construction workers, sentinels and healers.

Dynasts sometimes choose citizens for mates. It is their royal prerogative to do so, despite the citizens' lower status in the Perfected Hierarchy. In the Dynasty, good breeding is everything. Although noble mates (particularly Dragon-Blooded ones) are preferred, some members of the 11 houses, when they don't resort to incest, choose particularly beautiful or accomplished citizens to improve their breeding stock. Of course, given the capricious decadence of the Scarlet Brood, some Dynasts choose citizens for pleasure rather than good breeding. Certain members of the House of Sesus are said to take peculiar pleasure in copulating beneath their station, even with the disenfranchised.

The Peasantry

Most free people in the Realm are peasants. They tend to keep to themselves and are suspicious of those not from their own district. When noble trains or marching legions pass through, the peasants keep their heads low and work twice as hard. Peasants are masters of avoiding attention.

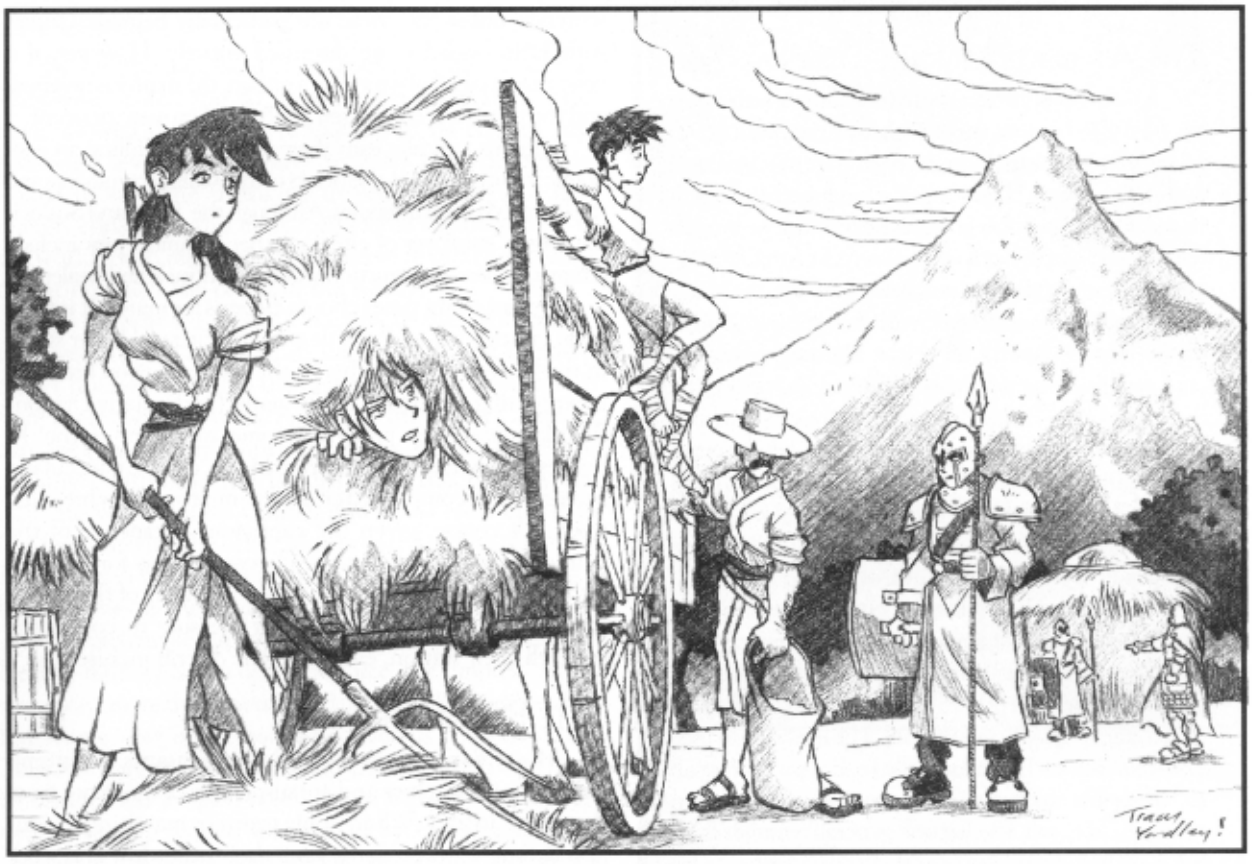
Of course, it's difficult to make any blanket statements about peasants as a class. Customs and behaviors change from region to region. While most peasants of the Realm play ignorant when dealing with strangers, their personalities when they don't feel threatened are as diverse as the prefectures that house them. A few holidays and the subservience to imperial decree are all most peasants have in common.

The Slaves

The peasant's lot is an unpleasant one, but there are worse positions in society. The Realm usually collects its slaves from conquered barbarian tribes, Thresholders and criminals who have committed certain inexcusable offenses. From these populations, the empire has reaped a vast harvest — about 1 in 50 people in the Realm is a slave.

Slaves are employed for a variety of tasks — anything that requires the intelligence of a human but involves inhumane treatment is appropriate for slave labor. Slaves do everything from the grunt work of mining and construction to the relatively more pleasant tasks of attending lords and Dynasts. The Dynasty, particularly Houses Cynis and Sesus, press the most attractive slaves of both sexes into concubinage.

Most of the slave trade in the Realm involves the Guild or House Cynis, whose legions are perpetually marching through the Threshold, seeking tribes of barbarians to suit the family's peculiar tastes.



THE LEGION OF SILENCE

After the attempted assassination of the Empress by partisans of House Iselsi, a cabal of Sesus and Cynis nobles assembled a slave legion dedicated to guarding the Imperial Manse. The Legion of Silence is made up of eunuch slaves who have had their tongues cut out at birth. The removal of their testicles, plus a few Charms designed by the legion's Dragon-Blooded masters, leaves these slaves with prodigious muscle mass — their gigantic stature and emotionless faces make most assassins or thieves think twice before entering the Imperial Manse.

Trained since their youth in the use of polearms and shields, the Legion of Silence is quite capable of defending the Dynasty should their intimidating forms prove insufficient to dissuade potential attackers.

The Legion of Silence also accompanies high-ranking Dynasts when they travel abroad. The sight of this intimidating personal guard makes peasant girls cry and rebellious tributaries rethink their insurrections.

THE DISENFRANCHISED

Even slaves need someone to spit on. The lowest stratum of society in the Realm is known as the disenfranchised. These vagrants, cripples, madmen, drunks and slatterns are the bane of the quiet imperial life. Of course, the Deliberative has taken measures to clean these wastrels out of certain overrun cities; murdering one of the disenfranchised is a crime only if the murderer stains the street with the victim's filthy blood. Of course, even the most untidy bloodbath only lands the perpetrator in the city jail for a few nights. This license to destroy the most worthless denizens of the Realm, however, does little to deter the panhandling and solicitation the disenfranchised practice in every city in the Realm.

Occasionally, a legion that is not deployed abroad will enter a city to sweep the disenfranchised outside the walls. Those vagrants that survive these purges join the throngs of imperial slaves that service the legions. By all accounts, it's a step up in the world.

The worst punishment in the Realm, short of death, is to demote a patrician or citizen into the ranks of the disenfranchised.

THE ORDER OF THE IMMACULATE DRAGONS

The Order of the Immaculate Dragons is a monastic order of Exalted and their human servitors. The order is led by Sidereals loyal to the Realm, and its Exalted ranks are made up of Dynasts who seek refuge from the political life of the Imperial Manse and outcastes who see the order as a path to higher understanding. The human monks that fill out the order's ranks can come from any class of society;

The Revised Imperial Calendar

The Empress disappeared in Realm Year 763. It is now RY 768.

The Realm keeps time with a lunar calendar. The moon passes through its phases every 28 days. Three months pass during each of the five seasons: Air, Water, Earth, Wood, Fire. Each of the three months represents a phase of the season; the first month is the Ascending phase, the second Resplendent, the third Descending. Referring to the 11th month of the year as "while the Wood is Resplendent" marks a person as a peasant, while "Resplendent Wood" sounds more like a denizen of the Imperial City. Ascending Water is usually the coldest month of the year, after which temperatures rise until they peak during Descending Fire, then resume their downward trend.

Yet, the year is not precisely 15 months long. At the end of Descending Fire is a moonless five-day period known as Calibration. Calibration is an unlucky time. Brutal tragedy befalls the Realm regularly, but the worst misfortunes squeeze themselves into those five extra days at the end of the year, that "in-between" time when the rules that govern the rest of the year no longer apply. The Calibration hosts more military defeats, political assassinations, peasant rebellions and no-confidence votes in the Deliberative than any other time of the year. For peasants, the Calibration is a time of crazed brawls, insomnia, stubbed toes, indigestion and bad apples. Strains of the Hundred Gods Heresy believe that the Calibration is the time that all spirits may freely walk the Realm. Skeptical city-dwellers, who believe the Calibration is a time for debauched revelry rather than ill omens, change the subject when they're reminded that the Empress disappeared during a Calibration.

some Immaculates who emulate Daana'd have even selected slave acolytes. Most of the order, however, is composed of the sons and daughters of patricians who did not gain land or title from their parents' inheritances.

Overseeing the entire order from the looming Manse known as the Palace Sublime is the office known as the Mouth of Peace, so named for the position's traditional council to the Dynasty against warfare. The only people to see the Mouth of Peace in her Contemplative Chamber are certain high-ranking members of the Dynasty, the elders of House Iselsi, the Sidereals and the most highly positioned Dragon-Blooded within the order. The current Mouth of Peace, however, is known to travel the Realm incognito to ascertain the spiritual state of her people.

Below the Mouth of Peace are the Most Righteous Paragons, one representing each of the five Immaculates. The Paragons are those Dragon-Blooded who have most faithfully emulated their Immaculate Dragon. Below these five, the power structure grows more uncertain. It's unclear whom anyone is accountable to after the Paragons and the Mouth of Peace. This is just as the order would have it; they are, after all, individuals seeking enlightenment. The chain of authority in the order meanders as much as the interpretations of the Immaculate Texts.

The Order of the Immaculate Dragons is arguably the most important political faction in the Realm, more important than the Dynasty and all the patricians. A simple accusation from the Mouth of Peace is enough to topple even the most powerful official or disgrace one of the Dragon-Blooded. The order does not use this power lightly, making it all the more formidable when it is deployed.

Even if many peasants pay homage to spirits outside the strictures of the Realm's only legal faith, the Immaculates can still put the fear of oblivion into the hearts of the weak. Immaculates are regarded as deadly warriors and wise men beyond all conventional limits of learning. Even less superstitious folk hesitate when their actions might attract the attention of the order. When facing a Dragon-Blooded Immaculate, one faces a near-perfect warrior, a foremost scholar of the Realm and one of the most powerful Exalted to have ever existed, all in one.

Those Dragon-Blooded who present themselves to the Paragon of Sextes Jylis at the Palace Sublime take their first steps on the path of the Immaculates. After a brief stint as an acolyte (a humbling servitude designed to eliminate unworthy candidates), the aspirant chooses which of the Five Immaculate Dragons she will emulate. After this choice, she is ceremoniously confirmed as a member of the order. The new Immaculate then begins a lifelong education into the order's particular styles of combat, Immaculate scholarship and the use of her Exalted powers. Those who cannot be taught more become teachers themselves or "walk the Realm" seeking further enlightenment.

Human petitioners undergo a similar education, with the time that would normally be spent honing their Exalted powers going instead to attending the Dragon-Blooded Immaculates and translating scrolls in search of new Immaculate Texts. Those without Exalted powers, however, rarely rise to authority within the order. One of the central tenets of the order is that one must harness one's inner Essence to advance spiritually. Since Exalted can harness Essence, they are generally seen as inherently further along the path to enlightenment and therefore superior to lesser humans.

The Order of Immaculate Dragons is ever in search of information about the First Age. At any given time, many Immaculates are abroad in the land, searching for relics of the First Age. The most successful searchers venture deep into the Wyld to find the rarest but most complete remnants of that past Age.



THE IMMACULATE PHILOSOPHY

Although the intricacies of the Immaculate Philosophy are debated within the order and the Dynasty and individual Immaculates have different understandings of the philosophy based on the Dragon they choose to emulate, a few fundamental tenets exist. While ignorant of many of the details, citizens and peasants understand these tenets as the core of the philosophy:

- Every soul walks enlightenment's road. A soul dies and is reborn many times, reaching a new state of enlightenment with each incarnation, unless it strays from the road. Whether the journey ends in Ultimate Exaltation or continues on forever, only the most enlightened Dragon-Blooded know.
- To advance toward enlightenment, one must harness Essence — the more Essence one wields, the farther along the road one has traveled. The Dragons of the Elements controlled infinite Essence.
- The Five Immaculate Dragons were the mortal incarnations of the Dragons of the Elements. From these five, the first Dragon-Blooded learned their Charms.
- The Dragons of the Elements were perfected beings, as enlightened as can be. Those who emulate their Immaculate incarnations follow the surest road to enlightenment.
- The birth of a Dragon-Blood is not an accident, but the sign of a soul that has almost achieved the perfection experienced by the Dragons of the Elements. The Dragon-Blooded sit atop the Perfected Hierarchy so that they may guide others down enlightenment's road.
- The Dragon-Blooded have reached Exaltation and must be respected. Lesser beings must always heed the Dragon-Blooded, for the Terrestrials cannot divert a soul from enlightenment's road.
- Spirits exist, but one must not worship them as gods. Likewise, individuals of low spiritual status must not pay them homage. Those who act in a worshipful fashion toward spirits or pay homage to them must spend time in the Underworld to prepare them for a more auspicious return in their next life. Only the Dragon-Blooded are advanced enough to deal with them and pay them due homage.
- The Anathema who survived the Contagion dwell in the Threshold and the Wyld and seek to divert souls to heresy. The Realm must conquer these lands in order to purge them of the Anathema's heathen influence. All souls must be given the chance to return to Enlightenment's road.
- Heresy must be suppressed wherever it arises.

THE FIVE IMMACULATE DRAGONS

The Order of the Immaculates recognizes five ancient Dragon-Bloods as the mortal incarnations of the Five Dragons of the Elements. Each of these Immaculate Dragons epitomizes one aspect of the Elements — Air, Earth, Fire, Water and Wood. In addition, each Dragon has an Antithesis, an example of the lifestyle that it most opposes. By being unlike these Antitheses, Immaculates can become more like the Dragon they seek to emulate.



Daana'd, Arbiter of the Immaculate Complaint: The Immaculate Texts portray Daana'd, the Immaculate of Water, as a capricious and rebellious youth from the Far West. Anathema saw her power and tried to lure her into their thrall, but Daana'd refused these seductions. After the Dragon-Blooded destroyed the Anathema, she swam down to the bottom of the deepest sea to lock the gate to the Underworld, to ensure that the Anathema would never again return to trouble the world of man. Daana'd taught men to follow the road of enlightenment and escape the cycle of life and death.

Younger Immaculates on Daana'd's path engage in all manner of spiritual athletics to develop the ultimate mastery of their own Essences. They often leave the order for many years and endure every hardship they can experience. The Antithesis of Daana'd is the "Unmanly Babbler," who whines that he cannot solve his problems, when the true answer lies in his own Essence.



Hesiesh, Reciter of Loud Hymns and Efficacious Prayers: Hesiesh was an Exalted of great potential who used his powers only once in his life. Hesiesh saved up his Essence, stored it away and released it all at once to burn away the corpses of the fallen Anathema so that they would not rise as hungry ghosts. Because he reserved his powers for the time when they were most needed, he succeeded during the one moment that his life truly mattered.

Follower of Hesiesh are the most involved in the order's catechism. They see tradition as the hallowed ways that generations past used to save time and energy. These traditional methods became traditional because they worked. The antithesis of Hesiesh is the "Illiberal Churl," who observes traditions because that is what is expected of him, thereby missing the Essence at the heart of the hallowed ways.



Sextes Jylis, He Who Hath Strewn Much Grass: After the war against the Anathema, the Immaculate of Wood walked the lands and restored the Realm. He rebuilt toppled mountains and set fallen trees aright. Over razed fields, he sowed grass so that the fields might grow again. Sextes Jylis, the wanderer, exemplifies the responsible use of Exalted gifts.

Those who emulate the Dragon of Wood travel the Realm repairing the damage caused by war and natural disaster, while, at the same time, seeking out heretics and ministering to small villages. The Antithesis of Sextes Jylis is the "Inconsiderate Horseman." As he travels the road of life, he neglects to protect against easily preventable damage.



Mela, Petitioner of Clouds Accordant to the Call of Battle: The Dragon of Air was the eldest in the legends of the Five Immaculates, the first soul to ever reach Ultimate Exaltation. She taught humans strong in spirit and body the use of Essence, and when the Dragon-Blooded marched to war against the Anathema, she used her power to blow the fires away from the Chosen, so that they would not be burned.

Mela represents perfection, and those who emulate her seek to make themselves the best at everything. Those who follow the Immaculate of Air are the most accomplished warriors in the Realm, and Mela's name is often invoked in times of war. The Antithesis of Mela is the "Sickly Whore," who, although she possesses great beauty, wastes her gifts on the degradation of herself and others.



Pasiap, He Who Illuminates Both Worlds with Majesty and Power: The Dragon of Earth was born into the human incarnation of Pasiap just at the end of the wars against the Anathema. When the other Dragons returned to the Celestial Sphere, Pasiap stayed behind to teach humanity the way to control the Essence of the Earth. He also showed the Dragon-Blooded how to use their Charms to construct great temples and awe-inspiring towers.

Followers of Pasiap are great architects and builders. Few Manses have been built without the advice of an Immaculate who follows the Dragon Pasiap. The Antithesis of Pasiap is the "Ostentatious Peasant," who lives far beyond his means, even though his possessions are worthless next to the true wealth of enlightenment.

The Palace Sublime

The Palace Sublime is an ugly place. The largest temple of the Order of the Immaculate Dragons and the home of the Mouth of Peace, the palace itself is really just two outrageously tall towers with a squat, square keep in the middle. The design was meant to be simultaneously unassuming and daunting — the keep is unremarkable, but the looming towers are, by far, the tallest constructions in the Realm. The entire layout is utterly indefensible. A single legion with a few trebuchets could destroy the whole place in a few days. This is just as the order would have it; who would dare attack the Palace Sublime, the seat of all enlightenment and learning? Even if someone had the audacity to do so, the Exalted might within is deterrence enough.

Heresies and Cabals

As the state religion of the Realm, the Order of the Immaculate Dragons has an interest in suppressing rival faiths. After all, those who do not heed to the path of virtue are forever cut off from the Ultimate Exaltation. The Order of the Immaculate Dragons regularly sends Immaculates to regions suspected of heresy. If the problem is easily taken care of or best kept quiet, these investigating Immaculates destroy all the ritual components of the worship, execute the priests or leaders, then kill those heretics they can't reeducate. In the case of larger heresies, the investigating Immaculates report back to their Paragons, who then advise the Mouth of Peace. From there, the Mouth of Peace advises the Dynasty of the course of action best taken to eliminate the problem.

Holy Writings

The Immaculate Texts

The Immaculate Texts are supposedly writings from the end of the First Age that describe the lives of the Five Immaculates. To qualify as a holy text, the author must have been a Dragon himself or else an eyewitness to the life of one. Although aspects of the order seem monolithic, the Immaculate Texts are an exception. The order is always hungry for more information about the Immaculates and their lives — the more they know, the more they can imitate. New books are added to the Immaculate Texts every few years, as new texts are unearthed and pass scholarly scrutiny. The order is not above ransoming potentially useful texts from mercenaries or securing them by force if the owner is unwilling to negotiate.

The Gentle Rule

This book, written an Immaculate who emulated Daana'd in the early days of the order, outlines the proper code of conduct for Immaculates living in monasteries. It includes provisions for division of labor, punishment of unholy or rebellious behavior and ways to perform all the major rituals of the order. Supposedly, the Dragon of Water briefly returned in human form to assist the work.

The Hundred Gods Heresy

The Hundred Gods Heresy isn't one faith, but a collective term for the cults in the Realm that worship the natural spirits that pervade the land. These cults usually base themselves on the older pagan religions common in the ancient past or in remote regions near the Threshold or Wyld. While the Order of the Immaculate Dragons recognizes the existence of these spirits, it considers them to be spiritual functionaries, who are distracted from their duties by worship and prayer. Members of the order give ritual thanks to the spirits on the appropriate holidays, and this, which is no more and no less than the Dragons decreed proper, is what should be given.

Every city and many of the villages of the Realm have cults devoted to some local deity. Sometimes, entire communities display the trappings of the Immaculate faith but, in reality, worship older gods. In the Threshold, matters are different. While all tributaries pay lip-service to the imperial cult, the degree to which the inhabitants of a given kingdom actually honor the faith varies wildly. In some places, belief is sincere, while, in others, people merely smile and nod until the missionaries and magistrates depart.

Cults of the Old Gods

In the Threshold, there are still those who remember the faiths of the First Age. Indeed, there are echoes of these faiths even in the liturgy of the Immaculate Order, with its veneration of Gaia as the all-mother. Though these faiths are officially heresy, their faint memories are as common as the Hundred Gods Heresy and little persecuted. Only in their full forms as religions are they considered dangerous and hunted by the Immaculates.

The Unconquered Sun

The Unconquered Sun is the god who first suggested the overthrow of the Primordials, and it was he who led the Celestines to victory. Though the Maiden of Battle is his match in single combat, none can match the Unconquered Sun as a strategist and leader.

The Unconquered Sun is typically depicted as a clean-shaven, androgynously handsome four-armed male, wearing bronze armor and carrying a lance, a shining shield, a laurel branch and a horn. After the murder of the Solar Exalted, all of the Unconquered Sun's many temples were pulled down or remodeled into temples to the El-

emental Dragons. Today, almost no inhabitants of the Realm, outside of scholars, even know there is such a deity, and his worship continues only in small, isolated communities in the Threshold.

Gaia

The god of the world as a whole. Gaia is a Primordial equal to or perhaps greater than the gods of the various planets and is sometimes called the Maiden of Plenty. Gaia is venerated abstractly by the Immaculates as the source of all life. Though many offer her prayers of thanksgiving, few ask for her intercession. Though she is benevolent, Gaia is as distant as the Celestines. Gaia's compassion for life is boundless. During the war against the Primordials, it was Gaia who stayed the other gods from the murder of those Primordials who surrendered.

Luna

Gaia's companion Incarna, Luna is not a Celestine, but might as well be from the amount of power her consort has delegated to her. Many-faced, cunning and perhaps mad, Luna is a trickster and shapeshifter without compare. During the war against the Primordials, she advised the Unconquered Sun on battle stratagems. Luna is said to have a very distant relationship with her Exalted, asking little and offering less.

The Cult of the Illuminated

Not every Sidereal allied herself with those who wished to murder the Solars and set up the Dragon-Blooded as rulers of the world. Many Sidereals fled into exile, where they lived solitary existences while the world unraveled around them.

After the Empress disappeared, and the Solars began to reappear, a number of these Sidereals gathered together and seized what they saw as a golden opportunity. If the Bronze faction could manipulate religions, so could they. Using their powers, the Sidereals infiltrated a relatively benign apocalyptic cult — the so-called "Cult of the Illuminated." The followers of this faith believed that, soon, powerful entities would appear to make the world a place of peace and harmony.

The Sidereals quickly assumed leadership of the cult, making the harmless madman who ran the organization answerable to them. They instituted a secret program of searching for and sheltering Solar Exalted. Since then, they have saved a number of Solars from the Wyld Hunt and taught others to control their powers.

Though the Sidereals obviously have their own agenda, the cult is often the only ally a young Solar has. Many naïve or desperate Solars have actually accepted the cult's doctrines and see themselves as divine saviors, having nothing else to believe.

The Threshold

There is a great deal of world between the roiling chaos of the Wyld and the urbane sophistication of the Realm. Though the scions of the Dynasty condemn the outlying lands as barbaric and keep them as tributaries, they are, in truth, vibrant and dynamic. Unfettered from the convoluted politics and the corruption of the Dynasty, the Threshold embodies possibilities and new solutions, innovation and a vibrant determination to succeed against the odds.

The term Threshold typically denotes the ring of princedoms and city-states on the outer edge of the Inner Sea, too barbarous to govern directly but still civilized enough to pay tribute to the Realm. The Realm proper only directly rules the Blessed Isle. Everything else is nominally independent, a kingdom or republic paying tribute and respect to the Dynasty and advised by an imperial satrap.

In the past, this meant imperial rule in everything but name. The Dragon-Blooded and their legions made the Empress' word law in almost all lands bordering the Inner Sea. All paid homage to the Immaculates and acknowledged the spiritual superiority of the Dragon-Blooded, though in many places this was purely a matter of honoring the imperial cult. But recently, the power of the Realm has crumbled, and more and more of the states that border the Inner Sea are reducing their tribute or eliminating it altogether.

The Spaces Between the Cities

There are quite a few large cities in the world of **Exalted** — great metropoli with populations of almost a million lie scattered across the Threshold. The area around these cities is densely settled, for all seek to shelter themselves behind the city's walls or behind its armies. War and siege are everyday events in the world of **Exalted**, and the importance of a fortified retreat is immense. This density of settlement and bounteous harvests provided by well-appeased local gods mean that most cities are fed by land within a weeks' travel of their walls.

The land between these oases of safety is sparsely inhabited. All settlements are built with an eye to defense, either walled or with a defensible central structure the community can retreat to if attacked. The walls and Charms protect against barbarians, bandits, Fair Folk, hungry ghosts and raids by enemy troops. People stick close to their homes — being caught outside the walls at night can lead to death, madness or worse.

Between these great cities and walled settlements lie great swaths of untamed wilderness, crossed by the trade routes of the Guild. Only armies and the massive convoys of the Guild can cross these areas with relative safety. Others who travel must rely on their wits or steel to protect them from the countless perils of the wilderness, from elementals and the fey to simple human robbers.



The East

To the farthest east lies the Elemental Pole of Wood. As one proceeds further east, the forests become gradually thicker and stiller and more hostile. The trees grow taller, the beasts of the wood larger and fiercer, and the almost-sentient, almost-malicious air one sometimes feels in an unfamiliar forest grows ever-stronger. Finally, progress is blocked by a seemingly unending wall of deadfalls, widowmakers and harsh terrain. It is said that if one goes far enough east, the ground gives way, and the traveler sees only an endless cathedral of trees, stretching up and down, from zenith to nadir, a holy green perfection of leaves and still air.

In the south, the forest becomes more tropical in character, while in the north, pine and ash choke out the oak and maple. All areas of the forest are rich in useful plants. Not only do edibles and utilitarian plants grow in abundance, but the woods bristle with a cornucopia of medicinal and recreational drugs. The woods also bristle with an array of deadly plant toxins, some so lethal as to cause the heart to stop a few seconds after skin contact. Foraging for the forest's bounty is a craft, not a hobby, particularly for those who dare the deep woods. Most of the truly remarkable plant types are found only deep in the forest, where strange spirits roam and the forest itself rails in anger against intruders.

The Near East was always the heartland of the Old Realm, with fertile soil, regular rains and abundant resources. It was heavily settled and the source of much of the Old Realm's prosperity. Consequently, when the Great Contagion and the subsequent incursions of the Wyld and the Underworld occurred, it was one of the areas hardest hit. In a way, this was a blessing, at least for the survivors. Even with much of it reduced to chaos-scarred ruins, the survivors had a vast trove of resources to scavenge from as they rebuilt their shattered world.

Today, the East consists of city-states of various sorts, largely autocratic or democratic, with a fair handful of bizarre governments in the mix. Most are built around the area's numerous rivers and serve as manufacturing centers and redistribution points for local produce. As one goes further east, the cities give way to towns, and the towns to logging camps and steadings. Despite the hospitable nature of the Near East, the Far East can be quite dangerous. There are a rather large number of shadowlands in the area, and the woods often crawl with barbarians.

Unfortunately, what had been a blessing became a curse with the renaissance of the Realm. The prestige implicit in reclaiming the heartland of the Realm, as well as the lure of military salvage and forgotten weapons caches, made the eastern provinces the target of repeated invasion attempts.

Luckily, the Realm's reach exceeded its grasp. For all their power, its warriors were too few and their self-estimation a bit too generous. Most importantly, the



Realm's leaders were trapped in a worldview with themselves as the foreordained winners. Had they played their cards cautiously and acknowledged the strength of the potential opposition, it's quite likely that the Realm would have been reestablished in the East. But even now, after repeated defeats, the strategists of the Realm have trouble understanding that there might be real opposition to the Realm's resurgence.

The average inhabitant of the East has a brownish skin tone, ranging from light tan to an almost bark-like brown in the Far East. Blond, red and brown are all common hair colors, and even red hair is typically straight and without body. The typical Easterner is tall, with even women standing nearly six feet. Eastern families tend to be matriarchies, centered around a female and successive generations of female offspring. Male children are raised by their mother's brothers, and marriage is uncommon but not unheard of.

Scavenger Lands

At the heart of the Near East is the River Province, the military and administrative center for the eastern sections of the Old Realm. The population here was devastated during the Contagion, but the area's reputation for prosperity drew displaced persons from all over the plague-blasted lands. This influx of new blood created an open, cosmopolitan society of immigrants eager to make their lives anew and create something for their children. It also attracted a large number of entrepreneurs, would-be conquerors, spirits, embittered dissidents from the Realm, hermits and renegade theoreticians. Together, this strange rabble created a new society over the top of, in the ruins of and built from the scraps of the Old Realm. Though these "Scavenger Lands" don't approach even the tawdry, remanufactured splendor of the modern Realm, their inhabitants are lively and eager, willing to take risks and plot their own course. The more advanced and warlike inhabitants, many wise in the ways of First Age artifacts, have consistently provided a major resource in the restoration of the region to habitability and in defense against the Realm. Accordingly, tinkers and wise men are held in high regard, and to have a son or daughter involved with scavenging is much the same as having a child take holy orders of some sort.

Most of the Scavenger Lands consist of walled towns and cities and the farm lands immediately around them, surrounded by sparsely populated wilderness, connected by trade routes and a common heritage of immigration and restoration of the ruins that surround them. Inhabitants of the region value individual initiative and self-reliance, and it's well they do, because powerful Essence flows make the region attractive to the Deathlords and Fair Folk alike. Ironically, while most of the Threshold is extremely superstitious, the Scavenger Lands verge on atheism. This doesn't mean that they don't

acknowledge the existence of the supernatural, but that there is much practicality and little reverence in their interactions with the world. You cannot live at the crossroads of Creation without becoming jaded. Exalted, Fair Folk, spirits and other supernatural beings are treated with the respect such dangerous creatures deserve but, generally, not with a worshipful or obsequious air.

Inhabitants of the Scavenger Lands come in all shapes and colors, though many are of mixed stock, coffee-and-cream complexioned, with wavy peach or black hair. Strong, aquiline noses are common in the Scavenger lands, as are relatively sharp features in general — probably the result of a heritage of interaction with the Fair Folk, much of it sexual. Marriage and family customs vary wildly from household to household, and the matter is complex and routine enough that it is culturally acceptable to find it funny.

NEXUS

At the center of the River Province lies Nexus — with three-quarters of a million inhabitants, Nexus is one of the largest cities outside the Realm. Like most other major cities of the province, Nexus is built on the ruins of a city of the Old Realm. Once the provincial capital, the city of Hollow was decimated by the Contagion and devastated by the Wyld incursions that followed. The streets were filled with bones and wreckage, and the city's three great rivers choked with the masonry of countless fallen towers. Because of its excellent location (and strong possibilities for salvage), Hollow was one of the first cities of the area to be reinhabited after the chaos of the Contagion.

But unlike many of the other large cities of the River Province, Hollow was neither rebuilt in a form that dreamed of ancient glories, nor stripped of artifacts and salvageable masonry until only the unbricked foundations remained. Because of Hollow's importance as the administrative center of the Realm's most prosperous province, many of its structures were made of substances impenetrable without now-lost sorceries. Much else had been touched by the Wyld and was... unsafe. The result was archetypal of the Scavenger Lands as a whole — new construction throw up around First Age ruins, wonders of the ancients half-restored and put to helter-skelter use, with little understanding of or regard for their original purpose. To the inhabitants of the River Province, it's seen as a willingness to innovate. To the denizens of the Realm, it's regarded as barbarians playing with things they don't understand.

THE COMING OF THE COUNCIL

For decades after its rehabitation, Nexus was a brawling sprawl of gangland feuds and petty potentates. Then, with little warning, things changed. Ganglords and potentates died, bloodily and inexplicably — at least at first. Shortly after the deaths of most of the city's most powerful figures, the being known as the Emissary first appeared.



This white-robed, silver-masked figure alleged to speak for a group known as the Council of Entities, a group that now laid claim to the city. Those who opposed the Council, the Emissary portended, would die. Some gang leaders alleged the Emissary was the only real governor and attempted to assail it during one of its appearances. They died terrible deaths, some choking on their own blood, others succumbing to suicidal madness or dissolving into masses of crawling insects. Others simply ignored its proclamations, and they also died, though their deaths were more prosaic — poison, a stab from a hired assassin or a bowshot from a dark alley. Within a few months, there were none who would oppose the Council's wishes as expressed through the Emissary.

The Decrees of the Council

The Council of Entities makes its wishes known on a variety of topics, sometimes through public proclamations by the Emissary, other times by using their minion to transact business; despite its striking appearance, the Emissary has ways of coming and going unseen that have yet to be divined. The vast majority of Council declarations are of only passing interest, "None shall trouble the workers erecting the new pier on the Yellow River" or "The woman called Harmonious Jade is hereby exiled from Nexus and is to depart by sunset tomorrow, never to return."

Certain rules, however, are well known, often repeated and relatively well enforced. The Council has spies everywhere, and very few serious infractions go unnoticed, though some offenses — conspiracies, for example — are kept under observation until their full extent can be established. The following are the closest to a "body of laws" Nexus has.

• **No Taxes Shall Be Raised, Save By the Council** — Nexus is a free port. There are no import or export taxes on goods shipped through the city. However, the Council hires independent contractors to collect port duties and head taxes charged at the gates and piers for entrance, and these make up the vast majority of the city's revenues. Some of this money is plowed back into the city, most is never seen again — it goes to the Council, and afterward, there are many guesses as to its fate but little certain knowledge.

Whatever it does with the income, the Council is fiercely protective of its cash intake. The whole selling point of Nexus is that, however potentially dangerous it may be to live there, it is the cheapest and most business-friendly place in existence. Local strongmen putting the bite on every neighborhood would raise the cost of doing business, thus cutting into the Council's revenues. As a result, protection rackets are punishable by death, and in a city know for drug-dealing, prostitution, slavery and vice of every sordid sort, the local muggers will actually apologize if you for some reason misinterpret their demands as based on location and not situation. Then, they'll club you, take your purse and leave you in the gutter for the rats.

• **None Shall Obstruct Trade** — The above, but in more general terms: wholesale theft of goods, destruction of warehouses, obstruction of the rivers, brigandage within an unacceptable distance of the walls. All are bad for business and, thus, punishable by death, either at the hands of the Emissary, assassins or one of the city's many mercenary companies hired out for the job.

• **You Shall Bring No Army Into Nexus** — Anyone attempting to assemble his own private army inside Nexus dies. Where "a large contingent of personal guards" ends and "an army" begins is left purposefully unclear. Mercenary companies are tolerated because of the tremendous amount of business they draw to the city, but they are permitted to march armed and in large groups only between the closest city gate to the company's compound and the compound itself. Mercenaries do travel in small, well-armed groups (just like everyone else in their right mind), but they're careful not to get too organized about it.

• **You Shall Commit No Wanton Violence** — At least in the eyes of the Council, violence and violent crime are unavoidable parts of human existence. However, there are differences between violent crime and wanton slaughter. Most importantly, the latter is much worse for business. This general decree is probably the most slackly enforced and the one most likely to end in exile rather than death. Likewise, impression into slavery is forbidden in or near Nexus, though there is no manumission of already enslaved beings.

• **None May Falsely Claim the Council's Name or Sanction** — A near-certain way to die, and die horribly, is to claim to represent the Council when you don't. The only way Nexus can continue to prosper is if the decrees of the Council are unquestioned. This idea is taken very seriously, and the scale doesn't matter — the punishment is the same for a scam that involved vast sums as it is for claiming to be a livestock inspector and hitting someone up for a cracked jade bit.

• **None Shall Harbor a Fugitive From the Council's Wrath** — Simply put, if you hide someone, or help hide someone, and the Council finds out (and it has eyes *everywhere*), you will get what the fugitive got, or should have gotten. When the Emissary says you're marked for death, people listen.

Note that this edict does not mean that Nexus is subject to the rule of law. There are no courts and no appeals. Likewise, there are no prisons in Nexus. Punishment for crimes against the Council is either death or exile from Nexus. Exile is a mercy granted to the weak — those who might be strong enough to inconvenience the Council of Entities are slain rather than being given a chance to nurse a grudge and plan revenge. The method of death varies, but it is generally memorable and unpleasant. Offenders have had their bone marrow turned to quicksilver and their blood to boiling vinegar. Their bodies have been infested with carnivorous maggots, they've been dosed with vast quantities of hallucinogenic poisons, and

they've been suddenly burnt to ashes. Most commonly, their bloodless bodies are found near a public fountain with the skins cut off and folded up neatly beside them.

On the other hand, while the Council is brutal and implacable, it is also self-interested. The well-being of Nexus is the well-being of the Council, and too much arbitrary killing over minor infractions would do nothing to make the city more successful. Instead, the most egregious violators are made into terrible examples, and the lower bounds of guilt are left nebulous so as to make potential offenders think twice.

There is little formal system of civil or criminal justice in Nexus. Individuals who feel they have been wronged can retaliate to whatever extent they feel the offense merits, though those who go too far run the risk of exile or death for wanton violence. Likewise, commercial disputes that get out of hand are generally mediated by the Emissary. This mediation is often very harsh for both participants in the dispute and encourages an environment where businessmen would rather come to an agreement than remain intractable and have one dictated to them.

The lack of any sort of justice beyond the lynch mob makes Nexus a very dangerous place. Most of those who travel there can either take care of themselves or hire a bodyguard or three to do the job. There a joke so well-worn as to have become an aphorism that there's no place other than Nexus where you can get killed so many different ways at any hour of the night.

Trade and Commerce

Nexus is the largest river port in the Scavenger Lands. The city's status as a free port makes it attractive as a transshipment point for manufactured goods. Anything imaginable is available at the city's Big and Little Markets, probably in sizes up to the 100-pound lot. The anything-goes attitude of the Council makes it the largest wholesale drug and slave market in known world. In addition, the city is the headquarters of countless mercenary units. The vast majority of Threshold states are too small or poor to field a standing army large enough to meet wartime needs and turn to mercenaries to swell their armies during wartime, to provide politically neutral garrisons and to train conscripted troops. The majority of such mercenary forces call Nexus home. The troops range from tiny squads of ultra-specialized troops and gangs of glorified legbreakers to large, formal military units. The consequent demand for weapons has combined with nearby coal beds and iron deposits to make Nexus not only the largest source of trained troops on the planet, but the largest source of the swords and armor that equip them. The availability of raw materials has drawn other manufacturers to the city as well, and Nexus-made ironmongery is some of the best in the world.

The great docks of Nexus are busy day and night receiving the vast quantities of ore and coal that feed the city's smelters and workshops. Coal ash, known locally as "Nexus snow," constantly settles over the city, and when the air is still, a thick yellow smog often hangs over the valley. At night, this reeking cloud descends and combines with the fog from the rivers to reduce visibility to just a few feet. This fog is unhealthy, and when it is particularly thick, it can choke children and the elderly. This makes altitude of residence a sign of status. The rich live on the city's high hills, out of the miasma, while the poor live amidst the stink and the pounding of the valley floor.

But the fog and din are not the only reasons to live high on the hill. Though the Old Realm established flood-control systems, these fell into ruin long ago. All three of Nexus' rivers flood regularly. At least once every spring — and often also after heavy rainfalls in the summer and fall — many of the city's low-lying districts are covered in anywhere from several feet to several dozen feet of water.

Districts

Nexus is divided into distinct neighborhoods by the city's hills and rivers. Each has its own character. The rivers are the city's defining features, and they profoundly shape day-to-day existence, not just by their yearly cycle, but by their presence. There are a number of bridges and countless ferries, water taxis and boats for rent. Teams of oxen, mules and slaves endlessly walk the draw paths on the riverbanks, pulling barges filled with goods and raw materials. A significant number of the city's inhabitants live on the water, on boats or barges. Though Nexus is subject to cold winters, with subfreezing temperatures the rule at night and occasional large snowfalls, it is rarely bitter enough for a long enough time to freeze the rivers.

The rivers themselves are filthy with sewage and the byproducts of the smelting and forging processes. Some fish live in them, but they are sullen and inedible mutants. Though the rivers near the city are largely devoid of dangerous life, it does migrate in from time-to-time. The inhabitants of the riverbanks and the floating villages are often forced to band together into hunting parties (or to group their funds and hire mercenary companies) to hunt down whatever has been pulling their pets and children off the riverbank at night.

Nexus District — At the center of Nexus is the eponymous Nexus district. Originally the commercial district of Hollow, many of the old buildings survived relatively intact. The result is a city of towering buildings, whose Old Realm architecture is impossible to duplicate in the modern day. Some standing as high as 8 or 12 stories, these vast structures serve as headquarters for the countless trading companies, mercantile trusts and export factors who make the Nexus riverport the busiest in the world. In the flood-washed lower stories of these ancient buildings, commercial shops dominate, selling wares exotic and everyday. The streets have been repaved with cobbles, but the structures are more imperishable than the road metal, and most look much as they did in the days before the Contagion.

The largest of these edifices houses the Guild, which uses the nine upper stories of the Guildhall as its headquarters. The lower three stories of the hall are perhaps Nexus' best high-end drug den and brothel, staffed with the pick of Guild slaves and selling the pick of the Guild's inventory. The Guildhall Harlotry is not just a money-losing crown jewel, it's a genuinely profitable venture. The windows of the lower floors are fitted with watertight steel shutters, and even during the worst floods, the Harlotry stays open, with water taxis rowing up and disembarking passengers onto the building's balconies. Security at the Harlotry is tight, and regular guests often have a linkman and an escort home provided gratis if they choose not to stay the night. Of course, given the rates, the Harlotry can afford to be generous. Goods and services purchased there run between one-and-a-half and two times the price of a comparable establishment in Cinnabar.

Nexus district is also home to the city's two main commercial markets, the so-called Big and Little Markets. The Big Market handles the auctions of almost all goods brought to sale on the city docks, except animals and slaves, which are sold at the Coffleblock Market near Sentinel's Hill. Transactions take place in the open air from sunup to sundown all day long, and there are typically 15 to 30 auctions going on at any given moment, making the whole place an unending din of shouts as lots of cotton, swords, diamonds and pine pitch are bought and sold.

By tradition, the seller dictates terms of payment at the start of the auction, making walking in on ongoing auctions very rare. Punishment for welshing on an auction is the lynch. There is a *lot* of money at the Big Market — jade on the barrelhead is the regular form of payment. Most of the trade factors present have several bodyguards, and the city Mercantile Association, together with the Guild, keeps a regularly rotated company of 30 or so mercenaries in field armor ready and on the spot to stop grand-scale attempts to rob the market.

The Little Market is the city's actual market and serves the domestic needs of Nexus. The selection available in the stalls is as large or larger than that at the Big Market, the goods are offered for sale, not auction, and quantities are aimed at individual or household consumption, not the wholesale market. Just as at the Big Market, the Mercantile Association pays for armed and armored guards. The penalty for theft is a beating, a broken hand or a lynching, depending on the magnitude of the crime and the stall owner's preference. Robbery is uncommon, but pilferage, even with these brutal penalties, is common.

The Little Market takes place under a giant pavilion of wood and leather, heated by charcoal-fueled braziers in the winter and lit during overcast days by countless candle lanterns. The pavilion periodically burns as a result of this, sometimes with a significant loss of life. Riots and stampedes are also fairly common, occurring every few years, triggered by a robbery, a mistaken shout of "Fire!" or for no discernable reason at all. Though weapons are offered for



The Guild

Possibly one of the most disliked and influential organizations in the world, the Guild is a great association of merchants whose ever-traveling caravans tour the lands of the Threshold, buying and selling. The typical Guild caravan is a creaking assemblage of giant yeddim-drawn wagons with a dual purpose. The first is to keep a regular commercial presence in every area of the Threshold. Every night, when the caravan stops, it throws an Evening Market for the inhabitants of the area. Though the Guild doesn't typically lose money in day-to-day transactions of this sort, the goal is really to help defray the expenses of the caravan and show the Guild in a positive light. In many places, the irregular visits from Guild caravans are the only contact with the outside world. Likewise, the caravans have no option but to interact — several hundred merchants and guards eat a lot of food and burn a lot of charcoal, and the yeddim need far more fodder than a few hours of evening forage will provide.

But the caravans always have a purpose other than small-time deals, and that purpose is always profitable. They may be carrying cargoes of weapons and armor, of drugs, of slaves, of precious metals or stones or of any other high-payoff commodities to make it worth the effort of fitting out the caravans. Most caravans have a regular route, traveling to and from either Nexus or the Imperial City of the Realm. Many caravan routes have several caravans moving along them at once, and the particularly busy ones have well-established caravansaries at various points. These overnight stopping areas often attract a permanent population of merchants and grow into towns in their own right.

The Guild is totally without scruples in what sorts of goods it will buy and sell, but it is not stupid. For example, the Guild does not just roust out the populations of small villages and toss them into chains. To do so would damage the Guild's reputation among its most important customers — the rural populations whose willingness to do business with Guild caravans allows them to meet their operating expenses with day-to-day transactions. Instead, most slaves are prisoners of war, either bought for cash from civilized nations or for trade goods from primitive tribes far out in the Threshold. Likewise, the Guild will not sell drugs or weapons in areas where they are prohibited, though it, of course, does a booming business selling to smugglers just across the nearest border.

The Guild has open political leanings. It favors small kingdoms over large ones, loose regulation over strict laws and freedom over the dominion of the Realm. These leanings are, again, simply a matter of profitability. It's easier to do business with places harboring a minimum number of greedy officials and troublesome regulations, and operating under a single government would force the Guild to adhere to that government's policies and not its own. The Guild clandestinely backs the Scavenger Lands against the Realm and offers significant (sometimes well below cost) discounts to various heretical organizations within the Realm. While it's done quietly enough not to force the Realm's hand, it's still a massive organization taking a political stance. Anyone who cares enough to watch knows what's going on. Currently, the Guild is busily playing various factions of the Realm against one another, backing those determined to tear the structure apart in the struggle against the centralizers and empire builders. So far, the policy is enjoying remarkable success, but the Guild lives in terror of a military rule emerging and knows that too much interference could trigger the very event it dreads, so it has limited its involvement.

sale inside the market pavilion, nothing larger than your typical belt knife (about a foot) may be brought in, and purchased weapons must be carried to one of the market's entrances by a guard, where the buyer can take possession.

Cinnabar District — Cinnabar district lies north of Nexus district. Few of the buildings in this district were imperishable, and as a result, most of it has been rebuilt in a more modern style. Because Cinnabar is the headquarters of most of the city's large mercenary units, however, the architecture is still impressive. Most units have large compounds built from cut stone and concrete, surrounded by multi-story barracks and housing for the unit's dependents. While the mercenaries are prohibited from mounting formal patrols, there are enough eyes and enough armed men that crime in Cinnabar is infrequent and almost always business-related sabotage or espionage.

Some of the more famous companies based in Cinnabar are the Nightarrows, the Hooks, the Bronze Pioneers and the dreaded Hooded Executioners, a company specializing in quelling domestic disturbances and insurgencies using whatever means necessary. Some portion of the latter unit is often in the employ of the Emissary, and they are the closest thing to a secret police force in Nexus, though the Council of Entities keeps its own coveys of spies as well.

Cinnabar is also notorious for its restaurants, inns and brothels, whose quality runs from extraordinary to execrable. The vast majority of these establishments line the first few blocks from the riverbank, and many are actually built out on the water — some on poles, others on moored barges. Inland, the quality of the establishments deteriorates somewhat, until they give over to the large, slave-staffed brothels aimed at servicing the mercenary companies. Then, the area gives over to the companies themselves, whose compounds take up block after block. This area is on the river's floodplain — most of the riverside establishments are flooded yearly, and the walls of

most mercenary compounds are sturdy enough to withstand the flood current, watertight enough to stay submerged for several days without undue leakage, and tall enough that even at the peak of the flood, the parapets remain dry.

Sentinel's Hill District — Sentinel's Hill is named for the towers that stand on it, overlooking Firewander district. These towers, staffed by mercenaries hired by the Council of Entities, keep constant watch on the borders of Firewander. Originally, Sentinel's Hill was a cleared buffer zone between Firewander and Nexus district. However, as the city of Nexus expanded, the Nighthammer and Cinnabar districts became too crowded with their own specialized businesses to accommodate the city's swelling population.

As the activity in the Firewander ruins decreased over time, more of Sentinel's Hill buffer zone was opened up for settlement. Now one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Nexus, four- and five-story tenements run all the way up to Sentinel's Wall, where the towers still stand and armed men peer out at the Firewander ruins, with their shapeless wraiths of living rainbow and sporadic fountains of multicolored fire.

The buildings on Sentinel's Hill are closely packed — even main streets have endless layers of laundry hanging between buildings, and most are passable only on foot. These multistory apartments are of modern construction — mostly wood and lath and plaster, not the imperishable stone of the Old Realm. The buildings are horribly vulnerable to fire and prone to collapse, especially given that there are few safety regulations concerning their construction.

Despite the crowding and the hazards, Sentinel's Hill is a popular place to live, either for middle-class tradesmen from Nighthammer or for successful young businessmen uninterested in the relatively staid existence of the Bastion. The elevation of Sentinel's Hill places it mostly off the floodplains of the rivers. The lower floors of most tenements are occupied by craftsmen and businesses, with the apartments immediately above the shops renting for the most, since the lower floors are less prone to collapse and have shorter walks up.

The Bastion District — In the hills above Cinnabar lie the well-guarded houses of the well-to-do of Nexus. The wealthy inhabitants of the Bastion work closely with the Council of Entities to determine what sorts of patrolling are acceptable and perform as much as they're able. Strangers to the Bastion, particularly strangers who don't look like they could afford to live there, can expect to be stopped, questioned and quite possibly forcibly ejected, or worse, if they're repeat offenders or known criminals. Most of the Bastion consists of townhouses, with central solars or walled front courtyards. The truly wealthy live in luxurious walled estates with well-patrolled grounds, surrounded by dozens of servants.

Nighthammer District — The manufacturing center of Nexus, Nighthammer is alive day and night with the sound of pounding and the stink of burning flux, the shouts of workmen and the clamor of cargo wagons clattering through the cobbled streets. Coal ash rains down constantly, and most who walk the streets wear cloths across their faces for protection against the sharp-edged soot and the various vile smokes. Most of the high-quality metal goods in the East are made in Nighthammer, and specialty goods are exported even into the Realm in some cases.

Few live in Nighthammer proper, a four block deep stretch of docks, warehouses and industry several miles long running up the riverfront. More live in the Nightside, a vast array of houses running from the edge of the Nighthammer works across the flood plain and up the hillside. The best housing is high up the hill, above most of the stink and din. As one gets closer to the forges and the floods, the housing becomes cheaper and

Places to Come From: The East

Nexus: A lawless den of crime and commerce, Nexus has a reputation as the richest and most dangerous city in the world.

Lookshy: Ruled by Dragon-Blooded nobility, Lookshy is an armed camp that promotes military ideals.

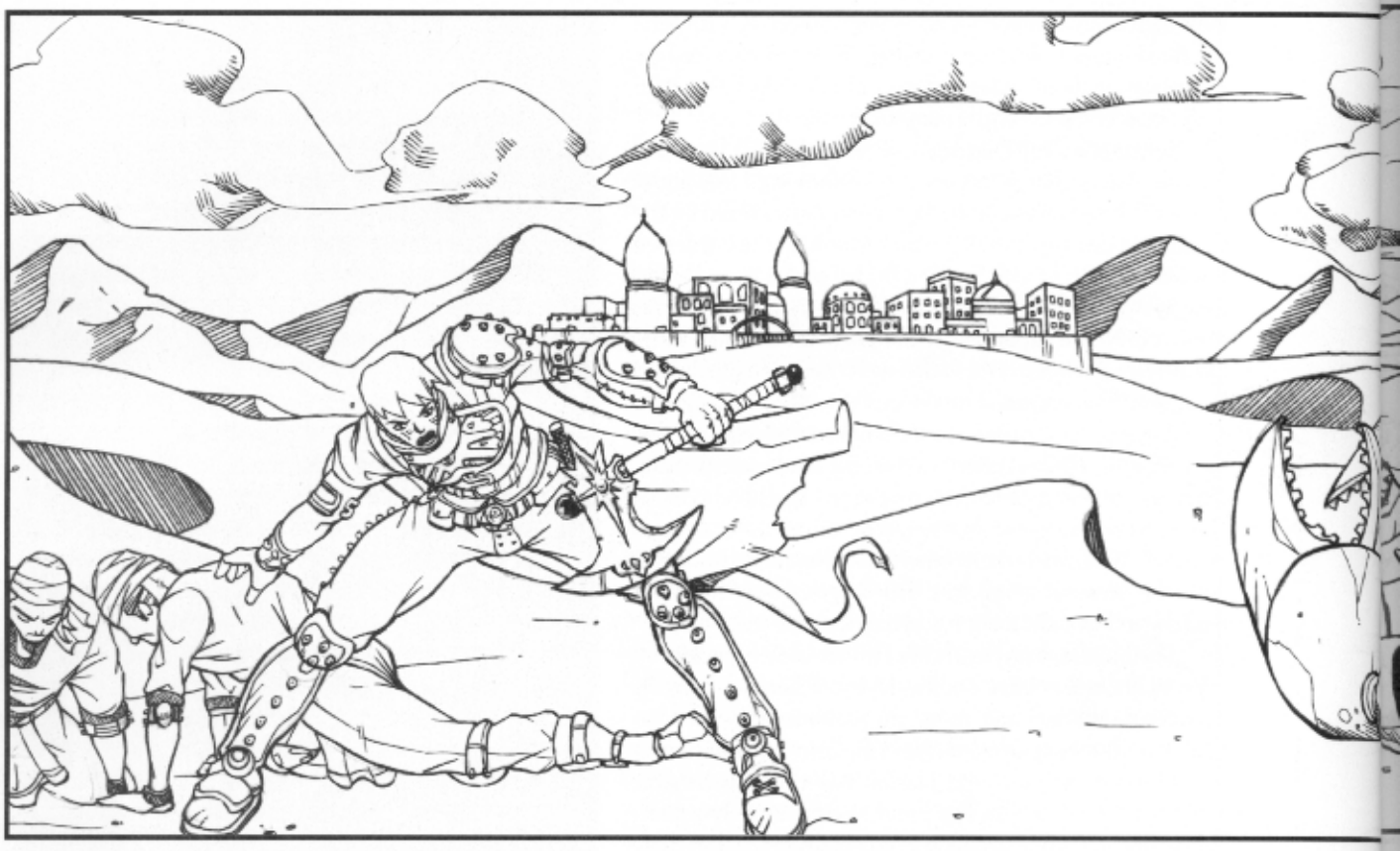
Great Forks: Ruled by three powerful spirits, Great Forks is a major producer of recreational drugs. It produces excellent local wine and qat, as well as marijuana and tobacco.

Sijan: A great city devoted to funeral and burial to the north of Nexus. Though it is located on the edge of a shadowland, Sijan owes no allegiance to the Deathlords. Sijan is the home of the world's most skillful undertakers, and the city's necropoli are near-inviolable. Those rich enough to do so often travel to Sijan to die or have Sijanese undertakers travel to their location and prepare them for burial.

Thorns: A great metropolis located south of the Scavenger Lands. Loyal to the Realm, Thorn was once one of the most prosperous cities in the East. It was recently conquered by the Deathlord Mask of Winters and now lies in the center of a newborn shadowland. Though much of its population remains, the streets are patrolled by ghosts, and the vast rotting hulk of the Deathlord's citadel still lies within sight of the walls.

Rubylak: The capital of the Linowan nation. The Linowan are tribal hunters and fishers who fight an eternal war with the Haltans, who inhabit the redwood forests to the east of their lands. The Linowan are staunch allies of the Realm and trade and raid at the Realm's behest.

Chanta: The capital city of the Haltan Republic. The Haltans are friends of the redwoods, and Chanta is actually built *in* the trees. Haltans are famed for their ability to train animals, and animal companions are a major part of most Haltans' lives.



cheaper. Life in the Nightside floodplain is some of the most brutal on the planet. Anything can be bought, and a life costs a bare handful of poorly cut jade beads.

Firewander — Firewander was once the true center of Hollow, before the Great Contagion and the invasion of the Wyld. When the Fair Folk hordes smashed across the Realm, they remained encamped around the provincial capitol, laying siege to it for several days before they finally broke through its defenses and destroyed the last defenders. The resulting Wyld area still has yet to return to stability. Although its strength has lessened considerably over the last century or so, the center of Firewander is still chaotic enough that portions often become inchoate and totally random.

The edge of Firewander has been picked over meticulously, first by professional scavengers, then, later, by amateurs and Wyld addicts. There's little that can be safely harvested other than the occasional prodigy. However, the former provincial capitol can still be seen to stand, towering and apparently intact, when the condition of the space around it permits the passage of light. The warped zone around the capitol is narrow and intense, possibly the result of some sorcery or weapon deployed by the Fair Folk. Several active vortices dance through it, and conditions flicker from safe to lethal in an eyeblink, with flashes of lightning and razor-edged soundwaves constantly flashing around the structure. Whatever is left inside is probably intact (assuming that concepts like "inside" still have meaning in the capitol) because it would take a mighty Exalted to pass through the Wyld distortions and emerge intact on the other side.

Other Scavenger Lands Cities

Nexus is not the only city in the River Province, though its reputation often causes its otherwise notable neighbors to be overlooked. There are a half-dozen cities with populations over 100,000 in the Scavenger Lands, and several dozen with populations over 10,000, most of which exist in quiet and prosperous obscurity. Two cities in particular are notable, however.

The first is Lookshy, a military republic founded by a breakaway military unit of the Old Realm. Lookshy upholds military virtues: discipline, integrity, honesty and bravery. It is primarily an agricultural and crafts community, deliberately eschewing trade in the belief that it will weaken them culturally. Lookshy has a population of only a little over 10,000 free citizens, but it possesses large stores of working Old Realm military artifacts, and its inhabitants are quite skilled in their use as well as in the use of the sword, javelin and sling. All adult citizens, even females, are drilled and tested regularly in their battle skills and form a part of the city's military structure.

Lookshy also benefits from a number of Terrestrial Exalted bloodlines. These lines, originally started by officers and elite troops of the formation, have been bolstered by the family's willingness to intermarry with other



outcastes. Not only have the Dragon-Blooded families of Lookshy been willing to accept refugees from the Realm, they have also intermarried with the so-called Forest Witches, a federation of outcaste bandits who claim territories to the north of the Scavenger Lands. This intermarriage has strengthened their bloodlines, reduced banditry in the Scavenger Lands as a whole and provided a buffer along the northern border.

Lookshy also has almost 10 times as many agricultural serfs as it does citizens. These helots are similarly trained and drilled, though permitted to carry conventional weapons only. The serfs are treated relatively well, and though their lives are not easy, outstanding helot children are educated and trained as citizens to make up for battle losses, which, given the brutal nature of Threshold life, are considerable.

The other notable city is Great Forks, built at the confluence of the Rolling and Yellow Rivers. Great Forks is a theocratic oligarchy, presided over by the manifested spirits of the city's three large temples. Great Forks is noted for its festivals and for the things that go hand-in-hand with celebration, namely alcohol and other recreational drugs. Great Forks qat is the drug of choice for most inhabitants of the River Province able to afford imported substances, and the city's wine is drunk even in the Realm. While the city's tobacco and marijuana crops are not so good as the grape and qat harvests, they are still noteworthy and bring the city a regular influx of jade. The spirits ruling the city have done well. Their personalities and powers are complementary, and their outlooks are long-term, without losing track of the mortal scale. The spirits are also powerful enough to dissuade most supernatural raiders, and so, Great Forks inhabitants do not suffer the constant fear of attack that is a regular part of existence for most Threshold-dwellers.

The South

To the south is the Elemental Pole of Fire. As one travels further south, the weather becomes hotter and hotter. Near the sea, it is Mediterranean, blending slowly into tropical forest in the east. Rain is frequent, and while rugged, the land is not brutal or water-scoured. As one travels farther south, the rain becomes less frequent, and the olive trees and grass slowly give way to scrub and tumbleweeds. It is a land of cacti, ice plants and yucca trees, where arroyos and wadis cut the landscape into a classic badland. The narrow canyons are full of fallen trees piled up like jackstraws and boulders chocked snugly into place, a tribute to the force of the flash floods that race through these narrow spaces.

Still further south, rain ceases to fall at all. Mesas give way to sand and stone outcroppings, and oases become increasingly infrequent. The cloudless sky does nothing to hold the sun's heat in, and blasting hot daytime temperatures plummet to subfreezing lows until one arrives at the True South, where the sun provides only light and the heat continues unabated day and night. None can reliably

claim to have traveled to the uttermost south and returned, and reports conflict as to what lies there. Some say a field of black glass with an never-setting sun, and others claim that it ends in a field of glowing red magma beneath a black and starless expanse, while still a third school says that in the True South, there is nothing but colorless fire.

INHABITANTS

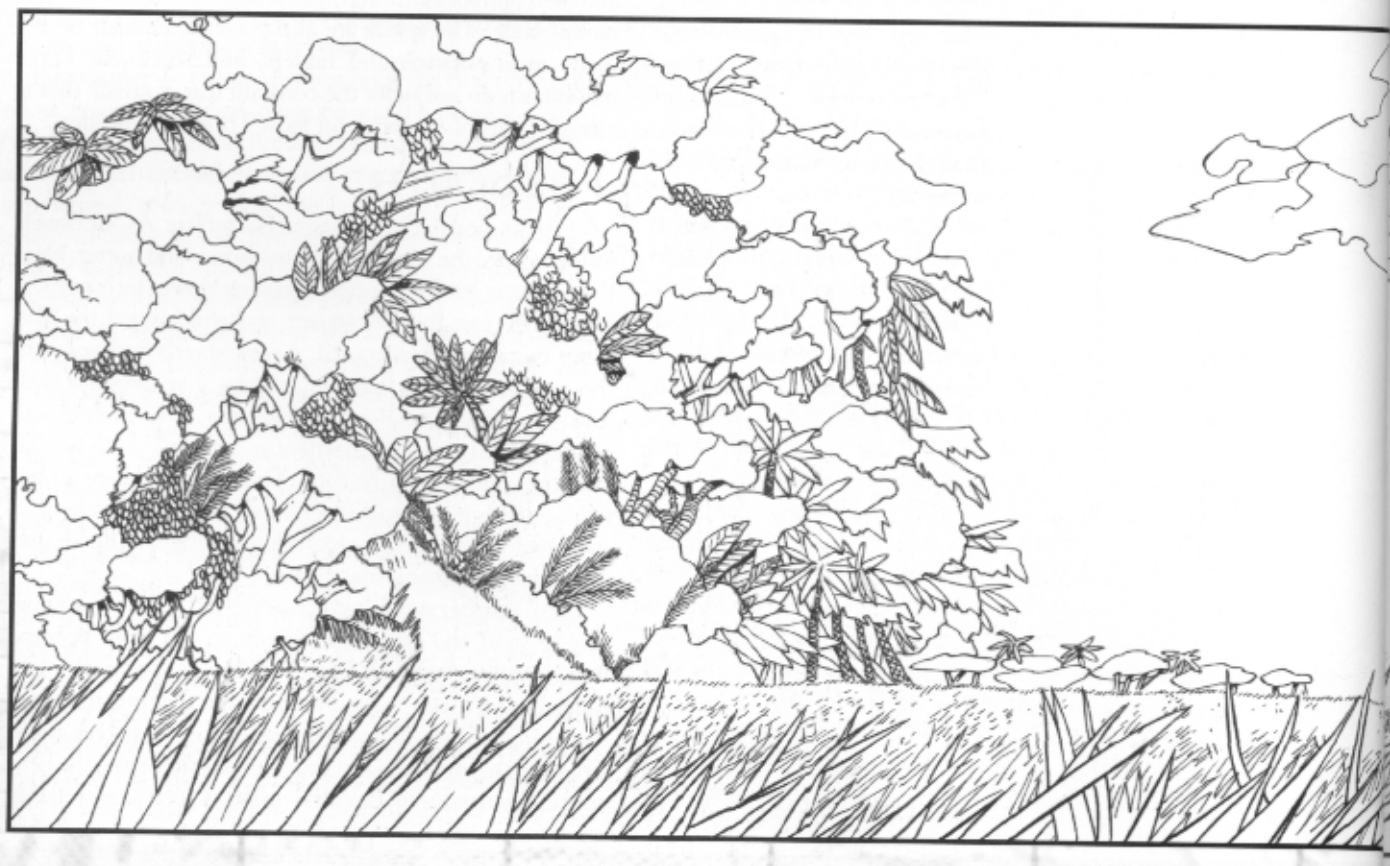
Along the northern coast, the inhabitants of the South gather in great cities, support by a brutally oppressed agricultural underclass. Though they are not as large and certainly not as splendid as the great cities of the Realm, at least three Southern cities (Gem, Paragon and Chiaroscuro) have a million or more inhabitants. They, like almost all the cities of the South, are hereditary autocracies and crawl with palace intrigues and secret police. As one travels further to the south, the cities and towns end abruptly at the edge of the badlands. Go further south, and there are only nomadic tribes feuding and stealing from one another to subsist. What keeps these nomads active is the harvest of the sands to the south. Just beyond where the heat becomes constant, the sands give up a bounty of gems — rubies and garnets, opals and topaz — and, most valuable of all, firedust.

Blown on the sun-winds from further south, firedust is a fine powder that collects in the lee of dunes and in hollows. Highly combustible and somewhat unstable, the dust can be gathered and sold for a great profit in the cities to the north. Though the firedust cannot dream of matching the artifacts and weapons of the First Age, the great wall-mounted, cast-bronze cannons of the Southern coastal cites make them invulnerable to siege and harbor piracy, even by the ships of the modern-day Realm. There is a great demand for this substance, and nomads are as certain to carry the small leather pouches and wooden spatulas used to gather the dust as they are to carry a fine sieve for sifting out gemstones from the sand.

The average Southerner is dark-skinned, with blond, black or red hair. Unlike Easterners, however, most Southerners' hair has a great deal of body, though the blondes tend toward less kink and more curl.

As a result, many, particularly the desert tribesmen, tend to wear their hair as short as possible. Shaved heads and (among men) well-trimmed beards are the rule in the wilderness. In the cities, both men and women who can afford the time and expense of styling their hair properly have it brushed and washed by slaves and then plaited to match their outfit for the day. Beards are still worn short and well trimmed, however — a long beard is seen as a sign of self-deprivation and, thus, of holiness and the almost certainly concomitant madness.

Southerners are extremely superstitious, as a rule. They take great stock in portents and signs, and everyone can read their own basic horoscope. Those who can



afford to employ one or several astrologers to supplement their own efforts, but no Southerner in his right mind wouldn't draw up his own basic horoscope to work from before consulting an outsider's predictions. Likewise, most Southerners sacrifice daily to their familial patron spirit, the patron of the task they're about to undertake, one or several spirits of good fortune, the spirit of their city and the ghosts of their ancestors. The cities of the South are seen as debased and decadent by those outside it, displaying all the corruption, greed and lascivious behavior of Nexus without the brutal opportunism and vibrancy that makes Nexus so different. Those from the South simply see themselves as civilized and enjoy the benefits thereof.

Families in the South are patriarchal, and marriage is a contractual affair of great legal complexity. Male parents retain the offspring of either sex at the end of a marriage contract, though this can be modified with the consent of both parties at the time the marriage is dissolved.

People from the South typically dress in silk, if the wearers can afford it, or else cotton. Only the poorest nomad wears wool, and it is considered an invitation to awful luck to wear leather — most armor is metal and canvas. Silk, cotton and large quantities of tobacco and marijuana are produced domestically on the same latifundia that feed the cities, and the export of these goods is the source of much of the cities' prosperity.

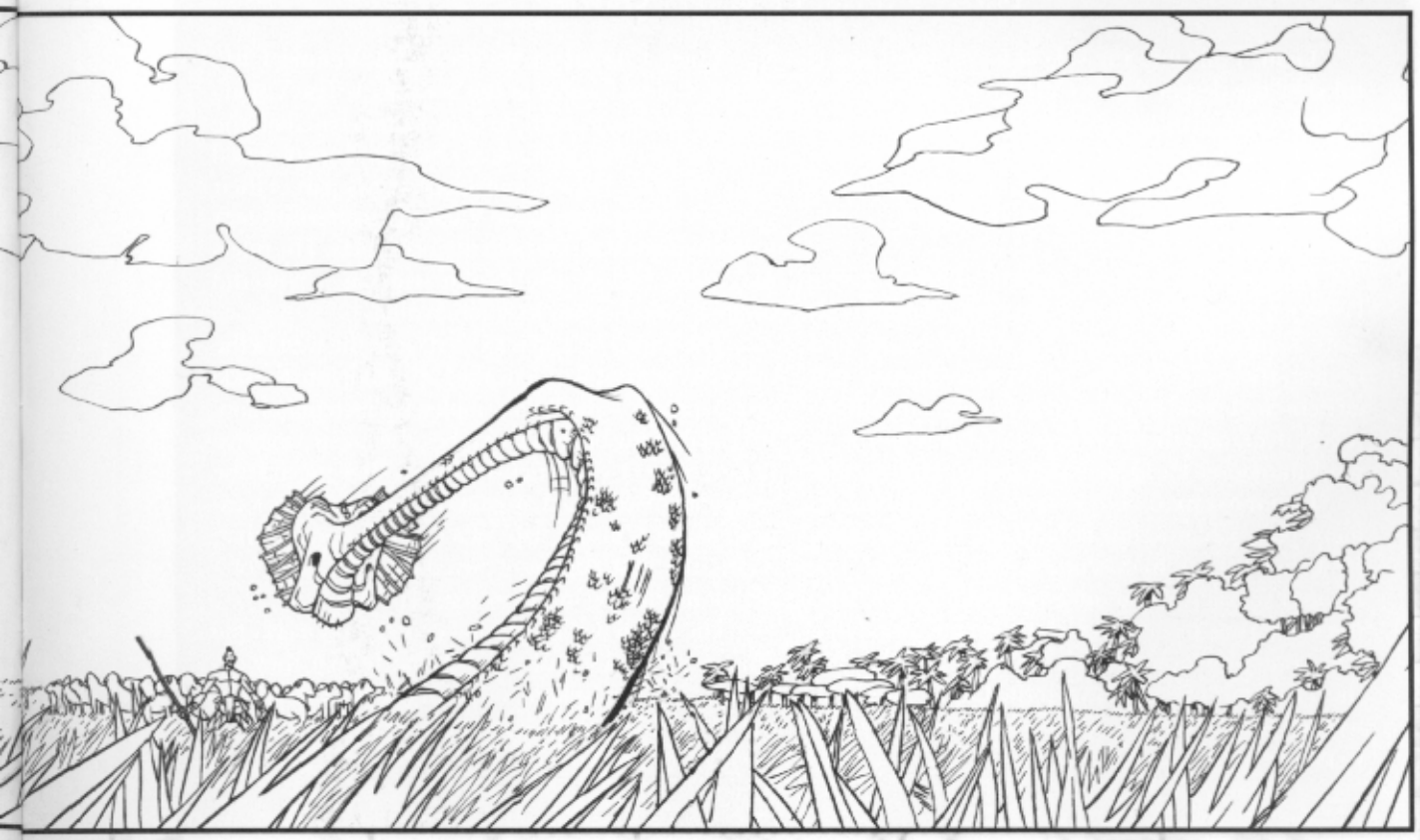
The Southeast

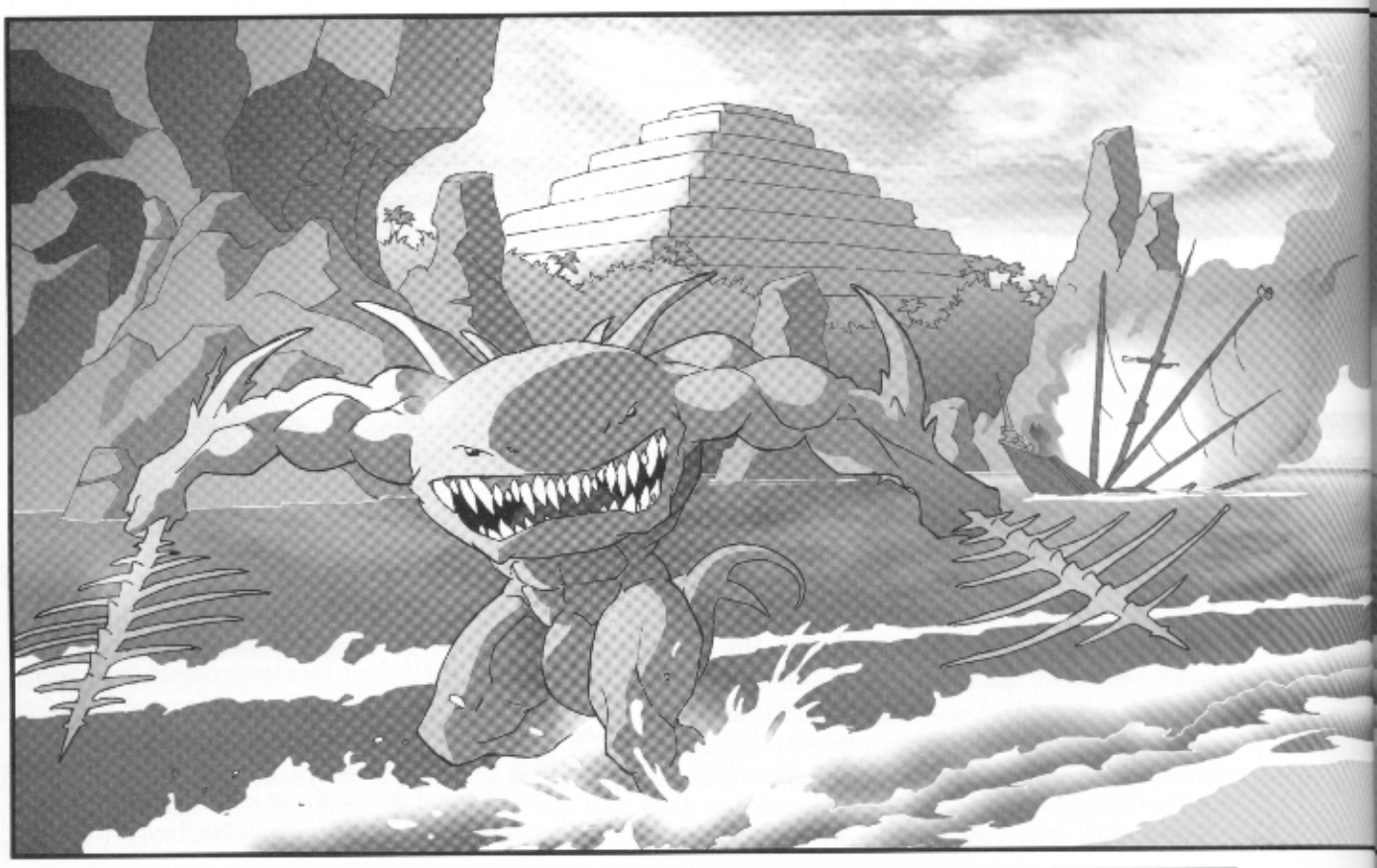
The Southeast has a distinctly different culture than the Central South, as it is called. Here, there are no badlands or sandy deserts, but instead, a wide and well-populated grassland where the jungle to the north peters out but the rain still falls during the wet season. The people here are settled cattle-herders, not nomads or city-dwellers, and they vigilantly guard their herds against hyenas, tyrant lizards and cattle thieves from neighboring towns and villages.

There is some cultural interchange. The great city of the Southeast, Yane, has almost a half-million inhabitants and is ruled by an expansive and politically adventurous royal family. Yet, though her walls are defended by firedust cannons and much of the city's grain is grown by agricultural thralls, Yane partakes of Eastern as well as Southern culture and of a way of life distinctly its own as well.

Southeasterners have a distinct skin tone of their own, a milk chocolate distinct from the ebony Far South and mahogany Near South skin tones. Southeasterners tend strongly toward straight red or tawny hair, which is worn in a topknot (by men) or a long ponytail (by women). Varangian men and women alike tend toward pert noses and full lips and are generally thought attractive by both Southern and Eastern eyes.

The people of the Southeast sacrifice primarily to the cattle-spirits and their family patrons, but they also do honor





Places to Come From: The South

Gem: Built into the side of a volcano, Gem is ruled by the despot Rankar VII. Gem gets its name from the vast quantities of gems it mines and gathers from the sands to the south. Nominally a tributary to the Realm, Gem has always used its wealth to buy freedom. Today, its allegiance to the empire is little more than a head-nod.

Paragon: Ruled by a god-king known as the Perfect, Paragon is a strange land whose ruler controls it almost completely. Though it is safe and honest, there are few who wish to live there — all citizens are bound by unbreakable magical oaths to the Perfect, and those who violate his rules die in writhing agony. Paragon is a loyal ally of the Realm.

Chiaroscuro: Largest of the Southern metropoli, Chiaroscuro is built on the ruins of a First Age city. Chiaroscuro is ruled by the Tri-Khan, the ruler of the once-nomadic people who resettled this place after the Great Contagion. Chiaroscuro is nominally loyal to the Realm, but the Tri-Khan's close ties with the Guild allow him to keep his city a free port, so long as he continues to pay lip-service to the Realm.

Yane: Capital of the powerful Varang City-States, Yane is located in the Southeast. The Varang follow a complex and rigid caste system based on the time and day of an individual's birth and are obsessed with astrology. Because outsiders are not part of their strict hierarchy, high-caste Varangians often attempt to use foreigners as pawns in their conflicts. The rulers of Varang believe the Realm still has a powerful destiny, and they are its staunch allies.

The Lap: The Lap is located far to the west of the other city-states. Like Gem, the Lap is built into the side of a mountain — but in a completely different fashion. Instead of being built in lava tubes, the Lap is a massive honeycomb of clay-brick buildings that ascend the mountain's face. The Lap gains its name from its location, which is in the "lap" of a lonely mountain that, during the First Age, was carved into the shape of a hermit meditating in a cross-legged posture.

The Lap is an agricultural center, and its people grow maize and squash so abundantly that they are exported to the Realm and form the field rations of the legions. The Lap is a tributary of the Realm and is ruled by an elected council of elders.



to the ghosts of their ancestors and to the predator-spirits, in hopes they will keep their children from the herds. It doesn't work very well, but any effort is better than none, as they say.

Marriage in the Southeast is seen as a lifelong partnership that only those who are truly in love should make. Sex outside of marriage and even extramarital affairs are common and accepted as normal parts of existence, though it is considered best to keep affairs an open secret rather than a public matter. Unmarried members of the community live in two- to five-person same-sex groups, and there is no social stigma for bastardy. Men and women are considered social equals. Children trace their lineage through their mother, and if their parents were married, carry their father's name as well.

Inhabitants of the Southeast dress in pantaloons and wooden-soled sandals, and most women wear brassieres or simple bustiers for support. Men typically go shirtless. In formal situations or in the rare cold weather, both sexes wear swallowtail jackets without shirts. In times of war, Southeasterners wear thick leather breastplates and carry ox-hide and wood shields. Favored weapons are the thrusting spear, the machete and the javelin.

The West

To the west lies the Elemental Pole of Water. As one travels outward, the islands are, at first, large and common and grow smaller and less frequent. Past a certain point, there are no more islands, only a horizon where the sea and sky come together. This horizon can be distinguished only at sunrise and sunset. During the day, it is as if one sails in a surfaceless ocean of blue and green, and at night, it is as if the sea is absent and the boat rocks gently as it sails among the stars. The ocean has no scent here because the "smell of the sea" is the smell of dead things rotting in seaside swamps, and it has no sound because the winds are gentle and the swells low. Even experienced seamen find it maddening to sail too far out past the far islands, and it is rarely done, for what is there to find, save more ocean, stretching out until the end of time?

Inhabitants

The West is the least populous of the directions. There is simply less space for human beings to live. Those men that do dwell here on the Western Ocean's countless islands and archipelagos are seafarers and shipbuilders. There is little arable land, making vegetables other than cultivated kelp a luxury. Subsistence food consists of clams, lobster, small fry — anything that lives close to shore. Those who are not merchants or pirates or sailors of some sort are fishermen or shipwrights. A child who cannot sail a boat by the age of six is a child misraised.

Political units in the West are based on the island. Each island or archipelago is its own independent nation. Most are nominal city-states, republics or benign monarchies with no foreign policy to conduct and no realistic hope of extending their grasp. Many are pirate havens, though only Wavecrest and the Neck will openly allow pirate ships to come into port.

PLACES TO COME FROM: THE WEST

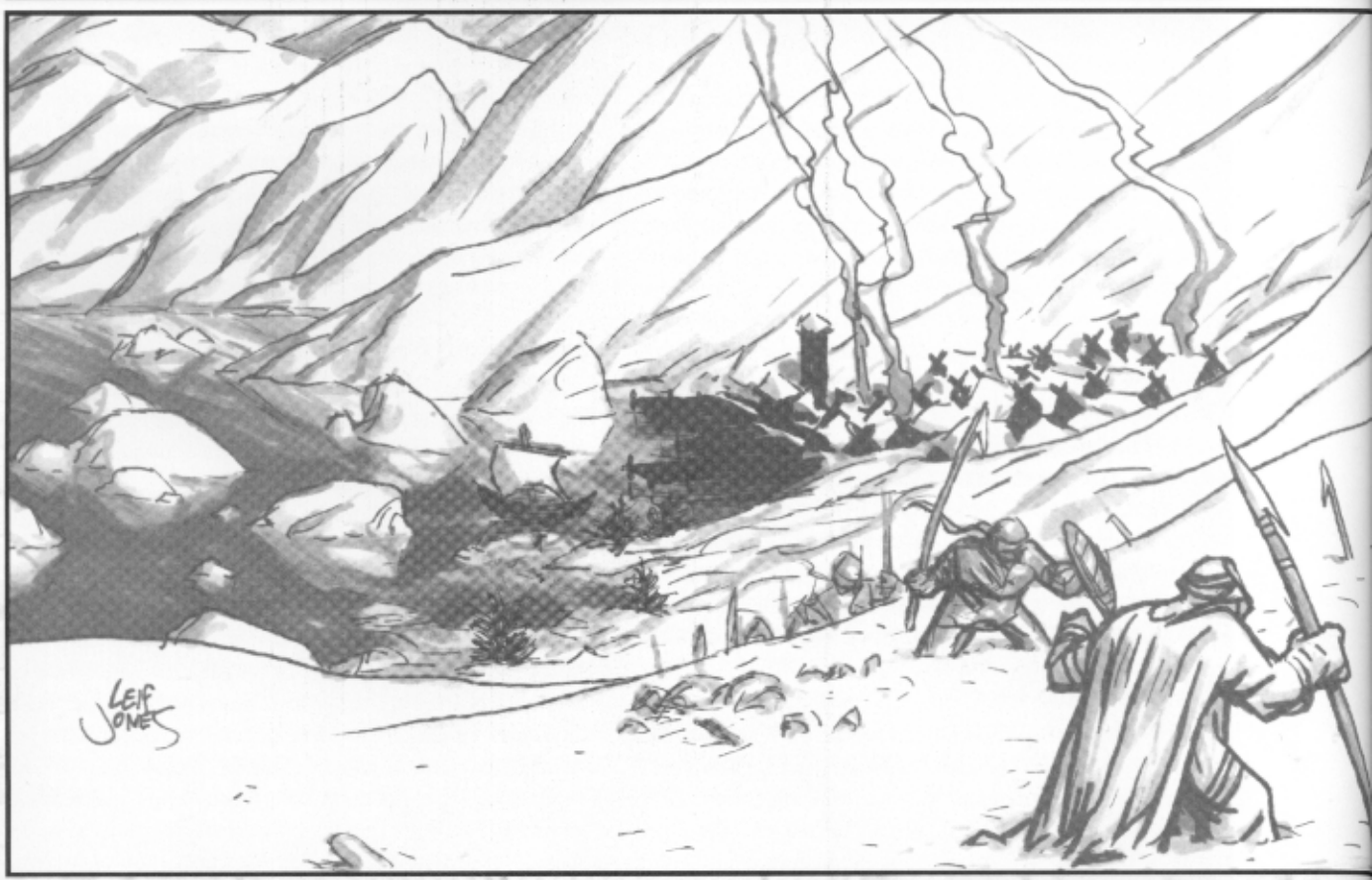
The Neck: A peaceful collection of tiny islands, most inhabitants of the Neck survive by fishing and gathering kelp. The Neck is tributary to the Realm but pays only in cowry shells and coral beads, for its inhabitants have nothing else to give. The Neck is ruled by its elders, who appoint one of their number as spokesman for their islands. The Neck has frequent contact with ocean spirits and water elementals, and many inhabitants bear the tell-tale signs of descent from spirit parents.

Azure: Ruled by an elected dictator, the Coral Archipelago is a militant, aggressive nation. The dictator retains power through a bread and circus policy, appeasing the populace with lavish festivals. In the past, the inhabitants of the Archipelago were restrained in their raiding by the Realm's military might, but now that the Realm has weakened, they have begun to sack and conquer smaller islands.

Abalone: Abalone is the capitol of the Wavecrest Archipelago, a peaceful collection of islands large enough to support agriculture. Wavecrest has a reputation for stolid boredom. Ruled by an elected president known as the Feathered One, Wavecrest is a passive tributary of the Realm that has recently been scaling back its tribute. Wavecrest is divided by gender, with women doing land-based jobs and men doing sea-based ones.

Bluehaven: Bluehaven is not an island, but a nearly impenetrable sargasso sea in the Southwest. Operating from imperishable hulks at the center of this sea wrack is the dreaded Lintha Family. A powerful pirate gang, the Lintha terrorize the sea for hundreds of miles around their weedy citadel. To date, no assault on their stronghold has been successful.

Onyx: Located on Darkmist Isle, Onyx is the capital city of the Skullstone Archipelago, a powerful shadowland in the West. Ruled by the Deathlord Bodhisattva Anointed by Dark Water, only the dead have real voice in the archipelago's government. The archipelago is know for its wealth and for the walking dead used to harvest coral, pearls and shipwrecks. The walking dead are also used as slaves by the living and the dead alike, and the people of this archipelago often lead leisured lives as a result.



A few are dictatorships or theocracies, but there are not many of either. It's too easy to sail away from a despot, and few of those who live and work near the sea are willing to worship it. Most Western settlements are well-organized for defense — piracy is as much about raiding ashore as it is about stopping ships on the high seas, after all.

There are a few large governments. Abalone controls an entire archipelago, and Coral holds three islands large enough to sport working farms, including livestock. But in the big scheme of things, the Coral Archipelago, the largest of the Western states, has only about 250,000 inhabitants, less than a third of what live in the city of Nexus alone. Still, these places each field a navy and an army of some sort and are formidable enough that their neighbors won't risk offending them.

Human raids aside, Fair Folk and water spirits are forever a menace to the cities of the West, picking and choosing where and when to land. On some islands, the problem with siren blandishments is so severe that it is traditional to artificially deafen unwanted children placed into the public trust by puncturing their eardrums repeatedly. These orphans are set to patrolling the shore when they come of age, to hunt mermaids who creep close to shore. Most eventually succumb to the seductions of the ladies of the deep or are killed by vengeful husbands, but it's better than drowning at birth.

The average Westerner is bronze-skinned, with those who dwell in the Far West or Southwest having an almost golden skin tone. Those from the Central West tend toward hair colors in sea shades — green, blue, dark gray. Those in the Southwest tend toward darker shades, primarily purple and black. Westerners dress in sturdy clothes, ankle-length dresses, jerkins and shawls for the women and canvas pants, thick jerkins and waterproof ankle-length canvas jackets for the men. Both sexes wear wool pullover caps when the weather is up, and boots from ankle to knee length are the standard footgear.

Westerners give offerings to the sea spirits and the bow spirits of their ships and the spirits of wind and weather and good fortune. Those who live by the sword and the gaff also make offerings to spirits of war and violence. Western culture is patriarchal, descent patrilineal, and marriage for life. Women tend to be socially isolated. They do the wash and dig clams, but they are generally expected to associate with only other women and usually only other women in their immediate family. Women from outside the island culture are treated as male for the duration of their visit to minimize their cultural impact but are also strongly encouraged to stick to the foreigner's quarters of town rather than test the local hospitality.

The North

To the north is the Elemental Pole of Air. Near the shores of the Inner Sea, the climate is chilly grasslands and pine scrub. But as one goes farther north, the cold becomes increasingly bitter, and the wind grows in strength, until the



taiga stops and the tundra begins. Winters here are long and cruel, and the short summer barely gives the surface of the tundra time to thaw before the ice closes in again. Even in the summer, this is a frigid and windy land, and pelting, freezing rain lashes the herds of elk, mammoth and reindeer than eke out a marginal existence from the bleak landscape. Feeding on the herd animals are omen dog packs, and at times, it seems as if the natural sound of the northern winter night is the low, endless sound of lupine baying.

The tundra eventually turns to a permanently frozen waste that runs to the foothills of the northern mountains. It is said that in the farthest north, past the mountains' divide, there is naught but a great gray expanse of snow and frigid winds. Certainly, this is a hard land, by far the most brutal of the four directions.

INHABITANTS

The North is populous, though not so densely as the South or East. A large number of petty kingdoms and city-states fringe the coastlines of the Inner Sea and the more northerly White Sea. In the south, most are tributaries or puppets of the Realm, with the cities becoming progressively more independent as one travels northward.

Northern states are often rude affairs, usually consisting of an enthroned strongman propped up by a table full of well-fed thugs with swords or axes. Only Whitewall, the Haslanti League and Cherak are states of notable power. In the barren spaces between the seas, the kingdoms shrink to towns, and the city-states become isolated hamlets. Democracy is the rule here because communities are so small and self-reliance is so critical to survival. Most inhabitants of the tundra don't farm, instead relying on hunting and the gathering of edible plants during the short summer to survive. The North is also the land of the elk and mammoth herders, who follow the yearly migration of the herds from east to west and back again.

The final sort of Northern inhabitant is the exile. The Far North is full of Demesnes unclaimed because the climate is so brutal and the existence so harsh that not even Dragon-Blooded outcastes are attracted. And into this void creep the castoffs of the Realm, the newborn Solar Exalted seeking places of power to refine their skills and the cultists seeking a place to perform their dark rites. Whatever cannot bear the scrutiny of even a disinterested observer eventually makes its way to the North, there to fester or (more often) to freeze solid or be torn apart by a barbarous raiding party.

Northerners primarily make offerings to the ancestor cult and to the dark spirits of snow and frost and hunger. Herders and hunters typically offer sacrifices to the herd animal spirits and to the spirits of the hunt, respectively, but the vast majority of devotions go to the ghosts of the departed. This ancestor worship, combined with the miserable conditions of Northern existence and the extreme weakness of the Shroud between the living and the dead in this place where life barely exists at all, makes the natives easy prey for the Deathlords. There are many shadowlands in the North, particularly in the steppes and bogs where the Wyld tribesmen dwell. At least two Deathlords — the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible and the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears — dwell in that region with their deathknights, and both enjoy large followings among the living.

Northerners dress in sturdy clothes, usually leather with the fur left on it and turned inward for insulation. Footgear usually consists of wool or felt puttees and sandals worn under a fur-lined, waterproof overboot. Mittens are common, as are large poncho-like parkas woven loosely out of thick yarn and covered with a windproof leather layer. Long wool caps, turbans and even longer scarves are worn, and skis are common as well.

Northerners have no set marriage customs. Life is hard, and those able to survive are unlikely to be bothered by whether the neighboring couple is of the same or different genders. If the ghosts of the ancestors do not signal their displeasure, then it's a fine marriage and deserves prosperity. Northerners live in an environment where everyone must pull their own weight and where one too many mouths can mean everyone starves — as a result, they typically expose deformed or unwanted children.

Favored weapons are a thick-bladed axe (thick to prevent it from spalling when used in cold weather) and the spear. Ranged weapons are surprisingly common, as many Northerners consider archery a devotion to the wind-spirits. Additionally, some Northerners use an interesting and somewhat disturbing device — the glider. Made in the shape of a box kite or batwing, these are taken to a tall place and turned to catch the wind, which carries the rider aloft. This is an amazingly dangerous activity, as the materials are often weakened by the cold and a single unexpected gust can cause the glider to disintegrate.

However, gliders allow rapid movement and give an unbeatable combat advantage against earthbound opponents. A skilled pilot can guide a glider on a bombing run, even in heavy winds. Medium-sized rocks are fairly common payloads, but more common are incendiaries. Most of the unpleasant creatures of the North fear fire, and a single direct hit with a pine-resin and lamp-oil bomb is usually enough to chase off even a fairly large pack of yeti or omen dogs.

Other devices have been devised to take advantage of the wind as well — particularly common are snowboats (narrow sailboats on runners) and a form of paraski, where the skier deploys a silk or cotton canopy into the wind and is yanked along behind it, often at tremendous speeds. Though not very good for long-distance travel, this does allow escapes from Northern predators, who, as a rule, can run significantly faster than a man.

Places to Come From: The North

Gethamane: Located in the mountainous Far North, Gethamane in an ancient city from the First Age. Abandoned until a few centuries ago, Gethamane was reinhabited by refugees, who eat the fruits of the city's fungus gardens and maintain its ancient temple. Gethamane is known for the passages beneath the city, from which man-devouring horrors occasionally emerge. Gethamane has never paid tribute to the Realm.

Whitewall: With almost a million inhabitants, Whitewall is the largest city in the North. Only a few day's travel from a shadowland and a Wyld area, the city is protected from the depredations of the fey and the hungry dead by a pact struck by the Syndics — four powerful embodied spirits who rule the city. Whitewall borders the White Sea but is joined to the coast of the Inner Sea by a road that magically keeps itself free of snow and ice. The city of Whitewall pledges fealty to the Realm but has never paid it tribute.

Icehome: Icehome is the capital of the Haslanti League, a loose alliance of city-states that lie along the shores of the White Sea in the Far North. The Haslanti are ruled by oligarchs and are skilled craftsmen and traders. They sell mammoth ivory and amber to the Realm, as well as refined ore and manufactured metal goods. The Haslanti people are known for their novel modes of transport — ice ships, gliders and even the rare air boats, which use bags of heated air to lift them above the ground. The Haslanti people are nominal tributaries of the Realm but have withheld tribute for the last three years.

Cherak: One of the city-states on the northern shore of the Inner Sea, Cherak is ruled by House Ferem, an offshoot of the Dynasty known for Dragon-Blooded offspring. Cherak subsists on whaling and as the shipping port for the wares of the various city-states bordering the White Sea. The Ferem family has a reputation within the Realm as being country bumpkins, but they are loyal clients of the Realm.

The Icewalkers: A nomadic people, the icewalkers travel the lands between the Inner Sea and the White Sea. They normally live from the herds of arctic animals they follow. Different icewalker groups follow different animals, and they take their names from them — hence, there are mammoth-folk, reindeer-folk, elk-folk and so on. The tribes worship the spirits of the herds they follow and protect the herd from predators. When times are hard, the icewalkers often raid isolated settlements.

The Wyld

The primal energies of creation still run strong and deep during the current age. In most places, the static fabric of reality is only a thin film atop the endless potential of unformed chaos. During the Old Realm, the world was stable, but after the Great Contagion, it began to fray at the edges and in the thin spots. Tiny clusters of survivors were not enough to remember the shape of the world, and the Fair Folk opened the gates at the edge of Creation and caused great spirit-storms of mischance and unchained possibility to enter the world through them. The effect was devastating. Vast swaths of Creation simply disappeared, and in the places where the barbarians and Fair Folk rode were sewn madness and discord, devastating not only the inhabitants, but twisting the nature of reality itself.

The further one travels from the stable center of the Realm, the thinner the fabric becomes, until, at the edges of the world, distance and time are dim memories, and only the lunar ebb and flow remains. Further still, and there is nothing but a timeless madness, a din of potential so great it permits no reckoning and no meaning. Nothing mortal can survive unprotected in these lunatic realms — beyond the edge of Creation there lie only the high courts of the unshaped Fair Folk, where even the Lunar Exalted dare not tread without good reason.

Wyld Places

For centuries, there have been places where the sky swims with ever-changing colors and the ground crawls with snow, with ash, with writhing flesh or carnivorous steel ants. Some occur naturally, but most are the remains of places where the Wyld claimed an ancient Manse or Demesne. These places shrink with the passage of centuries, but there are still large areas of the Threshold where the rules of Creation are loosely enforced, if they have any jurisdiction at all. The border marches of such places tend to resemble the areas in which they occur, save that they are rife with prodigies — crystal flowers, birds of many colors, briars which bleed wine instead of sap. As one travels deeper, the landscape quavers and shifts as if it were hallucination, and the prodigies grow more marvelous and fell — dandelions whose seeds are small warriors in mail, carnivorous shadows and oak trees whose galls are full of diamonds so poisonous a single whiff from them will kill a man.

To live in these places invites a form of ecstasy, a commune with potentiality that causes one to forget



limitations, to recapture lost dreams, to experience each event as if for the first time. Yet, to dwell in such places is also to invite madness and death. As the mind forgets its limitations, so does the body forget its shape. After several years of exposure to the emanations of these places, the inhabitants are often unrecognizable shambling masses of random body parts, feathers and suckers and glittering glass, all hematite eyes and cloven hooves. Lost to the ecstatic bliss of an instantaneous existence, these mutants are unpredictable, sometimes merely staring and laughing at intruders and other times launching savage attacks. There is no known cure for this strange cancer: If removed from the sustaining influence of the Wyld, these creatures typically wither from their own improbability, as they pine for an existence without past or future.

Yet, the aura of inconstancy is not the only hazard. These places are thick with Fair Folk, for here they are at home and can exist without dwindling away for want of dreams to eat. But Wyld places are also thick with other, less identifiable things. Animals as well as men are twisted by the Wyld's influence, and the beasts that live in such places are often monstrously deformed. Many are quite aggressive, and their mutations are disturbingly prone to breeding true. Barbarian tribes of the far Threshold often dwell near these places and think them holy for their plethora of spirits and the visions that shamans gain from meditating within these regions. Most dangerously, the great Wyld storms that laid the Old Realm to waste often linger deep within the largest such places, their vortices still blowing around abandoned and forgotten Demesnes.

Wyld Barbarians

At the borders of Creation, where the line between reality and chaos shifts with the cycles of the moon, there dwell strange and twisted men. These inhabitants of the fringes of Creation are warped by the power of the Wyld. Some tribes exhibit shocking deformities — gigantism, dwarfism, more or fewer limbs or sense organs than normal for the human form and other similarly radical mutations.

Like most inhabitants of the Threshold, the tribes of the Wyld worship spirits. Most barbarian communities have shamans who use a combination of folk magic, ecstatic meditations in Wyld areas and offerings of blood and edible plants to converse with the spirits. As a rule, Wyld barbarians hold spirits in extreme reverence — in many of the areas they inhabit, spirits may enter the material world at will. Indeed, many barbarian tribes are led by spirits of some sort.

Though each barbarian tribe is unique, some are exemplary of their type or particularly numerous. These are described below, but it should be kept in mind that the list provided is by no means exhaustive.



Eastern Tribes

The tribes of the East are forest people. In the north and central East, most such tribes are degenerate communities of brigands and inbred, back-country clans. Both tend to keep their blood "fresh" through kidnaping potential mates, and mate-hunting raids are a major threat, even as far west as the River Province. The tribes of the East raid for other reasons as well — for booty, food and manufactured goods they cannot produce themselves. Though most exhibit the signs of mixed parentage, Eastern barbarians two or three generations removed have bark-brown or ash-gray complexions, with autumn-orange, coal-black or snow-white hair. Most Eastern barbarians use the weapons of the region — axe, bow and spear — and those on raids wear the best armor they can scavenge.

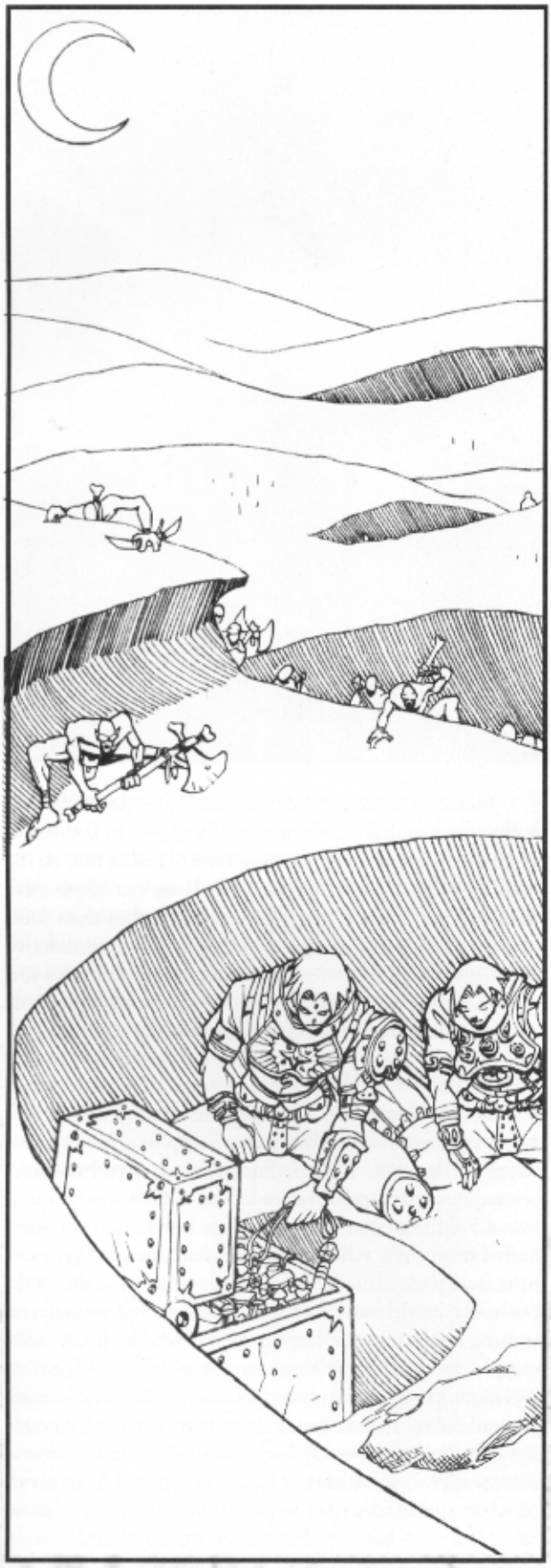
Further south, the backwoods clans give way to jungle savages. These tribesmen have milk-chocolate or bright-green skin and hair that grows or is dyed to every color of the tropical rainbow. The Southeastern tribes practice elaborate forms of spirit worship and are notable for their extreme hostility toward the Fair Folk of the area. The Southeasterners raid to propitiate their blood-hungry spirit patrons and to increase their personal prestige — it is a great coup to blowgun someone in an improbable fashion and then escape without being seen.

Most Southeastern tribesmen are frequent users of strong hallucinogens, making them quite dangerous in combat. It can take their warriors quite some time to realize that all the bright-red blood covering the area is in fact their own. Southeastern warriors rarely wear armor other than loincloths and war paint, though the latter can have a protective effect, given that it is often a form of prayer or entreaty to a spirit patron. Their standard weapons are the blowgun, bow and spear, and the use of poison is horrifically common.

Southern Tribes

In the Southeast, the barbarian tribes are largely cattle thieves. Many suffer from communicable veldt diseases — leprosy, joint inflammations, elephantiasis, contagious warts and other maladies; indeed, a great number of Southeastern "barbarians" are former Thresholders exiled from their villages for their contagions. Many expire, from their illnesses or from the predators of the veldt, but some hardy souls find that there are fellow-sufferers waiting on the fringes of civilization. These bands of sickly cripples are little more than human jackals, but they are still as cunning as men, and they often have spirit patrons who alleviate their suffering in exchange for sacrifice.

Though most veldt barbarians suffer from several diseases, groups are almost never homogenous in terms of what sicknesses they suffer from and communicate their illnesses back and forth among the band. Those



who are too sick to help steal livestock are left at the camp to take care of domestic chores, and those who are too sick to tend the camp are given as offerings to the Fair Folk, to buy the safety of the rest of the band. Most veldt barbarians dress in rags, if they dress at all, and are the mottled colors of the carious illnesses they bear. The typical savanna scavenger carries a club, a sturdy sharpened stick or a rusty machete.

In the central and western South, the barbarians are considerably more insidious. The so-called Dune People are among the most feared of the Wyld barbarians. These albino savages dwell in the deepest desert, on the very fringes of the region where the heat abates at night. The Dune People sleep beneath the surface of the desert all day, breathing through tubes made of hollow human thighbones. At night, they slip from their sandy beds and pad silently across the dunes and scree, hunting by smell and sound in the pitch-black desert night.

The Dune People creep close to camps, silently eliminate the sentries and then spring upon the unsuspecting victims en masse. Dune People wear no clothing and use heavy boomerangs and hammers and axes made from stone and human bone and tendon. Those captured by the Dune People are devoured, their blood rendered down into water and their bones used for tools. It is said the Dune People's spirit patrons give them power over the mirage and the sandstorm, in exchange for the souls of those the Dune People slay.

Western Tribes

Most barbarians in the West are concentrated in the Southwest, where the volcanic and coral isles offer poor harborage and have thus never attracted settlement by more civilized inhabitants. Not that driving out the natives would be an easy task — the inhabitants of these islands are incredibly fierce. These tribesmen have few goals in their existence other than to climb into their oceangoing outrigger canoes and paddle off to raid other islands or any ships they happen to come across.

Western barbarians are extraordinarily superstitious, obeying a rigid and seemingly endless list of taboos that prevent them from performing any number of seemingly inconsequential actions without suffering the wrath of the spirits. Southwestern warriors believe that if they eat the brain and liver of fallen foes, the foes' ghosts become the slaves of the tribesmans' ancestors. Most Southwestern tribes do obeisance to the spirit of the volcano at the center of their isles, though those who dwell on atolls often instead make offerings to various oceanic spirits.

Warriors of the Southwest dress in a dazzling variety of armors, made from the scales of pangolins, the shells of sea turtles, the skin of siaka, coconut hulls, tropical woods, hammered strands of volcanic copper and every other possible sort of adornment that might offer protective value. The armor is typically of questionable value, but it

looks impressive, and most warriors spend endless hours fashioning and refashioning their armor for maximum intimidation value. Typical weapons are the javelin, the spear and the elaborately carved ebony-and-copper mace, which is fashioned into the depiction of the minor war spirit who protects the warrior in question. Western barbarians typically have blue, green or aqua skin and hair, though some who have volcano spirits in their ancestry have scarlet or copper hair.

Northern Tribes

As in the West, Northern Wyld barbarians are the inhabitants of one particular region in general — the brutal bogs and steppes of the Northwest. These barbarians are said to be the prototypes of humans or the survivors of a manlike primordial race pushed here, to the uttermost extremity, by the emergence of the modern race of men. The barbarians of the Northwest are yellow-skinned and slouched, with thick brows and broad jaws, strong shoulders and sharp, pointed teeth. Most have white hair, which is typically worn long.

Northern tribes typically form clan structures, with the clans dwelling in long, low wooden houses during the summer. Large poles are erected in front of these lodges, depicting the various spirit patrons of the clan, sea and air and land beasts known to bring fertility and good luck at war and hunting. The names of these are known only to the barbarians of the North, and perhaps, like their worshipers, they are the diminished survivors of an age past.

During the summer, the barbarians hunt reindeer, whale, fish and gather sea-bird eggs. When winter comes, they either break into family units, take to the ice and hunt mammoths or else gather together as clans and raid across the tundra against the settlements to the east. The average Northern barbarian goes to war in an ankle-length jacket made from mammoth or elk hide and wields either a semi-sharp hardwood "axe" or a club made from hardwood and spiked with whale or elk bone. These barbed spikes are typically coated with feces or some other sort of infectant and are mounted only loosely to the club head, so that they remain in the wounds. The shamans of the Northern barbarians are particularly fierce, and the gifts and Charms of their spirit patrons are strange and feared.

Shadowlands

The land of the dead lies perilously near that of the living, and in places where the boundaries have been crossed and recrossed, the dividing line often frays into nonexistence. In these places, known as shadowlands, the Underworld thrusts through, and the dead walk among the living. During the daylight hours, those who cross the borders of these places traveling outward find themselves in the lands of the living. Those who leave them during the night find themselves traveling further into the Underworld.

Common Traits

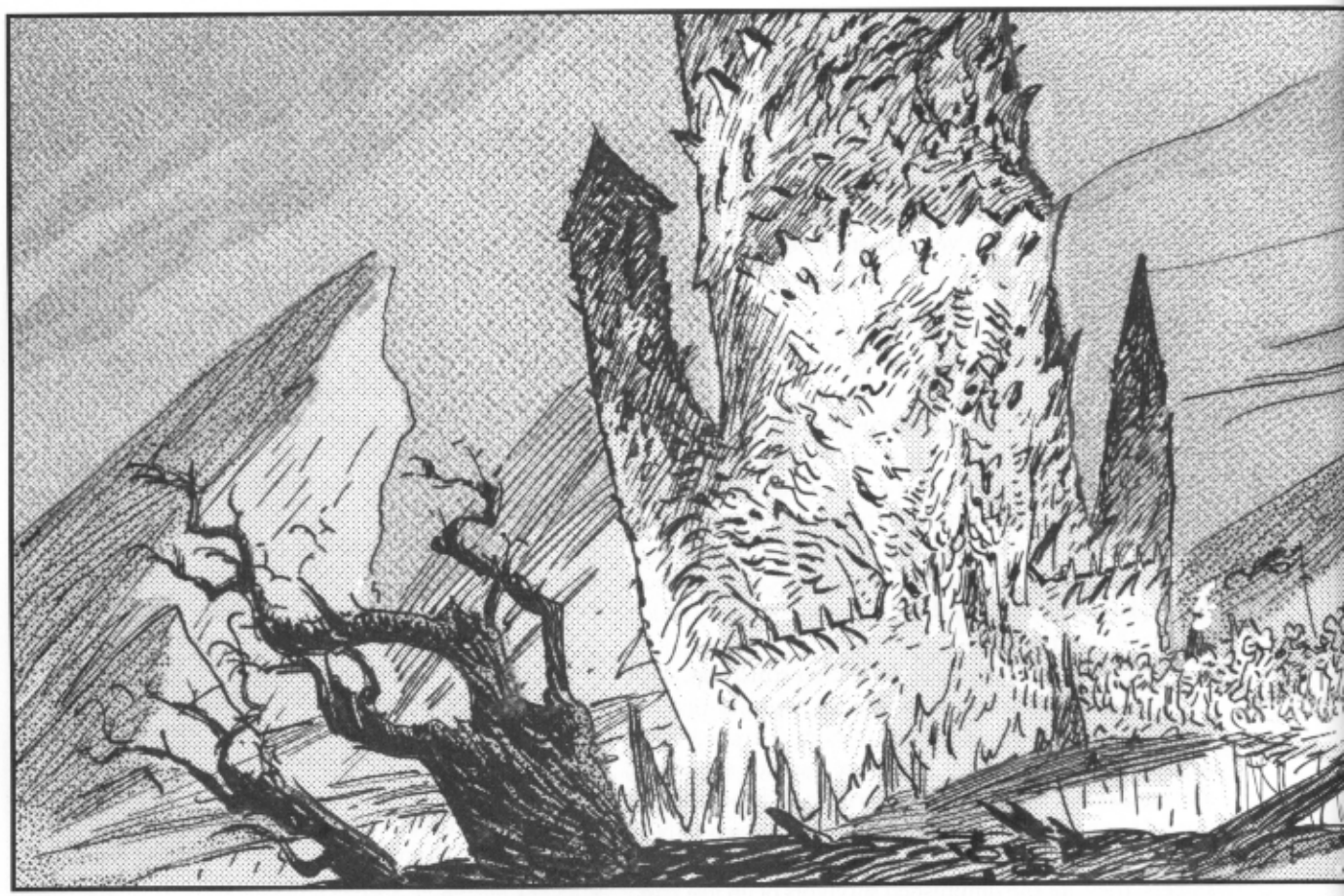
There is no place that the Underworld does not go, nowhere that death cannot touch. But despite their endless variety, there are certain common traits to the places where the dead walk among the living. The absence of animal life, the terrible nightmares, the tendency of those who live on the edges of such places to die early — all are common to every shadowland. But there are other, less obvious signs as well. Storms in these areas are often of unusual strength, the raindrops sometimes mixed with blood or ash or bone or, sometimes, quicksilver. This, the Deathlords say, is the rotting flesh of dead gods, shed from their bodies as they lie unquiet in their tombs beneath the world.

The stone in such places is often twisted and dark, as black and reflectionless as unpolished jet. Sometimes, it is devoid of natural design, but more often, it bears the pointless mazy markings of the Underworld. In most places, the striation is shallow, as noticeable and superficial as the layering of sandstone. But in other places, great palaces — even cities — formed from the black stone of the Labyrinth have been heaved up into the lands where the living and the dead can meet. It is said that, to erect these structures, the Deathlords offer souls to the dead gods buried beneath the Underworld, piling offering on offering until the scent rouses a fallen god enough that it reaches upward for the sacrifice. Their great arms crack and buckle the very fabric of the Underworld, pushing up castles and fortresses in their hunger. And thus it is that, at the center of every Deathlord's palace, there is a shaft that reaches into the darkness no light may penetrate, and if you listen closely at the edge, you can hear the distant dreaming of a dead god.

Deathlords

Most shadowlands are the products of little more than happenstance. The wall between life and death is new and fragile, and too many sudden deaths or a spate of hauntings is all that it takes to rend the Shroud far enough that event follows on event and tears a true opening. Yet, at the heart of the greatest shadowlands lie the Manses of the Deathlords, ancient ghosts whose hatred has allowed them to master the power of the Underworld itself.

Deathlords vary wildly in appearance, having reshaped themselves to match their self-images and the images they wish to project. Some are alabaster angels, wrapped in wings of sobbing knife-edged steel, with diadems of pale white fire and glittering ruby orbs and scepters of hungry yellow gold upon their belts. Others are little more than masses of moaning soulsteel armor, and still others wear corpselike images of themselves as they were in death, wrapped in the cerements of the grave and stinking of their scented funeral pyre, the wounds of murder still fresh upon them.



And some are no longer anything resembling human, having made the descent into the dark hallways under the land of the dead. These Deathlords are among the more personally powerful of their kind. Though they command the very elements of the Underworld and walk between life and death as if it were a simple doorway, these creatures no longer think as men think or feel as men feel. Their eyes behold an infinity of darkness, and their hearts know only the leaping exaltation of silence.

The Deathlords fight amongst themselves incessantly, constantly warring to advance themselves and their plans or for the sake of ego or simply for the love of strife. Though they command great forces, they have no common center. Each wishes to lash out at the world around her in her own personal fashion to recompense it for her death. The result is 100 little kingdoms of bone and steel and not a military juggernaut whose sole purpose is to crush the living and reunite all things across the Shroud.

Other Inhabitants

Those who dwell in the shadowlands are marked by the experience. The living are pale and fragile, already holding hands with death. Most are devout worshipers of the death cult, their whole existence a preparation for the moment of their demise, their every spare moment given to the propitiation of the ever-present ancestors. Their couplings are rarely fertile, and children conceived and carried to term in such places are often born with cauls on their faces and marked by unearthly beauty as well as strong gifts of mediumship. Animals kept within a shadowland are nervous and flighty and rarely bear live young.

But the living and their beasts of burden are not the only inhabitants of these places where life and death embrace. The dead walk here as well, and they take many shapes. Those who no longer have bodies are half-real, visible in all but the strongest light and capable of making love to the living or striking hard enough to wound during the night-time hours.

In these places during the night, ghosts can be mistaken for the living, save that their flesh is cold and they have no appetite — all mortal food tastes as dust to the dead, and they eat and drink only their own dishes. Those corpses whose owners were not strong enough to rise as ghosts the Deathlords use as slaves, forcing fragments of wicked spirits into the corpses. The spirits of such creatures cannot maintain a body as it was in life, and these walking corpses are typically rotten and shambling, slow-witted but immensely strong and surprisingly quick.

The dead are not the only inhabitants of this dry and bitter realm. There are other creatures. Some, such as the



The Coming of the Deathlords

It was as large as a small city, but just the same, it was moving, and the whole thing smelled like dead animals bloating in the summer sun. It seemed unlikely that this rank thing had ever seen the sun, or if it had, it must have just grabbed on to any light or warmth that alighted on it and sucked it in, the way a drowning man grabs on to anyone who comes too near and takes them down with him.

Around it were the pale things that served it, the puffy walking corpses it had dredged up from their graves. The entire abominable conveyance was one gigantic corpse, crawling on its hands and knees across the land. It groaned like a snapping pine as it cleared the final hill before the enormous city. In a heartbeat, the city's Dragon-Blooded "advisors," 20 of them at least, launched their assault. The zombies were easy targets for the elemental Charms of the Dragon-Blooded. The dead burned easily, greasily; they were sucked into the earth; they were blown away on winds or washed away by waves that the Dragon-Blooded conjured from nowhere.

For servants of a corrupt empire, the Dragon-Blooded fought with a remarkable nobility. Their martial prowess served them even when their elemental Charms were exhausted. When the shadow of the necropolis oozed over their small forms, they had defeated every last zombie, and only a fraction of their number had fallen.

It was then that the deathknights emerged from the colossal corpse. Three by three, they swarmed out, their heads all cowled and all of them carrying soulsteel weapons. They commanded ghosts to harry the Dragon-Blooded and blinded the Dynasts with shadows that fire couldn't burn away. The combat was over very quickly, and the bodies of the Dragon-Blooded were pulled into the necropolis as it crept to the wall of the city and set about its horrible work.

That city once had a name. It was called Thorns. It will not require the passage of a great deal of time to render that name unknown to all but savants.



great and tireless black stallions ridden by the deathknights, are only supernatural versions of creatures known among the living. Others have no equivalent among creatures known to the living and, instead, resemble tattered fragments of dreams or wayward nightmares, twisted creatures in a thousand shapes kept as pets and watchdogs and lovers by the Deathlords. Luckily for the world at large, these creatures have no place in Creation outside the land of the dead and cannot exist for long outside the Underworld or the shadowlands.

The Fair Folk

These malevolent creatures spring from the Wyld, where chaos mixes and gives rise to something that might generously be described as life. Though they are similar in appearance to mortals, it is a matter of appearance only. The faerie are made half from the mad passion of dreams and half from the primal energies of the Wyld, and they know neither morals nor fear. They hurl themselves into their timeless existences without hesitation or regret, and there is nothing in Creation that can deter one from its wrath or love.

The most powerful of the Fair Folk dwell beyond the edges of Creation, eschewing shape and form to dwell in the primal chaos that is their natural home. Only the outcasts, refugees and weak among them put on shape and enter the world of men.

Most Fair Folk who dwell in our world live in Wyld regions or else on the very edges of Creation. The natural alchemy that permits their existence is unstable without a high level of ambient Essence, and if deprived of it, they will soon fade into dust and scraps of memory. But Essence is not the only requirement for their survival. Just as natural predators must eat other creatures to survive, so the Fair Folk must consume dreams to continue their existence. Some are adept at snatching dreams from sleeping mortals or at feeding from the ambient imagination released during the creative process.

More commonly, the faerie feed on captive prey. Through their sorceries and their vast beauty, they ravish the souls of their victims, shearing away love and dreams and hope with a surgeon's skill and taking them all into themselves. The shells that survive this treatment are forever devoid of dreams and desires and know neither grief nor hope. The faerie often trade these husks to the Guild in exchange for fresh slaves. The Guild, in turn, sells the husks for use in mining or construction, where the work is hard and risky but simple.

Not all Fair Folk are such craftsmen, or rather, not all care to be. Where there is food aplenty, they often simply rip and rape away the victim's brightest dreams and aspirations, taking love and valor, creativity and the appreciation of beauty and leaving behind a twisted victim



whose only dreams are small and craven, but one still able to regret and remember that once, he was whole. Sadly, most such wretches have been stripped of the courage to end their existences.

The Fair Folk are vulnerable to the bite of unalloyed iron and fear and hate those who wield it. Though they are adept liars, they are unable to break their sworn word, and a promise given is a promise kept. Similarly, though they are often master shapeshifters, the faerie do have a true form, which they must assume when someone speaks their true and secret name. To know a Fair One's name is to be proof against her magic, and she will plot and scheme endlessly to destroy those who can use her name against her and to obliterate the name from memory.

Nobility

The sort of Fair Folk most commonly seen are the nobility, who are far more common among their kind than nobility among mortals. The Fair Folk do not need true food and drink — they are dreams made solid and stabilized with Essence, and they see no difference between the illusion of food and the reality. With no need for farmers and herders, the dream logic that governs the creation of the faerie produces them less often.

The East: Clothing, to the Fair Folk, is an expression of their being, and it is accordingly just as baroque and impossible as the Fair One who wears it. Though the appearance of the Fair Folk's raiment varies, most is made from gossamer, a form of solidified dream. Depending on how it is shaped, gossamer can be as supple as silk or as hard as adamant, of any color or texture. Those nobles who dwell in the East favor clothes with forest motifs, often wearing cloaks of leaves and juniper-berry tassels that turn to brilliant autumnal grandeur as the year progresses. For these Fair Ones, winter is a time of bare and snow-touched grace, as they gown themselves in leafless branches and the threadbare pelts of winter starvelings. All favor wooden armor and the forester's weapons, spear, axe and bow.

The Fair Folk of the Northeast are typically dark, wearing black and green all year and favoring night over day, snow over sunlight. Those of the jungles garb themselves in the brilliant colors of their tropical home — rainbows of feathers and flowers, tropical fruits and poisonous frog skin. These faerie use the blowgun, spear and club in their hunting. The methods by which they extract the dreams from their prey are unspeakable, involving jungle hallucinogens and long hours of torment. It is thought better by the local tribes to die by fire than to fall into their hands, and the local tribes are correct in this assessment.

The South: In the savanna, the Fair Folk do not live in one place but, instead, move across the land in the shape of lion prides. These prides do not take captives, but instead, individual lions slip into towns and villages in the night.



THE EATERS OF DREAMS

Not *all* of the Fair Folk are soulless ravagers of men. In some places, small groups of Fair Folk have reached a peaceful, or at least bearable, coexistence with the mortals around them, feeding only as they need to and not so much from any one individual that he is seriously damaged. Often, these groups are escaped servitors who slipped free of their noble masters through luck or mischance. Others were left behind when the faerie fell back at the end of the Great Contagion, scattered as stay-behind troops to harass and vex the mortals.

However, in some cases, there are even nobles living in these communities, and they have been recorded as defending their homes and mortal subjects from attack by other faerie. The Mountain Folk of the Realm, for example, once marched in the armies of the empire and still forge wonders at the behest of the Dragon-Blooded. Many scholars speculate that such breakaway communities are inevitable, as the chaotic potential of the Fair Folk must on some occasions generate order or a self-sustaining system as well as simple madness. Whatever the case, though they are rare and typically overshadowed by the actions of their people as a whole, there are Fair Folk living among men who do not prey upon them.

They enter houses and share the breath of dreamers, entering their dreams and devouring them from within. It is a dreadful fate to be cat-ridden, as it is called, for this method of feeding devours the victim's soul as well as her dreams.

Accordingly, the inhabitants encircle themselves with charms and wards against the black-tufted lion-Folk. But some are caught away from home at night when a pride is near and set upon and made willing to let the lions in. Others are beguiled by the murmurs of the lions as they lie outside the walls and windows in the night. The lion-Folk whisper of the joy of the victim, of the erotic perfection of the moment when the neck is snapped, of the glory of living on in the soul of an immortal predator. And, inevitably, there are some who listen to the lion-Folk's song.

The Fair Folk of the Far South are desert riders, dwellers in mirage and shadow, whose horses ride faster than an arrow and are more crafty than a dozen foxes. The wind whispers tales into the Fair Folk's ears, and they wear the clothing of their desert land — flowing robes and square-toed boots, burnooses and broad-brimmed hats. Yet, they are no erg-dwelling tribesmen. Their kaftans are sewn from the fabric of dreams and desert poems, flashing with romance and revenge, and embroidered with the calligraphy of a thousand fables in brilliant diamond thread.

Neither are they heroes — their raids strike without warning on the tents of mortal tribesmen, carrying away the young and the beautiful, leaving only bitter old women and men behind to weep at the loss. The desert riders are also wicked tricksters, even beyond the normal scope of the Fair Folk's darkly malicious sense of humor. It is thought great fun among them to take the shape of an asp and slither into the tents of the women, striking at their heels as they walk barefoot. Others slip up to sleepers and whisper words of illness in their ears or spoil a clan's water in the wasteland between oases.

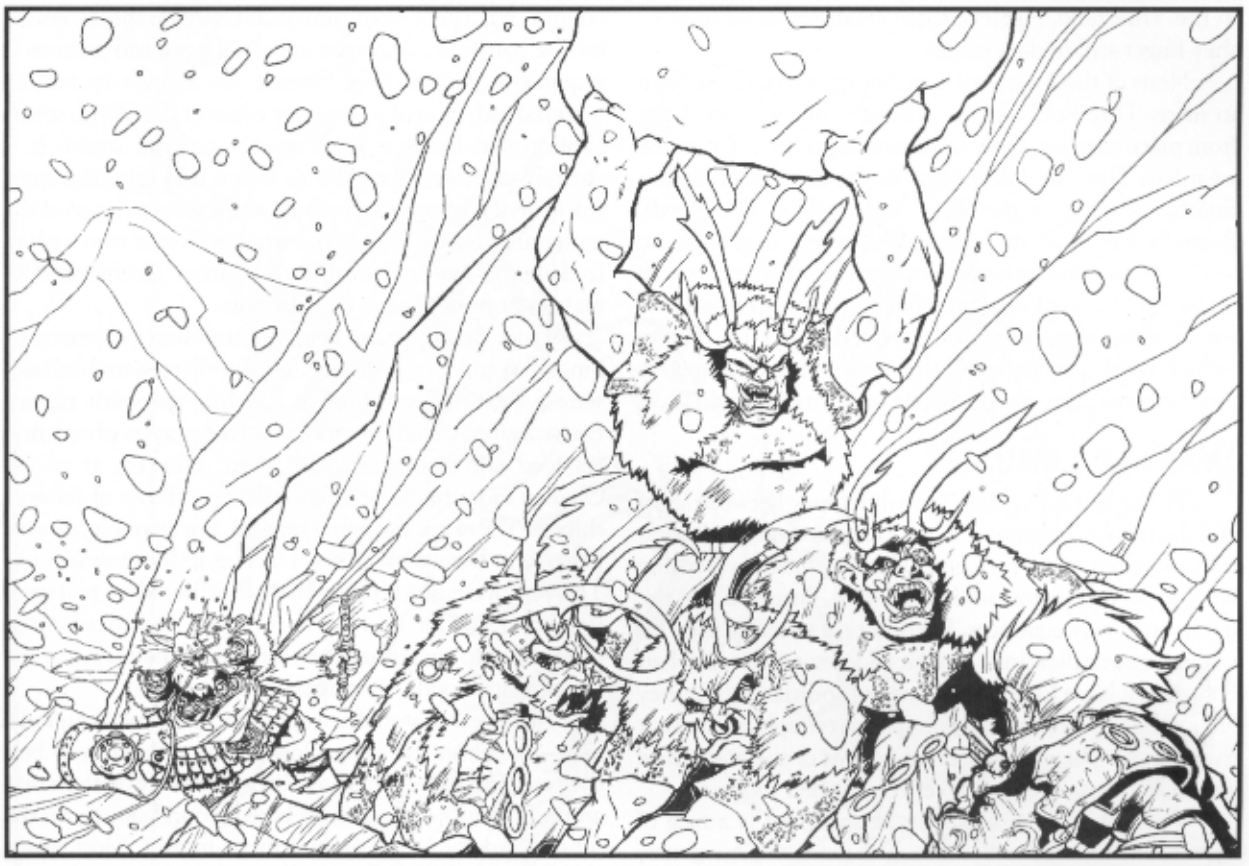
The West: Those Fair Ones who dwell in the Southwest are warlike, dwelling on tropical isles whose beaches are washed by lethal currents. With their outrigger canoes and their wooden masks, their tame siaka and squid and their command of the sea, they sail where they will and raid as they wish. Cannibals, they steal the dreams from their victims' boiled flesh, though some delight in tricking the unwary into violating taboos and feeding on the anguish. These Fair Folk dress in paint, tattoos and little else. They wear no armor, for they do not know fear, and in any case, the designs they draw across their bodies are so fearsome that few can bear to oppose them.

The Fair Folk who dwell in the West and the Northwest are creatures of the open ocean, making their homes beneath the waves in great palaces or in sea-caves. Like the Fair Folk of the Southwest, the male Fair Folk of the West are great raiders, though they do not boil and eat their victims. Instead, they carry them off alive, wrapped in cocoons of air to sustain them for their underwater journey. As the victims' dreams die, the air fouls. When they have been reduced to husks, they suffocate in the dark beneath the waves. Their bodies are either fed to the Fair Folk's pets and servants or else left to wash up on the beach near where the victims were first taken, their dead eyes hollow and their flesh torn by crabs.

The womenfolk of the Western Fair Folk hunt as well, though they pursue their prey differently. Some are cruel and bitter and sing up storms to smash ships, so that their sisters can snatch up the survivors as they slip into the deep. Others are cruel and sweet and sit upon the rocks near fishing villages or swim beside ships, singing sweet songs to the girls of the village or to sailors on late watch. As with the lion-Folk of the veldt, there is no deception, only misportrayal. Those who go into the mermaids' arms know full well their eventual fate but have been beguiled into believing it a sweet one.

The Fair Folk of the West often go bare-chested, but dress in kilts of fish scale or sail canvas. Both sexes ornament themselves heavily with pearls and with the riches of the surface world that fall into their hands. The men arm themselves with nets, tridents and spears, and the women carry no weapons save their curses and the scarlet rouge they wear upon their lips and nipples.

The North: The North is a harsh land of ice and tundra, of endless winters and short, functional summers. These brutal conditions color the Fair Folk who inhabit it



accordingly. The faerie of this place are hard and fell and merciless. They ride as raiders in the depths of winter, with white omen dogs baying around the feet of their black stallions and sleighs full of ice chains to hold the coffles of victims. Those who fall into the clutches of this hunt are never seen again, for the Winter People feed on them until they are naught but leather and bones, drinking even their victims' blood for its dreams of warmth. They cover the remains in water, shape them and freeze them into ornamentation for the doorways and walls of their palaces and long, low halls.

The Winter People dress similarly to the mortals of their region but far more extravagantly. They wear breastplates and thick bronze chainmail when they ride to war and bundle themselves heavily in omen dog and ermine fur and in leather of mammoth and elk hide. Indoors, the men wear wool tunics and pants, and their women wear tunics and ankle-length skirts. Most Winter People have cow or wolf tails and often take great care to hide this fact. Women of the Winter People sometimes walk in the midst of snowstorms clad only in their shifts. Those who accept their offered bargain of bliss for warmth are often left to live, so that they can be fed upon again and again. These poor souls are known as "snow ghosts" or "snow dolls" and can be seen walking the roads in the midst of the worst snowstorms, casting their eyes desperately back and forth, searching for their lovers.

Commoners

Not every faerie is a noble, though the nobility is, by far, the most commonly seen by outsiders. Inside their warrens and Demesnes, there are others sorts of faerie. Their shapes and purposes are many; swift messengers, ravenous hunters, stolid warriors, sultry sex toys, obsequious servants, obsessive tinkers and craftsmen. Though their appearance varies from area to area, all are as much twisted parodies of humanity as the nobility are exemplars of humanity's self-indulgent dreams of beauty.

The appearance of these faerie slaves varies considerably. None possess the unrivalled beauty of their masters, though some come close. Most, however, are stunted or twisted parodies of the human form, with a generous helping of bestial traits as well. Most are also idiot savants — brilliant at their particular task but less than gifted at other duties. This fact is the reason that, other than those gifted in war and pleasure, the lesser races of faerie are rarely allowed into the public eye.

The one form of servant that is all too familiar to many denizens of the Threshold is the servant-warrior. Many of these creatures were able to escape during the Great Contagion, when their commanders were killed, and many more were freed as stay-behind troops during the chaotic retreat after the Fair Folk were repulsed from the Blessed Isle. Still others were released later, to sow terror and chaos

in the Threshold. Ageless, these creatures never died — they linger still in dark places.

Nests of these escaped warriors are a serious problem in many Threshold regions. Though they vary in shape from place to place, their nature remains that of animate weapons. They are hobgoblins in the East, ghuls in the South, fish-men in the West and trolls in the North. Regardless of what they are called, where they lurk, no settlement or traveler is safe, not even the mighty caravans of the Guild. Most kingdoms offer considerable reward for the heads of these menaces, especially since the Realm (which once used its legions to hunt these creatures) is now far more concerned with its own internal politics.

War and Leisure

To the Fair Folk, there is no difference between sport and day-to-day existence. They know no fear, no hesitation, no remorse and no regret. They approach everything with total dedication and with total disregard for the outcome or consequences. Every action is undertaken for immediate gratification. This fact does not mean that Fair Folk do not have long-term planning abilities or that they have no memories or attention spans. It simply means that the idea of repercussions, moral qualms or the costs of an action to themselves has no effect on their judgment.

The result (from a human perspective) is a race of driven, self-indulgent maniacs. The faerie are constantly at war — with each other and with the world around them. They intrigue incessantly, ride out on hunts for prey and simply for the love of strife, and from time to time, they march against the kingdoms of men at the behest of the Lunar Exalted. After the Great Contagion, it was the Fair Folk who were the outriders of the Wyld, smashing the devastated forces of the Old Realm and using faerie sorceries to unlock the gates at the edge of the world that hold out the greatest spirits of raw chaos.

Spirit Kingdoms

Existence in the spirit world is not easy. The rule of the Celestial Incarna is inscrutable and often brutal. Below them is a strict hierarchy and constant competition for Essence, prayers and holy places. It is inevitable that some spirits seek to escape this tyranny.

Most spirits can manifest themselves in the material world — a draining process and one that many are unwilling to undertake, given the degree to which it will weaken them on their return to the realm of spirit. But at the edges of the Threshold, where the faith in spirit-pantheons is strongest, ambient Essence is readily available and Demesnes are powerful and relatively frequent, there are some spirits who choose to make the material world their primary habitation.

Spirits are like the Fair Folk, in that their physical forms require Essence to exist. However, the materialized condition is a profoundly unnatural state for spirits, unlike for the Fair Folk, who arise as part of a natural process. It requires a great deal of Essence for a spirit to remain materialized. Except at the very edges of the Wyld, spirits cannot gain Essence when in the material world. It is entirely possible for a spirit to starve back into the spirit world or, if it is stubborn enough and refuses to let go of the materialized body, into nonexistence. Spirits who wish to feed in the material world must gather Essence at Demesnes or from prayers and offerings.

Thus, materializing spirits quite often become god-kings or popular religious figures. A well-prepared cult can seize a Demesne and protect it, while the spirit regains Essence after its manifestation, and the prayers of worshipers feed and strengthen the spirit, allowing it to use Charms more frequently, typically in defense of its worshipers. There are also other reasons. For example, there is Essence in human sacrifice as well as in lesser devotions. This sort of feeding is particularly thrilling when materialized, and spirits that accept mortal sacrifices often materialize to encourage their cult and to better enjoy the flavor of its bloody offerings.

Not every materialized spirit becomes the center of a cult — some simply keep a low profile and get by as best they can. But such spirits have little influence on the world around them. Religious cults based around spirits, on the other hand, can have an enormous impact. Most spirits powerful enough to seriously consider taking up habitation in the material world are powerful indeed —equal to one of the mightiest Exalted. Though spirits are often harsh lords, they are rarely worse than the mortal lords around them, and the Threshold is not a place where the weak survive. Better a capricious god-king than ending your existence in the clutches of the Fair Folk, marching in the armies of the Deathlords, or simply starving to death and filling the belly of a raiton.

Behemoths

Great beasts containing fragments of raw Wyld Essence, the so-called behemoths were more common in the First Age, but many of their kind still lurk near the edges of Creation. Though they are to the dead gods as beasts are to men, the behemoths are similar to the Primordials in that each is a unique creature, unlike anything else in Creation. Many of these vast beasts were inspirations for lesser creations and, so, appear as rough prototypes of common creatures: crude dog-beasts, simple siaka, uncomplicated cat-things.

Others never inspired any more pedestrian creations and stand alone as exemplars of paths never taken — too strange to breed true, too full of Creation's primal energies to die. These behemoths typically defy description, though some were inspirations-in-part for things that followed after and can be described in terms of their great plumes of



iridescent peacock feathers, their scaly water-dragon hide or mole-like fur or their penetrating canine bark. But the rest of these creatures often beggar description, and for this reason, they are sometimes called nondescripts or aspects.

Behemoths do not die easily — though some have geasa that require them to eat or sleep or age at set intervals, this is both uncommon and a purely individual trait. The vast majority are invulnerable to the passing of years, and though they can be made to hunger and thirst, they cannot starve. Though behemoths can be slain with Essence attacks, they cling to Creation with the same simple fervor as the Primordials themselves and can absorb vast amounts of damage before they consent to expire. Lesser attacks trouble them not at all.

Some behemoths are worshiped as gods by the Wyld tribesmen, though they are truculent gods indeed, short-tempered and eager to devour their handlers for the taste of flesh. Others are used as war machines by the Fair Folk or exiled spirit nobles. Equipped with thick bronze armor and howdahs carrying as many as 100 troops, these beasts form an unstoppable shock force. When enraged, they can trample walls or battalions of men as if they simply did not exist. Those behemoths that have not been captured and pressed into service as weapons or objects of worship live simple existences, sleeping when they feel that they should tire, eating when instinct tells them they should hunger and defending their territories against whatever they perceive as threats.

It is believed that, unlike normal animals, the spirits of behemoths sometimes survive their deaths and pass into the Underworld. Though they are few, these dead creatures are mighty, for the dead draw strength from the memories of the living, and if there is one word to describe a behemoth, it is memorable. Of these spectral behemoths, only one is commonly known — the Kraken — and its name is whispered with respect and fear by the mariners who sail the silent seas of the shadowlands.



Dace's horse thundered over the bridge, and the beastmen scattered like chaff before his charge. He swung his daiklave Dawnlight in a glittering arc, and it sheared through the chest of one who had not fled quickly enough.

Already, the Essence rolled off Dace in silent golden flames. It guided his hand as he parried the beastmen's spears, knocking aside three spearpoints and slashing the tip from another. Dace spurred his mount in a tight circle, and his blade flashed out around him. The mercenary's arm moved with far more than mortal speed, dipping and slashing without thought or hesitation. When the horse had finished its curvet, the courtyard was silent and empty of all but corpses.

Dace looked about him and saw that, like the bridge he had so recently ridden over, the courtyard was made of irregular stones fitted together with the impossible art of the First Age. Great staircases ascended the walls of either side and led to another immense plaza above. In it, more beastmen milled about. Dace's arm raised his sword and flicked the blade through an incoming arrow before his eyes had even registered that some were readying bows.

Dace spurred his steed up the wide stone stairs, and the beast picked up speed as it flashed up the flags. Beastmen scrambled to block the hero's passage and locked ranks at the head of the steps. As his mount reached the top of the steps, the mercenary touched his spurs to its flanks, and it leapt over the heads of the beastmen who had sought to thwart him, a great trail of Essence burning behind it. The horse landed in a clatter of hooves, and before the warriors at the top of the stairs could spin, Dace was upon them.

Again, his daiklave slashed, and again, his foes spilled their lives upon the flagstones. The warrior, his blade, his horse — all were covered in splashed blood, and all around him was the reeking smell of death.

The voice that echoed from the shadows was melodious — almost charming. "Your sword is sharp, Solar. It cuts down my children with no more effort than a scythe cutting wheat. Hardly a peaceful way to enter the Manse of a comrade. What brings you to my abode?"

Dace turned his mount to face the terminus of the plaza — a great, shadowed stone doorway. Within it were only shadows — and something darker than shadows. It stepped out of the darkness and into the light. Its shape was that of a terrible thing, part wolf and part goat, and not at all suited to the silvery-sweet voice that issued from its mouth. Its claws glittered blackly in the evening light, and a spear was gripped loosely in one hand. Its mouth hung open in an inarticulate snarl, but its eyes glittered with far more than animal intelligence.

"Your offspring have marched against the lands to the northwest, Chosen of Luna. Those people are under the protection of my Circle. Twice, we defeated their raids, and twice, we sent back survivors with messages to you that you must cease your raids. Yet, still, the raiders came. We left none alive from the third raid, and I have come in their place."

"You are foolhardy."

"I am your advocate. I come here against the protests of my fellows. Had they had their way, my sister Harmonious Jade would have brought you silent death in the night."

The Lunar Exalted jumped backward without so much as a glance. Its leap was a single smooth motion that carried it to the head of the archway. "I will have no truck in the politics of the Exalted. My brothers and sisters spent centuries in exile for them. You would have been wise to heed your Circle and send your sister. If you wish the raids to stop, then show me I should fear you."

"It will take more than acrobatics to impress me, Ma-Ha-Suchi"

"If you know my name, Solar, then surely you know I am more than an acrobat. Come and find how much more, if you wish."

And so he did.

CHAPTER TWO
SYSTEMS

The systems in this chapter provide the structure by which matters of chance are resolved in **Exalted**. Even though these rules are quite simple, you shouldn't feel constrained by them. Be flexible with your adjustments, and change what you need to in order to make the game more fun and enjoyable for your group. The best advice in this regard is that when you make changes, make sure they're consistent — ultimately, the rules are like the physics of the world. If you didn't know how strong gravity was likely to be at any given moment, you would probably live a very tentative and unenjoyable life. Likewise, players who don't know how the rules are going to work at any given moment aren't likely to enjoy themselves or do daring things with their characters.

The Golden Rule

The primary rule of **Exalted** is simple: *If you don't like it, change it.* The story is more important than any rule. If the systems get in the way, ignore or change them. These rules are merely guidelines; feel free to use, alter or disregard them as you see fit. After all, it's *your* story: If everybody hates a rule, why use it? The Storyteller is the final arbiter of any rules question, but that's just because someone has to be — ultimately, the game is about everyone in the group having a good time. Don't let the rules stand in the way of that.

Time

Time is a fundamental element of **Exalted**. There are five distinct ways to describe divisions of time within the game, progressing from the smallest to the largest unit:

- **Turn** — The smallest unit of time in the game, considered long enough to take one action. A turn is defined as about three seconds in combat situations, although a turn can last up to three minutes in less dramatic circumstances.
- **Scene** — A segment of action and roleplaying that takes place without a cut in time and location, like a scene in a movie. A scene takes as few or as many *turns* as are necessary to resolve events.
- **Episode** — One independent part of a *story*, often played in one game session and made up of *scenes* connected by *downtime*.
- **Story** — A discreet portion of narrative that often takes several *episodes*. Stories usually have an overall goal, such as "overthrow the king" or "find the forgotten city of Yu and reclaim its ancient treasures."
- **Series** — A complete game, usually made up of multiple *stories*. Your series is the continuing narrative that your cast creates. Think of stories as being like individual novels or movies about the characters and of the series as being the complete tales of their adventures.

Besides these five active time divisions, **Exalted** stories sometimes include:

• **Downtime** — Time between *scenes* or *episodes* that characters may spend resting, recuperating or possibly learning new Abilities. Downtime occurs any time the group is narrating events in a abstract rather than concrete fashion.

Actions

Characters take lots of *actions* in the course of a story. An action can be anything from having a discussion to smiting a Deathlord with your Essence-charged blade. Players describe their characters' actions to the Storyteller. In turn, the Storyteller decides if there is a possibility of the character failing and adjudicates the success or failure of any tricky or dangerous actions.

Some actions, such as talking, walking and other simple physical deeds, are *automatic* and require no dice rolling. More difficult feats are called *dice actions* because the player rolls dice to determine if the character succeeds.

See "Complications," on page 88, for information regarding specific types of actions.

Dice

Exalted requires 10-sided dice, which you can find in any game store. Sharing dice between players is perfectly acceptable, but it can slow things down at times. If you prefer your own dice, you'll probably want around 12 to 20, though you can get by pretty well with just 10. The Storyteller should probably have her own dice.

Movement

Your character's actions may depend on how far she can move. These rules keep formulas to a minimum. A *walking* character moves five meters. A *running* character moves her Dexterity rating +12 meters. A *sprinting* character moves (Dexterity x 3) +20 meters.

Movement is often an automatic action, but a character can take no other action that turn if she moves the entire distance that she's able to. A character may move half her running distance and still perform a dice action. Moving under hazardous conditions (combat, rough terrain, buffeting updrafts) may also call for a die roll.

Trait Ratings

A character's *Traits* — innate and learned capabilities, called *Attributes* and *Abilities* — are defined by a number of *dots*. Most Traits are rated from one to five dots; • indicates a poor or beginner level of skill, while ••••• indicates the absolute peak of human capability. Some very powerful beings may have Traits rated greater than five dots. Also, many kinds of animals are stronger or tougher or faster than any human could ever be and, thus, have Traits rated higher than five dots. Trait ratings are recorded by filling in the appropriate dots on the character sheet.

Automatic Actions

Some actions are simple enough that no character of normal physical capabilities will ever need to roll for them. Such simple tasks include walking up a flight of steps, getting dressed, sharpening a knife, eating a meal and so on. In other cases, the character may be so skilled that even a normally challenging task is child's play for her. Characters with very high dice pools can automatically accomplish tasks that most characters would be required to roll for.

A character who has 7 or more dice in her pool can perform a difficulty 1 task without rolling. A character with 11 or more dice in her pool can perform a difficult 2 task without a roll. A character with 15 or more dice in her pool can perform a difficulty 3 task without rolling. Tasks of difficulty 4 or higher can never be performed automatically, no matter how many dice are in the character's pool.

An automatic success is always equal to the minimum possible number of successes required to complete the task. For example, even if a character has 15 dice in her Dexterity + Athletics pool, if her player takes an automatic success on a difficulty 1 task, it will be treated as if she rolled but a single success.

The automatic success roll is present to cut down on needless dice rolling. The Storyteller can waive the rule in situations where the character is under stress or the roll is critical and a botch, failure or astonishing success would have a meaningful effect on the story. For example, a character with a 13 dice Intelligence + Survival roll can pass without trace or notice through almost any terrain, even densely inhabited farmland. However, if a sighting of the character would rouse the countryside into alarm, the Storyteller can waive the automatic success rule and have the player roll for each day of travel, since a botch would introduce an interesting story complication.

The origin of the dice in a character's pool doesn't matter particularly. Many characters have the ability to increase their dice pools through the use of magic; as long as the character's pool exceeds the requisite number of dice and the Storyteller approves, the player may declare an automatic success. For example, a character attempting to run up a wall (normally a difficulty 3 Dexterity + Athletics roll) could boost his Dexterity + Athletics pool to 15 through the use of magic and race up the vertical surface without needing to roll.

x	Abysmal/Untrained
•	Poor/Novice
••	Average
•••	Good
••••	Exceptional
•••••	Human maximum

ROLLING DICE AND DICE POOLS

When your character takes a dice action, you roll one die for each dot you have in the Traits most suited to that task. The Storyteller decides which Traits are appropriate by choosing the Attribute and Ability that best cover the action being attempted.

Attributes (innate capabilities) and Abilities (things you know and have learned) have individual ratings, but they are added together to determine a *skill total*. When a skill total is presented in published material, it will always be in the format "Attribute + Ability." For example, if your character has three dots in Perception and two dots in Awareness, her Perception + Awareness skill total is 5. Whenever the character performs an action of that type, you would roll five dice to see if she succeeded. This is often called your *dice pool* for the action. Characters usually perform only one action in a turn, although you may wish to try more than one (see "Multiple Actions," p. **92**), and some characters can perform many actions in a turn.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

Some Traits do not relate directly to a character's Abilities. They are *Willpower*, *Essence*, the four *Virtues* (*Temperance*, *Valor*, *Compassion* and *Conviction*) and a Trait related to the Virtues called the character's *Limit*. Willpower has a *permanent* rating and *temporary* rating. The permanent rating (designated by dots on the character sheet) usually stays the same. However, the character's temporary rating (noted by the squares under the permanent rating) can fluctuate during an episode. Dice actions using Willpower are based on the character's permanent score (the dots), not the current rating (the squares).

Personality Traits and Limit are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four: Traits.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

When you roll your dice pool, you want each individual die to roll as high as possible, because they're not added up. **When rolling dice, you want to have as many as possible come up 7 or higher.** Each die that comes up an 7, 8, 9 or 0 (10) is considered a *success*—a favorable resolution. Conversely, if all the dice you roll come up less than 7, your action fails.

All you have to know when you roll is the number of successes you need; if you get at least the minimum quantity necessary, you achieve your goal. The standard number of successes necessary for any task is one, but it may be higher for particularly difficult fears. *Extra successes* beyond the minimum can sometimes cause a better outcome. For example, in combat, the more successes you roll on an attack, the more damage you do. At the very least, extra successes mean your character accomplishes the action in a notable fashion. See "Complications" for information regarding easier and more difficult actions.

Total Successes	Degree of Success
One	Standard
Two	Superior
Three	Remarkable
Four	Astonishing
Five	Phenomenal

For Example: Smith, a Solar Exalted and notorious bandit, is making a last stand with his back pressed up against an ancient oak. He has run out of arrows and is about to be pulled down by warriors of the Realm. He decides to evade capture by leaping up, grabbing one of the lower branches of the tree and hauling himself one-handed up into the foliage.

Smith doesn't have any Charms to allow him to make the necessary leap, so the Storyteller tells Phyllis, his player, to make a Strength + Athletics check to see if Smith makes it. Smith has 3 dots of Strength and 3 dots of Athletics, for a total dice pool of 6. Phyllis rolls six dice, and gets 1, 4, 4, 6, 7 and 9. That's two successes, and Smith needed only one success to make the leap. He vanishes into the branches of the oak, leaving only a few falling leaves and rustling branches. Phyllis had better think quickly before someone gets a bow or decides to start a fire.

COMPLICATIONS

It isn't difficult to get at least one success, even with only a couple of dice. If your group is heavily into roleplaying, the simple rolls described above move the game along with a minimum of distraction. The following options serve to accent the game's action and cinematic qualities with an added level of complexity, but they are still designed for smooth gameplay.

DIFFICULTY AND DIFFICULT ACTIONS

Most of the time you need only one success to complete an action. However, some tasks, such as running across the deck of a ship in the teeth of an arctic storm, can be more challenging. The Storyteller makes that distinction when appropriate, declaring that you must roll a certain number of successes for your character to complete the task.

The *difficulty* to a roll is always listed as the number of successes needed to complete the task. So a "difficulty 3" action means you must get a total of *three* successes. The harder the action being attempted, the more successes are required. Any extra successes you get *beyond* the difficulty indicate that your character does an even more outstanding job than required.

Difficulty Rating	Degree of Difficulty
1	Standard
2	Difficult
3	Challenging
4	Nearly Impossible
5	Legendary

Normally, the difficulty of an action is evident before the character attempts it. The Storyteller should usually inform the player if an act will be especially difficult before the player commits herself to the action. However, in certain circumstances, the character may be too pressed for time or have too little information to properly assess the situation. In these cases, the Storyteller may require the character to take a turn assessing the situation and make a roll of Perception + the Ability in question to judge the difficulty of the action.

For Example: One of the soldiers grabs onto Smith's heel as the Exalted leaps into the foliage. He's now hanging one-handed from a fairly thick branch with a man in armor hanging onto his foot. Phyllis wants Smith to stick his bow over his shoulder and continue climbing the tree, trusting that his grip will last longer than the soldier's.

The Storyteller tells Phyllis that this will be a difficult task, since Smith is hanging there as he stows his bow, and then trying to climb with a man in armor hanging from his leg. The Storyteller decides that this is a Challenging Stamina + Athletics, meaning that Phyllis will have to roll 3 successes, 1 for the basic success plus two additional successes because it's a Challenging task. Phyllis rolls a 1, 2, 4, 7, 7, 8 on Smith's Stamina + Athletics check, just making it with the requisite three successes. Smith slings his bow and climbs the tree, foot by agonizing foot, until, suddenly, the weight of the soldier is gone.

Dice Pool Penalties

Normally, the Storyteller increases the difficulty of a task to reflect the fact that what the character is attempting is a very difficult or complex feat. For example, trying to hit an apple with an arrow might be difficulty 1, while trying to hit a small coin would be difficulty 3. However, characters will often be attempting actions under sub-optimal conditions—for example, fighting while injured, performing gymnastics with poor footing or treating an illness with inadequate medicines. To reflect these sort of hindrances, the Storyteller should subtract from the character's dice pool rather than increasing the task's difficulty. Moderate handicaps subtract 1 die, while severe handicaps would subtract 4 or 5 dice from the character's pool.

Don't worry too much about deciding what kind of penalty to apply to a given situation. The Storyteller in the example above could just as easily have subtracted four dice from Smith's dice pool to reflect the hindrance of making a normal climb with a guard on his ankle. There are plenty of examples in the Drama chapter, and it's not like the world is going to end if you do it and later decide it was the wrong choice. Just keep the general rule in mind that if the *task* is hard, the difficulty increases, while if something is hindering the *character*, then subtract dice from the character's pool. Subtracting two dice from a character's dice pool is roughly equivalent to increasing the difficulty by one, but the results feel very different in play.

The Rule of One

Normally, if none of your dice comes up 7 or higher, your character simply fails. However, if any die on such a failed roll comes up "1," you've *botched*. A botch is an



unfortunate result; not only does your character fail the action, but she does so rather significantly. *However, as long as you roll at least one success, you ignore any 1s.*

The specific circumstances of a botch are up to the Storyteller, but they should affect the character adversely and relate to the action being attempted. Generally, the more 1s the character rolled on the botch, the worse the turn of events.

For Example: Smith is trying to size up how far the distance is to the next tree, to see if he can make the leap. The Storyteller tells Phyllis to roll her Perception + Athletics. Her dice pool is eight, and she rolls a 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4 and 6. That's a 1 with no successes, and so, she botches. The Storyteller tells her that Smith thinks it will be an easy jump, when it will actually take multiple successes. Had she rolled more 1s, Smith might have found that there were no branches at all within leaping distance, mistakenly decided to jump onto one that was weak or rotten or even fallen out of the tree.

The Rule of Ten

The world of **Exalted** is a world of excitement and adventure, as well as of horror and dark magic. Just as things can go horribly awry, characters (and their opponents) can achieve success far greater than anyone could ever have expected. Whenever a character rolls a "10," that die counts as *two* successes.

For Example: Smith waits until the soldiers are busy kindling a fire under the tree and then leaps to the next tree. Despite sincerely wishing otherwise, Smith hasn't learned any Charms related to leaping and jumping since the previous example, so he'll need to use his Athletics.

The Storyteller tells Phyllis to roll Smith's Dexterity + Athletics to see if he can make the jump. She rolls a 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 0, 0. This is a total of six successes — one for the 8, one for the 9 and two for each of the 0s. The Storyteller, who had set the difficulty at 4, tells Phyllis that Smith leaps between the trees, graceful as a gazelle. The Storyteller asks her if Smith is going to keep fleeing through the treetops, and when she indicates he will, the Storyteller informs her that Smith effortlessly pushes off into the next tree by reflex (to reflect the extra successes she rolled).

Stunts

Exalted is a storytelling game, not an engineering problem. The point of the game isn't to find the most efficient possible solution to a problem — the point is to have fun. But in many cases, rules force players to choose between making an efficient choice of action or making an enjoyable and dramatic one. This punishes players for trying to make the game fun. **Exalted** solves this problem through *stunts*, making the most entertaining thing the optimal choice.

As players, having characters perform a stunt is easy — you just do your best to describe what they're doing in the coolest fashion possible. "I hit him" might be straightforward and efficient, but it's dull. "I whirl entirely around, bringing the blade in a bright circle and leaving a hair-fine streak of silvery Essence behind the tip of the blade as I slash through my target" is fun to hear about and actually describes things. When you do that, you've performed a stunt.

The mechanical effects of performing a stunt are twofold. First, this is a story, not the real world. More specifically, it's a story that partakes heavily in the larger-than-life dramatic sensibilities of the sword-and-sorcery fantasy and anime action genres. Cool things are more likely to succeed that dull or dumb ones. When you describe a stunt, the Storyteller may add a bonus of one to three dice to your dice pool when you perform the action. The cooler and more entertaining the description, the larger the bonus.

Secondly, stunts that succeed are profoundly affirming events for the character. If your character performs a stunt, and it succeeds, he gets a reward. Your character can regain one mote of Essence for each bonus die the Storyteller awarded you for the stunt. If you got two or three dice, you may decide not to take the Essence and get back a point of temporary Willpower instead.

For Example: Thirty minutes later, Smith clambers down from a pine tree a mile away. Unfortunately, the commander of the garrison Smith and his companions raided was a Dragon-Blooded warrior of the wood element, who has used his own Exalted powers to track Smith and anticipate where the bandit's travels through the treetops would end. As Smith climbs out of the pine, he sees the Dragon-Blood flicker from a gray-green shadow into visibility. After a short exchange of taunts, the two fight. Smith goes first, and Phyllis gives her all to describing his Martial Arts attack.

"I feint downward, like I'm going to do a sweep, then I bring my foot up suddenly from below in a puff of pine needles, trying to catch him under the chin and send him sprawling. As I kick, I let the inertia carry me backward away from him and finish the move as a backflip that lands me on my feet several yards away."

The Storyteller is impressed and gives Phyllis a two dice bonus. Had Phyllis just described the attack and not added the backflip part, she probably would have only gotten a 1 die bonus, but the fact that she's interacting with the world and not just making the combat a toe-to-toe slugfest that could happen in a boxing ring somewhere makes the Storyteller decide to give her a better award for the stunt. If her attack succeeds and does damage, she'll have the option of getting either 2 motes of Essence or a point of temporary Willpower.

So what's to keep you from performing a stunt every time you undertake an action? Nothing, other than the fact that it's hard to be creative all the time. If the Storyteller doesn't think your stunt is cool, you don't get the bonus dice, and if you don't get any bonus dice, you don't regain Essence or Willpower for succeeding in the stunt. The Storyteller and players should spend some time talking about what sort of look and feel of stunts they want in their game of **Exalted**.

For more information on stunts, Storytellers should see the Adjudicating Stunts section on page **267** of Chapter Seven: Storytelling.

Automatic Successes

Your character may be so skilled in a certain task that you need not roll for it. Such is often the case for Exalted, who perform "impossible" feats with ease. At the Storyteller's discretion, your character has an *automatic success* if her skill

total for an action is at least equal to the target number of 7. So if you have seven dice or more in your die pool for an action, your character succeeds automatically — you don't even need to roll. Still, it's merely a standard success; you might want to roll anyway to achieve extra successes. As a rule of thumb, the automatic success rule should never be used in stressful situations, particularly in combat.

You may also spend a Willpower point to earn an automatic success. This "free" success is in addition to any successes gained by rolling dice, but the Willpower point must be spent prior to your roll. You won't want to do so too often. While Willpower points are easy to spend, they're not easy to earn. Only one Willpower point may be spent per turn to gain a free success. The one Willpower per turn rule applies only to Willpower spent to gain an automatic success — Charms and other powers that require a Willpower expenditure don't count against this limit. A character may spend Willpower to gain an automatic success in the same turn that he uses a Charm or power that requires Willpower expenditure. Characters may spend Willpower to gain an automatic success while performing stunts, but keep in mind that something that qualifies for a die bonus is almost certainly difficulty +1 or more, so the Willpower doesn't guarantee success, just makes it more likely.

Extended Actions

Some tasks require multiple successes to complete, but the character can roll more than once because the task isn't an all-or-nothing event. These *extended actions* often take more than one turn to complete. The number of successes you have built up are called your *accumulated successes*. You can keep rolling to obtain successes until you gather the required amount or until you botch. If you botch during an extended action, the Storyteller may decide that you lose an accumulated success for each 1 you rolled or that you lose them all and must start again from scratch — or even that the character messed up so badly that she can't try again, if the task is very delicate.

Extended actions are more complicated than standard actions, and they can slow down the game if overused. They're most often used in climactic situations when it's critical exactly how long the character takes to accomplish a task and, similarly, in downtime, to determine how much time a character spends completing a given action.

It is also possible for extended actions to be particularly difficult — take researching a new spell, for instance. In such cases, the difficult modifier is subtracted from the number of successes rolled before adding the result to the accumulated successes. If the character doesn't roll more successes than the difficulty of the action, then her accumulated successes don't increase.

For Example: Meanwhile, back at the Realm garrison, almost all the troops have left to pursue Smith. Koi, Smith's partner, begins the process of sneaking in to rob the outpost of sensitive documents. To get into the outpost, Koi must climb the stone outcrop that the outpost is located on.

The Storyteller tells Rebecca, Koi's player, that this will be an extended Dexterity + Athletics action. Each roll will take 10 minutes, and she must accumulate 10 successes to climb the outcrop. Time is often important during extended actions because they're often a way for the Storyteller to reflect a character racing against the clock. In this case, the troops will only be out pursuing Smith for so long. If Koi spends too long trying to climb the rock face, she won't have very much time to search the outpost while most of the inhabitants are out.

Rebecca makes her Dexterity + Athletics check, rolling a 1, 2, 3, 3, 7, 8, 0. That's four successes, one for the 7 and the 8 and two for the 10. Koi's almost halfway to the top. On her second action, Rebecca rolls 2, 3, 3, 5, 5, 6, 9, achieving only one more success. The Storyteller tells Rebecca that Koi spends almost 10 minutes hanging, searching for a hold above an overhang, and only just pulls herself up by a fingerhold. Rebecca then makes her third roll, rolling a 1, 1, 3, 7, 7, 0, 0 — an additional six successes, bringing her total to 11 successes. Koi slips into the darkness of the outpost after a half hour of climbing and begins making her way to the commander's quarters.

Resisted Actions

Sometimes, your character's efforts oppose another's, just like in a tug of war or a game of chess. During *resisted actions*, opposing players roll using the appropriate Traits. If you score more successes than your opponent does, your character succeeds at her action, instead of the other character. However, your total successes are reduced by the number of successes that your opponent rolled. In this way, even if your opponent can't beat you, her resistance hinders your efforts.

For Example: Koi is slipping through the shadows of the Realm outpost and must evade detection by one of the guards who has remained behind. The Storyteller tells Rebecca this action will be an opposed roll of her character's Dexterity + Stealth versus the guard's Perception + Awareness. Koi has six dice in her pool, and Rebecca rolls 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 8, for three successes. The guard has only four dice, and the Storyteller rolls 3, 6, 8, 9, for two successes. Rebecca and the Storyteller decide that the guard is alert but that Koi slips by him while he listens to the sounds of battle off in the distance.

It is possible for resisted actions to be very difficult for some or all of the parties involved. Take, for example, sneaking up on someone who is drunk. The character doing the sneaking might be using her full pool, while the drunkard's player would subtract a success or more from the Perception roll to spot the sneaking character.

Similarly, some actions are both extended *and* resisted. One opponent must collect a certain number of successes in order to win. All successes rolled above the opponent's total number of successes in a single turn are added together. The first opponent to collect a designated number of successes wins the contest.

For Example: Meanwhile, in the deep forest, the Dragon-Blooded commander and Smith are locked in furious combat. The two of them are on a hogback, with narrow ravines on either side.



The Dragon-Blooded officer just attempted to swing a log at Smith, which he caught as the result of a stunt. Now, each Exalted has one end of the log, and each is attempting to push the other to a long fall into a canyon full of sharp rocks. The Storyteller inform Phyllis that, each turn, both will make Strength + Athletics checks. When one accumulates five more successes than the other, that character's opponent is pushed over the edge of the ridge and into the canyon.

Multiple Actions

Your character can also perform *multiple actions* in a turn. The total number of actions the character takes determines how many dice are subtracted from the first task attempted in that turn. Each action after the first loses an additional (cumulative) die beyond that amount. So, if your character tries to perform three actions in a turn, you subtract three dice from the first task's dice pool, four from the second and five from the third. If the total actions bring your dice pool for any one task to zero, that action cannot be attempted. What action goes in what order is up to the player, but they are rolled in the order they occur, so a player who wants her character to dodge an attack and then swing across a ballroom on a tearing tapestry can't put the roll to swing across the room first and the dodge attempt second just because that gives her the most dice where she needs them.

For Example: Meanwhile, back at the outpost, things have gone somewhat badly. Koi was discovered and is attempting to make a fighting retreat to the window. Rebecca splits Koi's actions three ways: one action to attack, one action to parry the attack by the guard who discovered her and one action to leap for the window and make her escape. Her first action will be at -3 dice, her second action at -4, and her third action at -5.

Reflexive Actions

Normally when a player makes a roll, it is part of her characters action for the turn. But in some circumstances, players will make rolls that are not part of their characters' actions, but simply measure their natural response. These are called *reflexive actions*. Players make reflexive rolls immediately, regardless of their initiative rolls, and need not split their dice pools. The best example of such an action is a character who has been exposed to poison. A poisoned character's player makes a Stamina + Resistance roll to see if the character resists the effects of the toxin. He makes this roll as soon as the poison enters his character's system and rolls his character's whole Stamina + Resistance pool regardless of how many actions the character's taken that turn. An action will always specifically state if it is reflexive.

Teamwork

Characters can combine successes, generally during an extended action. At the Storyteller's discretion, two or more players can roll separately and total their successes. Teamwork can be effective in battering down barriers, collecting information, combat or even social situations. It's up to the Storyteller to adjudicate when teamwork is possible. Well-described teamwork can grant a stunt bonus for both characters.

Examples of Rolls

The following are a few examples of how to use these rules. Remember, Abilities can be used with any Attribute. The entire list of Attributes and Abilities is detailed in Chapter Four: Traits, page 128.

- Your character's audience with the Regent of the Realm requires him to spend hours in heavy, hot ceremonial garb in the middle of summer. Roll Stamina + Socialize to avoid him swooning.
- To shake the pirates pursuing his ship, your character attempts to sail hard by the Dragon's Teeth, a treacherous reef infamous for gutting ships. Make a Wits + Sail roll at a difficulty modifier you choose. To follow, the pirates have to succeed at the same roll. Whoever fails goes down to Davy Jones' locker.
- A sliding stone door has trapped your character in an ancient temple. Roll Strength + Athletics, difficulty +4, to have your character push over a giant idol and smash through the wall.
- Your character has reached Nexus with a cargo of spices and furs. Roll Manipulation + Bureaucracy to get a good price for it from the mercantile factor.
- Three tough-looking men ask your character to donate the contents of her purse to them, and lashing out with Charms would be a terrible idea. Roll Charisma + Leadership to intimidate them into leaving her alone.
- Your character is searching for the tomb of her previous incarnation in order to reclaim her orichalcum grave goods. Roll Perception + Investigation to spot the subtle clues to the tomb's location that have been landscaped into the terrain. Roll Intelligence + Lore to recognize the alphabet composing the glyphs etched into the massive doors and Intelligence + Linguistics to decipher it.
- Your character is left for dead by his Fair Folk lover in the arctic wastes of the Far North. Roll Stamina + Endurance at difficulty +2 to avoid him passing out from hypothermia as he staggers naked through the snow. Roll Intelligence + Survival for him to find shelter from the growing storm.
- Someone offers to sell your character a sword at a significant discount. Roll Perception + Melee to determine if it's worth the money.
- The shopkeeper is very excited but speaks a language your character is only passingly familiar with. Roll Intelligence + Linguistics to determine what he's shouting about.
- Wandering in the trackless jungles of the Threshold, your character has contracted a terrible tropical illness. Roll Intelligence + Medicine at +1 difficulty to diagnose it and Perception + Survival to find an herbal cure.
- Your character's horse doesn't like the place of ancient evil she's trying to lead it into. Roll Charisma + Ride to convince the reluctant animal to accompany her.
- It's critical that your character not mistakenly offend the nomadic horsemen he's seeking to recruit into an alliance. Roll Charisma + Socialize to honor their hospitality.
- Your character needs some money fast. Roll Dexterity + Larceny for your character to help herself to a passerby's purse.
- Your character goes to a party looking for some companionship, and he isn't interested in conversation. Roll Appearance + Presence to flash your character's winning smile and make it clear to prospective partners that he's the one they should be going home with.
- Your character is trying to convince a Guild representative in Nexus to accept a forged letter of credit. Roll Manipulation + Larceny to pass the character off as a legitimate businessman.
- Your character watches an unarmed monk defend himself against a group of thugs. Roll Perception + Martial Arts to read his form and learn what school he practices.
- Your character needs to turn a ragtag group of bandits into a fighting force. Roll Charisma + Leadership to convince them to follow your character into battle.

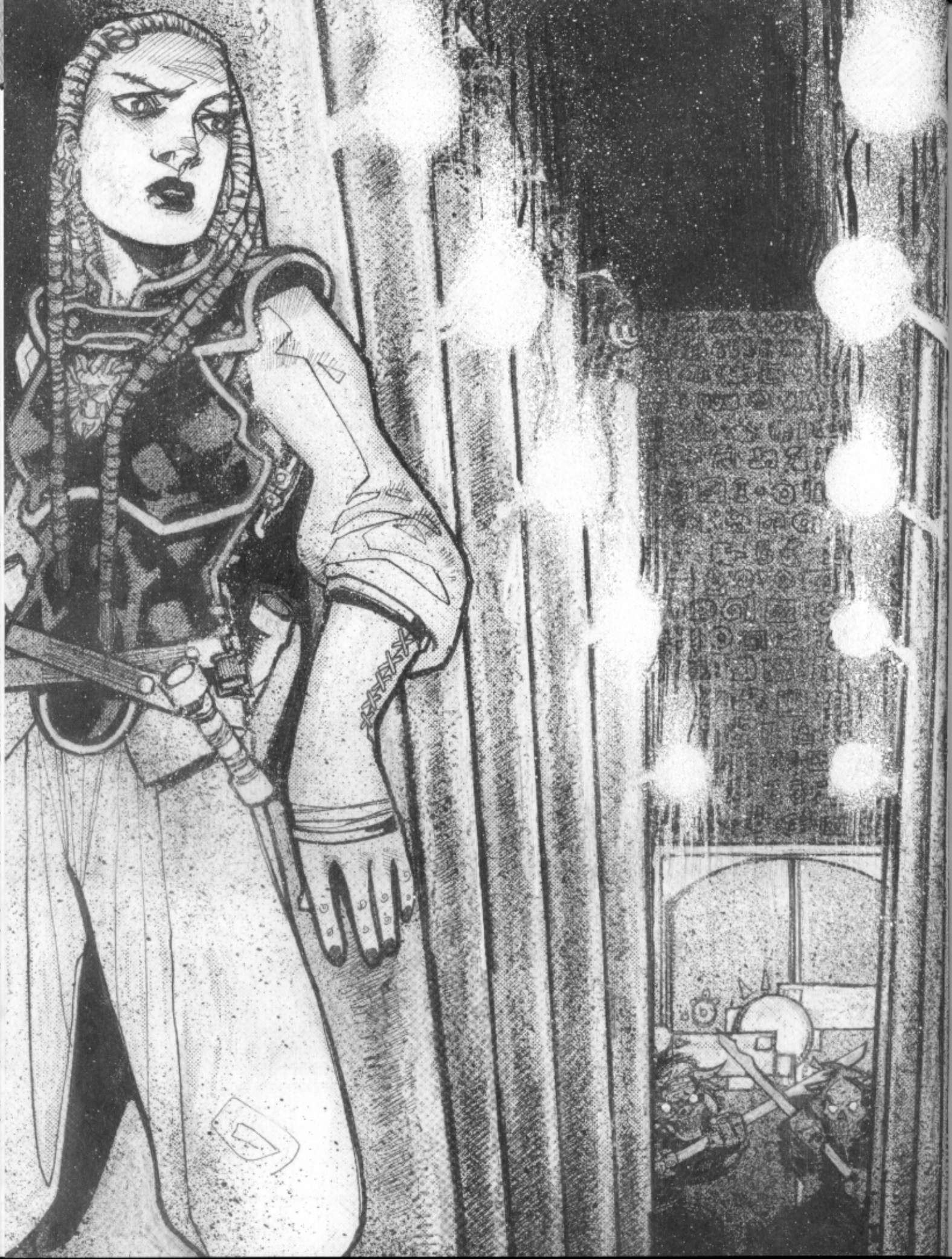
For Example: Many hours later, Koi and Smith are attempting to decode the documents they got from the outpost. The Storyteller tells Phyllis and Rebecca to make Intelligence + Linguistics rolls to decode them. Each attempt will take four hours, and they must accumulate five successes to break the code.

Because the two characters are used to working together, the Storyteller allows each player to roll and then add their successes together. Rebecca rolls seven dice for Koi, getting 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 9. Phyllis rolls Smith's five dice and gets 1, 1, 3, 6, 7. Four hours later, the two characters know they're on the verge of a breakthrough.

Second Chances

Failure is frustrating. If you're having trouble with your computer and can't figure out why, you're in for an evening of increasing frustration and decreasing productivity. **Exalted** reflects this "frustration with failure" by allowing the Storyteller to increase the successes needed for any action that you try again after an initial failure. So, if a first attempt at picking a lock fails, a character's frustration with her failure could make her try too hard the second time. To reflect this overcompensation, the Storyteller asks for two successes. Of course, if the character fails yet again, things will continue to escalate....

The Storyteller shouldn't invoke this rule in uncertain circumstances such as combat. Missing a target isn't terribly surprising in such situations, considering that everyone is dodging about, ducking for cover and generally not being polite enough to stand still.



Harmonious Jade filtered into the tomb as gradually and imperceptibly as dust or the smell of age. She pulled a cloak of Essence close about her and faded from the sight and mind of all who beheld her. It was not that she feared that the eyes of men might fall upon her. The tomb had been sealed for over 1,000 years, and no mortal thing within it was any worry to her.

But there were things within the tomb that were not mortal. There were certain to be demons within the tomb, under ancient duress to patrol its halls and slay intruders. Perhaps she could defeat them, perhaps not. It seemed wisest to her to be discreet and avoid the question altogether.

She laid her palms against the door, and there was a crack that split the night, as the great stone lock within the doors broke loose after centuries of settling. The mechanism grated and popped while the Exalted focused her magic on it. "Do not hear this!" her magic cried as the doors swung slowly open. "Do not see it!"

She walked into the tomb as softly as a ghost, her eyes alert and her ears pricked.

The first obstacle was the hardest, as they had told her it would be. Three demons, their eyes sharp enough to pierce even her shrouds of subtlety, stood guard before a great brass door. They forever patrolled the upper level of the tomb, clad in black jade armor and wielding great brass-bound cudgels.

One blinked, and she slipped between them in the instant that its eyes were closed. One sneezed, and then the great brass door was unlocked. Days later, one heard a sound from beyond the door. Finding it unlocked, the demons departed in a rush of fetid air. They had failed at their mission of eternal vigilance. It mattered little to Harmonious Jade — she had long ago departed.

There were other traps as well. There were great crushing stones that would have sealed her in eternally, had she triggered them. There were stabbing blades and slashing blades and a great blue gem like an eye that stole the life from all who beheld it. But she evaded the blades and confounded the eye and came, at last, to the heart of the tomb.

There, at the center of the tomb, lay a brilliant golden casket. It stood taller than Harmonious Jade's waist, and worked into the lid was the effigy of a beautiful man. It was carved from gold and decorated in the most brilliant and lifelike of enamels. His skin was dark, as Harmonious Jade's was, but he was willowy where she curved. He had a boyish face and a snub nose, and the hair that spilled across his shoulders was as thick and black as a horse's mane. He was proud and handsome, and she both reeled and rejoiced to see the face she had once worn.

Her hands lifted the lid, and she slid it aside and lowered it, slowly, until it leaned upright against the sarcophagus. She looked into the casket and saw the bones and ash that the effigy atop it had become. And in the center of the casket lay a brilliant bow. Its body was of ebony and teak, and the inserts were of orichalcum. It was decorated with the golden heads of eagles, so that the arrows would soar as far and fast as one. The setting on the front was empty, but the Hearthstone on her breast would fill it nicely.

Harmonious Jade looked into the casket and thought, That was me, once. She reached into the coffin and wrapped her hand around the bow's grip. She drew it out and said, "And this is mine, again."

And the great darkness of the world grew just a little brighter, as the hero and her bow were reunited.



CHAPTER THREE
CHARACTER CREATION

To play **Exalted**, you must create a character — one of the Solar Exalted — who will be your alter ego when you interact with the game's world and participate in the story. Your character is like one of the protagonists in a novel or movie, except that when one story is over you can move on to the next. Your character will grow as you play her, possibly becoming something you never expected.

In this chapter, you will learn how to create a character. Once you've done this, you can get together with the rest of your group and start telling the tales of your characters' exploits. But before you can do so, you must translate your character into numbers that you can use in the game. These numbers are not particularly inspiring or thought-provoking — it's hard to evoke a compelling image when you say, "My character has four dots in Presence." But they serve as a concrete measure, placing your character's strengths and weaknesses in objective terms so that they can be measured against other characters in the story. They are also used when you need to determine if your character succeeds or fails at an action — a character skilled in manipulation will have a better chance of persuading the city guardsman to let him go about his (rather questionable) business late at night than one who is not so skilled.

It's best to create a character with the assistance and supervision of the Storyteller — that way, you can more easily design a character who fits into the Circle. In fact, it's best to discuss what's expected in the game with the Storyteller and the other players, so everyone's characters fit together without too much fuss.

From Concept to Numbers

When you set out to create your character, you will have a general concept in mind — where he lives, how he grew up, what he loves and hates and so on. These experiences are what make each character truly alive and unique. When you're assigning Traits, you should make sure the numbers reflect the kind of character you're describing. If your character is intelligent and a fast thinker, you should make sure to assign dots to Intelligence and Wits. If he's devastatingly handsome, you should make sure his Appearance reflects that. You won't have enough points to make your character the best at everything. Don't worry too much — covering for the things you can't do is what the other characters in your Circle are there for. If there wasn't a challenge, there wouldn't be any story.

Traits have numerical values, with ratings from one to five dots. The only exceptions are Essence and Willpower, which can both have values up to 10. The ratings represents the character's capability in that particular Trait. Trait ratings are similar to scores critics might give a movie or restaurant — a character with no dots in an Ability is unskilled, and a character with no dots in an Attribute is some sort of cripple, incapable of actions requiring that Ability. One dot represents something the character is very poor at, while a character with five dots in a Trait is among the very best in the world at whatever it is the Trait

defines. The other ratings are somewhere in-between. These ratings are the number of dice the Trait adds to the character's dice pool when she attempts an action requiring that Trait (see Chapter Two: Systems for specifics).

Getting Started

Exalted character creation is based around five basic concepts — you must keep them in mind when creating the character you want to play.

• You can create a character from any nation, of any age, from any cultural background, but your character has only recently — in the past year or so — been Exalted. He probably knows very little about his nature as one of the Chosen, unless he has received instruction from a mentor, such as the Cult of the Illuminated.

• The character creation process is designed give you the tools to build your concept within the game rules. This does not mean that the numbers are more important than the concept, but rather, the opposite. Your character's Traits are like the girders and beams that support your concept. The only way your character can truly come to life is through roleplaying. That experience, and not being the most powerful character in the Circle, is what the game is all about. Try to keep the character's concept foremost in mind as you assign the numbers.

• The **Exalted** character creation system is point-based — you (the player) receive points to apply to each part of the character (Attributes, Abilities, Advantages). After you assign these points, you receive a pool of bonus points to further personalize and round out your character. Note that, even with bonus points, you probably won't have enough points to purchase everything you want — this is fine. Your character will gain experience and grow in power as you play him over time.

• A Trait of one is poor, while a Trait of five makes your character one of the most accomplished in her field. If you have one dot in a Trait, your character is inexperienced or simply not very good at it. Your character isn't useless just because she has one dot in Strength. Instead, consider it an opportunity to further flesh out your character — a one dot Trait can be as defining as any five dot Trait.

• It is very important to create a character that fits into the group. You can't expect the other players to tolerate a character who just won't fit in or work with the rest of the group. If your character's behavior disrupts a story, the Storyteller or the other players may ask you to modify how you play him or create a new character who will fit in better. In the savage world of **Exalted**, survival depends on a group's ability to cooperate.

The Storyteller's Role in Character Creation

As the Storyteller, you should guide your players through character creation. When your players arrive for the first session, discuss the themes you wish to explore and the basic premise of the game. It's helpful to write a style sheet of sorts, a document that describes where you'd like to start and where you'd like the series to go over time (you don't have to reveal your actual plans for stories, simply give guidance on the kind of stories you want to run). If you're in a situation where there are a large number of potential players, like a gaming club, you can even circulate the sheet ahead of the first session. That way, people who show up for the first session will know what to expect from the game.

If any players are unfamiliar with **Exalted**, take time at the beginning of the session to filling them in on the basics of the setting and rules. You don't need to bring them completely up to speed on everything (after all, a new character won't know much more than the new player does). Make sure they learn the basics, and keep things as simple as possible — let the players learn the system's intricacies on their own.

First, give each of the players a character sheet and let them look it over and ask questions. Then, explain the character creation process step by step — give the players time to ask questions and answer them as clearly as possible. A little patience in the beginning will save a lot of frustration and misunderstanding later on. Be sure to explain what the Traits mean and how they define a character's abilities.

Before players create their characters, discuss what kind of group they'd like to play and what role each character might fulfill. You don't have to think about it in terms of "one Exalted of each caste" or "we need a thief!" Just consider what the characters will do in the group and why they joined together. Encourage the players to make their characters complementary and to give their characters dramatic hooks to hold the Circle together.

Spend the entire session creating characters — don't rush the players. Give them time to make complete, flesh-and-blood characters with personalities, goals, hopes and dreams. You don't want undeveloped caricatures. Once players have finished creating their characters, use the time remaining in the session to run preludes for the characters. A prelude is a short session with the player that helps tell the story of her character's life up through the present. It helps establish things like the character's day-to-day existence, detail pivotal events in her life and helps the player get an idea of what her character's Exaltation was like. Preludes are your players' first exposure to your series, so try to make them memorable and interesting. Once you've run all the preludes, run a prelude for the group as a whole — the occasion that brought all of them together and forged a lasting bond between them. You can find more information on preludes later in this chapter.

Creating a Character

What follows details the actual process of creating a character. It is presented as step-by-step instructions for the player but is actually more flexible than that. Before play starts, nothing's set in stone. If you realize at the very end that you want to alter the way that you distributed your

Ability dots, just go back and change it. Just make sure to recompute your Essence if the Traits that govern it change, and make sure to keep track of where you spent your bonus points so you don't accidentally spend them twice.

Step One: Character Concept

Before you fill in a single dot on your character sheet, you need to think of a concept. You don't need to know all the details of her life at this point; you just need to have a general feel for who she is. Decide on something interesting that you'll enjoy playing for the long haul. As you progress through the character creation process, you may change or adjust this concept to suit your needs or wants, but it gives you a starting point. An example might be "My character was kidnaped by bandits as a child and Exalted as a teenager — now she runs the bandit gang with an iron hand." This concept should be unique and interesting enough to satisfy you and the Storyteller.

Caste

A pivotal aspect of any **Exalted** character is his caste. Each of the Solar Exalted is chosen by the Unconquered Sun because he or she embodies part of the ideal of one of the five castes. A character's caste will affect the skills he shows an affinity toward, the powers he develops and the role he will take in Exalted society. While members of each caste are often chosen for certain traits and qualities, remember that your character is an individual who may break from the caste's stereotypical image.

Other Exalted

Exalted focuses primarily on the Solar Exalted, and rules for playing the Dragon-Blooded and the other types of Celestial Exalted are not included here. Guidelines for using Lunar, Sidereal, Terrestrial and Abyssal Exalted can be found in the Antagonists section of this book, and more information will be presented in the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**. Full details on these other Exalted, including rules for playing them, will appear in future sourcebooks.

Nature

Next, choose your character's Nature, an archetype that best suits her true personality. This self perception guides how your character interacts with the world around her. Obviously, people are too complex to be described in a single word, but you can establish some basic behaviors for your character with these archetypes. See the "Nature" section on page 114 of the Traits chapter for detailed descriptions of each of the Natures.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Once you've defined your concept and selected your caste and Nature, it's time to begin assigning numbers. The first step is to assign scores to each of your character's Attributes. The Attributes define your character's innate capabilities and aptitudes. How fast can your character move? Is she attractive or even beautiful? How sharp are her senses? The Attributes objectively answer each of these questions.

First, prioritize your three Attribute categories — Physical, Social and Mental. Decide which category your character excels at (primary), which category is above average (secondary) and which category is merely average (tertiary). Is she mentally adept or more physically inclined. Is she perceptive and intelligent or a gifted socialite?

- Physical Attributes define your character's physical potential—how fast she can run, how much she can lift and how healthy she is. If your character is primarily action-oriented, then you'd be well advised to make Physical your primary category.
- Social Attributes define your character's ability to interact with, relate to and manipulate others. Social Attributes affect first impressions, your character's ability to inspire or lead people and how attractive she is. If your character is a charmer or very good at deception, Social Attributes make a good choice for your primary category.
- Mental Attributes define your characters intellectual capacity — How quickly can she think? How keen is her insight? How smart is she? If your character likes puzzles or is an investigator, then Mental Attributes should be primary.

Your character concept should give you direction on how to prioritize your Attributes, but don't feel straightjacketed into such choices — yes, it's perfectly viable to play a warrior with Social Attributes as primary (you could be a pit fighter with a gift for working the crowds) or a priest with Physical in the primary slot (perhaps you're a monk who meditates through rigorous physical exercise). As noted previously, you can still modify your basic concept, and Attribute priorities might prompt you to alter your focus or intent.

Your character begins with one dot in each Attribute. The priority you selected for the different categories of Attributes determines how many additional dots you may place in each category. You have eight dots to divide among the Attributes of your character's primary category, six dots to divide among the Attributes of her secondary category and four points to divide among the Attributes of her tertiary category. You are not limited in how many dots you may assign to any one Attribute, but you may not raise any Attribute above five dots. For explanations of exactly what different levels of the various Attributes mean, see the Attributes section beginning on page 128 of the Traits chapter.

Don't worry if you don't have enough points to bring your Attributes up to the levels you desire—you can always spend bonus points to increase an Attribute or two if you feel it necessary.

Spending Bonus Points

Every character has 15 bonus points that can be spent to increase whatever the player feels important during character creation. There's no specific step where you spend them — whenever you feel a Trait is too low, you can just spend bonus points to increase it. However, all Traits aren't equal, and the better a Trait is, the more bonus points it costs to raise. There are also some things, such as developing specialties and Combos, that can only be done with bonus points. There's a list of the bonus point cost to buy a single dot of the various Traits on page 105 of this chapter. Spend your bonus points however you want, but think carefully about where you put them — you only get 15 of them.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Abilities describe what your character knows and can do, what he's learned as opposed to what comes from natural potential.

Like Attributes, Abilities are rated from one to five dots. This rating represents your character's competence in that area. You use this number (usually added to an Attribute) to determine how many dice you roll when your character uses an Ability. Unlike Attributes, Abilities begin with a rating of zero.

Abilities are divided according to which caste best exemplifies those skills.

• **Dawn Abilities** are skills that relate to physical combat. They are Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown.

• **Zenith Abilities** are skills that relate to the power of faith, allowing one to persevere through great hardship and to inspire and convert others. They are Endurance, Performance, Presence, Resistance and Survival.

• **Twilight Abilities** are skills that involve the practical applications of knowledge and learning. They are Craft, Investigation, Lore, Medicine and Occult.

• **Night Abilities** are skills used for subterfuge and covert activities. They are Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny and Stealth.

• **Eclipse Abilities** are those skills devoted to keeping society functioning through organization and communication. They are Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Ride, Sail and Socialize.

Every Exalted has a natural affinity with the Abilities exemplified by her caste. This affinity is represented by the easier time a character has in raising her *Caste Abilities* through both bonus and experience points. See the table on page 105 for the bonus point costs of increasing Abilities.

Each Exalted also has an affinity with certain Abilities outside of their Caste Abilities. These skills are known as *Favored Abilities*. The player selects five Abilities to be her character's Favored Abilities. These Abilities receive the same bonus and experience point discounts as her Caste Abilities. You may not "double up" and increase your discount by choosing Caste Abilities as Favored Abilities.

You have 10 Ability dots to assign to your Caste and Favored Abilities and another 15 dots to spend toward any Abilities you wish, including your Caste and Favored Abilities. Your character does not have to place any points into her Caste Abilities, but you must place at least one dot in *each* of her Favored Abilities. You may not assign more than three dots to any Ability — you must spend bonus points to raise an Ability to four or five.

Specialties

Players may wish for their character to have a certain area of expertise within an Ability. This expertise is reflected by specialties. During character creation, specialties are purchased with bonus points or experience points. Your character may never have more than three specialties for an Ability. Keep your concept in mind when choosing specialties (a smooth talking merchant might choose "Wheeling and Dealing" as a Socialize specialty, while a diplomat might choose "Graceful Tact"). You don't need to purchase specialties, but they serve to flesh out the character. They're also useful for building a character who is good at one particular part of an Ability but not all of it and for making a character who has a really superhuman mastery of an Ability.

Step Four: Advantages

Advantages are neither prioritized nor ranked. Instead, each Advantage has a specific number of dots allotted. It is possible to increase them with bonus points, if you so desire.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds measure your character's "place" in the world of **Exalted**. They're a measure of who your character knows, who knows your character and what resources your character can draw upon. Your character receives seven dots to assign among the 10 Background Traits. Backgrounds chosen should tie into your character concept as defined in Step One. No Background may be raised above 3 without the use of bonus points. Buying the 4th and 5th dot of a Background with bonus points costs more than buying the 1st, 2nd or 3rd dot — see the Bonus Point table on page 105.

Charms

The mystical birthright of the Exalted, Charms allow characters powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. Charms are divided according to which Ability they enhance and augment. Select 10 Charms for your character, but at least five must be from his Caste or Favored Abilities. Each Charm has a minimum Ability and Essence

score needed to possess the power, and many require the mastery of other Charms as well. If you see a Charm you want your character have and find yourself coming up short in either of the required Traits, you can always spend bonus points to reach the necessary levels.

Characters who have one or more of the Sorcery Charms (these Charms are derived from the Occult Ability) will probably want to start the game with spells. Characters can exchange a Charm for a single sorcery spell but may not start the game with spells of the Solar Circle. Characters who wish to purchase spells with bonus points pay the same cost as they would for a Charm. Characters receive the in-caste discount on spells if Occult is one of their Caste or Favored Abilities.

Virtues

Passion and emotion are powerful forces in the world of **Exalted**. Virtue traits measure of how passionately committed a character is to certain types of behavior. There are four Virtue Traits, each representing the extremes to which the soul can reach.

The Virtues are:

• **Compassion** — a measure of empathy and forgiveness. Characters with high Compassion find it difficult to ignore the plights of others.

• **Conviction** — represents how hardened the character is against mental and physical hardship. Characters with high Conviction are able to endure (and inflict) great amounts of pain and suffering.

• **Temperance** — a measure of self-control and clear-headedness. Characters with high Temperance sometimes withdraw from human contact and may even hold themselves above those less "pure."

• **Valor** — represents courage and bravery. Characters with high Valor find it hard to back down from any challenge, no matter how dangerous or foolhardy.

Like an Attribute, each Virtue automatically begins with one dot in it. You have five additional dots to divide among your character's four Virtue traits. You cannot raise a character's starting Virtue above 4 without spending bonus points.

One of your Virtues must be chosen as the root of your character's Virtue Flaw. If a character is forced to act contrary to her Virtues too often, she will suffer a Limit Break and become temporarily ruled by her Virtue Flaw. This flaw must be chosen for a Virtue that is rated 3 or higher. See page 131 of the Traits chapter for rules on Limit Breaks and a list of sample Virtue Flaws.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Now it's time to determine your character's final Traits and finish rounding her out.

Willpower

Willpower describes how much self-control your character has and how determined she is in adverse circumstances. Players may use a character's Willpower to control her actions when events conspire to force an instinctive response (such as those dictated by Virtues), to gain automatic successes on a critical dice roll, to resist mental attacks and to activate a Virtue. See page 146 of the Traits chapter for more complete rules on using Willpower. Your character determines her initial Willpower by adding her two highest Virtue ratings together. Willpower may be increased with bonus points, but only as high as 8. Only characters with two Virtues at 4 or higher may begin the game with a Willpower above 8. Please keep in mind that such a character will be considered extremely passionate even by her fellow Exalted.

Essence

Essence measures your character's natural connection to the mystical energies which permeate the world of **Exalted**. Most normal humans only have an Essence rating of 1. Solar Exalted of all castes begin with an Essence rating of 2. This may be increased with bonus points, but characters may not start the game with an Essence above 5.

Essence Pool

Scholars measure Essence in units known as *motes*. A character's Essence Pool represents how many motes of Essence she is able to channel toward performing magic. Essence is divided into two types — *Personal* and *Peripheral*. When an Exalted spends Essence from her Personal Essence pool, the effects are subtle and her anima banner remains subdued. When Peripheral Essence is spent, her banner flares, revealing her Exalted nature for all to see. See Chapter Four for complete rules on Essence.

Personal Essence pool is calculated by multiplying your character's Essence Trait by three and then adding her Willpower — that is, (Essence x 3) + Willpower.

Peripheral Essence pool is calculated by multiplying your character's Essence trait by seven and then adding the sum of her Willpower and her Virtues — that is, (Essence x 7) + Willpower + (the sum of Virtues).

Health Levels

Health levels allow you to keep track of your character's current physical condition, including how much damage she's taken from, say, being chewed on by a giant hyena. It also lists the penalty imposed on your character's dice pool for each level of injury she's sustained. Most humans, including Solar Exalted who do not buy the Endurance Charm Ox-Body Technique, have seven health levels, ranging from Bruised to Incapacitated. Unless your character has extras, she has a -0 health level, two -1 health levels, two -2 health levels, a -4 health level and an Incapacitated health level. For more information on health levels see page 231 of the Drama chapter.

Bonus Points

As stated previously, have a total of 15 bonus points to round out your character and increase her Traits. If there are any left unspent, you should spend them now because they're of no use after character creation is over.

My Character Died!

It's often very useful to take a little care when designing a character in **Exalted**. It can be very hard to withstand the lure of making a narrowly focused character in order to have an array of powerful Charms. This extreme focus can lead to very short-lived characters. If all a character has is an array of impressive Archery Charms, she is going to die a terrible death when she runs out of ammunition. Below are some tips for first-time players to help them design characters. Once you know what you're doing, feel free to experiment, but until you do, play it safe.

Make Sure Your Character Can Survive: Your number one goal. It's very easy to get lost learning an assortment of cool Abilities and forget the meat-and-potatoes Charms than make a character able to survive combat. **Exalted** is a game of cinematic fantasy action — sooner or later, your character will end up in a combat.

Unless you have a very good reason to do otherwise, be sure to take the Endurance Charm Ox-Body Technique at least once — it's very inexpensive for what it does, and it can extend your character's lifespan a great deal.

You should probably also take the various Resistance Charms that allow your character to soak damage. At the very least, take Dipping Swallow Defense and Iron Kettle Body. If you expect your character to fight without armor, be sure to take Durability of Oak Meditation and Iron Skin Concentration as well.

In addition, be sure to take defensive as well as offensive Charms in your character's primary combat Ability. If your character's primary combat Ability doesn't have defensive Charms, then buy the very powerful Resistance Charms that allow the character to completely soak all the damage from an attack. Alternately, you can assign the Dodge Charms, particularly Shadow Over Water and Flow Like Blood, that allow your character to easily evade attacks.

Build a Broad Foundation: The Charms your character starts with would take you 15-20 sessions of play to buy with saved experience. It's much easier to survive if you create a well-rounded character of moderate skill to start and then get very good at something specific during the course of play than to create a one-dimensional character and spend four or five months scrambling to round her into viability.

It's also worth noting that the way that the Charms cascades work, plowing additional experience into Charms for a given Ability brings greater and greater payoffs. If you build a solid foundation with your "free" Charms during character creation and then build on that during play, the character will seem to grow and advance more than if you focus very narrowly and are constantly forced to pump experience points into the least rewarding Charms — those at the base of the cascades.

Combat Isn't Everything: Characters should also have something to do when they *aren't* in combat. No game of **Exalted** is going to be composed entirely of combat — there is also intrigue, romance, adventure, exploration. If all your character can do is inflict a critical beatdown, you are going to spend a lot of time bored, waiting for something to kill. Also, you're going to miss a lot of the game. Better than two-thirds of the Charms in **Exalted** focus on non-combat magic. They're specifically written to compare well with combat magic — take a look before you load up on combat powers.

Play Smart: In **Exalted**, the defense is slightly stronger than the offense. Chances are, your character's opponent is going to be able to block your character's super attack. Feint. Play. Wear the opponent down. If your character just unloads, her opponent is probably going to block her and then take advantage of her lack of Essence to put a serious hurting on her. Remember — you can't win a battle if you're already dead.

Spark of Life

Now it's time to work out some of those character qualities that have nothing to do with game mechanics — it's not absolutely necessary to write these down, but it is highly recommended. At the very least, think about each of them after character creation and during games thereafter. Some will change over time, while others may be reinforced. These are the things that make your character more than just a collection of dots on a character sheet.

Appearance

What does your character look like? How do her Traits affect that? If she has four dots in Strength, those muscles will show. If she has a high Charisma, that will translate into how she moves and talks. Go over her concept and Traits, and see how you can use those as descriptive hooks. Your choices will not only reflect your character's appearance, but also, how she dresses, how she acts and how she speaks. Does she move with confidence and have a steady gaze, or is she hunched over, refusing to look anyone in the eye? Does she prefer casual, rugged clothing, or does she have more expensive and refined tastes? It is much more evocative to say, "My character has a massive scar across the left side of her face, gained while battling tigers with her bare hands in the gladiatorial arenas of Nexus," than to say, "My character has one dot of Appearance."



Quirks

Everyone has unique habits, anecdotes, interests and hobbies that do not centrally define the character, but that give the character more color or depth and more of a realistic feel. Write a few sentences on the back of your character sheet describing some of these quirks — they could range from a refusal to drink any but the finest wine or ale to a favored pair of sharkskin boots or habitually performing rituals to placate the local spirits. You can always add more quirks after play begins if new possibilities occur to you.

You're Not From Around Here, Are You?

When fleshing out your character's appearance, behavior and personality, keep in mind where she's from. The regions of the Realm and the Threshold contain a vast diversity of peoples and cultures. Where a character is from can and should have an impact on her appearance, attitudes and beliefs. Three characters, one from the Eastern trade cities, one from the Western islands and one from the Southeastern grasslands will each have very distinctive skin and hair colors, as well very different opinions about women and their place in society. When creating your character, take a moment to reread descriptions of each region's inhabitants and their customs from Chapter One: Setting.

Motivations

What drives your character? Why does she go out and wage war against the forces of death, oppression and destruction? Why does she risk her life for her friends on a regular basis? While it may seem that fighting the Deathlords or the Dragon-Blooded is worthwhile for its own sake, surely most Solars have other reasons for struggling to change the world. What in your character's history or concept pushes her to redefine the world according to her hopes and dreams? A compelling, dramatic reason can give you a lot of mileage for roleplay in any series. Perhaps a squad of Dragon-Blooded soldiers killed your character's family when she Exalted, and every blow she strikes against the Realm's minions is a blow struck for her family. Your character's motivation need not lead her only to battle — she might also want to find her family's spirits and lay them to rest with the knowledge that their deaths have been avenged. Your character's motivation must answer the question, "Why does she do the things that become the stuff of legend?"

Make sure you find a good answer to this question — everyone who is subject to Exaltation was someone who deserved it. It isn't something that happens to boring, normal people. Exaltation happens to people who have already made their mark in the world. They might not be wealthy, powerful or famous, but everyone who is Exalted has a soul large enough to accept a fragment of divine power.

Social Ties

Characters don't live in a vacuum. Think about the people in your character's life. Are her parents still alive?

Down and Dirty, or Playing Humans

For normal mortals, the world of **Exalted** is a terrifying, dangerous place. Without the supernatural resilience and godlike might of the Chosen, mere survival can be difficult. Yet mortals do survive, and they even claw out success in a world that promises them little but suffering and danger. It can be an interesting challenge to play normal mortals — not one for everyone, but one that certain players will find fascinating.

The important thing to keep in mind is that the Exalted are like the heroes of Greek myth — more gods than men. It is a simple fact that a mere mortal adventuring among a group of demigods is going to be outclassed and outshone. Exalted are, by their very natures, the stuff of legends.

Thus, it is suggested that everyone in a game play either Exalted characters or normal mortals. It's really just unfair to the people playing mortals to do it any other way. To make up mortal characters, use the following modifications to character generation.

Step One: Concept

As with the Exalted, the key to creating an interesting, three-dimensional mortal character is the concept. Mortals select Nature as normal but do not select a caste.

Step Two: Attributes

You still prioritize Attributes as normal, but because your character is not one of the Chosen, he doesn't receive as many points to use. Mortals get only six dots for their primary category, four dots in their secondary and three dots for tertiary. This is a lot for a mortal — while not Exalted, your character still stands out. Ordinary mortals have four dots in one set of Attributes and three dots in the other two categories.

Step Three: Abilities

Because they are not Exalted, mortals do not have any Caste or Favored Abilities. Heroic mortals get 22 dots to distribute among their Abilities, normal mortals get 16.

Optional Rule: If the Storyteller agrees to it, heroic mortals may choose one Ability as a Favored Ability, complete with the discount. This is an Ability that the character excels in above all others. However, the character can never have any other Ability rated higher than his Favored Ability. The Favored Ability must be equal to or greater than every other skill he possesses. Exalted do not suffer from this restriction — this is simply another advantage that the Chosen have over mortals.

Mortals may purchase specialties as normal.

Step Four: Advantages

Mortals select Virtues as normal. However, they do not suffer from the curse the dying titans laid upon the Exalted and do not have a Virtue Flaw or suffer from Limit Breaks. Mortals only receive 5 dots for Backgrounds and may not purchase the Artifacts or Manse Backgrounds without Storyteller permission; if a mortal has control over one of these, it's a plot device, not an object for him to use. Mortals cannot purchase Charms.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Mortals calculate Willpower as normal. All mortals have an Essence of 1. This Trait cannot be raised with bonus points.

To help compensate for the vast gulf between mortals and the Chosen, mortal characters get 21 bonus points. These may be spent on any Traits except Charms and Essence. The Storyteller may impose further restrictions depending on the story she's running.

The Storyteller may wish to have players write up their Exalted characters as heroic mortals first and then roleplay through their Exaltations. This exercise differs from a prelude in that it can last as long as several sessions. By doing this, the group gets an even better feel for the characters prior to their Exaltation, and it gives the players a chance to really flesh out their characters as people, making the transition to the ranks of the Exalted even more dramatic.

To transform a heroic mortal into an Exalted, add three dots to Attributes, three dots to Abilities, mark down Caste Abilities, select Favored Abilities, choose 10 Charms, increase Essence to 2, choose a Virtue Flaw, and adjust the character's health levels accordingly.

Does she have a spouse? A lover? Children? What about friends and neighbors? Does she own slaves? Or was she a slave before her Exaltation? How have these relationships changed now that she's become one of the Chosen? Do her husband and children now shun and fear her as something no longer human? Do her neighbors now expect her to protect them from child-eating hobgoblins and the Realm's tax collectors? What sort of milieu does your character live in?

The Prelude

One moment in every Exalted's life changes everything — her Exaltation. At that point, there is no turning back: She is transformed and now lives in a larger world. When one of the Exalted is chosen, she steps into her heritage, probably very traumatically. But it's difficulty to understand that transition if you don't have a sense of what her life was like before she was Exalted.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Choose concept, caste and Nature.
Note caste's anima powers.

• STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (8/6/4)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

• STEP THREE: SELECT ABILITIES

Note Caste Abilities.

Select Favored Abilities (5; may not be the same as Caste Abilities).

Choose Abilities (25 — at least 10 must be from Caste or Favored Abilities; at least one must be in each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points)

• STEP FOUR: SELECT ADVANTAGES

Choose Backgrounds (7 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Charms (10 — at least five must be from Caste of Favored Abilities), Virtues (5 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points) and Virtue Flaw

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (2), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — may not start at higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher), Personal Essence pool ([3 x Essence] + Willpower), Peripheral Essence pool ([7 x Essence] + Willpower + [the sum of your Virtues]) and health levels (7, plus any gained from Charms).

• BONUS POINTS

Bonus points (15) may be spent at any time during character creation.

SAMPLE CONCEPTS

- **Craftsman** — carpenter, swordsmith, cobbler
- **Criminal** — bandit lord, pirate, con artist
- **Drifter** — nomadic tribesman, scavenger, gambler
- **Entertainer** — professional courtesan, musician, gladiator
- **Merchant** — caravan owner, slave trader, money lender
- **Politician** — barbarian prince, town magistrate, vizier
- **Priest** — shaman, initiate of the Order of the Immaculate Dragons, monk
- **Scholar** — royal historian, healer, engineer
- **Soldier** — city guardsmen, mercenary, barbarian warrior
- **Worker** — farmer, manservant, dock worker

CASTES

- **Dawn**:
  Masters of war in all its forms, the Children of the Dawn were once the leaders and champions of the Celestial Armies. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Dawn Caste from those with a talent for the arts of combat and war.
  Caste Abilities: Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown.
  Anima Powers: May use their animas to appear awesome and terrifying for a scene.

- **Zenith**:
  Once the leaders of the Solar Exalted, the Lightbringers are priest-kings, prophets and mystics. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Zenith Caste from those who thirst for righteousness and justice, as well as from among the leaders of men.
  Caste Abilities: Endurance, Perform, Presence, Resistance and Survival
  Anima Powers: May use their animas to burn the bodies of the dead and to do aggravated damage to the undead and demons.

- **Twilight**:
  Scholars and craftsmen of the Solar Exalted, the Children of Twilight are thinkers and doers. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Twilight Caste from those who take knowledge and apply it to create concrete results.
  Caste Abilities: Crafts, Investigation, Lore, Medicine and Occult
  Anima Powers: May use their animas as protective shields.

Character Creation Summary

- **Night:**
  Lords of stealth and trickery, the Concealing Shadows once served as the security of the Celestial Empire. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Night Caste from those who excel in entering places where they are not wanted or in finding unconventional solutions to problems.
  Caste Abilities: Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny and Stealth
  Anima Powers: May use their animas as cloaks against detection, and may mute their animas' display when using Essence.

- **Eclipse:**
  Diplomats and bureaucrats, the Crowned Suns were the force that kept the Celestial Empire running smoothly. The Unconquered Sun chooses the Eclipse Caste from those who master the art of communication in all its forms.
  Caste Abilities: Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Ride, Sail and Socialize
  Anima Powers: May use their animas to sanctify oaths and contracts and to provide diplomatic immunity when dealing with spirits, demons and the Fair Folk.

Archtypes (Nature)

- **Architect** — You want to leave a lasting legacy.
- **Bravo** — Might makes right.
- **Bureaucrat** — Rules keep the world from collapsing into chaos.
- **Caregiver** — You are a wellspring of compassion.
- **Conniver** — Brains over brawn.
- **Critic** — Pointing out flaws makes it possible to correct them.
- **Explorer** — Life is a never ending adventure.
- **Follower** — You look for someone else to take charge.
- **Gallant** — You seek to be the center of attention.
- **Hedonist** — Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you may die.
- **Jester** — Laughter can heal and teach.
- **Judge** — Balance, truth and justice are your quest.
- **Leader** — You are the one others turn to in times of crisis.
- **Martyr** — You are ready to give everything for what you believe.
- **Paragon** — You strive to be the noble ideal of a hero.
- **Rebel** — You constantly seek to challenge authority.
- **Savant** — Any problem can be solved with logic and deduction.
- **Survivor** — You withstand anything that the universe throws at you.
- **Thrillseeker** — Life is not worth living unless its on the edge.
- **Visionary** — You see the world for what it could be, rather than what it is.

Virtues

- **Compassion** — Empathy and forgiveness.
- **Conviction** — Emotional endurance.
- **Temperance** — Self-control and clear-headedness.
- **Valor** — Courage and bravery.

Backgrounds

- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifacts** — Wondrous devices of the First Age.
- **Backing** — Standing and rank in an organization of power and influence.
- **Contacts** — Information sources and friends in useful places.
- **Familiar** — An animal companion.
- **Followers** — Mortals who look to you for leadership.
- **Influence** — Your pull in the world around you.
- **Manse** — A place of power and Essence.
- **Mentor** — A teacher and instructor.
- **Resources** — Material goods and money.

Bonus Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored or Caste Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored or Caste Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence	7
Charms	5 (4 if in a Favored or Caste Ability)

The prelude, then, provides context for the character's past and depicts her experience of Exaltation, her reaction to it and what she does afterward. It's a one-on-one storytelling session during which the player and the Storyteller establish the important moments of the character's history. Rather than telling a fully developed life story, it generally compresses many years of life into a series of rapid-fire vignettes, each highlighting a pivotal event in the character's life.

Storytelling the Prelude

It's important to keep the player focused during the prelude — it should be very a personal experience, giving each character a sense of history. Some players may want to share a prelude — for example, if their characters were longtime friends (perhaps from childhood). Otherwise, it's best to run preludes one person at a time. You might want to run the prelude between the session where the player creates his character and the first session of play, but if you have to do it during a session, don't worry about the other players. Let them spend the time socializing, refining their characters, discussing their plans for the series or calling out for pizza. The prelude is too important to neglect or rush.

When running the prelude, don't take too much time with any one vignette. Lay out the scene, give the player a chance to make a few decisions, then move on to the next. You can use this opportunity to foreshadow some of the events in the series (perhaps a recurring enemy who appears in each prelude) but don't dwell on any one thing for too long. It's easy to get bogged down in a minute retelling of the party for the character's 14th birthday. Try not to fall victim to this trap — your goal is to make the player respond to a variety of situations typical of the character's existence. This gives a very concentrated sense of what the character's life was like and lets the player get a feel for roleplaying her.

The prelude serves as an opportunity for the player to explore the rules and setting — give her room to do so, but try to avoid combat. If combat does occur, simply describe the outcome; after all, you don't want to accidentally kill the character before the game starts.

The player may change her mind about some of her character's Traits as a result of decisions and actions during the prelude, and it's fine to let her change things around a bit to better fit her concept. Don't allow players to simply shift Traits around to make invincible characters. The idea is to highlight the character's nuances, not engage in a number-crunching exercise. Use the prelude to explore the character's Traits — does he have an Artifact or Manse? Cover how he came to possess of such a thing. Allies? Run a few vignettes showing how she met her friends.

It's also important, when running preludes, to establish a sense of normalcy — of the routine. This gives you a sense of the mundane that you can gleefully shatter when the character's Exaltation occurs.



The prelude is presented as a storytelling session, but it's important to allow the player to interrupt and offer input. After all, this is her character, and she should not have to deal with elements she finds intolerable. It's important that she's a part of the process.

Finally, take the time to give the character's Exaltation all the detail it needs. Play it up as much as you can, focus on the intensity of the moment as the character's newfound power wells up within her and she harnesses it for the first time. Stress the fantastic; Exalted have powers and abilities beyond those of normal people. Use the prelude to give the change impact and weight. Make it clear that the character has irrevocably crossed a line and her life will never again be the same.

Questions and Answers

When you play through your prelude, you should keep the following questions in mind. All of them should be answered to some extent by the time you're done (and you should have an idea as to how some of them will be answered before you begin). It often helps to write out the answers (whether or not you've played through the prelude). If written before, it can guide the Storyteller. If afterward, it can still be an invaluable means of solidifying concepts in your mind.

Each question lists some things you should ask yourself as you flesh out your character. The questions also include some advice on how to use these elements in the prelude.

• **How old are you?** — How long has it been since your Exaltation? Almost no Chosen go through their Exaltations before puberty, and a large number don't change until well into their mid-20s. Exaltation rarely happens after 35, but it has been recorded as late as 60.

• **What was your family life like?** — Were you raised by both parents? Did one — or both — of them die? Do you have brothers or sisters? Are you married? To more than one person? Do you have any children? Is anyone else in your family one of the Chosen?

• **When were you Exalted?** — Where did it happen? Did others see it? Did you injure — or kill — anyone? Did you find the experience terrifying? Exhilarating? Both?

Exaltation is probably the single most important event in your character's life — it's the first time he feels the incredible amounts of Essence flowing through him. From that point on, he can never go back to what he was.

• **Where are you from?** — Are you from the Threshold? The Realm? The Wyld Lands? Did you grow up in the deserts of the South? The Western seas?

Where your characters comes from will have an impact on what he looks like, what language he speaks and many of his customs and attitudes.

• **When did you meet your companions?** — Do you get along with your companions? How long have you known them? How did you meet them? Did you know any of them before you were Exalted? Do you share the same goals? Do you all work for the same city or organization? Do you have a rivalry with any of them?

It's important that a Circle of Exalted be compatible on some level. Too much interpersonal conflict can tear a Circle apart (or, at the very least, get the troublesome member expelled to live a solitary life — which might not be much fun for the player).

• **Where do you live now?** — In a town or city? In a small village? In the woods? Does anyone know how to find you? If you have access to a Manse, have you made it your home? If so, where is it located? Do you have neighbors? What are they like? Have you made their acquaintance?

The Storyteller can use your character's home as a story hook (especially if he's not careful about who learns where he lives).

• **What motivates you?** — What guides your life as one of the Exalted? What drives you to fight alongside your companions (beyond the group's shared purpose)? Do you seek vengeance upon someone? Renown? Adventure and excitement? Acceptance? Do you wish you'd never become one of the Exalted and long for a mundane life?

Your character's priorities and desires are a central part of her personality — it's vitally important you have these in mind as you flesh out your character. Once she's Exalted, how do her priorities shift? However noteworthy and accustomed to the unusual she may be, suddenly becoming the chosen champion of a mighty but largely forgotten god is bound to change things. How does she adjust to becoming a figure of legend?

The Circle

The world of **Exalted** is a very dangerous place, even for beings as powerful as the Chosen. There is strength in numbers, not only in the ability to overwhelm foes with superior force, but in the ability to find multiple solutions to problems more difficult than combat. Ancient manuscripts refer to groups of Solars bound together by oaths of loyalty, friendship and blood, their vows sanctified by a witness of the Eclipse Caste. The manuscripts call these gatherings of heroes Circles. A Circle's oaths were tested and tried by battles and quests, until hardship and struggle forged the companions' bond into an unbreakable brotherhood.

Today, as the Solars once again return to the world in great numbers, the Chosen find themselves compelled to seek out others of their kind. It is a matter of debate among some Solars if this is the will of the Unconquered Sun, reincarnated souls seeking out their long lost blood-brothers and oath-sisters or simply a survival instinct. Most don't bother to question, simply enjoying the company of others like themselves.

A Circle that included one member of each caste was known as a Perfect Circle during the First Age. This sort of Circle was considered the most auspicious. The Zenith Caste believed such a group to be blessed by the Unconquered Sun, who was most pleased to be represented in all of his many states. Sidereal astronomers held Perfect Circles to be extremely propitious and favorably touched by the hand of fate. Even the Dragon-Blooded recognized the strategic advantages of such a group, with each member's strength balancing the others' weaknesses, and eagerly followed them to victory in battle.

However, the modern Solars are scattered across the world, and although they seek each other out, there is no guarantee that they will meet one member of each caste. Many modern Circles lack the numbers or members of certain castes to create a Perfect Circle. Most Circles don't care. Any gathering of Exalted is formidable, no matter what castes they include. Just one of the Unconquered Sun's Chosen can change the world. A group of them can shake the world to its foundations.

Creating the Circle

The Circle serves as the series' center, the axis around which everything else revolves. Characters can join or die, but the Circle remains. Because of its nature, it's extremely important that the players agree on the sort of Circle they want to play, as that will directly impact the direction of the game. If a player decides she doesn't like her character two stories into a series, it's easy enough to let her switch to a new one. If the players decide they don't like the Circle's nature, it may be necessary to completely overhaul the series.

For a Circle to work, the characters must cooperate with each other. This is not to say that all the characters must unreservedly like each other and agree on all things — that is impossible. In fact, it's more interesting if the characters do disagree over some things and experience conflict — every family has its problems. Beyond that, a Circle is more than the sum of its members. It describes those Exalted as a group with common goals, motivations, enemies and background.

It may help players to visualize the Circle as a character unto itself and work out its nature before they even begin to create their characters. The Storyteller and players should discuss the group's purpose for existence (all Circles have one, even if its a simple as survival) and how it was formed. What must it accomplish? How does it interact with others? Once the players decide upon a Circle concept, they can decide who will fill what roles within the Circle and what kind of characters they want to bring into it.

When they create the Circle, players should answer several questions. Players should answer these before they create their characters or play out their preludes, but they may change specifics afterward. The important thing is to establish a firm group concept to give each character context.

- **Where is the Circle based?** — Where does the group make its home? In the Threshold? In the Realm itself? Does the group have access to a Manse? Do the members have their own homes, or do they live together? Is the group urban, rural or wilderness based?
- **What is the Circle's mission?** — What goals and motivations unite the group? Do they seek to hunt down and destroy wicked Fair Folk? Do they simply exist to help each other survive? Do they seek vengeance on someone in specific or upon anyone who happens to offend them?
- **Who, if anyone, is the Circle's leader?** — Who makes decisions? Who leads the group? How does the Circle decide? Traditionally, a Circle would defer to the member whose caste specialized in the activities at hand — the Dawn Caste would lead in combat, while the Eclipse Caste would take charge during social situations. In the modern era, anything goes.
- **Does the Circle have friends and allies?** — More than just the individual members' contacts and allies, are there people the Circle considers friends? Who are they? Does the group protect them?
- **What about enemies?** — Does the Circle have any enemies? Who are they, and why do they hate the Circle? What are their motivations? Are they Exalted? If not, what are they?

Character Creation Example

Jim is making a character for Alia's new **Exalted** series. Before doing anything else, Jim talks with Alia and the other players about the planned setting, theme and mood for the game. Alia plans to focus on the vibrant (and sometimes violent) dynamism of life in the Threshold and that region's rebirth in the wake of the Empress' disappearance. The players decide that they want their characters to be at the forefront of this rebirth and to take an active part in shaping the region's future.

Step One: Concept

Now Jim needs a concept to build his character around. Jim decides that his character will be a craftsman from the Scavenger Lands of the East. Jim wants to avoid any of the overused naming styles that are typical to fantasy gaming, so he does some research and decides on the name Tengiz Ksnis (Its Georgian). Tengiz is an endless bundle of energy, with quick and nimble hands and an even quicker wit.

Next, Jim needs to chose a caste. Looking over the caste descriptions, Jim considers the possibility of the Twilight Caste, which would fit perfectly with Tengiz being a craftsman, but, instead, chooses the Dawn Caste. In keeping with the Dawn Caste's martial overtones, Jim decides that Tengiz is a weaponsmith who specializes in designing and crafting new and inventive weapons.

Jim also writes down his caste's anima power. The Dawn Caste are able to spend Essence to appear huge and terrifying to anyone who looks upon them. Jim decides that Tengiz' anima is that of an angry god of the forge. The muscles of his body appear to ripple with raw power, and his voice is the booming of a hammer striking hot metal. Surrounded by heat and flames, with smoke pouring from his nostrils, Tengiz' eyes burn with the energy of the Unconquered Sun.

For Tengiz' Nature, Jim decides on Architect. Tengiz wants to help build a better world and believes he can best do that by rediscovering the lost secrets of the First Age and using them to defend people from the twin threats of the Realm and the Wyld.

Step Two: Attributes

Now that Jim has a concept, he needs to start assigning dots to determine just what Tengiz can do. As a craftsman and inventor, Tengiz is primarily a thinker and creator, so Jim makes Mental Attributes his primary category. Because Tengiz also has to craft and build his weapons and devices, Jim decides to make Physical Attributes secondary. This leaves Social Attributes as tertiary.

Jim takes the eight points he has for Mental Attributes and assigns three to Wits. Tengiz is a fast and versatile thinker. Jim wants Tengiz to be above average when it comes to smarts and assigns two dots to Intelligence. As a craftsman, Tengiz has a knack for noticing fine details, and as a scavenger, he's good at spotting things others might miss. Jim takes his remaining three points and assigns them to Perception. Tengiz' Mental Attributes are Perception 4, Intelligence 3 and Wits 4.

For Physical Attributes, Jim assigns three of his six points to Dexterity, one point to Strength and two points to Stamina. Tengiz needs nimble hands for a lot of the work he does and prefers to rely on speed and finesse rather than raw force. He also is accustomed to physical exertion, both in his work shop and out on scavenging hunts. However, because Tengiz is used to such physical labor, Jim wants him to have above average Strength. Jim decides to spend four bonus points to add a dot to Tengiz' Strength. Tengiz' Physical Attributes are Strength 3, Dexterity 4 and Stamina 3.

Finally, Jim assigns Tengiz' four points for Social Attributes. Tengiz is a likable fellow, but somewhat mild mannered and average looking. Jim assigns two dots to Charisma and one dot each to Manipulation and Appearance. Tengiz' Social Attributes are Charisma 3, Manipulation 2 and Appearance 2.

Step Three: Abilities

Jim now turns his attention to Abilities. First, Jim makes a note of Tengiz' Caste Abilities. As a member of the Dawn Caste, these include Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown. Jim doesn't have to give Tengiz any of these Abilities, but because he is Dawn Caste, he has a natural affinity with them.

Next, Jim decides on Tengiz' five Favored Abilities. Tengiz is a craftsman and weaponsmith, so the first choose is Craft (Weaponsmithing). Tengiz is used to spending long periods of time with little sleep or rest while working on a project, so Jim picks Endurance as the second of his Favored Abilities. Tengiz goes on scavenging trips out into the surrounding wilderness, so Jim chooses Survival and Awareness, representing both his character's experience with finding his way through the Threshold and his skill at noticing useful things to scavenge. Finally, Jim selects Lore, because Tengiz has a fascination with the First Age and often tries to recreate its martial devices in his workshop. Tengiz has a natural affinity with these Abilities, but unlike Caste Abilities, he must have at least one dot in each of these five Abilities.

Now, Jim must assign his 25 Ability dots. At least 10 dots must go toward Caste or Favored Abilities, so Jim starts by assigning three dots to Tengiz' Craft skill. He also assigns two dots each to Awareness, Endurance and Lore and one dot to Survival. Jim then assigns three dots each to Melee and Thrown (Tengiz knows how to use the weapons he crafts). Jim decides that Tengiz has some experience with unarmed combat and chooses to assign two dots to Martial Arts and three dots to Dodge. Jim assigns one dot to Socialize and two dots to Linguistics, representing Tengiz' ability to deal with his customers. Tengiz is originally from the Scavenger Lands, so his native language is Riverspeak. For his two additional languages, Jim picks Low Realm and Forest-tongue because the regions that border the Scavenger Lands speak these languages. Finally, Jim assigns a dot to Ride. Tengiz can get around on a horse, but he's never been that good at it.

Jim decides to go ahead and spend a few bonus points on his Abilities. Jim spends four bonus points to increase his Melee and Craft (Weaponsmithing) skills by two dots each (because Melee and Craft are part of Tengiz' Caste and Favored Abilities, respectively, Jim only needs to spend one bonus point for each additional dot).

Jim also decides to spend bonus points on specialties. He spends one bonus point to gain two specialty slots for his Melee skill (again, its a Caste Ability, so he gets a break in point costs). Jim gives Tengiz the Melee specialty of Weapons He's Crafted Himself and takes the specialty twice. Jim also spends another bonus point to gain two specialty slots for Favored Abilities. He takes the specialty Blades for Craft (Weaponsmithing) and the specialty Long Periods of Work for Endurance, representing Tengiz' ability to go days without rest while completing his craftwork.

Step Four: Advantages

Jim now turns his attention to Tengiz' Backgrounds. Tengiz has made a decent living over the years as a weaponsmith, and Jim places three dots in Resources to represent that fact. Jim also decides that Tengiz has taken on an apprentice, someone he can teach his craft to (something that fits with his Nature). Jim only allots one

point to Followers, deciding that his apprentice is still too much of a novice to have developed any outstanding Abilities. Later, Jim will sit down with Alia and work to turn the unnamed apprentice into a fully fleshed out personality for Alia to use as a Storyteller character. Tengiz has a lot of experience as a scavenger, and Jim gives him three dots in Contacts, representing fellow scavengers that Tengiz keeps in touch with. As with the apprentice, Jim will sit down with Alia later to flesh out his most important contacts and his relationships with them. Jim considers taking an Artifact (by spending bonus points) but decides not to. Instead, he makes a note to tell Alia that Tengiz has always dreamed of finding an artifact of the First Age and that it's something he hopes to do during the series. Tengiz' Backgrounds are Contacts 3, Followers 1 and Resources 3.

Next, Jim needs to pick Charms for Tengiz. He gets to pick 10, but at least five must be from Caste or Favored Abilities. Jim looks over the list of Charms and decides that several of the Craft Charms would be useful in Tengiz' line of work. He chooses Flawless Handiwork Method, Object-Strengthening Touch and Durability-Enhancing Technique. These Charms will allow Tengiz to craft weapons of extraordinary quality, which not only helps provide him with a source of income, but allows him to arm those that aide his quest to help and defend the people of the Threshold. Jim selects the Awareness Charm Sensory Acuity Prana, which will aid both his craftwork and his scavenging. Next, Jim looks over the Melee Charms, which will allow him to take a more active role in protecting people. Jim chooses Excellent Strike, Hungry Tiger Technique and One Weapon, Two Blows. Jim passes on Fire and Stones Strike, deciding that the Charm does not fit with Tengiz' speed over force philosophy. Jim also selects Golden Essence Block and Dipping Swallow Defense, so that he has a way to defend himself. As long as he's wielding weapons he made himself, Tengiz shouldn't have too much trouble parrying most blows. For his final Charm, Jim selects Retrieve the Fallen Weapon, deciding that it goes well with Tengiz' Melee specialty and helps strengthen his defense.

Next Jim assigns points to Tengiz' Virtues. Jim decides that Tengiz' impulsiveness and excessive energy sometimes get him into trouble, so he doesn't assign any additional dots to Tengiz' Temperance. Jim assigns two points to Valor, figuring that Tengiz is extremely brave in the face of adversity. Tengiz genuinely cares about people and wants to help them, so Jim also places two dots in Compassion. This leaves one dot, which Jim places in Conviction. Tengiz is used to hardship, but he's not exactly comfortable with it. Tengiz' Virtues are Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 1 and Valor 3.

Having assigned Tengiz' Virtues, Jim now needs to give Tengiz a Virtue Flaw. The flaw must come from a Virtue rated 3 or higher, so Tengiz' flaw will come from either his Compassion or his Valor. Jim decides that the Compassion Flaw Red Rage of Compassion best suits Tengiz' personality and his desire to help others.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Jim calculates Tengiz' Willpower. Tengiz' two highest Virtues are Compassion and Valor, at 3 each. Jim adds those two numbers together giving him a total of six. Jim considers spending bonus points to increase Tengiz' Willpower further, but decides that its high enough for now. Tengiz has Willpower 6.

Tengiz' starting Essence is 2. Jim decides that's high enough for right now — he doesn't have any Charms that require Essence of 3 or higher — and leaves it alone.

Next, Jim calculates Tengiz' Essence Pools. For his Personal Essence pool, Jim multiplies Tengiz' Essence by 3 and then adds his Willpower for a total of 12 ([2 x 3] + 6). For his Peripheral Essence pool, Jim multiplies Tengiz' Essence by 7 and then adds his Willpower and the sum of his Virtue ratings for a total of 29 ([2 x 7] + 6 + [3 + 2 + 1 + 3]).

Jim hasn't taken any extra health levels as Charms, so Tengiz begins with the standard eight health levels that all Solars possess.

Finally, Jim has five bonus points left to spend (he already spent 10 of his 15 bonus points earlier). He decides to spend four points for the Call the Blade Charm (its a Melee Charm, one of Tengiz' Caste Abilities, meaning that it only costs four bonus points instead of the usual five). This leaves Jim with one bonus point. Jim decides to spend the point on additional specialties — a third level of Weapons He's Crafted Himself (giving Tengiz a total of three additional dice to Melee rolls when using his own works) and a point on Lore (Scavenged Items) to reflect his hobbies.

All that remains are Tengiz' description, history and quirks. Jim has already decided that his character is from the Scavenger Lands of the East, but he also decides that Tengiz is originally from the Southeast. In his late 20s, he's of average height and thin but well muscled as a result of his profession. Being from the Southeast, Tengiz has brown skin that has been weathered by a lifetime of working in the forges. His hair is red, but Tengiz always keeps his beard and head cleanly shaven. He carries himself with an aura of self-confidence befitting a freeman who's aware of his skill as both swordsmith and swordsman. Tengiz favors comfortable, yet durable clothing but is able to dress well when needed. He prefers food and drink of high quality and has a reputation for complaining loudly if meals don't meet his standards (he's become the terror of tavern keepers in his hometown).

When fighting, Tengiz prefers a simple leather breastplate and helmet for armor. His weapons of choice are a pair of double-edged short swords. These are the first weapons Tengiz crafted (using his Craft Charms) after his Exaltation, and later, Jim and Alia will discuss what bonuses, if any, the weapons have.

For Tengiz' history, Jim decides that, as a young boy, Tengiz was sold into slavery by his family during a famine (one less mouth to feed). Tengiz was taken to the Scavenger Lands, where he was purchased by a swordsmith. After spending four years as a servant, Tengiz persuaded his master to take him on as an apprentice. His skill as a weapon maker soon surpassed that of his master and earned him the money to buy his freedom. Jim decides that Tengiz' apprentice was also a young slave that the smith purchased in the same manner that he himself was.

Tengiz had been a swordsmith for a decade before Exalting as a Solar. Tengiz believes that he has been chosen by the Unconquered Sun to help repair and reforge the world before it is broken beyond all hope of salvage. To his mind, the Realm of the Dragon-Blooded is too consumed by spiritual rust and corrosion to be repaired. The Threshold and its people hold the raw materials needed to rebuild the world.

Tengiz continues to maintain his workshop within the town his Circle calls home. Before meeting the other members of his Circle, Tengiz would join scavenger expeditions in hopes of finding artifacts of the First Age. Since joining the group, his opportunities to take such trips have grown fewer and fewer, but Tengiz hopes eventually to drag the others out into the field with him.




LEIF
JONES

Swan walked the land like a ghost, unobtrusive and scentless. Fox kits played, undisturbed by his passing, and the eyes of hunting mospids slid across him as if he were not there. In the evening, as he grew weary, he saw a thread of smoke rising from a grove on a distant hill.

The diplomat's stride quickened, and he ate up the distance between himself and the fire. The sky was just beginning to darken into twilight when he arrived on the outskirts of the copse. Pulling invisibility's gauzy veil close about him, Swan slipped into the trees. He followed the smell of smoke and the sound of the campfire to its origin, and there, he found the wood spider, sitting quietly in its web.

Around the campfire sat a macabre tableau of three skeletons. One lay with a rusted knife still imbedded in its chest, and the two others were curled up, as if in dying agonies. They were old enough that the maggots had departed but not so old that they had completely decayed. To one side, strewn out as if kicked over, was a bag of cheap jade bits. And above it all, in a web of greenery, hung the wicker spider.

Swan reached out and cautiously picked a small stick from off the ground. He gently eased himself down between the skeletons and then cracked the branch.

The silence fled with the crack, and Swan's concealing magic fled as well. The spider raised its face and peered at him, pine-sap eyes glittering with firelight in the growing darkness. "Greetings, brother. What brings you to my humble cottage?" Its voice was the rustle of trees in the wind of a looming storm. Swan looked into its heart and sought to read its motives, but he found only childlike malice, without reason or direction. Like a seed, its hate would grow as best it could in whatever soil it found.

"The night is growing chill, and I had sought a fire to warm myself. Little did I know I would meet one of my kin." Swan looked at the skeletons to either side of him. "What strange decor you have, brother."

"There is no honor among thieves, alas. The one tried to poison his fellows to steal their share of the loot, but sadly, his fellows were as dishonest as he, and they stabbed him to death. But, unfortunately for them, they guzzled poisoned wine as they jeered at his misfortune. Life is full of such ironies."

Swan smiled, knowing that the wood spider had omitted to mention how it had advised both parties in their deeds. He simply said, "A good catch, but is it really wise to birth hungry ghosts so close to one's web?"

The elemental said contentedly, "Not if one has use for them," and Swan noticed how fat the spider seemed to be. The diplomat nodded knowingly and gave an exaggerated yawn.

"Will you offer your hospitality, brother spider, to a lonely fellow, traveling through the night?"

The spider's chuckle was the soft sound of a forest when the rain is gone but the water still runs from the leaves, "But of course."

"Then let us shake on it, for though I do not doubt you, a traveler can trust no one."

"Certainly," the spider replied, and Swan knew from the smile in its voice that the thing intended to deceive and consume him. It extended a long front leg and Swan rose to touch it with his hand, willing his anima to sanctify the oath. A sudden wind blew through the grove, and the air around the Exalted and the elemental swirled with the characters of the pledge. Though it lasted only a second, for that moment, the beacon of the vow shone so brightly that the flames of the campfire were invisible.

Then, there was silence, and the spider said, "Greetings, Prince of the Earth. I had not recognized you."

Swan yawned again, this time in honest exhaustion. He murmured, "Sleep well, brother spirit," and drifted into the vale of dreams.

All night long, the spider's hateful resin eyes glared at him as the fire guttered and died.

CHAPTER FOUR
TRAITS

Traits detail your character's capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. By giving values to these qualities, your character's aptitudes and even personality can be represented in the structure of the game, as described in the Systems chapter. These rules and values allow you to develop a good idea of what kind of activities you can expect your character to succeed at and what activities are difficult or impossible for her. Traits in **Exalted** are very broad, meaning that there are not very many of them and that each Trait represents aptitude in a wide area or even several similar areas. By giving you fewer details to worry about, **Exalted** makes it easier to remember what your character can and cannot do and more likely that you will possess the ability to act in any given situation.

The last chapter outlined the process of character creation; this chapter is its companion and contains descriptions of the many Traits you may choose for your character. The exception is magical Traits. These are described in Chapter Five: Charms and Sorcery.

Nature

Nature is a basic description of your character's self-perception and the core of his "soul." No character fits any Nature exactly, but one of the listed Natures usually describes his concept well enough. Nature isn't all that a character is about. Rather, it serves as a guide to your character's perspective on the environment and how he reacts to that environment.

While Nature helps describe who your character really is on the inside, this may not be the façade he presents to the world. A person's mood and demeanor can change depending on who he's with and what situation he's in. Your character's outward personality is handled entirely through roleplaying, although his Nature should probably color his general disposition.

In game terms, Nature is important because it is one of the ways that a character can regain Willpower points. Each Nature archetype lists the criteria necessary to regain Willpower. See "Willpower," on page 146 of this chapter for specifics on spending and recovering Willpower.

The archetypes listed here are a small sample of the many faces of humanity. Feel free to work with your Storyteller to create new Natures.

Architect

You are driven to create something of lasting value, whether it be a new social order, a kingdom, a work of art or some other legacy. Disorder and decay are your enemies; you hope to bring about order and progress through your efforts. If you become fixated on your goal, you may force your dream on others.

Gain Willpower when you accomplish a significant goal.



Bravo

There are winners and losers in life, and you are definitely a winner. You reinforce your self-worth by dominating situations, whether through physical brawls or political intrigues. You might terrorize or protect the weak, but such weakness is not something you tolerate in yourself. You don't know the meaning of fear, and failure is not an option. Then again, you're not sure what discretion means, either, and compromise isn't on your list of choices.

Gain Willpower whenever you make someone else back down.

Bureaucrat

Laws were created for a reason, and your primary concern is to follow them. No matter what the crisis, you follow the proper procedure. If people don't obey the laws, chaos will run rampant. You take comfort in established processes, confident that they are the key to victory. Strict adherence to policy may blind you to better options.

Gain Willpower when a crisis is resolved by following correct procedures.

Caregiver

You always try to make a difference, helping those around you — and they depend on you for it. You're not blind to the flaws of others; if anything, that makes your desire to aid them stronger. You gain strength from knowing that you make a difference, that you ease the suffering in the world. Yet, you have nowhere to turn for support.

Gain Willpower when you receive tangible proof that you have helped another.

Conniver

Why break your own back when you can talk someone else into breaking his for you? You always try to manipulate others before applying yourself. You advance your cause by coordinating your friends' efforts and sowing dissent among your enemies. You fear that others may be doing exactly the same thing to you, making it difficult for you to trust anyone.

Gain Willpower when you lead someone to do what you want.

Critic

You find purpose in revealing weaknesses and faults, whether in artwork, an organization or a person's habits. You strive to perfect others by pointing out their shortcomings. You do this for their own good, whether they want your help or not. You can do your job too well, convincing someone that he isn't just flawed but worthless and, in the process, driving away those closest to you.

Gain Willpower when you point out a significant flaw that would have been harmful had it been overlooked.

Explorer

The prospect of finding new or lost places, people and things — whether it's an elder ruin, a lost artifact or a musical style — gives your life meaning. Discoveries are your passion, and you devote a great deal of time and effort to keeping up with current events. The routine and commonplace bores you, and learning of someone else's discovery fills you with envy. You constantly set your sights on the horizon, sometimes at the expense of the here and now.

Gain Willpower whenever you make a significant discovery.

Follower

Leaders need followers, and you await your orders. Taking charge isn't your style. It isn't in your nature to rebel. In fact, your strength comes from your ability to cooperate with a variety of personalities toward a common cause. Yet, while you might follow your commander into the marches of the Underworld, you tend to lack the self-esteem to question such a suicidal act.

Gain Willpower if you help the Circle succeed because you carry out your assigned duty.

Gallant

You are the noticeable one, and others had best recognize it! Your ego thrives on recognition and the admiration of others (though you'll settle for less desirable sorts of attention). You love being in the public eye, and nothing beats performing before an awestruck crowd. While you are certainly flamboyant and full of vivacity, others often see the potential for your overconfident approach to lead you to disastrous misjudgments.

Gain Willpower whenever your deeds are particularly impressive, awe-inspiring or likely to land you smack in the center of attention.

Hedonist

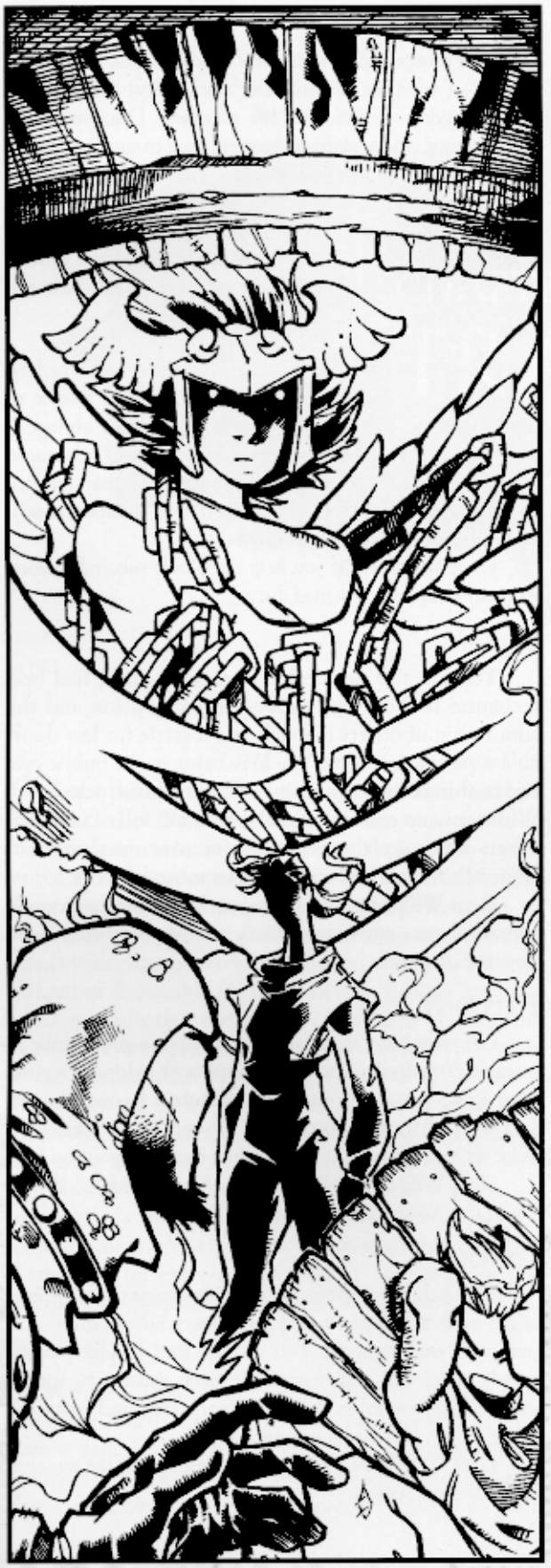
Life is too important to waste, so have as good a time as possible. You don't mind a little hard work as long as a good time awaits you at the end of it. Pleasure is its own reward, and you pity those who take life too seriously to realize it. Even so, your pursuit of a good time can take you too far.

Gain Willpower whenever you have a truly good time (and bring others along for the ride).

Jester

The only sane defense against an insane universe is to laugh at it all. Sorrow and pain are your enemies, and humor is your weapon. You act the fool to take others' minds off gloom and despair. In your pursuit to spread smiles, you may cross the line, distracting and irritating those whom you mean to entertain.

Gain Willpower whenever you can lighten the mood or ease a tense situation.



JUDGE

You seek to solve the problems of others by acting as a mediator, arbitrator or even a friend. You pride yourself on your clear judgment and ability to find compromises. Conflict and dissent are abhorrent to you; you know there is always an option on which everyone can agree. Your greatest fear is that you may use poor judgment, and thinking this way makes you question even the most obvious of choices.

Gain Willpower any time you lead others to an amicable resolution.

LEADER

You're meant to be in charge. You excel at organizing, and others look to you for direction. You trust your own judgment implicitly, and you have no qualms about taking over a task and shaping it the way you see fit. There are two ways to do a job: your way, and the wrong way. While you may be a master of direction, ignoring others' suggestions could be your downfall.

Gain Willpower when others follow you without disputing your decisions.

MARTYR

You're ready to put yourself at risk so that another person or a cause succeeds, even when the sacrifice isn't necessary. You drive yourself twice as hard as anyone else does, expecting no reward other than recognition of your efforts. Despite this suffering, you endure, clinging firmly to the belief that you make a difference. In your blind desire to throw yourself into the breach, you could sacrifice yourself for nothing.

Gain Willpower whenever you sacrifice yourself or something of yours for a higher goal.

PARAGON

You have lofty and concrete ideals about what is right and noble in human nature, and you strive to embody those ideals. You consider your powers a great gift and a tremendous responsibility, and you feel duty-bound to use them in the pursuit of righteousness and altruism. Though you aspire to be a role model, you are not a Gallant — public display is not as important as the knowledge of good deeds accomplished. Some might see you as self-righteous, but you are your own worst critic. You are completely intolerant of human foibles (especially your own), and this lack of acceptance might well drive you over the edge one day.

Gain Willpower whenever you accomplish a significant task for the greater good.

REBEL

You're the ultimate free-thinker. Whether you champion a cause or simply feel contrary, you choose your own

path. Others are welcome to join your march to a different drummer, but you don't need followers or fellow-travelers to make you happy. You defy authority in principle and deed, even if you have similar views.

Gain Willpower whenever you defy an established authority.

Savant

You approach the universe as a riddle to be answered. You live by logic and deduction; any problem can be solved in a rational manner. Your goal is to uncover the truth, to understand everything. However, your intense interest in finding the answers to questions can be distracting, since you get caught up in minutiae and may lose sight of the larger issue.

Gain Willpower when a rational, methodical approach helps solve a situation.

Survivor

You can endure nearly any circumstance. No matter what happens, you always persevere. Never say die and never give up — ever. You have no time for those who crumble at the first sign of adversity. In fact, to be safe, you avoid forming close ties with others. You'll pull through whatever the odds, even if it means sacrificing others.

Gain Willpower whenever you survive a difficult situation through your own cunning and perseverance.

Thrillseeker

You don't do things for the ends, but for the rush that the means provides. Risk gives your life meaning, and boredom is death. The stakes are never so high that they can't be made higher. As long as there's a thrill in it, you're willing to pay almost any price. Paybacks are a bitch, though, and you will get in over your head sooner or later.

Gain Willpower every time you put yourself in a life-threatening situation, then escape it.

Traditionalist

You believe the solutions for today's problems can be found by applying the methods of the past. Constant change destroys instead of creates. You wrap yourself in tradition, resisting innovations and breakthroughs. Not all change is bad, though; in holding too tightly to old ways, you can often miss something better.

Gain Willpower when a tried-and-true method proves effective.

Visionary

You have a goal that only you can see, something to which you've dedicated your life. You may be a spiritualist, philosopher or seer, but whatever you are, you search for something more. You create new possibilities by seeing beyond the bounds of conventional imagination. Though you are full of new ideas, your head is often among the stars.

Gain Willpower whenever you take a concrete step toward realizing your goal.

Caste

The spiritual essence of every Solar Exalted has certain predispositions, shaped by the gods in the days before history. These predispositions are called castes because they divide the Solars based on their duties and roles. There are five castes of Solar Exalted, each specialized in a certain facet of rulership and each of which is named after one of the five states of the Sun (Dawn, Zenith, Twilight, Night and Eclipse).

Since the murder of the Solars and the usurpation of the Realm by the Dragon-Blooded, the Immaculate Order has taught that the Solar Exalted are a form of demon called the Anathema. They also have names for the castes of the Anathema, and these are the names by which the different types of Solar Exalted are more commonly known in the modern day. While characters may know themselves to be Zenith Caste from dreams and ancient texts, others will think of them as the Blasphemous. The Immaculate demonological name for the caste is included after the ancient name of the caste.

Anima Effects

All castes of Solar Exalted can channel Essence directly through their animas to generate magical effects. While this is inefficient compared to the more refined magic of Charms, it is reflexive, and every Solar Exalted can utilize her caste's anima power without special training.

In addition to those abilities unique to their caste, all Solar Exalted can spend a single mote of Essence to:

- Cause their Caste Mark to glow brightly for a scene (as if the character has spent 4-7 motes of Peripheral Essence).
- Cause their anima to glow brightly enough to read by for a scene (as if the character had spent 8-10 motes of Peripheral Essence).
- Know the precise time of day for the rest of the scene.

DAWN CASTE



As the Unconquered Sun rises in the morning sky, its light flares forth, burning away the darkness and turning the sky red — as if the horizon was soaked with the blood of light's enemies. Thus do the warriors of the Dawn Caste strike against the minions of darkness, staining the ground crimson with the blood of all who dare to stand against them.

In the First Age, members of the Dawn Caste were the generals and champions of the Realm. They brought the light and the glory of the Unconquered Sun to every darkened corner of the earth, guarded the borders of the Realm against the destructive forces of the Wyld and lead the armies of the Realm to victory in battles that became legend. When the Dragon-Blooded betrayed the Solar Exalted and usurped control of the Realm, no member of this caste who escaped the Terrestrial's initial ambush went gently into the darkness of the Underworld. All those bearing the mark of the Dawn fought to the death, falling only to superior forces and treachery, each taking dozens or hundreds into the land of the dead with them.

Now that the Solars have returned, the Children of the Dawn have reclaimed their place as the greatest warriors to walk the earth. Unparalleled masters of the martial disciplines, they battle a thousand enemies on a hundred fronts, laying their foes low with blade, bow and fist. A single Dawn Child can destroy dozens of lesser foes; a group can lay waste to entire armies.

Members of the Dawn Caste are chosen from among those who have struggled to master the arts of war and combat. Master swordsmen and archers only scratch the surface of this caste. Gang leaders who excel at urban warfare, hulking brutes who dominate gladiator arenas, philosopher-monks who seek enlightenment through the martial arts, swordsmiths of legendary skill, hotheaded youths with the courage to fight for what they believe in; all these and more are found among the Children of the Dawn.

Dawn Children are the martial arm of a Circle, and one is frequently the character a group looks to for leadership in battle. They are the Circle's first line of defense and use their mastery of combat to destroy the Circle's enemies.

Anima Banner: Dawn Caste Solars are marked by a brilliant golden sunburst that adorns the center of their brow. Their anima tends to be bright white and pale gold, sometimes tinged with red or light violet.

Anima Effects: By spending 10 motes of Essence, the character can appear huge and terrifying for the remainder of the scene (or until she chooses to let the effect dissipate). The change is quite dramatic, as the character appears taller and fiercer, with a terrible visage, burning eyes and a deadly rending grasp.

Mortal creatures attempting to face the Exalted must make Valor checks or be unable to look directly at the character or strongly oppose him, subtracting 2 dice from all attempts to attack the character. Characters who botch their Valor rolls (and most natural animals) will flee in terror of the wrathful apparition that confronts them. Golems and automata, demons and the undead and other creatures that do not know fear cannot be affected by this power.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Dawn Caste excel in all forms of combat, armed and otherwise. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts, Melee and Thrown.

The Forsaken

According to the histories of the Realm, the dark patrons of the Anathema turned their backs on their servants. Most fled in terror and disarray from the forces of the Elemental Dragons and abandoned their warrior brethren to die alone in a hopeless battle against the righteous armies of the Terrestrials. Because this caste of Anathema was abandoned by its patron and fellows in its time of greatest need, the Dragon-Blooded still refer to the Dawn Caste as the Forsaken.

Associations: The season of spring, the colors of saffron and lavender, the eastern direction, the element of fire, the full moon and the Maiden of Battles

Sobriquets: Ascending Suns, Children of the Dawn, Lightbringers, Bronze Tigers, Swords of Heaven, The Forsaken (derogatory)

Concepts: Mercenary prince, city guardsman, warrior-scholar, grizzled veteran, daring young farm boy, famous pit fighter, heroic bandit, barbarian raider, swordsmith

I am not a wise man,
but I am a strong one,
and I know right from wrong.

Surrender,
and I will see you
are judged fairly.

Resist,
and I will end your
tyranny with your life.

ZENITH CASTE



As the Unconquered Sun reaches its height amid the noonday sky, its light shines down, banishing shadows, blazing with power and revealing the Sun's immeasurable might for all to see. And so do the Zenith Caste crusade to banish the shadows of doubt and confusion, infusing the masses with faith and revealing its power — the channeled strength of the Unconquered Sun — to all those around it.

At the height of the Solars' power, the Zenith Caste served as the priest-kings of the Realm. It members lead the Solar Deliberative, the Realm's original governing body, and their words inspired all who heeded them to greatness. Hearing the voice of the Unconquered Sun, members of the Zenith Caste served as intermediaries between the people of the Realm and their celestial patron. The people looked to the Zenith Caste for leadership in both spiritual and temporal matters, seeking from its members the wisdom and blessing of the Unconquered Sun. When the Dragon-Blooded rebelled against the Celestials, those Zenith Caste who escaped the Terrestrials' ambush stood like mountains, fortified by their unbreakable faith in the Unconquered Sun. But even the greatest of mountains is worn away by wind and the seas, and so, the Pillars of the Sun were slowly worn down and broken by the endless armies of the Terrestrials.

The Zenith Exalted were the first of the Solars to return. Throughout the Realm and the Threshold, strange men and women arrived in cities and towns. They wandered out of the deserts and mountains or sailed in from the sea, each preaching the glory of the Unconquered Sun. Once again, the Pillars of the Sun have begun to lead the people back toward righteousness and greatness and to confront the forces of darkness and corruption with faith, fist and fire.

Exalted of the Zenith Caste are chosen from those who thirst for righteousness and justice, as well as from among those who are natural leaders of men or who are willing to endure great hardship in the name of what they believe in. All members of this caste have been granted a vision of the Unconquered Sun, and this vision helps fire their passion and faith to new heights. No matter what the Zenith Solar fights for, he fights for it with every fiber of his being, never quitting — no matter what.

Within a Circle, members of the Zenith Caste are often the pillar that Circlemates look to for support and strength. The Zeniths tireless energy and fortitude allows them to bear the brunt of assaults that would break others, and their charisma and leadership abilities allow them to inspire others to feats above and beyond what they believe possible.

Anima Banner: Zenith Caste Solars bear large, bright-gold circular Caste Marks. Their animas are a brilliant, burning white or a majestic gold.

Anima Effects: The Zenith Caste is empowered with the touch of the Sun himself. With but a touch, they can burn the bodies of the fallen for 1 mote of Essence per body, sending the smoke (and soul) to Heaven and preventing the body from rising after death as a zombie or hungry ghost. They can also strike down demons, the undead and other creatures of darkness. As her action for a turn, a Zenith Exalted may channel 5 motes of Essence through her anima and indicate such a being within 10 yards. She then rolls her Essence as dice of unsoakable aggravated damage against the target. It is known that the Deathlords and their deathknight servants can resist this attack. As fierce enemies of darkness, the Zenith Exalted may cause their anima to flare for 10 motes of Essence. The effect is the same as the anima flare of the Dawn Exalted, but it only applies to demons, ghosts and other such unclean creatures.

The Blasphemous

According to the theology of the Realm, the Anathema forced their subjects to bow down and worship the dark powers the Anathema worshiped. This wicked worship was abolished, and in its place was set up the pure faith of the Immaculate Order. For their affronts against the natural order, the leaders of the Anathema's profane religion are referred to as the Blasphemous.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Zenith Caste excel at surviving great hardships, both physical and mental. They also possess amazing skills of persuasion and inspiration. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Endurance, Performance, Presence, Resistance and Survival.

Associations: The season of summer, the colors of gold and cobalt blue, the southern direction, the element of earth, the half moon and the Maiden of Serenity

Sobriquets: Resplendent Suns, Pillars of the Sun, Solar Thunder, Golden Bulls, Hammers of Heaven, The Blasphemous (derogatory)

Concepts: Former priest or shaman of another god, brilliant astrologer, two-fisted laborer, wandering tinker, desert hermit, physician, peasant rebel, tax collector, pirate, old man on the mountain, runaway slave

The stars and the prophets
have long foretold a day
when the forces of righteousness
would come vanquish
that which is wicked.

I have come in from
the wilderness to tell you —

that time is now at hand.

TWILIGHT CASTE



As the Unconquered Sun slips below the horizon, its light retreats. The shadows grow long as dedicated scholars and craftsmen light their candles and lanterns, seeking to continue their work into the night. And so, the Twilight Caste seek to hold back the night by bringing forth the light of learning and knowledge and banishing the darkness of ignorance.

During the First Age, the Twilight Children were the greatest scholars, wizards and craftsmen in the Realm. From their minds and hands came the wonders and artifacts that were the glory and the foundation of the First Age. These Exalted traveled to the four pillars of the world and helped to defend human civilization with their practical magic and legendary cunning. When the Solars were overthrown, many of the Twilight Caste gave their lives in the defense of their brethren. Those who survived the initial betrayal spent their last days seeking to hide their lore and artifacts from the traitorous Dragon-Blooded, that the Solars might come into their power again, in some future Age.

With the Solars' return, the Twilight Children have once again become beacons of knowledge and learning in a dark and dangerous world. Some of the most learned beings in the known world, the Copper Spiders now work — and fight — to rebuild the glory of the First Age in this era of chaos and corruption. They defend towns and cities with both sword and mind and teach their skills to any who will learn.

Members of the Twilight Caste are chosen from among those who apply their skills and knowledge to create solid, lasting results. Few are found among their numbers who were naught but withered scholars, pouring the years of their life into the pages of dusty tomes. The way of the Arrows of Heaven is the way of the scavenger, the engineer, the healer, the detective, the craftsman and the warrior-wizard. Each possesses not just a thirst for knowledge, but a burning desire to use it. When knowledge is needed, the Twilight Caste leads the way.

Anima Banner: The Caste Mark of the Twilight Caste Solars is a golden circle, filled in with gold on the top, but having only an empty ring on the bottom half. Their animas tend to the most spectacular colors, containing bright golds as well as bright and dark reds, purples and even blues.

Anima Effects: Solar Exalted of the Twilight Caste may channel Essence through their anima as a last-ditch protective act. If, after damage has rolled, a Twilight Exalted will lose health levels, then she may spend 5 motes of Essence to strengthen her Anima in an attempt to stop the attack. The character rolls her Essence, and for each success, she can subtract one health level from the damage the enemy would have done. This can turn an otherwise deadly blow or reduce a weak attack to harmlessness.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Twilight Caste excel in the search for knowledge and in the application of that knowledge. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Craft, Investigation, Lore, Medicine and Occult.

Associations: The season of autumn, the colors of orange and black, the western direction, the element of wood, the crescent moon and the Maiden of Secrets

The Unclean

Many were those among the Anathema who made pacts with evil spirits and the powers of the Underworld to gain power. These warlocks traded the blood of sacrifices, their bodies, even their eternal souls to the forces of darkness in exchange for power. Yet, when the righteous armies of the Terrestrial Exalted rose up against them, their evil powers availed them not, and they were put to the sword with their fellows. For their traffic with wicked beings, these Anathema are known as the Unclean.

Sobriquets: Descending Suns, Children of Twilight, Solar Lightning, Copper Spiders, Arrows of Heaven, The Unclean (derogatory)

Concepts: Elderly scholar, warrior-sage, cunning courtier, slave on the run, destitute student, child prodigy, ambitious courtesan, educated merchant, village wise woman, cunning tailor, traveling healer, town constable, optimistic young scavenger, blacksmith

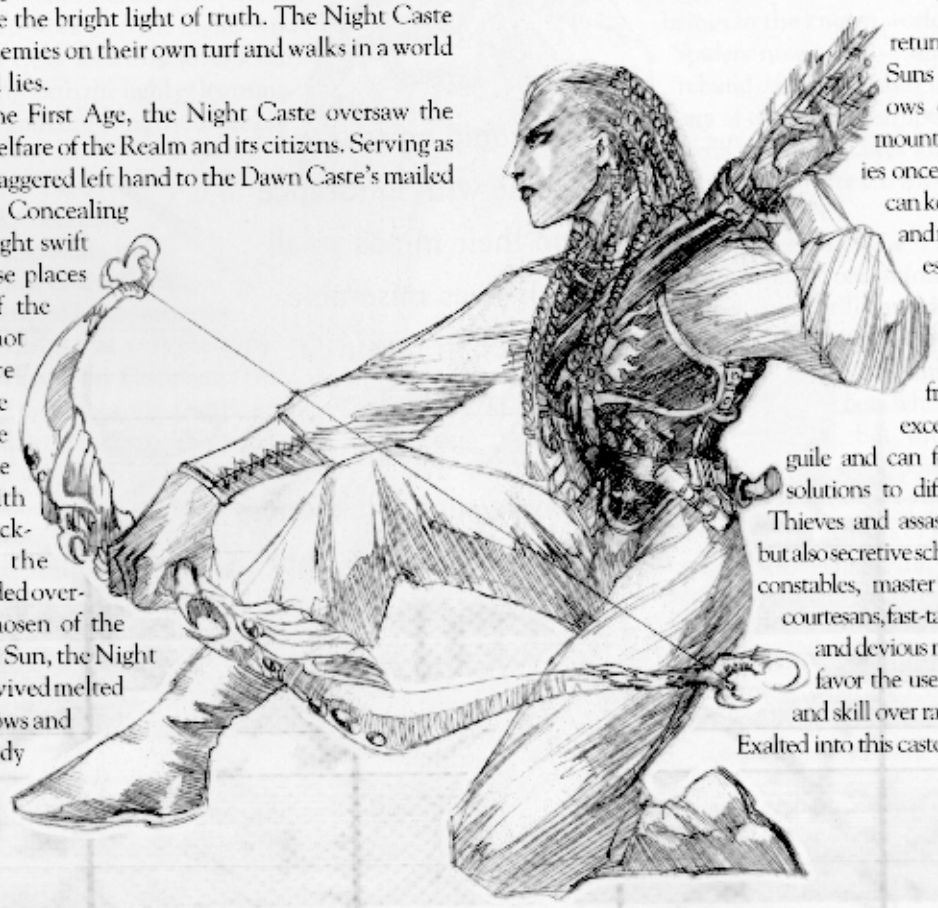
You would enslave
these people with ignorance
and keep their minds small
and their lives miserable
in order to fatten
your own belly.

I cannot abide such wickedness
and come bearing the light
of learning for all
who wish to see.

NIGHT CASTE

When the Unconquered Sun descends below the horizon to slumber until the next dawn, the world is shrouded in darkness and secrecy. It is the time of those beings — conspirators, criminals and wicked spirits — that cannot survive the bright light of truth. The Night Caste fights these enemies on their own turf and walks in a world of secrecy and lies.

During the First Age, the Night Caste oversaw the security and welfare of the Realm and its citizens. Serving as the silent, bedaggered left hand to the Dawn Caste's mailed right fist, the Concealing Shadows brought swift justice to those places the armies of the light could not reach. Where brute force failed, the Night Caste succeeded with stealth and trickery. When the Dragon-Blooded overthrew the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, the Night Caste who survived melted into the shadows and waged a bloody guerilla war that lasted for centuries. Whenever the Dragon-Blooded believed they had eliminated the last of the Iron Wolves, another nobleman would awaken to find himself covered in the blood of his children.



With the Solars' return, the Hidden Suns stalk the shadows of the forests, mountains and the cities once more. No wall can keep them at bay, and no treachery can escape their gaze.

Members of the Night Caste are chosen from those who excel in stealth and guile and can formulate clever solutions to difficult problems. Thieves and assassins are chosen but also secretive scholars, clever city constables, master woodsmen, sly courtesans, fast-talking merchants and devious nobles. Any who favor the use of cunning, wit and skill over raw power may be Exalted into this caste.

Concealing Shadows frequently become the Circle's eyes and ears, gathering information for the good of the group. When a situation calls for unconventional solutions, it is the Night Caste that the Circle often looks to for leadership.

Anima Banner: Night Caste Solars have an empty golden ring as their Caste Mark. The animas of these Exalted are ghostly whites and golds, tinged with purple and purple-gray.

Anima Effects: The Concealing Shadows have more control over their animas than the average Solar Exalted, though they cannot match the masterful illusions of the Lunar Exalted. First, the Hidden Suns may mute their animas, allowing them to exert their powers without the display of power. When a Night Caste Solar expends Peripheral Essence, she may spend twice as many motes in order to prevent the expenditure from adding to her anima banner. This ability does not allow the character to mute Essence displays caused by the use of sorcery.

The character may also extend her muted anima like an imperceptible veil around her. This extended anima last for an entire scene and costs 10 motes of Essence to evoke. The anima mutes the senses of those attempting to perceive the Night Caste and, also, the evidence the Exalted leaves behind for those who would follow her trail. Shadows are darker, sounds muffled and scent and footprints are both much lighter than normal. In game-mechanic terms, this muting increases the difficulty of all rolls to detect or track the Exalted by 1, so long as the muted anima is in effect.

The Wretched

Some among the Anathema would walk through the streets at night, listening at windows and peering through shutters. These beings endlessly hunted those who rebelled against the Anathema's twisted rule. Yet, their vigilance availed them not, for the champions of righteousness were more devious than they. It is said that these creature were so hideous that they could not bear the touch of sunlight on their skins. For their hideous looks and wicked demeanor, these Anathema are know as the Wretched.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Night Caste excel at noticing that which others miss and in going places where they are not wanted. They have a natural affinity for the Abilities of Athletics, Awareness, Dodge, Larceny and Stealth.

Associations: The season of winter, the colors of violet and gray, the northern direction, the element of water, the new moon and the Maiden of Endings

Sobriquets: Hidden Suns, Concealing Shadows, Nightbringers, Iron Wolves, Daggers of Heaven, The Wretched (derogatory)

Concepts: Troubleshooter for hire, bounty hunter, neglected youngest sister, escaped fugitive, king of thieves, nobleman's mistress, gang leader, crafty merchant, highwayman

Hide your wickedness
behind closed doors,
skulk beneath the earth,
even conspire in the land
of dead if you wish —

it will avail you not.

You may conceal your evil
from the light of
the Unconquered Sun,
but you cannot evade his eyes.

ECLIPSE CASTE



When the sun and the moon are in perfect alignment, the result is a spectacular solar eclipse. Visible from every corner of the world, it is a most auspicious event. The Golden Lord and the Silver Lady become one — a crown of light flares out, and the day dims enough that the Five Maidens are visible. All of Heaven can be seen, displaying the unity and harmony of the natural order. So the Eclipse Caste brings unity and order to the people of the world. It members touch all corners of society, crossing boundaries and bringing people together.

During the reign of the Solars, the Crowned Suns were the mortar that held the Realm together. These Exalted helped forge consensus between the countless factions of the Solar Deliberative. They negotiated treaties between the Realm and barbarian tribes, the spirit courts and even the Fair Folk, until it was safe for men and women to trade and travel from one end of Creation to the other. As administrators and censors, they kept the gears of the empire running smoothly.

When the Dragon-Blooded began their coup, the Eclipse Caste was stunned. Those Harmonious Voices who survived the Terrestrials' treachery attempted to resolve the crisis with diplomacy. But their efforts were met with lies, treachery and murder — the Dragon-Blooded were not interested in diplomacy. Overtures of peace were met with military force. The surviving Crowned Suns fled to the houses of their allies and called on the spirit courts, the elementals and the princes of the beasts for aid. Yet, these allies were not enough, and one by one, they fell before the armies of the Dragon-Blooded.

When the Solars returned, the world witnessed the first solar eclipse since the Terrestrial Exalted took power. Now, the Eclipse Caste has begun the difficult process of reunifying the world. With diplomacy and trade routes, the Crowned Suns forge links between distant people and places, binding groups together into something greater than the sum of the parts.

Members of the Eclipse Caste are chosen from those who excel at social interaction. Unlike the Zenith Caste, which is a shining beacon for all to see, the Crowned Suns work quietly. They are socialites who move with effortless grace, influencing the opinions of others. They are the shamans who make pacts between men and spirits and the censors who keep governments functioning honestly. They are the true masters of communication and organization.

Members of the Eclipse Caste are frequently the voice of their Circle. As natural communicators, they turn strangers into allies and their organizational skills keep the group running smoothly.

Anima Banner: Eclipse Solars have a golden disc within a circle for their Caste Mark. Their animas are brilliant whites and golds, almost sparkling, but filmy and fluctuating, like the corona of the sun during an eclipse.

Anima Effects: When an Eclipse Caste Solar is party or witness to an oath, he may use his anima to sanctify it. The character must touch hands to seal the agreement or touch the hands of those who are party to it. His anima burns brightly, swirling with the words and runes by which Heaven gave him the right to arbitrate such matters. Those who break such an oath (including the Exalted himself) suffer a terrible curse.

The Exalted spends 10 motes of Essence and a point of Willpower to sanctify the oath. Those who break it will suffer terrible luck from their oathbreaking. A number of times equal to the Exalted's Essence at the time he witnesses or agrees to the oath, the oathbreaker will horribly botch a critical roll. When this happens is up to the Storyteller, but it is always at the worst possible moment. The Exalted need not be alive when the curse takes effect — he sanctifies the oath, but Heaven enforces it.

Also, Eclipses are protected by ancient pacts with the spirit world, the demon princes and the Fair Folk. Crowned Suns and their companions who are on legitimate business with those beings may not be attacked without just cause (though they may be goaded into attacking and nullifying the oaths), and such creatures must honor the rules of hospitality. Such beings may pretend to be uncompelled but ultimately cannot attack members of an embassy unless they can provoke the characters into breaking the peace.

Finally, the Eclipse Caste Solars are talented generalists. Provided they have a willing tutor, they may learn the Charms of other types of Exalted, and even of spirits. Such Charms cost double the normal experience to learn (usually 20 points) and use. Eclipse Caste characters may not start the game knowing the Charms of other such beings without Storyteller permission.

Caste Abilities: Members of the Eclipse Caste excel in all forms of communication, organization and travel. They have a natural affinity for the skills of Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Ride, Sail and Socialize.

Associations: The period of Calibration, the color silver, the center direction, the element of air, the gibbous moon and the Maiden of Journeys

Sobriquets: Crowned Suns, Harmonious Voices, Solar Winds, Quicksilver Falcons, Quills of Heaven, The Deceivers (derogatory)

Concepts: Elderly society matron, ambitious young noble, professional diplomat, trade intermediary, village shaman, careful spy, ambitious courtier, professional messenger, adventurous sailor, army quartermaster

The Deceivers

Some of the Anathema had voices that could drive men beyond their senses. They could make the most blatant lie seem real or convince even the wisest man to bind himself into oaths of slavery. These honey-tongued charlatans crafted a web of lies to hold their corrupt empire together, but in the end, it was not enough to protect them from the forces of righteousness. For their perjuries, these Anathema are known as the Deceivers.

I negotiate in good faith,
and you respond with treachery.

Sadly for you,
I have learned to anticipate such duplicity.
Even if you survive the wrath of my Circlemates,
you must answer to Heaven as well.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are your character's most basic Traits. Don't let the statistics define the character — instead, let the character define the statistics. In the real world, nobody has Charisma 4 or Intelligence 2. However, in order to make the concepts easy to handle, they have to be represented by numbers. Attributes and Abilities are ultimately just simplistic abstractions of something much more complex. A character with four dots in Charisma may be vivacious, charming, magnetic or suave. Traits may show what your character can do, but they don't indicate what your character is like. That's up to how you portray him.

Ordinary humans' Attributes typically range from one to four dots, and most people have two dots in all their Attributes. Even before their Exaltation, the characters are extraordinary people; as a result, their Attributes can be as high as 5.

PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Physical Attributes indicate a character's raw strength, build, agility and sturdiness. Characters adept at physical combat or athletic activities have high Physical Attributes.

STRENGTH

Strength rates physical power, including the capacity to lift objects and cause damage. This Attribute is used to resolve jumping, lifting and other actions that draw on raw physical power. Strength also determines the base number of damage dice rolled for successful physical attacks.

- • **Poor:** Weakling (dead lift 80 lbs.).
- •• **Average:** That about says it all (dead lift 160 lbs.).
- ••• **Good:** Doughty laborer (dead lift 200 lbs.).
- •••• **Exceptional:** Village strongman (dead lift 250 lbs.).
- ••••• **Superb:** The bards sing of your might (dead lift 450 lbs.).

DEXTERITY

Dexterity measures both agility and hand-eye coordination. It describes how fast a character runs, how precisely he aims at a target and everything else that relates to speed, grace and control. Dexterity also helps determine the base number of dice rolled to hit in combat, and it is combined with Wits to calculate a character's initiative.

- • **Poor:** Oaf.
- •• **Average:** You can dance without stepping on your partner's toes.
- ••• **Good:** You have a good deal of natural athletic potential.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You can juggle knives with flair.
- ••••• **Superb:** You can climb a sheer cliff while blindfolded.

STAMINA

Stamina indicates your character's health, tolerance for pain and how long she can sustain physical exertion. It encompasses endurance, physical will to live and sheer toughness. Stamina determines the character's base soak pool.

- • **Poor:** The merest breeze makes you ill (1 bashing soak, 0 lethal soak).
- •• **Average:** You stay in moderately good health (2 bashing soak, 1 lethal soak).
- ••• **Good:** You can perform hard labor without tiring (3 bashing soak, 1 lethal soak).
- •••• **Exceptional:** You can fight from dawn to dusk (4 bashing soak, 2 lethal soak).
- ••••• **Superb:** You can shrug off a strong man's punch (5 bashing soak, 2 lethal soak).

Note: Only Exalted characters can soak lethal damage with their Stamina.

SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES

Social Attributes describe a character's influence, force of personality and looks. They often define interactions with others, from first impressions to leadership to dealing with people in general.

CHARISMA

Charisma is used to charm others and to gain trust through natural appeal — your character's "force of personality," if you will. It reflects an air of confidence or social grace when dealing with people. Charisma defines how likable your character is to others and whether they actively seek her company.

- • **Poor:** People drift away when you approach.
- •• **Average:** You make friends if you put forth the effort.
- ••• **Good:** You make friends even without a particular effort.
- •••• **Exceptional:** Even your enemies respect you.
- ••••• **Superb:** You could build an empire.

MANIPULATION

Manipulation measures your ability to influence others. This ability represents aggressive rather than passive persuasiveness, and it can be subtle or blatant. Manipulation covers everything from leading others to tricking them, from being sly to dominating. No one likes being fooled, though — failing a Manipulation roll has risks.

- • **Poor:** You rarely get what you want.
- •• **Average:** You fool some of the people some of the time.
- ••• **Good:** You'd make a good imperial courtier.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You can talk your way past the Legion of Silence.



••••• **Superb:** You can talk a Wyld spirit into doing your bidding.

Appearance

Appearance is a combination of physical attractiveness and innate appeal. It is your character's ability to make a good first impression or simply to generate an instinctive response in others.

- • **Poor:** People suppress a cringe when they see you.
- •• **Average:** Just that — another face in the crowd.
- ••• **Good:** Local villagers squabble for your affections.
- •••• **Exceptional:** A celebrated beauty, even in the imperial court.
- ••••• **Superb:** Rural folk mistake you for an incarnate deity.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes cover a character's perception, mental capacity, imagination and quick thinking. Creative and intellectual individuals have high Mental Attributes.

Perception

Perception covers alertness and comprehension. It determines not only your character's attentiveness to the world around him, but also how clearly he interprets it.

- • **Poor:** Addle-headed.
- •• **Average:** You keep abreast of general goings on.
- ••• **Good:** You pick up on subtle subtext in books and conversations.
- •••• **Exceptional:** Your keen eye can pick out even the most minute of flaws.
- ••••• **Superb:** Sherlock Holmes was an amateur compared to you.

Intelligence

Intelligence measures raw mental processes — memory, retention, judgment, reasoning and imagination, as well as your character's ability to find connections between seemingly unrelated pieces of information or analyze complex ideas. This Attribute is not a measure of how fast your character thinks, but of how clearly and well he thinks.

- • **Poor:** Dullard (IQ 80).
- •• **Average:** You remember family birthdays (IQ 100).
- ••• **Good:** Your friends describe you as "bright" (IQ 130).
- •••• **Exceptional:** You're not just bright, you're downright brilliant (IQ 160).
- ••••• **Superb:** Genius (IQ 180+).

Wits

Wits describes how quickly your character reacts to new situations and indicates general "grace under fire." This Attribute describes inherent common sense and how well your character thinks on the fly. Wits combines with Dexterity to determine base initiative.

- • **Poor:** You never doubt your betters.
- •• **Average:** You know when to pull out of a bad dice game.
- ••• **Good:** You keep your cool in a duel.
- •••• **Exceptional:** You always have the perfect comeback.
- ••••• **Superb:** You can make deals with demons and come out ahead.

Virtues

The world of **Exalted** is a world of driving passions and dark emotion. Heroes leap into battle with glorious abandon, and lovers dare the very gates of death to be reunited with their beloved. Harsh kings see thousands die of warfare or starvation so that their people may survive, yet weep openly at the death of their favored concubines.

In the heart of every Solar Exalted there lurks a deadly curse. Spit out by the dying enemies of the gods in the days before history, this curse urges the Solars to immoderate action and harsh tempers. Many say it was the excesses caused by this curse that drove the Dragon-Blooded to usurpation. Whatever the truth of the matter, even today, the Chosen are often victims of their passions.

In game terms, there are four Virtues, grouped into two linked pairs. The first pair is Compassion and Conviction, and the second pair is Temperance and Valor. These Virtues represent the extremes to which the soul is capable of responding. The Virtues have ratings that range from 1 to 5, and a character can have a very high or low rating in any or all of her passions: For example, having a high Compassion does not mean the character has a low Conviction.

The Benefits of Virtues

Virtues measure of how passionately the character is committed to a certain type of thinking and behavior. This commitment means that when the character invests Willpower in a task that is in accord with a Virtue, particularly a Virtue he has many dots in, his determination may carry him far further than it normally would.

Mechanically, what this means is that, for every dot a character has in a particular Virtue, once per story, he may channel a point of temporary Willpower through the Virtue rather than simply using it to gain a single automatic success. When a point of Willpower is channeled through a Virtue, it allows the character to add a number of dice equal to the Virtue rating, in addition to his normal dice pool. A point of Willpower expended in this fashion does not grant the character the regular automatic success, only the bonus dice.



Example: Harmonious Jade has a rating of 4 in her Valor Virtue. Four times per story, her player may spend a point of temporary Willpower to add 4 dice to any pool related to bravery, combat or withstanding horror. By contrast, she has only a score of 1 in her Compassion. When offering succor to the needy or defending the weak, her player could only spend Willpower to add 1 die to a dice pool once per story.

As the example shows, the higher the Virtue, the better. However, having high Virtues is not always advantageous.

Disadvantages of Virtues

As was noted above, having high Virtues represents a passionate commitment. A character with a high rating in a Virtue may find himself unable to resist following his heart, even if that leads him into danger.

Mechanically, this means that a character with ratings of 3 or higher in a Virtue must roll his Virtue rating when confronted with a situation where he wishes to act contrary to the Virtue's dictates. If the character achieves any successes on the Virtue roll, then he must either act in accordance with the dictates of the Virtue, or else spend a point of temporary Willpower to override the urges of his heart and act freely for the scene. A Solar Exalted who suppresses a Virtue automatically adds a point to his Limit (see "The Great Curse" in the following chapter).

Example: Smith has a Compassion rating of 3 and is in the midst of infiltrating the Realm. He sees an old woman being shoved and manhandled by two city guards. The Storyteller asks Phyllis, Smith's player, for his reaction, and she states that Smith will simply put his head down and keep walking. The Storyteller informs her that this is in contravention of Smith's Compassion and that she must make a Compassion roll to not intervene. Phyllis rolls a 1, 3 and 10 — two successes. The Storyteller tells her that unless she spends a point of temporary Willpower, Smith's going to have to do something. Phyllis grits her teeth, marks off a point of temporary Willpower and increases Smith's Limit by one.

Compassion

The Compassion Virtue measures the character's ability to empathize with and forgive those he cares for or regards as "his people."

Although Compassion can be a painful Trait in a dark and brutal world, not having any Compassion is worse still. Compassion aids the character in helping those in need and fighting against injustice. Characters with a high Compassion are fast friends to the weak or sickly and deadly enemies of the wicked or oppressive.

- • You'd sell your mother into slavery.
- •• Capable of some feeling, especially for family and friends.
- ••• You'd succor a stranger, if need beckoned.
- •••• You'd risk your life to defend a person who reviled you.
- ••••• Your nobility of spirit equals that of the storied heroes.

Compassion Aids in: Protecting or aiding the sick, innocent or oppressed. Fighting for justice, or attempting to bring aid to the needy. Fighting for or engaging in romantic love.

Characters Must Fail a Compassion Check to: Allow an enemy to perish miserably. Ignore the pleas of the oppressed or the impoverished. Abandon the diseased to their afflictions. Jilt or throw over a lover.

Conviction

The balancing Virtue to Compassion, Conviction measures the character's ability to withstand and (if necessary) inflict hardships and atrocities. A character's Conviction aids him in situations where he must persevere against great adversity, take harsh measures when there is no alternative and helps him to regain temporary Willpower.

- • Sniveling worm.
- •• You can be hard-minded when you must.
- ••• You are inured to hardships and necessary evils.
- •••• You could watch a village burn without flinching.
- ••••• You could put a nation to the sword, if there was need.

Conviction Aids in: Withstanding hardship, disease and oppression. Exercising command and leadership in times of hardship or woe. Fighting in hopeless situations or against the odds. Regaining Willpower.

Characters Must Fail a Conviction Check to: Abandon a cause they have committed themselves to. Give up in the face of hardship or disease. Abandon their companions in times of need.

Temperance

The Temperance Virtue is what spells the difference between wise men (or women) and fools. Characters with high Temperance act with iron self-control and keep their cool despite extraordinary provocation. Temperance helps a character resist taunting, seduction and even magical attempts to affect her emotions.

- • Hothead.
- •• You bite your tongue around the provincial tax collector.
- ••• Villagers ask you to arbitrate disputes.
- •••• You could resist the advances of an imperial concubine.
- ••••• A living saint, you see the world and are unswayed.

Temperance Aids in: Withstanding temptation, taunting and other forms of baiting. Keeping your tongue when intoxicated. Fighting the effects of befuddlement, illusions, drugs, poisons and mind control.

Characters Must Fail a Temperance Check to: Act dishonestly or show bias in a matter of importance. Overindulge themselves. Throw themselves into a situation without deliberation. Break oaths or abuse trusts.

Valor

The Valor Virtue is a measure of a character's courage and resolve in the face of danger. Valor helps characters resist fear and horror, whether from a magical spell, a monstrous creature or simple intimidation. Valor also helps characters who are fighting in battle, particularly against terrible odds.

- • Puling coward.
- •• You'll stand your ground if insulted.
- ••• You can march against the barbarians without showing fear.
- •••• You can march against the dead without showing fear.
- ••••• You'd face down one of the Five Dragons if you had to.

Valor Aids in: Heroism in battle and single combat. Withstanding magical fear and horror. Feats of daring, physical or otherwise.

Characters Must Fail a Valor Check to: Turn down a duel of honor or a call to single combat. Flee a battle. Swallow an insult without seeking retribution. Turn down a dare or challenge.

The Great Curse

In the time before history, the Exalted were the armies of the gods against terrible foes. The Solars were the heroes of those armies, and when they slew the enemies of the gods, their fallen foes used their dying breath to curse the Exalted who had slain them. The Primordials cursed the Solars, so that they would forever be driven to wrath and immoderacy and hounded by treachery not unlike that which they themselves had perpetrated. And because the enemies of the gods were greater than the gods, their curse took root in the divine souls of the Solar Exalted. It was this curse that ended the Golden Age and drove the Dragon-Blooded to usurp the rulership of the Realm, and even today, it lives within the heart of every Solar Exalted.

In game terms, the Great Curse causes every Solar Exalted to develop a Flaw related to one of her Virtues. This is typically a twisting or perversion of the Virtue, which drives the Exalted to rash and ill-considered deeds. Every Solar Exalted must pick a single Flaw, which must be related to a Virtue that she has a score of 3 or more in.

Limit Breaks

Every Flaw has a Limit Break condition attached to it, essentially a situation that tends to cause the Exalted to lose control of himself and act out his Flaw. Every time this condition is met, the Exalted's player must roll the rating of the Virtue that the Flaw is associated with. For every success he rolls, the character gains a point of Limit. As usual, rolling a 10 counts as two successes. When the character's Limit reaches 10, he suffers what is known as a Limit Break.

When a character suffers a Limit Break, he immediately reduces his Limit to 0. For the next scene, the character is ruled by his Flaw. He acts as it dictates and can only hope that the episode passes quickly. If the player flinches from acting out the character's loss of control, the Storyteller may take control of the character. However, a Limit Break is a tremendously cathartic experience. When he suffers a Limit Break, the character immediately gains a number of points of temporary Willpower equal to his rating in the Virtue that his Flaw springs from, even if this causes his temporary Willpower to rise above his permanent Willpower or even if it causes his temporary Willpower to rise above 10.

Sample Flaws

Below are sample Flaws for each Virtue. Obviously, these aren't the only Flaws that an Exalted might develop. Storytellers and players should feel free to work together to develop their own Flaws. Keep in mind that Flaws are the result of an ancient and terrible curse and that they aren't ever very pleasant. Use the Flaws presented here as a general guide to the severity of your own Flaws.

Compassion

Compassionate Martyrdom: The character can no longer bear to see those around her suffer unaided. When the character's Limit Breaks, she will throw herself into helping the sufferers in the most direct and obvious fashion possible. For example, if the character's Limit Breaks while she is watching convicts labor, she will step into their places one by one and work for them so they can rest or perhaps draw their brutal overseer's wrath onto herself. The character will not resort to violence unless attacked (though, obviously, if her Limit Breaks in combat, she will have little choice). If the character's Limit Breaks outside of combat or other circumstances, the episode of martyrdom may last as long in days as the character has dots in her Compassion Virtue.

Limit Break Condition: The character witnesses innocents suffering through no fault of their own.

Heart of Tears: The character can bear only so much. When his Limit Breaks, he is no longer able to stand the sight of suffering and can only weep that the world contains such pain. If in a stressful situation, the character will be unable to function for the rest of the scene and will attempt to flee if attacked. If he cannot flee, he will defend himself at a -2 dice penalty and will seek to flee at the first opportunity. If the Limit Break occurs outside of combat or some other stressful situation, the character will be left weeping and distraught for a number of days equal to his Compassion. He is unable to do more than avoid human contact and perhaps find substances to ingest to numb himself to the pain of existence.

Limit Break Condition: The character witnesses innocents suffering and is unable to ameliorate their pain.

Red Rage of Compassion: The character is overcome with anger at the pain that surrounds him. He flies into a rage and will directly attack the most immediate source of suffering, without any consideration for himself or the situation. The character's rage is absolute, and he is unlikely to think of even simple acts like putting down objects in his hands or drawing a weapon. Small consolation that it is, the character does not suffer wound penalties while in this state. A character who has no obvious target to lash out against will go into a terrible rage for a number of hours equal to his Compassion, moving erratically from area to area, smashing objects without consideration for value and lashing out thoughtlessly at anyone foolish enough to interfere.

Limit Break Condition: The character sees innocents suffering and is unable to effectively intervene.

Conviction

Deliberate Cruelty: The character embraces the power of a cold heart and uses it indiscriminately as a weapon. For a number of days after her Limit Breaks equal to the character's Temperance, she deliberately closes her heart to pity and embraces cruelty. Perceived or exhibited weakness is met with derision or casual violence, and the character's conscience vanishes under a shadow of cruelty. Prisoners are tortured and mutilated to sow terror, and the character contents herself with fear rather than respect. This cruelty probably causes a minimum penalty of -2 on all Social interactions that do not involve fear or intimidation, not that the character will be making many.

Limit Break Condition: The character is subjected to severe stress, in dire straits or otherwise backed against the wall.

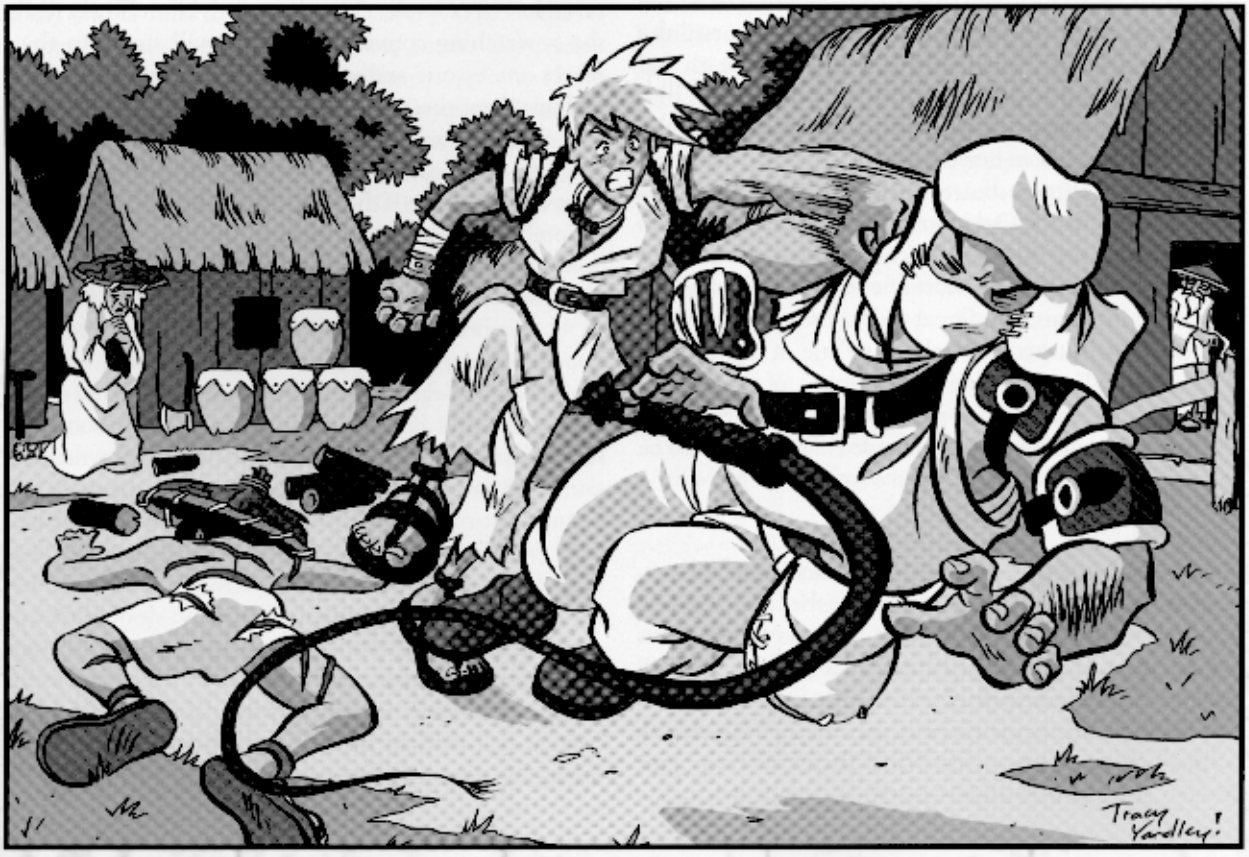
Heart of Flint: The character's heart hardens to the point that no emotion can enter. For a number of days equal to his Conviction rating, the character feels and expresses no emotions. He is not robotic, but rather lacks all empathy and feeling. The character considers little more than efficiency in choosing his course of action, and while he is not totally tactless, he still suffers a -2 on all Social rolls involving face-to-face interactions.

Limit Break Condition: The character is frustrated by the intemperate or childish nature of the world around him.

Temperance

Ascetic Drive: Similar to the Contempt of the Virtuous, but much more self-focused. After the character's Limit Breaks, she becomes convinced that she must seek tranquility and purification through withdrawal and meditation. She will immediately turn her back on worldly affairs, however pressing (not to the extent of walking out on a battle, but everything up to that).

The character shaves her head, dresses in sackcloth or shows some similar sign of penitence. She seeks out a place of retreat from worldly concerns to contemplate the ephemeral nature of life. If laden down with material possessions



like a mansion or many valuable goods, the character may burn or destroy them so they will not distract her in her repose. If disturbed in her hermitage, the character will be uncommunicative, and if the disturbance continues, she will become violent.

Limit Break Condition: The character is confronted by her own inadequacies or human weakness.

Contempt Of The Virtuous: When the character's Limit Breaks, he simply loses all respect for those around him with less self-control and becomes driven to show them a better way of life. For a number of days equal to the character's Temperance, the character treats those individuals he has previously witnessed overindulging or acting dishonorably as nonpersons. If the character witnesses what he interprets as dishonorable or indulgent behavior, he will attempt to stop it, including physically intervening to prevent it. The character will also attempt to harangue those around him into a more upright way of life, trying to convince them to destroy or repudiate their vanities and indulgences, swear oaths of righteous behavior and so on. The character will use his Charms and other resources to further this personal crusade.

Limit Break Condition: The character is hindered in his actions by the self-indulgent and intemperate nature of others.

Overindulgence: The character's self-control gives way in one massive binge of epic proportions. When the character's Limit Breaks, she will wallow as fully as possible in excess. Sex, liquor, drugs and gluttony are all equally attractive, and the character will not listen to reason or postpone her debauch. For a number of days equal to her Temperance, the character will indulge in whatever vices come to hand, regardless of expense or long-term consequences. If she is without funds or isolated, she will seek to borrow money or make her way to a location where she can indulge. Characters of advanced age or poor health may have to make a Stamina check to avoid long-term negative consequences from such an episode.

Limit Break Condition: The character must pass a favorite pleasure or vice in order to act in a moral fashion.

Valor

Berserk Anger: When the character's Limit Breaks, he simply loses all control. For the rest of the scene, anything near him that moves, friend or enemy, is to be attacked and killed. If it runs, it must be hunted and slain. The character starts with the nearest hostile target and proceeds through victims until he is dead or there is no one left to murder. If the character runs out of targets quickly or is not near other living beings, he will devastate his surroundings, doing his utmost to smash and ravage everything he can easily reach. Characters who are wrestled into restraint will subside from their rage within a few hours.

Limit Break Condition: The character is insulted, belittled, demeaned or deliberately frustrated.

Foolhardy Contempt: After the character's Limit Breaks, she knows no fear. For a number of days equal to her Valor, she will immediately seek to place herself in the forefront of the battle, thoughtlessly challenge enemies to single combat and not retreat under any circumstances.

Limit Break Condition: The character is fighting against losing odds, is challenged to single combat by a single foe or is otherwise given an opportunity where she can prove her bravery.

Abilities

A character's Attributes measure her raw potential and natural aptitudes. Her Abilities measure her training, education and developed skill. In this section, Abilities are presented according to the caste of Solar Exalted that naturally excels at them. Characters will have certain other Abilities they are predisposed toward and can learn skills outside their caste with no difficulty — see page 99 of Chapter Three: Character for details on Caste and Favored Abilities.

Abilities are rated from • to ••••. An Ability and an Attribute are added together to determine your character's dice pool when she attempts an action that is not automatically successfully. This combination can result in skill totals up to 10, though the effects of Charms, Virtues, stunts and specializations can drive that total significantly higher. Even one dot in an Ability implies at least basic proficiency. Although each Ability functions differently, they are all rated in the same manner.

x	**Unskilled:** No training in the Ability. Characters attempting to perform an action without the appropriate Ability use just the Attribute and suffer a -2 penalty to their dice pools to simulate their utter lack of training.
•	**Novice:** A basic grasp of the Ability; the character is a dabbler.
••	**Practiced:** General familiarity with the Ability's applications; the character can practice the skill at a professional level.
•••	**Competent:** Detailed comprehension of the Ability's potential; the character is a respected professional.
••••	**Expert:** Profound understanding of virtually all of the Ability's aspects; the character is one of the top talents in the field.
•••••	**Master:** Utter command of every possible way in which the Ability could be used; the character has peerless mastery of the subject. She is a living legend.

Specialties

Each Ability represents a rather broad area of knowledge. Yet, often, a character's concept focuses around someone who has mastery of only a single facet of an Ability.

For example, a character could be a master swordsman but not so gifted with other weapons. Somewhat similarly, the true masters of an Ability often have some special area of focus where they seem to transcend normal human limits. To reflect this, Abilities have specialties.

You can buy specialties for your character with bonus points during character creation or with experience points during play. Refer to page 105 of Chapter Three: Character for bonus point costs and page 270 for experience costs. Your character may never have more than three specialties for each Ability. If you buy your character a specialty, simply write it after the Ability on your character sheet.

Once purchased, a specialty gives your character an extra die on all rolls related to that particular facet of the Ability. A character with Survival 2 and a specialty in "Wyld" normally just has two dots of Survival, but since he's specialized in the strange and dangerous landscape of the Wyld, when he's foraging or pathfinding in regions of Wyld influence, he has three dots instead. Characters may take the same specialty more than once to increase the bonus they gain in particular circumstances. For example, a character who is a master of the sword might take the Melee specialty "Sword" three times to reflect his perfect ability with the blade.

Each Ability has a number of sample specialties listed with it. These aren't the only possible specialties, simply some examples of possible specialties for the Ability. Players and Storytellers should work together when determining a particular character's specialties for an Ability. The end result should be specialties that aren't too broad or narrow and that fit the character.

Example Feats

Characters in **Exalted** are capable of performing heroic feats with ease and rise to challenges without hesitation. To reflect this, it's often much easier to succeed at a task than it "should be" in real life or even in the other games in the Storyteller family. To give Storytellers and players an idea of what a character can do, each Ability has examples of "Standard" (1 success), "Challenging" (3 successes) and "Legendary" (5 successes) tasks listed with it. See page 88 of Chapter Two: Systems for an explanation of how the difficulties work. Since combat tasks are almost always opposed rolls, the example tasks listed for combat Abilities are the sort of non-combat feats that a character could expect to perform with the Ability. What sort of heroic deeds a character can actually perform in combat depends on the quality of her opponents.

Dawn Abilities

Archery

The use of bows, from small self bows to bone and steel reinforced war bows. Archers in the world of **Exalted** practice both "Occidental" (aimed) and "Oriental" (reflexive) archery — for the purposes of the game mechanics, they are treated the same, but don't let that obstruct you in describing how your character does things. It is worth noting that the crossbow does not exist in the world of **Exalted**, though crossbow-like siege engines, such as ballistae, do.

Specialties: Flaming Arrows, When Using Archery Charms, From Horseback, Woodland Environments, Ambushes

Standard: Shoot an apple off someone's head at 20 paces.

Challenging: Shoot an apple off someone's head at 20 yards with a warped arrow.

Legendary: Shoot an apple off someone's heat at 50 yards with a warped arrow, at night.

Brawl

This Ability covers styles of unarmed combat that rely more on power than on speed; they range from tavern brawling to scientific wrestling. Unless the character is using a brawling weapon, Brawl inflicts bashing damage — while it can cause a fair amount of pain, it isn't usually fatal. Brawl also covers fighting with improvised weapons such as kegs of brandy, barstools, small opponents and the like. Characters using weapons of this sort may choose to use their Brawl or Melee Abilities — whichever they prefer.

Specialties: Blind Fighting, Combinations, Dirty Maneuvers, Multiple Opponents, Fighting While Drunk

Standard: Punch through a door.

Challenging: Punch through a six-inch oak door.

Legendary: Punch through a steel-sheathed oak gate in a dozen mighty blows

Martial Arts

This fighting Ability covers the formalized fighting styles found throughout the world, particularly among the Realm's Immaculate Order, as well as less formalized

Dark and Gritty?

The characters in the world of **Exalted** are superhuman, the favored children of the gods, powerful enough to act out their personal dramas of heroism, tragedy and romance without regard for the brutal realities of life. Yet, the world they live in is a dark and often terrible place. Storytellers who are running games where the players portray unExalted characters may wish to emphasize this merciless side of the world.

To do this, make the difficulties of actions much more realistic, disallow stunts and refuse to let characters take the same specialty more than once. Storytellers who are running games where the players' characters are Exalted but who want to play up the difference between normal and Exalted should use these same modifications, but only when applied to unExalted Storyteller characters.

fighting styles based on speed and agility. Unless the character is using a martial arts weapon, Martial Arts attacks inflict bashing damage. While it favors speed over power, this Ability is as dangerous as any Brawl style.

Specialties: Fighting Against Other Martial Artists, Opponents in Armor, Multiple Opponents, Showing Off

Standard: Perform the Seven Leaping Dragon form flawlessly, break a board with your bare hands.

Challenging: Perform the Seven Leaping Dragon form flawlessly on a carriage rolling over bumpy roads, break a brick with your bare hands.

Legendary: Perform the Seven Leaping Dragon form flawlessly while being attacked by several opponents, and work their attacks into your demonstration of the form. Break a steel bar with your bare hands.

Melee

This Ability reflects the characters' skill with weapons of all types, from swords and spears to axes, hammers, maces and exotic martial arts weapons of various types. Because they inflict lethal damage and do not generally run out of ammunition, melee weapons are the predominate weapons in the world of **Exalted**.

Specialties: Sword, Axe, Fighting With Two Weapons, Fighting With a Shield, Gladiatorial Combats

Standard: Cut your initial on an opponent.

Challenging: Cut your initial on an opponent in the middle of a fight.

Legendary: Hang upside down from a tree branch to cut your initial on an opponent as she gallops by on her charger.

Thrown

The ability to use weapons that are hurled toward their target without mechanical assistance. These include throwing knives, throwing axes, chakram, javelins and improvised thrown weapons such as rocks and bottles.

Specialties: Improvised Weapons, Shuriken, Assassinations, While Leaping, Multiple Attacks, Knocking Other Weapons Out Of The Air

Standard: Cut a rope with a thrown knife.

Challenging: Sever a rope with a thrown knife as you fall past the rope.

Legendary: Sever a rope with a thrown knife you hurl with only your fingertips and the twist of your body as you fall, bound and gagged, past the rope.

Zenith Abilities

Endurance

This talent represents the character's ability to endure long-term exposure to severe conditions. This Ability differs from Resistance in that Endurance sustains your character's energy level over long periods of time. For example, a character would make Endurance rolls to stay



awake for days at a time, to endure unhealthy conditions without becoming ill or to march in armor without suffering heat prostration.

Specialties: Fasting, Holding Breath, Long-Distance Running, Sleep Deprivation

Standard: Run five miles nonstop.

Challenging: Run 25 miles nonstop.

Legendary: Run 250 miles nonstop.

PERFORMANCE

Performance covers the gamut of live artistic expression, from public speaking to musicianship to dancing to acting (including impersonating someone else) as well as the theatrics of large-scale leadership. This Ability also imparts knowledge of the society surrounding a particular art form, as well as how well your character fits into it.

Specialties: Acting, Dance, Female Impersonation, Oration, Singing, Specific Instrument (Flute, Lyre, Tambour, Zither)

Standard: Sway a friendly crowd into making generous donations and putting you and your friends up for a week. Lead 100 men.

Challenging: Sway a hostile crowd to the point of ecstatic episodes — speaking in tongues, convulsions, spontaneous conversions, the whole nine yards. Lead 1,000 men.

Legendary: Sway the crowd at your execution so that they overrun the guards, cut you down and become your liberating army. Hold a nation in your thrall.

PRESENCE

Presence is the ability to lead and intimidate through force of personality. Performance covers oratory and mass persuasion, but Presence determines effective, long-term leadership and one-on-one interactions. What a character's Presence stems from varies — he could lead through respect, fear, persuasion or demonstrated skill. Presence can be used to cow enemies and threaten or frighten individuals into cooperation, as well as to lead.

Specialties: Threats, Just Governance, Persuasion, When Impassioned, Coalition Leadership, Against All Odds, Brainwashing Conversion

Standard: Inspire a group of defeated troops to excel in an upcoming battle. Convince a thug that he should tell you who sent him.

Challenging: Inspire a group of untrained and terrified volunteers to excel in an upcoming battle. Convince the head of the Society of Assassins that he had better tell you who put the contract on your head.

Legendary: Turn a group of prisoners of war, condemned convicts and bandits into an highly motivated unit in just a few weeks. Convince the head of the Guild that he should back off from his assassination attempts and join your cause if he knows what's good for him.

RESISTANCE

Resistance allows your character to combat the effects of physical pain, plagues or drugs. This Ability can also be used to resist interrogation.

Specialties: Ignore Pain, Resist Disease, Resist Drugs, Resist Interrogation

Standard: Drink a quart of liquor and remain coherent. Laugh off a serious wound.

Challenging: Drink all night and remain coherent. Laugh off a critical wound.

Legendary: Drink for a week and remain coherent. Fight on with an amputated limb.

SURVIVAL

Survival enables your character to survive in wilderness environments. He knows how to find shelter, set traps, forage for food and water, build fires and separate dangerous flora and fauna from beneficial ones. This Ability is absolutely essential to subsist for any length of time in a wilderness region. Survival also includes the character's affinity with animals and his ability to tame, train and handle domestic and wild animals.

Specialties: Fire-Building, Forage, Hunt, Navigation, Set Snares, Track

Standard: Find food and shelter in the woods at night. Tame a wolf or hawk.

Challenging: Find food and shelter in the savage jungles of the Threshold, despite the fact that you have only a knife and are unfamiliar with the terrain. Tame a bear or tiger.

Legendary: Find food and shelter after being abandoned, naked, in the icy reaches of the North in the middle of a blizzard. Note that the Storyteller will probably make you roll out the combat where you beat the polar bear to death with your bare hands. Tame sharks, gryphons or other "untamable" animals.

TWILIGHT ABILITIES

CRAFT

Craft is the Ability to perform skilled labor. Smithing, farming, leatherworking, gem-cutting and the like are all examples of different crafts. High levels of the Craft Ability enables a character to produce masterworks, though without the influence of Charms, such things take time and resources. A character must choose what her Craft Ability is in; a master blacksmith, for example, does not necessarily know anything about farming. Characters who wish to master multiple crafts must take this Ability multiple times.

Specialties: Working in Haste, Field Expediencies, When in a Well-Equipped Workshop, Repairs, Form Over Function, Taking Extra Time

Standard: Make a fine sword from good raw materials.

Challenging: Make an excellent sword (+1 to damage) from excellent raw materials. Make a fine sword from poor materials.

Legendary: Make a perfect blade (+1 die to Melee pool, +2 to damage, +3 to initiative) out of the finest materials in the world. Make an excellent sword from poor raw materials. Forge fine swords from scrap iron and broken plowshares.

Investigation

Often possessed by magistrates and censors, Investigation is the skill of searching for clues and information, whether at a crime scene, in a library or through speaking to witnesses. Characters with this Ability can perform research in an effective manner, as well as collect evidence and reconstruct events to gain insight into what really happened at a scene.

Specialties: Analysis, Concealed Objects, Deduction, Interviews, Quick Search, Research

Standard: Reconstruct a fresh event with moderate evidence. Quickly locate a passage among the contents of a modest library in just a few days of searching.

Challenging: Reconstruct a stale event (2-3 weeks old) from moderate evidence. Locate a single passage among the contents of an impressive library in a long day of research.

Legendary: Reconstruct a months-old scene from only fragmentary evidence. Find a single passage out of all the books in the Imperial Library of the Realm with just a night of research.

Lore

Once, men understood the workings of the world, and lived in an Age of wonders beyond understanding. Characters with the Lore Ability have learned some scraps of that knowledge and are educated in history, geography, literature, philosophy and similar scholarly pursuits. High levels of Lore enable characters to decipher ancient scripts, identify First Age artifacts, know the nature of legendary creatures and similar feats.

If you wish your character to be able to read and write, you must purchase at least one dot in Lore. Once so purchased, a character may read the script of any language she can speak.

Specialties: Understanding Other Cultures, Current Events, Geography, History, Law, Government, Philosophy, Religion, The First Age

Standard: Recognize a foreign script. Recognize an important personage or recall a historical detail from the post-Contagion past. Recognize and operate a simple First Age device.

Challenging: Recognize script in the forgotten hand of the First Age. Recognize a historical personage or recall a historical detail from the days before the Contagion. Recognize and operate more complex First Age devices.

Legendary: Read First Age script. Repair simple First Age devices. Recognize a historical personage or recall a historical event from the time before the usurpation of the Dragon-Blooded. Operate the most complex First Age items, such as War Striders and the defense system of the Realm.

Medicine

This Ability covers knowledge of how the human body works as well as how to repair it in case of injury. Medicine includes a basic understanding of poultices, herbal tonics and their use, along with the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries. Obviously, in the world of **Exalted**, this knowledge is limited; even the best physicians can be stymied by injuries that would be child's play to doctors in our world. Characters trying to treat anything beyond fevers, flesh wounds, minor diseases and small burns will have a difficult time doing so. Any sort of internal surgery has a difficulty of at least +3.

Medicine can be used to harm as well as heal. Characters may use Medicine to perform torture, to apply harmful drugs (or helpful drugs in lethal doses) or even to spread a plague throughout a village. Such attempts should be attended closely by the Storyteller.

Specialties: Amputation, Broken Bones, Fever, Plague, Poultices

Standard: Amputate a mangled limb. Treat influenza. Stitch together simple tissue damage. Debride and dress small burns. Sterilize medical equipment. Disinfect wounds and make water potable.

Challenging: Treat serious diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, dysentery, smallpox, syphilis and cholera. Perform internal surgery to remove or repair failing and damaged organs.

Legendary: Treat incurable illnesses such as tuberculosis, the plague and cancer.

Occult

This Ability represents the character's familiarity, to whatever degree, with magic and the supernatural. It represents her magical aptitude and her familiarity with the ways of supernatural creatures such as spirits, Fair Folk and the dead. The character is also familiar with the many cults and heresies that permeate the Realm and the Threshold.

Specialties: Cults, Ghosts, Spirits, Superstitions, Undead, Wyld Beasts

Standard: Recognize and deal politely with a minor local spirit. Recognize a simple Charm or sorcery at work.

Challenging: Recognize and deal politely with a major spirit of the area — the spirit of the local haunted forest or mountain. Work very simple hedge magic (impotence cures, good luck charms, minor curses). Recognize complex or subtle sorcery at work.

Legendary: Recognize and deal politely with the Elemental Dragons, the servants of the Celestines, the demon princes and the Deathlords. Summon an elemental or demon of the First Circle without being one of the Exalted. Perform more powerful hedge magic (curses that visibly work, talismans that make even the most barren woman fertile, simple enchantment).

Night Abilities

Athletics

A measure of fitness, this Ability measures the character's developed physical ability — how well he applies his natural aptitudes. Athletics is the Ability that governs feats of strength, balance, coordination and reflexes. Athletics also covers skill in various sports and village games, knowing how to jump and tumble and being able to climb mountains and cliffs.

Specialties: Acrobatics, Climbing, Specific Sports, Tumbling and Jumping

Standard: Lift 200 pounds. Leap 10 feet from a standing start. Maintain your balance while fighting on a narrow ledge.

Challenging: Lift 700 pounds. Leap 20 feet from a standing start. Maintain your balance while fighting on a narrow, icy ledge in high winds.

Legendary: Lift a ton. Leap 50 feet from a standing start. Maintain your balance while fighting on an icy tightrope in high winds.

Awareness

This Ability measures how much the character notices about her surroundings. It's an overall indicator of how detailed the character's idea of what's physically nearby is, covering input from all five senses. Awareness is useful for picking out a face in a crowd or for anticipating surprises that wait around a corner.

Specialties: Acute Hearing, Keeping Watch, Sharp Sight, Smell, Spot Ambush, Track

Standard: Identify someone by the sound of his footfalls. Pick someone's face out of a crowded bazaar with a quick glance. Read lips. Detect concealed weapons. Case a location for burglary in just a few minutes. See 100 yards on a clear, moonlit night.

Challenging: Identify someone by scent. Pick someone's face out of a battlefield with a quick glance. Case a location for burglary just by just walking by it. See 100 yards on a cloudy night with a waning moon.

Legendary: Track by scent. Read with your eyes closed by feeling the texture of the ink on the paper. Listen in on a conversation a mile away on a windy day. Spot someone 100 yards away on an overcast, moonless night.

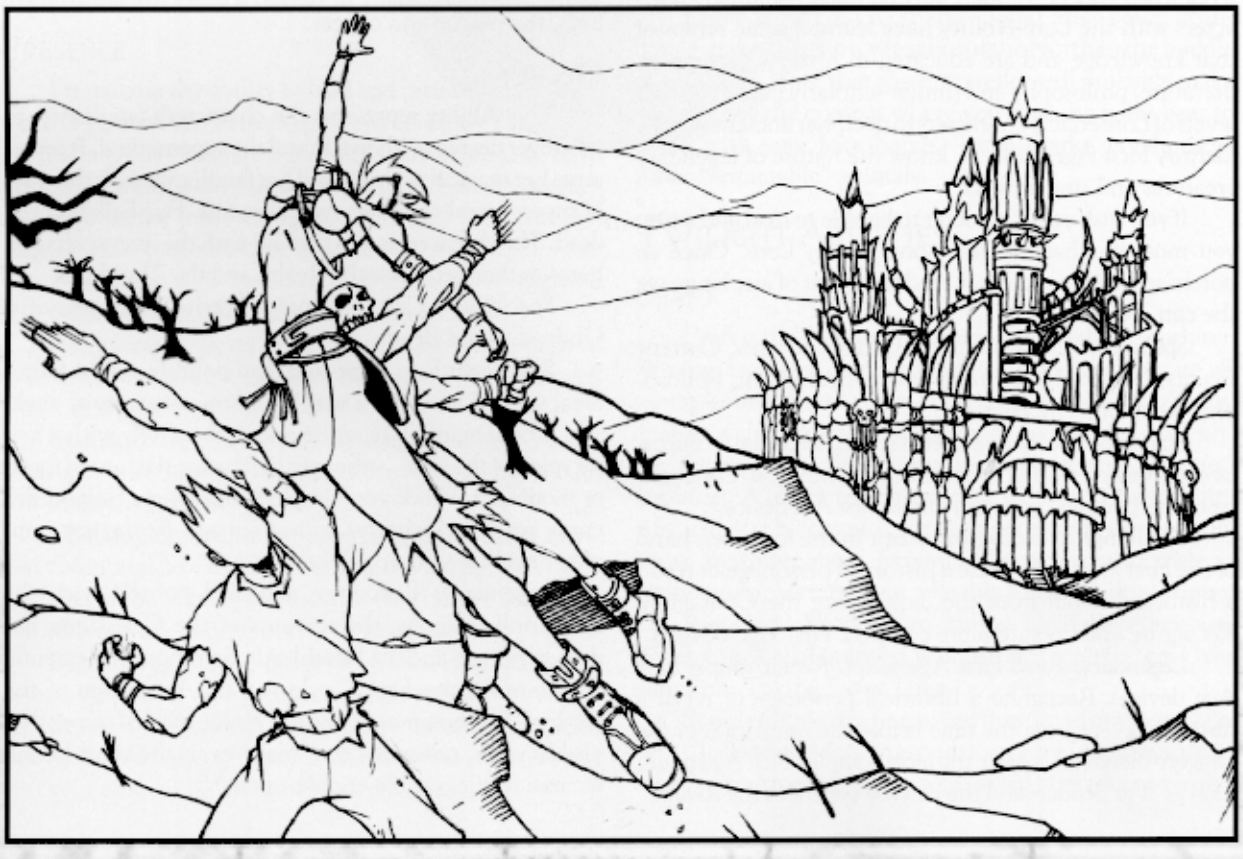
Dodge

Dodge measures the character's ability to evade blows. Characters skilled in Dodge are also generally agile and can evade environmental hazards such as falling trees and landslides as well as attacks launched by other characters.

Specialties: Ranged Attacks, Natural Hazards, On Battlefields, When Unarmed, Full Dodge, Animal Attacks

Standard: Dodge a rolling boulder or a windblown branch.

Challenging: Dodge through a hail of rolling boulders or a flurry of windblown debris.





Legendary: Pass through an avalanche or hurricane unscathed.

Larceny

Larceny is a measure of the character's knowledge of the technical aspects of crime and of the criminal lifestyle. It also gauges the character's mastery of legerdemain, sleight of hand, gambling, pickpocketing, lock picking, con games and the other necessary skills for survival outside the law.

Specialties: Lock Picking, Con Games, A Specific City, Cheating At Dice, Fencing Stolen Goods, Scoring Drugs, Female Marks, Organized Crime

Standard: Pick someone's pocket in a crowded street. Pick a simple lock. Run a floating crap game. Find drugs. Sell stolen goods. Contact the local thieves' guild, if one exists.

Challenging: Forge a Guild letter of credit. Pick an alert mark's pocket when the two of you are alone in a room. Sell extremely hot items. Find rare and potent drugs from halfway around the world. Make a stellar impression on the local thieves' guild.

Legendary: Forge an Imperial Signet of the Realm. Filch the ruby from a god-king's forehead during conversation. Fence the crown jewels of the local ruler for their actual value the day after you steal them. Run a vanity con on the Fair Folk.

Stealth

Stealth covers the ability to avoid notice, move quietly, trail someone and generally evade detection. Stealth rolls are made usually as resisted actions against another character's Awareness. Individuals characters attempting to hide in less than optimal conditions should have the difficulty of their Stealth rolls increased accordingly.

Specialties: Ambush, Camouflage, Hiding in Shadows, Sneak, Trail, Hiding in Plain Sight

Standard: Evade notice by hiding in deep shadow. Walk silently across a marble floor. Sneak up on an alert guard.

Challenging: Evade notice by standing a foot behind a person searching for you and moving when he turns. Walk silently across a floor covered with walnut hulls. Sneak up on an alert dog.

Legendary: Evade notice by simply standing still. Run silently across a floor covered with small bells. Sneak up on an alert guardian demon.

Eclipse Abilities

Bureaucracy

This Ability measures the character's skill at negotiating political, governmental and economic systems. Characters with Bureaucracy are capable of making their livings as merchants or government officials. Note that

though this Ability allows the character to be an effective merchant or bureaucrat — there are countless businesses and governments whose staff taken as a whole has few or no dots of Bureaucracy.

Specialties: Foot-Dragging, Expediting Paperwork, Illegal Business, Commodities, Wheeling and Dealing, A Particular Bureau

Standard: Bribe an honest official. Rig a bid. Learn who really controls the local marketplace. Turn a large starting stake into a fortune in just a few months, or turn a small starting stake into a fortune in several years.

Challenging: Reform the bureaucracy of a corrupt and decadent city state. Maneuver yourself to a position of primacy among local merchants. Turn a large starting stake into a fortune in just a few weeks, or turn a tiny starting stake into a fortune over months.

Legendary: Reform the bureaucracy of the Realm. Outmaneuver the Guild in the mercantile arena. Turn a tiny starting stake into a fortune in just a few days.

Linguistics

This Ability determines the number of languages the character speaks fluently, as well indicating a basic understanding of how languages work. Because there are many languages and each is a very complicated system, the character does not automatically understand all languages. Each character knows one language family as his native tongue. Each dot of Linguistics indicates a fluent understanding of a language family beyond the character's native one. Characters with high Linguistics will be able to express basic needs and desires in most languages, but cannot express complex concepts or understand even simple idioms.

Each language family comprises several dialects, but for simplicity's sake, its assumed that a character knowledgeable in a language family can comprehend dialects within the family. Linguistics rolls are needed only to understand complex writing or speech, although a high Linguistics rating should reduce this necessity.

In the world of **Exalted**, the following language families exist:

- High Realm: The language of the Dragon-Blooded nobles and their servitors. Also spoken by spirits, demons and the Fair Folk.
- Low Realm: The speech of the Realm's commoners.
- Riverspeak: The language of the Scavenger Lands. Also the lingua franca of the Threshold, full of loan words and used by almost every trader and merchant.
- Skytongue: A language family spoken in the Threshold regions of the North.
- Flametongue: A language family spoken in the Threshold regions of the South.
- Seatongue: A language family spoken in the Threshold archipelagoes of the West.
- Forest-tongue: A language family spoken in the Threshold region of the East.
- Tribal Tongues (various): Languages spoken by groups of barbarians. For each dot purchased, a character may know a number of tribal tongues equal to her Intelligence.
- Guild Cant: A secret language spoken only by members of the Guild. (Characters must have Backing [Guild] at ••• or higher to know this language.)
- Old Realm: The language of the Old Realm. This is the language of many oral and written spells, as well as the language of First Age tomes. Characters must have Lore • or greater to purchase this language. Old Realm is also the language of choice for spirits, demons and the Fair Folk.

Note that without the Lore Ability, characters may not read or write, regardless of how many languages they speak. Some languages, such as the barbarian tribal tongues, have no written language. Most Threshold written languages use variants or bastardizations of Old Realm glyphs.

Specialties: Specialties in Linguistics must be taken in an individual language group and indicate expressive talent with that language. A character with just the basic mastery of the language can hold normal conversation and even understand and use idiomatic expressions, but she hasn't mastered the internal poetry of the language. A character with a single specialization in a language group can make a living as a respected writer, poet or some other sort of composer in the language. Characters with multiple specialties in a language group are increasingly able to exploit its internal beauty and produce beautiful written or spoken works. Storytellers may wish to allow characters to add their Linguistics specialties to communication-related tasks (Presence, Larceny, Leadership, Socialize), particularly when delivering set piece speeches, writing letters and so forth.

Ride

Ride measures the character's proficiency when riding a horse, ox or similar creature. This Ability gives your character the ability to break wild horses and engage in tricky maneuvers, including coaxing a horse to jump, galloping over broken terrain and fighting while mounted.

Specialties: Wild Horses, Racing, Riding in Battle, Jumps, Rough Terrain, Nursing Mounts, Camels

Standard: Jump a stone wall. Ride a horse through a smoky battlefield. Break a wild stallion.

Challenging: Jump a high stone wall with a panicked horse. Ride a horse through a smoky battlefield full of undead horrors. Break a wild stallion in a single attempt.

Legendary: Jump a tremendous chasm on an old nag. Ride a horse through a wall of magical fire full of screaming faces. Have a legendary, untamable wild horse accept you without the need for breaking.

Sail

The world of **Exalted** lies around the great Inland Sea, and the entirety of the West is a great sea, full of archipelagos and

islands. Sea travel is vitally important to trade, warfare and communication. This Ability measures the character's skill at seamanship and in handling both fresh and saltwater craft.

Specialties: Piracy, Small Ships, Galleys, Open Ocean, Chases, Weathering Storms, Dangerous Passages, Uncharted Waters

Standard: Sail a ship through a moderate blow. Outrun a pirate ship. Navigate a dangerous reef.

Challenging: Sail a ship through a hurricane. Outrun a pirate chaser. Navigate an uncharted reef at night.

Legendary: Sail a galley through the storm of the century. Outrun a pirate fleet in a garbage scow. Navigate a deadly, uncharted reef while fogged in and under full sail.

Socialize

Socialize is the ability to sense and understand people's feelings, to understand and maneuver in social situations and to engage in politics, social climbing and various similar sorts of subterfuge. Note that Socialize covers blackmail and similar political dirty tricks, but Larceny is the Ability used to actually perform thefts, burglaries, evidence planting and so forth — Socialize only handles the political end. This Ability is not a magic power; it uses your character's own understanding of emotions and people to get an accurate reading of what others are feeling.

Specialties: Discern Motivation, Discern Truth, Emotional State, Intent

Standard: Cast aspersions at those who deserve them. Arrange an affair. Obtain a paid position in a court through political means.

Challenging: Cast aspersions at the undeserving and make them stick. Arrange an affair with the grand dame of local society, and her daughter. Obtain an influential and well-paid position (inspector-general, exchequer, major domo) through maneuvering alone.

Legendary: Cast aspersions at paragons of virtue and topple them. Arrange an affair with the local ruler, her beloved spouse and their daughter. Become the heir designate for the local throne through political maneuvering.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are Traits that do not measure your character's skills and inherent capabilities, but that are nevertheless key elements of who she is. They measure her ability to indirectly influence the world and help define her history and current circumstances.

Backgrounds are closely tied to character concept — each is more than just a dot rating. If a character has the Allies, Contacts or Mentor Background, the dots represent individuals with their own lives, personalities and motives. Resources don't just appear magically, and Backing and Influence aren't just recorded on a giant chalkboard in the sky.

The player and the Storyteller should work together to make sure that your choices make sense and work well with the overall theme of the game. For example, if the series begins before the characters are Exalted, Familiar is probably inappropriate. Alternatively, if the characters are all working for a renegade Sidereal, everyone in the Circle probably needs several dots of Mentor. Backgrounds should complement and help both the series and the character concept, rather than being a way to make a powerful character.

It may sometimes be uncertain if a character's Background rating is sufficient for a given task. For instance, it may be uncertain if allies can come to the character's aid or if she can afford a new piece of equipment. Typically, the player rolls the character's Background against difficulty 1 to see if it can do what she wants.

While this method is speedy, it can easily rob the game of nuance and roleplaying. If the Storyteller wants, he may have the player describe her character's use of the Background more clearly, working it into the story and then calling for the appropriate Attribute + Ability roll when the time comes. The player might have to roll the character's Manipulation + Socialize to talk her allies into helping her, while if her character's held in prison, she would roll her Charisma + Presence to see if they come to the character's aid because of their respect for her. A character trying to scrape together enough money to buy something would probably roll Intelligence + Bureaucracy to find a bargain on the open market or Wits + Streetwise to buy one "hot."

Storytellers should keep in mind that the point of this is not to make the character suffer or make her Backgrounds less useful. The point is to keep Backgrounds real and concrete things and not just abstract numbers the player rolls whenever she needs someone to kick down the door and rescue her character.

Allies

Almost everyone has at least one close friend. Allies are people to whom your character has intimate ties: friends, loved ones or simply someone with similar interests that she can turn to for assistance and support. Regardless of the nature of the relationship, allies are talented and dedicated individuals with whom your character has close bonds. A character doesn't have to buy the Allies Background to represent her relationship with the rest of the Circle — allies are always Storyteller characters.

Allies are people in their own right, with lives as complex and involving as your character's. Friendship is a two-way street, and if your character takes but doesn't give, her allies are likely to desert her. Allies do what they can to help your character, but they don't throw their lives away for nothing, nor are they on call to succor you in every situation. Like anyone, they grow weary of repeated demands on their time and resources. And, of course, allies can also call for assistance.

Each dot typically represents one ally. Instead of signifying multiple allies, however, a high rating could represent a more powerful ally. An ally may be a fellow

Exalted, noble, spymaster, soldier, Guild prince, even a spirit being or creature of the Wyld. You should work with the Storyteller to detail each ally — a well-developed supporting cast makes for rich roleplaying.

x	None; your character skulks about, having no one close to turn to.
•	One ally of moderate ability (equivalent to a starting character).
••	Two allies or one significant one.
•••	Three allies or fewer allies of correspondingly high power.
••••	Four allies or fewer ones of great capability.
•••••	Five allies or fewer ones of immense power.

Artifact

The world of **Exalted** is a magical one, and not all of that magic is in the forms of Charms and sorcery. Talented Exalted craftsmen can work their will on objects, crafting them into artifacts of great power. A character with the Artifact Background possesses one or more such items.

The most powerful of these items were made during the now-vanished golden time of the First Age. Many of these devices have failed, as the ravages of time undid their magic. Many more were destroyed in the disasters and wars that ended that Age of glory. Yet, some survive and continue to function — their imperishability a tribute to the power of the ancients.

Even today, the Dragon-Blooded still forge weak items, and the Sidereals and Lunars both work their hidden wonders. Yet, most of the First Age's wisdom has been forgotten or was lost during the Great Contagion, even to the Sidereals. Even if it could be gathered up, it would take centuries of effort and vast resources to rebuild the vast and splendorous civilization whose infrastructure made those wonders possible.

Your character could have been powerful or rich enough previous to her Exaltation to have some trapping of First Age glory. Or it could be that after her Exaltation, she followed prophetic dreams and looted one of the hidden fortress-tombs where the bones and ashes of the Solars were laid down and sealed away, protected forever against a disturbance that might anger their ghosts into rising. Perhaps she seized the artifact or had it given to her by a third party. However the object came into the character's possession, there is a story behind it.

For details of various artifacts, see Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment.

x	No Artifact
•	A minor item — a magic charm, an amulet with a setting for a single Hearthstone or a diadem of office.
••	A useful item, a weapon or suit of armor.
•••	A powerful weapon or suit of armor; a non-weapon item of significant power.
••••	Either a remarkably powerful weapon or armor or a non-weapon item of power and utility.
•••••	A vanished wonder of the First Age; a one-of-a-kind item capable of changing the course of history.

Backing

This Trait reflects standing in an organization (a government or army, the Guild, a powerful criminal society). Backing is less a measure of actual capability or achievement than of perceived influence or rank. At the Storyteller's discretion, you may take Backing multiple times for rank in different organizations. With this rank comes responsibility; if your character has high Backing, she is likely to be responsible for decisions involving great numbers of people and resources.

x	None; a typical grunt.
•	A low-ranking position of little authority but a fair amount of (usually dull and unpleasant) responsibility.
••	A good post with most of the disagreeable duties pawned off on underlings.
•••	Midlevel rank, usually with ill-defined authority and responsibility (such leeway can be both a blessing and a curse).
••••	A position of some direction and privilege — the character has access to large resources and is trusted by the elite.
•••••	You've reached the upper ranks; a leader in your own right, the character commands power and respect.

Contacts

More casual than allies, contacts are people with whom your character has developed a mutually beneficial arrangement. Contacts use their talents, information or resources to help your character, but they always expect some favor in return. This favor could be a service, trade or even payment, but it generally matches the value of the contact's assistance. These associates don't risk themselves as far as a follower or even an ally will (although a well-cultivated contact could grow into one or the other over the course of the series).

Each dot represents major and minor contacts. Major contacts are individuals with whom your character interacts frequently. They have names, personalities and positions that make them useful to know. A major contact could be a dirty customs official, a high-ranking military officer, a leading courtier or the scion of a powerful family. He's always your contact, but he has his own life and problems. He may not be there when you need him.

Minor contacts don't have names — they represent your character's overall "connectedness." They aren't as knowledgeable or influential as a major contact, but all you need to do to find one is roll a success on your Contacts. Obviously, not all these minor contacts know the character personally — to a large extent, minor contacts just



represent a character's innate ability to sniff out information and people receptive to bribes.

Also obviously, there will be times when a character's Contacts rating is irrelevant. A character just isn't going to find someone willing to fill him in on the local situation at a deserted oasis.

x	No useful contacts; the character does his own legwork.
•	One major contact and a few minor ones.
••	Two major contacts in different areas and a smattering of minor contacts.
•••	Three major contacts and a respectable number of minor ones.
••••	Four major contacts in different areas (although your character may double up in a given field) and a large number of minor contacts.
•••••	Five major contacts and a minor contact virtually anywhere your character cares to look.

Familiar

Many Exalted find themselves bound to animal companions. In many cases, these are simply animals drawn to the Exalted's power and are little more than loyal pets. However, in some cases, the bond is much closer, allowing the Exalted to communicate with the animal and even share its senses. However, in either case, the familiar draws the character's Essence to supplement its own life; the animal will not age or die until the character does.

x	No familiar
•	A small animal, such as a cat or stray dog, that provides little more than companionship and perhaps warning of danger.
••	An impressive pet, such as a wolf or hawk. A smaller pet that is preternaturally intelligent — a cat that is very clever and that can understand simple instructions, for example. It cannot speak, but it can understand you and perform very simple tasks such as fetching or knocking something over. It communicates with your character (and him alone) fairly well through posture and facial expression.
•••	A powerful or dangerous pet — a tiger or a dire wolf — or an impressive and intelligent pet. If the familiar is a small animal, it is as intelligent as a child of eight or nine years — it can fetch items and do chores, but it has no book learning and can be easily distracted. The familiar can communicate with you as well as if it were speaking by its noises, postures and expressions. When it is



touching your character, it makes an additional 5 motes of Essence available. This Essence is "stored" in the familiar but is otherwise treated as Personal Essence. It regenerates only after your character has regained all his own Essence. The character can share one of its senses when it is within 100 yards.

•••• An impressive pet that has the properties of a small animal at Familiar •••; increased intelligence, sharing of senses, making extra Essence available to your character and near-perfect communication.

••••• A powerful or dangerous pet that has the properties of Familiar •••.

FOLLOWERS

Your character has one or more assistants, steadfast companions in her journeys. These disciples are drawn to her for any number of reasons. Perhaps they're awestruck villagers or even worshipers; perhaps they're highly paid agents; perhaps they simply love your character.

Followers have some useful trade or skill (though not to the extent that allies or contacts do) and are loyal to a fault. Such individuals can think for themselves, but they choose to stand by your character through thick and thin. Even so, poor treatment tests the patience of the most devoted individual. A follower who is constantly sent to check for ambushes is bound to move on to a less abusive relationship (if he doesn't die first). Conversely, one treated with care and respect will go to tremendous lengths for your character.

Followers should not be Exalted, but they can be humans of any origin. They should be as flawed and as real as any character. Since player and Storyteller essentially share the duty of playing a follower, both must agree on the individual's history, personality and relationship with the character. No follower should ever be the perfect assistant, nor should he constantly save the day; he's meant to add flavor to the series, not take center stage.

x None; you haven't inspired anyone to rally to your banner.

• One follower of average capability (equivalent to a typical extra).

•• Three followers.

••• Seven followers.

•••• 25 followers.

••••• 100 loyal followers.

INFLUENCE

If nothing else, Exalted are certainly persons of importance; people watch, admire and fear them. The Influence Background reflects your character's pull and status in society. This status may derive from political office, running a business, being an entertainer, being a religious

figure or merely the amount of power he's demonstrated. Whatever your character's specific credentials, people pay attention to his words and deeds.

Influence may be used to garner special favors from others, to promote a personal agenda in public or just to make life that much easier. Additionally, Influence may be drawn on to network and make important connections — or to draw even more people under your character's sway. Most Exalted will eventually garner some degree of Influence, if they don't start with it.

This Background doesn't cover standing or sway in a private organization; that's handled by Backing.

x	None; your character's fame has yet to spread.
•	Moderately influential; a figure of local note.
••	Moderately powerful; your character swings some weight in the city-state or satrapy where he resides.
•••	Influential; your character is very important to the region close to where he resides and noticed in neighboring states. The Dragon-Blooded know of him.
••••	Broad personal power; your character's words carry great weight throughout the region, and he may rule a town or small city. The arrival of the Wyld Hunt is only a matter of time, even in the current political climate.
•••••	Vastly influential; your character rules a region or has great pull in several. Surely the Realm even now gathers armies to annihilate him.

Manse

Though the power of the Exalted stems from the might of their own souls, that Essence is the same power that courses through and forms the very fabric of the world. By attuning themselves to places where the world's natural magic gathers, the Exalted can draw on an almost unlimited wellspring of power, pulling energy from Creation itself to fuel their magics.

The places are called Demesnes, if they have not been harnessed by occult architecture. If their power has been focused by geomantic means, then they are known as Manses. Weak Demesnes are quite common, but the more powerful ones are increasingly rare and make attractive lairs for magical creatures. These beings range from Lunar Exalted to Fair Folk and spirits of great power — all capable of disputing the character's ownership.

Characters inside a Manse or Demesne to which they are attuned regain four times the level of the site per hour in Essence motes. Characters who have control over a Demesne can raise up a structure — a Manse — that channels the power of the Demesne into an object called a Hearthstone, a piece of rock crystal about the size and shape of a chicken egg. This crystal has several uses.

In its raw state, the Hearthstone causes the Exalted to regain twice the Manse's rating in Essence per hour. The Hearthstone must be touching skin to do this, and only one Hearthstone may grant this benefit at a time. During the Old Realm, Exalted typically wore their Hearthstones on headbands covering their Caste Marks or over their hearts as amulets.

However, the benefits of Hearthstones do not end there. A Hearthstone can be set into a specially made item, as a gem is set into a piece of jewelry, to grant greater power to the Exalted who bears it. The benefits vary from Hearthstone to Hearthstone, but all are beneficial, and those from powerful Manses are formidable indeed.

To use a Hearthstone in this fashion, the Exalted must first be attuned to the Manse that produced the Hearthstone. Second, the item in which the Hearthstone is set must be made from one of the Five Magical Materials for the Hearthstone to give its benefits. These materials are orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal, jade and soulsteel.

For more details on Manses, their construction and the mechanics of how they generate Hearthstones, see page 247 of Chapter Six: Drama. For a dozen example Hearthstones, see Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment.

x	No Manse or Demesne
•	Level 1 Manse or level 2 Demesne.
••	Level 2 Manse or level 3 Demesne.
•••	Level 3 Manse or level 4 Demesne.
••••	Level 4 Manse or level 5 Demesne.
•••••	Level 5 Manse.

Mentor

A mentor is many things: a patron, teacher, defender and friend. Your character's relationship with her mentor is quite different from any relationship with an ally, contact or follower. While a mentor won't always respond to your character's requests for help, he always acts in her best interests (or what he considers her best interests). A mentor-student relationship is a complex and personal association that entails responsibilities on both sides. It should, therefore, be the subject of involved roleplaying.

A mentor may be a powerful Exalted, an organization such as the Guild or possibly even a mighty spirit or creature of the Wyld. Depending on her capabilities and means, a mentor may teach Abilities, make information or resources available or even instruct in use of sorcery and Charms. She may also serve as your character's advocate in dealing with a particular organization or may simply show up in time to pull her out of a tight spot. It's advisable not to demand this sort of thing from a mentor too often, though.

The rating of this Background reflects a mentor's helpfulness. A minor patron is better than none (usually); a more significant mentor has a correspondingly higher rating. Even so, a low-ranking mentor can be a powerful influence in your character's growth.



x — None; your character hasn't caught anyone's attention, or perhaps, she simply hasn't found a patron worthy of her attention.

• — Like an older sibling, your mentor is just a bit more worldly and wise than your character. He has a few connections.

•• — A figure of some note or a true power who has little time for your character.

••• — A seasoned individual, your character's mentor is wise and influential.

•••• — Canny and respected, your character's mentor has significant clout, even enough to shape the course of nations.

••••• — Your character's mentor is potentially world-shaking, and he takes a great interest in your character's welfare. Beware, though; such a mentor surely has enemies, and those rivals will see your character as his heir, understudy and minion.

Resources

Resources are a general indication of the character's financial assets. The world of **Exalted** is much more like the ancient world of the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians than the Dark Ages. Jade money is common, and people can be considered wealthy without being feudal warlords controlling large stretches of farmland. Nevertheless, wealth is ephemeral, and the worth of coins is no more than that of their value as precious stones. As a result, this Background includes such things as property, clothing and basic equipment and shows how easily your character can acquire more. While Resources are not entirely liquid assets, possessions can be sold to gain money (though doing so may take some time depending on what is for sale).

Each dot of Resources conveys a standard income beyond any gear or wealth your character gains during play. The source of this wealth must be detailed (rents on property, sharecropping, government stipend, interest in a mercantile concern, tax farming), since it may be increased, reduced or cut off entirely depending on events in the series.

As with Influence, most Exalted have few problems acquiring Resources — through one means or another.

x — None: You are homeless and broke. You may own a club or a staff and, perhaps, a pair of boots with no holes in the soles.

• — Small savings: You have a tiny apartment or cottage and may own a shoddy suit of armor and a notched long knife or spear. You have no riding animal but may own a pet and some domestic animals such as goats or sheep. If you support a family, family members go hungry often, and meat is just a dream for them. If you live alone, you can eat meat once a week.

•• — Comfortable: You have a comfortable cottage or apartment and, probably, own a riding animal of low quality. You may own a suit of light armor and a weapon. If you support a family, it eats frequent, if boring, meals. If you live alone, you can eat meat every day or two and afford hard liquor as well as beer.

••• — Affluent: You own a townhouse or a prosperous farm. You probably have a fine riding animal and another one of lower quality in case the first falls ill. You have a suit of any armor and any two weapons. If you live alone, you are a merry bachelor or spinster, eating well every night and making merry with your friends. If you are supporting a family, it never goes hungry, and there are roasts and sweetmeats on feast days. You probably have a domestic servant or two.

•••• — Wealthy: You are very wealthy, owning at least a townhouse and a country estate. You bear the finest arms, ride a fine gelding or stallion, and alone or as master of a family, you and yours will never know hunger or want for medical attention. You may own a private yacht, and a dozen or more servants tend to your needs.

••••• — Vastly Rich: You are a merchant prince, bandit king, mercenary lord or potentate. You have more riches than you know what to do with. You command an army or could rent one if you needed to. You own at least one excellent ship. An army of servants waits on you, oh Prince of the Earth.

Willpower

The Willpower Trait measures drive and emotional stability. A high score reflects a confident, self-motivated individual, while a low score indicates someone with little confidence or perseverance.

Willpower has a permanent rating, also called the score, that reflects the character's total strength in the Trait (noted by the circles on the character sheet). Whenever a roll is called for, the dice pool is always based on the character's permanent Willpower. Willpower also has a current rating, called points, that indicates the character's present reserves. "Spending points" refers to removing points from the current rating (noted by the squares on the character sheet). Current rating can fluctuate greatly during a story.

• — Weak

•• — Timid

••• — Hesitant

•••• — Diffident

••••• — Certain

•••••• — Confident

•••••••	Determined
••••••••	Secure
•••••••••	Iron-willed
••••••••••	Unshakable

Using Willpower

When a character spends Willpower, he pushes himself beyond his normal limits in an attempt to do something extraordinary. A character can spend only one Willpower point in a turn to activate one of the effects listed below. Many powerful Charms require the expenditure of Willpower points to activate, but that does not count against this limit.

Free Success: You can spend one of the character's Willpower points to earn an automatic success. This free success is separate from any that you roll, but it counts toward your success in the action. You must declare that you're spending Willpower in this fashion prior to rolling for the action. Players who spend Willpower on a roll cannot botch.

Activate a Virtue: Rather than gaining an automatic success, under certain circumstances a character can activate her Virtues to add extra dice to her pool instead. See "Virtues," above, for details.

Resist Instinctual Response: Sometimes, the Storyteller may have your character react to something out of instinct — whether fear of a monstrous undead creature, revulsion at the sight of a gruesome mutilation or lust for a stunning individual. Your character can resist this urge with the expenditure of a Willpower point (although the urge may return depending on the circumstances, calling for further expenditures).

Resist Mental Powers: A character's Willpower is critical to resisting mental control and domination. The specifics depend on the power being used; refer to Chapter Five: Charms and Sorcery, page 154, for details.

Compulsion

Once all of your Willpower points are gone, your character is subject to a compulsion. His innermost Nature comes to the forefront of his personality, dictating his thoughts and actions. Compulsions are the weaknesses mentioned at the end of each Nature's description (see "Natures," p. 114). An Analyst becomes distracted even by the most mundane of puzzles. A Bravo acts without thinking, using brute force and bluster.

Acting at extremes can be very liberating, but it can also cause serious problems. While the likelihood of regaining Willpower increases (since your character behaves true to his Nature), operating under a compulsion can make your character ignore important information, disregard otherwise obvious warnings or be manipulated easily. When at least one Willpower point is regained, your character shakes off the compulsion, reasserting his self-will.

Recovering Willpower

Willpower points are regained whenever your character gets a chance to rest or restore his self-confidence. The Storyteller is always the final arbiter of when and how Willpower is regained. The following methods are entirely optional, and they should encourage roleplaying. The Willpower gained should serve as a reward for playing your character well in the story — it should not be the goal itself.

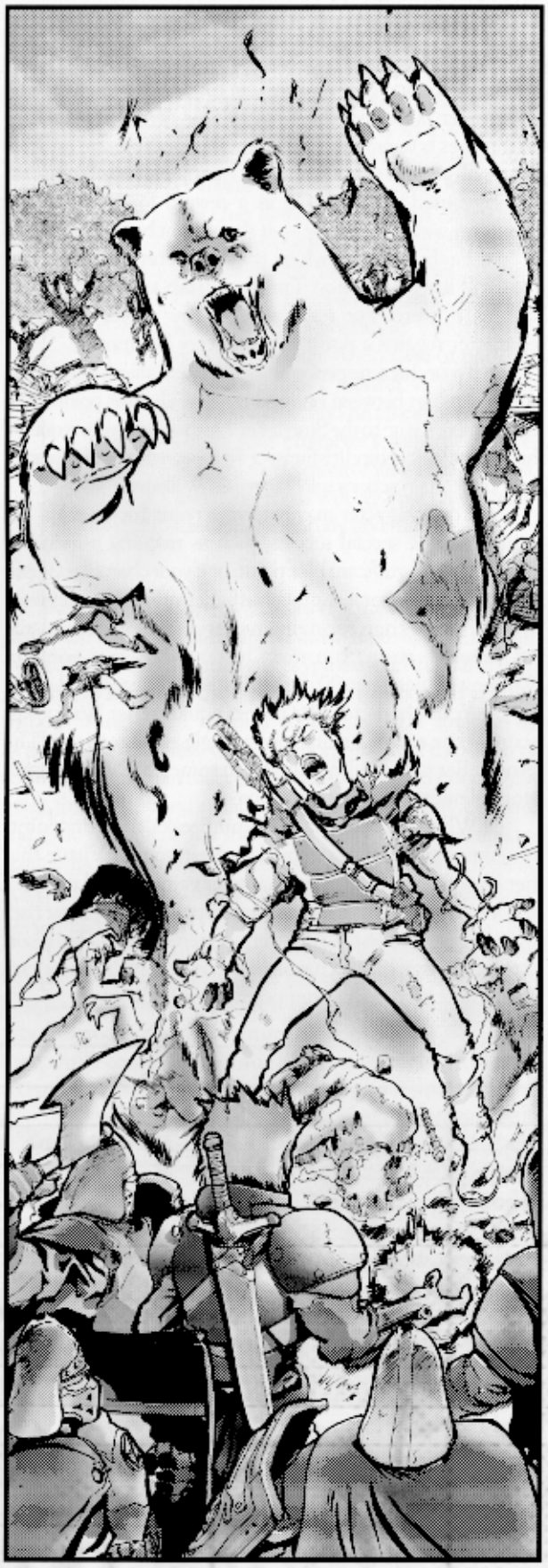
- Each morning when the character awakens, you may roll his Conviction Trait— a fresh start each morning, as it were. For each success the player rolls, the character regains a point of temporary Willpower.
- If your character performs an action that affirms her Nature, she may regain between one and three Willpower points. The exact amount is up to the Storyteller. He may deny your request if he feels the logic behind it is flimsy or if it appears that your character performs certain actions solely to regain Willpower.
- Your character may receive a point (or more) if she achieves some special success, such as rescuing a friend or discovering a significant plot point, or if your character affirms his capabilities in some way, such as by defeating a hated enemy.
- Rather than receiving motes of Esssence for a two- or three-die stunt, you may, instead, regain a point of Willpower. See page 90 of the Systems chapter for details.
- Your character gets points equal to her Willpower score at the end of a story (not a single game session). The Storyteller may modify this return somewhat if significant story elements remain unresolved.
- When your character's Limit Breaks, she gains points of temporary Willpower equal to the rating of Virtue that her Flaw springs from. The character gains the full rating of the Virtue, even if this means her temporary Willpower rises over her permanent Willpower or even over 10. This gain is the only way that a character can ever have a temporary Willpower higher than her permanent Willpower.

Essence

Essence is the Trait that measures the character's inherent attunement to the ambient magical energies of the world around her. Solars fresh from their Exaltation and most normal mortals have Essence scores of one. Normal mortals almost never rise above Essence 1, but most Exalted quickly master their internal Essence, rising to Essence 2 or 3. An Exalted's Essence can rise to 5 relatively easily, and some very old Exalted increase their Essence to 6 or more. However, this is rare even among elderly Exalted — it requires a tremendous commitment to power usually seen only among the greatest sorcerers and conquerors.

Essence Motes

All beings have the energies of Creation flowing through them. Exalted, however, have much greater reserves than the average being and are able to channel



their Essence to perform magical feats. To Exalted, these energies often seem like sparks or pulses of light (or, in the case of the Abyssals, darkness). During particularly taxing feats, an Exalted's power literally dances around her body, wrapping her in a coruscating nimbus or shower of sparks.

Regardless, scholars speak of Essence as comprised of discrete units, which they refer as motes. Each Exalted character has two pools of power, each consisting of a number of motes. These motes are spent to power Charms, sorcery and the natural powers of the character's anima. A character's maximum Personal Essence pool is equal to (3 x her Essence) + her Willpower. Her maximum Peripheral Essence pool is equal to (7 x her Essence) + her Willpower + (the sum of her Virtues).

The character's Personal Essence in closely tied to her being, and she can spend motes from her Personal Essence without betraying her use of Essence. Her Peripheral Essence is Essence placed under her control by her Exaltation but not internalized into her person. Use of motes from the character's Peripheral Essence causes a brilliant display known as an anima banner. Characters can freely mix Personal and Peripheral Essence when using a Charm — only the motes of Peripheral Essence count toward the anima banner.

The Anima Banner

All Exalted have an "anima," an aura of power that surrounds them. Normally, this aura is so faint that it is imperceptible to normal human senses, but when the Exalted spends motes of Peripheral Essence, the anima intensifies to form a so-called banner. Except for the 1-3 and 16+ effects, the anima banner fades at the rate of one table entry per scene, or per 10 to 15 minutes, if the scenes are very long.

Tracking Motes

Keeping track of how many motes of Essence your character has can be a little tricky, as well as hard on your character sheet. One of the things we've found that works well are the flat-bottomed glass beads commonly sold to keep track of values in trading-card games. You can get them in bulk quite cheaply from your local game store. These beads let you have a tangible way to assess how much Essence your character has left, and you can get them in two colors — one for Personal Essence and a different color for Peripheral Essence. Poker chips also work, they are even cheaper, and you can usually buy them at the local supermarket. They're not as cool or attractive as glass beads, though.

Motes of Peripheral Essence	Effect
1-3	The character's Caste Mark glitters and is visible from certain angles. Anyone seeing the Exalted may make a Perception + Awareness roll at standard difficulty to notice the Caste Mark. The character can use the Stealth Ability normally, and may still hide behind Stealth Charms and other concealing magic without fear of detection. This effect can persist for as long as an hour after the character has ceased to burn Essence.
4-7	The character's Caste Mark burns and will shine through anything placed over it. It is impossible to mistake the character for anything but what she is. Stealth Charms and other such magic, including the Night Caste's ability to mute sensory impressions, fail. A character may use the Stealth Ability to hide in natural cover, but all such attempts are at +2 difficult.
8-10	The character is surrounded by a coruscant aura bright enough to read by, and his Caste Mark is a burning golden brand on his forehead. Stealth is impossible.
11-15	The character is engulfed in a brilliant bonfire of Essence, which burns from his feet to at least a foot above the character's head. Objects that come in contact with the aura may be left bleached or faded, as if they had been exposed to the sun for many days. The character is visible for miles. The light is bright and steady enough to read by out to a spearcast's distance. The character's Caste Mark will remain etched in the vision of anyone who sees it for minutes afterward.
16+	The character is surmounted or surrounded by a burning image totemic to his person — a warrior might be surrounded by a great golden bull, an Twilight Caste magician by an incredibly elaborate mandala, and so on. This effect fades during any turn the character does not spend Essence, but leaps back into existence from the solar bonfire of the character's anima if the character again burns Peripheral Essence.

These effects occur naturally only when the character uses Peripheral Essence. However, an Exalted using Personal Essence can deliberately allow it to escape into her anima and have the motes expended count toward the number used during that scene. An Exalted typically does so when she has spent all her Peripheral Essence but, for some reason, wishes to stage a showy display.

Regaining Essence

An Exalted's motes, once spent, return to him only gradually — thus, an Exalted has to shepherd his mystical energies carefully, lest he find himself powerless and beset by enemies. An Exalted cannot recover any motes if he engages in strenuous activity (combat, most forms of manual labor, hikes or forced marches and so on). If at ease, but not completely relaxed (such as watching an artistic performance, taking a leisurely stroll or debating with a Realm courtier), he recovers spent motes at the rate of four per hour. When he's completely relaxed (for example, sleeping or receiving a massage), he recovers motes at the rate of eight per hour. Characters first regenerate their Personal Essence, regaining motes of their Peripheral Essence only when their Personal Essence pool is full.

In addition, characters who are attuned to Manses recover their Essence more quickly. Characters within a Manse they are attuned to gain a bonus to their hourly recovery rate of four times the Manse's rating. A character carrying the raw Hearthstone of a Manse against his bare skin gains a bonus of twice the Manse's rating. For more information on Manses and Hearthstones, see their entries in the "Background" section, page 145. Characters attuned to Manses gain the Manse's Essence bonus even if they are engaged in strenuous activity.

Players' characters are presumed to begin the game with a full pool of motes.



Arianna fled from Thorns in the long shadowland night, and the dark Inquisitors pursued her. She fled on a gold-maned horse of Essence and hurtled through the dark forest astride it, trusting in her Charms to keep her and her steed safe from harm. But though she rode through the night like a falling star, the Inquisitors kept pace with her. They pursued her on foot, yet they were wise in the magic of the Underworld. Their strides carried them 10 times farther than the stride of a mortal man, and they paced her even as she bolted through the darkness on her tireless white steed.

Twice she turned inside their net and lost them. Twice they found her, hunting by the scent of her spirit and peering through the night with black eyes, sharp as only the eyes of the dead can be. The Inquisitors brought her to bay in the square of an abandoned hamlet. Arianna could see only as well as a screech owl, and so the Inquisitors — who could see through darkness as easily as light — stood back beyond her vision. They intimated to her in their ancient tongue that if she did not return with them to the Mask of Winters' court, grave harm would befall her.

Arianna responded with a few clipped words in that same language, leveling an insult. There was a moment of silence as the combatants gathered power, and then, the ghosts attacked. They leapt at her from every direction, whirling through the air with the fluid grace of the dead. She clapped her hands together and spoke the syllables of the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze. Her voice rolled through the predawn silence like a temple gong, and the magic raced around her like a spray of molten metal, hardening her flesh into supple bronze.

Then, the Inquisitors were on her, but they did not seek to wound her. They sought to caress her and batten upon her power. Against this attack, Arianna had not prepared a defense. The hands of the dead raced through her aura and came away trailing strands of stolen magic, snatching the warmth and Essence from her. The divine spark within Arianna flickered and dimmed. She whirled and struck a defensive pose. The ghosts launched themselves at her and she flowed like blood away from them, and her joints bent with fluid grace as she ducked and tumbled to evade their hungry touches.

Enraged, they rushed at her again, seeking to steal away her life. Laughing, she evaded them and uttered the spell of the Wood Dragon's Claw. The air around her whirled with petitions to the elemental forces as her hands swelled and cracked into rending, oaken claws.

She stood there, with her skin of bronze and her claws of bloodthirsty wood, her form fluid and her being alive with power. She faced the Inquisitors, and she laughed at them. They set upon her, and she whirled through the village, leaping and spinning away from their chilling touch. Then she jumped, rolled and struck upward to catch one of the ghosts as it leapt past her.

Her oak claws pierced the cloth and memories of its spectral body, and she shook him until he blew away like dust. In the light from the brightening sky, she could just perceive the ash that billowed from her razor-sharp claws as his form disintegrated. She turned to regard the other three, her head bowed and her sap-glistening claws hanging loosely at her side.

The sun would rise in just a few minutes. The ghosts must either attack her now or be trapped across the Shroud from her. After the sun rose, they would need to claw their way into the land of the living — almost certainly beyond their power after the rigors of the night's chase.

She stared at them, and they watched her with their emotionless black eyes. Slowly, the light grew, and the ghosts faded from view. First, they were transparent and then, suddenly, gone. Arianna leapt astride her waiting steed and raced toward the growing dawn and away from the dark metropolis of Thorns.

CHAPTER FIVE
CHARMS AND SORCERY

CHARMS

Charms are simple sorceries, "tricks" that grant a single, often narrow, ability. By channeling Essence through their bodies and animas, the Chosen enhance their Abilities to superhuman levels. Using Charms, Exalted can leap vast distances, survive in the harshest conditions, forge weapons of unearthly quality and absorb without injury sword blows that would kill a mortal. It is the ability to use these Charms that most clearly separates the Exalted from normal mortals, and it is the mark of the favor of the gods.

All Exalted use Charms, and on the surface, these magics are all broadly similar. Yet, similar does not mean the same, and power that flows easily to the hands one sort of Exalted does not come naturally to other types. The Charms in this chapter are those used by the Solar Exalted. Other sorts of Exalted wield their own magics, from the protean shapeshifting of the Lunar Exalted to the elemental mastery of the Dragon-Blooded. Most Exalted can only use those Charms specifically created for Chosen of their type. Among the Solars, only those of the Eclipse Caste may learn the Charms of other Exalted and of spirits.

The Charms used by spirits and by other sorts of Exalted are briefly illustrated in the Antagonists chapter of this book and will be described in greater detail in the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**.

LEARNING CHARMS

The gods taught their servants the first Charms in the time before history, but the knowledge of this magic does not spring entirely from them. Though the gods set men on the road to knowledge, the Exalted themselves have walked far along that road over the ages since. Throughout history, the Exalted have experimented with their powers, devising new Charms and teaching them to one another. Indeed, so simple are Charms to learn that many Solars discover theirs through simple experimentation, without need for tutelage.

The Charms in this chapter are the most easily developed and well known of their kind, but they are by no means the only ones. If both the players and the Storyteller are amenable, there's no reason that a player shouldn't design her own Charms or alter the Charm trees slightly to suit her character.

PRESENTATION FORMAT

What follows is an explanation of the format used to present Charms. While each Charm is a unique magic unto itself, all are presented in a regular format listing the trick's important game statistics.

CHARM NAME

Cost: The cost to use the Charm. Charms usually cost one or more Essence motes to use, though some Charms also cost Willpower, health levels or other, even costlier

The Rules of Charms

If players are creating their own Charms, Storytellers will want to keep the following rules of thumb in mind.

Efficiency: The Charms presented are the results of thousands of years of experimentation. They are as efficient (in terms of how much effect you get for a given number of motes) as they are ever going to be. Don't let a player convince you that because her character has spent time optimizing the Charm he should get to use it at a discount.

Coherence: Charm trees all typically work along a theme, with lesser Charms building on one another and acting as a logical foundation for the more powerful Charms. Feel free to refuse a player who draws up a grab-bag assortment of what she wants her character to do and then cobbles it together into a tree. Most Charms should either be offshoots of or variants on an established tree or else part of an entirely new tree the player and Storyteller design together.

Theme: Solars are glorious heroes. They fight, they lead, and they rule. They don't really shapeshift, they don't shoot ice bolts out of their hands, and they aren't necromancers. Those are all the sorts of things that other Exalted do. No matter how long she works at it, a Solar isn't going to develop a Charm that lets her shoot her mouth out on a tentacle and savagely bite someone to death. She might shout loudly enough to shatter bones or breathe solar flames, but she isn't going to get H.R. Giger special effects. That's just not in-genre for the characters.

Limits: Don't just let characters produce powerful Charm after powerful Charm. Charms have prerequisites because they are complex, and a lot of lesser knowledge leads into their mastery. Don't let a player justify making an Ability 5, Essence 3 Charm without any precursors just because she knows several other such Charms. If it was that simple, Charms would not have prerequisites.

sacrifices to activate. A character cannot use a Charm if he cannot immediately pay the Essence cost for its use — that is, a Charm that generates Essence cannot be used to power itself when the character is otherwise without Essence. Finally, unless the description of the Charm states otherwise, the Exalted must spend the cost of the Charm before making any rolls related to it. Charms which cost health levels to activate inflict unsoakable levels of bashing damage to the character using them.

A character may use only a single Charm per turn — each Charm requires a character to channel Essence in a particular fashion, and even the Exalted cannot easily perform two such feats at once. A character may be able to use a Charm more than one time per turn, depending on it's Type (see "Type," below), but he cannot normally use two different Charms in the same turn.

There is a way, with practice, for characters to use multiple Charms in the same turn. However, the use of these Combos requires great effort on the part of the Exalted. Combos are explained in greater detail on page 213.

Duration: The length of time the Charm lasts, sometimes given in real units such as minutes and hours, and other times in dramatic units such as turns and scenes. Instant Charms happen in an instant (or so near to it as to have effectively no duration). Though there may be effects such as injuries and healed wounds that result from the Charm, the actual magic is done and gone and cannot be unwoven.

Type: For the purposes of game mechanics, Charms are divided into four types. A Charm's type governs how often it can be used in a turn and if it requires the character's dice action or not. The four types of Charms are:

Simple — The Charm can be used only once per turn, and it is the character's dice action for the turn. When using one of these Charms in combat, the character acts on her regular initiative. The character may not split her dice pool in the turn she uses a simple Charm.

Committed Essence

Most Charms are of instant duration, meaning they happen in a flash and then, while the effects may linger, the magic is gone. Other Charms, however, have longer durations. Exalted are often wary of this magic. While the effects of the Charm linger, the Chosen's spirit retains a connection to the motes of Essence expended to power it. This is called *committed Essence*. While the Charm's effects persist, the character cannot regain the motes of committed Essence.

For example, a character with a normal maximum Essence pool of 42 has spent 10 motes to power the Hypnotic Tongue Technique Charm. The duration of this Charm is special — it lasts until the suggestion is carried out or until a number of days equal to the Essence rating of the Exalted who used the Charm pass. Until one of these things occurs, the character's maximum Essence pool is 32, because 10 Essence motes are sustaining the effect of the Charm. After the Hypnotic Tongue Technique's effects have ended, the character can regain those 10 motes of Essence as normal.

An Exalted can end the effect of any of her Charms at any time. Also, motes expended to power sorcery are *not* committed, even if the spell's effects linger beyond an instant.

Supplemental — The Charm must be used to supplement a normal dice action. The Charm can be used multiple times in one turn if the character splits his dice pool, but the Charm cannot be used on its own — it must be used to supplement a dice action. Unless specifically stated otherwise, a supplementary Charm can only aid an action involving the Ability on which it is based.

Reflexive — The Charm does not require a dice action — a character can use it as many times per turn as she wishes, even before her initiative, as long as she can continue to pay the Charm's cost. Many reflexive Charms can also be used as supplemental Charms. For example, a reflexive Dodge Charm that allows the character to buy dice to evade an attack can be used on its own or to supplement a normal dodge action. Reflexive Charms that also serve a supplemental role can be used both ways in the same turn.

Extra Action — This Charm is very similar to a simple Charm. By using this Charm, the character may act multiple times in a single turn. As with a simple Charm, the character may only use the Charm once per turn and may not split her dice pool on any of the actions it grants. The character takes all the actions on her initiative. Unless the Charm specifically states otherwise, she must use the Ability the Charm is based on for all of the actions.

Minimum (Ability): The minimum score the character must possess in the Ability that the Charm stems from in order to learn the Charm. For example, a character who wishes to learn the Charm Fire and Stones Strike must have a Melee Ability of three or higher in order to do so. Characters with insufficient Abilities simply don't have the personal mastery of the Ability required to empower the Charm.

Minimum Essence: The minimum Essence score the character must possess in order to learn the Charm. Characters with insufficient Essence lack the skill to channel sufficient power into the Charm to make it manifest.

Charms and Pools

Charms often have limits, typically that a bonus they grant cannot exceed a character's score in something or that it cannot more than double a character's dice pool in an Ability. Unless specifically stated otherwise, this is the value or dice pool *before any bonuses are applied*. These include the bonuses granted by specialties, superior equipment, the effects of other Charms or any other modifiers that may be applicable.

For example, Thorn has a Dexterity of 4 and a Melee of 3, with the specialty Sword taken three times. Using the Excellent Strike Charm, she cannot add more than 7 dice (4 Dexterity + 3 Melee) to her Melee dice pool, even if she is fighting with a sword and has a nominal Dexterity + Melee dice pool of 10, including her specialties.

Prerequisite Charms: Some Charms are very simple and can be learned on their own. Most Charms, however, are more complex, and the character's ability to execute them is dependent on his mastery of other, simpler tricks. Characters cannot, either during character creation or with experience, purchase a Charm without first purchasing all its prerequisite Charms.

Description: This section details the effects of the Charm. Charms are idiosyncratic, and each Charm's description details the rules for its use.

Dawn Caste

Archery

Wise Arrow

Cost:	1 mote per die
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Supplemental
Minimum Archery:	1
Minimum Essence:	1
Prerequisite Charms:	None

The character extends her anima into the world around her, and joins archer, target and arrow into a single being. Truly, the arrow knows the way to the target, for that is its natural home. For each mote of Essence the player spends, he may add 1 die to an Archery attack roll, but the number of bonus dice added to any single roll cannot exceed her normal Dexterity + Archery dice pool. The player must declare how much Essence she is going to use in this Charm prior to making the attack roll.

Sight Without Eyes

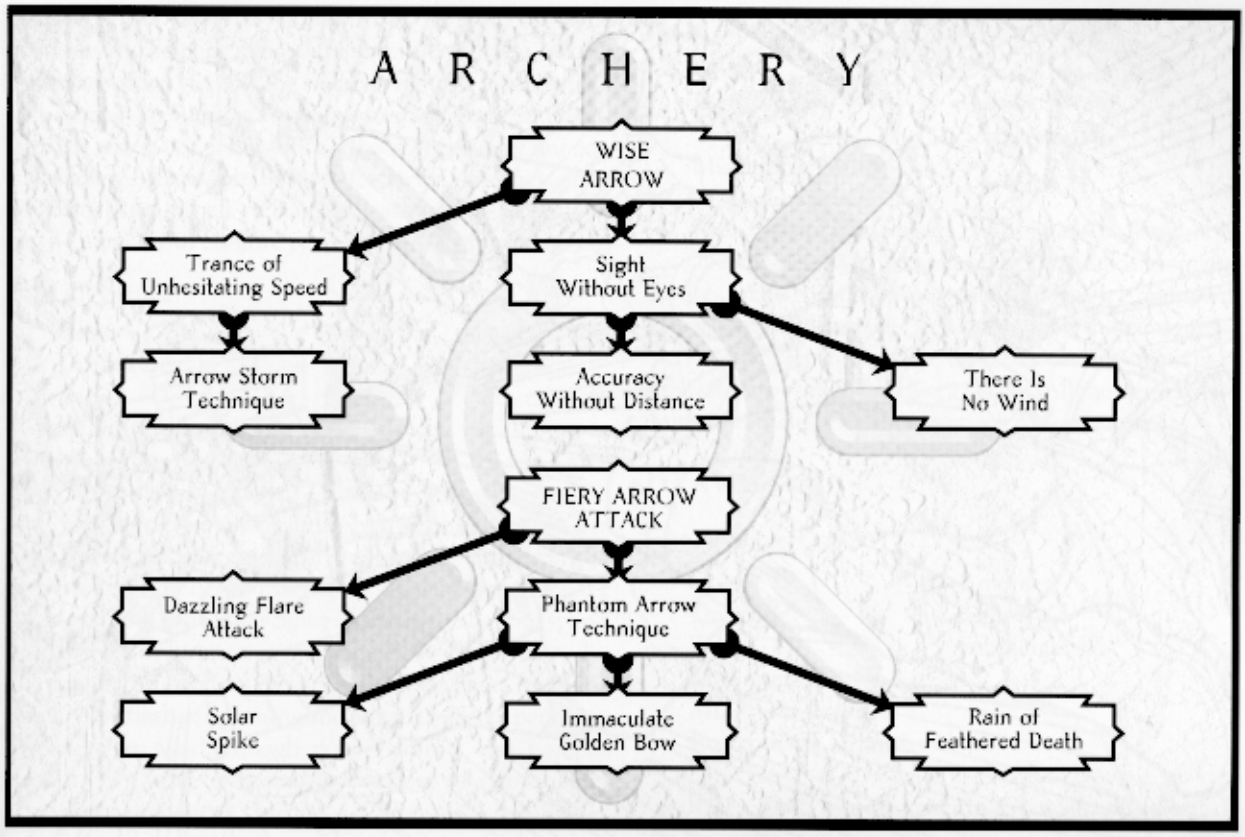
Cost:	1 mote
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Supplemental
Minimum Archery:	3
Minimum Essence:	1
Prerequisite Charms:	Wise Arrow

The character opens her eyes not to the visual world, but to the world of Essence and senses her target in that fashion. She may make an Archery attack without penalty for visual conditions. Other negative modifiers (high winds, range and so forth) still impose their regular penalties.

Accuracy Without Distance

Cost:	1 mote, 1 Willpower
Duration:	Instant
Type:	Supplemental
Minimum Archery:	5
Minimum Essence:	1
Prerequisite Charms:	Sight Without Eyes

The character extends her sense of the local Essence flows to greater heights and can now shoot with perfect assurance. The character may make an Archery attack out to the maximum range of the bow with absolute certainty that the shot will hit.



The player rolls to attack as normal, but if he rolls insufficient successes for his character to hit the target, he still hits it, doing the arrow's base damage. This Charm can also be used to hit small objects, to cut cords and ropes and for other trick shots. It does not, however, allow the archer to negate their target's armor via a called shot to the eye, throat or what have you.

There Is No Wind

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Archery: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Sight Without Eyes

The character's Essence flows into the bow and arrow, and he fires with a perfect, supple grace. The character may make a Archery attack without any environmental penalties of any sort, be they for range, high winds, bad weather, bad ammunition or what have you—the Charmed shot is absolutely flawless. Splitting a dice pool for multiple actions is not an environmental penalty.

Trance of Unhesitating Speed

Cost: Varies
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Archery: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Wise Arrow

The character flows with soft and unhesitating grace through the motions of firing her weapon. Before the character takes her first action for the turn, the player must declare how many attacks the character will make this turn. Each extra attack costs a number of motes of Essence equal to *twice* the total number of attacks the character has made so far, including the attack the character is buying.

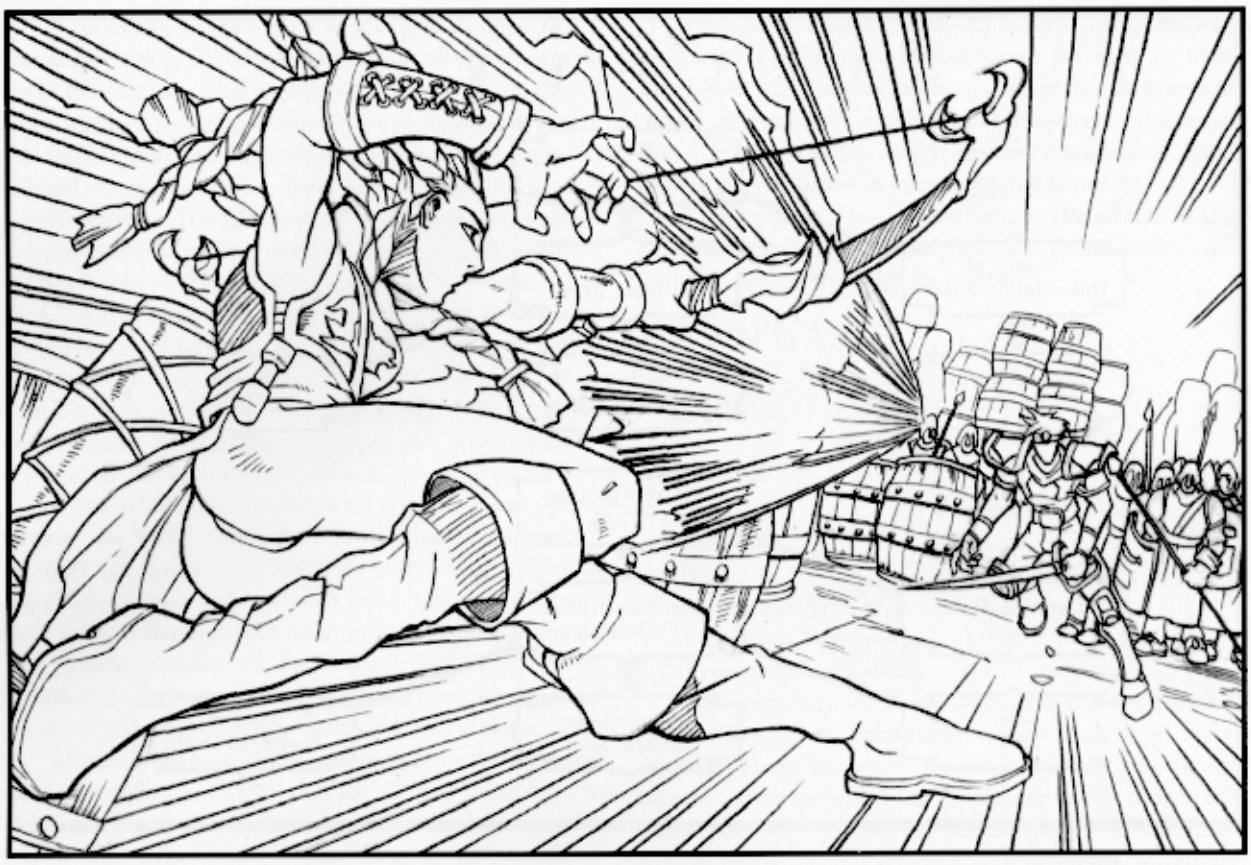
For Example: Harmonious Jade is surrounded by Dragon-Blooded hunters and needs to act now, regardless of cost. She uses the Trance of Unhesitating Speed to make three extra attacks (for a total of four attacks that turn). The cost is 18 motes of Essence; 4 motes for the first extra attack, 6 motes for the second extra attack, and 8 motes for the third extra attack. The cost of the Charm must be paid before Harmonious Jade makes her first attack.

The player must decide how many attacks the character will make and pay for them all before he makes any attack rolls. Obviously, a character cannot attack more times than she has ammunition.

Arrow Storm Technique

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Archery: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Trance of Unhesitating Speed

The character's motions become smooth and economical, optimized for the release of arrows with a minimal



expenditure of effort. So long as the character hits (she need not do damage) with an attack, she may make another attack immediately thereafter. Each attack must be at a different target, and the character cannot make more attacks than she has ammunition. This Charm ends when the character misses or when she has hit every possible target once.

Fiery Arrow Attack

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Archery: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character concentrates Essence in an arrow and then launches it, causing it to burst into flame in mid-flight. Not only will the arrow ignite flammable materials it hits, it also adds dice equal to the character's Essence score to the arrow's damage. Arrows that have had the Fiery Arrow Attack Charm used on them are burnt to cinders and cannot be recovered. Keep in mind that indiscriminately firing burning arrows in a forest or grassland during the dry season is generally a bad idea.

Dazzling Flare Attack

Cost: 1 mote per 2 damage
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Archery: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Fiery Arrow Attack

The character pours greater amounts of Essence into an arrow, and it roars and flashes with Essence as it streaks toward its target. The arrow flies faster and straighter than normal, adding one die to the character's Archery pool. Also, for every mote of Essence the character spends on the Charm, it adds two points to the base damage of the arrow. The Exalted cannot spend more motes of Essence activating this Charm than her permanent Essence rating. Characters using this Charm must spend at least one mote to do so — the Charm cannot be activated "for free" to gain the bonus die to the character's Archery pool.

As the Charm's name suggests, if fired on a high arc through the air, the arrow forms a beacon that can be seen for miles. Arrows that have had the Dazzling Flare Attack Charm used on them are burned to fine gray ash and cannot be recovered.

Phantom Arrow Technique

Cost: 1 mote per arrow
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Archery: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Fiery Arrow Attack

The bane of the archer is his dependence on ammunition. Through the use of this Charm, the Exalted can

transcend the need for ammunition, at least while he possesses the Essence needed to power this Charm. As the character draws his bow, he shapes a mote of Essence into a glittering arrow. This arrow has normal range and damage, but winks out of existence a few seconds after impact. The Essence Arrow can be Comboed with Charms such as Dazzling Flare Attack or Rain of Feathered Death, allowing a character to conjure powerful attacks from thin air.

Solar Spike

Cost: 1 mote per 2 dice of damage
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Archery: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Arrow Technique

The character pulls a blazing bolt of Essence across her bow. This is fired as a normal arrow, but does a base damage of twice the number of Essence motes that the character spent conjuring the Solar Spike. A character cannot spend more motes of Essence conjuring a Solar Spike than she has dots in the Archery Ability. The Solar Spike moves as quickly as a flash of lightning and is not subject to penalties for range or wind, though poor visibility can hamper shooting. A Solar Spike can be fired out to a distance of (the firing character's Essence x 100) yards.

Regardless of the target's soak, Solar Spikes that strike demons, undead and other creatures of the night will always roll at least as many dice of damage as the firing character's Essence. Solar Spike is not compatible with arrow-enhancing Charms such as Fiery Arrow Attack and Rain of Feathered Death. The damage of the Solar Spike is determined only by the amount of Essence the character spends on the bolt and the number of extra successes she rolls on her attack — do not add the damage of the bow.

Immaculate Golden Bow

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One Scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Archery: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Arrow Technique

The Exalted can not only substitute his Essence for ammunition, but for his weapon as well. Through this Charm, the character shapes Essence into a deadly bow. As an extension of the character's anima, each bow is unique to the Exalted who conjured it. All, however, have the same statistics — they do the character's Strength + Essence damage and have the range of a compound bow. The Immaculate Golden Bow does not come with ammunition, so characters without arrows will need to use Phantom Arrow Technique.

Rain of Feathered Death

Cost: 3 motes per duplicate
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Archery: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Arrow Technique

The character bundles Essence tightly around the arrow as she fires, and as the shaft arcs toward the target, it is multiplied. Use one attack roll for all the arrows, but apply the damage from each of them separately. The character cannot create more duplicate arrows than her Essence score. All the arrows in the Rain of Feathered Death must attack the same target.

Brawl

Ferocious Jab

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Brawl: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character infuses his anima with Essence, making his strikes much more damaging. On a successful attack, the character may count his extra successes twice for the purposes of determining damage. The Essence for this Charm may be spent after the character rolls the attack.

Fists of Iron Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Brawl: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Jab

The character suffuses her fists with Essence, hardening them into deadly weapons. Until her next action, her hand-to-hand strikes do lethal damage, and she can safely parry lethal damage blows with her hands. However, she is no faster than normal and so, generally, cannot parry incoming arrows or magical attacks without a well-described stunt.

Ox-Stunning Blow

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Brawl: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Fists of Iron Technique

The character concentrates her anima around her fist and smashes it into her enemy, stunning and disorienting him. The character makes a normal attack with her Dexterity + Brawl. If successful, the attack does no normal



damage but, instead, does a base of one point of stunning damage for every mote spent on the Charm. This stunning damage is soaked as bashing damage, but can only be soaked with the target's Stamina. Extra successes on the attack add to damage as usual. However, rather than doing health levels of damage, each success on the damage roll imposes a -1 penalty to the target's dice pools for a number of turns equal to (7 - the target's Stamina).

The Exalted using this Charm cannot spend more motes of Essence to power this Charm than twice his Strength, and the Storyteller may rule that certain types of opponents (mechanical constructs, shambling corpses or giant man-eating trees, for example) are too sturdy or insensible to be stunned by the character's mighty blows.

Dragon Coil Technique

Cost: 3 motes per turn
Duration: Varies
Type: Simple
Minimum Brawl: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Fists of Iron Technique

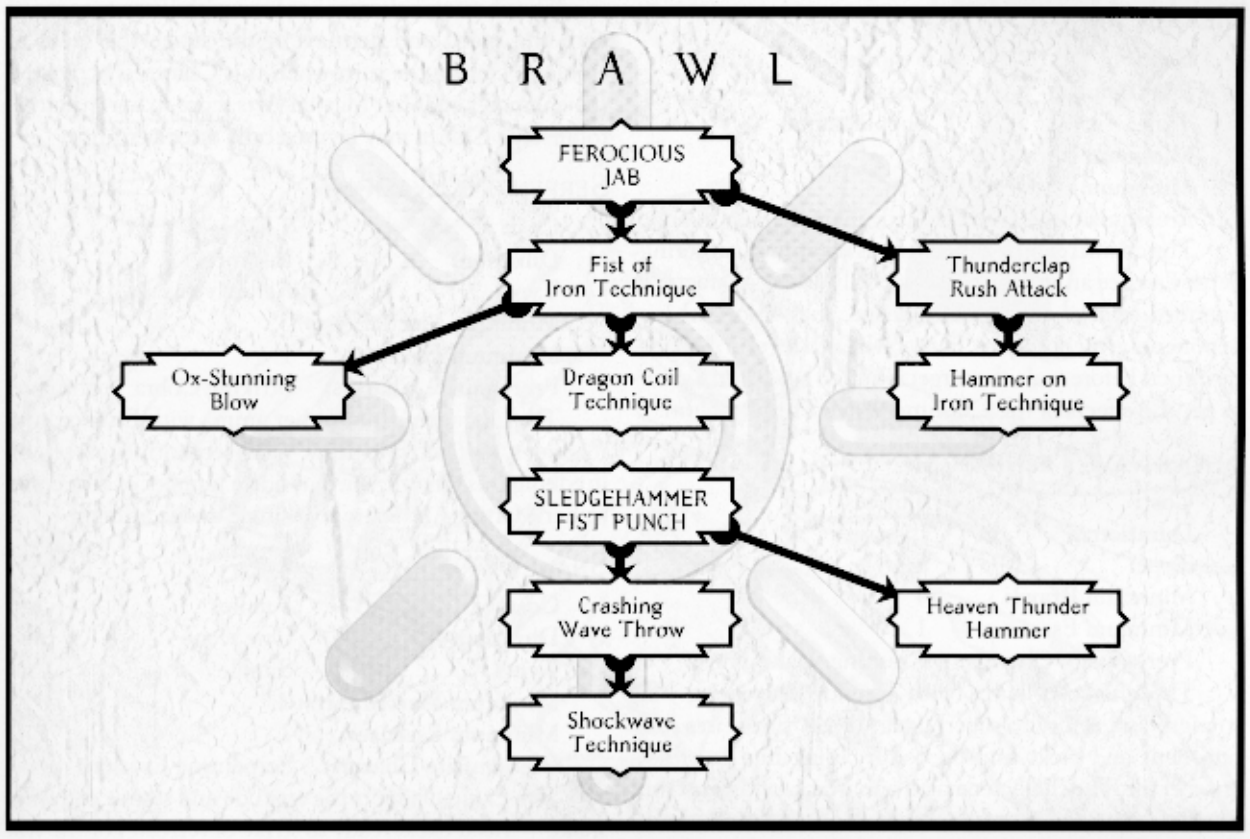
The character may wrap his opponents in his mighty arms and crush the very life from them. The character makes a clinch attack as normal, but the attack does the character's Strength + Essence + 2 in lethal damage, while the subject of the clinch does only the normal Strength + 2 bashing. If the target attempts to escape the clinch, the character performing the Dragon Coil Technique may add his Essence in automatic successes to the reflexive roll to resist the escape attempt.

If the target also has Dragon Coil Technique, she may choose to activate it as her action on subsequent turns and do her Strength + Essence + 2 in lethal damage as well. Maintaining this Charm over multiple turns prevents the character from using simple and supplemental Charms but does not prevent the use of reflexive defensive Charms. This Charm is not compatible with Hammer on Iron Technique or other Charms of the extra action type and cannot be placed in Combos with them.

Thunderclap Rush Attack

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Brawl: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ferocious Jab

The character pours Essence into quickening her motions and rushes aggressively toward her enemy. She automatically wins initiative over a single opponent. Characters cannot split their dice pools on the turn they use Thunderclap Rush Attack. Two characters using Thunderclap Rush Attack in competition roll for initiative normally.



Hammer on Iron Technique

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Brawl: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Thunderclap Rush Attack

The character suffuses his body with Essence, turning him into a virtual killing machine, with arms like pounding triphammers. He gains a number of additional attacks equal to his Essence but must make all his attacks against the same target. Hammer on Iron Technique cannot be Comboed with defensive Charms that allow the character to dodge or otherwise avoid attacks, but may be combined with those that allow her to soak or ignore damage.

Sledgehammer Fist Punch

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One turn
Type: Simple
Minimum Brawl: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character can suffuse his body with Essence, concentrating his anima until it is a crackling nimbus around him, and become capable of great destruction. This Charm must be used to attack inanimate objects and doubles the amount of damage the character does after extra successes are added but before the object's soak is applied. This increase in Strength does not add directly to combat damage, though it may assist the character in causing indirect damage (for example, by causing a tower to collapse on top of his opponent).

Crashing Wave Throw

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Brawl: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Sledgehammer Fist Punch

The character tightly focuses his anima, making him able to apply his Strength more effectively. In addition to doing normal damage, the character also throws his opponent on a successful attack. The target is hurled a number of yards equal to the character's Strength + his extra successes on the attack roll. This attack cannot be blocked, only dodged. A target who strikes a solid object takes dice of damage equal to the number of yards she would have continued flying had the object not been in the way. This damage is typically bashing but can be lethal if (for example) the object is covered in sharp steel spikes. Obviously, the target can also suffer serious injury if she is tossed over a cliff or off a ship at sea.

Heaven Thunder Hammer

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Brawl: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Sledgehammer Fist Punch

The character fully concentrates his anima, gathering dense Essence around his fists. Not only do the character's unarmed attacks do normal damage, they also hurl his opponents great distances. For each health level of damage he inflicts before soak, the target is hurled backward a yard, as per the effects of the Crashing Wave Throw Charm.

Shockwave Technique

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Brawl: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Crashing Wave Throw

The character burns with Essence, increasing her strength and agility to superhuman levels. She seizes one opponent and picks him up bodily, using him to strike another foe. The character makes one attack roll against the primary target. The attack cannot be blocked, only dodged. If successful, this attack does no damage, but the attacker may immediately make a reflexive Brawl attack at her full dice pool against another target within hand-to-hand range.

If the second attack is successful, both the targets take bashing damage equal to the character's Strength + the extra successes on the Exalted's reflexive attack. The second target may parry or dodge to reduce damage or avoid the attack, but if the attack is parried, the character being used as a club takes bashing damage equal to the Strength of the Exalted swinging him around + the number of successes the parrying character rolled to block the attacks.

If the Exalted hits with her second attack, both targets are left in a heap on the ground and must spend an action to return to their feet. If the second attack misses, the character being used as a club is hurled a number of yards equal to the Exalted's Strength, in a direction of the Exalted's choice, as if he had been successfully attacked with the Crashing Wave Throw Charm.

Martial Arts

Striking Cobra Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Martial Arts: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character charges her form with Essence to move with the speed and deftness of the snake she seeks to emulate. During the turn when this Charm is activated, the character adds her Martial Arts score to her initiative total. This Charm may be used only once per turn.

Serpentine Evasion

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Martial Arts: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Striking Cobra Technique

The character's infuses her anima with Essence, and it guides her body to flow with serpentine grace. By invoking this Charm, she may add a number of dice equal to her Martial Arts score to a single dodge attempt.

Snake Form

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Martial Arts: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Serpentine Evasion

The Exalted adopts the attitude and stance of a wary snake — head back, ready to strike or retreat. For the rest of the scene, he adds his Martial Arts score to his initiative totals and his bashing soak. Also, his sinuous, hypnotic movements slow and distract enemies. Enemies attacking him subtract a number of dice from their pool equal to the Exalted's Essence. This latter effect only works if the target can see the characters movements — a blind opponent would be unfazed by this aspect of Snake Form. This Charm is incompatible with the use of armor.

Characters cannot use more than one Martial Arts Form-type Charm at a time. Snake Form is the only Form-type Charm in the **Exalted** book, but more Martial Arts styles will be introduced in later supplements.

Essence Fangs and Scales Technique

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form

Thought training and the use of Essence, the character learns to harden her fingers into talons, like the fangs of a striking snake. Likewise, she can toughen her skin until it is as strong and supple as snake's skin. For the rest of the scene, the character's Martial Arts attacks do lethal damage, and she soaks lethal damage with her bashing soak total. This Charm is incompatible with the use of armor or weapons.



Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Essence Fangs and Scales Technique

The character can harden her fingers to the degree that they can punch through nearly anything and cause trauma merely by the intensity of their Essence. The character's attack ignores the soak of the target's armor and can be soaked only by the target's Stamina.

Snake Strikes the Heel

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form

Like the snake, the Exalted defends herself by attacking. Whenever she is successfully attacked, the character may immediately (before damage is determined) make a Martial Arts counterattack with a dice pool equal to her Martial Arts Ability plus the attacker's extra successes on his attack. The damage from her opponent's attack and her own counterstrike is applied simultaneously. Snake Strikes the Heel cannot be used to retaliate against Solar Counterattack or any other counterattack Charm.

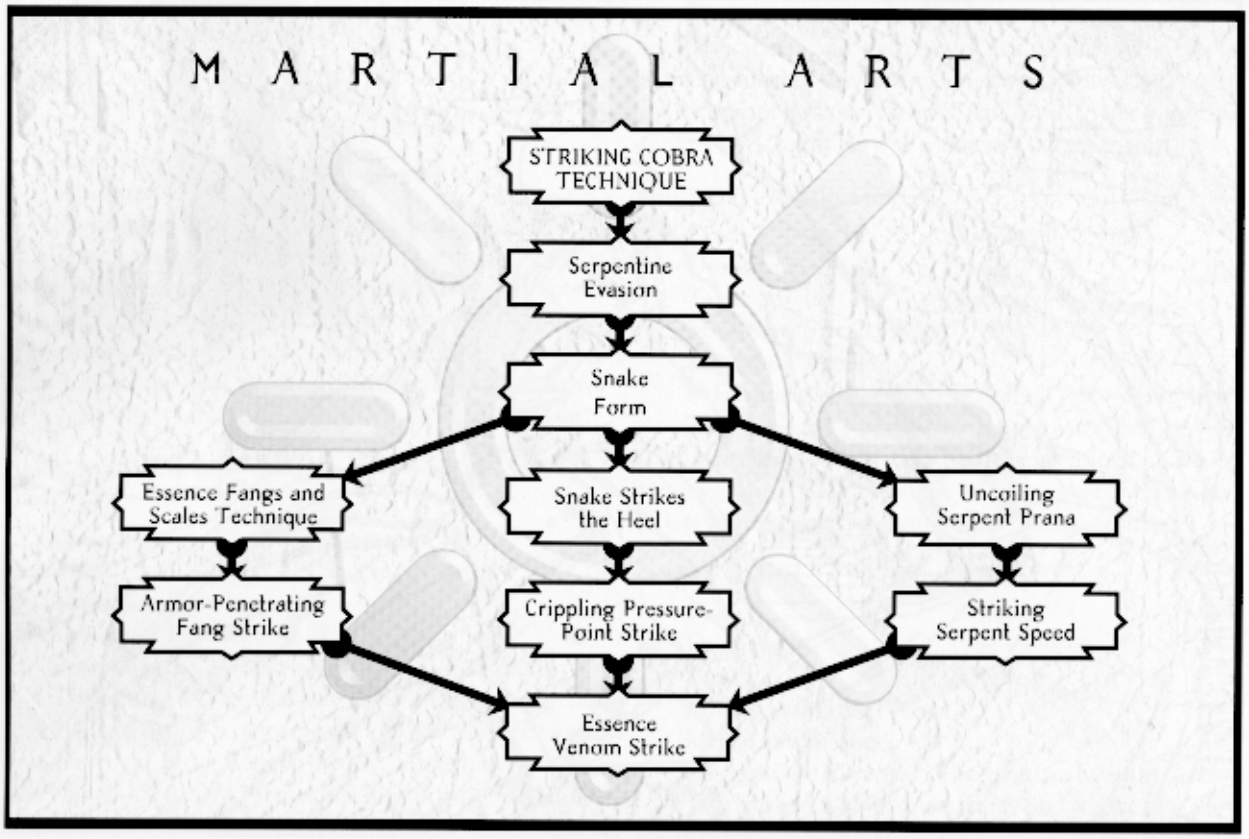
Crippling Pressure-Point Strike

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Snake Strikes the Heel

The character makes a Martial Arts attack as normal, including the roll for damage. However, the attack does no actual damage. Rather, for every health level the character would have inflicted, her target is at a -1 penalty to all rolls for a number of turns equal to the Martial Arts of the Exalted who used the Crippling Pressure-Point Strike.

Uncoiling Serpent Prana

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Snake Form



The character infuses his anima with Essence and lashes out, his anima flashing forward like a striking snake. The Exalted may invoke this Charm and make a Martial Arts attack a number of yards away equal to his Essence. The character's anima actually strikes the target, so there must be a clear path to the target, and the character must be able to perceive the target well enough to attack.

Striking Serpent Speed

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Uncoiling Serpent Prana

The character internalizes the reflexes and raw speed of a coiled snake. The player rolls the Exalted's Martial Arts Ability, and for every success, she may take an extra action during the turn. This extra action need not be an attack. A character may not split her dice pool during the round she uses Striking Serpent Speed.

Essence Venom Strike

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Martial Arts: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike, Crippling Pressure-Point Strike, Striking Serpent Speed

The character concentrates her Essence on the tips of two fingers, making her attack as quick as lightning and as deadly as the strike of a dozen serpents. The character invokes the Charm and makes a Martial Arts attack as normal, but adds her Essence score to the damage of the attack. The attack does aggravated damage.

Melee

Excellent Strike

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Melee: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalted fills her weapon with crackling Essence, making her swing hard and true. For each mote of Essence spent on this Charm, the player may add one die to a single attack but can no more than double her character's regular Dexterity + Melee dice pool.

Hungry Tiger Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Melee: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Excellent Strike

To activate the Hungry Tiger Technique, the Exalted charges her body and weapon with Essence, unifying the two and making her attack as if the weapon were an extension of her being. If the attack is successful, the player counts the extra successes twice for the purposes of determining damage. The Essence to power this Charm must be spent prior to making the attack roll.

Fire and Stones Strike

Cost: 1 mote per health level
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Melee: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Hungry Tiger Technique

The character focuses her Essence into her weapon and swings a terrible blow against her opponent. If the blow is successful, the character's attack does an additional die of damage against her opponent for every mote of Essence she spent activating the Charm. Characters cannot spend more Essence activating Fire and Stones Strike than they have dots of Strength. Note that the Essence cost of Fire and Stones Strike must be spent before the attack roll. If a non-orichalcum weapon is used to do more automatic damage successes than its damage rating, it will probably break.

One Weapon, Two Blows

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Melee: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Excellent Strike

The Exalted charges her weapon arm with Essence, and it becomes as fast as a striking snake. The character may attack a target twice in one turn. The attacks both occur on the character's initiative, but each is rolled separately. If the defender attempts to dodge or parry, one roll is made and the results are applied to both attacks.

Peony Blossom Attack

Cost: Varies
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Melee: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: One Weapon, Two Blows

The Exalted surrounds herself with a nimbus of Essence, and her movements become as rapid and smooth as ice on hot metal. The character may make multiple attacks, either against multiple targets or a single opponent. The character may attack as many times as she likes, so long as she has sufficient Essence to fuel the Charm. Each attack costs motes of Essence equal to the twice the total number of attacks the character has made that turn, including his normal attack. A character making 5 attacks would pay 28 (4 + 6 + 8 + 10) motes of Essence to activate the Peony Blossom Attack.

The player must declare how many attacks the character will make this turn before the character takes her first action. The character cannot split her Melee dice pool and use this Charm in the same turn, so a Combo with some sort of defensive Charm is recommended. Defenders must dodge or parry each attack separately.

Iron Whirlwind Attack

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Melee: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Peony Blossom Attack

The character permeates his body with raw Essence, so much that it wraps around him in a gauzy corona and leaves trailing streaks behind his lightning-fast strikes and thrusts. On the turn he uses this Charm, the character may make a total number of attacks equal to his Dexterity.

The character cannot split his Melee dice pool and use this Charm in the same turn, so a Combo with some sort of defensive Charm is recommended.

Retrieve the Fallen Weapon

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalted may use the bonds that form between a weapon and its wielder to call his chosen implement of battle to his hand. This Charm can overcome friction and gravity to carry the weapon through the air to the character but cannot defeat doors, chains and other such substantial hindrances. The character must have his weapon hand empty and must be able to see the weapon in order to call it to himself. The character must have used the weapon and be familiar with it to use this Charm on it — it must be *his* weapon.

Call the Blade

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant

Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Retrieve the Fallen Weapon

The character may call her weapon back to her hand, even if she cannot see it. The weapon does not traverse the space between its location and the character's hand, it simply flashes into her grasp. The call of this Charm reaches only (10 x the character's Essence) yards, if the weapon is farther than that, the Charm will fail. As with Retrieve the Fallen Weapon, the character cannot use this power to steal weapons, only to call her own weapon to her.

Summoning the Loyal Steel

Cost: 1 mote to summon or banish
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Call the Blade

The character simply gestures, and his weapon flashes to his hand, appearing instantly in his grasp regardless of its previous location. A character who is holding his weapon can also banish it, spending a mote of Essence to place it Elsewhere. Weapons that have been placed Elsewhere are gone from the world and can only be reached by their Exalted owner through the use of Summoning the Loyal Steel. The Exalted must have an extremely close relationship with a single weapon to use Summoning the Loyal Steel on it and cannot know more than one weapon at a time well enough to place it Elsewhere.

Glorious Solar Saber

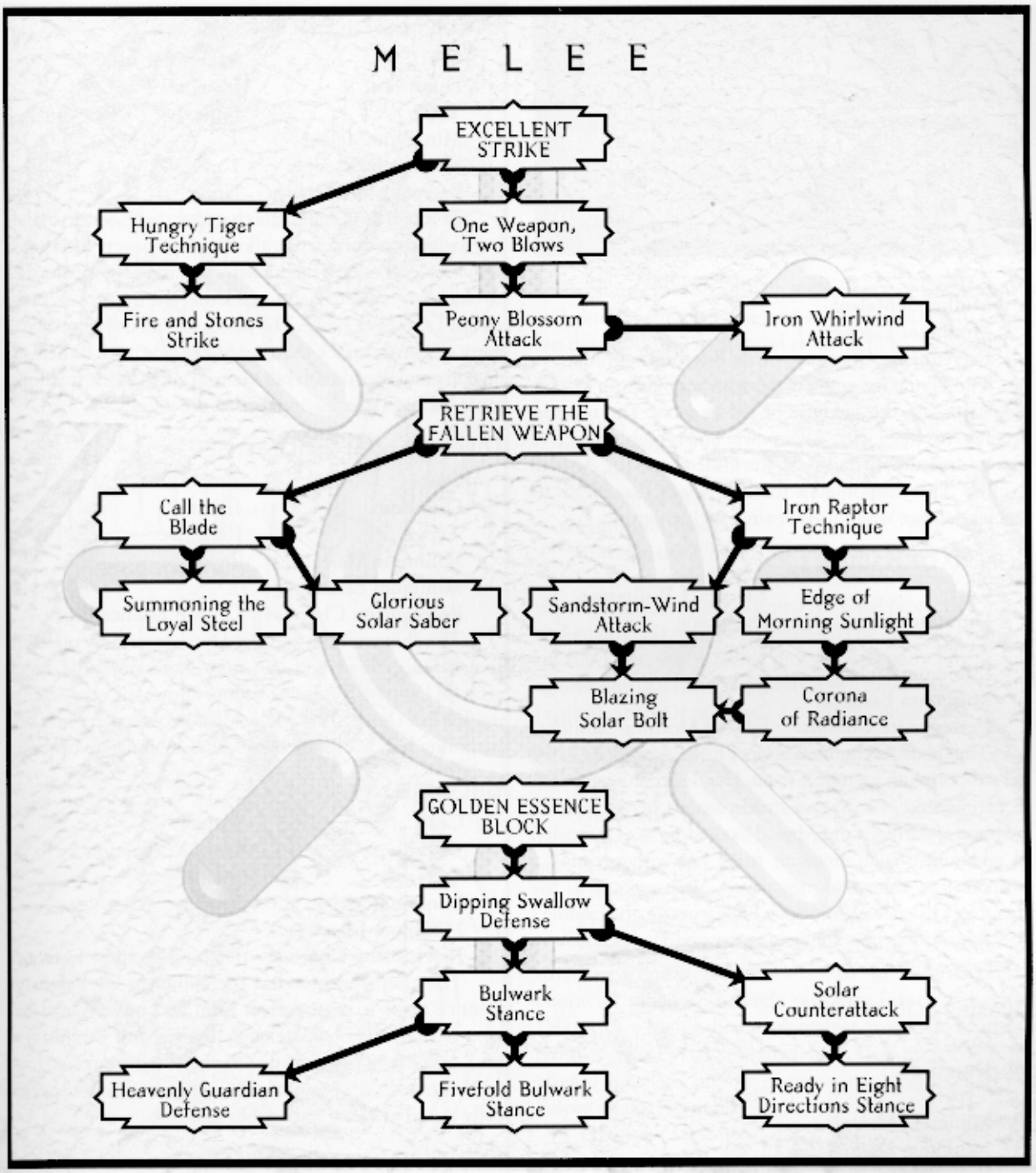
Cost: 5 motes + 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Call the Blade

The character can now never be disarmed. She can concentrate Essence in her hand, forming a glittering golden blade of pure magical energy that does a base lethal damage equal to the character's Strength plus her Essence score. The blade glows brightly enough to light an area three or four yards across. Each Exalted's blade is different, perfectly matching her personality and fighting style.

Iron Raptor Technique

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Retrieve the Fallen Weapon





This Charm allows the character to use his weapon to attack up to Dexterity x 5 yards away. The weapon whirls through the air to its strike its target, like a bloodthirsty, metal bird of prey, and then spins obediently back to the wielder's hand. The character attacks with his Melee pool, as usual, and the damage is determined using his Strength as if it was a normal Melee attack. Iron Raptor attacks can be blocked like normal Melee attacks. Botched Iron Raptor attacks can result in stuck or lost weapons or injury to the Exalted using the Charm.

Sandstorm-Wind Attack

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Iron Raptor Technique

The character charges his weapon with Essence and strikes a blow at a distant target. A slashing edge of concen-

trated force leaps from the weapon and races toward the target. The character attacks with his Dexterity + Melee dice pool and does a base lethal damage of his Strength + his Essence. The Sandstorm-Wind Attack is blocked as a ranged attack, not as a Melee attack. Sandstorm-Wind Attack can strike characters up to (10 x the character's Essence) yards away.

EDGE OF MORNING SUNLIGHT

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Melee: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Iron Raptor Technique

The character concentrates on manifesting his Essence through the medium of his weapon. The weapon becomes invested with Solar power and is highly effective against creatures of darkness, the undead and the Abyssal Exalted. The weapon adds the character's Essence to its regular damage when used against such creatures.

CORONA OF RADIANCE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Edge of Morning Sunlight

The character channels Essence through her body, using her weapon as an aggressive focus. Her flesh coruscates with flickering Solar energy, and attacks against her by undead, creatures of the night and Abyssal Exalted are at +1 difficulty. In addition, if such creatures strike her without using a weapon, they must soak aggravated damage equal to the character's Essence. While Solar Blaze is active, the Exalted's attacks against such creatures do aggravated damage and have a damage bonus equal to the character's Essence.

BLAZING SOLAR BOLT

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Corona of Radiance, Sandstorm-Wind Attack

The character channels pure Solar Essence though herself, focusing it with her will and through the medium of her weapon. A powerful lance of energy leaps between the Solar's Caste Mark, her weapon and the target. The character makes an attack with her Dexterit + Melee dice pool, which cannot be blocked or dodged without the use of Charms. The attack does lethal damage and has a base damage of the Exalted's Strength + her Willpower. Against inhabitants of Malfeas and the Underworld, Blazing Solar Bolt inflicts aggravated damage.

GOLDEN ESSENCE BLOCK

Cost: 1 mote per 2 dice
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through this Charm, the character uses Essence to guide her weapon on the defense, allowing her to parry the attacks of many foes at once. The character may trade Essence for dice to block any hand-to-hand attack that she is aware of, at the cost of 1 mote per 2 dice. The player cannot use more dice to parry any single attack than her Melee dice pool. If there are an odd number of dice in her Melee pool, then the fractional mote left over after buying the last die is lost.

DIPPING SWALLOW DEFENSE

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Golden Essence Block

The character has achieved further mastery of defensive Essence flows and can now more smoothly block attacks. Dipping Swallow Defense allows the character to use his full Dexterity + Melee dice pool to parry any one incoming hand-to-hand attack that he is aware of.

BULWARK STANCE

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Until next action
Type: Simple
Minimum Melee: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense

The character now has the ability to use defensive Essence flows to gain perfect form and poise. Until her next action, the character may use her full Dexterity + Melee dice pool to parry any attack she is aware of, so long as the attack has a physical component and is not specifically noted as being impossible to block.

HEAVENLY GUARDIAN DEFENSE

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Bulwark Stance

The character may block, without his player rolling, any one attack against him that he is aware of, even if the attack is not normally blockable, such as that from an arrow, a bolt of acid or a hurtling boulder. Blocking the tremendously



Irresistible Force/ Immovable Object

There are a number of attacks in **Exalted** that cannot be blocked. There are also a number of impenetrable defenses. Whenever an unblockable attack comes into conflict with an impenetrable defense, the defense wins.

powerful attacks of beings such as godlings and demon princes will almost certainly cause non-magical weapons to perish, but the attack will be stopped at no harm to the Exalted.

Fivefold Bulwark Stance

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Bulwark Stance

For the rest of the scene, the character is surrounded by glowing Essence arcs, outlining his ideal protective moves and guiding his weapon in defense. The character may use his full Dexterity + Melee dice pool to parry any attacks against him of which he is aware, even missile weapons and magical attacks that possess a physical component.

Solar Counterattack

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Dipping Swallow Defense

Essence guides the character's tempo, allowing her to strike when her enemy extends for an attack. The character may immediately make an attack at her full Dexterity + Melee dice pool against anyone executing a hand-to-hand attack against her. This attack is made after the roll to hit the counterattacking Exalted but before damage is determined.

The Solar Counterattack is not an action and does not subtract from the character's dice pools or affect her action for the turn. A character can make as many Solar Counterattacks in a turn as she can afford to pay for, but a character cannot use Solar Counterattack in response to Solar Counterattack or any other counterattack Charm.

Ready in Eight Directions Stance

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One turn
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Melee: 5



Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Solar Counterattack

The character now rides the impulses of Essence with supple perfection. To attack him is to invite a lethal counterstroke. Until the character's next action, he may respond to all incoming hand-to-hand attacks with an immediate counterattack at his full Dexterity + Melee dice pool. As with Solar Counterattack, Ready in Eight Directions Stance comes after the opponent's attack roll but before damage effects are applied. Ready in Eight Directions Stance in no way mitigates the attack's effects. A character cannot use Ready in Eight Directions Stance in response to Solar Counterattack or any other counterattack Charm.

THROWN

PRECISION OF THE STRIKING RAPTOR

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Thrown: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character infuses her thrown weapon, be it a hatchet, knife or shuriken, with Essence, coming to a perfect understanding of the weapon's balance and behavior at the moment of release. For each mote of Essence spent, the player may add 1 die to a Thrown attack roll but cannot more than double her character's dice pool. The player must declare how much Essence she is going to use in this Charm prior to making the attack roll.

JOINT-WOUNDING ATTACK

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Thrown: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Precision of the Striking Raptor

The character attacks, not only to do damage, but to stun or cripple his opponent. The character attacks and damage is rolled as normal. However, for every health level of damage the attack inflicts, the target suffers a -1 penalty to all dice pools related to physical activity until the end of the scene. It is up to the player and Storyteller to describe how this is inflicted — it could be an injured hand, slashed tendons or a stunning blow to the head. While a very small number of creatures (such as animated statues of solid iron or marble) might be unaffected by this attack, it works on automata, the undead and so forth. Storytellers will have to work with players to help describe the attacks' adverse effects on more exotic opponents.

OBSERVER-DECEIVING ATTACK

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Thrown: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Joint-Wounding Attack

The art of thrown weapons is an art often practiced by assassins and others who attack from ambush. Through the use of this Charm, the character can mislead his target (or his target's avengers) as to his location, buying him a chance to escape or giving him a chance to make further attacks. The Exalted makes an attack as normal, gaining no special bonuses to attack or damage. However, attacks made using this Charm appear to have been made from a totally different direction. For example, a character attacking her target from behind might inflict a wound to the chest or side. Obviously, the sight of the character actually hurling the knife will ruin the effect, but the difficulty of the Awareness roll to spot the attacker is raised by one (or more, at the Storyteller's discretion).

MIST ON WATER ATTACK

Cost: 3 motes per turn
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Thrown: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Observer-Deceiving Attack

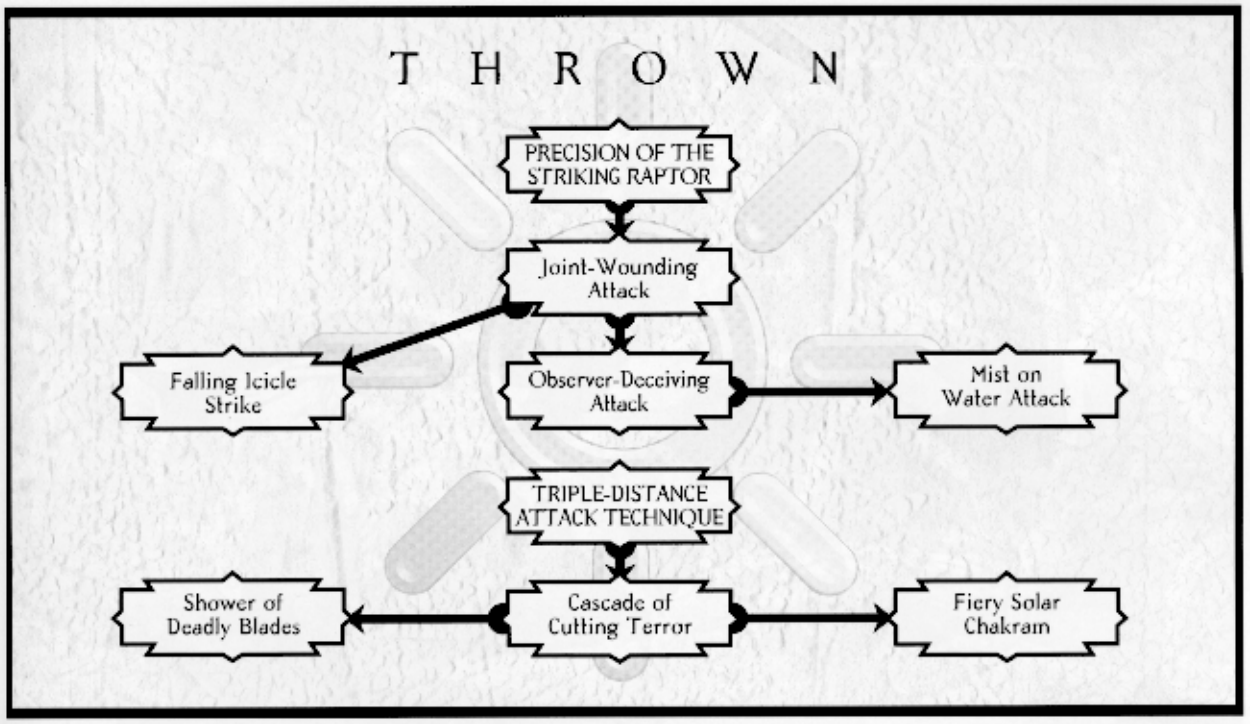
The character strikes his unsuspecting opponent with a weapon imbued with Essence, stifling her outcry and muting the sensory impressions of the attack. The character may impose silence on the attack for up to a number of turns equal to his Essence score, but he must pay 3 motes per turn of silence.

If the target is killed outright by the attack, her death will not be noticed for a number of turns equal to the length of the silence. She will stand upright even though already dead, circumstances will conspire to make her companions look away and assume she us still alive, and so forth. If the target is still alive, she may react to the attack normally, but she cannot speak or otherwise raise an alarm for a number of turns equal to the silence's length.

Obviously, someone seeing the target fighting is likely to draw some obvious conclusions regardless of whether she can speak or not. This Charm amplifies the natural shock of a surprise attack and must be used from ambush — it has no effect when used against an alerted opponent. It's left up to the Storyteller's discretion as to what qualifies as "alerted."

FALLING ICICLE STRIKE

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Thrown: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Joint-Wounding Attack



This deadly Charm is the friend of assassins everywhere. The Exalted charges her weapon with Essence and strikes from surprise. The defender applies soak, and the attacker's player rolls for damage as normal, but doubles the number of successes when determining damage. This Charm amplifies the natural shock of a surprise attack and must be used from ambush — it has no effect when used against an alerted opponent.

Triple-Distance Attack Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Thrown: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character imbues her arm and weapon with Essence, lightening the weapon at the moment of launch and correcting for tiny errors in aim. The weapon's range is tripled for the purposes of determining penalties based on distance to the target.

Cascade of Cutting Terror

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Thrown: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Triple-Distance Attack Technique

The character hurls dozens or even hundreds of Essence duplicates of his favored throwing weapon, saturating an area with countless attacks. The character doubles his Thrown pool for the purposes of the attack, which cannot be dodged, only blocked. This attack effects only a single individual. However, it *can* be used for utility purposes — for example, to clear tree branches and undergrowth from the façade of an overgrown stepped pyramid or to ruin the rigging of a ship. The thrown weapons fade away a few seconds after impact. The character need not have any actual copies of the weapon he is conjuring.

Shower of Deadly Blades

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Thrown: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Cascade of Cutting Terror

The Exalted hurls a number of throwing weapons with the same hand. The character makes one attack roll but applies the result to every weapon. The weapons can be thrown at one or several targets without penalty. The character cannot hurl more weapons than his Essence score and must have enough ammunition. If this Charm is Comboed with supplemental Charms, the cost of the supplemental Charms must be paid for every weapon the character hurls.

Fiery Solar Chakram

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Thrown: 5



Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Cascade of Cutting Terror

The character hurls a mote of burning light at her target. This mote does a lethal damage of 6 + the number of extra successes the character rolls on his attack and has a range of 100 yards. Against demons, ghosts or other creatures of the night, the character may add a number of automatic successes to her attack roll equal to her Essence score.

ZENITH CASTE

ENDURANCE

OX-BODY TECHNIQUE

Cost: None
Duration: Permanent
Type: Special
Minimum Endurance: Varies
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The bodies of the Exalted are far more durable than those of mere mortals. To help simulate this, an Exalted may buy extra health levels as if they were a Charm. A player may purchase this Charm up to once per dot of the Endurance Ability his character possesses. Each Ox-Body Technique Charm purchased can provide one of the following, at the player's option, determined at the time of purchase:

- One -0 health level
- Two -1 health levels
- One -1 health level and two -2 health levels

ARMORED SCOUT'S INVIGORATION

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Endurance: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalted causes her anima to encompass her gear as well as her person, and she adapts perfectly to wearing her armor, even in conditions of brutal heat or freezing cold. This Charm reduces the fatigue value and mobility penalty of the character's armor by one each. A fatigue value of zero means that the character need never roll to see if he becomes fatigued from wearing the armor. This Charm cannot reduce a character's mobility penalty or fatigue value below zero.

FRONT-LINE WARRIOR'S STAMINA

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Endurance: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Armored Scout's Invigoration

This Charm is a more powerful version of the Armored Scout's Invigoration. This Charm reduces the fatigue value and mobility penalty of the character's armor by two each. A fatigue value of zero means that the character need never roll to see if he becomes fatigued from wearing the armor. This Charm cannot reduce a character's mobility penalty or fatigue value below zero.

Tiger-Warrior's Endurance

Cost: 15 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Endurance: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Front-Line Warrior's Stamina

The most powerful of the armor Charms, Tiger-Warrior's Endurance reduces the fatigue value and mobility penalty of the character's armor by three each. A fatigue value of zero means that the character need never roll to see if he becomes fatigued from wearing the armor. This Charm cannot reduce a character's mobility penalty or fatigue value below zero.

Essence-Gathering Temper

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Endurance: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

Many Exalted learn to tap the wellsprings of Essence that are pain and rage. A character who knows this Charm may activate it whenever he is hit in combat. For every point of damage he takes *before soak is applied*, his player may roll one die. Each success on this roll causes the character to gain a mote of Essence. A character cannot gain more Essence from any given attack than his Stamina score.

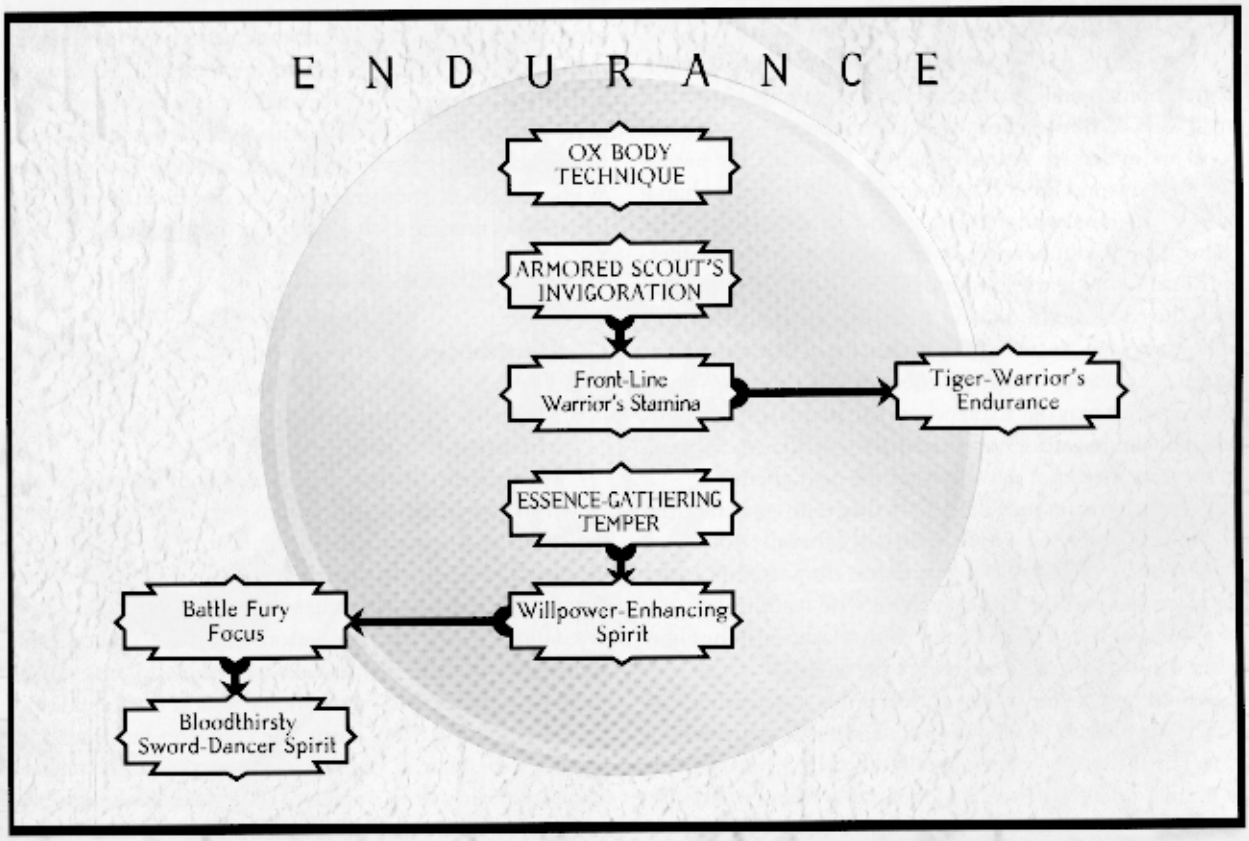
Willpower-Enhancing Spirit

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Endurance: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Gathering Temper

With this Charm, the character does not simply tap her inner rage and pain to refill her Essence pool, but internalizes it to gain true inner strength. The Exalted's player may roll one die for each health level of damage the character takes when hit in combat (that is, damage successes rolled after the character's soak is applied). Each success on this roll causes the Exalted to regain a point of temporary Willpower. A character using this Charm may not raise her temporary Willpower over its permanent value.

Battle Fury Focus

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple





Minimum Endurance: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Willpower-Enhancing Spirit

Through the use of this Charm, the character taps his inner rage, not to replenish his stores of Essence, but in conjunction with them. He channels his anger and infuses it with primal magic, making him capable of superhuman feats.

For the duration of the scene, the character has +1 die to all pools related to combat and subtracts -1 from all wound penalties. However, the character must either be engaged in combat or attempting to become so engaged. He can attack at range and differentiate friend from foe, but his player must make a Willpower roll for him to utter sentences of more than a few words, move away from the enemy or perform a complex action, such as retrieving a small object from a pack. Failure means the character simply chooses to ignore whatever the action is in favor of attacking or readying himself to attack. Success means the character can do whatever it was he wished, but the Battle Fury Focus immediately ends, with the dice pool bonus dissipating and wound penalties returning. The bonus vanishes, and the penalties return starting with the action that broke the Battle Fury Focus.

Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Endurance: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Battle Fury Focus

The battle-trance engendered by Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit is similar to that of Battle Fury Focus, but greater in all ways. While in effect, the character is at +3 to all dice pools and suffers no wound penalties. However, her awareness of the world around her narrows to little more than a narrow red tunnel with things that must die at the far end. The character cannot use ranged weapons, cannot speak coherently, cannot retreat and cannot choose to fight another foe until the one she is attacking is definitively dead. She may only attack or move toward the nearest foe via the most direct route. A character under the effect of Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit may opt to die where she stands (for example, when holding a gate or bridge against tremendous odds) and, in this case, need not move toward the next enemy.

The character may have difficulty telling friend from foe if they are dressed similarly but will generally not attack close friends, relatives or lovers unless they attempt to get between her and her target or otherwise restrain her.

Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit lasts until the character can no longer locate an enemy to kill.

If the character wishes to leave the state earlier, her player may make a Willpower roll to snap the character out of it. The Willpower roll is normally difficulty 3, but it is made at normal difficulty if there is a loved one or friend attempting to restrain the character. Unfortunately, in the event that the roll fails when a loved one is attempting to calm the character down, she is almost certain to lash out at the unrecognizable blur obstructing her from slaying her target.

Performance

Respect Commanding Attitude

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows a character to command the respect of an audience. While they may not be swayed by his arguments or impressed by his performance, they will pay him heed and refrain from heckling him or leaving the venue in significant numbers prior to the end of the performance.

Unruly Mob Dispersing Rebuke

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Respect Commanding Attitude

Violent mobs can endanger even the Exalted. Their numbers can drag down even the mightiest of the Chosen, but those who compose the mob are probably not normally so violent or dangerous. Chances are, the riot has begun over some legitimate grievance — laying about with lethal force is likely to cause serious repercussions. Through the use of this Charm, a character can deliver a stern rebuke and shatter the inertia holding an angry mob together. Without significant further impetus, the crowd will disperse. This Charm does nothing to an organized or disciplined force.

Rout-Stemming Gesture

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: 3 turns
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unruly Mob Dispersing Rebuke

If an angry mob is a danger to its victims, then a stampeding crowd or a routing unit is a danger to everyone in the vicinity. The crush of a panicked crowd will clog a door and leave no room for escape, where an orderly exit would have saved most or even all of the persons involved. A routing unit will shatter, leaving its members vulnerable to attacks that could never have been pressed home against the formation.

When using this Charm, the character burns with an incandescent blaze of Essence, radiating power and reassurance. All those within a radius of (10 x the Exalted's Essence rating) yards are immediately steadied. Those who have failed

Valor checks can roll again, and characters who must make new Valor checks are assumed to succeed. Rout-Stemming Gesture can even overcome supernatural panic, such as that caused by the Terrifying Apparition of Glory Charm or by the anima power of a Dawn Caste Solar Exalted.

Fury Inciting Presence

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unruly Mob Dispersing Rebuke

The persuasive power of an Exalted channeling Essence into Social Charms can raise mobs as well as disperse them. With 10 to 20 minutes of haranguing a crowd on nearly any subject, an Exalted can whip the listeners into an angry mob. A mob raised in this fashion lasts a number of hours equal to the character's Essence rating but (like a natural mob) will disperse if subjected to organized opposition that cannot be immediately overwhelmed or if the mob is left idle without things to smash or burn for more than 10 or 20 minutes.

Heroism-Encouraging Presence

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Fury Inciting Presence

The Solar Exalted can inspire far more than simple mob violence. An Exalted in battle can radiate the confidence and the surety of the Unconquered Sun, lifting the souls of those around her and inspiring them to feats of great heroism. All friendly troops within a radius equal to the character's Essence x 100 yards are affected. While subject to this Charm, assume that individual soldiers all operate with a bonus die to all combat-related dice pools from improved morale and do not fail Valor rolls. The effect on the overall outcome of the battle is up to the Storyteller to decide, but it should have considerable influence.

Tiger-Warrior Training Technique

Cost: 10 motes, 2 Willpower
Duration: One week
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Heroism-Encouraging Presence, Rout-Stemming Gesture

Actual combat is only the end of a long process that begins with the recruitment and training of the soldiers. Exalted who know the Tiger-Warrior Training Technique Charm can take even the worst gutter-sweepings or ban-



dits and train them into a deadly, disciplined fighting force. Characters may supervise the training of up to (their Essence rating x 100) soldiers in a given week. Soldiers trained for one or more months by Exalted using this Charm should be treated as elite troops — they are well-disciplined, have ratings of at least 3 in the relevant combat Abilities, at least one specialty, Valor ratings of at least 3 and at least one Physical Attribute at 3. Already-trained troops or troops trained for more than one month can excel even these ratings.

MASTERFUL PERFORMANCE EXERCISE

Cost: 2 motes per success
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Performance: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character channels Essence through his voice or his instrument, enhancing his delivery and making the final result flow far more effectively than it would naturally. To use this Charm, the player first makes a regular Charisma + Performance roll for the character. Then, the player may "buy" additional successes, up to (the character's permanent Essence rating + the number of successes rolled on the Charisma + Performance roll). Each success bought in this fashion costs 2 motes of Essence.

PHANTOM-CONJURING PERFORMANCE

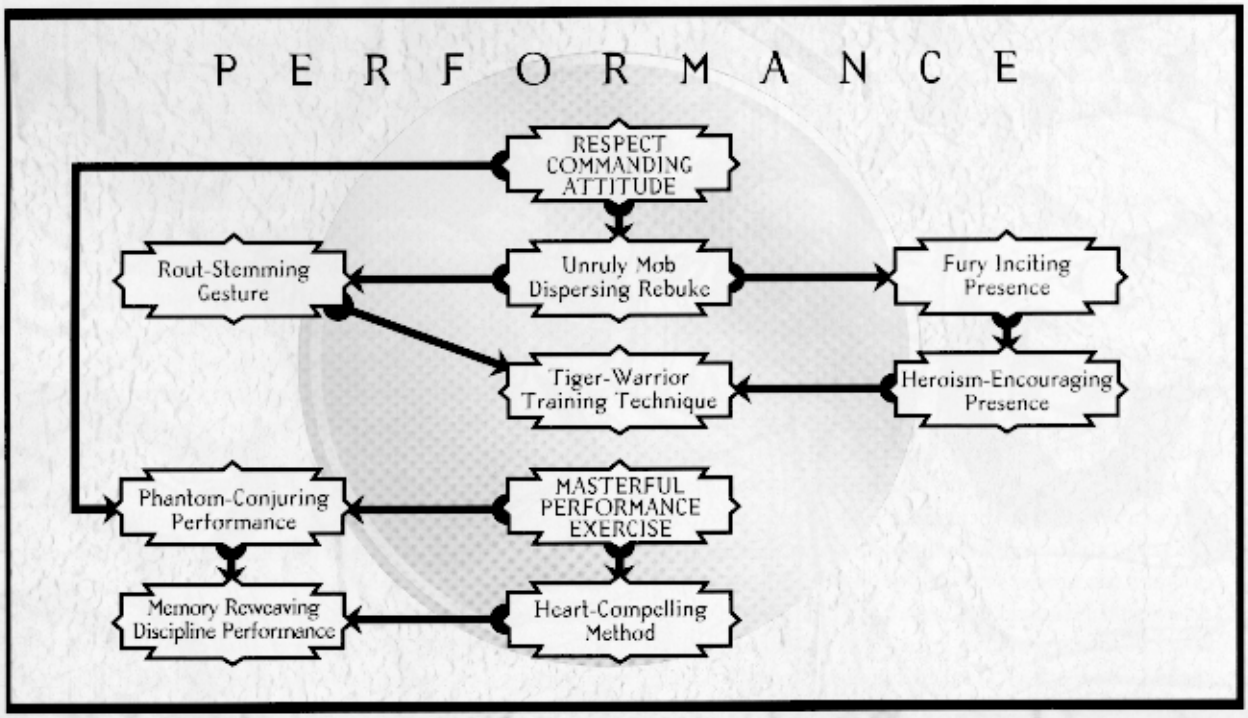
Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Performance: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise, Respect-Commanding Attitude

A character who possesses this Charm can give a performance so compelling that it plays out in the form of phantom images that swirl through the air around her. If it is a narrative performance, then the images illustrate the narrative, while if it is an abstract performance, then the images simply underscore and highlight the performance. Typically, this adds a number of dice equal to the character's Essence rating to the player's next Charisma + Performance roll. Note that the images actually appear, fading in and out of existence around the character. This Charm is compatible with Masterful Performance Exercise.

HEART-COMPELLING METHOD

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Performance: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Masterful Performance Exercise

The character can channel Essence through her performance to evoke a certain emotion in those who witness it. The player chooses the emotion to be evoked, which may be anger, fear, pride, happiness, jealousy or whatever else the player wishes. He then makes a Manipulation + Performance roll for the character. Targets with a Willpower lower than the number of successes the player achieves on



this roll are overcome with the emotion in question and act accordingly. Those with Willpower below twice the number of successes rolled may make a Willpower roll to resist the emotion. Those whose Willpower is greater than twice the number of successes are unaffected.

Memory Reweaving Discipline

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Performance: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Heart-Compelling Method, Phantom-Conjuring Performance

This Charm allows a character to weave a narrative so plausible and so compelling that those who hear it forget the truth of a matter and come to believe the narrative. The player makes a Manipulation + Performance roll. The number of successes determines how much evidence to the contrary the target must be confronted with before he is able to shake off the lingering effects of the Charm. For each success, the target must be presented with one piece of evidence that contradicts the narrative. A Solar Exalted in a situation where there is very little clear evidence can effectively rewrite history with a little careful planning.

Note that this Charm need not be used as part of a performance, per se. Characters who know it can use also it during conversation, making them quite dangerous in the world of courtly intrigue.

Presence

Harmonious Presence Meditation

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Presence: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

An Exalted using this Charm increases her personal magnetism greatly, making her words seem wise and her arguments persuasive. While this Charm is in effect, add a number of dice equal to her permanent Essence to any Socialize, Presence or Bureaucracy rolls that involve one-on-one interactions.

Listener-Swaying Argument

Cost: 2 motes per die, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Presence: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Presence Meditation

The character can use Essence to make himself almost irresistibly persuasive. For every two motes of Essence spent on this Charm, add another die to any Socialize, Presence or Bureaucracy roll involving one-on-one interaction. A character cannot more than double his pool using this Charm.

Hypnotic Tongue Technique

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Special
Type: Simple
Minimum Presence: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Listener-Swaying Argument

Through this Charm, an Exalted can program a target to undertake an action at a future time. The Exalted must touch the target, and the player makes an opposed Willpower roll. If the Exalted wins the Willpower roll, she may give the target an unspoken command. This command can be as specific and elaborate as the character wishes, and the target will not be aware of having received it. The suggestion will stay in place for a number of days equal to the Charisma of the Exalted using the Charm, after which the target forgets it.

The command can take no more time to execute than the Exalted's Essence score in turns. The target can forget or remember the act after executing it, at the choice of the Exalted when the suggestion is implanted. Characters will not attack themselves or others unless already strongly predisposed to do so. If the target wins the Willpower roll, she is instantly aware of what the Exalted has attempted to do and what the suggestion and conditions were.

Majestic Radiant Presence

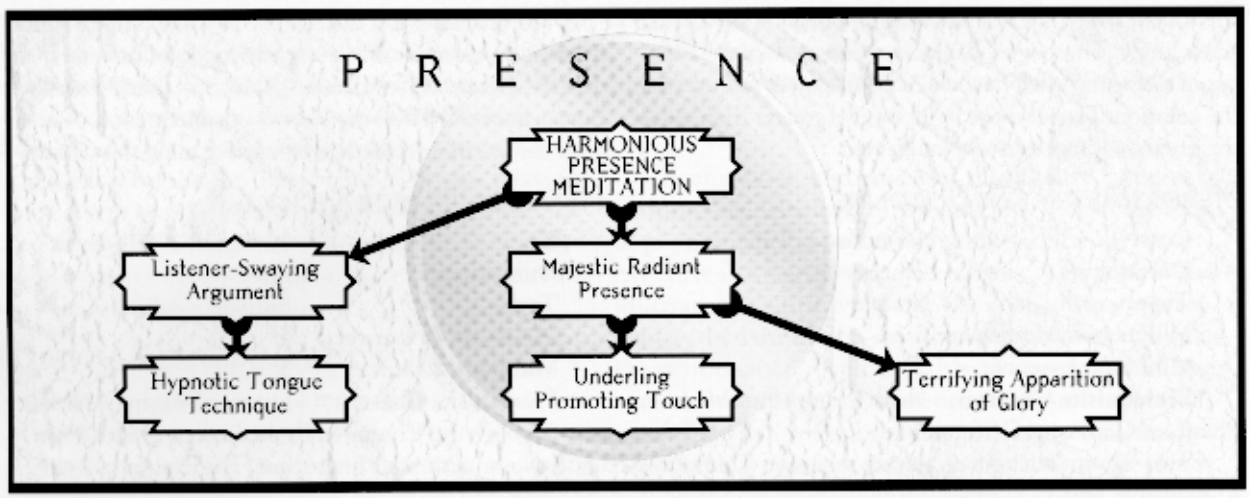
Cost: 8 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Presence: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Harmonious Presence Meditation

A character with this Charm active burns with the incandescent radiance of the Unconquered Sun. The players of characters attempting to attack the Exalted or to stand against him in argument must make a successful Willpower roll to have their characters do so. This Charm is not compatible with the Dawn Caste anima power.

Underling Promoting Touch

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Presence: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Majestic Radiant Presence

This Charm causes the target (typically a mortal servant of the Exalted) to be imbued with the majesty of the Exalted's office. While this Charm is in effect, individuals will treat him



with the respect and deference they would normally reserve for the Exalted who used the Charm (or for any powerful magical being, if they are not acquainted with the target's benefactor). Players who wish their characters to do otherwise must succeed at a Willpower roll with a difficulty of 1 + the Essence score of the Exalted who deputized the character.

Terrifying Apparition of Glory

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Presence: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Majestic Radiant Presence

If the Majestic Radiant Presence Charm makes the character seem terrible and powerful, then Terrifying Apparition of Glory makes him unspeakably so. While Terrifying Apparition of Glory is in effect, a successful Valor roll is required to attack the character. Most animals, even trained attack animals, will simply flee. Players of characters who are not actively hostile to the Exalted using Terrifying Apparition of Glory must make a successful Conviction roll not to obey immediately any non-suicidal orders the character gives. This compulsion lasts for at least a scene after the target leaves the Exalted's presence. Those who are able to attack the Exalted do so at a die penalty equal to the character's Essence score. This Charm is not compatible with the Dawn Caste's anima ability.

Resistance

Durability of Oak Meditation

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Resistance: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalted uses Essence to enhance his ability to withstand attack. The player may roll up to his character's Stamina + Resistance in dice, but must spend one mote of Essence per die rolled. For every success on this roll, the character adds 1 to his bashing soak for the remainder of the scene. This Charm may be used again on subsequent rounds, but a character cannot gain more dice of bashing soak via Durability of Oak Meditation than his Stamina + Resistance.

Iron Skin Concentration

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Varies
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Resistance: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Durability of Oak Meditation

The character's anima hardens, and his skin is made incredibly difficult to cut or pierce. The player makes a Stamina + Resistance roll. For a number of turns equal to the character's Essence + the number of successes the player rolls on the Resistance roll, the character soaks lethal damage with his bashing soak. This Charm cannot be used by characters wearing armor.

Spirit Strengthens the Skin

Cost: 3 motes per point
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Resistance: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Durability of Oak Meditation

The Solar pours Essence into her skin and muscles, hardening and roughening them far beyond those of any mere mortal. The Exalted may add up to her score in the Resistance Ability to her bashing soak, at a cost of 3 Essence motes per additional point of bashing soak. These additional points of bashing soak are above and beyond those provided by Durability of Oak Meditation and do not count against that Charm's maximum soak bonus.

The character can use Spirit Strengthens the Skin more than once during a scene, increasing her soak repeatedly as her assessment of the situation changes. However, a character cannot at any given time gain more points of bashing soak through Spirit Strengthens the Skin than her score in the Resistance Ability.

Adamant Skin Technique

Cost: 5 motes, 1 health level, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Resistance: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Iron Skin Concentration, Spirit Strengthens the Skin

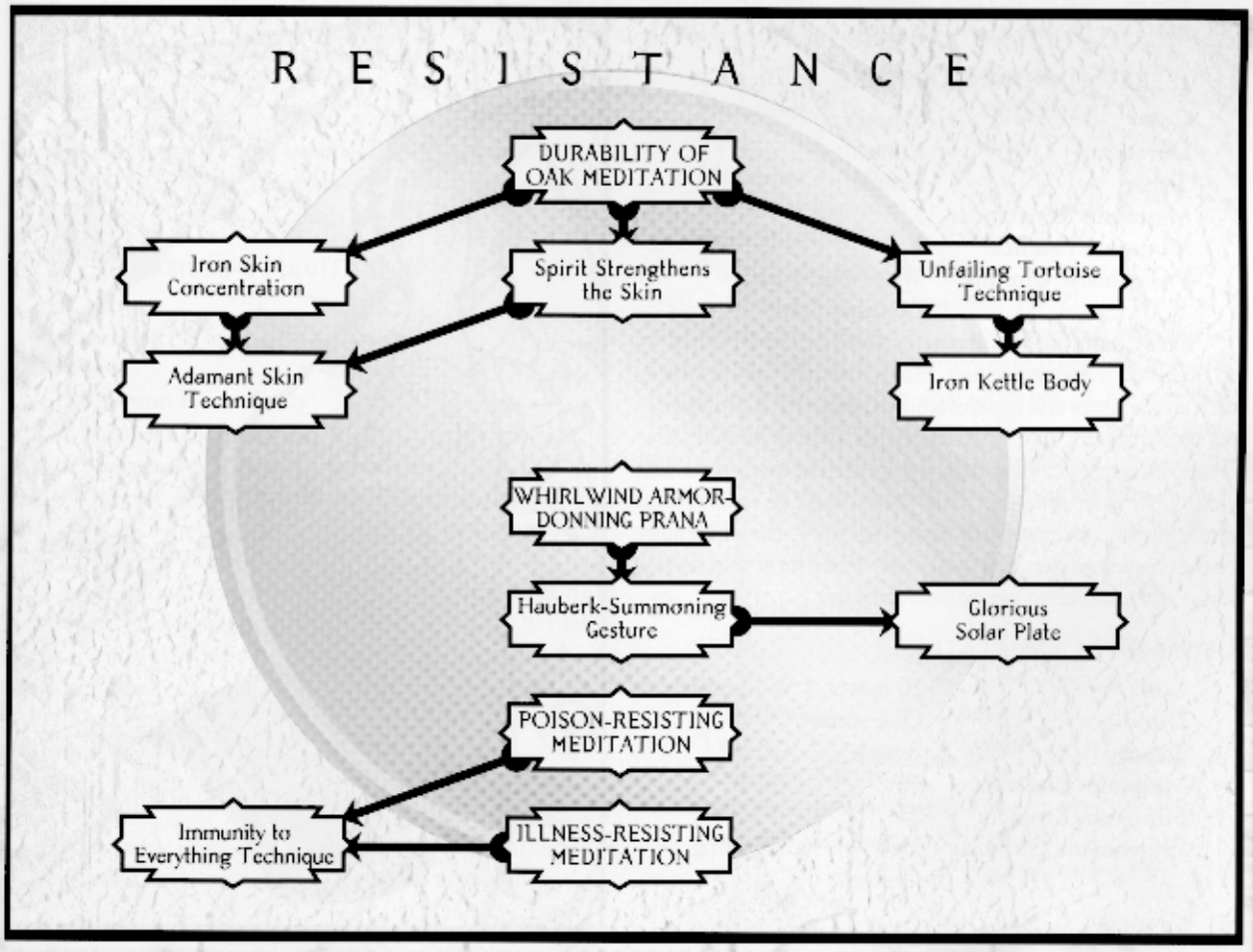
Through the use of this Charm, the Exalted hardens his skin into impenetrability, sacrificing some of his life force to gain the strength of unbreakable diamond. The character using this Charm takes no damage whatsoever from a single attack. This Charm does not protect the character from the secondary effects of the attack — for example, a character smashed down through a sheet of ice and into a frozen lake by the blow of a giant beastman's club would take no damage from the impact or from passing through the ice, but she would have to contend with the dangers of drowning and hypothermia.

The Adamant Skin Technique can also be used to withstand physical damage not associated with combat. It is as effective at withstanding the impact of a fall as the blow of a sword. However, Storytellers should keep in mind that the defense offered by the Adamant Skin Technique is of a very short duration — the character might use it to withstand the impact of a falling idol or a plunge from the top of a tower, but a character who hurled himself into a blazing firepit would only be protected for a second or two. A character must invoke the Adamant Skin Technique *before* his opponent's attack roll.

Unfailing Tortoise Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Resistance: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Durability of Oak Meditation

This Charm strengthens the character's awareness of the world around him and allows him to resist even unanticipated attacks. If hit by an attack, even one he is not anticipating, the character may spend 1 mote of Essence to add his Resistance score to his bashing soak total for the purposes of soaking that



attack. Characters must invoke Unfailing Tortoise Technique before soak is subtracted from the damage.

Iron Kettle Body

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Resistance: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Unfailing Tortoise Technique

As Unfailing Tortoise Technique, but the character's Resistance is also added to her lethal soak as well.

Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

Cost: 2 motes per turn
Duration: Special
Type: Simple
Minimum Resistance: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the character can speed the process of donning his armor. The character can don his armor in a number of turns equal to the armor's mobility penalty. Each turn of effort costs 2 motes of Essence. The character must have the armor readily available and at hand to don it so quickly — this Charm does not speed the process of getting the armor out of a trunk.

Hauberk-Summoning Gesture

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Resistance: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

This Charm allows a character to call her armor to her. In an eyeblink, it appears on her. She is instantly fully armored, with all the straps and buckles adjusted properly. If the character uses a shield, that appears on her person as well. The character cannot call her armor from further away than 100 yards x her Essence rating. This Charm can't be used to steal armor off an opponent or off a display dummy — the armor must be the character's own. She must have worn it for at least several hours and established her possession of it.

Glorious Solar Plate

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Resistance: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Hauberk-Summoning Gesture



The characters materializes his Essence into a suit of golden lamellar armor. This armor is an expression of the character's anima and, so, reflects his personality and predispositions. It can be sleek, imposing, ornate, simple — it is the character's ideal armor. Regardless of its appearance, the armor glows with an golden inner light bright enough to read by in a several-yard radius. Glorious Solar Plate provides 10 lethal and 10 bashing soak, with only a -1 penalty to maneuvers requiring dexterity and grace.

Poison-Resisting Meditation

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Resistance: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character's metabolism is strengthened by Essence, allowing him to easily endure the effects of toxins. The player may add a number of automatic successes equal to the character's Stamina to her Stamina + Resistance roll to resist the effects of poison. Though even the hardiest Exalted can still be slain by massive doses of poison while using this Charm, they are largely invulnerable to poisoned food and envenomed blades. Characters need not invoke this Charm before exposure to poison — they may call upon its effects after they are exposed but before the Stamina + Resistance roll is made to survive the toxin.

Use of this Charm allows a character to withstand incidental toxins such as spoiled food. A character under the effect of this Charm may also consume without penalty a number of drinks equal to his Stamina.

Illness-Resisting Meditation

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Resistance: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

While the Exalted are little-affected by disease, they can still become sick. Fevers can slow them at critical moments. Further, while the Chosen can withstand even the most serious illnesses with little more than a feeling of weariness and discomfort, those illnesses are as lethal as ever to mortals who contract them from exposure to the infected Exalted.

This Charm allows the player to add a number of automatic successes equal to her character's Stamina to the Stamina + Resistance roll to avoid contracting an illness. Further, the player may add a like number of automatic successes to her character's daily Stamina + Endurance roll to overcome an illness she has already contracted.

Immunity to Everything Technique

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Resistance: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Illness-Resisting Meditation, Poison-Resisting Meditation

The character channels Essence to strengthen and enhance her system to an almost unimaginable degree. While this Charm is in effect, the character cannot be injured by poison and cannot contract illnesses. She can sprinkle poison on her food as a condiment or walk hand-in-hand with a plague victim and be unaffected — for its duration, this Charm even makes the character immune to the Great Contagion. This Charm provides genuine immunity — a character exposed to poison will not suddenly stiffen and die after the scene is over, and a character exposed to disease while protected will not become ill from her exposure later. However, a character exposed to a disease or toxin *after* the Charm's effect has dissipated is as vulnerable as any of the Chosen.

Survival

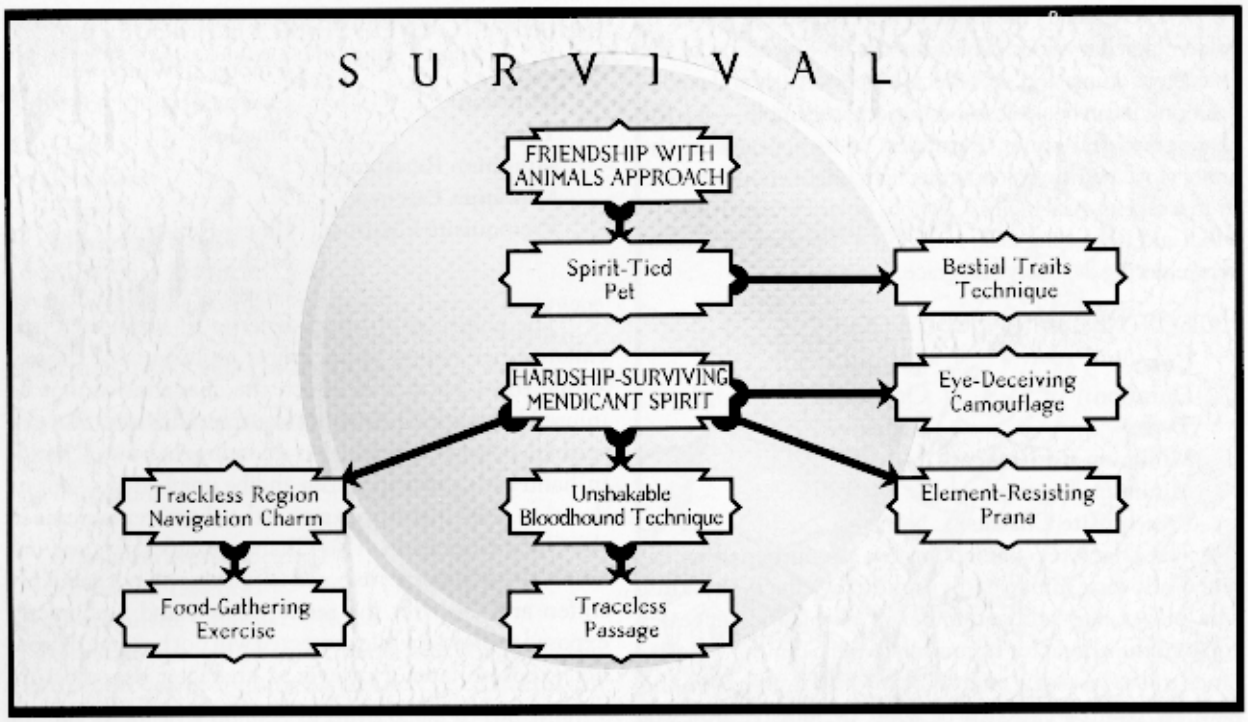
Friendship with Animals Approach

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One Scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the character can deal well with nearly any wild animal. The character must be within one yard of the target per point of her Essence. Herbivores and smaller omnivores will become somewhat docile, even letting the character pet or handle them. Predators are less susceptible to this power, and most will simply let the character pass unmolested through their territory. This power does not work on sentient animals, animals that are trained to attack or animals that are insane from pain, hunger or disease.

Spirit-Tied Pet

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Friendship With Animals Approach



By handling an animal, feeding it, petting and scratching it and otherwise interacting with it, a character who knows this Charm can forge a permanent magical bond with the beast. Each time the character uses this Charm on the target, it is as if he gained a point of the Familiar Background with the target animal as the Familiar. So a character who wished to tame a tiger would have to use it at least three times to cause the beast to become well-disposed to him and an additional two times to gain the ability to see through the beast's eyes and communicate with it. Obviously, using this Charm on animals such as bears, tigers and tyrant lizards can be problematic, as they will not allow themselves to be handled, even under the effects of Friendship with Animals Approach. A strong wrestling ability or a willingness to raise the animal from a cub is useful in such instances. Characters cannot have more than one Spirit-Tied Pet at a time.

Bestial Traits Technique

Cost: 8 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Tied Pet

Through the use of this Charm, a character can gain the traits of her Spirit-Tied Pet. Each use of this Charm allows the character to gain a single characteristic. Obviously, animals have too many characteristics to easily model them all. Typically, the character will gain the ability to climb rough surfaces, fall great distances without damage, survive in difficult conditions or strike for lethal damage or gain one or more Keen (Sense) Techniques or Unsurpassed (Sense) Disciplines. A character who wishes to imitate her poisonous animal companion must imitate both the bite and the poison (two characteristics) and gains a bite as poisonous as the companion, not as poisonous as the companion if it were the size of the character.

Characters may not gain abilities that require gross physical changes — a character with an eagle companion cannot grow wings, and a character with a tiger companion cannot gain camouflage stripes. Characters must have an Spirit-Tied Pet to use this Charm.

Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the character becomes able to survive in even the most hostile conditions without special preparations. Blazing heat or terrible cold are no danger to the character, nor are hypothermia from rain or water exposure, trench foot, snow and sand blindness, leeches, mosquitoes and other potentially deadly biting insects — the character is perfectly at home in a harsh wilderness environment. This magic protects the character even if he personally is not prepared for the environment. A character using Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit is at home on a glacier if he is bundled in the warmest clothing available or if he is clad in

nothing but silk slippers and a pair of pantaloons (though he may have difficulty walking over ice in silk slippers).

Note that this Charm does not protect against the most hostile of environments — ocean survival, underwater survival or the extreme elemental effects near the elemental poles. To exist in those environments, characters must use the Element-Resisting Prana Charm (p. 182).

Trackless Region Navigation Charm

Cost: 7 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

With this Charm, the character can find his way safely and surely through even the worst terrain. The character (and a number of persons following him equal to twice his Essence score) can travel through even the worst terrain with ease. Travel through most terrain (forest, light marsh, rock and sand desert) is about as fast as if the character was walking over flat, level ground — characters will travel about 20 miles a day. Travel over very harsh terrain (muskeg at high summer, glacier, bayou, dense scrub or fresh-growth jungle) is at half this speed.

Food-Gathering Exercise

Cost: 3 motes per person
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Trackless Region Navigation Charm

A character with this Charm will never go hungry. In a hour of foraging for food, she can gather enough nuts, berries, edible tubers, slugs, bugs and small animals to make a large meal for a number of people equal to her Essence score. Note that this skill typically does not involve hunting game, and so, the character does not need a hunting tool such as a spear, sling or bow — the character will probably not bring back anything larger than a rabbit. Storytellers may wish to make it more difficult to gather food in certain environments (deep sandy desert and pack ice, for example) but should not impose a penalty greater than halving the Exalted's take. This is, after all, magic.

Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit



The character can track anyone in the wilderness, following the most minute signs and, sometimes, nothing more than a magical intuition of where the target has gone. The character can track anyone through any terrain, so long as the trail is fresh enough. Over difficult terrain for tracking (open ocean, rocky desert, grasslands), the trail remains fresh for typically one day per point of the tracking character's permanent Essence. Over terrain more amenable to tracking, it can be two or even three times that long.

This ability can be foiled by the Traceless Passage Charm. If the target is using Traceless Passage, then the tracker and target resolve the matter as if neither was using magic. See "Tracking" on page 245 of the Drama chapter for details.

Eye-Deceiving Camouflage

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

Trough the use of this Charm, the character can conceal himself or an object no bigger around than his Essence rating in yards so well as to be undetectable. In order to gain the benefit of this Charm, the character must spend one hour camouflaging his position or the object to be concealed. So long as the character stays still and takes no violent action, he will not be seen. Note that a character or object camouflaged in this fashion is essentially fixed in position. If the character moves suddenly or at great length, the effect is disturbed and the Charm ceases to have its effect.

Camouflaged objects or characters can be found after a number of hours of intensive searching in their immediate area equal to the camouflaging character's Essence score or by a character with Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline or some similarly powerful perception power whose player succeeds in a Perception + Awareness roll against the character's Intelligence + Survival. Note that camouflage covers scent and other detection methods as well as visual stealth.

Traceless Passage

Cost: 5 motes per person, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique

Through the use of this Charm, the character can make his passage and the passage of additional persons equal to his Essence score totally traceless. They cannot be tracked by conventional means, not even with the aid of tracking animals or other tracking aids. Only characters with the Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique Charm can follow them, and even then, it's played out as if they were tracking him without magical assistance.

Element-Resisting Prana

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Survival: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit

Through the use of this Charm, the character becomes able to survive in any environment. The character can survive in extreme environments, such as the extreme heat and toxic fumes within the caldera of active volcanoes, can exist underwater with no ill effects and can even exist without danger in conditions as harsh as those of the elemental poles. While this Charm is active, the character adds her Endurance to her soak when she takes damage from elemental sources such as cold, fire and lightning.

Twilight Caste

Craft

Flawless Handiwork Method

Cost: 3 motes per success
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Craft: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character channels Essence through his hands and tools, enhancing his efforts and making the final produce of his work far more impressive than the fruits of any mortal craftsman's labor. To use this Charm, the player first makes a regular Intelligence or Stamina + Craft roll for the character. Then, the player may "buy" additional successes, up to the character's Essence rating + the number of successes rolled on the Craft roll. Each success bought in this fashion costs 3 motes of Essence.

Storytellers should consider strongly granting special bonuses to objects that are made from good or exceptional materials to start and that have astonishing numbers of successes. For more details on this, see the "Craft" section of the Drama chapter, page 245. Note that Flawless Handiwork Method's effects do not occur instantly — the character must still take the regular amount of time necessary to construct an object of that type, though he need take no longer. An Exalted craftsman can knock together in a morning items that would take a mortal craftsman months or years to produce.

Object-Strengthening Touch

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One Scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Craft: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Handiwork Method

This Charm strengthens objects, allowing them to endure far more damage than normal. Very fragile objects such as those made of paper or glass cannot be damaged without the full exertion of a Strength at least equal to the Essence rating of the character who used the Object-Strengthening Touch Charm on them. Objects that are not so fragile take roughly twice as much force as normal to harm. For rules on breaking and lifting objects, see the "Athletics" section of the Drama chapter, page 251.

Object-Strengthening Touch does not just protect against breakage — strengthened objects are also resistant to fire, acid, freezing and other forms of damage. The character using Object-Strengthening Touch must touch the object in order to cause this Charm to take effect. Characters can strengthen any object, not just objects that are at the focus of the character's Craft Ability. This Charm does not work on animals or sentient beings.

Durability-Enhancing Technique

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Craft: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Object-Strengthening Touch

Objects subjected to this Charm do not have the immense durability of objects subjected to Object-Strengthening Touch, but the enhancement is permanent. While objects treated with Durability-Enhancing Technique are not completely immune to the ravages of time and nature, they are very resistant, enduring at least 10 times as long as untreated objects. Objects treated with Durability-Enhancing Technique add twice the Exalted's score in the Crafts Ability to the Strength + Athletics dice pool required to break them. Items such as swords and axes that have been treated with Durability-Enhancing Technique hold their edges longer, even if used to hack through doors or otherwise mistreated.

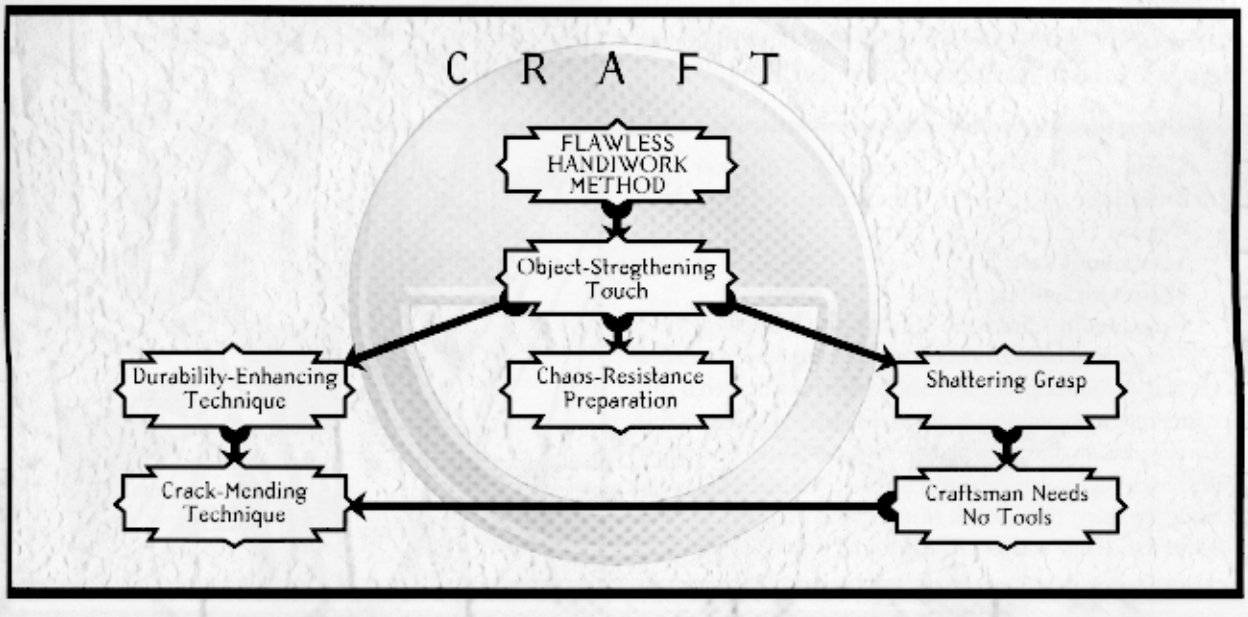
Chaos-Resistance Preparation

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Craft: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Object-Strengthening Touch

The ravages of the Wyld can twist objects, as well as men. For every object that is made better suited to its task, 100 are ruined by the energies of unbounded change. This Charm makes an object far more resistant to the twisting effects of Wyld energy. Chaos-Resistance Preparation is not as complete as the Lore Charms that stabilize persons, causing an object protected by this Charm to take only take 10 times as long to change as it would normally. However, the effects of Chaos-Resistance Preparation are permanent. Objects treated with this Charm lend no protective qualities to their bearers — a suit of Chaos-Resistant armor will not protect the character wearing it from Wyld-induced mutation.

Crack-Mending Technique

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Craft: 5
Minimum Essence: 3



Prerequisite Charms: Craftsman Needs No Tools, Durability-Enhancing Technique

A character using the Crack-Mending Technique can fix any broken object, no matter how severely damaged, so long as it was not totally unmade (for example, by powerful sorcery, digestion in a Behemoth's gullet or immersion in molten rock). The character must spend a number of hours working on the object equal to 10 - her Essence, slowly piecing it back together and coaxing the fragments to bind to one another.

This Charm can even remake extremely damaged things such as shattered crystal and burnt paper, but it cannot remake metaphorical or conceptual things — it cannot mend broken hearts, oaths or promises, for example, nor can it remake shattered dreams or smashed hopes. Also, it cannot remake an object more yards in radius than the character's Essence rating. Crack-Mending Technique can restore damaged items of First Age manufacture but can do nothing to repair those whose magic has fled or been exhausted.

Shattering Grasp

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Craft: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Object-Strengthening Touch

Someone who works with a material for a long time learns its strengths and weaknesses. A character who knows this Charm can channel Essence to intensify this knowledge and can rend stone and metal with his bare hands and tear apart wooden doors with his fingers. A character using the Shattering Grasp Charm multiplies his Strength + Athletics by 2 for the purposes of breaking or damaging the basic material he works with for the focus of his Craft skill — typically metal, stone or wood. If the character is making an attack against such an object, double his damage successes. Tanners and leathercrafters do not gain the ability to do extra damage in hand-to-hand combat with this Charm.

Craftsman Needs No Tools

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Craft: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Shattering Grasp

The greatest burden of a craftsman is the pressing need for tools and a workshop. For an Exalted who has mastered this Charm, that is no problem at all. A character who knows this Charm can work directly with her chosen material, shaping it with hands and voice, laboring without any need for tools. Characters using this Charm slowly croon and purr to their work as they shape and form the material with their fingertips



— the effect is the same as working in a well-stocked workshop, and in many cases, better. Characters using this Charm can accomplish a full day's work in a single scene. Projects requiring multiple days work require multiple scenes of use.

Investigation

Ten Magistrate Eyes

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Investigation: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character attunes himself to the world's ambient Essence and becomes preternaturally aware of the order of and links between objects. For the remainder of the scene, add his Essence score in automatic successes to any Investigation rolls.

Crafty Observation Method

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Investigation: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ten Magistrate Eyes

By examining the undisturbed physical evidence of an event, the character can reconstruct the physical process behind that event. For example, finding a body with a knife wound, the character can tell what sort of knife was used, from what direction the blow was struck and so on. This effect need not be limited to bodies and the scenes of crimes — characters can likewise reconstruct the evidence left behind by liaisons, examine the details of a camp site, etc.

Obviously, the event must have left significant physical evidence for a character to analyze. If the evidence is disturbed significantly, the Charm doesn't function automatically. The player must instead make a Perception + Investigation roll with a difficulty determined by the amount of disturbance the evidence has been subjected to, with success indicating that the character can reconstruct the events.

Judge's Ear Technique

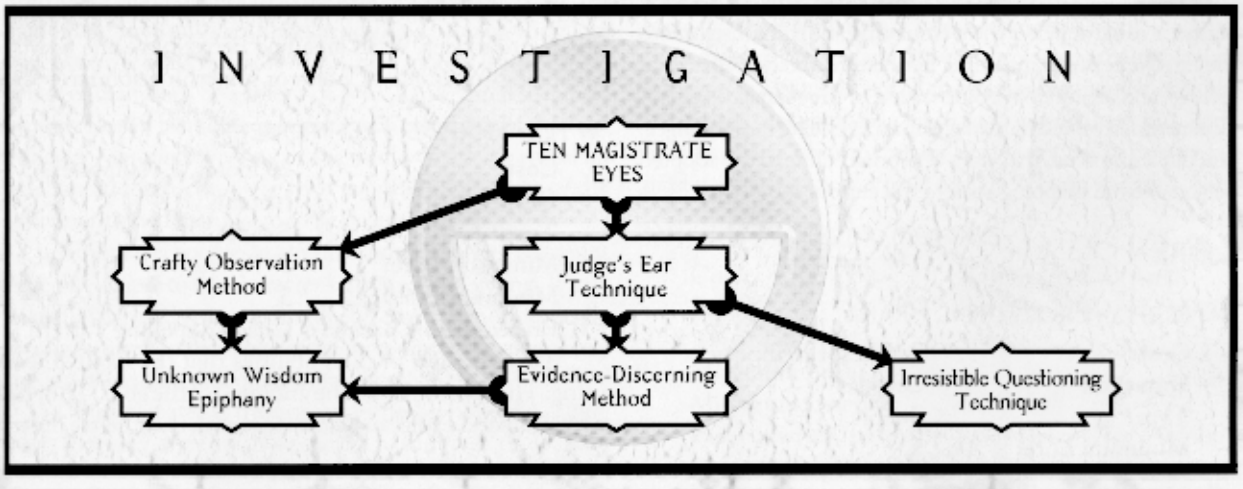
Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Ability: 2
Minimum Investigation: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Ten Magistrate Eyes

This Charm allows the character to tell if a specific individual is lying to her. This Charm is infallible, within its limits. If the target refuses to answer or answers in an unclear fashion, the Charm will not indicate him as having lied. Likewise, it can only detect lies the target knows to be lies. If the target sincerely believes something to be the case, then the Charm will not detect him as having lied. This Charm in no way compels or reveals the truth — it only detects falsehoods.

Evidence-Discerning Method

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Investigation: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Judge's Ear Technique

By sorting through possessions, physical evidence and so on left by a particular individual, an Exalted using this Charm may construct a psychological profile of the character who left the evidence. The clarity of this profile is determined by the amount of material the Exalted employing this Charm has to sort through. The more material, the more likely the character is to derive an accurate picture; the use of the Investigation Charm Crafty Observation Method is extremely beneficial as an aid to the use of this Charm. If there is material mixed in that does not actually belong to the target of analysis, then the Exalted's picture of the target will be distorted.



Irresistable Questioning Technique

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Investigation: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Judge's Ear Technique

An Exalted using this Charm can make her questions impossible to resist. During the extended interrogation of a target whose Willpower is equal to or less than her Essence, she may wring him utterly dry — he is unable to lie, dissimulate or otherwise prevaricate. If the target has Willpower equal to or less than twice the Exalted's Willpower, the Exalted's player may make a Manipulation + Investigation roll. For every success, the target must truthfully and to the best of his ability answer a single question. The Charm Ten Magistrate Eyes cannot be used to gain extra successes on this roll.

This Charm does not work on targets whose Willpower is higher than twice the Exalted's Essence. In any event, this Charm loses its effectiveness with repeated use — if used by an Exalted on the same target more than once during a period equal to the target's Willpower in weeks, the Charm has no effect.

Unknown Wisdom Epiphany

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Investigation: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Crafty Observation Method, Evidence-Discerning Method

By visiting the scene of an event and attuning himself to local Essence flows and residues, the Exalted can psychically reenact history, reconstructing the event to the point of gaining insight he could not normally receive from evidence alone. The character must have time alone to go over the scene, touch and examine the largely undisturbed evidence and "get into the shoes" of one of the people involved.

The Exalted experiences flashbacks of the event from the perspective of the person he is emulating and gains insight into the target's persona, including her Nature and her superficial feelings and attitudes over the course of the reenacted event. Characters involved in reenacting an event are rarely dangerous, but if disturbed, they may very briefly cling to the adopted persona before snapping back to the current moment.

Lore

Integrity-Protecting Prana

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Exposure to Wyld energies can cause hallucinations, psychological dependency, insanity and even terrible mutations. Through the use of this Charm, the character makes her person proof against the influence of Wyld energies. While the Charm is in effect, her mind and body cannot be warped or twisted by the power of the Wyld. Note that, while the character's shape and sanity are protected, her body can still be torn asunder by Wyld-spawned phenomenon; the whirling walls of fire and thunder and the 100-headed snake monsters with burning chalcedony eyes are quite real.

Similarly, her possessions are vulnerable, though the protective effect of the Charm does seem to spill over to them slightly. A character's sword will turn into a snake that hisses and slithers off rather than an asp that bites her hand, and her armor will suddenly become gossamer spiderwebs rather than sheets of rotting gristle full of carnivorous maggots.

Chaos-Repelling Pattern

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Integrity-Protecting Prana

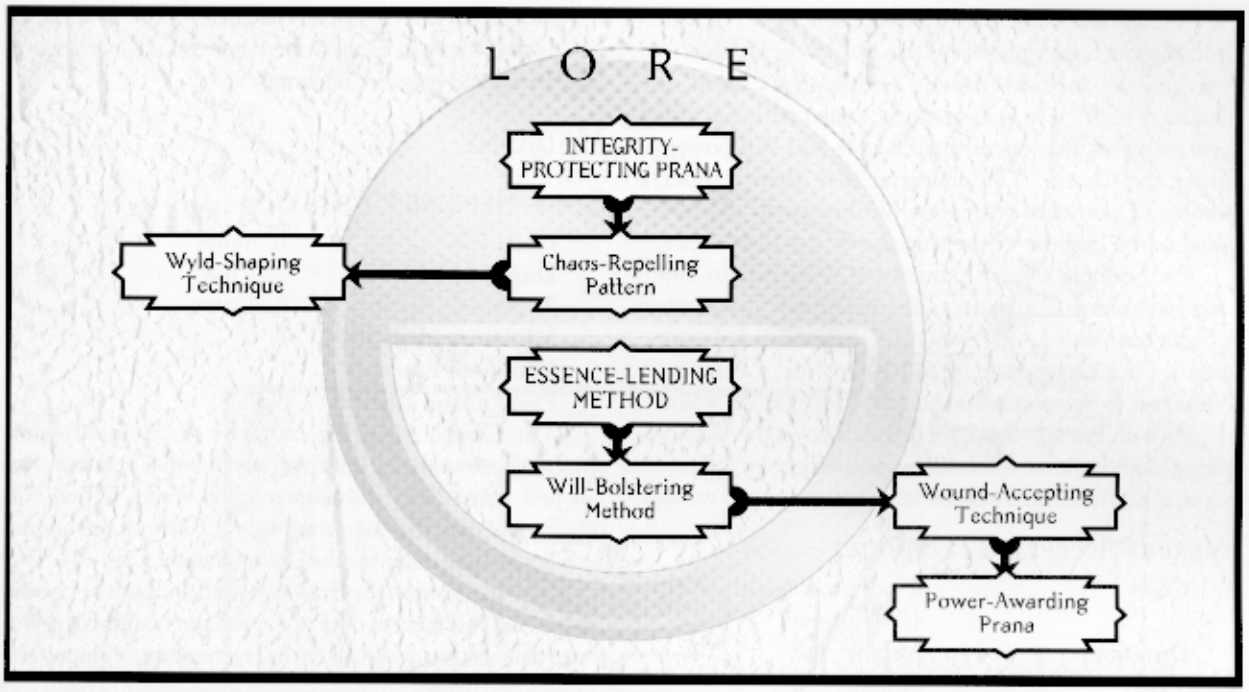
Through the use of this Charm, the character protects his possessions from the warping influence of the Wyld. While the Charm lasts, the character and his goods (an amount which can equal a fully laden horse if the character is mounted) can sojourn in even the most fluid areas of the Wyld without worry that they will suddenly become something other than what they currently are.

Note again that Wyld-spawned phenomenon are not warded against, though the Charm makes certain sorts of mishaps (falling into the sky, having the ground suddenly open up to become a pit of mechanical alligators) quite unlikely. The character may be blasted asunder or eaten and digested, but up and down will continue to mean the same thing, and his feet will tend to always land on a stable, solid object of some sort. Any character trying to lead a horse into a deep Wyld area had better have the Spirit-Steadying Assurances Charm or something similar.

Wyld-Shaping Technique

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Chaos-Repelling Pattern

There are few of their abilities that the Exalted fear using. They are, after all, the anointed of the gods. They do not command Essence, it flows to match their desire. Even



the most serious sorts of negligence or mistakes are only likely to lead to wild mood swings and misbehavior, not a grisly death. But even in the days of the Old Realm, the most powerful Solar Exalted used this Charm sparingly.

A character using this Charm can shape the primordial chaos, the inchoate precursor of reality, to his whim. Obviously, this Charm does not work in areas where the fabric of reality is already set — it must be used in the deepest, most fluid Wyld zones or else at the edge of the world, forcing shape into the teeth of the howling storm.

To activate this Charm, the character sets foot in the unformed substance of reality and wills it to take shape as he commands. The player rolls his character's Essence. Wyld-Shaping Technique is an extended action, with the cost of the Charm paid for each roll. The number of successes required is up to the Storyteller. The character can create nearly anything — a Demesne, a giant factory that produces golem warriors, a bag of diamonds as big as potatoes — but the larger and more powerful the thing he wishes to create, the more successes the player must roll. A single success would create a bag of diamonds or a talent of gold, while three successes would create a Demesne, a keep or a talent of one of the Five Magical Materials. Five successes would create a fortress, an enchanted forest complete with magical inhabitants or the aforementioned manufactory for golem warriors.

If the player botches at any time, horrible side effects result as reality shapes to the character's subconscious whims. It may take the shape of his fears or simply coalesce in some horrifically wrong fashion — the specifics are up to the Storyteller. They are rarely pleasant and often worse than fatal.

Objects created in this fashion are freshly minted. Lacking roots in reality, they are more subject to the gnawing of chaos than other items. This instability is really only a problem for large structures such as fortresses and cities — if such places are left unpeopled and not made part of the complex interplay of contact that makes up existence, they will slowly dissolve back into the chaos from which they sprang.

Essence-Lending Method

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

No Exalted is an island. Through the use of this Charm, a character can transfer Essence motes to another character. To use this Charm, the character must spend a turn in skin-to-skin contact with the target and burn 3 motes of Essence to power the Charm. She may then transfer to the target motes of Essence equal to 3 x her permanent Essence score. This Essence may not cause the target's Essence pool to rise above its normal maximum. If the target cannot accept all the transferred Essence, then the excess dissipates harmlessly. Characters may activate this Charm over successive turns to transfer large quantities of Essence but must pay the 3 motes for each turn the Charm is in use.

Will-Bolstering Method

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Essence-Lending Method

Exalted can share more than simple power. The touch of a Solar can bring new strength to the downcast heart and new courage to the terrified. To use this Charm, the character must be in skin-to-skin contact with the target for a turn and must spend the Essence and Willpower to power the Charm. The character may then transfer a number of points of temporary Willpower to the target equal to the highest Virtue that the two of them share.

For Example: Dace is transferring Willpower to Swan. Dace has Valor 4, Conviction 2, Compassion 3, Temperance 2. Swan has Valor 3, Conviction 2, Compassion 2, Temperance 3. Dace can transfer up to three points of Temporary Willpower to Swan, one for each dot they share in Valor.

As with Essence-Lending Method, above, the Will-Bolstering Method cannot cause a character's temporary Willpower to rise above its normal maximum. Excess points are wasted.

Wound-Accepting Technique

Cost: 3 motes per health level, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Will-Bolstering Method

Through the use of this Charm, the Exalted can give the gift of his very life energy. The character must be in skin-to-skin contact with the target for a turn and must spend a point of temporary Willpower and the appropriate amount of Essence. The Exalted using the Charm immediately takes a number of health levels of bashing damage, and the target of the Charm immediately heals a like number of levels of bashing or lethal damage. Exalted cannot share more health levels than the lower of the two character's Staminas. This Charm cannot heal aggravated damage, nor can it cause a character to gain more health levels than she would normally have. Exalted can, in fact, kill themselves through the use of this Charm.

Power-Awarding Prana

Cost: 5 mote, 1 Willpower, 1 experience point
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Lore: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Accepting Technique

Through the use of this Charm, the Exalted can lend some of her power to a normal mortal recipient. For each point of the loaning character's Essence, he can loan one Charm to the target. The target must have the appropriate minimum Ability to use the Charm, and if the Charms lent have prerequisite Charms, then the target must be lent those as well. The Charms draw directly on the Essence of the Exalted who lent them, but the recipient must pay any non-Essence costs. While the Charms are lent, the Exalted cannot use them. The Exalted can end the effect of this Charm and recall her power at any time. During the First Age, Exalted often used this ability to bolster their lictors and pages for important tasks.

Medicine

Body-Mending Meditation

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Medicine: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows the character to channel Essence through her own body, knitting broken bones and mending cut and burnt flesh with supernatural speed. When this Charm is active, the character heals at 10 times the normal rate. For healing times, see the Drama chapter, page 234. This Charm works only on the Exalted herself and cannot be used on others. This Charm does not speed the healing of aggravated damage, nor does it allow the regeneration of amputated or destroyed tissue — a character who loses an eye or hand will have to seek more powerful magical remedies. Characters can activate this Charm even if unconscious.

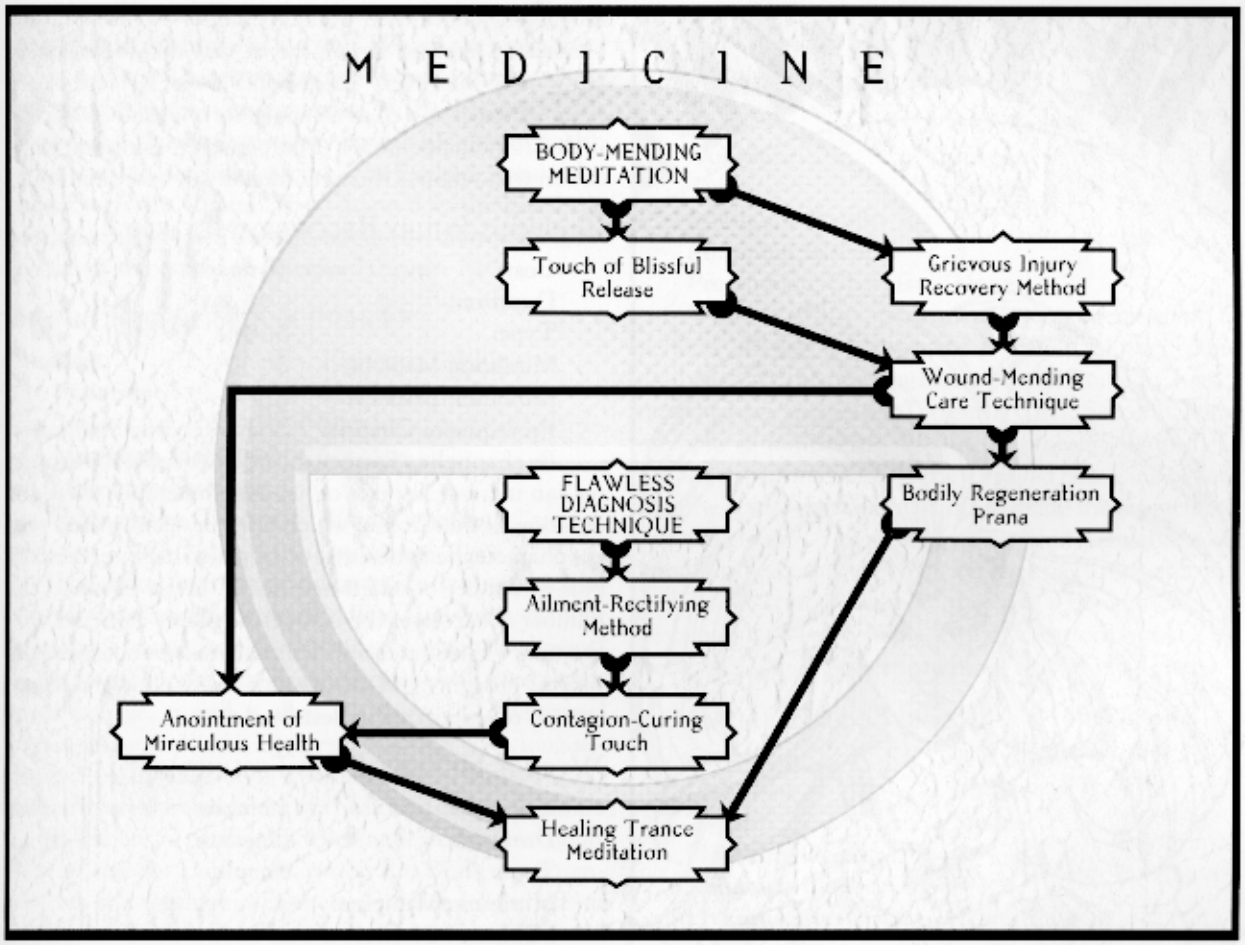
Flawless Diagnosis Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Five minutes
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the character hones his medical abilities to an unearthly degree. By examining a patient closely and hearing about her symptoms, the character can flawlessly diagnose her illness. Note that this is an improvement of the character's perception, not access to a vast store of medical wisdom — knowledge of formal medicine is a function of the character's Medicine and Lore skills. If the character has never heard of a disease, she will only be able to diagnose its general type and determine if it is magical in nature or not. The character's ability to actually treat the disease will be strictly contingent on her skill as a physician. However, regardless of her degree of skill, she will never misdiagnose a disease, mistaking one she doesn't know for one she does.

Ailment-Rectifying Method

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: Six hours
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Diagnosis Technique



The Charm Ailment-Rectifying Method allows an Exalted to recover rapidly from even the most serious illness. Non-life-threatening illnesses dissipate immediately. The player of a character suffering from a more serious ailment may make a Stamina + Resistance roll (without any wound or disease-related penalties). Success indicates that the character's illness fades over the course of the Charm's duration. Very serious diseases may require two or more successes, so it may take a character several days of use to accumulate enough successes to recover fully. However, even the most serious illnesses are halted in their progress by this Charm, and even the Great Contagion requires but five accumulated successes to overcome. Note that this Charm can only be used on the Exalted herself — to heal others of sickness, the Exalted must use Contagion-Curing Touch.

Contagion-Curing Touch

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Ailment-Rectifying Method

Through the use of this Charm, the character can successfully treat serious or even normally incurable diseases. The Exalted's player makes an Intelligence + Medicine roll. Normal diseases are cured with a single success, while more serious ailments may require as many as five successes. Regardless of success, once treatment has begun, the course of the disease is halted, and unless use of this Charm is discontinued, the illness will grow no worse. No medicine is required, though the person being treated must be bathed, kept warm, fed well and given all the other prerequisites of bed rest. The Exalted himself must perform this care and, as a result, cannot treat more individuals during a given day than his score in the Medicine Ability.

Touch of Blissful Release

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Six hours
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Body-Mending Meditation

The Touch of Blissful Release allows the character to lessen the suffering of wounded or ill individuals, dulling their pains and easing the discomforts of illness. Wounded



characters reduce their wound penalties by two, and sick characters likewise ignore up to two dice of negative symptoms. However, Touch of Blissful Release has a narcotic effect as well as an analgesic one, and characters under its influence are at a -3 die penalty to performing any action that requires thought, memory or coordination.

GRIEVOUS INJURY RECOVERY METHOD

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Body-Mending Meditation

By channeling Essence through her body, the character can increase her rate of healing immensely. Over the duration of the Charm, which must be spent in bed rest, the character heals health levels equal to her Essence score plus a number of additional health levels equal to the number of successes the character's player achieves on a Stamina + Endurance roll. This Charm does not speed the healing of aggravated damage, nor does it allow the regeneration of amputated or destroyed tissue.

WOUND-MENDING CARE TECHNIQUE

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Grievous Injury Recovery Method, Touch of Blissful Release

Similar in effect to Grievous Injury Recovery Method, this Charm allows the character to heal others at an incredible pace. For each day the character spends treating the subject (who must rest in bed during the treatment), she heals health levels equal to her permanent Essence plus a number of additional levels equal to the number of successes her player achieves on an Intelligence + Medicine roll. A character cannot tend to more than one individual undergoing Wound-Mending Care Technique at a time. This Charm does not speed the healing of aggravated damage, nor does it allow the regeneration of amputated or destroyed tissue.

ANOINTMENT OF MIRACULOUS HEALTH

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Contagion-Curing Touch, Wound-Mending Care Technique

This Charm allows the character to actually cure injuries with nothing but a touch. Where the character's Essence-charged hands go, shattered bones are made whole and torn flesh is instantly mended. With each use of this Charm, the character instantly heals a number of health levels equal to his Essence score. The Exalted cannot heal herself with this Charm. This Charm does not speed the healing of aggravated damage, nor does it allow the regeneration of amputated or destroyed tissue.

Bodily Regeneration Prana

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wound-Mending Care Technique

The character enters a healing trance, during which he loses all awareness of the world around him. For every hour he is in this trance, he heals a number of health levels equal to his Essence score. This healing trance will cure aggravated damage, as well as allow the regrowth of destroyed tissues, amputated limbs, lost eyes and so forth. Eyes, tongues, hands, feet, mouths full of smashed teeth and other lesser maimings are the equivalent of a health level. Lost limbs are the equivalent of two health levels and, so, take two hours each to regrow. During the period the Exalted is so entranced, she regains no Essence — prolonged periods of healing can leave a Solar helpless before her enemies.

Healing Trance Meditation

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Medicine: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Anointment of Miraculous Health, Bodily Regeneration Prana

Similar to the Charm Bodily Regeneration Prana, the Healing Trance Meditation Charm allows the character to heal similarly serious injuries in others. The Exalted must touch her target, and the target must be cooperative. Both she and the target fall into a healing trance, during which they have no awareness of the outside world. For each hour they remain in this trance, the target heals a number of health levels equal to the Exalted's Essence score. As with Healing Trance Meditation, this Charm can heal aggravated damage and replace lost limbs and other, similar maimings. The times required to heal these injuries are as for Healing Trance Meditation, above. Neither of the characters involved regains Essence during the healing period (assuming that the target has any Essence to regain — he may, after all, be an unExalted mortal).

Occult

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

Cost: 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Occult: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: None

While some mortals can manage, by supreme effort, to perform magical rituals, magic is simply another, more draining way of channeling Essence to the Exalted. Characters who have learned the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Charm are able to hone their will into the needle-sharp focus needed to perform magic of the so-called First Circle. Note that the cost of the Charm is only to *enable* the character to cast a single spell. The actual spell itself has an Essence cost, often very high, that the character must pay to actualize the spell. This cost is listed in the spell's description. For descriptions of spells, see the "Sorcery" section on page 215. Terrestrial Circle Sorcery can never be part of a Combo.

Celestial Circle Sorcery

Cost: 2 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Occult: 4
Minimum Essence: 4
Prerequisite Charms: Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

Similar to, but more powerful than, magic of the Terrestrial Circle, Celestial Circle magic is mighty indeed. Dragon-Blooded and mortals are unable to practice this form of magic, but Celestial Exalted can. It is worth noting that there are only a handful of individuals in the world who know the secrets of Celestial Circle magic. Characters who wish to learn magic of this circle will have to find these entities and convince them to share their wisdom. Celestial Circle Sorcery can never be part of a Combo.

Solar Circle Sorcery

Cost: 3 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Occult: 5
Minimum Essence: 5
Prerequisite Charms: Celestial Circle Sorcery

The most powerful form of magic available to the Exalted. Sorcery of the Solar Circle rivals the anger of the Five Elemental Dragons in its power. Only the Solar Exalted can practice magic of this magnitude, and most of it was lost after the murder of the Solars, many centuries ago. As a result, there are practically no spells of the Solar Circle left outside the Imperial Library. Characters who wish to reclaim the sorcerous power that is their legacy without centuries of magical

research will have to either search far and wide for magic or else bargain with the Yozis and Deathlords for such scraps of power as they can be persuaded to part with. Solar Circle Sorcery can never be part of a Combo.

SPIRIT-DETECTING GLANCE

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Occult: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows the character to perceive unmanifested spirits. Normally, spirits must manifest (appear but remain intangible) or materialize (appear in physical form) to be perceived. However, characters with this Charm can see spirits when they have done neither. Spirits in their natural form appear much as they do when manifested or materialized, though the character can clearly distinguish them from those that are actually visible. Note that this Charm does not make the character any more able to strike or harm spirits, though it does make it much easier for her to direct her attacks. For more information on spirits and their powers, see the Antagonists chapter, page 289.

SPIRIT-CUTTING ATTACK

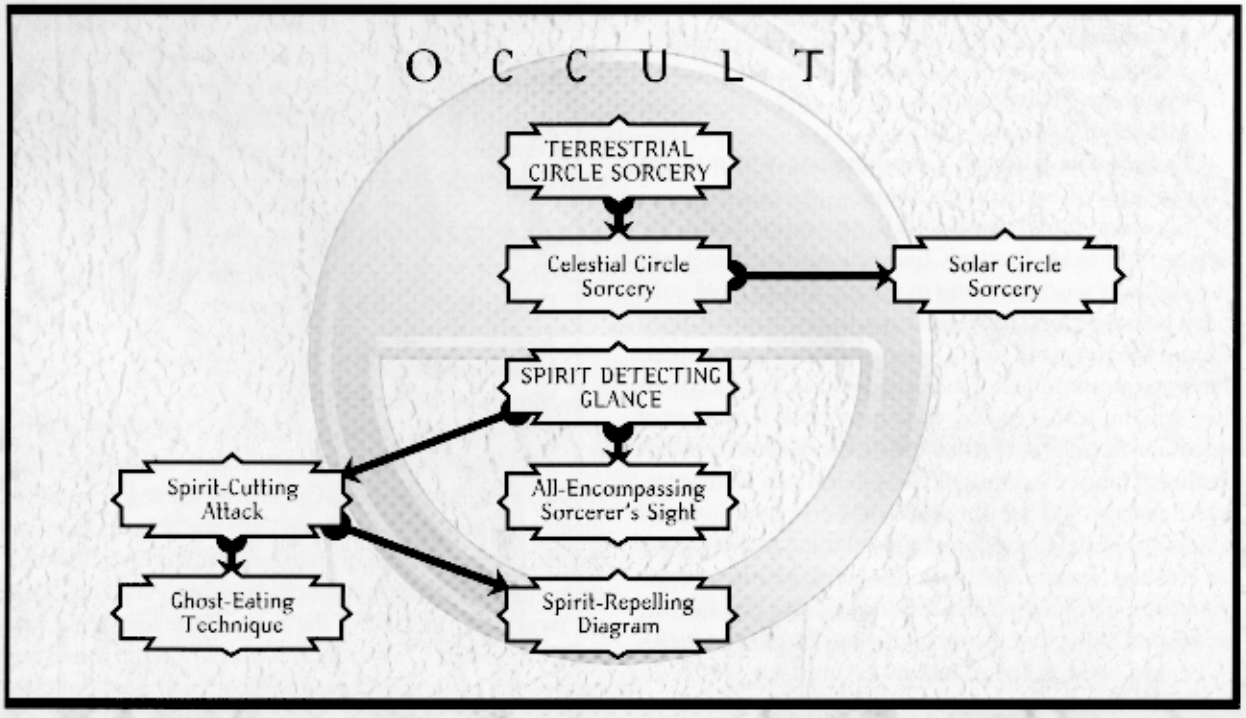
Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Occult: 2
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Glance

This Charm allows the character to launch a single attack at an unmanifested spirit. For the purposes of the individual attack, the character attacks the spirit as if it was manifested normally. Characters who do not have Spirit-Detecting Glance active (or who are not using some other means of perceiving spirits) will be attacking blind —a +2 difficulty modifier. Spirits killed via Spirit-Cutting Attack will eventually regenerate, but this process takes some time (potentially decades) and is quite unpleasant for the spirit. Spirit-Cutting Attack is explicitly permitted to be part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

GHOST-EATING TECHNIQUE

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Occult: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Cutting Attack

This Charm is similar to Spirit-Cutting Attack, but the character's blows are much more dangerous. Name aside, the character does not actually place the spirit into her mouth, though she does consume its Essence, and its death at her hands is permanent. A blow struck using this Charm does aggravated damage to unmaterialized spirits and drains away motes of the spirit's Essence equal to twice the character's permanent Essence, which are added to the character's own store of motes. Drained motes that would take the character above her normal maximum are still drained but dissipate without benefit to the Exalted. Spirits that have materialized are no longer vulnerable to the Ghost-Eating Technique. This Charm is the weapon by which the Exalted slew the



enemies of the gods, and spirits hate and fear it. The Ghost-Eating Technique is explicitly permitted to be part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

Spirit-Repelling Diagram

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Occult: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Cutting Attack

Through the use of this Charm, characters can drive away unmaterialized spirits from an area and bar them from entry. The character spreads her arms, and a blazing circle of gold-white light erupts a number of yards in radius equal to the character's Essence. All unmaterialized spirits within the diagram who have a lower maximum Essence pool than the character must either flee the warded area or materialize. Unmaterialized spirits outside the diagram with maximum Essence pools lower than the character's may not use their Charms to effect those within the diagram, nor may they enter it. Spirits that have materialized are no longer subject to the diagram.

All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Occult: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Detecting Glance

This powerful Charm allows a character to perceive the flows of Essence at work in the world around him. Far more detailed than Spirit-Detecting Glance or the intuition for magic at work that every sorcerer possesses, this Charm allows characters to actually see the Essence of the world. Characters can not only perceive spirits, they can also see the great gauzy rivers of the dragon tracks and the shatteringly brilliant fountains and spires of Manses and Demesnes. Exalted using this Charm can distinguish the diamond-bright lattices of Charms and sorcery at work, allowing them to spot most enchantments without the need for any roll. With a successful Intelligence + Occult roll, a character can even identify the kind of enchantment and (if he is sufficiently familiar with her handiwork) the Exalted who caused the magic to come into existence.

Night Caste

Athletics

Graceful Crane Stance

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: 1 Scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Athletics: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, the Exalted channels Essence through his body, making it extraordinarily limber, deft and light. For the remainder of the scene, the character has near-perfect balance and can stand on things far too narrow and weak to normally support him (the tips of pine trees, horizontal flagpoles, roof gables and so forth) with no fear of falling or breaking the object. The Storyteller may wish to call for Athletics rolls in the most extraordinary of circumstances (the character is leaping from branch to branch on a moonless night in a snowstorm), but generally, the character can run along even the narrowest ledges or stand on the flimsiest perches with no worries.

Monkey Leap Technique

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: One Turn
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Athletics: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Crane Stance

The character leaps with the grace of a flying crane and the speed of a striking hawk. Rather than make her normal movement action, the character may make a leap of up to her Strength x 10 feet vertically or twice that distance horizontally. The character can attack during the round she performs Monkey Leap Technique, but gains no special bonuses.

Thunderbolt Attack Prana

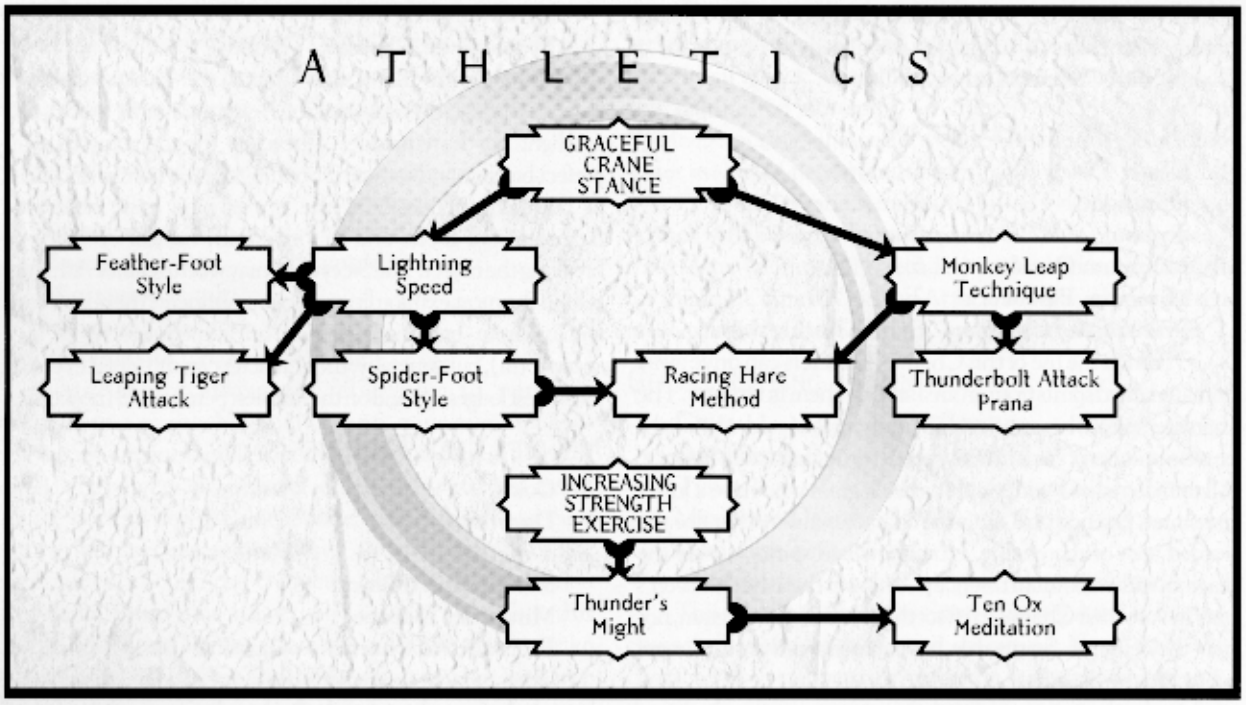
Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Athletics: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Monkey Leap Technique

The character leaps high into the air, swinging his weapon (or fist or feet) in a brilliant Essence-laden arc. The character makes an attack as normal, but the amount of damage he inflicts is doubled after it is rolled. Characters cannot move during a turn when they use Thunderbolt Attack Prana, which effectively rules out the use of Thunderbolt Attack Prana and Leaping Tiger Attack as part of the same Combo. Thunderbolt Attack Prana is explicitly permitted to be part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

Lightning Speed

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: One Turn
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Athletics: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Crane Stance

The character becomes a blur of motion, Essence leaking from her anima in fine streaks, as she flashes from point to point almost faster than the eye can follow. The



character may double her sprinting distance for the turn and has no chance of becoming winded from the exertion, as she is relying on her Essence, not her merely human endurance.

Spider-Foot Style

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Athletics: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Speed

When using this Charm, the character's speed and balance become so heightened that she can perform acts of truly supernatural athleticism. Not only may she run without fear across even the most uneven of surfaces, she may scuttle up even the sheerest vertical surfaces or even dash upside down across horizontal surfaces such as ceilings or the undersides of tree limbs. This not only allows the Exalted to circumvent many obstacles, it also allows her to bypass shields or move behind enemies. Storytellers should assign bonuses as appropriate.

If the character is in a position she could not naturally hold (fighting while standing upside down on a ceiling, for example) and fails to spend Essence on Spider-Foot Style during a turn, she becomes subject to the normal forces of gravity and inertia again and may be seriously injured in the resulting fall.

Feather-Foot Style

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Athletics: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Speed

The Exalted lightens her footfalls with Essence and spreads her weight, allowing her to walk or run across fluid surfaces such as water, quicksand, loose sand, acid, lava, lakes of writhing maggots and the like. The character may traverse such surfaces just as if they were solid earth during a turn in which she uses this Charm. Note that the bottom of the character's feet *are* still touching the material, so barefoot or lightly shod characters running across acid or lava or man-eating maggots are still risking serious injury.

As with Spider-Foot Style, if the character fails to spend Essence on this Charm during a turn in which she is standing on a fluid, she becomes subject to the normal laws of gravity and buoyancy. All but the most lightly burdened character will risk death by drowning (or worse, in the case of more exotic fluids).

Leaping Tiger Attack

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Athletics: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Speed

The character flashes toward his opponent, attacking as he blurs past her. The character makes the attack as normal, but the amount of damage he does is doubled after soak but before damage is rolled.

The character can move up to his normal sprinting distance without penalty in the turn he launches the Leaping Tiger Attack. The character need not move this far — the attack needs only a yard or so — but the character cannot be bound or otherwise unable to move when he launches the attack. This means that

Thunderbolt Attack Prana and Leaping Tiger Attack cannot be part of the same Combo. Leaping Tiger Attack is explicitly permitted to be part of a Combo with Charms of other Abilities.

Racing Hare Method

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Athletics: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Monkey Leap Technique, Spider-Foot Style

The character attunes himself to his own Essence and that of the world around him and moves as though in a waking dream. He travels in great, graceful leaps, over the ground, off roofpeaks, from tree limb to tree limb. Moving in this fashion, the character can traverse a number of miles per hour equal to his (Stamina + Essence) x 10.

This state is trancelike and ends if the character stops for any reason. Likewise, the character is not preternaturally aware of his location, and his perceptions of the world beyond the next leap are often hazy, at best. He will notice only the most urgent stimuli (very large landmarks, hordes of hobgoblins ambushing him) and can easily become lost when traveling through areas he is unfamiliar with.

Increasing Strength Exercise

Cost: 3 motes per dot
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Athletics: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows a character to increase her Strength tremendously for short periods of time. For every 3 motes of Essence the character spends, her Strength increases by 1. A character cannot increase her Strength by more than her Essence rating through the use of this Charm. The Strength lent by this Charm increases the damage of the character's attacks, just as if it were normal Strength.

Thunder's Might

Cost: 2 motes per point
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Athletics: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Increasing Strength Exercise

Through the use of this Charm, the character can increase his Strength even further. For every 2 motes of Essence the character spends, he may increase his Strength + Athletics by one for the purposes of lifting and breaking objects. The character can no more than double his regular Strength + Athletics pool through the use of this Charm — keep in mind that the Charm Increasing Strength Exercise



counts as a bonus, and thus, its bonus cannot be doubled through the use of this Charm. If the character makes an attack with the intent of destroying an inanimate object, each point adds one to the character's raw damage. This Charm does not increase the amount of damage the character does in combat.

TEN OX MEDITATION

Cost: 1 mote per 2 points
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Athletics: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Thunder's Might

By burning vast quantities of Essence, a character can increase his physical might greatly for a few moments. For every mote of Essence the character spends on this Charm, he can increase his Strength + Athletics by 2 for the purposes of a single attempt to lift or break something. If it is used to aid a character in a hand-to-hand attack to break or destroy an object, each mote spent adds two to the raw damage of the attack. A character cannot burn more motes of Essence powering this Charm than he has points of permanent Willpower. Ten Ox Meditation does not increase the damage of a character's attacks against animate beings , though it can cause indirect damage. For example, if the character pulls down the main pillars of a temple, those inside will probably be killed or injured.

AWARENESS

SENSORY ACUITY PRANA

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Though the use of this Charm, the character extends his perception, heightening all five senses. The character can see farther and in less light, hear softer sounds and distinguish between them more easily and differentiate various tastes, textures and scents quite easily — he could be a master chef or perfumer. The basic mechanical effect is to increase the character's Awareness by a number of dice equal to his Essence, though there are obviously many other situations where these senses might come into play — it's up to the Storyteller to make a character's extended perceptions a reality by increasing the amount of information available to the player. Characters using this Charm are not any more or less vulnerable to sensory overload than normal mortals — the extended perceptions include the ability to manage the sensations more effectively.

KEEN (SENSE) TECHNIQUE

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Sensory Acuity Prana

The character channels Essence into one of his senses, heightening his perceptions to an immense degree. When he purchases this Charm, the character must choose which sense it affects. Characters may purchase this Charm more than once in order to gain the ability to heighten different senses. However, a character may not have more than one sense heightened at any given time. Generally, this Charm does not add dice to a character's pools, but instead, changes what actions she can undertake at a given difficulty. For example, recognizing someone by her scent is normally difficulty 2 or 3, but a character with Keen Smell and Taste Technique could do it without a roll.

The effects of various Keen (Sense) Techniques are listed below

• Sight — The character's visual acuity is heightened to several times that of a normal mortal. He can pick out tiny details at 100 yards, quickly count masses of troops and so on. In fog, dusk and other poor visual conditions, he can see as well as a normal person in good visual conditions.

• Hearing and Touch — The character's hearing and sense of touch are tremendously increased. The character can easily judge the quality of fabric and metals with casual inspection, hear animals burrowing beneath the ground, listen in clearly on conversations through thick doors and perform other, similar feats.

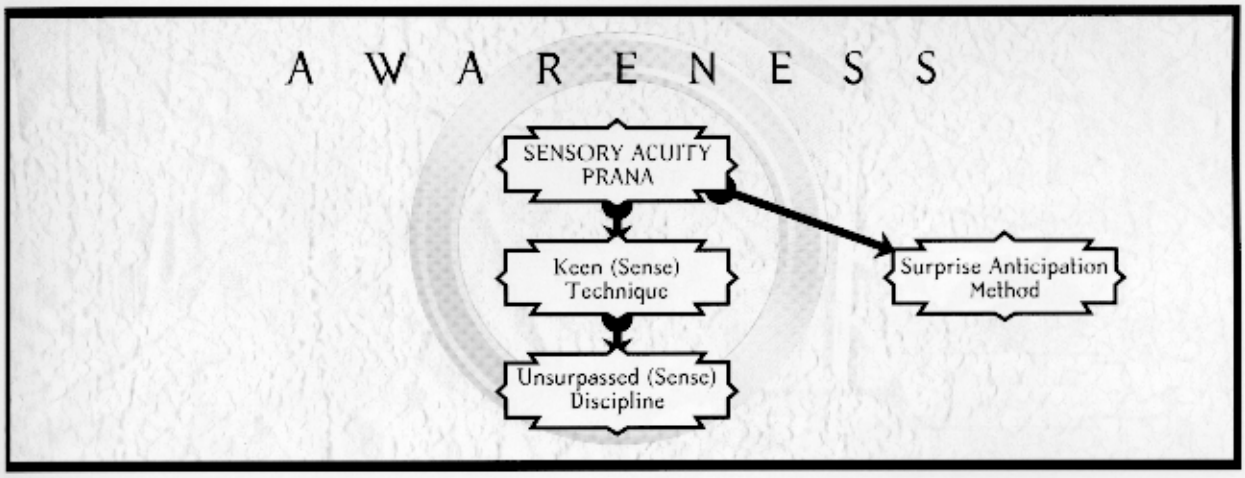
• Smell and Taste — The character can detect poisons by taste and smell and recognize individuals by their scents (even if they are no longer present). The character may track by scent but is not good at it — add a +2 bonus to all Survival rolls involving tracking or hunting for food.

This Charm is incompatible with Sensory Acuity Prana, above. The character can either extend all her senses or one of them.

UNSURPASSED (SENSE) DISCIPLINE

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Awareness: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Keen (Sense) Technique

The character channels Essence to hone one of her senses As with Keen (Sense) Technique, above, the character must choose a sense to be enhanced when she purchases this Charm. The Charm may be purchased multiple times to cover multiple senses, but the character may not invoke Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline and Keen



(Sense) Technique at the same time, and only one sense at a time can be enhanced via the Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline Charm. A character can only purchase the Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline Charm for a sense for which she has already purchased the Keen (Sense) Technique Charm. Also, as with Keen (Sense) Technique, this Charm is incompatible with Sensory Acuity Prana.

• Sight — The character gains eyes equal to those of the greatest raptors. In good light, the character can see a fieldmouse a mile away, pick a face out of a crowded street with a casual glance and detect the tiniest details and imperfections without effort. In the dark or in poor visual conditions such as smoke, haze and mist, her senses are diminished, and she sees only as well as an individual using Keen Sight Technique does in normal conditions.

• Hearing and Touch — The character can listen in on a whispered conversation a mile away in still air or 100 yards away indoors, in windy conditions or in noisy situations such as a bazaar or coliseum. The character can read by passing her fingers over a page and feeling the ink beneath her fingertips.

• Smell and Taste — The character can track by scent almost as well as a bloodhound, adding his Perception as automatic successes to all Survival rolls involving tracking or hunting for food. She can distinguish poisons at a distance by scent alone and can tell how much and how recently something was poisoned with but a harmless touch of the tongue. She can read an individual or animal's actual mood by scent.

Surprise Anticipation Method

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Awareness: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Sensory Acuity Prana

The character develops a preternatural sense for hazard. Whenever she is about to be placed in immediate danger, her Surprise Anticipation Method activates. There is no roll — the character simply becomes aware of immanent danger. This effect costs a mote of Essence and makes it almost impossible to ambush the character. Storytellers should keep in mind that Surprise Anticipation Method is an asset, not a liability. Don't use it as an excuse to drain the character's Essence.

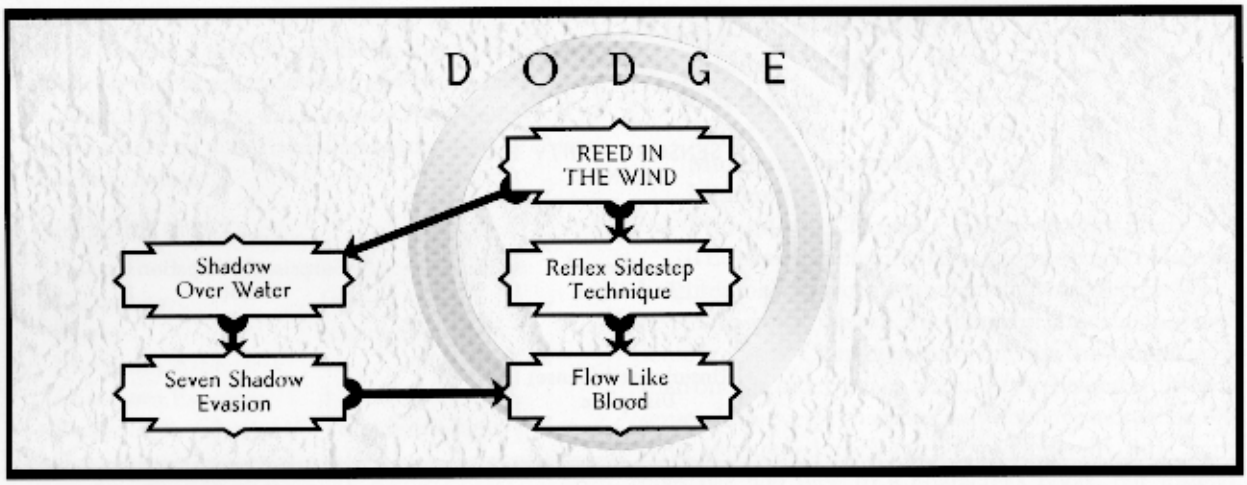
Storytellers should also keep in mind that Surprise Anticipation Method operates by increasing the character's awareness, not by precognition or mind reading. It alerts characters to anything they would perceive as dangerous if they saw it and gave it a quick glance. A character with Surprise Anticipation Method can occasionally guess wrong about an individual's intentions, particularly when on edge. While the character will detect invisible individuals from subtle environmental clues, she can fall into carefully concealed pits, and she can be taken by surprise by the unexpected treachery of a trusted friend. She is not prescient so much as nearly impossible to catch flat-footed.

Characters may place other Charms in a Combo with Surprise Anticipation Method. When Surprise Anticipation Method activates, the character has the option of spending a point of temporary Willpower and activating the rest of the Charms. However, she must do this *immediately* upon the activation of Surprise Anticipation Method. Most Exalted Combo in defensive Charms since, while Surprise Anticipation Method is generally reliable, it is hardly infallible. It only takes one accidentally murdered loved one or terrible diplomatic incident to make an Exalted into a broken or hunted creature.

Dodge

Reed in the Wind

Cost: 1 mote per 2 dice
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Dodge: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None



The Exalted lets Essence flow through her body, making her motions as smooth as those of reeds and willows in the wind. For each mote spent, add one die to an attempt to dodge an attack that the character can anticipate coming. A character cannot gain more dice than her regular Dexterity + Dodge pool. The player must declare she is using this Charm and how much Essence she will spend on it before her character's opponent makes his attack roll. If there are an odd number of dice in the characters Dexterity + Dodge pool, the fractional mote left over after buying the last die is lost.

Shadow Over Water

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Dodge: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Reed in the Wind

Like shadows over water, the Exalted moves with perfect, fluid grace and speed. The character may dodge a single attack that he can anticipate with his full Dexterity + Dodge pool. Characters must spend the Essence for Shadow Over Water before his opponent makes her attack roll.

Seven Shadow Evasion

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Dodge: 5
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Shadow Over Water

From Shadows Over Water to shadow itself, the character is too quick to be hit at all. The character can use this Charm to evade, without the need for a roll, any single attack that she can anticipate, even one that has an area of effect. A character must invoke Seven Shadow Evasion before her opponent makes his attack roll.

Reflex Sidestep Technique

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Dodge: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Reed in the Wind

The character's attunement to the interaction of her anima with the ambient Essence of Creation makes her preternaturally aware of her surroundings. By using this Charm, she may dodge attacks that she is not even aware of. If the character is attacked, even by an attack she does not anticipate, she may spend 2 motes of Essence to attempt to evade the attack. The character's dice pool for dodging such attacks is equal to (2 x her permanent Essence score).

Reflex Sidestep Technique cannot be used as part of a Combo with other Dodge Charms. Although the character does not perceive the situation until she has already dodged, the player may choose whether or not the character spends the Essence to dodge the blow. If she chooses to dodge, she must spend the Essence to do so before the attacker makes his roll.

Flow Like Blood

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Dodge: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Reflex Sidestep Technique, Seven Shadow Evasion

The character permeates his being with Essence, becoming partly atomized. He moves with an impossible fluid grace, and those attacks that he cannot dodge often pass harmlessly through his dreamlike body. For the rest of the scene, the character may use his full Dexterity + Dodge dice pool to dodge all physical attacks, perceived or not.



Larceny

Seasoned Criminal Method

Cost: 10 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm grants a character preternatural intuition with regard to criminal subcultures. While under the influence of this Charm, he can easily pick out criminal establishments — pawnshops willing to operate as fences, taverns that are thieves' havens and so on. Likewise, the character can easily pick out those who are actively interested in buying or selling illegal goods and services — he can spot police and officials who will accept bribes and individuals interested in selling or buying drugs, sex or information. Finally, the character using this Charm can easily read lines of power, differentiating important organized crime figures from small-time operators and quickly tracking down the true thrones and powers of the local underworld. In short, characters with this Charm are at home in any criminal subculture. This Charm doesn't grant the ability to spot *agents provocateurs* and informers.

Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

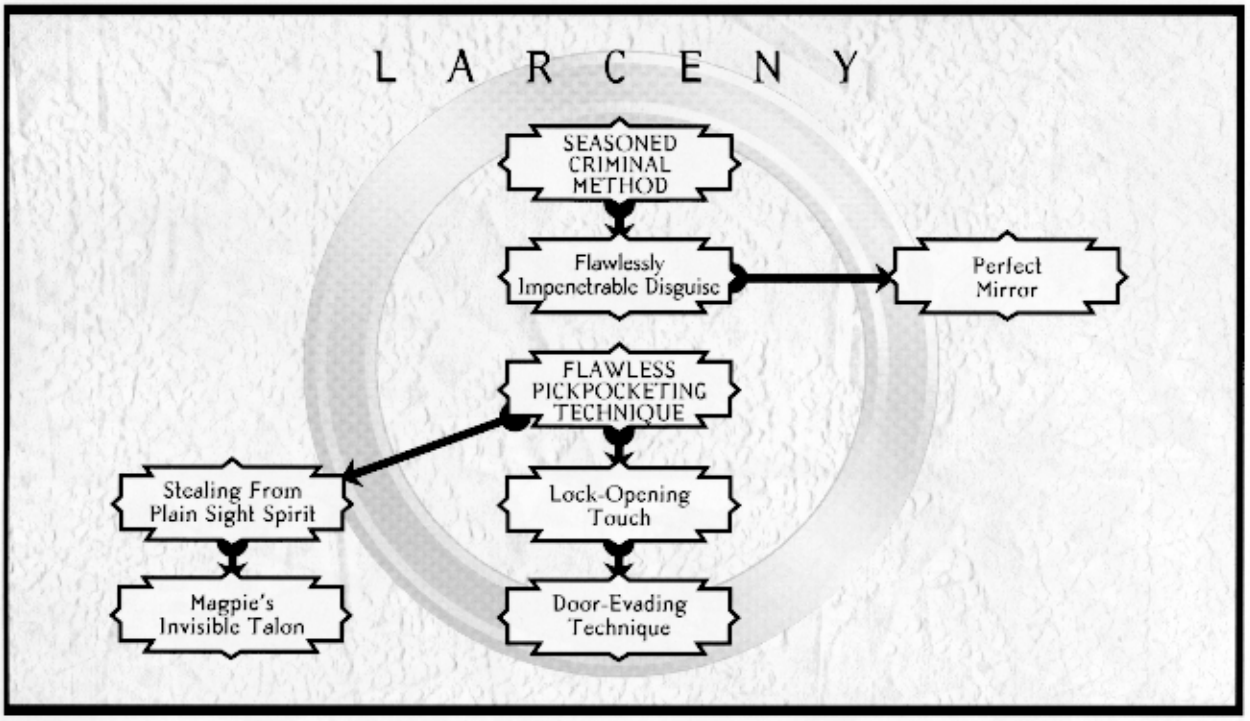
Cost: 7 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Seasoned Criminal Method

By means of this Charm, the character can disguise her appearance, her voice and even her scent. The player may not imitate a specific individual, but may alter her apparent age by as much as 20 years (minimum 16), her ethnicity, her height by as much as six inches and her gender. It is impossible to see through the character's disguise via mundane means. Characters using this Charm can sometimes be detected via the Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline Charm or by the All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight Charm — in these cases, the matter is resolved as normal for disguise attempts — an opposed roll of the disguised character's Wits + Larceny versus the Perception + Awareness of the character attempting to detect him.

Perfect Mirror

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise

This Charm allows a character to perfectly imitate someone she is very familiar with. While this Charm is active, not even the target's pets, intimates and close friends will be able to tell her



from the real individual. The character *must* know the target well to perfectly mirror him — at least well enough to imitate him through mundane disguise (see the Drama chapter, page 255, for rules on disguise). Also, while this Charm covers small mannerisms, responses to in-jokes and so forth, it does not grant the character access to the mirrored character's memories, so she will not be able to use passwords she does not know, recall facts the Exalted herself is not familiar with and so forth.

Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

With this Charm, one of the Chosen can pick someone's pocket flawlessly, with no chance of detection. He must be able to touch the target (though no one will notice him do so), and the Exalted must have a pouch, pocket or other hiding place large enough to put the stolen items into if he does not wish to end the theft with the filched item simply palmed.

Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

This Charm is much like Flawless Pickpocketing Technique, allowing a character to steal an item without any chance of being caught in the act. However, an Exalted utilizing Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit can steal an item from plain view, for example stealing a brooch from a table, a key from a jailer's keyring or a sword from its scabbard. Unless attention is somehow drawn to the act (for example, a guard will notice his sword was stolen if he attempts to draw it, and a jailer will notice a key is missing if he attempts to unlock a door with it), the theft will go unnoticed for at least number of turns equal to the character's Essence rating.

As with Flawless Pickpocketing Technique, the character must be close enough to touch the object she wishes to steal. Note that the item cannot be actively in use when it is stolen — for instance, you cannot use Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit to steal the pen or sword out of someone's hand.

Magpie's Invisible Talon

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit

This Charm is similar to Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit, in that it allows objects to be stolen from plain view without their loss being noticed for a number of turns equal to the Essence score of the character using the Charm (unless some special notice is drawn to the fact that the object is no longer present). However, Magpie's Invisible

Talon allows the character to steal an object from up to one yard away per point of her Essence score. As with Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit, the character cannot steal an object that is actively in use.

Lock-Opening Touch

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Pickpocketing Technique

Through the use of this Charm, the character can instantly pick any lock. He needs no tools — all he need do is strike or rap it sharply, and it pops open. The character must use this Charm once per lock, and so, doors with many locks can exhaust an Exalted thief who relies only on this Charm. Lock-Opening Touch works on all locks, not just those built into doors, and can be used to open locked shackles or chests as well.

Door-Evading Technique

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Larceny: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Lock-Opening Touch

Some doors do not have locks to pick, being bound closed with bars or sorcery. Other doors are equipped with too many locks to easily pick, even with the assistance of Charms. With this Charm, an Exalted can simply step through a locked portal, closed gate, dropped portcullis or other closed portal. The character places her hand against the portal, steps forward and appears on the other side. This Charm also works on windows, sewer grates and other aperture closures, but it does not allow the character to pass through walls or stick his hand into a locked chest and fish around.

Stealth

Easily Overlooked Presence Method

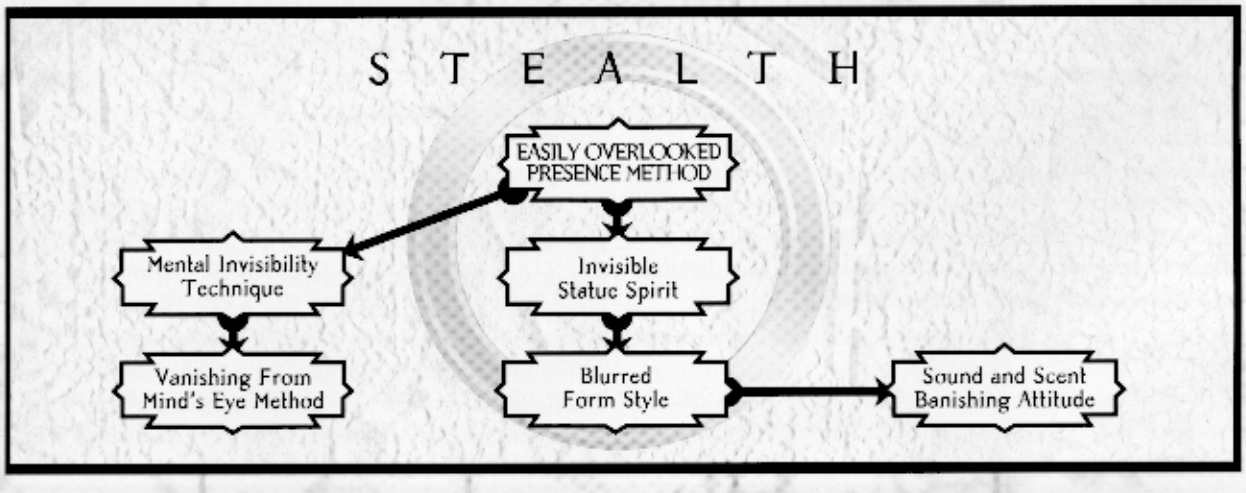
Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm does not involve hiding so much as becoming difficult to notice. So long as the character does nothing to stand out, make herself obvious or become the center of attention, those who are not actively looking for someone will simply discount her as part of the scenery. For example, this Charm does not work on alerted guards or those watching over restricted areas or on those who intend to stop everyone who passes. Likewise, it cannot conceal a character who is very different from her surroundings; a tall, short-haired, light-skinned woman in a crowd of short, long-haired, dark-skinned men is going to stand out too much to benefit from this Charm.

Mental Invisibility Technique

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Easily Overlooked Presence Method

An extension of Easily Overlooked Presence Method, this Charm bends the minds of those seeing the character. Players whose characters see the Exalted must make a Willpower roll and gain a number of successes equal to the Essence of the Chosen using the Charm to actually perceive her and not just ignore her. This effect ends if the character takes violent action or if she is pointed out by someone who notices her, either directly ("Look! Over there!") or indirectly (Onlookers asking themselves the question, "Who is the guard swinging an axe at?").





Vanishing From Mind's Eye Method

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Mental Invisibility Technique

The ultimate mental misdirection — the character can vanish from all memory. She is no more or less easy to detect than before, but those who see her will not recognize her because they have no idea who she is. Essentially, the character sets up a separate history for herself, starting when the Charm is first invoked and ending when she allows it to expire. Beings with Essence ratings higher than the character's are immune to this effect. Obviously, a character trying to get somewhere she shouldn't should have some other Stealth abilities at work since, while she will not be recognized, guards are still going to stop someone they don't know. Extended use of this Charm can cause serious problems for an Exalted who is a ruler, merchant or other important person, as others will quickly start dividing up the character's now-ownerless property.

Invisible Statue Spirit

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: Until disturbed
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Easily Overlooked Presence Method

This Charm allows the Exalted to truly disappear — no amount of visual searching, however thorough, will detect him, so long as he remains still. Moving, even in a slow, shuffling walk, is enough to disturb the effect of this Charm, as is any sort of offensive action. Characters using Invisible Statue Spirit are not immaterial, they can be detected by touch or by scent or hearing.

Blurred Form Style

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Invisible Statue Spirit

This Charm conceals the Exalted, blurring her form and allowing her to blend into whatever background she stands against, vastly improving her Stealth. Players whose characters attempt to spot her when she is hiding or moving slowly must gain a number of additional successes on their Perception + Alertness rolls equal to the character's Essence. If she attacks from a distance, players of those who see the attack get one free Perception + Alertness roll at

difficulty 1 to spot her for each attack she makes. If she attacks in hand-to-hand combat, all watching are assumed to immediately spot her.

Once spotted, her enemies can pick her out again at will until she escapes from their line of sight for at least several seconds. While the Exalted has Blurred Form Style active, enemies attacking her at range do so at a difficulty penalty equal to her Essence score, and those attacking her in hand-to-hand combat suffer a flat +1 penalty to the difficulty of their attacks.

Sound and Scent Banishing Attitude

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Stealth: 4
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Blurred Form Style

Visual detection is not the only thing an Exalted must fear. Through the use of this Charm, an Exalted can protect himself from other forms of detection, as well. While this Charm is active, the character makes no noise of any sort, nor does anything carried on his person or in his hands. This effect does not extend beyond his touch — a dropped knife will still clatter, a knocked-over pot will still shatter. Also, while this Charm is in effect, the character has (and leaves) no scent of any sort. Tracking beasts will not detect him or be able to follow him.

Eclipse Caste

Bureaucracy

Frugal Merchant Method

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows an Exalted to evaluate the quality of goods offered for sale. The character has an intuitive sense of if the goods are shoddy, exceptional, average or whatever. Note that this doesn't give the character market knowledge he doesn't have. If a character has no idea how much a good is supposed to cost, use of this power still won't tell him if he's being overcharged. Likewise, this power grants no actual knowledge of the good under examination, only knowledge of its quality. Presented with a totally unfamiliar object, the character will be able to tell if it is shoddy or broken but will still not know anything about its purpose or operation. This Charm works on found objects as well as those offered for sale and can, for example, tell if a piece of First Age magic is still functional or not simply by handling it.

Insightful Buyer Technique

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Frugal Merchant Method

Through the use of this Charm, the character 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 character need not be physically present in the market, this Charm must be used with a particular sales venue in mind. A character cannot discover previously unknown markets through the use of this Charm. She can, however, review markets she is familiar with, even distant ones, to determine which would be the best place to sell a given good. The more specific the venue contemplated, the more accurate the forecast.

This Charm is perfectly accurate if used at the moment of sale. However, the more time that elapses between the use of the Charm and the actual sale of the goods, the greater the chance of an error in the character's projection.

Consumer-Evaluating Glance

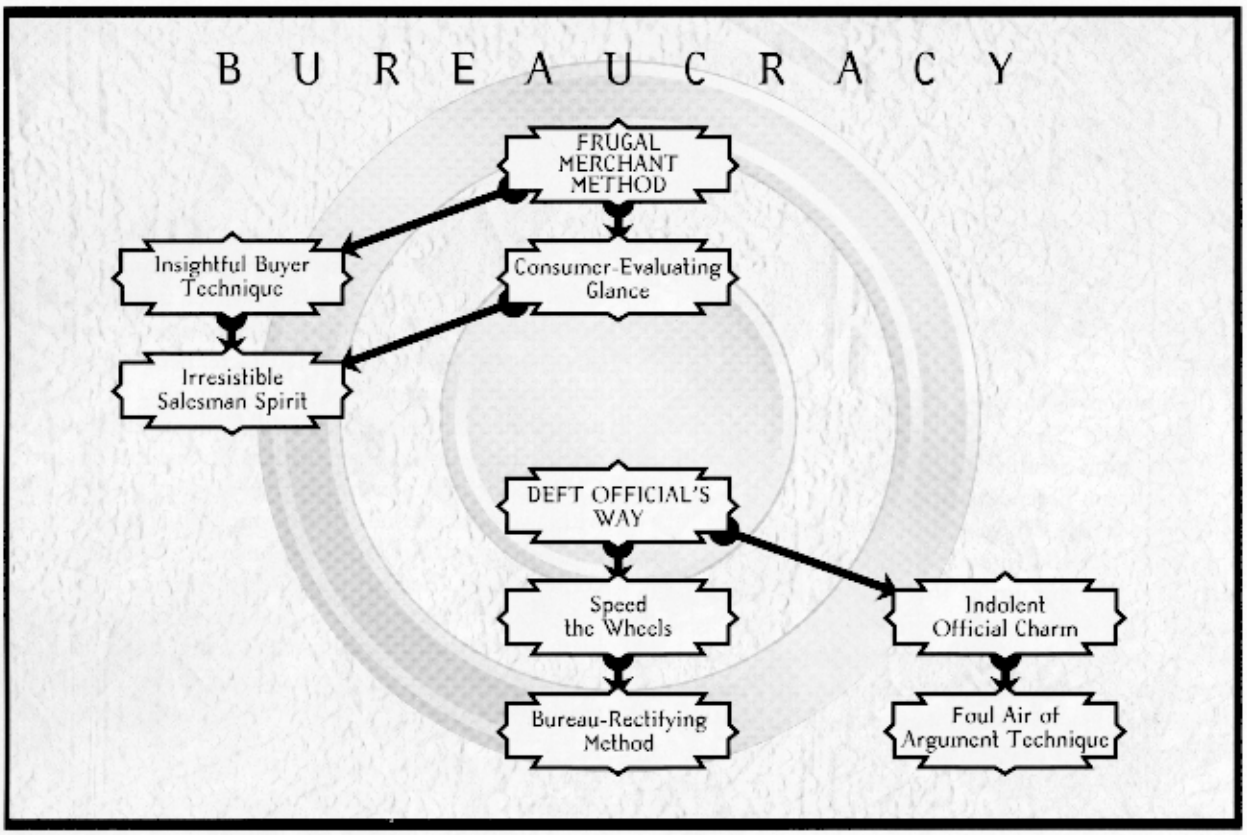
Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Frugal Merchant Method

An Exalted using this Charm may evaluate a given buyer's intentions and budget with but a glance. He can tell if a given potential buyer has no real intention of purchasing, if she's already decided to buy or if she requires swaying. The Exalted also has a good idea of the target's budget for the purchase, at least in relation to the price the Exalted desires to obtain. Finally, the character will know if the target plans to attempt to swindle or betray him in some fashion, making it an essential tool for characters dealing in illegal or extremely valuable goods.

Irresistable Salesman Spirit

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Consumer-Evaluating Glance, Insightful Buyer Technique

A character utilizing this Charm becomes the ultimate high-pressure salesman, able to sell practically anything to anyone for outrageous prices. If the target's Willpower is equal to or lower than the Exalted's Essence, he can be sold literally anything at any price — the Exalted



may cause him to sell himself into slavery for a handful of potsherds or a kiss. If the target's Willpower is less than twice the Exalted's Essence, the Exalted's player must make a Wits + Bureaucracy roll. The number of successes is how many times the object's normal price the character manages to extract from the target. This Charm does not work on characters whose Willpower is greater than twice the Exalted's Essence.

Note that this Charm does not actually enforce the deal in any way, and that it works only for a single scene. Afterward, the target will be acutely aware of having just been swindled — the greater the swindle, the more likely he is to seek redress.

Deft Official's Way

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One task
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

An Exalted who uses this Charm becomes preternaturally adept at navigating through bureaucracies. The character 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 simply petty individuals enjoying their tiny sliver of power. A player whose character uses this Charm may add the character's Essence score in automatic successes to any Bureaucracy rolls when attempting to achieve a given result in a bureaucracy (for example, obtain a license, passport, grant or audience). Note that this Charm does not make the impossible possible or allow an impoverished character to pay bribes she cannot afford, but it may allow the character to find away around such obstacles.

Speed the Wheels

Cost: 8 motes
Duration: One task
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Deft Official's Way

Through the use of this Charm, a character can cause a bureaucracy to accomplish a task in record time. An Exalted using Speed the Wheels causes the bureaucracy to work (her Essence + 1) times faster for the duration of a particular job. For example, a character with Essence 3 who uses the Speed the Wheels Charm to expedite an appeal to the ruler of a city to use the naval dry-docks to repair her ship would be able to make the appropriate appointments and cause the proper papers to be read four times faster than normal. Note that this Charm simply speeds the process, it does not increase the character's chances of success. Characters who wish to improve their chances of success should use Social Charms or Deft Official's Way.

Bureau-Rectifying Method

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One investigation
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Speed the Wheels

An Exalted who knows this Charm may use it to aid in an investigation of corruption in a bureaucracy. In order for this Charm to work, the character must either request or take part in the investigation. The result will be an actual investigation — there will be genuine inquiries, real punishments and, potentially, even meaningful reform. If this Charm is used by an Exalted who is heading an investigation, it causes questioned individuals to be much more cooperative than they would be otherwise, and subordinates who would otherwise go through the motions of their jobs will instead actually attempt to ferret out the corruption.

Note that there is a finite upper limit on the how wide-ranging an investigation this Charm can support. If the character is reforming an entire bureaucracy, the Storyteller should feel free to force him to commit Essence to this Charm more than once. Typically, an Exalted can bolster the efforts of (her Essence rating x 20) individuals per use of this Charm. This Charm does not cause an investigation to be launched, merely reinforces one that is already in progress.

Indolent Official Charm

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One task
Type: Simple
Minimum Bureaucracy: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Deft Official's Way

Solar Exalted can use their powers to slow as well as hasten the actions of a bureaucracy. Through the use of the Indolent Official Charm, a character may bring the wheels of government to a screeching, grinding halt with regard to a single task. Papers will be lost at every turn, every petty official who could possibly interfere or request a bribe will do so, and petitions and requests will inevitably end up neglected at the bottom of the pile. For every point of Essence the character possesses, the amount of time the bureaucracy needs to accomplish a given task is multiplied by one.

The character need not be part of the matter to be delayed, but must know about the situation well enough to specify it. Characters may invest Essence speculatively (for example, "the ongoing secret police investigation into my affair" is a perfectly valid target, even if the character isn't sure one exists) but will not know if the Charm had an effect or not — as long as she keeps the Essence committed, an investigation that meets her criteria will be hampered. As with Bureau-Rectifying Method, there is an upper limit to the size of the delay that the character can impose. Each use of this Charm can hinder the efforts of a number of investigators equal to (the character's Essence x 20).

Foul Air of Argument Technique

Cost: 12 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One task
Minimum Bureaucracy: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Indolent Official Charm

The character can cause a request, project or initiative to become the kiss of death for a bureaucracy. Meetings produce nothing, initiatives fall into pointless squabbling, and departmental infighting hampers even the simplest matters. Worse, the fighting spreads, rippling out from the issue in question to other matters and, eventually, hampering or even crippling the bureaus involved. When bureaucracies are subject to the Foul Air of Argument Technique, they operate at a fraction of their efficiency equal to 1/(1 + the Essence score of the character), so a character with Essence 1 would make a bureau work at 1/2 efficiency, one with Essence 2 would make it work at 1/3, Essence 3 at 1/4, and so on. A character cannot use multiple invocations of this Charm on the same bureau at once.

Linguistics

Whirling Brush Method

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, a character can write or copy with superhuman speed. While this does not allow the character to write creative works much faster than normal (since the physical act of writing rarely slows a creator), she can write quickly enough to copy even a large book in a single day or make an accurate transcript of a rapid conversation containing multiple parties. While the character's writing doesn't destroy pens from writing too fast, they do wear down at the regular speed, and the character's writing consumes the regular amount of ink. The product of this Charm is a copy of the work in question, not a perfect facsimile. It's written in the character's own hand, contains as many errors as if the character had done it at normal speed without the use of a Charm and is otherwise an imperfect rendering of the original.

Flawless Brush Discipline

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 3

Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Whirling Brush Method

Sometimes a character needs more than a copy of a document; sometimes he needs a perfect facsimile. Flawless Brush Discipline allows a character to produce just that. The character copies at her regular writing speed, but the result is not a copy, but a perfect replica of the original document, indistinguishable from the original. A character without colored inks trying to copy illuminated text will produce a carefully shaded monotone replica of the original. Flawless Brush Discipline copies only text and illustrations — it does not allow the character to forge seals or impressions affixed to a document.

Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Whirling Brush Method

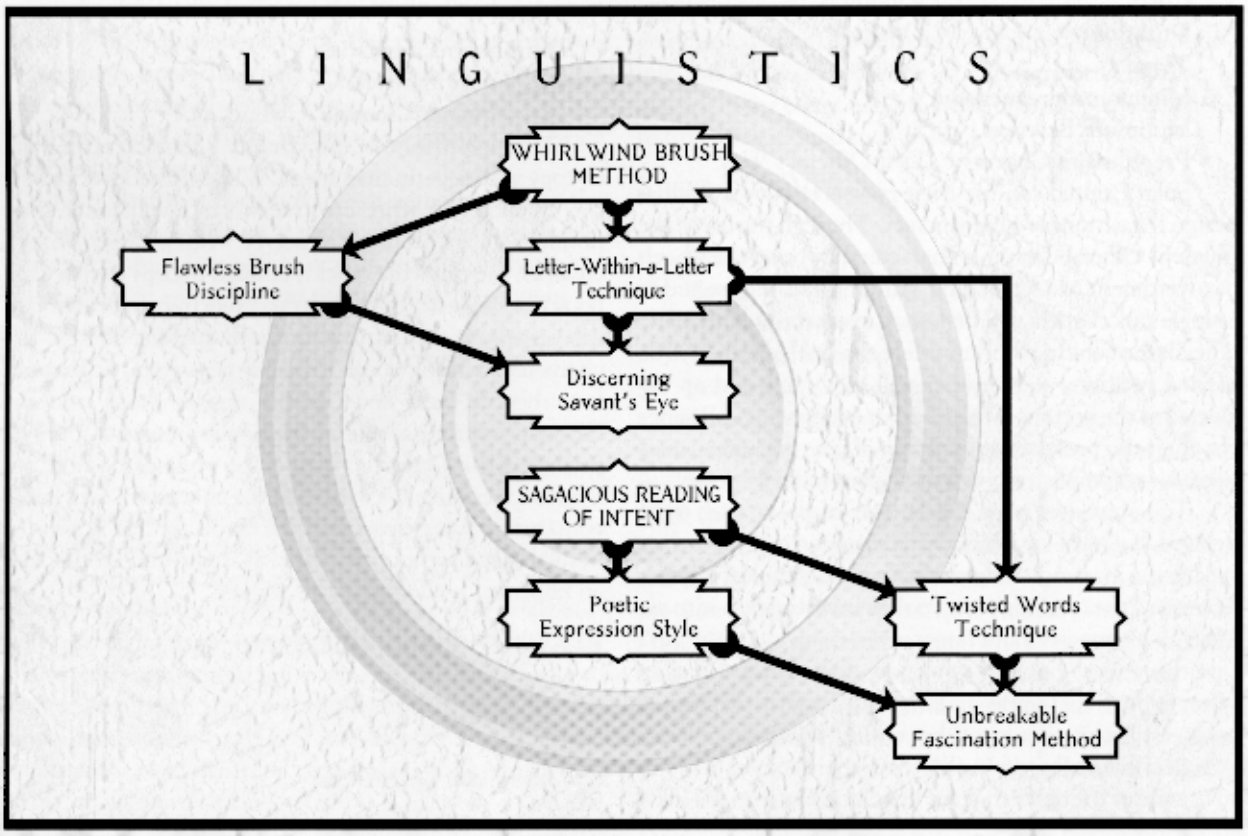
By carefully injecting allusions, subtle stresses and loaded word choices, the character can imbed a secret message in a document of seemingly innocuous character — a shopping list, a bill of lading or even a quickly dashed note. The intended recipient (who must be very familiar to the Exalted using this Charm) is the only one who will be able to comprehend the message, though an Exalted using the Sagacious Reading of Intent Charm will be able to detect the Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique's use. The hidden message can be no longer (in words) than one-half the length of the "cover" document.

Discerning Savant's Eye

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One hour
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Brush Discipline, Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique

The character can make out the minute traces of writing that was once readable but has now been damaged or erased. Examples are palimpsests, water-soluble inks that have been left in the rain and stone inscriptions that have been rendered unreadable by purposeful vandalism or the action of the elements. Writing of which effectively no traces remain — writing on paper that was burnt to ash or on stone that has been smashed to gravel — cannot be recovered with this Charm.

Discerning Savant's Eye does not give the character the ability to understand a language she cannot normally read, though she may use Flawless Brush Discipline to make a perfect copy of the material as it originally appeared for later translation.



Sagacious Reading of Intent

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm allows a character reading a letter, book or other form of written text to understand the author's biases, opinions and hidden agendas. Characters using this Charm when reading a book will immediately discern if and in what direction the material is slanted. Note that this works even if the author is unaware of her own biases. In addition to the obvious uses, this Charm is very useful for detecting literary forgeries.

Poetic Expression Style

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Sagacious Reading of Intent

Exalted with this Charm can convey ideas and concepts through pantomime. The character's gestures carry far more meaning than any normal mortal's. While there is little room for subtlety or poetry, the character can communicate even complex concepts across the language barrier. For example, a character could convey, "He offended my honor, and I pursue him to seek redress in an honorable duel. Surrender him to me or face my wrath." However, a character is unlikely to succeed in acquiring a lover, unless "I am attracted to you and desire a sexual encounter" is all the wooing the potential partner requires.

Twisted Words Technique

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique, Sagacious Reading of Intent

Twisted Words Technique allows one of the Exalted to weight certain words or meanings in a speech or written work in order to sway the listener or reader to a particular way of thinking. Characters with a permanent Willpower lower than the character's Essence score who read or listen to the Exalted's words will come to agree with the idea she presents. Players whose characters possess a Willpower less than twice the Exalted's Essence must make a Willpower roll or have their characters swayed into a favorable view of the matter. Note that the concealed message must be germane to the topic at hand, but the character can seem to advocate an idea on the surface while the subtext is negative, or vice versa.

Unbreakable Fascination Method

Cost: 8 motes, 1 health level per hour
Duration: Special
Type: Simple
Minimum Linguistics: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Poetic Expression Style, Twisted Words Technique

A character using this Charm can speak in such a magnetic and engaging fashion that listeners simply cannot do anything else but pay attention to what he's saying. When he activates this Charm, the Exalted's player makes a Manipulation + Linguistics roll. Thereafter, players of characters with an Essence less than the Exalted's who hear the Chosen speak must make a reflexive Willpower roll with a difficulty equal to the number of successes made on the Linguistics roll. Those who fail are entranced by the character's voice and are held enraptured until the character ceases speaking for more than a few seconds.

It is not necessary to speak the Exalted's language to succumb to this power. Attack or other obvious open hostility causes the effect of this Charm to end. However, *only* direct physical danger will disrupt the effect. A brave or suicidal Exalted could, for example, use Unbreakable Fascination Method to keep a platoon of guards in a burning building with him until it was fully aflame, but they would not stand there listening as the flaming timbers started crashing down around them.

Ride

Master Horseman's Eye

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 1
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

With but a glance, the character can evaluate the age, health and temperament of a mount or draft animal. The Charm will effortlessly penetrate the sorts of ruses used to pawn substandard animals off at full price.

Horse-Summoning Whistle

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Eye

Through the use of this Charm, the character silently summons her mount, which will move toward her at the best possible speed. This Charm has a range of (10 x the character's Essence) miles. The character must have built up a relationship with the summoned animal — typically riding and

caring for it for several days — before it will respond to this Charm. While the character's steed will always respond to this call and will not become distracted or lost, it's still an animal. It can't get through locked doors or penetrate complex obstacles any better than it normally could.

Phantom Steed

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Horse-Summoning Whistle

This Charm allows a character to summon up from raw Essence a great white steed with a burning golden mane and tail. It has the same statistics as a warhorse of excellent quality, but it is tireless and fearless and need not eat or sleep.

Spirit-Steadying Assurances

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Master Horseman's Eye

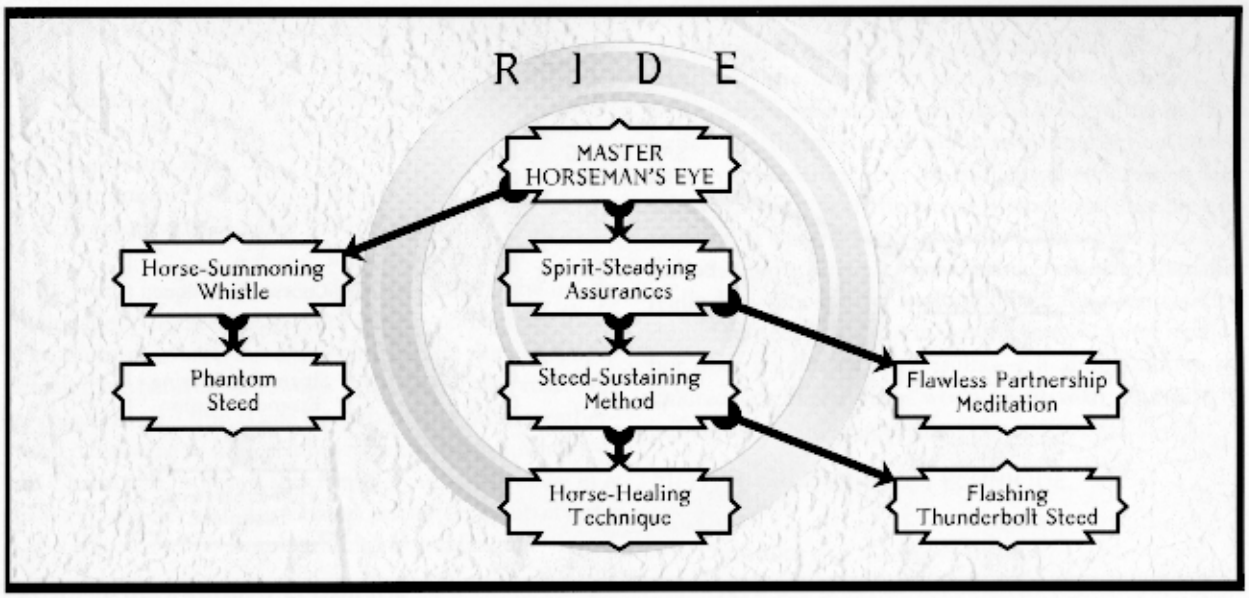
Horses' instincts are to run away from what they perceive as danger — the smells of fire and blood or the sounds of conflict and wounded animals. This often puts them at odds with adventurous riders, who are probably trying to reach and linger near the stimuli. Through the use of this Charm, a character can render her mount immune to terror for the rest of the scene, thus obviating the need for rolls to control the animal around frightening sensations.

Steed-Sustaining Method

Cost: 6 motes per mount
Duration: One day's march
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 5
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Steadying Assurances

While their speed in battle is tremendously greater than that of a man on foot, traveling long distances with mounts is often slower than walking. Mounts must be rested during the march and must be cared for before and after the day's travel. Through the use of this Charm, the character can reduce the need to care for animals during travel. Mounts under the effect of this Charm are very resistant to problems such as thrown shoes and injured hooves and legs. They can also keep up a brisk walk for an entire day without resting, even when burdened with armored riders or cargo panniers. Keep in mind that, unless this Charm is used on the characters' remounts or their pack animals, the characters' overall marching speed will still be limited by the speed of the slowest beast in the group.





Horse-Healing Technique

Cost: 4 motes, 1 health level
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Steed-Sustaining Method

A sick or injured mount is a serious problem for its rider. Even outside of a battle, the loss of an animal can be a tremendous expense. By the use of this Charm, the character heals a number of his mount's health levels equal to his Essence rating. If the mount is unwounded, then this Charm cures any diseases or parasites the beast possesses. This Charm does not take effect instantly — the character must spend a scene tending to the mount by dressing its wounds, feeding it, currying or otherwise grooming it — for the healing effects to set in.

Flawless Partnership Meditation

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Spirit-Steadying Assurances

Through the use of this Charm, the Exalted and her mount become as one. The player need never roll for her character to accidentally be thrown or fall from her steed. Her mount will never panic, and she receives a bonus equal to her Essence score to all Ride rolls that cause the horse to jump, rear or otherwise perform tricks.

Flashing Thunderbolt Steed

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Ride: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Steed-Sustaining Method

By using this Charm, the Exalted can imbue his steed with endless energy. While under the effect of this Charm, the steed can run at full speed for a full scene (a full march, outside of dramatic time) without becoming fatigued. This Charm has no long-term ill effects on the mount — the Exalted pays the price in Essence and his own health.

Sail

Salty Dog Method

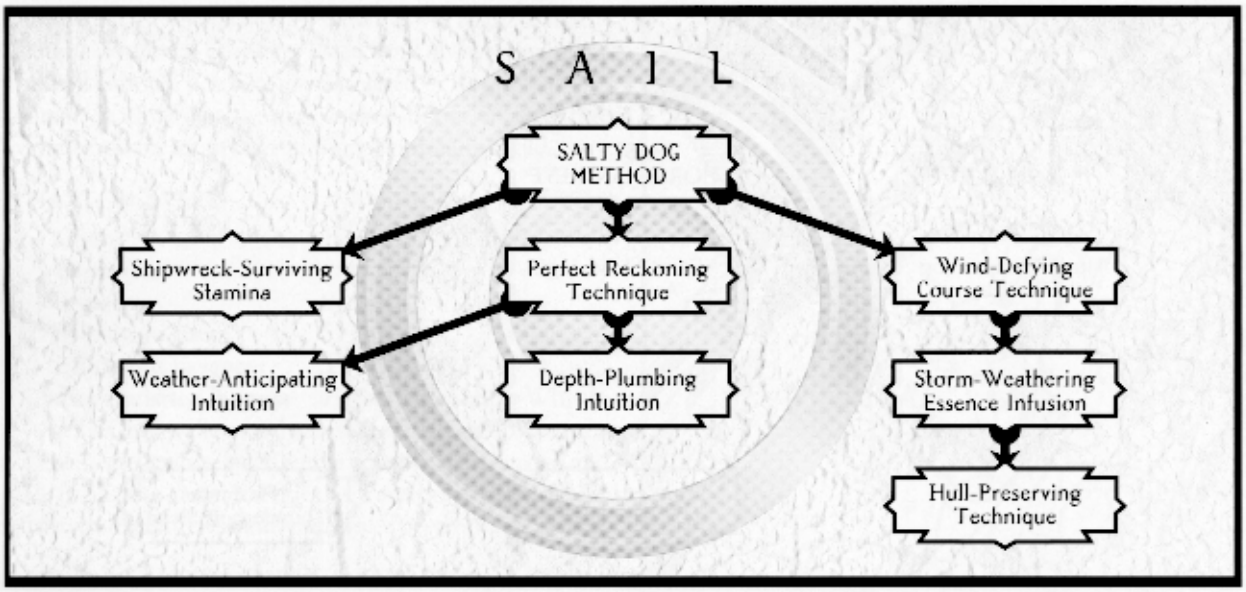
Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sail: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

While this Charm remains in effect, it gives the character perfect sea legs. While the Charm lasts, the character will not lose his balance or footing, even on the most storm-tossed ship, though collisions and so forth may still require Dexterity + Athletics rolls. Characters using this Charm will not become seasick, even on rough seas.

Shipwreck-Surviving Stamina

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One day
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sail: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

A character using this Charm can survive indefinitely in water. She will never tire from treading water and may



drink seawater without ill effect. She is protected from sunburn and other exposure effects and can hold her breath for up to five minutes per point of Stamina. This Charm does nothing to ward off hostile sea life, nor does it protect a character from inclement weather.

Perfect Reckoning Technique

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

Through the use of this Charm, the character may learn exactly where her ship lies in relation to landmarks and locations she already knows. This knowledge allows her to pinpoint her location, but only in regard to known landmarks. The Charm does not allow the character to indirectly divine the local geography by sensing her distance from previously uncharted reefs or lost islands.

Weather-Anticipating Intuition

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 3
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Reckoning Technique

By placing her finger in the water, the character can instantly predict future weather for a number of days equal to the Chosen's permanent Essence. The only thing that will cause this forecast to err is the influence of powerful magic changing the weather — this Charm will foresee even freak squalls and unexpected fogs.

Depth-Plumbing Intuition

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Sail: 4
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: Perfect Reckoning Technique

By feeling the Essence flows in the world around him, the character can sense the depth of the water for (100 x his Essence rating) yards. This knowledge allows him to discern harbor channels, sense reefs and so on. Note that awareness of a hazard doesn't necessarily mean that the character's ship is agile or well-handled enough to avoid the obstacle.

Wind-Defying Course Technique

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Salty Dog Method

A character using this Charm while aboard a ship can tack much more closely to the wind than would be normal for his ship and rigging. Ships affected by this Charm cannot sail directly into the wind, but they can sail very near to it and, in general, handle more lightly and responsively than normal. Aside from additions to maneuverability and speed, which vary from ship to ship, the pilot may add the Essence rating of the character invoking the Charm to her Dexterity + Sail for ship handling. A ship that has had multiple Exalted use this Charm on it only benefits from the character with the highest Essence score.

Storm-Weathering Essence Infusion

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wind-Defying Course Technique

Storms are great banes of ships, particularly the lightly built galleys that ferry cargo between the ports of the Inner Sea. Storms can snap masts and oars, capsize ships or simply smash them beneath vast swells. While under the protection of this Charm, a ship is safe from these and other weather-related disasters, so long as it has a competent helmsman — no Charm can protect a ship drifting without steerage in a gale. A character with this Charm can protect a ship of up to (20 x the character's Essence rating) feet in length.

Hull-Preserving Technique

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 health level
Duration: One turn
Type: Simple
Minimum Sail: 5
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Storm-Weathering Essence Infusion

Even more dangerous to a boat than a storm is a sharp impact — from the ram of a warship or from a rock or shoal. Even running aground on a sandbank can gut a ship or damage it so severely it founders. By bracing herself against the ship and channeling Essence through it at the moment of impact, the character can cause her magic to absorb the damage, leaving the ship unharmed. This effect can cause severe damage to a ramming vessel, as the preserved ship yields only as much as the impact of the ram pushes it sideways through the water. The character may have to use this Charm multiple turns in a row if the ship suffers multiple impacts. For example, if the ship fails to turn away and scrapes longways across a reef, the character may have to renew the Charm every turn the scraping continues. As with Storm-Weathering Essence Infusion, a character cannot use this Charm to protect a ship of more than (20 x the character's Essence rating) feet in length.

Socialize

Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Socialize: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

Use of this Charm allows a character to instantly read the superficial subtext of a social situation. The surface attitudes ("she is angry at him") and relationships ("she respects him a great deal, perhaps he is her father or like a father") of the individuals involved are apparent at a mere glance. Characters who are skilled at concealing their motives will project the exterior emotions they are pretending. It's up to the Storyteller's discretion as to how skilled a character must be to appear to feel other than they really do — Socialize or Performance 2 and a serious effort should suffice. This Charm is not a form of mind reading, nor does it offer precise results — it simply allows the Exalted get his bearings when faced with confusing or unfamiliar social situations.

Motive-Discerning Technique

Cost: 6 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Socialize: 4
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Wise-Eyed Courtier Method

This Charm allows an Exalted to tell, through a short, topical interaction, what the target's true motives in a situation are. For example, an Exalted who talked to a woman about her sick father would be able to tell if she was at his bedside out of love, filial loyalty or greed for her inheritance. Where there are mixed motives, the Exalted will gain a rough feel of in what proportions they occur. This power is especially useful for Exalted leaders, as it lets them keep their entourages free of the self-serving and the corrupt.

Mastery of Small Manners

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Socialize: 2
Minimum Essence: 1
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character attunes himself to the patterns of human interaction and allows Essence to guide his responses to social situations. While this Charm is active, the character will reflexively respond in the appropriate and mannerly fashion for the situation at hand. These manners are not deep, covering only simple things such as greetings, eating customs, gift customs and flirtation mores. The character will never make an unintentional faux pas but is not charismatic so much as simply well behaved. Too much active interaction spoils the effect of this Charm.

Knowing the Soul's Price

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Socialize: 5

Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Mastery of Small Manners, Motive-Discerning Technique

Everyone has a price, though it may not be in gold. It could be aid in a personal endeavor, flattery, sex with an unachievable object of desire, the recovery of a lost possession or any number of things — but there is invariably something that, when offered, will crack the strongest morals and ethics. To have it, an individual will betray trusts, engage in corruption, plant evidence — almost anything. This Charm allows the character to know what that thing is for a given individual. It is up to the Storyteller to define precisely what a given person's weakness is — the things some people require may be difficult or impossible to obtain, while other characters may simply need to be offered a large sum of money. Generally, the higher a character's Temperance score, the more likely her price will be something other than money and the more likely it will be difficult to arrange.

Understanding the Court

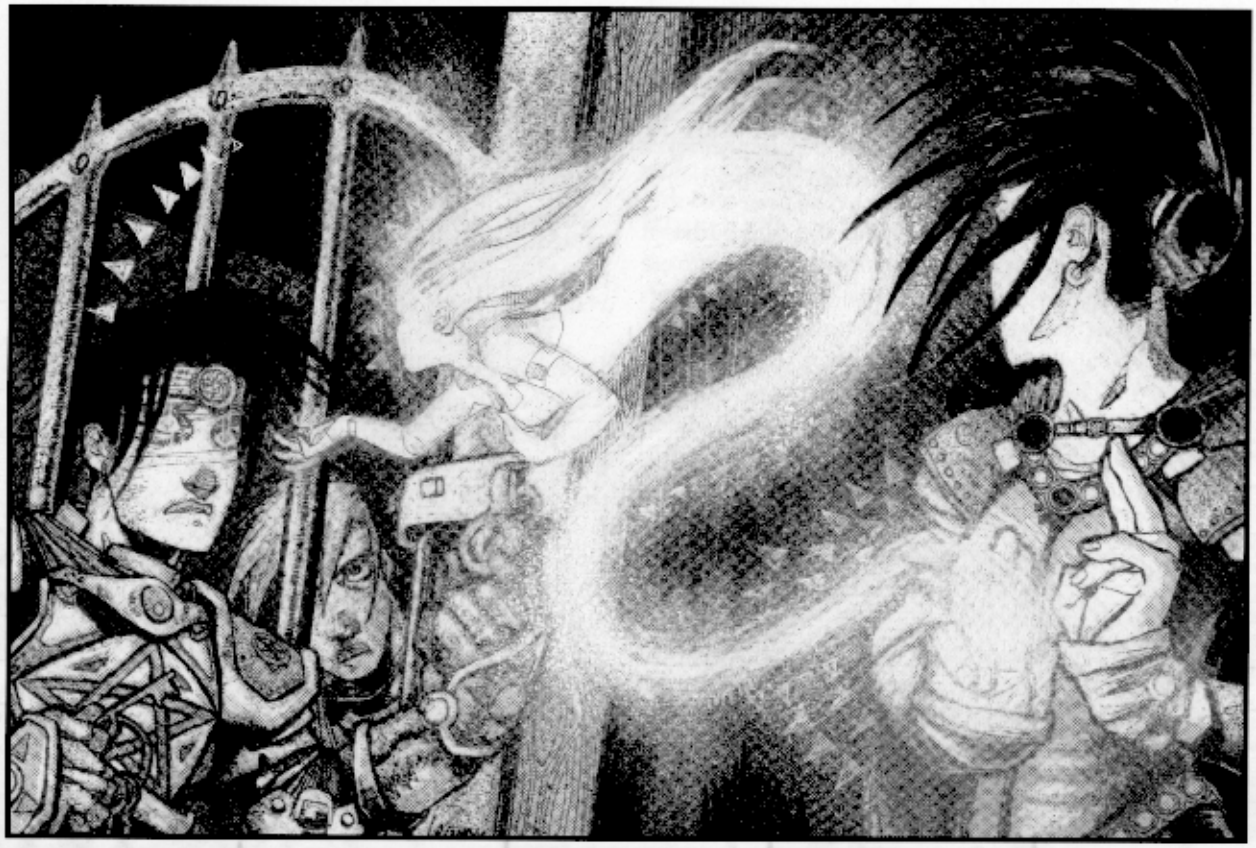
Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Socialize: 5
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: Motive-Discerning Technique

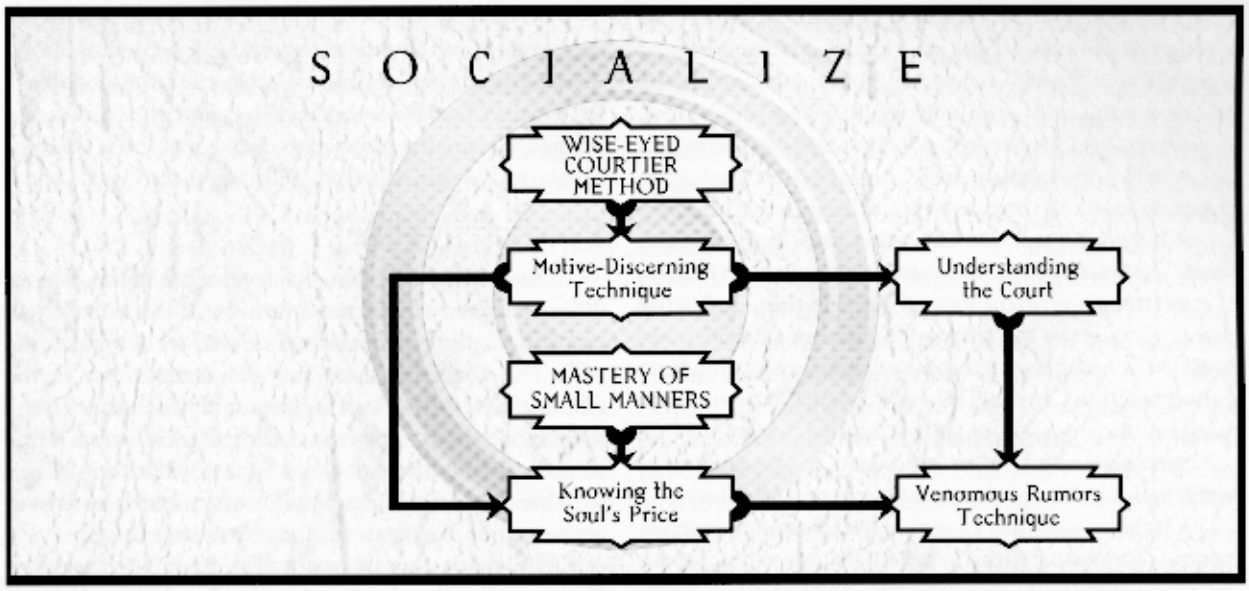
This Charm allows an Exalted to read motives on a grand scale, gaining a picture of the flows and eddies of power in an extended social situation such as a king's court or a mercantile community. The character must spend a number of days equal to (10 - her Essence score) in observation of the situation. The character need not be part of the social milieu to observe, she need simply be close to it; a character disguised as a servant or maid will be able to observe adequately as well. It's up to the Storyteller to decide how the information is conveyed. Some Storytellers will want to draw a diagram, while others may simply explain who says "jump!" and who asks "how high?"

The character's understanding is limited by what she has witnessed — for example, if an important figure is absent during her period of observation, she may be able to deduce a great deal from how people act in his absence but will not know for certain until she can reconstruct her picture once he has returned. Also, the character's preternatural understanding is rooted in the time it was made. Unless the mapped situation is extremely stagnant, events will cause the pattern of interactions to change over time. Characters relying on years-old understanding are liable to make errors in judgment.

Venomous Rumors Technique

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One day
Minimum Socialize: 5





Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Knowing the Soul's Price, Understanding the Court

Through the use of this Charm, an Exalted can turn her target into a social outcast. The target's words seem false, tentative or devious, by turns, and even his friends notice the worst parts of his personality — and all of it is true. This Charm is not an illusion. It simply brings the worst parts of the target to the fore. The Exalted must touch her target to use this Charm. For a full day afterward, the target takes a penalty on all social rolls equal to twice the Exalted's Essence score.

Combos

Normally, an Exalted can use only a single Charm per turn. However, with long practice and focus, the Exalted can combine Charms together, becoming able to use two or more Charms of instant duration in the same turn. The effect of a Combo can often be quite impressive. For example, an Exalted who has mastered the Combo of Peony Blossom Attack and Fire and Stones Strike can make several attacks per turn *and* do extra damage on all of them. The number and power of the Combos an Exalted has mastered are a better measure of her power than the raw number of Charms she knows.

Developing Combos

Characters develop Combos through long exercise of their powers, devoting hours of effort toward integrating their abilities and understanding their Charms and how they interact. Many characters will have done this prior to the beginning of play, as least to a limited degree. Starting play with a Combo costs a number of a number of freebie points equal to the number of Charms in the Combo.

During play, a character can develop Combos through arduous practice. The experience cost of Combos developed during play is equal to the sum of the minimum Ability values of the Charms. However, Storytellers don't have to let a character learn a Combo just because the player has enough experience points saved up. Combos are hard, they don't just develop overnight or when you really need them. Think about martial arts movies — the characters go through arduous training to learn their new secret moves or are forced to find teachers. Make learning new maneuvers part of the game, not just a matter of writing something new down on a character sheet.

General Guidelines

Combos may only be developed between Charms of instant duration. A Combo can include more than two Charms but cannot include the same Charm more than once. Storytellers are always free to veto the Comboing of certain Charms, and the Storyteller's decision is final when it comes to defining how a given Combo works.

Once a Combo is bought, it is set. While there is no limit to the number of Combos a character can develop, a character cannot add Charms to a Combo after she develops it. A character who wishes to add another Charm to a Combo will have to purchase the Combo again, with the additional Charm in it. The character will then know both versions of the Combo.

When a Combo is activated, there is an unmistakably brilliant display of Essence. Any character present will know that the Exalted is using a Combo the moment she pays the temporary Willpower to activate it. However, he will not know the exact nature of the Combo until he has seen it used once. The display of a Combo's activation is very distinctive, and once a character has seen it activated, he will be able to recognize it if he sees it again.

Timing

Combos allow a character to use two, three or more Charms in a given turn. Don't worry if this seems like it could get confusing. This section presents a point-by-point

description of how the different Types of Charms work together in a Combo. There are a lot of rules, but it's not as complex as it looks — the core concepts, beneath the precise wording and occasional repetition, are simple ones.

Simple — A Combo can have only one simple Charm in it.

• If there are supplemental Charms in the Combo, the character *must* use them to benefit the simple Charm.

• If there are reflexive Charms in the Combo that can benefit the simple Charm, the character *may* use them to do so.

• If there is an extra action Charm in the Combo, the character *must* use the simple Charm a number of times equal to the number of actions she would have gotten from the extra action Charm. The extra action Charm must be based on the same Ability as the simple Charm.

Supplemental — There is no limit to the number of supplemental Charms that can be part of a Combo.

• If there is a simple Charm in the Combo, the supplemental Charm *must* be used to benefit it. Unless the Charm's description specifically states otherwise, supplemental Charms can only benefit simple Charms from the same Ability.

• If there are no simple Charms in the Combo, the supplemental Charm *must* benefit the character's dice action. Unless the Charm's description states otherwise, supplemental Charms can only benefit uses of the Ability they are based on.

Reflexive — There is no limit to the number of reflexive Charms that can be part of a Combo.

• If there is a simple Charm in the Combo that can legally benefit from the reflexive charm, the character *may* use the reflexive Charm to supplement it.

• If there are no action-type Charms in the Combo, the reflexive Charm *may* be used to supplement the character's dice action if it can legally do so.

• The reflexive Charm may also be used outside the character's dice actions, as normal. However, if the character wishes to use a reflexive Charm prior to her initiative, she must explicitly declare she is activating a Combo, tell the Storyteller which Combo it is, and spend the point of temporary Willpower to activate the Combo when she pays the cost of the reflexive Charm.

Extra Action — Only one Charm of the extra action type may be used in a given Combo.

• If there is an extra action Charm in a Combo, the character *must* activate it.

• If there is a simple Charm in the Combo, the character *must* use it a number of times equal to the number of dice actions the extra action Charm would normally have granted. In this case, the extra action Charm does not grant extra dice actions.

• If there are no simple Charms in the Combo, then the character *must* take the number of extra actions the Charm would normally grant.

• If there are supplemental Charms in the Combo, they *must* be used to benefit every action the character makes, be it a normal dice action or an action-type Charm.

• If there are reflexive Charms in the Combo, they *may* be used to benefit any of the character's dice actions or simple Charms. They *may* also be used outside of the character's dice action, but if she uses the Charm before her initiative, then when she uses the reflexive Charm, the player must declare that she is using the Combo and pay the temporary Willpower to activate it.

Paying the Price

Developing a Combo enables the Exalted to use two different Charms in the same turn, but this is not without cost. Channeling so much Essence is an act of tremendous will. The character must pay the normal cost of the Charms involved, as well as the cost of the Combo, and if she cannot afford to pay the cost of all the Charms in the Combo, then it does not work. Some Combos will have a variable cost. In this case, the character must be able to activate the Charms in the Combo at least once.

The character must also spend a point of temporary Willpower in order to activate the Combo, above and beyond the cost to activate the Charms that make up the Combo. A character can activate a Combo only once per turn and cannot use a Combo during a turn she uses Charms of any other sort.

Examples

In order to help illustrate how the Combo rules work, three examples have been included. One is of a simple Combo, one is of a Combo involving multiple actions, and one is of a very complex Combo involving Charms of every type. Players and Storytellers should use these as guidelines for building their own Combos.

One of the things to note is the amount of attention paid to how the Combo looks when it is in use. While a Combo is a complex *mechanical* effect, don't just focus on that aspect of it. It's also a character's super attack move, and with very rare exceptions, those sorts of things involve complex and showy special effects. Keep in mind that a Combo of any significant size is going to burn enough Essence to make the character's anima banner flare up. A cool description is entirely merited.

A Simple Combo

Bleys wants Dace to be dangerous to attack, to match the character's battlefield experience. Bleys decides to make a Combo containing the Melee Charms Dipping Swallow Defense and Solar Counterattack. After Dace activates the Combo, he will be able to block attacks against him and lash out with brutal counterstrikes at the same time.

To use the Combo, Bleys would mark off a point of temporary Willpower whenever Dace first used the Dipping Swallow Defense Charm. After that, he would have the option of using one or both Charms against any hand-to-hand attacks. Each time he uses one of the Charms, he must pay the Charm's Cost, so each use of Dipping Swallow Defense costs 2 motes, each use of Solar Counterattack costs 3 motes, and use of both has a total cost of 5 motes.

Note that even though the Charms are reflexive, if Dace wishes to use them both during a turn, he must declare he's activating the Combo and spend the temporary Willpower to do so the first time he uses one of the Charms. If he used one without activating the Combo, then he wouldn't be able to use the other during the turn because a character can't use a Combo during a turn when he uses a Charm.

This Combo would cost 2 freebie points during character generation because there are two Charms in it. During play, it would cost 6 experience points because Dipping Swallow Defense has a minimum Melee of 2 and Solar Counterattack has a minimum Melee of 4.

Description: When using this Combo, Dace's anima flares to envelop his body, surrounding him a glow of burning white. His stance becomes set and precise as Essence pervades every fiber of his body, and he moves like a merciless combat automaton, reacting instantly to every possible threat, ready to block and counterstrike. As Dace burns more Essence using the Combo, the glow grows, until he stands at the center of a heatless, flickering fire.

A Multiple Action Combo

Rebecca wants Harmonious Jade to have a powerful, fast attack to help her even up the odds when she's outnumbered. She builds a Combo of the Archery Charms Arrow Storm Technique and Fiery Arrow Attack, so she can launch a volley of burning arrows at her opponents.

To use this Combo, Rebecca would mark off 10 motes of Harmonious Jade's Essence and 2 points of her temporary Willpower. One point of temporary Willpower goes to activate the Combo, and 8 motes of Essence and the other point of temporary Willpower go to activate the Arrow Storm Technique. The last 2 motes of Essence go to kindle the first arrow Harmonious Jade shoots. For every arrow she fires as part of the Arrow Storm Technique, she *must* pay an additional 2 motes of Essence. If she doesn't have enough Essence to pay the cost of the Fiery Arrow Attack Charm, then the Combo ends immediately, and her action for the turn is over.

This Combo would cost 2 freebie points to develop during character creation because it contains two Charms. During play, Rebecca would have to spend 7 of Harmonious Jade's experience points to develop it because Arrow Storm Technique has a minimum Archery of 5 and Fiery Arrow Attack's minimum Archery is 2.

Description: When Harmonious Jade uses this Combo, her arrowheads glitter from within, radiating diamond-like rays. As they leave the bow, they burst into white-hot flame and trail slowly dissipating contrails of misty Essence. As she fires arrow after arrow, the effects grow brighter and more intense, until the arrows are great roaring comets of Essence with tips like shattered suns.

A Complex Combo

Phyllis wants to develop a very powerful attack for Swan that allows him to hold his own against multiple opponents and demonstrate his mastery of Martial Arts. She decides to build him a very complex, powerful Combo that will let him weaken multiple opponents, while still protecting himself.

She chooses to build a Combo with the Martial Arts Charms Striking Serpent Speed, Crippling Pressure-Point Strike and Serpentine Evasion and the Athletics Charm Thunderbolt Attack Prana. Normally, a character cannot include supplemental Charms from another Ability in a Combo, but Thunderbolt Attack Prana specifically notes it can be used in attacks and Combos involving another Ability.

When she uses this Charm, Phyllis marks off 4 motes of Essence and 1 point of temporary Willpower for the Striking Serpent Speed. She then rolls Swan's Essence, and for every success, Swan can make an extra attack that turn. So, he will have his regular attack for the turn, plus a number of extra attacks equal to the number of successes she achieves on his Essence roll. Normally, he could use the extra actions for whatever he wished, but when extra action Charms are in a Combo with simple Charms, all extra actions *must* be use to repeat the effect of the simple Charm.

Swan *must* make every attack he can. For each attack, he must spend 8 motes of Essence and 1 point of temporary Willpower. Three motes of Essence go to power the Crippling Pressure-Point Strike, and the Thunderbolt Attack Prana requires the point of temporary Willpower and the other 5 motes of Essence. The combined effect of the Charms is that for each success that Swan rolls on his damage roll, the target takes a -2 penalty to all actions for a number of turns equal to Swan's Essence, rather than a health level of bashing damage.

Also, if Swan is attacked before his initiative, he can choose to activate the Combo. He would spend 1 temporary Willpower to activate the Combo and then spend 1 mote of Essence to roll a number of dice equal to his Essence score to dodge the attack. This defensive aspect of the Combo is very important, since characters cannot split their dice pools during turns when they use Combos.

This Combo would cost 4 freebie points to develop during character creation because it has four Charms in it. Developing it with experience points would cost 13 experience points because that is the sum of the Charms' minimum Abilities — 2 for Serpentine Evasion, 4 for Crippling Pressure-Point Strike, 4 for Striking Serpent Speed and 3 for Thunderbolt Attack Prana.

Description: When Swan readies himself to launch this attack, he shrinks into a tight crouch, then explodes upward in a leap, lashing out in every direction. He himself blazes with golden Essence, and each blow he strikes emits spherical shockwaves of white energy. When he lands in a defensive stance, his eyes burn with golden fire, and his anima banner roars like a bonfire, spreading its brilliant wings above him.

Sorcery

The magic of Charms comes naturally to the Exalted — Essence flows easily through them, enhancing their Abilities

and making impossible feats trivial. Yet, this primal sort of magic is not the only power the Chosen can command. The Exalted can channel Essence by will alone, shaping it to match their whims and changing the very fabric of reality. This art is known as sorcery, and through a combination of will and Essence, an Exalted magician can obliterate her enemies utterly, cross kingdoms in an eye blink or force demons and elementals to bow their heads and serve her.

Yet, there is a reason that few Exalted choose to use this power, relying instead on the simple magics of their Charms. To work sorcery is to command the essential forces of the very universe. It is demanding, torturous and dangerous. A mishap can drive a character mad, burn her to ashes in a flood of uncontrolled Essence or leave her the slave of the very inhuman forces she sought to control.

And, for all its power, sorcery is slow and inefficient compared to Charms. A powerful sorcerer might lay a kingdom to waste, but the days-long ritual will do her no good when she is faced with a sword-wielding foe. While there are faster spells, they are still slow compared to Charms. The quantity of Essence required to work magic ranges from "large" to "vast," and many lesser Exalted cannot afford to pay the price of powerful spells. Indeed, lesser Exalted such as the Dragon-Blooded cannot even attempt the more powerful magics — the divine spark within them is too weak to reshape Creation on any but the simplest of levels. Those who master sorcery are beings to be feared — even the short-lived Terrestrial Exalted have centuries to perfect their art. More powerful Exalted sorcerers have literally millennia to perfect their craft.

Once, in the First Age, sorcery was an art and a field of scholarly inquiry. There were vast libraries and academies dedicated to the study of the arcane arts. The Celestial Exalted ruled as wizard-kings, and every Exalted of any education could work magic of the Terrestrial Circle. But those days are long gone. Today, much of that wisdom is forgotten — destroyed in wars and disasters or locked away by the jealous few who remember the secrets of the lost First Age. Newly reincarnated Solar Exalted who wish to gain sorcerous power must deal with these beings — bartering with them, tricking them and perhaps even threatening them to yield their wisdom.

Rules

Sorcery is more than just a sophisticated Charm, and it has rules all its own. Storytellers and the players of sorcerously inclined characters should make sure they are familiar with the guidelines before play starts. The less rules material that needs looked up during play, the smoother the game will run.

Using Sorcery

In order to cast a spell, a character must meet the following criteria:

• She must know the Occult Charm that allows her to cast spells of that circle. A character who wishes to cast a spell of the first circle must know the Charm Terrestrial Circle Sorcery. A character who wishes to cast a spell of the second circle must know the Charm Celestial Circle Sorcery. A character who wishes to use a spell of the third circle must know the Charm Solar Circle Sorcery.

• She must know the spell she wishes to cast. Spells in Exalted are too complex and tricky to read from a book. In order to work magic, the character must memorize the spell, learning it by heart and internalizing its patterns. This knowledge costs experience points.

• She must have enough Willpower to activate the appropriate sorcery Charm and enough Essence to pay for the spell. A character cannot cast a spell if she cannot pay for it fully on the turn she activates the Charm to cast it.

To cast a spell, the character spends the Willpower to activate the appropriate Occult Charm and, at the same time, spends the Essence required to cast the spell.

Casting Time

After the character has spent the Willpower and Essence to power the spell, she must focus and channel the power into the effect. Because the character releases the Essence and then shapes it, the result is an awe-inspiring display of power. The magic flows and coruscates around the character, displaying the sorcerous characters she utters and shaping itself into the final magical effect. For lesser spells, the effect is simply impressive. For more powerful spells, it can create a display hundreds of feet high that is visible for miles.

This process is not instant. A character who uses a Terrestrial Circle spell must concentrate on shaping the magic until his action the next turn, when he releases the spell effect as his action for the turn. Celestial Circle spells require an additional turn of shaping; the character activates the Charm on one turn, shapes the magic as his action for a full turn and releases it as his action in the third turn. Solar Circle spells require two turns of shaping; the character activates the Charm as her action one turn, spends her full action for the next two turns shaping the magic and releases the magic as her action on the fourth turn of casting.

This is the minimum casting time for a spell of a given circle. Many spells are rituals and require much longer casting times. If a spell has a longer-than-normal casting time, the description of the spell will specify how long it takes to cast.

Distractions

The shaping process requires intense concentration. Characters who are shaping Essence can do nothing but stand in place and work magic as their action for the turn. They cannot move, split their dice pool to perform another action in addition to working magic, carry on conversations or gesture. Characters can only use the anima power of their caste and perform dice actions that are permitted by the continuing effect of Charms invoked earlier in the scene (for

example, the Dodge Charm Flow Like Blood, which allows the character to dodge attacks in turns after it is invoked).

If a character is hit or forcibly distracted during the shaping process, there is a strong possibility that she will lose her concentration. This usually causes the half-shaped Essence to dissipate harmlessly, though there is a real risk the spell's energies will run terribly awry, causing strange half-formed magical effects or delivering terrible Essence burns to everyone in the vicinity. Whenever the sorcerer is distracted, his player must make a reflexive Wits + Occult roll. The difficulty of this roll is normally 1, but if the character has suffered injuries, then the difficulty is the number of health levels of damage he has suffered. In addition, the Storyteller should make certain to apply any wound penalties the character incurs to the Wits + Occult roll.

If this roll fails, then the magic dissipates, and the half-shaped Essence flees in a great rush of light and power. However, if he botches, the effects can be terrible. The magic may run terribly awry, or it could dissipate as brilliant heat and burning light rather than in a harmless display of wasted magical power. These Essence burns do one point of lethal damage per mote of Essence the character used to power the spell, which can be soaked as normal. The burns effect the caster and everyone in a radius of one yard per circle of the spell. Botches where the magic runs awry in a more colorful fashion are left up to the Storyteller to detail.

Learning Sorcery

Sorcery is a difficult and exacting field of study. Characters cannot simply sit down over a tome and learn a spell in the course of an evening. Characters must spend a week studying the magic per circle of the spell, and the player must spend 10 experience points.

It is assumed that the character has a chance to practice his magic while he is learning the spell. He may not cast it fully, but he will at least be able to work through some of the shaping. This sort of practice causes quite a display, however, and so, characters may have to cast a spell purely from "book learning."

In this case, the sorcerer's player must make a Wits + Occult roll when the character releases the spell, with a difficulty equal to the spell's circle. If the roll fails, then the character fails to cast the spell properly. If the roll botches, treat it as if the caster botched on a concentration roll when distracted during spellcasting, except that it is far more likely for the magic to go horribly awry than to cause Essence burns. A player need only roll to cast a spell until the character casts it successfully once — after that, it is assumed he can successfully repeat the magic without mishap.

Inventing Sorcery

Crafting spells is a demanding profession, requiring months or years of effort on the part of the sorcerer. The magician must have a properly stocked library to research her magic and a testing field of some sort where she can unleash magic without fear of leveling city blocks. For a magician researching war magic of the Solar Circle, finding a place to test her magic harmlessly may be quite a challenge. It is said that, in the First Age, such magicians typically had their demon servants ferry them to rocky islets in the middle of the open ocean, where they could work their prodigies of destruction without worry of causing accidental harm.

The mechanical process of creating a spell is simple — the sorcerer's player must make extended Intelligence + Occult rolls. The difficulty of these rolls is equal to the circle of the spell: 1 for first circle spells, 2 for second circle spells and 3 for third circle spells. The number of successes the character must accumulate is equal to 10 x the spell's circle. Characters can roll once every month of full-time research. A month, in this case, assumes the character is working about 10 hours a day, five to six days a week, on her magic. Characters who pursue research as a sideline get one roll about every 300 hours of time spent researching a spell.

It is possible that a character may be working from partial notes or attempting to recreate the effects of a well-known but lost magic. In this case, the player rolls Intelligence + Lore, rather than Occult. The difficulty of the roll is the same as for inventing the spell, and the player rolls once per month of character effort, but the number of successes required is a reduced by the amount of information about the spell the character already possesses. So, if a character is attempting to recreate a spell for which she has half the information, she need only collect half as many successes as if she was trying to invent it.

When attempting to recreate a spell in this fashion, the quality of the character's arcane library is paramount. Storytellers should feel free to increase the difficulty of the Lore roll if the character's library is inadequate. A character who has nothing but a dog-eared primer for First Age apprentices and a sheaf of stolen notes may well be better off to invent a spell independently with the same effect rather than to try to recreate it from partial information.

The Terrestrial Circle

The Terrestrial Circle is the least of the circles of magic and is so-named because it is the mightiest sort of magic that the Dragon-Blooded can master. That does not imply that it is weak. Indeed, a master of Terrestrial sorcery is a being to be reckoned with, who can slay a man with a gesture or call up storms with a glance.

Death of Obsidian Butterflies

Cost: 15 motes

Death of Obsidian Butterflies calls forth a cascade of sculpted obsidian butterflies with razor-sharp wings, whose wingspans vary from an inch across to almost a foot. Flashing over the character's shoulders and past her sides in a glassy black torrent, they slash through the air in a pattern approximately 30 yards wide, 100 yards long and 10 yards high.



Brush, grass and small trees are cut off near the ground. Larger trees and wooden structures suffer serious damage. Stone is defaced but structurally unharmed.

When the character releases the magic, her player makes a Perception + Occult roll and adds a number of automatic successes equal to the sorcerer's permanent Essence. Everyone in the attack pattern not behind an inch or more of stone or several inches of wood is subject to attack. Characters who wish to defend against the Death of Obsidian Butterflies do so as if it were a hand-to-hand attack that had scored as many successes as the caster's player achieved on her Perception + Occult roll. The obsidian butterflies have a raw damage of 8, plus extra successes on the attack roll. This damage is lethal. The thousands of shattered glass butterflies don't go away afterward, and walking barefoot in the area is not recommended.

Demon of the First Circle

Cost: 20+ motes

The spell calls up one of the lesser inhabitants of the demon realm — a twisted, hellish world, different from our own. Though these wicked creatures resent being called into the burningly clean air and bright yellow sunlight of our own world, they can be shackled into magical bondage by a cunning sorcerer. Casting this spell is a ritual of many hours, which must be begun at sundown and end at the stroke of midnight, and it involves a great number of ritual implements and protective sigils — casting it outside a dedicated ritual space is difficult. The actual spell itself costs 20 Essence, to open the portal to the demon realm and call forth the target.

Once summoned, the sorcerer and demon engage in a contest of wills, reflected by opposed Willpower + Essence rolls. During the casting of the spell, the character may spend temporary Essence in 5 mote increments to decrease the demon's dice pool. Every 5 motes of Essence so spent decreases the demon's Willpower + Essence pool by one die. Continue to roll, once per turn, until one of them accumulates three more successes than the other. If the character gains three or more successes, the demon will serve him loyally for a year and a day or perform one task, which can be of indefinite duration. If the demon wins, the character's player may make a Wits + Occult roll at difficulty 3 to banish the demon back to Malfeas. If he fails, the demon is free of the protective diagram. Typically, this means an excruciating death for the sorcerer, as he rarely has the Essence to defend himself.

Demons are the favored tools of the sorcerer because their actions cost no Essence and their capture does not outrage the Celestial Hierarchy.

Emerald Countermagic

Cost: 10 or 20 motes

Through the use of Emerald Countermagic, the Exalted can protect herself and her companions from hostile sorcery. If the character spends 10 motes of Essence, she can secure her own person against hostile magic. She crosses her arms or makes a gesture of defense and is surrounded by a nimbus of multicolored energy. Until the end of the next turn, any hostile magic of the Terrestrial Circle that attempts to affect her shatters, and its effects are wasted. However, the character must partially maintain her defensive stance and is thus at a -2 penalty on combat, athletics and similar actions during her next turn.

The caster can also opt to spend 20 motes of Essence and halt the effects of a Terrestrial Circle spell within a radius of (the caster's permanent Essence x 50) feet. Spells in the midst of being cast are shattered, and spells that are currently in effect are undone.

Emerald Countermagic is fast and requires no shaping — it takes effect as soon as the character spends the Willpower. Countermagic cannot banish demons or other spirits. Countermagic is not a clean or quiet process — spells in the midst of being cast are huffed out in a puff of Essence, and already existing magics are deliberately torn asunder. While the magician who used the countermagic will remain safe, those nearby may receive minor flashburns, small fires may be kindled, and weak "echo" effects of the disrupted spell may wash over the area.

Impenetrable Frost Barrier

Cost: 20 motes

This magic protects the sorcerer and his companions from attacks by enemies with ranged weapons. A thin, cold blue-gray plume of mist issues from the magician, extended 10 to 15 feet from him, depending on the wind conditions and the local temperature. The mists swirl about any incoming missile attacks, buffeting them and coating them in ice. Most such weapons are dragged hopelessly off course, and the impacts of the rest are cushioned. For the next 20 minutes, attacks by ranged weapons against the sorcerer or anyone standing in the mist suffer a difficulty penalty equal to twice the sorcerer's permanent Essence rating. The mists are of limited power — they cannot stop attacks from large weapons such as ballista bolts and hurled boulders.

Infallible Messenger

Cost: 10 motes

The sorcerer conjures up a minor spirit, a cherub, purely from Essence. Cherubs are multicolored humanoid figures only a few feet tall, with six glittering blue-chrome wings. The sorcerer whispers his message, which can be no longer than a few minutes, into the cherub's ear. He then names and describes a target. The cherub is able to travel from one point to another nearly instantly — traveling hundreds of miles an hour, it can traverse the world in less than a day. Unless the target's location is mystically obscured, the cherub will find the recipient, deliver the message perfectly to her ear (even using the original sender's voice), then dissipate.

Invulnerable Skin of Bronze

Cost: 20 motes

Until the sun next crosses the horizon, the character's skin hardens into shining bronze, as supple and as flexible as silk, but as invulnerable and cold as any metal. The character has +6 soak against lethal damage and +12



against bashing. Moreover, if the damage is totally absorbed by the Skin (that is, under 6 dice of lethal or 12 dice of bashing), the attacker rolls no damage dice at all. The character inflicts an extra two dice of bashing damage in bare-handed combat and weighs an extra 100 or so pounds. While Invulnerable Skin of Bronze does not impede his motions or slow him, caution is advised near bodies of water and deep mud.

Stormwind Rider

Cost: 15 motes

The sorcerer calls up a mighty wind and wraps herself in it. The result is a dust devil — a tornado-like vortex that's smaller and less devastating to the landscape. The dust devil flies low, usually just touching the ground. The stormwind vortex can jump obstacles 50 feet wide or 30 feet high but cannot actually fly. It can survive falls of 30 feet and completely protects the sorcerer and any other contents during such short falls. If the vortex falls any farther, it will dissipate on impact. The vortex will completely absorb the damage of falls up to 60 feet and reduces the damage caused by longer falls. Treat long falls as if they were 60 feet shorter for the purposes of determining damage.

The dust devil carries the sorcerer and 200 pounds per point of her Essence at speeds of nearly 100 miles an hour. The vortex is immensely maneuverable, and a careful magician can even fly one through a forest, so long as the growth isn't too thick. The first time the character sets foot on the ground, the vortex, and the magic, dissipate.

Characters inside the vortex can see out, but it requires some concentration to fly it, and this consumes the sorcerer's attention. The roaring winds add 2 to the difficulty of missile attacks into or out of the vortex and render speech nearly impossible. It is very hard to see who is riding in a stormwind vortex, so it's generally considered polite, if you are using one to travel, to land a fair distance away and approach on foot.

Summon Elemental

Cost: 10+ motes

This spell is much like Demon of the First Circle and uses, generally, the same rules, with the following exceptions:

- It can be cast any time — the ritual takes four hours and need not start at sunset or end at midnight.
- The roll to banish the elemental if the binding fails is at regular difficulty, not at +2 difficulty.
- The elemental will not serve for more than a lunar month, and any task it is set to cannot take longer than a year and a day.
- The kidnap and enslavement of elementals can outrage the Celestial Hierarchy. Characters who mistreat their servants or who bind the subjects of a powerful spirit entity are likely to earn the ire of the spirit world.



Wood Dragon's Claw

Cost: 10 motes

Until the character wishes otherwise, the her hands warp and twist into the shape of huge gnarled claws of oak, lesser replicas of those that adorn the forepaws of the great elemental dragons of Wood. The character does Strength + 4 lethal damage in unarmed combat, and he can harmlessly block lethal attacks with his Dexterity + Brawl pool. The Wood Dragon's Claw offers no protection against aggravated attacks. The character's clinches automatically do Strength + 2 lethal damage rather than bashing damage, and holds do 2 points of lethal damage per turn, soaked as normal. For more information on holds and clinches, see page 239 of the Drama chapter.

The character's hands do actually turn into thorny paws several times their normal size — fine manipulation is impossible, and attempts to hold or carry anyone automatically inflict 2 points of lethal damage, soaked as normal.

The Celestial Circle

The Celestial Circle of magic is so-called because it is the most powerful circle of magic that the Celestial Exalted can use. These magics are out of the reach of the Dragon-Blooded, who cannot gain enough purchase on reality to reshape it in such dramatic fashions. Though the now-vanished Empress could cast spells of the Celestial Circle, it was always assumed she used some sort of First Age artifact to enhance her magical ability.

Blood of Boiling Oil

Cost: 30 motes

The character gathers a roiling ball of Essence between her hands. This sphere glows brighter and brighter as the power within it grows. It starts a dull brick red, but the color grows in brightness and saturation until it is, first, the color of red-hot iron and, then, an unearthly, glittering scarlet. The sphere then vanishes noiselessly and without display, but the sorcerer's hands are left covered with glowing scarlet arcane characters.

If the sorcerer lays a hand on another living being, the power flows from her hands into the unfortunate victim, transmuting his blood to boiling oil. Most mortals die instantly when subjected to this attack, and even the Exalted can be slain with but a single touch.

To resolve this attack, the sorcerer must make a successful unarmed attack on the target. This attack can be combined with a regular attack, a Charm or even a Combo, allowing a powerful warrior-mage to unleash an attack of unparalleled power. The first time the sorcerer makes a successful unarmed attack, her player must immediately make a reflexive Charisma + Occult roll. For every success, the target takes the sorcerer's Essence in levels of lethal damage. This damage is applied before any other damage from the attack and can be soaked only by the victim's Stamina.

The Exalted are resistant to transmutation. When this Charm is used on an Exalted target (or any similar target, such as one of the Fair Folk or an embodied spirit), subtract the target's Essence from the number of successes the sorcerer's player achieves on the Charisma + Occult roll before determining damage. If the sorcerer's successes are reduced to 0 or less, then the magic dissipates but does no harm to the target.

This spell persists for a number of minutes equal to the sorcerer's Essence or until the first time she touches a living creature. The sorcerer cannot touch herself by accident, but can accidentally touch an unintended target. This spell has no effect on unliving creatures.

Demon of the Second Circle

Cost: 30+ motes

This spell is very similar to Demon of the First Circle, save that the being it calls forth is a more powerful creature. Rather than a mere servant of darkness, the being summoned is powerful and dangerous, capable of wreaking great evil in the world of men — or performing great feats when bound to the will of a sorcerer.

As with Demon of the First Circle, this spell is a complex ritual that must be started at sundown and ended at the stroke of midnight, but it can only be cast on the night of the new moon or during the Calibration. The actual spell itself costs 30 Essence.

The sorcerer and demon engage in a contest of Willpower + Essence, as per Demon of the First Circle. However, the cost to reduce the demon's dice pool is 10 motes per die, not 5. The roll to send the demon back to the demon world is still difficulty 3, though the Exalted is much less likely to be able to defeat the demon if his summoning fails.

Demons of the second and higher circles are vengeful, intelligent creatures. Though they cannot reach the world of men on their own, if somehow given an opportunity to avenge themselves on a sorcerer who treated them cruelly or enslaved them, they will.

Dolorous Reflection

Cost: 20 motes

The character extends his hands, then crosses them in a defensive posture, and hundreds of bands of mystical energy swirl around him in a brilliant, surging cocoon. The bands fade from view within a few seconds, but their effects remain. The effects of Dolorous Reflection persist for as long as the caster maintains his defensive stance and linger for a number of minutes afterward equal to twice the character's permanent Essence score.

Until the effects of the spell end, any missile attack on the character is caught in the swirling bands of Essence, whirled around her at tremendous speed and hurled back at the character who launched it. The sorcerer's player makes a reflexive Wits + Occult roll for each reflected attack. This roll acts as the attack roll for the reflected attack, and the character who launched the attack may dodge it as if it was

a normal attack. Reflected attacks are made without range penalties and do their original base damage — the stronger the attack, the stronger the reflecting force.

Unlike the Impenetrable Frost Barrier, Dolorous Reflection effects large missiles, such as ballista bolts and trebuchet-hurled boulders. However, Dolorous Reflection has no effect on attacks composed of Essence, such as the Archery Charm Solar Spike. It does effect Essence-spawned material attacks, such as Death of Obsidian Butterflies or Phantom Arrow Technique. Dolorous Reflection also has no effect on hand-to-hand attacks.

This spell is a favorite of Lunar Exalted warriors, who prefer to fight their opponents hand to hand.

Incomparable Body Arsenal

Cost: 30 motes

For a number of hours equal to her Essence score, the character transforms her body into an automaton of rust-streaked black iron. This form is roughly similar to her natural body, but it appears roughly cast and is studded with rivets where the "segments" meet. A character used this spell need not breathe and is immune to poison and the effects of exposure to extreme temperatures.

Incomparable Body Arsenal grants the character +10 soak against both bashing and lethal damage. If an attack does less than 10 dice of raw damage to her, not a single damage die is rolled. In addition, the character's body is a trove of hidden weapons. Her skin can sprout rusty iron spikes at will; double-bladed, eight-inch knives flick from her fingertips; barbed iron spears extend from her palms at whim; and her mouth can drop open, puppet-like, to fire a razor-sharp multi-bladed projectile on a long iron chain. Whatever sort of weapon she needs simply extends from her metallic form.

The character's Strength and Stamina both increase by 2, even if that causes them to rise above 5. The character does Strength + 8 lethal damage in a clinch. She may make Speed + 3, Accuracy + 1 hand-to-hand attacks using her Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee (whatever the character prefers) that do Strength + 6 lethal damage. The character can make these attacks out to a range in yards equal to her permanent Essence.

This spell is not compatible with the use of armor or weapons, for such accoutrements fade into the character's statue-like form. The character moves at normal speed, and unlike the Invulnerable Skin of Bronze, the character weighs no more than normal while under the effect of this spell. While she cannot swim, she need not worry about sinking into deep mud or falling through wooden floors.

This spell is a favorite of the Abyssal Exalted, who use it to carry out assassinations and strike fear into their foes.

Sapphire Countermagic

Cost: 15 or 20 motes

This spell is similar to Emerald Countermagic, save that it protects against spells of the second circle. Other than its increased cost in Essence and Willpower and its ability to effect spells of the second circle, this spell is identical to Emerald Countermagic. However, the side effects of countering the spell are greater because more Essence is released when the spell is cast. These side effects can even cause some damage, in cases where the countered spell is very powerful.

In addition to its ability to counter magic of the second circle, Sapphire Countermagic can also overpower the magic of the Terrestrial Circle totally. A Terrestrial Circle spell countered through the use of Sapphire Countermagic is hushed instantly, with no collateral damage from the released Essence.

Travel Without Distance

Cost: 25 motes

The mighty among Exalted sorcerers can travel across the face of the world in an instant, if they must. The character gathers a blazing corona of Essence around him and shapes it through a complex series of finger and hand gestures. When he releases the magic, he is wrapped in whirling clouds of Essence and energy. When the clouds dissipate, he is gone. The character can choose to reappear in any location he has seen before, either with his own eyes or through scrying, so long as the destination is within 10 miles per point of the character's permanent Essence and it is not warded against magical travel and spying.

The character's arrival is as spectacular as his departure, with the same whirling clouds gathering out of nothingness and then dissipating to reveal the character, still wrapped in a corona of Essence and channeling the magic with complicated gestures. This arrival takes the same amount of time as the character's departure — two full turns — during which the character is vulnerable to attack. If the character is disrupted on arrival, there is no chance of a botch: The spell's Essence has been expended carrying him to his destination. However, the character will be disoriented (-2 to all actions) for (6 - his Stamina) hours. Travel via this spell is quite safe — the character need not worry about appearing inside a chair if the furniture has been rearranged or about appearing in midair if the building has been burnt down or demolished. Instead, he will simply be displaced to the nearest stable, open space with solid footing.

This spell is a favorite of the Sidereal Exalted, who use it to come and go undetected from their meeting places, some of which can only be reached through the use of this spell.

The Solar Circle

Solar Circle magic is the province of the Solar Exalted alone. Though the other Celestial Exalted can each excel in their own strengths — the Abyssal in necromancy, the Sidereal in astrology and the Lunars in shapechanging — none can match the versatility and raw power of Solar Circle magic.



ADAMANT COUNTERMAGIC

Cost: 20 or 25 motes

This spell is similar to Emerald or Sapphire Countermagic, save that it is more expensive and protects against spells of the third circle. However, the side effects of countering Solar Circle spells are very impressive — the shattered fragments of Essence are themselves as powerful as many first circle spells. The effects of shattering a spell of the third circle can kill unprotected mortals and lay waste to the countryside — but compared to the effects of a spell such as Rain of Doom, they are nothing.

In addition to its ability to counter magic of the second circle, Adamant Countermagic can also overpower magics of the Terrestrial or Celestial Circles totally. A first or second circle spell countered through the use of Adamant Countermagic is stifled totally, without any side effects from the thwarted Essence.

DEMON OF THE THIRD CIRCLE

Cost: 40+ motes

A very powerful and dangerous spell, this magic calls up one of the demons of the third circle, powerful and dangerous beings who serve as the chief lieutenants and generals of the Yozis. The demon princes themselves cannot be summoned, for the power of the gods imprisons them.

As with Demon of the First Circle, this spell is a complex ritual that is difficult to perform outside of the confines of a specially prepared ritual space. It must be started at sundown and end at the stroke of midnight, and it can only be performed during the Calibration, when the powers of light are at their weakest. In the Old Realm, all magicians gathered together at sunset during every night of the Calibration for a great feast that lasted until dawn, so that none might be tempted to dabble with the powers of darkness. This tradition continues to this day among the Dragon-Blooded, though none of them have the power to summon forth such creatures of evil.

The casting of Demon of the Third Circle itself costs 40 Essence. The sorcerer and demon engage in a contest of wills, as per Demon of the First Circle. As with Demon of the Second Circle, the cost to reduce the demon's dice pool is 10 motes per die, not 5. The roll to send the demon back to Malfeas if the binding fails is difficulty 5. A character who forces a Demon of the Third Circle to bow its head to him had best be prepared to deal with the sort of enemy he has just earned.

RAIN OF DOOM

Cost: 60 motes

This spell calls down a supernatural storm of vast proportions on the target. A rain of corrosive venom falls from the sky, while sickly green lightning lashes the ground. The venom falls in sheets from dusk till dawn and is corrosive enough to pit stone and warp glass. Wood bursts into thick red-orange flame at its touch, and metal simply dissolves. Living creatures exposed to the venom suffer terrible burns, and most humans and animals die shortly thereafter in convulsions.

For years or even decades after the storm, nothing but stunted scrub will grow on the land washed by the rain, and those areas that catch the runoff of the storm will be similarly blighted. The venom is neutralized by the touch of daylight, and it evaporates easily, so the devastation is limited. However, even several days after event, the venom can be dangerous to areas near the target that are not warmed or lighted by the sun.

The mechanical effects of the venom are as follows:

• Those exposed to the rain must soak one point of lethal damage on the first turn, two points of lethal damage on the second turn, three points in the third turn and so on. However, after the character leaves the rain, the damage ceases to increase every turn and stays steady at the damage the character received during her last turn of exposure. After a character leaves the rain, she continues to take damage until she has removed her soaked clothing (generally the matter of a single turn's dice action).

A character's armor adds to her soak. However, it is much harder to remove armor than clothing. An armored character will have to take the regular amount of time to remove her armor. Anything not made from Essence or one of the Five Magical Materials is ruined by exposure to the rain.

Characters exposed to the runoff take lethal damage only once. The amount of damage is determined by how much the character is exposed to and how diluted the runoff is with pure water. A character splashed with diluted runoff may only take 1 die of lethal damage, while a character full immersed in a pool of the pure venom might take 20 or more.

• Further, players of unExalted characters who come in contact with the rain or runoff must make a Stamina + Resistance roll at difficulty 2 or succumb to a painful, convulsive death over the next several hours.

• Also, characters outdoors have a 1 in 10 chance of being hit by lightning on any given turn. Characters hit by lightning suffer 12 dice of lethal damage, which can be soaked only with Stamina.

The Rain of Doom spell is somewhat complex to cast. The spell itself takes only three turns to cast, but the magic must be performed after the sun has touched the horizon during the evening. When the casting is complete, the sky beings to darken at unnatural pace with thick, oily clouds. The sorcerer must immediately begin traveling. He can walk, run or ride a beast, but he cannot fly or transport himself magically — he or his mount must actually tread the ground around the target.

The caster has from the time he finishes the casting of the spell until night has fallen fully to circumnavigate the area of effect. For the purposes of the spell, this sunset period



lasts about an hour. The sorcerer cannot recross his path, and he must reach his starting point before night falls fully. If the character crosses his path or fails to reach his starting point by the time darkness falls, the magic is wasted, and the gathering storm dissipates as though it had never been.

However, if the character successfully describes a circuit, then from an hour after nightfall to the rising of the sun, the area within it is lashed by the Rain of Doom. Outside of that area, a thick rain falls, mixed with sleet and hail, but nothing compared to the horror within the area of the spell's effect. Character who are outside the spell's area of effect — for example, a besieging army manning the siege lines — must take steps to protect themselves from the spell's venomous runoff, which is as lethal as the falling rain.

Rune of Singular Hate

Cost: 10 motes

This curse is the blackest and most foul that an Exalted can utter, and it sears and twists the soul of the target and of the sorcerer who pronounces it as well. The Rune of Singular Hate is but a single word, a word so sharp edged and hateful that a tongue can give it voice but once in a lifetime. As a result, the casting time is near-instant. A sorcerer who has sufficient Willpower and Essence can pronounce the Rune of Singular Hare as a reflexive action, so long as she is able to speak.

To speak the Rune, the character must be within earshot of the target, though the target need not hear the words. Even magical stillness will not prevent the target from hearing the curse in his heart if the sound would normally have reached him. The Rune of Hate can target only single individual, but if he is less than a god, a Yozi or a Malfean, the Rune will sear him.

The player of the target of the Rune immediately rolls the value of *each* of his character's Abilities, Attributes and Virtues — including Essence and Willpower — that he possesses a score in, one at a time. The player cannot botch these rolls, and 10s do not count as two successes on them. For every success the player rolls testing an Ability, Attribute or Virtue, his character retains one dot in it. Dice on which the player does not roll a success represent a dot that is lost, immediately and forever, from that Ability, Attribute or Virtue.

A character who is left without any dots in his Wits or Intelligence is reduced to a mindless vegetable. A character who is left without any dots in his Perception is deprived of all senses and cut off forever from the outside world. A character who is left without any dots in Willpower is reduced to will-less automaton, similar to what remains after the Fair Folk consume a being's dreams and hope. A character whose Essence is reduced to zero dies as his life force is snuffed out. An Exalted character whose Essence and Abilities are reduced below the minimum levels required to learn a Charm is unable to use it until he raises his Essence and Abilities back to the requisite levels.

The sorcerer pronouncing the Rune loses one dot in every Attribute, Ability and Virtue that she possesses a score in. As implied earlier in the description, a character can pronounce the Rune of Singular Hate but once in her life.



Tepet Ejava, better known as the Roseblack, crouched behind the gunwale of the Bitter Harvest. Glancing across the waves, she could see the rest of her squadron plowing toward the shore, oars moving in synchronization. Behind them were the burning hulks of the pirate's harbor squadron. Before them lay the buccaneer's den of Sharktooth, it's location long secret from the forces of the Realm.

All along the shore waited an army of pirates. Armed with chopping swords and boarding axes, cargo hooks and flensing gaffs, the cutthroats outnumbered her mercenary troops by three to one. Here and there, the outlaw's garish standards billowed in the sea-breeze. They were bandits and brigands, but it would still be a hard fight. A ship at sea required iron discipline to function, regardless of whether it was sailed by merchants, pirates or naval troops. Many had extensive experience fighting ashore as well, since many of the pirates looted ports and coastal towns as well as ships at sea. The Roseblack looked left and right at the galleys heaving toward the shore and felt confidence. Though her troops were mercenaries and Red-Piss Legion cutthroats, she would pit them against any imperial legion — even House Tepet's crack legions, so recently lost in the North.

Ejava's face hardened at the thought of her dead brother, and of the cousins, uncles and aunts lost in the fighting. Her house had paid dearly for the bravery of its Dragon-Blooded offspring. But they were gone to the Dragons now, and there was no changing that. There was only the need to make their sacrifice worthwhile and keep the honor of the house alive. If that meant using mercenaries and unBlooded officers, then so be it. The Dynasty might laugh at her methods, but there would be no disputing her results.

The galley neared the beach, and the tempo of the kettledrum changed. Arrows began to fall all around the vessel. The Roseblack glanced back and watched a man fall noiselessly beside her, dead from an arrow. The galley to the Bitter Harvest's left staggered in the water as a ballista bolt penetrated the upper deck and plowed into the bank of galley slaves beneath.

The shouts of her vessel's keleustes were audible even at the prow of the galley. The rowers backwatered their oars, and the laden vessel slowed. There was no concern with saving the vessel's keel during the beaching — win or lose, it wouldn't matter if the ship could sail at the end of the day, but too sharp a collision with the shingle would kill or injure most of the troops on board.

The Roseblack's jade armor glistened in the afternoon sun, and she leapt from the galley as soon as she felt the scrape of the keel grounding. She fell into the water and dully felt the smacks of arrows glancing from her armor. Ejava staggered upright, water streaming from her armor, and waded ashore into the mass of pirates. Behind her, the flotilla grounded. Here and there, ships capsized or broke as they struck the beach, but most landed successfully. Within seconds, talons of troops spilled over the gunwales of their galleys, following their commander's lead into the fray.

Burning Essence like a torch, the Roseblack plowed into the mass of buccaneers. In one hand, she swung her glittering jade daiklave, as fast and limber as a willow switch. From the palm of her other hand sprang a wickedly barbed javelin of wood, piercing the chest of an unarmored giant wielding a battle axe in each hand. She raised her sword above her head and then pointed forward with it. "To the standard!" she cried, and her words were lost in the din of battle. Her men needed no urging, and they fought their way ashore with the ferocity of the wolf that was their standard.

"Victory!" she shouted into the din. "Victory or death!"

CHAPTER SIX
DRAMA

The world of **Exalted** is a place of heroic adventure, legendary deeds and epic struggles between mighty magical beings. There needs to be a way to determine if your character succeeds or fails at a heroic feat. If your character won every single contest, the narrative would be boring, and if the outcome of an event was simply left up to the Storyteller's judgment, the game would seem arbitrary. Chapter Two: Systems introduced the basic elements of **Exalted**'s rules. This chapter shows Storytellers how to apply those rules to dramatic situations, from furious battles to death-defying races through burning jungles.

Dramatic Systems

The only things limiting a character's actions are the player's imagination and his character's skill. During a game session, characters — both those controlled by players and Storyteller-controlled characters — are sure to attempt a vast variety of tasks, many of which you could never have anticipated. Ultimately, it falls to the Storyteller to adjudicate these actions while still keeping the game flowing along.

Dramatic systems simplify the Storyteller's job by supplying rules for some common activities. Also, by outlining many "stock" dramatic situations, this chapter is meant to serve as an inspiration to Storytellers and players alike by showing the sort of things that can be expected to occur in a game of **Exalted**.

Obviously, not every one of these things will happen in a given game of **Exalted**, and they are by no means the only things that characters can do. They are simply meant to serve as a guideline to help develop player and Storyteller expectations. Storytellers shouldn't hesitate to improvise their own dramatic systems for new situations.

A number of these systems may be tried again if the first attempt is unsuccessful. Subsequent efforts may, at the Storyteller's discretion, increase the difficulty of the task (see "Second Chances," on page 93 of Chapter Two: Systems). Also, remember that a player may be able to apply her character's specialties to a given task. The Storyteller should make sure the player knows if her character's specialties will apply to a task before she attempts it.

Dawn Caste

Combat and violent conflict are important parts of dramatic narratives. What epic tale would be complete without vast battles, furious duels and heroic stands against overwhelming numbers? Because it is so complex and so important to the genre of fantasy adventure and because so much is at stake when swords are drawn, the rules for combat are quite detailed. Because they are warriors and natural masters of most martial Abilities, combat rules are detailed here, under the Dawn Caste's section.

Combat Turns

In combat, many things happen at virtually the same time. Since this fact can make things a bit confusing, combat is divided into a series of roughly three-second intervals called turns. During a turn, a character can do anything she could normally do in three seconds — run, leap, attack an enemy, furiously attempt to saw a bar out of a window while the rest of the Circle holds off the guards or anything else you can imagine. These actions are adjudicated by the Storyteller, guided by the rules in this section. Typically, the actions involve violence, though the Storyteller may choose to use combat turns at any time when timing and the order of actions is critical. It might be a race to climb up the intricately carved stone bridge, or it might be a climactic social scene, where a character's every word and gesture is extremely important.

Stage One: Initiative

This stage organizes the turn, determining what order characters act in. A character's base initiative is equal to the sum of her Dexterity + Wits. Depending on what kind of weapon she's wielding, it may be adjusted up or down. The result, after adjustment for the character's weapon, is her initiative rating.

Every turn, each player rolls a 10-sided die and adds the number rolled to her initiative rating. If two characters get the same total, the one with the higher Dexterity + Wits goes first. If tied characters have the same Dexterity + Wits, their players should roll off until the tie is resolved.

Characters act in the order of their initiative, with the highest-rolling character going first, then the next-highest and so on until all the characters involved have acted. There are only two exceptions to this rule. The first is if your character delays her action. A character may always choose to act later than her rolled initiative, even to interrupt or pre-empt the action of a character with a lower initiative total. If two characters both delay their actions and both finally act at the same time, the one with the higher initiative score for the turn acts first. The second interruption of the initiative order occurs in the case of a character declaring full dodge (see "Dodge" on p. 231 of this chapter) or aborting to a parry (see "Parry" on p. 230 of this chapter), both of which a character may perform even before her rolled initiative.

Movement

A character may move up to (her Dexterity + 12) yards in a turn, but this movement is her only action for the turn, and she can neither attack nor defend herself. Characters can move up to half this distance and still take actions other than running. Many characters will know Charms that allow them to move considerably faster than this. In this case, the Charm will specify how quickly the character can move and if she may take an action while moving.

Describing the Scene

Combat in **Exalted** should be cool. It is a time when characters' lives are on the line. Players can use their character's magical abilities to clean house, defeat their hated rivals and rescue kidnaped loved ones from the clutches of their enemies. And the first step to making a combat scene as cool as it deserves to be is *description*. If the Storyteller doesn't describe the scene in a way that brings it alive to the characters and provides them with plenty of props and backdrops for their stunts, then the combat might as well take place in a boxing ring somewhere.

But the Storyteller isn't the only person who matters. Players also bear a responsibility for making sure that combat moves swiftly and is enjoyable for everyone involved. As a player, you shouldn't just drone out, "I hit him with my mace," when it's your turn. Describe your character's facial expression, his stance, the kind of attack he uses. The point of the game *is* the game — there's no real goal other than that the people taking part enjoy themselves. By describing your character's combat maneuvers, you help make *all* of combat interesting for everyone involved, rather than a lot of boring waits between your opportunities to roll dice. Sure, it takes effort to make every move in a combat interesting, but attempting to do so increases your chance of success (since you may gain stunt dice from it), and it makes the experience more enjoyable for everyone involved.

In addition to describing the scene at the beginning of the combat, the Storyteller should begin each turn to recapping the events of last turn. This is important — the more often people's mental image is reinforced and updated, the better everyone's idea of what's going on will be and the less likely there are to be arguments over how Axe would never have jumped from the bridge if he had realized that the barges of the militia were within spearcast! Those kind of arguments tend to generate hard feelings, and too much rewinding of time damages people's sense of continuity, potentially ruining a game at it's moment of climax.

Non-Combat Activities

Characters will often attempt to perform actions in the middle of combat that have nothing to do with fighting. These will often be Athletics or Ride actions, as the characters leap, climb and race across the scenery in high-cinema fashion. However, they may be Larceny rolls to pick locks in a hurry, Resistance rolls as a character sticks his hand into a fire to grab an object or anything else a player might imagine. These are resolved like any other action. Remember that stunts aren't just for combat. In a

ORDER OF COMBAT EVENTS

1) Attack Roll: The attacker's player rolls Dexterity + the Ability that governs the kind of attack the character's making. Characters attacking unarmed may choose to use Martial Arts or Brawl — the only difference is the way the attack is described and the sort of Charms available to Exalted characters. The attacker's player must roll at least one success for his character to stand any chance of hitting the target.

2) Subtract Penalties, If Any: Subtract any fixed penalties from the attacker's number of successes. This typically means the modifiers for shield use and cover, but there may be other factors that subtract a fixed number of dice from the attacker's success. If the attacker still has successes left after penalties have been subtracted, go on to step three. If the penalties negate all the attacker's successes, then the attack misses.

3) Defense Roll (Dodge or Parry): The defender's player may be able to reduce the attacker's successes further by making a roll to dodge or parry the attack. Dodge rolls are Dexterity + Dodge. Parry rolls are Dexterity + whatever Ability governs the weapon the character is armed with. Dodges and parries are actions, and a character cannot necessarily dodge or parry every attack. For every success on the dodge or parry roll, the character subtracts one from the attacker's successes. If, after this, the attacker still has successes remaining, go to step four. If the attacker has no successes remaining, then the attack was successfully dodged or parried.

4) Determine Damage: Take the base damage of the weapon the attacker is using (usually the character's Strength + some fixed value) and add the attacker's remaining successes to it. This is the raw damage of the attack. Be sure to determine if the damage is bashing, lethal or aggravated — as a rule of thumb, unarmed attacks are bashing, while attacks with weapons are lethal. Attacks doing aggravated damage are very rare and always the result of magic of some sort.

Note To Storyteller Veterans: Most Storyteller system games add (the attacker's remaining successes -1) to damage, to reflect that one success is required to hit at all. **Exalted** dispenses with this extra step and counts every remaining success in order to speed up combat.

5) Apply Soak: After determining the attack's raw damage, subtract the target's soak value from it. A character's bashing soak is equal to his Stamina plus the bashing soak value of any armor he is wearing. Exalted soak lethal damage with one-half their Stamina (rounded down) and the lethal soak value of any armor they are wearing. UnExalted characters cannot soak lethal damage with their Stamina and must rely on armor to protect them. Soak can never reduce a successful attack's damage below 1.

6) Roll Damage: For every point of damage remaining after soak, roll one die. Every success on this roll inflicts a health level of damage on the target. *This roll cannot be botched, and 10s do not count as two successes for the purposes of this roll.*

7) Apply Damage: Mark down the number of health levels of bashing or lethal damage the target took. If the target has wound penalties, then they take effect immediately. If the target is reduced below Incapacitated by lethal damage, then he begins dying immediately.

movie or anime, there's very little that doesn't look cool. If the player has a fun or dramatic way to describe an action, allow him to make a stunt out of the action.

Keep in mind that a turn is only three seconds long during combat. Most complex actions will take more than one turn to accomplish. It's important for Storytellers not to punish players when the players' characters take part in essential non-combat actions during combat. Try to break hard, complex actions up into smaller, simple actions that can fit into a turn. First, many low-difficulty actions rather than one high-difficulty action means that a failure "costs" the player less and is less likely to frustrate her. People come to a game to have fun, and frustration is not fun. Also, breaking an action up into many smaller actions is more realistic. Actions are usually reduced down to one or two dice rolls outside of combat because roleplaying and rolling out every part of the task would be excruciatingly dull. However, in combat, exactly who has the lead at any given second in the crucial horse race between the Exalted and her hated rival is a matter of dramatic tension.

Whenever possible, don't just make the players roll dice. Give them a chance to come up with cool stunts. Let them make meaningful decisions. Obviously, you can't always do this, but when a player gets to make a decision that has a real effect on the game, it's a lot more involving than just rolling the dice.

ATTACKING

Attacking a target is as simple as making a skill roll. The attacker's player rolls his character's Dexterity + his

Order of Modifiers

Many things can modify a character's dice pool in **Exalted**. During certain complex situations, there may be three or four things modifying the character's dice pool. In order to prevent things from being hopelessly complex, you can go through the following checklist for an action to make sure you didn't miss anything.

Step 1 — Apply Bonuses: Add dice pool modifiers from stunts, specialties, equipment and any other similar effects.

Step 2 — Apply Negative Modifiers: Subtract negative modifiers. These are typically the negative modifiers for splitting the character's dice pool for multiple actions but also include range and wound penalties. Note that if you're splitting your dice pool to perform multiple actions, things like range and wound penalties apply to *every* action.

Step 3 — Apply Charm Modifiers: Apply Charms that alter the character's dice pool. Remember that, unless stated otherwise, when a character spends motes of Essence to add dice to her dice pool, she cannot add more dice than the Attribute + Ability that form the basis of the character's dice pool for the action.

Ability in whatever sort of weapon he's attacking with, be it Melee, Thrown, Brawl or whatever. If the player rolls one or more successes, the attack will hit its target unless the target blocks or dodges it.

Ranged Weapons

Attacking with a ranged weapon is very similar to attacking with a sword or fists. There are three main differences. The first is that, to use a ranged weapon, the character must have ammunition. Obviously, you need arrows to shoot a bow, and you can't throw knives at someone if you don't have any.

Second, ranged weapons have a rate, which is the maximum number of times a turn it can be fired *without magical assistance*. For example, most bows have a rate of 2, meaning that a character cannot split his dice pool to make more than two Archery rolls a turn; the bow simply cannot be operated any faster than that.

This limitation does not apply to actions involving Charms that grant a character multiple shots per turn. The magic of Essence allows characters to exceed mere physical concerns. A character using Charms to enhance the speed of her Archery is limited by the magic she employs, not by mere physical reality.

The third difference is that ranged weapons only operate out to a certain distance. Beyond a certain point, accuracy is impossible. To reflect this, each weapon has a range rating. Characters can attack out to the weapon's range in yards without penalty. Characters can attack out to twice the weapon's range with a -2 penalty to their dice pools. Attacks between two and three times the weapon's range are at a -4 penalty. Accurate shooting beyond three times a weapon's range rating is impossible.

Range penalties can never reduce a character's dice pool below 1 — even at up to three times the weapon's listed range, a character has some chance of hitting a target.

Defending

Characters in **Exalted** are assumed to be actively avoiding blows without giving ground or sacrificing their own attacks. This is why an attacker must have at least one success to hit her target. Yet, characters need to protect themselves more actively from attacks. Characters can do this be seeking shelter behind shields and cover and by parrying and dodging attacks.

Shields and Cover

The best type of defense is to hide behind something too thick for an attack to penetrate or to carry a shield, which is really nothing more than portable cover. Both cover and shields subtract successes from attack rolls against the character using them. That means these forms of defense not only make the character harder to hit, they also reduce the amount of damage an attack does, since the number of successes rolled is added to the damage of the attack.

Shields and Cover Table

Type	Hand-to-Hand Cover	Ranged Cover
Buckler	-1	-0
Target Shield	-1	-1
Tower Shield	-1	-2
25% Hard Cover (Shoulder and leg protected)	-0	-1
50% Hard Cover (Half body protected)	-1	-2
75% Hard Cover (All but shoulder, arm and face protected)	-1	-3
90% Hard Cover (All but eyes protected)	-2	-4



The amount of cover provided by a given type of shield or cover is listed in the Shield and Cover Table. Note that most kinds of shields and cover have different values depending on if the attacker is attacking at range via Thrown or Archery, or close in using Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee. Typically, cover is much more effective against ranged attacks because it's far harder to duck behind cover from a sword blow than a bowshot.

Type is the type of cover the character is sheltering behind. Typically, characters only benefit from the modifiers of the best type of cover they're behind, though the Storyteller may rule otherwise. Hand-to-Hand Cover and Ranged Cover are the number of successes that the cover subtracts from the roll to hit the target with a given type of attack. For example, a character using a sword to attack someone sheltering behind a target shield has one success subtracted from the attack roll if she is attacking the target in hand-to-hand combat. Two successes would be subtracted from the attack if she was, instead, making a ranged attack with a bow.

Parry

In addition to seeking cover, characters can attempt to block incoming attacks. To parry an attack, the player rolls the character's Dexterity + whatever combat Ability is appropriate to the weapon the character is armed with. Subtract the number of successes rolled on the parry attempt from the attacker's successes. If the attacker no longer has any successes, then the attack has been successfully parried, and the target takes no damage.

Assume that characters using the Melee, Brawl or Martial Arts Abilities can use their skill to block any unarmed attacks. Characters using the Melee Ability may also block attacks involving arrows, thrown weapons or melee weapons.

Characters using the Martial Arts or Brawl Abilities cannot parry these sorts of attacks without the aid of a Charm; even the callused palms of Exalted martial artists are not strong enough to stop the blows of weapons without the strengthening effects of Essence. Obviously, it is difficult to use the Thrown and Archery Abilities to parry attacks without well-described stunts, and a player whose character attempts to do so should be prepared to give the Storyteller an intensely cinematic explanation of exactly how it was done.

Parrying is an action, and characters who plan on parrying attacks later in the turn must split their dice pool in advance. Characters may well make errors in their estimation and find themselves open late in the round or, alternately, having "wasted" dice on the possibility of parrying attacks that never occurred.

A player may have her character may "abort to a parry" at any time before she has acted in a round, rolling the character's full Dexterity + whatever Ability she is using to defend herself to counter a single attack. The character may not split her dice pool in a turn when she aborts to parry, so a slow character set upon by multiple assailants will have to rely on the strength of her luck and her armor.

Note that it's worthwhile to have your character attempt to parry an attack she cannot possibly hope to stop entirely because even partial success will help reduce the amount of damage the attack does.

Dodge

Characters using the Dodge Ability can avoid almost any type of attack, provided they are able to give ground. Characters cannot dodge if they are tied up, mired in mud to their knees or fighting on a six-inch ledge (at least, not unless the player comes up with a really cool-looking stunt that describes how the character is able to pull it off). Dodging is mechanically the same as parrying, except that a character uses the Dodge Ability instead of the Ability governing his weapon. Characters can dodge any attack that does not specifically state it cannot be dodged.

Provided a character is willing to forgo all other actions for the round and is able to give ground, she may defend herself very ably by using a *full dodge*. A character may declare a full dodge on her action or abort to a full dodge at any time before her action. When using a full dodge, a character may use her Dexterity + Dodge to evade any attack launched at her. When dodging the first attack, the player rolls her character's full Dexterity + Dodge. When dodging the second attack, the player rolls her character's (Dexterity + Dodge) – 1; when dodging the third attack, the player rolls her character's (Dexterity + Dodge) – 2; and so on. A character going full dodge need not dodge every attack launched at her.

Damage

When a character fails to evade an attack, she may take damage from it. Every attack has a *base damage*. For weapons, this is usually equal to the Strength of the character plus some fixed value determined by how large and dangerous the weapon is. A successful attack does the attack's base damage + the number of successes remaining from the attack roll after the target's defenses have been applied. This result is the attack's *raw damage*.

For example, Smith has a Strength of 4 and attacks a guard with his broadsword, which does Strength + 4 damage. Smith's player rolls 10 dice for the character's attack (Smith's an expert with the sword). The player rolls 1, 3, 3, 4, 5, 5, 5, 7, 8, 0, 0, for a total of 6 successes. The guard has a shield, and the Storyteller rolls 3 successes for the guard to parry Smith's attack. Smith lost 4 successes from his attempt to hit the guard — 1 automatically for her shield and 3 from the parry attempt. Smith, thus, does a raw damage of 10 — 4 for his Strength, 4 for the sword itself and 2 for the two successes remaining from the attack roll.

Damage Types

Not all damage is the same. A character can be badly beaten by a bully and heal from his injuries in a week or two at most, and a tough mortal can shrug off punches and kicks. On the other hand, no character, not even an Exalted, can shrug off a sword blow, and such injuries take much longer to heal.

To reflect this, damage in **Exalted** comes in three distinct types. The two most common kinds are bashing damage, which is the kind of damage you take from punches and kicks, and lethal damage, which is the kind of damage you take from being hit by a sword or mace or mauled by an angry Kodiak. The third, less common type of damage is aggravated damage. Aggravated damage is magically enhanced damage that is difficult for characters to shrug off and that cannot be healed magically. The types are described in detail below.

Bashing: Bashing damage is caused by relatively soft, blunt trauma, such as punches and kicks, falls onto unpacked earth, tumbles down steps, being thrown from a horse and the like. Damage from Brawl or Martial Arts attacks is bashing unless the character uses a brawling or martial arts weapon or uses a Charm that causes the damage to become lethal. Bashing damage heals quickly, and a character knocked below Incapacitated (see "Recording Damage," below) by bashing damage is simply knocked unconscious, rather than killed. Characters add their Stamina to the bashing soak of their armor to determine their total soak against bashing damage.

Lethal: Lethal damage is damage that is beyond the human body's capability to resist. It includes damage done by cutting and piercing attacks, such as swords, spears, arrows; severe blunt trauma from things such as maces and fireplace pokers; and the bites and claws of large angry animals. A character who is reduced below Incapacitated by lethal damage dies, though the application of magical healing might save him if it is applied before life leaves the character. Only magical beings such as Exalted, manifested spirits and Fair Folk can use their Stamina to soak lethal damage, and even they use only half their Stamina (rounded down) — mere mortals must rely on armor for protection.

Aggravated: Aggravated damage is damage that is somehow particularly inimical to the character. For example, Fair Folk take aggravated damage from attacks by iron weapons, and many Solar Charms allow the Chosen to do aggravated damage to demons and the undead. A character can never soak aggravated damage with her Stamina, even if she is a magical being. Similarly, unless the Charm specifically states otherwise, magics that strengthen a character's soak do not protect against aggravated damage. Magical healing and regeneration are ineffective against aggravated damage. Aggravated damage is otherwise the same as lethal damage, in terms of healing times and the protection that armor offers against such attacks.

Soak

After the amount of raw damage an attack does has been determined, it is compared to the defender's ability to withstand damage, either from her natural toughness or because of armor. This ability to withstand damage is called a character's *soak*. In most

cases, a character has two different soak scores, one against bashing damage and one against lethal damage.

A character's bashing soak is equal to her Stamina plus the bashing soak value of her armor. The lethal soak of an Exalted character is equal to half her Stamina (rounded down) plus the lethal soak value of her armor. Mortals cannot absorb lethal damage with their Stamina, and their lethal soak is equal only to the protection lent them by their armor.

Subtract the appropriate soak from the raw damage done by the attack. The result is the number of damage dice the attacker's player rolls to see how many health levels the target loses. *The raw damage of an attack can never be reduced below 1 by soak.* There is always some chance a successful attack will cause damage.

Rolling Damage

For every point of raw damage that remains after the target soaks, the attacker's player rolls one die. For each success on this roll, the attacker does a health level of damage to the target. There are two important differences between damage rolls and any other roll. First, you cannot botch a damage roll. The worst that can happen is that the target fails to take damage. Conversely, rolling a 10 on the damage roll does not count as two successes.

Recording Damage

When a character takes damage, his player should record it on the character sheet. Fill in one box on the wound track for each health level of damage the character takes. These boxes represent the character's injuries and remain filled in until the wounds are healed, either through magic or naturally.

Different kinds of damage heal at different rates. Separate symbols let you keep track of how much of each sort of damage your character has taken. Bashing damage is denoted with a single slash (/) in the box. Lethal damage is denoted by an X, and aggravated damage is denoted by an asterisk (*). Because it is important for healing and for determining if a character is knocked unconscious or killed by a blow that takes him below Incapacitated, the damage a character has taken is always recorded with the aggravated levels "highest" on the wound track (that is, occupying the health levels with the smallest wound penalties), with lethal damage below that and bashing damage below lethal damage.

For Example: Caught in a riot in Nexus, Koi is trampled by the crowd for three health levels of bashing damage. Rebecca records these on Koi's wound track, as shown in Figure 1. Koi is now at -1 on all her die pools.

Attempting to flee the riot, Koi is ambushed by an assassin sent by the Guild, who attempts to kill her off while she's unarmored and distracted. The assassin sees Koi and hurls at her a dagger given to him by his masters in the Guild. This rare and deadly weapon is carved from the tooth of a Yozi and does aggravated damage. Koi dodges well despite her wounds, and the smoke and shouts from the riot spoil the assassin's aim. Koi is only nicked for two levels of aggravated damage. Rebecca marks these on Koi's sheet, bumping the bashing damage down. This is shown in Figure 2. Note that Rebecca need not erase the bashing damage, as she can just add the \ and | strokes instead. This may seem minor, but it is a useful time-saver in play. Koi now suffers a -2 penalty to all her actions from the pain and disability of her wounds.

Wounded and feeling from the bitter bite of the Yozi-tooth dagger that the wound is not a natural one, Koi flees the scene. The assassin hurls a normal knife at her, seeking to kill her before she can escape. She is hit by his thrown knife and takes four levels of lethal damage. Rebecca marks these on Koi's wound track, bumping the three health levels of bashing damage down the wound track because lethal damage is more serious than bashing. Again, note that Rebecca need not erase the three levels of bashing damage before making entries on the wound track — she can simply draw in a \, finishing the X. This is shown in Figure 3. As shown, Koi's wounds place her at a -4 penalty to her dice pools. She is moving slowly and probably leaving a trail of blood. She had better have some magical healing or else hope that she can evade the assassin if he pursues.

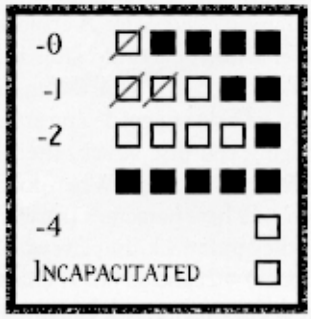


FIGURE 1

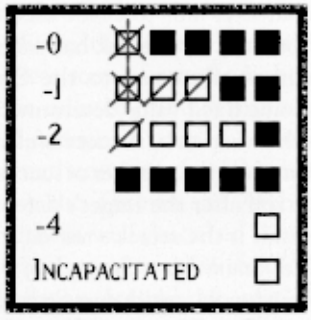


FIGURE 2

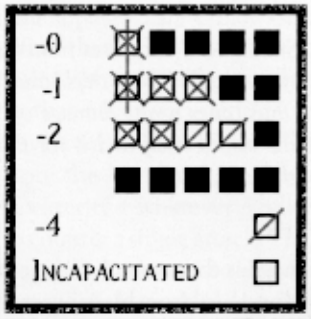


FIGURE 3

Moving While Injured

Characters who have been injured move more slowly than those who are uninjured. Some characters may possess Charms that allow them to move at full speed despite their injuries. Characters who are at -0 move as if they were unwounded, they may run up to their Dexterity + 12 yards per turn. Characters who are at -1 may move up to their Dexterity + 8 yards per turn. Characters at -2 can move their Dexterity + 4 yards per turn. Characters at -4 can only hobble along at their Dexterity in yards per turn.

Characters who have Charms that enhance their movement beyond normal have their movement cut by a similar amount: 30 percent at -1, 60 percent at -2 and 90 percent at -4. Some characters may possess Charms that make them immune to movement penalties while wounded, and characters who ignore wound penalties for whatever reason may move at full speed no matter how seriously injured they are.

Death and Dying

When a character is reduced below Incapacitated by lethal damage, he is dying. Dying characters expire in a number of turns equal to their Stamina. Any additional health levels of damage the character sustains reduces the survival time by one turn per health level. These additional levels of damage may be from the blow that knocked the character below Incapacitated, or they may be inflicted later by opponents who wish to finish the character off quickly. While dying, a character is beyond the help of mortal physicians but can be resuscitated or saved by magical healing. When applying such magical aid, the character must be raised to Incapacitated, including healing any additional health levels of damage the character may have suffered. Characters who are in the process of dying might croak out a bloody-lipped soliloquy or experience a cinematic flashback but, otherwise, are unable to act.

Characters who are immune to wound penalties may continue to act normally during turns in which they are dying. Once a character dies, he is forever dead. Though his soul can be summoned forth from the Underworld, he can never be made to live again.

Bleeding

Characters who have suffered lethal damage must worry about bleeding. Characters who have suffered a blow that did more than one health level of lethal damage must tend to their wounds or lose additional health levels every several minutes afterward. Characters can quite easily bleed to death in this fashion. To stanch the bleeding of an unExalted character is a Wits + Medicine roll. The difficulty of the roll is the number of lethal health levels the bleeding character suffered in any single wound. Obviously, a character who engages in strenuous activity risks reopening her wounds. It up to the Storyteller to decide if this happens, but it can be assumed that wounds will reopen if the character engages in combat or makes Athletics checks.

The wounds of the Exalted tend not to bleed badly. Exalted can stanch bleeding by force of will, making a Stamina roll at difficulty 1 to do so. If given medical attention by a character with at least one dot of Medicine, the wounds of Exalted characters can be assumed to cease bleeding. Exalted characters need never worry about their wounds beginning to bleed again from strenuous exertion.

Infection

Characters who suffer lethal damage must contend not just with bleeding, but with infection as well. A player whose character suffer health levels of lethal damage must make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll immediately to resist infection. The difficulty of the roll is based on the conditions in which the injury was received. Typical battlefield injuries are at difficulty 3, while injuries sustained under worse conditions (from fighting in a swamp or injuries inflicted with dirty weapons) cause the player to make the Stamina roll at difficulty 4 or greater.

If the character dresses the wound quickly, his player need only make a single roll to resist infection. If the wound is left undressed or is maltreated (for example, by failing to change the dressings or by soaking the dressings in swamp water), the player must make another Stamina + Resistance roll each time the character's wounds are exposed to possible infection. Wound penalties do not subtract from the character's dice pool for the purposes of this roll.

An unExalted character whose wounds become infected must either beat the infection or die. Every day, the player must make a Stamina + Endurance roll for the unExalted character. On the first day after the character's infection, the roll is at standard difficulty. Each day thereafter, the difficulty of the roll increases by 1. This difficulty modifier also applies to all other actions, as the character's mind and body are wracked by illness.

If the player botches the Endurance roll or when the difficulty modifier causes the difficulty to exceed the character's Stamina + Endurance, then the character succumbs to the infection. He is helpless and delirious, and the player no longer makes rolls for the character to overcome the infection. The character will die in a number of days equal to his Stamina score unless he receives magical assistance. The character's Stamina + Endurance total is modified by wound penalties when making the roll to overcome the infection. A character who has medical attention can more effectively fight infection — see the description of the Medicine Ability on page 249 of this chapter for details.

Exalted are not particularly prone to infected wounds. Players of Exalted characters who are injured subtract 2 from the difficulty of the initial Stamina + Resistance roll to resist infection, meaning they normally roll at difficulty 1, though the difficulty may increase if the character is injured under bad conditions. The player of an Exalted whose wounds *do* become infected must make a Stamina + Endurance roll at difficulty 1 every morning. If the player fails the roll, the character is

feverish and ill and suffers a -2 penalty to all his dice pools from the effects of the infection. If the Stamina + Endurance roll succeeds, the character shakes off the infection.

Healing

Lethal: The amount of time a wound takes to heal depends on its severity. For unExalted characters, -0 health levels heal in but a single day, -1 health levels heal in one week, -2 health levels heal in two weeks, and a -4 or Incapacitated health level takes a month to heal. Exalted characters heal much more quickly, as befits their station as soldiers in the armies of the gods. For Exalted, -0 wound levels heal in just six hours, -1 health levels heal in two days, -2 levels heal in four days, and -4 and Incapacitated levels require a week per wound level.

All healing times assume the character is resting. Exalted characters double their healing times if they refuse to rest. UnExalted characters double the healing time for -0 and -1 health levels and cannot recover from -2, -4 or Incapacitated health levels without rest. Characters recover one health level at a time, starting with those that impose the most serious penalty and working in reverse order until they have healed all their -0 health levels.

For example, Fiona is a Solar Exalted and has taken a -0, two -1 and a -2 health level in damage. With four days of rest, she will heal the -2 health level. After another two days of rest, she will heal a -1 health level, and so on. Assuming she rests, it will take Fiona eight days and six hours to totally recover from her wounds.

Bashing: Bashing damage heals more quickly than lethal damage. UnExalted characters heal one health level of bashing damage per 12 hours of rest, regardless of the wound penalty. Exalted characters heal one health level of bashing damage every three hours of rest, also regardless of wound penalty.

Aggravated: Aggravated damage is just like lethal damage, except it cannot be healed with magic.

Healing Complications

UnExalted characters who do not receive adequate medical treatment for serious injuries will probably die of complications. Even if they do not, serious wounds rarely heal well naturally. An unExalted character who does not receive surgical attention for serious injuries (those that inflict more than three levels of lethal damage) will continue to retain the wound penalty for her injuries even after they have healed. These wound penalties are permanent handicaps and do not prevent the character from suffering additional wound penalties if she is later injured. The only way wound penalties left by untreated injuries can be removed is by a physician undertaking the difficult task of deliberately undoing the natural healing and realigning the cut tissue and reserting the broken bones. Injuries inflicted in this fashion are subject to infection, just like any other wound, but when the wounds have healed, the penalties are removed.

UnExalted characters who are seriously injured may require the removal of damaged tissue to allow their wounds to heal. At the Storyteller's discretion, unExalted characters who are reduced to -4 or Incapacitated by injuries may require the amputation of a limb in order for them to be able to recover from their wound penalties. Characters who lose an arm are at -2 on Athletics checks due to poor balance and obviously have problems with two-handed tasks. Characters who lose a leg are limited to half movement speed with a crutch or pegleg and are at -3 on footwork based Athletics checks.

Obviously, the availability of magical healing will modify many of these rules. If a Charm's effects dictate otherwise, ignore these effects.

Exalted characters are blessed with the luck of the gods, for their healing is like a slow form of regeneration. Even mangled limbs and badly splintered bones will heal straight, strong and true.

Complications

If combat was always just two characters slugging it out toe to toe, it would be pretty boring. Fortunately, in the world of **Exalted**, combat that simple and predictable is a rarity. Almost every combat will have something about it that makes it special. The following rules describe some common complications that will arise on the battlefield.

Feel free to make up your own complications and rules for them. Cool and more exotic settings are one of the things that makes battles interesting. There's a reason battles in movies almost never happen against a boring backdrop. That's because having scenery that's interesting to interact with, both visually and in terms of what kinds of stunts can be performed on it, is one of the keys to exciting fight scenes.

Off Hand

Characters may be forced to fight with their off hands. Off-hand fighting imposes a -1 penalty on a character's dice pool for attacks involving weapons in the off hand. Characters with a weapon in each hand must still split their dice pool to attack more than once a turn.

Knockback and Knockdown

Characters in **Exalted** can dish out and take immense amounts of damage. This damage can result in a number of dramatic effects. Characters can be knocked to their knees by mighty blows, or they may be hurled back into or even through walls.

Knockdown: Characters who take a lot of damage may be knocked to the ground or even stunned by attacks. If a character takes more pre-soak damage than his Stamina + Resistance, his player must make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll at difficulty 1 or the character is knocked to the ground. Also, players of characters who take more health levels of damage from a single blow than their Stamina must make a reflexive Stamina

+ Resistance roll with a difficulty equal to (the number of health levels she took - her Stamina). Characters whose players fail are stunned. Stunned characters are at -2 on all their dice pools for a number of turns equal to (6 - their Stamina). This penalty combines with one for prone fighting, below.

Fighting Prone: Characters who are knocked to the ground cannot move at any significant speed and are at a -2 penalty to all actions until they get up. It requires an action to stand — while a character need not roll to stand up, if he is doing anything else that turn, he must split his dice pool as if it was an action.

Knockback: Characters who take enough damage to be eligible for knockdown may instead take knockback, at the Storyteller's discretion. For every three points of raw damage she took, a character may be knocked back a yard. If she hits a solid object, she will smash it, either coming to rest in the rubble or continuing on to hit another object if the blow was hard enough.

A character will never take a lethal fall due to knockback. Likewise, knockback does no extra damage, even if the character's punched through a stone lamp post or knocked through the wooden wall of a house — knockback is all about the visual spectacle of being hurled through some object, not about taking extra damage. Rather, treat knockback like an impressive-looking form of knockdown. Instead of taking an action to stand up, the character must take the time to extricate herself from the ruin of whatever she was smashed through.

Obviously, if the Storyteller is running a gritty game, knockback is inappropriate. Just use the knockdown rules instead.

Multiple Actions

Often, characters will to do more than one thing in a round. Any character can perform multiple actions in a turn by splitting his dice pool. This process is explained in detail under "Multiple Actions" on page 92 of the Systems chapter. The only time that using a dice pool for multiple actions doesn't operate this way is if the character chooses to go full dodge (see "Dodge" on p. 231 of this chapter), which uses a slightly different system to reflect the ease with which a character willing to give ground can avoid attacks.

Keep in mind that Charms of instant duration benefit a *single action* and not all the character's actions for the round. A character may use a Charm to benefit each of his actions during a turn when he splits his dice pool, but he must pay the appropriate Essence cost for each action he applies the Charm to. Remember that, unless the Charm specifically states otherwise, the maximum number of dice that a character can add to an action through the use of a Charm is *always* equal to her *original* Attribute + Ability total. Characters must pay normally for *each* use of the Charm.

For Example: Tengiz is attempting to escape from the clutches of the outcaste pirate lord Redfists. Tengiz finds himself fighting three guards and wants to finish them all off quickly. Jim splits Tengiz' Melee pool to attack them all at once. Tengiz normally has 3 Melee and 3 Dexterity, for a total of 6. He has regained his sword after escaping from the dungeons, and so, his



three Melee specialties in "Weapons He's Crafted Himself" count. The specialties bring his total dice pool to 9.

Jim decides to split Tengiz' dice pool to make three attacks, one on each guard, hoping that he can at least cripple one of them. Jim activates Excellent Strike as Tengiz' Charm for the turn, because Jim knows Tengiz will need it to have a real chance of harming each of the guards. Tengiz' first attack is at -3, his second is at -4, and his third is at -5.

Jim decides to burn the Essence to boost each of Tengiz' attacks to the maximum amount that Excellent Strike will allow. That is six dice, the total of Tengiz' Melee + Dexterity scores. Boosting each attack will cost Tengiz 6 motes of Essence, since Excellent Strike costs 1 mote per die.

On his action, Tengiz makes three attacks. His first attack is at 12 dice — 6 dice of Melee + Dexterity, -3 dice for the multiple action penalty, +6 dice for the Excellent Strike, +3 dice for his specialty. His next attack is at 11 dice because the multiple action penalty is -4 for this action. His third and final attack is at 10 dice because the multiple action penalty for that attack is -5. His actions during the turn have cost him a total of 18 motes of Essence.

Exalted characters may also know Charms that allow them to act multiple times in a single turn. In this case, the number of extra actions a character may take will be determined by the Charm. Unless otherwise specified by the description of the magic, these Essence-powered additional actions are made at the character's full dice pool.

Also, unless specifically allowed by the Charm in question, a character using Charms to increase the number of actions he takes in a given turn may not split his dice pool, either for his primary action or for the extra, Charm-inspired actions. Among other things, this means that a character using Charms to gain extra actions cannot go full dodge and must either rely on his armor or else Combo his attack power with defensive Charms.

Fighting Mounted

Characters who are fighting from astride a mount of some sort have their combat Abilities limited by their Ride. If a character's scores in Melee, Thrown, Archery, Brawl, Martial Arts or Dodge are higher that her score in the Ride Ability, use her Ride score instead.

Also, the player of a character with a Ride of less than the mount's control value must make a Wits + Ride roll every turn to stay mounted in the din of combat. Typically, the control value of a mount is 3, but very calm and sure mounts will have lower values, and very high-strung and spirited mounts will have higher values. The roll to stay mounted is an action, and characters who wish to do something other than stay in the saddle must split their dice pool to do so.

These rules doesn't apply to mounts so large that they carry howdahs or other, similar structures. Only the player of the drover needs to make Dexterity + Ride rolls to control and direct the mount. Characters fighting from howdahs can attack at their full Attribute + Ability totals if they have but a single dot of Ride. Characters without Ride are at a -2 penalty to their dice pools when fighting from a howdah.

Storytellers may require players to make Wits + Ride rolls for their characters to stay mounted if the creature carrying the howdah panics and bolts or Dexterity + Dodge rolls to escape if the beast decides to roll over and crush the howdah.

Characters on foot suffer a -2 difficulty penalty fighting in hand-to-hand combat against mounted opponents unless they are using long weapons such as spears or poleaxes. These weapons are specifically marked in Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment. This penalty also applies to attacks against the character's mount — much of the danger is of being kicked or trampled by the beast.

Attacks against characters in howdahs are even harder. Characters without long weapons are at -4 to their dice pool and can only attack the (usually well-armored) mount. Characters with long weapons such as spears and poleaxes can attack the passengers of the howdah but are at a -2 penalty to their dice pool to do so. Obviously, stunts involving climbing aboard the animal or cutting the howdah straps can alter the situation. Attacks against the straps are at -4 (for characters with short weapons) or -2 (for characters with long ones).

Difficult Conditions

Other than duels, most fights don't take place at mid-morning on well-packed earth with fair weather. Combats often take place in harsh conditions and against dramatic and dangerous backdrops. Below are some guidelines for situations that are likely to come up in play. These are by no means the only dramatic situations that will arise in a game of **Exalted** — your imagination can create far more possibilities than any book could hope to cover. Instead, the rules attempt to cover many basic situations and serve as guidelines for how Storytellers can handle other situations that come up in her game.

Height: Often, a combatant will be fighting an opponent who has the advantage of a higher position — she may be fighting her way up a flight of steps or up a steep slope. Whatever the case, fighting someone higher in hand-to-hand combat is difficult, especially on very steep slopes. The Height Modifiers table lists the penalty to a character's dice pool *for both attack and defense* when fighting against an opponent with superior positioning.

Narrow or Unstable Areas: Characters in **Exalted** will frequently find themselves fighting on narrow ledges, roof peaks, the battlements of castles, tightropes or even logs rushing downstream toward roaring waterfalls. In these situations, characters must not only defeat their opponents, they must also keep their footing as well.

At the beginning of each turn, players must make a Dexterity + Athletics check for their characters with the difficulty set by the narrowness of the area and the footing conditions. Fighting on a wide ledge or atop the crenellations of a castle battlement would be standard difficult, but fighting on the same ledge or battlement in a howling

Height Modifiers

Situation	Dice Pool Penalty
Steps	-1
Defensible Spiral Steps	-2 when going the wrong way
Gentle Slope	-1
Steep Slope	-2
Too Steep To Climb Without Hands	-3
Scaling Ladder	-3
Scree, Thorns or Abatis*	-1 additional

* Scree slopes are any surfaces covered in a layer of small, loose stones. Thorns, in this case, means any sort of dense underbrush that a character cannot easily bull through. Abatis is a deliberately erected barrier, usually of sharpened sticks, designed to slow attackers.

snowstorm, with the stones glazed in ice, would be difficulty +2. Fighting on a tightrope or rolling log is at least difficulty +2 and is even more difficult under poor conditions.

A character's attempt to maintain his footing is not a reflexive check — a character who wishes to do something other than remain balanced must split his dice pool. Characters of players who fail the balance roll lose their ability to act for the round and may (if they wish) allow themselves to fall off. Characters of players who botch automatically fall. For details of falling damage, see "Falling" on page 253 of this chapter.

If a character is hit by an attack, her player must make a reflexive Wits + Athletics roll for the character to remain on the surface. The player must roll one success for every five points of the attack's raw damage. The character of a player who fails this roll is knocked off the surface.

Storytellers *may* wish to set a level of the Athletics Ability where a roll is no longer necessary every turn for characters to stay on the surface. This level might be 3 for a narrow ledge, 4 for a tightrope and 5 for a rolling log. Players must still make reflexive Wits + Athletics checks for their characters to keep their footing if hit. Storytellers need not set an Ability level for every surface — no amount of training will allow a character to be certain of his footing when engaged in a furious axe-duel on a narrow ledge in the midst of a typhoon.

Players of characters who have activated the Athletics Charm Graceful Crane Stance need never roll while the Charm is in effect, regardless of the footing conditions, even when the characters are hit in combat.

Water Or Mud: Characters fighting in mud or water of less than ankle depth suffer no penalties, though the Storyteller should keep the conditions in mind when determining the effects and severity of botches. Characters fighting in water of up to knee depth and mud of up to mid-calf depth suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls. Characters fighting in water of up to waist depth or mud of up to knee depth suffer a -2 to their dice pools. Characters in water of greater than waist depth or mud of greater than knee depth may still make ranged attacks, but can only wrestle in hand-to-hand combat.

Poor Visibility: When characters are fighting in poor visibility, Storytellers should decide on two ranges — the range beyond which characters can no longer see clearly and the range beyond which characters can no longer see at all. Within the range where characters can see clearly,

Condition	Clear Vision Ends	Murky Vision Ends
Fog, Day	10 yards	30 yards
Fog, Night	0 yards	3 yards
Heavy Snow, Day	0 yards	20 yards
Heavy Snow, Night	0 yards	0 yards
No Moon, Snowy Ground or Desert	5 yards	25 yards
No Moon, Grass or Leafless Forest	0 yards	3 yards
No Moon, City or Forest	0 yards	0 yards
Full Moon, Snowy Ground or Desert	50 yards	100 yards
Full Moon, Grass or Leafless Forest	25 yards	50 yards
Full Moon, City or Forest	0 yards	3 yards
Torchlight*	3 yards	5 yards

* Torchlight supplants the regular illumination and provides light enough to read by in the Clear Vision area. However, characters using torches are visible from miles away in open terrain or from tens or hundreds of yards in close terrain such as forests and urban areas. Characters carrying torches can be attacked with ranged weapons, even beyond the range of visibility. Such attacks are subject to normal range modifiers, and the attacker must subtract 1 success because the target is poorly lit.

they may make attacks at no penalty. Murky vision subtracts 1 from the number of successes on any attack roll. Characters attacking blind subtract 2 successes from all attack rolls. Characters with normal human senses cannot make effective blind attacks at over 100 yards.

Multiple Opponents

A character in an open field may be assailed by up to five opponents. Conversely, characters in tight quarters such as a hall, stairwell or doorway can only be attacked by three opponents, or even fewer if the Storyteller thinks the quarters are particularly tight. Characters are already penalized for multiple actions via the mechanics for splitting dice pools — there are no additional mechanical penalties for facing two or more opponents. Assume that a character who has space to shift footing can keep all his opponents in view, at least during the critical moments when they're launching attacks. If a character has restricted mobility, the Storyteller may allow some opponents to attack his back — see "Attack From Behind," below, for details.

Attack From Behind

Characters may be attacked from behind, either due to treachery or because terrain prevents them from shifting to keep all their opponents in view. Unexalted characters who are attacked from behind do not get the benefit of their shields and cannot normally parry or dodge these attacks — they must trust in their armor. Exalted characters may use Charms to defend themselves from rear attacks but have 0 dice to start — that is, they have only those dice they buy with the Charm.

Ambushes

Characters will sometimes be attacked from surprise or seek to ambush an opponent. Normally, players of characters about to be ambushed may make reflexive Perception + Awareness rolls against the Dexterity + Stealth rolls of the ambushers to detect the ambush before it is sprung. If they spot it, they may react normally.

Make a reflexive Wits + Awareness roll for characters who are successfully ambushed. If it fails, they are taken by surprise and may not dodge or parry during the first turn except with reflexive Charms. If it succeeds, they are startled but not defenseless. They may move, dodge and parry but not attack. Characters whose players roll three or more successes on the Wits + Awareness roll are totally unsurprised and can act normally during the first turn of the combat.

Called Shots

Called shots are attacks where the character aims for a specific target. Using called shots, a character can cut ropes, mark her target or even disarm an opponent.

Pulling Blows: Characters will often wish to incapacitate rather than kill opponents. By subtracting a success from the attack roll, a character can use a melee weapon in inflict bashing damage. Characters cannot inflict bashing damage in this fashion with thrown weapons or arrows, though there are thrown weapons and types of arrows that do bashing damage. See Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment for details on these weapons.

Small Targets: Characters will often need to strike small targets for dramatic purposes. For example, an archer might have to shoot the torch out of a watchman's hand before he can light a signal fire, or a swordsman may want to display his prowess by tossing up an apple and slashing it into many parts as it falls. This is a Dexterity + the appropriate combat Ability roll, with a difficulty set by the Storyteller based on the size of the target and the difficulty of the attack. Knocking an apple off of someone's head is standard difficulty, but grazing it so it then flies through the air into the surprised hands of a lovely young woman is probably difficulty 2 or 3.

Marking Targets: Some character may wish to "mark" an opponent, meaning striking him in a way that leaves a wound or mark but does no serious injury. A character might slash the buttons off the shirt front of a thug who insults her, or an archer may fire an arrow that barely creases the cheek of an official to let him know that he was deliberately missed and that the next arrow will be fatal. Such flourishes are difficult, which is why they are often used to warn off dramatically inferior opponents. Making a mark is a Dexterity + the appropriate combat Ability roll with a difficulty of 3 for a relatively simply mark and of 4 or higher for a particularly difficult move. The target can parry or dodge the marking attempt as though it was a normal attack. Marking attempts do no damage.

Disarming: Disarming opponents is a staple of heroic fiction. Make a Dexterity + the appropriate combat Ability roll at difficulty 3 for a hand-to-hand attack or difficulty 5 for a ranged attack for a character attempting to disarm an opponent. The target may parry or dodge as though it were a normal attack.

If the disarming roll is successful, make a reflexive Wits + the combat Ability governing the weapon he's wielding for the victim of the attack. If the target's player

Called Shots and Extra Damage

In **Exalted**, called shots do *not* do additional damage. Characters are assumed to be attempting to deliver the most lethal blows they possibly can. A character who rolls well to attack and then rolls well for damage has delivered a blow to a critical area. Storytellers shouldn't let themselves be talked into allowing characters to kill an opponent instantly by attacking a "weak spot." The ability to find and exploit such weak spots is part of having a high combat Ability — that's why extra successes on the attack roll add to damage.

does not get at least as many successes on the Wits + Ability roll as the attacker had extra successes on the disarming roll, his weapon is torn from his grasp and flung several feet in a direction of the attacker's choice.

A player must succeed at a roll of Dexterity + the combat Ability governing the weapon for the character to retrieve his weapon after he's been disarmed, unless the weapon fell (or was kicked) into a river, under a piece of heavy furniture or down a bottomless chasm. Retrieving a weapon is not a reflexive action — a character who wishes to do something in the turn he picks up his weapon must split his dice pool. Disarming does no actual damage. Characters using brawling weapons such as cesti or tiger claws cannot normally be disarmed because their weapons are so firmly attached to their hands.

Disarming and Drama

Being disarmed and disarming an opponent are important dramatic events. A disarmed hero has to listen to the villain's evil monologue, and a hero can explain to a now-weaponless enemy that she's killed all his minions and ruined his plans, all to avenge her murdered father. Unfortunately, many gamers aren't very dramatic people. They will immediately try to run a disarmed opponent through because you win by killing the bad guy, and winning is what gaming is all about, right?

If the Storyteller wants to run a gritty game or if the players are chowderheads who are just going to use disarming as a cheap way to kill their characters' opponents, then disarming should be more realistic. For realistic disarming, only allow it against targets with combat Abilities at least 2 dots lower than that disarming character's or as the result of botches on attack or parry rolls. Unless he's totally inept, getting someone's weapon away from him is a lot harder than it looks.

Attacking Objects

Characters will often want to attack inanimate objects. A character may use an axe to hack through a door. One might also want to deface the monuments of an enemy, using a single mighty stroke of her sword to slash off the laurel-bearing hand of an effigy. Whatever the reason, resolving these attacks is simple. Storytellers should assign the object a soak rating and two different health level values — one to totally destroy it and one to damage it — for example, by hacking a hole in a door large enough to reach through or by severing a statue's hand at the wrist.

Characters attack objects just as if they were any other target, except of course very few objects dodge or parry. Don't roll for damage against an object — it doesn't matter if the characters hit a vulnerable spot. Just assume that all damage that penetrates an object's soak is a success. However, objects are tougher than characters — their soaks can completely negate the damage of attacks. Generally, even fairly fragile objects have rather high bashing soaks and a large number of health levels.

While there are no specific rules for it, Storytellers should keep in mind that most weapons are designed to use against relatively fragile human bodies and the comparatively thin armor humans wear. Using a normal steel sword to chop apart an iron statue is very likely to break the sword and will, in any case, ruin the blade. Characters who wish to chop up objects without enchanted weapons or tools made for the job are going to rack up quite a bill in broken equipment.

Object Strengths

Object	Soak (B/L)	Health Levels to Damage	Health Levels to Destroy
House Door	3/1	3	10
Oak Door	5/3	10	20
Fortress Gate	10/8	20	40
Wood Statue	4/2	3	16
Stone Statue	8/4	4	28
Iron Statue	12/6	6	50
Wood Wall*	5/3	8	12
Brick Wall*	10/6	24	40
Stone Wall*	18/12	40	80

*This is for a section of wall large enough for a single character to squeeze through at a time.

Wrestling

Unarmed characters have more options than simply punching and kicking — powerful wrestling maneuvers are part of both the Brawl and Martial Arts Abilities. These combat maneuvers are similar to normal attacks, in that the character makes a Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts maneuver, which the target can dodge or parry. However, each typically has special rules governing the effect of a successful attack, since the goal of most grappling is more complex than simple damage. Characters who wish to make wrestling maneuvers other than sweep and tackle must have both hands free.

Clinch: On a successful attack, the character goes into a clinch with the target. On the first turn, the attacker does Strength + 2 bashing damage. Extra successes on the clinch attack do not add to this damage. Thereafter, the combatants act on their normal initiative. However, while in a clinch, a character can only take two actions. He may choose to inflict

Strength + 2 bashing damage on his opponent, or he can attempt to escape the clinch. Attempting to escape is a Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts maneuver, which the opponent's player gets a reflexive Dexterity or Martial Arts roll to resist, if she wishes to. If the character attempting to escape scores more successes than his opponent does, he escapes the clinch. If not, he is still locked in the clinch.

Characters in a clinch are severely limited, as they cannot use any combat Charms except those that increase their soak and those that specifically state they work in a clinch. They certain cannot dodge or parry attacks against them. It is at the Storyteller's discretion what non-combat Charms a clinched character can use.

Note that the player of the character who initiated a clinch must roll for him to escape the clinch — a character using this wrestling maneuver should be sure he doesn't pick on someone larger than he is. Characters who are involved in a clinch cannot perform any other combat actions until they break out of the clinch or their opponents succumb to damage.

Hold: A hold is similar to a clinch, but less dangerous for both combatants. The attacker makes a Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts attack, which does no damage. On a successful roll, the target is held until his next action. At that time, his player may make a Strength + Brawl or Martial Arts roll, which the character holding him may reflexively resist with her player's own Strength + Brawl or Martial Arts roll, if she wishes. If the character in the hold gains more successes than his captor, he escapes and may act normally during his next action. If he fails, he remains restrained and can try to escape again during his next action. Neither the character in the hold nor the character holding him can take any physical actions until the hold is broken or released.

Sweep: When performing a sweep, the character uses her leg or legs to knock her opponents legs out from under him, dropping him to the ground. The attacker subtracts 1 success from the attack roll and does her Strength in bashing damage. Extra successes add to damage as normal for combat. The player of the target of a successful sweep must succeed at a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll at difficulty 2 or have his character knocked down. This maneuver can be performed with a staff, chain, chair or any other weapon that can be swept under an opponent.

Tackle: The character smashes into her opponent and attempts to knock him over. The attacker's player rolls Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts and subtracts 1 success from the attack roll. The attack does Strength + 2 damage, and the players of both the tackler and her opponent must succeed at reflexive Stamina + Athletics check at difficulty 3 or be knocked down. Even if the target's player succeeds in his roll, the character is unbalanced and at a -2 dice penalty on all his actions for the next turn.

Throw: The attacker grabs her opponent and uses his own weight and momentum to hurl him through the air. The attacker's player makes a Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts roll and subtracts 1 success from her attack roll. The attack itself does no damage, but the target flies a number of yards equal to the attacker's Strength in a direction of her choice and the target's player must make a reflexive Wits + Athletics roll at difficulty 2 or the character suffer a knockdown on landing. He takes the attacker's Strength - 1 bashing damage on landing, and every two extra successes on the attack roll adds one die of bashing damage to this total. Obviously, being hurled into a pit full of razor-edged spearpoints or over a mile-high cliff can increase considerably the amount of damage the character takes. Being hurled into a river or mud pit probably reduces or negates the damage, though heavily armored characters may have other problems.

Extras

Exalted is a cinematic game, designed to simulate the sort of wild action you see in Hong Kong action movies, Japanese animation and over-the-top American action films. In these films, most combats aren't gritty, life-or-death struggles for the hero, where every sword blow may be the last. That sort of tension is reserved for the real fights, when the protagonist faces off against the real villains or their lieutenants.

The average enemy the hero faces is a nameless, expendable bad guy. These opponents' purpose in combat is to get beaten up or killed in order to provide a visual spectacle, complicate the narrative and demonstrate how badass the protagonist is. In **Exalted**, these characters are called *extras*, and there are special rules to allow fast and furious combats where players fight their ways through hordes of nameless villains.

Extras and Tone

Storytellers shouldn't be surprised when the players' characters battle through hordes of extras without serious injury. The rules are set up to make it happen that way — getting killed is the whole purpose of an extra. When was the last time you saw an action movie where the hero died at the hands of some faceless goon? Extras are not serious dangers to the players' characters — extras are human scenery whose purpose is to let the players' characters show off their cool powers and amazing abilities.

You don't *need* to use extras. It's perfectly acceptable to run a somewhat grittier game of **Exalted** where there are no extras. Indeed, using extras would be almost totally inappropriate for a game where the characters were mortals rather than Exalted. But if you do use extras, don't be surprised when the players' characters lay a righteous smackdown on them.

• **Extras Have Only Three Health Levels:** Extras have just -1, -3 and Incapacitated health levels. If knocked below Incapacitated by lethal damage, they die instantly.

• **Characters Don't Roll For Damage Against Extras:** After you subtract the extra's soak from an attacker's raw damage, the result is not the number of dice rolled for damage. Instead, for every three dice of damage that remain after the extra's soak has been subtracted, the attack automatically does a health level of damage to the extra. Thus, if an attack does 9 or more dice of damage after soak, the extra is instantly incapacitated. If the damage does not evenly divide by three, apply the automatic health levels. If the extra is not at Incapacitated or below, roll the remaining one or two dice as normal for damage.

• **Extras Do Not Reroll 10s:** Rerolling 10s represents a heroic character's ability to excel under pressure. Extras are not so blessed.

• **Extras Need Not Have Full Stats:** Usually, extras do not need a full character sheet because they're just nameless opponents for the heroes to overcome. It's often a good idea to make up fully detailed statistics for a given type of extra, just to think it through and get a feel for what they're like. However, there will often be times when unexpected encounters occur. At these times, don't hesitate to use the following stats. You can always give them more detail later.

Weak Opponents
Militia, Hired Thugs, City Watch
Base initiative 4, 4 dice in any relevant combat dice pools.
Valor 2, Willpower 3

Competent Opponents
Trained Troops, Professional Legbreakers, City Guard
Base initiative 5, 5 dice in any relevant combat dice pools.
Valor 3, Willpower 4

Elite Opponents
Crack Troops, Professional Assassins, Praetorian Guard
Base initiative 6, 6 dice in any relevant combat dice pools.
Valor 4, Willpower 6

Zenith Caste

Endurance

Withstanding Illness

Characters who are exposed to the victims of disease or to disease-carrying items, such as the blankets or personal possessions of disease victims, may themselves contract the illness. Once characters are infected, their players must make a Stamina + Endurance roll to recover. For mortals, the difficulty of this roll depends on the virulence of the disease and whether or not the character has been successfully treated by a physician. Characters whose players fail the Stamina + Endurance roll die.

The Antagonists chapter lists the effects of various diseases common in the world of **Exalted**. These are the symptoms exhibited by mortals. Typically, Exalted characters are much more resistant to illness. Most diseases merely cause the Exalted to feel feverish and drained, causing them to suffer a -1 or -2 penalty to their dice pools for several days. Only one disease is a notable exception to this — the Great Contagion. This awful plague, which scythed down over nine-tenths of the population of the world seven centuries ago, slew mortals, Dragon-Blooded and Celestial Exalted impartially.

Staying Awake

In **Exalted**, characters must often stay awake for days at a time. Players of characters attempting to stay awake must make a Stamina + Endurance roll. Players must make this roll once per day of game time and every time their characters are left alone and without anything to do. Failure means the character falls asleep until awakened or until 8-12 hours have passed. For every day they are awake, characters are at a -1 to all their dice pools, including the roll to stay awake. This penalty never rises higher than -3.

Enduring Fatigue

Characters who labor for too long without rest suffer penalties similar to those suffered by characters who go without sleep. Characters with Endurance may call on their natural reserves to continue to perform, even after wearying labor. A character can normally perform hard manual labor for a number of hours equal to her Stamina + Endurance without fatigue. If she works longer than this, she is at -1 to all dice pools until she has slept and eaten well. If the character continues to work, she will continue to accumulate a –1 penalty every hour until she is incapacitated from hard labor.

A player may make a Stamina + Endurance roll for her character to negate this penalty even if she sleeps and/or eats poorly. However, a character can live on Endurance for only so long. The character must sleep and eat well at least once every (her Stamina + Endurance) days, or she suffers the -1 penalty for fatigue without a chance of offset.

This same system can also be used to represent characters living a dissolute life. Players of such characters make a Stamina + Endurance rolls after a debauch. Characters whose players fail the roll are at a -1 penalty due to hangover.

Treading Water

Characters may be forced by shipwreck or other disaster to tread water for a long period of time. Players of characters forced to tread water must make a Stamina + Endurance roll, with a difficulty set by the temperature of the water and the weather. Swimming under a beating sun or during a storm is much more tiring that treading water in calm weather. Likewise, very cold or hot water will rapidly sap a character's Stamina. The number of successes rolled is the number of hours the character can tread water before succumbing to fatigue. Characters who have driftwood or bits of planking

to cling to can decrease the difficulty of the roll (if the flotsam is small) or only need their players to make rolls daily because of sunburn and dehydration (if the debris is large enough to bear the character's weight without sinking).

Performance

Composing

Composing a musical work for performance is an extended Intelligence + Performance roll. The difficulty of the roll is determined by the quality of output that the composer wishes to produce. The number of successes required is determined by the desired final length of the piece. The Storyteller and the player should discuss the amount of work the character is putting in on the project to determine how long the intervals between rolls are; large works can take years of work to compose, especially if they're only part-time projects.

Performing

To determine the quality of a character's performance, his player rolls the character's Charisma + Performance, with the difficulty of the roll set by the conditions of the performance, the mood of the crowd and the quality of the instruments. A characters may perform a piece he has composed or that was composed for him. A character gains a +1 bonus to his dice pool when performing one of his own compositions. A character working from a prepared script or score of some sort is ultimately limited by the quality of the material he's working from. However, good material only enables truly excellent performances, it does not make the performance any easier.

Presence

Seduction

Seduction, for the purposes of these rules, covers any attempt to persuade a potential partner to engage in intimate acts. It can cover romance, flirtation or outright manipulation. In the case of romance or flirtation, the player of the active partner makes a Charisma + Presence roll. Less scrupulous methods use Manipulation + Presence. The difficulty of the roll is modified by the situation, the apparent differences in status and the Appearance of the seducer, and the difficulty is increased by at least 1 if the pairing is outside the usual sexual orientation of the prospective partner. Obviously, if both partners are actively seeking intimacy, the result is an automatic success. Pregnancy and childbirth are beyond the scope of these rules and are left to the Storyteller's discretion and dramatic necessity.

Persuasion

A character will often need to persuade another individual to her point of view. This is a Presence roll that may be combined with a number of different Attributes, depending on the sort of arguments the character uses. The most common Attributes for this roll are Charisma, Manipulation or Intelligence. Persuasion based on Strength is more properly handled by the rules for intimidation, below.

The difficulty of a persuasion roll is modified by the strength of the character's arguments, the strength of the target's convictions, the conditions under which the persuasion takes place and the target's Willpower. Winning an argument requires only a single success, but converting someone to a new way of thinking is generally a high-difficulty extended action where the persuading character must accumulate more successes than the target's Willpower. This process may be voluntary, as (for example) during a long series of coffeehouse debates, or it may be involuntary brainwashing. The difficulty of brainwashing is much higher than that of voluntary persuasion, and brainwashing attempts should generally have a minimum difficulty of 3.

Intimidation

The intimidation of individuals is typically a simple matter. If the character simply beats up or manhandles a target to frighten him, then it's probably a matter of a Strength + Presence roll. A character who is doing something more elaborate — convincing the target of an immanent danger to his treasured home or beloved daughter, for example — is a Manipulation + Presence roll. The difficulty of intimidating an individual is set by the credibility of the threat, the severity of the threat and the target's Valor. A threat of horrible mutilation against a low-Valor character who has daily exposure to the one-handed results of the character's anger probably requires only a single success. On the other hand, an unlikely threat against a high-Valor character who has no reason to believe it is at least difficulty 3.

The intimidation of groups is trickier because object lessons can easily become martyrs. Roll Manipulation + Performance when setting up object lessons. The difficulty of mass intimidation is based on the mood of the populace, their general wealth and the degree to which individuals feel they have a chance to defend themselves. Mass executions and property confiscation that would terrify a prosperous and unarmed populace will do little but incense an impoverished and heavily armed people.

Leadership

Characters in **Exalted** will frequently find themselves in positions of leadership. Even if they do not seek such responsibility, their power and their destinies impel them to the ruling of kingdoms and the leading of armies. Characters must inspire, influence and give succor to their followers. The Performance Ability governs such leadership tasks.

Typically, leadership is a matter of Charisma + Presence rolls, but nearly every non-Physical Attribute can play a part. A character appearing before her followers may

use Appearance + Presence, and Manipulation + Presence comes into play when the character must persuade an underling to follow an unpleasant course of action. A character planning her next move may consider it with Intelligence + Presence, while she uses Perception + Presence to understand how her enemy leads *his* troops.

Characters cannot lead by Presence alone. Organizational skills are essential, and a successful leader must have either a high Bureaucracy or trustworthy followers who are masters of it. Likewise, a character who does not rule absolutely will need Socialize to manage the coalition of interests that supports her rule. Even if the character rules without support or dispute, mastery of the Socialize Ability is useful, to allow her to sense and understand the politics that swirl around her throne as individuals attempt to gain her ear and favor.

Presence does not govern leaders who rule with an iron fist. While rule through fear and might can produce results equal to that of rule through charisma and popularity, it is not reliant on the same qualities. Rule through fear is part intimidation and part logistics — a character must make those under her command fear her and then organize the machinery of repression so that they cannot flee her reign of terror. The intimidation aspect is governed by Presence and handled in the section under intimidation, above. Organizing the machinery of repression is a matter of Socialize and Bureaucracy.

Resistance

Drinking

A character can normally consume a number of drinks equal to his Stamina before becoming drunk. A drunken character is at -2 to all actions until he has sobered up. Heavy drinkers may be hung over the next day — see the section on Endurance for systems to deal with the morning after.

Characters with the Resistance Ability can hold their liquor better. Players may make Stamina + Resistance rolls before their characters drink. The number of successes rolled is the number of additional drinks their characters can consume before becoming drunk.

For the purposes of this rule a "drink" is a glass of wine, a tankard of beer or a dram of hard liquor.

Withstanding Poison

Characters in **Exalted** will sometimes be exposed to poison. To resist poison, a player makes a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll for his character. Weak poisons are difficulty 1, medium poisons are difficulty 2, and strong venoms are difficulty 3 or higher. A poison will have two effects, typically — one if the Stamina + Resistance roll is failed and a less severe effect if it succeeds. Normally, the effect is simply represented by a number of health levels of damage, a penalty and a duration. The damage is applied immediately and is not rolled. Simply apply that many health levels of the appropriate type of damage to the character's wound track. The penalty reflects any hallucinogenic or convulsive effects of the poison and is applied to all dice pools until the duration of the poison elapses.

Venom Type	Diff.	Success	Failure	Duration/ Penalty
Coral Snake Venom	3	1L	4L	1 minutes/ -6
Arrow Frog Venom	3	2L	6L	6 hours/ -4
Poison Snake Venom	2	1L	4L	4 hours/ -2
Court Poison (Arsenic or Aconite)	2	2L	6L	6 hours/ -3

These rules are for the effects of poison on the Exalted. For mortals, poison typically means certain death after a period of suffering equal to the poisons duration. For weak toxins such as snake venom or courtly poisons, make a Stamina + Resistance roll at twice the listed difficulty for the mortal to survive. However, a poisoning will have long-term negative effects on a mortal victim's health, possibly reducing the victim's Attributes or imposing penalties.

Holding Breath

A character can normally hold her breath for (her Stamina x 30 seconds). After that, she must take a breath. A character who is underwater will begin to drown, taking one health level of bashing damage per 30 seconds. A character who falls unconscious continues to take bashing damage until she dies of lethal wounds.

A reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll will extend the length of time characters can hold their breaths. For each success on the roll, a character may go without breathing for an additional 30 seconds. Extremely cold water can increase the difficulty of this roll by +1 or +2 for swimming characters, as can being immersed with no chance to catch a final breath.

Resisting Disease

Whenever a character is exposed to a disease, her player must make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll to avoid having the character contract the illness. The difficulty of the roll is determined by the virulence of the disease and modified by the degree of exposure. A character who has only a fleeting contact with the disease has the difficulty of her roll decreased by 1 or 2, while a character

who wallows in it will have the difficulty increased by a like amount. For details of what happens if the character fails the roll, see "Withstanding Illness" under Endurance on page 241 of this chapter.

Environmental Damage

Characters will often be exposed to dangerous environments — intense heat, supernatural cold, acid mists and countless other terrible menaces. Normally, a character's armor provides no protection against these pervasive threats, but Exalted can often withstand them by virtue of their supernatural constitutions. Players of Exalted exposed to these threats may make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll. Storytellers should rate environmental hazards much like poison, with a difficulty and two effects — one if the Resistance roll succeeds, the other if the roll fails. However, these hazards also have an *interval*. Because they are ongoing effects, a character may be exposed to them for prolonged periods. The interval of the effect determines how long the period of exposure between Stamina + Resistance rolls is. As with poisons, the damage is rated in levels, *not* dice. Do not roll it — simply apply it directly to the character's wound track.

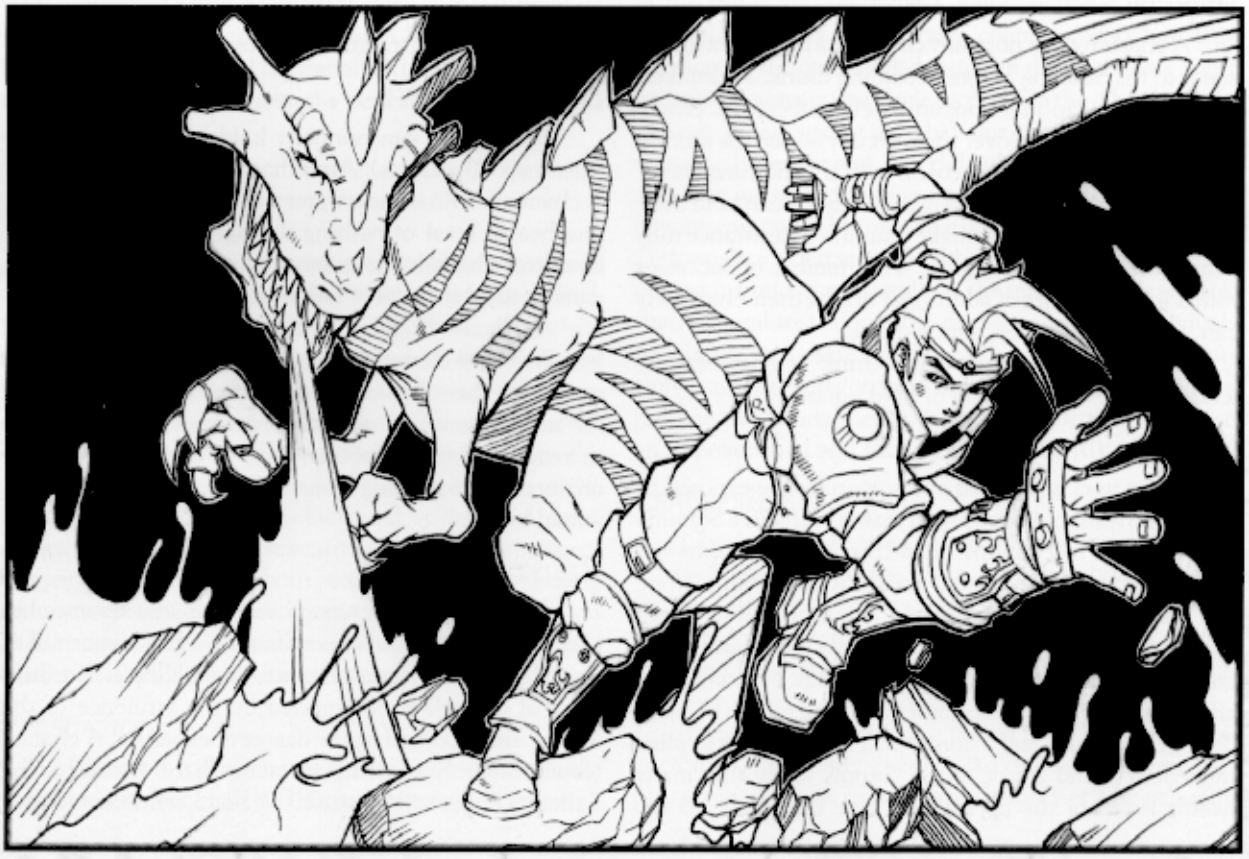
Creatures that cannot soak lethal damage with their Stamina automatically take the more serious effect and may not soak it. Characters who can soak lethal damage not only have a chance to resist it, but also reduce the resulting damage with their Staminas. Unlike damage from combat, a high Stamina may totally negate environmental damage. Many Exalted know Charms that permit them total immunity to these hazards. Players of such characters need not make any rolls when the Charms are in effect. Resistance is automatic.

Hazard	Diff.	Resisted Effect	Failed Effect	Interval
Hearth	1	0	1B	5 min.
Severe Sandstorm	2	0	1L	1 min.
Supernatural Ice Storm	2	1L	3L	1 min.
Bonfire	3	2L	6L	1 turn
Acid Bath	5	2L	8L	1 turn

Survival

Finding Shelter

Exposure, dehydration and starvation can kill as easily as a sword blow. Characters in **Exalted** will often be exposed to terrible weather with little or no appropriate



gear or supplies. Typically, players do not need to make Survival rolls just for their characters to survive from day to day unless the characters are in truly terrible conditions or completely without appropriate equipment. In such cases, the Storyteller should assign a difficulty based on the conditions and whatever inadequate preparation they may have made. Surviving in the woods with knife and flint is difficulty 1, while being thrown unprepared and naked into the middle of the deep desert is difficulty 4 or 5. Only one player in a group needs to succeed at this roll; so long as the other characters are willing to take direction, that player's character can instruct them in what they must do.

Foraging is more difficult. Players must make Perception + Survival rolls for their characters to find food and clean water. In temperate or tropical conditions, this roll is made at normal difficulty, but in desert, arctic or otherwise inhospitable conditions, the difficulty is 2 or higher. Lack of proper survival equipment (typically waxed cord and a sharp knife) also raises this difficulty, but characters need not carry a bow and arrow — most survival hunting involves creatures rabbit-sized or smaller.

Tracking and Evasion

Tracking is the art of following something by the signs and marks its passage leaves. Typically, the only people who can evade a skilled tracker are other trackers of equal or greater skill, who know what the tricks their pursuers will use and can cover their trails.

Normally, tracking is an extended, opposed roll. The player of the target of the pursuit makes Wits + Survival rolls for her character to evade the pursuer and wipe out her tracks, and the pursuer's player makes Perception + Survival rolls for his character to detect the fugitive's traces and continue the pursuit. Rolls are made twice a day, during the morning and afternoon. Tracking at night is impossible without dogs or Charms.

The number of successes that must be accumulated to end the chase — either by losing the pursuit or catching up to the target — depends on the relative speeds of those involved in the chase. If both parties are evenly matched in terms of speed, then one of them must have more than three successes after an exchange in order to win. If the match is uneven (men on horseback chasing someone in leg irons or a swift-legged beastman evading pursuers on foot) then the number of successes should shift. Using the example of men on horseback chasing a victim in leg irons, the pursuers might need to accumulate only a single success to catch their target, while the fugitive must accumulate more than five to successfully evade pursuit.

If the target has a long lead, then he should be awarded a number of automatic successes by the Storyteller to reflect the cold trail and the distance advantage. Poor conditions or unfamiliarity with the terrain increase the difficulty of tracking rolls. The use of dogs or other scent-hunting animals adds at least 2 dice to the pursuer's player's Survival roll and possibly as many as 5 dice, but the pack must be familiar with the terrain and have a skilled handler.

Attempting to throw pursuers with false trails or lead them into traps adds to the difficulty of the evasion roll but can potentially lead them into the den of a dangerous animal or cause them long delays. It's up to the Storyteller to decide how much the difficulty increases. Remember that the difficulty modifier to the fugitive's player's roll should be based on how time-consuming and dangerous the trick is for the fugitive to execute, not on how difficult it is for the pursuers to handle. Also, remember to make sure that the player gets a chance to describe the cunning trick as a stunt.

Taming Animals

Taming animals is an extended Charisma + Survival roll. The number of successes that must be accumulated to tame an animal is dependent on the age and domesticability of the animal in question. Domesticating a young wolf pup is much easier than domesticating a full-grown tiger, and so, the pup requires only four or five successes as opposed to 20 or more for the tiger. Typically, one roll may be made every several days. Characters with the Survival Charm Friendship With Animals Approach add three dice to the rolls when attempting to domesticate animals. Note that tamed animals are *not* magical animal companions as per the Spirit-Tied Pet Charm or the Familiar Background — they are no smarter or communicative than any other animal of their type.

Predicting Weather

Characters who possess the Survival Ability can predict the weather. The player makes an Perception + Survival roll whose difficulty is determined by the changeability of the local weather. The number of successes is the number of days in advance the character can predict the weather. Weather at sea is different than weather on land. Characters using Survival to predict the weather operate at -2 dice penalty when on open water.

Twilight Caste

Craft

Creating Items

Using the Craft Ability to create items is a three-step process. Note that this system is for creating high-quality or otherwise unusual items. For run of the mill work, the Storyteller can ask for a single roll or just assume the character succeeds at producing a passable product.

In the first step, the character must plan the project. Obviously, some things don't need very much planning. A blacksmith used to military work isn't going to need to do very much planning to make a sword, unless it's something very special. Planning is an extended Intelligence + Craft roll. It can

go on for as long as the player wishes, but the time between rolls grows considerably if the player wants to keep his already accumulated successes. How long depends on how many rolls the player has made and the Storyteller's judgment. You might be able to make a new roll every few days of game time, then every few weeks and then every few months when planning a sword. However, when planning a magnificent fortress, the player may begin making new rolls every few months but her character may be required to spend years refining the plans to justify additional rolls. The character can scrap her already-extant plans and start from scratch, but any accumulated successes are lost. The more successes gathered in the planning phase, the more potentially impressive the project. During this stage, the Storyteller should give the player ideas about what kind of results the character can hope for and lay hints for potential adventures to obtain rare ingredients.

In the second step, the character must assess the materials involved. The character must look over the selection of materials and her player must make a Perception + Craft roll to choose the best. Note that a character cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear — it takes excellent materials to make a really outstanding product. However, with enough successes, the character can find a way to make an acceptable product from low-grade material or find the strengths in exceptional material that allow the character to produce a truly astonishing result.

In the third step, the character actually does the work or oversees its execution. This is an extended Dexterity + Craft roll or Intelligence + Craft if the project is a large one (such as shipbuilding or architecture), where the character is essentially directing the labors of others. The player may make as many rolls as she wishes but cannot continue rolling after she has accumulated a number of successes equal to or greater than her character's Intelligence + Craft. However, any spillover successes on the last roll are retained.

As with planning the project, the amount of time between rolls grows ever-larger as the player continues to roll, and a botch will ruin the execution. In the world of **Exalted**, mere craft is not enough to make an item magical. It must be worked through with Essence, and to be truly great, must be made from or with one of the Five Magical Materials: jade, moonsilver, starmetal, orichalcum or soulsteel. However, items that are well-planned, made from the finest materials and superbly executed can give significant bonuses — as many as three dice under special circumstances.

Obviously, on large projects, a lot more is going on than a character directing mindless automatons to go about their tasks. Characters must make sure the employees are skilled enough to carry out her design — potentially a very serious challenge if the character is inhumanly good at her job. The character must also make sure the people carrying out the task are motivated and paid and that work can continue unobstructed. The construction of fortresses, Manses and large ocean-going warships can take years and is full of potential for adventure.

The Five Magical Materials

Exalted characters can construct actual magical devices from the Five Magical Materials—jade, orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal or soulsteel. A character need not be a sorcerer to enchant items, but must have scores of 3 or higher in his Lore, Occult and the appropriate Craft for the item to be created.

The rules for creating magical items are the same as for creating any other item, above. The only differences are that the process takes longer, the materials are more specialized and expensive and the work must be done by an Exalted character with mastery of the appropriate Abilities. The Storyteller and the player should sit down and discuss the effects the character wants the item to have. As a rule of thumb, each significant power takes as long to invest as the item itself took to make.

Players of Exalted characters working Magical Materials that are not aligned with their caste make all rolls at +1 difficulty. This is a penalty Celestial Exalted will often incur — jade is far more common than any other of the Five Magical Materials.

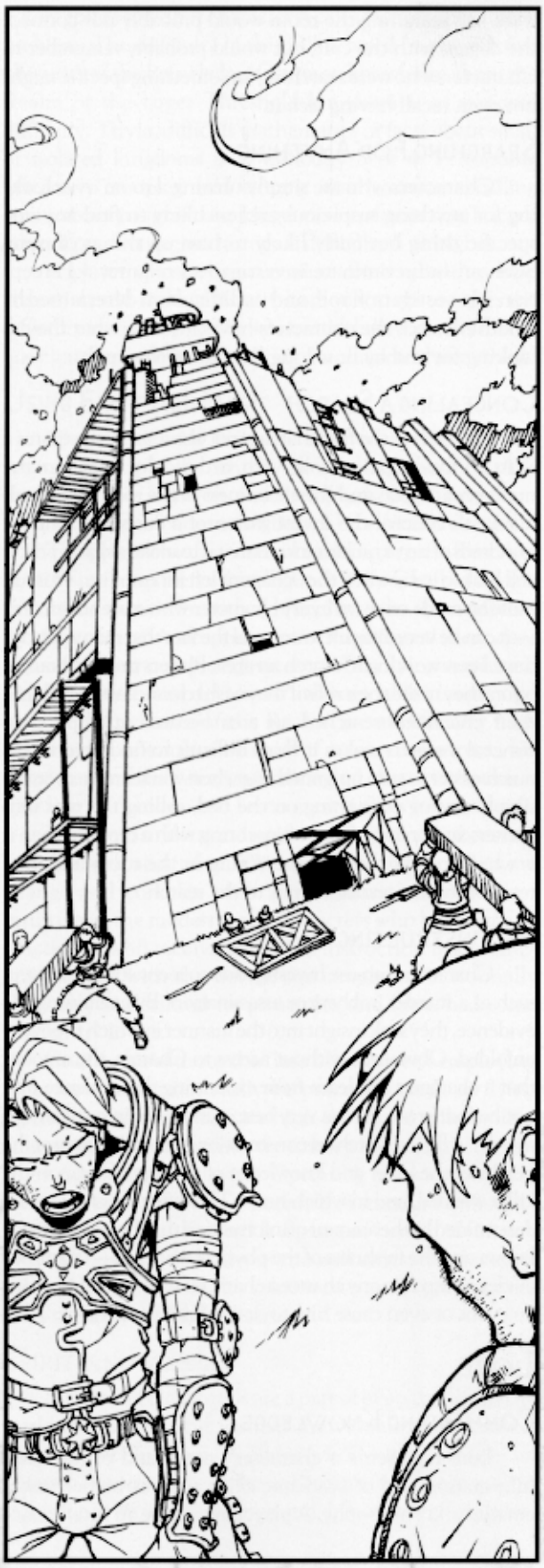
For descriptions of sample items, see Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment.

Building Manses

In order to reap the real benefits of a Demesne, an Exalted must focus the site's energies by the construction of a Manse, a structure designed to concentrate and direct the Demesne's Essence flow. To build a Manse is a difficult feat of magical engineering. The character must have the Abilities Lore, Craft (Architecture) and Occult at 4 or higher. Depending on the level of the Manse being created, the task may be merely demanding or it may be a masterwork.

Building a level 1 Manse takes four to six months of uninterrupted work for a skilled team of masons with fair weather and plentiful supplies. Larger Manses take progressively longer to construct — a Manse for a level 3 Demesne can take several years, while one for a level 5 Demesne may take five or more years of full-time work to build. It is for this reason that Exalted often use elementals, demons or sorcery to raise their Manses.

The quality of the Manse is directly related to the quality of the architecture and the material of the Manse, as well as to the skill of the architect. It is possible for a Manse to be of lower level than the original Demesne. Many Manses, especially those built since the Great Contagion, are much weaker than the Demesnes they focus. These structures are built to discharge the extra, unfocused Essence harmlessly from their spires or even to use it for decoration, as fountains and light sources. Such design elements are a sign of the Manse's architect making a virtue out of a necessity. If they had sufficient skill and access to the proper materials, the Essence would be focused into the Manse's Hearthstone. Instead, it must be discharged in a display that, however impressive, is ultimately designed to prevent the Manse from overloading with Essence the architecture is inadequate to focus.



Crafting Hearthstones

Formed from Essence so densely focused it take on a crystalline form, Hearthstones are fabulously brilliant gems that burn with their own inner light. A Hearthstone is generated when a Manse is built on a Demesne, formed over the course of weeks as the architecture focuses the Demesne's Essence into a single point. Each Hearthstone is unique, colored by the natural resonance of the Demesne and the architecture of the Manse that focuses it. If the Hearthstone is shattered, then the Manse will generate a new one over the next month. If the Manse is destroyed, the Hearthstone is shattered as well, and the fragments rapidly dissolve back into the local Essence flows.

Against the skin, a Hearthstone provides a connection to its Manse, allowing an Exalted to draw power from it, though not so rapidly as if she were in the Manse itself. However, the true power of Hearthstones lies in their interaction with the Five Magical Materials. When placed into a setting in a properly crafted item made from one of these materials, a Hearthstone resonates with the Essence of the Exalted who carries the item on her person. This resonance grants the Exalted a direct link to the Demesne from whence the Hearthstone springs and allows her to harness the Demesne's power to perform wondrous feats. A character with at least 3 dots of Lore and Occult can made a Perception + Lore roll to examine a Hearthstone visually and tell what it does. The difficulty of the roll is the level of the Hearthstone. This knowledge can allow a character to use a Hearthstone's powers without dangerous experimentation or to gain advance information on the abilities of a potential opponent.

The power granted by the Hearthstone varies, depending on the raw power and predisposition of the Demesne and the architecture of the Manse. By making slight alterations to the geometry of a Manse and then breaking the old Hearthstone, characters may attempt to alter the nature of the Hearthstone. This is unlikely to produce a Hearthstone vastly different than the one that already exists, but it can change the specific effects considerably. For example, a Hearthstone that causes a sturdy climbing vine to spring from wherever the character touches might be altered into one that causes thick armor-like creepers to grow all over the character or to allow the character to throw nets of rugged, sticky lianas. It could not, however, be reshaped into a Hearthstone that allowed the character to cause trees to grow explosively or that caused crops to wither. Also, it is unlikely that such alterations will produce a more powerful Hearthstone. Even if the Manse is poorly constructed and much less powerful than the Demesne it focuses, the faults are likely to be fundamental to the architecture and not something that minor changes can counteract.

To alter a Manse, a player must make an Intelligence + Occult roll for his character to determine what changes must be made. The difficulty of this roll is determined by the degree of change the character wants. Purely cosmetic changes are difficulty 1. Moderate changes, such as those discussed for the vine-focused Hearthstone above, are at difficulty 3, while chang-

ing the Hearthstone's nature totally is at least difficulty 5. A botch means the character has made an error in the plans that he will not detect until after he has attempted to implement them. At the very least, this tampering will leave the Manse inert.

The player must then make a Wits + Lore roll at difficulty 3 for his character to execute the changes. Failure means the adjustments didn't succeed, and the Manse is rendered inert until the character implements them successfully. A botch indicates any number of terrible effects — the Manse may be ruined, it may fail to dissipate Essence, causing dangerous discharges or attracting elementals, or the Hearthstone could develop strange and unexpected side effects. A successful Wits + Lore roll of difficulty 1 allows a character to alter the geometry of a Manse very slightly and break all attunements to it.

For descriptions of sample Hearthstones, see Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment. Hearthstones only provide their benefits to Exalted who are attuned to the Manse from which they spring.

Investigation

Investigation is the Ability that characters use when searching an area closely. Storytellers should be particularly careful not to use Investigation as a sort of vending machine for clues. Let Investigation discover the evidence — leave explaining it up to the players. This makes things more engaging for the players and helps prevent the game from turning into an exercise where the players' characters move around the setting and attempt to locate where the next roll should be made.

Because rolls are involved in an investigation, there is always a temptation for players who know they roll poorly to have their characters "try again, dammit" and, if the players roll very well and find nothing, to "just know there's nothing here to find." Good players will stay in-character, but the Storyteller may have to roll in secret for players who have problems separating what they know from what their character knows.

Searching For Something

The primary use of Investigation as an Ability is in searching areas for items, evidence or clues. Characters searching for something specific have a goal in mind, such as "evidence of the Senator's involvement with the Guild slavers" or "the stolen signet ring." Searching for a single object is an Intelligence + Investigation roll, with a difficulty based on how well the object is hidden and the amount of time the characters have to search. Characters searching for specific things are much more likely to find what they're looking for than if they were just searching haphazardly. On the other hand, they're much less likely to notice incidental details. For example, characters searching for forged letters of transit are unlikely to even notice the dagger, its handle wrapped in blue leather, that marks the bedroom's owner as a member of the heretical Bone Wind cult. Characters who were just searching the room would probably not connect the dagger with the cult, but would probably remember it. Characters who were searching for something specific might not even recall having *seen* it.

Searching For Anything

Characters who are simply turning a room over looking for anything suspicious are less likely to find any one specific thing but fairly likely to turn up things of note. Such an indiscriminate investigation requires a Perception + Investigation roll, and its difficulty is determined by whether or not the characters have any idea what they're looking for and by how long they have to search.

Concealing a Search

To conceal the fact that an area was searched requires a Wits + Investigation roll, with a difficulty equal to the number of objects and the cleanliness of the room. It's much harder to conceal the investigation of a dusty room full of hundreds of tiny knickknacks than it is to make a sparse prison cell look as it did when the occupant left for exercise. This roll must be made once for every character who searches an area — it can be very difficult to conceal the fact that many persons have been working to search an area. Players must announce *before* they make their rolls if they wish to conceal the fact that their characters searched an area because attempting to conceal a search makes it more difficult to find objects. It's much easier to turn up something when you search a room by simply tossing everything on the bed, rolling the rugs into corners and prying off the wainscoting with a crowbar than it is when you sift through everything in the room and then return it to its condition prior to the search.

Reconstructing an Event

Characters can use Investigation to reconstruct an event, such as a murder, robbery or assassination. By examining the evidence, they seek insight into the manner in which the event unfolded. Obviously, without access to Charms, the amount that a character can learn from examining the evidence may not be that great. At the very best, a character investigating a murder will get a sketchy reconstruction of events, a guess at the height of the killer and knowledge of the sort of weapon the killer wielded, and in which hand. The difficulty of this roll is determined by the amount of information the character already knows and the freshness of the physical evidence — disturbed evidence can ruin any chance a character has of reconstructing an event or even cause him to drawn false conclusions.

Lore

Commanding Knowledge

Lore represents a character's command of historical information and of academic skills such as higher mathematics and philosophy. A player may make an Intelligence

+ Lore roll to have her character recall a fact or solve a math problem. The difficulty of this roll is based on the relative obscurity of the knowledge. Common knowledge about the Realm or the larger Threshold kingdoms is at standard difficulty. Trivia, difficult mathematics or facts about small or isolated kingdoms is at difficulty 3 or 4. Performing extremely complex and esoteric mathematics, recalling trivia about insignificant kingdoms or almost any knowledge of pre-Contagion history is difficulty 5 or higher.

A player whose character must come up with a snap answer should make a Wits + Lore roll to do so, with the difficulty increased by +1 or +2 over the base difficulty for the question, depending on how long the character has to think.

Using First Age Magic

Characters with Lore are able to understand the strange principles by which the relics of the First Age operate. These controls and metaphors were once common knowledge but are now lost, like so much else.

The player of a character attempting to use a First Age device should make an Intelligence + Lore roll to divine the object's function, with a difficulty set by the complexity of the device. A weapon or knowledge crystal is standard difficulty. Very complex devices, such as flying machines, are difficulty 4, and devices of unimaginable complexity, such as the defenses of the Realm, are at difficulty 6. A player need not make this roll if someone instructs his character in the device's use, though a character's understanding in this case can be no greater than her teacher's.

However, understanding doesn't make the character at home with an artifact. The devices of the First Age are strange and complex and operate along principles not intuitive in the modern age. Characters who have time to practice or who receive extensive instruction from someone familiar with the device can simply use it normally after they understand its principles and have had some time to try it out.

Characters without the time to practice or employing a device that cannot really be practiced (such as flying machines and weapons for which they have only limited ammunition) must, at first, try to keep everything straight when operating the device. Operating a device properly under pressure is a Wits + Lore roll of standard difficulty. Keep in mind that **Exalted** is a game of heroic adventure — don't raise the difficulty of this roll unless the device is incredibly complex or the game is of a much grittier tone than the average **Exalted** series.

Spirit Knowledge

Spirits and elementals are a part of everyday life in the world of **Exalted**, and learned individuals often know a great deal about them. A player whose character sees an unfamiliar spirit may make a Perception + Lore roll to recognize it by its appearance and demonstrated abilities. The difficulty of the roll depends of the relative rarity of the spirit and its power level. More powerful spirits are less frequently seen and much harder to study than their more commonplace fellows. In areas that pay homage to the Immaculates, knowledge of spirits is strictly forbidden to those who are not Dragon-Blooded or members of the Immaculate Order.

Characters who are sorcerers may use Lore to aid them in their summoning. There are a vast array of ritual incantations, protective symbols and warding gestures. Make an Intelligence + Lore roll for the character to tailor the summoning ritual to local conditions, by assaying the date, the mood of the local Essence and the spirit to be summoned. For every success on this Intelligence + Lore roll, the player may add one die to a *single* roll involved in the summoning. This roll may either be one of the Willpower + Essence rolls or the Wits + Occult roll to banish the elemental after a failed binding attempt. Whichever it is, the player gains only one bonus die per success and must declare when she is using them, and how many she's using, *prior* to making the roll.

Demons are the least known sorts of spirits, infrequently seen and little-studied by anyone but sorcerers. Rolls to gain knowledge about demons are the same as those for spirits and elementals, but are made at +2 difficulty.

Attuning to a Demesne

A character who wishes to attune himself to an ownerless Manse or Demesne may do so through a simple ritual that takes one hour per level of the holy place. At the end, the player makes a difficulty 1 Intelligence + Lore roll, and if he succeeds, the character is attuned to the Manse or Demesne. A character can relinquish an attunement by an act of will at any time.

However, if there are already beings attuned to a Manse or Demesne, then either their attunement must be broken, they must consent to the attunement and be present for the ritual or they must be killed. To deattune a character from a Manse is a matter of altering the structure's geomantic architecture slightly — see Crafting Hearthstones on page 247 of this chapter. It is impossible to deattune a character from a Demesne. He must either consent, voluntarily relinquish his attunement or be killed.

No matter how many characters are attuned to a Manse, it still produces only a single Hearthstone. It is up to the individuals involved to determine who carries it.

Medicine

Stanching Bleeding

A character who has suffered an injury from an edged weapon that did more than one level of lethal damage is assumed to be bleeding. He must staunch the bleeding quickly

if he does not wish to bleed to death. A Wits + Medicine roll will stop the bleeding of a single wound. A separate roll must be made for each wound a character wishes to stanch. Each roll is at difficulty 1 for wounds of 1 or 2 health levels and at difficulty 2 for wounds of 3 or more health levels. Increase the difficulty of this roll by +1 if no proper dressings are available.

As stated in the combat section, Exalted can stop the bleeding of their wounds by force of will, and if they take the time to dress their wounds, the bleeding stops without the need for a roll.

Infected Wounds

Characters who have been seriously hurt in battle will often suffer life-threatening infections. A character with the Medicine Ability can help halt the progress of an infection, giving a character a much better chance to recover if he receives early treatment.

With a successful Intelligence + Medicine roll, a character can halt the progress of an infection. For a number of days equal to the number of successes rolled, the difficulty of the Stamina + Endurance roll for the wounded character to overcome the illness stays where it was when she was treated, rather than increasing daily. If the Intelligence + Medicine roll fails, the character cannot treat the infection. Thereafter, the infection can only benefit from treatment by a character with a Medicine score higher than the character who failed the roll.

The character whose player made the Medicine roll must attend to his patient during this period, and he may not tend to more than one person for every dot of Medicine he possesses. When the grace period granted by a successful Medicine roll ends, the difficulty of the Stamina + Endurance roll to recover begins to increase again. If a character does not recover by the time the infection begins to increase in severity again, she may be treated again, but this time, the growth of the infection is only halted for a number of days equal to (the number of successes on the Medicine roll/2). If she still does not recover, then the next roll is at (successes/4), and so on.

The difficulty of the Intelligence + Medicine roll can increase by +3 or more if the character does not have access to the proper medicines.

Treating Illness

The world of **Exalted** is as full of sickness as our own, and though the wonders of the First Age staved off pestilence, those wonders are no more. Though the Exalted themselves are immune to most mortal ills, mere mortals have no such protection.

Various diseases have differing effects — there are a number of illnesses detailed in the Antagonists chapter of this book. When a character is exposed to a disease, his player must make a Stamina + Resistance roll. The difficulty of this roll is determined by the virulence of the disease. The diseases in this book already have difficulties listed for them, and Storytellers should feel free to use these as a baseline for the difficulty of resisting other diseases. If the player fails his roll, then his character is infected, and the player must make a Stamina + Endurance roll for the character to survive. There are two difficulties to this roll — one if the character has received effective medical treatment and one if he has not.

Effective treatment of a disease requires an Intelligence + Medicine roll, with the difficulty set by the availability of proper medicine. If the appropriate medicine to treat the ailment is not available, then the difficulty of the Medicine roll increases. The difficulty may be modified by only +1 if inferior treatments are available or by +3 or more if the character must simply treat the symptoms and hope for the best.

Successful treatment does not necessarily imply a complete cure. Such miracles are the province of the Chosen and their magic. Successful treatment with mortal medicine often means only that the disease runs its course more gently and that the victim has a better chance of survival.

On a botch on the treatment, the treating character is considered to have been exposed to the disease himself. Certain diseases, such as the bubonic plague, are very contagious. Players of characters attempting to treat a victim of such a disease must roll to see if their characters are infected, regardless of the outcome of the treatment attempt.

Occult

Sensing Magic

In large quantities, Essence is impossible to conceal. It crackles and roars, putting on shapes that suit its nature and the purpose that its master lends it. But in smaller quantities, it is still perceptible to the senses of a trained observer. Even after the crackling discharge that marks the birth of an effect has dissipated, its magic can be detected. A character knowledgeable in the wavering marks that Essence leaves in the fabric of reality and in its particular tastes and smells can detect the Charms or sorcery on a target so long as the magic remains in effect.

To do this, the character must closely observe the target, which can be an object or a person. If she is examining an object, she must be able to touch and handle it. If she is examining an individual, she must have at least an interrupted turn of either eye contact or skin-to-skin contact.

The character's player then makes a Perception + Occult roll. The difficulty of this roll is 11, but it is decreased by 1 for every mote of Essence used to cast a spell on the target and also for every mote currently dedicated to powering Charms affecting the target. The minimum difficulty for this roll is 1 — no matter how much magic the character bears, the observer's player must still roll at least one success on her Perception + Occult roll.

A character cannot detect the lingering effects of magic that once affected a target but that has now ended. The magic must still be in effect in order for a character to detect it.

Geomancy

A character can typically tell without any roll when she is in a place of great magical power such as a Demesne or a Manse. Even to dull mortal senses, such a place seems frozen in the cathedral-like silence between the lightning-stoke and the thunderclap.

If a character wishes to detect more subtle magical influences, she must either use the Occult Charm All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight or else perform a geomantic survey of the area. Such a survey requires a simple but specialized kit of equipment and several hours or days of work, depending on the size and detail of the survey. The difficulty of this roll is almost always 1, though it can increase if the character rushes her investigations or if the area has a very complex magical geography.

The result of the survey is a map of the local area's flows of luck and power. This map is useful for pointing out the possible location of nearby Demesnes, building structures with very good luck and a variety of other magical tasks — no sorcerer would live in an area without first compiling a map of the local Essence flows.

Sensing Spirits

Just as a character with Occult can detect the taste and scent of magic at work, a practitioner of the black arts can also detect when spirits are lurking nearby invisibly. By the creeping of the hairs on the back of his neck and by the sense of slight unease they inspire, an accomplished occultist can detect immaterial spirits within a distance of 10 yards.

Detection requires a Perception + Occult roll. The difficulty of this roll is equal to 10, but it is decreased by 1 for every 10 points of Essence possessed by the spirits in the area. Multiple spirits congregating together within the area add up their Essences to determine how far the difficulty of this roll falls, so an occultist is as likely to notice a number of weak spirits as he is a single powerful one. As with sensing magic, above, the difficulty can never fall below 1. No matter how many spirits gather around a character, at least one success on the Perception + Occult roll is needed to detect them. Success on the roll grants no specific knowledge about the spirits present, just that there are immaterial spirits in the area.

Astrology

Though they cannot rival the astonishing powers of the Sidereal Exalted, other occultists can still read fates of men and kingdoms in the panoply of the heavens. To draw up a horoscope for a person or group, an astrologer must first gather information about births and deaths and other important events. This requires either the willing participation of the target(s) or else a great deal of research that is more properly a matter for roleplaying than dice rolling. After the information has been gathered, roll the occultist's Intelligence + Occult, with a difficulty equal to the detail desired and the obscurity of the target. (It is far easier to see the blazing destiny of an emperor-to-be than the dim path of a humble cobbler.) The more successes obtained, the greater the accuracy of the character's forecast and the farther she sees into the target's future.

Obviously, assigning specific mechanical effects to astrology is difficult. Storytellers should give appropriately vague predictions and feel free to twist the meaning to match the outcome. Astrology is the art of stealing the knowledge of the future from the stars — it is an act of hubris and inherently unreliable. No destiny is fixed, particularly not the destinies of the Exalted. If fate rules all men, then the Maidens often place lies in the stars or else the gods themselves are subject to fate and can be deceived as easily as some king's astrologer.

Though few know it, the fortunetelling of men cannot predict the doings of the Yozis or of the Underworld's Deathlord rulers. The heavens can tell only of the things that were born beneath them, and the magic of the demon princes and the Malfeans is far older than the moon and stars. However, the servants of these entities are largely beings of our epoch, and as creatures of this world, their destinies are spoken of within the stars.

Night Caste

Athletics

Breaking and Lifting Things

A character who wishes to lift or break an object should compare his Strength + Athletics total to the Feats of Strength chart. A character can lift or break an object at this level as a reflexive action. A player whose character wish to exert himself may spend a point of Willpower and make a Willpower roll as a regular action. He may add the number of successes on this roll to the character's Strength + Athletics when referencing the Feats of Strength chart. Obviously, this table has a distinctly heroic bent to it. Storytellers running grittier games should halve the character's lifting capacity and divide the character's Strength + Athletics by 2 when deciding what sort of feats they can accomplish.

Note that there are rules for characters smashing their way through walls in the middle of combat — if characters need to break things in a hurry, use those instead.

Encumbrance

A character in **Exalted** can comfortably carry an amount equal to half her lift value. For every 10 percent over that, she suffers a -1 mobility penalty and a +1 fatigue value, cumulative with any armor she may be wearing. A character cannot carry more than her lift value for an extended period and will be at a -5 mobility penalty and +5 fatigue value even when staggering short distances under such a burden.

Feats of Strength

Strength + Athletics	Lift (In lbs.)	Feat
1	80	Lift an anvil or a suit of heavy armor.
2	160	Lift a full-grown man. Break a pine board with a kick.
3	250	Lift a mule. Punch through a pine door.
4	350	Tote a bale of cotton on one shoulder. Break a sword over your knee.
5	450	Lift a full-grown warhorse. Kick a pine door to splinters.
6	550	Punch through an oak door. Carry a log on one shoulder.
7	650	Lift an ox. Bend an iron bar with both hands.
8	800	Throw a mule. Bend a horseshoe into a pretzel.
9	1,000	Pull a fully laden wagon. Snap an axe haft over your knee.
10	1,200	Lift a yeddim. Throw a full-grown warhorse.
11	1,500	Lift an unlocked portcullis. Slowly kick down a brick wall.
12	1,600	Kick an oak door to splinters. Pull down a wooden bridge.
13	1,800	Lift an elephant. Throw an ox. Punch through an iron-shod door.
14	2,000	Snap iron manacles. Tear apart a castle wall, stone by stone.
15	2,200	Punch through a stone wall. Kick an iron-shod door into flinders.
16	2,500	Lift a locked portcullis, snap even the sturdiest lock with a single kick.
17	3,000	Punch through an iron door. Pull down temple pillars.
18	3,500	Rip iron bars out of a stone sill with one hand. Tip over a Guild wagon.
19	4,000	Throw a yeddim, tear apart the welded steel bars of a portcullis.
20	4,500	Kick down the iron-shod and barred gates of a mighty fortress.

Leaping

Leaping and jumping — across chasms, between ships and onto wall hangings — is an important part of heroic adventure. Characters can leap up to their Strength + Athletics in yards vertically and twice that distance horizontally. The Storyteller may require Dexterity or Wits + Athletics rolls if characters land on slippery, unstable or dangerous surfaces.

Climbing

Characters with an Athletics of 1 or greater can safely climb any dry, sloping surface that possesses plenty of easy handholds. Roll to see if characters without the Athletics Ability or those who are climbing vertical or difficult surfaces succeed. The Storyteller should add additional difficulty to climbing attempts based on the availability of handholds and whether or not there is water or slime on the climbing surface. The Storyteller should also take into account the temperature of the climbing surface and the air around it — climbing in gloves is frustratingly clumsy, while touching freezing rock quickly numbs the hands. If the climbing surface slopes outward, the Storyteller should add at *least* +1 to the difficulty of the climbing attempt.

Likewise, characters climbing in armor or otherwise encumbered suffer their mobility penalty to climbing rolls, and characters attempting to climb with packs on or otherwise festooned with unbalancing gear should have the difficulty increased by +1 or more. Typically, climbers ascend a pitch and then pull the gear up after them.

Proper climbing equipment should help negate difficulty penalties. Characters who are properly belayed will only fall on a botch. However, a belay must be set up from the top of the area to be climbed, so the first character up will generally have to make the ascent unprotected. The Storyteller shouldn't hesitate to split a climb, particularly a long one, into many small rolls to make it more interesting.

Falling

Falling characters normally take 1 level of bashing damage for every five feet they fall — soakable with Stamina, as usual. If a character falls more than 50 feet or strikes a surface such as jagged rocks or the bottom of a pit filled with rusty spikes, the damage becomes lethal. A characters who falls into deep water or onto a very soft surface may decrease or eliminate damage totally.

If the Storyteller allows it, a player may make a Wits + Athletics roll for the falling character to attempt to better her situation. The Storyteller sets the difficulty of the roll and determines what success means. It could mean the character successfully grabs the edge of a pit or snags a tree limb on the way down or that she manages to kick off of the rocky sea cliff and hurl herself into deep water. The Storyteller should keep in mind that nobody likes her character to die a pointless death and that falling is a pretty unheroic way to go. While death from a fall is acceptable in a dark and gritty game, it's probably not what players are expecting in a cinematic adventure.

Awareness

Small Details

The most common use of the Awareness Ability is to notice small details or signs of danger. This Ability isn't Investigation, which covers thoroughly looking over an area for something specific or for anything of interest. Instead, Awareness determines if a character notices something when he isn't paying particular attention. Does he notice that his room has been searched or that his honor guard is composed of battle-scarred veterans unused to fine dress, rather than soldiers chosen for their attractiveness? Does he realize that the food has a strange scent or that the laces on the back of his mistress' dress are tied differently than they were this morning?

The Storyteller should set the difficulty of Awareness rolls based on how obvious a fact the character may notice and how distracted he is. A character in the midst of a kiss or a wild melee is less likely to notice small details than a character going for a stroll or sitting quietly waiting for something to happen.

Countering Stealth

Characters use their Awareness to counter the use of Stealth by others. This is a opposed roll, with the sneaking character's player rolling his character's Dexterity + Stealth and the observing character's player rolling her character's Perception + Awareness. If the stealthy character succeeds, then he goes undetected, while if the observer succeeds, she sees him. Negative factors such as poor visibility or distractions will increase the difficulty of this roll for the observing character.

Storytellers who feel that this way of doing things leaves too much to the dice should work with the rule of thumb that if the sneaking character does not get at least at many successes as the observing character has points of Awareness, no roll is necessary to detect him. Storytellers using this rule should probably only do so when a character with Stealth is attempting a heroic feat — sneaking by someone in broad daylight, for example.

Detecting Ambushes

Part noticing small details and part countering Stealth, characters will often be required to detect sneak attacks of various sorts. Players get Perception + Awareness rolls for their characters to detect an ambush. Players whose characters fail to spot their attackers may make a reflexive Wits + Awareness roll to overcome surprise. Details are provided under "Ambushes" on page 238 of this chapter.

Dodge

Dodge is essentially a combat-only Ability. Characters who wish to be physically agile or perform gymnastics should learn the Athletics skill instead. Dodge as a combat Ability is covered in the Dawn Caste section on combat.

Larceny

The Larceny Ability subsumes most criminal activity, from buying and selling illegal goods to disguise, theft and burglary. It is a favorite of criminals as well as of spies and secret police.

Picking Locks

Characters, particularly those of a dishonest bent, will often find that their ways are barred by locked portals. Likewise, cabinets and chests that contain the objects of a character's desire will often be secured.

Picking a lock is a Dexterity + Larceny roll. The difficulty of this roll is set by the complexity and quality of the lock. Storytellers should feel free to increase the difficulty of a roll if a character is working under poor conditions — it isn't easy to pick a lock when hanging upside down by one foot over a pair of alert guards. Characters must have lockpicks to pick a lock. Most civilized areas look poorly on people who carry such tools and restrict their availability or ban them outright. Though these tools can be improvised, using homemade lockpicks adds +1 to the difficulty of lockpicking rolls.

Storytellers incorporating locks into their stories as obstacles should keep in mind that a crowbar, an axe and a 12-pound sledgehammer are all highly effective lockpicks, and one of the players is sure to figure this out. Lockpicking is a skill for situations requiring stealth — don't be surprised when the characters just smash the door down or carry the chest off to pick the lock later.

Picking Pockets

Locks aren't the only thing characters in **Exalted** may wish to pick. Picking pockets isn't just useful to help supplement a character's income — the skill can be used



to steal documents, keys, signets or practically any other object small enough to be palmed.

To pick a pocket or cut a purse, the character's player rolls Dexterity + Larceny. The difficulty of the attempt is determined by where the target carries her valuables. Pouches and back pockets are easy, while purses and front pockets are difficulty 2. Items carried in breast pockets or against the skin of the chest are difficulty 3. If the pouch or pocket is in any way theft-proofed, the difficulty is raised by at least 1. For example, many purses are covered in iron or brass mesh that makes them difficult to cut. As its name suggests, cutting purses requires a very sharp knife: Either the bottom is cut out or the strap is slashed. Characters without a knife can attempt to snatch a purse but do so at difficulty 2 — most people wear their purses in ways that makes them difficult to snatch.

Players of characters who have had their pockets picked or purses cut may make a Wits + Awareness roll for the characters to notice in time to react. The difficulty modifier of this Awareness roll is equal to the number of *extra* successes achieved on the Dexterity + Larceny roll. If the robber rolled no extra successes, then the Awareness roll is at normal difficulty.

Blending Into the Underworld

Characters of criminal bent need not work alone. There is always the shadowy underworld of criminals available. Cat burglars, fences, thugs, cutpurses and every other sort of criminal throng through the urban night, and the rural roads crawl with brigands and highwaymen.

Criminal characters who are new to an area will first need to make the acquaintance of important figures in the local underworld. To make contact requires a Charisma + Larceny roll, with the difficulty determined by the degree to which local crime is organized and regimented and the degree to which local police efforts force criminals into hiding. It's very hard to meet potential contacts in a city full of organized criminals and strict police. On the other hand, meeting someone important in a freeport town such as Nexus, where the authorities' only real efforts to fight crime are specifically directed at preventing criminals from organizing, can be as easy as walking up to the shifty figure in a bar and sitting down.

The number of successes rolled determines the quality of the contacts the character makes. One success will allow the character to purchase illegal goods, three or more will enable her to become involved in a crime ring, and with five or more successes, she can catch the eye of a major local criminal enterprise.

Casing a Target

There's more to crime than the act itself, at least for professional criminals. Scouting out the location of a crime is of critical importance to a successful robbery or kidnaping. The difficulty of casing an area is determined by how much the characters can see and by how alert the denizens are.

Casing a location requires a Perception + Larceny roll, with a difficulty set by the degree of access the

character has to the location and the attentiveness of the inhabitants. The number of successes on the roll determines how much information the character gets.

For example, when casing a mansion, one success allows the character to get a good idea of the exterior layout, while three allows him a strong grasp of the exterior and an good grasp of the public areas inside. Five successes would give him a good idea of the entire structure's layout, down to the habits of the individual inhabitants and the night watchmen's taste in girls.

Characters receive no direct mechanical benefit from casing a location successfully. On the other hand, Storytellers should let the players plan things out ahead of time and help the players clarify misapprehensions they might have — after all, the characters have actually *seen* the location: They're unlikely to make elementary errors.

Disguise

Characters in **Exalted** will frequently have reason to appear to be someone they aren't. One may need to imitate the victim of a murder or kidnaping, dress as someone who belongs in a particular area or conceal her identity to escape a place where she's wanted. There are two kinds of disguise — concealing one's own identity and dressing as someone or something in particular.

A player who wishes her character to conceal her identity must make an Intelligence + Larceny roll with a difficulty determined by how distinctive looking the character is. A seven-foot tall, one-armed man with bright green hair and a skin color wildly at odds with the local norm is going to have a much more difficult time concealing his appearance than a normal-looking woman of average height, build and skin tone. Players of individuals looking for the disguised character make a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll on seeing her with a difficulty equal to the number of successes the player rolled on the disguise attempt. Bad visibility and crowded conditions can increase the difficulty of the roll to recognize the character.

A character attempting to disguise herself as someone else faces a much more challenging task. The player rolls Intelligence + Larceny, with a difficulty set by the degree to which the character resembles the target and the amount of study she has done of the target's mannerisms. Attempting a serious imitation of someone without any study and without looking very much like her is at least difficulty 5. A character must study for weeks or months and have access to detailed personal information to have any chance at a successful impersonation in close quarters.

The number of successes the player rolls on her character's disguise attempt is the difficulty of other characters to recognize her as an imposter while interacting with her. If she interacts very briefly or is seen only from a distance, the difficulty of the roll to recognize her increases considerably. It also increases if the individuals she interacts with do not know the person she's disguised as very well.

A character attempting to imitate a member of a group, rather than a specific individual, uses the same system, except that the amount of study required to perform the role is decreased. The character need only study for a few weeks at most, and in many cases, individuals will simply ignore her, especially if she is dressed as a servant, soldier, page or some other uniformed functionary.

Stealth

Stealth is the ability to evade detection and move without being seen. This act is an opposed roll, with the sneaking character's player rolling his character's Dexterity + Stealth and the observing character's player rolling her character's Perception + Awareness. If the stealthy character succeeds, then he goes undetected, while if the observer succeeds, she sees him. Negative factors such as good lighting, poor cover, crunchy material underfoot or alerted guards add to the difficulty for the sneaking character. At the Storyteller's option, a character may need to gain at least as many successes as the observing character has points of Awareness. Storytellers should see the description of Awareness for an explanation of this system.

Eclipse Caste

Bureaucracy

Evaluating Goods

Salesmanship and outright fraud are a normal part of business, and characters who wish to be successful merchants must learn to discern the true value of merchandise. The kind of roll a player must make depends on the merchant her character is dealing with. If the merchant is not attempting to deceive the buyer regarding the quality of his goods, then she need only make a simple Perception + Bureaucracy roll to tell if the merchant is over- or undercharging. If the seller is perpetrating some sort of fraud or con game, then her Perception + Bureaucracy roll is an opposed roll. If the merchant is just attempting to fast talk the character, then his player opposes the Perception roll with a Charisma + Bureaucracy roll. If he's attempting to commit some sort of fraud, then his player opposes the Perception + Bureaucracy with Wits + Larceny.

A character buying a tool or item that relates to one of her Abilities may substitute her Ability for Bureaucracy, if she so wishes. For example, a character with Melee could use that Ability when buying swords or armor, or a character with Craft (Tailor) could use it instead of Bureaucracy when buying cloth or sewing equipment.

Buying and Selling

Most markets in the world of **Exalted** accept haggling as natural. Haggling is an extended opposed roll of Wits + Bureaucracy. Both players can continue to roll and accumulate successes until one of them chooses to stop the contest.

Successes on the part of the seller allow him to charge a better than regular price, while successes on the part of the buyer allow her to get a price below what the market generally allows. Typically, every five accumulated successes halves or doubles the price. Because of how general the Resources system is, haggling is typically for flavor, unless the character is buying something of significant value, such as a wagonload of silk, real estate or the services of a mercenary army.

Bribes and Bureaucracy

Bribery and corruption are the way of the world. Often, characters will not just need to bribe officials to circumvent the law or have a special exception made, but will be forced to pay off officials to get them to do their jobs at all.

Paying off an official who wishes to collect money to do her job requires no roll but may be a Resources • to •••• expense, depending on what it is the character wants.

Convincing an official to accept a bribe she isn't expecting requires a Manipulation + Bureaucracy roll. The difficulty of this roll depends on the probity of the official and how severe the punishment will be if she is caught accepting the bribe. Obviously, such bribes also have a Resources cost, and the bribing character must be able to pay it. Note that, in many cases, an official who chooses not to accept the bribe will still take the money and simply not honor the agreement.

Bureaucratic Maneuvering

Characters who are part of a bureaucracy must often use the mechanism of bureaucracy as a weapon and a shield, attacking with hearings, investigations and accusations and defending themselves with paperwork, foot-dragging and an excruciating attention to detail. A player whose character is using bureaucracy to delay or expedite something must make an Intelligence + Bureaucracy roll. Every success speeds or slows the operation by 20 percent.

Normally, the Storyteller should break up struggles for the control of a bureaucracy into many smaller tasks, but it can be resolved abstractly if the group desires. To do this, have the principle personalities involved in the struggle engage in an extended Intelligence + Bureaucracy contest. The interval between rolls is usually weekly or monthly, and the total number of successes required to seize control of the apparatus is set by the Storyteller, based on the size of the bureaucracy. Most bureaucracies have a number of such long-running feuds grinding on at any given time, as various groups attempt to seize the reins of power and promote their own loyal underlings into vacancies.

Linguistics

Linguistics represents the character's ability to speak and (if he has at least Lore •) write in various languages. The character's basic Linguistics score represents only proficiency in a number of languages and in the concept of language as a whole. A character who wishes to find a language's internal poetry and express himself through that must take specialties in a specific language. The number of specialties a character possesses in a given language reflects the character's expressive talent. Characters with one specialty are gifted and those with three specialties in a single language are unexcelled.

Composing

Composing a play, poem or prepared speech is not unlike composing music with the Performance Ability, and the rules are similar. Writing requires an extended Intelligence + Performance roll. As with composing music, the quality of the desired output determines the difficulty of the roll, and the number of successes required is set by the length of the piece. A short love poem or homily may take only one or two successes, while an epic poem or a book of history might take many hundreds. The Storyteller and the player should discuss the amount of work the character is putting in on the project to determine how long the intervals between rolls are; large works can take years to compose, especially if the character is pursuing other projects.

Lost and Secret Languages

Characters in **Exalted** will often be confronted with texts in secret code, forgotten languages or the occult alphabets and tongues of various cults and secret societies. The ability to read these is often crucial and not just for the sake of knowledge. Such tongues are often used to hide secrets or to conceal the meaning of magical texts.

Decoding a cryptic or lost language is an extended action. For codes, the difficulty is determined by the strength of the code. Simple use of numbers or occult symbols in place of letters is standard difficulty to unravel. Actual secret tongues are from +1 to +4 difficulty, depending on if the language uses the grammar or alphabet of an existing tongue or if it is a completely synthetic language.

Lost languages are similar. The difficulty is set by the rarity and antiquity of the tongue. A courtly or antique dialect of a common tongue would be standard difficulty. Reading the high holy speech of the Dragon Kings, who ruled the world before the First Age of Man, is difficulty 5.

In both cases, the number of successes that the character must accumulate is related to the length of the text he wishes to decode. It may be 10 successes for a few pages or hundreds for a long book. Keep in mind that a character cannot necessarily just "skip to the good parts" of a large tome that he cannot initially read. While a character looking for certain specific details can cut some corners, he must still translate or decode enough of the text to know where to find what he's looking for, and a character doing a slipshod job risks skipping some piece of dreadfully important context. If he rushes off immediately after discovering the secret location of the burial place of the Lord of the Dragon Kings, he may overlook the page afterward, which describes the many deadly perils that await him there.

Ride

Evaluating Mounts

Riding animals are as uniquely individual as people, and they are by no means all of equal quality. It goes without saying that those whose business is selling beasts of burden would like to move the sickly, old and weak beasts among their stock as well as the healthier ones. Many dealers are willing to misportray the quality of their stock, and some will even go so far as to feed stimulants and pain killers to old mounts or perform similar ruses. A character must thus be able to evaluate the quality of a mount for herself.

If the seller is not actively attempting to defraud the character, evaluating the quality of a riding beast is a simple Perception + Ride roll. If the seller is perpetrating some sort of fraud, the Perception + Ride is opposed by the merchant's Charisma + Bureaucracy (if he's attempting to fast talk the character) or his Wits + Larceny (if he's putting plaster over the beast's sores or dying its coat to help conceal its age).

Training Mounts

While they may be domesticated by many generations of breeding, animals are still individuals with distinct personalities, and most of them are not entirely pleased at the prospect of bearing burdens. Training animals to carry riders and obey commands is not easy, especially for heroes with a habit of training mythic beasts of various sorts to serve as their mounts.

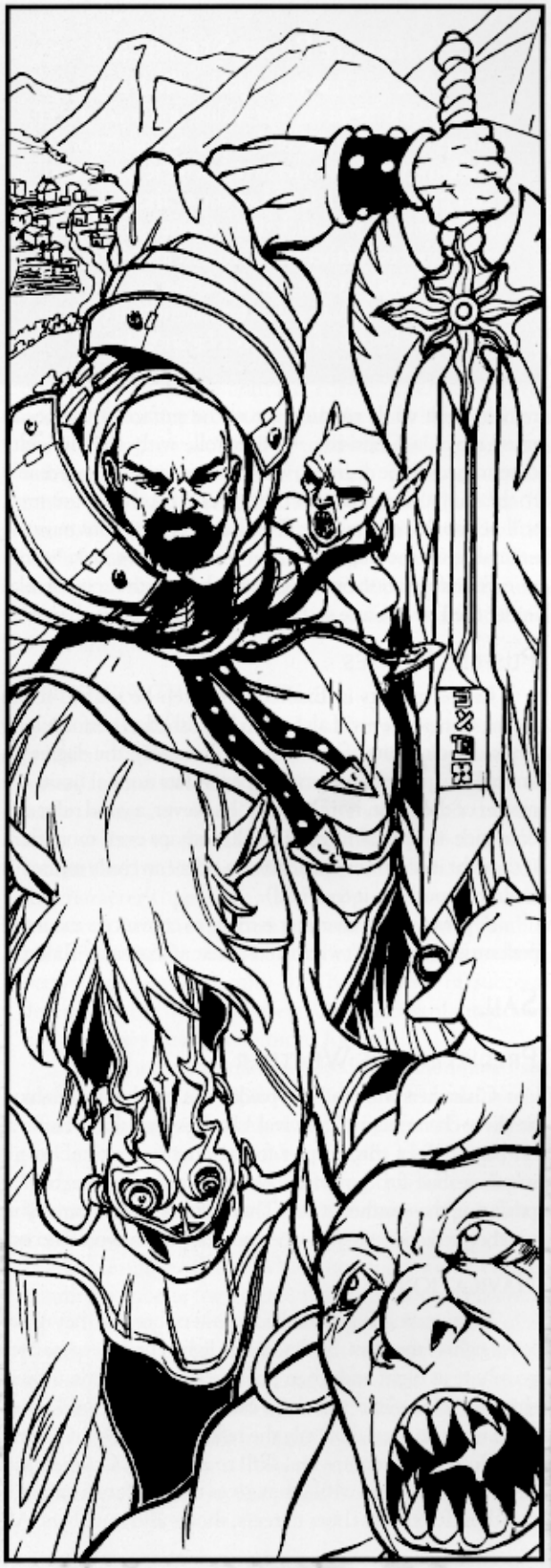
Breaking an animal is a Charisma + Ride roll, with the difficulty determined by the fierceness of the beast. The roll is extended, with the number of successes required determined by the degree of domesticability of the animal. Already domesticated animals are broken with but a single success, while wild creature might take 3, 5 or even more successes.

Animals are easiest to train when young — if the beast is already fully grown, add +1 to the difficulty of the roll. For especially fierce beasts, Storytellers should feel free to set a minimum level of Ride below which the character has no chance to tame the beast. Botches on such a roll can be very dangerous, resulting in the character being trampled or mauled.

Riding Under Stress

Characters with the Ride Ability need not roll when riding a mount normally. However, characters in **Exalted** will often ride under anything but normal conditions. Most beasts of burden were originally herbivores. They do not like to be ridden through bloody battles, blazing forest fires, primordial chaos or the land of the dead, where every instinct tells them to run away. Those that are carnivorous are carnivores large enough to carry an adult human and are prone to territoriality, eating things they shouldn't and mauling bystanders when hurt or confused.

While breeding and training can help overcome these problems, keeping control of animals in difficult situations still takes skill. A player who wishes his character to coax his mount to leap through fire, go near its natural enemies or



Alternate Riding Strategies

The use of Charisma in Ride rolls assumes that characters ride heroically, by building up a bond of trust and respect between rider and mount. Not all characters will ride this way. Characters who saw the reins and force their mounts around should substitute their Strength, while characters who trick their mounts and wheedle performance out of them should use Manipulation. All three methods of riding are mechanically identical, though compassionate characters might find controlling animals by brute force to be objectionable.

remain calm while running across the surface of the ocean must make a Charisma + Ride roll, with the difficulty determined by the degree to which the activity is disagreeable to the animal. Regardless of the player's roll, the mount must still be capable of the feat. The character may convince the animal to try the impossible, but trying doesn't make it so.

For information on riding in combat, see the combat rules under the Dawn Caste section on page 226 of this chapter.

Pushing Horses

Just as mounts in **Exalted** will often be pushed to do daring things, they will also often be pushed to perform long beyond their limits of endurance. Ultimately, the degree an animal is capable of performing beyond its normal limits is a matter of the beast, not the rider. However, a good rider can convince an animal to gives its all, perhaps even more than it thought it could (or is able to — a rider can easily injure his mount by pushing it too hard).

A player whose character is trying to convince a mount to perform when it doesn't wish to must make a Charisma + Ride roll.

Sail

Predicting the Weather

Characters with Sail can predict the weather in a fashion similar to characters with Survival. Use the system under Survival on page 245 of this chapter for weather forecasting, except substitute Sail for Survival. Characters with Sail are best at predicting the weather at sea. They suffer a -2 dice penalty to weather prediction attempts when not on open water or a seacoast.

Navigation

Many sailing ships are called "coasters" because they never leave sight of the coast. Such ships are lightly built because they go ashore at night and when poor weather threatens. Others ships are "blue water" vessels, so called because they sail across open water so deep that only the reflected sky gives it color.

Both ships require real skill to navigate. Coasters sail near the shore, and while that gives them safety from poor weather, it exposes them to reefs, shoals and sand bars. All can rip through the fragile wooden hulls of these ships with terrifying ease. Blue water vessels have fewer problems but must keep to their course with only simple instruments, without landmarks and despite the invisible effects of wind and ocean current.

Navigating a ship is an Intelligence + Sail roll, with a difficulty equal to the complexity of the course the character is plotting. Sailing through an area with many snags or very strong currents is of greater difficulty than open sailing over calm water.

Handling a ship in a tight passage is a two-step process. First, the character must choose the right tack for the passage. This requires a Wits + Sail roll, with a difficulty determined by the degree to which the wind and the passage align and by the general difficulty of the passage. Narrow, rocky passages with strong currents are more difficult than broad ones with gentle currents and few hazards. Failure on this roll means that the passage is unnavigable by the character under the current conditions — he must either use oars (if the ship is a galley) or wait for more favorable winds.

The player must then make a number of Dexterity + Sail rolls equal to (5 - her successes on the Wits + Sail roll), with a difficulty determined by the ship's handling characteristics and the constancy of the wind. It is easier to navigate a dangerous passage with an agile sloop in a steady wind than in a large, unresponsive cargo vessel during a period of rapidly shifting winds. Failure on these Dexterity-based rolls means the ship has scraped a hazard and taken damage, but not enough to sink it immediately. A botch means the side of the ship has been staved in or the bottom ripped out.

Shipboard Movement

It takes skill to move on a ship in anything but the calmest of weather. Small, wooden ships pitch dramatically in even moderate seas. Characters without their sea legs will be at a dramatic disadvantage on ships. Storytellers should set a minimum Sail Ability required to operate without penalty, with the minimum Ability level required determined by the roughness of the sea. Players of characters with Sail Abilities below that level must make Dexterity + Sail checks every turn or have their characters operate at a +1 difficulty penalty on any tasks involving agility or coordination. On very heavy seas, Storytellers should feel free to make the player of *any* character moving about make a Dexterity + Sail roll. Botching means the character is hurled to the deck or even thrown overboard.

In a similar vein, the rolling and pitching of a ship as sea is often very unsettling to the stomachs of inexperienced sailors. Players must make Stamina + Sail rolls every day of the voyage or have their characters become seasick. The difficulty of this roll is set by the state of the sea — it's hard to hold down your lunch when the ship is regularly

tilting 10 degrees. Characters whose players fail the roll are at -2 dice on all actions and cannot hold down solid food or water. Once the roll succeeds, the character will generally no longer be seasick for that voyage. However, very rough seas will make even the saltiest of sea dogs green around the gills — the Storyteller should feel free to make characters sailing in a storm check for seasickness.

Exalted characters who have activated the Athletics Charm Graceful Crane Stance are immune to the effects of pitch and roll, but their players may still be required to make Dexterity + Sail rolls during heavy seas to avoid having the characters washed overboard.

Socialize

Sensing Social Situations

One of the most important skills for a character who has social leanings is the ability to rapidly gain a grasp of a social situation. A character who walks into a social group with established interactions must read the situation and find a place for himself, making sure that he does not pick the wrong friends or make the wrong enemies.

Sensing social situations requires a Perception + Socialize roll, made after the character has had a while to acclimate himself. The difficulty of the roll is based on the complexity of the situation, both in terms of the number of participants and the amount of history their relationships carry. It's much easier to sense the workings of a rapidly assembled group of generals and officials than it is to find one's way in the complex, intrigue-filled maze of an imperial court that has had years to grow inward.

The number of successes indicates how clear a picture the character receives. It should be noted that when a character does not realize the complexity of the situation she is involved in, one or two successes can be more dangerous than none at all. A superficial understanding of a complex social situation can easily lead a character to make dangerous assumptions.

Making Friends

One of the most critical matters in a social situation is finding allies. Despite popular impressions, political games are not generally played by emotionless robots, but by normal people with a full range of feelings who are simply ruthless about getting what they want. In getting what you want, trustworthy friends and allies are critical. Someone has to report the rumors your opponents use to smear you, and someone has to warn you in time for you to go into hiding when the secret police are coming to apprehend you. It requires a Perception + Socialize roll to find good allies and a Charisma + Presence roll to become friends with them. The difficulty of the Perception + Socialize roll is set by the attractiveness of the character as a friend. Someone who is novel or who has a great deal to offer is more likely to find friends in a social set than a destitute nobody there on a friend's invitation.

The difficulty of the Presence roll to cement the friendship is set by the relative stations of the parties and the degree of compatibility between the characters' personalities and beliefs. A successful older character seeking to gain the trust of a like-minded younger character would roll at difficulty 1, while a young reactionary from the provinces trying to gain the trust of an older decadent without succumbing to his ways would have a minimum difficulty of at least 3.

This is an extended roll, made at intervals dependent on the degree of contact between the individuals and the circumstances of the contact. Formal interviews have a much smaller impact on a friendship than life together in the field during wartime. The total accumulated successes indicate the strength of the friendship. Ten is an acquaintance, 20 is mild friendship, and so on up to the 80 to 100 range, which indicates a bond that will last for the duration of the characters' lives and perhaps even beyond. Both parties can roll, if both desire friendship, but the accumulated successes are not added together — friendship is often unequal.

Poisoning the Waters

Just as allies are critical, turning opinions against political rivals is also of crucial importance. Poisoning the waters against someone is a Manipulation + Socialize roll made during conversation with the individuals the character wishes to persuade. The difficulty of this roll is determined by the degree of competence demonstrated by the character's opponent and the opponent's own political situation. Anyone can turn opinion against the bumbler, but throwing darts at the hero of the hour without seeming petty is at least difficulty 3. The number of successes determines the degree of effect. One success plants doubts, five successes changes opinions forever.

Note that it can take hundreds of accumulated successes in interactions with dozens of individuals to really affect a change of opinion. A campaign of whispered slander and insinuation takes months of hard effort to bring to maturation. A botch during this time will probably make the matter into a public feud or even bring about a challenge to a duel.

Sometimes, whispered insinuations aren't enough. Framing someone for a crime she didn't commit is always a popular way to eliminate an enemy. It is particularly popular if she's thought to commit the sort of crime she's framed for but hasn't been caught yet. Setting the matter up is an Intelligence + Socialize roll, with a difficulty equal to the legitimacy of the victim. The actual sting should be roleplayed out, and it is likely that many other systems will be put into use during the process.



Lilith was a hunter, and for centuries, her existence had been as pure and empty as any predator's. She fed when she was hungry, grew fat when food was plentiful and lean when times were hard. She held her territory against trespassers but retreated from fights where she might be hurt. She bred as thoughtlessly as any other beast and sent her strange-blooded progeny into the world to find their fortunes as best they could. And in this long and empty time, she knew peace from the worries of her long existence. In many months, she went without the burden of a single thought.

But she could feel the seasons changing, and the beast within her knew it to be more than the turning of the year. She smelled the wind and was uneasy. She gazed up at the stars with her animal eyes and saw disorder. She slept restlessly, and her dreams were not animal dreams of hunter and prey, but memories of the time before this time.

Yet, her heart rejected the urges of her instincts, and she curled deeper into her empty dream of animal life. Let the stars fall into disorder, let the wind blow rich with strife. What could a beast do in the face of fate? Lilith went on with her simple fantasy, heedless of more complicated urges. And then, one morning, the burbling of the half-frozen brook below her perch said, "He has come again," and the rustling of the trees in the snow-covered forest said, "You must see him." Her eyes beheld the sun, and she felt a grief that had been silent for a millennium.

Lilith swooped to the ground in silence, but it was feet, and not talons, that touched the earth. She took one staggering step forward through a cloud of shed owl feathers, her silver armor glittering in the dawn sun. She fell to her knees in the golden light and shadows and stared at her reflection in the water. The silver owl-face of her helm stared back at her, and she ripped the helmet from her head, seeing for the first time in centuries her own tear-streaked face. Bracing her hands on the frozen stream-bank, she sobbed, and burning tears mixed with the icy water below.

In time, her crying ceased, and she knew she must see the being she had once been bound to by oaths of marriage and loyalty. Words could not describe the time before his murder. The excesses beyond description, the impenetrable mixture of love and hate bred by their blood oath. Had she been a different creature, she might have come to hate the spirit of the being she had once married, or she might have clung to the memories and broken shards of the blood oath. But she was neither, and centuries on the wing had changed her. She only wished to see.

Again, she donned the cloak of bird's feathers. As a mospid, she flew back and forth across the world, her eyes sharp and hunting for his footsteps. As an owl, she glided silently through the night, listening for his voice. As a raiton, she perched on branches and listened to the conversations of the living and the dead alike. And though she learned much of the world, she did not find the man she had once loved.

So, she called up robes of silk and precious things from Essence and traveled to the courts of the great spirits. She found many gone and many more who claimed they did not recognize her. She examined the heavens and cast mouse-bones in an oracle, but both were disordered and inconclusive. Winter led to spring, to summer, to fall and, then, to winter.

Seeking shelter from the snow in a lonely grove of trees, Lilith found a minor spirit. Unwisely, it attempted to do her a wickedness. When she caught it in her wolf's talons, it stammered out apologies and begged for her to pardon it, offering news of the return of the Princes of the Earth. She stopped and listened, and before the evil thing could even finish its desperate tale, she was gone.

She had found him at last.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Storytelling

Getting Started

So you've decided to take the mantle of Storyteller for your group — or maybe they're the ones who've decided that you're the one who gets to learn all the rules and run the series for them. Either way, don't worry too much. Storytelling might occasionally be a thankless job, but it's frequently very rewarding.

One of the first things you'll have to do is become familiar with most of the rules in this book. Yes, it's a daunting prospect. Now, this doesn't mean having to learn each Charm by heart — but one of the things that helps a game move quickly and remain entertaining is the Storyteller's ability to remember, ad-lib or quickly locate rules.

There's nothing *wrong* with just having your players generate characters and learning as you go — even if you make mistakes, no big deal. Being prepared is nice, but if you'd rather spend the time gaming, no problem. Just as long as everybody understands there's gonna be some rough riding in the beginning.

However, there *is* one problem that will frequently crop up if you start a game with little preparation — *creator's remorse*. Creator's remorse is a problem that plagues a lot of Storytellers. Essentially, it sets in after you've been running your game for a while and you're becoming more familiar with the rules and setting and you're starting to develop some new ideas. As you pursue these ideas, maybe you start wishing that you'd done some things differently way back when you started running your game. In fact, you wouldn't mind the chance to start over and try out your new series ideas or house rules — but the players are having lots of fun with your current game, or maybe they just don't want to give up on their characters. You don't want to be the bad guy and tell them to throw away their characters and start fresh, but you're not very happy with the series' current direction. Hence: creator's remorse.

This doesn't happen to everyone. Some folks hit instantly on a style of storytelling that lasts them their whole lives, and they never wind up having regrets. And there are plenty of instances where the Storyteller decides he'd like to try something different and the players are more than happy to play along. So, no, you don't have to fret too much about the possibility of being stuck running a game you don't enjoy quite as much as you could. But if you'd like to take some extra precautions to make *sure* it doesn't happen — well, the best thing for that is a little advance preparation.

Being Prepared

The more you think about what you'd like to do with the series before you actually start running it, the more smoothly your game is likely to flow. You might want to ask yourself a few of the following questions, just to make sure you've got that extra level of preparation before play begins.

What do the players want to do? You know what your friends are like — what genres to they prefer? Do they ooh and ah over moody pieces such as *Vampire Hunter D* and the Eternal Champion series, or are they more fond of high heroism in the style of Tolkien and *The Vision of Escaflowne*? Do they enjoy complicated, character-driven pieces such as Brust's Taltos books and *Blade of the Immortal*, or are they more inclined toward full-bore pulp action in the Robert E. Howard or *Ninja Scroll* vein? The more you can play to their preferences, the more involved they'll be.

Do you want to tell a few stories, or do you want to oversee a series? Neither option is innately superior to the other. A number of unrelated or highly episodic stories requires less work and is usually a better way to build up steam. On the other hand, the emotional payoffs of a series that addresses the characters' ambitions and fears over many sessions, eventually building to a climax, is well worth the extra effort. Ask yourself just how much work you're willing to do or how involved your players are willing to get. And don't bite off more than you can chew — better a few stories that you can easily complete than a sprawling epic that runs out of steam partway through.

Where do you want the stories to take place? Do you want to set your series or stories in an already established locale such as Chiaroscuro or Nexus, or would you rather devise a city or province of your own? The setting you choose should be one that interests you personally and requires as much work as you're willing to give. If you don't like pirate movies all that much, a seafaring coastal city isn't an ideal setting. On the other hand, if you've watched *Gladiator* and *Ben Hur* a hundred times, a city with a prominent arena will probably provide you with lots of story material.

How dark do you want the series to be? To put it another way, would it be rated PG, PG-13, R or even NC-17? How graphic do you want the violence or sex to get, and what level is your group comfortable with? Do you want some comic relief for your series, or do you want it to be an unrelenting assault on the emotions? The series' mood is one of the things you should decide beforehand because most groups find it very difficult to shift from light-hearted comedy to horrific violence.

What kind of characters will people be playing? It is boundlessly, eminently desirable that you get together and talk with your players about the series before they generate characters! If you don't, you run the risk of having characters that cannot be expected to keep from killing one another, much less cooperate. Seriously. If one player wants to play a decadent epicure who wants to accumulate a harem of the most exotic concubines, all broken to the lash, and another wants to play a high-minded abolitionist, your series' in danger from the start. You, as the Storyteller, have to nip these sorts of conflicts in the bud. A good game starts *before* the first session.

Your word is law, but remember that the players' enjoyment is the main goal here. Try not to veto a concept without letting the player know why or what she might do to make her concept more feasible. If a player offers a character concept that you think might be disruptive or inappropriate, suggest some ways that she might alter the concept to meet the series' needs, rather than just tossing it out completely.

Series Closure

Many series don't strictly have a beginning and an end — that is to say, they *begin* like any other, but they run almost perpetually, finally petering out only when the Storyteller has run out of ideas or when the group is bored with the game. There's nothing wrong with this style of play, but it can be unsatisfying. Sometimes, it's better to bring the characters' overall story to a fitting end.

Give at least a little thought before you begin your series to the question of whether or not you have a foreseeable end in mind. If you're setting up a primary villain to oppose the characters, do you intend to keep running the game after said villain's defeat? Or would you rather make the final battle with the primary villain literally that — the final main struggle of the series and, therefore, the game's climax?

There's no right or wrong answer to this question; many players are just as happy playing the same characters in perpetuity as they are shifting gears from one epic tale to another. The same goes for Storytellers. It's something to think about, though — if you set up your series so that it has no real end in sight and you later decide that maybe an ending would be more satisfying, you may have some trouble figuring out an appropriate climax that'll suit your tastes and leave the players happy.

Cinematic Tricks

Movie industry pros tell stories for a living, and while some movies are more professional than others, you shouldn't hesitate to purloin a couple of tricks from the best. This is particularly true for **Exalted** because it was designed with cinematic roleplaying in mind — wide panoramas, massive battle scenes and stormy confrontations between larger-than-life personalities are all part of the game's look and feel. It's fairly easy for a Storyteller to adapt several cinematic conventions to a storytelling game — that's the benefit of being producer, director, set designer and footage editor all at once!

One of the most classic conventions is the flashback. Even after the prelude, a flashback scene can flesh out a character's backstory in a way that a simple synopsis never could. Obviously, you don't want the events of a flashback to contradict the present, but with cooperative players or even a judicious bit of editing, there's not too much of a problem. If the flashback scene goes well enough, you might even want to let the events there influence the present. For example, if the flashback shows one of the heroes fighting side-by-side with a major antagonist and the hero's actions (or negligence) wind up injuring the



antagonist, then that's an added motivation for your villain. He might display an increased hatred, disdain or obsession for the character in question, adding an extra bit of emotional tension — particularly because the character knows *exactly* why the villain's so upset with her.

Another trick that works very well in cinema but can be tricky in a storytelling game is the scene that takes place outside of the protagonists' knowledge. Every action movie has these cut scenes — they usually involve the villain revealing something of his personality or plot, in the interest of establishing his character. These scenes are wonderful cinematic tools — after all, it's not as if the hero will act on information that the audience has but he doesn't. The trouble in storytelling games, though, is that the players are the audience *and* the writers. There's always the temptation to act in character on their players' knowledge.

Unless you're blessed with players who wouldn't think of using such out-of-character information to their own advantage, it's probably best to avoid revealing important plot elements or other "spoilers" during these scenes. This disclaimer might seem pretty limiting, but it still leaves you with plenty of options.

For instance, let's say that the characters are on the run from a very powerful noble and that they've just eluded the mercenary captain who said noble had sent to hunt them down. Between scenes, you cut to the noble's palace. There, you give a detailed description of the mercenary reporting his failure to the noble in question (preferably speaking "in voice" for all participants as you describe the unfolding scene). Of course, the noble doesn't tolerate failure and punishes the mercenary in a manner that's undoubtedly both gruesome and creative — but very appropriate to the noble's personality.

You've seen similar scenes in action movies a thousand times before, and by describing this scene in detail to your players, you accomplish two things. One, you reveal some interesting quirks of the noble's personality. Two, by using action-movie conventions, you reinforce the feel that the characters are taking part in an action movie themselves. You haven't given away any plot points or vital information (after all, the characters could probably guess that the noble wasn't happy that they weren't caught), but the story's mood has gotten a significant reinforcement.

Another trick is the slow pan across the landscape. Yes, this device is a very visual trick, but it's also adaptable to a storytelling game. If your players are visiting a significant location during your next session, try writing up a paragraph description of the place beforehand and reading it to them as they arrive. Describe the way the city nestles into the valley, the snap of the torn banners waving over the battlefield, the way the sunlight hits the temple walls. It's a wonderful way to establish mood.

If you aren't a good reader, you'll probably want to practice the description until you can deacon it off without stumbling. Alternately, you might want to just jot down a list of things you absolutely must mention about the scene and then improv the description on the spot. All you have to do then is flick your eyes to the list occasionally and see what's left to describe.

This tactic works really well if you're winding up for a big scene but haven't had time to plan it between sessions. While the players are interacting or working something out, you can just jot down a quick list of things you need to describe or that need to happen in that scene. If the players throw you for a loop, it is perfectly acceptable to ask for a few minutes to work out what happens next. Putting the players under time pressure can increase dramatic tension. Putting the Storyteller under similar pressure just makes for a crappy story.

Being Flexible

Unfortunately, no rulebook ever written can teach you the fine art of flexibility in storytelling — this sort of thing comes only with practice, and lots of it. Nothing teaches you how to respond quickly to clever players and their spur-of-the-moment demands better than actual experience. With that in mind, though, here are a few tips that you might find useful *before* all hell breaks loose — and if you plan to play **Exalted** in the wild, over-the-top, swashbuckling, high fantasy vein in which it was designed, they will prove useful.

First of all, you should encourage your players to be as descriptive as possible when it comes to declaring their actions. We can't recommend this enough — it's handy on so many levels. First, it keeps all the players interested in what the others are doing; if interest levels are high, then everyone has more fun. Second, the more accurate a player's description of a character's actions, the more accurately you'll be able to gauge his chances of success. Detailed descriptions are good for flexing the creative muscles — definitely something to be proud of.

This rule applies most of all to the outrageous stunts that characters might attempt. For instance, say a player proclaims he wants his character to leap from the staircase where he's fighting a platoon of eunuch guards, catch a tapestry and swing his way to safety. You think it'd make a good scene, but your notes on the palace don't mention any tapestries. That's fine — let him have a tapestry. If you let your players get away with amazing stunts, they'll keep on trying them — which keeps the entertainment value of the game nice and high. Don't guarantee them *success*, mind — but don't be afraid to be generous with possibilities for high drama.

There's really no need to demand that a character possesses a Charm to be able to do cool cinematic tricks; Jackie Chan doesn't have any Exalted Charms, and he still manages to achieve some impressive results. Sure, it takes a Charm such as Spider-Foot Style to do the otherwise impossible, such as running up a stone wall and across the ceiling, but if a player wants his character to try running across the heads of a crowd, that isn't necessarily something

that demands supernatural assistance. If the character's Attributes or Abilities are good enough to give him a chance of success and the player's description of what he wants his character to do is intriguing, give him fair odds.

Remember that you have a responsibility not to play favorites with your players, particularly where stunts are concerned. It's completely unfair to decide ahead of time how you want a scene to play out and then penalize players who try anything other than the actions mapped out in your personal script. They haven't read the script — they're trying to improvise one of their own. Be open-minded. Talk to your players ahead of time, and tell them where your limits are in regards to something being "too cinematic" or "not in keeping with the mood." Everyone needs to be on the same page if the game's going to be fun for all.

Genre Conventions

At its heart, **Exalted** is a game of dark, epic adventure. This genre appeals to people because it's so much larger than life; the good things in **Exalted** are fantastic, and the bad things downright horrific. With the judicious use of a few genre conventions, you can bring that bigger-than-life feeling right into your series, where it belongs.

Large Scale

This is the convention most people think about when they think of the epic. Epics are never just about two or three people — they involve cities, kingdoms, continents or even worlds. To properly capture the feel of epic adventure, you'll have to go beyond the village or the tavern — the scale just plain needs to be bigger. Now, this does *not* mean your group has to save the world every session — far from it! However, the world should seem *huge* to your players, and they should feel that their characters are mighty individuals within it. Make your mountains higher, your cities more decadent and corrupt, your seas more tempest-tossed — and make sure that the players' characters see as much of the world as you're comfortable letting them.

Romance

Some people are uncomfortable roleplaying out romantic interludes or even flirting in-character in front of their fellow players. That's fine; no need to make anyone uncomfortable. However, if your players are up to it, romance is *definitely* something that belongs in your series. The "hero saves maiden and claims his reward" may be juvenile and done to death, but anyone can attest to the fact that romantic relationships are about as emotionally intense as life gets.

An entire chapter could be devoted to romantic subplots — certainly, many an article has been written for gaming magazines with just such a subject — but in brief, the two main elements of any good love story are chemistry and adversity.

Chemistry is of paramount importance. If Romeo had been only moderately interested in Juliet, the play would never have survived 400 years. Of course, you might find that actual chemistry is pretty hard to plan ahead of time. It can be pretty frustrating to spend an hour crafting an intriguing personality that you expect a character to immediately fall in love with, only to find her summarily dismissed by said character because the player just didn't think they clicked well together. You may find it more useful to litter your series with interesting or exotic individuals that *might* work well as romantic interests — and when a player finds (sometimes to his surprise) that his character is intrigued with a particular one, *then* begin work on a romantic subplot.

Adversity is what makes a romantic subplot a story and not an anecdote. If nothing stands between the lovers and their happy ending, the subplot is only marginally worth the time you spend on it. Again, see *Romeo and Juliet* — the adversity those two face is what makes their story one of the most famous, most defining love stories of all time. Make a character work for the right to spend time in his beloved's arms; it's certainly true that nobody really appreciates the things they get cheaply or free! Adversity comes in all forms, from romantic rivals and overprotective relatives to romantic interests who aren't initially interested in their suitors. Every love story ever written has some spin on the theme, so possible suggestions abound.

Be prepared for any and all sorts of supporting cast members to be potential romantic interests. Soldiers, fellow Exalted, noble barbarians, other people's concubines, nobility, even the classic "good-hearted peasant" — you never know who might catch a character's eye. And by all means, don't forget the antagonists! A good antagonist *already* has a measure of chemistry with his or her rivals, and the adversity goes without saying. Of course, you probably shouldn't be expecting the characters to fall for outright villains such as unrepentant slavers, misogynistic rapists or sadistic zealots — that sends entirely the wrong message anyway. Some assholes just won't be redeemed by the love of a good woman (or man) — and shouldn't be, anyway, because the rest of the group would probably take more satisfaction in their defeat than their redemption.

Intrigue

Not every threat is readily identifiable as such. History and fantasy both abound with examples of schemes and intrigues that make wonderful stories. An intrigue story might be a mystery, wherein the characters try to puzzle out just who the hidden antagonist is by uncovering secret motives. Or it might be the backdrop for a more straightforward story, such as one where the characters are pursuing a particular quest at the behest of a benefactor who has secret designs on a separate goal.



Certainly, not all characters involved in a story of intrigue are outright villains — in fact, the tale of intrigue is the perfect sort of story in which to play with shades of gray. Even the most despicable character might have a spark of decency here and there, no matter how callous she otherwise might be. The treacherous concubine who secretly murders her rivals in order to establish her son as heir may be doing it out of love for her son, rather than out of a desire to be the power behind the throne. In a similar vein, sympathetic characters might have dark blotches on their moral fiber — after all, they're resorting to secret maneuverings, aren't they? Maybe they have no alternative — but then again, maybe they do, and they prefer being cunning.

Dark fantasy usually only uses really good or really evil characters in a very secondary role, to serve as foils for the protagonists and antagonists and highlight their moral indifference. For example, in Glen Cook's *Black Company*, the forces of The Lady and the White Rose are both portrayed as morally indifferent, while the figure of real evil, the Dominator, is used primarily as a foil and plot element.

Remember that one of the key elements of an intrigue story is surprise; you should always have something up your sleeve to startle the players. ("Vizier Treshayn is actually the Satrap's *mother!* Who knew?") Such a surprise should, to be honest, be a "fair" surprise — something that the players might not have guessed but that makes sense when it is revealed. ("Then that means Madame Kavettra has access to the Satrap's riches — something that his *real* mother doesn't have. So *that's* why the Vizier hates Kavettra so much....") It's surprises such as these that keep the players' interest in the series razor-sharp.

Melodrama

There's really nothing wrong with going over-the-top with a dramatic scene. Hurting a loved one is always dramatic — murdering an entire family, though, *that* turns heads. Let's face it — most gamers are hams at heart, and everyone wants a chance to chew the scenery with a really melodramatic soliloquy at some point.

The best part of melodrama is that it's *easy* — which is a merit in its own right when you want things to move quickly and be fun. So make one of your villains remarkably grotesque. Cue up an over-the-top personal tragedy when appropriate. Play with the Love Story To End All Love Stories. Don't be afraid to use cliches and stock elements. Epics and popular genres are built from those very archetypal elements. To paraphrase Raymond Chandler, this week's *Important Modern Novel* is at the remaindered book store in six months, while *Death Wears Yellow Garters* is in its 97th printing. There's a reason for that, and the reason is that people want to be entertained.

Flawed Heroes

Another thing to bear in mind as your players generate characters, but also worth remembering as you populate your series, is that nobody's perfect — and if they were, they'd be

too dull to hold a gaming group's interest for long. In both epics and pulp fantasy, heroes often have problems — big ones. They might be perpetually lustful, shamelessly greedy, ruled by self-destructive impulses, lacking in compassion, even outright cowardly. They're larger than life, and their personality flaws are larger than life, too. For Solar Exalted, their tragic flaws manifest in the Great Curse, but there's no reason other people in the world shouldn't have problems as well. Don't go overboard assigning your protagonists and their supporting cast flaws, mind — if the characters were completely dysfunctional, they'd never have risen to positions of note in the first place. Nevertheless, a vice or weak point can do wonders for making a character seem *real* — and more importantly, at home in a world of savage adventure.

Storyteller Rules

This section contains a few important rules items that don't really belong in the Drama chapter or that related directly to the mechanics of the game. Most specifically, they include the rules for awarding experience and the guidelines for adjudicating stunts. These rules aren't off-limits to players or anything — in fact, it's a good thing if the players know how experience and stunts work. However, they're primarily a Storyteller concern during play and, so, are addressed here.

Stunt Bonuses

Bonus	Guidelines
+1	The player described the action in a cool or interesting fashion.
+2	The player described the action in a cool fashion, and the character interacted with or took advantage of the environment.
+3	The player comes up with something amazing. Everyone at the table goes "Damn, that's cool."

Adjudicating Stunts

Adjudicating stunt attempts can be one of the most difficult tasks a Storyteller faces. Everyone is going to be performing stunts constantly to get the bonus, and you're going to be the one that says "Yes, that's good enough for a bonus" or "No, that isn't."

The first thing to define is "what is a stunt?" In **Exalted**, a stunt isn't necessarily the sort of thing that you need a body double for. For the purposes of this game, *a stunt is a way of describing a character's action that is evocative, exciting and that results in a cinematic feel.* It's a mechanical incentive for players to do crazy and exciting things and to make their descriptions of the characters' actions more lively than "I hit him with my mace."

Awarding the Stunt Bonus

Generally, the way stunts work is that the player describes what she wants the character to do and the Storyteller evaluates it and awards the bonus. Then, the player rolls, and the Storyteller describes how the attempt actually turned out, based on the result of the roll.

But how much of a bonus do you award? In **Exalted**, there's a fairly concrete guideline for this. It's described below and summarized in a boxed text on this page for quick reference.

One-Die Stunts: A stunt is worth a one-die bonus when the player puts some effort into describing the character's activities. The key is that the player illustrates the action by speaking to the senses, rather than just stating what the character does next. Remember, the point is that you're trying to make the combat easy to imagine and full of powerful images. The goal is to reward creativity and involvement, not just pass out dice. If someone is repeating the same attack over and over again, stop awarding stunt dice. "I swing my mace at his head in a whistling overhand blow" repeated again and again with slight variations is just as boring as "I hit him with my mace."

You'll also get players who stretch it and give a corny description for every single action to cadge one or two dice out of you. If the player is clearly describing the stunt, not out of inspiration, but in order to get the bonus dice, then don't award the bonus. If you do, you'll just encourage bad behavior.

Two-Die Stunts: A stunt is worth two dice when the player integrates it into the ongoing scene. When a player describes the stunt, it should involve interaction with the scenery or otherwise make ongoing events in the scene a part of the action. These sorts of stunts take the action away from something that could be happening in a bare room someplace and ground it firmly in the location and overall thrust of the scene.

As an example, if you watch the black marble hallway gunfight scene in *The Matrix*, you'll notice that very rarely is a stunt just about one of the lead characters and the mook shooting at him. More frequently, it involves a pillar, a body being used as a shield, an acrobatic maneuver that takes advantage of the terrain or some other integration of the set into the action.

Similarly, watch the scene where Jubei kills the stone giant Tessai in *Ninja Scroll*. Tessai doesn't just hit Jubei, he smashes his hand *through* the wall to get to Jubei. Then, he punches Jubei into the stone lamp post so hard he shatters it. All these examples take advantage of the set to make the fight more interesting, and that sort of thing is what qualifies for a two-die stunt bonus.

Three-Die Stunts: There aren't any firm guidelines for a three-die stunt, other than "it makes you go wow." Most one- and two-die stunts will end up exploiting visual cliches. They're entertaining, but they're not surprising or unexpected. A three-die stunt is the kind of thing that makes the group go "wow."

A three-die stunt might be something not entirely original that's really well described or really apt. Maybe a character turns a villain's attack back on him in a totally appropriate way, or maybe the player just describes something that's so fitting to her character that you can't imagine it not working. It might be something so visually or conceptually cool you desperately wish you'd thought of it. A three-die stunt might also be something so absolutely audacious or all-out that you just have to give a large bonus for it.

An excellent example of a good three-die stunt is the scene in *The Killer* during the final battle at the church. The *gweilo* assassin comes in and plugs Chow Yun-Fat with his shotgun, and as CYF slo-mos backward, the dove flies over the rack of votive candles and extinguishes half of them. A three-die stunt is visual poetry, one of the things that people will remember from the session and potentially from the series as a whole. Reward it appropriately.

Stunts as Insurance

It's pretty certain that, when a player describes a stunt, he's either going to be in a desperate situation or doing something that can get him killed if he fails. If you run the game straight up, giving stunt bonuses but hitting the player with both barrels when he fails at some daring but objectively stupid stunt, you are going to discourage the use of stunts. A player will only have his character perform stunts when he absolutely must because if he fails at the stunt, then something horrible will happen to the character.

So when you award a stunt bonus, it also has to be like a life-insurance policy for the character. Implicit in the stunt is the fact that failing the roll won't kill the character. If a character is walking across a highwire and falls, his player will get a Dexterity + Athletics roll to have him grab the rope. If the character is audaciously trying to seduce the queen and fails, his player will get a Wits + Presence roll to make the flirtation seem innocent or roguish. That doesn't mean the character is immunized from the consequences of his actions, just that the player won't lose the character for trying to do something cool.

Obviously, there's one occasion where this isn't the case, and that's combat. Characters who are using stunts to enhance their attack, dodge and parry rolls have to live with the fact that a failed roll can, in fact, directly result in their deaths. That doesn't mean that just because blades are drawn that suddenly there's no second chances. It just means that stunts that apply to actual parry, dodge and attack rolls don't come with any sort of insurance.

Stunts and the Impossible

One of the most useful effects of stunts is that, within a fairly limited scope, they let characters do the impossible. Certain actions (parrying melee attacks without a weapon, parrying any attacks with a bow) are impossible without the use of a stunt. In many cases, a character who performs a stunt can even equal the effect of some Charms. For example, a character might use a stunt to run across the heads of a crowd, which is the sort of thing that a character can do with the Athletics Charm Spider-Foot Style. Similarly, he might use a stunt to sell someone something at an outrageous price, in a fashion similar to the Bureaucracy Charm Irresistible Salesman Spirit.

The similarity doesn't make the stunt magical. It's just two different ways to achieve the same result. One uses supreme skill and panache, while the other uses magic. As a rule, Charms are much better at what they do than stunts are. Take the player who wants her character to run across the heads and shoulders of a crowd. To do it with a stunt, the player would have to describe it well enough that the Storyteller allowed it as a stunt and then make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, probably at difficulty 4 or 5, for the character to actually succeed. A player whose character was using Spider-Foot Style, however, could just tell the Storyteller "I'm going to run across the heads and shoulders of the crowd" and spend the motes of Essence to activate the Charm. Then, the Storyteller would tell the player what happened to her character when she got to the other side.

A Storyteller running a dark and gritty game involving unExalted mortals will probably want to limit stunts, especially those that allow the characters to do the normally impossible. There is a major difference in feel and power between a game that allows stunts and one that doesn't. Whatever you pick, you should definitely make sure the players know ahead of time.

Stunts and Multiple Actions

A stunt bonus applies to all of the rolls involved in resolving it. If a character describes leaping from a balcony to her horse while firing arrows at the guards and then jumping her steed over the barricade at the entrance to the courtyard, her stunt bonus applies to each of the Athletics, Archery and Ride rolls she'll be making to determine if she succeeds. This bonus makes stunts very useful when a character is undertaking several actions in a turn because it helps to offset the dice-pool penalties for multiple actions.

Stunts and Charms

Players may freely combine stunts and Charms to enhance the same action. Indeed, the use of Charms can enable a large number of really spectacular stunts. However, just using a Charm doesn't automatically make an action into a stunt or even make it more likely the action will receive a stunt bonus. "I hit him with my mace using Excellent Strike" is still "I hit him with my mace," with just a few extra words added. The stunt bonus is entirely contingent on the player's ability to describe the character's action in an engaging and imaginative fashion.

Stunts and Storyteller Characters

Storyteller characters can use stunts as well. After all, villains and supporting characters do cool things too. However, adjudicating what gets a stunt bonus and what doesn't



can be tricky, and trying to think of stunts for multiple villains at once can quickly wear a Storyteller down.

For starters, don't have anyone but important characters perform stunts. Extras shouldn't be performing stunts, and minor villains probably shouldn't either. Save your creativity for the important Storyteller characters, such as archvillains and major supporting cast members. You should also probably figure out three to five really snazzy stunts unique to each major character, so that, when pressed to come up with something cool in a hurry, you don't always have all the Storyteller characters do the same thing.

In terms of awarding stunt bonuses, there are two options. Either you can just award them to yourself, or you can have the players determine if something is a stunt or not and how much of a bonus it gets. In an ideal world, you'd use the latter system. However, less mature players may not be able to resist the chance to gank a major Storyteller character at a critical moment. In other cases, an atmosphere of blackmail may develop, where players won't allow Storyteller characters to get stunt bonuses unless their own stunts are allowed.

In short, you're probably going to want to just award the bonuses to yourself unless the players are very mature. The obvious problems here are the natural tendency for you to think your stunt ideas are pretty clever and the players' tendency to see you as favoring yourself. The best rule of thumb is to be at least as strict awarding bonuses to your stunts as you are to the player who you think is the dumbest. Imagine all your stunt descriptions came out of his mouth. If you would still award a bonus, then think about giving one to the Storyteller character.

Experience

Characters in **Exalted** aren't static. They grow in power and knowledge as time goes by. At the end of every session, the Storyteller awards each character a number of experience points, which the player records on the character sheet. These are then called "banked" experience because they're saved up for spending later. The player can spend them immediately (subject to certain restrictions, see "Spending Experience" and "Training," below), or he can hold onto them to spend later. It's often a good idea for characters to have banked experience available because certain Charms require an experience point to activate.

Awarding Experience

Basic Award: If the player comes to the session and contributes to the fun of the game, the character gets four experience points. If someone didn't show up or was a total goof, you can withhold experience or give a reduced award, respectively. If someone fails to attend or goofs off so much that it has a serious impact on the character's growth, you should probably be asking yourself why she's in the game.

Bonus Award: If a player does something really amazingly cool, comes up with an startlingly good idea or even just saves your butt by having the rulebook when you forgot yours at home, you can award her character an experience point on the spot. Make sure you don't play favorites, and try not to give any one character more than one bonus award per session.

Story Award: Normally, a game has narrative arcs in it — places where the characters have clearly completed some multi-session task or made concrete progress toward their overall goal. At the end of the story, all the characters get five *additional* experience points, on top of the session award.

Spending Experience

When a player exchanges the character's banked experience for new or improved Traits, this is called spending experience. The experience must be paid as soon as the Trait is increased — there is no borrowing on future experience. Normally, experience can be spent only in downtime, but the Storyteller may allow a character who desperately needs an Ability to buy it up on the spot with banked experience. This decision is *entirely* at the Storyteller's discretion and is most useful for early in the series. Early on, it's likely that characters will not have as many dots as the players wish they did, and it's still plausible for a character to have known something "all along." Even during downtime, spending experience is still subject to Storyteller approval because the Storyteller may require training.

The cost of increasing a Trait is equal to some multiple of its current rating, that is, the value of the Trait *before* it is bought up. Say, for example, that Phyllis wants to increase Smith's Melee Ability from 3 to 4. Melee is one of Smith's Caste Abilities, so looking at the Experience Costs chart, we see that it will cost her the Trait's (current rating x 2) - 1, or 5 experience points, since (3 x 2) – 1 = 5. If the Storyteller approved the increase, Phyllis would subtract 5 from Smith's banked experience and increase his Melee from 3 to 4.

Experience Costs

Trait Increase	Cost
Attribute	current rating x 4
Favored or Caste Ability	(current rating x 2) - 1
Ability	current rating x 2
Essence	current rating x 8
Virtue	current rating x 3*
Willpower	current rating x 2

New Trait	Cost
New Ability	3
New Specialty (max. three per Ability)	3
New Charm	10 (8 if in Favored or Caste Ability)
New Spell	10 (8 if Occult is a Caste or Favored Ability)
Spirit Charm/ Charm of Another Type of Exalted (Eclipse Caste only)	20

* Increasing a Virtue after character creation does not increase the character's Willpower.

Training Times

Characters don't just wake up one day and find themselves better at what they do because their players spent some experience. Developing Traits also requires in-character practice and training. Normally, this training is assumed to be with a tutor of greater skill than the character. This tutor may be a hired professional, a friend or a fellow player's character. The Training Times chart illustrates how long the character must train to increase various Traits.

However, in many instances, a character will not have a tutor available — she may be too poor to hire a professional to teach her, she may be far away from anywhere a tutor is likely to be found, or she may be so good that there *are* no tutors. After all, who tutors you when you're raising your Melee to 5? If the character is training without a teacher, it takes twice as long as listed in the Training Time table.

Training is assumed to be fairly intensive — eight hours a day, six days a week. If the character trains less than that, multiply her training time appropriately. For example, a character who practices only one hour a day will multiply her training time by eight, and a character who practices only three days a week will multiply his training time by two. This penalty is cumulative with the penalty for lack of tutelage, and a character who is just goofing around without a tutor can take a long, long time to improve.

Exalted characters are naturals at their Caste and Favored Abilities. They do not require tutelage or training of any sort to increase them.



Training Times

Mundane Traits

Favored or Caste Abilities: No Training Needed

New Ability: 3 weeks

Improving an Ability: rating x weeks

Improving Attributes: rating x months

Gaining a Specialty: 3 weeks

Improving Virtues: no training needed

Improving Willpower: no training needed

Magical Traits

Improving Essence: rating x months

Learning New Spells: circle x weeks

Learning Caste or Favored Charms: minimum Ability x days

Learning Other Charms: (minimum Ability + minimum Essence) x days

Increasing Magical Traits

Increasing magical Traits is a little different than increasing more mundane ones. Each of the magical Traits requires a different sort of training, detailed below. As with more mundane Traits, the basic training times are listed in the Training Times table.

A character can increase her Essence to 3 by simply expending experience. However, raising Essence above 3 requires prolonged meditation and self-reflection. A character who wishes to raise her Essence above 3 must go into monastic retreat for a number of months equal to her current Essence score. Most Solar Exalted travel into the desert or the high mountains, to be closer to the sun, but any form of retreat will work. Characters cannot generally raise their Essence above 5 until they have been Exalted for more than a mortal lifetime.

A character can learn new Charms just as if they were mundane Abilities. A character with a tutor can learn a Caste or Favored Charm in a number of days of practice equal to the Charm's minimum Ability rating. If the Charm is not in a Favored or Caste Ability, it takes a number of days of practice equal to the Charm's minimum Ability plus it's minimum Essence. As with mundane Abilities, the training time doubles if the character is learning without a tutor. If a character is inventing a completely new Charm, then quadruple the time.

Sorcerers do not require tutors. However, they absolutely must have the texts of the spells available to study. A sorcerer without access to a magical library that contains spells he doesn't know cannot improve himself. The sorcerer must also have an area where he can practice his magic. Learning a spell takes one week of intensive study per circle. Inventing a new spell can take much longer. The specifics of learning magic are more full detailed on page 217 of Chapter Five: Charms and Sorcery.

Bringing New Characters Into an Old Game

Often, there will be a need to bring a new character into an established game — there may be a new player, someone may have gotten tired of their old character, or someone's character may have died.

You can always either start a character at zero experience or at the same number of experience points everyone else has. The former tends to produce characters who sit around bored while more experienced Exalted do all the work. However, the latter tends to devalue the experiences of the group. After six months of hard adventuring, this new guy shows up and is exactly as powerful as they are. It might work for you, but in most cases, it cheapens the feel of the game and can make people play carelessly.

The suggested solution is that you keep track of how much experience you've given out through basic awards and story awards. Don't count bonus experience — it's too much bookkeeping, and it devalues the importance of doing something so cool your character gets an extra experience point. Have the player make the new character as normal. Then, for every 10 points of experience or fraction thereof that you've given out, let the player roll one 10-sided die. The result is the number of experience points they can spend to improve the character before bringing it into play. Don't worry about training times or anything like that, but if the character is a powerful sorcerer, you should probably make sure to detail where she learned her magic.

Final Advice

Almost ready? Good! Here, then, are a few final bits of wisdom (or so we like to call it — it makes us feel sage) for you to mull over before you get started.

• **Your players' characters are the most important characters in the game but not necessarily the most important people in the world.** Admittedly, a great many fantasy authors don't always adhere to this — Tolkien, Moorcock and many others were more interested in telling the big stories. On the other hand, Fritz Leiber, Jack Vance, Clark Ashton Smith and many others were content to tell stories about people who were important in their own way but not the most important people in their world. Even Conan never really saved the world. Keep this in mind as you plan your game. Although you can certainly have the characters become the true movers and shakers of the world, that isn't the only kind of meaningful story. Characters who save a tiny kingdom someplace or get rich and retire comfortably can have just as dramatic a time doing it as someone who climbs up to Heaven and slays the gods.

• **Conversely, the characters *can* be the most important people in the world.** Every rule has its exception. And since Exalted possess the power to level cities, there's no reason to prevent them from doing so if you figure you're up to the challenge of responding appropriately. If your characters are dead-set on changing the world and you're not overwhelmed by the prospect, let them. It's only a game, after all — the worst thing that can happen is that you learn what not to do next time and try a new kind of series.

• **Customize the setting.** Some Storytellers make the mistake of being too reliant on published setting material, wanting to keep everything as "by the book" as possible. The downside of this style is that players who read up on the setting information (and they will) are often harder to surprise. Once you've picked out your preferred setting, it's in your best interest to put your personal touch on it. For instance, if you've decided to set your series in Nexus itself, you might want to detail a particular street or subdistrict of especial interest to your players and their characters. A custom-tailored backdrop such as this one makes the players feel that it's "their" territory, and therefore, they feel more at home. The classic example is the tavern that the characters have adopted as their hangout, but there's no reason that a bazaar, temple, library or even a brothel can't work just as well as a signature location. For less urban series, letting the characters have a valley, oasis, mountaintop, monastery or fortress to call their own is a great way to unify the group and to let them feel that they're directly important to the setting.

• **You — not the rulebook — are the final authority.** Of course, we'd like to think that the rulebook is pretty comprehensive, but let's face it — you can't fit an entire world between two covers. Even as further **Exalted** supplements are released, there'll still be some things that don't receive "official" write-ups or rulings. You can also decide to disagree with any portion of a book and do things your own way. That's cool. If your ruling seems more fun than ours, then run with yours — it's obviously the superior one for your game.

However, you owe it to your players to be fair and reasonable in your judgments, of course; this means that you shouldn't change your rulings unexpectedly. Nothing's more irritating to a player than to find out that, all other things being equal, his character can't do something another character did an hour ago just because your ruling changed. This *does* mean you have the added responsibility of remembering your rulings and sticking to them in most occasions — but it's for the good of the game.

• **Play to the senses.** Whatever else you can say about the world of **Exalted**, it's certainly distinctive. Even in the

monochromatic shadowlands, there's a incredible spectrum of blacks and whites to play with. Take advantage of this palette. Describe the rich colors of the nobility's garments, and contrast them with the rust and ocher of the earthier inhabitants of the world. Describe the heavy, sweet scent of orchids, the changes in the ocean's temperature, the jagged cold of a weapon's edge. Don't be afraid to leaf through a thesaurus beforehand to find just the right word for a sensation (or even a character — there's certainly ample precedent in the genre for naming a character something like "Lord Saffron" or "Mistress Sharkskin").

• **Don't confuse power level with drama.** Leveling entire cities or continents doesn't necessarily make a good story. Similarly, a character who holds strong personal power shouldn't come across as invincible; otherwise, where's the dramatic tension? It's a lot harder to write a good Superman story than it is to write a good Batman story, simply because the only real way to mess with Superman is to drag in Kryptonite in some way or another. Keep an eye on the characters' power levels; don't jack them up unnecessarily to make a situation somehow more dramatic. For one thing, that creates an ever-escalating arms race between them and the antagonists — which should be avoided, as the climax of a story should *never* boil down to a simple "who's got the bigger gun?" situation. For another, you find yourself constantly trying to up the stakes — first they're battling over the state of a city, then a kingdom, then a world, then a universe. Set a power level — then tailor the drama accordingly. The two are quite separate and should remain so.

• **There's no such thing as "over the top."** There is certainly *room* in **Exalted** for gritty, stick-and-potato adventuring. But the main intent of the game is to provide an over-the-top Hong Kong/anime cinematic experience. Who cares if it's outlandish or unrealistic — you're playing a game of make-believe. The point is to have fun, and doing wild and crazy shit you could never even come close to in real life is pretty damn fun. Sit down with the players before the first session and watch a copy of *Swordsman 2*, *Ninja Scroll* or *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* — hell, watch *Romeo Must Die* or *The Matrix*. Get them into the mood for whirling, sword-swinging, martial-arts adventure.

• **Have Fun.** This suggestion is even more important than the Golden Rule. If nobody's having fun, there's no reason to continue the game. If you're happy with the way your game's going, then enjoy it! Nobody — not us, not gaming magazines, not other gamers on the Internet — can tell you that the way you're playing is "wrong," as long as you're having fun. Sure, roleplaying can tell you things about yourself, increase your creativity and all that sort of thing — but the main reason to play is and will always be *to have a good time*, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise.





Prince of Shadows was a champion. Into the light, he brought darkness. Into the squalor of life, he brought the holy purity of death. He served his master, the Deathlord called the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears, with an admirable loyalty, and with good reason. When she had taken him under her wing, he had been a shivering coffin-guard in the boneyards of Sijan. At her behest, the deathknight Bloodflower Princess had taught him the arts of war, and the Deathlord herself had instructed him in sorcery and the black arts of necromancy.

And in return, he was her general and her assassin. Resplendent in his soulsteel plate, he had carried her banner to war against her fellow Deathlords and against the inhabitants of the living world, as well. His crystal-headed mace had slain Dragon-Blood and Abyssal alike, and he had never regretted a moment of his new existence.

Yet Prince of Shadows was not just a warrior, but a sorcerer and mystic as well. The Lover had taught him power, but he had seen the face of the greater darkness that stood behind her. His teachers had taken him into the places beneath the earth, where the dead gods slept. Slain by the living, their deaths had birthed the Underworld. Yet, so great were they that not even the Charms of the Exalted could banish them from existence. So, here they laid in endless slumber, dead but undying, dreaming of the day when the world itself would die, that they might rise again.

Since that time, the dead gods had spoken to him in his dreams, but their voices were distant and blurred. The Prince had found it beneficial to take retreats from time to time, to withdraw into the darkness and commune with his true masters.

So, he had gone into the darkness once again. Now, he walked through the endless hallways beneath the Underworld, with a burning red lantern to light his way. His mind was at ease, and his heart was set firmly on the glory of darkness and the joyous triumph of silence. These hidden places were vast and resolutely defied efforts at their mapping. Navigating the passages had as much to do with the traveler's desires and emotions as with the actual route. The heart, and not the eyes, must know the way.

Prince of Shadows walked past vast cities consumed with billowing green flame and descended stairways so wide that titans could walk abreast down them. Down into the belly of the darkness he descended, down to the tombs of the Primordials. All around him, it seemed as if a thousand voices were whispering, murmuring to one-another in the darkness, just out of earshot. The Deathlords had told him that this murmuring was a sign, a miracle of the dead gods waiting for its time, and he treated it with the grave reverence such a vast and important spectacle deserved.

At last, Prince of Shadows released a calculated sigh and turned a corner onto a portico that looked out onto the Mouth of the Void. This huge and ancient well of souls was vast enough to swallow armies. It led downward, perhaps forever, perhaps terminating at some point of ultimate annihilation far below. To the deathknight, it was only a sign that he was near to his goal.

The dead gods had not wished to sleep without a view of their ultimate goal, and their great, dusty tombs faced out onto the darkness of this well. Vast onyx balconies and gorgeous obsidian balustrades marked the resting places of the Neverborn, and those who wished to seek their attentions need only enter these dark places and pray.

He looked up and down, peering through the darkness, seeking with his spirit for his ultimate goal. After a time, he found it. Tireless, Prince of Shadows set his fingers to the cracks and ledges of the wall and began his ascent.

CHAPTER EIGHT
Antagonists

The world of **Exalted** harbors many dangers, even for beings as mighty as the Chosen. Characters must possess both cunning and ability to achieve victory over their foes, be they mortal brigands, wild beasts, fierce spirits and wild elementals or even their fellow Exalted.

As heroes reborn, the characters will have many challenges to overcome, including some of the creatures in this chapter. However, this isn't just a list of monsters for the Exalted to work their way through, putting notches on their scabbards and looting the bodies for coins. Many of these creatures are dangerous predators in the wild, but they may be tamed and used as pets and domestic animals, either by a Storyteller character or by one of the player's characters. Likewise, more intelligent individuals are not merely potential enemies, but also potential allies, advisors, mercenaries or just indifferent bystanders.

Mortal Foes

From the icy reaches of the Northern elemental pole to the fire-blasted dunes of the Southern, the race of man covers the face of the world. Though their hair and skin colors span the rainbow, all colors of men can mingle and interbreed. Only the most warped and twisted beastman barbarians of the Wyld regions are unable to breed easily with the inhabitants of other regions. Unfortunately, though they cannot procreate, there is more than enough evidence of these savage's willingness to copulate.

Typical Citizen

Description: The typical citizen everywhere wants pretty much the same things — food to eat and a roof to sleep under. The citizen hopes for a better future for his children and that the current threat to the established social order will subside. In short, the average citizen wants to feel of secure, often regardless of the cost to personal liberty.

Well-to-do citizens tend to dress well as a mark of their station, with flowing, elegant clothing and stylized hair. The poor dress in what they can manage to find, and most have only one or two sets of clothes. While the fashions of the rich are generally more extravagant in the Realm, poor people look the same, regardless of where you go.

Most barbarians and outlanders look down on the citizens of "civil" states, considering them soft and weak. Civilization has robbed them of their will, of their simple courtesies and of their awareness that life is a constant struggle. To the tribal societies that dwell beyond the pale of civilization, the inhabitants of civilized states are like fat little sheep, all gathered together in one convenient place for shearing.

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

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

Abilities: Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Craft 2, Dodge 1, Melee 1, Presence 1, Socialize 1

Base Initiative: 4
Attack:
Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 3 Damage 2B Defense 3
Kick: Speed 0 Accuracy 2 Damage 4B Defense 2
Dodge Pool: 3 **Soak:** 0L/2B (Skin)
Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: Almost always an extra.

Heretic/Partisan/Criminal/Bandit

Description: There are many ways to expatriate oneself from society, but the basic reasons can be summed up as religious, political or social. Religious outcasts are called heretics, political outcasts are partisans, while social outcasts are criminals or bandits.

Heretics are not all child-sacrificing cultists. In the Realm, they're often common people living by the earth's gifts, offering pious Immaculate façades to distract attention from their hidden spirit shrines. Most simply want to ensure fertile crops and animals over the coming year and do homage to their ancestors. While the worshipers of the Hundred Gods usually do little to draw attention to themselves, they often offer shelter and food to partisans. In the Threshold, a heretic might be anything from a Hundred Gods cultist (in a loyal client state of the Realm) to a rebel against the manifested spirit who rules her region as a god-king. The cultist depicted here is a militant supporter of her religion, willing to fight to defend her beliefs.

Making their homes in the wild, partisans are organized resistance cells engaged in guerilla-style warfare against the forces of the entrenched political order. It's a bloody engagement with no quarter offered or given. As such, partisans are a wisely paranoid lot, who embrace strangers with one hand while keeping a dagger ready in the other. Like heretics, partisans enjoy diverse backgrounds and varying social strata, though it's rare for the noble or the affluent to join the "good fight." Instead partisans are normally the victim of injustices, whether as disenfranchised laborers, exploited farmers or indentured servants. Most fight for liberation or the reinstatement of a government in exile or some other sort of high ideal. Partisans without ideals are bandits and are explained in detail below. Smaller subversive cells typically number from three to seven members, while larger camps in mountainous or heavily forested regions may have as many as 50 members.

Criminals, on the other hand, are social outcasts profiting from the current situation. Though they are exiles from respectable society, many have little drive to change the social clime. The populace may be poor, but in most places, the forces of law and order accept bribes and catch only those who are inept or make targets of themselves. Though the line between criminal and partisan is sometimes a blurry one, most career criminals are just interested in making a few jade coins. Bandits are similar to criminals, except that their misdeeds take place in a more rural setting.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2 (Criminal 1), Conviction 2 (*Criminal 3*), Temperance 2, Valor 2 (Partisan 3)
Abilities:
Heretic: Archery 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Melee 2, Occult 1 (Her Religion +1), Performance 1 (Religious Oration +1), Presence 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Partisan/Bandit: Archery 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Bureaucracy 1, Larceny 1, Medicine 1, Melee 2, Performance 2, Presence 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2
Criminal: Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Larceny 2 (Her Particular Brand of Crime +1), Melee 1, Presence 1, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Base Initiative: 6
Attack:
Fist: Speed 6 Accuracy 4* Damage 2B Defense 4
*(Criminal: Accuracy 5)
Kick: Speed 3 Accuracy 3* Damage 4B Defense 3
*(Criminal: Accuracy 4)
Short Sword: Speed 6 Accuracy 6* Damage 4L Defense 6
*(Criminal: Accuracy 5)
Self Bow: Speed 6 Accuracy 4* Damage 4l
*(Criminal: No Archery Ability)
Dodge Pool: 5 Soak: 3L/6B (Buff jacket, -1 mobility penalty)
Willpower: *Heretic: 4, Bandit, Criminal and Partisan: 5*
Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: Almost always an extra.

Soldiers

Description: Every land needs a police and a military, and in most places, they're one and the same. In many civilized areas, the forces of order bully the poor and ignore the excesses of the rich, and this is especially true in the Realm. In the less settled lands of the Threshold, where the populace is armed and accustomed to defending itself, matters are often considerably better. Militia don't just man gates and march in formation to battle. They escort caravans, patrol the roads and local farmlands and protect the streets of cities at night.

Most soldiers can be divided into three types. The first is the average militiaman, who can be found patrolling streets, watching over marketplaces and making up the bulk of conscript armies. Most carry spears and short swords, and when combat is likely, they wear buff jackets.

The second type are infantry, trained for battle and used primarily for military rather than police duties. They are typically volunteers, though they often "volunteer" when give the choice of 20 lashes or service under the colors. This second type of soldier is better trained and equipped than the militia. Most are armed with spears, chopping swords and bows.

Infantry typically wear reinforced buff jackets and approach their job with considerably more enthusiasm than militia.

The third type are elite troops, typically career soldiers, often raised from childhood for military service. The best of the best, these warriors are well equipped and excellently trained. Individually, even these stalwarts are no threat to the Chosen, but in large numbers, they can pose a serious threat to even a Solar Exalted. The soldiers normally wear lamellar or reinforced breastplate armor and carry chopping swords, tower shields and bows. The heavy infantry of the Realm wear articulated plate and use great axes instead of chopping swords. Elite troops are often mounted—such troops are typically called cataphractoi.

Militia

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2
Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Endurance 1, Melee 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1
Base Initiative: 4
Attack:
Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 2B Defense 4
Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 3 Damage 4B Defense 3
Knife: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 3L Defense 2
Short Sword: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 4L Defense 5
Spear: Speed 7, Accuracy 5, Damage 3L, Defense 4
Dodge Pool: 4/3 **Soak:** 3L/6B (Buff jacket, 3L/4B, -1 mobility penalty)
Willpower: 4 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: Almost always an extra.

Infantry

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Endurance 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Chopping Sword +1), Presence 1, Resistance 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1
Base Initiative: 4
Attack:
Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4
Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3
Knife: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2
Chopping Sword: Speed 4 Accuracy 6 Damage 7L Defense 6
Spear: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L Defense 4
Self Bow: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 5L
Dodge Pool: 3/0 **Soak:** 5L/9B (Reinforced buff jacket and target shield, 5L/6B, -3 mobility penalty, +1 difficulty to attack)
Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: Usually an extra.

Elite Troops

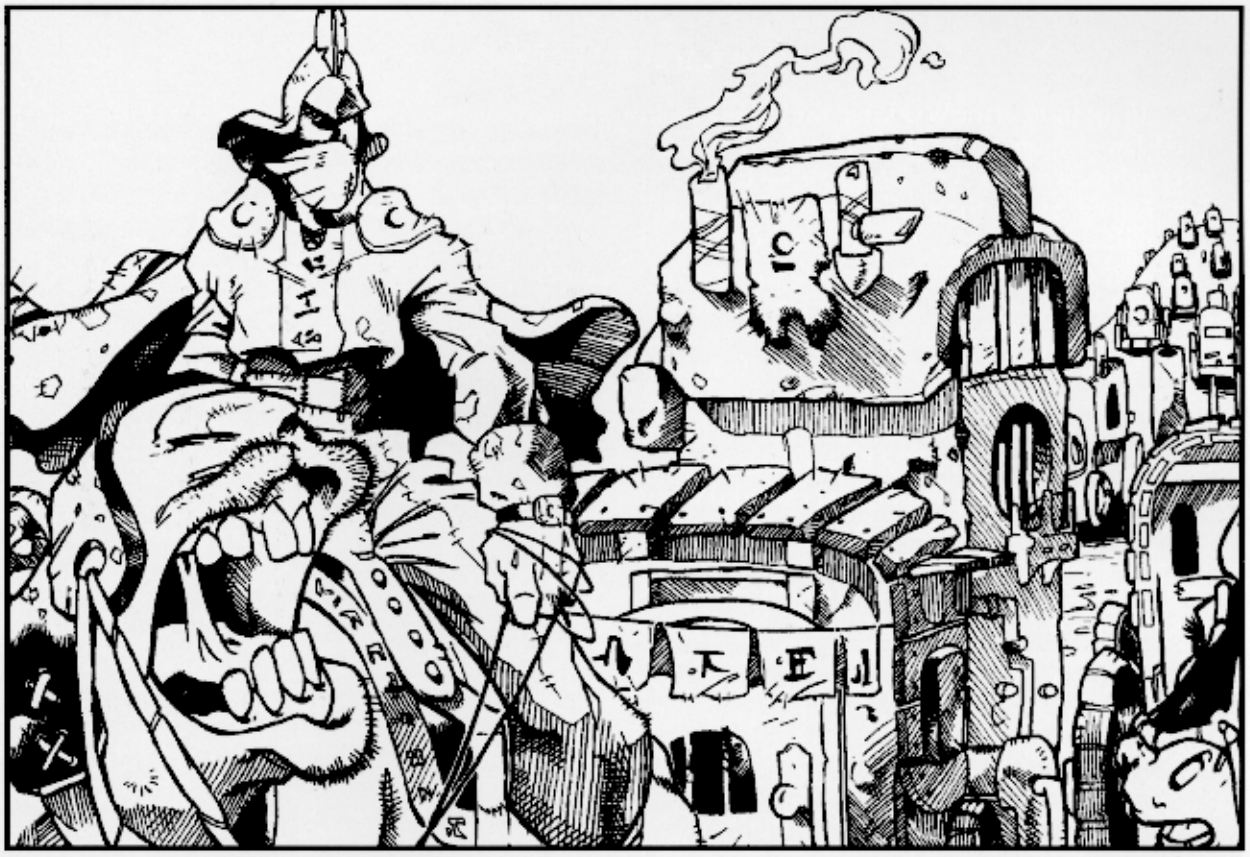
Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4
Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Endurance 3 (Marches +1), Medicine 2, Melee 3, Presence 2, Resistance 2 (Disease +1), Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Base Initiative: 6
Attack:
Fist: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 3B Defense 6
Kick: Speed 3 Accuracy 5 Damage 5B Defense 5
Knife: Speed 9 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 5
Chopping Sword: Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 7L Defense 6
Self Bow: Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L
Dodge Pool: 5/2 **Soak:** 6L/12B (Lamellar armor and target shield, 6L/8B, -3 mobility penalty, +1 difficulty to attack)
Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: Often an extra.

The Guild

Architects of a vast financial empire, the Guild controls trade routes and commerce across the Realm and the Threshold, establishing the value of the commodities in a hundred kingdoms. The Guild offers financial protection through universal standards and ensures the safety of its members in differing empires through the threat of trade sanctions. As a result, few leaders, even those of the Realm, will cross swords with a Guild merchant prince without good reason.

The Guild keeps trade routes open by treaty, in more civilized areas, and by force of arms, in lawless areas. Its vast caravans carry vital commodities including metal stock, tools, seed grains, fabrics, medicines, slaves and, most importantly, news. It bears the promise of hope and opens the world to villagers. More than just a traveling caravan, the Guild links diverse communities and offers both critical goods and a rare diversion from the toils of life for those along its route. The caravan's arrival marks festivities in many Threshold towns and cities.

Guild caravans are ambulatory spectacles, traveling zoos that draw together different people from across the Realm and the Threshold. In addition to merchants selling their wares, there are jugglers, acrobats and other performers entertaining for their livelihood and exploring the world in relative safety. Flanking the giant yeddim-drawn Conestogas of the merchants are smaller vehicles drawn by horse and oxen. These small enterprises serve as four-wheeled shops for affiliated tradesmen, brothels, soothsayers and charlatans and even as display cages for circus animals. Caravans also trade briskly in slaves where slavery is legal, and a motley cargo of captured



thieves, indentured servants, barbarian prisoners-of-war and concubines are up for sale to the highest bidder.

As the largest and most diverse collections of well-traveled individuals in the world, Guild caravans are excellent sources of lore about different principalities. The campfire tales shared while the caravan beds down for the night range from pole to pole. Those who would travel far or become storytellers can learn more secrets from a Guild caravan than from a hundred tomes of knowledge. There's a saying that everyone is in the caravan for a reason and that, when you join the caravan, your life begins anew. Many of those in the caravans were once criminals or outcasts, but where the Guild has political interests, partisans and fugitives are sometimes permitted to use Guild caravans for safe passage past patrols and border outposts — everyone has a story, though it's generally considered impolite to pry. So long as they cause no trouble and are willing to help defend the caravan in times of need, small groups of travelers are welcome to sojourn with the caravan, no questions asked.

Merchant Prince

Description: The true directors of the Guild reside in the hub cities from whence the caravans originate, but all of the directors have, without exception, worked as part of the mobile city-states that are the caravans themselves. The merchant princes are the representatives of the syndics that hold shares in the caravan, with each syndic appointing one such delegate. Like everything else in the Guild, this is negotiable — syndics often sell or trade their rights to a representative in a given caravan to other syndics in exchange for money or other considerations. The princes in a caravan form a council that governs the caravan while it is in the field. These sovereigns of commerce apply the standards of the Guild, while still attempting to turn a profit. It's not easy, but those that succeed retire to well-paid and sedentary jobs in the hub cities.

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

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

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 3 (Business +2), Endurance 2 (Resisting Disease +2), Investigation 2 (Pilferage +1), Linguistics 3, Medicine 2, Melee 2, Occult 2, Presence 3 (Appearing Trustworthy +2), Resistance 2 (Resisting Disease +2), Ride 2, Socialize 2, Survival 1

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 2B Defense 4

Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 3 Damage 4B Defense 3

Knife: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 3L Defense 2

Baton: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 4L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 3 **Soak:** 5L/8B (Reinforced buff jacket 5L/6B, -2 mobility penalty)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

The Call of The Wyld

In the heart of the Wyld, impulse holds domain and laws are an abstraction. The Wyld changes everything it touches on a basic level — there is an awakening within the soul, a sense of possibility unfulfilled and potential unrealized. Continued exposure makes these imaginings into reality, twisting people and animals into dreams and chimeras.

Rather than trying to detail every possible creature, what follow are physical mutations, ranging from common to uncommon, that touch both mortal and beast exposed to Wyld energies. Bear in mind that this list but touches the surface of the Wyld's chaotic creativity.

Note to Storytellers: Willing and extended exposure to the influences of the Wyld is a gateway to madness and addiction, and even if a character emerges with positive physical changes, the cost in terms of his sanity is likely to be quite high. Remember that the Wyld changes more than just physical characteristics. Characters who become accustomed to the influence of the Wyld may have to spend Willpower or make Temperance rolls to leave or may even go insane. Those who are physically changed in ways that cannot exist in the real world typically wither and die if they spend long away from Wyld influences. As a final caveat, civilized mortals fear those individuals touched by the Wyld; to most people, the Wyld is the source of beastmen, barbarians and horrors beyond words.

To determine if a creature that dwells in a Wyld region possesses an anomaly, roll a die and consult the following results:

1-3: No Wyld-induced alterations.

4-5: The individual possesses one or two pox from the list below. He also gains a derangement.

6-8: The individual possesses one or two afflictions and up to three pox. Beings with afflictions typically have a Temperance one point lower than normal.

9-10: One blight and as many afflictions or poxes as befit the description affect the creature. Blights add one derangement, and beings suffering from blights typically have Temperance Virtues from one to three dots lower than normal.

Pox

- **Enhanced Smell and Hearing:** These two senses become more acute. In addition to the ear tips elongating or the ears growing larger or the nose becoming a snout (for example), the barbarian gains an additional two dice to related Awareness rolls.
- **Eye Color:** The pupils change colors or even mutate to mirror an animal's eyes. Most often, the change indicates enhanced visual acuity. Either the barbarian can see in the dark, or he gains an additional two dice to vision-related Awareness rolls.
- **Fur/Feathers/Leaves:** The barbarian sprouts fur, feathers or leaves, allowing him to endure colder climes. This adds 1L/1B to the character's soak and provides an extra die on Survival rolls.
- **Hair Color:** Cosmetic; the individual's hair changes to colors and patterns normally found on animals or plants (white, tiger-stripped, green, fire-red, etc.).
- **Large:** The individual gains one dot of Strength and Stamina and an additional –0 health level.
- **Skin Color:** Same as hair color.

Afflictions

- **Chameleon:** Creatures with this affliction may shift their skin patterns and coloration to match their surroundings, allowing them to add three dice to Stealth and one die to Survival rolls.
- **Claws:** The barbarian's hands and feet become talons or claws, allowing her to shred opponents. Her punches and kicks do lethal damage.
- **Fangs:** The barbarian grows meat-ripping fangs, capable of delivering a Speed +0, Accuracy +1, Damage +2, Defense -2 lethal damage bite attack with her Brawl or Martial Arts Ability.
- **Gills:** The barbarian can breathe underwater.
- **Huge:** The individual gains two dots of both Strength and Stamina and an additional –0 and an additional –1 health level.
- **Tail:** Reptilian, simian or otherwise, tails aid in balance. The barbarian gains +2 dice in Athletics-related endeavors.
- **Thick Skin:** Whether he grows thick fur or scales or his skin thickens into a leathery hide, the barbarian gains a toughened exterior. This thick skin adds 3L/3B to his soak, and his feral instincts provide an extra three dice on Survival rolls.
- **Tusks/Horns:** These outgrowths allow the barbarian to gore opponents with a Speed -3, Accuracy -1, Damage 5, Defense -1 lethal tusk or horn attack using her Brawl or Martial Arts.

Blights

- **Armored Hide:** Thicker armor, such as a chitinous carapace, rhino hide or mammoth fur. The barbarian possesses 4L/4B armor and animalistic behavior that adds an extra four dice to Survival rolls.
- **Beast Form:** The barbarian changes into an animal-human hybrid. He gains the animal's Traits, Abilities and its bestial disposition.

The Call of The Wyld (continued)

• **Giant:** The individual gains three dots of both Strength and Stamina and an additional –0 health level, two additional –1 health levels and four additional –2 health levels. These giants often rule over tribes or a region.

• **Multiple Heads:** In situations where an individual possesses additional heads, the heads have separate identities but may work together. In these situations, the creature gains +2 dice to Awareness rolls against surprise attacks for each additional head. In cases where the heads can employ goring or biting attacks, the creature gains two more dice in Brawl dice pools.

• **Multiple Limbs:** Multiple limbs can be an extra set of operable legs, arms, tentacles or claw-like appendages. Barbarians with this mutation suffer less of a penalty when performing multiple actions. When a character with this blight splits her actions, compute the dice penalties normally, but then reduce them all by one. For example, if the creature performed three actions, it would roll at -2, -3 and -4 dice, rather than -3, -4 and -5 dice.

Derangements

• **Amnesia:** You forget a significant portion of your past due to physical trauma or mental scarring. This derangement can be so acute as to erase all memories or simply cause you to forget a few hours of time.

• **Delusions:** Your mind plays tricks on itself. You see and hear things that don't actually exist. Mild cases can be distracting, while potent delusions can cause a complete detachment from reality.

• **Mood Swings:** Also known as melancholy, this disorder causes lethargy, depression and an inability to function for months at a time. Maniacs suffer the same symptoms, but their bouts are interspersed with manic fits.

• **Multiple Personalities:** Trauma can cause a single personality to splinter into distinct shards. Each personality possesses its own Nature and behaves differently from the others.

• **Obsession:** You are unable to resist a certain urge. This urge may cause you to perform ludicrous tasks or to seek absolute perfection in every detail.

• **Shattered Mind:** This affliction causes a complete detachment from reality. Severe cases are accompanied by delusions of persecution and elaborate paranoid theories.

Essence: 1
Other Notes: None

The Wyld

The Wyld is. That is the simplest explanation that a guide can offer without having to explain the fluid dynamic of these surroundings. That which is Wyld lives in a tumultuous world alive with sensation. In this realm, behemoths drink the sky like water, while nature spirits dress themselves in leaves for comfort — the Wyld is potential unbound, where the wall between reality and dream is paper thing or nonexistent. The Wyld is freedom. It is home to legions of mortals, beasts and spirits. Many of these creatures are completely unique, fabulous entities cast up on the shores of the world as the flotsam of dreams.

Wyld Barbarians

Description: The barbarians of the Wyld are a fearsome lot. Resplendent in their war paint, feathers and tattoos, these savages live in tribal bands, enduring a brutal and precarious existence. Despite the fact that more "civilized" beings often find them crude and uneducated, barbarians possess an unparalleled understanding of the natural world and the ways of spirits, and most adhere to codes of etiquette far stricter than those of the soft, settled weaklings in the cities.

Their guardian spirits protect the barbarians from the warping nature of the Wyld, shielding them from Fair Folk raiders and teaching them to avoid the bogs and quagmires where dreams and reality are one and where flesh warps and runs like wax. The tribes worship various spirit courts and independent entities. Conflict is a constant of barbarian existence, and warriors are always battling the creatures of the Wyld, attacking Threshold outposts for resources or feuding with other tribes over territory and resources or at the behest of their patron spirit.

Barbarians are a frightening lot to behold, even those not afflicted with Wyld-induced changes. They adorn themselves in a variety of markings. Full-body tattoos, scars or brands distinguish tribe and sept. Other popular body modifications include facial piercings — bones represent prowess as a hunter, while holes and scars speak of ecstatic vision quests where the supplicant hangs for days from hooks or sleeps on sharp stones. To the barbarian, the flesh is expression and conduit for the spirit. Enduring tests of pain, rite-of-passage ceremonies and arduous spiritual covenants are all accomplishments celebrating death and embracing life.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Endurance 2 (Wilderness +1), Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Axe



+1), Performance 1, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Native Environment +1)
Base Initiative: 5
Attack:
Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4
Kick: Speed 2 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3
Knife: Speed 8 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2
Axe: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 8L Defense 5
Short Spear: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L Defense 4
Dodge Pool: 4/2 **Soak:** 3L/7B (Pangolin scale armor [buff jacket] and target shield, 3L/4B, -2 mobility penalty, +1 difficulty to attack)
Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: Usually an extra.

Wyld Shaman

Description: Shamans are typically wild hermits living outside the tribes, though this was not always the case. At one time each belonged to a band. Following a traumatic event, be it a harrowing vision quest or a walkabout where her path intersected the wrong domains, she was never the same. These shamans belong to the Wyld now, as a channel for spirits, demons and even ghosts looking for physical expression or a quick morsel of Essence. Shamans move in a dance of spasms, ecstatic undulations and wide-eyed terror. Their motion is a constant siren call to the spirits, inviting the unseen a shelter of flesh in return for a parcel of power. It is said that, throughout the course of their lives, their erratic dance, through their very dirt-stamped footprints, eventually traces one of the six mandalas related to Incarna, Exalted, mortal, animal, spirit or demon.

Even truer than barbarians, Wyld shamans are dishevelled and unkempt, living more like animals than men. Their bodies are scarred testaments to vision-inducing tortures, and their eyes speak more of the unseen than their tongues ever could. Despite appearances, however, these shaman have learned to control the spirits they channel, preventing outright control or permanent possession. They also barter with the spirits, learning as much of their courts and doings as a scholar of the Realm. Shamans are the perfect intermediaries between the physical and unearthly, and most live near tribes that provide them with food, tools and other necessities in return for their services. However, there is one rule, and that is that for any favor a shaman gives, she will ask one in return. It may be a spirit possession, a short quest for a dangerous root or a sample of the supplicant's saliva.
Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 4
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Endurance 2 (Wilderness +1), Medicine 1, Melee 2, Occult 1 (Local

Spirits +2),Performance 1, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Native Environment +1)
Base Initiative: 5
Attack:
Fist: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4
Kick: Speed 2 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3
Knife: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2
Short Spear: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L Defense 4
Dodge Pool: 2 **Soak:** 4L/8B (Scars and tattoos, 4L/4B)
Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 2
Other Notes: Often an extra. Generally quite mad. Usually has at least one affliction and two poxes.

Beastmen

Description: Beastmen are a type of Wyld barbarian formed by the mating of Lunar Exalted with normal mortals and animals in the presence of Wyld energies. The offspring of such matings, whether with human or beast, are much the same, and can interbreed. As a result, most of the Lunar Exalted are surrounded by animalistic tribes of their own offspring.

The Lunar blood tends to draw their offspring into the shapes of the local animals, and so, there are as many types of beastman as there are regions. There are wolf-, goat-, bear-, hyena-, lion-, elk-, hawk- and even shark-like beastmen. Most remain relatively true to their shapes, even through long lives in Wyld regions. Their Lunar blood grants them a great deal of resistance to permanent warping by the Wyld, and susceptible individuals are culled from the group as children. The Storyteller may choose not to roll to see what Wyld mutations the beastman has, or he may roll, but subtract two from the result.

However, the Storyteller should apply those Wyld mutations appropriate to the beastman's form at no cost in Temperance dots or derangements. Wolf-like beastmen have great tracking ability due to their powerful noses, while eagle-like beastmen possess tremendous visual acuity. Despite their bestial appearances, beastmen are quite intelligent. They are capable of using tools, speaking and forming complex social structures. Most live lives not unlike those of more "normal" Wyld barbarians, save that rather than worshiping a spirit, they serve the will of their parent, the Lunar Exalted who sired the tribe.

Wolfman

Description: One of the most common beastman types in the Northeast, wolfmen are gregarious creatures who run in packs with 6 to 18 members. Packs are led by strong leaders and gather together in clans, septs and nations. Most nations are ruled by or closely allied with the Lunar Exalted who begat them.

Wolfmen are nomadic hunter-gatherers who do not sow the land or herd animals. They use their raids on human steadings as a way to gather weapons, armor, finished goods and skilled slaves. Like most barbarians, they consider themselves superior to their settled neighbors. Among many beastmen, but especially among the wolfmen, the scourging of civilized areas is built up into a sort of holy crusade.

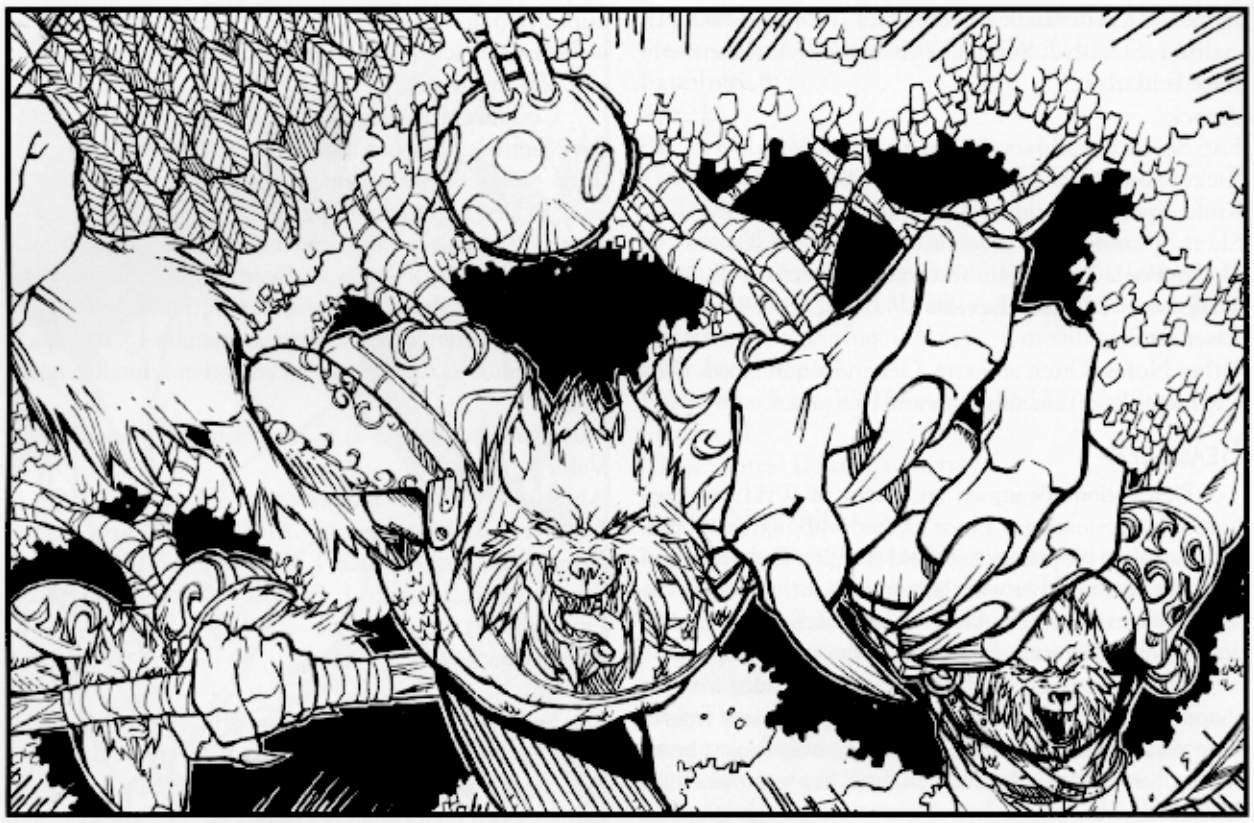
Contrary to popular belief, wolfmen do not generally eat their captives. Slaves are used to perform skilled labor, and in many places, slave communities are left to thrive on their own, so long as they continue to pay tribute to their lupine masters. These slaves often lead comfortable lives but run the risk of being killed if the pack is forced to flee its territory and doesn't wish to abandon its property for the victors.
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Endurance 3 (Wilderness +2), Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Great Sword +2), Performance 1 (Howling +2), Presence 2, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Native Environment +1)
Base Initiative: 5
Attack:
Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4
Kick: Speed 2 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3
Bite: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 5L Defense 2
Knife: Speed 8 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2
Great Sword: Speed 5 Accuracy 8 Damage 9L Defense 4
Dodge Pool: 4/1 **Soak:** Battered Chain Hauberk (6L/10B, -3 mobility penalty)
Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1
Other Notes: A commonly occurring type of beastman in the Northeast. These creatures have the afflictions Fangs and the poxes Fur, Eye Color (wolf-like, can see in the dark), Hair Color (red wolf-pelt), Acute Smell and Large. Usually an extra.

Wyld Beasts

Pitfalls and patches of raw Essence riddle the Wyld. They occasionally trap men and beasts, transmuting them into something entirely different. Nothing of the original creature remains, except possibly shreds of intelligence and a fading memory of former identity. The creatures that emerge are truly unique — the Wyld's life-giving touch never generates a the same chimerical monstrosity twice.

The Storyteller is free to create a bestiary of creatures unique to her series. These steps are guidelines to help focus the creative process, not empirical formulas to success.

• **Step One — Desired Effect:** First, determine in large and rough strokes what you want to create. The need to engender a creature must stem from some image or morsel of inspiration that drives you. Do you want to scare the characters or perhaps haunt and mystify them? Determine the effect you're striving for, and write down some key adjectives, such



as sleek, dangerous, nocturnal and hunter. A list of adjectives is available in the "Elemental Characteristics" sidebar further on. Borrow from those if necessary, but get the juices flowing.

• **Step Two — The Base Creature:** A list of common beasts is available further on. Use these as base templates, then start adjusting. See what happens when you add "sleek, dangerous, nocturnal and hunter" to a horse. Use elemental characteristics to change its nature.

• **Step Three — Superficial Changes:** Superficial changes affect a creature's appearance only. They might include different skin and eye colors, more or less fur, striping, etc. In dealing with a horse, for example, how does one make it dangerous and predatory? How about darkening the skin and mane or making the beast smaller and sleeker. Lengthening and elongating the head makes it more sinister, especially if the eyes glow with a wolf's baleful stare.

• **Step Four — Consequential Changes:** These changes affect the animal's movement, senses and even self-defense mechanisms. The Storyteller should ask herself: Is the animal faster or slower because of more limbs? Does it have more attacks with multiple appendages, or does it consolidate its attacks into one option? Use the previous "The Call of the Wyld" sidebar for inspiration. In continuing with our horse example, how about giving it an obvious set of meat-wrenching teeth for its new diet. It has chameleon skin to facilitate stealth, and it's double-headed. Closer to the ground, it moves with the sure-footed agility of a billy goat, but it is fast only in short bursts.

• **Step Five — Purpose:** Each creature should do something in your game. Does the new animal generate a unique poison? Is it a good pack animal? Is it loyal? Is it a great hunter, or does it possess sharp cunning? Is it the ultimate chameleon? Does it lay golden eggs? No animal exists for the sake of existing. Making a creature unique is easy, but giving it value is vital. Besides, there is profit in capturing a truly serviceable animal, especially if it can accomplish something no other beast can or possesses the rarest of all treasures, a mate. Now, it can breed. Our horse, for example, might make a great pack hunter and, once domesticated, prove a loyal, if temperamental, companion.

Buck-Ogre

Description: Living alone or in small herds, the two-headed buck-ogre is a scourge of the northeast Threshold. It has backward bending legs, like a goat, a massive human chest and upper body and two great bucks' heads that surmount its shoulders. The racks face almost entirely forward, and the heads normally face slightly outward, preventing the antlers from tangling. Buck-ogres are intelligent, and they often work with beastmen to raid isolated settlements. Like in this example, most buck-ogres wield a great axe in each hand.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

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

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 2, Medicine 2, Melee 3 (Axe +2), Presence 1 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 2 (Poison +2), Stealth 3, Survival 5
Base Initiative: 6
Attack:
Fist: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 7B Defense 6
Kick: Speed 3 Accuracy 5 Damage 9B Defense 5
Gore: Speed 3 Accuracy 7 Damage 12L Defense 5
Great Axe:* Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 14L Defense 6
*The two-headed buck-ogre uses one axe in each hand. It must split its dice pool normally to act twice.
Dodge Pool: 5/3 **Soak:** 9L/14B (Hide plus fragments of salvaged armor equal to a reinforced buff jacket, 5L/6B, -2 mobility penalty)
Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Other Notes: Buck-ogres have the poxes Eye Color (+2 on visual Awareness rolls) and Hair Color (Elk Pelt), the afflictions Huge and Tusks/Horns, and the blights Armored Hide, Beast Form and Multiple Heads. Buck-ogres are probably not extras.

Fair Folk

Few creatures inspire more terror in mortals than the manipulative and dangerous Fair Folk (so called because to use their true name, faerie, might attract the attention of one that was passing). Their nobles are the envy of mortal beauty, with sculpted and unblemished physiques that appear as though they were formed by the hands of a master sculptor. Fair Folk have an absent, almost dream-like elegance to their movement and proportions. They wear dream-spun clothing of the most dazzling hues and in patterns with detail far beyond that any mortal could dream of creating. When they ride to war, their armor follows the shape of their elegant bodies, and beneath the decoration lie perfectly curved plates of unequalled quality. Like their limbs, their weapons are elegant, almost dainty. Set against this visual feast is contoured jewelry for the fingers, arms, legs, neck and hair. Each piece is of stunning craftsmanship, with gold, silver and platinum lacing finer than a spider's web and roped in impossible braids. In short, their appearance is a study in resplendence.

The mightiest and most malevolent of the Fair Folk dwell in the chaos outside Creation. Those who enter our world must take on a more solid form and, in shaping themselves, are lessened. The reasons the Fair Folk enter our world are many. Some come to destroy Creation from within, while others seek shelter here against the rigors of existence beyond Creation. Some even come to live among men, studying them or even protecting them and ruling over them as kings and lords.

But these are the rare exceptions — the Fair Folk are the offspring of dreams, as men are the offspring of substance. Most know and care little of compassion or restraint. They hunt men for sport and batten upon their dreams for sustenance. These are the Fair Folk who pay the Guild handsomely for human slaves, draining them of vitality and selling the empty husks back to the slavers months or years later. These pathetic wretches are used for hard labor and serve as stark reminders that there are fates far worse than death.

Mechanical Guidelines

Fair Folk, while powerful magical beings, are not Exalted, or even creatures of Creation. They are the offspring of the chaos that lies beyond the edge of the world. As a result, they do not use Charms as Exalted and spirits do. They have powerful magic — their mastery of glamour and elemental manipulation cannot be matched — but these abilities are not based on their Traits. The Essence-shaping of the Fair Folk is simply unlike any other magic in Creation; it reshapes reality, bends the truth like wax, and yet, it crumbles beneath the touch of iron.

Fair Folk have Essence pools because however strange their magic may be, it still springs from the same source as all other enchantment. Generally, this magic does not directly enhance the Fair Folk's Abilities in the fashion of Charms — it's more like a subtle and efficient form of sorcery. Each Fair Folk commands a limited number of powers. One faerie might be able to create illusions and change shape, while another can tell totally undetectable lies and make all who behold him fall in love with him. Part of a Fair Folk putting on flesh is defining a fairly strict "role" for itself, and the Fair Folk's powers will further and reinforce this role. Each of the Fair Folk detailed below has individual powers listed. These are typical for a being of its type, and the Storyteller should use them as guidelines for other, similar magic.

Fair Folk also have a more complex sort of magic they use, part craft and part wizardry, that allows them to forge spells and enchantments in a more flexible fashion. Similar in power to Celestial Circle Sorcery, it is slower and more refined — gradually shaping reality rather than twisting it to the magician's whims. This magic must be worked in a Wyld area or a Demesne, and it can take weeks, months or even years for the magician to craft his spells.

Note that while Fair Folk do not have Charms to enhance their Abilities, those Abilities are quite often superhuman. While the Fair Folk must abide by the limits of the material world they now exist in, they are as perfect as they dream themselves to be. Most Fair Folk nobles have Traits well above the human maximum, and the generally weaker servitors still approach the upper end of human capability. It worth noting that Fair Folk have no magical powers that allow them to take extra actions — they have only the innate magic of their bodies to rely on. If they wish to perform multiple actions, the Fair Folk must split their dice pools accordingly.

Fair Folk's wounds do not bleed or become infected. Fair Folk take aggravated damage from iron. They are incapable of breaking a sworn promise.

Fair Folk Diplomat

Description: A noble more specialized in manipulation than in war. Diplomats are most often seen traveling in human lands on embassies or greeting visitors to the Fair Folk's domains. Though their clothing and appearance varies from area to area, their intent remains the same. Sweet of tongue, generous of manners and able to beguile the most experienced negotiator — few are those who can deal with the Fair Folk and come away without regretting the deal. The Guild has special protocols for dealing with the Fair Folk, and all deals must be approved by a panel of negotiators who have never met the faerie tribe in question.

Though they are a match for any mortal warrior, the diplomats of the Fair Folk rarely travel alone. Most go abroad accompanied by a cataphract and, often, with a number of lower-caste warriors as well. When traveling in places where wild hobgoblins are a problem, diplomats typically omit this second escort, though there may be another noble warrior if there is the possibility the mission may encounter hostility.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 6, Manipulation 7, Appearance 6, Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 4, Craft (Glamour) 4, Dodge 5, Endurance 3, Linguistics 5, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Occult 2, Performance 6, Presence 6, Resistance 3, Ride 4, Socialize 7, Stealth 5

Powers:

Beguile: 10 motes, 1 Willpower. The faerie becomes utterly charming, to the point where it is impossible to resist his suggestions. While those who interact with him may come to their senses later, at the time, any reasonably phrased suggestion or request seems perfectly natural. Roll the diplomat's Charisma + Socialize — the result is the number of scenes for which the Fair Folk's suggestion seems perfectly reasonable. The target will not directly kill herself, but can easily be manipulated into lethal situations; she will happily give the diplomat all her warm clothing in the midst of a snowstorm or attack the faerie's enemies. This power cannot be used in the midst of combat or in situations where nobody is listening — for example, it cannot calm an angry mob. This power does not work on targets whose Willpower or Wits + Essence are greater than the faerie's Charisma.

Glamour: 5 motes. The faerie creates an illusion so perfect that it is effectively real. This illusion cannot create truly enchanted objects — it can create winged horses, glitteringly perfect sabers and priceless jewels, but not orichalcum weapons or Hearthstones. Roll the faerie's Intelligence + Craft (Glamour), and the number of successes is the duration of the magic. What unit the duration is measured in depends on the degree to which the glamour is illusionary; the magic of the faerie works best when it is based on reality. If the faerie creates something from nothing, then the duration is measured in turns. If it creates something from almost nothing, such as fire-eyed chargers from beetles or armor from old dry leaves, then the duration is measured in scenes. If the faerie simply improves something that already exists, for example turning a rusty old sword into a glass faerie blade or a battered hay-wain into a magnificent carriage, then the duration is measured in days. In a Manse, Demesne, Wyld area or faerie abode, ignore this duration — glamour can persist indefinitely in such an environment.

The deception behind this illusion is patently obvious to characters with a Wits + Essence higher than the faerie's Intelligence. A character who sees through a weapon takes damage from the reality, not the illusion, and a character who sees through armor treats it as what it really is, not what it appears to be. This knowledge is a double-edged sword — the character cannot benefit from faerie illusions either. The glamour used to forge the clothing, weapons and armor of the Fair Folk is of considerably better craft and durability and cannot be seen through: It is, for all intents and purposes, real.

Undetectable Lie: 5 motes, 1 Willpower. The faerie can tell a lie that seems and sounds perfectly natural, even if the facts would seem to contradict it. If the faerie says "down is now up, you must brace yourself or fall into the sky!" then the target of this power will be scrabbling for something to hold onto. When the diplomat uses this power, make a Manipulation + Presence roll for the faerie. With a single success, the effect succeeds. This power does not work on targets whose Wits + Essence are greater than the faerie's Manipulation.

Base Initiative: 10

Attack:

Fist: Speed 10 Accuracy 9 Damage 4B Defense 9
Kick: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 6B Defense 8
Faerie Knife: Speed 13 Accuracy 9 Damage 6L Defense 7
Faerie Blade: Speed 12 Accuracy 11 Damage 8L Defense 11

Dodge Pool: 10 **Soak:** 8L/10B (Gossamer garb, 6L/6B)
Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 30
Other Notes: Iron does aggravated damage against the Fair Folk, and they cannot soak it with their Stamina. Against iron weapons, the diplomat has only the 6L/6B protection of his gossamer garb. Note that most weapons are forged from bronze or steel, not iron.

Fair Folk Cataphract

Description: Though their appearance varies from region to region, the elegance of Fair Folk warriors is never in doubt. These soldiers encase their lithe bodies in armor of obsidian, jade, marble and mother-of-pearl. Intricate patterns of embossed and etched gold, silver and even melted crystal adorn their breast plates, shields, helms and high-neck collars. Their flowing and often

animate cloaks are woven of gossamer fabrics saturated with the deepest colors. This elegance does not come at the price of frailty, however. The armor of faerie is stronger than any mortal plate, and Fair Folk who dream themselves to be warriors are inhumanly skillful with arms. Their weapons are similarly deadly — their glass blades are as light as feathers, yet sever limbs and cut armor as though they were the heaviest axe.

Mortals rarely see Fair Folk cataphractoi outside of the hunt or warfare. When one does appear, it is usually as an escort to an emissary or ambassador. In his role as chaperon, a cataphract typically rides a fey steed, usually a gryphon or fell unicorn, and wields a serrated lance. Fair Folk cataphractoi are not to be trifled with — though they tread warily around the Exalted, most are proud and short-tempered — and quick to take offense at mortal frailties.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 6, Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Craft (Glamour) 3, Dodge 6, Endurance 3, Linguistics 3, Martial Arts 6, Melee 6 (Sword +2), Occult 3, Performance 4, Presence 6, Resistance 4, Ride 5, Socialize 5, Stealth 4

Powers:

Fearsome Mien: 5 motes, 1 Willpower. The Fair Folk wreaths herself in terrifying illusions, similar to the battle mien of a Dawn Caste Solar Exalted. Targers whose Valor + Essence is lower than the cataphract's highest combat Ability suffer a -2 to all dice pools while in combat with her.

Glamour: 5 motes. As per the Fair Folk Diplomat.

Base Initiative: 13

Attack:

Fist: Speed 14 Accuracy 13 Damage 6B Defense 13

Kick: Speed 11 Accuracy 12 Damage 8B Defense 12

Faerie Knife: Speed 17 Accuracy 9 Damage 6L Defense 7

Faerie Blade: Speed 16 Accuracy 15 Damage 11L Defense 15

Faerie Lance: Speed 28 Accuracy 14 Damage 16L Defense 12

Fey Bow: Speed 14 Accuracy 10 Damage 10L (Rate 2, Range 200)

Dodge Pool: 13 **Soak:** 15L/18B (Faerie plate and target shield, 12L/12B, +1 difficulty to hit)

Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 30





Other Notes: Iron does aggravated damage against the Fair Folk, and they cannot soak it with their Stamina. Against iron weapons, the cataphract has only the 12L/12B protection of her faerie plate. Note that most weapons are forged from bronze or steel, not iron.

Hobgoblins

Description: The Fair Folk have many inhuman servants within their realms, laborers and tinkers and spies and creatures of pleasure. Alas, the sort most commonly seen by outsiders are their warriors. Though their specific appearance varies from location to location, in general they are short, savage beasts with needle teeth and twisted limbs. Hobgoblins served as the footsoldiers of the armies of the Fair Folk when they attacked the Realm during the Great Contagion. Many escaped control during the campaign and lurked in caves, swamps and the dark hearts of forests touched by the Wyld — whatever seemed most natural to them.

Immortal unless slain or starved, most of those hobgoblins who remain today dwell in or near Wyld zones and, so, need not eat regularly. The energies of the Wyld are pallid and sustaining, however, while those of terrified mortals, eaten alive, are vibrant and energizing. As a result, hobgoblins are quick to attack travelers or even towns, carrying off who they can. In many places, hobgoblin infestations have forced the abandonment of whole regions, as the beasts are lightning quick and exceedingly clever.

Lately, more hobgoblins have been sighted than ever before, and many believe that the Fair Folk are releasing them to serve as spies and to terrorize and destabilize the kingdoms of men prior to another great offensive.

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

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

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 4 (Marches +2), Melee 3, Presence 1 (Terrorizing +3), Resistance 2 (Disease +1), Stealth 3, Survival 3

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Claw: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L Defense 8

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 9 Damage 6L Defense 6

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

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 5L/7B (Tough hide, 3L/3B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 20

Other Notes: Some powerful and clever hobgoblins can use glamour and shapeshift into wolves or great cats. Hobgoblins are often extras.

Fey Beasts

The Fair Folk are not the only creatures to inhabit the world beyond Creation. Just as in the shaped world, for every sentient being, there are many animals. When the Fair Folk come to our world, they often bring their pets and beasts of burden with them. Others slip through the weak places deep in Wyld areas, where the tears in the fabric of Creation occasionally gape wide enough for creatures from the chaos beyond our world to enter.

As with the Fair Folk, the beasts of the Wyld must put on a shape to exist for long in our world. As with the more intelligent Fair Folk, the process is largely natural, a tendency for the raw element most abundant in the region to coalesce and give form to the formless. This process is in many ways the direct parallel of the effect the Wyld has on mortal creatures, but running in the opposite direction. Because the matter that draws together to give the creature shape is comprised of that most commonly available in the area, the beasts of faerie are elementally aspected.

The dreams of these beasts focus mainly on their role, and so, their shapes are the peerless incarnations of those roles. Manticores, unicorns, gryphons, rocs, white hounds and countless other fantastic beasts have their origins in faerie.

Like all fey creatures, faerie animals take aggravated damage from iron weapons. Most fey creatures have only their innate magic, and few can work glamour.

Gryphon

Description: These flying predators are favored riding beasts of Fair Folk warriors. They're also used as guards and warders, as they're trainable and quite intelligent. The legend of the gryphon's attraction to horseflesh is only partly true. They are, in fact, incredibly ravenous carnivores that will eat anything — man, horse or otherwise — that crosses their path. While training can overcome their constant hunger, gryphons will feed on flesh if given any opportunity.

Gryphons are swooping flyers, soaring rather than fluttering from place to place. They gain altitude and airspeed only slowly, but once under way, they can fly almost twice as fast as a galloping horse runs and are considerably faster in a dive. On land, gryphons move with the slinking gait of cats, capable of dashing charges but without the ability to run for long periods. Fair Folk cataphractoi who ride gryphons use their lances only when their mount has alighted — the impact of a swooping attack is too much for even the bodies and gear of the Fair Folk to absorb.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 6, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 4, Stealth 1 (Flying +3), Survival 4

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 10 Damage 11L Defense 8

Claw: Speed 9 Accuracy 9 Damage 9L Defense 9

Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 5L/8B (Hide, 3L/3B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Other Notes: If struck by iron, the gryphon has no soak. Fair Folk riding gryphons usually fit them with a gossamer caparison (6L/6B), raising their soak to 11L/14B. A gryphon has a control rating of 4.

Spirits

Spirits are the least among the gods. Where the Celestines are the deities of the sky and of time and of living and dying, the little gods are the deities of individual places and things. They are less powerful than their mighty brothers and sisters, weak enough that one of the Exalted — or even a strong and clever mortal — can best them. Yet, they are deities nevertheless and not to be trifled with. They manipulate Essence more easily than one of the Exalted, and they are also beloved by their greater brothers and sisters. Those who do harm or offense to the little gods risks the implacable wrath of their celestial relatives.

The little gods are divided into two types, elementals and spirits. Elementals are primal creatures, aligned with one of the five elements (wood, water, fire, earth and air) and owing fealty to their Elemental Dragon. As a rule, elementals are creatures of simple needs and wants, willing to serve sorcerers and not generally inclined toward the sort of entanglements in mortal affairs that their more complex relatives often develop.

Spirits are more sophisticated beings and spring from complex origins, typically embodying the spirit of a place or of a concept in a particular region — there are many gods of crops and of disease, for example. In some places, particularly in the Realm, there are the remnants of an ancient celestial order. In these places, the spirits are formed into hierarchies and courts, and some govern others. However, in many places, the neglect of the celestial gods has caused the natural order to deteriorate. In such chaotic regions, spirits war among themselves and walk incarnate among men, demanding sacrifice and worship.

But not all spirits who involve themselves in human affairs are simply little gods who have forgotten their place and duties. In a twisted world, sideways from our own, imprisoned forever behind wards and oaths imposed on them by the gods and the Exalted in the time before history, reign the Yozis, the demon princes. From their city of black stone and brass, beneath a sickly green sun, they forever plot their revenge on the world that jailed them.

Their followers and minions are known by many names among men — wendigo, nightmare, bane — but regardless of what men name them, all men know of demons. Slipping

into Creation where the gods are lax in their vigilance or at the behest of an Exalted sorcerer, these creatures wish only ill to the world. Some are minor evils, whose touch is stillbirth and disease, while others are massive, twisted blasphemies, capable of destroying entire cities in their rage. Luckily, such creatures have not been seen since before the Great Contagion, and the very world is hostile to these beings. Even with the aid of the most powerful magicians, they can exist here only for the briefest of times.

The Spirit Courts

The Celestines and their servants live in great palaces in the farthest reaches of the sky, while the lesser gods live within the world. Some great spirits emulate the Celestines, dwelling in hidden places Elsewhere from our world, but the majority of the little gods pass their existences within the same world as man.

Once, in the dawn of the world, spirits were well governed, and there was a hierarchy of spirit courts that kept order among the small gods. In some places, particularly within the Realm, that natural order still reigns. Spirits who serve as censors and inspectors oversee the behavior of their lesser brothers and sisters, rewarding good behavior and punishing excess.

But in the Threshold and particularly in places where the Wyld holds sway, the natural order has broken down, and many of the little gods do as they will — altering the natural order to favor themselves, waging war on their fellow deities and even ruling over men as kings.

Lesser Spirits

Below the Celestines and their peers, the hierarchy of gods devolves almost endlessly, down to the tiniest of gods, who are the gods of single places or things. At every level of this celestial bureaucracy, there is a Byzantine political hierarchy, shot through with corruption and the outright abandonment of duty. Most individuals in the world of **Exalted**, particularly those who live in the Threshold, interact with spirits on a regular basis. This practice is never safe, for the little gods do not think the way men think, and that makes them easy to offend and difficult to bargain with.

A number of spirits are detailed below. Storytellers should use them as a guide for developing other spirits. More information on various spirits will be forthcoming in the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**.

Spirit Traits

Spirit beings, such as ghosts, spirits, elementals and demons, are naturally insubstantial and invisible, though they can be detected and harmed by the use of certain Charms. All but the weakest spirits can spend a point of Essence to manifest in our world as an apparition or ghostly image, and many can manifest physically through the use of the Materialize Charm. In this state, a spirit can interact with the material world without the expenditure of Essence. The world of **Exalted** is a primal one, and spirits typically appear the same to different viewers. Most little gods have but a single form or, at most, a small repertoire.

While immaterial, spirits have the same Attributes as they do when manifested, but they are only vulnerable to attack by other spirits and to certain Charms. Manifested spirits are quite vulnerable and are left almost helpless if their physical form is slain. They may be bound into service or objects or torn apart by rival spirits — regardless, it is an unpleasant experience, and most embodied spirits are protective of their lives.

• **Willpower & Health Levels:** Willpower is the mortar that binds a spirit's Essence together. Typically, a spirit's health levels, whether materialized or ethereal, equal it's Willpower + Conviction. Should the spirit lose all its health levels or Willpower, it disperses into motes of Essence, a state from which many spirits never return and takes others weeks, months or even years to recover from. A spirit that loses all its health levels to Ghost-Eating Technique is forever destroyed, and as a result, spirits are hateful toward and afraid of those Exalted who possess that Charm.

• **Essence & Essence Pools:** Essence is the lifeblood of spirits. It not only makes up their very being, but it also fuels their Charms, allowing the spirit to affect the physical and spiritual worlds. Spirits possess Essence ratings. Most small gods possess Essence ratings of 1 or 2, but mighty beings such as lesser elemental dragons may have Essence ratings as high as 5 or 6. The Celestines and their minions, the Deathlords, powerful demons and other such beings may have Essence ratings as high as 8 or 9.

Spirits derive their Essence pools through the following formula: (Essence x 10) + (Willpower x 3) + (Sum of Virtues x 2).

Charms

Many spirits wield abilities and weapons that are extensions of themselves or personifications of their outlooks. As such, they are capable of great and varied effects that can only be touched upon briefly. Unlike the Charms of the Exalted, which are based on the Chosen's Abilities, a spirit's power stems from its Virtues. Eclipse Caste Exalted who learn the Charms of Spirits use their Virtues to activate the magic, just as if they were spirits.

For space reasons, the Charms presented are stereotypical of many different sorts of Charms. In reality, the Charms of spirits are as varied and diverse as those of the Exalted. Storytellers should personalize the Charms to the spirit in question: The Charms of a spirit typically display the spirit's nature. For Example, Cunning Thief robs the victim of Essence. If used by a ghost, the attack might be a chilling touch that leaves the victim feeling cold, while a nature spirit might entwine the victim in delicate creepers and drain her life energy. If an Exalted uses a Charm he learned from a spirit, the manifestation will be that displayed by the spirit, not an effect natural to the Exalted — after all, these Charms are only abstractions.

The format these Charms are presented in is similar to the one used to present the Charms of the Exalted. The only differences are that, rather than having a minimum Ability, they have a minimum Virtue and there are no prerequisites for spirit Charms. Spirits with a Virtue below the minimum Virtue cannot possess that Charm, nor can an Eclipse Exalted with an insufficient Virtue rating learn it. To aid Storytellers in making up additional Charms for their games, the Virtues as they relate to spirit Charms are described below.

Compassion

Compassion is a purely emotive Virtue that spirits use to extend their senses, administer succor or even heal others.

Sample Charms:

Measure the Wind

Cost: 1 mote
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Compassion: 1
Minimum Essence: 1

This power enables the spirit to sense nearby Essence, whether it exists in objects or within Exalted. Rolls the spirit's Perception + Compassion. One success is enough to sense Essence in the vaguest of measures. Three or more successes means the spirit not only senses Essence, but knows its source and potential powers (if possessed by Exalted, for example).

Stoic Endurance

Cost: 2 motes per die
Duration: Varies
Type: Simple
Minimum Compassion: 3
Minimum Essence: 2

For each success on the roll, the spirit may improve an individual's Stamina by one dot. More dice than the spirit's Charisma + Compassion may not be rolled, nor may the spirit increase the target's Stamina by more dots than the spirit's Essence. Only one use of this Charm may be active on an individual at any given time. This Charm fades at a rate of one dot per (the spirit's Willpower) turns.

Touch of Grace

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Compassion: 4
Minimum Essence: 2

The spirit may heal itself or others. Spends the 3 motes of Essence and make a Compassion roll. If the roll succeeds, the Charm heals one health level of bashing or lethal damage.

Conviction

Conviction allows the spirit to attack an opponent mentally. Spirits employing Conviction can elicit or alter emotions in others, create horrifying mental illusions and even inflict derangements. Conviction is also used in possession.

Sample Charms:

Harrow the Mind

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Conviction: 3
Minimum Essence: 2

Through the use of this Charm, the spirit can create mental illusions that only the target can see. To do it, roll the spirit's Manipulation + Conviction. The first success creates the illusion, while additional successes make the illusion more difficult to penetrate. The target's player must make an Intelligence + Temperance roll and must gain a number of successes at least equal to the number of successes the spirit rolled. If not, the target is unable to tell the illusion from reality. He may make additional Intelligence + Temperance rolls whenever the illusion departs wildly from what the target expects from reality, making believable illusions much more difficult to see through. Once the illusion has been penetrated, it is dispelled, and all further uses of the Charm on that being are at +1 difficulty for the next several days.

Possession

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Conviction: 4
Minimum Essence: 1

Roll the spirit's Manipulation + Conviction in an extended resisted action against the target's Willpower. When the spirit gains more successes than the victim has temporary Willpower, the spirit takes possession of the target for the rest of the scene. Successes accumulate for the duration of the scene. More powerful versions of this Charm exist, which allow spirits to "hollow out" a being's soul and possess him indefinitely.

Stoke the Flame

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Conviction: 2
Minimum Essence: 1

The spirit channels Essence into the victim to inflame her emotional state. One success merely aggravates whatever condition is already present, while three or more successes cause the target to completely lose herself in the emotion of the moment. You may roll no more dice that the spirit's Conviction. Used against one of the Exalted, this Charm causes the character's Limit to increase by one point per success.

Temperance

Temperance not only allows the spirit to dodge and reflect attacks, but to steal Essence from opponents.

Sample Charms:

Cunning Thief

Cost: 1 mote per 2 dice
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple
Minimum Temperance: 2
Minimum Essence: 1

The spirit must touch the target for this Charm to work (resolved by a normal Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts check). If the attempt to touch the target is successful, make a reflexive Wits + Temperance roll. For every success the spirit achieves, the target loses two motes of Essence. The spirit cannot steal more motes than twice its Essence.

Host of Spirits

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Temperance: 2
Minimum Essence: 2

Through the use of this Charm, the spirit forms multiple images of itself to deceive attackers. This ability works much like Harrow the Mind, above. However, there are more images and they are harder to distinguish from reality.

Make an Intelligence + Temperance roll for the spirit, opposed by the target's Perception + Awareness. If the target garners fewer successes than the spirit, he sees many false images of the small god, each virtually indistinguishable from the real being. Attacks by individuals so befuddled have only (their Essence) in 10 chance of actually striking the spirit. Make another Perception + Awareness for those observing the spirit every time the spirit attacks.

Valor

This Virtue allows the spirit to do harm to or affect the physical world. It is directed by intent and the will to hurt others. Most spirits use this power to grow claws, spines and ripping scales, though some can turn thought into weapons.

Sample Charms:

Essence Bite

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Valor: 3
Minimum Essence: 2

The spirit must touch its target for this Charm to work, requiring a successful Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts roll. If the touch attempt is successful, make a reflexive Valor + Essence roll for the spirit. For every success on the attack, the spirit does a point of lethal damage. The character's armor soak applies as normal to this damage, and extra successes on the attack roll add to damage as usual.

This Charm may rely on heat, cold, life-draining or any number of other mechanisms to do damage — almost all have secondary effects that the spirit can manipulate to its advantage. For example, a ghost that can start fires with its fiery touch can burn down a barn with this Charm.

Materialize

Cost: Varies
Duration: Indefinite
Type: Simple
Minimum Valor: 2
Minimum Essence: 2

Through the use of this Charm, the spirit can materialize in the physical world. The cost of this Charm is between 50 percent and 100 percent of the spirit's temporary Essence. The cost varies from spirit to spirit and is listed in the spirit's description or assigned by the Storyteller. Generally, as the power of the spirit grows, the spirit must expend proportionally greater amounts of Essence to materialize.

In most cases, a spirit that plans to meddle in mortal affairs will materialize in some safe area and then rest, regaining its Essence, before it goes about its business. *Spirits that have not materialized cannot affect the physical world, not with Charms, physical attacks or in any other fashion.*

Principle of Motion

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Until used
Type: Extra Action
Minimum Valor: 2
Minimum Essence: 2

When the spirit uses this Charm, it gains a pool of extra actions equal to its Valor. Actions in this pool can be expended for extra attacks on the spirit's initiative or reflexively, to parry or dodge an attack or to refresh the spirit's Dodge pool when using the full dodge maneuver. If the spirit does not use all the actions in its pool, they remain available for it in the following turn. Actions in the pool will persist for many months, and many spirits make sure they retain a full complement of actions in case they are ambushed. A spirit cannot use this Charm again until it has used up all the extra actions granted by the last use of the Charm. While the spirit has extra actions in its pool, the motes of Essence used to power this Charm are considered committed.

Words of Power

Cost: 3 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Valor: 2
Minimum Essence: 2

The spirit may intone blasphemies, keen out the lamentations of the dead or speak the victim's true name, but regardless, its words are like a battering ram. The spirit attacks using Charisma + Valor to hit the opponent and does bashing damage equal to the spirit's Strength, which can be soaked only by the target's Stamina. Extra successes on the attack add to damage, as usual. For every health level of damage the target takes, he is at a -1 penalty to all dice pools for a number of turns equal to the attacking spirit's Essence.

This attack may be dodged or blocked as normal but has no physical effects except perhaps causing blood to flow from the target's ears or hurling him bodily through light obstructions.

Sample Spirits

Below are several examples of the little gods. For more spirits, see the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**.

Fakharu, Lesser Elemental Dragon of Water

Description: As one of the lesser elemental dragons, Fakharu is a powerful functionary in the spirit courts of the West. Fakharu was originally a censor, one of several powerful spirits charged with investigating improper behavior by the lesser courts of his region. With the decay of the celestial order, Fakharu has grown indolent on bribes and tributes offered up by spirits who wish to perpetrate improprieties. Though still fierce, he has little interest in living up to the responsibilities of his post in the Celestial Bureaucracy.

Rather that spending his time investigating misdeeds, Fakharu spends it in scholarly repose. Dwelling with his mortal lover in a golden palace on a remote spire far out in the Western Ocean, Fakharu spends his time painting, sculpting and writing histories of local kingdoms.

Fakharu does not condescend to notice mortals. However, the Exalted can command his respect. He has occasional commerce with various Sidereal and Lunar Exalted, treating them as honorable guests from a different department — one suffering some serious internal problems best not spoken of. He would treat visiting Solars equally well. His great power, vast influence among spirit beings and tremendous erudition would make him a powerful ally or valuable mentor for a Circle.

Fakharu is a huge, sleek, serpentine beast covered in golden-green scales. He is no lumbering behemoth — his motions are as smooth as glass, and his claws as delicate as a surgeon's touch. He rarely uses it, but his breath is an immensely potent venom, capable of slaying both men and spirits. Though he sometimes assumes the form of a human, Fakharu generally disdains such appearances, choosing instead to wear his natural shape. He typically receives visitors in the evening, on the vast golden balcony of his palatial Manse, where he and his lover eat their meals and watch the sunset when the weather is fair.

The Dragon Shape

Many powerful elemental spirits take the shape of dragons — as the spirit becomes more and more powerful, it becomes impossible for any shape but that of the dragon to embody the creature's elemental majesty. While the difference between spirits and elementals is very stark at lower ranks, as spirits and elementals grow more powerful they become more similar. Powerful elementals are often very influential creatures, holding important stations in the Celestial Bureaucracy. For example, Fakharu, depicted in the spirits section of this chapter, is a celestial censor, overseeing other spirits and watching out for misdoing. These creatures have complex personalities, quirks and frailties, and while their characters are colored by their element, they are not necessarily slaves to their elemental natures.

But not all elemental dragons are like this. Some are ravening coils of elemental fury and passion, eager only to rip and thrash. Their voice is thunder and their tread disaster. They are kept locked away from the world, for they would ruin Creation if they were allowed to dwell within it. Some of these creatures are used to guard holy places and objects, so that they will not be stolen or disturbed. Others are chained away Elsewhere and loosed by the gods to bring down natural disasters and punish those who have offended the heavens.

Nature: Autocrat
Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 5, Stamina 12, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 6, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 4
Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Craft (Sculpture) 4 (Working With Claws +3), Dodge 4, Endurance 4, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Flametongue, Guild Cant, High Realm, Riverspeak, Seatongue) 5 (Old Realm +3), Martial Arts 4 (In Dragon Form +2), Occult 6, Perform 4, Presence 4 (While Exercise His Office +2), Resistance 4 (Venom +3), Socialize 6, Stealth 2
Backgrounds: Allies 5, Backing 5, Followers 5, Influence 5, Manse 5, Resources 5
Charms: All listed Charms.
Cost To Materialize: 75
Base Initiative: 9
Attack:
Claw: Speed 9 Accuracy 11 Damage 11L Defense 11*
Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 10 Damage 13L Defense 10*
Venom: Speed 18 Accuracy 8 Damage 24L **

* Fakharu may make two claw attacks and a bite attack every turn without splitting his dice pool.
** Fakharu's venom may not be blocked, only dodged. Fakharu can only breathe venom once per 10 turns and is loathe to do so in his Manse because of the possible damage to the furnishings.
Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 14L/28B (Dragon hide, 8L/16B)
Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 112
Other Notes: Fakharu has a large number of spirit servants and followers who will fight to defend him and his Manse. Although mortal in the loosest sense of the term, Fakharu's lover is attuned to the Manse as well and wears a Gem of Incomparable Wellness in a circlet Fakharu had forged for her. This circlet allows her to gain the Hearthstone's benefits, despite her unExalted state. For details of the gem, see Hearthstones on page 335 of Chapter Nine: Wonders and Equipment. In dragon form, Fakharu is quite large, and those attacking him add 3 dice to their pools.



Erymanthus, the Blood-Ape, Demon of the First Circle

Description: These creatures are among the weakest of banes. Ready servants of sorcerers, the Erymanthoi throng the streets of Malfeas and commonly serve as soldiers of the Yozis. Though not intelligent, they are evil and cunning and are accustomed to servitude. An Erymanthus typically enjoys the chance to wreak evil in the world of men without resenting its enslavement overmuch, for it is their lot in the demon world as well.

Erymanthoi appear as gnarled apes, with long, black claws. Their eyes glow, and their teeth are crooked yellow fangs. Their fur is matted, and they move with an awkward gait that belies their incredible speed and strength. Erymanthoi are favorite servants of the sorcerer who needs a guardian, warrior or physical laborer. The Erymanthoi earn their nickname from their favorite food and become resentful if not allowed to consume the blood of their kills.

Erymanthoi have a strong tendency to physical existence. They will dematerialize if ordered to do so by their masters, but even when insubstantial, they still verge on the physical. Occasionally, their smell will waft through the air or their shuffling gait will be heard clearly or onlookers will catch glimpses of the Blood-Ape out of the corners of their eyes. Left to their own devices, Erymanthoi will never dematerialize and, if ordered to dematerialize, will rematerialize at the first possible opportunity.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

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

Abilities: Athletics 4 (Brachiation +2), Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Presence 2 (Physical Intimidation +2), Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Charms: Materialize, Measure the Wind, Principle of Motion, Words of Power

Cost To Materialize: 21

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Claw: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 7L Defense 7

Bite: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage 8L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 5L/8B (Tough hide, 3L/3B)

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

Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 49

Other Notes: None

Elementals

Everywhere within the known world dwell elementals, spirits embodying the most basic building blocks of Creation. The Immaculates claim that the Five Great Elemental Dragons, the sires of the elements, crafted mortals using their gifts. The Elemental Dragons fashioned the mortals' bodies from earth, their blood from water, their breath from air and their spirit from fire. Wood, the last gift, gave mortals their implements of survival and their affinity with nature. When the Incarna created the Exalted from humanity, it was the Five Elemental Dragons who taught the Dragon-Blooded their power.

Once, elementals existed side by side with humanity, but with the breakdown of the celestial order, they have become less common. Today, they rarely appear in thickly populated territories. However, some serve as wardens to the temples of the Immaculates and as concubines and companions of the Dragon-Blooded priests of that order. However, with the exception of these "tame" elementals, such creatures are rarely seen in the Realm.

Elementals appear as men and beasts whose forms always betray their birth material in some manner, though it may be something as minor as green hair or leaving wet footprints. The more powerful elementals tend to have draconian form. Many powerful elementals can almost totally suppress their elemental sign, allowing them to shapechange and walk among men undetected.

Elementals possess the following universal properties:

- Elementals use the same Charms and rules as spirits, but their natural state is the physical — they must use a Charm to become immaterial. This Charm, Dematerialize, is functionally identical to Materialize. As with spirits, most elementals powerful enough to use this Charm know it.
- Elementals can control expressions of their element, intensifying or diminishing the strength of these phenomena. An elemental may spend 1 mote to double or halve an elemental effect but cannot spend more motes on a specific phenomenon than the elemental's Essence score. If used to cause direct damage, this effect cannot do more than 1 point of lethal damage per point of Essence spent, and the target's soak applies normally.
- In addition to spirit Charms, elementals also frequently manifest innate powers that they can use without the expenditure of Essence. See the "Common Elemental Powers" sidebar for details.

Elemental Characteristics

Creatures strongly aligned to the elements tend to have personalities that reflect that attunement. This effect is most pronounced in elementals but is present in the Dragon-Blooded, Fair Folk and spirits as well. Below is a list of personality traits commonly associated with the various elements. Storytellers may wish to pick or randomly roll traits from these lists when detailing creatures of that element.

- **Air:** Cold, elevated, ethereal, free, intelligent, light, meandering, mysterious, ordered, pervasive, subtle, thoughtful and unhindered.
- **Earth:** Enduring, ignorant, malleable, moral, overbearing, passive, patient, physical, practical, quiet, strong, stubborn and survivor.
- **Fire:** Angry, brilliant, changing, demanding, dynamic, exacting, forceful, heated, hurtful, impetuous, indulgent, nurturing, purifying, quick, vengeful and willful.
- **Water:** Accommodating, cleansing, deep, dreaming, emotional, healing, intuitive, obscured, passive, philosophical, reflective, resurgent, sensual and sexual.
- **Wood:** Ancient, enigmatic, fertile, hidden, humbling, labyrinthine, lively, mischievous, overshadowing, protective, sinister, uncontrolled, unyielding, wild and wise.

Common Elemental Powers

- **Aegis:** The element coalesces into a thin sheath that protects the elemental with (3L/3B) armor.
- **Coarse Skin:** Whether searing or blistering-cold skin, fur sharp with thorns or pebbles or even abrasive scales, the elemental damages anyone that touches it, inflicting two dice of lethal damage.
- **Dragon's Suspire:** Elemental breath, such as a thunderclap, plume of flame, stream of rocks or splinters or blast of ice water. This attack is a Dexterity + Athletics or Archery roll, whichever the attacker prefers. The effect is 10 feet in length and 5 feet wide. It can be blocked or dodged. It inflicts 4L, plus extra successes.
- **Element's Domain:** The elemental briefly assumes the form of its element. For fire and air, it becomes intangible and can neither be hit nor fall to physical harm. For water, it takes only half damage from attacks but can only inflict half its normal damage. Earth and wood endow the elemental with (6L/6B) armor, but its movement and initiative are halved as well.
- **Enshroud:** The elemental causes fog, mist, smoke or dust to settle over an area, blinding everyone except itself. Make Awareness rolls for all creatures at +1 difficulty for them to see.
- **Mobility:** Based on the elemental's element, it can move more quickly or possesses a new mode of transport. Air imbues flight, earth offers tunneling, water increases swimming speed, while both fire and wood double ground speed.
- **Rejuvenation:** The elemental regenerates one health level per turn when in contact with its relevant element. This ability cannot regenerate aggravated damage.

• Elementals can heal and regain Essence when in contact with their natural element at a rate of one health level or mote of Essence per turn. This regeneration requires their utmost attention, however. They cannot engage in combat or discourse.

• Elementals can breed with mortals, Exalted and animals in order to produce offspring. These half-breeds vary widely in appearance and temperament. Some are monsters, others exceptional mortals. The strongest aspect of either parent dominates the progeny, but all the offspring of elementals display some power over their heritage element and exhibit its characteristic temperaments. Even those who have only traces of elemental blood will echo their supernatural ancestor in their skin, hair and eye colors.

Nymph

Description: Nymphs are water elementals who have little contact with men because few mortals can journey into the ocean depths where these creatures live. Sailors and lake fisherman, however, often tell of nymphs. They describe them as beautiful spirits with minimal inhibitions, who occasionally show themselves to mortals who spend a great deal of time on the water. Their libidinous natures and legendary sexual prowess have led many nobles to pay a fortune in land titles, precious metals and artifacts to put just one nymph concubine in their harems.

Nymphs are not the submissive playthings many mortals believe them to be. They, like all elementals, are immortal creatures whose outlook on the world is far different than that of short-lived man's. Mercurial creatures, nymphs can and do drag mortals beneath the water's surface to slay them for the sensual pleasure of the kill — but few fishermen tell tales of how they were playfully murdered by the lovers of the deep.

Unlike djinn, nymphs don't burn with rage at man's tendency to enslave their kind. What is a lifetime to an endless creature? Spending a few decades as some mortals pampered plaything is certainly not the most unpleasant interlude that might strike such a creature. Those who bore or anger nymphs, they murder and then escape. The rest they allow to amuse them until their short, short lives end, and then, the nymphs make their way back home to the sea or lake that gave them birth.

In appearance, nymphs are slender, feminine creatures with human forms, webbed fingers and dazzling, long hair that billows to accentuate their slightest movement. Their eyes are like white pearls, and their skins are unblemished save for light streaks of blue, white and green skin. In water, they are translucent and nearly invisible.

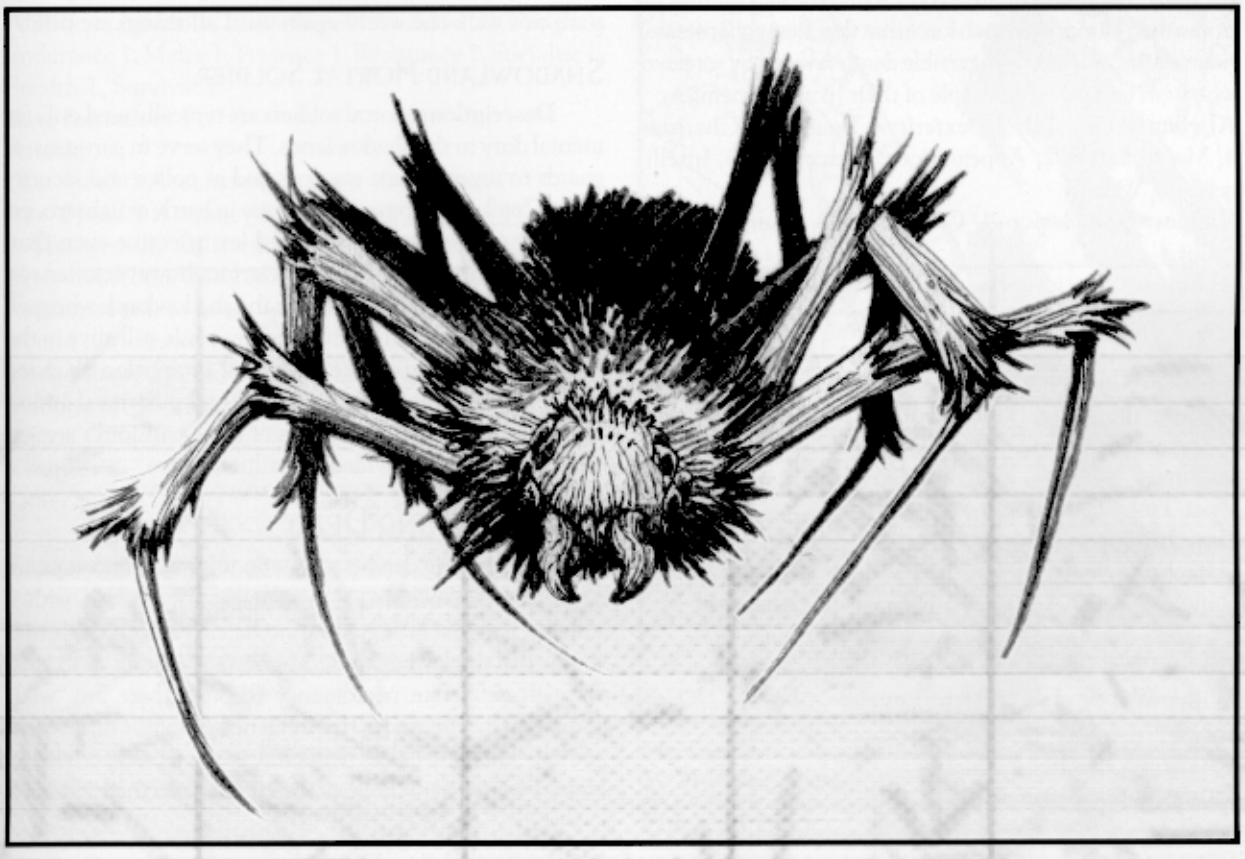
Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4
Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 3 (Under Water +2), Dodge 3, Endurance 4, Lore 3, Performance 3, Presence 5 (Seductive +2), Resistance 5, Stealth 3
Charms: Dematerialize, Harrow the Mind, Measure the Wind
Elemental Powers: Element's Domain, Mobility, Rejuvenation
Cost To Dematerialize: 30
Base Initiative: 8
Attack:
Punch: Speed 8 Accuracy 7 Damage 3B Defense 7
Kick: Speed 5 Accuracy 6 Damage 5B Defense 6
Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 1L/3B (Skin)
Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 60
Other Notes: None

Wood Spider

Description: Most wood elementals remain close to the Grandfather Trees, sentient oak and birch giants that live in the deepest groves and tend the wood elementals as a human might tend his pets. However, some species, such as wood spiders, live independently and often range dangerously close to human settlements.

Crafty, scheming and hanging from strings of braided wood, the average wood spider is a head-sized creature whose body is made of interlaced and woven branches and whose eight legs are twigs still green with leaves and broken offshoots. Larger spiders can reach the size of horses, but these are thankfully rare. The wood spider is a cunning species filled with riddles and puzzles. Though they may appear friendly enough with their questions and their civil suggestions, wood spiders are malicious tricksters. Most enjoy nothing more than hurting and misleading those mortals who foolishly heed the spiders' advice. Hidden in their riddles and parables are powers to confuse and beguile listeners. Most are willing to tell a good deal of truth to make the lie go down smoothly, and so, even those who know of the wood spider's wicked nature are often tempted to listen to their advice, convinced that they're wise enough to sort the truths from the falsehoods. Many is the village that has starved from relying on a wood spider's advice for planting and harvesting.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 6, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5
Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 3
Abilities: Athletics 4 (Climbing +2), Awareness 3, Dodge 5, Endurance 2, Linguistics 3, Lore 4, Martial Arts 3, Presence 2 (Convincing +2), Resistance 4, Socialize 3 (Bad Advice +1), Stealth 4, Survival 3
Charms: Cunning Thief, Dematerialize, Essence Bite, Harrow the Mind, Measure the Wind, Stoke the Flame, Words of Power
Elemental Powers: Enshroud, Rejuvenation
Cost To Dematerialize: 20
Base Initiative: 11
Attack:
Claw: Speed 11 Accuracy 9 Damage 7B Defense 9
Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 3L* Defense 8
*The wood spider's bite is venomous. If it causes a health level of damage, the spider injects a plant toxin into the victim. The target's player must make a Stamina + Resistance roll, difficulty 3, or the target suffers three additional health dice of lethal damage. This damage is automatic and cannot be soaked, though it can be prevented with Charms that render the target immune to poison. Targets whose players succeed in the Resistance roll still take a level of automatic damage.
Dodge Pool: 11 **Soak:** 5L/7B (Woody skin, 3L/3B)



Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 68
Other Notes: None

Zephyr

Description: A zephyr speaks in song, moving and never faltering. Its pleasure is a cool, refreshing breeze, its anger a searing desert blast, it's sadness the stillborn calm that settles over tombs. The zephyr, by its nature, is an elusive and whimsical spirit. Zephyr skins are the color of smoke rising pin-straight in the sunset or of a stream of cold breath on a winter morning. Even in their materialized forms, zephyrs are large insubstantial, and they can become spiritualized almost without effort.

Little is known of zephyrs. They appear in winds, laughing and giggling lightly, tugging on clothing and hair as a tease. Dynasty scholars refer to them as the children of the elementals, for their manner is far from refined. Yet, zephyrs are among the oldest of the elementals, having been created when the Five Elemental Dragons first issued their infant cries. To zephyrs, everyone but the Dragons are children, delightful little playthings to lead along and bat at. Though difficult to bind, zephyrs make excellent scouts and messengers.

Zephyrs also make excellent assassins and are extremely dangerous if they are agitated or if they escape from binding rituals. Their ability to call down lightning is rightly feared, and they can ruin crops with little effort by calling hailstorms and strong winds. Constantly in contact with their native element, zephyrs are never lacking for Essence or health. The strongest among them are even capable of sucking the air from a man's lungs with such force that the chest collapses and he strangles in agony — a terrible death favored by sorcerers who wish to make an example of their rivals or enemies.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 4
Abilities: Athletics 4 (Aerobatics +3), Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 5, Linguistics 1, Lore 1, Martial Arts 1, Presence 1 (Beautiful +3), Resistance 3, Stealth 4
Charms: Cunning Thief, Dematerialize, Essence Bite, Measure the Wind, Principle of Motion, Words of Power
Elemental Powers: Dragon's Suspire, Element's Domain, Enshroud, Mobility, Rejuvenation
Cost To Dematerialize: 50
Base Initiative: 7
Attack:
Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 1L Defense 5
Dragon's Suspire: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 4L
Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 5L/7B (Air barrier, 4L/4B)
Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 5 **Essence Pool:** 106
Other Notes: None

The Dead

The theologians and demonologists of the Immaculates claim that the first shadowlands were the work of the Anathema, who stained the soil with their poisoned blood and begat hell-lands. This tale is not true, but the shadowlands are still chilling, for they are places where the land of the living and land of the dead overlap. They are windswept plains of greasy, dark green grass or vast forests of twisted, unhealthily luxuriant rhododendrons or a hundred other death-touched landscapes. Here, the sky is never blue, and storm clouds and fields of mist turn the day to perpetual twilight. At night, the sky is often clear, revealing an ebony firmament set with diamonds and a huge, waxy yellow moon. Those who cross the borders of these lands in the daylight return to the land of the living, while those who leave them at night only travel farther into the kingdom of the dead.

These deadlands are not inhabited solely by the dead; there are humans within these antechambers of the Underworld, gathered in cities or communities around the citadel of a Deathlord or one of its deathknight servants. Most such places engage in ancestor worship, venerating the ghosts and walking dead who surround them as the culmination of existence and the highest possible aspiration. Such cults are typically messianic in character, preaching the virtues of a universal death. The Deathlords encourage this belief, both for the air of authority it lends them and for darker reasons as well; the Deathlords are themselves servants of other powers, and those powers shall not walk the world again until all things are dead.

Shadowland Mortal Soldier

Description: Mortal soldiers are typically used only for menial duty in the shadowlands. They serve in garrisons, as guards to unimportant convoys and as police and security units. Crack units sometimes see use in battle as light troops, but they are generally considered less effective even than units of walking dead. Valorous warriors, however, often rise quickly after death, and many in the shadowlands who seek a military career join the armed forces while still alive in the hopes of attracting notice and a fast promotion by dying well. Armed with polearms, shields and piecemeal armor, these foot soldiers are the dregs of the Deathlord's armies. Use the statistics provided for militia, above.

The Walking Dead

The walking dead is a generic term that encompasses zombies and skeletons — essentially any undead with a tangible body but little guiding intelligence. Most people who die in the shadowlands rise as ghosts. Walking dead exist through deliberate necromancy (though there are "wild" zombies who rise under the influence of minor malevolent spirits). The Deathlords frequently storm a castle or village, then reanimate and impress the corpses into their armies.

The walking dead constitute the vanguard of the Underworld's armies and are its most dreaded weapon. Under the capable command of risen lieutenants and Abyssal Exalted, these dangerous creatures can overwhelm opponents with wave upon wave of attackers, with no regard to pain or self-preservation. With the supernatural strength and stamina of the dead, they can be catapulted over barricades or onto ramparts to breach a castle's defenses from within or used to form living siege ramps and scaling ladders.



Common Zombie

Description: Necromancy animates the dead, but it does not particularly preserve them. Zombies are in perpetual decay, with eyes swinging from their sockets, scraps of hanging skin and small lengths of bone exposed in graying wounds. Their stench alone is horrific, as is the potential for disease from contact with their rotting flesh. Most zombies don't carry weapons or wear armor — they're too stupid to dress themselves and tend to tear off cumbersome burdens. In their mad stumbling gait to reach and grab their victims, they would drop whatever implements of war they carried. Typically, once one scores a kill, it simply squats there feeding unless provoked or driven onward by its leaders.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Not applicable. Never fails Valor rolls, never succeeds at any other rolls.

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Endurance 1, Melee 1, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Fist: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 4*

Bite: Speed 3 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L Defense 3*

* The wounds inflicted by zombies are extraordinarily likely to become infected. The difficulty of the Stamina + Resistance roll to resist infection from a zombie-inflicted wound is increased by 2.

Dodge Pool: 2 **Soak:** 1L/3B (Skin)

Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Players whose characters are fighting zombies in hand-to-hand combat must succeed at a Stamina + Resistance roll at difficulty 2 each turn or their characters suffer a -2 penalty on all their dice pools for the turn due to nausea. The stench loses its impact after several encounters, though mortals may not last that long.

Spine Chain

Description: These disgusting implements of war are the remnants of several dozen corpses cleaved at the midriff and

sewn into a long chain of chests. Like obscene centipedes, the creatures scamper along using multiple arms and one lead head (with every other corpse's head rooted in the empty chest cavity of the next link). When the first link is damaged or the spine chain is severed, the closest link pulls the stitching loose from the damaged portion, discards it and assumes control. It is not unheard of for two or more smaller chains to join together when more than one link suffers damage.

Some spine chains are used as scaling ladders. With their claw-like fingertips, they scale up walls and act as gangways for assault troops. Others have harnesses covered with sharp blades attached to them and are used as formation-beakers. Few troops can stand up to a handful of these 1,000-pound horrors covered in razor-edged hooks plowing into their formation at top speed.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Not applicable. Never fails Valor rolls, never succeeds at any other rolls.

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Endurance 1, Melee 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Harness Sideswipe: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 7L* Defense 5

*As with zombies, wounds caused by spine chains are likely to become infected. Add 2 to the difficulty of the Stamina + Resistance roll to resist infection.

Dodge Pool: 4 **Soak:** 1L/2B (Skin)

Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** One each of -0, -1 and -2 health levels per link.

Essence: 1

Other Notes: The process of breaking apart and joining with other spine chains takes too much time to occur in combat.

Ghosts

Ghosts are the shadows of the restless mortal dead. They constitute the Underworld's chief population and the backbone of its commerce. Unlike spirits or elementals, ghosts are forever drawn to the Underworld and are naturally tangible there. While they can exist comfortably in the shadowlands, it requires powerful magic for them to remain in the lands of the living. Ghosts need a special Compassion Charm to see into the land of the living at all, and when a ghost uses the standard Materialize Charm, the duration is only a single scene.

Because of this fact, those ghosts who are able to walk freely among the living are some of the Deathlords' most sought-after minions. The Deathlords employ them as scouts to map out enemy strengths and weaknesses and as war lieutenants to lead specialized cadres of zombies.

Ghosts appear much as they did in life, save that they are coldly beautiful and often carry the wounds of their deaths upon them. Those who are on the verge of giving up on existence and becoming the will-less creatures known as drones appear waxy and pallid, while those who are strong-willed and vibrant appear almost lively, with strong gazes and a palpable aura of certainty.

Hungry Ghost

Description: Hungry ghosts are usually created when a murder goes unpunished or a spirit is not sent to the Underworld by the ceremonial disposal of the body. Evil occultists sometimes create hungry ghosts deliberately by torturing victims to death in lonely places because any mortal with Occult 3+ can bind a hungry ghost to service if he has access to the creature's corpse.

Hungry ghosts are composed only of the being's lower, or animal, soul and are not particularly intelligent. They are more like predators, filled with an endless rage and a hunger for the warmth of the living. They are naturally material, rising from their corpses at nightfall and dematerializing at sunrise (at no Essence cost) to sleep in their bodies. A hungry ghost must be at its body at sunrise, for the rays of the sun will blast it to ash. Hungry dead are very canny about how far they can go from their corpses and still return before sunrise. The hungry dead cannot cross an unbroken line of salt or germinated grain.



Like the walking dead, hungry ghosts are common in the legions of the Underworld. Many battlefields yield a ripe harvest, as the bodies rise as walking dead and their angry spirits as hungry ghosts.
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3
Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Survival 3
Powers: Cunning Thief, Measure the Wind
Base Initiative: 6
Attack:
Claw: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 1L Defense 5
Bite: Speed 0 Accuracy 5 Damage 3L Defense 4
Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 1L/2B (Corpus)
Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1 **Essence Pool:** 39
Other Notes: Often an extra.

War Ghost

Description: Unlike most mundane afterlife spirits, war ghosts can assume more solid forms in the land of the living, with barely distinguishable death marks. They wear field soldier's armor forged from black iron mined from the great caverns beneath the Underworld and decorated with baroque designs and images of suffering. Their shields and arms are similarly adorned with garish expressions of suffering. For less violent ghosts, use the statistics for a Typical Citizen, above, save that one of their Virtues is 3 and they have an Essence Pool of 41.
Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Endurance 2, Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Axe +1), Presence 1, Resistance 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1
Powers: Materialize, Measure the Wind
Cost to Materialize: 40
Base Initiative: 4
Attack:
Fist: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4
Kick: Speed 1 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3
Knife: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2
Axe: Speed 4 Accuracy Damage 8L Defense 5
Pole Axe: Speed 1 Accuracy 4 Damage 11L Defense 5
Dodge Pool: 4/1 **Soak:** 7L/10B (Chain hauberk and target shield, 6L/7B, -3 mobility penalty, +1 difficulty to attack)
Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1 **Essence Pool:** 58
Other Notes: Usually an extra.

Nemessaries

By will and magical machination, some ghosts can possess and animate corpses and use them to walk among the living. Deathlords prize these individuals, conscripting them into their armies and offering them positions of authority over walking dead legions or war ghost cadres. Without original bodies to call their own, these puppeteers can nonetheless animate a variety of corpses and ride them for several days at a stretch. Deathlords use these risen as spies and saboteurs behind enemy lines. Nemissaries often possess birds, using them as aerial scouts or swooping into seemingly secure areas before inhabiting corpses to accomplish their tasks.

Nemissary

Description: Able to reanimate bodies other than their own, nemissaries are the most common sort of risen. Although decayed and still decomposing, their stolen mortal shells move with purpose and intelligence. Nemissaries are distinguishable from zombies not only by their attitude, but by their attire as well. Those practiced in war wear black iron armor and wield wicked-looking spears. Revenants who serve the Deathlords and Abyssal Exalted as squires and attendants wear loosely layered gray robes with silver bracers and crowns. Those with widespread decomposition typically wear silver masks with emotionless features. Nemissaries fight with little concern for their bodies — though their hosts can be slain, they themselves will continue.
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4
Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Endurance 3 (Marches +1), Medicine 2, Melee 3, Presence 2, Resistance 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1
Powers: Cunning Thief, Measure the Wind, Possession
Base Initiative: 6
Attack:
Fist: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 6L Defense 7
Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 6 Damage 8L Defense 6
Knife: Speed 10 Accuracy 7 Damage 5L Defense 6
Pole Axe: Speed 3 Accuracy 5 Damage 12L Defense 6
Dodge Pool: 5/4 **Soak:** 6L/12B (Breastplate, 4L/2B, -1 mobility penalty)
Willpower: 7, **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 63
Other Notes: Usually an extra. The attacks of a nemissary are infectious, like those of zombies, adding +2 to the difficulty of the Stamina + Resistance roll to resist infection.

The Deathlords

The Deathlords are the undisputed rulers of the Underworld. The afterlife is their engine of war, the dead their coffer of riches. Yet, the Deathlords pursue agendas be-



yond simple strife and mayhem. The Abyssals, for their vaunted prowess and ability as death-dealing warriors and necromancers, often maintain families of mortal wives and children they treat with compassion and love.

The Deathlords themselves remain a mystery. It is known that there was a time before they ruled the Underworld, but little is known of the specifics. If there are any among the dead who remember well the time before the Deathlords ruled, those ghosts do not speak of it. Few can match the Deathlords in power, and though they may quibble and argue privately, they are a fraternity who side with one another against outsiders.

A Deathlord's body can suffer a hundred terrible fates and still return reincarnated and whole again from the dust and ashes of its demise. It is said that each is vulnerable to a single thing, which will strike it instantly dead. If this is true, none have recorded an instance of a Deathlord being slain in this fashion.

Deathlords vary wildly in appearance. The Silver Prince is clearly dead and dresses in robes made from a thousand razor-edged shards of soulsteel. The Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears dresses in armor of brilliant orichalcum and seems as alive as if she were human, save for the freezing aura that curls forever about her.

The Mask of Winters

Description: Like all Deathlords, the Mask of Winters lives his life in mystery. He wears robes of the darkest hue, hiding his body beneath fold upon fold of clothing. He wears a cowl and a mask of ice that floats smiling serenely within its hooded darkness. The Mask of Winters can pull the cowl over his face, however, revealing the back of his head where a second mask floats with frowned expression. With branch-breaking cracks, his joints reverse themselves, and suddenly, the Deathlord's back is now his front. It's impossible to know which is his true facing; even his thumbs and palms change direction.

With his past secret to all but his peers, the Mask of Winters has spent the last millennium fortifying his moving keep Juggernaut. The Deathlord is ready for the coming war against the living and has dedicated his entire kingdom to the invasion of the mortal realms. Already, the city of Thorns has fallen to his army, and his forces swell with new recruits, both living and dead. Admittedly, he is one of the youngest among the Deathlords and controls only a small portion of territory, but Juggernaut is a powerful weapon. The other Deathlords know that were it not for the war against humans, the Mask of Winters would certainly turn on his most immediate Deathlord neighbors. For now, however, the Deathlords ignore their brother's bloodthirst

and ambition — his zeal has already secured them a foothold in the Essence-rich eastern Threshold.

The Mask of Winters may be ambitious, but he isn't stupid. Forever scheming, the young Deathlord uses nemissaries to inhabit the giant maggots already festering deep inside the felled giant. He hopes to bring them under his control and breed them until Juggernaut is ready to burst. When the moment presents itself, he'll unleash these voracious vermin on the neighboring Deathlords' kingdoms and watch them eat through the opposing undead ranks like a plague. All plans rely on preparedness, however, and the Mask of Winters is far from ready; he must bide his time and grow his forces while readying for all-out war. The city of Thorns was certainly a fortuitous victory, since it brought a number of powerful Demesnes under his control and increased his power, but it's not enough. The Mask of Winters needs time that his brethren may not give him.

To delay the inevitable, the Deathlord has opened secret negotiations with several Threshold cities bordering the territories of his rivals. He supplies the mortals with pertinent information on shadowland aggressions into the Threshold. This intelligence causes delays and extra losses for his brothers and sisters in their own campaigns, but if they discover his betrayal, there will be no way for him to escape their wrath.

Nature: Survivor

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 6, Temperance 4, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 7, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 5 (Administration +2), Craft (Occult Architecture) 5, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Linguistics 5 (Native: Old Realm; Airtongue, Forest-Tongue, Guild Cant, High Realm, Riverspeak), Lore 10, Martial Arts 5, Melee 6 (Daiklaves +3), Occult 7 (Necromancy +1, Trapping Spirits +2), Perform 6 (Meditational Chanting +1), Resistance 4, Ride 3, Sail 4, Socialize 5 (Manipulation +2), Stealth 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Backing 5, Contact 5, Followers 5, Influence 5, Manse 5+, Resources 5

Charms: All Solar Charms the Storyteller cares to give him, along with whatever Combos the Storyteller feels appropriate.

Spells: The Mask of Winters can cast magic from all three circles of sorcery, and he knows a large number of spells, including all the Solar Circle spells listed in this book. He also knows a number of powerful rituals that draw on the power of his dark gods.

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Soulsteel Grand Daiklave (Frigid Razor): Speed 7 Accuracy 14 Damage 16L* Defense 12

*Frigid Razor drains 8 motes of Essence from the target on y attack that does at least one health level of damage.

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1 x 7/-2 x 12/-4/Incap



Dodge Pool: 8/8* **Soak:** 20L/23B (Soulsteel superheavy plate, 17L/17B, -2 mobility penalty)
*Mask of Winters typically activates Front-Line Warrior's Stamina when in armor.
Essence: 8
Personal Essence: 68 **Peripheral Essence:** 192
Other Notes: The Mask of Winters controls many Manses and carries a number of powerful Hearthstones.

Juggernaut

Description: Juggernaut is the giant, misshapen corpse of a behemoth, vaguely humanoid in form except for an extra set of smaller arms and a cratered face that was lost long ages ago — destroyed by whatever trauma killed the brute. The corpse is nearly a half-league in length and decomposes so slowly that, to mortal eyes, it seems imperishable. On its back rests a fortress built from black iron, basalt and the creature's own rib cage. Beneath that, carved into its flesh, is an anthill of passages and zombie tunnels extending into the deepest cavities, where islands of organs and viscera coagulate and disintegrate in lakes of pus and seepage. This interior wilderness has not yet been fully explored.

Wagon-sized maggots make their home deep inside the corpse, feeding in inaccessible chambers and occasionally ambushing the wayward zombie and even ghost. They're too numerous to eliminate and not intelligent enough to train. They're left carefully alone, by the Mask of Winters' orders.

Juggernaut is the mobile fortress of the Deathlord Mask of Winters, and a cadre of 30 of his most skillful nemissaries possess the corpse in order to animate it. Due to its size and the power required to move and coordinate the thing's vast bulk, the nemissaries can only make it crawl on its belly like a wounded soldier. Each pull, however, brings it a league further, faster than a horse can mark the distance. The thing's leering skull face houses catapults and, in an assault, is used as a staging point for the Deathlord's shock troops. The Mask of Winters uses Juggernaut as a siege engine and mobile fortress, moving it infrequently to defend some important march or to attack a major city.

Exalted

The most dangerous foe an Exalted can face is one of her own kind. Against mortals and beasts, an Exalted can count on sheer power to carry her through, and against spirits and Fair Folk, she can count on her versatility. But other Chosen are both powerful and versatile.

Those Exalted who are trained to fight others of their kind, including most Dragon-Blooded, typically possess an array of defensive Charms and Combos, so that they are never unguarded. Between them, combat is an elegant dance of strike and counterstrike, as each attempts to wear down the other's stores of Essence or catch him at an unguarded moment. Combat between Exalted who are not so trained is usually bloody and inelegant, a matter of who goes first and whose attack is the most brutally powerful.

Regardless of the combatants' levels of skill, however, when Exalted clash, the matter is always in doubt. An Exalted with even moderate skill in combat can slay a master opponent if he is careless or unlucky. Characters should know that, when facing one of their fellow Chosen, their very lives are on the line.

Terrestrial Exalted

To be numbered among the Exalted is an immensely exhilarating experience. For the Dragon-Blooded, the experience is in all ways accentuated. Trained from birth to rule, told by the Immaculates that they are elevated above mere mortals and halfway to divinity, blessed with the power of several men — what crimes can you be taken to task for that you cannot absolve as birthright?

Every Dragon-Blooded youth is educated in military matters from childhood, for it is their destiny to be the conquering rulers of the Realm. Though they may indulge in the most flagrant of excesses, at their cores, the Dragon-Blooded are some of the best-trained soldiers in the world, and the older ones have had human lifetimes to hone their skills as warriors and generals. Though they are not necessarily evil, they are raised from birth to exercise power, and it colors their perceptions of everything.

When not on the drilling ground, life for younger Dragon-Blooded is a gala of personal sensation. Raised within the twisted and politically incestuous environment of their ruling caste, most possesses a skewed sense of morality. In some families, it's acceptable for mother and son to share a bed or to gratify personal desires regardless of whether it's with a partner or victim. For many young Dragon-Blooded, so long as their habits don't distract the youths from their studies or cause trouble for the family, anything is acceptable.

Older Dragon-Blooded are a dangerous and cagey lot. They've survived a mortal lifetime or more in an environment of constant political and social maneuvering. They've honed the arts of betrayal and politicking to a razor edge, while keeping a handle on their own self-indulgence. Plots aren't confined to enemies of the family, either. The greatest menace to a politically ambitious noble is often her siblings, cousins or offspring. It's not unheard of for a Dragon-Blood to slay a promising cousin, cripple a stronger sibling or even disfigure beautiful offspring.

When creating Dragon-Blooded, remember they are elemental beings and strongly influenced by their elemental natures. Sometimes, this causes them to seem admirable, and other times, less so. For example, those related to Earth are typically stolid and iron willed, holding their ground and rarely swaying in their decisions. Unfortunately, they are prone to ritualizing their vices and to bull-headedness. Likewise with the other elements.



Dragon-Blooded of Air aspect are creative and dream of great things, but many have difficulty moving from the realm of thought to action. Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded are as extreme as the element of their attunement, loving with unequalled passion and hating with similar zeal. Water-attuned Dragon-Blooded are nurturing caregivers, yet are often overbearing, overprotective and smothering to the point of drowning. Those with Wood affinities are naturally prone to wisdom and possess an understanding of the life-spanning arc from seed to death to seed again. However, many of this aspect consider themselves better tenders of life's garden that the "plants" themselves and constantly plot and scheme to manipulate events and "prune" the world around them into proper shape.

Anima and Essence

The Personal Essence pool of a Dragon-Blooded is equal to her Essence + her Willpower. Her Peripheral Essence pool is equal to (her Essence x 4) + her Willpower + (the sum of her two highest Virtues). The anima banners of the Terrestrial Exalted come into existence at the same rate as those of a Solar Exalted but are very abstract and elemental in character. Even when they become iconic, they are little more than a whirling vortex of the character's element. The anima flares of the Dragon-Blooded are as straightforward as their anima banners.

Air: A Terrestrial Exalted aspected to Air can spend 5 motes to become as light and sprightly as a featherdown for the rest of the scene. He can triple his leaping distance and takes no damage from falls.

Earth: A Dragon-Blooded aspected to Earth can spend 5 motes, and for the rest of the scene, she can soak lethal damage with her entire Stamina.

Fire: A Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded can spend 5 motes to burst into flame. For the rest of the scene, he is immune to fire damage, and anyone striking him without a weapon or wrestling with him takes a number of dice of points of lethal damage every turn equal to his Essence. If he strikes with an unarmed attack or wrestles with a character, his opponent takes a like amount of damage.

Water: A Terrestrial Exalted aspected to Water can spend 5 motes to allow herself water freedom. For the rest of the day, she can breathe underwater and operate as freely as if she was in air, including firing bows and the like.

Wood: A Dragon-Blooded attuned to Wood may spend 5 motes to become as flexible as a sapling in the wind. For the rest of the scene, she may add her Essence in dice to a single Dodge or Athletics action once per turn. This power is reflexive, not supplementary, and so, the character can either add to a dice action or gain a free Dodge or Athletics action with a dice pool equal to her Essence.

Charms Guidelines

The Charms that Dragon-Blooded use to add extra dice to their pools work in a slightly different fashion that those of the Solar Exalted. Rather than being limited to the character's Attribute + Ability total, they are limited by the character's

Ability. However, there are certain advantages. These Charms are also more efficient, adding two dice to the character's pool per mote of Essence spent powering them, rather than the one die per mote for Solar Exalted. The Charms are also more versatile — most are reflexive, rather than supplemental, allowing the Terrestrial Exalted to attack and defend in the same turn without the use of a Combo. Finally, a character's specialties are counted as part of her Ability when she's adding dice to actions to which the character's specialties apply.

Terrestrial Exalted do not generally have perfect success and extra actions Charms. Instead, they have Charms that allow them to reroll actions. Typically, these Charms allow the Dragon-Blooded to reroll an unsuccessful action once, but more powerful Charms allow her to continue paying Essence and rerolling until she succeeds or even to roll an action twice and add her successes together. Dragon-Blooded typically develop Combos between reroll Charms and Charms that allow them to add extra dice to attacks.

Dragon-Blooded Charms that don't directly benefit Abilities tend to be elemental in character. These Charms extend not just to hurling elemental bolts, but grant the character an ability to manipulate his element in a more complex fashion. Charms of this sort will be detailed in the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**.

The Dragon-Blooded's Ox-Body Technique Charm provides one -1 and one -2 health level.

Dragon-Blooded learn Charms more slowly than the Celestial Exalted — they typically start with 6, rather than 10.

Dynasty Noble

Description: Sesus Nagezzer, known as "the Slug," is grandson to the Empress (a far from uncommon title) and lord of the Dragon-Blooded vice trade. Nagezzer derives his moniker from his almost comical obesity, a fate he earned after being crippled by a war wound as a young man. Lame in one leg, Nagezzer's youthful habits of heavy eating never abated when he was rendered unable to exercise. Many Dragon-Blooded look to him as an example of how far from their warrior ideal one can fall.

Over the century since his injury, Nagezzer has grown in girth. Ridiculed and excluded from the imperial court, he buried himself and his shame in his appetites. He came to know many blighted delights and reveled in the ones that best degraded him. His self-loathing, however, boiled over into hatred; Nagezzer eventually blamed his siblings for his condition and even poisoned his mother when he assumed her love for him was disguised pity. Upon inheriting his mother's Manse, the Throne of Roses, Nagezzer turned his newly acquired estate into a palace of debauchery.

However, his self-hatred hasn't bated his ambition or his shrewd financial mind. Having long ago realized he wouldn't hold any official power in the Empress' court, Nagezzer plays lord to an ongoing shadow court of growing popularity. The Throne of Roses is now a brothel and drug den second only to the Guild's headquarters in Nexus, and the Throne caters to



all desires, no matter how shameful. Nagezzer has principles — he does not blackmail his clientele. Instead, he barters services for information and favors. For the most part, he remains in the main orgy chamber, reclining on a mountain of silk and velvet pillows, watching the panoply of vice and pleasuring himself with his various servants and wares.

For all his vice and avarice, Nagezzer is not stupid man, and he cares as deeply about the Realm now as he did when he was a ruthless young officer. He is acutely aware of how unstable the situation has become since the disappearance of the Empress and knows most of the Dragon-Blooded are more interested in the politics of succession than in the fate of the Realm itself. Since the struggle for succession between the various thrones and powers of the court began, Nagezzer has been sponsoring apolitical measures to stabilize the Realm. In many places, his quietly hired mercenaries, marching under the banner of a white rose on a black field, have arrived to replace garrisons withdrawn for home duty. He has also been recruiting young Dragon-Blooded officers, those discontent with the deteriorating turn of events, and incorporating them into leadership roles in his forces.

This heroism is not entirely unprofitable. Where Nagezzer's troops go, his business representatives follow, and he's been diversifying considerably while the other Dragon-Bloods have cashed in their resources for physical power. Likewise, whoever comes to the throne will owe Nagezzer a large, if informal, debt of gratitude. Nagezzer sees this not as a calculated act, but as the just rewards of patriotism — for him, the money is an extra. He would sacrifice all the monetary earnings to benefit the Realm.

Name: Sesus "The Slug" Nagezzer
Aspect: Wood
Nature: Hedonist

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3
Abilities: Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 4, Endurance 3, Interrogation 2, Larceny 2 (Drugs and Vice +2), Linguistics (Native: High Realm; Guild Cant, Riverspeak) 2, Lore 3, Presence 4 (Command +1), Resistance 4, Socialize 5
Backgrounds: Allies 3, Backing 5, Contacts 5, Followers 5, Influence 4, Manse 3, Resources 5
Charms: Nagezzer still remembers the military Charms he once knew, but he long ago became too obese to use them. Now, he relies on his honeyed tongue. Assume that Nagezzer has Charms that allow him to increase any of his Social Abilities at a cost of one mote per two dice. He can also spend 5 motes to double his Socialize or Presence for the rest of the scene. Nagezzer can reroll failed Presence and Larceny attempts at a cost of 3 motes. For 3 motes per roll and a Willpower, Nagezzer can reroll any Presence roll until he succeeds.
Nagezzer has a Combo that allows him to combine his ability to double his Presence pool and reroll Presence attempts until he succeeds, but the Combo's signature means it's useful only for emergencies. Nagezzer also possesses minor healing abilities, due to his Wood aspect.
Attack: Charms only
Dodge Total: Does not dodge **Soak:** 2L/4B (Skin)
Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 3 (Wood Aspected)
Personal Essence: 11 **Peripheral Essence:** 27
Other Notes: Nagezzer relies on a retinue of guards to defend him. They are equivalent to elite troops.

Ambitious Young Officer

Description: After misfortune piled on misfortune and a number of daughters proved sterile, superstitious Dynasty marriage brokers ostracized the minor House of Denovah, a subsidiary house of the Cynis gens, as poor breeding stock. With only a minor Manse to call its own, the Denovah lost land and power to rivals both in and outside the Cynis family. All that eventually remained was a crumbling sea-side castle and destitute village. But if the house's current heir has anything to say about it, that is all about to change.

Avaku of Ways is the strongest Dragon-Blood born into his family line in recent centuries. His shrewd insight into human nature is strong, and Avaku displayed great strategic talent in school. He accepted military service, even though he was his line's only Dragon-Blood of his generation. In the 15 years since his graduation, he's shown no sign of exhibiting the poor fortune of his ancestors. Indeed, his wife, the unExalted daughter of another minor house, has already borne him two healthy children, both of whom have excellent chances of Exaltation.



Avaku has held several combat commands so far and was decorated for heroism for his part in a recent assault on a pirate haven in the southern Threshold. Avaku is currently a mid-ranking officer in the Dragon-Blooded advisory contingent to the northern Threshold state of Whitewall. While his faithfulness to the Immaculate doctrine often makes him uncomfortable around the city's spirit rulers, he knows it is an important client state of the Realm. His bravery and acumen have attracted the attention of a number of powerful individuals. If he proves himself as gifted with diplomacy and tact as he is with valor, he has a bright career ahead of him.
Name: Denovah Avaku of Cynis
Aspect: Fire
Nature: Architect
Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 4
Abilities: Archery 3, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Craft (Blacksmith) 1, Dodge 3 (When Unarmored +2), Endurance 3, Martial Arts 2, Medicine 2 (Treating Wounds +2), Melee 4 (Swords +2), Performance 2 (Commanding Troops +2), Presence 2 (Underlings +1), Resistance 3, Ride 3 (In Battle +2), Socialize 3 (Military Politics +2), Stealth 2, Survival 2
Backgrounds: Allies 2, Backing 2, Followers 4, Influence 2, Resources 4
Charms: Avaku has a large number of military Charms, focused mainly on his Melee. He can increase his Melee Ability at a cost of 1 mote per two dice or spend 5 motes to



double it for the whole scene. He can reroll failed Melee rolls for 3 motes. He can also increase his Awareness, Performance and Medicine Abilities at a cost of one mote per two dice. Roll his Dexterity + Archery for Avaku to throw bolts of fire, with a range in yards equal to 10 times his Essence. For every 3 motes he spends, the bolt does lethal damage equal to his Essence. Extra successes add to the damage of this attack as normal. Avaku cannot spend more motes powering this attack than (his Stamina x 3).

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Punch: Speed 8 Accuracy 6 Damage 3B Defense 6

Kick: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 5B Defense 5

Jade Reaver Daiklave (Kiss of Thunder): Speed 11 Accuracy 7 Damage 10L Defense 7

Long Bow: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 5L

Dodge Pool: 9/5 **Soak:** 10L/12B (Articulated plate and target shield, 9L/9B, -4 mobility penalty, +1 difficulty to hit)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3 (Fire Aspected)

Personal Essence: 10 **Peripheral Essence:** 28

Other Notes: Avaku could be any ambitious young Dragon-Blooded warrior. Such foes typically travel in groups of two to six, usually leading detachments of elite troops. Terrestrial Exalted are never extras.

Lunar Exalted

Master tricksters, shapechangers and warriors second only to the Solar Exalted, the Lunar Exalted were once the generals of the Realm's armies, the heads of its secret police and the spouses of the Solar Exalted.

After the murder of the Solars, the Lunars fled into the wilderness. At first, they remembered that they had left peacefully, but as time passed, it began to seem more and more that the Sidereals had tricked them. Bit by bit, the hatred grew, and one by one, the now-feral Lunars turned their wrath on the Realm that had betrayed them.

Once, the Lunars were simply powerful tricksters. Now, they are... different. Their time in the Wyld has changed them, made them dark and feral. Dwelling in the wilderness, they have learned painful ways to chain themselves to a single identity. Living outside society, they have learned to take what they need or want. Many have bred tribes of beastmen from their own loins, and the Lunar Exalted lead their offspring in savage raids against the civilization that betrayed them.

But the Lunars are not entirely bestial — they have simply changed their face, as they say. They are not ravening monsters, but cunning creatures as intelligent and powerful as any other Exalted. Most simply see no use for the Realm, whose ruling order cast them out into the wilderness to suffer. Some have approached reborn Solars, seeking to offer them aid in avenging themselves against the Realm. Others have come to blame the Solars as much as the Dragon-Blooded and Sidereals for the Lunar Exile and bear the newly returned Solar Exalted much ill will. It is certain that a Solar Exalted will cross paths with one of the Lunars eventually, and it is likely to be sooner rather than later. Whether the Lunars will be invaluable allies or deadly enemies depends largely on the individuals in question, but regardless of the relationship's color, it will be a significant one.

Anima and Essence

The Essence of the Lunar Exalted springs from their strength of will. The Personal Essence pool of a Lunar Exalted is equal to his Essence + (his Willpower x 2). His Peripheral Essence pool is equal to (his Essence x 4) + (his Willpower x 2) + (his highest Virtue x 4). The anima banners of the Lunar Exalted come into existence at the same rate as those of a Solar Exalted, and like those of the Solars, they are largely cosmetic — an outwelling of blues and purples, similar to the Aurora Borealis, and dominated by an unmistakable silvery-white radiance. When their anima banners become iconic, they are either abstract or else depictive of lunar animals — snakes, spiders, owls, wolves, bears, panthers and so forth. The anima powers of the Lunar Exalted are as follows:

Full Moon: A Lunar aspected to the Full Moon can spend 5 motes to hone his physical prowess. For the rest of the scene, he can double his running and leaping distances. These bonuses stack with those provided by other Charms.

Changing Moon: A Changing Moon Caste Lunar Exalted is a master trickster. For 10 motes, she may pull a veil of illusion across herself for the rest of the scene, appearing to be anyone she is familiar with. This effect ends if the character's anima banner activates at any level or if the character has significant physical interaction with another intelligent creature. This illusion does not change the character's scent or voice. As creatures of deception, the Fair Folk are immune to these illusions.

No Moon: No Moons are excellent combat sorcerers. A No Moon Lunar may spend 1 mote to lower the Essence Cost of all spells she casts for the rest of the scene by 1, but she may not spend more than twice her Essence in this fashion during a given scene. The cost of a spell cannot be reduced by more than half (rounded down).

Charms Guidelines

The Charms of the Lunar Exalted emphasize these characters' innate capabilities, rather than enhancing their skills. Lunar Exalted Charms are based off the character's Attributes, rather than her Abilities. Those Charms that allow the character to increase a dice pool only allow the Lunar to double the Attributes, rather than their entire dice pool.

Similarly, rather than having powerful Charms that allow automatic success on an attack or parry through magic, the Lunars' Charms instead allow them to succeed by instinctual prowess. These powerful Charms allow the Lunar to trade for automatic successes the dice his Attribute would normally add to his dice pool.

Lunar Exalted Charms tend to emphasize traits such as survival, agility and strength — they are as fast as panthers, as strong as bears and as cunning as wolves. Most Lunars also have a wide variety of Charms that allow them to shift their shapes, either partially or fully, into other creatures.

The Lunar Exalted's Ox-Body Technique Charm provides two -1 health levels or four -2 health levels.

Lunar Exalted learn Charms more slowly than the Solar Exalted, starting with 8, rather than 10.

Lunar Trickster

Description: Though he is a survivor of the First Age, Magnificent Jaguar has not lived every year since then. Like many of his kind, Jaguar sleeps in torpor for years or decades before rousing himself to activity again. At first, embittered by the murder of the Solars, Magnificent Jaguar slept many decades, but as time passed and his bitterness grew, Jaguar became more active. Like many Lunar Exalted, Magnificent Jaguar prefers to wear the shape of a single animal and takes his name from the beast he favors — a great jungle panther, with night-black fur and inhuman feline eyes.

From his lair in the rainforests of the southeast Threshold, he has been raising his own brood of beastman warriors for the last 250 years. For the last century, he and his children have raided the more temperate regions to the north for riches and mates. Since the disappearance of the Empress, Jaguar has been preparing his children for war.

Magnificent Jaguar is neutral on the matter of the Solars' return. Though he bears great enmity to the Sidereals and Dragon-Blooded for their betrayal, he still remembers that there were reasons for their treachery. The Solars who ruled the Old Realm were indeed corrupt and self-serving, and he has not yet forgotten that the oaths that bound the Lunars to the Solars were as constraining and contrived as those that forced the Lunar tribe to abandon their ancient companions. He misses his mate but does not believe her reincarnation will return her to his arms.

Today, Magnificent Jaguar walks among the men of the Scavengers Lands in a dozen shapes. He has left his people and told them that he will return in three years with plans for a great raid and greater conquests to follow. They are making ready for his reappearance, and when he does return, his tribe will be a deadly fighting force.

Name: Magnificent Jaguar
Caste: Changing Moon



Nature: Thrillseeker
Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 3
Abilities: Archery 2 (Game +2), Awareness 3, Brawl 4 (With Brawling Aids +2), Bureaucracy 2, Craft (Carving Bone) 3, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Lore 5, Medicine 2 (Wilderness Remedies), Melee 3 (Javelins +1), Performance 3 (Flute +1), Presence 4, Resistance 4, Ride 1, Socialize 3 (Military Politics +2), Stealth 2, Survival 2, Thrown 4 (Javelins +2)
Backgrounds: Allies 1, Backing 4, Followers 5, Manse 4, Resources 3
Charms: Magnificent Jaguar has Dexterity Charms that let him add dice to his Brawl and Thrown attacks (but he cannot more than double his Dexterity) and a Charm that allows him to reflexively increase his Strength when he's made a successful attack (but he cannot more than double his Strength). All three of these Charms cost 1 mote per die to activate. Magnificent Jaguar may trade dice for automatic successes on Brawl and Thrown rolls, but cannot buy more successes than his natural Attribute rating in Dexterity.

Magnificent Jaguar also has Charms that allow him to increase his Perception when making Alertness rolls and to gain the senses of a wild animal. He can survive and prosper in almost any environment. For 10 motes and a Willpower, he can shapechange into a different human body, but he can't deliberately impersonate someone. The duration of this Charm is indefinite or until Jaguar spends Peripheral Essence.



For 10 motes, Magnificent Jaguar can turn into his namesake — a huge and splendid jaguar. He retains his Mental Attributes and Abilities, but gains the Physical Attributes of a great cat (see the Beasts section on p. 315). For 10 motes and 1 Willpower, Magnificent Jaguar can enter his combat form for the rest of the scene, becoming half jaguar and half man. In this form, he gains +2 to all his Physical Attributes, and these bonus dots are considered natural for the purposes of using Charms to trade them for automatic successes. Jaguar also gains a Speed -3, Accuracy +1, Damage +2L, Defense 0 bite attack, and his punches and kicks do lethal damage.

Base Initiative: 8 (10 in combat form)

Attack:*

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy Damage 9L Defense 10 (Attack usable in combat form only)

Punch: Speed 8/10 Accuracy 8/10 Damage 5B/7L Defense 8/10

Kick: Speed 5/7 Accuracy 7/9 Damage 7B/9L Defense 7/9

Moonsilver Smashfist (Bonehammer): Speed 11/12 Accuracy 13/15 Damage 8/10L Defense 13/15

Javelins (hand-to-hand): Speed 9/11 Accuracy 9/11 Damage 7/9L Defense 8/10

Javelins (thrown): Speed 8/10 Accuracy 11/13 Damage 8/10L

*Figures after the slash for combat form.

Dodge Pool: 8/6//10/8* **Soak:** 13L/18B//15L/20B (Chain swathing, 11L/14B, -6 mobility penalty)

*When dressed for war, Magnificent Jaguar normally has an armor Charm active that subtracts 4 from the mobility and fatigue values of the armor he is wearing for a full day at a cost of 15 motes and 1 Willpower.

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 5

Personal Essence: 19 **Peripheral Essence:** 50

Other Notes: Magnificent Jaguar wears a Gem of Adamant Skin Hearthstone in an orichalcum amulet around his neck — a wedding present from his former mate.

Sidereal Exalted

Rarest, longest-lived and most secretive of the Exalted, the Sidereals were created by the Maidens to serve as the scouts, assassins and spies of the army of the gods. Crafty and gifted with an unrivalled talent for astrology, the Sidereal Exalted served as the advisors and savants to the Old Realm.

When the Realm began to decay, the Sidereals consulted the stars and drew up a great prophecy that showed three futures. In one, matters continued without change. This future was an endless downward spiral of warfare and decay, where the world itself became a place of darkness. There were two alternatives. One was for the Sidereals to attempt to reform the Solars and reestablish the Realm in its true glory. The Great Prophecy showed this had little change of success and would most likely result in the world of darkness the Sidereals foresaw. Those Sidereals who favored this approach were called the Gold.

The other option was to supplant the Solars with the Dragon-Blooded, creating a world that was less glorious but more stable. This course of action was seen as much more likely to succeed, and the Sidereals who agreed with this approach were called the Bronze.

The Bronze faction won the debates after the Prophecy had been examined, and it was decided that the Solars must be slain. In the chaos afterward, the Gold went into exile, living as hermits and reclusive savants. The Bronze founded the Immaculate Order and helped manage the Realm from behind its façade. Gradually, the Sidereal Exalted faded from the memory of all but the spirits and their fellow Exalted. Today, the Sidereals have been all but forgotten; the majority of Terrestrial Exalted are as ignorant of the Sidereals' existence as the mortals the Dragon-Blooded rule.

Yet, with the disappearance of the Empress, the Sidereals have been forced to take a more active role in the affairs of the empire. No longer can they govern with a whispered word here and a carefully chosen bit of advice to the Empress. Now, as the system they have built to enforce their will on the world becomes increasingly unstable, the Sidereals must take an active hand in matters if they wish to continue shaping the destiny of Creation.

To make matters more complex, the long-silent Gold faction has begun to manipulate events from behind the scenes. These Sidereals have been aiding and training young Solar Exalted in an attempt to advance their own plans for the future. Most prominent among these is the so-called Cult of the Illuminated, a millenarian group manipulated by a number of Sidereals into a vehicle for gathering and training young Solar Exalted.

Anima and Essence

The Personal Essence pool of a Sidereal is equal to (her Essence x 2) + her Willpower. Her Peripheral Essence pool is Equal to (her Essence x 6) + her Willpower + (the sum of her Virtues). The display of a Sidereal Exalted's anima banner occurs at the same levels of Peripheral Essence spending as a Solar Exalted. The Sidereals have the most abstract of all the anima banners — even when they are fully realized, the Sidereals do not have an iconic banner. Instead, they are surrounded by a brilliant corona or halo in the color of their patron Maiden.

Mercury, Maiden of Journeys: The Exalted of the Maiden of Journeys can make the Lesser Sign of Mercury at a cost of 10 motes. This sign manifests as a brilliant yellow aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Exalted and all her allies within (the Exalted's Essence x 10) yards triple their running speeds. The increased running speed applies not

just to people, but to horses and other steeds whose feet touch the ground as they travel. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalted employing it.

Venus, Maiden of Serenity: The Exalted of the Maiden of Serenity can make the Lesser Sign of Venus at a cost of 10 motes. This sign manifests as a brilliant blue aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Exalted and all her allies within (the Exalted's Essence x 10) yards may add a number of successes equal to the Exalted's Essence to any Performance rolls. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalted employing it.

Mars, Maiden of Battle: The Exalted of the Maiden of Battle can make the Lesser Sign of Mars at a cost of 10 motes. This sign manifests as a brilliant scarlet aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Exalted and all her allies within (the Exalted's Essence x 10) yards reduce the damage of all blows against them by 1 health level, applied after the damage is rolled. This effect cannot reduce an attack's damage below 1. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalted employing it.

Jupiter, Maiden of Secrets: The Exalted of the Maiden of Secrets can make the Lesser Sign of Jupiter at a cost of 10 motes. This sign manifests as a brilliant green aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, the Exalted and all her allies within (the Exalted's Essence x 10) yards cannot be subjected to magical mind control or have their thoughts read. The effect of the anima dissipates if a recipient moves out of range of the Exalted employing it.

Saturn, Maiden of Endings: The Exalted of the Maiden of Endings may make the Lesser Sign of Saturn at a cost of 10 motes. This sign manifests as a brilliant violet aura that laps around all those under the anima's effect. For the rest of the scene, any blows that the Exalted and all her allies within (the Exalted's Essence x 10) yards strike are increased in damage by 1 level, applied after damage is rolled. This anima effect cannot increase the damage of an attack that generates no damage successes. The effect of the anima dissipates if the recipient moves out of range of the Exalted employing it.

Charms Guidelines

Like the Solars and the Dragon-Blooded, the Charms of the Sidereals are based on the character's Abilities. The Charms that the Sidereals use to boost their dice pools are generally much less effective than those of other Exalted. Most Sidereals can only increase a dice pool by a number of dice equal to the character's Essence, at the cost of 1 mote per die. However, the Sidereals' more powerful Charms allow them to alter the very balance of fate. A character can use these Charms to lower the number her player must roll on a die to get a success, either for a single roll or when using an Ability in a certain way for an entire scene. The cost varies — lowering the difficulty of a parry attempt or dodge roll is easy, while lowering the difficulty of a damage roll is considerably more expensive. These effects are extremely powerful because the Sidereals are not limited by their Attribute + Ability dice pools.

The Sidereals' grasp of fate extends further than this — the Chosen of the Maidens are powerful astrologers, able to shape destinies and manipulate individuals and groups by twisting their horoscopes — even on a momentary level. A Sidereal spy does not rely on stealth, but on the fact that no one will ever look where he is standing.

A Sidereal Exalted's Ox-Body Technique Charm provides one -0 health level. Most Sidereals of either faction are well educated in Charms and begin play with 12 of them.

Bronze Faction Functionary

Description: Ahn-Aru, or Sad Ivory, was born in the eastern Threshold in the chaos following the Empress' ascension to the Imperial Manse. She was taken by the Bronze almost before her Exaltation and spent her entire early existence immersing herself in the teachings and lore of the Immaculate Order. As one Chosen by the Maiden of Endings, she was trained as an assassin and executioner first and an administrator second.

This temperament suited her well for her eventual posting as the Sidereal agent in the Scavenger Lands, just as her elders knew it would. There, in the heart of resistance to the Empress' rule, she was charged with observing events and manipulating local politics. It also fell to her to carry out the Solar Purge against any newly reborn Solars and otherwise act as the order's agent in violent matters.

Ahn-Aru has a number of securely warded apartments and towers spread through the Scavenger Lands. Protected by bound demons and hidden from sight by powerful astrological rituals, these workrooms serve as boltholes and magical workrooms. She is forever on the move and rarely lingers in one abode for more than 10 days.

Though she has a soft, almost restless demeanor, Sad Ivory is an isolated warrior-scholar who carries out her job with ruthless efficiency. Yet, her heart longs for the companionship of her peers, and she holds a position that makes the company of her fellow Exalted a rare thing. Sad Ivory has never really lived outsider her order and is strongly committed to its ideals. She exists in a world where the Prophecy and her views on it are a matter of religious faith. Her commitment to the Bronze faction is near-absolute, and she recently killed a Gold Sidereal during a Wyld Hunt — rare bloodshed indeed.

Name: Ahn-Aru ("Sad Ivory"), Chosen of the Maiden of Endings

Caste: Favored of Saturn



Nature: Bravo
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 3, Valor 4
Abilities: Archery 4 (Surprise Shots +2), Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 4, Craft (Scrimshaw) 3, Dodge 5 (Other Exalted +3), Endurance 4, Linguistics (Native: Forest-tongue; High Realm, Old Realm, Riverspeak) 3, Lore 5, Martial Arts 5, Medicine 3 (Poison +2), Melee 5 (One-on-One +3), Occult 4 (Demonology +2), Performance 3 (Intimidating +1), Presence 3 (Blackmail Targets +2), Resistance 3, Ride 5 (Moving Quickly +2), Socialize 4 (Threshold Politics +2), Stealth 5, Survival 4 (Finding Boltholes +1, When Alone +2)
Backgrounds: Allies 5, Backing 3, Influence 5, Mentor 5, Resources 4
Charms: Ahn-Aru can add dice to her Melee and Archery attacks as a supplemental action, as a simple action to Presence, Performance, Endurance and Survival rolls and as a reflexive action to Dodge. Sad Ivory can lower the difficulty of her Melee and Archery attacks on a per-roll basis to as low as 4, at a cost of 2 motes for each point by which she reduces the difficulty. She can reduce the difficulty of all her Melee rolls during the scene by 1 for 10 motes and 1 Willpower. She can reduce the difficulty on Dodge rolls as a reflexive action at a cost of 1 mote for each point by which she reduces the difficulty. For 10 motes, 2 Willpower and 1 health level, Ahn-Aru can make a perfect strike — an attack in which all of her dice come up successes. She has this in a Combo with her two Dodge Charms (the one that reduces difficulty and the one that adds dice), along with the Charms that allows her to add dice to Melee rolls and lower their difficulty. She has lesser versions of this Combo, but this version is her primary attack. She has a Charm that allows her to roll half her Essence (rounded up) and take as many extra attacks during that turn as she rolls successes. Ahn-Aru can triple her jumping distance for a single leap at a cost of 1 mote, she can increase her lethal and bashing soaks by an amount equal to her Essence for a scene for 5 motes and against a single attack for 2 motes. These two Charms stack. She also knows Terrestrial and Celestial Circle sorcery and a large number of spells.
Base Initiative: 8
Attack:
Punch: Speed 8 Accuracy 9 Damage 4B Defense 9
Kick: Speed 5 Accuracy 8 Damage 7B Defense 8
Slashing Sword: Speed 8 Accuracy 10 Damage 7L Defense 10
Starmetal Long Powerbow (Bone Rain): Speed 8 Accuracy 11 Damage 13L*
*Ahn-Aru usually uses frog-crotch arrows, which double the target's lethal soak.
Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 2L/4B (Skin)
Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 4
Personal Essence: 16 **Peripheral Essence:** 47
Other Notes: Ahn-Aru is a dangerous opponent who attempts to fight in the most efficient fashion possible. She has a strong sense of personal honor and prefers to slay her targets in single combat, but she puts her mission first.

Abyssal Exalted

Unlike Deathlords, Abyssal Exalted are verifiably mortal. They were born within the shadowlands and Exalted much as a Solar or Lunar. After their Exaltation, they exist in a half-state of death and life. For some, decay sets in quickly, withering their flesh into a corpse's leathered carapace or to nothing but polished white bones. Others remain human in appearance, save for their chill skin and their unconcealable pallor. Their appetite for food diminishes, and most dine on blood, breath or even human flesh.

Abyssal Exalted are the noble champions of Death. Full of grace, educated and even charming in their cold fashion, the deathknights are gentlefolk as well as peerless warriors. In their soulsteel armor inlaid with intricate patterns of ivory and silver splinters, they are as beautiful as they are deadly. The molded armor may curve with the fluid grace of wind-tracked sand or glower with the countenance of a raging demon. Many wear helms decorated with ivory horns, great plumes or other ornaments. Their

weapons, whether a double-crescent battle-axe, a skeletal bow or a blade with a frightful serrated edge, show the same phenomenal craftsmanship.

Anima and Essence

The Personal Essence pool of an Abyssal Exalted is equal to that of a Solar Exalted — her Personal pool is equal to (her Essence x 3) + her Willpower, and her Peripheral pool is equal to (her Essence x 7) + her Willpower + (the sum of her Virtues). However, the Abyssals regain Essence naturally only when in the Underworld or the shadowlands. Outside the deadlands, the Abyssals regain Essence only with Hearthstones or from feeding on the living. By drinking one health level of blood or eating one health level of flesh, a deathknight may regain 10 motes of Essence. Many Abyssals know Charms that allow them to suck the Essence from living creatures without eating blood or flesh.

The anima banners of the Abyssal Exalted come into existence at the same rate as those of a Solar Exalted and are very similar in appearance. When they become iconic, the anima banners depict various solar animals, but darkened — black-furred lions and jaguars with glowering red eyes, raitons, severe and shadowy eagles and bulls with blood tipped horns.

Dusk: By spending 10 motes of Essence, the character can appear dark and terrible for the remainder of the scene (or until she chooses to let the effect dissipate). Mortal creatures attempting to face the Abyssal must make a Valor check or be unable to look directly at the character or strongly oppose him, subtracting 2 dice from all attempts to attack the character. Characters whose players botch their Valor rolls (and most natural animals) will flee in terror of the spectre that confronts them.

Midnight: The Midnight Caste is empowered with the unholy might of the Deathlords' dark gods. With but a touch, these Exalted can cause the bodies of the fallen to rise as zombies. The character spends 5 motes of Essence and touches a body, and it awakens and rises by the end of the scene. An Abyssal may also strike down mortals with an icy glance. As her action for a turn, the Exalted may channel 5 motes of Essence through her anima and indicate a normal mortal within 10 yards. She then does her Essence as dice of unsoakable aggravated damage against the target. The power has no effect on Fair Folk, Exalted or other magical beings.

Daybreak: Abyssals of the Daybreak Caste may channel Essence through their animas, filling them with the swirling power of the Underworld. If, after an enemy has rolled damage, the Exalted would take health levels of damage, then he may spend 5 motes of Essence to strengthen his anima in an attempt to stop the attack. Roll the character's Essence, and for each success, he can subtract one health level from the damage the enemy would have done. This effect can turn an otherwise deadly blow or reduce a weak attack to harmlessness.

Day: Exalted of the Day Caste have more control over their animas than the average Abyssal. They may mute their animas, allowing them to exert their powers without the display of an anima banner. When the Abyssal expends Peripheral Essence, she may double the number of motes spent in order to prevent the expenditure from adding to her anima banner. This ability does not allow the character to mute the Essence displays caused by the use of sorcery.

The character may also extend her muted anima like a choking cloak around her. This extended anima last for an entire scene and costs 5 motes of Essence to evoke. The anima mutes the senses of those attempting to perceive the Abyssal and the evidence the Exalted leaves behind for those who would follow her trail. Shadows are darker, sounds muffled, and the character's scent and footprints are both much lighter than normal. In game terms, increase the difficulty of all rolls to detect or track the Exalted by 1, so long as the muted anima is in effect.

Moonshadow: When a Moonshadow Caste is party or witness to an oath, he may use his anima to sanctify it. The character must touch hands to seal the agreement or touch the hands of those who are party to it. His anima burns brightly, swirling with the words and runes by which the Malfeans give him the right to sanctify matters by their unspeakable names. Those who break such an oath (including the Exalted himself) suffer a terrible curse.

The Exalted spends 10 motes of Essence and a point of Willpower to sanctify the oath. Those who break it will suffer terrible luck from their oathbreaking. A number of times equal to the Exalted's Essence at the time he witnesses or agrees to the oath, the oathbreaker with horribly botch a critical roll. When this happens is up to the Storyteller, but it is always at the worst possible moment. The Exalted need not be alive when the curse takes effect — he sanctifies the oath, but the Abyssal's dark gods enforce it.

Also, Abyssals of the Moonshadow Caste are talented generalists. Provided they have willing tutors, they may learn the Charms of other types of Exalted and even of spirits. Such Charms cost double the normal experience to learn (usually 20 points) and use. Moonshadow Caste characters may not start the game knowing the Charms of other such beings without Storyteller permission.

Charms Guidelines

The powers of the Abyssal Exalted closely parallel those of the Solar Exalted, but where the Solars Charms aid their own actions, the entropic powers of Abyssals hinder others. Where a Solar's Charm might add dice to a parry attempt, the Abyssal's Charm would instead subtract dice from the attacker's roll. Where a Charm would

normally enhance a Solar's damage, it lowers the Abyssal's target's soak. In opposed rolls where a Solar Charm would provide extra dice, an Abyssal Charm subtracts from the target's dice pool instead.

Most Abyssal Charms cannot reduce a target's dice pool to lower than the target's Essence. The Abyssal Exalted gain a –0 and two -1 or a -1 and two -2 health levels, picked at the time of purchase, from their Ox-Body Technique Charm, just as if they were Solar Exalted. Abyssal Exalted begin with 10 Charms.

DEATHKNIGHT OF THE MASK OF WINTERS

Description: Typhon's history begins a generation before his time, when his mother fled from the Realm, a victim of her family's designs on the Empress' throne. She'd left behind a burning estate and a family now in flight from the hangman or exiled to the four corners. When the plot was revealed, retaliation was swift, and Typhon's mother fled into the night, her possessions only what she had had time to cram into her pockets.

From his mother's tales, Typhon learned it took harrowing months for her to finally find shelter. She fled to the only place she knew the Dragon-Bloods would not pursue — the shadowlands. Forced into exile, she grew more bitter each passing year over the loss of her family. She weaned Typhon, the storm of her life, on that hatred.

Typhon grew up in the camp of the Mask of Winters, in the care the care of his mother and the many members of his family who had recently come to the land of the dead. The Mask of Winters took the exiles under his personal protection, and Typhon learned swordplay from the armsmasters of the dead and manners from the deathknights. It seemed only natural that, in time, Typhon himself was Exalted and joined the ranks of the deathknights. He swore fealty to the Mask of Winters and acts now as his agent in the mortal world. It is Typhon's duty to study the various cities within the Scavenger Lands and report on their weaknesses. Currently, he casts his eye toward the trade cities that neighbor Nexus, the crown jewel of the Scavenger Lands.

The Mask of Winters chose Typhon for this duty in part because of Typhon's almost human appearance. His complexion is not yet the marble hue of funeral statuary, and his hair is still a deep mahogany brown and has not yet turned to the silver-white or black shades universal among older deathknights. His eyes still twinkle, at times, rather than glinting like ice under a winter sun.

Yet Typhon wasn't chosen solely for his looks — he's cunning and rarely impetuous, despite his youthful appearance. He's also eloquent and charming, a byproduct of his mother's mortal influence and a touch of character the Mask of Winters admires. Typhon is eager to prove his loyalty to the Mask of Winters as gratitude for the Deathlord's hospitality and kindness to his family. His



battle-axe and vestments are of Threshold make, and he seems like nothing more than a seasoned warrior taking a break from his profession.

Name: Typhon, Servant of the Mask of Winters
Caste: Day
Nature: Thrillseeker
Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4
Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 4
Abilities: Archery 4 (On the Battlefield +1), Awareness 3 (Surreptitious Observation), Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Necromancer) 3, Dodge 4 (In Battle +2), Endurance 4, Lore 4, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 2 (Treating Own Wounds +2), Melee 3 (Mass Combat +3), Occult 4, Performance 3 (Lyre +1), Presence 4 (Noble +1), Resistance 4, Ride 3 (In Battle +2), Socialize 3 (Threshold Politics +2), Stealth 2, Survival 3 (The Underworld +2)
Backgrounds: Allies 5, Backing 3, Influence 3, Mentor 4, Resources 5
Charms: Typhon is a Melee specialist — he knows the Abyssal versions of most Melee Charms, as well as the Abyssal equivalents of Dipping Swallow Defense and Iron Kettle Body. The latter Charm does not increase the Abyssal's soak, but instead, decreases the damage the attacker does before soak is applied. This Charm can totally dissipate the effects of weak blows. Typhon knows Terrestrial Circle sorcery and Celestial Circle sorcery and knows the spell Incomparable Body Arsenal, as well as a number of Terrestrial spells.
Base Initiative: 8

Attack:
Punch: Speed 8 Accuracy 7 Damage 4B Defense 7
Kick: Speed 5 Accuracy 6 Damage 6B Defense 6
Battle-Axe: Speed 8 Accuracy 7 Damage 9L Defense 7
Long Bow: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L
Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 7L/10B (Reinforced buff jacket, 5L/6B, -2 mobility penalty)*
* Typhon always has the Abyssal equivalent to Front-Line Warrior's Stamina active and does not suffer a mobility penalty or become fatigued by his armor.
Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 3
Personal Essence: 17 **Peripheral Essence:** 44
Other Notes: Typhon is a noble figure, in his own way. Though he is a loyal servant of the Mask of Winters, Typhon believes himself to serve a laudable cause. He will fight bravely to defend his ideals and dreams of a day when every creature can be assured of rebirth into the paradise of the Underworld.

Beasts

Beasts have dominated man's mythology since time began. They hunted humanity and taught men the skills of survival. In turn, man domesticated or learned the value of each animal, whether as adversary, prey, companion or beast of burden. Humanity understood the world through these creatures and evolved because of them. They walk with dreams, can see spirits and still teach the old ways to those willing to listen. Every quality that mortals possess can be found in animals... or perhaps it was the animals who gifted humans with such faculties. Regardless, animals are mystical and cunning in surprising ways, and humanity still has much to learn.

• **Austrech:** Found in humid and hot climes, the austrech is a scaled bird with a bone-cracking hooked beak. It's a flightless runner reaching seven feet in height, with a large head, small wings and thick legs ending in clawed feet. A swift moving carnivore, the austrech is a vicious hunter known to eat its own eggs and offspring.

• **Bear:** Found in a mix of locations but favoring temperate to cold climes, bears appear in a variety of subspecies and colors. Mortals fear bears with good reason — they are fierce and short-tempered creatures. Their strongest sense is smell; their weakest is sight.

• **Boar (Wild):** A surly creature, the wild boar is a woodland hog, with sharp tusks, dark gray-black or brown hair and a height reaching three-and-a-half feet. Found in a variety of forests and jungles, the boar is an omnivore with a taste for insects and eggs.

• **Camel:** A foul-tempered herbivore, the camel is a common mount in the South because it can go for long periods without food or water.

• **Coral Snake:** Found mostly in the South, coral snakes are nocturnal creatures that can reach lengths of five feet, with red, white and black banding. Known for its poisoned bite, the coral snake is sought after by assassins for its venom. During the day, coral snakes burrow beneath the earth for shade.

• **Dog:** Perhaps humanity's oldest ally, the dog evened the odds when man was outmatched by his prey. Since then, dogs have remained by humanity's side, serving as pets, friends and guards. With their keen senses of smell and hearing, they make excellent hunters and trackers.

• **Giant Wolf Spider:** Mottled in a thick gray and brown pelt, giant wolf spiders hide in trees or deep jungle burrows, pouncing on prey with frightening speed. They measure two feet in height and five feet in length. Fortunately, they aren't poisonous. They mostly hunt insects and small mammals, though humans have fallen prey to them as well.

• **Great Cat:** Like bears, great cats run the gamut of coloration and regional dispersion, though great cats are also found in arid and desert climes. With their oversized incisors jutting over their lower jaw, these muscular animals are superb hunters. Although difficult to train, they can be domesticated. They can reach heights of five feet at the shoulder.

• **Horse:** Horses are *the* riding animals of mortal society, with many subspecies bred for purity, speed and loyalty. Dynasty nobles pursue horse breeding as a mark of their wealth and often trade their mares and stallions with other nobles to improve their stables.

• **Hybroc:** The hybroc is a scaled bird. With a wingspan ranging between 50 to 75 feet, it is a carnivore capable of grabbing humans and animals up to the size of a horse. It lives in mountainous regions and is sought after by hunters. Attempts to domesticate the hybroc have failed so far.

• **Ichneumon Hunter:** Giant wasps, these deadly, black-and-red insects measure one foot in length, with the female's ovipositor spine-stinger extending another foot and a half. The wasp uses her ovipositor to sting and deposit her eggs into a host. The eggs hatch within a few days, feeding first off blood and then the internal tissues of their host. They devour their victim internally before using the corpse as a cocoon.

Note: Emerging larvae inflict one level of lethal damage per day, no soak allowed. The larvae may be killed through herbal remedies.

• **Mammoth:** This giant pack mammal stands 14 feet high at the shoulder and possesses large, curving tusks. Found mostly in the Eastern forests and Northern savannas (with a wholly pelted version in the ice lands), this intelligent herbivore is easily domesticated. Guild caravans use mammoths for transport, while hunters seek out the beasts for meat and ivory.

• **Mospid:** This small, scaled bird is favored by nobility as a sport hunter. Although it possesses a wingspan of only two feet, its wide wings, tuft of feathers along the thumb and long tail allow it to perform quick and tight aerial maneuvers. The mospid is a woodland bird well suited for catching prey such as other birds and rabbits.

Beasts

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Willpower	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Atk/Dmg	Dodge/ Soak	Abilities
Austrech	4/4/4	2	0x1/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 6/7/1L, Kick: 5/6/3L	6/0L/4B	Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Stealth 1
Bear	7/2/6	3	-0x2/-1x3/ -2x3/-4/I	Bite: 2/6/8L, Claw: 5/5/7L	3L/6B	Awareness 2, Dodge 1, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Stealth 1
Boar	4/2/4	3	-0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Gore: 5/4/6L	4/2L/4B	Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Presence 2
Camel	3/2/4	3	-0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 5/5/1L, Kick: 2/5/6B	4/1L/4B	Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2
Coral Snake	1/3/1	2	-3/I	Bite: 6/6/1L +venom	5/0L/1B	Awareness 1, Dodge 1, Intimidation 2, Martial Arts 3, Stealth 3
Dog (War)	3/3/3	3	-0/-1/-1/ -2/-4/I	Bite: 6/5/4L	4/0L/3B	Awareness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Intimidation 2, Survival 3 (Tracking +3), Stealth 2
Giant Wolf Spider	3/3/2	2	-0/-1/-2/-4/I	Bite: 6/6/3L	5/1L/2B	Awareness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2 (Tracking +2)
Great Cat	6/3/5	5	-0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 6/6/7L, Claw: 6/7/6L	5/2L/5B	Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 5, Stealth 3, Survival 3
Horse	4/2/3	2	-0x/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 5/3/1L, Kick: 2/2/6B	4/0L/3B	Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2
Horse (War)	6/2/5	4	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 5/5/2L, Kick: 2/5/8L	3/2L/5B	Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2
Hybroc	12/3/8	4	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Claw: 6/7/10L, Beak: 5/6/13L	6/4L/8B	Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Presence 7 — hybrocs are control rating 5 to ride.

Beasts (continued)

Creature	Physical Att. Str/Dex/Sta	Willpower	Health Levels	Attack Spd/Atk/Dmg	Dodge/ Soak	Abilities
Ichneumon Hunter	1/3/1	2	-0/-2/-4/I	Sting: 6/6/1L +cgg	5/0L/1B	Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2
Mammoth	14/3/10	5	-0x3/-1x3/ -2x2/-4/I	Gore:6/5/10L, Trample: 3/6/15L	0/5L/10B	Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Presence 6
Mospid	2/3/2	3	-1/-2/I	Claw: 6/5/2L	8/0L/2B	Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Dodge 5, Martial Arts 2, Stealth 3
Omen Dogs	5/3/4	5	-0/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Bite: 6/7/6L	5/2L/4B	Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Stealth 2
Raiton	2/3/2	3	-0/-1/-2/I	Claw: 6/4/2L	6/0L/2B	Athletic 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 3, Presence 1, Stealth 3
River Dragon	14/2/12	4	-0x3/-1x3/ -2x3/-4/I	Bite: 5/5/14L, Claw: 6/5/10L	0/6L/12B	Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Presence 3, Stealth 1 (Swimming +3)
Sand Swimmers	3/2/2	3	-0/-1/-2/I	Bite: 5/4/2L		Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Intimidation 1, Stealth 2
Siaka	12/3/8	3	-0x3/-1x4/ -2x4/-4x2/I	Bite: 5/7/12L	3/4L/8B	Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Endurance 5, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Stealth 3
Strix	8/3/8	5	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/I	Grab:6/9/ Clinch, Bite: 6/7/6L	5/4L/8B	Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 4 (Grappling +2), Dodge 3, Stealth 5
Squid	10/3/10	2	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/I	Grab:6/8/ Clinch, Bite:6/6/8L	4/5L/10B	Awareness 3, Brawl 3 (Grappling +2), Dodge 1, Stealth 2
Tyrant Lizard	14/3/12	5	-0x3/-1x4/ -2x4/-4x2/I	Bite:6/9/14L	0/6L/12B	Awareness 3, Brawl 4 (Biting +2)
Yeddim	14/2/11	3	-0x2/-1x3/	Trample: -2x3/-4/I	0/5L/10B	Awareness 3, Brawl 1

Note: Unless otherwise stated, assume beasts possess Intelligence at 1 dot, Perception at 2 dots and Wits at 3 dots. For beasts, use the provided Atk value for both attacks and parries.



• **Omen Dogs:** Omen dogs are wild pack hunters related to normal dogs. Distinguished by their broad chests and backs, small ears and long legs, they can reach heights of four feet. Their mouths bristle with oversized incisors that can make short work of prey. Alone, one can take down a horse, but in packs, they've been known to attack caravans. Some packs serve barbarian tribes.

• **Raiton:** This scaled bird is a true omnivore, devouring anything from insects to fruits, eggs, reptiles and even carrion. Raitons lurk on battlefields, cawing and watching the wounded die with their black, soulless eyes. Raitons have a wingspan of three feet and possess elongated reptilian tails and tooth-lined beaks.

• **River Dragon:** Widely feared by coastal villagers, the river dragon is a reptilian carnivore with powerful jaws, a short tail and four flippers that propel it like a tortoise. It gains its name not because it lives in rivers, but because it lives at their mouths, feeding on the rich bloom of life that exists where fresh water meets salt. It can reach lengths of 42 feet, though river dragons of this size quickly deplete the local wildlife. These beasts are amphibious, allowing them to snare prey along the shoreline as well as in the water.

• **Sand Swimmers:** Sand swimmers are lizards three to five feet in length, with paddle-like tails and webbed claws. They earn their name by burrowing beneath the sand and waiting for prey to draw close. They then pounce, using surprise and their weight to drag the victim down. Desert caravans recently discovered that the presence of a sand swimmer also indicates an underground water source. Sand swimmers tunnel into these subterranean springs and nest.

• **Siaka:** Voracious carnivores of the sea, siaka are an ancient species of shark that grows to 40 feet in length. The siaka's maw opens six feet wide and seven feet high, allowing it to swallow a human in a single bite. Its five rows of teeth make quick work of its prey. Scholars claim the siaka have over 3,000 teeth, with the largest growing to 6.5 inches. Siaka mostly hunt whales.

• **Strix:** The subject of Eastern superstitions, strix are giant forest owls believed to be harbingers of ill fortune. These nocturnal hunters possess wingspans of 15 feet, with mottled dark-brown feathers and a small, but rock-crackingly strong beak. Their large circular eyes give them a piercing stare, engendering legends that the creatures are wise and herald an ill fate. Strix are known to feed on lone travelers.

• **Squid:** Known as sailor's banes, these giant creatures reach lengths of 60 feet and possess 10 tentacles, two of which are longer than the others. Preferring the open sea over shorelines, squids are dangerous predators and strong swimmers. Their skins dance with glowing colors, lending the creatures a spectacular visage. When frightened, squids squirt clouds of ink to mask their retreat.

• **Tyrant Lizard:** Seen occasionally deep within the Wyld or in forgotten portions of the Southern jungle, the

tyrant lizard walks on its hind legs and possesses a long, pointed tail to provide balance. A voracious carnivore and hunter, it stands 20 feet tall and is almost 50 feet long. Despite the tyrant lizard's tiny arms, its powerful jaws and serrated teeth make quick work of most opponents. Fair Folk have been known to ride these beasts, though even they are leery of its appetite.

• **Yeddim:** A giant herbivore mammal species, the yeddim stands 18 feet at the shoulders and weighs several tons. With strong legs, a short neck and a shaggy head, it grazes mostly in the Northern savannas, though caravans throughout the world use domesticated yeddim because of their vast endurance and ability to go days without food or water. They are passive animals and excellent pack creatures.

Diseases

Plagues are a society's greatest enemy. Though the Exalted have little to fear from illness, the mortals around them are quite vulnerable to disease. The Great Contagion ended the First Age, and lesser epidemics have decimated entire kingdoms and brought civilizations to their knees. Diseases are best played when serving a story or moving the series forward. Can the characters stop a plague or travel safely through lands ravaged by disease?

The following diseases are common in the world of the Exalted. Plagues are well-known and generally feared. Like the Great Contagion, they carry the death of society with them, threatening the general populace as opposed to the individual. The Storyteller is certainly free to create more plagues using the following framework.

Remember that Exalted exposed to diseases do not suffer their normal effects, but instead operate at a -2 penalty on dice pools until they succeed in a daily Stamina + Endurance roll to recover.

In the write-ups that follow, diseases are given four statistics:

• **Virulence:** The difficulty of the Stamina + Resistance roll that the player must make for his character to avoid infection when exposed to the disease.

• **Untreated Morbidity:** The difficulty of the Stamina + Endurance roll the player must make for his character to survive the illness if he *is not* successfully treated by someone with the Medicine Ability.

• **Treated Morbidity:** The difficulty of the Stamina + Endurance roll the player must make for his character to survive the illness if he *is* successfully treated by a character with the Medicine Ability.

• **Difficulty to Treat:** The difficulty of the Intelligence + Medicine roll to successfully treat the illness. Bear in mind that this represents an actual regimen of treatment, not a miracle cure. The character will still be immobilized and ill. Only the Exalted can shrug off a deadly illness with ease.

Smallpox

Symptoms: The course of the disease is very regular, and though it may be mistaken for something else in an early stage, the signature pox in later stages makes its true nature evident. Smallpox victims develop a very high fever, muscle aches and chills that last for approximately four days. Then, these symptoms fade and are replaced by a rash that is most severe on the face, soles of the feet and palms of the hands. In a day or two, the rash develops into the characteristic pustules of smallpox. By day nine, the pustules burst, scab and scar. If the disease attacks major internal organs, it can lead to death. Approximately 30 percent of smallpox victims die. Those who survive are left permanently scarred.

Duration: Smallpox has an incubation period between 9 and 12 days. The course of the disease is typically 9 days.

Vector: Smallpox is highly contagious disease and a particular danger to children. It is passed directly from person to person through contact and/or exposure to contaminated clothing or other items, making outbreaks more likely in heavily populated areas. If a person survives smallpox, he is immune from ever acquiring it again.

Treatment: Attempts to inoculate against smallpox by inhaling powdered pox scabs are as likely to have no effect or to infect the intended recipient with smallpox as to create immunity. Once the virus is contracted, the symptoms can be treated with herbal preparations to make the victim as comfortable as possible while he waits out the disease. The natural course of the illness includes death about 30 percent of the time. Smallpox can be cured by the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 2 or more successes.

Virulence:	4
Untreated Morbidity:	3
Treated Morbidity:	2
Difficulty to Treat:	3

Cholera

Symptoms: The symptoms of cholera are sometimes confused with simple food poisoning. Infection with cholera is marked by dizziness, vomiting and grayish diarrhea. Unlike food poisoning, cholera is dangerous because of the rapid, extreme dehydration it causes. As dehydration sets in, muscle cramps, thirst and cold or withered skin join the other symptoms. Approximately half of those who contract cholera die, though the statistics are better if there is a supply of uncontaminated water available with which to treat the victims. One of the largest problems with cholera is that it tends to affect whole communities, leaving very

Disclaimer

This information is presented solely for the benefit of the Storyteller in setting an appropriate scene and mood. It should not replace formal medical advice or treatment. Any person with a condition requiring medical attention should consult a qualified medical practitioner.



few healthy individuals to care for the stricken. With no one to care for the ill, death can claim entire villages.

Duration: It takes approximately five days between exposure to the contaminated water or food and the onset of symptoms. Victims of cholera often die from dehydration without medical treatment. Cholera symptoms do not have a set duration, as each body must try to fight off the illness as it may. The victim will either weaken and die or slowly recover from the infection.

Vector: Cholera is common in places where there is poor sanitation or where drinking water is contaminated with the feces of livestock or humans — it is the bane of besieging armies. Foods washed in contaminated water or grown in infected conditions can also be a source of cholera. Victims of cholera can be contagious to others, especially if their wastes mingle with drinking water or food.

Treatment: Cholera patients can be treated with large amounts of clean water to help replace the fluids lost to vomiting and diarrhea. Certain herbal preparations or broths also aid to strengthened those weakened by losing so much of their bodily fluids so rapidly. Cholera can be cured with the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 2 or more successes.

Virulence:	3
Untreated Morbidity:	3
Treated Morbidity:	2
Difficulty to Treat:	4

Leprosy

Symptoms: The earliest symptom of leprosy is discolored patches on the skin, especially on the hands, feet or face. These discolored patches slowly loose feeling and soon become totally numb. For the lucky ones, leprosy does not progress past these symptoms. In other cases, the symptoms grow to include paralysis of the smaller muscles, such as those of the face and hands, blindness due to the inability to blink and the collapse of the nose into the skull. Finally, the victim requires crutches to move or is completely bed ridden as the disease takes all control and sensation from her limbs. Leprosy weakens its victims, leaving them ripe for other diseases.

Duration: Once infected with leprosy, it lasts for the rest of its victim's life.

Vector: Leprosy seems most common where there is crowding, malnutrition and poor hygiene. Proximity to victims of the disease seems to be enough to infect others. It is unclear why leprosy strikes some and not others.

Treatment: There is no cure for leprosy. Most lepers are shunned and expelled from society. Weakened by the disease and at risk because of their inability to feel injuries to their numb limbs, lepers do not usually live long as outcasts. Leprosy can be cured with the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 3 or more successes.

Virulence:	1
Untreated Morbidity:	4
Treated Morbidity:	3
Difficulty to Treat:	5

Yellow Fever

Symptoms: Yellow fever is characterized by a fever, muscle aches, headache and a yellowish tinge to the victim's skin and the whites of the eyes. The color is distinct, but it is characteristic of several other diseases, thus making diagnosis difficult. The fever usually lasts for only a few days but, in the worst cases, returns accompanied by vomiting blood, delirium and bleeding from the nose. Yellow fever has a relatively low death rate, with only 15 percent of its victims dying because of the disease.

Duration: Yellow fever has an incubation period ranging from three days to two weeks. The initial fever lasts for three days. For most, this is the end of the disease. Past infection does not provide immunity from contracting the disease again.

Vector: Yellow fever is caused by mosquito bites. Warm, marshy or jungle areas are particularly likely to harbor disease-carrying insects. The best defense is to avoid being bitten while traveling in areas likely to be contaminated. Methods of avoiding infection include ointments rubbed into the skin to discourage bug bites or the use of thick clothing that covers the entire body. Once infected, the victim is not contagious to others.

Treatment: There is no cure for yellow fever. Treatment commonly includes making the patient comfortable and trying to reduce the fever while the disease runs its course. Yellow fever can be cured by the use of the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 2 or more successes.

Virulence:	2
Untreated Morbidity:	4
Treated Morbidity:	2
Difficulty to Treat:	4

Typhus

Symptoms: Typhus develops slowly, beginning with a cough, high fever, sore throat, headache, fatigue and other influenza-like symptoms. Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea accompany the other symptoms. As the disease progresses, victims begin to bleed internally and their organs fail. Organ failure, coupled with secondary infections such as pneumonia, is what kills the victims of typhus.

Duration: Typhus develops quickly in children but slowly in adults. Either way, the disease lasts until it kills the victim.

Vector: Typhus comes from ingesting contaminated food or water. How water and food become contaminated with typhus is unclear. Areas with better sanitation and less crowding are not as likely to suffer outbreaks of typhus. Once infected, victims can sometimes be contagious to others through handling water or raw foods that are then consumed.

Treatment: There is no reliable cure for typhus, though if it is caught in its early stages several different herbal elixirs have proven effective in staving off the later, deadly symp-

toms of the disease. Typhoid can be treated by the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 2 or more successes.

Virulence:	4
Untreated Morbidity:	4
Treated Morbidity:	3
Difficulty to Treat:	4

Malaria

Symptoms: Malaria causes fatigue, fever, chills and copious sweating. These symptoms ebb and flow at regular intervals as the disease progresses. The repeating nature of these symptoms — in either two- or three-day cycles — is the chief way malaria is diagnosed. Cases of malaria can be of varied severity. The worst cases include disorientation, high fevers, dehydration, stomach pain and internal bleeding that often proves fatal.

Duration: Malaria has an incubation period that varies from a few days to several months. Once symptoms begin, a case will last between one and four weeks. Exposure to the disease does not provide immunity and, often, those infected with malaria will suffer from occasional bouts of the disease for the rest of their lives.

Vector: Malaria is caused by the bites of infectious mosquitoes. It is a tropical disease with outbreaks occurring most often in or near swampy conditions. Once infected, the victim is not contagious to others.

Treatment: The best treatment is to avoid infection. Treating the skin with ointments that discourage mosquito bites, wearing thick garments that cover the majority of the body and avoiding swampy, tropical areas are all effective ways to avoid malaria. The disease that would be eradicated if the marshlands were drained often hinders building projects in swampy areas. Once a case of malaria has begun, bed rest, clean water to offset dehydration and herbal preparations to reduce fever are the best treatments. Certain bitter-tasting barks have proven more effective than other remedies in reducing fevers and the disease's duration. Malaria can be treated by the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 2 or more successes.

Virulence:	3
Untreated Morbidity:	3
Treated Morbidity:	2
Difficulty to Treat:	2

Bubonic Plague

Symptoms: The primary symptom of bubonic plague is the swollen, red-black nodules that appear at the neck, armpits and groin. High fever, delirium and coughing accompany the distinctive buboes. Eight in ten plague victims die within days of contracting the disease.

Duration: There is usually a two- to six-day incubation period between infection and the appearance of the first symptoms. Once symptoms appear, the disease usually lasts for three days. The lucky few who recover from bubonic plague develop an immunity to it. It is so contagious that proximity to the infected, handling their belongings or burying their corpses is enough to infect fresh victims.

Vector: The cause and source of bubonic plague is unknown. It does not appear in particular seasons or climates and does not appear in isolated outbreaks, rather coming in epidemics that wipe out the majority of a region's population. Avoiding all contact with those infected is the most effective way to avoid bubonic plague. Burning the corpses and belongings of plague victims helps to slow the spread of the disease but does not eradicate it.

Treatment: There is no natural cure for bubonic plague, and contracting this disease can be viewed as a death sentence. Bubonic plague can be cured by the Contagion-Curing Touch Charm with 3 or more successes.

Virulence:	5
Untreated Morbidity:	5
Treated Morbidity:	4
Difficulty to Treat:	4



Chejop Kejak relaxed in his chair atop the Palace Sublime. A towering structure built to commemorate the might of the Immaculates, the palace stood alone against the sky. And in offices atop it, Kejak and his fellows managed the fate of the Realm, or tried. With the Empress gone and the houses vying for position, the reins of power were growing more numerous and less effective. Every negotiation with some noble wore the Sidereal's pretense of secrecy thinner and dragged the ancient conspirators closer to the fray. Eventually, they would be just another of the many cabals vying for control of the Realm and would have no more weight than what their power lent them.

Kejak was ancient, one of the oldest living things in Creation, but few of his 5,000 years showed on his body. In a century or three, not even the Exaltation would be able to sustain Kejak's flesh. He would fade to dust and memories, as his own elders had faded in the years before the Contagion. His Essence would pass to a new Exalt, and his millennia of wisdom and lore would vanish. Yet, despite his tremendous age, Kejak's flesh was firm, and his skin was tanned and rugged. Although the hair on his pate had long thinned and gone white, there was still enough to make an impressive ponytail.

An observer might have mistaken him for a handsome and successful patrician merchant, and Kejak dressed the part. He eschewed the clerical robes so many of his faction favored, especially the younger generation. Though he used the façade of the order, Kejak had helped to fabricate the Immaculate Texts. He would be rather walk to Malfeas than pay them more than the necessary lip service. Instead, he wore a simple wrap of raw white silk and only a few small pieces of jewelry.

Kejak could not fairly be said to think himself a messiah. Though it was true that he and his fellow Sidereals thought themselves to be the only beings capable of navigating the world through these difficult times, that vision was not rooted in religious fervor. Rather, they saw themselves as individuals whose knowledge and skills made them supremely suited to the task. That some doubted the matter in this dark hour was inevitable.

In the time before the Contagion, Kejak and his fellows had drawn up the Prophecy. Those who had not been there could not imagine it — the chaos and the madness as the grandeur of the First Age began to tear itself apart and the desperation of those who realized a solution must be found. The Sidereals had found a path out of the terror, and though the price was high, they had taken it.

The Solars, the Lunars, even the dissenters among their own number — all were sacrificed on the altar of survival. If the Realm was not so glorious as it had been, then at least it survived. Dissenters pointed at the Contagion, at the disappearance of the Empress, at the emergence of the Deathlords and the return of the Solars — and said the Prophecy must be flawed. But the Prophecy had predicted strife and tribulation, and what was the alternative? Chaos?

And now, at the moment of gravest danger, when its members should have been at the side of their brothers and sisters, the Gold faction was sponsoring Solars and competing actively for the possession of newly reborn Sidereals. Kejak sighed in irritation and snapped, "come in," at the silent door. The page who had been about to knock swung the panel inward, amazed as the youngsters always were that their elders could perceive Fate's web with such casual effort. "The Mouth of Peace is here to see you, sir."

The elder Sidereal nodded tiredly. Twice already this week. "Send her in."

Chapter Nine
Wonders And Equipment

This chapter details the various goods and services available in the world of **Exalted**. Obviously, not every good or service is available everywhere. Characters in a small town are unlikely to find articulated plate armor. Such equipment is available only in a tiny number of places — Nexus, the Imperial City and, perhaps, the great cities of the South. Likewise, many large purchases, such as ships and manor houses, may require a character to wait for months or years while the item is built to her specifications.

Mundane Equipment

What follows is a list of non-combat items that **Exalted** characters are likely to purchase. The Storyteller will notice a distinct lack of household goods, provisions and common clothing articles. This lack is deliberate. **Exalted** is not a game about how many candles a character owns or if she can afford a barrel of pickled fish. The only time such things are important is when the character is far away from civilization and has only the things on her back or pack animals. Unless a character is totally destitute, she is assumed to be able to buy food, clothing and shelter of some sort. A character with Resources •• or more can afford any reasonable number of common household objects.

Clothing and Jewelry

Item	Resources Cost
Fancy clothing (custom tailored)	••
Courtly clothing (silk)	•••
Royal raiment (cloth of gold studded with gems)	••••
Noble jewelry (electrum and pinhead-size gems)	•••
Royal jewelry (gold and pea-sized gems)	••••
Imperial jewelry (orichalcum and pigeon's-egg-sized gems)	•••••

Slaves and Animals

Item	Resources Cost
Unskilled slave	••
Skilled slave (healthy, smart, Craft •••)	•••

Concubine (skilled, attractive, disease free)	••••
Keep for a slave for a year	••
Domestic animal (camel, horse or ox)	••
Fine camel/horse (war or racing)	•••
Elephant or mammoth	•••
Fodder for a horse for a month	•
Fodder for an elephant for a month	••
Stabling and keep for a work horse (per week)	••
Stabling and keep for a fine horse (per week)	•••
Stabling and keep for an elephant (per week)	•••
Saddle and tack (basic)	••
Saddle and tack (lavishly decorated)	•••
Howdah	•••

Ships and Property

Item	Resources Cost
Buy an estate	••••
Build a country villa or townhouse	••••
Staff a country villa or townhouse for a month	•••
Furnish a townhouse or villa (Spartan)	•••
Furnish a townhouse or villa (posh)	••••
Build a grand palace	•••••
Staff a grand palace for a month	••••
Furnish a grand palace (Spartan)	••••
Furnish a grand palace (posh)	•••••
Lavish feast for two dozen	•••
Grand banquet for 200	••••
Erect a Manse (rating • to •••)	••••
Erect a Manse (rating •••• to •••••)	•••••
Passage across the Inner Sea	••
Buy a yacht or ship	••••
Crew and provender for a ship for a month	••••
Crew and provender for a yacht for a month	•••
Rent a crack mercenary company for a month	••••
Rent a mercenary army for a month	••••

Realm Expenses

Item	Resources Cost
Price of Commission (Field Command)	•••
Price of Commission (Legionary Command)	••••
Donatives necessary to be named an imperial prefect	••••
Donatives necessary to be named an imperial satrap	•••••
Donatives necessary to have a child accepted at a good school (per annum)	•••

The Resources System

Items in **Exalted** do not generally have a value in game-world money attached to them. Instead, they are rated with the number of dots in Resources a character must possess in order to purchase them.

An item with a Resources cost *lower* than the character's Resources is an out-of-pocket expense. Within reason, the character can purchase as many of the items as she wants without a strain on her pocketbook.

An item with a cost *equal* to the character's Resources is a serious expense. When she buys it, she lowers her Resources rating by 1 until it is increased through roleplaying.

An item with a cost *greater* than the character's Resources is too expensive for her, and she cannot afford to buy it.

Weapons

The following is a general list of commonly used weapons. Obviously, not every weapon is used or manufactured everywhere. Swords, particularly, require special forging and craftsmanship that make them difficult to find outside of military smithies and major urban areas.

Storytellers should bear in mind that, in many areas (including the Realm), it is impossible to legally obtain military weapons or armor of any sort without being a member of the ruling elite or the military or without otherwise making arrangements with the powers that be. Most dictatorial governments keep their populaces disarmed to prevent uprisings, and any large-scale smithing of military weapons and armor will be seen as an attack against the state. Many places do permit the inhabitants of rural areas to own hunting weapons, such as bows and spears, but these are typically subject to confiscation during periods of civil unrest.

Hand-to-Hand Weapons

As the name suggests, these are weapons that are used for hand-to-hand combat. Most, but not all, use the Melee Ability. However, if the character is using a brawling aid, she may substitute her Brawl Ability instead, and if she is using a martial arts weapon, she may substitute her Martial Arts for Melee. This applies to both attacks and parries. All listed hand-to-hand weapons do lethal damage.

Exceptional Weapons

The weapons detailed in these charts are serviceable and sturdy — but not exceptional. Characters with money to burn may seek to buy or have made for them truly exceptional weapons. Exceptional weapons will be available only in those areas that have talented, full-time weaponsmiths — typically large cities and military foundries. Even there, such weapons are usually custom ordered and can rarely be found in quantity — there simply aren't enough first-rate smiths to make the weapons in bulk.

Making a weapon exceptional adds • to the weapon's cost. These weapons have three bonus points that can be distributed among the weapons characteristics — the bonus points can add to the weapon's speed, accuracy, damage or defense or subtract a dot from a minimum due to excellent balance. However, no two bonus points may be added to the same characteristic.

Exceptional bows may divide two points between the weapon's accuracy, rate and range — adding a point to range increases the weapon's range characteristic by 50. Exceptional thrown weapons add 3 points, but improving the weapon's hand-to-hand characteristics do not increase its thrown characteristics and vice versa. Improving

Blades

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 (q.v.), chopping swords are not designed for fencing and agility, but for delivering solid blows that hack through armor and bone.

Great Sword

A great sword is a two-handed weapon used for hacking blows. These massive swords can be either single or double edged. Though these weapons are slow and unsuited to fencing, a strong blow from a great sword can cut a man in half.

Knife

A knife is a weapon with a chopping and stabbing blade about a foot long. Most adults in the world of **Exalted** carry a knife. They are carried not just for personal defense, but for utility as well — knives are used as tableware and to cut and pry, as well as for combat.

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.

Slashing Sword

A slashing sword has a long, single-edged blade about three feet long. These swords are quick and used primarily for arcing cuts. The slashing sword is favored by cavalry; its shape and length make it suited for use from horseback.

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 chopping attacks.

Impact Weapons

Axe

A broad-bladed weapon balanced for use in one hand, an axe is not too different from a chopping sword. Easy to manufacture and of great utility as a tool as well as a weapon, the axe is a popular armament.

Hand-to-Hand Weapons

Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Resources	Minimums
Blades						
Chopping Sword	+0	+1	+4L	+0	•••	S••
Great Sword*	+0	+2	+6L	-1	•••	S•••
Knife	+3	+0	+1L	-2	•	S•
Short Sword	+0	+1	+2L	+1	•	S•
Slashing Sword	+3	+1	+2L	+1	••	S•
Straight Sword	+0	+1	+3L	+1	••	S••
Impact Weapons						
Axe	+0	+0	+5L	+0	•	S••
Club/Staff	+0	+0	+2L	-1	•	S•
Great Axe*	+0	+0	+7L	-1	••	S••
Hammer	-3	+1	+4L	+1	•	S••
Mace	-3	+1	+5L	+0	•	S••
Poleaxe*	-3	-1	+8L	+0	••	S••
Sledge*	-6	-1	+10L	-1	••	S••••
Spears						
Lance**	+10	+0	+2/+8L	-3	•	S••
Short Spear*	+1	+1	+3L	+0	•	S•
Spear*	+3	+1	+3L	+0	•	S••
Brawling Aids						
Bare Fist	+0	+0	+0B	+0	N/A	S•
Cestus	-3	+0	+0L	+0	•	S•
Fighting Gauntlet	+0	+0	+1L	+0	•	S••
Khatar	-3	-0	+2L	-1	••	S•
Kick	-3	-1	+2B	-1	N/A	S•, D••
Tiger Claws	-3	-1	+2L	+0	••	S••
Martial Arts Weapons						
Hook Sword	+0	-1	+3L	+3	•••	S••, D•••, MA•••
Seven-Section Staff	+3	-2	+2L	+2	••	D••••, MA••••
Wind-Fire Wheel	+0	-2	+0L	+2	••	D•••, MA•••

* This weapon can be used by a character on foot to attack a mounted opponent without a penalty.

** This weapon does extra damage on a charge, see its description for details.

Name: The name of the weapon.

Speed: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's initiative total when she is wielding the weapon.

Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Ability total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.

Damage: This value is added to the character's Strength + extra successes to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon.

Defense: This value is added to the character's Dexterity + Ability total when she parries with the weapon.

Resources: The minimum Resources value necessary to purchase the weapon.

Minimums: The minimum number of dots in specific Attributes or Abilities required to wield the weapon effectively. The information is presented as a letter or letters followed by a number of dots. The letter indicates which Attribute or Ability is required. S stands for Strength, D for Dexterity, and MA for Martial Arts. The number of dots is the minimum value the character must have to wield the weapon without penalty. For each dot the character is missing from any minimum, she subtracts 1 from the speed, attack and defense of the weapon. This penalty can cause a weapon's speed, attack and defense to become negative and can worsen already negative values.



Club/Staff

At its most basic, a club is little more than a billet of wood and a staff is a slighrly longer version of the same weapon. A more refined model of either might have a few metal bands added to increase its heft and leather wrapped around the area where the wielder's hands rest. Clubs are popular among truly barbaric Threshold-dwellers, peasants in revolt and outlaws of a poorer sort, while travelers of various sorts favor staves. Treat very well-constructed, banded clubs as maces.

Great Axe

A narrow-bladed axe designed for use in both hands, the great axe is a fearsome weapon. These long-hafted weapons are typically used for striking downward blows. Great axes are the favorite of the Realm's heavy infantry, who use them during sieges and assaults.

Hammer

Hammers are better balanced and lighter than maces, making them faster and more accurate. A smaller head concentrates the force of the hammer's blows and helps make up for the weapon's lack of mass. Many hammers have a sharp point opposite the head, for use against heavily armored opponents.

Mace

A mace is nothing more than a heavy weight on the end of a handle. Slow but powerful, the mace delivers crushing, stunning blows to targets. In the world of **Exalted**, the heads of maces are often elaborately decorated. Some maces 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.

Poleaxe

Similar to the great axe but equipped with a longer haft and heavier blade, the poleaxe is a slow but devastating weapon. While less effective than the great sword, the poleaxe is considerably cheaper and requires less strength than that mighty weapon. As a result, the poleaxe is a popular armament for heavy infantry.

Sledge

A two-handed mace or hammer, the sledge is slow and unwieldy, but strikes with awesome power. Like maces, many sledges are elaborately decorated. Their huge heads are often carved with elaborate battle scenes or sculpted in the shape of fabulous beasts.

Spears

Lance

A difficult weapon to use, 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 individuals on the ground. On a battlefield, this means they usually come into play after an infantry formation breaks and routs.

A character who uses a lance as a jabbing weapon, either overhand or underhand, does only Strength + 2 damage. However, a character who sets the lance under his arm and charges home on the target does Strength + 8, to reflect the fact that the weapon strikes with the mass of both the rider and mount behind it. The player of a character who successfully attacks with a lance must make a difficulty 1 Dexterity + Ride roll. A failed roll typically means either the character loses his lance or is unhorsed. The player of a character under the effect of the Ride Charm Flawless Partnership Meditation need not roll for his character to retain his balance.

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 as a result.

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 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.

Brawling Aids

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 and serve to enhance the wearer's punches. Although blows delivered while wearing cesti do lethal damage, a character wearing them still cannot block lethal attacks without a stunt.

Fighting Gauntlet

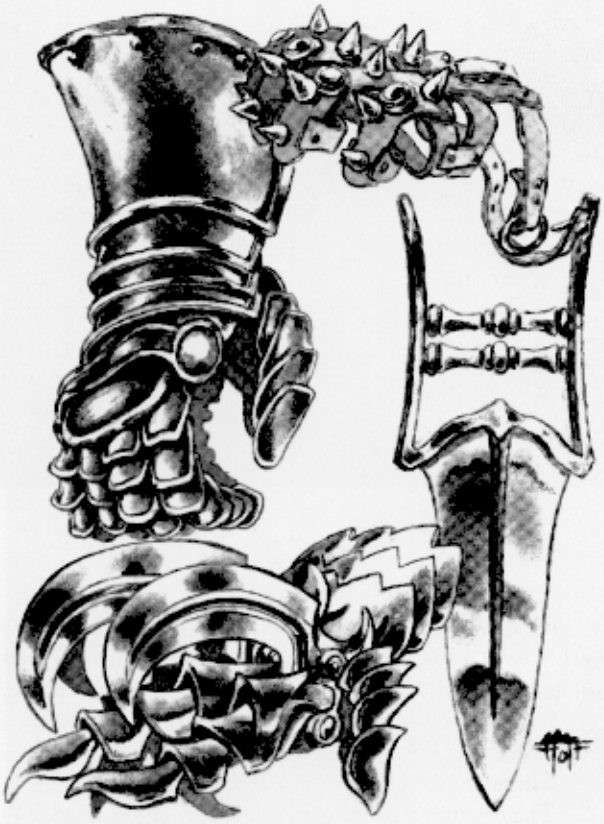
Fighting gauntlets are either articulated metal gloves or full-hand leather gloves covered in overlapping metal plates. Though they slow the character's blows, a character using fighting gauntlets may use her Brawl Ability to block attacks that do lethal damage.

Khatar

The khatar, also known as the punch dagger, is a single-bladed knife that attaches to the character's hand with a glove-and-strap assembly similar to a cestus. When the knives are worn, the character's punches deliver deadly stabs. Although blows delivered while wearing khatar do lethal damage, these weapons cannot be used to block lethal attacks without a stunt.

Tiger Claws

Similar in construction to a khatar, tiger claws are 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 the world of **Exalted**. Characters using tiger claws may use their Brawl Ability to block lethal attacks.



Brawling Aids and Martial Arts Weapons

Characters using brawling aids can use the higher of their Brawl or Melee Abilities when attacking or defending with the weapons. Characters using martial arts weapons likewise use the higher of their Martial Arts or Melee Abilities.

Martial Arts Weapons

Hook Sword

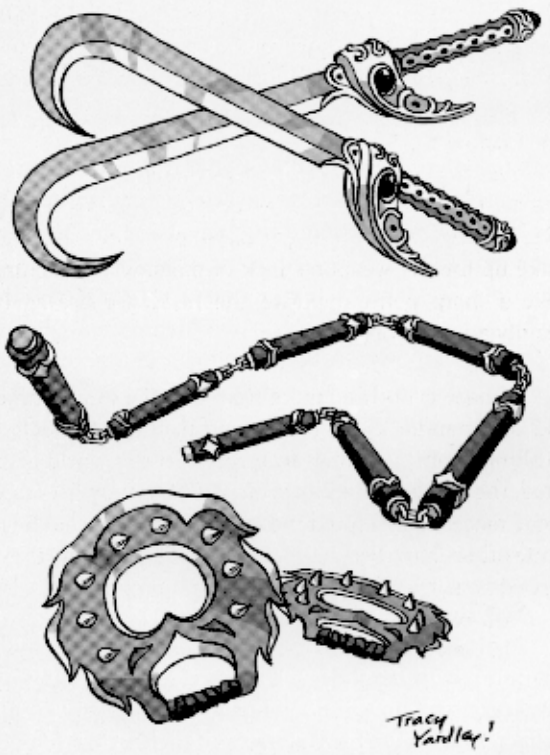
The hook sword is similar in appearance to a straight sword, except it ends in a J-shaped hook that curves back along the inside of the blade. These weapons are always wielded paired.

Seven-Section Staff

This weapon, which can actually have from 3 to 12 sections, is made up of a number of segments of wood or metal connected by very short lengths of chain. The weapon is wielded as a combination of staff and flail and is very difficult to master. It can be used to strike, entangle or disarm foes. Someone able to wield it effectively is a dangerous opponent. Botches with this weapon are likely to be very damaging to the wielder.

Wind-Fire Wheel

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, which are always wielded paired, are used to deliver crushing or slashing blows and to block or catch weapons for disarming.



Bows

Bows are the premier ranged weapons in the world of **Exalted**. A bow must be made for the character's Strength because, if it is too strong for him, he won't be able to string it or bend it. A bow fired by a character with higher Strength than it is built to accommodate uses the bow's maximum Strength and not the character's. Further, construction techniques place an upper limit on the maximum Strength bows of a given type can accommodate — there is simply no way to build a self bow as strong as some characters.

Bow Types

Composite Bow

Composite bows are made of layers of different woods, often reinforced with layers of horn. The only



BOWS

Name	Accuracy	Max Strength	Rate	Range	Resources
Self Bow	+0	3	2	150	•
Long Bow	+1	4	3	200	••
Composite Bow	+0	5+	3	250	•••

Name: The name of the weapon.
Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Archery total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Max Strength: The maximum Strength a bow of this type can be built for.
Rate: The maximum number of arrows that can be fired from the bow in a given turn without the use of Charms.
Range: The range interval of the weapon in yards. Ranged weapons can shoot out to their range without penalty. They can fire at up to twice their range with a -2 penalty and can fire at up to three times their range at a -4 penalty.
Resources: The minimum Resources the character must have to purchase the item.

weakness of a composite bow, other than its expense, is the fact that it is held together with glue. If it becomes wet, the glue weakens and the bow can come to pieces when pulled. As a result, most composite bows are bound in waterproof leather covers (but characters must still be careful about not immersing the weapons). A composite bow can be made for a character of any Strength, though bows for characters above Strength 5 are a Resources •••• item.

Long Bow

Longer than a self bow, the long bow is harder to pull and offers considerably more power. A character can never have a Strength of higher than 4 for the purposes of determining a long bow's damage.

Self Bow

A stout length of springy wood about three feet long. The self bow is bent along the wood's natural shape. Of simple construction, the self bow is not very powerful. A character can never have a Strength higher than 3 for the purposes of determining a self bow's damage.

ARROWS

Broadhead

Broadhead arrows have broad triangle- or leaf-shaped heads. The arrowhead is wide, to increase the amount of tissue damage done on a successful hit, but still tapers to allow the arrow to penetrate armor. Broadhead arrows do the firing character's Strength + 2 as their base damage.

Fowling

Fowling arrows do not have a point. Instead, they have a round wooden bulb at the tip. They're normally used to hunt birds, which would be ruined by a direct hit from a normal arrow. However, they can also be used to stun targets without killing them. Fowling arrows do the firing character's Strength + 2 as their base damage, but that damage is *bashing*.

Frog Crotch

Frog crotch arrows are have a Y-shaped head, with the arms of the Y facing forward, sharpened on the inside. These arrows do hideous damage to tissue but perform terribly against armor. Frog crotch arrows do the firing character's Strength + 4 as their base damage, but the lethal soak of the target's armor is doubled before applying the damage.

Target

Target arrows have no blades on their heads — simply hardened steel tips. Target arrows do the firing character's Strength as their base damage, but treat the lethal soak of the target's armor as half its true value when the damage is applied.

THROWN WEAPONS

Thrown weapons occupy a nebulous realm between melee weapons and bows. Most thrown weapons, other than chakram, can be used in hand-to-hand combat, but all are more effective when thrown. When a thrown weapon is used in hand-to-hand combat, the character can choose to use the higher of her Melee or Thrown Abilities.

Chakram

A chakram is a small disc or ring of steel with sharpened outer edges. The chakram's shape allows it to fly farther than most thrown weapons, but the fact that it doesn't tumble in flight deprives it of much striking power.

Hatchet

A small one-handed axe balanced for throwing. Hatchets have very short ranges, but their weight and tumbling motion makes them deadly weapons. Hatchets are a favored weapon of barbarians because of their utility.

Javelin

The most powerful of the thrown weapons, the javelin is a small, light spear often carried in small bundles. The javelin is superior to the hatchet as a melee weapon and has better range than the chakram. However, this comes at a

Thrown Weapons

Name	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Resources
Chakram	+0	+1L	3	20	•
Hatchet	-1	+3L	2	10	•
Javelin	+1	+3L	2	30	•
Throwing Baton	+0	+3B	2	10	•
Throwing Knife	+0	+2L	3	15	•

Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Thrown total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Damage: This value is added to the character's Strength + extra successes to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon.
Rate: The maximum number of that type of weapon that can be thrown in a given turn without the use of Charms.
Range: The range interval of the weapon in yards. Ranged weapons can be thrown at targets out to their range without penalty. They can be used against targets at up to twice their range with a -2 penalty and at up to three times their range at a -4 penalty.
Resources: The minimum Resources the character must have to purchase the item.

Hand-to-Hand

Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Minimums
Hatchet	+0	+0	+2L	-1	S••
Javelin	+1	+1	+2L	+0	S•
Throwing Baton	+0	+0	+2B	-1	S•
Throwing Knife	+2	+0	+1L	-2	S•

Speed: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's initiative total when she is wielding the weapon.
Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Ability total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Damage: This value is added to the character's Strength + extra successes to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon.
Defense: This value is added to the character's Dexterity + Ability total when she parries with the weapon.
Minimums: The minimum number of dots in Strength required to wield the weapon effectively. The information is presented as a letter S followed by a number of dots. The number of dots is the minimum value the character must have to wield the weapon without penalty. For each dot the character lacks from the minimum, she subtracts 1 from the speed, attack and defense of the weapon. This penalty can cause a weapon's speed, attack and defense to become negative and can worsen already negative values.

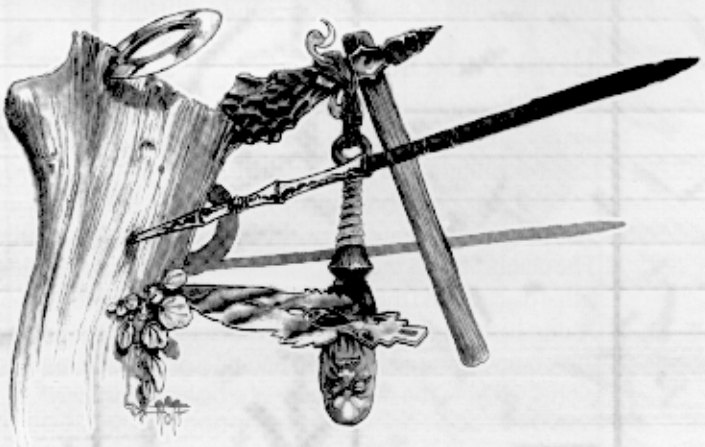
price — unlike all the other thrown weapons, javelins are large, bulky and difficult to conceal.

Throwing Baton

A short, blunt and balanced length of wood, the throwing baton is used for hunting small animals and carried by the city guards in some of the more peaceful areas. Throwing batons inflict bashing damage.

Throwing Knife

The middle ground of thrown weapons, with more punch than the chakram and more range and concealability than the hatchet. Throwing knives in the world of **Exalted** are often made in a variety of fanciful shapes — crosses, praying goddesses, warriors with their arms outstretched or elaborate



Name	Soak (L/B)	Mobility Penalty	Fatigue	Resources
Light Armor				
Breastplate	4/2	-1	1	••
Buff Jacket	3/4	-1	2	•
Chain Shirt	3/1	-0	1	••
Medium Armor				
Chain Hauberk	6/7	-3	2	•••
Lamellar	6/8	-2	1	•••
Reinforced Buff Jacket	5/6	-2	2	••
(Concealed Plates)	5/6	-2	3	••
Heavy Armor				
Articulated Plate	9/9	-3	2	•••••
Plate-and-Chain	8/10	-4	3	••••
Reinforced Breastplate	7/6	-2	1	••••
Superheavy Armor				
Chain Swathing	11/14	-6	5	••••
Superheavy Plate	12/12	-4	3	•••••

Name: The name of the armor type.
Soak (L/B): The lethal and bashing soaks of the armor.
Mobility Penalty: The penalty subtracted from all rolls requiring agility or balance while wearing the armor.
Fatigue: The difficulty of the armor type's fatigue roll.
Resources: The minimum Resources required to purchase the armor.

abstract designs. Throwing knives are balanced for throwing, not melee combat — don't let players convince you they should use the statistics for a normal knife.

ARMOR

Though many Exalted have Charms that allow them to fight without armor, most use some sort of protective gear, even if it's no more than a shield. Mortals, without the luxury of magic, are heavily reliant on armor in battle. Armor's protection is a double-edged sword. Though it defends the character against blows, it is fatiguing, and its bulk makes any sort of graceful maneuver —such as running, climbing or acrobatics — more difficult.

BODY ARMOR

Body armor is the character's primary protection against attacks. A character without armor or protective Charms will not live long in battle.

All armor has three important statistics. The first is its soak. Soak is represented by two numbers, separated by a slash. The number before the slash is the armor's protection against lethal damage, and the number after the slash is its protection against bashing damage. When a character wears the armor, these numbers are added to her natural soak, and the result is subtracted from the raw damage of attacks against her.

The second important number is the armor's mobility penalty. This is the number of dice subtracted from the character's dice pools when she tries to do anything requiring agility or physical dexterity. This penalty doesn't normally apply to attack and parry rolls, but does apply to dodge rolls and Athletics rolls for feats that require whole-body agility. The Storyteller can also apply this penalty to anything else she deems becomes more difficult in 20 or more pounds of protective gear.

The third and final number is the armor's fatigue value. Players must make a Stamina + Endurance roll when their characters wear armor, with a difficulty equal to the armor's fatigue value. If a player fails the roll, his character takes a -1 penalty to all actions due to soreness and fatigue. This penalty continues to accumulate as the character continues to fail Endurance rolls. Accumulated penalties dissipate at the rate of one point of penalty per eight hours of rest outside the armor.

The frequency with which the character has to make these rolls is determined by the weather conditions and the exercise the character is engaging in. If a character is engaging in normal activity under a partly cloudy sky on a cool day, the player will have to make a roll every 4 hours of game time that passes. Characters in very hot or cold weather, characters exposed to prolonged sun or engaging in strenuous labor will cause their players to have to make

Donning Armor

Armor is not a simple thing. It takes a number of minutes equal to the mobility penalty of a suit of armor to put it on. A character who rushes can do it in half that time, but any botch she rolls almost certainly indicates that something has gone wrong with her armor. 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 dice pool penalties as the shifting armor deprives her of full mobility.

a fatigue roll more frequently. For each of those factors (extreme heat or cold, sun and activity), halve the time between checks — the player of a character fighting a battle in a desert under a bright sun would be making Stamina + Endurance rolls every 30 minutes of game time.

Characters in the shade, in cold weather or those not exerting themselves at all double the time between checks. These factors can offset the negative factors above. For example, the player of a character exerting himself in cold weather would make Endurance rolls every four hours of game time — four hours, halved for hard labor and doubled for cold weather. The maximum amount of time a character can go between checks is eight hours — the very act of wearing armor is, to some degree, tiring.

Exalted characters have access to Endurance Charms that offset the negative effects of armor.

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 and an armor that can be worn without causing too much fatigue.

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 set up 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.

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.

Medium Armor

Chain 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. Chain hauberks are not worn directly against the skin — they typically include a layer of padding underneath to spread the impact of blows.

Lamellar

Lamellar armor is a breastplate composed of a series of interlocking horizontal bands. Lamellar is lighter and more flexible than a standard breasrplate 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.

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.

Concealed versions of this jacket are available, with the plates and chain sewn to the inside of the jacket. Though this makes the armor considerably more fatiguing to wear, it also conceals the fact that the character is dressed for conflict and muffles the inevitable clank of the armor.

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. The only disadvantages are the vast skill necessary to forge it and the absurd prices such skilled craftsmen charge for their labor. This armor is commonly available only in the Realm and in the city of Nexus.

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 armor of heavy cavalry outside the Realm.

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 bracers 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 that are totally unarmored. The reinforced breastplate is the standard armor of the Realm's heavy infantry.

Superheavy Armor

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 — unExalted characters wearing it can walk 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 superheavy plate.

Superheavy Plate

Massively reinforced articulated plate, this armor is similar to articulated plate but is in all ways superior. The plates are heavier, the pins and hinges that permit the armor's articulation are thicker and more durable, and the joints are large and sturdy enough that, in many cases, chain reinforcement can be dispensed with altogether. Superheavy plate is seen very occasionally in sieges but, most often, adorns the bodies of Exalted warriors, whose magic allows them to bear the massive burden of this armor as easily as a normal mortal bears the burden of a buff jacket.

Helmets

In the real world, the helmet is of critical importance because it protects the warrior's brain and sense organs. However, **Exalted** is a dramatic game, not a realistic one. Helmets are largely a cosmetic matter — they're a substitute for a striking hair style.

If the Storyteller is running a gritty game, he may wish to penalize characters who don't wear helmets by allowing opponents to make called shots at the bare-headed characters' unarmored pates by subtracting one success from the attack rolls. This penalty is an exception to the rule that called shots cannot be used to cause extra damage but one that accurately reflects the effect of not wearing a helmet. Storytellers should make sure the players know what kind of game they'll be playing in before killing a character with a shot to his unarmored head.

Regardless of the game's genre, all helms are considered mechanically identical.

Masked Helm

The masked helm is the standard helm for completing heavy armor. The design is a thicker pot helm (q.v.), usually without a spire. The difference is that an armored plate can be affixed in front of the wearer's face. This plate has holes for the wearer's eyes and mouth, but is usually decorated with some sort of ferocious beast.

In the Realm, draconic images are common, while in the Threshold, the faces are typically those of dangerous beings — Fair Folk warrior races, war spirits and predators such as wolves and tigers.

Pot Helm

This helm is a rounded bowl that fits over the wearer's head. Typically, it is longer in the back than in the front, protecting the wearer's ears. These helms usually have a nosepiece and a neck guard in the back. The neck guard is either an extension of the helm itself or a drape of chain or armored leather. These helms also often have a so-called spire, a point cast into the helm that slopes gently downward into the body of the helmet, to make it difficult to land a stunning blow atop the crown of the helmet.

Slotted Helmet

One of the simplest and most durable helms, the slotted helmet is a cylinder, rounded at one end and open at the other, that fits over the wearer's head. The bottom is typically fluted to allow the wearer to move her head. A T-shaped slot in the front of the helm allows the wearer to see, breathe and speak clearly. Slotted helmets are usually cast as a single piece, making them very strong. Slotted helmets are often used to complete a suit of heavy armor in areas where the craftsmanship is not up to forging a masked helm.

Shields

Shields are tools used to block attacks. They vary in size and shape, but all have the same purpose and function — they are strapped to the character's arm and interposed between the character's body and attacks. Some are made of light plywood with a metal rim around them, while others are made from layered ox-hide or even from hardwood faced with metal. However, sturdiness is often a liability where shields are concerned; the heavier the shield's construction, the slower it is to block attacks. Few enchanted shields are created — by their nature, shields have short lifespans. Even in the First Age, few individuals were willing to spend the time and resources necessary to construct an item whose very purpose guaranteed it would soon perish. Those few enchanted shields that do exist are extremely magical, and they are typically impervious to any damage save the very powerful and specific dooms that can be inflicted on an object when a sorcerer has it on her workbench.

Buckler

A buckler is a small shield, between one and two feet across, used to actively parry incoming blows. It raises the difficulty to attack the character in hand-to-hand combat by 1 but does nothing to protect the character from missile fire.

Target Shield

A large shield, able to effectively block missile fire. Target shields are usually round or roundly triangular in shape and are often emblazoned with a device or logo significant to the character or her cause. A target shield raises the difficulty of hitting a character in hand-to-hand combat or with missile fire by 1. A character using a target shield adds 1 to the mobility penalty of her armor or suffers a 1 point mobility penalty, if she is using no other armor.

Tower Shield

Twice as tall as a target shield and at least as wide, a tower shield offers excellent protection against missile fire. Using a tower shield increases the difficulty of hitting a character in hand-to-hand combat by 1 and increases the difficulty of hitting him with ranged attacks by 2.

A tower shield increases the mobility penalty of the character's armor by 2 or inflicts a 2 point mobility penalty, if he is using no other armor. Most tower shields have a series of straps that allow the user to attach the shield to his body during use. In this configuration, the shield provides the same protection as a target shield, but the character has both hands free. While this is useful, it is a cumbersome arrangement — it adds 1 to the fatigue value of the character's armor.

Everyday Wonders

Though mortal men have little access to the sort of magic wielded by the Exalted, the spirits and the Fair Folk, they are not completely without the ability to wield occult power. In a time as magical as the Second Age of Man, there is power to be found in even the smallest acts. Though the Exalted often overlook this magic as beneath them or useless compared to the power to directly shape Essence, the sorcery that men can accomplish is not quite so worthless as they believe. Mortal magicians practice geomancy and astrology, and they also have access to a variety of minor wonders to ease their burden and tilt the scales of fate in their favor.

Prayers and Offerings (Resources Vary)

Though they are detached, the Elemental Dragons, the Maidens and even the Unconquered Sun are not indifferent to human affairs. They are simply aloof from these events and little concerned with the goings and doings of individuals.

Yet, for all their distance, offerings that please them can draw the gods' favor. The gods love these things best: the thighbones of meat animals, wrapped in fat and burned as offerings; precious things broken in their honor; the blood of sacrificial animals poured over their altars; and the smoke from burning incense and prayer papers.

In order to gain the favor of the gods, the priest must first make an offering and then beseech the gods for their attention and aid. This is a Charisma + Performance roll, whose difficulty is (6 - the Resources value of the offering). If the individual making the offering is not a priest, the difficulty increases by one. Though they may wish otherwise, all Zenith Caste Solar Exalted are priests.

The favor of the gods is a subtle thing. It comes in the shape of portents and favorable turns of fate, not as divine resurrections and armies of heavenly warriors. Rarely do the gods interfere so visibly in the world of men, for they are wise and know that men lose their fear of those things they have grown accustomed to.

In mediating this, the Storyteller should keep in mind that the attention of the gods is a source of good luck. Their benevolent notice brings favorable circumstances — accurate dreams and forebodings of future events, good fortune rather than bad. They are not the sorts of things that have mechanical effects, nor do they guarantee success, they simply tilt the tables somewhat in the character's favor.

Seven Bounties Paste

(Resources •••)

Seven Bounties Paste is, as its name suggests, made from the roots of seven rare plants. When mixed with alcohol, it makes an extremely hot-tasting, bitter, red paste normally mixed with rice and broth to render if palatable. The Seven Bounties Paste can cure almost any illness, save leprosy and the Great Contagion. The player of a character imbibing the paste may make an immediate difficulty 1 Stamina + Endurance roll, without any penalties, for the character to overcome any ailment she suffers from, be it a sickness or an infected wound. Each of the seven bounties effects the character once — roll once for each successive day for seven days for the character to overcome the effects of the illness. Seven Bounties Paste is rare to begin with — in times of plague, its price can rise to astronomical levels.

Sweet Cordial

(Resources ••••)

Brewed from orchids found only in the Southeast jungles, tubers from the slopes of the Imperial Mountain and the glands of certain deep-sea fish found only near the Elemental Pole of Water, this cordial's overwhelming sweetness is matched only by its astronomical price. Yet, despite that price, this thick purple potion is constantly in demand.

Immediately upon imbibing this elixir, the character falls into a narcotic haze for the next 12 hours. Her player may make a Stamina + Endurance roll at difficulty 1, without wound penalties, for the character to recover from the effect of any wound-related infections. She also automatically heals one health level while under the cordial's effects. Once the cordial has been imbibed, it remains in the character's system for a full 28 days. If the potion is taken again before it passes naturally from the character's system, it acts as a hallucinogenic poison — the character suffers 12 hours of horrifying narcotic hallucinations and must succeed at a Stamina + Resistance roll or take 4 health levels of lethal damage.

Talismans

(Resources Vary OR Artifact •)

It is human nature to attempt to persuade fate and chance to change their course. Some pray to the gods, while others carry magic charms and talismans to bring them luck. Regardless of their efficacy in our own world, in the world of **Exalted**, these methods are quite effective, if unreliable.

Most talismans are generated by a natural event — a stroke of good luck, a noteworthy deed — whose magic lingers in mementos of the incident. Individuals seek out the best mementos they can find and cross their fingers.

However, talismans can also be created by magicians and occultists, Exalted and otherwise. By combining materials pleasing and displeasing to the spirits and the gods, a magician may seek to make a lucky item. The raw materials for such an undertaking are often costly, and the results are uncertain, but the chances of success are better than attempting to get a talisman by gathering mementos.

Both sorts of talismans are offered for sale. The natural sort usually have a cost between Resources • and •••, while the created sort begin at Resources ••• and go up from there. It is a difficulty 3 Intelligence + Occult roll to create an effective talisman, though the difficulty decreases to 2 if the character actually has the memento of an appropriate event to work from.

It is impossible to tell, from visual inspection, if a talisman is effective. A character with Occult 2 or higher can make certain simple tests on the item involving spoken words or passes of the hands. This testing requires a difficulty 1 Perception + Occult roll. If successful, the character can tell if the talisman possesses true power.

The talismans described below are just a small selection of the kinds available. For example, there are fertility talismans for crops, livestock and humans and charms for safe sea voyages and for luck in business. For every endeavor, hedge magic has produced a magical remedy, sometimes effective but often not.

It's worth noting that the effects of multiple talismans of the same type do not stack linearly. In general, a character will benefit only from the best talisman she carries, though the Storyteller may wish to extend some additional benefit to truly prodigious talisman collections.

Charms Against Disease

One of the rarest and most valued talismans is a charm against disease. Carried on a character's person, this talis-

man adds one die to the Stamina + Resistance roll to withstand disease and one die to the Stamina + Endurance roll to overcome its effects. Used to protect a household, the talisman adds two dice to the Stamina + Resistance rolls of all those within when they attempt to resist infection. However, the charm is only effective so long as the individuals are within the warded house. Very strong charms against disease have double or even triple these effects.

Good Luck Charms

Good luck charms don't so much give a character good luck as protect him from bad luck. Once per story, a good luck charm will protect the character from the negative effects of a botch, either one the player rolls or one another player rolls that would hurt the talisman carrying character. This protection may have indirect effects — for example, if the character is aboard a ship that crashes into a shoal due to pilot mishap, he may be picked up by a passing ship or may find a floating spar and be cast safely ashore. Very powerful good luck charms will negate two or more botches in a single story.

Walkaways

Naturally occurring walkaways are created from mementos of a memorable accident where the survivors should have been killed or maimed but instead emerged unharmed (hence the name). Once per story, an effective walkaway will negate one success on a single, life-threatening damage roll. Very powerful walkaways can negate two or even three successes, but they must all be from the same damage roll. As always, the Storyteller determines when the talisman's effects take place, but the player should make sure to remind her that his character carries a talisman.

Warding Charms

There are different talismans that protect against the Fair Folk, spirits and elementals, demons or the walking dead. These charms cause beings of the appropriate type to suffer a -1 penalty to all their dice pools when attempting to affect the wearer. Very powerful warding charms may have double or even triple this effect. Magical beings can sense when an individual is warded against their power and often react with hostility. Warding charms are the easiest sort of talismans to make — reduce the cost and difficulty of the rolls involved by 1.

Lesser Wonders

Not all of the magic of the Exalted is of earth-shaking potency. There are many items that were created for simple utility, from Hearthstones to lesser enchanted items. Those below are just a sampling — Storytellers should use them as guidelines for their own creations.

Jewelry

Jewlery and ornamentation has been a favorite of the Exalted since the First Age. It not only serves as an ornament, it also allows Hearthstones to lie against the character's skin and often provides lesser magical bonuses as well. During the First Age, jewelry was often used to declare the character's political allegiance, but the meaning of the symbolism has been largely forgotten in the modern day.

Hearthstone Amulet (Artifact •)

Hearthstone amulets were common in the First Age because they allowed characters to carry Hearthstones innocuously. Though forged from the Five Magical Materials, these amulets are too small to provide special benefits to their bearers based on their material.

Each Hearthstone amulet contains a setting for a single Hearthstone. A character wearing such an amulet against her skin gains the basic benefits of a Hearthstone — that is, the ability to regain Essence more quickly. However, a character can commit 1 mote of Essence to the amulet, just as if she were maintaining a Charm with a cost of 1 mote. This causes the amulet to resonate and activates the Hearthstone. If the character removes the amulet, the benefit dissipates.

Common Shapes

Orichalcum: The most common sort of orichalcum amulets are starbursts in varying patterns. Other common shapes include leopard and eagle heads and amulets forged in the shapes of the various Caste Marks.

Moonsilver: The most common sort of moonsilver amulet is the so-called moonburst, a stylized moon-face that depicts both the full and crescent moon. Other common symbols are owl and wolf heads, inward-turning spirals and simple teardrops just large enough to contain the Hearthstone.

Jade: Jade amulets from the First Age are typically carved in abstract elemental shapes or in representation of various elemental dragons. Those from the post-Contagion era are of much cruder workmanship and are generally carved into symbols that venerate the various Immaculates.

Starmetal: Starmetal amulets are very rare, as starmetal is not common enough to waste on items of little power. Those that exist are typically minimalistic in the extreme — little more than drawn-wire cages for the Hearthstones.

Soulsteel: Because soulsteel was virtually unknown until the modern age, there are no surviving amulets of First Age manufacture. Those that have been seen have typically either been decorative or forged in death motifs — death's heads, crossed bones and the like.

Dragon Tear Tiara (Artifact ••)

Another common decorative item, these tiaras and circlets were forged from all the Magical Materials and incorporate all the motifs of Hearthstone amulets, above. Regardless of the material from which they're forged, all tiaras provide the same benefits.

Each has a setting for a Hearthstone located directly over the character's Caste Mark. Dragon tear tiaras require the commitment of 2 motes of Essence to activate the Hearthstone

Items of the Wrong Material

Most magical items intended for use by the Exalted are made from one of the Five Magical Materials and provide additional bonuses to Exalted who are most closely attuned to that material — for example, moonsilver weapons provide extra bonuses when wielded by a Lunar Exalted.

It is possible, but not easy, for an Exalted to gain these extra bonuses even if she is not of the appropriate type. To do this, the character must commit twice as many motes of Essence as normal to activate the item and the player must make a Wits + Lore roll at difficulty 3. If the roll succeeds, her character harmonizes the item fully with her own anima and gains the additional bonuses as if she were an Exalted of the appropriate type.

If the Lore roll fails, her character takes a health level of unsoakable lethal damage from the harmonic feedback and must drop the item. This feedback also causes any Hearthstones in the item to shatter, though they will reform naturally at their Manses of origin over the next month. A botch on this roll can lead to the damage or destruction of the item.

and the tiara's own magical powers. When activated, the tiara adds 1 die to the character's Perception for normal perception rolls. This bonus increases to 3 dice when the character is attempting to perform geomancy, astrology, detect spirits or otherwise perform tasks that require occult sensitivity.

Hearthstone Bracers (Artifact ••)

Another common survivor of the First Age that is still manufactured by the Dragon-Blooded, Hearthstone bracers provide powerful defensive bonuses to the Exalted who carries them. These bracers come as a pair, one of which has a setting for a single Hearthstone and the other of which is imbued with magical power. These powers only work for an Exalted of the appropriate type.

Hearthstone bracers require the commitment of 4 motes of Essence to activate — 2 for each bracer. A bracer *must* be worn with its mate and will not activate unless worn as a pair.

Orichalcum: Ornately wrought in homage to the Unconquered Sun, these bracers cause Solar Exalted who wear them to strike with the surety and power of the Sun. All the character's attacks have their damage increased by 2 while he is wearing the bracers.

Moonsilver: Almost liquid or organic in appearance, Moonsilver bracers lend Lunar wearers the bracers' own somewhat protean nature. The character's lethal soak increases by 2 as her body adapts to flow around attacks.

Jade: Carved in elaborate draconic shapes, these bracers cause Dragon-Blooded characters wearing them to move with the speed of a striking dragon. These characters add 2 to their base initiative while the bracers are attuned.

Starmetal: Starmetal bracers are decorated with elaborate abstract and astrological designs. Like much else of starmetal, they are typically of minimalistic design, so as not to waste the precious stuff. Sidereal Exalted who attune these bracers to their animas move more in accordance with destiny. They add 1 to their weapons' attack, defense and initiative rolls.

Soulsteel: These items are somewhat uncommon, simply because the Deathlords rarely waste time forging objects of little power for their underlings. Soulsteel bracers are typically decorated with the sort of imagery common in war-tools in the Underworld — weeping faces, shrieking souls, skulls and the like.

Soulsteel bracers bring the forces of entropy to bear on the target, decreasing her soak by 2 against the Abyssal's attacks. This effect cannot reduce a target's soak below 0.

Hearthstones

Hearthstones are the talismans of the Exalted. Where mortal men gather mementos of magic, the Chosen harvest its very fruits. From the heart of a Manse grows a crystal of pure magic, usually about the size of a large chicken egg. Such crystals are of unearthly beauty, growing naturally in beautiful cuts. Yet, it is not for their luster that the Chosen prize them.

Many items made of the Five Magical Materials have sockets in them, for the mounting of these crystals. When an Exalted is attuned to a Manse, places that Manse's Hearthstone into an item made with one of the Five Magical Materials and then invests Essence in the item to attune its resonance to her own, the Hearthstone resonates as well.

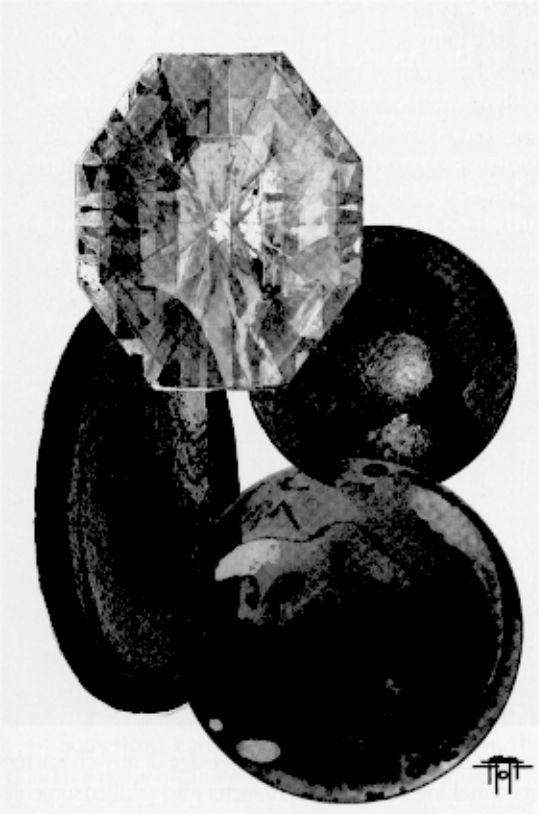
Such a resonant Hearthstone has a beneficial effect on the Exalted, like a mighty talisman. This effect is determined by the architecture of the Manse that produced the stone and the nature of the Demesne that forms the Manse's foundation. Some provide minor bonuses, while more powerful Hearthstones grant magical powers.

Ten Hearthstones are depicted below — two for each of the five elements. They should be used as examples by Storytellers and players when designing their own. For more information on Hearthstones, see the Manse entry on page 145 of the Traits chapter. For more information on Manses and their construction, see the Craft entry on page 245 of the Drama chapter.

Hearthstones of Air

Windhands Gemstone (Manse •••)

This Hearthstone is perfectly clear — so clear that it becomes invisible if submerged in clear water. A character



bearing this Hearthstone has his reflexes enhanced, allowing him to knock aside or dodge arrows and thrown attacks with casual ease. Whenever the character is subject to a ranged attack, he may make a reflexive roll to dodge or parry it (his option) at his full Dexterity + (his Dodge or his highest combat Ability, whichever he chooses) dice pool.

Gem of Sapphire and Emerald (Manse •••••)

This gem has no constant color — depending on the angle the viewer sees it from, it appears pale or brilliant, cloudy or translucent, green or blue.

A character bearing this Hearthstone is treated as if she was constantly under the effects of the spell Sapphire Countermagic. Terrestrial Circle spells cast at her are snuffed out instantly, and Celestial Circle spells that target her are torn asunder. This Hearthstone protects the character only — she cannot disrupt spells that do not include her in their effects, nor can she tear apart already-extant magic.

Hearthstones of Earth

Salt-Gem of the Spirit's Eye (Manse ••)

This stone is white and porous, like salt or chalk, but like all Hearthstones, is almost impossible to mar without enchanted tools. A character bearing this Hearthstone is very difficult for unmanifested spirits to perceive. If a spirit is not actively looking for the character, it will overlook him. If a spirit is looking for the character, it increases the difficulty of Perception + Awareness rolls to spot the character by 1 (if he's using Stealth). If an unmanifested spirit attacks the character, any attempts to harm the character at a -2 dice penalty. This Hearthstone has no effect on spirits that have donned physical form.

Gem of Adamant Skin (Manse ••••)

This Hearthstone is a glittering, flawless black ovoid. The character who bears it cannot be cut or have her bones broken. Lethal damage done to her is automatically converted to bashing before soak is applied. This Hearthstone has no effect on aggravated damage.

Hearthstones of Fire

Gem of the Calm Heart (Manse •)

This Hearthstone is teardrop shaped and the bright, glittering red of heart's blood. It serves to bank the fires of the character's heart, allowing him to act out of reason rather than anger. The Hearthstone allows the character who bears it to spend Willpower to suppress a Valor check without adding to his Limit. This Hearthstone has no effect on Limit Break conditions.

Jewel of Hungry Fire (Manse ••)

This gem is bright orange-red around the edges, deepening to a glowing brick red at the center, like the coals of a banked fire. The Hearthstone draws heat and flame into itself, protecting the character. Add 6 to the character's soak when applying damage from fire attacks.

Hearthstones of Water

The Freedom Stone (Manse •••)

The Hearthstone is a murky blue-black, full of shifting colors, like lake water rich with algae. A character who bears this Hearthstone can never be physically restrained. Shackles placed around her wrists will fall off, the knots of lassos and nooses will come undone when drawn tight. All grapple, clinch, hold and throw maneuvers attempted against her automatically fail. Note that the character cannot be *restrained*. She can still be confined — this Hearthstone does nothing to counter locked doors and barred gates.

Seacalm Gemstone (Manse ••••)

In appearance, a fist-sized drop of brilliant azure seawater caught in perfect stasis, this Hearthstone brings the character incredible luck at sea. No matters how severe the weather or how poor the handling, the character's ship will never founder at sea and will, in fact, emerge totally unscathed. Note that this does not protect it from shoals, pirates or anything of the sort — it only protects the character's ship from weather-related mishaps. Note this is more powerful than it sounds — a character can ride before a gale with full sails and have no fear of ripped cloth or snapped masts.

Hearthstones of Wood

Stone of Healing (Manse •)

This stone is a healthy earth-brown, mottled with spots of green. It is round in shape and could have come from the bottom of any streambed, were the colors not so vibrant. The stone



Breaking Hearthstones

Hearthstones are very durable items formed from pure magic. They're far too hard to break in the heat of combat, even with a weapon forged from one of the Five Magical Materials. The easiest way to destroy a Hearthstone is to damage the Manse it springs from. Failing that, a character who has Occult 3 and Craft (Jeweler) 3 can, with several days of study, find a natural seam down which a chisel made from one of the Five Magical Materials will split the gem, rendering it into chunks of inert gray stone.

A player must make a difficulty 1 Perception + Craft (Jeweler) roll for his character to do this. A single success destroys the stone, but a botch indicates the stone was split along the wrong plane of fracture, releasing wild magical effects similar to the results of high-circle countermagic spells. Two characters — a sorcerer and a jeweler — can work together to split a stone, but the difficulty of the Craft (Jeweler) roll increases to 2.

enhances the medical talents and knowledge of any character that bears it, making an unskilled character into a skilled surgeon and a gifted doctor into a brilliant healer. A character bearing this stone has three dice added to all her player's Medicine rolls.

Gem of Incomparable Wellness (Manse •••••)

This brilliant emerald stone has an unearthly appearance, for it is constantly changing shape as it grows outward from its ever-shrinking center. A character carrying this stone cannot die. He will regenerate one health level per turn, even if rendered into ash. Aggravated damage requires up to a minute per health level to regenerate. The bearer will never become sick and never age. He cannot drown, suffocate, starve or dehydrate. The only way he can be destroyed is if the Hearthstone is broken, if the Manse is damaged so much the stone becomes inactive or if the item the stone is set in is separated from him long enough for the committed Essence in the setting to dissipate (about a day).

Greater Wonders

These powerful items were never common, even in the First Age. Today, they are rare indeed. Most of the wonders that survive are war gear because such items were built to survive hard use. Most other items were long ago broken or had their magic exhausted. However, particularly in the Realm, there are still some powerful items of the First Age in use, and others lie undiscovered in caches scattered across Creation.

Daiklaves

Elaborately decorated and with double-edged blades over four feet long and six or more inches wide, daiklaves are the traditional weapons of the Exalted. Daiklaves are forged from

steel alloyed with one of the Five Magical Materials and are far too large to be wielded by mere mortals. However, in the hands of an Exalted, the material of the sword resonates with the character's anima, making the blade light and wieldy, despite its impressive size. Each daiklave is unique, its shape partly a product of the smith's desires and partly dictated by complex astrological factors. By long tradition, each is also named and treated as an honored companion to the Exalted who wields it.

A daiklave is deadly in the hands of any Exalted, but in the hands of one of the Exalted attuned to the Magical Material used in its construction, it is especially deadly. Such an Exalted can use the weapon as a conduit for her anima. The blade is not simply an extension of her body, but an expression of her will and her divine nature.

In addition to their inherent powers, most daiklaves have a setting for a single Hearthstone. Beyond this setting and their inherent magic, most daiklaves bear no additional enchantment. However, some daiklaves, normally those forged for nobles or noted heroes, are woven with other sorceries. Such enchantments are much more common on relics of the First Age than on modern jade-alloy daiklaves.

Grand Daiklaves

Sometimes called a battleblade or foecutter, the grand daiklave is the ultimate expression of the philosophy behind the reaver daiklave — you need 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. Even bolstered by resonance, only the physically strongest among the Exalted can wield these deadly weapons, and even they swing them with both hands. Though they were never popular, even in the First Age, there have always been those willing to sacrifice defense and speed for the ultimate in killing power. Most grand daiklaves bear settings for three Hearthstones.

Reaver Daiklaves

Daiklaves are dual-edged weapons, and despite their size, they are agile in the hand and lighting swift. Yet, 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, capable of shearing through even the heaviest armor. Like normal daiklaves, reaver daiklaves typically have a setting for a single Hearthstone. During the First Age, reaver daiklaves were most popular among the Dragon-Blooded and the Lunar Exalted and remain favored weapons among these groups to this day.

The Cost of Power

Daiklaves are tremendous weapons, and not simply in terms of their power. They are huge, and the Essence required to render such a mass feather-light and falcon-swift is not negligible, even for one of the Exalted. When a character carries or wields a daiklave, she must commit 5 motes of Essence to the lightening of the blade, just as if she was sustaining the magic of a Charm that cost 5 motes to activate.

This process of attuning the weapon to the character's anima is not instantaneous and takes at least 20 minutes of handling and practicing with the blade. The attunement dissipates if the character does not make daily skin contact with the weapon.

Also, daiklaves that are attuned are not just light in the character's hand, but light to carry as well. A characters who does not remain attuned to her daiklave will have a 20-pound burden strapped to her back. Grand daiklaves are even heavier and require the commitment of 8 motes of Essence from the Exalted who wield them.

Similar Weapons

Daiklaves are the most common type of melee weapon created for the use of the Exalted, but they are by no means the only sort. Every sort of weapon wielded by mortal hand has been forged from the Five Magical Materials for use by the Chosen. The common types are grimcleavers (axes), dire lances (spears), goremauls (hammers and maces), serpent-sting staves (seven-section staffs) and smashfists (cesti).

All of these weapons are much larger and swifter than their comparable mortal equivalents. All require the commitment of 5 Essence to attune them, and almost all are forged with a setting for the addition of a Hearthstone.

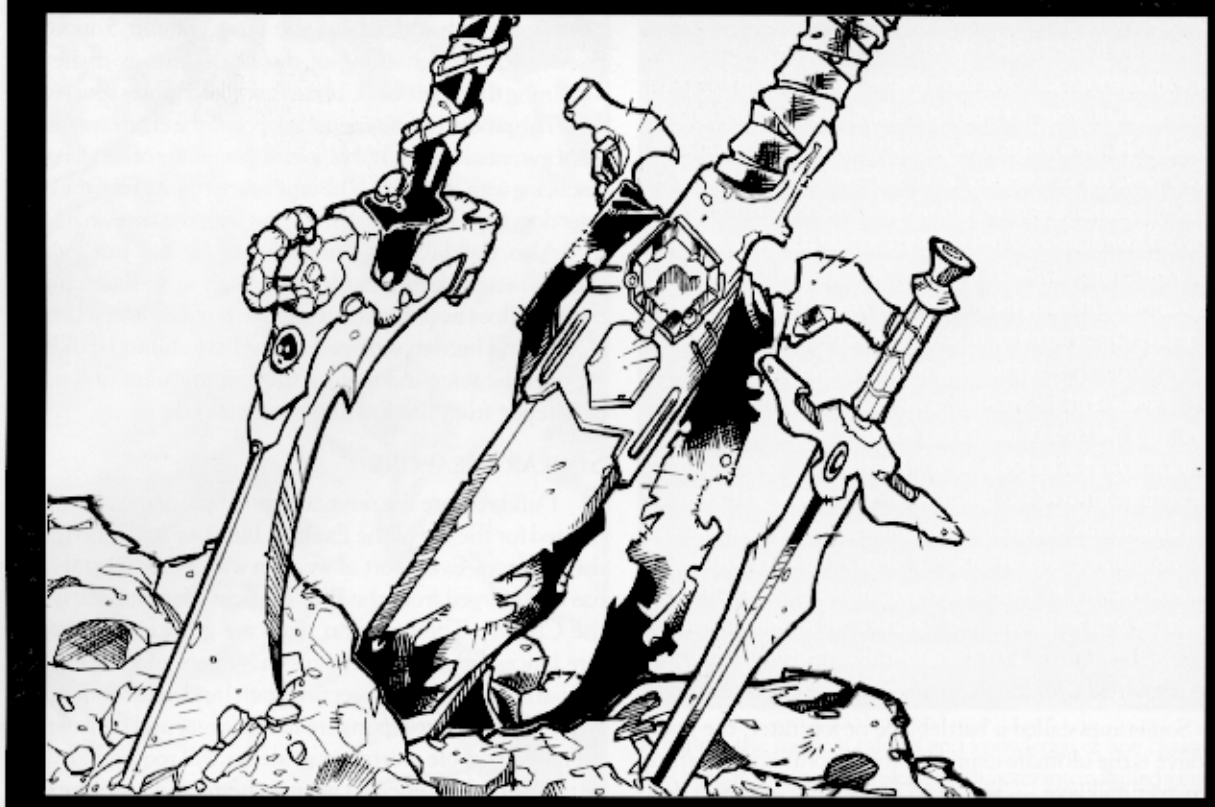
Orichalcum: Orichalcum weapons excel at no one thing but are of superlative speed and accuracy in the hands of their Solar masters. They add +1 to speed, accuracy and defense when wielded by Solar Exalted.

Moonsilver: Moonsilver weapons, like their wielders, can change shape. Though they are far from protean, they strike with a fluid grace and penetrate guards with unnatural ease. They are at +2 accuracy in the hands of Lunar Exalted.

Jade: The jade-alloy weapons of the Dragon-Blooded bind the wielder to the elements from which her powers spring. A Dragon-Blooded character wielding a jade weapon strikes with the speed and assurance of a thunderbolt, avalanche or waterfall. Jade weapons add +3 to their speed when in the hands of Dragon-Blooded characters.

Starmetal: Starmetal weapons are weapons of fate, destined to strike the most lethal blows. Though the Sidereal Exalted are not the most warlike of the Exalted, their baleful weapons are among the most feared. Starmetal weapons add +2 to their damage in the hands of a Sidereal.

Soulsteel: Soulsteel weapons are forged from human souls alloyed with frigid black stone from the caverns beneath the Underworld. When a soulsteel weapon strikes a target, it drains her warmth to fill the endless cold that exists within itself. In the hands of an Abyssal Exalted, a soulsteel weapon is +1 to accuracy and drains a number of motes of Essence equal to the wielder's permanent Essence whenever it strikes a target and does at least one health level of damage.



Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Artifact	Minimums
Daiklave	+3	+2	+5L	+2	••	S••
Dire Lance*	+6	+2	+5L	+0	••	S•
Dire Lance**(as lance)	+14	+1	+3/+12L	-1	••	S••
Goremaul	+0	+1	+6L	+1	•	S••
Grand Daiklave	-3	+2	+11L	+0	•••	S•••
Grimcleaver	+0	+1	+7L	+0	••	S••
Reaver Daiklave	+0	+2	+8L	+0	••	S••
Serpent-Sting Staff	+3	+0	+3L	+3	••	D••••, MA••••
Smashfist	+3	+1	+3L	+1	•	S••

Name: The name of the weapon.
Speed: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's initiative total when she is wielding the weapon.
Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Ability total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Damage: This value is added to the character's Strength + extra successes to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon.
Defense: This value is added to the character's Dexterity + Ability total when she parries with the weapon.
Artifact: The number of dots of the Artifact Background necessary to start play with the weapon.
Minimums: The minimum number of dots in specific Attributes or Abilities required to wield the weapon effectively. The information is presented as a letter or letters followed by a number of dots. The letter indicates which Attribute or Ability is required. S stands for Strength, D for Dexterity, and MA for Martial Arts. The number of dots is the minimum value the character must have to wield the weapon without penalty. For each dot the character is missing from any minimum, she subtracts 1 from the speed, attack and defense of the weapon. This penalty can cause a weapon's speed, attack and defense to become negative and can worsen already negative values.

Powerbows

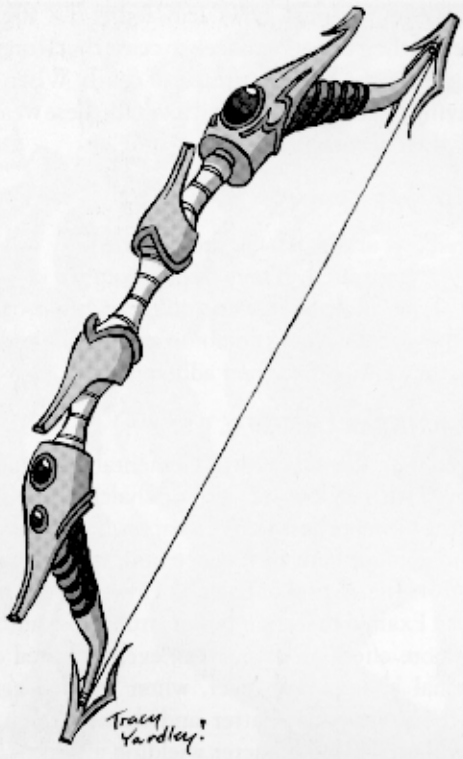
Beautifully ornate weapons, powerbows are to bows what daiklaves are to swords. These weapons are made from a laminate of horn, rare woods and the Five Magical Materials. Crafted by the Exalted for their own hands, these baroque and ornate bows far overmatch any merely mortal weapon. But, like the daiklaves, powerbows must be invested with Essence to function — otherwise their mighty limbs are too stiff for even the mightiest of the Chosen to bend. Short powerbows require the wielder to commit 4 motes of Essence, while long powerbows require the wielder to commit 7 motes. All powerbows have a setting for a single Hearthstone.

Unlike normal bows, powerbows do not have a maximum Strength. They are linked with the Essence of the firing character, and their construction is such that they yield to those who are weak and stiffen when their wielder is mighty. Instead, they *add* to the user's Strength for the purposes of determining damage.

For Example: Astrid has a Strength of 3. She fires a frog crotch arrow from her short powerbow. If the arrow hits, it will do a base damage of 9 — 3 for her Strength, 4 for the natural damage bonus of the arrow and 2 for the powerbow's damage bonus. Successes add as normal to this damage, and (because it is a frog crotch arrow) the target's lethal soak is doubled before the damage is applied.

Orichalcum: Orichalcum powerbows excel at no one thing, but are excellent all-around weapons. When in the hands of a Solar Exalted, these bows are +1 to accuracy, +1 to damage and add 50 yards to their range value.

Moonsilver: Moonsilver bows are fluid things, reshaping themselves as they are drawn in order to more effectively launch their shafts. In the hands of a Lunar Exalted, such weapons are +1 accuracy and add 100 yards to their range value.



Jade : Jade powerbows allow their wielders to fire with the fluid grace of falling water and buoy their arrows along on the natural eddies of the wind. In the hands of a Terrestrial Exalted, they add +1 to their rate and 50 yards to their range value.

Starmetal: Starmetal bows reshape the destiny of arrows fired from them, fating them to strike deadly blows. When in the hands of a Sidereal Exalted, these weapons add +2 to their damage.

Name	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Artifact	Minimums
Short Powerbow	+2	+2	2	250	••	S•••
Long Powerbow	+1	+3	2	350	•••	S••••

Name: The name of the weapon.
Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Archery total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Damage: This value is added to the arrow's normal damage when it is fired from a bow of this type.
Rate: The maximum number of arrows that can be fired from the bow in a given turn without the use of Charms.
Range: The range interval of the weapon in yards. Ranged weapons can shoot out to their range without penalty. They can fire at up to twice their range with a -2 penalty and can fire at up to three times their range at a -4 penalty.
Artifact: The number of dots in the Artifact Background the character must spend to start the game owning one of these weapons.
Minimums: The minimum number of dots in Strength required to wield the weapon effectively. The information is presented as a letter S followed by a number of dots. The number of dots is the minimum value the character must have to wield the weapon without penalty. For each dot the character is missing from the minimum, she subtracts 1 from the accuracy, damage bonus and rate of the weapon. This penalty can cause a weapon's accuracy and damage to become negative. A character whose rate drops below 1 cannot draw the bow.

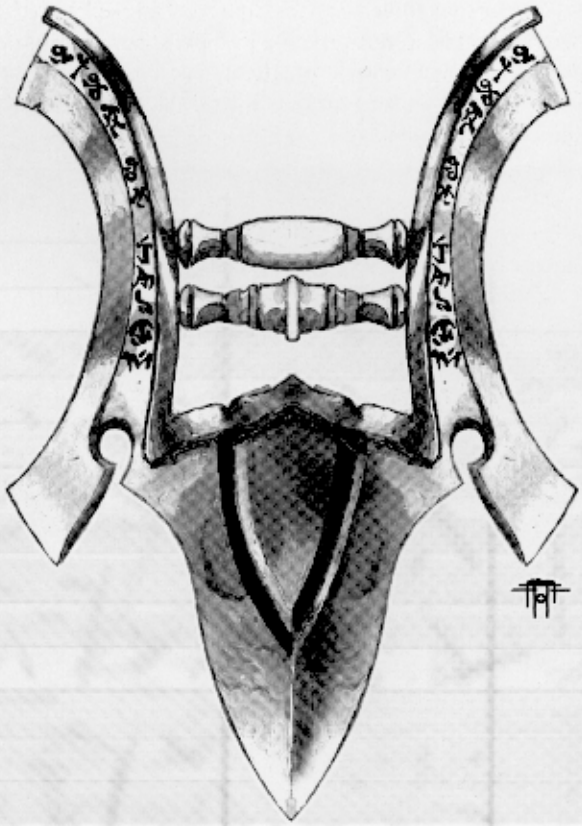
Soulsteel: Soulsteel bows can sense the life and movement of their targets and seek to cease that struggling and bring about the blessed stillness of death. When used against living targets by an Abyssal Exalted, these weapons are +2 to their accuracy.

Other Weapons

Powerbows and daiklaves are not the only weapons forged by the Exalted. There are a number of other, powerful items built with very different philosophies. Though they were never as common as the daiklave-type weapons, they always had their adherents.

Slayer Khatar (Artifact ••)

Forged with the aid of earth elementals and made of steel alloyed with yellow jade and orichalcum, the slayer khatar is the ultimate destructive weapon. These weapons require no commitment of Essence and, indeed, can be used by any being, mortal or Exalted. However, it is in the hands of an Exalted that their powers truly blossom. They have no more effect on characters, even armored ones, than normal khatars. However, when wielded against objects, these weapons shatter and destroy them. All damage inflicted by a character wielding a slayer khatar against inanimate objects is doubled. This effect is compatible with abilities such as the Brawl Charm Sledgehammer Fist Punch. For rules on attacking inanimate objects, see page 239 of the Drama chapter.



Lightning Torment Hatchets (Artifact •••••)

Teak-handled axes forged from moonsilver and white jade, these throwing axes are the assassin's friend. No more than an oversized throwing axe outside the hands of an Exalted. An Exalted must invest 3 motes of Essence into a hatchet to activate its powers. Lightning

Lightning Torment Hatchet

Thrown

Acc	Dmg	Rate	Range
+1	+4	2	20

Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Thrown total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Damage: This value is added to the character's Strength + extra successes to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon.
Rate: The maximum number of that type of weapon that can be thrown in a given turn without the use of Charms.
Range: The range interval of the weapon in yards. Ranged weapons can be thrown at targets out to their range without penalty. They can be used against targets at up to twice their range with a -2 penalty and at up to three times their range at a -4 penalty.

Hand-to-Hand

Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def	Min
+3	+0	+3	+0	S••

Speed: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's initiative total when she is wielding the weapon.
Accuracy: This value is added to or subtracted from the character's Dexterity + Ability total when rolling for attacks using the weapon.
Damage: This value is added to the character's Strength + extra successes to determine damage when she attacks with the weapon.
Defense: This value is added to the character's Dexterity + Ability total when she parries with the weapon.
Minimums: The minimum number of dots in Strength required to wield the weapon effectively. The information is presented as a letter S followed by a number of dots. The number of dots is the minimum value the character must have to wield the weapon without penalty. For each dot the character lacks from the minimum, she subtracts 1 from the speed, attack and defense of the weapon. This penalty can cause a weapon's speed, attack and defense to become negative and can worsen already negative values.



Torment Hatchets come in pairs, and the wielder must have both activated in order for them to work (for a total cost of 6 motes).

In addition to their impressive statistics, Lightning Torment Hatchets have two additional powers. The first is that they return to their wielder's hands after they've been thrown. Normally, they whirl back through the air at the end of the turn. However, this will not occur if their return is blocked or they travel more than 100 yards from the wielder. In these cases, the wielder must recall them through Elsewhere as a reflexive action by spending a mote of Essence. The hatchets can be recalled until the invested Essence fades (about a day after they've last been touched), making them easy to smuggle into dangerous situations.

The second power is the one that gives the hatchets their name. A target struck by a hatchet is surrounded by crackling blue sparks until the end of the scene. The pain and muscle spasms this causes subtract 1 from all her dice pools. Multiple hits from a hatchet are cumulative, but cannot exceed -3. However, *each* hatchet inflicts this penalty, so a character who splits her dice pool can dish out considerable hurting. Storytellers and players should keep track of which roll is for the right and the left hatchet.

Armor

Just as they forge weapons from steel alloyed with the Five Magical Materials, the Exalted likewise craft armor. This armor has a number of advantages — not only is it more protective than mundane armor, it can also be made lighter and more flexible through the commitment of Essence.

The armor is unmistakably magical. Most of it glitters and gleams with the color of the Magical Material used to forge it, and the heavier armors typically have fins or long, flat spikes that protrude from the back and shoulders to prevent uncomfortable Essence buildup between the plates and the wearer's skin.

Orichalcum: Orichalcum is the strongest and most durable of the magical armors. When worn by a Solar Exalted, add 2 to both the armor's lethal and bashing soak.

Moonsilver: Moonsilver shifts its shape to move with the wearer, accommodating his every need. When worn by a Lunar Exalted, moonsilver armors have no mobility penalty, no matter how heavy they are.

Jade: The Dragon-Blooded have the endurance of the earth and the tenacity of wood, and their armor acts to emphasizes these qualities. When worn by a Terrestrial Exalted, jade-alloy armor has no fatigue value.

Name (L/B)	Soak Penalty	Mobility Value	Fatigue	Commitment	Artifact
Articulated Plate	12/14	-2	1	6	••••
Breastplate	6/4	-0	0	2	•
Reinforced Breastplate	10/9	-1	1	4	•••
Reinforced Buff Jacket	7/10	-1	0	3	••
Superheavy Plate	15/15	-2	2	8	•••••

Name: The name of the armor type.
Soak(L/B): The lethal and bashing soaks of the armor.
Mobility Penalty: The penalty subtracted from all rolls requiring agility or balance while wearing the armor with Essence committed. If the character does not commit Essence, then the penalty is the same as for mundane armor of that type.
Fatigue Value: The difficulty of the armor type's fatigue roll.
Commitment: The number of motes of Essence the character must commit to attune herself to the item.
Artifact: The number of dots of Artifact Background required to start the game with this item.

Starmetal: Starmetal armor offers incredibly auspicious protection. The incidental bruises that can pull down even the mightiest warriors are no worry for an Exalted who wears this protection. When worn by a Sidereal, starmetal armor provides the normal soak value but also subtracts 1 from the number of successes the attacker rolls when determining damage. This can reduce the damage of a blow to 0.

Soulsteel: Disturbingly similar in strength to orichalcum, this armor likewise adds 2 to all soaks when worn by an Abyssal Exalted.

Afterword

So. This is the end of the book. I'm supposed to say some heartfelt stuff and thank all the people who made it possible. Let's do it.

Heartfelt Stuff

Exalted is a game of imagination, but it's by no means shallow. I hope that people take away something, maybe even something profound, from reading and playing it. But ultimately, it's just a game. You can read it, play it your whole life, be crowned Emperor of the Realm and not have performed a single meaningful act.

Read this game. Play it, and enjoy it. By all means, buy every single supplement and convince all your friends they should too. But don't forget there's a real world going on around you, and if you don't take part in it, it will not wait for you. It will simply happen without your input. Go out and do something, stand up for yourself, because the world is full of people who'd like you to sit in your chair and take it while they make all the important decisions.

Fuck that noise — get on your feet and make a difference.

Mad Props to My Peeps

Thanks to my Mom, without whom I wouldn't be participating in projects of any sort, and to my Uncle Dave, Aunt Kath and the rest of my family. Thanks also to my other family, the Aspects — especially to Gator, who offered to come pick me up and take me home on 18 hours notice if I ever decided the job sucked. Their years of unconditional belief made it possible for me to do this thing.

Thanks to everyone at White Wolf, especially Ken, Steve and Rich, who all put up with me, and to Justin and Phil for showing me the developer ropes. Thanks also to James Stewart and Jess Heinig for much hauling-about of the dog and to John Chambers for editing this mess. Any mistakes in the final text are mine, not his. Special thanks to Rob Hatch, who did a phenomenal initial design for this game.

Thanks to Mike Oglesby and his dogs Rufus and Girl, for giving me a place to live sight unseen and putting up with my crazy schedule and manic demeanor while I put this book together.

Thanks to Alia Ogron and Heather Smith, for their companionship during many long hours of work.

Thanks to Kid Rock, Shrickback, The Wu-Tang Clan, Bomb The Bass, X Marks The Pedwalk, Casey Scott, Mel Torme and Natacha Atlas for their audio support during the creation of this monstrosity.

And last but not least, to Li — without you, my love, I could never have done this.

Peace,

Geoffrey C. Grabowski

INDEX

Ability 99, 133-141
  Dawn 99, 134, 226-241
    Archery 134
    Brawl 134
    Martial Arts 134
    Melee 135
    Thrown 135
  Eclipse 99, 139, 255-259
    Bureaucracy 139, 255-256
    Linguistics 140, 256
    Ride 140, 257-258
    Sail 140, 258-259
    Socialize 141, 259
  Night 99, 138, 251-255
    Athletics 138, 251-253
    Awareness 138, 253
    Dodge 138, 231, 253
    Larceny 139, 253-255
    Stealth 139, 255
  Twilight 99, 136, 245-251
    Craft 136, 245-248
    Investigation 137, 248
    Lore 137, 248-249
    Medicine 137, 249-250
    Occult 137, 250-251
  Zenith 99, 135, 241-245
    Endurance 135, 241-242
    Performance 136, 242
    Presence 136, 242-243
    Resistance 136, 243-244
    Survival 136, 244-245
Abyssal Exalted 14, 26, 313-315
action 87
  extended action 91
  multiple action 92
  reflexive action 91
Advantages 99
Ahn-Aru 311-312
All-Seeing Eye 45
Allies 141
Anathema 13
anima 13, 117, 148, 305, 308, 310, 313
Appearance 129
armor 332-335
Artifact 30, 142, 336-346
aspect 305
Attribute 98, 128-129
automatic success 90
Avaku of Ways 307-308
Background 99, 141-146
beast 315-319
beastman 283
behemoth 82
Blessed Isle 13, 35
Blood-Ape *see Erymanthus*
bonus points 100, 105
botch *see Rule of One*
buck-ogre 284
caste 22-24, 98, 117-127
  q.v. *Dawn Caste, Eclipse Caste, Night Caste, Twilight Caste, Zenith Caste*
Caste Mark 13, 28
character creation 96-111
character creation chart 104-105
Charisma 128
Charm 13, 99, 152-213, 305-306, 308-310, 311, 313-314
  Dawn Caste 154-170
    Archery 154-157
      Accuracy Without Distance 154
      Arrow Storm Technique 155
      Dazzling Flare Attack 156
      Fiery Arrow Attack 156
      Immaculate Golden Bow 157
      Phantom Arrow Technique 156
      Rain of Feathered Death 157
      Sight Without Eyes 154
      Solar Spike 157
      There Is No Wind 155
      Trance of Unhesitating Speed 155
      Wise Arrow 155
    Brawl 157-160
      Crashing Wave Throw 159
      Dragon Coil Technique 158
      Ferocious Jab 157
      Fists of Iron Technique 157
      Hammer on Iron Technique 159
      Heaven Thunder Hammer 160
      Ox-Stunning Blow 157
      Shockwave Technique 160
      Sledgehammer Fist Punch 159
      Thunderclap Rush Attack 158
    Martial Arts 160-162
      Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike 161
      Crippling Pressure-Point Strike 161
      Essence Fangs and Scales Technique 160
      Essence Venom Strike 162
      Serpentine Evasion 160
      Snake Form 160
      Snake Strikes the Heel 161
      Striking Cobra Technique 160
      Striking Serpent Speed 162
      Uncoiling Serpent Prana 161
    Melee 162-168
      Blazing Solar Bolt 166
      Bulwark Stance 166
      Call the Blade 163
      Corona of Radiance 166
      Dipping Swallow Defense 166
      Edge of Morning Sunlight 166
      Excellent Strike 162
      Fire and Stones Strike 163
      Fivefold Bulwark Stance 167
      Glorious Solar Saber 164
      Golden Essence Block 166
      Heavenly Guardian Defense 166
      Hungry Tiger Technique 163
      Iron Raptor Technique 164
      Iron Whirlwind Attack 163
      One Weapon, Two Blows 163
      Peony Blossom Attack 163
      Ready in Eight Directions Stance 167
      Retrieve the Fallen Weapon 163
      Sandstorm-Wind Attack 165
      Solar Counterattack 167
      Summoning the Loyal Steel 164
    Thrown 168-170
      Cascade of Cutting Terror 169
      Falling Icicle Strike 168
      Fiery Solar Chakram 169
      Joint-Wounding Attack 168
      Mist on Water Attack 168
      Observing-Deceiving Attack 168
      Precision of the Striking Raptor 168
      Shower of Deadly Blades 169
      Triple-Distance Attack Technique 169
  Eclipse Caste 203-213
    Bureaucracy 203-205
      Bureau-Rectifying Method 205
      Consumer-Evaluating Glance 203
      Deft Official's Way 204
      Foul Air of Argument Technique 205
      Frugal Merchant Method 203
      Indolent Official Charm 205
      Insightful Buyer Technique 203
      Irresistible Salesman Spirit 203
      Speed the Wheels 204
    Linguistics 205-207
      Discerning Savant's Eye 206
      Flawless Brush Discipline 205
      Letter-Within-a-Letter Technique 206
      Poetic Expression Style 207
      Sagacious Reading of Intent 207
      Twisted Words Technique 207
      Unbreakable Fascination Method 207
      Whirling Brush Method 205
    Ride 207-209
      Flashing Thunderbolt Steed 209
      Flawless Partnership Meditation 209
      Horse-Healing Technique 209
      Horse-Summoning Whistle 207
      Master Horseman's Eye 207
      Phantom Steed 208
      Spirit-Steadying Assurances 208
      Steed-Sustaining Method 208
    Sail 209-211
      Depth-Plumbing Intuition 210
      Hull-Preserving Technique 211
      Perfect Reckoning Technique 210
      Salty Dog Method 209
      Shipwreck-Surviving Stamina 209
      Storm-Weathering Essence Infusion 211
      Weather-Anticipation Intuition 210
      Wind-Defying Course Technique 210
    Socialize 211-213
      Knowing the Soul's Price 211
      Mastery of Small Manners 211
      Motive-Discerning Technique 211
      Understanding the Court 211
      Venomous Rumors Technique 212
      Wise-Eyed Courtier Method 211
  Night Caste 193-203
    Athletics 193-196
      Feather-Foot Style 194
      Graceful Crane Stance 193
      Increasing Strength Exercise 195

Leaping Tiger Attack 194
Lightning Speed 193
Monkey Leap Technique 193
Racing Hare Method 195
Spider-Foot Style 194
Ten Ox Meditation 196
Thunder's Might 195
Thunderbolt Attack Prana 193
Awareness 196-197
Keen (Sense) Technique 196
Sensory Acuity Prana 196
Surprise Anticipation Method 197
Unsurpassed (Sense) Discipline 196
Dodge 197-198
Flow Like Blood 198
Reed in the Wind 197
Reflex Sidestep Technique 198
Seven Shadow Evasion 198
Shadow Over Water 198
Larceny 199-201
Door-Evading Technique 201
Flawless Pickpocketing Technique 200
Flawlessly Impenetrable Disguise 199
Lock-Opening Touch 201
Magpie's Invisible Talon 200
Perfect Mirror 199
Seasoned Criminal Method 199
Stealing From Plain Sight Spirit 200
Stealth 201-203
Easily Overlooked Presence Method 201
Invisible Statue Spirit 202
Mental Invisibility Technique 201
Sound and Scent Banishing Attitude 203
Vanishing From Mind's Eye Method 202
Twilight Caste 182-193
Craft 182-185
Chaos-Resistance Preparation 183
Crack-Mending Technique 183
Craftsman Needs No Tools 184
Durability-Enhancing Technique 183
Flawless Handiwork Method 182
Object-Strengthening Touch 183
Shattering Grasp 184
Investigation 185-186
Crafty Observation Method 185
Evidence-Discerning Method 185
Irresistible Questioning Technique 186
Judge's Ear Technique 185
Ten Magistrate Eyes 185
Unknown Wisdom Epiphany 186
Lore 186-188
Chaos-Repelling Pattern 186
Essence-Lending Method 187
Integrity-Protecting Prana 186
Power-Awarding Prana
Will-Bolstering Method 187
Wound-Accepting Technique 188
Wyld-Shaping Technique 186
Medicine 188-191
Ailment-Rectifying Method 188
Anointment of Miraculous Health 190
Bodily Regeneration Prana 191
Body-Mending Meditation 188
Contagion-Curing Touch 189
Flawless Diagnosis Technique 188
Grievous Injury Recovery Method 190
Healing Trance Meditation 191
Touch of Blissful Release 189
Wound-Mending Care Technique 190
Occult 191-193
All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight 193
Celestial Circle Sorcery 191
Ghost-Eating Technique 192
Solar Circle Sorcery 191
Spirit-Cutting Attack 192
Spirit-Detecting Glance 192
Spirit-Repelling Diagram 193
Terrestrial Circle Sorcery 191
Zenith Caste 170-182
Endurance 170-172
Armored Scout's Invigoration 170
Battle Fury Focus 171
Bloodthirsty Sword-Dancer Spirit 172
Essence-Gathering Temper 171
Front-Line Warrior's Stamina 170
Ox-Body Technique 170
Tiger-Warrior's Endurance 171
Willpower-Enhancing Spirit 171
Performance 172-175
Fury Inciting Presence 173
Heart-Compelling Method 174
Heroism-Encouraging Presence 173
Masterful Performance Exercise 174
Memory Reweaving Discipline 175
Respect Commanding Attitude 172
Phantom-Conjuring Performance 174
Rout-Stemming Gesture 172
Tiger-Warrior Training Technique 173
Unruly Mob Dispersing Rebuke 172
Presence 175-176
Harmonious Presence Meditation 175
Hypnotic Tongue Technique 175
Listener-Swaying Argument 175
Majestic Radiant Presence 175
Terrifying Apparition of Glory 176
Underling Promoting Touch 175
Resistance 176-179
Adamant Skin Technique 177
Durability of Oak Meditation 176
Glorious Solar Plate 178
Hauberk-Summoning Gesture 178
Illness-Resisting Meditation 179
Immunity to Everything Technique 179
Iron Kettle Body 178
Iron Skin Concentration 176
Poison-Resisting Meditation 179
Spirit Strengthens the Skin 176
Unfailing Tortoise Technique 177
Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana 178
Survival 179-182
Bestial Traits Technique 180
Element-Resisting Prana 182
Eye-Deceiving Camouflage 182
Food-Gathering Exercise 181
Friendship with Animals Approach 179
Hardship-Surviving Mendicant Spirit 180
Spirit-Tied Pet 179
Traceless Passage 182
Trackless Region Navigation Charm 181
Unshakeable Bloodhound Technique 181
Chosen 13
Circle 13, 107
combat 227-240
Combo 213-215
Compassion 130
Contacts 142
Conviction 130
Council of Entities 56
Creation 14
Cult of the Illuminated 14, 53
Daana'd 51
damage 231-234
Dawn Caste 22, 118-119
Dead 298-304
Deathlord 14, 75, 301-304
Deliberative 44
Demesne 14, 30, 249
derangement 281
Dexterity 128
dice 87, 88, 89
difficulty 88
disease 319-321
dragon shape 293
Dragon-Blooded 14, 26, 304-308
Dynasty 39-43
East 54-63
Eclipse Caste 23, 126-127
elemental 295-298
characteristics 295
powers 296
Elemental Poles 14
Emissary 56
environmental damage 244
equipment 324-325
Erymanthus 294
Essence 14, 27, 100, 147-149, 305, 308, 310, 313
Exaltation 27
Exalted 14, 20-27, 304-314
experience 269-272
costs 270
extras 240-241
Fair Folk 14, 78-82, 285-288
Fakharu 293-294
Familiar 143
Feats of Strength 252
fey beast 288-289
First Age 15, 36
Five Elemental Dragons 15, 51
Five Immaculate Dragons 51
Five Magical Materials 15, 246
Five Maidens 15, 26, 310-311
Followers 144
Gaia 53
ghost 300-301
Golden Rule 86
Great Contagion 11, 15
Great Curse 15, 131
gryphon 289
Guild 15, 60, 278-279
healing 234
health level 100

Hearthstone 15, 247-248, 338-340
Hesiesh 51
hobgoblin 287
Houses 39
  Cathak 40
  Cytis 40
  Iselsi 42
  Ledaal 43
  Mnemon 42
  Nellens 41
  Peleps 43
  Ragara 40
  Sesus 42
  Tepet 41
  V'neef 39
Hundred Gods Heresy 52
hungry ghost 300
Immaculate Order see *Order of the Immaculate Dragons*
Immaculate Philosophy 50
Immaculate Texts 52
Imperial City 38
Imperial Mountain 37
Influence 144
initiative 227
Intelligence 129
Juggernaut 77, 304
legion 46
Legion of Silence 48
Limit Break 131
Luna 15, 53
Lunar Exalted 14, 24, 308-310
magistrate 45
Magnificent Jaguar 309-310
Malfean 15
Manipulation 128
Manse 15, 29, 145, 246
map 18
Mask of Winters 302-304
Mela 51
Mentor 145
mortal foes 276-279
mote 15
Mountain Folk 37
Nagezzer the Slug 306-307
Nature 98, 114-117
  Architect 114
  Bravo 115
  Bureaucrat 115
  Caregiver 115
  Conniver 115
  Critic 115
  Explorer 115
  Follower 115
  Gallant 115
  Hedonist 115
  Jester 115
  Judge 116
  Leader 116
  Martyr 116
  Paragon 116
  Rebel 116
  Savant 117
  Survivor 117
  Thrillseeker 117
  Traditionalist 117
  Visionary 117
nemissary 301
Nexus 16, 56-62
Night Caste 23, 124-125
North 69-70
nymph 296
object strengths 239
Old Realm 16
Order of the Immaculate Dragons 15, 48
outcaste 44
Palace Sublime 52
Pasiap 51
patrician 44
Perception 129
Perfected Hierarchy 39
poison 243
prelude 103
Realm 12, 16, 34-53
Red-Piss Legion see *Vermilion Legion*
Regent Fokuf 42
Resources 146
Rule of One 89
Rule of Ten 90
Sad Ivory see *Ahn-Arn*
Scarlet Empress 12, 16
Scavenger Lands 16, 55
Second Breath 16
second chance 93
Senate see *Deliberative*
setting 20-83
Sextes Jylis 51
shadowland 75-78, 298-304
Sidereal Exalted 14, 24, 310-312
soak 231
Solar Exalted 14, 22
sorcery 16,191, 215-223
  Celestial Circle Sorcery 191, 220-221
    Blood of Boiling Oil 220
    Demon of the Second Circle 220
    Dolorous Reflection 220
    Incomparable Body Arsenal 221
    Sapphire Countermagic 221
    Travel Without Distance 221
  Solar Circle Sorcery 191, 221-223
    Adamant Countermagic 222
    Demon of the Third Circle 222
    Rain of Doom 222
    Rune of Singular Hate 223
  Terrestrial Circle Sorcery 191, 217-220
    Death of Obsidian Butterflies 217
    Demon of the First Circle 218
    Emerald Countermagic 218
    Impenetrable Frost Barrier 218
    Infallible Messenger 218
    Invulnerable Skin of Bronze 218
    Stormwind Rider 219
    Summon Elemental 219
    Wood Dragon's Claw 220
South 63-67
specialty 99, 133
spine chain 299
spirit 16, 82, 289-298
Spirit Charms 290-293
  Compassion 291
    Measure the Wind 291
    Stoic Endurance 291
    Touch of Grace 291
  Conviction 291
    Harrow the Mind 291
    Possession 291
    Stoke the Flame 291
  Temperance 291-292
    Cunning Thief 291
    Host of Spirits 292
  Valor 292-293
    Essence Bite 292
    Materialize 292
    Principle of Motion 292
    Words of Power 292
Stamina 128
storytelling 10, 262-273
Strength 128
stunt 90, 267-269
systems 86-93
teamwork 92
Temperance 130
Terrestrial Exalted 14, 304-308
Thousand Scales 45
Threshold 16, 53
time 86
Trait 87, 88, 114-149
Twilight Caste 23, 122-123
Typhon 314-315
Unconquered Sun 16, 52
Underworld 16
Valor 131
Vermilion Legion 47
Virtue 100, 129-133
Virtue Flaw 131-133
war ghost 301
weapons 326-332
West 67-69
Willpower 100, 146
wolfman 283
wonders 335-346
wood spider 297
Wits 129
Wyld 16, 71-75, 281-284
  pox 280
  blight 280-281
  derangement 281
Wyld barbarian 72, 281-282
Wyld beast 283-284
Wyld Hunt 16
Yozi 17
Zenith Caste 23, 120-121
zephyr 298
zombie 299

EXALTED

NAME: _____ CONCEPT: _____
PLAYER: _____ NATURE: _____
CASTE: _____ ANIMA: _____

ATTRIBUTES

STRENGTH _____ ●OOOO
DEXTERITY _____ ●OOOO
STAMINA _____ ●OOOO
CHARISMA _____ ●OOOO
MANIPULATION _____ ●OOOO
APPEARANCE _____ ●OOOO
PERCEPTION _____ ●OOOO
INTELLIGENCE _____ ●OOOO
WITS _____ ●OOOO

ABILITIES

DAWN

☐ ARCHERY _____ OOOOO
☐ BRAWL _____ OOOOO
☐ MARTIAL ARTS _____ OOOOO
☐ MELEE _____ OOOOO
☐ THROWN _____ OOOOO

ZENITH

☐ ENDURANCE _____ OOOOO
☐ PERFORMANCE _____ OOOOO
☐ PRESENCE _____ OOOOO
☐ RESISTANCE _____ OOOOO
☐ SURVIVAL _____ OOOOO

TWILIGHT

☐ CRAFT _____ OOOOO
☐ INVESTIGATION _____ OOOOO
☐ LORE _____ OOOOO
☐ MEDICINE _____ OOOOO
☐ OCCULT _____ OOOOO

NIGHT

☐ ATHLETICS _____ OOOOO
☐ AWARENESS _____ OOOOO
☐ DODGE _____ OOOOO
☐ LARCENY _____ OOOOO
☐ STEALTH _____ OOOOO

ECLIPSE

☐ BUREAUCRACY _____ OOOOO
☐ LINGUISTICS _____ OOOOO
☐ RIDE _____ OOOOO
☐ SAIL _____ OOOOO
☐ SOCIALIZE _____ OOOOO

SPECIALTIES

☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
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_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

CHARMS

Name	Cost	Name	Cost

WEAPONS

_____
_____
_____
_____

ANIMA

_____
_____
_____
_____

LIMIT BREAK

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

VIRTUE FLAW

_____
_____
_____

WILLPOWER

O O O O O O O O O O

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

HEALTH

SOAK

B_____ L_____ A_____

-0	☐☐☐☐☐
-1	☐☐☐☐☐
-2	☐☐☐☐☐
	☐☐☐☐☐
-4	☐
INCAPACITATED	☐

VIRTUES

COMPASSION ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
TEMPERANCE ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
CONVICTION ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
VALOR ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐

ESSENCE

● O O O O O

PERSONAL ____ / ____
PERIPHERAL ____ / ____
COMMITTED _____

EXPERIENCE

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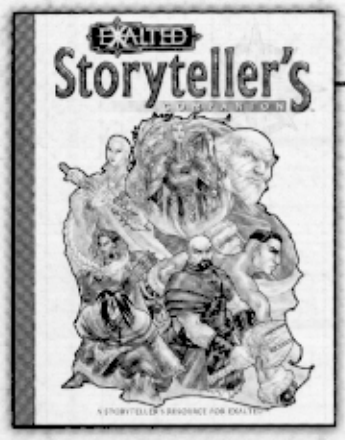

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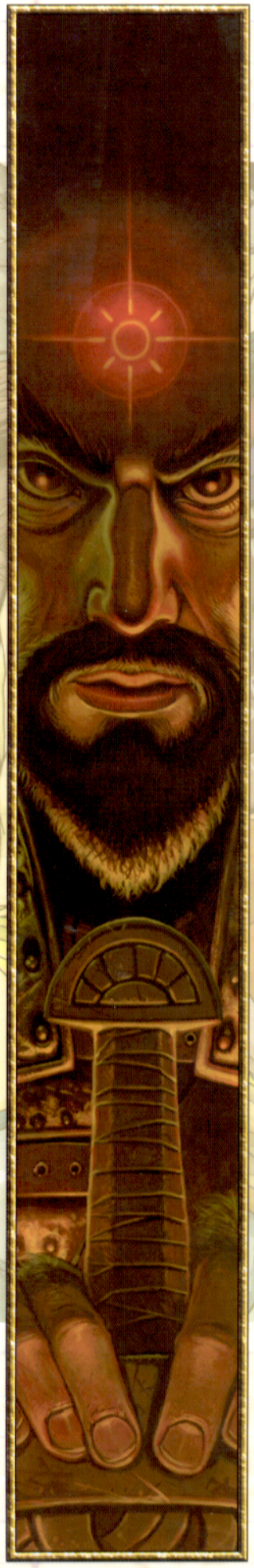

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