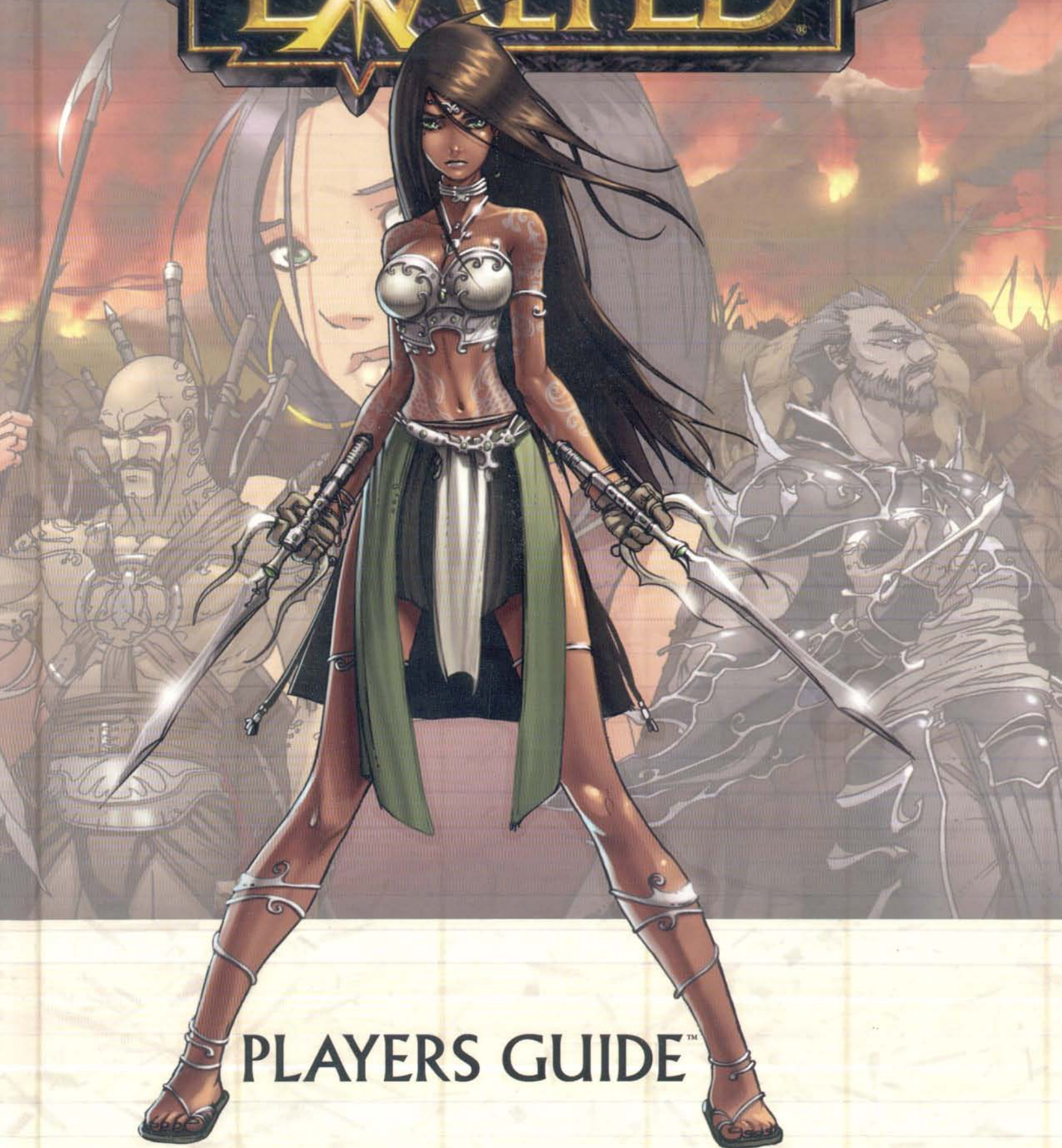


EXALTED



PLAYERS GUIDE™

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...and then the bartender said, "Gods and sorcerers are like faggots and junkies. You just can't get rid of them. I mean, you can get up on your high horse, and you can say, 'We won't have any of that foul sorcery in this town,' and the Immaculates can rail against people who set up shrines, but the truth is, they're not going anywhere. You're just the same as the anti-opium nut on his wagon or the guys who lay for rakes coming home from the boy bars. The only thing those folks are doing is making themselves feel self-righteous. They aren't changing anything. The human need to change the world is as central to us as the need for sex and thrills. Even if you scare someone off, they're still a faggot or a junkie, they just can't hook up. It's pretty much the definition of futility to keep people away from something they go out looking for.

"And, gods of the Scavenger Lands bless them, the Council of Nexus realizes that, and it has a very understanding and, I think, progressive view on the matter. And while it can look pretty small-minded from the perspective of someone having it enforced on him, I don't mind telling you that I agree with it. Yep, if you're wondering, I do work for the secret police, and yes, this is a tavern for sorcerers. I am the barkeeper, a friend to the patrons, and no, you cannot ask me to set you up with someone to sell your soul. I can see you're new here, and I've heard your name around, and so, I'm gonna tell you how it is. I don't make these rules, but I think they're fine.

"There are two rules of magic in Nexus. The first is "Don't get seen." Nexus is built on trade, and merchants don't come to places where demons walk the streets and sorcery patently flourishes. The scene is big here, and everybody who's anybody has a sorcerer. That doesn't matter — keep it looking small time. Don't be a high roller, don't break the ice, don't make the shills wonder if they should go someplace else to sell their wool next year. If you fuck up once, maybe they will just hurt you, cut off one of your nuts or something. If you fuck up twice, you die for sure.

"The second rule is "Do not prey upon this city or attempt to overwhelm it with your magic." Don't send out demon assassins to pick off the Council. Do not snatch bums off the streets for use in your black magic. Do not enthrall people and have them give you all their money. Do not do the sorts of things that sorcerers do that make sorcery illegal in other places. The reason those things make sorcery illegal is because they are wrong and they are threats to society. If you did them in Nexus, other people would do them too, and it would fuck up the program. Here in Nexus, the penalty for fucking up the program is death, and you will not be the special exception.

"So all that established, how can I help you?"

Fucking great. Everyone in this town is on the take. I don't know if I should shit or go blind. I am totally unready to cope with this shit. Until, like, six weeks before, I was an apprentice court sorcerer in a city in the Hundred Kingdoms that you have never fucking heard of. Its people thought they were the shit — three squares even in lean years, and there was always a different traveling entertainer every couple of nights. I grew up in Great Forks, and I know splendor, and let me tell you, it was the armpit of nowhere, but they had it pretty good, and I didn't think the place was going anywhere. It seemed like a good place to go to ground. How wrong I was.

The prince had a Dragon-Blood who fought in all his battles, and I guess the outcaste was pretty decent because we took in a lot more than we gave, in terms of tribute. I was still the "apprentice," but I was pushing 30 and doing most of the work, while waiting for Haderu the Wise to retire or

push off. I'd been a journeyman when I left Great Forks, but Haderu wanted me to be his "apprentice," and I didn't argue. Maybe you'd quibble with it, but it was a condition of my employment, and a bad house is better than walking the roads. He could call me a monkeyfucker if he wanted, I didn't care. I figured, in the end, when I settled down for my 30-year stint as king shit, it'd lend me legitimacy to have done it that way.

So, about a year ago, this all changes. Haderu and I were up at the fort, and there's no way to describe it, the place just went instantly to hell. We'd had some bad omens, so everyone was on edge, and then someone — one of the kitchen boys — shouted there'd been a murder. It seemed like few came to the alarm, and the runners sent out to find the absentees mostly never returned. The few who did narrated scenes of murder in every inhabited location. In no more than five minutes, half the people in the fort were just dead. No explanation, just the obvious signs that they'd been slain bloodily with a blade. There had been no noise or cry. From the fact that most of the messengers never came back, we knew the killer was still active in the keep.

Haderu and the lord and the Dragon-Blood had all been up in the throne room, and they moved down to the front court to command from the front door as soon as people started turning up dead. I was with them, of course. We had no idea what the hell was going on, but the outcaste was covering us with his jade daiklave, and I felt supremely confident as I helped Haderu sketch out his diagram against gods and demons. We weren't sure what was murdering folks, but it certainly seemed that a spirit of some sort was probably the cause. We didn't know of anything so powerful in the region, but it was our best guess.

It was also wrong. I was down on my knees finishing up the diagram, and Haderu was just standing up to lay the incantation of sanctification, when all of a sudden, this fucking little kid drops down in the middle of us. The Terrestrial swung at her instantly, so fast that the way I noticed the girl was as the target of Ouchuwe's daiklave. Suddenly, she's a bear, and damn, everyone is dead. Ouchuwe left a cut on the thing's ribs, and then, the she-bear, twice as tall as a man now, just pounded through his defenses and drove his corpse to the stones so hard she shattered the cobbles. Then, the prince and Haderu were felled, unfortunate enough to be standing upright when the bear-girl's talons scythed by.

I dropped the chalk in my hands and ran in the opposite direction she was facing. I heard her turn behind me, but I think she would have had to chase me and didn't see me as a threat. I ran around through the postern gate only to find there were a dozen beastmen cleaning out the pantry fire-brigade style, while two buck-ogres stood guard.

I went out to the place in the woods that Haderu had told me to meet him at if the fort were ever burned and looked under the rock for the bolting money. The generous allotment suggested to me that Haderu's opinion of his employers had been considerably less positive than my own. But it sure didn't feel like that at the time, and judging my locale's conditions to be going West at a rapid pace, I decided to up stakes and relocate to more convivial parts. What I've seen and heard since then suggests to me that it was the renegade Lunar warlord Sleeves of War who killed the prince, my master and the outcaste at the gates to the fort and that I might actually be one of the luckiest people alive in Creation today.



It was my observation on my travels that the world is entering a time of woe and that if I wish to prosper, it would be best to accept a purely parasitic mode of existence. As a rootless knave, I'd be suited for existence in a world where owning a house simply meant you had property to loot.

I set my sights on Nexus, thinking that, if I was to be a parasite, I would go to what surely must be the greatest focal point for refugees and the dispossessed, where the permissive local laws, or lack thereof, would allow me to prosper best while battenning on my fellow man. Surely, Nexus would be teeming with marks.

Oh, how naïve I was then, to think that the fat, matted bush of the river harlot's legs didn't have room to accommodate just one more sucker.

Nexus sees waves of refugees all the time. Every time there's a big war in the Hundred Kingdoms, another few thousand wash up on this most inauspicious beach. To the locals, this was like an especially busy harvest season, and the dinars of the dispossessed were their glittering fruit. It sometimes contented me that all these rabble would probably be slain or forcibly parted from their ill-gotten wealth soon. In the meantime, I was an out-of-towner looking for an angle in a city that did not favor strangers.

I had what I thought was a lot of money, but it turned out to be a lot less than I thought it was. I think that I can pay about another two weeks worth of rent on the little room that I'm living in. I know that I am living pretty high on the hog compared to a lot of people in this city, but I really don't know if I can explore the lower social orders and live. My landlord is a retired headhunter who gave up banditry and rents out these little bachelor's apartments. He's told me that he'll eat me if I fall behind on my rent, and I've become aware that that's not actually illegal or even seen as wrong in this city.

I needed to start peddling people their horoscopes, and fast. I didn't need to hear the local pint-puller at the thaumaturge's bar tell me that he worked for the secret police and that these were the 12 simple rules to keep your nose clean while your practiced sorcery in Nexus. I wanted to make my landlord's sons grow up strong by filling his purse, not his stewpot. I'd pack it up and take a boat up the river to Great Forks except I don't have enough money for the passage anymore, and I don't know if I want to see the place it's probably about to become. They're probably about to start passing out the good drugs and getting everyone wound up about their posterity in the city's grand epical tale of victory. Footnotes on a death roll. I don't want any posterity I can't eat.

"After having heard all that advice, I think I'll just have a small beer and roll on."

"Understandable," he said and memorized my face.

I left in a leisurely sort of way and lingered nearby, savoring a slab of barbecued meat I hoped was from a stock animal. It wasn't very long until someone approached me. I didn't know if he was a recruiter for the secret police or an agent for one of the people who had recruiters in the bar. From the way Nexus worked, I couldn't see that there would be much difference.

The way I had seen things, this town was already going to hell. They might have been ready for the flood of refugees, but the government of Nexus seemed to have made a tactical error and let other powers come to roost in their territory. My cannibal landlord was a member of a basement-worshipping cult of Dace, a mercenary soldier the city hired by the job to protect its interests. There are people who say he's one of the Golden Ones, the "chosen prophets"



that every street-corner preacher has invented to represent this year, and there was no bolt from the blue, no pressure on him to break up the cult.

I figured the people running the town wouldn't bother with a sting operation. They'd already lost their privileged status and were probably just recruiting. The guy asked me if I'd be willing to see a lady he worked for sometimes. I said sure, if it was about business. He said it was, and I went with him, and that's how I started working for the Tang-Zen crime syndicate.

So, I've been where you're standing. I've walked out of the Talking Stick shaking my head at Murufu behind the bar there and the size of his balls. The secret police are cool and all, but there are sorcerers out there who better themselves by means other than peddling horoscopes and fending off curses. The Tang-Zen has an army of magicians, mortals and even some outcasts. Our leader's the head of the syndicate's lady, and they're in tight. Have you been here long enough to learn who Ophilis Ses is? Yeah, that guy? I had dinner with him over at his place in the Cinnabar last night. And here I am, talking to you? If you're a good worker and a smart guy, there's a seat at the big man's table for you, too.

No, you don't need to step up right now, man. And this is not a pushy sort of pass. We don't need to be pushy. We're right here. I'm just telling you this — I don't think what I was thinking before Azure Path's recruiter walked up on me was wrong. I think this city is going to hell, and let me tell you, I may not have lived here for years, but I can tell you that bartender remembered your name. This city's going to hell, and when it realizes that, the Council is going to try to kick everyone who can possibly endanger it out. You can either be here with us or you can prepare to hit the highway. You come by any of our shops and say that Candle sent you, and they'll put me in touch with you.

Here's a bag of dinars. Take it, courtesy of me. This isn't work. This is me to you. Don't sell your ass to the secret police. Don't get eaten by cannibal landlords. This is the shittiest city in the world, and you are fresh fish. Good luck sister, see you around.

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All the kick-ass artists who worked on this project, for quickly resending all the art to me when my hard drive melted as I was laying the book out. I love you guys and gals.

Jimbo "300 cards due WHEN?!!" Zubkavich and Gala "I want to be an intern... I can make coffee" Ferriere, for letting me continue to harass them and them just dealing it right back out at me. Just bring it! It's on!

To the White Wolf Street Hockey Team. Bringing home the gold in '04!



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Hand me that liquor, and I'll tell you a tale, boy. I'll give you a story you've never heard before. I'm sure you've heard every sort of bullshit tale a storyteller's got to peddle, but I reckon for a good hard knock of your finest, I can reveal to you a true story of one of my brushes with the supernatural.

Thank you. It is indeed very fine.

As you can imagine, as a gentleman of the lakes and rivers, I've heard a lot of stories, but I've also seen a lot myself. It is with such a personal tale that I will now regale you gentlemen. No, this isn't some story I've heard second hand. It's the real deal.

It was, I reckon, about seven years ago, and I was... well, I don't think I'll recall exactly how old I was. I was living in a little city in the Hundred Kingdoms by the name of Bourbon, which I found highly agreeable. I hooked up with a lady — a widow — who'd lost her husband a few years back in a riverboat accident. I'd known the fellow from some barge crews we'd both worked on, and I'd gotten into the habit of stopping by and overnighing at his house whenever I was in town. I hadn't come by for a few years, but when I did, I found her husband dead and her bereft.

Well, one thing led to another, and my visit extended itself, and pretty soon, I guess I'd officially started shacking up with her. It was well enough. I mean, I'd always been a little sweet on her when her husband was alive — not that I did anything improper, mind you. I wasn't really planning on settling down, but it seemed like maybe it would be a good time to put down some roots and settle.

Yeah, you can already tell this story doesn't have a happy ending.

So, I'd gotten real honest to help her save her house and feed her kid, but the time came when I started to think that maybe she was fooling around on me. She was hung up on something, always sneaking out of the house, always anxious like I might catch her. It was her kid that finally helped me catch her — her daughter was just as suspicious of her as I was, and eventually, the two of us took to shadowing her. Now, imagine this, an 11-year-old girl and a drunken boatman sneaking around this little town. We're lucky we weren't caught and hanged for trying to get a hold of her property.

But we didn't think that. We were just curious what we'd find when we finally caught her. She was sly as three cats together, and what we learned was that not only was she good at her slipping around, but the extent of her comings and goings were a bit more than we'd anticipated. What we'd thought were her slipping off to assignations were just trips around town to places she'd been in her youth. But the trips she took out at night, after the teahouse where she worked closed up, those were the interesting ones.

I remember, crouching in the weeds near the boneyard fence, staring in at her sitting on her dead husband's grave — *and him coming up to sit with her.*

You heard me right. The dead will cuckold you, ain't it the truth. I'd worked my fingers to the bone, and here she was holding hands with her dead husband. Me and the kid snuck back to the house, and we didn't have anything left to say. We had seen it.

It wasn't too long after that that she said she was pregnant. I told her I might have been Tobi's friend, but I wasn't gonna let him put a baby on me as well as horns. She didn't take that too well, nor to my intimation that my trip schedule was such that it would look very poorly if I brought the issue of parentage to light. When she turned to her daughter, the girl suggested she should join her dearly beloved in the hereafter posthaste because if she let the lynch mob send her there in a few weeks or months when the matter came out, the pregnancy would ruin her figure forever. Kids are rough.

She bolted and killed herself before the day was out with a long jump off the local lover's leap. Quaint, and it helped her daughter and I look sad-faced. The kid and I cleaned up the house and sold it to the very same fucker who'd been trying to repossess it. I gave the kid three-quarters of what we made and dropped her off with some cousins a few towns away. I haven't been back there since — I reckon Tobi and Rags would probably give me a welcome I'd not soon forget — but I swear to the Dragons this is all true.

The cousins? Of course I didn't tell them about the money I gave the girl.



INTRODUCTION

*This time Apollo nudged its flight
toward Arkheptólemos, driver to Hektor,
as he came on. It struck him near the nipple.
Down he tumbled from the car, his horses
shying back as the man died where he fell.
A gloom passed over Hektor for his driver,
But angered as he was he left him there.
—The Illiad, Robert Fitzgerald, trans.*

In the years since its release, **Exalted** has detailed the five types of Exalted in Creation, its gods and its primordial monsters, the inhabitants of the Demon Realm and of the Underworld. All of these beings are mighty, and many are glorious.

Yet, these individuals are a mere dusting of glittering dust across the face of Creation. However mighty and influential in the affairs of princes and deities, the Exalted and the gods, demons and demigods who form their milieu are really but footnotes to the true story of Creation — the one that millions of individuals each live every day. If Creation is a woven tapestry, then the deeds of the Exalted are the threads that make the colored pattern, but the countless mortal denizens of the world are the actual body of the tapestry.

These individuals have little narrative importance in the fable of history. This is no comment on

them as individuals. They are humans with every human feeling, desire and motivation, but their destiny's place in the web of history makes significant accomplishments unlikely. It is unfair, but it is the way of things. While few truly understand this, many sense it at some level.

And what all must agree on is that there are individuals who stand between the Exalted and the common mass of men in terms of their importance. It is inarguable that these individuals, many of them god-children, sorcerers, practitioners of the martial arts and other such heroic professions, possess some spark that those around them lack, a preternatural luck and soft aura of divine favor. These individuals are natural leaders, pioneers, visionaries and champions. There are many shades and nuances to mortal power. The weakest are merely talented or outspoken

individuals whose deeds and words change the world around them more than is typical. The mightiest among them may contend against a young Exalt. All are blessed with some importance by the Loom of Fate, and their lives are accordingly adventurous.

The line between extra and hero is a thin one, as history is made in the now, not in the stars. Determination, luck, the direct and indirect influence of Essence-users or even a position of responsibility can force a mortal to become a heroic individual. Once the change has happened, however, there is no going back. Those who are favored by destiny with heroism are also cursed with it, for there are never enough heroes to fulfill the demands of history. The world is full of strangeness, and much of it requires witnesses or participants. Those who cross the threshold and distinguish themselves gain notice in the eyes of history and soon find that adventure finds them.

This is doubly true in the Time of Tumult. As the Age of Sorrows dawns and Creation prepares for the new age of war, the growing expenditures of Essence, the twists of destiny and the use of Charms such as the Tiger-Warrior Training Technique have all been generating more heroes. However, the rising tide of events demands far more, as do those heroes who desire to recruit mortal officers and officials to staff their growing private empires. Growing crises, the recruiters of the Exalted and the cold twists of fate have seized most mortal heroes in the Age of Sorrows. Even now, they are dragged inexorably into the coming clash of heroes and can seek only to survive as best they may the looming crisis.

In *Exalted*'s mechanical terms, these individuals who stand out from the masses are heroic mortals. It is the intention of this book to provide rules for portraying these most common, if least powerful, of the inhabitants of the world of *Exalted*.

WHAT IS A HEROIC MORTAL?

Heroic mortals are individuals who stand out from the mass of extras that populate the world. From the perspective of Destiny, they are more important to the story of history. From the perspective of a mortal human, they are somehow blessed — less than Exalted, but more than merely mortal. Heroic mortals are described as playable characters on page 103 of the *Exalted* main rulebook. The following additional clarifications and rules apply.

- Heroic mortal-characters gain two successes on 10s.
- Heroic mortal characters resist infection from wounds, diseases, etc. as mortals, not as Exalted.
- Heroic mortal characters cannot normally gain extra health levels, but they have the full normal

THIS IS NOT A COMPLETE GAME

Despite its size, the *Exalted Players Guide* is not a complete game. It is a supplement for White Wolf's *Exalted*, a game in which characters take the roles of Solar Exalted, the heroes who were slain Ages ago by their followers, who usurped their thrones and painted the Solars to be terrible creatures of demonic evil. This book doesn't include descriptions of the game's various Traits, rules on combat or a complete setting. It just has an in-depth treatment of certain specific topics of interest to people who are already playing *Exalted*. You'll need to at least have access to a copy of *Exalted* to use this book. Because this adds directly to the main book and expands the setting as a whole, you'll find references to many other *Exalted* books throughout the text. Just because we mention it doesn't mean you have to run out and buy it in order to understand or enjoy the game.

mortal complement and damage against them should be rolled, rather than assuming one damage success per three points of damage beyond soak.

- Mortals are exceedingly susceptible to poisons and toxins — most exposures will kill them near-instantly, and even minor toxins are very difficult to resist (double the difficulty listed for Exalts, and it is the Storyteller's discretion if the mortal can even roll at all).

- Mortal characters have an Essence of 1, but no way to gain access to their Essence pool.

- Mortal characters cannot detect the flow of Essence, determine the presence of sorceries or the use of Charms or otherwise influence Essence patterns without the use of a thaumaturgic spell or ritual, except in the most extraordinary of cases.

- Mortals cannot attune to any of the Five Magical Materials or to any artifact that has a continuing committed Essence cost. They **may** make use of artifacts that require no committed Essence or that have some other cost (Willpower, health levels, etc.).

Similarly, mortals cannot attune to Manses or Hearthstones.

- Heroic mortal characters can stunt, but they cannot regain Essence unless they have access to their Essence pool. Heroic mortal characters who perform a one-die stunt only gain the ability to do the normally impossible. Storytellers should be less lenient with mortal characters than with Exalted on determining stunt bonuses — two-die stunts should be garner a single die, three-die stunts gain two dice, and only the

most extraordinary actions should give the performer a three-die bonus.

All of these limitations may be momentarily surpassed through the use of Charms, spells, artifacts or effects or permanently through a number of methods, including some artifacts, the spirit Charm Endowment or other Charms, Celestial-level Sorcery or certain Merits or Flaws.

OTHER GOALS

This book does not talk only about heroic mortals. The Merits and Flaws it provides are useful for any character type, Exalted included. It also discusses the Dragon Kings in some detail. There are rules for developing supernatural martial arts, an alternate combat system and a mass combat system for resolving clashes of armies. In short, it rounds out the mechanical content of the setting, providing most of the systems absent from the main rules and not detailed with any of the different types of Exalted.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The **Exalted Players Guide** is intended to supplement the rules of the main **Exalted** book. It adds new options for character creation, enhances the original combat system, provides rules for mass combat, allows for new character types and generally expands upon the main **Exalted** rules to make them more complete. Each of the following chapters may have something to add to your game. Evaluate each of them, go over them with your players, and if you all agree, then integrate them into your game. In many cases, such as for Merits and Flaws, it may be best to wait until everyone makes new characters or someone else begins storytelling to integrate the changes.

Chapter One: Merits and Flaws details Merits and Flaws, special Traits that some characters possess and others do not.

Chapter Two: The God-Blooded contains comprehensive rules for portraying those individuals touched by the divine through their lineage or the use of certain powerful divine blessings.

Chapter Three: Mortal Thaumaturgy covers the intricacies of mortal magic. Frail though it is, mortal magical workings are one of the few sources of might available to the unExalted, and thaumaturgy has a powerful impact on the day-to-day life of the average inhabitant of Creation.

Chapter Four: The Dragon Kings provides rules for playing the prehuman masters of Creation, the saurian Dragon Kings.

Chapter Five: The Exalted contains the Mail and Steel mass-combat rules and the Exalted Power Combat combat-system enhancements, and it details

I HAVE MORAL OBJECTIONS!

Someone, somewhere is even now saying that it's terrible that some people in Creation are inherently better than others. The reasons for this are twofold.

The first reason is that they're just mechanically less important. The world of **Exalted** is an epic tale, and they are the many who strive and die without directly affecting the narrative. Just because she's an extra doesn't mean that Auntie Jade is any less a person. It just means she's never really likely to change the world. She is not a robotic drone or a superficial caricature of a person. She is merely a normal person unable to run up walls or withstand multiple sword blows. In this, she is not unlike the reader.

Certainly, there are individuals in Creation, especially among the Exalted, who are bigoted and mistreat those of lesser destiny and Essence. Others are not so hard hearted. The Immaculate Philosophy dictates that those with power strive to protect and govern these individuals precisely because they *are* wholly human and normal and mortal. They are merely far less able to protect themselves than an Exalt or hero.

The second reason is that they're not really facing these inequities at all. These are, in fact, fictional people encountering fictional inequalities in an entirely fictional world. The cosmology of their world is, in fact, inherently unfair in handing out power. People who are important to the "story" of history are in fact vastly more powerful and talented than the average rice farmer merely by nature of being important. You know what — none of it actually matters. Do you write angry letters to the publishers of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* about how Kafka mistreated that poor protagonist by turning him into a giant bug? There is some real person in the real world near you who is actually encountering real discrimination. Muster up some courage, and go stand up for them instead of bothering me.

the learning and practice of the supernatural martial arts among all the Exalted.

Appendix: Writing in the Age of Sorrows includes guides to writing in two of the alphabets of Creation and a short essay on writing in the Realm.

LEXICON

This lexicon briefly defines some of the most important terms in this book. There are many others described in the individual chapters, but there's no real reason to define them centrally, as the chapters of the book are only tangentially related.

Anklok: The lonely, desert-dwelling Southern breed of *Dragon King*.

Arts: Generic forms of *thaumaturgy* that anyone with a high enough Occult can attempt.

Dragon King: A prehistoric race of magically talented lizardmen who ruled humanity in the time before the coming of the Exalted and the war against the Primordials. Dragon King civilization declined during the Old Realm and the Shogunate, and the Contagion rendered the Dragon Kings virtually extinct.

Flaw: A negative Trait not part of the normal array of Attributes, Abilities, Virtues and so on. Some characters possess certain Flaws, other characters do not. Some Merits have varying values, like normal Traits, while others merely denote that character is subject to some status or condition. See *Merit*.

hero: A special member of a military unit who is permitted to strike for the leader in hand-to-hand combat and who can assume leadership of the unit if the unit leader is incapacitated.

Merit: A positive Trait not part of the normal array of Attributes, Abilities, Virtues and so on. Some characters possess certain Merits, some characters do not. Some Merits have varying values, like normal Traits, while others merely denote that character is subject to some status or condition. See *Flaw*.

Mosok: Western, aquatic breed of *Dragon King*.

Path: One of the 10 magical aptitudes (two for each element) practiced by the *Dragon Kings* to channel their Essence. Paths are somewhat more flexible than Charms, but not nearly as versatile. Dragon Kings practiced almost no other arts beyond the Paths.

Perfected Lotus: A term used to refer to practice of supernatural martial arts. The three initiations into the lotus — root, bud and blossom — represent the ability to practice Terrestrial, Celestial and Sidereal martial arts.

Pterok: A flying, Northern breed of *Dragon King*.

Raptok: The most humanoid, Eastern breed of *Dragon King*. Raptoks are still found in the Southeast, especially around Rathess, and are called "stalkers" locally.

relay: A special member of a military unit charged with repeating and amplifying the leader's orders.

Sciences: Specialized forms of *thaumaturgy* that require more than mere Occult to execute.

sorcerer: A special member of a military unit who occupies a protected position. Used for master archers and observers as well as sorcerers. Sorcerers may strike for the unit leader in ranged combat.

thaumaturgy: The mortal practice of magic, using very basic Essence channeling and natural law. Prior to this book, the mortal practice of magic was generally called "mortal sorcery." It has been renamed so that it and the vastly more powerful magical practice of the Exalted are not so easily confused.

unit leader: A special member of a military unit who directs the formation and strikes for the rest of the soldiers in combat.



"No Legs! No Legs!"

That was what the children called after him as they pelted him with rocks and green bones. He'd had another name once, before the war. He had been Emerald, for his eyes, though they had darkened as he aged. At Mishaka, a burning fortification had fallen on his fang as it hurried past, and his legs were crushed to crimson pulp beneath it.

The legion surgeons had said that it was nothing short of a miracle that he had lived, and the Dragon-Blooded honored the mortals who had dug him out from beneath the burning wreckage as "like unto the Exalted" in their heroism.

This had meant little for Emerald. He was struck from the rolls of the legions as soon as his wounds had healed. With a war-invalid's pittance of a pension, he could either return home and live in poverty in his ancestral village, just able to make his share of the tax payment, and dependent on the good will of the village and the good deeds of the mendicants for food, at least until there was a hard year. Then, he would be his family's problem.

Emerald remembered well looking out from the deck of his transport and weeping as the cripples hauled themselves and brothers and sisters too enfeebled to walk down to the military pier, weeping, knowing he would join their so-called "Invalid Legion." They were here every time a transport left for war or returned from a campaign. They begged small coins from the departing soldiers, who gave, hoping for luck. When the ships came back, the invalids waited to receive their new recruits. Many even wore military gear they had stolen or salvaged.

Emerald had been a child once. He did not feel the need to burden his family again. His father's back was failing already. His mother's hands were knotted with arthritis. They did not need broken hearts as well. He had penned a rough letter to them, stating that he had suffered a so-called "lucky injury," one that allowed one to work while still qualifying one for an invalid's pension, and that he was staying the Imperial City to find work.

Emerald had served in the legions long enough to know that such injuries were largely myth — the Dragon-Blooded officers were very good at mending those who could provide so much as a lick of work to the Realm and deftly discarding the rest. Those "lucky injuries" that did exist were mostly purchased from legion surgeons, who would sign a lightly injured soldier's certification for a few obols.

The amputation of Emerald's legs had been horrifyingly real, but he felt it was better for his parents to think they had an unfilial cheapskate for a son than a cripple that they would seek to support despite their own poverty.

And so, he had given his rudely brushed letter to a trustworthy officer for delivery and left with the Invalid Legion, carried away in its pushcart. It was not too terrible a life. The Invalid Legion was organized and armed, and it took care of its own to the end, as the legions that had discarded them had not. The invalids were not the most worthless of the offal of the Imperial City's streets, and their fellow mendicants honored them. Sanctuaries had been purchased by generous Dragon-Blooded to house the waste of the legions, and they all, of course, had their tiny pensions. When some paupers were required as recipients of imperial largesse, the Invalid Legion was as sure to be there as the worthy orphans of the poor. Indeed, even those who sold hashish and opium charged them significantly lower rates, seeking to ameliorate their suffering. Other than his maiming, poverty, drug addiction and purposeless life, No Legs did not suffer overmuch in his new existence.

Yet, times had become hard since the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress. The discount on hashish had been reduced, and the imperial pension payments had become sporadic. The Dragon-Blooded had begun to clash in the streets. Some invalids were killed for seeing what they oughtn't, and the rest were forced to navigate the labyrinth of multiple independent security forces who might begin sweeping the streets for unknown reasons at any given hour.

Some nights, as he laid on his lousy straw mattress and stared out at the glittering imperishable lights of the Imperial City, No Legs would think of the much deeper darkness of his home village and of the girls he'd loved and the rivals he'd hated, so many years ago. He'd wonder what they were doing and if they remembered him and what stories they made up to tell one another about the snatches of him they sought to detect in every scrap of news. And then, the invalid who had once been Emerald would weep, wishing for a life he could never live again, for this is the sort of tale that has no happy ending.



CHAPTER ONE MERITS AND FLAWS

Although the standard character creation rules presented in **Exalted** allow for considerable diversity, players and Storytellers desiring greater customization and detail may incorporate the optional system of Merits and Flaws into their games. Merits represent specific advantages purchased with bonus points. Characters may theoretically have as many Merits as they can afford to purchase, limited only by the relative scarcity of bonus points. Flaws work in reverse, imposing disadvantages in exchange for additional bonus points to spend on other Traits. **Characters may only receive up to 10 extra bonus points from Flaws, regardless of the number**

taken. This cap limits abuse of Traits solely obtained for points and cuts down on patently ridiculous combinations of high-value Flaws. The dying, insane, blind, one-legged, one-armed sterile man cursed with terrible fate and bad luck is a pathetic wretch that doesn't really belong as a heroic protagonist, even if he has five dots in almost every Ability and Willpower 10 to show for it.

Most importantly, **Storytellers may veto any selection of Merits and Flaws for any character for any reason, period.** This decision should take into account the ways that Merits and Flaws affect the character who takes them as well as the other protagonists in the game. A

character with Known Anathema is going to bring down reprisal on a Circle of Solar Exalted, and the other players didn't ask for that trouble. On the one hand, this creates drama and story seeds. On the other, players may not appreciate being part of this *particular* drama just because somebody felt he just had to take another dot of Essence. In a similar vein, Storytellers should consider whether a Merit or Flaw will be played as intended or lie forgotten in the margin of a character sheet. While ostensibly the duty of the player who selected the Trait, it is the Storyteller's job to ensure that Flaws are not conveniently overlooked.

GAINING AND LOSING MERITS AND FLAWS

If something happens during the course of play that removes, modifies or imposes a new Trait, the Storyteller has three choices. The first is to treat Merits and Flaws like Backgrounds. They can change with the plot and events but do not cost or reward players after character creation. This system is simple, but it can create a sense of unfairness if a player takes extra points with Amputee and then finds a Solar healer to regenerate the missing limb, while a character who suffers an Abyssal's Artful Maiming Onslaught receives no compensation for the loss of a hand.

The second option requires more work from the Storyteller, but it offers more fairness. If the character loses a Trait, it will eventually be replaced with another Trait of equal value. If a character gains a Trait, then it comes with the erosion of another Trait. This method is easy on the bookkeeping, but it may feel contrived, especially if the Storyteller cannot find a good story explanation for the change. Also, this method does not address circumstances of great point discrepancy, where a character stands to gain a Trait whose value greatly exceeds the existing number of Merits or Flaws.

The final method is the most complicated but, also, the most thorough. If a character loses a Merit or gains a Flaw, she receives a number of experience points equal to twice its bonus point value. If a character gains a Merit or loses a Flaw, she must pay a like number of experience. If the character cannot pay this full cost, she pays whatever she has available and must allocate all further experience to the remaining balance until it is paid in full. Characters with more than 10 points of Flaws receive no experience for the excess. The Storyteller may use any of these three methods or a combination, as appropriate, to the specific Trait and situation.

GAINING AND LOSING BACKGROUNDS

Like Merits and Flaws, Backgrounds can and often do fluctuate in play, but they require slightly different systems to accommodate the change. Storytellers should note that these are *optional* rules.

One option is "Background protection." In this system, if a character loses dots of a Background due to forces beyond her player's control, the Storyteller should ensure

that events lead the character to a proportional gain in other Backgrounds. Characters should receive no such protection from player choices, or else, the system loses all accountability. Background conversion often requires creative interpretation and may not be immediate or obvious, but it demands a good faith effort on the Storyteller and trust from the players. Deliberately rearranging a character's concept to accommodate Storyteller vision will probably leave that player feeling cheated.

Conversions work best when they actually make sense from a plot perspective. If a satrap tyrannically confiscates the character's lands and holdings (loss of Resources), the disenfranchised workers of that land may rally to their displaced master's side as followers. The conversion method does not address or seek to address Background gains. If a character increases his connections or wealth or magical property in game, then the Storyteller simply awards dots as needed. Of course, this adds a complication — if, for example, something later happens to remove these added dots, does the Storyteller limit the safety net to the initial values purchased at character creation or extend them to the new ones?

The more complicated alternative to Background protection grants characters experience points for lost Background dots and charges players experience for Backgrounds awarded in play. The cost or award equals (the total number of dots granted or taken x 3). Continue this progression if a situation somehow raises a Background above an effective rating of 5, such as a Solar who gains a sixth cumulative dot of Artifact. Characters without sufficient banked experience points to cover the cost still gain the Background according to the circumstance, but they must pay the remaining balance from all future experience awards. For example, a Solar with Resources 2 finds an underground vault containing enough jewels to bring her to Resources 4. This involves a gain of 5 total Background dots for a cost of 15 experience points. As with the Background protection option, experience awards should not rescue players from their own poor choices, but should endeavor to promote fairness.

ABBREVIATIONS

This book makes reference to other *Exalted* supplements using the following abbreviations:

BoTC	The Book of Three Circles
CotW	Creatures of the Wyld
E:Ab	Exalted: The Abyssals
E:DB	Exalted: The Dragon-Blooded
E:L	Exalted: The Lunars
E:S	Exalted: The Sidereals
ESC	Exalted Storyteller's Companion
GoD	Games of Divinity

MERITS

PHYSICAL

SELECTIVE CONCEPTION

(1-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit have full conscious control of their fertility. They may be as sexually active as desired without risk of unwanted pregnancy and yet as fertile as always when they decide. Females with this Merit can automatically conceive as a result of a given union for a cost of one Willpower point, and such characters automatically know if they become pregnant. Males cannot assure conception and do not know if they sire offspring, but they may withhold their fertility as desired.

AMBIDEXTROUS

(1- OR 2-PT. MERIT, 1-PT. FOR LUNARS)

For one point, the character can use both hands equally well and never suffers an offhand penalty for any task. Characters with the two-point version of this Merit can also hold weapons and tools with their feet as readily as their hands, an adaptation common among the Haltans of the East and highly useful for characters who have lost the use of both hands. Matters of balance and common sense still apply, however, so omnidextrous characters will not be able to walk around carrying objects with every hand and foot simultaneously. Lunars pay only one point to be omnidextrous.

ACUTE SENSE

(1- OR 3-PT. MERIT PER SENSE)

The character has one or more senses heightened to superhuman sensitivity, for a cost of one bonus point each. The character adds two dice to any Perception and/or Awareness dice pool involving a heightened sense, but his player must make a reflexive Wits + Awareness roll at standard difficulty whenever that sense experiences extremely intense stimuli. Failure inflicts a one-die penalty to all actions requiring concentration until the stimulus abates or the acclimation roll succeeds on a successive turn. If a character instead pays three bonus points per sense, the sense is heightened to preternatural acuity. For example, a character with preternatural hearing could navigate entirely by the reflection and pitch of echoes, compensating entirely for pitch darkness or blindness except for an inability to discern colors and purely visual data. This sensitivity also adds four dice to relevant rolls involving the sense. Unfortunately, such extreme acuity increases the difficulty of sensory-overload rolls and the dice penalty for failure to two. The enhance-



ment provided by this Merit is not cumulative with Charms and other magic. Only the highest bonus applies. Bonus dice awarded by a heightened sense do not aid in resisting overstimulation.

DOUBLE-JOINTED

(1- OR 3-PT. MERIT, 1- OR 2-PT. FOR LUNARS)

For a cost of one point, the character is unusually supple and capable of remarkable feats of contortion. Add one die to such an individual's grappling attempts, as well as to any Athletics or Larceny rolls where such flexibility proves advantageous. Characters with the three-point version of this Merit are uncanny contortionists, capable of seemingly impossible feats. These freakish acrobats add two dice to rolls benefiting from flexibility and can bend every finger to the wrist, kick their legs straight up, maintain indefinite splits, dislocate and reset joints painlessly and slip free of most conventional restraints with a Dexterity + Athletics roll at a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller. Lunar Exalted pay only two points for the greater version of this Merit.

PAIN TOLERANCE

(3-, 5- OR 7-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit can shrug off injuries that would leave most individuals unconscious or writhing in agony. For a cost of three points, the character can ignore one die of wound penalties, but this numbness increases the difficulty of all Awareness rolls based on touch by one. Five points allow the character to ignore two dice of wound penalties but also increases the difficulty of touch-based Awareness by a like amount. At seven points, the character feels nothing. Even if mortally wounded, he may continue to act without any penalties for injuries that do not involve actual maiming. If maimed, the character can briefly jog on broken legs, swing his shattered stump of an arm like a club and perform other acts of relentless fortitude. The downside to seven-point resilience is that the character automatically fails rolls that require a sense of touch and must visually inspect his body for injuries that require treatment to prevent infection or bleeding to death. The effects of this Merit are not cumulative with Charms and other magic that negate wound penalties. Only the most powerful effect applies. Pain Tolerance is particularly common among ghosts, Lunar Exalted and deathknights with corpse-like flesh.

LARGE SIZE

(4- OR 6-PT. MERIT)

Characters with the four-point version of this Merit are roughly 25 percent larger than average, standing over seven feet tall and usually weighing in at 300 pounds or

more. Such imposing bulk grants one additional -0 health level. For six points, the character is almost impossibly huge, standing eight to nine feet tall and weighing 500 or more pounds. Such characters receive one -0 level and one -1 level but lose one die from Dexterity rolls to use small weapons, writing instruments or other tools not designed for their massive hands. Unlike health levels bestowed by Charms, the added toughness afforded by this Merit is immediately evident to everyone. The character will certainly stand out in most crowds and may have to stoop to pass through doorways built for smaller individuals. Most characters with this Merit have both Strength and Stamina rated at 3 or higher. Lunar Exalted with this Merit are proportionally larger in all forms and thus receive the extra health level(s) unless wearing another specific being's face as with Prey's Skin Disguise (see **E:L**, p. 129). Large Size may also represent extremely obese characters of normal stature, particularly when coupled with a low Dexterity.

LEGENDARY ATTRIBUTE

(5-PT. MERIT, 3-PT. FOR EXALTED)

Characters with this Merit have the potential to attain superhuman strength, speed or resilience and may select a Physical Attribute in which they can attain a rating one dot higher than the normal limit imposed by their Essence allows. This may be done during character creation or after it. For mortals and Exalted with Essence 1 to 5, this allows a rating of 6 in the chosen Attribute. Exalted with Essence 6 may raise the Attribute to 7, etc. Other versions of this Merit exist to accommodate Social and Mental Attributes. Such Legendary Attributes follow the same rules apart from being classified as Social or Mental Merits.

SPECIAL RESISTANCE

(VARIABLE COST MERIT)

For every point invested in this Merit, the character adds one additional die on applicable Resistance and Endurance rolls versus poison or disease. A character may not purchase more than five additional dice of immunity to either form of injury. Alternately, the character may have total immunity to a specific poison or disease for a cost of one point. The character will suffer no ill effects from that toxin or become sick from exposure to the malady. It is not possible to purchase immunity to infected wounds with this Merit. Immunity to alcohol simply means that the character will never suffer alcohol poisoning, though he may become inebriated and even pass out from excessive drinking. All forms of this Merit assume the character has built his Special Resistance through repeated exposure to the appropriate danger — intentionally or otherwise.

SPECIAL SENSE

(VARIABLE COST MERIT)

Characters with this Merit have one or more senses that process stimuli beyond the normal ranges of detection for their species. For example, a character may be able to see heat as well as visible light, to hear high frequency pitches like a dog or to recognize pheromones like a bee. There is no fixed mechanical effect for this broader sensitivity, but Storytellers should certainly accommodate the character's gift when narrating sensory details. If this Merit is taken in conjunction with the appropriate Acute Sense Merit (see p. 18), the character's heightened awareness also applies to the unusual ranges of that sense. Every significant expansion of a single sense's range costs two bonus points.

MUTATION

(VARIABLE COST MERIT OR FLAW)

Characters with this Merit display unusual or even unnatural features, typically as a result of supernatural parentage, direct or ancestral exposure to the Wyld or an uncapped Demesne or even an especially pronounced Lunar Tell. Regardless of their actual origin, aberrations purchased with this Merit take the form of Wyld mutations (see *Exalted*, pp. 280-281, or *E:L*, pp. 212-222). Useful mutations costs a number of bonus points equal to their mutation point rating + 2. Harmful mutations taken as Flaws grant bonus points equal to their mutation point rating + 1.

Characters with an Essence pool may spend 2 motes of Essence in place of one Willpower point to fuel any activation costs required by mutations but may not purchase the Essence Channeler blight under any circumstances. Similarly, character with a natural healing rate superior to mortals cannot purchase the Regeneration affliction. As always, the Storyteller may veto or modify the cost of any mutation deemed unfair, particularly if that feature is already covered by another Trait. Features obtained with this Merit do not count as actual Wyld mutations for the purposes of determining whether a creature may safely endure Creation, but only beings with less mutation points than their Stamina may pass their aberrations on to offspring (who must still take this Merit/Flaw as appropriate).

MENTAL

COMMON SENSE

(1-PT. MERIT)

A character with this Merit has a decent grasp of what constitutes a good idea, a bad idea and a very bad idea. She won't rush into calamity without recognizing her folly, though nothing prevents her from ignoring her better judgment. This Merit chiefly exists to warn inexperienced

players about the obvious dangers implicit in a particular course of action. The Storyteller should give fair warning in such cases, though he needn't belabor the point.

INTERNAL COMPASS

(1-PT. MERIT)

The character has an uncanny sense of direction and gains one extra die to all rolls made to navigate a ship or to find her way through a maze. She can orient herself with regard to the cardinal directions of Creation or the Underworld with a Wits + Awareness roll at standard difficulty.

EIDETIC RECALL

(1- TO 5-PT. MERIT, 3-PT. FOR ALCHEMICALS)

Characters with this Merit have a nearly perfect memory of everything they have ever witnessed, at a cost of one bonus point for every sense the character can infallibly recall. Eidetic Recall allows character to identify someone by a whiff of remembered perfume or to remember the exact wording of every argument used in a trial or to revisit scenes with photographic memory. It is assumed that this record is always functioning, though the Storyteller may require a Wits + Awareness roll to memorize or remember details observed in moments of intense stress (such as combat). Alchemical Exalted pay a flat cost of three points for full Eidetic Recall of all five senses.

PRODIGY

(2- TO 5-PT. MERIT, 2- OR 4-PT. FOR

DRAGON KINGS OR GOD-BLOODED)

The character excels at a particular skill or knowledge, gaining one additional Favored Ability for every time this Merit is purchased. Characters may not have more than five Favored Abilities in total, so Prodigy is not available to Solars, Abyssals or Lunars (who already reach these limits as part of their Exaltation). Similarly, Alchemical Exalted may not take this Merit at all, as they favor Attributes instead of Abilities. Heroic mortals and ghosts may only take this Merit with express Storyteller approval, and it is assumed that these characters *already* favor one Ability if they receive permission. All characters must abide by normal rules of Ability allocation regarding Favored Abilities: Exalted and most magical beings must have one dot in each, while mortals and ghosts cannot have a non-Favored Ability rated higher than any of their Favored Abilities. Purchasing a Favored Ability with this Merit costs three bonus points for most characters and two points for Dragon Kings and God-Blooded of all heritages.

Players of characters who already favor an Ability or treat it as a Caste/Aspect/Auspicious Ability may pay an extra two bonus points to increase their characters' aptitude even further. This cost may be stacked onto the cost

of purchasing the Trait as Favored with Prodigy or paid separately for characters who innately gain Favored Abilities as part of character creation. The increased aptitude lowers the cost of raising the Trait with experience to (current rating $\times$ 2) - 2 and adds one die to all rolls involving the Ability. This bonus die does not actually adjust the character's rating and, therefore, does not count for determining the experience cost to raise the Ability, but the bonus does permit superhuman mastery for characters who purchase their fifth dot.

VIRTUE SPECIALTY

(2- TO 6-PT. MERIT)

A character with this Merit finds his moral resolve strengthened under certain conditions. For example, a meek villager may stand as a lion in defense of his family, and a celibate monk may train himself to better resist the lure of flesh. The character receives a number of additional dice to applicable Virtue rolls equal to half the number of points invested in this Merit. However, this also increases the virtue's effective rating in circumstances where a character wishes to act against his moral judgment. Regardless of allocation and the number of times this Merit is purchased, a character may not have more than three specialty dice for a Virtue. This limitation duplicates the restrictions on specialties for Abilities. As always, Storytellers may veto any specialties deemed too broad.

DRIVING PASSION

(3-PT. MERIT)

Characters with a Driving Passion live for a cause directly tied to their Nature (most commonly Architect or Visionary). The cause can be anything of any scope, from liberating the Threshold from the tyranny of the Realm to avenging a loved one's murder to becoming a peerless master swordsman. Whenever the character takes an action *directly* furthering this goal, his player adds one additional die to the roll involved. The Storyteller remains the final arbiter of what situations merit this bonus. A character seeking vengeance for his dead wife would certainly gain dice when searching for clues, dispatching the murderer's flunkies and the final dramatic duel with the killer. However, the character would not gain a bonus in combat with roadside brigands on the way to the murderer's home city because the combat is only tangentially connected to the Driving Passion. If a character actually resolves or fulfills her Driving Passion, she immediately loses this Merit and gains six experience points.

TACTICAL INSTINCTS

(3-PT. MERIT)

The character has an intuitive understanding of tactics, from the myriad stratagems of Gateway to the most

elaborate battlefield formations. With a Wits + Lore roll as a normal dice action at standard difficulty, the character, upon glancing at any contested forces or the arrangement of a game board, immediately discerns all weaknesses and distribution of strength. Successes accumulate as a pool of extra dice the character's player may subsequently add to any Lore rolls to devise a winning strategy or Presence rolls to command forces in pursuit of that victory. Other pertinent rolls may benefit from this pool with Storyteller permission. No more than three of these dice may be applied to any single roll, and bonus dice remain until used or the end of the scene. Characters may not reevaluate the tactical scenario to refresh the bonus pool until they empty it. Dawn and Dusk Caste Exalted pay only two points for this Merit, as do the Chosen of Mars.

TRUE LOVE

(3-PT. MERIT)

A character with this Merit shares a deep and abiding romance with a partner who reciprocates her affection. This commitment adds one die to all rolls made in defense or aid of that love or the loved one. As always, the Storyteller remains the final authority of what rolls receive this bonus. The player of a character with this Merit may also roll (Compassion + 1) in place of Conviction for her character to regain Willpower each morning, if so desired. If the character's lover ever perishes, she immediately loses this Merit, but she may subsume her feelings into an appropriate Driving Passion, with Storyteller approval. Such passions often focus on completing the work of the deceased, honoring her memory or avenging her untimely demise.

TRUE PARAGON

(3-PT. MERIT)

The character exudes honor and nobility, either from a formal code or an instinctive fulfillment of what she believes is right. As a result, she may spend bonus or experience points to raise any Virtue to a rating of 6. Characters with this Merit capable of raising their Virtues above 5 for other reasons instead add one to their permitted maximum. However, this Merit does not allow permanent Willpower to exceed a rating of 10. In addition, the character's player may choose to roll her character's highest Virtue in place of the standard Conviction roll for her to regain Willpower after sleeping. Only characters with the Paragon Nature may purchase or retain this Merit. Characters who betray their code lose this Merit without compensation.

JACK OF ALL TRADES

(4-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit have a broad basis of knowledge and skill to draw upon and an almost preternatural



ability to adapt their understanding to new purposes and situations. They suffer no penalty to Attribute rolls when lacking the required Ability for a dice pool.

SOCIAL

BORN TO RULE

(2-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit convey authority in every gesture and inflection, most likely as a result of aristocratic upbringing. Others develop such majesty through the practice of leadership or upon receiving the mantle of Exaltation. Regardless, this Merit adds one die to all Social rolls when interacting with an acknowledged inferior (as determined by the Storyteller).

ENCHANTING FEATURE

(2-PT. MERIT)

Something about the character is striking and attractive or at least conveys a strong presence. He may have deep eyes that seem to hold the secrets of the universe or a voice that resonates like the basso rumble of a lion. Whenever the character can exploit this feature, he adds one die to all pertinent Social rolls, as decided by the Storyteller.

INNOCUOUS

(2- OR 4-PT. MERIT)

Characters with the two-point version of this Merit have an eerily unremarkable visage. Height, weight and build are all average, all plain. No one is apt to pick them from a crowd unless their skin and hair is dramatically different in hue than all the locals — and, possibly, not even then. People are less likely to remember them at all if they do nothing to draw attention to themselves. Such everyman anonymity adds one die to pertinent Larceny and Stealth rolls and adds one to the difficulty of any casual pursuit or investigation of the character. This will not foil any serious inquiry, nor does it grant any bonus if the character is alone or does something memorable (such as showing any level of an anima banner). Characters must have Appearance 2 in order to purchase this version of Innocuous.

The four-point version of Innocuous is a Supernatural Merit rather than Social. The character is not simply ordinary, but cloaked in an aura of subtle obscurity. Those who witness and even interact with her find their memories blurred. They may recall the conversation, but not the person with whom they spoke. More astute characters might remember “that girl” or maybe even “that red-haired girl” if they are especially insightful, but that’s about the best most can hope for.

Mechanically, this more powerful version doubles the bonuses afforded by the lesser version of this Merit. Additionally, onlookers do not remember more than superficial details from interactions with the character without a Wits + Essence roll. The base difficulty of this roll is 6, reduced by 1 for every significant interaction the observer had with the character in the previous week. Roll at the conclusion of each encounter. Once a witness pierces the anonymity, the difficulty of subsequent memory checks is the number of full weeks she has gone without interacting with the obscured character. This roll is made once a week, starting with the first full week of no contact. On a failure, existing memories of previous encounters with the obscured character blur and fade regardless of their significance. Magical beings (those with Essence 2+) indefinitely ignore the aura of anonymity after they pierce it once, but only if the hidden character has a lower permanent Essence. Unfortunately, magically cloaked characters have obvious difficulties forming lasting relationships and may not have more than two dots each of Allies, Contacts, Mentor or any other socially dependent Backgrounds unless their associates are powerful magical beings assumed to have pierced the veil. Veiled characters may not have Followers, Henchman, a Cult, any form of Command or other Backgrounds contingent on being widely known without *extremely* unusual circumstances approved by the Storyteller.

Sidereals may not purchase Innocuous in either version, as their innate Arcane Fate surpasses and supersedes the Merit's effects. The effects of Innocuous do not stack with Charms and other magic that conceal identity. Only the most powerful effect applies.

FAVOR

(VARIABLE COST MERIT OR FLAW)

If this Trait is a Merit, someone of roughly equal or greater power owes the character a favor. The value of this Merit depends on the extent of service required to cancel the debt. For one point, the debtor must perform a task that might take a few days but would not place her in any foreseen danger or require her to go especially out of her way. For two points, the debtor must perform a service whose execution may involve considerable inconvenience but little danger. Three-point favors are quite serious and may involve substantial risk of injury or other misfortune. Four-point favors represent a life debt that can only be repaid by directly saving the favor holder's life or fulfilling any single task she demands whenever she demands it. In the convoluted politics of Yu-Shan and the great spirit courts, a minor Celestial favor is worth two points, a moderate favor worth four points and a major favor costs six points.

This Trait may also be taken as a Flaw, in which case the character owes a favor to someone powerful enough or well-connected enough to call it in. The value of this Flaw

depends of the severity of favor as noted previously. Characters with Backing or similar Backgrounds most likely owe this to another member of their organization or at least to a well-regarded associate. For other characters, the possibilities are limitless: Guild factors, politicians, merciful victors of a duel, etc. Characters who renege on their favors will suffer considerable loss of face at best and possibly much worse if they break their word to someone especially powerful or vengeful.

In either form as a Merit or a Flaw, a Favor lasts until the holder calls it due. Once paid, the Trait vanishes without adding or subtracting experience or other recompense. Storytellers should not go easy on characters who owe favors, even at low levels. Indebtedness is not pleasant or convenient, and a mundane errand called due in the middle of an epic quest can create all sorts of life complications. It is common practice among spirit courts and in certain other groups to exchange their favors as social currency. In such systems, a favor debt may be transferred to another party in order to cancel a debt of like value. Such transfers do not need the consent of the party who owes the service. This practice can lead to considerable complications if a god purchases a favor from characters who haven't even heard of it, especially if that god has a diametrically opposed agenda to those owing it service.

PROPERTY

HEIRLOOM

(1-PT. MERIT)

The character owns a piece of property more valuable than his means and lifestyle can afford. Such treasures may be actual heirlooms, spoils of a heist, gifts or something more exotic still. Such an item costs only one bonus point regardless of its Resource value. Most weapons and armor purchased with Heirloom will be of exceptional quality. This Merit is particularly easy to abuse and requires close Storyteller monitoring. If an object has little utility but sufficient value to raise a character's Resources rating if sold, the Storyteller should probably require purchase of Resources at that level and assume that the wealth is simply concentrated into very narrow holdings.

HIDDEN MANSE

(1- OR 2-PT. MERIT)

The character controls a Manse forgotten to history and geomantic maps or perhaps a Manse in a more public area shrouded by some mysterious property of its arcane nature. Such a hidden place of power makes an excellent base of operations or secret lair, provided that the character and those trusted with the secret don't compromise the location with their actions. Assuming the character is properly discrete, no one need ever know about his

magical lair. This Merit costs one point for a hidden Demesne or two for an actual Manse. Characters must have the Manse Background to purchase this Merit.

HEIR APPARENT

(1- TO 5-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit will receive an inheritance left by their parents or another benefactor. They need only wait for the current owner to die — or find some way to hasten that process along without getting caught (which would forfeit the gain at the very least).

Every point invested in this Merit grants two dots of Backgrounds that the character will ultimately gain, but characters may not spend more than five points in this fashion. Add an extra dot to the pool of invested Backgrounds for every major stipulation applied to the Inheritance, up a maximum of three conditions. This can include requirements that the character be married or unmarried, serve in the military for a defined number of years, etc. Background dots obtained with this Merit are cumulative with Backgrounds the character already possesses and may raise a Background above a rating of three. Although Heir Apparent is typically used to transfer resources, artifacts, followers and other tangible goods or servants, but it may also include business partners and associates in the form of contacts, allies and the like. Still more exotic selections rely on situation and Storyteller approval, such as a necromancer whose blood-inscribed will bestows her Whispers to an heir.

LEGENDARY ARTIFACT

(10-PT. MERIT)

A character with this Merit has gotten hold of an artifact of world-shaking power, a relic on par with the Mantle of Brigid or the Eye of Autochthon. Such rare and often unwisely coveted devices invariably reshape the lives of all who come into contact with them, even defining the very epoch of their use. These relics bring terrible danger commiserate with their power, as the doomed prophet Ikerre and Bagrash Köl learned in their futile attempts to master the fabled Eye. And then too, these devices attract the worst and deadliest ambitions of gods and demons and Exalted hungry for their power. Storytellers do not need to allow this Merit *ever*, as legendary artifacts are innately and grossly unfair plot devices that will likely dominate any series they occupy. This Trait merely aids in telling stories revolving around these relics.

CACHE

(VARIABLE COST MERIT)

The character has wealth hidden or legally stored in banks in many locations, for a cost of one bonus point per city beyond the character's home. The character has full

access to the value of his full Resources or Salary at any of these locations and their surrounding regions. Characters with five points of Cache are assumed to have access to their wealth in any settlement town-sized or larger in a selected direction of Creation or the Blessed Isle, though it may take up to a week for the money to arrive in smaller towns. Each additional point beyond five extends this domain by another direction. Characters must have Resources 4+ or Salary 2+ to purchase this Merit.

SUPERNATURAL

ALTERNATIVE DIVINATION

(1-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit can crudely divine the workings of fate through methods other than astrology. Some read destiny in the pattern of tea leaves or the entrails of birds or upon the symbolic threads of a spider's web, while others spout disjointed verses of prophecy from a drug-induced trance or read palms or gaze into crystals. Whatever the method, the rolls and effectiveness of divination remain the same as for conventional astrology (see *Exalted*, p. 251). Any divination ritual should take a minimum of one scene to complete, though most will be considerably longer. Methods less complicated and quicker than astrology suffer an increased difficulty assigned by the Storyteller, while complicated, well-described rituals should benefit from a stunt bonus. Characters may purchase this Merit multiple times, with each purchase granting knowledge of one effective ritual beyond astrology (or two rituals per purchase for Sidereal Exalted). However, characters may not purchase this Merit more times than their Occult rating. Alternative Divination methods exploit the tendency of a powerful fate to inscribe its marks upon certain unfolding patterns in Creation (or in the Underworld, for those who seek the shadowed destiny of that realm). Such patterns are never as reliable as the confluence of stars and almost never allow glimpses of the future beyond the diviner's Occult rating in years.

TERRESTRIAL BLOODLINE

(1-PT. MERIT)

The blood of the Dragons does not awaken in all who bear it, and some children of the Terrestrial Exalted never receive the blessing of their ancestry. Still, the Dragons sleep fitfully, and it is not at all uncommon for Exaltation to skip a generation or more. Mortal carriers of a Terrestrial Bloodline are mechanically considered patricians of good pedigree for the purposes of producing a Dragon-Blooded child. This does not automatically make them actual patricians or grant them social standing in imperial society, but it does dramatically increase the odds that they will be able to marry into a good family if their bloodline is known.

In the Threshold, a brief tryst with a roaming Dragon-Blood can result in the mysterious Exaltation of grandchildren or great-grandchildren decades later, according to the fickle or perhaps inscrutable will of the Elemental Dragons. If a character with this Merit mates with a mortal lacking such ancestry, their child Exalts on a roll of 1 on a 10-sided die. A result of 2 to 3 indicates the child is mortal but also gains this Merit. Anything else indicates the bloodline ends unless reinvigorated with new blood. If two characters with this Merit mate, any offspring who do not Exalt automatically gain this Merit. For such couplings and other permutations of Dragon-Blooded breeding, see page 282 of **E:DB**.

Celestial Exalted may purchase and retain Terrestrial Bloodline until they reach Essence 4, but any Half-Caste children they produce have no chance of Exalting as Dragon-Blooded. Obviously, Dragon-Blooded may not purchase this Merit, nor do they have any need to do so.

PRIEST

(1- OR 7-PT. MERIT)

The character is a recognized priest of a particular deity or religion. Apart from lowering the difficulty of prayers directed at the appropriate spirit (see **Exalted**, p. 335), the one-point version of this Merit has no defined rules effects. Storytellers may award symbolic dream messages to priests or provide omens sent by their patrons, but no systems govern these visitations. The effects of this Merit are automatically bestowed upon Zenith, Midnight and No Moon Caste Exalted, and all Sidereal Exalted are automatically priests of any astrological colleges they are initiated into. Such characters do not need to purchase their ordination, as it is an innate aspect of their Exaltation.

The seven-point version of this Merit signifies far greater favor from the priest's spirit patron. Such high priests receive portentous dreams and even waking visions from their masters, but their devotion and faith must be ever-unwavering to retain favor. Piety has its rewards, however, and high priests may petition the god, elemental or demon they serve for miracles. A petition of this magnitude is performed as a standard prayer roll, but the player must spend a Willpower point to add an automatic success or channel a virtue appropriate to the prayer.

Provided that the god, elemental or demon accepts the petition (Storyteller's discretion), successes on this attempt may be spent to: restore 2 spent motes to the character's Essence pool (one success), restore one spent Willpower point to the character's pool (two successes), exorcise a possessing spirit from a host (requires successes equal to the offending spirit's Essence + 3, and the character's patron must have a higher Essence rating than the targeted spirit) or heal a dying character to stable

condition at Incapacitated (five successes; Resources 4+ offering required).

Storytellers may allow other specialized prayers at their discretion, using the preceding list as inspiration for the level of power and number of successes required for miracles. It is also important to remember that some spirits will not or cannot perform certain miracles based on their nature or power. It is possible for priests asking for a miracle to promise future offerings at the soonest opportunity, particularly when praying to save a life, but such deferred sacrifices only reduce the difficulty of the prayer roll by half their Resources value (rounded up). Patrons who accept deferment will not answer any further prayers until they receive their promised tribute. For bloodier gods and many demons, a human sacrifice has a Resource value equal to the combined permanent Essence of all victims offered in the patron's name.

Spirits can perceive a distinctive mark of Essence upon characters with this Merit. The design and placement of this mark depends on the patron. Exalted castes who are innate priests of their gods pay only six points to receive anointing as high priests, but their Caste Mark glows brightly whenever they pray for a miracle.

DESTINY

(1- TO 5-PT. MERIT)

A character with Destiny shall live most auspiciously, her fate written large in the stars above. Providence comes in many forms and degrees of fortune, as represented by the number of points invested in this Merit. A one-point destiny may be a long and uneventful life of good health without serious hunger. Two points promise a lifetime of financial prosperity or many offspring to carry the family name — or perhaps the greater prosperity of a famed tradesman, local hero or honored elder. In three points lie the destinies of merchant princes, kings of small nations and those of similar ilk. The favored scion of a Dynastic house might bear such a fate, as might the conscript who survives and rises through the ranks to become a general in his own right. Four points promise the life of a hero whose deeds shall live on in songs and stories for many generations to come or perhaps the founder of a lasting noble dynasty. Five-point destinies only surround the mightiest sorcerers and emperors whose exploits transform their era and world. The combined fate of entire nations bends before such epochal figures.

While ultimately positive in its way, destiny need not be kind to those who bear it or those who stand in its path. A foreordained king may claim his crown through assassination and treachery, his greatness rooted in tyranny. Conversely, a selfless hero may deliver her people from that same tyrant through her martyrdom,

her greatness culminating in personal tragedy even as her name becomes legend. Such juxtapositions of greatness and doom may best be represented by a combination of this Merit and the Dark Fate Flaw (see p. 39). Characters bearing the twin marks of fortune and misfortune will fulfill both in their time, usually through the same events. Any astrologer can sense the weight of fortune upon the horoscope of those bearing Destiny with a single success (see *Exalted*, p. 251), though discerning the specifics of such a destiny requires far more effort and research.

It is worth noting the difference between *capacity* for greatness and *certainty* of greatness. All Exalted bear the capacity to become mighty heroes or despots by virtue of their power, yet not all do so by virtue of the very free will granted by that potential. Those with Destiny *must* fulfill their fate unless that destiny is re woven by the power of the Maidens, and even the Celestines cannot alter the fate of the dead and Abyssal Exalted. It is incumbent

upon Storytellers to ensure that coincidence protects those with a powerful fate until that fate finds fruition, though such protection may seem cruel or callous. Such characters are not wholly defended from misfortune and injury, but only such misfortune as directly interferes with their appointed role. There is no system for such protection, as it is more of a storytelling matter.

Players who invest points in this Merit may request a particular destiny for their characters or leave the specifics in the hands of the Storyteller. As always, Storytellers should feel free to veto any fate they find inappropriate for their story. Celestial, Abyssal and Infernal Exalted can only have the smallest of destinies, as their Exaltation overrides rigid fate with the freedom of true self-determination. As such, they may not have more than one or two points of Destiny (see sidebar). Terrestrial and Alchemical Exalted do not base their Exaltations on destiny and, therefore, suffer no such limitations.

DESTINY AND EXALTATION

Terrestrial Exaltation flows through the twin vagaries of bloodline and luck. This is not so for Celestial Exalted, for which their selection is a matter of destiny and suitability. This is not to say that the Celestial Exalted are predestined, save perhaps a handful of Sidereals for whom the Maidens dangerously and deliberately bend the rules. Rather, Celestial Essences can only affix themselves to destinies worthy of their glory.

Most mortals are utterly insignificant to the Tapestry as a whole, with an effective Destiny rating of 0. Far less have Destiny 1 and considerably fewer Destiny 2 and so on, until only the rarest and most precious souls alive in Creation have the kind of world-shaping fate of Destiny 5. Mortals below Destiny 3 simply cannot contain a Celestial Essence. It isn't that anything terrible would happen to them. It just isn't possible. Of course, not all those with sufficient Destiny receive Exaltation. There aren't nearly enough Essences to go around. That is where luck comes in. For Solars and Lunars, a mortal of sufficient destiny draws attention to herself at the exact moment an Essence is available, and a dramatic Exaltation occurs. For Sidereals, the Essence finds them according to its arcane design before they are even born, drawn by preordained greatness of Destiny 4 or better. Abyssal and Infernal Exalted are like their Solar cousins and only require Destiny 3, but the Deathlords can only thrust the terrible bargain of the Black Exaltation upon mortals at the very cusp of death, and the Yozis must follow their own alien precepts.

When Celestial Exaltation takes place, the Essence overrides most or all of the mortal's extant Destiny. In place of a heroic certainty, the new Exalt is imbued with the power to make her own way and write her own fate. This reduces the character's Destiny rating by four in the case of Sidereals and three for the rest. Any remaining points of Destiny fold in on themselves like frayed threads, accommodating a new minor fate appropriate to the Exalt. Those heroic mortals not blessed with Exaltation go on with their lives toward their destined and certain end, a bright strand of color in the Loom of Fate against the drab of their brethren. A good life or a good end is their lot, and no more, and still, it is considerably better than most.

So what does this mean, from a rules perspective? Very little, actually. Every heroic mortal has at least a point of Destiny by their very nature and usually two or three points. It makes them what they are: special, set apart. It isn't necessary to assign or require purchase of the Destiny Merit unless differentiation of greatness or a specific fate is desired — or unless there is the possibility of Exaltation. As stated above, mortals who lack the appropriate Destiny do not Exalt unless they bear the blood of the Dragons. Period. That is how it works. Either the Storyteller needs to award sufficient Destiny for free or assume all the characters have it without bothering to write anything down or stipulate that players must buy the Merit if they wish to be eligible. No matter what, Storytellers should be open and upfront about the role Destiny will play in their games, both as a Trait and a force in the plot.



LUCKY

(1- TO 5-PT. MERIT, 1- TO 3-PT. FOR SIDEREALS)

A character with this Merit lives in interesting times, blessed with an unlikely preponderance of fortune that follows his every enterprise. He may or may not also have Destiny (see p. 25), as luck is quite a different force than fate. Those with Destiny find their luck invisibly guiding them toward that ordained end, while those without particular fate drift aimlessly and gracefully as a wind-blown leaf through the challenges of life.

Lucky characters receive a luck pool equal to the number of points invested in the Merit. Players may spend a point of luck to repeat any roll at the same difficulty and target number. Even botches may be rerolled with luck, provided the botches are not the result of broken oaths enforced by the anima of an Eclipse Caste Solar or a Moonshadow Caste Abyssal or similarly potent curses. Multiple rerolls may be applied to a single task until the desired result is obtained or until the luck runs out.

Players may also spend points of luck to affect a game of chance or other *completely random* event involving the character. Each point spent in this manner increases the character's chance of success by 10 percent. In such situations, the Storyteller should roll one die, adding one to the result per luck point spent. If the modified result comes

up 6 or higher, the event favors the character. Characters with this Merit regain one luck point after every full week they do not call upon their luck and refresh their luck pool fully at the end of each story. Sidereal characters receive two more luck points than the number of points invested in the Merit, though they may not have a luck pool greater than five. Consequently, Sidereals with this Merit pay a maximum of three points for a luck pool of five and may not have a luck pool smaller than three.

PAST LIVES

(1- TO 5-PT. MERIT)

Celestial Exalted with this Merit remember vignettes and emotional moments from previous incarnations of their Essence. The extent of this recall determines the cost of this Merit. One-point memories are fragmentary and not especially useful, though they can add color to a series and give indirect clues about life in the First Age. Alternately, the Exalt remembers something highly useful, but incompletely, perhaps remembering the treasures and traps of her sanctuary without knowing the tower's location.

Two-point memories are considerably more substantial and varied, but the information remains relatively fragmented. However, this overall familiarity with the First Age adds one die to any roll to operate the magical technology of that era.

Three-point memories provide priceless insight into the magic and society of the First Age, albeit one told through disconnected scenes. The character's player now adds the earlier bonus to any rolls for the Exalt to remember details about social matters and lifestyle, as well as technology operation.

Four-point memories are thorough and comprehensive, like being transported into that forgotten time to witness its splendors. The character's period of intermittent recall spans centuries if not millennia and may encompass more than one incarnation. The character's player adds three dice to any roll related to knowledge of the First Age.

Five-point memories are expansive in their beauty and terror. The character remembers scenes from the entire span of the First Age, beginning with the war against the Primordials, progressing through the glory and corruption of the Solar Deliberative and culminating in visions of the bloody Usurpation. This increases the aforementioned bonus to five dice. Such memories can easily overwhelm young Exalted, driving them to madness or worse (see "Throwback," p. 41).

Sidereals cannot purchase this Merit, but instead, rely on their Savant Background to unlock memories and learn knowledge of the First Age. Likewise, up to two points of this Merit may be taken under extraordinarily rare circumstances by mortals or Dragon-Blooded to reflect memories leftover from previous incarnations of their higher soul. Such Past Lives only apply to the most recent life, invariably much more recent than the First Age and, therefore, without any accompanying benefit to operating First Age technology.

Storytellers can create memories for a character with this Merit or may allow players to design memories (with close monitoring and approval). The former method is often better in that a slow trickle of revealed memories can help unfold a plot, particularly if the current story has its roots in events and enmities of the distant past. If players founder and become stumped, an errant memory can prove an invaluable clue. Similarly, Storyteller controlled memories don't need to be scripted in advance and may be improvised as the situation demands. On the other hand, player-designed memories can add entirely new levels to a character's backstory, enriching the game for everyone. Ultimately, this Merit serves as a plot device and background element more than a power, as information provided by memories is often incomplete at best.

SIGNATURE STYLE

(2-PT. MERIT)

Characters with this Merit combine movement and attitude into a distinctive flair that defines their legend. Signature Style functions like an Ability specialty for stunts, adding one extra die in appropriate circumstances. This extra die stacks with the rating of the stunt to determine the

final bonus, but it does not alter the number of motes or Willpower returned if the action succeeds. Possible stunt specialties include "Obvious Impossibilities," "Damn, I'm Smooth," "Making it Look Easy," "Look Upon Me and Despair," "Economy of Motion," "Excessively Flashy," "Visual Poetry" and "Shocking Brutality." As always, the Storyteller remains final authority on whether a particular stunt embodies the character's Signature Style. Characters may purchase this Merit up to three times, but only one Signature Style can benefit the same stunt.

SWORN BROTHERHOOD

(2-PT. MERIT, EXALTED ONLY)

Exalted with this Merit have taken part in the Terrestrial spell Sworn Brothers' Oath (see **E:DB**, p. 161), sharing a bond with a rating equal to the number of members (maximum eight). Sworn Brotherhood is most commonly used to link the players' characters together in common purpose and loyalty, and therefore, all members of the brotherhood must purchase this Merit. Sworn Brotherhood is extremely rare among Exalted other than Dragon-Blooded, though some Lunar packs bind themselves together in this fashion.

TAINT'S WARNING

(2-PT. MERIT FOR SOLARS, 1-PT. FOR ABYSSALS)

A Solar Exalt with this Merit intuitively senses the presence of demons, Infernal Exalted, deathknights, Deathlords, the undead and other creatures of darkness. Whenever such a being approaches within a number of yards equal to his permanent Essence, he senses the presence and spends a mote to light his Caste Mark. This expenditure is reflexive and automatic. The Solar cannot suppress the light, although he need not expend Essence if his anima already exceeds the 4-7 range of display. The character only knows that something unclean approaches. The vague impression does not reveal the creature's exact location or identity. An Abyssal with this Merit does not receive a warning of taint, but rather *from* her own taint. Her Caste Mark emerges and bleeds in the presence of Solar Exalted, celestial lions (see **GoD**, p. 33, or **E:S**, p. 20), mice of the sun (see **CotW**, pp. 15-16) and other direct agents of the Unconquered Sun.

LEGENDARY BREEDING

(3-PT. MERIT, DRAGON-BLOODED ONLY)

A Dragon-Blood with this Merit is the pinnacle of physical perfection, a veritable avatar of those ideals and qualities associated with her aspect. As a result, her Breeding Background (see **E:DB**, p. 158) has a rating of 6. This superb ancestry adds 6 motes to her Personal Essence pool and 11 motes to her Peripheral Essence pool. In addition, she reduces the cost of activating her anima banner by 3

and adds 3 to the roll to determine if her children Exalt. The physical signs of Legendary Breeding are patently obvious, conferring an additional die on most Social rolls with other Dragon-Blooded and mortals who respect or fear the majesty of those chosen by the Dragons. However, the distinctiveness of such breeding adds two to the difficulty of all attempts for such an Exalt to disguise herself as someone else. Characters must already have Breeding 5 to purchase this Merit.

PRESCIENT DREAMER

(3-PT. MERIT, 2-PT. FOR SIDEREALS)

A character with this Merit regularly dreams of what may be. The reason for this may be a gift from a god capable of seeing into the future or an unconscious awareness of fate's strands upon the dreamer or simply a quirk of destined Exaltation for Sidereals. Regardless of the reason, such characters always remember prophetic dreams more clearly than others and recognize them as visions, even if they do not know what they mean. The futures they see may involve events of decades hence or those of the next day, though they are usually within the dreamer's lifespan.

Deriving meaning from the vague symbolism of such omens requires an Intelligence + Occult roll at a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller to reflect the overall significance of the event. The number of successes determines the clarity of understanding. One success reveals that a great calamity will come soon, but the nature of the calamity remains shrouded, as does its location and exact timing. Five successes may unearth a plot of assassination with a timetable and visions of the conspirators. Characters with this Merit do not control their visions in any way. Such dreams come unbidden and follow the whims of fate and the Storyteller. A prescient dreamer may sleep soundly for years without an omen and then experience visions every night for a month. Once a character reveals the dream to others or takes actions based on the dream, he interferes with that destiny and decreases its overall probability. This is especially true for dreams whose content lies many years in the future.

ETERNAL VOW

(3-PT. MERIT OR 1-PT. FLAW, SOLARS,

LUNARS AND ABYSSALS ONLY)

In the First Age, Solar and Lunar Exalted joined in marriages blessed by Luna and the Unconquered Sun. So strong were these vows that many endured beyond death, joining each new incarnation of Solar and Lunar Essence in matrimony. Characters with this Merit retain one of these ancient links to another Exalt. As such, each may sense the other's emotions or health across any separation of distance with a successful Perception + Essence roll. This intuition normally requires a dice action, though it

may be triggered reflexively when one of the partners experiences intense feelings. It is also possible to gauge the partner's approximate direction with the intuition roll, but this requires total concentration for a full turn and cannot function unless both partners are in the same world — Creation, Yu-Shan or the Underworld.

As a final benefit, the characters may reflexively donate motes to one another with a touch at the maximum rate of their Essence rating each turn. If either party dies, the survivor experiences a moment of overwhelming pain and grief and loses a number of points of temporary Willpower equal to her Compassion. If the survivor actually slew her spouse, this costs her a dot of permanent Willpower instead.

Creating an Eternal Vow in play requires two willing participants and a marriage ceremony jointly blessed by a Zenith and No Moon and a successful prayer roll from both presiding priests. As any sacrifices are given jointly to Luna and the Unconquered Sun, the Resource value of these offerings reduces the difficulty of both prayer attempts. Characters with wedding bands (see **BoTC**, p. 92) and an Eternal Vow find the magic combines, such that they infallibly know their partner's emotional state and health at all times without a roll.

Some Abyssal Exalted retain vows made in their previous incarnations as Solars, much to the chagrin and enmity of surviving Lunar spouses. Deathknights linked to Lunars and vice versa treat Eternal Vow as a one-point Flaw, typically coupled with an appropriate rating of the Enemy Flaw (see p. 37). The effects of the vow remain the same, as the link represents a liability rather than asset. Renegade deathknights pursuing the elusive hope of redemption — especially to be with their Lunar love — may purchase this Trait as a Merit like Solar Exalted.

UNUSUAL BACKGROUNDS

Like Merits, the specialized Backgrounds introduced in later **Exalted** supplements can help to customize unusual characters. However, Storytellers should be wary of selections intended to rob other Exalted of their proprietary advantages. It is reasonable that a First Age Lunar would have Savant (see **E:S**, pp. 109-110). However, a Solar could no more develop Acquaintances (see **E:S**, pp. 105-106) than a Sidereal could exhibit Dragon-Blooded Breeding (see **E:DB**, p. 158). Likewise, the infamous Solar pirate Moray Darktide no doubt has a fair bit of Abyssal Command at his disposal, yet the Silver Prince is his Mentor and the source of Backing, not his Liege (see **E:Ab**, p. 133). Common sense and intriguing character concept should take precedence over rigid rules, but *only* with Storyteller approval.

DAREDEVIL**(4-PT. MERIT, 3-PT. FOR MORTALS)**

Fortune smiles on the recklessly brave. A character with this Merit may reflexively spend one Willpower point to double the number of stunt dice awarded to a Physical action with a difficulty of 3 or higher. This Willpower may be spent after the Storyteller determines the rating of a stunt and does not prevent simultaneous Willpower use for automatic success or channeling a Virtue. Note that Daredevil does not increase the number of motes or Willpower awarded for a successful stunt. Heroic mortals pay one less point for this Merit, as their daring is all the more impressive for its lack of magic. Characters with the Signature Style Merit (see p. 28) do not double the extra die awarded by that Trait in situations where both Merits apply.

BRIGID'S HEIR**(5-PT. MERIT, 4-PT. FOR TWILIGHT CASTE)**

Although a character with this Merit is not necessarily a reincarnation of the apocryphal Mother of All Spells, she walks in the footsteps of Brigid. As a result, she doubles the bonus/experience cost and training time of all Charms but halves the corresponding costs and training time for spells. Ox-Body Technique is exempt from this doubling, as is any Charm that includes Terrestrial Circle Sorcery as an ultimate prerequisite or leads directly to that Charm. Only beings capable of learning sorcery may purchase this Merit, and Twilight Caste Solars pay one less point than usual. Among Dragon-Blooded sorcerers, this inexplicable attunement to sorcery is called Legacy of Hesiesh.

FLAWS**PHYSICAL****UNUSUAL APPEARANCE****(1- OR 2-PT. FLAW)**

For one point, the character has hair and/or eyes of a striking color, such as vivid scarlet, sea green, ashen white or some stranger hue. For two points, the character's skin also exhibits remarkable pigmentation or the colorless white of an albino. It is also possible that the character has no hair on his body at all. Regardless of the specifics, the character's appearance must deviate notably from the expected norm to warrant an actual Flaw. For example, there is nothing unusual about green-haired Haltans, though such a character might take this Flaw for a story set among the blonde and gray hues of a village in the Far North. As always, the Storyteller retains final say on whether a character's appearance deviates sufficiently. Those marked by striking colors have a harder time hiding or impersonating others and may suffer discrimination and

suspicious stares from xenophobes (losing one die from pertinent Stealth, Larceny and Social rolls). True albinos often have the Sun-Seared Flaw (see p. 31).

MUTE**(1-, 3- OR 4-PT. FLAW, 1-PT. LESS FOR EXALTED)**

Mute characters may not speak or make vocal utterance of any sort. Their players may speak to describe actions, but no verbal communication is possible without writing, magic or shared understanding of a sign language. For three points, this limitation has no physiological basis. The character may have lost her voice after exposure to mind-shattering horror, forsaken speech as part of a barbarian taboo or taken a monastic vow of silence. If the character finds her voice or breaks her willing quiet, her player must buy off the Flaw at normal cost. The four-point version of this Flaw involves actual damage to the vocal cords, either as a result of injury or birth defect. Characters incapable of speaking above a faint whisper may also purchase this Flaw for one point, regardless of the reason for their quiet. Exalted characters suffering actual silence receive one less point.

STERILE**(1- TO 3-PT. FLAW)**

The character is physically incapable of siring or bearing children. This may be the result of an accident, illness or simply a cruel jest of fate. This Flaw is only worth one point for characters that may still engage in and enjoy the act of procreation. Characters who are also impotent or eunuchs gain two points from the Flaw. Dragon-Blooded and mortal Dynasts gain three points from any form of sterility, owing to the expectations of children and the corresponding social stigma against barrenness in the Realm. Members of other cultures who prize fertility on par with the Realm also receive three points at Storyteller discretion.

LIMITED FORMS**(2-PT. FLAW, LUNARS ONLY)**

A Lunar Exalt with this Flaw may only use her innate shapechanging to assume the form of beasts in the same family as her totem (reptiles, mammals, birds, fish, etc.). She may still drink the heart's blood of creatures that fall outside this definition, but she cannot take these forms without adjusting her totem to become a chimera. This Flaw does not interfere with a character's ability to wear a human form with Prey's Skin Disguise, nor does it interfere with partial changes wrought by other Charms.

ONE EYE**(2-PT. FLAW)**

Whether resulting from injury or congenital defect, characters with this Flaw have only a single eye remaining. This imposes a one-die penalty to Awareness rolls involv-

ing distance vision or peripheral vision on the blind side and increases the difficulty of ranged attacks by one.

SUN-SEARED

(2-, 3- OR 6-PT. FLAW)

The character finds sunlight uncomfortable and suffers horrible sunburns from relatively mild exposure. This Flaw is common among albinos (see "Unusual Appearance," p. 30), especially the Dune People of the South. Some ghosts and Abyssals also manifest this trait as a Supernatural Flaw, unable to bear the light their dead or blackened souls have forsaken. A character with the two-point version of this Flaw is at -1 on all dice pools in direct sunlight and suffers one die of unsoakable bashing damage for each hour of sun exposure. Characters with the three-point version increase the penalty to -2 and suffer damage every 30 minutes. The extreme six-point form of this Flaw is rarely seen outside of the most tainted spectres, Abyssals and Demon-Blooded. Such wretches are at -3 under direct sunlight and suffer one die of unsoakable bashing damage every minute. Characters bundled in heavy clothes or otherwise limiting their direct exposure, such as under an overcast sky or darting from shadow to shadow double the interval necessary to inflict damage. Those with the six-point version only suffer damage every five minutes for indirect exposure.

CLIMATE SENSITIVE

(2- TO 4-PT. FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw experience discomfort and even take ill if they are subjected to environmental conditions substantially different than those they are accustomed to. The value of this Flaw depends on the likelihood of encountering the undesired conditions. For two points, the character responds poorly to a particular extreme of temperature (arctic, tropical) or humidity (arid desert, marsh/jungle). For three points, the character is uncomfortable in any environment *lacking* these extreme conditions, including temperate climates. Four points indicates the condition that defines the character's home environment is specific to a geographical region and may not be replicated or transplanted without considerable difficulty and expense, such as the pollen of a particular tree or something equally obscure. Whenever a character with this Flaw finds himself in an environment he finds uncomfortable, he adds 1 to the difficulty of all Survival rolls, as well as all Endurance and Resistance rolls to resist manifestations of the undesired conditions. This Flaw may not be taken to include any area the Storyteller indicates the game will never visit.

AMPUTEE

(2- TO 8-PT. FLAW, 1- TO 6-PT. FOR EXALTED)

The character lacks an arm or a leg, either as a result of a congenital defect or injury sustained later in life. Alter-

nately, the character retains the limb, but only as a useless, paralyzed husk. The mechanical effects of amputation vary. Characters missing a hand may only perform two-handed tasks with extreme difficulty, if at all. It is assumed that any character with only one hand considers that hand primary and, therefore, suffers no offhand penalty.

The loss of both hands means that tasks involving fine dexterity are impossible, though hooks or other prosthetics may allow cruder tasks at a -1 die penalty. Characters missing an arm are at -2 on most Athletics rolls due to poor balance and also suffer the penalties for missing a hand.

Characters may offset the balance penalty with carefully weighted garments, prosthetics or other innovative means (such as tying the arm in place for those suffering paralysis). Characters missing both arms suffer the same balance penalty as those lacking one but may not perform any tasks requiring manual dexterity without magic, stunts or other remarkable means approved by the Storyteller.

Characters missing a leg can move at half normal movement with a crutch or peg leg and are at -3 on Athletics rolls involving footwork. Those with a paralyzed leg must also use crutches as they drag the limb behind them, suffering the same penalties as true amputees. Paraplegics cannot walk at all and automatically fail any footwork-based rolls. At best, they may drag themselves painfully and slowly across the ground with their arms.

Quadriplegics may not even attempt most physical tasks. Such tortured invalids seldom live long in the harsh Age of Sorrows and make poor concepts for the vast majority of players' characters. The value of this Flaw is two points for lack of one hand, three points for a single missing arm or leg, five points for the loss of both hands, six points for the loss of any two limbs, seven points for those with only a single limb remaining and eight points for quadriplegics. As with all major physical deformities, Exalted characters receive less compensation for amputation, gaining one less point for losing a single hand or limb and two less points for amputations involving two or more limbs. Fair or not, the gods do not normally make cripples their Chosen.

DYING

(2- TO 10-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw suffers from a curse, a terminal illness or another fatal condition and will assuredly perish without the aid of powerful curative magic. The character loses one dot of Stamina per interval, with the length of the interval determined by the value of the Flaw. At the lowest level, two points results in annual deterioration. This period shortens to months for four points, weeks for six points and days for ten points. Once a character reaches Stamina 0, he dies. It is always possible to avert this process by some means appropriate to the source, but not without truly heroic effort. This Flaw aids in depicting heroes who strive bravely against all odds or stories rooted



in the quest for a cure. Storytellers should feel free to disallow this Flaw without an appropriate story explanation, especially for Exalted characters or a short game.

SMALL

(3-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw stands only four and a half feet tall or less. She has difficulty reaching and manipulating objects designed for normal adult size, reducing her effective Strength by one dot for the sole purpose of meeting the minimum requirements of weapons and large tools. Her reduced size also costs her one -1 health level. Lunar Exalted with this Flaw appear proportionally smaller in all forms unless assuming a specific guise as with Prey's Skin Disguise (see **E:L**, p. 129). In addition to representing children or short adults or pygmy races such as the Djala, this Flaw can aid in portraying extremely gaunt and frail characters of normal height (especially in conjunction with low Stamina).

DISFIGURED

(3- OR 4-PT. FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw suffer some wretched deformity. For three points, they might bear the pitted pockmarks of a smallpox survivor, gross birth defects, heavy scarring from burns or wounds, useless protrusions of Wyld-warped tissue or something stranger still. Exalted and other magical beings may suffer deformities appropriate to their nature, such as a Lunar with a hideous Tell or ghosts with excessively prominent death marks. Characters with the lowest version of the Flaw cannot ever have an Appearance rating greater than 1 and lose one die from other Social pools in which their unsightly deformity could prove a hindrance. It is usually possible to conceal three-point deformities with heavy clothes, masks or other garb. While so attired, the character suffers no penalty and may act as though he has a normal Appearance unless the other party knows his true visage. Characters with Appearance 1 who do not have this Flaw are simply ugly, but not strikingly so.

The four-point version of this Flaw represents truly monstrous deformity: full-body scarring, the gaping pits and rotting abscesses of a leper, hideous Wyld-mutation or something more horrible still. Wretches at this level of hideousness have an Appearance of 0 that cannot be improved with bonus or experience points and automatically fail any Appearance-based roll. All but the most tolerant and charitable souls (Compassion 4+) will respond to the character with utter revulsion and disgust, resulting in a two-die penalty on most Social rolls. At best, monstrous characters can expect contempt and pity. In crueler regions, they may be run out of town or stoned for public amusement.

Abyssal Exalted may take with Flaw with Storyteller approval to represent a rotted or death-twisted visage. Storytellers may certainly default to the rules as written in

E:Ab, giving no bonus-point reward to players who choose the path of decay and putrescence. However, the game effects of this Flaw adequately represent the fear and loathing a rotted Abyssal will engender in most people.

SLOW HEALING

(4-PT. FLAW)

Mortal characters with this Flaw recover from injury at half their normal rate. Most such characters do not live long in the brutal Age of Sorrows. Exalted with this Flaw instead recover from their wounds at the rate of normal mortals, but given sufficient time, they still heal perfectly from anything less than amputation.

WEAK IMMUNE SYSTEM

(4-PT. FLAW, 3-PT. FOR EXALTED)

Mortal characters with this Flaw have a harder time fighting off illness, their players adding 2 to the difficulty of all Endurance and Resistance rolls for the characters to resist disease and infection. Exalted characters instead half their dice pools to resist or throw off such maladies (rounded down) but retain their usual superhuman resilience to the actual effects of ailments they contract. This means that Chosen with this Flaw will often experience the discomfort and distraction of illness for long bouts at a time, perhaps making them wish they were dead even if they are never in any real danger.

DIMINISHED ATTRIBUTES

(VARIABLE POINT FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw have weaker, slower or less healthy bodies than normal adults. This may be a result of atrophy induced by old age, injury or illness, or perhaps the character is a child who has not developed into full maturity. Regardless, the character receives three points for every Physical Attribute dot forfeited during character creation. Characters cannot use this Flaw to forfeit the free dot they receive in each Attribute and, obviously, may not spend bonus points to purchase Physical Attributes. Alternate versions of this Flaw apply to Mental and Social Attributes for characters who are less bright or particularly uncouth. Note that these are considered Mental and Social Flaws rather than falling into the Physical category.

DIMINISHED SENSE

(VARIABLE POINT FLAW)

The character suffers partial or total loss of a physical sense. In the case of partial loss, this Flaw adds 1 to the difficulty of all Awareness rolls based on the dulled sense. This difficulty increase also applies to other rolls determined by the Storyteller, such as Social rolls in a noisy party for hearing loss or long range attacks for vision. Partial loss of a

sense is normally worth three bonus points for hearing or vision and two points for other senses. Reduce this value by one if the character has ready access to magic or a device that compensates or corrects for this loss. Glass or crystal spectacles are not unknown in the Realm and the largest cities of the Threshold, although they are often prohibitively expensive (Resources 4 in the Threshold or the rural Realm, Resources 3 in Nexus, the Imperial City or other metropoli, Resources 2 in Chiaroscuro).

Total loss of a sense ensures that a character automatically fails any rolls exclusively dependent on that sense, especially Awareness. This loss also adds anywhere from 1 to 3 to the base difficulty of rolls requiring a conjunction of the missing sense and other senses.

The Storyteller will impose other penalties as appropriate: Blind characters cannot attack targets beyond 100 yards without magic or an extraordinary stunt and subtract two successes from all attacks and other actions dependent on sight. Deafness makes speech more difficult and requires a Perception + Linguistics roll (difficulty 3+) to lip-read others, making some sort of shared sign language useful. Numbness prevents most pain (halving wound penalties), but the character also cannot discern temperature, feel pleasure or know when she is suffering injury. The value of this Flaw is six points for blindness, four for deafness or numbness and three for loss of smell and taste. The Storyteller may adjust these costs as needed for characters who find ways to circumvent a lost sense or find the loss even more debilitating for some reason.

Exalted characters receive one less bonus point per sense for any Diminished Sense, as the gods are loathe to choose people with serious handicaps. No Exalt may have more than one sense lost in its entirety.

MENTAL

DERANGEMENT

(1- OR 3-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw suffers the curse of madness. Perhaps he dallied too close to the warping energies of the Wyld or angered a wrathful spirit or maybe there is no obvious and overt cause. Regardless, his mind suffers regular debilitating bouts of its infirmity. Characters with this Flaw have one of the derangements listed on page 281 of **Exalted**. It is often possible to suppress the worst effects of this derangement for a scene for a cost of one Willpower point. However, it requires magic or lengthy counseling to actually cure a derangement. The actual game effects of madness are left to Storyteller imagination, but the character will probably lose at least two dice from most Social pools with characters who do not share the madness. Characters receive three points for their first derangement and only one point for such subsequent form of madness. Other possible derangements include:

Depression: Observing or experiencing pain or emotional distress overwhelms the character, causing him to act as though suffering from the Virtue Flaw Heart of Tears (see *Exalted*, p. 131).

Glossolalia: Under stress, the character begins speaking loudly in tongues for the rest of the scene. Only powerful magic can interpret the meaning of such verbal outbursts, assuming they have any coherence. This derangement primarily manifests in true prophets, shamans and characters with the Whispers Background.

Hysteria: Under stress, the character lashes out in blind rage as though suffering from the Virtue Flaw Berserk Anger (see *Exalted*, p. 133).

Sadism: With only minor provocation, the character behaves as if constantly suffering from the Virtue Flaw Deliberate Cruelty (see *Exalted*, p. 132). The character also has an effective Compassion rating of 1 until and unless the madness passes, regardless of her true rating.

AMNESIA

(1-, 2- OR 5-PT. FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw suffer large gaps in their memory. For one point, the character is missing a notable section of his life (such as childhood) or cannot remember a very crucial event (Exaltation, committing an atrocity). Celestial Exalted who remember absolutely nothing from any previous incarnations of their Exaltation may also purchase Amnesia for one point.

For two points, the character remembers nothing from a vast swath of her life: everything before Exaltation, decades spent as a death cultist, etc. For five points, the amnesia is recurring and prevents the character from remembering anything that happened prior to waking up from her last sleep. The character still preserves memory, but he cannot access it. Such characters may retain fragmentary memories from before they received the injury or psychic trauma that damaged their mind. Additionally, recurring amnesia prevents characters from learning or advancing Abilities unless they can somehow keep themselves awake or keep a thorough journal.

Characters with any version of Amnesia have all their Traits and capabilities, though they often do not know what they can do and certainly do not remember where and how they learned. Likewise, they may find their forgotten friends and enemies faintly familiar but may mistake friend for foe and vice versa if the Storyteller feels particularly cruel. Players of amnesiacs should consider letting the Storyteller spend most or all of the character's bonus points to create actual surprises, but this obviously requires a deep level of trust. As an optional rule to encourage suspenseful play, any "hidden" Traits cost one less bonus point each, but these only emerge when the Storyteller sees fit to reveal them.

SUPERSTITION

(1- TO 3-PT. FLAW)

Creation is a magical world where physical laws are often a matter of divine whim or are torn asunder by the encroachment of the Wyld or shadowlands. Strange local beliefs and customs are very often real and meaningful — and perhaps even necessary. Unfortunately, characters with this Flaw have a wrong or fanatical idea about something important. Perhaps this erroneous belief was once rooted in fact or a kernel of truth, but that time is long past.

The value of this Flaw depends on the deviation and danger of the character's superstitious beliefs. For one point, the custom is simply inconvenient. The character might believe that road spirits abhor travelers who walk in a straight line down their path or that a certain livestock animal is inherently unclean and therefore unsuitable for human consumption. At two points, the superstition is actually dangerous to oneself (or to others who believe it). Characters may think that garlic repels the undead or put faith in a medicine that does nothing. Three-point versions of this Flaw involve harm to others. Characters may seriously believe the year will not return from the chaos of Calibration unless the gods receive a dedicated sacrifice of a virgin, or they may believe that anyone who commits adultery must die by public stoning. Exercise of such beliefs where they are not the law of the land may get a character in trouble with the authorities or incur retaliation. Characters who discover and come to accept the falsehood of their superstitions must buy off this Flaw with experience. Characters receive one less point for this Flaw if the game will take place mostly in areas where the belief is commonly held.

VICE

(1- TO 3-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw suffers a moral weakness, a particular sin or failing that tempts him above all others. A warrior of great Valor may harbor a secret fear of the undead. A monk who masters ascetic Temperance may yet fall to the lure of carnal pleasures. Those of great Conviction may find their implacable confidence shattered when they must assume a position of leadership. Deep Compassion may mask a streak of bigotry and cruelty toward a group of people or an utter disinterest in romance.

In situations relevant to the sinful condition, the character loses two dice from the affected Virtue for every point invested in the Vice. This may reduce the dice pool of a Virtue to zero, in which case the character automatically indulges in the sin and immoderation of his Vice over the better judgment of his morality. Characters may not have more than one Vice. Instead, those with deep moral deficiencies are Callous (see p. 35). This Flaw may not alter or ameliorate the Great Curse, and Storytellers should ban any Vice that obviously attempts to circumvent this restriction.



ADDICTION

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw suffer an addiction to some substance, without which they suffer the discomfort — and perhaps danger — of withdrawal. For one point, this substance is relatively easy and legal to obtain, inexpensive enough that the habit will not bankrupt the character and reasonably safe barring excessive overdose. Examples include alcohol, qat and marijuana. For two points, the addiction is more serious due to higher cost, rarity or more debilitating side effects. Examples include opium, rasp spider venom and ice fern spores. Three-point addictions are expensive and/or dangerous, such as rock cocaine, heroin and bright morning. Addiction to the Wyld also awards three points. Add one to the value of an addiction if the character's Resources cannot support regular use. Add two if the character cannot possibly afford a single dose and must turn to theft or deep debt or if the addiction controls the character's entire life. Exalted subtract one from the rating of their addictions, owing to their hardier constitutions. Actual effects of addiction and withdrawal depend on the drug and Storyteller discretion but may include dice penalties, damage or rolls to remain conscious. Thorough information on the drug trade and most of the example drugs can be found in Chapter Two of *Manacle and Coin*. Rules for Wyld addiction may be found on page 205 of *E:L*.

CALLOUS

(2- TO 10-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw believes in selfish pragmatism over scruples and integrity. He gains two bonus points for every dot of Virtues his player forfeits during character creation. Callous characters cannot forfeit their last dot of a Virtue and may not begin play with a Willpower rating more than one point higher than the sum of their two highest Virtues. This limit applies until such a time as the character has a total of 9 dots of Virtues, at which point the character automatically loses this Flaw at no cost. Thus, a monstrous, intemperate, inconstant coward with a rating of 1 in all Virtues could never have a Willpower higher than 3. Characters with this Flaw may not have the Paragon Nature. Exalted with this Flaw still suffer Virtue Flaws appropriate to their highest Virtue, if applicable.

NIGHTMARES

(3-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw experiences horrific dreams whenever she sleeps. She may have experienced a mind-shattering personal trauma or received the attention of malefic spirits or sorcerers, or perhaps she harbors guilt over past misdeeds. Regardless, she finds little solace in slumber and adds 1 to the difficulty to regain Willpower with Conviction after sleep. If the Conviction roll botches, the character loses one point

of temporary Willpower and is plagued with lingering horror for the rest of the day, resulting in a one-die penalty to all non-reflexive actions. Ghosts with this Flaw instead apply the difficulty increase to their Stamina roll to heal in Slumber. Failure inflicts an additional level of unsoakable bashing damage, while a botch results in damage and the added die penalty for lingering horror as described above.

PACIFIST

(3- OR 5-PT. FLAW)

However noble in intent, pacifism carries great risks in the violent, imperfect reality of the Age of Sorrows. Those who will not fight must find protectors who will or suffer at the hands of those less idealistically principled. For three points, a pacifist adds 1 to the difficulty of all her attacks. Even retaliation or combat in self-defense carries this penalty, as the character's peaceful nature rebels against the very notion of inflicting harm. Characters with the five-point version of this Flaw may not attack anyone without the expenditure of a Willpower point to overcome their aversion to violence for a scene. Even if they do take violent action out of necessity, such characters add 1 to the difficulty of their attacks.

UNSKILLED

(VARIABLE POINT FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw have less education and training to draw upon than most adults. They may be too young to know much yet or so old that dementia and lack of practice has robbed them of their skill. Perhaps they slept through school, or maybe they just aren't the sharpest knives in the drawer (reflected by low Intelligence or Wits). Whatever the reason, such a character receives one bonus point for every dot of Abilities forfeited during character creation. Characters with this Flaw must still meet the statistic requirements of all known Favored Abilities (one dot for Exalted; all Favored Abilities rated equal or above non-Favored for mortals) and obviously cannot purchase Ability dots with bonus points.

WEAK-WILLED

(VARIABLE POINT FLAW)

A character with this Flaw suffers gnawing self-doubt and lack of drive. She may have experienced the hunger of a Fair One or had her mind shattered by wicked sorcery. Or maybe she's simply a pathetic wretch. Regardless, the character gains one bonus point for every dot of permanent Willpower her player forfeits during character creation. This Flaw is extremely uncommon among the Chosen, as the Celestines do not Exalt spiritual weaklings. Only Exalted who suffered Willpower loss since their Exaltation may take this Flaw and only with a remarkable story

explanation. Exalted characters with this Flaw may not begin with a Willpower rating lower than 4, unless they are also Callous (see p. 35). UnExalted and Callous Exalted characters may have a Willpower score as low as 2.

SOCIAL

BARBARIAN

(1-PT. FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw grew up outside the bounds of civilization and do not know the ways of soft city-dwellers. Such individuals lose one die from all Social dice pools related to understanding or expressing civilized etiquette and are not assumed to be literate unless they have Lore 2 or higher. Characters playing in a barbarian-only game may not take this Flaw unless they must interact with civilization on a fairly regular basis in a capacity that makes their upbringing a liability.

SECRETS

(1- TO 3-PT. FLAW)

The character harbors a secret that could prove embarrassing or even dangerous if others were to learn of it. The value of this Flaw depends on the severity of the secret. For one point, it is something highly inconvenient or humiliating, like a bastard child from an illicit affair. The character's reputation and relationships may suffer, but no harm will befall him if word gets out. For two points, the secret is more serious and will certainly lead to reprisal if it comes to light. Criminals who have gotten away with their crimes have this level of Secrets, as do Anathema living in the Imperial City. Three-point secrets are deadly serious affairs. If the authorities find out, it will mean death or a comparably unpleasant fate. This level is the purview of traitors, cannibals, assassins and those who commit the most heinous and depraved acts. Quite a number of upstanding members of House Cynis hide such secrets as a result of indulging the varied excesses of their orgies. Secrets of greater value may exist, but these outrageous blasphemies are left wholly to the demented imaginations of players and Storytellers.

DISCIPLE

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

The character's superiors have entrusted her with a student that she must train and look after. In effect, the character is the mentor of her pupil, save that she cannot abandon the relationship without permission from those higher ranking than her. The student has the potential to become as powerful as the character, given time and experience. The disciples of Exalted are usually themselves Exalted, while heroic mortals typically take on other mortals as students.

The value of this Flaw depends on the cooperativeness of the disciple and the level of obligation/contact required. For one point, the disciple is cooperative and/or requires minimal attention. The disciple may be a child whom the character tutors in poetry once a week or an eager (and blessedly harmless) acolyte hoping to become an Immaculate monk.

For two points, the disciple requires more regular attention, probably for several hours at a time every few days. Alternately, the character may be responsible for providing food and shelter in addition to infrequent tutelage.

Three points indicates a disciple requiring daily instruction or a rebellious student seen less frequently. As the character's superiors will hold the character responsible for the rash actions of a wayward disciple, it is incumbent upon her to monitor and discipline the student.

A four-point disciple lives with the character and follows her almost everywhere, intruding on virtually every facet of the character's life. It is also possible that the character sees the disciple daily, but the student is a spoiled brat or utter fool who causes regular trouble and mishap (intentionally or otherwise).

A five-point disciple is a teacher's nightmare given form, an insipid, cloying wretch or a willfully malicious terror indulging in wanton mayhem for the sheer fun of it. Woe to the sorcerer suffering the pangs of a five-point disciple.

Should a character fail in her teaching duties, unpleasant consequences invariably follow. The character may be given a worse disciple as an object lesson or may be temporarily stripped of rank (losing dots of Backing, Command, Liege or other status-based Backgrounds as appropriate). Paid tutors will lose the income gained from that tutelage. The character may even lose the respect and attention of her own disappointed mentor.

The Storyteller should ensure that characters treat their disciples appropriately or suffer as befits the specifics of the assignment. It is possible to represent a useful disciple through dots of Followers or Henchmen (another Exalt is probably worth 3 to 5 dots worth of either), though such usefulness in no way mitigates the obligations of the character to the student. This Flaw is particularly common among Sidereals and Immaculates, both of whom depend on a rigid hierarchy for training. Storytellers and players alike should remember that this Trait is a Flaw, not a Merit. Without supplementary Backgrounds, disciples always create more work and trouble than any possible benefit they provide.

ENEMY/RIVAL

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

The character has earned the enmity of an individual or group. This Flaw functions like a reverse of the Allies Background, with a corresponding point value matching the power of the character's foes. Thus, two enemies equivalent to starting characters would award two points, as would a

more experienced adversary. At five points, the character might contend with the wrath of a powerful god, a Deathlord, an Exalted survivor of the First Age, a Third Circle fetich or a similarly potent being. The only difference between a rival and an enemy is that the former is a member of an organization to which the character belongs. The level of animosity and adversity remains the same, but neither the rival nor the character may openly act against the other without reprisal from their organization. Thus, a rival represents a more subtle enemy, one that cannot be overcome with brute force alone.

KNOWN ANATHEMA

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW, CELESTIAL EXALTED ONLY)

The character's Exaltation and deeds as one of the Chosen have not gone unnoticed. Even in the wake of the Empress' disappearance, such a reputation carries considerable danger. The Wyld Hunt cannot hope to match the glory and power of its past, but Immaculate brotherhoods still pose a deadly threat to unwary Exalted.

The value of this Flaw depends on how widely the character's name and true nature are known. One point indicates regional notoriety. The Wyld Hunt does not actually know of the character, but it could certainly discover him if it passed through the nation and listened to tavern gossip. Two points indicates more widespread fame. The Wyld Hunt knows the character's name and a very crude idea of his deeds, but it does not know his present whereabouts. Three points indicates the character is regarded as a great threat. A brotherhood has already been tasked with his execution, and it is only a matter of time before it finds its quarry unless he keeps moving.

Four points indicates the Wyld Hunt regards the character as a terrible demon who has likely slain the first hunters sent to destroy him, perhaps even marshaling military forces against the Realm. Such a character can expect an experienced Wyld Hunt dogging his heels or, worse yet, a Sidereal assassin of the Bronze Faction. At five points, the character is considered one of the greatest threats presently facing the Realm, on par with the Bull of the North and the Deathlords. The Mouth of Peace and Chejop Kejak personally discuss such dire menaces in order to plan their eradication. Barring exceptional story explanations, characters may not generally take more points of this Flaw than their rating in Influence or a Background granting comparable fame.

WANTED

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

The character is a known criminal, or her actions have somehow incurred the wrath of authorities willing to send hunters after her. Whether she is actually innocent is irrelevant. For one point, the character is most likely an escaped slave or has defaulted on a moderate loan, committed a theft or become involved in some other minor crime involving

another's property. Pursuit will be slight if at all, though the character will need to keep a low profile if she ever returns home. Three points indicates a murder or violent crime and a certainty of pursuit, with capture most likely leading to death or lengthy imprisonment. Five points indicates the character has committed an act of highest inexcusable treason: consorting with the Deathlords or fae, leading a rebellion, assassinating the king, etc. Storytellers should use these guidelines to interpolate crimes rated at two or four points.

DISTURBING (2- OR 3-PT. FLAW)

Characters with this Flaw make others uncomfortable. It's not that they are necessarily ugly or even rude, but they exude an indefinable aura of menace that discomfits those around them. For two points, this adds 1 to the difficulty of all Social rolls not based on intimidation. For three points, this penalty increases to 2. In general, characters with this Flaw can expect most people to give them a wide berth and to minimize contact even when Social rolls do not actually come into play.

CHILD

(3-PT. FLAW)

The character has not yet reached full maturity, and therefore, most adults treat him with patronizing amusement or disdain. His opinions are generally ignored in favor of those older and wiser, especially in matters for his own good. And that assumes anyone even bothers to hear what he has to say in the first place. The character's player loses one to three dice from all Social rolls involving interactions with adults, depending on the tolerance of the adult in question. Most children also have the Small Flaw (see p. 32) and a measure of Unskilled (see p. 36).

CHIMERA

(3-PT. FLAW, LUNARS ONLY)

A Lunar with this Flaw has revoked his original totem and taken another beast in its place. Traces of his original totem remain in Deadly Beastman form, giving him an oddly mutated and hybrid appearance. Other Lunars regard the character with distaste or even distrust, increasing the difficulty of all pertinent Social rolls by one. Actual chimerae — those who have lost themselves to the Wyld — should take an assortment of Wyld mutations to reflect this change. True chimerae cannot have the Renown Background.

PROPERTY

DAMAGED ARTIFACT

(1- TO 3-PT. FLAW)

One of the mystical wonders owned by the character through purchase of the Artifact Background has suffered damage, either in the distant past or since it has fallen into her

possession. The extent of this damage and the effect of that damage on the artifact's ability to function depend on the number of points invested in this Flaw. One point indicates minor damage. A weapon may lose a point of damage or accuracy or some other characteristic, while armor loses an equivalent number of points from its lethal and bashing soak or other ratings. More complicated artifacts will function correctly most of the time or with slightly reduced function all of the time (as arbitrated by the Storyteller).

Two points indicates major damage, costing six points from weapons and armor or resulting in half effectiveness or half consistency from complicated devices. Three points indicates near-total damage. The artifact is presently useless, though it may be repaired. Fixing a damaged artifact requires a proportionally complex and expensive process appropriate to the damage and the nature of the object. Repairing a shattered daiklave is considerably easier and cheaper than repairing a long-abandoned First Age warstrider.

Players may not gain more points from this Flaw than the rating of the artifact it modifies or the number of Background and/or bonus points spent obtaining the artifact, whichever is less. If so desired, characters may begin play with artifacts damaged to a degree beyond the number of points received, though they receive no benefit for doing so. Characters must have at least one more dot of Artifact than the points obtained with this Flaw.

The Solar craftsman Velgash found tattered wings of the raptor in a tomb (see BoTC, p. 95). Using the Artifact Background available to Solars, Velgash's player had to spend four points to obtain this artifact. He may thus gain the full three points from Damaged Artifact to represent a presently useless set of wings. If Velgash's player instead wished a bent and mangled daiklave, he could not gain more than two points from the Flaw, even if the daiklave were all-but completely ruined.

However, if the Abyssal tomb robber Clutching Owl began play with the same tattered wings, he could not receive more than two points from their condition, since it would cost only two Background points to obtain the wings with the Abyssal version of the Artifact Background (see E:Ab, p. 131).

DEBT

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

The character owes money or goods to an individual or organization of substantial power, such as a wealthy Dynast or even the Guild itself. The character must either pay regular installments with interest or promise a full repayment as of a certain date agreed upon by both parties. If the character fails to meet her obligations on schedule, unpleasant consequences will follow. The creditor may send hunters or the militia after her or worse. Wise creditors will avoid killing the character, if only to ensure they ultimately receive payment, but others may accept the loss to set an example for other debtors. This Flaw functions as

an inverse of the Resources Background with an identical rating system. Thus, a character with four points of Debt owes a sum equal to Resources 4. It is possible for characters to have both Debt and Resources, provided the former exceeds the latter. Such characters must pay small installments over time, no doubt accruing terrible interest all the while. Players who buy off Debt with Resources accumulated in play or borrowed from another lender do not need to spend experience points to do so.

SUPERNATURAL

UNBIDDEN ORACLE

(1-PT. FLAW)

At least once per story, but no more than once per scene, a character with this Flaw speaks prophetic words of ill omen without meaning to. Such outbursts invariably come at the most inopportune or impolitic moment, such as to a paranoid king who believes the speaker intones a curse against him. Prophecies obtained from this Flaw almost always come true — or would come true if the blurted warning didn't prompt countermeasures. Then, too, some prophecies fulfill themselves, and seeming flight from destiny may be the very thing that fulfills that fate. Only rarely will an unbidden oracle speak of his own impending misfortune. Players may prevent a prophetic outburst by spending a point of Willpower, but prophecies of any importance will find their way from the oracle's

mouth eventually. It is usually wiser to allow fate to speak as it wills or else it chooses an even less convenient time.

While they represent a rare and frightening mystery to mortals, characters with this Flaw are actually the unwitting minor tools of the Bureau of Destiny, a phenomenon to correct for dooms that come about as a result of ambient Essence disruption. Where it is imprudent or inefficient to send an agent of the bureau, a memorandum attached to the fate strand of a prophet can ensure a warning reaches the right ears at an auspicious moment.

DARK FATE

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

No happy ending awaits a character with Dark Fate. No matter how heroic and glorious her destiny and deeds, she shall ultimately suffer or bring about some great tragedy. This fate will come at its appointed time, defying the most potent sorcery, astrology and divine intervention short of the Maidens themselves.

The specifics of a given doom may vary widely in severity depending on the number of points invested in this Flaw. A one-point doom indicates a violent and painful demise or a lifetime of petty miseries. Two points indicates some serious criminal act or betrayal of a loved one. Death by slow torture can also befall those with such a fate. For three points, the fate usually extends to a broader scope: the ruination of a family business that has lasted for generations, the end of a dynasty or the impassioned murder of one's family. Fates worse than



death usually begin at this level, such as a slow descent into madness or a fall from princely splendor into utter destitution and widespread derision. Four-point dooms can lead a cursed general's army to ignoble slaughter or shatter the prosperity of a small kingdom. True damnation is also possible, be it before the sweet whispers of Deathlords or the infernal temptations of the Demon Princes. Five-point dooms bring about epic catastrophe. Entire empires may crumble in the wake of such fate. Directed inwardly, such ruin is absolute and final. A Solar champion may become a terrible scion and slave to the Void, a figure of such dread that his very name becomes a curse on the lips of all who utter it.

Death itself often seems a kindness to those who suffer Dark Fate, as few destinies match the cruelty of the broken survivor forced to live out the rest of his days knowing the horror he has wrought or become. Those fated for ruin seldom know the curse they bear, though ill portents of varying intensity typically accompany their birth or Exaltation. Any astrologer can sense the presence of doom in the horoscope of such individuals with a single success (see *Exalted*, p. 251). Identifying the specifics of a Dark Fate is much harder and never certain (minimum difficulty 5).

As always, the fate of the dead and Abyssals lies written in the stars of the Underworld rather than the stars of Creation, and not even the Maidens may change such destinies. Ironically, those cursed with Dark Fate receive the same coincidental protection as those with Destiny (see p. 25). They will survive to meet their doom, though nothing says they must meet their doom healthy and happy. As with positive destiny, players may select a particular doom with Storyteller permission or leave the curse to the Storyteller's own whim.

Celestial Exalted with this Flaw often pass similar dooms on to the next souls who bear their Essence. Sidereal Exalted are normally exempt from Dark Fate on account of their position in the Bureau of Destiny. As a result, only Sidereals who have betrayed their appointed role to serve the enemies of Creation may take this Flaw. Such inauspiciousness is its own bitter harvest.

GREATER CURSE

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW, CELESTIAL EXALTED ONLY)

Solar and Lunar Exalted with this Flaw suffer more deeply from the curse laid upon their kind by the dying Primordials. This reduces their maximum Limit pool by one dot per point invested in the Flaw, to a maximum reduction of five dots. Thus, a character with three points of this Flaw suffers Limit Break when his Limit reaches seven dots.

The Curse upon the Sidereal Exalted is subtle and hidden by design. Sidereals with this Flaw keep the nebulous Great Curse of their peers but have tried the patience of the pattern spiders with their astrological excesses. As a result, a memorandum of reprimand has been inscribed in their

strands of destiny. This reduces a character's maximum Paradox pool in the same manner as Limit described above.

UNLUCKY

(1- TO 5-PT. FLAW)

A character with this Flaw suffers an endless stream of misfortune that plagues his life. Such misfortune is not the same as a Dark Fate (see p. 39) in that it has no ultimate purpose. Chance simply dislikes the character and thwarts his enterprises. The character receives a negative luck pool equal to the points invested in the Flaw. The Storyteller may spend a point of this bad luck to force the reroll of any roll on the part of the character's player at the same difficulty and target number as the original roll. The least successful result of these applies unless the Storyteller spends additional points of bad luck to force another reroll and so on until the Storyteller runs out of luck or accepts the outcome of the lowest roll.

Alternately, the Storyteller may spend points of bad luck to negatively influence a game of chance or other *completely random* event involving the character. Used in such fashion, the Storyteller rolls one die, subtracting one from the result for every luck point spent. If this yields a result of 5 or less, the outcome opposes the character. Strangely enough, characters may be simultaneously Lucky (see p. 27) and Unlucky.

Although the two can cancel (particularly in contests of chance), the Storyteller and the player need not spend their respective luck points to affect the same rolls. A character blessed with mixed fortune experiences great highs and lows without any mediocrity, winning a king's ransom in a game and losing it the next night. Characters with this Flaw refresh their pool of bad luck at the end of every story.

PERMANENT CASTE MARK

(2-PT. FLAW, CELESTIAL EXALTED ONLY,

1-PT. FOR SIDEREALS)

An Exalt with this Flaw always displays his Caste Mark on his brow. The mark does not glow without expenditure of Essence, normally appearing as a tattoo of the appropriate color: gold for Solars, silver for Lunars and the color of a Sidereal's patron Maiden. The Caste Mark of an Abyssal is a fierce brand charred and stained to inky black. Due to the widespread teachings of the Immaculate Order, many individuals in Creation recognize the symbols of the Solars, the Lunars and the Abyssals as signs of Anathema. People who behold such marks will respond appropriately. Sidereal marks are far less known and, therefore, are worth only one point, though still unusual enough to draw attention. It is relatively easy to veil a Caste Mark, at least until it begins to glow.

BEACON OF POWER**(4-PT. FLAW, EXALTED ONLY)**

Exalted with this Flaw cannot hide their divinity. Such characters have only a single Essence pool equal to the sum of their Personal and Peripheral Essence, all of which is considered Peripheral for the purposes of anima displays. This Flaw costs the same for Exalted of all types: The dangers of revealing oneself as Anathema are balanced against the destruction wrought by Terrestrial anima flux. Night and Day Caste Exalted may not take this Flaw.

WEAK ESSENCE**(6-PT. FLAW)**

Individuals with this Flaw suffer stunted magical development, or perhaps they only recently received Exaltation. This circumstance reduces the character's starting Essence rating to 1, severely limiting Charm selection. If used to represent a new Exalt, the player may choose to withhold up to five Charms in reserve (typically until after the character can raise Essence in play). Withheld Charms waive their experience cost, though they still require the same training time. Other magical beings may take this Flaw, provided that they normally have a starting Essence of 2. Dragon Kings are an exception to this rule, since those with Essence 1 are feral predators unsuitable for players.

DEATH-TAINT**(VARIABLE POINT FLAW,****ABYSSALS AND GHOSTS ONLY)**

Some Abyssal Exalted feel the touch of the Malfeans' displeasure and accursed power more keenly than others. This deepened taint provides four bonus points and alters the mechanics of the Abyssal Curse. Whenever the character's Resonance pool exceeds a rating of 10, her pool resets to zero, and she gains a point of permanent Resonance. Permanent Resonance is cumulative with temporary Resonance in determining social penalties and Virtue difficulties, and it also adds its rating to the power of any evoked or unintentional Resonance effects. Characters may not have a permanent Resonance higher than their Essence. Any Resonance Breaks after this limit merely evoke dark miracles with a rating equal to the excess, as with most Abyssals. Characters wishing to reduce their permanent Resonance by one dot must spend five experience points and undergo a Harrowing deep in the Labyrinth (see **E:Ab**, p. 148). If a Storyteller allows a deathknight to remove this Flaw with experience, the quest certainly involves a Harrowing and sufficient penance to appease the Malfeans responsible for the deepened curse. The base value of this Flaw assumes the character does not begin play with any permanent Resonance. Characters who

actually start with this greater taint add one additional bonus point per dot.

Ghosts with this Flaw do not contend with Resonance in any form, but instead, suffer the tainting of their Passions by the Whisper of Oblivion (see **E:Ab**, p. 284). Such characters receive one bonus point for every dot of tainted Passions they begin play with and must taint all Passions if they lack any rated above one. Ghosts with all Passions tainted by Oblivion are Disciples of the Abyss and may purchase Whispers at the standard cost for other Backgrounds.

THROWBACK**(VARIABLE POINT FLAW,****CELESTIAL EXALTED ONLY)**

An Exalt with this Flaw harbors impulses and personality fragments from a previous incarnation of his Essence. In effect, his Essence has its own different Nature. If the Exalt finds himself in a situation where this Nature would feel strongly and desire a particular course of action, his player must roll Willpower against a difficulty of the Exalt's own Essence rating. If the roll fails, the character acts according to his Essence Nature, but does not regain Willpower for fulfilling its impulses. A botch means the Essence Nature takes over for the rest of the scene, replacing the character's normal personality and pattern of behavior.

While "possessed" by the echoes of their former selves, Exalted regain Willpower according to the Nature of their Essence (see **Exalted**, p. 148). If a character with this Flaw ever has an Essence rating in excess of his permanent Willpower, his Nature changes entirely to the dictates of the Throwback. The value of this Flaw depends on the degree of deviation and malice of the former self. For one point, the vestigial personality is merely inconvenient, such as a Hedonist inside a stoic Paragon (or vice versa). A three-point Throwback is more alien and dangerous, exerting love toward half-remembered ancients and reincarnations of past associates — or remembering feuds too bloody to end with death. Five-point versions of this Flaw are outright malignant or insane: remnants of demented god-kings steeped in their own arrogance and power. Their voice is an unceasing monologue of temptation and inhumanity that refuses to accept silence or death.

Storytellers may interpolate the two- and four-point versions of this Flaw if so desired. Deathknights loyal to their masters may harbor an echo of Solar glory driving them to Resonance and punishment even as it guides them toward elusive redemption, though such a Throwback is never worth more than three points. Abyssal Exalted actively rebelling against their destiny gain no points for a heroic Throwback but may harbor a wicked personality like other Exalted and profit from it.



The door opened before her, and Agu Tatosu entered the Manse.

Sometimes, it was subtle or at least dignified. She could enter the Manse with the gate guards merely kneeling and clasping their hands before them in obeisance. It wasn't particularly enjoyable to watch because Tatosu knew from experience that the guards would be punished for actually interacting with her. She had to just let them make their honors to her like automatons.

Today wouldn't be like that though. Today was an ostentatious day, and mother clearly wanted to show off. The guards at the gate were lion dogs brought down from the heavenly mansion, and the mortal guards were inside, this time armored and in serried ranks. Temple girls carried lanterns burning scented oil, and Tatosu could see the Manse's imperishable lighting had been dimmed so the lanterns cast an appropriately impressive glow.

Tatosu coughed softly as she walked through the doorway and into a wall of perfume and burned-oil scent, and the acoustics of the hall cast the sound to every corner. At the throne in the central of the vast central hall, Tatosu's mother clicked her tongue disapprovingly, and the sound carried equally well.

Nothing like a good entrance to start a visit with mother off right.

Tatosu was glad that her father, Agu Khan, ruled a kingdom whose close cooperation helped make the Lady of the Well's Manse more secure and that voluntarily contributed to her cult. Had she not been a princess by her father's line, Tatosu was sure she would never have known a world outside this temple madhouse. In fact, she had noticed that a number of the temple guards and serving girls shared a certain cast of feature with her and suspected her mother used the children of less prominent couplings to help her meet her considerable staffing requirements. The young princess had tried asking some of the girls in her entourage where they came from, but the girls had clearly been terrified or geased to speak only of the inconsequential and tried to turn every conversation toward the topics of marriage, boys and horseback riding.

The Lady of the Well made a throat-clearing noise from the throne, and Tatosu realized she had absently drifted up the processional parade route. There was her mother, the same flawless crop mother as always, full of beautiful roundness and rather obvious fertility. Tatosu tried not to stare at the two bears attempting to balance on stools standing behind the throne. Any sort of undue attention would be sure to convert the visit into a positive festival of dancing bears. This had happened twice before, once with a girl she had paid overmuch attention to during a dinner and once with a dog she had petted. She had had to refuse taking the girl away as a present and regretted not doing so. Tatosu had never seen her again, and her mother was less than forthcoming about little White Blossom's ultimate fate. Since then, the Agu Khano-a had been on her very best visiting manners and made certain that she didn't admire anything especially or dote on any of her servants.

Tatosu stood, ragged from the road. Mother didn't understand being allowed to prepare before a formal reception, so she arrayed her wall of soldiers and gods and dancing bears to greet a tired young woman who really only needed to pee.

"Daughter! Come and sit with me! Tell me stories of your time away from me! My court is curious as to your condition, and they pester me constantly with questions about your well-being." Tatosu wondered if they were actually given scripts or if her mother only retained the ones who could keep up reflexively with the goddess' internal narrative.

All manners were impossible in the situation, so Tatosu blurted out the one all-encompassing concern she possessed at that very moment.

"I need to piss, Mother."

"What, now?"

"Yes, now."

The round goddess' cheeks flushed scarlet. "Can't you just do it there?"

"Not in front of everyone."

"Fine. Bring her a curtain and a pot to piss in, and when you are done pissing, we will hear your thrilling tales of adolescent adventure."

No, this was not going to be a subtle or even a dignified visit.



CHAPTER TWO

THE GOD-BLOODED

When a magical being breeds with a mortal or animal, the resulting offspring bears traces of its mystical parentage. Virtually all beings capable of channeling Essence may bear — or at least sire — such children if they engage in sexual union, though with varying degrees of difficulty or restrictions as appropriate to their nature.

Of those lines that the Primordials sired, only the Lintha remain, at least in the records or memories of the gods. Perhaps behemoths claim such descent as beings

diminished in power and purity from their incomprehensible sires. However, it is far more likely that the Primordials are simply beyond the need for reproduction. They are. They make. That is enough for most savants. Yozi's breed children wholly of themselves and no partner, souls upon souls around the core of their fetich. Though their souls reproduce with mortals, no mortal partner could bear a Yozi's attention. The dead Malfeans wish only extinguishment of life and not its perpetuation. They would not create progeny even if they could.

Like the Primordials, savants know little of the Dragon Kings who ruled the world before mankind. And yet, none of the fragments unearthed from Rathess and other ruins of the first race suggest their power flowed into lineages of lesser beings. Still, there are heretics who wonder at the origin of the first Terrestrial Exalted and remark at the elemental power of the Dragon Kings.

For the most part, the people of Creation have no contact with apocryphal creatures and titans of legend. They do encounter spirits and Fair Folk and the Chosen, however, and not all such encounters prove hostile. From unions with these beings emerge the five known heritages: God-Blood, Demon-Blood, Ghost-Blood, Fae-Blood and Half-Caste. As a collective whole, scholars know them by their most numerous heritage and, thus, refer to all children of magical parentage as "God-Blooded." These beings stand in the threshold between mortality and divinity, less than Exalted but more than human. Theirs is the power of mystical birthright and, also, the paradoxical slavery that chains the greatest of them to their ancestors.

BIRTH

While the specifics of conception and pregnancy vary between each heritage, all five share common characteristics. Gestation takes the usual time for the mother: nine months for mortals, one year for Exalted and appropriate intervals for animals. Some spirits have been known to bring a child to term in a matter of minutes, if so inclined. Exalted mothers show no visible signs of pregnancy until the fifth month and suffer little impairment until the 13th (adding 1 or 2 to the difficulty of all Dexterity-based dice pools in the last month). Regardless of the mother's species, a God-Blooded pregnancy suffers no complications until delivery. Such children are almost always born healthy, barring any defects intrinsic to their parentage. However, it is not unknown for animals and mortal mothers to die in labor (Stamina + Resistance, difficulty 1, to survive the birth). Magical beings never risk death from childbirth. Other guidelines depend on heritage:

God-Blooded: Almost all gods and elementals may produce God-Blooded as an innate power, provided they have a permanent Essence of 2 or higher. Many spirits can even overcome constraints of gender and anatomy in such unions, allowing such bizarre possibilities as an air elemental who visits his mortal lover in the form of a rainstorm or a butterfly god whose wing dust is as fertile seed to those who breathe it. Storytellers should consider a spirit's nature when assigning the method of its reproduction. Spirits with clearly defined genders must normally adhere to the limits of those genders in producing offspring, and not all female spirits are suited in temperament or physiology to the task of bringing half-mortal children to term. Some spirits may cleverly circumvent such restrictions, perhaps

by laying self-incubating eggs or by implanting a fetus in a mortal surrogate. Ultimately, the Storyteller remains the final arbiter of how and whether a particular spirit mates.

Demon-Blooded: Like their divine counterparts, most demons with Essence 2+ may create Half-Damned offspring as an innate ability, though not all can or do. Some, such as the single-minded stomach bottle bugs, have no interest in carnal pleasures. Others partake of such violent mating rites that no partner lives long enough to become pregnant, let alone bear children. It is so with the greatest demons, for no mortal or beast can survive a sexual union with a demon of the Third Circle, let alone one of the dread Yozis. Only Exalted may enjoy the forbidden delights of the final Circle, as was popular among Solar sorcerers at the height of their decadence in the First Age. Yet, demons do mate in the Age of Sorrows — most often at the behest of sorcerers — and every offspring born of such parentage brings still more sorrow to the world.

The exact nature of demonic mating varies as widely as the nature of demons themselves. Some mate as humans do, and with like organs, while others employ stranger convolutions and contrivances of anatomy best left to nightmares. There are succubi who extract and fertilize a woman's egg with pseudopodia that they might bear children in their own infernal wombs. There are demons who must magically enter a lover's erotic dreams and mate there, leaving their partner pregnant when she awakens. Most exotic are the neomah, the Makers of Flesh, for whom the creation of children is an artform like no other (see *GoD*, p. 118). Mortals and animal mothers who bear Demon-Blooded offspring add 1 to the difficulty of rolls made for them to survive childbirth, though such pregnancies are still as free of complications as any other God-Blooded.

Ghost-Blooded: Though it is natural that all life fade unto death, it is not the way of death to beget life. The dead grow in numbers with endings, not in life's perpetuation. Even the greatest courtesans among the Restless Dead merely turn their passions and the malleable plasm of their corpora toward an act of remembered flesh. The act itself remains a sham, a memory of living sensation without life or the potential for new life. Yet, enough of that echo remains that some rare, devoted wraiths may conjoin the seed of death with the spark of life.

It is out of such unions that the Ghost-Blooded come, not naturally as the children of gods and even demons, but only with the aid of a powerful Arcanos at the very apex of the Essence-Measuring Thief Arts. Many ghosts know of this Fertile Soul Endowment, though considerably fewer actually know the coveted magic. The Arcanos requires a living woman to bear the child to term, but it also allows ghosts of either gender to "father" the offspring. As with the Demon-Blooded, add 1 to the difficulty of the roll for mortal mothers of Ghost-Blooded to survive childbirth.



Mothers claimed by death in the act of birthing the Half-Dead almost always become ghosts themselves. Full information on Fertile Soul Endowment can be found on page 80.

Half-Caste: An Exalt must normally have a minimum of Essence 4 before her children show more than cosmetic hints of their parentage. Exalted who live as gods and receive worship (i.e., Cult at 3+) reduce this Essence requirement by one, as do those who spend a full month living in a powerful (rating 4+) uncapped Demesne prior to conception. These factors are cumulative. The actual breeding of a Half-Caste involves normal reproduction and pregnancy.

All Lunar Exalted of any Essence rating may create beastmen as an innate ability by mating with an animal partner in human form or with a human lover as an animal. In either case, the Lunar must perform the coupling in the Bordermarches or deeper into the Wyld. Conception must generally follow rules of common sense: For example, a hawk cannot lay an egg large enough to hatch a hawkman (see *E:L*, p. 70-71). Once Lunar Exalted have sufficient Essence to create “normal” Half-Caste children as described above, they may produce beastmen even in the absence of Wyld energies. Non-Lunar Exalted may occasionally produce beastmen with cross-species couplings when they reach Essence 5, provided their players make an Essence roll at difficulty 3. This roll is not optional.

The difficulty of the roll for animal or mortal mothers to survive the labor of an Abyssal Half-Caste or a beastman is difficulty 2. This increases to difficulty 3 or more in the case of beastman litters, though, thankfully, such pregnancies are exceedingly rare.

Fae-Blooded: When the fae put on the trappings of form and flesh, they assume *all* the trappings of their new state. As such, all Fair Folk may breed with mortals to create Fae-Blooded children. There is no minimum Essence requirement for such a mystical conception, but more fae sire than bear, if only for their lack of patience to endure pregnancy. Indeed, the embodied Wyld energies of the fae make them especially virile.

There is no system as such for this heightened fertility, but a viable mating is almost twice as likely to result in offspring as it would with a mortal partner. Curiously enough, the presence of Wyld energies in the womb poses no threat to mortal mothers and even confers limited resistance to the Wyld for the duration of the pregnancy. Mothers of unborn Fae-Blooded add their children's Inheritance to all rolls to withstand the warping power of the Wyld for the duration of the pregnancy. This resistance only extends to the mother's body, however. Even if her flesh remains inviolate, her possessions can change, and she can still succumb to addiction or suffer derangements from exposure. As a final benefit, mortal mothers do not die in childbirth unless their players botch the Stamina + Resistance roll.

GOD-BLOODED CHARACTER CREATION

STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Choosing a concept for a God-Blooded character follows the same general guidelines as for Exalted and mortals. Consider the character's past. God-Blooded draw their power and heroic destiny from their parentage, so the specifics of their family are paramount to *any* concept. Where did she grow up? How did she grow up? Was she created as an accident of love or for a specific purpose? How does she feel about the supernatural world? Is she even aware of her supernatural parentage?

HERITAGE

God-Blooded do not have castes as Exalted do, but instead, fall into one of five heritages depending on the type of magical being they are descended from. The five heritages are: God-Blooded (gods and elementals), Demon-Blooded (demons), Ghost-Blooded (ghosts), Half-Caste (Exalted) and Fae-Blooded (Fair Folk). While all five heritages are roughly similar in power level, they do not necessarily compliment one another and may even feel naturally antagonistic toward other types of God-Blooded. Players should consult with their Storyteller and with each other to ensure compatible heritages.

INHERITANCE

While Backgrounds are normally selected in Step Four: Advantages, Inheritance presents a special case that demands attention prior to any other numerical Traits. Where heritage determines a God-Blood's type of ancestry, Inheritance quantifies the power and potential of that breeding. Each dot provides additional bonus points, so it is definitely not a "fair" Background compared with others. It is better to think of Inheritance as a placeholder to establish a consistent power level for a group. Storytellers should assign a consistent Inheritance rating for all characters to use during character creation, based on the intended power level of their series. See page 61 for more information on the specifics of Inheritance.

NATURE

God-Blooded characters select Nature as normal. Keep in mind that many God-Blooded learn to conceal their true personality behind a mask of submissive deference shown toward their magical parent. Underneath, they may be Architects or Explorers or any archetype. God-Blooded Paragons may ascribe to any of the moral ideals espoused by the different types of Exalted (as explained in their respective books).

PRIMACY OF INHERITANCE

When different magical beings produce offspring together, their children invariably favor one parent's nature over the other. A God-Blood always favors the parent with the highest permanent Essence at the time of conception. If both parents have the same Essence rating, consult the following list to determine primacy. Each entry supersedes the entries below it. If the result is still a tie, roll one die. The child favors the father's heritage on an odd result or mother on even.

Solar/Abyssal
Lunar/Sidereal
God/Demon/Terrestrial
Fair Folk/Elemental
Ghost

STEP TWO: CHOOSING ATTRIBUTES

Elevated to heroic potential beyond most mortals by their birth, God-Blooded receive six dots for their primary Attribute category, four dots for their secondary category and three dots for their tertiary (6/4/3). Half-Caste characters are the exception to this rule, receiving five dots for their secondary category and four for their tertiary (6/5/4).

STEP THREE: CHOOSING ABILITIES

God-Blooded characters select one Ability as favored, plus any purchased with the Prodigy Merit (see p. 20). They receive 22 dots to distribute among their Abilities, at least one dot of which must be placed in each Favored Ability.

STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

God-Blooded characters receive six Background dots in addition to their established Inheritance rating. These may be spent to purchase any of the Backgrounds listed in **Exalted**, as well as the new Background Patron. In addition, God-Blooded of appropriate ancestry and upbringing may have access to a number of specialized Backgrounds from other **Exalted** sourcebooks. For full information on available Backgrounds and their restrictions, see page 50.

CHARMS

With the exception of the Fae-Blooded, all God-Blooded with the Awakened Essence Merit may learn the Charms of their magical parents, albeit with greater difficulty. Regardless of heritage, all God-Blooded receive only two -2 health levels for every purchase of Ox-Body Technique. In addition, God-Blooded characters with the

Awakened Essence Merit may also study the Charms of the supernatural martial arts, though they can learn only Terrestrial styles and do so at great cost.

God-Blooded capable of learning Charms do not receive any as part of character creation, but must, instead, purchase all Charms at the cost of 7 bonus points each. Owing to their limited mastery of Essence, God-Blooded cannot develop Combos and, thus, may never activate more than one Charm per turn. Specific Charm guidelines depend on heritage:

God-Blooded: The children of gods and elementals learn spirit Charms, exactly as their parents. Such characters cannot learn Wyld Shield and may only develop a lesser variation of the Portal Charm (costing permanent Willpower in place of temporary, though the character is assured of at least one success per use). Charms that require a Trait or state of being that God-Blooded do not possess may be learned, but they cannot be used unless the character somehow finds herself in a situation where the Charm becomes relevant. For example, God-Blooded may not use Possession unless they are immaterial and have no need of Materialize unless they are actually forced into an incorporeal state. Storytellers should feel free to ban, restrict or modify other Charms deemed too powerful for their games and should limit or deny access to those Charms obviously inappropriate to a God-Blood's parentage. For example, the daughter of a wood or water elemental will certainly not gain power over fire, nor will the son of a pain goddess learn to soothe and heal injuries. God-Blooded learn spirit Charms exactly as taught, which means they can develop many specialized forms of the "same" Charm. This is especially true of blessings and curses, as God-Blooded only learn one of the listed effects per purchase.

Demon-Blooded: The children of demons follow the same rules regarding Charm selection as God-Blooded. Storytellers should take into account the particulars of a Demon-Blood's infernal heritage when approving or vetoing Charm selection. For example, the brutish get of an blood-ape will have simple, violent powers quite different from the disturbing seduction displayed by the love child of a neomah courtesan. The Demon-Blooded version of Portal costs the same as usual, but it can only transport the character into a place within Malfeas or return him to the exact place in Creation where he opened the portal into the Demon Realm. The difficulty to escape Malfeas with a Portal is the character's own Essence rating.

Ghost-Blooded: The children of ghosts learn Arcanoi just as their parents, but they suffer the same overall limitations as other descendents of spirits regarding the applicability and usefulness of effects. For example, Ghost-Blooded cannot normally reshape their flesh with Arcanoi of the Shifting Ghost-Clay Path or possess bodies with the Stringless Puppeteer Art. However, the specialized Arcanoi

of the Death in Life Path (see p. 84) allow Ghost-Blooded characters to circumvent many of these limitations.

Half-Caste: The descendents of Exalted learn the Charms of their parents but may not master any Charms that provide a perfect defense or persistent scene-length defense. The Storyteller remains the final arbiter of whether a Charm meets these restrictions. Although Lunar Half-Caste cannot freely shapechange as an innate power or benefit from drinking the heart's blood of a beast, they may gain up to two alternate forms with Finding the Spirit's Shape and Deadly Beastman Transformation. Under no circumstances can Lunar Half-Caste gain any forms beyond these, although they may customize their appearance or perform partial acts of shapechanging integral to the effects of other Charms. Sidereal Half-Caste with sufficient prerequisites and Traits may learn Charms that require the express approval of the Maidens as a theoretical exercise, but they cannot actually enact these powers.

Fae-Blooded: The children of the Fair Folk do not use Charms, but instead, wield gifts of glamour to beguile and enchant and bend reality according to their half-Wyld nature. These powers take the form of proprietary Merits.

SPELLS

All God-Blooded with the Awakened Essence Merit apart from Fae-Blooded may also learn to cast spells. Terrestrial Circle Sorcery is available to all the remaining heritages save Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Caste. Conversely, only these heritages may learn Shadowlands Circle Necromancy. Greater circles of sorcery and necromancy lie beyond the purview of the God-Blooded. Becoming a sorcerer or necromancer requires a great investment of time and energy, and so, the Charms necessary to unlock spells (Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, for example) cost 10 bonus points. Once unlocked, spells cost the same as Charms (7 bonus points each). Characters must also have Essence 3 and Occult 5 to undergo the Terrestrial initiation. No God-Blood can learn spells to summon and bind elementals or demons, as the workings of these spells are designed to operate in conjunction with certain privileges of the Exalted.

VIRTUES

God-Blooded receive the same Virtue allotment as Exalted, one free dot in each and five additional dots to distribute among them. Only Half-Caste with the Inherited Curse Flaw (see p. 73) suffer any form of the Great Curse.

STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

God-Blooded characters calculate their Willpower and health levels exactly as mortals. They receive 21 bonus points, plus those awarded by their Inheritance rating and any Flaws. Bonus points may be spent at any

time during the character creation process to raise or purchase Traits. As noted previously, it is necessary to raise a God-Blood's Essence or purchase the Awakened Essence Merit in order to gain access to an Essence pool, and characters must have Essence pools in order to learn Charms or to activate other magical Traits powered by motes. Finally, many of the inherited powers of the God-Blooded take the form of exclusive Merits. As such, Merits and Flaws are *not* considered optional rules for God-Blooded characters. Storytellers may still ban or veto any Merits or Flaws they find inappropriate, just as with all other aspects of character creation.

ESSENCE

All God-Blooded begin with Essence 1. Raising this Trait to Essence 2 requires the character to purchase the Awakened Essence Merit (see p. 66) and to spend 5 bonus points. Essence 3 costs another 15 bonus points, as it marks the uppermost limit of magical power for God-Blooded of all heritages.

THE SPARK OF LIFE

As always, consider the important questions that change the character from a collection of dots to a convincing personality: What does he look like? What are his distinctive quirks? Who are his friends? Who does he know? Who does he trust? How did he discover his magical parentage? How does he relate to his parents? How does he feel about ordinary mortals? Why does he act as he does?

GOD-BLOODED EXPERIENCE

Like all characters, God-Blooded grow in skill and power over time. Use the experience cost table and training times found on page 270 of *Exalted*, with the following modifications: Only God-Blooded with the Awakened Essence Merit may purchase or increase magical Traits.

New Charms or spells cost 15 experience points each, regardless of whether the character favors the Trait upon which the Charm builds. Supernatural Martial Arts Charms share this cost, but characters without Martial Arts 5 and Essence 3 cannot learn these fighting styles, nor can they be initiated as Terrestrial Circle sorcerers without Occult 5 and Essence 3.

The Charms Terrestrial Circle Sorcery and Shadowlands Circle Necromancy cost 25 experience points and require training time measured in weeks rather than days. Permanent Essence costs (current rating x 12) to advance, and most God-Blooded cannot ever rise above Essence 3. Only Ghost-Blooded may surpass this limit, though this grueling process inevitably kills them at its conclusion and transforms them into ghosts with Essence 4. God-Blooded must always go into monastic retreat to increase their Essence for a number of months equal to their desired Essence rating.



CREATION CREATION SUMMARY

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Record Inheritance.

Choose concept, heritage and Nature.

• STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (6/4/3); Half-Caste receive (6/5/3)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

• STEP THREE: SELECT ABILITIES

Note Favored Ability (plus any others purchased with the Prodigy Merit, see p. 20).

Choose Abilities (22 — at least one dot must go into each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• STEP FOUR: SELECT ADVANTAGES

Choose Backgrounds (6 in addition to recorded Inheritance) and Virtues (5 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (1), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — may not start at higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher) and health levels (7, plus any obtained with Merits or Charms). Characters with the Awakened Essence Merit receive an Essence Pool dependent on their heritage (see p. 66).

• BONUS POINTS

Bonus points (21, plus those obtained from Inheritance and Flaws) may be spent at any time during character creation. Only characters with the Awakened Essence Merit may raise their Essence or purchase Charms appropriate to their heritage (see p. 66).

NATURE AND VIRTUES

See the chart on page 105 of **Exalted**.

BACKGROUNDS

Not all characters may purchase all Backgrounds. See page 50 for details.

- **Abyssal Command** — Leadership within a Deathlord's forces.
- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifact*** — Magical devices, often hoarded from the First Age

- **Backing** — Standing and rank in an organization of power and influence.
- **Celestial Manse*** — Your dwelling in Yu-Shan.
- **Command** — Troops under your personal control.
- **Contacts** — Information sources and friends in useful places.
- **Cult**** — Mortals who worship you.
- **Familiar**** — An animal companion.
- **Family** — Notable kin.
- **Followers** — Mortals or stranger beings who look to you for leadership.
- **Henchmen** — Agents who do your bidding.
- **Influence** — Your pull in the world around you.
- **Inheritance** — The potency of your magical birthright.
- **Manse*** — A place of power and Essence.
- **Mentor** — A teacher and instructor.
- **Patron** — The privileges and obligations imposed by your magical parent.
- **Renown** — Your earned respect with Lunars of the Silver Pact.
- **Reputation** — How society views you and your actions.
- **Resources** — Material goods and money.
- **Salary** — An allowance of Celestial income.
- **Savant** — Secrets of the First Age.
- **Spies** — Your access to your master's espionage capabilities.
- **Underworld Manse*** — Your access to places of power in the Underworld.
- **Whispers** — Your personal attunement with the Malfeans or Yozis.

* Requires the Magical Attunement Merit

** Requires the Awakened Essence Merit

BONUS POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence 2*	5
Essence 3**	15
Charm/Spell*	7 (10 for Sorcery or Necromancy Charms)
Merit	Listed Cost

* Requires the Awakened Essence Merit

** Requires Essence 2

GOD-BLOODED

It is the true God-Blooded — descendants of gods and elementals — whom most savants indicate when they speak of magical power passed on through the blood. They are the most common type by far, and so, it is not simply an accident or misunderstanding that the very term God-Blood has come to mean *any* being whose ancestry carries a mystical birthright. In places such as Great Forks, easily 1 in 50 mortals can trace their bloodline directly back to a divinity. The number drops to roughly one in every few hundred for most parts of the Threshold, depending on local customs and beliefs. The numbers sharply decline in places where the Immaculate Order holds sway, and only the barest handful live anywhere on the Blessed Isle.

The prevalence of God-Blooded in a region is usually directly proportional to the strength of the Hundred Gods Heresy among that region's worshippers. Gods upholding their proper function in the Celestial Bureaucracy remain invisible and do not dally among mortals. Yet, fewer and fewer gods pay more than lip service to Celestial law in the declining Age of Sorrows. Once, it was a mark of shame to father God-Kin and nearly unthinkable scandalous to bear one. It was out of such social stigma than the epithet Harvest of Sighs grew to warn against the dangers of loving mortals. That Age is past, though, and many gods now regard their Sunset Dalliances as privileges of their divine station. Among elementals, breeding with mortals and animals is even more common, as they do not have to expend the effort and Essence to materialize to enjoy the fruits of flesh.

The reasons for a God-Blood's creation are as varied as the spirits who spawn them. For gods lost in their own power and

decadence or too enamored of mortal affairs, progeny may result from love or lust. Yet, even a God-Blood spawned of a meaningless tryst is too valuable a resource for most spirits to ignore. For more calculating

gods, the usefulness of a God-Blood serves as their primary or even sole incentive. Such mercenary spirits may gradually breed a small army of loyal God-Kin to attend their whims or to kill their enemies in flagrant disregard of divine law. Generally, the censors of the Celestial

Bureaucracy will happily overlook a handful of God-Blooded offspring for a relatively small bribe. As the severity of the offense rises, the cost of bribes rises exponentially. Wise gods recognize when the cost of bribes exceeds the benefit of more offspring and adjust their habits accordingly.

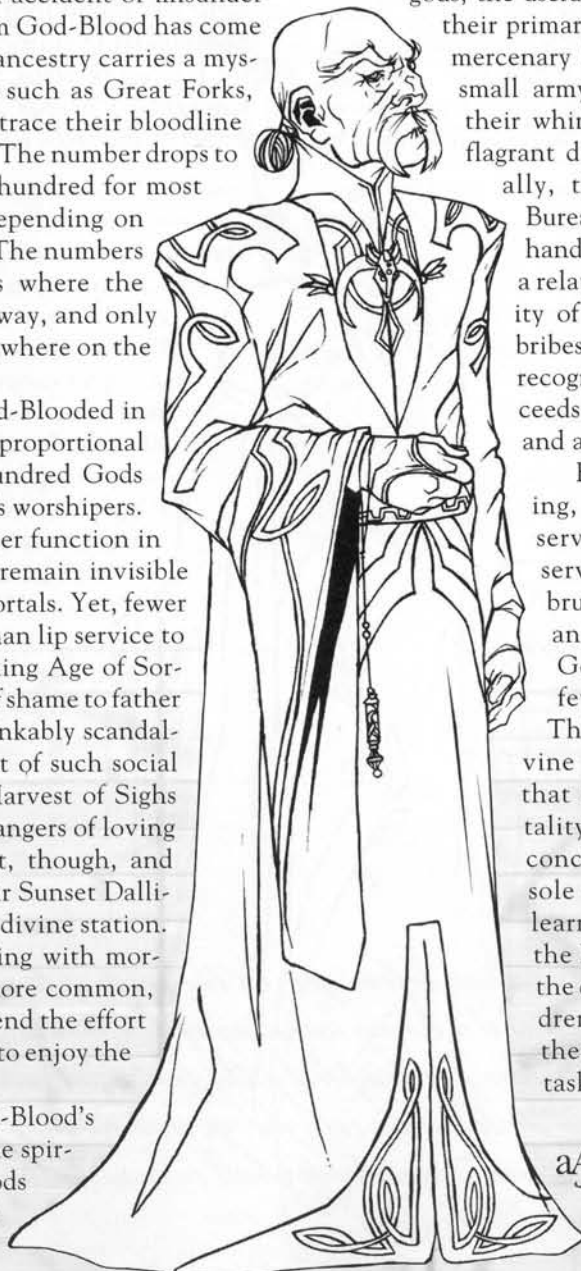
However they come into being, most God-Blooded grow up serving their divine parents. Such service ranges from pleasant to brutal, depending on the nature and temperament of the spirit.

Gods are not men, and precious few can even love as men do.

This is not to say that most divine parents are cruel, but rather, that they do not understand mortality. Flesh is transient and of little concern, so gods who take up the sole duty of parenting must often learn about hunger and excrement the hard way — and sometimes to the detriment of their wailing children. Most gods do not trouble themselves with such mundane tasks, entrusting their children to

the mortal parent or a human caretaker. The god

aa⁰³ may even leave a child to



her own devices, dramatically recruiting her at some later year when she could prove useful rather than a burden. God-Blooded raised among spirit courts learn the proper inhuman etiquette of those societies and appropriate humility. Loyalty is rewarded with scraps of power and perhaps even the dangling promise of godhood after a century or more of exemplary work. Disobedience is harshly punished, often by means beyond mortal ingenuity of suffering.

God-Blooded who escape their parents, earn freedom or simply grow up without divine interference may live more as mortals than Divinity's Shadows. Free God-Kin have less power in most cases than their enthralled brethren, but this is offset by an opportunity to carve their own destiny. Some become petty despots whose dominions mirror the brutality they suffered at the hands of their parents. Others become heroes, seeking a greatness even beyond themselves. Yet, none can ever quite escape their strange inheritance.

Heritage Power: God-Blooded may attune their senses to the spirit world as a basic dice action for a cost of 1 Willpower point or 3 motes of Essence. This sixth sense allows a God-Blood to perceive all sanctum entrances and immaterial spirits within the range of her normal senses for one scene.

Associations: Determined by parentage. The children of elementals resonate with that element directly, as well as the appropriate color, season and direction. Those descended from gods claim the symbols of their parents, as decided by the Storyteller. A daughter of a forest god will certainly feel a connection with the element of wood, but she may also favor the element of earth, the colors green and brown and hold a particular love of flowers. Conversely, such a character might feel almost irrationally skittish around fire.

Sobriquets: Divinity's Shadows, God-Kin, Half-Spirits, Harvest of Sighs, Sunset Dalliances

Concepts: Courtier among spirits, high priest, messenger of the gods, right hand of divinity

*I come before you as the voice of the
lake and a living warning of her wrath.
Restore her temple by the fortnight, or
you shall drown in a deluge such as your
scattered descendants shall lament to the
end of their days.*

Demon-Blooded

Deposed and exiled from the world they created, the Yozis brood and scheme in the hell-prison of their own tangled being. Each claims and encompasses a multitude of souls and souls within souls, all of which manifest as separate demons with their own personalities and agendas. And of the least demons, the infernal spirit races spawned according to whims and dread purpose, they comprise the bulk of fiends who dwell in the Demon City.

It is not often that demons escape Malfeas of their own volition. Most who visit Creation arrive at the behest of sorcerers eager to bind them into servitude. Sorcerers usually win such battles of wills, but every so often, a demon breaks free and slays its would-be master. These rare free demons may roam Creation for quite some time before their inevitable destruction or banishment. In that time, a wandering demon may produce dozens of children born of rape, lustful seduction or even romance. More powerful demons may even send out minions to retrieve mortal concubines worthy of their attention. Abandoned Demon-Blooded spawned in haste or violence are often mistaken for God-Blooded when they are known at all, though spirits and the wisest savants can tell the difference. The bastards of Malfeas either embrace their heritage in a vain search for meaning or reject their blood—even to the point of hunting their kin. Though they never entirely trust such defectors, professional exorcists will often pay exorbitant fees to obtain Demon-Blooded aides.

Far more commonly, Demon-Blooded come into being according to the will of sorcerers who summon demons for the express purpose of spawning them. After all, the Half-Damned are more tractable and less dangerous than full demons.

They don't need a constant diet of Essence to maintain corporeal form, and they have less exotic diets and urges (at least usually). Then, too, their part-human nature allows Demon-Blooded to roam through Creation and mortal society without attracting the panic and magical reprisal that a true demon would face.

Only a rare few Demon-Blooded actually grow up in the Demon Realm, though the slaves of callous sorcerers might believe otherwise for the unceasing abuse and outright torture they face. Many born in Creation rightly fear Malfeas and work hard to avoid paying a visit to their ancestors. This fear serves as yet another tool by which ruthless sorcerers control their thralls.

The expected duties of Demon-Blooded depend very much on their upbringing. Slaves of sorcerers often fulfill a specific role that they can do better than mortal lackeys. They are the concubines of legend, the most feared thugs in the brute squad and the most efficient inquisitors in the dungeon. Yozi-Kin serving free demons often fulfill similar functions, but they do so with greater dignity, as agents rather than slaves. If autonomy is only a lie, then it serves the deception of Malfeas and remains far better than the truth. Other Demon-Blooded working directly for their parents act as merchants of sin and vice or as advisors to mortal leaders. Some even give good advice, particularly to kings and chieftains who have dedicated themselves to infernal masters. The greatest and most esteemed Demon-Blooded act as the brokers of demonic pacts, collecting souls and slaves for their masters in exchange for infernal blessings.



These unsurpassed artisans of deception go where their parents cannot, even into the heart of the Realm itself to negotiate the creation of new Infernal Exalted.

Heritage Power: Demon-Blooded may attune their senses to infernal energies as a reflexive action for a cost of 1 Willpower point or 3 motes of Essence. This sixth sense allows a Demon-Blood to perceive and recognize demons (immaterial or material), Infernal Exalted, Demon-Blooded, gates to Cecelyne, artifacts from the Demon Realm, beings enchanted by demonic magic and all other vessels or places of infernal power within the range of her normal senses for one scene. The character's mystical senses can infallibly pierce shapechanging and mundane disguises. Only magic that cloaks emanations of Essence can hide a source of infernal power from Yozi-Kin employing their birthright.

Associations: As creatures of inauspicious and accursed parentage, Demon-Blooded are not truly natural to Creation and, yet, are partly of it. As such, they are haunted by a lifelong awareness that they do not belong. Most are restless, fitful creatures eager for any praise and community that will claim them — though they are invariably disappointed that no such acceptance ever fills the hollow in their Half-Damned souls. In spite of, or perhaps *because* of this bleak unease, they resonate with signs and symbols associated with the Demon Realm: the green sun, deserts, empty places and the twofold principles of lies and pain that form the fundamental purpose of all demons.

Sobriquets: Yozi-Kin, Hellspawn, Tears of Malfeas, Half-Damned

Concepts: Sin peddler, seducer of sorcerers, master torturer, priest of the Yozi, ronin demon hunter, negotiator of pacts

*You look at me with disdain
and heap insults upon me. No
matter, for I have crawled into
your heart, and on cold and lonely
nights, you will become mine.*

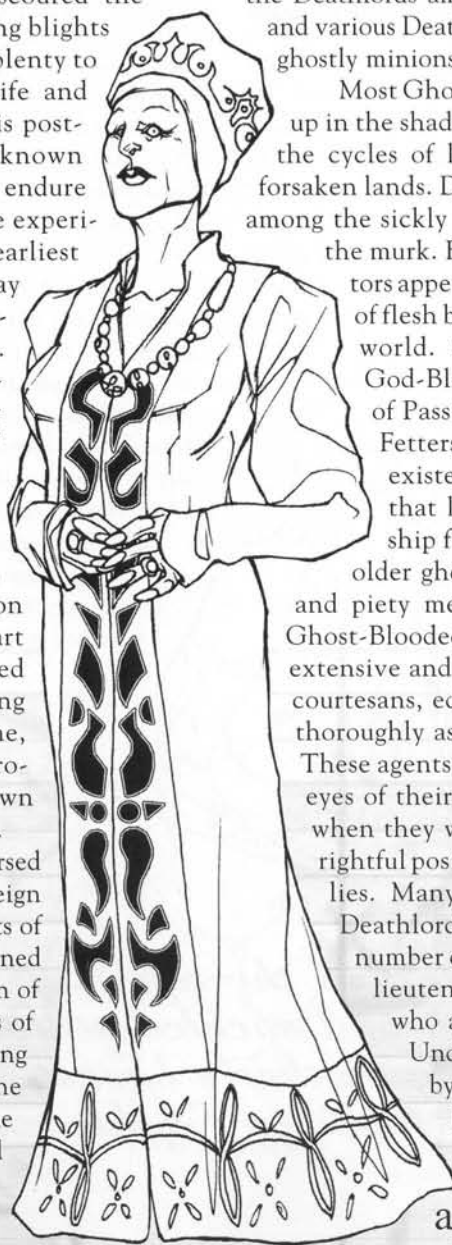
Ghost-Blooded

In the First Age, few ghosts walked the Underworld, and fewer still found their way back into Creation except at the behest of sorcerers and necromancers. All that dramatically changed with the Great Contagion. The plague scoured the population and spread the gnawing blights of shadowlands, leaving ghosts aplenty to settle the many places where life and death conjoined. It was from this post-Contagion era that the first known Ghost-Blooded emerged. None endure to the present who remember the experiments of Arcanoi that bore these earliest Half-Dead, and so, none can say whether the births were deliberate or merely serendipitous. Perhaps the magic was simply rediscovered, as with so much other lore from records and tomes of the First Age. Regardless of their origins, the early Ghost-Blooded proved quite useful to their undead forbears. In spite of this, the secret of Half-Dead creation spread slowly, owing in large part to the difficulty of the required magic and the effort of remaining in Creation. But since that time, there have always been ghosts arrogant and powerful enough to spawn wherever and however they will.

Those few Ghost-Blooded cursed to walk the Threshold during the reign of the Empress were mostly outcasts of the lowest sort. The dead condemned them variously as below the station of the dead and as painful reminders of their former existences. The living feared them as monsters, and the Immaculates condemned them as the pitiful products of cosmological miscegenation. Then came the sack of Thorns, and everything changed. The Ghost-Blooded

now rank only slightly behind the deathknights and the Solar Anathema on the Wyld Hunt's targets list, as the Realm's poor intelligence of the Underworld leads them to assume every Ghost-Blood is a potential spy of the Deathlords among the living. Indeed, many are, and various Deathlords have been encouraging their ghostly minions to reproduce.

Most Ghost-Blooded in the modern era grow up in the shadowlands, surrounded from birth by the cycles of life and death that govern those forsaken lands. During the day, they live as mortals among the sickly wretches eking out sustenance in the murk. By night, the ghosts of their ancestors appear and walk among them like beings of flesh beneath the dim stars of the Underworld. Instead of parental love, these God-Blooded know the stilted melodrama of Passion. Instead of toys, they tend the Fetters and relics of their parents. Their existence is rooted in morbid acceptance that life itself is merely an apprenticeship for unlife. This is especially true in older ghost clans, where respect for elders and piety meet in a rigid familial hierarchy. Ghost-Blooded who belong to these clans receive extensive and versatile training as assassins and courtesans, educated in prayer and etiquette as thoroughly as their training in the killing arts. These agents walk in Creation as the hands and eyes of their ancestors, preparing for the time when they will kill themselves and take their rightful positions as full members of their families. Many of these ghost clans serve the Deathlords directly or indirectly, and so, a number of talented Ghost-Blooded serve as lieutenants for Abyssal Exalted. Those who are not servants of the lords of the Underworld are seen as little different by the living, and most of those Ghost-Blooded who do not dwell among the dead live in secrecy, lest they be struck down by Dragon-Blooded hot to avenge Thorns. A rare few Ghouls



aA⁰³
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rebel against their nature entirely and take up lucrative — and highly dangerous — careers as ghost hunters and exorcists.

Heritage Power: Half-Dead may attune their senses to the Essence of the Underworld as a basic dice action for a cost of 1 Willpower point or 3 motes of Essence. This sixth sense allows a God-Blood to perceive all shadowland borders and immaterial ghosts within the range of her normal senses for one scene. In addition, Ghost-Blooded with the Awakened Essence Merit may drink blood to replenish their motes as if they were ghosts (see **E:Ab**, p. 33). Finally, all Ghost-Blooded become full ghosts upon their demise, losing all Traits specific to life as a God-Blood, while gaining appropriate Passion dots for each Virtue and 5 dots of Fetters. Unlike the majority of ghosts, Ghost-Blooded

who cross over simply step out of their dead flesh and remain at their previous location.

Associations: Ghost-Blooded are creatures of the shadowlands, alive and yet stained by death. Many Half-Dead embrace the trappings of their ancestry, dressing in funerary garb or anointing themselves with the fragrant unguents of embalming. Others dwell in crypts or graveyards or simply surround themselves more subtly with hues of black, gray and bone white. It is ever in the dimness and shadows that the Heirs of Dust and Ashes walk.

Sobriquets: Ghouls, Grave-Born, Half-Dead, Heirs of Dust and Ashes

Concepts: Deathknight's lieutenant, speaker for the dead, morbid poet, mailed fist of the ancestors, keeper of the old ways

*I died the night of my
birth and suckled stillborn
at my mother's breast. Do
you think to frighten me?*

Half-Caste

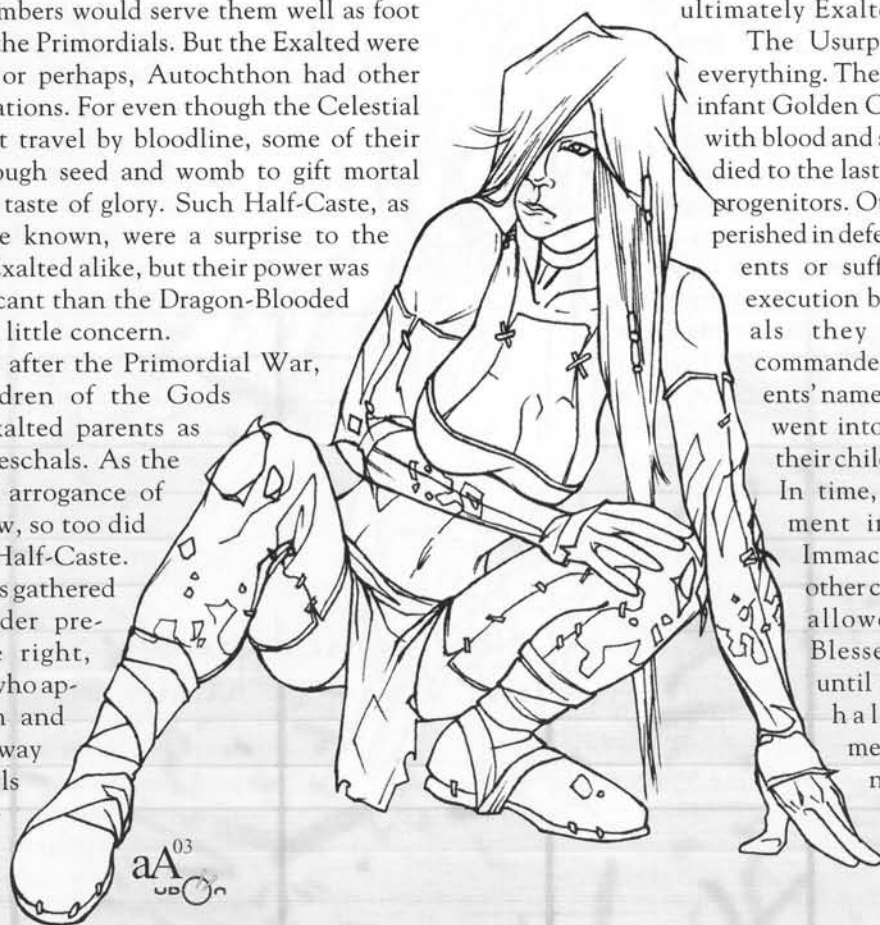
When the gods created their Exalted champions according to the designs of the Primordial Autochthon, they considered their own planned betrayal against their creators. Thus, it was decided that the power of Exaltation would not flow through blood, but would incarnate anew to those with destiny and greatness enough to attract the Essence. This system served a twofold purpose: First, it ensured that only the most worthy and able candidates received induction into the ranks of the Chosen. But more importantly, the Exalted inability to foster dynasties of power would keep them divided and fractious — and, therefore less likely or able to plot a coup against the gods. Only the Terrestrial Exalted were exempt from this limitation, for they were no threat to the power of the Celestines and swelling numbers would serve them well as foot soldiers against the Primordials. But the Exalted were made too well, or perhaps, Autochthon had other plans for his creations. For even though the Celestial Essences did not travel by bloodline, some of their power bled through seed and womb to gift mortal children with a taste of glory. Such Half-Caste, as they came to be known, were a surprise to the Celestines and Exalted alike, but their power was even less significant than the Dragon-Blooded and, so, merited little concern.

During and after the Primordial War, the Grandchildren of the Gods served their Exalted parents as squires and seneschals. As the decadence and arrogance of the Chosen grew, so too did the numbers of Half-Caste. Voracious Solars gathered concubines under pretext of divine right, seizing mortals who appealed to them and spiriting them away to lavish brothels and harems beneath their gilded Manses.

The legions of Golden Children that sprung from these unions served as living monuments to their parents' glory, sometimes displacing the Terrestrial Exalted as the closest servants and bodyguards of their sires. This insult no doubt furthered the seeds of Usurpation and gave idle Dragon-Blooded more opportunities to gather and plot.

Lunar Exalted bore few offspring in their own likeness, though they dutifully gave birth to many of the greatest Golden Children. In contrast, the Chosen of the Maidens mated rarely and kept their Star-Blessed progeny hidden from the inauspicious lusts and appetites of the Solars. As for the Terrestrials, their Half-Caste were seen as deficient or precocious depending on whether they ultimately Exalted.

The Usurpation changed everything. The nurseries of the infant Golden Children ran red with blood and screams, as they died to the last like their Solar progenitors. Other Half-Caste perished in defense of their parents or suffered righteous execution by the Terrestrials they had cruelly commanded in their parents' names. The Sidereals went into hiding, taking their children with them. In time, their involvement in the nascent Immaculate Order and other celibate religions allowed the Star-Blessed to dwindle until they were but a half-forgotten memory. The Lunar Exalted retreated to the far corners of the world and the Wyld



places and bred hordes of beastmen to attend them in their loneliness. The Contagion merely accentuated this change, erasing the last memories of the Sidereal and Solar Half-Caste.

In the modern Age, little has changed from the days of the Shogunate. But this is not bound to last. The Solar have returned to the world, and they are not alone. The Abyssal Exalted have also emerged, tainted by the malice of the Underworld. These deathknights sire children stained with their own dark power in defiance of their stillborn destiny, yet these inauspicious births can only lead to more death when their progeny learn to kill and hate life. All the while, the Solars unwittingly cast seed into the world, not knowing the harvest they will reap or the significance of the first Golden Children to tread Creation since the Usurpation.

Heritage Power: Half-Caste receive additional dots of Attributes during character creation, as noted previously, but otherwise exhibit no mystical birth-right of their heritage.

Associations: Half-Caste experience a sense of connection with the signs and symbols of their parentage. Solar Half-Caste feel most at ease under

sunlight, regarding its warm glow as an affirmation of their very existence. They likewise favor the colors gold and white. Lunar Half-Caste share that preference for white, but they also love the silver and pale blue of moonlight. Sidereal Half-Caste often claim to feel lucky under starlight and instinctively favor the symbols of their parent's Maiden. Abyssal Half-Caste embrace their state of half-death with a fondness for black, ivory and the crimson hue of blood. They often wallow in the trappings of death, regaled as Ghost-Blooded in funerary garb. The children of Terrestrial Exalted experience the most intense associations of all Half-Caste, resonating with the color, season and direction of their inherited Aspect as well as the actual element thereof.

Sobriquets: Grandchildren of the Gods, Anathema Spawn (Derogatory), Golden Children (Solar), Moon-Born (Lunar), Star-Blessed (Sidereal), Shadewalkers (Abyssal), Dragon-Touched (Terrestrial)

Concepts: Big fish in a small pond, Dynastic scion (Terrestrial), embittered right hand of greatness, gambler's bane (Sidereal), forgotten bastard, ghost hunter (Solar, Abyssal), hero without a cause, messianic harbinger (Celestial), voice of her sire

*How did I come by such
information? I'm just lucky,
I guess.*

Fae-Blooded

The fae dwell in the infinite chaos, entertaining themselves with the endless permutations of power and form. Most ignore Creation, treating the island of jagged rules like the irritant of an oyster's pearl. At best, it is a bauble to play with and toss aside again for greater toys. At worst, it is a tumor in the perfection of the Wyld. But for the exiles, the losers, the least of the fae, Creation is the only game left to them. It is these wretches whom the dwellers of Creation know as Fair Folk, diminished by the very shapes and elemental Essence they wear to adorn their chaos. But even the formed Fair Folk wither away without the sustenance of possibilities sucked from passion or ravished souls. And so, they hunt mortals for food and sport or send raiding parties of hobgoblins and mutants to recover prey. Of course, mutants and hobgoblins cannot abide the unforgiving rigidity of Creation much better, a factor that sharply limits the ultimate range of their predations. It is to this end that form becomes a surprising blessing, as it allows the Fair Folk to mate with humans and produce half-Wyld offspring. The majority of these Fleshdreamt may walk as freely in Creation as in the Wyld places, a flexibility that makes them the perfect leaders for Ravager bands.

Effective as they are, not all Fae-Blooded grow up as living weapons and hunters. After all, it is sheer folly to assign any absolutes to the inscrutable purposes of the Fair Folk. Some fairies fashion children in their own likenesses, delighting in them as dolls to pamper with toys and playrooms spun of delicate glamour. When they

reach maturity, such offspring may receive new duties. Or, as likely as not, the intemperate parent may simply tire of the game and cast the child out or devour her. Particularly debauched Fair Folk keep a stocked nursery in the same manner that mortals keep wine cellars, raising each innocent as a new vintage to hoard or share at banquets. Less unfortunate Fae-Blooded serve as pets of sorts, amusing in their ignorance and delusions of self-importance.

Still others are living pranks played upon the denizens of Creation. The game itself is simple:

The Fair Folk creep into mortal homes and

reshape their babies to the

likenesses of the infants they

find. Then, they take away the

human children and leave their

precious Changelings behind.

Most parents never know — never dream — that their offspring are not

their own. As for the children,

they cannot imagine why they look

in longing to the wilderness and dream

strange, impossible dreams. If they show

a propensity for glamour as they reach

adolescence, then their very existence

serves chaos even at the height of ignorance. Others of these Changelings

serve as hidden sleeper agents, each a

perfect spy that does not know she is a

spy. When the weight of the unforgiving world bears too heavily upon their

souls, then they may be found and educated in the sweetness of betrayal. Such sport can take decades to reach fruition, but the immortal Fair Folk have nothing but time.

The last general category of Fae-Blooded are the least numerous and the most tragic. They are the children of

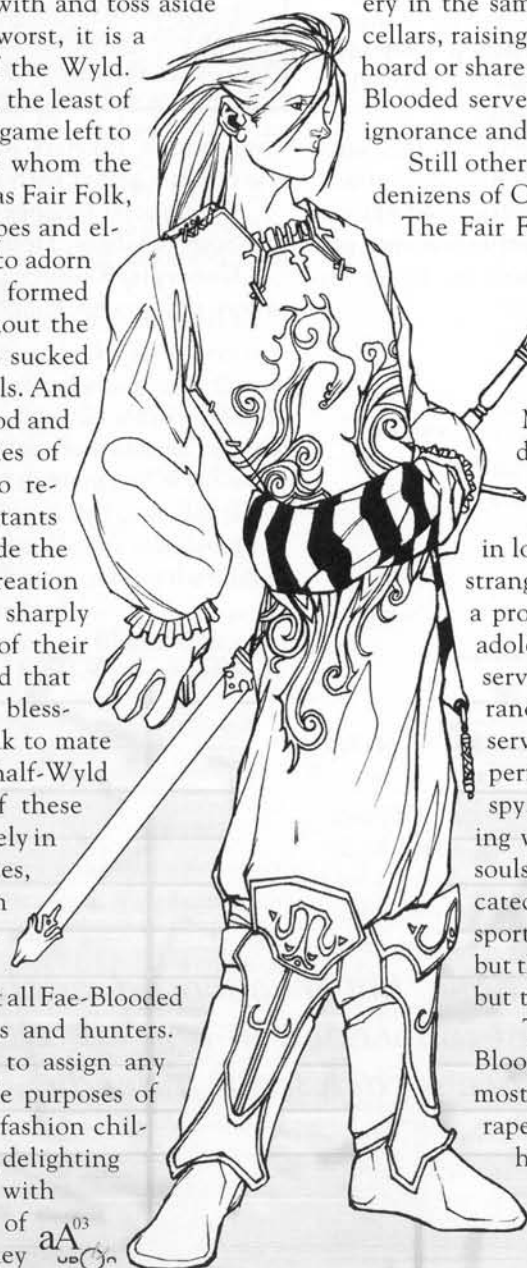
rape or indifferent seduction, born of

hobgoblin raids and noble trysts with

wide-eyed village girls. At best,

they are a shameful secret to keep

safe from bitter prejudice against



the Wyld. More often, they are reviled and cast out to fend for themselves when their true nature becomes apparent. Of these, many perish by stoning, crucifixion or burning at the stake for public amusement. Those who live do so as pariahs and outcasts, wandering in hopes their nature will not be discovered. In time, their bitterness may take them to the courts of the fae, though some simply learn to enjoy ravaging the humanity that spurned them.

Heritage Power: Like their inchoate parents, Fae-Blooded have nothing to fear from the maddening and warping power of the Wyld. Changelings may journey into the deepest chaos and retain their form and sanity, though the same protection does not extend to their possessions. This constant aegis duplicates the effects of the Solar Charm Integrity-Protecting Prana (see *Exalted*, p. 186), save that it does not protect against glamour and other willfully directed uses of Wyld energies.

Associations: Flowers, bright colors, jewels, sunsets, music and other objects and circumstances imbued with passion. Fae-Blooded live excessively, and so, they trail the signs of lustful excess wherever they go. Changelings find themselves most at home in

WHAT ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN FOLK?

The fae dwelling in the heart of the Imperial Mountain are a breed apart from their soul-eating cousins. This divergence holds even more true of the God-Blooded children of the Mountain Folk, who more closely resemble elemental God-Blooded of earth than standard Fae-Blooded. These beings only rarely evince any of their parent's powers, instead demonstrating phenomenal skill as smiths and artists. Their heritage power lowers the difficulty of all Craft rolls by one (to a minimum of standard difficulty), but they must take Craft as a Favored Ability. The children of Mountain Folk may not purchase the proprietary Merits and Flaws of their half-Wyld cousins.

whorehouses, theaters, arenas, taverns and wherever else mortals gather with passionate intent.

Sobriquets: Changelings, Wyld-Kissed, Daughters/Sons of Chaos, Fleshdreamt

Concepts: Ravager, gifted artisan, connoisseur of excess, unknown Changeling, legendary lover

*I have never savored such
sweet innocence in one so old.
You are a rare treat indeed!*

GOD-BLOODED TRAITS

God-Blooded characters do not differ considerably from Exalted in terms of the Traits they use or the rules governing those Traits, except where specifically noted. However, there are differences between the Chosen and those blessed with mystical Inheritance, and the God-Blooded have a number of Traits unique to them.

USEFUL CRAFTS

For the most part, God-Blooded may learn the same Craft Abilities as any other denizen of Creation. However, members of some heritages also study a number of unusual crafts as part of their birthright. As each Craft type is a separate Ability unto itself, characters may purchase up to three specialties per Craft.

Crafts of the Dead: Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Caste may freely learn jadecrafting and soulforging from appropriate tutors, and anyone can learn the grisly practice of necrosurgery. Ghost-Blooded who learn the Arcanos Transubstantiation of Flesh may study Molation to shape plasm with the Shifting Ghost-Clay Path. Likewise, Half-Dead may study Pandemonium after learning any Arcanoi of the Terror Spreading Art. Information on these crafts may be found on page 130 of **E:Ab**.

Craft (Fate): While it is likely that Sidereal Half-Caste are the only heritage to study the art of weaving destiny, God-Blooded whose parents belong to the Bureau of Destiny might also do so. See page 104 of **E:S** for details.

Craft (Glamour): Apart from their parents, only the Fae-Blooded practice the art of illusions and Wyld-working. In addition to its magical uses, this craft also allows Fae-Blooded to recognize or even identify manifestations of glamour. Master artisans of glamour can spot the subtlest signs of enchantment and beguilement.

Specialties: Quick Enchantment, Illusions, Beguilement, With Melodramatic Flair, Mind-Shattering Horrors, When No One is Looking

NEW BACKGROUNDS

INHERITANCE

Although still mortal, the character bears exceptional heritage. One of her parents was a powerful magical being: a spirit, a Fair One or even a mighty Exalt. This mystical parentage has left its mark on her body and soul, conferring the blessings — and perhaps banes — of her ancestry. Characters without the Inheritance Background may not purchase Traits exclusive to the God-Blooded, although minor or distant mystical ancestry may explain unusual Merits and Flaws. Characters with at least one dot of Inheritance may freely purchase God-Blooded Traits. In addition, God-Blooded gain extra bonus points and capacity for Flaws depending on their Inheritance rating. These bonus points may not be spent on Backgrounds. In case it

needs to be calculated, Inheritance equals half the sum of the parents' Essence ratings, rounded down.

- x You have little or no mystical heritage.
- Thin blood. You are the child of a lesser spirit or one of the weaker Fair Folk. It is possible that you do not even know of your heritage. You gain 6 additional bonus points and may take 10 points of Flaws.
- Good blood. Your parent is accorded respect or fear. You may be descended from a lesser demon, the spirit of a river or an ancient tree, an established Exalt, an old ghost or a Fair Folk noble. You gain 12 additional bonus points and may take 15 points of Flaws.
- Notable ancestry. You claim descent from a mighty Exalt, a Second Circle demon, a significant elemental or a locally important god. You gain 18 additional bonus points and may take 15 points of Flaws.
- Impeccable scion. You favor your divine blood as the child of a centuries-old Exalt, a greater god or a champion among Second Circle demons. Minor gods honor you as a peer. You gain 24 additional bonus points and may take 20 points of Flaws.
- Divine. You are all but a god in your own right, the honored progeny of a regional or celestial god of surpassing authority, a truly terrible demon or a venerable Celestial Exalt from the First Age. You may even rise in power beyond the lowest Terrestrial Exalted in your life. You gain 30 additional bonus points and may take 20 points of Flaws.

PATRON

Most God-Blooded serve their magical parents as favored lieutenants or majordomos. Others attend powerful sorcerers or necromancers who summoned the God-Bloods' parents and arranged for the God-Blooded's conception as slaves. A few are loved and pampered almost incessantly, yet they know it is their duty to look beautiful and act with graceful courtesy so that their parents might show them off like prized steeds or hunting hounds. Others, such as Lunar beastmen, *are* hunting hounds with a duty to track interlopers and kill where bid. Some simply count the days or weeks since their last beating and pray they might go a month without feeling some new torment born of their sire's boredom or cruel ingenuity, though such torment is gladly rare outside of Malfeas or the clutches of the Fair Folk.

For most, though, life is not so extreme in weal or woe. Their parents show little love as humans understand and need love, but such is the lot of those who grow up in the shadow of divinity. It is not the place of the shadow to interpose itself before the light, and neither is it the place of those who inherit power to preempt or deny the source of their might. Thus, most God-Blooded live lives of paradox. Like slaves, their lives are not their own to command, and yet, many know splendor and luxury such as most mortals cannot imagine.

The Patron Background measures the closeness of a God-Blood to her magical parent. The more she serves, the more she receives in tutelage and other rewards. As such, every dot invested in Patron counts as a dot of Mentor and awards additional Background dots that can raise Traits above 3. Patron also substitutes for Backing in representing rank within the parent's dominion or area of influence. Of course, service is not simply an idle term or an abstract concept. Gods, elementals and demons greedily seek to expand the size of their cults, while Exalted invariably hold their children to a higher standard than any other retainers. Ghosts demand protection for their Fetters and fulfillment of their obsessive Passions. And the Fair Folk are perhaps most capricious of all, flitting from kindness to cruelty in an eye-blink. The higher a character's Patron Background, the greater and more frequent her obligations. Characters cannot have a higher rating of Patron than they have dots of Inheritance. Lesser parentage does

not allow for the prodigious rewards given to the greatest God-Blooded. Characters who abandon their duties will certainly lose all Background dots purchased under the auspices of their Patron and will come to rue anything they steal as fugitives (Artifacts, Resources, etc.).

- x You have no contact with your magical parent. Did you escape his brutal control, or were you exiled for disobedience? Does he even know you exist? Do you even know what you are?
- Your parent has precious little power and connections. On the upside, she only asks one or two simple errands every month. You gain 3 additional Background dots.
- Your parent has only moderate power or greater influence and little use for you. In either case, you must generally perform a handful of simple tasks each month and one complicated or dangerous errand each year. You gain 6 additional Background dots.
- Your parent has considerable influence and substantial magical power. Merely presenting yourself as her emissary grants safety in some places. You can expect to perform a minor task each week and a handful of complicated task every year, often when you least expect or want a



job. Alternately, you take on a full-time job as an unsupervised agent with proscribed duties, reporting in person once every few months or as summoned. Add 9 additional Background dots.

- Your parent is widely revered and worshiped, and she may instruct you in all manner of lore and magic if you prove worthy. She sends you out on all her most important errands, perhaps even supervising other lesser agents. Alternately, you manage her entire influence over a particular region or activity as a trusted seneschal. You have precious little free time, but the rewards of such notable service are great. Add 13 additional Background dots.

- Your parent is among the most powerful beings in or out of Creation, her name spoken in a hushed whisper by all save her equally great and terrible peers. You can have or learn anything you can imagine and many things you can't, but the price is everything. You have no life of your own and may never own mastery of your fate, existing merely as an adjunct and enforcer of your parent's divine will. Add 17 additional Background dots.

ALTERED BACKGROUNDS

The following Backgrounds require modification for use with God-Blooded characters. Many of these may be found in the rulebooks for each Exalted type, as noted with each entry. Characters without the Awakened Essence Merit (see p. 66) may not purchase Cult, nor may characters without the Magical Attunement Merit (see p. 66) purchase Artifact, Manse, Underworld Manse or Celestial Manse. Any God-Blood may take a familiar, though characters without Awakened Essence cannot benefit from the additional Essence storage conferred by high Familiar ratings. Backgrounds not listed here or in the main **Exalted** rulebook are off-limits to God-Blooded characters without express Storyteller approval.

ARTIFACT

Denied the power to form full attunements with any of the Five Magical Materials, most God-Blooded fortunate enough to own magical devices or arms regale themselves in jade. Besides being the cheapest and most common Magical Material, jade has the singular advantage of being widely accepted through Creation. It doesn't take much for a jade-bedecked God-Blood to pass himself off as one of the Terrestrial Exalted, at least so long as he avoids close inspection. Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-

Caste also use jade, but many prefer soulsteel whenever they can find it for its power over the dead. God-Blooded characters without the Patron Background purchase the Artifact Background as Solar Exalted. However, those who serve powerful or wealthy parents may have access to caches of hoarded treasures. Such characters may purchase Artifact as high as their Patron rating, using the modified values listed below. Keep in mind that characters with a Patron do not own any of their own gear, and it may be taken from them as punishment or simply on a whim.

- x A single level 1 artifact of the Storyteller's choice.
- Two level 1 artifacts.
- One level 2 artifact, and two level 2 artifacts.
- One level 3 artifact, and three dots worth of artifacts with a maximum individual rating of 2.
- One level 4 artifact, and four dots worth of artifacts with a maximum individual rating of 3.
- One level 5 artifact, and five dots worth of artifacts with a maximum individual rating of 4.

COMMAND AND ABYSSAL COMMAND

These Backgrounds, respectively found on page 159 of **E:DB** and 132 of **E:Ab**, may be purchased by characters with the appropriate military rank in the armies of the Realm, Lookshy or the Deathlords. With the rarest exceptions, God-Blooded characters will not have a higher Command rating than 3 or their Patron rating, whichever is lower.

CULT

Most often, a God-Blood's only connection with a Cult will be as a high priest or shaman leading mortals in the worship of her parents. Thus, this Background is actually quite rare among God-Blooded, especially at ratings 3+. Those who benefit from their own worshipers have either established a small religious following or are "skimming" worship from the cults of their parents by virtue of association. The latter is sometimes a case of cunning embezzlement, but in other cases, divine parents may encourage or even demand the veneration of their offspring. Cult may be found on pages 98-99 of **E:L** or page 127 of **GoD**. Given the slight ways the two versions differ, the former is more appropriate for Half-Caste, while the latter applies better to all other heritages.

HENCHMEN

Like Terrestrial Exalted, powerful God-Blooded may attract talented mortal sidekicks in place of (or in addition to) lesser followers. In general, weaker God-Blooded are little more than mortals themselves and do not often

gain such remarkable agents or disciples. A good rule of thumb is that no God-Blood of Inheritance 2 or less will have Henchmen. This Background may be found on page 160 of **E:DB**.

REPUTATION AND FAMILY

These Backgrounds, respectively found on pages 160-161 and page 279 of **E:DB**, are normally only available to characters belonging to the Dynasty of the Realm or some other society of Dragon-Blooded. As written, they are most applicable to Terrestrial Half-Caste. The politics of gods and demons are no less Byzantine and incestuous, however, and these Backgrounds may also aid their children among the appropriate spirit courts.

RENOWN

God-Blooded barbarians may earn the respect of Lunars in the Silver Pact, though such acclaim is rare outside of the descendents of tribal totem gods or Lunar Half-Caste (including beastmen). However respected, non-Lunars cannot ever hope to rise above Renown •••, and they will always be least among the nain-ya. Renown may be found on page 100 of **E:L**.

SALARY

Sidereal Exalted and the gods of Heaven enjoy a standard of living in Yu-Shan surpassing most of Creation. Their favored children may occasionally benefit from this wealth, typically as a form of allowance. While there are no official strings attached, it is understood that dutiful children of Heaven will perform various chores for their parents as requested. It is unthinkable that a mere God-Blood should ever exceed Salary •••, and most will never rise above a rating of •• without a century of competent service. In no case may a God-Blood purchase more dots of Salary than her Patron rating. Furthermore, characters may not keep Resources if they draw a Salary. This Background may be found on pages 107 and 109 of **E:S**.

SAVANT

Although the Sidereals are the undisputed lore-keepers of the Exalted, they are not alone in their records and knowledge of the First Age. Many older spirits and a few Fair Folk nobles remember that glorious time well, having lived through it firsthand. Such beings are normally loath to divulge their secrets, even to their own children. Yet, tidbits of lore serve as an excellent reward for service. Many magical parents with such knowledge are not above using it as a form of control, granting only what scraps they see fit with the tantalizing promise of more to come. God-Blooded characters with the appropriate upbringing and parentage may purchase a Savant rating as high as 3 or their Patron rating, whichever is lower. Savant may be found on pages 109-110 of **E:S**.

SPIES

For the most part, a God-Blood's spies and informants count as Followers or Contacts. Only those God-Blooded who serve in long-established spy networks may benefit from the vast scope of these intelligence bureaus, be they comprised of fae Ravagers, hidden cults worshipping demons and forbidden gods or the agents of the Deathlords. Greater demons also have spies throughout Malfeas that an ambitious Demon-Blood might help manage. No God-Blood may have a higher rating in Spies than her Patron rating. This Background may be found on page 134 of **E:Ab**.

UNDERWORLD OR CELESTIAL MANSE

Unlike most mortals, God-Blooded of appropriate heritages may journey into the Underworld or Yu-Shan and even take up residence in the palaces and citadels of power within these spiritual realms. Some precious few even receive the remarkable privilege of attuning themselves to these Manses, as represented by the Underworld and Celestial Manse Backgrounds respectively found on pages 134-135 of **E:Ab** and page 106 of **E:S**. Only Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Caste may claim an Underworld Manse, and they only receive the usual benefits and Hearthstone for a Manse of the same rating rather than the greater quantities listed for the Background. Only Sidereal Half-Caste or divine God-Blooded with parents dwelling in Yu-Shan may claim a Celestial Manse, and they are merely guests of their parents in either case. Their residence automatically allows them to pass the celestial lion guards and enter Heaven, and they *might* be entrusted with the Manse's stone on occasion for specific errands given by their parents. In general, the stone remains with its true owner. In no case may a God-Blood purchase more dots of Celestial Manse than her Patron rating, though there is no upper limit on Underworld Manse.

WHISPERS

The touch of the Malfeans sometimes creeps into the souls of the Ghost-Blooded as it does their undead parents. Likewise, a disturbing number of Abyssal Half-Caste hear the whispers of dead gods in the silence between heartbeats as they float unborn in the womb. Some Demon-Blooded commune with the Yozis in a similar fashion, that they might better serve the lies and spiteful pain of their imprisoned Primordial forbears. Whispers may be found on pages 135-136 of **E:Ab**.

MERITS AND FLAWS

God-Blooded of all heritages bear the privileges of their ancestry. Among those of low Inheritance, these blessings are often quite subtle and without accompanying banes. Such characters may be unusually skilled or wise or physically fit, altogether better suited to a life of heroism

and greatness as a result of these exceptional qualities. Yet, little marks them as supernatural in any sense, save perhaps an oddity of pigment or quirk of personality. Those with greater Inheritance show proportionally greater power, taking on supernatural enhancements of mind, body and spirit. Less than divine, while far above mortals, the greatest God-Blooded are akin to Exalted in their resilience and mystical prowess. The following Merits and Flaws express the wide variety of special birthrights available to God-Blooded characters beyond Charms and Essence, ranging from the convenient to the transcendent. This list is divided into six categories, starting with those common to multiple types and then progressing through Traits specific to each heritage. Some of these Merits and Flaws list other Merits or minimum Trait ratings as prerequisites. As with Charms, characters must meet all requirements to gain these Traits.

COMMON

LONGEVITY

(2-PT. PHYSICAL MERIT)

God-Blooded with this Merit will live for a century, plus a number of additional decades equal to (Inheritance + Essence). After they exceed this generous allotment, their players must roll Stamina + Endurance at standard difficulty. Success grants another five years of life. Players must repeat this roll every five years, cumulatively increasing the difficulty by 1 with each check. Failure means the character will die of natural causes sometime during the upcoming five-year period. The physical aging of long-lived God-Blooded slows to its proportional rate during late adolescence and progresses accordingly thereafter.

GOD-BODY

(3- TO 10-PT. PHYSICAL MERIT)

The character has gained a measure of her parent's resilience. The cost of this Merit depends on the extent of this blessing. Higher-cost versions encompass the powers bestowed at lesser levels. For three points, the character may soak lethal damage with half Stamina. At five points, the character's bleeding rapidly slows as an Exalt. For seven points, the character resists disease, poison and infection as though Exalted. For 10 points, the character heals as one of the Exalted, including the slow regeneration of mangled bones and so forth.

DIVINE RESILIENCE

(7-PT. PHYSICAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: God-Body

Every time they purchase this Merit, God-Blooded characters receive two -2 health levels. Characters may not purchase this Merit more times than the rating of their

controlling Trait for toughness (Stamina for Lunar Half-Caste, Conviction for descendents of all spirit types or Fair Folk and Endurance for all other heritages). Each purchase of this Merit counts against the total number of times a character may purchase Ox-Body Technique, if applicable. Divine Resilience is offered as an option for characters incapable of learning Charms to gain superhuman toughness. Characters capable of learning Charms should purchase Ox-Body Technique instead.

LICENSE OF CELESTIAL ENTRY

(1-PT. SOCIAL MERIT)

A God-Blood with this Merit may freely pass the celestial lions guarding the gates of Heaven. Characters must have a sibling or parent living in Yu-Shan to purchase this Merit, which generally restricts it to divine God-Blooded and Sidereal Half-Caste. Under no circumstances may Demon-Blooded, Ghost-Blooded, Abyssal Half-Caste or Fae-Blooded purchase this Merit. Note that this Merit does not confer any actual rights in Heaven, though most gods will wisely avoid giving undue trouble to the children of powerful deities or Exalted for fear of reprisal.

BLURRED FATE

(1-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT, DEMON-BLOODED, GHOST-BLOODED, FAE-BLOODED AND ABYSSAL HALF-CASTE ONLY)

While no God-Blood exists wholly outside the auspices of destiny, some heritages exist at the edge of fate on account of their parentage. Add 2 to the difficulty of any attempt to read the future of characters with this Merit in the stars of Creation (see *Exalted*, p. 251). The fate of Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Caste lies written half in the stars of the Underworld, though horoscope readings there still add the usual difficulty. If simultaneous observations can be made in both the skies of the living and the dead, do not apply a difficulty penalty to the combined reading. Characters with this Merit may be affected normally by magic that does not affect beings outside of fate, unless that magic is of a purely divinatory nature. The listed protection against divination extends to all magic of any potency.

DYNASTY OF INHERITANCE

(2-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Once Essence enters a bloodline, its mark often endures for several generations. When God-Blooded with this Merit reproduce with normal mortal partners, their children share their heritage with a halved Inheritance rating, rounded down. Thus, even the most powerful Inheritance burns out after three generations. God-Blooded are treated as normal mortals for the purposes of breeding

with magical beings, although their Essence may still contribute to a higher Inheritance for their children, as normal. If two God-Blooded with Dynasty of Inheritance mate, their offspring will have an Inheritance equal to half the sum of their parents' combined rating. In such cases, heritage is determined according to the parent with the highest Inheritance (or the mother in the case of a tie). Characters without this Merit do not yield any subsequent generations of God-Blooded.

EYES OF WICKED MADNESS

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,

DEMON-BLOODED AND FAE-BLOODED ONLY)

At will, the character's eyes magically dilate to reveal visions of the impossible geometry and horror of Malfeas or the jagged chaos of the Wyld. Mortals who gaze into such visions flee in terror unless their players make a successful Valor roll at difficulty 2. Exalted and other magical beings find the scenes distasteful and perhaps unnerving but certainly not terrifying. Characters may alternately purchase this Trait as a three-point Flaw, in which case the fear gaze is constant and may not be suppressed.

CALL OF THE BLOOD

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

The character gains an intuitive sense whenever she stands in the presence of a magical being of the same type as her parent. Half-Caste can only sense the specific type of Exalt they claim descent from, while those born of spirits or fae sense all gods, demons, elementals, ghosts or Fair Folk, as appropriate. Sensing a magical being with this Merit requires a brief moment of concentration and a successful Perception + Occult roll at a difficulty of 6 minus the target's Essence rating, minimum difficulty 1. This sense can manifest in any number of ways: sudden pain, chills or the ringing of some vast and distant bell are all common. Call of the Blood does not identify or locate sensed beings, but simply makes characters aware of their presence in the immediate area.

MAGICAL ATTUNEMENT

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Awakened Essence

God-Blooded with this Merit may attune themselves to magical artifacts, Manses and Demesnes like other magical beings, but they cannot receive a Magical Material bonus from artifacts regardless of how many motes they spend.

AWAKENED ESSENCE

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Characters with this Merit gain an Essence pool determined by their heritage. God-Blooded, Demon-Blooded and Ghost-Blooded pools equal (Essence x 5) +

(Willpower x 2) + (sum of Virtues). Half-Caste pools equal (Essence x 5) + (the sum of Virtues). Fae-Blooded pools equal (Essence x 8). Only characters with the Aura of Power Flaw (see p. 67) display any type of anima banner as they spend Essence.

In general, God-Blooded regain Essence through respiration according to the same rate and restrictions as their parents. Fae-Blooded only regain motes while resting in the Wyld or within an uncapped Demesne rated at 3+, but they do so at the same rates as Exalted. Ghost-Blooded regain 2 motes per hour of rest or three per hour of sleep/meditation, but they cannot regain Essence in Creation any better than the undead (see **E:Ab**, p. 25). Abyssal Half-Caste likewise may only breathe in the Essence of the Underworld, but they do so at the same rate as Exalted. All other God-Blooded heritages regain Essence in Creation at the usual rate for Exalted characters.

SIRE'S ENMITY

(1-, 3- OR 5-PT. SOCIAL FLAW)

By overt sin or simple misfortune, a God-Blood with this Flaw has offended her magical parent. For one point, the offense was slight: a minor act of disobedience or an embarrassing failure to complete an assigned task. As a result, the character must report more regularly and serve more dutifully in atonement, fulfilling assigned duties as though her Patron Background is one dot higher than its true rating. Only characters with Patron • through •••• may take Sire's Enmity at this level.

For three points, the God-Blood has committed a great offense. Either she ran away (which itself qualifies as sufficient offense) or has been banished for a time as punishment for another crime. Runaway God-Blooded face relentless pursuit, though they may take some small comfort in knowing their hunters have orders to bring them back alive for... discipline. Banished characters face stiff social penalties with any allies or associates of their parent, yet they must still strive to uphold their parent's honor and commands in exile or risk incurring greater wrath.

Only the most heinous criminals in magical society deserve the walking death sentence of a five-point Enmity. Kinslayers and traitors fall into this category, as do those whose gross incompetence has undone decades or even centuries of meticulous work. For these God-Blooded, a quick death is the best they can hope for if they fall into the clutches of the hunters set upon them at every turn. Obviously, characters with the three- or five-point versions of this Flaw may not have the Patron Background or any other tokens of their parent's continued favor.

ALIEN UPBRINGING

(2-PT. SOCIAL FLAW)

A God-Blood with this Flaw was raised entirely by her magical parent or a closely monitored caretaker. Some

have never known anything but the inhuman politics of spirit, demon or fae courts. Some children of ghosts reach maturity without knowing true love or hate, but only the cold mockeries played out in the capricious passions of their ancestors. Half-Caste with this Flaw may have grown up in a hidden sorcerer's tower or mired in the deadliest games of the Scarlet Dynasty. Regardless of the specifics, God-Blooded who experienced an Alien Upbringing have difficulty relating with ordinary mortals and add 1 to the difficulty of all pertinent Social rolls requiring human empathy or understanding.

IGNORANT OF SELF

(4-PT. SOCIAL FLAW)

While most God-Blooded grow up surrounded by the magic and power of their birthright, others slip through the cracks. They are the sons of incubi trysts or forgotten dalliances, the bastards of divinity. Others are left to their own devices as hidden resources or as part of some elaborate plan on the part of their parents. For these unfortunates, coming of age brings far more questions than answers. Such a God-Blood must wrestle with the pangs of mystical adolescence alone, trying to make sense of her terrifying new gifts and strangely inhuman impulses. Some do not survive this brutal crucible, lost to their own frustration or the predations of territorial gods or even the merciless Wyld Hunt. But for those who do, life merely continues without respite — no less brutal for its newfound oddity.

Characters with this Flaw cannot begin play with the Patron Background, nor with any magical powers that require disciplined training (such as sorcery and all but the simplest Charms). Likewise, such characters may not have Artifact, Manse or other Backgrounds based on active supernatural involvement. Assuming they have any idea of what they are, bastard or orphaned God-Blooded have no way of discerning their specific parentage without extensive magical aid.

AFFECTED BY WARDS

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

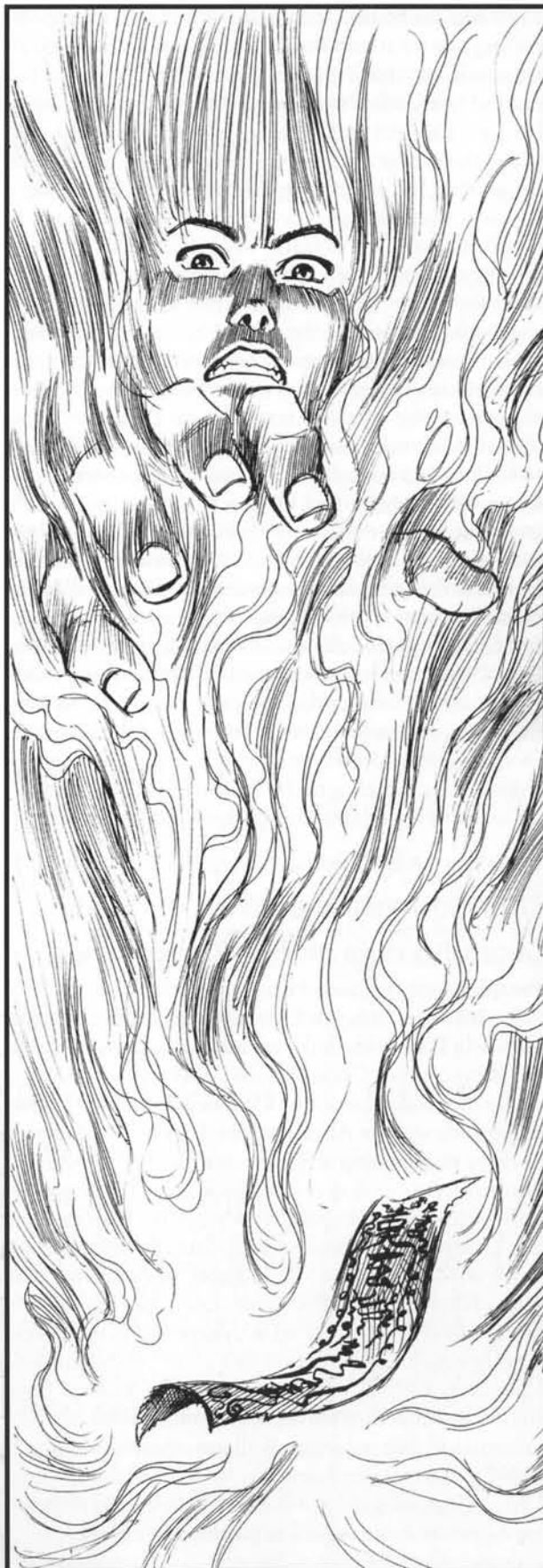
God-Blooded with this Flaw may be affected by wards and talismans designed to impede their parents. The vulnerability also extends to other magic specifically dedicated to affect the parent's type of being, such as a Zenith anima flare against a Demon-Blood. Half-Caste may not take this Flaw.

AURA OF POWER

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Prerequisites: Awakened Essence

While most God-Blooded capable of channeling Essence may spend motes without any display of light or power, a character with this Flaw must contend with an aura



like the Exalted. Such characters divide their Essence pool, placing one third into Personal (rounded down) and the remaining two thirds into Peripheral. Expenditures of Peripheral Essence feed such characters' animas according to heritage. Celestial and Abyssal Half-Caste manifest pale Caste Marks over the center of their chest, as though the brand of their lineage lay upon their heart. These marks appear at the same rate as Solar Caste Marks and glow (or bleed) through any clothing when they emerge to full prominence. The color matches the appropriate heritage, so silver for Moon-Born, scarlet for Star-Blessed associated with Mars, etc. Beyond the Caste Mark stage, such Half-Caste reveal indistinct auras of light according to the same color scheme. Iconic displays merely bring this radiance to dazzling fury for a turn without forming a totemic image. Other God-Blooded show less distinct or predictable animas, sometimes lacking substantial visual components. One Demon-Blood might find his eyes anointed with Ligier's green fire before the blaze billows to enfold him, while another might ooze gray smoke and leave acid-charred footprints before becoming a smoking blur. Ghost-Blooded become increasingly ghostly and translucent, lit from within by a cold spectral fire that spills from their eyes and mouth. Fae-Blooded tend to cause cosmetic Wyld-warping in their environment, changing the shape and growth of grass they tread upon even as the air shimmers in bizarre liquid colors. Storytellers should work with players to create appropriate anima effects, referring to the guidelines for Solar Exalted for comparable visibility at each threshold.

DENIZEN OF BEYOND

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW,

GHOST-BLOODED AND FAE-BLOODED ONLY)

Prerequisites: Awakened Essence

Characters with this Flaw wither in Creation, losing 1 mote of Essence each day spent outside of their native environment. For Ghost-Blooded, this environment includes the shadowlands, the Underworld and any Manse or Demesne with an Abyssal aspect. For Fae-Blooded, this territory encompasses any Demesne rated at 3+ and the Bordermarches or deeper into the Wyld. This deterioration continues until a character depletes her Essence pool, at which point, she begins losing dots of permanent Essence at the same rate. A character whose permanent Essence drops to 0 dies. Permanent Essence lost to deterioration may only be recovered with experience, though no training time is required to restore a previously held rating. Characters with this Flaw cannot regain Essence from stunts away from their native environment, although they may still add dice and regain Willpower from their efforts. Half-Dead may regain Essence by feeding on blood, as may Changelings using their own feeding powers. A character must have an Essence pool to purchase this Flaw.

GOD-BLOODED

While the children of gods rely primarily on spirit Charms for power, descendants of elementals draw on the innate powers of their heritage. Any of these elemental powers may be learned in play for a number of experience points equal to double its bonus point value. Learning these powers takes a number of days equal to the bonus point cost or twice that if they do not have an appropriate elemental or God-Blooded tutor.

DIVINE APPRENTICE

(3-PT. SOCIAL MERIT,

DIVINE GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

Prerequisites: Patron •••

A God-Blood with this Merit has already served with exceptional distinction, so much so, in fact, that his spirit parent has chosen to groom him for eventual deification. The character must continue to serve faithfully in all things, but he is assured of receiving an Endowment if and when he reaches a state of sufficiently advanced spiritual development (Essence 3). In the meantime, the character's reputation adds one die to all Social interactions with other God-Blooded and deities impressed by such ardent devotion.

SANCTUM'S KEY

(1-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,

DIVINE GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

A God-Blood with this Merit has free access to her parent's sanctum and may enter it at any time from its doorway in the physical world as a simple action and may bring along one willing passenger each trip. Characters without the Patron Background may not purchase this Merit without express Storyteller permission and a remarkable story explanation.

ARTISAN OF PRAYERS

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,

DIVINE GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

Time spent among the gods has refined the God-Blood's understanding of prayer into an art. In addition to being considered a priest for all prayer rolls, the character may also direct prayers of eloquent homage to a specific deity. Such auspicious prayers feed the named god 2 motes of Essence per success on the standard Charisma + Performance roll. This gift makes an excellent bribe and will certainly do wonders to improve the character's divine reputation and popularity. Of course, the parent of such a prodigy will certainly expect a regular share of this bounteous wealth as a sign of loyalty.

ELEMENTAL DOMINION

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,
ELEMENTAL GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

Prerequisites: Respiring Touch

Characters with this Merit may exert control over their associated element in the same manner as full elementals (see *Exalted*, p. 295 for full details). Using this power as an attack requires a Willpower roll to hit and may be dodged or parried normally. Characters must have an Essence pool to purchase this Merit.

ELEMENTAL POWER

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,
ELEMENTAL GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

Prerequisites: Elemental Dominion, Essence 2

A God-Blood with this power exhibits one of the innate powers common among elementals (see *Exalted*, p. 296). These gifts do not come so naturally to half-breeds, however. Characters must spend 3 motes or 1 Willpower to evoke an elemental power. Aegis, Coarse Skin and Mobility may be activated reflexively and last one scene unless prematurely revoked. Element's Domain and Enshroud are also reflexive powers, but they only last a number of turns equal to the character's Essence. Activating Dragon's Suspire counts as a simple action, and characters must pay for each attack separately. Characters employing Mobility may fly or tunnel up to their normal running speed or swim/run at double normal speed as appropriate to the element. The elemental power Rejuvenation is only available to characters with the Merit Primal Restoration. Moreover, the God-Blooded variant only restores bashing and lethal levels on an hourly basis rather than every turn.

Of the elemental powers on page 56 of *GoD*, only Consume Element and Plague of Menaces can be learned. They cost the God-Blooded the normal number of motes to activate, plus one additional Willpower.

PRIMAL RESTORATION

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,
ELEMENTAL GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

Characters with this Merit heal damage as thoroughly as *Exalted* and further multiply this enhanced rate by (their Essence + 1) for as long as they remain in contact with or extremely close proximity to a substantial quantity of their associated element.

RESPIRING TOUCH

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,
ELEMENTAL GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

An elemental God-Blood with this Merit multiplies the rate at which she regains Essence through respiration by

(her Essence + 1), provided that she maintains contact with or extremely close proximity to a substantial quantity of her associated element for the duration of her rest. Characters must have an Essence pool to purchase this Merit.

ELEMENTAL IMMUNITY

(8-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT,
ELEMENTAL GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

Prerequisites: Elemental Dominion, Essence 2

God-Blooded with this Merit may spend 3 motes of Essence or one point of Willpower to become immune to natural manifestations of their associated element for one scene. For as long as this protection lasts, those who resonate with fire do not burn, while the children of earth cannot be crushed or torn beneath the stones of an avalanche or the metal of weapons. No splinter or thorn will pierce the flesh of characters warded from wood, nor will poisons of the fruit and vine sicken them. Wooden weapons and arrows are no different than natural thorns and similarly turn aside to no effect. Lightning and lashing gales can only buffet a child of air futilely. Lastly, the daughters of water cannot drown or suffer frozen crushing death in the depths. This Merit provides little protection against magical sources of damage, though a character may apply her full Stamina to soak appropriate attacks or environmental hazards.

ELEMENTAL ARCHETYPE

(2-PT. MENTAL FLAW,
ELEMENTAL GOD-BLOODED ONLY)

A God-Blood with this Flaw exhibits the stereotypical personality traits associated with her element (see *Exalted*, p. 295). As a result, anyone who knows the character's heritage may predict her responses with uncomfortable accuracy. Subtract one from the character's successes in any opposed Socialize or Presence check.

DEMON-BLOODED**GATEKEEPER**

(1-PT. SOCIAL MERIT)

The character knows the location of a route connecting the infernal desert of Cecelyne with Creation during Calibration. A total of 16 such routes exist, of which only seven remain known to savants. The knowledge of a lost route may prove an invaluable commodity to sorcerers and would-be infernalists, provided the Demon-Blood is willing to trade such a priceless secret.

IMMUNITY TO POSSESSION

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

A Demon-Blood with this Merit cannot be possessed by any spirit Charms, including Arcanoi. Even though he

cannot be entered and controlled from within, he may still fall victim to mind control directed from afar.

MARK OF INFERNAL FAVOR

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

A Demon-Blood with this Merit has been tattooed with a demonic glyph identifying her parentage and allegiance. This mark is normally invisible except to spirits and beings capable of perceiving Essence at work, though the character may cause it to become visible and faintly luminous at will. Sentient demons of the First Circle will not generally attack a character bearing such a mark except in self-defense, though such protection is simply diplomatic rather than mystically enforced. A character may conceal the mark from the eyes of divinities, but a thorough search of her person will locate it.

ORDINATION OF LIES

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Demon-Blooded with this Merit embody the preternatural deception of their demonic forbears, adding one automatic success to all Social rolls involving lies and concealment of truth.

ORDINATION OF PAIN

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Demon-Blooded with this Merit understand the ultimate agony of Malfestas, adding one automatic success to all rolls involving direct torture or interrogation.

UNHOLY

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Prerequisites: Affected by Wards

Characters with this Flaw radiate palpable, alien evil that priests and other holy individuals in line of sight can sense with a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 6 - the character's Inheritance). In addition, such Half-Damned find temples and consecrated ground uncomfortable, adding 1 to the difficulty of all rolls made for them for as long as they remain in the blessed area.

WALKING BLASPHEMY

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Prerequisites: Unholy, Inheritance 3

Whenever a Demon-Blood with this Flaw approaches within three yards of a sacred object, her infernal power reaches out to destroy it. This effect is not optional. The player spends one Willpower point and makes a reflexive Inheritance + Essence roll with a difficulty determined by the object's spiritual significance. Objects without supernatural protection are difficulty 3, while the relics of the Unconquered Sun may range as high as difficulty 10. Stunt

dice may benefit this attempt. If the roll succeeds, the offending object shatters or burns, and the character regains the Willpower invested in the attempt. On a failure, the object remains intact for the rest of the turn but demands a new destruction attempt each turn until the character succeeds or runs out of Willpower. Wise Demon-Blooded quickly withdraw from relics beyond their power before the holy items sap their will entirely. Charms that affect creatures of darkness work on the character to full effect.

GHOST-BLOODED

DECEPTIVE FRAILTY

(1-PT. PHYSICAL MERIT)

Ghost-Blooded with this Merit display the pallor associated with life in the shadowlands, appearing wan and sickly regardless of their true health. Even characters at the peak of human strength, speed and vitality look emaciated and weak, leading others to grossly underestimate their actual prowess.

FONT OF DESPAIR

(2-PT. MENTAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Conviction 3

The prospect of near-certain death leaves little room for hope in the hearts of mortals. Even the greatest heroes find their resolve challenged by lethal crisis, and it is only by exerting willful defiance and ironic denial of death that they may bravely fight on to the last. This is not so for Ghost-Blooded with this Merit, for whom death is less remarkable than life. When all hope fades, these Half-Dead turn inward to absolute nihilism to sustain them through the crisis. In recognizing that life has no meaning, they can simply let go. Such morbid indifference is strangely liberating: The character may reflexively spend a point of temporary Conviction to regain Willpower with a Conviction roll (as though following a night's rest). This roll may only be attempted in dramatically appropriate moments when all hope is gone. As always, the Storyteller remains the final arbiter of what constitutes such a moment.

SUICIDE COMMANDO

(3-PT. MENTAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Conviction 3

Many Ghost-Blooded assassins and mercenaries understand that death is only the beginning. These hardened zealots fight without any mercy or regard for life, *especially* their own. While such a fatalistic combat style carries considerable risk of injury and swift death, it also unnerves living opponents. Provided the Ghost-Blood does not dodge or parry, mortal opponents facing the character subtract 3 from their base initiative and lose one die from all attack and defense rolls as a result of lowered morale.

This penalty does not affect God-Blooded, Exalted or other magical beings.

DEATHSIGHT

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Ghost-Blooded with this Merit gain the same visual acuity and eye for sickness as their undead parents (see E:Ab, p. 148).

DEATHWALKER

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Characters with this Merit are always considered to be on the same level of material reality as ghosts. They may freely engage in combat or intimacy with the dead, even as the ghosts remain invisible and incorporeal to everyone else. Of course, this also works in reverse, as angry ghosts can freely assault the character without a need for Arcanoi. This Merit does not alter interactions with other types of spirits, nor does it allow Ghost-Blooded to perceive incorporeal ghosts without calling upon their heritage power.

FETTER SENSE

(4-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Half-Dead with this Merit may recognize an object or individual as a ghost's Fetter with a simple touch. Fetter Sense does not allow Ghost-Blooded to identify the ghost to whom the Fetter belongs, nor to gauge the strength of the bond.

UNCHAINED SOUL

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Death brings the certainty of unlife for all children born to the Restless Dead. This cold inevitability guides their existence, following and empowering them even as it embraces their descent. But it is a lie. Not all Ghost-Blooded linger beyond death. Some rare few find a place of enlightened peace to carry them through life and death into the gentle repose of Lethe. As such, no magic short of Void Circle Necromancy may compel their souls to linger after death. In addition, such characters may add one automatic success to every Virtue roll to recover Willpower or to resist fear and depression (magically induced or otherwise).

RITUAL SUICIDE

(3- OR 5-PT. SOCIAL FLAW)

A Ghost-Blood with this Flaw belongs to an Underworld clan that practices ritual suicide as a rite of passage, and he is expected to carry on this tradition at the appointed time. Most commonly, this ritual must be carried out at twilight on the character's 30th birthday. Other clans entrust their eldest ancestor to judge living descen-

dents and to decide their fate each year. When the final hour comes, a Ghost-Blood must enter into unlife by killing himself according to tradition, typically through slow bleeding, disembowelment or drowning. Failure to obey shames and embarrasses the clan. Such reluctance is expected from the living, not the Half-Dead. Fugitives lose all backing associated with their family (i.e. dots of Patron, access to Underworld Manses, etc.) and must contend with ghostly hunters and other Ghost-Blooded sent to bring them into righteous unlife by force. Characters who have already passed their allotted lifespan and chosen the path of a hunted fugitive may take this Flaw for five points, provided they do not purchase any Traits dependent on Underworld family ties.

EASILY POSSESSED

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Owing to their dim Half-Dead souls, Ghost-Blooded with this Flaw make excellent hosts. As a result, ghosts using Arcanoi of the Stringless Puppeteer Art add one automatic success to activation rolls when targeting such characters. This Flaw provides no additional susceptibility to possession by demons or spirits of Creation.

SPECTRE MEAT

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

A Ghost-Blood with this Flaw radiates a faint nepenthe of Essence that attracts hungry ghosts and spectres. Such beings can "smell" this radiance out to a maximum radius of a mile with a Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 6 - the character's Essence rating). Hungry ghosts and shades will track this scent back to its source in search of blood, while intelligent spectres may respond however they choose. Spectres of all types gain 3 motes for every health level of blood consumed from the character, however, so even nephraacks may pursue her as a delicacy.

WANDERING PO

(6-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Whenever a Ghost-Blood with this Flaw sleeps at night, her lower soul emerges invisibly from her mouth as a terrible hungry ghost. It will not harm its sleeping body, but suffers no compunctions about attacking her friends or lovers. This shade has the same statistics as the character, with the following exceptions and additions: Its Intelligence equals half the character's own rating, rounded up, and it only has one dot in all Social Attributes. It soaks lethal damage with its full Stamina and attacks with claws (Speed +0, Accuracy +0, Damage +1L, Defense -1) and teeth (Speed -6, Accuracy -1, Damage +3L, Defense -2). The hungry ghost may be warded by salt or talismans and slain with sunlight or weapons, but no force can permanently destroy it so long as the Ghost-Blood lives. If it's

killed or if the character awakens, the shade fades away to arise anew the next night. Characters with this Flaw do not automatically know of their condition and will not necessarily connect themselves with the horror and brutal atrocities committed by their embodied rage. Those who learn the bitter truth must sleep in rings of unbroken salt or take other precautions to hold their inner beast in check. Sleeping by day keeps the lower soul from emerging, but its repressed frustration prevents the character from regaining Willpower with Conviction and costs the Ghost-Blood one Willpower point per day until the shade has an opportunity to emerge.

HALF-CASTE

BREED TRUE (2-PT. PHYSICAL MERIT, BEASTMEN ONLY)

Prerequisites: Dynasty of Inheritance

Beastmen with this Merit represent a new and viable species. Such characters may sire or bear beastmen of the same breed by mating with their own kind or with normal humans, though a beastman-human coupling has an equal likelihood of producing a human child. More importantly, beastmen with Breed True do not lose Inheritance with each generation of mutated offspring.

CHILLIKIN COMPANION

(3-PT. SOCIAL MERIT, SOLAR HALF-CASTE ONLY)

The Solar Exalted of the First Age fawned on their Golden Children when they could, but they had precious little time for them between the various duties of administering Creation. It was to this end that sorcerers among them created many great and wondrous toys to amuse the spiritual grandchildren of the Unconquered Sun. Of these, the greatest were the chillikin, simian automatons capable of eating nightmares and bringing dreams to life as material phantasms. During the Usurpation, the Golden Children perished alongside their parents, and the chillikin were cast aside and forgotten. Twisted by the horror they saw, the immortal toys waited in vain for the return of their playmates, but the Solars were no more, and their children did not come back. But now, the Solars have returned, and the Golden Children will not be long in following.

A Solar Half-Caste with this Merit has reunited with one of her kind's ancestral playmates. It may be a bit crazy and apt to regard her as a young child regardless of her age, but it loves her fiercely and will use all its powers in her defense. Of course, the chillikin and its ostensible master may have very different ideas about what constitutes a threat, as lovers driven away by conjured bogeymen can

BUILDING BEASTMEN

While technically Half-Caste by their Lunar parentage, beastmen do not display the same degree of individual variance as other God-Blooded. The vast majority of these human-animal hybrids forsake magical power for physical prowess. All share the two-point version of the Unusual Appearance Flaw due to their animalistic visage. Additionally, beastmen bred from a specific animal share a specific set of Traits appropriate to that breed.

Some of the most common breeds roaming Creation include:

Elkmen: Mutation (10 points total): Enhanced Smell and Hearing, Fur, Antlers (as Horns); Large Size (4); many elkmen practice mortal sorcery or even channel Essence

Hawkmen: Mutation (13 or 15 points total): Claws, Eye Color (distance vision), Feathers, Gliding Wings or Wings

Hyenamen: Mutation (12 points total): Enhanced Smell and Hearing, Eye Color (night vision), Fangs, Fur; Disfigured (-3)

Sharkmen: Mutation (14 points total): Bite, Enhanced Smell and Hearing, Berserker, Gills (no lung atrophy); Mutation (-3): Diet (carnivore, -3), Disfigured (-3)

Snakemen: Mutation (12 points total): Enhanced Smell and Hearing, Eye Color (night vision), Fangs, Snake Scales (as Fur); Longevity (2); Climate Sensitive (cold, -2), Disfigured (-3)

Wolfmen: Mutation (12 points total): Enhanced Smell and Hearing, Eye Color (night vision), Fangs, Fur; Large Size (4)

attest. Full statistics on the chillikin may be found on page 105 of *CotW*.

ANIMA POWERS

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Aura of Power

Half-Caste with this Merit receive the basic anima powers associated with their parent's Exalted type. For example, Golden Children may spend motes to determine the time of day or to illuminate their pale Caste Marks, while Shadewalkers may grow fangs to consume blood for Essence, sense Underworld energies, etc. Lacking tattoos, Lunar Half-Caste only illuminate their Caste Mark and, likewise, may not display a Tell (which they do not possess).



MATERIAL RESONANCE

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Artifact Attunement

A Half-Caste with this Merit may fully attune to objects of the Magical Material associated with his parent's Exalted type, thereby receiving the same special benefits. Characters without the ability to channel Essence may purchase this Merit to reflect a latent capacity that will emerge if and when they gain an Essence pool.

INHERITED CURSE

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

A Half-Caste with this Flaw bears the stain of the Great Curse gnawing at his soul, a cruel legacy of his Exalted forbears. Solar and Lunar Half-Caste have a Limit Trait and a Virtue Flaw determined exactly as if they were Exalted, but they only receive half the usual number of Limit points from any occasion or condition that would increase their rating (rounded up). Abyssal Half-Caste accumulate Resonance instead of Limit but at the same halved rate. Characters lose Limit or Resonance exactly as their parents. Terrestrial Half-Caste suffer the same Virtue Flaws as actual Dragon-Blooded and similarly break when they reach zero Willpower with an anima banner showing.

As such, Terrestrial Half-Caste must also have the Aura of Power Flaw. Sidereal Half-Caste may not take this Flaw.

FAE-BLOODED

The following Traits are exclusive to the Fae-Blooded, representing the particular gifts and curses of their half-Wyld nature. Any of these Merit-based powers may be learned in play for an experience cost of double their bonus-point value. Training time for these powers is a number of days equal to their bonus point cost, or double that if the character is not learning from one of the Fair Folk or another Fae-Blood. Magic that completely defends against the Wyld will shield characters from these glamour-based powers and force the Fae-Blood using them to pay any activation costs in vain, though Lunar tattoos still only shield against physical alteration unless otherwise noted. Such protection takes hold regardless of the magic's intent. Eclipse Caste Solars and Moonshadow Caste Abyssals can learn glamour powers with their anima power, doubling all experience and activation costs as normal.

VIRTUE ATTUNEMENT

(3-PT. MENTAL MERIT)

Fae-Blooded with this Merit feel a particular resonance with one of the four Virtues, depending on the type of Fair Folk they claim descent from: Entertainers

RAVAGERS

Although soul-eaten mortals warped by the Fair Folk aren't actually Fae-Blooded, they often exhibit similar powers. Ravagers are created as heroic mortals, but they may purchase Fae-Blooded Merits with their normal allotment of bonus points. However, they may not purchase generic God-Blooded Traits and, thus, have no access to Essence or powers that depend on Essence. Lacking any immunity to the Wyld, many Ravagers also have varying levels of mutations, though these are generally restricted to features that may be retracted or otherwise hidden with ease. Ravagers do not make especially exciting characters to play, lacking almost any capacity to assert free will against their masters. However, Storytellers may find use for the Children of the Wyld as antagonists or even henchmen for powerful Fae-Blooded.

(Compassion), Diplomats (Conviction), Workers (Temperance) or Warriors (Valor). Fae-Blooded born of any of these fae types may only purchase this Merit once. Children of fairy nobles may purchase this Merit up to twice if they so choose, selecting whichever Virtue(s) they desire.

Changelings may draw on their attunement to a Virtue in order to gauge its strength in another. This requires eye contact, touch or some level of direct conversation, and the Fae-Blood's player rolls Perception + attuned Virtue against a difficulty of the target's Wits. Success reveals the target's rating in the attuned Virtue. Virtues selected for attunement with this Merit are considered favored and may be increased for a cost of two bonus points per dot or (current rating x 2) experience points.

WYLD SENSE

(2-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Fae-Blooded with this Merit can gauge the ambient strength of the Wyld with a Perception + Awareness roll at standard difficulty. Success determines the area's category of Wyld region (Creation, Tainted Lands, Bordermarches, Middlemarches, Wyld, Deep Wyld or Pure Chaos). This Merit activates as a reflexive action whenever the character moves into a category of greater Wyld strength but, otherwise, requires a normal dice action to invoke.

A Changeling's Wyld Sense can also detect the presence of Wyld beasts, Fair Folk, mutants or other Fae-Blooded within range of the character's normal senses. The difficulty of the detection attempt is 5 - the target's Essence (or highest Essence if multiple Wyld denizens are present).

Success merely reveals that a denizen of the Wyld is present. The character must determine the denizen's exact location and identity by other means. Sensing denizens normally requires concentration, but it triggers reflexively whenever a Fae-Blood actually touches a Wyld being.

DRAUGHT OF PASSION

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Awakened Essence, Virtue Attunement

A Fae-Blood with this Merit may feed on ambient emotion appropriate to her attuned Virtue(s), absorbing Essence from the very intensity of passion. This requires a roll of the appropriate Virtue as a reflexive dice action whenever the character is exposed to strong feelings or emotion-arousing actions. Willpower may benefit this roll, as may stunts that cleverly narrate the exact "flavor" of the emotional energies. Each success restores 1 mote to the Changeling's pool.

If the character spent Willpower to aid the feeding attempt, she may instead choose to spend four successes to regain one temporary point of the rolled Virtue. This forfeits any Essence recovery for the feeding attempt. Although characters may use this power whenever they encounter or create circumstance of sufficient emotional intensity, the difficulty of all feeding rolls cumulatively increases by two for every successive attempt in the same scene.

DREAMSCULPTING

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Fervor's Kiss, Unveiling Intuition

A Changeling with this Merit may implant a dream in target's mind so that she experiences it when she next sleeps. Building the dream requires the character to spend uninterrupted time pulling the elements from her imagination as a vivid hallucinatory daydream. The player rolls Manipulation + Craft (Glamour) in an extended roll, making one attempt for every minute of real-time work. Each distinct element of the dream (character, event, setting, prop, etc.) requires one to five successes, as decided by the Storyteller based on the element's complexity.

A dream that is not completed before the character stops daydreaming fades away like the finest gossamer, all effort lost. However, a completed dream remains in the character's subconscious for as long as she commits a point of Willpower or 2 motes of Essence to sustain it. Spending one experience point allows the character to remember the dream forever without commitment, but Changelings rarely bother for anything less than their greatest masterpieces.

Sending a copy of a remembered dream to a target requires eye contact or touch. The player spends a Willpower point or 2 motes of Essence and rolls his character's Manipulation + Socialize against a difficulty of the target's Essence. Success plants the dream in the target's mind,

where it remains until she sleeps. Against sleeping targets, the dream takes effect immediately. Targets of Dreamsculpting experience the dream as it was intended and will not suspect magical origins unless the sending Changeling is particularly blatant in his manipulations or deliberately builds lucidity into the phantasm.

FERVOR'S KISS

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Virtue Attunement

By making eye contact with, touching or engaging in conversation with a target, a Fae-Blood with this Merit may project an emotion connected to a Virtue she favors with a Virtue Attunement. This requires the expenditure of one Willpower point or 2 motes of Essence and a roll of the character's Manipulation + the appropriate Virtue against a difficulty of the target's opposing Virtue. Thus, an attempt to project intense love would require a roll of Manipulation + Compassion against a difficulty of the target's Conviction.

For every success gained on the projection attempt, the target gains or loses one die from all actions for the rest of the scene, as appropriate to the roll in question and situation. Projected emotions normally affect Virtues, Willpower and many Social-based dice pools, but they can affect other rolls (such as intense fear interfering with attacks, paranoia affecting a gambler's Larceny, etc.). Attracting eye contact in order to use this Merit on an unsuspecting target requires a roll of Charisma + (Presence or Socialize, whichever is higher).

MIEN OF PASSION

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Fervor's Kiss

A Fae-Blood with this Merit may suffuse herself in an almost-palpable aura of raw emotion. The exact effects of such a mien depend on the specific emotion evoked, but the system is the same. The player spends one Willpower point or 3 motes and rolls the appropriate Virtue (which the Changeling must claim as favored with Virtue Attunement) to generate the aura. As usual, this roll can benefit from stunts and additional Willpower expenditure.

Successes last until the end of the scene, creating a modifier of dice added to or subtracted from all pertinent Social rolls. A character suffused in Lust through Compassion would add successes as bonus dice to seduction attempts but would suffer a like penalty when interacting with a stoic monk offended by her lechery. Since this power works by enchanting the Changeling rather than those she interacts with, magic that defends against Wyld energies does not shield against a mien's effect. It is only possible to radiate one mien at a time.

MUSING

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Draught of Passion

Far from the ravishing of predatory Fae-Blooded, this Merit allows a Changeling to inspire others to greatness. The character must observe her target in the process of attempting or preparing to attempt an action that could benefit from channeling a Virtue the character favors through a Virtue Attunement. The Fae-Blood's player spends one Willpower point and rolls the appropriate Virtue as a normal dice action at standard difficulty.

It is possible to stunt this roll by describing the intended effect upon the target. The target character adds the Changeling's successes to her own roll, presumably enabling her to achieve superior feats of skill. A botch on the musing attempt increases the difficulty of the target's "mused" action by 1. Fae-Blooded regain 1 mote of Essence for every success contributed to another's actions via Musing.

PRINCE OF CHAOS

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Transcendent Dream Shape, Essence 2

The unformed Fair Folk nobles rule the chaos of the deepest Wyld as its undisputed overlords, and none may gainsay them but others of their own kind. Those fae who take form are vastly lessened, both literally by the constraints of shape and certainly in status and authority. Their half-breed children bear only traces of the majesty their parents forsook for the pleasures of the flesh, but even such as these may lord over the mutant wretches twisted by the Wyld.

A Changeling with this Merit may command any mutant in his line of sight, his player spending a Willpower or 3 motes of Essence to pit the Fae-Blood's Charisma + Inheritance in an opposed roll against the target's (Willpower - total number of mutation points). If the Changeling wins, the target recognizes his authority and becomes fearfully submissive for the rest of the scene. It will obey any non-suicidal commands it understands, provided the assigned tasks may be fulfilled by the end of the scene. Mutants cowed by this power find it harder to resist the character in the future, adding 2 to the difficulty of the resistance roll. This penalty is not cumulative, but it remains until and unless the mutant wins a contest of wills.

Only "normal" mutants may be commanded with this power. These include humans and animals but not Exalted or other magical beings twisted by the Wyld. It is also possible for Changelings with Inheritance 3+ to command hobgoblins and the other lowliest creatures of the Wyld, in which case the target resists the character's authority with a straight Willpower roll. Only Fae-Blooded children of Fair Folk nobles may learn this power.

RAVISH

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Draught of Passion

Fae-Blooded who take on the worst aspects on their parents may learn to devour souls with this Merit. Such feeding requires a willing or beguiled victim within touching distance, though even the willing need not understand the full ramifications of the Changeling's intent. The Fleshdreamt's player rolls the appropriate Virtue or Willpower to devour that Trait from the victim. Each success permanently reduces the targeted Trait by one dot and adds 10 motes to the character's pool. Changelings consuming a Virtue can forfeit five successes to recover a temporary point of that Virtue instead.

Ravishers need not apply every success if they wish to draw out the rapturous feeding process. A botch on the feeding attempt leaves the target immune to all future ravishing attempts by the character. The victim experiences an ecstatic rush of emotion as the devoured Virtue or confidence of Willpower momentarily overwhelms her, but this feeling quickly fades to placid numbness. Characters may only heal damage to their souls with experience. For Storyteller characters who do not keep track of experience points, assume that any devoured Trait replenishes at the rate of one dot per year for most mortals or one dot per month for Exalted and other similarly powerful magical beings.

It is only possible for Changelings to devour the Virtue(s) they favor with Virtue Attunement, though any may drain a target's Willpower. Mortals reduced to a rating of zero in a Virtue or Willpower become completely numb to that part of themselves and never recover.

Those without Compassion are truly soulless psychopaths without any shred of decency. The absence of Conviction or Valor destroys the will to live or leaves the victim wracked in an inescapable nightmare of fear. Both states inevitably shorten the victim's tormented life to a matter of days or weeks at best. A lack of Temperance removes the capacity to delay gratification and leaves the victim helpless before the least of her urges. Those who lose all Willpower become the soulless wretches known as the dream-eaten, shuffling thralls who only do as they are told. All Exalted and beings with Essence 2+ are spared these worst of fates and cannot lose their last dot of a Virtue or Willpower as a result of ravishing. Most characters with this Merit also suffer the Flaw Denizen of Beyond (see p. 68).

UNDETECTABLE LIE

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Awakened Essence, Fervor's Kiss

For a cost of 5 motes and 1 Willpower, a Fae-Blood with this Merit may tell a lie of such power that it may

enchant a single target against all bounds of common sense or reality. The rules for this power may be found on page 286 of *Exalted*.

UNVEILING INTUITION

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Virtue Attunement

A Fae-Blood with this Merit may see past deceptions and read the truth of a target's heart, soul and even mind. The Changeling's player spends a Willpower point or 2 motes of Essence and rolls her character's Perception + Socialize against a difficulty of the target's Essence. If successful, the Changeling may allocate successes to determine any of the following pieces of information: the rating of any one Virtue (one success), the rating of permanent or temporary Willpower (one success each), Nature (two successes), dominant emotion for the turn (three successes) or surface thoughts for the turn (five successes).

It is not possible to sift through a target's memories with this Merit, though clever Changelings may use verbal prompting to bring a triggered memory to the forefront of the target's mind. This requires a reflexive Charisma + Presence roll, with a difficulty equal to the target's Manipulation. Characters may use Unveiling Intuition on any target within line of sight that they can concentrate on for several seconds. Magic completely warding against Wyld energies will block any use of this power. Targets of this power can sense the telepathic intrusion with a reflexive Perception + Occult roll (difficulty 2), although they cannot necessarily pinpoint the source.

WAKING PHANTASMS

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Awakened Essence, Dreamsculpting

For a cost of 4 motes and a Willpower point, a Fae-Blood with this power may conjure illusions that onlookers experience as a mass hallucination. The Changeling's player rolls Wits + Craft (Glamour) against a difficulty of the highest Wits rating among all witnesses present. Those touched by the Wyld, including Fair Folk, mutants and Fae-Blooded, do not count as witnesses. A single success allows a simple, unchanging illusion that affects one sense: a sudden noise, a projected image, a whiff of a single smell or a chill. Two successes allow the simple illusion to extend to multiple senses (as many as desired) or allow for an illusion affecting one sense to change and move.

Examples include a dancing flame (albeit one lacking heat or distinctive crackle) or the illusion of a visible ice sculpture that radiates cold. Three successes generate a simple moving illusion that affects as many senses as desired or a complex illusion involving multiple components that affects one or two senses. Illusions may be directed to change their behavior but not their form. Four

successes create an illusion of any complexity that affects any or all senses. Such illusions have no substance, but otherwise, seem completely real. They may be directed by will to radically change form or behavior. Five successes create illusions as convincing as those created with four successes, but such phantasms blur the lines between reality and illusion. As such, they may exert force or damage with a maximum possible dice pool of the Changeling's Essence. It does not matter how skillfully or terribly the illusion attacks or presses. No combination of bonuses or successes or any other factor can raise this damage or Strength pool higher than this limit. Illusions created with this Merit last one scene.

WYLDWARD

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Wyld Sense, Essence 2

Changelings with this Merit can briefly imbue others with their innate protection from the Wyld. The Fae-Blood's player spends 10 motes of Essence and a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Craft (Glamour) against a difficulty of the target's Essence. The target remains completely shielded from the Wyld for a number of days equal to the successes rolled plus one. This shield duplicates the Fae-Blooded heritage power. A character using this power must touch her intended target for a full turn in order to grant the protection. This is most often accomplished with a kiss.

ARTISAN'S GLAMOUR

(8-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Wyld Sense

While less versatile and grandiose in their enchantments than their noble-born cousins, Fae-Blooded descended from commoner Fair Folk have their own exclusive form of enchantment. Those with Artisan's Glamour may only create objects of the finest quality, as though they had the very best raw materials to work with. This power does excuse the actual need for tools or components, nor does it permit outright impossible feats of craftsmanship.

A weaponsmith could not forge a sword of steel from scraps of copper and bronze, nor could a gemcutter carve diamonds out of rubies or glass. But in the preceding examples, the weaponsmith could consistently produce masterworks using low-grade bronze and a barely adequate forge, while the gemcutter would find perfect angles and clarity hidden in glass that made it as attractive as a diamond and always find the most flattering cut of any actual jewel he worked with.

In effect, a character with this power is assured of creating exceptional items without a need for exceptional materials or any additional effort for the quality. Failure is

still possible, but even the smallest success creates amazing work. Even in cases where the final product is less tangible, such as Craft (Courtesan), the results are no less spectacular. Only purely mystical crafts (Fate, Glamour, etc.) are beyond enhancement with this power. Changelings blessed with Artisan's Glamour must spend a Willpower point if they deliberately wish to create a work of normal quality, let alone fashion something shoddy. This power automatically fails to function in the immediate presence of cold iron and, therefore, may not be used to craft quality items of that material.

BEGUILE

(9-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Undetectable Lie, Mien of Passion

A Fae-Blood who learns this power may, for a cost of 10 motes of Essence and one Willpower point, assume a mantle of preternaturally overwhelming charm that affects everyone in earshot. Beguiled characters may be fed from using the Ravish Merit. Rules for this power may be found on page 286 of *Exalted*.

WYLDWALK

(10-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Wyldward, Essence 3

Fae-Blooded with this power may exploit the inconstant fluctuations of space and time in the Wyld to traverse vast distances in a comparatively brief time. The character must be in the Bordermarches or deeper into the Wyld when she begins her journey, and her destination must lie in a rural or wilderness setting somewhere in the Threshold. Urban or other highly populated regions remain off-limits, as does the entirety of the Blessed Isle.

The player spends 15 motes and rolls the character's Wits + Craft (Glamour), adding one die for every category of Wyld intensity beyond the Bordermarches at her starting location and subtracting one die for every level of Wyld intensity below Bordermarches at her destination. The difficulty depends on the total distance the character wishes to travel. Sojourns of 100 miles or less are standard difficulty. The difficulty increases by 1 for every additional 20 miles or fraction thereof.

If successful, the character finds that her path through the Wyld leads her inexorably but windingly to her destination, bridging all constraints of distance and obstacles in the real world. The journey itself seems unremarkable save for the "usual" oddities associated with travel through the Wyld.

The character *will* reach her destination with one day of walking, provided she does not leave the path her magic has divined or rest for longer than a single hour during her trip. The chaotic landscape gradually shifts toward that of the destination until the Changeling emerges without

ever quite knowing exactly when she left the Wyld. Characters always emerge out of sight of witnesses, inexplicably walking out of woods and wild places.

Failing a Wyldwalk attempt leads the character along a random direction to the same general distance as the intended destination. Changelings have no way to know they've failed and may become quite lost in doing so. A botch is far more catastrophic, leading the character one category deeper into the Wyld for every "1" rolled. The courts of the unformed fae do not look kindly on meddling half-breed intruders, and invariably find exquisite new methods of expressing their displeasure.

SUBTLE GLAMOUR

(12-PT. MERIT)

Prerequisites: Wyld Sense, Essence 2

Changelings of noble birth may only channel a fragment of their parents' glamour, but even this lesser magic can twist the details of reality in startling ways. The character cannot create new items from thin air or even transmute objects into a new nature, but she may alter the specific properties of an object no larger than herself within a number of yards equal to her Essence, so long as its fundamental nature does not change. The player spends 1 to 5 motes Essence and rolls Wits + Craft (Glamour)

against a difficulty of the highest Wits rating of any character who perceives the magic taking place.

It does not matter if witnesses perceive the magic after it takes place, so clever sleight of hand may allow the enchantment of small objects out of sight at reduced difficulty (in addition to any awarded stunt dice). Fair Folk, Changelings, mutants and other creatures of the Wyld do not count as witnesses for this purpose. If there are no incredulous witnesses to overcome or if the character uses this power in the Bordermarches or deeper into the Wyld, the base difficulty is only 1.

Remaining successes determine the maximum complexity and scope of the enchantment or contribute to extending the duration of the effect, but characters cannot allocate more successes to the actual enchantment than the number of motes spent. Enchantments wrought by this power last one hour or one scene, whichever is longer. Each success spent on duration doubles this period, so one success yields two hours or two scenes, two successes grants four hours or four scenes, etc.

Objects revert to their original state as soon as the enchantment expires. The touch of cold iron on an object or being prematurely ends any enchantment cast upon it with this power. Likewise, objects made of cold iron and beings wearing cold iron may not be enchanted, nor may objects change into cold iron or Magical Mate-



rials (other than mediocre-quality jade unsuitable for mystical purposes).

One success: Creates minor cosmetic alterations. Such changes may include switching eye/hair color or “erasing” a surface-level blemish or crack. Likewise, characters may add splotches of rust to a sword, write a page’s worth of illusory text on a surface or alter the serial number on a minted jade bar.

Two successes: Creates limited alteration of properties. Dice may be weighted or restored to fairness. Any surface markings or designs may be rearranged, completely changing a character’s racial pigmentation or allowing canny gamblers to “swap” playing cards in their hand with those in a deck by changing the facing of both cards. Coins can shift to any mintage or denomination, provided they retain the same overall material type.

Three successes: Alters the overall quality of an object. This can transform armor and weapons into exceptional gear or reduce them to shoddy relics. Pebbles may be changed into chips of jade, glass into jewels or vinegar into wine (or vice versa), but the overall physical state and composition of the object must remain the same.

A living being enchanted with this level of glamour may be given a wholly new visage that even his closest friends cannot penetrate, but the enchantment cannot change gender or alter Appearance by more than one dot. Alternately, Changelings may grant or remove a single dot from a Physical Attribute. Bonuses awarded by Subtle Glamour are not cumulative with other magic. Only the highest enhancement provides benefit.

Four successes: Brings about substantial alterations of quality, even to the point of affecting intangible objects and straining the edges of believability. A wooden training sword may become a saber fit for an emperor’s hand or a flame may be made to swell and dance alluringly in the shape of a girl. One weapon can become another of vaguely related design, changing a dagger into a longsword or a mace into a mere club. Water can become wine or poison — or mystically shift states into a puff of steam or hardened ice. A cluster of vines may grow and bear grapes with supernatural speed as they weave to sculpted shapes, while animals receive enhancement or withering by two Physical Attribute or Appearance dots according to the same rules as three successes.

Five successes: Allows the character to simultaneously affect as many objects with their own level four effects as the character has dots of Wits. By focusing the entire enchantment on a single living being, the character may impart a single Pox or Deficiency for the duration of the glamour.

GOBLIN BODY

(VARIABLE COST SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Wyld Sense

A Changeling with this Merit may reshape his flesh with the energies of his own half-Wyld soul, assuming a

form of raw nightmare. The character’s Goblin Body form is built using Wyld mutations (see **E:L**, pp. 212-222), and the Merit costs two bonus points per mutation point incorporated into the form. Characters may not add the Essence Channeler Blight to a Goblin Body. Changelings assuming their Goblin Body form drop to Appearance 0 and suffer the effects of the five-point version of Iron Vulnerability (see p. 80). In addition, characters with Awakened Essence gain Denizen from Beyond (see p. 68) for the duration of their transformation. Changelings touching cold iron cannot even assume Goblin Body form.

Adding additional features onto a Goblin Body during play requires 4 experience points and one day of training time per mutation point added. Shifting from human to Goblin Body form is a simple action costing (1 mote per mutation point built into the form) - (3 motes per Willpower point spent). Shifting back into human form is also a simple action, but only costs a Willpower point or 3 motes of Essence. The children of Fair Folk nobles may not learn this power. Characters without an Essence pool may purchase this Merit, but must spend enough Willpower to reduce the Essence cost to zero when they want to shift forms. Characters with the Awakened Essence Merit may spend motes in place of Willpower on a one-for-one basis to pay any activation costs required by their mutations.

TRANSCENDENT DREAM SHAPE

(VARIABLE COST SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Wyld Sense

With this Merit, a noble-born Changeling may briefly call upon her fae heritage to become a being of deadly beauty for a scene. The Transcendent Dream Shape adds bonus Physical and/or Social Attribute dots to the character’s normal rating according to the allocation decided when the Merit is purchased. Each bonus Attribute dot costs two points, and no Attribute may be raised above a rating of 7. If a character with an enhanced rating of 7 in an Attribute later raises her natural rating, she may reallocate the bonus dot to another Attribute until all six Attributes have the maximum enhanced rating.

Adding additional bonus dots to the fairy form in play costs 7 experience points per dot. Changelings in fae form suffer the effects of the five-point version of Iron Vulnerability (see p. 80), whether or not they normally exhibit a weakness to cold iron. In addition, Fae-Blooded touching cold iron cannot even assume their faerie form. Changing into the Transcendent Dream Shape is a simple action requiring the expenditure of one Willpower point + (a number of motes equal to the bonus dots provided by the transformation) - (3 motes per additional Willpower point spent). Characters without an Essence pool may purchase this Merit, but they must pay the cost to shift form entirely using Willpower. Only Fae-Blooded descended from Fair Folk nobles may learn this power.

TOO PERFECT

(2-PT. PHYSICAL FLAW)

A Fae-Blood with this Flaw appears unnaturally attractive in a way that is also faintly disturbing, her angular features sculpted with exacting symmetry. As such, the character adds one to the difficulty of all Charisma rolls. Characters must have an Appearance of 3+ to purchase this Flaw.

ERRATIC TEMPERAMENT

(3-, 5- OR 6-PT. MENTAL FLAW)

A Changeling with this Flaw is mercurial to the point of insanity, involuntarily shifting her motivations and persona at regular or irregular intervals. For three points, the shift occurs each month at the full moon. For five points, the interval is measured in weeks or occurs whenever the character's player botches a roll (decided when the Flaw is purchased). For six points, the shift takes place every time the character awakens from sleep. Whenever a shift takes place, the Storyteller assigns a new Nature to the character.

OATH KEEPER

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

As with their Fair Folk parents, Fae-Blooded with this Flaw cannot break a sworn promise. They can lie and even go back on their casually spoken words, but once they give a promise, it is inviolate. Any breach of a sworn promise causes the character to suffer a catastrophic botch at the worst and most poetically appropriate moment, exactly as though an Eclipse Caste Solar had sanctified the oath.

IRON VULNERABILITY

(3- OR 5-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Like Wyld mutants and Fair Folk, Changelings with the three-point version of this Flaw suffer aggravated damage from weapons made of cold iron. Even the touch of iron discomfits them, adding 1 to the difficulty of all actions performed while contact is maintained. Fae-Blooded with the five-point version suffer considerably more than mere discomfort from sustained contact, taking one die of aggravated damage per turn that the iron sears their flesh.

SPIRIT CHARM CHANGES

The following additions allow new forms of Blessings and Curses that may be appropriate to a game involving God-Blooded characters.

BENEFACTION

This Charm can confer heightened fertility, causing the recipient's next viable sexual union to result in con-

ception with a successful roll of her Stamina + Essence at standard difficulty. A character's heightened fertility remains until used.

LARGESS

This Charm can place a mark insuring that a particular sexual union results in offspring, even if one or both partners suffer sterility. This mark fades at the moment of conception. Alternately, the spirit can simply grant full virility to one who has become barren or sterile.

More powerfully, this Charm can lay a mark increasing the likelihood that an unborn child bearing appropriate ancestry will Exalt as a Dragon-Blood. This blessing increases the chance by 1, as though from a parent with Breeding 5 (see **E: DB**, p. 282). No child can receive this spiritual mark more than once, though it is cumulative with actual parental Breeding bonuses.

Another coveted form of Largess extends the target's natural lifespan by two years or reduces her physical age by one year. Reducing physical age does not erase memories. Spirits must know the Charm Touch of Grace to grant this form of blessing and may not award it more than once a year.

ENDOWMENT

Spirits capable of granting Charms may permanently confer any Charm they know upon a God-Blooded or Demon-Blooded target, so long as the recipient meets the minimum Traits and prerequisites of that Charm.

Some spirits may grant a blessing of life with Endowment, provided they also know the Charm Touch of Grace. This blessing halts the target's age for 10 years or reverses her physical age by a decade. The latter variant may not regress a target into a prenatal state unable to survive outside of womb or egg, nor does it erase memories. A final variant of this effect restores the target to the prime of life for one year, after which his body's true age returns.

If used to grant a second dot of permanent Essence to a mortal, an Endowment transforms that mortal into a God-Blood or Demon-Blood (as appropriate to the spirit's type). The spirit effectively adopts the mortal, resulting in a God-Blood whose Traits and destiny reflect the spirit's parentage as surely as any actual offspring. Eclipse Caste Solars and Moonshadow Caste Abyssals who somehow learn Endowment and other Exalted with Charms or spells capable bestowing permanent Essence on a mortal may create Half-Caste in a similar fashion. The new God-Blood's Inheritance equals one half the spirit's Essence, rounded down. Bonus points awarded by Inheritance should be spent immediately to enhance the character. Even spirits capable of this feat are often loath to use it.

Normal God-Bloods may be trained for loyal service from birth, whereas adopted God-Bloods normally display distressing levels of autonomy and willfulness. It is for this reason that some spirits use an alternative form of Endowment that ensures the target's next child will be born a

God-Blood on the condition that the child will be given over to the spirit at an appointed birthday. However, this variant only works if the recipient is a normal mortal who couples with another mortal. Mating with a magical being results in the appropriate offspring of that union, though the mortal is treated as Essence 2 for the purposes of determining the child's Inheritance.

If a God-Blood without the Awakened Essence Merit receives a second dot of Essence with an Endowment, the surge of magical energy opens her soul to its full birthright. As such, this blessing bestows Awakened Essence in addition to the actual Essence increase.

Spirits can also grant an Endowment of Essence to a God-Blood with Essence 3 as an ultimate form of promotion, according to the following guidelines. These rules supersede those on page 48 of *GoD*.

God-Blooded: A promoted God-Blooded transcends flesh and becomes a little god or elemental of the same type as his parent. It is strongly recommended that God-Blooded who attain this rare and coveted apotheosis become Storyteller characters.

Demon-Blooded: Should such a character attain promotion, he transcends flesh and becomes a First Circle demon of the same race as his parent (or a race appropriate to his parentage for the children of greater demons). Demons created by this method outside of Malfeas feel the irresistible pull of the Yozis upon their souls, immediately dragging them through the sands of Cecelyne toward the hell-prison. It is strongly recommended that Demon-Blooded who receive ascension become Storyteller characters.

Fae-Blooded: Changelings given Essence beyond 3 instead receive the effects of another type of Endowment decided by the Storyteller. This applies even if the donating spirit only knows how to grant Essence with Endowment.

Ghost-Blooded: As always, a Ghost-Blood who attains Essence 4 instantly dies but lingers as a ghost with Essence 4.

Half-Caste: Dragon-Touched given Essence above 3 do not increase their Essence, but instead, receive an immediate test for Exaltation with a +3 bonus. For Solar, Sidereal or Lunar Half-Caste with Essence 3, an Endowment of Essence serves as a powerful "letter of reference" to the patron deity of their parentage. Whether the Celestine acknowledges such a reference with Exaltation depends on the heroism and worthiness of the candidate, as well as the righteousness and status of the petitioning spirit within the Celestial Bureaucracy. Ultimately, the Storyteller decides what, if anything, happens. Celestial Exaltation has never been recorded as the result, but it has often resulted in various forms of deification. Abyssal Half-Caste automatically receive an alternate type of Endowment, exactly as with Fae-Blooded.

IMPRECATION

This Charm can inflict temporary sterility on a target for one month. Mortals may suffer permanent sterility if their players fail a Stamina + Essence roll at standard difficulty. The fertility effects of a Benefaction can cancel this effect.

MALEDICTION

A variant of this Charm can inflict sterility on any being. This effect will also trigger miscarriage if the target is pregnant, unless the unborn child is innately magical (such as a type of God-Blood). Sterility only lasts one month for Exalted and other magical beings but is permanent for mortals and animals. The fertility effects of a Largess can cancel this effect. Another form of this Curse physically ages the target by three years.

SCOURGE

Against magical victims, a Scourge can remove any single Charm the target knows. The spirit must also know the Charm in question or have seen the target use the Charm in order to erase it. If a character loses a Charm that serves as a prerequisite for other Charms, he retains those Charms but cannot learn any new Charms that would require the lost Charm at any layer of prerequisites until he relearns the foundation. Sorcery and necromancy Charms may not be removed with this Charm.

Yet another form of this curse physically ages the target by 15 years, though most spirits prefer more immediate retribution. A slight variation gives the target the semblance and weakness of old age for one year, after which the victim returns to normal. This withering infirmity reduces the target's Stamina by 2 dots and Appearance by 1 dot, to the usual minimum of 1 in any Attribute.

As stated in its description, Scourge's most powerful manifestation can remove dots of permanent Essence. If this effect is used against a god, elemental, demon or God-Blooded character with Essence 1, the victim instead becomes a non-magical Essence 1 mortal and loses all benefits of his former state. These beings can also voluntarily accept transformation into a mortal through a Scourge regardless of their Essence rating.

In this case, voluntary means precisely that: The being cannot be coerced, threatened, blackmailed or otherwise duped into accepting the change. She must truly *want* to become a mortal, knowing fully what she sacrifices. Only a scant handful of spirits have ever accepted such obvious demotion, and most of these scourged themselves for reasons of love or ennui.

NEW CHARMS

The following Charms specifically pertain to the God-Blooded, either as part of their creation or among their inherited powers. As a formatting note, the listing in parenthesis following the Charm name indicates the type

of beings who use the Charm. The category “spirit” includes gods, elementals and demons (and of course their God-Blooded progeny), but not ghosts.

CONDITIONAL BLESSING/CONDITIONAL CURSE (SPIRIT)

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Until Calibration

Type: Simple

Minimum Compassion/Valor: 2

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Benefaction/Imprecation

With these Charms, a spirit may place a mark of Essence upon a target in its line of sight as a delayed trigger for another Charm. If the delayed effect has a positive intent, the spirit must know and use the Compassion Charm Conditional Blessing. A negative or harmful intent requires the Valor Charm Conditional Curse. A Manipulation + Compassion/Valor roll against a difficulty of the target's Essence is necessary to inscribe the mark. If this roll succeeds, the spirit chooses one Charm it knows that can directly affect that target. If the selected Charm has multiple uses or permutations, the spirit must also select the exact effects the Charm will take. The spirit then establishes the precise actions the target must perform to trigger the delayed Charm.

The spirit may include as many conditions as desired, any of which may be as elaborate or straightforward as desired. For example, the spirit may decide to heal a loyal shaman with Touch of Grace if she speaks a specific prayer petitioning aid. Conversely, a demon might arrange to summon its Demon-Blooded daughter to a dungeon in Malfeas (via Capture) if she ever disobeys a direct order or reveals her infernal heritage to anyone she is not actively trying to kill.

Whenever the target of a Conditional Blessing or Curse performs the requisite actions, the spirit knows. At any time, it may then immediately activate the triggered Charm as a reflexive action to end the Conditional Blessing/Curse regardless of distance or withhold its benediction/wrath until it can learn more about the target's actions. This Charm and its mark also fade without effect if the target does not meet the established conditions by the next Calibration. Only spirits and other beings capable of perceiving Essence at work can see the mark of an extant Conditional Blessing/Curse.

DEMATERIALIZIZE

(SPIRIT)

Cost: Varies

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Valor: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

Through the use of this Charm, an elemental may transmute its flesh and personal belongings into spiritual Essence, thereby assuming an incorporeal state. Dematerialized elementals may perceive and interact with other incorporeal beings as if both were solid, either magically or with touch. However, immaterial beings are utterly undetectable to physical beings and cannot directly affect the physical world in any way without Charms or other powers intended for such use (such as Possession, Will-o-Wisp etc.).

Dematerialized elementals with Essence 2+ can spend 1 mote to manifest for a scene as a translucent phantom of themselves and speak in a quiet voice or whisper, exactly as normally immaterial spirits can do as an innate ability. As always, the Storyteller remains the final arbiter of whether a particular power may affect the physical world from a dematerialized state. This lack of physical interaction also allows an incorporeal elemental to effortlessly pass through solid walls and other material obstructions, though appropriate magical wards can still bar their path.

The cost of this Charm is normally between 50 percent and 100 percent of the elemental's total available Essence pool. For elementals without a listed cost to dematerialize, the percentage cost of total Essence they must expend equals their (Essence rating $\times$ 5) + 45, rounded up. For example, a spirit with Essence 2 and an available pool of 48 motes pays 27 motes (55 percent).

Eclipse Caste Solars and Moonshadow Caste Abyssals who learn this Charm also calculate their cost according to the preceding formula without applying the usual double cost modifier for learning spirit Charms, determining the value according to a percentage of their total Essence pool (Personal + Peripheral). The half-spirit descendants of gods, elementals and demons do not pay a percentage of their total pool, instead paying a cost of their (Essence rating $\times$ 5) + 5 motes.

Unlike other Charms of non-instant duration, Dematerialize does not require that elementals commit the Essence cost to sustain the magic. However, beings that normally exist in a material state cannot regain Essence through respiration while Dematerialized (and vice versa for immaterial spirits who materialize). Instead of committing Essence, beings using this Charm must pay half the normal cost each day at sunrise as a reflexive upkeep, rounded up. Failure to pay this upkeep immediately ends the effects of the Charm. Otherwise, characters must spend a dice action reverting back to their natural state, though success is automatic.

The rules printed here expand upon and supersede those for the Materialize Charm in *Exalted* and apply in reverse for that Charm.

FERTILE SOUL ENDOWMENT

(ARCANOS)

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1 lethal health level

Duration: Special

Type: Simple

Minimum Temperance: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Feeding Life's Fountain

With this Arcanos, a ghost may sire offspring with a human, God-Blood or Exalted woman. The ghost must be materialized, either through *Weighted With the Anchor of Flesh* (see **E:Ab**, p. 237) or by siring the child in a shadowland at night. It is also possible for the living to facilitate mating with copious doses of ghost flower tea (see **Manacle and Coin**, p. 45). Fertile Soul Endowment automatically fails in the Underworld, as the very principles of that dark realm oppose life. The ghost need not actually copulate with the living partner, though the two must exchange a minimum of a deep, passionate kiss. As such, female ghosts may use this Arcanos as readily as males. Finally, the living partner cannot already be pregnant.

If all the appropriate conditions are met, the ghost's player rolls Temperance + Essence against a difficulty of the partner's Essence rating. Ghosts with appropriate Passions may also channel them for additional dice, as normal. A failure means the living partner's Essence rejects the energies and no conception takes place. A botch means the partner immediately becomes sterile unless her player makes a successful Stamina + Resistance roll (difficulty 2). Exalted and other magical beings do not risk sterility from such a union.

A successful roll on the part of the ghost means the partner immediately conceives a Ghost-Blooded offspring, which she then carries to term normally. The living partner need not be willing or even know that conception has taken place. Essence used to power this Arcanos remains committed until the birth of the child. The ghost may not voluntarily withdraw this commitment, and even the destruction of the ghost does not release the Essence prior to birth or end the pregnancy. A Ghost-Blooded child born of such a union will have innate power appropriate to the total Essence of its parents as normal. Ghosts that sire offspring upon Exalted women are more apt to produce Half-Caste children, though the Arcanos still affords the certainty of conception.

OX-BODY TECHNIQUE

(SPIRIT, ARCANOS)

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Conviction: 1

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None



Like the Exalted, the children of spirits may also exhibit superhuman resilience. Each time this Charm is purchased, the character gains two additional -2 health levels. Characters cannot purchase this Charm more times than their Conviction rating. Actual gods, elementals and demons do not normally use this Charm, but instead, manifest health levels appropriate to their nature. As the souls of mortals, ghosts require this Arcanos to surpass mortal limits of resilience.

DEATH IN LIFE PATH

The following specialized Arcanoi are of no use to the Restless Dead, but allow their Ghost-Blooded progeny to emulate the condition of unlife. Moonshadow Caste Abyssals and Eclipse Caste Solars can also learn these Arcanoi, provided they can find a teacher. Ghosts may only learn the Death in Life Path as a theoretical exercise, though some seek such knowledge for the express purpose of instructing Ghost-Blooded.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION OF FLESH

Cost: 5 motes per hour (plus 1 Willpower in Creation)

Duration: Varies

Type: Simple

Minimum Conviction: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

With this Arcanos, a Ghost-Blood may suffuse his body with necrotic Essence, blurring the distinction between flesh and corpus. This effect lasts one hour for every 5 motes spent. During that time, the ghost-blood's body becomes fully malleable to the Arcanoi of the Shifting Ghost-Clay Path. In addition, the character gains the ability to soak lethal damage with half Stamina and otherwise resists injury, poison and disease like one of the Exalted. When the duration ends, however, the spectral flesh overrides all changes and reverts to its original state. Characters employing this Arcanos can perceive incorporeal ghosts clearly, though other types of spirits remain hidden to their senses.

LOWER SOUL ASCENDANT

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Conviction: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Transubstantiation of Flesh

Unlike their ghostly parents, the Half-Dead retain both higher and lower souls. Although both halves remain conjoined until death, a Ghost-Blood with this Arcanos may briefly subsume his higher consciousness to the bestial power of his bloated po. For the rest of the scene, the character loses all morality and embraces

psychopathic behavior such as that imposed by the Deliberate Cruelty Virtue Flaw (see *Exalted*, p. 132). In addition, the character suffers no wound penalties and adds his Essence rating to all Physical Attributes. When the Arcanos ends, his player must roll Conviction + Essence. The character remains trapped in his inhuman cruelty for a number of hours equal to the successes rolled. Incapacitated or mortally wounded Ghost-Blooded may explicitly activate Lower Soul Ascendant as a reflexive action regardless of whether they are conscious or have already used a Charm during the turn. If the character cannot pay any part of the cost, the Arcanos still takes effect but the character loses a dot of permanent Willpower. Used in this fashion, the Ghost-Blood instantly heals all bashing levels and a number of levels of lethal damage equal to his Conviction but also loses a dot of permanent Essence as the Arcanos activates (in addition to any permanent Willpower loss). The character retains any Arcanoi for which he fails to meet the Minimum Essence requirements, but he cannot use them until he spends experience to restore his diminished spirit.

SPITEFUL ESSENCE ONSLAUGHT

Cost: 1 mote per 1L per target

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Conviction: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Lower Soul Ascendant

Building on the principles of Lower Soul Ascendant, a Ghost-Blood can manifest the wrath of her swollen po in rays of pale, searing Essence. As the Arcanos activates, dancing sparks of cold light ignite around the character like will-o-wisps, brightly visible to material and immaterial onlookers alike. From these sparks emerge beams of manifested spite. The Ghost-Blood's player makes one attack roll of Charisma + Conviction, with a base difficulty of the number of separate targets included in the barrage. The character cannot attack more targets in a single use of this Arcanos than her Essence rating. The base damage is 1L per mote spent powering the blast, plus successes on the attack roll, but the character must spend motes for each target separately, allocating at least 1 mote to each.

Characters cannot spend more motes on all uses of this Charm in a single turn than their Conviction + Essence. Thus, a barrage against two targets by a character with Conviction 4 and Essence 2 could inflict up to 5L on the first target and 1L on the second target or inflict 3L to each or divide the damage in any combination of 6L or less. This Arcanos affects material and dematerialized beings equally and may be used by incorporeal Ghost-Blooded to attack the living as readily as spirits.

WRAITH FORM TRANSFORMATION

Cost: 6 motes per hour, plus 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies

Type: Simple

Minimum Conviction: 2

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Transubstantiation of Flesh

A Ghost-Blood employing Wraith Form Transformation ripples and fades away with a rustling whisper, her flesh wholly subsumed into the corpus of her Half-Dead soul. This Arcanos duplicates the effects of Transubstantiation of Flesh, including resistance conferred and susceptibility to Arcanoi of the Shifting Ghost-Clay Path. Furthermore, she does not need air, food or water for the duration of the effect. However, the Arcanos also causes the Ghost-Blood to dematerialize as per the spirit Charm of the same name (see p. 82). Unlike elementals, Ghost-Blooded may still regain Essence through respiration and pay no upkeep while dematerialized with this Arcanos. However, it still requires a dice action for a Ghost-Blood to prematurely end the effect to rematerialize, and wards intended to bar the passage of ghosts can stop her.

While immaterial, Ghost-Blooded can use Arcanoi of the Terror-Spreading Art or Stringless Puppeteer Art to affect the physical world, though a possessing Ghost-Blood suffers forcible ejection from her host as the Arcanos ends and she reforms. Characters employing this Arcanos may reflexively spend 1 mote to manifest as a translucent phantom in the physical world for up to one scene. While manifested as a phantom, the character may speak and be heard as a faint whisper, but she remains incorporeal. A character who dies while under the effects of Wraith Form Transformation always becomes a ghost.

GHOST BODY EVASION

Cost: 6 motes

Duration: One turn

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Conviction: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Wraith Form Transformation

A Ghost-Blood with this Arcanos may dissolve into an incorporeal form in response to physical danger, perceived or otherwise. He remains visible to onlookers as a luminous translucent phantom, but all physical attacks pass through his incorporeal body. Use of this Arcanos is not considered a type of dodge or soak, but may preempt damage by allowing the character to become immaterial in the instant before an attack strikes. Obviously, Ghost Body Evasion provides no defense against attacks that function against immaterial beings. Characters may rematerialize prior to the end of the turn if so desired by reflexively spending one Willpower point. The immate-

rial state granted by this Arcanos duplicates the effects of Wraith Form Transformation.

RESTLESS SPIRIT SOJOURN

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Conviction: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Wraith Form Transformation

With the activation of this Arcanos, a Ghost-Blood's body falls into a deep coma, and her soul flows from her mouth as an immaterial cloud of Essence. The soul reforms over the next turn into the dematerialized semblance of the character, as if she had used Wraith Form Transformation. This spirit body begins with a number of -0 health levels equal to the character's permanent Willpower plus any levels obtained with Ox-Body Technique. The soul keeps track of health separate from the actual body. A Ghost-Blood using Restless Spirit Sojourn may return her soul to her body across any distance by reflexively spending a Willpower point and accepting a level of unsoakable aggravated damage to her flesh. Recalling a soul does not count as a Charm use and may be performed on the same turn as the character activates other Charms. No Essence or Willpower is required if the soul can "touch" its flesh in an attempt to rejoin, and this form of return incurs no aggravated damage.

If a character's spirit body dies, she loses one point of permanent Essence, and her scarred soul returns to its flesh. Once soul and flesh rejoin by any method, the body immediately awakens with a painful gasp. An awakened Ghost-Blood cannot escape her flesh again with this Arcanos until a number of hours have passed equal to the health levels of damage her soul had suffered at the time of rejoining.

While using this Arcanos, a Ghost-Blood's torpid body needs only a third of its usual intake of air, food and water and may be force-fed by caretakers. Since characters do not feel the needs of their flesh while using this Arcanos, Ghost-Blooded must take care not to let their bodies wither away from starvation or thirst. If a Ghost-Blood's body dies in its soul's absence, the soul experiences a turn of terrible agony in which she can do nothing but writhe and scream. When the pain fades, the character becomes a full ghost with her body's usual health levels minus any spiritual damage already sustained.

EXALTED GOD-BLOODED

Like those touched by the Wyld, the half divine seldom receive the added power of Exaltation. The Celestines wisely inscribed their Exalted Essences to avoid those whose birth and allegiance already bound them to other gods, let alone the descendents of their enemies. The Five Elemental

Dragons took no such measures, leaving the matter of strange births as a result of strange couplings to chance, or perhaps they simply did not care. And as for the Deathlords, they are even more paranoid than the Celestines in their choice of servants. And so, by divine providence or simple luck, very few God-Blooded of any heritage draw the Second Breath. And yet, from time to time, it happens.

The conjunction of Exaltation and Inheritance affords great power, but that power comes at a still greater price, as the Essence of birth and Second Breath forever compete to slow magical development. Exalted God-Blooded are created according to the usual rules for their Exalted type, purchasing Inheritance as they would any other Background. This Inheritance allows them to spend bonus points to purchase all Traits associated with their heritage, including Charms. However, bonus points obtained from Inheritance may *not* be spent on Essence or magical Traits natural to the Exalt's type.

Exalted God-Blooded are automatically assumed to have all Merits and Flaws with game effects naturally incorporated into or surpassed by Exaltation, such as God-Body, Longevity, Awakened Essence, Magical Attunement, etc., for the purposes of meeting prerequisites, but they may not actually purchase these Traits. Likewise, if a God-Blood receives Exaltation during play, she immediately loses all such redundant Merits and Flaws without recompense.

As stated, however, this boost in power comes at a steep price. Exalted God-Blooded lose one Charm at character creation for every dot of Inheritance they take. In addition, they may never spend experience to learn any Charms or powers of their heritage that their Exalted type cannot normally learn. The anima power of the Eclipse and Moonshadow Caste may circumvent this restriction for the usual doubled cost. Worst of all, these characters add their Inheritance rating to the experience cost required to purchase or increase every magical Trait except for Essence (such as Charms, Combos, spells and astrological colleges).

In the case of Essence, this surcharge instead applies to the factor required for advancement. Thus, a Solar God-Blood with Inheritance 3 pays (current rating x 11) experience instead of the usual (current rating x 8) for every dot of Essence. As a final note, Exaltation does not automatically free God-Blooded from the expectations of their parents, which may prove especially troublesome for the children of demons, ghosts and Fair Folk.

Half-Caste are a special case, as they already begin their lives attuned to the Essence of the Chosen from before birth. Such individuals may only receive Exaltation appropriate to their heritage. In the case of Terrestrial Half-Castes, this restriction often binds them to their parent's aspect as well as type, though not always. The power of the Second Breath completely overrides the

power of a Half-Caste's Inheritance, stripping away all exclusively God-Blooded Traits. Known Charms and spells remain, as does any advancement of Essence, but the character is functionally a "normal" Exalt for all further development. This may provide an intriguing backstory for an Exalt, but there are no modifications to character creation for "completed" Half-Caste.

AKUMA, RESPLENDENT SLAVES OF THE YOZIS

A demon's Endowment Charm can transform a mortal into a Demon-Blood, making it a powerful and coveted reward for ambitious infernalists. These adopted Hellspawn are sometimes known as akuma, a foul epithet denoting a slave of blasphemous power. However, the term is often reserved for other, more dangerous slaves, those Exalted who succumb to the lure of quick power at the price of their souls. A simple Endowment is not enough to bring one of the Chosen into the service of the Demon Realm, but most Third Circle demons know how to taint an Exalted Essence with the Charm Investiture of Infernal Glory.

This hideous Charm is not known outside of the lords of the Demon Realm and may not be learned by gods, elementals or Exalted who are not akuma. As for the akuma, the princes of Malfeas do not share the secrets of making slaves with their slaves. The souls of the Yozis understand treachery too well to place themselves in such obvious danger. In their time, the lords of Malfeas have enslaved members of every type of Exalted available to them. Only the Chosen of other Primordials remain beyond their grasp, not that the lords of Malfeas have even tried seizing them. The souls of the Yozis would not dare poach from the Deathlords for fear of causing a calamitous diplomatic incident between already-strained allies.

When they are not roaming Creation on assignments from their masters, Exalted akuma live as princes in the Demon Realm. There, they dwell in towers and sprawling townhouses built by and sometimes even of their masters, with every depraved whim attended by demonic courtesans and obsequious servants. Such regal comfort is a dreadful irony for the resplendent slaves but still splendor enough that akuma revel to satiation in bacchanals of blood and pain and obscure carnal delights. For all they have, Infernal Exalted exist solely because their masters permit them to draw another breath.

In case it needs to be said, akuma are a bad thing. An Exalt who embraces damnation has less freedom than the lowliest First Circle demon and, yet, wields vast and terrible power. They live inside that paradox, as emperors enslaved. It is their lot, for all that it is worth, and some find sick pleasure in their servitude. However, such characters are difficult and frustrating to play properly owing to their

lack of autonomy. Storytellers should consider whether an Exalt who becomes akuma should remain under the control of his player or become a Storyteller character. While damnation lends itself well to drama, it is a powerful theme that can quickly derail and monopolize a story.

If Storytellers wish to permit akuma from the start rather than allowing them in play, they are created as Exalted Demon-Blooded with Inheritance and Patron rated at 5 each and do not lose starting Charms for their Inheritance. In addition, akuma receive these Backgrounds for free rather than purchasing them with starting Background dots, though these advantages pale in comparison with the price.

INVESTITURE OF INFERNAL GLORY

Cost: 60 motes, 6 Willpower

Duration: Until completed

Type: Simple

Minimum Compassion: 3

Minimum Conviction: 5

Minimum Valor: 4

Minimum Essence: 7

Prerequisite Charms: Endowment, Geas, Memory Transference, Scourge

With this Charm, a Demon Prince may stain an Exalted Essence to create a prince among akuma. The rite cannot begin until the Exalt submits his will to the demon, forfeiting part of his soul with a prayer of supplication that costs him a point of permanent Willpower. Such a sacrifice cannot be coerced or obtained with deception, but must be an act of genuine free will. It is the last act of free will the Exalt will ever know.

With this sacrifice, the demon infuses the subject with torturous power and reshapes him to better suit its monstrous will. Any Traits that may be purchased or raised in play may be cannibalized to yield the number of experience points it would cost to obtain the Trait in its current state. Thus, the character's Wits of 4 could yield 12 experience points as it dropped to 3, while a specialty would yield 3 experience points. The demon chooses how to reassign these experience points to modify the character as much or as little as desired, but it must spend them all. Anything leftover at the end of the process is lost. It is possible to rebuild an Exalt from scratch, though most Demon Princes only make artful adjustments.

Such modifications are very quick, taking a number of hours equal to the experience point cost of the new or improved Trait to implement, but the changes are also

The Broken-Winged Crane

This unholy manuscript serves as a guide to damnation and damnable power (see *BoTC*, p.22). Every copy of the book is different, all imperfect reflections of the original tome that has not yet been penned. But all winding and crooked paths lead to Malfeas, and every copy leads its reader toward resplendent slavery or utter madness. A copy of *The Broken-Winged Crane* is an Artifact •••••, possession of which means certain death in the Realm and much of the Threshold. Mere rumor of the book's existence can doom a sorcerer to death or inescapable disgrace.

Mortals who read from the tome gain a derangement unless their players make a successful Willpower roll, difficulty 3. Those who do not lose their sanity may thereafter consult the text as a teacher to increase their Occult rating or to develop an Occult specialty in demons, Malfeas or other related matters. Most importantly, a mortal who dares can read aloud the prayers and rituals from the book to initiate telepathic contact with a powerful demon of the Second Circle or higher. This rite takes a Charisma + Occult roll, difficulty 5. A botch tears open a brief crack into Malfeas and pulls the reader and book through the shrieking vortex.

If successful, however, the mortal can petition the demon for power, and the demon may use its Charms to affect her from wherever it resides. Demons may not use Charms involving possession, transportation or other effects allowing greater access to Creation. A few minor blessings in exchange for service may ultimately lead to Endowment and transformation into lesser akuma, or the demon may inflict terrible curses to punish the infernalist's presumption. If *The Broken-Winged Crane* is used as the focus of a demon's Endowment, the mortal pays the permanent Willpower cost of the Charm instead, and the demon does not have to wait a year to use Endowment again.

Exalted who read *The Broken-Winged Crane* test for madness at standard difficulty and may use the book in the same ways as mortals if they retain their sanity. However, the Chosen may also use the text to learn Sorcery Charms of the first two circles — and even the third, provided they ritually contact a Third Circle demon to serve as an actual tutor. Exalted cannot learn sorcery Charms more powerful than their normal limits permit. The book cannot act as a conduit for the Charm Investiture of Infernal Glory, though its pages may open a portal to a Demon Prince's lair in Malfeas for those Exalted seeking transformation into akuma. The book does not allow a portal out of the Demon Realm, but that was never its function. Opening the portal costs the Exalt 30 motes and 2 Willpower. The gateway remains open for one turn only and does not allow anything to escape from the Demon Realm.



excruciating ordeals involving torture, soul-branding, mental rape, forced re-healing and other freakishly alien torments. The Exalt may have his flesh turned inside out so the demon can twist muscles from Strength to Dexterity or have the beliefs of his Virtues torn asunder to accommodate the influx of Ability tutoring inscribed upon his brain.

When the process of reshaping the Exalt is complete, the Demon Prince imbues him with the Essence of the Demon Realm. This involves a new round of torments lasting a number of days equal to the Exalt's Essence rating. At the conclusion of this period, the character gains Inheritance 5 and Patron 5 and becomes an akuma Demon-Blood.

The Demon Prince immediately spends the 30 bonus points in a new round of customization, and may further increase this number by assigning Flaws with a combined value no greater than (20 - the total value of the character's current Flaws). The demon also assigns the 17 additional points of Backgrounds awarded by Patron according to the intended function of the akuma. This concludes the ritual and the Charm, forever branding the Infernal Exalt as a slave of the Demon Realm.

An Exalted akuma receives several unique advantages. First, the maximum cap on all Attributes and Abilities increases by one. An Exalt with Essence 1-5 can raise these Traits to 6, while more powerful Exalted can reach ratings equal to their Essence + 1. The Demon Prince can and often does exploit these heightened thresholds during the process of reshaping and empowering the akuma, but the Exalt may also take advantage of them with experience points. See page 259 of this book for details of experience costs beyond the Essence 5 mark.

Second, the character may learn spirit Charms like any Demon-Blood during the initial transformation or later with experience points at the same cost as normal Charms for his Exalted type. However, like Essence and other magical Traits, these Charms are subject to the Inheritance penalty imposed on all Exalted God-Blooded. The character's anima may remain eerily the same or twisted to reflect whatever aspect of the Demon Realm the master desires. Those with terrible Infernal animas may cause derangements in ordinary mortals who behold their iconic splendor. Lastly, an akuma is no longer a part of fate and receives the protection of that state from the divinations and astrological manipulations of the Sidereals.

Exalted akuma pay a heavy price for their power. They cannot disobey their masters or any Yozi, even if ordered to commit suicide or to murder former loved ones. Nor may they ever escape their masters. At any time and in any place, the Demon Prince who made them can borrow their senses or voice and may issue irresistible telepathic commands. Even if the Demon Prince grants the illusion of autonomy by choosing to

convey suggestions rather than orders, it is a thin lie at best. The truth is slavery, absolute and eternal, to the end of the Exalt's long days.

Akuma cannot be redeemed or cleansed of the Yozi's taint. This corruption even follows Celestial Exalted into future incarnations of their Essence, though their successors do not begin their lives as Infernal Exalted. Instead, these unfortunate souls must take a five-point version of the Flaw Throwback (see p. 41) in which their Essence Nature is a Follower seeking slavery with the Yozi. Exalted can fight this siren song, but the temptation remains until they die. Each subsequent incarnation reduces the value of the Throwback by two points until the taint wears off completely or one of the Chosen falls into the damnation of her forbear.

Fortunately for Creation, very few Exalted even know this Charm exists, and fewer still may visit Malfeas to undergo the change. Knowing about the benefits of life as an akuma requires a difficulty 6 Intelligence + Occult roll. Knowing the *price* is difficulty 8.

JUST SAY NO?

As with every other option and facet of the character creation process, Storytellers should not feel obligated to allow akuma or other forms of Exalted God-Blooded into their games simply because they exist. The rules as written provide notable disadvantages to hybrid characters in the form of reduced starting Charms and experience penalties. For the record, these surcharges are cumulative with those imposed by any Wyld mutations. This is a stiff price to pay and more than fair given that "pure" Exalted will inevitably surpass their hybrid cousins over the course of a series. Then again, there are good reasons to limit playable hybrids or ban them outright. These beings are extremely rare, after all, and their presence adds a level of complexity with which Storytellers may feel uncomfortable. Then too, some players may fall into the trap of thinking an improbable juxtaposition of birth can substitute for lack of a detailed character concept and history. Ultimately, every game and situation is different. Storytellers must do what they feel is best for their games on a case-by-case basis. Players should respect these decisions and remember that the Storyteller is the final authority.

NOTABLE GOD-BLOODED

Less distinguished and powerful than the Exalted, some God-Blooded nonetheless find recognition as heroes and greatness in their own right. The following represent

a mere sampling of the most active children of divinity in the Age of Sorrows.

FOUNTAIN OF TEARS AND LAUGHTER

The island of Alahi lies in the hot Southwestern seas, a sleeping volcano shrouded in lush jungle. A lake fills the caldera now, and a river flows down from lake to sea. All beasts and people drink of this river, and none may die beside it, for that is the will of Namrea, goddess of the lake. She is the only source of potable water, and so, all life is hers. Those who earn her wrath do not drink, and Alahi reclaims their water for her own. She does not care what the people of her island do, so long as no woman comes to her lake and blood does not defile her river. She does not mind the young men who visit her with gourds and prayers, seeking to dip their ewers for the price of her lust. She savors them and takes their seed to make her offspring. Only one such child attends her at a time, and she loves each until they grow too old to serve. Then, she takes them into the depths of herself, and they lie still, that their water joins hers once more. Every child is the Fountain of Tears and Laughter, and every child conveys her will to the six tribes of Alahi.

The current Fountain of Tears and Laughter is quite old, even past his time. But a challenge confronts Namrea that demands action, and she cannot afford to train another. A Lunar Exalt came to her island from the sea and drank unbidden from her waters. He cast down her temple and stole prayers with demands of worship. And even though he has gone away, the people of Alahi fear him and pray to him from a cairn of stones raised to his honor. Namrea feels herself drying now, and she fears as she has not done before. She must have prayers, or she will become a mere spring once more, and so, the Fountain of Tears and Laughter goes among the people bearing wrath and warnings. They laugh at him now and scorn his prophecies. They throw stones. But he loves his mother, and he will see them all punished for shaming her.

JOYOUS GIFT, DAUGHTER OF MARA

Joyous Gift was born many years ago, given to a grieving widow by Mara, the Eater of Souls. Her mother wisely fled the town she called home when she first felt the stirring in her womb, fearing for herself and her unborn child. She traveled many leagues to Great Forks and chose the life of a harlot, for she had been prosperous once and would not stoop to becoming a common field worker. Joyous Gift lived up to her name at first, and her mother loved her dearly. But this love faded with the years, for Joy was a constant reminder of her mother's blasphemy. So it was that the young girl found herself alone on the streets of Great Forks when her mother married a young craftsman.

Joy knew only one skill and followed her mother into harlotry that she might live. Her clientele grew as she did, for she indiscriminately took men and women and gods to her bed. They all admired her lush curves and black hair and the striking blue eyes of Mara's legacy. As a grown woman, Joy craves gods most and accepts only token payment from them. They alone know her for what she is. It amuses them to ravish the child of their enemy, to hate her as they savagely love her. Conquering that disgust with passion drives Joy now. And if, for a moment, her customers long for her and forget their revulsion, then she can forget that she is a daughter of demons in the City of Temples.

Such desperation drove Joy to kill for Ribbons of Sorrow, a local god of slavery and courtier of the Three. She killed because he looked into her eyes without hate. And she killed again, for a glance, for a kiss. He swears to take her as his daughter if she serves him well. He promises the Blessing that will anoint her as a God-Blood of his line. He promises this in her bed with hot kisses, and she believes his lies. He cannot change her nature, any more than he can change dirt into jade. But he delights in his game and yearns for the day when he will crush her with the truth. He believes she will shatter, and this thought pleases him. But he is wrong, for Mara's blood runs true. One day, Joy will know his lies, and Ribbons of Sorrow will suffer for it.

MOYA LEAFDANCER, REAPER OF SHADES

The most infamous exorcist and slayer of hungry ghosts in the Scavenger Lands is an unassuming young woman of waif-like fragility and unsurpassing beauty. Moya originally hails from the village of Graybark along the western border of the Haltan Republic, but she long ago left the trees of her homeland and has not seen them since. Once, she thought to be a shaman as her mother was and her grandfather before her, but this, too, she has forsaken. Only the hunt matters. Only her vengeance matters.

In her childhood, she knew the love of her parents and especially her father, the honored ancestor Iron Petals, who founded her lineage of shamans 12 generations ago. He loved his daughter above all things, and she loved him as only the Half-Dead can. But this idyllic — if macabre — childhood was not to last. On her 12th birthday, Moya awoke to find her mother brutally slaughtered and no sign of her father. The marks of a hungry ghost were clear to the girl's supernatural senses, and she vowed revenge. Since that day, she has never known peace or joy, but only the cold fervor of the hunt. Her quarry has eluded her for over six years, taunting her with new victims in every village and town, but always steering away from cities. In the course of her hunt, she has laid dozens of hungry ghosts to rest and made a name for herself.

What Moya does not know and could not bear to know is that she is the source of her own misery. Every night, her lower soul rises in search of blood, wandering as in a living nightmare to wreak her repressed grief and wrath upon the world. It was Moya who slew her mother and cast her father into Oblivion, and it is Moya who kills again and again even as she unwittingly atones with her unceasing hunt.

RABBIT

Rabbit remembers being loved, though not by whom. She knows she was abandoned but has no idea when or why this occurred. For Rabbit, the Undercity of Nexus is the womb that cradled her and the mother who bore her, and she has intimate knowledge of the myriad corridors running beneath the Firewinder and Nighthammer districts of the city. The subterranean community of the "sunless folk" absorbed the nameless little girl, nicknamed her Rabbit for her wispy blonde pallor and prominent front teeth and fit her seamlessly into the intricate workings of their starless world.

The awkward girl showed a unique knack for information gathering, and her almost intuitive ability to locate objects, people or information earned her a large rank of clientele, first among the sunless folk and eventually among the denizens of the Nexus above. The girl welcomes all who pay her fee, from beggars and merchants to Exalted, such as the Solar gang leader Crow the Boy. Oddly, those who seek Rabbit from beyond the Undercity frequently leave with the information they sought but only the vaguest memory of the source. Any returning for future exchanges may remember at most to ask for the pale, dark-eyed girl. The sunless folk point the way and smile smugly over their oft-forgotten treasure.

While Rabbit can and usually will provide a wide font of knowledge, it comes at a price. Many clients can purchase information with a sparkling gem or a handful of coin, but some secrets have a higher cost. In the dark that knows no stars, Rabbit barter her most obscure lore for glittering shards of fallen meteors, which she cannot use but covets almost obsessively without knowing why.

Though Rabbit does not remember her, Rabbit's mother never lost sight of her only child. A Sidereal Exalt of the Bronze Faction, she bore her daughter in shameful secrecy, knowing the child was necessary to fulfill a destiny that has yet to completely reveal itself. Believing herself an orphan, Rabbit subtly gathers the lore that will serve her mother's greater purpose when this destiny comes to fruition.

SNOW-FALLING-FROM-CLEAR-SKY

The frozen wastelands of the North see many passionate interludes between locals and the merchants of Guild caravans. Snow-Falling-from-Clear-Sky's father thought nothing of taking the exotic trader to his bed, wanting only brief respite from the cold in the warm arms of a young woman. If he could not remember afterward which caravan she traveled with or even what she looked like, he was untroubled and gave it no mind. Three years later, he found a fur-wrapped bundle screaming on his doorstep, a message hastily calligraphed across the toddler's forehead, "Take it!"

Snow-Falling-from-Clear-Sky began to manifest signs of his mixed heritage at an early age, and his father toiled relentlessly to keep his son's nature secret. The boy had a habit of appearing suddenly in strange places, often quite far from where he had last been seen. His father made excuses for the peculiar behavior, but Snow-Falling seemed to revel in disturbing and even frightening people. The more his father tried to control him, the more the boy delighted in tormenting him with tricks of glamour. As Snow-Falling approached adolescence, his moods became more erratic, swinging wildly between bliss and sullen anger. The tighter his father's boundaries, the more Snow-Falling openly rebelled, until his father sickened from the strain of hiding his son's chaotic excesses. When his father wept, Snow-Falling laughed.

The truth finally came to light when one of the prettier village girls caught Snow-Falling-from-Clear-Sky's eye. Though he was handsome, his advances were repeatedly spurned, for the girl sensed something unnatural and dangerous in him. One evening, he caught her alone at the outskirts of the village and pleaded with her to return his affections. When she turned him away again, Snow-Falling grew angry and then cajoling. He begged her for a single kiss, one perfect tear running down his face, and she consented out of pity. The villagers found her the next morning wandering the snow drifts, eyes dead and vacant as she whispered one phrase over and over, "Just one kiss... it's so cold."

More fae than man now, Snow-Falling-from-Clear-Sky wanders the North in search of innocents to sate his newfound hunger. Stories of his predations have slowly begun to spread throughout the Haslanti League, though none have guessed he is only a half-breed.

STORYTELLING THE CHILDREN OF DIVINITY

Living on the threshold between the edgy danger of heroic mortals and the majestic splendor of the Exalted, the God-Blooded present a wide variety of possibilities and challenges for Storytellers and players alike. Their diver-

sity alone is staggering. Even characters of the same heritage may have radically different capabilities and upbringings, let alone the variance between different types. Managing this diversity requires an attention to the intrinsic themes of each heritage and the God-Blooded as a whole.

GOD-BLOODED

The descendents of gods and elementals are the "default" God-Blooded of the setting, more numerous by far than any other heritage. As such, their themes are the themes of the God-Blooded as a group, intertwining the dichotomies of duty and power versus mortal frailty and the chance to live a peaceful ordinary life. The gods and elementals of Creation exist in a labyrinthine hierarchy riddled with corruption, with needlessly obtuse rules bent or broken outright by the strong to oppress the weak. The very existence of a God-Blood may violate Celestial law or fulfill it as a privilege won through bribes or traded favors.

God-Blooded live between the worlds of spirit and man, part of both and, yet, fully belonging to neither. They have few rights in the spirit courts, yet their parentage places them beyond the reach of many mortal laws. On the one hand, the path of pious familial duty leads to unimaginable rewards tainted by the yoke of informal slavery. On the other, the sweet and simple joys of mortal life beckon. For God-Blooded who grow up among mortals, life is no less complex. An abandoned Half-Spirit may seek out his parent and become hopelessly ensnared by her games and politics or discover opportunities for heroism the likes of which he could never have imagined.

DEMON-BLOODED

The progeny of the Demon Realm face a magnified form of the alienation experienced by their God-Blooded peers. In Creation, they are rejected and hated for the accident of their parentage. In Malfeas, they are simply hated by a society founded on pain and lies for the sake of pain and lies. All but the rarest and most unlikely Demon-Blooded have no home, few friends and countless enemies. Their parents are callous and cruel fiends touched by alien malice as the descendents or even second-generation souls of the imprisoned Yozis. Add to this that most Yozi-Kin live under the pitiless scrutiny and vengeful lash of their masters, be they unscrupulous sorcerers or their own infernal parents. Too often, it is a thankless and tiresome existence for which an ignoble death marks the sole point of respite in a tortured life. Of course, life doesn't *have* to be this bleak. Some free Demon-Blooded rebel against their parentage as ronin demon hunters and exorcists, while others take up employment as mercenaries or advisors to sorcerers.

GHOST-BLOODED

If Demon-Blooded have little hope of escaping their suffering save through death, then the Ghost-Blooded have no escape. They begin their fragile half-lives under the shadow of inevitability and await the grim certainty of undeath to claim them forever. It is their tragedy to become their parents, to lose flesh and the warmth of mortal feelings for the cold and shallow passions of the Restless Dead.

Not all realize this truth, and not all who do look upon their destiny so negatively. Among ancestor cults, the Half-Dead serve as honored liaisons between life and afterlife. They look forward to their own deaths as a holy ascension, postponing demise only because their ancestors need living hands and eyes to protect their interests. Life is difficult, but it carries privilege in the form of wealth and lore and veneration. The Deathlords offer even greater rewards for loyal service, employing many Ghost-Blooded officers in their armies and retaining others as spies and assassins.

Perhaps more than any other heritage, Ghost-Blooded cannot hope for a normal life. A few *do* hope and seek escape from their shadowed existence. Such an escape may be metaphorical and cathartic, the indulgence of food or drink or sex. Or in other cases, Ghost-Blooded actually run away and hope their destiny cannot find them. This almost always fails, but hope is all many have, and sometimes, hope breaks the chains of fate. All too often, however, renegades give up and give in because hope is hard and nihilism is all too easy. Death follows despair, and perhaps Oblivion after, completing the tragedy the Half-Dead lacked the faith to resist.

HALF-CASTE

In the grand game of powers and principalities vying for Creation, the Half-Caste serve as valued pawns of their forbears. They are destined to stand unacknowledged at the right hand of greatness, dim shadows of glory. Some cannot accept this lesser station and struggle heroically in hopes of Exaltation that never comes. These are restless heroes for whom nothing is ever enough and no good they achieve ever brings satisfaction. They wander beloved wherever they go without appreciating what they do have and how much better their lives are than those of most mortals. In their own way, they are no less spoiled than the pampered Golden Children of the First Age.

Still other Half-Caste accept their place and find happiness or at least satisfaction in what they are. They accept that they will not overcome the faerie princes or turn aside the vanguard of the Deathlords or the hordes of the Yozis, and they accept that it would be suicide to try. These are tasks for the Chosen. But that does not mean the Half-Caste cannot hunt the hobgoblins or

zombies or infernal cultists marauding villages too poor and insignificant for the Exalted to notice. They can champion the forgotten.

FAE-BLOODED

Although they wear mortal flesh and mortal souls, the Fae-Blooded exist as caricatures of the human condition. Exactly how this caricature plays out depends in large part on the character and the direction of the story. On the one hand, Changelings embody freedom. They can do anything, or feel they can. With the right Charms, they can bend reality itself to their will, and so, they don't ever have to take no for an answer. Fae-Blooded can exploit this liberty to become decadent Ravagers or seek to share the gift of possibility with a world too often locked into stifling mediocrity. As muses, they can inspire greatness and champion dreams undreamt and hopes unfulfilled. As tricksters, they can spread comedy to a world that takes itself far too seriously and deflate the egos of the proud and mighty. As noble rogues, they can bring down the establishments of oppression and encourage sedition by artful example as a local legend.

In darker stories involving Fae-Blooded, freedom becomes madness. Possibility itself transmutes to fear as all the rules break down and any sense of familiarity or security dissolves. Without rules, there can be no relationships, no law, nothing to stave off the disintegration of society or to protect against the monsters of nightmare. The Fae-Blooded may be such monsters themselves, willing agents of the Wyld. Most terrible though are the harbingers, who do not mean to trail the chaos that follows them. For these wretches, passion is obsession. They cannot help themselves. They bear the seed of anarchy in their half-inchoate souls, and all they touch crumbles. When their own sanity finally shatters, they laugh and laugh and laugh at the grand cosmic joke they finally understand, and they become terrible beyond all imagining save their own.

INHERITANCE

If heritage determines the genre of a God-Blooded series, Inheritance determines its tone. It is for this reason that Storytellers must determine the common rating of this Background prior to character creation, since the decision has such a profound impact on the kinds of stories that can be told.

LOW INHERITANCE

Characters with low levels of Inheritance rise only marginally above heroic mortals. If they face powerful magical opposition, their paltry birthrights will not save them from a brutal and violent end. This doesn't mean they cannot fight, but it does change the scale of combat and cinematic action scenes. They cannot take on Fair

Folk nobles or Exalted except in large numbers with the certainty of mass casualties, but they can certainly take a stand against other mortals and demigods. Likewise, their feats may not reach the consistent grandeur available to Exalted, but that does not prevent them from attempting breathtaking stunts when they must.

This kind of gritty game allows players to see the glory and terror of **Exalted** from the ground up, where Dragon-Blooded are the Princes of the Earth, the little gods are not nearly so little and the Solar Exalted are figures of dread straight out of mythology. Properly handled, such a change of pace may prove an effective means of reinvigorating jaded players used to the near invulnerability of high-experience Exalted. Beware, however. Other players may find this sudden drop in power frustrating and boring.

HIGH INHERITANCE

As Inheritance climbs, the tone of a series approaches Exalted levels of over-the-top action and drama. It's not quite the same, of course. Even mighty God-Blooded receive less overall power than the least Terrestrial outcaste, and their inflated experience costs for magical powers keeps such Traits from growing as quickly. Such a style of play might be half-humorously termed "**Exalted Lite**" for involving the usual themes and mood on a less dramatic scale.

STORYTELLER CHARACTERS

The various heritages of God-Blooded may appear in any game and serve any number of functions. However, they tend to fulfill one of the following roles, particularly in games with Exalted protagonists:

TEACHERS

A God-Blooded might seem an unassuming tutor for one of the Chosen, but this is not always the case. Elder God-Blooded have certainly been around the block a lot longer than new Exalted, and they invariably know secrets and more than a few tricks of their own. It is true that the Chosen will ultimately outstrip such mentors if they apply themselves, but the theme of surpassing one's teachers is a poignant part of the hero's journey in much epic literature.

AIDES AND ALLIES

A God-Blooded lieutenant makes a powerful second-in-command for a mercenary company or militia. Abyssal Exalted are known to ride with Ghost-Blooded squires among their usual retinue of nemissaries, and Lunar Exalted certainly rely on their beastmen hordes in raids upon civilized lands. Less subserviently, a God-Blooded contact might provide an insider view of a spirit court's deadly politics or provide the secret weakness of her parent's chief rival.

ADVERSARIES

The final use of God-Blooded will be as antagonists. Though they are never extras, the God-Blooded simply cannot compete with Exalted in a fair duel. As a result, God-Blooded opponents must choose the field of battle carefully and stack the odds in their own favor, perhaps by shifting the conflict into the political arena or the guerilla warfare of dematerialization and possessed loved ones. Dramatic possibilities abound for a God-Blood to seek revenge upon the Exalt who unthinkingly slew or displaced her parent or for a defeated Ghost-Blood to haunt his enemies long after his demise.



For 27 years, he labored at the forge, like a boggan hammering out pretties for an elf prince. He beat and peened under the glowering eyes of an overseer, but the things he forged were not beautiful trinkets, they were the chains of ships, to tether them at anchor. He cleaned them and peened them and broke the mold-flashing from them with a hammer and chisel. As he hammered at the anchor chains, the slave would often glance at the chain around his own ankle and felt himself a collaborator.

As slaves went, the smith's lot was good.

The slave had once been a scavenger lord, or at least a journeyman at the scavenger's trade, before a youthful drinking bout at the wrong tavern in Thorns led to his kidnaping and enslavement. Now, he was a thrall in the South, and he tried to think very little of his time outside this place. Taken as a young man, for the first five years, he had dreamed of nothing but freedom. For five years after that, he dreamed of nothing but vengeance on his captors. Then for ten years, he strove to remember nothing but the memories of his childhood and youth. For the seven years since then, he has thought only of the secret contentments slaves find in their confinement.

The man who had been a scavenger lord was amused by how little the family who owned him knew about the workshop they operated. For example, they knew that slave labor made stronger chains through sympathetic magic, but they did not know the sigils that one might scribe on an item to strengthen it further. Like so many is the Second Age, ritual sufficed for them in place of understanding. For the first ten years of his servitude, Hawk had held it to be a private satisfaction. After that, he began to use his wisdom to better his lot and sold his secrets to his owners in exchange for lighter duties. It was during this period that he was made a trustee. People called him by the name he'd had when he was free ("Hawk"), and he had a room of his own in the workshop. They even let him keep knives and work small bits of metal, though he wasn't allowed to sell them or to have any money. That suited the slave who had been Hawk when he was free. He had no need of money while he did not have his freedom.

All his youth, all his middle years, even the vigorous wisdom of his 40s had been taken from him and put into the chains he made. The slavery and the magic took his life and made it into his work. His fingers were gnarled, and his skin a leather map of burn scars. His back was hunched and his ears were dim from the incessant din of the forge he managed.

One day, Hawk appeared in the courtyard with a strange metal assemblage he'd been tinkering with for some time. It was all of cloth and scrap iron, and most of the workers had thought it was one of the strange junk sculptures the foreman made now and again.

It was not. From it, he took a pair of long-handled cutters whose jaws glittered with adamant teeth 17 years in the scrounging, and he snipped the hobble chain between his feet neatly in two. Casually reversing them, he snipped the chain off of his neck, and two of the young assistant slaves, seeing what he was about, walked out of the courtyard and went off to shirk their duties so they could claim not to have been present. Better the beating of disobedience than the execution of escape.

The slave-smith touched something on his metal contraption, and watched ten years of secret manufacture, testing and prayer fulfill itself as the device's folded wings deployed.

And then, grasping it firmly by the proper handles and taking care that he aimed into the wind, he flew away, Hawk once more.

Some said he was an Anathema. Others said he was possessed by a god. A few who knew him well claimed he was just crafty. Whatever the explanation, he was never seen in those parts again.

Over the next five years, seven ships were lost in the South due to faulty anchor chains.



CHAPTER THREE MORTAL THAUMATURGY

Although few Exalted or God-Blooded consider thaumaturgy to be a particularly powerful tool — especially against the Exalted — many consider it to be a particularly useful one. For those not blessed by

the gods in one fashion or another, thaumaturgy, while it cannot level the playing field between mortals and Exalted, is certainly the most powerful form of magic available.

THAUMATURGY?

Thaumaturgy is what had previously been referred to as mortal sorcery — the school of sciences, magics, summonings and other minor sorceries and spells that mortal magicians — alternately called thaumaturges, witches, exorcists, alchemists and enchanters (among other titles) — study in lieu of Charms and the powerful spells of the three circles.

Why the change? To avoid confusion — particularly when using the material contained in this book. An Exalt might use sorcery to summon a demon, or he might rely on his knowledge of the Art of Summoning instead. In one case, he is using a spell and his connection to aeons old pacts. In the other case, he is appealing to the demon's inner desires and wishes. One is easier and perhaps less costly. The other is more sure and safer.

As a result, the game rules will always use the term sorcery, or sorcerer, to refer to an Exalt or other Essence channeler using the three circles of sorcery — normally Terrestrial Circle spells. The term thaumaturgy will always refer to spells or rituals usable by mortals (and many other beings in Creation). Individuals in Creation may not be so clear in their use of nouns, and non-sorcerers generally don't care if they use the proper word.

HISTORY

Mortals learned the basics of thaumaturgy not from the gods or the Exalted, but from the Dragon Kings who held dominion over them before the rise of the Exalted. When first granted dominion over the newly created mortals, the Dragon Kings were at something of a loss. Humans were too weak and puny to be used as soldiers, too willful and proud to make good slaves and too short-lived to be good servants. They barely mastered even the simplest of tasks or rituals before expiring.

Dragon Kings tried for centuries to teach their servants the Ten Paths but were largely unsuccessful. Whatever effects the mortals were eventually able to master often bore little relation to the well-ordered structure of the Paths. Eventually, the Dragon Kings all but gave up, with only a handful of savants continuing their obstinate experiments in educating the uneducable.

Bands of escaped humans often included subjects of these experiments, who used what bits of knowledge they had to help their new compatriots. Experimentation and research slowly built on these beginnings, creating the fundamental basis for the Arts and Sciences. It was inevitable that students of these magics were eventually captured

by the Dragon Kings, who quickly uncovered the humans' new talents.

While the Dragon Kings were underwhelmed by the idea that humans had stumbled upon a source of power without Dragon King aid and guidance (except in the roughest sense), this disdain was outweighed in large part by the thought of new fields of study for them to explore and conquer. Human magic was neither orderly, nor well-definable, something of an affront to Dragon King sensibilities, but noted savants nonetheless worked with (mostly) willing subjects to try and aid the mortals in refining these new-found fields of study. A handful of Dragon Kings deigned to directly study the Arts and Sciences as well, but this practice was relatively uncommon.

The Arts quickly became an important part of mortal society. Under Dragon King tutelage, the study of thaumaturgy flourished — a skilled thaumaturge was a much more useful servant than an untrained mortal, and the Dragon Kings surmised that, while a thaumaturge could perhaps defeat a Dragon King in combat, it was unlikely. For a time, skilled practitioners of the Arts were the most powerful mortals, highly valued servants and aides to the Dragon Kings. Known as *amiliki*, or adepts, they were respected by the Dragon Kings and served as their voices in mortal society.

The bargain offered by the gods and the coming of the Exalts largely eclipsed the *amiliki*'s power and status but also brought freedom from the (mostly benevolent) tyranny of the Dragon Kings, and many Exalted were themselves *amiliki* before their Exaltation and continued to study the Arts. Thaumaturgy's prominence amongst mortals was reinforced in the early days of the Solar Deliberative and was nearly as common as mathematics — most farmers could bless their fields or whistle up rain when the crops demanded it.

As the Great Curse took stronger hold on the members of the Deliberative, suspicion and distrust of mortal magicians grew and led to increasing regimentation and control over the teaching of thaumaturgy. Various excuses were made — at first, it was described as necessary reform, to allow the various spirit courts some respite from the continual interference and realigning of directives in the face of mortal interference. Later, it was explained that these were important restrictions on possibly dangerous knowledge. In the final days of the Deliberative, most of the Solars simply described it as keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of children too immature and weak-willed to use them responsibly.

Many mortals went along with — and even agreed with — these edicts, seeing them as necessary restrictions on powers too great for them to handle. Others, as access to training in thaumaturgy was restricted first to the talented, then to the talented and influential and finally

only to those deemed trustworthy — and limited even then — saw no reason for the Deliberative to place convoluted restrictions and licensing requirements on what was, in the end, relatively minor magics. Some, including a handful of Celestials and larger groups of Terrestrials, were determined to continue teaching those who could be taught. The first thaumaturgic secret societies date to this time period, as do the first examples of “purloined letter”-style primers and manuscripts, sorcerous knowledge hidden in seemingly innocuous documents. Some thaumaturges moved far from the centers of civilization and began researching methods of enchantment and spell-casting that didn’t rely on easily detectable methods.

The Dragon-Blooded recruited heavily amongst renegade thaumaturges and disgruntled students in the years and decades after the opening attacks of the Usurpation, training them in Arts and rituals useful to soldiers. These first gunzosha warriors, equipped with special weapons and trained in countering guerilla warfare, sabotage and assassination, were the spine of mortal combat units used against the Solars and marched in the vanguards alongside the Terrestrial Exalted. While suffering fearsome losses, they were often effective in delaying Solar forces until the Terrestrials could unleash some weapon or ambush.

The early days of the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate saw a lifting — or at least relaxation — of many of the bans on learning most forms of thaumaturgy, but training in its arts, and especially mastery, was never as common as in the First Age. Too many thaumaturges had been lost, as had much knowledge, and the practice of thaumaturgy slowly declined, although it never disappeared, and it was always possible to find a thaumaturge when needed.

Increasing strife and unrest in the Shogunate led to increased restrictions on how thaumaturgy could be used. Fueled in part by several disasters and revolts centered around thaumaturges, these crackdowns merely managed to again drive the study of thaumaturgy underground. In many cases, those interested in learning thaumaturgy were forced to make bargains with dark entities to gain access to power or got it without the wisdom to use it properly.

The Contagion killed forever any hope of keeping thaumaturgy a secret. While vast libraries of knowledge were consumed by the Wyld, others were dispersed — often by the Dragon-Blooded librarians assigned to protect them — to prevent them being lost forever. Gunzosha warriors were dispatched to all corners of Creation to try and stem the tide of the Wyld, and after the war, many remained where they were, beginning new lives — and teaching those who showed talent. Many rituals and minor spells were handed down from master craftsmen to apprentice, until the reasons *why* one did things a certain way was lost. All that was retained was the practical knowledge that forging a blade in the proscribed fashion resulted in

superior cutting knives and that doing it any other way resulted in useless junk.

MYSTICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS

A wide variety of associations of thaumaturges have arisen throughout Creation. Some are extremely old, remnants of First Age schools or alliances that have survived and handed down their traditions through history, if in an increasingly muddled and confused fashion. Others are much more recent in provenance — many secret societies last only a generation or two before fading into history or splitting off into mutually hostile lodges, the victim of internecine warfare and conflicts between incompatible goals.

ORGANIZATION SIZE

Mystical organizations can range in size from a handful of thaumaturges, their students and assorted servants and guards to the massive organized schools in the largest cities, with dozens or even hundreds of thaumaturges and possibly thousands of servants, aides, guards, teachers of mundane subjects and others.

Small: Five to ten thaumaturges and students, with maybe a dozen aides, guards and servants — mystical groups are the most common in the Second Age. For every group that dissolves in a haze of bitter resentment and distrust, another is formed when a master’s students themselves take on students to teach in their master’s style. Most small groups are centered around a master thaumaturge, his former students and their current students — others are formed around reasons of common training at a larger school, a shared childhood or some common purpose. Although small groups can be wealthy and even influential in a local area, their power rarely extends beyond a single locale. Their influence normally lacks reach, and their fortunes are often closely tied to the well-being of some larger non-magical association — a village or town, a small city, a kingdom, a trading guild, etc.

Medium: Mid-sized organizations are normally the outgrowth of a small group — as it gains membership, the group shifts in organizational structure to accommodate more members. Most mid-sized groups range in size from 10 to 30 thaumaturges and will normally have dozens of hangers-on, servants and soldiers. These groups are typically geographical in foundation — most of the thaumaturges of Puyo belong to the Society of the Enlightened Masters of Secret Arts in Puyo, for example. Mid-sized organizations can be the most stable — they are large enough to weather setbacks and to survive minor internal struggles but small enough that they are unlikely to fragment into a dozen smaller groups during some succession crisis.



Large: Large mystic organizations typically have dozens of members and may have hundreds of associates, assistants, lackeys and servants at their behest. Most of them are fairly wealthy — it takes resources to keep such a large group going. While most large organizations are public, a surprising number are still hidden or secret — it is not impossible to keep a conspiracy of dozens working in silence, especially with the aid of thaumaturgy to keep them that way.

There are only a handful of massive thaumaturgical organizations in Creation, most of them detailed below (though Storytellers, as always, should feel free to create their own). A massive mystical organization may have hundreds of thaumaturges in its membership and will typically have dozens more cultists, hangers-on, militia or militant brigade members or servants for each thaumaturge. There is usually no attempt to keep such a large group a secret, unless it is widely spread out (in which case it is more akin to a large number of small and mid-sized groups linked by infrequent communications and a common purpose). The infrastructure necessary to run such a group obviates any hope of anonymity. Large groups typically need some strong reason or purpose to hold them together — if it is easy for the group to fragment, it typically will within a generation or two, driven apart by internecine politics.

TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

Mystic organizations are invariably created for some reason, even if that reason is as simple as a thaumaturge desiring some students to help clean up around the laboratory. As an organization expands and grows over the decades, the reason for its existence can grow or change as well. An organization that starts as a simple association of like-minded thaumaturges exchanging information and recipes can shift in response to changing membership, local politics and events into a political group seeking reform, an alliance of power-seekers or a tight-knit and intrusive “extended family”-type political structure.

CAMARADERIE

The individuals that make up this group are there, basically, because they are friends or, at least, compatriots. While they may have other goals or reasons for allying themselves into a semiformal organization of some kind, the main reason is simple friendship. Organizations based on bonds of friendship rarely last longer than the lifespan of the members. Even if new generations of members are added to replace the old, the bonds formed are rarely as strong as those of the initial members, and such groups eventually drift apart, even if the individual members remain in contact.

DEFENSE

There are few places in Creation where the use of thaumaturgy is banned — but many places where its practice is highly restricted. This kind of restriction nearly always brings with it small clusters of students willing to risk the repercussions in the pursuit of lost or forbidden knowledge, banded together in the belief that there is safety in numbers. In other places, those who have some trace of sorcerous knowledge band together to help provide for the common defense, using their powers to defend their homes. Such groups are nearly always small and often short-lived.

POLITICAL

Some groups that ally together for reasons of politics are interested in seizing political power for themselves. Others are merely interested in keeping their position in society secure, in working to maintain good relations with local rulers, in influencing nobles and powerful groups such as the Guild to look upon the group favorably, etc. Such groups are nearly always publicly known, but not always — subtly played, the game of influence and favor-brokering can be a nearly invisible one, at least for a time. Hidden political groups are usually fairly small, while public political thaumaturgical societies can be reasonably large and influential.

ECONOMIC

There can be no doubt that thaumaturgy can be a profitable trade and vocation, and a number of well-organized guilds, trade associations and craftsmen's brotherhoods have sprung up throughout Creation. Many — though not all — are directly associated with the Guild, providing finished goods of an enchanted or alchemical nature for trade. Those that are not are either influenced by the Guild or have found some more powerful — or at least more locally influential — ally or patron with which to align themselves. Such organizations normally either fall prey to some Guild machination or implode from the pressure of dealing with Guild political maneuvering. Only a handful last more than a generation as independent entities.

POWER

Political groups are often interested in becoming the power behind the throne — groups associated for the purpose of gathering power are rarely so munificent in sharing power with someone outside their organization, even if only a figurehead. These groups wish to rule directly, as theocracies, councils of thaumaturgy or other power-sharing schemes. This is the fundamental flaw with all groups associated directly around the acquisition of power. It is rare to find such an organization where the individuals are willing to share power, when each one

could seize it for herself. Most of these organizations quickly splinter — sometimes within years — or destroy themselves with infighting and political corruption.

CULT

Cults are typically centered around a single powerful figure or a small circle of individuals. Depending on the exact nature of the cult, this could be a single god (or Exalt), a thaumaturge or a small cadre of aligned gods or elementals — a large cult surrounds the three gods of Great Forks, for example. Cults often cycle from periods of prominence through periods of relative to total obscurity, but so long as the central figure lives, there is always a chance of them springing up again, either inadvertently or because of that being's machinations.

INFERNAL CULT

The cults of the Yozi-worshippers can be found spread throughout Creation — anywhere there are the disaffected, the bored, the jaded or the easily duped, the Yozi find tools to suit their purposes. Most such cults are small and highly secretive. Whether it is a handful of spoiled nobles seeking new thrills or the mining slaves of a cruel master dancing their vengeance into reality, no groups want to be seen as aligned with Demon Princes, lest they be destroyed by the Wyld Hunt or civil authorities.

AGE

Mystical organizations tend to be fairly short lived. While there are examples of cults that date back to before the Contagion, and the Cult of the Scarlet Empress has certainly been around nearly as long as the Realm itself, these are very much the exception, and most groups never see their first centennial. Either the reason for their existence fades, the group tumbles into obscurity, the school falls into disfavor or infighting and internecine rivalry splits the group into one or more factions, sometimes with spectacular results.

A notable exception to this tendency is in groups centered around some powerful individual — normally a god or Exalt, although elementals, demons and even powerful ghosts have cults that gather around them. Such groups have a degree of administrative stability that many others lack — and a central authority figure who can be appealed to in cases of disputes between senior members. This allows for a continuity and strength of organization that can extend for as long as the patron remains alive and interested.

SAMPLE ORGANIZATIONS

Below are a number of different mystical organizations, intended to give Storytellers examples of the kind of groups possible in the Second Age of Man.

MONKS OF THE IMMACULATE FAITH

Although not all Immaculate monks are skilled thaumaturges, many are, and most will have at least a basic understanding of the Arts of Warding and Exorcism. The Immaculate faith holds that mortal thaumaturgy was a gift from the Five Elemental Dragons, handed down to the monks to use for the betterment of mortals. For the most part, the Immaculates seek to be responsible stewards of this trust, using their gifts wisely. They are, however quite protective of their Arts, and study of thaumaturgy, particularly the Sciences, is supposedly highly regulated. In reality, knowledge of the least secrets (levels 1 and 2 of each Science, the Arts and one- to two-dot rituals) is not uncommon in the Realm, as with elsewhere — mortals are just more circumspect about it there.

THE CULT OF THE SCARLET EMPRESS

The Cult of the Scarlet Empress has no formal initiation, no entry rites, no set patterns of behavior — it is perhaps the loosest, and certainly the least formal, cult in Creation. Its patron, the Scarlet Empress herself, has vacillated between a tacit condoning — if not approval — of the cult, periods of harsh suppression and, most commonly, studied indifference. The Immaculate Order has also wavered between support and condemnation, most usually shifting when it suited the needs of the Gold Faction. The cult's rites and sacrifices have traditionally been informal, centered around personal combinations of those days people think are important to the Empress (wedding days, birthdates of important children, etc.) and sacrifices of those things thought precious to her. Since the Empress' disappearance, the cult has started to grow cohesive and more formal at a disturbing rate, as those who believe in her power gather to try and draw their patron saint back to solve the Realm's ills. More disturbing still are the nature of some of the rites and observances practiced — human sacrifices have been observed in a handful of cases, and magistrates have noted attacks (so far unsuccessful) on Dragon-Blooded

who were thought (rightly or not) to carry a direct lineage of blood from the Empress.

SORCERER-ASSISTANTS OF LOOKSHY

Lookshy's mastery of the sorcerous Arts extends beyond the Terrestrial Circle. Lookshy's Academy of Sorcery trains mortals in the Arts as well as it does the Dragon-Blooded, and every scale has at least one thaumaturge — albeit usually of only modest skill — in its ranks. The Lookshy approach to thaumaturgy is as pragmatic as its approach to most things. Most teaching is done with an eye toward battlefield applications, and most Lookshy thaumaturges are generalists with a range of lower-level rituals and formulas, rather than specialists in a single Art or Science. The exception to this rule are those mortals who work as assistants to the sorcerer-engineers, who are usually experts in the Arts of Warding and either Alchemy or Enchantment — or both. Lookshy counts hundreds of thaumaturges in its ranks, most of relatively low power).

THE CULT OF THE DARKNESS' UNSEEING EYE

The Cult of the Darkness' Unseeing Eye is one of the largest cults of Yozi-worshippers in Creation — in terms of area covered if not actual membership. Small cells of the cult are spread throughout the South, operating independently for the most part — few have much communication with other cells and, so, are unaware that they are part of a larger organization or believe they are part of some other cult or organization. Sondok, a Demon Lord of the Second Circle, can be very patient when she wants to be and is sometimes more clever than is needful. While spreading her cult so thin makes it harder to root out and destroy, it also weakens its response to any threat — the cult must always strike from the side because it never has the strength to confront an opponent directly.

ARCHETYPES

While no teaching technique known to mortal man can produce students who are perfectly alike, many thaumaturges can be fit into general molds.

Scavenger Lord

Although best-known, most famous and most common in the Scavenger Lands, the adventurers known as scavenger lords can be found nearly anywhere that there are relics of the First Age to be found — that is to say, nearly everywhere in Creation. Although not every scavenger lord is a thaumaturge, and in fact, few think of themselves primarily as wielders of thaumaturgy, nearly all of them have some diverse collection of tricks up their sleeves — rituals and tidbits of knowledge they have acquired over the decades. For most scavenger lords, thaumaturgy is a tool, a means after an end, rather than an end in itself. Raiding First Age tombs and ruins is hazardous work, but it would be even more so without the help of whatever magics a scavenger lord can uncover to aid him in his quest after glory and money.

Scavenger lords stress the physical and social aspects of their being as much as the mental — fast reactions and a good running speed are as essential as a strong memory and a quick mind. Few scavenger lords are so well-connected and powerful they can ignore the skills of bribery, judicious misapplication of the truth and the occasional bit of blackmail.

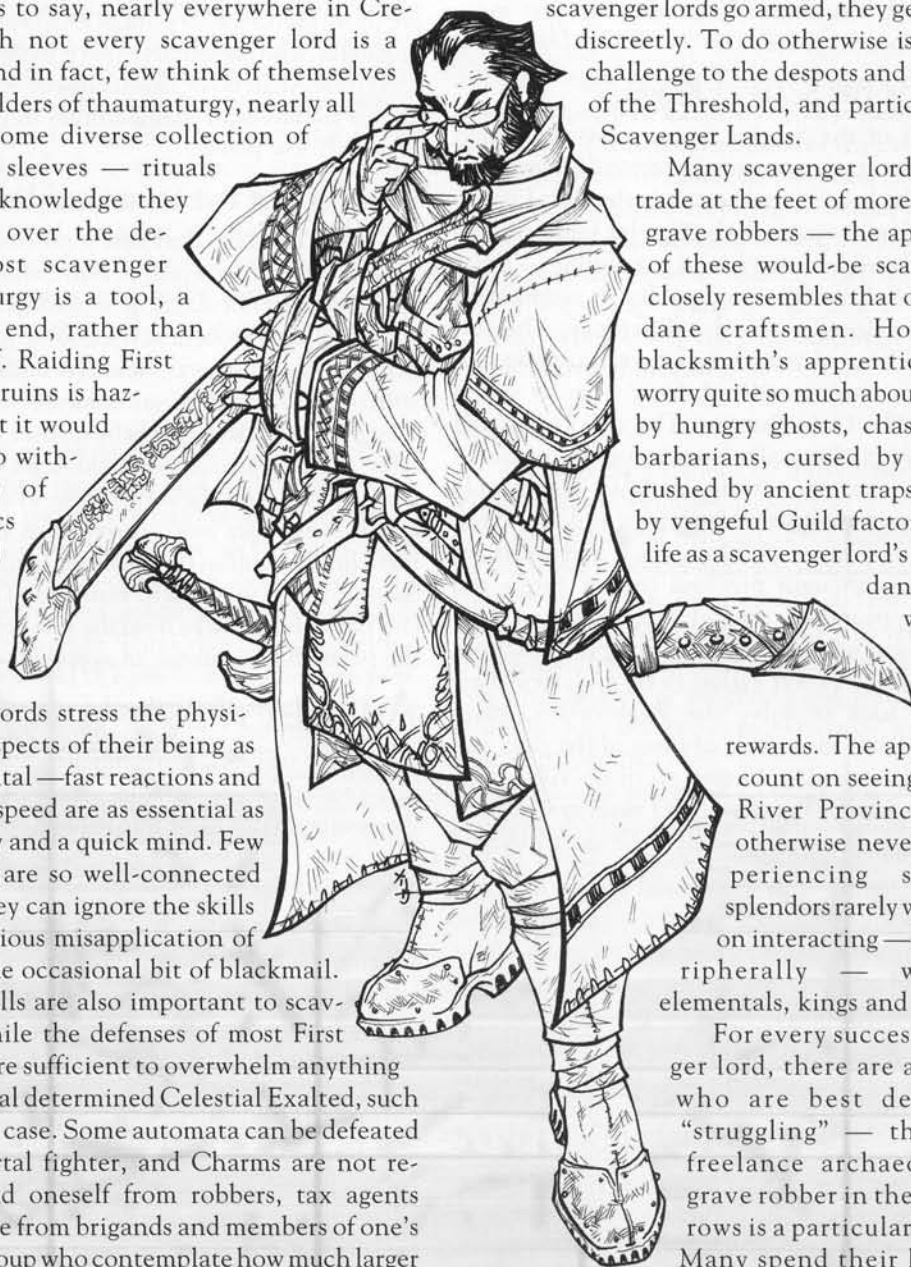
Fighting skills are also important to scavenger lords. While the defenses of most First Age structures are sufficient to overwhelm anything other than several determined Celestial Exalted, such is not always the case. Some automata can be defeated by a strong mortal fighter, and Charms are not required to defend oneself from robbers, tax agents indistinguishable from brigands and members of one's expeditionary group who contemplate how much larger

each slice would be if there were just a few less people getting one. However, discretion in such matters is advised, as many rulers keep the populace disarmed in order to cement their hold on power. While most scavenger lords go armed, they generally do so discreetly. To do otherwise is a dangerous challenge to the despots and highwaymen of the Threshold, and particularly of the Scavenger Lands.

Many scavenger lords learn their trade at the feet of more experienced grave robbers — the apprenticeship of these would-be scavenger lords closely resembles that of more mundane craftsmen. However, few blacksmith's apprentices have to worry quite so much about being eaten by hungry ghosts, chased by Wyld barbarians, cursed by little gods, crushed by ancient traps or enslaved by vengeful Guild factors. Although life as a scavenger lord's apprentice is dangerous — when it isn't interminably boring — it has its

rewards. The apprentice can count on seeing parts of the River Province he would otherwise never see, or experiencing sights and splendors rarely witnessed and on interacting — however peripherally — with gods, elementals, kings and Exalts.

For every successful scavenger lord, there are a half-dozen who are best described as “struggling” — the life of a freelance archaeologist and grave robber in the Age of Sorrows is a particularly hard one. Many spend their last years of



life as little more than soul-blasted relics themselves, half-ruined by some ancient defense system, Fair Folk marauder or vengeful ghost's curse. These tottering ruins struggle their way from town to town, bartering ruined trinkets or some half-remembered spell for a night in the stable, a bit to eat and some sake or beer.

Abilities: Awareness and Investigation are probably the two most important Abilities for scavenger lords — both for noticing important details and for discovering where those important details might lead. Larceny is a common Ability for scavenger lords, as are various combat Abilities — particularly Dodge, which is useful in avoiding ancient security measures and automatic defenses intent on slaying any hapless intruders. Various sorts of Craft can be incredibly useful, and the scavenger lord who skimps on Survival likely won't live to regret it. Social Abilities such as Bureaucracy, Linguistics, Socialize and Presence can be important as well — getting artifacts out of the

kingdom they were found in can be as difficult as getting them out of the tomb they've been hidden inside.

Backgrounds: Successful scavenger lords often have Reputation and/or Influence. Some have Backing or Mentors, and many will have near-permanent teams of mercenary soldiers, diggers, specialists and porters (bought with a combination of Henchmen, Followers, Allies and, possibly, Command). Contacts are certainly possible, and while Spies are unlikely, not all scavenger lords are daredevil adventurers skilled at derring-do, and a spymaster sitting in a web of contacts and agents is certainly not an impossible character concept. Artifact and Resources are naturals for the successful scavenger lord — and even unsuccessful ones may have one or two tricks up their sleeves.

Concepts: Adventuring scholar, archaeologist, grave robber, dealer in antiquities, scheming philosopher

Hold on a second.
Something here doesn't
look quite right — Duck!

Savant

Although the line between savant, shaman, witch and wise woman is exceedingly blurry even at the best of times, savants are known for their scholarly mien and methods of teaching, rather than any practical differences in their knowledge. Both a witch and a savant can heal wounds, but the savant's methods may be a bit more scientific — or at least alchemical — and the witch's more likely to involve summoning up a healing spirit and brewing some herbal tea.

Savants are formally trained in thaumaturgy — they attended one of the rare (but not unknown) universities or schools that teach it or apprenticed to a master thaumaturge to be taught his secrets. Usually, the first half-decade of an apprenticeship involves learning many secrets indeed — how to clean floors, chase away vermin, muck out cesspits and cook. With a good teacher, these lessons involve carefully hidden lessons — how to maintain a steady mind, patience, controlling the temperature on an uncertain stove (vital for proper alchemical heating) and preparing for a task ahead of time. With a poor master, it merely involves developing many muscles in places the apprentice did not have them before and an improved tolerance for beatings. Life in a university involves much the same, although more honest scholarship is usually involved, and the make-work usually involves dusting and reorganizing library shelves, cataloging rare (or just unusual) artifacts and hauling laundry from place to place.

In time, even the worst of masters begins to teach the apprentice real secrets of thaumaturgy. Fundamental lessons in summoning — and sending back what you've summoned, as well as keeping it away from you — are followed by classes in beginning alchemy and enchantment, interspersed with additional training in academics. In some schools, these can

be followed with martial-arts classes or other physical activity. In others, simply more backbreaking labor follows (players with younger character concepts should never have to justify higher than average Physical Attributes simply because the character is of a scholarly bent).

But savants are not merely sorcerers. They are the civilized people's equivalent of a shaman, jack-of-all-trades keepers of knowledge and lore in a world that can no longer support the vast infrastructures of communication and necessities needed to maintain knowledge specialists. The savant is the doctor or scientist to the paramedic or technician of the scavenger lord. Savants stand between nations and the gods, work the wonders that the population around them has forgotten how to operate and maintain and, alone or in council, advise rulers on subjects as diverse as social policy, agricultural methods and military science.

In the Realm, Savants are seen as something of a nuisance. With its orientation toward combat, hunting, politics and agrarian stability, the Scarlet Dynasty and its patrician imitators tend to see savants as keepers of ancient evils, as likely to rend society apart as to benefit its members. Savants there are kept to minor roles, educating patricians and operating their weather machines out of sight of the superstitious populace.

But in the Threshold, matters are different. There, without reliable access to the power of the Exalted, the savants are often the mightiest and most educated members of a society. Into their hands



are thrust the responsibility of mediating with the gods, educating the ignorant and preserving the ever-diminishing heritage of the First Age. Even among hardened outlaws, savants are more likely to be held captive and made to work wonders than killed.

Abilities: Nearly any academic Ability can be important to a savant — Medicine, Linguistics and Lore are all common. Craft Abilities are nearly omnipresent amongst enchanter, and savants who stay with a university will typically pick up some Bureaucracy and Socialize as well. While physical Abilities are not emphasized, neither are they uncommon — the reedy supercilious savant who can recite long-dead poems, but can't fight his way out of a wet sack exists, but he is by no means the only kind of savant.

Backgrounds: A thaumaturge trained by a master will nearly always have a Patron and may have Allies (his patron's friends, other students, etc.). Resources is quite common — it takes money to support research, and an alchemist or enchanter can always make money. University-based savants often have Reputation, Influence and Backing, and any master thaumaturge can have Henchmen or Followers — if nothing else, they may have students and servants. A well-traveled thaumaturge may have Contacts or even Spies.

Concepts: University professor, independent teacher, wandering journeyman thaumaturge, specialist thaumaturge (enchanter, alchemist, etc.), researching thaumaturge

IT PLAINLY SHOWS
HERE IN MELA'S
EVOCATIONS OF TRUTH
THAT THE PROPER
ALIGNMENT FOR THESE
SIGILS IS...

Village Shaman

The village shaman, wise woman or witch is perhaps the most common type of thaumaturge in Creation. For every school of thaumaturgy, there are a dozen small villages or tribes where the traditions and teachings have been passed down from shaman to student for centuries — in some cases in lineages unbroken since the Contagion.

Thaumaturgy as practiced by many shamans is an informal, even half-instinctive affair, driven as much by necessity and lack of materials as it is by proper theory or informed training. This does not mean that shamans are unskilled — although herbalism recipes are rarely written down, they are beaten into apprentices through harrowing repetition. In its own way, the thaumaturgy practiced in the hinterlands of Creation is as effective — and as informed — as the refined practices of the servants in the towns and cities of the Threshold. Still, there is a distinct feeling of improvisation associated with the thaumaturgy one partakes of when dealing with a village wise woman.

Some village thaumaturges are well respected and loved — others are feared and tolerated only because they are necessary. Many are both, a

curious blend of desire and loathing that is possible only on the fringes of Creation, where the need for a thaumaturge's knowledge outweighs the desire to be rid of a loathsome personality. In some tribes,

the wise woman's apprentice is chosen not by the wise woman, but by the tribal council or the women of the tribe. In other villages, the real power lies not with the ruling council, mayor, lord or chief hunter, but with the village witch, who rules from the side of the throne but rules nonetheless.

Shamans are normally the primary go-betweens for a village and the local spirit court. This is rarely as enjoyable or exciting a job as it might seem at first blush. In most cases, much of the shaman's time is spent making petitions for better weather, requesting bountiful harvests and beseeching the local



spirit of the hunt not to eat the children when they wander into the forest to gather berries. Such close contact with the spirit realm has its advantages, however, and those shamans who manage to maintain good relations with the local gods can count on their aid when they need it.

Abilities: Medicine is vital to the village shaman — he is often as much healer and doctor as he is speaker-to-spirits and enchanter. Lore, generally with a specialty in “Local Spirits” is important as well. The shaman is often the only line of defense between a rogue spirit and the village — feeble a defense as that is. Endurance and Resistance are important for keeping up with all-night rituals and persevering through the excesses shamans must subject themselves to. Performance, Presence and Larceny can all help the shaman maintain his position in the village — or help him ascend to that position. Linguistics can help the

shaman to deal with outsiders — as can Brawl or Melee, should force become necessary.

Backgrounds: Allies in the form of friendly spirits or elementals, honored ancestral ghosts, etc. are common, as are Followers and Henchmen. A shaman typically has plenty of Influence in his local village, even if he rarely exercises it. Essence-savvy shamans will often have access to a Demesne, if not an actual Manse, and may have minor Artifacts or a Familiar. Many shamans are from poor villages — while they may be one of the richest men in their village, this often means a Resources of 3 or less. Some very powerful shamans may have a Cult that rises up around them (usually of level 1 or 2), and a few might have Contacts or Spies.

Concepts: Manipulative witch, gracious shaman, crazy elder, spirit-ridden Wyld shaman

OH, DEARIE ME. THAT DOES LOOK PAINFUL, DOESN'T IT? WELL, WELL, YOU'D BETTER COME RIGHT IN, AND WE'LL HAVE A LOOK AT THAT, WE WILL. AND WE WILL DISCUSS THE TOPIC OF PAYMENT LATER... WON'T WE?

Black Cultist

Not all thaumaturges are of benign, mercenary or even profit-seeking bent. Some are power-crazed plotters, some are obsessed with vendettas and perceived slights, and still others seek after knowledge to the expense of all other matters. Still, not even the most vile, overambitious vizier is seen in quite the same light as those thaumaturges who ally themselves with the lords of the Underworld or Malfeas.

Black cultists align themselves with dark powers for a variety of reasons. Some are interested in quick power, seeking knowledge without wisdom, might without restraint. Others seek to make themselves important, wish to feed their most deviant desires or simply want a sense of belonging. More than a few join harmless-seeming organizations for illicit thrills and only too late find out that not only was the group they joined far from harmless, but they have no way out. A handful of these fools find they don't want to leave.

Black cultists have sworn their fealty to some sinister higher power. This might be a Deathlord (or even, in rare cases, one of the Malfeas), a Demon Prince, one of the dark gods of Creation or a particularly twisted and fell Exalt for whom the approbation "Anathema" is truly appropriate. In most cases, these powers see their mortal cultists as, at best, tools of limited value — some tolerate their mortal servants only for the Essence their prayers provide, and others care not at all for worship or actively work to discourage their cults.

Black cultists rarely openly advertise themselves as such — few places in Creation tolerate the concept of demon worship, and fewer still embrace the idea. While some small communities of cultists exist throughout Creation, carefully isolated from most of civilization, most dark cultists live in the midst of unsuspecting villages or cities. While there are always examples of the half-mad creep at the end of the street everyone whispers about, many cultists are respected members of their society, even wealthy and influential ones.

Some dark cultists are members of various covens and conspiracies. The Yozis organize their followers into several loosely knit Creation-wide fraternities of darkness, which do not compete with one another, but instead, each work their own tiny, insidious piece of the endless schemes that seek to unravel the walls of the Demon Princes' prison. Likewise, the Deathlords also organize their followers into cults, generally serving the cult of the ancestors or the nihilistic doctrines of the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible. Unlike the Yozis, who rarely tolerate sectarian violence among their followers, the followers of the Deathlords are frequently far more hostile, and fratricide is common among their ranks as the Deathlords maneuver their pawns. Other black cultists work alone. Some are disciples of the evils native to Creation, servants of gods with dark portfolios or simply wicked individuals driven by their own



personal hatreds to sow strife and curses among their fellow men.

Black cultists are most common in the Threshold. In the Realm, the constant persecution of the Hundred Gods Heresy and the presence of so many Exalted secret police and spies makes mortal worship of dark powers difficult in the extreme. Even Exalted black sorcerers do not gather assistants for fear of attracting the attention of the White Registry. In the Threshold, however, these villains often prosper where weak governments or anarchy allow them to operate with far less fear of discovery and effective proscription.

Abilities: Larceny and Stealth are important Abilities for most cultists, as is Performance when trying to convince a magistrate as to a sincere lack of Yozi-worshipping. Most cultists will have at least a smattering of combat skills, often Brawl and Melee,

although highly trained assassin cults exist as well. Most cultists have some sort of skills or job they perform as a cover role, usually a Craft, although they can be found in any walk of life, and nearly any set of Abilities could be justified.

Backgrounds: Cultists nearly always have Patron - this may be whatever dark god, Deathlord or Demon Prince they worship, but more likely, it is the cult's high priest or their sponsor in the cult. They also frequently have Allies and Contacts (other cult members) and, sometimes, Followers or Henchmen (who might be lesser members of the cult, unwitting dupes or both) or a network of Spies. In some places in Creation, cultists have wormed their way quite high into society, and levels of Influence, Resources or Backing could be appropriate.

Concepts: Charming schemer, vengeful madman, disturbing seductress, callous assassin, unwitting tool

*It was the world of the
Yozi once. It will be again,
one day. And when it is, I
shall dance on your grave.*

Holy Man

Holy men are not necessarily priests — although many are priests of one or more gods, having gained some insight into the workings of the Celestial Bureaucracy. Holy men (and women) are typically ascetics, devotees of a school of fierce self-discipline and sacrifice as a road to higher power and enlightenment.

Most mortal members of the Immaculate Order are devotees of these practices, exchanging the pleasures of the flesh and freedom of motive and decision in exchange for the ability to aid those less spiritually aligned. They follow a strict code of discipline, swearing great oaths of sacrifice and commitment in order to gain some measure of power to act against demons and the dead and the ability to work against rogue gods when no other option presents itself.

Not all holy men are members of the Immaculate Order, however. Throughout Creation — particularly in the East and the North — there are small monasteries devoted to one or another school of belief, teaching thaumaturgy and wisdom through suffering and denial of the self. Some of these schools are effective only at making their supplicants truly miserable or are sophisticated con jobs seeking only to separate the unwitting from their material goods. Just as many have unlocked some form of truth, and those who are truly devoted can learn much, if they have the endurance to follow the lessons presented to them.

Itinerant members of these orders are often sent out on journeys of observation and education — some to witness firsthand the trials and privations of common folk, others to provide what aid they can. Some of these wandering monks never return to their monasteries, either succumbing to the temptations of the flesh and forswearing their oaths, choosing to remain on the road or settling down in some village they feel needs their aid.

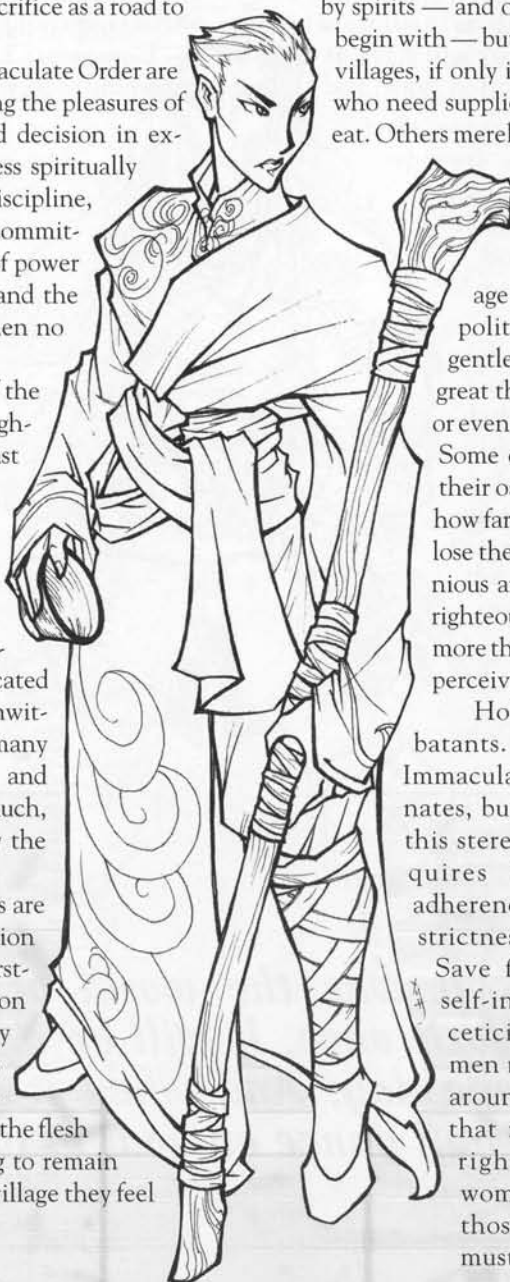
Other holy men are self-taught, unlocking inner strength through their privations and solitude. These thaumaturges are often driven half-mad by their experiences and travails, by exposure to the Wyld or by possession by spirits — and often, they weren't too stable to begin with — but they can be useful aids for local villages, if only in attracting would-be disciples who need supplies, guidance, and something to eat. Others merely want to be left alone to pursue

their particular brand of wisdom in peace and are otherwise perfectly amiable neighbors.

Although the common image of the holy man is the quiet, polite Immaculate Monk, full of gentle wisdom, powerful resolve and great thaumaturgical power, not all — or even most — holy men fit this image. Some continuously skirt the edges of their oaths, attempting to find out just how far they can push them before they lose their powers. Others are sanctimonious and overbearing, filled with the righteous fury of the True Believer, and more than willing to harshly punish any perceived transgressions.

Holy men are often fierce combatants. The image of the fighting Immaculate monk, of course, predominates, but it is not the only source of this stereotype. To be a holy man requires intense discipline and adherence to an internal code whose strictness virtually dictates conflict.

Save for those who live entirely self-involved lives of perfect asceticism in total isolation, all holy men must interact with the world around them, and it is the world that must bend. While hard and righteous words can carry a woman of strong character far, those with unyielding principles must eventually defend them.



Abilities: Most holy men have Endurance and Resistance, to better withstand the trials they place themselves under, and wandering monks typically have Survival as well. Many itinerant monks are skilled combatants — the road is dangerous, and there are many who don't care if a holy man is sacred or not. Those of properly spirituous mien will often have Presence, and their travels often inspire the study of Linguistics. The fierce physical training temple monks undergo results in heightened Athletics, and some study Stealth as well. Most have a Craft or two they can fall back upon, when their spiritual teachings and thaumaturgical skills are not sufficient to earn them some food and a place to sleep. Immaculate monks (and many others) will have some knowledge of Bureaucracy, and

maybe Investigation or Socialize as well, depending on their life prior to joining the monastery.

Backgrounds: Monks who belong to an organization nearly always have a Patron or a Mentor and some level of Backing. Some may have Allies or Contacts. More well-known or idolized monks (high Reputation) might have Followers or even a Cult, but these are uncommon. A skilled and particularly holy monk might be chosen to guard an Artifact or Manse. The Resources Background is rare — one of the first holy oaths taken in most orders is a vow of poverty.

Concepts: Itinerant wanderer, Immaculate monk, crazy old guy on the mountaintop, village holy man, warrior priest

The path to enlightenment takes one down many roads — but you seem to have deliberately chosen a particularly difficult and painful one.

THAUMATURGE CHARACTER CREATION

STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Thaumaturges follow the same general guidelines for other heroic mortals (see *Exalted*, p. 103). What kind of past did the character have, and what drove him to the life of a scholar and thaumaturge? Where did he grow up, who were his friends, and what does he do today? How does he interact with the Exalted, spirits or demons? What are his goals, and how does thaumaturgy help him to achieve them?

ARCHETYPE

Archetypes can be used to help guide a player as to what Abilities, Attributes and Backgrounds may be appropriate for a character, but they are not strictly necessary and should always be considered a set of guidelines to be followed as necessary, rather than a straitjacket. Players should consult with their Storyteller to make sure a given kind of character will be appropriate for the chronicle.

KNOWLEDGE

Although Backgrounds are normally chosen in Step Three: Advantages, Knowledge, like Inheritance, presents a special case that requires some initial assessment and decision making prior to deciding any other numerical Traits. Knowledge determines how powerful a thaumaturge the character is — it provides additional bonus points to be spent on purchasing Sciences and rituals and on Backgrounds and Merits related to the thaumaturge's studies.

One to two dots is appropriate for a mortals-only game, involving skilled, but still learning, thaumaturges. When combined with the optional rule "Magic for Everyone" (see p. 115), this can make for an appropriate wise woman of a struggling tribe, a journeyman thaumaturge or a military spellcaster. Three to four dots of Knowledge makes for a powerful thaumaturge — these are feared scholars, easily a match for most mortal threats and able to dispatch misbehaving ghosts, spirits, elementals and the least powerful of demons, when they must.

At five dots, a thaumaturge is a master of the Arts and, with some careful planning, design and a cunning player,

CHOOSING LEVELS OF POWER

Inheritance, Knowledge and Experience allow a Storyteller to customize her series to a high degree, and a Storyteller should definitely set limits not only on how many dots can (or should) be purchased in each, but the total number of dots that can be spread between them. A game that allows only a couple of dots in each keeps the game grounded in a mostly mortal setting — the Exalted, spirits, demons, etc. are terrifying aspects of a Creation that is hostile to even heroic mortals. With a large number of dots available — or allowing higher levels in a single Background — characters can approach, or even rival, the Terrestrial Exalted or lower status gods in power. These characters are less discomfited by mortal frailties, and at higher levels, mortals can become worthwhile opponents — if ultimately doomed ones — even to the Celestial Exalted.

Storytellers should consider carefully whether to allow starting Exalts access to these Backgrounds unless they plan to allow all characters access to them equally. This is particularly true for Knowledge and Experience, which give the starting Exalt access to extra bonus points without the built-in limits that access to Inheritance has. Both Knowledge and Experience can be used to provide for more seasoned and powerful Exalted characters, however — an Exalt with three dots in each is a formidable agent of change in Creation, with substantial resources and background.

Power Level	Total Dots	Max Background	Notes
None	0	0	Heroic mortals — limited powers, only purchased with starting Background points
Low	1-3	2	Thaumaturge's apprentices, bastard sons of a minor godling, seasoned soldiers
Moderate	4-6	3	Skilled thaumaturges, young but honored spirit-kin, experienced warriors
Powerful	7-9	4	Master thaumaturges, demigods in waiting, legendary mortal heroes
Paragon	10+	5	Cult leaders, black thaumaturges, a god's right-hand man, warlords and generals

can be played alongside powerful God-Blooded, lesser spirits and Dragon-Blooded — and with some luck, can play an important role even in a Celestial-based game, although likely a supporting one.

STEP TWO: CHOOSING ATTRIBUTES

Mortal thaumaturges are normally heroic mortals and use the same point spread they do for Attributes — six in their primary Attribute category, four in the second category, and three in their tertiary (6/4/3).

STEP THREE: CHOOSING ABILITIES

Thaumaturges may normally choose one Favored Ability, but Storytellers may choose to allow them two or even three. They receive 22 dots to distribute among their Abilities, at least one of which must be placed in each Favored Ability. As always, these Abilities cannot be raised above 3 without the use of bonus points.

SCALES, POWER AND GROWTH

Although Lore and Occult are important Abilities for every thaumaturge, players should consider carefully the repercussions of inflating one or both of these Abilities to their limit:

- Starting the game with both Lore and Occult at 5 will cost the character six Ability dots, eight bonus points and whatever specialties are purchased — a substantial part of her initial allocation — rendering the character less flexible than others.

- Such a character is already at the pinnacle of her knowledge and power — while she can continue to pick up dots in Sciences, master new aspects of the Arts or learn new rituals, she is already a master thaumaturge, with little real room for progression or growth.

- The character will often lack believability — she has mastered all there is to know in Creation, but she still has only an apprentice's knowledge of the Sciences and a paltry handful of rituals?

There are certainly cases — particularly in higher-powered games — where it is perfectly appropriate for a character to start with Lore, Occult or both purchased at the highest levels, with a full array of specialties. More often, however, it is a better use of bonus points to purchase additional rituals, specialties in Arts or Sciences and appropriate formulas than it is to simply purchase more Occult.

STEP FOUR: ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Thaumaturges receive five dots for Backgrounds and may not use any of these dots to purchase any of the Backgrounds marked with an asterisk on page 116 — these can **only** be purchased with bonus points.

VIRTUES

Thaumaturge characters purchase Virtues normally — one dot in each Virtue, plus five dots to distribute as desired. Thaumaturges do not suffer from the Great Curse and may not buy Merits or Flaws related to the Curse.

ESSENCE

Mortals begin with an Essence of 1 but no access to their Essence at all, and they lack an Essence pool (either Peripheral or Personal). Accordingly, they must find other ways to power their sorceries (see p. 125). As they gain experience and mastery of thaumaturgy, some mortals learn how to unlock some or all of their personal Essence (see the Essence Awareness and Essence Mastery Merits, p. 120), and a few eventually manage to exceed Essence 1 — this requires the Essence Mastery Merit and 10 bonus points (or 20 experience points) for Essence 2. Achieving Essence 3 costs 20 additional bonus points (or 40 experience points) and is the limit of human potential — mortals that exceed Essence 3 become gods, in the same way the God-Blooded do. Mortals who manage to unlock their Essence gain an Essence pool equal to (Essence + Willpower + Conviction + [highest Virtue x 2]).

ARTS, SCIENCES AND RITUALS

Thaumaturgy is divided into the Arts (common bodies of knowledge that all thaumaturges practice to one extent or another), the Sciences (Alchemy, Enchantment, Geomancy and Weather Working) and rituals (spells and effects that can be learned by rote, obviating the need for specialized study). Thaumaturges may spend their bonus points on any combination of these without limitation, although Storytellers may choose to restrict starting characters to no more than three-dot rituals and/or the third level of knowledge in any Science.

STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Thaumaturges calculate their Willpower and health levels exactly as other mortals do. They receive 21 bonus points to spend as they will and additional bonus points to be spent on magical knowledge and advantages from their Knowledge Background. Bonus points may be spent at any time to raise or purchase

Traits. Although Merits and Flaws are an optional rule for thaumaturges, Storytellers should strongly consider allowing thaumaturges (and heroic mortal characters in general) to take them even if they are not normally allowed in the game, as there are a number of useful Merits that would otherwise be unavailable to

thaumaturges (such as the Essence Awareness and Essence Mastery Merits). As always, Storytellers may veto any combination of Merits, Flaws and Backgrounds they find inappropriate.

OTHERS AND THAUMATURGY

Mortals are not the only ones who practice the minor sorceries. Although not often useful in battle against the Exalted or other Essence users, thaumaturgy can make life easier in a myriad of ways outside of combat. Some have an easier time of it when trying to master thaumaturgy than others, however.

The Exalted are, despite their great power and extended lifespans, still basically mortal and can learn the minor sorceries without any difficulty. Although the dead retain knowledge of what they learned in Creation, they are forever barred from using that knowledge — their potency has passed, and the only way they may lay their will upon Creation is through the use of Arcanoi (this apparently

includes the Deathlords). The dead who knew magic in life can act as tutors for thaumaturges, however.

The Wyld-tainted are still mortal and may use thaumaturgy with no restraint, although they rarely have access to the tools or knowledge necessary to master the higher levels of power in Sciences. Spirits may use thaumaturgy, but they pay twice the normal experience (or bonus) points when learning or improving any Art, Science or ritual. The Fair Folk do not use thaumaturgy at all, although some of their glamours closely resemble mortal sorceries. The Dragon Kings can learn thaumaturgy, but they rarely did so during the First Age, preferring the steady reliability of their Paths to the variable (and less powerful) results of the mortal Arts and Sciences.



MAGIC FOR EVERYONE

Thaumaturgy is as much a part of the world of **Exalted** as mathematics is to our modern world — although mathematicians are highly knowledgeable and uncommon, nearly everyone can count out change. In a similar fashion, nearly everyone in **Exalted** can perform minor magics.

As an optional (but recommended) part of character creation, Storytellers may wish to let characters begin play with a small handful of rituals, formulas or aspects in an Art to represent the near ubiquitous nature of thaumaturgy. A recommended level is one ritual, one formula or procedure or knowledge of one aspect for every two dots in Occult (along with any appropriate specialties). This should be limited to rituals, formulas or procedures of no more than level 3, and only specialties in Arts, not the Arts themselves (so a non-thaumaturge could choose to learn how to ward off ghosts, but not the Art of Warding).

If this is allowed, it should apply to all starting characters — including starting thaumaturges, who can then further improve their knowledge by using bonus points gained from the Knowledge Background.

THE SPARK OF LIFE

Once the character has been designed, it's time to set on the final touches that make them what they truly are. If the thaumaturge attended an academy or school, where is it? What kind of students attended with her — do any of them qualify as allies (or possibly enemies or rivals)? Do her parents still live? Is she an orphan, abandoned at a monastery and raised by monks? Did she learn her trade at the foot of a master thaumaturge, or is she self-taught? Is she descended from a long line of famous thaumaturges or the unwanted last daughter of a noble family, who turned to thaumaturgy as a way to distinguish herself? What are her long-term goals — why does she seek out the secret powers of thaumaturgy?

THAUMATURGE EXPERIENCE

Thaumaturges grow in experience and mastery of their arts over time. The following experience cost table and training times can be used to supplant those found on page 270 of **Exalted** not only for thaumaturges, but for any mortal characters. Training times for mortal characters are typically double those for the Exalted — few things come as easily to mortals as they do to Exalts. This can be modified by the use of Charms, spells or other supernatural abilities, and it should be kept in mind that self-training doubles this time again.

Trait Increase	Cost
Attribute	current rating x 4
Favored Ability	(current rating x 2) - 1
Ability	current rating x 2
Essence 2*	20
Essence 3**	40
Virtue	current rating x 4
Willpower	current rating x 2
New Trait	Cost
Art	5
Art Specialty	3
Ritual	3, +1 per level of the ritual
Procedure/Formula	1
New Merit (mystical only)	cost in bonus points x 2

* Must already have Essence Mastery Merit. Cannot be purchased at the same time as Essence Mastery.

** Must already have Essence 2. Cannot be purchased at same time as Essence 2.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Record Knowledge.

Choose concept, archetype (if any) and Nature.

• STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (6/4/3); ordinary mortals receive (4/3/3)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

• STEP THREE: SELECT ABILITIES

Note Favored Ability (plus any others purchased with the Prodigy Merit, see p. 20).

Choose Abilities (22 — at least one dot must go into each Favored Ability; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• STEP FOUR: SELECT ADVANTAGES

Choose Backgrounds (5 in addition to recorded Inheritance) and Virtues (5 — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (1), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — may not start at higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher) and health levels (7, plus any obtained with Merits). Characters with the Essence Mastery Merit receive an Essence Pool equal to (Essence + Willpower + Conviction + (highest Virtue x 2))

• BONUS POINTS

Bonus points (21, plus those obtained from Knowledge and Flaws) may be spent at any time during character creation. Only characters with the Essence Mastery Merit may raise their Essence. Bonus points gained from Knowledge may only be spent on those Backgrounds marked with an asterisk and those Merits listed on pages 120-122.

NATURE AND VIRTUES

See the chart on page 105 of **Exalted**.

BACKGROUNDS

Not all characters may purchase all Backgrounds. Those backgrounds marked with an asterisk may only be purchased with Bonus Points and the Knowledge Background.

- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifact*** — Magical devices, often hoarded from the First Age.
- **Backing** — Standing and rank in an organization of power and influence.
- **Command** — Troops under your personal control.
- **Contacts** — Information sources and friends in useful places.
- **Cult*** — Mortals who worship you.
- **Experience*** — Your skill at non-magical Traits.
- **Familiar*** — An animal companion.
- **Family** — Notable kin.
- **Followers** — Mortals or stranger beings who look to you for leadership.
- **Henchmen** — Agents who do your bidding.
- **Influence** — Your pull in the world around you.
- **Knowledge** — Your magical training and skills.
- **Library*** — Your collection of thaumaturgic lore.
- **Manse*** — A place of power and Essence.
- **Mentor** — A teacher and instructor.
- **Patron** — A guardian, tutor or master who looks over you, providing resources and assistance in exchange for services rendered.
- **Reputation** — How society views you and your actions.
- **Resources** — Material goods and money.
- **Spies** — Your access to espionage capabilities.

* Magic Background. Can only be increased through bonus points from the Knowledge Background.

BONUS POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence 2*	10
Essence 3**	20
Art	5
Art Specialty***	2
Ritual	2 + 1 per level of Ritual
Procedure/Formula	1
Merit	listed cost

* Requires the Essence Mastery Merit.

** Requires Essence 2.

*** You do **not** have to buy the relevant Art in order to buy a specialty in that Art.

BACKGROUNDS

ALTERED BACKGROUNDS

Many Backgrounds are altered slightly for thaumaturges to reflect the world mortal characters live in. In many cases, Backgrounds higher than 3 should be scrutinized more carefully than lower levels, particularly Backgrounds that have a generally supernatural origin — it is perfectly believable that a powerful merchant lord has Resources and Backing at 5, but less likely that he will have Artifact, Manse or Familiar at that level.

ALLIES

It is unlikely — but not impossible — for mortal characters to gain Exalted, spirit, elemental or God-Blooded allies. Allies of great power will need some sort of justification — what are they getting out of the relationship with the thaumaturge? In some cases, Patron or Mentor will be a more likely relationship.

ARTIFACT

Mortal characters cannot attune to weapons or devices that require committed Essence, and never gain any form of bonus from the Five Magical Materials, but they may make use of artifacts that do not require Essence. Mortals with the Magical Attunement Merit (see p. 120) can attune to artifacts with a committed Essence cost, but never gain bonuses from the devices' Magical Materials.

CULT

Most mortal thaumaturges should buy a combination of Command, Followers, Henchman, Spies and Connections to represent a cult they lead. The Cult Background should be reserved for those characters who have found some way to gain access to their Essence pool and can actually gain some benefit from the adoring reverence bestowed upon them by their fanatical followers.

FAMILIAR

Mortal characters — particularly thaumaturges — may gain the Familiar Background under certain circumstances. The character gains all of the normal benefits of a familiar, save that he may not draw Essence from the familiar unless he has already gained access to his own Essence pool.

MANSE

Mortal characters cannot attune to a Manse or gain any benefit from a Hearthstone unless they have learned how to access their Essence pool. Thaumaturges with the Manse Attunement Merit (see p. 120) can attune to Manses.

PATRON

Some thaumaturges are agents or servants of higher beings — they may work for a god who has no children, serve as a spy for the Yozis or assist a powerful Exalt in his tasks. Alternately, they could work for some large organization that sponsors their activities — the Guild and the Seventh Legion both frequently assist independent scavenger lords, for example. In any case, they are frequently given additional resources to perform the duties they have been assigned. These resources are subject to the same limitations others face — they can be taken away, are subject to continued good behavior, etc. Only very rarely will a thaumaturge have more than 3 dots in this Background.

USELESS BACKGROUNDS

Players may choose to take Backgrounds for their characters that they can gain no benefit from — a holy man may have taken up residence in an abandoned Manse, or a scavenger lord may have access to artifacts that he cannot personally use. Storytellers should consider whether or not to charge the character Background or bonus points for these Backgrounds — if it is likely that the Background will become useful later in the series, then they should cost points. If the Background is merely going to be flavor text, with no real value in the storyline, then they should be treated like any other bit of superfluous background material, and no point cost should be assessed.

NEW BACKGROUNDS

Thaumaturges make use of a variety of new Backgrounds, as detailed below.

EXPERIENCE

Some characters are just more worldly and experienced than others. This Background is a measure of the character's practical experience and other benefits of a basically mundane nature, providing extra bonus points that can be used to purchase Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds and Merits. These points can be used to build grizzled old watch commanders, mercenary captains, skilled major-domos, master craftsmen, trade lords and other mundanely powerful characters. A mix of Experience and Knowledge can produce adventuring scavenger lords, wandering Immaculate monks, ghost hunters and other characters that mix physical prowess with magical secrets.

- x You are experienced, but not exceptionally so—a journeyman craftsman, trained but not blooded warrior, etc.
- You show great potential, or have received extensive training. You receive 8 additional bonus points to spend on non-magical Traits.
- You have trained extensively, have an auspicious background (noble's son, etc.) or have substantial battlefield or other experience. You gain 14 additional bonus points to spend on non-magical Traits.
- Seasoned warrior. You gain 20 additional bonus points to spend on non-magical Traits and may accumulate up to 15 points of Flaws.
- Master craftsman. You have mastered your trade and enjoy the benefits that mastery brings. You gain an additional 26 bonus points to spend on non-magical Traits and may take up to 15 points of Flaws.
- Guild factor. As a politician, your influence spreads far and wide. As a warrior, you know no peer and are a leader of men respected even by the Exalted. As a craftsman, you are matchless, and students line up for a chance to study under you. You gain an additional 32 bonus points to spend on non-magical Traits and may take up to 20 points of Flaws.

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is a measure of a thaumaturge's magical training and experience, a direct gauge of her overall power—a thaumaturge made with Knowledge 5 is going to be a more potent magician than one built with Knowledge 1. Each dot of Knowledge can represent as much as a decade of study, experimentation and practice—few thaumaturges exceed Knowledge 2, and at any given time, only a small handful of thaumaturges in each cardinal direction have risen to Knowledge 5. It is not, strictly speaking, necessary to take the Knowledge Background to become a thaumaturge—anyone possessing the Occult Ability can attempt to perform exorcisms, to ward a place or person against spirits or ghosts or to summon up demons. Having Knowledge and the extra bonus points it grants to purchase Sciences, Merits and other mystical Traits merely makes it a lot easier. Characters with Knowledge gain bonus points that can be spent on a variety of mystical Backgrounds, Merits, Sciences, Arts and other Traits (see sidebar) and, potentially, on other Traits, at the Storyteller's discretion.

- x You have little magical training beyond that common to most folks.

- Gifted Apprentice: Whether a diligent self-taught prodigy, a devoted apprentice or the favored student of the tribal wisewoman, your learning exceeds that of the common man—but you are all too aware of how much further you have to go. You receive 8 additional bonus points to spend on magical Traits.
- Talented Journeyman: Your training has progressed to the point where your master feels he can trust you without constant supervision—if, indeed, he is still around at all. Many, perhaps most, thaumaturges never proceed beyond this level of training—their lives and duties simply prohibit the kind of study necessary to progress further. You gain 14 additional bonus points to spend on magical Traits.
- Clever Scholar: You have peered into the depths of thaumaturgy's majesty and decided you want access to those powers. You have dedicated much of your life to the pursuit of magical knowledge, and your skills are vast—if you have concentrated on a single Path or Art, you have all but mastered it, and if you have played the dilettante, picking up scattered bits of knowledge and secret training as you have progressed, then you have a solid backing in a wide variety of Sciences and Arts. You gain 20 additional bonus points to spend on magical Traits and may accumulate up to 15 points of Flaws.
- Fledgling Master: Thaumaturgy makes up a fundamental part of you—truly, you think of yourself as a magician or thaumaturge first and foremost and all other things only after that. You have likely mastered at least one Art and are close to mastering several others. You gain an additional 26 bonus points to spend on mystical Traits and may take up to 15 points of Flaws.
- Mighty Thaumaturge: Your skills at thaumaturgy know few equals and nearly no peers among humanity—the Exalted and the gods are another matter. Still, even amongst the Exalted your name is spoken with, if not reverence, at least some small amount of respect. You gain an additional 32 bonus points to spend on mystical Traits and may take up to 20 points of Flaws.

LIBRARY

Although printing is a well-developed skill in the Realm and many of the larger cities of the Scavenger Lands, books are still by no means common, and in many places, much knowledge is passed down through legends or songs or is memorized through repetition and mnemonic aids. Despite this, most literate scholars or thaumaturges (and there are both who are not) will have at least a handful of books, scrolls or other forms of research materials — the hazards of an erudite life.

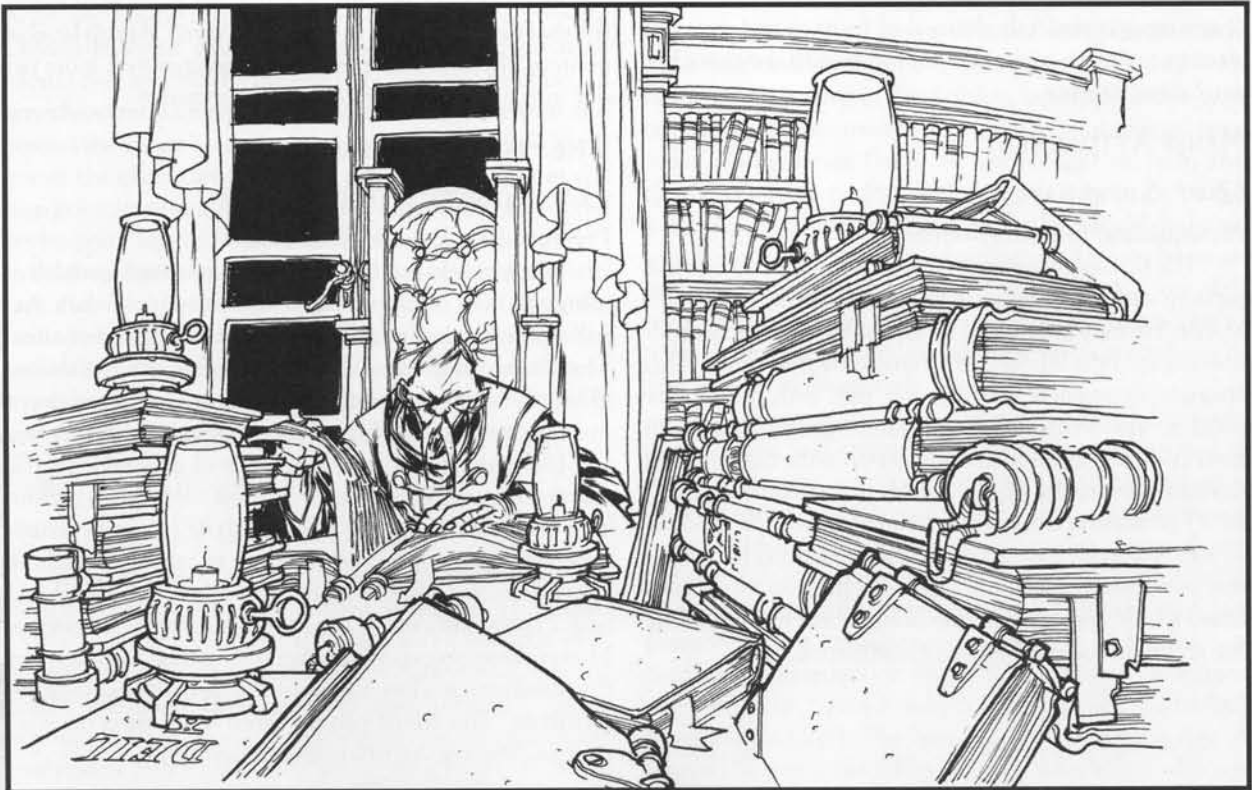
The Library Background goes beyond a scattered supply of basic works, representing a substantial investment in research materials — at the higher levels, possibly including works from the First Age. This resource can prove an invaluable aid in researching new spells, hidden secrets or obscure facts of biology, history or a dozen other philosophical studies.

- x You travel light, or perhaps your research materials have been taken from you, whether by fire, flood or theft.
- You have a small stash of uncommon or hard-to-acquire books in your library. Add one die to Lore dice pools relating to research and study.
- Your research materials are extensive and include some truly rare tomes. Add one die to Lore or Occult dice pools related to research and study.

••• You have a large library of mundane research materials and a smaller, but reasonably complete, stock of works covering unusual and obscure topics. Add two dice to Lore and one die to Occult dice pools related to research, and self-taught training times are not doubled for Lore or Occult for users of this library.

•••• Your library is as extensive as those of small cities or learned monasteries and contain many volumes of histories purporting to be from the First Age, training manuals from the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate and other works of extreme antiquity and potency. Add two dice to all Occult and Lore dice pools related to research.

••••• While not a match for the great libraries of the Imperial City, Lookshy, Great Forks, Sijan or some of the other centers of learning in the Second Age, your collection of works certainly approaches them in its depth, if not its breadth. Add two dice to all Lore and Occult dice pools and one die to **any** Ability's dice pool, if the roll is related to research or study in some fashion. Additionally, increasing existing Traits of a mystical nature (Storytellers discretion) costs 1 experience point less than it normally would (as if a Favored Ability), if they are studied using this library.



THAUMATURGY MERITS

By default, the following Merits can be purchased by anyone who can learn thaumaturgy, using bonus points or experience. Storytellers who desire less powerful mortals may choose to restrict the purchase of these Merits to characters who have taken dots in the Knowledge Background or have some other source of mystical awareness.

ESSENCE RECOVERY

(2-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Essence Awareness

The thaumaturge has learned secrets of relaxation and geomancy that allow him to recover Essence more rapidly than most mortals can. He recovers Essence at half the rate an Exalt does and gains the normal benefit from resting in a Manse or carrying a Hearthstone he has attuned to (if he has the Manse Attunement Merit).

MAGICAL ATTUNEMENT

(2-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Essence Awareness

The character is able to attune to magical devices, provided she is willing to pay the normal commitment cost for the device. She does not **ever** gain any bonus from any Magical Material an artifact may be made of. Any attempt to attune to a device requires a Willpower roll, with a difficulty equal to half the device's commitment cost. Failure drains double the commitment cost in motes, but then, she can try again. A botch normally means that the character is completely drained of Essence and may not attempt to attune to that device again until she raises her permanent Essence.

MANSE ATTUNEMENT

(2-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Essence Awareness

The thaumaturge has learned how to align his Essence patterns with the geomantic Essence flows that surround a Manse. He may attempt to attune to any Manse he finds unoccupied or is allowed to attune to by the owner. This attunement requires a Willpower roll, with a difficulty equal to the Manse's rating. Failure drains him of all Essence—a botch does the same, prevents the thaumaturge from attuning to the Manse until he has raised his permanent Essence and reduces the thaumaturge to 1 Willpower—this is a temporary drain and can be gained back with rest as normal. A thaumaturge who has successfully attuned to a Manse gains all the normal benefits, including the ability to use the Manse's Hearthstone.

CELESTIAL TRAVEL PERMIT

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Celestial Patron of at least 2

The thaumaturge has been granted limited permission to travel to Yu-Shan while on the direct business of her patron deity. Normally, this is a limited permit to travel from one singular gateway to the god's place of business or residence in Yu-Shan and back again. While in Yu-Shan, the thaumaturge has no rights, but enjoys some limited level of protection based upon her god's status and power, which is usually sufficient to prevent her from being unduly molested, though "official" interference based on the misapplication of regulations is certainly possible. This Merit can be revoked at any time, even over the patron's wishes, should the thaumaturge abuse her privileges or otherwise prove herself unworthy of such a massive show of trust.

ESSENCE AWARENESS

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

The mortal has, through dint of study, hard work, luck or sheer cussed-mindedness, learned how to unlock some small portion of his Essence, enabling him to manipulate it in small fashions. Compute his Essence pool normally, then divide it into two pools. The first, equal to one third of his Essence pool, can be drawn upon normally—he can use it to power spells or other effects, sustain enchantments, etc. The other two thirds can only be accessed with a Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the number of motes the thaumaturge wants to spend that turn). At this level of mastery, the thaumaturge can only regenerate 1 mote per day into his pool, regardless of circumstance.

THE FLOW OF ESSENCE

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Essence Awareness

Many monks and holy men have mastered methods of using the flow of Essence to temporarily boost their Attributes to supernatural levels for a brief period of time. The thaumaturge may choose **one** group of Attributes: Physical, Social or Mental. By spending 2 motes per dot of increase, and having his player succeed on a Willpower roll (difficulty equal to the number of dots added), the thaumaturge may boost one Attribute for his next action. This boost may not raise any Attribute beyond (permanent Essence + 5), and any attempt to raise an Attribute above 5 costs double (4 motes for each dot above 5) and adds 2 to the difficulty. Using this ability without Essence Mastery requires two Willpower rolls—one to draw upon the thaumaturge's Essence and one to actually increase the Attribute. This Merit can be taken more than once—select a different Attribute group each time.

ESSENCE MASTERY

(5-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

Prerequisites: Essence Awareness

Through supreme effort, the character has learned how to unlock her Essence pool completely, giving her access to great stores (for a mortal) of energy with which to power spells or enchantments. She may now use her entire Essence pool without limit or required rolls. Characters with Essence Mastery have sufficient Essence to activate the Root of the Perfected Lotus and practice Terrestrial Martial Arts. The character is still only able to regenerate 1 mote of Essence per day.

HOLY MIEN

(7-PT. SUPERNATURAL MERIT)

The thaumaturge carries some aura of serenity and power around him. This is not the blessing of any specific god or power, but an all-encompassing sense of rightness, of holy purity. It may be the result of the Celestines smiling upon the character, some result of their efforts at removing from themselves of all that is impure and unholy, or some other reason. In any case, the dead and especially demons or unclean spirits (spirits of disease, death, unhealthy emotions, etc.) find the character naturally repellent. The character gains four dice on all attempts to ward, bind, exorcise or otherwise deal with the servants of the Yozis (including demons of the First Circle, Demon-Blooded, Infernal Exalted, spirits that have been corrupted by the Yozis, etc.) using magic. Teodozija and other demons (or Demon-Blooded who possess the Walking Blasphemy Merit) that specifically oppose holy men will be drawn to any character with this Merit, particularly those who also possess the Priest Merit (see p. 25). The Holy Mien Merit grants the character possessing it the Priest Merit at the one-point level at no extra cost and reduces the cost of the seven-point level to six bonus points.

Most often, this Merit will be tied to one or more oaths (see the Oathbound Magic Flaw, p. 121) — if so, the character must uphold those oaths, or this Merit is revoked instantly, until such time as the character has undergone whatever atonement or ritual purification the Storyteller and player feel is appropriate.

SHELTERED UPBRINGING

(3-PT. SOCIAL FLAW)

The character has been brought up in isolation, far from the harsh realities of Creation. While not a total naïf, she lacks certain inherent reactions and suspicions most people have and is too trusting by far. Alternately, she may realize she lacks these defenses and overreact, taking nothing at face value and trusting no one. In either case, this results in a +1 difficulty on all rolls based on Social

Attributes, as the character's trusting nature — or over-developed sense of paranoia — interferes with even basic social interactions.

DARK MAGICS

(3-PT. SUPERNATURAL FLAW)

Whether because of some bargain with evil powers best left alone or unwitting research into secrets that should have remained secret, the character's magics are tainted with the stench of evil. Any thaumaturgy, Charm, sorcery or other ability that alerts its user to the presence of evil magic will react to his spells, and any defense that operates against the dead, the Yozis or other evil entities will be effective against his magics. The thaumaturge specifically is **not** effected by attacks or other abilities that specifically target evil entities and creatures of darkness (Yozis, the dead, etc.) as he is not necessarily evil, even if his magics are.

OATHBOUND MAGIC

(VARIABLE COST SUPERNATURAL FLAW, THAUMATURGES ONLY)

This Flaw is common among holy men — indeed, a character claiming to be a holy man who has taken no ascetic oaths is likely merely a con artist. By subjecting himself to numerous privations and self-imposed restrictions, the holy man opens his being to great stores of power, enabling him to perform miracles.

Bonus points provided by oaths sworn under this Flaw must be tied to the Traits purchased using them — any Trait can conceivably be increased or purchased with bonus points gained in this fashion, but the increase must be purchased in toto with these points. Points gained from other Backgrounds (such as Knowledge) or from the character's basic pool of bonus points cannot be mixed with those gained from oaths. Oaths should indicate which Traits were purchased with them (Never harm an innocent, Major: +1 Strength, +1 Willpower). If that oath is ever forsaken, the character immediately loses access to those Traits, and depending on the severity of the breach, may lose them completely.

At minimum, the character will need to undergo acts of contrition and atonement (usually lasting a period of months equal to the bonus points provided by the oath), perform ritual sacrifices (Resource cost equal to bonus points of the oath) or take other actions to rededicate himself and prove his worthiness. Major or legendary oaths may not only involve removal of the Traits granted, but punishment for transgression as well — often this is a corresponding reduction in the Traits granted (so a character who purchased Strength with an oath might find himself enfeebled). The swearing of oaths in the Age of Sorrows is not undertaken lightly. Storytellers who are

unwilling to keep track of a character's oaths and to punish him appropriately for transgressions should not allow this Merit in play.

Minor Oath: An oath that only barely restricts the character or only in some minor fashion. An oath never to sleep with a red-headed woman, to never eat goats or against using straight swords, for example. Grants one bonus point.

Moderate Oath: An oath that impedes the character in some fashion, restricting his behavior in some significant, but not life-changing, fashion. An oath of chastity before marriage, against eating red meat or against initiating violence (or using no bladed weapon), for example. Grants three bonus points.

Major Oath: Major oaths restrict or impede the character in some significant fashion. An oath of celibacy, of vegetarianism or of pacifism (or of using no weapons) would all be examples of major oaths. Major oaths grant five bonus points.

Legendary Oath: Legendary oaths go beyond restricting behavior, into the realm of allowing only certain specific behaviors. An oath to engage in no self-gratification of any kind, an oath to eat only grains or only vegetables one has grown and harvested oneself or an oath to never raise a hand against another being of any kind would all be examples of legendary oaths. Legendary oaths grant eight bonus points.

Oaths in a particular area (as determined by the Storyteller — combat, sex, eating and drinking, for example) can be stacked, but each stacked oath past the first is reduced in value by the total number of oaths. So, a pair of oaths to never initiate violence and to use no bladed weapon would be worth five bonus points, rather than six (3 + 3, -1 for an additional oath in the same arena). Legendary oaths generally cannot be stacked — it is normally impossible to get more restrictive than a legendary oath in a particular sphere.

GENERAL RULES FOR THAUMATURGY

Rituals, the Sciences and the Arts all share certain common rules. These rules are generally held to apply unless they are specifically countered in a particular description.

PAYING THE COSTS

To make it easier for Exalted characters to keep track of costs, spells and effects, we list their costs based on motes of Essence. Thaumaturges rarely have access to a direct source of Essence that can be used in short-term effects. They have several other means of drawing forth the power they need to fuel spells, however.

WILLPOWER

The most common source for paying a spell's costs is a thaumaturge's own Willpower. By focusing his will upon a desired outcome, the thaumaturge uses his occult knowledge to make it happen. Each dot of temporary Willpower spent provides the equivalent of 3 motes of Essence, which must be spent on a single spell, in the same turn the Willpower was spent. This Willpower is recovered normally. A thaumaturge can spend as many dots of Willpower in one turn as his highest Virtue - 2.

In extreme conditions, a thaumaturge may choose to burn permanent Willpower. This provides 10 motes of Essence, but the dot of permanent Willpower is lost and can only be recovered through experience. Only one dot of Willpower can be burned in this fashion per scene.

EXERTION

The thaumaturge concentrates and burns his personal energy in fueling the spell, leaving him spent and drained. For each mote of Essence spent in this fashion, the thaumaturge takes two health levels of bashing damage that cannot be soaked or avoided in any fashion (including through the use of Hearthstones, Charms or other methods). This damage is recovered normally.

BLOOD

Blood is a potent source of magic. Although some schools of thaumaturgy frown on using blood sacrifices, most see no harm in it. Human sacrifice is frequently reserved only for the most desperate, or most necessary, rituals, but this is often more a matter of practicality than a matter of virtue or ethics.

Mortal blood provides the equivalent of 1 mote of Essence per health level lost. This is limited to no more than 6 motes for heroic mortals or 2 motes for extras — further blood loss merely kills the sacrifice. Health levels lost in this fashion are not soakable or avoidable in any fashion, but they can be regained normally. The blood of animals is normally not potent enough to provide Essence usable for mortal spells — when their sacrifice is called for in a ritual or offering, it is for other reasons than powering the spell. Blood may be stored for up to an hour before use, but it loses half of its potency — 1 mote per two health levels sacrificed.

Blood used to power spells must be ritually sacrificed - a thaumaturge cannot power spells with the spilling of blood in combat. This ritual takes one turn for a willing victim and a number of turns for an unwilling victim, depending on how well bound she is (normally three to five turns). The thaumaturge can choose to use his own blood to power a spell — this takes no extra time, just a sharp blade.

CHIMINAGE

Spirits can choose to power spells for a thaumaturge. Most commonly, the spirit must be present at the casting of the spell or ritual and simply channels power into the spell as it is cast. This costs twice the spell's normal cost in Essence, plus one Willpower. Alternately, a god can choose to use a Conditional Blessing (see p. 82), committing a sum of Essence to the blessing. If the conditions of the blessing are fulfilled, the subject of the blessing receives half the Essence committed to it as a source of power that can be used for a single spell.

INVESTMENT

Spirits, Solars and the Dragon-Blooded can invest mortals with some measure of their power for a time, using the Charms listed in the "Investment Charms" sidebar. This was more commonly done in the early days of the First Age. Later, the Exalted grew concerned about placing too much (or any) power in the hands of mortals, and use of these Charms became limited. In the Age of Sorrows, few Exalted learn these Charms, and fewer still make common use of them. The Dynasts see it as vaguely blasphemous and decadent, while few Solars have grown sufficiently in power to make effective use of this ability. Lunars never developed the ability to grant Essence to their servants, having few servants they would trust in this fashion, and the Sidereals never had enough Essence to make this worthwhile, preferring other methods of empowering their servants.

INVESTMENT CHARMS

SPIRITS

ESSENCE-GIFTING METHOD

Cost: 1 mote per mote granted, plus 1 mote committed per 4 motes granted

Duration: Until released

Type: Simple

Minimum Compassion: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Benefaction, Dreamspeak

Spirits sometimes use this Charm to aid their mortal servants, granting them some measure of power to wield on their behalf. To use the Charm, the spirit normally marks the mortal in some fashion — this may be as simple as a pendant or pin proclaiming the mortal is aligned with the spirit, or it may be as elaborate as whole-body tattoos, ritual scarification or a stain on the mortal's soul. After doing this, the spirit can channel Essence to the mortal through this Charm. The spirit can channel up to twice the mortal's Willpower + permanent Essence in motes to the mortal, paying 1 mote for each mote transferred and committing 1 additional mote per 4 motes granted. These motes are committed until the spirit chooses to drop the

Charm, at which point, the mortal loses all Essence granted. Motes granted in this fashion do not regenerate normally — in order to gain more power, the mortal must once again be granted motes by the spirit. Motes gained in this fashion may be used in any way mortals may normally spend Essence, including committing them to attune to artifacts, if the mortal has the right Merits. Artifacts attuned in this fashion function for one week before becoming de-attuned — the motes committed do not regenerate normally, and so, eventually, their power fades.

SOLARS

POWER-INVESTING PRANA

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Until released

Type: Simple

Minimum Lore: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Will-Bolstering Method

Solars of the First Age used this Charm to empower their trusted servants and most skilled mortal warriors with enough Essence to make use of the weapons and armor that could be crafted for their use and to power minor artifacts to aid them in their service to the Exalted. To use this Charm, the character must spend a turn in skin-to-skin contact with the recipient and spend 3 motes of Essence — these motes are committed so long as the Charm is in effect. Upon doing this, the Exalt can transfer up to three times her permanent Essence to the mortal, up to a limit of three times the mortal's Willpower. These motes do not regenerate normally — once they have all been spent, the Charm ends. If the Solar withdraws her commitment, the Charm also ends immediately, and the mortal loses all granted motes. Motes gained in this fashion may be used in any way mortals may normally spend Essence, including committing them to attune to artifacts, if the mortal has the right Merits. Artifacts attuned in this fashion function for one week before becoming de-attuned. The motes committed to the subject do not regenerate normally.

DRAGON-BLOODED

WISE COMMANDER'S GIFT

Cost: 1 mote per mote granted, 1 additional committed mote, 1 Willpower

Duration: One week per permanent Essence

Type: Simple

Minimum Bureaucracy: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Benevolent Master's Blessing

Use of this Charm was never common, even in the First Age — Terrestrial Exalted simply do not have enough Essence to grant it to their servants and prefer to make artifacts that are both operable by mortals and limited in



power (to prevent those mortals using them against their masters). Still, in some instances, no other alternative is available, and so, this Charm was developed. The Terrestrial may grant no more motes than twice his permanent Essence with this Charm, nor may a mortal benefit from more than one application of this Charm at once, even from different Dragon-Blooded. The Dragon-Blooded can gift Essence to as many mortals as his permanent Essence at any time and commits 1 additional mote per mortal affected in this fashion.

Motes gifted by this Charm do not regenerate normally — once they have all been spent, the Charm ends. If the Terrestrial withdraws his commitment, the Charm also ends immediately, and the mortal loses all granted motes. Motes gained in this fashion may be used in any way mortals may normally spend Essence, including committing them to attune to artifacts, if the mortal has the right Merits. Artifacts attuned in this fashion function for one week before becoming de-attuned — the motes committed do not regenerate normally, and so, eventually, their power fades.

GEOMANCY

Certain rituals can attune a thaumaturge's aura with the ambient Essence of an area. This is not the same as attuning to a Manse — the thaumaturge taps only a small

fraction of the Essence available and can only draw meaningful amounts (a mote of Essence an hour or more) from the most powerful of dragon lines, but this small amount can be enough. (For more information, see "Geomancy," p. 146.)

FORMULAS, PROCEDURES AND ASPECTS

The Arts and Sciences have vast bodies of knowledge associated with them — there are hundreds of rituals for warding spirits from a home, dozens of ways to summon an elemental, etc. Similarly, the number of alchemical formulas or methods of enchanting a minor talisman are myriad and vary from region to region — a spell that is efficacious in the East may be worthless in the West, as it draws on some substance, pays homage to some spirit or otherwise makes use of some aspect of the East that is simply unavailable elsewhere.

In game terms, every formula and ritual has an orientation: North, South, East, West or Realm. Spells from one region away (North to East or West, Realm to any other orientation, East to North or South, etc.) are performed at +1 difficulty, and any preparations (gathering materials, etc.) take twice as long. Spells from two regions away (Western spells in the East, Northern spells in the South) are at +2 difficulty and take five times as long to prepare for — alternately, in large cities, the time can be reduced to

twice as long, but the required Resources for the spell (if any) is increased by 1.

For Example: Jyu is trying to create a sleeping potion he learned in Lookshy while staying in a tavern in Wavecrest. The formula is normally difficulty 2, takes 2 hours to prepare and costs Resources 2. In Wavecrest, it will be difficulty 4, and it will either take 10 hours to gather the necessary materials (or research adequate substitutes), or 4 hours and Resources 3.

The spells listed in this book are reasonably generic — versions of them can be found in all parts of Creation, suitably modified for the local materials. Other spells or formulas may be specific to a given region or, at least, require materials that are more difficult to acquire outside of that region. Thaumaturges may choose to learn multiple versions of a spell if they travel frequently. Once one version is learned, additional versions for other orientations cost only a single experience or bonus point to learn (so to completely master all versions of a given spell would cost four bonus points, in addition to the normal cost of the spell).

Formulas and procedures are recipes for creating specific enchanted items or alchemical substances — a rote memorization of a complex process, rather than an inherent understanding of the process and why it works. In the Second Age, they are much more common than actual knowledge of Alchemy or Enchantment, and this is reflected in their low cost.

MORTAL SPELLS AND TIMING

Mortal spells are typically treated the same as spells of the three circles and use the same rules, with a few exceptions.

Mortal spells are **always** the last action to happen in a turn. This fact cannot be altered in any fashion — even artifacts cannot alter the fact that thaumaturgy is simply slower than all other forms of Essence manipulation.

Because mortal spells operate on an extended timeframe, they require some special rules regarding actions and timing. It is entirely possible for a mortal thaumaturge to be disturbed — or even attacked — while in the middle of casting a spell. (Rituals, formulas, etc. have their own rules for timing. See p. 125 for more details.) If the thaumaturge is distracted (see **Exalted**, pp. 216-217), the task is Wits + Occult, with a difficulty of 2 (instead of 1). This is a simple task, and the thaumaturge is treated as having split his dice pool for any other actions in the turn. The thaumaturge can still only take dice actions that are permitted by continuing effects — effectively, each dice action granted by a Charm or artifact is at a three-die penalty (as if it was the second action in a two-action series).

Willpower or Essence used for a ritual or other thaumaturgical effect is committed when the spell is begun but not actually spent until the spell is cast.

MORTAL USES OF ESSENCE

Mortals who have learned how to access the stores of Essence locked up inside them, either through acquiring the Essence Mastery or Essence Awareness Merits or some other method, can use their motes of temporary Essence in a number of ways.

Mortals possessing Wyld taints that require the expenditure of Willpower may substitute 3 motes of Essence for each point of Willpower required to use the ability. This duplicates the effects of the Essence Channeler blight (see **E:L**, p. 216). Storytellers may want to increase the cost of substituting Essence for Willpower for the Essence Channeler blight in order to bring the costs in line with all other uses.

Similarly, any other mystical or magical ability that requires Willpower may also be powered by Essence, at the Storyteller's discretion. In most cases, this costs 3 motes of Essence for each point of Willpower substituted in this fashion. This is not applicable to powers that require some combination of Essence and Willpower — just as with Charm costs, the Willpower cost cannot be avoided in these cases.

Mortals who can control their Essence can, given time and experimentation, learn to attune to artifacts just as the Exalted or God-Blooded can (see the Magical Attunement Merit, p. 120). Those who lack the Magical Attunement Merit cannot attune to artifacts, but may pay the activation costs for weapons or other devices that do not require attunement to operate (for examples of this, see the Lookshy section of **Exalted: The Outcaste**, pp. 47-64).

Naturally, mortals can use their Essence pool to power thaumaturgical effects. They may, alternatively, choose to use older methods as well. Exalted can use any method they choose to power thaumaturgy. Mortal methods of substituting for Essence (burning health levels, sacrifices, etc.) do not release Essence rapidly enough to be used in Charms or sorcery, however. Only motes from an Exalt's Essence pool or stored in artifacts specifically designed to allow the rapid release of motes can be used to power these effects.

THE PRIMACY OF SORCERY

In all things, the three circles of sorcery trump mortal thaumaturgy in power. Thaumaturgy is useful, and many Exalted thaumaturges continue to develop their skill in it — particularly the Sciences — after they have mastered Terrestrial Circle sorcery, but few would even begin to claim that thaumaturgy is more powerful.

The effects of thaumaturgy are, in the end, transient. A thaumaturge might make a walkaway talisman that lasts a century or two. A sorcerer can create an artifact that grants good luck for an Age. A thaumaturge can remove a curse placed on a person by another mortal, with time and effort. A sorcerer can use Emerald Countermagic to remove it — or any other work of thaumaturgy in the area — without any effort at all.

Emerald Countermagic should be considered efficacious — without side effects or startling pyrotechnics — against any mortal magics. Directed against a mortal talisman, it removes the enchantments present — a glass blade becomes ordinary glass again, a walkaway loses its enchantment, etc. The only exception to this rule is alchemy. Imbued potions normally retain their effects until the end of the duration, though the more powerful the potion, the less likely it is to retain power. All other effects in an area equal to (the caster's permanent Essence x 10) yards immediately lose their potency. Only enchantments or alchemical effects require specific targeting. At the Storyteller's discretion, extremely old and powerful wards may require specific targeting as well, especially if the sorcerer is the person being warded against.

ARTS

The Arts are a common body of nearly universal mystical knowledge. Unlike with the Sciences or rituals, a person does not need any special knowledge or skill to use these abilities, beyond the basic Occult necessary — anyone with the right Occult score can attempt to summon the dead, to ward a home against plague spirits or to undo a curse or binding. Even those who lack specific training can attempt many of these feats, in the same way that a child can attempt to beat someone with their fists, despite having no Brawl Ability.

The Arts are divided into a number of fields of study — Summoning, Warding, Exorcism and Astrology — and each field of study is further subdivided into a number of specialties. A thaumaturge does not need to buy a field of study in order to purchase a specialty in that field, and many do not — a mortal does not need to master all there is to know about the Art of Summoning to call up a demon, only the particular rituals involved. Purchasing a specialty is like rote memorization of a particular subject. The thaumaturge has focused on that one area of study, at the expense of the entire field.

RULES

The following material provides a mechanical representation of the effects of the Arts. In actual practice, the Arts are not a set of simple systems, but a complex catalog of acts and small magics. Players shouldn't let the mechanical simplicity of the system detract from their portrayal of their thaumaturges as savants who are masters of many esoteric trivias.

BUYING ARTS

Although anyone with the appropriate Occult knowledge can attempt any of the Arts, those who have received training in a particular Art can achieve feats the untrained can only dream of. A thaumaturge may choose to buy training at character generation or later with experience. Training in the basic Art adds two dice to attempts to use that Art.

Characters can also purchase specialties in a particular Art. Each art lists a number of specialties, but players may also develop their own specialties — a character could choose to buy a specialty of "Local Fair Folk" for the Art of Warding, for example. Specialties add one die to relevant dice pools, but no more than two specialties can be applied to any die roll. The most a character could gain would be four dice — mastering the Art (Warding, +2), a general specialty in the Art (Fair Folk, +1) and a relevant specialty (Local Fair Folk, +1). Player-made specialties should be limited in scope. They should either include both a geographical (orientation in Creation — East, South, etc.) and conceptual limiter of some kind (so Eastern war gods is okay, but neither Eastern gods nor war gods would be), or they should be tied to a location (gods local to my village). Storytellers should feel free to disallow player-created specialties they think are too broad or charge extra experience or bonus points for them.

TIME TO CAST

Although simple effects can be performed relatively quickly — on the order of minutes for a simple summoning or warding — most uses of the Arts take far longer to set up. The Arts are performed on the order of hours and days, rather than turns or minutes, especially when powerful or lasting effects are desired.

THE ART OF SUMMONING (OCCULT •)

Roll: Charisma + Occult

Cost: 3 motes per attempt

Aspects: Ghosts, beasts, spirits, elementals, man

Calling the spirits, the elementals and the dead are what is commonly thought of when Summoners are mentioned, but in fact, nearly any creature can be called to a thaumaturge who knows the right words to use and the right actions to take. The hunter that whistles up prey to be slaughtered, the horse trainer who can call in the herds

from the field — they are as much summoners as the black cultist making deals with the Yozis' servants.

As a special rule, a thaumaturge may choose to further limit one or more of their summoning aspects — a shaman might only be able to summon up the ghosts of his ancestors, for example, or a hunter might only know the words to bring prey animals to his presence, while a soldier might know the words to summon a spirit of war to her side. This halves the cost of the aspect and should be noted on the character sheet — as with Summoning (War Gods), for example.

BEASTS (OCCULT •)

Summoning and controlling the beasts of the wood and the field and the sky and the sea is an art practiced by many in the Second Age. Nearly any caravan master will know how to calm his beasts, just as hunters may draw prey to their snares, and breeders arrange to make sure the strongest and healthiest of their breeding stock are interested in each other at the appropriate times.

Summoning beasts can be used in two ways — to call creatures to the thaumaturge and to control them once they are there. Calling creatures is a relatively simple task. The player spends one point of the character's temporary Willpower and rolls the character's Charisma + Occult, with a difficulty equal to (the creature's control rating - 2, minimum 1). If the species called exists within calling range (normally one mile per dot of the thaumaturge's permanent Essence), such a beast will make its way to where the thaumaturge is located — this normally takes two hours, but each extra success reduces this time by 15 minutes. Summoning more than one member of a species is +1 difficulty to summon "whatever's available" or +2 difficulty for a specific number.

Controlling creatures is slightly more difficult. The roll to actually command a beast is Manipulation + Occult, with a difficulty equal to the creature's control rating - 1 (plus any modifiers for complexity or Intelligence). If the roll succeeds, the animal will undertake the orders it is given to the best of its ability. The thaumaturge must have a clear idea of the task or action he wishes to have performed. This is easiest if it's a single word or action — complex statements of desire or sophisticated concepts are beyond most beasts. For every two words beyond the first, add 1 to the difficulty of the task roll, subtracting the creature's Intelligence (normally 1). Failure usually indicates only that the animal does not perform as desired, while a botch often means the creature flees, attacks the thaumaturge or otherwise becomes unresponsive.

MORTALS (OCCULT •)

Although the basic rituals for summoning mortals to one's side are easily learned, their execution is far less certain. In order to summon a mortal, the thaumaturge

must know his name — his actual name, not his title or position. "Hetman Liu Ke" is sufficient. "The Hetman of Shadowfalls district" is not. The thaumaturge must also have some sample from the person to be summoned — this sample could be of hair, nail clippings or some other bodily substance. Summoning mortals is a resisted action. The thaumaturge's player rolls Manipulation + Occult, while the Storyteller rolls the target's Willpower + permanent Essence. Players of Exalts roll Willpower + (permanent Essence x 2) and gain two free successes on all rolls to resist beckoning by thaumaturgy. The Exalted are always **aware** of an attempted summoning and of who attempted it. What actions an Exalt takes is up to him. If the thaumaturge's player succeeds at the roll, the subject faces a strong compulsion to travel to where the thaumaturge is located.

At one success, the compulsion is strong but not sufficient for the character to threaten the target's life in any way. He will travel by a direct route and make travel arrangements as quickly as possible, but he will not travel in hazardous weather and will take time to make sure local arrangements are in order before departing. At three successes, the subject will take risks and even leave his affairs in disorder, but he will not react in a suicidal fashion to the compulsion. At five successes, there is nothing more important to the subject than getting to where the thaumaturge is, as quickly as possible.

Range attenuates the effect of a summoning — the further away, the less strongly the subject feels the compulsion. Subtract one success for each orientation that separates the thaumaturge from the target (-1 from the East to the Realm, -2 from the East to the West, etc.).

DEMONS (OCCULT ••)

Summoning up demons is perilously simple. Summoning up a demon in a fashion that allows it to be controlled in any meaningful fashion is another matter. Summoning a demon normally requires a human sacrifice. The least demons sometimes demand only a predator's blood — for example, erymanthoi will respond for the blood of any large cat, for they hate these things above all other creatures. Some demons will respond to a summoning whether there are sacrifices made or not — the neomah and teodozjia are particularly known to respond to nearly any summonings, whether blood has been spilt in quantity or not.

Summoning a demon of the First Circle requires a Charisma + Occult roll, with a difficulty of 3. This conjuration forces the demon to appear in Creation, within the same room or close area as the summoner, but it places no particular onus of behavior or geas of command upon the demon, who may then act as it wishes once it arrives in Creation. Mortal thaumaturges who summon up demons

without first setting up careful wards against them rarely live long enough to try a second time.

Mortals cannot force a demon to perform a task — demons can be forced to appear in Creation, but a mortal cannot force one to perform once it arrives. However, demons, particularly those of the First Circle, come to Creation to fulfill their inclinations and will willingly perform the tasks they are created to perform: Erymanthoi will kill when ordered to do so, gilmyne will perform their dances and neomah will prostitute themselves in exchange for samples of flesh. Demons who perform services for mortal thaumaturges are not automatically returned to Malfeas when their service ends. They can choose to remain in Creation, unless banished back to Malfeas. There are simple rituals to perform this task — most of which have long since been lost or destroyed by Yozi-worshippers. Mechanically, these banishing rituals operate with a Manipulation + Occult roll, difficulty 2, with the caveat that only a demon the thaumaturge has summoned can be banished in this fashion. Otherwise, the summoner must use the banishment rules under the Art of Exorcism. Or he can simply accept that he has unleashed a being of ineffable evil into the world.

Demons of the Second Circle cannot be coerced into appearing, and the rituals to beckon them to appear in Creation are normally carefully hidden. Allusions of their power can be found in manuscripts, but unlocking the precise ritual requires an extended Intelligence + Occult roll, with a base difficulty of the demon's permanent Essence and a total number of successes required equal to the demon's permanent Essence squared, with a roll interval of one week. Once this roll is successfully made, the summoner can make his attempt — but whether the demon comes or not is strictly based on its own whims, not on the power of the thaumaturge or how properly the ritual was enacted. No demon of the Third Circle has ever been summoned by a mortal. There are no rituals that are known to be efficacious, and none of the documented attempts to gain their attention has ever resulted in anything more than a host of failed sacrifices.

Second Circle demons come only when it pleases them, when their presence in Creation allows them to further some goal they have or to satiate some desire. This does not mean they will not come when beckoned, for sometimes, they do, but it does mean that the demon is in Creation solely at its own behest, and woe betide the mortal who thinks otherwise. Demons of the Second Circle can rarely be bribed, but they can sometimes be appeased through painstakingly precise knowledge of their whims, understanding of their desires and a willingness in the thaumaturge to follow their... suggestions... in all ways.

Most of the discoverable rituals of summoning for demons of the Second Circle were designed by the demons themselves and contain numerous traps and flaws in them.

Unless a thaumaturge is very careful, or very lucky, he will find his wards mostly ineffective (half normal strength) and himself unable to resist the powers of the demon he has summoned (an effective -3 to Willpower and permanent Essence in all cases). There are still fragments of early records that suggest rituals that can call those of the Second Circle without some of the attendant risks to body and soul. Assembling one of these rituals from the various records of the First Age would be an epic quest for a mortal thaumaturge and is largely beyond the scope of rules, but doubling the needed successes on deciphering the demon's summoning ritual (Essence squared x 2, instead of Essence squared) would be a good basic difficulty if the Storyteller doesn't want to roleplay the entire process out.

ELEMENTALS (OCCULT ••)

Elementals can be readily summoned with little effort. Getting them to do what the summoner wants can be another matter entirely, however. While most elementals are interested in performing services for thaumaturges when summoned, they do not normally work for free — although what the elemental considers payment and what the thaumaturge might consider may be two different things entirely. Like demons, elementals want to do those things that are in their nature: A fire elemental wants to burn things, earth elementals desire stability and stasis, etc.

Elementals are often argumentative, willful and easily provoked. They are also surprisingly loyal once an agreement has been reached, unlike demons, and their absence is less likely to attract attention when compared to the absence of a small god. Summoning an elemental normally requires a Charisma + Occult roll equal to the elemental's permanent Essence. Summoned elementals are not coerced to serve in any way and must be bargained with to obtain their services. The exact nature of the bargain struck depends on the elemental in question, but typically, a sacrifice equal to the elemental's permanent Essence is sufficient. Summoned elementals **are** forsworn from attacking or otherwise harassing a mortal that summons them and may not take action against the mortal for a day and a night after they are summoned, unless they are maltreated during the summoning. Once an agreement is reached, an elemental will serve faithfully. Powerful elementals may send nominees in their place.

Under normal circumstances, elementals will not serve for more than a week, and any task they are set to cannot last longer than one season. Elementals expect to be well rewarded for their services. Fine woods and incenses to be burned (useful for both air and fire elementals — the air elementals partake of the smokes, the fire elementals of the act of burning), precious crystals or gemstones, rare plants or seeds, etc. are all common demands for payment and, normally, are equal in Resources

cost to the elemental's permanent Essence. Alternately, some elementals are willing to exchange favors. They may ask that prayers be devoted to a spirit friend of theirs (or themselves) or that the thaumaturge aid a nearby village, help clean up some problem that vexes the elemental or otherwise make himself useful to the elemental in exchange for its cooperation in his endeavors.

GHOSTS (OCCULT •••)

Ghosts are some of the easiest of creatures to summon. Even far from a shadowland, there are always plenty of Restless Dead who are willing to answer the clarion call of a dish of fresh blood and the promise of more, and even those dead who are satisfied in the Underworld will normally come to see who has spoken their name with an offering of blood.

The process of summoning a ghost is simple. The summoner must either go to the person's grave or to the location of her death or must know the ghost's full name, then make an offering of blood, drawing mystic symbols in the ground in blood and chalk. Funereal incantations must be chanted — those of the ghost's society are best (+1 die) — and then, the blood is poured onto the ground. The entire ritual normally takes about 15 minutes, culminating in a Charisma + Occult roll. A living animal sacrifice adds one die to the dice pool, while a human sacrifice adds two dice. Fresh blood from a relative can add an additional die — but actually sacrificing a relative of the ghost is rarely conducive to friendly relations with the ghost being summoned. The difficulty is 2 in Creation or 1 if performed in a shadowland or during Calibration. The difficulty is further modified by how old the ghost is — add 1 to the difficulty for each century the person being summoned has been dead (as a rough guideline, if unsure, add the ghost's permanent Essence).

During Calibration or in a shadowland, a failed roll does not mean there is no answer to the summons. It merely means that the summoner either failed to summon the right ghost or, alternately, summoned up additional ghosts besides the one called. Every die the roll failed by brings an additional three to five ghosts who have been drawn to the summoning by the scent of blood. Their dispositions and interests (other than in the blood spilt) are up to the Storyteller.

Ghost summoning can be attempted by anyone, but the less a summoner knows of the Underworld, the lower her chances of success. Summoning with no Occult is difficulty +3. With Occult 1, the penalty falls to +2, and with Occult 2, it falls to +1 difficulty.

SPIRITS (OCCULT •••)

A thaumaturge does not summon spirits. He beckons them, asking them to pay attention to him. A beckoning is a special kind of prayer — roll Charisma + Performance,

with a difficulty equal to the spirit's permanent Essence. If this roll is successful, the spirit must fail a Virtue roll — dictated by the summoner — or appear before the thaumaturge. The thaumaturge dictates the Virtue used — and the tack taken in the request for the god to appear — but does not have any power over the spirit once it arrives. And while the spirit's response will be shaded by the Virtue invoked (Compassion will suggest a desire to help, a spirit beckoned with Valor will be ready for a fight, etc.), this reaction can change rapidly if the god comes to believe it has been tricked.

Once a spirit has been invoked, getting it to leave again is another matter, and thaumaturges have little more power over the spirits than ordinary mortals do — which is to say, none. Although not as immediately dangerous as summoning demons, beckoning the gods to appear for capricious or trivial reasons (in the eyes of the spirit, not necessarily those of the mortal) is almost never a good idea.

WHY SUMMON?

If the Art of Summoning seems a particularly dangerous Art, fraught with perils to a thaumaturge's mind, body and immortal soul, it is. A thaumaturge who engages in summoning spirits — particularly more powerful spirits — is dealing with creatures that are often far more powerful than he is, and unlike the Exalted, he doesn't even have the protection of age-old pacts, secret treaties or half-remembered favors to grant him protection from those he summons up.

Nonetheless, summoning can be particularly powerful. Even minor spirits can grant meaningful intercessions on the thaumaturge's behalf, and summoning is, essentially, the easiest way for a thaumaturge to make his wishes and desires heard in the Celestial Bureaucracy, in the Council of Winds or in any other part of the great bureaucratic engines that keep Creation functioning.

What is important is that the thaumaturge has something to offer the spirits he summons, absent his ability to simply compel their obedience. A skilled summoner is a haggler, making bargains of chiminage, worship, precious goods or services in exchange for the favors he needs. This is seen as not being particularly magical — chiminage is an accepted and appropriate way of doing business, and even the Immaculate Order takes part in bribery and chiminage, even if the Order calls it arranging for proper schedules of holidays and reverence. These bargains need not be for physical materials — or even particularly onerous. The ways of spirits are mysterious to mortals, and some of the tasks they ask to have performed are unfathomable.

THE ART OF WARDING (OCCULT •)

Roll: Manipulation + Occult (Perception + Occult to detect weaknesses in an existing ward, Intelligence + Occult to determine the specific warding ritual required)

Cost: 3 motes per attempt

Aspects: Ghosts, demons, elementals, gods, Exalts, animals, mortals, the Wyld, Fair Folk, divination, bad magic

Warding is the simplest of Arts, and in nearly every community, there will be a handful of people who at least know its basics. Wards are barriers against intrusion or contamination. They seal an area off from the presence of the being or influence the ward is designed to defend against. This Art is spread throughout Creation. In the west, witches craft talismans and sing spell-songs to keep away the Sea and to remind islands of their name and history. In Chiaroscuro, barriers of salt fend off the dead, while in the East, glyphs carved into door lintels and windowsills keep the Fair Folk at bay.

Wards come in two types: generic and specific. Generic wards are proof against an entire class or type of creature — a barrier of salt protects against the dead. A specific ward is particular to a given type of creature — hungry ghosts are terrified of lily blossoms, a dreamcatcher can defend against certain types of night-wandering spirits, and so on. There are hundreds of different warding rituals, and knowing the correct ward to use can make a great difference.

Wards nearly always have a physical component to them — a line of salt or ash for the dead, sigils of warding, woven dreamcatchers, statuary. In some cases, these can be living things — cats are trained in the East to keep away breath-stealing spirits and certain types of hostile magic, for example. The time and effort spent in preparing a ward's physical components can impact how long it lasts and how powerful it is. A pouch of salt carefully circled around the thaumaturge will provide only temporary protection, while salt carefully wetted and caked into pre-carved grooves in the pavestones in Chiaroscuro lasts for years — unless someone steals it.

For each day or portion of a day spent preparing the ward, add one success to the ward's durability, and add one success to the ward's strength for every two days spent. This should be adjusted downward for particularly large wards — the most basic of wards to protect a small city from the dead take far longer to prepare than the best of wards to protect a small house.

The materials necessary to ward an area typically have a Resources cost of 2 to protect a decent-sized home. Each increase in Resources covers a larger area. Resources 3 will ward a large mansion, 4 a small town, and 5 a small city.

Long-term wards require maintenance — glyphs must be recarved to keep the edges sharp, lines of salt and ash

must be repaired, etc. This need for maintenance is more common in larger wards — more work must be done to keep the wards active and protecting the entire area equally, or weak spots or even gaps develop, allowing the powerful or the cunning to slip through the cracks in the wards. Maintenance is normally cheap. Resources costs equal the original costs - 3 per year (so a mansion can be maintained for almost no money, while a city might cost Resources 2 to maintain). The downside is that it is manpower intensive. Maintaining the wards on a mansion will take one person a week's labor, while keeping the wards of a city strong might take 100 men the same time, spread throughout the course of a year. Wards that are not maintained lose both Strength and Durability more rapidly, losing one dot of each per year. Additionally, large wards may develop weak spots or gaps in the protection. Weak spots typically halve the Strength of the ward, while gaps allow unlimited travel through the wards.

WARDING TALISMANS

Talismans enchanted to fend off various entities are created by enchanters wise in the ways of the Art of Warding. A thaumaturge must have Enchantment 3 as well as at least a specialty in the aspect of the entities he is trying to protect against in order to craft a warding talisman. Warding talismans are rarely very strong. They subtract one die from any actions taken against the wearer for every four successes scored on the Dexterity + Occult die roll to enchant the talisman, to a maximum of three dice. Talismans that protect against inimical but nonsentient threats, such as the Wyld, instead provide a one-die bonus on relevant dice pools (Willpower, Soak, etc.) as necessary.

Every time a warding talisman is used, the user's player must roll the character's Willpower, with a difficulty equal to the dice penalty afforded by the talisman. If the roll is successful, the talisman retains its power. Failure reduces the talisman's potency by 1 (from -3 to -2, etc.). A botch on the roll instantly renders the talisman powerless. The power of a talisman is not immediately evident and must be ascertained normally.

Most warding talismans have a cost in Resources equal to their potency +1 — so a talisman that subtracts three dice costs Resources 4. This cost can be adjusted up or down for relative commonness — talismans to protect against the Wyld are common in the West and the North, for example. Common talismans have a Resources cost 1 less than normal, that is, equal to their potency.

Once the ward has been researched and prepared, the thaumaturge's player rolls his character's Manipulation + Occult (along with appropriate specialties and bonuses) and divides the successes up between the ward's two attributes: strength and durability. The difficulty for a warding is based on size. One success is sufficient to protect a good-sized room, and three successes will protect a decent-sized house, while five successes will protect a small town.

Strength: Strength determines how powerful the ward is. Strong wards can keep out even the most voracious of hungry ghosts, turn away Fair Folk lords or repel even puissant gods. A minor ward will have problems keeping away even the slightest ghosts or keeping servant fae out of the cupboards. Anything trying to pass an appropriate ward subtracts 1 from the ward's Strength for each dot of Permanent Essence up to 4 it has, and by 2 for each dot it has over 4 (so a god with Essence 6 would subtract 8 from the ward's strength). Exalted of any kind, demons of the Third Circle and gods with an Essence higher than 8 double this reduction — an Exalt with a permanent Essence of 5, for example, would subtract 12 from the ward's strength. The results of any attempt to breach the ward are detailed below.

(Strength - Essence)	Results
Less than 0	Target walks through the ward without noticing it.
0	Target tears through the ward, but it takes two turns.
1	Target can approach the ward and might even be able to reach through it (up to the range of its arm), but it can activate no magics through the ward, nor attack anyone not in arm's reach (nor drag them through the ward).
2	Target can approach the ward, but cannot penetrate it.
3	Target can only reach the edge of the ward by spending a dot of temporary Willpower. This expenditure lets the target stay in proximity of the ward for a number of turns equal to her permanent Essence + Willpower. Actual contact — touching surfaces the warding sigils are inscribed upon, attempting to pass over a ward's physical manifestation (salt line, etc.) or stepping through doorways or windows that have been warded — delivers bashing damage equal to the thaumaturge's permanent Essence each turn. This damage may be soaked with Stamina and other natural soak only.



- 4 Target will not willingly approach within 10 feet of the barrier, nor remain within 50 feet of it for more than a few minutes. Target suffers twice the thaumaturge's permanent Essence in lethal damage (soakable only by Stamina and other natural soak) each turn it is in contact with the barrier.
- 5 Target will not approach within bowshot of the ward and approaches within sight of it only with reluctance. If driven into contact with the ward through some act of insane desperation, the target suffers unsoakable lethal damage equal to the thaumaturge's permanent Essence each turn.
- 6+ Target will never consider trying to approach or cross the ward, under any circumstances, fearing death less than the erected wards.

Durability: Durability is a measure of how tough the ward is — how long it will last. Wards with high durability resist tampering (through counterspell or Charm — sorcery can remove wards without effort) and can last for centuries. Wards with low Durability may last only a short time (minutes or even turns) and quickly succumb to any attempt to bypass them. When a thaumaturge tries to unweave a warding, or someone else attempts to tamper with it, durability can be used as an extended difficulty — a number of successes equal to the durability must be acquired in order to defeat the warding. The ward's durability also determines how long the ward will hold power.

Durability	Results
0	A few seconds — a number of turns equal to twice the thaumaturge's permanent Essence.
1	Minutes equal to twice the caster's permanent Essence.
2	A full scene. (About 20 minutes).
3	One day.
4	One week.
5	One month.
6	One year.
7	One decade. Each success beyond seven adds two decades.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT RITUAL

Picking amongst the hundreds of rituals available can be a difficult task. Fortunately, many overlap to a greater or lesser degree — the wards that stop hungry ghosts are also somewhat efficacious against shades, for example. Determining the correct ritual requires a successful Intelligence + Occult roll, against a difficulty based on the creature's renown (or at least commonness), how far the

thaumaturge is from home (the rituals that are efficacious in the Western Ocean may be useless in the Eastern forests). A common breath-stealing spirit from a thaumaturge's home village might be difficulty 1 (or even require no roll), while an obscure and rare form of aquatic hopping dead found only on a single island far in the West might be difficulty 5 or even higher for an Eastern thaumaturge. Any excess successes scored on this roll are added to the ward's strength.

Modifier	Reason
+1	One orientation away (Realm to anywhere, East to South or North, etc.)
+2	Two orientations away (West to East, North to South, or vice versa)
+1-+3	Obscurity (Essence less than 3, uncommon type, small area of responsibility) The Art of Exorcism (Occult ●●●)

Roll: Varies by task — see below

Cost: 6 motes per attempt

Aspects: Ghosts, Fair Folk, demons, spirits

Perhaps only slightly less respected than the Art of Warding is the Art of Exorcism. Rogue spirits and the dead are often found harassing mortals — sometimes with justification, often without — and it is the duty of the ghost hunter or exorcist to deal with these problems and send the beings plaguing mankind back to their rest.

Exorcism is, like warding, mostly a matter of ritual and observance of the correct rites. Some of these rites are intended to mollify or placate a spirit wronged or to bring closure to a ghost that has lost its way. Others are less beneficent, intended to repel or destroy a ghost that has mischief, or worse, on its mind.

Exorcism is broken up into three basic tasks: placation, expulsion and banishment.

Placation: Sometimes it's possible to negotiate with spirits or ghosts. When a minor god or a revered ancestor feels it has been wronged, it may visit misfortunes upon those who have betrayed or crossed it, and if the wrong is properly atoned for, the suffering can be alleviated. Placation is the process of drawing forth the spirit and forcing it to actually state its demands. Beginning the ritual of placation first requires that the exorcist draw the spirit or ghost's attention. In some cases this can be accomplished simply by offering it tea (or perhaps blood, in the case of a ghost or demon). In other cases, long, drawn-out rituals involving incense, the beating of gongs and chanting are required. Once the spirit has materialized — or at least made its presence known — negotiations can begin.

Negotiations are an extended Charisma + Occult task. The thaumaturge must accumulate successes equal to twice the spirit's Willpower + Essence, with an interval of one hour between rolls and a difficulty on each roll equal to (6 - the spirit's Compassion). A failure adds the dice failed by to the total number of successes needed. The

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Wards have a number of advanced techniques that can be used to apply conditions to them, allow them greater flexibility in application.

Keyed Wards: There are times when you want to be able to allow individual members of a supernatural group in, without giving blanket permission for all to enter — revered family ancestors are welcome, while hungry ghosts are not. This can partly be handled by using specific wards — a ward against hungry ghosts does little to the honored dead. But, in some cases, generic wards must be used, lest the place be festooned with wards against all manner of evil.

Keyed wards allow for these exceptions. A keyed ward is cast at +2 difficulty, but it allows the thaumaturge to create a condition in the ward — a specific group or individual that is allowed to pass through the ward when it would normally be stopped. The conditional group is defined by the thaumaturge — “my honored ancestors,” “the Fair Folk noble known as Never-Ending Glass Tears,” “those who know to say the word ‘alembic’ while passing through the door” or “those who bear my sigil tattooed on their left palm” are all valid groups, for example.

Alarm Wards: Instead of acting as a barrier against entry, wards can act as a detection mechanism, informing the thaumaturge whenever someone enters the area of the ward. This is a silent-alarm system, alerting only the thaumaturge. Alarm wards can be set in conjunction with more powerful manifestations and are cast at +1 difficulty (or, alternately, by reducing the final Strength by 1, the thaumaturge can set wards that not only prevent entry, but alert the thaumaturge if they are disturbed).

Boosting Wards: Wards that are already in place can be boosted in strength or durability — some of the wards protecting the Imperial City could conceivably last longer than the walls they protect. To do this, the thaumaturge must inspect and repair or enhance the physical manifestations of the wards, while, at the same time, reinforcing or rebuilding the Essence patterns of the wards (the actions are, in many ways, one and the same). The thaumaturge’s player can reroll the warding, at a difficulty of 4. Any excess successes are divided in two and then allocated to strength and durability just as if they were original successes.

exorcist’s player can make a total number of rolls equal to her character’s Endurance (or Stamina -2, if she has no Endurance). A botch immediately halts negotiations, but the thaumaturge can often lure the spirit back to the bargaining table with sufficient acts of contrition and sacrifices. Most spirits will be suitably impressed with rituals of exorcism and contrite acts. In total, this process involves the sacrifice of Resources equal to the spirit’s permanent Essence — higher levels may bring a more favorable reaction.

Once the reasons for the spirit’s misbehavior are known, an appropriate form of atonement can be decided upon. Sometimes, the method of atonement is obvious — an ancestor whose tomb has been allowed to fall into disrepair will normally be satisfied if it is cleaned up and brought back to its former glory... with perhaps new shingling and some better doors and a pair of stone guardian lions at the entryway. In other cases, proper atonement may mean some quest undertaken, sacrifices of precious things — some of them material, others less so (reputation, innocence, virginity) — or merely an apology. A particularly aggrieved — or merely callous and petty — spirit will be satisfied only with the shedding of blood, although it need not always be that of the guilty party.

If the price is too high, impossible or merely unfathomable, the exorcist can attempt to arrange some other form of atonement. The exorcist must first attempt to ascertain what kind of atonement or punishment will be acceptable to the spirit in lieu of what it demands. This requires a Wits + Occult roll, with a difficulty equal to the spirit’s Conviction. Extra successes are added as dice to the next roll — conversely, one die is subtracted from the next roll for each die by which this roll failed. The exorcist’s player can then roll her character’s Manipulation + Occult, as an extended roll, with a difficulty equal to the spirit’s Willpower + Conviction, to try and convince the spirit that it should accept this alternate form of atonement instead. If successful, the spirit has accepted this new form of punishment — if not, it is obstinate, refusing anything other than the original terms.

An exorcist can also try to outwit the spirit — indeed, many are the tales of the clever Immaculate monk who tricked the fearsome (but perhaps not so bright) god into forsaking some terrible vengeance. The stories rarely mention the countless numbers of would-be exorcists who were not so clever as they thought, for they rarely come to good ends. Fooling a spirit is a contested roll — the exorcist’s Wits + Occult versus the spirit’s Perception + Awareness. Even if a spirit notices the dupe, it may choose to do nothing about it, pretending to be fooled — a well-done feat of misdirection is a good way for the spirit to back off of an untenable claim without losing face, so long as the exorcist is circumspect in his telling of the tale after the

fact — and if he is not, there is nothing to say that the spirit may not chase down and kill the exorcist for his temerity.

Expulsion: Some spirits or ghosts take over the living for sport or to slake some unnatural thirst or another. Others, such as demons, have darker motives. A skilled exorcist can attempt to drive out a spirit or ghost that has taken a mortal over with some Charm or Arcanos. Driving a spirit out of a mortal is an extended Manipulation + Occult roll, with a difficulty equal to the spirit's lowest Virtue. The exorcist must accumulate successes equal to twice the spirit's highest Virtue. Each roll represents 10 minutes and costs a Willpower.

EXORCISM RITUALS

Exorcists make use of a number of rituals to enhance their abilities against spirits, demons and the dead. These rituals allow the exorcist to find and attack spirits when they have no other alternative and can be found in the section on rituals, starting on page 148.

Banishment: When a thaumaturge is unable to come to some arrangement with a spirit or demon, she can try to banish the spirit from her presence, at least for a time. This is typically a delaying tactic and nothing more — the exorcist must take steps to make sure that, when the entity returns, there are plenty of surprises lined up for it — or

that the exorcist and her charges have long since vacated the premises.

Spirits cannot be banished or forced to vacate a location for more than a few scenes. The best ways for a thaumaturge — even a powerful one — to get a spirit to leave is to flatter it, to appease it, to bribe it, to ask its superiors to please take it away — or to get an Exalt to kill it or drive it away. Prayers can be made to try and invoke the intercession of a rogue spirit's putative superiors, but these are rarely effective (increases the normal difficulty of prayers by 3). If these prayers are successful, the spirit will normally be called away by some important missive, rather than through a more direct or overt kind of action — even in removing rogue spirits, the gods are typically subtle.

Demons can also be banished from a place for a night and a day by a thaumaturge. Prayers to the gods regarding demons are routed to the Bureau of Destiny and, when successful, are often far from subtle. Effects can range from a hasty intercession by a Sidereal or other demon hunter (though the characters may never know this is what happened, seeing only an old holy man or wandering Immaculate monk drive the demon away) to the sudden arrival of a Crimson Panoply of Battles' quick-response force of celestial lions, lesser elemental dragons, thunderbirds and huraka.

Elementals can be exiled from a place defended by an exorcist for up to a month, although rarely does this become necessary — elementals are notoriously prone to bribery and other, less coercive tools at the exorcist's disposal.

Type	Roll	Cost Per Roll	Successes Needed to Banish	Length of Banishment
Lesser Spirit*	Conviction + Valor	3 motes	permanent Essence x 2	one week
God**	Conviction + Valor + permanent Essence	2 motes	permanent Essence x 3	one hour
Incarna***	Cannot be banished by mortals. As "God" for Exalted, but permanent Essence x 4 successes needed.			
Lesser Demon*	Willpower	3 motes	permanent Essence x 2	A night and a day
Demon Lord**	Willpower + permanent Essence	3 motes	permanent Essence x 3	A night and a day
Demon Prince***	Cannot be banished by mortals. As "God" for Exalted, but permanent Essence x 4 successes needed.			
Lesser Elemental*	highest Virtue + permanent Essence	3 motes	permanent Essence + Conviction	One month
Elemental Lord	highest Virtue + permanent Essence	2 motes	permanent Essence + Conviction + Valor	One week
Elemental Prince	highest Virtue + permanent Essence	2 motes	permanent Essence + Willpower	A night and a day
Ghost	sum of two highest Virtues	5 motes	Willpower	Until re-summoned
Ghost Lord	sum of two highest Virtues	5 motes	Willpower + Conviction	Until re-summoned
Deathlord***	Cannot be banished by mortals. As "God" for Exalted, but permanent Essence x 4 successes needed.			

* Entities listed as "Lesser" are those with an Essence lower than 3. Ghosts are considered "Lesser."

** Gods, Elemental Lords, Demon Lords and Ghost Lords are those with an Essence of 4 to 6.

*** Incarna, Demon Princes, Elemental Princes and Deathlords have an Essence of 7+.

Ghosts can be permanently laid to rest or, at least, driven back to the Underworld. The gods are loath to answer prayers regarding the dead (+2 difficulty) not because of fear of the Malfeans or the Underworld, but simply because most of them feel that mortals ought to be able to handle their revered ancestors without help—and they are largely correct in this assumption.

The process for performing a banishment is identical in each case. Banishment requires an extended opposed roll—the exorcist's player rolls the better of her character's Manipulation + Occult or Willpower + permanent Essence (depending on if the thaumaturge is trying to convince or trick it into leaving or force it to leave with brute power). The Storyteller rolls the Traits of the spirit that are listed in the table below. Each roll costs the exorcist 3 motes and represents one minute. The exorcist's player cannot make more rolls in a banishment than her character's Stamina + permanent Essence. The entity must also pay Essence for each roll to resist banishment. If it is unwilling or unable to spend the motes listed below for each roll to resist, it automatically fails and is banished for the set period of time. Extra successes garnered in the banishing process double the banishment period (one hour, two hours, four hours, etc.).

GHOST HUNTERS

Ghost hunters are respected mystics, half warrior, half wise man. These wandering exorcists travel from town to town, settling disputes between the mortal world, the spirit world and the lands of the dead. Most are highly skilled in the Arts of Warding, Summoning and Exorcism, and many are also skilled martial artists or warriors in addition. Holy Aura is a common Merit, and some are, indeed, holy men, bound by vows of duty and asceticism to their lonely wandering path.

For every legitimate ghost hunter, however, there are a dozen bands of con men, fakers, tricksters and frauds wandering the roads. Some are themselves spirits or ghosts, acting both as haunt and exorciser-of-haunts, seeking chiminage and sacrifice through wholly unscrupulous means. Others are mere mortals, preying upon the guilty-minded, the weak-willed and the foolish with simple shows of misdirection and trickery and by playing upon common fears. Some even have some small measure of thaumaturgical talent, and a few could, indeed, be ghost hunters of some renown, if they weren't so busy fleecing poor villagers.



THE ART OF ASTROLOGY (OCCULT ••••)

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Cost: 0 motes per attempt

Aspects: The Exalted, mortals, the stars of the dead, gods
Mortal thaumaturges have, over the millennia, researched, stolen and otherwise acquired a surprisingly complete set of astrological ephemera — tables, charts, star maps and stellar associations that detail the effects the stars and constellations have on a person or group's destiny.

The first task of an astrologer in making a prediction is to gather as much information about the subject and his family as can be gathered — births, deaths in the family and dates of certain relevant events (first menses for women, for example). This information is then entered into charts of data, and correspondences with heavenly events are drawn up. These tables can then be used, in conjunction with formulas, tables and information gathered from checking the night sky, to cast a prediction.

Predictions are made using Intelligence + Occult, with a difficulty equal to (8 - any dots the character may have in the Destiny Merit [heroic mortal characters can always be counted as having a Destiny of at least 1]). Access to Varangian or First Age astrological machinery makes the base difficulty of this roll 5, rather than 8. The more successes scored beyond the base difficulty, the more accurate the predictions (in general terms) or the longer the predictions can be cast into the future. Successes should be divided into duration and accuracy, as shown below:

Successes	Duration	Accuracy
1	One month	Extremely vague, at best ("The road ahead is difficult")
2	One season	Vague ("You're coming into trouble")
3	Half a year	Enlightening ("Old enemies will darken your path")
4	One year	Somewhat accurate ("A former rival will seek vengeance")
5	Three years	Reasonably accurate ("A former classmate seeks to vindicate his belief in his own superiority over you")
6+	Ten years	Accurate ("Shao Yin will seek to disabuse his compatriots of the notion that you are the superior martial artist by challenging you")

Storytellers should always keep in mind that, while predictions made using the Art of Astrology tend to come true — if the gods or Sidereals do nothing to meddle with

the Tapestry of Fate in the meantime — they do not have to be exactly accurate. Predictions are often misleading, inconclusive, missing important details or otherwise subject to erroneous interpretation.

ERRONEOUS CONCLUSIONS

Astrologers — both mortal and Exalted — are, at best, mislead and, in some cases, frankly mistaken as to the nature of astrology and the role of the stars and the constellations in respect to destiny and fate. Few know that the stars are a system for displaying status, rather than the actual harbingers of destiny, for example. Those who do know of the original purpose of the stars are only rarely aware that their purpose has been at least altered — and more properly, supplanted and revised — since the beginnings of the First Age. The term Loom of Fate is seen by most as a poetic metaphor, rather than the actual machine of destiny. Only a handful of mortals know that destiny can be altered by direct action. Most know only that the gods can influence fate and destiny.

As a result, astrology is largely seen as being unreliable when applied to individuals, save in very broad strokes, and less than accurate even when applied to large groups or organizations — the repeated editing and changing made by the pattern spiders and the Sidereals renders most readings suspect, particularly when looked at closely or for longer time periods.

SCIENCES

The four Sciences, alchemy, enchantment, geomancy and weather working, are nearly as important to mortals in the Second Age as modern technology and science are to humans today — they are the cornerstones on which much of society functions. A thaumaturge can create a warding to protect a town — an enchanter can create warding talismans that protect the town's inhabitants when they go out to gather firewood.

Despite this, the Sciences are fraught with peril and trickery. Most thaumaturges are mountebanks who, at best, know only a handful of formulas or procedures, fixed processes that let them replicate specific items or potions.

ALCHEMY

Alchemy is the art of producing compounds or substances that have (usually) short-term magical effects. Most alchemy is fairly simple herbalism. The alchemist uses the properties of various plant and animal parts to enhance the natural processes of the human body or to

HOW SCIENTIFIC IS IT?

Neither alchemy, enchantment, geomancy nor weather working are sciences as we know them today—they are not based on the scientific method, but rather, on enlightened and focused dabbling, divine (often literally) inspiration, a lot of luck and vast amounts of careful documentation. While there are laws of thaumaturgy that are followed and known properties of materials and substances that can be used to guide an experimenting thaumaturge in his research, once he steps away from the tried and true recipes and formulas in his grimoires and manuscripts, he is largely on his own—and is likely to, at the very least, expend large sums of money on broken or ruined crockery and glassware.

Most practical applications of the Sciences are based around either known variations of tried and tested formulas or in altering them in ways that are *almost* guaranteed to be safe. Many thaumaturges never even try to alter a formula or procedure, preferring a steady and safe course.

achieve other effects, and while their effects can be spectacular, they are not truly magical in nature. At the higher levels of knowledge, alchemy truly comes into its own. By purifying and revealing the essential natures of the materials used—mixing elements or metals based on their cosmic significance, on their elemental alignment, or based on their associations—alchemy gains the ability to cause truly miraculous feats.

Internal alchemy is the most dangerous of all forms of alchemy, and many thaumaturges refuse to practice it. At least with external alchemy, or herbalism, there is a chance to test an alchemical mixture before imbibing it. In internal alchemy, the thaumaturge ingests the various compounds and converts them into the desired substance in her digestive tract through force of will. The advantage is that the effect takes place nearly immediately, instead of requiring days of preparation. The disadvantage is that, if the thaumaturge is unsuccessful, many of the ingredients she is imbibing are highly toxic until the substance is completed.

Alchemy normally has no cost in motes to perform—its effects are generated from the passage of time and the ingredients used in producing the material. Advanced alchemy (effects with a strength of 3 dots or higher) cannot be performed without the use of a lab, however—this normally costs Resources 3 to maintain. Additionally, the ingredients necessary, while usually available in any major city or large town, can have a cost as well, usually equal to the level of the effect being produced -1. Internal alchemy is always performed at a +2 difficulty and costs one Will-

power per attempt. It can, however, perform effects all the way up to five dots.

A failed internal alchemy roll typically results in a fairly nasty poison. The best the alchemist can hope for is violent illness as the reagents intermingle in new, interesting and nauseating fashions in her gut.

- The alchemist can produce a wide variety of reasonably mundane formulas—minor painkillers, mild anti-inflammatories and potions to counter the effects of illness. In contemporary terms, she can stock a medicine cabinet. These potions provide no bonuses to Medicine or Resistance rolls, but they may reduce the difficulty of those rolls by 1 in specific circumstances.

- Alchemical potions of this level can allow a person to exceed her normal potential for a short time, grant extra resistance to disease or pain or otherwise improve a person's chances. They can add one dot to an Attribute for a minute or two, grant an extra die on an Ability check or allow someone to ignore up to a two-die penalty from pain, wounds or some other reason for a few minutes. Healing philtres made with at this level double a person's natural healing rate for one day. Potions of this level cannot raise a person's Traits above mortal limits.

- These potions can enhance their target to superhuman limits for a short time or raise her to mortal limits for a longer period of time—two dots to a single Attribute for up to an hour or one dot for a scene if it raises the Attribute beyond 5. Alternately, a potion could add one dot to a single category of Attribute (all Physical, etc.) for up to a scene. Other options are possible as well. Up to three dots can be added to an Ability or up to six dots for a brief period of time (no more than 20 turns, or one minute). Materials of this strength can also grant non-supernatural Merits to the imbiber for up to an hour (the ability to see in the dark, for example). Up to a four-die penalty can be ignored by the drinker of a potion at this level, for up to a scene. A healing poultice can double the subject's healing rate for up to a week and adds two dice to all Medicine rolls made on the patient.

- Materials produced at this level of strength can have truly lasting effects—an alchemist could purify steel to the point of

being unbreakable and ever-sharp or enhance the lifting properties of hot air until it was as potent as helium. Benefits equal to level 2 potions can be made permanent — the character must pay any relevant experience costs in order for these bonuses to last, just like they normally would to raise an Attribute or Ability or to buy a Merit, but she does not need to spend any time in training.

- The pinnacles of alchemical knowledge. While immortality is beyond even these vaunted heights, with the proper elixirs, the thaumaturge can extend his life indefinitely — certainly by decades, perhaps centuries. Permanent effects equal to potions of three dots in strength can be wrought, and the alchemist learns the secrets of transmutation — the art of changing one thing fundamentally into another, such as the fabled changing of lead into gold. The thaumaturge cannot transform base materials into the Five Magical Materials, however.

INTERNAL ALCHEMY FAILURE

Failed by	Result of failed roll
1	Sick: Stamina + Resistance roll (difficulty 2) to do anything other than feel miserable. Success grants 10 minutes of activity (-2 dice on all pools, and another Stamina + Resistance roll, if physical activity more serious than walking or gentle activity is undertaken). Alchemist's player can only make as many rolls per hour as the character's Willpower.
2	Really Sick: As above, but difficulty is 3, and only five minutes are granted, and only as many rolls per hour as Willpower - 2.
3	Sick as a Dog: As above, but difficulty 4, three minutes of activity per success, and only Willpower - 4 rolls per hour. Alternately, a poison that does 1L damage per potion's level, soaked with Stamina.
4	Poisoned: The poisons ingested do 2L damage per potion level. This damage can be soaked with Stamina. A Stamina + Resistance roll (with a difficulty equal to the poison's level - the alchemist's permanent Essence) costs one Willpower and changes the damage to bashing, if successful. The poison will likely also have side effects based on the desired effect of the

LIMITS ON ALCHEMY

Alchemical formulas are potent but limited in their application and frequently much more useful to mortals than they are for the Exalted, whose Essence-enhanced natures makes them less vulnerable to poisons and diseases but also less affected by most alchemical formulas. Alchemical formulas always suffer from the following limitations:

- Alchemical benefits do not normally stack with bonuses granted by other sources. Only the greatest benefit applies.
 - Most alchemical substances are of limited duration — they typically last for no more than a scene or two, and only subtle effects last longer than hours. This is less true for alterations of material properties — once lead is turned into gold, it is now gold, not lead, and remains gold.
 - Alchemical bonuses do not react well to Charms of similar natures — the Charm's benefit, even if of instant nature, burns away the potion, negating its effects. This is specific to the Ability or Attribute — therefore, a Melee Charm does not burn out a potion that enhances Perception.
 - Alchemical potions typically have only half the normal duration for Exalts and God-Blooded. Spirits and the dead are not affected by most alchemy.
 - Many alchemical formulas of levels 4 or 5 simply do not work on Exalts at all.
- These limitations should definitely be kept in mind when Storytellers make their own alchemical formulas or allow players to create new ones. Failing to adhere to them can result in alchemists producing dice-adding mixtures that can easily throw game balance right out the window.

potion — a potion of strength may leave the alchemist weak and fatigued, for example.

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Badly Poisoned: As above, but the poison does 3L damage per potion level, and the difficulty of the Stamina + Resistance roll is equal to the potion's level + 2 - the alchemist's permanent Essence.

FORMULA DESCRIPTIONS

Each formula has several ratings that help to explain how the formula works and the procedures involved in its production. Each of these ratings is described below.

Name

The most common name for the substance created. The names for some of these formulas are somewhat

generic, as different versions are used in different parts of Creation. So, while a doctor in the North might use an Infusion of Frostflower Blossoms to stave off infection, a Seventh Legion surgeon might use a Tincture of Iodine and nearly everyone uses distilled alcohol, they all have the same game effects.

Alchemy

The level of Alchemy that must be mastered in order to learn and produce this formula.

Roll

The Attribute + Ability dice pool used in producing this formula. This is normally Intelligence + Occult. There are various modifiers that can be made to this roll — see the “Alchemical Modifiers” sidebar.

Difficulty

The basic difficulty for making the formula. This can be modified by circumstances, amounts produced, and other variables — see the “Alchemical Modifiers” sidebar.

Cost of Materials

All alchemical preparations make use of uncommon or rare materials. The cost listed is the base cost for purchasing these materials in a major town or small city. In many cases, these materials can be gathered locally instead — assume that the alchemist must spend two hours gathering materials for each Resource dot in cost. At the Storyteller’s option, potions of levels 4 and 5 may require access to a large trading city or the ability to traverse Creation hunting up ingredients.

Effects

A description of the potion, its effects, how long those effects last and how long the potion will retain its potency once produced.

Addiction

Some alchemical compounds cause dependency, either physical or psychological. This section details the substance’s addictive properties, if it has any.

ALCHEMICAL MODIFIERS

Difficulty	Modifier
+1	Each additional dose after the first
+1	Substituting unavailable ingredients
+2	Rushing the job (cuts time in half)
+1-+3	Inadequate tools or facilities
-1	Assistant (must have at least Alchemy • to qualify)
-1	Expert tools (+1 Resources cost)
-1	Extra time taken (doubles time)

FORMULAS

Below are some of the more common alchemical compounds known in Creation. Each is a separate formula and must be learned to be effectively used (see rules above for improvisation or creating new formulas). Most of these formulas are common knowledge. Those that are not will

be mentioned. Full effects for some of these compounds can be found in other books — see the referenced sections for details.

BLOOD-STAUNCHING COMPRESS

Alchemy: •

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 3

Cost of Materials: Resources •

Effects: Bandages steeped in Blood-Staunching Compress, when applied to a wound, automatically staunch the flow of blood (no roll needed), and wounds wrapped in these bandages do not re-open unless the character botches a combat or Athletics roll. Wound dressings cannot be steeped in both Blood-Staunching Compress and Wound-Cleansing Unguent. Blood-Staunching Compress maintains potency for one year.

VENOM-ALLAYING DRAUGHT

Alchemy: •

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 2

Cost of Materials: Equal to poison cost

Effects: Each Venom-Allaying Draught is a separate formula, specific to a given poison or venom. If applied promptly (within a number of turns equal to 10 - twice the poison’s difficulty to resist), it allows a Stamina + Resistance roll for mortals to resist even powerful toxins. This roll is made at normal difficulty levels, not the doubled levels mortals normally suffer. Antitoxins normally retain their potency for five years.

WOUND-CLEANSING UNGUENT

Alchemy: •

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 1

Cost of Materials: Resources •

Effects: Prevents sepsis effects (see *Exalted*, pp. 233-234). Patients treated with antiseptics do not need to roll for infection from surgery unless surgeon botches, and wound dressings treated in antiseptics reduce infection difficulty by 1. Wound-Cleansing Unguent will retain its potency for at least a decade, so long as it is carefully stored. Bandages soaked in the Wound-Cleansing Unguent normally will keep for 90 days if carefully wrapped, but more commonly, they are prepared the night before injuries are expected. It takes two hours for soaked bandages to dry.

DRAUGHT OF BLESSED RESPITE

Alchemy: ••

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 2

Cost of Materials: Resources •

Effects: The Draught of Blessed Respite is a simple sleeping potion, commonly used by those who have trouble

gaining enough rest at night. The potion also has a secondary effect — a half dose of the potion, administered in a glass of wine, has the effect of putting the imbiber into a highly restful half-sleep for four hours. During this time, any dice pool involving the user's Perception, Wits or Dexterity is halved, but she can still function, after a fashion, and she rapidly recovers from fatigue, coming out of this half-sleep fully rested and recovered. A bottle of Blessed Respite normally contains five doses and, until opened, retains its potency for three years. Once exposed to air, however, the potion quickly decays, becoming useless in only a month.

Addiction: Using Blessed Respite more times per week than the user's Stamina can lead to addiction. The roll to avoid addiction is difficulty (half the doses taken in a week). An addict is physically dependent on Blessed Respite to gain meaningful sleep — without a dose each night, she suffers a -1 to all dice pools and gains only half the normal benefits of rest (including healing, Essence recovery, recovering from fatigue, etc.). Breaking this addiction is difficult — the Recovery rating is 4, although no physical side effects (other than the lack of sleep) occur.

HERO'S RECOVERY

Alchemy: ••

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 3

Cost of Materials: Resources ••

Effects: Hero's Recovery is composed of a variety of rare herbs, strong wine and the blood of some fearsome beast — usually a hunting cat of some kind, but nearly any large predator will do. The potion's effects last for half a day per dot of Stamina the recipient has. During this time, the mortal recovers from injuries as an Exalt does. Serious injuries may require that more than one dose be administered through the course of treatment. Mortals cannot stand more than their Stamina in number of doses administered in one course (so someone with Stamina 4 could, over the course of eight days, take four doses of Hero's Recovery). Exceeding this dosage reverses the effects, doubling the patient's recovery times.

PHILTRE OF DESIRE

Alchemy: ••

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 2

Cost of Materials: Resources ••

Effects: One of a variety of potions designed to inspire an emotional reaction in the desired target. Depending on the exact recipe, some potions may be designed to be drunk by the person who should be the target of the emotions, while others are to be imbibed by the person who should feel them. Typically, these potions either grant the imbiber a two-die bonus to their Performance, Presence or Socialize dice pools with respect to the victim *only*, or they

increase the difficulty of rolls made for the victim to resist the target's suggestions by 1. These potions are normally personalized — they require some article with a sympathetic connection to the victim (clothing, hair, nail clippings, some treasured possession) to work properly. Increase the difficulty by 1 if no article is present and by 2 for a generic potion that increases everyone's reactions to the imbiber. Botches on Social rolls made while using these potions can lead to decades-long hatreds or all-consuming jealous obsessions. Philtres of Desire normally only retain their potency for a month or two.

EAGLE'S EYE POTION

Alchemy: •••

Roll: Wits + Occult

Difficulty: 3

Cost of Materials: Resources ••

Effects: Eagle's Eye Potion clears the sight, granting preternaturally clear vision while it is in effect. It takes one hour to gain its full strength, and the effects last for five hours (plus one additional hour for each extra success on the production roll). While active, the potion grants +1 Perception to all vision-related tasks. Similar potions can be developed for hearing and smell.

FINAL VENGEANCE

Alchemy: •••

Roll: Wits + Occult

Difficulty: 3

Cost of Materials: Resources •••

Effects: Final Vengeance is a powerful painkiller and euphoric. Used mostly by assassin cults, desperate soldiers and the foolhardy, this potion allows the imbiber to ignore all wound penalties and automatically succeed at all Valor checks while under its effects, and they can (and will) continue to fight until dead. The potion's effects last for one scene. Afterward, the imbiber is reduced to a Stamina of 1, regaining one dot of Stamina for each day of complete rest. So long as his Stamina is reduced, all healing is done at half the normal rate, and the patient may not take advantage of non-magical methods of increasing the healing rate.

MUNIFICENT ANTIVENIN

Alchemy: •••

Roll: Intelligence + Occult

Difficulty: 3

Cost of Materials: Resources •••

Effects: The Munificent Antivenin is a powerful elixir, capable of negating even the most deadly of poisons. If ingested in time, the antivenin immediately clears out all trace of the poison from the imbiber's bloodstream over the course of several turns (normally one turn per difficulty to resist the toxin). This experience is hardly a pleasant one, accompanied as it is by racking pains, vomiting and sweating from every pore as the body tries to eject the

toxin. Afterward, the subject is fatigued, suffering a two-die penalty on all dice pools until he has a chance to rest for at least four hours.

TIGER'S HEART ELIXIR

Alchemy: •••

Roll: Wits + Occult

Difficulty: 3

Cost of Materials: Resources ••

Effects: Tiger's Heart Elixir emboldens the spirit, driving fear and doubt away like mist in the dawn. This potion takes only one minute to take effect, and then, it grants the imbiber +1 Valor for a number of scenes equal to the successes rolled when creating the elixir. Tiger's Heart Elixir has no side effects and is not normally addictive.

VALIANT WARRIOR FORMULA

Alchemy: •••

Roll: Wits + Occult

Difficulty: 2

Cost of Materials: Resources •••

Effects: Valiant Warrior Formula is sometimes used by soldiers who have to keep up with exceptional warriors or champions, particularly the Dragon-Blooded. This potion lasts one day, and so long as the potion is in effect, the soldier, no matter her experience, is not treated as an extra. He has the full complement of health levels, can spend Willpower to power Virtues, etc.

WIND-FIRE POTION

Alchemy: ••••

Roll: Wits + Occult

Difficulty: 4

Cost of Materials: Resources ••

Effects: The Wind-Fire Potion is so named because it imbues those who drink it — usually soldiers — with the speed of the wind and the ferocity of fire. Most militaries make sparing use of Wind-Fire Potion, if they use it at all. While it turns soldiers into fierce combatants, it also makes them hard to control and can have serious long-term side effects. While under the influence of the potion, a soldier gains +1 to their Physical Attributes, Wits and Valor but loses one dot of Compassion, Temperance and Intelligence. Furthermore, the imbiber is no longer treated as an extra (heroic mortals instead gain two additional -4 health levels) and can stunt like an Exalt. The positive effects of the potion last for one scene, plus one additional scene for every three successes rolled in creating the potion. Once the positive effects of the potion wear off, the user crashes, suffering the same downsides as before and, additionally, suffering a -1 to all Physical Attributes and -1 to all dice pools from fatigue.

Addiction: Anyone taking more than one dose of Wind-Fire Potion in a month may become addicted. The difficulty to resist addiction is (the number of times the potion was taken in the last month + 2). Addiction is mostly psychological — when confronted with some



important task or mission, the addict will seek out the potion, believing he can only achieve positive results with its aid. The potion has no withdrawal effects, other than the normal side effects and is Recovery 2.

HEAVENLY TRANSMUTATION PROCESSES

Alchemy: •••••

Roll: Perception + Occult

Difficulty: 7

Cost of Materials: Varies — Resources of original materials +1

Effects: The art of transmuting the lesser into the more noble extends beyond living flesh for the master alchemist. With the secrets of the Heavenly Transmutation Processes, the alchemist can change base materials into noble ones. He can transform the crudest pig iron into flawless steel, lead into gold, or common citrines into flawless rubies. Each transmutation process is a separate formula, learned individually — knowledge of changing iron to steel is of no use when one wishes to change granite into marble. Transmutation typically takes one hour per pound of material to be transmuted and results in half as much materials as the process was started with — 20 pounds of iron results in 10 pounds of steel. Unlike most alchemy, transmutation costs one Willpower per batch of material to be changed (exceptionally large batches may require more than one Willpower). An alchemist can typically work on no more material than twice his Stamina + Endurance in pounds at one time. Materials created through this process are suitable for creation into artifacts, for use in creating exceptional weapons or armor or for other duties that require excellent quality material.

SIX-DEMON POTION

Alchemy: •••••

Roll: Stamina + Occult

Difficulty: 5 (typically produced in six-dose batches, for difficulty 8)

Cost of Materials: Resources •••••

Effects: Perhaps the greatest of alchemical feats, the Six-Demon Potion imbues the drinker with the might of six demons — or so it is claimed. In reality, the elixir is not quite so potent, but it can grant a mortal great power for a time. When imbibed by a mortal, the Six-Demon Potion has the following effects:

- The mortal is treated as an Exalt for all purposes — she recovers from wounds and penalties, rolls against poisons or diseases, moves and fights just as an Exalt does for the duration of the potion. This specifically includes stunting, but mortals cannot regain Essence using stunts (with a three-die stunt, they could regain a point of temporary Willpower, up to their normal limit).

- The potion adds two temporary Willpower to the mortal's pool. This bonus can raise the pool above her

permanent Willpower. These dots fade at the end of the potion's duration if not used.

- The potion adds two dots to the mortal's Valor until the potion wears off. This can raise her Valor above 5 for the duration of the potion's effects. If a mortal's Valor rises above 5, she is immune to all Valor checks until it falls below 5.

- The potion temporarily adds 1 dot to the mortal's Physical Attributes, Wits and Perception.

This potion has no effect whatsoever on Exalted, spirits, demons, ghosts, the Fair Folk or God-Blooded of any sort. The potion's effects, other than wound recovery, typically last for no more than 10 minutes (plus one minute for each additional success rolled), and take three minutes to take effect. The wound-recovery effects of the potion linger after the others have subsided, lasting for three days, plus one day per extra success. Brewing this potion takes one month of near-constant supervision and a wide variety of ingredients from throughout Creation, mixed in at the proper times. Once produced, a Six-Demon Potion will retain its potency for three years, plus three months for each success rolled.

FORMULAS FROM OTHER WORKS

A number of *Exalted* books have featured substances that alchemists can prepare. For the Storyteller's convenience, the difficulties and material costs are listed here. For precise effects, Storytellers and players should reference the original works. Generally, a formula's required Alchemy level is equal to its difficulty, and all of these substances are produced using an Intelligence + Occult (Alchemy) roll.

ENCHANTMENT

Roll: Dexterity + Occult.

Time: Normally one day per dot of effect.

Cost: 3 motes per level of effect, +1 Willpower.

Duration: Varies, but usually long. Even minor talismans will typically last for years, and the greatest feats of enchantment last for decades or even centuries.

There are as many tales of how the first talismans were made as there are enchanters to tell the tale. Many involve some great teacher (alternately a god, a Dragon King or some shadowy power) giving the gift of enchantment to mortals. Others hold that mortals themselves stumbled upon the ability to manipulate the Essence flows in the first talismans and walkaways. Immaculate doctrine holds that enchantment, like all thaumaturgy, was handed to the monks of the Immaculate faith by the Elemental Dragons to be used in service of the Realm.

Enchantment is the production of minor magical items. Known alternately as talismans, charms (but not Charms), lesser artifacts, wonders and a host of other names, these minor items are less potent and impressive than the artifacts used by the Exalted but are no less important. Few soldiers willingly take to the field without

Compound Name	Difficulty	Cost	Effects
Age-staving cordial	3	••	Anagathic. (See Manacle & Coin , pp. 45-46.)
Cocaine	2	•	Stimulant. (See Manacle & Coin , p. 40.)
Firedust grenade	2	Cost of firedust	Small explosive device. (See Caste Book: Night , p. 77.)
Ghost flower	3	••• (Varies)	Allows communication with ghosts. (See Manacle & Coin , p. 45.)
Greater poisons	3	••••••	Coral snake or arrow frog venom. (See Exalted , p. 243.) Sea adder venom or stonefish poison. (See Savage Seas , p. 106.)
Hallucinogenic woad	1	• (•• outside the East)	Hallucinogen, mild painkiller. Rare outside of the East. (See Manacle & Coin , pp. 42-43.)
Heroin	2	•	Painkiller, mild soporific. Must know how to produce opium. Highly guarded secret (Guild). (See Manacle & Coin , pp. 41-42.)
Ice fern spores	3	•• (••• outside the North)	Dream enhancer, mild divination enhancer. (See Manacle & Coin , p. 44.)
Lesser poisons	2	•	Court poison or poison snake venom. (See Exalted , p. 243.) River spider or lesser sea serpent venom or pelagic phantom sting. (See Savage Seas , p. 106.)
Maiden tea	2	•	Contraceptive and abortifacient. (See Manacle & Coin , p. 45.)
Opium	2	•	Painkiller, dysentery cure. (See Manacle & Coin , p. 41.)
Rasp spider venom	2	•• (••• outside the East)	Hallucinogen, poison in unadulterated form. Rare outside of the East. (See Manacle & Coin , pp. 43-44.)
Rock cocaine	1	•	Must know how to produce cocaine. Highly addictive stimulant. (See Manacle & Coin , pp. 40-41.)
Seven bounties paste	4	••	Disease cure-all. (See Exalted , p. 336.)
Sleep grenade	2	Cost of pollen	Sleep-gas bomb. (See Caste Book: Night , pp. 77-78.)
Sweet cordial	4	•••	Narcotic healing potion. (See Exalted , p. 336.)

a handful of talismans of various kinds — to ward off misfortune, to prevent disease, to turn arrows in flight — and sometimes, a small number of them actually work.

Unfortunately, the world of the charm-seller — a maker of talismans — is full of fraud and trickery. Most talismans are subtle devices, with effects that are hard to evince and easily explained away when they do not work — obviously the reason an arrow-turning amulet didn't work is that the archer had an amulet of true flight or an arrow inscribed with the runes of the archer-god, or the target was just unlucky. Out of a dozen amulets for sale in a shop, perhaps two will contain some measure of real power. The others may be spent talismans or charms that once had power but have long since decayed into mere frippery, poorly enchanted baubles with no discernable use or frauds perpetrated by con-men posing as enchanters. This does not prevent mortals from stocking up on them, for though many

know that most talismans are of little real value, few know how to tell a talisman that works from one that is mere jewelry — and, if one can afford it, why take the chance?

TELLING REAL FROM FAKE

Any thaumaturge with Occult 2 or higher can perform a simple series of tests to tell whether an amulet has any real power or is just overpriced jewelry. This process takes a few minutes, and requires a Perception + Occult roll. A single success allows the thaumaturge to tell if the item is enchanted. Three successes will give some basic idea as to the nature of the talisman and its relative power, and five successes will pinpoint exactly what kind of amulet it is and how powerful it is.

RECOVERY

Many alchemical substances are addictive to a greater or lesser degree. Addiction can be physical, mental or both. This system makes no differentiation between the two, although the side effects of the addiction may be different in each case. This is handled separately for each substance.

Addiction is not a pleasant subject, and for some players, it can hit somewhat close to home. Storytellers should consider whether they want to feature it as part of their series or, indeed, if they want to use these rules at all. If a Storyteller chooses not to use addiction in her game, she may wish to increase the cost of alchemical substances in some other fashion to prevent abuse: Increasing the component costs by 1 Resource, requiring the expenditure of a temporary Willpower for each alchemical batch produced or increasing the difficulty to produce each batch by 1 are all viable alternatives.

Recovery

Method

Rating

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Roll Willpower every other day. Must achieve one success on two attempts in a row to kick the habit. After four days of withdrawal, the user is clean and no longer physically requires the drug — add two dice to all Willpower dice pools to kick the habit. No roll to resist temptation is required. Exalts require no roll to kick the habit. |
| 2 | Roll Willpower each day for eight days. If more than three successes are scored in a single roll, the user breaks his dependency. If not, he will seek out the drug by any means necessary. If he can stay off the drug for eight days straight, he breaks the physical dependency. |
| 3 | As with 1, above, but four successful rolls in a row are required to break the habit, and the period of physical withdrawal is eight days. If the character is exposed to the drug again in a stressful situation, the player of the former addict must make a difficulty 2 Willpower roll for the character to resist temptation, but he is not automatically readdicted. Exalts require only two successive rolls to break the addiction. |
| 4 | As with 2, above, but the Willpower roll needs five successes, and the interval is 12 days. |
| 5 | Roll Willpower every other day for three weeks, as an extended roll (difficulty 3). The addict must accumulate 20 successes in order to kick the habit. Staying clean for three weeks removes any physical dependency, but it does not remove psychological addiction — only accumulating 20 successes does that. |

An enchanter does not need to craft the item he is going to enchant — although doing so reduces the difficulty of the task involved by 1 (or by 2 for an item of exceptional quality). Nor does an item to be enchanted need to be of surpassing fineness, beauty or value, merely of at least adequate workmanship. There is a prevalent belief that truly potent magical items reflect the same sort of ostentatious design as greater artifacts, and so, talismans (particularly frauds) are often gaudy things — either from the overuse of expensive materials or excessive amounts of cut glass, gilt, bright enamels and cheap semiprecious stones.

Mementos of auspicious events are commonly enchanted to draw forth any lingering echoes of that happening. Less commonly (but no less efficaciously), remnants left behind by disasters or misfortune are sometimes enchanted to prevent their recurrence. Part of the charcoal-crusted center-beam of a burned house may be salvaged and enchanted as a ward against fire, then installed as the fireplace mantle of a new home, for example.

Benefits derived from a talisman or other device do not stack with benefits from Charms, alchemical potions,

sorceries or most other sources (Merits, Wyld mutations or other effects that permanently raise the wearer's relevant Traits do stack with talismans). Because of their already Essence-infused natures, the Exalted gain little benefit from many types of talismans — specifically, talismans that increase the wearer's Abilities or Attributes, even if only for a time, operate at only half-strength for the Exalted. So, a belt that raises the wearer's Strength by 2 for one scene would only raise an Exalt's Strength by 1. Benefits derived from talismans **can** raise the user's Attributes (but not Abilities) beyond 5, at least for a short time.

Devices enchanted with thaumaturgy are inferior to artifacts in every way. Their enchantments are fragile against the workings of Essence — there is no chance that an enchanted item will survive directed Emerald Countermagic and they can often be destroyed merely by being in proximity to such a counterspell. Where artifacts can be multipurpose devices, providing a number of benefits to the user, creations of thaumaturgy are, without exception, single-purpose devices, capable of performing

only one task. And where artifacts are often — though not always, particularly the craftings of the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate — timeless devices with apparently infinite duration, most mortal talismans will lose their power within a century, and very few last longer than two. Many will survive no longer than a mortal's lifetime.

Talismans and other enchanted objects typically have a cost equal to the level of Enchantment needed to produce them. Alternately, a mortal character can buy a talisman of any level during character generation by spending one dot from the Artifact Background.

- Enchantments of this level are both subtle and weak, and they mostly have to do with enhancing everyday items in some minor fashion. An enchantment at this level

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can create boots that never wear out, a mail coat that never rusts or a set of surgical tools that are always clean. At best, enchanted devices of this level will negate +1 worth of difficulty due to some situational modifier — ever-clean blades need not worry about infection, for example.

The thaumaturge's enchantments can have an impact on the world around him. His charms can negate up to +2 difficulty in situational modifiers (+1 difficulty in combat) or can allow their users to ignore the effects of a single botched roll

EXCEPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Exceptional equipment is forged or created from the finest of mundane materials, by experts in their craft, often working to order for a particular customer. Alternately, they can be weapons forged by demons, Exalts or gods, carrying some after-echo of their Essence in the weapon (the weapons forged by the firmin of their black exudation are one example). In similar fashion, armor can be custom-forged for a wearer or produced of the most cunning design and rarest of metals. In their creation is something of magic, but it is the magic of forge and trestle, hammer and needle, and so, exceptional equipment is not affected by counter-magics of any sort.

Creating an exceptional piece of equipment normally requires the relevant Craft at a rating of at least 3 and may also require Lore of 2 (depending on the device or weapon). The player must decide what level of exceptional equipment his character is going to aim for before he starts his task — bladesmithing is done differently when seeking a serviceable weapon as opposed to a legendary one, using different materials and techniques. A Storyteller may choose to allow accidental exceptional equipment, if the character garners twice as many successes as he would normally need to create it.

Forging exceptional or perfect weapons takes time — typically a year for an exceptional blade or five years for a perfect weapon. This interval can be reduced with successes — each extra success cuts the time needed in half.

Difficulty Description

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Serviceable. A good-quality weapon or suit of armor, with few obvious flaws — but no real strengths either. Locatable in any armory in Creation. |
| 2 | Fine. A weapon of superior quality in some fashion — well balanced, extra sharp, or otherwise special in some minor fashion. Can be found in most armories in small quantity and may cost some extra but not overly so. Adds +1 to one statistic (speed, accuracy, etc.) for weapons, or adds +1L/+1B soak for armor. |
| 3 | Exceptional. Exceptional weapons are finely honed, superbly balanced, flexible and light. Exceptional armor is tough, easy to wear and designed for speed. Weapons gain three +1s that can be added to the weapon's statistics (no more than +1 in any statistic). Armor gains two +1s that can be used to add +1L/+1B to soak or to subtract 1 from either the mobility penalty or fatigue. Other equipment will have some virtue that is applicable to its needs (possibly adding one die to a relevant dice pool while that equipment is used). |
| 5 | Perfect. Impossible to improve by mortal hands, and even enchantment and thaumaturgy will only avail the creator little. Perfect weapons are legends, with histories as rich as those of any artifact. Perfect armor is light, tough and easy to wear beyond any expectation. These are weapons of kings and highly sought after. Perfect weapons gain two +1 modifiers and a single +2 modifier, which can be added to statistics to improve them (no doubling up). Perfect armor reduces the mobility penalty and fatigue by 1 each and gains two +1s which can be used to add to soak or to further reduce (by no more than an additional -1 each) the mobility penalty or fatigue ratings. Perfect equipment will add two dice to the relevant dice pool. |



(the roll is merely treated as a failure, rather than a botch).

... Enchanted weapons or equipment are treated as fine equipment or gain an additional point to add to the weapon's stats if already an exceptional piece of equipment. Periapts against disease and poison can be produced at this level, as can good luck charms that protect against up to two botches per story

.... The thaumaturge's enchantments are puissant indeed. While not equal to the weapons created by the Exalted, his enchanted blades are powerful, and his talismans can hold back even powerful threats for a time. His good luck charms can allow the user to ignore three botched rolls per story or to reroll one failed roll per story (not both). Up to two dice can be added to a dice pool or up to one dot to an Attribute. These bonuses are only good for a single die roll or no more than a minute of time. The thaumaturge can produce walkaways that reduce damage taken by one. Enchanted weapons or equipment are treated as exceptional equipment or gain an additional point to add to the weapon's stats if already exceptional. Ordinary equipment can be

produced from non-standard materials — swords made of glass or wood that are as strong as steel, hammers with heads of gold or lead, etc. These weapons (or other equipment) are identical to normal pieces of equipment, except for their exotic makeup. The thaumaturge's talismans are renowned throughout Creation. Enchanted weapons or equipment are treated as perfect equipment or gain an additional 2 points to add to the weapon's stats if already perfect. Up to two dice can be added to a dice pool or up to one dot to an Attribute for up to a minute or effects equal to a level 4 talisman for up to a scene. Weapons can be produced that are unbreakable in the same fashion that daiklaves and other artifact weapons are unbreakable.

GEOMANCY

Roll: Perception + Occult

Time: Varies

Cost: Normally none

Duration: Varies

Geomancy is the art of detecting and manipulating Essence flows. While thaumaturges cannot work such great feats as reshaping the very paths of dragon lines or raising and lowering Demesnes without equally great pub-

lic-works endeavors, they can, nonetheless, make works of impressive subtlety and power, and a skilled geomancer with a dedicated work crew can substantially improve the quality of life of his surroundings.

Geomancy is based on the study of how Essence naturally flows, what materials or structures impede its progress and how it can be diverted or manipulated to create eddies or currents. By reshaping his surroundings, the geomancer can increase the flow of Essence in an area, bringing bountiful harvests and good fortune. Conversely, he can retard the flow of Essence in an area, cursing the inhabitants of an area with blighted crops and disease.

Geomancy, especially when working on large-scale projects, is remarkably labor and time intensive. While the Essence of a home can be adjusted in some cases by moving around some furniture, painting walls and hanging some chimes, shifting the edge flows of a dragon line so they pass over a village's fields is quite another matter, involving reshaping the very landscape.

- With a successful Perception + Occult roll made by his player and a few minutes of walking an area (no more than half an acre), the geomancer can ascertain how strong the flow of Essence is in that area. One success grants some limited understanding of the power level ("high," "low," "moderate") and, possibly, an idea as to its aspect, if it's very powerfully aspected. Three successes allows the thaumaturge to get a precise strength, aspect and direction. Five successes gives the thaumaturge a good start toward a geomantic map of the area.
- The geomancer is able to draw up a precise map of how Essence moves through an area, pinpointing places that are good (or bad) for various tasks (animal husbandry, farming, raising families, sorcerous activities). Building this map requires hours or days of work (figure four hours per half-acre of land surveyed), and it requires a set of tools that costs Resources 2 to 3. The base difficulty for this task is 1, but extremely detailed or complex surveys may range as high as difficulty 3. Geomancy of this nature provides little effect in game terms — it merely tells people where to build, where possible Demesnes are and other minor details. At best, scrupulously following a detailed survey might allow those inhabiting and using the buildings built to its standard to reduce the severity of a botch (so a botch with

LUCKY FUNCTIONS

Geomancy and Enchantment are mostly about luck and good fortune. Rarely are their effects directly seen — fields are bountiful, but no more bountiful than another farmer's might be with good soil, careful tending... and a little luck. Households don't seem to suffer the same procession of dying children, poor finances and mishaps others seem to face — but it can all be attributed to simple, dumb luck.

Some possible mechanical representations of this "good luck" can include:

- Rerolling a botch once per month, or (lesser) treating a single botch as a simple failure, rather than a botch.

- Reducing the Virulence and Morbidity of any disease that strikes the household by 1 or (lesser) reducing only the Virulence or Morbidity.

- Good crop yields, even in poor seasons (for homes, this could mean the herb garden, window planters or whatever)

- Money will tend to be available when needed. If there is a question as to whether the household or person has sufficient funds, the answer will be "yes" unless it is clearly "no" (exceeds the household's or the person's Resource rating). There are no maybes.

- In general, if there is a question as to what might happen in a situation, it will generally resolve itself in a fashion that favors — or at least doesn't harm — the bearer of good fortune.

Other minor effects are certainly possible. Storytellers should avoid overt results. Good luck does not add dice to dice pools (although it might let the player reroll a die or two). It does not add soak, nor does it otherwise directly aid the character or household. It is a subtle, indirect sort of thing.

SHAPING DEMESNES

Shaping Demesnes is a tremendous task. Most geomancers could contemplate such a project, but few other than the Exalted have the personal resources to contemplate it the amount and quality of the landscaping involved. Accordingly, this material is discussed in *Exalted's* specialized supplement on sorcery. See *Savant and Sorcerer* for details of altering and creating Demesnes.

•••

three 1s might be treated as if only a single 1 and no successes were rolled). The geomancer can work with an existing home or other building, or work with an architect in designing a new

home, to help ensure good fortune. By determining where entrances and exits should be located, the shape and size of windows, room layouts and decorations, the geomancer can align the building to different aspects of Essence. This allows the geomancer to grant a single lucky function to the inhabitants of the house (see sidebar).

••••

The geomancer can expand his area of work to alter the fortunes of an entire area — up to one acre per success scored. This can involve more than simple architecture and some minor landscaping. Depending on the area, whole sections of the surrounding terrain may need to be reshaped to inhibit, enhance or shift the flow of Essence in the area. This process takes months — sometimes years — even with a skilled team of workers.

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The geomancer is sufficiently skilled to affect the flow of Essence in relatively subtle fashions. He can use a single application of this Science to effect more than one form of luck on a household. Alternately, he can fashion an area suitable for a laboratory. While no match for a Manse, this space will provide 1 mote of Essence every two hours for the inhabitant to use.

WEATHER WORKING

Roll: Charisma + Occult. Because of the effort involved, weather working is always performed at +2 difficulty.

Time: Standard for spell casting. Time to take effect varies.

Cost: 2 motes per level of effect, +1 Willpower for effects of level 4 or 5.

Duration: Varies.

Weather witches have always been among the most revered and feared members of the mortal mystic community. A weather witch can doom a community to a slow death by withholding rains the crops needed... or wreck it quickly by bringing storms that flood the fields, destroy homes and kill the unwary. On the seas, those who can call the winds are lifesavers in truth, for a becalmed vessel is a dead one, and even blunting the force of a storm can make the difference between a safe harbor and a ship with a shattered mast or hull.

Weather magic can be terribly powerful, but it is also usually very slow to take effect. While small effects can occur quickly — a simple breeze to snuff a candle comes nearly instantly, for example — larger changes in the weather usually require hours or days to enact. A skilled weather

worker can speed changes, but cannot summon tidal waves out of nothing or instantly call storms from clear skies.

RITUAL MAGICS

Ritual magic is based in part on both the Arts and the Sciences of thaumaturgy. Some rituals are bits of half-forgotten Sciences, the sole remnants of knowledge from earlier days. Others are formalized and refined versions of some aspect of the Arts. Other rituals are of unknown or unclear provenance. Most are of limited long-term effect — the effects of rituals are normally measured in minutes, sometimes in hours, rarely in days and almost never in weeks. Some can be quite powerful in their limited way, thwarting even the Exalted or powerful spirits for a brief period of time — at great cost.

PURCHASING RITUALS

Rituals are rated in level of utility and effect, from • to •••••. The only normal restriction on purchasing a ritual is that a thaumaturge must have an Occult score equal to or higher than the ritual's level — any other requirements will be listed in the ritual's description.

USING RITUALS

Rituals are always available for the thaumaturge's use — presuming he has the relevant supplies, frame of mind and time. Most rituals are unique in their application — there are few constant rules, but there are guidelines, as follows:

Rituals take time. Most rituals have casting times rated in minutes, while some take hours or days to cast. The casting time is not directly related to a ritual's power. There are long rituals that have little real power — intended for novice thaumaturges — and others that can quickly create reasonably impressive results.

Rituals tend not to cost much in Essence.

Rituals often need tools, a workspace or other preparations to be fully effective. These requirements are normally listed in the ritual's description if specific. Otherwise, Storytellers can assume a ritual needs a cleared space about 20 feet on a side or some kind of laboratory and various pieces of occult equipment (sanctified knives and other instruments, candelabras and candles, etc.) with a cost in Resources equal to (the level of the ritual - 2).

Rituals are rarely directly offensive in nature. Most of their effects are aimed toward gathering information, protection, creation or healing, rather than warfare. This is more a matter of how they are used, than any inherent limits on the craft of rituals. A spell that takes 10 hours to cast is rarely going to be useful on the battlefield.

COMMON RITUALS

The following rituals are commonly known throughout Creation. Many thaumaturges, and more than a few

THE COUNCIL OF WINDS

The Council of Winds is one of the few elemental courts to maintain any kind of cohesion or order in its ranks, and its servants are likely to notice any major interruption or disturbance in their carefully disciplined plans — and weather-working thaumaturges are more likely than most to engage their ire.

This is particularly true when the thaumaturge is working against the will of the Council. Although thaumaturgy can be effective even in the most trying of situations, against storms summoned by the Wind Masters themselves, there will always be an accounting after the fact, and terrible prices to be paid. Few weather workers willingly oppose the Council of Winds directly, and summoning up an air elemental to determine whether the rains that fall are divinely mandated, and therefore sacrosanct, or merely normal operations that can be avoided or altered with the correct petitions and prayers is not only recommended, but necessary, especially in the West and North.

In all cases, however, Storytellers should keep in mind that thaumaturgy should not be a punishment. If the needs of the game outweigh some sort of bow toward “realism” or an accurate portrayal of the machinations of the elemental courts (especially in a mortals-only game), Storytellers should feel free to give weather-working mortals quite a bit of space to use the abilities they have spent points to purchase, so long as their crimes aren’t too egregious. Just keep in mind there is a controlling intelligence behind the weather than doesn’t like mortals summoning up blizzards in the hottest reaches of Gem during the middle of Resplendent Fire.

- With a successful roll, the thaumaturge can accurately tell what the weather will be — although not if the weather is divinely mandated or not. Each success allows the weather witch to predict the weather one more day into the future — changes in the mandates of Heaven, the actions of other thaumaturges, etc. cannot be determined, however.
- The weather witch can not only tell the weather, they can accurately determine its provenance — whether it is divinely mandated, a natural occurrence or of some other magical nature. The weather witch can also call forth extremely minor effects with a successful roll
- A weather witch can evoke minor changes in the local weather. She can cool an area as if it were shaded or warm it as if in the direct rays of the sun, and she can conjure up brief zephyrs of wind or a gentle mist. She can also cause the morning fog to maintain, keeping its strength well into the day or cause a short-lived fog bank to roll into her local area, cutting visibility in half. These minor changes occur within minutes of being asked for and will typically last for up to a scene or two.
- The thaumaturge learns how to truly alter the weather. These changes are rarely sufficient to break the back of current weather. The most she can do is provide some relief. A storm can be lessened to gentle rain, blinding heat to a pleasant summer day, etc. Naturally, she can also reverse these trends, increasing the severity of storms, raising or lowering the temperature by up to 15 degrees, etc. These effects normally take hours — sometimes days — to summon forth, although more successes can either reduce the time or strengthen the effect. She can also summon up greater examples of earlier effects, gaining some insight as to the provenance of current or future weather, summoning up strong winds or calling forth deep fogs.
- The weather witch can change the weather to a great extent, summoning up strong winds in a becalmed sea, rain on a sunny day or sunshine in the middle of storms. Merely altering existing weather (changing severity) can be performed in minutes (an hour at most), and the greatest of changes will rarely take more than a day or two.

learned mortals who would never consider themselves thaumaturges, know a handful of the following rituals.

CALLING THE FLAME’S BENEFICENCE •

At the cost of 1 mote or one Willpower and one turn of gesticulation, the thaumaturge can conjure up a small flame about the size and intensity of a candle flame and lasting for no more than a minute. The flame provides only sparse illumination, but it is bright enough by which to read a book.

RITUAL OF DEDICATED PURIFICATION •

Using a variety of tools and resources (sanctified candles, cleansing soaps, a large vat of clean water, preferably rainwater kept clear of any debris) costing Resources •, the thaumaturge, in an hour-long ritual of cleansing and chanting, purifies not only himself and any participants in whatever spell or ritual is to follow, but also the area in which the ritual will take place. The ritual requires an Occult + Perception roll, with a difficulty of 2. If successful, the thaumaturge’s

player can reroll a single botch during the procedure that follows, as the sanctification of the site and participants aids in preventing backlash and mishaps in the ritual.

ART OF THE THRICE-WARDED GATEWAY ••

This ritual is rarely sufficient to stop the determined, but it is sufficient to deter the merely curious. The thaumaturge repeats a prayer to a now-dead god of locks and wards seven times seven times, then quickly wraps the handles, lock bars or hinges with twine and spends 3 motes of Essence. Once done, the door will act as if stoutly barred to any who try to pass through it for the next hour. If someone attempts to force the door, the door will resist, but only for the first attempt. Any subsequent effort to break the door down will automatically succeed.

DISHONEST SPIRIT'S REBUKE •••

This is actually four related rituals — one each for spirits, demons, elementals and ghosts. Each operates in the same fashion but must be learned separately. When a ghost hunter is unable to placate or drive a spirit away through the Arts, sometimes, the only option is to use force. This is difficult, but not impossible. The thaumaturge must first inscribe a set of prayer strips — these can be generic and prepared ahead of time, but if they are personalized with the name, lineage and misdeeds of the spirit they are to be used against, the thaumaturge gains +2L damage on all attacks against that spirit while the strips are active. Scribing these prayer strips requires 10 hours and inks, special papers and brushes worth Resources 2. When the ritual is cast, the thaumaturge mutters a prayer and throws the strips up into the air, where they hang for the duration of the spell (no more than one scene). While in use, the ghost hunter may, as a reflexive action, spend one Willpower to make an attack against a dematerialized spirit, using a weapon or barehanded. This ritual grants no innate ability to detect a dematerialized spirit. That must be gained in some other fashion.

WARDING OF UNDUE INFLUENCE •••

It is known that many spirits, the Fair Folk and the Anathema have powers that can twist perception and make the unreal seem real or the obvious hidden. While the Warding of Undue Influence is not a surety against these powers, it does provide some protection for mortals. The ritual normally takes one day to perform and costs one Willpower, but in a crisis, a thaumaturge may attempt to invoke its power immediately. This requires a Wits + Occult roll against a difficulty of 3 and the expenditure of three Willpower. While invoked, all beings with a permanent Essence of 1 gain a +2 bonus to their permanent Essence for purposes of resisting Fair Folk glimmers, spirit Charms that deal with manipulating emotions or perceptions, etc. Charms that are rolled against a difficulty to affect emotions, perceptions, etc. are at +1 difficulty. This effect is limited to an area

equal to five feet times the caster's permanent Essence, centered on the caster (it moves where he moves), and once invoked, it lasts for 10 minutes.

IMPERIAL LEGALITIES

At least until the disappearance of the Empress, life on the Blessed Isle progressed as it did due to two fundamental forces. One was the paranoia of the Empress, which caused her to form the Thousand Mazy Paths of the state bureaucracy and to take many other similar steps to ensure that no individual or group could effectively menace her authority. The other was the Order of the Immaculate Dragons. With a deeply rooted support among the people of the Realm and the strength of the Dragon-Blooded and Sidereals who advocate it, the Order served as a check on the power of the Empress.

However, though the two forces were often in opposition, they were not naturally opposed. One of their areas of agreement has to deal with knowledge, learning and the practice of magic. The Empress was exceedingly jealous of her throne, and in her opinion, any power was power that would eventually be brought to bear against her. The Immaculate Order is exceedingly protective of the peasant class, and in its opinion, ignorance is bliss.

Thus, learning and knowledge in the Realm is a highly regulated matter, for knowledge is power, and there is no power that does not bring with it worries and burdens. The Empress had no desire to have individuals amass stores of understanding that she had no control over or knowledge of. The Immaculate Order saw no need to crush the peasantry beneath the burdens of a complicated existence when its more spiritually advanced brethren were readily available to bear the heavy burden of sophisticated thinking.

This does not mean that the Blessed Isle was a place of ignorance. Both the Empress and the Immaculate Order understood that individuals and society as a whole would benefit from basic literacy and the ability to do simple math, and the Immaculate monks accordingly provided instruction in these matters to all those willing to learn.

However, knowledge of more sophisticated matters was controlled both by social class and by various gatekeepers. The Empress wisely ascertained that any attempt to limit the inquiries of the Exalted would not only endanger the Realm, it would also engender resentment and present thousands of bored demigods with a challenge. Accordingly, the Dragon-Blooded may learn and study as they wish. Though they are discouraged by their culture from inquiry into matters of occult science and the First Age, they are largely free to ignore this if they're willing to pay the social price for such bookish pursuits.

However, for patricians and peasants, matters of learning are considerably more complicated. The Immaculate Order and the Honorable and Humble Caretakers of the Common Folk worked together under the auspices of the All-Seeing Eye to produce a series of imperially approved teaching texts that provided the lower orders with the information they needed without unduly burdening them with the complicated history of the Great Uprising. General texts are commonly available, but specialized texts can be acquired only through application to the Thousand Scales. While this is merely a matter of presenting a signed and witnessed petition for access, appropriate credentials are generally required, and printing presses in the Realm are required by law to leave the license number of the press and the impression number of the book on each signature. This information is recorded for each distributed book, and tracking the origins of leaked books is thus a relatively simple matter.

Works of savantry — that is, serious historical inquiry or occult studies — are treated in the same fashion as books on poison, military strategy or other especially dangerous knowledge. Separate and costly certification is required for each avenue of inquiry, and the careful division of topics allows all lawful scholars of a given topic to be interviewed easily if any suspicious activity relating to the matter is reported. Within the bounds of this deliberately restrictive and burdensome regime, all forms of magic save summoning are practiced in the Realm.

And, of course, this has little relation to the actual practice of magic. Just like learning in general, it cannot be stamped out. Most individuals except the very most pious practice at least some thaumaturgy, but the Realm's policies keep knowledge fragmented, hoarded and corrupt and prevent any academies of sorcery from emerging save those that the Realm implicitly operates with its process of certification. In addition, in this climate of ignorance and secrecy, the All-Seeing Eye has encouraged the growth of certain rumors and urban legends that hinder the practice of magic distasteful to the Throne and mark illicit sorcerers for scrutiny.

THE COST OF POWER

It costs Resources •••• and attendance to a five-year program of instruction to be certified as a thaumaturge in the Realm (minimum Occult •••, Lore ••). This license costs Resources ••• per year to maintain. For a mortal character, starting with such a license is a 2-pt. Merit and requires the character have at least Resources •••. Thaumaturges are licensed by a branch of the Thousand Scales called the Imminent Registrar of Mortal Occultists and Savants.



The sleeper was waterless, breathless, without heartbeat. His brain did not function, and his soul fluttered endlessly on the verge of release, yet never escaped. All the sleeper's Essence had been extracted centuries ago by the stasis apparatus, which had rendered the still-living corpse far more sterile and desolate than any desert in Creation. Held in the grasp of the stasis tube, the Dragon King warrior lingered between life and death.

Such sleepers had always been curiosities. Most were misanthropes who fled to the future only to find that the thing they hated the most — themselves — was something they could not escape. Others fled impossible personal situations or merely hateful fashion. Regardless of their specifics, such histrionics were the follies of the golden age, before the Usurpation. For centuries, man had been too preoccupied with war for empty dominion, and the Dragon Kings with sectarian strife over empty ritual, to spend precious military resources on such frivolities.

Indeed, the stasis tube the sleeper laid in had been a medical model, designed centuries before to hold victims for a few weeks or perhaps months while specialist physicians made the journey to the patient's location. The secrets of growing the sensitive crystals that enable the machine to function were long forgotten when the Great Contagion began to slay Dragon Kings as well as mortal men.

Indeed, the units were dusty and long forgotten in the storehouses beneath Rathess. They had been rehabilitated in a matter of days as the Contagion and the armies of the Fair Folk made their deadly progress. Then, Ssuma the Iron, one of the last hopes of his people, lay down into the endless rest, to sleep away a century. If there was a world to awaken in, Ssuma the Iron would reawaken the children to philosophy and teach the deadly young Dragon Kings the brutal lessons of civility. Many among the team who laid him down to his long slumber hoped that he would awaken and make the Dragon Kings great again while humanity loped apeline through the ruins of its world.

Unfortunately for the hopes of his optimistic fellow Dragon Kings, this destruction of the human race had not happened. Indeed, mere days after the fall of the Shogunate, the Empress had already established her power. But Ssuma the Iron had not had to bear the disappointment of waking to find the early Realm and Bagrash Kōl struggling for power with their titanic sorceries. No, his haphazardly rehabilitated medical stasis tube failed to activate when scheduled and had carried him much farther down the road that cannot be unwalked than he intended.

He was not the wisest among his people, but he was, his fellows hoped, wise enough, as ideal a tutor for a resurgent Dragon King race as could be obtained in his people's squalorous impoverishment and against the desperate hurry of the Contagion's advance. He was, in short, physically powerful, cunning, well-armed and young enough to raise several generations of young and civilize them before succumbing to old age himself. In short, a sort of close-order drill instructor for enlightenment.

But now, the sleeper was awakening. Essence flowed into the wood-dry body, bringing with it the return of life. One of the recent battles in the city had sent water dripping deep underground through new cracks. Gently, it had dripped onto the ancient control panel of Ssuma's stasis unit. There, in the withered heart of the controls, the water brought life and renewed functionality.

It did not take long to revive Ssuma the Iron, once the controls had awakened. His body was filled with fluid, his lungs with breath, his mind, after a time of great darkness, was filled again with thoughts. By the time the tube hissed open several hours after the revivification process had begun, the Dragon King traveler was already prepared for his mission.

He was not prepared, however, for the devastation he found when he stepped out of the stasis chamber and found a city that was more than 600 years past his intended destination in the future. The underways of Rathess were lit erratically and pierced by the roots of forest giants. All around him was the stale reek of young Dragon King piss. Old enough to breed, to fight for territory, but in no way civilized or contained. This, Ssuma the Iron thought, would be the most difficult part of his task — to round up youths and somehow secure them for training without being torn to pieces by a pack of adolescents who could only see him as an older dominant male challenging their territory. The Dragon King hero contemplated the challenge before him, shrugged and continued on. Little did he know then how paltry this initial challenge was, against the backdrop of the Age of Sorrows. However, it did not take Ssuma the Iron long to learn.



CHAPTER FOUR THE DRAGON KINGS

Long ago, millennia before the gods overthrew the Primordials, the fierce and noble Dragon Kings were the lords of Creation. In this primeval aeon, the world was newly made and far less stable — terrible earthquakes, fiery volcanoes and vast hurricanes were extremely common, and only the toughest creatures could survive. The gods made four breeds of Dragon Kings, one to live in each of the world's four directions — the center of the world alone was empty of the Dragon King's presence, as the Blessed Isle

was the domain of the gods when they were not serving the Primordials in the Celestial City of Yu-Shan. Each of the four breeds of Dragon Kings ruled a different quarter of Creation. The aquatic Mosok ruled the West, the winged Pterok controlled the North, the lithe Raptok populated the East, while the fierce and sturdy Anklok held sway over the fiery South.

Spiritually, the Dragon Kings were beings halfway between gods and mortals. They were the Primordials' first

experiment at creating thinking beings that were fully a part of the physical world. Although their souls were immortal and retained within them some memories of their past lives, their bodies were merely mortal flesh and, although strong and durable, rarely lived longer than 350 years. When one of the Dragon Kings died, his spirit was reborn within the egg of another of his kind. The Dragon King's personality remained intact. However, the process of rejoining a physical body stripped most of the memories and power from the Dragon King's spirit, reducing it in Essence and leaving it with only fragmentary memories from its past lives.

Physically, all four breeds of the Dragon Kings were humanoid dinosaurs. They were warm-blooded creatures that laid eggs and were covered in scales and feathers. All of the Dragon Kings were fierce and predatory carnivores. The Raptok could also eat and even enjoy plants, but even they ate mostly meat, and the members of the other three breeds ate only meat or fish.

For the first years of its life, the newly born Dragon King was a mindlessly savage beast, driven by the instincts of its reptilian form. A tutor wise in the lore of civility was required to train the young Dragon King and allow it to become something more than a mindless predator. Complicating matters, the Dragon Kings' fast-growing bodies matured fully into deadly carnivores in only five or six years, while awakening it to mannerly behavior took significantly longer. During the First Age, the Dragon Kings kept their young in large, specially made pens and carefully walled game parks, where these savages were given extensive training through various hunting games but were not allowed to run wild and possibly harm civilized beings. After almost a decade of special training, the spirit within the beast awakened, and the creature could slowly be trained to civility, returning both sentience and personality to its new body. Much of this training involved spiritual devotions dedicated to the Unconquered Sun. The Dragon Kings believed, perhaps truthfully, that his light was the ultimate source of their reason.

As the spirit within the Dragon King slowly grew in power and education, it also recalled fragmentary memories of its previous lives. The Dragon Kings' memories of their past lives are similar to those possessed by all of the Celestial Exalted and become somewhat more intense and detailed as the creatures rise in Essence. By the end of its fourth decade, a Dragon King's education would be complete, and it could now look forward to three centuries of life, during which it would continue to slowly grow in both skill and power.

Eventually, the world became a less violent and deadly place, and the gods created humanity. Because they were both weaker and more numerous than the Dragon Kings, the Primordials made the Dragon Kings their overlords. The humans served the Dragon Kings, the Dragon Kings

served the gods, and the gods served the Primordials. In this era, the chain of Creation was perfect and unbroken.

In the West, amphibious Dragon Kings ruled the islands. They hunted kraken and other deadly sea beasts of the oceans and came on shore to command the islanders to build cities and temples. In the North, winged Dragon Kings were the lords of the upper air and the icy wastes. They ruled the North from their elegant mountaintop fortresses and used the mortals they ruled in complex status games. In the savanna and deserts of the South, huge and deadly Dragon Kings hunted prey and left enigmatic rock paintings and stone sculptures that humans still marvel at. The Southern Dragon Kings had the least contact with their human subjects. These Dragon Kings lived in the harsh deserts and only rarely came into the human cities on the coast to order their humans to build temples or hold a festival to honor the gods. The lush forests and verdant jungles of the East were the heart of the Dragon Kings' civilization. Here, tall and elegant Dragon Kings with brilliantly scaled hides built great cities, worked powerful magics and created wonders that rivaled the glorious Celestial City of Yu-Shan. These were the most numerous Dragon Kings and had the most contact with the mortals they ruled. They were also the only Dragon Kings who lived in the same cities as the humans. The greatest of their cities was Rathess, which was the capital of the Dragon King's Creation-spanning empire.

When the gods created the Exalted and warred against the Primordials, the Dragon Kings fought alongside gods and helped to slay the Primordials and their allies. However, the gods favored the Exalted and, after the war, gave them dominion over Creation, ending the rule of the Dragon Kings. During the war, the Primordials had also killed many millions of Dragon Kings, shattering their spirits beyond any possibility of rebirth — the vast majority of the Pterok, the Mosok and the Anklok populations were forever destroyed, as were most of the Raptok. Following the war, the Dragon Kings became a valuable part of the Solar Deliberative, but their numbers were greatly reduced and their influence was far less than it had been. Exalts were now the lords of Creation, and the Dragon Kings were only a minor adjunct to their power. As the First Age progressed, the Dragon Kings became increasingly isolated and took an ever-decreasing role in the affairs of mortals and Exalts.

THE CIVILIZATION OF THE DRAGON KINGS

The Dragon Kings were a proud and volatile race. Dueling was an accepted way of settling disputes, and while most duels ended at first blood, fights to the death were not unknown. However, they considered the death of one of the duelists only a minor tragedy because every Dragon King who died would soon be reborn. As a result, the Dragon Kings freely fought duels over even

minor slights. In addition to being significantly more aggressive by nature than humanity, all but the most cowardly Dragon Kings were more concerned with honor than their own survival.

Although all but fragments of the Dragon King's prior lives were forever lost, the individual's personality and his likes and dislikes remained from one life to the next. The Dragon Kings felt that this constituted spiritual immortality and, therefore, felt little fear of death. Once their training was completed, Dragon Kings were generally expected to pick up their lives where they'd left off. Being creatures of deep passion, both love and hatred normally endured from one life to the next, even if the reasons for these feelings no longer remained. An elaborate code of honor and dueling was therefore necessary. Without it, feuds between rivals would be literally never-ending.

All four breeds of the Dragon Kings worshiped the Unconquered Sun. While they also honored a host of other, lesser gods, the sun was the center of their world and the heart of their faith, at least until the late First Age. Every dawn, there were worship services atop the Pyramid of the Sun in Rathess and atop similar temples in their other cities. The carnivorous Dragon Kings offered the hearts of living animals to the sun and, not infrequently, the hearts of the own people as well.

Death was never something the Dragon Kings simply accepted — since they viewed it as a punctuation to the chapters of their immortal existences, they preferred to meet it on their own terms. Although some Dragon Kings arranged to die hunting dangerous prey or attempting some heroic feat, when many Dragon Kings neared the end of their lives, they offered up their own hearts to the sun, asking the priests to make their deaths sacred offerings to their god.

The Dragon Kings viewed the first half-century of each new life after their awakening as a time for growth, for reflection and (most importantly) for relearning both civilized wisdom and their code of honor. They believed that spending a decade or more as a mindless predator helped to reconnect them to their physical bodies and their savage origins, while relearning reason and intelligence gave them another chance to understand how to lead brave and honorable lives. They also believed that anyone who committed serious crimes had forgotten or never learned these essential lessons. To help remedy these deficiencies, criminals were made into involuntary sacrifices to the Unconquered Sun. The Dragon Kings saw hastening an offender's death and rebirth as a way to force him to relearn these essential lessons and, so, to overcome his past mistakes. Although the Dragon Kings deemed such sacrifices inferior to the willing offerings of weary or aged Dragon Kings, the Unconquered Sun accepted all the hearts given to him.

When the Dragon Kings ruled humanity, they also sacrificed human criminals to the sun. Once the Primordials were overthrown and the gods freed humanity, this practice ceased. On rare occasions, the Solar Exalted agreed that humans who committed serious crimes against the Dragon Kings should die in this way to atone for their offenses against Heaven. However, the Solars only allowed the Dragon Kings to sacrifice the worst human criminals in this manner.

THE RELIGION OF THE DRAGON KINGS

The Dragon Kings looked on spirit possession as part of the natural order of things. Although they were occasionally appalled by the results of a given possession, they nevertheless did not regard the process with either revulsion or fear. To be chosen as a vessel for a god, especially if it were a spirit with which one had a natural affinity, was a great honor and one that few Dragon Kings refused. Indeed, many Dragon Kings sought out such possession, doing great deeds in hopes of attracting the attention of a god looking for a mortal vessel.

Dragon Kings looked upon the possessed with awe and respect, calling them several names, the most common being *olchilik*, or "the Chosen," a term later used by men to describe the Exalted. Dragon Kings viewed their Chosen much like humans viewed the Exalted. However, the people of Rathess did not look upon either the Chosen or the Exalted as intrinsically different from other people. They were not a higher caste as such (even though they often enjoyed great privileges), and the possessed did not see themselves in that manner either. Since the spirits could — and often did — withdraw their power from their hosts, it did not do well to look upon the *olchiliké* as godlike or even semidivine, despite their great powers. The Dragon Kings knew that their gods could ride anyone and that the reasons for being chosen were sometimes based on a god's self-interest rather than the suitability of its mortal vessel.

This is not to say that the *olchiliké* were not lords among the Dragon Kings, for that would be an understatement. Their Chosen took commanding roles in the society of Rathess, much as the Exalted did elsewhere in Creation. They were generals, scholars, sorcerers and leaders. They were slightly rarer than the Terrestrial Exalted were among humanity, and they were often aloof from everyday society, owing to the dual nature of their origin, but they were still an integral part of Dragon King society during the First Age. The possessed often wielded powers far beyond those of the weakest Celestials but still far below those of the greatest among the god's new servants. These violent reptiles were susceptible to wounded pride and battered egos. The mightiest among the Dragon King Chosen were the glory of the Dragon Kings and attempted to prove that their kind still had a role to play in Creation, even if the Incarna had taken greater interest in the Exalted.

THE FALL OF THE DRAGON KINGS

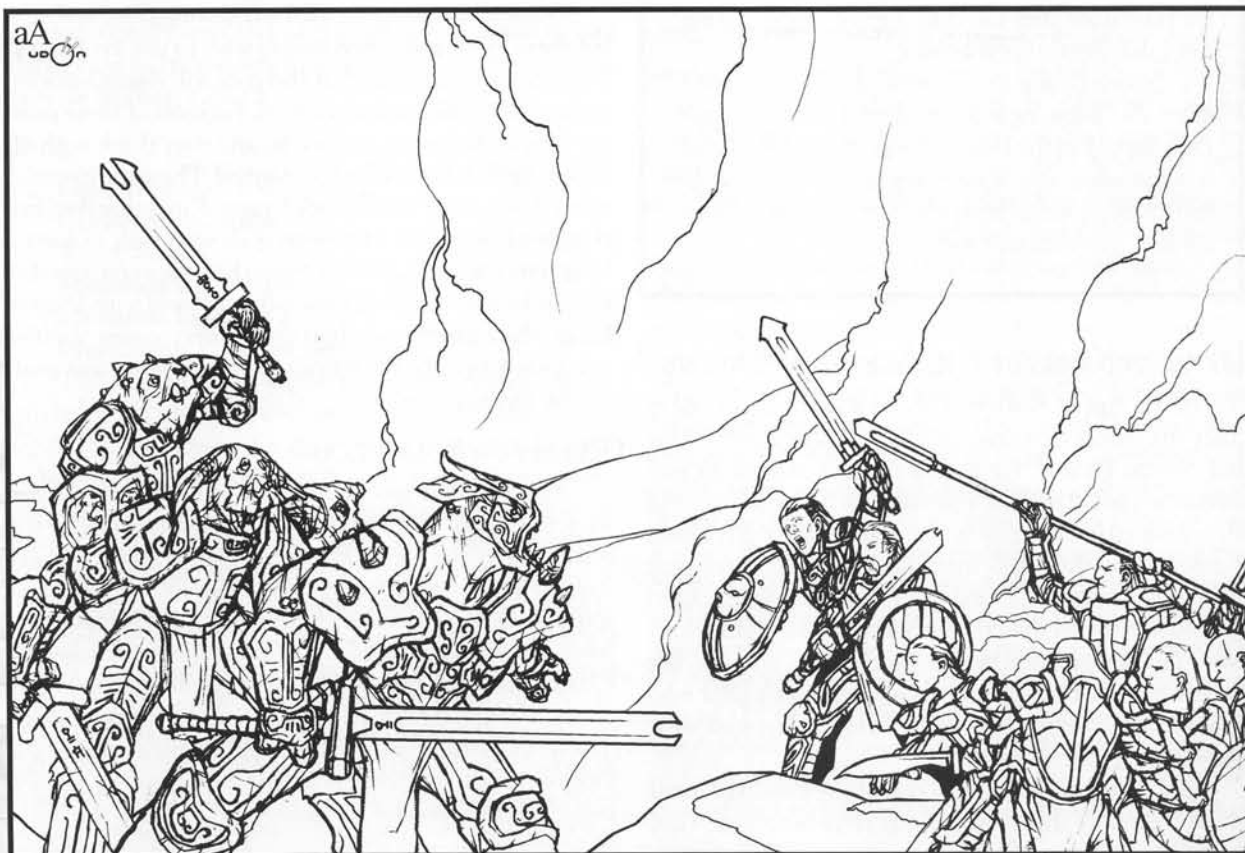
In the first days of the Contagion, many Dragon Kings blamed the traitorous Dragon-Blooded's murder of the Solar Exalted for the ravages of the disease. Groups of Dragon Kings left their cities to hunt down members of the Dragon-Blooded to sacrifice upon the Dragon Kings' altars to restore the favor of the Unconquered Sun and end the terrible Contagion. Although nearly 100 of the Dragon-Blooded had their still-beating hearts ripped from their bodies in this vast orgy of blood, not even these sacrifices satisfied the Unconquered Sun, and the plague continued.

Eventually, the Contagion, attacks by the Fair Folk and the ensuing panic and violence resulted in the deaths of almost all of the civilized Dragon Kings. Young Dragon Kings were left with no one to teach them the philosophy and other lessons they required to regain their minds and personalities. Instead, they remained semi-intelligent savages who led short and brutish lives. A few rare Dragon Kings occasionally regained their minds spontaneously, but most were killed by their savage fellows, and the remainder were unable to do more than train a few of their fellows and, so, form short-lived communities of partially civilized Dragon Kings. Today, the vast majority of the surviving Dragon Kings of all breeds are mindless savages. A few

small settlements of civilized Dragon Kings remain, but they are either short-lived or located in remote and extremely isolated portions of Creation.

PLAYING THE DRAGON KINGS

Few fully intelligent Dragon Kings survive in the modern world. The few of them who still exist either live in small communities where their elders trained them in the disciplines needed to cause them to regain their minds or they were one of the rare Dragon Kings who became intelligent without training. Any of these intelligent Dragon Kings are suitable characters in **Exalted**. Because of their strong connection to the Unconquered Sun, they are the natural allies of any Solar Exalted — Dragon Kings dismiss the image of Solar Exalted as corrupt and dangerous Anathema as vile and foolish propaganda put forth by the murderers who slew the Solars. Today, the return of the mighty Solar Exalted could mean a new rebirth for the Dragon Kings. Many of the newly reborn Solar Exalted retain at least a few vivid memories of their fierce and stalwart Dragon King allies. In addition to helping to revive ancient sleeping Dragon Kings and protecting those small remaining communities of civilized and semicivilized Dragon Kings, Solar Exalts can also learn how to help return the light of sun-given reason to the Dragon Kings.



NEW SOLAR CHARM: DRAGON-SOUL

ENLIGHTENING METHOD

Cost: 20 motes, 3 Willpower**Duration:** One month**Type:** Simple**Minimum Performance:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 4**Prerequisite Charms:** Tiger-Warrior Training Technique

Although their own methods of teaching their young the first steps toward civilized intelligence require several years, Solar Exalted who know this Charm can take even the most savage and mindless stalkers and unlock the latent intelligence within them. A Solar may supervise the training of up to (his Essence rating x 3) stalkers in a given month. At the end of this month, all of the stalkers who the Storyteller makes a successful Willpower roll for now have two dots in Essence and are capable of speaking both their own language and the language of the Solar who taught them. This Charm can only be used to give stalkers who only possess one dot of Essence a second dot of Essence, it cannot be used to give more spiritually advanced Dragon Kings further Essence and enlightenment. Until their training is completed, the Solar must confine the stalkers, since they are cunning and savage beasts until they regain their reason.

Note: To use this Charm, the Solar Exalted must also know how to speak and read the High Holy Speech of the Dragon Kings. Also, this Charm is unknown in the modern day. Exalts who wish to learn it must either reinvent it or find instructions about it in an ancient tome.

DRAGON KINGS IN THE AGE OF SORROWS

In the Age of Sorrows, Dragon Kings are rare, especially the breeds that originally lived in the South, West and North. Dragon Kings who have managed to pull themselves out of the brutal savagery of their early years of life are rarer still. In the ruins of the ancient city of Rathess, there are less than 100 intelligent Raptok. Intelligent Dragon Kings can be found both elsewhere in Creation and even living in the Heavenly City of Yu-Shan. However, they are rare, and no one except a few scholars, the more educated Dynasts and those Celestial Exalts who possess fragmentary memories of them has any idea what these large reptiles actually are.

In the centuries since the end of the First Age, most of the legends of the Dragon Kings have been lost. They

were insular enough before the First Age ended that few ancient chronicles talked extensively of them. More importantly, the fact that they were devout worshipers of the Unconquered Sun caused the Immaculate Order to suppress all knowledge of their existence from anyone other than the Dynasts.

The returning Solar Exalted might directly or indirectly help the Dragon Kings regain some of their past glory. If not, the Dragon Kings may vanish completely. Their ultimate fate is still to be determined, but even if they restore their ancient civilization, they are extremely few in number and will never again hold sway over Creation.

THE CHOSEN IN THE AGE OF SORROWS

Among those few Dragon Kings who remember traces of their past lives, remnants of their old religion remains. In addition to honoring the Unconquered Sun, some still submit themselves to become living vessels for the gods. Those Dragon Kings lucky enough to find a god willing to accept this offer become members of the Chosen. Today, Chosen are incredibly rare because few Dragon Kings remember the appropriate rites to indicate that they wish to attain this honored state and most of the spirits who used to regularly perform this joining have been assigned other duties and no longer interact with the Dragon Kings. Those spirits who are still willing and able to join with Dragon Kings are rare, but they also have few candidates to choose from.

Some spirits will join with any willing Dragon Kings, but these small gods often simply wish to use the Dragon Kings as tools or pawns that the gods will discard as soon as they accomplish a specific goal. For most of these gods, the Dragon Kings are disposable, and they think nothing of getting their hosts killed or maimed. These spirits prefer to bond only with low-Essence Dragon Kings that they can completely subsume. However, gods who wish to form a long-term partnership with Dragon Kings are considerably more selective. These deities will only bond with Dragon Kings who have proven their worth, who possess abilities or contacts that the spirit finds useful and who have goals similar to the spirits'.

RULES FOR POSSESSION

A spirit that has access to the Possession Charm (described on p. 291 of *Exalted*) may possess a target for the remainder of the scene. However, such possession is extremely limited and a far cry from the union of mortal and spirit that was a hallmark of the *olchiliké*. To achieve that level of possession requires the use of the more powerful Charm described below. The supplement *Games of Divinity* includes other Charms relating to spirit possession. The new Charm presented here applies specifically to the Dragon Kings and their gods and is not widely known outside of Rathess and its environs. As well as the other

PLAYING THE CHOSEN

Dragon Kings characters cannot start play as one of the Chosen. However, Dragon Kings can start play with gods as allies, contacts or mentors — in time, such a character may be able to convince a god to join with her. This joining should be one of the most profound moments in the character's life and will only occur if she can convince the god that doing so would also be in its best interests.

The details of this bonding should be determined during play and placing the character in a situation where a god is willing to bond with her should typically be the focus of an entire scenario. The character may need to accomplish some goal for the god to prove her worthiness. *Spirit Exiles of the Western Ocean* in **Time of Tumult** is an example of this type of scenario. Alternately, the spirit might only be willing to join with a Dragon King who had something that the spirit wanted, such as rulership of a community of Dragon Kings, a position of influence in some human government or organization or a close alliance with a particular Celestial Exalt or other powerful being.

obvious benefits, Dragon Kings who are *olchiliké* heal as rapidly as Exalted. They also resist and recover from all diseases equally well and gain a lethal soak equal to half their Stamina (round down) in addition to any lethal soak provide by their armor.

RIDE

Cost: 20 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

Minimum Conviction: 5

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Possession

This Charm allows a spirit to possess someone indefinitely, riding him as if the host's body were its own and laying the groundwork for a true fusion of spirit and mortal form. In order for this Charm to work, the potential vessel must consent to the spirit's possessing him. Otherwise, it does not function, and the spirit must rely on cruder Charms, such as Soul Rapt.

The results of the Charm depend on the difference in the Essence of the host and the possessing spirit. If the spirit's Essence exceeds the host's by three or more, the host acquires the spirit's Traits (both Attributes and Abilities). If the host's Essence exceeds the spirit's by three or more, the spirit acquires the host's Traits. If the Essence of host and spirit are within two points of one another, a true fusion is achieved in which the combined entity has the

average of the Traits of both halves, rounded up. The fusion also acquires the average of the spirit and the subject's temporary Essence after subtracting the 20 motes needed to trigger the Charm. If the being is an Exalt, add all temporary Essence together before determining the average — the result of a god synthesis with an Exalt has only Peripheral Essence. In addition, it has access to one of the god's Charms per point of total permanent Essence. These Charms cannot include Dematerialize.

This Charm is exceedingly rare outside of Rathess and the surrounding regions. Gods and spirits hailing from regions close to the Realm generally avoid using it, out of fear that the Immaculates will notice and take offense. The Immaculate Philosophy's adherents consider the use of this Charm a grave blasphemy and take harsh measures to suppress its continued employment.

If the mortal host is slain, the spirit reforms in one-third the normal time, and the spirit never loses its individual identity as a result. If the host is killed using Charms that have the effect of slaying a spirit forever (as with Ghost-Eating Technique), the spirit and the host's higher soul are both destroyed. Spirits using this Charm are not constantly drained the way those who simply create bodies for themselves out of Essence through the use of the Materialize Charm are.

ANCIENT AND MODERN DRAGON KINGS

Most Dragon Kings now living in Creation are savage beasts that are unsuitable as anything other than mindless antagonists. However, a few Dragon Kings are civilized enough to be suitable characters. These Dragon Kings fall into two varieties that use slightly different rules for character generation — modern Dragon Kings and ancient Dragon Kings.

Modern Dragon Kings: A few Dragon Kings manage to regain their minds through either chance or training. Among the several tens of thousands savage Dragon Kings living in various portions of Creation, some either spontaneously gain both Essence and intelligence or are raised to full sentience by one of the rare Dragon Kings who regained her mind on her own. Some of these Dragon Kings create self-sustaining pockets of civilized Dragon Kings. However, without some form of external assistance, such groups never grow beyond a few dozen members, and most do not survive for more than a few centuries. Eventually, the mass of ever-hungry and brutally savage Dragon Kings either slays the members of this small civilized community or drives the few survivors off so that they can no longer increase their numbers by recruiting from these beasts.

Also, without access to old texts or the assistance of one of the ancient Dragon Kings (see below) or a god familiar with the Dragon Kings, these creatures can never regain their highest levels of Essence (Essence 4+) or learn the highest levels of the Paths of Prehuman Mastery. As a

result, they are unable to truly rebuild the glory their kind once possessed. Because their enclaves lie on the far outskirts of Creation, those few civilized Dragon Kings who venture outside of them encounter a world that they know nothing about and that is now hostile to their kind.

CREATING MODERN DRAGON KINGS

Modern Dragon Kings begin play with 7/5/4 dots in primary/secondary/tertiary Attributes, 25 dots in Abilities, 5 dots in Virtues (at least one of which must be put into Valor), 6 dots in Paths, 7 dots in Backgrounds, a starting Essence of •• and 15 bonus points to spend. See “Character Creation Summary” (p. 175) for more information.

Ancient Dragon Kings: Unlike all but a handful of ancient Celestial Exalts, several hundred Dragon Kings survived the end of the First Age. Hoping to preserve and rebuild their ancient civilization sometime in the future, they retreated into enchanted chambers where they lay in magical stasis. Inside these chambers, the ancient reptiles did not age, but the disruptions in Essence that followed the magical catastrophes that were part of the end of the First Age prevented most of these sleepers from awakening on their own.

A few woke at various points in the past, while many of these chambers were looted and their occupants destroyed. Today, only slightly more than 100 survive. Eight sleepers lie waiting in Rathess and similar numbers exist in First Age ruins in various points in Creation. Seven are in the heart of the most ruined portions of Chiaroscuro, others are in a hidden vault under Nexus, in a chamber in the underways of Gethamane and inside a well-fortified room buried under the ice of Crystal.

These Dragon Kings originally planned to remain in stasis for a century or two and then to awaken to help their kind rebuild after the horrors of the Contagion and the attacks by the Fair Folk had both ended. Instead, they have all slept for many centuries, while the world has largely forgotten their kind as anything more than ancient legends or mindless predators. While they are usually equipped with both artifacts and Hearthstones from carefully hidden Manses, those who awaken have no knowledge of the Age of Sorrows and find themselves living in a world that has no place for their kind.

Most of these sleepers awaken if their chambers are opened. Since the newly reborn Solar Exalted now seek to reclaim their past glory, they often explore old ruins and are the ones to open these chambers. Also, simply the nearby presence of one of these mighty beings either becoming Exalted or using her Solar-aspect Essence can activate the enchanted mechanisms that awaken the sleepers.

Having actually lived during the First Age, these Dragon Kings possess secrets known only to themselves, the gods and the mysterious Sidereal Exalted. Not only can some operate and repair First Age artifacts with great skill, a few of the more widely traveled Dragon Kings know of cities and Manses that are now only legends. Storytellers should take care to make certain that this knowledge does not interfere with anyone’s enjoyment of the game. While a Dragon King may know the location of a city long forgotten by mortals, this antique metropolis will not simply lie empty and deserted, waiting for the characters to loot it. It may be buried deep under sand or ice or, worse, inhabited by rogue gods, Wyld barbarians, the Fair Folk or even one or more of the mad and inhumanly powerful Lunar Exalted who survived the First Age. Also, Dragon Kings who repair and use large quantities of First Age artifacts often rapidly attract the attention of powerful beings such as Solar Exalted who are more than capable of claiming these artifacts as their own.

CREATING ANCIENT DRAGON KINGS

Ancient Dragon Kings begin play with 8/6/5 dots in primary/secondary/tertiary Attributes, 35 dots in Abilities, 5 dots in Virtues (at least one of which must be put into Valor), 10 dots in Paths, 12 dots in Backgrounds, a starting Essence of ••• and 25 bonus points to spend. All ancient Dragon Kings must know Linguistics • (Old Realm), Lore •• and Occult ••. See “Character Creation Summary” (p. 175) for more information. Ancient Dragon Kings may also learn the Savant Background (see E:S, pp. 109-110) to represent their deep understanding of the history, science and/or magic of the First Age.

DRAGON KINGS IN Exalted CAMPAIGNS

Dragon Kings are some of the most unusual characters available in **Exalted**. Not only are they fundamentally inhuman, but they are also completely unknown to most of the inhabitants of Creation. Most mortals will assume they are god or demons, while others will take them for particularly unusual-looking Fair Folk. Unless they are traveling in the company of Exalts or other similar powerful beings, many mortals are likely to simply flee in fear when the great reptiles approach.

When playing Dragon Kings who wish to interact with mortals in any normal fashion, some form of disguise is essential. The third dot of the Path of Shimmering Water, Guise of the New Form (see p. 187), provides a useful disguise — Dragon Kings who plan to interact with mortals should strongly consider mastering this Path.

Alternately, the Necklace of Solar Charisma provides another option that simply allows mortals to look at the Dragon King without fear or distrust. For Dragon Kings who lack any such Charms or artifacts, the best option is to travel with Exalts and to never stray too far from their sides. If three outcaste Dragon-Bloods wander into a city in the Threshold in the company of one or two Dragon Kings, the populace may assume that the Dragon Kings are summoned demons or dangerous gods, but they will offer them as much deference and respect as they offer the Dragon-Bloods. Mortals all know that harming any member of an Exalt's entourage invites swift and terrible retribution. The same is true for Dragon Kings traveling with any Circle of Exalts who are not hiding their true nature from the populace.

Ancient Dragon Kings are generally powerful enough that they will not need to fear attack by mortals, but they must still contend with the Wyld Hunt, outcaste Dragon-Bloods greedy for artifacts and Lunar Exalted who attack every powerful intruder that enters their territories. Therefore, many either use illusions to conceal their nature or pretend to be powerful gods. Also, ancient Dragon Kings who wish to easily talk or trade with mortals will either need to disguise themselves, to save the mortals they wish to interact with from some serious threat or to perform a truly impressive speech to convince the inhabitants of a village that they have no interest in harming them. Even then, without an effective disguise, mortals will still move away when these powerful reptiles approach. While a just and merciful Dragon King who liberated a city or town from an oppressive ruler could eventually win the loyalty of the populace, doing so could be a lengthy and difficult task.

Dragon Kings who leave their homeland behind often form themselves into Clutches of like-minded individuals who stay together for mutual defense and to help each other to understand the strange human-dominated world around them. Also, Dragon Kings who have memories of past friendships with Exalts sometimes join Circles of Exalted. Ancient Dragon Kings are most suitable in games where the characters are all ancient Dragon Kings seeking to either restore their kind to glory or find their place in a vastly changed world or in series where one or more Dragon Kings join a Circle of Celestial Exalted. Dragon Kings and Solar Exalted get along exceptionally well, and while Solar Exalted soon become more powerful than even the greatest of the Dragon Kings, ancient Dragon Kings possess both the raw power and the knowledge of the First Age to allow them to form a valuable addition to a Circle of the mightiest Exalted in Creation. Also, every Dragon King with an Essence of 3 or higher has fragmentary memories of the First Age. Both a Dragon King and one or more of its Solar companions may have memories of having been together during the First Age. Solars and Dragon Kings formed lengthy friendships during this era

and, in some cases, spent several lifetimes as close friends or devoted shield mates. Providing this sort of tie between a Dragon King and an Exalt is an excellent way to introduce a Dragon King into the Circle.

An ancient Dragon King who joins a Circle of Terrestrial Exalted might be a bit too powerful initially, but will fit in perfectly as the Dragon-Blooded increase in power and experience. However, such characters would completely dominate a group of God-Blooded or heroic mortals. Also, only outcaste Dragon-Blooded would ever choose to associate with a creature whose devotion to the Unconquered Sun is so deep and enduring.

Modern Dragon Kings begin play significantly less powerful — a dozen well-armed mortals can easily overwhelm one of them. Modern Dragon Kings are most suitable in games where the characters are all modern Dragon Kings who wish to learn more about the hostile and dangerous world that lies beyond the boundaries of the isolated land where they grew up. Modern Dragon Kings also work extremely well in series where one or more of their kind join a Circle composed of outcaste Dragon-Blooded or powerful God-Blooded. A modern Dragon King is slightly less powerful than one of the Terrestrial Exalted, and some outcaste Dragon-Blooded gets along well with Dragon Kings, especially if they both have similar objectives. Modern Dragon Kings can join Circles of Solar Exalted, but their companions will always significantly outclass these characters. However, a Dragon King's special abilities can allow him to play an invaluable role in a Circle if the player is comfortable with such a character.

Like their more powerful elders, modern Dragon Kings must often either disguise their identity or travel in the company of powerful Exalted. Even in exceptionally cosmopolitan cities such as Nexus, almost no one has ever seen one of the Dragon Kings before — fear and awe will be the typical reactions, and one of the Dragon Kings will have far less chance of normal interactions than even one of the mighty Exalted. While most mortals will either cower away from the Dragon Kings or fearfully and politely ask what they need, a few might be foolish enough to attack. Also, because of their unique appearance, word of their presence will spread extremely rapidly, and the Wyld Hunt will soon know of their presence.

Another danger all Dragon Kings face is mistaken identity. In the largest and most cosmopolitan cities scholars, priests and mortal sorcerers know of vast numbers of gods. Because of their superficial similarities, Dragon Kings are sometimes mistaken for Arilak, the Goddess of the Eastern Jungle, for one of Grala's hounds of the Endless Hunt (see *Games of Divinity*, pp. 29-31 and 42) or for some other reptilian god. A few Dragon Kings have even been mistaken for elementals or even lesser elemental dragons who have taken humanoid form.

Although such mistakes can grant a Dragon King vast amounts of respect and prestige, continuing such a charade can be both difficult and potentially deadly. The mortals will expect the Dragon King act like the god they believe it to be and will react very poorly to being deceived. Also, all gods react extremely angrily toward those who attempt to impersonate them. Dragon Kings caught impersonating one of the more important gods are usually either killed on the spot or taken in chains to the Heavenly City of Yu-Shan, where they are tried and sentenced to some horrible centuries-long torture.

THE REMAINING DOMAINS OF THE DRAGON KINGS

While Rathess (described in **Scavenger Lands**, pp. 29-30, and covered in great detail in **Ruins of Rathess**) was once the capital city of the Dragon King's prehuman empire, many fled this city during the end of the First Realm, and other Dragon Kings had lived in isolated locations since shortly after the end of the war with the Primordials. There are isolated and remote jungle peaks, mountain valleys, desert oases and islands where small pockets of civilized Dragon Kings still survive. Most contain only a few hundred Dragon Kings. Also, while most of these regions contain only Dragon Kings, some are home to mortals, usually rude barbarians. In most cases, the Dragon Kings rule these mortals. Sometimes, the Dragon Kings keep to their oldest traditions and sacrifice human criminals to their gods, cutting out the hearts of these offenders on the top of a pyramid dedicated to the Unconquered Sun.

HIDDEN VALLEYS AND LOST ISLANDS

The following are some of the isolated locations in Creation where various breeds of Dragon Kings now live. There are other pockets of Dragon Kings, but none that hold larger numbers of civilized Dragon Kings. Most of these communities consist of a few hundred or a few thousand mindlessly savage Dragon Kings. Civilized communities tend to be both smaller, more isolated and rarer. The following communities are presented as examples of surviving enclaves of Dragon Kings. No more than two or three such settlements of civilized Dragon Kings should exist in Creation unless the Storyteller wishes to make Dragon Kings an especially important part of her series.

The Black Crag Mountains: The icy mountains to the west of Gethamane are home to a large band of uncivilized Pterok. Over 100 savage Pterok live on the ledges and small caves found on these frigid peaks. Although they primarily feast on the wandering herds of elk, reindeer and mammoths, they also sometimes attack small bands of human travelers. Occasionally, during lean years, several dozen Pterok swoop down upon large caravans or migrating icewalker tribes. Others go after

visiting Haslanti air boats. The danger posed by the Pterok means that most air boats traveling to Gethamane are equipped with siege crossbows (see **Caste Book: Night**, pp. 76-78) or heavy ballistae (see **Savage Seas**, pp. 121-122) so that they can defend themselves against these flying horrors. A tiny handful of these Pterok here have attained actual intelligence, and some of these creatures decide to leave the harsh and savage life of the Black Crag Mountains far behind.

Vesathar Valley: Located in the Northeast, 1,500 miles north and 600 miles west of the Haltan City of Chanta is a high and isolated mountain valley. This valley is one of the largest settlements of civilized Dragon Kings. Here, almost 500 civilized Pterok and nearly 300 civilized Raptok live and work alongside a few thousand humans. While the inhabitants retain little more than legends about the First Age, they have kept remnants of the old Dragon King civilization alive. The Dragon Kings grow many of the less exotic forms of vegetative technology in crystal-walled greenhouses and excel at the production of crystal technology. The human inhabitants of Vesathar Valley allow themselves to be governed by the relatively enlightened rule of these Dragon Kings. They worship the Dragon Kings as benevolent demigods who are specially blessed by the Unconquered Sun.

By standards of the First Age, this valley is poor and backward, but it is relatively peaceful, and the Dragon Kings' magics allow the inhabitants to thrive in this harsh region. The valley is surrounded on all sides by high peaks, and explorers venturing outside the valley either never return or bring back tales of savage Wyld barbarians and hostile icewalkers. However, a party of explorers recently sighted a Haslanti air boat that was exploring the lands east of Crystal. Because some of the Dragon Kings have fleeting memories of the great skyships of the First Age, they are now equipping a small group of Pterok and Raptok to travel to the southwest and see if they can find the source of this vessel.

Mount Eledath: This great conical peak is an extinct volcano located halfway between Rathess and the Varang city of Kirighast. The huge volcano has a caldera that is two miles across and rises almost four miles above the surrounding jungle. The caldera is filled with exotic animals and plants, including some remnants of First Age fauna now extinct in the rest of Creation. For centuries, savage bands of both Raptok and Anklok inhabited this crater. They lived as beasts and knew nothing of either reason or their long-lost past. The two tribes, each consisting of several hundred Dragon Kings, fought endless and deadly battles against each other. The Raptok lived in the jungles at the bottom of the crater, and the Anklok lived in the rocky land near the crater walls. All of this changed a few years ago when more than a dozen Dragon Kings spontaneously regained their intellects.



Today, several dozen Dragon Kings of both breeds have regained portions of their memories and are now training others. The Dragon Kings have brought a sort of peace to their savage subjects. The Dragon Kings still fight but in a more limited and controlled fashion — savage duels rather than open warfare. As the leaders remember more of their past lives, they grow more ambitious, and if they can successfully help other Dragon Kings regain their reason, they will begin to explore and expand outward beyond their remote mountain home.

The Glitter-Flame Desert: Seven hundred miles South of Chiaroscuro, the Glitter-Flame Desert is bounded in the north by low, rocky hills and in the west by many lines of great sand dunes. This desert and the many small oases inside of it are home to more than 200 savage and unintelligent Anklok. These bestial Dragon-Kings subsist by hunting the hardy wild goats that live in many of these oases. They supplement this diet by feeding on the savage Dune People who live beneath the nearby sand dunes. Most travelers know to avoid this region — either the Dune People or the Anklok usually devour those that fail to heed such warnings. At any given time, only a handful of these great, heavily armored monsters have managed to become fully intelligent before death in their kind's incessant battles for status and dominance. Those few who develop their spirits far enough to regain a portion of their memories of their past lives often leave this brutal and stark land behind and seek out others of their kind.

Scale Crest Island: This tropical island is located in the further reaches of the Southwest. Almost 5,000 mortal barbarians live in the interior of this jungle-filled island, and several thousand savage fisher folk live along the coast. A group of almost 200 hundred semicivilized Mosok rule the coastal fishers, while half that many semicivilized Anklok rule the barbarians who live in the interior. Tyrant lizards and a 30-foot-tall animate construct resembling a huge warstrider inhabit the large valley in the center of the interior jungle. To protect themselves and their subjects from these monsters, the Anklok constructed a huge stockade of living trees with animate gates to prevent any of the dangerous beasts from leaving this valley. The barbarians of Scale Crest Island worship their Dragon Kings as gods, and the Dragon Kings regularly sacrifice criminals by tearing out their hearts and offering them to the Unconquered Sun.

Scag: One thousand eight hundred miles northwest of Abalone lies the rocky island of Scag. In this portion of the Far West, islands with soil or vegetation are rare. Only pirates and Wyld barbarians who can breathe water visit most of these barren rocks. Scag is one of the treasures of the Coral Archipelago pirates. Scouts from a small pirate fleet known as the Azure Hook found that this island was the breeding ground and part-time home of a rude tribe of almost 400 mindless and savage Mosok. Almost a decade ago, these pirates learned how to capture and train these beasts, and the Azure Hook has subsequently attempted to

emulate the Lintha Family. The pirates use these savage beasts to help to attack ships and to raid coastal villages, sending the Mosok in first to terrify their victims and kill the most dangerous combatants.

The Azure Hook is based in the Coral Archipelago and for the past few years, it has made additional money renting out some of these half-trained Mosok to other Coral pirates. Today, the Coral pirates have almost 100 well-trained, but still savage Mosok that they control with threats and powerful drugs. Their training has begun to awaken the minds of a few of these bestial Dragon Kings. Some of their trainers noticed these changes and are now teaching a handful of the semisavage Mosok more complex duties. However, the majority of trainers wish nothing more than dull and obedient monsters and punish any sign of greater comprehension. Some of the semicivilized captive Mosok have learned to conceal their growing awareness and bide their time until they have an opportunity to slaughter the pirates who hold them captive.

Common backgrounds: Dragon Kings who come from hidden valleys and remote islands filled with dangerous animals and their own kind can possess Backgrounds such as Allies, Artifact, Familiar, Mentor or Resources, but they rarely have others. However, Dragon Kings who rule over regions inhabited by mortal savages also frequently possess both the Cult and Followers Backgrounds because dozens or even hundreds of mortals may worship the characters as powerful reptilian godlings.

DRAGON KINGS IN YU-SHAN

Not all civilized Dragon Kings live within the boundaries of Creation. After the Dragon-Blooded slew the Solar Exalted, some Dragon Kings who already had close ties with the gods fled the growing chaos in Creation and moved to Yu-Shan. Their descendents still work for either the Bureau of Heaven or the Bureau of the Seasons or live in one of the mostly abandoned portions of Yu-Shan (See *E:S*, p. 32). Dragon Kings in Creation who manage to overcome their savage beginnings are occasionally taken to Yu-Shan as servants of gods or Sidereal Exalted or successfully petition for employment there.

Because any Dragon King who learns 3 or more dots in the Path of Celestial Air can attempt to enter Yu-Shan, going there often seems like an excellent escape from the many problems that Dragon Kings now face in Creation. During the First Age, some Dragon Kings visited Yu-Shan regularly, and the gods are both familiar with them and often treat Dragon Kings with the mild deference reserved for once important individuals who have fallen on desperately hard times. Ever since the first Dragon Kings immigrated to Yu-Shan, some gods have reserved a small number of jobs for these beings and their descendents. Most Dragon Kings work as clerks or messengers or serve in purely symbolic posts that provide little more than a

minimal income and a chance to legitimately live in Heaven. These Dragon Kings have little supervision, and so long as they make periodic appearances and don't violate any of the laws of Heaven, they can do mostly as they please.

DRAGON KINGS RIGHTS IN YU-SHAN

Like any other magical being, Dragon Kings who are on official business for one of the Bureaus of Heaven or who possess one or more dots in Celestial Manse (almost no Dragon Kings have more than one dot) are free to enter or leave Yu-Shan, though they may not have the ability to pass the gates to enter unaided. Before the destruction of the Primordials, when the Dragon Kings ruled Creation, they could freely visit Heaven and stay for up to a week at a time. Ghataru, head of the Bureau of the Seasons and Weather, successfully lobbied to keep this law in place. As a result, the celestial lions allow any Dragon King to visit Heaven for up to seven days, but they assign all such visitors a lion dog escort to both guide them around and make certain they do not overstay their time. Dragon Kings visitors who are not on official business and who do not live in Heaven may not invite guests along on their visits to Yu-Shan.

Dragon Kings who live in Heaven but do not have a meaningful job there (which includes both actual responsibilities and having either two dots in Salary or one dot each in Salary and Celestial Manse) have no more rights than the lowliest minor servant. They have the minimal rights guaranteed to all residents of Heaven (see *E:S*, p. 21), but even the most minor gods can freely call for an audit of their actions (see *E:S*, pp. 34-40). Celestial judges treat such Dragon Kings as paupers who live in Heaven on the sufferance of their betters. Those few Dragon Kings who have important duties in Heaven are protected from harassment as well as any other heavenly employee.

Before the war with the Primordials, the Dragon Kings were openly welcomed in Heaven. Today, they retain limited rights only because Ghataru, Shogun-Regent of the Bureau of Seasons and Weather (see *E:S*, p. 45), once had his life saved by a heroic Dragon King. Ghataru feels honor-bound to assist Dragon Kings in Yu-Shan. He has both lobbied to allow them to retain a portion of their traditional rights and finds many who come to Yu-Shan make-work jobs in the Bureau of Seasons or with allies of his in the Bureau of Heaven. A few of these

Dragon Kings have sufficient ambition and ability to impress their immediate superiors sufficiently that they are promoted and given meaningful jobs in one of these bureaus. In total, almost 1,000 Dragon Kings now live and work in Yu-Shan. All four breeds of Dragon King now live in Yu-Shan, and all but the youngest are fully intelligent — civilized parents, assisted by various gods who know the ancient techniques necessary to help Dragon Kings increase their Essence, raise all Dragon Kings that hatch here. Without this divine aid, even these Dragon Kings would be unable to advance to the highest levels of knowledge and power. Almost all Dragon Kings in Yu-Shan are the descendents of Dragon Kings who immigrated there long ago. However, Dragon Kings continue to immigrate there, and a character living in Yu-Shan could either be a new immigrant who recently gained an appointment there or part of a family of Dragon Kings who have lived in Yu-Shan since the end of the First Age.

Look at both **Games of Divinity** (see pp. 12-20) and **Exalted: The Sidereals** (see pp. 16-49) for further information on Yu-Shan and the Celestial Hierarchy. Any Dragon King who wishes to be able to easily travel back and forth between Yu-Shan and Creation must either know the Celestial Airpower Open the Celestial Doorway or both the secrets of Terrestrial Circle Sorcery and the spell Open the Spirit Door. Otherwise, the Dragon King will need to ask a god or Exalt to transport him back and forth from Yu-Shan. Dragon Kings born and raised in Yu-Shan can be either modern or ancient Dragon Kings in terms of both power and experience. Occasionally, ancient Dragon Kings awaken and find Creation so alien that they seek refuge in the more familiar city of Yu-Shan.

Common Backgrounds: Most Dragon Kings living in Yu-Shan should have one dot in the Salary Background (see **E:S**, pp. 107-108), and some even possess one dot in Celestial Manse (see **E:S**, p. 106). Because they often hold their position only because various gods took pity upon them or their ancestors, no Dragon Kings can have more than •• in either Background, and most have no more than • in either one. Only Dragon Kings who live or work in Yu-Shan can possess either Background.

THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE DRAGON KINGS

For the Dragon Kings, their philosophies are not merely pursuits for scholars, they form the essential basis for their thought and reason. Without special training in these philosophies, a Dragon King is nothing more than a savage and mindless predator. Training in these philosophies was necessary to unlock the minds and spiritual power latent within them. Although a few exceptional Dragon Kings can gain up to three dots of permanent Essence without instruction, most require extensive training in order to advance

DRAGON KING PHYSIOLOGY

Dragon Kings are powerful and tough, but they lack the magically enhanced endurance of the Exalted. Although their tough reptilian hide and sturdy constitutions allow them to resist the affects of bleeding, poison and harsh environmental conditions as well as one of the Exalted, they heal no faster than mortals, and they are no more resistant to disease or infection than ordinary mortals. Use mortal healing rates, mortal rules for infection (see **Exalted**, pp. 233-234) and the mortal rules for disease for all Dragon King characters. Also, while all Dragon Kings possess tough hides that give them some innate armor, unlike Exalts, their Stamina does not assist them in soaking lethal damage. When not wearing additional armor, their bashing soak equals (their Stamina + their innate armor) and their lethal soak equals their innate armor.

even to this level, and all Dragon Kings require teaching from an older Dragon King or god skilled in these philosophies to advanced further. Each dot of Essence they gain requires a different level of understanding.

ESSENCE ONE: THE SAVAGE

Dragon Kings with one dot of Essence are mindless predators that are as clever as bright apes but completely incapable of rational thought or language. They think of nothing but the excitement of hunting and killing their prey and the joy of having a full belly.

ESSENCE TWO: THE APPRENTICE

After some initial teaching reawakens the Dragon King's reason, he is no longer a mindless savage. These Dragon Kings cannot yet remember anything from their previous lives, and so, only their devotion to language and rational thought prevents them from reverting to savagery.

Apprentice Dragon Kings understand that greater enlightenment awaits them, but they cannot yet understand anything more than the barest hints of what it is. Although they are schooled in how to perform the various rituals of Dragon King life, they lack any understanding of what these rituals mean. However, they now possess a basic understanding of time. They can think about the past and the future and regularly spend time meditating on both their past actions and their plans for the future. Beyond this, they only know that they should follow the dictates of wiser Dragon Kings and that sufficient mediation would eventually unlock the wisdom of previous lives. Apprentice Dragon Kings understand that they are members of a great (or once great) people and that their loyalty

to their own kind and to the Unconquered Sun are the ultimate foundations of Dragon King ethics and morals.

They have also learned that they should check their aggression and to think before they attack. These lessons in self-control form the heart of their learning. However, in the heat of the moment, many apprentice Dragon Kings forget this lesson.

ESSENCE THREE: THE REBORN

These Dragon Kings possessed sufficiently advanced spirits that they can remember fragments of their previous lives. Suddenly, many of the lessons the Dragon King learns by rote become vividly real because she can now remember and comprehend the meaning behind those lessons. These memories allow the Dragon King to instinctively understand the intricate structure of Dragon King society. For the first time, the Dragon King feels a fervent devotion to the Unconquered Sun because she can remember images and emotions from the many thousands of worship services it participated in during her previous lives. The Dragon King might even remember both that agony and the transcendence of voluntarily giving up her life and heart to the Unconquered Sun.

Beyond this, the Dragon King now understands her status as one of the greatest predators in Creation and a fiercely loyal servant of the Unconquered Sun. The reborn often possess a fervent devotion to the Unconquered Sun and an obsession with both loves and hates from their past lives. As an apprentice, a Dragon King only knew that she must refrain from mindless aggression. Now, she learns to use and channel her aggression rather than simply to restrain it.

ESSENCE FOUR AND FIVE: THE ADULTS

Few such Dragon Kings exist in Creation today because there are no gods or elder Dragon Kings to tutor them. By the time they reach four dots in Essence, Dragon Kings are considered full adults and have completely integrated the fragmentary memories of their previous lives. They have also tempered the overwhelming zeal common to the reborn with a more reasoned understanding of the world. The fervor and deeply emotional devotion they feel toward the Unconquered Sun is combined with an understanding of divine politics and the complex motives of the gods. Similarly, the overwhelming loyalty

they felt toward their own people is mixed with an understanding of the place of all beings in Creation and a more balanced understanding of the needs of the individual versus the needs of their species, while still filled with passion and not denying their nature as savage predators.

Adults fully understand the Dragon King's complex code of dueling and their elaborate etiquette of carefully studied revenge. While the reborn are often fervent zealots, adults are generally more careful and calculating. However, even they sometimes become caught up in the moment and give way to their wild, violent natures.

ESSENCE SIX: THE WISE

Although some Dragon Kings gained six dots in Essence shortly after their first century of life, less advanced Dragon Kings consider all of the wise to be revered elders. Dragon Kings who attain this degree of enlightenment approach the older Celestial Exalted and the gods in wisdom and understanding. They have lived longer than mortals and fully comprehend all of the lessons of their people's philosophy. They are the only Dragon Kings who can fully balance their emotional nature with their reason, and they are more fully in control of their emotions and their actions than other Dragon Kings. They have fully tamed their savage instincts but have not discarded them. The wise can be as fierce and violent as a mindless savage of their kind, but they know how to use this savagery and not be controlled by it. They can also teach other Dragon Kings how to attain this level of enlightenment. In the First Age, most Dragon Kings eventually attained this enlightened state, but in the Age of Sorrows, these elders and exceptionally rare and are only found in Yu-Shan and among the ancient Dragon Kings from the First Age.

THE FOUR BREEDS OF DRAGON KINGS

There are four breeds of Dragon King, each one originally lived in one of the four quarters of the Threshold. Today, the Eastern Dragon Kings are the most common, but a few thousand Western Dragon Kings also live in Rathess and small numbers of all four breeds live in isolated valleys and high mountain peaks in the less accessible portions of the Threshold.

The Pterok

Before the fall of the Primordials, these magnificent flying reptiles were the unquestioned rulers of the air. They lived in towns and villas built high on mountaintops and flew down to mortal villages to govern their subjects. Most of these wondrous creatures died during the war against the Primordials. Afterward, those that remained were no longer alone in the air — Exalted sorcerers created several races of flying mortals, and Exalted builders created great skyships and aerial chariots. However, Pterok were superb flyers and the more war-

like served with distinction and valor in the aerial regiments of the armies of the Solar Deliberative.

Although not as indulgent and sybaritic as the Raptok, the Pterok loved beauty and painstakingly crafted both their mountaintop homes and their artifacts so that all these creations had exceptionally clean and elegant lines. Their dwellings were both graceful and extremely Spartan by human standards. The Pterok disliked useless ornamentation, unnecessary structures and any devices or accoutrements that had moving parts. As a result, their small aeries were smooth constructions of stone, with a few carefully placed pieces of crystal and vegetative technology. Humans often described these settlements as looking like unusually lovely and well-preserved ruins.

The Pterok were noted scholars and occultists, and the few who remain eagerly study the relics of the First Age. The ease with which the Pterok interact with spirits and especially with the gods means that

they are now almost as common in Heaven as the Raptok, despite the fact that far fewer of their kind survive in Creation. Legends say that they were the breed that created the Dragon King's written language, and savants still regard the tomes the Pterok made from plates of enchanted crystal as some of the most elegant and durable books in Creation. This is especially true because Pterok crystal-workers treated these books so that they are imperishable. More than 100 Pterok now work in Yu-Shan as scribes and personal historians to moderately powerful gods. Although their hands are unsuited for many mortal crafts, they are excellent calligraphers, and their finest work wins praise even in Yu-Shan.

Pterok are both brilliant and meticulous. They enjoy both intricacy and detail and are well suited for the study of



all forms of magic. They are also savage predators who dive on helpless prey from above. They prefer to make everything an art, including the arts of death. Individuals gain status both for successful hunts and for executing diving attacks in a particularly perfect fashion. Although all of Dragon King society is filled with rituals, Pterok rituals are unusually complex and elaborate. The Dragon King learned supernatural martial arts from the Exalted. However, their Essence was such that they could not practice human styles. Instead, they practiced a number of styles more suited to their primal nature. Foremost among these styles was a technique studied by many Pterok, which was both a deadly fighting form and a complex aerial display of swift and elegant movement. While the supernatural elements of this style are lost to the Age of Sorrows, the desire for elegant perfection remains.

The Pterok's thoughts are similarly intricate. They are as devoted to the Unconquered Sun as any other breed of the Dragon Kings. However, they express this devotion through an interest in theology that they use to attempt to understand the Unconquered Sun's inner nature and through elaborate divinations that seek to learn the intricacies of his will and his plan for Creation.

Appearance: The Northern Dragon Kings are large flying reptiles that look much like long-legged, bipedal pteranodons. They stand in a slightly forward crouch and are between four and a half and five and a half feet tall, with a wingspan of between 16 and 20 feet. Their great leathery wings have dexterous long-fingered hands in the middle — the wings fold neatly back to allow the Pterok to carry and manipulate objects and to fight with weapons. Their heads have both long muzzles filled with many sharp teeth and a narrow crest like a pteranodon's on the back that helps them to steer. They have long thin tails with a rudder-like flap at the end. Although their wings are leathery and covered in extremely short, fine fur, their necks and bodies are covered with short, brightly colored feathers like those on the bodies of some birds.

Breed Attributes: The Pterok gain +2 to Dexterity and +2 to Perception. These modifiers can raise their

Dexterity and Perception above 5. However, they may only raise these two Attributes above 5 by spending either bonus or experience points. While flying, they can ascend at a rate of (Dexterity + 12) yards a turn, descend at a rate equal to 10 times this speed and fly level at a rate equal to four times their speed at ascending flight — they fly at speeds of between 40 and 55 miles per hour over long distances.

On the ground, Pterok are far slower — they cannot sprint, and their running speed is only (Dexterity + 8) yards a turn. Like other characters, Pterok can act normally and still move up to half of this distance. The Pterok have a tough hide that gives them an extra +1B/1L of soak. While they are quite adept at using many weapons, their unusual physical form prevents them from using weapons or wearing armor not made specifically for one of these Dragon Kings. Also, the unusual structure of their arms mean that they suffer a +1 difficulty to all rolls where they attempt to use tools, lockpicks, musical instruments or similar implements that are not specifically created for Dragon King hands.

Those with human body shapes similarly experience this penalty when attempting to use tool and implements designed for Dragon Kings. However, with the proper tools, Pterok can be inhumanly skilled calligraphers.

Breed Abilities: Pterok excel at feats of athletics and scholarship and at dealing with spirits. They have a natural affinity with Athletics, Lore and Occult.

Innate Weapons: Pterok cannot use their claws or their tails to attack. However, they have sharp teeth and can buffet foes with their powerful wings.

Weapon	Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def
Bite	+1	+0	+3L	-2
Wing Buffet	+1	+1	+4B	+0

Common Natures: Architect, Bureaucrat, Critic, Explorer, Paragon, Savant, Visionary

Sobriquets: Children of the Wind, Flying Demons, Sky Lords

Concepts: Celestial bureaucrat, martial artist, heavenly calligrapher, scavenger lord

*When I am a zone in the sky,
then is the time for hunting and
introspection.*

The Raptok

Raptok are the lithe and swift Eastern Dragon Kings. During the First Age, they were the unquestioned rulers of the jungle city of Rathess. They excelled at the Dragon King's vegetative technology and were the most human of any of the breeds of Dragon Kings. In addition to being able to use human tools and weapons as well as ones made by their own kind, they were also the most human in their ways of thought and the most comfortable around humans. Many Raptok developed close friendships with both mortals and Exalts and fought alongside Exalts as loyal companions. During the height of the First Age, a few Raptok even left Rathess forever and spent their lives living among mortals and Exalts.

The Raptok were the most urban and the most conventionally civilized of the Dragon Kings. They enjoyed art, music and fine food, they took great pleasure in conversation and the social niceties of life, and they enjoyed living amidst crowds. They were also the finest crafters of the Dragon Kings, and the crystal and vegetative items they made were in great demand by Exalts who found these items both lovely and useful. The Raptok were also the only Dragon Kings who used anything resembling mortal tools. As a result, their cities appeared far less alien than the settlements of the other Dragon Kings. The Raptok were also the only Dragon Kings who ate both plants and animals. Although exotic, during the First Age, some mortals and Exalts considered civilized Raptok cuisine to be a delicacy. Raptok could thrive on a diet of normal mortal food, although most preferred to eat at least some of their meat raw.

Today, Raptok are the most common of the Dragon Kings, and any scholar familiar with Rathess

has at least seen a sketch of them. However, only a handful of savants realize that the so-called "stalkers" that lurk in the towers and underways of Rathess are the same beings as the glorious Dragon Kings who once



lived there. A character must possess four or more dots in Lore to know this fact.

Although they could be refined diplomats and entertaining hosts at parties, Raptok were also savage predators. Their code of dueling was somewhat more ritualized and complex than those of the other breeds, but it was no less deadly. In battle, the Raptok were fierce warriors who did not hesitate to ruthlessly and utterly destroy their enemies. However, after a battle, these same warriors would chat happily about art or literature while they delicately cleaned the skulls of their enemies for display in their elegant battle shrines.

Raptok attempted to lead lives based equally upon the principles of honor and an enjoyment of worldly pleasure. They avoided extreme excesses that distracted them from their duties but were always willing to enjoy fine food, luxurious furnishings, well-made weapons or beautiful adornments. They also valued cooperation and companionship and were almost never loners. When in a Clutch of Dragon Kings or a Circle of Exalts, they attempted to create consensus and work to ensure that the members' relations are harmonious and peaceful.

Appearance: Raptok are slender and exceedingly graceful. They have small scales, nimble clawed hands that are quite similar to a human's and a crest of brightly colored feathers that extends down their backs and covers the end of their long sinuous tails. Humans considered them to be the most attractive of the Dragon Kings. Raptok stand

between five and six feet tall and have flexible necks that are more than a foot long and tails that can be more than a yard long.

Breed Attributes: The Raptok gain +1 to Strength, Dexterity, Stamina and Perception. These modifiers can raise their Strength, Dexterity, Stamina and Perception above 5. However, they may only raise these Attributes above 5 by spending either bonus or experience points. Their tough scaled hide adds +3B/+3L to their soak. Raptok are the most human of the Dragon Kings, both in their personalities and in their physical form. As a result, they can use all weapons or tools made for humans. The Raptok also have the most humanlike hands of any of the breeds of Dragon King — they can use tools and manipulate objects as well as any human.

Breed Abilities: Raptok excel at feats of manual dexterity and social interaction and at dealing with other species. They have a natural affinity with Craft, Socialize and Linguistics.

Innate Weapons: Raptok possess both sharp teeth and claws but cannot attack with their tails.

Weapon	Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def
Bite	+0	+0	+3L	-2
Claw	+1	+1	+2L	+0

Common Natures: Caregiver, Conniver, Hedonist, Leader, Martyr, Thrillseeker

Sobriquets: Stalkers, The Walkers Among Men, The Lords of the Green

Concepts: diplomat, healer, magical crafter

IM QUICKER THAN A MAN
AND HUNGRIER BY FAR
BUT EVEN I CAN TALK
AND BE REASONABLE

The Anklok

The Anklok are the large and hulking Southern Dragon Kings. Although slow and heavily armored, they excelled at Paths that make them inhumanly fast and agile. The Anklok were the most aggressive and the most solitary of the Dragon Kings. They normally lived on the edges of deserts and in dry rocky areas. Here, they hunted all manner of large game and occasionally came together in large groups, where they performed great rituals and created vast rock carvings. Because of their mastery of fire and, by extension, their connection to the blazing heat of the Unconquered Sun, the Anklok were regarded by most Dragon Kings as the finest priests of their kind.

They made little use of vegetative technology, they never built cities, and they created and used only those pieces of crystal technology that they could carry and would need regularly. Their crystal technology was typically large, blocky and somewhat crude in appearance. However, these devices worked just as well as the more complex and delicate crystals created by the Raptok and the Pterok. The Anklok studied the arts of hunting and survival above all others and worshiped the Unconquered Sun by dedicating their kills to him. They offered up the hearts of their most impressive victims and prey as sacrifices. Instead of building elaborate temples, they ripped the hearts from their victims where they fell and incin-

erated those hearts with magical fire while they shouted prayers to the Unconquered Sun.

Most Anklok were deeply passionate creatures filled with the conviction of their beliefs. Although few Anklok



spent much time with either mortals or Exalts, those that did were more steadfast and loyal than any other breed of Dragon King. Anklok cared extremely deeply about a very few things, which could include their religion, their ideals or even a chosen group of companions, such as their Clutch. However, they had little interest in anything outside their chosen interests. Anklok rarely had hobbies. Instead, they devoted their lives to the fervent pursuit of a single overwhelming ideal. Most were especially zealous about their devotion to the Unconquered Sun, and while normally taciturn, few passed up a chance to attempt to convert a receptive audience to his worship. Also, while the more civilized Anklok challenged anyone who strongly disagreed with them to a duel, many Anklok simply attacked individuals who openly argued about something that the Anklok cared deeply about.

Mortals and Exalts most often saw only this passion for battle. The Anklok were fearless warriors. In addition to enjoying battle for its own sake, Anklok saw fighting for something as the ultimate proof of their devotion and victory as vindication of their views. Shunning deception and trickery, they embraced honorable combat with worthy opponents as an almost sacred act. During the First Age, a few of the most powerful Anklok took service in the armies of the Solar Deliberative and looked forward to trying their skill in single combat with one of the nobles of the Fair Folk.

An Anklok's word was its bond, and his honor was his most prized possession. While this meant that the Anklok were exceptionally trustworthy, anyone who questioned the honor of an Anklok had to be prepared to defend her statement with her life. Anklok never joked about their honor.

Appearance: Anklok are the largest Dragon Kings, standing seven feet tall. They have thick armor composed of large heavily ridged plates like those on the back of an alligator or crocodile. Their blunt muzzles are filled with thick conical teeth, and their broad muscular tails end in a large club-like bulb that they can use as a deadly weapon. They have crude hands, and many mortals who see them mistake them for animals.

Breed Attributes: Anklok gain +2 to Strength and +2 to Stamina, as well as an additional +0 health level. These modifiers can raise their Strength and Stamina above 5. However, they may only raise these two Attributes above 5 by spending either bonus or experience points. They also add +6B/6L to their soak. However, their clawed hands are hulking paws that cannot use any tools or weapons not designed specifically for Dragon Kings. Even using such tools, they suffer a +1 difficulty to all Dexterity rolls involving fine manipulation, including all Craft rolls as well as any attempt to play a musical instrument or to pick a lock.

Breed Abilities: Anklok excel at surviving adversity. They have a natural affinity with Endurance, Resistance and Survival.

Innate Weapons: Anklok possess claws, sharp teeth and a heavy club-like tail.

Weapon	Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def
Claw	+1	+1	+3L	+0
Bite	+0	+0	+3L	-2
Tail	+1	-1	+4L	-2

Common Natures: Bravo, Gallant, Judge, Paragon, Survivor, Traditionalist

Sobriquets: Sand Hunter, Children of the Desert, Armored Zealots

Concepts: Proud warrior, zealous priest, honorable judge

*To live, to fight and to
die under the face of the
sun, that is what is best.*

The Mosok

The Mosok are large, aquatic Dragon Kings who once lived in both the Western Ocean and in lakes and rivers elsewhere in Creation. Spending most of their time in the water, they had little to do with humanity. However, they were quite social and lived in packs of several hundred to

several thousand. Like the Anklok, they had little use for technology, living as they did in the open ocean. However, they also built villages and towns that were partly underwater and partly on various coral atolls and other small islands. Here, they raised their young, celebrated festivals, worshiped the Unconquered Sun and crafted plants and crystals to provide them with many useful amenities and

weapons. Although they hunted the open ocean alone or in small groups, they always returned

to their large and thriving settlements. This split between solitude and socialization made them the most changeable of the Dragon Kings, which only befits their element.

Most Mosok lived in the vast Western Ocean, but some dwelled in the various great rivers of the Realm and the Threshold. These Mosok had a similar way of life, but they also had far more contact with humanity. Mosok who live in fresh water both hunt and relax in the waters of rivers and lakes, but they spend much of their time on land and in moist environments such as swamps. Fresh- and saltwater Mosok are not separate breeds. Any of them can exist equally well in any body of water. To move from fresh to salt water or the reverse, a Mosok's player must make a Stamina + Resistance roll for the character at a difficulty of 4. This roll can be made as an extended roll, with a new roll made every hour. However, every hour that the Mosok is in water it has



not adapted to, it takes one unsoakable die of bashing damage. Although Mosok were superbly adapted for life in the water, they are not tied to the water like most amphibians. While none of them are happy doing so, they can remain away from the water indefinitely.

Their amphibious nature and their mixture of social and solitary pursuits were only part of their extreme and mercurial nature. Mosok shifted between extremes of mood with great speed. If provoked, a group of calm and joyful Mosok could become deadly warriors within seconds. They were also extremely adaptable and were willing to use any means necessary to solve a problem.

If straightforward and honorable solutions failed, Mosok were perfectly willing to use other, less savory, means. Except for their kin and their closest allies, the Mosok were willing to betray any comrade who became a liability or whose betrayal brought them a significant gain. Blackmail, assassination and similar pursuits were also perfectly reasonable activities for Mosok — they were far more concerned with the goal they wished to accomplish than with the exact path they had to take to reach it. Their Paths enabled them to especially excel at all forms of deception, and despite their hulking appearance, those who took to lives of crime became premier assassins and thieves.

During the First Age, few humans trusted Mosok. However, while they considered expedience to be far more important than casual loyalties, they were extremely devoted to their Clutch. Exalts who worked with Mosok learned that a Mosok who considered an Exalt to be a friend and a close companion would do anything for that Exalt, including sacrificing his own life. Mosok were creatures of extremes — moderation was completely foreign to them. Their excesses often made it difficult for them to gain the trust of others, but their effectiveness meant that few dared to underestimate them.

Appearance: Mosok look somewhat like large bipedal crocodiles. They have thick crocodilian hides, and while

their limbs are longer in proportion than those of the Anklok, they are also quite wide, and their hands and feet end in webbed fingers and toes. Their flattened crocodile-like tails allow them to swim quite swiftly, and they only use their arms and legs to help them steer.

Breed Attributes: All Mosok gain +2 to both Strength and Stamina, as well as an additional +0 health level. These modifiers can raise their Strength and Stamina above 5. However, they may only raise these two Attributes above 5 by spending either bonus or experience points. They also add +4L/+4B to their soak. However, their clawed and webbed hands are so crude that they cannot use any tools or weapons not designed specifically for Dragon Kings. Even using such tools, they suffer a +1 difficulty to all Dexterity rolls involving fine manipulation, including all Craft rolls as well as any attempt to play a musical instrument or to pick a lock. Mosok are completely at home in the water. They can swim at their sprinting speed and can hold their breath for (Stamina x 10) minutes, plus 10 additional minutes for every success on a reflexive Stamina + Endurance roll. However, Mosok are clumsy on the land — they cannot sprint, and the distance that they can jump is halved.

Breed Abilities: Mosok excel at hunting, deception and life at sea. They have a natural affinity with Brawl, Larceny and Survival.

Innate Weapons: Mosok possess claws, sharp teeth and a flat, heavy tail.

Weapon	Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def
Bite	+0	+0	+4L	-2
Claw	+1	+1	+2L	+0
Tail	+0	-1	+5B	-2

Common Natures: Bravo, Conniver, Explorer, Gal-lant, Jester, Rebel, Thrillseeker

Sobriquets: Croc Men, Children of the Sea, Deep Hunters

Concepts: Deadly assassin, cunning thief, clever sailor

Come over here, and look at
what I've found.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

CHARACTER CREATION PROCESS

• STEP ONE: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Choose concept, breed and Nature.

Choose to create a modern or an ancient Dragon King

Note breed's special abilities.

• STEP TWO: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental

(7/5/4) for a modern Dragon King or (8/6/5) for an ancient Dragon King.

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

Apply Breed Attribute modifiers.

Note: Even after these modifiers are applied, Dragon Kings cannot have any Attributes higher than 5 without spending bonus or experience points.

• STEP THREE: SELECT ABILITIES

Note Breed Abilities.

Select Favored Abilities (3; may not be the same as Breed Abilities).

Choose Abilities (25 for a modern Dragon King or 35 for an ancient Dragon King — at least 10 must be from Breed 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 for a modern Dragon King or 12 for an ancient Dragon King — none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points), Paths (select one favored Path, in addition to the two Breed Paths), Path powers (6 for a modern Dragon King — at least 3 must be from Favored or Breed Paths; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points; or 10 for an ancient Dragon King — at least 5 must be from Favored or Breed Paths; none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points) and Virtues (5, at least 1 of which must be put into Valor — no Virtue may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points).

• STEP FIVE: FINISHING TOUCHES

Record Essence (2 for a modern Dragon King or 3 for an ancient Dragon King), Willpower (add the total of two highest Virtues — may not start at higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher), Essence pool equal to (Essence x 4) + (Willpower x 2) + Conviction + Valor. As with spirits, each Dragon King is fully harmonized to his entire Essence pool; expenditure of Essence does not cause Dragon Kings to display anima banners.

BREEDS

- **Northern:** Agile flyers with who excel at dealing with spirits.

Breed Abilities: Athletics, Lore, Occult

- **Eastern:** Clever urbanites who excel at working with vegetative technology.

Breed Abilities: Craft, Socialize, Linguistics

- **Southern:** Savage, hulking barbarian warriors.

Breed Abilities: Endurance, Resistance, Survival

- **Western:** Large amphibious creatures who excel at deception.

Breed Abilities: Brawl, Larceny, Survival

ARCHETYPES (NATURE)

See *Exalted*, pages 114-117.

VIRTUES

See *Exalted*, pages 129-131.

BACKGROUNDS

- **Allies** — Aides and friends who help in tasks.
- **Artifact** — Weapons and tools, either vegetative, crystal or orichalcum.*
- **Backing** — Rank in an organization of power and influence.
- **Celestial Manse** — You have a dwelling in the Celestial City (see *E:S*, p. 106).**
- **Contacts** — Information sources and associates in useful places.
- **Cult** — Mortals who worship you.
- **Familiar** — An animal companion.
- **Followers** — Humans who look to you for leadership.
- **Influence** — Your pull in the world around you.
- **Manse** — A place of power and Essence.
- **Mentor** — A patron and teacher.
- **Resources** — Material goods and money.
- **Salary** — The size of your celestial pay packet.**
- **Savant** — Memories of the First Age and its lost secrets.***

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

CHANGED BACKGROUNDS

* Minor Dragon King artifacts are relatively plentiful. Like the Terrestrial Exalted, the Artifact Background of the Dragon Kings provides twice as many dots worth of artifacts as normal. This Background provides the Dragon King with one artifact with a number of dots equal to the Background as well as two or more artifacts whose total number of dots add up to this number of dots. (See **E:DB**, p. 157 for details.)

** See **Exalted: The Sidereals**, pages 107-108. Only for characters living or working Yu-Shan, these Backgrounds may not exceed two dots, even if bonus points are used.

*** See **Exalted: The Sidereals**, pages 108-109. Only ancient Dragon Kings may possess this Background at character creation.

• BONUS POINTS

Bonus points (15 for modern Dragon Kings or 25 for ancient Dragon Kings) may be spent at any time during character creation.

BONUS POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 if a Favored or Breed Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored or Breed Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence	8
Path	5 (10 if the Path is being raised above 3)
Breed Path	4 (8 if the Path is being raised above 3)
Terrestrial Circle	
Sorcery	7 (see p. 192)
Terrestrial Spell	7

EXPERIENCE COSTS

Trait	Cost
Essence	current rating x 8
New Path	7
New Favored or Breed Path	6
Path	current rating x 5
Favored or Breed Path	current rating x 4
Terrestrial Circle	
Sorcery	12 (see p. 192)
New Terrestrial Spell	12

*Other than those listed on the above table, Dragon Kings increase at the same cost as those of other characters. See **Exalted**, pages 269-272 for details.*

THE MAGICS OF THE DRAGON KINGS

The Dragon Kings were Essence-channelers of considerable skill, practicing various elemental Essence-shaping techniques to transmute themselves and to perform other magical effects. While not so versatile as Charms, these Paths came naturally to the Dragon Kings, and most mastered several such techniques.

DRAGON KINGS AND ATTUNEMENT

Dragon Kings can attune to items of the Five Magical Materials or to other magical items requiring Essence commitment. They can attune to orichalcum items for the normal commitment cost and gain the orichalcum Magical Material bonus as if they were Solars. They can also attune to items of their own technology at normal cost. However, items of the other Magical Materials or general magical items of mortal human manufacture require the Dragon Kings to commit double the normal commitment cost and provide no Magical Material bonus (the Dragon Kings cannot force full attunement).

ESSENCE

The Dragon Kings have an Essence pool equal to (Essence x 4) + (Willpower x 2) + Conviction + Valor. As with spirits, they are fully harmonized to their entire Essence pool. Thus, expenditure of Essence does not cause Dragon Kings to display anima banners. Among the Dragon Kings, permanent Essence is also a measure of enlightenment and civility. Mechanically, their Essence scores determine both how much they remember of their past lives and how high both their magical Paths and their Intelligence can rise. It costs a Dragon King (current rating x 8) experience points to increase her permanent Essence. A Dragon King must undergo (her current Essence rating x 2) months of intensive training in manners, behavior and martial philosophy each time she wishes to increase her Essence score.

THE TEN PATHS OF PREHUMAN MASTERY

Unlike Exalts, Dragon Kings do not learn separate Charms. Instead, they have 10 orderly Paths to wisdom and power. There are two Paths based on each of the five elements. Learning a Path is much like learning an Ability — each Path must be learned in a fixed order. For example, a character can only learn the third dot in a Path after the character has learned the first two dots.

It costs a Dragon King 7 experience points to develop the first dot in a Path, and it can be advanced at an experience point cost of (current rating x 5). The training time is (the Path's current rating) weeks. Dragon Kings cannot develop a Path past • at Essence 1 or past ••• at Essence 2. At Essence 3 or higher, they can advance their Paths to •••••, and those who exceed 100 years in age are able to raise their Essence to 6 and can then advance as high as •••••• in each Path. Dragon Kings cannot exceed Essence 6.

DICE POOLS AND COMBOS

Unless otherwise stated, Dragon King Paths cannot add more dice to Ability rolls than the Dragon King's level with the Path she is using. Any additional dice above this number are lost. Dragon Kings may purchase and use Combos normally.

THE CELESTIAL AIR PATH

This Path allows the adept to see and communicate with unmanifested spirits, to strike them with weapons, to enter a spirit's sanctum (or even the sacred city of Yu-Shan) and, eventually, to summon and command the obedience of both elementals and demons.



Essence	Personality and Memories	Maximum Intelligence and Path Level
1	The individual is a bestial savage but possesses many keen instincts	1
2	The individual is fully civilized but has no memories of its many past lives	3
3-5	The individual possesses memories of its past lives similar to those of the Celestial Exalted	5
6	The individual possesses an inhuman level of intelligence and can increase Abilities, Virtues, and Paths up to 6	6

• PIERCING THE CELESTIAL VEIL

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

This power allows the character to see gods, demons and other spirits that have not materialized. These spirits appear just as they do when materialized, and while using this power, the Dragon King may not know if the spirit she sees has materialized or not. The religion of the Dragon Kings involved possession by spirits, and characters using this power can also see possessing spirits, but they do this at the expense of seeing the possessed character. If an elemental dragon possesses a mortal, characters using this power would simply see the elemental dragon. The Dragon King cannot instead see the mortal being possessed without ending this power.

•• TOUCH THE CELESTIAL FORM

Cost: 3 motes or 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant or one scene

Type: Supplemental

This power allows the character to physically attack any type of unmanifested spirit. If the character only spends 3 motes, the power only affects a single attack. If he also spends a point of Willpower, its effects last for an entire scene. In addition to being able to use any physical attack on an unmanifested spirit, the character can also attack any spirit that possesses someone without harming the person who is possessed. The damage only affects the possessing spirit, it does not damage to the person who is possessed. If the character does not use Piercing the Celestial Veil or have some other way to see an unmanifested spirits, he will be attacking blind — a +2 difficulty modifier. Attacking a spirit possessing someone suffers no such negative modifier.

••• OPEN THE CELESTIAL DOORWAY

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

This power allows the character to freely enter the immaterial sanctum of any spirit who has an Essence less than the character's. The character can take along a number of other characters equal to her Essence. The Dragon King can also use this power to enter the sanctums of more powerful spirits, but only with the owner's permission. This power does allow the Dragon King to dematerialize, it can only be used to enter a small god's sanctum, and the user reappears in Creation the instant that she leaves the sanctum. To locate a sanctum, the Dragon King can ask a spirit, use Piercing the Celestial Veil or perform a complex divination. This divination requires several hours, a set of specialized but easily made crystalline tools and a Perception + Occult roll of difficulty

3. If the Dragon King's player succeeds in this roll, the character can locate all sanctum entrances within a 100-yard radius.

Once the entrance has been found, the Dragon King and her companions need only stand before it and activate this power. In the next instant, they all find themselves on the threshold of the sanctum. The character and everyone she brings along can interact physically with the sanctum and all of its inhabitants and furnishings. To leave the sanctum, the character and anyone she brought with her need only walk out the door of the sanctum. The character and everyone with her reappear exactly where they entered the sanctum. This power cannot be used to intangibly move through space.

Anyone using this power can carry out items and furnishings from the sanctum so long as she can pick up and carry them. Spirits generally object strongly to having their sanctums invaded by greedy or aggressive Dragon Kings. Anyone who is known to make a habit of attacking the sanctums of small gods will eventually have to deal with the wrath of more powerful spirits who object to their underlings being harmed or robbed. If the character has an Essence of 3 or more, she can also use this power to gain entrance to the Celestial City of Yu-Shan.

•••• SUMMON CELESTIAL SERVANT

Cost: 10+ motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

The power calls up an elemental with an Essence that is no greater than the character's. Using this power requires a ritual that takes four hours to perform. The actual power itself costs 10 motes of Essence to open the portal to call forth the desired elemental.

Once summoned, the sorcerer and elemental engage in a contest of wills, reflected by opposed Willpower + Essence rolls. When activating this power, the Dragon King may spend temporary Essence in 5-mote increments to decrease the elemental's dice pool. Every 5 motes of Essence so spent decreases the elemental'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 Dragon King gains three or more successes, the elemental will serve him loyally for one month. If the elemental wins, the character's player may make a Wits + Occult roll at difficulty 1 to banish the elemental. If he fails, the elemental is free to do as it wishes. The elemental will either attack the Dragon King for daring to summon it or demand some form of payment, such as an artifact, to leave the Dragon King in peace. Mistreating an elemental can outrage the Celestial Hierarchy and can call the summoner to the attention of one of the Celestial Censors. Powerful elementals typically send nominees to serve in their place.



••••• WALK THE CELESTIAL ROAD

Cost: Half temporary Essence (round down), 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

This power allows the character to dematerialize exactly like an elemental (see p. 82 of this book). Rematerializing also requires one complete turn, but it does not cost the Dragon King any Essence or Willpower. The character can take along a number of other characters equal to her Essence. However, these characters automatically rematerialize when the Dragon King that brought them does. When dematerialized, the Dragon King does not need to eat, drink or breathe.

••••• BAR THE DOORWAY OF THE GODS

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can perform a ritual lasting an hour that allows her to ward a region against gods, demons and other naturally immaterial beings. She can either create wards that do not allow any immaterial creature to materialize within this region or wards that cause any immaterial creature to automatically materialize in this region. Both types of wards cannot operate simultaneously. In the first

case, no beings, including naturally material entities such as elementals, can materialize within this space. In addition, while naturally material creatures can enter the space normally, creatures such as gods or demons that use the Materialize Charm to exist in Creation dematerialize the instant they cross the boundary of the warded area. In the second case, all immaterial beings instantly materialize the instant that they cross the boundary of the warded area.

Warding an area requires the Dragon King to place at least four flat palm-sized crystals around the border of this region. Although they can be buried in the ground or placed inside of a wall, if any of these crystals are moved or destroyed, the wards are instantly canceled. Spirits instantly notice either sort of ward, and Dragon Kings who regularly use these wards to bar spirits from regions will rapidly earn their ire. Using these wards to prevent the servants of a powerful god from entering a region will soon come to the attention of the god that these spirits serve.

To see if this ward affects the spirit, make an Essence + Valor roll for the spirit must with a difficulty equal to the Dragon King's permanent Essence. Unless the spirit wins by one or more successes, the ward functions normally. Spirits who fail to resist the wards cannot touch any of the warding crystals. Reroll each time a spirit attempts to enter the warded region. However, unless the Dragon King

invests its Essence in these wards, the wards collapse after a number of spirits equal to the Dragon King's permanent Essence have successfully resisted the wards. If the caster is willing to invest her Essence in these wards, they last until the crystals are disturbed or the Dragon King who created them dies. These wards have no effect on beings whose permanent Essence is greater than the Dragon King's. A Dragon King can ward an area no more than (Willpower x 20) yards on a side.

THE PATH OF CLEAR AIR

This Path concerns knowledge and perception. The Dragon King hones his mind and senses so that he can perceive all forms of magic and the flows of Essence or overhear a whispered conversation taking place 100 yards away. At higher levels, the Dragon King can touch an object and know its history, discover someone's inner secrets or learn the most critical flaws in a wall or a suit of armor.

• CLARITY OF SENSE

Cost: 2 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple

This power allows the Dragon King to use the air around her to significantly enhance her sense of sight, of hearing or of smell. For the duration of this power, the character adds a number of dice equal to her level with this Path to whichever of these three senses she chooses to enhance. The Dragon King can only enhance a single sense at a time. Activating this power twice cancels out the first use.

•• SEE THE WINDS OF ESSENCE

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple

The Dragon King can perceive the flows of Essence. He can see the powerful wellsprings of Manses and Demesnes, the openings of spirit's sanctums and the complex swirls of Essence that distinguish artifacts and talismans from ordinary objects. He can also see the Essence contained in Dragon Kings, gods and Exalts and, so, can instantly tell them from ordinary mortals. He can also see all active Charms.

••• VISIONS OF ATTACK AND DEFENSE

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Path level in turns
Type: Reflexive

This power uses the wind to heighten the Dragon King's senses to the point that he can both strike more surely with a missile weapon and avoid attacks more easily. The power adds a number of dice equal to the Dragon

King's level with this Path to any Archery or Thrown attacks and to any Dodge attempts. If the Dragon King is not expecting the attack or otherwise has no defense, this power grants him a reflexive dodge with a number of dice equal to his Path rating. Dragon Kings cannot gain the bonus from this power more often than twice per turn.

•••• PERCEPTION OF SUBTLE FLAWS

Cost: 4 motes
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental

The Dragon King can sense both the weak point in any single object and the best way to strike the object so as to do the maximum possible damage. When the Dragon King strikes a target, her attack ignores half of the target's armor (round up). In addition, this power doubles the damage the Dragon King does when attacking inanimate objects. This power can only be used with Melee, Brawl and Martial Arts attacks. It does not work with any sort of ranged weapon.

••••• ANCIENT UNDERSTANDING

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Instant
Type: Simple

The Dragon King touches a person or object and learns its secrets. The Dragon King touches the object or person, and his player makes a Perception + Lore roll. Success on this roll allows the Dragon King to know the answer to one relatively short question about the person or object. The answer to the question can contain no more than a dozen words. The difficulty for questions about mortals and mundane objects is 1. Questions about Exalts, gods and other Essence users have a difficulty equal to the being touched's permanent Essence, while questions about Manses, Hearthstones or artifacts have a difficulty equal to half of the dots of the touched place or object (round up). The question is answered in an instant, but the Dragon King must always touch the target to ask the question.

•••••• INHUMAN CLARITY OF PERCEPTION

TECHNIQUE

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: Day
Type: Simple

Dragon Kings who use this power gain the ultimate clarity of their senses. Their senses become preternaturally acute, and they can instantly pierce all forms of mundane deception and disguise. Everyone using any sort of mundane disguise is seen in their true form. Everyone who is hiding is revealed to the character's gaze. Everyone and everything that was deliberately disguised or hidden by non-magical means

can be clearly seen. In addition, the Dragon King reduces the difficulty of all Awareness rolls by 3.

THE PATH OF SOLID EARTH

This Path was used to construct the Dragon Kings' vast cyclopean cities and enormous pyramidal temples. Practitioners learn to shape stone, earth and crystal solely by thought and to temporarily transform themselves into beings of living stone. They also learn to create inhumanly fine items and to unlock the powers inherent in various crystals and the Five Magical Materials. This Path is the origin of the Dragon Kings' crystal technology.

• LITHIC UNDERSTANDING

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

This power grants the Dragon King the ability to communicate with the small god associated with each rock or crystal. His player gains a number of dice equal to the Dragon King's score in this Path to all Lore rolls to understand the properties of a rock or crystal and to all Craft rolls to work with stone and crystal, whether the character is compounding a mineral poison, carving a stone statue or faceting a jewel. When using this power, the Dragon King can identify the basic properties and potential uses of a mineral he has never seen before by his player making a successful Perception + Lore roll with a difficulty of 2. Add 1 to this difficulty if this mineral comes from the Wyld. When working with such substances, this power removes the +1 difficulty that Pterok, Anklok and Mosok players suffer from when making normal Craft rolls for their characters. Also, a Dragon King using Lithic Understanding does not require tools beyond his natural claws when working with stone or crystal. This power provides no bonuses for working with any type of metal.

•• SHAPE THE EARTH

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can shape stone or crystal with her bare hands as easily and swiftly as she can mold mud or clay. She can instantly create handholds in rock that allow her to climb any surface made of stone or brick twice as rapidly as normal, and reduce the difficulty of the associated Athletics roll by her permanent Essence. In addition, the Dragon King can swiftly shape doorways in rock walls or repair broken walls with her bare hands. Using this power, she ignores all of the stone's soak and applies her full claw damage to the wall every turn. However, she can only use her claws in this fashion. This power cannot be used with her teeth or with any weapons

she is carrying. She can repair walls equally rapidly, using her strength and claws to repair breaches in a wall by shaping it like soft clay. Each turn, she can repair as many levels of damage to a stone wall or other stone structure as she could normally cause with her claws.

••• EMPOWER CRYSTAL

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies

Type: Simple

The character learns the secret of creating the various pieces of crystal technology that the Dragon Kings use. She requires no tools and suffers no penalties when creating such items. Use the rules for creating artifacts in *The Book of Three Circles* (pp. 88-89). This power adds a number of automatic successes equal to the Dragon King's level with this Path. Because the Dragon King can now sense the flows of Essence travel through the earth, this power also adds a number of dice equal to the Dragon King's level with this Path to any attempts to build Manses or craft Hearthstones. This power can only be used to create the crystal artifacts used by the Dragon Kings. Without this power, only the mighty Solar Exalted can create such items. Because of the Dragon Kings' close connection to the Unconquered Sun, this power also allows them to create artifacts from orichalcum, but they are not capable of working any of the other Magical Materials. Essence spent on this power remains committed throughout the creation process.

•••• BECOME STONE

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One day

Type: Simple

The Dragon King's body temporarily turns to living stone. The character gains +4 soak against both lethal and bashing damage. Moreover, if the damage is totally absorbed by his skin (that is, under four dice of lethal or bashing), the attacker rolls no damage dice at all. The character does lethal damage with his unarmed attacks, may block attacks with weapons as if he was armed and inflicts an extra die of bashing damage in barehanded combat. He also weighs an extra 100 pounds. Becoming a walking statue also protects the character from heat or cold and all other environmental hazards. In addition, the character does not need to eat, drink or breathe in this state. However, he cannot sprint, swim or fly and halves his running movement rate. The Dragon King looks like a living statue, and if he holds perfectly still (requires a successful Dexterity + Stealth roll with a difficulty of 2), he can easily be mistaken for an ordinary statue, especially since he does not need to breathe.

••••• COMMAND THE EARTH

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can cause large amounts of stone and earth to obey her command. She can cause the earth within 30 yards to shake enough that the player of anyone standing must make a successful reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll for his character or have him fall over. The roll happens on the Dragon King's initiative. Players whose characters are running at this time increase the difficulty of this roll by 2. The Dragon King can also cause non-enchanted stone structures the size of a small stadium or a large palace to fall. They can open huge breaks in even the thickest stone, earth or brick walls and can create stone structures the size of a small palace or temple ([Essence x 20] feet on a side and up to [Essence] stories tall). Several Dragon Kings who all know this power can work together to create fairly substantial structures. However, such pavilions or towers will have a very rough appearance unless finished.

The primary limit on this power is that the Dragon King must touch anything he is affecting and that this power is relatively slow. To destroy a structure, the Dragon King's player rolls his character's permanent Essence and adds a number of automatic successes equal to his Path level. He does this many health levels of damage to a structure each turn. Doing a number of health levels equal to twice that necessary to destroy a portion of a brick or stone wall brings the entire structure tumbling down. Weapons, spells, artifacts and Charms cannot add to the damage done by this power, nor can this power be part of a Combo. However, multiple Dragon Kings who all know this power can work together. Unfortunately, any Dragon King attempting to destroy a structure must keep touching it for the entire time. If she stops touching the structure, she must reactivate the power to use it again.

••••• UNITY WITH EARTH AND STONE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King attunes her body to the nature of earth and stone. She can move through it freely, and it cannot harm her. She can walk through earth and stone as easily as a mortal can move through air. She can even see through a yard or two of earth and stone so that she can easily navigate when walking through walls. Unless she wishes for them to harm her, weapons of stone pass through her body without harm, and so long as she lands on earth or stone, even the highest falls cannot harm her.

In addition to being able to run or sprint through earth or rock, the Dragon King can also move up and down as easily as forward or backward. Also, if she stands near a stone wall during a battle, she can instantly retreat within every turn after she strikes her blow, thus adding the wall's

soak to her own against all attacks delivered after her initiative. This power does not protect the Dragon King from weapons made from enchanted jade or from any of the other Five Magical Materials.

THE PATH OF YIELDING EARTH

This Path concerns healing the living, curing disease and repairing that which has been broken. It cannot be used to create new objects, but Dragon Kings who follow this Path eventually learn to transform maimed and plague-ridden individuals into healthy ones or a handful of fragments into a complete and functional artifact.

• BALM OF HEALTH

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

When cast on anyone who is not Exalted, this power allows the patient to make his next Endurance roll to recover from disease or infection as if he were one of the Exalted. If used on one of the Exalted, the player gains two additional dice to the next Endurance roll for his character to recover from disease or infection.

•• REPAIR

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can repair any broken object simply by fitting all of the pieces back together and using this power. This power can repair anything from a cracked goblet or a torn gown to a broken sword. However, this power will not work if the object has any significant pieces missing, it does not repair the effects of age and wear, and it does not work on talismans, items containing the Magical Materials or otherwise ensorcelled objects.

••• SPEED HEALING

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

This power can be used on both the Dragon King who performs it and on others to speed ordinary healing so that each day of healing is equal to five days of ordinary healing. The Dragon King can use this power on both herself and on others, but she must touch the patient to use it. Although the Essence spent on this power is recovered normally, the improved healing lasts until the patient's wounds heal completely. This healing only works on wounds that occurred before the Dragon King used this power.

•••• RESTORE

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

So long as the Dragon King possesses almost all of the pieces of a broken non-magical item, she can repair it. This power allows the Dragon King to both remove the ravages of age and wear and to fill in any small missing pieces of an object or device. However, this power cannot be used on magical artifacts. Also, to understand an item sufficiently to know how it should go together, the Dragon King's player must make a successful Intelligence + Lore roll for her character. The difficulty for all simple objects such as swords or plates is 1. Complex mechanisms or especially intricate objects such as elaborate pieces of jewelry range from 2 to 4. Performing this repair requires between 15 minutes and an hour, depending on the size and complexity of the object.

••••• EMPOWER HEALING

Cost: 5 motes and 1 Willpower per health level healed

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

The Dragon King's player makes a Wits + Medicine roll for her character to focus the living energy she has learned to tap. Every success on this roll allows her patient (who can either be the Dragon King or someone else) to instantly recover one level of bashing or lethal damage. This power also heals aggravated damage, but such damage heals at a rate of one health level per day. This power also allows the patient to regrow lost or crippled body parts. However, this regrowth requires a full week to complete.

••••• • REGAIN THE GLORY OF THE PAST

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 1-5 experience points

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

This power allows the Dragon King to repair any magical artifact so that all of its powers are fully restored. These repairs are especially intricate and require a successful Intelligence + Occult roll. Repairing a relatively simple item such as a daiklave would be difficulty 1, repairing damage to a complex device such as a warbird would be difficulty 3, and repairing a large vehicle or an exceptionally complicated device such as a warstrider would be difficulty 5. This power can be used to reduce age and wear as well as damage, but in all cases, the Dragon King must possess almost all of the pieces of the broken artifact. The number of experience points required to activate this power is the Artifact rating of the item to be restored.

THE PATH OF BLAZING FIRE

This Path involves the creation and control of both light and flame. As worshipers of the Unconquered Sun, the Dragon Kings deemed this Path sacred — their priests were all highly skilled in it.

• FIRST LIGHT

Cost: 1 mote

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The character can conjure a small light sufficient to illuminate an area 10 yards on a side. This light can be cast on any object the character can touch, including on other characters. A character who is a recipient of this light cannot effectively hide until the effect ends.

•• LESSER CONJURATION OF FLAME

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: One scene or until extinguished

Type: Simple

The character can cause any flammable object she touches to burst into flame. This flame is as intense as a campfire. In addition, the character can apply the flame to a nonflammable object, which will be unharmed but will remain covered in flame for the duration of the spell. When used on the blade of a weapon, or even on a cestus, this power adds a number of dice of damage equal to the character's permanent Essence score. This flame will not harm its creator, although other fires created by it may do so.

••• BOLT OF FIRE

Cost: 1 mote per 1L damage

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

The Dragon King hurls a bolt of blazing fire at a single opponent. The Dragon King's player rolls Dexterity + Thrown to hit, plus a number of dice equal to the character's Essence. This attack has a range of (the character's permanent Essence x 20) yards and does a base damage of 1L for every mote of Essence spent. A character cannot spend more motes on this power than her permanent Essence + her rank with this Path.

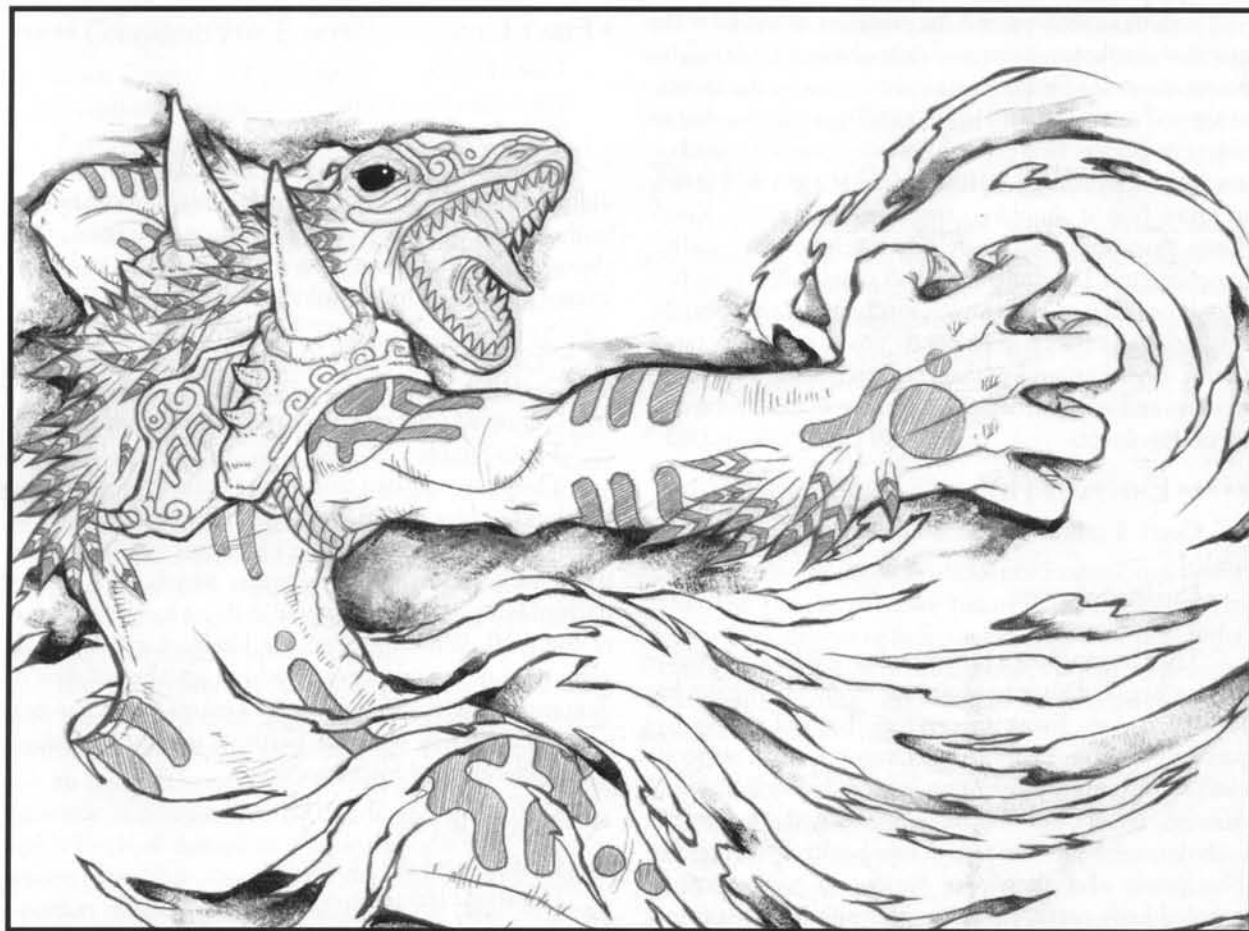
•••• COMMAND FIRE

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

This power allows Dragon Kings to command and control large fires. A Dragon King can control a fire the size of a large bonfire or a burning hut, or she can command a portion of a larger fire that is approximately as large. For the duration of this power, the Dragon King can keep the fire away from people or objects that it would otherwise consume — she and her companions can walk through such a fire without fear of getting burned or being troubled by smoke. The Dragon King can protect a number of individuals equal to her permanent Essence. However, all of these beings must be visible to the Dragon King.



So long as there is sufficient fuel in the desired direction, she can also cause such fires to move as rapidly as a sprinting person in any direction that she desires. Also, while this power is active, she can, as a simple action, make the fire lash out at anyone who is within (her level with this Path x 5) yards of it simply by expending an additional 2 motes of Essence. She can produce this lash of flame no more often than once a turn, but doing so counts as a reflexive action. She may also act normally on the same turn with no penalty. When used in this fashion, it does the damage listed for a bonfire (6L, 2L if the target resists, see *Exalted*, p. 244). Armor soaks this damage normally. This huge tongue of flame strikes its target if the Dragon King's player can make a successful attack roll using her character's Manipulation + Occult + Essence. This attack can be parried and dodged normally.

••••• IMMOLATION

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can hurl fist-sized balls of fire that burst into bonfire-sized conflagrations. His player rolls the Dragon King's Dexterity + Thrown with an accuracy bonus equal to his permanent Essence to strike in the vicinity of the target. When the ball hits, flame engulfs a region with

a radius equal to the Dragon King's permanent Essence in yards. This attack has a range of 100 yards, and the fire started by this attack burns for at least one full scene — longer if it finds something to catch. This attack cannot be parried, only dodged. Anyone who is in the region and does not manage to successfully dodge this attack takes 6L damage the first turn, and her player must roll in subsequent turns for the character to resist the damage from this fire exactly like a normal bonfire. This fire is exceptionally hot and will completely destroy any flammable objects such as wood or bone by the end of the scene.

••••• TOUCH OF BLAZING FIRE

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can create a blazing inferno by touch. She can strike a target with either her bare hands or with a melee weapon and cause it to burst into flames, or she can sprint along a path and cause a wall of flame to spring up in her footsteps. She can even walk forward with her hands extended, and so long as she moves no faster than a normal walk, all flammable obstacles, such as heavy oak doors, wooden stockades or even thick jungles, will burn away extremely rapidly.

The Dragon King's fire does a base lethal damage equal to her permanent Essence + her Willpower every turn. Any walls of flame that she creates are as tall as the Dragon King and last until the end of the scene. For the duration of this power, the Dragon King is also immune to all heat and fire, including all fire-based attacks by other beings.

THE PATH OF FLICKERING FIRE

This is the Path of physical prowess. Students of the Flickering Fire Path learn to jump, climb and fight with great ability. At higher levels, they learn to move with unparalleled speed and to battle multiple opponents at once.

• FLASHING AGILITY

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Permanent Essence in hours

Type: Simple

The character can add a number of dice equal to her level with this Path to all Athletics rolls involving jumping, climbing or balance. All of the character's initiative totals are increased by the same amount.

•• FIERY PROWESS

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

The character's jumping distance is multiplied by his level with this Path. Also, the character's score in this Path is also added to all of his player's attack and parry rolls for this turn. This bonus is only added to Brawl, Martial Arts or Melee attacks.

••• ONE FIRE, MANY FLAMES

Cost: 3 motes per additional action

Duration: Instant

Type: Extra Action

The character can spend 3 motes of Essence to perform an extra action. The Dragon King can perform no more extra actions in any given turn than her Essence. The cost for this effect must be paid for each additional action the character takes. The character cannot split her dice pools on the extra actions but may abort to parry, perform a full dodge or refresh a dodge pool.

•••• SPEED OF FLAME

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can now run as swiftly and lightly as a racing fire. This power multiplies the Dragon King's movement speeds by her level with this Path. A Dragon King with five dots in this Path would quintuple the distance she could move and still perform an action, as well as quintupling the distance she can run or sprint. Because it

is powered by Essence, moving in this fashion is no more tiring than ordinary walking — a Dragon King can run for the entire scene, and when the scene ends, she is well-rested. She also runs lightly enough that she can run over water without falling in and does not suffer injury or need to slow her pace when running over uneven or jagged terrain.

••••• TWICE-FLICKERING FLAME

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Extra Action

This power allows the character to can take two normal actions a turn without any penalties. By taking both actions as movements, the character can also walk, run or sprint twice as fast as normal. The only limitations on using this power are that sorcery still takes the normal time to cast and that using these additional actions makes the character appear to move inhumanly fast. The Dragon King can split her dice pools for each action normally while using this power. However, the additional action gained from using this power is incompatible with all other extra-actions-type effects, including One Fire, Many Flames. The character can utilize other effects but must forfeit her extra actions for the turn to do so.

••••• PERFECTION OF MOVEMENT

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Supplemental

For the duration of this power, the Dragon King can fight and move with perfect confidence. The difficulty of all Athletics rolls involving movement are reduced to 1, and the Dragon King never risks falling, slipping or tripping when moving or fighting on an unstable surface such as an ice-covered tightrope in a hurricane. She can also climb or swim just as easily as she can run. So long as she does no more than half her running speed, she can move in any fashion and still act normally and without penalty. She can also use other powers to enhance her speed and still benefit from this power.

In addition, the Dragon King takes no penalties for fighting due to movement or position. She can attack mounted opponents or opponents at different heights without penalty and can attack normally while prone, hanging upside down, underwater or standing in deep mud. Because her ability to control her movements is so exact, she also ignores all penalties due to shields or cover when making hand-to-hand attacks. The Dragon King can even evade magical shields and spells or artifacts that provide protection similar to shields. She can always find the precise way to move her attack past the wall an opponent is hiding behind or to evade a protective barrier. However, her skill does not allow her to ignore or reduce the protection provided by parries or dodges.

THE PATH OF FLOWING WATER

This Path involves learning the secrets of movement. First, the Dragon King learns to walk up walls or even

across empty space as easily as she could walk across a floor. Eventually, she learns how to walk through walls and how to cross distances with only a thought.

• CLINGING PUDDLE STYLE

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

The Dragon King bonds herself to the earth so that she cannot slip or fall. She is immune to knockdown and knockback and can also walk along a narrow ice-coated ledge without fear of falling. She can walk up walls and across ceilings with no chance of falling. The surface must be able to support the Dragon King's weight, but it can be at any angle.

•• AIR WALKING STYLE

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: Path level in turns

Type: Reflexive

This power allows the Dragon King to walk on or climb surfaces far too flimsy to support her weight, such as paper, water, clouds or even smoke. The Dragon King can even walk or run on air like a roadway or climb it like a set of stairs. While moving on water, air or smoke, the Dragon King moves at his normal rate. This power is compatible with powers that allow the Dragon King to increase her rate of movement.

••• VAULT-BREACHING METHOD

Cost: 6 motes

Duration: One turn

Type: Simple

By concentrating for a turn, the Dragon King can move his head and arm through any non-magical barrier. While he cannot also perform any vigorous action such as attacking someone on the other side of a wall, he can perform simple tasks like taking a brief look around a room, grabbing an item inside a safe or turning a latch. This power does not allow the Dragon King to move all the way through the barrier, and at the end of the turn, he is automatically forced back through the barrier. The character can carry any item he can easily hold in one hand back through the barrier with him. This power does not allow the character to reach or see through barriers more than one foot thick. A Dragon King using this power is effectively in 75 percent cover if someone attempts to attack him when he sticks his head and arm through a wall.

•••• BARRIER-BREACHING METHOD

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

The Dragon King can walk through walls or other barriers. To do this, the character must place her hand against the wall or door, and an instant later, she is on the other side of this barrier. If the character cannot see what

is on the other side of the barrier, she has no guarantee that she will not end up surrounded by armed guards or even standing underwater or in midair, with nothing underneath her. Also, this power will only allow the character to move through barriers no thicker than her Essence in feet. If used on thicker barriers, the power cannot be activated.

••••• DISTANCE IGNORING TECHNIQUE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

This power allows the Dragon King to teleport short distances through space. So long as he can clearly see where he is going, he can instantly move up to (Essence x 30) yards. The Dragon King vanishes and reappears in a new location. He can bring along anything he can normally carry, up to (Essence x 50) pounds. The Dragon King only needs a glimpse of his destination to teleport there. A Dragon King who is locked in a cell and can only see out a tiny crack in the wall can easily transport himself outside of the cell and onto the distant hill he can barely see.

••••• CREATE GATEWAY

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One turn

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can alter the Essence flows of a place sufficiently to create a temporary portal to a nearby location. Instead of merely being able to transport himself a few dozen yards, the Dragon King can open a portal up to six yards in diameter that lasts for one minute after the Dragon King creates it. Although a Dragon King can activate this power in only one turn if she is inside a Manse or Demesne that she is attuned to, otherwise she must perform a complex ritual where she draws arcane symbols on the ground and marks the location of the gateway with small stones. Performing this ritual takes 10 minutes. Once she completes the ritual, the Dragon King opens a portal that will transport anyone who goes through it a number of miles equal to her permanent Essence. The portal is simply a glowing circle in the air. No one can see though it, and touching the portal instantly draws the individual through it. Individuals going through the portal need not go through willingly. The Dragon King must either have visited or be able to clearly see the destination. Otherwise, the portal will merely transport everyone who goes through it to a location approximately the desired distance and direction away.

No roll is needed if the Dragon King can clearly see the destination. Otherwise, her player must make a Perception + Occult roll for the character. The difficulty is 1 if the Dragon King has been to the exact location before and 3 if the Dragon King is trying to create a portal

to an unfamiliar location. Failure on this roll results in the portal opening to a different location within range. Even if this roll is successful, a Dragon King who created a gateway to allow her and her companions to enter a nearby fortress would create a portal that emerged somewhere on the desired floor of the fortress. However, it might emerge in the central banquet hall amidst dozens of feasting quests or in a corner closet that servants use to store mops and buckets.

THE PATH OF SHIMMERING WATER

This Path involves the control of stealth, illusion and deceptive appearances. At low levels, practitioners can disguise themselves or hide more effectively. Eventually, they learn to become nearly invisible or to create multisensory illusions that can fool pursuers or entertain a crowd.

• AVERTING THE EYES

Cost: 1 mote for every +1 in difficulty

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

This power causes others to look away from the Dragon King. While it does not render the character invisible, this power enhances the user's Stealth. Every mote the character spends on this power increases the difficulty of all Perception + Awareness rolls to notice the Dragon King by +1. This increased difficulty only applies so long as the Dragon King is attempting to be stealthy. If the Dragon King enters combat or does anything else to draw attention to herself, the power immediately ends. Dragon Kings cannot use this power when they are being observed. Also, they cannot spend more motes on this power than their permanent Essences.

•• VISAGE OF ANOTHER FACE

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: One day

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can use her growing powers of illusion to disguise herself as someone else. The character changes his appearance, voice, scent and even the feeling of her skin into that of any reptilian creature that looks vaguely similar. A Raptok could disguise himself as a Pterok, as one of the hounds of the Endless Hunt (see *GoD*, p. 42) or a half-grown claw strider (see *CotW*, p. 31).

Charms or artifacts that allow characters to pierce illusions can penetrate this disguise. However, without such magics, this disguise is exceptionally believable and can only be penetrated if the character examines the Dragon King closely and his player succeeds at a Perception + Awareness roll with a difficulty equal to the Dragon King's Wits + her rating with this Path. However, this power does not allow the Dragon King to gain any of the abilities or advantages of the form she has temporarily assumed. It only changes her appearance.

••• GUISE OF THE NEW FORM

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Permanent Essence in hours

Type: Simple

The character changes his appearance, voice, scent and even the feeling of her skin into that of any other vaguely humanoid creature. A Dragon King could disguise himself as a Western Dragon King, a green-haired Haltan, a bandy-legged Arczeckhi barbarian or a beastman. While his illusionary abilities are not sufficient to imitate a specific individual, he can alter his apparent height by as much as one foot. This disguise is exceptionally believable and can only be penetrated by Charms designed to pierce illusions or if the observer examines the Dragon King closely and her player succeeds at a Perception + Awareness roll with a difficulty equal to the Dragon King's Wits + his rating with this Path. This power also does not allow the Dragon King to gain any of the abilities or advantages of the form he has temporarily assumed. It only changes his appearance.

In addition to being useful for disguise, this power also allows the Dragon King to alter his voice and appearance so that he becomes far more effective at singing, acting or storytelling. The Dragon King's player adds a number of dice equal to his character's level with this Path to any appropriate Performance roll made while this power is active. When the duration of this power runs out, the Dragon King can continue it simply by spending 5 more motes.

•••• UNSEEN FORM TECHNIQUE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Path level in minutes

Type: Simple

This power allows the Dragon King to become invisible. In fact, she can literally vanish from sight. Characters can perform any activity while invisible, even combat. However, this power does not render the Dragon King immaterial. She can be detected normally by touch, by scent or by hearing.

Players of enemies may attempt a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll each turn for their characters to spot the Dragon King. If an observer saw the Dragon King disappear, noticed the Dragon King last turn or witnessed an action performed by the character, the difficulty for the check is only 1. However, the difficulty increases by one for every turn that the character remains undetected, to a maximum of 5. If the observer has some reason to believe that someone is around (a knocked over vase, footprints in the sand) the difficulty for spotting the character starts at 3 and scales up. Just looking casually for the invisible Dragon King has a difficulty of 5. Even when spotted, any actions taken against the character are at a +2 difficulty. Dragon Kings who engage in hand-to-hand combat are always considered to be spotted.

••••• VEIL OF DECEPTION

Cost: 6 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Dragon Kings can disguise both themselves and others as any other creature or object of approximately the same size. A Dragon King could disguise herself as a rock, the Perfect of Paragon or a giant wolf spider. Dragon Kings can also disguise others with this same power but must touch them to do so. This power alters the subject's appearance, voice and scent but not the feel of her skin. Anyone who touches a rock and feels the Dragon King's scaled skin will be instantly aware that some deception is occurring. Also, all Charms, spells and artifacts that allow their users to see through illusions instantly penetrate this power.

If desired, the Dragon King can maintain the illusion for additional scenes by simply spending 5 more motes of Essence for every illusion she wishes to maintain. Using this power to disguise anyone as a specific person is more difficult than simply looking like a rock. While this power normally does not require a roll, attempting to imitate someone without carefully observing the person for a full day requires an Intelligence + Larceny roll with a difficulty of 3. However, such observation lowers the difficulty to 1. A failed roll means that the disguised character does not believably pass as the target although she looks similar to this person.

••••• PERFECTION OF ILLUSION

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Willpower in turns

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can create exceptionally subtle illusions. She can cause these illusions to be visible to everyone watching or only to one or a small number of observers. The Dragon King must be able to clearly see everyone she wishes to perceive the illusion. This power can be used to cause the targets to hear the details of a conversation differently, to not see someone pouring poison in a goblet or even to see someone else nearby pouring the poison. Although this power only lasts for a short time, it can subtly alter as few or as many details of the targets' environment as the Dragon King wishes to change. The Dragon King can affect any portion of her environment that is within (permanent Essence x 5) yards. This adds a number of dice equal to the Dragon King's permanent Essence to Presence, Socialize, Larceny or other rolls that benefit from this deception.

When used in combat, this power can add or subtract a number of dice equal to the Dragon King's permanent Essence from all attack, parry or dodge rolls by everyone attacking or being attacked by a single target. All deceptions created by this power can be



detected with the appropriate illusion-piercing Charms, spells or artifacts. Alternately, anyone who carefully observes the scene and whose player succeeds at a Perception + Awareness roll with a difficulty equal to the Dragon King's Essence can also see what's actually occurring.

THE PATH OF GROWING WOOD

This Path allows the Dragon King to communicate with and eventually shape and control all manner of plants. Adepts of this Path were the ones who created the Dragon Kings' powerful vegetative technology.

• VERDANT UNDERSTANDING

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

This power grants the Dragon King the ability to communicate with the small god associated with each individual plant. The Dragon King's player gains a number of dice equal to his character's score in this Path to all Lore rolls to understand the properties of a plant, to all Survival rolls where the Dragon King is attempting to gather edible plants and to all Craft rolls to work with plants or plant products, whether the character is compounding poison or medicine, carving wood or gardening.

When using this power, the Dragon King can identify the basic properties and potential uses of a plant he has never seen before by his player making a successful Perception + Lore roll with a difficulty of 2. Add 1 to this difficulty if this plant comes from the Wyld. When working with wood and living plants, this power removes the +1 difficulty that players of Anklok and Mosok suffer when making normal Craft rolls. Also, the Dragon King does not require tools beyond his natural claws when working such substances.

•• EMPOWER CULTIVATION

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

This power allows the Dragon King to cause even the most exotic plants to sprout and grow. While they grow no faster than normal and require normal care, this power allows the character to grow exotic plants such as life flowers, coca or swordstick bushes (see p. 193) anywhere in Creation, so long as the plant receives approximately the correct amounts of warmth, light soil and water. The Dragon King can even use this power to keep plants alive that otherwise only grow in the Wyld. Once this power has been used, the plant will continue to grow and thrive so long as it receives regular care.

••• EMPOWER PLANTS

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

The character learns the secrets of creating the various pieces of vegetative technology that the Dragon Kings use. She requires no tools and suffers no penalties when creating such items. Use the rule for creating artifacts in **The Book of Three Circles** (pp. 88-89). This power adds a number of automatic successes equal to the Dragon King's level with this Path to all rolls to create such artifacts. This power can only be used to create the vegetative artifacts used by the Dragon Kings. Without this power, only the mighty Solar Exalted can create vegetative items. This power even allows the Dragon King to produce plants such as the swordstick bush that actually grow new swordsticks. However, none of these plants can produce more than one or two new artifacts each year.

•••• SHAPE PLANTS

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

For the duration of this power, the Dragon King can touch any living plant and shape it to her desires. She can cause a tree to reshape itself into a comfortable shelter, cause vines to become easy to use bridges and ladders through the jungle, turn a bent branch into an exceptional club or spear or transform a piece of bamboo into an exceptional blowgun. The character can only use this power to create weapons and other item than can normally be made of wood. It can be used to create an exceptional javelin, but it cannot be used to create a chakram or an axe because both of these weapons require other materials to make.

Creating any weapon or other useful item using this power requires a complete turn and a successful Intelligence + Craft (Vegetation) roll. The affects of all changes produced using this power are permanent unless the Dragon King later decides to reverse them. The Dragon King can also use this power to move swiftly and easily through any forest or field. The plants both move out of her way and aid her progress, allowing her to safely sprint through a dense jungle. In any location with thick vegetation, pursuers are at +2 difficulty to track her. In addition, the Dragon King's player gains a number of dice equal to her character's level in this Path to any Athletics roll involving climbing, jumping or balancing on trees, vines or other large plants while this power is active.

••••• ALTER PLANTS

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King must spend several hours touching a living plant. During this time, he contacts the spirit of the plant and causes profound changes to the plant. He can cause the plant to undergo a year's growth in this time or to bloom or to produce ripe and delicious fruit at the end of the scene. The Dragon King can also touch a plant and cause it

to be animate for the next day. Although the plant cannot uproot itself, trees, bushes or vines can attack anyone within reach. Using this power to animate a plant is a reflexive action requiring only a brief touch and can be performed once a turn for the duration of this power. Animate plants remain animate until the sun next crosses the horizon.

The attack pool of all animate plants equals the Dragon King's Wits + Craft (Vegetation). Animate plants can clinch or hold an opponent with a Strength equal to the Dragon King's Willpower. Alternately, they can perform hand-to-hand attacks that do damage equal to the Dragon King's Willpower + Craft (Vegetation). Trees and woody plants do lethal damage. Vines and softer plants do only bashing damage. However, animate plants are extremely slow. Their initiative is equal to the Dragon King's Wits + the results of a 10-sided die roll. Each turn, animate plants must be commanded to attack their targets. Controlling these plants is a reflexive action. However, Dragon Kings can only control a number of plants equal to their permanent Essence. Attacking and damaging an animate plant is handled just like attacking any other animate target. Most trees and woody plants have a soak of 3L/5B. Plants that take more than 10 levels of damage cannot attack anymore.

Regardless of how it is used, this power cannot be used more often than once a month on any plant. Using this power more often on a single plant causes the plant to die before it can complete the desired changes. Also, Dragon Kings cannot use this power on any enchanted plants, such as those found in the Wyld or those that grow artifacts such as swordsticks.

••••• PLANT WALK

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can move into and through both living and dead wood as easily as a wood elemental. The Dragon King attunes her body to the nature of wood and other plant material. She can then move through it freely, and it cannot harm her. She can walk through a tree or a wooden wall as easily as a mortal can move through air. She can even see through a yard or two of solid wood so that she can easily navigate when walking through unusually thick trees. Also, because all trees in a dense forest have roots that come quite close to one another, she can walk in one tree and emerge from a neighboring one during the same turn, so long as they are within the distance that she can move within a turn.

Unless she wishes for them to harm her, wooden weapons pass through her body without harm, and so long as she lands on a tree branch, even the highest fall cannot hurt her.

In addition to being able to run or sprint through plant material, the Dragon King can also move up and down as easily as forward or backward. Also, if she stands near a tree during a battle, she can instantly retreat within it every turn after she strikes her blow, thus adding the tree's soak to her own against all attacks delivered after her initiative.

This power does not protect the Dragon King from enchanted wooden weapons such as swordsticks (see p. 121).

THE PATH OF SHAPING WOOD

This Path concerns the control of the adept's physical form. Practitioners can shape their bodies in a multitude of ways and can eventually learn to temporarily transform themselves into other creatures.

• SHAPING THE BARK

Cost: 3 motes (and an additional mote to remove)

Duration: Indefinite

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can alter the structure of her hide and claws, adding 1 to both her lethal and her bashing soak and 1L to all attacks made with her claws and teeth. With three or more dots in this Path, these bonuses rise to +2 and +2L. Although the changes made using this ability last until the committed Essence is released, civilized Dragon Kings did not keep them active at all time, since the alterations make both fine manipulation and social interactions more difficult (+1 difficulty on all rolls for either). The penalty to fine manipulation is cumulative with those that some Dragon Kings experience because of their breed.

•• ALTER THE TRUNK

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can stretch and shape her body to fit into narrow spaces or to extend her reach. The Dragon King can extend the reach of her arms, her legs, her tail or even her neck by up to an additional two yards. In addition to being able to reach out and grab objects, the character can also flatten her body so that she can fit through spaces no more than four inches wide. She may attack and defend normally while her body is altered by this power.

••• ADAPTATION

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One day

Type: Simple

This power allows the Dragon King to adapt himself to almost any environment. The Dragon King can endure cold, heat, thick smoke, frozen fog, parching deserts and even freezing arctic waters. The Dragon King experiences no penalties on survival roles due to environmental conditions. He still requires air, water and food to survive, but he can safely drink mineral-tainted water and breathe air filled with thick smoke and noxious gases without harm.

•••• FORM OF ANOTHER BREED

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

A Dragon King using this power can temporarily transform herself into another breed. A Northern Dragon King, for instance, could transform herself into an Eastern, Southern or Western Dragon King. While transformed, the Dragon King gains all of the abilities of her new form, including all Attribute modifications.

••••• FORM OF THE TERRIBLE ANCESTORS

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can transform himself into a primal dinosaur-like form suitable for combat. The Dragon King's Dexterity, Mental Attributes, Charisma and Manipulation are unchanged. However, his Strength and Stamina both become 7. Also, he now has a natural Soak of 5L/10B, but he cannot wear armor. A Dragon King who is wearing armor or clothing when he transforms is unharmed, but these items are ripped to shreds.

The Dragon King cannot use any weapons, but he does gain formidable claws and teeth. Also, all worn artifacts alter themselves to fit the Dragon King's new form. Artifact armors cease to provide any other soak benefit but may provide other effects such as Hearthstones, harsh-environmental survival and so on. In this primal form, the Dragon King cannot speak, and the difficulty of all Valor rolls is reduced by one. Dragon Kings using this power cannot deliberately attempt to fail Valor rolls — they become ravening predators who yearn to kill their enemies.

Innate Weapons: Transformed Dragon Kings possess razor-sharp foreclaws and dagger-like teeth.

Weapon	Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def
Bite	+0	+0	+5L	-2
Claw	+2	+1	+3L	+0

••••• TRANSFORMATION OF THE NEW FORM

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

The Dragon King can temporarily transform herself into any creature of approximately the same weight. She could become a human, a lion, a dolphin, a strix or even a disturbingly huge giant wolf spider. If one of the larger Dragon Kings (such as an Anklok) becomes a human, she will become an unusually large human. Except for her Appearance, her Attributes do not change. However, she gains all of the innate capabilities of the creature, including poison, flight or the ability to breathe water. The Dragon King cannot become any creature that is innately magical such as a god or an Exalt. She also cannot transform herself into a duplicate of any beast that is so tied to the Wyld that it cannot actually live in Creation without periodic visits to the Wyld.

ARTIFACTS OF THE DRAGON KINGS

The Dragon Kings have a technology that is completely different from that used by humans or Exalts. They



DRAGON KINGS AND SORCERY

Although Celestial and Solar Circle Sorcery are the sole purview of the Celestial Exalted, many Essence users, including the Dragon Kings, can learn to use Terrestrial Circle Sorcery. Learning to use it first requires that the Dragon King have a minimum Essence of ••• and a minimum Occult of •••. At this point, the Dragon King must find an Exalt to teach her this powerful ability. Dragon Kings cannot learn to use sorcery on their own. They must find an Exalted teacher.

However, once they have learned Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, they can learn the various spells without assistance. Learning sorcery is a difficult process that costs either 7 bonus points or 12 experience points. Dragon Kings who buy this Charm with bonus points can use up to half of their free dots of Paths to instead learn Sorcery spells. New spells cost a similar amount. Using the Charm is identical with any Exalted using the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Charm—the Dragon King spends one point of Willpower and the appropriate amount of Essence required for the Charm. The spell then works exactly as if it had been cast by any other sorcerer. Sorcery spells cannot be included in any Combos.

craft items out of living plants and enchanted crystals using their innate magics. They rarely use tools, and most of their artifacts look far more like jewelry and decorations than they do like functional wonders. The only exceptions are some of their weapons and armor, and even some of these items are completely unlike any human- or Exalt-made counterparts. Dragon King artifacts rarely have moving parts, and only the simplest items appear to have any relation to their actual function.

EVERYDAY VEGETATIVE ITEMS

The most commonly seen examples of their vegetative technology are:

- Lianas that carry fresh and waste water. These wrist-to thigh-thick plants normally grow down into or away from carved stone basins.
- Delicate-looking but exceedingly tough turquoise carpet grass. It is extremely soft to lie and walk on, and it absorbs and digests dirt and spills. This grass cleans the floors of Dragon King buildings and keeps the structures clean and fragrant.
- Living furniture that reshapes itself to the comfort off anyone who uses it.

EVERYDAY CRYSTAL ITEMS

The most commonly seen examples of their crystal technology are:

- Large chandelier-like lights that can be turned up and down by making specific gestures on a small crystal panel set in a wall.
- Self-heating crystal panels that can be controlled by touching an inset gemstone.
- Locks that are locked or unlocked by means of small crystal keys. These keys always appear to be brilliantly colored rings of crystal that lock or unlock the lock they are magically tied to whenever the character touches the quartz lock-plate with the key. These keys glow briefly when they open or shut a lock. Characters are at +3 difficulty to pick these locks unless they obtain one of the octagonal crystal lock picks used by Dragon King criminals. With these tools, crystal locks can be picked with a normal Dexterity + Larceny roll.
- Large doors that open or close when specific gestures are made.
- Flat crystalline books. The text appears on the surface of the crystal, and the reader can scroll down the work by touching the side of the book.

DRAGON KING ARTIFACTS

In the days before the rise of man, the Dragon Kings had an advanced magical society. Though they never reached the astonishing pinnacle of the Solar Deliberative at the height of the First Age, their reign produced plentiful wonders. Even after the Primordial War, the Dragon Kings retained a great deal of sophistication, and the nature of their tools is such that many survive even to this most distant day. Those below are a selection of the most common such devices in the Second Age.

READING CRYSTAL (ARTIFACT •)

This is a clear, flat, rectangular crystal eight inches on a side and an eighth of an inch thick. When placed over any piece of text and infused with 5 motes of Essence, this crystal copies the text. Once activated, the crystal remains active for a full scene. The crystal copies each page of text in an instant, allowing the user to copy one page every turn. Users who are not interrupted can copy a 1,000-page tome in an hour (three scenes). This device reproduces the text exactly as it is on the page, except that it is sensitive enough that it renders worn, faded or partially erased text as if it were newly written. So long as the original page is intact and some trace of the writing remains, the reading crystal can reproduce it. Also, if the user wishes, she can instead spend 3 motes of Essence and write on the surface of the crystal. The device will then record her writing within it for the next full scene. To avoid marking the crystal with ink, most users write on it with a dry pen or brush. Each reading crystal can hold several thousand pages of text. To read this text, the user need only spend 1 mote of Essence to activate the device for a scene. The user can then cause the text to scroll down by merely touching the device and willing it. Although many are blank, some

ancient reading crystals contain text recorded many thousands of years before that may exist nowhere else.

SWORDSTICK (ARTIFACT •)

This deadly weapon consists of a long, flat club of semi-living wood. Along either side, just like the teeth in jaws of a sawfish, a single row of iron-hard thorns as long as a woman's palm transform this club into an extremely deadly weapon. Swordsticks are the ultimate expression of one of the Dragon Kings' oldest weapons. The first swordsticks were simply branches of ironthorn wood cut to an appropriate length. However, the Dragon King's vegetative technology allows them to grow low bushes that produce a cluster of three or four swordsticks every two years. Unfortunately, all efforts to grow the bushes outside of Rathess have failed.

When empowered with 4 motes of committed Essence, the swordstick comes to life. At this point, the thorns ooze a sap that causes all wounds to be exceptionally painful, and the club-like blade bends itself to the user's will, aiding him in his attacks.

Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def	Min
+2	+1	+5L*	+1	S•••

* In addition to the damage cause by the swordstick, the thorn's sap causes a painful burning. Characters wounded by a swordstick increase their wound penalties by +1 for the rest of the scene. A target can only suffer this penalty once per scene.

BRACER OF CRYSTAL BOLTS (ARTIFACT ••)

This large bracer is made of a single piece of clear rock crystal set with orichalcum inlays. This weapon holds two

bolts also made of enchanted rock crystal. With a thought, the wearer can fire these bolts, and by spending 1 mote of Essence, the character can draw the bolts back to the weapon (they actually fly to the weapon).

If either of the bolts is damaged or broken, it will repair itself within a few hours, less for minor damage. Committing 4 motes of Essence activates the bracer and causes it to resize to fit the wearer and allows the wearer to fire it. It can then only be removed by the wearer or upon her death. This bracelet has a setting for a single Hearthstone. Bracers of crystal bolts use the Thrown Ability to attack, and Thrown Charms can apply to attacks with them.

Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range
+2	6L*	2	100

* Like target arrows, the bolts are armor piercing. Halve the target's armor soak, but apply natural soak normally.

FIRE CLAW (ARTIFACT ••)

This unusual and deadly item is made in the form of a fancy orichalcum bracelet set with a large red stone. It fits perfectly on the wrist of one of the Dragon Kings and is not uncomfortable when worn by an Exalt. Whenever the wearer expends 2 motes of Essence, a curving blade of golden sunfire springs forth from the bracelet and arcs in front of the wearer's hand (this is a diceless reflexive action). Looking like a cross between a narrow-bladed scimitar and a great and deadly claw, this weapon was favored by many Dragon King cult members. The claw endures for one full scene, and so long as the wearer expends 2 motes every scene, it can be made to exist indefinitely. The claw is designed so that it is impossible

MUNDANE WEAPONS OF THE DRAGON KINGS

While many Dragon Kings used spears, javelins, spear throwers, boomerangs, clubs, slings, throwing clubs and throwing knives, others fought and hunted with more exotic weapons that their kind first created long ago. Sword-clubs and throwing blades are their most common weapons.

SWORD-CLUB

Lacking the aptitude for metalwork possessed by humanity, the Dragon Kings created weapons quite similar to chopping swords. The best are made from ironwood that either have chipped obsidian blades slotted into their sides or are carved so that a row of jutting razor-sharp blades project from each side of the weapon. The weapon looks much like the tooth-filled jaws of a sawfish.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Resources	Minimums
+1	+0	+4L	+0	•••	S•••

THROWING BLADE

Throwing blades looks much like a curving triangular shuriken the size of a large man's hand. They have significantly greater range and do far more damage, but unlike shuriken, the Dragon King can only throw one of these deadly weapons at a time. While some are made from ironwood, the best throwing blades are all carved from razor-sharp crystal.

Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Resources
+1	+3L	2	30	•

for the wearer's hand to be injured by the claw curving above it. A wearer must commit 5 motes of Essence to use this item. This item contains a setting for a single hearthstone. The Fire Claw is used with the Melee Ability, and it cannot be used as a claw-type weapon for the purposes of Tiger Style or Lunar natural fighting techniques.

Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def	Min
+2 (+3)*	+2 (+3)*	+5L	+1 (+2)*	S••, D•••

* Add one to the weapon's speed, accuracy and defense if it is worn by a Dragon King or one of the Solar Exalted.

CRYSTAL WARCLUB (ARTIFACT •••)

When not in use, this weapon looks like a flattened angular club of smoky quartz, set with a single row of bright ruby crystals on both of the two blade-like edges. However, when the club is activated by spending 2 motes of Essence, a triangular blade of glowing energy issues from each of these crystals. These glowing blades remain for the next full scene. The crystal warclub was one of the Dragon Kings most savage and lethal weapons. Anyone who wields this club must also commit 6 motes of Essence to it.

Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def	Min
+3 (+4)*	+2 (+3)*	+9L (+10L)*	+0	S•••, D•••

* Use the second set of numbers if this weapon is wielded by one of the Dragon Kings or one of the Solar Exalted.

NECKLACE OF SOLAR CHARISMA (ARTIFACT •••)

This necklace consists of a series of golden circular crystals connected by slender orichalcum chains. When the wearer puts it on and attunes it by committing 3 motes of Essence, he becomes infused with a small fraction of the Unconquered Sun's majesty. As a result, he becomes supernaturally attractive and charismatic, adding three dice to all Charisma and Appearance rolls. In addition, everyone with a permanent Essence less than the wearer's regards the wearer as attractive and does not find him in any way odd or disturbing.

If a Dragon King with an Essence of 3 wears this necklace into a city, every mortal and all other beings with an Essence of 2 or less will regard the Dragon King as a perfectly normal and attractive individual. They will all know that they are looking at a large bipedal lizard, but seeing such a creature will be a cause for wonder, not of fear or disgust. No one affected by this item will ever attack the wearer simply for looking monstrous and deadly. However, someone can still attack the wearer out of greed, anger or any other reason that does not involve the wearer's appearance. Beings with an Essence equal or greater than the wearer see her normally, but the wearer's player can still roll three extra dice when making Appearance and Charisma rolls directed at them. This necklace has a setting for a single Hearthstone. The crystals in this necklace are all inscribed with images of the Unconquered Sun. Loyal followers of the Immaculate Dragons would never consider wearing such an item.

SHOCK GAUNTLET (ARTIFACT •••)

The shock gauntlet is a large gauntlet covered in what appear to be metallic leaves. Unlike more traditional gauntlets, the shock gauntlet covers nearly the entire arm of the wearer, going almost to his shoulder. Shock gauntlets were used by Dragon King troops before the fall of Rathess, especially those associated with the worship of Leeayta, the Lizard Queen. Even so, they were never very widespread, since their construction was expensive and, in the hands of an untalented soldier, could be quite disruptive to typical battle formations.

The usefulness of the shock gauntlet is that it is a ranged melee weapon, as contradictory as that seems. The wearer expends 1 mote of Essence and punches in the direction of his intended target, his player making a normal Brawl or Martial Arts roll, just like an ordinary unarmed attack. The target can be as far as 30 yards away from the wearer. If the attack roll is successful, the gauntlet transmits the strength of the wearer's punch to the target, who suffers damage exactly as if he had been hit with a normal unarmed attack. The shock gauntlet also enhances the wearer's punches, making them far deadlier than they otherwise would be.

The shock gauntlet has the following statistics:

RANGED USE

Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range
+0	16L*	1	30**

HAND-TO-HAND USE

Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def	Min
+0	+0	Str + 8B	+0	S•

* The character must spend 1 mote per ranged attack made.

** This is the weapon's maximum range. It offers no range increments.

THORN THROWER (ARTIFACT •••)

This unusual weapon consists of a thin flexible branch four feet long that holds many large thorns near one end. The user must commit 6 motes of Essence to use this weapon. The user can then cause the thorn thrower to curl up into a six inch coil that can be easily and safely carried on a belt. To use this weapon, the wearer normally flicks it like a whip at a target. Several of the large, sharp thorns fly off of the end and strike the target. These thorns are coated with an azure sap that promotes blood loss. In addition to throwing thorns, the user can also use this weapon like a short whip or chain to strike nearby opponents.

THROWN USE

Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range
+3	8L*	2	20

HAND-TO-HAND USE

Spd	Acc	Dmg	Def	Min
+4	+2	+6L*	+3	D•••

* Like a target arrow, this attack is armor piercing. Halve the target's armor soak. Natural soak is counted normally. Anyone wounded by this weapon loses one health level every 10 turns due to bleeding, and all attempts to stop this bleeding are at +1 difficulty.

A character must invest 6 motes to activate the thorn thrower and must spend 1 additional mote for each ranged thorn attack the character makes.

ESSENCE STORING CRYSTAL (ARTIFACT ••••)

Although the Dragon Kings have relatively few motes of Essence compared to the Exalted, they learned to use their skill at manipulating crystal to create artifacts that helped them to overcome this limitation. This artifact is a flat collar of triangular crystals that sits on the Dragon Kings shoulders, at the base of its neck. The collar stores and concentrates Essence, giving the wearer access to an extra 8 motes of Essence. The wearer can use this Essence just like ordinary Essence. However, this item is particularly attuned to Dragon Kings and cannot be used by Exalts or other Essence users. The user must deliberately store Essence motes in this item in order to retrieve them later.

When the crystals are filled with Essence, they glow softly. Dragon Kings who wish to hide their presence must conceal them underneath clothing, armor or scarves. Because of the high Essence cost of many sorcery spells, during the First Age, most of the rare Dragon King sorcerers wore one of these artifacts. This artifact costs nothing to attune. However, when the wearer first puts it on and places at least 1 mote of Essence in it, the item automatically sizes itself to fit around the wearer's neck and closes when the ends are touched together.

GLOBE OF TRANSPORT (ARTIFACT ••••)

Rathess was located far from the lands inhabited by mortal humans and their Exalted leaders. As a result, the Dragon Kings enchanted special crystals to enable them to easily visit far-off lands. The smallest and most common of these crystal vehicles is the globe of transport. When not in use, this item is a solid sphere of violet crystal the size of a large orange with a setting for a single Hearthstone. In this form, it can be carried around as easily as any other small item. However, if the user places a Hearthstone of at least level 2 in the setting and spends 7 motes of Essence, this sphere transforms itself into a wondrous vehicle. The sphere expands into a thin-walled hollow globe nearly three yards in diameter. This globe expands around the individual supplying the Essence, and once it has fully expanded, this individual (as well as up to two other people she is touching) is inside the globe — the globe can carry a maximum of 800 pounds, but overloading one can burn it out very quickly. This globe can

be used to transport up to three humans or Dragon Kings, but is not large enough to transport larger creatures such as horses. The walls of this globe are fairly fragile, providing only 3L/3B armor for the occupants. However, any cracks, holes or other damage will repair themselves in seconds.

The individual who initially supplied the transport globe with Essence is the one who controls it. The controller can either direct the globe to go to any place he has visited before whose location he is aware of, or he can tell the globe to travel in a particular direction. The Essence supplied to the globe powers it for one journey, regardless of whether the globe transports the rider 10 yards or 10,000 miles. This vehicle travels at up to 100 miles per hour and will immediately land on the first safe, solid surface if for some reason it becomes impossible to reach its destination.

Because its exterior is solid and without holes, it is difficult for anyone riding in one of these globes to launch any form of attack with either weapons, Charms or sorcery at anyone outside of the globe. Assume the globe's 3L/3B soak protects targets outside the globe from attacks inside the globe. Whenever the globe lands, it deactivates and transform itself back into a small violet ball. When the transport globe deactivates, everyone and everything inside of it is deposited outside of it, completely unharmed. While the globe is in use, the Hearthstone in the setting provides no other benefit to the owner.

OBSIDIAN SHEATH (ARTIFACT ••••)

This remarkable type of armor looks like a lightweight suit of articulated plate made from a glassy yet flexible black stone, similar in appearance to obsidian, hence the name of the item. The armor is trimmed with orichalcum. It provides the orichalcum Magical Material bonus when attuned by a Solar or a Dragon King and Dragon Kings need only spend the normal number of motes to attune to it. When worn by a living creature who expends 6 motes of Essence to attune to it, the armor bonds with its user, acting like a second skin and providing excellent protection against most forms of attack. The obsidian sheath has the following characteristics:

Soak (L/B)	Mobility Penalty	Fatigue
8/8	-0	1

In addition, if the character's Strength is not already 8, the armor increase's the wearer's Strength to 8. If it is already 8 or greater, the armor increases the character's Strength by 2 instead.

This armor has the advantage of being both quite tough and very maneuverable. A warrior wearing an obsidian sheath need not worry about either limiting his mobility or tiring himself in combat. The elite troops of the Dragon Kings wore this armor into battle, which is why it is so rare in the Second Age, and most surviving examples of it have ended up in the arsenals of various powers. An obsidian sheath is associated with service to the Unconquered Sun, and those who wear it have a greater than average chance of drawing the attentions of spirits likewise in his service.



The Exalts took the field, and splendid were their panoplies. Arrayed about them were their seconds and retainers. The matter had been arranged beforehand, the date decided in advance after consultations with astrologers, mannerists and savants. The formal clash of Celestial arms was not heard often in the Second Age outside of Lunar circles, and so it was that Him What Waits was called out of the hoary wilderness of the Far North and set to adjudicate the matter. Most knew him by his silver eyes and wolf's fangs, for even among Lunars, he had built his fame on mortal combat, and the beast was mighty in him.

He had brought with him another observer of lithe build, clad all in black and with a hooded face. A slim man or mannish woman, he/she spoke not at all, but observed closely. Him What Waits had claimed on his good name that his companion was a sorcerer who would assure the fairness of the proceedings and threatened to depart immediately if he/she was not permitted to attend. After hurried discussion, it was decided to permit this in deference to the Lunars' martial skill.

One contender was a Solar master of the spear, called Radiance of Daybreak. He had been a prince in the East before the Unconquered Sun Exalted him. Now, he was a proud Solar hero, invincible in battle. None had stood against him in single combat since his Exaltation and lived. He was clad in a breastplate and greaves of jade, which had been lent to him by his fighting companion, Winter, who had, in turn, taken them from a Terrestrial he slew. It had not lived up to its title of "Ever-Faithful Dragon Carapace," but its glittering white surface made Radiance of Daybreak look every bit the glorious Solar hero. The spear he carried was the "Slayer-of-Foes," and it was familiar to him, for the Solar who had born it in the First Age against the enemies of the Solar Deliberative had possessed Radiance of Daybreak's Exaltation. Its name had largely vanished from the current Age, however, and there were few who remembered its terrible might.

His enemy was hung all about with a tragic air. She hailed from the grim shadowlands of the South and served in the retinue of the martially inclined Deathlord the First and Forsaken Lion. He was the greatest general among the dead and had been for many centuries, and his deathknight servant was a prodigy of his own creation.

Titled First Monsoon Raindrop, she had, before her Exaltation, been a devotee of the Pale Mistress of An-Teng. Now, she rejected the petty evil of the Mistress. The deathknight's periwinkle eyes glittered with humor. She wielded a wickedly long-bladed grincleaver, whose head was entirely cut away save for the cutting edge and bevel. It would have looked fragile in any metal other than soulsteel. In that material, executed as it was, it appeared a brutally minimalist masterpiece of death. It was titled "Rolling Thunderpeal, the Headsman's Blade" by the Lion, who was fond of such things, knowing well indeed such titles as would cause all those who heard them to blanch. First Monsoon Raindrop was clad only in silk robes. She preferred to fight encased in armor of her own extruded bone and would not don this armor until the moment before combat commenced.

The two Exalted had been spouses in the First Age. After untangling the rather complicated stories of their past and her rebirth, Radiance of Daybreak had developed an intense loathing of the Exalt who now played host to his former spouse's power. Pitilessly, he sought to end her incarnation, hoping that her power might be reborn pure. With the connivance of his Circlemates, he had preyed upon the Abyssal's sense of honor, and this led her to challenge him. Unfortunately for his brutal schemes, the circumstances of the challenge led to his swearing of an oath on the power of the Malfeans that the fight would be fair. Thus, the elaborate pageantry of the formal duel.

Regarding the combatants, the Him What Waits considered. The matter would be decided by his spear and her skill. If the Solar was a master of his weapon's diverse modes and the Abyssal ignorant of its power, he would surely slay her as he originally intended. If he was ignorant, her superior knowledge of Charms would surely crush the cocky young Exalt. If they were evenly matched, then the matter favored the spear — it was quite mighty.

This morning, the matter would be decided. The Lunar raised his hand. The fighters shifted their stances. The silver-eyed wolf's voice was the only sound in the glade.

"Ready. Fight."



CHAPTER FIVE THE EXALTED

Much of this book discusses Creation's less powerful inhabitants — God-Blooded, Dragon Kings and thaumaturges. This chapter deals with the Exalted, mostly with their battles. It leads with Exalted Power Combat, a combat system designed to gave combats in Exalted a more CRPG and less TCG feel. Exalted Power Combat contains, in its Charm notes, what is effectively a revised Solar basic combat Charm set.

Next is Mail and Steel, a system for representing mass combat in the world of **Exalted**. Now, Exalted can actually fight their wars of conquest and ideal in your game.

Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the supernatural martial arts and outlines several forms, of both Terrestrial and Celestial power level, for Exalts to practice.

This chapter will probably profoundly affect how your game plays out. Read it, decide what of the material in it you want to use, and include it in your game after making sure all the players know and are ready for the changes.

EXALTED POWER COMBAT

Exalted Power Combat is an entirely optional set of new rules and clarifications for **Exalted**, intended not only to streamline certain areas, but to lend combat a bloodier feel and to open more tactical options for players. While optional, the rules, clarifications and changes that follow are strongly recommended alterations. Storytellers and players should familiarize themselves with this material before starting to use it in an existing **Exalted** game, as certain character types and combat stratagems will change rather drastically.

UNSKILLED PENALTIES

Exalted do not suffer the -2 penalty to dice actions when attempting an action governed by an Ability they do not possess, as versatility is inherent to their design. Other Essence-using beings, such as spirits, are generally specialists by nature and perform poorly at tasks outside their purview. Mortals have only their training and education to hone their aptitudes, no matter how great their potential.

ONE ACTIVATION PER INSTANT

In general, a Charm can be activated only once per instant. An instant is the abstract period in which instant-duration Charms are invoked — the moment captured by the dice when the character leaps to parry or dodge, for example, or when the character soaks damage from an attack. This is very important with reflexives and for certain other Charms. For example, a character cannot invoke Iron Kettle Body repeatedly to multiply its soak bonus against one attack, cannot use Essence-Gathering Temper repeatedly against the same blow, cannot use Serpentine Evasion several times to “stack” the bonus dodge dice and cannot use Shadow Over Water or Dipping Swallow Defense again and again to repeatedly dodge or parry the same attack.

This is designed to prevent exploitive uses of Charms — “instant” is to be construed narrowly. The idea is to prevent the stacking of instant-duration reflexive Charms with themselves, not that you cannot use Anointment of Miraculous Health twice on the same injury. Characters who want stacked effects will have to learn two similar but compatible Charms and place them in a Combo. Some Charms may specifically have the characters use them repeatedly on a single event, but these Charms will state this explicitly. As usual, the text of the Charm supercedes the rules.

THE APPLICABILITY OF PERFECTION

Perfect dodges, soaks and parries carry with them an interesting question. Given that the perfect defense always wins (see the boxed text on **Exalted**, p. 167), can a character’s perfect defense allow her to evade situations where the defense is inapplicable? For example, can a character use Seven Shadow Evasion to sidestep an attack using Cascade of Cutting Terror, which specifically states that the attack cannot be dodged, only blocked?

The answer is no. The Charm’s effect is infallible, the Charm itself is not. If the character is not allowed to dodge the attack, then there’s no chance for the Charm’s effects to take place. Dodging is an inapplicable action — it doesn’t matter how perfect it is, there’s no way for it to happen. Yes, this makes having an array of defenses more important, because Seven Shadow Evasion isn’t the only defense you need.

Of specific note is Adamant Skin Technique. Adamant Skin Technique protects against damage as in “12L,” not damage as in “any negative effect.” If someone hits your character with an attack that decreases his Attributes or makes his soul fall off, Adamant Skin Technique won’t help there. There probably is a Solar Charm in the Essence 6-7 region that absolutely prevents any negative effects whatsoever from an attack, but Adamant Skin Technique isn’t it. However, Adamant Skin Technique *will* protect against attacks such as Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike because that’s an attempt to defeat the Charm’s effects, rather than trumping the applicability of the Charm.

Note that an “exception” to this is Heavenly Guardian Defense, the penultimate parry Charm in the main book’s Melee tree. This Charm is specifically noted as blocking even attacks that cannot be blocked. And indeed, page 167 rules here, and this defense really can really block any single attack, hence its Willpower cost. Characters wishing to develop a less extravagant version of this Charm that’s still vulnerable to unblockable attacks can probably do so and have it cost 6-7 motes. Likewise, a truly perfect dodge Charm using Willpower is also possible.

MULTIPLE DEFENSE ACTIONS

Characters may, through various Charms or other effects, have a variety of defenses at their disposal that they are able to bring to bear against an individual attack. Through a Combo or scene-duration effects, they may be able to both dodge and parry and attack with some number of dice — and, possibly, even counterattack as well. It is permissible to both dodge and parry an attack, with each defensive effect negating more successes. If the Charm texts don’t dictate which happens first, the defender gets to pick which defenses are applied in what order, which can make it very dangerous to attack certain kinds of

riposte specialists. See the ruling above about only activating Charms once per instant. This allows your character to use Dipping Swallow Defense while she has Flow Like Blood active. It does not allow her to use Dipping Swallow Defense repeatedly to make multiple parries against a single attack. In general, an Exalt can only use one defense of a given type against an attack. Though Charms might exist that give “second chances” to parry or dodge or whatever, these will explicitly say so in the Charms’ text.

*For Example: Seven Thunder Kid is fighting the Mask of Winters. The Mask of Winters attacks with some improbable netherworld kung-fu move, and the Storyteller rolls 20 successes on his attack. Seven Thunder Kid has Flow Like Blood and Angry Predator Frenzy Style (from **Caste Book: Dawn**) active. Seven Thunder Kid’s player rolls his character’s Dexterity + Dodge + any specialty he might have there that helps and gets eight successes. Not nearly enough. The Kid now spends one of his extra actions, aborts to a parry in response to the Mask of Winters, and his player rolls the Solar’s Dexterity + Martial Arts + his specialty in tiger claws, and gets six successes. Still not enough. Looks like Seven Thunder Kid is going to take a hit. Now, Seven Thunder Kid’s persistent Angry Predator Frenzy Style kicks in, and he gets a simultaneous reflexive counterattack at 11 dice (his Martial Arts 5 + the six remaining successes the Storyteller rolled on the Mask of Winters’ attack).*

FULL PARRY

Characters may now declare a *full parry* on their action, or as an abort action, exactly as with dodging. The first parry is made at the character’s full Dexterity + Melee pool, and each successive parry is made with one less die. These parries are still limited by the rate of the weapon or weapons used.

INCREASED STUNT ESSENCE

Double the number of points of Essence a character regains on a successful stunt.

MARTIAL ARTS WEAPONS

Many martial-arts forms have weapons associated with their practice. These form weapons are used when training with the specific form they are associated with. **A martial artist using the form weapons of style is considered to be attacking unarmed when using Charms of that style**, unless specific Charm effects state otherwise. Form weapons from one style do not enjoy this benefit while the character is not using Charms of that style, and a character cannot be under the effects of a Form-type Charm when not unarmed or fighting with an in-form weapon. Some martial arts from early in the game’s publication history are not explicitly associated with weapon types. The table below lists explicit associations for previously unassociated forms. A martial-arts style is automatically associated with the Magical Materials versions of a form’s weapons, so, for example, snake style is associated with serpent-sting staffs

because they are the Magical Materials version of a seven-section staff, which is a weapon embraced by snake style.

Style	Form Weapons
Tiger	tiger claws
Snake	seven-section staff, hook swords
Mantis	war fans, multi-section staff
Ebon Shadow	fighting chains, sai
Hungry Ghost	tiger claws (shade talons)
Five-Dragon	sword, spear
Air Dragon	chakram
Earth Dragon	sledge (tetsubo)
Fire Dragon	paired short swords
Water Dragon	tiger claws (dragon’s claws)
Wood Dragon	bow

DONNING LIGHT ARMOR

It takes time equal to the armor’s mobility penalty in minutes to don it. In the case of armor with a mobility penalty of 0, either inherently or from the use of Charms, the minimum time to don the armor properly is one minute. Rushing takes 30 seconds (10 turns).

EXTENDED MOVEMENT

Characters in Exalted Power Combat may move up to their full Dexterity + 12 yards and still take a full dice action. A character who spends a full action moving can move up to her (Dexterity x 3) + 20 yards per action spent moving.

Normally, a character moves on the initiative tick her player chooses to activate her dice action on. Movement is not an offensive action and suffers no penalty for being held.

There are several circumstances when a character can move reflexively. Players of characters who are on tumbling or cracking ledges can make a Wits + Athletics roll for their characters to move off of them, at a difficulty determined by the distance to the nearest non-tumbling part and the discretion of the Storyteller. Players of characters caught totally unawares should make an ambush check (see **Exalted**, p. 238). Characters unable to act normally cannot evade the fall, while characters who can use only reflexive Charms may use mobility Charms but cannot escape the hazard via footspeed.

In addition, there are a certain class of magical defenses that allow a character to leap, teleport or otherwise evade a certain distance away from an attacker. This form of defense is primarily used against individuals launching powerful multiple-attack Charms or large flurries of unaided blows with a high-Rate weapon such as a daiklave (see “Weapon Statistics” on p. 209).

A character whose attack target invokes a hopping defense technique may reflexively spend her remaining movement to follow. This means characters who are taking normal dice actions are limited to (Dexterity + 12) yards. A character with extra actions may use her normal

dice action as a full movement and travel at the $([Dexterity \times 3] + 20)$ yard rate, which can be useful for encroaching on hopping defenses, but the character must still be able to take a full action. Obviously, the players of such characters cannot also use the character's dice action to do a full dodge or full parry (see "Full Parry," p. 200).

If a character's attack is a target of a hopping defense and the character has both a reflexive mobility effect and normal yards of foot movement available, the character may choose which to use and may use them in any combination to pursue the evading character.

FLY-BY ATTACKS

Certain characters have total control over their position in space and can swoop by their enemies and flit away after attacking. These include Solars using Eagle-Wing Style (see **Caste Book: Night**, p. 73), deathknights enacting the Soaring Raptor Prana (see **E:Ab**, p. 201) and Lunars wielding the Deadly Beastman Transformation gift Soaring Pinions (see p. 207).

Characters with these or similar effects can only be attacked in hand-to-hand combat during the initiative tick when they attack a foe in hand-to-hand combat. If they choose to linger outside of hand-to-hand range and characters cannot leap to them or otherwise come to grips, the airborne Exalts have control of the situation. Their target may attack (or counterattack) without penalty. Characters other than the target who wish to attack must be able to move into hand-to-hand range reflexively and suffer a -3 penalty. Characters who have long weapons such as spears suffer only a -1 penalty. They may be attacked in ranged combat normally.

These rules are specified in the effects of the Charms but are detailed here to help Storytellers model birdman warriors and other flying foes. Note that the new initiative rules in Exalted Power Combat (see "Initiative," below) can make these characters very difficult to hit indeed in hand-to-hand combat.

HOPPING DEFENSES

Many Charms in **Exalted** allow an Exalt to escape combat if an enemy does not have the ability to follow. Examples include the Abyssal Charms Flickering Wisp Technique and Flowing Evasion Assault (see **E:Ab**, pp. 206-207), the Lunar Charm Wind-Dancing Method (see **E:L**, pp. 163-164), the Dragon-Blooded Charm Hopping Firecracker Evasion (see **E:DB**, p. 204), the Solar Charm Leaping Dodge Method (see **Caste Book: Night**, p. 75) and the Sidereal martial-art technique Dance of the Hungry Spider (see **E:S**, pp. 185-186).

The following abilities grant the capability to follow a character using such an evasion:

- Unspent yards of movement up to the character's normal allowance (this has been increased in Exalted

Power Combat, see "Extended Movement," above). As a full action, any character can leap a number of yards vertically equal to her Strength + Athletics or twice that distance horizontally (see **Exalted**, p. 252).

- Any reflexive Charm that allows enhanced movement, such as Monkey Leap Technique. Characters who activate a mobility Charm to increase their movement do not need to do so repeatedly after each evasion — the attacks and evasions during a multiattack are so closely spaced that a character playing "follow the leader" may hold saved-up yards of movement between evasions. However, a character cannot activate a mobility Charm until his yards of saved movement are used up and can only activate a reflexive movement Charm once per evasion attempt.

If the evading character ceases to use hopping defenses while the pursuer still has yards of mobility remaining, the pursuing character may decide if she wishes to use up the remaining movement or stop in hand-to-hand range of the evading character. Note that Charms that seem to increase movement but that actually do not (such as Thunderbolt Attack Prana) do not allow characters especial ability to pursue evaders. The Charm must actually enable the character to move some number of yards.

All of the hopping dodges except the Dance of the Hungry Spider involve the character flying or leaping. Characters who exploit this can ascend obstacles, leap chasms and otherwise place themselves so that earth-bound characters have a difficult time following them. Allow the players of characters pursuing such Exalted across difficult terrain to make reflexive Wits + Dexterity rolls for their characters to keep on their foes, with difficulty 1 indicating rough terrain like a sand dune or rocky slope, difficulty 3 indicating very difficult terrain such as a tumbled breach in a city wall or a slick ledge in an underground chasm and difficulty 5 indicating exceedingly hard terrain such as the slick interior wall of an ice cave or a pitching ship's deck amid the spray of a terrible storm.

Characters with perfect balance, such as that conveyed by Graceful Crane Stance, should be assessed only on the technical difficulty of following an opponent, not on the footing conditions. Generally, running up a vertical wall is difficulty 3 and extremely poor footing is +2 difficulty.

Characters who are forced to follow an evading character in a roundabout fashion must travel the actual number of yards they traverse. For example, if Lord Iron leaps to the top of a tower and Disciple Raven has to run up the stairs that spiral around it to take the next blow, he will have to travel much farther than Lord Iron, who jumped straight to the top. This would be an ideal situation in which to use Lightning Speed.

Note that hopping defenses do not generally provide a defense roll (Dance of the Hungry Spider's powerful effect has a defensive character), but instead, move a character away from an attack that has already taken place. They do not prevent the character from suffering the attack that triggers the defensive effect. A hopping defense may not circumvent the effects of a reflexive counterattack, but it may be triggered by one.

Players of characters who are leaping blindly onto slick or dangerous purchase must make a successful Wits + Athletics roll at difficulty 2 (higher for very bad conditions), or their characters fall prone (see *Exalted*, p. 235, for rules on prone actions). Characters falling prone in perilous circumstances may also take environmental and falling damage (see *Exalted*, pp. 244 and 253, respectively, for rules).

A hopping defense may be used only once against a given attack, but it may be used on every attack in a multiattack in order to attempt to run an attacker dry of movement. If a character activates a reflexive mobility Charm in order to follow an evading defender, any unused yards of movement are "saved" until the end of an exchange. Characters activating hopping defenses cannot enhance their effects with reflexive mobility Charms, even through an otherwise legal Combo.

Note that while these Charms are mechanically similar, they each have unique physical special effects that dictate certain limitations.

Dance of the Hungry Spider: This Charm is a powerful defense, causing attackers to suffer a substantial penalty to their dice pools as well as the normal effects of such a Charm. Its mechanic is not the normal one for hopping defenses, but a superior version of the effect seen here in the context of Sidereal martial arts. In addition to this, when attacking, the character may, reflexively and without penalty, move up to twice his Dexterity in yards in pursuit of a defender who has invoked a hopping defense. This is a part of the Dance of the Hungry Spider's ongoing effects.

Hopping Firecracker Evasion: Characters using this Charm in Exalted Power Combat can still dodge only $(\text{one-half their Dexterity}) + 6$ yards. This evasion is based on a leap, and the character cannot repeat it if his feet do not have purchase at the end of the effect.

Flickering Wisp Technique: This Charm allows for teleportation, but it has a fairly short range, allowing for jumps of no more than the Abyssal's Essence in yards. Characters can end the Flickering Wisp Technique's dodge in midair and can continue to evade upward in response to successive attacks.

Flowing Evasion Assault: Slightly longer ranged than Flickering Wisp Technique, this defense also allows the Abyssal to attack from behind (see *Exalted*, p. 238, the

character so attacked cannot parry or dodge the attack without the aid of Charms). In such instances, assume that, if the Abyssal uses this Charm against a foe and attacks that foe in her next action, that it is an attack from behind. Characters can evade upward repeatedly with this Charm, but if they move outside of hand-to-hand distance with their enemy and have no ranged attacks, they will forfeit the benefit for an attack from the rear.

Leaping Dodge Method: Covering $([\text{Strength} + \text{Athletics}] \times 6)$ yards horizontal distance and half that in vertical, this Charm is the longest ranged of the hopping dodges. This evasion is based on a leap, and the character cannot repeat it if his feet do not have purchase at the end of the effect, but any character using this Charm will generally have a wide choice in landing spots.

Wind-Dancing Method: The distance traveled is fixed at eight yards. However, as the Charm's name suggests, the character evades by walking on air. Lunars using Wind-Dancing Method repeatedly can dodge upward to great heights.

Characters who evade straight up cannot be followed by characters who cannot close to hand-to-hand range with them through leaping or flight. Hopping Firecracker Evasion and Leaping Dodge Method require jumping and cannot be done from midair; Wind-Dancing Method requires no surface, as the Charm allows the character to tread on empty air as easily as solid surfaces. Those left in midair will fall at the end of the exchange of blows they evaded. Falling characters take normal falling damage (see *Exalted*, p. 253), and their players must roll for knockdown (see *Exalted*, pp. 234-235) at a difficulty equal to 1 per three yards fallen, to a maximum difficulty of 5. Increase this difficulty if the character is not landing on a stable, dry, level surface.

Note that characters whose attacks have a range long enough to hit a character after the evasion have no compelling reason to follow, but may pursue if they wish. Evasive defenses always invite such pursuit, but only from the character they were deployed against.

"NATURAL" SOAK

Many attacks refer to "natural" soak. This is soak that represents a character's inherent toughness of fiber, rather than that added by plates of Magical Materials against the skin. Natural soak includes the soak provided by a character's Stamina and the benefits of Essence-channeling techniques that directly increase it. As a general rule, if it is treated mechanically as a form of armor, it is not natural soak, while if it merely adds to the character's soak values, it is a form of natural soak. Natural soak is important in Exalted Power Combat because many attacks do piercing damage.

PIERCING DAMAGE

This is the type of damage done by target arrows in the normal **Exalted** combat rules. In **Exalted Power Combat**, a number of other weapons also do piercing damage. This damage ignores half the soak value of any armor, but the character's natural soak is applied normally. See "Natural Soak" on page 202. It is used to model both sharp weapons that punch through armor and, with their large bashing damage values, to model weapons such as maces.

INITIATIVE

While it may seem tactically advantageous to have a character coolly keep back in combat before unloading his held actions on his now defense-free or -light foes, the fact is that it is an easily exploitable way to upset the pacing and drama of a fight. The ability to hold your action was never meant to be a way to sneak your attacks in at the tail end of the turn when everyone's parry or dodge pools have gotten low. Once this trick is used in a game, everyone simply starts holding their actions and doing nothing until the bottom of the turn, and everything then goes off as it would have anyway. This footrace for initiative 0 undoes the utility of several Charms, costs everyone the advantages of faster weapons and attacks and simply ruins the dramatic pacing of a combat scene. On the other hand, having the option of holding an action can play an important role in drama and teamwork tactics in a combat scene.

To remedy this problem, it is suggested that Storytellers regard initiative as not only a function of speed in attacking, but also in perceiving and exploiting a window of opportunity for attack before a foe does the same. Holding an action means missing that window. **A negative modifier equal to the number of initiative points a player holds his action is applied to all offensive actions made later in that turn.** The penalty is for initiative points skipped only and does not include the current initiative.

For Example: Hudson rolled an initiative of 17 this turn of combat, but he has held his character G6m's action so that he can get a sense of the tactics of the blood apes he and his friends' characters are facing. If he chooses for G6m to attack on tick 12, he does so with a -5 penalty for holding back, as he held his action for initiative ticks 17, 16, 15, 14 and 13. 12, the initiative tick that G6m acts on, is not counted for the purposes of the penalty. If G6m is attacked, however, he suffers no negative modifiers to his defense

Reflexive offensive actions, such as the Charm-driven automatic counterattacks provided by Ready in Eight Directions Stance, are unaffected by this penalty. As this penalty is for holding back from an ideal window in a combat situation, it does not penalize noncombat actions taken during a combat turn, such as Perception checks, Stealth checks, attempting to heal an ally or the like. It

does explicitly apply to ranged attacks, which are as much a matter of timing as a hand-to-hand strike.

Charms that specifically require the user to hold his action or voluntarily reduce his initiative score use the Charm text to arbitrate effects, and not the above rules.

Wound penalties should be applied to initiative totals. A character with a Dexterity + Wits of 7, a weapon speed of 2, and initiative roll of 5 on a d10, and who is suffering a -2 wound penalty would have an initiative of 12.

HANDLING INITIATIVE

The rules in this section are the "official" system for solving the problem of "footraces for initiative point 0." However, some groups may find the transition too jarring or simply not to their liking. The following suggestions and ideas are provided to give a sense of other options, as well as to provide some perspective for those using the canon **Exalted Power Combat** initiative rules.

Older Storyteller games made use of a "declare up, resolve down" initiative scheme, which was satisfying on a tactical level but very slow and often confusing. Intended actions would be declared starting from the lowest initiative score to the highest, then resolved from the highest to the lowest. The idea being that the faster characters would see what the slower ones were planning and could react accordingly. People who changed their declared actions suffered a penalty. Groups who are comfortable with their speed and who are organized enough to keep track of such a system might find it suits their needs.

Doing away with holding actions altogether is another option, albeit a harsh one, that keeps combat moving and action packed. A less brutal option is to require players to declare a trigger when holding their action, such as "when the Lunar moves to attack someone" or "when one of the monks produces a red scroll" and only permit them to interrupt actions that meet their declared trigger. Another idea is to only do away with interrupts while keeping held actions. Again, a little experimentation and forethought is all a group needs if it wants to tinker.

INCREASED MINIMUM DAMAGE

Without effects that specify otherwise, a character's soak cannot reduce the damage of an incoming attack to below the permanent Essence of the attacker. This rule



replaces the minimum one die of damage an attack causes under the normal **Exalted** combat rules.

*For Example: Terry's character has an Essence of 4. Terry has made a successful attack roll with five successes after reductions for his target's dodge attempt. His character's attack has a base 7L plus those five extra successes, which works out to a raw damage of 12L. However, his target has a 14L soak. Under the normal **Exalted** combat rules, Terry would roll one die of damage. However, in **Exalted Power Combat**, Terry rolls his character's Essence of 4 as his minimum damage.*

High-end soak Charms or effects that provide a hardness (see p. 205), such as Iron Kettle Body, Invulnerable Skin of Bronze or Invulnerable Moonsilver Carapace, can still cause an attack to roll no damage dice, as noted under "New and Changed Charms" (see p. 206). Such effects cause an attack to do no damage if the *raw damage* (damage before soak is applied) is below a value specified by the Charm or effect in question. *Minimum damage*, on the other hand, is the minimum amount of dice that can be rolled to deal damage on an attack that has already been resolved to the point where soak has been applied and the actual damage is being rolled.

DICE-POOL PENALTIES AND ESSENCE

Penalties can never reduce an Essence-user's dice pool below his permanent Essence score. His state as an

Exalt means that there is a baseline level of effectiveness that no environment or Charm can ever reduce them below (see **Exalted**, p. 89 and pp. 236-238). Bear in mind the difference between difficulty (minimum successes) and dice penalties (which reduce the number of dice a character rolls). This rule applies only to the latter category, and as such, certain complications, such as attacking blind (see **Exalted**, p. 238), still apply fully. **Wound penalties are the exception to this rule** and should be calculated against dice pools subsequent to the other penalties for that reason.

This rule does not grant a dice pool when none exists, as lack of skill or opportunity is not a dice-pool penalty. If the character had no dice pool to begin with, he cannot receive an Essence-minimum die pool. Effects that specifically reduce an Attribute, Ability or dice pool to some arbitrary value (0, for example) continue to work as normal. Apply such effects before subtracting any penalty dice during Step 2 of the order of modifiers (see **Exalted**, p. 229). Charm effects that reduce the character's dice pool cannot further reduce such a pool if the arbitrary value is already below or equal to the victim's Essence. Similarly, Charms that explicitly allow a character to reduce a target's dice pool to 0 continue to operate as normal and are likewise applied before any other penalties.

Penalties to the rolls to remember Sidereal Exalted are not limited by this rule, nor are rolls made by Sidereal Exalted to create and maintain relationships. It is the specific nature of the Arcane Fate to transcend such rational limitations.

DODGING

A character's permanent Essence score is added to all dodge attempts. This does not provide a dice pool where none exists; it is simply an addition to dodge attempts under the current mechanics. This is a bonus that all beings above Essence 1 enjoy, reflecting their (conscious or unconscious) attunement to and understanding of the nature of Creation. This bonus is applied to the overall dodge dice pool, before any penalties for splitting the pool or taking multiple actions due to a full dodge.

CLINCHES

Clinches and holds are now condensed into one combat maneuver, with clinch absorbing hold. All Charms or effects that call for a hold should now be read as calling for a clinch.

A clinch is an unarmed attack with an accuracy, damage and defense of 0 and a rate of 1. Clinch damage is bashing. Successes on clinch rolls now add to damage done on the clinch when the attacker chooses to do damage. The clinch roll itself is a Strength or Dexterity + Brawl or Martial Arts roll, which can be defended against normally (that is, both parried and dodged).

The player of the target of a clinch may attempt a clinch roll as a defensive action to take control of or escape from the clinch on the turn that the clinch is initiated, but only if the character has an action with which to do so. On each subsequent turn of the clinch, the players of both characters make a clinch roll on the highest initiative of the participants. This is the dice action for all participants in the clinch, so a character who escapes a clinch on his faster opponent's initiative does not get an additional dice action on the slower initiative his player rolled. The grappler with the greatest number of successes controls the clinch and can opt to do damage equal to (his Strength + extra successes on the opposed clinch roll), to end the clinch or to hold his opponent without dealing damage.

A combatant who ends a clinch can, at his option, push his opponent back a number of yards equal to his Strength when ending the clinch or knock his opponent prone when ending the clinch. Clinches with more than two combatants will need to be judged according to teamwork rules (see *Exalted*, p. 92).

The player of a character in a clinch who has multiple actions may attempt multiple clinch rolls. He makes his contested clinch roll against his opponent's last clinch roll, while his opponent does not roll at all. Each of these attempts is considered a separate attack or control attempt.

CLINCH REVISION RATIONALE

The original clinch rules were too great a departure from the standard combat pace and systems and were unclear as to when and how the participants attacked or defended due to the contested nature of practically every roll made. Additionally, the clinch and hold rules were two sets of systems to govern what were essentially the same grappling maneuvers. These new rules make use of maneuver statistics to stay in line with other unarmed attacks and use only a single type of roll for initiating, maintaining, controlling and ending the clinch.

HARDNESS

Certain types of armor and soak, such as Invulnerable Skin of Bronze (see *Exalted*, pp. 218-219) or the Lunar Deadly Beastman Transformation gift Impenetrable Beast Armor (see *E:L*, p. 127), provide an added layer of protection aside from simple soak. This hardness reflects a passive defense so sturdy that certain weak attacks have no chance to penetrate. These defenses automatically stop attacks whose incoming *raw damage* (damage dice before soak is applied) is equal to or below a certain value. Hardness is an exception to the minimum damage rules, above. If an attack does not do raw damage over the target's hardness value, the attacked does not do any damage at all. Hardness effects do not stack, instead defaulting to the highest active hardness effect on a character.

NEW AND CHANGED EQUIPMENT

CLINCH ENHANCERS

Clinch enhancers are a type of grappling aid or weapon that can only be used in conjunction with clinches. A *pankrator's cestus* is an articulated bracer and gauntlet, usually worn in pairs, designed specifically to enable to use to better apply leverage and to hook the hands when applying holds and chokes to an opponent. A *razor harness* is a brutal and bloody wrestling enhancement, covering the wearer in spikes and blades that wound grappled foes and make their counters much harder to effect. The rarely seen *crushfist* is the artifact version of a pankrator's cestus. These constrictive sleeves add their strength to the wearer's own to enhance both offensive and defensive grappling capabilities. Trained users can defeat another wrestler with the use of only one crushing hand, giving these weapons their name.

HEAVY AND SUPERHEAVY ARTIFACT ARMOR

Armor in the heavy and superheavy classes made from the Five Magical Materials now enjoy the benefits of hardness (see "Hardness," p. 205) due to their especially sturdy composition. Heavy armors have a hardness of 3, while superheavy armors and Armor of the Immaculate Dragons have a hardness of 4. There is no change in cost for existing armors.

HEARTHSTONE BRACERS

Hearthstone bracers (see *Exalted*, p. 338), regardless of construction, provide a three-die bonus to all dodge attempts made by an attuned character. This is in addition to any other powers the bracers provide based on their Magical Material. The cost and properties of Hearthstone bracers remain otherwise unchanged.

NEW AND CHANGED CHARMS

ARCHERY

Exquisite Relic Bow: The bow has a rate and accuracy equal to the Essence of the character who creates it. Its range is 300 yards. See **E:Ab**, page 159.

Immaculate Golden Bow: See "Exquisite Relic Bow," above. See *Exalted*, page 157.

Piercing Ghost Barb: Arrows enchanted with this Charm may not be blocked with nonliving objects or weapons unless these objects have the benefit of magic permitting interaction with the immaterial. Characters may parry incorporeal arrows with their hands through a stunt or magic that allows for unarmed parries of lethal attacks. See **E:Ab**, page 159.

Trance of Unhesitating Speed: The cost of this Charm is now a flat 3 motes per extra attack. An Exalt can purchase no more extra attacks with this Charm in a turn than her Essence. See *Exalted*, page 155.

ATHLETICS

Feather-Foot Style: The cost of this Charm is now 5 motes. Its duration is now one scene. In addition to its effects as outlined in the main rulebook, Feather-Foot Style also doubles the distance the character can run or sprint in a turn. This effect does not stack with the effect of other Charms that increase running speed. See *Exalted*, page 194.

Mist Over Ice: The cost of this Charm is 3 motes, its duration is one scene, and it doubles the character's sprinting speed for the remainder of the scene. Any turn during which a character chooses to benefit from these effects, she suffers the +1 difficulty modifier, as normal for this Charm, but the effects are not mandatory. See **E:Ab**, pages 202-203.

Monkey Leap Technique: The distance the character jumps is now measured in yards, not feet. See *Exalted*, page 193.

Spider-Foot Style: The cost of this Charm is now 3 motes. Its duration is one scene. See *Exalted*, page 194.

BRAWL

Crashing Wave Throw: The cost of this Charm is now 3 motes. Its type is supplemental. It can only be used when the character ends a clinch by throwing his opponent. When invoking this Charm, the character can throw his opponent (Brawl x 5) yards upward or twice that distance horizontally. Characters thrown over cliffs or high into the air will take falling damage as normal. See *Exalted*, page 253 for falling rules. See "Clinches," above, for details of how the clinch maneuver works in *Exalted* Power Combat. See *Exalted*, page 159.

Dragon Coil Technique: This Charm transforms the character's clinch damage into lethal damage. Additionally, characters using this Charm add their Essence in dice to all clinch dice pools. See *Exalted*, page 158.

Fists of Iron Technique: When attacking with this Charm, the character adds 1 to the accuracy of the attack and 2L to its damage. See *Exalted*, page 157.

Inescapable Iron Grip: The user of this Charm makes a clinch attack as normal, adding his Essence as automatic successes. The target defends as normal against a clinch, but neither party can inflict clinch damage and can only act to control the clinch while the effects of the Charm occur. See **E:Ab**, page 160.

Rapacious Lamprey Technique: This Charm allows Abyssals to drink their Essence in health levels of blood during a single turn rather than their Essence x 3. See **E:Ab**, page 160.

Sledgehammer Fist Punch: The Charm's type is now supplemental. Its duration is instant. See *Exalted*, page 159.

CHARISMA

Cunning Porcupine Defense: All unarmed attacks dealt by a character using this Charm do lethal damage. Characters using this Charm do base clinch damage of 6L. The accuracy, defense, speed and rate of their clinches are unchanged. See **E:L**, pages 145-146.

Deadly Beastman Transformation: The stats for Terrible Beast Claws are: Speed +2, Accuracy +1, Damage +5L, Defense +1 and Rate 4 for claws. The bite stats are Speed -6, Accuracy -1, Damage +8L, Defense -1 and Rate 2. The stats for Savage Moonsilver Talons are: Speed +2, Accuracy +3, Damage +7L, Defense +2 and Rate 7 for claws. The bite stats are Speed -4, Accuracy +0, Damage +10L, Defense +0 and Rate 2.

There are additional Deadly Beastman Transformation gifts in the boxed text beside this page.

A Lunar can choose to spend the normal number of experience points it would cost to buy Deadly Beastman Transformation and instead surpass it without internalizing its lessons, thus preserving the ability of perfect

skinchanging. The Lunar can count herself as having learned Deadly Beastman Transformation for the purposes of Charms that have it as a prerequisite. If the character chooses to learn the Charm Deadly Beastman Transformation at some later date, she purchases it at no special discount and suffers its effects on her Tell normally. See **E:L**, pages 124-127.

NEW BEASTMAN GIFTS

ASPECT OF THE GILLMAN

Prerequisite Gifts: None

The character is totally at home underwater. He can swim at normal running speed, make attacks without penalty (even ranged attacks) and breathe water as easily as air. The character is perfectly amphibious and needs no transition time between air and water.

FLUTTERING WINGS

Prerequisite Gifts: None

The character has weak wings good only for fluttering flight or flaps of skin that allow gliding. The primary effects are to double the character's vertical jumping distance and to triple the character's horizontal jumping distance. In addition, the character can fall any distance without injury. This gift can also simulate characters with incredibly athletic legs, a Lunar with a springbok or rabbit totem, for example.

SOARING PINIONS

Prerequisite Gifts: Fluttering Wings

The character has mighty wings, which allow her to swoop and soar at speeds of up to 35 miles per hour. The character's wingspan is at least twice as wide as the character is tall, and the Exalt cannot fly if she cannot spread her wings. The player must make a Stamina + Endurance roll for her character for every four hours of soaring flight or every hour of flapping flight.

DEXTERITY

Throat-Baring Hold: The user of this Charm must make a successful clinch attack. The attack does no damage. The attacker's successes, after the target's defense, are reduced from the target's bashing and lethal soak until the Lunar's next action or until the target breaks free. See **E:L**, page 145.

ENDURANCE

Armored Scout's Invigoration: The cost of this Charm is 3 motes per point of mobility penalty and fatigue value negated. Every 3 motes spent negates a point of each. A character cannot negate one or the other. Multiple uses of this effect stack, but the maximum that either value can be reduced by is the character's Endurance. Values reduced below 0 stay at 0. See **Exalted**, page 170.

Essence-Gathering Temper: For each successes the player gains on the roll when the character is struck by an attack, the character gains a number of points of temporary Essence equal to his permanent Essence score. A character cannot benefit from more successes due to a single invocation of this Charm than he has points of Stamina. See **Exalted**, page 171.

Front-Line Warrior's Stamina: The cost of this Charm is 5 motes and a Willpower. While it is in effect, the character suffers no fatigue or mobility penalties for wearing armor. The duration of the Charm is special — until the armor is removed. See **Exalted**, pages 170-171.

Pain-Eating Focus: This Charm provides effects as per the Solar Charm Essence-Gathering Temper, above, but only in the Underworld or in a shadowland. In the land of the living, it provides the normal benefits as outlined in **Exalted: The Abyssals**. See **E:Ab**, page 175.

Tiger-Warrior's Endurance: The cost of this Charm is 6 motes, one Willpower and one health level. While this Charm is active, the character burns from within with inner power. He regains Essence as if meditating (8 motes per hour) and cannot suffer fatigue checks or fatigue penalties while it is in effect. Also, the character not only does not need sleep, he cannot sleep. The Charm's duration is a number of hours equal to the character's Essence + Endurance. The health level lost is lethal and cannot be avoided or negated in any way. It remains committed while the Charm's effects linger. See **Exalted**, page 171.

MANIPULATION

Hyena Jaw Technique: The Cost of this Charm is 4 motes. For every turn that this Charm is active and the Lunar controls the clinch, the target loses of temporary Stamina in addition to the usual deleterious effects of being the target of a clinch. Clinch base damage is 0L for users of this Charm. See **E:L**, page 145.

Scimitar Claw Technique: The claws grown by this Charm have the following stats: Speed +2, Accuracy +3, Damage +7L, Defense +2 and Rate 7 for claws. The bite stats are Speed -4, Accuracy +0, Damage +10L, Defense +0 and Rate 2. See **E:L**, pages 138-139.

MARTIAL ARTS

Armor-Penetrating Fang Strike: The cost of this Charm is 4 motes and one Willpower. See **Exalted**, page 161.

Bottomless Depths Defense: This Charm costs 6 motes and one Willpower. It reduces the damage of all attacks to one die for the remainder of the turn. This effect occurs after soak is applied, but before damage is rolled. See **E:DB**, page 259.

Crushing Claw Technique: Users of this Charm do lethal damage in clinches rather than bashing, and their clinch successes (after reduction from their target's resistance to the clinch) are doubled only for the purpose of calculating damage. See **Caste Book: Eclipse**, page 75.

Essence Fangs and Scales Technique: While this Charm is in effect, the character's unarmed attacks do piercing damage (that is, halving the soak provided by armor). This Charm is incompatible with the use of weapons. See **Exalted**, page 160.

Essence Venom Strike: The cost of this Charm is 7 motes and one Willpower. See **Exalted**, page 162.

Fivefold Wound-Absorbing Method: The cost of this Charm is actually 4 motes and one Willpower per health level, not 5 motes as the text indicates. See **E:Ab**, page 196.

Joint-Locking Technique: The automatic successes conveyed by this Charm are only for calculating a target's resistance and not for damage inflicted in the clinch. See **Caste Book: Eclipse**, page 75.

Mantis Form: Users of Mantis Form who abort to a parry may parry all incoming attacks with their full Dexterity + Martial Arts pool. See **Caste Book: Eclipse**, page 74.

Perfection of Earth Body: The rate of the character's unarmed attacks while using this Charm are equal to his permanent Essence. See **E:DB**, page 252.

Soul-Flaying Strike: The attack inflicts aggravated damage and may affect incorporeal beings as if they were material. Add the Exalt's Martial Arts rating to the base damage if she wins the opposed Essence roll. Living victims slain by this Charm at night immediately arise as hungry ghosts at the beginning of the next turn instead of needing to wait for the next sunset. Slain spirits and Fair Folk are disintegrated. See **E:Ab**, page 165.

Striking Serpent Speed: The cost of this Charm is 6 motes, with no Willpower cost. See **Exalted**, page 162.

MELEE

Blazing Solar Bolt: This Charm has an accuracy bonus equal to the Exalt's Essence and a range of (Essence x 10) yards. This is absolute. There are no penalties as range increases, nor are there range increments. See **Exalted**, page 166.

Elegant Flowing Deflection: Parries made with this Charm do not include the weapon's defense bonus, as the parry is purely Essence driven. See **E:Ab**, page 170.

Golden Essence Block: As Elegant Flowing Deflection, see above. See **Exalted**, page 166.

Glorious Solar Saber: This Charm costs 6 motes and 1 Willpower, is simple and has a duration of one scene.

When this Charm is purchased, the player must decide the form of the weapon. He then divides a number of points equal to twice the character's Melee score between the weapon's speed, accuracy, damage and defense. Once selected, this Charm always summons the same weapon. The blade's statistics remain constant unless the character raises his Melee score. The wielder adds his permanent Essence to damage against creatures of darkness, such as demons or the undead. This damage bonus does not apply to Exalted, regardless of any affiliation with dark powers. The Deathlords themselves are counted as Exalts for the purposes of this effect. As with the Resplendent Shadow Blade, the weapon's rate is unlimited. See **Exalted**, page 164.

One Weapon, Two Blows: The cost of this Charm is now 2 motes. See **Exalted**, page 163.

Peony Blossom Attack: The cost of this Charm is now a flat 3 motes per attack. The character cannot make more extra attacks through the use of this Charm than her permanent Essence. See **Exalted**, page 163.

Resplendent Shadow Blade: The rate of a weapon summoned with this Charm is unlimited. See **E:Ab**, pages 169-170.

Steel Devil Style: A character may not counterattack through the use of this Charm more times per turn than she has points of permanent Essence. See **Caste Book: Night**, page 71.

PRESENCE

Majestic Radiant Presence: The Willpower roll to oppose or attack the character must be made every time anyone witnessing her glory attempts to disobey or harm the character, but it never needs to be made more than once per turn. The difficulty of the Willpower roll is 2. See **Exalted**, page 175.

Terrifying Apparition of Glory: The Valor and Conviction rolls must be made every time anyone witnessing the Exalt's majesty attempts to disobey or harm the character, but it never needs to be made more than once per turn. See **Exalted**, page 176.

RESISTANCE

Bone Arsenal Method: Characters creating weapons with this Charm must also spend Essence for the weapon's rate, which starts at 1 and costs 1 mote per +1. See **E:Ab**, page 182.

Crimson Petal Armor: Characters only need to spend Willpower and health levels the first time they activate this Charm in a scene. See **E:Ab**, page 182.

Durability of Oak Meditation: This Charm costs 1 mote per 2B added to the character's soak for the scene. The maximum soak bonus (not motes spent) is equal to the character's Stamina + Resistance. This Charm is compatible with the use of armor. See **Exalted**, page 176.

Flowing Wound Defense: The brief transformation to liquid also blunts the force of blows, preventing all knockback, knockdown or similar effects associated with the attack, even if those effects have a magical origin. See **E:Ab**, page 182.

Glorious Solar Plate: This armor provided by this Charm provides a Hardness of 5. For an additional 3 motes, the character can conjure a glowing golden shield that increases the difficulty of hand-to-hand attacks against the character by 1 and of ranged attacks against the character by 3. This shield always bears the sunburst emblem of the Unconquered Sun. See **Exalted**, pages 178-179.

Inauspicious Shadow Plate: This armor provided by this Charm possesses a hardness of 5. See **E:Ab**, page 184.

Iron Kettle Body: This Charm is reflexive and of instant duration. For the cost of 3 motes, the character gains +9L/+8B to soak and a hardness of 8 against one attack. See **Exalted**, page 178.

Iron Skin Concentration: This Charm is reflexive and of instant duration. It has a cost of 3 motes. It reduces the damage of any attack that the character is aware of to minimum damage (usually the attacker's Essence). This Charm is compatible with armor. See **Exalted**, page 176.

Spirit Strengthens the Skin: This Charm is reflexive, has a cost of 2 motes and one Willpower, a duration of one scene and is incompatible with the use of armor. It allows the user to soak lethal damage with her bashing soak total for the duration of the scene. See **Exalted**, pages 176-177.

Unfailing Tortoise Technique: This Charm is reflexive and of an instant duration. For the cost of 2 motes, the character may soak unanticipated attacks with a lethal soak equal to his Stamina + Resistance. This Charm is compatible with armor. This Charm does not decrease the attack's minimum damage (normally the attacker's permanent Essence). See **Exalted**, pages 177-178.

SORCERY

Incomparable Body Arsenal: This spell provides a hardness of 10 against both lethal and bashing damage, in addition to the effects in the book. See **Exalted**, page 221.

Invulnerable Skin of Bronze: This spell provides a hardness of 6L and 12B in addition to its normal soak. See **Exalted**, pages 218-219.

Wood Dragon's Claw: The caster receives 20 points to allocate to the claws' accuracy, defense, damage, speed and rate. These values replace the statistics provided in the book for the claws. No one rating may exceed the caster's Essence + Occult. Once per turn, before initiative is rolled, the caster may reflexively reallocate the 20 points however she wishes among the weapon statistics. See **Exalted**, page 220.

STAMINA

Claws of the Silver Moon: The stats for the claws provided by this Charm are Speed +3, Accuracy +1, Damage +5L, Defense +1 and Rate 4. The bite stats are Speed -3, Accuracy -1, Damage +8L, Defense -1 and Rate 2. The Duration of this Charm is one scene. See **E:L**, page 138.

STRENGTH

Spine-Breaking Technique: The cost of this Charm is 1 mote to activate plus 1 mote for each success purchased. The user's clinches do lethal damage, and she can buy her Strength as automatic successes. See **E:L**, page 144.

THROWN

Fiery Solar Chakram: The cost of this Charm is 4 motes and its accuracy bonus is equal to the Essence of the Solar hurling it. See **Exalted**, pages 169-170.

WEAPON STATISTICS

New statistics have been generated for all weapons both to fine-tune them and to incorporate the addition of the rate statistic to non-ranged weapons and attacks. **Rate works for all weapons as it always has for ranged weapons, indicating the maximum number of actions a given weapon may be used in per turn without the use of Charms or other magic.** Rate includes both offensive and defensive actions. A straight sword (Rate 3), for example, could be used to attack once and to parry twice without the use of Essence.

Rate is a function of maneuverability and quick follow-through with a given weapon. Speed is now solely a function of reach, and as such, spears and other very long weapons have a higher speed, for example, while short knifelike weapons have very little speed, if any, and a higher rate.

Many weapons were otherwise rebalanced to increase diversity and to more accurately model the feel of the weapons. In general, weapons are deadlier and more accurate, while defense is higher only in specifically defensive weapons, creating a more brutal combat environment.

The material bonus for orichalcum has been changed to reflect the inclusion of rate in hand-to-hand weapon statistics. The +1 bonus to speed should instead be a +1 bonus to rate. The table below summarizes the Five Magical Materials' bonuses under these rules.

Material	Bonuses
Orichalcum	+1 accuracy, defense and rate
Moonsilver	+2 accuracy
Jade	+3 speed
Starmetal	+2 damage
Soulsteel	+1 accuracy, drains Essence

HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Str	Dex	MA	Cost	Notes
Axe/Hatchet	+2	+1	+5L	-2	2	••	-	-	•	*
Cestus	+0	+0	+0L	+2	4	•	-	-	•	
Chopping Sword	+3	+2	+4L	-1	3	••	-	-	••	
Clinch	-6	+0	+0B	+0	1	•	-	-	-	P
Club/Baton	+4	+1	+6B	+0	2	•	-	-	•	*
Fighting Chain	+3	-1	+2L	+2	3	••	••••	••••	•	C
Fighting Gauntlet	-6	+0	+5L	+2	2	••	-	-	•	P
Fist	+0	+1	+0B	+2	5	•	-	-	-	
Great Axe	+4	+1	+6L	-2	2	•••	-	-	•	**
Great Sword	+7	+2	+6L	-1	2	•••	-	-	••	**
Hook Sword	+4	-1	+3L	+3	4	•	•••	•••	•••	
Iron Boot	-4	+0	+4L	-4	2	••	-	-	••	
Javelin	+1	+1	+3L	+1	3	•	-	-	•	
Khatar	+0	+0	+2L	+3	4	•	-	-	••	
Kick	-3	+1	+3B	-3	3	•	••	-	-	
Knife	+0	+1	+2L	-2	4	•	-	-	•	*
Lance	+10	-1	+7L	-3	1	•••	-	-	•	***
Mace/Hammer	+4	+1	+8B	+1	2	••	-	-	•	P
Pankrator's Cestus	-5	-1	+3B	-1	1	•	-	-	•	P,C
Poleaxe	+5	-1	+6L	+0	2	••	-	-	••	**
Razor Harness	-5	-1	+3L	+1	1	•	-	-	•••	P,C
Sai	+0	+0	+0L	+2	4	•	•••	•••	••	
Seven-Section Staff	+2	-2	+3L	+3	2	•	••••	••••	••	
Short Spear	+5	+2	+4L	+1	2	•	-	-	•	**
Short Sword	+2	+1	+3L	+0	3	•	-	-	•	
Short Tiger Fork	+4	+0	+1L	+2	3	•	•••	•••	•	
Slashing Sword	+6	+1	+4L	+0	2	•	-	-	••	
Sledge(Tetsubo)	+3	-1	+12B	-3	1	••••	-	-	••	** ,P
Spear	+10	+1	+4L	+2	2	••	-	-	•	**
Staff	+8	+3	+7B	+2	2	•	-	-	-	
Straight Sword	+4	+3	+3L	+1	3	••	-	-	••	
Tiger Claws	-3	+1	+3L	+0	3	••	-	-	••	
Tiger Fork	+8	-1	+2L	+2	2	••	••••	•••	•	
Wind-Fire Wheel/ War Fan	+0	+2	+0L	+2	4	•	•••	•••	••	

* Weapon can be thrown, see the "Thrown Weapons" chart.

** Weapon can be used by characters on foot to fight mounted characters without penalty.

*** Weapon does extra damage in a charge.

P Weapon does piercing damage.

C Weapon is a clinch enhancer.

THROWN WEAPONS (RANGED)

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Cost	Notes
Axe/Hatchet	-1	+3L	2	10	•	
Chakram/Shuriken	+0	+1L	3	20	•	
Club/Baton	+0	+3B	2	10	•	
Javelin	+1	+3L	2	30	•	P
Knife	+0	+2L	3	15	•	
Sling	-1	+2L	1	100	•	

P Weapon does piercing damage.

ARCHERY WEAPONS

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Max Str	Range	Cost
Composite Bow	+0	-	3	•••••+	250	•••
Crossbow	+0	5L	1	-	125	••*
Firewand	+1	12L	1/2**	-	10***	•••
Hand Crossbow	+0	3L	2	-	75	••••*
Long Bow	+1	-	3	•••••	200	••
Self Bow	+0	-	2	•••	150	•
Siege Crossbow	+0	8L	1/10	-	•••	

* Costs listed are for the Haslanti League.

** A firewand takes one turn to reload after every shot.

*** Firedust weapons have no extended range.

ARTIFACT HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Str	Dex	MA	Artifact Notes
Crushfist	-5	+0	+4L	+3	1	••	-	-	• P,C
Daiklave	+7	+3	+6L	+2	5	••	-	-	••
Daiklave, Grand	+10	+2	+12L	-1	3	•••	-	-	•••
Daiklave, Reaper	+9	+4	+4L	+1	4	••	•••	-	••
Daiklave, Reaver	+7	+3	+9L	+0	4	••	-	-	••
Daiklave, Short	+3	+4	+4L	+1	6	•	-	-	••
Daiklave, Wavecleaver	+3	+2	+7L	+1	4	••	-	-	••
Dire Lance	+12	+2	+9L	+3	3	•	-	-	•• ***
God-Kicking Boot	-2	+2	+6L	+1	3	••	-	-	•
Goremaul	+7	+1	+6L	+1	4	••	-	-	• P
Goremaul, Grand	+10	+0	+9L	+1	3	••••	-	-	••• P
Grimcleaver	+5	+2	+8L	-1	4	••	-	-	••
Lightning Torment Hatchet	+3	+2	+6L****	+2	3	••	-	-	••••• *
Razor Claws	+0	+1	+5L	+1	6	•	••	-	•
Serpent-Sting Staff	+3	+0	+5L	+3	4	•	••••	••••	••
Smashfist	-3	+1	+5L	+3	7	••	-	-	•

* This weapon can be thrown see the "Artifact Thrown Weapons" chart.

** Weapon can be used against mounted foes with no penalty.

*** Weapon does extra damage on a charge.

**** Targets lose -1 per hit to all die pools until end of scene, max -3.

P The weapon does piercing damage.

C This weapon is a clinch enhancer.

ARTIFACT THROWN WEAPONS

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Str	Dex	Artifact	Notes
Infinite Jade Chakram	+1	+4L	4	50	•	•••	••	returns instantly
Lightning Torment Hatchet	+1	+5L	2	20	••	•••	•••	returns at end of turn
Sling of Deadly Prowess	+2	+4L	2	150	•	••	•	

ARTIFACT ARCHERY WEAPONS

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Str	Cost
Short Powerbow	+2	+2L	2	250	••	••
Long Powerbow	+1	+3L	2	350	•••	•••

MORTAL WARSTRIDER WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Str	Dex	MA	Cost	Notes
Axe	+7	-1	+10L	-2	1	12	-	-	••••	
Chopping Sword	+8	+1	+9L	-1	2	12	-	-	••••	
Fighting Gauntlet	+4	+0	+5L	+0	2	10	-	-	•••	
Fist	+3	+0	+3L	+1	4	-	-	-	-	
Hook Sword	+8	-1	+7L	+3	3	12	••••	••••	•••••	
Kick	+0	-1	+5L	-1	2	-	••	-	-	
Mace	+9	+1	+8L	+0	2	12	-	-	••••	P
Spear	+16	+0	+7L	+1	2	10	-	-	•••	
Sword	+10	+1	+8L	+1	2	12	-	-	••••	
Two-Handed Sword	+13	+0	+12L	-1	1	14	-	-	•••••	

P The weapon does piercing damage.

ARTIFACT WARSTRIDER WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Str	Dex	MA	Artifact	Notes
Daiklave	+14	+1	+12L	+1	4	12	-	-	•••	
Dire Lance	+20	+1	+14L	+1	2	12	-	-	•••	
Goremaul	+10	+1	+12L	+0	3	12	-	-	•••	P
Grand Daiklave	+18	+2	+18L	+0	2	14	-	-	••••	
Grimcleaver	+10	-1	+13L	-2	3	12	-	-	•••	
Reaver Daiklave	+12	+2	+14L	-1	3	12	-	-	•••	
Serpent-Sting Staff	+7	+0	+9L	+3	3	12	••••	••••	•••	P
Smashfist	+6	+1	+8L	+1	5	12	-	-	••	

P The weapon does piercing damage.

MORTAL WARSTRIDER RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Max Str	Range	Cost
Shortbow	+1	-	1	12	250	••••
Longbow	+1	-	1	14	350	••••

ARTIFACT WARSTRIDER RANGED WEAPONS

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Artifact
Short Powerbow	+1	+4L	1	450	•••
Long Powerbow	+0	+5L	1	550	••••

FIRST AGE/SHOGUNATE WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Str	Dex	MA	Artifact	Notes
Shock Pike	+4	+1	+5L	+1	2	••	••	-	••	
Exalted Shock Pike	+6	+2	+7L	+1	3	••	••	-	••	
Fire Lance, Standard	+7	+1	+4L	+1	2	••	••	-	•••	
Fire Lance, Charged	+7	+1	+6L	+1	2	••	••	-	•••	
Infinite Weapon	+0	+1	+2L	+1	1	-	-	-	•••	!
Warstrider Fire Lance, Standard	+10	+0	+7L	+1	2	12	-	-	••••	
Warstrider Fire Lance, Charged	+10	+0	+14L	+1	2	12	-	-	••••	

Dragon Armor Weapons

Air Dragon: Lightning Corona	+2	+1	+5L	+1	4	-	-	-	••••	
Fire Dragon: Fire Claws	+6	+2	+7L	+2	6	-	-	-	••••	
Dragon Armor Ranged Attack	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Artifact					
Air Dragon: Lightning Corona	+0	10L	1	200	••••					

! Adds these values to the stats of any weapon it duplicates.

DRAGON KING NATURAL ATTACKS

PTEROK

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Notes
Bite	+8	+0	+3L	-2	3	
Wing Buffet	+5	+1	+4B	+0	3	

RAPTOK

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Notes
Bite	+5	+0	+3L	-2	3	
Claw	+6	+1	+2L	+0	4	

ANKLOK

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Notes
Bite	-3	+0	+3L	-2	2	
Claw	+0	+1	+3L	+0	3	
Tail	-6	-1	+4L	-2	2	P

MOSOK

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Notes
Bite	+0	+0	+4L	-2	4	
Claw	+3	+1	+2L	+0	2	
Tail	-3	-1	+6B	-2	2	P

P The weapon does piercing damage.

DRAGON KING HAND-TO-HAND WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Def	Rate	Str	Dex	MA	Artifact	Notes
Crystal Warclub*	+8	+3	+10L	+0	4	•••	•••	-	•••	
Fire Claw*	+4	+2	+4L	+2	4	••	•••	-	•	Melee weapon, not a claw.
Shock Gauntlet	-3	+0	+10B	+0	6	-	-	-	•••	P
Swordstick	+5	+2	+5L**	+1	4	•••	-	-	•	

* This weapon is made of one of the Magical Materials and enjoys a Magical Material bonus.

** In addition to the damage cause by the swordstick, the thorn's sap causes a painful burning. Characters wounded by a swordstick increase their wound penalties by 1 for the rest of the scene. A target can only suffer this penalty once per scene.

DRAGON KING THROWN WEAPONS

Name	Spd	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Artifact	Notes
Bracer of Crystal Bolts	+2	+2	+6L	2	100	••	P, 1 mote per shot
Shock Gauntlet	+0	+0	+16L	1	30*	•••	1 mote per shot
Thorn Thrower	-3	+3	+8L*	2	20	•••	P, Anyone wounded by this weapon loses one health level every 10 turns due to bleeding, and all attempts to stop this bleeding are at +1 difficulty.

* This weapon has no range increments or range penalties. This is its maximum range.

P The weapon does piercing damage.

DRAGON KING ARMORS

As with the Armors of the Immaculate Dragons, the obsidian sheath has a hardness of half its lethal soak. An obsidian sheath provides a hardness of 4.

MAIL AND STEEL

These rules extend and enhance the existing combat system of *Exalted* to present a simple, abstract set of rules for managing large-scale land battles involving potentially hundreds of characters without a dependence on complex math, maps or tabletop miniatures. The guiding principle is to be simple and fast, without requiring a large number of new rules or sacrificing the high energy dramatics of a battle in *Creation*. It is compatible with *Exalted Power Combat*, detailed above.

CONCEPTS

A few core combat concepts behave slightly different in these rules. We discuss them in brief so the reader has an idea of these important ideas as well as the few additions.

TIME

Like the ship-to-ship combat rules in *Savage Seas*, these rules use *long turns*. Long turns are roughly three minutes in length. They are deliberate abstractions designed to slow down the action so that the extremely short (three-second) *Exalted* turns don't make battles interminable and highly disorganized and so that the heroic figures of the *Exalted* don't totally dominate the game. During a long turn, characters can take three individual turns worth of actions. Time in *Exalted* is often measured in scenes. A scene is normally about 20 minutes long. However, a battle, however long, is a single scene, and effects that linger for a scene will affect a character for the entire duration of a battle.

During a long turn, there are three "combat sequences" during which units in combat exchange blows. Player characters in solo units and select members of complimentary units may take three full turns of action in one long turn, one during each combat sequence. These characters may perform actions that take more than three turns but less than three minutes at the expense of taking no other action for the long turn's combat sequences. Normally, units can do anything a character can do, though they generally limit themselves to marching and fighting. In addition, there are a small set of actions specific to units, detailed later.

During a long turn, weapons with a rate of 1/3 or faster can fire three times, weapons with 1/10 or faster can fire twice, and weapons with rates of fire above one shot per 10 turns can fire once.

FORCING MASS COMBAT

Fighting in formation is one of the gifts of the Unconquered Sun to men. Formed bodies of troops allow weak individuals to work together to overthrow the mighty. It is the peculiar property of organized troops that they can force their context on those around them. If, at any time, a formed body of troops begins undertaking to secure

operational objectives through force of arms, it can force anyone attempting to interact with it or capable of obstructing it to use the Mail and Steel mass combat rules to resolve combat.

This effect is applied to anyone who can have a material impact on the unit's operational progress — basically, if it is relevant to ask the question, then the matter should be decided in Mail and Steel terms. This is an abstraction representing the impact and nature of formed troops and providing a justification for mass combat. It is not some sort of weird effect that washes over people because they are within some critical distance of soldiers.

AS LONG AS IT'S A WAR TO YOU...

The Mail and Steel rules reproduce a world where individuals who are in the rank and file of military units can die without memorial. The rules barely bother to account for the fates of individuals soldiers. Such is the fate of the individual fighting as part of a greater whole. Characters who don't want to die in a potentially ignominious fashion shouldn't fight as members of a military formation. By taking part in the battle, a character is putting herself at risk. Characters who do not wish to risk the perils of the battlefield should attempt to flee their units.

UNITS

Managing the character sheets of a force of 500 warriors is a impossible task. Instead, to represent groups of soldiers, we abstract away the individuals and make them part of the unit, represented with a single set of statistics. The unit is the most important concept in these additional rules. Units are of one of two types. A complimentary unit is a fighting force composed of a commanding character and a group of equal or lesser characters who follow her lead. A solo unit is a single character or creature, such as a powerful Exalt or spirit, that fights without direct support. The solo unit encompasses any single character or piece of equipment that works on its own on the battlefield. It could as easily be an assassin or a semiautonomous piece of First Age artillery as a heroic Exalt.

Every unit's statistics are based on the statistics of its leader. A unit is treated as an extension of its leader. Its swords are her sword. Its arrows are her arrows. The soldiers in a unit make their impact by adding a bonus to the Traits of their leader.

UNIT TRAITS

All units are based upon a principle, commanding character, the unit leader. Almost all the unit Traits are



based on this important character. The other characters in the unit are either the unit leader's close supporters who act in her stead (special characters), or they serve in the unit's rank and file and effectively become naught more than modifiers to the commanding character's Traits.

The members of a unit affect the unit leader's attack rolls with their Hand-to-Hand Skill and Ranged Skill and increase the damage she inflicts with their Hand-to-Hand Damage and Ranged Damage. They increase her soak with their Armor and multiply her health levels with their Magnitude. The only Traits the unit has that are not merely modifiers to the commanding character are the unit's Drill, which represents the unit's degree of skill and discipline in executing battlefield maneuvers; its Might, which abstractly represents the unit's magical power and serves as a general modifier to many things; and the basic Dexterity of the members of the unit. The latter is only important if the Storyteller needs to determine the number of yards the unit members can move per turn.

In the case of solo units, the character simply uses her own Traits, without any modifications lent by the unit, as she battles the formations of her foes alone.

UNITS AS CHARACTERS

Units are, by and large, treated as though they were normal Exalted characters. However, because units are

groups of individuals, there are certain effects that cannot happen to them.

- All effects that target single individuals must be directed at the unit leader, who can defend against them normally.

- Effects that can encompass groups of individuals must be able to affect a number of individuals equal to the Magnitude of the unit + 1 in order to affect the unit. When determining which Traits to use to defend against group effects, assume that every individual in the unit is resisting with the unit leader's Traits or the Traits of the single relay best-qualified for the job. In the case of a situation where there's a judgment call about what makes Traits "better," the player controlling the unit may pick.

- If an effect targets an area, it must substantially strike the unit. Frying a few stray unit members with the edge of the effect does not qualify. Again, the effects are applied against the leader, who can resist and defend normally.

- Charms that affect everyone who sees them or everyone in the vicinity are generally best thought of as extremely large area effects.

- If, for some reason, the commander is no longer capable of leading, one of the unit's heroes may assume immediate leadership of the unit. Otherwise, if the unit has no heroes, it dissolves.

Charms that allow one to attack “another individual,” “different targets” or some other form of indicator that they must be distributed among different individuals are always valid when directed at a unit, even if that unit was just the target of the last attack with that effect.

Units take no wound penalties from damage (though they suffer something akin to them through decreasing Magnitude).

UNITS, STATUS AND EFFECTS

The following are some basic rules about how units behave:

- Units cannot suffer knockback or knockdown — their equivalent is a failed Valor roll leading to a hesitation, and they suffer them as described in these rules. Units can go prone, and rising causes the unit leader to split his dice action during a combat sequence.
- A unit may only attack one other unit in a long turn.
- A unit may not occupy the same space as another friendly unit.
- If a unit leader is killed, one of the unit’s heroes immediately takes command.
- Normally, succession of command is established before battle.

MAGNITUDE

All units have a Trait, Magnitude, that represents the number of individuals in the unit. Magnitude is very important in combat. The higher a unit’s Magnitude, the more damage it does in combat and the harder it is to destroy, but high-Magnitude units are also cumbersome to maneuver and control. Magnitude is not a linear value. Consult the table below to determine the Magnitude of a unit depending on how many individuals are in it.

Whenever a unit attacks or defends, these attacks are modified by the unit’s Magnitude. Large units attacking smaller units have powerful advantages over them. If the attacker is larger than the defender, add one success for each point of Magnitude advantage the attacker enjoys. If the defender is larger, subtract one success from the attack for every point of Magnitude advantage the defender enjoys. Even if the difference in Magnitude is 4 or more, the Magnitude modifier cannot exceed 3. This limitation is unique to Magnitude. It does not limit a unit’s Hand-to-Hand Skill, Ranged Skill or Might.

Keep in mind that most armies do not fight in one large lump, but divide into smaller tactical units. For example, an imperial legion almost never takes the field as a single Magnitude 9 formation. Instead, it fights as 10 Magnitude 5 dragons. The smallest imperial unit that regularly maneuvers independently is the 125 man talon, but they are rarely deployed very far away from the rest of their dragon. Imperial dragons fighting alone tend to fight as collections of Magnitude 3 talons, while legions and

flight commanders generally attempt to keep their Magnitude 5 dragons together to keep communication efficient.

These rules strongly encourage tactical unit sizes of between 100 and 1,000 men. These rules assume that large units are inherently inferior to small ones, and assume that very large units are so organized because they lack the command resources to divide into smaller units.

In cases where individuals in the unit have more health levels than is normal for a human, consider that each “unit member” represents a three-health-level extra. Units composed entirely of heroic mortals should be counted as having about three times as many members as they actually have. Generic lesser elemental dragons from **Exalted: The Sidereals** would be worth about five troops each. Do not count the health levels of the mounts for mounted units as part of the Magnitude unless the animals are genuinely active combatants — not just trained warhorses, but dangerous fighters. A good example would be a unit of cataphractoi mounted on man-eating simhata lion-horses from the South. When computing such a unit’s Magnitude, add the simhata’s health levels to the rider’s.

Magnitude	Unit Members	Unit Equivalent
0	1	Solo Unit
1	2-10	Fang
2	11-75	Scale(s)
3	76-150	Talon
4	151-300	Wing
5	301-650	Dragon
6	650-1,250	—
7	1,251-2,500	—
8	2,501-5,000	Legion
9	5,001-10,000	First Age Legion

HAND-TO-HAND/RANGED ATTACK RATING

The troops in each unit have two Traits called Hand-to-Hand Skill and Ranged Skill. They represent the unit’s skill and ability. These values are added as automatic successes to each attack or parry roll made by the unit leader’s player. These values are, generally, equal to the one half the Dexterity + the appropriate combat Ability of the troops. Shuriken-hurling ninja commandos would use their Thrown, for instance. Units always have both Traits but cannot add them to the leader’s attacks unless the members of the unit are armed with weapons of that type. So, a unit of men armed solely with poleaxes could not add its Ranged Skill to the attacks of its commander.

HAND-TO-HAND/RANGED DAMAGE

This Trait represents the hitting power of the attacks the troops wield. Use one third the normal damage of the unit’s hand-to-hand or ranged attack, rounded up. This amount is added to the damage of each and every attack the unit’s leader makes. The unit’s damage value is not in

automatic successes. It is simply a bonus to the leader's normal damage.

If a unit has multiple attacks, then one must be chosen as primary and the damage determined from that. The value used must be damage before any Charms or other non-constant supernatural effects — the effects of battle magic are reflected in the unit's Might. In order to count as an attack, the lead character must be able to launch the attack at least once every minute.

ARMOR

The unit's Armor Trait represents the strength of the unit's defenses. This Trait is subtracted from all attacks against the commander, even those that would normally bypass armor only to be defended against with natural soak. The value of a unit's Armor is one third its lethal soak, rounded up.

DRILL

Nothing is so important to units fighting in formation than the ability to assume formation, to maintain dressage and formation integrity and to march, countermarch and rapidly change facing. Drill is a matter of long hours of often-brutal training, grinding the patterns of the formation drills into the heads of soldiers so thoroughly that they will be remembered in a rainstorm on a bloody battlefield. Drill is not the deciding factor on the battlefield — large numbers of undisciplined troops moving in a mob can overwhelm even well-drilled units, but the ability to assume and maintain formations is a powerful force multiplier.

Units have Drill ratings from x, meaning totally undrilled, to 5, meaning crack troops who can mechanically change formation while injured, in a snowstorm, and fighting in hand-to-hand combat.

Solo units have no Drill Trait. Solo units may never gain the benefits of order, nor need they ever make any roll relating to it.

Drill Rating	Description	Level
x	Undrilled	Mobs, throngs, rabbles, warbands, thugs in uniform.
•	Barely Disciplined	Poor village militia, gendarmes, poor-quality troops.
••	Drilled	Good militia, mediocre troops, imperial peltasts, Lintha pirates.
•••	Crisp	Excellent militia, good troops, imperial medium foot, Seventh Legion reservists.

••••

Crack

Excellent troops, imperial heavy foot, Seventh Legion line troops, Immaculate monks.

•••••

Elite

Superb troops, the Legion of Silence, tiger warriors, Seventh Legion veterans, brass legionaries, brides of Ahlat.

MIGHT

Might is the measure of the supernatural power the unit brings to the battlefield. Hand-to-Hand and Ranged Skill represent the training and ability of the unit. Might represents the unit's weaponry and inherent power. Might adds to the unit's ranged and hand-to-hand attack. In addition, the unit's Might is added to the commander's Essence in order to determine if he can be subjected to effects and in any case where his Essence helps him to defend himself against Charms.

Keep in mind this does not mean "two members of the unit are equipped to this standard" — the way to model such special troops is as heroes. It represents the level of magical power available to every rank-and-file member of the unit. Obviously, units with high Might are not common in the Age of Sorrows. They are included for Storytellers who wish to run imperial civil war games or for games where the military forces of Heaven take to the field.

Might Level

Description

x

No supernatural abilities, strictly mortal troops.

•

The unit contains God-Blooded or individuals with thaumaturgic training.

••

The unit is composed of beings of equivalent power to the Terrestrial Exalted.

•••

The unit is composed of beings of equivalent power to older Terrestrials or to young Celestials. This is the power level of lion dogs, scarab guardians and units of Immaculate monks.

••••

The unit is composed of beings of equivalent power to experienced Celestials or very old Terrestrials. This is the power level of celestial lions.

•••••

The unit is composed of beings of the uttermost puissance, such as lesser elemental dragons, Sidereal martial-arts masters and Solars of Essence 6+.

In addition to their basic Might, the unit's Might is modified by its equipment:

- +• The unit is equipped with talismans, efficacious good luck charms and sorcerous draughts.
 - +•• The unit is equipped with daiklaves, Magical Materials armor and powerful mortal thaumaturgic boosters such as gunzosha armor.
 - +••• The unit is equipped with Essence-discharge weapons.
 - +•••• The unit is equipped with powerful First Age artifacts or divine weapons.
- Finally, there are certain other modifiers:
- +•• The unit is equipped with dragon armor, warstriders or some other powerful combat armor.
 - +•• All members of the unit are Terrestrial Exalted who know at least two Charms that can beneficially affect others.

VALOR

Units in combat must often have Valor rolls made for them. The Valor of a unit is based on the average Valor of the members of the unit. When fighting in Mail and Steel combat, the Valor used is always the lowest of the average Valor of the unit members or the Valor of the commander. Effects that cause those who follow a commander to be immune to failed Valor checks do not automatically allow the commander to do so unless they specifically state this is so. Units that are mounted have the lowest Valor of the leader's Valor, the average Valor of the troops or the average Valor of the unit's steeds.

UNIT ORDER

A unit's "order" describes how close together the unit members are. Combat as practiced by the cultures of Creation features three orders that remain largely unchanged since the late Shogunate. Even given the wide variety of weapons, Charms and spells on the battlefield,

SPECIAL UNIT MEMBERS

Some unit members occupy special positions in the formation, positions reserved for those who do not lead, but provide some other essential unit function. This is where the sorcerers, the magnificent archers, the incomparable duelists, the golden-noted battle-signalers and the other notable individuals with the unit are assigned, so that their individual skills can contribute to the overall whole. A unit may only have two special characters per dot of Magnitude. Normally, one of them must be a relay in order for the unit to maintain order, but this is not a rule. Unordered units such as warbands may have more heroes than relays, and units often have extra relays to ensure against the loss of command control. Support troops may be mixed in any fashion: A Magnitude 3 unit could have two sorcerers, one heroic character and three relays; 6 sorcerers; or two of each.

A unit cannot start battle with more heroic figures than its Magnitude permits, but the unit's special characters are generally considered to survive, barring their death via an Essence-fueled counterattack or deliberate assassination attempt, until the unit loses its last step of Magnitude. When the unit is reduced to a solo unit, then they are slain attempting to protect the leader. Even if they logically would constitute a major percentage of the unit's combat strength, special characters do not add to the unit's Might.

Heroes: Heroes are distinguished individuals who participate in combat with the unit. Heroes may act independently of the unit in hand-to-hand combat and may split off from the unit, taking as many troops with them as they wish and becoming the leader of new units (see "Splitting Units," on p. 223).

A hero may be a soldier of lesser rank than the leader or someone placed under a command in the capacity of duelist, as in imperial practice.

Sorcerers: Sorcerers are individuals capable of acting independently of the unit who move with and are protected by the unit but do not exercise a leadership role. These individuals are as often bowmen or observers as actual sorcerers, but the tactical manuals of the Second Age treat all such individuals as functionally identical. Sorcerers may act independently of the unit in missile combat and are specially protected from attack. A sorcerer may not become unit leader if the unit leader dies.

Relays: Relays are drummers and buglers, signalmen and standard bearers. They relay, repeat and reinforce commands from the unit leader. These men are incredibly important in maintaining a unit's drill order and position. A unit needs one relay per dot of scale in order to be able to assume any order. Units without relays may only assume the unordered unit order. For example, a Magnitude 4 unit requires 4 relays to maintain unit order. Heroic relays are often extremely charismatic or beautiful individuals who underscore the orders of the commander with their own efforts. Relays can stand in for the commander when the unit hesitates and tests for rout and in other situations where commands are vital.

these formations have proven flexible enough to adapt quickly to what may come. While some academic thinking suggests other, often more complicated formations and strategies, in the end, the practicality of these tried-and-true methods remain the standards by which all are measured. Nothing has proven to be enough improvement to oust these practices.

Solo units do not fight in formation — they stride the battlefield alone. They need never have any roll involving the Drill Trait made for them, nor do they ever receive an order bonus.

Close Order: A unit in close order is fighting shoulder to shoulder, with no room for another man to slip between the troops. The advantages of a close order include improved soaks against missile volleys, increased defense in close combat and a bonus to morale. Conversely, area-oriented attacks, such as certain spells, First Age weapons and the breaths of many lesser elemental dragons, have a better chance of hitting unit members. Units in close order are slow to move and also slow to change direction while moving. Close order is the order most commonly used for combat by armies of the Second Age because multiple ranks of troops in close order are highly effective in hand-to-hand combat, and the soldier armed with a steel blade is the predominant arm of decision in the Age of Sorrows.

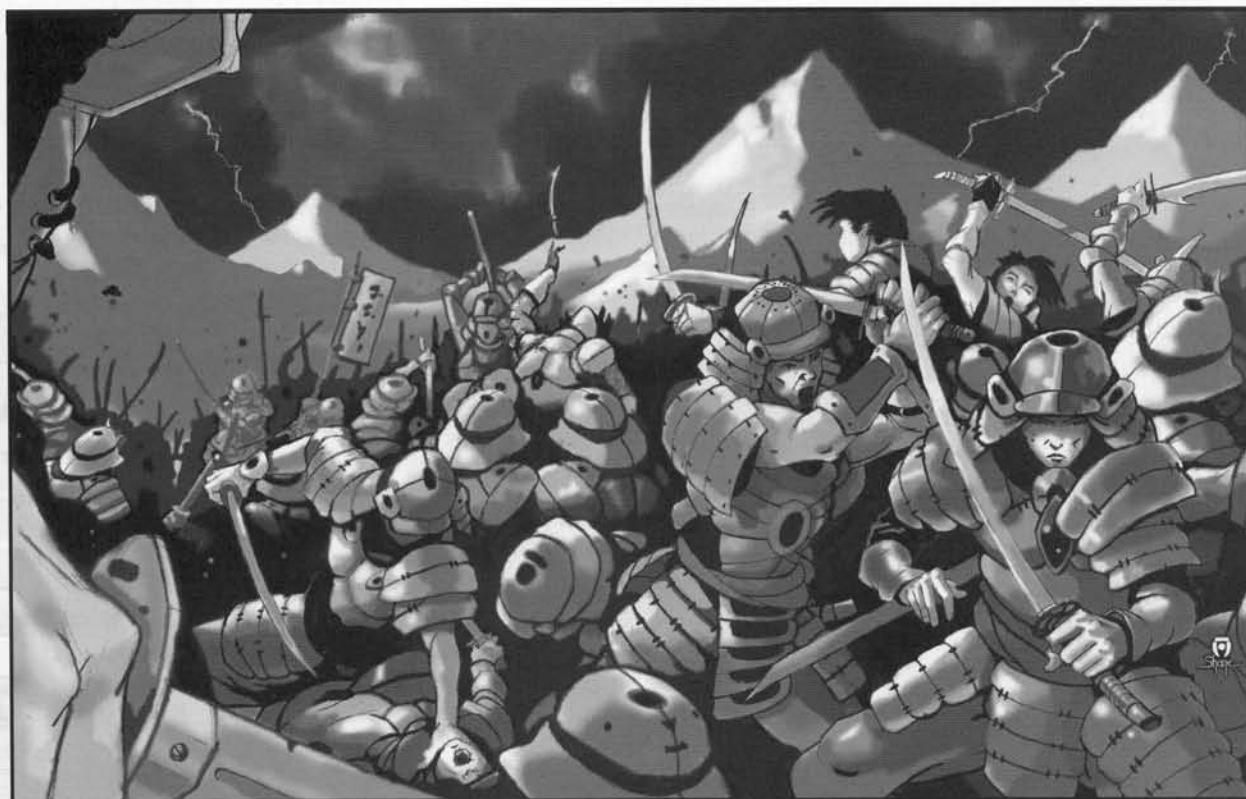
Relaxed Order: A unit in relaxed order is widespread, with troops far enough apart that with arms spread each trooper can just touch the fingertips of the next closest soldier. This order is the middle ground of the three

troop concentrations, balancing out the advantages and disadvantages of the other two modes. A unit is *assumed* to be in relaxed order unless otherwise declared. All movement, size, occupied space and similar values for the unit assume a relaxed order. Relaxed order is generally used when receiving archery fire or fighting against rabbles and by units of Terrestrial Exalted taking the field. On the Shogunate battlefield, this was the standard order for troops armed with Essence-discharge weapons.

Skirmish Order: Skirmish order spreads each unit member out far enough she can barely strike the next closest member of the unit with a long staff. Wide orders can be highly mobile and spread the force out enough that area effect weapons have a great deal of difficulty hitting a large portion of the unit. Conversely, being so far apart, it's is easy for an enemy force to rush in, closing the range to hand-to-hand. It can more difficult to rally or to perform other morale oriented actions with a wide order. Skirmish order is used to cover large areas of terrain (for example, when running down fugitives). It was also used on the Shogunate battlefield by troops advancing under implosion-bow and Essence-weapon fire.

In addition to the three battle orders, there is one additional order that units assume:

Unordered: An unordered unit is a group of individuals who are fighting together on the battlefield in no particular order or pattern — they are a large mob clinging to a standard or following some very general objective or charismatic leader. Units such as these can still figure



importantly on a battlefield, but they are generally not very effective or responsive to commands. This is the order of undrilled or poorly drilled militias, of barbarian warbands, of mobs of angry peasants and of units that have lost their order due to moral failure.

CHANGING ORDER

Units may change order once per long turn, after they have rolled initiative but before anyone has moved. Changing order normally takes the unit's movement for the turn, but the unit can fight normally. However, a roll can be made using the unit leader's or best relay's Charisma + Presence to bring the unit to order sharply and allow it to move in the same turn it changed orders. The difficulty of this roll is the unit's (Magnitude - its Drill), minimum 1. If the unit was attacked by an enemy ranged attack in the previous turn, increase the difficulty of this roll by 1. If the unit is in contact with an enemy unit, increase the difficulty by 2.

While units cannot normally change orders in the midst of a turn, units can go to ground when under fire. Whenever a unit comes under ranged attack, its commander can make declare it is going to ground. Immediately *after* the ranged attack is resolved and the damage is applied, the unit enters skirmish order. Obviously, only disciplined units will exercise this option — most troops, told to spread out and take cover, will never come back into order.

Units that go to ground are considered to have hesitated (see "Rout and Morale" on p. 227). Make a Charisma + Presence roll, difficulty 3 (already including the +2 for being in skirmish order), for the unit leader or his best relay. Points of Magnitude lost represent troops who never return to the ranks after the unit quits cover. As normal, subtract (the unit's Magnitude - its Drill) from the character's dice pool in this roll. This check is separate from any Valor-roll failure induced hesitation rolls and is applied after those rolls. Any such rolls to master the unit stemming from the initial attack that prompted the commander to order the unit to ground (for example, if it lost a Magnitude of strength) are at +2 difficulty for skirmish order.

INITIATIVE

Initiative in Mail and Steel is identical to that in normal **Exalted** combat, save for a few slight differences. Solo units move as normal on the character's Dexterity + Wits + weapons' speed values + one 10-sided die. Players controlling complementary units, however, move on the leader's Charisma + Presence + one 10-sided die, do not add their weapons' speed and subtract (the unit's Magnitude - its Drill) from this initiative. Complementary units

ORDER MODIFIERS

Order	Effect
Close Order	Double Hand-to-Hand Skill. Double shield and cover bonus against hand-to-hand attack. Double the Magnitude of enemy units attacking with missile fire. Half movement speed, -2 difficulty to hesitation rolls.
Relaxed Order	Double shield and cover bonus against archery and other missiles.
Skirmish Order	Double shield and cover bonus and add an additional +3 difficulty to archery and other missile attacks. Double effective Magnitude of enemy units in hand-to-hand combat (triple if they are in close order). Half again movement speed, +2 difficulty to rolls for hesitation.
Unordered	Half movement speed, +2 difficulty to rolls for hesitation.

cannot benefit from effects that boost the initiative of the leader unless every member of the unit enjoys the benefit.

This initiative is determined at the beginning of the long turn. It determines the order of action during all three combat sequences. Combat sequences are just like turns, except that they are one minute long, the characters roll initiative only once every three combat turns, and units move only once per long turn. For the purposes of Charm timing and any other effects, combat sequences are exactly equivalent to a turn.

Some Charms, spells and Essence-powered items allow individual characters to bypass the normal initiative and strike earlier than they should. If used by a solo unit or a unit's special character taking independent action, then these effects are resolved before the beginning of the first combat sequence and are considered to take place in the first combat sequence. These initiative-winning effects provide no advantage during the second and third combat sequences of the long turn, reflecting the limited usefulness of these effects in the press of battle. Any unit or unit member deaths caused by this attack take place immediately. Should two opposing units or special unit members use this option against each other and succeed, the damage is considered simultaneous.

MOVEMENT

Units move at the beginning of the long turn, from the slowest initiative to the fastest. Faster units may interrupt and take their full action at any time. In determining who goes first, the unit with the higher base initiative total always has the option of going before or after any unit slower than it.

Each solo unit moves 20 times its normal movement in yards. For a regular unit, this would be 280 yards (that is, its Dexterity of 2 + 12 yards, times 20). A unit's movement can never be reduced to less than 60 yards a turn. Units that are not able to move that fast should either be considered immobile for the purposes of this system or have their movement increased to 60 yards per long turn. Complimentary units move identically to solo units with one exception: Coordinating the movement of a large force takes time.

Unordered units and units in close order moves at half normal speed to a minimum of 60 yards per turn. A unit in skirmish order moves at one-and-a-half times normal speed. For example, a unit whose leader is Dexterity 2 would move 140 yards per turn when in close order or 420 yards per long turn in skirmish order. If a unit is ordered, the leader may make a Presence roll to execute a forced march. This allows a unit to move up to double its normal speed. This maneuver requires a Charisma + Presence roll with a difficulty equal to the unit's (Magnitude - it's Drill), with a minimum difficulty of 1. Units that are executing a forced march lose a number of fatigue points equal to the fatigue value of their armor. Units that execute a forced march can still fight normally, but apply the fatigue penalties for the run before any combat for the turn is resolved.

TERRAIN EFFECTS ON MOVEMENT

Terrain in Mail and Steel is classified into three types for the purposes of movement:

Open Terrain: Open terrain is generally clear of more than ankle-high grass, but terrain can still be "open" so long as it provides no more than 25 percent cover to units in it. In order to qualify as open terrain, the cover cannot be so stiff or the footing so bad that a horse or human trying to run through it would seriously risk injury — a field of sugarcane is open terrain, a swampy field covered in knee- and ankle-deep mud is not.

Difficult Terrain: Difficult terrain represented terrain that troops on foot can traverse without problem, but that mounted units cannot move at normal speed through. A good example would be a forest, a group of closely spaced wooden houses. Chariots and limbered artillery cannot traverse difficult terrain at all.

Abatis: Abatis is terrain that is extremely difficult to move through. It might be an actual abatis, meaning a

deliberately built barricade of felled trees used to obstruct movement on the battlefield, or it might be extremely dense brush, swamp, flooded rice paddies or any other terrain that is difficult for even men on foot to traverse. Units that begin to move into abatis must end their movement adjacent to the abatis in the turn prior to entering it. Foot units move at half speed through abatis. Mounted units, limbered artillery and chariots cannot traverse abatis at all.

Units can often attack abatis to clear it — treat this as an attack on an oak door — but a unit cannot advance more than its own length through the abatis in a single turn.

ON MOVEMENT AND MAGNITUDE

These rules measure distances in the yards used in the regular **Exalted** rules and make no assumptions about how the battle will actually be represented. Often, small skirmishes can be played out without a map. In general, for clashes of larger forces, you will want to get a large flat surface such as a floor or large table, say that one inch equals however many yards, mock up the "terrain" through the use of books and old socks or whatever and use pieces of appropriately sized paper or cardboard to represent units. Some people may have miniatures and gaming tables with hell-a-cool terrain, but these rules don't assume you own any such. Unless you have a very large playing surface, consider a scale where one inch equals 20 to 30 yards. Otherwise, powerbows and similar weapons will be able fire beyond the edge of the board without penalty. Units can take up a great deal of space, as they can easily represent hundreds of individuals spread over quite a space.

It may be important how much space a unit takes up, for the purposes of blocking a pass or gate, for example. Treat a unit in relaxed order as taking up a circular or square space equal in yards to 10 times its Magnitude. If the unit is in skirmish order or disorder, double this size. If it is close order, halve it. Units can proceed through obstacles too narrow for them, obviously, but this causes the unit to become disordered on the other side of the obstacle. It may fight normally that long turn, but its leader's player must roll to put it into order again before the next long turn's movement. Units that double-timed normally lose a point of fatigue and add 2 to the fatigue value of their armor for the purposes of this check (see "Fatigue" on p. 229 of this chapter).

MOUNTED UNITS

Not every unit on the battlefield moves on foot. There are a number of military units in Creation that use mounts of various sorts. In order to benefit from mounts, the unit leader and all members of the unit must have them. Mounted units have the same advantages as mounted individuals — attacks against mounted units are at a -2 success penalty, while those against characters mounted in a howdah are at a -4 success penalty, unless the attacking unit has long weapons (see **Exalted**, p. 236 for details). Mounted units armed with lances can charge, as per the rules under lance on page 328 of **Exalted**. Mounted units never check for fatigue unless they charge. While foot units must constantly battle exhaustion, most cavalry mounts are sturdy enough to move all day.

Characters cannot be a part of a military unit riding mounts unless their Ride is at least equal to the beast's control rating. In units that have war animals controlled by drovers, use the Ride Ability of the drovers but do not include the drovers in the unit's Magnitude or penalize the unit for their (generally light) gear.

Most of the downside of mounted troops, the immense logistical effort required to supply them, the degree of training it takes to ride into battle mounted and the expense and difficulty of obtaining a steady supply of military-quality mounts are all beyond the scope of these rules.

However, what does matter is that the Valor of the mount becomes an issue. While some beasts, such as the simhata of the South, are specially bred for willingness to do battle, most mounts are not. Whenever a mounted unit is required to make a Valor check, the lowest of the leader's Valor, the average trooper's Valor or the average mount's Valor should be used. Effects that make troops immune to Valor rolls or increase their effective Valor during battle generally make their mounts immune as well.

Mount	Speed/Turn	Valor
Horse	600 yards	2
Destrier	450 yards	3
Chariot	2/3 team's max speed	team's Valor
Horsedrawn Artillery	1/2 team's max speed	team's Valor
Dragon Armor	650 yards	user's Valor
Dragon Armor, Fire	1,300 yards*	user's Valor
Elephant or Mammoth	350 yards	3
Elephant, War	300 yards	3
Marukani Scout	500 yards	3
Marukani Swift	750 yards	2
Marukani Battler	600 yards	3
Simhata	1,200 yards	4
Warstrider	500 yards	user's Valor

* Each long turn is equivalent to three turns of activation, but Essence 2 Exalts still need only activate the speed boost once per long turn.

FLYING UNITS

Units that can fly may choose to spend a long turn aloft. Characters who are flying must determine if they are aloft or alighted before movement in any given long turn. Units that are flying are immune to hand-to-hand attacks from all nonflying units unless they perform a fly-by attack (see below) but can be attacked by ranged attacks normally. Flying units with ranged attacks or fully mobile artillery (see "Artillery Units," below) can make those attacks as normal during any combat sequence.

In order to be a flying unit, every member of the unit must be able to fly or be borne aloft by some mechanism that allows for combat. Units that are flying can perform fly-by attacks (see p. 201) against ground targets, just as though they were a flying character. However, units that choose to perform fly-by attacks can attack only in the second combat sequence. During the first and third combat sequences, the unit is considered to be aloft and evading attacks. Units can use full defense during these actions if they wish to evade attack. Flying units that are alighted engage in combat just as if they were normal nonflying units.

Flying units only occupy space on a. If a flying unit attempts to land on a unit, friendly or otherwise, move it to the nearest edge of the unit it attempted to land on. Both the flying unit and the unit it was forced to land on must make a Valor roll or suffer hesitation (see "Rout and Morale," below).

TURNING

While an individual may pivot rapidly on his feet, troops in an organized unit change direction as a matter of communication, training and discipline. The larger the force, the more difficult it can be to communicate and execute any movement more complicated than marching forward. Even simple turns to the right or left require coordination that becomes increasingly demanding as the force grows.

All units in all orders may turn no more than once per turn. Any change in direction less than a quarter turn has no effect on movement. Anything greater requires the unit to end its movement. Units in skirmish formation can change direction by up to 90 degrees without ceasing movement. The unit may face in any direction at the beginning of the next long turn.

Make a reflexive Charisma + Presence roll for the unit leader or one of his relays to bring the unit through the maneuver. The difficulty of this roll is (the unit's Magnitude - its Drill), with a minimum difficulty of 1. If the character succeeds, then the unit may make the turn without stopping its movement.

DISENGAGING

An individual can quit combat with another merely by ducking at a key moment and gaining a few key steps on his opponent. It is not so easy for formations, where dozens or hundreds of men must cleanly break contact with their opponents while still maintaining dressage. Only the best units can perform this feat. Roll the commander's Wits + Presence against a difficulty of (the enemy unit's Drill + 3). Add the result of the unit's (Magnitude - Drill) as appropriate (subtract if the result is negative).

SPLITTING UNITS

During the course of battle, a portion of a unit may be split off and form a new unit in order to perform a specific task. In order for this action to occur, the unit must have at least one hero-type special character, who becomes the unit leader of the new unit. Any special characters may be disposed at the unit leader sees fit, either staying with the old unit or joining the detached hero in the command party of the newly spawned detachment.

Unless the original unit had a surfeit of relays, it is likely the detached unit will either spend its life unordered or else the unit leader will be forced to rally for relays to put the unit in order (see "Rallying" on p. 229). Units cannot promote special characters out of the rank-and-file and can use only the special characters they already possess for staffing during the battle.

When splitting units, determine the actual number of soldiers that split off, then determine the new Magnitudes of the units based on this. Splitting always causes the parent units to lose at least one point of Magnitude.

For Example: The character is a hero in a 600-man imperial dragon, a Magnitude 5 unit. Her commander delegates command of a 125-man talon to her. This new unit is Magnitude 3. The character's old unit shrinks to Magnitude 4, even though 475 men is enough for the unit to stay Magnitude 5, splitting always shrinks the unit parent unit at least one Magnitude.

Splitting must be declared before the beginning of the long turn and takes the place of the unit's movement. Place the new unit on the map or table at any point adjacent to the original unit. must Make a Charisma + Presence roll for the leaders of both the units or their best relays, with a difficulty equal to each unit's (Magnitude - Drill), minimum 1. If the unit is in contact with the enemy when the split takes place, add 2 to the difficulty of the roll for hesitation. Failure means the unit becomes unordered due to the split and is considered to have hesitated, and the player must now roll for dissipation. Note that this includes units that are spawned without enough relays to keep them ordered; one must also roll for these units to retain their Magnitude.

CONSOLIDATING UNITS

Units often join together in the heat of battle, as units decimated by action with the enemy close ranks together under a single standard. When this happens, the smaller unit leaves the map, and the larger unit increases in Magnitude by one. Merging units requires a reflexive Charisma + Performance roll be made for both unit leaders, with a difficulty equal to (the unit's Magnitude - its Drill), minimum 1. Failure causes the consolidation to fail, and the unit whose commander's roll failed has hesitated (see "Rout and Morale," on p. 227), and now, the player must roll to see if it sheds Magnitude.

Any hero with either unit can ascend to the role of unit leader. Other unit leaders become heroes or return to the unit's rank and file. If there are any disputes over who retains what roles, the commander of the larger-Magnitude unit resolves them to his satisfaction. If the units have more than (their Magnitude x 2) special characters, extra special characters must immediately become solo units or join the unit's rank and file. Special characters sent to the rank-and-file cannot be fetched out again for service.

Units that are in direct contact can exchange special characters in lieu of combat during a combat sequence. A successful reflexive Charisma + Presence roll for both commanders or their best relays is necessary to transfer the troops.

When consolidating units, treat each unit as though it has the maximum members for its Magnitude, then add the number of troops together. Use this number to determine the new, consolidated unit Magnitude.

UNIT COMBAT

In combat, solo units fight largely as normal, other than the fact that they are rolling initiative only once every three combat turns.

Complimentary units attack as though they were the unit leader. Add the unit's Hand-to-Hand Skill Trait to the attack as automatic successes. This bonus is added to every attack after it is rolled. It does not count as part of the attacking character's pool for the purposes of determining how often she may split her dice pool. If the unit enjoys a Magnitude bonus over its enemies or is suffering a Magnitude penalty, then apply that. Modify for terrain and battlefield conditions (see *Exalted*, p. 237) as necessary.

If the attack may be dodged or parried, then the defending unit's leader may attempt to defend herself as normal, also adding the unit's Hand-to-Hand Skill, as appropriate, as a bonus to any parry rolls. Units add no bonus to the unit leader's attempts to dodge. Damage is soaked based on the unit leader's armor with the Armor rating of the unit added to it. Any unsoaked dice are taken as damage against the unit's health.

SPLITTING, CONSOLIDATION AND THE SPECIAL CHARACTER

Note that these rules reflect the realities of relatively short battles. Units that split cannot instantly staff themselves with the special characters from the unit's rank and file because it takes time to organize for operations. Characters can rally for relays, but sorcerers and heroes are the technical names for positions in the formation and command staff that specific members of the unit occupy, not just types of characters who might be tagging along with the unit. It takes time to bring new individuals into these positions and to familiarize everyone in the unit with their identity.

Obviously, a unit can break itself up into many tactical elements, and releasing a small detachment does not automatically diminish the unit to a great degree. However, in the heat of an engagement, this is not true. Units that detach smaller units in the fray will play hob with the command authority and responsibilities the unit has established for the mission. Thus, units lose points of Magnitude merely for splitting at all.

If it becomes an issue, one hour (20 long turns) out of contact with the enemy should allow a unit to assume the proper Magnitude for the number of troops under its standard after birthing new sub-units and to allow a unit to choose new special characters out of named characters known to be present in the unit's rank and file.

Make a Charisma + Presence roll for the unit leader or her best relay with a difficulty equal to (the Magnitude of the unit they command - its Drill), minimum 1. Each success subtracts one long turn from the amount of time required to organize the unit, but without specialized magic, the amount of time can never be reduced below the Magnitude of the unit in turns of uninterrupted time out of contact with the enemy.

TERRAIN EFFECTS ON COMBAT

The effects of terrain on combat are identical to those found on page 236 of the main rulebook. Indeed, many of them are more likely to come into play in mass combat than in single combat. See page 236 and 237 of the **Exalted** main book for rules on fighting in difficult terrain. See page 229 of the **Exalted** book for rules on cover.

Units deployed in soft cover such as tall grass should be considered to be in 25 percent cover. Units in heavy terrain such as boulder fields and forests are treated as

STUNTS

The beginning of mass combat is not the end of stunts. The press of battle is a time of deeds of great heroism and terrible importance. Stunts are appropriate at any point in a battle, both in the many combat rolls made during the battle and in any of the many rolls used to control the unit. Think of the descriptions of great generals from epic and history — their heartening battle-speeches, their ability ride on untouched even as their guard falls, their foolish disregard for danger, their willingness to brave risks for their men, the willingness of men to hurl their bodies in front of blows meant for the commander — all of these are excellent fodder for stunts. These rules assume a sort of heroic combat where the unit leader is always at the forefront of the fight, doing battle with the cream of the enemy host.

In addition to their normal effects, characters who successfully perform stunts can have a salutary effect on their units' performance.

Rather than regaining a point of Essence, characters who successfully perform a stunt may choose to increase their unit's fatigue point total by a number equal to the number of dice awarded for the stunt (do not double this as in **Exalted Power Combat**). Rather than regaining a Willpower point, a character can instead choose to bolster his unit. Bolstered units automatically succeed at their next Valor check. A unit can "carry" as many bolsters as it has Valor.

Fierce pre-battle speeches by the unit's commander (Charisma + Presence) or demonstrations by its sorcerers and heroes (Dexterity + the lowest of Performance or the relevant combat Ability/Occult) can send a unit into battle with an automatic bolster. Units cannot be given greater enhancements than this prior to the start of battle. Attempts to impress troops prior to battle are difficulty (6 - the Valor of the unit).

Keep in mind that characters are not alone on the battlefield. If they are a solo unit, then it is appropriate to dwell on their individual actions, but units do not fight like that. The men in the rank and file are fighting and dying to support their leader, twisting to cover the sorcerers and looking to their relays for orders and inspiration. Talk about the unit's glory and the deeds of its heroic members. Obviously, the unit leader is prominently at the forefront of battle, but everyone else isn't simply marching along behind in regular columns.

being in 50 percent cover. Units in makeshift field fortifications, siege lines or dense jungle and bamboo groves are under 75 percent cover. Units whose members shelter in prepared stone fortifications are under 90 percent cover. Because the commander gains the defensive effects of the ground his unit occupies, terrain has a powerful effect on combat, and units in good defensive positions can be very hard to displace. If a unit is under the effects of two sorts of terrain at once (for example, occupying siege lines in tall grass) apply only the best modifier.

CHARM USE BY COMBATANTS

Unit leaders may freely use Charms of any duration. As discussed on page 214 of this section, Charms of scene duration last for an entire battle, no matter what its length. Members of a unit who are also heroic individuals may activate Charms as well. Individual members of a unit do not use specific Charms. Their magical power is represented by the unit's Might Trait. Unit leaders, heroes and relays cannot use hopping dodges to evade attacks while they are part of a unit, but sorcerers may.

RANGED ATTACKS

Ranged weapons have an altered rate of fire in the Mail and Steel system. Weapons that shoot at Rate 1/9 or higher (meaning all mortal ranged weapons and most light battlefield artillery) maybe fired once in every combat sequence of a long turn, assuming they are deployed and able to fire. Weapons that fire between 1/10 and 1/14 fire only in the first and second combat sequence. Weapons that fire at Rate 1/15 or higher may fire only in the first combat sequence.

Units making ranged attacks are assumed to expend three arrows per shot. This means most troops will have four shots worth of ammunition for their bows if fighting on the move or about seven shots if fighting from a prepared emplacement. Unit leaders who are making ranged attacks must use the range increment of their troops, not that of their own weapon. This is not an option — characters who do not wish to participate in volley fire should accompany a unit in a sorcerer's protected position or fight as a solo unit.

See "Artillery Units," below, for details of limbering and unlimbering artillery and determining the strength of a given artillery unit.

Only the unit's sorcerers may make ranged attacks when the unit is in direct contact with an enemy and engaging in hand-to-hand combat. However, in the first combat sequence after the enemy unit moves into direct contact, the unit leader may make ranged attacks as normal.

SPECIAL CHARACTER ACTIONS

Any character traveling with the unit as a special character may attack in place of the leader on any given

attack but does not add the unit's Magnitude or Unit Traits to the attack. Only the commander may use those Traits. Characters who are part of the unit as heroes may attack in hand-to-hand combat. Characters who are part of the unit as sorcerers can make ranged attacks or cast a spell of any circle. Relays do not make independent actions. The unit, not the special character, is the subject of any counterattacks. Attacks against special characters must be resolved as per "Attacking a Unit Leader," below. Special characters can only act if their commander permits it. If special characters wish to act without the unit leader's permission, they may attempt to hijack the unit's action, see "Hijacking Actions," below, for details.

ATTACKING A UNIT LEADER

The quickest way to kill a snake is to chop off its head. It is possible to make a direct attack against the leader of a unit, but most formations shield the commander, so this is very difficult. When directly attacking the commander, make a normal attack roll, but subtract the higher of the target unit's Drill or Magnitude from the attacker's die pool. If the unit is disordered, subtract the lower of the target unit's Drill or Magnitude from the attacker's dice pool. The attacked unit may defend as normal. Attacks against the leader of a unit may be either by ranged attacks or by units that *began the long turn* in contact with the enemy.

If the defender fails to stop the attack, apply the damage of the strike directly against the leader of the unit. This damage is applied directly to the leader's damage track and is not regained when the unit's damage is "regenerated" after the unit is "killed" and reduced one Magnitude. You may wish to mark this damage differently so that it is not confused with damage done to the unit, which is "healed" when damage makes the unit drop in Magnitude.

This same procedure should be followed if, for some reason, the unit's leader begins a battle wounded. If the unit leader dies and there is no hero in the unit to take his place, then the unit is dissolved and removed from play — the remnants may fight on as individuals, but the unit as a battlefield formation is gone.

Relays, sorcerers and hero special characters may all be attacked directly in this manner. Apply the damage directly to the character. Unlike leaders, any damage these units take has no deleterious effect on the unit as a whole (although it might, if a wounded hero ascends to control of the unit after the leader's death). Sorcerers may double the unit's Magnitude before applying it as a defensive bonus. Heroes and relays are attacked in the same fashion as the unit leader, but sorcerers may apply twice the unit's Magnitude as a defensive bonus, rather than just its Magnitude, as they are especially protected by the formation.

DUELS

Situations often arise on the battlefield of the Second Age where heroes are pressed into single combat. Indeed, in many cases, wars are little more than pageantry surrounding duels between supernatural champions. However, there is no guarantee that the tides of battle will permit a satisfactory conclusion of all-out combat between even the most hated of rivals, if their commanders do not permit it.

A duel requires a willing leader or special character from two units that are engaged in combat. If the unit's leaders are the characters fighting the duel, then the duel is automatic. If the duel involves a special character, then the unit's commander must give permission. Characters who are not unit commanders or special characters in a unit may not duel. A special character who wishes to duel without her commander's permission must successfully hijack the unit's action to do so.

If one character wishes to fight a duel with an unwilling target who is a special character in a stack, then the individual must be attacked as per "Attacking a Unit Leader," above. If the duelists and their commanders are willing, the duel is resolved as a normal **Exalted** combat between the two individuals. There are no "rules" for the duel other than those enforced by the participants, and cheating and ambushes are valid and known tactics of the Age of Sorrows. The entire duel, however long, takes only a single combat sequence and constitutes the dice action of both units for that combat sequence. If the commander dies, treat it as a normal combat death of the commander — if there is no hero there to step in, the unit is dissolved. If a special character dies, the unit is not destroyed, but the player controlling the unit to which the losing special character belonged must make a check as if it hesitated, see the rules on "Rout and Morale," below.

HIJACKING ACTIONS

Normally, sorcerer and hero special characters can make individual attacks only when their commander permits them to and allows them to act during one of the unit's combat sequences. Players of special characters who wish to act heroically without the permission of their leader may make a Charisma + Presence roll with a difficulty equal to (the Charisma of the unit's leader + the unit's Drill Trait). If her Wits is higher, any relay may substitute it for the commander's Charisma. If the special character succeeds, then she may take action in the combat sequence. Only sorcerers and heroes may hijack a unit's action. Relays who hijack the unit's action make the unit *hesitate*, and the commander's player must roll at +2 difficulty to keep his troops from routing — a disloyal standard-bearer can bring military operations to a crashing halt.

EJECTING SPECIAL CHARACTERS

Commanders can automatically eject any special character from the unit at the beginning of the long turn, before the movement phase, transforming her into a solo stack adjacent to the unit. The ejected character can act normally, quite possibly including challenging the leader of her former unit to a duel or answering such a challenge.

DAMAGE

In Mail and Steel, as in Exalted Power Combat, there is a minimum for the amount of damage that can be inflicted. This is the Magnitude of the unit, for complementary units, or the character's Essence, for solo units. Always add the unit's Damage rating and any Magnitude bonus to the character's damage.

Units have the same number of health levels as their leader, but complimentary units take damage in a slightly different fashion, to reflect the large number of individuals in them. Each time that a complementary unit's leader takes a wound that would reduce him to Incapacitated, the unit instead loses a point of Magnitude and erases all the injuries on its wound track. This continues until it reaches a Magnitude of 0, at which point just the leader remains as a solo unit. Units do not use the rules on dying or possess additional health levels beyond Incapacitated. Note that units that lose one or more Magnitudes of strength to damage must also make a rout check (see "Routing and Morale," below).

Solo units do not use the bleeding and dying rules either. A character fighting alone on the battlefield who is undone in the press of combat is assumed to certainly expire, and any Exalt is likely to be the subject of numerous coup de grâce attacks. Storytellers may choose to make exceptions for roleplaying and dramatic purposes, but as a general rule, those laid low on the field of a great battle should not expect to survive.

Units may lose more than a single point of Magnitude to an attack. If an attack does a very large amount of damage, reduce the unit's Magnitude and continue applying damage. Powerful Exalted warriors can mow men down like so many rice stalks.

INDIVIDUAL DEATH

While much of the loss of "Magnitude" doesn't represent actual casualties so much as panic and lack of unit cohesion, many of the individuals in a unit that loses Magnitude still die. Players of individual characters who are the rank and file of a unit that loses points of Magnitude must roll to determine if their characters are slain in the battle. After the end of the battle, roll for each character who was part of the rank and file in a unit that lost Magnitude. Players should roll their characters' Wits + Willpower, with a difficulty equal to the largest number of points of Magnitude the unit was down at any point in the

battle. Characters whose players fail are slain. Characters whose players botch live but are horribly maimed.

The player must then make a Wits + Willpower roll for her character with a difficulty equal to the *total* number of points of Magnitude the unit lost. Failure on this roll means the character is wounded. Wounded characters take one 10-sided die's worth of lethal damage levels. Characters who are reduced to Incapacitated or below by their wounds are also slain. Players of mortal characters who survive their immediate wounds must make rolls for their characters to resist infection normally, as detailed on pages 233-234 of **Exalted**. For rules on treatment of these injuries by characters with the Medicine Ability, see page 250 of the **Exalted** main rulebook.

Assume that all health levels were lost to a single wound, and unless the battle is fought in a swamp or a parched and sterile necropolis, assume that the difficulty of the Stamina + Resistance roll to resist infection is 3.

This system assumes the character does her part in battle, accepts the risks of combat and fights without hesitation as part of her unit. Characters who are heroic mortals or Exalts who wish to run away from their units will probably succeed. Characters who wish to contribute especially should serve as a hero in the unit or fight on their own as a solo unit.

EXTRA UNITS

Most combat units are staffed by extras but are assumed to be led by heroic mortals, even ones of low quality. However, it is possible to simply declare that entire units are extras. Extras units have only three health levels per point of Magnitude. Effects that slay an extra slay one point of an extra unit's Magnitude per extra they should affect. In the "canonical" style of the **Exalted** setting — powerful but still somewhat heroic — only the worst sorts of village militia, raw conscripts or thuggish mercenaries would be extras. However, in games where the characters are performing genuinely heroic deeds — defeating entire armies single-handedly, for example — extra units are perfectly appropriate. Be aware, however, that the combination of Abyssal Exalted and armies composed of extras are likely to feature carnage of the sickest sort.

HEALING

As with normal combat, damage taken affects the unit until death or healing. For units, healing is a period of well-supplied rest in an area with available replacements that is equal in length to the number of the Magnitude dots to be

regained. Thus, a Magnitude 7 unit reduced to Magnitude 5 would need six days of resupply and rest to reach Magnitude 6, and seven days of rest and refitting to return to Magnitude 7.

ROUT AND MORALE

A failure of heart can quickly make a military force tuck its collective tail between its legs and run, transforming a troop of disciplined soldiers into a mob of panicked men. If one man runs and others see him, the whole formation will soon dissolve into a rout.

A rout roll must often be made for a unit. This is a two-step process. In the first step, one must make a Valor roll for the unit. A unit's Valor is the *lowest* of the unit commander's Valor, the average Valor of the members of the unit or the average Valor of the unit's mounts (if any).

If the roll succeeds, the unit may act normally. If the roll fails, then the unit *hesitates*. It can take no further actions for the rest of the long turn, but it may act normally next turn. In addition, the commander's player must make an additional reflexive Charisma + Presence roll, difficulty 1. This is modified by several factors. First, subtract (the unit's Magnitude - its Drill) — large units are harder to keep under control. Second, if the unit is in close order, subtract 2 from the difficulty. If the unit is in skirmish order or unordered, the difficulty is +2.

For every point the leader's player fails the roll by, the unit loses a dot of Magnitude to men routing out of the ranks. Apply this loss immediately. Do not alter the number of health levels on the unit's wound track. Simply subtract the Magnitude directly.

The following events are cause for Valor rolls:

Event	Difficulty Modifier
Taking a Magnitude of damage in combat	+0
Receiving a ranged attack	(once each turn) +0
Receiving a ranged attack from flame or Essence weapons	+1
Being the subject of a sorcery spell	+1 Terrestrial, +2 Celestial, +3 Solar
Being the subject of a charge	+0
Being the subject of a charge by mounted troops	+1
Entering combat with another unit	+0
Entering combat with a unit obviously led by a supernatural being	+1
Entering combat with a unit obviously composed of supernatural beings	+2
Breaking contact with another unit	+1

RALLYING

By sacrificing the unit's movement for a long turn, the commander may perform a rally. This action is the only one the unit can take this turn, so it is best done out of contact with the enemy.

To perform a rally, the commander places himself before his troops, exhorting them to honor, bravery and organization. Make a Charisma + Presence roll for the unit leader or his best relay with a difficulty equal to (the unit's current Magnitude - its Drill + 3). Success can have several effects:

Rally for Organization: A unit leader who has performed a successful rally may add a relay to his unit's special characters. Each successful rally adds a single relay to the unit. Characters who already have (Magnitude x 2) special characters cannot add relays their staff cannot support in anticipation of growing. Characters must instead increase the unit's Magnitude, spend a turn as an unordered unit, rally for a relay and then bring the unit to order (see p. 220) before proceeding.

Rally for Numbers: The unit leader draws men to his standard to fight beside him. This character's unit increases in Magnitude by 1. Note that if the unit grows beyond the ability of the lead character's staff of relays to command, it may become unordered.

The player of a unit leader whose unit has less than (its Magnitude x 2) special characters may always perform a rally to add a relay to his unit. This relay is drawn from the rank and file of the unit and may be an extra.

A unit leader may only perform a rally action to increase the Magnitude of his unit if another unit of the unit's Magnitude + 1 or larger has already lost a Magnitude of strength on the battlefield — rallying represents the commander gathering men to his unit from the flotsam of battle. Rallying doesn't directly bring characters back from the dead or reduce the human cost of the battle. The player of a character who is serving as a unit's relay may make this roll instead.

Rally for Wind: A unit leader who has successfully rallied his unit may raise the spirits of his men so that they may fight on fiercely despite their tiredness. Add a number of fatigue points to the unit's total equal to the unit's Drill, minimum 1. A unit cannot gain more fatigue points in this fashion than its normal maximum, but this action can rally units that entered battle winded (see "Fatigue" on p. 229).

ARTILLERY UNITS

Artillery units of the Second Age are of two types: First Age support weapons mounted on field carriage and used in sieges and to directly support troops, and massed units of ballistae or other stored-muscle-power weapons, used to similar effect. Both are used on the battlefield for direct fire support of troops. Support via indirect fire

(arcing shells over obstacles) is unheard of in the Age of Sorrows and was never common, even in the high First Age, as most powerful weapons were Essence-discharge weapons firing in a straight line.

Artillery is grouped together in *batteries*, units of several guns that fire together, though some weapons fire as single guns. Weapons in a battery are generally all located in roughly the same area, but they are not necessarily side-by-side and can be separated by tens of yards in some cases. A battery of both First and Second Age weapons contains enough artillerists and support and security personnel to have Magnitude 3. Batteries of weapons consist of three to four light First Age weapons such as Essence cannons or implosion bows and 12 to 18 Second Age weapons such as ballistae and catapults.

If they are readied before the fighting begins, as in a pitched battle, for example, artillery units may fire on the first turn. Otherwise, they begin the game *limbered* — the aiming mechanisms are locked down, and the weapons are hitched to teams of draft animals for movement. Limbered artillery batteries may move at 2/3 the normal speed for cavalry mounts of the type used in the teams of horses pulling the artillery. Limbered artillery that double-times moves at the normal speed for cavalry mounts of the type pulling the artillery.

When a unit is *unlimbered*, the guns are prepared for fire. The weapons have been unhitched from their teams and seated firmly on the ground (critical for implosion bows), and the aim of the pieces has been professionally checked by the battery savants. Unlimbered units may fire as often as the rate of their weapons permits, but they cannot move.

Units can change between the limbered and unlimbered states as an alternative to a movement action. The player of the unit leader of a battery equipped with light guns can make a Wits + Charisma roll for his character against a difficulty equal to (the battery's Magnitude - its Drill) to allow the unit to move normally after limbering or to fire normally after unlimbering. In no case can a unit both limber and unlimber its guns in a single turn, and in no case can a battery equipped with medium or heavy weapons be made to do this — such weapons require large teams of draft animals to haul and are typically very cumbersome to aim. Limbering or unlimbering always consumes their full action for the turn.

Artillery weapons are designed for fire at masses of troops. There are independent firing drills to account for the fact that there are powerful individuals in the Second Age, but engaging individual fighters is something that formations of foot troops are much better suited for. All solo units automatically have the terrain bonus of being under 50 percent cover when fired on by artillery units. This terrain bonus is automatic — it does not add to the solo unit's other terrain bonuses and is

replaced by any better bonus provided by the terrain the character occupies.

A few weapons are *fully mobile*. Fully mobile artillery represents a unit with an ranged attack out of scale with its Magnitude. Fully mobile artillery is generally a sort of ranged attack that extremely powerful beings such as Thousand-Forged Dragons, lesser elemental dragons and warstriders used as gun carriages for artillery weapons may bring to bear. Fully mobile artillery does not have to limber or unlimber. It is basically a unit with a powerful ranged attack that does not suffer Magnitude penalties when attacking a larger enemy unit. Units that have fully mobile artillery must abide by the weapon's rate, as normal. Solo units do not have an automatic 50 percent cover bonus against units with fully mobile artillery.

Artillery units that have been emplaced — that is, dug into fortified positions ahead of time — are treated as being under 75 percent cover. Guns that have been dug in elaborately, for example with sunken artillery runs for the drays and alternate firing positions, are considered to be under 90 percent cover. Guns that are part of First or Second Age naval emplacements — such as the guns of Lookshy Harbor and many Southern cities — are effectively invulnerable unless the structure they are emplaced into is destroyed.

Artillery units are fired as if they were making normal ranged attacks. Like a unit making ranged attacks, an artillery piece cannot split its dice pool. It must make one shot per combat sequence. However, unlike units making ranged attacks, artillery never suffers a Magnitude penalty for its ranged attacks. Generally, an artillery unit's Ranged Skill is determined by the Intelligence + Lore of the

battery savants, rather than the Dexterity + appropriate Ability of the unit leader.

FATIGUE

Units are composed of flesh-and-blood individuals, fighting in heavy metal armor. Battle is often a long and prolonged struggle, involving marches and countermarches.

Units begin combat with a number of Fatigue Points equal to their Drill. Units that have not rested for several hours before battle begin combat with a number of fatigue points equal to (the unit's Drill - the fatigue value of the troops' armor).

Whenever a unit moves or spends a combat sequence fighting, it loses a fatigue point. To prevent this, the player of the unit leader or the player of his best relay may reflexively make a Charisma + Presence roll with a difficulty equal to the higher of the fatigue value he experiences from his own armor or the fatigue value of his troops' armor. Obviously, unit leaders who are not fatigued by their armor only have to worry about their troops. Certain other events modify the difficulty of the Charisma + Presence roll.

Modifier	Effect
Effective Valor 3+*	-1
Unit does not make Valor checks	-2
Each turn of continuous contact with enemy	+1
Infantry that double-timed	+2
Cavalry unit that charged	+1
Hot weather/Snowy	+1
Desert Weather/Blizzard	+2
The Burning Sands/The Icy Wastes of Doom	+3

Name	Acc	Damage	Range	Rate	M&S Rate
Ballista, Light	-0	7L	300 yards	1/5	3
Ballista, Heavy	-1	11L	400 yards	1/10	2
Catapult, Light	-2	10L	350 yards	1/10	2
Catapult, Heavy	-3	15L	400 yards	1/15	1
Essence Cannon, Light**	+1	15B	75 yards	2	3
Essence Cannon, Medium**	+0	20B	125 yards	1	3
Essence Cannon, Heavy**	-2	30B	200 yards	1	3
Essence Cannon, V. Heavy**	-4	45B	300 yards	1/2	3
Essence Cannon, Brass Leviathan ***	+2	60L	1,200 yards	1	3
Flame Lance, Warstrider **	+1	18L	250 yards	2	3
Implosion Bow, Light *	+3	5L/12L	1,000 yards	1	3
Implosion Bow, Medium**	+2	12L/20L	750 yards	1	3
Implosion Bow, Warstrider **	+2	5L/12L	450 yards	1	3
Lightning Ballista, Medium *	+2	20L	1,000 yards	1	3
Oliphem's Piercing Gaze***	+5	25A	10 miles	3	3
Thousand Forged Dragon Conflagration***	+0	24L	100 yards	5	3

* From *Savage Seas*.

** From *Exalted: The Outcaste*.

*** From *Creatures of the Wyld*.

Units that lose all their fatigue points begin to accumulate negative fatigue points. These act as wound penalties for the unit's Traits. All the unit's Traits, including Might and Armor, are affected by fatigue — a tired unit fights less well in all ways, and its members must conserve their Essence as well. A unit's negative fatigue points total can never exceed its Magnitude. Characters can rally to bolster a unit's fatigue (see the rules for rallying, above). Also, characters who successfully perform a stunt can hearten their troops and return fatigue points to their unit.

MARTIAL ARTS

THE TRINITY OF PERFECTED UNDERSTANDING

In Creation, Essence flows through all things. It is the great and primordial web, inscrutable in its vast entirety, constituting the celestial and imbuing all that is terrestrial with life and breath. Those who perceive its flow are exalted among men, and those who may harness it are, indeed, wise in spirit.

Essence manipulation is something all Exalted can do naturally, but Exalted martial artists have developed this ability to a tightly focused degree.

Exalted martial artists learn to channel Essence through their forms, using ritualized katas, tantras, mantras or sutras as their focus, and supplement their attacks with near-sorcerous effects. Scholarship of Exalted martial arts was one of the primary schools of Essence manipulation explored by the first Exalted. Those who practice martial arts do not perceive their fighting styles as various forms of "combat magic" (leave that to the Charms of the melee specialists and brawlers), but instead, view their Charms as applications of a discerning wisdom.

Though less difficult and as exacting than sorcery to its practitioners, Exalted martial arts require their practitioners to become very intimately aware of their own Essence forms. They learn to itemize and focus the esoteric functions of Heaven and Creation through the attitudes of their bodies and spirits, becoming living applications of these principles. To the Exalted martial artist, the body is not merely an instrument of flesh and bones, but a vessel, a filter of the divine whose parameters and capacities can be altered through proper understanding.

This proper understanding of the functions of the All can be broken into three separate levels of spiritual perception. Collectively, they are known as the Trinity of Perfected Understanding. In order for a martial artist to perform a martial arts style, she must first be able to wrap her mind around the esoteric principles on which the style was based, which is the foundation of its type. There are no set rituals or exercises that will guarantee

a martial artist will be able to attain these levels of enlightened perception. What is obvious to one person will not necessarily be to another. Enlightenment is a personal matter, and Storytellers should work out such momentous occurrences with their players, either during the Prelude or in-game. While not as grueling as sorcerous initiation, learning her first Martial Arts Charm is an initiatory experience that challenges and changes the Exalt.

These three levels of initiation, while they have many esoteric names, are generally referred to as "Terrestrial," "Celestial" and "Sidereal." Dragon-Blooded normally can undergo only the first initiation, the Root of the Perfected Lotus. Celestial Exalted — Solars, Lunars and, more recently, Abyssals — can master the Celestial initiation, the Bulb of the Perfected Lotus. Only Sidereals can master the Sidereal initiation of the martial arts, the Blossoming of the Perfected Lotus.

LEARNING MARTIAL ARTS

Martial arts are formalized fighting styles that involve channeling Essence as well as physical combat maneuvers. They are, in some ways, a middle ground between sorcery and Charms. In order to practice the martial arts, just as to practice sorcery, a character must be initiated into the martial arts. In general, this initiation requires a tutor, although, as with sorcery, practitioners can self-initiate.

Characters cannot generally invent Martial Arts Charms unless they are inventing an entire style (see below). Instead, they must learn them. Depending on how powerful a character's inherent Essence is, various sorts of Martial Arts Charms are easier or harder to learn. Anyone can learn martial arts styles of their level of initiation from any source — even written guides, memory crystals and flashbacks will do.

Characters can learn martial arts techniques of one level of greater sophistication than is normally possible through direct instruction from an Exalted tutor who knows that Charm.

Dragon-Blooded cannot ever practice Sidereal martial arts — their weak Essence cannot master the Blossoming of the Perfected Lotus. To date, all attempts at such an initiation (and there have been many) have led to the death of the Terrestrial — or his utter destruction.

THE CALLING

The calling to become a martial artist is not heeded lightly. To become truly proficient in her chosen martial art, the Exalt practices her style with strict diligence. Because proper understanding is necessary to fully realize the esoteric lessons within the precepts of her martial art, she meditates on its tenets with religious fervor, to the near exclusion of all else. The martial artist's life

becomes consumed with the art's study. Very much like a religious calling, the would-be martial artist seeks to understand Creation on a higher level. Whether by adventure or fortuitous circumstance, the Exalt becomes aware of martial scholarship and feels an unceasing drive to follow its path. Savants claim there are three fortunes to a calling, three requirements or conditions one must achieve in order to be worthy of walking one of the Perfected Paths:

Auspicious Spirit: In order to even step upon one of the Perfected Paths, one must be fortunate enough to have gained the ability to channel Essence. Only those with the ability to perceive and channel Essence may even begin to understand the basic principles of supernatural martial arts. Generally, this means that one must be of the Exalted, but the God-Blooded and even mortals can master certain aspects of the Terrestrial martial arts.

Such individuals are generally seen as challenging the Exalted mandate of Creation's rulership, and the Immaculates and other Exalted martial arts masters often seek out and slay out unExalted individuals who profane the martial arts with their studies.

Fortuitous Destiny: To receive the teachings of a particular martial style, one must be fortunate enough to find a mentor, or sifu, willing to bestow his wisdom upon one. It is believed by some disciples of the martial arts that they were drawn, by luck of circumstance or inner drive, to a person or place where they first were introduced to the study of their martial style.

Proper Mindfulness: Before a sifu will take on a student, he will usually test the applicant based on the principles of the martial-arts style being taught. These tests can be anything the sifu can think of, whether a battery of riddles to solve or physical tests meant to gauge spiritual resolve. The future disciple must convince his would-be sifu that she has the mental acumen and enough physical prowess that if his sifu were to bestow upon her the wisdom of his style, it would not be wasted. Only those whose sifus find them worthy are instructed.

TRAINING AMONG THE SPRAWL OF ABUNDANT DESIRES

Those fortunate enough to be worthy of martial scholarship soon disappear from society at large. The rigorous discipline and focus necessary to achieve even a basic understanding of the martial style requires that there be no distraction from the student's course of study. Because of this, sifus usually train their pupils away from the hustle and bustle of cities or other populated areas. If they are in a city, training is generally done in a secluded dojo, behind a tall wall with a defensible gate through which students are allowed to leave on only the rarest of occasions.

A student becomes totally isolated from the outside world. His dojo becomes his new home and his sifu and any other students the sifu has taken on become his surrogate family with its own strict set of rules. Removed from inauspicious distraction, the student is free to spend all his time contemplating the deeper mysteries of his chosen martial art. Wise is the sifu who manages to keep her student untainted by the vagaries of impure distractions, that she might perfectly convey her wisdom to a mind open and uncluttered by society's often improper preconceptions.

It is within the first year of martial study that the budding martial artist achieves the first level of spiritual perception, which is the Root Understanding of the Perfected Trinity. The applicable understanding of their Exalted natures to the basic precepts of how martial arts work becomes apparent within the first several months. Fortunate is the sifu whose student quickly acclimates to this understanding. This is not always the case, however. It is true that sometimes a student may never learn to achieve such an understanding, in which case the student/sifu relationship is dissolved.

Those who do, however, are then indoctrinated into further study. Depending on the type of martial arts being studied (Terrestrial, Celestial or Sidereal) and the type of Exalt studying it, the martial artist must achieve the other levels of the Perfected Trinity necessary to learn it. This process could take months or years to accomplish. During the time a student stays with his sifu, she has complete control over her pupil, and he is required to learn and absorb his lessons quickly. A student will answer and defer to his sifu in all things and trust her implicitly. He does so as an acknowledgement of her spiritual superiority. To do otherwise is disrespectful and interferes with the transmission of wisdom.

Invariably, there comes a time when the student has fully absorbed all the wisdom a teacher has to give and he leaves her company. When he does, he is surrounded by a new set of challenges. Treacherous is the path that leads away from his sifu's door. Keeping one's focus on the straight-and-narrow path to martial-arts mastery can be tricky when confronted by a world that seems more interested in the collection of transient baubles than in putting out the flames of ignorance that threaten to consume Creation.

This can be highly frustrating to the newly freed martial scholar, and many lose their way in the process. It is because of this tendency that most students of the martial arts choose to pursue their studies by seeking solitude or new sifus to help them unlock new levels of understanding.

TANTRAS, MANTRAS AND SUTRAS...OH, MY!

For as many varied martial arts styles as there are in Creation, there are at least as many ways to teach them. Although students of the martial arts must be highly perceptive and physically adept to withstand the rigors of training, all have varying learning capacities. Whether by standing on one's head balancing three earthen urns while reciting the passages from a First Age epic poem or by meditating on the nature of a coiling rattlesnake's strike, wise is the sifu who can recognize what will be the best way for her student to learn. All the creative ways a master can disseminate her knowledge can basically be broken down into three types based on how they are relayed and their context. A tantra is a written ritual or set series of meditative exercises. A mantra is a verbalization or successful expression of a tantra. A sutra is the written explanation or discourse of the esoteric importance of a tantra or mantra, usually composed by one's spiritual superior. Confused?

For Example: A student storms into his master's garden. He is carrying a piece of paper in one hand and a block of wood wrapped with sandpaper in the other. He finds his sifu meditating at the shrine of his school's patron god. The impetuous student stomps up angrily to where his master sits, drops the block of wood at her feet and thrusts the paper out so that his master can read it.

"What does this mean? I found this when I woke... next to my slippers. It says that 'The dojo floor has become rough and uneven. You will sand it in its entirety before my lunch. Use a circular pattern, using a full range of motion, 50 times to the left and then switch and do 50 more rotations to the right. Continue until you have finished. In this way, proper understanding will be made available to you. And remember, diligence is the key to Heaven!' What is this, sifu? What could sanding the dojo floor have to do wit—"

In a hairsbreadth instant, the master snatches one of the lit tapers off the shrine and deftly sears her reply onto the whining student's chest, except in reverse characters, so that whenever this mincing little prattler looks in the mirror, he will know his "parrying technique was weak" and that the exercise was intended "to teach you how to unthinkingly block attacks aimed straight at your chest."

Now, in this example, the master's note, its self, and the instructions therein are tantras. The student's verbatim verbalizing of the note or, if the student had followed the directions on the note and discovered the wisdom of his master's intention, the act, would be examples of mantras. Finally, the master's personalized graffiti is, of course, a sutra.

CREATING STYLES

In order to create a style, the martial artist must fulfill the Minimum Essence and Minimum Ability prerequisites of the final Charm of the tree — creating a martial-arts form is done by masters, not students. Designing the style requires a number of experience points equal to the number of Charms in the style and a like number of weeks of martial-arts practice, animal observation, learning lessons from Charms and so on. At the end of that time, the character has conceptualized the style and can begin inventing the individual Charms. At this point, there should be a complete written version of the martial-arts style, including all the Charms in their final version, which has been approved by the Storyteller.

The character must spend eight times the normal study time in order to learn each Charm. Characters who practice martial arts at one level greater than normal due to special initiation can never invent martial arts at that level but invent martial arts at their normal level of practice normally. The actual approval process, we leave to the player and her Storyteller. Martial-arts styles should be equivalent in power to other Martial Arts Charms of that power level, with the understanding that the Glorious

Dragon Paths are the product of transcendent mastery and not entirely appropriate as a template for other effects.

All martial arts are inherently martial in focus. They may drift in directions tangentially related to combat — dancing, acrobatics, stealth, flower arranging and landscaping, for example. However, ultimately, these are all seen as part of the greater genre of "martial arts." They are about some physical exertion practiced in harmony with the natural order and with the character's Essence and made greater thereby, and they almost always focus on combat at some level. Martial Arts Charms should first and foremost be true to this.

All martial arts have a Form-type Charm. In general, the Charms before the Form Charm represent the "buy-in" to the Martial Art and are not as good as one would expect, while Charms after the Form Charm are generally better than normal. Martial arts generally have no more than three in-form weapons, and this is only if they are weak. Likewise, martial arts whose Form Charm can be practiced in armor are weaker than martial arts where this is not the case. Martial arts tend to require higher Essence and have higher Essence costs than similar effects used by an Exalt who naturally favors creating such effects.

OPTIONAL BACKGROUND: FACE

Through duels and/or other forms of contested spiritual prowess, martial artists test their fighting prowess and inner purity. Face represents a measure of how well the martial artist is known because of his fighting skills. This Background applies mostly to Terrestrial martial artists practicing Terrestrial martial arts. Those Terrestrial Exalted of the Five Glorious Dragon Paths rarely acknowledge or participate in martial-arts contests, as such things are beneath them.

In the Threshold, those of Celestial as well as Terrestrial understanding contend, and there may be God-Blooded and spirit practitioners of divine martial arts. Mechanically, when two martial artists meet, their ratings in Face are compared, and the lowest is subtracted from the highest. The player of the martial artist with the highest rating adds a number of automatic successes, equal to the difference, to all Social rolls made against the opposing martial artist. This is only true if both martial artists are part of the martial-arts world and acknowledge face.

If the Face Background is used, add 2 to the number of Background points provided to each character.

- x Nameless — nobody has heard of you or your teacher.
- Perhaps you are lucky. You have a good name or maybe just a teacher with a good name.
- You are a credit to your sifu. You have a strong reputation in the martial-arts world.
- Your style is strong and worthy of sharing with others. You may be approached by individuals seeking to study your technique.
- Your technique is impeccable, and your name is synonymous with your style. You have been victorious in many duels and have trained at least one notable student. Lunars observant of the Silver Pact may show respect to such an individual, depending on their disposition.
- Your prowess is legendary. Students are constantly seeking you out that they might train under your wise and respected tutelage. You have trained at least two notable students and have probably created your own style. Anyone who studies under you receives +1 to their Face because of it.

Sidereal martial artists may invent Celestial or Terrestrial martial arts freely according to the rules above, but they must have Essence 6+ to invent new Sidereal forms. All Sidereal techniques must have sutras the Storyteller and the player agree are appropriate and meaningful, and the absence of such a unifying sutra is a barrier to the successful creation of the style.

BELoved OF THE PLENTIFUL MAIDEN SUTRA

*And there appeared before Urmon a great presence.
From the mountains came a beauty of such pristine femininity as
he had never before laid his sight upon.
Her skin was glorious yasal.
Her eyes were as luminous golden jade, prismatic in their depths.*

*Her hair and robes were of jewels, amber wheat and oceans, and fish, birds and
all things frolicked among their folds, holding aloft her train and tresses.*

*Her smile warmed the air, and her laugh was the fragrance of flowers and the joyous dance of butterflies
She was vast as horizons, and when she spoke,
her voice was the echo of deep caverns,
the rustle of leaves amid birdsong and waterfalls.*

*And Gaia said unto Urmon,
"Well met, beloved.*

*Rise and receive my blessing.
Know that among all that are close to my bosom,
you are most beloved of me,
and I would set you above all.*

*You are become like a chalice
most perfect to receive the gifts of Creation.
Drink of me, and never thirst again.*

*Eat of me, and know the wisdom of Ages.
May all that is within my domain serve
obedience to you, O Prince of Creation,
for you are perfect blossoms to my eyes."*

*And the Maiden of Plenty
did kiss Urmon on his forehead and
there appeared a bright light, and
thereby, Urmon could see the
Great Rivers of Quintessential Essence and
he was enlightened.*

The Perfected Lotus Sutras, 1:1-19

TERRESTRIAL INITIATION

THE ROOT OF THE PERFECTED LOTUS

This is the primary understanding of the esoteric functions of Creation and the martial artist's own Exalted nature. Also known as the Root Understanding, it is a relatively easy step for the Exalt's growth of comprehension to take as she is quite intimately aware of how

Essence flows through her body. Upon achieving this level of understanding, the martial artist perceives the world's esoteric principles in broad, aphoristic generalizations, and the martial-arts styles of this Perfected Understanding reflects this Exalted, yet fundamentally prosaic, perception.

Martial-arts styles of the Terrestrial type are fairly straightforward in scope and function. Exalted martial artists using a Terrestrial-type martial-arts style channel Essence through their forms for no more abstract reason than to supplement the damage done by their attacks or to withstand damage done to them. The Charms of these martial styles are usually based around one or two general esoteric principles or could be based around the proper use of a particular weapon or weapon type. While certainly deadly and effective, compared to the finesse offered by the further levels of perfected understanding, Charms of this level are clumsy and elementary in their applications. Styles of this type tend to be short lived as they are quickly mastered and just as quickly defeated or absorbed by the next evolutionary set of tricks. Only Five-Dragon Style has attained lasting popularity among military fighters.

Examples: Five-Dragon Style, Crimson Pentacle Blade Style

Correlations: Foundation, simple, basic, primary, secular, aphoristic, prosaic

UNEXALTED INITIATION INTO SUPERNATURAL MARTIAL ARTS

The Exalted are not alone in practicing the supernatural martial arts, though they are, without questions, its greatest masters.

Certain mortals, through hereditary divine power or great mastery of their personal Essence, can practice the supernatural martial arts. These beings have the proper spirit, destiny and attitude for only the Root of the Perfected Lotus. Though they may learn to understand the flow of Essence through their bodies intimately and master the spiritual principles thereby evident, they cannot internalize them any further. This is equivalent to the ability of Exalts to advance one step further along the Perfected Lotus Path, and it is often a time of terrible, grueling training under the tutelage of a harsh master, typically one of far greater supernatural puissance.

Mortal thaumaturges and God-Blooded do not need a special Merit to study supernatural martial arts. It is an offshoot of a Merit they have already purchased — Essence Mastery in the case of mortal thaumaturges, and Awakened Essence in the case of God-Bloods. However, a player should receive permission from the Storyteller before assuming his character can start with these Charms, and characters who know them must have Backgrounds to explain the tutelage they received.

Ghosts may learn supernatural martial-arts techniques as well. Like thaumaturges and God-Blooded, they can learn only Terrestrial styles. They do so at the same cost per Charm that they would pay for inventing a new Arcanos (20 experience points). This high cost, combined with the natural inertia of the dead, means that few save the most dedicated fighters of the Underworld master any forms. Abyssals who rise as the Restless Dead through the use of the Restless Revenant Technique have their own limitations, as discussed on page 175 of *Exalted: The Abyssals*. They can practice Celestial martial arts up the Form-type Charm but not beyond it and can practice the entirety of any Terrestrial styles known.

FIGHTER IN LIFE

(VARIABLE POINT MERIT, GHOSTS ONLY)

The character was a supernatural martial artist in life. For every point spent on this Merit, the character can choose to have known one Terrestrial-level Martial Arts Charm during her life. This Merit does not grant actual knowledge of the Charm. It merely allows the ghost to purchase it at character creation for 6 bonus points or during play for the cost of developing a regular Arcanos (14 experience points). The character does not need a tutor for these Charms, and training time is as normal for a ghostly Arcanos.

Some gods, demons and elementals practice supernatural martial arts as well. In general, however, the skill and power of divinities is a completely inherent matter. They neither understand their perfection nor care to. Even those that seem to demonstrate Martial Arts Charms have generally not actually learned them as an Exalt would, but either have the effects as part of their nature or have learned to emulate them through the miracles of divinity. However, some war gods study the Exalted's practice of formal fighting styles as part of a scholarship in all things martial. Others have enough Essence to possess the volition required to learn the supernatural martial arts. These latter beings (typically celestial lions, lesser elemental dragons and demons of the Second Circle) are the only true practitioners of the supernatural martial arts among spirits.

As a general rule, divinities of Essence 5 or below will only practice or emulate Terrestrial techniques. Those of Essence 6 or higher may emulate Celestial techniques. Divinities may never learn the Sidereal techniques — they are utterly rooted into their roles in Creation and can never experience the Blossoming of the Perfected Lotus.

UnExalted mortals, God-Blooded and ghosts who practice the supernatural martial arts can never form Combos with any Martial Arts Charms they may learn. Deities, elementals and demons may develop Combos according to the regular Combo rules and can freely mix divine Charms and supernatural martial arts within a Combo. None of these unExalted characters can invent Martial Arts Charms of any sort. Ghosts, unExalted mortals and God-Blooded must have a tutor for all instruction — books and memory crystals will not suffice.

Divinities must merely have teaching media of some sort, but training times are octupled if they learn without a tutor who already knows the Charms.

Dragon Kings can practice supernatural martial arts, but cannot learn those styles practiced by Man. Dragon King study and practice of the supernatural martial arts declined precipitously with the decline of their people, and the techniques were long forgotten even at the time of the Great Contagion. Dragon Kings can develop Martial Arts Combos normally, but can never master anything other than Terrestrial styles designed specifically for Dragon Kings.

THE GILDED COIN OF REGENCY SUTRA

*Urmon then turned his face to the heavens,
and they became unto the amethyst hue of
Calibration's eclipsing shroud,
and the constellations did arrange themselves in resplendence,*

*majestic in their ideal clarity,
making way for the greatest among them.
Descending from Heaven
there came the Resplendent Lords of Inscrutable Day
and Unfathomable Night.
Glorious in their most perfect radiance,
colors did bleach from the very earth where he tread, and
growing things shed their finite forms and cavorted freely
in her silvery wake.*

*So then did the Unconquered Sun and the Silver Mistress
speak unto Urmon and*

*They spoke in unison.
"Behold, beloved of the Maiden of Plenty,
Heaven's resplendent array.
You have become perfect in our eyes.
You are the union of Heaven and Earth.
Of the Terrestrial Prosaic,
you are Dragons.
Of the Most High, Celestial Virtues,
you are of us.
Of this union of Perfected Potential,
you are the crucible
by which Truth Inscrutable
shall burn brightly.
Walk in the footsteps of Ten Thousand Things,*

*O Gilded Regent of All.
Yea, verily,
Ten Thousand Perfected Things."*
The Perfected Lotus Sutras, 1:20-34

CELESTIAL INITIATION

THE BULB OF THE PERFECTED LOTUS

Martial artists of this level of perception, also known as the Resplendent Bulb of Understanding, seek to emulate the functions of Creation and Heaven in their most perfect, comprehensive and idyllic representations. Beyond mere reflections of these abstractions, martial artists, having achieved this realm of enlightenment, can channel explosive quantities of Essence through their forms, shaping themselves into living applications of these principles. It is also at this level that the flavor of martial arts takes on religious overtones. The dedication and discipline required to achieve this level of mastery is near all consuming. Secular concerns of politics and social mores become distractions for one who seeks true enlightenment. Celestial martial artists perceive the grand scope of Heaven and Creation as one entity and the concepts of cause and effect that are applicable to both. Their martial-arts styles reflect this principle and generally reflect some sort of Celestial ideal — animals, shadows, the purity of the Five Elemental Dragons.

Examples: The Five Glorious Dragon Paths, Snake Style, Tiger Style, Celestial Monkey Style

Correlations: Expansive, spiritually abundant, idyllic, primordial, archetypal

LUNAR MARTIAL ARTISTS

Lunar Exalted may learn and invent martial arts up to the Celestial level without special initiation. They may not learn Sidereal martial arts under any circumstances. They may only Combo Martial Arts Charms with other Ability-based Charms and must abide by the normal Combo rules when doing so, meaning that they can generally only practice their own natural style of combat or fight as supernatural martial artists in a given turn, not both. Lunars are never considered to favor a Martial Arts Charm, even if they favor the Martial Arts Ability and, thus, pay the full 15 experience points for each Charm.

TERRESTRIAL PRACTICE OF CELESTIAL MARTIAL ARTS

It is possible for the Terrestrial Exalted to practice Celestial martial arts. Indeed, many Terrestrials do — the Glorious Dragon Paths are Celestial-level martial arts devised by Sidereal masters especially for the Dragon-Blooded. However, to do so is very difficult. It requires a being of at least Essence 4 and Martial Arts 5 acting as a full-time tutor and a number of years of instruction

equal to (5 - the neophyte Martial Artist's Intelligence). In addition, the Dragon-Blood must also have her perceptions opened to the wider spiritual world, to allow her to ground her existence on the more advanced spiritual plane of the Celestial initiation. There are several ways this can be done, but the most efficient method involves the character learning two Charms. One opens the character's perceptions to the totality of the world. The other enhances the character's ability to interact with it. Together, they allow the Terrestrial to, with difficulty, grasp the principles and practice of the Celestial martial arts. The Immaculate Charms Spirit Sight and Spirit Walking are just one set of such Charms. There are others.

Two alternate Charm pairs for initiation of a Terrestrial Exalt into the Celestial martial arts are detailed below. One, the Iris Bulb Understanding of Secular and Profane Brokerage, was the most common initiation among Dragon-Blooded mandarins of the Shogunate and the First Age. It forms the basis for the Immaculate Charms Spirit Sight and Spirit Walking, but the Immaculate versions are generally considered to be improvements. This is the form most likely to be learned by Terrestrials who instruct themselves using First Age texts or receive instruction from a Gold Faction Sidereal.

The other, the Tiger-and-Bear initiation, was used on members of elite military units who were instructed in the Celestial martial arts to increase their combat power. This is the form of initiation most likely to be taught by First Age or Shogunate automated tutors, to be passed on by ancient Lunars or to be learned from a warlike god.

There are other methods of instruction, other than years of instruction and learning two Charms. These other methods of initiation include years of special diet and prayer, in order to bring the Terrestrial's body, and thus Essence, into harmony with the practice of Celestial martial arts. This procedure was only ever followed in the First Age, when Celestials used it to tutor Terrestrial servants. This long and intricate procedure is available to anyone with Lore 4 and Martial Arts 4, and it takes a number of years equal to (20 - the sum of the Essences of the instructor and the character under instruction). It is also said that initiation could once be achieved by Dragon-Blooded spending months with the entirety of their Essence committed to various huge, specially sculpted chunks of the different Magical Materials. These artifacts reshaped the Terrestrials' Essence into the patterns necessary to practice the supernatural martial arts. Any such miraculous devices were long ago lost or cannibalized for their Magical Materials.

WALKER-AMONG-IRISES PERCEPTION

Cost: 5 motes
Duration: One scene
Type: Simple
Minimum Martial Arts: 3
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm functions exactly like the Immaculate Spirit Mastery Charm Spirit Sight. However, when the martial artist using this Charm perceives spirits, instead of seeing their true form, she perceives an outline of the spirit's form, a god-shaped cutout through which she beholds a field teeming with blossoming irises by the thousands.

IRIS-BULB DISCOURSE

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower
Duration: One scene
Type: Reflexive
Minimum Martial Arts: 3
Minimum Essence: 3
Prerequisite Charms: Walker-Among-Irises Perception

This Charm works exactly like the Immaculate Martial Arts Charm Spirit Walking. However, because this style lacks the ritualized diplomacy of the Dragon styles, a casual, "off the books" attitude flavors the Exalt's dealings with the little gods.

Martial artists using this style can be recognized as such by the large foot-wide irises that burst from whatever surface the Exalt is standing on (stone balcony, pool of water, air, etc) and blossom for a few moments before dissipating into a glittering cloud of purple-black Essence. There are other differences besides the obvious cosmetic effects.

Little gods who interact with the Terrestrial do so completely without the protection of Heaven. Though their murder may be avenged, Heaven turns a blind eye to slights against propriety inflicted by the Exalt while this Charm is in effect. The Exalt treats dematerialized spirits as if they were material for the remainder of the scene. The character may be hit by dematerialized beings and cannot necessarily see any spirits she may encounter without the use Walker-Among-Irises Perception.

In addition, during the duration of this Charm, if the Exalt's Essence is higher than the spirit's, all difficulties for the little god's Social rolls against the Terrestrial Exalt are increased by the difference in their permanent Essence ratings. This also applies in reverse — Exalts using this Charm on powerful deities may not enjoy what the deities say to them and suffer a similar penalty when interacting with gods whose Essence is higher than their own.



TIGER-AND-BEAR AWARENESS

Cost: 6 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character becomes totally aware of the world around him, breathing in an awareness of his surroundings with the Essence of his respiration. No being that is not using Essence to conceal itself can hide from him within a radius equal to his Essence in yards. In addition, the character also benefits from the effects of a danger sense. Characters who possess this Charm can activate it reflexively when subject to a sneak attack to obviate the need for an ambush roll (see *Exalted*, p. 236 for rules on ambushes). This Charm does not grant the character the ability to see dematerialized spirits.

TIGER-AND-BEAR UNITY

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Tiger-and-Bear Awareness

The character's awareness of his environment allows him to strike true against even the hardest foes. Characters who have mastered this technique can damage any foe they can hit. Essence for this Charm must be spent before the attack roll is made. After the attack is rolled but before any defenses are applied, the player may add his character's Martial Arts to the number of successes rolled on the attack. This Charm does not allow the character to damage individuals he cannot successfully strike with an attack. The character cannot attack dematerialized beings, for example, or beings who are for some reason immune to attack.

TERRESTRIAL PRACTICE OF CELESTIAL FORMS

Even after initiation, Terrestrial Exalted cannot rely with absolute certainty on their mastery of Celestial techniques. In order to use a Form-type Charm of a Celestial martial arts style, the Terrestrial's player must roll a successful reflexive Dexterity + Martial Arts roll, difficulty 1. Failure means the form is not executed properly. No Essence is paid but the character's dice action for the turn is used and the attempt counts as a normal activation of a simple Charm for the purposes of Charm activations per turn.

TERRESTRIAL EXPERIENCE COSTS

Terrestrials pay the same costs to learn other Celestial Charms as for an Immaculate Charm—12 experience

if they favor Martial Arts, 15 if they do not. The initiatory Charms are bought at this same cost. Terrestrials do not normally practice non-Immaculate Celestial forms. Storytellers should not allow Dynastic Dragon-Blooded to take non-Immaculate initiations, and in an outcaste game, it is generally something that every individual must have. Terrestrials can initiate themselves from documents, but they cannot learn any of the Charms without a tutor who already knows them. Terrestrial training times are doubled when learning Celestial martial arts. Terrestrials can learn no Martial Arts Charms other than those of the style they are learning once they have learned the first Charm in a Celestial-level style.

THE SENESCHAL OF CELESTIAL DESIGN SUTRA

*As Urmon perceived the whole of All,
the terrestrial grandeur of Gaia's domain
beneath his feet and
the assembled personage of the Lords of Heaven,
Resplendent,
his mind perceived a new wonder,
unexpected.*

*There was subtle power at work
among the All —
less than his own, but
more pervasive.*

*It connected Heaven and Creation
in weights and balances,
defining order from Chaos,
in the prismatic display of
All Light.*

*Like a machine, yea verily,
like a machine.*

*And there appeared before Urmon
Five Celestial Maidens.*

*They danced through the Celestial expanse
on starbeams and*

*the Silver Lady sang their approach.
They spoke in the tongue of Heaven.*

*Their voices were unto
crystal bells.*

And they said:

*"Urmon, it would seem
You are indeed a master
of all you survey and
truly beloved of Heaven and the All.
But would you be deserving
of such devotion?"*

The blue maiden spoke:

*"Would you raise up those under
your command from the despair
of ignorance, through Divine Compassion?"*

The yellow maiden spoke:

*"Would you accept the mantle of responsibility
and rule, even to your detriment,
with the discerning wisdom
of Divine Temperance?"*

The green maiden spoke:

*"Would you know the never-ceasing vigil
of Divine Conviction
required to obtain such devotion?"*

And the red maiden spoke:

*"Or the absolute confidence of humility and
Divine Valor?*

*Could you become the servant
of that which served you...?"*

Urmon said:

"I would answer yes.

With sincerity, I say yes."

Then, the Five,

and the Two,

and the All sang

"Rejoice! O Steward of Man's Ascension!

For you are master

not of all that lies within Creation,

but Creation itself."

The Perfected Lotus Sutras, 1:35-54

SIDEREAL INITIATION

THE BLOSSOMING OF THE PERFECTED LOTUS

Here lies the pinnacle and full realization of the Trinity of Perfected Understanding. Upon obtaining this level of spiritual maturity, truly comes to terms with the machinations and functions of the All. Also known as the Steward's Sutra, these enlightened masters weigh the scope and entirety of Heaven and Creation, not as a whole, but instead, by the mosaic multitude of its parts. They also realize they, too, are but functionaries of the Great Cycle and strive to not, merely, sit idly by as the epic Tapestry unfolds by itself, but instead, choose to act with the powers at their behest. Whether to exalt or destroy, the martial artist wise in the esoteric principles of his station seeks to affect the world to the best of his ability. Sidereal martial arts styles reflect this most perfected understanding. Exquisite in their subtlety and awesomely powerful when necessary, the masters need not keep to the examples provided by Creation, but may look to abstract principles, such as Entropy and Fate, as focuses for their styles.

Examples: Prismatic Arrangement of Creation Style, Charcoal March of Spiders Style, Citrine Foxes of Contagion Style

Correlations: Cerebral, technique, ritualized, precise and concise, advanced theory, definitive

SOLAR INITIATION INTO THE BLOSSOMING LOTUS

By dint of practice and meditation, Solar and Abyssal Exalted can learn Charms of the Blossoming of the Perfected Lotus, the Sidereal initiation, the ultimate circle of martial arts. However, they do not do so easily. As normal, they cannot learn without a tutor. Even with a tutor, their strong connection with forces in Creation slows their learning, and the study time is quadrupled. In addition, they pay 15 experience points per Charm, or 13 if they favor the Martial Arts Ability. As normal, these Exalted cannot learn the Form Charms or above of any Sidereal Martial Art tree until they have mastered a Celestial style entirely.

If this seems extreme, consider that it is easy compared to the difficulties the Dragon-Blooded face learning the Celestial-level martial arts. Celestials need not learn special Charms or undergo years of grueling tutelage. The greatest hurdle is the fact that they must find Sidereals willing to tutor them. There are practically none of these, for the Sidereals guard the secrets of their techniques jealously. Any Sidereal who taught techniques to a Celestial would be under the gravest legal risk and generally seen as a traitor to the Five-Score Fellowship's innermost secrets. Non-Sidereal individuals who are seen or reasonably suspected to have learned Sidereal martial arts will be marked for death by the Sidereals as a group. The Gold Faction has not yet taught its Solar proteges in the Cult of the Illuminated's training camps Charms of this type, but they are always weighing the option. It is possible that some Deathlords may teach their Abyssals these secrets.

IMMACULATE, SECULAR AND HERETICAL MARTIAL ARTS

In the millennia of the First Age, the pursuit of enlightenment through the study of martial arts was commonplace, and all Exalted were familiar with at least the Terrestrial styles. Of these paths, there were believed to be thousands.

After the Great Uprising and the strife of the Shogunate, many of these paths to spiritual perfection were lost or forgotten. After the founding of the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate, a new paradigm was put in place. The Solars were vilified as demons, and their magic and Charms were cast into an equally unflattering light. In the Realm, where the Bronze Faction maintains control, various martial arts are categorized into three delineations as described by the Immaculate Texts.

The most accepted are, of course, the Celestial Five Glorious Dragon Paths and the Terrestrial Five-Dragon Style. Because such styles are proscribed by the state religion, all others are considered to be lesser, or secular, martial arts. These "family" style martial arts are toler-

ated within the Realm so long as they are Terrestrial style martial arts. Any Celestial martial arts other than one of the Five Glorious Dragon Paths and any other means of initiation into the Celestial styles are deemed heretical by the Immaculate Order and are subject to Immaculate censure.

CRIMSON PENTACLE BLADE STYLE

Type: Terrestrial

Of the many "mastered today, defeated tomorrow" styles that come and go in the world of Terrestrial martial arts, one that has remained through the centuries is the Crimson Pentacle Blade. This is a military-style martial art utilizing the efficiency, power and versatility of formation fighting. While definitely effective in singular combat, it is its focus on the choreography of multiple combatants to achieve victory that has gifted this martial-art style with its staying power. It is ideal both for exhibition and for the small-team fighting style the Dragon-Blooded favor.

A potent and grandiose martial art that combines the speed and extended reach of polearms with the defensive capabilities of shields, "speardancers," as practitioners of this style are colloquially known, are capable of beautiful and awe-inspiring displays of martial prowess. It was the claim of the public founder and premier master of this style, Vajra Mul, that the style was initially conceptualized by an Anathema patron of her family in the years before the Great Uprising. She often claimed it had been specially designed to more perfectly express the poesy of Dragon-Blooded in battle, making it aesthetically more pleasing to the eye. Practitioners of this often strive to implement that goal into every aspect of their lives. Haughty and flamboyant, speardancers are the divas of the battlefield. When they go to battle, they wear little in the way of actual clothing. Instead, their skins are oiled and display artful henna patterns and tattoos. Clothing, if worn at all, tends to be loose-fitting or sheer so as not to hide the exquisite contours and lines of their forms. Their bodies and shields are encrusted with the jeweled baubles awarded them by their admirers, if any.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Disciples of this martial-arts style are proficient with the use of polearms and shields and Charms in the Crimson Pentacle Blade Style treat attacks made with a spear (or other polearm) and shield as unarmed attacks. A polearm is any weapon that has an extended haft a minimum of four and a half feet in length. Characters cannot use this style while wearing armor.

This style contains five variations on a rhythmic kata, akin to a dancing style, known as a posture. Each posture emulates one of the five directions: East, North, West, South and Central. Although all postures are learned by each practitioner, upon learning the Crimson Pentacle Blade Form Charm, the martial artist chooses a primary direction, and characteristics of that posture begin to flavor her approach to her martial art.

FIVE DIRECTIONS POSTURES

More than just acrobatic katas, the characteristics of direction postures begin to influence other aspects of the martial artist's life as well as he masters the style. Dress, code of conduct and general outlook on life begin to reflect the attitude of the character's favored posture. Students generally favor the posture taught by their master, and those who do not seek out masters who favor their style. In this way, schools favoring just one posture have grown all around the Blessed Isle, with a sprinkling of them in the Threshold. Posture bonuses are only usable when the martial artist is using the Crimson Pentacle Blade Style martial art.

EASTERN TRUE SPEAR POSTURE

Considered the oldest of postures, it is the foundation by which the true potency of the style is realized. Those who favor Eastern True Spear move with a darting, sinuous grace whose true strength lies in its ability to act in close quarters and in concert with others. They make excellent formation captains and protocol designers and strive to develop as many formation protocols (see below) as they can.

True Spear sages clothe themselves in tightly wrapped cobalt veils and leg wrappings. Ornamental amber-studded plates of burnished copper, hammered to fit the contours of the martial artist's body, are fastened with fine-leather straps. Her body bears leaf and vine inspired tattoos and henna patterns, and her eyes are darkened with charcoal. She is often crowned with intricately wrapped dreadlocks, woven with colored hemp thread and wooden beads. As their name implies, those of this posture often prefer the spear as their favored weapon, and their players get a +1 bonus to all Martial Arts rolls when these Exalts perform in a formation protocol.



NORTHERN ICE BLOSSOM POSTURE

The Northern posture is the very expression of elegant precision and efficiency. The minimalist, one-hit one-kill approach to speardancing expresses itself in the practitioners' tendency to deliver devastating sweeps with their weapons. Northern Ice Blossoms are formidable assassins and duelists, and their discerning logic and reptilian morality lend them well to such craft.

Northern Ice Blossoms have a fondness for highly polished black leather and are easily recognizable by their skintight leather suits and full-length, long-sleeved leather buff jackets that are pleated to fit the contours of their body and flare dramatically at the bottom. They pierce their skin with multiple silver studs and rings, often all connected by a latticework of onyx and silver chains. Occasionally, they will use white pancake makeup on their faces to reduce any show of expression, but this is only done for battle or important duels. Their hair is traditionally worn in a severe topknot. Those who practice the Northern posture prefer the poleaxe or any other convex, or outward-curving, shaped blade polearm and receive a +1 bonus to their Martial Arts pools when in a duel or one-on-one fight.

WESTERN SHIELD POSTURE

The martial artist who favors the Western posture is capable of unpredictable tumbling rushes and maneuvers of such fluidity that she seems to float across the ground. The martial artist's erratic katas combined with her considerable skill with the shield makes her almost impossible to hit.

Practitioners of the Western posture garb themselves in gauzy white or light pastel-tinted netting and coil themselves in long strands of pearls, coral and shells. The hair is generally worn in a long, weighted braid down the back. Their shields are certainly the most ornate of all the postures and are often accented with spikes and the teeth of large oceanic creatures. These "posturates" favor large studded war clubs and sledges and gain a +1 bonus to shield.

SOUTHERN SCYTHE POSTURE

The high arcing leaps and acrobatic "ground work" of the Southern posture is truly impressive. Martial artists who favor this posture are loud and of a jovial wit but quick to anger. They are excellent as troop coordinators and whips.

A martial artist specializing in the Southern posture typically fights clad in no less than seven ornately beaded crimson veils and draped with precious stones and colored glass beads that glitter and chime as she moves. Indeed, her truly audacious sense of style makes her difficult to look at in direct sunlight. She traditionally has her nose and mouth covered by a veil, and her eyes are

brightly powdered with colorful pigments. The head is shaved but for two locks that sprout from the peak of her hairline, and these are sometimes braided with gems and glass as well. The martial artists of this posture prefer scythes or any other concave-bladed polearm. Players of such martial artists gain a +1 bonus to Martial Arts rolls whenever their characters use their martial arts to impress or inspire people.

CENTRAL NOBLE HONOR BLADE POSTURE

Those who favor this posture, also known as the High Posture, possess a disciplined sense of honor. They are diligent in the pursuit of their goals, and their loyalties run deep. More of a code of conduct than a style, the Central posture has elements of all the others and is highly ritualized.

Noble Blades are regally outfitted in flowing, sheer skirts the color of pale sunlight. Gold-leaf decals adorn their bodies in beautiful, elegant patterns. They are intricately coifed in Grecian curls and a gold-leaf pomade. They favor yellow starburst-diamond and gold-plated glass jewelry. Also, they prefer straight, double-edged polearms and lances. Their players receive a +1 bonus to Martial Arts rolls when the characters are defending their honor.

POSTURE BONUSES

Posture bonuses are a form of specialty that only "exist" when the character is utilizing the martial arts form. They do not hinder the character's ability to develop other specialties, but the total bonus they and other specialties the character may possess can add to a given roll is +3.

CHARMS

GRACEFUL TORTOISE TECHNIQUE

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

Speardancers do not wear armor when they take the battlefield, and clothing, if worn at all, is sheer and loose fitting so as not to hide nor hinder the lines of their dance. Instead, they rely on their ornate shields to deflect arrows and to bat away weapon strikes. An Exalt using the Graceful Tortoise Technique can incorporate the shield effortlessly into her deadly blade dance, even if the shield would otherwise be too large and cumber-

some to use. After activating this Charm, the martial artist does not suffer any mobility penalty when using her shield for the scene. She may use a long spear or poleaxe one-handed so long as she uses a buckler or target shield on her other arm.

SPEARDANCER CONCENTRATION

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Graceful Tortoise Technique

Through the use of this Charm, the martial artist gains an acute awareness enabling her to use her polearm with great alacrity. Her familiarity with the extended reach afforded her by her weapon allows her to strike first in hand-to-hand combat. Upon activating this Charm, the martial artist adds her Essence rating to her Initiative.

CRIMSON PENTACLE BLADE FORM

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Speardancer Concentration

To master the Form Charm, the martial artist has spent years developing her technique. Her muscles have been trained to supple perfection, and she is capable of graceful *pas de géant* and impressive acrobatic feats. Combined with her acute familiarity with her weapon, she can deliver attacks of devastatingly lethal precision. So perfect is her technique that she can masterfully place attacks where they will do the most damage. To activate the Crimson Pentacle Blade Form, the martial artist spends 5 motes, and for the next scene, her player may add the character's Essence rating to Martial Arts rolls.

Characters cannot use more than one Form-type Charm at a time. Using a Form-type Charm ends the effects of any other Form-type Charm the character was utilizing.

EASTERN ROOT PROTOCOL

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Pentacle Blade Form

The first thing learned in the Eastern posture is how to move together in a group and to use a shield effectively to protect the whole formation. With this Charm, a troupe of speardancers band together into an array and gain the benefit of each other's shields. The shields seem

to move in a coiling, serpentine dance. There must be at least two martial artists in the formation to gain the benefit of this effect. Each participant gains an additional +1 defensive bonus from the effects of the Charm, against both hand-to-hand and ranged attack. This bonus is provided by the shields of other members of the formation, and the formation is able to extend this protection to one person without a shield for every shield-bearing individual in the formation. No one who does not know the Eastern Root Protocol may benefit from this formation, and all members of the formation must be within the space permitted by the Five Directions Formation Protocol (see below). This Charm lasts for the remainder of the scene or until one of the Exalted moves more than 10 yards away from any other member of the formation.

FIVE DIRECTIONS FORMATION PROTOCOL

Cost: Varies

Duration: Varies

Type: Varies

Minimum Martial Arts: Varies

Minimum Essence: Varies

Prerequisite Charms: Eastern Root Protocol

One of the most potent aspects of this martial-arts style is the ability for speardancers to work together in formations to accomplish martial effects otherwise impossible to them. While not a proper Charm in its own right, Five Directions Formation Protocol is an endless list of varying Charm Combos, or protocols, designed by the practitioners of Crimson Pentacle Blade Style. Protocols are a form of Combo empowered by a military formation instead of by one person. When a formation performs a protocol, the martial artists leap as one into a bounding choreography. Their bodies explore three-dimensional space, leaping and tumbling in concert as they perform the Charms in the protocol while always maintaining a shoulder-to-shoulder, back-to-back formation.

Protocols are a form of multi-participant Combo that are developed between specific individuals practicing the Crimson Pentacle style. Like Combos, they must be named and have a signature appearance that distinguishes them to those who have seen them before (see *Exalted*, p. 213, for more information).

The maximum distance by which all the most distantly located martial artists performing the protocol can be separated by is 10 yards. Also, all the martial artists must be within this area prior to invoking the protocol. Movement speed for all martial artists in the protocol is equal to the Exalt with the lowest movement speed unless a Charm that boosts movement speed is part of the protocol. In that case, all who are a part of the protocol may enjoy its benefits, so long as the critical distance limit is not broken. If any participant is ever more than

10 yards from any other participant for any other reason, the protocol ends instantly. Individuals are aware before they break the protocol, however, and will not stumble outside of its borders without some reason. The players of all the participants may make a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll at difficulty 1 for their characters to note the failure of the protocol in time to invoke any reflexive effects in the protocol in the instant before it is broken.

All members of a protocol must be present to activate it — casualties or absentees render a protocol impossible to perform, and the pursuit of flexibility and loss-resilience can lead speardancer ensembles to expend a great deal of energy developing alternate protocols. All participants must be conscious, mobile and able to take reflexive actions (meaning none can be ambushed, as per *Exalted*, p. 238). Activating a protocol is effectively activating a Combo, and every Exalt in the protocol must be eligible to do so, meaning one cannot have used another Charm or Combo this turn.

When one member of the protocol attempts to activate the protocol and the protocol is legal, every member of the protocol is instantly aware of the attempt and may choose to join. Only if all members of the protocol join the activation does the protocol actually activate. Otherwise, no costs are paid or other actions forgone. Attempting to activate a protocol is a reflexive action that may be and generally is done immediately after initiative is rolled and before any actions are taken. When the protocol is activated, every Exalt in the group must spend a point of temporary Willpower and has access to all the Charms in the protocol.

The rules for developing Combos still apply to the development of protocols. Every Exalt in the protocol must know Five Directions Formation Protocol, but only one needs to know any of the Charms in the Protocol, and only the individuals who know the Charm need to meet its Minimum Essence and Minimum Ability requirements. The experience point cost and time it takes to develop a protocol is the same as for a Combo. The experience cost of the protocol is divided among the members of the fighting group as evenly as possible, with the Exalts with the highest Essence + Martial Arts paying the extra point if the cost cannot be divided evenly. In the case of a tie in the Traits, all eligible Dragon-Blooded pay the extra point. Talons comprised of martial artists of the Crimson Pentacle Style sometimes spend years designing and perfecting large, multi-Charm protocols.

However, the Essence cost to fuel it are split evenly by the members of the formation. In the case of an odd number, the person with the highest Martial Arts ability must pay the extra cost. Every member in the formation must add a Charm to the protocol, and it is the acting speardancer's Traits, +1 per every person performing the protocol, that are rolled when that Charm is activated in

the Combo. Individual Essence and Willpower ratings, however, remain the same.

Keep in mind that this Charm in no way negates Combo prohibitions of other Charms. Only Martial Arts Charms and Charms that are explicitly permitted to be in Combos with the Charms from other Abilities may be included in a protocol.

In addition to the normal effects of a Combo, there is one added feature of these protocols — Exalted martial artists who have Charms active with a duration longer than instant may reflexively spend 1 mote of Essence when the protocol is activated and bleed the effects to another member of the formation. Each Charm must be bled separately onto each participant in the formation. Sharing Charm effects is optional. Every Exalt in the protocol can share any effect of non-instant duration active on them at the time the protocol is activated, provided they can afford the Essence cost.

The Exalt sharing the Charm pays for it, and the original roll is used, but use the affected character's Traits if the effect uses the recipient's Traits for some purpose. The effects of the Charm last for as long on each member of the protocol as they would have when originally invoked and will be ended by any conditions that would normally end that Charm. Characters cannot have more than one Form-type Charm active on them at a time, as usual and cannot share Charms that are attainments of capability that permanently enhance the Exalt, such as Ox-Body Technique.

Protocols take advantage of the inherent group-orientation of the Terrestrial Exalted. Those Exalts who are not Terrestrials must pay double the experience costs to develop these Combos. This Charm has no cost, save the costs of the protocols created with it, but instead, indicates the attainment of an ability.

The benefits lent by this Charm are bonus dice from a Martial Art and cannot exceed the character's Attribute + Ability on any one roll.

NORTHERN LOTUS PETAL DISCERNMENT

MEDITATION

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Pentacle Blade Form

Although all martial artists of this style are capable of dazzling feats of fighting prowess, it is through the cold, logical efficiency of movement of the “minimalist” Northern posture that the potency of the style is truly realized. When the Exalt invokes this Charm, her target must add her permanent Essence rating to the difficulty to defend against her attack.

SPRINTING STAG DEFENSE**Cost:** 4 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Reflexive**Minimum Martial Arts:** 4**Minimum Essence:** 3**Prerequisite Charms:** Northern Lotus Petal Discernment Meditation

Like the majestic stag fleeing the huntsman's bow, the acrobatic derring-do of the martial artist aids in her defense. For every turn she keeps moving in an acrobatic fashion, her player may make a reflexive Dexterity + Martial Arts roll. Successes on this roll are added to the difficulty for anyone trying to make an attack against the character.

WESTERN SHIELD CRUSH COUNTERATTACK**Cost:** 3 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Reflexive**Minimum Martial Arts:** 4**Minimum Essence:** 3**Prerequisite Charms:** Crimson Pentacle Blade Form

To break as waves against a defiant reef, such is the fate of any who would dare attack a disciple knowledgeable in the Western posture. Although effective in a one-on-one fight, disciples of the Western Shield Posture specifically developed this Charm to break enemy formations.

If the martial artist's opponent makes an unsuccessful attack, the martial artist makes a reflexive counterattack by slamming her shield into her foe, knocking him to the ground. The speardancer's player makes a Reflexive roll using her character's Dexterity + Martial Arts pool. This is a counterattack, not an action. The martial artist's target can defend against this normally, but Charms that produce counterattacks cannot counterattack the user of this Charm. If successful, her target is brought to his knees and fights as if prone until he stands. If the speardancer scores more successes than her target has combined dots of Strength + Essence, he is knocked to the ground winded and prone. He is at -2 for prone fighting and -2 for being stunned, and his player must make a reflexive (Wits + appropriate Ability for use of his weapon) roll and score as many successes as the martial artist's Essence, or the character's disarmed.

Make the reflexive roll before applying the penalties. The martial artist may make as many Western Shield Crush Counterattacks in a turn as she can afford to pay for, but a character cannot use this Charm in response to any counterattack Charm. For rules on prone fighting and stunning, see *Exalted*, pages 234-235.

BLESSING OF JEWEL VAMBRACES AND MANTLE**Cost:** 4 motes, 1 Willpower**Duration:** One scene**Type:** Simple**Minimum Martial Arts:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 3**Prerequisite Charms:** Western Shield Crush Counterattack

With this Charm, the Exalt is able to fortify herself with Essence. She takes a breath and concentrates. When she exhales, Essence-laden energy coruscates and whirls about her arms and upper torso. The Exalt's forearms become heavily encrusted with large gems that work their way up her shoulders and upper back. The appearance of the Jeweled Vambraces and Mantle is appropriate to the Exalt's elemental aspect. For example, a Water-aspect martial artist might become scaled like a sea urchin with spines of saffron coral, studded with black pearls in chitonous clusters. Regardless of the appearance, the Exalt who invokes this Charm adds her Essence score to her bashing and lethal soaks for the scene. The Blessing of Jeweled Vambraces and Mantle is not considered to be armor, but a form of natural soak and, therefore, does not contradict the armor prohibition for this martial-arts style.

GLORIOUS SOUTHERN HARBINGER OF WAR AND FURY**Cost:** 6 motes, 1 Willpower**Duration:** One scene**Type:** Simple**Minimum Martial Arts:** 4**Minimum Essence:** 3**Prerequisite Charms:** Crimson Pentacle Blade Form

As the martial artist adopts the flamboyant and sensual attitude of the Southern posture, she can use her grandiose, sweeping katas to inspire others to acts of great valor. As the Exalt invokes this Charm, a banner of pure Essence erupts from the head of her polearm. The banner's edge is intricately woven with precious gems and curves rakishly from its base till it ends in a six-foot-long pendant tail. Characters in High Realm encouraging fearlessness in battle and diligence to duty are emblazoned along its length, and tassels of fiery Essence dot the tail's inner curve. The martial artist then uses the weapon to perform an awe-inspiring display before her troops. Once invoked, the pendant lasts for the entire scene or until the Exalt who invoked it wishes otherwise.

This display uses her Charisma + Martial Arts, at a base difficulty of 1, +1 difficulty for every three targets she wishes to affect. Success means she effectively stirs the crowd into a battle fury and all those thusly inspired are gifted with one temporary Valor point that can be



used per the Virtue rules (see *Exalted*, p. 129). This bonus point of Valor lasts for a scene and can exceed its Trait maximum. Also, this Charm is stackable, but only if invoked by separate speardancers — no one martial artist can give an individual more than one Valor point in a single scene through the use of this Charm.

FURIOUS BATTLE SCYTHE

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: Until next turn

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Glorious Southern Harbinger of War and Fury

During the scene in which the martial artist has invoked the Glorious Southern Harbinger of War and Fury, she may choose to invoke the Furious Battle Scythe. The Essence pendant crystallizes into a gem encrusted scythe. Its tassels harden giving the scythe a kris pointed serrated edge and it is wickedly sharp. The scythe has a Speed 0, Attack 0, Damage +12L, Parry -2, and Rate 3. Characters cannot activate this Charm until they have activated the Charm Glorious Southern Harbinger of War and Fury already during the scene.

RETRIBUTION OF HONORABLE GUARDIANSHIP ATTITUDE

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower +1 mote per attack

Duration: One scene

Type: Extra Action

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Crimson Pentacle Blade Form

Speardancer masters believe that once one is committed to battle it is dishonorable to retreat. With this Charm, a martial artist can hold a bridge or gate almost indefinitely and also prevent anyone from escaping combat once they've crossed blades with her. The character spends Essence, and for the next scene, her player may make a reflexive Dexterity + Martial Arts roll for the Exalt to attack anyone who tries to flank or otherwise get around her, to a maximum distance equal to the martial artist's Essence in yards. She may also make such an attack if her opponent attempts to flee her presence once he has entered into hand-to-hand combat. In addition, the martial artist cannot be moved from the spot by any means unless she, herself, breaks her stance.

CALL-TO-THE-BLADE-OF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

MANTRA

Cost: 3 motes (committed), 1 Willpower**Duration:** One day**Type:** Simple**Minimum Martial Arts:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 3**Prerequisite Charms:** Retribution of Honorable Guardianship Attitude

The Central posture is more of a mode of conduct than a speardancing style. Living life in a state of honorable grace is preferred. And having one's weapon put to a noble cause is the height of achievement all who walk the path of the Crimson Pentacle Blade strive to attain. With this Charm, the Exalt fortifies and enriches his weapon to that purpose. The Exalt spends a little while ritually cleaning and sharpening his weapon. When he is done, he speaks aloud the task to which his weapon shall be used victoriously.

For the next day, the martial artist may add his permanent Essence to the damage rating of his weapon when it is bent to this task. This task must be a specific one. Also, the martial artist may stack as many tasks on a single weapon as he has points in permanent Essence. However, the maximum damage bonus awarded by this Charm to a single strike cannot exceed the character's Essence.

CENTRAL PILLAR ATTACK PATTERN MASTERY

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Extra Action**Minimum Martial Arts:** 5**Minimum Essence:** 4**Prerequisite Charms:** Eastern Root Protocol, Sprinting Stag Defense, Blessing of Jeweled Vambraces and Mantle, Furious Battle Scythe, Call-to-the-Blade-of-Righteousness Mantra

On the field of battle, a master of the Crimson Pentacle Blade Style is a weapon specialist without peer. She perceives the churning chaos of death and discord that is battle instead as a grand choreography. The speardancer's moving and acrobatic style enables her to position herself centrally, maximizing her weapon's effectiveness against multiple foes. Upon activating this Charm, the Exalt perceives a singular, circular attack pattern that enables her to strike a number of opponents equal to her permanent Essence in one efficient stroke. The character's player makes a single Dexterity + Martial Arts roll for her to hit all targets at +1 difficulty for each target after the first, to a maximum +3 difficulty. Targets must then defend individually, as normal. Also, if the attack is successful, the martial artist counts the successes twice for the purposes of

determining damage. The Essence for this Charm must be spent prior to making the attack roll.

CELESTIAL MONKEY STYLE

Type: Celestial

At the root of this martial-arts style lies the teachings of an ancient text known as *The Perfected Lotus Sutras*. Disciples of this style practice a doctrine of "selfless mind" and, through the meditation of moderation, strive to disassociate themselves from impure concepts and trappings, such as the rise and decline of monetary fortune; the transitory concepts of religion, social mores and politics; and the like. "Blissful Sages", as they are also known, view these ultimately unimportant things as mere distractions counterproductive for those who would live lives of purity, in compassionate harmony with the whole of Creation.

The practitioners of this discipline undergo a grueling physical conditioning and dizzying tests of mental acumen, honing their reflexes to lightningspeed. Also, the sharpening of their intense physical prowess gives them prodigious insight into the fighting styles of their opponents, which can be used to their benefit.

As practitioners of moderation in all things, those who would grow in the wisdom of the Celestial Monkey can not have any Virtue rating higher than 3.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

This martial-arts style is an unarmed style, and the Charms within it are not conducive to the use of any weapons. Characters cannot use this style while wearing armor. Masters of this style, however, do not suffer these prohibitions. See the Charm Celestial Godbody Understanding for details.

MONKEY TAIL DISTRACTION STRIKE

Cost: 2 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Simple**Minimum Martial Arts:** 2**Minimum Essence:** 1**Prerequisite Charms:** None

With this Charm, the Exalt is able to move from a perfectly relaxed, unassuming pose to strike her opponent, effectively ambushing him with a surprise attack while in full view. The martial artist must not be in combat with her opponent in order for this Charm to be effective. After activating this Charm, the opponent's player makes a reflexive Perception + Awareness roll for his character, with a difficulty equal to the martial artist's permanent Essence.

If this roll fails, the Exalt's opponent cannot dodge or parry this attack without the use of Charms. If it succeeds, the opponent is not taken completely off guard and can dodge or parry as normal but cannot attack until he enters into combat turns with the martial artist. Charms such as Surprise Anticipation Method can negate the effects of this Charm if they are active or if they are reflexive and the target chooses to activate them.

FLOWING MIRROR OF OPPOSITION TECHNIQUE

Cost: 1 mote

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: Monkey Tail Distraction Strike

Also known as the "Monkey Dance," this Charm enables the martial artist using it to be frustratingly hard to attack. The Exalt flashes forward, engaging his opponent and "dances" about her, inside the attack range of her Melee, Martial Arts or Brawl weapon, thereby nullifying its speed and accuracy bonuses. Also, being in such close range allows the Exalt to make quicker attacks. Add his permanent Essence score to his Initiative pool.

BODY OF WAR MEDITATION

Cost: 4 motes per point of Strength or Stamina, 6 motes per point of Dexterity

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt begins a meditative prana that takes about 20 minutes to complete. In that time, the martial artist channels powerful Essence through his form. His muscles are imbued with a liquid suppleness, and his bones and skin are fortified with an oaken flexibility. For every 4 motes of Essence the martial artist spends, add 1 to his Strength or Stamina. For every 6 motes of Essence, add 1 to his Dexterity. Body of War Meditation can be used more than once, the effects are cumulative, and the Exalt's Attributes can be raised above Trait maximums. The character cannot, however, raise any of his Physical Attributes by more dots than he has in his permanent Essence rating, regardless of how many times he uses this Charm.

WITHERING PAW STRIKE

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Body of War Meditation



Instead of extending himself to strike his opponent's body, the martial artist makes an attack against his foe's weapon arm in an attempt to disarm him. The Exalt makes a Dexterity + Martial Arts attack that does no damage at a difficulty of 1. The target may dodge or parry as if it were a normal attack but with a base difficulty equal to the attacking Exalt's Essence.

If the disarming roll is successful, the target's player must make a reflexive roll of Wits + the combat Ability governing the weapon the character is using. If she does not gain as many successes on the Wits + Ability roll as the martial artist had successes on the disarming roll, her character is successfully disarmed and her weapon is flung a number of feet in a direction of the martial artist's choosing equal to (the martial artist's extra successes x 10), or the Exalt may take it for himself.

CELESTIAL MONKEY FORM

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Flowing Mirror of Opposition, Withering Paw Strike

The disciples of this style practice a state of being known as "Selfless Mind." Through diligent, introspective meditation, they learn to divorce themselves of emotions or other distractions that would keep them from their set course of action. This form is the perfect expression of that ability.

The martial artist takes a moment to center himself and spends the motes of Essence to fuel the Charm. His body relaxes as he releases his mind from the burden of emotions and social mores and taboos. Transcended, a contented smile piques the corners of the martial artist's mouth. It is from the display of this Charm that martial artists of this style have come to be known also as "Blissful Sages." For the remainder of the scene, the Exalt does not need to make Virtues tests. Slaving hordes of the walking dead will not keep him from the field, nor will a burning house of innocents distract him from pursuing his adversary.

Characters cannot use more than one Form-type Charm at a time. Using a Form-type Charm ends the effects of any other Form-type Charm the character was utilizing.

WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TEN THOUSAND THINGS

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower, 2 Experience Points

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Celestial Monkey Form

The masters who discovered and developed martial arts obtained the principles of their fighting styles through meditation on the world around them: the graceful dance of wind through an orchard, the stoic fortitude of mountains, the ferocious and cunning strength of a pack of lionesses taking down a yeddim. It is also said that these masters were completely unassailable. No technique could defeat them. So diligent were they in their meditations, they had walked in the footsteps of no less than ten thousand things. The very principles of Creation were known to them, and there was not a fighting style of sword or fist that could remain inscrutable to them. It is on this principle that this Charm is based.

The martial artist takes a moment to size up his opponent, either by fighting her, by watching her demonstrate her style or by watching her fight someone else. The Exalt's player makes a Perception + Martial Arts roll with a difficulty equal to his opponent's Martial Arts Ability. If successful, he may add any successes over and above the set difficulty to his Martial Arts attacks against that opponent when she uses the scrutinized fighting style.

For each turn the Exalt studies his opponent and spends the Essence for this Charm, the difficulty drops by 1, to minimum of difficulty 3. The martial artist can meaningfully scrutinize his opponent for a maximum number of turns equal to his Essence, and these turns do not have to be consecutive ones. Once all the character's turns are exhausted, he gains nothing by observing her again until he increases his Essence. The successes on multiple rolls are not cumulative. Only the highest number of successes on a single roll may be kept.

The experience points spent for this Charm are spent only once, no matter how many times the player of martial artist invoking this Charm makes the Perception + Martial Arts roll against his character's opponent.

FOUR HALO GOLDEN MONKEY PALM

Cost: 3 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Walking in the Footsteps of Ten Thousand Things

The fact that Essence flows through all things and that martial arts is a way to channel and direct these energies is a fundamental principle understood by all martial artists. Disciples of the Celestial Monkey Style have refined this understanding to an exquisite degree. As Essence flows through the land, there are places where these flows convene, nexus points known as Demesnes. Such nexus points exist in the body as well. These places of convergence, of which there are four, are known as the Gates of Virtue. Sages of the Celestial Monkey Style believe that each of these gates is attuned to one of the Divine Virtues. They are: the Crown of Temperance (head), the Chalice of Compassion (sternum), the Throne of Conviction (stomach) and the Root of Valor (groin). In combat, as the martial artist invokes this Charm, four Essence-laden rings encircle these locations on his opponent, glowing at various intensities corresponding to how “firmly seated” she is in each of her Virtues.

The martial artist then makes an attack against one of these Gates at a +3 difficulty. If successful, roll damage as usual. If any damage exceeds his opponent's soak, his opponent takes an additional amount of lethal damage equal to the Virtue that corresponds to the location in which she was struck.

For Example: Omun Dos, a mighty Lunar Celestial Monkey, apes and cavorts around a highly angered and frustrated Terrestrial Exalt of the Wyld Hunt trying to kill him. Omun Dos opens his mind and perceives the young Exalt's four Gates of Virtue and sees that his opponent is highly centered in her Root of Valor. Omun Dos punches her and succeeds in getting two levels of damage over his opponent's considerable soak. The young Exalt has a Valor of 5. As such, she takes an additional five levels of lethal damage and drops squealing to her knees.

FOUR HALO GOLDEN MONKEY REALIGNMENT

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Four Halo Golden Monkey Palm

With this Charm, the martial artist is able manipulate his own Gates of Virtue with virtuosity. They no longer remain stationary within his body. Instead, he is able to move these nexus points about within his own form. Doing so creates strange, spherical fields of Essence, with a radius about the length of a man's forearm, around his body wherever he moves the gates. This causes no harm to the martial artist. However, those witnessing him using this Charm will see glittering

coronas in the color and appearance of the Exalt's anima banner flare around the Exalt's extremities as he manipulates these spherical fields.

The martial artist is able to utilize these Essence fields to parry any incoming attack, hand-to-hand or ranged, using his full Dexterity + Martial Arts pool for the scene. He does not have to be able to move to do this. In fact, the Blissful Sage need not get up from the lotus-position he was sitting in before these unfortunate, misguided fools tried to disturb his meditations.

Also, for the scene, the martial artist may add his permanent Essence to all Martial Arts attacks.

CELESTIAL GODBODY UNDERSTANDING

Cost: None

Duration: Permanent

Type: Special

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Four Halo Golden Monkey Realignment

Masters of the Celestial Monkey Style are so acutely aware of how they move through Creation — or, more importantly, how Essence moves through them and the world around them while they move through Creation — they can fortify, enrich and empower their actions just by attuning themselves to the world around them. After buying this Charm, the martial artist can treat all unaided attacks and attacks he makes with any Charms of this style as unarmed attacks, no matter what weapon he uses. All Strength, Dexterity or Martial Arts minimums required for the use of weapons are halved, rounded up. Also, wearing armor no longer hinders his ability to perform this martial-arts style. This Charm has no costs. It is simply an enhancement of the Exalt's capabilities.

DREAMING PEARL COURTESAN STYLE

Type: Celestial

To the savants of the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Style, Creation is indeed the penultimate work of art. It is the perfect expression of form from chaos, tempered and shaped by the dreams and desires of sentient creatures in their endless possibilities. These martial artists are consummate performers with charisma and grace to spare and can be as elusive as dreams. This style, at lower levels, is unassuming as an actual martial art and relies on technique and finesse, instead of on brute prowess and weapon strength.

However, if ever there was ever considered to be a truly “heretical” style, this one is it. Although not widely known, as it can be mastered only by the Solar Exalted and Moonshadow Caste Abyssals, as it requires the understanding of certain Solar techniques of persuasion. No one can instill fear in his enemies like a disciple of this style.

Dreaming Pearl Courtesans can wield desires like swords, and the masters can become things out of nightmare. They are most despised because they're often mistakenly connected to the Wyld and the realm of faerie. In the enlightened days of the First Age, theirs was a valid scholarship. However, in the days since the Contagion and the subsequent invasion by the Princes of Chaos, practitioners of this style have been hard-pressed to find any who would remember such a thing or accept them as anything other than corrupt advocates of the Wyld.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Charms in the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Style treat attacks made with a fan, sash, cape or whip as unarmed attacks. Practitioners of this martial style have also been known to use the long, flowing sleeves of monk's robes as well as the intricate hem of a ball gown's train to equal effect.

Simple practice of this martial art does not make props combat-worthy. Fans and similar props that have been strengthened for battle use the stats for wind-fire wheels. Sashes, capes and whips used in this style are weighted and use the stats for the seven-section staff. These stats can be found in the *Exalted* main rulebook, page 327. Detecting that such items are weapons is relatively easy — a difficulty 1 Perception + Investigation roll while directly examining the item or a difficulty 3 Perception + Awareness roll while looking the character over in general.

The Charm Lethal Paper Fan Attack allows characters to use frail props as lethal weapons.

Characters cannot use this style while wearing armor.

DEMURE CARP FEINT

Cost: 4 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 2

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The character begins the fan dance by unfurling her fan, causing it to ripple and spin in a distracting fashion. The Exalt's movements become as graceful and unpredictable as peach blossoms caught in a strong gust of wind. Those opposing the Exalt who are trying to strike her must add her Essence score to the difficulty when making an attack.

PEARLESCENT FILIGREE DEFENSE

Cost: 1 mote per 1L/2B soak

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

The Exalt channels her Essence into her robes, fortifying them against damage. Her clothing and accoutrements take on an iridescent sheen, and shimmering golden motes of Essence waft and rise off of her person. The character cannot spend more motes of Essence to fuel this Charm than she has in her permanent Essence rating. Each mote spent adds 1L/2B to the character's soak. This bonus does not count as armor, but is, instead, a form of natural soak.

LETHAL PAPER FAN ATTACK

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 3

Minimum Essence: 1

Prerequisite Charms: None

With this Charm, the Exalt imbues her props with lethal Essence. In the hands of the martial artist, a delicate paper fan can cut like a mighty scimitar. Despite the Charm's name, these benefits can also be applied to other items as well. The character can treat all paper fans and other similar props such as brushes and mirrors as wind-fire wheels. All sashes, long hems, sleeves and so on can be treated as seven-section staves. The damage inflicted with these weapons is lethal. This does not change the appearance of the item thus imbued, just it's damage potential. The sash will remain it's flowing silken self, and a fan will still look like a fan.

In addition, if the character is using a fan or other accoutrement properly-constructed for use in the martial arts, Upon activating this Charm, the character may increase the accuracy, parry, speed or damage bonus of her weapon (pick any one at activation) by her permanent Essence score.

DREAMING PEARL COURTESAN FORM

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Demure Carp Feint, Pearlescent Filigree Defense, Lethal Paper Fan Attack

As the martial artist affects the demure and sensual dance of the Pearl Courtesan, her accoutrements and robes take on a life of their own, enhancing and

complimenting her movements. At her command, her fans unfurl and ripple enticingly about her body. Her sashes swirl in a coy serpentine dance, and her flowing sleeves and gossamer robes unfold and gather at her whim. The Exalt does not have to manually control these props in order to allow for this effect. They do so automatically, leaving her hands free.

Upon activating this Charm, the martial artist can control one prop per dot in her permanent Essence score. For example, an Exalt with an Essence score of 4 can control one fan, one sash, one of her flowing sleeves and the hem of her cloak, or she could control four fans at once. Which props the Exalt intends to command must be decided before the activation of this Charm. If the martial artist wishes to add or change a prop, she must drop the present invocation of this form and reactivate it at the beginning of the next turn.

Objects the martial artist wishes to command must be on her person. Also, she cannot make an attack with these props unless she is manually controlling them. To do so and leave her hands free requires her to use the Flurry of August Leaves Concentration Charm. While this form is active, the Exalt's player may add her character's Martial Arts to all Presence and Socialize rolls. Characters cannot use more than one Form-type Charm at a time.

FLURRY OF AUGUST LEAVES CONCENTRATION

Cost: 2 motes per weapon

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

At this level, the fan dancer has an acute understanding of spatial awareness and how the supple flows of air currents can affect the "play" of lighter materials such as silk and paper. Armed with this knowledge, the martial artist can use her props to surprising effect at range. The Exalt casts her fan or sash into the air. At her command it flicks and swoops toward its intended target before spinning obediently back to her. If this Charm is activated while the martial artist is using the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form, she can command up to the number of props allowed by that Charm to make multiple attacks against one target. This Charm allows the martial artist to strike a target up to (Martial Arts x 5) yards away.

The Exalt makes a single attack with her Martial Arts pool, as usual, regardless of how many weapons she is controlling. Successes from the roll are applied to all weapons, and the damage is determined using her Strength as if were a normal Martial Arts attack. This attack can be parried or dodged like a normal Martial Arts attack, and the target's player need only make one roll for his character

to parry or dodge this effect. Botched attacks can result in broken or lost props or injury to the martial artist who cast them. She must pay the cost of this Charm for each prop she wishes to command. Also, this Charm can only be used on props that can be separated from the Exalt's body. For example, she cannot use her cape while it's still tied around her neck. However, props in the grips of the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan form are considered explicitly "in-hand" for the purposes of this Charm.

RESPLENDENT SASH GRAPPLE TECHNIQUE

Cost: 3 motes per turn

Duration: Varies

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Flurry of August Leaves Concentration

With this Charm, the Exalt is able to use her flowing garments with a prehensile dexterity to grapple opponents and their weapons. After successfully dodging or otherwise negating an enemy's attack, the Exalt's player may make a reflexive Dexterity + Martial Arts roll to have her character's skirt, cloak or flowing sleeves move to snare her opponents weapon or fist.

The martial artist must score as many successes as her opponent did on his attack to make a successful grapple. The defender may evade this only with Charms or by splitting his dice pool. If her opponent is using a weapon and the martial artist scores successes equal to or higher than her opponent's Melee, Martial Arts or Brawl score, the character has the option of disarming the target rather than clinching him.

After successfully clinching her enemy, the martial artist enters into a resisted roll against her opponent using her Dexterity + Martial Arts dice pool against his Strength + Brawl, Melee or Martial Arts dice pool. The rules for clinching still apply. If the Exalt is using the Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form when this Charm is activated, she may make as many of these reflexive grapples as allowed by that form Charm. The cost of this Charm must be spent for each reflexive grapple the Exalt wishes to make.

VINDICTIVE CONCUBINE'S PILLOW BOOK

UNDERSTANDING

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Motive-Discerning Technique, Dreaming Pearl Courtesan Form

There is a saying that the most vicious fights are the ones between siblings or lovers. The person who knows

someone the most intimately can circumvent his defenses and hurt him the most deeply. It is in the spirit of this aphorism that this technique was developed.

Most armor only covers the vital areas of the body, leaving the harder or less lethal areas uncovered. Even superheavy plate is donned and removed in pieces: the helm, the back and shoulder guards, the breastplate, the greaves and leggings, etc. It is a testament to the smith's craft if the seams between the different pieces are too narrow for an arrow or blade to pierce. Paper and silk, however, are thinner than even the sharpest blade, and in the hands of a martial artist using this Charm, can be used to deadly effect. Upon activating this Charm, the Exalt negates points of her opponent's armor soak equal to her Essence + Martial Arts. This does not negate her target's natural soak or any bonuses gained through the use of Charms, merely his armor.

FRAGRANT PETAL FASCINATION KATA

Cost: 10 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Until disturbed

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Flurry of August Leaves
Concentration

As the Exalt performs the fluid and languid moves of the Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata, hundreds of glowing

flower petals flow out of her sleeves and the folds of her robes and spiral about her. The players of all those within the Exalt's Essence in yards must succeed in a resisted Willpower roll against her player, or their characters are transfixed in place, enraptured by the beauty of the kata and perfume of the petals. Even those whose players succeed in the roll find themselves subjected to a hallucinogenic vertigo, as if in a waking dream, and suffer a penalty to all dice pools equal to the Exalt's Essence while in the range of the Charm.

Those entranced by this Charm are highly susceptible to suggestion and will believe whatever the Exalt tells them to be truthful. Also, the Exalt can issue commands to those enraptured and, unless the orders are suicidal, expect them to be followed. These suggestive effects, however, do not effect those with a higher permanent Essence rating than the martial artist. If for any reason the Exalt halts her kata, or the scene ends, the fascination begins to wear off. The effects linger for a number of turns equal to the martial artist's Essence. During this period of reduced effects, the victims suffer a dice-pool penalty equal to the Exalt's Essence. Those thus enraptured will have vague memories of what transpired while under the effects of this Charm and will suffer a strange melancholia, adding +1 difficulty to Conviction rolls made for them for a number of days equal to the Exalt's Essence.



SEVEN STORMS ESCAPE PRANA

Cost: 8 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Fragrant Petal Fascination Kata

The martial artist takes a deep breath and concentrates. When she exhales, tendrils of pastel fumes escape her lips. Her clothing and hair whip about her as if caught in an unseen maelstrom. In a flash, she becomes a vortex of swirling light that quickly disappears only to reappear a distance of (the Exalt's Martial Arts x 5) yards away. While performing this Charm, the martial artist can take no other action.

INVOKING THE CHIMERA'S COILS

Cost: 15 motes, 1 Willpower + 1 Willpower to end the Charm

Duration: Varies

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 4

Prerequisite Charms: Knowing the Soul's Price, Resplendent Sash Grapple Technique, Vindictive Concubine's Pillow Book Understanding, Seven Storms Escape Prana

It is believed by the masters of this style that all things in Creation are expressions of duality, a marriage of form and the infinitely possible, and that all sentient creatures experience this potential from the safety of their dreams. Here, desires are laid bare, wishes are fulfilled, and nightmares stalk those unwilling to confront their inner demons. The savants of this style argue that a person's dreams are not a phenomenon unique to an individual, but instead "The Dreaming," as they refer to this collective subconsciousness, is a commonality. All sentient creatures share and are a part of it. Here, they may touch the infinite, however briefly, without fear of losing sight of the singularity that is their "self." Masters of this style seek to achieve a perfect waking and lucid union of this dual principle. With this Charm, they are briefly able to breach this threshold and achieve its perfect form, the mighty Chimera. The martial artist opens herself to this same collective consciousness and transcends, assuming the form of this fell and beautiful creature. A pillar of swirling light shines down upon the Exalt. Her clothing and accoutrements disappear as her form becomes long and sinewy, growing to five times her normal height. Her neck extends up to four feet in length and supports her delicate and golden beaked foal's head. She is crowned with four sets of gazelle's horns that whip and spiral, reshaping themselves like tendrils of smoke. Eyes ranging from the size of small

pearls to the size of goose eggs line either side of her narrow snout and continue down her back, collecting in shifting patterns by the hundreds, blazing like sapphires in the noonday sun, blinking demurely.

The Exalt's entire form is covered with gold-veined pearl scales, which afford her an additional 6L/12B armor. Instead of arms or legs, the martial artist gains a pair of four-foot-wide, barbed carp's fins for every point of her permanent Essence, which can strike for Strength +3 damage and enable her to hover in or swim through the air with serpentine grace at 45 miles per hour. While using this Charm, the Exalt cannot be surprised or lied to, as secrets echo like the whispers of wind chimes between her coils and opponents' intentions play out like gossamer filigree about her. Also, the Exalt has a number of actions per turn equal to her Essence. These are full extra actions, the martial artist may split her dice pools, and this effect is incompatible with other extra actions effects.

There is, however, a certain risk involved when Invoking the Chimera's Coils. The Exalt experiences an ecstatic bliss while in this form, and if she is not careful, she will forget that she once was mortal and lose herself to the collective knowledge of humanity's dreams, remain transcendent and pass out of this realm of existence. This Charm lasts for as long as the Exalt wishes, and she must spend a point of temporary Willpower to end it. For every scene after the first she remains in this form, she must make a Willpower roll at an additional +1 difficulty. If at any time she fails this roll, she disappears in a blinding flash of pearlescent light. The Exalted have lost some of their mightiest martial artists in this way. Once thus transcended, none ever return.

RIGHTEOUS DEVIL STYLE

Type: Celestial

As pervasive and as inescapable as the light of the sun at it's highest meridian is the undeniable destiny of those who serve at the feet of unrighteousness. For those who would exist for the sole purpose of Creation's defilement, Heaven prepares a gift of harmonious vengeance. At the hands of those who serve the Principle of Righteousness, all who defy the Mandate of Heaven will be cleansed by anointment in purifying, Celestial flame. These are the precepts of those who would walk in the footsteps of the Righteous Devil.

This is not to say that the martial artists who follow this style are paragons of virtue. Usually, quite the opposite is true. Disciples of this style strive to exist, not in terms of good or evil, but instead, in terms of right or wrong; appropriate or needlessly excessive; necessary or wastefully destructive. Theirs is a discerning wisdom, one they believe is the common truth. Similar to the way threads of Essence connect an Exalt's weapon to her

target, they believe, all things in Heaven and Creation are ultimately a singular entity. And, therefore, they feel that all must work for the betterment of the whole. Those who would defy this mandate would be better off if they shuffled off this mortal coil that they might learn, through the lesson of rebirth, the righteousness of appropriate existence.

KISS OF THE SUN CONCENTRATION

Cost: 1 mote per die
Duration: Instant
Type: Supplemental
Minimum Martial Arts: 1
Minimum Essence: 2
Prerequisite Charms: None

The character draws a breath and concentrates, extending her senses to feel the flow of Essence that unites her, her weapon and her target. In this perfect moment, the Exalt fires her weapon, and her firewand's tongue of flame seeks out her intended target with knowing assurance. For each mote of Essence the player spends, his player may add one die to any Martial Arts roll using a firewand or similar weapon. This added bonus cannot exceed the character's Dexterity + Martial Arts pool. Essence for this Charm must be spent prior to the attack roll.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Originally developed for use with the discharge of various flame-discharge weapons lost to the modern day, disciples of the Righteous Devil Style use firewands and other weapons that project bolts of flame as the focus for their martial arts. Charms of this style treat attacks with these weapons as Martial Arts attacks. Painfully, the Charms of this style cannot generally be used with any other weapons or even unarmed. Without their weapons, practitioners of the Righteous Devil Style are as helpless as a disarmed swordsman.

FLAME WEAPONS

The following weapons are considered in-style with the Righteous Devil Style. The Charms of this tree may be used with the ranged attacks of flame lances, but many of the Charms, for example those that speed reloading, are of little use.

Flame Piece: This is a small firewand, made for use one-handed. Most are typically wielded by elite Southern cavalry, who use them to gain the advantage in horseback melees.

Fuel Bolt Launcher: A large First Age weapon, fired from the shoulder, that projects a cohesive bolt of semiliquid flame. These weapons were given to infantry expected to engage Exalted clad in First Age armor or warstriders.

Plasma Tongue Repeater: A five-shot weapon, made to be held and discharged in a single hand, that was favored by some assault troops during the height of the First Age.

Name	Acc	Dam	Rate	Range	Ammo	Cost
Firewand	+1	12L	1/2*	10**	1	Resources ●●●
Flame Piece	+0	8L	1/2*	8**	1	Resources ●●
Fuel Bolt Launcher	+1	18L	1/2	30**	1	Artifact ●●
Plasma Tongue Repeater	+2	10L	1	20**	5	Artifact ●●

* The weapon takes one turn to reload after every shot.

** Flame weapons have no range increments and suffer no range penalties. This is their maximum range.

FIRST AGE FLAME AMMUNITION

These weapons use alchemical charges to fire. They were once relatively common in the hands of Exalts and special assault troops, but the ammunition is difficult to manufacture under modern conditions, and the existing stocks were depleted long ago. Most of these weapons were scavenged or relegated to storage centuries ago. The rounds for the two types of weapons are not interchangeable. Characters must have access to the resources of the Heptagram, Lookshy, Nexus or some locale with both martial foundries and large military chemical works to manufacture such ammunition.

Compound Name	Difficulty	Cost	Effects
Fuel Bolt Charge	4	●●●	One shot for a fuel bolt launcher.
Plasma Tongue Charge	3	●●●	Five shots for a plasma tongue repeater.

BLOSSOM OF INEVITABLE DEMISE TECHNIQUE**Cost:** 3 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Supplemental**Minimum Martial Arts:** 2**Minimum Essence:** 2**Prerequisite Charms:** Kiss of the Sun Concentration

At this level, the character becomes more intimately aware of how Essence flows through her and her weapon and is able to dramatically increase the damage her weapon can do based on this understanding. As with Kiss of the Sun Concentration, the character draws a breath, concentrates and then fires her weapon. This time, however, the once thin stream of flame expands to twice its normal girth, spiraling out from its center like a blossoming peony of flame. The player activates the Charm and doubles the damage done on a successful Martial Arts attack using a firewand or some similar weapon. The bonus damage is applied before the target rolls to soak.

LIGHTNING DRAW STANCE**Cost:** 2 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Reflexive**Minimum Martial Arts:** 3**Minimum Essence:** 2**Prerequisite Charms:** Kiss of the Sun Concentration

With this Charm, the martial artist need not have her weapon in hand before Initiative is rolled to use it. Vibrant cobalt lightning crackles and coalesces about her forearm, and in one fluid motion, the Exalt readies her firewand and fires. The player spends 2 motes of Essence to invoke this Charm. Aside from the benefit of surprise, "shooting from the hip" enables the character to attack more quickly, adding 1 to her Initiative rating per point of her permanent Essence.

BLESSING OF RIGHTEOUS SOLAR SPARK**MEDITATION****Cost:** 2 motes**Duration:** Until fired**Type:** Simple**Minimum Martial Arts:** 3**Minimum Essence:** 2**Prerequisite Charms:** Fire Blossom of Inevitable Demise Technique

With this Charm, the character can turn a mere firewand into a weapon of righteousness. The Solar Exalted meditates and invokes a blessing on his weapon. Upon finishing the evocation, gossamer tongues of heatless golden flame writhe along the barrel of her firewand, imbuing it with a golden, iridescent cast. The benefits to the weapon are more than merely cosmetic.

The player spends 2 motes of Essence for her character to invoke the blessing, and these motes are considered committed until the Exalt fires the weapon, releasing the charge. Add the character's permanent Essence to the base damage of the firewand or similar weapon when it is next fired.

If this Charm is used against creatures of the Underworld or Abyssal Exalted, the damage dealt is aggravated. If the Solar using this Charm also invokes Fire Blossom of Inevitable Demise, the bonus dice are added after the damage has been doubled. The increased damage dice gained with Blessing of Righteous Solar Spark Meditation cannot be doubled with Fire Blossom of Inevitable Demise Technique or any Charm that doubles base damage.

If the martial artist has multiple firewands, the Blessing of Righteous Solar Spark can only be invoked on one at a time, and if done in combat, it takes two turns to do so. Finally, if the Solar using a "blessed firewand" invokes an attack Charm that allows her to make multiple attacks, the bonus damage must be divided evenly among her targets.

Only Solar Exalted can use this particular Charm.

CLOUD OF EBON DEVILS**Cost:** 1 motes**Duration:** Instant**Type:** Reflexive**Minimum Martial Arts:** 3**Minimum Essence:** 2**Prerequisite Charms:** Lightning Draw Stance

Despite the superior damage capabilities of firewands, there are certain drawbacks to using them: the low availability and astronomical price of firedust, just to name a couple. Also, their temperamental nature and need for constant upkeep and repair make them difficult choices for use in the field. But perhaps the biggest difficulty in using firewands is that most flame-discharge weapons are single-shot ones. The martial artist must take a turn to reload a firewand after each shot. However, a Solar with this Charm is able to bypass this particular weakness.

After the character makes an attack with his weapon, the player may spend 1 mote for his character and make a Reflexive Wits + Martial Arts roll, difficulty 2. The character's hands move too fast for unExalted eyes to see, trailing translucent clouds of black firedust that waft about his torso. If the roll is successful, the Solar Exalted successfully reloads his weapon and can bring it to bear before his next action. If the roll fails, he is unable to load the weapon correctly. If he manages to botch, the Storyteller should feel free to use her twisted imagination to describe what happens when those black firedust clouds, from which the Charm gets its name, ignite about the

martial artist's upper torso. A botch can be especially bad if the character is using a First Age weapon.

RIGHTEOUS DEVIL FORM

Cost: 5 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Blessing of Righteous Solar Spark Meditation, Cloud of Ebon Devils

The martial artist takes on an executioner's terrible stillness. Shadows seem to darken about his eyes and render his features gaunt, giving him an imposing, dreadful gaze. He is the fatal answer to the depraved and unjust, the retribution all who would defy Heaven knew must someday come. After activating this Charm, all extras who lay eyes on the martial artist will move unassumingly, as not to draw attention to themselves, yet swiftly for cover, pull their children inside and bolt their doors.

Targets of the martial artist within a radius equal to (the martial artist's Essence x 10) yards feel a sense of foreboding and are compelled to confront the martial artist. Up until a target actually makes eye contact with the Exalt, her player must make a successful reflexive Willpower roll each turn with a difficulty equal to the Exalt's permanent Essence rating, or her character moves to confront the Exalt. Characters may spend a point of temporary Willpower to stop this compulsion. Once she has spent a turn engaged in combat or parley with the Exalt, this effect ends for the remainder of the scene.

PHOENIX FLIES ON GOLDEN WINGS ATTACK

Cost: 1 mote

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Devil Form

With this Charm, a martial artist can extend the range of his weapon. Upon activating this Charm, a halo of gold and cobalt light encircles the tip of the firewand's barrel. When the character pulls the trigger, six golden swan wings, each the length of a woman's forearm, gracefully spiral out of the halo and speed the tongue of flame to its extended target. The player spends 1 mote of Essence, and her character can make a Martial Arts attack using her firewand or similar weapon at twice its normal range.

AZURE ABACUS MEDITATION

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Simple

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Phoenix Flies on Golden Wings Attack

The martial artist using this Charm draws a controlled, deep breath and holds it. She extends her senses to perceive the ebb and flow of Essence that permeates the world around her. As she concentrates, the tenuous connections that tie her and her weapon to her target become glaringly apparent to her. At this point, she can close her eyes, for she need not see her target to strike it. Her Caste Mark flares and pulses with the beating of her own heart. At the same moment, a series of notched rings of silvery azure light encircle her target. They are of varying widths, numbering between three and nine in total, and rotate around the target at odd angles, some spinning clockwise, while others spin widdershins.

This is the Azure Abacus. In the days of the First Age, this Charm was an artful meditation of the most introspective and intimate — and, some considered, prideful — nature, for it measured, some believed, a soul's nature, existence and importance in the grand scope of Creation. Unfortunately, in this dark Age, the knowledge of how to glean any pertinent information from such a display is completely lost, even to the martial artist invoking this Charm. If there are any alive who remember how to gauge the delicate nuances of the Azure Abacus, they are not sharing the information.

Upon reaching this harmonious state, the Exalt invoking this Charm fires her weapon, and her shot zeros in on her target, trailing a brilliant comet's tail of flaming Essence. As the fireball closes in on its target, this ancient accounting begins to solve itself. The rings begin to align, starting with the innermost, and quickly rectify themselves a hairsbreadth moment before the martial artist's attack hits. In this perfect moment just before the Exalt's attack strikes the middle of the Abacus, time slows to an immeasurable halt.

The martial artist's target perceives the rectified rings about him shift their shape. A chorus of aquiline, cobalt cherubim, three to nine risers deep and awash in silver and golden flames begin to sing. The melody resonates at a very intimate level with the target, matching the harmonic frequency of his soul. Such a display can be very unsettling to those not prepared for it, and the players of those subjected must make a successful reflexive Willpower roll, difficulty 2, for their characters to do anything other than stare or scream in shocked terror as inescapable retribution comes calling. The martial artist spends 4 motes of Essence and one Willpower. So long as the target stays within the

firing range of the martial artist's weapon, the attack cannot miss. Even if the character can move, the attack cannot be dodged by any means and can only be parried if the target has Charms that enable him to parry insubstantial attacks.

TWIN SALAMANDER FIST

Cost: 3 motes

Duration: One scene

Type: Reflexive

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Devil Form

With this Charm, the Exalt now has the ability to use a firewand or similar weapon in either hand without the "off-hand" penalty. The player spends 3 motes to activate this Charm.

DANCE OF THE HOWLING MAGMA SPRITES

Cost: 4 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Instant

Type: Extra Action

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Twin Salamander Fist

Martial artists knowledgeable of this Charm are deadly foes, especially in close quarters, with little to hide behind. Upon firing his weapon, the bolt of flame spits from the

end of the barrel only to come to a shrieking halt a yard from the barrel-end of the firewand and, with a thunderous clap, explodes into a small winged creature that howls, spiraling toward its target. The player spends 4 motes and a point of temporary Willpower for his character to invoke the Charm. The player rolls for the martial artist to hit the first target. If the roll succeeds, he may immediately make a second roll to hit the same target or a second target, and so on. The Exalt may make as many attacks as he has points of permanent Essence, and each magma sprite does the base damage of the martial artist's weapon.

PHANTOM FLAMEBOLT PRANA

Cost: 2 motes

Duration: Instant

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 4

Minimum Essence: 2

Prerequisite Charms: Righteous Devil Form

When invoking this Charm, the Celestial martial artist breathes deeply, tapping her inner reservoir of Essence, like bellows stoking a furnace. With each breath, she channels Essence through her weapon, using it as her focus. The Exalt can then fire a bolt of gossamer golden flame from his flamewand rather than needing firedust. So long as he has Essence to fuel it, he need never worry about running out of ammunition again.



CARESS OF 1,000 HELLS

Cost: 7 motes, 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies

Type: Supplemental

Minimum Martial Arts: 5

Minimum Essence: 3

Prerequisite Charms: Phantom Flamebolt Prana

A master of this style has an acute and profound understanding into the nature of Essence. The invisible matrix of divine energy that tethers all of Creation into one whole, where concepts of space and distance do not exist, becomes evident and accessible to her.

When invoking this Charm, the martial artist attunes herself to the ambient lines of Essence, pulling them through her and focusing and filtering these energies through her righteous will. Essence trails can momentarily be seen radiating around her Caste Mark, tongues of Celestial fire and lightning writhe about her head and shoulders. The Exalt fires her weapon, and an Essence-enriched deluge of cobalt-and-gold-flame engulfs her target. Any flammable items within the Exalt's Essence in yards around the target is incinerated to ash within seconds. The damage of the attack is aggravated, and the target is engulfed in flames for a number of turns equal to the Exalt's permanent Essence.

After soaking the initial damage, the target's player must then make a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll, difficulty 3, for his character. If the roll is successful, the target suffers a penalty equal to the martial artist's permanent Essence rating to all dice pools. If the roll fails, then the target can do nothing but writhe around on the ground in agony. The victim's player must make a Stamina + Resistance roll as a reflexive action every turn his character remains aflame in order to continue acting. For each turn the target remains on fire, he must soak the base damage of the martial artist's weapon. This damage is not aggravated. Also, his player must reroll the Stamina + Resistance roll at an additional +1 difficulty for each turn after the first.

ELDER EXALTS

Elder Exalts of all types, even the Terrestrial Exalted, can achieve degrees of mastery of Abilities and Essence more perfect than even the most gifted young hero. The Exalted begin as more than human, but only slightly more so. Within their human lifetime they remain largely constrained by the limitations of their mind and form in their endeavors to master channeling Essence and to increase their fundamental cognitive and physiological aptitudes. Charms allow any Exalt to perform at amazing or even perfect levels.

However, the use of a Charm is a temporary synergy of Essence and skill, aptitude or spiritual force of being and not a true achievement of fundamental ability beyond that possible to the most gifted mortal. It is only with the experience of great age that Exalted can surpass their mortal frame of reference and truly internalize their Essence. It requires a human lifetime as an Exalt for Essence-channeling to begin to affect the changes on mind and body necessary for a truly posthuman existence to begin and concurrently greater amounts of time, practice and acclimation to semidivine nature for every further achievement after that. For the purposes of these rules, such a lifetime is held to constitute 100 years of Exalted existence. Sometimes, this change can occur as early as after 70 years of Exalted existence, sometimes as late as 200 for Exalted who, for whatever reason, retain low Essence, but even low-Essence Exalts will eventually gain transcendent understanding of their Essence, though it will benefit them little save in conversation.

ESSENCE AND MAXIMUMS

Training times for elder Exalts to raise their Essence, Abilities and Attributes beyond 5 are calculated using the same formulas as is usual for that Exalt type. However, Abilities and Attributes may not be raised above the level of the character's permanent Essence through the use of experience points. Exalted cannot raise their Virtues above 5.

Additionally, all Exalted must first meet age requirements (see chart) before they can spend the training time and experience points to raise their Essence beyond the fifth dot. Terrestrial Exalts may never raise their permanent Essence above 7 without resorting to the use of outside energies such as complex dietary and meditational regimens, powerful Hearthstones and other, similar effects.

LONG-TERM EXPERIENCE AWARDS

Games featuring elder Exalts or other long-lived Essence-wielders will often skip past or skim through years, decades or centuries at a time. In such cases, it is useful to have a standardized guideline for the amount of experience that player characters or Storyteller characters accrue while out of the spotlight of session-by-session play. The following chart lists annual experience point awards suitable for use in either case. Older Exalts receive less and less experience as they age, not because they apply themselves any less, necessarily, but because they run out of new experiences from which to learn and often find themselves treading paths they have walked many times before.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS:

CUSTOMIZING THE NUMBERS

Characters who are actively played for more than one session per in-character year are going to earn a great deal more experience than these annual awards indicate. It is assumed that players' characters and their foes are going to exceed the baseline expectations for characters of their type in most cases.

When applying these awards to players' characters during long periods of downtime, let the pace and rhythm of your game's sessions be your guide in setting any optional annual experience awards you use in the event of downtime or the introduction of new Storyteller characters. A game that meets to play regularly will certainly have characters who are much more powerful than their age would seem to indicate. There is no one ruling that will apply to every style and pace of *Exalted* game, but with a little experimentation and forethought, annual experience awards can be adjusted to suit the needs of any game. The annual award numbers presented in this chapter are the canon for *Exalted*. This sidebar is an attempt to provide some guidelines for rules-tinkers.

Age	Max Essence	Annual Exp
100	6	5
250	7	4
500	8	3
1,000	9+	2

The lump sum of experience points awarded for downtime should be broken down according to a 4:3:2:1 ratio among categories of Charms and Combos, Abilities, Attributes and Virtues, and Essence. This reflects a character's focus in choice of activities during the downtime and can be an easy tool for Storytellers to

benchmark the actions of the characters instead of laboriously reckoning the doings of several Exalts over a period of many years. The mathematical shortcut for calculating the prioritization ratio is to divide the lump experience sum by 10 and then multiply that number by 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively to find the individual categories' experience point totals.

Characters must spend all their maturation experience points on the designated categories. Characters must divide their experience points up between all the different groups as specified above — the system's point is to force players to round out their characters. Characters must spend all the experience points they are reasonably able to during the downtime — annual experience cannot be hoarded and suddenly burned at the start of play after the downtime to do strange things to the character, to fuel endless arrays of experience point-consuming Charms or to totally overmatch some unknown opponent. Those experience points that are not spent are banked against specified goals (most typically increasing Essence) until the character can afford to increase them. This is not a specific rule so much as an injunction to Storytellers to treat the experience not as some sort of power battery the character is accumulating a stored charge in, but as a year-by-year stream of individual incidents that slightly increase her understanding. The player should be incrementally improving the character to represent the experiences of the undetailed years, not trying to exploit the system to create the world's largest Combo.

Characters who adventure in the midst of an extended downtime and receive normal experience may spend that however they wish.

For Example: Mike has decided to introduce 40 years of downtime between the first and second major arcs of his Exalted game. This means that Chelly, Clay and Phil have 200 experience points to spend. First, they must decide how their characters prioritized their time during that 50 years, and then assign 80, 60, 40 and 20 experience points to each of the four categories.



Sring! sring! sring! went the slave's scythe as he trimmed down the grass in front of the windows. Ledaal An'nua peered out through the thick and wavery glass at the bright-red skin of the Northern slave who labored outside in the hot summer sun. The air was thick with jasmine and peonies and the smell of fresh-cut grass.

There were no calligraphy lessons in her mind, just a child's love for a summer afternoon and the restless urge to be somewhere outdoors during such fine weather. An'nua wished she was at fencing practice. The slave's scythe against the grass stirred memories in her of crossing steel. The tiger that her parents and instructors had so carefully nurtured in her breast stirred restlessly as well, and she dreamed an idle child's dreams of steel and hunting men.

Around her, the empire reeled, and the world spun toward an age of war. Nations rose to conquest in the names of alien god-kings, and cities died at the hands of a great darkness, but it was a far-away racket here, drowned out by the bumblebees and the sound of chalk on slate. An'nua had not yet acquired a taste for blood, and for her, wars were still things of story and lecture, not sources of riches and fame. She was not yet eager to fare away over the Great Inland Sea to face the enemies of her people or to win herself an imperial pension and cut her family's strings. The Scarlet Dynasty still seemed to her to be a family of sorts, and she wished only to defend it from the imaginary ogres of childhood. She wanted boys and women to throw themselves at her feet for her valor but had no real idea of what came after. She wanted a Manse of her own and a horse of her own and the power to draw up her chef's cooking schedule any way she pleased.

An'nua assumed in her child's heart that she would be Exalted. Oh, she performed the rituals with burnt cork and mud, seeking to propitiate first this dragon and then that, but it was a matter of childhood magic. She was still young enough that her peers had not yet begun to kindle about her. She had never wondered if she would live out her life merely mortal while her lunchmate or the subject of her crush would look back at her in a century as a fading mortal memory. For now, An'nua lived in a world of unlimited future potential, where the quality of her breeding and the certainty of her expectation had been a given for her entire young life.

And so, without worries, without cares, the afternoon passed. In An'nua's classroom, there were teachers and scrolls and lessons and the smell of dust and spicy burps and people whispering when they thought the instructor might not notice. He did, expert teacher as he was, but he let the matter pass. It was impossible to have perfect discipline on a day such as this. Birchings would only disrupt more lessons than notes did.

And the sun turned through the sky above the school, and beneath it, the clouds rolled by puffy and white, while the slaves trimmed grass and the straw boss snoozed drunkenly in the shade. The birds and the deer moved in the trees and grass. Here, as in all other places where no force exerted itself, the Maiden of Serenity spread her shawl. Peace reigned, and those who loved life partook of it. It was but an afternoon, but all places, all eras, are no more than an afternoon in the calendar of time.

APPENDIX

WRITING IN THE AGE OF SORROWS

While literacy is not universal among the denizens of the Realm, most citizens can at least sign their names and read simple signs due to the efforts of the Immaculate Order to educate all children in at least very basic skills. Among patricians and the Dragon-Blooded, literacy is universal and required, and most well-to-do children are literate before they enter primary school. All children who graduate public school must pass standardized examinations established by the Scarlet Throne. These examinations test knowledge of the alphabet, basic penmanship and the written form and proper pronunciation of an imperially dictated vocabulary of about 3,000 words. This vocabulary includes the names of common animals and plants, some religious concepts, a few hundred simple verbs and nouns and a large military vocabulary.

The goal is not to broaden the horizons of the student. Any student unable to master a 3,000-word vocabulary by the time she leaves primary school is going

to need a full-time caretaker. The goal is to establish basic command vocabulary and understanding of military procedure on every patrician. Every student who attends primary school will leave qualified to read, write and properly pronounce simple orders and is, thus, a potential noncommissioned officer or minor official and able to work with others from elsewhere in the Realm.

When a student goes to secondary school, her education continues, and the number of words she's expected to master increases as well. A patrician secondary school student must demonstrate mastery of about 30,000 words, while a student at one of the four Dragon-Blooded secondary schools must master about 100,000. Mastery includes correct pronunciation, proper penmanship and proper spelling. The vocabulary involved is different depending on the school involved, but all of the words are drawn from the half-million or so terms that form the official vocabulary of the court of the Scarlet Empress.

Individuals who know this alphabet and this vocabulary speak High Realm.

Obviously, the High Realm vocabulary is larger than this. It includes a large number of abbreviations and informal additions, as well as institutional slang that develops. However, the half-million regulated words form a sparse but functional language of trade, governance and war. The great longevity of the speakers, and the institutional character of most Dragon-Blooded education minimize linguistic drift even in High Realm's informal vocabulary, and the language of civil discourse is thus fixed.

The informal discourse of the populace is another matter, as are loan words and novel sounds. The Immaculate Order seeks to instill a basic knowledge of Realm, but without the pressure of standardized examinations or a meaningful diploma and with its limited resources, it acts with limited ambitions. Monks teach writing and spelling

over pronunciation, with the goal of allowing students to read the Immaculate Texts and sign their names, rather than teaching them proper diction. As a result, the language of the lower orders, Low Realm, can become totally incomprehensible in linguistic backwaters such as slums or isolated rural communities.

Loan words and novel sounds are likewise totally unregulated. Individuals representing foreign words and sounds in the alphabet of the Realm sound it out and fit it into the phonetically rather limited standard alphabet as best they can. Two writers will write the same word two different ways, and as a result, even with a core vocabulary established by statute, High Realm is also often difficult reading. This is especially true when dealing with topics outside of its range of respect, orders and accountancy, and particularly when providing accounts of Threshold culture or customs, where there are a great many new words used.

NOTE TO SCRIBES

The following pages contain two alphabets that demonstrate the methods of writing in the world of **Exalted**.

Writers of the Second Age are not generally very dainty about how they bend words to fit their method of writing, which uses two-letter consonant-vowel pairings. Unusual sounds tend to be either bent terribly to fit or represented with improvised characters that seem to best capture the sound. Inspecting the mons of the Great Houses reveals a number of these improvisations. These are common in individual names among the upper classes, where a complex and unique signature is seen as a sign of distinction.

WRITING METHODS

High imperial script is meant to be written either left to right in rows or top to bottom in columns, usually with an animal-hair brush and ink on fine rice paper or on silk. In either case, the calligrapher attempts to use the finest materials, hand-ground inks and papers created with rare scented woods. To some imperial calligraphers, the written language and its presentation are sacred and must be reproduced exactly with great ritual. Other calligraphers see writing as an opportunity to express their individuality, creativity and artistry.

The low imperial script has evolved as a simplified version of the high and is what the lower orders of the Realm and the inhabitants of the Threshold use as their day-to-day alphabet. It is easier to carve into wood and stone and quicker to scrawl using the small sticks of charcoal favored by the merchant class for writing.

GENERAL RULES

- Imperial script is a syllable-based system of paired consonants plus vowel combinations. An individual consonant which has no vowel uses the vowel of the syllable before it. For example, the word "loyal" would be written using the symbols for "lo," "ya" and "la."
- Lone vowels have their own symbol.
- When the letter "c" is soft, it is represented as "s." When it is hard, it is represented as "k."
- The digraph "sh" is represented as "ch," and the digraph "th" is represented as "d." The article "the" is thus written as either "de," "da" or "du," depending on the regional dialect.

EXAMPLE ALPHABETS

High Realm Script: Second Age imperial script in clean, calligraphic style. In this form, it is used by Dynasts and patricians in correspondence and for displays of penmanship.

Low Realm Script: This is the simplified script used by the lower orders of the Realm and in the Threshold as the alphabet of Riverspeak. Easy to carve and write with a charcoal stylus, Low Realm script is used when readability and ease of execution are paramount.



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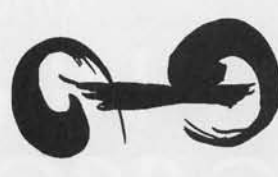
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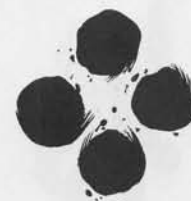
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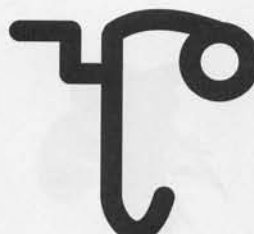
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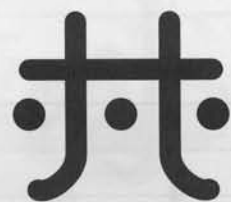
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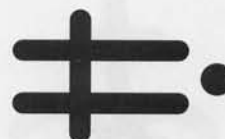
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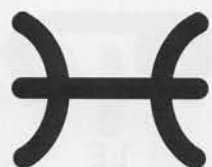
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Until five short years ago, the Realm was the undisputed ruler of Creation. The only ones still willing to argue the point were hill-men savages and the glorified bandits that populate the Scavenger Lands.

The Empress had it all, a never-ending reign. And then, she vanished. Now, it seems like the Realm's dominion is nothing but a fading memory.

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