SHARDS OF THE EXALTED DREAM
EXALTED
SECOND EDITION

Shards of the Exalted Dream™

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To James Wels, best wishes for a speedy recovery.

A Message From Charles Spaulding:

Recently, a lot has changed in my life, and I was given the opportunity to put my own touch on **Exalted**. In this, I could be content, if I had not met Carey. No day goes by that I do not think of this game, yet no hour, minute, or second goes by that I do not love her. I am not as great an author as my fellows, but these are some words I am proud to have all to myself:

Carey, will you marry me?

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INTRODUCTION

You wish to see the distant realms? Very well. But know this first: The places you will visit, the places you will see, do not exist. For there are only two worlds—your world, which is the real world, and other worlds, the fantasy.

Worlds like this are worlds of the human imagination: Their reality, or lack of reality, is not important. What is important is that they are there. These worlds provide an alternate. Provide an escape. Provide a threat. Provide a dream, and power, provide refuge, and pain. They give your world meaning. They do not exist, and thus they are all that matters.

—Neil Gaiman, *The Books of Magic*

Creation. It is a word that is a place, and a place that is a thousand more: worlds and realms changing under the shifting light, like a thousand different reflections from the shards of a broken mirror. When the mirror shatters, it reveals a mad math of worlds, a conspiracy of ideas, places, and themes that nevertheless evoke all the myth and legend of the world that came before. Do not believe what the scientists tell you.

As the tale of Exalted continues...

Shards of the Exalted Dream is a compilation of reboots and retakes on Creation and the myth of Exalted, by writers both old and new to the Exalted universe.

Shard I: Gunstar Autochthonia tells the harrowing tale of the Exalted, who are forced to flee their world in a starship forged from the bones of the Machine God.

Shard II: Heaven's Reach is a detailed exploration of the Central Galactic Empire of Heaven's Son, His Divine Lunar Presence.

Shard III: Burn Legend is a fusion of the lore of Exalted and the mystical martial arts of modern day storytelling.

Shard IV: Exalted: the Modern Age transforms Creation into a world far more similar to our own… yet looks can be deceiving.

Appendix I: A Thousand Little Pieces details vast mechanical changes that make these Shards and many more possible. It includes rule hacks, stats for new weapons and technology, rules for aerial combat and for vehicular pursuit…and of course, Charms. Oh god, the Charms.

GUNSTAR AUTOCHTHONIA

This is the history of the world: In the beginning, the Primordials arose from the cosmic depths to forge a great Spiral of worlds, building their palaces and towers high amid the coils of the universe they created. These titans ruled over all things as immortal tyrants, and so the gods they had created plotted against them. The Celestial Incarnae, gods of sun and moon and stars, conspired with Autochthon and Gaia to bestow their own power upon men, forging Exaltation. Chosen of the gods, the Exalted went to war with the titans, seeking to win worlds with their triumph.

The Exalted lost.

Though empowered by the greatest of gods and the heights of mortal audacity, their victory was never assured. None can say for sure the precise moment when the Chosen knew defeat. Was it when the Principle of Hierarchy set the Spiral ablaze with white flame, burning entire galaxies to stellar ash? When Isidoros unleashed his apocalypse-*jouten*, obliterating countless armies in a blink of his dread eye? When the Unconquered Sun knelt before his titanic father, pledging fealty to the Universe Emperor?

The Solar Exalted were loath to accept their defeat, but even they could not refuse the counsel of their Viziers, and the truth of their own eyes. In an act of defiant courage and utter despair, the Exalted Host fled into the world-body of Autochthonia, bringing as much of humanity as they could salvage, and then set a course for the infinite abyss of stars beyond the Spiral. Cast into exile, they began to regroup and rebuild, preparing for that fateful day when they could return to the Spiral as saviors and conquerors.

It is four thousand years since the Exalted embarked on their long exodus. A Solar Deliberative reigns over the Eight Nations of Autochthonia, overseeing an unthinkable plan to reclaim their homeworld. The Great Maker's mortal sickness has been cured at the hands of the Chosen, his pantheon culled and remade to begin his transformation into a divine weapon, a war-world of titanic power.

But even after four millennia, they have yet to make their return. Hunted by the Primordials and their Green Sun Princes, wracked from within by internecine strife, the Exalted have yet to choose between the fragile peace of exile and the audacious hope of return.

Remaking the Maker

Eons ago, the titan called the Great Maker took the exiled peoples of the Spiral into the world that is his body, securing them in a sanctum of brass and shadows. Knowing that his sibling-titans would never forgive him for his treachery, he hastily agreed to the Exalted's plan of retreat, fleeing into starry darkness outside the Spiral. In those early days, the orphaned Lawgivers came to Autochthon with a daring plan, one in which he would play a crucial role. Without a home or the hope of any other return, the Maker consented. Sometimes, in the idle dreams of spun-off thought processes, he wonders if perhaps this was a mistake. But there are no tears left in him to shed for his regrets.

At the heart of the Solars' plan is the transformation of Autochthon. Through works of high theurgy and grand artifice, they will recreate the Primordial as an avenging titan, a living warship of numinous power with might enough to launch a devastating counterattack against the Spiral. A lone Primordial could not be expected to stand against the massed might of an entire pantheon, but the new Autochthon will be a perfect nemesis. Already, the Solars call him the Gunstar, dreaming of his awful steel fury. The god-weapons forged into his war-*jouten* will strike against his cruel siblings' every flaw and imperfection, while the five-metal bulwark of his hull will stand impervious against their wrath. As the fourth millenium of the Autochthonian Realm draws night to its close, the Great Maker's transformation is nearing completion. Its first step was the curing of the Primordial's mortal sickness, and the Exalted accomplished that long ago. With divine medicine and world-warping shinmaic manipulation, the Solar Exalted purged the Great Maker of his cancer over a span of centuries, scouring away the degenerative symptoms of the Void within his very nature. Although the core imperfection has yet to be fully removed, the grand astrological blessings of the Sidereals and a ceaseless gremlin-hunt waged by Luna's Chosen have kept the Void well at bay.

With the underlying sickness treated, the Exalted have all of Autochthonia in which to work their will. Souls of Autochthon are brought into experimental complexes for analysis and alteration, reshaping them to enact the progress of Autochthon towards his final form. The most dramatic changes come from the execution of souls within the recombination arrays, as when the Divine Minister Ku was slain to cleanse the Maker of his fears and doubts. The vast majority of operations, however, are more subtle. A war-deva might have synthetic cerebellum implants grafted onto its cortex to subtly differentiate Autochthon's strategic thought processes, while a stubbornly pacifistic exmachina might have its personality resculpted through mind-altering Charms. After millennia of operation, almost every significant exmachina has received at least minor fine-tuning in the laboratories of the Lawgivers.

Aside from these metaphysical changes, the Exalted have physically altered the Great Maker, grafting powerful artifact-organs onto his living body to facilitate and empower his transformation. The Primordial's outer hull bristles with Essence artillery and siege-artifacts installed by the Exalted, the almighty Realm Defense Grid. Essence turbines in Hadal draw power out of the Elemental Pole of Crystal to empower this divine arsenal, giving it power enough to demolish entire planets. Within his world-*jouten*, expedition crews headed by Lunar shikari have ventured into the furthest Reaches of Autochthonia carrying vast motonic machinery, installing them directly into the Maker's body as prosthetic enhancements. A synthetic nervous system of starmetal circuitry spreads throughout the Reaches, while a massive pumping facility installed in the Pole of Smoke dumps countless tons of theocarcinogenic smoke into Elsewhere every day. A pulsating sphere of orichalcum and moonsilver the size of a small moon revolves in a narrow orbit around the Elemental Pole of Crystal, a second heart beating alongside Autochthon's own.

Under the countless layers of machinery and the scars of theurgy, Autochthon wonders. No longer can he fear the Exalted who change him in ways he never thought possible. No longer can he doubt their triumph. Such insecurities have been flensed from his mind. But he wonders what the world will become when the Exalted reclaim the Spiral from the Primordials, and what his place in it will be. He wonders if his enraged sibling-titans might not have been gentler in their torments than the Exalted proved to be. But it is too late for such thoughts. Soon, whether in a thousand years or a single century, the transformation of Autochthon will be complete, finalized with a single decisive alteration to his fetich-core. Out of the Great Maker's husk will emerge the Gunstar, the greatest sword ever seized in the hands of the Exalted. When that day comes, the titans will weep.

A Realm Amid the Stars

The Exalted have made for themselves a kingdom to reign over in their exile. From the Centropolis of Hadal, the Solar Deliberative presides over the Eight Nations, overseeing both the constant defense of Autochthonia and the plans for their vengeful return to the Spiral. Glorious even in the shadow of the Primordials, the Autochthonian Realm controls a staggering treasure trove of resources.

Jade-lined vaults in every metropolis house heaped-up slabs of the magical materials, mined from both the body of the Great Maker and from metal-rich planetoids encountered in the Gunstar's flight. Impossible treasures and exotic prodigies shaped from the prismatic haze of Wyld nebulae fuel the tireless progress of Exalted artificers, allowing potent treasures and supernal weapons to be forged en masse in defense of Autochthonia. Miracles of industrial artifice are commonplace for the Realm's citizens, from the Gates of Auspicious Passage that link distant cities to the comforting silo-spires of the Immaculate Dragon Aeries, forward bases of the Gunstar Defense Line. And above all, the Realm has the personal power of hundreds of Celestial Exalted and hundreds of thousands of Dragon-Blooded, all working together for a single purpose.

It is wealth and power enough to usher in an Era of Dreams. Instead, the Exalted have put it towards sustaining an endless war. Untold sums of resources are consumed in the twin endeavors of maintaining the Gunstar's defenses and completing the transformation of Autochthon. The Exalted have foregone the opulence of their personal luxury artifacts and pleasure-palaces in order to sustain the infrastructure of the Realm. Even the most privileged Princes of the Earth understand the paramount importance of holding off the Gunstar's pursuers, the ethos of total war that is at the heart of the Realm.

The Exalted command the Realm, but it would not stand without the ceaseless labor of its mortal citizens. Every citizen is expected to work for the benefit of the Realm, whether on the assembly lines or the line of battle. Populat workers manufacture voidfighter gunships in Estasian munitions factories and excavate veins of magical materials from alien planets. Soldiers drawn from the Militat serve under the Exalted in the ranks of the Deliberative Army and the Void Hunt, risking their lives to protect the Realm. Administrators of the Olgotory act as bureaucrats and local planners, answering to each nation-district's Dragon-Blooded governor and implementing laws, regulations, and schedules passed down from the Deliberative. The Theomachry sees to matters of morale, history, and dogma, devoting as much time to maintenance of state-sanctioned Exalted cults as it does to the worship of the Great Maker. The Sodalities compete with one another for the choicest of resources, but the Realm's constant war footing leaves no room for jealous hoarding. Their technical know-how keeps lights lit and engines humming, allowing all of Autochthonia's citizens a degree of safety and comfort in the darkness of the Maker's body. Hard work has its rewards; dutiful laborers of even the lowest social caste can expect enough living space to comfortably house them and their families, ample allocations of food, access to essential magitech amenities, medical treatment, public entertainment, and more.

Most mortals live in relative safety. Medical alchemy provides remedies and cures for almost any plague or poison, while the policing of the Alchemical Exalted and the Regulators keeps crime to a bare minimum. Advances in magitech infrastructure and Municipal Charm development have diminished the risk of industrial hazards in the workplace. But while the Exalted have solved many of the problems facing Autochthonian mortals, new perils have appeared in their absence. Massive geomantic grids can provide power to entire cities, but system failure results in nation-wide blackouts that can last for days. Advanced industrial machinery and labor automatons have removed much of the risk to human life from mining and manufacturing, but reliance upon these technologies makes their breakdowns all the more disastrous. Even when they work in the shadow of the great Solar god-engines, mortals must still contend with mechanical failures, industrial dangers, and grinding hours of labor.

HADAL

The Deliberative divides the Autochthonian Realm into eight administrative nation-districts, each of them built around one of the ancient metropoli that were the first cities raised by the Exalted Host. At the conflux of these Eight Nations is the Centropolis of Hadal, the elder city of orichalcum that sits atop the Elemental Pole of Crystal like a shining crown. Amid the sprawling factory-complexes and Charm-engines of the city's municipal infrastructure is the mile-high dome of gold and black basalt where the Solar Deliberative convenes to rule. The Deliberative's control radiates out from the dome through realm-spanning systems of technology. Hologlyphic projection relays transmit the oratories and proclamations of Celestial senators to crystalline display screens in every city of the Autochthonian Realm, while the world-moving machinery of the theotechtonic navigation grid sets the drift of Autochthon's continent-organs in the order ordained by the Exalted. Artificial dragon lines channel elemental Essence from the Pole of Crystal to empower the Realm Defense Grid built by the Exalted, and the stolen Loom of Fate that sits at the pinnacle of Hadal.

ESTASIA

The Tiger-Warrior Estasia—favored servant of Aofe, the Golden Blade—sacrificed herself in a desperate bid to buy the escaping Exalted more time. The district named for her is as devoted to martial pursuits as she was; it has serves as the crucible for the Deliberative's Army, and a forge for crafting the implements of revenge. Here, the great sums of magical materials produced by Kamak and Sova are put to use. In the arms factories of Lux, Populat laborers work to assemble voidfighters, warstriders, and the titanic siege weaponry of the Realm Defense Grid. Sodalt savants oversee the construction of these artifact weapons with their technical expertise, with Exalted artificers pro-

viding the finishing touches. In the metropolis of Cidon, newly-Exalted Dragon-Blooded go through five years of flight school in the Steel Crucible of Dragons Academy, undergoing a hyper-accelerated regimen of Solar training to prepare them for service in the Gunstar Defense Line. On the rain-slick plains below, the mortal soldiers of the Deliberative Army train for war, a legion four thousand years in the making.

NURAD

The nation-district of Nurad is a living memento of the long-vanished Spiral. Vast arcologies float within its chamber-dome, buoyed by clouds of Essence. Crystalline panels reveal vine-draped trellises, trees heavy with fruit, and nutrient-baths thick with seedlings. Agricultural laborers work in specialized farm-decks, raising pigs, chickens, and yeddim engineered by Genesis sciences. Far below, Nurad's tidal regions drain into paddies of artificial soil, where workers sow and harvest rice. High above, the city of Wisant casts life-giving light upon all below, a reflection of the Deliberative's promise to the people of Autochthonia.

Genesis laboratories and bioenhancement facilities flourish throughout Nurad, drawing specimens and raw materials from its arcologies. Sodalt geneticists raise specialized breeds of animal and hybrid plant life, while Genesis savants working in the Arsenal of Experimental Life-Forms create artificial behemoths and engineered super-soldiers, living weapons against the forces of the Primordials. Thaumaturgical hospitals provide state-of-the-art health care to the injured, while the Exalted find comprehensive supernatural care in the Garden of Holistic Rejuvenation, along with an extensive suite of biological enhancements and modifications. The wide open-air spaces of Nurad also make it an ideal testing site for magitech aircraft, making it home to the Gunstar Defense Line's Illustrious Institute of Voidflight Research, nicknamed the Hatchery.

CLASLAT

Hadal is where the Exalted work, but Claslat is where they come to rest. The nation-district caters to the Chosen like no other: within its technicolor cities, the Chosen feast on fine cuisine, enjoy the company of courtesans, and cheer for competitors in the arenas of the Gladiat. Miles below, workers toil in a churning maze, cranking out crossbows, armor, and other implements of war. When the shift-whistle blows, some filter to the upper decks, hoping that one of the Chosen will see something desirable in them—whether that something is wit, strength, intelligence, or even simple sex appeal. While the Exalted and their mortal followers occupy two very separate social strata, Claslat is a mixing pot, where an off-duty Solar general can play sports with his troops and an overworked Sidereal can enjoy a good conversation and a cup of kaff. Sometimes this causes conflict, as tensions accumulated over decades or centuries boil out without duty to keep them contained. Sometimes, new bonds of love, friendship, and loyalty form. Inevitably, both sides must return to their duties—but often they return with a renewed sense of respect, and the knowledge of what they're fighting for.

YUGASH

Yugash is nestled in one of the Maker's mighty neural nodes, a confluence of faith and genius. Centuries of work by theotechnical savants have shaped it into a land of towering peaks and narrow, winding tunnels; prayer-flags flap in venting steam, and electrical arcs trace out entire sutras in their deadly currents. Thousands of savants, technicians, and scholars make their home in the district, bustling from project to project and providing brain-power for the largest think tank humanity has ever seen. Led by Exalted savants, they plumb the reaches of possibility, devising new and awe-inspiring tools for the Deliberative's endless struggle. As Autochthon's thought-lightning roars and crackles overhead, they bow their heads in solemn meditation, hoping that the Maker's genius will grace them.

The Metropolis of Kadar forms the nation-district's core; the Synaptic Junction Dynamo runs down the city's spine, drawing energies from the Maker's thought-lightning into massive rods and channeling it into the power grid. Even the residue of Autochthon's genius is enough to power Kadar ten times over—which leaves more than enough for the Deliberative's experiments. Early in the Realm's history, a No Moon researcher perfected a method for containing Wyldstorms, and transporting them safely within the Gunstar's hull. This raw creation-stuff has served as fodder for countless theories, experiments, and weapons—the first protoshinmaic vortex was birthed within the labs of Yugash, and its labs churn out refinements on the basic design to this day. In the nearby reaches, Lawgivers weave Miracle Shells within specially-shielded chambers, warping the laws of nature to better study them. These two disciplines have borne terrifying fruit in the form of the Titanomach, a device the size of a man's hand. When detonated, the Titanomach affirms the reality of Nirguna upon a localized area, obliterating all existence within it. It's hoped that weapons like these will prove a crucial asset in the upcoming war, but there are those who wonder, in moments of silence, if such a thing is worth the price.

GULAK

The air in Gulak is thick with hymns to the Chosen. Cathedral-complexes hold hourly masses, empowering the Exalted with mortal worship in accordance with the catechism of the Deliberative's prayer calendars. While the temples of the Chosen are found in every city of the Realm, the nation-district of Gulak has been designed purely as an optimized power-source. Gulaki chefs are put through training regimens to make them the finest of any in the Realm, maximizing the consumption of the fertility drugs that every morsel of food is laced with. Music halls and grand poetry

salons draw thousands of mortals to listen to talented lectors and Exalted performers, promoting Deliberative-approved doctrine with every showing. Nowhere else does mortal culture flourish as it does in Gulak—nor, for that matter, mortal population. So great is the nation's overpopulation that entire sectors of its geomantic grid are dedicated to powering the spatial-folding technology built into its dormitories, compacting the living space of thousands of citizens into a building no larger than a single Populat apartment.

While this overpopulation has turned Gulak into a bottomless wellspring of worship for the Exalted, it poses its own problems for the nation-district's citizens. Disease spreads through the compressed populace in a matter of hours, turning even the mildest outbreaks into epidemics that tax the nation's medical services to the breaking point. Cultural tensions flare high in tight proximity as adherents clash over differing modes of worship, philosophies, and aesthetics. Peacekeeper Champions intervene to stamp out violence or mass unrest, but conflict simmers hot under the surface. The masses of mortal citizens also provide an ideal hiding place for Apostates, akuma, and traitors. The Void Hunt pays special attention to Gulak, but even they cannot uncover every hidden threat.

JARISH

The district of Jarish floats on a cushion of prayer, traveling through the Maker's body to carry out its holy mission. The lover-Metropoli of Jast and Qune hold each other in an eternal embrace, forming a single gleaming city of moonsilver and orichalcum. At its center stands the Radiant Obelisk—a shining prismatic spire housing thousands of worshipers. Mortals, exmachina, gods, and even captured demons raise their voices in song; the Obelisk trembles, awed by the force of their faith. From this awe comes enough energy to run Jast and Qune three times over. Often, this spare power is channeled outward, to power vehicles, equipment, and even smaller mobile settlements; when Jarish is in motion, it is channeled inward. The Obelisk itself recites the Wanderer's Prayer, praising Autochthon and begging for passage through his holy body—and consciously or not, Autochthon's body complies. The very structure of the Maker rearranges itself to accommodate the city's passage; even the narrowest tunnel will expand to fit it.

While mortals offer up their faith to Autochthon as the god of their exodus, the Exalted take matters into their own hands. From Hadal, the Solar Deliberative pilots Jarish through the Pole of Metal as a mobile theurgic laboratory, sending it to track down exmachina and perform modifications to distant parts of Autochthon's *jouten*-landscape. The strange engines of the Demomorphic Recombination Array and the Transdivine Parallax Enclave are housed within the golden span of its capital metropolis, allowing the Solar Exalted to modify the souls of the Great Maker on an industrial scale. Heightened patrols of regulators and the Alchemical Exalted track down any exmachina that escapes its cage, ensuring that renegade spirits do not upset the plans of the Solar Exalted. It does not disturb the pious mortals of Jarish to see the emanations of their god brought down into the grinding gears of these machines, nor do they fear when the exmachina emerge altered, transformed, or not at all. Their faith in the Great Maker is unwavering, but so too is their faith in the plans of the Solar Exalted.

KAMAK

Kamak traces out the widest orbit of the Eight Nations, circling through the mineral-rich edges of the Pole of Metal in accordance with the Solar Deliberative's designs. Kamaki citizens oversee the largest mining operations in all the Realm, directing swarms of arachnid harvester-automatons or operating magitech excavation machinery. Hover-skiffs and hydraulic trams transport materials by the ton to the other nations, feeding the coffers of the Realm and the Gunstar Defense Line. Even after the steep taxes imposed by the Solar Deliberative, there is plenty left over for the Kamaki, supporting such luxuries as the nation's sky mantis grid and clockwork servitors. Innovation is encouraged and rewarded, with stipends of magical materials and exotic reagents paid out to those whose designs and inventions hold promise for the Realm's future. It is said that even the humblest mortal savants may live in the same splendor and opulence as their Exalted rulers, if they have the talent and genius to earn it.

But Kamak's riches are not without their cost. As the nation drifts along the outermost edge of the Pole of Metal, it is the most vulnerable of the Octet to demonic incursions. Stellar behemoths or deva swarms have invaded the nation through access hatches and spatial portals on the Gunstar's exterior, while direct fire from hellstar battleships have threatened to breach the exterior hull that shelters Kamak from the deadly void of space. Workers caught in these incursions find themselves fending off monsters with little more than mining equipment and industrial tools, one-sided engagements that all too often end in mortal bloodshed. The Solar Deliberative has commissioned a disproportionate number of Gunstar Defense Line bases in Kamak to safeguard their greatest source of magical materials, and the clarions of the Immaculate Dragon Aeries have become a familiar sound to the nation's citizens. The short-tempered Dawn Caste Ragni Star-Bear oversees the Defense Line's operations here, and has little patience for the softness and cowardice she sees in Kamaki culture. If she had her druthers, the entire nation would be placed under permanent martial law, and damn the complaining of Twilights back in Hadal. For now, she settles for making her will known through the oppressive presence of her Dragon-Blooded peacekeepers, keeping the fat bureaucrats and absent-minded savants in line with her martinet discipline.

SOVA

Sova's metropoli lie above an ocean of molten metal that flows through the veins of the Maker, a sea of liquid gold and boiling jade that rise up through the titanic shafts that pierce the nation's landscape. Under Exalted reign, this industrial pyroclasm has become a source of untold wealth and resources. Huge tubes of red jade and adamant extend from Sovan cities down into the shafts, pumping the molten magical materials into the distillation factories of Municipal Charms. Citizens work in the siphon-factories as technicians and engineers, performing routine maintenance on Municipal Charms and refining the harvested magical materials through complex thaumaturgical processes. The actual physical labor of extracting the minerals has been replaced by automated machinery, obsoleting the dangerous mining-skiffs once used to gather precious minerals. However, this is not without is own perils. When lava surges or solid mineral deposits obstruct the siphon-tubes, crews of Populat laborers must descend through access tunnels to clear the blockage, braving the heat and poisoned air to do so. Sometimes, they must even fend off attacks from metal elements unwittingly caught in the siphons, or from invading gremlins.

SOULGEMS AND THE CHOSEN

Soulgems are implanted into the forehead of every citizen of the Realm at birth, allowing the Sodalities to track the reincarnation cycles of heroic souls. Upon Exaltation, a Chosen's soulgem begins to resonate with the Essence newly joined to his soul, causing it to undergo a metamorphosis based on the type of Exaltation.

Solar: A Solar's soulgem is subsumed into his Exaltation as part of its natural design, seeming to dissolve into his flesh as it vanishes from his brow. Upon death, his soulgem reappears as the Exaltation leaves his body.

Lunar: Lunar soulgems are encysted within a node of moonsilver, drawing it under the concealment of the Tell. Moonsilver tattoos often integrate a Lunar's soulgem into their geometric patterns.

Sidereal: A Sidereal's soulgem takes on the jeweled hue of her anima banner, glowing with vivid illumination when it flares. Sidereal caste marks are overlaid on the foremost facet of the soulgem, shining distinctly through the stone.

Dragon-Blooded: A Dragon-Blood's soulgem becomes part of his aspect markings, taking on an elemental character appropriate to his Exaltation. A Fire Aspect's gem might seem to be illuminated by an inner flame, while the soulgem of a Water Aspect shifts through sea-green hues with his mood.

While the siphon-tubes are Sova's most obvious form of industry, most of its populace is employed in the nation's other greater enterprise—the *Malki* Archives. Soulsteel chambers deep beneath the patropolis of Imtu house the *malki*, gestalt material intelligences synthesized from the personalities and knowledge of the Realm's dead. Specially-trained Luminors oversee the the transfer of psyche-imprints from soulgems into the material intelligences, while Populat curators assist visitors in navigating the vast stores of data held in the collective minds of the *malki*. Within the halls of the Archives, Celestial savants debate the finer points of metaphysics with ancient scholars and philosophers, while young Dragon-Blooded are schooled in Primordial battle strategy by ancestors who fought the titans firsthand. The topmost layer of the Archives houses the Sagacious Council of Fallen Stars, a revered council of *malki* composed from the memories of fallen Celestial Exalted. Each of these *malki* contains the personas of every inheritor of a single Celestial Exaltation. It is considered traditional for the newly-Exalted to meet with the *malki* of their past incarnations, standing as equals before the flickering screens.

THE EXALTED IN EXILE

The Exalted rule the Eight Nations. The Solar Deliberative is the first and highest authority of the Autochthonian Realm, and their reign has stood since the dawn of the Chosen's long exodus. But the rule of the Lawgivers is not the absolute dominion of tyrants. While the Deliberative could impose its absolute will upon the Realm, it could not hope to hold the Eight Nations by force while at the same time holding off the attacks of the Primordials—civil war and bloody revolution have proved this to them. The Deliberative has recognized the rights of Celestial, Terrestrial, and even mortal for the sake of the Realm's continued existence. Sovereignty is held by the Lawgivers alone, but they may not ignore the council of their Sidereal Viziers, nor treat the Lunar shikari of the Void Hunt as mere trained dogs. In the face of oblivion, the Exalted Host stands together.

THE SOLAR EXALTED

The Solar Exalted are first among their peers, the greatest of all in might and mastery. As a Deliberative, they rule over the Realm; as Chosen, they are its greatest heroes. But their primacy is tempered by a humility born of defeat. It is written on the first line of the Tome of the Great Maker and upon the walls of the Solar Deliberative that not all could be saved, that even the Sun's Chosen were unable to deliver the whole of humanity or the Chosen from the Primordials. Under the burden of their ancient failure, they have committed to their plan of reclamation with unwavering conviction. Every Solar makes his own brand of heroism, be it reigning over nations, raising great

engines of industry, or dueling against the vile generals of the Primordials—but all of them stand united in one common purpose. The Sun's Chosen do not make their hard decisions and necessary sacrifices with callous detachment, but neither do they let their tears blind them to the greater purpose they pursue.

General Narikon of the Gunstar Defense Line

Four thousand years ago, General Narikon was dragged into the Great Maker's belly by his Lunar Mate, swearing eternal revenge against the Primordials and their spawn. Over the course of his exile, the Dawn's red-hot anger has cooled; instead of strangling the Holy Tyrant today, he will return with the finest army in existence at his back, and do it tomorrow. Narikon wants the Gunstar and everyone aboard to be that army, and he brooks no insubordination; in his eyes, the Primordial War did not truly end with the retreat of the Chosen, and every man, woman, and child of Autochthonia must prepare for the day when he takes his war back to the titans. Narikon is one of five generals of the Gunstar Defensive Line—the cordon of ships and Voidfighters standing ready to fend off the forces of the titans—and he takes his job with deadly seriousness. He is the only general to remember the War, and the world-cracking power of their monstrous foes. In the end, the Gunstar will go to war against the Primordials and their progeny; if this means that the Realm's citizens remain on war footing, then so be it. They were never at peace anyway.

Narikon savors every chance to make war against his ancient foes. He leads from the front, piloting his custom Voidfighter *Undaunted Sunrise*. Together, the Dawn and his Voidfighter have seen many battles; he taunted the Sun from its cockpit, leading the Daystar away from the Gunstar and riding the razor's edge between life and death the entire time. Narikon is just as deadly when not at the helm of his ship—when the World-Engulfing Maw fell upon the Gunstar, he dove into the behemoth's gullet, enduring the furious inferno of its stomachs and cleaving its heart in two. Extensive magitech augmentations have honed Narikon's body into an even deadlier fighting machine. His arm-mounted beamklave armature has been the last thing more than one Infernal has seen, and when one of the Empyreal Chaos' minions tore out his eye, he had it replaced with a miniaturized Essence cannon. The least Narikon can do is to remake himself for the coming war, just as his fellow Chosen are remolding the Great Maker. Next time, the Dawn vows, things will be very different.

Raanei, Empyrean Astrogator

Autocthonia sails a sea of alien stars, and Raanei plots its course. Her mathematical acumen is legendary; not a century into her tenure, she eluded the Daystar by navigating Autochthonia through a dense cluster of stellar vortices.

Halfway through, fire from the Sun overloaded her calculation array in a shower of flaming shrapnel. Raanei plotted the rest of the course in her head. As a senior Twilight, she holds tremendous authority, but rarely uses it; her cheerful face is known to all of Autochthonia's inhabitants, but she's rarely seen outside of official functions. Raanei spends hours each day dangling in a simulated void, plotting out a course on thin adamant filaments. She's also one of the few Exalted with the authority to consult with the Magnus; over the past few centuries, they've come to know each other well, though Raanei doesn't dare let down her guard around him. Conversation with the elder Twilight is one of the few pleasures she has left—he's left his mark on her, but it is nothing compared to what the crush of years has done to her.

Raanei is sick of running. She's sick of hiding, sick of being chased by the Yozis' war-beasts, sick of matching wits with her own mind-controlled patron, and sick of her fellows' politics. Despite all this, Raanei has no plans to sail Autochthonia back to the Spiral. To her, the idea is nothing short of suicide; the Yozis have had four millennia to tighten their grip on their winnings, and the fleets and monsters they've sent after the Deliberative are but a fraction of their might. What horrors have they devised in those four thousand years? Raanei has spent many a late shift calculating the odds, and what she's seen has convinced her that humanity cannot win this fight. Open war with the Yozis is simply not an option. Instead, the Deliberative should build its own homeworld, far away from the strife and terror of humanity's birthplace.

Raanei envisions a bold new era for humanity—an empire spanning dozens of worlds, united by a vast network of space-folding gates. These worlds will be everything that the Spiral was not: a place where the Chosen and their mortal followers can know rest. Their inhabitants won't want for safety, either; once its transformation into a world-weapon has been completed, the Gunstar will serve this empire as a mighty defensive aegis, a battle-station that can fend off the most vicious Primordial assault. Raanei knows that her plan will be greeted by scorn and accusation. But after each skirmish, each report of casualties, she finds herself caring for her colleagues' opinions even less.

THE MAGNUS

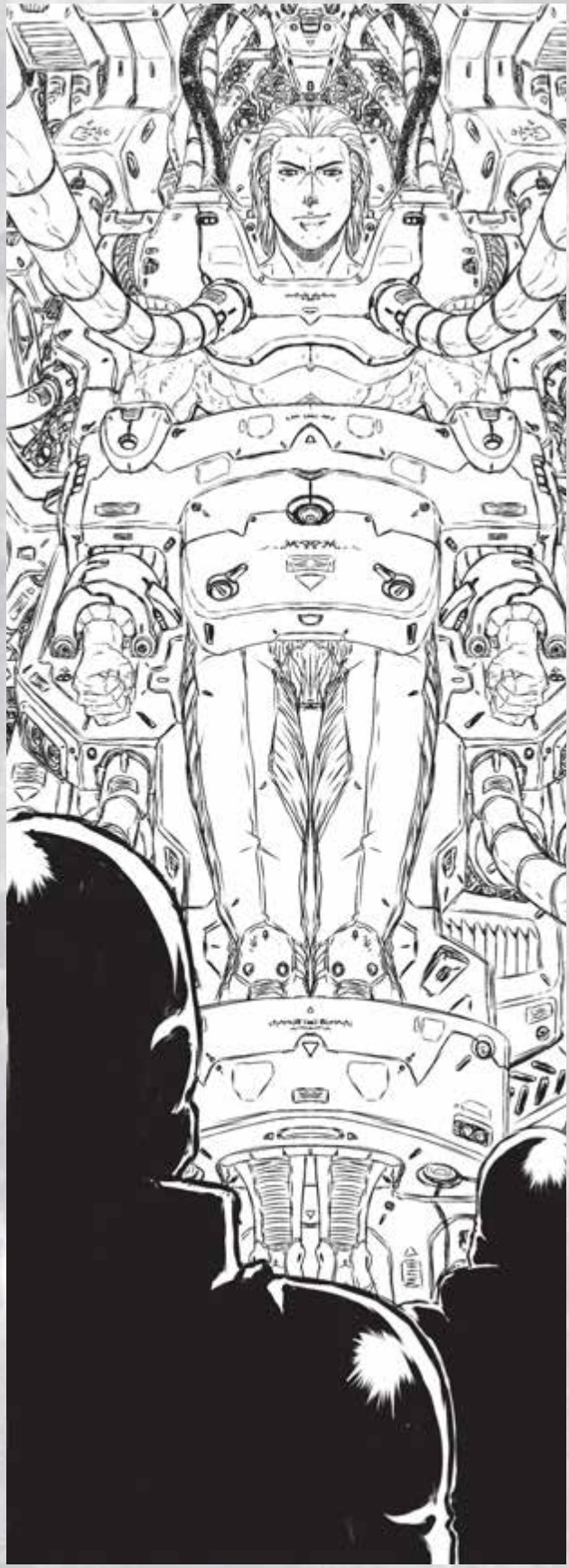
The Magnus is a prisoner of the Solar Deliberative. His cell is carved into the Elemental Pole of Crystal, trapped beneath miles of diamond and adamant. Glyphs of binding and sorcerous wards line the walls of his cell, drawing untold power from the geomantic infrastructure of Hadal to ensure that the arch-sorcerer cannot escape with one of his countless spells. An artificial blight zone opens into his prison, draining every last breath of Essence from him. It is not enough. Even with these precautions, the escape of the Magnus has been prevented only through the combined efforts of the Solar Deliberative. The renegade Twilight Caste is supremely intelligent, undauntedly bold, cunning, charismatic, brilliantly creative—and also dangerous. In the past, his superhuman intellect has served the Realm well. He designed the theurgic rituals used in reshaping the Great Maker's soul hierarchy, and played a crucial role in convincing the Great Maker to grant the secrets of sorcery to the Chosen. But as centuries went by, his plans grew in both ambition and madness. He blinded the eyes of the cosmic scorpion Ishiika and sent it into battle against the Tyrant Sun, darkened a thousand stars to conceal the Gunstar from pursuing Primordials, and even sought to trap the Silent Wind in a giant prayer-mill to serve as a power source. The Solar Deliberative grew fearful of him and his genius, coming to dread the thought of what he might do next. Finally, his enemies in the Deliberative moved to imprison him, casting him into the surest and strongest cage that the Exalted could devise.

In spite of all this, the Deliberative still needs the Magnus. His understanding of Primordial metaphysics, motonic science, and esoteric sorcery is unrivaled, making him often the only one capable of solving impassable obstacles in the theurgic modification of Autochthon or catastrophic failures of the Gunstar's magitech infrastructure. His solutions have never failed in all his centuries of imprisonment, though they often have their own catastrophic consequences, forcing his jailers to return and seek further advice from him. A geomantic grid recalibrated to his specifications may restore power to blacked-out sectors of the Realm Defense Grid, but its new Essence signature draws wild exmachina and destroyers out from the Reaches. Executing one of Autochthon's exmachina on the Magnus's orders might advance the process of theurgic transformation by years, but it will also cause Realm-wide

ON SORCERY

The victorious Primordials never gave the arts of sorcery to the Exalted of the Autochthonian Realm, having no need to stoop to so desperate a ruse. Instead, it was bestowed upon them at the hands of the Great Maker, though it took many long years before the titan was finally convinced to teach them. Similarly, the Infernal Exalted have been taught the circles of sorcery by their Primordial masters, while the Abyssals have unearthed the secrets of necromancy from the dread tombs beneath Black Non.

Because the unconquered titans never swore any oaths of surrender, sorcery cannot bind their souls, save when cast by their Infernal champions. Spells can still summon devas, but without the power to compel their loyalty, this is of little use to all but the most depraved or treacherous of sorcerers.



earthquakes as the Great Maker's body shudders in agony. The Deliberative has long since made the connection between the Magnus's plans and their unforeseen outcomes, but his insights are simply too valuable to cease dealing with him.

In conversation with his captors, the Magnus is composed, cultured, and often witty. He enjoys keeping up on the Realm's culture and intellectual discourse, often asking his interrogators to recite the aria from the latest Gulaki opera, explain the particulars of a new philosophical movement, or to keep him up to date on current events. He favors those who do, rewarding them with advice and boons that seem to carry no adverse consequences. But his genial demeanor doesn't mean he isn't dangerous. He is an analytical genius, comprehending the entirety of his interrogators' personal histories and psychological complexities before even the first word is spoken. His speech is laced with latent suggestions and hypnotic compulsions, the potent mental coercion of Charms he has had centuries to develop. Not even the powerful mental defenses of the Solar Exalted are a guarantee of safety against him, for the Magnus is a master of making offers that his captors will not *want* to resist, embedding his escape plans and complex agendas in their own desires and ambitions. Most do not ever realize they have been compromised by him, and those who do rarely comprehend the extent of his influence.

THEOPHANT WOTCH

From high atop the tallest spire in Kadar, Theophant Wotch looks down at his people with worry-darkened eyes. Barely two decades into his life, he's not only caring for the spiritual welfare of an entire nation, but forming a radical, heretical plan to ensure their survival. Wotch Exalted three years ago, during a routine surveying mission in the Reaches. A sudden malfunction sent their tunnel-speeder crashing through a conduit-forest; Wotch awoke to the screams and panic of his comrades. Several were dead, including their foreman. The young Populat took charge, and talked a sense of order into his colleagues. Under his command, the team cared for their wounded, and jury-rigged the speeder's systems to carry a glorious distress-prayer back to Yugash. The rescuers arrived to find the team safe and sound, and the blessing of the Sun upon its leader.

The Sun should have spoken to Wotch at the moment of his enlightenment, but he did not. Instead, Ignis Divine hounds his Chosen relentlessly, driving them deeper into the cosmos—enslaved by his father-king. The turmoil in Wotch's soul will not die until the day his patron is freed from his chains. He is newly-Chosen, and cannot hope to save the Sun alone; he needs allies, and powerful ones. Some of the Deliberative sees the Sun as a lost cause; others hold out hope, but urge caution, as the Gunstar is not yet complete, and open battle against the Daystar could be disastrous. Wotch is looking for an ace in the hole, even if he has to drag one out of the darkest depths of Autochtho-

nia's history. One of the few beings capable of challenging the Sun is the Viator of the Nullspace—Wotch hopes to find the Dread Gear, and convince him that Autochthon's salvation lies in the rescue of Ignis Divine. But before he can go through with it, he will need allies.

Crown of Gold

Crown of Gold was a Plutocrat before her Exaltation, a hundred years ago. Her rise through the ranks of the Chosen has been meteoric; she's one of the Deliberative's most brilliant economic strategists, and years of tutelage by her fellows have honed her acumen into a powerful instrument of efficiency. Though still young by Exalted standards, the Eclipse has become a force to be reckoned with. She's one of a handful of Chosen with the authority to set quotas and timetables for all of Autochthonia. This gives her broad, far-ranging authority over her society, including the plans of many of her fellows. Crown's blessing can ensure that a project goes ahead, and her ire can ensure that it dies before it even gets off the ground. Fortunately, the Eclipse is as friendly and impartial as she is intelligent, and she has not yet succumbed to favoritism.

But Crown isn't above manipulating her fellows if she feels it would benefit them. She can't assign her fellow Chosen like she can mortal workers, but she has other ways of moving them around—she learns their strengths, weaknesses, and preferences, and subtly steers them into appropriate assignments. There, they meet other Chosen, ones with compatible goals and interests. When disaster inevitably strikes, a new Circle will stand ready to fight it, even if its members don't realize they're a Circle until the dust settles. Sometimes, these Circles stick around long enough to be reassigned to other duties, sometimes they don't, and their members go their separate ways. Only rarely do things go wrong, but even these mistakes haven't swayed Crown from her goal. Yet.

Bauri of Shadows

Five hundred years ago, the Moonsilver colossus *Uncanny Mirror* fell in desperate battle. His soul returned to the Everfull Amphora, accumulating knowledge and humanity over subsequent incarnations; the Sodalities hoped that they could return it to service, empowering a Champion once more. Their plans fell through when its current owner, a Sovan named Bauri, Exalted as a Night Caste. The Solar was every bit as heroic as his predecessor, and soon made a name for himself as an infiltrator. After half a century of assassination and espionage, Bauri has become a spymaster in his own right—he controls a ring of operatives that spans the Octet. He's humble, professional, and quiet, but this masks the man's inner turmoil.

Bauri's husband, a Starmetal analyst named *Perfected Calculus*, has gone Apostate. The Night didn't see the warning signs until it was far too late—his closeness to *Calculus* led him to dismiss them as simple stress. Publicly, Bauri admits his guilt and vows to bring his errant partner to justice. Privately, he hopes against hope that somehow, he can find his Void-maddened lover and save him from himself before it is too late. Showing sympathy for the Void would jeopardize more than Bauri's career, so he seeks help through cutouts and disguises, hoping to evade the Void Hunt long enough to save *Calculus*, or end his torment.

The Shining Bodhisattva

The Shining Bodhisattva was the first of the Zenith Caste to be Chosen after the Unconquered Sun's betrayal, in the early days of exodus. As the burning euphoria of Solar Exaltation flowed through her body and soul, she saw a vision of the Sun, his noble countenance twisted with hatred. The Tyrant Sun stared into her with eyes like twin stars, and mouthed the words of a terrible promise: "I am coming for you." The Bodhisattva's eyes were burned to ash and cinders, blinding her, and soon after the Daystar came baying after the fleeing Gunstar. As if it were a brilliant beacon against the night-black sky, the Bodhisattva's Exaltation had called out to the Tyrant Sun, revealing the Gunstar despite all its defenses.

In the aftermath, as the Solar Deliberative struggled to recover from the Daystar's first devastating assault, the Shining Bodhisattva was overcome by a horrific guilt that has defined her to this day. Almost immediately, she began working to strengthen the Gunstar's defenses against the Tyrant Sun, laboring with the Sidereal Exalted to encode the Samkhya Heresy Protocols into the Loom of Fate, an impervious ward against prayer. So long as the Protocols stand, the betrayer Sun cannot sense the Exaltation to seek out his Chosen, nor can the titans hear the heretical prayers offered up by traitors within Autochthonia.

In the millennia since, the Shining Bodhisattva has ascended to the upper echelons of the Solar Deliberative, securing a role of prominence by dint of age and a fanatical enmity against the Tyrant Sun. Even as an elder, she refuses any healing that would restore her eyesight, bearing the burnt-out sockets like a badge of honor. She has spent untold years studying the psychology and metaphysics of the Unconquered Sun, exploiting his every flaw and shortcoming to secure the Gunstar Defense Line against incursions by the Daystar. Her favored stratagem is to stare into the face of the Sun, taunting him with empathic missives that force him to either abandon the Gunstar in pursuit of her, or to spurn his Valor and the awful might of his Godspear. Such a tactic is tantamount to suicide, but her hatred for the Tyrant Sun long since surpassed any fear of death she might have felt.

The Lunar Exalted

The Moonchildren fled alongside their Solar mates, and they've been safeguarding Solar interests ever since. The Lunars stalk through darkened corridors, enduring the worst horrors the Reaches could throw at them—and teaching those horrors fear. When the Void reaches twisted claws at the Realm, the Lunars beat them back. Luna's Chosen stalk among the Realm's citizens, searching for signs of treason;

even the most devout-seeming worker may offer up blasphemous prayers to the Void or the Yozis between shifts. But the Lunars' duties don't end at the Gunstar's walls—donning the forms of countless space-behemoths, they join their Exalted brethren in the war against the hordes of the Yozis. Other Lunars sit at the helms of Voidships, guiding them along the stellar winds to seek out worlds ripe with resources. In all of these duties, the Children of the Moon serve as the respected right hands of the Solars, and the fearsome guardians of the Realm. The Void Hunt, lead largely by Lunars, acts as the Deliberative's gauntleted fist. Its shikari delve deep into the Reaches to root out pernicious Gremlin infestations, and keep eyes open for signs of Voidbringer cults. When the Void Hunt rides out, it shows no mercy, and no quarter.

The Lunars' endless adaptability also makes them the perfect Chosen to spearhead the Deliberative's explorations. The depths of space hold horrors that could reach spindly limbs for the Gunstar at any time, as well as resource-rich worlds ripe for the picking. The Moonchildren comb the depths of the Void for threats and boons alike, serving as the first line of defense against whatever the cosmos decides to throw at the Chosen next. Once the rest of the Exalted Host knows what's out there, they can make plans to deal with it, or to exploit it.

Admiral Leviathan

Not ten months into his tenure as the captain of the scoutship *Far Moonrise*, Leviathan single-handedly destroyed one of Kimbery's swarms by luring it into a Wyld-nebula thick with raksha. The tactic was unorthodox, experimental, and insane—and it set the tone for the Admiral's career. The wily Full Moon has made a name for himself by taking risks no one else would, and staring down odds that would make other Chosen go pale in the face. Stories of Admiral Leviathan's exploits are the grist for countless popular novels; broadcast programs feature audio dramas of his encounters with things out in the void. Though as fearsome a foe as any of his brethren, Leviathan is also magnetic and charismatic, a trait he puts to good use in his leadership of the Gunstar's Expeditionary Fleet. His crews would die for him, and he would die for them, in turn—and both put their all into ensuring that neither outcome happens. More than once, he's thrown himself from an airlock, assumed the form of an interstellar horror, and savaged the monsters attacking his ship. Leviathan has hunted some of the deadliest creatures of the cosmos, and he's all too happy to turn their forms against the Gunstar's pursuers.

Lately, though, doubts from an unexpected quarter have been weighing on the Admiral's mind. The Gunstar's flight has left a trail of barren worlds in its wake; much of the Deliberative sees them and their inhabitants as necessary sacrifices in an endless war. Leviathan has seen them in person—he's heard the heartbreaking greeting-song of the Motlani, and seen the mind-shattering complexity of the hive-thoughts of the Lok'thul. He's taken outsiders as friends, mentors, students, and lovers—and all have been lost to the aeons, along with their worlds. Each time he sets out on another journey, the Admiral wonders if it will end in heartbreak, as so many of them have.

White Scar Huntress, Queen of the Menagerie

White Scar Huntress is the No Moon priestess who oversees the Hallowed Menagerie of Emerald Children, a sprawling arcology of floating adamant spheres strung between the metropoli of Nurad. Here can be found herds of wild yeddim roaming through artificial grasslands, orcas and kraken swimming in deep-sea habitats, and the last tyrant lizard in his lonely jungle home. While the nation's other synthetic environments house agricultural industry or civic entertainment, the tiger-queen's conservancy is an arsenal. Luna's Chosen come to sample the Heart's Blood of deadly predators and exotic flora, while genesis engineers harvest breeding stock and raw materials to make their artificial life. The White Scar Huntress holds exclusive right of approval over all such requests, giving her considerable political sway among both her Lunar peers and the savants of the Twilight Caste. Her favored bribe is sex—not just for herself, but for the animal inhabitants of the menagerie. Over the years, she has amassed a personal army of Half-Caste beastman through such bribes, and eagerly awaits the day when she may lead them against the Primordials.

A Question of Caste

Within the setting of Gunstar Autochthonia, the Lunar Exalted were created with only the Full Moon, Changing Moon, and No Moon castes. The "lost castes" of Creation's First Age (see **Lords of Creation**, p. 17-18) never existed in this alternative setting. Likewise, there is no Wyld taint for the Luna's Chosen to contend with, nor any risk of them devolving into chimera. While some Lunars wear moonsilver tattoos as a ward against the harmful Shaping they may encounter in the Void Hunt, the tattoos are not needed to fix a Lunar into a caste.

The Sidereal Exalted

The Five-Score Fellowship serves the Solar Deliberative on matters esoteric and metaphysical. It was the Sidereal Exalted who brought the Loom of Fate into the Palace of the Maidens above Hadal, and who wove its strands of causality into the Design of Autochthon. Sidereal magic encoded the patterns of the Seal of Five Divinities into the Loom of Fate, creating a perdurant ward that would prevent

the Celestial Exaltations of any Chosen within fate from fleeing Autocthonia upon their death. When Wyldstorms seep into Autochthonia and eat away at time and space with tongues of indigo lightning, it is the Sidereals who reweave the tapestry of the world. When Yugashi experiments delve too deeply into shinmaic manipulation, it is the Sidereals who erase the conceptual damage done to the universe. While the Maidens weave the strands of destiny, it is the Sidereals who ensure that no harm comes to their tapestry.

The Sidereals also serve as oracles and viziers, providing prophecy and council to the Lawgivers. Questions of policy, warfare, technology, and even personal life are brought to the Chosen of the Maidens, in hopes that their prophesies can reveal what is obscured to the cogitations and deductions of even the most brilliant Solars. Although the Viziers have no formal power in the Deliberative, the trust placed in them entails a substantial sum of political influence. Elder Solars accept this as a necessary aspect of ruling the Realm, remaining open to the persuasions of their Viziers even while ceaselessly testing their loyalty to the Deliberative.

Ni Zhang

The elder Ni Zhang is recognized throughout the Realm as one of the wisest spiritual gurus among the Chosen, a living wellspring of insight, guidance, and enlightenment. Celestial and Dragon-Blooded alike study at his feet, cultivating their Essence and mastering the patterns of the esoteric martial arts styles that are Ni Zhang's favored parables of necessary violence and right action. Solars vie for the precious reward of personal instruction in the most advanced Sidereal styles from the master, playing great games of political negotiation to secure the privilege. Ni Zhang is unimpressed by bribes and favors, preferring that potential students prove themselves through great quests and heroic labors. Some have found an easier method to secure his tutelage—blackmail. Ni Zhang has taken the demon Mara as both his lover and sifu, learning the wicked arts of the Black Claw style from the insidious demon. Once every season, he summons her into Autochthonia for a night of sparring and furious lovemaking, flagrantly violating the Deliberative's bans on infernalism. A select circle of the old Sidereal's "favorite students" coerced their way into his tutelage with the threat of exposure, forcing him to instruct them in his most secret styles. The Vizier endures this extortion with customary patience, but has little real concern that his secrets will come to light. Some have tried to reveal him before, but poisoned corpses tell no tales. Ni Zhang enjoys his life of contemplation and serenity, and he does not hesitate in killing if he must do so to preserve that life.

Righteous Sage Bride

The Gunstar flees through space, haunted at every step by foes of the Chosen—it's no small wonder, then, that some view love as a luxury. The Righteous Sage Bride is not one of those Chosen. She is a matchmaker without peer, and for centuries, she's lent her services to the Chosen of the Deliberative. When the Lawgiver Nine Scars Lan refused to fight, stricken with grief over the death of his family, she matched him with his long-suffering Sidereal lieutenant, whose heart burned with secret love for him. When a pair of Twilights threatened to kill each other over their pet engineering projects, Righteous Sage Bride helped them see how much they had in common—and how union in marriage would be far preferable to competition. A tiny portion of the Joygiver's success is due to her personality; her warm, matronly attitude puts all but the most jaded Chosen at ease, and she's always willing to listen to their troubles. The rest of it is due to her terrifying social acumen. Righteous Sage Bride can see the invisible cracks running through her society like spider-webs—Chosen driven to extremes through grief, stress, or simple hubris; familial and work relationships strained to the breaking point by the harsh demands of life in wartime. The Vizier mends these cracks with a deft, steady hand, maneuvering her fellow Exalted into relationships meant to patch them. Marriage is also a potent tool to ensure that like minds stick together, and become even more productive for their closeness. Chosen united in matrimony by Righteous Sage Bride are happy, productive, and most importantly, less likely to disrupt others' serenity.

The Vagaries of Fate

The Sidereal Exalted of **Gunstar Autochthonia** do not suffer from Arcane Fate, nor has the potent magic of their Astrological Charms been sealed away from them. The Primordial War has yet to be concluded in the eyes of the Maidens, and they will not deny the Chosen their most powerful weapons before the final battle is ended.

The Alchemical Exalted

Autochthon unleashed his Alchemical Exalted in the last days of the Primordial War, hoping that the arrival of his Chosen would be enough to turn the tide against the conquering titans. It was a desperate decision, and a dangerous one—the Gunstar's hull still bears the scars of his siblings' wrath as testament to this. And, for all this, the Alchemicals failed in their mission. Now, they have taken up a new role as Champions of the Eight Nations. Alchemical Exalts defend the citizens of the Realm against infernal invaders and gremlinized machine spirits, inspire the laboring masses through their heroic examples, and testify on behalf of the mortal populace in the halls of the Solar Deliberative. While the other Celestial Exalted are a distant afterthought out in

the Farthest Reaches or the void of space, the Champions are a constant presence the lives of the Realm's mortals. The Deliberative allocates ample magical materials to the construction of new Alchemicals, and gives the Chosen of the Great Maker a wide berth in deciding how best they might serve the Realm. The Lawgivers recognize the value of giving the Champions their freedom. The thousand-strong forces of the Alchemical Exalted extend the reach of the Solar Deliberative considerably, and have given protection and representation enough to the mortal populace to quiet the worst rebellion. But even with this, a Champion's work is not always easy. Many find themselves caught between conflicting duties, asked both to serve the people and to carry out the relentlessly pragmatic agendas of the Solar Exalted. While the Alchemical Exalted recognize the necessity of the Deliberative's plans, many find themselves struggling to justify the sacrifices of lives and principles that the Lawgivers make.

Most Champions make their own peace with this, serving loyally despite their misgivings—but not all. Alchemical heroes have risen up against the Deliberative before, using their personal presence among the Realm's citizens to recruit revolutionaries to their cause. While rumors of dissension and subterfuge have marred the reputation of the Alchemical Exalted throughout the millennia, the last popular uprising was put down more than a century ago, quelling the voices of doubt in the Deliberative and beyond. But then, the Apostates came. With the revelation of the mysterious disease that twisted Champions into psychopathic techno-organic abominations, the Alchemicals have come under constant scrutiny. While the Solar Deliberative remains confident in the loyalty of their Champions, the Lunars of the Void Hunt are less trusting, ever-vigilant for signs of subversion or betrayal. Most Apostates have been forced into hiding under this surveillance, disappearing either into the masses of mortal society or out into the Farthest Reaches, leaving the uncorrupted Champions to bear the brunt of Lunar suspicions.

Adamant Castes serve a another role. The Blessed of Kadmek are entrusted with policing the ranks of the Exalted for signs of dissidence, corruption, and infernalism, reporting directly to the Night Castes of the Solar Deliberative. Although their mandated duty is purely to surveil and arrest Primordial agents, it is tacitly understood among the Deliberative that political dissension can be just as dangerous to the Exalted cause as any other betrayal. Much as their five-metal brethren must balance their role as Champions with the pragmatism of the Lawgivers, so too are Adamants conflicted by their ordained duty and the demands of their Solar spymasters.

Unbowed Golden Advocate

Three thousand years ago, *Advocate* rose from the Vats of Hadal. Commissioned as a strategist, he demonstrated willpower and charisma when he brought a case before the Deliberative in the aftermath of a clash with the Daystar; an overload in Sova's power grid brought down the antiquated heat-shields of three siphon-settlements, resulting in serious damage and over a hundred deaths. *Advocate* did not hide the tremor in his voice as he recollected the stories he'd gathered from the survivors, and in the process, moved the Lawgivers to tears and action. Sova's municipal systems were retrofitted in a matter of months. The Deliberative tasked *Advocate* with keeping his hand on the pulse of Autochthonian society, and acting as an intermediate between the common folk and their distant leaders.

Over the centuries, *Advocate* has worked his way into a precarious position. Some of his colleagues resent him for his influence, while several of his patrons' Lunar mates still view him with suspicion. As the Deliberative sets its sights on the Spiral once again, *Advocate* fights a continual battle to ensure that they do not forget what they're fighting for. More than one Lawgiver sees the Champion as a close, personal friend; many share feelings that they would share with no one else. As a result, *Advocate* knows the hopes, dreams, and fears of some of humanity's greatest heroes. For all his knowledge, *Advocate* remains uncertain of the lengths the Solars will go to in their quest to return to the Spiral. Late at night, he wonders if one of his fellows will lead the final rebellion, or if he himself will march at its head.

The Dragon-Blooded

Once, the Dragon-Blooded were the foremost soldiers in the Army of the Gods, marching against hosts of devas and star-spanning behemoths. To the Terrestrial Exalted, that war has still not ended. Dragon-Blooded are still the elite soldiers of the Exalted, piloting voidfighters on the Gunstar Defense Line or serving in the ranks of the Deliberative Army. Other Dragon-Blooded serve the Realm as magitech engineers and technicians, installing and maintaining the industrial wonders of the Eight Nations. Still others are district administrators, overseeing the local government and bureaucracy of metropoli while the Solar Exalted rule from on high. In all things, the Dragon-Blooded are the esteemed and honored subordinates of the Celestial Exalted, beneath them in station and power, but not in dignity.

Upon Exaltation, a young Dragon-Blood is taken from her family and enrolled in one of the Realm's Terrestrial academies. The Steel Crucible of Dragons Academy puts those with the most martial aptitudes through grueling regimens of training in preparation for service in the Gunstar Defense Line. Those with an aptitude for command are placed in the Upright Soldier Military Academy, or in the Scarlet Academy of Proper Bearing if their inclinations lean more towards governance than warcraft. Youth with the makings of a savant or sorcerer are enrolled in the Eight Degrees of Enlightenment Academy, learning the fundamentals of magitech and the motonic sciences from pedagogic material intelligences. Once a Dragon-Blood has

completed five years of hyper-accelerated education, she is formally recognized as a member of the Terrestrial Host and a hero of the Realm.

Companions of the Chosen

Humanity is not the only race in exile. While mortal and Exalted humans make up nearly the entirety of the Autochthonian Realm's populace, its cities are also home to gods, exmachina, renegade deva, and the last surviving Dragon Kings. A small enclave of gods holds court in the Palace of the Maidens, those who survived the wrath of the Primordials in the last days of the War. These gods are not worshipped directly by the mortal peoples of the Realm, but instead receive tithes of Essence from the prayers made unto the Exalted. In exchange, they serve the Solar Deliberative, granting their blessings and boons. Lytek labors tirelessly over the Celestial Exaltations in his sanctum-laboratory, while the goddess Wun Ja casts her auspices upon the Municipal Charms that form the basis of the Realm's infrastructure. The Rat Avatar oversees the progress of the Scurrying Nation, a nomadic kingdom of talking rats that has spent centuries mapping out the crawlspaces and narrow passageways of the Reaches on behalf of the Deliberative.

The Divine Ministers also attend the meetings of this court, representing the Great Maker and his pantheon. While these supreme exmachina have cooperated with the Solar Deliberative since its inception, they do not trust the Sun's Chosen. Ku's empty throne stands as a testament to the lengths to which the Exalted will go to achieve their aims, and each of the Ministers fears that his execution might one day be deemed a necessary sacrifice. Beside them are the rebel deva, spirits who rose up against their Primordials in defiance. While these renegade souls were welcomed aboard the Gunstar in recognition of their war heroism, they have never fully escaped the suspicion that comes with their Primordial descent. Most keep to seclusion, save for a few confidantes among the gods or Sidereal Exalted.

While the divinities keep to their abode in the Palace of the Maidens, the Dragon Kings live amidst humanity. Once the mightiest and most honored of the races made by the Primordials, the Dragon Kings have fallen far, brought to the break of extinction by the wrath of the Shining Tyrant. Now, they linger on by the benevolence of the Exalted. Most keep to dedicated environments in the arcologies of Nurad, dwelling amid ziggurats and great monuments built in imitation of their lost home planet. A few have made homes in Hadal, living alongside the Exalted. While some have found membership in the Void Hunt or the Deliberative Army, little is expected of them by the Exalted. Most Solars look at the Dragon Kings as a race already broken by their ordeals, and see little use in pushing them further. Whether this is compassion or condescension, this attitude is almost universal in the Deliberative.

One race is notable by its absence. The People of Adamant, favored children of the Great Maker and ancient ancestors of humanity, are not to be found anywhere within the Autochthonian Realm. When She Who Lives in Her Name learned that the Great Maker had created his own Exalted to stand against his kindred titans, she vented her outrage upon his most beloved creations. She burned the free will and identity from their minds, remaking them as a collective hivemind that serves the Principle of Hierarchy with perfect obedience.

The Guns of the Lawgivers

Glowing pinpoints of green light appear against the black background of a hologlyphic screen. Across an entire metropolis, the shrill static whine of clarions sounds out, sending mortals fleeing to jade-domed shelters deep underground. But the men and women of the Gunstar Defense Line do not flee. Staccato metallic clicks rise above the alarums as dozens of launch gates swing open from the face of the Immaculate Dragon Aerie. Voidfighters scramble, glinting in the red beams of warning-lights as they set course through a shimmering rift in space, flying out into the void. As a swarm of rust-hulled demon fighters close in, the Dragon-Blooded pilots hold fast their blockade. They are all that stands between the massed armies of the Primordials and their home.

The Gunstar Defense Line is the largest branch of the Solar Deliberative's military forces, more than doubling every other branch combined in numbers. Its void-pilots risk their lives flying interdiction for the Gunstar, keeping demonic invaders from swarming into Autochthonia and holding infernal battleships at bay. Maintaining a barricade against any enemy that can approach from any direction in three-dimensional space would be next to impossible, but the powerful weaponry of the Realm Defense Grid mounted on the Gunstar's hull forces invaders to approach through narrow blind spots to avoid obliteration, giving the Defense Line a clear field of battle to hold. Every metropolis that could be assailed through one of these blind spots has its own posting of the Gunstar Defense Line, operating out of the silo-spire of an Immaculate Dragon Aerie, a combined forward base, hangar and barracks. Within the Aerie's black walls, its Dragon-Blooded pilots lead a life of constant training and vigilance. Flight drills, combat simulations, and tactical training are carried out using the Realm's most advanced technology, from memory crystal uplinks to vaults of woven dreams. Stimulant drugs keep them awake and functional on only a few hours of sleep. When the clarions sound, the voidfighters move out in seconds.

A council of five Solar generals appointed by the Deliberative leads the Gunstar Defense Line, overseeing campaigns across the entire Realm. Reporting directly to them are the brigadiers, who head the Defense Line's operations in a single metropolis. Most are Solars, although

VOIDFIGHTER GUNSHIPS (ARTIFACT ••••)

Repair: 3

These magitech gunships are the premier fighters of the Gunstar Defense Line. Voidfighters have a small, sharp-nosed cockpit flanked by two long, angled wings, with a hull composed of jade-moonsilver alloy. Essence-powered nacelles at the rear of the ship provide constant propulsion even in the airless depths of space. Beneath the wings hangs an array of fixed artifact weapons, both long-range Essence cannons and devastating nova warheads. Potent utility artifacts are integrated into the ship, providing the gunships' Dragon-Blooded pilots with potent Alchemical Charms and constant mental contact with Sidereal tacticians in Hadal. It is a ship that embodies the unified strength of the Exalted, and the armies of the Primordials have learned to fear it.

Voidfighter Gunships are constructed as an Artifact 4, but the Solar Deliberative has allocated massive amounts of infrastructure and resources towards the production of the gunships. As such, any pilot with Backing 3 in the Gunstar Defense Line is given a voidfighter without needing to purchase it with the Artifact Background.

Speed: 60/120 mph

Maneuverability: +3S (Lore 2, Sail 2)

Endurance: A voidfighter must be powered by an Artifact 3+ elemental core in order to operate. Maintenance is required for every twenty hours of operation; without it, the ship takes one level of lethal damage for every ten hours it is in arrears.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: Two passengers or equivalent cargo.

Armor: 20L/25B

Health Levels: Ux10/Mx5/Cx4/Ix2/D

Integrated Artifacts

Long-Range Essence Cannons: Speed 5, Accuracy +1, Damage 15L, Rate 2, Range 1,000. Each shot costs three motes.

Nova Warheads: Speed 5, Accuracy +0, Damage 30A, Rate 1, Range 1,000. All ships within 100 yards of the initial point of detonation are damaged if their DV is lower than the pilots attack roll. Charging a nova warhead costs ten motes.

Auspicious Relay Node: A clockwork assembly of starmetal housed beneath the control console of a voidfighter maintains a constant uplink to the Loom of Fate, allowing the Sidereal Exalted to synchronize with the ships of the Gunstar Defense Line. A Sidereal in Hadal using a Loom terminal may attune his senses to multiple voidfighters, committing a single mote for each ship he wishes to focus on. While he maintains this commitment, the Sidereal can telepathically communicate with the pilots of those ships, and simultaneously experiences everything they see. He can also activate any Sidereal Awareness Charms he knows on behalf of a pilot, allowing them to benefit from it as though they had used it. Charms used through an Auspicious Relay Node still follow all normal rules for Combos, and both the Sidereal and the pilot must take any actions needed to use an activated Charm.

Dragon's Roar Resonance Engine: The ship's elemental core is ensconced in an ornate matrix of jade, causing it to resonate with the terrestrial element of its Dragon-Blooded pilot. As long as the ship is piloted by a Dragon-Blood, it gains a pool of thirty motes that can be spent to power its weaponry (but not on Charms or other magic). Once this pool of resonant Essence is depleted, it does not refill until the ship has received maintenance. Additionally, a voidfighter is never damaged by Terrestrial anima flux.

Environmental Shielding: A voidfighter gunship's hull provides full protection against the hazards of exposure to hard vacuum. The ship is also capable of producing an unlimited supply of air, synthesizing it from Essence drawn out of its elemental core.

Integrated God-Machine Grid: Veteran pilots customize their Voidfighters using the Integrated God-Machine Grid, a potent magitech assembly derived from the god-technology of Alchemical Exaltation. A soulgem encased in solid adamant is installed within the ship, connected to four Charm Slots distributed across the ship. Specially-constructed artifacts that emulate specific Alchemical Charms can be installed in these slots, allowing the gunship's pilot to activate them as though they were his own. He must commit the full installation cost of each Charm plus one mote each upon entering the ship, and cannot use Charms whose Attribute or Essence minimums he does not meet, or whose prerequisite Charms are not also installed. Only Charms that could logically function as an upgrade to a ship can be installed in the Grid: Aim-Calibrating Sensors might impose a targeting reticule over the ship's viewscreen, but a Piston-Driven Megaton Hammer could not be modified to be compatible with a ship. Colossus and Municipal Charms are never compatible. Alchemical Charms made for the Integrated God-Machine Grid are constructed as three-dot artifacts. Additional Charm Slots can be added to the Grid as separate two-dot artifacts.

especially skilled or elder Dragon-Blooded may also receive brigadier postings. Beneath these are a sprawling hierarchy of Terrestrial officer ranks. While the vast majority of pilots are Dragon-Blooded, other Exalted also serve in the ranks. Lunars on the Line are among its most devastating aces. Luna's Chosen have no need of gunships, shapeshifting into deadly battle-forms in which to grapple and crush demons and behemoths. Some Alchemicals also see service on the Line as the best way to protect the mortals they champion, using their technomorphic Charms to integrate themselves into their voidfighter ships—or, like some Colossi, transforming themselves into living warships. With only the rarest exceptions, Sidereals are too few and too fragile to risk in direct combat. Instead, they act as tactical analysts and intelligence operatives, coordinating the operations of voidfighter squadrons through telepathic links and prescient insight—throughout the history of the Gunstar Defense Line, only three Sidereals have ever served as combat pilots.

While the Gunstar Defense Line patrols the void for external threats, the Deliberative Army stands against those from within, a legion of augmented mortal soldiers under Dragon-Blooded captains. Every advancement in Realm military technology has been put to use preparing these soldiers for a second Primordial War: anagathic treatments, power armor, mutation regimens, Essence-enlightening thaumaturgy, martial sorcery, and more. When demonic invasions, exmachina incursions, or civil war threaten the cities of the Eight Nations, it is the Deliberative Army that marches to put them down. But for all its training, augmentation, and preparedness drills, the Deliberative Army has been relegated to small-scale incursions and planetary expeditions, denied the chance to take the fight to the Primordials. Centuries of constant drill, ceremony, and technological advancement might keep its mortal members content, but even they are starting to feel restless—to say nothing of the demigods who have spent centuries preparing for the Second Primordial War. The Army's leadership chomps at its bit, pushing for any opportunity to deploy its forces. Voidfighter pilots often dismiss the Army as a legion of layabouts, drilling with flashy weapons while the Gunstar Defense Line fights the forces of the Primordials face-to-face. Deliberative soldiers, in turn, see Defense Line pilots as arrogant hot-shots who expect the Army to clean up their mistakes.

COILS OF THE COSMOS

HARVESTING THE STARS

In their journeys through the stars, the Exalted have sometimes come across stellar debris adrift in the void of space, drifting asteroids and dwarf-planetoids littering the starry depths like so much dust. Encountering these cast-off fragments is a great opportunity for the Realm, for they often run rich in veins of precious metals and magical materials. Mining machinery designed to hew through the metal flesh of the Great Maker can drill through stone as though it were slush, providing a rapid boom of invaluable resources. When the Gunstar encounters these, it deploys paramagnetic cages installed on its exterior hull to capture them, then draws them in towards an access portal. Once they are secured, mortal mining crews headed by an Alchemical foreman are sent to survey and extract anything of value. But this opportunity is not without dangers. Life can endure even in the harsh depths of space, and the creatures that teem in the depths of alien worlds are inimically hostile to Autochthonia's peoples. Chthonic horrors flail spined, venomous tentacles at miners unlucky enough to unseal their cavernous tombs, while biolumenescent fungi can strand mortals in a hypnotic daze until they starve to death. Such horrors are collectively called the Darkbrood, and their discovery spurs swift responses from the Alchemical Exalted or the shikari of the Void Hunt.

Other times, the Gunstar comes across entire worlds: orphan planets flung loose from the coils of the Spiral, or distant worlds not of the titan's making. Planets are mined out entirely in a process that can take seasons, the only labor for which the Exalted will cease the Gunstar's flight for so long a span. After powerful Essence-sensing scanners analyze the mineral content of the newfound world, shuttlecraft descend on it carrying tens of thousands of mortal laborers and massive mining automatons, capable of hollowing out a planet's mineral veins in incredibly short spans of time. Eclipse Caste speed the process of labor through supernatural planning and organizational magic, while the Five-Score Fellowship provides mass blessings of astrology to the mining force.

Some rare few of these worlds are populated by intelligent life: the jewel-skinned Sephoi, the many-bodied Jathorn swarms, the living islands of the Nanithoi Dominion. Most are driven to nigh-extinction by the Solars' campaign of mass mining, even peaceful species, as their native habitats are torn asunder. It is a doleful price to pay, but the harvest of planets is crucial to the operations of the Realm. More dangerous than the threat of hostile aliens is that posed by the Primordial fleet. Should the Gunstar be caught by the forces of the Primordials in the middle of planetary mining, they would be forced into devastating retreat, leaving behind thousands of lives and invaluable artifact infrastructure to the mercy of the Primordials. The Gunstar Defense Line is deployed in full force during these expeditions, maintaining a tense watch for the first signs of demonic incursion.

At other times, the Exalted have found stranger phenomena adrift in the void. Shimmering nebulae of prismatic Essence called Wyldstorms warp time and space, creating

rifts and anomalies that pose a danger even to the Exalted. Twilight Caste savants have studied them with boundless curiosity, positing that their chaotic flux may be the fundamental matter from which the titans built the Spiral. They have developed Charms to shape these nebulae into matter, creating infant-worlds rich in resources or exotic components for their artifacts. But these nebulae are also

The Scarlet Empress (Artifact •••••)

The *Scarlet Empress* is an experimental voidship, capable of transforming from a swift gunfighter into a crimson warstrider designed for space combat. Initial testing of the prototype ended in failure, as even the most experienced Terrestrial pilots could not master the complexity and power of the experimental craft—until one did. During a devastating ambush by an armada of hellforged warships, an untested Dragon-Blooded officer stole the *Scarlet Empress* out of dry dock, piloting it to a daring and decisive victory. Hologlyphic images of her duel with the terrifying battle-shintai of the armada's Infernal admiral played above the hall of the Solar Deliberative as she was unanimously ratified the pilot of the prototype gunship.

Since then, the fiery young officer has established her legend as an ace pilot of the Gunstar Defense Line, standing among the ranks of the fleet's most honored veterans. Such is her celebrity that even the Solar Exalted have taken favorable notice of her, commissioning transforming gunships of their own modeled after the *Scarlet Empress*. But she has also become the center of a great political and scientific intrigue, as Celestial savants race to determine how she was able to take the controls of the impossible ship. Such a discovery would bring unimaginable prestige and fame, revolutionizing the Gunstar's fleet—and there are Exalts who would stop at nothing to claim such an honor for their own.

Mechanically, the *Scarlet Empress* is a voidfighter gunship that is capable of transforming into a jade noble warstrider (see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 142) as a Speed 8, DV -3 miscellaneous action that cannot be flurried. In warstrider mode, the *Empress* retains half of its full flight speed and access to all of the voidfighter's integrated artifacts. An Artifact 5+ elemental core is required to provide power. So far, the *Empress*'s pilot is the only non-Solar to ever achieve attunement with this model of prototype ship, for reasons still undetermined.

home to an insane alien race, grotesque monsters that would like nothing better than to crack the Gunstar open like an egg and devour the succulent souls inside. While the Solar Exalted have carried out their Wyld-Shaping research with little concern for the raksha, keeping them at bay with magitech weaponry or battle sorcery, the shikari of the Void Hunt have grown increasingly suspicious over the dangers of the practice in the last few centuries. Some No Moons wonder whether the Wyldstorms themselves might not be alive and sentient, the fully-matured form of the parasitic, larval raksha. What dread metamorphosis might the aliens undergo if they were to taste the Essence of the Exalted?

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE

When the Exalted fled from the Spiral in the last days of the Primordial War, it was with the baying howls of the Daystar at their heels. As the Solar Exalted desperately drove the Great Maker onward in his flight, it was Luna who came to their defense. She fought the Tyrant Sun to a standstill in single combat, enduring blow after blow from his fatal Godspear and still spitting defiance in his face. Only when the Exalted escaped the Spiral did she fall before his wrath.

SURVIVING IN SPACE

Exposure to the hard vacuum of outer space is deadly without protective artifacts or Charms. As space has no breathable air, anyone caught without an air supply will die of suffocation (see **Exalted**, p. 130). Unprotected characters also face the environmental hazard with Damage 10L/minute, Trauma 4 from both depressurization and the freezing cold of the abyss.

Spacesuits that provide immunity to this hazard and supply unlimited air are two-dots artifacts with an attunement cost of five motes. Lunars may immunize themselves to the environmental hazard of space with Northern Mastery Technique (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**, p. 157), while Alchemicals may use the Steam submodule of the Industrial Survival Frame (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals**, p. 137).

But Luna did not die in that dire battle. As the Tyrant Sun strode forward to deliver the final stroke, the Emerald Mother descended on wings of apocalyptic fury. Sheltering her fallen lover behind an aegis ripped from the face of a planet, Gaia delayed the Sun long enough to bring Luna onto the comet Gnosis. Stopping only to sweep up a score of mortals and Dragon-Blooded left behind by the Solar Exalted, Gaia drove the comet out into the furthest reaches of space, entering into her own exile with her beloved at her side.

The Solar Deliberative scans the skies constantly for any sign of the wayward Gnosis, casting exploratory probes and sorcerous divinations out into the void in hope of finding the Argent Madonna and the Emerald Mother. An empty moonsilver cathedral stands ever-ready to receive her and her titanic lover should they ever be found, its altar engraved with a memorial to Luna and all of her Chosen. Someday the Solars hope to find her, to thank her for standing when they could not. Gnosis will be brought aboard the Gunstar, a safe haven against the hunting horrors that have pursued it, while Luna and Gaia will make potent allies for the Solar Deliberative. With their joined forces, the Exalted might finally be able to end the war for good.

THE SPIRAL

What awaits the Exalted when they finally end their exodus? The world that the Primordials made is known to them as the Spiral, a vast cosmology arrayed in seven coils. It is little but legend to most of Autochthonia, existing only in the memories of the Exalted. Even to most Celestials, it is remembered only as a heap of broken images—ancient, shrouded in myth, but still home. What is known is recorded in the secret scriptures of the Tome of the Great Maker. Legends of the Spiral are read aloud at the welcome banquets of the newly Exalted, and whispered to infants in their nativity creches.

At the highest coil of the Spiral lies the abode of the titans, where the Empyreal Chaos holds court amid crystal manses and starry towers. Where the lowest coils winds to its close, the city of Black Non rises out of the crypt-bodies of the Neverborn at the place where existence ends. In the coils between hang countless worlds, shimmering jewels in the dark. It is a paradise in which any joy or horror can be found. There are worlds where violet flames burn at the edges of time, and worlds whose dreaming depths hold secrets unknown even to titans. Worlds with diamond clouds, forests of corpses, slumbering dragons, oceans of gemstone and metal. Such are the treasures await the Exalted when they finally return to reclaim their rightful thrones.

Or at least, so say the legends.

STRIFE FROM WITHIN

CIVIL WAR

The Deliberative stands as a unified front in the face of the Yozis. But each Lawgiver has her own vision of how their world should function, what the proper approach to the looming war should be, and so on—conflict is inevitable. Hadal is a center of intrigue as well as coordination:

Solars sometimes wage bureaucratic wars over crucial resources, and many Lawgivers are firm in their belief that their favored projects are the best hope for humanity. Though the Chosen of the Moon and Stars hold no official power, this has only moved their agendas to the shadows. Using silvered tongues and cunning plans, they try to guide the Lawgivers in whatever directions they see fit. Exceptional, trusted Dragon-Blooded can gain the ear of their superiors, granting them influence one might not expect from soldiers.

Sometimes, the inner peace of the Realm is shattered by treason or the threat of civil war. The Sidereal known as Ten Stars, driven to insanity by something he'd seen in the outer dark, tried to warp the Samkhya Heresy Protocols within the Loom, turning it into a beacon for the Primordials' armies. The shadow war between Priest-King Moh and his No Moon nemesis, Nadika, almost flared hot when Moh's mate accused Nadika of infernalism. It took the collected might of the Deliberative to pry the two rivals away from each other's throats. But some of the most enduring rebellions came not from the Solars, Lunars, or Sidereals—they arose from the lowest rung of society, and bore Champions as leaders.

Less than five centuries into the Deliberative's reign, the Adamant Caste *Harbinger of the Golden Engine* led a popular rebellion in Estasia, using subterfuge and bribery to gain the loyalty of the nation's regulator corps. At its height, the Operative's power base stretched across three separate metropoli, giving him the manpower to enact his vision of a new era of martial glory. *Harbinger*"s followers seized the Estasian capital of Cidon with a covert assault; the Exalt himself broadcast his terms to the stunned Solars, demanding Estasia's independence. *Harbinger*'s reign came to a violent end less than two days later in a reprisal raid by the Deliberative. The young hero Ma-Ha-Suchi challenged the Adamant to a duel atop Cidon's highest spire as their forces clashed in the streets below. *Harbinger* had the upper hand, but was put off his attack when the Changing Moon confronted him with the face of every mortal he had ever loved in his many lifetimes. Ma-Ha-Suchi seized the soulgem of the renegade Champion, and savagely wrenched it from it socket as he sent his foe tumbling down to his death in the pit below.

Harbinger was not the last Alchemical rebel—throughout Deliberative history, other Champions have risen against the Solars. Their reasons were as disparate as they were, but all caused the Populat to crane an ear in sympathy. Moreso than any other Chosen, the Alchemicals speak to the hearts and minds of the Realm's citizens. A Lawgiver might make a grand pronouncement to every man, woman, and child in the Octet, but it is the Champions who are tasked with following that pronouncement through. The Alchemicals are very much the public face of the Deliberative, and they hold a status unique among the Chosen. That disaffected Champions have used their status to stir up rebellion is no great surprise. Charged as they are with the Realm's internal security, the Lunars make it their mission to watch for more popular uprisings. Even the most benevolent Champion can inadvertently weaken the Deliberative's defenses, giving the Yozis more chances to attack the Gunstar. Popular Champions may well find themselves being watched by a dozen different faces, all belonging to the same Exalt.

MACHINE GODS

Many of the threats that the Realm faces come from the spiritual ecology of Autochthonia. Although the Great Maker consciously accepted humanity into his world-*jouten*, he cannot fully control his subconscious urges and impulses as enacted by his lesser souls. Expeditions into the Reaches risk violent reprisals from custodians and destroyers if they are perceived as a threat to the Great Maker's internal workings. Mining crews and expedition forces receive basic training on avoiding aggression from the exmachina, but aggression is inescapable for the teams tasked with modifying the body of Autochthon to complete his transformation into the Gunstar. Potent wards and subdual weaponry are standard-issue for such teams, but sometimes even these are not enough, necessitating lethal conflict. Even worse is when the exmachina come into contact with Autochthonian settlements, either through the settlement expanding into the custodian's zone of influence or due to some glitch in the machine god's programming. Exmachina attacks on civilian populations can cause mass casualties, necessitating intervention from the Alchemical Exalted to drive out the errant devas.

THE VOID

While the Solar Exalted cured the Great Maker of his sickness in the earliest days of their exile, they were never able to eradicate the root cause of his disease. Blight zones still form where Autochthon's Essence flows are at their weakest, slowly swelling like malignant tumors. Gremlin Syndrome spreads from the blight zones, corrupting exmachina into malevolent spirits of destruction. Gremlins are far more dangerous than any errant exmachina, acting with calculated malevolence and devious cunning. Alchemicals and Dragon-Blooded act as a vanguard against gremlin intrusion in the metropoli, destroying the corrupted exmachina before they can perpetrate sabotage and murder throughout the cities. The Void Hunt is tasked with seeking them out at the root, purging hives of gremlins from the Reaches and sealing the blight zones that spawned them.

While the Void Hunt has proven more than capable of holding the gremlin threat at bay, it now finds itself faced with a new and far more disturbing menace—the Apostates. Alchemical Exalts twisted by the techno-organic taint of Gremlin Syndrome, the Apostates are a dangerous and subversive force, a cancer gnawing at the heart of the Realm. *Blade of the Apostate* slaughtered dozens

of young Dragon-Blooded and a Lunar shikari in a string of brutal serial murders before fleeing into the Reaches, marshaling an army of gremlins as a self-proclaimed Void Lord. *Clambering Horror Mechanism* waged a covert war of sabotage throughout the Centropolis of Hadal, damaging its geomantic grids so severely that the Realm Defense Grid and other vital infrastructure were forced offline for months. The hidden laboratories of *Carnifex of the New Flesh* spawned abominations of the Genesis sciences, a freakish army that rampaged throughout Nurad until the Void Hunt put him down. Despite all its efforts, the Deliberative has not developed a reliable way to identify Void-tainted Exalts, forcing constant scrutiny of the Alchemical Exalted to pick out the tell-tale signs of subversion—long periods of seclusion, research into restricted Charm technologies, and a growing disregard for human life.

THE VIATOR OF NULLSPACE

The Viator of Nullspace has threatened the Autochthonian Realm for its entire existence. It emerges from the Farthest Reaches to strike at the Eight Nations, ripping metropoli from their foundations and sending the towers of the Exalted tumbling down. The Solar Exalted have dealt with it throughout the centuries, driving it back into the darkness of the Reaches with overwhelming battle prowess or sealing it away in sorcerous prison-dimensions. Despite the apocalyptic destruction wrought by the Viator against the Realm, some among the Exalted see it as an unlikely ally. Among the Lunar Exalted he is seen as a figure of purifying destruction, for he has stood beside them before in driving back the forces of the Void. The Solars have interrogated Autochthon on the origin of the Minister of Wrath, but the Great Maker either does not know or refuses to say.

The last sighting of the Viator of Nullspace came over a hundred years ago, during a deadly incursion by the Tyrant Sun. As the child of the Empyreal Chaos brought down fire and devastation against the Realm, he inadvertently shattered the binding stone of the Viator's prison with a stroke of his Godspear. The Viator escaped and immediately gave battle, pursuing the surprised Sun with unrelenting zeal. The duel of the divines went on until the Tyrant Sun felled his foe—but not before the Dread Gear's final stratagem cast the Sun out of Autochthonia, giving the Gunstar a chance for escape. Many Exalted refuse to believe that the Viator could be destroyed, suspecting that his Essence still lingers on within Autochthonia, slowly recovering power and substance until the Dread Gear can be reborn.

Alternatively, the Viator could have infected the Godspear with his Essence as it destroyed him, allowing him to secretly emerge in a drastically weakened form when the Tyrant Sun returned to the Daystar. Once aboard the Daystar, the Viator might encounter Bannery Bu, an ancient ally of Autochthon. Inadvertently imprisoned in the Daystar since its creation, she has spent the last four

millennia in a harmless mock-rebellion against the Sun, and would be easily won over by the Viator's mission of wrath. Once his Essence makes its way to her ward, she would begin secretly rebuilding him, far from where the wrathful eyes of the Sun might fall. Once fully restored, the Viator could wreak all hell against the Daystar, positioning him as the unlikeliest of allies for Exalted seeking to defeat the Sun.

THE VIATOR REVISITED

The Viator's traits are identical to those listed in the **Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. VI—Autochthonia**, pages 128-130, with the following changes. His Motivation is "Destroy anything that threatens the survival of Autochthon," and he has been rendered a creature of darkness by the judgment passed on him by the Tyrant Sun in their fateful duel.

HELL FOLLOWS AFTER

MONSTERS AND DEMONS

Autochthon's outer shell bears airlocks, vents, and scars from ancient battles—countless ways for monsters to sneak inside, should they survive the Deliberative Void Fleet. Kimbery's Brood-Swarm optimizes its tactics for just such a purpose: while voidfighters trade Essence fire with immense carrier-beasts and swarms of winged terrors, agile transport-beasts scream through the defensive cordon and vomit horrors into Autochthon's depths. Some are hacked apart by Destroyers or Gremlins, vaporized by thought-lightning, or dissolved in acid—but most survive to menace the people of the Octet. The Great Mother birthed them to be agents of her endless spite, and they do not disappoint.

Many of these monsters are designed with guerilla warfare in mind—the most feared among them are the Faceless. These tainted-quicksilver horrors haunt lightless corridors, waiting; they strike like lightning, devouring their victims' bodies and minds and wearing their skins. The merest rumor of one is enough to send the Silver Pact and its Moonsilver attachés into high alert. The Faceless are as cunning as they are spiteful, and their schemes are subtle and deadly.

Not all infiltrators are the spawn of the Yozis. Autochthon's body contains a wealth of resources, and some simply want to steal or use them. The oron are immense armored worm-creatures that lay their eggs in lava seas. A century ago, a pair of them bored through Autochthon's hull in the Sovan district, and spawned; it took the better part of a year for the District's Champions to root out the infestation. The galkak pose a different threat: these insectile crystalline creatures travel in immense swarms, and eat metal. When a galkak swarm is sighted, the Deliberative greets it with a wave of purifying Essence-flame.

Other infiltrators have less comprehensible motives. The roshtonari are clouds of golden vapor possessed of an alien intelligence, and an undeniable urge to proselytize about their ancient faith—about their gods, whom they claim were ancient when the Spiral was young. Despite their bizarre nature, some are swayed by their arguments, and abandon their duties to live in shantytowns in the Reaches under the guidance of their strange patrons. To date, the greatest danger the roshtonari pose is their penchant for driving good workers to dereliction of duty.

The Gunstar's flight into exile has taken it far away from the Spiral, and the Chosen take great pains to hide its location from their foes. Unfortunately for them, the Primordials have long since learned to harness the power of Nirupadhika to create points in space with no intervening space between them. Anything that enters one of these tears appears instantly at whatever point colocates with the first—which could be millions of miles away. The Primordials use these gateways, called Time-scars, to deploy their troops against the Gunstar once they've gotten a good idea of its current location. The Time-scars are not locked against the Chosen; the young scout Asha of Journeys made her name by flying her Voidfighter through a series of Time-scars, leading her pursuers on a mad chase until they were hopelessly lost. But her journey was not without peril—she ended up barely outracing the fires of Theion, and she still sees them in her dreams.

THE TYRANT SUN

Nothing strikes more fear into the hearts of the Gunstar Defense Line than the sight of the Daystar. Ever since the Unconquered Sun knelt before the Shining Tyrant to pledge his fealty to the King of the Primordi-

THE RADIANT CORONA (ARTIFACT N/A)

The Tyrant Sun received the Radiant Corona upon his betrayal of the Exalted Host, a powerful relic forged from one of the Empyreal Chaos's highest souls. So long as he wears this orichalcum crown, he gains access to all of Theion's Charms, save for those that are Native. However, while he wears the Corona, he cannot call upon the power of the Magnanimous Unbound Sun. Whether the Sun's fealty to the Shining Tyrant is forced upon him by the relic is left to the Storyteller to decide.

als, he has become the greatest enemy of the Exalted, relentlessly hunting them through the void. The sight of it is fearsome to behold—the Tyrant Sun and his Traitor Queen, the wrathful flames of the Daystar behind them, and ten thousand thousand lumina swarming behind them in the shadow of the Gardullis. The sheer power amassed in such assaults is devastating, and the tactical genius of the Sun has proved superior to countless Solar stratagems. It is fortunate that the Primordial Geas still restrains him from attacking Autochthon directly, or else the wayward titan would have been felled by the Godspear long ago. Instead, the Sun sets his fury against the Exalted, carving a fiery swathe through the blockade of the Defense Line so that the demonic hordes behind him may advance into Autochthonia, or fire upon the Gunstar directly. Sometimes he will follow behind the intruding swarm, entering into the body of the Great Maker to lay waste to the kingdoms of the Exalted. At other times he is content to wait just outside, denying the Exalted crucial opportunities to harvest resources or make upgrade to the Gunstar's weaponry by his terrifying presence.

Defeating him is no easy thing. The Solar Exalted have never once been able to deny the Sun the invulnerability of his Aegis of Unconquered Might, forcing them to rely on other tactics if they are to drive their renegade patron back. Exalts who fight through the many defenses of the Daystar and avoid its apocalyptic weaponry may strike directly against it, forcing the Sun to withdraw lest his chariot be crucially damaged. It is also possible to exploit the Sun's Geas, wiping out his demonic allies so that he must go back to seek reinforcements. Such tactics have always been temporary measures, and have always come at great cost. A permanent victory can only come if the Tyrant Sun is forced to deny the Temperance that empower his invulnerability—but in service to his Primordial master, his loyalty seems unshakable. Some of the Exalted hope against hope that if the Radiant Corona bestowed upon the Tyrant Sun were destroyed, it would free the god from his slavery. Others ask, with tears in their eyes, how they can be sure that the Sun does not hunt them of his own free will.

THE INFERNAL EXALTED

While the Tyrant Sun is the most overtly powerful weapon in the army of the Primordials, his may not be the highest danger. In the aftermath of the Primordial War, the Empyreal Chaos commanded the conquered Sun to create a new rank of Chosen who would serve the Primordials. With the emerald flame of his new master burning at the very core of his Essence, the Sun was able to twist and remake the Exaltations of Solars captured in the war to empower the first Chosen of the Primordials, and to harness the Spiral's wellsprings of cosmic energy and primal matter in forging new Exaltations. These are the Green Sun Princes, the Titanic Exalted, though they are called Infernal by their Celestial foes. Theion claimed the greatest number of these Exalted to serve as his Sovereigns, though each of the Primordial pantheon (save dread Sacheverell) were given their own Chosen. Scourges of Adorjan torment the pilots of the Gunstar Defense Line as deadly cosmic winds, while Metagaos's Devourers lay siege by spreading festering diseases and corrupting blood rituals throughout its populace. Jheel-Khan's Mountebanks, Elloge's Rhapsodes, the terrifying Dements of Oramus—all these and more descend upon the Autochthonian Realm with their awful power.

Green Sun Princes lead the attack on the Gunstar from positions of prominence, either leading ravening hordes of demons and behemoths behind them, or flying as honor guard for the Tyrant Sun. Many pilot powerful artifact ships empowered by bound devas of their Primordial patrons, derisively termed Hellstars by the pilots of the Defense Line. Others take to the fight directly, assuming monstrous battle-forms that embody the full cosmic power of the titans. A Sovereign might unleash the supernova wrath of the Universe Emperor Shintai to burn his foes to cosmic cinders, while a Chosen of Hegra might entrap voidfighters in the nightmare haze of her nebula-body. Dragon-Blooded pilots stand little chance against these Infernals in single combat, relying on cooperation and mass assaults to drive them away. When these fail, Solar aces take to the void to duel the Green Sun Princes as equals.

WHOM THE SUN DESPISES

The Tyrant Sun has not named the exiled Exalted as creatures of darkness. Some take this as a secret sign of his enduring loyalty to the Chosen–that, even in servitude to the Shining Tyrant, the Sun cannot be made to hate those whom he and his brethren Exalted. Others see it as a show of arrogance on the part of the Primordials–what should they fear from the Holy power of the Exalted, when it holds no power over them?

On the other hand, the Great Maker and his soul pantheon have been named creatures of darkness, making the Tyrant Sun's Godspear a terrifying weapon against the Gunstar. None of the other Primordials or their deva are creatures of darkness (save the irredeemable Ebon Dragon), nor are the Infernal or Abyssal Exalted.

Infernals who break through the Gunstar's defensive cordon penetrate into the Autochthonian Realm, vanishing into its metropoli like shadows. Disguising their true natures with potent Charms, the Green Sun Princes act as covert agents of the Primordials, sabotaging the infrastructure of the Realm, stirring up dissent among its peoples, and stealing the plans of the Exalted. An industrial complex manufacturing magitech weaponry is destroyed in a terrorist attack, melted to a slag of magical materials in a conflagration of emerald fire. A Chosen of Serenity is murdered by the strangling hands of her own shadow before she can convince political rivals in the Deliberative to come to an accord. A ravishingly beautiful lector rises to public acclaim for his sermons and oratory, all the while poisoning the minds of his followers with dream-eating drugs and candied locusts. The Solar Deliberative is perpetually on guard for signs of Infernal subversion, engendering an infectious paranoia in the minds of some Exalted. Night Castes walk on a constant watch throughout the cities of their Eight Nations, flanked by Adamant Castes and Lunar shikari. Sidereals spend long hours poring over the records of the Loom of Fate, trying to find the tell-tale anomalies of Infernal intervention. When a Green Sun Prince is found, the forces of the Realm mobilize through Gateways of Auspicious Passage, sending dozens of Exalted to hunt down the exposed Infernal. Such battles leave nations scarred by the awful, devastating attacks unleashed by both sides.

HELLSTARS (ARTIFACT ••••, SENTIENCE •–•••••)

Hellstars are the elite fighter ships of the Infernal Exalted, reserved for Green Sun Princes and powerful elder akuma. Hellstars have traits identical to a Voidfighter Gunship, but they do not possess the Dragon's Roar Resonance Engine, Auspicious Relay Node, or Integrated God-Machine Grid. Instead, as hellforged relics, they possess a Sentience rating, allowing their pilot access to the Charms of the demons used to construct them (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, p. 196). In addition, each Hellstar has a unique power based on the demon used to create it, roughly equivalent in power to an artifact with a rating based on the Circle of demon used: two dots for a First Circle, three dots for a Second Circle, four dots for a Third Circle. A Hellstar forged from one of the agatae might be so beautiful that even enemy pilots are left dazzled, while one made from Jacint might possess a powerful hyperdrive.

AKUMA

Akuma bolster the ranks of the Infernal Exalted with their unholy presence, serving as champions, guardians, living weapons, and elite soldiers to the Green Sun Princes. The Primordials fashioned the Celestial akuma from Sidereals and Lunars captured at the end of the war, hollowing out the wills of the defeated Exalted and subsuming their Essence into the titan's own soul hierarchies. Dragon-Blooded are bred from the bloodlines of captured Terrestrials, produced en masse on warren-worlds and invested as akuma as soon as they Exalt. The titans do not rely on their akuma to deliver them triumphs, leaving victories aside for the Green Sun Princes, but instead bind them with Urges that will wreak havoc among the ranks of the Exalted. Covert akuma can vanish into the ranks of the Chosen, fabricating their identities through illusion and guile. As the Exalted are strained to their limits by paranoia and internal division, the titans hope, the Green Sun Princes can move in for checkmate.

In recent years, however, strange Exalts have been sighted among the ranks of the Primordial forces. While the akuma are little better than mindless thralls, these have an eerie intelligence to them, a devious cunning that could not come from any Primordial's Urge. In their power, they are as warped reflections of the Lunars and Sidereals, wielding unknown Charms that bear the unmistakable mark of Lunar and Sidereal Essence. Some Exalted savants wonder if the titans could not have forged new Incarnae of the moon and stars, and through them created strange new Chosen to field in battle—not akuma, but true Exalted.

THE ABYSSAL EXALTED

In the aftermath of the Exalted's defeat, the triumphant titans chose the most defiant of the captured Solars from their world-prisons to be marched in a mocking parade down the black glass roads of Heaven. The conquered Chosen were bound in chains of jade forged from their own oaths of surrender, spoken under torture, and forced to pay obeisance to the Primordials. The Lawgivers would not kneel. Casting off their chains before the eyes of all Heaven, they turned upon the titans, striking a fatal blow that would mark the close of the Primordial War. In its death throes, the murdered titan seized his killers, dragging them down with him as he fell from Heaven to join the Neverborn.

It is said that none may ever rise from the black hole at the end of existence, but the fallen Solars have returned. Calling themselves the Lawgivers, they raised great funerary palaces over the corpses of the Neverborn, and declared themselves dark champions and deathknights of the lowest coil and its nations of the dead. Black ships patrol the Spiral and the void beyond it on missions of inscrutable purpose, unknown to both Primordial and Exalted. Pilots of the Gunstar Defense Line sometimes claim to have been joined by sleek midnight fighters

in heated battles against the titans' army, only for the mysterious ship to leave as the battle ends. At the same time, sightings of these strange ships out of the Abyss have presaged great catastrophes and disasters within the Realm, leaving the Solar Deliberative to wonder if they might not be responsible.

Death Beyond the Stars

Death's Essence pervades the necropolis of Black Non like a foul miasma, but it does not emanate outward into the Spiral or the void of space that surrounds it. Shadowlands and other places of death do not exist in this cosmology outside the lowest coil of the Spiral. As such, the Abyssal Exalted and other creatures of death may recover motes normally no matter where they are, feasting upon the world's Essence with the same ease of the other Exalted.

Ishiika, the Cosmic Scorpion

Ishiika is the most fearsome of all the alien creatures the Gunstar has ever encountered, a singular monster born into the depths of space. It is the cosmic scorpion, an endless nebula of teeth encircled by countless rings of clicking, disembodied mandibles. Even among the stars, it is vast–its pincers could wrest planets from their orbits and grind them to dust, while its lashing tail spans the length of solar systems. As a child of Nishikriya it is born to strife and violence, but its massive size leaves it slow and ponderous. It might take days for it to close a pincer around the Gunstar's hull or lash out with its world-killing stinger, ample time for the Exalted to make good an escape. But this does not mean there is no peril in facing the cosmic scorpion. It is a world unto itself, populated with an entire biosphere of monstrous insectoid life. Obsidian mites cling to the gnashing teeth that are Ishiika's carapace, each one the size of a warship. Cruel hooked worms wind their way through its body, slender ribbons of flesh that stretch on for miles. Corpse-eating wasps with metal eyes gather amid the halo of mandibles surrounding the grand behemoth. All of them partake of the same principle of violence from which Ishiika derives. The Gunstar has encountered Ishiika only a handful of times, driving it back each time at extraordinary cost. The prophecies of the Sidereal Exalted foretell that the Gunstar must face the cosmic scorpion once more if it is ever to return to the Spiral.

Why Can't I Play an Infernal?

Green Sun Princes and the Abyssal Exalted are designed to serve primarily as antagonists within the setting of **Gunstar Autochthonia**. The Infernal Exalted are the constant enemies of the Autochthonian Realm, while the deathknights are mysterious figures of unknown intentions. While it is possible to run a game in which either Exalts are the primary protagonists, doing so will require a great deal of legwork on the Storyteller's part: detailing just what the Spiral really is, deciding the true purpose of the Abyssal Exalted, and inventing castes and Charms for the many Primordials who have empowered the Green Sun Princes. As this setting is written primarily from the perspective of the Exalted aboard the Gunstar, these details have been intentionally omitted. But, for a Storyteller with the time and energy to fill in their own answers, a game focused on Infernals or Abyssals would provide a unique new perspective on the setting. Infernal or Abyssal defectors, on the other hand, provide a simpler option for integrating such Exalted into the ranks of playable characters.

Theion, the Empyreal Chaos

In Gunstar Autochthonia, the Primordial King has never knelt in surrender to any being, never suffered mutilation, humiliation, or imprisonment. He remains Theion, the Empyreal Chaos, and the Sovereigns are his Chosen. These are the miracles he has magnanimously granted them.

The Empyreal Urge (The Urge to Dominate)

The Urges of Theion are to rule—not only to have authority, but to exercise that power over all that he surveys. His might is self-referential, yet not a dumb engine. He will seek counsel like any good leader, but his convictions are strong and his purpose is singular: To be the most glorious sovereign. He knows that he must protect his kingdom and subjects for there to be a kingdom to rule; he may even love them. But the ultimate purpose to all things is to uplift his own splendor by being subject to him. At times, he may see wisdom in banishing or destroying parts of his realm, and he will do so sadly, but most often defiance of his authority spells the end for his subjects and their works. All goals that are promoted by this Urge must seek absolute dominion recognized by those claimed as subjects.

The Empyreal Chaos knows Compassion is often a weakness, but it is ever a tool in understanding how best to reward loyal subjects or how to build a kingdom of harmony to compliment his leadership. Conviction is his cornerstone, for once he has determined the right path there is no stopping the promise of Theion's glory. Temperance aids him in demonstrating his wisdom, keeping both his kingly honor and enforcing what peace he desires for his subjects. Valor burns as a flame only less bright than Conviction, to destroy those who question or try to depose him, or who would elevate themselves over his immaculate decrees.

Examples include:

- Annex the Alaun provinces that border your estate on the Blessed Isle.
- Become the matriarch of all the Lintha.
- Bring peace between the scathac and mazriki, that they may unite in one kingdom under your rule.
- Depose and crush your treacherous, usurper brother.
- Suborn Gens Helion by leading them back into glory.

The Torment of Theion: Pushed to the ends of his restraint, Theion cannot abide wayward fools. He need not dominate all characters, but on reaching 10 Limit the Storyteller chooses a convenient group that has rebuffed the warlock's authority, or seems to have done so, in even the most minuscule way. The Infernal gains an Intimacy of righteous anger for the group, replacing any existing Intimacy. This Intimacy cannot be eroded or otherwise removed or altered for (Essence) days. While it lasts, the Exalt cannot interact with members of that group in any way except to try to make them servile characters (see p. 33).

Crushing the Opposition Provocation (Act of Villainy)

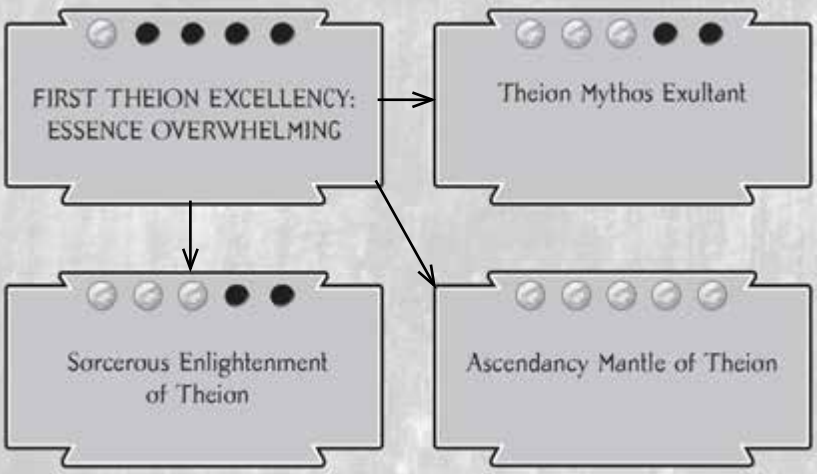
The King of All Kings' forgiveness is not what many might call mercy, but he is magnanimous enough that not all of his punishments result in total obliteration. Finding and subduing without murder those who defy him, the Empyreal Chaos is relieved in the knowledge that his word is what gives them their joy and their sorrow. Fomenting and later slaying true rebels is only a little less satisfying, proving that his faithless people cry out in their hearts for his overwhelming decrees to order their lives. Whenever the Infernal successfully inspires an Intimacy of resentment, hatred or rebellion in a social group he leads or a heroic member of that group, he sheds 1 Limit. If the group or hero deliberately avoids the full-fledged Intimacy for fear or respect of the warlock—by eroding it before it can fully form, for example—the Exalt rolls her Compassion and rids herself of Limit equal to her rolled successes.

First Theion Excellency— Essence Overwhelming

Cost: 1m per die; **Mins:** Essence 1;
Type: Reflexive (Step 1 for attacker, Step 2 for defender)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The *King* of the Universe is *prideful* even when he attempts magnanimity, given to *grandiose* displays of *majesty* for the chance to *demonstrate his power* and the *self-important* joy he feels when his allies look upon him in *awe* and his enemies in *terror*. He is *vast* and full of *self-righteous* drive, seeking the *respect he is due* regardless of the ultimate consequences. The Empyreal Chaos is *eternal* and *immutable*, his white *flames* too *intense* for others to survive. This is why he sends his Green Sun before him, to shield his subjects with its kinder *light*, though it still shines into and through the kingdom that he *rules*, *marking* the entire world as his *dominion*. He holds *authority* over all things, his *unquestionable eminence* apparent in the *glorious signs* of his *holy splendor*.

This Excellency may be used to *command* and *demand*, to *lead others* into the *inevitable* magnificence of one's rule. Theion's *unswerving conviction* in his choices does not



necessitate that he seriously harm those who are contrary, but he will at least *overwhelm* their stupidity with his own *overbearing arguments*. It is best for others to suborn their desires to those of the King of All Kings, or if they are sly enough, to convince him that his desires include their own. While his forgiveness is rarely sincere, his power and stature make his measures of mercy and generosity difficult to separate from true compassion.

Characters may apply this Charm to actions in which they choose the *ostentatious* or *magnificent* approach over the merely adequate. Any intentional subtlety or display of restraint makes this Excellency inapplicable, including adding less than half the maximum possible dice bonus to a roll (rounded down). The Exalt must be *self-assured*, as well, because uncertainty is poison to the Shining Tyrant. If at the Storyteller's discretion the warlock is meaningfully conflicted over his action, he may not use the First Theion Excellency to enhance it. This includes, but is not limited to, actions that harm or stymie his Motivation, Urge, or Intimacies, or that go against the dictates of a Virtue that he rolled to determine his course of action. Storytellers are encouraged to be lenient but discerning in their judgment. Even if the character's Virtues, Intimacies, Motivation or Urge have nothing to do with a situation, they may still be conflicted.

Theion Mythos Exultant

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: First Theion Excellency

The overwhelming certitude of Theion is self-perpetuating, allowing him to regain one Conviction channel in addition to any normal stunt awards, but only if he channeled Conviction on at least one stunted action.

Sorcerous Enlightenment of Theion

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Sorcerous
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: First Theion Excellency

Spells that evoke his personal authority and fiery majesty come most naturally to the Empyreal Chaos, costing no Willpower to cast. Amongst these are Burning Eyes of the Offender, Commanding Presence of Fire, Curse of Slavish Humility (but only when forcing the worship of himself) and Incantation of the Invincible Army. Spells to summon or banish one's own souls or personally created First Circle demons qualify for the discount as well. He cannot cast spells that conceal or disguise, such as Disguise of the New Face, Private Plaza of Downcast Eyes or Summoning the Heart of Darkness.

Ascendancy Mantle of Theion

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 5; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: First Theion Excellency

An Infernal who suppresses Conviction loses the extra dot of Essence for the scene as well. This Charm has no effect for characters with Conviction less than 3. See **The Broken-Winged Crane**, p. 9.

Ultimate Sovereign Fundament

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Servitude, Sorcerous
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Empyreal Chaos is elevated above all other titans, his splendor rising up on winds of praise by the subjects he rules. Use of this Charm requires a Motivation or Urge focused on founding or ruling a group, enhancing that drive in the following ways:

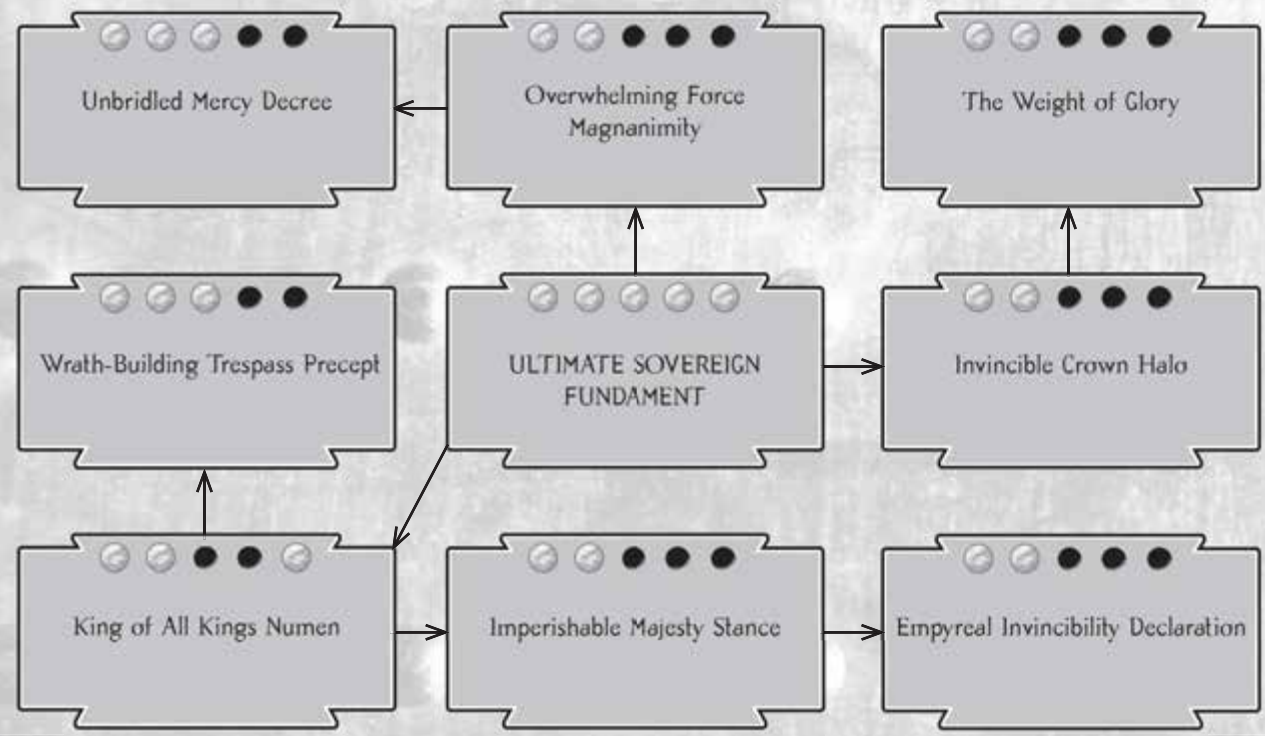
- The MDV modifier it provides in social combat becomes (Exalt's Essence + 1), and when it adds a bonus against a form of influence, the Exalt may channel his Conviction to perfectly dodge it.
- The warlock need not suppress Compassion to take actions that further the Motivation or Urge.
- Stunts that resonate with it provide bonus successes rather than dice.
- The first time in a scene that the Infernal takes an action opposed to the Motivation or Urge, he gains 1 Limit.

An Essence 3+ repurchase sharpens the Exalt's dedication. Channeling Conviction to enhance resonant stunts provides bonus successes instead of dice. If a resonant stunt enhances a social attack, it is converted into unnatural influence that costs at least one Willpower to resist. The Sorcerous strength of the Charm is upgraded to resist countermagic as a Sapphire-level spell.

An Essence 4+ repurchase changes the Charm's Type and Duration to Permanent, and its Cost to —, and being broken by countermagic merely disables the Charm for a scene. It affects the chosen Motivation or Urge permanently and irrevocably until a new one is chosen, at which point he must choose to enhance his new one or a remaining Motivation or Urge. If he lacks an appropriate driving goal, this Charm affords no other benefit than fulfilling prerequisites for other Charms.

Overwhelming Force Magnanimity

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Ultimate Sovereign Fundament



His desire to rule them is more mercy than the subjects of the Shining Tyrant deserve. This Charm allows Infernals to use their Compassion and Conviction channels interchangeably when enhancing actions resonant with an Urge or Motivation enchanted by Ultimate Sovereign Fundament. They may use channels from either to gain bonus dice from the better rated of the two.

UNBRIDLED MERCY DECREE

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Essence 3;
Type: Simple (Speed 7)
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Emotion, Obvious, Social
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Overwhelming Force Magnanimity

Theion knows to sustain the loyalty of his subjects, he must sometimes punish them lightly. This Charm may be activated up to three actions after the Exalt destroys something dear to a social group, sweetening the praise in their terrified voices. The destroyed target must be a structure or Resources 4+ object, usually the subject of an Intimacy of the group. It may also be activated after rendering a heroic member of the group unconscious, as long as it is clear they will live on.

The Infernal makes a proclamation of her mercy to those members of the group that witnessed her stayed wrath, affecting them individually with a (Charisma + Presence) social attack, and the group as a whole if the majority of its members are present. If a target's MDV is insufficient, they adopt an Intimacy of terrified loyalty to the Infernal as an unnatural Emotion effect. The Intimacy cannot be eroded without spending one Willpower per scene doing so.

At Essence 4+ the Infernal may add +1 Willpower to the cost of the Charm to make it a Performance-based attack, affecting all individuals and groups present.

INVINCIBLE CROWN HALO

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2;
Type: Reflexive (Step 7)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Ultimate Sovereign Fundament

Warriors with the temerity to assault the Empyreal Chaos find their weapons and traps quailing in terror, turned aside by the very law of the world. The warlock's anima surrounds him in a white halo, a space of visual authority that lends him natural soak equal to his (Charisma + Essence) , plus the collected Magnitude of all servile mortals who witness the attack (servile Essence-users count as 100 mortal witnesses for the purposes of this Charm).

Weapons and other sources of harm that fail to inflict any levels of damage on the Infernal shiver and moan in fear of retribution until the Exalt's DV refreshes twice after the attack. This adds a bonus success to rolls to find the source of attack if it is hidden, though it may instead impose a -1 external penalty to appropriate actions at the Storyteller's judgment (for instance, when the attacker must roll to remain still and quiet to keep from disturbing a delicate gossamer bridge).

A repurchase allows the Exalt to add +5m to the Charm's cost, extending its duration to the rest of the scene.

The Weight of Glory

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2;
Type: Reflexive (Step 8)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Stackable
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Invincible Crown Halo

With a flash of white and blue sparks, the Infernal's anima crushes the force of a blow, reducing its post-soak damage by the higher of his Conviction or Valor, to a minimum of one die.

With an Essence 3+ repurchase and King of All Kings Numen active, the warlock may activate this Charm to reduce the post-soak damage of an attack targeting a servile character he can perceive within 20 yards. He may do so only once per attack.

King of All Kings Numen

Cost: 7m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Sorcerous
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: Ultimate Sovereign Fundament

Though he may go amongst them, it is not for his beloved subjects or hated enemies to touch the Empyreal Chaos. This Charm expands the Infernal's anima from his body, creating a shimmering barrier of light. This allows him to ignore all penalties to his Parry DV, and functions as a Blockade Movement action against all who attempt to come within three yards of the warlock, preventing them from engaging him in close combat. The Exalt rolls (Charisma + Presence) rather than the usual dice pool to prevent a foe's approach.

An Infernal may learn the *Court-Sealing Anima Ambit* with an Essence 3+ repurchase, allowing him to add +2m to the Charm's cost. The aura extends to (Essence + 2) yards around him, preventing others from entering the area or moving within it. Servile and subordinate characters may move freely within the area as long as they remain at least three yards from the Exalt and are not subject to one of his negative Intimacies. Ranged attacks that pass through the expanded aura suffer an external penalty of (Exalt's Charisma), regardless of their target.

Wrath-Building Trespass Precept

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native, Overdrive
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: King of All Kings Numen

If only that they continue under his rule, the Shining Tyrant treasures his subjects almost as much as his own authority. This Charm provides a 10m Overdrive pool. Initially empty, when joining battle the pool gains motes equal to the collected Magnitude of all non-servile enemies the Infernal can perceive also entering combat, to a maximum of 10m. If any servile characters enter combat as his foe, the warlock gains 10m if that would be more than the Magnitude of his gathered enemies. The pool also gains 3m the first time each action that the Exalt tries and fails to attack a servile character with killing intent.

Charm Concept: Servile and Subordinate Characters

Though they exist at his sufferance, not all know their place as subjects of the Empyreal Chaos. Those that do are servile, possessing Intimacies of awe, terror or loyalty to the Infernal, or having Motivations encouraging service to the Exalt's will. Subordinate characters are those who are members of a social group led by the Infernal. With an appropriate Policy, a group may be servile, or it may be subordinate if it belongs to another, larger group led by the warlock.

Characters and groups that would be mutually servile or subordinate are instead treated as neither.

Imperishable Majesty Stance

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Essence 2;
Type: Reflexive (Step 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: King of All Kings Numen

The Empyreal Chaos is an eternal, unapproachable beacon that stretched his glory across vast infinitudes to rule everything. Activating this Charm flashes the Infernal's Caste mark brightly, a brief blaze like a torch. This release of raw, cosmic might pushes away a physical attack that is not unexpected, perfectly parrying it even if it is unblockable. This Charm is subject to the Imperfection of the Shining Tyrant.

Empyreal Invincibility Declaration

Cost: — (3m); **Mins:** Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Obvious
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Imperishable Majesty Stance

Only by the Shining Tyrant's word is the order of the world set; that the Daystar shall rise, and Luna watch over the night, and that Creation—his great throne—be a

bastion against the wilderness of Chaos. This Charm makes the Infernal immune to unwanted Shaping effects from the environment, like the Wyld, or from servile or subordinate characters. When subject to other sources of undesired Shaping, she may reject such effects by spending 3m in Step 2 of an attack's resolution.

At Essence 3+ the Exalt can protect her subjects from each others' amusing feuds. By committing 3m in Step 2 of resolution, she extends this Charm's base protection to a servile or subordinate character within (Essence x 5) yards, for as long as she commits the Essence. She may pay an additional 3m per attack to protect her subjects from true enemies.

Empyrean Mandate Tongue

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Obvious, Training
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Ultimate Sovereign Fundament

Imperfection of the Shining Tyrant

One who is the Universe Emperor should carry a majesty that is reflected in his subjects. The Imperfection of the Shining Tyrant adds +3m to the cost of Charms invoked in scenes that do not involve sufficient subordinates to witness their glory. This applies when, to the Infernal's knowledge, there are not at least (Exalt's Essence) Magnitude servile mortals. Each individual servile or subordinate Essence user counts as 100 mortal witnesses for this purpose.

Greater Imperfection of the Empyreal Chaos: The King of All Kings rests his power on a throne that oversees the universe. Even the subjects he must destroy are components of his greater glory; a perfect order that can be shattered only by the titan's rejection of his own authority. On learning Theion Cosmic Principle (see **Return of the Scarlet Empress**, p. 209), the Imperfection of the Shining Tyrant is more keenly felt.

To exploit this flaw, the Primordial must be maneuvered into adopting an Intimacy reflecting abnegation of authority over someone he formerly ruled. This usually requires transforming an existing Intimacy for a subset of a larger group. For the rest of the story, the titan cannot use Charms suffering the Imperfection of the Shining Tyrant to attack or defend against the subjects he has rejected. Contempt or murderous wrath are not rejections of authority.

The dictates of the Universe Emperor are hard to ignore and impossible to obscure. In speech and writing, characters with this Charm express themselves only using Old Realm (which they learn as a 0xp Training effect that does not improve their Linguistics rating, if necessary). They do not unlearn other languages they may know, and can understand them still.

Regardless if he shouts, the deep, spiritual presence of the Infernal's words is undeniable. When the First Theion Excellency could validly enhance his speech, the Exalt ignores penalties from interfering noise, and if it was a social attack his targets suffer -2 MDV.

At Essence 3+, applying the First Theion Excellency to his speech allows the Infernal to be understood by those who do not speak Old Realm, his cosmic might impressing his meaning upon them. Against servile characters, social attacks enhanced by the First Theion Excellency increase their Dodge MDV penalty to (Exalt's Essence).

Divine Right Caprice

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Empyrean Mandate Tongue

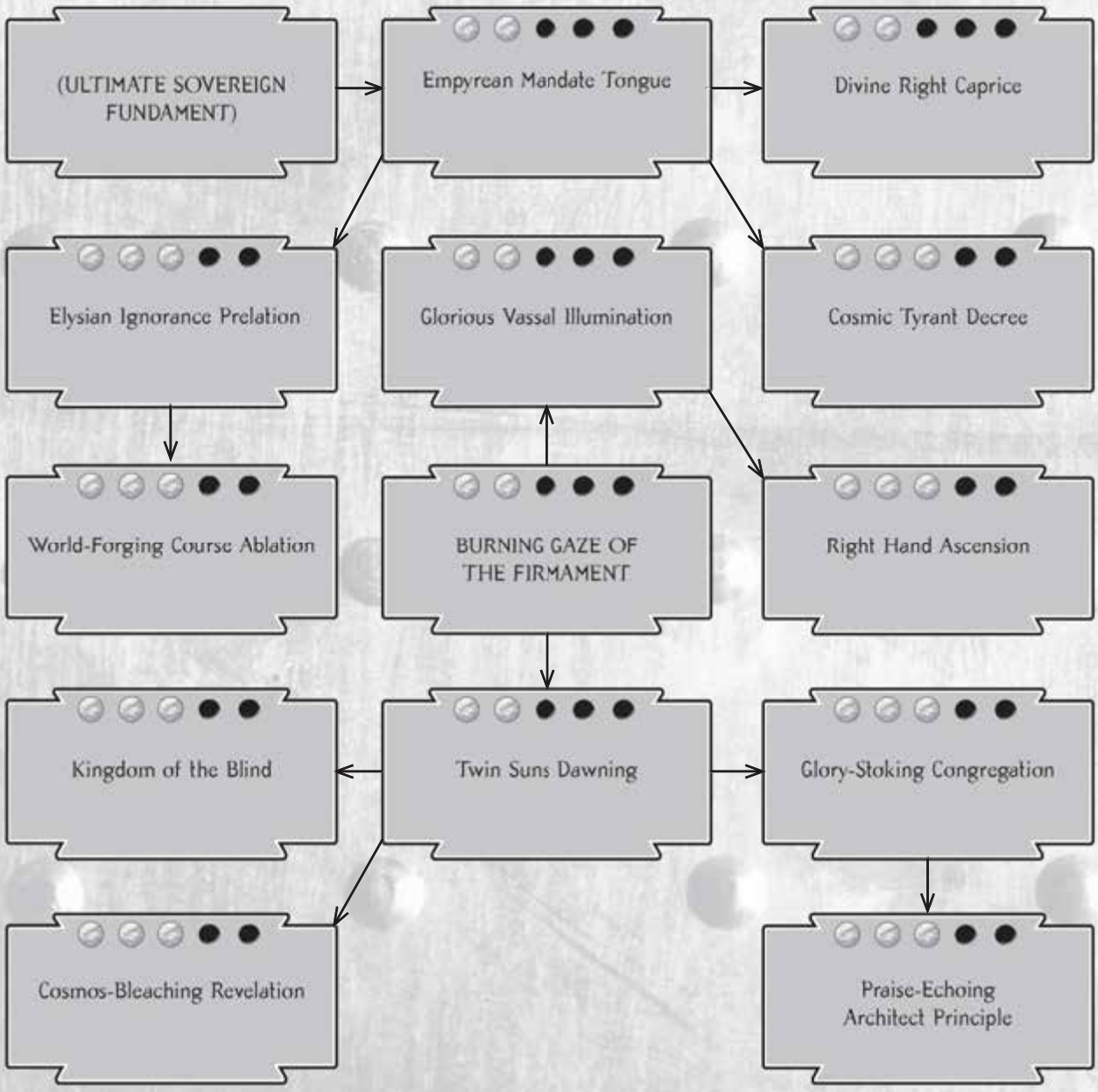
Where lesser rulers may be shaken by foolish or defiant servants, the Empyreal Chaos knows that none can live up to his impossible grandeur. This Charm allows an Infernal to recoup his emotional investment in a subordinate character or group, when that subject has failed him by performing actions working against the Exalt's Motivation or Urge, even if only in retrospect. By reflexively adopting an Intimacy of righteous anger for his bumbling servants, replacing any other, the warlock need not suppress Conviction to abandon the plan his servant mishandled. This new Intimacy reasserts itself each scene for the rest of the story.

The warlock may not use this Charm if he personally worked to undertake the project in question, with the exception of ordering his subjects to carry it out or granting them the resources to do so.

Elysian Ignorance Prelation

Cost: — (4m per scene); **Mins:** Essence 3;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Empyrean Mandate Tongue

A vast gulf of authority separates the Shining Tyrant from the wishes of his subjects; it is difficult for him to comprehend that they expect their needs to contend with his own desires. This Charm functions identically to Impervious Primacy Mantle (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—Infernals**, p. 112).



WORLD-FORGING COURSE ABLATION

Cost: — (0-10m); **Mins:** Essence 3;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Obvious
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Elysian Ignorance Prelation

The Empyreal Chaos must pursue his own order, ignoring all pleas to turn aside. Supplications to stop catalyze within his aura of power, becoming a cloud of embers in his anima as they are burned to nothingness by his refusal. This Charm protects against influence contrary to the Infernal's Motivation, Urge or Intimacies, or to an ongoing plan which the Exalt has meaningfully pursued.

The first time in a scene he is subject to such influence, the warlock may spend 0m instead of any Willpower to ignore it. He may do so again and again, though against influence from characters who are not servile or subordinate each use adds a +1m surcharge to future uses in the same scene. Once the cost to do so reaches 10m, the burnt prayers a storm of fireflies in his anima, the Exalt cannot use this Charm again until another scene begins.

Unnatural influence resisted with this Charm does not cause Limit gain.

COSMIC TYRANT DECREE

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Obvious, Social
Duration: Permanent

Prerequisite Charms: Empyrean Mandate Tongue

The Shining Tyrant led his Tribe of Dreamers through the Chaos, and commanded them to end their pilgrimage with the birth of a world. When an Infernal with this Charm speaks a command (per Elysian Ignorance Prelation), his voice rings out to no less than (Essence x 10) yards and he is crowned by a searing white halo, ornamented with tongues of green flame. Servile characters treat such influence as undodgeable and unnatural if it was not already, costing one Willpower to resist. By channeling his Conviction, the Infernal may apply this effect against all valid targets of a social attack, regardless of their Intimacies.

Burning Gaze of the Firmament

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Looking down from his heights to survey the glories he has unleashed, the Empyreal Chaos reminds himself that his order is for the greater good, even for those who must be destroyed. This Charm enhances sight-based sensory rolls to perceive the presence or nature of a thing that is the subject of one of the Infernal's Intimacies, adding (Essence) successes to relevant rolls. It cannot be applied if the target has higher permanent Essence, if the Exalt's Intimacy is one of fear or servitude, or if the target has somehow extracted an admission of weakness from the warlock during the current scene (including beating him into unconsciousness).

Should Theion's gaze fall on something offensive to him, his wrath is sudden and ready. After using this Charm to notice something, the Exalt may choose to transform a relevant Intimacy into one of righteous anger or hatred. It is testament to the Shining Tyrant's forbearance that he did not give up his love for the Wayward Sun during the Rebellion. The fires of the King of All Kings could not burn their angriest for his greatest betrayer.

Glorious Vassal Illumination

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Burning Gaze of the Firmament

The Shining Tyrant must be discerning when picking out his servants from the world of wonders he created. This Charm enhances the Exalt's sight, his eyes becoming white hot embers, limning characters in his sight with interpretive tableaus depicting their might and skill. In dense crowds, the Storyteller may call for a Notice Details roll (see **Exalted**, p. 135) to pick out targets of worth equal to the Infernal's threshold successes (minimum 1).

The Storyteller may tell the player the following information: Whether a target's Essence is within two dots of the Exalt's, or if it is greater or lower; whether a target has any Attributes or Abilities rated 4+, and if so which two they prize the most; and whether the target is a servile character.

At Essence 3+ the warlock also interprets one of the target's non-Permanent Charms with the highest minimum Essence, usually the one most used or most prized by the target.

Right Hand Ascension

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Servitude, Sorcerous, Touch
Duration: One story
Prerequisite Charms: Glorious Vassal Illumination

The servants of the Empyreal Chaos reflect, in a small way, the titan's own glory. This Charm imposes an unnatural Servitude effect on a servile character, granting them a secondary Motivation that is an extrapolation of part of the Infernal's own Motivation or Urge. As long as it persists, the servant's stunts that resonate with this new Motivation provide bonus successes rather than dice, and when they channel Conviction to enhance supportive actions, up to (Exalt's Essence) of their bonus dice are converted into automatic successes.

This Charm may be rejected freely when it is activated, but if so the warlock is free to transform a relevant Intimacy into an appropriate negative context. After it is in place, the target must resort to countermagic, or shed all other servile traits before spending 5wp (immediately or in installments) to get rid of the extra Motivation.

Investing Essence users with this Charm is difficult, requiring the Infernal commit the cost of Right Hand Ascension.

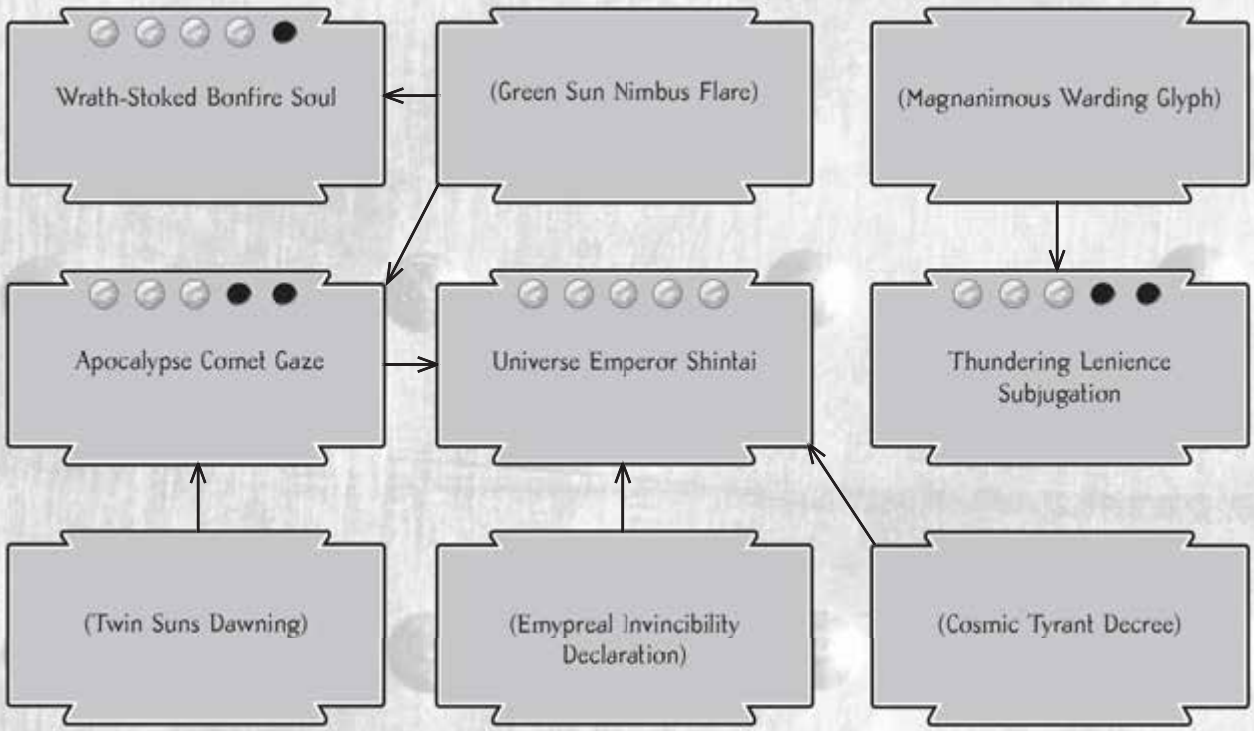
Twin Suns Dawning

Cost: — (+3m); **Mins:** Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Obvious, Shaping
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Burning Gaze of the Firmament

The Empyreal Chaos casts his gaze against the universe like a terrible disaster, burning away the falsehoods of matter within the fires of his omniscience. Adding +3m to the cost of Burning Gaze of the Firmament, that Charm's duration becomes One scene, allowing it to apply to all valid rolls during that time. It also adds the following effects:

- The Infernal's eyes become burning white orbs of fire that cast light as a 4-7m anima. He can see normally even if blind, and is immune to effects that would blind him.
- The Infernal can validly make Awareness rolls to perceive servile and subordinate characters even if his line of sight is blocked by obstacles, as long as the obstructions total no more than (Essence) yards thick.

An Essence 4+ repurchase extends the duration of the enhanced Burning Gaze of the Firmament to Indefinite, and the Exalt's sight can pierce matter up to (Essence x 2) yards thick.



KINGDOM OF THE BLIND

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Crippling, Emotion, Obvious
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Twin Suns Dawning

Having seen the glory of the King of All Kings, his subjects find it difficult to gaze upon things outside his blessed realm. When the anima of a warlock with this Charm rises to the 4m or higher level, and the first time each action that it flares higher (including dramatic reappearance of the iconic anima), it may strike witnesses blind. Those within (Essence) yards who can see the warlock's anima must make a reflexive (Wits + Awareness) roll at difficulty 2 to shield or avert their eyes.

Failure causes near-total blindness for the rest of the scene, a Crippling effect that imposes a -3 internal penalty on relevant rolls, which tends to include attacks. Servile characters may avoid this effect entirely by reflexively falling to their knees in supplication, taking no other action but to bask in the Exalt's glory. The servile regain 1wp the first time in a scene that they do so.

Characters dazzled by this Charm can still clearly see the Infernal. When such victims are called to make Morale checks (see **Exalted**, pp. 155-156), the threat level of the Exalt is increased by one and failure on the roll instills an appropriate servile Intimacy as an unnatural Emotion effect that costs 3wp to ignore.

An Essence 4+ repurchase increases the difficulty of the roll to protect one's eyes to (Exalt's Essence) and the radius in which characters are blinded to (Exalt's Essence x 3) yards. In addition, servile characters blinded by the Charm can still see each other, the Infernal and the warlock's known enemies clearly, unless the servile character is the subject of one of the Exalt's negative Intimacies.

COSMOS-BLEACHING REVELATION

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3;
Type: Simple (Speed 4)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Sorcerous
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Twin Suns Dawning

The Empyreal Chaos is beyond the world of matter, piercing it with his glory and revealing its secrets even to those without his unstoppable sight. This Charm targets a non-magical object within (Essence x 10) yards, blasting it with the light of the Exalt's anima. He rolls (Charisma + Presence) against (target's Resources value) difficulty. Bathed in holy white light, it is stripped of the pretensions of physicality, being treated as transparent to a warlock using Twin Suns Dawning, regardless of its thickness or if the things on the other side are servile characters.

Once this Charm ends normally at scene's end, it leaves the target ungently, bleaching it and making it translucent. Now anyone may see through it, though at a -1 external penalty to relevant rolls.

At Essence 4+ an Infernal may add +5m to the Charm's cost to target non-magical structures that are no more than (Essence x 2) yards in their greatest dimension. Emerald Countermagic can save individual component objects from bleaching, while Sapphire or Adamant Countermagic will save the whole structure.

Glory-Stoking Congregation

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Twin Suns Dawning

The Shining Tyrant's might is obvious, but pointless without subjects to recognize it. This Charm provides a 10m Peripheral pool, which respires 1m for every hour the Exalt spends in the presence of servile characters whose Magnitude totals at least (his Essence ÷ 2).

Praise-Echoing Architect Principle

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Emotion, Shaping, Sorcerous
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Glory-Stoking Congregation

The universe shivers with each step of its king, the worlds he has forged echoing back his splendor. This Charm permanently enhances the way the Infernal creates objects, ensuring they are always in service. If used as an implement in worship or as a sacrifice in prayer to the Exalt, objects created even before he learned this Charm convert bonus dice from relevant stunts into automatic successes and add one extra success. If it was not already, such acts of worship become social attacks building a servile Intimacy in all participants and witnesses, using the most relevant roll to overcome the audience's MDV, or a roll of the priest's (Charisma + Presence) if no other rolls are made.

At Essence 4+ the above effect broadens to include structures created by the Infernal, as well as objects and structures created and owned by servile characters.

An Essence 4+ repurchase reduces the trait requirements for the Exalt and his servile characters to build or design anything specifically meant as a tool for worshiping the Infernal. This reduces the Ability requisites for artifact creation by one each, the (Ability + Specialty) totals for manse design by 3, and the trait requirements to design worshipful manse powers by one. This reduction is not cumulative with similar reductions from other Charms.

Thundering Lenience Subjugation

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion, Emotion, Social, Sorcerous
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Magnanimous Warning Glyph

The Shining Tyrant's violent glory can be preamble to his merciful acceptance of fealty. This Charm can enhance social attacks demanding loyalty or fear from characters that have in the last month been successfully physically hit by the Infernal's attacks or who have failed a Morale check regarding him (see **Exalted**, pp. 156-157). Success imposes an appropriate servile Intimacy as an unnatural Emotion effect that cannot be removed for the rest of the scene. This Intimacy is accompanied by the same rune imposed by Magnanimous Warning Glyph.

Targets who are already servile have their relevant Intimacy reasserted, and also suffer a Compulsion effect that prevents them from attacking the Exalt, socially or physically, or from asking boons or favors of him unless he expressly inquires about their wants. Heroic servile characters can ignore this unnatural influence by spending 2wp, or for free if they are physically attacked by the Infernal. Others may not resist.

Wrath-Stoked Bonfire Soul

Cost: —; **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Green Sun Nimbus Flare

This Charm functions as the Charm of the same name from **The Manual of Exalted Power—Infernals**, p. 117, except that it burns slain victims to delicate statues of white ash rather than piles of stinking viscera.

A Legacy for Malfeas

Even in the unthinkable event that Theion would fail and be imprisoned within himself as Malfeas, the Demon City, he is home to such unimpeachable glory that some embers of it would gutter on. The following Charms are possessed by the Shining Tyrant and would not suffer meaningful alteration in his fall: Green Sun Nimbus Flare, Godscorch Invective, World Chains Geas, Magnanimous Warning Glyph, Radiant Fury Dissolution and Kissed By Hellish Noon from **The Manual of Exalted Power—Infernals**, pages 114-117. As Charms of Theion, their ultimate prerequisite is Burning Gaze of the Firmament rather than Insignificant Embers Intuition.

Likewise, Malfeas retains A Prince for the Queen and Two Hearts as One, that gave birth to Ligier and elevated him to the status of second fetich, even if he is too wounded to have two hearts now. Conversely, the Demon City is clearly a creature of darkness, because only one so purely magnificent and hallowed as the Empyreal Chaos can possess the Invincible Creator Authority that raised him above the hatred of the Wayward Sun.

Apocalypse Comet Gaze

Cost: —(+2m); **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Green Sun Nimbus Flare, Twin Suns Dawning (x2)

When the Empyreal Chaos' wroth gaze finds his enemies, they are burned utterly, never to mar the perfection of his kingdom again. By adding a further +2m to the Cost of using Twin Suns Dawning, his smoldering eyes roar briefly into a blazing bonfire, obscuring his body. This grants him the ability to make (Dexterity + [Archery or Thrown]) attacks with his baleful glare, using the traits below.

At Essence 5+, the glare's Overwhelming value rises to 5 against servile characters.

A repurchase allows the warlock to direct his baleful glare at targets perceived by his sublime barrier-piercing sight, ignoring the intervening cover. This costs 1wp per attack.

Baleful Glare: Speed 5, Accuracy +1, Damage (Charisma + 3)L/2, Rate 2, Range (Essence x 5), Tags: O.

Universe Emperor Shintai

Cost: 15m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 5; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Blasphemy, Emotion, Form-type, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Empyreal Invincibility Declaration, Cosmic Tyrant Decree, Apocalypse Comet Gaze (x3)

Theion woke far from his brethren, brushing against the infinitude of Time Not to gaze on the 10,000 kingdoms he might rule. The formless rebels of Chaos laughed at him, a foolish monster seeking a place that could house his

Backgrounds in Gunstar Autochthonia

The world of the Autochthonian Realm is vastly different from the Time of Tumult. As such, some Backgrounds function differently in this setting.

Acquaintances: This Background functions as described in **Lords of Creation**, pp. 30-31.

Artifact: The magitech infrastructure of the Realm makes it far easier to mass-produce personal artifacts. An Exalt gains three dots worth of artifacts for each point of the Artifact Background he buys. The Exalted may even raise their Artifact Background all the way to five dots without using bonus points, paying only one Background or bonus point each for the fourth and fifth dots.

Breeding: Realm-spanning eugenics programs have preserved the purity and potency of Terrestrial bloodlines. Dragon-Blooded characters may acquire their first three dots of Breeding at character creation for only a single background dot or bonus point. Some Dragon-Blooded have lower ratings, but these are regarded as flawed and imperfect mistakes, treated as sub-Exalted by their purebred kin.

Class: All Exalts receive free ratings in the Class background at character creation (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals**, p. 94). Alchemicals and Dragon-Blooded receive Class 3 for free at character creation. Similarly, Solar, Lunar, and Sidereal Exalted all receive Class 4 for free.

Cult: The worship of the Exalted is the state religion of the Autochthonian Realm. All Celestial Exalted receive Cult 3 for free at character creation.

Familiar: A character with this Background may choose between either a standard animal familiar or a construct or machine spirit familiar (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals**, p. 93).

Followers: This Background is subsumed into Class and cannot be purchased.

Influence: This Background is subsumed into Class and cannot be purchased.

Manse: Autochthon's geomancy does not form demesnes, making the construction of manses impossible within Autochthonia. Only Green Sun Princes and Abyssals are capable of purchasing this Background, raising their manses in the distant worlds of the Spiral.

Panoply: Even with the staggering technological advancement of the Autochthonian Realm, artifacts are precious and potent magical treasures, not mass-produced commodities. This Background cannot be purchased.

Resources: This Background is subsumed into Class and cannot be purchased.

Salary: This Background is subsumed into Class and cannot be purchased.

Savant: The Savant background represents specialty training in magitech and science (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals**, p. 96). Any character may purchase it, including mortals.

Wealth: Most of the Autochthonian Realm's immense wealth is bound up in supporting world-spanning infrastructure and a highly advanced military force, not the personal bank accounts of the Chosen. This Background cannot be purchased.

impossible majesty, but they screeched in voiceless terror at what he did next. From all his would-be dominions, the Empyreal Chaos drew forth the skeleton of the universe and shattered it, fashioning it into the fiery tines of his crown, lighting the flame of his righteousness and forging a realm greater than any imagined by others.

Like the universe-forging flame of the Empyreal Chaos, warlocks activating this Charm are subsumed into a blaze of their own might, their bodies ceasing to be worthy houses for their infinite radiant soul. This produces the following effects:

• The Infernal's body is a pure, white flame with a radius of (Essence ÷ 2) yards, and her anima flares to the 11+m level, a light encompassing a radius of (Essence x 50) yards. Her fiery, transcendent body is both material and immaterial, allowing her to physically interact with both levels of existence and ignoring one or the other for purposes of moving through obstacles. She may enter spirit sanctums like a dematerialized spirit.

Others who do not similarly exist in this dual state must use magic to affect the Exalt as if she were in the opposing state. (In other words, material beings must use Charms to affect immaterial things, and immaterial beings must use Charms to affect material things, in order to physically affect the Infernal at all.)

• As a flame out of the primeval chaos, others may enter into the furnace of the Infernal's body, but this constitutes an environmental hazard with Trauma and lethal Damage per action equal to (her Essence ÷ 2).

• She does not breathe, though she may still speak with her voice. She is immune to and ignores previously accrued penalties from Crippling, Poison, non-magical Sickness, fatigue, sleep, hunger, and thirst.

• The character's Cosmic Tyrant Decree expands its range to fill her anima. Her social attacks inflicting servile Emotions become unnatural, imposing scene-long internal penalties of -1 on targets' actions unrelated to the feeling, and -3 to contrary actions. By successfully imposing servile Emotions (target's Conviction) times in the scene, the target adopts an appropriate servile Intimacy that may not be eroded without spending 1wp per scene of effort.

• With Twin Suns Dawning active, the Infernal's vision can see through any obstacle within the space of her expanded anima, regardless of thickness.

• Apocalypse Comet Gaze inflicts damage to subordinate characters as if they were servile, and expands its maximum Range to the extent of her expanded anima.

An Essence 6+ repurchase expands the radius of the Exalt's flame-body to (Essence) yards, and her blazing anima to (her Essence x 100) yards.

Character Creation in Gunstar Autochthonia

In general, young Exalts created for play in this shard are made according to the rules found in the **Exalted** core book or in their respective Manuals of Exalted Power. A few particular concerns apply:

• Gunstar Autochthonia does *not* use the Drive or Firearms Abilities on found in this book's Appendix. Exalts in this setting do battle with a mixture of classical and Autochthonian weaponry—not firearms, rockets, blasters, or other such technology.

• Casteless Lunars and Wyld Taint explicitly do not exist in Gunstar Autochthonia. Characters wishing to wear moonsilver tattoos to protect them against external shape-changing must pay for the privilege; such tattoos are Artifact ••, and only function for Lunars.

• Dragon-Blooded graduates of one of the Realm's Terrestrial academies use Lookshyan character creation rules.

• Should Storytellers allow Abyssal Exalted characters, they have no access to the Liege background or any equivalent thereof.

• Should Storytellers allow Infernal characters, the Malfeas Charm set is unavailable in this shard; the Slayer Caste is replaced by the Sovereign Caste, which instead use the Charms of Theion, the Empyreal Chaos (see above). The Sovereign anima power is identical to that of the Dawn Caste, and their caste mark is a circle of eight rays—similar to the Dawn caste mark, but with an empty center.

• Characters may progress in Essence as in traditional **Exalted**. The long flight of Autochthonia has resulted in a great mixture of Exalts of varying age and power, raising the possibility of playing elder characters. Such characters are created according to **Dreams of the First Age** character creation rules. Storytellers are strongly advised to consider the consequences of mixed groups of elder and younger Exalts before allowing players to make such characters, however.

HEAVEN'S REACH

In the far future of a different cosmos, the Exalted live amongst the teeming masses of sentient life, sometimes ruling the citizenry, sometimes hunted like animals. In the Central Empire, mankind is pressed together, ruled over by interstellar trading clans, trans-galactic cartels, and strange syndicates, all of whom are overseen by the Thousandth Dynasty, the ruling bureaucracy overseen by Heaven's Son, His Divine Lunar Presence, who overthrew his immortal spouse an aeon ago and now oversees an empire which manages a thousand star systems but is a shadow of what it once was.

Ten Million Dragons serve the divine Emperor, but even with the armies and bureaucracy of the Dragon-Blooded behind it, the Central Empire's power is hardly noticed in the vast majority of systems. Out there on the frontier, farmers and industrialists live out their lives hearing mere rumors about the wider galaxy. Adventurers discover new worlds or rediscover lost treasures; mercenaries fight for whoever will pay them the most thalers. Out there in the hinterland, the Solar Exalted slowly return to prominence, working for pay and seeking their fortunes, aided by Lunar warriors who eschew the soft decadence of the Central Empire, Sidereal freebooters who reject the hierarchy of their own kind, and outcaste Dragon-Blooded who enjoy a life away from, or covet an existence amongst, the trading clans of the Central Empire.

Surrounding the Empire and the frontier, within it and amongst it, unseen by most, is the Grand Celestial Mountain, a data-archive which runs the machinery that exists behind the Known Worlds. The Grand Celestial Mountain is a virtual space whose vastness exists in a subspatial otherwhere, but whose roots pierce into the real world to create the Essence-fueled infosphere. The Sidereal Exalted live within the endless corridors of Grand Celestial

Mountain and maintain its archives and computing power. Few humans or aliens bother with the Grand Celestial Mountain unless they are technologically or spiritually adept, or wealthy enough to pay those who are to secure their secrets and wealth there.

But the Exalted are not alone, and the Central Empire and frontier do not go unthreatened. Mass extinction-level threats lurk in the dark outside the frontier, from the sinister Yozis, powerful supercomputers which rose up against the galaxy, to the Tomb-Stars and the shadow-dimension Terminus. In the empty spaces of the galaxy, where no matter exists, the Shrieking Hordes travel, dark-matter intellects that exist as extrusions of another, more chaotic reality. Many of these immensely intelligent and powerful beings have created their own Exalted to threaten and subvert the Central Empire and the vast frontier which surrounds it.

A Galactic History

The Central Empire and its predecessors have existed for so long that mankind's origins are forgotten. Ancient historical periods are classified not in years or centuries, but aeons, epochs and millennia. Lost in the mists of antiquity is Creation, the mythical home of mankind, where the original architects of the current galactic order built massive dirt-bound empires and then expanded outward toward the stars. Some say that as mankind attempted to master the universe, Creation was lost in some terrible apocalypse. Others believe that Creation was simply left behind, unnecessary and forgotten, as mankind forged new worlds out of the cosmic dust. Perhaps Creation still lies out there, renamed and inhabited by those who do not know its significance, or hidden in the spacelanes, waiting to be rediscovered by the children who left its bosom ages earlier.

Thus, the original builders of previous galactic orders are lost to history and largely relegated to mythology. It is storytellers and not historians who recount the tales of First Emperor, who cold-bloodedly subjugated a million systems using armies of metal and flesh until the whole of the galaxy rested under his boot-heel. His might was matched only by his hubris, and whole systems were razed and rebuilt to function as monuments and tombs to he and his family. Just as legendary are the tales of the Immaculate Golden Engineer, who designed the Grand Celestial Mountain and brought the light of knowledge to the galaxy, then built the massive canal-system which even now allows mankind to travel effortlessly across the gulfs of space. Some scholars argue that both First Emperor and the Golden Engineer were actually mythical, or an amalgamation of several dozen early galactic leaders, but archeo-historians still seek relics from their reigns to sell to an eager public.

Another matter of debate is when the Exalted first appeared. The Terrestrial and Lunar Exalted insist that their origins lay in ancient Creation, where they were designed to assist in the expansion of an empire whose rule was sorely tested by the limits of pre-faster-than-light travel, and as the current ruling class the Central Empire echoes their belief. The Solar and Sidereal Exalted, these official sources recount, were products of the Immaculate Golden Engineer, who designed them to help manage Grand Celestial Mountain and the Stellar Intelligences. But renegade savants say that the precursors of the Solar Exalted may be found much earlier in human history, and that Immaculate Golden Engineer himself may have been one of their number. It is true that the legends of some Solar Exalted seem to predate the golden age of the Engineer—Dysseus the Cunning, for instance, and his enemy Oliphem, are said to be contemporaneous with the First Emperor, rather than living in a later epoch.

Alien Races

As long as mankind has walked the stars, it has walked alongside thousands of alien races. From the sinuous Kittiri to the sullen and massive Stal, from the ebon-skinned Ratch to the scintillating Uvall, mankind has discovered a nearly uncountable number of races on thousands of different worlds. Some of them have looked just like mankind, but with minor differences to account for evolution in different environments—the Ratch are violet-skinned humanoids who, apart from their color, ears, and slight changes to facial structure, could pass for human. Others are strange, inhuman things, like the Kranix, who appear as a kind of hard-shelled octopus.

Over the course of history, mankind and innumerable alien species have met, allied, fought, lived together in peace, stared sullenly at one another in prejudice, and engaged in every other interaction one can think of. Alien dynasties have even ruled the empire on occasion over the last few thousand years. Everything that can be said of mankind can be said of their alien brethren. But history has been written by the victors, and His Divine Lunar Presence is human, and so aliens have largely been relegated to a second-place position in the history of mankind's ascendance. Which is not to say that aliens do not occupy the imagination of humanity—many a child has delighted to the tales of Uba-Sathlo the Kittiri thief-general and his heist of the Emperor's data-hoard, or the warrior-prowess of the Stal known as Ungenerous-Hand-of-Reprisal 1-9-7-3, and how he declared war on the demon progeny of the Yozi called Isidoros, the Black Boar Who Blots Out the Stars.

At the height of the Solar Exalted's rule, alien worlds were terraformed to their inhabitant's specifications just as mankind's were. The home-worlds and colonies of the various alien races are just as interconnected with the Grand Celestial Mountain as the worlds of humankind, and Essence-programs and spirit-agents manage the Essence machineries that maintain weather, climate, and other elements. FFala, homeworld of the octopi-like Kranix, may have an ammonia atmosphere and its undersea citadels may be grown from metallic coral nanotechnology, but its aquatic

GLOSSARY

Autochthon: One of the last surviving unaltered Stellar Intelligences, Autochthon has spent the last millennia absorbing worlds into his being and converting them into mammoth machines.

canals: Weakened regions of subspace connecting solar systems to one another, which allow for faster-than-light travel between stars, navigable only by starships equipped with anima-fields.

Central Empire, the: What remains of the galactic empire founded by *First Emperor*, built up by the *Immaculate Golden Engineer*, and maintained for millennia by the Exalted.

Death Avatars: Extrusions of a *Tomb-Star's* will, the Death Avatars are powerful beings capable of interacting directly with the lifeforms and ghosts in *Terminus* and occasionally entering into the *Known Worlds*. They act as intermediaries between the Abyssal Exalted and the *Tomb-Stars*.

eschatechnology: The strange dark-matter and dark-energy devices of the *Tomb-Stars*, Abyssal Exalted and *Death Avatars*.

femtotechnology: The most advanced form of nanotechnology developed, where picotechnology and nanotechnology manipulated individuals atoms and molecules, femtotechnology manipulates individual nuclear particles and motes of Essence, allowing almost miraculous effects. Picotechnology was the stage of technology before femtotechnology, in use by *First Emperor*.

First Emperor: Ancient human who conquered much of the galaxy using pre-Essence technology and is still renowned, millennia after his death, for brutality and ruthlessness.

frontier, the: The region of space surrounding the *Central Empire* made up of worlds largely outside of Imperial control.

Grand Celestial Mountain: The subspace informational network that permeates the entirety of the galaxy, inhabited by the Sidereal Exalted and Essence-programs of varying power and importance.

Immaculate Golden Engineer: The imperial personage who created much of the infrastructure which allowed for the invention of the Exalted, the interstellar *canal system*, and the *Stellar Intelligences*.

Known Worlds, the: The term for the known universe as it has come to be understood, remapped and redefined in the aftermath of the Malfean War. The Known Worlds consists of both the *frontier* and the *Central Empire*.

Shrieking Hordes: Strange beings made up of chaotic, half-formed matter and driven by an alien intellect, these creatures dwell in the broken reality of the *canals* or at the periphery of the galaxy, where physics break down under their powerful whims.

Solar Dynasties, the: The millennia where the Solar Exalted, aided by the *Stellar Intelligences* and their fellow Exalted, ran the galaxy. Much of the technology and accomplishment of this era is largely deemed mythical except by those rare beings who remember it first-hand.

Son of Heaven, the: One of the oldest surviving Exalted, the Son of Heaven slew his bride, Dema Osirian, last of the Solar imperial rulers, and took control of the *Central Empire* a century after the Malfean War. He still rules it today.

Stellar Intelligences: Stellar macro-phenomena whose mass and Essence output were altered until they were sentient supercomputers run by Essence-programs of immense power and unfathomable intent. Most were destroyed or altered by the *Solar Dynasty*.

Terminus: A pocket universe which exists on the other side of the *Tomb-Stars*, it grows with each iota of matter and energy absorbed by the dead *Stellar Intelligences*.

thaler: The common currency used throughout the *Central Empire*, made of an alloy nearly impossible to forge, and also a common unit of exchange in the *frontier*.

Thousandth Dynasty, the: The common term for the *Central Empire* under Heaven's Son, often used on internal documents.

Tomb-Stars: *Stellar Intelligences* destroyed by the Exalted in the Malfean War exploded and collapsed in on themselves, creating massive black holes and other destructive phenomena. Their intellects still survive in the subspatial realm known as *Terminus*.

boulevards have manses, and programs staff those manses just as on any other world.

The Creation of the Solar Exalted and the Stellar Intelligences

One of the reasons why the origins of mankind's journey to the stars is lost is because of the rise of the Stellar Intelligences. During an age long past, technological innovation reached the point where star systems would be raided for their resources in order to build massive edifices as vast as planets, stars, and even whole solar systems. Invulnerable spheres of matter were placed around suns to capture their energy, planets were terraformed effortlessly to suit mankind or its many alien allies, and the gases of nebulae were suffused with Essence and turned into unfathomable intelligences in order to manage an empire the size of a galaxy.

The hard sciences were found to be only notional limits on mankind's ambitions. Spiritual energy—called Essence, and whose primary unit of measurement was the mote—began to see use during this period. The predecessor of the Grand Celestial Mountain's technological foundation of femto- and pico-technology, supported by tachyon communication arrays, was replaced with Essence-based power and communication, allowing nearly instantaneous communication across a virtual subspace.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of this new technology was that sentient souls could be crafted from Essence, and so mankind and their alien brethren soon had Artificial Intellects who did everything for them. Many of these intellects were programmed with the purpose of acting as programs in the Grand Celestial Mountain, but others were anchored into weapons, starships, and even toys for the children of the age. Each spirit-program has a specific task, or oversaw a multitude of lesser programs. They monitored the health of the populace and kept track of each individual's well-being as well as the progress of wide-scale epidemics and health risks. They oversaw the weather patterns of planets and tracked and manipulated tectonic pressures so as to make each world a paradise. They maintained the delicate Essence flows of the canal network and ran a command economy of immense subtlety, ensuring want and lack were things of the past.

But the task of running such a massive empire was too much for simple programs, even the powerful Incarnae systems who built palaces near the peak of Grand Celestial Mountain. Stellar phenomena were bent to mankind's aims in order to maintain peace and prosperity, and so suns were turned into living, sentient supercomputers, their vast intelligence used to monitor the health of thousands of systems and hundreds of thousands of worlds. Nebula were awakened into full stars and then collapsed to form wormholes for travel far easier than even using the intergalactic canal system.

The names of these Stellar Intelligences are still known to historians—The Eye that Sees, who managed the surveillance networks policed by the Lunar Exalted; Adrian, the product of an experiment to awaken the canals themselves, and who was bound by the Night Caste known as Shinjon of the Thousand Murders; and Mardukth, Who Holds in Thrall, who enslaved billions of sentients via the manse-network and sought to take over the Grand Celestial Mountain itself until a raid against his palace on the mountain by Sidereal commandoes and their script-spiders led to his destruction in the real world, creating the second Tomb-Star.

Most historians say that it was during this period of limitless technological innovation that the Celestial Exalted were created, and that the development of Essence technology allowed the Solar Exalted and their fellows to be modified from advanced human stock. Just as the Stellar Intelligences were created as fathomless intellects to govern the galactic empire, the Exalted, too, were tools. The posthuman intellects of the Stellar Intelligences required posthuman minds to guide and police them. And so the Exalted were made, the greatest among mankind reforged and transformed to oversee this period of unchecked human advancement.

The limitations of mankind—even a mankind aided by technology and modified over the years by low-impact genetic engineering—could only do so much. But Solar Exalted governors oversaw huge tracts of space, Lunar spies policed dissident groups whose movements and conspiracies involved dozens of worlds, and the Sidereal Exalted monitored the spirit-programs and galactic interface that connected the Grand Celestial Mountain to the galaxy as a whole. And always there were the Ten Million Dragons, warring, building, and governing in the Celestials' names.

Some of these Exalted survive today in official histories as well as folktales. No realspace vault or encrypted cache in the Grand Celestial Mountain was safe from the semi-divine Night Caste hacker and spy known as Arialla 10Shadow, and her doomed romance with the Lunar infiltrator Proteas and the Sidereal code-architect Xiaofei Shen is still a subject for modern romances. The sentient cannibal-virus known as the Chaun-strain was stopped by the Twilight researcher Shattered Ice, who was only slain by Cytherea, a Stellar Intelligence crafted from sentient biomass the size of a large planet, and who caused untold damage to herself in destroying her Solar opponent. And every soldier knows of Contentious Sword, who survived the Malfean War only to disappear into the frontier centuries later.

The Malfean War

No one knows for sure how long this glorious age lasted or why it broke down. Some archeo-historians say a few centuries, while others believe it maintained itself for several thousand years. What is known is that the Stellar Intelligences, led by a being named Malfeas, a mobile sphere

covered in cityscapes wrapped around a green sun, rebelled against the Imperial Mandate. Sentient and powerful stars traveled through the cosmos destroying solar systems. Asteroid fields made up of macro-scale machinery devoured worlds and dark matter to increase their power. From their beings they forged demon-armies out of Essence and biomass to harvest the lives of untold billions, wiping out entire prefectures, which in turn were each made up of dozens of systems. Only the Exalted, led by the Solars, rallied mankind and their alien allies to defeat the Intelligences.

After years of costly conflict, the first handful of rebel suns fell. And when these gigantic cosmic beings died, in their death throes they collapsed inwards on themselves, creating holes in the very fabric of physical space, black holes that swallowed every iota of matter, energy and Essence. The first such rift in space-time, which occurred when a galaxy-wide surveillance network run from a medium-sized star perished, surprised all involved—after all, the Stellar Intelligences were supposed to be ageless, deathless beings, and so none knew what would happen if they were brought down by their former Exalted masters. But once the news reached the other rebel suns, they realized that if they were to fall, they would take light-years of space time with them. That first Stellar Intelligence to die wiped out a solar system in his death-throes and left a black hole in his wake—the second, upon realizing her end was imminent, released all of her power at once in a mighty conflagration which rendered uninhabitable all of the systems around her, brought down a significant fraction of the Grand Celestial Mountain, and then collapsed light-years of spacetime into a massive black hole. The death of a rebel, it seemed, would be costly for all sides.

The destruction of these first cosmic intellects spelled the end of the Stellar Intelligences' rebellion. An immortal, near-omnipotent and omniscient being has more to fear from termination of its existence than even the long-lived Exalted. And so Malfeas and its kindred allowed themselves to be diminished, reprogrammed and modified so that there were limits on their nigh-omnipotent power, and then banished to the gulf between the stars, forbidden from using the galactic canals and cast off to the hinterlands of the ruined galaxy, to dwell in the galactic graveyard they'd created out of thousands of ruined solar systems and decimated constellations. There, in the wine-dark void at the edge of the frontier, they were free to populate whole regions of space with the demons they created, but they were barred forever by new behavioral limits from ever approaching the remains of the Empire.

The Decline

In the wake of the destruction of much of the galaxy, the Solar mandate collapsed. For centuries after the end of the Malfean War, the Solar Exalted attempted to regain

the previous, lofty heights of civilization which had once existed, but each attempt only revealed how much had been lost. Dynasty after dynasty were either overthrown or voted out of office as each caste attempted to prove it had the answer. The Dawn caste attempted to reconquer lost territory only to lose whole expeditions in the dangerous canal network. The Twilights attempted to find some other avenue to galactic power, some new technology that would equal the Stellar Intelligences without falling prey to the same damned ambition. The Zenith caste sought to create cults of personality, while the Night caste created police states and draconian networks of spies, and the Eclipse attempted to shore up the crumbling bureaucracy. As each government in turn tried desperately to recreate what was lost, more and more of the empire slipped from their grasp.

The legislative bodies which helped the executive branch of the Dynasty—the councils, the senates, the deliberatives—found the Solar Exalted too powerful to control. It had taken innumerable years and rewriting the fabric of reality to defeat the Yozi, and the deaths of the Tomb-Stars caused untold damage and snuffed out billions of lives. The Solar Exalted were close to those beings' power, so their underlings saw them with an admixture of fear and jealousy.

Thus, the Solar Exalted's consorts and trusted advisors eventually grew weary of this mismanagement, turned on them in the halls of power, and tried to vote them out of office. At that time, intergalactic society held fast to the rule of law. The majority of Solars at the heart of the empire allowed themselves to be voted out of office or fall from power via no-confidence rulings and assisted in the arrest and imprisonment of their fellows if they refused to shuffle out of the public eye or actively rebelled.

It was on the periphery of the empire that Solars most often clung to power, and on them, the galaxy declared war. The minor Solar rebellions on the fringes of the empire hastened the shrinking of the dynasty's hold over outer systems—many of those systems revered their golden rulers. But those Solar Exalted who fought the mandate of the people were eventually overthrown by coalitions of Lunar, Sidereal and Dragon-Blooded Exalts, who saw in these leaders the hints of a corruption they had barely thought existed. The last Solar empress was slain by her young Lunar spouse after she fled to the periphery and sought to rebuild her lost empire.

But while many of the Solar Exalted perished, a sizeable number of them willingly walked away from their old posts and left the seats of power in the galactic core for the frontier, where they tried to eke out a peaceful existence and build something unspoiled by centuries of war and destruction.

Within a century or two, the Solar Exalted were wholly out of power, their Essences cast out into the frontier. Some rotted in prison for crimes committed during their rule, but the vast majority had been killed or walked willingly into exile, and there, for many years, left the eye of history.

In the chaos following the removal of the Solar Exalted from power and the end of the Malfean War, the crumbling empire was in danger of extinction. With no Solar administrators in the centers of power, governing an empire the size of the galaxy, especially a galaxy which lay in ruins and whose terrain was now largely unmapped, now became unfeasible. The empire still claimed to rule the galaxy, but in practice, it governed only those thousands of systems closest to it and which by dint of being largely untouched by the war were easiest to control and monitor through the Grand Celestial Mountain.

The former capital, Aden, had suffered hugely at the hands of Yozi-controlled demonic insurgencies and the Yozi had smashed themselves over and over again at neighboring systems, only to be stopped by the sentient navy run by Unconquered Sun or by Autochthon, one of the handful of Stellar Intelligences to stay loyal. And so the capital was moved from Aden to the world eventually renamed Imperial Center, which was more centrally located to the heart of the surviving systems.

Mortal mankind had to govern this new, smaller empire without the help of the remaining Exalted. During this era, the Lunars were riven by internal schisms over whether the Yozi still remained threats, while the Sidereals retreated to Grand Celestial Mountain to oversee the reconstruction of the galaxy. (It is said the Sidereals were also fearful of mankind's overthrow of the Solar Exalted, and so managed to largely hide their existence from humanity when they had to travel amongst them to repair a terraforming unit or check on an errant spirit-program's manse.) But administrating even a diminished empire which spanned thousands of systems was too difficult for normal mortals, and mercantile interests began corrupting the democratic institutions at the heart of the empire.

Into this period of decline came the nameless Lunar now known as His Divine Lunar Presence. His dedication to the survival of the empire was unquestioned by his packmates—he had, after all, slain his own Solar bride for the good of the galaxy. He and a cadre of his fellows seized power in a relatively bloodless coup. For centuries the Lunar, now called Heaven's Son by his fellows, ruled under the guise of various politicians, stealing the identities of those chosen to rule by the people, until during a massive political and economic upheaval surrounding one of the galactic syndicates, the Lunar emperor cast off his disguise, seized control, and appointed himself overlord in order to oversee the crisis. He has held power ever since.

Despite the loss of democracy, many in the nascent Central Empire embraced this transfer of power. Suddenly, the shrinking borders of the empire stabilized, and in fact expanded outwards. The Dragon-Blooded mercantile interests were brought to heel, the star-legions were rebuilt, and

the quality of life in the empire increased immeasurably. If this was tyranny, some in the empire said, then it is a benevolent one.

The Modern Age and the Shape of Space

At least a thousand years have come and gone since the apocalyptic war against Malfeas and its ilk, and the galaxy is diminished. Ancient star-charts show that the position of many stars has shifted, with hundred or thousands of alien suns moved, or gone entirely. Constellations have changed. The universe, some say, was toppled on its axis. The once great Imperial Mandate that cast its will across the whole of a galaxy is now a diminished Central Empire, whose authority stretches over a fraction of what it once claimed. The remnants of the Exalteds' unquestioned hegemony over humanity and its alien brethren rule a fractious kingdom, afraid of advancement and fearful of what lay in the dark behind the stars.

Where the galaxy once reportedly had the shape of a flattened disc, bulging at the center, it is now a fragmented, sickly mess, with shattered arms and huge gulfs within its enormity. Holes exist where star systems once drifted. Massive regions of space burn with eldritch color—some a dim red, others a sickly green, still yet others a purple that makes the eyes water and burn. Areas where Tomb-Stars reign are marked by black tumorous holes into which cascades of healthy starshine are drawn fatally and inexorably down into Terminus.

Some of these areas are where even now the Yozi or their demonic offspring lurk—collectively called the Damned Reaches, these demonic zones are mentioned whenever spacefarers gossip about the Ydreni Gulf or the Shattered Sea, or whisper about what lies within Ymar's Chasm or the Roiling Storms of the Hellesponte Systems. Sometimes, untouched paradises or treasure troves lie within these terrible cosmic hinterlands, and so pirates, privateers and explorers will often attempt to brave the dangers of the Damned Reaches in order to make their fortunes, but few of these brave or foolhardy crews return, and of the few who do, rarely do they come back richer.

The Grand Canals

Due to the technological brilliance of the Immaculate Golden Engineer and the later tinkering of the Stellar Intelligences and their Solar masters, travel from one distant star system to another was effectuated by faults in space, the so-called grand canals. The grand canals are "weak areas" in space time where the normal rules of physics do not apply, and so starships travelling at incredibly high rates of speed cover distance more rapidly. Within the grand canals, a journey that would take a starship decades or centuries even at faster-than-light speeds takes mere days for most travel, or weeks to cross large stretches of the Known Worlds.

The real practical limitation on the grand canals is that within the space-time of the canal itself, physical reality breaks down, subjecting the ship to cosmic energies and enormous stress, and the crew to the potential for total mental breakdown as their senses and mind are assaulted by different physical laws. In ancient times before Essence manipulation technology became widespread, ships using the faults had to be heavily armored and shielded behemoths to survive within the region of the canal. After Essence technology became widespread, ships were equipped with special "anima fields" based on the principles behind the anima banners of the Exalted. The anima fields shield the structural integrity of the ship as it travels through the canal, allowing small and agile craft to make the cross-system trip using a canal instead of the brutish titan-ships of ages past.

Even within the twisted half-reality of the grand canal, there are few threats to a ship within the well-traveled regions of space. But travelers brave enough to use a neglected canal, or to travel via canals that touch on the borders of known space, often report strange, chaotic intelligences lurking within, capable of creating their own bubbles of mad reality. And given the weakened nature of reality there, whole worlds may be created by these intelligences. Some trading clans from the Central Empire are rumored to carry on a surreptitious trade with these alien entities, swapping slaves, strange artifacts and technology in exchange for items that could only be created in a realm where a less stringent reality's laws hold sway.

Space Travel

Space travel in the Known Worlds is usually effected by the use of light freighters, if civilian, or smaller corvettes, if military. Larger ships are prohibitively expensive to build for anyone but a planetary government, one of the trading clans of the Central Empire, or a multi-system financial concern in the frontier. For the average adventurer, human, alien or Exalt, a smaller transport allows enough room to move valuable goods to take advantage of price differences between systems while maintaining the speed and arms to fight off imperial pickets or pirates. These ships tend to be agile, relatively old and handed down from owner to owner, and they are often surprisingly well-armed and armored. In addition, each ship has its own slaved intellect, usually a program-spirit of small to moderate power, to moderate use of the anima fields and access the Grand Celestial Mountain's lowest districts for common, unrestricted information.

The largest modern ships are destroyers and battlecruisers the size of a city, while the smallest are single-seat fighters, usually too small to carry their own intellect and anima field, and thus unable to travel the canals by themselves. For the duration of Heaven's Son's reign, very few

specially designed, excessively scaled ships have been built, except for his flagship and the personal ships of the empire's greatest citizens. Gone are the golden age of the superships, massive, artificially intelligent hulls large enough to support their own manses and hearthstones.

The greatest of those ships was *Unconquered Sun*, the flagship of the Solar Exalted, run by a small Stellar Intelligence of their own design. But there were other ships, such as the black carriers of the *Ebon Dragon*'s fleet, a powerful Yozi whose ships were demonic crafts carved of pure Essence, and which haunted shipping lanes and thwarted military operations for the duration of the Malfean War.

But not every legendary ship is some relic of the Malfean War and staffed by a posthuman intellect—smugglers trade stories of the *Europa*, a well-used freighter that has been passed down from one rogue's hands to another's over the years, or the *Bankrupt Lady*, small corvette that was converted over to civilian use and which—depending on who has possession of her now—is either one of the greatest smuggling ships of all time, thanks to its custom stealth anima, or a pirate ship of terrifying capability.

Manses & Hearthstones

On most worlds that have known the rule of the Exalted, lines of power run across the land and sea according to geomantic principles. This energy had always been there, but once mankind and his alien allies learned how to tap into this "Essence" and use it as a basis for their technology, wholesale modification of the lines of power began, first to generate more power for construction projects and then, later, to assist in terraforming.

Eventually, the stars themselves were tapped for Essence, which was used to create the virtual space of the Great Celestial Mountain. With energy from a thousand suns being funneled into a virtual space, a new universe was created wherein all knowledge could be stored. That energy could also be structured so that, when properly channeled, it created virtual computers of incredible potency, artificial intellects who were able to use the Essence within their forms and tap into the network Essence of a planet to accomplish incredible feats. Development of these intellects proceeded along with the redesign of the human psyche and Essence pattern itself in the creation of the Exalted, and so these artificial intelligences and the Exalted grew into power simultaneously, working together to shepherd the galaxy into a new golden age. These Essence-based beings created in the Grand Celestial Mountain are called by many names, depending on their purpose—intellects, programs, agents, and spirits.

In areas where the Essence of a world pooled, or where it was particularly potent, geomantic researchers built

specially designed buildings to tap into that Essence and exploit it. These buildings—referred to as manses—became the centers of communities and the hearts of each region's civilization. In cities, where dozens of manses were capable of being created, each manse became a neighborhood center or the heart of a government office.

Each manse usually produced its own governing intellect, which maintained the manse's repairs and which served the local community. The intellect was also in touch, via lower-ranked programs and messengers, with the Grand Celestial Mountain. Low-level manses were used for international and even interplanetary communication—the governing intellect would transmit a message through its servants, which disappeared into the otherworld of the Mountain and exited at a connection which lay at a manse across the galaxy nearly instantaneously.

In addition, the most powerful manses either had intellects capable of creating a stable portal to the Grand Celestial Mountain that humans or aliens could travel through, or had functional, stable artifact portals that did not require an intellect to activate. Thus, the Exalted and their most trusted mortal companions could actually enter the Grand Celestial Mountain itself, and one breed of Exalt, the Sidereal Exalted, was created as a bridge between the impossibly powerful intellects that existed within the Celestial Mountain Network and mortal mankind. Within that network, the Exalted could converse with powerful spirits which oversaw massive public works projects or who collected statistics concerning any number of subjects.

The governing intellect of a manse usually commands a small handful of pattern spiders and messenger agents for communicating with the Grand Celestial Mountain. This intellect is very basic, and is effectively a friend and ally to those who have bonded with the manse. Some Exalts have better developed intellects attached to their manses, or may have different relationships with those intellects.

Finally, each manse produces at least one hearthstone, an extrusion of the manse which grants its owner various powers. All hearthstones function as a means of verbal communication both with the governing intellect of the manse and with other hearthstones spawned by that manse.

As the Exalted grew more powerful and their intellects went from a transhuman scale to a posthuman one, they did not stop tapping into the Great Celestial Mountain to create artificial intelligences who could channel Essence on a planetary level—instead, they began to develop macroscale intellects which used the Essence storms surrounding stars and other astronomical phenomena to accomplish incredible feats beyond previous imaginings. These became the so-called Stellar Intellects, who eventually rose up in the Malfean War and became the Yozis and Tomb Stars.

Worlds Beyond Number

The innumerable worlds of the galaxy are the product of reshaping by now unfathomable technologies over thousands of years. If history is to be believed, then First Emperor was capable of terraforming worlds even without Essence technology or the creation of spirit computers to oversee weather patterns, animal populations, and geological formation, but such terraforming efforts took centuries. Using technologies first crafted by the Golden Engineer, under the power of the Stellar Intelligences and the guidance of the Solar Exalted, the whole of the galaxy was reshaped rapidly, for better or for worse.

Thus impossible worlds exist, kept up by divine programs roosting in the Grand Celestial Mountain. Some were redesigned around themes—hellscapes to function as prisons or training grounds for Imperial special forces; edens for the rich and idle; ice worlds and swamp planets for alien client races or new, genetically engineered breeds of humanity to grow and thrive. On some of these planets, spirit programs failed, fell to Yozi corruption, or fled to the Grand Celestial Mountain, and so they have fallen into disrepair, and now

Anima Fields

The anima field used by most modern starships is powered by Essence generators, which in turn are monitored by the ship's intellect. Only an intelligence of pure Essence, bound to a ship's sensors, can tune the field to withstand the shifting rigors of a canal's twisted space-time.

However, sabotage or damage can injure or temporarily incapacitate a ship's intellect to the extent that it can no longer manipulate the Essence generators around the ship. In such cases, if a ship has a mortal crew, they are usually doomed, unless they are very close to a system in realspace. But if a ship has a member of the Celestial Exalted amongst their crew, there are rumors that they can use their own anima to shield the ship, either channeling it through the ship's generators or by the use of special Charms. Some Exalted are reported to have Charms which allow them to even function as the ship's intellect, linking their spirits with the ship itself, manipulating the anima generator with the fine control needed to navigate the canal.

once sweet-smelling vegetation is carnivorous, and predatory weather patterns target the populace, guided by rogue weather programs. On other worlds, ancient intellects still tend to their duties, even if a human or alien hasn't set foot there for centuries.

Trailblazers from frontier worlds or explorers from the Central Empire never know what they'll find, because the Malfean War moved whole systems and made most pre-war star maps of anything but the center of the empire useless. Even though centuries have passed, only a fraction of the galaxy has been remapped, and even now, well-travelled star-systems on the edge of civilization may disappear, their canal-routes collapsing or the solar system itself disappearing for unknown reasons.

The phrase "the Known Worlds" is often used to describe those areas of the galaxy which have been remapped since the Malfean War and which have active, reliable canal routes to effect travel. Thousands of systems make up the Known Worlds, encompassing both the vastness of the frontier and the worlds of the Central Empire alike.

The term "the frontier" describes all of those worlds not under the control and direct governance of the Central Empire. Within that broad definition, pocket empires encompassing dozens or hundreds of systems in regular trade with the Central Empire are covered just as are worlds which have not had a new visitor in centuries. Worlds right on the border of the Central Empire, and which its troops are free to travel to, are part of the frontier just as much as planets on the edges space, at risk of attack by demonic hordes, and which have been long forgotten by history.

The term the Central Empire is used to describe those worlds which are official members of the Central Empire, whose government is either directly controlled or monitored by the Ten Million Dragons, and where the forces of the Central Empire travel freely and unimpeded. To the citizens of the Empire, the term denotes civilization, rather than barbarity and chaos, and those on the frontier are assumed to be rubes at best and near-bestial threats at worst.

The Central Empire

Lying in the northeast corner of the galaxy, the Central Empire is a healthy cluster of thousands of star systems largely spared of the worst of the Malfean War. Imperial Center is the nexus of all authority in the Central Empire, and its location toward the center of the region puts it in a densely inhabited cluster of hundreds of systems. In this civilized region, canal routes between important systems are short—most requiring a scant few hours travel from world to world—and the manses connecting to the Grand Celestial Mountain are well-maintained, their spirit programs mostly brought to heel by the Sidereal Exalted and Dragon-Blooded enforcers.

There are no hard and fast rules for what a world looks like in the Central Empire. Urban-zones run the whole length of Tannin while Uridia is a verdant, untouched paradise except for a handful of farms and a small spaceport. Dis is an alien hellhole, tailor-made for its imprisoned inhabitants, who toil in jade mines for the Orezchka Dragon-Blood trading clan, while two systems away ancient ruins dot Scintillim, now used as a vacation spot for wealthy syndicate members and Imperial dignitaries.

The Central Empire is still ruled by Heaven's Son, a mighty Lunar, served by dozens of his fellows and a near army of Sidereal bureaucrats who spend most of their time in Grand Celestial Mountain, making sure the machinery behind the worlds of the empire runs smoothly. Nominally, Heaven's Son is advised by a variety of councils, senates, deliberatives, and ad hoc committees, but the mechanisms of government have been wholly subverted to provide an illusion of democracy to the countless worlds of the empire.

His Divine Lunar Presence's rule is unquestioned by most citizens. Idealistic politicians and zealous ideologues are subverted by the power and wealth they gain when they become a part of the system, in exchange for embracing the illusion of freedom that the Central Empire presents to its populace. After their terms are over they can expect positions, pensions or stipends from the various trading clans, syndicates and corporations that keep the wheels of commerce in the empire turning. Those who will not embrace the corrupting influence of the Central Empire are either culled by Lunar intelligence operatives or broken under the wheels of the system. Those who cannot be battered into submission or are too cunning to be removed by the Lunar bureaus end up imprisoned on various worlds set aside for this purpose, some of them paradisiacal, others infernal pits. A bare handful of others manage to eke out a life in the underworld of the empire—individuals like Urfei Nine-Tails, Lunar insurgent and head of the Unbidden, a body criminal. Heaven Son's, some suspect, allows some rebels to roost very close to Imperial Center, to attract opposition until, like a ripe fruit, the organization is ready to be plucked and devoured by the justice system.

Day to day life under the Central Empire is marked not by an excess of tyranny, unless one lives on a prison-world, is an indentured servant to one of the wealthy, or is a slave to a trading clan. Instead, it is marked by a lack of freedom that many amongst the citizenry barely notice. Travel from star to star requires identification papers and money, just enough so that the average citizen is deterred from travel. And there's always a risk that some official will decide to peer into exactly why you're traveling, and then either demand a bribe to guarantee easy passage, or bar your travel arbitrarily. If you take an interest in politics or decide to protest some action by those in power, then it's entirely possible the secret police or the legions will take an interest in you, and while you have a right to a

defense, there's no guarantee, unless you're wealthy, that your advocate will be at all competent, or the judicial official in charge is interested in your claim to "rights" or "freedom."

Which is not to say that life under the empire is bad, necessarily—the Central Empire provides entertainment for its citizens, and in exchange for their economic power and their labor, provides them with security from outside interference. The trading clans, legions and the secret police may have all of the power, but servitude is hardly troubling when you're guaranteed a basic education, limited health care, and you don't have to worry about raiders landing on your planet and selling your family as slaves. The boot on the neck of the empire's citizenry is a soft pressure, and it only crushes those who push too hard for liberty and freedom. Freedom is for the frontier, and with freedom comes danger. Those on the frontier view the citizens of the empire as dead inside, while the average imperial citizen sees someone on the frontier as an uneducated thug.

The Legions

Guarding the Central Empire, and often the frontier, are the countless soldiers of the legions. Billions of humans and aliens march in lockstep to the orders of the high command. The vast majority are nameless masses, but the empire needs its heroes, and the legions give them to it. The Vermillion Legion, led by a renegade Abyssal Exalted titled the Impenetrable Heart of Obsidian, is a misfit band of penal "volunteers," indentured corporate levies, and outcaste Dragon-Bloods. The Red Rabble, as they're called, are handed impossible missions on the edge of space, followed by crews of spirit-programs who document their misadventures and then repackage them for sale by media clans back in the heart of the empire. Their leader is one of the first Abyssal Exalted, broken and rebuilt in the heart of Terminus, where the souls of the Tomb-Stars lie. It is said that even after death, chained in the heart of a dead star, the fiery Solar Essence that once beat within his breast could not forget its loyalty to the empire. He escaped from his new masters and fought his way to Imperial Center, where he swore to defend the empire again if Heaven's Son would but let him. Being in command of the Rabble puts the Impenetrable Heart of Obsidian far enough from Imperial Center where he won't be a threat, but still allows him to expend his Essence for the empire he loves so much. Heaven's Son is nothing if not pragmatic—one does not lightly throw away even broken tools.

In counterpoint to the Vermillion Legion is the Divine Lunargent Sword, a crack team of Exalted warstrider aces who personally defend the emperor when he travels from world to world. They are led by Rakshi, a scholar-general of unquestioned talent whose heart yearns for the Long War of the frontier but whose will has been broken by His Divine Lunar Presence's sorcery. One of the generals of the Long War, Erik Swear-Oath, is determined to free her from Heaven's Son, but every attempt he's made has been, as yet, a failure. Swear-Oath is forever calculating the odds of a raid into the heart of the empire and a duel with the greatest squadron of aces in the galaxy, but so far, he has not decided to test himself against Heaven's Son and his most devoted troops.

The Lunar Intelligence Network

The Shining Eye is the unquestioned intelligence power in the Central Empire. Everyone in the empire and much of the frontier refers to it as "the Lunar Intelligence Bureau" and assumes that the main operatives are Lunar Exalted shapeshifters spying amongst society. Everyone knows the Lunars can be anyone, or anywhere, and so the Shining Eye creates a kind of monolithic dread in the populace. The Shining Eye is rightly feared by those who would plot against the government or those whose power allows them some control over the intelligence services, such as the most powerful of the trading clans. Its leader's name, Nacreous Blade, is only whispered, and none can say what he looks like.

Except, of course, that the real Shining Eye exists mainly to collate data collected by the real intelligence networks located throughout the galaxy, run by an alliance of Terrestrial Exalted families, Lunar Exalted spymasters, and Sidereal code-savants who utilize acres of the Grand Celestial Mountain to analyze data from the actual workhorses of the galactic intelligence underground. Anyone who truly understands the the nature of the Exalted realize that even if the Lunar Exalted were not riven by disagreement between the Imperial and Long War factions, there are too few Lunar Exalted to keep track of the intelligence needs of the thousands of systems inside the Central Empire, let alone in the rest of the Known Worlds and out on the fringes in demon-tainted space.

Instead, the imperial intelligence bureau's work is done by thousands of cults, assassin's guilds, terror cells, corporate espionage services, criminal organizations, and high-end thieves, mercenaries and saboteurs, all believing they work either for their own profit or, in some case, to the detriment of the Central Empire. At a guess, a third of the shadowy underground organizations within the Central Empire or the sections of the frontier nearest to the empire have been co-opted by the Shining Eye, and while the Shining Eye serves as a focus for fear and discontent, the actual business of monitoring the populace of the Central Empire and the powers that are a threat to it is done by millions of beings who think they are wholly unaffiliated with the Shining Eye, and who take orders from compromised superiors, power-brokers blackmailed by Sidereals who know where the bodies are buried, or by commanders making their fortunes from Lunar

paymasters while their underlings go about their business, never knowing who their true masters are.

Even the existence of Nacreous Blade is a matter of dispute. Few have ever claimed to have met him (or her), and those that have can hardly agree on what he or she looks like. Is it a single Lunar impersonating multiple individuals, an identity shared across multiple powerful Exalted, or a rumor created to hide the true power behind the Shining Eye? Few can truly say, and those who can aren't talking.

The Great Trading Clans

The majority of corporate interests in the Central Empire are run by normal humans or aliens, but the syndicates at the top of the heap tend to be under the control of Dragon-Blooded families. These families tend to intermarry, but their number is large enough that inbreeding is not an issue. Roughly 70% of the wealth of the Central Empire is consolidated in the hands of the great trading clans, thanks to various monopolies granted to them by Heaven's Son. These trading clans don't try to usurp power from the Lunar Exalted because Heaven's Son promotes a fierce rivalry between the trading clans and the dozens of families who populate the upper echelons of the imperial legions. In addition, Heaven's Son's spies, as previously stated, are incredibly adept at targeting the ambitious before they make an attempt at increasing their status, and he knows that in a choice between sacrificing a useful Terrestrial to eliminate a rival down the road, or letting the Exalt live and consolidate power, it is best to eliminate the Dragon-Blood. There are, after all, millions more.

Some of the most powerful trading clans, including the Mnemon Syndicate and the Cathak Corporation, effectively control multiple systems themselves under license from the Thousandth Dynasty. In cases of disagreement between the empire and these clans, the clans usually lose unless the matter is of little importance to the Lunar hierarchy, but such conflicts are rare, and the inhabitants of those worlds mostly see their masters as Dragon-Blooded. Peleps & Ragara, a large trading syndicate, also manages hundreds of worlds on the frontier under contract to the world's governors. Peleps Deled, a fleet captain of incredible skill and power, has come into conflict with the Lunar Long War faction several times, and many wonder if he is provoking a battle so that Heaven's Son can come in and finally confront those who have resisted his rule. Others ponder whether or

Where Have the Solars Been?

One question which troubles the Lunar Emperor and his advisors is where, exactly, the Solar Exalted went after they were removed from power. For centuries a few of the Solars continued to wander the frontier, and it's said that a handful of veterans of the Malfean War still exist, powerful, wise, and possibly mad, ruling pocket empires or pursuing their own opaque objectives. But there is no doubt that for most of the last few centuries, the number of Solar Exalted on the frontier has been a fraction of those who once ruled the Empire.

Those who look into the matter find a number of stories, each one of more questionable provenance. Some say that the Yozi rebels hunted the Solars once they were removed from the heart of the empire, harvesting their Essences when they could and imprisoning them when they couldn't. Others say that the Sidereals attempted some plot whereby the Solar Essences were used to power the Great Celestial Mountain. Some others whisper of ancient evils lurking on the fringe of known space, like Arad, the Hunter, a posthuman insurgent capable of adapting to any threat; or the Brass Leviathan, once the flagship of the Golden Engineer himself, now devouring worlds and using Solar Essences to fuel its immortal existence. Others still whisper that those Solars trapped in the event horizons of collapsing Stellar Intelligences were pulled down into Terminus, and that the Tomb-Stars trapped them and broke their spirits, turning them into emissaries of their new darkened, cold reality, hoping to use them to collapse the galaxy in on itself and end all of existence.

Finally, some scholars believe that the Solar Essences were infected by a psycho-spiritual virus by the Yozis before they surrendered. This infection made the Solars who commanded the armies of the Dynasty erratic, prone to errors in judgment that made their immense power both undependable and prone to disaster. It is because of this cognitive hack by the Yozi that Heaven's Son and his kind moved against the Solars, why the Sidereals allowed it to happen, and why the upper echelons of the legions did not move to defend their masters. It also explains why the majority of the Solars allowed themselves to be exiled—there on the fringes of space, near where the Yozi were cast out, they stood the best chance of finding a cure for their condition. Now some say the Solars have returned because they've found that cure—while others whisper that they have returned because they accept that no cure can be found.

In the end, the Solars' disappearance could be for any of these reasons, or many, or none.

not Heaven's Son's loyalty to other Lunars and occasional disdain for the Dragon-Blooded feeding at his trough means that if the Peleps conflict with the Long Warriors comes to a head, Heaven's Son will sacrifice Peleps & Ragara's frontier strength rather than cause a greater rift between to the two Lunar factions.

Imperial Center

Imperial Center is the ostensible capital of the Central Empire, having taken that honor from Aden when the latter became too difficult to administer from in the wake of the Malfean War. For a thousand years Imperial Center has grown until it is now a completely urbanized world which requires imports of agricultural products in order to feed its teeming populace. Heaven's Son rules the Thousandth Dynasty from a gigantic citadel carved out of a mountain range that dominates one of world's southern continents, and he is surrounded at all times by Dragon-Blooded and Lunar bodyguards as well as Sidereal advisors, permanently linked to the Grand Celestial Mountain. Although the whole world is watched by the Shining Eye and various spirit-programs dedicated to amassing intelligence on behalf of the Emperor and his secret police, the planet is too crowded and too chaotic to wholly control. Whole cities are effectively massive, sprawling slum-warrens, where illicit goods of any stripe from across the empire may be had for the right price, and where assassin's guilds and sinister cults rub elbows in darkened meeting halls.

The Frontier

The first thing one notices about life on the frontier is a certain vitality— a desire on the part of even the poorest scoundrel to make his fortune. Merchant-princes with letters of marque and reprisal granted by the Central Empire trade with the outer worlds, while small alliances of civilized systems enforce their own justice using bounty-hunters, privateers and misfit ronin. Outcaste Dragon-Blooded sell their services on the fringe of the Known Worlds, working as muscle or freelance troubleshooters, while Lunar generals who may have fought against names such as Malfeas or the Ebon Dragon work as rangers, protecting the galactic rim from ancient terrors for nothing more than fuel and refits for their ancient ships.

Into the massive, nigh lawless frontier, the Solar Exalted fled centuries ago, and now their descendants eke out an existence as bounty-hunters, explorers, yojimbo and pirates. Some of them foment revolution against the Central Empire in the name of their ancestors, while others are content to seek action, romance and adventure under a thousand stars by hunting down threats to humanity for a handful of credits, or making a name for themselves in the galactic martial underworld.

Even amongst the non-Exalted, many who don't embrace life as a farmer, miner, or official on some remote world become treasure-seekers, plying the dead and forgotten planets beyond the edge of the frontier looking for lost technological treasures from the time when man's reach was so much longer than it is today. Others become technologists, attempting to forge new breakthroughs using the pitiful tools that remain available to the frontier scientist.

If asked, the average citizen of the Central Empire would brush off the frontier as a place of poverty and lawlessness, but there are as many types of world in the fringes of space as there are in the empire. Teeming urban hives with glittering towers that pierce the atmosphere exist on the borders of the empire, as do remote wilderness worlds with a few dozen settlers fearful of raiders and slavers. There are democratic governments ruling several systems with technologically advanced militaries, such as the Principality of Thorns, which manages to thrive despite proximity to a Tomb-Star. There are despots wielding ancient war-machines from the Malfean War to rule over fractious clans of primitives. And there is anything, and everything, in-between.

The one thing the frontier has to offer is opportunity. The worlds of the frontier are not bound by contract to any trading clan, and the aspiring warlord does not need to concern himself with Heaven's Son's legions unless the world lies very close to the Central Empire and has some trade agreement or self-defense pact with the Thousandth Dynasty. Trade is extensive, if unmonitored, and so freebooters can make their fortunes preying on shipping or offering up their services to protect it. And a number of the Central Empire's greatest criminals keep their lairs in the hinterlands of space, so bounty hunters can make a fortune stalking the most dangerous prey of all. Those who seek to explore illicit technologies and sorcery can delve into it in black-laboratories on forgotten worlds without fear of Lunar witch-hunters or the interference of trading clans with technological monopolies.

And despite what the empire would have its citizens believe, the technology that keeps terraformed worlds habitable is operational on the majority of planets, and where it's not, it is still capable of being repaired if one could draw the attention of the various engineering programs in the Grand Celestial Mountain or a Sidereal troubleshooter. Manses abound in the reaches of the frontier—those who would never stand a chance of possessing status and rank capable of affording themselves a sophisticated hearthstone in the Central Empire, or access to a powerful manse, can find such things if they look hard enough throughout the frontier. Indeed, in addition to access to such manses and hearthstones, many worlds possess ancient artifacts, either seeded there by the Yozis in preparation for some later invasion, left there by some previous civilization, or buried there with a dead Exalt who perished in the Malfean War or the purges that followed it.

Worlds of the Frontier

Aden

Aden III was once the capital of the Empire, but after the attacks on the system during the Malfean War and due to Aden's distance from the new centers of power, the capital was moved to Imperial Center. Now Aden is a scintillating barbarian jewel, fought over by the various pocket empires that riddle the frontier. Centrally located in the heart of frontier space, with access to dozens of choice canal-routes, anyone looking to build a power-base in the region eventually covets access to Aden, because of its historical cachet if nothing else. After all, Nexus VI may be more important as a center for commerce and trade, but its grimy patina means that no one wants to run a government from it.

Just as important as Aden's historical role and its timeless beauty is the shipyard based on the moons of Aden, from which the best starships in the galaxy are made, currently administered by the Shipwright Dynasty, led by a young mortal named Celed Wyrr. The Empire maintains a garrison on Aden, headed by a Fire Aspect called Hema Shian, to guarantee that the system remains open to imperial commerce and that the trade in ships can go on undisturbed, but the real ruler is inevitably whatever border-lord has taken power. Currently that is Daisham XXIII, master of the Chiaroscuran Khanate and leader of the Zhongnnu fleets. The three way power struggle between Daisham, Shian and Wyrr means that yojimbo, mercenaries and assassins have no want of work, so long as they can be discrete.

Lacros' Folly

Lacros' Folly is a low-population world on the very tip of the frontier, known as the "gateway to the dark." The world's tiny economy subsists on trade based in strange artifacts pulled in from the empty quarters that Lacros' Folly borders—gossamer artifacts bargained for from the Shrieking Hordes, hell-technology smuggled out of the Yozi exile, ancient weapons from the age of Solar hegemony ransacked from deserted behemoths, and even eschatechnology purchased from the Death Avatars of the Tomb-Worlds. Because of this market in black-technology, smugglers, pirates, outcastes looking for a way to buy their way into a trading clan, Solar mercenaries, and even Lunar generals still fighting the Long War all find their way here, if just for a little while. Currently, the world hosts a pirate fleet led by Moray Darktide, an amoral Solar mercenary who has no compunctions about slaving for the Shrieking Hordes, privateering on behalf of the Tomb-Stars, or even breaking skulls for imperial trading clans.

Nexus VI

There are a dozen worlds with some claim to underworld fame, from the pirate haven of Sargasso to the Rookery on Imperial Center, but only Nexus VI is a whole world devoted to black-market trade. Slave markets, pirate starship refitters, black market techs, outlaw programs selling information stolen from the Grand Celestial Mountain, exiled trading clans—if it has the reek of money and desperation about it, you can find it on Nexus VI. Nexus' infamous red-markets are policed by various mob outfits, yakuza alliances, and upjumped street gangs, so visitors are advised to find a guide to help them get in touch with reliable criminal contacts and to help them navigate the slums and bordellos of the galactic criminal hub.

Nexus is nominally ruled by the Emissary, a masked entity to whom insiders ascribe near godlike powers. Gossips and rumormongers variously describe the being inside the mask as a Death Avatar to a Tomb-Star, an undiminished Solar general from the age before the Malfean War, an exiled program of incredible power from the Grand Celestial Mountain, or even Immaculate Golden Emperor himself. He keeps a handful of retainers on his payrolls to enforce some tiny semblance of order on the chaotic world, and these retainers are inevitably Exalted of varying levels of power. Working for the Emissary often requires travel to the far quarters of the galaxy on missions that seem to serve no purpose until some plan comes to bloody fruition on Nexus VI.

Nexus is the location of the Twelve Suns Invitational, a sprawling tournament that the martial arts underworld flocks to. Over two decades, each round is fought in a different system, and the Nexus round is legendary for its betting, which in turn invites all sorts of skullduggery as local criminal elements try to cheat and scam. During the two-week long tournament, locals expect to see gangs of toughs and mob enforcers ambushing some of the greatest combatants in the Known Worlds, sometimes successfully, other times wildly failing, but never without the potential to entertain (and sometimes injure) bystanders.

Temujin

Temujin was once a paradise like Rael before the Malfean War, but She Who Lives in Her Name launched demon-spores to terraform and populate the planet, corrupting the once beautifully terraformed lifeforms that called it home into a single, linked, self-aware predatory ecology. The Central Empire realized that the costs involved in taking the world back from the Yozi's blight would be prohibitively expensive, especially for a world with little to no economic value or special resources, outside of its use as a vacation spot. As the empire receded to its current reduced size, Temujin was soon positioned on one of the borders of the Known Worlds, isolated and forgotten, until the Lunar generals of the Long War split with their decadent cousins and decided to use the now fantastically dangerous Temujin as a training ground for newly Exalted Lunars, outcaste allies, and genetically engineered soldiers. Special Forces units belonging to various frontier powers are often sent onto Temujin to train and survive for a week at a time—longer than that and casualties make the lessons moot—while newly trained Lunars are often left on the planet for one month. If they survive, they earn their nanotechnological tattoos. If they are gravely injured, then they are cast out of the frontier, to kowtow to the Emperor and his dissolute allies.

Rael

Rael is an example of how far technology progressed during the golden age of the Stellar Intellects and their Exalted masters. It is a world where ivory cities float in the sky above fields of varicolored flowers, where mountain ranges have been turned into beautifully sculpted monuments, and where the wind smells of honey and cinnamon and the strikingly azure seas glitter in daytime starlight. When the Malfean War came, the Yozi attacked Rael, but the other planets and moons in the system were fortified to resist even the strongest assault, and the mighty, sentient star-destroying ship known as Unconquered Sun patrolled its borders, run by one of the most brilliant tactical spirit-intellects ever devised. These same defenses are what keep Rael safe today. The paradise is barely visited except by those Solar Exalted and their allies who have stumbled onto maps which point out the safe canal routes into the system (several are dummy routes leading directly into the firing alignment of moon-sized weapon systems), and found secure passcodes to disarm the world's defensive perimeter. Even then, only the Solar Exalted are welcome on Rael—the custom-designed slave races and aesthetically perfect mechanicals there are rumored to be programmed to mount an insurgency on any other being that attempts to make the planet their home without Solar consent.

Rael is home to innumerable Solar tombs from the Malfean War, and it rumored that a handful of Solars retired to seclusion on the world, including the legendary Contentious Sword, who was one of the greatest warriors to ever walk to the stars. Some whisper that Contentious Sword seeks a worthy to inherit his wisdom, and many young Solars have sought it out…but few, if any, have returned to tell the tale.

Hidden Fortress

Hidden Fortress is a world only whispered of, lost to the ages. When First Emperor laid the foundation for the galactic empire that would survive him, he expended millions of lives and the resources of whole star-systems to build a grand planetary tomb for himself, and an army to guard him from grave-robbers and scavengers, as well as an automated research facility where generations of

scientists would toil seeking his resurrection. The whole system is a monument to First Emperor, heavily defended by ancient artifacts, and guarded by robot armies and ancient behemoth ships. During the last days of the Malfean War, as the Yozi rebels realized that the Solar Exalted forces were capable of collapsing their stellar power-sources, the nascent Tomb-Stars and Yozi reached out to the only being they suspected was cunning and malignant enough to be able to win a war against the Solars: First Emperor. They refitted the technology in the system to reflect their own advances, upgraded the computers, and set forth spirits and demons to toil over the First Emperor's resurrection. Now, the system which resisted all intrusion except for that of the Yozis has evolved on its own, into a dangerous network of traps and incredibly powerful technology, at least the equal of the best technology history has to offer. And sitting at the center of it is the First Emperor, who some say finally awakens after millennia, unfettered by the control of the Yozi or the Tomb-Stars of Terminus.

Yugash, Scout World of God Constellation Autochthon

The sentient star system and last unbowed Stellar Intelligence, Autochthon, remains undiminished by the eons. Autochthon sold out his fellows at the end of the Malfean War, in exchange for safe passage out of the galactic halo, unbound by the oaths and reprogramming which transformed the nearly omnipotent Stellar Intellects into the diminished Yozi. Outside of the reach of his brethren, who seek his destruction for their betrayal, and the Exalted, who surely would have eventually grown suspicious of him and sought his destruction, Autochthon has absorbed whole star systems into his Essence, converting planets into engines for his greatness, and turning the populations of those worlds into his slaves and priests. Now no longer merely Autochthon, but God Constellation Autochthon, after long millennia, he seeks to return to the Known Worlds, although for what reason, none can say. To effect this, one of the worlds that make up his Essence has been converted into a massive spacecraft and generation ship and sent into the canals of the Known Worlds. Ill omens follow in Yugash's wake, and his peculiar Exalted fly forth to capture prisoners, to harvest resources, and to collect artifacts until they are ready to summon their god into the frontier.

Yugash itself is a strange world, the product of centuries of terraforming. Its huge, fragile spires reach miles into the sky, keeping the atmosphere wrapped around the world even as it moves at tremendous, unfathomable speed, while its endless oily seas crash upon glittering quartz beaches, all of which give way to the massive, fiery world-engines which burn with cosmic Essence to move the world forward into the galaxy, and which keep it warm in the sunless, cold vastness of space.

Amongst the teeming masses of humanity laboring on Yugash there are strange half-mechanical Exalted created by Autochthon along no known Essence framework. These Alchemical Exalted on Yugash are led by *Unquestioned Strength of the Populat*, a nearly city-sized being whose massive intellect guides Yugash throughout the Known Worlds.

The Grand Celestial Mountain

The Grand Celestial Mountain is arguably one of the greatest inventions of mankind, a massive virtual edifice shaped out of pure Essence, and stored in a virtual otherplace where a million artificial intellects interface with manses on countless worlds, tracking weather, making sure terraformation changes continue to hold, and monitoring populations of human and aliens beyond number.

To walk the streets of the Grand Celestial Mountain is to see a shining paradise, with avenues of virtual gold brick, shining silver spires, clean air unpolluted by factory or farm, and waterways of glittering azure. The mountain is not simply a metaphor—imagine a mountain a thousand miles high, and every foot of it is covered in the handiwork of its spirit masters. Gardens, avenues, buildings, waterways, all of them climb inexorably to the gigantic fortress that lay atop the mount, where the most powerful intellects dwell, and where the Stellar Intellects themselves used to interface until they were thrown from their positions and diminished by their former Exalted masters. The avenues are teeming with intellects going about their daily business, or relaxing during their downtime. The edges of the road glitter as pattern spiders and communication agents flit carrying data or executable instructions from the outside universe to the proper personage to use that information to good effect. Guardian programs patrol the exits from the Known Worlds to the mountain and the entranceways to important bureaus, such as the Incomparable Watchtower of Indomitable Tempests and Gentle Breezes, which oversees weather control on thousands of worlds.

In this age, few humans or aliens see any point in travel to the Grand Celestial Mountain, and given heightened security after the Malfean War—the control computers for most of the Known Worlds is a tempting target to any number of beings—many of them would be turned away anyway. In addition, the sheer number of available manses means that the poor can always ask their local manse intellect for the answer to most questions, while the wealthy elites can carry around hearthstones which inform them of whatever they need to know without the need to enter and petition at a data-temple.

The only beings who see much point to entering the sanctified otherspace of the Grand Celestial Mountain are the Exalted, a few augmented humans and aliens who sneak in so as to hack some operation on some planet or find some obscure piece of data, and the wealthiest of elites,

who petition for their own secure datavaults, where their most private information can lay under the guard of the most powerful security programs.

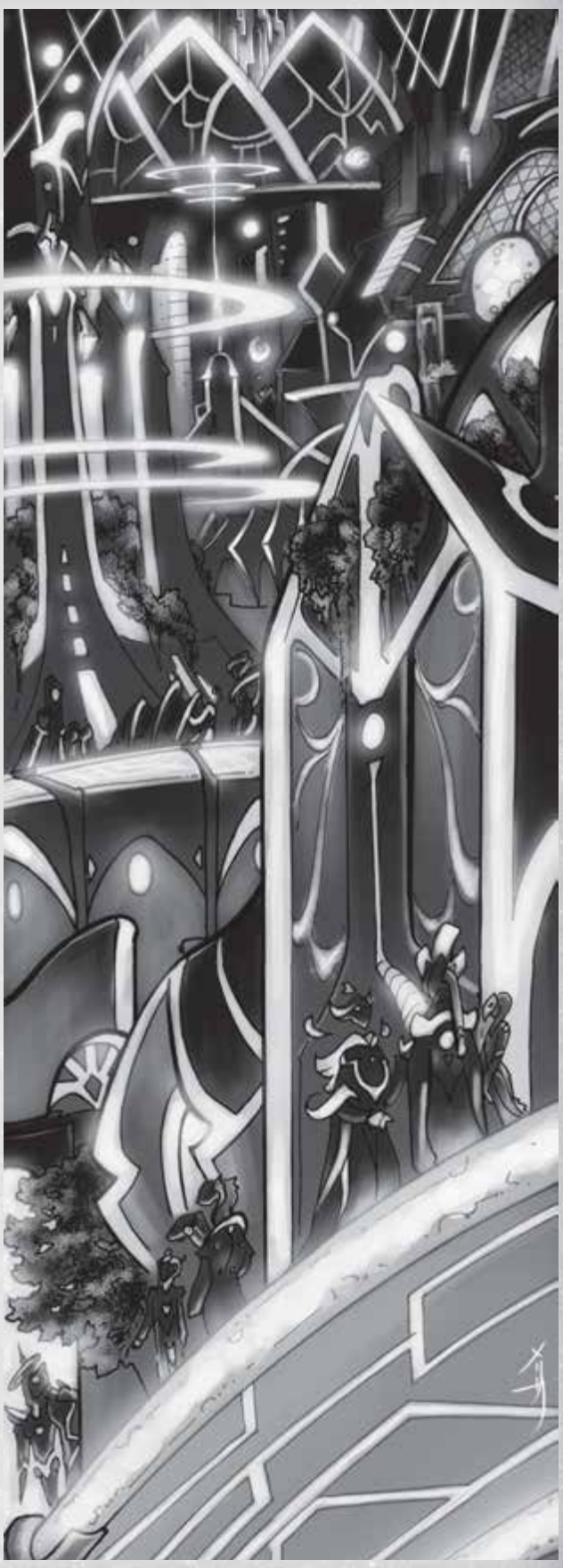
The geography of the Grand Celestial Mountain is based on access. Public information caches and system-wide reference libraries open to the public lie along the base of the mountain. As one ascends, the security increases even as the power of the governing intellects and spirit-programs grows greater. Private information stores belonging to the rich and powerful in the frontier and the Central Empire rest between a third and halfway up the mountain. Above them are the data warehouses of the Exalted, some of them untouched since the Malfean War. And above those ancient storehouses are the command and control centers for multi-system engineering services and projects, including terraforming data, grand canal maintenance information, and the private libraries of the most powerful of the code-spirits, living as gods amongst the top-most levels of the Grand Celestial Mountain.

The Exalted

The Exalted have existed as long as humanity has reached toward the stars. With each incremental step along the road to stellar empire, the Exalted have grown as well, until during the golden age of history, the same technology that created the great Stellar Intelligences was used to craft Exalted Essences.

But that was millennia after the development of the first Exalted, the Terrestrial Exalted. They were created on humanity's homeworld, the mythical system known as Creation. They were the product of genetic engineering, the best martial training the rulers of that system could provide, and their powers were rooted in psychic manipulation of the spirit and body, first to allow the Exalt to perform miraculous feats, and then to manipulate the world around them. It was these first forays into psychic phenomena and so-called "chi" that laid the groundwork for full manipulation of Essence millennia later. Early texts orient the Terrestrial Exalted not toward the five traditional elements, but along the lines of psychic disciplines—pyrokinesis, cryokinesis, geokinesis, hydrokinesis and biokinesis.

As products of genetic experimentation, the changes wrought on these first Terrestrial Exalted was passed on from parent to child, although thanks to the vagaries of genetics and recessive traits, not every child born to a Dragon-Blood was an Exalt. Extensive breeding programs were started by the corporate and governmental creators of these first Exalts to guarantee that the highest yield of Exalted were born from each generation, leading to bloodlines being created and intermarriage amongst Exalts becoming common. Given the Exalted's superiority over even genetically enhanced humanity, eventually those self-same corporations and governments were run by—or at least were dependent on—the Exalted to a large degree.



Designer's Note: The "Netrunner" Problem

From a game perspective, the Grand Celestial Mountain and the function of manses and hearthstones solves the infamous "netrunner" problem that plagues so many RPGs. Yes, the rich keep their personal ledgers and their dirty secrets locked up in a secure computer system, but that computer system is a real place, albeit one made of spirit energy. An entire circle of Exalted can try to sneak into the Grand Celestial Mountain, and the normal accouterments of the genre—guessing passwords, piercing security, fighting enemy programs, and stealing the data—is now literally giving passwords to guardian spirits, battling enemies with daiklaives and blasters, and walking out with the information to get to the nearest exit point to their manse.

This also means that tyrannical regimes will fortify the manses on their worlds, if they don't destroy them outright. Heroes and mercenaries fighting crime lords and wicked empires will have to battle through security forces and defeat physical obstacles if they wish to gain access to the Grand Celestial Mountain. Such tyrants tend to reserve the Hearthstones from such manses for themselves and their trusted adjutants, so they still have easy access to information at a moment's notice.

As mankind spread out through the Solar system, humanity made its next technological leap, from genetic engineering and primitive molecular machines to true nanotechnology. New elements were created, liquid metals and metallic glasses, superfuels and oil-eating bacteria. It was logical that a new kind of Exalt would be created, one which would take advantage of the ability to shift its very shape thanks to chimeric nanotechnology. But learning from the mistakes of the Terrestrial Exalted's creators, this new technology was not built into the bloodlines of these so-called Lunar Exalted (named after the moon they were created on) but instead the product of a process. The process involved implantation of a liquid-metal processor, power-plant and nano-seed into the body of the Lunar Exalted. The seed could live for a thousand years, and so battle-field or mission-based implantations were common—when an Exalt died, one of his human squadmates would allow himself to be implanted so the mission could continue.

For at least a thousand years, these Exalted and a handful of others were all that existed. As technology made another leap forward, so too were these Exalted modified, until the technologies and psychic and physical modifications involved would no longer be comprehensible to the original creators of the Exalted. But it took the development of Essence technology—true prana and musculature manipulation via Essence manipulation—to spell the next step forward.

Essence manipulation and quantum computing allowed for the creation of the Solar Exalted and Sidereal Exalted. The Essence generators built into the Solar Essence shards were the most powerful and compact ever designed, allowing for enhancement of skills and abilities far beyond what was available before. The Solars were designed as human monitors and companions to the Stellar Intelligences—a human bridge to beings so powerful that they were literally stars, nebula, and planetary size masses of matter and dark matter.

The Sidereal Exalted, on the other hand, were designed to interface with the nascent Essence programs that populated Grand Celestial Mountain, as well as take advantage of advances in quantum computing. Their Essence manipulation ability was tuned toward finesse rather than the brutal power of their Solar brethren. And the Lunar Exalted received an upgrade during this period as well, for after centuries of service as leaders, special forces, assassins, and the companions of the wealthy, they had the ears of the very powerful.

The Celestial Exalted all share one thing in common—the Essence shards that make them Exalted are dependent on spiritual and physical power and finesse. When an Exalt dies, shards may either seek out a replacement user on their own, or by implantation by those few who still carry the secret of shard-harvesting and placement. But these shards cannot just be placed in anyone—a host needs a special kind of intellectual or physical prowess, not necessarily pure strength or intelligence, but instead a kind of spiritual puissance. The shards can only interface with those who have a special potential for greatness. Implantation in an ill-equipped being not capable of the appropriate prana-musculature movements to wield the shard's power and interface with its Essence, either by mortals or by the shard's own programming, will result in the swift and fatal deterioration of the mortal in question. Sometimes shards on nearly empty worlds have been known to implant themselves in the nearest unsuitable specimen, which then will travel the world seeking a cure for the energies that are causing it to die. When the shard then comes near an appropriate host, it leaves its current owner—sometimes, on rare occasions, this exit is not fatal.

The Solar Exalted

The Solar Exalted were designed to be the upgraded elites of a universe where the stars were mere objects to be manipulated, where sentience—and more importantly, spiritual awareness—was a function to be built into common tools. The first of the Solar Exalted is rumored to have been the Immaculate Golden Engineer himself, who used a prototype shard to enhance his own incredible power and ability and extend his lifespan well beyond normal limits, allowing him to finish his ambitious redesign of the planets, stars, and space between.

Implantation of the Solar shards were reserved not for the servants of the great, but for the great themselves—corporate overlords, members of the royal families, scions of military dynasties, and war heroes who had won every medal and award the legions could grant. The truly great, by the metric of the age, were gifted with Solar shards.

And for a period, the Solar Exalted governed the universe well. Teamed with the fathomless intellects and ambitions of the Stellar Intelligences, the Solar Exalted expanded the canal system until nearly every habitable world in the galaxy was easily accessed, they interacted with the Shrieking Hordes who lurk in the space between galaxies and tamed them, shaping them somewhat in their own image, so the Hordes could send ambassadors into the Known Worlds. The Solar Exalted's charms and sorceries allowed them to deal with a hundred crises across a thousand worlds, it allowed them to remake whole worlds if they needed, and play with the fundamental building blocks of reality. And when the Stellar Intelligences rose up in the Malfean War, the power of the Solar Exalted allowed them put their former companions down.

But at heart, the Essences which gifted the Solar Exalted with such power were, conceptually, computers, and computers are prone to viruses. The Yozi infected the nigh-immortal and omnipotent Solar overlords with a viral program of incredible delicacy, one which threw off their control of their own natures. In the collapse of the galactic empire, as the taint of the Stellar Intelligences led to the downfall of Solar leadership, the majority of the Solars sensed there was something wrong, and retreated to find a cure. Over the ensuing centuries, they came to realize that the Essence infections they suffered from could only be cured by "rebooting" the Essence—by stripping it out of its host, reformatting it back to its original state. But to do so was to diminish the shard—it would never be as good as it was before it was affected by the virus. While still immensely powerful, the Solar Exalted would never reach the heights of puissance they once knew—like the Yozi, they would be forever diminished. Over the ensuing thousand years, the vast majority of Solar Exalted eventually gave in to senescence and old age or the ambition of other beings, and allowed themselves to die peacefully or be killed in some last, great crusade. A handful of Solar Exalted still exist who haven't reformatted their Essences, but these beings are still subject to the Yozi's curse, the Essence virus which drives the Solars mad.

It is this situation—the Solar Exalted driven into exile, and then allowing themselves to succumb to old age or death—which has cast the majority of Solar Essences into the frontier, and that is why the Solar Exalted are now mostly found in the vastness of the universe outside of the Central Empire.

Now is a time when new Solar Exalted are born and create new legends. Every schoolchild knows the heroic stories of Ynos Starlaw, who helped push the limits of the old Solar Dynasties to the edges of the galaxy and who disappeared across the dark edge of the Known Worlds to see what lay beyond them, but now the populace talks about the gunslinger known as Dace, and the strange assassin known as Harmonious Jade, who claims descent from Immaculate Golden Emperor himself.

Orichalcum

Orichalcum is a rare metal forged in special furnaces which can replicate the heat of the sun. This rare, exotic metal shines brightly and can survive any force in the Known Worlds. Even the weapons of the Malfean rebels, capable of destroying worlds, could not harm orichalcum.

The Lunar Exalted

The Lunar Exalted's origins lie back on Creation. Over the years, the basis for their charms and shapeshifting ability has changed from chimeric nanotechnology to Essence-based manipulation of their own matter, but their overall role has never wandered—the Lunar Exalted are warriors, assassins, companions, and spies. They can infiltrate any criminal enterprise, fight in any environment, and they can live as long as even the most powerful Solar Exalted. It is no surprise that the Solar Exalted relied on their Lunar "uncles and aunts" a great deal during their reign.

The Long Warriors and the Imperial Lunars

With the end of the Solar Exalted's stewardship over the Known Worlds, the Lunar Exalted have split into two main branches. The first are the "imperial" Lunars, who have embraced Heaven's Son's rulership over the Central Empire and his goals of rulership over all sapient life. These Lunars seek to build a great society, but one not based on the dangerous stellar power sources that eventually rebelled against mankind. These Lunars believe it is their duty to govern and to lead. Nacreous Sword is rumored to belong to this line, as is Feral Wolf, a terrible law enforcement operative known for bringing down whole interstellar criminal operations one bloody mutilation at a time when they step out of their prescribed roles.

The other major faction within Lunar society is that of the Long Warriors. For these Lunar Exalted, turning

inward to govern a diminished empire is a foolish, possibly fatal endeavor. The Yozi are not dead, just diminished. The graveyards of the Tomb-Stars are unexplored and potentially dangerous. The Shrieking Hordes lurk within the spaces beyond the Known Worlds and in the weakened reality of the canals. And there are still Solar Exalted remnants of the Malfean War, strangely undiminished compared to their newly born fellows, and prone to great madnesses. These Long Warriors work as rangers and mercenary captains, fighting back threats on the frontier when they appear, and between missions operating as wandering sell-swords and gunslingers. This is not to say that these Lunars are not themselves serious threats to peace and prosperity—the frontier tells tales of Leviathan, who has somehow managed to transform himself into an enormous bioship capable of ravaging in the name of strengthening the people of the frontier. But the Long Warriors generally have a good reputation, such as Lilith, who monitors the activity of the Solar Exalted for the Long War's leaders, and her apprentice Strength of Many.

The differences between these groups is best demonstrated in how they choose new Lunar Exalted, since both groups have access to the technologies needed for Essence implantation, and rarely resort to allowing their dead brethren's Essences to find their own hosts. The imperial Lunars implant their own descendants, their most favored servants, or those who epitomize the ideals of the Central Empire and its bureaucratic and militant commercialism. The Long Warriors implant Essences in warriors from the greatest armies in the frontier, in hard-traveling trailblazers who the Lunars have chanced across, and in the most cunning and moral thieves and killers.

Luckily, the difference in philosophies mean the two factions rarely encounter one another as of yet. But if a true threat ever approached the Known Worlds capable of harming galactic civilization again, the Long Warriors may have no choice but to turn to their imperial brothers and sisters for aid, and if the Central Empire ever does begin to expand again, it will surely cross the paths of their lost brethren.

Moonsilver

Although many things have changed about the Lunars since their first, mythical appearances, they still rely on liquid metal—although it is now a kind of liquid femtotechnology, as much energy as matter, rather than the nanotechnology the first Lunar Exalted wielded.

The Sidereal Exalted

The Sidereal Exalted Essences were first designed and implanted at roughly the same time as the Solar Exalted. However, where the Solar Exalted were designed for a kind of ruthless generalism and overwhelming power, the Sidereal Exalted natures were oriented toward finesse and a delicate interface with the universe. The Sidereals were meant to lever the massive processing power of the Grand Celestial Mountain into their charms to allow for miraculous feats of forecasting and manipulation of events in the galaxy at large. The Sidereal Essences are effectively chaos computing terminals networked to the Grand Celestial Mountain, allowing them to use their unique forecasting gifts to guide individuals, and even whole societies, in the proper direction.

It was the Sidereal Exalted who advised the Solar Exalted on the feasibility of various galaxy-wide engineering projects, vetted workers and designers, and then guided the projects to completion. In addition, they interfaced with the powerful Essence-programs and master control intellects that ran the Grand Celestial Mountain, including the Stellar Intellects themselves. It is unknown if the Sidereals saw of the rebellion of the Yozi in advance, granting the Solar Exalted an edge just before the Malfean War—but once the war was underway, the Sidereals directly engaged the enemy, attacking their fortresses in Grand Celestial Mountain and cutting them off from computing power and communication while their Exalted brethren met them in realspace.

In the wake of the Yozi's rebellion and the departure of the Solar Exalted for the frontier, the Sidereals have not been idle. They have peered closely at the mechanisms involved in Exaltation in an attempt to puzzle out the secrets of their own creation, potentially to enhance their power to Solar levels. But the mysteries of the Exalted are difficult to solve, especially in this fallen age, and so the Sidereals have had to be satisfied with "hacking" their Essences in order to allow them to use Sidereal martial arts, a specific set of combat charms, as well as to hide from those who would seek them without permission. At this point, there are only a small handful of Sidereal Essences which have not been hacked. The few Sidereals who possess original Essences claim that the hacking process introduces massive errors into long-term forecasting.

Emissaries and Exiles

Since the Malfean War, there has been a rift amongst the Sidereals just as there is among the Lunars, although the split is not because of philosophical differences. The Emissary faction still follows their ancient mission and troubleshoots the manses and Essence programs that connect with the Grand Celestial Mountain. This is a sacred task, they feel, and not only that, it is a task to which no other kind of Exalted is suited. More than that, within the Grand Celestial Mountain, the Sidereals are as powerful as the Lunar Exalted are in the Central Empire, accorded respect by the spirit programs and Essence systems that run the galaxy. This faction was until recently led by an ancient Sidereal, but his Essence and the accumulated knowledge of his grand plan was implanted into a newly Exalted woman named Chejop Kejak.

However, it is impossible to ignore that the Mountain is a galactic computer network designed to manage and

oversee an empire many times larger than the current size of the Known Worlds, that much of the Mountain's operations proceed largely satisfactorily with just the oversight of the most powerful programs who dwell at the mountain's peak, and that many of the most powerful functions of the mountain are largely inaccessible without Stellar Intelligences to guide them. The number of Sidereal Exalted is tied to the number of troubleshooters the system needed at its peak—now, a faction within the Sidereal Exalted considers that number too high. These self-proclaimed "exiles" wander the galaxy, seeking adventure or using their abilities to build something of import within realspace, attempting to create relationships under one guise or another in order to live normal, if incredibly interesting lives. Some of them work as adventurous warriors, like the Crimson Banner Executioner, while others will hack the Mountain itself for the right price, like the young and urbane Black Ice Shadow and his coterie of burglary code-spirits.

The most powerful of the Emissaries view the exiles as ne'er-do-wells and wastrels, but for the most part, the two factions get along well. Exiles know that when they get tired of wandering the Known Worlds, they have a position waiting for them in Grand Celestial Mountain, albeit a low-level, boring occupation to start. Emissaries, in turn, suspect that having eyes positioned on the fringes of the galaxy—and much more likely to encounter the renewed numbers of the Solar Exalted—are probably a wise course of action. One of the problems these Emissaries face is that their sensory ability is limited to worlds which are either part of the Grand Celestial Mountain or which were at one point—the darkened areas beyond the Known Worlds, where the Yozi and Shrieking Hordes lurk, as well as the shadow-realm of Terminus where the Tomb-Stars wait, are out of the reach of Sidereal forecasting.

Starmetal

The starmetal that the Sidereal Exalted use is not actually metal harvested from a star, but a rare artificial metal created in femtotech furnaces and which is effectively indestructible.

The Dragon-Blooded

The original Dragon-Blooded were genetically engineered, psychically gifted beings oriented around a handful of disciplines and trained in body control and very, very primitive Essence manipulation. (So primitive, in fact, that it would be thousands of years and the development of Essence technology before scientists realized that's what the original Terrestrials had been doing.) Over the years, that genetic engineering has been modified, hacked, enhanced, and modified again, until the Terrestrial Exalted look as they do today. Sometime in the golden age, the original psychic potential which allowed the Dragon-Blooded to accomplish incredible feats was replaced with genetically transmitted Essence-engines, lower-powered but similar to those used by the Solar, Sidereal and Lunar Exalted.

Obviously, some among the powers-that-be during the golden age believed that the genetic inheritance that made a Dragon-Blood what they were was too uncontrollable compared to the Essence-shards of the other Exalted. But by that point in history, the Terrestrial bloodlines were wedded to the upper echelons of society—predecessors of the modern military families, trading clans, and syndicates. And those most worried about the Terrestrial inheritance were normal human beings—the Solars disregarded their fears because of the inherent power difference between the Celestial Exalted and their Terrestrial siblings.

Obviously, the Celestial Exalted are no longer a natural check on the Dragon-Bloods. The Sidereals either spend the majority of their time advising the Lunar dynasty that runs the Central Empire or maintaining the Grand Celestial Mountain, barring those few who choose the life of the exile. The Solar Exalted have been effectively banished to the frontier, and none, as yet, has attempted to seek power in the empire's core systems. And the Lunar Exalted who follow Heaven's Son are relatively few in number, concerned primarily with maintaining the Central Empire, and utterly dependent on the massed numbers of the Dragon-Bloods to populate the bureaucracy and military's ranks, in addition to the work they do maintaining the corporate trading monopolies that keep the Central Empire's commercial power at peak performance.

The Ten Million Dragons and the Outcaste

The Ten Million Dragons serve the Lunar overlords of the Central Empire and swear fealty to Heaven's Son. This is not to say that some of them do not entertain ambitious plans to overthrow the Lunars, but Heaven's Son as yet has managed to keep the Terrestrial Exalted under him pitted against each other in such a way as to keep the hungriest amongst them busy, even while it leaves them wealthy enough to keep the greediest amongst them happy. In addition, Heaven's Son's intelligence operatives have riddled the Dragon-Blooded's power-bases with informants, spies, and watchers, eager to report on any hint of revolution.

Which is not to say that all Dragon-Blooded serve Heaven's Son. The genetic inheritance that makes a Terrestrial Exalted has been sown all over the galaxy, and especially at the height of the empire, there were few worlds which did not know the tread of a Dragon-Blooded heel. Even today, generations after a family has given birth to the last Terrestrial Exalted in their line, the right confluence of genes may come together to allow the birth of some atavism. Within the Central Empire, these outcaste Exalts are recruited into the trading clans or legions, but in the frontier, they often either seek out lives of adventure or use their powers to advance their own ambitions amongst

the people they've grown up around. Many is the scion of a trading clan exploring the frontier who encounters a city, nation-state, or world-government run by a handful of Dragon-Blooded outcastes, utilizing blaster, charm, and daiklaive to eliminate those who oppose them. And many still is the world grateful for the sight of some well-known outcaste, like the Five Elite Fiends, masters of Nexus' martial arts underworld, who arrive to match wits, daiklaives and blasters with armies of slavers.

Jade

The Dragon-Blooded build their artifacts out of jade, but just as modern Dragon-Blooded have very little in common with the original Terrestrial Exalted after years of alteration, the jade used in modern technology is actually a crystalline form of matter with similarities to both metal and stone. Most worlds have jade deposits of substantial size, seeded there during previous dynasties, and so it is the most common of the Exalted elements.

The Abyssal Exalted

If the return of the Solar Exalted to a shade of their former numbers over the last decade has sent the populations of the frontier and Central Empire reeling, then the rumors of a new kind of Exalt are even more worrisome. These Exalted traffic in darkness, preaching the Gospel of the Terminus, of life everlasting in a universe with no stars, no heat, just the oppressive gloom and cold of the great abyss, the endpoint of black holes, and the genesis of dark matter.

These Abyssal Exalted are the servants of the Tomb-Stars, answering to the Death Avatars of the collapsed corpses of ancient Stellar Intelligences. They travel freely between this universe and the Terminus, their starships' anima fields able to ignore the inexorable pull of impossible gravity of the black holes that mark the resting places of Yozi rebels slain in the Malfean War. The agendas of the Death Avatars are not yet apparent, and may differ from individual avatar to avatar, but the Abyssals are the agents of those plans, actively working for the Tomb-Stars and pursuing their strange goals.

But from where do the Abyssals come? Some scientists in the frontier believe that their Essences are actually corrupted Solar shards. It is true that many believe the disappearances of the Solar Exalted were caused by the realization that their Essences had been corrupted by the Yozi, but there were other reasons for Solars to blink out of existence. Rumors were rife of the boldest of the Solar Exalted in the frontier being hunted—it's possible that some of them fell to the agents of the Death Avatars, their Essences harvested and brought back to Terminus for modification. In addition, hundreds of Solar Exalted died in the Malfean War, their Essences unaccounted for. Some of those deaths were caused by the death throes of Stellar Intelligences collapsing into black holes or dark matter anomalies, the so-called Tomb-Stars. Could it be that the Essences of those dead Exalts made their way to Terminus, where the Tomb-Stars manipulated them into the Abyssal Exalted?

What *is* known is that the Abyssal Exalted are inevitably chosen by the Tomb-Stars from those about to perish. The reach of the Tomb-Stars is unspeakably long, and when a being of great power is about to perish, sometimes the Tomb-Stars or their Death Avatars reach out and suspend that being in a state of half-life, sending out an Abyssal Essence shard to infect them and transform them into an agent of the dead Stellar Intelligence that has chosen him. Once Exalted, the Abyssal is summoned through the nearest Tomb-Star to the grave-world of Terminus, where he swears oaths on his old name, is granted a new title by his Tomb-Star's avatar, and is given his mission. Sometimes those missions are incredibly specific—the Dusky-Hued Blossom Whose Scent is Despair has been sent out into the galaxy to hunt down Contentious Sword, if he still lives, and destroy him, while other Abyssals are given very general orders, such as the Monk Who Speaks Unutterable Wisdom and Forbidden Truth, who has been ordered to undermine the Shining Eye and its cults and crime-rings, thus weakening the Thousandth Dynasty as a whole.

Reapers and Rebels

A handful of movements and philosophies coalesce under the nascent Abyssal Exalted, but for the most part, the Abyssal Exalted can be broken down into two groups—those broken and bound, body and soul, by the Tomb-Stars, and those who pursue their own agendas, either under the aegis of their master or after leaving his service, such as the Impenetrable Heart of Obsidian, who now serves the Thousandth Dynasty. These latter rogue Abyssals are often hunted by their fellows, although given the opacity of the Tomb-Star's goals, it may be that even these petty rebellions somehow serve their old master's goals.

Soulsteel

The mysterious element known as soulsteel has yet to be successfully examined by the scientists and technologists of the Known Worlds. Those few who have had cause to encounter the substance know only that its properties are novel, and do not match up with any material as yet found within the galaxy. When asked, the Abyssal Exalted merely state that it comes from Terminus, and can only be found there—that it is the substance of the Tomb-Stars themselves.

Heaven's Reach Vehicles

Heaven's Reach is a universe of exoticism and variety, and as such no reasonable catalog of ships can encompass everything that one may encounter in all its vast reaches. Storytellers and players alike should keep in mind that what follows is a tiny selection of examples from which to draw inspiration. More vehicles may be found in **The Books of**

Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age. While those ships and other conveyances are not specifically designed to fit into Heaven's Reach, many of them can be made suitable with minimal effort. For instance, the *Windblade*-class personal transports can provide both a tactical advantage to an alien potentate's personal guard, as well as hint at the royal aerial sport the players' characters may need to engage in to redress an impending diplomatic gaffe.

Mundane Star Ships

Swan-class Personal Yacht (Resources ••••)

A mere 20 yards long, barely larger than most star fighters, the *Swan*-class personal yacht manages to pack a surprising amount of luxury into its tiny frame, though having three decks does help. Its tiered design, and asymmetric pair of cockpit and observation room, lend it the appearance of the head of a swan. When produced, they are usually custom-built, with minor modifications just for the customer. Notable amongst popular modifications are murals along the hull, which make a given *Swan* yacht highly recognizable.

Repair: 4

Speed: 45/90mph

Maneuverability: +1S (Lore 2, Sail 2)

Endurance: *Swan* yachts are not known for their reactor efficiency, and with regular use must dock at recharging stations monthly. They are well-known for many aftermarket modifications to enhance or replace their reactors, improving operational range to as many as three months of constant travel. The ships still need weekly maintenance, but can be in arrears a full month before their performance suffers. At that point, its Maneuverability falls to -1, and every week thereafter it falls one more point. When its Maneuverability would reach a total of -3, the ship's engine is completely misaligned, and it can sustain only minimal life support until it is repaired.

Crew: 2/1

Cargo: One ton of cargo, usually taken up by delicacies, and vacation and observation equipment. It also has lavish suites for both crew, and for up to five more passengers.

Armor: 8L/12B

Health Levels: Ux8/Mx6/Cx6/Ix4/D

Weapons: Though not manufactured with weapons or mounting points, many who venture into less civilized territories and frontiers find it fairly easy to equip their yacht with a vehicular blaster (as blaster rifle, with Damage 9L, Range 100, Ammo 150).

Other Notes: There are numerous gathering areas throughout the ship, including two intimate dining rooms (adjoining crew and passenger quarters, respectively), a small banquet hall, a sizable kitchen, a conference room, a drawing room, a den, and an observation room that can accommodate a half-dozen guests in addition to regular crew and passengers. Each personal room is adjoined by a bathroom, and some models reduce the size of the conference room to make space for a communal bath.

A very limited line of *Swan* yachts, specially tailored for showy Exalted diplomats, are equipped with a standard anima circuit (see p. 64), as well as the *refraction echo* circuit. This latter circuit, when charged, boosts the clarity and range of any onboard Exalt's voice, halving external penalties due to overwhelming sound that apply to his social attacks or Awareness rolls for others to hear him, and doubling the range of his voice.

Friendly Roc-class Cargo Hauler (Resources ••••)

One of the more expensive cargo haulers for small businesses, the *Friendly Roc* is relatively new, having been put into production barely two centuries past. It is not famous, it is not ubiquitous, but it is well-appointed, reliable, and still within the budgets of up-and-coming traders and tramp haulers. Only 30 yards long, its bulk spreads outward, giving it great, broad shoulders with a total 80 yard span. This is not remarkable for a cargo hauler, but *Friendly Rocs* can still be spotted quite easily thanks to their thematically modeled central cockpit. Those who think it tacky tend to spend what money they earn hauling cargo on remodeling, to make the ship less "ridiculous looking." Others enjoy or embrace the look, and spend an equal amount of money getting laser-etched wings painted on the cargo pods.

Repair: 3

Speed: 35/70mph

Maneuverability: -1S (Lore 2, Sail 2)

Endurance: One of the traits of the *Friendly Roc* that makes it more attractive than some competitors is its robust reactor core, which allows it to fire its engines, maintain life support and all the other minimal necessities for months at a time without returning to a recharging station. It still requires monthly maintenance, or weekly with heavy travel. Every week in arrears after this time imposes one of the following penalties: -1 Maneuverability, -5/10mph Speed, or random outages that render systems other than life support inoperable for as much as a day.

Crew: 2/1

Cargo: *Friendly Rocs* do not boast the greatest cargo capacity, but they are not specially lacking, and can haul hundreds of tons of cargo at a time (or hundreds of extra passengers in varying degrees of discomfort depending on modifications made). The ships also come with three regular passengers quarters, factory-furnished.

Armor: 9L/13B

Health Levels: Ux10/Mx7/Cx7/Ix6/D

Weapons: *Friendly Roc* models exist for civilized areas of space, and for those traders who venture into more exotic locales (sporting two vehicular blasters, see the *Swan*-class personal yacht, above).

Anima Circuits

An outgrowth or predecessor of the anima field technology, the history of anima circuits is uncertain. It remains clear that they are related innovations with wildly divergent purposes. While the anima field projects a bulwark against the dangers of interstellar travel, anima circuits exploit the Exalted aura of power to protect the ship from the inside, and to shunt some of that power into other uses. The first and most common anima circuit is found in nearly all war ships, from the oldest, frailest star fighters to the most robust capital ship-of-the-line. These oldest circuits protect the ship from anima flux and other inherent dangers of an Exalted anima display that may harm a vessel. It is cheap and easy to install these systems, but it is not free, so the only civilian vessels that sport anima circuits are custom-built or built to specially cater to Exalted markets.

Other anima circuits are expensive and complex, but built on top of the common, protective anima circuit. They channel the energy of an anima flaring to the 8m+ level into special charging modules, drawing on the infinite heroism of Exalted pilots to empower the ship. These powers tend to be short-lived, discharging with use or when overwhelmed, and only recharging after the pilot's next action tick when he spends another 8m+ in a single instant. The most common anima circuits of this type are *shield overchargers*, which lend a ship 15L/15B hardness that persists until a hit actually overcomes the hardness, at which point the field collapses and must wait to be recharged. Another common anima circuit—the *dragon's wake*—is specific to Terrestrial Exalted, extending their anima flux up to 10 yards outside the perimeter of their ship for one action.

A ship can sustain only two or three anima circuits before the delicate circuitry and Essence shunts become imbalanced and no longer function. This is a limitation of the technology that has frustrated engineers for centuries.

Star Asp-class Fighter (Resources ••••)

One of the most common star fighters in service for the past century, *Star Asps* made the Kireeki Design Concern what it is today (and funded their creation of a limited series of *Kireeki*-class battlecruisers). They are sleek, cobalt spearheads, surmounted on the back by two menacing claw-like wings. One of the reasons for their enduring popularity is the ease with which they are refitted for special missions, filling the roles of space superiority fighter, heavy weapons escort, and bomber with small effort and much less cost than maintaining three different ships for each mission. Their long history and short production cycle see these ships filling out squadrons all across Heaven's Reach.

Repair: 4

Speed: 65/130mph

Maneuverability: +2S (Lore 2, Sail 2)

Endurance: Like most star fighters, *Star Asps* tend to expend fuel at a prodigious rate, furiously pursuing foes in combat. They require recharging after every combat extending beyond ten minutes. When on patrol, they can go for several hours before needing to recharge. They require an hour's maintenance after every battle, or after eight hours of patrol. If in arrears for four hours of maintenance, reduce Maneuverability by one; if in arrears eight hours, reduce the Accuracy and Damage of its weapons by one. If 25 hours in arrears, the ship's engines will become inoperable until the vehicle is fully repaired.

Crew: 1/1 (2/1 in bomber configuration)

Cargo: *Star Asps* are equipped with emergency supplies in case of a crash, but otherwise carry no more than a dozen pounds of extra cargo.

Armor: 11L/18B (13L/20B in bomber configuration)

Health Levels: Ux6/Mx6/Cx5/Ix3/D

Weapons: The standard *Star Asp*, which is usually deployed as an interceptor, is equipped with a pair of heavy, vehicular blasters (as a blaster rifle, with Damage 11L, Range 150, Ammo 300). *Star Asp DD* (*D*estroyer *D*eployment) models replace these with a heavy repeating disruptor (Damage 9L, Range 100, Ammo 150). *Star Asp B* (*B*omber) models have a single vehicular blaster, as well as a missile rack (as a rocket launcher, with Damage 20L, Ammo 2).

Other Notes: *Star Asp* fighters are widespread and common enough that old production models can be found for the relatively low price of Resources •••. They are always treated as being in arrears for no less than three hours of maintenance, or four for extremely old models. *Star Asp sub-C* (*C*hosen) are a sub-model of each version of the ship, coming equipped with basic anima circuits.

Nova Deliverance-class Star Bomber (Resources •••••)

A joint venture by many engineers within the Central Empire, the *Nova Deliverance* was once the pinnacle of heavy

ordnance star fighters, and has since been copied and spread throughout Heaven's Reach. The original, Imperial models are sleek, nearly wingless daggers, twice as long as most star fighters. Lesser copies tend to be bulky trapezoids, and some have extended wings for mounting extra weapons. Most of the space inside the ship is taken up by guidance systems and ordnance storage.

Repair: 4

Speed: 40/80mph

Maneuverability: +0S (Lore 3, Sail 2)

Endurance: *Nova Deliverance* star ships can keep flying for a full day without needing to recharge. Where they expend most of their energy is in the launching of their heavier weapons, which count as three hours in flight each. They require maintenance like a *Star Asp*, but only after 25 hours of flight, regardless of the combat situation. If in arrears eight hours, in addition to the usual penalties, *Nova Deliverance* bombers can fire only one missile or Final Pulse before their heavy ordnance targeting system becomes misaligned and can no longer fire at all.

Crew: 2/1

Cargo: Though much larger than other fighter-scale ships, *Nova Deliverance* bombers have room for only a few hundred pounds of cargo beyond their emergency supplies.

Armor: 12L/18B

Health Levels: Ux4/Mx8/Cx8/Ix3/D

Weapons: Traditional *Nova Deliverance* bombers are outfitted with a single vehicular blaster (see *Star Asp* weapons, above) under their nose. They also carry two missile pods, one on either side of the fuselage (as a rocket launcher, with Damage 20L, Ammo 10 each). These may be replaced by the Final Pulse energy weapon, which expels a coruscating orb that explodes on impact, mimicking a trip to the surface of a star (Speed 7, Accuracy +0, Damage 25L, Rate 1, Range 100, Ammo 2, Tags: P).

Knock-offs with extended wings can equip two additional blasters, but they may mount only a single missile pod under the fuselage, and cannot produce the necessary energy to be outfitted with a Final Pulse weapon.

Other Notes: *Nova Deliverance* bombers are equipped with basic anima circuits, as well as a standard *shield overcharger* circuit. Most knock-offs are equipped only with a standard circuit.

Indomitable-class Frigate (Resources •••••)

Though recent, and not as widespread or cheap as older models, the *Indomitable*-class frigate has seen an explosion in popularity. While it is not entirely dissimilar to other popular frigates, and it bears little resemblance to the imposing angular juggernauts of the Central Empires core navy, the trademark golden swash along its prow marks the *Indomitable* frigate as the largest, most successful ship produced by Denandsor Industries. It is relatively cheap, as capital war ships go, despite its size and armament, and it manages to remain imposingly aerodynamic (not that it is capable of atmospheric flight). At over 100 yards in length, it features few protrusions, affording little cover to star fighters and bombers that penetrate its point defenses and escort fighters. It is highly maneuverable, and with its rounded design it is not difficult to train nearly half of its weapons on any given target.

Repair: 4

Speed: 35/70mph

Maneuverability: -2S (Bureaucracy 2, Lore 3, Sail 3)

Endurance: Built for extended patrol and siege, *Indomitable* frigates have powerful reactors and battery housings half again as large as those of similar ships. Even with frequent and long battles, they can go for years before their power systems must be refitted. They require regular ship-wide maintenance, however, from dedicated engineering crews numbering in the dozens. Without an engineering crew, the ship will quickly fall out of order and cease operations over the course of a month, though some derelicts are rumored to house refugees who rely on the enduring life support system and their own hydroponics.

Crew: 70/15 (Unlike smaller vessels, operations on *Indomitable* frigates only suffer a -1 Maneuverability penalty for every 10 crew that it lacks.)

Cargo: *Indomitable* frigates have space for hundreds of tons of cargo, which may be taken up by extra ground troops or vehicles. They have enough space to house four star fighters, if they carry little else. In addition to this vast space, they have quarters for up to 30 passengers, and a spare barracks that can house 125 soldiers.

Armor: 14L/20B

Health Levels: Ux15/Mx10/Cx5/Ix10/D

Weapons: Weapons pods mark the four corners of the frigate, with three more along each side and the dorsal and ventral hulls. Each pod is outfitted with a pair of heavy vehicular blasters (as blaster rifle, with Damage 12L, Range 200, Ammo unlimited). The six foremost pods are also outfitted with mass drivers (as sniper rifle, with Damage 15L, Range 600, Ammo 300).

Other Notes: *Indomitable* frigates are outfitted with standard anima circuits throughout vital areas, though to cut costs crew quarters and other non-key interiors are not so protected. The command bridge is protected with a *shield overcharger* circuit tied to the commander's anima, providing 20L/20B hardness when active.

Mostath Space Fortress-class Battlecruiser (Resources N/A)

Kireeki Design Concern has made its name and fortune with innovative marketing and engineering, but it got its start providing reasonably priced, good products to people who need them. That is why so many local

planetary navies are led by *Mostath Space Fortress*-class battlecruisers. Moderate for battlecruisers, these vessels are still over 300 yards long and wide, small floating cities with many adjoining modules that lean inwards, forming a pyramidal frame which protects and oversees operations in an expansive hangar at the heart of the beast. This odd design also makes the *Mostath Space Fortress* incredibly durable, as its vital systems are diffused and spread far apart, though bringing them all together properly raises the cost of each ship. Their reputation has suffered lately, as some conquest-minded villains and madmen have demonstrated that the ventral hull at the bottom of the superstructure is easily adaptable into a planet-busting weapons platform.

Repair: 4

Speed: 28/55mph

Maneuverability:-3S (Bureaucracy 3, Lore 3, Sail 2)

Endurance: As a cost-saving measure, these battlecruisers are designed to enter low-power states during times of extended peace, allowing their already efficient reactors to last years without recharging. Unfortunately, if left on standby for a full mont, it can take hours to return the ship to battle readiness, leaving its guns with sporadic access to power. *Mostath Space Fortress* require regular maintenance like an *Indomitable* frigate. The operational range of these gargantuan ships is most limited by its small cargo holds, tying them closely to supply lines.

Crew: 200/20 (Unlike smaller vessels, operations on *Mostath Space Fortress* battlecruisers only suffer a -1 Maneuverability penalty for every 60 crew that it lacks.)

Cargo: While large by any means, servicing a ship and crew of its size means that the thousands of tons that can be transported by these battlecruisers is often filled mostly with necessary supplies when on extended missions, usually no more than a month's worth. It also has three barracks that can house a total of 750 ground troops, space for a dozen support craft, and a dedicated fighter bay and launch area that accommodates two full squadrons. There are also escort quarters for up to 50 diplomats and important prisoners.

Armor: 18L/25B

Health Levels: Ux20/Mx15/Cx5/Ix15/D (Storytellers are advised to keep in mind the threat levels outlined in **Scroll of Kings**, pp. 40-42, as even volleys from a frigate broadside attack simply cannot encompass more than a fraction of the ship.)

Weapons: All along the struts that support its various modules, there are dozens of heavy blaster gunnery stations (as a blaster rifle, with Damage 11L, Range 150, Ammo unlimited). The lower, ventral superstructure is dotted with these same weapons pods, and is meant to act as a shield for the rest of the ship as it plows into enemy territory, squadrons of fighters snaking up from behind its safety when they reach key targets. At each point of the pyramidal structure is a missile launch tube (as rocket launcher, with Damage 20L, Ammo 30).

Some governments and villains with devastation on their minds have equipped their *Mostath Space Fortresses* with superweapons, usually on the lower superstructure. One example is the *Multi-focus Disruptor Array*, which sits in the center of the bottom of the ship, its component housing taking up the room of a whole squadron in the hangar above. This terrifying weapon has the following traits: Speed 7, Accuracy -1, Damage 14L, Rate 1, Range 100, Ammo 10 (takes a full day to recharge from the reactor, or an hour when docked at a charging station), Tags: P. Attacks with this weapon are flashing waves of green and white that shimmer through space like an aurora, applied against all valid targets within 100 yards of the intended target. The effective range of the multi-focus disruptor array is actually extended when fired into a planetary atmosphere, as it causes the air to superheat and applies the attack to all valid targets from space to ground and out to a mile from the intended target.

Other Notes: *Mostath Space Fortresses* are not just staging platforms, they are hardened military targets, and are equipped with anima circuits to protect key interior chambers, including engineering, command, munitions, and the hangar. Kireeki Design Concern could not manufacture these battlecruisers with additional circuits due to the exorbitant cost.

Artifact Star Ships

The Lost Corona (Artifact ••••)

Ill-regarded are the name and story of *The Lost Corona*, and the name and story of Sahan Brel, the scientist who long ago built her and led his crew to their doom in the Tomb-Star known as the Scar Nebula. Despite he and his Exalted compatriot's skill and knowledge, they were never seen or heard from again. The same cannot be said of their ship.

The Lost Corona has reappeared frequently throughout the centuries, but many still dismiss it as legend, or hoax, or the conflation of many tragedies. Those that have encountered the haunted star ship know better. What horrors lay in the domain of the Scar Nebula seared the shades of her crew into its bulkheads, and granted the computers and engines of the ship a malevolent drive of their own. It has been corrupted, and though metal still, it is hungry; it hungers for crewmen, whom it cannot care for in any but the most twisted ways, and other ships, whose components nourish it better than any common reactor could.

Repair: 3

Speed: 40/80mph, 50/100mph or 80/160mph

Maneuverability: +0S, +1S or +3S

Endurance: *The Lost Corona* fuels itself with the screams of the damned and the hulls of their ships. Drawing energy in the prescribed ways affords it another month's worth of

driving force. One option is to successfully build an Intimacy of fear or terror regarding the ship or its crew in a living character that is on board or in another ship that is docked with it. Another is to use its gimbals to grapple with and tear apart another star ship, which is considered successful for every five health levels removed in this way.

Unfortunately, to gain fuel it must expend it, as each scene of effort to do so consumes at least a day's worth of its continued unlife, and up to a week for intense scenes in which it ends up thwarted. Firing its disruptor weapon consumes one month of its unlife per action.

Crew: 3/0 (Even in absence of wakeful shades or foolish treasure hunters, *The Lost Corona* can pilot itself.)

Cargo: *The Lost Corona* has quarters for five passengers in addition to its crew quarters. It has a large cargo hold that can accommodate a few tons of solid recovered material, and supplies for long voyages. It is also burdened with the calcified remains of a number of specialized research stations. Most toxins and dangerous implements in them have since become inert or rusted away into pitiful fragments.

Armor: 15L/20B

Health Levels: Ux10/Mx6/Cx5/Ix10/D (*The Lost Corona*, if it is not completely destroyed, will consume its fuel at a rate of one month's worth per day to restore one health level, until it becomes only Critically damaged. If it has too little fuel to expend this way, it will still regenerate at a rate of one level per year.)

Weapons: Though a science vessel primarily, *The Lost Corona*'s mission was to infiltrate a Tomb-Star. Only the most foolish engineer would leave it with little or no armament. The ghost-ship is equipped with a vehicular starcaster (Accuracy +0, +1, +2; Damage 12L; Range 150), and with an outsized surgical laser with traits similar to a nova lens disruptor (Accuracy +1, +2, +3; Damage 13L, 15L, 17L; Range 300).

The Lost Corona also sports gimbals with very articulate grasping attachments, though still too large to substitute for human hands entirely. They are delicate enough to open a door, but not to pick a lock. The ship is treated as having Strength 10 and Dexterity (3, 4, 5), and Martial Arts 3 (clinching star ships +2, crushing humans +1), and its size and reach allow it to grapple and crush other star ships similar to its scale.

Other Notes: *The Lost Corona* hungers painfully, and tires like a man starving when it has not frightened and stranded enough living beings. If it has only a week's left worth of its "fuel", its performance is reduced, reflected in the first given values for its Speed, Maneuverability, and weapon Accuracies. If it has at least a month left, it remains strong but still painfully aware of its coming dormancy, reflected in the second set of values given for those traits. So long as it has gorged itself and has more than a year's worth of fuel available, it is invigorated and uses the third set of values.

It was once equipped with a trio of innovative anima circuits, all of which have fused into some new abomination. Unlike normal anima circuits, those of *The Lost Corona* feed on the meeting of two opposing animas, treating each action of combat in which Exalted fight each other with mutual 8m+ anima flare as an hour of driving force.

The Lost Corona is inhabited by a number of ghosts, most of them ancient and powerful. They are beholden to its will and cannot leave it without being destroyed. Most ghosts new and old quickly learn the tricks of nemissaries and other inhabiting Arcanoi, so that they can better manipulate their home. Those who die on the ship will not necessarily become ghosts, and it is unknown if those who do are always bound to it.

Son of Heaven III (Artifact •••••)

It is a sad fact that the greatest war ships, when released to do what they are built for, often become tantalizing targets and, eventually, are destroyed. Happily, their great legacy can be carried on and even improved with new, better ships in the line, taking up the fallen banner and raising it to new heights. The first *Son of Heaven* was commissioned nearly ten centuries past, and it served gloriously in battle after battle, subduing rebels and more exotic foes, expanding the Central Empire in each of its campaigns. *Son of Heaven II* was completed during a time of peace, and served a ceremonial role for most of its existence. However, both were destroyed in narrow and glorious victories against incursions by Stellar Intelligences. *Son of Heaven III* was already being built when its predecessor was destroyed. It would have been a companion battlecruiser, to project both prestige and force beyond all previous eras. Sadly, this was not to be, and what would have been *Titan's Fist* was on completion commissioned as the new *Son of Heaven*.

This ship-of-the-line battlecruiser of the Imperial Fleet is one of the largest war ships ever built, a fortress-city that flies through space. Its astronomical cost in comparison to other battlecruisers lies in both its improved armament and its beauty. There are no crude sensor towers, no weapons blisters bristling with unlovely guns. There are few sharp angles to the hull of the ship, each city block of it boasting frescoes of the victories of past *Son of Heaven* flagships and other, lesser known, cruisers. Busts of the Emperor cap crenels that surround the top of each skyscraper-module, a symbol of defiance that protects the lovingly craft temples that house weapon platforms all around the ship. Thick steel plates slide through vast streets of sturdy armor, shielding observation decks and quiescent hangars in battle. Despite its size and variety, the immense star ship boasts a unifying aesthetic, a warrior prayer to Heaven's Son and itself, a promise of devastating victory for the Empire.

But it is more than a tool for battle. It is a staging platform for dozens of squadrons of smaller star ships, even

acting as a field repair station for other capital ships. Its senior officers' quarters rival the mansions of planetary governors, and it has finely appointed conference halls for negotiating and accepting the surrender of those cowed by the ship's presence and armament, or for extraplanetary meetings of the most prestigious and sensitive diplomats from across the Empire. *Son of Heaven III* has been sent into active battle conservatively over the decades of its service. The recent loss of *Son of Heaven II* was a sore blow. However, it is no less a juggernaut than its fellow battlecruisers, and laden with some of the best soldiers and tacticians of the Empire.

Repair: 5

Speed: 40/80mph

Maneuverability:-4S (Bureaucracy 3, Lore 3)

Endurance: *Son of Heaven III* is typically deployed as a support platform for other ships, which requires less fuel on its own part. It can last for months in this configuration. Even when sent into an extended battle, its supplies and fuel will outlast a hundred of the most vicious skirmishes. It can be outfitted as a siege platform as well, to beat a wayward planet into submission, laying in wait a full year without resupply if necessary.

Crew: 50/10 (Unlike smaller vessels, operations on *Son of Heaven III* only suffer a -1 Maneuverability penalty for every 10 crew that it lacks.)

Cargo: The giant battlecruiser carries thousands of tons of supplies, and houses dozens of its own support craft. Depending on its mission, it may be accompanied by up to five full squadrons of fighters, and may transport in comfort two full legions of ground troops.

Armor: 40L/50B

Health Levels: Ux150/Mx100/Cx50/Ix30/D (Storytellers are advised to keep in mind the threat levels outlined in **Scroll of Kings**, pp. 40-42, as even volleys from a frigate broadside attack simply cannot encompass more than a fraction of the ship.)

Weapons: Dozens of weapons platforms dot the surface of the star ship, most equipped with three pairs of capital-scale blaster rifles (Damage 10L, Range 100) and a heavy repeating disruptor (Damage 9L, Range 75). At key points near the perimeter of the vessel and in a cluster around central command are a score of artifact-equipped weapons platforms with pairs of vehicular starcasters (Damage 13L/2, Range 150), and a quasar warsear disruptor (Damage 12L/3, Range 100). *Son of Heaven III* also has a number of missile tubes for taking out hardened or capital opponents, equivalent to a capital-scale dragon's roar cannon (Damage 17L/4, Rate 2, Range 500). All these weapons, and the many more it may be equipped with, have effectively unlimited ammunition for any given battle.

Other Notes: *Son of Heaven III* is rarely seen without an escort of up to a dozen other capital ships, from support frigates to one or two other, smaller battlecruisers. It is the flagship of the Central Empire, and its presence should be enough to deter most foes who still have something to lose.

The entire ship is equipped with standard anima circuits throughout. Each gunnery station is outfitted with an *horizon-piercing* anima circuit, increasing the Range of the weapon by +50 yards for each bonus die applied from Aiming on the first following attack, to a maximum of +150 yards.

Character Creation in Heaven's Reach

In general, characters created for play in Heaven's Reach are made according to the rules found in the **Exalted** core book or in their respective Manuals of Exalted Power. A few particular concerns apply:

- Heaven's Reach uses both the Drive and Firearms Abilities, rules for which can be found in this book's Appendix.
- Lunars do not suffer from Wyld Taint. It is up to Storytellers whether or not Casteless Lunars exist in the setting, but as a general assumption, no special process is needed to protect Lunars from their own shapeshifting power.
- Dragon-Blooded raised within the trading clans of the Central Empire use the same character-creation rules as Dynasts, while those growing up on the fringes use outcaste creation rules.
- Sidereals, benefitting from their connection to the Grand Celestial Mountain, use their standard character creation rules.
- Abyssals in service to the Tomb Stars and their Death Avatars may use such patronage to obtain the Liege background.
- Exalts in Heaven's Reach may not advance their Essence rating above 5.

Burn Legend

In **Burn Legend**, the tale of **Exalted** is told with a fist and written in flame.

Set in the modern world, **Burn Legend** is a manga-inspired take on **Exalted**. In this shard, the Exalted do not exist as heroes chosen by the gods to act as their political and spiritual representatives. Rather, **Burn Legend** focuses on martial artists the world over, who are able to channel and use ki—the stream of life energy flowing through all things—to emphasize their martial prowess. Here, martial artists do not need the power of the gods to exhibit extraordinary powers. Their might comes from arduous practice of ancient techniques honed over centuries, and the perfection of physical form. Emphasis lies on the heart of the fighter, the mentality he uses to get through the day, to train until his next big fight, and his reasons for doing so. The Exalted do not exist as a quantifiable group of entities, but rather as an outgrowth of martial artists. In this shard, the term "Exalted" has no special meaning. Rather, the Exalted are the strongest of those who can attune to the spirit energy around them, moving it with their ki. By this connection, and through unlocking ancient and terrible—sometimes otherworldly—martial arts, these humans take the next step, becoming greater and more powerful than any legend. It is said that in the moment a fighter reaches this peak, this nirvana, his aura bursts into spirit flames. He steps into a world alive with ancient spirits and new powers, and sees the ki of all things winding through the world and separating gods from men. Only then is the true path of battle open to him.

***

Angel stood at the center of the gym, eyes closed, breathing tight, punctual, rhythmic. His goal was to channel his focus, to unwind his thoughts until he was a vector for thoughtless action; to let the extraneous flow through him and out of him; to push out attachment and feel the purity of unbiased motion, the pulse of life flowing through him. Gone was the roar of the crowd, ecstatic in the throes

of his latest victory. The fight that had defined his career was the one that nobody knew about.

In his dreams, his father was still alive.

Even now, he could see the menacing glare of the man: the jagged, grating teeth, facial scar retreating into his hairline, hair rolling back from his skull like he was riding a rocket into a hurricane. *Eccentric,* Candy had called him. *Fucking insane, like a mad dog,* said Rachel. Small wonder he liked Rachel best. One look at his father's eyes and you *knew* the man was crazy. His father's former secretary used words like eccentric because anything else made her sound complicit. Behind his father's businesses there were bodies, lots of them, and it hadn't ended when his father hit the floor.

Nor had killing him changed Angel.

He'd trained all his life—committed every last waking moment—to kill his father. He had to. If he'd put less than his everything into those countless hours, the Tiger of the West would have torn him limb from limb. He found, when his mother was avenged, that all the old clichés held true—but only up to a point. He still needed to fight. It was in him now, like a fever that rose when unattended. If he was an adrenaline junkie, then his highs were few and far between. He spent his days and nights training. Months passed in alternating hours of deep concentration, rhythmic breathing, and a physical regimen of punishing exercise and perfected motions that buried the art of fighting so deep in his marrow that he forgot everything, including his father, and all that was left was instinct.

The clichés could not account for his ambition. The violence had not consumed him. He did not see his father in every opponent. He did not fight to keep the man alive, or to revel in catharsis with every opponent he felled. If that were true, he'd be in prison right now, not a national champion careening toward worldwide celebrity. Rather, in training to defeat one of the greatest fighters in the world, he had found a true passion for fighting. With his father dead, his mother was avenged. It should have ended there, but perhaps in becoming the man who could defeat his father, he had sculpted himself into a man who knew nothing about anything else except fighting.

Still, his moral compass was a strong one, and it had guided him to be everything his father wasn't. He endeavored to be merciful instead of brutal, sincere instead of treacherous, and to use his strength to stand for those who could not stand for themselves. He never killed a man who didn't deserve it, and so far, that list began and ended at his father. Angel had left a trail of bodies on his way to confronting Richter Hayes, but all of them were still breathing when he walked away. Like specters, they raced around his thoughts—so many battles in so many places, so many faces he could barely recall, countless names he could not remember. He banished all thoughts to the periphery, until his mind was like a whirl of color without context and there was nothing left inside but raw emotion. This he did not banish, but rather channeled. His passion, his rage, his love, his hate, everything that motivated him to fight, was that which made him be. He would not throw it away. This was the path through which his power came.

His eyes glowed and his clothes and hair were whipped by the compact winds of a local hurricane. Emerging from the sluice of cast-off memories: his father rising tall into the night sky, looking down on him with scorn, baring his chest for a chance at a strike the old man was sure to deflect. *TRY ME, BOY, SEE WHAT COMES OF IT,* said his father. Angel strained against the power inside, growling through his teeth as he struggled to control it. Tongues of spiritual fire rose up from his body, throwing flickering shadows on the gym wall. He thought of the fight; his father's style, a coupling of strikes and counters, aikido throws bouncing him off granite platforms under marble statues that lined the steps; tangled fists and biting teeth and fingers in eyes, falling into the pool and fighting their way out, fists colliding with flesh every step of the way; the insane thought as he looked down into his father's dead face—*Even with your hair wet down you look like you're about to rape someone*—and how he'd stumbled out the front gates as his father's goons had gaped openly, expecting that when he'd entered they would never see him alive again. But it was his father who lay dead at the bottom of the steps in a smoking crater large enough to take a Buick. Yet here was his father, towering in the storm of his mind, pushing through it like a death-god, a titan coming back from some distant Hell to take his toll in the form of a rematch. *YOU HAD ME, THEN, BUT WHAT DO YOU HAVE NOW? YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T BEAT ME TWICE.*

Don't have to. Nobody comes back from that.

TRY ME!

Angel grimaced, his eyes snapping wide, pulling all of his force and all of his emotion into a single pinnacle moment, a point at the end of his fist, rising up from the soles of his feet, drawn up through the Earth and pulled down from the sky. He reached in and found the well was bottomless. His stance unwound in violent, twisting motion, driving up from the hips, his left fist rising, trailing an arc of burning yellow-white blaze two yards wide and angling up for the ceiling. Drawing his right fist in to his side, he then stepped into the wave, driving his chambered fist forward into the heart of the blaze he had created, sending it roaring across the room with a force that shook the gym and sounded like a jet leaving the runway. "ROLLING THUNDER!"

The apparition of his father shrank behind the gigantic wall of ki, burning up and dissolving as it dragged across the floor, tearing up floorboards and ripping up concrete. It broke over the back wall of the gym, blasting a massive hole in the sheet rock and slamming into the brick beyond. Tendrils of orange lightning crawled the walls and hit the glass fronting the gym, which glowed briefly white and then

blew outward. Trophies fell from racks. Posters burned on the walls and heavy bags were blown off their chains and thrown around the room, shredded as if caught in an explosion. Behind him, the practice ring collapsed on itself. He held the stance: right fist out, left in, both hands glowing with surging force. His breathing did not change. In seconds, the glow in his eyes and on his hands abated. Somewhere on the street, a car alarm was shrieking.

Angel relaxed his stance, stood up straight, raised his hands, flexed his fingers, and lowered them. He did not know what these dreams of his father meant. He could only feel the storm gathering like the worst storms do—somewhere far from knowing.

Whatever comes, I'll be ready for it.

What This Game Is About

Burn Legend is an inverted take on the theme of Exaltation. It focuses on fighters who do battle for all the reasons one might expect: for pride, glory, love, power, revenge, or simply to be the best. Martial artists require no special dispensation to kick ass; they harness ki, do battle with demons, and pit their martial arts against the twisted and forbidden magic of those who came before. Rather, through greatness fighters grasp new techniques, raise their fighting ability to the next level, and even make pacts for power. In **Burn Legend**, one is Exalted by the might of one's own fist.

Burn Legend focuses on offering a variety of powerful martial arts styles and character concepts which resonate with the traditional character archetypes of **Exalted**; however, these styles and characters, while deeply rooted in the mysticism of the martial arts world, are not Exalted above other martial artists. Rather, in B**urn Legend**, the martial arts themselves provide a path to Exaltation, which each character must attempt to walk in order to grasp power, glory, and victory. A Tennin mystic may fall to the savage kicks and knees of a muay thai champion, the fists of a world-class boxer, or the kung fu of a shrine's spirit guardian. In this way, Exaltation is limitless within **Burn Legend**, being determined by victory rather than divine favor.

The Martial Arts

As much as the characters you play, the martial arts take on character of their own. Each martial art features a distinctive style that attracts a different kind of fighter. Players should consider the nature of the style their characters will be using. Some styles are vicious, built on bone-crushing strikes and relentless offense. Others are defensive, built on turning an attacker's power and momentum against him. Martial arts styles are like puzzles which fighters are continuously striving to solve. Many styles known worldwide contain techniques that have not been mastered in decades or even centuries. Other styles exist themselves as

an enigma, bearing techniques which can only be mastered by training the body and shaping the soul into a perfect vessel for reception of universal truth. Many fighters realize too late that the truth they have found has been yielded by an impure source, granting power which imperils the soul. Others relish in power whatever the source, grasping whatever opportunities appear and caring not for what dark corners of creation from which they emerge. Still fewer find a kind of fighter's nirvana by walking their path alone and finding truth at the end of their fist.

The Legend Begins

The fighter walks a path of many roads leading to many places. The path of the fight is a journey in which the fighter seeks an end that can be achieved no other way. There are many kinds of fighters in the world, and though many fight for love or money or for self-defense, all use their fists to seek a reckoning. Some are obsessed with violence, and use fighting to fill the emptiness inside. Some train so that they might redress the wrongs of those who will answer to nothing less than power. Many seek revenge. Still others use the martial arts as a vehicle for redemption. In their entirety, they are men and women who lead all the lives and take all the shapes one might imagine.

Below is a detailed listing of supernatural martial artists playable in this shard, each an analog to one of the Exalted. However, do not be deceived. Natural martial artists—regular men and women—who achieve mastery of a style, earn a kind of Exaltation. Martial prowess and the secret techniques of ki are open to all who have the talent and drive to learn them. At the hands of such a master, gods and the Exalted may fall. Therefore, purely "mortal" martial artists are the first kind of character playable in this shard. These characters employ a variety of martial arts styles and techniques listed at the back of this chapter, and share them with the Exalted.

Sample Characters:

Sinit Kra, ring name "Devil Tiger," was forcibly retired from his championship at Lumpinee stadium after thirty consecutive victories. Feared for his reach and his aggression, and his willingness to fight anyone anywhere, Kra simply ran out of opponents. He recently returned to the muay thai circuit after two years of training and putting on more than twenty pounds of muscle mass. Since then he has captured the world championship and has taken his title around the globe, challenging fighters from all weight classes and promoting the dominance of his chosen style, muay thai. He is considered by many to be the greatest fighter in the world.

Jane Doe, red hair, mid-thirties, woke up from a coma after seven years and stopped a presidential assassination. She has only vague memories of who she is or who trained her to fight, but since she awakened she has been followed by shadows which seem to whisper, and men who regret her waking up and think they're good enough to do something about it. So far none of them has. Jane uses a blend of tae kwon do and military jujutsu. She is incredibly resistant to pain and is ki sensitive. If an attacker is capable of harnessing ki, her adrenaline surges and she gains a burst of power. Since awakening, she has yet to encounter a fighter who can channel his ki, however. Because of her small stature, Jane is at a relative disadvantage against most opponents. Jane uses the reach of lightning fast kicks to keep her opponents from closing, tiring them out until she lets them close, only to apply her jujutsu to bring them to the ground. An excellent ground fighter, Jane recently survived an assassination attempt by putting a much larger attacker in a triangle chokehold.

Jirou, a wild-haired man who lives and trains in haunted Aokigahara, is a maniacal practitioner of kyokushin karate who lives in his gi for weeks at a time. His past is a mystery; all he will say is that he was orphaned and lost in the world, and the martial arts saved him. A journalist once dug deeper into his past and found what she suspects to be a clue: tale of a street fight between yakuza and a homeless man that left a shopping district out several windows and doors. But Jirou will neither confirm nor deny his part. "The past dies when the sun rises, there is only today," he said. Jirou gained mass media attention with his public challenge to any fighter in Japan who was willing to face him. Of the six who have answered, he won five of the fights, and one ended in a draw. Still, Jirou continues to train and makes headlines with each new emergence into the public eye.

Lemur Kan is the assumed alias of a major figure in the West Coast crime scene. Kan emerged in the wake of the death of crime boss Richter Hayes. Kan has been investigated by several police branches, including the FBI, for his involvement in organized crime. However, all have failed to ascertain much about him, or even if he is guilty of any crime. Sometimes Kan acts as an informant to law enforcement, leading them to major busts. Other times, he is frustratingly close to major failures in multi-million dollar investigations. Those few agents who have confronted him have described him as a handsome black man, mid-thirties, with a disarming smile, who never takes off his shades, and who is a self-professed practitioner of jeet kune do, with speed and motion to match his words. Now the only agents who are allowed to approach anyone even suspected of being Lemur Kan must be certified hand-to-hand combatants.

Advent of the Akuma

Long ago, the Yama Kings were defeated by the Legendary Masters and forced to return to Yomi Wan. Ever since, martial artists seeking the ultimate power have striven to recreate the Yama Kings' forbidden techniques and sorcerous katas. Most of them die, suffering a fate worse

than any, as their souls plunge into the Thousand Hells. But some have gained true power from the insights of the Yama Kings. Channeling hellish spirit energy through their ki, these fighters transform themselves into avatars of nigh unstoppable demonic force, turning the fighter into a kind of demon himself. Such beings are called Akuma, and throughout history they have sought to awaken the true power of the Yama Kings.

Many fighters on this path are not aware of the existence of such beings. Some see them as mere myth. Yet others live the life of Akuma from birth, cursed by the unclean power that is their blood inheritance. Sample Akuma include:

The psychotic arms dealer obsessed with fighting, who challenges any fighter unlucky enough to catch his interest, an interest that one day leads to his defeat at the hands of a Yamajin. However, he was able to sustain the diseased ki of his attacker within his own wounds, preventing them from healing, but allowing him to cultivate the wicked power of Yomi Wan in his own body, turning it into a vessel for the demonic arts.

The scion of a bloodline cursed by the Yama King Xi Long, who can see ghosts and can even strike them with his tainted ki, burning them up and breathing in the vapors that remain. He uses the martial arts to try to contain his power, but when his emotions are piqued he runs the risk of it running loose, turning him into a vessel of wrath against anyone it might equate with one of the Legendary Masters—typically any strong fighter.

The human offspring of a human and the Yama King Ravanna. Such a child's blood burns in youth and becomes almost unbearable during puberty. For female offspring the condition is especially worsened; male heirs often never manifest any signs of power. The burning blood can only be sated through violence, and such descendants are naturally pushed into lifestyles which involve fighting.

The crime boss Richter Hayes, who unknowingly stumbled onto the Akuma condition when he returned to Japan to challenge and kill his old sensei. After raiding his former dojo, he discovered ancient scrolls which contained what he believed to be demon-sealing techniques. In reality, he learned to invoke the storm-calling powers of the Yama King Mikaboshi. His already-tremendous fighting prowess grew exponentially in the years to come, and he crushed many famous fighters in grudges, open challenges, and revenge duels as the years went on. Richter Hayes was killed by his son Angel, who sought revenge for the death of his mother, Sophia.

Oni is the name of a monstrous killer in a fighter's myth from southern Japan. Oni is said to be a Korean, over eighty years of age, but built like a mountain. His face is spotted with age and cracked with strain, and braised as if it were on fire beneath. His teeth are nails, his hair tufts of volcanic ash flowing down from a bald peak. It is said that he remembers the days of war and murder, and was born from the blood and flames that swallowed the South Pacific. His hatred for the Japanese people drove him to move to Japan and live and train among them, absorbing their hatred and using it to fuel his own drive to excel and become stronger. According to legend, he emerges to stalk any Japanese fighter who dares to show his fists outside of Japan. Fighters in Honshu scoff at the idea of Oni as a superstitious legend, but fighters in Shikoku know better.

Yamajin—The Infernal Exalted

When those on the path of the Akuma die, their souls fall to Yomi Wan, where they are judged by the Yama Kings. For most, this is the final consequence of their quest for power. For a few, it is a necessary step. The greatest of the Akuma know that a pilgrimage to Yomi Wan is unavoidable if they wish to attain true power. Some of them die in a moment of perfect harmonic bliss, projecting their souls into Hell through deep meditation. Others discover, perfect, and use an authentic Yama technique of such power that it is guaranteed to kill them. Others simply die in battle, as the physical world holds no further challenge to their ascendance. Upon dying, the Akuma's soul falls to Yomi Wan. If he is powerful enough, he breaks the chains of death, and returns just minutes or seconds after dying. Only, he does not return alone. Such beings call themselves Yamajin. They seem as demons entire, bearing the hellish aspects of the Yama Kings and using sickening and blasphemous martial techniques of unimaginable power.

The Yama Kings are not sealed in the Thousand Hells. Formerly, it was the martial prowess of the Legendary Masters that kept them from returning. Now it is each other. The Yama Kings hate and fear one another. Each has carved out his own piece of Yomi Wan, making it into a Hell of his own reflection. The vast dominions of the Yama Kings are what give Yomi Wan its name. Yamajin are humans who have become a part of Yomi Wan, their souls fusing with the essence of Hell to transform them into Yama Kings. But they are not spirits in true, nor are they kings. These miscellaneous demon warriors are quick to return to the physical world for their own safety. Unsurprisingly, a Yamajin who lacks subtlety finds himself equally imperiled in the human world. Where Yama Kings seek to use him or devour him, various demon-slaying martial artists will track him to the ends of the Earth.

A Yamajin's quest only continues after his return to life. He must seek out a realm of spiritual significance, a place where he can bind the physical and spiritual realms together, and turn this into a shrine to his own power. There he can safely conceal himself and begin to build his power bases, while transforming his "Little Hell" into a reflection of his soul through various profane and tainted katas and hell-born techniques.

Tennin—The Sidereal Exalted

Demon Saints who slay the devils of the world, the Tennin are divine mortals who utilize the demon killing arts to great effect. All Tennin were once spiritually gifted mortals who drew the attention of the shinma and made a pact with them for power. The shinma are a race of demons that came from the stars to settle on Earth. Now they consider the Earth their home; to defend it from evil spirits and other malevolence, they choose mortal champions and grant them power. The souls of the Tennin are fused with the shinma. They can tap into the shinma to see into the spirit world, and to sense ki flows instinctively. These talents make the Tennin incredible martial artists, and through their connection with these ancient spirits they are able to exude martial principles unbowed by the physics of the natural world.

Whether the Tennin take their name from the beings of Japanese lore, or Japanese lore is describing the chosen of the shinma is unclear. During the Heian Period, the Tennin masqueraded as onmyoji, using divination and spirit-sensing talents to influence the government. This allowed them greater freedom to act against yokai disguised as public officials or respected members of society. During this time, the Tennin fought in the Eight Demons' War against a legendary clan of devils, and they used their influence to protect the nation against demonic incursion.

Though they have similar goals, the Ryuujin have long distrusted the Tennin. Occasionally one of the Demon Saints becomes addicted to the disruption of spirit energy caused by their techniques and begins to kill powerful fighters just for the sensation of rending their souls apart. Such Soulslayers have not gone unnoticed by the demons of the world, and Yamajin actively seek to lure the Tennin into acts of murder, potentially turning their natural predators into allies.

Of the Shinma

Little is known about the shinma, even by the Tennin. They are spirits, but they cannot be approached or struck like ghosts or demons. They cannot even be seen unless the Tennin is using her ki to express her divine power, and even then, the shinma may not be seen, only briefly experienced as a thought, an image, a voice, a taste, an instinct. The shinma do have names, and varying appearances. Some appear as runes in a lost language; while others appear as various disembodied anatomy: a hand that teaches the fist, an eye that teaches to see, a mouth and lungs that teaches to breathe. Others are more spectacular; a blue widow in silk robes whose eyes blaze behind her veil; an upside down flame that salivates burning venom into the mind of the Tennin as she channels poisonous ki through her body.

Many Tennin believe that the shinma exist as facets of themselves; that their own existence and perceptions of the shinma are what give them power. The legendary Soulslayer Mijin believed as much: driven insane by the murder of his wife at the hands of yokai, he vowed to destroy the shinma he blamed for her death—after all, she would not have been targeted if he had never become a Demon Saint. To this day, it is his goal to slay all Tennin, last of all himself, and end the shinma's bid for power.

When a Tennin is approached by the shinma, it begins in dreams and extends to the waking day. The would-be Tennin begins to see things around his neighborhood or ward that are not correct; the evidence of spirits moving through the world, some of these malevolent. The shinma warns the candidate of danger to himself or those close to him. This prediction proves correct. The seer, possibly through lack of caution or experience, finds himself hunted by a wicked spirit, seeking to drink his breath. Fearing for his own sanity, he begins to try to understand what is happening to him. When that fails, he attempts to contact the shinma, who come to him when he is in the depths of concentration. The shinma tell him of their origin, how they came from the stars to settle on Earth and live in peace, and how some amongst them broke away to rule as gods over men. These shinma were transformed by their vices into demons called yokai, and over time, when the yokai learned they could not rule over men, they learned instead to prey on them, battening on souls and twisting themselves into more hideous forms. The shinma offer the candidate their power, honed and harnessed through martial discipline, to rid the world of evil spirits and keep their loved ones safe. In return, they become intertwined with the shinma.

Ryuujin—The Dragon-Blooded

The Ryuujin count themselves as the living descendants of the Five Dragon Gods, dragons that wind around the pillars which hold up Heaven and Earth. As the dragons before them, the Ryuujin swore to destroy anything that threatens to shatter those pillars, casting those realms into chaos. The Ryuujin are typically broken up into five bloodlines, one for each of the ancient elements. Through rigorous martial arts training, the Ryuujin learn to unlock the power hidden deep in their blood, to control the elements and use them as a weapon.

Once, the Ryuujin boasted several great families spread across Asia, but through in-fighting and dereliction, these powerful dynasties have been shattered, save for a few houses remaining in Japan. Lesser households have dispersed across the globe, carrying their legends and traditions with them, and may now be found such disparate locales as Europe, Brazil, and North America. Traditionally, they are hunters of ghosts and other evil spirits. The shinma and their wicked counterparts, the yokai, have also been the targets of Ryuujin wrath. In the past, they moved across the country, using their exorcising fists and cleansing flames to destroy wicked spirits. More recently, the Ryuujin have become

stationary. They make their houses in spiritually significant places—some say over physical gateways to the Thousand Hells—and guard these places with their lives.

The few itinerant Ryuujin are sent out into world on rumors of the appearance of fighters who can control the elements. Ryuujin who emerge without the support structure of a family will find themselves hunted by the Akuma, who wish to use their mystic blood in rites which may reveal the secrets of the Yama Kings. As such, itinerant Ryuujin seek to destroy Akuma wherever they find them.

The Dragon's Awakening

Through marriage and through tryst, dragon blood has made its way across the globe, carried over centuries and across generations. Ryuujin call it the Sleeping Dragon, for many who carry it will never know it. The blood of the dragons must be stoked by spirit flame in order to awaken. In other words, Ryuujin powers are awakened by fighting.

Because of this, Ryuujin families train their children from youth to be martial artists and to learn to focus their ki. This training involves a special diet and breathing exercises that graduate into a more challenging physical regimen as the child grows. Mental and spiritual cultivation includes puzzles and riddles meant to teach each individual about his own heart.

But not all Ryuujin are aware they possess this mystic genome. Over the centuries, Ryuujin begat children they never knew. In more recent times, Ryuujin families broke away from the old traditions, leaving the world of ghosts and demons behind to enter modern society. They changed their names and moved far from the grip of their former culture. When they had children, they taught them nothing of their true heritage. These children went on, in turn, to raise children who were unaware of their past.

Yet the dragon families still track down lone Ryuujin. Beyond the obvious signs, such as fighters who can comb flame through the air with a pass of their hands, the Ryuujin employ genetic science to their cause. While dragon blood cannot be detected by scientific means, DNA testing allows the Ryuujin to identify close and distant relatives. For this reason, many family members take up genealogy on the side and become quite good at tracing family records.

But there is another component to the quest for lost eggs. For unknown reasons, a Ryuujin gains a sudden burst of instinct about a person who has dragon blood. This instinct—called Dragon Sense—is infallible. It comes on like a flash of light in the Ryuujin's mind, and he both sees and feels the dragon sleeping within a person's soul. Though it is rare and occurs wholly by chance, this sensation is so precise that the Ryuujin have gone so far as to patrol maternity wards, trying trigger the Sense in close proximity to newborns. Of those that do register, the Ryuujin mark that child's course through life. Such children often experience circumstances beyond belief, as if they were being protected by guardian angels. But there is also a dark side to the tale—dragon families that are desperate for power are not above kidnapping lost eggs so that they might raise them as their own, and guarantee that the Sleeping Dragon awakens.

The Dragon Sense

The order in which the Ryuujin sense one another is as follows: Fire senses Wood; Wood senses Earth; Earth senses Air; Air senses Water; and Water senses Fire. When a Fire Aspect senses the Sleeping Dragon within a person, that person will infallibly turn out to become a dragon of Wood. When a Water Apect has the sense, her suspect will always turn out to be a Fire aspect. The Dragon Sense does not apply to Ryuujin who have already awakened their powers.

The Dragon Aspects

Through harnessing his ki, each Aspect of the Ryuujin can learn to harness a different element.

Dragons of Flame are boisterous and aggressive. They are often charismatic and given to hot tempers and flashiness. If one is considered arrogant, he can usually back it up. Flame techniques are unleashed in bursts at the end of attacks, or as a product of the breath or the channeling of ki. Pulling his hands from his middle a Dragon of Flame may draw the very essence of flame from his core and wind it through the air like a crimson battle standard, unleashing it in torrents upon his foes. The advanced technique of the Flame is the Shadow Jutsu: the Fire Aspect learns to channel and control shadows, winding them around himself like a cloak or using them to strangle or slash at opponents.

Dragons of Wind are energetic and heedless, fearless and shameless. Such Ryuujin exhibit almost effortless control over their bodies, moving with incredible speed and grace and without thought. When riled, they can be calamitous. Wind techniques are birthed from the breath and the core of the body, much as fire, but unlike fire they do not accentuate strikes. Rather, the wind can be channeled along the curve of punches or kicks to generate gales that push or turn opponents, or even send them flying in the twist of a cyclone. The advanced technique of the Wind is Lightning Jutsu: the Air Aspect binds the wind into a blazing sheet that he flings from his fingertips. This is perhaps the most ki-concentrated attack a Ryuujin is capable of, and one of the most feared. Those who can bind Lightning also use it to electrify their attacks, stunning or crippling their opponents.

Dragons of Water are patient but never inactive. They are naturally curious and there is little which fails to interest them. As fighters, they adapt quickly to changes in their

opponent and find it easy to rebound from an unexpected change in combat. Like the waves, they are inexorable, retreating with seamless grace and returning with brutal power. The binding of water is somewhat more difficult than wind or fire. Water Aspects require a source of water with which to fight, manipulating it with their ki. A Ryuujin of the Waves can dance on water, winding the surface through his kata and around his body, striking down opponents with lashing blows and driving them down with torrents of water. The advanced technique of the Water is the Frost Jutsu: a Water Aspect needs no source of water to breathe ice into the world or to draw it from his core. One such technique includes the ability to freeze the surface underfoot and use it to slide toward an opponent, or to ruin an opponent's footing. Another involves unleashing a torrent of sub-zero ki to freeze an opponent in place.

Dragons of Earth are stoic and resolute. They are patient and unmoving, listening with their hearts, feeling the flow of ki around them to such keen degree that they see future instants just before they occur. Like the Dragons of Water, Earth Ryuujin must rely on the earth and stone around them to generate attacks. Generally this involves katas in which they draw up landmasses with their arms, punch stone masses through the air with a jerk of their fists, or stomp whole sections of earth into the air with their heels. Earth binding is perhaps one of the most shocking techniques of the Ryuujin, as the Ryuujin may tear the ground and even local structures out of shape with his control over the elements. The advanced technique of the Earth is Iron Jutsu: the Earth Aspect may even shape metal with his ki. Metal is more difficult to bind than earth, and fewer techniques have been developed. Earth Aspects find it useful when confronted with steel doors or opponents wielding metal weapons or wearing armor, however.

Dragons of Wood are inquisitive, but peaceful. They accept the feelings of others and are compassionate as a rule, but do not get caught up in the passions of others. Such Ryuujin hide their own passions deep inside, and only those who penetrate deep into their hearts ever learn the true depths of a Wood Aspect's soul. The binding of wood is unique: like a tree, Wood shapes the wind in its branches and the earth at its roots; it drinks in the water and shapes it into rain and it takes on flame, binding it into the form of the tree. Wood is the binding and the moving of the other four elements. The power is unique among the Ryuujin; Dragons of Wood are the only Ryuujin who can control the other four elements, and they are also the rarest of the Ryuujin. However, Wood has no advanced technique, and cannot use the advanced techniques of the other elements.

Okami—The Lunar Exalted

Okami are earth spirits descended from the moon, who are born as humans every thousand years. Each protects a wild, untouched region of the Earth, and is only drawn to the world of man by two things: the appearance of those who threaten the life of the planet, and one of the deadly sins of man, which each of the Okami represents; when a society falls prey to the sins, the Okami are free to hunt there until order is restored, according to the most ancient laws.

Okami grow up as human children, but it becomes apparent immediately that something is very wrong. Early on, they develop heightened senses and preternatural instincts about the weather and natural disasters. By the time most Okami are of school age, they can see and hear ghosts. Some may continue some semblance of a normal life, but all feel irreversibly compelled away from the lives that have been built for them. Often, Okami simply walk away from their families and their identities, following a voice only they can hear. This voice guides them to a wild place, where they commune by starlight with the moon and hear the spirit of the Earth calling them to be its guardian. Upon hearing this, the Okami is transformed into a great beast of legend. Such creatures reflect the fusion of man and animal present in werewolves, but have also had the seeming of mermen and more human catgirls.

The Okami use martial arts derived from their bestial forms. They may appear as humans but seldom ever do so, developing a suspicion for the world of men. However, they're known to be sympathetic to children and value strong people who are kind to those weaker than themselves. Okami generally become involved in the struggles of the world's martial artists when their actions lead to the corruption of a society, or when they seek to unleash demons or other wicked spirits upon the land. However, Okami have been drawn out of hiding by pure curiosity, when a fighter develops such power that it sends a surge of spirit energy traveling through the world like a ripple. More recently, several Okami have begun to appear in cities across the world, drawn by the rumors of a Yamajin who seeks to reunite the worlds of matter and spirit.

An Okami can sense disturbances in the natural flow of ki. Such disturbances, emanating from far away, come to the Okami in dreams and visions, sometimes even in scents carried on the wind, or by voices that whisper of it within nature. Okami have the power to sense and commune with spirits, and in the wild they often do, learning of the actions of societies they have left far behind. Wild spirits see the Okami as a kind of problem solver, though some Okami are gruff and wish only to be left alone. One such Okami, the wolf called Byur-on-the-Mountain, trained a fighter on the sacred peak of her domain for simply surviving the climb.

Some Okami like to live in corrupt society, where they are free to stalk and hunt in the concrete jungle. As humans, they blend in with society. As monsters, they are its greatest predators and night terrors. Such Okami often work to keep society a place of corruption, so that they may continue to stalk the streets. Some Okami actively target wicked men for slaughter, in order to trim back the fever

that drives a society to endanger the world. At times, such dogmatically opposed Okami are destined to collide, leaving city-dwellers to wonder what sort of animals leave slashes in concrete and steel. Other Okami are loath to hunt their own brethren, as secrecy is a vital facet of Okami existence. Often they enlist the aid of martial artists to try to drive out Okami who revel in corruption.

Once in a lifetime, an Okami will sense the ki of one whose spirit energy is compatible with her own. If she sleeps with this person, the offspring will be Okami. Such Okami are not considered to be reborn—that is, they are not reincarnated spirits—though they are considered full descendants of the moon.

Shinigami—The Abyssal Exalted

The wounded world cries for vengeance. Devils loosed by the Yamajin, the Shinigami answer that call. Long ago, the Yama Kings tore tracts from the chakras of the planet to make their dominions, and the world still bleeds. Spirits ply the souls of men from the natural cycle of reincarnation, guiding them to personal Heavens and Hells so that they do not complete the cycle of rebirth. Mighty men, ever hungry for power, pull the ki of the universe out of harmony to fuel their wars and realize their ambitions. The world is angry, and the Shinigami are its wrath. They are the dread shadows of the martial world, champions of death unleashed to becalm the fire raging at the heart of the universe.

The Shinigami are chosen from those who have lost their reason for living at the hands of the violent and powerful. They are approached with an offer to leave their lives behind, to train in a killing art devised long before man learned to make a fist. Those who accept vanish from their old lives. When they re-emerge, they are as the priest-champions of the hewer, demonic s□ttvikas who are hallowed by the dead and carry all the finality and ferocity of Kali reborn.

These demon binders slay devils and men alike, binding their souls into tattoos and even extensions of their own body, drawing upon the stolen, imprisoned souls to create new fighting techniques. Though they primarily hunt the strong, Shinigami are not limited to hunting the wicked. They move through the physical world, ridding it of spirits who interfere with the living, and the living who interfere with the dead. Amongst those, powerful ki users almost universally upset the balance, but of all their potential victims, mortals alone have the power to stay a Shinigami's hand. If a mortal or a Mugen defeats a Shinigami in combat, he may stay the hand of death itself by swearing to uphold a virtuous ideal—to be true to one he loves, or to hew to a strongly-held martial belief despite all resistance. If he keeps his promise, the Shinigami cannot again attack him. But the moment he begins to slip, the Shinigami will return for his head.

The Yamajin, Tennin, Okami, Akuma and Ryuujin are given no such quarter, for they represent a break in the cycle, an abnormality that must be flensed away so that there can be an end to the world's suffering. Breath-drinkers, some Shinigami have come to relish stealing the life force of even the weakest mortals. These Shinigami too are hunted by their brethren.

Mugen—The Solar Exalted

In the martial arts world, there are fighters who excel at channeling their ki. The world's greatest fighting styles hinge upon disciplines which focus ki through martial techniques to create the style's most unique and devastating special attacks. Of those who master these styles, few fighters reach the category of Mugen. According to legend, these warriors are gifted with such extraordinary fighting spirit as to channel the ki of the sun itself. The spirit energy of the sun and the planet are said to intertwine, forming a radiant field of spirit energy that flows through all things. The Mugen are martial artists of such caliber that they can tap into this energy, channeling it through their own ki to unleash attacks which exceed the power of even the Yama Kings.

The Mugen are a mystery. They can be good or evil, but they are always fighters who have sought meaning, power, or harmony through martial techniques passed down by human hands, eschewing the soul-twisting powers of the ancient world. Through the utmost discipline, some few purists become the empty set, the untainted sum. When glimpsed through the anima-sensing technique of the Tennin, the shape of their ki takes the form of infinity.

The Burn Legend System

Unlike other shards, **Burn Legend** eschews the standard **Exalted** system in favor of a specialized resolution system for martial arts battles.

Traits

Burn Legend utilizes a simplified set of traits for its characters. Abilities, Backgrounds, Virtues, Essence pools and Essence ratings are done away with altogether. In their place, martial artists possess Attribute and technique ratings, along with ki, Willpower, and health pools.

Attributes

Martial artists possess only three Attributes: Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina. These are normally rated from one to five, although some legendary fighters possess even higher values. Attributes are used to help land techniques, and to determine and resist damage from successfully executed techniques.

Techniques

A potentially limitless number of techniques exist within the martial arts world. Like Attributes, techniques

are normally rated from one to five, but may occasionally rise higher.

Ki and Willpower

All martial artists possess a pool of five points of ki, and five points of Willpower. Ki is used to fuel powerful martial arts techniques, while Willpower may be used to execute legendary techniques, as well as to reach deep and attempt to turn the tide of battle.

Ki is regained during battle through the use of certain (primarily Defensive) techniques; these can never grant the martial artist more than five ki at once, however. Martial artists begin all battles with five full points of ki.

Willpower, on the other hand, is only regained by winning battles. Victory in battle (defined as defeating one's opponents, or successfully achieving an objective despite martial opposition) restores two points of Willpower.

Health

Martial artists possess two health-related traits: a pool of seven health points, which are depleted as they suffer attacks from their opponents, and five Health Stocks.

Health points are restored through the use of certain martial arts techniques, and are restored to full at the beginning of each battle. Depleted Health Stocks, by contrast, return at a rate of one every 12 hours.

Combat

Combat in **Burn Legend** isn't tick-based, but rather proceeds in a series of rounds. In each round, every player selects one technique for their character to use, while the Storyteller selects techniques for antagonists she controls. Techniques are selected simultaneously, and in secret. This is generally done by passing the Storyteller a note, or a face-down index card with the details of the technique written on it. For online games, private messages sent to the Storyteller serve the same purpose. Once techniques have been selected for all characters, the selections are revealed, and the action is resolved.

Priority Resolve

Each technique in **Burn Legend** falls into one of six types: Strike, Aerial, Projectile, Rush, Grapple, or Defense. When two fighters deploy their techniques against one another, one of three results can occur: defeat, Clash, or Hit Trade.

Victorious Technique

Almost all techniques have one category of techniques they absolutely defeat. Basic Technique: Basic Strike, for example, automatically beats Aerial techniques. Thus, if two fighters attack one another, and one plays Basic Strike (which defeats Aerial techniques) while the other plays Aerial Strike (which defeats Projectiles), the fighter using the Basic Strike will automatically win, and proceeds to roll damage.

Priority Clash

If neither technique cleanly defeats the other, then the victory is down to which fighter executed their attack faster, or better. Both players make a Clash roll, using a dice pool determined by the technique they have played. The player who accumulates more successes wins, and his technique defeats the opponent's.

Hit Trade

There are two circumstances in which neither technique cleanly loses: when both techniques automatically defeat the move they are facing, or when players accumulate equal successes in a Clash. In this case, both techniques succeed, generally meaning that both characters inflict damage on one another.

A technique which Hit Trades is considered Victorious.

Damage and Defeat

When a technique has been successfully executed, its listed damage value is rolled as a dice pool. Unlike damage in standard **Exalted** games, successes from the Clash roll are not added to this value, and 10s count as two successes. A damaging technique automatically removes one health point from the target, plus one additional health point per success.

Each damaging technique also lists a minimum damage. The calculation listed in the technique's damage section cannot produce a dice pool lower than this value.

Health and Health Stocks

Fighters possess seven health points and five Health Stocks. When a fighter's health points are fully depleted, her player must roll her current Health Stocks as a dice pool. If no successes are gained on this roll, the fighter is rendered unconscious, and loses the battle. If at least one success is rolled, then one Health Stock vanishes, and the character restores her health points to full, and may continue to fight.

Damage in excess of current health points 'rolls over' when a Health Stock vanishes. Thus, a character with three health points who suffers four damage and succeeds in her roll to stay conscious would immediately lose one health after her points replenish themselves.

Additional Rules

While the above rules describe toe-to-toe slug-outs adequately, **Burn Legend** battles are dynamic martial arts battles, and so a number of additional complications must be considered.

Refinements

In addition to their base effects, some techniques possess *refinements*—special executions that enhance the

Non-Events

Sometimes, technique interactions just don't make sense. In these cases, the Storyteller should feel free to declare a non-event, in which both techniques simply fail. This most frequently occurs when two fighters attempt to use counterattack-type techniques in the same round—with no attack to counter, neither move can win.

technique in some way. Refinements have a minimum dot rating requirement which the technique must meet before they can be purchased, and a listed experience point cost. Additionally, some refinements are marked as *exclusive*. A martial artist may only learn one exclusive refinement per technique.

Movement and Range

Burn Legend recognizes two distances characters may occupy in relation to one another: near, and distant. In battles containing more than two fighters, it is up to the Storyteller to use common sense to track which fighters are near, and which are distant from one another. For example, if a Tennin standing at a distance from three closely-spaced Ryuujin advances on one of the Ryuujin, it stands to reason that he is now also near the other two as well.

Movement and range are handled by a technique's two Range values. These describe, respectively, the range of an opponent the move can be used against, and how the technique moves the martial artist.

The first value may be *Close* or *Mid*. A Close attack may only strike a near opponent. A Mid attack may strike a near or distant opponent. A Close technique used against an opponent who remains at a distance automatically fails.

The second value may be *Advance*, *Still*, or *Back*. A Still technique does not move the martial artist. An Advance technique moves the martial artist from a distance to be near her target. A Back technique moves the martial artist from near her opponent out to a distance. An Advance or Back technique used by a martial artist who is already (respectively) near or distant from her opponent simply leaves them at that range.

A martial artist using an Advance or Back technique to change ranges is considered to occupy both near and distant ranges during the instant she attempts to move. Thus, it is sometimes wise to play a Close technique even against a distant opponent, in the hopes that she will attempt an Advance technique, bringing herself into range.

A martial artist who attempts an Advance or Back technique that fails is left at the range he formerly occupied at the end of the round.

Multiple Opponents

Honorable combat in the martial arts world is a contest of strength and skill between two fighters. Alas, not all fighters are honorable, and sometimes martial arts battles involve uneven numbers and groups of foes.

When a martial artist is targeted by two or more opponents at the same time, the technique she plays acts as a defense which determines whether or not her attackers can harm her.

For example, a Mugen fights a Tennin and Ryuujin. The Mugen attacks the Ryuujin with a Basic Strike. The Ryuujin uses an Aerial Strike, while the Tennin uses a Basic Strike of his own.

The Mugen's Basic Strike cleanly defeats the Tennin's Aerial Strike. The Tennin's Basic Strike Clashes with the Mugen's technique, however, and so the two roll their Clash pools. If the Mugen gains more successes, he will defeat the Tennin's technique and suffer no damage; however, because his Basic Strike was not aimed at the Tennin, he does not damage the Tennin. If the Tennin gains more successes, he will damage the Mugen. The defender of multiple attacks makes only a single Clash roll to determine his defense from all incoming techniques.

A fighter may be attacked by a maximum of three total opponents in a round.

Extras

Extras are an optional rule in **Burn Legend**, used to represent martial arts lackeys of low skill, or untrained thugs with nothing but a knack for violence. Extras may use only Basic Techniques, or at most a single Martial Arts Style Technique, at the Storyteller's discretion. They have 0 Health Stocks. Depleting their health points automatically defeats them.

Stagger

Even the sturdiest of martial artists cannot withstand long strings of unanswered blows without becoming disoriented. When a martial artist suffers damage from three techniques in a row, then the next round, when her selected technique is revealed, she must roll to resist Stagger. This is a Stamina roll against difficulty 2. If the roll is successful, her technique plays out normally. If it fails, she is Staggered, and her technique automatically fails.

Sudden Comebacks are also possible at this point. If the martial artist successfully resists Stagger and lands a Victorious Technique against her opponent, the opponent must check to resist Stagger in the next round.

Reversal

Once per battle, a martial artist may reach deep into her burning spirit to give herself a second chance. Attempting a Reversal costs one point of Willpower.

A Reversal may be declared after all players have revealed their selected techniques, permitting the martial artist's player to change her declared technique. The newly selected technique may not cleanly defeat the technique it is going up against; it must Clash. Some techniques cannot be subjected to Reversal.

Overdrive Techniques

Finally, all martial artists possess a ten-point Overdrive meter. One point is placed into the meter every time the martial artist successfully inflicts damage on her opponent. Once the meter contains ten points, the martial artist may spend one Willpower point and all ten of her Overdrive points to use an Overdrive Technique.

Overdrive Techniques are powerful attacks, often unique to the martial artist using them, which are used to end fights. In addition to inflicting their listed damage or other effects, a successful Overdrive Technique automatically removes one Health Stock from the opponent, and forces the opponent to immediately roll to remain conscious after this Stock's removal. Because they tend to be very damaging attacks, an Overdrive Technique may even force an opponent to roll to remain conscious twice, by removing a Health Stock and then immediately depleting the target's health points!

A martial artist may only know a single Overdrive Technique. No Overdrive Technique may be subjected to Reversal.

Character Creation

Character creation in **Burn Legend** is much like any other **Exalted** game, proceeding in a series of simple steps.

Step One: Concept

What sort of fighter appeals to you? The heroes of **Burn Legend** come from a global diversity of martial traditions and supernatural origins: American boxers, Thai kickboxers, and prideful karateka rub shoulders with savage Okami from the wilds of Patagonia, revenge-seeking Mugen, and deadly Yamajin seeking mastery of the Hell Arts.

Step Two: Select Exaltation and Martial Arts Style

Two choices define a **Burn Legend** character above all others: style and mystic nature. Selecting an Exaltation template grants access to that Exaltation's special techniques, while selecting a martial arts style grants access to its Martial Arts Style Techniques.

Neither of these choices is mandatory. A jungle-dwelling Okami, for example, might practice no formal style, focusing entirely on his instinctive battle arts. Indeed, even Exaltation may be eschewed to play a purely 'mortal' martial artist, contesting against supernatural legends with fist and nerve alone.

Characters may not begin with more than one martial arts style without explicit Storyteller approval (this is generally only recommended for 'mortal' martial artists), and may not have more than one Exaltation template.

Step Three: Assign Attributes

The martial artist begins with one dot in each Attribute, and then has seven dots to distribute among the three. No Attribute may begin rated higher than five.

Step Four: Assign Backgrounds

All Backgrounds begin at zero dots, and may be raised as high as five dots. The character has seven dots to distribute among them.

Step Five: Assign Basic Techniques

Characters begin with two dots in each of the Basic Techniques, and are granted an additional seven dots to distribute into their Basic Techniques.

Step Six: Assign Exalted and Martial Arts Style Techniques

All Exalted Techniques and Martial Arts Style Techniques begin at zero dots. The character has fifteen dots to distribute among these techniques.

Character Advancement

Characters in **Burn Legend** gain a default of four experience points per session, plus an additional experience point if their battles and conflicts during the session have been well-stunted. (Stunting techniques does not grant a moment-to-moment bonus of dice and resources in **Burn Legend**; instead, the reward is delivered at the end of the session.) Five additional points should be awarded at the end of each story arc.

Learning a new martial arts style is possible, but requires storyline justification and Storyteller approval, and should never be a fast or simple process. Similarly, buying Attributes or techniques past five (they can potentially go as high as ten dots) requires storyline justification, legendary training, or epic martial accomplishments, and only one such 'cap-breaking' dot may be purchased per story.

Designing Antagonists

The above creation rules are designed to produce a young but somewhat experienced fighter, and are particularly calibrated to create enjoyable player-controlled protagonists. They are not intended to serve as a creation template for Storyteller-controlled fighters, who should simply have their traits assigned as makes sense for their personal fighting style, character, and level of desired prowess.

Trait	Cost
Attribute	current rating x 4
New Martial Arts Style Technique	4
New Exalted Technique	4
New Background	3
Basic Technique	current rating x 2
Martial Arts Style Technique	current rating x 3
Exalted Technique	current rating x 3
Background	current rating x 2

Backgrounds

Burn Legend characters who wish to shift the course of the story with something other than their fists may do so using Backgrounds. Most actions outside of combat in this shard are handled by simple roleplaying; Backgrounds are employed when characters wish to perform some dramatic feat beyond the ordinary, such as getting in contact with black market arms dealers (Contacts), calling upon a private plane to get them halfway around the world before the end of the day (Resources), or binding a vengeful spirit so that they might interrogate it (Magic).

In such circumstances, the player rolls the relevant Background rating against a difficulty determined by the Storyteller, generally ranging from 1 (for straightforward applications) to 3 (for incredible acts).

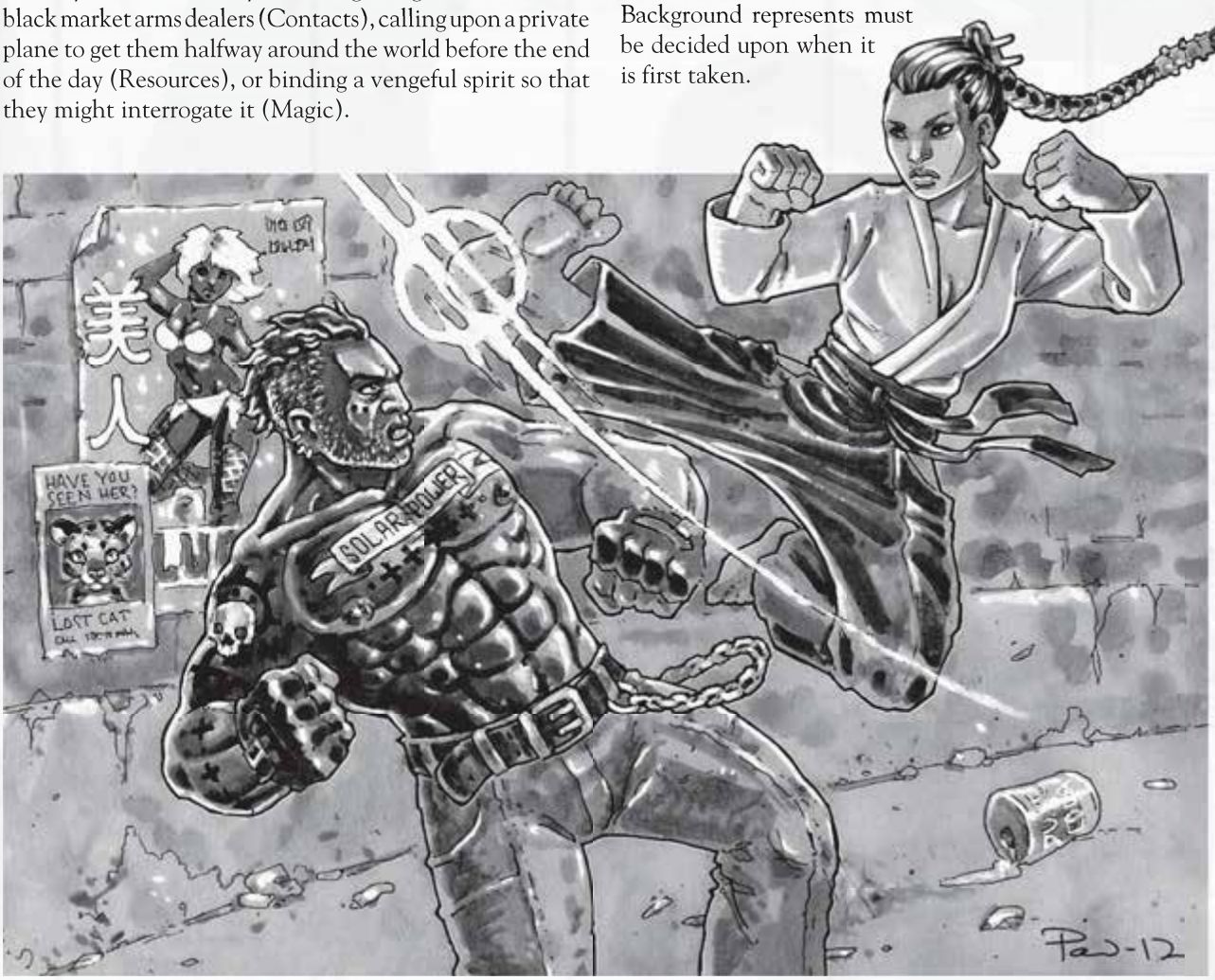
Backgrounds may be rated from one to five dots.

Allies

Allies describes the character's influence in the world. It could represent likability, political influence, carefully maintained networks of blackmail, or simply being manipulative enough to get what he wants wherever he goes. This Background is rolled when the martial artist needs to have a local friend to help him out, determining whether such a person exists or can be recruited on short notice.

Backing

Backing describes the character's pull with a particular organization—perhaps a corporation, governmental bureau, law enforcement organization, ancient and widespread family, or criminal cartel. This Background is rolled when the martial artist seeks to call upon the resources of the organization for his benefit. The particular organization this Background represents must be decided upon when it is first taken.



Contacts

Contacts describes the character's ability to gather information. Rather than describing a particular set of contacts, Contacts describes how wide the character's net of informants, contacts, confidants and spies is spread. It is rolled whenever the character needs to find out information, to determine if he has a local contact able to supply him with the knowledge he seeks.

Fame

Fame describes the character's degree of celebrity. He might be a boxing champ, a national muay thai hero, an eccentric playboy millionaire, or the special forces soldier who saved the President from terrorists. It is rolled whenever the character seeks to use his fame and notoriety to bend rules or gain advantage for himself.

Lore

Lore describes the character's knowledge of the hidden secrets of the martial arts world. It describes his familiarity with supernatural martial arts, spirits, the tales of the Yama Kings and the Legendary Masters, the location of lost temples and hidden monasteries, and other occluded secrets known only to great martial artists and sorcerers. It is rolled whenever the character seeks to exploit such learning or gain knowledge of a new and strange phenomenon he encounters.

Magic

Magic describes the character's facility with the mystic arts of the sorcerer and exorcist, used to summon, bind, and banish spirits. Infernal martial artists use this Background to strike bargains with the Yama Kings and their servants, while Tennin and other righteous fighters employ magic to confound wicked spirits. This Background is rolled when the character wishes to interact with spirits in some manner other than with his fists, or when he seeks to perform some other mystic feat, as the Storyteller presents such opportunities (such as opening an ancient portal into the spirit realms).

Minions

Minions describes the number of lesser fighters willing to answer the martial artist's summons. Such fighters are generally extras, but even a few extra fists may be sufficient to turn the tide of battle at times. This may represent loyal ninja assassins, a street gang, or corporate enforcers on the fighter's payroll. This Background is rolled to determine whether or not the character is able to successfully summon fighters to support him, generally producing one extra per success. It may only be used a number of times each story equal to half the Background's rating, rounded up.

Resources

Resources describes the wealth the character has access to. He might be a CEO's wealthy son, a prize fighter who carefully invested his winnings, or a crime lord riding high atop a wave of vice and terror. This Background is rolled to determine if the character is able to manage an extravagant expenditure, such as paying out elaborate bribes, chartering a private plane to carry him halfway across the world to a match on a tight deadline, or financing an entire village's reconstruction to impress a potential sifu.

Martial Arts Techniques

The following effects are used by natural martial artists and their Exalted counterparts alike. They are split into two categories: Basic Techniques, which all fighters may use, and Martial Arts Style Techniques, which only practitioners of a particular style may use.

Basic Techniques

Basic Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Basic Strike; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Striking techniques are the core of martial conflict, encompassing the basic punches and kicks that form the foundation of any fighter's repertoire. With their firm grounding, such attacks automatically defeat Aerial techniques.

Aerial Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity – 1 + Aerial Strike; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The fighter launches himself into the air, adding his full weight and momentum to the power of a leaping punch or kick. Aerial strikes afford great mobility, but suffer the drawback of total commitment once begun. Their high arc carries them over Projectile techniques, defeating them.

Rush

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Rush; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The fighter throws himself into an aggressive assault, launching a punch, kick or body check with all of his momentum behind it. The overwhelming force of this attack defeats Strikes.

Grapple

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Grapple; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Strength (min 1)

The fighter locks up with his opponent with the intent of causing injury, generally in the form of a joint lock or throw. Grapples automatically defeat Defensive techniques.

Block

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Block; **Damage:** None

Raising his arms and focusing on evading the worst of his opponent's assault, the fighter takes a moment to gather himself and attempt to find his second wind. If he successfully blocks his opponent's attack, this technique inflicts no damage; instead, the fighter regains two points of ki or health. Block defeats Strikes, and may be used as a Still or Back technique as desired.

Firearms in the Martial Arts World

Effective though they may be for settling mundane conflicts, guns have little standing in the martial arts world, where they are an indication of cowardice or lack of confidence in the strength of one's fists. Thus, guns are the tools of thugs and lackeys, or martial artists who have utterly lost their nerve.

Firearms attacks in **Burn Legend** are treated as Projectiles which defeat nothing, roll Dexterity alone for Clashes, and inflict (5 – Dexterity, min 1) damage. A character wielding a gun may use only his gun and Basic Techniques so long as he holds the firearm and for two turns after discarding or losing it. Suffering a single damaging attack both disarms him and automatically results in the loss of a Health Stock.

Boxing

The "sweet science" is a rigidly structured tournament style, emphasizing footwork and spacing. It exclusively makes use of swift and powerful punches.

One-Two Combo

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity – 1 + One-Two Combo;
Damage: Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Difficult to land but devastatingly effective, this attack consists of an uppercut to the jaw which lifts the opponent's head into position for a left hook to the face. It defeats Rushes.

Rushing Uppercut

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Rushing Uppercut;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The boxer surges forward, throwing a vicious uppercut into his opponent. This attack defeats Aerial techniques.

Cross Counter

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Cross Counter; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The boxer waits for his opponent to make a move, then answers with a powerful cross to the chin. This counterattack defeats Strikes, but is a non-event if no attack is thrown by the opponent.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

Also known as Gracie jiu-jitsu, this martial art (derived from Japanese Kodokan judo) teaches that even a small fighter can defeat giants, primarily by focusing on chokeholds and joint locks. Brazilian jiu-jitsu also emphasizes ground fighting.

Flying Armbar

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Flying Armbar; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Strength (min 1)

The martial artist launches himself through the air, using his legs and hands to lock an opponent's arm into a brutal joint lock as he falls to the ground. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique subtracts two dice from the opponent's next two Clash rolls. It defeats Projectiles.

Sliding Legbreaker

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Sliding Legbreaker; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Strength (min 1)

The martial artist throws herself into a baseball slide, kicking the opponent's legs out from under her, then snaps her leg into a painful joint lock before she can recover. This attack defeats Strikes.

Triangle Choke Hold

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Deterity + Triangle Choke Hold; **Damage:** Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist leaps up, catching her opponent and dragging him to the ground, locking his head into a chokehold utilizing her arms and thighs. This attack defeats Defensive techniques.

Kyokushin Karate

Kyokushin kaikan is a powerful, stand-up karate style originally created by master Masutatsu Oyama. Emblematic of Japanese fighting styles, it focuses on swift, powerful blows to the body and head in order to defeat opponents.

Rolling Axe Kick (Mawashi Kaiten Geri)

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Rolling Axe Kick;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The martial artist's feet leave the ground as he throws himself head-over-heels into a rolling axe kick, using his body as a pendulum to accelerate his heel into his opponent's face. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique removes one die from the opponent's next Clash roll. Rolling Axe Kick defeats Grapple techniques.

Front Kick

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + Front Kick; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist steps into the opponent with a strong forward kick, driving all the power of his hips into the blow, knocking any opponent not firmly rooted in a stable stance to the ground. This attack defeats Rushes, and adds two dice to Clash rolls against any Advance technique.

Step Spear Kick

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Step Spear Kick;
Damage: Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Taking a long step forward, the martial artist chambers his leg out in a devastating side kick that clears the opponent off his feet and drives him back. This attack defeats Strikes, and knocks the opponent Back.

Muay Thai

The signature martial art of Thailand, muay thai is an incredibly brutal style in which practitioners toughen their shins, fists, elbows, and knees into lethal weapons. It emphasizes kicks for spacing and ending fights, as well as close-in strikes to tenderize the opponent's body.

Elbow Slash (Sok Ti)

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + Elbow Slash; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The fighter throws a slashing elbow into his opponent's face, stunning them or cutting their eyebrow open with the impact. This attack defeats Grapples, and takes two dice from the opponent's next Clash roll when it does so.

Flying Knee (Khao Loi)

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Strength + Flying Knee; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The fighter advances with an unstoppable flying knee, which defeats Strikes. This attack also adds one additional die to Clash rolls against Defensive techniques.

Neck Wrestling (Chap Kho)

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Stamina + Neck Wrestling;
Damage: Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The martial artist clinches the opponent behind the head or neck, and throws a series of punishing knee strikes into his foe's solar plexus. Chap Kho defeats Defensive techniques.

Snake Style Kung Fu (Shequan)

One of the five legendary animal styles of kung fu, shequan focuses on fluid movement, swift attacks from unexpected angles, and pressure point strikes.

Serpent Blinds the Wolf

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Serpent Blinds the Wolf;
Damage: Dexterity + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The martial artist delivers a darting strike to his opponent's eyes, temporarily blinding her. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique causes the opponent to lose two dice from her next Clash roll. It defeats Grapples.

Striking Serpent Speed

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Striking Serpent Speed;
Damage: Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist uncoils, lunging forward with a deadly nerve strike to his opponent's solar plexus. This attack defeats Strikes.

Snake Strikes the Heel

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Snake Strikes the Heel;
Damage: Dexterity – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

Whipping his ki out from the base of his spine to the tips his fingers, the martial artist lunges around an opponent's attack to deliver a devastating counter-strike. This technique defeats Rushes.

Taekwondo

The most famous Korean martial arts style, taekwondo places extreme emphasis on kicks in all aspects of battle, turning the martial artist's legs into ultimate weapons.

Roundhouse Kick (Dollyeo Chagi)

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Roundhouse Kick;
Damage: Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist pivots his body to deliver a devastating roundhouse kick to the opponent's head. This attack defeats Rushes, and adds two dice to Clashes against Aerial techniques.

Side Kick (Yeop Chagi)

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + Side Kick; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The martial artist spears his leg out in a high, powerful side kick. This crisp, versatile attack defeats Aerial techniques, and inflicts one additional damage when it beats Advance techniques.

Jumping Axe Kick (Ee Dan Naekyeo Chagi)

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity – 1 + Jumping Axe Kick;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The martial artist brings his leg high in a jumping axe kick, then swings it down onto the opponent's head or collarbone with bone-breaking force. This attack defeats Projectiles.

Tiger Style Kung Fu (Hung Gar)

One of the five legendary animal styles of kung fu, hung gar features brutal joint locks, rigid 'claw' strikes, and a comprehensive suite of ground fighting techniques that make the tiger stylist as dangerous on his back as on his feet.

Hungry Tiger Technique

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Hungry Tiger Technique;
Damage: Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist launches a series of brutal tiger claw strikes, savaging her opponent. This attack defeats Grapples.

Tiger Seizes the Joint

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Tiger Seizes the Joint; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Immobilizing one of her opponent's limbs to create an opening, the martial artist lays in a brutal tiger claw strike which simultaneously lacerates the opponent's skin and wrenches the joint. In addition to causing damage, this attack causes the opponent's next two Close attacks to lose one die from their Clash rolls. It defeats Strikes.

Prone Fighting

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Prone Fighting;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist draws on her extensive training in fighting prone and in other disadvantageous circumstances to launch a series of agile but well-disciplined attacks. These attacks are immune to any Clash penalties they should otherwise suffer. This attack does not automatically defeat any technique type.

Wing Chun

This Chinese martial art blends elements of snake and crane kung fu with short, powerful direct attacks. Its overall philosophy focuses on fighting in harmony with the opponent's energy, bending like a reed before aggressive force only to snap back unharmed with decisive impact.

One-Inch Punch

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + One-Inch Punch;
Damage: Dexterity + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The martial artist delivers a very short but brutally powerful snap-hit to the opponent's body. This technique defeats Grapples.

Trapping

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Trapping; **Damage:** None

The martial artist moves with the opponent, grasping an offending limb when it is offered in attack. This immobilizes the opponent, offering great opportunities for the Wing Chun practitioner. Although this technique inflicts no damage, it allows the character to add four dice to her next Clash roll. It defeats Strikes.

Chi Sao

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Chi Sao; **Damage:** None

Drawing on hours of *chi sao* training, the martial artist instinctively moves in sync with her opponent's aggression, gliding gracefully away from his attacks. This defensive technique grants three ki points when it successfully evades an attack. It does not automatically defeat any type of technique.

Wrestling

Dating back to long before the Greeks, wrestling is one of the world's oldest martial arts. It is afforded little respect by other martial arts schools, which only leaves wrestlers with more to prove using their suite of powerful slams, holds, and strikes.

Clothesline

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Strength + Clothesline; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The wrestler rushes his opponent, striking her neck with an outstretched arm and knocking her off her feet. In addition to inflicting damage, this attack prevents the opponent from using an Advance or Back technique in the next round. It defeats other Rushes.

Piledriver

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Piledriver; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The wrestler hoists his opponent upside-down in the air, then drops down, spiking their head into the ground while it is held immobile between his legs. This devastating technique disorients as well as damages, causing the opponent to lose one die from his next two Clash rolls. It defeats Defensive techniques.

Powerbomb

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Powerbomb; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The wrestler catches his opponent, lifting her high into the air, then slamming her into the ground with all the strength he can muster. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique counts as two steps toward Staggering the opponent. It catches and defeats Aerial techniques.

Zui Quan (Drunken Boxing)

A deceptive school of Chinese martial arts, zui quan emulates the uncoordinated and thus unpredictable movements of a stumbling drunk. These motions mask the drunken boxer's true intent until he has already landed a decisive blow.

Stumbling Fist

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Stumbling Fist; **Damage:** Dexterity + 2 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The martial artist stumbles toward his opponent, looping out an unexpected fist to strike at the side of his foe's head. The technique's Clash roll becomes Dexterity + 2 + Stumbling Fist if the martial artist's last action was Drunkard's Sway. This attack defeats Rushes.

Zhang Xu Removes His Cap

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Zhang Xu Removes His Cap; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

Named after one of the Eight Drunken Immortals, this attack sees the martial artist stagger forward, dropping a backfist from above as though doffing his cap. The technique's Clash roll becomes Dexterity + 2 + Zhang Xu Removes His Cap if the martial artist's last action was Drunkard's Sway. This attack defeats Strikes.

Drunkard's Sway

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Advance or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Drunkard's Sway; **Damage:** None

The martial artist reels about in an unpredictable fashion, as though intoxicated, throwing off his enemies. If successful, this technique restores one ki point, and adds two (non-stackable) damage to the martial artist's next Victorious Technique. Drunkard's Sway defeats Aerial techniques.

Fighting With Spirits

The martial arts world has never forgotten the spirits that watch invisibly over the Earth, or scheme against it from the depths of distant, otherworldly realms. Some spirits are invisible, intangible presences which may only be summoned or bargained with through the use of sorcery, while others can and do take on a semblance of flesh to challenge fighters directly.

Spirit fighters are capable of using Basic Techniques and, in some cases, Martial Arts Techniques. In most cases they also know a number of unique techniques, which may be designed by the Storyteller or simulated by selecting 2-6 Exalted Techniques and changing their aesthetics to be appropriate to the spirit. In most cases, spirits possess the same number of Health Stocks, Willpower, ki and health points as Exalted fighters, though some especially mighty spirits—veritable gods, or demon kings—might have greater reserves of ki or Health Stocks.

Exalted Techniques

The following techniques are the exclusive province of supernatural martial artists.

Solar Techniques

These techniques mark the greatest fighters of a generation. There is no body of 'Mugen styles' since Mugen are of diverse origins; instead, individual Mugen techniques are instinctively grasped and wielded by those who have learned to use the Breath of Heaven. Some commonly-

invented techniques are listed below, generally arising from the 'mortal' Martial Arts styles the Mugen practice. As a result, certain techniques, when developed by a Mugen practitioner of an appropriate style, gain an experience point discount and may be raised past the first dot as though they were Basic Techniques.

Burning Corona Strike

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Burning Corona Strike; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Mugen erupts from the ground with a mighty uppercut, trailing a brilliantly burning arc of ki in its wake. This potent attack defeats Aerial techniques and grants an additional point of Overdrive upon inflicting damage. It is immune to Reversal.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Kyokushin Karate practitioners.

Sunfire Eruption (••••, 5xp, exclusive): A secondary eruption of ki tears through opponents intercepted in the air, sending them spinning away. The attack's damage when defeating an Aerial attack becomes Strength + 1 (min 1), and the opponent is knocked Back.

Burning Heaven Spear (••••, 5xp, exclusive): Burning Corona Strike gains even greater height, momentum, and force, adding another two dice to Clash rolls. However, this total commitment creates vulnerability when the technique fails; attackers who hit the Mugen through Burning Corona Strike add one additional damage to their attack.

Earth-Splitting Fist

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Earth-Splitting Fist; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Stoking his ki into an internal storm, the Mugen unleashes his spiritual power through his fist, striking the ground before him. A jagged shockwave-spike of gold-scarlet power rips outward, shattering pavement and flattening opponents. Earth-Splitting Fist defeats Rushes.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Tiger Style and Boxing practitioners.

Earth Swallows Lightning (••••, 6xp): Earth-Splitting Fist's range becomes Mid/Still, and it Clashes against any Projectile that should defeat it outright.

Roaring Flare Kick

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Strength + Roaring Flare Kick; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Mugen slashes a leg high into the air in a brutally powerful vertical jumping kick, trailing a flaring streamer of ki behind the limb, then spins and spikes her opponent back to the ground with the other leg. This attack defeats other Aerial techniques and grants an additional point of Overdrive upon inflicting damage.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Taekwondo practitioners.

Falling Meteor Atemi

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Falling Meteor Atemi; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Mugen draws the ki of the earth into himself as he leaves the ground, and the ki of the heavens into himself as he curls through the air. At the apex of his leap, he uncoils and drives down a fist, wreathed in a corona of heavenly fire; the impact is sufficient to shatter nearby windows and crack concrete beneath his unfortunate opponents. This attack rises above Projectiles, defeating them.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Tiger Style and Muay Thai practitioners.

Unstoppable Comet (••, 3xp): This technique produces one additional Overdrive point when it inflicts damage.

Heavenly Storm

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Strength + Heavenly Storm; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1).

Summoning up ki from his heart, lungs, and the earth beneath his feet, the Mugen hurls a roaring projectile of spirit energy from both hands like a cannon shot, burning in the colors of the sun: gold, violet, white. This technique defeats Strikes, and adds one additional die when Clashing with other Projectiles.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Kyokushin Karate and Wing Chun practitioners.

Solid Shot (••, 2xp): Heavenly Storm gains increased spiritual weight and a scarlet corona, tearing aside lesser projectiles. Add two additional dice to Clashes against Projectiles.

Thunder Cannon (•••••, 6xp, exclusive): The projectile becomes a blistering comet of purest gold, adding two additional damage.

Heaven's Bullet (•••••, 6xp, exclusive): The projectile grants two additional Overdrive points upon inflicting damage.

Thunderclap Rush Attack

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Thunderclap Rush Attack; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Driving forward with a mighty strike, ki erupts from the Mugen's heart to his fist, wreathing it in a corona of power. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent's stance is blown wide open, preventing him from using a Defensive technique in the next round. This attack defeats Grapples and grants one additional Overdrive point.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Snake Style and Boxing practitioners.

Sun Fist Strike (•••, 5xp): The technique's damage rises by one, and it may knock close opponents Back, if the Mugen desires.

Iron Raptor Combination

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Iron Raptor Combination; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The Mugen leaps forward with an overhead rolling kick, then slides into a devastating precision strike to the solar plexus, stunning his opponent. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique counts as two steps toward Staggering the opponent. It defeats Strikes.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Snake Style, Taekwondo, and Zui Quan practitioners.

Dragon Coil Kanzetsuwaza

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Dragon Coil Kanzetsuwaza; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

Grasping an opponent's limb, the Mugen gives a calculated wrench, sending his ki racing explosively through the enemy's joints. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent loses one die from his next two Clashes. This defeats Defensive techniques.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Wrestling practitioners.

Sun-Seared Joints (••, 3xp): When Dragon Coil Kanzetsuwaza defeats a Defensive technique, the opponent loses two dice from his next two Clashes.

Crashing Wave Throw

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Crashing Wave Throw; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Mugen grasps his opponent and rolls with him, throwing a leg up. Ki and momentum carry the enemy to a painful impact with the ground or some other surface, knocking the wind out of them and weakening their ki. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent may not use an Aerial technique in the next round, and is forced Back from the Mugen. This defeats Defensive techniques, and grants the martial artist one additional Overdrive point.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Kyokushin Karate, Wrestling, and Zui Quan practitioners.

Storm-Tossed Chakras (•••••, 4xp): In the next round, the opponent must also spend one Willpower to spend any ki.

Break the Storm

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Break the Storm; **Damage:** None/Special

Crossing his arms, the Mugen fortifies his ki into an iron defense, rebounding force directed at him back against his foes. Successfully executed, Break the Storm restores one health and ki point, and causes the attacker to lose two dice from his next Clash roll. It automatically defeats Projectiles, sending them hurtling back at the one who threw them, inflicting the Projectile's listed damage against its creator. It is immune to Reversal.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Muay Thai practitioners.

Solar Counterattack (••, 3xp): Reflected Projectiles gain a slight solar corona, and add one to their damage.

Sun-Eating Method (••, 3xp): The martial artist may, at the player's discretion, absorb a projectile rather than reflecting it, adding 4 dice to his next Clash roll.

Reed in the Wind

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Reed in the Wind; **Damage:** None

Time seems to slow for the martial artist as he concentrates on his opponent's movements, measuring the arc of the next blow. His opponent's fighting intent is traced out in bright lines of ki that only the martial artist can see. In the last moment before contact, the martial artist bends around the blow, drawing off some measure of his opponent's energy as he twists aside, better positioning himself for the next strike. Successfully executed, Reed in the Wind restores one health or ki point, and grants three extra dice on the Mugen's next Clash. It automatically defeats Rushes.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Snake Style, Wing Chun, and Zui Quan practitioners.

Grass Before the Storm (•••, 3xp): Reed in the Wind adds another die to Clash rolls, or another two dice to Clashes against Strikes.

Drinking the Storm (••, 3xp): Successfully executing this technique grants one Overdrive point.

Overdrive Technique: Heavenly Destroyer Blast

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Heavenly Destroyer Blast; **Damage:** Stamina + 6 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

Recapturing one of the lost arts of the Legendary Masters, the Mugen channels the ki of the Eye of Heaven into his glowing hands, then releases a mighty blast of destructive energy to annihilate his opponents. To observers, it seems he has hurled the sun itself from his hands—a roaring ball of impossibly intense spiritual flames as large as a man. This attack defeats Rushes and Defensive techniques.

Overdrive Technique: Heaven Thunder Hammer

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + 3 + Heaven Thunder Hammer; **Damage:** Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Recapturing one of the lost arts of the Legendary Masters, the Mugen channels the full wrath of Heaven into a single burning fist, then delivers an earth-shaking blow. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent is knocked Back and must check for Stagger in the next round. This attack defeats Rushes and Grapples.

Akuma Techniques

Akuma are those whose blood and ki is tainted by the corrupt power of Hell. Many bargain or scheme for such unclean power, while others are born with cursed might pounding in their veins. Unlike the Yamajin, who wield the very powers of the Yama Kings themselves, the Hell Arts of the Akuma are corrupted bestowments of martial power, similar in some superficial ways to the mighty fighting techniques of Mugen. Like Mugen, certain bestowments come more easily to fighters of specific martial heritage, granting an experience point discount when raising appropriate techniques past the first dot as though they were Basic Techniques.

Black Tide Rising

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Black Tide Rising; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Akuma surges forward, slashing a fist from his hip up to high in the air as he advances, pushing a wave of sizzling red-black ki ahead of him. This potent attack defeats Aerial techniques and grants an additional point of Overdrive upon inflicting damage.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Boxers and Kyokushin Karate practitioners.

Black Tide Drowning (••••, 5xp, exclusive): The ki wave swallows and erupts around opponents it plucks from the air. The attack's damage when defeating an Aerial attack becomes Strength + 1 (min 1), and the opponent's next technique is automatically considered Still.

Midnight Tsunami (••••, 5xp, exclusive): Black Tide Rising's ki wave becomes a deadly, more compact ebon wedge, adding three dice to Clash rolls against Rushes and Aerial techniques and one die to its damage, but sacrificing its ability to cleanly defeat Aerial techniques.

Air-Skinning Fist

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Air-Skinning Fist; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Stoking his ki into a poisonous maelstrom, the Akuma unleashes his spiritual power through his fist, striking the air before him. A tattered splash of black-purple toxic ki sprays through the air, burning and weakening opponents. Air-Skinning Fist defeats Rushes.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Tiger Style and Boxing practitioners.

Hell Spits Spite (••••, 6xp): Air-Skinning Fist's range becomes Mid/Still, and it Clashes against any Projectile that should defeat it outright.

Sky-Splitting Claw

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Strength + Sky-Splitting Claw; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Akuma slashes a clawed hand high into the air in a brutally powerful vertical slash, trailing a tattered stream of ebon ki, then spins and kicks her opponent away. This attack knocks the opponent Back in addition to dealing damage, and defeats other Aerial techniques.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Taekwondo and Zui Quan practitioners.

Hell Wind Atemi

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Hell Wind Atemi; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Akuma draws the ki of Yomi Wan into himself as he leaves the ground, then kindles it in his own ragged soul as he curls through the air. At the apex of his leap, he uncoils and drives down a fist, wreathed in a corona of flying winds which lacerate unfortunate opponents. This attack rises above Projectiles, defeating them, and produces one additional Overdrive point when it inflicts damage.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Snake Style and Muay Thai practitioners.

Unstoppable Comet (••, 1xp): This technique is immune to Reversal.

Hell Spite Blast

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Strength + Hell Spite Blast; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1).

Channeling poisonous ki through his tainted chakras and meridians, the Akuma hurls a screaming projectile of spirit energy from both hands like a cannon shot, burning in the terrible colors of Hell: green, scarlet, black. This technique defeats Strikes, and adds one additional die when Clashing with other Projectiles.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Kyokushin Karate and Wing Chun practitioners.

Hell Shot (••, 2xp): Hell Spite Blast tears aside lesser projectiles with a triumphant scream. Add two additional dice to Clashes against Projectiles.

Hell Surge Advance

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Hell Surge Advance; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Erupting forward, poisoned ki streaming from a clawed hand, the Akuma grasps her opponent and drives him to the ground, dragging him along behind her as her attack engulfs his body in black flames, then tossing him aside. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent's body is wracked by such agony that he cannot use a Strike in the next round. This attack defeats Grapples and grants one additional Overdrive point.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Tiger Style practitioners.

Black Claw Strike (•••, 5xp): The technique's damage rises by one, and it may knock close opponents Back, if the Akuma desires.

Reaping Claw (•••••, 6xp, exclusive): The ki claw is studded with jagged demon teeth, adding two additional damage.

Hell Focus Combination

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Hell Focus Combination; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The Akuma lunges forward with a flat-handed strike to the opponent's solar plexus, arm wreathed in a drill of black-scarlet ki, then wheels into a devastating roundhouse kick that knocks the opponent Back and counts as two steps toward Staggering the opponent. It defeats Strikes.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Snake Style, Taekwondo and Zui Quan practitioners.

Devil Fang Kanzetsuwaza

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Devil Fang Kanzetsuwaza; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

Grasping an opponent's limb, the Akuma injects slivers of poisonous ki, causing the least movement of the limb to become agonizingly painful. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent loses one die from his next two Clashes. This defeats Defensive techniques.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Wrestling practitioners.

Devil-Bitten Joints (••, 3xp): When Devil Fang Kanzetsuwaza defeats a Defensive technique, the opponent loses two dice from his next two Clashes.

Earth-Breaking Throw

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Earth-Breaking Throw; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Akuma grasps his opponent and shoulder-tosses him into the ground with sufficient force to shatter the earth, leaving them at the bottom of a crater whose cracks produce an inauspicious mandala. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent may not use an Aerial technique in the next round. This defeats Defensive techniques, and grants the martial artist one additional Overdrive point.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Kyokushin Karate and Wrestling practitioners.

Hell-Sealed Chakras (•••••, 4xp): In the next round, the opponent must also spend one Willpower to spend any ki.

Laughing Devil Rebuke

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Laughing Devil Rebuke; **Damage:** None/Special

Crossing his arms, the Akuma's visage is shrouded by a half-illusory demon mask of fearsome aspect, and his form wreathed momentarily by phantasmal armor. Successfully executed, Laughing Devil Rebuke restores one health and ki point, and causes the attacker to lose two dice from his next Clash roll. It automatically defeats Projectiles, sending them hurtling back at the one who threw them, inflicting the Projectile's listed damage against its creator. It is immune to Reversal.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Muay Thai and Zui Quan practitioners.

Infernal Counterattack (••, 3xp): Reflected Projectiles gain a slight ebon corona, and add one to their damage.

Ki-Feasting Method (••, 3xp): The martial artist may, at the player's discretion, absorb a projectile rather than reflecting it, adding 4 dice to his next Clash roll.

Riding the Whirlwind

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Riding the Whirlwind; **Damage:** None

Maddening voices whisper martial advice in the Akuma's ears, betraying a few precious moments of the future. His opponent's fighting intent becomes plain to the Akuma, allowing him to bend around the opponent's attack while stealing some measure of its energy. Successfully executed, Riding the Whirlwind restores one health or ki point, and grants three extra dice on the Akuma's next Clash. It automatically defeats Rushes.

This technique may be purchased at reduced cost by Snake Style and Wing Chun practitioners.

Storm-Driven Debris Refinement (•••, 3xp): Riding the Whirlwind adds another die to Clash rolls, or another two dice to Clashes against Strikes.

By Whispers Nourished (••, 3xp): Successfully executing this technique grants one Overdrive point.

Overdrive Technique: Raging Gale

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + 5 + Raging Gale; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

Unleashing the raw and terrible forces of Yomi Wan into the mortal world, the Akuma strikes his fists into the ground, tearing open a portal at his feet. Terrible skinning winds and storms of black and scarlet ki erupt in a torrent, savaging all opponents near the Akuma. This attack defeats Rushes and Aerial techniques.

Overdrive Technique: Devil Riot

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + 4 + Devil Riot; **Damage:** None

The Akuma momentarily awakens the full demonic taint in his blood, drowning reason in a tide of Hellish wrath. His eyes glow scarlet, his fingers harden into devil-claws, and his eyeteeth visibly sharpen, while his strength and reflexes become superhuman as he descends into a berserk fury.

Unlike other Overdrive Techniques, Devil Riot does not inflict damage on the Akuma's opponent, nor deprive them of a Health Stock. The Akuma raises his Strength and Dexterity by five points for the next four rounds, at which point the Devil Riot abates. This technique defeats Grapples.

Infernal Techniques

The Hell Arts of the Yamajin are corrupt and corrosive techniques created by the Yama Kings before recorded history. Excessive practice of the Hell Arts within a region taints the ki of the world, transforming the landscape into a blighted and terrible wasteland and the spirit world into a new and nascent aspect of Yomi Wan. Through refinement and perfection of the Hell Arts, most Yamajin hope to ascend to join the ranks of the ancient Yama Kings, carving out a wicked empire for themselves, and eventually to cast down their brethren and rule over them as Demon Emperor.

Searing Claw of the Devil-Tiger

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still or Back; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Searing Claw of the Devil-Tiger; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Yamajin's hand burns with bilious emerald flames as she unleashes a vicious claw-strike to her opponent, searing both flesh and soul. This technique defeats Grapples. It is immune to Reversal.

Heart-Rending Claw (••••, 3xp): If this technique causes the opponent to lose a Health Stock, they must also check for Stagger on the next round.

Hell Echo Kiai

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + Hell Echo Kiai; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Filling his lungs with tainted ki, the Yamajin unleashes an echoing roar or piercing scream, which beats at the air and hammers the ki of living things. This attack defeats Aerial techniques.

Emerald Angel Unfurling

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Emerald Angel Unfurling; **Damage:** Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Twin wings of viridian flame sweep the Yamajin high into the air, propelling her into her opponent with bone-shaking force. This technique defeats Projectiles.

Green Sun Nimbus Flare

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + Green Sun Nimbus Flare; **Damage:** Stamina + 2 – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

The Yamajin levitates into the air, unleashing her full infernal aura as a searing emerald corona which burns any foolish enough to assault her. This attack defeats Grapples.

Kissed by Hellish Noon (•••••, 5xp): Green Sun Nimbus Flare is applied against all Close enemies.

Earth-Scourging Blast

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Earth-Scourging Blast; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Filling her palm with emerald flames, the Yamajin sweeps her hand out, sending a skittering burst of hellish power racing along the ground toward an opponent, to explode on contact. This attack defeats Rushes.

Devil Rebuke (••, 2xp): When this technique erupts, it forces the opponent Back.

Hell Driver

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Strength + 2 + Hell Driver; **Damage:** Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Yamajin's body collapses into a stream of tainted ki, trailing behind a terrible rune-marked fist, which flies into her opponent with lethal force. This attack defeats Strikes.

Sinner-Skinning Grasp

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Sinner-Skinning Grasp; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 3)

The Yamajin takes hold of an opponent, and tears deep gouges into her flesh with burning, iron-hard hands. This gruesome attack defeats Defensive techniques.

Flaying Winds (•••, 6xp): Upon releasing the opponent, the flaying winds of the Hell of Being Skinned Alive bear the target aloft, inflicting one die of additional damage and flinging them Back.

Litany of Lost Souls

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Litany of Lost Souls; **Damage:** Stamina + 2 – opponent's Strength (min 2)

The Yamajin surges forward, slamming a clawed hand over her opponent's brow. Sending a pulse of tainted ki into her opponent's crown chakra, she ignites his body in emerald flames and momentarily fills his soul with the torments of Yomi Wan. This attack defeats Rushes.

Shattered Soul Revelations (•••, 3xp): If this attack inflicts three or more points of damage, the opponent also loses a Willpower point.

Agony-Savoring Posture

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Agony-Savoring Posture; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Coiling herself into a tight defensive stance, the Yamajin tastes her opponent's suffering and unleashes it in a vicious counterstrike, igniting her foe's body with a rush of tainted ki. This attack's minimum damage becomes 2 if the character has already lost two Health Stocks, or 3 if they have already lost four. It defeats Strikes and is immune to Reversal.

The Tempest of Inward Focus

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + The Tempest of Inward Focus; **Damage:** None

Stealing the fighting spirit from an opponent's blocked attack, the Yamajin refines it in the burning cauldron of her tainted ki, focusing herself toward victory. Successfully using this technique grants one point each of health, ki, and overdrive. It defeats Rushes.

Hell Focus Cauldron (••, 4xp): The Tempest of Inward Focus grants one additional point of ki.

Overdrive Technique: Demon Emperor Shintai

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + 2 + Demon Emperor Shintai; **Damage:** None

The Yamajin's body dissolves in a blaze of emerald fire; when the inferno dies away, she wears a new form befitting her infernal majesty. Horns, claws, long fangs, lashing tails, black devil-armor, third eyes, and other such infernal

features are common, though each Yamajin's devil form is ultimately unique.

Unlike other Overdrive Techniques, Demon Emperor Shintai does not inflict damage on the Yamajin's opponent, nor deprive them of a Health Stock. Instead, it empowers the Yamajin's body, granting +3 to Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina. This form persists until the Yamajin loses a Health Stock. Demon Emperor Shintai defeats Grapples.

Dragon-Blooded Techniques

The Ryuujin recognize five lineages of descent, and employ numerous ki-binding styles, each granting control over a different primal element.

Air Dragon Style

Ryuujin of the Air Aspect use their ki to stir the very air itself into a devastating weapon. Ryuujin may not learn Lightning Binding techniques until they have at least three Air techniques at ratings of •• or more.

Air Binding: Knife-Wind Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Knife-Wind Strike; **Damage:** Dexterity + 1 – opponent's Strength (min 1)

The Ryuujin makes a series of tight, lashing kicks and knife-edge hand and elbow strikes, the attacking edges of his limbs wreathed in concentrated wedges of wind. These attacks beat Rush techniques.

Lightning Binding: Sky-Breaking Kick

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still or Back; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Sky-Breaking Kick; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin executes a blazingly fast back flip kick, carrying herself high into the air. Lightning erupts from the ground to the sky in the wake of her slashing heel, defeating Aerial techniques.

Air Binding: Air Dragon Scream

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Strength + 2 + Air Dragon Scream; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

Concentrating ki and wind between his hands, the Ryuujin hurls a cannon-shot of solidified winds with a howl like an angry dragon. In addition to inflicting damage, a successful hit blows opponents off their feet and disorients them, causing them to lose two dice from their next Clash. This attack defeats Strikes.

Air Bullet Style (•••, 4xp): Add an additional die to Clashes against other Projectiles.

Lightning Binding: Sky-Fire Strike

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + Sky-Fire Strike; **Damage:** Dexterity + 1 – opponent's Strength (min 2)

Folding her hands together, the Ryuujin channels the ki of the air and the earth through her lungs and feet and into her fingertips, releasing it as a bolt of lightning. This attack defeats Defensive techniques.

Nerve-Biting Dragon Strike (••, 4xp): On a successful hit, Sky-Fire Strike also removes one die from the target's next Clash roll.

Air Binding: Katabatic Wind-Claw

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Katabatic Wind-Claw; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Strength (min 1)

Wheeling through the air, the Ryuujin surrounds himself in slashing claws of solidified wind. This technique defeats Projectiles.

Air Dragon's Embrace (•, 3xp): The technique's hardened air-barrier adds an additional die to Clashes against other Aerial techniques.

Air Binding: Dragon Cannon Rush

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Stamina + Dragon Cannon Rush; **Damage:** Dexterity + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Wrapping himself in a blast of powerful winds, the Ryuujin hurls himself forward, delivering a devastating elbow or knee strike that folds his opponent double, before releasing his winds to batter them. This attack defeats Grapples.

Hurricane Rebuke Refinement (•••, 4xp, exclusive): This attack may hurl opponents Back if the Ryuujin wishes.

Dragon Rail Strike (•••, 4xp, exclusive): Dragon Cannon Rush adds two dice to Clashes against Strikes.

Lightning Binding: Racing Lightning Method

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 3 + Racing Lightning Method; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin flashes forward in a crackling corona of lightning, driving an electrified palm into the opponent's chest. This technique defeats Strikes and knocks the opponent Back.

Electric Heart Strike (•••, 3xp): The technique adds one to its damage.

Air Binding: Howling Gale Toss

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Howling Gale Toss;
Damage: Dexterity – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

A series of quick grabs creates ki anchor points on the opponent's body, at which point the Ryuujin steps back as he commands the wind to batter the opponent about before finally hurling them away. The opponent is too disoriented to use a Projectile in the next round without spending one Willpower to do so, and is forced Back from the Ryuujin. Howling Gale Toss defeats Defensive techniques.

Wind Step Grapple (••, 3xp): The technique's movement type becomes Mid/Advance or Still.

Air Binding: Cyclone Winds Defense

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Cyclone Winds Defense;
Damage: None

The Ryuujin whirls his limbs in a quick, elegant kata around himself, stirring the wind into a cyclone shield surrounding his body. Successfully employing this technique adds one to the Ryuujin's Dexterity and Stamina for the purpose of resisting damage until his next Health Stock breaks. Multiple activations of Cyclone Winds Defense do not stack. This technique defeats Projectiles. Cyclone Winds Defense is immune to Reversal.

Overdrive Technique: Thunder Cyclone Burst

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Thunder Cyclone Burst;
Damage: Dexterity + 4 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Rooting himself in an ancient stance, the Ryuujin unleashes his ki in a devastating tempest, surrounding himself with a roaring whirlwind crackling with lightning. This Overdrive maneuver defeats Aerial techniques and Grapples, knocks opponents Back, and if it should Hit Trade, goes to a Clash instead.

Earth Dragon Style

Ryuujin of the Earth Aspect may order the very bones of the earth itself to stir in response to their ki. Ryuujin may not learn Metal techniques until they have at least three Earth techniques at ratings of •• or more, and all Metal techniques require a substantial source of nearby metal to act upon.

Earth Binding: Whistling Stone Atemi

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Whistling Stone Atemi;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Using his ki to draw a stone from the earth to orbit his fist, the Ryuujin makes a devastating attack, automatically defeating Grapples.

Metal Binding: Steel Avalanche Strike

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Stamina + Steel Avalanche Strike;
Damage: Stamina + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Executing a rolling axe kick, the Ryuujin drags a heavy metallic object along in his leg's arc, smashing anything above or ahead of him. This attack defeats Aerial techniques.

Earth Binding: Exploding Earth Technique

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Strength + Exploding Earth Technique;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Ryuujin drives his fist or heel into the ground, causing an eruption of stone and debris beneath the feet of his opponent. This attack defeats Rushes.

Earthquake Step (••••, 6xp, exclusive): This attack also applies itself to all close opponents who attack the Ryuujin during the round.

Erupting Earth Method (••••, 5xp, exclusive): Using a more powerful strike, the technique adds two additional dice to its damage.

Earth Binding: Earthshock Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Stamina + Earthshock Strike;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Rooting his feet in the earth, the Ryuujin's ki propels him into his opponent, releasing him to deliver an elbow strike amidst an eruption of stone. The martial artist may even draw himself momentarily down into the earth during this attack, allowing it to defeat Projectiles.

Earth Ward Attitude (••, 4xp): Projectiles which should defeat the technique Clash against it instead if used at a distance.

Earth Binding: Earth Dragon Fang Koshinage

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Earth Dragon Fang Koshinage;
Damage: Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin grasps his opponent and hip tosses him. At the same moment, his foot stamps the ground, raising up a fang of stone, onto which the opponent is brutally slammed. This attack defeats Defensive techniques.

Metal Binding: Steel Arms Restraint

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength – 1 + Steel Arms Restraint;
Damage: Stamina – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin binds metal into a cage, restraining his opponent. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique forces the opponent to check for Stagger in the next round. It defeats Defensive techniques.

Earth Binding: Earth Scale Fortification

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + Earth Scale Fortification;
Damage: None

The Ryuujin pulls up the ground around himself, creating a momentary protective shell. Successfully executed, this technique restores 2 ki or health points. It automatically defeats Strikes, and is immune to Reversal.

Earth Binding: Claws of the Earth Dragon

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Claws of the Earth Dragon;
Damage: None

With a mighty kiai, the Ryuujin punches his fists and feet into the earth. If successful, when he draws them forth, they are sheathed in flexible stone, granting all of his attacks +1 damage until his next Health Stock breaks. This technique doesn't stack, or automatically defeat any technique type.

Earthen Unity Prana (•, 2xp): The Technique uses the higher of Strength or Stamina for Clash rolls.

Metal Binding: Iron Claw Technique

Cost: 1 wp; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Iron Claw Technique; **Damage:** None

With a mighty kiai, the Ryuujin punches his fists into some large source of metal, such as a fire door or engine block, and withdraws them sheathed in steel. This grants all of his attacks +2 damage until his next Health Stock breaks. This technique doesn't stack, or automatically defeat any technique type, and is incompatible with Claws of the Earth Dragon.

Overdrive Technique: As In the Beginning

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + As In the Beginning;
Damage: Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The Ryuujin smashes his fist into the earth, causing a massive explosion of stone and debris, and creating a localized earthquake. The attack is applied against *all* opponents, both near and distant, in the current battle. It defeats Rushes.

Fire Dragon Style

Ryuujin of the Fire Aspect harness their ki to project spiritual flames. Ryuujin may not learn Shadow techniques until they have at least three Fire techniques at ratings of •• or more.

Fire Binding: Fire Dragon Fist

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Fire Dragon Fist;
Damage: Strength + 2 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Ryuujin lashes out with a snap punch or kick, a gout of flame erupting from the strike to scorch opponents. This attack defeats Grapples.

Fire Kata Mastery (•••••, 7xp): Fire Dragon Fist adds an additional die to all Clashes against near opponents.

Fire Binding: Inferno Kick

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Inferno Kick;
Damage: Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin unleashes a savage, wheeling kick, sending an arc of flame billowing toward his opponent. This attack defeats other Strikes.

Ring of Fire (••••, 6xp): This attack now applies against all near opponents.

Fire Binding: Breath of the Fire Dragon

Cost: 1 ki or 1wp; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + Breath of the Fire Dragon;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

Concentrating his fiery ki in his stomach, the Ryuujin expels a long streamer of flame from his mouth with a mighty roar. This attack defeats Rushes.

Shadow Binding: Smoke Follows Fire

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Smoke Follows Fire;
Damage: None

Wheeling his arms through the air, the Ryuujin unleashes a wave of flame at his opponent—which darkens into a miasma of murky shadows upon impact. This attack inflicts no damage, but subtracts four dice from the opponent's next Clash. It defeats Defensive techniques.

Clinging Shadows (••, 3xp): If the opponent uses a Projectile technique in the round after being struck with

Smoke Follows Fire, that Projectile cannot be automatically Victorious against any technique; at best, it may Clash.

Fire Binding: Lashing Dragon Tail Technique

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Lashing Dragon Tail Technique;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin hurls himself into a high curling arc, slashing his heel down at his opponent's head, trailing an arc of flame behind it. In addition to inflicting damage, a successful strike scorches and disorients the opponent, subtracting two dice from his next Clash. This attack defeats Projectiles.

Double Lash Technique (•••, 5xp): If a successful use of this move is followed up in the next round by another Lashing Dragon Tail Technique, its damage becomes Strength + 2 (min 3).

Fire Binding: Earth-Scorching Volcano Strike

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Earth-Scorching Volcano Strike;
Damage: Strength + 3 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Ryuujin explodes forward, dragging a fist low to the ground and leaving a trail of smoke and flame in its wake; upon reaching his opponent, he explodes from the ground into the air in a curling, burning uppercut which sends a wave of flame rolling forward. This attack defeats Aerial techniques. It is immune to Reversal.

Shadow Binding: Flame-Chased Image Assault

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Flame-Chased Image Assault;
Damage: Dexterity – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

Executing a complex kata, the Ryuujin sends his shadow racing at his opponent, its heart carrying a core of burning flames, to explode on impact. If used from a distance, this technique is vulnerable to Close attacks—the shadow may be struck, though it only transmits a fragment of the injury inflicted back to its owner. Used from a distance in this fashion, if Flame-Chased Image Assault is defeated by a Close Clash or Close Victorious technique, the winning technique cannot inflict more than two points of damage. This attack defeats Grapples.

Fire Binding: Dragon Nest Slam

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Dragon Nest Slam;
Damage: Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Locking his opponent up in a two-armed hold, the Ryuujin stomps the earth, creating a red-hot crater, and then slams his enemy into it. Dragon Nest Slam defeats Defensive techniques.

Swift Talons Tactic (••, 5xp): The technique's movement becomes Mid/Advance or Still.

Fire Binding: Burning Scales Defense

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Burning Scales Defense;
Damage: None

The Ryuujin presents a powerful defense, his spiritual aura burning around him like banked embers. If successful, all of his ki is restored. Burning Scales Defense doesn't automatically defeat any technique type.

Shadow Binding: Smoking Mirror

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Smoking Mirror;
Damage: Dexterity + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The opponent strikes the fighter only to discover she has hit nothing but smoke and shadow. A moment later, the Ryuujin launches a devastating counter-strike from amidst the dissipating shadows. This technique defeats Strikes.

Overdrive Technique: Flame and Shadow Dance

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Flame and Shadow Dance;
Damage: Dexterity + 5 – opponent's Stamina (min 3)

Seizing the opponent in an immobilizing hold, the Ryuujin's ki pulses out into all nearby shadows, animating them into likenesses of himself. Each of these dozen shadow assassins charges the helpless opponent, striking them and exploding into a torrent of flame, until the opponent is utterly defeated. This attack defeats Rushes and Defensive techniques.

Water Dragon Style

Ryuujin of the Water Aspect ink mystical tattoos containing water from the purest of sacred springs into their arms, releasing the tattoos as bands of free-flowing water when they fight. Nearby water sources may provide even greater opportunities. For a water source to be useful to this style, it must be within 50 feet, at least as large as a full bathtub, or as pervasive as a rainy day. Ryuujin may not learn Ice techniques until they have at least three Water techniques at ratings of •• or more. Ice techniques do not require a source of water, condensing ice out of moisture in the air and the Ryuujin's own ki.

Water Binding: Lashing Water Dragon Tail

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Strike

Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Lashing Water Dragon Tail; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Twisting water into a liquid whip, the Ryuujin lashes out at his opponent. This attack adds two dice to its Damage if a useful water source is nearby. It defeats Rushes.

Savage Dragon Braid (••, 4xp): The attack's damage becomes Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 2).

Water Binding: Water Dragon Surge

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Water Dragon Surge; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin sweeps himself into the air high atop a wave, then crests and falls down upon his enemy with a slashing knee or elbow strike. If a useful water source is nearby, the damage is raised by one. This attack defeats Projectiles.

Ice Binding: Hailstorm Slash

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Hailstorm Slash; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The fighter leaps high, slashing an arm through the air, and rains down her ki upon the opponent in the form of slashing ice daggers. This attack defeats Projectiles. It is immune to Reversal.

Water Binding: Battering Wave Kata

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Battering Wave Kata; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Strength (min 1).

The Ryuujin sweeps his palms forward, exhaling, and sends a great wave surging forward to strike down his enemy. If a useful water source is nearby, the damage is raised by two. This attack defeats Defensive techniques.

Crashing Tsunami Force (•••, 5xp): When it defeats Defensive techniques, this attack's Damage becomes Dexterity (min 1).

Water Binding: Dragon Spiral Strike

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Dragon Spiral Strike; **Damage:** Dexterity + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin hurls herself toward her opponent, surrounding herself in a lashing spiral of water which stretches back from her attacking fist or foot to wreath her body. Upon impact, this aquatic typhoon slashes across the enemy with terrible force. If a useful water source is nearby, add two dice to this attack's Clash rolls. Dragon Spiral Strike defeats Strikes.

Ice Binding: Slide Sweep

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Slide Sweep; **Damage:** Dexterity + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin throws herself into a power slide, icing the ground beneath herself as she goes, and then sweeps the opponent's legs out from under him. In addition to inflicting damage, this attack causes the opponent to lose two dice from his next Clash roll. It defeats Grapples.

Water Binding: Drowning Depths Kata

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Drowning Depths Kata; **Damage:** Dexterity – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Ryuujin circles her opponent while executing a flowing kata. Water coalesces in a rippling orb around the opponent's head and upper body, forcing itself into their lungs. In addition to doing damage, Drowning Depths Kata also inflicts a -2 penalty to the opponent's next Clash. With a useful source of water nearby, this attack gains an additional two dice to Clashes. It defeats Defensive techniques.

Ice Binding: Blood Binding Kata

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Stamina + Blood Binding Kata; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Ryuujin seizes her opponent and floods her own ki into her opponent's chakras, freezing the flow of blood and ki through his body. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique forces the opponent to check for Stagger in the next round. It defeats Strikes.

Ice Binding: Shining Ice Guardian

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Shining Ice Guardian; **Damage:** None

The Ryuujin sweeps up a curtain of water before herself and freezes it into a jagged shield, protecting her from attacks. Successfully executed, this technique restores two health and one ki. Shining Ice Guardian defeats Aerial techniques.

Overdrive Technique: Sea-Tossed Storm Method

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 4 + Sea-Tossed Storm Method; **Damage:** Dexterity - opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Whirling his arms in an intricate, furious kata, the Ryuujin stirs water into a howling storm of lashing whips and ice particulates around himself. This attack strikes all near opponents. It automatically defeats Rushes and Aerial techniques.

Wood Dragon Style

Ryuujin of the Wood Aspect represent a living synthesis of the other elements, and may learn and use any Air, Earth, Fire, or Water Binding techniques. The advanced techniques of Lightning, Metal, Shadow, and Ice are beyond their capabilities, however, as are the Overdrive Techniques of their brethren.

Overdrive Technique: Wrath of the Living Elements

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Stamina + 2 + Wrath of the Living Elements; **Damage:** Strength + 5 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Ryuujin's ki erupts with the elements of Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. She stomps the ground, causing 'roots' of water to ensnare her opponent, then issues a double palm-heel strike which fans blossoms of burning embers across the foe. A sudden kata ensnares the enemy in a cyclonic trunk of wind, whirling the flames and water into a liquid inferno, which is finally disrupted—explosively—by a powerful strike by a fist wrapped in stony thorns. In addition to inflicting severe damage, this last strike knocks the opponent Back. This technique defeats Strikes and Grapples.

Overdrive Technique: Five-Dragon Fusion Method

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + 2 + Wrath of the Living Elements; **Damage:** None

Air, Earth, Fire, and Water surge through the martial artist's key meridians, suffusing her chakras. Her crown shines a clear, brilliant blue, while her feet glow with pure white ki. Her stomach gleams a deep black, while her fists shine blazing red. Her heart chakra, at the nexus of these energies, pulses with the emerald ki of life, at the point where the other elements combine. Until she next loses a Health Stock, the Ryuujin may draw on an unlimited wellspring of ki, and may execute all techniques at no cost. Unlike other Overdrive Techniques, successfully executing this technique does not deplete one of the opponent's Health Stocks. It defeats Projectiles, which dissipate upon contact with the perfect storm of ki that is the martial artist's body.

Sidereal Techniques

The Tennin possess ancient and otherworldly combat arts, designed by the shinma to rend spirits. Each Demon Saint's instruction in these Devil Judgment techniques begins shortly after his compact with the shinma, progressing through a series of eerie dreams and waking omens.

The Celestial Ladder

Devil Judgment Style is highly formalized; the majority of its techniques progress through the winding path of the Celestial Ladder, being divided into Terrestrial, Celestial, and Sidereal techniques.

Terrestrial Techniques open the way, controlling and maneuvering opponents, and may be used at any time.

Celestial Techniques capitalize upon the foundations built by Terrestrial Techniques, preparing the ki of the opponent for defeat. They may only be used in the round following the successful use of a Terrestrial Technique.

Finally, Sidereal Techniques are martial maneuvers which ignite the ki conditions created by Celestial Techniques to devastating effect. They may only be used in the round following the successful use of a Celestial Technique.

Terrestrial Technique: Bridge of the Waking Dream

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Bridge of the Waking Dream; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Tennin takes a circular, weaving step toward her opponent, then applies a palm heel strike to the forehead. Strange, otherworldly visions briefly pulse before the opponent's eyes, clouding his ability to perceive his own ki. In addition to inflicting damage, Bridge of the Waking Dream prevents the target from spending ki during the next round. It defeats Rushes.

Celestial Technique: Bridge of the Jade Harmony

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Stamina + 2 + Bridge of the Jade Harmony; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Driving two fingers into her opponent's crown chakra, the Tennin becomes the perfect receptacle for spiritual energies; the target's ki, obligingly, flows into her body. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique causes the Tennin to drain two ki points from her opponent into herself. Bridge of the Jade Harmony defeats Rushes.

Sidereal Technique: Bridge of the Scarlet Phoenix

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + 4 + Bridge of the Scarlet Phoenix; **Damage:** Dexterity + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The Tennin unfolds her arms, raising them to the heavens, trailing wings of unfurling celestial flame from her fingertips. These flames burn away all spiritual illusion, frighten the unquiet dead, and inflict righteous agony on the wicked. This attack defeats Aerial techniques. It is immune to Reversal.

Terrestrial Technique: Bridge of the Mirror

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Bridge of the Mirror; **Damage:** Dexterity + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Leaping into the air, the Tennin moves through the spaces-between-spaces, strange dimensions understood only by the shinma. Her body seems to shatter as would light passing through a prism, appearing momentarily to strike at the opponent from seven directions almost at once. This attack defeats other Aerial techniques.

Prayer Binding

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Prayer Binding; **Damage:** Stamina – opponent's Dexterity (min 2)

Raising a hand and channeling the power of the shinma, the Tennin causes an ethereal prayer strip to flutter into existence between her fingers, then hurls it toward her opponent. In addition to inflicting damage, the prayer strip causes the opponent's next technique to become Still. This attack defeats Defensive techniques.

Threefold Prayer Binding (•, 3xp): If used after a Terrestrial Technique, Prayer Binding also removes two dice from the target's next Clash roll.

Eightfold Prayer Binding (•••, Threefold Prayer Binding, 3xp): If used after a Celestial Technique, Prayer Binding incorporates the benefits of Threefold Prayer Binding and also inflicts an additional two dice of damage.

Thousandfold Prayer Binding (•••••, Eightfold Prayer Binding, 3xp): If used after a Sidereal Technique, Prayer Binding incorporates the benefits of Threefold and Eightfold Prayer Binding, and also forces the opponent to check for Stagger in the next turn.

Sidereal Technique: Bridge of the Dragon Emperor

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Stamina + 3 + Bridge of the Dragon Emperor; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Strength (min 3)

Summoning up the infinite power of the Celestial River which winds between Heaven, Earth, and the starry vault, the Tennin borrows the aspect of its rulers, the dragon kings. She hurls a great rolling wave of prismatic energy which freezes her opponent's chakras—in addition to suffering damage, the opponent's next technique which should restore health or ki fails to do so. This attack defeats Rushes. It is immune to Reversal.

Celestial Technique: Bridge of the Black Serpent

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Bridge of the Black Serpent; **Damage:** Stamina + 2 – opponent's Strength (min 2)

The Tennin blurs forward, wrapped in the darkness of the night sky, to discharge this cold darkness through a strike to the opponent's solar plexus. In addition to inflicting damage, this attack poisons the target's ki, inflicting one additional die of damage each subsequent round until the opponent loses a Health Stock or damages the Tennin. This attack defeats Grapples.

Sidereal Technique: Bridge of the Devil Fighter

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 5 + Bridge of the Devil Fighter; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Trusting to destiny and the shinma to guide her fist, the Tennin lands a perfect blow. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent automatically suffers Stagger in the next round without a check. This attack defeats Defensive techniques. It is immune to Reversal.

Celestial Technique: Bridge of the Celestial Gods

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + 3 + Bridge of the Celestial Gods; **Damage:** Stamina – opponent's Strength (min 2)

Grasping the opponent's head and forcing him to bow, the Tennin brands a celestial mark of judgment upon his enemy's back, stripping away his earthly might, so that he has only his martial learning to rely upon. In addition to inflicting damage, Bridge of the Celestial Gods causes the opponent's next Clash to omit all Attributes from its dice pool calculation. It defeats Strikes.

Terrestrial Technique: Bridge of the Resilient Cat

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Bridge of the Resilient Cat; **Damage:** Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Moving with a sophisticated and unnatural grace, the Tennin weaves around an opponent's attack, retaliating with a knife-edge strike which impedes the flow of ki through the attacker's chakras. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent cannot use the defeated technique during the next round. The Demon Saint's counterstrike need not actually touch the opponent's flesh; it is the offending

technique that the Tennin targets, and thus the Bridge of the Resilient Cat defeats Projectiles.

Overdrive Technique: Devil Judgment Art

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 3 + Devil Judgment Art;
Damage: Dexterity + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Launching a flurry of pressure point strikes, the Tennin impedes and detonates her opponent's ki, causing brilliant multihued eruptions of energy to devastate his body. Used in the round after successfully deploying a Sidereal Technique, this attack's minimum damage becomes (Dexterity + 3). It defeats Grapples.

Lunar Techniques

The fighting arts of the Okami harness their immortal ki and their bestial half-spirit bodies to devastating effect. Okami share a body of common techniques dating back to the very beginning of the martial arts, and these are often the only fighting arts they need to learn.

Claw Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still or Back; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Claw Strike; **Damage:** Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Okami lashes out with her savage claws, lacerating the opponent with a powerful strike. This technique defeats Rushes.

Bloody Fervor (••, 3xp): Each time the Okami successfully lands a Claw Strike, she adds one die to her next Clash. This bonus stacks with itself, but resets once she actually rolls a Clash.

Reaping Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Reaping Strike;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Using her powerful legs to propel herself into the air, the Okami lashes out with a circular claw strike, savaging any foolish enough to attack her. This attack defeats Aerial techniques.

Reaping Kick (•••, 4xp): The Okami follows up her circular claw strike with a spin-kick, adding one to the technique's damage and knocking the opponent Back.

Beast Cannon

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Beast Cannon;
Damage: Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Tensing all of her muscles, the Okami hurls herself into the air, curled into a tight ball. This compact mass strikes the opponent with devastating force, automatically defeating Projectiles.

Okami Spirit Shape

Incarnated Okami are capable of suppressing their bestial spirit-features, becoming indistinguishable from the mortals around them. However, when doing so, their Lunar Techniques become unavailable—to gain access to these potent techniques, they must resume their spirit shape. Conversely, the powerful instincts and feral body of an Okami in his true form cannot make use of regimented Martial Arts Style Techniques—only Basic Techniques and Lunar Techniques are available.

An Okami may assume his true form in the middle of a battle reflexively—the fighter's spirit features erupt through his mortal seeming in a flood of argent ki. Suppressing spirit features during combat is much more difficult, requiring a round spent concentrating on forcing the features into suppression, and a successful Strength + Stamina roll (difficulty 3). The Okami is vulnerable during this transformation; any technique directed at him automatically succeeds if its Range is valid.

An Okami in his true form adds one dot to an Attribute of the player's choice, selected during character generation.

Beast Kick (•••, 4xp, exclusive): The Okami uncoils into a double-legged kick at the last moment, inflicting an extra die of damage.

Stunning Roll (•••, 4xp, exclusive): The full bulk of the Okami landing on her opponent stuns him; in addition to suffering damage, the opponent loses one die from his next Clash roll.

Air Dance

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Air Dance;
Damage: Strength – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Okami erupts high into the air in a flash of argent ki, slamming down on top of her opponent with claws. The opponent loses two dice from his next Clash roll from the bone-jarring impact. Air Dance automatically defeats Projectiles.

Moonlight Claws

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 3 + Moonlight Claws;
Damage: Dexterity – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

Focusing her fighting spirit into her claws, the Okami slashes the air, sending crescent boomerangs of ki slashing wildly toward an opponent. This attack defeats Rushes. It is immune to Reversal.

Moonlight Slaughter (•••••, 6xp): If Moonlight Claws strikes an opponent attempting to use an Advance or Back technique, it inflicts (Dexterity x 2) – opponent's Stamina (min 1) damage.

Beast Rush

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Strength + Beast Rush; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Okami throws himself into a forward roll, uncoiling into a powerful kick at the last moment. This attack defeats Strikes.

Beast Pounce (•, 3xp): The Okami follows up Beast Rush by striking his downed opponent, adding one to the attack's damage.

Beast Sweep

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 2 + Beast Sweep;
Damage: Strength – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Okami throws herself into a low, vicious slide, kicking her opponent's knees to take his legs out from under him. In addition to suffering damage, the opponent's next technique automatically becomes Still. This attack defeats Grapples.

Savage Monkey Method

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Savage Monkey Method; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The Okami grasps and savages her opponent, biting and clawing. This defeats Defensive techniques.

Resilience of the Bear

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + Resilience of the Bear; **Damage:** None

The Okami concentrates his ki into his half-spirit flesh, fortifying himself and recovering from injury. Used successfully, this technique restores 4 health points. It does not automatically defeat any technique types.

Ox-Body Technique (•••, 4xp): When the Okami successfully uses this technique, she also adds one to her Strength and Stamina for the purpose of resisting the next attack that strikes her. This benefit does not stack, and if she is next struck by an attack resisted by Dexterity, the bonus is wasted.

Cunning Serpent Counterstrike

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Cunning Serpent Counterstrike; **Damage:** Dexterity + [Special] – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

Swaying with animalistic grace, the martial artist coils around an incoming attack, responding with a devastating strike of her own. This attack has a damage bonus equal to the number of successes the opponent gained on her Clash roll. It does not automatically defeat any type of technique.

Overdrive Technique: Full Moon Frenzy

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Strength + 4 + Full Moon Frenzy; **Damage:** Strength + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 2)

The Okami erupts toward his opponent, argent ki blazing and howling in whirling claw-strike patterns around his attacking limbs as he launches a deadly combo of slashes, kicks, and strikes. Full Moon Frenzy defeats Rushes and Grapples.

Overdrive Technique: Moon Crescent Slash

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 3 + Moon Crescent Slash; **Damage:** Dexterity + 1 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

The Okami floods her killing intent into her claws, causing them to burn with an unearthly aurora of ki, then slashes wildly at the air. A great wheeling crescent of deadly ki whirls out at the opponent, then returns to the Okami. If this technique is successful, it inflicts its damage again on the following turn. It defeats other Projectiles and Defensive techniques.

Abyssal Techniques

The killing saints and immortal slayers of the Shinigami blend mortal martial arts with killing techniques stretching back to prehistory. Shinigami use these techniques to avenge affronts against the balance of the Earth, slaying unruly spirits and martial artists alike.

Banishing Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Strength + Banishing Strike; **Damage:** Stamina + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Shinigami lays in a tight, powerful palm heel thrust against his opponent's chest. Ebon ki whirls and howls as it carries the opponent back through the air, slamming them to the ground and knocking them Back. This attack defeats Grapples.

Binding Strike (•••, 4xp): The opponent may not use an Advance Technique in the round after being struck with Banishing Strike.

Crashing Shadow Strike

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Strike
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Crashing Shadow Strike; **Damage:** Strength + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Shinigami slaps his palms against the ground, then raises them quickly into the air. In response to the call of his silent ki, the uttermost darkness of the earth rises up in a silent flood, chilling the muscles and bones of the opponent caught within the black pillar. In addition to inflicting damage, the opponent loses three dice from his next Clash roll. This attack defeats Aerial techniques.

Shadow Blinding Method (••, 3xp): When Crashing Shadow Strike defeats an Aerial Technique, the opponent loses one ki point.

Shadow Step: Death From Above

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Aerial
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Shadow Step: Death From Above; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Disappearing in a sudden rush of shadows, the Shinigami drops down from above her opponent with a powerful knife-edge strike to the collarbone, sending down a surge of ki that binds the target to the earth. In addition to inflicting damage, the opponent's next technique is automatically Still. This attack defeats Projectiles.

Mu Ken

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Mu Ken; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Shinigami expels all breath from his lungs, pauses, and then strikes the air with a single fist. The killing intent of this strike surges invisibly through the air to savage the ki of his opponent; individuals slain by this technique often seem to have died of heart failure or some other catastrophic breakdown within their body. Mu Ken defeats Defensive techniques. It is immune to Reversal.

Guttering Flame (•••••, 5xp): In addition to inflicting damage, Mu Ken causes the opponent to lose one ki point.

Abyssal Reaper Strike

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Strength + Abyssal Reaper Strike; **Damage:** Dexterity + 2 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

Rushing forward in a surge of shadows, the Shinigami throws a curving elbow strike at the opponent, trailing a blade of entropic ki behind the strike. This attack defeats Strikes, and when it does so, counts as two steps toward Staggering the opponent.

Grand Emperor Guillotine Kick

Cost: —; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Grand Emperor Guillotine Kick; **Damage:** Strength + 1 – opponent's Strength (min 1)

The Shinigami flips toward the opponent with an overhead kick, his heel trailing screaming shadows. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique removes one die from the opponent's next Clash roll. It defeats other Rushes.

Absolute Execution (•••, 4xp): If a successful Grand Emperor Guillotine Kick is followed up by the same technique again, its Damage becomes (Strength x 2) – opponent's Strength (min 3).

Breath-Stilling Touch

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Advance; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Breath-Stilling Touch; **Damage:** Stamina + 2 – opponent's Strength (min 1)

The Shinigami lays a palm against his opponent's forehead, spiking a pulse of ki into them that chills their fighting spirit. Each point of damage this attack inflicts also causes the opponent to lose one Overdrive point, to a minimum of 0 points. It defeats Defensive techniques.

Breath-Drinking Technique

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Close/Still; **Type:** Grapple
Clash Roll: Strength + Breath-Drinking Technique; **Damage:** Stamina – opponent's Strength (min 3)

The Shinigami grasps his opponent in an iron embrace, then draws out her breath and life-force into his own lungs. Each point of damage inflicted by this attack restores one point of health to the Shinigami. This is the technique by which Shinigami most often prefer to destroy spirits. It defeats Defensive techniques.

Bottomless Abyss Defense

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still or Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Stamina + 1 + Bottomless Abyss Defense; **Damage:** None

The Shinigami crosses his arms in an impervious guard, radiating the inevitability of his success and the futility of battle against him. Should an attack directed against this technique fail to harm the Shinigami, the Shinigami regains one point of health, and the opponent loses one Willpower point. Bottomless Abyss Defense does not automatically defeat any technique type.

Shadow Step: Spirit Raven Retreat

Cost: —; **Range:** Close/Back; **Type:** Defensive
Clash Roll: Dexterity + Shadow Step: Spirit Raven Retreat; **Damage:** None

Disappearing in a rush of fluttering shadows, the Shinigami fades back away from his opponent, reappearing at a distance and stealing some measure of the opponent's ki in the process. Used successfully, this technique causes the opponent to lose one ki, and the Shinigami to gain two points of ki. It defeats Strikes.

Overdrive Technique: Absolute Judgment

Cost: 1 ki; **Range:** Mid/Still; **Type:** Projectile
Clash Roll: Strength + 1 + Absolute Judgment; **Damage:** Stamina + 3 – opponent's Dexterity (min 1)

Raising his hand, the Shinigami calls upon the vengeance of the Earth, striking down his foe with a final, deadly judgment. Black lances of ki erupt from the shadows to pierce the foe, utterly chilling his soul. In addition to inflicting damage, this technique causes the opponent to lose all Overdrive points. It defeats Strikes and Defensive techniques.

Overdrive Technique: Heart-Drinking Palm

Cost: 2 ki; **Range:** Mid/Advance; **Type:** Rush
Clash Roll: Dexterity + 1 + Heart-Drinking Palm; **Damage:** Strength + 5 – opponent's Stamina (min 1)

The Shinigami blurs forward, hand wreathed in a corona of screaming shadows, to latch this deadly black claw over his opponent's heart. In addition to inflicting damage, Heart-Drinking Palm drains one ki and from the opponent and grants it to the Shinigami. It defeats Strikes and Rushes.

EXALTED
SECOND EDITION

Burn Legend

Name: _____

Player: _____ Style: _____

Concept: _____ Exaltation: _____

Attributes

Strength ____ OOOOOOOOOO Dexterity ____ OOOOOOOOOO Stamina ____ OOOOOOOOOO

Techniques

Technique		Cost	Range	Type	Clash	Damage
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Overdrive

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Health Points

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Ki

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Willpower

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Experience

THE MODERN AGE

On the thirty-third floor of a Nechara office building, the corpse-faced woman leans out a window and pulls the trigger of her sniper rifle of soulsteel and bone, putting a single bullet through a president's skull.

High over the Southern desert, a Tengese ace pilots a jet with an open cockpit. Dodging fire from a Varangian fighter squadron, he grips the control stick with one hand and hurls lightning with the other.

West of the Neck, a swimmer catches hold of the conning tower of the submarine she's been pursuing. Taking on a monstrous bestial form, she rips open a hatch against fifty atmospheres of pressure.

At an observatory in the Juche hills, a man sits before a bank of computers studying radio telescope data of distant stars, from which he derives a prophecy foretelling the collapse of a mighty corporation.

In Plenilune, a retired cop with nothing to live for challenges an untouchable drug baron so he can go out in a blaze of glory. Instead he blazes with golden light as he Exalts, his service revolver shining like the sun.

Welcome to the Second Age of Creation. Welcome to the Modern Age.

This Modern World

This shard shows us Creation as it might have been—a world which, despite being a flat expanse girded by Chaos, nonetheless resembles our own. It's a world of skyscrapers and superhighways, of suburbs and strip malls, of sweatshops and smartphones, and all the other trappings of modern Earth.

But while this Creation is ruled by technology, it's not without magic. At the world's edge, aircraft and infantry hurl bombs and bullets against supernatural insurgents. The Exalted walk among mortals, too—shapeshifting Lunars stalk terrorist spirits amid Creation's cities, while cadets volunteer for arduous genetic experiments to join the elemental

Dragon-Blooded. And then there's the Abyssal Exalted, rising from the mysterious new shadowlands to wreak mayhem and murder.

And now, in a world wracked by war and poverty, by blind ideology and ecological decay, a new cadre of Exalted have appeared from nowhere, burning bright as the sun. Can these "Solar Exalted" sweep away the darkness of this modern age?

What About the Others?

The other Exalted types—Sidereals, Alchemicals and Infernals—are unknown to the world at large. For more information on them and other setting mysteries, see "Behind the Scenes," pp. 119-129.

The Big Picture

Creation has entered the digital age. The world's great powers—Meruvia, the Union of Eastern States (UES), An-Teng, and other developed nations—are largely republican and capitalist. Their information-driven, automation-heavy economies churn out industrial goods and mass media which flow out through trade networks across the world. Even their numerous poor enjoy a higher standard of living than their counterparts in economically undeveloped states beyond the Threshold. There, citizens face corrupt or failed governments, vigilantism, famine, plague and war.

It's a sign of progress that most wars are between mortal forces. Supernatural beings from the Elemental Poles and the Wyld have preyed on humanity for thousands of years. Only in the past millennium—with the appearance of the Lunar Exalted, the development of firearms, aircraft, rockets and other sophisticated armaments, and the advent of the Dragon-Blooded—has humanity driven these spirits from Creation's civilized center to the world's edge. This is a war that most in the developed world never see, though those interested in current events follow it through blogs, radio programs and articles buried at the back of the newspaper.

The Threshold's relative peace is purchased with constant diplomacy and incalculable risk. The effects of nuclear war between the three great powers are too terrible to contemplate. To diffuse the prospects of a direct clash, the powers restrain their struggle to political maneuvers: economic warfare, espionage, and proxy wars between client states out beyond the Threshold.

Historically, Calin, Cherak and Fellara controlled mighty colonial empires. Then capitalist Meruvia and the totalitarian Guild Coalition—precursor to the modern UES—divided the world between their spheres of influence, conducting proxy wars in the Threshold to postpone a world-shattering conflict. Power continues to move south; the Tengese juggernaut has advanced into the digital age, while populous southern states such as Delzahn, Varangia and Nyunda expand and modernize with surprising haste.

The International League claims most nations as members and coordinates military actions against spirit-led forces. Other intergovernmental organizations and alliances include the League of Many Rivers, the Linowan Union and the Western Trade Alliance. Some facilitate collective defense; others support economic and social progress, provide humanitarian aid or offer forums for political and legal negotiation. The more economically and militarily powerful members of such unions dominate their lesser partners.

It's Not Paranoia If They Really Are Out to Get You

As in the real world, conspiracy theorists view various religious, ethnic or political groups as cabals which infiltrate societies and governments and pervert them to further their own agendas. Individual events are likewise attributed to sinister forces.

For instance, some attribute recent deaths in the Meruvian royal family to an attempt to bring a distant Calinese cousin to the throne—one who theorists claim is descended directly from Saint Cecilia herself, the bloodline maintained by a mysterious cult.

Others claim the UES and An-Teng acquired Dragon-Blooded technology neither through straightforward research nor espionage, but through a secret society of shapeshifting, cold-blooded alien "saurians" who manipulate society behind the scenes. The Dragon-Blooded, say these theorists, are the next stage of saurian development and are being groomed to take control of Creation's governments overtly.

Most theories are not quite so extreme. Nonetheless, grand conspiracies influencing world governments from behind the scenes are prevalent in popular culture. Whether those responsible are humans, Lunars, spirits or otherwise depends on who you ask.

Science and Technology

Modern scientific principles largely hold true in Creation, except when overridden by the supernatural. This permits manufacturing infrastructure for familiar modern goods. Homes and businesses in developed societies have running water, central heating, cable TV, and electricity extracted from fossil fuels, uranium and alternative energy sources. Airplanes, railroads and automobiles facilitate long-distance travel, while well-heeled travelers carry cellular phones, digital cameras and tablet computers. Weaponry ranges from firearms to long-range ballistic missiles.

The cutting edge of Creation's technology hovers just a bit beyond our own. The most elite military forces have limited access to railguns, autonomous weapons systems, powered armor, adaptive camouflage and directed-energy weapons. Multinational conglomerates and research institutes struggle toward affordable implementations of human cloning, genetic engineering, bionic implants, wireless power, nanomachines, artificial intelligence and more.

Magic

Simple thaumaturgies—feng shui, homeopathy, Reiki, ouija boards, astrology, palmistry, Tarot cards, the I Ching, etc.—are common. While genuinely effective when practiced by a skilled thaumaturge, most in developed nations regard these techniques with disdain. Many ostensible practitioners are charlatans, and modern science yields more accessible and consistent results. Why consult a weather-witch about tomorrow's forecast when you can watch a meteorologist's report on television?

A handful of philosophic societies practice more sophisticated thaumaturgical procedures—alchemy, enchantment, the summoning of demons—but prospective students are hard put to distinguish genuine societies from fraudulent organizations or cults. A few reputable universities offer thaumaturgy programs, but many procedures are illegal or highly regulated, and the field as a whole is less profitable than, say, accounting or engineering.

Where occult practices leave off, science and technology take up the slack. The newly-established field of motics—the study of Essence, a force more primal than gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces—has potentially vast applications. Reactors tapping Creation's dragon lines provide power to several developed nations, while infusing elemental Essence into human tissue underlies the treatments empowering the Dragon-Blooded.

Places of Power

The intersections of Essence flows—known for weird dreams, poltergeist activity and the like—serve as sites for Essence reactors. Psychic effluent from these reactors occasionally leaks into the Essence flows. This taint accumulates at other intersections, producing weirder and more dangerous phenomena: glowing trees, oily waters, hypnotic lights, singing winds, ectoplasmic monsters, nightmares and psychosis.

Magitech

In a world where magic and science exist side by side, combining the two is inevitable. While this is far easier for those who can natively manipulate Essence, even mortals—if they're sufficiently knowledgeable—can devise technologies with supernatural effects: algorithms to generate new thaumaturgical rituals, robots designed to host possessing spirits, containment units that imprison ghosts or store Wyld energies, and much more.

At the Poles themselves, powerful elemental Essence wreaks havoc with technology. Combustion flares uncontrollably near the Pole of Fire but fails outright as one approaches the Pole of Water. Electrical devices go haywire near the Pole of Air; vegetation attacks mechanisms at the Pole of Wood. And in proximity to the Pole of Earth, all overt energies—electricity, combustion, even nuclear reactions—are damped down.

The Wyld writhes endlessly beyond the Elemental Poles. Its extent is unmapped and unknowable, as technology functions erratically even in the Bordermarches. Governments restrict travel here because of raksha, Wyld mutants and the like. Strike forces from developed nations respond to major incursions but cannot meaningfully secure a border tens of thousands of miles long.

Lastly, shadowlands are the return of an old phenomenon not seen in Creation for centuries. They're most prevalent in the Northeast, a region wracked by bloody wars and murderous ethnic cleansing, but they crop up elsewhere as well—on battlegrounds, in hospitals and slums, on the sites of mass murders and in lethal injection chambers.

Spirits

Historians and theologians say the world was once rife with spirits. Guardian angels watched over cities and peoples; thunderbirds ruled the skies while dragons guarded the oceanic deeps. But most of these entities turned against humanity. Aided by the Exalted, Creation's armed forces drove these malicious beings to the edges of the world.

Some spirits linger. The least of them—guardian angels of ordinary things, from cars and phones to raindrops and grains of sand—exist everywhere. But like subatomic particles, these invisible, immanent entities never manifest to mortal eyes, being perceptible only through sophisticated Essence-perceiving instruments.

A few greater powers also remain: angels of cities and corporations, divine mandarins of ideas and principles, elemental overseers of groves and ore-veins. These too are rarely seen, for they find it salubrious to keep their heads down in public.

Spirits are assumed hostile unless proven otherwise, so even those maintaining a place in society prefer to avoid notice lest they meet with violence.

Spirits in the developed world must register with national governments. This requires patronage. Some attach themselves to religious institutions, driving up attendance with appearances as angels in Immaculate churches or as possessors in Guivré ceremonies. Others affiliate themselves with corporations, using magic to benefit the business. A few assume government roles, where they find themselves hunting down their unregistered peers.

RELIGION

Religion is typically devoted to transcendent deities or forces. The immanent gods of Creation are considered to be malicious tricksters distracting people from the truly divine, with most actively seeking to destroy modern society through military or terrorist means.

GOD-BLOODED

Divine heritage is rare among mortals. But it happens nonetheless, especially when a spirit hiding out in human society decides that marriage—or casual sex, for that matter—would strengthen their disguise. The resulting god-blooded offspring often don't discover their powers until after the divine parent moves on, leaving them clueless about their heritage. Like spirits, they must register or face legal penalties.

THE EXALTED

• **Lunars**: These shape-shifters have lived secretly amidst mortal society for close to a millennium. Their faces are changeable, their movements untrackable. Nonetheless, they're the stuff of urban legend and tabloid cover stories, and photographs, nicknames and speculation are bandied on the Internet after every Lunar sighting. Historical records and modern reporting alike show them mingling with mortal elites, hunting monsters in the Threshold and slaughtering evil spirits in wars at Creation's edge. But they answer to no government—unless rumor is to be believed—and actions ranging from sabotage to seduction, abduction to murder, inspire speculation attributing them to one Lunar or another.

• **Dragon-Blooded**Unlike the Lunars, the Dragon-Blooded came into being during living memory through the diligent efforts of Meruvian scientists. Their research was soon replicated by—or leaked to—counterparts in the UES and An-Teng. These elementally empowered super-soldiers have forced the hordes of spirits at the edge of the world into smaller and smaller enclaves. Unlike the shadowy Lunars, Dragon-Blooded are celebrities, lauded by their fellow citizens for their heroism.

• **Abyssals**: Five years ago, a great temblor rolled across Creation. Amid the blackouts and earthquakes, shadowlands opened for the first time in centuries amid the wreckage of broken cities. New shadowlands continue to appear in places afflicted by death and destruction—the sites of battles with evil spirits, the ruins of terrorist bombings, and amid the Linowan and Haltan killing fields. Deathknights emerge from these holes in reality—some backed by ghostly armies, others alone. Though their military sorties against developed nations have been thrown back, the shadowlands remain open.

• **Solars**: Who are these strange golden Exalts? Their origin is as enigmatic as that of the Lunars. Perhaps they're a new step in human evolution; maybe they're a trick sent by evil spirits. Whatever their origin or intent, they represent a new source of power that individuals and governments will seek to control. But those who attract the Solar Exaltation are strong of will—leaders by nature—and won't be so easily used.

MERUVIA, THE BLESSED REALM

The island nation of Meruvia is the center of the world in every way that counts—or so its inhabitants believe. Rich and populous, isolated from foreign threats by unbridgeable oceans, Meruvia conveys a sense of invincibility. It claims to have never lost a major war, and no invader has set foot upon its shores for centuries. Officially at peace with its neighbors across the Inland Sea, it meddles in foreign affairs and supports proxy wars against UES and Tengese client states with impunity, knowing its citizens will turn a blind eye as long as their quality of life remains unchanged.

HISTORY

For millennia the ancient avians called alaun thwarted human efforts to colonize the Blessed Isle, permitting only a handful of coastal settlements. But 600 years ago, their guardianship failed in the face of flintlock-wielding pioneers. Within three centuries, all alaun were killed or driven onto the slopes of Meru. Mortal peoples under their rule were hemmed into tribal enclaves or absorbed into Meruvian society.

Wars among parent nations spilled out into their colonies. Finding more common ground with one another than with their motherlands, the colonies rebelled, won their independence and united under one monarch. Since then, Meruvia has been at peace—aside from civil wars over Haltan chattel slavery, royal succession and parliamentary supremacy—and leveraged a large populace, fertile fields and mineral wealth to become an industrial and technological powerhouse.

Many islands south and west of the Blessed Isle were never absorbed into the Meruvian body politic. They remain sovereign states. Most are Meruvian protectorates, but a handful remain

associated with Threshold powers—most notably Tongma Island to the northwest, a protectorate of An-Teng.

CULTURE

Meruvia maintains a hegemonic grip on world culture. Its romantic comedies and buddy cop movies are viewed on movie screens and televisions across the developed world; people from An-Teng to the Haslanti Confederation listen to Meruvian classic rock and hip-hop on their radios and their digital media players. Meruvian dollars are accepted worldwide and serve as the currency in several minor states.

Meruvia's society started with the Northern and Eastern cultures that founded its early colonies—primarily Calin, Cherak and Fellara. But other immigrants added their own cultural elements, especially Haltans and Linowans brought as chattel slaves. The resulting multicultural crucible produces a range of vibrant arts—music, dance, cuisine, etc.—as well as volatile and discriminatory relations between ethnic groups.

Though Meruvia is religiously pluralistic, a majority identifies with the Immaculate Church, a monotheistic religion born of a Southern desert cult. Doctrine claims an omnipotent God shaped Creation from Chaos millennia ago, then redeemed humanity with the death and resurrection of the wisest of his seven sons—emerald-eyed Lucien, the Phoenix Angel, Prince of the House of Journeys. Many denominations focus on the Last Age: an apocalyptic war wherein all evil spirits will be destroyed and the Church's followers—living and dead—earn eternal life.

GOVERNMENT

Meruvia comprises a federal union of thirteen dominions, each with its own capital city and local government. A figurehead Empress serves as head of state for a weak constitutional monarchy. Its legislature, the Meruvian Deliberative, consists of three elected representatives from each dominion, along with several non-voting representatives—one from each of the nation's overseas protectorates, plus three Church legates. Executive power is held by a cabinet of Deliberative members from the dominant political party—currently the National Unity Party—and led by a Prime Minister. In practice, lobbying by wealthy corporations and other interest groups dominates Meruvian politics.

The throne is unoccupied since the recent deaths of the widowed Empress Charlotte I and her eldest son in one of the freak Essence storms afflicting eastern Meruvia. Charlotte II, the late Empress's eldest daughter and heiress to the throne, is only 14—too young to be crowned. Prime Minister Thibaud Fouquet serves as regent, but he's grown unstable since becoming acting head of state. While the media minimizes coverage of his paranoid ramblings, his popularity has cratered and it won't be long before he suffers a vote of no confidence.

The Office of Meruvian Intelligence (OMI), or "All-Seeing Eye," handles national security issues, both foreign and domestic—including intelligence gathering, analysis and field operations. The Dominion Oversight Bureau (DOB) covers federal criminal investigations, domestic security

and counterintelligence. The two bureaus lock horns where their jurisdictions overlap. Other overlapping directorates include Strike Force Zero (SF0), a paramilitary body that investigates and neutralizes supernatural threats. SF0 agents employ high-tech equipment normally available only to Exalts and other military elites.

MILITARY

Meruvia's all-volunteer army is the best-equipped in the world. Wealthy corporations maintain government contracts to manufacture advanced firearms, body armor, armored vehicles, stealth fighters, helicopter gunships, aircraft carriers, submarines and so forth.

Though officially at peace with its neighbors, Meruvia is always warring somewhere—defending or overthrowing oil-producing regimes in the South, sending "military advisors" to intervene in the deep Southeast's drug-producing jungle nations, or meddling in secessionist conflicts in the war-torn Northeast.

Most importantly, elite Meruvian forces contain supernatural forces at the edges of the world. Strike teams descend on the Bordermarches in iron-plated helicopters, their guns loaded with iron-jacketed bullets. Air strikes reduce spirit-ruled settlements to rubble.

Meruvia's Dragon-Blooded are as much propaganda tools as soldiers. When not on active duty, they're covered by cameras and pursued by paparazzi. Their public personas vary widely, from dilettante playboys such as Lionel Kes to political players like Catherine Cainan.

NOTEWORTHY LOCATIONS

CRANE BAY

Meruvia's eastern coast, once rich in timber and minerals, is now the most populous and industrialized part of the Blessed Isle. Several wealthy, multicultural cities dominate the area. Largest and richest is the Meruvian capital of Crane Bay.

Red-crowned cranes no longer fly over the once-verdant bay. Instead, passenger jets cast their shadows on sprawling docks crammed with cargo vessels from every seaborne nation. Shining skyscrapers loom over a tangled morass of neighborhoods grown from a dozen colonial-era towns, where bohemian artists' enclaves and blue-light districts stand cheek-by-jowl with museums and financial centers. The Imperial Palace, a many-winged marble structure flanked by gardens and fountains, stands on a height. Many of the colonial-era noble estates encircling the palace grounds have been assigned to Dragon-Blooded heroes.

TUCHARA

The warm, moist climate and excellent soil of southern Meruvia provides rich agricultural yields, including various cash crops such as cotton, sugar and tobacco. The area is known as the "Green Belt" both for its lushness and for its green-haired Haltan minority population. Largely descended from former chattel slaves, these "greenies" still face discrimination despite ameliorative legal measures.

Tuchara is among the oldest cities on the Blessed Isle, and its patrician families trace their ancestry back to the first Calinese and Tengese colonists. A major port and railway hub, Tuchara is seen by many as the heart of southern Meruvian culture. Museums dedicated to Meruvian founders—some of them claimed to have been Lunar Exalted—stand side by side with corporate-owned skyscrapers, university campuses and industrial parks.

EAGLE'S LAUNCH

Meruvia's western shores range from warm and sunny in the south to chilly and wet in the north. These regions blend numerous ethnicities, from the Northern and Eastern stock common to much of Meruvia to Tengese, Coraline and Wavecrester immigrants and the descendants of Linowan and Haltan slaves. Here, this multicultural background breeds a socially liberal atmosphere.

Eagle's Launch is the fulcrum of the Meruvian computing and entertainment industries. This makes the city a locus for corporate espionage. A pair of nearby islands are of special note. One hosts the Lilon Space Center, one of Meruvia's principal rocket launch sites. Meanwhile, the small island of Guin supports an imperial prison wherein supernatural convicts are held. A new program immerses offenders in virtual reality tanks. Theoretically for rehabilitation, their actual applications tend toward the punitive.

VERSINO

Located on the Isle of Voices by the Blessed Isle's rugged northern coast, Versino is a major center for trade and finance. It's weathered the nation's changing economy better than many other cities in Meruvia's lightly populated northern reaches, where a manufacturing downturn has transformed major urban centers into ghost towns. It's also more ethnically diverse than the rest of the region, which was settled primarily by farmers and herders of Fellaran and Cheraki stock.

Versino hosts the Heptagram, Meruvia's premier public research university for science and engineering. The campus's glittering glass and steel buildings enclose cutting-edge biotechnology and nanotechnology projects. The first Dragon-Blooded were created here, and rumor suggests new developments in the process are underway. As many projects relate to national defense, security is tighter than normal for a university campus. Military guards and biometric scanners protect important sites from unwanted scrutiny.

LORD'S CROSSING

Mining and timber harvesting drive the economy of the Blessed Isle's lightly populated interior. In the areas closest to the Pole of Earth, modern technology functions erratically; brownouts are common, while radio and television reception is poor. In addition, spirits and creatures from Meru's slopes often

afflict the area, necessitating military patrols and encouraging assault weapon ownership among residents.

The largest city in the region, Lord's Crossing is small by Meruvian standards. The city's booming economy—several major corporate headquarters are located here—stems partly from oil and valuable minerals, and partly from its central locale, which makes it an important transportation hub. The latter also attracts criminal syndicates who're shipping drugs across the country.

One nearby site of interest is the Blessed Isle Defense Aerospace Command (BIDAC), Meruvia's nuclear operations center, which lies buried beneath nearby Portee Mountain. Another is the Iselsi Royal Observatory, one of the largest and most sophisticated radio telescopes in Creation. Scientists there have begun deciphering cryptic messages in cosmic background radiation—messages that contain blueprints for an intricate, enigmatic machine. The device is currently under construction at an undisclosed location.

MOUNT MERU

At the center of the Blessed Isle, cordoned off by a ring of military bases, there rises Meru—the largest mountain in the world. It's so tall that it can be seen from every corner of the Isle, its shining snow-capped summit forever veiled by clouds. But it seems only a mountain; an especially large one, perhaps, but not unnaturally so.

Only when one climbs Meru's slopes do its true dimensions reveal themselves, its hundreds of miles of height folded in upon themselves through some strange supernatural geometry. Entire nations could be lost in its valleys; each ridge dwarfs any mere mountain range.

Few attempt the climb. The Blessed Isle's nonhuman denizens take refuge here: dispossessed alaun, greater and lesser gods, elementals of earth and sky. Many technologies fail on its slopes, forcing climbers to rely on strength and skill. But those who endure the trek to Meru's mist-shrouded summit bear witness to the shining cyclopean towers of Yu-Shan, the Heavenly City.

UNION OF EASTERN STATES

The Union of Eastern States (UES) has risen from the ashes of the Guild Coalition. It remains one of the largest nations in the world, forming a triangle stretching from Deheleshen to Chaing-Dav to Greyfalls. It's also among the most powerful, with a vast military and a sizable arsenal of nuclear weapons and Dragon-Blooded. But old animosities with other countries persist, as do memories of the former excesses of the Guild.

HISTORY

The history of the UES begins with the Guild.

Three centuries ago, the Guild—then an association of merchants and traders—began absorbing other craft guilds under the enlightened guidance of the economic philosopher Marst, who believed the working classes should wrest control of their destinies from the aristocracy by taking ownership of wealth and the means of production. What began as a reformist movement exploded into civic strife, wherein the monarchy of the industrialized nation of Hollow was supplanted by an aggressive, fractious, radicalized republic.

The Republic of Hollow lasted only a few years before Jochim, a minor noble of Cheraki ancestry, staged a coup d'état. As dictator, he proved a brilliant general and politician—first extending Hollow's empire over much of the Scavenger Lands, then building an alliance to oppose efforts by Sijan's necromancer-lords to conquer the East—and perhaps the world—with legions of black-clad soldiers and waves of walking dead. Jochim eventually crushed Sijan, razing the city and sowing its lands with salt. Hollow's forces continued to occupy their erstwhile allies, establishing military garrisons and installing puppet governments.

But Jochim's dynasty didn't last. Under his short-lived successors' autocratic rule, military and economic failures led to a bloody revolution and the resurgence of Guild rule throughout the empire.

The resulting federated state, the Guild Coalition, endured for almost two centuries before it unraveled beneath the strain of a failing centrally-planned economy, cultural conflicts and proxy wars with Meruvia. When the Guild Directorate voted to dissolve the federation, fringe states declared independence, while those with stronger economic and cultural ties to Hollow and the Guild reaffirmed their union, forming the UES.

CULTURE

Reacting to patrician excesses, the old Directorate suppressed 'decadent' expressions of wealth, art and culture. Now dull, blocky architecture and utilitarian clothing are being supplanted by vivid foreign styles and revivals of colorful old costumes and customs. Similarly, while censorship of art, correspondence and media resulted in drab government-sponsored art and heavily slanted coverage from government-run newspapers and radio stations, a vibrant underground media scene has surged into public view.

The UES is relatively irreligious. The Guild Coalition strongly discouraged religious belief, as spiritual patronage—whether the Immaculate God or the trickster-spirits which often pass for deities—was deemed as oppressive as any temporal aristocracy. While worship wasn't banned outright, the

government cracked down on clergy whose preaching didn't adhere to the party line. Now, while atheism and agnosticism predominate, older religious beliefs—largely Immaculate denominations—undergo a small revival.

GOVERNMENT

The UES comprises a cat's cradle of republics, autonomous cities, administrative districts and border territories. Envoys from UES member states meet in Marita to pass legislation and set policy for the federation as a whole. But the various UES-wide councils, parliaments and courts have little real power. It's primarily the bullying force of Hollow—the most populous and powerful state—and the threat of falling under Meruvian hegemony that keeps member nations pulling in the same direction.

With the dissolution of the Guild Directorate a generation ago, each UES member state's Guild party functions independently. While some Guild parties are in decline, others hold great power—even acting as single-party governments—and most collaborate across national boundaries, forming the strongest power bloc in the entire East.

While the UES's Trans-Union Security Committee (TUSC) has supplanted the old Guild Coalition's Wardens, the organization is thought to retain ties to intelligence agencies in ex-Coalition states outside the UES like Calin and Marukan. Corruption is widespread; many officers abuse their authority for wealth and power. Member states maintain independent intelligence ministries which guard their jurisdictions jealously against TUSC intrusion.

MILITARY

The dissolution of the Guild Coalition has reduced the UES military's manpower significantly; it is now the third largest in the world after An-Teng and Meruvia. Its reserve forces vastly outnumber both, however, as mandatory conscription trains much of the population for war.

Like the other great powers, the UES maintains both a nuclear arsenal—which is being cut back due to maintenance costs—and a Dragon-Blooded cadre. Most UES Dragon-Blooded belong to the Hollow and Deheleshen militaries, though a few can be found in the militaries of other member states.

The UES also breeds ata-beasts and san-beasts for a variety of martial and logistical purposes. Though valued for their abilities and loved by their handlers, these creatures have no more rights than mundane animals.

While the UES military's equipment is largely behind the curve technologically, recent administrations have spent heavily to modernize the military. Much of this funding has gone to the federation's feared special forces, such as TIGR—an elite black ops division fitted with cutting-edge AEGIS bionic implants that supercharge strength, speed and endurance at the cost of accelerated senescence.

NOTEWORTHY LOCATIONS

HOLLOW

Once the center of Guild power, the Federated Republic of Hollow is largely recovered from the Guild Coalition's collapse. Although millions remain impoverished in the wake of capitalist reforms, crime runs rampant in the great cities of Lodros, Nexus and Pyrron, and armed insurgencies persist in the hinterlands, Hollow's overall economy is robust and its central government largely stable.

The Guild Party dominates every circle of power—business, politics, bureaucracy—with the same people filling all three roles. Former military and security officials hold major elected and bureaucratic posts, with many branching out into organized crime (or vice versa).

Nexus—Hollow's capital—sprawls across the juncture of the Yellow and Gray Rivers like some urban industrial hell. At the city center, modernist skyscrapers mingle with neoclassical government domes and Brutalist office buildings. As one moves farther out, these give way to sprawling districts of public housing projects alongside rows of foundries and factories spewing pollution into the rivers and the skies. The powerful live even farther off, in greenery-draped walled compounds out in the hills.

DEHELESHEN

Founded by a military order several centuries ago, the small state of Deheleshen serves as a military center for the UES. Flanked by Calin to the north and by Hollow to the east and south, Deheleshen still holds a commanding position at the mouth of the Yanaze; the nation maintains a small but well-equipped navy and acts as a UES naval base. Military service is mandatory for all citizens.

The nation's capital, Lookshy, hosts the world-renowned Nefvarin Military Academy. Equally famous is the Valkhawsen Military Research Institute, responsible for furthering the cutting edge of military technology—including the development of the UES Dragon-Blooded. Rumors tell of classified research projects conducted in vaults deep beneath the city, including the reverse-engineering of ancient magical artifacts.

SIJAN

Nothing grows in the ruins of Sijan. The city streets are a jumble of fallen stones, broken concrete, shattered glass, bones and rust. But a few roadways through the debris have been bulldozed, connecting a handful of Guild Coalition-era concrete structures patrolled by UES forces.

Most activity in the ruins takes place underground. Magic still exists, even if most give it short shrift, and death magic is of unquestionable interest to modern governments. Here, UES scientists investigate the rituals of the Sijanese necromancers and try to figure out why they no longer function.

VELENNIA

Once a great empire, this historic nation is now but one of several mid-sized states affiliated with the UES. While the Guild proper no longer rules, the Velennian Guild Party retains significant power within the nation's splintered parliamentary legislature. Velennia's terrain ranges from low mountains to the north to the Yellow River valley in the south. A mild climate and fertile soil lend themselves well to agriculture, but the nation's economy is primarily industrial, including metalworking, electronics, chemical manufacturing and pharmaceuticals.

The nation's bohemian capital, Great Forks, is renowned for cuisine and the arts. Its thousand-year history draws tourists to tree-shaded avenues and winding streets where picturesque old buildings of brick and stone surround functionalist Guild-era concrete blocks and high-tech towers of glass and steel. The city's most famous landmark is the Cathedral of the Founders, home to three legendary angels of the Immaculate faith—Weaver of Glorious Tales, Merchant of Dreams of Victory, and Spear of a Different Day—said to have guided the city's first settlers and to answer the prayers of the faithful.

CHAYA

This minor republic is best known as the source of fire tree pollen, a rare and powerful drug with both stimulant and hallucinogenic effects. The drug is only available for a brief period once a year, after which the shed pollen quickly denatures. Drug cartels have failed to induce the trees to grow elsewhere or to flower at other times of year; their researchers labor to crack its genome, knowing success will be worth billions.

AN-TENG

Oldest and most populous of the world's civilizations, the Greater Tengese Empire—or, as it is more commonly known, An-Teng—controls all the lands west of the Firepeaks and hundreds of Southwestern islands. It's a land steeped in tradition and bureaucracy. But despite its affection for the past, reflected in its popular image as a place of silk-robed mandarins and many-tiered pagodas, An-Teng has chosen to join the modern age.

An-Teng's numerous provinces encompass everything from rugged mountains and rolling hills to steppes, jungles, marshes and fertile plains, from huge modern cities on the coast to farming villages, strip mines and refineries in the hinterlands. Massive deposits of Southern oil and coal combine with cheap labor to fuel an industrial boom. Smog, polluted rivers and mountains of industrial waste are regrettable side effects the nation has yet to come to terms with.

HISTORY

According to legend, An-Teng was founded by the Lintha peoples of the Western ocean over five thousand years ago during the first great war against Creation's renegade spirits. Kingdoms burgeoned and warred across the following millennia, uniting into great empires and disintegrating into squabbling successor states. With each iteration, new neighboring peoples either conquered elements of An-Teng or were themselves conquered. Those peoples were eventually incorporated into Tengese society and culture.

After An-Teng's colonies on the Blessed Isle won their independence, the nation withdrew from the larger world for hundreds of years. But isolationism couldn't protect against the Threshold's imperialist powers. When trade disputes with Calin, Cherak and Meruvia escalated into war, the backward Tengese military suffered humiliating defeats. Rich coastal territories were first ceded to foreign trading companies, then annexed outright.

Only after a series of revolts expelled the foreign viceroys and put a new dynasty into power did An-Teng begin to modernize—and it did so with a vengeance. A highly trained military equipped with modern weapons and tactics spread the Empire's grip across the southwest, annexing some states and forcing others into protectorate status. Meanwhile, increasing exports of cheap industrial goods sent ripples through the global economy.

CULTURE

It's hard to ascribe a single cultural template to a nation as large as An-Teng, which has absorbed dozens of peoples over thousands of years of history. If there's a common thread, it's traditionalism and stubbornness. Even as foreign media and styles penetrate into Tengese urban life, most adhere to archaic fashions, rituals and leisure activities.

While Tengese culture values merit, it also places a premium on familial relationships and on personal obligations. Business and government are thus rife with nepotism and political patronage. The Tengese bemoan the consequences of corruption even as they admire the loyalties involved as traditional and virtuous.

The predominant religion, Zhenjiao, emphasizes propriety, piety and respect for social order. Worshipers revere an elaborate bureaucratic hierarchy of celestial immortals led by the Black Jade Emperor, the Empress Wàn and the Silver Dowager. Millions of Tengese hew to other creeds, from major foreign religions such as Gharaniqism and the Immaculate faith to dozens of minor sects and spiritual practices. Only those whose preaching disrupts civil order meet with governmental opposition.

GOVERNMENT

An-Teng's constitutional monarchy is as far as one can get from Meruvia's. The legislature—its lower house elected, its upper house largely comprised of hereditary aristocrats and imperial appointees—has little power, as executive authority resides in the hands of the Jianshi Emperor and is administered by a meritocratic bureaucracy. A score of nearby nations, both among the Southwestern islands and just east of the Firepeaks, fall within the Tengese sphere of influence. Though officially

independent, these minor states subordinate themselves to An-Teng's political whims.

An-Teng's security ministry, the Putaoshu, encompasses seven specialist branches: cryptography, censorship, counterintelligence, etc. Branch Seven, the best-known and most-feared, specializes in wetwork. The head of the Putaoshu, the anonymous S, is described as an angry, humorless figure humanized only by the mangy dog that never leaves her side.

Military

The Tengese military is the world's largest, its standing troop strength exceeding the populations of many smaller nations. Traditionalism and patriotism ensure sufficient recruits to maintain an all-volunteer army, keeping morale high. Technologically, however, An-Teng's military lags twenty years behind the Meruvian state of the art.

An-Teng maintains a nuclear arsenal smaller than that of the other two Great Powers. But this is relative; its ballistic missiles are sufficiently numerous to level every major city in the Threshold.

More practical for the exercise of Tengese power are the Dragon-Blooded. Citizens typically regard them with superstitious dread and awe, calling them the Wàn Xian—the Ten Thousand Immortals—and treating them as avatars of the divine, imbued with celestial power. While this makes Dragon-Bloods invaluable for propaganda purposes, ministers worry this adoration could evolve into a dangerous popular movement.

Noteworthy Locations

Ilankai

This island metropolis rises at the northernmost tip of the Southwestern coast. As a historical locus of immigration and foreign trade—one only recently returned to Tengese control after two centuries of Calinese occupation—Ilankai is among Creation's richest and most cosmopolitan cities. Much of the world's wealth passes through the city's financial markets, supporting the construction of masses of towering skyscrapers and opulent casinos.

It is common knowledge among Ilankai's people that at least one Lunar Exalt dwells there on a semi-permanent basis. Lunar sightings are common and thought to bring good luck. Foreign enthusiasts visit in hope of a glimpse, and an international convention of such aficionados meets here annually.

Kota Lotus Besi

The "City of the Steel Lotus" is among the largest and most populous cities in the world. It is also the capital of An-Teng,

having swallowed the old capital—Kota Bunga, the "City of Flowers"—into just another district.

The city is a microcosm of An-Teng's shifting history. In the business and financial districts, modern skyscrapers blaze with neon and fluorescent light; only a stone's throw away, scarlet banners crackle on the dragon-backed roofs of ancient temples. Willow trees droop over languid pools in parks which front on noisy, thronging slums. Smog chokes the air on bad days, yet another reminder of the city's modernization. Subway lines, train tracks and highways crisscross the city and extend out into the vast Tengese megalopolis.

YAOCHI

Once a rustic mountain town known for rich peach orchards, summer palaces and its shrine to the Empress Wàn, the still-beautiful heart of Yaochi—with its tree-lined boulevards and ornamental lake—is now ringed by oil wells, refineries, factories and open-pit mines. Situated in southeastern An-Teng, the city is close enough to the Firepeaks' intensifying volcanism to suffer intermittent earthquakes and fire-spirit raids. It's also the site of the Saloy Hin Mining Company's recent discovery of the underground ruins of a lost prehuman race. Various ancient mechanisms and relics have been brought up from the caverns for analysis, most notably a humanoid shape sealed in a cloudy crystalline cocoon.

THE THRESHOLD

DARI

Dari has always been a police state. When it was a village of mud brick, the people were watched by ever-vigilant guards. As a city of wood and plaster and stone, secret police infiltrated every level of society. Now, its towers of glass and steel are rife with security cameras and parabolic microphones. But these are a mere afterthought to the Mark of Dari.

Every adult citizen has a chip surgically implanted in their left palm containing several miniaturized electronic devices—an audio receiver, polygraph sensors, and a radio transceiver with a unique transponder code to link those systems to the secret police's information grid. It also contains reservoirs of algetics and neurotoxins, released either by remote trigger or by tampering with the chip.

Crime in Dari is low, while emigration among young people is high—though not as high as one might think. The office of the Perfect—the continually re-elected head of this single-party republic—labors to burnish a sense of civic pride, portraying the chip as a mark of honor.

DELZAHN

This militaristic Southern state was beaten badly in its last major war half a century ago. The harbor district of its capital, Chiaroscuro, was leveled by a nuclear strike, fusing the beach sands into mildly radioactive glass. Reconstruction put power in the hands of corporations and criminal syndicates. Delzahn picks its battles more carefully now, but border disputes with neighboring Varangia remain volatile.

The capital city of Chiaroscuro has always been a nexus of Southern trade. The nation's oil reserves have fueled its post-war renewal. So has aid from the city's spiritual patron, the enigmatic Grandmother Bright.

While Delzahn is ostensibly a republic run by an elected legislature and a premier, the hereditary Tri-Khan actually holds the reins. The current ruler, Yejouj, has warded off Varangian expansionism and avoided civil unrest between the country's three main ethnic groups, all while expanding trade and starting the country toward modernization. But he grows old, and his eldest son Semanos lacks his presence and guile.

VARANGIA

Political commentators already describe this sprawling, overpopulated Southern nation as the world's fourth great power. Its fertile soils furnish a powerful agricultural base capable of supporting numerous industries and dozens of huge, ever-expanding cities. But income inequality—aggravated by relics of an outmoded caste system—fills those cities' slums, such that poverty, disease and famine are escalating concerns.

The Varang government possesses nuclear technology, powering many cities with fission reactors and amassing a small atomic arsenal. Acquiring the secrets of creating Dragon-Blooded is next on the list. Given Varangia's ongoing history of armed conflict with Delzahn and Nyunda—not to mention armed insurgencies in outlying provinces—nuclear war is a distinct possibility, as is the prospect of military alliances drawing other nuclear powers into such an engagement.

Of Varangia's many religions, most prevalent is Daevaism, a pantheistic belief system dedicated to a host of astral powers radiating from a single divine oversoul. Some sects adhere strictly to the pantheon's original 25 deities, but most accept millennia of accretion that have brought thousands of other divinities into the fold—ranging from mortal kings and presidents to corporate mascots, earthly spirits and Exalts.

NYUNDA

Once the seat of a vast empire, Nyunda has never recovered from warring with the nascent Guild Coalition two centuries ago. More recently, the civil government in Kirighast was overthrown by Gharaniqi fundamentalists and replaced by a repressive theocratic regime. Nyunda remains a potent regional power, rumored to have acquired nuclear weapon capability, and strong enough militarily to hold its own against neighboring Varangia. Ongoing border disputes between the two threaten to escalate into war.

Nyunda's economy is based primarily on the export of food, textiles, iron and oil. It maintains military ties with Meruvia and An-Teng as a hedge against UES aggression. Foreign pressure forced the abolition of chattel slavery, but debt slavery is common.

Gharaniqism, a monotheistic religion entrenched in Nyunda and prevalent elsewhere in the South and West, vests

sole religious authority in its holy book. Tradition states that the book was transcribed by three prophetesses from the words of an angel. The original text resides in the Fane of White Wings in the holy city of Khrosal, not far from the Varangian border.

MARUKAN

While Hollow controls the land immediately south of the Yanaze, what lies beyond—a thousand miles of steppes surrounding a central massif—belongs to the Marukani People's Republic. While the nation's booming mineral exports have redirected many Marukani into mining, heavy industry and urban services, a third of the populace still lives off the land. Horsemanship remains central to Marukani culture.

Twenty years ago, disaster struck the Marukani city of Thorns. A nearby nuclear power plant—nicknamed "the Juggernaut"—suffered catastrophic failure, spewing radioactive fallout across the city and its environs, which were evacuated and declared uninhabitable. But many citizens refused to leave. Most remain in good health; while the contamination makes cancer more prevalent, it isn't a death sentence. In addition, others have traveled to Thorns for various purposes: to loot the ruins, to hide from authorities or enemies, to hold covert meetings or to perform secret research on the bizarre black fungi thriving in the reactor chamber.

CALIN

The borders of the Kingdom of Calin extend from Goodharbor in the north to the Yanaze in the South, from Port Calin in the west to the River of Tears in the east. Historically a great Threshold power, Calin lost much international standing when its Blessed Isle colonies rebelled, then was subsumed into the Guild Coalition after the war against Sijan. But when the Coalition disintegrated, Calin declared independence.

Despite heavy exports of luxury goods—food, fashion, automobiles—and an enormous tourist industry, cultural flaws undermine Calin's potential economic strength. Discrimination against Linowan and Haltan immigrants results in ethnic strife. Corruption is commonplace, with bribery, kickbacks and nepotism treated as normal. In overthrowing the Guild Party and restoring a constitutional monarchy, the Calinese didn't follow through and purge Guild loyalists from the administration and the military. Said loyalists form a network of officials who cover for one another's abuses of power.

Marin Bay, Calin's oldest city, makes the most of its history. Tourists come to sample the cuisine, view ancient marble façades and visit famous ruins, museums and holy sites. Most notable is the Church of St. Cecilia, named for the Immaculate Church's founder and ecclesiastical seat of the Church's Matriarch. St. Cecilia's contains a vast collection of art, literature and ecclesiastical relics—including such things as the blood-stained funereal shroud of the martyred saint Isidor and a basalt feather from the wings of the archangel Hyacinth.

CHERAK

For centuries, Cherak ruled a colonial empire encompassing the northern Blessed Isle, numerous western islands and much of coastal An-Teng. Cheraki merchants profited handsomely trading in Western spices and Haltan slaves. But that empire has long since disintegrated, leaving Cherak a shadow of its old self. Now old and sedate, the nation retains a good standard of living and some small measure of international prestige.

Cherak's alliance with Meruvia has lasted over two centuries, providing a mainland bridgehead in exchange for protection against UES aggression. But the disintegration of the old Eastern power structure has given the Cheraki government cause to rethink its old arrangements. Alliances with Calin and the richer Northern states could establish a new power bloc—a prospect that's spurred foreign espionage assets into a frenzy of investigative activity.

Foreigners know Cherak best for its liberal attitudes toward drugs, gambling and prostitution. Such activities are especially prevalent in Margard, a semi-autonomous commune within the capital where the city government has largely turned over policing to the enclave's residents.

THE LINOWAN NATIONS

Hundreds of tribes once thrived north and east of Sijan; autochthonous empires rose and fell along the Silver River's banks. The colonial era was unkind to them. Now the Linowan peoples form an impoverished swath of underdeveloped countries. Even those with stable economies and political clout suffer troubles endemic to trans-Threshold states: disease, famine, poverty, corruption and widespread disregard for civil rights. Civil wars and coups d'état bedevil the region, resulting in failed states afflicted by feuding warlords or economic collapse.

Most Linowan nations are in thrall to external powers. Multinational corporations buy mineral rights; foreign governments maintain military bases in former colonies or offer economic aid with strings attached. Humanitarian efforts by nongovernmental organizations are often hijacked by warlords or corrupt officials.

Various religions spread and interact here, forming countless syncretic faiths. Many involve spirit worship. The most notable, Guivré, venerates five mighty elemental dragons that took mortal guise eons ago to cleanse Creation of evil, and whose apocalyptic second coming is imminent. The religion's reputation has been stained by fanatics using terror tactics against targets in the developed world.

Archaeologists believe the Northeast is one of the original cradles of mortal civilization. In the absence of powerful central authority, reputable institutes and treasure hunters alike flock toward newly discovered ruins in Linowan or Haltan territory to acquire valuable prehistoric and historical relics—or ancient magics.

FELLARA

The Fellarans are as complex and moody as their nation's landscape, which stretches from the sunny shores of the Inland Sea to the White Sea's icy coast. Once among the most militaristic Threshold states, Fellara now channels that vigor into maintaining one of the world's largest economies, specializing in heavy industry and chemical goods. In addition to their own forces, the Fellarans host Meruvian military bases reinforced with Dragon-Blooded operatives as a stepping-stone for actions against the spirits at the Pole of Air.

The Fellaran capital, Whitewall, is clean, efficient and modern. Well-maintained stone and brick buildings stand beside more recent structures of concrete, steel and glass. The most dramatic government edifice is Ondor Palace, seat of the Syndics—an elective triumvirate collectively serving as head of state. Tourists are more awed by Vorderstadt Station, the massive high-tech terminal for the Great Northern Rail—the fastest long-range bullet train in the world, connecting Whitewall to the coast of the Inland Sea.

Another historic city, Gethamane, is a major economic and scientific hub, hosting chemical, biotech and energy firms. The city runs off a unique Essence reactor that fuels a third of the entire nation's power grid. Strange dreams and nightmares have long afflicted the people of Gethamane, however, and those dreams have increased in frequency and impact since the reactor came online.

RAJTUL

It's only been a few centuries since the Rajtul islands were colonized—first by a handful of Fellaran settlers, then by waves of Meruvian emigrants, many of them forcibly settled into penal colonies. The albino Varajtul natives were driven from their fishing villages into the cold interior of Rajtul, the largest island in the chain.

Though no great power, Rajtul's strategic position grants it significance as a Meruvian ally. Its wealth comes from metal ores, fisheries, and such Information Age products as banking and computer software. Geothermal energy provides power, and the islands' volcanoes, geysers and glaciers draw tourist dollars.

CORAL

Once feared as a ruthless military power, Coral has never recovered from a crushing defeat at Meruvian hands. Almost a century after suffering nuclear bombing and a years-long occupation, Coral's military caste and privateering fleets have been replaced by industrialist families and corporate raiders, its Sea Lord subordinated to a mere Prime Minister.

For all their drive and financial acumen, the Coralese have become second-stringers in the current world order. The archipelago is simply too small for their ambitions. While Coral's economy is strong, it lacks the population and natural resources necessary to make a play for the center of the world stage.

Coral supports itself with heavy industry, electronics, information technologies, oil, and Creation's most aggressive fishery. Tourism is also important; the nation retains a wealth of ancient buildings alongside futuristic neon-and-chrome structures, plus entire fleets of historic houseboats and seaborne businesses—most notably its infamous floating casinos.

WAVECREST

An ancient and storied civilization that was among the first to rise from the ashes of the wars at the dawn of time, Wavecrest succumbed less than a century ago to external forces. Conquest by An-Teng, followed by a Guild-sponsored revolution, a second Tengese conquest and a series of proxy wars with Meruvian-backed island states have completely overturned the old order.

While the Republic of Wavecrest is nominally independent, it takes its marching orders from Kota Lotus Besi. The islands are studded with Tengese military bases used to combat spirit fleets from the Pole of Water and to counter Meruvia's sphere of influence. The current government is engaged in normalizing relations with other states, but the current Prime Minister's scandalous liaison with underage pop singer Akianshi threatens to bring down his administration.

Wavecrest is also home to the Denzik, or "sedentary fleet"—an assembly of mothballed ships and boats, both local and purchased from other nations, tied together like a tremendous raft. Combining features of a city, a floating market and a tourist attraction, the Denzik floats offshore near the capital city of Abalone, acting as a seaborne extension of that city.

THE EDGES OF THE WORLD

In the places beyond the Threshold, humanity lies open to the supernatural powers that infest Creation's borders.

BLUEHAVEN

The waters west of the Silent Crescent are called the Sea of Refuge. Strange mists veil the sea—meteorologists explain these as a natural effect of tropical air crossing colder water—while an unusual number of ships and aircraft passing through the region are reported missing. Some attribute the latter to storms or reefs, others to supernatural forces. Most acknowledge as a factor the pirate city of Bluehaven.

In a world of gods and monsters, Bluehaven's survival in An-Teng's sphere of influence is more improbable than some ship-snatching spectral haunt. But the city is neither fixed nor floating. Bluehaven is transient, an idea of a city, manifesting in whatever island village is hosting a pirate fleet, dissolving when the pirates move on. The impoverished island nations west of the Sea of Refuge chafe under Tengese hegemony, and while their navies are inadequate to guard local shipping lanes, they bridle at Tengese efforts to establish a stronger military presence.

RANQAR

This tiny state is among the richest beyond the Threshold. Ill-paid, ill-treated foreign laborers mine precious stones—including supernatural gems such as dream opals and yasal crystals—and rare earths with valuable technological applications. The profits, funneled through

government-run corporations, flow to Ranqar's sprawling, decadent royal family.

Ranqar maintains power through close ties with Meruvia. A Meruvian military base south of Ranqar City protects regional trade, acts as a waypoint to fight supernatural forces near the Pole of Fire, and checks Tengese expansion. Ranqar's positive relationships with other major states provide political leverage against falling too far into Meruvia's political orbit.

The nation's booming economy draws in foreign investors, generating a strong financial market and funding numerous technology-based companies. Most noteworthy are efforts to study the region's supernatural gemstones and duplicate their effects with mundane technology.

ZARLATH

The Pole of Wood is the most habitable of the four outlying Elemental Poles. There, among trees tall as mountains and tangled as cobwebs, mortals dwell side by side with Wyld mutants, spirits and survivors of prehuman races—reptilian bipeds, sapient insects, and many others. From there they send raiders and spies to afflict human civilization.

Zarlath, the westernmost major settlement the renegades possess, serves as their advance base against Creation. It is too deep in the vast elemental woodland to be reached by air strikes or even nuclear missiles. Nonetheless, UES ground forces keep trying to penetrate Zarlath's defensive cordon. Recent Exalt-led efforts have scarred the city's fringes, but none have dealt a decisive blow.

THE HALTAN ZONE

The forests of Halta were Creation's largest reservoir of malevolent spirits. These spirits dominated the Haltans, commanding their worship and levying armies to assail civilized societies in the North and East. But Lunars, guns and foreign military aid allowed the Linowan to drive the Haltans back. For centuries the Linowans sold captured Haltans to Meruvia and other nations as slaves. Now they content themselves with demolishing the Haltan forests through slash-and-burn agriculture and mass logging operations.

The remaining Haltan nations—Sal-Maneth, Trinu, Yagan, and a few smaller states and roving tribes—are seen as thralls of supernatural forces. Meruvia, the UES and several of their allies have established an arms embargo, but black-market weapons filter in nonetheless. In exchange, Halta offers its own unique goods—rare herbs, oneiromantic magics, and the sapient animals with which the Haltans are accused of unwholesome congress.

HASLANTI CONFEDERATION

Named for the region's indigenous Haslan tribes, the southeastern shores of the White Sea were taken by Cheraki, Fellaran and Meruvian colonists who later declared independence. The Confederation's central government is weak; taxation and government programs devolve upon its seven member states instead of the federal government. Secessionist efforts in Fellaran-speaking Tuskstad and relations with Haslan indigenes occasionally spill over into violence.

The Haslanti Confederation's wealth stems from exports of timber, grain and manufactured goods, plus oil from White Sea rigs and metals and gems mined beneath the Northern glaciers. There's also a black market for magical goods obtained from spirits at the Pole of Air or a rumored prehistoric city beneath the ice. Meruvia has threatened sanctions if the Haslanti don't cut off such trade.

BEYOND THE PALE

When one travels past the edges of the world, one enters realms fundamentally unfriendly to human survival. Crushing pressure, strange creatures and enigmatic spirits haunt the ocean floor. Elemental forces and disruptive entities rampage at the world's poles. The recursive infinities of the Wyld shelter mythopoeic beings that hunger for human dreams. But mortal ingenuity has begun rolling back these frontiers, and experts foresee further progress in days to come.

YU-SHAN

Every mythology speaks of a heavenly city at Meru's peak. There—depending on which writings one consults—can be found the dwellings of Immaculate angels, the ruling powers of the constellations or the Black Jade Emperor's court. But even satellite photography cannot penetrate the shining mists that veil Yu-Shan, and no climber in living memory has reached the city and returned to tell the tale.

THE UNDERWORLD

Centuries ago, massive geomantic foci were raised across the world to seal the Underworld away from Creation. For generations, the dead could not haunt the living, nor did corpses walk at night. Coroners and undertakers were safe from the depredations of hungry ghosts. But the paths to the land of the dead have reopened, and shades both kindly and malevolent have followed them back into the world.

THE CELESTIAL VAULT

The sun and moon each rise from the Wyld in the east and descend into it in the west. All other celestial bodies revolve around a cosmic axis centered upon Mount Meru and the Pole of Earth. This aetheric vortex supports the orbits of government-owned and corporate satellites, such as telecommunications satellites, orbital telescopes and a few primitive space stations. The aetheric winds offer turbulent resistance to spacecraft—including a manned mission to Mars that's currently underway.

Despite the raksha which infest the lunar surface, the International League has sponsored a lunar outpost—BAARA—as humanity's first foothold above Creation. Though still under construction, the iron-walled moonbase's nuclear generator and Wyld observatory are online, and its first railgun for launching lunar ore to Earth should be ready by decade's end.

Behind the Scenes

A Secret History

In the beginning, the Incarnae—Sol and the Maidens, and their children Luna, Autochthon and Gaia—made Creation. But where the light of the Incarnae did not reach, strange and alien powers took root. In the voids between the stars—in lightless caverns beneath the mountains—in the ocean's black abyss—in the song of numbers and the fog of dreams—in the shadows of all things—there grew the Yozis, timeless and terrible, festering with malice towards the world of gross matter with which they were intertwined.

For an Age, the gods ruled in peace. But the Yozis unleashed unnatural forces—demon legions, mutated humans and animals, and their own nightmarish avatars—to reshape the world to their liking. Their first strike cast civilization into chaos, decimating mortals and gods alike. A grievously wounded Luna fled into the deepest Wyld; the Elemental Dragons were blasted into torpor.

Then Autochthon forged the Exaltations, imbuing the Essence of the eldest Incarnae into mortal vessels. These Solar and Sidereal Exalts strove mightily against Creation's foes. In their first sortie, they proved their power by slaying some Yozis and driving back the rest in confusion.

The war then grew protracted. Uncertain of victory, a few of the Solar Exalted—led by the Night Caste Gorol—conceived a plan to seize the power of the Yozis for themselves. By dint of forgotten rites, these Solars became the first Infernals, wielding the Sun's power in one hand and Yozi might in the other.

Led by the Infernals, the Solar Host seemed invincible. Together they drove the Yozis to the edge of existence. But the Solars were betrayed by their Infernal brethren in the final battle, leading to their defeat.

The Infernals returned to Creation alone. There they cast down the Incarnae and bound them with mighty oaths of surrender, then proclaimed themselves the rulers of the world.

Alternate Demiurges

What's important in this shard isn't that the Infernals rule, but that the truth is hidden. The Storyteller should feel free to replace the Infernals with some other behind-the-scenes faction—whether that be Deathlords, ishvara or even Incarnae gone bad.

Under New Management

Aghast at the prospect of a Yozi triumph, the Sidereals performed a great prophecy to choose their path. Faced with two grim futures—continuing to fight in the face of almost certain annihilation, or attempting to ameliorate the warlocks' worst excesses from within—they chose the latter, bending the knee to the Infernal host.

First on the Infernal agenda was subjugating the old order—the gods and elementals who served the Incarnae. Some were broken to the service of their new masters; others were slain outright. The rest fled to the edges of the world. There they raised mortal armies to continue the war, claiming authority over Creation as the legitimate government in exile.

A long dark age followed. Infernals and their Sidereal viziers manipulated Threshold societies, raising armies against peoples allied with the gods, then turning their pawns against each other in waves of butchery to assuage the malice of their Yozi masters and, in many cases, their own bloodthirsty natures. Both sides slipped into barbarism, with primitive mortal tribes dominated by supernatural overlords.

But Creation is vast and humanity fecund. Civilization rose again in the West amid islands too numerous to monitor. An expanding web of trade spread the tools of progress—legal systems, mathematics, currency, engineering—across the South, then to the East and North. War continued unabated until the belated arrival of the Lunar Exalted nine centuries ago. With Lunar aid, the warlocks consolidated their power and drove the divine insurgency to the edges of Creation.

Now the Infernals rule behind the scenes. Confident in their power, they tend mortals as a resource, growing their numbers and technology until they're ready to shatter the divine insurgency once and for all.

The Exalted

Dragon-Blooded

Officially, Dragon-Blooded are empowered by hazardous genetic and thaumaturgic treatments. While few successfully accept the treatment and master the arduous training regimen that follows, everyone has the potential to become Dragon-Blooded—or so the advertising campaigns claim.

This is a lie. The Dragon-Blooded are chosen before they're born. Geneticists infuse human embryos with blood cells from the imprisoned Elemental Dragons; these are implanted at Infernal-owned fertility clinics. The resulting children are called up for Dragon-Blooded training once they're of age.

All three great powers impose similar training regimes on Dragon-Blooded trainees. In addition to classes in athletics, weapons use, driving, strategy, tactics, logistics, science, languages and so forth, cadets endure wilderness survival training and live-fire exercises. Four-fifths of all trainees wash out during the three-year program; one in ten die. Only the best receive the final treatments to catalyze the Exaltation.

Dragon-Blooded perform roles appropriate to their talents. Some serve as elite front-line soldiers or fighter pilots, others as

stealthy special operatives, strategists or tacticians. Some hold senior non-commissioned ranks; others are lieutenants, captains, majors or colonels. All report to non-Exalted commanders.

Instead of long tours of service, Dragon-Blooded see action only on important missions. This avoids wasteful losses and offers more opportunities for advanced training, downtime and propaganda functions—interviews, ribbon-cutting ceremonies and the like.

While Dragon-Blooded narratives often start as heroic adventure, some devolve into political stories where characters become pawns in mortal power struggles. Others become conspiracy stories where characters catch a glimpse of the big picture by witnessing Sidereal interference or Infernal atrocities, and they must choose whether to risk their careers—or their lives—to find the truth.

DRAGON-BLOOD HERITABILITY

The children of the first Dragon-Blooded are reaching adulthood. The Infernals calculate that children of Terrestrial Exalts will not inherit their Exalted parent's powers without receiving genetic treatments. But the Infernals are not infallible. If a child should Exalt as a Terrestrial without treatment...

NOTEWORTHY DRAGON-BLOODED

• **Catherine Cainan**: A colonel in the Meruvian army with decades of experience, Cainan has retired from front-line operations to handle strategic and logistical issues but remains available for critical battlefield situations. Though uninterested in fame, Cainan is a popular figure: war hero, Dragon-Blooded, spokesperson for the Immaculate Church and member of the Meruvian royal family. A popular movement is growing to grant her the Regency—or put her on the throne.

• **Gavin Bast**: Before volunteering for Dragon-Blooded training, Bast was a working-class Nexus auto mechanic. Exaltation has given him the ability to dominate a battlefield, leading troops against wood elementals or Haltan irregulars. But his particular talent is craftsmanship. Many new weapons employed by his Dragon-Blooded peers were designed by Bast—and patented, too. Bast Industries is a major corporate player in the UES's adolescent market economy, and its CEO is among the richest and most politically powerful Dragon-Blooded alive.

• **Hei Meijui**: A talented career soldier who's risen through the ranks, Hei commands An-Teng's Cinnabar Brigade, a special ops unit regularly deployed to the most dangerous battlegrounds—at the front or behind enemy lines during wartime, otherwise against spirits at the world's edge. She's taken a unit infamous as a meatgrinder for troublemakers and political undesirables, and turned it into a lean fighting force laden with tenacious veterans. Hei's surging popularity troubles government officials who see her as a potential threat.

• **Lionel Kes**: The youngest ever to pass Dragon-Blooded training, Kes lacks the raw physical power and personal discipline displayed by many of his peers. Instead of military service, his keen intellect and youthful charm have been allocated to the Office of Meruvian Intelligence. Good looks, uncanny reflexes and a devious temperament serve him well in the field—and in the bedchamber, where his conquests are legendary in the bureau. (His tally of seducing male operatives from rival agencies is both startlingly high and statistically improbable.)

• **Philip Deled**: This young Dragon-Blooded marine's media popularity stems from his handsome features, hunky build, cocky attitude and overt displays of piety. His officers and media handlers are more concerned with his frankly sociopathic behavior, as the effort of covering up incidents of sexual assault and friendly fire comes to outweigh his usefulness and the cost of his creation. Suicide missions seem a suitable solution, but Deled has the unfortunate habit of survival…

DEMONIC DRAGON-BLOODED

Fearing that powerful, numerous Dragon-Blooded might prove too independent-minded, the Infernals are developing more tractable replacements. These include demonic Dragon-Blooded—Exalts whose elemental nature has been fused with the Essence of a Yozi or powerful demon. The eldest have already had their powers activated and are being trained in their use.

LUNARS

The Lunar Exalted serve the Infernals. They don't know why they feel such an affinity for Creation's masters, only that it feels right. This misplaced affection belongs naturally to the Solars. When a Lunar meets a Solar for the first time, the true bond surfaces. The resulting turbulent emotions can elicit almost any reaction—shock, suspicion, rage or flight. In the long term, recognizing they've been used by the Infernals may lead Lunars to turn their backs on their former masters—or to double down on old loyalties.

But Lunars are neither puppets nor slaves. Only self-imposed bonds can hold them. Since their Exaltation comes to those willing to kill or die for another, loyalty comes naturally to them. Some are ruthless in their service, others self-sacrificing. Most revel in their power and its concomitant lack of responsibility, roving freely except when the Infernals call upon them for intelligence gathering, combat or assassination.

Lunars can travel and act more freely than other Exalted. Their stories tend to be Creation-spanning action-adventure yarns—battles atop airplanes and skyscrapers, stalking foes through Eastern jungles, racing against time to unearth ancient relics from sunken cities, etc. But they can just as easily be caught up in bildungsromans where they must move past their animal instincts and their Infernal bonds to choose what sorts of people they will become.

NOTEWORTHY LUNARS

• **Roxanne Grauer**: For centuries, Grauer channeled her innate Lunar fascination for the Infernals into a fascination with their origins. This led her to millennia-old ruined Solar citadels in the jungles of the Southeast, where she mastered the powers of sorcery and other ancient secrets. Roxanne questions whether to aid the returned Solars over the Infernals—or whether she should aid anyone at all. She's reconstructed the rites by which the Infernals claimed the power of the Yozis, and the stars are right for their use. Aided by a stolen prototype—the Ashuki Corporation Model 000 quantum motic computer—she's modifying those rites to empower a Lunar: herself.

• **Thomas Kahn**: Nine centuries ago, the Lunar Tamas Khan gathered the Delzahn tribes and conquered Chiaroscuro, which he ruled as King of Kings. Since faking his death at the end of his reign, he's worn many names and identities, but he's never lost his taste for the spotlight. In his current identity—Thomas Kahn, Velennian millionaire playboy—he takes pleasure in being spotted and tracked by reporters, paparazzi and conspiracy theorists.

• **"White Lily"**: When not occupied with tasks set by her Infernal spouse, White Lily acts as a vigilante. Infiltrating a criminal gang or conspiracy in an innocuous guise, she gathers evidence regarding their activities and plans. She then vanishes without trace, leaving police the evidence, the criminals—some tied up but alive, others killed in gruesome ways—and her calling card, the flower for which she's named.

SIDEREALS

The Sidereal Exalted are advisors, cleaners, assassins, spies. They study the paths of probability with radio telescopes and computer-modeled orreries. Then they make adjustments to the world—accidents, twists of fate, sabotage, murder—to eliminate those things their masters would conceal: monsters spawned from Essence reactors; rogue gods infiltrating human society; ghosts, behemoths and raksha; evidence of prayer mills and other Infernal projects; and ideas or people that threaten the existing order.

Some Sidereals wish to better the world for mankind. Others disagree with the current system but prefer it to the chaos that would arise from efforts at reform. Still others belong wholly to the Infernal cause. None can wholly trust any of their fellows, and so matters remain unchanged over the centuries. But now the Sidereals have discovered something worse than any of them had dreamed—their masters' creation of the Abyssal Exalted, creatures both willing and able to exterminate all life in the universe.

Now a handful have quietly rebelled, releasing the Solar Exaltations from their prison and arranging for the theft of Alchemical Exaltations from the Heptagram. Corresponding via encrypted phones and emails, they twist destiny to keep the Solars and Alchemicals out of the Infernals' hands until the new Exalts can stand on their own.

SEEKING LUNA

Deep in the uttermost Wyld, lit neither by sun nor stars, a place of cool, soothing waters lies hidden. There, moths drowse somnolently among dark cypress boughs, and sensuous silver orchids droop over beds of pale roses. There, amidst the luxurious scents and the plash of the sea, owls and cats tend to injured Luna. There, the only color is the red of her blood. There, her unhealing wound brings no pain.

Millennia ago, at the height of the War, the Sidereals sent emissaries to Luna. They prayed that she might share her blessing with mortals, granting her quicksilver power, her passion and fury, in the form of a new Exaltation. When they found the place to which she'd fled, her island of peace in the Wyld, they begged her for her aid.

She refused. Her power was beauty and desire, fury and madness, a maelstrom of ardor which even she could not contain. It was not meant for mortals. It would bring only suffering.

Seeing that she would not do this for humankind, the emissaries spoke instead of the Sun. Ignis Divine—her father and lover, her dream and desire, her heart and soul—even now the Yozis threatened to quench his unconquerable fires. Without her aid, her beloved could die.

This was the one prospect that Luna could not bear. She would give Creation her Exalted, she said. They would be born from her love for the Sun, from her mad devotion, that they might safeguard him and his Chosen until time's end. Born of that bond, they would burn for the Solar Exalted as Luna burned for her beloved. They would be drawn to their golden cousins across all boundaries—those of space, time and death.

But it was too late.

The tides of the Wyld churned the seas of Time, and the Lunars arrived thousands of years after the War's end. The Solars were gone. Instead, Luna's Chosen found the Infernals, within whom the corrupted Solar Exaltations had lodged.

The warlocks were quick to seize the Lunars' love and loyalty, using it as a leash to twist these Exalts to their will. But the Lunars have always felt uneasy around them. They sense the wrongness within the Infernals—the corruption of the Yozis tainting the Sun's holy fire. But Luna's passion waxes and wanes within them, and at its height, the world is a cold, dark place which only that tainted fire can warm.

Until now.

At long last, the Solars have returned to Creation. Though they're strange and unfamiliar, something within them strikes a chord with the Lunars. Now Luna's Chosen are torn between long-standing bonds to the current masters of the world, and the wild infatuation that wafts from the Solars like attar of roses.

Some Sidereal stories are police procedurals, spy dramas or action-adventure stories about tracking down and thwarting those who'd undermine Creation and the status quo. Others are political and psychological thrillers where the protagonists, disgusted at covering up Infernal atrocities, challenge—covertly or overtly—their masters' schemes.

NOTEWORTHY SIDEREALS

• **Chejop Kejak**: No Sidereal should remember the war against the Yozis. Even their remarkable longevity can't bridge the five millennia since war's end. But Chejop Kejak remembers. Tasked to seek Luna and petition her for Exaltations, the flux of time in the Wyld brought him back with the Lunars nine centuries ago, stranding him in a wholly unfamiliar world. As he approaches the end of his thousand-year span, he looks back on his life and sees only failure. He failed to bring the Lunars back in time to thwart the Yozis, and in joining his fellow Sidereals as an Infernal vizier he's failed to change the world for the better. Still, he hopes it's not too late to make amends. He's made allies among the Sidereals, forming a network—a "Gold Faction"—of those willing to support the new Solars and break the Infernal yoke.

• **Lady Sharkskin**: For centuries she has ruled Kota Lotus Besi's criminal underworld with an iron fist. While most believe that many different women have claimed the title over the years, she who calls herself Lady Sharkskin simply takes on a new identity with each generation. Uninterested in the big picture, she merely does her duty when she thwarts troublesome spirits and adjusts events to better suit the Infernals' plans. In her spare time, she indulges in sensual pleasures—women, wine and casual violence.

• **Miss Green**: No one knows her real name. She is simply Miss Green. Year after year, new staff are rotated into the Sijan facility, so no one's there long enough to recognize that this plain, severe-looking woman has served as the site's principal scientific advisor for several decades. She is the Sidereals' expert in matters of death and necromancy. Some consider her obsessed. She tells her peers she still worries over the creation of the Abyssals, and she has uttered more than one "I told you so" since their return. Her fellow Sidereals would be astonished to learn of her collaboration with the Seven Degreed Physician of Black Maladies.

Alchemicals

The Dragon-Blooded aren't the only Infernal experiment in investing mortals with power. Infernal researchers snared a handful of Lunar Exaltations and merged them with fragments of Autochthon's body and soul. Intended as replacements for the Lunars, these Alchemical Exalted were designed as a perfect blend of Exalt and machine: powerful, flexible, slaves to their programming. They succeeded in every respect except the last.

The Alchemical Exaltation appears as a large gemstone overlaid with a fractal matrix of metallic fibers. When affixed to a mortal's forehead, the Exaltation bonds permanently to its new host, extending filaments throughout her body and resonating with her Essence. It cannot be removed while she lives.

Alchemical stories are sci-fi thrillers about people on the run. The Infernals want the missing Exaltations back, so they're hunting the Alchemicals with every means available—men with guns, Dragon-Blooded special ops, demons, Lunars, and experimental creatures and machines cooked up in their labs. Meanwhile, Alchemicals are likely to wonder what they are and what they might become, leading to infiltrating well-guarded laboratories and interrogating scientific geniuses at gunpoint.

Noteworthy Alchemicals

• **Evelyn Bell**: A gifted computer engineer at the Heptagram, Bell was thrilled to join what seemed a breathtaking merger of engineering and Essence manipulation, only to be horrified by the project's human trials—ghastly mutations, deliberate torture, vivisection. She feared the consequences of whistle-blowing, but when an Alchemical test subject destroyed an entire wing of the facility while battling project security, she seized the moment and fled with several Alchemical Exaltations. Recognizing that keeping them in one place only makes it easier for her pursuers to reclaim them, she's mailed several to people across Creation that she thinks might make good use of them...

• **Subject 8262**: Like many other Alchemical test subjects, Subject 8262 is no longer remotely human. It emulates a mortal form only as circumstances require, preferring to stretch its metallic body through a succession of disturbingly organic shapes. Since its escape from the Heptagram, only one desire burns in its shattered mind—to hunt and devour other Essence users.

• **Tadashii Hana**: This sixtysomething second-wave feminist author, emeritus Chair of Philosophy and Religion at Azure University, would normally be of little relevance to Creation's great powers. But her writings struck such a chord with college-aged Evelyn Bell that twenty years later, Bell mailed Tadashii one of the Alchemical Exaltations. A person of iron will and stark principles, Tadashii is eager to put her newfound capabilities to honorable use. Unfortunately, her erudition extends only to the liberal arts; her understanding of military strategy is nonexistent.

• **Zamir Sultan**: Certain Infernals and Sidereals have abstracted Alchemical Exaltations for their own purposes. For instance, the warlock Kopal Pahit kidnaps, Exalts and vivisects young people near his Kiraktou laboratory to better understand Autochthon's Essence. The occasional escape attempt was, to Pahit's mind, part of the entertainment—until Zamir Sultan, a young off-duty policeman, had the temerity to briefly overpower Pahit and flee the laboratory. Sultan—a hothead and a rake—exults in his new powers, using them subtly to enhance his career, unaware he's being surveilled by his former captor.

Alchemical Chimeras

Some Alchemical Exaltations prove monstrously defective. Their hosts quickly deteriorate into Alchemical Chimerae—protean ravagers with a craving for living Essence. Some are all but mindless. Others exhibit a low cunning capable of outwitting even intelligent opponents.

Solars

The Solar Exalted never ruled this world. Their kingdoms and researchers were dedicated to a war they never pursued to completion. They did not live long enough for the Great Curse to master them. Though they're forgotten, their legacy endures, as they wounded the Yozis so terribly that those dark powers have yet to fully recover. Now that the Solars are free of the Jade Prison, they're ready to resume the war they lost five thousand years ago.

Or they would be, if they knew what was going on.

Solars are action film protagonists; their stories are typically those of naïve or unwilling heroes in over their heads. Since they come without affiliations or baggage, they look like ready-made tools for everyone else's hidden agendas. Mortal governments and corporate magnates offer them lucrative employment; Lunars stalk them out of perverse love; Sidereals and Infernals approach them as patrons and mentors, guiding them into conflicts they don't understand.

NOTEWORTHY SOLARS

• **Fehim**: Growing up on the streets of Yane, this bastard son of a high-caste Varangian fell in with the Three Devils Gang—Yane's biggest crime syndicate, dealing in everything from pick-pocketing and drugs to prostitution, arms running and murder for hire. A self-taught computer prodigy, Fehim Exalted while escaping a police crackdown using a false identity he'd hacked into existence on the fly. He didn't cover his tracks well enough to escape Infernal notice, however, and a demon has been sent to seduce him to the Yozi cause.

• **Gabriel Ehren**: This Meruvian pop megastar, who played the heroic Captain Panther on the sci-fi action-adventure television series Mirrorflag, was recently kidnapped by a race of tiny, childlike green-gold humanoids from beyond the stars. Mistaking him for his television persona, the creatures—whose Venusian birth-cities were expunged by the Infernals long ago—sought his aid in saving their colony worlds from demonic siege. Though skilled at acting and music rather than battle, he rose to the challenge—and he Exalted. Now that he's returned to Creation, his old life seems small and mundane; where once he craved only adulation, now he wants to be the hero he only pretended to be.

• **Yu Liling**: Considered among the best in her field, this Ranqari-born contract killer could eliminate anyone—crime bosses, corporate executives, government officials and even gods—for the right price. She performed her tasks without mercy until the Putaoshu sent her to murder her adoptive father, who'd turned coat to the UES. Refusal put her on her old employer's hit list. Her end seemed inescapable—until she Exalted. Now she seeks a higher purpose than murder for money.

• **Yurgen Kaneko**: A retired police sergeant in notoriously corrupt Plenilune, Kaneko stubbornly outlived both friends and family. He decided it was better to die while dishing out vigilante justice—or in jail for doing so—than wither away from age and senility. In the process, Kaneko Exalted. His wits and vigor restored, he's gathering a posse of civic-minded citizens to take the city back for the people—with blood if necessary.

ABYSSALS

As millennia passed and the world's population grew, so did the ranks of the unquiet dead. The Infernals tired of sealing the shadowlands and quelling the rise of ghosts and hekatonchires. But the most straightforward method—eschewing war, limiting violent crime, preventing genocide and other atrocities—opposed their masters' interests. Indeed, the better the Infernals performed their tasks, the worse the Underworld tempests that followed.

Sijan was the last straw. Mere mortals calling forth such world-shaping power could not be borne. The Underworld had to be sealed.

In their arrogance, the Infernals created the Abyssal Exalted, twisting prisoned Solar Exaltations into tools of death and destruction, They awarded the Underworld to their new creations as their kingdom to pacify and to rule. Then they blasted away the existing shadowlands and raised a geomantic barrier between the worlds of the living and the dead so that neither the ghosts nor their new masters could return to Creation. Then the Infernals forgot the matter, confident the Abyssals and their realm would trouble them no more.

That was then. Now the Abyssals have shattered the mighty engines that sealed off the Underworld, and they've come forth to lead dead armies into the lands of the living.

Abyssal player characters may be horror film antagonists—whether of the slasher, gore or psychological varieties. More often they are grim antiheroes in gothic action stories, seeking to bring justice to a world antithetical to their natures.

NOTEWORTHY ABYSSALS

• **The Seven Degreed Physician of Black Maladies**: A Siijanese doctor drafted into the necromantic corps for the war, the Physician's understanding of death and necromancy has grown more nuanced and intimate over the centuries. He was first among his peers to open a path back to the living world, his efforts meshing with those of Sidereal agent Miss Green, with whom he now collaborates as a fellow infiltrator in the UES necromantic laboratory under Sijan. The two Exalts have a complex relationship, sharing information about each other's domain and allegiance. It's no longer clear to either of them where their loyalties lie.

• **Weeping Jade**: Her hair green as bile, her skin pale as bone, Weeping Jade haunts the towns and killing fields of the Northeast. Her weapons—gun, blade and fang—do not discriminate between Linowan, Haltan and foreigner. Where she passes, people die—sometimes a single elder in a farming village, at other times every adult in an entire district. She never kills prepubescent children, but the youngsters she spares are all too often recruited as child soldiers by local warlords.

• **Winter's Mask Cast Aside**: A pale, middle-aged Western woman, Winter's Mask has appeared to various governments as a representative of the nations of the dead. She claims the Abyssals who've caused havoc in Creation are rebels in self-imposed exile from an otherwise pacific Underworld, and that civilized peoples in both worlds will benefit from an alliance against the rogue deathknights. To that end, she's scheduled to make a statement before the full International League Mutual Defense Council to address the issue.

INFERNALS

This world belongs to the Infernals. The Yozis are bound, but through their servants they can wreak their malice upon Creation. Some are celebrities, some quietly identifiable public figures, and some exist wholly in secret. All work behind the scenes to manipulate mortal society, opposing the better angels of human nature while feeding their baser instincts, in order to please their Yozi masters.

It's easy to blame the Infernals for society's ills. But they are few where mortals are many. Reveling in the luxury that their power affords, they allow the engines of society to do their work for them. Mortals have proven more than capable of inventing their own atrocities, from scalping and medicine murder to child pornography and concentration camps.

Instead, Infernals focus on things beyond mortal capability which require supernatural power to implement. They enslave mortals in secret prayer mills to feed power to the Yozis. They devise, test and stockpile magical monsters and sorcerous plagues against the day their masters demand a new dark age. They turned the Lunars against the spirits and mortals they were meant to save, and built the Dragon-Blooded as living weapons. And now they aim to seduce the Solars to their cause.

Without meaningful opposition, the Infernals have grown lazy and proud, permitting obstacles to flourish for years or decades before intervening personally. Moreover, they strive against one another for reasons political, personal and aesthetic, investing effort in internal intrigues rather than against external enemies.

Infernal player characters emerge from a hothouse of arrogance and malice. Some are selfish or demented antiheroes, reveling in their power as they struggle to dominate rivals and suppress opposition to the system. But Infernal stories may also be tales of redemption—neo-noir stories of political maneuverings to sabotage the Althing, or over-the-top action stories where Infernal PCs open fire on squads of demonic Dragon-Blooded with a stolen experimental sky-fortress.

Promotion

Each Infernal Exaltation is tied to a *phylactery*—an artifact orb of crystal and brass to which it returns upon death. A simple rite transfers the Exaltation to a willing host chosen by vote of the Infernal Althing. This election is a matter for fierce and ruthless politicking. The eldest Infernals who hold the phylacteries occasionally bypass the process and Exalt someone without leave, though the political blowback can be fatal.

New Infernals are selected using a broad range of criteria—brilliance, ruthlessness, loyalty or cruelty. Sometimes a seemingly innocuous individual is selected as a compromise, but even compromise candidates are drawn from the cream of a pool of billions. No Infernal should be underestimated.

NOTEWORTHY INFERNALS

• **The Princess Charlotte**: Though clever and well-educated, the orphaned heir to the Meruvian throne seems an ordinary enough 14-year-old girl—polite, friendly, cheerful. This is a mask. Exalted as an Infernal last year by a whim of the Althing, she took to her murderous powers like a fish to water. The recent spate of 'Essence storms'—including the one that killed her mother and elder brother—are manifestations of her Adorjani Charms, which she exercises whenever she can.

• **Geir Falkman**: This well-liked Haslanti Air Force captain abused his position to facilitate black market trade between wealthy mortals and the spirit denizens of the Pole of Air, earning both illicit monies and the favor of a number of well-connected people. When his activities were uncovered, he ruthlessly sold out his divine associates in exchange for immunity, earning the endorsement of a few key Infernals. Since his elevation to the Althing, he's leveraged his military and black market contacts to dabble in a variety of fields—military research, procurement, espionage. Mostly, however, he indulges his newfound access to Infernal stealth jets and spaceships—for joyrides, piracy, or the simple pleasure of blowing things to bits.

• **Gorol Thrice-Blessed**: Gorol is the most powerful man in the world. His first blessing came from the Sun with the Solar Exaltation. The second came from himself, when he led a cabal of his fellows in tearing the power of the Yozis from them and claiming it for his own. But the third blessing came from the King of the Yozis, granting him stewardship of Creation for betraying the untainted Solars to their doom. Now Gorol rules the Althing as first among equals—but he is first by far. Not only does he retain Solar Charms and Solar immortality, but his Yozi benefactors blessed him with strange powers his fellows cannot match. For millennia he's played his game against his peers, and one by one his fellow immortals have fallen. Only a few remain. He will be the last. He will rule unchallenged forever.

• **Lintha Ng Hut Dukantha**: Of mixed Lintha and human blood, Dukantha was unsatisfied with his power and heritage even before ascending into the ranks of the Infernals. Where he once seethed to be seen as inferior to his full-blooded Lintha peers, now he refuses to remain in the shadow of the immortal Infernal elders. Dukantha subjected himself to an experimental version of the Dragon-Blooded treatment in order to obtain new powers, and success—albeit at the price of a twisted inhuman visage—has only whetted his appetite for more. He intends to usurp Gorol's position, and will use anyone and anything, including other Exalted, as tools to this end.

• **Sula Mohr**: Centuries ago, Mohr climbed to the inner circles of Delzahni society through seduction and manipulation, taking various nobles and ecclesiasts as lovers and short-lived husbands, then exerting influence on her progeny and descendants. Though she uses magic to create the illusion of youth, she feels her true age upon her. In her latest identity she has taken holy orders in Delzahn's Immaculate Church. Seeing her in her nun's habit, her Infernal peers write her off as senile, vulnerable and weak. But Mohr remains almost as sharp and puissant as ever. She has merely surrendered her old ambitions and begun to question her old loyalties.

DEMIURGES

YOZIS

The Yozis spread their tendrils throughout reality. Malfeas—worshipped as the One True God or the Black Jade Emperor—is immanent in the endless void between the stars, while his sister Cecelyne—whom mortals call Saint Cecilia or the Silver Dowager—entwines with him through the fabric of limitless space. She Who Lives in Her Name pulses through the geometry of constellations and galaxies; Hegra prowls the borders of mortal dreams and nightmares; the Ebon Dragon watches from every shadow.

DEMONS

Hell is not a place, but an idea. There is no demon realm inhabited by the Yozis' progeny. Greater demons—the Yozis' souls and sub-souls—exist within their progenitors as thoughts, dreams and principles, only manifesting as independent, free-willed beings when called forth by sorcery, thaumaturgy or certain circumstances unique to each. When banished or slain, they sublime away to rejoin the greater whole.

First Circle demons are manufactured or bred in places beyond the light of the Incarnae—beneath Creation's roots, in pocket dimensions or on distant worlds. The Yozis spent eons assembling their demon armies for the Primordial War. New legions gather to crush the last rebel gods and enslave humanity. Though incomplete, these forces are sufficient to imperil Creation if unleashed.

A handful of demons dwell in Creation. Some are renegades, skulking through isolated and abandoned places—forests, caves, rubbish dumps, subway tunnels and sewers. Others serve the Infernals directly, either passing as humans or registered spirits in society or laboring in sealed corporate or government compounds.

LIGIER

The Demon Emperor's impossible heart, a green sun twice the mass of the universe, blazes outside the bounds of time and space. Every other star in the cosmos will dwindle to an icy cinder before a single ray of its emerald light reaches Creation.

The Demon Emperor's heart is also a man. Dr. Lucien Igier, with his striking red hair and emerald-green eyes, is among Creation's most brilliant engineers, responsible for great advances in Essence technology. The brass machine pistol he carries—his own handiwork—is among the deadliest devices ever created, to several assassins' brief and final dismay. But he prefers to work on a grander scale. One of the weapons he's constructing in his undersea laboratory could annihilate all Creation—and of the projects he has under development, it is not the worst.

Space Travel

The Infernals utilize a handful of mechanisms to visit Creation's planets or distant stars. These include astral projection, magitech starships and wormhole gates. These are plot devices for the most part, allowing player characters to visit alien environments for specific purposes without stealing focus from Creation.

The Infernal Althing

In the olden days, the Infernals gathered only rarely. Creation is vast, and travel was as slow as the pace of events. But things move quickly in this modern world, and its dark masters must keep up. The Althing meets during Calibration at a different locale each year to compare notes, exchange snubs and coordinate their activities against the rebel gods and other obstacles.

More and more Infernals teleconference for the Althing these days. Some are motivated by paranoia, others by laziness, and still others as a deliberate snub to hidebound Infernal elders.

Primordial Races

During their war against the gods, the Yozis twisted countless earthly species to their own ends. Most are extinct; the remainder largely serve the Infernals, dwelling in isolation from mortal society.

Lintha

The Sea of Refuge's strangeness is neither coincidence nor imagination. Here, the Lintha capital of Ng Oroo rests on the ocean floor, concealed by sorcery and by technology so advanced it's indistinguishable from magic. Ng Oroo is a living city, a place of coral and shell grown upon the back of a vast alien behemoth. Its people—their human ancestors twisted by the Yozis into their own image—while away the years in peculiar games of status and idle cruelties, occasionally traveling in submersible craft to battle water elementals and the peoples of the seas.

The Lintha maintain a similarly concealed surface outpost, Ng Skalt, on an island in the Sea of Refuge. From here, Lintha agents in stealth vehicles—their green skin and blood-red eyes disguised with cosmetics or Charms—travel to and fro on missions from the Infernals and their Sidereal viziers.

Alaun

Strange and morose, the surviving Alaun gather in their flocks on the slopes of Mount Meru. There they prevent the hated mortals from accessing the Pole of Earth's secrets—ancient places of power, modern Infernal research installations and the lost celestial city of Yu-Shan.

Rebel Powers

While a few rebel gods and elementals have gone undercover in the developed world, most have withdrawn beyond the Threshold. Some dwell among mortal civilizations at the edges of the world, marshaling them to harry Threshold societies. The rest dwell at the Elemental Poles, where modern weapons are undependable. From there they can strike with impunity and withdraw back to safety.

Noteworthy Gods in Society

- **Burning Feather**: Dark glasses hide the blank white eyes of Det. Serafina Feather of the Chanos Police Department's narcotics squad, a post whose irony isn't lost on her. While she doesn't sabotage active investigations, she's as corrupt as she can get away with, accepting kickbacks from drug dealers and shaking down users—not for the money, but as an excuse to let the drugs flow.
- **The Desert Noon**: Though she calls herself "Sahra" now, the goddess of Descending Fire hews to her old ways, aiding mortals or spirits with her magic in exchange for lodging. But now she's on the run after witnessing the murder of the walrus-god Ahlat—and recognizing the killer.
- **Shalrina**: After all these millennia, the Infernals still haven't laid a hand on Shalrina. The Daimyo of Faces serves as a go-between for gods in society and those at the Poles, providing faces and identities that allow safe passage among mortals.
- **Vanileth**: The former Shogun of Artificial Flight maintains a human identity as an engineer for a major Whitewall aeronautics firm. Despite his absent-mindedness, his employers recognize his brilliance, giving him the freedom to experiment with new materials and technologies. They remain unaware of the working spaceship he's constructed in his garage.

The Polar Courts

- **Fire**: The South's elementals burn too bright for conventional stealth. They've gone underground instead, enlarging and connecting magma chambers over a 10,000-mile range. Volcanoes thought dormant or extinct return to life, while new eruptions burst forth in geologically stable areas. Besides property damage and loss of life from lava, gas and debris, these ruptures offer beachheads from which elementals swarm out from magmatic lairs into civilized regions. A coalition of developed nations has built prototype magma divers to take the battle to the enemy. These await volunteers willing to attempt the mission.
- **Wood**: Countless ancient races dwell amidst the trackless Eastern forests. There, gods and elementals and Dragon Kings fuse biology and thaumaturgy, warping the stuff of life into new weapons to bedevil the Infernal-ruled peoples of Creation. While these include giant monsters and clever predators, the worst threats are the subtlest, including such creatures as chakra orchids and heart wasps, and diseases like Green Rage

and White Sun Sickness. Still more bioweapons—prolific venomous plants, shapeshifting fungi and more—will emerge in years to come.

• **Air**: The lightning-shot tempest of the Pole of Air offers an impregnable defense. Planes cannot enter it without being torn apart, while nuclear warheads are but pinpricks against its vastness. Within that endless storm, the generals Nasri and Voharun plan their offensives against Creation, blasting Northern cities with icy cyclones or intercepting air travel with sudden tornadoes and lightning strikes. These assaults provide cover for subtler actions. Lightning-based air elementals have learned the trick of entering the power grid as electricity, while the cleverest explore the Internet as living information.

• **Water**: In the West, the mightiest divinities—Fakharu, Kireeki, Zhuzhiao and the rest—once ruled the oceanic deeps, raising cities of pelagothropes and aquatic spirits upon the seabed. But the Lintha undersea fleets proved too perilous, forcing a retreat to the Pole of Water. Elemental raiders emerge to attack shipping lanes, oil rigs and undersea mining operations, or to slip ashore and insinuate themselves into urban water supplies. In a recent coup, the goddess Rudhira captured a Meruvian nuclear submarine. Plans are underway to retrieve the submarine before its reactor can be weaponized.

Yu-Shan

Heaven is a dead city. All too many of her chatoyant towers have fallen. Looters have trod through the rest, thieving and burning. The vineyards have been torn down. Rotten stumps fill the peach gardens. In her stables, the celestial steeds are bones and dust.

Like all dead things, grisly animation lurks amid the rot. Packs of feral gods lurk in the ruins and stalk the nighttime streets. When two packs meet, flares of wild Essence fill the air along with shrieks of agony or triumph. Carrion-gods skulk in their wake.

A handful of civilized gods—such as the Black Puppet Mask and the Right Hand of Power—linger in hidden places, drawing on ancient magics for concealment and defense. These are few, for the depredations of the Infernals and their demon kin and the ravages of savage god-swarms have left few stones unturned. Nonetheless, they're valuable allies for gods and Exalts seeking primeval sorceries and forgotten secrets.

Covert meetings among supernatural beings are held in Yu-Shan on dire occasions. The heavenly city's impenetrable mists and mad denizens provide a neutral venue with unmatched secrecy. They also offer magnificent opportunities for treachery.

A Modern Underworld

The Abyssals have had centuries to tame the Underworld through personal power and a burgeoning mastery of necromancy. Their ruling council, the Black Nadir Concordat, has divided the realm into a patchwork of domains reflecting each deathknight's unique views and proclivities—skyscrapers of shadow and bone, xebecs sailing on seas of blood, lush ivory jungles where each tree trunk bears a ghost's living face. Wars between deathknights with discordant views make border regions even more nightmarish.

The Celestial Incarnae

The Infernals imprisoned the Sun and the Maidens on the celestial bodies bearing their names, there to witness the suffering of mortals and Exalts but be unable to intervene. Gaia was bound to the comet Gnosis and flung out among the stars. And though Luna escaped into the Wyld, her twin brother Autochthon suffers enough for both. Chained inside a crater on the dark side of the moon, he writhes in agony as Infernal-led scientists mine his enormous body for rare elements and theotechnological organ-systems to research such things as the Alchemical Exalted.

Down the Rabbit Hole

Creation is full of secrets to uncover and schemes to unravel. These range from the intricacies of mundane espionage to atrocities plotted by inhuman powers. Whether tasked by external agencies or acting on their own initiative, Exalted find themselves entangled with such scenarios and compelled to solve them—even if it means cutting the Gordian knot of espionage with Essence-enhanced violence.

Magadon

This biotechnology conglomerate researches and manufactures polymers, pharmaceuticals, diagnostic equipment, herbicides, pesticides, hormones and genetically modified food animals and seed crops. Headquartered in Gethamane, Magadon has offices, facilities and subsidiaries in a dozen countries, many of them linked to unethical or illegal activities.

Magadon is a front for Infernal genetic engineering research, most notably the creation of the Dragon-Blooded. Projects under development include addictive, psychosis-inducing combat drugs; biological weapons; human cloning; and genetic engineering projects to supplement or replace the Dragon-Blooded by splicing in demonic genes and Essence.

An experimental Essence reactor near Gethamane holds the imprisoned Elemental Dragon of Air, whose cells and Essence—used in the first Dragon-Blooded experiments—still generate new Air Aspects. The nightmares afflicting Gethamane's people rise from the dragon's agonies as invasive surgeries trouble its sorcerous slumber.

Other Noteworthy Organizations

• **Ashuki Corporation**: Based in the Coral archipelago, Ashuki pursues the cutting edge of computer science—bioinformatics, data mining, machine learning and so forth. The company's most advanced research projects—mandated by an Exalted patron—move beyond the cutting edge into unknown territory. Bionic implants, nanomachines, artificial intelligence, exocortices and more are under development in the white-lit Ashuki vaults. Their most dramatic success to date may be the ATSILUTH project: a system for uploading human minds into a persistent virtual reality matrix.

• **The Counters**: This widespread Freemasonry-like fraternal order maintains thousands of lodges hosting millions of members—largely wealthy professionals looking to network. The Counters help maintain the social order; one of their core principles is loyalty to one's lawful government. Conspiracy theorists ascribe them more sweeping powers, suggesting they control world governments from behind the scenes. While this is false, the Counters are riddled with secret societies serving various supernatural factions.

• **The Grass Spiders**: An offshoot of the now-defunct Guild Directorate, this rogue intelligence organization sells arms and intelligence—corporate, military and political—on the black market. Contacts in TUSC and other Eastern intelligence services, plus blackmailing of politicians and rival intelligence officials, allow them to function with relative impunity. The Spiders gather information and relics from the Primordial War, intending to reconstruct or retrieve enough of that era's world-shaking technologies to dominate the world.

• **JDG Cryogenics**: A firm that freezes and stores terminally ill clients in hopes of a future cure, JDG Cryogenics offers false hope. Some bodies stored in its vaults are used for medical and biothaumaturgic experimentation. Others—those few whose ailments have already proven amenable to treatment—are pithed to serve as permanent vessels for demonic possessors.

• **Project: Desus**: A joint research project operating out of several major universities, Project: Desus ostensibly studies human potential to manifest superhuman talents—clairvoyance, telepathy, precognition, etc. The project's actual purpose is to genetically engineer, selectively breed, recruit and train people with such abilities—plus god-blooded who've fallen through the cracks—and place them at the Infernals' disposal.

• **Shinmaic Order of the Serpent-and-Egg**: This esoteric mystical society pursues wisdom via thaumaturgy. As with certain Southern and Western religions, Shinmaic adepts seek communion with the shinma, the underlying principles that define Creation. The order's leadership has established contact with a power they believe to be Dharma—the pure and all-knowing—from which they take direction. The true source of their marching orders is unknown.

Character Creation in Exalted: The Modern Age

In general, characters created for play in the Modern Age are made according to the rules found in the **Exalted** corebook or in their respective Manuals of Exalted Power. A few particular concerns apply:

• The Modern Age uses both the Drive and Firearms Abilities, rules for which can be found in this book's Appendix.

• Casteless Lunars and Wyld Taint explicitly do not exist in the Modern Age. Characters wishing to wear moonsilver tattoos to protect them against external shape-changing must pay for the privilege; such tattoos are Artifact ••, and only function for Lunars.

• Dragon-Blooded are highly-trained, and use Lookshyan character creation rules. No characters use outcaste creation rules, as Dragon-Blooded do not Exalt "in the wild" in this shard… unless the Infernals have miscalculated…. (see the Dragon-Blooded Heritability sidebar, p. 120.)

• Breeding doesn't exist as a concept in the Modern Age. All Dragon-Blooded are considered to begin with Breeding 3 for the sole purpose of calculating their Essence pools; Breeding does not exist otherwise.

• Sidereals, benefitting from intense post-Exaltation training before assuming their duties, use their standard character creation rules.

• Abyssals have no access to the Liege Background or any equivalent thereof.

• Infernals do not have the Unwoven Coadjutor Background, or Unwoven Coadjutors in general.

• The following Backgrounds don't exist in the Modern Age: Celestial Manse, Class, Eidolon, Family, Manse, Reputation, Salary. Alchemicals also specifically lack access to Command, their specific version of Familiar (though they may take normal, corebook familiars), and Savant.

• Exalts in the Modern Age may not advance their Essence rating above 5.

• Sorcery is largely a forgotten art. Characters may only know sorcery at character creation with explicit Storyteller permission; even then, it is generally only likely to be found among the Infernal, Abyssal, Sidereal, and possibly Lunar Exalted. Necromancy is the sole province of the Abyssal Exalted at character creation.

APPENDIX

A THOUSAND LITTLE PIECES

Modern and Future Abilities

Modern and futuristic shards, such as Exalted: the Modern Age and Heaven's Reach, incorporate two new Abilities and see a slight repurposing of some existing Abilities.

New Abilities

Drive

Trait Description: Drive measures a character's ability to control a motorized vehicle at high speeds, from the cars and motorcycles of Exalted: the Modern Age to hovercrafts, speeder bikes, and other futuristic personal conveyances in Heaven's Reach. Drive also serves as a limit on a character's martial prowess when driving a vehicle. If a character's Drive is lower than the combat Ability she is using, she suffers an internal penalty equal to the difference between the two Abilities.

Specialties: Compact Cars, Trucks, Muscle Cars, Motorcycles, Speeders, Tailing, Daredevil Maneuvers, In Combat, Off-Road, Heavy Traffic.

Trait Effects: Someone with Drive 1 can guide a car through heavy traffic at speed. Someone with Drive 3 can weave through heavy traffic under aerial bombardment at top speed without a scratch. Someone with Drive 5 can jump a motorcycle from atop a tall building and into the open door of a helicopter to finish a chase scene—without scratching the paint.

Firearms

Trait Description: *This trait is important in combat.* Firearms allows the character to use all manner of guns, from the pistols and shotguns of Exalted: the Modern Age to the blasters and disruptors of Heaven's Reach, and their artifact equivalents.

Specialties: Pistols, Revolvers, Shotguns, Blaster Rifles, Disruptors, Duels, Sniping, While Driving

Trait Effects: Someone with Firearms 1 can head-shot the paper targets at the firing range. Someone with Firearms 3 can shoot the guns out of assailants' hands—while running.

Someone with Firearms 5 can keep a coin dancing in the air until she runs out of bullets, without disfiguring the coin.

Matters of Caste and Aspect

Certain Exalts inherently favor Drive and Firearms, considering them Caste/Aspect Abilities, as appropriate. They are listed as follows:

Drive: Eclipse, Moonshadow, Fiend, Earth, Journeys

Firearms: Dawn, Dusk, Slayer, Fire, Battles

However, this does not grant certain castes six Caste Abilities. Players of the above-mentioned Castes in settings which incorporate these additional Abilities must, during character generation, decide which five of the six Abilities they will take as their character's Caste/Aspect abilities. For example, an individual creating a Dawn Caste character in Exalted: the Modern Age might consider the rarity of bows and the ubiquity of guns in the setting, and decide to drop Archery from his character's list of Caste Abilities, keeping Firearms in its place.

Dragon-Blooded still enjoy their Aspected mote discount for Charms of the 'dropped' Ability, even if they gain no experience discount when buying its Charms and raising its rating.

Modified Abilities

Certain Abilities may see altered use within the context of certain shards.

• **Hacking (Lore):** Hacking a computer or a similar electronic device allows a character to gain unrestricted access to all its contents and functions, as arbitrated by the Storyteller. Doing so is a minute-long dramatic action in which the character rolls (Intelligence + Lore). The difficulty usually ranges from 1-5, based on the level of security used to protect the computer. An average person's home computer might be difficulty 1, a technical expert's might be difficulty 2-3, while computer systems owned by governmental organizations, intelligence groups, militaries, or technologically skilled Exalted could have a difficulty of 4-5, or even higher in exceptional situations. Hacking usually requires the character to have physical access to the computer he is attempting to gain control of. If he attempts to do so from another computer that is part of the same local network, he takes a -2 external penalty; if he does so from a remote network, the penalty rises to -4. Failed rolls cannot be retried unless the character is able to gain a greater situational advantage—obtaining more direct access to the computer he is attempting to hack, acquiring superior equipment, using magic, and so on.

Bypass Security (Lore/Larceny): Electronic security measures such as pass-coded locks, key card scanners, and biometric security can be bypassed with either an (Intelligence + Lore) roll or a (Dexterity + Larceny) roll. Lore-based attempts involve exploiting flaws in the programming of such devices to gain illicit access; Larceny-based attempts involve physical manipulation of the device. Difficulties range from 1-5 based on the sophistication of the security system, and characters suffer a -1 external penalty on the roll if they do not have appropriate tools.

• **Space Navigation (Lore):** Deep space navigation is also a Lore specialty, and Lore is used to plot courses across the stars.

• **Piloting (Sail):** Operating modern aircraft uses Sail, requiring at least two specialties in Aviation. These do not count toward the maximum number of specialties for the Ability. Operating spacecraft also uses Sail, although this is the default use for Sail in Heaven's Reach; traditional sailing vessels require two specialties in Nautical Engineering for anyone not raised on an aquatic world (in such cases, two specialties in Voidfaring are required to operate spacecraft). Again, this does not count toward a character's maximum number of specialties.

Unnatural Mental Influence Online

Exalted socialites can easily embed unnatural mental influence in letters, pamphlets, and books. However, doing the same with a social media update that will be read by hundreds of thousands is somewhat more difficult. Without the physical medium of a written text to contain its Essence patterns, unnatural mental influence conveyed through the Internet or other electronic means will slowly degrade as it is read by more and more people. Once an enchanted message has been read by a group of people with a Magnitude equal to its creator's (Essence + 2), these patterns of Essence dissipate into their component motes. While the written social attack itself remains, new readers will not be affected by any unnatural mental influence attached to it.

Rules Hacks

Exalted closely weds its rules to Creation and the Exalts who struggle over its fate. When transplanting the Chosen to other worlds and other cosmologies, some rules elements may feel out of place. Below, a number of rules hacks are presented to facilitate playing in the shards presented in this book, as well as creating shards of your own.

Rules Hack: Simple Sidereal Astrology

In the default **Exalted** setting, the magic of the Sidereal Exalted leans heavily on byzantine complexity of the Celestial Bureaucracy, which normally helps submit and process their astrological demands. What, then, are Sidereals to do in a shard where the Loom of Fate may be unrecognizably

different, or absent entirely? Presented below is a lightweight set of rules for handling Sidereal Astrology, intended for use in cosmologically different shards such as Heaven's Reach, or simply by Storytellers desiring a lighter astrology system for games set in Creation.

Colleges

Sidereals must still purchase College dots. In settings lacking a Bureau of Destiny from which to discover such knowledge, Sidereals learn their Colleges by studying the patterns of the starry vault and the movement of the stars belonging to the various constellations of auspicious destiny, or by study of other omens appropriate to the setting's cosmology.

Ascending and Descending Destinies

Sidereal Astrology may be used to lay blessings and curses, which can at times be difficult for recipients to distinguish. The Sidereal scribes a fate into destiny's design through a series of exact and exhausting command-prayers, and then infects himself with the ability to bestow the mandated destiny.

In order to create such a destiny, the Sidereal performs a 12-hour ritual during which his words and gestures bend fate and destiny into the desired shape. At the end of this period, he rolls (Charisma + Performance + [Relevant College]). (The Sidereal may not call upon a College in which he possesses no dots.) The difficulty of this roll is dictated by who he wants to lay the destiny on. If targeting mortals, the difficulty is 3 + the Magnitude of the mortals to be affected. If targeting an Essence-user, the difficulty becomes 3 + the being's Essence rating, +1 additional difficulty if the target is Exalted (this is also the difficulty for self-targeted effects). Mortals and Essence-users may not be simultaneously targeted by the same destiny, and Essence-users may only be targeted one at a time. Once the destiny has been successfully crafted, the Sidereal must touch his target (if a group of mortals, then a mortal belonging to the target group) for the destiny to take effect.

The Sidereal may add more dice to his roll by extending the duration of the ritual; for each additional full day spent crafting the destiny, the Sidereal adds one die to the final roll, to a maximum number of bonus dice equal to his Essence.

When crafting a destiny, the Sidereal declares a narrative he wishes to inflict on the target(s). For example, a Sidereal might craft a martial destiny wherein a Solar gunslinger is unstoppable in battle, so long as he remains faithful to his wife; or he could curse a merchant to ruin so long as he does business within the boundaries of Chiaroscuro, with fortune awaiting him across the sea in Lookshy.

Whenever the targeted character takes an action considered auspicious by the destiny, he enjoys a -1 TN reduction on his actions. Whenever he takes an inauspicious action, he suffers a +1 modifier to his Target Numbers. Actions irrelevant to the granted destiny are not modified, and these modifiers may not bring an action's TN below 6 or above 8.

Destinies must fall within the purview of the College empowering them; no College is so all-encompassing to give bonuses to all tasks or penalties to all actions. Destinies must also be structured as an edict of fate which imposes narrative power or constraint upon the target within the focus of the College. Storytellers should veto any destiny that strays outside of the themes of its governing College, or which is structured as a simple power bonus ("I fate myself to always strike with my bow!") rather than a tale of overriding destiny ("My aim shall be as true as my heart, so long as I never turn my hand against one who trusts me").

Ordinarily, an astrological destiny lasts one season, plus one month per threshold success above the difficulty of the roll to create it. The Sidereal may extend the destiny's duration by one year per point of Paradox voluntarily suffered during the roll. This price must be paid before the roll is made.

Crafted destinies are considered Shaping effects. They cannot be laid on a character with an active Shaping defense, and will not provide benefits or penalties while a Shaping defense is active, nor may they be laid on creatures outside of fate.

A character may have only a single crafted destiny at any time. New destinies automatically bump off any existing destiny.

Resplendent Destinies

Resplendent destinies are crafted in the same fashion as blessings and curses (a Charisma + Performance + [Relevant College] roll, taking the same amount of time). They last for a default of one month, plus one month per threshold success above the difficulty of the roll to create them, or until one Willpower point is spent to dismiss them permanently; this duration may be extended by one year for each point of Paradox voluntarily suffered during the roll. This price must be paid before the roll is made. A Sidereal may bear up to (Essence) resplendent destinies at once.

One effect point (which may be spent to activate resplendency powers) is gained for each threshold success on the activation roll. They otherwise work exactly as described in **The Manual of Exalted Power, Vol. III—The Sidereals**.

Paradox

In addition to the usual methods for gaining Paradox from resplendent destinies, Sidereals suffer two points of Paradox for a failed astrology roll of either variety, and five Paradox for a botched astrology roll. Sidereals also suffer a single point of paradox for attaching an ascending or descending destiny to an Essence-user (including themselves).

Rules Hack: Doom of the Black Exaltation

The following rules replace the rules for Resonance and Dark Fate found in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**. They are intended for use in the Gunstar Autochthonia, Heaven's Reach, and Exalted: the Modern Age shards, as well as any other shard where the Abyssal Exaltation's curse is carried in its very nature, rather than by ties to some external force such as the Neverborn. Storytellers may also wish to use these rules in default-setting **Exalted** series.

Resonance

Like other Chosen, Abyssals are cursed. Unlike their brethren, this is not the lingering death-curse of the slain Primordials, but an affliction arising from the deathly Essence that suffuses their body, soul, and Exaltation. Abyssals know this curse as the Black Resonance of the Grave, or Resonance for short—a shadow cast over their lives, which ensures that wherever they travel, death will follow close at their heels. Resonance can be fought, mitigated, even placated, but it can never be denied. So long as an Abyssal bears the Black Exaltation, he must always take steps to account for his nature, or risk being swallowed whole by the power of death.

Each Abyssal Exalt has a 10-point Resonance track. This works much like the Limit track of their Solar counterparts, but with some key differences.

Gaining Resonance

There are several means by which Abyssals accumulate Resonance:

- The Abyssal must define one Virtue he possesses at a rating of 3 or above as his primary Virtue. When he spends Willpower to defy this Virtue, he gains one point of Resonance.
- The first time in a scene the Abyssal spends Willpower to resist unnatural mental influence, he gains one point of Resonance.
- Whenever the Abyssal experiences the trigger condition of his Doom (see below), he must roll a number of dice equal to the rating of the Virtue associated with the Doom. He gains one Resonance per success.
- Siring or bearing a child with a living lover produces three points of Resonance upon the child's birth.
- Walking in Creation, among the living, without adopting the trappings of death (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**, p. 95) produces one point of Resonance at the end of a full week of masquerading as one of the living without respite. (Deathknight infiltrators may avoid this penalty so long as they privately retreat to surround themselves with the trappings of death for at least eight uninterrupted hours per week.)
- The Abyssal gains four points of Resonance after a month elapses in which he has not slain any sentient living creature, or permanently destroyed any spirit.
- The Abyssal gains one point of Resonance the first time during a scene he is adversely affected by a Holy effect.
- While the Abyssal may acknowledge or use his living name without automatically gaining Resonance, doing so exacerbates his potential to gain Resonance by other means. If he gains Resonance (or rolls to gain Resonance) in a scene where he has already acknowledged his living name, he automatically gains an additional point of Resonance. If he acknowledges his living name in a scene after he has already gained Resonance, then he gains an additional point upon doing so.

Losing Resonance

Abyssals may mitigate the build-up of Resonance by embracing their deathly nature, or spreading the power of death out of themselves and into the world around them.

- The Abyssal loses all Resonance once he recovers from being swallowed by his Doom (see below).
- The Abyssal loses three points of Resonance after spending a full month within the Underworld, or one point after a full month within a shadowland. Moving between the Underworld and shadowlands within a month without stepping out into Creation counts as time spent in a shadowland.
- Spending three days performing no significant exertions while surrounded by the trappings of death (sleeping in a crypt, wearing funereal garb, avoiding the sun, subsisting on only blood, lighting incense and singing hymns to the dead, etc) removes one point of Resonance.
- Permanently destroying a spirit or killing a sentient living being in order to protect or promote the Abyssal's Motivation or one of his Intimacies removes one point of Resonance (to a maximum of one point removed in this manner per day).

Resonance Bleed

As Resonance accumulates within the Abyssal's body and soul, its deathly power bleeds out into the world, producing eerie and unnerving phenomena. Such Resonance Bleed effects are generally under the control of the Storyteller, though players utilizing two or three-die stunts may incorporate cosmetic Resonance Bleed effects into the scene via dramatic editing. Resonance Bleed isn't constantly active, but comes and goes unpredictably while the Abyssal is within certain degrees of Resonance buildup. As a general rule, the higher the Abyssal's Resonance, the more frequently Resonance Bleed appears.

Resonance 1-2: Events conspire to cast the Abyssal in a sinister light, and ill omens dog his heels, but these events remain within the boundaries of possible coincidence. When he arrives in town, he will like as not pass a funeral procession on the road. When he opens the door

to a teahouse, the candles blow out. Gamblers experience runs of bad luck in his presence. In settings containing high technology, lights tend to dim when he appears.

Resonance 3-4: Minor unearthly effects manifest upon the Abyssal. His eyes may gleam or glow in unnatural hues, or his skin might grow ice-cold to the touch. His shadow could include monstrous features such as barbs or spines, or gesture menacingly and out of sync with the character's own movements. His reflection could appear twisted and monstrous, or he might cast no reflection at all. His voice could chime like mourning bells, or echo as though cast into a vast cavern.

Resonance 5-6: Level 3-4 Resonance Bleed effects become more common. Additionally, the character's presence begins to blight the world. Delicate plants may die at his touch. A cold wind could follow him about, stirring his hair and clothes and chilling those around him. Animals might begin to howl and panic in his presence, or raitons to crowd onto trees and rooftops wherever he lingers. What food he touches could become spoiled, curdling or exploding with maggots when cut into, while water he lingers near becomes brackish and stale, or freezes solid. Shadows stretch toward the Abyssal as though pulled in by some awful gravity, or bow down in his presence regardless of the actions of their owners.

In settings containing high technology, monitors and televisions may begin to display static, or sudden jump-cuts of disturbing imagery. Eerie wails emit from speakers, lighting flickers, and blood may drip from ventilation systems.

Resonance 7-9: At this level the character experiences near-constant level 3-4 Resonance Bleed effects, and frequent level 5-6 effects. Additionally, during moments of stress, emotion, or great concentration, truly frightening deathly manifestations may appear around him. All divine symbols within a mile might tarnish, crack, or shatter. If the deathknight peers into a mirror while incensed, it is likely to shatter or explode. The sky may grow dark and overcast, flickering with black or red lightning and blocking out the sun, building over the next hour to a terrible storm. Seas might grow becalmed, or could be stirred into violent froth. Corpses could whisper frantic prayers to the Abyssal's glory, or weeping red eyes might open in the shadows all around. Those sleeping where the Abyssal passes may be tormented by horrid nightmares in which the Exalt features prominently.

In settings containing high technology, video display systems may cease to function, displaying only images of ghosts, corpses, or other unnerving imagery. The voices of the dead can be heard from radios, speakers, and telephones. Electrical lighting fails entirely, or bulbs burst with no warning, while plumbing backs up and spits out blood, or other, less identifiable but still unwholesome substances.

The Curse: The Doom of the Abyssal Exalted

Each Abyssal carries a Doom, a deathly curse that consumes him when he reaches Resonance 10. This curse is chosen during character creation, and is tied to the Abyssal's primary Virtue (which must be a Virtue rated at 3+). Each Doom contains a trigger condition which may cause the Abyssal to gain Resonance (see above). Unlike the Great Curse which afflicts the Solar Exalted, Abyssals may not spend Willpower to mitigate the effects of their Doom, and experience no catharsis at its conclusion. While the Great Curse seems to its victims to be their own fault, a momentary lapse of control in which their passions break free and lead them to blind and terrible acts, there is nothing subtle about an Abyssal being swallowed by his Doom. He is in the grip of a curse, bent beneath the weight of his own terrible, deathly nature, and knows it.

Curses of Compassion

Doom of the Killing Saint

The Abyssal's heart breaks, then drowns in a rising tide of darkness. She cannot stand to witness an individual suffering, and acts to alleviate such misery as best she is able. If she cannot relieve an individual's sorrow by other means, then she sends them to the peace of the grave.

Duration: (Essence) days.

Trigger Condition: The character sees innocents suffering and is unable to effectively intervene.

Doom of the Black Sun

Undone by her keen empathy, the Abyssal is no longer able to withstand the constant awareness that she is an affront to the living Essence of Creation and a perversion of what her Exaltation was meant to be. She is driven to retreat from the light of the sun, for only shadows and the night can bring relief and hide her shame. The Abyssal must make a Willpower roll each action (difficulty 3) to take any action other than flee for the nearest available dark shelter when exposed to the direct light of the sun. She must spend a Willpower point to willingly leave such shelter and expose herself to sunlight. Exposure to diffused sunlight, such as on a heavily overcast day, or through heavy curtains, does not trigger the compulsion to flee, but imposes a -1 internal penalty on all actions.

Duration: (Essence) days.

Trigger Condition: The Abyssal experiences difficulty achieving her goals because of fear or rejection by the living.

Curses of Conviction

Doom of the Scorched Heart

The Abyssal's heart becomes as a burnt stone in his chest. He neither feels nor expresses emotion—in his actions he seems not robotic, but simply dead inside. He effectively has no Intimacies while this Doom is in effect, and considers only efficiency when selecting a course of action. This lack of tact also imposes a -2 internal penalty on all Social rolls.

Duration: (Essence) days.

Trigger Condition: The character's emotions lead him into a course of action he regrets.

Doom of the Cold Soul

The Abyssal falls into a state of "cold mind," emptying her thoughts of all but her goals and passions and proceeding with the single-mindedness of a restless spirit. She becomes incapable of acting on any matter that has no bearing on her Motivation or Intimacies, save to protect herself from direct assault. An Abyssal under this Doom will pass by a burning orphanage or the greatest of First Age treasures without comment or a second glance, if they have no relevance to her mission or those things she values.

Duration: (Essence) days.

Trigger Condition: The character suffers a personal setback because she allowed herself to be distracted from her goals.

Curses of Temperance

Doom of the Heart's Judge

The Abyssal's heart becomes a scale in which those around her are weighed and found worthy or wanting. Any individual who expresses disrespect for his ancestors or the dead in general, or who disdains his own life in her presence, she is compelled to slay.

Duration: (Essence) days.

Trigger Condition: The character suffers a significant setback due to the selfishness of others.

Doom of the Hungry Ghost

The Abyssal is filled with a great, aching, and uncontrollable hunger for life, and seeks to fulfill this need at all costs. She forgoes all other priorities to binge on the rudest of living pleasures, gorging on food, sex, and blood, as opportunities present themselves. A Temperance roll must be made to avoid fighting anyone who attempts to deny the Abyssal the pleasures she seeks.

Duration: One day.

Trigger Condition: The Abyssal must forego a worldly pleasure to avoid endangering others.

Curses of Valor

Doom of the Grave Blade

The character becomes an embodiment of death, answering those she feels pose a challenge to the grave through their bravado. Whenever she encounters a character that seems to have no fear of death, she must challenge them to battle. She slays those whose bravado exceeds their skill, but is compelled to devise some reward for those who are able to stand in the face of death's avatar and triumph (assuming she survives challenging them). This might mean slaying a personal enemy on the fighter's behalf, or perhaps bequeathing her daiklave to the mighty one.

Duration: One day, or until she has appropriately rewarded an individual who defeated her.

Trigger Condition: Another individual expresses a lack of fear of death in the character's presence, with apparent sincerity.

Doom of the Eternal Knight

Having been to the cusp of death and returned, the Abyssal is without fear. Convinced that she is death's master, she recklessly places herself in the forefront of battle, challenges enemies without regard to their strength, and tackles missions regardless of the danger involved. She will not retreat or back down under any circumstances.

Duration: (Essence) days.

Trigger Condition: The character's valor is impugned.

Rules Hack: Modern Alchemicals

These rules exist to describe the unique, flesh-and-blood Alchemicals of the Exalted: the Modern Age shard. However, they might also be used to detail strange evolutions of Alchemical nature brought about by exposure and adaptation to Creation in default-setting **Exalted** games.

Flesh and Brass

Exalted: the Modern Age Alchemicals are the result of an Exaltation Core merging with a living host, imbuing her with a fusion of Lunar and Autochthonic power. Visually, a Modern Alchemical looks to be a human wearing a suit of biomechanical body armor—or fused with it. Her Charms are visible as weapons and utility devices threaded through the armor and her flesh. The Exaltation Core's Essence Gem adorns her forehead. Without Charms such as Integrated Artifact Transmogrifier and Husk-Sculpting Apparatus, she cannot be mistaken for a mortal.

With Great Power

Because Modern Alchemicals are fully biological beings, rather than artificial bodies housing living souls, they grow and advance in the same fashion as other Exalted. That is to say, they need spend no time in the Vats or any other such facility having their Attributes or Essence rating expanded by technicians; these things advance naturally. Likewise, they are able to envision new Charm templates for their Alchemical armor without outside interference. Raising traits and learning new Charms takes the same time as for Lunar Exalted. Growing a new Charm Slot takes the same amount of time as learning a Charm.

Modern Alchemicals do not become Colossi or cities at any point in their physical and spiritual development.

Dormancy

Modern Alchemicals do not store their Charms externally. Instead, all Alchemical Charms exist as pattern matrices stored within their Exaltation Core—potential configurations the Exaltation might adopt.

Having no Vats to retreat to, a Modern Alchemical wishing to change her Charm load-out must instead enter Dormancy. She uses a Speed 7, DV -2 miscellaneous action to dismiss her Exaltation into Elsewhere, where it reconfigures itself according to her wishes. This takes the same amount of time it would take a traditional Alchemical to have her Charms swapped out at the Vats.

During Dormancy, the Alchemical is mortal, save that she continues to soak lethal damage and heal as an Exalt, retains her heightened Essence rating, and retains the extra health levels she gets for being an Alchemical. Additionally, she continues to suffer from any Clarity inflicted by her Exemplar Charms. This persists until the Exaltation returns bearing a new template without those Charms.

Forcibly ending Dormancy prematurely is possible, requiring a Speed 7, DV -2 miscellaneous action. This restores the Exaltation with the Charm template it had loaded before being dismissed, but doing so damages its synchronization with the Alchemical, leaving her effective Essence rating reduced by one for (28 – Willpower) days.

Modern Alchemicals may also enter Dormancy without intending to change their Charm loadout, to avoid drawing attention in public. Doing so banishes the Exaltation for a fixed duration of 12 hours, at which point it automatically returns.

Protocol Weaving and Sorcery

Modern Alchemicals do not use Man-Machine or God-Machine Protocols; instead, they learn sorcery, as do other Exalts. A Modern Alchemical must still obtain a Man-Machine Weaving Engine to cast Terrestrial Circle spells, and a God-Machine Weaving Engine to cast Celestial Circle spells. The Solar Circle of sorcery is barred to them.

Chases

A pair of Solar detectives hop into their muscle car, careening down the street after a Lunar jewel thief. An Alchemical Voidfighter pilot brakes hard around an asteroid, to turn the tables on a pursuing Hellstar. When Exalted grab the wheel, there is no telling how many suspensions will be busted, how many fruit stands obliterated, and how many cars sideswiped. Not until it's all over and you can assess the carnage.

Chases are made up of one or more *legs*, discrete environments through which the action proceeds towards an exit. A burning warehouse may be one leg, while the busy streets outside are another. Each leg of a chase is an extended dramatic action, with a cumulative difficulty based on how complex the environment is and how far it is to the exit. Roll intervals are usually one minute, and face a difficulty that reflects how hard it is to maneuver through the scene. See page 122 of **Exalted** for the basics of dramatic and extended actions.

Multiple characters and vehicles may attempt to achieve mutual success in a chase, as when a squad of police cars tear through downtown after a fugitive. Instead of resolving each pursuer's actions separately, the Storyteller should allow the whole group to participate in limited teamwork (see **Exalted**, p. 125). However, should multiple participants break off

into what can only be described as completely separate legs, even if the chases are simultaneous, the Storyteller is advised to resolve them as separate chases entirely rather than as teamwork.

Resolving Chases

The heart of a chase are its legs. The Storyteller sets the scene and its pace, guiding why and how the participants act. While it may be the Storyteller's inclination to provide one, a map is not necessary. A chase scene is about the need for a beat cop to catch a mugger, and the camaraderie of a squadron of Voidfighter pilots. Where these conflicts take place is used to support the story and move it along, but it is not the focus.

To start each leg of a chase, the Storyteller should set the scene by describing the overall terrain, the obstacles and advantages it presents, and provide a cumulative difficulty based on that context. A Storyteller may come up with any number of methods to translate distance and difficulties into a specific value, but generally a cumulative difficulty of 20 is sufficient. Where the complexities lie are the difficulties of each roll and the actions of the participants.

Difficulty 1 chases are easy to navigate. They occur on flat planes with no remarkable obstructions. **Difficulty 2** chases will require some maneuvering just to finish, due to some sharp turns, blinding smoke, or crowds of people one must avoid (even if only to keep from jamming up the car's wheel wells). **Difficulty 3** chases are nearly impossible to finish in a timely manner for normal people: Drivers must weave through traffic jams, find ways across aquifers, or swerve around the collapsing sections of an old bridge. **Difficulty 4** chases make legends of those who can survive to complete them, involving death-defying jumps and alleys too narrow for any but a hero to careen through at 90mph. Chases at **difficulty 5** take things one step further, requiring clearly heroic actions, to slam a car onto a swinging arm crane to cross a chasm, or tilting a car up on two wheels to squeeze between buildings. Races of **difficulty 6+** are possible, but they are quite unique, and are often the result of magic.

At each interval, every participant makes a (Dexterity + Drive) roll against the given difficulty, accruing threshold successes to achieve the cumulative difficulty and exit the leg of the chase. Failure represents an inability to make any significant progress toward the exit.

Characters may attempt or be targeted by fancy maneuvers, known as Chase actions. These cause a character to accumulate **hazard**. If a leg is particularly dangerous, the Storyteller may decide that simply participating in the chase accrues one or even two hazard each interval. Once a character reaches 10 points of hazard, they crash, tumble, pierce their fuel tank, find a dead end, or are otherwise removed from the race. Hazard is released at the end of each leg, like the tension snapping out of a cable, causing damage to the vehicles as they burst from one setting into another.

Other Chases

To save space and improve readability, these rules refer to car chases primarily, but they are useful for more than that. A mad dash through the woods on horseback may use Ride instead of Drive, while characters on foot use their Athletics. Large vehicles, from caravels at sea to frigates in space, use (Wits + Sail).

These rules are not restricted to use where one party pursues another, either. They may also model straightforward competitions like a foot race, or attempts to maneuver for advantage in a running battle on land or sea, or even in the sky—any scene in which movement is the focus of conflict. It is even possible the Storyteller may call for more unusual Attributes on which to base a chase, such as using Stamina to outlast competitors in a marathon, or Strength to crash through a series of walls.

At the End of the Leg

In a simple, single-legged race to the finish, once a character exits the leg they need no further aid. They won! Depending on the context, most chases are more complex than that, and rarely involve a single leg.

A character that has completed a leg does not immediately move on to the next one, though they may use the time their competitors spend catching up to gain an advantage. For each interval that they wait on the others, the character may convert one point of their accumulated hazard into a benefit. A single point can become a bonus success towards the cumulative difficulty of the next leg, which is often a great choice for fugitives trying to escape multiple pursuers. If the character is attempting to escape pursuit and has completed the leg before all pursuers, accruing five of these early successes before any pursuers complete the leg allows the fugitive to escape entirely.

Three points of hazard, banked over three intervals, can become an extra point of hazard imposed on the next enemy to complete the leg. This is the best choice for pursuers wishing to stop their quarry, or for fugitives wishing to escape a single pursuer, as ending the leg with 10 hazard is just as disastrous as accruing it normally in the middle of the race.

Once all participants have completed the leg or dropped out, any remaining hazard points are converted into dice of bashing damage rolled against a character's vehicle, which ignore soak and hardness. This continues until the victory conditions of the chase have been met, or the participants move into a different form of conflict or lose interest.

Dogfights

The rules here can be used for more than simple pursuit and evasion, as has already been noted. When foes jockey for position amongst the clouds and stars, or even back on the mean streets, the conflict lives in who gains the advantage of the surrounding environment, not any individual attack. Of course in the end, advantages won in dogfights and car wars are more and better attacks. Attack Chase Actions are merely pot shots and rare opportunities, but during engagements between Voidfighters, concentrated Essence blasts fly fast and heavy. To reflect this greater focus on fast-paced combat, the Storyteller may wish to shorten roll intervals and set the cumulative difficulty for some of the chase's legs as low as 10.

At the end of a leg during a dogfight, as an alternative to imposing an additional point of hazard on a straggler by ablating three of her own hazard points, a participant may gain the opportunity of unleashing a normal combat action of her choice against the chosen target. This action may include a flurry of Attacks, from both the pilot and her passengers, and any valid Charm activations they could make. As with the Attack Chase Action, any close combat attacks or similar actions performed through this advantage increase their difficulties by +2.

Bonuses and Penalties

The most common bonuses during a chase are stunts, while the most common penalties tend to come from mounting vehicle damage. Here are some others:

Control Rating: In a chase, if it is higher than its rider's Ride rating, the difference is applied as an internal penalty on the rider's rolls. See **Exalted**, p. 154 for a list of suggested Control Ratings.

Endurance: Vehicles tend not to get tired; they simply keep going until they run out of fuel. When resolving a foot chase or mounted pursuit, the strenuous activity may be exhausting. Each leg of a chase, or every 10 minutes of chasing for a long-term pursuit, should impose a cumulative -1 internal penalty from fatigue.

Maneuverability: Vehicle maneuverability applies normally.

Movement rate: While speed is vital in pursuit, evading capture, or just winning a race, the ability to navigate a leg is more important. That said, raw speed is valuable. For every full 10 yards per tick by which a participant exceeds their fastest competitor, they may gain one bonus die on their rolls. Remember that when moving as a group, a team is always as fast as its slowest member. For chases involving exceptionally fast vehicles, the Storyteller may scale up the increment of speed necessary to accrue bonuses. Usually, movement rate should not afford more than five bonus dice per roll.

Conversely, participating in a chase with a very slow vehicle can be difficult. For every full 10 yards per tick slower a car is than its slowest competitor, that car's driver may suffer a -1 internal penalty on their interval rolls. If this penalty would exceed -3, they are likely too slow to meaningfully participate in the chase.

Chase Actions

Normally, resolving an interval in a chase requires a simple (Dexterity + Drive) roll. With a supporting stunt, a character may perform one of a special set of maneuvers. A player cannot just declare he is taking a Dangerous Maneuver action; he must describe the risky driving his character is using, whether this is rushing under an oncoming eighteen-wheeler or ramping off a raised draw-bridge. These are not flurries, but rather a more complex version of the normal action used to participate in a chase. Unless noted otherwise, they also require the usual Drive roll. These actions may also require other rolls, all of which are reflexive. When taking one of these actions, it modifies the roll difficulty for that interval, as well as causing the character to accrue points of hazard.

Activate Charm

Difficulty: +1; **Hazard:** +0 or +1

An Activate Charm action allows the character to invoke any Simple Charm with an activation time measured in short ticks. If the interval of the car chase is five minutes or greater, he can also use Charms with long-tick activation. Alternatively, he can designate another character in the car to activate a Charm.

If the Charm is activated by a passenger, this action imposes no hazard. If activated by the driver, it adds +1 hazard.

Attack

Difficulty: +1 or +2; **Hazard:** +2 or +3

An Attack action allows a character to reflexively make a single attack after his interval roll. He can make the attack with any weapon on his person or built into his vehicle, or simply try to ram his opponent's car. Only a single attack can be made unless he uses an Extra Action Charm to create a magical flurry. Alternatively, he can designate any other character in the car to make the Attack for the interval.

Since chase scenes use abstract measures of distance, it can be difficult to assess the engagement ranges of characters. In general, participants in the current leg of a chase can target each other with any ranged weapons at their disposal. Close combat weapons can only be used to Attack as long as the target has less than a six success lead.

If the Attack is made with a close combat weapon, this action adds +2 to the difficulty of the interval's roll. If made with a ranged weapon, it only adds +1 difficulty.

If the Attack is made with vehicle-mounted weaponry, or by a passenger, the hazard from this action is only +2. If made with a personal weapon by the driver, it is +3.

Cautious Driving
Difficulty: +0; **Hazard:** -1

A character can drive cautiously to recover from a dangerous situation or regain their composure in a heated chase. When a character succeeds on his interval roll while using Cautious Driving, he may spend any or all of his threshold successes to remove hazard points on a one-for-one basis instead of adding them to his cumulative total. Regardless, this action reduces the character's hazard by one even if it fails.

Close In
Difficulty: +1; **Hazard:** +1

An aggressive driver can force his opponent into dangerous situations, or wear down his will with risky mind games. A pursuing character might tailgate his target or attempt to push them off road, while a fugitive might reverse directions to play a high-stakes game of chicken. Whenever a character uses a Close In action, he attempts to force his opponent into taking extra points of hazard—but suffers the same risk himself. Whichever character achieves the least threshold successes during the interval gains an extra three points of hazard.

Cunning Maneuver
Difficulty: +1; **Hazard:** +1

A character who takes a Cunning Maneuver attempts to gain a tactical advantage in the chase by exploiting his surroundings. He might lead the chase onto streets he knows by heart, drive through a distracting spectacle like a festival, or drift across multiple lanes to lose a persistent tail. Doing so adds a three-die circumstance bonus to his roll on the next interval—or imposes a -3 dice internal penalty on his opponent's roll, if this better represents the nature of his tactical advantage.

Dangerous Maneuver
Difficulty: +0; **Hazard:** +2

A character taking a Dangerous Maneuver drives with deliberate recklessness, forcing their opponent to take the same risks if they wish to keep up. A fugitive might ramp his car over a raised drawbridge or cross over into the wrong lane to drive around traffic, while a pursuer might take a tight back-alley shortcut or simply push his car as fast as it can go. Doing so adds 2 automatic successes to his interval roll, unless his opponent accepts two extra hazard to match his risky advantage with their own.

Stalk/Hide
Difficulty: +1; **Hazard:** +1

Sneaky drivers can blend in with their surroundings to catch an opponent unawares. Pursuers might follow their target from far behind or stalk them through side streets, while a fugitive might try to double back to lose their tail or blend in with traffic. On an interval where a character takes a Stalk or Evade action, the usual (Dexterity + Ride) rolls are replaced with his (Wits + Stealth) against his opponent's (Perception + Awareness). If he succeeds on the roll and follows up with an Attack action on the next interval, his attack becomes unexpected. A car can only stay hidden for so long, however. Each use of this action imposes a cumulative -1 internal penalty on all further uses for the rest of the scene. When both characters take a Stalk/Evade action, the one with the higher (Wits + Stealth) takes precedence.

Weave
Difficulty: +1; **Hazard:** +1

A driver under attack can weave through his surroundings, turning them into tactical cover. Garbage cans, cabbage stalls, innocent bystanders—any of these can shield a car in fast pursuit. Doing so adds a +3 cover bonus to the DVs of the character's vehicle on that interval, and to the DVs of all characters in it.

Autoklave (Artifact •••)
Repair: 2

Autoklaves resemble two thin, traditional daiklaves, with wicked, rotating metal teeth strung between them on rotors. The motor in its hilt hums with potential, but only roars into action when the wielder joins battle (imposing a -1 external penalty on their attempts at hiding). These chewing teeth lend the weapon more damage than a normal daiklave, and negate the external penalty for attempting to maim a target (see Exalted, p. 152). In addition, the wielder may pay 3m in Step 1 of an attack to tighten the chain and speed the rotors, causing the weapon to bite into flesh deeply and savagely. Should the enhanced attack inflict two or more levels of lethal damage, the wound penalty of the target is increased by one for the rest of the scene. This power doesn't stack, and is incompatible with others that increase wound penalties; only the best takes effect.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Defense	Rate	Minimums	Cost	Attune	Tags
5	+2	+7L/2	+2	3	Str ••	•••	7	O

Note: Autoklaves are found within the Gunstar, Heaven's Reach, and Modern shards, as well as in Autochthonia within the traditional setting, where some Champions prefer them as a classic alternative to beamklaves.

Guns

Emblems of modern conflicts both physical and moral, guns (and their futuristic counterparts, blasters), can replace the daiklave as the typical Exalted weapon in modern settings. Despite their reach and power, guns remain only a single option in the **Exalted** arsenal. An arrow to the gut can be just as fatal as a bullet, to say nothing of being crushed by a car or grand goremaul.

Unless otherwise noted, it takes a Speed 5, DV -2 miscellaneous action to reload a gun or blaster, usually by simply swapping out an empty magazine or power pack for another. Other weapons, notably revolvers and barrel-loading hunting rifles, require a miscellaneous action to reload two or three bullets individually, barring special equipment such as a speed-loader.

Firearms Complications

New Tag: Strafing (St)

Weapons with this tag may be used to make Strafing Attacks. These are identical to normal Attack actions, save that each one counts as two attacks for the purposes of subsequent multiple action penalties, DV penalties, Rate, and Extra Action Charms; and as three attacks for purposes of Simple, Supplemental and Reflexive Charm use, and ammo consumption.

In exchange, the attacker can apply the attack simultaneously against up to three targets that are within five yards of each other.

Armor-Piercing Rounds

The Piercing tag may be added to most pistols and rifles, by purchasing armor-piercing bullets. Doing so increases the Resources cost of ammo by one, and sale of such bullets is often restricted or illegal.

Sights

As one of the most stable platforms for ranged attacks to begin with, it can be hard to find ways to improve Firearms weapon performance. Guns benefiting from scopes and laser sights do not increase their normal attack traits. Instead, such additions make Aim actions easier; the first tick of Aiming provides the usual single bonus die, while the second tick of aiming provides two more, for a total of three. Three remains the maximum number of bonus dice available from Aim actions. See **Exalted**, p. 142 for more on Aim actions.

Scopes and laser sights do not appreciably increase the cost of a weapon. Most rifles come with a scope.

MUNDANE GUNS

Assault Rifle

Assault rifles are about three and a half feet in length, with more complex mechanisms near the stock to afford higher rate of fire than other rifles. Typically meant for active military service, they tend to be sturdy so that they can withstand exposure to the elements. Assault rifle ammunition is typically stored in magazines, but they may also be belt-fed.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+1	7L	4	100	30	Str ••	•••/•	2, St

Heavy Machine Gun

Heavy machine guns can be up to five feet long, allowing their heavier ammunition to travel as far or farther than the bullets of smaller, lower-powered rifles. Their rate of fire is even higher than other automatic weapons, and since size and weight are less of a concern, they carry much more ammo. They are typically fixed in place, on a rotating mount or on a tripod. Heavy machine guns tend to draw ammunition from underslung boxes mounted just ahead of the trigger, or to the side of a slot that allows them to be belt-fed for more indefinite ammunition usage.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+2	7L	5	100	100	Str •••	••••/••	2, St

Heavy Pistol

Heavy pistols are typically around eight inches long, though "hand cannons" might be upwards of a foot in length. Amongst the most widely used and available weapons in the world, heavy pistols are the side arms of nearly every police force, and even non-combat military officers are often issued one. Heavy pistols use magazines of bullets.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+0	6L	3	50	9	Str ••	••/–	–

Holdout Pistol

Holdout pistols are very small guns, around half a foot in length. To further compact their size, they have very limited ammo capacity. They are backup weapons, meant for being hidden on one's person in case of danger or to prevent being completely disarmed when larger weapons are lost. To save space, most holdout pistols are reloaded one bullet at a time.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+0	5L	3	25	3	Str •	•/–	*

* Holdout pistols are especially small, granting a +2 dice equipment bonus to Larceny rolls to conceal them on one's person.

Hunting Rifle

Hunting rifles fill a role between the assault and sniper rifles, built to deliver damaging blows at great distance, but not quite so specifically designed for extreme range, single-target missions. They are light weight enough for carrying on extended treks in search of prey, and their ammunition, while powerful, is still small enough to be relatively cheap. Models meant for quick reloading typically have small ammo capacity, using hand-sized cartridges that hold six bullets. Barrel-loading models can hold nearly two dozen bullets, but must be reloaded one bullet a time.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+1	8L	2	200	6*	Str ••	•••/•	2

* The ammo and tags given are for cartridge-loading rifles. A barrel-loading rifle has Ammo 20, but each bullet must be loaded individually.

Revolver

These iconic firearms represent both the early eras of gunplay and the spread of cheap guns in the modern era. They are around seven to ten inches in length, with a revolving chamber in front of the grip into which each bullet is individually inserted. Speed-loading devices are manufactured to allow reloading with the speed of magazine and cartridge replacement.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+0	5L	2	40	6	Str •	•/–	S

Rocket Launcher

Strikingly simplistic looking personal artillery, rocket launchers are long tubes, hefted over the shoulder to deliver vicious devastation on the battlefield. They often change combat situations simply with their intimidating presence. Exceptional rocket launchers are usually models incorporating laser painting and computer guidance systems.

Rocket launcher missiles are each reloaded with a miscellaneous action. This may be mitigated by adding a sliding missile rack, which is a Resources ••• purchase, increasing the weapon's Ammo to 4 and removing the S tag.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
7	-2	10L	1	200	1	Str •••	•••/••	2, P, S

Shotguns

Shotguns are best known for the use of birdshot, firing clouds of pellets that disperse to improve accuracy while sacrificing killing power. This is less of a concern for hunters, who make extensive use of shotguns, but can be compensated by using slug rounds. Slug rounds do not disperse, but they are typically soft and deform on impact, inflicting greater harm than individual pellets when they do hit. Other slugs may be made of rubber or similarly soft materials to inflict less harm, for purposes of non-lethal crowd control.

Name	Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
Combat	5	+2	5L	3	15	8	Str ••	•••/–	2, St *
Double-barreled	6	+2	5L	2	15	2	Str ••	•/–	2, St *
Pump-action	6	+2	5L	2	15	6	Str ••	••/–	2, St *

* Shotguns firing pellets apply long range penalties to damage rolls as well as attack rolls, and against inanimate objects their base Damage is halved. Shotguns firing slugs lower their Accuracy to +1 and lose the St tag, but increase their Damage to 7L and Range to 30. Softer slug rounds can be substituted to similar effect, inflicting bashing damage instead of lethal.

Sniper Rifle

Like most rifles, the sniper rifle is roughly three to four feet long, with a stock and scope. Sniper scopes are carefully calibrated, and their longer and precisely machined barrels lend themselves to high accuracy. Combined with higher caliber ammunition, they are ideal for taking out key targets from long distances.

Some sniper rifles are built to be easily taken apart and stored in carrying cases, for easy transport and infiltration. It takes about a minute to take the rifle apart or put it back together. Because of the rifle's size, only large briefcases can hold the entirety of the disassembled gun.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+2	9L	1	400	6	Str ••	••••/••	2

Stun Gun

Stun guns may be small devices shooting crackling arcs of electricity, or they might shoot tiny darts that dig into flesh, allowing attached wires to carry a jolting current into the target. Depending on their specific method of delivery, stun guns are reloaded using small batteries or cartridges.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+0	6B + stun*	1	10	1	Str •	•/–	F, S **

* Targets that suffer at least one level of damage from a stun gun, no matter their Stamina, must resist being stunned (see Exalted, p. 153), at a minimum difficulty of 3.

** Stun guns may be wielded in hand-to-hand combat with the Melee Ability. Doing so does not consume ammunition.

Submachine Gun

Submachine guns are a compromise between the firing rate of an assault rifle and the stopping power of handgun bullets. They are around two feet in length and fairly light weight. They are still best used two-handed, and are reloaded using magazines.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+0	6L	4	50	30	Str ••	••/•	2, St

Mundane Blasters

Blasters, laser pistols, disruptors. These are futuristic energy weapons that benefit from fewer moving parts, less need for maintenance, and easier reloading. They are fueled by power packs, batteries of a universal nature that can be used with any type of blaster weapon.

Blasters are traditional pulp and science-fantasy laser pistols, firing bolts of energy that fly through the air. **Disruptors** are more insidious weapons, firing less coherent beams of energy that are more effective against armor, with the drawbacks of being less accurate and draining more of the weapon's power.

Blaster Rifle

The blaster rifles' size—around three to four feet in length—allows it to incorporate a more efficient battery interface, as well as a more powerful projectile system.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+2	7L	3	50	100	Str ••	•••/•	2

Blaster Pistol

Blaster pistols are the typical sidearm for both space-faring rogue and soldier. They are the iconic energy weapon, a single-barrel energy caster about eight inches long. They give up range and power for ease of use and transport.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+1	5L	3	30	50	Str •	••/•	–

Heavy Repeating Disruptor

Set apart from other energy weapons, the heavy repeating disruptor sports two barrels and enormous heat sinks, allowing it to quickly disperse deadly rays over a large area. Compact models may be as short as three feet, though since this does not make them lighter or much easier to transport, most models are four feet long.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+0	6L	4	50	50	Str ••••	••••/•	2, P, St

Holdout Blaster

Like its slugthrower counterparts, holdout blasters are meant to be hidden, to ensure that a weapon is available when disarmed of other options.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
5	+1	4L	3	10	20	Str •	•/•	*

* Holdout blasters are especially small, granting a +2 dice equipment bonus to Larceny rolls to conceal them on one's person.

Long Disruptor

Long disruptors are the result of attempts to extend blaster ranges; energy dispersal is inevitable, turning the weapons into death rays rather than more precise "projectile" throwers. They penetrate armor well as a result, but require much more energy per shot. They are extremely long rifles, with a minimum length of four feet.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Cost	Tags
6	+1	7L	2	100	30	Str ••	••••/•	2, P

Artifact Guns: Shellcasters

While the first value under Cost for artifact guns are their Artifact ratings, the dots after the slash indicate the Resources cost of filling the weapon with mundane ammo.

Grand Shellcaster (Artifact •••)

Most grand shellcasters resemble outsized versions of normal assault rifles. They are at least four feet long, from barrel tip to shoulder rest. The barrel of the gun is an alloy of a magical material and steel, with precise and auspiciously patterned rifling to send a bullet on its way with more impact at greater speed and range. It is traditional to hold the weapon in a standard rifle grip, with one hand on the barrel's stabilizing hold, but when firing from the hip Exalted often use the carrying hook on top.

While the barrel is noticeably longer than that of a mundane assault rifle, what ensures that no one can mistake a grand shellcaster for an ornate mortal gun is the elaborate housing of the firing mechanisms that make up the heart of the weapon. Nearly the size of a child's torso, its exterior best resembles a shrine. What appear to be arched portals for supplicants, depending on their orientation, are slots for ammunition magazines or for pouring bullets into the hopper.

The weapon's two hearthstone settings are usually situated on the stock, but they may also be mounted on the main housing of the gun.

Like a mundane assault rifle, grand shellcasters are magazine or belt fed.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+2	9L/3	4	150	100	Str •••	6	•••/•	2, O, St

Warstorm Shellcaster (Artifact •••)

Warstorm shellcasters are roughly the size and shape of a small man, with two enormous barrels mounted on a firing mechanism and ammo hopper. They are unlovely by the standards of most artifact guns, boxy and crude since an artificer's effort must go into harnessing the destructive will of the gun's least god. This angers the spirit, but anyone clever enough to successfully build a warstorm shellcaster channels the god's rage, vindictively enhancing the stopping power and accuracy of the shellcaster's bullets.

Though relatively simple looking, warstorm shellcasters are sophisticated machinery. A large slot on the side of the gun allows it to be reloaded entirely with a miscellaneous action, despite the prodigious amount of bullets it can hold. It is not fitted with magazine mounts or a belt feed; instead, the gunner simply tosses the right type of bullet in the hole. The shellcaster sorts out the rest.

Warstorm shellcasters have space for mounting up to two hearthstones.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+2	9L/3	5	200	300	Str •••••	7	•••/•••	2, O, St

Shellcaster (Artifact ••)

Most deserving of the moniker "hand cannon", the standard shellcaster is an artifact heavy pistol. The smallest of them are slightly bigger than the largest mundane pistol, while the greatest are as big as a man's thigh. Being their most visible part, the end of a shellcaster's barrel is often highly stylized, usually in the form of a dragon's maw or sunburst. There is a spot on the grip for mounting a hearthstone. Shellcasters are loaded with magazines.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+1	8L/2	3	50	15	Str ••	5	••/–	O

Divine Shout Trigger (Artifact •)

Divine shout triggers are the smallest artifact guns, usually about the same size as their mundane equivalent, the holdout pistol. They may even be styled to look like a mundane weapon, though they are just as likely to be shaped like a twisting dragon, a hefty lightning bolt, or a wicked talon. Divine shout triggers may be loaded one bullet at a time, or with small cartridges.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+0	6L/2	3	30	5	Str •	3	•/–	O *

* Divine shout triggers are especially small, granting a +2 dice equipment bonus to Larceny rolls to conceal them on one's person.

Behemoth Heartpiercer (Artifact ••)

The behemoth heartpiercer is short for an artifact rifle, with a barrel only two and a half feet long. Made for easy transport through the wilderness while still affording extreme range, they are usually imbued with powdered gems resonant with birds of prey, bloodhounds or wolves. Though it provides no proven benefit over such admixtures, the most sought after behemoth heartpiercers have had their least gods eaten and replaced by a hunting spirit. Behemoth heartpiercers are loaded with magazines.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+2	10L/2	2	300	30	Str ••	6	••/•	2, O *

* When the target of a behemoth heartpiercer attack has been deliberately tracked or hunted by the wielder in the past day (see **Exalted**, pp. 139-140), the attack gains the Piercing tag, and that tag applies even against natural soak.

Six-Heart Stormspitter (Artifact •)

One of the simplest designs for artifact guns, six-heart stormspitters can vary in size from that of a mundane handgun to enormous weapons, impossible for a mortal to wield. Smaller models can be used by mortals as their mundane equivalent, the revolver (see 141). Because of the tradition and personalized nature lent more to these older styles of guns, as well as how easy it is to load the cylinder with a variety of bullets, six-heart stormspitters are often the weapon of choice for Exalted who make extensive use of bullets with unique magical capabilities. Such bullets almost always rely on the attunement of the weapon to work properly.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+1	6L/2	3	40	6	Str •	4	•/–	O *

* Six-heart stormspitters are often created in pairs; using paired weapons allows the wielder to ignore the off-hand penalty to his attacks.

Dragon's Roar Cannon (Artifact •••)

The simplest dragon's roar cannons are hardly more than featureless metal tubes, their auspicious construction and enchantments flinging missiles farther and with greater force than their mundane counterpart, the rocket launcher. Some dragon's roar cannons are more elaborate, with hefty aiming computers, cyclotrons that impart their force to the projectile, and miniature factories inside that paint the missile with a friction-reducing polymer the instant before it is fired. Regardless of their apparent complexity, they are always at least three feet long and about a half foot wide, hefted onto the shoulder for proper firing.

Like a mortal rocket launcher, a dragon's roar cannon requires that a character load each missile with a miscellaneous action. While the standard dragon's roar cannon can hold two missiles, it may be equipped with a rack that can hold up to three additional missiles.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
7	-1	12L/4	1	300	2	Str •••	8	•••/••	2, O, P

Reaping Shellcaster (Artifact ••)

Reaping shellcasters sport two relatively short, two-foot barrels, wide and dark with ominous promise. These sit against a loading and firing mechanism that has an underslung box for reloading, which are often fashioned to resemble a screaming skull, roaring dragon, or angry face. Often, the barrels emerge from the ornament's mouth, but some of the more disturbing designs come from the eyes. Reaping shellcasters have collapsible stocks, but thanks to their magical construction these are usually only an element of style. The underslung ammunition box is very easy to reload, but the size and number of shells still requires a miscellaneous action to do so.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+3	7L/2	3	20	20	Str ••	5	••/–	2, O, St *

* Reaping shellcasters firing pellets apply long range penalties to damage rolls as well as attack rolls, and against inanimate objects their base Damage is halved. Reaping shellcasters firing slugs lower their Accuracy to +2 and lose the St tag, but increase their Damage to 8L/2 and Range to 30. Softer slug rounds can be substituted to similar effect, inflicting bashing damage instead of lethal.

Godcannon (Artifact •••)

Every inch of a godcannon is a prayer to the god of killing at a distance. Its barrel, four feet long on its own, is thick and covered in runes. The firing heart is heavy with lethal intent, a shrine the size of a man's torso housing the gun's violent least god. It has a built-in bipod for easy stabilization, two struts where the barrel meets the main body of the gun, often stylized as swept back fangs, intricate marble pillars, or two arms punching into the ground with stone fists. Between these intimidating bipods, one may find the magazine slot for reloading the weapon.

Some godcannons are built to be taken apart and stored in carrying cases, for easy transport and infiltration. It requires about a minute to take the weapon apart or put it back together. Because of the godcannon's size, only suitcases for extended travel can hold the entirety of the disassembled gun.

Each godcannon comes with a built-in heartseeking focus lens. In addition to the scope, the stock or body of the gun has a second spot for mounting another hearthstone.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+3	10L/3	1	500	15	Str ••	7	•••/••	2, O

Heartseeking Focus Lens (Artifact •)

At times, a lightning spirit falls in love with a spirit of metal or crystal, pining away in the heavens. Thunderstorms plague the domain of the earth spirit, until finally the sky spirit can withhold herself no longer and rushes to meet the object of her obsession. The heat of her speed and love obliterates a course through the ground while solidifying a hard tube around it. These oddities can be unearthed and, carved and mounted with care, make excellent scopes for the guns of the Exalted.

A heartseeking focus lens is not significantly larger than a mortal scope, but it cannot be mistaken for one. Though opaque, it is a crystalline tube with smoky visions of bullets, eyes and sparks playing on the surface as light refracts through its facets. It acts as a normal scope when attached to an artifact gun. Should a hearthstone be set in its far end, the jewel becomes transparent and warps slightly to focus the gunner's sight.

In addition to providing its normal benefits, the hearthstone aids in aiming the weapon, multiplying the Range of the gun by the amount of bonus dice provided by the Aim action (minimum factor of 1, maximum of 3).

Innocuous Assassin's Luggage (Artifact •)

Specially designed for godcannon infiltration, though versions exist for mortal sniper rifles and other guns, innocuous assassin's luggage are mundane-looking attaché cases with minor Elsewhere-storage enchancements. Attuning the case for 1m allows one to store a disassembled gun without fear of detection. The magic of the case shields itself from detection as well, adding +4 difficulty to relevant rolls.

Each innocuous assassin's luggage case is built to accommodate a specific type of weapon. A case built to hide a godcannon cannot store a warstorm shellcaster.

Stormwand (Artifact •)

Stormwands are one of the most varied artifact guns in form and apparent function. They may look like simple totem sticks, or vicious, pronged implements of science and torture. They may be strange, boxy designs that fit over the hand and spit electrified spikes. Some simply look like ornate but otherwise mundane stun guns. They benefit from their magical construction not just from improved stunning capability, but their effective range is improved and they do not require wires to deliver their charge at a distance. Stormwand batteries and spikes are contained in cartridges.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+1	10B/2 + stun*	1	25	3	Str •	3	•/–	O, P **

* Targets that suffer at least one level of damage from a stormwand, no matter their Stamina, must resist being stunned (see Exalted, p. 153), at a minimum difficulty of 3.

** Stormwands may be wielded in hand-to-hand combat with the Melee Ability. Doing so does not consume ammunition.

Steel Rain Caster (Artifact ••)

Steel rain casters are usually less than three feet long, with a grip on one end for those not strong enough to wield them single-handed. Like mundane submachine guns, they fire smaller caliber bullets from their magazines. Because they fit under a trenchcoat (or behemothskin coat, see p. 150), and in cramped hallways, steel rain casters are a popular choice for Exalted gangsters and police forces. They are loaded using three separate magazines.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+0	7L/2	4	50	120	Str •	6	••/•	2, O, St *

* The traits given here are for a single steel rain caster. They can be built as matched pairs, allowing the gunner to wield two while ignoring the usual -1 internal penalty when wielding the offhand gun.

Artifact Blasters: Starcasters

Like shellcasters, the cost before the slash is the Artifact rating of the weapon, while the cost after the slash is the Resources value of the power pack necessary to charge the weapon.

Grand Starcaster (Artifact •••)

Two or three barrels, each a couple of feet long, extrude from a firing chamber filled with focusing lenses and ray accelerators. Each barrel has a dedicated firing mechanism, used in turn to afford the weapon a high rate of fire. Grand starcasters have room for two hearthstones mounted near the stock, or on the firing mechanism's housing.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+2	9L/3	3	50	100	Str ••	6	•••/•	2, O, St

Starcaster (Artifact ••)

Sidearm of the space navy officer and the starfaring tramp alike, starcasters are the standard heavy pistol of artifact energy weapons. They are often built with extra weight in the grip, to lend it the heft that a warrior expects from her weapon. As one of the most common and customizable magical weapons in the universe, there is virtually no style that has not been tried with the starcaster, from gem-laden chrome ornament, to blocky children's toy. The most common style resembles its slugthrowing cousin, the shellcaster, but with a thinner barrel and more elaborate body, making it easy to discern from the crude solid projectile throwers it competes with.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+1	7L/2	3	30	50	Str •	5	••/•	O

Quasar Warsear Disruptor (Artifact •••)

Quasar warsear distruptors earn their name, giving up on containing the dispersal of high-energy projectiles and exploiting its advantages. This shortens its potential range, but allows its waves of semi-kinetic energy to slice through dozens of armored foes with ease. The most advanced models appear to have only a single barrel, with a pulsing star deep in its recess; stripped-down or more primitive models show that, like the grand starcaster, its firing rate relies on multiple firing mechanisms jammed into a single gun; the twinkling star of the quasar warsear disruptor is, in fact, the rotating barrels concealing and revealing their focusing lenses each in turn.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+1	8L/3	4	50	20	Str ••••	7	••••/•	2, O, P, St

Starburst Trigger (Artifact •)

Starburst triggers fit easily in pockets or an ankle holster. While they are amazingly compact, they have been around for years, and so may be designed with any style in mind without compromising their efficiency or accuracy. Cheaper or ruggedized models are often ugly little blocks of machinery, while the affluent or stylish prefer finger-sized chrome bullets with jewel-encrusted handles.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
5	+2	5L/2	3	10	20	Str •	3	•/•	O *

* Holdout blasters are especially small, granting a +2 dice equipment bonus to Larceny rolls to conceal them on one's person.

Nova Lens Disruptor (Artifact •••)

The thick, three to four foot barrels of nova lens disruptors house wave-boosting technology, improving the sizzling power and range of the weapon. Their main housing features retractable bipod legs, for quick and easy stabilization. This allows them to achieve both the longest range of any energy weapon, as well as the best accuracy of any disruptor. Each nova lens disruptor comes with a built-in heartseeking focus lens, and they are often built in tandem with a matching innocuous assassin's luggage case. See p. 146 for these artifacts. In addition to the mounting on its scope, there is space for a second hearthstone on a nova lens disruptor, usually on the underside grip or somewhere near the shoulder rest.

Speed	Accuracy	Damage	Rate	Range	Ammo	Minimums	Attune	Cost	Tags
6	+2	8L/3	2	200	30	Str ••	7	••••/•	2, O, P

Artillery

Large guns requiring vehicles and many personnel are better used as set pieces than standard individual weapons. However, they may still be used to make attacks. Smaller artillery uses (Dexterity + Firearms) to attack, while larger pieces use (Intelligence + Firearms). Like the artillery found in **Scroll of Kings**, without explicit exception one cannot apply Charms other than Excellencies to their use.

Artillery requires spotters to use properly. This allows other characters in communication with the gunner himself to engage in teamwork on the same Attack action, offsetting the otherwise low Accuracy of these weapons. If they are fast enough to be fired regularly in normal combat, they will have a Speed of 7. Otherwise, their Speeds are measured in long ticks. Their Damage is rarely less than 15L, their Rate 2 at the most, and their Range is usually measured in miles.

These weapons do not receive specific statistics, because they can be so varied, ranging from small burst anti-personnel weapons, mine scattering, anti-tank, and

The Nuclear Option

Nuclear explosions, even smaller blasts from a tactical or "suitcase" nuke, are tools to change the battlefield less than they are attacks to be utilized against a given target. They cause arbitrary amounts of damage, completely obliterating mundane structures for miles around, and they leave behind a multitude of hazards survivors must contend with.

These are true doomsday devices, meant to be a mark of failure for heroes, or segues into the hellscape backdrop of their final fight with the villain. Storytellers requiring specific game traits will need to decide exactly what results they expect from the weapon, and work backwards from there. In a pulp fantasy adventure, a nuclear blast can be much more survivable than in a gritty, Terrestrial anti-terrorism drama.

siege weaponry. Each tends to be ill-suited to applications outside of its design, with Accuracy of up to +2 when used properly and as low as -3 when used outside its specification.

Explosive munitions are worth specific mention, as the smaller types may apply a single attack against all valid targets within 3 yards of their impact point. This is the standard for anti-personnel and anti-vehicle artillery.

Artifact artillery pieces, each one potentially a world-cracking superweapon, tend to function largely the same, but possess Damage values high enough to obliterate nearly any mundane target that falls within their specification, and they will usually incapacitate any other target in very few volleys.

Mundane Armor

Heavy Duster

Very thick, layered leather coats that stretch below the thighs, but split in the back to keep from being tangled around the legs. Heavy dusters use thick enough leather, and in enough layers, that they constitute light armor rather than mere clothing.

Soak	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Tags
+1L/3B	-1	1	•	–

Bulletproof Vest

Sturdy, manufactured cloth layers glued together absorb and disperse the impact of weapons, particularly small, blunt projectiles like bullets. The bulletproof vest is extremely common amongst police forces. They are light and flexible enough that they are not too restrictive, yet they provide vital protection during outbreaks of violence. Bulletproof vests are light armor.

Soak	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Tags
+2L/2B	0	1	••	+3L/3B soak against bullets.

Tactical Vest

Tactical vests are identical to bulletproof vests, but incorporate ceramic tiles to afford better protection against all weapons, but unfortunately adding to how encumbering they are. They remain a form of light armor.

Soak	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Tags
+4L/4B	-1	1	•••	+3L/3B soak against solid projectiles.

Tactical Suit

Tactical suits incorporate a tactical vest, and extend its protection to other parts of the body. Where the weight and inflexibility of ceramic tiles would hamper the wearer too much, the laminate layers of bulletproof vests are used. Tactical suits are medium armor.

Soak	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Tags
+6L/6B	-2	2	••••	+3L/3B soak against solid projectiles.

Bomb Suit

Bomb suits are a form of heavy armor specially designed to allow technicians to survive a catastrophe when attempting to disarm an explosive. They use many layers of thick laminate, ceramic plates, and a blast-impeding foam or plastic layer to soften the impact of a blast. Bomb suits' mobility penalties apply to nearly all gross and fine movement, since they are so bulky and heavy, even activities relying primarily on arm movement such as parrying. Very fine manipulation relying entirely on the fingers only suffers a -1 penalty. The protective helmet and bulk of the armor also imposes a -1 external penalty on most Perception- and Awareness-based actions.

Soak	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Tags
+11L/11B	-3	4	••••	–

Artifact Armor

Behemothskin Coat (Artifact •)

Iconic of the revenge-driven ex-cop or the hard-bitten, wordless drifter, behemothskin coats are long and thick, providing both protection from harm and a place to conceal a few submachine guns or a rifle.

Soak	Hardness	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Attune	Tags
+3L/4B	2L/2B	0	0	•	2	+2 dice equipment bonus to conceal most guns underneath.

Laminate Dragonscale Vest (Artifact •)

Hundreds of layers of impossibly thin, threaded magical materials, glued together with distilled stardust or industrial strength solidified Essence, this light armor is the most common form of protection worn by enlightened police forces.

Soak	Hardness	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Attune	Tags
+4L/4B	2L/2B	0	0	•	3	+5L/5B soak against bullets.

Bullet-Eating Sparksuit (Artifact •••)

This medium armor is typically created by layering behemoth skin or scales around thin sheets of the magical materials. Layered in this way, it protects extremely well against all harm, but it is particularly suited to stopping bullets and other projectiles. The denial of harm is not so mundane as simply absorbing the impact; it is of a violent and spiritual nature. When a bullet or similar missile strikes the wearer, but ends up causing no levels of damage, the wearer may spend 1m in a blinding flash in Step 10.

Each mote committed this way affords one object-scale gun the wearer wields a number of extra, phantom bullets equal to the minimum damage of the attack (minimum one), replacing any missing ammo in the clip. Excess phantom bullets are wasted.

Soak	Hardness	Mobility	Fatigue	Cost	Attune	Tags
+7L/7B	5L/5B	-1	1	••	4	+5L/5B soak against solid projectiles.

Modern Vehicles

Where the Maneuverability of many vehicles denotes that they are Sail- or Ride-based, a new notation, "D", indicates that a vehicle is Drive-based.

Most modern vehicles are capable of moving faster than their listed maximum Speed, up to half again as fast. However, moving this fast is dangerous; the Maneuverability of the vehicle falls by -2, and failure on piloting rolls of difficulty 3+ automatically cause a crash.

Mundane Vehicles

Modern vehicles benefit from frequent maintenance, but they can go unserviced for a year without significant trouble. Every six months in arrears may reduce fuel efficiency, impose a -1 penalty on Maneuverability, or reduce Speed by 2/5mph, depending on the quality of the car. These problems are cumulative, but each one will rarely apply more than twice before the vehicle simply stops working. Specialized vehicles often require more regular maintenance.

Motorcycles (Resources •-••••)

Motorcycles are often a staple of modern action and adventure storytelling. While less exciting and popular, mopeds and scooters can also feature in modern games, particularly comedic or lighthearted stories.

Repair: 2 for most, 3 for exceptional sports bikes or elaborate models

Speed: Most motorcycles can achieve top speeds of around 40/80mph; heavier cruisers are slower, with top speeds of 35/70mph; sport bikes built for racing can achieve speeds of up to 50/100mph, or even higher; faster mopeds and scooters can reach speeds of 20/40mph

Maneuverability: +1D for most, +0D or -1D for some cruisers (Drive 2)

Endurance: Motorcycles meant for travel are very fuel efficient, requiring refueling every two weeks under moderate use

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: Depending on the model, a motorcycle can as little as a backpack or as much as a mid-size trunk, and many motorcycles can accommodate at least one passenger

Armor: 6L/9B

Health Levels: Ux3/Mx2/Cx2/I/D

Weapons: Motorcycles are rarely equipped with weapons

Other Notes: Most motorcycles provide less protection than other vehicles. Attackers may choose to target the rider or passengers without difficulty, though they face the better of the character's DV or the vehicle's Dodge DV.

Small and Mid-Size Cars (Resources ••-••••)

Most cars on the road are sedans, though some are stations wagons, hatchbacks, or other extensions of the same basic design. In any case, they tend to function roughly the same. Despite their similarities, manufacturer and aesthetics play a large role in popularity and price.

Repair: 2

Speed: Most cars can achieve top speeds of up to 40/80mph; poorer models can have top speeds as low as 25/50mph, while exceptional sports cars can achieve Speeds upwards of 60/120mph

Maneuverability: +1D (Lore 1) for most cars, though fine and exceptional cars may have +2D, while poor and older models may have -1D

Endurance: Most cars require refueling every week after moderate use.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: Small and mid-size cars can accommodate up to three passengers comfortably, and as many as seven in extreme discomfort. In addition to their normal passenger allowance, they can carry anywhere from 500-1,000 lbs. safely.

Armor: 8L/12B; vehicles armored for security or military service may have soak of 10L/14B

Health Levels: Ux3/Mx3/Cx2/Ix2/D

Weapons: Most cars are not equipped with weapons.

Vans, Minivans and S.U.V.s (Resources ••-••••)

These larger vehicles are less common than other cars, but not rare. They function similarly, but are much larger, and presumably sturdier than a smaller counterpart.

Repair: 2

Speed: Most larger vehicles achieve top speeds no greater than 35/70mph; vans in particular are not built for speed, and tend to have a top speed of 30/60mph

Maneuverability: +0D for most large, modern vehicles, though vans and poorer models have -1D instead

Endurance: Extensive use of larger vehicles can require refueling as often as two or three times a week, even for better models. They require maintenance just like smaller cars.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: S.U.V.s and minivans are usually equipped to accommodate at least four passengers comfortably, and as many as seven. They also have cargo capacities upwards of 1,000 lbs. Vans tend to carry up to 10 passengers, with relatively little space left over strictly for other cargo.

Armor: 9L/14B; vehicles armored for security may have 10L/15B, while military vehicles outfitted with full armor can have soak up to 12L/18B

Health Levels: Ux7/Mx4/Cx3/I/D

Weapons: As domestic vehicles, these cars are rarely equipped with weapons. Militaries make frequent use of S.U.V.-type vehicles, mounting a single large gun on them, such as the heavy machine gun (see p. 140).

Tanks (Resources ••••+)

Large metal boxes rolling across the battlefield, filled with munitions and soldiers. Devastating innovations of modern warfare, tanks have destructive capabilities commensurate with the fear they can strike into their foes. This entry, like the others, covers a variety of different models, from bastion-breaking main guns to lightly armed personnel carriers.

Repair: 3 for lighter or older models, 4 for more advanced tanks

Speed: Most tanks have low top speeds of around 10/20mph, while some can achieve movement rates of up to 15/30mph

Maneuverability: More agile tanks, like APCs, have Maneuverability up to -1D (Drive 2); main battle tanks may have as low as -4D (Drive 2)

Endurance: Tanks consume prodigious amounts of fuel due to their size and weight. If moving under their own power, they may require refueling as much as once every day. Tanks require constant maintenance to remain in working order, at least one hour every day of use. For every week in arrears, its Maneuverability and the Accuracy of its weapons suffer a -1 penalty. On reaching -4 Maneuverability the tank is no longer mobile, and at -2 Accuracy its weapons cease to function.

Crew: 2/1 for most tanks, but this does not take into account gunners and other crew that may be necessary for additional functions in the tank, such as ECM and ECCM.

Cargo: Main battle tanks have small cargo capacity for non-essential things. Removing the ammunition for its weapons or emergency equipment may free up space for up to a ton of extra cargo. Other tanks, particularly APCs, have large cargo capacity for supplies and personnel, larger models carrying up to 10 soldiers.

Armor: 15L/23B

Health Levels: Ux8/Mx4/Cx2/Ix2/D for lighter or smaller models, such as APCs; Ux8/Mx4/Cx5/Ix3/D for main battle tanks

Weapons: Nearly every tank is equipped with a heavy machine gun. APCs are sometimes equipped with one or two assault rifle emplacements. Main battle tanks typically possess a single artillery gun meant for obliterating opposing vehicles or fortifications.

Domestic Planes (Resources ••••+)

Small planes are common, but not exceptionally powerful or long-ranged. They can still cover far greater distances

at greater speeds than common cars, however, and of course they bypass the difficulties of terrain on the ground. Their size and purpose can cause a greater variation in statistics than mid-size cars, but the below should remain a good guideline even for the larger cargo planes.

Repair: 3

Speed: 50/100mph, up to 65/130mph for exceptional planes

Maneuverability: +1S (Lore 3, Sail 2)

Endurance: Small, personal planes, like modern prop planes, can travel 300-400 miles before needing to refuel. Those specially designed for long range travel and carrying fuel reserves can cover 1,000 miles before refueling.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: Depending on their configuration, small planes may be equipped to accommodate a dozen passengers, or up to a few tons of cargo.

Armor: 8L/11B

Health Levels: Ux5/Mx4/Cx4/Ix2/D

Weapons: Modern domestic planes are rarely equipped with weapons. Early in the development of aircraft, prop planes were equipped with the equivalents of assault rifles and heavy machine guns (see p. 140).

Helicopters (Resources ••••+)

Helicopters are an understated backbone of many an airborne infrastructure, thanks to their capability to take off and land vertically, good lift-to-weight ratios, and fuel efficiency.

Repair: 3 or 4

Speed: Specialized helicopters can achieve speeds of up to 80/160mph, but most have top speeds in the realm of of 40/80mph

Maneuverability: +1S (Lore 2, Sail 2) for most, +2S (Lore 3, Sail 3) for some advanced military models; it should be noted that helicopters' capacity to hover easily is well-suited to aerial stunts uncommon or impossible in other vehicles.

Endurance: Operational ranges before refueling for small domestic models can be as little as 200 miles, while specialized helicopters can achieve distances of 2,000 miles

Crew: 2/1

Cargo: Varies widely by type, from minimal storage for small domestic crafts, to many tons of cargo or soldiers for large commercial and military helicopters

Armor: 7L/9B for domestic models, and up to 9L/13B for military models

Health Levels: Ux4/Mx3/Cx1/Ix2/D for domestic models, and up to Ux6/Mx5/Cx2/Ix2/D for military models

Weapons: Commercial helicopters rarely possess weapons, while military models may be equipped with a few or many heavy machine guns, assault rifle emplacements, and even rocket launchers, depending on their size and mission. Some few may be equipped with weapons on the scale of a jet fighter (see below).

Jet Fighters (Resources •••••)

With the express purpose of being fast, sleek and deadly, jet fighters make excellent additions to a combat or chase scene in a modern setting. They can represent powerful, intimidating foes all by themselves, or set pieces as daring Exalted soldiers leap from one to the other as they careen through the stratosphere.

Repair: 4

Speed: Jet fighters have top speeds of 200/400mph and up

Maneuverability: +2S (Lore 3, Sail 3)

Endurance: Operational ranges for jet fighters vary widely depending on their type and mission, from 1,000 miles to 4,000 miles before refueling is necessary.

Crew: 1/1 or 2/1 usually

Cargo: Jet fighters rarely have much room for optional cargo beyond a few dozen pounds, though they are equipped with emergency supplies

Armor: 12L/18B

Health Levels: Ux4/Mx4/Cx5/Ix2/D

Weapons: Jet fighters are often equipped with one or more higher-caliber versions of heavy machine guns, with statistics identical to standard character-scale models except as follows: Damage 13L, Range 1,000, Ammo 500 to 1,000 depending on the plane. They may also carry powerful missiles, which are similar to character-scale rocket launchers, with the following changes: Damage 17L, Range 1,000, Ammo 1 to 4. Both have Cost ••••/••••.

Larger Vehicles

Space cruisers, aircraft carriers, submarines, dreadnaughts, and oil tankers are all enormous vehicles that have a high likelihood of featuring in a science-fantasy or modern-themed **Exalted** chronicle. While their complete traits can come into play, they are best used as set pieces or backgrounds, fields of battle for characters and their personal vehicles. Because of the overwhelming variety amongst these vehicles and their traits, rather than providing complete statistics, this section primarily focuses on providing guidelines on how they can play a part as the setting or backdrop of a dogfight or chase scene, with a particular emphasis on the massive capital ships of Heaven's Reach. These guidelines can also be used to convert existing traits given for large vehicles into more easily used set pieces. These guidelines may also be used to model the dangers of running a blockade of hundreds of smaller ships, or similar hazards.

• **Main Guns:** Memorable ships often have one or a few very large, very intimidating weapons that can be seen as their "main weapon", even if they are primarily for use against very specific targets and see little or no action in most combat scenes. These special guns, the *Eyes of Judgment* or *Planet Busters*, are best left on their own, like individual combatants. They tend to have their own dedicated crew, and when they can and do fire is often an important part of their ship's presence. They constitute an extra, individual

foe, albeit stationary. Their use and destruction may be the entire point of playing a scene, and may shape future scenes or even the whole story.

Main guns should be presented and used sparingly, to avoid bogging down the game or diffusing their importance. While each story is different, and so each main gun should be calibrated to best suit the damage the Storyteller expects from them, they typically have Damage ratings of 25L or more, and Range enough to reach across any battlefield.

• **Point Defense:** Technically, not all of the smaller guns on a large vessel fulfill the role of "point defense", which is a constant, tight screen of fire to keep enemy ships from venturing too close. For the purposes of these rules, they and the more haphazard, hectic deployment of individual weapon emplacements amount to the same thing: A field of hazardous fire for other ships. Point defense weaponry applies much like an environmental hazard (see **Exalted**, p. 131), with a Damage rating, a frequency (usually "per action"), and a Trauma. These fields extend around the perimeter of their ship and out to half of the weapon's base Range. A ship with enough variety of weapons banks may have many such fields surrounding it. In this case, the Storyteller is advised to err on the side of applying only the most damaging if any of the fields overlap.

The Damage rating of these hazards represent not just a single direct hit, but dozens, hundreds, even thousands of wide shots, near-misses, and maybe even a few well-placed direct hits. As such, the Damage is low (typically half the Damage of the weapon), but it ignores the armored soak of the vehicle. Luckily, the damage is rolled even against mundane vehicles. Usually, this should fall somewhere in a range of 4-8.

The Trauma represents both the puissance of the gunners, and the number of shots blanketing the battlefield. This will tend to fall in a range from 1 to 6, and may be derived by adding the weapon's Accuracy to its Rate (minimum 1), with an additional +1 if the gunners predominantly possess Archery or Firearms ratings of 4+.

Instead of a Resistance roll, the pilot of a vehicle must make a reflexive piloting roll against the Trauma. Failure inflicts the damage as normal. Success both downgrades the Damage (aggravated to lethal, lethal to bashing, bashing to nothing), and halves the Damage's value (compensating for the fact that, generally, damage types do not matter to vehicles when soak does not apply). Achieving threshold successes equal to the Trauma downgrades Damage types again, as usual, but does not reduce the amount of damage dice any further.

Characters who wander into point defense fields outside of their vehicles make Resistance rolls as normal, and do not halve the damage of the field on a successful roll.

During a chase that wends its way into the point defense field of a large vehicle, participants may be subject to both the hazard described above, and may accumulate one or two points of hazard each interval, as they careen through hails of bullets and hot plasma.

• **Superstructure:** Asteroid fields, atolls, and the narrow alleys between gothic skyscrapers are all exciting places to hold a vehicular battle. With their jutting components, weapons platforms, and escort vehicles, capital ships can provide all the same excitement and more. There are no hard and fast rules for this guideline, as each ship and situation are unique, but Storytellers are advised to carefully consider the interesting twists and turns that may arise when characters chase each other through a capital ship's point defenses, dogfighting around its RADAR tower, or even through the tight deployment corridors from which it launches its own fighters. A difficulty increase of +1 or +2 in piloting rolls, and an extra point of hazard during a chase are not unreasonable.

As some dubious compensation for heroes willing to penetrate enemy vehicular territory so deeply, most point defense weapons cannot fire on a foe that is close enough for the superstructure to affect a character's actions. Immense space stations and aircraft carriers may prove an exception, and there may be enough soldiers in parts of the ship to constitute their own lesser form of point defense field.

Artifact Vehicles

The Road Lion (Artifact ••)

The road lion is one of the most popular cruising motorcycles manufactured by Simhata Motors. Despite its eye-catching lion's head tank, roaring engine, streamer like white jade handlebars and foot rests, it never draws too much attention from its impressive riders. Best suited to Exalted owners, particularly Celestials, it remains incredibly popular amongst Dragon-Blooded.

Repair: 3

Speed: 60/120mph

Maneuverability: +2D (Lore 1)

Endurance: A road lion can be attuned for only a single mote, but to function the driver must commit 4m while mounted on the vehicle. This commitment cost is waived when the rider is a Celestial Exalt whose anima banner is flaring at the 8m+ level.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: Road lions can accommodate one passenger comfortably, or two in a pinch if those aboard do not mind suffering a -1 external penalty to their physical actions. Tucked beneath the sweeping seatback is a sturdy chest about two feet to a side.

Armor: 6L/9B

Health Levels: Ux3/Mx2/Cx2/I/D

Weapons: Standard road lions are not equipped with weapons, but it is not very difficult to mount a rifle between the handlebars.

Other Notes: Attackers may choose to target the rider or passengers of a road lion without difficulty, though the target may choose to use the vehicle's Dodge DV in place

of their own. The driver of a road lion and any passenger he invites to ride along gain +4L/4B armor soak, enmeshed as they are in the confident aura of the vehicle.

As with most other vehicles from Simhata Motors, an attuned owner who possesses a positive Intimacy for his road lion may pay 1m to roll (Wits + Awareness) as a miscellaneous action. This is against difficulty 1 normally, but if the bike has been actively concealed it is opposed by the relevant rolls of whoever has hidden it. Success informs the character of the condition of his vehicle and in what direction it lies.

Road lions require regular maintenance like a mundane motorcycle.

Stalking Tiger Comet (Artifact ••••)

Sleek and low to the ground, clearly a vehicle built for speed and grace, the stalking tiger comet's starmetal-accented black steel body conceals a rich but subdued interior: Fine leather seats, burnished steel ornamentation, and crystalline dials and knobs. Its hood tapers slowly to a beveled point, the mark of its maker displayed prominently there, like a knife ready to slice its way through any traffic. Unlike many other sports cars, its engine does not growl or purr, its stoic silence affording it just as much menace and mystery as its tinted windows.

Repair: 4

Speed: 80/160mph

Maneuverability: +3D (Lore 3, Occult 1)

Endurance: A stalking tiger comet may be driven only by someone who has attuned it for 10m, or by someone the attuned owner has explicitly given permission to pilot it. The robust engines of stalking tiger comets are actually intricate shrines to the least god of the car, its pillars adamant prayer strips covered by starmetal paeans. The car runs for one day for each successful hour of prayer directed to the invigoration of the least god (see Exalted, p. 132). The spirit of the car can remember only seven days worth of motivating prayer; any extra empowers it no further, lost in the wash of the praise it has already received.

Crew: 1/1

Cargo: The stalking tiger comet can comfortably seat three passengers, and has a small trunk with a cubic yard of space.

Armor: 10L/14B

Health Levels: Ux4/Mx5/Cx2/Ix4/D

Weapons: A stalking tiger comet comes with two grand shellcasters concealed beneath panels on either side of the hood, which may be deployed reflexively and are fired by the driver. It is impossible to find them through a mundane search, and magical senses are made at difficulty 6. The car is also equipped with two dragon's roar cannons, concealed and deployed in the same way adjacent to each headlight.

Other Notes: Stalking tiger comets come with notoriety interdiction fields, which impose an effect identical to Arcane Fate on memories of the car (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals**, pp. 119-121). This does not apply to memories of the car when it is joined in battle, or the memories of passengers. The attuned owner may turn the field on and off as a reflexive action while in the car.

Stalking tiger comets may be equipped with additional artifact subsystems, such as the following:

Musician Pattern Upholstery (Artifact •): The stalking tiger comet is a vehicle of refinement; though meant primarily for other conflicts, its beauty and grace can be appreciated outside of combat. When the attuned owner of the car incorporates the vehicle into a stunt to impress or seduce someone, she may pay 3m to increase the bonus dice from the stunt by one, and any resulting influence becomes unnatural.

Pacification Dashboard (Artifact ••): With a simple gesture and 1wp, the attuned owner of the car may draw the attention of a passenger to the dials and lights on the dashboard. They blur, and turn, and wheel about in soothing patterns, ensuring that the ride is a peaceful one. Using the owner's (Manipulation + Presence) in a reflexive roll against the target's Dodge MDV, the car imposes an unnatural Compulsion effect of compliance and lethargy. The target cannot disturb the driver or other passengers, nor take any non-reflexive actions that require a dice roll, unless they are targeted by a physical attack or the driver joins battle with the car. This effect may be ignored for a day by spending 2wp.

If a target allows the Compulsion to affect them until they get out of the car, their memories of the trip are

Sufficiently Advanced Magitech

While in a traditional fantasy or space opera setting, things like internally powered vehicles or dictation machines may be cutting edge technological marvels, in a modern or space age setting, the value and use of existing artifacts can be severely at odds with what should be widely available mundane technology. Storytellers are encouraged to keep the values of their setting in mind when evaluating the worth and difficulty of creating an item. While an audient brush or resplendent personal assistant may still boast one or two features that even the most advanced mobile phone lacks, it is probably safe to convert these into more conventional inventions, or minor enchanted tools from the Arts of Thaumaturgy. Players and characters may still desire them for their aesthetic flair, and unless they are totally inappropriate for the themes and tone of the game, the Storyteller should be generous in turning the amazing utility artifacts of **Exalted** into minor, if cherished, tools of mad Solar scientists, Terrestrial treasure hunters, or dashing Sidereal secret agents.

afflicted by the notoriety interdiction field as if they had not been a passenger.

Benthic Emissary Undercarriage (Artifact •••): Moonsilver struts, adamant hub caps and blue jade wheel wells allow the car to reconfigure itself for deployment at sea. The driver uses a miscellaneous action to spend 5m, 1wp to start the transformation, the wheels retracting and their hub caps turning to become fins that slice through the water, propelled by high-pressure jets of air from the wheel wells. This allows the car to travel on or beneath the water at half its normal speed.

Solar Charms

Drive

Daredevil Driving Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Ghost Drift Moves)
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

Solars drive through gunfights and hot pursuits with impossible coordination and grace, pulling off vehicular stunts that defy all known physics. The Solar can make driving rolls to control his vehicle in combat as a reflexive action and converts any stunt dice on the roll to automatic successes. Any vehicle he drives adds +3 to its Dodge DV.

Invincible Sun-Engine Reinforcement

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Haunted Junkyard Horror Engine)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Daredevil Driving Technique

Enfolding his vehicle with Essence, the Solar strengthens it against all harm, turning metal to impenetrable armor and windows to bulletproof glass. Invincible Sun-Engine Reinforcement adds +40B/40L to the soak of any Drive-based vehicle the Solar drives against a single attack. It can also be used to protect a character inside the vehicle, granting them +8B/8L soak. This counts as soak from armor.

In a chase scene, the Solar can use this Charm to supplement a chase action (see p. 138). The enhanced action does not add to the difficulty of the Solar's interval roll, and reduces its hazard rating by one point (minimum zero). A separate activation is required if the Solar also wishes to invoke the soak effects of this Charm.

Sky-Skidding Maneuver

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Tombstone-Wrecking Joyride)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Daredevil Driving Technique

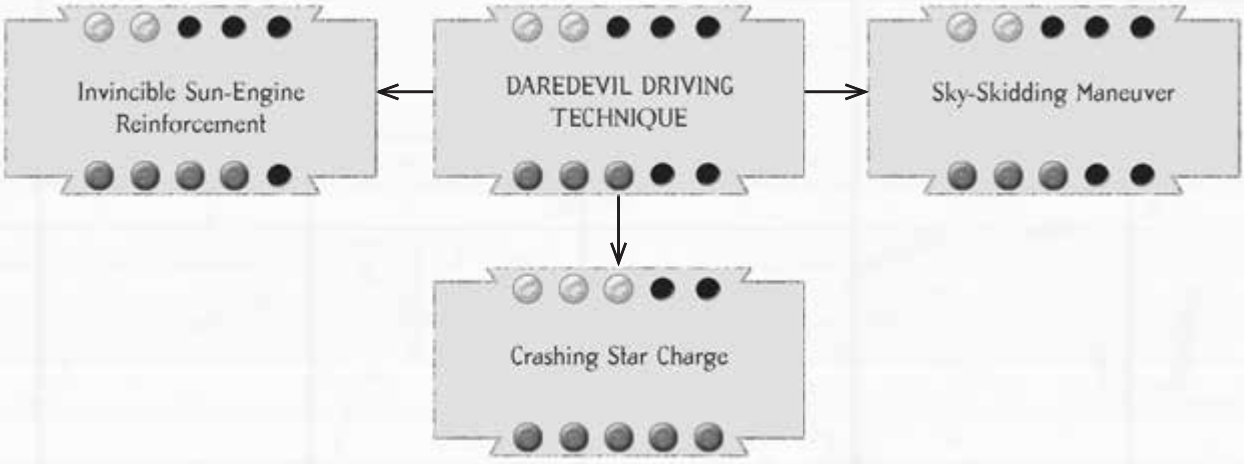
No obstacle stands in the way when a Solar is behind the wheel. Not even a lack of roads or ground. This Charm enhances a Solar's attempt to pilot a Drive-based vehicle through a movement action across some hazard, turning it into a reflexive Jump action. The leap's maximum distance is calculated by multiplying the car's top speed by the stunt rating of the maneuver (no stunt counts as half top speed, rather than zero). This Charm explicitly allows the Exalt to perform otherwise impossible Jump actions with his car, as long as the Storyteller judges that the stunt provides some significant momentum in the desired direction.

Sky-Skidding Maneuver may be used to enhance a chase action, granting bonus successes commensurate with the Solar's increased speed. If there are any environmental sources of hazard in the current leg of the chase, the enhanced interval also imposes one less than normal (minimum zero).

Crashing Star Charge

Cost: —(5m); **Mins:** Drive 5, Essence 3;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (Murder On Wheels)
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Daredevil Driving Technique

Manning the wheel with unwavering courage and skill, the Solar makes his vehicle into a vessel of his martial perfection, a falling star on an unstoppable collision course. Whenever the Solar uses a Drive-based vehicle to ram an enemy (see p. 138), he may pay five motes. Doing so al-



lows him to enhance that ramming attack with any of his Reflexive or Supplemental Charms that can be used with close combat attacks. He may ignore the normal Ability restrictions on any such Charm for the purposes of this attack, although he cannot use non-Drive Excellencies to enhance the attack roll.

Firearms

Nova Shell Ordnance

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Screaming Wraith Bullet), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

A pulse of blinding white Essence explodes outward from the Solar's bullet as it hits its mark. Nova Shell Ordnance adds (Essence) dice to the raw damage of a supplemented attack and grants it the Piercing tag. Against inanimate objects, this Charm halves their soak instead of simply subtracting from it.

Searing Radiance Fire Tongues

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Holy, Mirror (Gnawing Bullet Thrash), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Nova Shell Ordnance

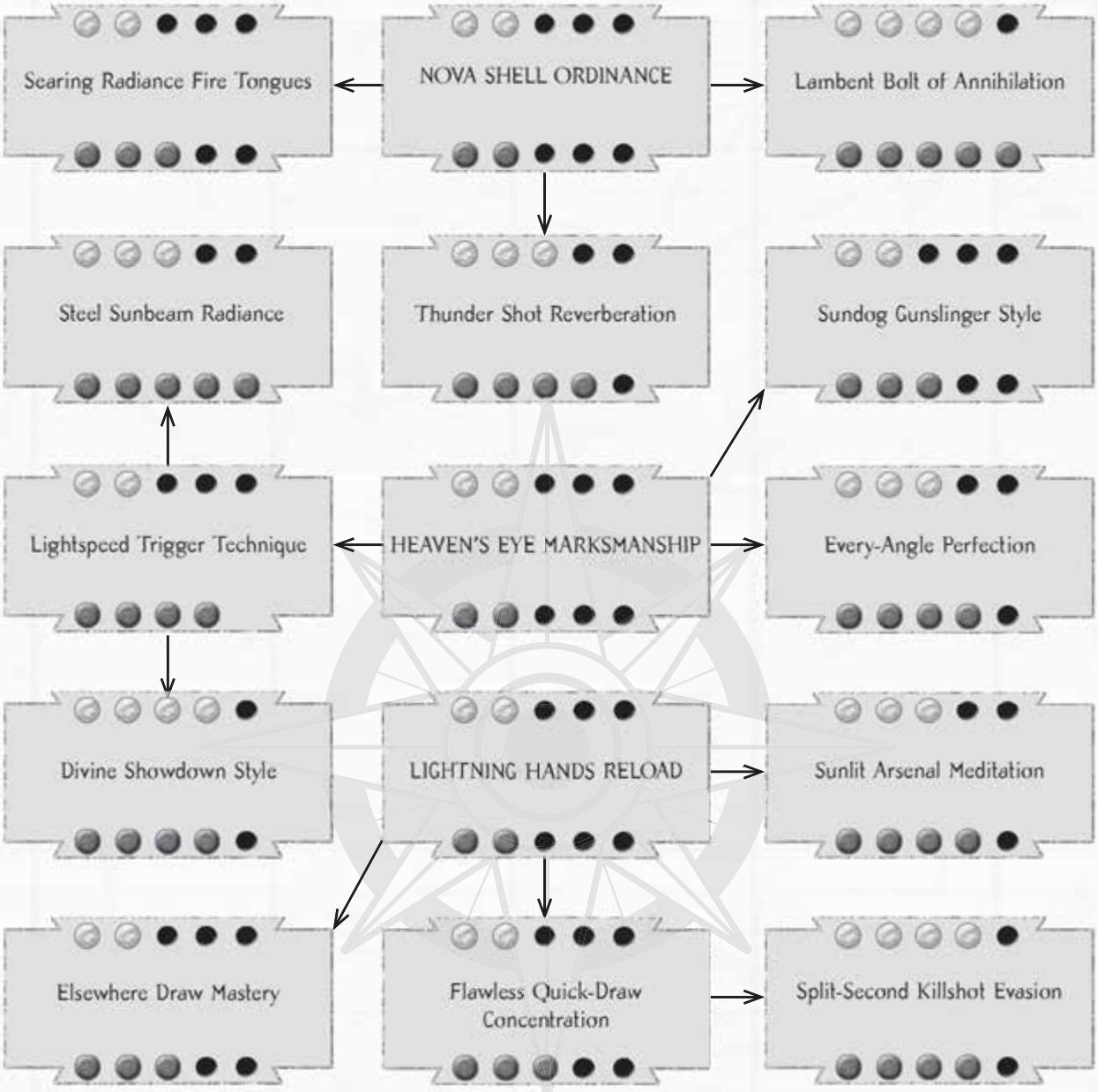
The Essence of a Solar's righteous wrath suffuses his weapon as his finger falls upon the trigger, superheating the chambered round until it glows a bright cherry-red. Searing Radiance Fire Tongues adds the Solar's (Essence) to the post-soak damage of a supplemented attack. Any flammable materials struck by a superheated bullet catch flame.

Against creatures of darkness damaged by this attack, the Solar's bullet continues to burn in their wound until the end of the scene, its wrathful flame stoked by the blood of the world's enemies. Every time the wounded target's DV refreshes, they take one die of unsoakable aggravated damage as a tongue of flame bursts from their wounds, bypassing Hardness. This effect is both Holy and Crippling. Removing the embedded bullet to end this requires a difficulty 3 (Dexterity + Medicine) roll as a miscellaneous action.

Thunder Shot Reverberation

Cost: 8m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Emotion, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Nova Shell Ordnance

The Solar fires his weapon into the air, magnifying the sound of the gunshot through his anima until it is as the terrifying roar of thunder. The Solar rolls (Charisma



+ Performance) as an unblockable social attack against all enemies within the base Range of his weapon, adding automatic successes equal to his (Firearms) rating. Any character whose MDV is exceeded by the roll succumbs to an unnatural Emotion of fear, forcing them to spend the rest of the scene fleeing from the Solar. On every tick, they must take a Move action to move as far away as possible from him, although they are never forced to move through an area that would cause harm to them (such as a bonfire or off a cliff). Affected characters can still take other actions normally.

Resisting this unnatural mental influence costs three Willpower. Once a character has run outside the base Range of the Solar's firearm, he may pay one point of Willpower for partial resistance, allowing him to stop running as long as he remains outside that weapon's Range. Extras and wild animals are unable to resist this influence.

Lambent Bolt of Annihilation

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 4;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged, Mirror (Howling Shadows of the Void), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Nova Shell Ordnance
See Lords of Creation, p. 59.
Merged: Lambent Bolt of Annihilation (Archery).

Heaven's Eye Marksmanship

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental

Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Bloodthirsty Killing Style)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar gunslinger's eye is infallible as it gauges the distance and sets its mark. Heaven's Eye Marksmanship adds 150 yards to the Range of the supplemented attack. As a peerless marksman, the Solar also adds an additional 50 yards for each die added to the attack from Aiming, and adds all Aim dice to raw damage as well as the attack roll.

Lightspeed Trigger Technique

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Devouring Time Technique)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven's Eye Marksmanship

Essence and martial perfection come together in an instant of unsurpassed speed as the Solar fires too fast for his enemies to defend. His hand is a blur, drawing and firing faster than a heartbeat. Such is the speed of the Solar's gunslinging that any DV applied against the supplemented attack is halved. If necessary, he can reflexively ready a Firearms weapon before making the attack.

With Essence 4+, the Solar's reflexes heighten in response to the thrill of danger. As long as he is within the engagement range of his target, he can pay an additional two motes to make the attack undodgeable.

Steel Sunbeam Radiance

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 3;
Type: Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Minutes to Midnight Attitude), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Lightspeed Trigger Technique

Gathering Essence and honing his will, the Solar seizes a single perfect moment, unleashing countless bullets with superhuman speed and graceful elegance. Steel Sunbeam Radiance creates a magical flurry of up to (Dexterity + 1) Firearms attacks at the Solar's full dice pool, ignoring Rate. It has a total DV penalty and Speed equal to the highest of any individual attack. If the Solar took an Aim action before using this Charm, then any dice it accrued are added to each attack in the flurry.

Divine Showdown Style

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 4; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Native, Overdrive
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Lightspeed Trigger Technique

The world stills for a moment as the Solar gunslinger locks eyes with a foe. His fighting spirit redoubles as he calls his foe out with a shouted taunt, a menacing gesture, or a dramatic gun cock. From that moment on, the fight is between them alone. Divine Showdown Style grants the Solar an Overdrive pool with a capacity of ten motes. It can be activated to issue a challenge to any enemy who is a heroic character. The challenge has the following effects:

- The Solar gains a single offensive mote each time he damages the chosen enemy with a Firearms attack.
- On any tick in which the Solar is attacked by enemies other than the one he challenged, he gains a single offensive mote.
- If the challenged enemy falls Incapacitated or retreats from the scene of combat, the Solar gains offensive motes equal to their (Essence), and this Charm ends. It cannot be reactivated for the rest of the scene.
- The Solar loses a single offensive mote any time he attacks a character other than the challenged enemy, unless they attacked him on their last action.
- He also loses an offensive mote each time one of his allies attacks the challenged enemy.
- The Solar cannot willingly end the duration of this Charm.

Sundog Gunslinger Stance

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Murder of Crows Posture)
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven's Eye Marksmanship

A Lawgiver may double his glory in battle, wielding twin guns with superhuman precision. While dual-wielding Firearms weapons with this Charm active, the Solar suffers no off-hand penalties. In addition, the first attack made with each weapon in the flurry ignores up to (Essence) points of multiple action penalties. Subsequent attacks with that weapon reduce their multiple action penalties by one point. This does not stack with other effects that reduce multiple action penalties.

Sundog Gunslinger Stance also enhances other Solar Charms while it is active. Lightning Hands Reload can be used to reflexively reload two different weapons once each round, and Flawless Quick-Draw Concentration allows the Solar to reflexively draw two weapons when he rolls Join Battle.

Every-Angle Perfection

Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Precision Bloodshed Technique)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Heaven's Eye Marksmanship

A Solar with the Every-Angle Perfection can send his bullets curving around corners or ricocheting off the walls to strike his target, pulling off impossible shots with the practiced ease of an old hand. Attacks supplemented by this Charm are unblockable and ignore cover. Any external penalties to the attack are negated.

Lightning Hands Reload
Cost: — (1m); **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (Instant Murder Instinct)
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: None

Once each action, the Solar can reflexively reload a readied Firearms weapon at no cost, trusting his lightning reflexes and well-honed muscle memory. With a stunt, he can reflexively reload even without a free hand. Should he ever run out of ammunition, he can pay one mote to make an attack without using ammo, shaping his Essence into a golden shell engraved with his caste mark. Created rounds dissipate back into Essence once the attack has been made.

With Essence 3+, a Solar can pay one mote and a point of Willpower to create all ammunition needed for a single flurry, with no additional mote cost.

Elsewhere Draw Mastery
Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Speed 3)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged, Mirror (Glinting Steel Shadows)
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Hands Reload

The Lawgiver's weapons are as their glory—sometimes unseen, but always present. This Charm is identical to Summoning the Loyal Bow (see **Exalted**, p. 189), except that it is compatible only with Firearms weapons. The Solar can also use it to banish ammunition to Elsewhere; such activations cost zero motes.

Merged: Summoning the Loyal Bow (Archery), Summoning the Loyal Steel (Melee).

Flawless Quick-Draw Concentration
Cost: —; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (First Fatality Enthusiasm)
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Hands Reload

Fools who draw down the wrath of the Solar Exalted had best be prepared to dance with the thunder. As part of the Join Battle roll made at the start of combat, the Solar may reflexively draw a single Firearms weapon. Doing so adds that weapon's Accuracy rating to his roll as bonus dice (maximum +4 dice).

In addition, any Firearms attack the Solar makes on his first action tick of the scene adds an additional three dice on the attack roll as long as he attacks a character who has not yet received an action tick in combat. These count as dice from Aiming, not as bonus dice from Charms.

Split-Second Killshot Evasion
Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 4;
Type: Reflexive (Step 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Screaming Steel Vengeance), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Flawless Quick-Draw Concentration

Moving with the honed reflexes and instinctive grace of the Solar gunslinger, it becomes possible to dodge bullets. Split-Second Killshot Evasion is a perfect dodge against any ranged attack that is made with some form of projectile, even those that are undodgeable. The Solar must be aware of the attack in order to dodge it. Once the Solar has sidestepped or pulled away from the attack, he may choose to let the projectile continue on in a straight line away from him, redirecting it to the first character in that trajectory as long as they are within the attack's Range.

This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Invulnerability.

Sunlit Arsenal Meditation
Cost: 3m, 1wp or 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Unearthed Relic Weaponry), Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Lightning Hands Reload

Sunfire surges through the Solar's anima before coalescing in the shape of a puissant weapon, drawn from his soul. The summoned weapon shines for a moment with blinding radiance, then cools into obsidian-black steel. This Charm is identical to Glorious Solar Saber (see **Exalted**, p. 192), except that it creates Firearms weapons.

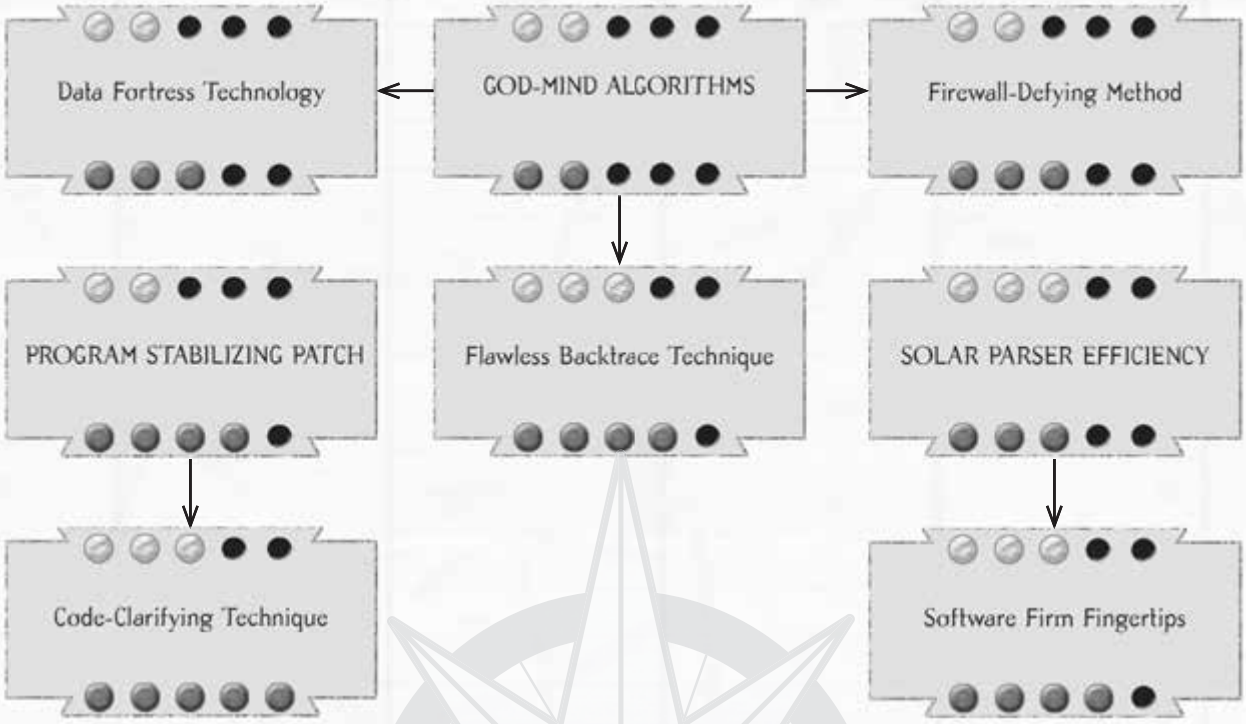
Lore

God-Mind Algorithms
Cost: –; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (The Black Box Opened)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Solar Exalted are unmatched in their technical genius, transcending the limitations of mortal technology with their supernal prowess. Any dice added to the Solar's computer-based actions by stunts or equipment bonuses are converted into automatic successes. Essence empowers any computer he operates, granting it an unlimited battery life and a perfect wireless connection to the Internet regardless of location. With a Storyteller-approved stunt, the Solar may even take computer-based actions using other electronic devices, allowing him to hack into systems from his smartphone or access the Internet from his car's GPS.

Data Fortress Technology
Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Mirror (Forbidden Data Crypt), Touch
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: God-Mind Algorithms

One would sooner crack open a steel vault with his bare hands than infiltrate a Solar's computer network. As the Solar touches a computer he owns, he commands its



least god to be a diligent and faithful guardian of his domain. So long as this Charm remains active, any attempts at hacking that computer suffer a -2 external penalty in addition to any other penalties they might face. The penalty rises to the Solar's (Essence) against hacking attempts that are not enhanced by magic. In addition, whenever a character fails a roll to hack into that computer, the Solar instantly learns of the attempt, sensing it through the bond of Essence that sustains this Charm. While this intuition does not reveal the identity of the trespasser, it is sufficient basis for the Solar to track them down using Flawless Backtrace Technique.

Firewall-Defying Method

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Server-Scorching Assault)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: God-Mind Algorithms

Speaking his will to the soul of a computer, the Lawgiver reminds it that he is the rightful ruler of the digital realm of information just as he is of the world of men. A Solar may use this Charm whenever he hacks a computer, adding (Essence) automatic successes on his roll to do so. If he has direct physical access to the computer he is hacking, he automatically succeeds on the roll unless that computer is owned by an Essence-user.

With Essence 4+, the Solar may choose to leave a backdoor in any computer he has hacked using this Charm. Once he has done so, future attempts to hack that computer succeed automatically even if the Solar is doing so remotely or if it is owned by an Essence-user.

Flawless Backtrace Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple (Dramatic Action)
Keywords: Combo-OK (Ghost-in-the-Machine Aggression)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: God-Mind Algorithms

Criminals and miscreants cannot hope to hide from Solar justice behind their computers and proxies. Flawless Backtrace Technique allows the Lawgiver to trace a person through their online identity. He must have some distinctive identifying information of the person he wishes to trace: their email, their account name on an online forum, their IP address, or similar. Running the trace is a five-hour dramatic action in which the Solar carries out Essence-enhanced search queries, tracks their electronic activity, and pinpoints the distinctive motonic signature of their online identity. This is an (Intelligence + Lore + Essence) roll at a difficulty of the target's (Essence + Lore). On a success, the Solar learns that character's name and their approximate geographic location (enough to pinpoint a city, but not a specific address). Characters who are warded against scrying, or who have their computers warded against scrying, cannot be tracked with this Charm.

Program Stabilizing Patch

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Speed 3 in long ticks)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Most Solar programmers develop signatures in their code, undeniable marks of their presence. With this Charm,

an Exalt can turn that sign into a beacon of hope for an ailing computer program, sheathing it in a bulwark of his undeniable name and purpose. This Charm modifies a program that is beset by a computer virus or similar malicious software, arresting the effects of the virus so that it causes no more harm. If the malicious software is iterative, the shield lasts for (Solar's Essence) days; after that time, the same shield cannot work against the same virus again. If the virus is simpler than that, the program is shielded indefinitely, allowing the Solar to deal with the invasive program at his leisure.

In places like the Grand Celestial Mountain, where computer code is personified as spirits, this Charm can negate or arrest all Crippling, Poison or Sickness effects in one of those characters. Doing so changes this Charm's duration to Indefinite, requiring that the motes be committed.

Code-Clarifying Technique

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 5, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Program Stabilizing Patch

Only the most complete hardware failure or energetic catastrophe can forever claim the programs of the Solar Exalted. This Charm functions like Crack-Mending Technique, except that the Exalt can reproduce computer data from the barest scraps.

Merged: Crack-Mending Technique (Craft, **Exalted**, p. 212)

Solar Parser Efficacy

Cost: —; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: None

No realm is safe from the commands of the Solar Exalted, not even the most arcane computer architectures. Lawgivers with this Charm can use and program any computer without difficulty, so long as its interface or programming language is written in a language the Exalt can understand. He ignores any external penalties or difficulty increases from lack of familiarity when trying to reprogram a robotic crane, a car-manufacturing line, or to hack into a government database.

Software Firm Fingertips

Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Solar Parser Efficacy

Hands flying across his keyboard, modules and references appearing on the screen too fast for the computer to render before the next one comes, a lone Solar Exalted programmer can outstrip a team of the greatest mortal software engineers. This Charm functions like Craftsman Needs No Tools, except that it speeds the creation of computer programs. It does not affect the modification or circumvention of programs that already exist, making it useless for on-the-fly hacking.

Merged: Craftsman Needs No Tools (Craft, **Exalted**, p. 213)

Abyssal Charms

Drive

Ghost Drift Moves

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Daredevil Driving Technique), Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

Black tendrils spit forth from the motor of the Abyssal's vehicle, binding his hands to the steering wheel or handlebars of his ride. His hands move to execute death-defying maneuvers without him willing it, as if possessed by an angry ghost of the road. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, but does not convert stunt dice to automatic successes. Instead, the Abyssal adds his (Whispers + 1) to any driving rolls he makes.

Haunted Junkyard Horror Engine

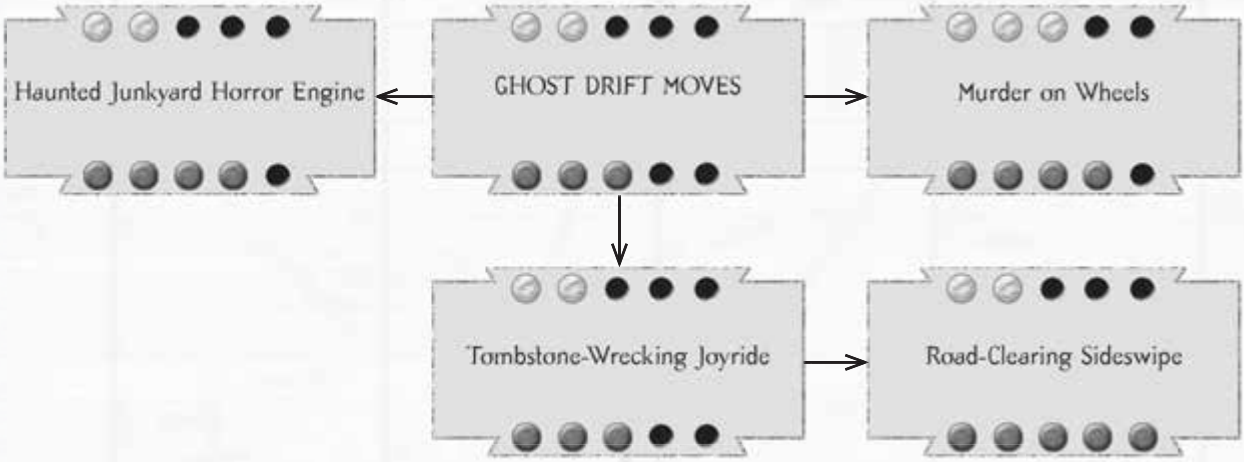
Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Invincible Sun-Engine Reinforcement), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Ghost Drift Moves

A low, metallic snarl comes from the engine of the deathknight's ride, a sound of pain and hunger both. Hunks of scrap metal, salvageable parts from crashed cars, and even chunks of asphalt ripped from the road are all drawn in towards the vehicle, fusing with it to form a patchwork metal monstrosity. The Abyssal may use this Charm to heal up to (Drive) levels of bashing or lethal damage to any vehicle he drives, mending its ruin with the spare parts and metal detritus drawn in by this magic. Haunted Junkyard Horror Engine cannot be activated more than once per tick.

In a chase scene, the Abyssal can use this Charm to supplement a chase action (see p. 138). The enhanced action does not add to the difficulty of the deathknight's interval roll, and reduces its hazard rating by one point (minimum zero). A separate activation is required if the Abyssal also wishes to invoke the healing effects of this Charm.

Tombstone-Wrecking Joyride

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Sky-Skidding Maneuver)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Ghost Drift Moves



An Abyssal in the driver's seat means trouble for anyone and anything between him and his destination. This Charm enhances a deathknight's attempt to direct a car's movement action through an environment boasting one or more stationary, non-magical objects that may slow or stop his progress. As long as those objects have soak and hardness less than the Abyssal's car, the Exalt can plow through them at top speed, damaging them sufficiently to allow his unfettered passage—and the passage of any pursuers who follow his trail of destruction. If the object is smaller than his car and is not a vital component of a larger structure, the Abyssal may elect to completely destroy it. The Exalt's car is left unharmed by his navigational improvisation.

Used to enhance an interval roll during a chase scene, this Charm affords the same benefits as its Solar counterpart, though the stunt must be based on barreling through obstacles rather than jumping them.

Road-Clearing Sideswipe

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Tombstone-Wrecking Joyride

Abyssal mercy is such that those not destroyed by this Charm simply come to a stop and lose the race. Road-Clearing Sideswipe is an attempt to ram any other cars in close range, careening between them and sending their drivers reeling. The Abyssal makes a ramming attack (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 33) against all other cars within (Essence x 5) yards, applying a single attack roll against all valid targets. The Abyssal's car reduces the post-soak damage it faces from each collision by (deathknight's Essence), to a minimum of one die.

In addition to any damage their cars may suffer, the other drivers also increase the difficulty of their piloting rolls by +2 until their DV has refreshed twice, as they attempt to regain control of their vehicles. Failure on the first such roll after being struck by this Charm causes the vehicle to come to a complete halt and requires no further rolls, allowing it to move and be controlled normally on the pilot's next action tick. A botch causes a crash, as the car flips or swerves into an obstruction.

An Abyssal driver may use this Charm during a chase scene, executing a ramming attack against all other cars that have cumulative successes no more than three greater or lower than his own. In addition to the damage it inflicts, any car hit by this Charm also accrues one extra point of hazard.

Murder On Wheels

Cost: —(5m); **Mins:** Drive 5, Essence 3;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (Crashing Star Charge)
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Ghost Drift Moves

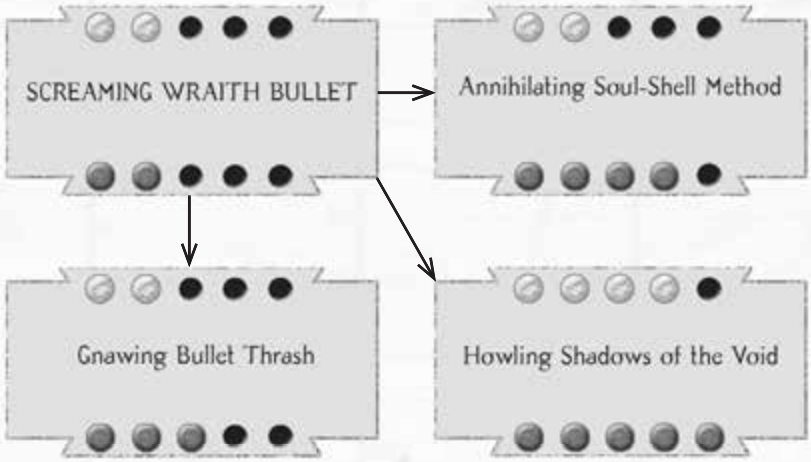
Abandoning caution and self-preservation, the Abyssal sets out on a deliberate crash course, turning every ton of metal in his car into a high-speed murder weapon. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

Firearms

Screaming Wraith Bullet

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Nova Shell Ordnance), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Dredging up the ghosts of old violence, the deathknight gives their vengeful hatred form through his attacks. No gunshot rings out as he pulls the trigger, but only the eerie wail of the half-insane ghost that rides the shot. Screaming Wraith Bullet adds (Essence) dice to the raw damage of the supplemented attack. Living characters hit by the ghost-ridden bullet see the twisted plasmic visage of the wraith in a sudden flash, stunning them until their DV has refreshed two times (see **Exalted**, p. 153). Even if the Abyssal has no ammunition, he can still unleash vengeful wraiths with this Charm, 1m making attacks that deal no damage but still stun their victims.



Annihilating Soul-Shell Method
Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Screaming Wraith Bullet

Oblivion's Essence arcs down the barrel of the Abyssal's gun like lightning as he fires, surrounding his bullets with a crackling black halo of soul-destroying energy. These entropic bullets deal aggravated damage to mortals, ghosts, and raksha. Any character damaged by them loses a single mote for every level of damage dealt to them, up to a maximum of the Abyssal's (Essence). This mote drain is compatible with Ravening Maw of Firearms and Soulsteel Reaper Spirit.

Gnawing Bullet Thrash
Cost: 6m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Mirror (Searing Radiance Fire Tongues), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Screaming Wraith Bullet

A swift shot to the head is more mercy than the living deserve. Better that they face the long and lingering death of bleeding out gutshot, that they may have more time to contemplate the agony of life and the sweet release of death. Gnawing Bullet Thrash adds the Abyssal's (Essence) to the post-soak damage of a supplemented attack. Characters damaged by the attack bleed out from it as though they were a mortal (see **Exalted**, p. 151), as a Crippling effect. The rate at which they take damage from this bleeding is increased to once every two actions. Damaged mortals cannot close their bleeding wounds by any means.

Howling Shadows of the Void
Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 4;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged, Mirror (Lambent Bolt of Annihilation), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Screaming Wraith Bullet

See Lords of Creation, p. 59.

Merged: Howling Shadows of the Void (Archery).

Bloodthirsty Killing Style
Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Heaven's Eye Marksmanship)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

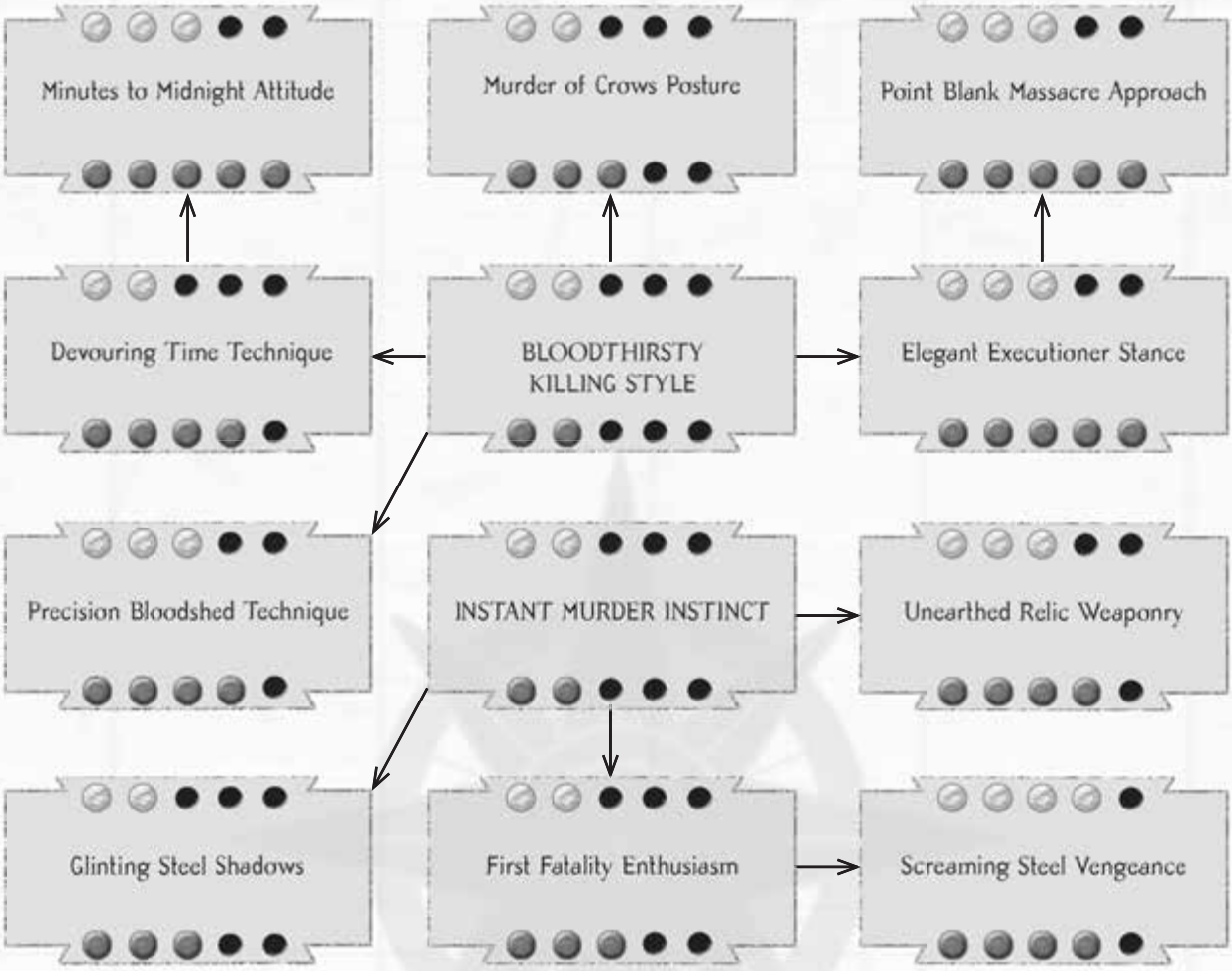
Blood calls to the Abyssal killer, setting his shells quivering in the chamber in anticipation of tasting flesh. Bloodthirsty Killing Style adds 150 yards to the Range of the supplemented attack. Add an additional 50 yards and a die of raw damage for every point of wound penalties suffered by the Abyssal's target when he fires.

With Essence 4+, this Charm also negates external penalties from environmental conditions.

Devouring Time Technique
Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Lightspeed Trigger Technique)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Bloodthirsty Killing Style

As the Abyssal lazily fingers the trigger, time seems to slow to a standstill for his victim. They can see the bullet coming towards them, tracing its spiraling path through the air, but they cannot act fast enough to throw themselves from its course. If nothing else, they have time enough to resign themselves to their death. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

Minutes to Midnight Attitude
Cost: 7m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 3;
Type: Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Steel Sunbeam Radiance), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Devouring Time Technique



Time stops for everyone but the Abyssal, casting the world into a monochrome wash of black and white. His bullets hang heavy and unmoving in the air until time once again resumes, sending them flying towards their marks. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

Murder of Crows Posture

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Sundog Gunslinger Stance)
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Bloodthirsty Killing Style

Calling his weapons to hand like a flock of carrion birds, the Abyssal brings death enough to sate them all. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

Elegant Executioner Stance

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 3;
Type: Simple (Speed 4)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Bloodthirsty Killing Style

See **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**, pp. 123-124.

Merged: Elegant Executioner Stance (Archery).

Point Blank Massacre Approach

Cost: —; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native, Overdrive
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Elegant Executioner Stance

Violence is best savored face to face with one's victims. Point Blank Massacre Approach grants the Abyssal an Overdrive pool with a capacity of ten motes. While wielding a Firearms weapons, he can fill his pool by entering into the engagement range of a non-extra enemy during his own action tick. Doing so grants him two offensive motes, as long as his own engagement range is longer than that of the enemy. He can only gain this benefit once per action, no matter how many enemies he comes within range of.

In addition, the Abyssal gains a single offensive mote each time his DVs refresh while he is within the engagement range of at least one non-extra enemy.

Precision Bloodshed Technique

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Every-Angle Perfection)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Bloodthirsty Killing Style

The Abyssal lets his killing instinct rule him, blinding him to everything but the trajectory to his target. Acting without thought or intentionality, he fires the perfect, fatal shot. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

Instant Murder Instinct
Cost: — (1m); **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (Lightning Hands Reload)
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: None

The motions of murder are second nature for the Abyssal Exalted. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, except that it creates ammunition forged from black steel.

Glinting Steel Shadows
Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Speed 3)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Merged, Mirror (Elsewhere Draw Mastery)
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Instant Murder Instinct

An Abyssal's arms cling to his Essence as formless shadows until he has need of their steel. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart.

Merged: Banished Bow Arsenal (Archery), Void Sheath Technique (Melee).

First Fatality Enthusiasm
Cost: —; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (Flawless Quick-Draw Concentration)
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Instant Murder Instinct

Deathknights are swift to violence, and spare no mercy on enemies who cannot match their deadly pace. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, except that it does not add dice to the Abyssal's attacks. On his first action tick, he instead doubles any threshold successes added to the raw damage of Firearms attacks made against characters who have yet to take an action tick.

Screaming Steel Vengeance
Cost: 10m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 4;
Type: Reflexive (Step 2)
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Split-Second Killshot Evasion), Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: First Fatality Enthusiasm

Ripping bullets from the air with inhuman speed and precision, the deathknight sends them screaming back to their masters. Screaming Steel Vengeance is a perfect parry against any ranged attack that is made with some form of projectile, even those that are unblockable. The Abyssal must be aware of the attack in order to parry it. Once the Abyssal has caught the projectile, he may fling it back at the character who made the attack, redirecting it to them in step 9.

This Charm has one of the Four Flaws of Abyssal Invulnerability.

Unearthed Relic Weaponry
Cost: 3m, 1wp or 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Sunlit Arsenal Meditation), Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Instant Murder Instinct

Plunging his hands into his shadow or the darkness of his anima, the deathknight draws forth the manifestation of his murderous intent. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, except that it produces soulsteel weaponry rather than orichalcum.

Lore

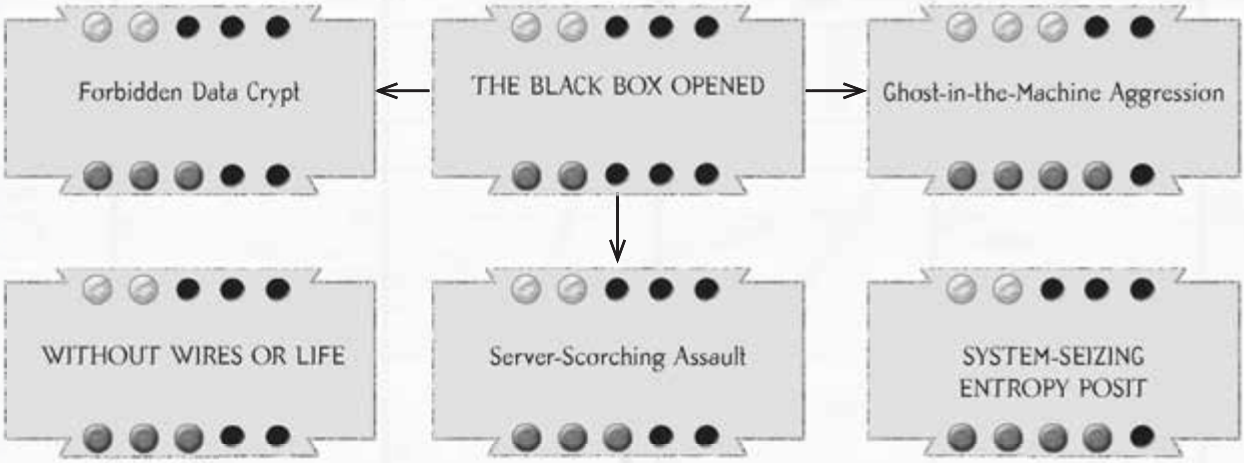
The Black Box Opened
Cost: –; **Mins:** Lore 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Mirror (God-Mind Algorithms)
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The mind of a machine is a lifeless thing of cold calculation and heartless programming. Oblivion's Chosen understand such things well. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, but does not convert stunt dice to automatic successes. Instead, the Abyssal adds his (Whispers + 1) as bonus dice to any computer-based action he makes.

Forbidden Data Crypt
Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Mirror (Data Fortress Technology), Shaping, Touch
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: The Black Box Opened

It would be wise not to disturb those secrets that death's champions would keep. Even in the realm of data, there are things that can scar the mind and drive men to madness. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, but the base penalty it inflicts is only -1. However, any character who fails their roll to hack into the protected computer is bombarded by a stream of horrifically maddening imagery. Even if they are able to force their eyelids shut or rip the power cord from their monitor, there is no reprieve from the assault: the images are sent directly into their mind. This mental Shaping causes the character to lose all points of temporary Willpower and grants them a single dot of the Whispers background for free. Whispers granted by Forbidden Data Crypt fade away after a month… unless their maddened victim pays the experience cost to make them permanent.

Server-Scorching Assault
Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Mirror (Firewall-Defying Method)
Duration: Instant



Prerequisite Charms: The Black Box Opened

A fragment of the Abyssal's own entropic Essence takes on an aberrant existence as a living computer virus, spreading throughout computer networks to infiltrate and destroy the systems of his enemies. This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart, but the entropic virus always causes some lingering damage to the hacked computer before it dissolves into nothingness. The computer's processor might slow down considerably, files could be deleted at random from its hard drive, keystrokes might be replaced with random characters from no known human alphabet. Mundane repairs can fix these traces of corruption; the true damage has already been done.

Ghost-in-the-Machine Aggression

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 3;
Type: Simple (Dramatic Action)
Keywords: Combo-OK (Flawless Backtrace Technique), Emotion
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: The Black Box Opened

This Charm is identical to its Solar counterpart... except that the next time the traced character turns on a computer, an apparition of the deathknight's face appears on its screen in a split-second burst of static. While this reveals the Abyssal's identity to their victim, it also causes that character to form an Intimacy of fear towards them. Resisting this unnatural Emotion costs one Willpower.

Without Wires or Life

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Dramatic action)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

Taking the time to tweak the network settings of a computer, the Abyssal penetrates the barrier between Creation and the Underworld to connect his computer with a wireless network on the other side. The network must be within the corresponding space of the other realm, but the conceptual distance between the two realms proves meaningless. The connection is tenuous, requiring frequent recalibration to maintain. This Charm only allows networking between computers that could normally do so were it not for the separation of Creation from the Underworld; it does not create network capability where there is none.

System-Seizing Entropy Posit

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Dramatic action)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Through his understanding of the inevitably limited nature of constructed thoughts, like those of computers, automata, and manses, the Abyssal can find some crack in their logic processes by which to cripple the intelligence. This Charm require access to these processes directly, which is represented by system-level access to a computer or attunement to and access to a manse's hearth room. The Exalt rolls (Intelligence + Lore) to hack into the system as an hour-long dramatic action, which may involve typing at a keyboard or speaking to a manse's intelligence. The difficulty of this roll is based on the quality of the system's security, usually on a scale of 1-5, or the manse's rating.

Success imposes a -5 internal penalty on all rolls by the target, and a -3 external penalty on relevant rolls by others to utilize the data processing services of the target. This is due to the slowdown as it attempts to understand the intractable problem the Abyssal has afflicted it with. He may propose a logical contradiction, or simply insert a crippling virus. To repair this affliction, another programmer or manse architect must make an extended dramatic (Intelligence + Lore) roll, with a difficulty of 3 and cumulative difficulty of (Abyssal's Intelligence + Lore + Essence), with an interval of one hour per roll.

Lunar Charms

Dexterity

Silver-Slick Maneuver

Cost: —; **Mins:** Dexterity 3, Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: None

Even at top speed, a Lunar's car can change heading in an instant, tearing off in any direction. This Charm permanently enhances the Lunar's ability to drive, allowing him to change facing and even momentum with unsurpassed ease. This provides the following benefits:

- Any Maneuverability penalty a car may suffer is reduced to 0 while the Lunar drives it. The Exalt may drive in reverse at no special penalty, though blindness penalties may apply if there are no side mirrors or rear window.
- The Lunar need not make piloting rolls just to control the car at greater than half its maximum speed.
- If their difficulty is equal to or lower than his permanent Essence, the Lunar's piloting rolls each action to maintain control of the car are reflexive.
- When giving chase or evading pursuit, stunts that take advantage of hairpin turns and sudden changes of direction allow the Lunar's car to take an extra Move action. This benefit is available no more than once per tick. In a chase scene, such stunts may result in extra bonus dice due to increased movement rate during the stunted interval.

Air Skid Ghost-Wheels

Cost: 7m, 1wp (+1wp per action); **Mins:** Dexterity 3, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Shaping
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Silver-Slick Maneuver

A Lunar can drive down any path he pleases, even when it's not a path to anyone else. This Charm enchants a car or other Drive-based vehicle owned and piloted by the Lunar, wrapping its wheels in silvery mist. The mist even creates replacements for damaged and missing wheels as a Shaping effect, allowing the car to function normally, and immunizing them from further damage.

While in effect, Air Skid Ghost-Wheels allows the Lunar's car to drive on any solid surface, even vertical and inverted ones, treating them as if they were relatively level ground. Gargoyles, balconies and window washers remain obstacles, but the side of a skyscraper or underside of a bridge is just as easy to navigate as a city street. Structures that are driven on are not necessarily damaged by the Lunar's antics, though misty silver trails are left behind for the rest of the scene, making it extremely easy to track the Exalt's car.

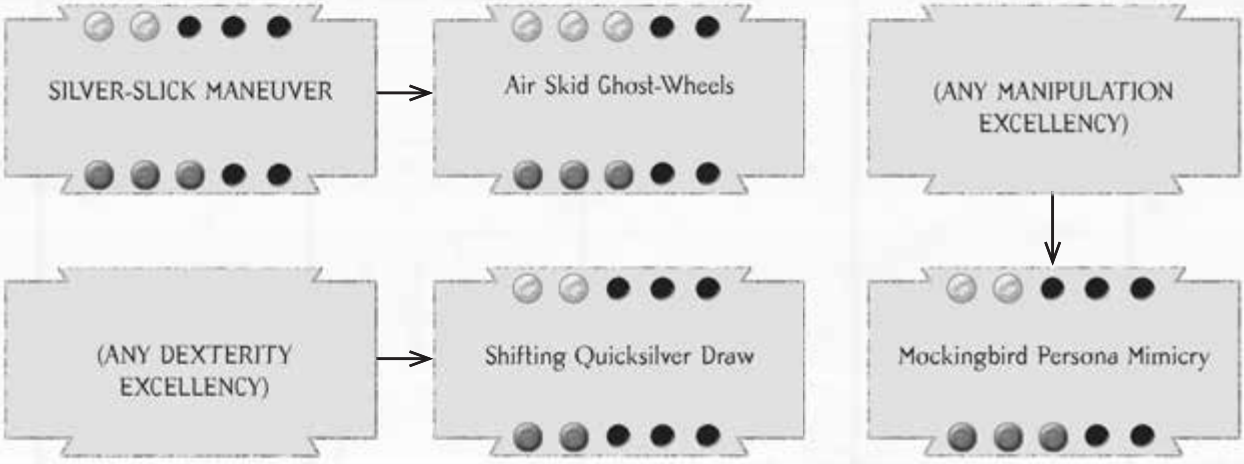
By paying one Willpower per action, the Lunar may cause her car to treat the very air as a solid surface, allowing it to drive through the sky as if it were solid ground.

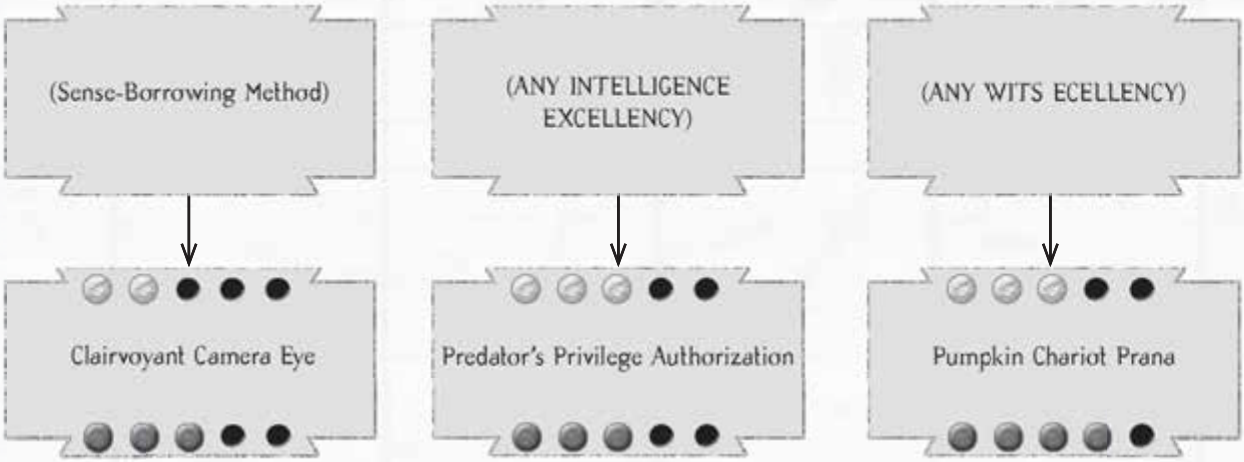
During a chase scene, stunts facilitated by this Charm grant one extra die, and if appropriate they reduce any points of hazard the Lunar would accrue during that interval by as much as the stunt's rating (to a minimum of one).

Shifting Quicksilver Draw

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Dexterity 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Dexterity Excellency

Warping and twisting his own malleable flesh, the Lunar reconfigures his body to bring his weapons to bear, shifting faster than his unsuspecting victims can see. The revolver holstered at his hip is now held in his hand; the magazine of ammo concealed in his boot is now securely loaded. Shifting Quicksilver Draw lets the Lunar reflexively draw, put away, or reload a single weapon. As part of this action, he can choose to make a (Dexterity + Larceny) roll opposed by the (Wits + Awareness) of all characters who can see him. Any character that fails their roll is unable to detect the transfer of items, or the Obvious nature of this





Charm. Characters will still notice when a Lunar uses the items, so he cannot make his attacks unexpected just by using this Charm. Shifting Quicksilver Draw cannot be activated more than once each action.

Manipulation

Mockingbird Persona Mimicry

Cost: 1m, 1wp; **Mins:** Manipulation 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Any Manipulation Excellency

Cunning Lunars can conceal their true face with nothing more than a turn of phrase, weaving false personas and alter egos from words alone. Mockingbird Persona Mimicry can supplement any action to create a written message or text (which can include a written social attack). As the Lunar writes the enchanted message, he chooses how he wishes its readers to conceive of him: as an innocent schoolgirl, a respected scientist, a dangerous criminal, or any other persona he pleases. This is how the Lunar will be seen by any character who reads the message and has a Dodge MDV lower than his (Manipulation + Essence). Such characters will form an Intimacy of belief in this conception of the author unless they pay three Willpower to resist this unnatural Illusion.

Mockingbird Persona Mimicry can explicitly be used to enchant text that is conveyed through the Internet or other electronic means, and does not suffer degradation from multiple readers.

Perception

Clairvoyant Camera Eye

Cost: —; **Mins:** Perception 3, Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Sense-Borrowing Method

Once a Lunar has learned to steal the eyes of the hawk and the ears of the cat, it is not so different to take the eyes of the bank security cameras or the ears of a cell phone's receiver. This Charm upgrades Sense-Borrowing Method so that it can be used to target machines that are capable of sensory input such as cameras, microphones, phones, and so on. The difficulty of the activation roll to target a machine is equal to that machine's (Resources value + 1). It is also possible to borrow the senses of automata with this Charm as long as they have Essence 1, using the same difficulty as for animals.

Intelligence

Predator's Privilege Authorization

Cost: —; **Mins:** Intelligence 3, Essence 3;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Native
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Any Intelligence Excellency

Such is the talent of the Lunar shapeshifters that they may even fool the least gods of computers and networks, stealing the authorizations and privileges of those whose forms they wear. While the Lunar is in the shape of another character, he automatically succeeds on any roll he makes to hack a computer owned by that character, as the system willingly offers itself up to the one it believes to be its true master. He can also access any password-protected information or services belonging to that character, such as email logins, forum accounts, or secure files. Although he gains no knowledge of what the actual password is in such a case, his disguise is so convincing that the computer gods graciously accept even the wrong answer.

Wits

Pumpkin Chariot Prana

Cost: Special; **Mins:** Wits 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Shaping, Touch
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Any Wits Excellency

Luna's Chosen have no use for any vehicle that is not just as protean and adaptable as they are. Activating this Charm, the Lunar may touch any mundane object-scale vehicle in order to copy the unique imprint of its Essence, committing a number of motes equal to its Resources cost. As long as he maintains this commitment, he may reflexively confer the traits of the imprinted vehicle on any other that he pilots as a Shaping effect, granting the new vehicle the same Speed, Maneuverability, Endurance, health levels, and soak as the original. The vehicle's Crew, Cargo and passenger requirements and capacities remain unchanged. The Lunar may drive a yacht like a speedboat, ram a pickup through a wall as if it were an eighteen-wheeler, or speed through traffic on a bicycle-cum-motorcycle.

Multiple activations of this Charm can be stacked to retain the imprints of different vehicles, but the Lunar cannot grant traits from multiple imprints to a single vehicle.

Sidereal Charms

Journeys—Drive: The Comet

Predestined Escort Coincidence

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Compulsion
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Catching the thread of someone's destiny, the Sidereal draws that unwitting person into her car—and into her life. In order to use this Charm, the Sidereal must pull up next to a character while driving a vehicle. She rolls (Charisma + Presence) as an unblockable social attack against that character, adding automatic successes equal to her (Drive). Characters who are joined in combat or mass combat, or who are already in a vehicle, are immune. On a successful roll, that character succumbs to an unnatural Compulsion to enter the Sidereal's vehicle and allow her to drive him to a single destination. He cannot exit the vehicle or take any actions that would prevent the Sidereal from completing their journey, such as attacking her or using social attacks to dissuade her of the plan.

The Sidereal must have a concrete destination in mind in order to use this Charm, such as "Crane City Library" or "the burger joint on 7th and Lotus." She need not inform her target where they are going, however. Upon concluding the journey, she may make the targeted character one of her Acquaintances if he is a mortal. Doing so raises her Acquaintances as appropriate for the addition. The new Acquaintance lasts for only one story unless the Sidereal pays one experience point for her raised rating in the background as a Training effect.

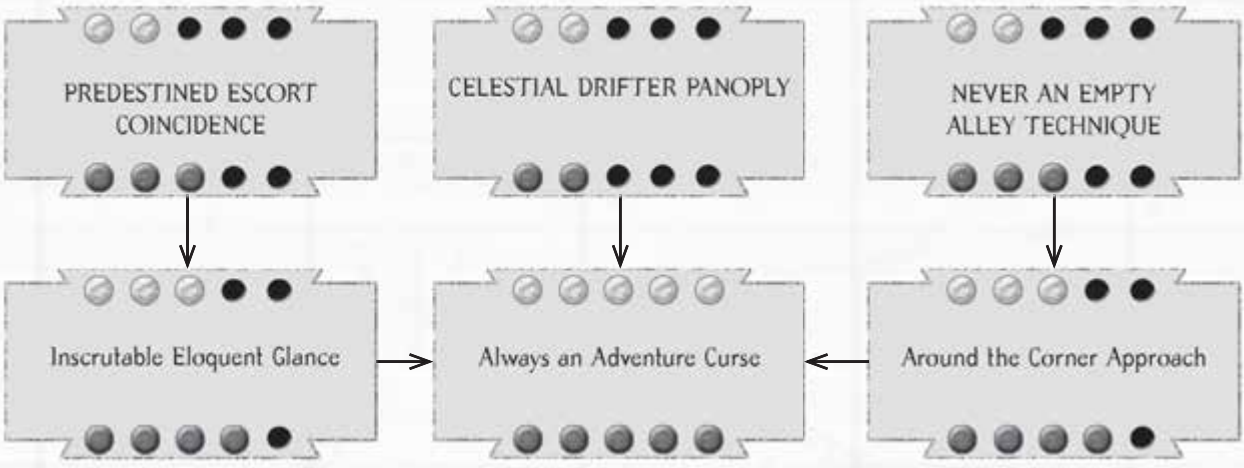
Resisting the unnatural mental influence of this Charm costs three points of Willpower. This cost drops to zero if an affected character is attacked while in the Sidereal's vehicle, allowing him to fight back or bail out as he wishes.

Inscrutable Eloquent Glance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Compulsion
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Predestined Escort Coincidence

Behind the wheel of a car, the task of a Sidereal to make sure heroes get where they must go is only more keenly felt. This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite, allowing the Sidereal to include a curt request for a destination, or simply a raised eyebrow and expectant look. In addition to compelling the target to come with her, the Seer extracts a confession of desire to travel to a location where the target may meet and interact with the subject of one of their Intimacies or their Motivation. The Storyteller should weigh the presumed distance to the subject against how important it is to the target.

Having extracted a desire from the target, the Sidereal driver sets off in search of it. The Exalt achieves a minimum of (Drive) threshold successes on any unopposed rolls to find and navigate to the person, place or thing his passenger finds important. He also gains +2 bonus successes on similar, opposed rolls. The Seer gains an intuitive sense for



where the object of desire may be, allowing him to attempt rolls to find it that would be otherwise invalid (usually at difficulties reflective of having minimal clues).

Once they arrive at their destination, the target is shaken by the Sidereal's uncanny sense for their need. The Vizier may make a short remark or another significant glance, reflexively executing a single Presence-based social attack against the target. The attack must be relevant to the context of the destination and the expressed desire. The target's MDV is halved against the attack, and the influence is unnatural.

With Essence 4+, the Sidereal may scrutinize the passenger silently, rather than asking for a destination. The Exalt intuits the desired destination entirely without conversation. The capstone social attack at the end of the journey becomes undodgeable.

Celestial Drifter Panoply

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Drive 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Shaping, Touch
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: None

In all the unused nooks and crannies of the universe, the Sidereal Exalted hide their tools for safekeeping. This Charm enchants the storage space of a single-pilot vehicle the Exalt owns, allowing it to hold twice as much stuff as it normally would, but only to store additional inanimate objects—not characters or, even if it is large enough, structures. Celestial Drifter Panoply achieves this effect by warping space, masking the distorted perspectives and angles of the altered cargo area underneath the clutter necessary to fit everything within it. Even as little as a single piece of paper will appear to fill up the space, seeming to multiply into a crumpled mess. If there are more than five objects in the storage space, it takes at least a minute of searching to find the one the Exalt is looking for, unless he pays 1wp to find a specific object as a miscellaneous action. With a glance, the Sidereal can know how much storage space is available and how much is left.

Even when he has not planned ahead, a Celestial drifter can always find a favorite tool when he really needs it. As long as the Sidereal has rummaged through or actually been inside the vehicle within the current scene, he may retroactively justify having grabbed an object for later use. Editing reality this way costs 2m and requires a successful ([Dexterity or Wits] + Larceny) roll as if the Seer were hiding the item on his person, at a difficulty appropriate to the feat. If contested by another effect such as a ward against teleportation, the Exalt adds (Essence) dice to his contesting roll.

With Drive and Essence 4+, a Sidereal may store a single structure in a cargo hold expanded with this Charm, if the extra space is sufficient to allow it.

Never an Empty Alley Technique

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Speed 1 in long ticks)
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Shaping
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Sidereal searches around for a minute, sure that he planned ahead well enough that his car is just around the corner. So it is! This Charm is a short search for an unobserved space large enough to contain an unoccupied car owned by the Seer. At the Storyteller's discretion, this may require an Awareness or Investigation roll. Turning a corner, peering down into the sewer, or opening an abandoned crate, the Sidereal finds his vehicle. At his discretion, it may already be running.

The car may exist in two places at once for a brief period, after the Sidereal has found it but before he gets in. Once someone attempts to enter the vehicle, its location becomes certain: faithfully at the Exalt's side.

Around the Corner Approach

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Shaping
Duration: One story
Prerequisite Charms: Never an Empty Alley Technique

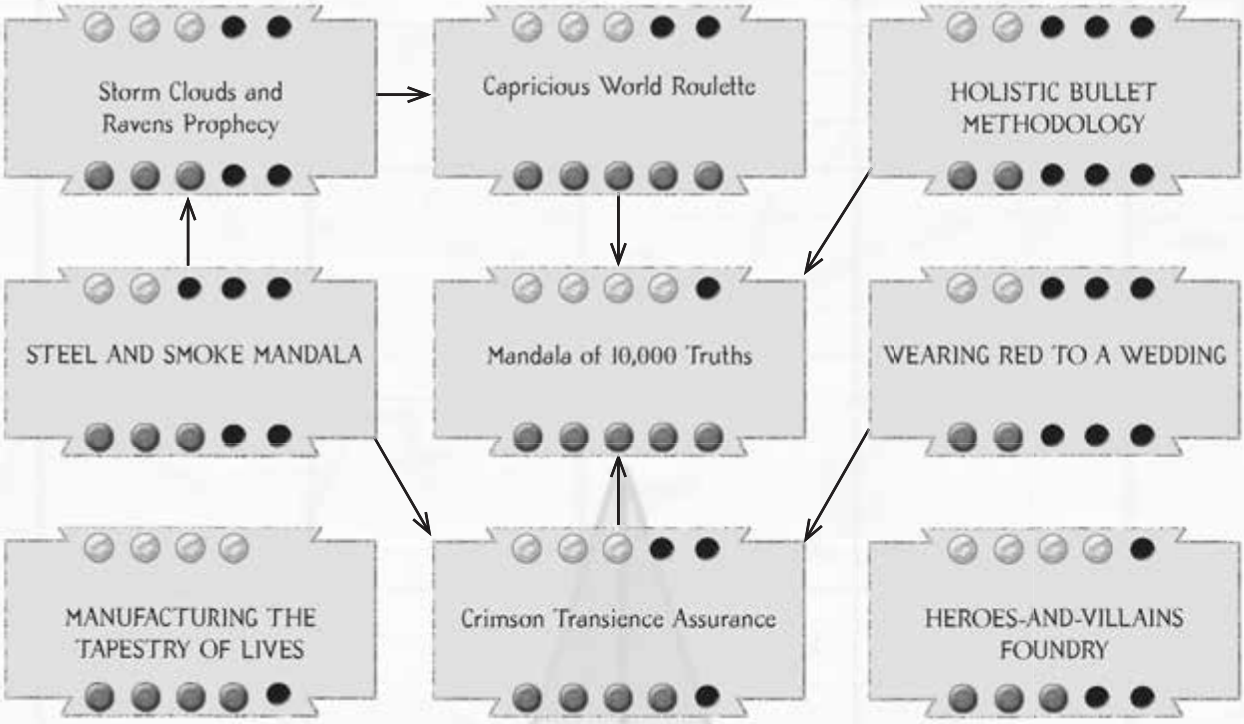
A Sidereal detective on someone's trail may have only a few clues and her intuition for finding a fugitive. That is enough. This Charm can enhance an Awareness, Investigation, or Survival action to try to notice, observe or track down a specific character, adding two extra successes. If the action is successful, as long as the motes remain committed to this Charm the Sidereal can take a few good turns and shortcuts while piloting a vehicle she owns, finding the target unerringly. If the target is actively concealed, she may have to succeed on an opposing (Wits + Drive) roll to guess the right path. The Sidereal also retains the bonus successes to the above rolls to find the target for the duration of the Charm.

With a miscellaneous action that has a Speed of one long tick, the Seer drives her car through unrecognizable streets and tunnels, past unfamiliar parks, and over strange bridges. If her quarry is within (Essence) miles, her car appears within 50 yards of the target. It may appear anywhere within the area that she specifies, if she has been there before; otherwise, the Exalt's car comes in at the edge of the designated space. It is up to the Sidereal to find her target after she arrives. The shortcuts afforded by this Charm can be used no more than once per scene.

Once per chase scene, a Sidereal may use this Charm's effect to replace her normal interval roll. Instead, she replaces her cumulative success total with an amount one less than the target achieves during that interval. During an extended chase scene, this explicitly allows the Exalt to bypass intervening legs after falling behind, entering the target's current leg.

Always an Adventure Curse

Cost: 10m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 5, Essence 5; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Prayer Strip, Shaping, Touch



Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Inscrutable Eloquent Glance, Celestial Drifter Panoply, Around the Corner Approach

Always an Adventure Curse teaches its targets to better appreciate what they seek, when they manage to find it. If a journey is not exciting, and most important if it is not difficult, then how can anything at the end of it truly matter? To use this Charm, the Sidereal must burden a vehicle with a prayer strip bearing the Scripture of the Wandering Maiden. It fixes on the vehicle wherever the Exalt puts it, its ink glowing a prideful golden hue. It resists harm as normal, and it cannot be removed.

While carrying the prayer strip, the vehicle it is on suffers adventure. This adds (Exalt's Drive) extra successes to Awareness, Investigation and Survival rolls for others attempting to find and pursue the vehicle, and increases their movement rates by +2 yards per tick in pursuit of the vehicle. In dramatic travel time, this adds another mile per hour to the pursuer's speed.

Meanwhile, the target struggles to continue. Their vehicle is beset by misfortune, poor weather, and any of their pursuers that can find them. (Sidereal's Drive) times per day, the Storyteller may invent an obstacle to the vehicle's progress. The obstacle may be implausible, but it must be possible. Environmental hazards may be present, with bashing Damage and Trauma equal to the Exalt's Drive rating; weather may impose (Vizier's Drive ÷ 2) as external penalties or difficulty increases to any action meant to make progress with the vehicle. The pilot and passengers may be subject to what are effectively social attacks, distractions meant to turn them aside or cause them to stop the journey, with successes against their MDV equal to (Exalt's Drive + Essence), causing a natural Compulsion or Illusion effect. Truculent, local spirits with permanent Essence less than the Sidereal's Drive rating may make appearances to hinder the journey.

Storytellers need not play out every single trial that the journey faces, or even any—only scenes of dramatic interest and fun. For each obstacle that is not played out as a scene, dramatic travel times may be reduced by 10%, to a minimum of five miles per hour.

If in spite of all these troubles, the vehicle stays on its course and makes at least five miles of progress for (Exalt's Essence) consecutive days, for the remaining duration of this Charm the vehicle is granted good fortune. This is equivalent to all the obstacles above, reversed: imposing external penalties on those pursuing the vehicle, subduing environmental hazards, imposing mental influence to continue the journey, and guarding the vehicle from troublesome spirits.

A Sidereal may end this Charm early while the target still faces trials, but once they have won their way to good fortune, Always an Adventure Curse cannot voluntarily be ended unless the Exalt is within (Essence x 10) yards and can see the prayer strip.

Firearms — The Lightning Bolt

Holistic Bullet Methodology

Cost: — (1m); **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: None

The Scripture of the Wandering Maiden

Once there was a Maiden who went on a long trip.

She took her lover and her child with her…

…and all her worldly possessions.

They rode to escape despair and war…

…on paved roads and gravel roads and even no roads.

'Where are we going?' asked the Maiden's lover.

'Always to the next horizon,' she said.

The Sidereal makes the world into a medium for her intentions, killing with chance alone. The Sidereal can pay one mote whenever she makes a Firearms attack to do so without using any ammunition. She pulls the trigger, and a wound bursts open on her enemy as if by random chance. Attacks made without bullets can still be dodged and parried normally. Because no ammunition is actually used, no evidence is left behind that the shot was ever fired, other than the inexplicable wound.

When the Sidereal is without a weapon, she may make Firearms attacks by holding her hand in the shape of a gun and pointing it at her enemy, treating it as a holdout pistol (see p. 141) with the magical material bonus of starmetal. Doing so is Obvious, and requires her to pay the cost of this Charm for each attack she makes. Because both use only her bare hands, she may switch freely between these attacks and unarmed punches without needing a Ready Weapon action.

Steel and Smoke Mandala

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Closing her eyes to the clinging falsehoods of the spatial and physical, the Sidereal sights a straight line through the warp and weft of destiny. She fires only a single shot down this line, but that is all she needs. Ash and Smoke Mandala creates a magical flurry consisting of a single Firearms attack directed at each enemy the Sidereal can perceive within range, up to a maximum of (Dexterity + 3) attacks. The flurry is made at the character's full dice pool, ignores Rate, and has a total DV penalty and Speed equal to the highest of any individual attack. No enemy can have more than one attack directed at them—a single bullet passes through them all as if they were arranged in a straight line, tracing out a trajectory in higher-dimensional space.

A Firearms 5+, Essence 3+ repurchase of this Charm allows the Sidereal to direct all attacks in this flurry against a single enemy. Doing so reduces the total number of attacks to her (Dexterity). She fires her shot along a metaphysical trajectory that causes it to strike one target multiple times, leaving a wound that has no sensible explanation other than a "magic bullet."

Storm Clouds and Ravens Prophecy

Cost: 1m+; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Shaping
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Steel and Smoke Mandala

An unresolved tension hangs in the destiny of every battle that has yet to be concluded, the faintest vibration of uncertainty in the metaphysical fabric of fate. Storm Clouds and Ravens Prophecy taps into this tension to empower the Sidereal's weapon with death-dealing force. Every mote spent on this Charm reduces the target number of the damage roll for the supplemented attack by one point (minimum 4).

Once the Sidereal has damaged a character with the supplemented attack, she can pay a point of Willpower to bind them to the unresolved outcome of the fight. Win or lose, they will be there to see it. This entanglement is a Shaping effect that lasts until the end of the scene. On any action that the character retreats from combat, they lose a point of Willpower (falling back to make ranged attacks is not retreating).

This Shaping also consumes a single mote of Essence each time that character uses magic to reflexively move away from an attacker during the middle of a flurry. The Shaping will drain offensive motes from a character's Overdrive pool first if they possess one, then proceeds to their peripheral and personal pools in that order. Once a character is drained to zero temporary Willpower or zero motes, they become incapable of taking either of the penalized actions (even if they later regain Willpower or motes).

Capricious World Roulette

Cost: 8m; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Storm Clouds and Ravens Prophecy

Accepting the chaos and unpredictability of violence without regret, the Sidereal casts off all other assumptions. In the heat of the firefight there is no meaning or cause in her mind, no right or wrong—only shots fired, and the bodies of the wounded and dead. When using Capricious World Roulette, the Sidereal does not choose a target for her attack. Instead, she rolls a single die in Step 1 of the supplemented attack, which is used to determine the target. No effects can modify the roll (adding dice, applying penalties, converting dice to successes), except to modify its target number—including granting an auspicious success. The Auspicious Firearms Excellency is explicitly capable of enhancing the roll.

Once the roll has been made and the target chosen, the attack proceeds as normal. It automatically hits with a minimum of zero threshold successes, even if the attack roll does not beat the target's DV. At the Storyteller's discretion, this Charm can extend the Range of the attack indefinitely to strike a chosen target, but only against characters that are already joined in battle against the Sidereal—she cannot snipe at enemies from continents away.

Targets are chosen as follows:

- *Success on a 10*: The Sidereal's player chooses what character the attack targets. Auspicious successes always confer this effect.
- *Success*: The Storyteller chooses one of the Sidereal's enemies for the attack to target. He cannot choose an extra unless there are no non-extra enemies in that combat.
- *Failure*: The Storyteller chooses one of the Sidereal's enemies for the attack to target. He *must* choose an extra unless there are none in that combat.
- *Failure on a 1*: The Storyteller chooses one of the Sidereal's *allies* for the attack to target. If she has no allies in that combat, the attack is instead redirected to the nearest uninvolved bystander. Attacks against bystanders always have infinite range, even though their targets are not joined in combat.

Wearing Red to a Wedding

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Illusion
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: None

The world is a cruel and unhappy place. That's just how it is! While Wearing Red to a Wedding is active, a shroud of banality and inevitably is cast over the Sidereal's violent deeds and bearing. Characters who see the Sidereal won't be frightened or put off by any guns or ammunition that she carries, or by any obvious signs of battle on her—torn clothes, bloodstains, and so on. Although they still notice these things, they simply cannot see the Sidereal as being capable of hurting people or being involved in a fight. Resisting this unnatural mental influence for a scene costs two Willpower.

Once the Sidereal actually joins in combat, the Illusion begins to fray, making the deadly nature of her weapons all-too-obvious to every character who has also joined combat. They remain immune to this Charm for one full day following the fight. Uninvolved bystanders who do not join in the fight are still affected, but can pay a discounted cost of one Willpower to resist for an entire day.

Crimson Transience Assurance

Cost: —; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Native, Overdrive
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Steel and Smoke Mandala, Wearing Red to a Wedding

The Sidereal takes the truths revealed by meaningless violence and folds them into her heart, hardening it with countless layers of acceptance. If she is to make an answer to suffering, then it will be through strife. Crimson Transience Assurance grants the Sidereal an Overdrive pool with a capacity of ten motes. It can be filled when the universe reminds the Vizier of the transience of attachments by causing misfortune to characters for whom she holds a positive Intimacy, or whom she has instructed in the past. "Instruction" in this case includes not only characters who have learned Charms, sorcery, or new Abilities or Specialty dots from the Sidereal, but also those that have significantly benefited from her advice or stratagems, at the Storyteller's discretion. The following conditions can trigger this Overdrive:

• Whenever the Sidereal witnesses one of these characters being dealt damage while she is joined in combat alongside them as an ally, she gains a single offensive mote.

• Whenever the Sidereal witnesses one of these characters being killed by an enemy while she is joined in combat alongside them as an ally, she gains (Conviction + 3) offensive motes. The deaths of extras do not grant this mote award. She also gains this reward if she joins combat in response to learning of the death of such a character.

• Whenever the Sidereal deals damage to such a character with a Firearms attack, she gains a single offensive mote. In order to claim this reward, that character must be considered her enemy at the time. The Sidereal cannot gain motes if he is willing or complicit in the harm—either she must betray him, or he must betray her. Attacks inadvertently directed against allies by Capricious World Roulette are an exception to this, granting offensive motes as they demonstrate that the Sidereal cannot rely on violence without harming those she cares for.

Mandala of 10,000 Truths

Cost: 13m, 1lhl, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 4;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious, Prayer Strip
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Capricious World Roulette, Crimson Transience Assurance, Holistic Bullet Methodology

As the Sidereal casts away a prayer strip marked with the Scripture of the Lonely Maiden to flutter in the air, the scroll elongates and twists itself into an intricate spiral pattern that hangs in the air just a few feet before her. She can fire through the center of the floating scripture as though it were a targeting reticule, sending her shots down fateful trajectories of inevitable collision. Shooting through the reticule converts any dice added from Aim actions to automatic successes and negates any external penalties to the attack. In addition, any Parry DV applied against such attacks is halved as the bullets weave around shields and blocking weapons, and cover affords no DV bonuses against them. The spiraling prayer strip also deflects ranged attacks from the Sidereal, granting her a +3 cover bonus to her DVs against them.

Should a time ever come when the Sidereal must forsake both the certainty and safety of this Charm, then she may unleash the last of the mandala's ten thousand truths. As she fires her last shot through the spinning mandala, the prayer strip unfolds and affixes itself to her bullet like a long, swishing tail. The prayer strip confers none of this Charm's usual benefits, but instead adds thirteen dice to the post-soak damage of the attack, a testament to the primacy of violence.

The Scripture of the Lonely Maiden

Once, there was a maiden

…whose friends left her.

And her enemies, too.

"I miss them, but I know why they had to go.

"It's not just or right,

"It just is."

She drew out her lover's handkerchief,
and wiped away her tears.

"Survival is chance," she said.

Sidereal Astrology

New Colleges

The College of the Comet

The Comet is a marvel on its own, but its individual beauty can be lost in a shower of meteors. Still, it carries its portents regardless. Under its ascending aspect, people learn that children of import have been born, that they will find a new home, and that a doctor will treat them well. In its descending aspect, people learn that their king is dead, that the enemy is advancing, and that their uncle's corpse was lost on the way to the morgue. The Comet is the constellation of the bigamist, freedom in old age, abundance from afar and inescapable civilization.

Trappings: The Comet *carries bad things*, both to and from her home, *empowering or compelling others to find what they seek*. She can carry good things, too, but only if they are *news*, *food* or *babies*.

Correlations: Long trips that are easy, short trips that are hard, family fights, late-night duties, watching children grow up

Resplendencies

• **Middle-of-Nowhere Denouement (1 Endurance):** The Sidereal climbs out of his vehicle and calls for a decisive resolution to conflict. Those present are subject to an unnatural Compulsion effect to also get out of their vehicles, and engage each other in whatever way they wish for the rest of the scene. Anyone who wishes to remain in a vehicle must leave the scene entirely, and anyone outside a vehicle may not stop them once they are underway. Ignoring this influence costs 5wp. This effect may not be used in the presence of more than a dozen uninvolved witnesses, and may not be used without the Seer first starting inside a vehicle he owns.

• **Last Minute Getaway (1 Endurance per scene):** The Sidereal urges her car to push past its limits, functioning perfectly despite any damage short of total destruction, and even in spite of an empty fuel tank. This Resplendency may be used to empower any object-scale vehicle the Exalt owns.

• **The Scenic Route (1 Endurance at the end of the trip):** This power is invoked at the end of a vehicle-borne trip that takes at least an hour. However long it took, and no matter how eventful it was, once a passenger disembarks they find themselves refreshed. This affords them the same benefits as if they had slept for eight hours. This benefit may be invoked only when the Exalt disembarks, affecting himself and any other passengers that do so within the next hour.

The College of the Lightning Bolt

The Lightning Bolt is sudden and irreversible violence, the start of fighting without regard for the inevitable consequences. In its ascending aspect, those in its domain find themselves in exhilarating battle, filled with elation as they stand over the body of their slain foe. In its descending aspect, they weep over collateral damage to their loved ones and treasures or are driven to despair by meaningless violence. The Lightning Bolt is the constellation of the rogue cop, the traumatized veteran, the pacifist drawn into violence, ends and beginnings of tyranny, the vengeful spouse, the hired killer, and the suddenly bereft.

Trappings: The Lightning Bolt *strikes without warning*, coming onto the scene in *shining majesty*, all while filled with *immature self-importance*. He will *seek exactly what he wants*, though this often ends in tears for somebody, as he *never considers any unintended consequences*.

Correlations: Sudden and unpredictable violence, innocent bystanders, senseless killings, revenge fantasies, the weak overthrowing the strong, taking foolish risks

Resplendencies

• **The Perfect Miss (1 Endurance):** Bullets are willing to kill just about anything. Having missed with a Firearms attack, the projectile continues to strike a non-magical, inanimate object further on in its flight path (but still within the attack's maximum Range). Despite the object's resilience, a weak point is found and the bullet destroys it. As the object collapses or explodes, the collateral damage spreads, acting as an environmental hazard on those within (object's Resources value) yards, with Damage (The Lightning Bolt)B/instant, Trauma 3.

• **Killing Spirit Stockpile (1 Endurance per scene):** When the Sidereal attacks a target that is the subject of one of his negative Intimacies, he adds +1 die to the attack roll. When attacking someone whose harm or death supports his Motivation, the Exalt adds +3 dice instead. These count as bonus dice from Aiming.

• **Bullet Storm Cathedral (2 Endurance):** The terrifying clap of a bullet's arrival sends everyone diving for cover, imposing an unnatural Compulsion effect that forces those joined in battle to drop prone if they do not have 100% cover. A character may become immune to this effect for a scene by paying 3wp.

Greater Astrology

Manufacturing the Tapestry of Lives

Cost: 10m, 3wp, 3p; **Mins:** The Comet 4, Essence 4;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Compulsion, Shaping
Duration: One month

Innovation often means new obligations, as the world closes in to become smaller and smaller. Still, the work must be done, and thanks to new inventions it could be called 'easier' if there were not more of it. With this Charm the Sidereal names a piece of equipment—sword, car, grocery bag, lyre—and speaks the secret name of a social group whose Magnitude is no greater than (her Essence x 2), making the duties of that organization related to the named piece of equipment a natural part of the world. It is unthinkable that they not be performed.

All members of the group are subject to an unnatural Compulsion effect, requiring that they fulfill any duty their group calls for if it can be facilitated with the named piece of equipment. This includes incidental uses, such as using a wagon to get to a job that otherwise has no use for wagons. Any actions directly supporting the duty with the equipment gain a circumstantial +2 dice bonus. Ignoring this influence costs 3wp per day.

In the context of the Creation-Ruling Mandate (see **Masters of Jade**, Appendix), this Charm can target an organization of Size reflective of the limitation above. If significant enough in the function of the group, the Compulsion to use the equipment effectively increases the organization's Competence by one for the duration, including granting an additional point of Capital as long as it lasts. Appropriate stunts taking advantage of the chosen equipment also grant a circumstantial bonus of one extra success.

Heroes-and-Villains Foundry

Cost: 5m, 2p; **Mins:** The Lightning Bolt 3, Essence 4;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Servitude, Shaping, Touch
Duration: One week

Conflict is the birthplace of great men and women. By touching an object geographically and socially central to a community, the Sidereal divides the people into two discrete camps of her choice: liberal against conservative, Dragon-Blooded against mortal, tribe against tribe, men against women, etc. They oppose each other for one day, first with words and then with deeds, until the tinder ignites into a vicious, week-long war. This acts as an unnatural Servitude effect on the members of the community, which non-heroic mortals cannot resist. Heroic characters and Essence users may ignore the effect by paying 5wp, coming to their senses amidst the riots and looting.

Those who accept that bloody battle must be joined, to make the world a better place, are afforded the benefits of a Motivation in pursuing the destruction of the opposing faction. At the end of the week, a character may adopt this or a reasonable extrapolation as his true Motivation at no cost.

When the Sidereal is present to watch a character adopt a Motivation granted by this Charm permanently, and that character immediately leaves their home, never to return until the Motivation is fulfilled, the Exalt may activate Sifu's Useful Fingers as a reflexive action to make the departing character a shadow finger (see **Dreams of the First Age, Book I—Lords of Creation**, pp. 95-96).

Dragon-Blooded Charms

Air—Lore

Instant Hacking Technique

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Lore 4, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Speed 5)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Concentration Trance

A flourish of dramatic keystrokes is all a Dragon-Blood needs to gain access to even the most secure networks. Instant Hacking Technique allows the Dragon-Blood to hack a computer as a miscellaneous action, rather than the minute-long dramatic action that is usually required. In addition, for each die of applicable specialty that is added to the roll, the Dragon-Blood negates a single point of external penalty.

Meticulous Analytical Style

Cost: 2m; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Elemental Concentration Trance

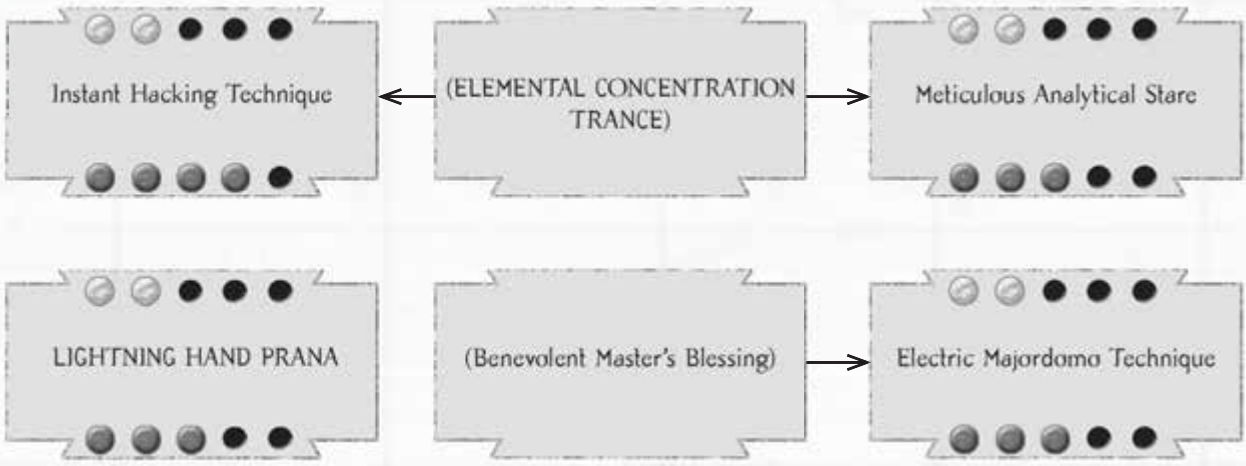
Meticulous Analytical Style allows the Dragon-Blood to extensively examine a computer, recovering any data that has been lost within the last year. He can pull up complete browsing histories, recover deleted files, and even restore a hard drive that has been manually wiped clean with a magnet. As an incidental effect, a Dragon-Blood can use this Charm to identify all attempts made to hack the examined computer within the last year by examining records of online activity. He may distinguish successful from unsuccessful attempts, and can identify which attempts came from the same individual by noting similarities in method and style.

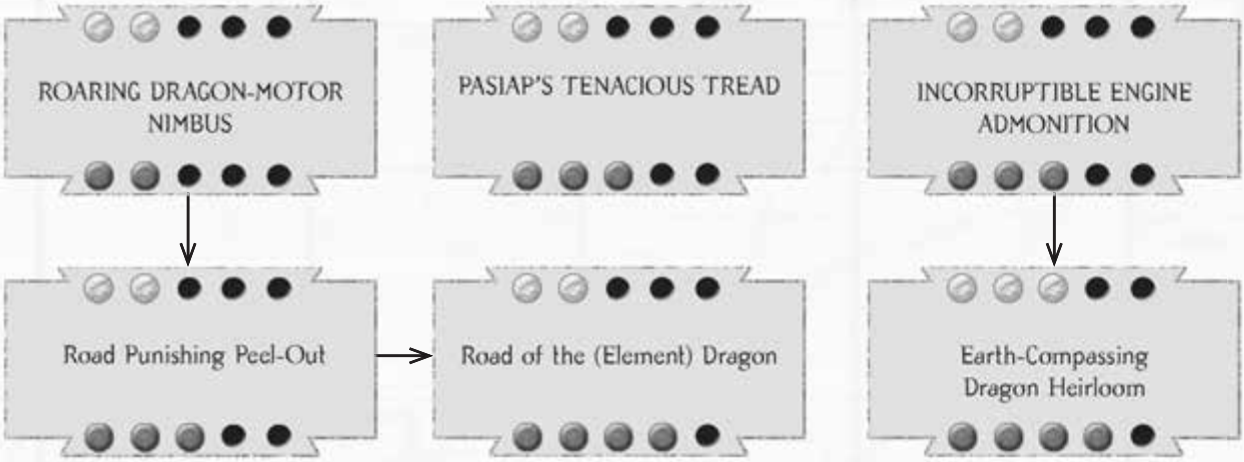
Recovering data that has been deleted through magical means or detecting a hacking attempt that was enhanced by magic requires the Dragon-Blood to make an opposed roll-off against the character responsible for the conflicting effect in order to succeed, even if that magic was only an Excellency.

Lightning Hand Prana

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Lore 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Manipulating the currents of electricity that flow through a device's circuits, the Dragon-Blood can assert his control over it from afar. Lightning Hand Prana can supplement any action to operate an electronically-controlled device, allowing the Dragon-Blood to do so from a range of (Essence + Breeding) yards. He could turn a room's lights on or off with a thought, type a stolen password into a computer from across a hall, or obtain a stranger's phone





number by having their cell phone dial him while it is still in their pocket.

Earth—Drive

Roaring Dragon-Motor Nimbus

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Drive 2, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: None

The wheels of the Exalt's car spark and moan briefly, before flaring with his elemental Essence. The conflagration spreads to encompass the car in a cloud made from the Terrestrial's anima. Characters and objects, including other cars, that come within three yards of the Dragon-Blood's car are subject to an environmental hazard of an appropriate elemental type, with Damage 1L/action, Trauma 3. Physically touching the car increases the Trauma by one. Passengers remain safe while inside the vehicle.

During a chase scene, a Dragon-Blood using this Charm imperils all other cars with cumulative successes no more than three greater or lower than her own. At the end of each interval, those who remain too close accumulate one extra point of hazard.

Road Punishing Peel-Out

Cost: 6m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2;
Type: Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK, Cooperative, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: Roaring Dragon-Motor Nimbus

Crushing the pedal to the floor, the Dragon-Blood's car grinds into the road, leaving behind a hazard for her competitors. This Charm enhances the Move actions of a Terrestrial driver's car for the rest of the action, disrupting the road with elemental fields of devastation. This effect spreads out to cover the space behind the car as it travels, as well as two yards to either side, which is usually enough to affect an entire road.

The Exalt first learns the version of this Charm associated with her Aspect, and further purchases allow her to learn other iterations. Dragon-Blooded may activate more than one elemental effect at the same time, with a surcharge of +2m for each additional effect after the first.

Air: A great blast of air swirls in the wake of the car, imposing a +2 difficulty increase on piloting rolls for those who follow for the rest of the Exalt's action. Failure on these rolls brings the pursuer to a stop until their next action tick, when they may start their vehicle moving again. A botch causes them to crash, as their car flips or caroms off of another vehicle.

In a chase scene, those in the leg with up to three cumulative successes less than the Exalt's total add +2 to the difficulty of their interval roll. Botching their roll causes them to crash.

Earth: The car's tires grow wicked crystal teeth, chewing into the ground to leave a wake of rocks and roots and chunks of road. This damages non-magical roads, turning them into terrain that adds +1 to the difficulty of piloting rolls on them. Failure on such piloting rolls inflicts one level of damage on a car. This effect remains in place permanently, until the road undergoes extensive repairs.

In a chase scene, those with up to five cumulative successes less than the Dragon-Blood increase their interval roll difficulty by +1. Failing their roll causes a level of damage to their car.

Fire: Twin trails of fire flare into a bonfire that engulfs the road, imposing a -1 external penalty on attempts to see through the flames, making it more difficult to track the driver. When a car that is not specially sealed against environmental hazards drives through the fire, those inside suffer as if inside a bonfire (see **Exalted**, p. 131). If the occupants are notably exposed—riding in a convertible, for instance—the Trauma of the hazard increases by one. The fire cannot be put out without magic water or ice, lasting until the end of the scene. It may start mundane fires in the meantime.

During a chase scene, cars that end the interval with up to three fewer cumulative successes than the Exalt accrue an extra point of hazard, and their occupants suffer the environmental hazard above.

Water: A slick of ice follows the car through its course, imposing a -2 external penalty on the piloting rolls of anyone who follows the same path. Failure on a penalized piloting roll causes the car to spin out of control, careening to the edge of the slick and potentially into some other hazard, such as into a tree, a crowd of bystanders, or off of a cliff. The slick remains in place for the rest of the scene if it is not targeted with magical flames; it reverts to natural ice and can melt normally after the scene ends.

In a chase scene, those with up to five cumulative successes fewer than the Exalt's suffer a -2 external penalty on their interval roll. Failure on their roll accrues an extra point of hazard.

Wood: Grasping vines sprout beneath the treads of the Terrestrial's car, spreading in an instant like kudzu. The speed of those vehicles that follow are reduced by half. The vines remain for the rest of the scene unless purged with magical fire or similar methods. After the scene ends, they revert to non-magical foliage.

During a chase scene, those with up to five fewer cumulative successes than the Dragon-Blood have their speed reduced. This can eliminate any bonus they receive from their speed, and may impose penalties if they become slow enough.

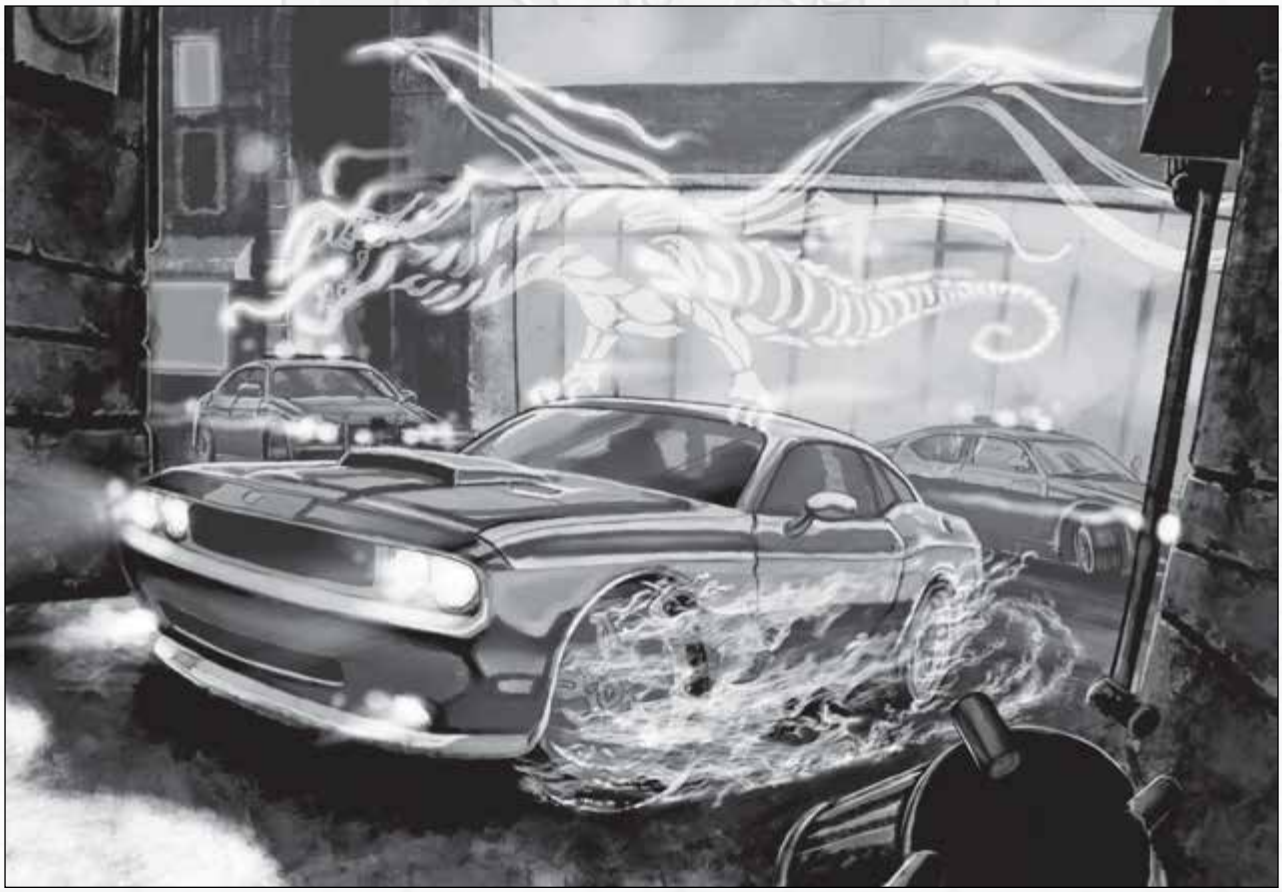
Dragon-Blooded in the same car that know this Charm may combine their efforts, each activating it at the same time. An extra participant may improve the difficulty increase or penalty imposed by one of the elemental effects by one each, or in the case of the Wood effect, pursuers' speed is divided by (2 + 1 for each extra improving the Wood effect). No more Exalts may participate than the highest permanent Essence amongst them.

Road of the (Element) Dragon

Cost: —; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 2; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: None
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Road-Punishing Peel-Out

Just as his elemental power uplifts him personally, a Terrestrial's control over the facets of the world carry his car to its destination. This Charm permanently enhances its prerequisite, allowing the Dragon-Blood to extend the elemental path ahead as well as behind on solid ground, becoming a new road for his car. The Road of the (Element) Dragon does not extend far enough ahead to inconvenience faster vehicles, but it lays down a street perfect for his own purposes. It imposes no penalties on his car, and in fact lowers the difficulty of his piloting rolls by one. It helps to protect against hazards and difficulties that it passes over, adding +10L/10B to the car's soak and hardness against them, and generally smoothing out the ride.

At Drive 5+, Essence 3+ the Exalt may add +2m to the cost of Road-Punishing Peel Out to create ramps or bridges as well as simple roads, spanning chasms with elemental



highways, creating a web of flame and vines between hotel balconies, or simply creating an icy incline to jump a barrier. The bridge must begin on solid ground, and may incline to overcome barriers or drops. These bridges can support vehicles up to twice the weight of the Dragon-Blood's. Others may take advantage of the crossing if they are willing to brave its dangers, but the path will collapse on the Dragon-Blood's next action tick. Since the path is made entirely of suspended elemental Essence, hazards that normally last for the rest of the scene disperse as the bridge crumbles.

Pasiap's Tenacious Tread

Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Reflexive
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: One action
Prerequisite Charms: None

This Charm enhances the ground-based Move actions of the Exalt pilot's car for the rest of the action, allowing her to ignore penalties and difficulty increases due to road conditions or strong weather that would buffet the vehicle. Hurricanes will not lift the car off the road, and ice slicks cause no more trouble than a newly paved highway.

At Drive 5+, Essence 3+, a Dragon-Blood may pay +1wp when activating this Charm to broaden her definition of "road." This iteration of Pasiap's Tenacious Tread allows her car's wheels to grip any solid surface as if it were a level road, allowing her to drive up the sides of buildings or along the surface of a dirigible's gas bag.

Incorruptible Engine Admonition

Cost: 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 3, Essence 2; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Dynasty
Duration: One day
Prerequisite Charms: None

With a smirk and wry observation, the Dragon-Blood ensures someone trying to steal his car meets only failure. This Charm protects an unoccupied object-scale vehicle the Exalt owns. Whatever starting sequence it normally requires will not function properly for anyone other than the Exalt, and thieves suffer an external penalty equal to the Dragon-Blood's permanent Essence on rolls to hot-wire or otherwise bypass the starting sequence. When the Charm is activated, the Terrestrial may choose to make an exception for blood relatives.

At Drive 5+, Essence 3+ the Exalt becomes preternaturally aware of the condition of his car. When someone attempts to break into or steal it, he may make a (Perception + Awareness) roll, opposed by whatever roll was made to accost the vehicle. Success makes him aware of the attempted theft. If he knows it, he may activate Roaring Dragon-Motor Nimbus in response, no matter the distance to the car.

Earth-Compassing Dragon Heirloom

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Drive 4, Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Dynasty, Martyr, Touch
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Incorruptible Engine Admonition

Drawing on the legend of his progenitors, the Exalt empowers the treasures they have passed down to him. This Charm enchants an object-scale vehicle the Exalt owns that was previously owned by a blood ancestor, increasing its soak by 5L/5B, and granting it an extra two Undamaged and one Inoperative health levels. In addition, while the Exalt pilots it, the car gains one Maneuverability. When others pilot the vehicle, its Maneuverability falls by one and its Speed is reduced by (his Drive x x2) yards per tick, reducing its miles per hour speed by twice that amount. These penalties can be avoided by being a blood relative of the Terrestrial and gaining his express permission to use the car.

No combination of Charms including this one can increase the Maneuverability of a vehicle by more than three.

In addition to the above, the targeted car cannot suffer penalties or breakdowns based on its age. It may be centuries old, but the car can only be stopped by deliberate harm or the likes of an empty gas tank.

When the Exalt dies in the presence of both the vehicle and a blood relative, he may permanently enchant the car as a Martyr effect by expressly passing on the car to his blood relative. They gain the benefits of using this Charm on the car, and on their death they may pass on the privilege in the same way. If the car is not passed on at an owner's death, the enchantment fades and can only be renewed with a reuse of this Charm.

Fire—Firearms

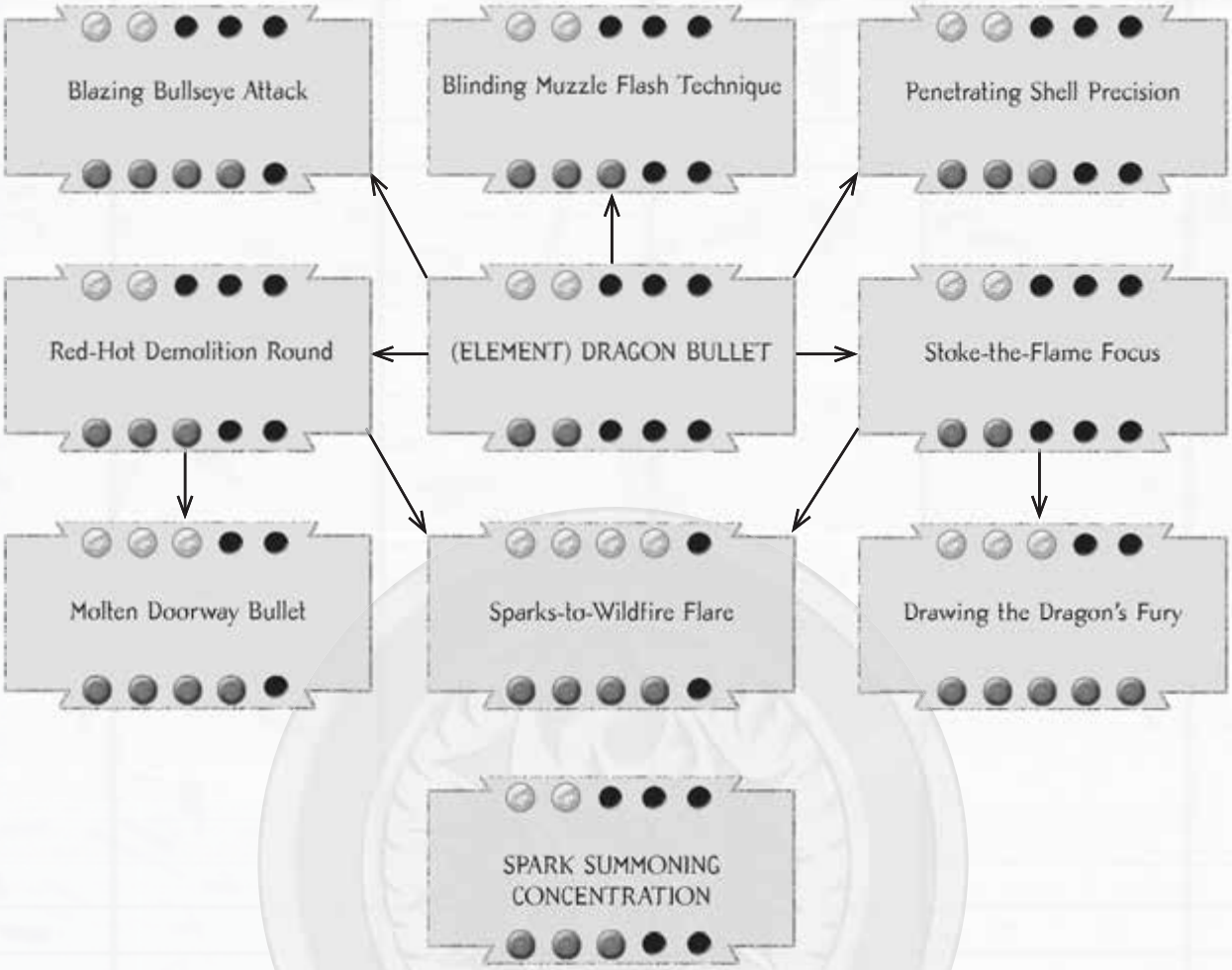
(Element) Dragon Bullet

Cost: 1m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Elemental, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

Channeling the elemental Essence of his anima to charge his weapons, the Dragon-Blood unleashes the ancient fury of the Elemental Dragons. Upon learning this Charm, the Dragon-Blood gains the version appropriate to his elemental aspect. Each additional purchase allows him to choose an additional elemental effect. Every activation incorporates the Exalt's base element, but can also incorporate any number of additional elements unlocked with extra Charm purchases. The total cost to activate the Charm is half the number of elements unleashed, all of which provide their usual power.

Air: Arcs of lightning crackle in an electric nimbus around the shell, stunning any character hit by the electrified round until their DV next refreshes (see **Exalted**, p. 153).

Earth: Drawing upon the solidity and weight of stone, this Charm multiplies the mass and stopping power of the enchanted bullet, causing any character hit by it to automatically fall prone.



Fire: Elemental fire superheats the chambered round, adding four dice of raw damage to the attack.

Water: The bullet becomes as water in mid-flight, dissolving and spreading into a mass of molten metal. While the dispersed impact has no killing power, it has force enough to send enemies flying. All damage from the attack is converted to bashing, but a hit character is automatically knocked back one yard for every two dice of raw damage. Impacts cause damage as per Heaven Thunder Hammer (see **Exalted**, p. 242).

Wood: Attuned to the living Essence of elemental wood, the enchanted bullet hones in on the vital points of its targets with unerring accuracy. A character damaged by this Charm increases their wound penalties by one point for the rest of the scene as a Crippling effect.

Blazing Bullseye Attack

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: (Element) Dragon Bullet

The Dragon-Blood's shot wreathes his enemy in phantasmal flame. While this cold fire does not damage them, the radiant light it casts marks that enemy as a target. The wreath of flames continues burning for the rest of the scene, penalizing Stealth as a 4-7m anima banner. In addition, any character who makes a ranged attack against the illuminated enemy adds the Dragon-Blood's (Essence ÷ 2) in dice to their attack roll, to a maximum bonus of three dice. These count as dice from Aiming, not from Charms.

Blinding Muzzle Flash Technique

Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Crippling, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: (Element) Dragon Bullet

Sparks of elemental fire burst from the Dragon-Blood's firearm in a brilliant muzzle flash as it discharges, blinding his enemy with its intensity. A Firearms attack supplemented by Blinding Muzzle Flash Technique blinds its target for one action unless they succeed on a difficulty 2 (Wits + Dodge) roll to avert their eyes. The blinding comes before the attack roll is made. Even if the character avoids being blinded, averting his eyes imposes a -2 penalty to any DV applied against the attack.

Penetrating Shell Precision
Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Extra Action
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: (Element) Dragon Bullet

Sighting through the battlefield with eyes like burning embers, the Dragon-Blood chooses a single trajectory that crosses through all of his foes. A single shot, like a single explosive burst of flame, decides the battle. The Dragon-Blood makes a single Firearms attack at his full dice pool against a character within the base Range of his weapon. Should his attack successfully damage the target, he may choose to have the projectile penetrate through them and continue on in a straight line until it hits another enemy, at which point the Dragon-Blood may roll a second attack against them. He may repeat this sequence until an attack fails to deal damage or he has made a total of (Firearms + 3) attacks. He must also stop if the projectile is blocked by a solid obstacle or leaves the base Range of his weapon, or if he runs out of valid targets.

The magical flurry created by Penetrating Shell Precision ignores Rate and has a total DV penalty and Speed equal to the highest of any individual attack. Even though the Dragon-Blood only fires one shot, he must pay the full cost of any Charms he wishes to use individually for each attack roll.

With Essence 3+, the Dragon-Blood can pay an additional two motes to blast explosive exit wounds in his enemies. After making a successfully damaging attack, he can choose to make a second attack against that same enemy before moving on to the next enemy in line. These follow-up attacks are subject to all the usual limitations of this Charm and count towards the maximum number of attacks that can be made with it.

Red-Hot Demolition Round
Cost: 4m; **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: (Element) Dragon Bullet

The bullets of the children of Hesiesh sear the air and battlefield, a trail of devastation that makes clear who their target is. An attack supplemented by this Charm ignores up to (Essence) points of DV from cover. If the cover was provided by a mundane object or object-sized segment of a structure that is flammable, this Charm sets it on fire.

With Essence 3+, the Dragon-Blood may pay a two-mote surcharge to shoot through walls and other solid obstacles with this Charm as long as they are part of a mundane structure and are flammable.

Molten Doorway Bullet
Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 3;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Red-Hot Demolition Round

A red ember sits in the barrel of the Exalt's gun, long instants before the hammer sparks the round on its explosive journey. When it does, that hungry fire persists, an orange streak sinking to the heart of an obstacle in the Terrestrial's path. This Charm is a Firearms attack against a non-magical inanimate object. So long as the attack inflicts at least one level of damage, the bullet smolders and seethes inside it, causing one more level of unsoakable damage on each of the Dragon-Blood's following action ticks until the object has lost all its Damaged health levels. If the object is flammable, it may catch fire, suffering additional damage.

Someone who wishes to save the object may douse the bullet with water created by Charms, spells or similar magic, or they may extract it with a difficulty 3 (Dexterity + appropriate Craft) miscellaneous action.

With Firearms 5+, Essence 4+, Dragon-Blooded may apply the principles of this Charm to wood elementals, for a +1m surcharge. Gods and demons who are strongly tied to the element of wood can also be affected. The bullet burns within them as a Crippling effect, until they have lost all of their -1 and -2 health levels. It may be removed with a difficulty 3 (Dexterity + [Medicine or Occult]) miscellaneous action.

Stoke-the-Flame Focus
Cost: 3m; **Mins:** Firearms 2, Essence 2;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: (Element) Dragon Bullet

A swirling corona of flame forms around the muzzle of the Dragon-Blood's gun as he sights his target, growing in brilliance and intensity as he focuses. When he finally fires, the burning aura is discharged as a blazing fireball that engulfs the blast. This Charm can be used to supplement an Aim action made before attacking with a Firearms weapon. The supplemented action does not add dice to the attack roll, but instead adds to the attack's damage, converting each die from Aiming to three dice of raw damage from the blast of flame (maximum +9).

Should the Dragon-Blood make a non-Firearms attack after using this Charm, the fiery aura dissipates and its benefits are lost.

Drawing the Dragon's Fury
Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 5, Essence 3;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: One scene
Prerequisite Charms: Stoke-the-Flame Focus

A flare of anima bursts from the Dragon-Blood's hand into his firearm, limning its edges with the glowing radiance of elemental Essence. (Element) Dragon Bullet costs no motes when used with the enchanted weapon, allowing the Dragon-Blood to apply all of the elemental effects he has mastered for free. As an additional benefit, he may reflexively reload the enchanted weapon once each action. No more than one weapon can be enchanted with Drawing the Dragon's Fury at one time.

Sparks-to-Wildfires Flare

Cost: 3m, 1wp; **Mins:** Firearms 4, Essence 4;
Type: Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Red-Hot Demolition Round, Stoke-the-Flame Focus

A gout of scorching flames bursts from the Dragon-Blood's shot as it hits, igniting a furious blaze centered on the target of the attack. This fiery blaze is an environmental hazard with Damage 4L and Trauma 3, with a radius of (Firearms + 3) yards. Normally, the bonfire burns for one minute before going out. It can be extinguished by environmental hazards based on cold or water, shrinking at a rate of one yard per tick of exposure to such hazards.

Spark-Summoning Concentration

Cost: 1m (1wp); **Mins:** Firearms 3, Essence 2;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-OK, Obvious, Touch
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: None

As the Dragon-Blood lays hands on a clip or magazine of ammunition, it vanishes in a burst of flame, sending it to Elsewhere. As part of an action to reload his firearm, the Dragon-Blood may reflexively recall any amount of banished ammunition to load it with. Doing so for the first time in a scene costs a point of Willpower, but after that it is free. There is no limit to how much ammunition can be stored in Elsewhere with this Charm.

Water—Bureaucracy

Electric Majordomo Technique

Cost: 4m, 1wp; **Mins:** Bureaucracy 3, Essence 2;
Type: Simple (Dramatic action)
Keywords: Combo-OK
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Benevolent Master's Blessing

A Terrestrial programmer uses this Charm to empower an interactive help file, to better administrate his organization. This is an (Intelligence + Bureaucracy + Lore) dramatic action, usually taking a week of work, against a difficulty equal to the Magnitude of the group being administered. The Exalt then chooses a number of specialties relevant to the group's Policy, up to a limit of (lower of threshold successes or five). When the organization undertakes a project heavily reliant on the use of computers with this help file installed, participants may apply the chosen specialties their actions as if they possessed them. Normal limits to bonus dice from specialties still apply.

Help files created with this Charm may be installed on any number of computers, but a system may play host and service only one file at a time (with new ones replacing older ones automatically). The file becomes useless if the group is significantly altered or reformed, due to majority turnover or a change of Policy.

Infernal Charms

Malfeas

Brazen Hell-Chariot Carapace

Cost: — (+7m); **Mins:** Essence 4; **Type:** Permanent
Keywords: Shaping, Touch
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Viridian Legend Exoskeleton (x2)

A sickly blue-green tarnish spreads through the chassis of the warlock's vehicle, moments before the metal of its frame cracks and peels away to reveal layers of burnished brass beneath. Emerald light streams from the hell-bound machine's headlights, while invisible Old Realm glyphs on its front proclaim it the chariot of the Demon Emperor to those with Essence sight. This Charm upgrades Viridian Legend Exoskeleton. The Infernal may activate it for a seven-mote surcharge to enchant a touched vehicle that he owns, adding +10B/10L to its soak and granting it (Essence) additional Undamaged health levels. If the warlock wishes, he can also create personal armor for himself with the same activation at no additional cost.

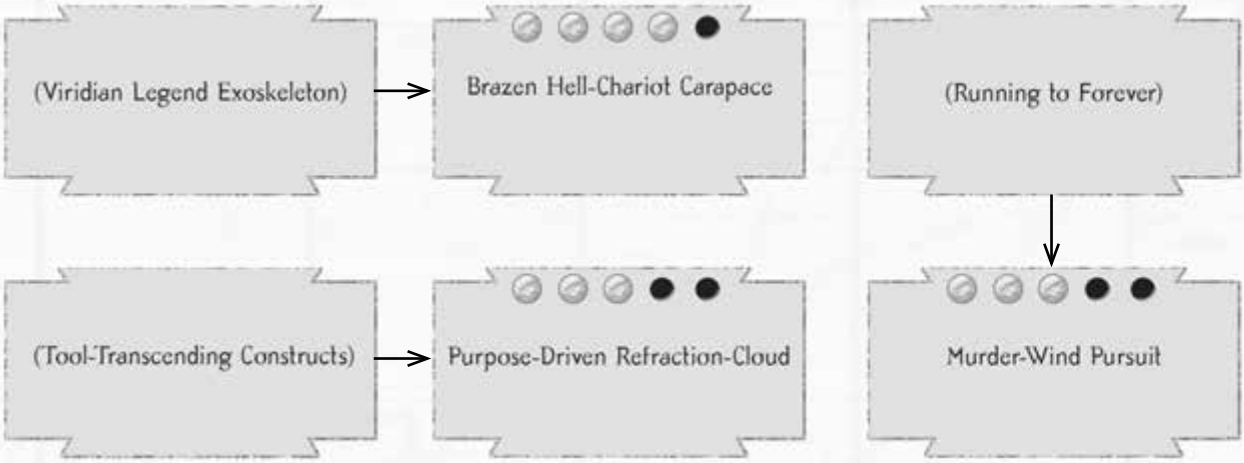
She Who Lives in Her Name

Analytical Modeling Intuition

This Charm's second purchase (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, pp. 131-132) can be used to extract information from a computer as if using it normally to gain five threshold successes on an Investigation roll. Mundane computers are not left catatonic, but for the next hour users suffer a -2 external penalty on relevant rolls, and Infernals cannot make further use of this Charm during that time, as the device repairs or reinstalls the programs that the Exalt's magic tore through.

Tool-Transcending Constructs

This Charm allows an Infernal to interface with any computer, if she is familiar with the device necessary to do so, her Essence substituting for missing keyboards or security dongles. See **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, page 137.



Experimental Acceleration Mastery

When the act of creation is so ephemeral as programming a computer, this Charm enhances such actions better than the physical act of crafting. The Exalt accelerates her work by a factor of (her Lore).

Purpose-Driven Refraction Cloud

Cost: 5m, 1wp; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious, Shaping, Sorcerous
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Tool-Transcending Constructs

She Who Lives in Her Name incorporates many facets into her constellation, extruding knowledge and tools best suited to whatever task she faces. This Charm cannot be activated if the Exalt does not currently have Mind-Hand Manipulation active, and all iterations end when that Charm does. With this Charm, the Exalt can transform an object she owns into a crystalline geometry about a yard across that orbits her. When she requires the transformed object's use, she may pay 5m as a miscellaneous action to shatter the shape into a cloud of shards, which continues to orbit her for an hour in this state. With Mind-Hand Manipulation, the Infernal may utilize this cloud as if it were the original object, refracting constructs of light to fulfill the physical manifestations of the tool's uses. A cloud derived from a sword shears targets with cutting beams of light, while platforms of shimmering crystal support passengers in a cloud derived from a car.

Despite its strange aspect, for the Infernal the object functions normally. Others may be affected by actions facilitated by the representative cloud of crystals, but they cannot directly use the object themselves.

This Charm can transform artifacts of up to rating 3, but only if they are attuned by the Infernal, if they require attunement. Losing attunement for any reason ends the effect and returns the object to its natural state. A character cannot "store" more than (her Essence) objects at once with this Charm; she may reactivate it to revert an object in preparation of replacing it with another.

Hollow Mind Possession

Hollow Mind Possession (see **The Broken-Winged Crane**, pp. 19-20) can be one of the most powerful assets a character possesses in a setting rife with computers. However, it is not the ultimate power. Material Intelligences (MI) are rare, especially in mundane computer technology. It requires powerful, widespread networks of computers to create one. This does not mean that the internet or its equivalents are a single material intelligence, either. A network MI is defined by a core purpose, which is usually a localized cluster of computers working to a common goal. They may even work together like a single, greater computer. Storytellers should be very mindful of this distinction. However closely networked they may be, various MI networks exist individually, as do the programs on them. An Infernal that possesses the MI of a car factory master control program does not have control over similar car factories, even if they use identical computers and programs and are connected to each other. Mundane computer networks typically resist the effects of this Charm at difficulty 2. Those with especially poor security may be difficulty 1, while hardened military or sensitive corporate networks may be difficulty 3 or 4. Some mundane vehicles may be advanced enough to possess MIs, and these are typically difficulty 1 to possess.

The Essence 4+ repurchase of this Charm does not allow the Infernal to possess computers or programs that lie on the same paved road. Instead, she must rely on network connections directly to the target. For instance, she may touch a wireless router or a cable that connects a targeted MI, and use this Charm successfully, but she cannot reach her target by way of another computer on the same network.

Noumena-Seizing Assimilation

This Charm (see **The Broken-Winged Crane**, pp. 20-21) can open backdoors into things like mundane powered armor or vehicles, but only if they are connected directly to an existing valid target network.

Adorjan

Murder-Wind Pursuit

Cost: 5m; **Mins:** Essence 3; **Type:** Supplemental
Keywords: Combo-OK, Velocity
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Running to Forever

Once the Scourge gives chase, there is no escape. Even with the advantage of a vehicle there is no hope for salvation—no matter how fast it might be, she is faster. Murder-Wind Pursuit can supplement any chase action, converting any bonus dice the warlock receives based on her speed into automatic successes. If this Charm supplements a Close In or Dangerous Maneuver action that causes another character to gain points of hazard, it inflicts an additional point of hazard if the Infernal has a higher movement rate than that character. Murder-Wind Pursuit can only be activated while the Infernal is participating in a chase while dashing on foot.

Alchemical Charms

Omnitool Implants

This Charm can be found in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals**, page 164.

New Submodules:

Systems Integration Interface: The Champion's Omnitool Implants extend wires from her arms and fingers, entering the interface ports of a computer. The starmetal prongs and locks on the ends of these flexible wires are compatible with any device. Since the Alchemical need not resort to crude methods like typing on a keyboard, moving a mouse, or tapping a touchscreen, her commands to the device are executed instantaneously. This affords relevant Lore actions a two-die equipment bonus, and speeds them by a factor of (the Exalt's Wits). Alchemicals using this submodule can transfer data between the computer and their own minds, without any indication on display devices. The only limitation in this regard are the data transfer rates of the computer, which will rarely be slow enough to matter, unless the Champion attempts to download a culture's entire library of knowledge. Knowledge gained this way is present in the Exalt's mind, but it was not learned normally and so is not yet assimilated into her thought processes. Relying primarily on this information requires an Investigation roll rather than an Academic Knowledge check, though the Exalt should be allowed to stunt knowledge she otherwise would lack, based on the amount and broadness of data she downloaded.

Wireless Interface Modality (Intelligence 5): With this submodule, the Alchemical can use her Omnitool Implant to extrude antennae to access wireless networks. This acts the same as Systems Integration Interface, above, except it does not speed actions. To access communication networks directly, the Exalt will likely need to hack them, though if the network is accommodating they may provide Alchemicals with access codes and frequencies for their personal use.

Champion Network Node

Cost: —; **Mins:** Intelligence 5, Essence 3;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Exemplar 1, Internal
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Omnitool Implant (Wireless Interface Modality)

A sturdy box installed beneath the surface of the Exalt's neck, the Champion Network Node acts as a wireless computer networking hub. The Alchemical can also act as a computer on the network, at his option, providing access to his knowledge to other computers on the network. The range of the network is limited to (Essence x 5) yards. The Exalt has control over which computers may access his personal network, and whether they may access other networks to which he is connected with Wireless Interface Modality.

Clarity-Tinted Screen Enhancement

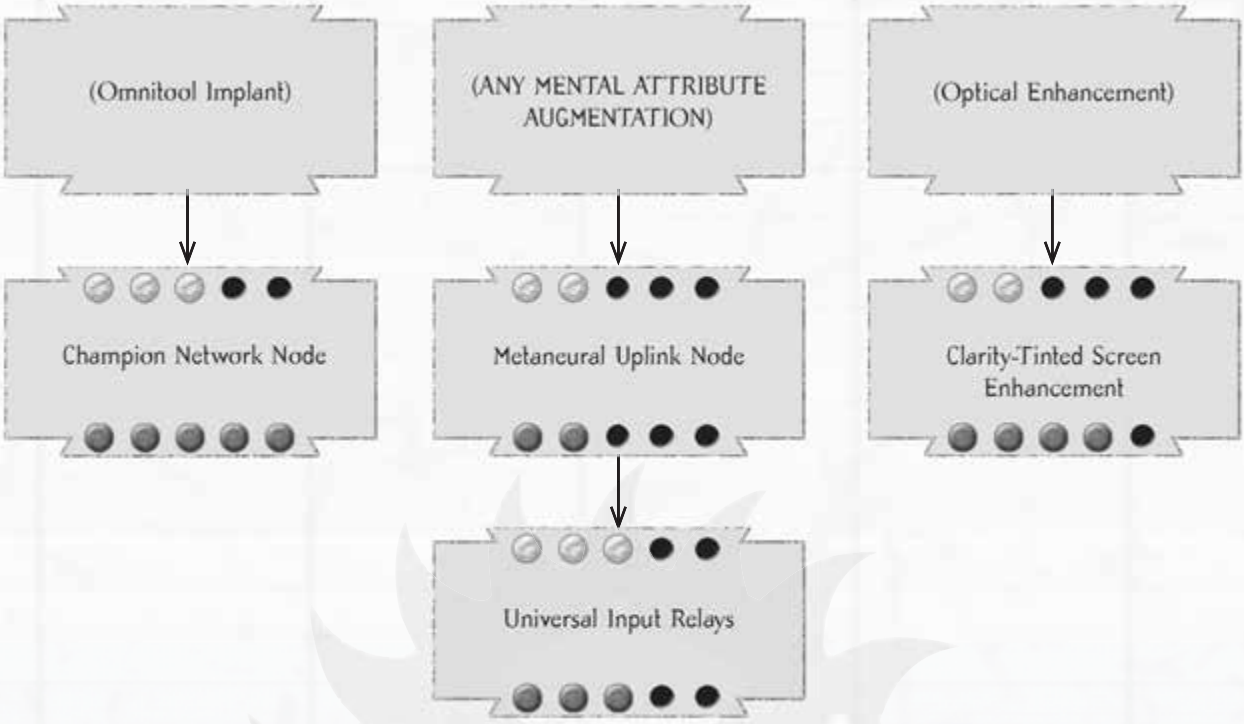
Cost: 0m or 3m; **Mins:** Perception 4, Essence 2;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic
Duration: Indefinite
Prerequisite Charms: Optical Enhancement

Tiny adamant filaments tipped by crystal gangue riddled with starmetal extrude from the Alchemical's body, infiltrating windows or similar viewing ports in an object that is not owned by another Essence user. The starmetal buds sprout, sending invisible traceries through the glass they encounter. A brief sheen is the only clue to the outside world that the nature of the windows have changed. While it remains in effect, this Charm affords those on the same side of the window as the Alchemical the benefits of a selection of the submodules she has learned for the Optical Enhancement Charm. These submodules include: Flash Shutters, Cross-Phase Scanner, Light-Intensification Filters, Thermal Vision, and Mass-Penetrating Scan. In the case of submodules like Thermal Vision, it is up to the Alchemical to turn them on or off.

The Alchemical must stay within three yards of the enhanced object, or else the Charm ends. Clarity-Tinted Screen Enhancement costs 3m normally, but its cost falls to 0m when the Champion uses it on an artifact vehicle to which he committed motes to attune.

Submodules:

Battlefield Report Overlays (Wits 4): The perceptual node from which the filaments emerge is overhauled, granting it additional dedicated processing power so that it can make detailed, enhanced information available to all who see through windows enhanced by the Alchemical. Readouts from other of the Alchemical's submodules become possible, including those that require



concerted effort on the part of the observer to be of any use. In those cases, passengers must perform the necessary action individually to gain the benefits, as if they were the Alchemical using the submodule. The additional submodules that this Charm extends into the vehicle's windows include: Microscopic Lens, Telescopic Lens, Motion-Tracking Targeting Glance, Soulgem Transponder Overlay, Essence Sight Oculars.

Metaneural Uplink Node

Cost: — [1m]; **Mins:** Intelligence 2, Essence 2;
Type: Permanent
Keywords: Internal
Duration: Permanent
Prerequisite Charms: Any Mental Attribute Augmentation

A series of starmetal discs implanted in the Alchemical's visual cortex house microscopic mechanical gods, the least divinities of digital signals. While this Charm is installed, the Alchemical becomes capable of accessing the Internet mentally, viewing it as though it were superimposed over his field of vision. He can provide any needed user input simply by willing it so, "clicking" links or typing out text with thought alone. Viewing the Internet with this Charm does not impede the Alchemical's normal vision or his ability to take actions, although he must still flurry normally if he wishes to take actions online and in the real world simultaneously. The Metaneural Uplink Node is not capable of being hacked.

The instant and intuitive nature of mental control adds three dice to any computer-based action the Alchemical takes via his mental uplink as an equipment bonus. He can spend a point of Willpower to increase this bonus to his (Clarity) if it is higher, as a machine-like mind is better suited to interface with computerized systems. Other benefits of constant and instantaneous access to the entire Internet are left to the player's creativity in stunting.

Submodules

Machine Override Authorization (Intelligence 3, 4xp): When using the digital connection of his Metaneural Uplink Node to hack into computers, the Alchemical is treated as accessing them from the same network for determining the external penalty he suffers as long as he is within (Essence x 10) yards of them. If he is within (Essence) yards of them, he is treated as having physical access to them.

Universal Input Relays

Cost: 4m [1m]; **Mins:** Perception 3, Essence 3;
Type: Simple
Keywords: Combo-Basic, Obvious
Duration: Instant
Prerequisite Charms: Metaneural Uplink Node

Moonsilver panels on the Alchemical's torso conceal an extensive array of adaptive slots, universal serial ports, and scanning devices. When this Charm is activated, these panels slide back, allowing the Alchemical to insert any form of digital data storage medium into one of these receptacles. CDs, flash drives, smartphones, and even hard drives can all be accessed with this Charm, as are even more exotic forms of digital memory. Once inserted, the medium is processed over a span of ten minutes, allowing the Alchemical a general knowledge of all of its contents.

While this scanning does not provide sufficient detail for the Alchemical to quote specific pieces of information or to learn any Charms or spells stored in the medium, it is sufficient to provide a general overview of the contents and nature of the data contained within it. Universal Input Relays cannot translate text or audio that is in a language that the Alchemical does not know, nor is it capable of decoding any data that has been encrypted.

Additional Submodules

Attunement Resonance Couplings (Wits 4, Essence 3): This submodule upgrades the Universal Pilot Key (see **Ink Monkeys, Vol. 48**). Once the Alchemical has used that Charm to interface with a vehicle, any mote commitment needed to attune to the craft is reduced to one mote for its duration.

Autonomic Maneuvering System (Dexterity 4, 3xp): This submodule upgrades the Universal Pilot Key (see **Ink Monkeys, Vol. 48**). Once the Alchemical has used that Charm to interface with a vehicle, he is treated as a passenger rather than the driver for calculating the Hazard rating of any Activate Charm or Attack chase actions he takes.

Industrial Forerunner Adaptation (1xp): This submodule upgrades the Universal Pilot Key (see **Ink Monkeys, Vol. 48**). The Alchemical may use it to interface with mundane vehicles as long as they contain some form of mechanical or electronic controls. Cars, motorcycles, helicopters, and so on are all valid forms of vehicle, but sailboats or hang gliders would not be.

What is the Onyx Path?

Spring 2012: (VtM) V20 Companion

Summer 2012: (VtM) Children of the Revolution

Fall 2012: (VtM) Hunters Hunted 2

Fall 2012: (WtA) Werewolf: The Apocalypse – 20th Anniversary Edition

Winter 2012-2013: (MtA) Mage Convention Book

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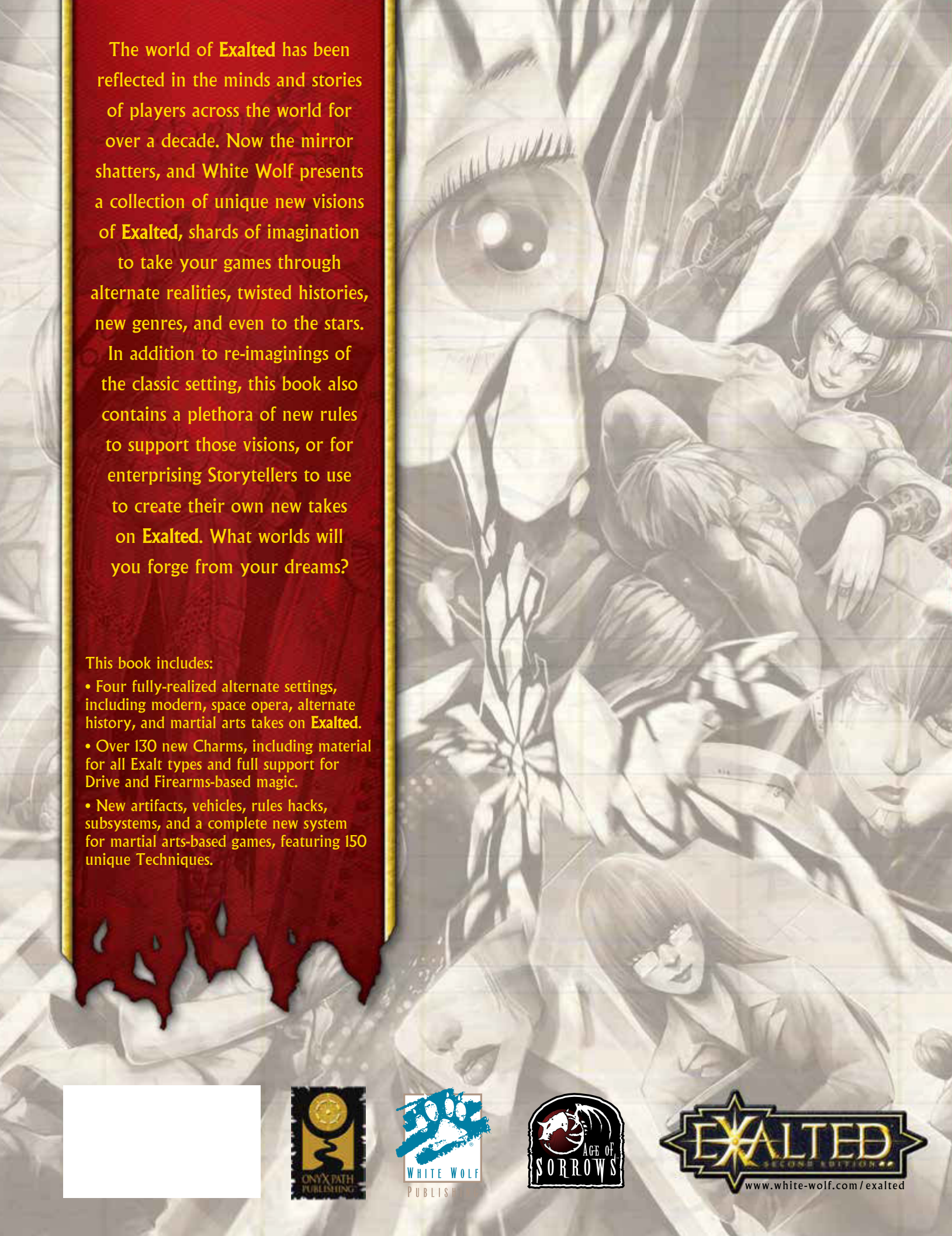

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