

Unlikely Flowerings

a peculiar book for Nobilis

The first humans emerged from the Garden into a world of savagery and grime. Beasts and birds and fish hunted, and killed, and ate, and the ones most often eaten were the ones who harmed no others at all. The sky poured water and stony ice and jagged lightning down upon them and the thunder shouted its rage.

The first humans built themselves a shelter from sticks and leaves; and a fire from stones and wood; and they learned to kill what they wished to kill and protect what they wished to protect; and as Eve brought forth a child in suffering and pain, she said:

“Truly, this is an age of miracles.”

—from *Carryout*,
by Emily Chen

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Dedication

*I*n honor of the birth of

Robin Michael Alexander Maginn

and the birth of

Eliza Caroline Ann Wallis

and in the hopes of greater joy
for all those
who play Nobilis.

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Before I was born, I saw a great pearlescent river rising from this world, merging with just such rivers rising from every world and forming a great confluence pouring upwards towards Heaven.

Before I was born, I saw a wall of fire around the universe, and something more beyond it.

Before I was born, the angel Lahariel came to me and showed me a book. Its pages described things that I did not understand, all manner of creatures and places that I had never known to exist in all the worlds into which I had been born; and I asked him, "What is this, then?"

"It is a survey," answered the angel Lahariel, "of a place larger than the Creation you know. Within this place are threats uncountable to everything you have ever loved and within this place are hopes for our salvation as yet beyond our dreams. I have learned some of what is there but I have not learned it all. In truth, in seven thousand years, I have scarcely even begun.

"No ordinary ink suffices," Lahariel continued, "to record this work, so I must use the mortal soul. I ask you then for a hundredth part of yours — a tithe — that this project may continue."

"A hundredth part?" I asked. "How much will that let you write?"

Lahariel shrugged. "Enough for a space as large as all Creation, and a bit besides."

"You may have it."

Lahariel disappeared. I felt a moment of pain. I turned as if to resume my search for this life, but found my eyes following the piece of my soul instead as it rose and merged into the great nacreous stream.

It would not be enough, I knew; not with seven more years or seven thousand, not with the souls of all that lived. I had seen the size of Creation, and the size of what lay beyond. But I found the effort worthy. I wanted to be part of it. And I would have given more than half my soul to see Lahariel smile.

— from Memories Predating Earthly Experiences, edited by Kayetan Dernesch

Exclusive Attributes

Nobilis honing their miraculous abilities generally follow widely-known paths, striving to improve their Aspect, Domain, Realm, Spirit, or collection of Gifts. However, the road to greater power has a few narrow and twisting offshoots, routes that lead some Nobles to develop peculiar and unique abilities. Many of these take the form of **byway** or **exclusive Attributes** — miraculous Attributes possessed by only a small percentage of the Noble population. Each is the fruit of an idiosyncratic personal journey down a path of study few Nobilis walk. Most are weaker or less flexible than the four primary Attributes; the others have comparable power but specific limitations. The virtue of the exclusive Attributes lies not in their raw miraculous potency but rather in their rarity — the Powers who master them thereby command a rare resource, and can take advantage of this in their dealings with other Nobilis.

The criteria for purchasing exclusive Attributes vary, as do the criteria for purchasing any associated miracle points. In most cases, the character must fulfill a roleplaying condition. Some require access to a specific source of information. In other cases, an entity that already has the Attribute must use a Spirit-based Word of Command (also called an **Exalted Word**) to show the character part of the inner reaches of their soul. This shares enlightenment in the ways of one exclusive Attribute. For Attributes with associated miracle points, the character must generally purchase five permanent miracle points associated with that exclusive Attribute, at the normal cost. After fulfilling the relevant conditions, the character acquires a score of 0 in the exclusive Attribute and can work its miracles.

Individual characters can also create new exclusive Attributes, based on their own studies and aspirations. The HG determines the exact boundaries of these exclusive Attributes, or whether the character can create a given exclusive Attribute at all. In addition, Hollyhock Gods can create their own byway Attributes for general distribution in their world, and others will appear in this and future works.

The old rituals of darkness, thought master thespian Arigato James, needed a little something — a little spice. Acrobats, perhaps, or caged tigers. A few sizzling assistants in skimpy costumes, that could never hurt, even if all they did was hold their athames and gesture in mock astonishment at the monster summoned from Beyond —

Fireworks! Showmanship! Such would be the goetism of Arigato James!

— from *The Ivory Clock*,
by Emily Chen

Cneph came to Lo Mei-zhu in her dreams and gifted her with an understanding of Creation. She woke the next morning and made herself ready, and went to work, and worked, and came home, and began to read a book.

"Lo Mei-zhu," the Creator said, "why do you not act on the knowledge you possess?"

Mei-zhu stood, set her book down, and pulled a flower from a table's vase. "With nothing more than my understanding of this flower," she said, "I could reshape the world. But why should I? Contemplating the truth of a single petal gives me all the happiness I could ever want."

*—from Legends of the Nobilis,
by Luc Ginneis*

Alchemy

Alchemy sees past the prosaic and mythic nature of the world to the divine and supra-divine power behind it. Its origins lie in the Second Age, when the Devil Shuhyung Chen strove against the Angels and broke the sky. The Power Hermes Trismegistus scoured the world for a means to repair the heavens, and, having found nothing, sat by the sea to rest. There, the Trismegistus saw the flower Niuka, also called Nu Wa, floating on the waves. Her petals were the color of fire and her stem the length of a dragon's tail. Pistils rose from her center like horns. Witnessing that divine flower, fallen somehow from the Angels' realm to Earth, the Trismegistus understood the core truth of alchemy: as above, so below. That is, Heaven reflects the power of the Creator, and the flowers of the world reflect the power of the Brightest Realm. From Niuka the Trismegistus brewed a five-colored rainbow and cast it upwards to repair the sky. Only in two places, where clouds obscured the Power's view, did small cracks remain in the vault of the sky.

Later, Hermes Trismegistus recorded the basic principles of alchemy on the Emerald Tablet (also called the Emerald or Smaragdine Table). For this reason, alchemy is sometimes called the Emerald Art. Thirty years after the repair of the sky, Tanetnephthys the Sieve found the Trismegistus' corpse, hands clutching the Emerald Tablet against the body's chest; from there, the secrets of Alchemy diffused through the Noble population.

Alchemy Scores

Level 0: Student

Students of alchemy have taken their first steps towards understanding the Emerald Art. They have a reasonable theoretical grasp of its basic principles and have performed their first experiments. If their alchemical texts do not describe a given flower's properties, the character can investigate them. They can perform elementary analysis on items and substances created through alchemy. To perform meaningful alchemical feats, the character must expend miraculous energy.

Most students of Alchemy are eager to progress further. For mortals, this is not always possible; for Powers, it is almost inevitable.

Example Concept

Keziah Montagu is a woman of a thousand interests. As a mortal, she over-committed herself to the point of ineffectuality. As a Power, she can push forward her endless array of projects with glacial and majestic inevitability. A recent enthusiasm is Alchemy, with her sister caelestis Malkiyah Theodores acting as her mentor in the Emerald Art. Keziah is a mere apprentice now, save for occasional flashes of Aspect-fueled brilliance; in seventy-two years, she expects to be a master.

In Locus Imsety, there is an Oracle named Rainfall. Her full name is "Rain falling in the jungle, heavy drops struggling down through the leaves, and the knowledge of your lover's death." She can answer almost any question, if moved to answer at all, and has occasionally unraveled mysteries that no other Power can touch. Rainfall had a deep and desperate love for knowledge, and gave herself over to it; and one day, there came a point when the facts, mysteries, and wisdom in her mind began to crowd out her thoughts, feelings, and desires. "I do not care," decided Rainfall. "I wish to know." Thus she made her choice, and now she feels nothing, thinks nothing, desires nothing, and knows all things that are.

— from *A Tourist's Guide to Creation*,
by Jasprite Sherrard

Level 1: Practitioner

Characters who proceed in their studies of the Emerald Art eventually master its elementary activities. On the theoretical front, they learn more about the properties of rare flowers — from the flower Nu Wa, almost never seen on Earth, to yellow roses exactly seventeen and a half days old. As a practical matter, they learn the basic elements of alchemical manufacture. They are qualified professionals at one of the deepest sciences in the world.

Developing one's alchemical abilities further takes a certain mindset, difficult even for Powers to adopt. It is a rare mortal who has the raw talent and drive to proceed past this point. Some of the Powers who study this exclusive Attribute linger at this level of understanding for many years before they have the time and inclination to delve into the greater mysteries of the Emerald Art. Others — particularly those with high Aspect or Spirit, though not invariably — race past this point furiously in their climb to higher levels of mastery.

Example Concept

Kapshö Surkhang's son was poisoned with a distillation of the flower Dóirín, a blossom rare enough that none of the public works record its properties. To free his son from the Dóirín-induced coma, Kapshö developed modest alchemical competence and began a hunt through private collections for the information this allowed him to understand. "Love him?" answered Kapshö, when the inevitable question arose. "Of course not; but to do this to my own flesh and blood is an insult I cannot allow to stand."

"Two days ago," Mieszko said, "I could not have seriously considered selling myself to Hell. You are very good at this, Nilaia."

"Perfection is in an angel's nature," Nilaia answered.

Mieszko frowned. "Then how did you fall?"

"With great difficulty," Nilaia admitted. "I must struggle constantly lest I return to grace."

—from *Children of Heaven*, by Martin Elliott

Level 2: Alchemist

*I*n the Cleave of the Botanists (pg. 35, **Nobilis**), only those who reach this level can become full members; those of lesser skill are apprentices or support staff in the eyes of the Cleave. This is the point at which alchemy can compete easily with the other magics of the world; a well-prepared mortal Alchemist can face down an elemental or Goetic magician. Noble Alchemists can draw upon their innate miraculous energy to create true alchemical wonders.

In mortal society, those who go further become giants of the field: esteemed elders of the botanists and the bright young geniuses of the Emerald Art. Among Powers, this level of Alchemy represents less of a meaningful plateau; anyone who climbs this far has the potential to climb to the pinnacle of alchemical achievement.

"We have guns. You have an orchid," said the thug to the alchemist.

"But it is an indigo orchid," the alchemist replied, "so I suggest you surrender at once."

—from *Transmutation for Dummies*, by Gerald de Voe

Example Concept

Ko Te Oho a Neru learned the alchemical sciences from her Chancel-folk; their mortal perspective pervades and diminishes her understanding of the Emerald Art. As she put it, bitterly, when first encountering a limit on her progress, “it is as if one has learned one’s trigonometry from pigs, and can only dimly hear the angles through the snorting.”

Level 3: Master Alchemist

Master alchemists have seen past the mortal virtues of flowers and plants to the divine power within them. With ground coltsfoot petals and burned hyssop — and a thousand other preparations besides — they can brush aside the substance of Prosaic and Mythic Reality and touch the *spiritus Dei*.

In any given generation, only a few dozen mortals are born with the ability to become master alchemists. Natural inclinations or the divinations of the Cleave lead them almost inevitably to an alchemical life. About half of these have the potential to rise further and become grandmasters — with Alchemy scores of 4 or 5 — either through long-term study or immediate mastery of the field.

The greater alchemical experiments possible to the grandmasters are increasingly risky and unreliable. The lure of power draws some Nobles inevitably past this point; others feel that their energies are better used developing more dependable abilities.

This was my ambition: to create an answer to the defilers of the world.

It took me ten years to learn the alchemist’s art. It took me ten months, hard labor all, to formulate and prove my method; and when I looked up from that final determination I saw the long strange shadows dancing in the corner of my lab.

It took me ten weeks to finish the construction. As I completed it the Thing came into being amidst the shadows; and its body was like a lion’s, and its face was like a woman’s, but its eyes were nothing human.

No art in my possession could drive it from my lab.

From that ten weeks of work (that ten months of computation; that ten years of study!): a wooden flute, inlaid with gold. It had certain qualities and affinities of my devising. Its sound would crush the hearts — the pumping, bloody hearts — of the corrupters of the world.

Seven days I polished it. Three days I tested it, tested it in silence, with measure and mathematics to verify that it could not harm the pure.

Three breaths I took; then I was ready.

I turned to look at the creature. “What are you?” I asked. “That you are not afraid?”

“I am the Dark,” it answered. “I am here to witness.”

I watched it for a time, and it watched me. Then I began to play.

“It is strange,” the creature said, “how many ways you humans find to bring closure to your lives.”

—from *Transient Elements*,
by K.C. Danine

Example Concept

Clematis 4 is the Pawn of her Estate and a Radiant of her Realm, with limited access at best to the world-shaping abilities of the Nobilis. As partial compensation, she has striven to develop a deep alchemical knowledge; now she may build alchemical tools for miraculously changing the world in a variety of ways.

Level 4: Grandmaster Alchemist

Grandmasters of alchemy have unlocked the deeper secrets of the world. They can work with the *spiritus Dei* as easily as the mortal elements; from their laboratories come divine masterworks. In reaching this level they tear the scales from their eyes and learn to directly apprehend the miraculous nature of each flower; (or each archetype; or each word); fields and glades become riots of meaning to them, and they can see the world reflected in a single rose.

The grandmasters lead the Cleave of the Botanists; the orthodoxy of the organization restrains them from progressing further. Those who insist on the search for greater enlightenment become *emeriti*, honored outcasts; while the Cleave embraces their willingness to risk life, limb, and mind on hazardous research, it demands that they retreat from the world and practice in seclusion. Even Powers consider the final level of alchemy forbidding: in opening oneself to the greatest powers, one risks unleashing terrible dooms.

Example Concept

Chao Nurhaci ascended to nobility from within the ranks of the Cleave; in the first moment of her blazing Commencement, she understood the truths that had eluded her before and achieved grandmastery. Grandmaster she became, and grandmaster she remains; contemplating the individual smells and fates of each emeritus she had known, she saw no reason to go forward!

As I entered the room, a bell chimed. She turned, very casually, and swallowed down a vialful of shimmering black liquid. I stepped forward to grab her shoulder; without apparent effort, she slipped directly sideways and out of the way. I picked up a table, scattering alembics, pestles, lenses, crucibles, exotic fluids, and a coffee grinder. She winced visibly. I swung the table in her direction, and she fell silkily to the floor. It took me a moment to realize that she had literally dissolved into liquid rather than simply falling prone; by that time, she had coalesced again, and was hurling a powder in my direction. The world went dark. I could still smell her, though, and I advanced; that's when she went liquid again and poured herself down a drain pipe in the floor.

—from Raüli's Report
on the Hunt for
the Botanist Ndrirjàna Shkelyim

She has chosen her own punishment. Liquid she is; liquid she shall remain; and when she dies, I shall drink her as wine. This is the statement of the Grim King.

—from a Notice distributed to the Cleave of the Botanists

Level 5: Worldbreaker

Characters at this level understand the deadliest and the greatest alchemical science: the creation of artifacts capable of Imperial miracles. This knowledge is perpetually incomplete and the danger it poses to the practitioner and everything around them cannot be eliminated. A mind grounded in form cannot wholly apprehend the formless; in the wedge of unknowable and uncognizable consequence this creates there is ample opportunity for cataclysm. Not the Trismegistus nor any Power since has fully mastered this science or its subtleties, nor is it likely that any ever will. Thus those who practice this ultimate expression of the Emerald Art are named Worldbreakers; disaster is a way of life for them, and even the Cleave of the Botanists shows them fear.

Only a handful of mortals in any generation become Worldbreakers; the dedication and the insight necessary to work regularly with Imperial artifacts eludes all others. For many Powers, conversely, the final alchemical science is an infinitely alluring opportunity, and both dedication and insight are easy to come by. In a world with billions of mortals and only a few thousand Powers, the Nobles at this level usually outnumber the mortal Worldbreakers.

Example Concept

Malige Ristani never wished harm to another living thing — but in the moment of her Commencement, hearing the song of the Dark, she sold her soul to it. Hidden in that song was the memory of the apples of Eden, and something in her lusted for them. Drinking deep of the nectar of human suicide, she earned her access to the Sable Gardens. Dedicating herself to the Emerald Art, she learned to brew a mash from the sour and withered apples of the Tree of Knowledge. Drunk on that forbidden wisdom, she has made herself one of the deadliest opponents of the Light.

Weaving at the Loom named Yin-Feng has many desirable effects. Powers have tested Yin-Feng's potency against the Excrucians, pitting the shuttling of the loom against the edge of the Abhorrent Weapon Rivalry (that is also Caligo-rant); Yin-Feng came away the victor. Yet Powers rarely sit to weave from this loom. Yin-Feng produces no fabric save destiny, and those who use its powers for too long turn to molten silver and trickle away.

— from *A Tourist's Guide to Creation*, by Jasprite Sherrard

*The door to my cell, old,
fouled wood, grew clean and
straight when he touched it,
and the lock shone. He put
in the key, and the door
opened without effort. He
stepped in the filth as he en-
tered; it dissolved under his
boot, turned to dust and
then nothingness, and clean-
liness spread in rivulets
across the floor of the room.
He wore a strange headband
of woven thorns and blos-
soms; pale violet petals
shone with a soft pure light.*

*"You are free," he said. "I
shall lead you hence. But do
not touch me."*

*I could not help myself. It
had been too hard. I had
missed him for too long. I
took his hand in the two of
mine.*

*... that is the last entry I
shall write, for it marks the
end of one life and the begin-
ning of another. I do not
know what I became, when
Corentin's touch burned
through my soul, but I am
not who I was; and, in truth,
I am glad to conclude my
former life's affairs. Coren-
tin — I shall still love
Corentin, I think, but I have
no love for the man named
Reynaud Parmentier.*

—from the Diary of
Reynaud Parmentier

Alchemy Rules

Any character — including mortals, Powers, and Excrucians — can develop the Alchemy exclusive Attribute. It requires that they achieve what the alchemists call the "essential insight" of the Emerald Art — the understanding that the Trismegistus came to while regarding the flower Niuka. Sadly, like Buddhist enlightenment, the essential insight resists explanation. A few Nobilis achieve this insight on their own. Others learn it through meditation on their Chancel — Nobles bound to Chancels with the **Alchemy** Resource can automatically acquire the essential insight in this manner, as will some of their Chancelfolk. For the rest, two known methods exist for "teaching" this insight.

First, the teacher can transfer the insight to the student along with their soul — literally embedding that soul and all its perspective within the initiate's own. This requires that the teacher kill themselves — of their own free will, untainted by direct magical or miraculous compulsion — in the student's presence. Either the student must have an appropriate alchemical artifact to "catch" the teacher's soul, or the teacher must use an alchemical tool to "channel" that soul into the student. In event of tricks or treachery, unless the artifact involved can work Imperial miracles, Powers can freely refuse the offered soul.

Second, if the teacher has the Spirit Attribute, they can perform a Spirit-based Word of Command. They spend 8 SMPs and accept a wound, and the blaze of their spirit rises around them. Looking into the shining white fire and fury of that Word, the student acquires the essential insight and can begin their study of Alchemy.

Characters who acquire the essential insight also gain an Alchemy rating of 0 and may perform Alchemy miracles. Additional levels of Alchemy cost 3 Character Points each; characters can purchase up to 5, each representing increased understanding of their essential insight into the nature of the world. Mortal alchemists are limited to simple miracles of this Attribute, but miraculous beings may spend Aspect Miracle Points (AMPs) on Alchemy, enhancing their insight, senses, and physical precision that they may perform even greater works.

Floral Influences

The stronger Alchemy miracles draw on the essence of a flower or flowers to empower an artifact or substance of the alchemist's design. This creates a magical or miraculous tool whose basic qualities derive from the symbolic associations of the flowers. (Characters can

instead learn or develop Alchemy based on other symbol sets, such as the Tarot; this follows identical rules but is slightly inferior. These variant Alchemy Attributes do not include floral Alchemy, or vice versa.)

Unfortunately for the alchemists, multiple *influences* taint each flower. The alchemist may wish to take advantage of a specific concept tied to the flower — but it also has other associations. Some of these are known to the general alchemical community, such as those in **Nobilis**, ppg. 294-298. Others are *not*, and require research or blind optimism to determine. The more time an alchemist spends, the more likely they are to create something that matches their desires. However, the remaining influences on the artifact generally burden it with peculiar quirks, drawbacks, and limitations.

In the past century, the Cleave of the Botanists has taken advantage of gene manipulation and floral hybrids to create flowers with one or two associations carefully screened away. The process is extremely complex, and only eight complete successes exist. These flowers do not reflect the Great Work in Heaven, and the Angels feel a great loathing for them. Thus — while it is the consensus of the Council of Four that the Cleave should continue its work — alchemists who work too frequently with these flowers tend to meet tragically beautiful ends.

The Nobilis occasionally describe their passing passions as such: “I was touched by the periwinkle”, or “a jasmine mood took me”. The first refers to a moment of wistful memory; the second, an hour, day, or week of lust. This fashion is particularly common among alchemists, who are more likely than other Powers to memorize the meanings of the flowers of the world.

— from *The Society of Flowers*,
by Heather Williams

Precision Work and Imprudent Alchemy

She held up the mirror, and in it I saw myself; and behind me, the curl of a mountain laurel. An insect perched on the plant, of a sort that I had never before seen. "This is your ambition," she said, "and it does not suffice."

She set down the mirror and sprinkled a powder over it. I could see the insect's reflected image swell to monstrous proportions; then it crawled out from the glass. I stood in a kind of frozen horror as it scuttled over to me, and did not shriek and jerk until the twisted reflection had clambered most of the way onto my back.

Six legs and a body burrowed into my skin, while I thrashed, until its fluttering wings lay flush against my back. Its legs spread through me. Its mind touched my own.

Now, when I think to rest too long, or eat too much, or waste any time at all, the insect moves in me. It jerks my limbs about. I must work! the insect thinks. I must work! I must work!

How otherwise can I master the great alchemical arts?

—from the Journal of Sigurd Lanser

*S*creening out unknown or unwanted influences on a given work is tricky and uncertain. Alchemy is fundamentally an experimental science, and almost every work is flawed.

Let us begin our discussion with *precision work* – the domain of the cautious, inasmuch as the term applies. The pinnacle of alchemy is the perfect work, harmonious in every aspect and perfectly expressing the creator's will; this cannot be achieved in an imperfect world, but the alchemist may manage a functional equivalent. . . with a miracle 8 levels higher than the base difficulty. If the player cannot afford such conspicuous excess, the HG may season their character's alchemical creation with limitations and drawbacks to taste, as follows:

Requirement	(in Dynamic Nobilis)	Possible Flaws
Miracle Level $\geq$ Difficulty + 8	(TRIUMPH)	None; the product is perfect as envisioned.
Miracle Level $\geq$ Difficulty + 4	(deep success)	... or has significant limitations on its use.
Miracle Level $\geq$ Difficulty + 2	(hard success)	... and/or significant drawbacks to its use.
Miracle Level = Difficulty + 1	(normal success)	... and/or to carrying or transporting it.
Miracle Level = Difficulty	(simple success)	... and/or significant drawbacks to owning it.

Some examples of these limitations include

- “does not work at night;”
- “requires a full Gregorian choir;” and
- “user must be calm.”

Some examples of these drawbacks include:

- “drains MP when used” (a problem in use);
- “puts anyone touching it to sleep” (a problem when carrying it); and
- “owner can never find happiness” (principally a problem with owning it.)

For characters with less skill and more ambition, there is another path: *imprudent alchemy*.

As said, alchemy is an experimental science; a reckless work, rather than failing outright, is more likely to function in an unexpected fashion. Thus alchemists — whether mortal apprentices consumed with importune hubris or Powers striving to master the infinite — have the option to attempt alchemical miracles with miracle level *lower* than the difficulty.

Each such imprudent work is inherently a gamble. The character wields powers they only partially comprehend and creates — something — but it is not necessarily a thing that is desirable or safe. The best way to think of this is that the player describes their character’s process and goals and this serves as a source of inspiration to the HG, who strives not so much to fulfill the player’s desires or to thwart them as to use them as the springboard for the creation of something resonant, quixotic, and fitting to the needs of the game. Such works are always *like* the creator’s intent . . . but not *very* like; they are generally dangerous, sometimes useful, always surprising, and often fatally flawed.

Yip Xiao-mei, regrettably, lost half of her mind to an alchemical experiment gone awry. She still thinks perfectly well, of course, and this has proved no practical impediment to her success, but she admits quite explicitly that she cannot think half of the thoughts she might otherwise have been capable of.

— from *In the Right Circles*, by
Jasprite Sherrard

Requirement	(in Dynamic Nobilis)	Possible Flaws
Miracle Level = Difficulty	(simple success)	The work is only <i>similar</i> to your intent. ... and may have very limited use.
Miracle Level = Difficulty - 1	(normal failure)	... and/or significant drawbacks to its use.
Miracle Level ≤ Difficulty - 2	(hard failure)	... and/or to carrying or transporting it.
Miracle Level ≤ Difficulty - 4	(MISERY)	... and/or to owning it.

Characters using miracle level equal to the difficulty may use the rules for precision work or for imprudent alchemy — whichever they prefer.

Crafting and the Circumstances of the Game

In my Chancel, the infernal Power Channary Keng runs the hospitals. Naturally, they do not admit those whose condition creates intense suffering — but Channary is remarkably lax in applying this rule, treating even such conditions as cancer, severed limbs, and degenerative lung disease. Nor do her hospitals treat them inadequately — her alchemical cures are experimental and perhaps dangerous, but on the whole quick, effective, and painless. Qu Kien-Lung challenged her, saying, “You sacrifice these peoples’ suffering to advance your own knowledge of the alchemical arts.”

“I do not,” answered Channary. “If I turn away a patient who then dies, their pain ends. If I turn away a patient who then masters their hardship, I have failed entirely. But those I send away healed return to their lives, and know that accident, disease, and death shall be no escape for them; they will face suffering enough for any Power of Hell.”

—from *Becoming Noble*,
by Fayola Osiagobare

*A*s a general rule, PCs can complete one major alchemical work and two minor works in each story. (A “minor work” is something that the character can create with a simple miracle.) This limit reflects natural time constraints — experiential wisdom accumulating in one story and flowering in the next — and cannot be hurried by miracle points alone. NPCs have the potential to do the same, but typically work at a slower pace. The HG can allow additional works for both PCs and NPCs if the time scale seems appropriate.

Alchemical objects tend to reflect the conditions that produced them. An object built carefully in a laboratory will be predictable but sterile; the crude work of someone chained in Hell will operate with the same malevolent creativity and tightly constrained circumstances as its maker. Spontaneous alchemy produces reckless works of power; slow and meditative practices produce deep and still ones.

It requires specific effort as part of the design to secure an alchemical object against breakage and the destructive works of time. A glass cup, even should it contain Imperial magic, is prone to shattering; an alchemical tapestry can rot. That said, it is difficult to destroy any alchemical work before the spirit of its purpose and its flaws are satisfied; unless directly targeted by a powerful miracle, it will tend to endure until it has had the opportunity to work its magic and its mischief on one or more meaningful occasions.

Examples

Clematis 4 has Alchemy 3. She wishes to alchemically enhance her favorite gun so that it never misses — at least, when there is nothing miraculous involved. This is basically an Earthly magic, so she uses **Essential Alchemy** (a level 2 miracle), imbuing the gun with the essence of Hemlock. When she has finished her work, the barrel will shimmer with the soft white of poison hemlock and its handle will turn jade green.

As mentioned, this is her favorite gun, so she doesn't want any downside to carrying or owning it. She uses a level 4 miracle, equal to the difficulty + 2. This ensures that carrying and owning the gun is safe, though its actual use might have limits or drawbacks. The HG decides that the hemlock in the gun really wants to kill, not to hit. It therefore has a limitation: when fired at an inanimate object, using a mundane action, it simply refuses to work. This limitation is fairly minor, since Clematis can usually use Aspect 0 miracles to shoot inanimate things. However, Essential Alchemy is a low-level miracle typified by relatively minor flaws.

Teodosio Ribeiro has Alchemy 3. He wishes to create a powder of awakening that, when sprinkled onto the inanimate, gives it life and mobility in the prosaic world. He uses **Alchemical Mastery** (a level 3 miracle) to do so, crafting the powder from extracts of Angelica and Butterfly Weed — the flowers of inspiration and freedom.

Teodosio chooses to create this powder carefully. He uses a level 5 miracle, costing him 2 AMPs. The miracle level is again equal to the difficulty + 2, so the powder is definitely safe to carry and own — but using it may have some drawbacks.

The HG evaluates the likely extra influences on Angelica and Butterfly Weed, either using whimsy or comparing the flower design charts in **No-bilis** to the physical flowers, and determines that Teodosio fails to screen out aspects of knowledge and war. Consequentially, the inanimate objects that the powder awakens will be truculent, vicious, and cunning enough to conceal their nature until they can strike at the Power that awakened them. Since Teodosio is a reasonably accomplished alchemist, the HG also decides that Powers *can* tame these hostile creatures and make them loyal, with sufficient effort.

Teodosio may or may not be satisfied with the powder. If not, he can try again, most likely finding a variant on the awakening powder with different flaws.

Ko Te Oho a Neru wishes to craft an alchemical blade that, when drawn, causes those who look upon it to love and fight for the wielder. She'd like an effect comparable to the Glorious Gift, so must use **Alchemical Grandmastery** (a level 4 miracle). She only has Alchemy 2, and only 1 AMP to

The Temple of Inessential Doubts contains two precious scrolls: the Primary Truth, that is, the truth that is the archetype for the very concept of veracity, and the Principal Lie, which is to say, the corresponding archetype of falsehood. (Astute readers may recognize these matters from earlier discussion, and identify these scrolls as Earthly extensions of the Angels Firstborn and Lucifer.) For centuries after the Temple's construction, visitors came to admire these scrolls; then, sadly, they were stolen. The Temple's seven-story hounds rapidly brought the thief to heel, but the priests of the Temple found that — once having been rearranged — they could no longer tell the Primary Truth and the Principal Lie apart.

— from *A Primer on the Loci Celatum*,
by Holly Djurisc

It was more graceful than a dance, the alchemist and the nimblejack: one blessed with dexterity by something greater than a god, and one whose shoes – high-heeled, no less – gave her the terrible speed of a hurricane wind. I think that after the first ten seconds – that must have been an eternity to them – the nature of their battle changed. The nimblejack set aside its will to claw out her eyes and pull her liver free, and she surrendered her desire for life. Hunger did not exist. Life did not exist. There was only the motion and the speed.

It ended all too predictably. The beauty of the encounter reached and moved the nimblejack's stone heart and the creature died at once.

— from the Memoirs of
Alice Mendel,
Lady of the Thunder

spare, but she tries it anyway. The difficulty (4) is equal to the miracle level (3) + 1, so the HG can alter the basic concept and possibly impose limitations or drawbacks on its use. After some thought, the HG decides that the blade inspires desperate love, not for the wielder, but for the blade itself. This seems a sufficiently large change that no further limitation is required. Ko Te is reasonably pleased with the result; she can still *distract* large groups of warriors, even if she cannot subvert them.

Maliqe Ristani has Alchemy 5. She wishes to create vambraces to counter the Abhorrent Weapons of the Excrucians – specifically, an artifact that can counter the Negative Gift. Maliqe can't think of a general way to counter a Major Destruction of Miraculous Power with a Noble miracle, so she uses **Alchemical Wonders** (a level 5 miracle) to create a relic on the Imperial scale. This is a tricky, dangerous work, requiring the essence of at least five flowers.

Maliqe elects to empower the vambraces with the essence of Achillea, Alyssym, Amaranth, Ashflower, and Chamomile – the flowers of war, excellence, immutability, guardianship, and energy in adversity. She uses a level 6 miracle, costing her a single AMP. The miracle level is equal to the difficulty + 1, so owning the vambraces is guaranteed to be safe – but carrying, wearing, and using them might not be. The HG looks at the Negative Gift, which usually costs the Excrucians miraculous energy, and decides that the vambraces do the same. They drain the miracle points of whomever carries them at the rate of two per scene, and swallow an additional MP each time they block an Abhorrent Weapon's power. Since these effects are fairly obvious, the HG tells Maliqe about them. Maliqe names the vambraces Aristratos, but sometimes calls them Hunger.

Maliqe could have issued an Aspect Word of Command instead, burning inspiration into her mind. For just 8 AMPs and a long-lasting wound, she could have used a level 13 miracle, creating wondrous vambraces that could block the Excrucian Negative Gift without limitations or drawbacks worth the mentioning.

Dynamic Alchemy

*I*n **Dynamic Nobilis**, each individual Alchemical creation requires downtime consultation with an HG.

The player and HG meet. They discuss what the player hopes to create, and how. The player notes how many Miracle Points they wish to use, the flowers in question, the desired miracle level, and any other pertinent information. The HG, possibly after consulting others, determines the final product and creates it as an object card

The player may now begin to spend the desired number of miracle points (here, equivalent to AMPs.) They can spend these points over any number of games. When they've spent enough to enact the miracle, they receive the object card.

In **Dynamic Nobilis**, a given player should only develop one alchemical product at a time; however, they can conceivably create one per session.

Hemlock Gun

(example object card)

Created by HG for Clematis 4, Power of Recurrence, 2/4/08 1pm

The barrel of this gun shimmers and its handle is jade green.

It never misses a living target (earthly magic), but
it cannot shoot inanimate objects without a miraculous action. *AK*

Requires an Aspect 2 miracle to damage. *AK*

Alchemy Miracles

Level 0: Alchemical Analysis

The wolf came into Christopher Dannson's camp, its fur the color of storms at night, and bared fangs the white of the moon. An angel fell from above in a susurrus of wings and the blade named Promise, and it said to the wolf, "You are a thing that should not be."

Christopher ran while the angel fought; and then four hours later, the angel found him. Its wings and hands and face ran with blood. He fell to his knees.

"There is a price that must be paid for acts of virtue," said the angel, "for this is the law of the blade I bear." The sword came out again and in one stroke it took off Christopher Dannson's head.

—from *Innocents and Thieves*,
by Keiko Takemori

Level 0 Alchemy miracles allow a character to determine the limitations and quirks of an alchemically created object. The time investment is small, and sometimes gives the alchemist a hint of the influences involved.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the character can read the object card for any object created through Alchemy. In general, this is all the relevant information for the object; if the HGs have secret information about the alchemical creation, these miracles do not help reveal it.

Level 1: Alchemical Trivia

Level 1 Alchemy miracles express the basic skills of a practical alchemist. These miracles do not use the precision work or imprudent alchemy rules; a level 1 Alchemy miracle is both necessary and sufficient.

The first skill under this heading is alchemical manufacturing: the production of mundane or unusual substances through alchemy, whether creating them in a laboratory or transmuting them from lesser substances. This ability is a minor Earthly magic, and is comparable to Extrapolative Technology in its ability to grant access to unusual chemicals, drugs, and metals.

The second skill under this heading is an analytical, applied, and reasonably comprehensive understanding of the properties of flowers. In the hands of an alchemist, flowers can do some fairly peculiar things, from eavesdropping on (the vicinity of) a matched blossom to opening gate-

ways to Heaven. The HG can sometimes offer an alchemist the opportunity to solve a problem that is otherwise blocking them by finding an appropriate flower or flowers. This generally does not mean “a hyacinth” so much as “a hyacinth so many years old, with one petal twice the length of another” — but alchemists still find their peculiar knowledge handy.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, object cards created through alchemical trivia use the same rules as objects built with Extrapolative Technology — they give one more shift towards success than the tool typically would. The HGs can optionally give alchemists the right to create one such object a session without consultation with an HG. This is in addition to any major alchemical objects developed together with the HGs.

When a difficult problem becomes public knowledge, the HGs may sometimes inform characters able and willing to use these miracles (Alchemy 0 characters willing to spend an MP or characters with Alchemy 1+) how their floral techniques can resolve it.

There is an old legend
that if you hollow out a corpse,
leaving only skin and bones,
and stuff
this remainder with violets,
it will be able to speak.

I do not recommend the attempt;
corpses may
remember much of their former life,
but they are wicked
and devious
beyond the aspirations of man.

—from *The Grim King* (Appendix A),
by Melanie Tumbarius

Level 2: Essential Alchemy

Level 2 Alchemy miracles allow the character to unlock the hidden essence of a single flower and create objects imbued with its power. Results usually vary, even with identical objects and flowers, but an alchemist can deliberately reproduce a previously discovered effect. The alchemical artifact this miracle produces has raw potency equivalent to an Earthly magic — its effects are not treated as miraculous. For example, a solvent created through this process would splash off a Noble harmlessly. However, the effects can be quite powerful; such a solvent would burn through steel as easily as paper.

These miracles use the precision work and imprudent alchemy rules; however, the limitations and drawbacks associated with them are generally trivial.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, these use the normal rules for alchemical creations, described above.

Level 3: Improbable Alchemy

Level 3 Alchemy miracles allow the character to create objects imbued with the essence of a pair of distinct flowers. The alchemical artifact thus produced has a raw potency equivalent to a lesser miracle; its penetration generally ranges from 0-2. Unfortunately, the unwanted influences that derive from a pair of flowers are harder to screen out than those from the single flowers of essential alchemy.

These miracles use the precision work and imprudent alchemy rules. The limitations and drawbacks associated with them should be relatively minor.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, these use the normal rules for alchemical creations, described above.

*The light cast by censers of burning
Amaranth and Hawkweed casts no
shadows; it trickles around, under,
and over every obstacle. In the
hands of a skilled alchemist, such
censers are more potent yet, reveal-
ing the unseen and blinding the un-
worthy.*

—from *A Tourist's Guide to Creation*,
by Jasprite Sherrard

Level 4: Alchemical Mastery

Level 4 Alchemy miracles allow the character to create objects imbued with the essence of three distinct flowers. This yields an alchemical artifact with a raw potency equivalent either to a major miracle with small penetration or a lesser miracle with 4-5 penetration. Such artifacts are always useful, but generally both limited and peculiar due to the varied influences upon them.

These miracles use the precision work and imprudent alchemy rules. The limitations and drawbacks associated with them can be major or minor.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, these use the normal rules for alchemical creations, described above.

*Seen through an alchemical visci-
scope, the flower of Storms is nothing
more than a raging hurricane; or
perhaps, a driving rain; or a night
full of snow and ice. The exact spiri-
tual nature of the flower varies de-
pending on how it chooses to
interact with the viewer; those
whom the Viscount of Storms de-
spises generally see nothing but
flurries of hate and clouds whose
march across the sky forms an omen
of doom.*

—from *The Amethyst Table*,
by Salma Aidara

Level 5: Alchemical Wonders

The most powerful Alchemy miracles allow the character to create objects imbued with the essence of five distinct flowers. The resulting work has power equivalent to that of an Imperial miracle, beyond the might of any Power, and conceivably even puissance beyond that of a typical Imperator. However, even the greatest Alchemist cannot weed away all the influences that taint such artifacts; it is a wonder to produce one at all, and producing something *too* close to the desired result would be too much to ask.

These miracles use the Alchemical Experimentation rules. The limitations and drawbacks associated with them should be major or at least significant, and even “perfect” works should be quirky.

*Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, these use the normal rules for alchemical creations, described above.*

The label on the box said, “Lucifer’s Heart – 5¢.”

“How do you know it is really Lucifer’s heart?” asked Emma Jane.

“I pulled it out myself,” said the man in the black coat. He pulled up his shirt and Izod sweater to show the hole in his chest. “See?”

— from *Emma and César*,
by Martin Elliott

*"Are the ranks of the
muses fixed?"*

*"Of course not," said
Terpsichore. "We regu-
larly expand our ranks as
new forms of art become
available."*

*"Oh? Who are some of the
up and coming young
muses?"*

*"Well, we've been very
pleased to welcome Katal-
ixis," Terpsichore said.
"She's the muse of de-
stroying the world."*

"That's an art form?"

*Terpsichore smiled. "You
know?" she said. "I asked
that too. But it's all about
your attitude when you're
doing it."*

*—from *The Ends of the Earth*,
by K.C. Danine*

High Summoning

Some Powers turn outside Creation for their strength. They study the monsters that live beyond the Weirding Wall. They learn to summon them, to bind them, and to make pacts with them. Some are corrupted, and fall into the service of the Beyond's horrors. Some grow mighty from their allies' power. Most become a little alien themselves, bound with strange promises and gifted with peculiar abilities.

High Summoning rests on two foundations. The first is knowledge — understanding the creatures of the Lands Beyond Creation. Those who know their ways can speak to them; those who learn their tricks can bargain with them; those who learn their weaknesses can command them. The truths of the Beyond, however, are always changing. Last year's understanding of the Peregrine Bears may not survive into today. The promise so tight as to command a Lawbreaker one day may hold no influence over them the next. A High Summoner's power waxes and wanes, and what they can do one moment they might not accomplish the next. The second foundation is influence — acquiring a social and perhaps mystical position in the Beyond. A Power whose name accumulates fear and respect outside the Weirding Wall can parlay this into more complete command over greater and more terrible creatures.

Characters who engage in the dangerous art of High Summoning should generally take the Handicaps Imperfect Command (pg. 55), Imperfect Knowledge (pg. 56), and Student of Summoning (pg. 57). The first indicates that the character does not wholly master everything they summon, and has various outstanding pacts with the creatures of the Beyond. The second defines the degree to which the summoned creatures fall short of the character's expectations. The third indicates that the character, in pursuit of further knowledge, continues to experiment with High Summoning, calling forth new creatures in their quest for understanding; this can lead to an occasional disaster.

*Once, I asked my imaginary friend,
"Are you real?"*

*She thought on this, and then sat
down upon the beach. She poked
her finger into the sand; it left a
hole. Ten times she did this, and
nine holes she left.*

*"Mostly," she concluded, and I was
forced to agree.*

— from the Diary of
Minerva Candeloro

High Summoning Scores

Level 0: Severed Sage

A student of High Summoning must learn the rites of summoning, binding, dispelling, and compelling. They must master the ceremonies that propitiate the Weirding Wall (pg. 40, **Nobilis**) and conceivably Creation itself, allowing the conjuration of entities from Beyond. Most importantly, they must learn enough about the infinity outside existence to both locate and manipulate the allies they desire. Some delve into libraries of mystic lore, earning their wisdom through old-fashioned scholarship. Others, whose experiments rely on their raw intuition and the power of their soul, acquire a quicker but less comfortable understanding of the Lands Beyond Creation; strange truths, lies, and theorems spread through their mind like cracks through a stone.

Those who practice High Summoning are never wholly creatures of Creation again. They base their influence in the Beyond on their honor, deceptions, promises, gifts, contracts, secrets, alliances, energies, wisdom, and efforts — all things that are a part of their essential selfhood. To learn High Summoning is to sever oneself, ever so slightly, from the natural processes of the world. A portion of one's soul becomes a stranger to all the things in Creation. This does not necessarily corrupt the practitioner; the Lands Beyond Creation are home to things stranger than the Fallen. Neither, however, is it safe.

I waited for her to introduce herself, but she stood silent. Finally, I prompted her. "Your name, milady?"

She shook her head. "Creatures who one day have seven limbs and the next twenty-three, who can eat your shadow and spit it out again — they bandy my name about. Things with seven sapphire eyes, the living antithesis of mountains, they make jokes of it. Monsters who can flip a coin and have it come up null, whose fangs can cut the night and whose eyes can see through stone — they hide in fear from its shadow. I have a name," she said, "but it is no longer fit for the children of man."

— from the Thought-Record
of Luc Ginneis

Example Concept

Andel Miskova chose to learn High Summoning due to its availability in his Chancel; this, he concluded soon after, was the greatest mistake he had ever made. He can feel in his bones and his soul that he no longer belongs wholly to the world; and though the spirits and the land seem still to welcome him, he spends his life in expectation of the world's rejection. He feels estranged even from his Estate, a Power's first and final companion; and so has chosen to walk the path of High Summoning no further.

नोबिलिस्: अर्कतन्त्र

nobilis: a game of sovereign powers

Level 1: Companion to Monsters

After mastering the basic techniques, a High Summoner begins a long study of the internal lives and social contracts of the creatures beyond Creation. Through these studies, they learn to constrain, compel, and manipulate such entities. Some creatures the Summoner controls through the creature's sense of honor and obligation; some through agreements made with greater, suzerain entities; and a few through a shrewd understanding of the monster's nature, allowing them to present the creature with a dilemma solvable only through obedience. These matters are treacherous; the greater the dominion a Summoner hopes to claim, the more hostility their experiments can generate.

Characters with this level of High Summoning have used their knowledge to gain social currency in regions of the Beyond, and with certain individual entities as well. In so doing, they make themselves a creature of the Lands Beyond Creation as well as a creature of the world; they have an identity in both places. Those uncomfortable with this idea rarely develop their High Summoning to this point; those who consider such a dual nature mere semantics often proceed further.

Example Concept

Esemkhebe is also Niutweskhet of the Lands Beyond Creation; she has a name there and a place in the societies of seventy of the Beyond's dominions. She finds the process of High Summoning intellectually and emotionally fascinating, but doesn't feel she can afford to develop Niutweskhet's influence further; she has Esemkhebe, Power of Tragedy, to tend to.

She stood in the garden she had summoned from outside the world. A thing that I could not call a flower brushed against her face; soft yellow fuzz lay beneath her feet. Behind her, radiant indigo shapes of whorls and topologically impossible curves served as bushes, and something beautiful but disturbingly wormlike crawled up a lattice against the garden fence.

Nothing in that garden came from the mind of God. It was something called, something conjured, something found.

"What price did you pay for it?" I asked.

She opened her eyes. Patterns of amber and violet endlessly bloomed within them. "None worth the mentioning," she answered.

She stood within the garden; and nothing in that garden came from the mind of God.

—from the Thought-Record of
Melania Stockli

Level 2: Lady of the Beyond

Determined practitioners of High Summoning eventually build a meaningful web of influence in the Lands Beyond Creation. Whether mortal or Power, each of those who develops High Summoning to this level becomes a lord or lady of the places outside existence; in the Beyond, they are a force to reckon with. This has certain spiritual consequences. A mortal with such mastery almost inevitably falls into the Beyond upon their death, rather than reincarnating. A Power faces a small corrosion of their identity: though their Estate exists only within Creation, they and their authority reach outside it. Those Powers at this level assert that this in no way dilutes their loyalty or their effectiveness in service to Creation; the person playing such a Power determines how much truth lies in this assertion.

A character's continuing social advancement in the Lands Beyond Creation has certain direct material consequences. Their ability to dominate or earn cooperation from any of the allies they summon increases; they are simply in a better position to command.

Example Concept

Tang Pei-pei feels herself diluted by the energy she pours into the Beyond. She has built power for herself there with pacts, gifts, and promises, and sometimes suspects she is buying that power with pieces of her own soul. At the same time, the prospect of an unworldly crown to go with her Duchess' circlet of strawberry leaves and gold appeals to her. More influence over her Beyond allies is always tempting. She has not yet decided whether to direct her efforts into further studies of High Summoning or to spend that time turning her already-mustered influence to the service of Estate and Code.

Level 3: Peer of the Most Distant Realm

The Lady of the Dawn opened her eyes and cast her gaze across the battlefield; and as the light of her regard touched each of them, the creatures of darkness withered, and sank down, and hid beneath the sod.

A murmur rose among the soldiers, and they knelt before her, one or two shaming twenty and then two thousand into obeisance. They drove their blades into the soil and waited for her to bless them with her word. She said nothing, but rather closed her eyes; and from the sod beneath the soldiers, the creatures of darkness rose.

"How should I record it?" asked Eguerdi, pen in hand, when the slaughter was complete.

"At this battle," said the Lady, whose aspect had darkened, "I am the Lady of the Eventide."

—from *Seven Wonders*,
by Emily Chen

Those who ascend to this level of High Summoning can wear a crown woven of *sukka adharmā*, a substance or quality found in the Beyond that sometimes carries an appearance of shadow and sometimes of light. They have claimed a high place in the distant courts; and if that place is not a true place, in a court no true court, in a land that one cannot truly say exists, nevertheless they have become something more than they were.

At this level, the Power has significant influence over the unintelligent denizens of the world Beyond; moreover, with the pacts they have woven, they can reasonably expect to dominate creatures whose nature both mirrors and stands outside the miraculous. Sometimes, they can even control those creatures whose nature is as potent as a Noble's own.

Example Concept

Kaminaga Hitoshi spends much of his time in abstract research on the order and structure of the Lands Beyond Creation, viewed as if it possessed geography, physics, politics, and social systems. He considers these things to exist only in the mind of an observer within Creation, as an interpretation of the fundamentally unknowable; the question that burns in his mind is whether the Beyond, existing outside the physics and metaphysics of Creation, is real at all. He wears the crown of *sukka adharmā* proudly, and would like the reassurance of believing that the lands from which that crown comes are more than a consensual illusion.

Level 4: Sovereign Beyond

Those who can claim this High Summoning score have built massive influence in the Lands Beyond Creation; they may wear the crown of *ariya adharmā*, a substance that sometimes shines with its glory and sometimes flickers with unworth. They are a significant potentate in the Beyond, and that power roughly equals the strength of their influence in Creation. Some find themselves still bound thoroughly to Creation's service; others discover their Emperor's constraints have slowly faded away, and they must decide whether to serve the world freely or reject it as beneath them.

At this level, the Power's dominance over the menial animals of the Lands Beyond Creation is in most respects complete. Their control over significant entities is meaningful. They can treat with the Beyond's equivalents of Nobles as equals or — occasionally — superiors.

Example Concept

Ilisa Kasavaraju stands at the cusp of the most important decision of her life. Already, she possesses nobility in both Creation and the Beyond, and her fundamental connection to reality has grown tenuous. If she stops her studies, she can continue to consider herself a person and a Power, and most likely — with effort and planning — can arrange to reincarnate rather than fall out of Creation upon her death. If she struggles upwards towards true mastery, she will become something fundamentally alien, serving Creation only by choice: a creature fated to upon its death forswear ordinary things, shake free its wings from the chrysalis of the world, and fly out into endlessness as an empress of the Beyond.

Certain Powers assert their mastery of the peculiar art of High Summoning by adopting a crown shaped from the substance of the Lands Beyond Creation. Like any other item of regalia, such crowns ostensibly recognize the Power's worth and serve to intimidate those who have earned no similar adornment. In practice, the Power has adopted the distinctive markings of another tribe — that of the entities beyond the boundaries of the world — and in so doing indicated their defection from the social order. The response is invariably negative. That some Powers fail to notice this simply demonstrates their increasing alienation from Noble culture. That others prosper in society despite choosing an adharmic crown testifies to the charm, intensity, and manipulative ability that some fortunate Powers possess.

—from *The Society of Flowers*,
by Heather Williams

Level 5: Empress Beyond

To reach this High Summoning score is to claim the crown of *nijhati adharmā*, the circlet that perfects — though the standard to which it perfects its wearer is unknown. Death is nothing to these masters; when they die, unless an Emperor should intervene, they shall step beyond Creation and become something else — something grander, something more glorious, something altogether inhuman. Those who would find such a fate unwelcome had best curtail their ambition before they reach this point.

Those Powers who may name themselves emperors in the Beyond easily dominate a wide variety of useful monsters. In addition, they can usually force the grudging cooperation of certain majestic and semi-divine horrors. High Summoning cannot manipulate those terrible creatures who correspond to the Beyond's Imperators, but even these will generally go out of their way to avoid crushing a master of High Summoning under their heel.

Example Concept

Anupriya Mageshkumar wore the name Kadir-Rahman in the Lands Beyond Creation and thought this name an aspect of herself. She fed that aspect's strength with her efforts and occult bargains, seeking always to make it greater. Then one day she awoke to understand that Kadir-Rahman was not her aspect but the converse; that she had been a part of Kadir-Rahman since the day of her birth, and upon her death would rejoin with it. "Which came first?" she asked herself. "My creation of Kadir-Rahman, or Kadir-Rahman's creation of Anupriya Mageshkumar?" Eventually, she concluded that the question had no meaning; time is an artifact of the angels, and cannot bind such things as Kadir-Rahman, who is also named the Mercy at the Heart of the Flame.

*Walk to the east until you can walk
no more. Swim east until you pass
the sunrise; swim east until you
pass the stars; swim east until you
pass beyond the edge of the sky.
There, you will find yourself on the
shores of a different land, under a
different sky.*

*Even in that land, he said, they shall
know your name, and mine, and of
our love.*

— from *Adel*, by K.C. Danine

णोबिलिस्: अगक्तन्त्र

nobilis: a game of sovereign powers

High Summoning Rules

The power source for High Summoning is High Summoning MPs (HMPs). These represent the alien but miraculous energy accruing to the character from their position and bargains in the Lands Beyond Creation. Characters have 0 HMPs by default. Normally, a character begins purchasing these Miracle Points before developing a rating in High Summoning. This represents their studies of and experimentation with the Beyond, which have as yet yielded no useful results. When a character has purchased 5 HMPs, not counting HMPs received from Handicaps, they acquire a rating in High Summoning. They may then purchase levels in the exclusive Attribute normally.

Certain environments are particularly congenial to High Summoning — such as Chancels with the High Summoning Chancel Property and places tainted heavily with the powers of creatures Beyond. Creatures bound to a character in such a place are vulnerable not simply to the character's wisdom but to their raw spiritual potency. The character can substitute Spirit MPs for HMPs when summoning, binding, banishing, or coercing such creatures. If the character lives in such a place, they may freely develop a rating in High Summoning without purchasing 5 HMPs, or, in fact, any HMPs at all.

Mortals who live in an environment congenial to High Summoning can learn the art, but cannot develop HMPs or SMPs. Most have the Handicaps Imperfect Command, Imperfect Knowledge, and Student of Summoning, none of which earn them miracle points. If a creature so requests, they may accept other Handicaps to please it; this earns them neither miracle points nor any guarantee of loyalty. High Summoning is a Noble's art.

*He looked at the pentacle,
and his nostrils flared.
"Clearly," he said, "I have
overestimated your tal-
ents. Perhaps we will start
with something easier to
draw. A summoning cir-
cle. Or perhaps a sum-
moning square."*

*"What can you summon
with a square?" asked Jau-
regi.*

*"Demons and monsters,"
snapped Salvador. "But
they sneer at you!"*

— from *The Ivory Clock*,
by Emily Chen

Learning High Summoning in Dynamic Nobilis

In **Dynamic Nobilis**, characters do not purchase HMPs separately. Instead, generic Miracle Points represent HMPs (and SMPs).

To learn High Summoning without an appropriate Chancel Property, a character must still make an investment in developing the appropriate applications of miraculous energy. As there are no HMP to purchase, they must fulfill the generic **MP Criterion (below)**.

A **Dynamic Nobilis** character can claim a rating in High Summoning as soon as they purchase a sufficient number of generic MPs and obtain HG permission. The HGs may wish to impose additional restrictions, such as a number of stories spent studying High Summoning or specific interactions with HG-played entities.

“To learn the first secret of this temple, you must sacrifice your left arm. To learn the second, you must sacrifice your right. The third, your left leg. The fourth, your right. The fifth, your tongue. The sixth, your eyes. The seventh, your torso, and the eighth, your head.”

“You seem remarkably intact, honored teacher.”

“I had acquired several spare bodies,” he explained, “for just such occasions as this. . . .”

— from *Tearing Down the Thirty-Three Heavens*,
by Martin Elliott

MP Criterion	Fulfilled for . . .
Character has purchased 3 additional MPs	One exclusive Attribute demanding this criterion.
Character has purchased 5 additional MPs	Two exclusive Attributes demanding this criterion.
Character has purchased 8 additional MPs	Three exclusive Attributes demanding this criterion.
Character has purchased 10 additional MPs	Four exclusive Attributes demanding this criterion.
<i>* In the event that a character needs to develop more than four Attributes with this criterion, start over at the beginning of the table; 13 MPs suffices for a fifth, 15 for a sixth, 18 for a seventh, and so on.</i>	

Pacts

High Summoning is not a solitary art. In its pursuit, summoners make pacts and bargains with — potentially — dozens of creatures. These include things and essences in Creation that watch over the Weirding Wall; potentates and ministers controlling access to the various regions of the Beyond; the oracles, sages, divinaturses, and sofiamancers that teach the summoner of the secrets and species outside existence; those divine horrors and horrarchs the character summons; and the strange and hideous lords, ladies, and androgynes that rule, govern, dominate, or oversee the individual species of the furthestmost realm.

The requirements incumbent upon a character can take the form of concrete sacrifices, such as virginal maidens or boys, gold, chocolate, rare flowers, or the character's own blood. They can include abstract sacrifices, such as death, joy, bored drudgery, mountain climbing, beetle consumption, or artistic effort, experienced by the Power or by a number of mortals in the creature's name. The Power may need to lame themselves or drive themselves mad; they may need to speak no truths or no falsehoods; they may be bound against killing, or against holding back their anger; they may be required to isolate themselves from the touch of water or the taste of stone. Bargains can call for the torment of thousands, a week's revelry, a stone that shines as brightly as the sun, a hundred thousand dollars set on fire, an intricate pattern of brands and marks on the Power's flesh, cruelty or kindness, or the gift of a butterfly found living and well at the bottom of the sea.

In practice, these pacts take the form of Handicaps. The Handicap Imperfect Command (pg. 55) serves as a catchall for all the small bargains the character involves themselves with that do not merit MPs on an individual basis. The need for minor sacrifices could take the form of a Restriction, giving a MP when some obstacle prevents the character from making the sacrifice. Conversely, making regular major sacrifices takes the form of a Limit: the HG defines interesting sacrifices that must be obtained, and the character's quest for each forms a subplot in one or several stories. In addition, almost any Limit or Restriction can derive from a bargain with creatures Beyond. Even peculiar Restrictions such as the inability to enter a home uninvited can serve in a character's bargains — few entities take pleasure in that particular inability, but the spiritual commitment the Power makes to that Restriction can provide energy or some other quality that a creature from Beyond finds valuable. Although a great deal of freedom exists in choosing High Summoning-based Handicaps, the player should always work out which of the creatures they dealt with demanded the Handicap and why.

The end result of the character's pacts is a supply of HMPs or SMPs with which they can enhance their miracles of High Summoning. Thanks to

"'Before I break my pact with you,' you swore, 'I will burn away my eyes; scour away my flesh; pound my bones to dust; and curse to death my ten thousand young.'"

"I swore that; granted."

"How do you explain this betrayal, then?"

"When the moment of decision came, I could find no brands with which to burn away my eyes; no stones to scour away my flesh; and no hammers to pound my bones to dust. Sadly, for all my noble and self-sacrificing intentions, I could not fulfill the oath that I had sworn. Now that I have already broken the pact, it is too late."

"And your young?"

"I cursed them to a dread and terrible death. Happily, my curses are not efficacious."

— from *On Making Pacts with the Odonata*,
by Nadyezhda Chesnokov

*The elephants shook; the plate
wobbled beneath the world;
and we thousands of us top-
pled screaming into the void.*

*Our gods offered no sym-
pathy; "it was thy choice," they
said, "to live upon a world
precariously balanced on a
turtle's back. For life is holy,
but its choices mean, and it
may hold no other to ac-
count."*

*We took our petitions of out-
rage, ghostly, to the one who
toppled us; but his staring
eyes gave us only blank dis-
dain.*

*"I was under a turtle," he
said. "Thus, I jumped. To pal-
pate a turtle's stomach with
my head, unsettling its bal-
ance: such is my pact with
Mario, who is also named
Contention, and who dwells
between the stars."*

— from *Peculiar Devotions*,
by Emily Chen

their pacts, they can dominate those things that would otherwise cooperate with them; earn cooperation from things that would normally speak to them; and demand civility from creatures that would otherwise tear them limb from limb. Characters who have high High Summoning scores may choose to scale back on their pacts and obligations, choosing their commitments wisely; alternately, they may have Miracle Point-supported dealings with creatures that lesser summoners dare not call forth.

Creatures of the Beyond

Powers have both arcane and scholastic methods for learning the truths of the Lands Beyond Creation. Practitioners of High Summoning conjure viewing ports into the Beyond, study strange divinatory arts, and summon forth peculiar creatures for little more reason than to ask them of the truths of the world outside existence. In addition, the libraries of Creation have much information on the things beyond the Weirding Wall. Through careful analysis and study one can often apply this dated knowledge in the modern day.

Through their research and their efforts, a Power can bind (High Summoning Level + 1) allies to them. If appropriate, the Power can treat a collection or hive of monsters as a single ally, using a single character sheet to represent them. The initial summoning that makes a creature available takes days, at a minimum, and normally takes place between sessions. It can occur during a session with prearrangement. If necessary, the character dismisses or banishes one of their previous allies into the Beyond. The Student of Summoning (pg. 57) Handicap occasionally leads to the Power losing control of a creature they wished to banish; the exact consequences depend on the monster's personality.

Creatures from Beyond are rarely random collections of points. As a general rule, each should have a clearly defined central quality that makes them appeal to the summoner — e.g., one can travel through the things of Creation as if they were mist; another acts as a kind of living Auctoritas. In addition, these creatures may have a few less important qualities, such as radiant beauty or a tendency to devour shadows. The creature's beneficial qualities should generally follow a theme — much as Excrucians are warriors, or liars, or hidden menaces, or weavers of dark plots and energies,

other creatures from Beyond may be thieves, diplomats, shapes in fire and pain, negative images of the sun or animal life, things of mist or noise, and so forth. Not every combative creature with a spare point has Durant, nor every conjured mount Flight — although both certainly fit certain concepts.

It is the responsibility of the player of a character with High Summoning to define the character sheets for the creatures they summon. Do not take from this that the Nobilis may do the same! It is legitimate and in fact expected to build a creature that differs from your character's expectations — a typical summoner must study and explore at great length to find creatures that closely match their desires, and is frequently surprised, disappointed, or elated by some unexpected aspect of the result. In short, treat the design of your summoned allies as you would the design of your character, Imperator, or Chancel, where being able to play the kinds of situations *you* want outweighs the character's interests and ideas.

When designing creatures with Gifts that affect miraculous entities or energies, players should observe the same rules applicable to the creation of Excrucian Gifts — reasonable countermeasures should exist, none of the Gifts should allow an "instant kill" of a miraculous entity, and they should fit the entity's general theme. If the HG feels a Gift crosses these boundaries, they should negotiate with the player, finding a way to satisfy the Gift's general purpose without breaking the game — normally by imposing a Limit on its use or by making the creature reluctant to use that Gift efficiently. If the player has the Imperfect Knowledge Handicap (pg. 56), allowing the HG to modify the final character sheet, this negotiation should still take place beforehand.

"Have you no love for imagination?" asked the Lady Vijaya.

"I have no love for anything that does not exist," answered Lord Kurian. "The things not found in this world resent me for living in it. They would kill me, I think, and savor the deed, were not their fangs and claws and blades as chimerical as they."

—from *The Divine Hunt*,
by Michael Kay

Build Points

The miracle level used to summon the creature determines its rules templates (ppg. 71-90) and its base character point value. In addition to the base character points, a High Summoner receives a number of “floating” character points based on their High Summoning score:

The character can use these points to augment their summoned allies, dividing them among the creatures’ character sheets. However, they must actually bind a new ally to define a *new* character sheet. For example, a character with High Summoning 3 has four allies and 25 floating character points; they can give one ally 5 of these points and two other allies 10 each. If the character dismisses both of the allies with 10 floating character points, they could then summon one ally with 20 floating character points and another with none. Once allocated, these points are treated just like a creature’s base character points.

A High Summoner does not need to use all their floating character points, or even all of the base character points for the creatures they call forth. Almost all High Summoners take the Limit Imperfect Knowledge (pg. 56), allowing the HG to alter the final result; normally, the HG adds Handicaps or slightly adjusts point totals to an extent determined by the Limit.

*Within the limits of our comprehension,
we each determine our own fate –
Go gladly to it, rather,
whether we make ourselves have wings
Or feed ourselves to rabid dogs.*

*It is the inexorable blessedness of the universe
Operating beyond our comprehension
And clashing terribly with the
smallness of our desires
That poses the great threat
To our chosen outcome.*

— repeated ad infinitum in
the Thought-Record of Hannary James

High Summoning Score	Floating Character Points
0 (Severed Sage)	0
1 (Companion to Monsters)	5
2 (Lady of the Beyond)	15
3 (Peer of the Most Distant Realm)	25
4 (Sovereign Beyond)	35
5 (Empress Beyond)	45

Coercion

Powers may call upon their allies in many ways, drawing on the power of their pacts.

First, they can summon or dismiss them — once an ally is bound to them, summoning them into Creation or banishing them from it is a ritual that takes only a few hours. Normally, this is a precursor to calling upon the monster's abilities. Often, a Power does not dismiss certain allies at all — if the creature is under the Power's thumb, or finds Creation congenial, they may simply remain in the Chancel or in the Power's company. A few Powers claim uncontrollable monsters as their allies; they summon the creature into an enemy's Chancel and let it ravage while they make their escape. Later, they banish it from afar.

A second use for one's pacts is forcing civility from a creature. Many monsters resent their summoners. A few dislike Creation in general. Some would simply like the taste of Noble flesh. A Power can call upon their pacts and force the creature to converse with them politely, or hold back from actions obviously against the Power's interests. General good manners last one scene; specific prohibitions last one story. Once establishing civility, the Power may be able to persuade the creature to take positive actions through normal conversational interaction.

Third, the Power can demand a monster's grudging cooperation on some defined task. This can be every bit as good as its full cooperation or obedience in some cases — if you order a peregrine bear (pg. 99) to break down a door, there's not much leeway for interpretation. On the other hand, if one obtains the grudging cooperation of an ally in attempting to assassinate an enemy, scout out a territory, or feed a city, it will be under no obligation to pursue the most efficient, subtle, cunning, or self-sacrificing approach.

Fourth, with more effort, the Power can earn a creature's full and willing cooperation in some defined task. Here it truly earns the name ally — but, like any ally, it keeps its own interests in mind as well as the Power's. Thus, it is helpful but not self-sacrificing, and it acts according to its own personality. A Charitable Being (pg. 94) may search out a gift that the Power will find useful for their task, but it will experience its characteristic fury if the Power rejects its gift or demands some specific offering.

Fifth, in the ultimate exercise of the High Summoner's art, the Power can command a creature outright. It cannot disobey, though it may react unfavorably to the command at a later date. The Power can issue a complex command, but only a single command.

The creature poured towards me like an emerald torrent, great sheets of it raining from ceiling to floor without ever touching either, skating sideways as if blown by the wind. Needles fell like fangs at the foremost edge. It hated me, but we were bound together. Our pact was a thousand threads of fate and promise stretching from its soul to mine and back again, and I decided that it did not permit an attack upon my person at that time.

I tugged on a thread. Something flinched amidst the tumbling green; it might have been a face. That particular element of our arcane pact had worked three days ago — had not only held it back but bent it to my will. But in three days, the creature had changed; I had changed; the laws that bound it in its distant home had changed. That thread was not enough. I pulled another.

Sweat was pouring down my face and the cascade of shining teeth was no more than an inch from my flesh when I found the right thread to pull. Snarling, it stopped, and then retreated, and then settled against a wall. Casually, as if it had not turned on me moments ago, it spoke liquid crystal words. "Good afternoon, Salieva. Are you well?"

Tomorrow, I will not have the strength to hold it back; but tomorrow, perhaps, it will have no hate for me. The Reflection of Summer is a pleasant companion, when we are friends.

— from the Thought-Record of Salieva Kuchmuradov

Adharmic Subversion

Reasoning that our art would be best served with a golden ratio of 2, we summoned forth the Mimique from a peculiar warped space. They were symmetric on 2 phi, giving them an appealingly squashed look regardless of the direction of one's gaze; while we, to them, were bilateral marvels, the envy of their Michelangelos. The partnership did not prove fruitful; when we spent too long in their company our counting numbers became suspect to ourselves.

— from *Principles of Architectural Design*,
by Kong Jian Nuan

The miracle level used determines the Power's degree of command over their ally. When used to summon a creature or bind it as an ally, a low enough miracle level can either give the monster limited control over the Power or summon it in a condition of enmity; the High Summoner chooses which one. If the monster gains limited control over the Power during a binding, it lasts for the duration of their alliance. If the monster gains control during a summoning, it lasts until the creature voluntarily returns to the Lands Beyond Creation. (That is, a nonconsensual banishing does not break this service.) In a desperate situation — as where a creature offers salvation to the Power on the condition of service — the Power can treat a level 0 miracle as something lower.

Requirement	Level of Control
Miracle Level $\geq$ Difficulty + 8	Command
Miracle Level $\geq$ Difficulty + 4	Full Cooperation
Miracle Level $\geq$ Difficulty + 2	Grudging Cooperation
Miracle Level = Difficulty + 1	Civility
Miracle Level = Difficulty	Summoning, Binding, or Banishing as an Ally
Criterion (Negative Adjustment)	Level of Control
Miracle Level = Difficulty - 1	The creature can force civility from the Power, or it actively dislikes them.
Miracle Level $\leq$ Difficulty - 2	The creature can force grudging cooperation from the Power, or it loathes them.
Miracle Level $\leq$ Difficulty - 4	The creature can force cooperation from the Power, or it hates them and will take any opportunity to do them harm.
Miracle Level $\leq$ Difficulty - 8	The creature can force obedience from the Power.

Dynamic Coercion

The system above is designed for HG-run creatures. However, in **Dynamic Nobilis**, the HGs probably have only occasional opportunities to play a character's otherworldly allies. The rest of the time, each ally manifests as an object card, created in downtime by an HG after consultation with the player. It is bound the next session, when summoned for the first time, with an appropriate expenditure of Miracle Points. Characters can use miracles either to control a summoned creature or break another's control over such a monster.

Unless an HG decides otherwise, a character's allies begin each session in the Lands Beyond Creation. Summoning the creature uses a High Summoning miracle, with the difficulty described under **High Summoning Miracles**, below. This automatically gives the character control over their ally's actions whenever they are in the same region. In addition, the character can give their ally passive duties in another region — that is, duties not requiring the accomplishment of a proactive task while the character is away. Note that other players can manipulate allies left behind in other regions in the same fashion they can manipulate any other object card.

When bringing an ally into a new region, players should make it clear that a strange monster from beyond Creation travels with their character. The HGs can define a costuming shorthand for this, such as a stuffed or beanbag animal prop in a loosely appropriate shape. Characters can banish their ally temporarily into the Lands Beyond Creation, as in tabletop **Nobilis**; if they do so, players should put away the prop but keep the object card handy in case they summon the ally again later in the session.

When someone tries to break a character's control over a summoned ally, or the character then tries to reassert control, it begins a contest. One can break a character's control in two ways: persuasion and dissuasion. To persuade, one uses an Aspect or High Summoning miracle to gently convince a summoned monster to violate the terms of its pacts. To dissuade, one makes service to the character uncomfortable. Specifically, if the creature is hurt or discomfited as a direct consequence of following the character's orders, the miracle that hurts or discomfits them automatically contests the character's control. Reasserting control always uses a High Summoning miracle.

The degrees of success and failure on miracles to summon allies, or reassert control, have the effects below. Note that any level of control over an object card means that the summoner's player chooses the creature's actions — even if the creature technically obeys only “reluctantly”. However, an object card may note specific abilities only usable with a given level of control — for example, a Charitable Being's Blessing (pg. 96) may normally yield “an effect determined by an HG or a minor effect determined by region consensus”, but has its full flexibility when the character achieves a Triumph on the summoning miracle and the Being obeys them completely.

When I looked into his eyes, I saw the radiance of God. I could not refuse him, for all that his requests were vile. I knew that there was a higher purpose to them. I knew that it was correct to serve him. God willed it so, and the angels sang alleluias to that will, and the universe shivered with the rightness of it.

— from the statement of
Father Sebastian Capobianco,
03/25/00

Requirement (Dynamic Nobilis)	Level of Control
TRIUMPH	Ally obeys character completely.
A deep success.	Ally obeys character willingly.
A hard success.	Ally obeys character pretty well.
A normal success.	Ally obeys character reluctantly. HG may subvert orders.
A simple success.	Ally obeys character, if an object card. HG-run allies are forced to behave civilly, but need not obey.
Criterion (Negative Adjustment)	Level of Control
A normal failure.	Creature ceases to obey. Unless run by an HG, it still accompanies the character.
A hard failure.	Creature becomes hostile. If the creature is in object card form, the player of the rival who initiated the contest controls it through a short confrontation, after which it sulkily stops the fight but ceases to obey. During this contest, the rival players should try to stay in the same region or move together. The conflict ends if the character reasserts control.
A deep failure.	Creature becomes wild. If the creature is in object card form, the player of the rival who initiated the contest controls it through a short confrontation. The rival's player then hands the monster card to an HG, who uses it to wreak judicious havoc. The conflict and/or havoc end if the character reasserts control.
MISERY	Creature defects. The creature obeys the rival who initiated the contest willingly until the end of the session or until the character reasserts control.

If an HG is actively playing the monster, they should interpret the Dynamic Nobilis coercion rules loosely. Sometimes, a creature is harder to control than others!

Note that this system has different IC consequences than the tabletop system. Summoned allies are more generally cooperative, easier to turn against the character, and less developed as characters in their own right. Players transitioning from a tabletop game to a Dynamic game, or vice versa, should expect a different feel for this exclusive Attribute.

Once upon a time, in a place outside this world, a thing that was one became two, and its paths diverged.

In the darkness of the void, Textrix forged the spear Morgante, and her name was also Solitude. Textrix carried her into Creation and slew three angels with her; then he came upon an Imperator of the Wild and thrust the spear into its side. There Morgante stayed, and for all his efforts, Textrix could not wrest her free.

"You are dead," complained Textrix. "Let go of my spear."

"I am," agreed the Wild Magister, but in distraction, for its attention lay not on Textrix but on Morgante. A moment passed. A light woke to brilliance in its eyes, and it said, "Why, I have known you before."

— from *Legends of the Nobilis*,
by Luc Ginneis

मात्रै
do not be afraid

Unpleased and unhumbled by Death's irregular timing, and by the difficulties it posed for them in making final resolution to their affairs, the Princes of the Lorencete took action. They sought first to legislate Death out of their empire; this faced strong opposition in the Senate. Executions were threatened; Death refused to cooperate; and the Princes retreated from the fray. Their laboratories of law brewed up a new proposal: let Death pay taxes on the worth of those it seizes, scaling taxes, rising rapidly with the promptness of the claim. Public protests ensued, to the bafflement of the Princes: throngs marched in the street, shouts drowned out public business, and a harried government backed down. Feeling they had exhausted all good options, and no longer confident in the power of their governance, the Princes turned to a loophole in the universal law. A person's ghost, by divine decree, could remain in the world from the beginning of their funeral to its end; now the Princes took up the employment of necromancers and mediums and required that a Prince's funeral continue until its celebrants dropped dead. This took a minimum of seven days, and often years, during which time a dead Prince communicated through his oracles. This gave each thus an ample opportunity to make a bookend to their lives.

-- from *The One by the Cairn*,
by Emily Chen

Examples

Superstes Annabelle Zupay lives in a Chancel with the High Summoning Chancel property. She can therefore use SMPs for High Summoning miracles and can develop the High Summoning exclusive Attribute at will. She does so, claiming a rating of High Summoning 0. Her player elects to take the standard Limits Imperfect Command, Imperfect Knowledge, and Student of Summoning at the minimum levels. This gives her 3 MPs, which she assigns to her Spirit, raising her total SMPs to 8. She also decides that her ally requires sacrifices of her terrene essence, and that this occasionally makes her behavior erratic and limits her ability to understand the suffering of others; this is a Restriction that could give her an additional SMP when it makes her life difficult.

Annabelle's player follows a simple design pattern for the one ally Annabelle is allowed. Skim this process for a sense of how High Summoning works, and optionally re-read the details when you've explored the relevant miracles on ppg. 51-54, the Superior Attributes rules on pg. 69, and the templates on ppg. 71-92.

Define Basic Concept. Annabelle's player envisions the ally as an acidic mist that eats away at corruption or beauty — even in miraculous things — rather than material objects. She doesn't expand on this concept just yet.

Choose Base Miracle Level. She decides to use a base miracle level of 2. This summons a "horror", or, more specifically, a member of the order *Hymenoptera*. It will have 15 character points and the templates **External** and **Animal**.

Purchase Primary Abilities. The acidity becomes a Gift of major destruction with a penetration of 2, for a total cost of 12 points. Since the creature is a mist, she also buys it Flight.

Refine Concept. She can refine the concept at any point, of course. Here, she adds a bit of personality to the creature by making it a scholar and ethicist.

Purchase Additional Abilities. She can, again, purchase additional abilities at any point. Here, she buys Superior Scholarship 2.

Define Handicaps. Creatures without miraculous Attributes cannot benefit from their Handicaps, but usually have them anyway. She sticks with a standard set: Disabled, Revelatory Trait, and Summonable — since it's a mist with no hands that she can call to her presence at will. She doesn't specify its Code; since the creature's core philosophy isn't a big part of its concept, she's content to leave this aspect of characterization to the HG.

Refine Concept. She refines the concept again, giving the creature its name. It is the Lamp Image, a being that considers itself not so much a thing in itself but rather the radiance cast by a greater entity onto the surface of its alien home.

HG Handoff. Since Annabelle has Imperfect Knowledge, the HG gets to make some small changes to the final product. The HG might decide that the Lamp Image can't consume the purest forms of beauty and corruption. Or they might secretly cast the creature's academic qualifications into doubt by replacing Superior Scholarship with Superior Flim-Flam Artistry. Annabelle's player doesn't know.

Annabelle must use a level 2 miracle to bind the Lamp Image. This costs her 2 SMPs, and gives the creature its introduction to the game. From that point forward, she can summon it or banish it as a level 2 hard miracle. It's normally civil, but one never knows what will set off one of these Beyond creatures — for a level 3 deep miracle she can force it to play nice. She can force its grudging cooperation with a level 4 deep miracle, or its full cooperation with a level 6 Word of Command. Alternately, she can try to talk it into helping like any normal NPC. If it's like the creatures of Creation, the more often she forces it into cooperation, the less cooperative it'll be the rest of the time — even though she's really only calling upon a bargain it agreed to.

Over time, Annabelle raises her High Summoning score to 3. This allows her to have a total of four allies of various sorts from the Lands Beyond Creation. She's used all her floating points on a new ally each time she could summon one, so her second ally has 5 floating points and her third and fourth have 10 each. She decides she's unhappy with her roster of associates, however, and banishes all but the Lamp Image so she can choose three more.

With High Summoning 3, Annabelle can summon, banish, or demand civility from the Lamp Image as a simple miracle of level 2, 2, or 3. She can force grudging cooperation from the Lamp Image — if ever necessary — with a level 4 normal miracle, and get its full and willing cooperation with a level 6 deep miracle. With a level 10 Word of Command, she can give it

Devour Beauty and Corruption

The Lamp Image's ability to eat through beauty and corruption is purchased as a Major Destruction of Beauty and Corruption, as follows:

Miracle Level	Invocation	Range	Utility	Common?	Cost
8+2 Penetration (Domain)	Simple	Local	One Trick	No	
10 CPs	-1	-1	-3	+1	6*2=12 CPs

absolute and unquestionable orders, although it'll probably end any friendship they've built up.

Annabelle's player decides to gamble a little and binds a creature with base miracle level 5 — a peregrine bear, of the family *Lepidoptera hesperiidae ursidae* (pg. 99), with 19 floating character points. Summoning it, forcing its grudging cooperation, and banishing it again will use up her 8 SMPs for a story, in miracles with respective level 5, 7, and 5. Still, she expects it to be worth it sometimes — and besides, they could always wind up hitting it off. This leaves her with two allies and 6 floating points.

Annabelle wants at least one ally she can get free cooperation from, which means a creature with base miracle level 1 — a monster, based on the **Animal** template, with 10 character points. She decides on something straightforward and handy: a bodyguard from Beyond. Her player hypothesizes that somewhere in the Lands Beyond Creation are creatures that are defenders of existences the same way the Excrucians are absorbers or destroyers of them. One caste of these creatures is the personal bodyguard, who stand by the representatives of the worlds they defend. (Just as the Excrucians may have benign motivations, such defenders may have malevolent ones — but the player isn't worrying about that right now.) Her bodyguard is a relative wimp, Annabelle's player admits, but perhaps it would have more power in another Age or situation. She assigns it Superior Awareness 3, Superior Combat 3, and Durant; after some thought, she completes its sheet with Invisibility and Perfect Timing, so it can appear out of nowhere to defend her at the perfect moment. She can spend some floating points here; after some thought, she decides that she wants Superior Appearance 1 and Superior Dress Sense 1 — one can't make out her bodyguard's face clearly, but he's an adjunct likely to increase rather than decrease her apparent cool. She names her bodyguard Mzpopiasaiel, or Sal, after a classical angel of wrath. Finally, she gives Sal the Handicap Respectful, indicating that he will not directly

*I come across a man trying to kill
himself with a knife; but the blade
misses, over and over again, and
each time lodges in another person's
heart.*

"Why are you doing this?" I ask.

*"If I die," he explains, "I become a
mighty Yacarca, a stellar oracle and
diviner by fire."*

"It does not seem to be working."

He looks slightly crestfallen.

"Naturally not," he says sadly.

*"There is no such thing as a Yacar-
ca."*

— from *Sonnet and the Sea*,
by Alex Dec

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harm any Noble, and expresses the hope that the HG will consider this drawback enough and not meddle with Sal's definition. Annabelle can summon, banish, demand civility from, or force grudging cooperation from Sal with simple miracles (level 1, 1, 2, and 3, respectively); with a hard level 5 miracle, she can earn his willing cooperation in some task, such as protecting her for a story; it would require a level 9 Word of Command to demand absolute obedience of him.

Finally, Annabelle's player decides to build a creature with base miracle level 3. It will obey the **Animal**, **External**, and **Inheritor** templates, with a total of 15 character points. She decides to go ahead and use her remaining floating points on this ally, bringing her up to 19 character points to spend. (This means that if she decides to replace Sal and only Sal, the replacement can have at most 2 floating points; similarly, if she replaces just the Lamp Image, the replacement cannot have floating points, and if she replaces the Peregrine Bear and keeps the other three, she is limited to 19 floating points. Otherwise, there's no drawback.) The player wants to experiment with a hive of creatures, and also wants something with fairly general applicability. She settles on a small army of great long legged scissor men. The shears these tall tailors carry can cut away at a mortal or spirit's limbs or life; the wonder of these creatures is that they can turn their scissors inside out to restore the lives, limbs, or health of those they have severed. The HG allows this, ruling that those the scissor men kill do not move on to a proper afterlife until the relevant scissor man either leaves Creation or restores them to life.

The player's first duty is to ensure that she doesn't get more use out of her small army than she would out of a single creature. From a mechanical perspective, she buys her legion of scissor men as a single monster. This normally means that they can't wander far from one another — at least, not when cooperating with her — and that their miraculous and mundane abil-

Horde

The Horde Gift (described further in *A Peculiar Compendium of Gifts*) treats the character sheet as a kind of totemic miraculous force passed around automatically between members of the horde. This is purchased as a Lesser Change of Location and allows one member at a time to take a miraculous action. Mundane abilities such as Superior Attributes are divided among the members using the ability *at any given time*, giving individual ninjas and ninja hordes a rough parity.

Miracle Level	Invocation	Range	Utility	Common?	Cost
6 (Domain)	Automatic	Self-Only	One Trick	No	
6 CPs	+1	-3	-3	+1	2 CPs

ities are actually the abilities of the army working as a whole. However, she takes the Gift Horde, for 2 points; this gives individual scissor men access to the full power of their character sheet, as long as only one scissor man takes a miraculous action at a time. The Gift to restore to life the things they kill is a Major Creation of, essentially, anything — since they can kill and restore spirits as well as people — and costs 12 points. She buys them Superior Lethality 2 — one level for their terrifying skill, and one level for shears that can easily slice through bone. The remaining three points she spends on one level of Spirit.

Annabelle can summon, bind, or dispel her army of scissor men as a simple level 3 miracle. She can force civility from the scissor men with a normal level 4 miracle, and earn their grudging cooperation with a level 5 hard miracle. With a level 7 deep miracle, she can earn their full cooperation. If she issues a Word of Command, a level 11 miracle can make an absolute demand to the legion of scissor men she has called forth.

At this point, Annabelle feels an urge for more High Summoning Miracle Points, and takes several additional Restrictions. To satisfy the peregrine bear, who often finds miracles distasteful, she accepts the Subtle Restriction. To keep her pacts with the scissor men, she limits her wardrobe to a pair of gowns they made for her (a Restriction giving 1 MP when the impracticality or incongruity of this outfit causes a meaningful problem) and further accepts the Health-Linked Restriction with regards to them.

Unscissoring

The scissor men can restore limbs they cut off, heal wounds they have issued, and return those they have killed to life. This includes Powers, but the Gift must penetrate their Auctoritas. This is purchased as a Major Creation of any Estate, as follows:

Miracle Level	Invocation	Range	Utility	Common?	Cost
7+1 Penetration (Domain)	Simple	One Person	Limited	<i>No</i>	
8 CPs	-1	-2	-2	+1	4*3=12 CPs

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High Summoning Miracles

Level 0: Animal

Level 0 High Summoning miracles allow the character to summon or dominate the *Phasmida* — the “animals” of the Lands Beyond Creation. If these creatures are intelligent, their minds do not accompany them through the Weirding Wall — they act on instinct with the dimmest perception of the world around them. These creatures observe the **Animal** template (see pg. 75) and have a base of 10 character points.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the difficulty to summon, bind, banish, or assert control over an animal is 0. Such creatures are easily mastered — and easily turned against their masters. The HG should reserve some of their abilities for a deep success or Triumph on the miracle that controls them — unless tightly controlled, they simply aren’t smart enough to use their abilities optimally.

In my path, wolves struggled with a moose. I kept walking, and the wolves disengaged and drew back. One by one, they lay down and lowered their heads. The moose continued to stomp its feet and toss its horns; I stopped and regarded it with disapproval.

“You are impolite,” I told it.

It ignored me, so I rendered it to ash. Its bones revealed what I had already guessed: it may have been an ordinary moose, but the thing within its brain had been no creature of Earth.

—from *The Book of Silence*,
by Melanie Brown

Level 1: Monster

Level 1 High Summoning miracles allow the character to summon, dominate, or make pacts with the *Collembola* and *Dermaptora* — creatures of some small note in the Lands Beyond Creation, who lose much of their power when summoned into the world. These creatures also observe the **Animal** template and have 10 character points, but also have the intelligence to use their Gifts and Superior Attributes effectively.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the difficulty to summon, bind, banish, or assert control over a monster is 1. Usually, all the monster’s abilities are available for use.

“This is ultimately to your benefit,” it said. Its claws and teeth were dark with the blood of its last victim. “You cannot see the truth of this. I understand that. But I ask you to trust me.”

Hysteria tinged her reply. “How?”

“I will tear you to shreds either way,” it said. “If you trust me, you shall feel better about it.”

For a long, dizzy moment, she considered it. Then she shrugged, and offered the creature her hand.

—from the Entertainment
Archive of Baronet Dulkan

Level 2: Horror

Level 2 High Summoning miracles allow the character to summon, dominate, or make pacts with the *Diplura* and the *Hymenoptera*. The abilities of the *Diplura* translate into Creation as miraculous powers; they observe the **Inheritor** template (pg. 76). The *Hymenoptera*, conversely, observe the **External** (pg. 78) and **Animal** templates — they have peculiar abilities that defy the order of Creation, but no innate miraculous nature. The *Hymenoptera* family is particularly popular with High Summoners, and hundreds of species have been categorized. These creatures have a base of 15 character points.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the difficulty to summon, bind, banish, or assert control over a horror is 2. If the creature is reluctant to perform certain activities, it manifests as a requirement for a higher level of success; the HG can use this technique as an alternative to a Limit for abilities that risk game balance.

Reality is fundamentally social; prior to the intervention of culture we exist in an undifferentiated welkin of sensation from which monsters, gods, and motivational forces arise. Whence, then, society? Those who have sliced open its belly and crawled out report, "It is no different: a transient god that swum up to devour us — an aspect of the blasphemous Athop-Helm."

— from the foreword to *Hero Myths*,
edited by Emily Chen

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Level 3: External Inheritor

Level 3 High Summoning miracles allow the character to summon, dominate, or make pacts with the *Orthoptera* and *Mantodea* — powerful monsters whose abilities span the range from the miraculous to the peculiar. They observe the **Inheritor**, **External**, and **Animal** templates all; their key abilities can affect miraculous things and miraculous energy, but they are themselves as immune to direct miracles as the *Nobilis*. These creatures have a base of 15 character points.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the difficulty to summon, bind, banish, or assert control over an external inheritor is 3. If the creature is reluctant to perform certain activities, it manifests as a requirement for a higher level of success.

The first miracle that touched my life was a holy thing. I was trapped in a burning building. A girl walked through the fire and said, "I owe the world seventy-three lives, in penance." She took me from that place, unharmed, and said, "Seventy-two." Then she vanished into the crowd. I do not know what her words meant, but I could feel that she was sacred.

The second miracle that touched my life had no place in this world. I was very sick, and a thing made of sunset colors came into my room. "I am hungry," it said, and I could feel it ripping the sickness from me and draining it into the flaring orange and red. I felt so much better. Perhaps it even saved my life. But I knew this was a thing that should not have happened, accomplished by a thing that should not have been. I have sought to make myself ill again, but not even the coldest rain can return pneumonia to my lungs.

— from a speech
by Kalliroe Calmes,
3/25/00

Level 4: Noble

Level 4 High Summoning miracles allow the character to summon, dominate, or make pacts with the *Odonata* — creatures on the level of the *Nobilis*, possibly as a result of power lost or gained in their entrance to Creation. The *Odonata* observe the **Noble** and **Animal** templates (see ppg. 74, 86) and have a base of 20 character points.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the difficulty to summon, bind, banish, or assert control over a Noble-equivalent creature from the Lands Beyond Creation is 4. If the creature is reluctant to perform certain activities, it manifests as a requirement for a higher level of success. (However, the *Odonata*, who are in some sense a Noble's peers, are often more accommodating than both lesser and greater creatures.)

There was a woman whom Martein Magnússon could only see when drunk, for she came from beyond the boundaries of the world. Drunk he met her, drunk he loved her, and drunk he married her. The doctors told him that his liver was failing and his drink would be his death; so drunk he died for her, and she took his spirit away.

— from *Doorknobs*,
by Emily Chen

माझे
do not be afraid

Level 5: Uearthly Noble

Level 5 High Summoning miracles allow the character to summon, dominate, or make pacts with the *Lepidoptera* — monsters whose raw power equals that of the *Nobilis*, yet who may command Gifts that affect miraculous creatures and energy directly. These creatures observe the **Noble** and **Uearthly** templates (see ppg. 86, 90) and have a base of 20 character points.

Playing it Out: In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the difficulty to summon, bind, banish, or assert control over an Uearthly Noble is 5. If the creature is reluctant to perform certain activities, it manifests as a requirement for a higher level of success.

Seven knights in sapphire and seven queens in jade stand outside the world. When a soul strays beyond the walls of existence, they catch it and make it round; and pass it spinning one to the other; and the air where there is no air hums with the interwoven pattern of the souls, and the shouts where there are no sounds come from the players of this game.

— from *Fasciculus Temporum*,
by Ossian Walthew

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Imperfect Command

This Handicap expresses the notion that the character commands their allies not through endogenous authority but rather through a set of binding agreements and social relationships. They must work and make sacrifices to maintain their power, and the effort this will require is not necessarily predictable.

Imperfect Command may be taken either as a Limit or as a Restriction.

If Imperfect Command is a Restriction, then the HG will occasionally put some obstacle in the way of the character properly fulfilling an established pact, or, alternately, declare a new obligation on which some entity now insists. Here it's common to focus on the imperfect medium of language through which the character's pacts operate — solecisms and barbarisms in the text of the character's agreements give rise to afflictions, obstacles, and unfortunate expectations. It earns the character 1-2 MP every time they must go out of their way to fulfill or renegotiate their pacts.

If Imperfect Command is a Limit, then the character's pacts are inherently ambiguous or difficult to fulfill. Here it's more common to focus on the character's enmeshment with the affairs of the Lands Beyond Creation. The player decides whether they'd rather have established duties that are always difficult or frequent, unexpected requests requiring labor to fulfill. In either case, this gives rise to scenes or subplots of trouble on a regular basis.

1 MP Limit: the character's pacts bring them a scene or two of trouble every now and again.

2 MP Limit: the character is thoroughly caught up in the affairs of the Beyond. In a typical story, they will have some Summoning-related task to perform that requires a scene or two of effort to resolve.

3 MP Limit: the character must spend substantial effort in every story to fulfill the terms of their pacts.

5 MP Limit: the character has unleashed forces into their life that they cannot control and that seem likely to devour them. In a long-term game this Handicap should not endure more than two or three stories — after that, the character should either die/transcend or resolve enough of their current crisis that the 1-3 point level is more appropriate.

No sooner had I consented to wearing human form than these creatures began their chorus of demands. I realized — with dawning horror — that the shape was not enough; also, these perverse entities expected I wear clothes on all occasions, inhale the terrible excesses of their smoke, and eat the transubstantiated flesh of their once-embodied god.

"It is impossible," I told them. "What if I am fighting with a wolf of nakedness? Or need to use my unforgiven sins to purchase the amenities of Hell?"

They looked blankly at the reasonableness of my explanations; they gaped as I explained the stringencies of my daily life; they were adamant and troublesome, in those days, in the Garden of Modern Men.

*—from *Forgotten of Our Love*,
by Madeline Bacall*

Imperfect Knowledge

The character's knowledge of the Lands Beyond Creation, however comprehensive, is not exhaustive. Thus there are details of the creatures that they summon that they will not know. As a general rule, the changes the HG makes do not affect the number of floating points the character has available — although the HG can bend this rule if subtracting or adding large numbers of points.

1 point Limit: the player can expect the HG to adjust the point totals, Gifts, and Handicaps for summoned creatures in small ways — though not enough to dramatically alter the outcome.

2 point Limit: the player can expect the HG to adjust the point totals, Gifts, and Handicaps for summoned creatures to fit whatever inspiration strikes. Occasionally creatures will differ dramatically from the player's design.

3 point Limit: Imperfect Knowledge transforms High Summoning into a blunt instrument: the character can use it within broad outlines to create, destroy, and preserve the targets of their desire but must invest substantial time and micro-management to accomplish specific tasks. The HG adjusts the details of the summoned creatures during play, and they need not remain consistent.

5 point Limit: Imperfect Knowledge reduces High Summoning to a catalyst for drastic and unpredictable change — the character can bring it into play, but cannot determine how it will play out. The HG uses the character sheets for summoned creatures as a rough guide when improvising, choosing, and changing their abilities, limitations, and motivations during play.

Summoning a perfect foot-high orchestra went quite well until Aholibamah sought a pianist.

"It's because of this newfangled auditioning behind screens," the conductor said, somewhat awkwardly.

"Is it, then."

— from *The Mansion of All Strange Things*,
by Dolores Bureaugard

Student of Summoning

Because the character practices High Summoning, trouble finds its way into their life.

This Handicap functions much as Imperfect Command does, save that where Imperfect Command is cast in the language of obligation, Student of Summoning is put in terms of disaster. The character's work is experimental, and leaves gaps through which alien epiphenomena may impinge upon their lives. This ensures that even their most reliable work is not entirely tame; it is a characteristic feature of this Handicap that characters may fail at a banishment, the creature taking advantage of some lacuna in the pact or some energy released by the character's recent experiments to remain in Creation and behave according to its nature.

Student of Summoning may be taken either as a Limit or as a Restriction.

If Student of Summoning is a Restriction, then the HG will occasionally visit a disaster upon the character. If Imperfect Command is a Limit, then the character may expect such disasters with a certain regularity.

1 MP Limit: the character's experiments bring them a scene or two of trouble every now and again.

2 MP Limit: the character is constantly picking up after High Summoning-related disasters. In a typical story, they will have some Summoning-related problem that requires a scene or two of effort to resolve.

3 MP Limit: the character must spend substantial effort in every story to recover from some new or persistent disaster.

5 MP Limit: the character is constantly unleashing forces into their life that they cannot control and that seem likely to devour them. In a long-term game this Handicap should not endure more than two or three stories — after that, the character should either die/transcend or resolve enough of their characteristic flaws that the 1-3 point level is more appropriate.

Now in his youth, on a sweltering summer day, Devin felt suddenly as gold; his limbs were strong, his thoughts were clear, and his heart was treasure.

He sipped deeply of his lemonade; his spirit shouted in his frame; his dreams were suddenly within his reach.

Then the moment passed away to an ordinary summer.

Events arose. Circumstances transpired. Grievances and hurts ensued. The matter was forgotten.

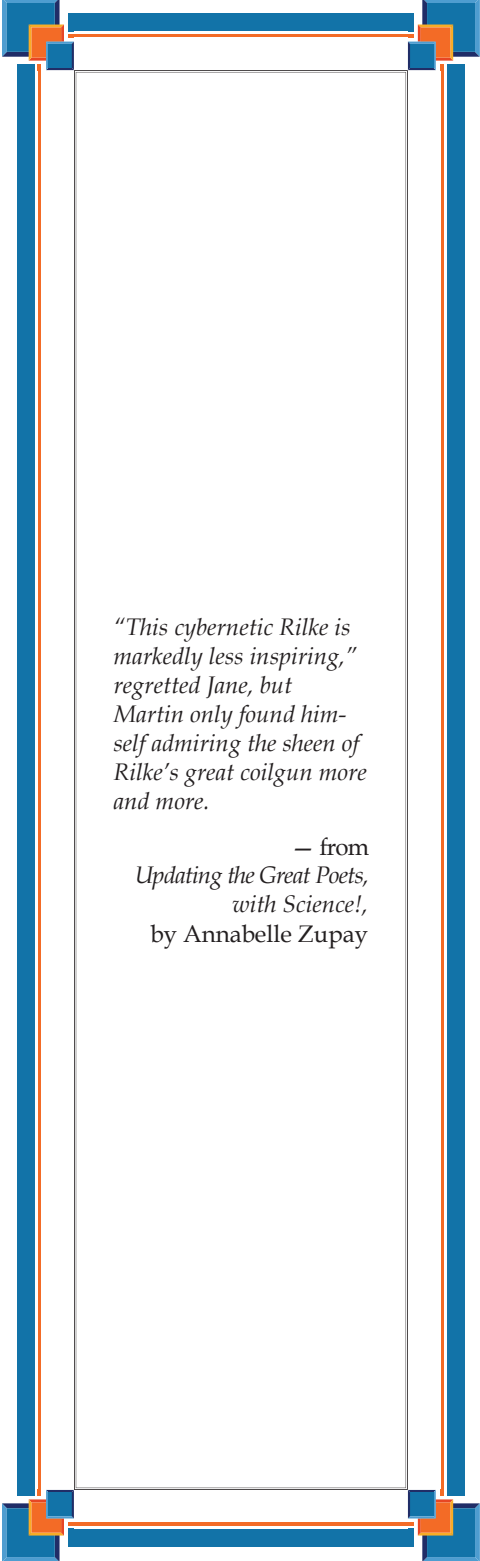
Now, as he stared into the burning heart of the void — into the squirming, howling, flat-eared dog-god emptiness that was an uncreated world — he saw a pattern that reminded him of that gold.

Heedless of the open-throated forces that writhed and bayed within, he reached in his hand; trailed it along the surface to make it separate and recombine like some baleful gelatin; grasped firmly at the tail of a strange anomaly, and pulled it into sight.

There! There, of all things, there and then, in the containment chamber that he'd made, there lay the summer day; therein lay the gold; skulking, lurking, snarling, forbidden on the surface of the void.

"It is the end of days," Devin advised it, for it was, and then he smiled. "I'd wondered where you'd been."

— from *Dreams of Emptiness*,
by Emily Chen



*"This cybernetic Rilke is
markedly less inspiring,"
regretted Jane, but
Martin only found him-
self admiring the sheen of
Rilke's great coilgun more
and more.*

— from
*Updating the Great Poets,
with Science!,
by Annabelle Zupay*

Patronage

The divine intensity of an Emperor's spirit has a profound effect on that Emperor's Powers. A clear-sighted Emperor lends its Powers wisdom; a passionate Emperor, zeal; and an inscrutable Emperor shares some fraction of its mystery. Characters who develop the **Patronage** Attribute learn to do the same — to develop elementally powerful character traits and, through their spiritual connection to others, lend them the benefits of Emperor Properties.

Any character — including mortals, Powers, and Excrucians — can acquire a Patronage score. It requires the assistance of an Emperor, an Excrucian, or a lesser being with a Patronage score. In all cases, the assisting entity must use an Exalted Word, spending 8 SMPs and accepting a wound; looking into the shining white fire and fury of that Word, the character understands the truths of Patronage and acquires a Patronage score of 0. They can then buy additional levels of Patronage for 3 points each, to a maximum of 5 levels.

When the character buys their way to Patronage 1, and with each new level purchased thereafter, they gain the ability to share one Emperor Property with others. This is either a 1-point Property, a negative Property, or a 2-point Property superceding a Property already purchased. (For example, with Patronage 2, the character could share the Mastery Emperor Properties of Scholarly or Polished. The second builds on the first.)

In order to use Patronage, the character must develop the relevant quality in their own spirit — a character without a clear-sighted perspective cannot grant it to others. More, they must develop this quality to a high pitch. Specifically, they must have a Virtue Handicap appropriate to the Property in question, or two such Virtues for a 2-point Property. Normally, although Virtues are free, characters have a limited number and do not develop them in play. Characters who study Patronage, however, learn the arts of creating Virtues in themselves — it is feasible, although in many ways crippling, for a Patron to develop five distinct Virtues. The Virtues chosen can overlap; for example, the Virtue Devoted can reasonably support both the Emperor Properties Passionate and Dim Warding.

To share the developed qualities with another character, a Patron must have a strong spiritual or emotional connection to that person. Strong spiritual connections include family ties, marital ties, Power-Anchor relationships, Power-Bond relationships, and sometimes a Power's relationship with the priestesses and cultists that worship them. For a sufficiently strong emotional relationship, both characters must care deeply about the others' suffering — whether they want to increase it, decrease it, or simply ward it off — and they must think about the other often. Characters implicitly have a strong spiritual connection to themselves.

"It is therefore with the greatest joy," said the Commander, holding his head high, "that I strike your comments from my log, and write instead what I know you would write, if only you had the time to come around — that you die joyfully, knowing that you are but playing pieces in this war. That you loved me. That you do not, as you imagine now, resent my choice — but rather are grateful, at the last, that I have used you well."

— from *Safflower Chronicles*,
by Tamara Vance

If a sufficiently strong connection exists, the character can share any selection of their developed Properties with the victim or beneficiary.

Characters who stop having a Virtue fitting a given Emperor Property can't give it out until they once again develop such a Virtue. Any other characters receiving its benefits or drawbacks lose said benefits or drawbacks in the interim. There is no specific mechanism for changing the Property if the character never intends to develop such a Virtue again; if the player is unhappy with the waste of points, the player and HG should discuss the matter out of character before or instead of any in-character efforts towards change.

The miraculous qualities of the Patronage byway Attribute affect the character's own soul directly. The effects on others derive naturally from being spiritually or empathetically "proximate" to the character in question. (See the discussion of terrene particles on pg. 102 for details on how an emotional connection can bridge two souls.) This is related to the Imperial process of Patronage, but not identical — among other things, Emperors have a spirit so intense they don't need Virtues to offer Emperor Properties.

Sample Virtues for the various Emperor Properties follow. Note that the Dynasty Point, Mystery Cult, and Respect Properties are not recommended for use with Patronage, and that the appropriate Virtues for Granted Gift and Granted Handicap depend greatly on the Gift or Handicap in question.

Hostile Patronage

Characters can receive unwanted Properties from enemies with Patronage. Such unwelcome Properties can always be overcome in the short term with symptomatic solutions — the HG should suspend or reduce the Properties' mechanical effects while the character is "dealing" with the problem in an adequate and reasonable fashion. Thus characters can legitimately use miracles as crutches to overcome Granted Handicaps or to shield themselves against the spiritual connection; or legitimately cut the connection by, e.g., removing their memory of the Patron with a hippocampal knife. But symptomatic solutions such as these have a natural inclination to decay; eventually, they should stop working, and the Power will need to spend more effort or a higher miracle level to keep the Property in check. A longer-term solution is to win some notable victory against either the Property, the spiritual connection, or the Patron; this causes the Property to subside for (most likely) 2-5 stories. The permanent solution is a spiritual cleansing — the Power struggles within themselves to face and expiate the relevant emotions or to transcend the conditions that bring about the spiritual link. This can take part-time work over the course of several stories; Purity 4 miracles can reduce the effort. Alternately, the character can kill their Patron, ending the Patronage instantly.

Empathy

Clear-Sighted draws on the character's ability to assess and understand the things of the world. The Compassionate Virtue reflects the desire to understand; the Rational Virtue reflects acceptance of that understanding; and the Cautious Virtue fits a character who looks to the deeper things of the world rather than accepting the surface. All of these Virtues are appropriate for lending the Clear-Sighted Property.

The **Sympathetic** Property relies on the character's ability to feel the pains and joys of others. The Compassionate Virtue applies here as well. The Self-Controlled and Egocentric Virtues are also appropriate, as characters with iron self-control or absolute certainty of their own superior importance can afford to feel the emotions of others as acutely as desired.

The **Cruel** Property has no meaning when "bestowed" on others. The character can be cruel to their associates without buying up their Patronage.

*"Do you love me?" I asked, when
our time was done.*

*Diamanta leaned her head back to
look at me. "Is that why you think I
come to you?"*

"Why do you, then?"

*She looked down. "I committed a sin
I cannot bear," she said. "This is my
expiation."*

—from the Thought-Record of
Desecration's-Regal Meon

Galeid

Inspirational normally relies on the radiant glory of an Emperor. The Vain or Egocentric Virtues can simulate this glory through a spiritual or emotional connection; the character with such virtues certainly believes in their own glory! The Virtue Faith permits the Power to share their vision of greater things with others, and can therefore also provide this Property.

The **Transcendent** Property builds on Inspirational, imbuing its beneficiaries with the will to overcome even the most impossible odds. The Stubborn Virtue or the Dutiful Virtue, added to one of the Virtues above, can provide this dedication. Alternately, the Reckless Virtue contains a certain willingness to disregard the odds — it can also help lend this Property.

The **Unshining** Property effectively drains its victims' faith in the cause of Creation. For a Power, such Virtues as Fearful, Doubtful, Disloyal, and Hopeless can help provide this Property. Excrucians and their agents, conversely, can lend this Property by way of positive examples, being Vain, being Egocentric, or having Faith in the Excrucian cause.

Today, Oscar offered to "inspire" me with his "hidden glory", through the mechanism of "greater intimacy". I am afraid that I quite needed to draw upon my miraculous abilities to avoid laughing in his face.

— from
the Diary of Clarissa Kilthdigai

Guiding Hand

Prophetic, which lends Powers the benefit of an Emperor's oracular foresight, is not normally appropriate for use with Patronage. With the HG's permission, Virtues associated with foresight — such as Rational, Careful, and perhaps Elegant — can lend this Property.

The **Advising** Property lends its subjects the benefits of an Emperor's common sense. Naturally, Common Sense is the most appropriate Virtue for use with this Property. (Strictly speaking, this Virtue has relatively few drawbacks; but it does restrict character options, and there are certain Chancels and Realms where the sensible have difficulty.)

Like Cruel, the **Demanding** Property has no meaning when "bestowed" on others. The character can make as many demands of others as they like; since the character is not those others' Emperor, they have no obligation to obey.

He lifted the gun and pointed it at the girl; and then there was a shadow behind him, and in that shadow was the Prince of Lies.

"I wouldn't," the Devil warned. "You'll go to Hell."

The man bit his lip. "Why'd you want to stop that?" he asked.

"I am high-minded and noble," answered the Devil, "and, besides, she'll go to Heaven."

— from *The Haunting*,
by Martin Elliott

Incomprehensibility

The **Soul-Twisted** Property normally conceals its beneficiaries' natures through their connection with an incomprehensible Imperator. To achieve a similar effect, the master of Patronage must be equally incomprehensible; such Virtues as Irrational, Chaotic, or Insane help in this endeavor. Characters with the Virtue Liar may be able to give the same benefit, maintaining a constant masquerade of insanity across the emotional and spiritual links.

Players whose characters take the Irrational or some similar Virtue should consult with the Hollyhock God to define the Virtue's limits. The illogic or madness involved should have an underlying pattern, to prevent the character's Virtue from disrupting play. At the same time, the pattern should not suffice to predict both their actions and their thoughts. For example, an Irrational character might think about and justify their actions in an extremely peculiar fashion, but keep their actions themselves within a few degrees of sane. A Chaotic character might be afflicted with random urges, but not continuously. An Insane character should have an incomprehensible internal worldview, to properly yield this Property, but they can manifest that worldview as a standard form of insanity — a constant sense of uncleanness and unworthiness, hyperactivity, ritual compulsions, and so forth. Their internal explanation for this disorder is simply slightly less human than for the mortal mentally ill.

The **Unfathomable** Property builds on this by making the characters blessed by it indescribable. Adding a Virtue such as Sneaky, Liar, or Bland can help with this. (If the character is already using Liar to provide the Soul-Twisted Property, adding Irrational, Chaotic, or Insane would also work.)

The **Straightforward** Property represents an elementally straightforward Patron. This suggests a Virtue like Blunt, Open, or, of course, Straightforward.

*I have no motivations. I am a word;
I am a note in a song; I am a day, a
week, a month, a year. I proceed
from my beginning to my end be-
cause of what I am and not because
of what I do. To speak my true name
is to know how my life will end, how
it began, and what I will do for ev-
ery moment in between. This is not
a curse; this is my freedom.*

—Bhradkaya Kalluri,
Power of the Wild

Integrity

P **rincipled** expresses a resistance to personal corruption and an absolute service to Creation. The Virtues Honorable, Dutiful, and Self-Sacrificing all fit this Property well.

The **Honorable** Property augments this with an acute sense for Excrucian and Diabolic deception. Compassionate, Cautious, and Rational make good Virtues for this Property, for the same reason that they help lend Clear-Sighted. In addition, the Power should have a Virtue appropriate for Principled.

The **Degenerate** Property embodies a susceptibility to Excrucian deception and, more generally, a tendency towards suffering corruption. Virtues like Liar, Sneaky, and Corrupting may help with this, as do the Virtues appropriate for Unshining (above).

"I will give you this Creation," said Seimelkhe, "and all the power there is in it, if you but give me the cup you hold in your hand."

"This does not tempt me," said Galeid.

— from *Legends of the Nobilis*,
by Luc Ginneis

Love

The **Passionate** and **Cold** Properties both reflect — in different ways — the character pouring their own Code into others' souls. Having the Zealous, Devoted, or Dutiful Virtue helps here, as might the Virtue Evangelist.

The **Fervent** Property takes this to a higher pitch. Generally, the character needs two reasonably distinct Virtues that help them share their Code; Zealous and Devoted, or Dutiful and Evangelist, for example. Certain enemies of the Nobilis might share this Property by way of the Virtue Corrupting — the Code they inflict twists their victim.

They bound me to the tree, far from the world, and turned to leave.

*"Wait," I asked them. Then him.
"Wait, Daniel."*

*He stood very still for a moment, my love did, but then he shook his head.
"This is right," he said. "This is the thing that we must do."*

— from *The Wood Nguema*,
and *What Took Place There*,
by K.C. Danine

Mastery

*S*cholarly shares superlative expertise with a given skill. The character with Patronage has to be able to tap into the spiritual essence of that skill, which normally requires a superhuman commitment to that skill. Virtues like Artisan, Dedicated Student of [the Skill], and Stubborn help here. A Virtue directly relevant to the skill (like Vain for Fashion) can also help.

The **Polished** Property requires something slightly more — the character must go beyond even the superlative. This generally requires both a dedication to the skill and something that enhances the character's commitment in general — e.g., Artisan and Zealous, or Dedicated Student and Stubborn. Again, a Virtue directly relevant to the skill (like Cruel for Torture) can replace one of these.

The Virtue required for the **Untalented** Property varies depending on the skill. For example, incompetence with guns can be conveyed via the Virtue Pacifist, and incompetence with cooking can be conveyed through the Virtue Ascetic. Such Virtues as Fearful and Doubtful also work, attacking the ability of the character and their victims through underconfidence.

"I had hoped to change people," she said, "by mastering the arts of beauty. I thought: I will make something so radiant that people, looking upon it, will become different than they were. But this did not happen; I discovered I had been extremely foolish; and so I took up neurosurgery."

"Neurosurgery?"

"Changing people from the outside," she said, "is not what beauty's for."

— from *A Comedy of Spirits*, Act II,
by Keiko Takemori

Warding

*T*he **Dim Warding** Property represents the Patron's fierce desire that the ones they care for suffer no harm. Typical Virtues for this include Devoted, Protector — embodying the character's commitment to the role of guardian, and perhaps Compassionate.

Nobilis who share the **Bright Warding** Property with others rarely live long; the power involved in issuing it eats through their soul. Any two Virtues suitable for Dim Warding suffice, or one of those Virtues plus Generous or Self-Sacrificing.

The **Bright Warning** Property is a banner calling Excrucians to war. Characters can generally share this Property if they have such Virtues as Brave, Fierce, Warlike, or Dutiful.

*If you die, said Adel, I will die;
while you live, I will live. I shall be a
guardian of blood to you.*

— from *Adel*, by K.C. Danine

Examples

Najia Sediki wishes to develop the Patronage byway Attribute. By dint of great personal service, she convinces Ramachandran Denya (a Power with Patronage) to issue an Exalted Word on her behalf. As Ramachandran burns in the pyre of that Word, Najia understands that power in his soul that makes Patronage possible and acquires a Patronage score of 0. She may now buy additional Patronage levels, can develop new Virtues easily, and can teach others to use Patronage with an Exalted Word of her own.

Later, Najia spends 3 character points to buy her way to Patronage 1. Being a level-headed sort, she decides to go with the Rational Virtue and the *Clear-Sighted* Emperor Property. She immediately gives herself the benefit of this Property, along with her mother, her Anchors, and two of her siblings caelestis.

Later yet, she spends another 6 character points to develop Patronage 3. She chooses to take the Honorable Virtue, allowing her to give out the *Principled* Emperor Property. Since she already has Rational, she can also give out the *Honorable* Emperor Property. She gives their benefits to the same characters, except that one of her siblings caelestis, a Power of Hell, requests that she not give him the Honorable Property.

Finally, as she has acquired several really annoying enemies in Noble society, she spends another 3 character points to increase her Patronage score to 4. She takes the Dutiful Virtue and the ability to create Bright Warnings. She immediately attaches the Bright Warnings to her enemies. At this point, she has three Virtues, which is slightly more than she can handle — but she could later increase her Patronage to 5 and learn to give out the Emperor Property *Passionate*, since Dutiful covers duty to her Code as well as the War.

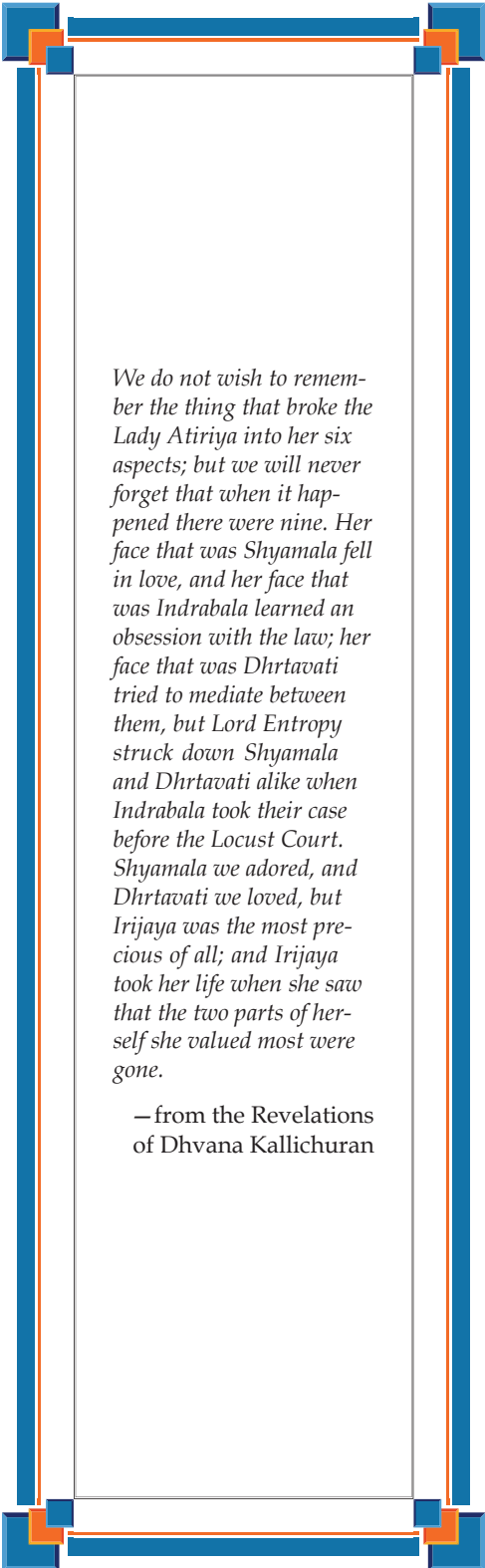
Najia can change her Virtues later, if she so chooses, since they are Handicaps. However, she cannot change the Emperor Properties she has chosen — if she does not have an appropriate Virtue for a Property, she can't give it out.

He was weak and they held him back, but then the Hunger fell upon him, and he moved against the foe. Through their ranks he tore, cutting through the soldiers as if they were paper toys. He came against Ju Sze-mei and their blades met, and with her soldiers still milling about him and striving at his back, he fought her to a standstill.

"I had not thought you so strong," she said.

"I am not," he said. His eyes burned with his Need for blood and death, the hook caught in his soul since the day of his daughter's execution. "But I serve a powerful master."

—from
On Serving the Nobilis,
by Luc Ginneis



We do not wish to remember the thing that broke the Lady Atiriya into her six aspects; but we will never forget that when it happened there were nine. Her face that was Shyamala fell in love, and her face that was Indrabala learned an obsession with the law; her face that was Dhrtavati tried to mediate between them, but Lord Entropy struck down Shyamala and Dhrtavati alike when Indrabala took their case before the Locust Court. Shyamala we adored, and Dhrtavati we loved, but Irijaya was the most precious of all; and Irijaya took her life when she saw that the two parts of herself she valued most were gone.

—from the Revelations
of Dhvana Kallichuran

Superior Attributes

Some mortal characters are, quite simply, better than humans. They are stronger, faster, sneakier, or more destructive. They can accomplish improbable feats — but these feats are mundane actions.

Nobilis represents these abilities with **Superior Attributes**, such as Superior Intellect, Superior Toughness, or even such limited-purpose abilities as Superior Resistance to Blandishment.

Each Superior Attribute has a rating between 0 and 9. It allows the character to perform appropriate feats, with a mundane action, as if using an Aspect miracle of that level. For example, characters with Superior Speed 2 run as fast as Powers using level 2 Aspect miracles. A Power would need an Aspect 7 miracle to break the grip of a character with Superior Wrestling 7. Since these are mundane actions, they ignore the Auctoritas — but the Rite of Holy Fire does protect against offensive uses.

To purchase these Attributes, characters must develop the ability through natural, mundane means. For a human-born Power, Superior Attribute scores top out at 2 — and that requires considerable natural talent and many years of practice. Animals, nature spirits, and creatures from other worlds can have higher Superior Attributes, as can Imperators and Excrucians. Most, however, do not.

Superior Attributes cost 1 point per level. Not all Superior Attributes are created equal; Superior Speed and Superior Cooking have the same cost, and — depending on the campaign — one can prove far more useful than the other. The HG should ensure that both player characters and Noble NPCs restrict themselves to Superior Attributes of limited scope.

If a character's Superior Toughness (or Superior Grit, Superior Endurance, etc.) exceeds their Aspect, base their wound levels on the Superior Attribute. An ennobled rhinoceros with Aspect 0 and Superior Toughness 2 has six wound levels — two Deadly, two Serious, and two Surface.

In **Dynamic Nobilis**, the HGs can use these rules to replace the **Talent & Professionalism** shift towards triumph on mundane actions. Alternately, they can apply these rules only to physical advantages and truly superhuman talent.

It took me ten years of practice to learn to paint — without miracles — what I could accomplish miraculously from the moment of my Commencement. And in that time, I have grown into my power, and can make works that transcend my mortal art as the ocean transcends a pond. But still I sit in the morning at the easel and paint with the skill of an ordinary woman; and why?

Anyone may work miracles; but in the ordinary things dwells God.

— Akilina Govorov,
Warden of Locus Kadmiel

A Menagerie of Myths

preview

Here are a few pages from forthcoming peculiar books to help put context to the High Summoning miracles.

Rules Templates

A creature's *rules template* describes the basic game rules governing its abilities. For example, creatures with the **Noble** template have Aspect, Spirit, Domain, and Realm Attributes, and miracles cannot directly change their nature. Each template has a *priority* rated Lowest, Low, Medium, High, or Highest. If a creature has multiple templates, and they conflict, use the template with the highest priority.

In some cases, the abilities *available* to a given template far exceed the typical. For example, nature spirits can have Superior Attributes up to 8, but most spirits top out at 0-5. Higher ratings are possible for such things as a mountain's Superior Toughness or light's Speed. These should be 7, so that level 8 Aspect miracles can split mountains and outrace lasers.

Similarly, if a given template allows Gifts that can affect Powers or miraculous energy, this doesn't mean that every Gift taken by a creature with that template does. For example, if a creature with that template has Glorious, their beauty doesn't overpower Noble minds — unless explicitly stated.

□	□	□	□	□
□	“Every day, for seventy	□		
□	years, I would throw an evil	□		
□	thing into this bottomless	□		
□	pit. They would scream sat-	□		
□	isfyingly as they fell. After	□		
□	seventy years, I stopped	□		
□	this practice. It was no lon-	□		
□	ger necessary. I had firmly	□		
□	established a link between	□		
□	evil and an eternal fall; it	□		
□	had become the norm for	□		
□	black-hearted creatures	□		
□	rather than the exception.	□		
□	Only a few truly excep-	□		
□	tional monsters have been	□		
□	able to resist the subtle	□		
□	pressure of that standard	□		
□	and stop themselves from	□		
□	jumping into the pit at the	□		
□	steady rate of one per day.”	□		
□	I looked at the pit and	□		
□	thought of the horrors I had	□		
□	participated in through all	□		
□	my years of service, but I	□		
□	felt no great inclination to	□		
□	jump.	□		
□	— from	□		
□	On Serving the Nobilis,	□		
□	by Luc Ginneis	□		
□		□		

Lowest Priority

Default

"If you strip any Power down to their core, you have a human," said Mok Tso-lin. "If you take the miraculous power from them, and the habits of nobility."

"Not so," answered Chang Xue-mei. "I, for one, have forgotten what humanity is."

— from *A Noble's Catechism (Introduction)*,
by K.C. Danine

Unless otherwise stated, a creature obeys the following rules:

- They have no rating in Aspect, Domain, Realm, or Spirit.
- They have no Gifts or miracle points.
- They can have ratings between 0 and 5 in those exclusive Attributes (p. XX) explicitly available to their character type (or to all character types). They have no rating in other exclusive Attributes.
- They can have Superior Attributes between 0 and 2.
- They can learn or innately possess Earthly magics.
- They have no resistance to direct miracles. The Power of Memory can make them forget, the Power of Speech can give them a second tongue, and so forth. They are a part of all relevant Estates.

Example

Bhrajathu Behari is a human architect in Locus Drag-Adriessc. He has no Chancel-specific modifications, but he designs some pretty nice buildings.

Low Priority

Anchor

I sat down and pulled my son onto my lap. "I have heard you have been telling the other children about the glory of the Excrucian cause," I said.

"That's right," he said chipperly. "Ms. Caducine put a little piece of herself in my head and now I understand it all. How come you always explained it backwards?"

I will not write of what I had to do. Suffice it to say that the Excrucian Anchor will not bring further trouble to the Chancel of my lord.

—from the Journal of Calliste Focault

Characters with the Anchor template derive their miraculous nature, as an ongoing process, from another creature. This usually means they *are* an Anchor, although a few exceptions exist. They obey the following rules.

- Anchors are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. They cannot be directly warded, created, destroyed, or changed with miracles.
 - Exception: the creature from whom the Anchor derives its miraculous nature can use miracles directly upon it.
- The creature responsible for the Anchor's miraculous nature can most likely move their consciousness into the Anchor's mind, to witness events or take that mind over.

Example

Oriane Feroulet is one of Zéphyrin's Anchors, claimed out of his love for her. His need to prove her worth — to assuage his guilt at loving a mortal at all — complicates their relationship.

Animal or Machine

The panther sprang. Arikel didn't bother to move; it thudded into his shoulder and rolled off to the side. Its claws had made no dent in his flesh. Arikel, lost in meditation, was unperturbed. The panther, conversely, was clearly thrown. It regarded him with an expression I can only describe as intense puzzlement.

—from the Thought-Record of Cassius Quirinius

Characters with the animal or machine template can exceed human capacity in some respects — possibly being stronger or tougher.

- They can have Gifts reflecting their racial abilities (e.g., Flight or Amphibian).
- They can have Superior Attributes from 0 to 5.

Example

A Nameless Bee has the Gift of Flight. This particular bee belongs to the beehive Chelsea, whose spirit Patrick Precipice-Lord Anchored (p. 260, **Nobilis**). Accordingly, it has both the Anchor and Animal templates. These do not conflict in any fashion.

Inheritor

The child of the cosmos walked out into the Arizona heat. Where no one lived and nothing grew, he set up the ring. It took him only a few days to get the bandstands up and the restrooms built. Then he sat at his laptop and printed out a handful of flyers, reading, "The Child of the Cosmos against the Gods that Move Between the Stars! A once-in-a-lifetime wrestling event, coming June 3rd!" These he distributed in nearby towns. Then, at last, he let himself sleep.

"But you are only half a god," the reporters would ask him later. "How can you expect to beat the real thing?"

"The gods rule an unjust cosmos," he would answer. "But in the ring, I will make justice with my own two hands."

—from *24 Finales*, by Rannen Yedidyah

Characters with the Inheritor template have somehow inherited a certain amount of miraculous nature from a Power or Imperator — e.g., from an ancestor, or from the Chancel whose creation gave them life.

- Inheritors are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Inheritors can have ratings in one or more Attributes (Aspect, Domain, Realm, or Spirit). If so, they have a score between 0 and 3 and a base of 3 Miracle Points.
- Inheritors can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to mortals.
- Inheritors can have ratings between 0 and 3 in any exclusive Attribute available to Powers but not mortals.
- Inheritors can have Gifts of any potency. These Gifts can only affect things that are part of some Estate.

Example

Harkány Ordina found a recently dead “angel” — in truth, a winged Power — not far from his laboratory. A skilled mage, a talented doctor, and a thoroughly insane man, he decided to preserve the Power’s wings and the associated musculature by grafting them onto his own back. Since then he has found himself tainted by the miraculous — acquiring both power and peculiar Handicaps.

Inspired

"I boasted of my strength," explained the ogre, "and so I was transformed into what you see here and set to guard this treasury."

"If you permit me entrance," answered the Power, "I will take you back to my Chancel and restore you."

The ogre blinked. "Are you kidding? Do you know how much a good treasury ogre gets paid?"

—from *The Tragic Story of Jay Penhue and His Knights*,
by Melanie Tumbarius

Characters with the Inspired template have received Gifts (effectively) through the miracles of others. For example, a Chancel inhabitant blessed by a Realm miracle of Lesser Preservation can become effectively Immutable or Durant. A Cammoran can have exceptionally keen sight via the blessing of the Domina Oculae.

- They can have Gifts of any potency. These Gifts can only affect things that are part of some Estate.
 - These Gifts are contingent on circumstance. For example, a Chancel resident made Durant can lose that Gift by leaving the Chancel for more than a day.

Example

Vaslaw Karpenko is a Cammoran attached to the Russian mob. He has become effectively Eternal due to a bargain with the Power of Clocks.

Medium Priority

External

The finch's star is a thing not of the Lord, nor yet opposed by Him. It stands outside the laws of the world.

— from *Earth Stories*, compiled by Edward Guy

Creatures with the External template have potent abilities that are neither miraculous nor a form of Earthly magic. They stand “outside” the normal rules.

- Externals can have Gifts, including Gifts that can affect Powers or miraculous energy directly.
- Externals can have Superior Attributes between 0 and 9.

Example

The Mirrored Haunt of Locus Asaph is a particularly potent Bane. His face always looks like the viewer's own. He turns back miracles on their creator with a gesture of his bony hand.

Nature Spirit

Jacob's mirror did not like him. It showed him flickers of motion, at times, that caused him to spin about in fear. It flashed, for just a moment, a horror instead of his face. Finally, however, it found its most satisfactory technique: a slow and careful degradation of the beauty of his reflection. As Jacob saw himself grow uglier and uglier each day, the truth of it sank in; and, slowly, his beauty in the world outside his reflection began to fade.

— from *Test Pattern*, by Keiko Takemori

Characters with the Nature Spirit template are alive in Mythic Reality but inanimate or mindless in the Prosaic World. They are the living spirits of the world.

- They can have Gifts — most typically:
 - the Sovereign's Gift, adjusted to cost no MPs;
 - infrequently, Durant;
 - very rarely, anything else.
- Nature Spirits can have Superior Attributes between 0 and 8.

Example

Mijiza is a wind-spirit. In a bargain with the Power of Armor, she earned miraculous protection against calming and fading away, making her Eternal. She has the Inspired template, permitting this Gift, and the Nature Spirit template, allowing her to purchase Superior Speed 3.

High Priority

Deceiver-Shard

"You love me," he said. His voice was very assured, and I realized at once that it must be so.

—from *Jack*, by Keiko Takemori

Creatures with the Deceiver-shard template are shards or other extrusions of an Excrucian's nature. The Excrucian in question is almost invariably a Deceiver.

- Deceiver-shards can have a rating in Aspect. If they do, it is between 0 and 2.
- Deceiver-shards can have ratings between 0 and 3 in any exclusive Attribute available to Excrucian-shards.
- Deceiver-shards have a base of 0 Miracle Points in every appropriate Attribute for which they possess a rating.
- Deceiver-shards can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers and miraculous energy directly.
- Deceiver-shards can perform the Ritual of Two Skins (pg. 202, **Nobilis**) and gain access to a specific Noble or Emperor's abilities, becoming vulnerable in turn to the Truth of the Name (also pg. 202, **Nobilis**). As a specific exception, they do not gain the ability to work Imperial miracles when they gain access to an Emperor's abilities.

Example

Rowen Crusher is a name sometimes worn by shards of Coriander Hasp. The exact distinction between Rowen's personality and Coriander's is unclear. Sometimes, a Rowen seems very different than his greater self. Sometimes, he seems like nothing more than a direct extension of Coriander's will.

Deceiver

"Why do you have a gun in your hand?" he asked.

"I have promised to kill the one I love."

"You hate me," he said. His voice was very assured, and I realized at once that it must be so.

— from *Jack*, by Keiko Takemori

Characters with this template are Excrucian Deceivers and similar creatures from the Lands Beyond Creation.

- They are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Deceivers have ratings between 0 and 7 in Aspect and Spirit.
- Deceivers can have ratings between 1 and 7 in Domain or Realm through a Focus.
- Deceivers have a base of 5 MPs in all four Attributes, even if they have no Attribute rating.
- Deceivers can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to Excrucians.
- Deceivers can have Superior Attributes from 0 to 7.
- Deceivers can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers and miraculous energy directly.
- Deceivers can create Deceiver-shards.
- Deceivers can perform the Ritual of Two Skins and gain access to a specific Noble or Emperor's abilities, becoming vulnerable in turn to the Truth of the Name. This includes the ability to work Imperial miracles, when wearing an Emperor's "skin".

Example

Archetel Denisot notes, in a private interview, that Excrucians do not so much lack the power of Domain and Realm as that they lack Estates and Chancels recognized on Earth. "There are things in the Lands Beyond Creation," Archetel says, "that I have influence over and few others do; but these things are useless in the War." Archetel has the template Excrucian Deceiver, and therefore cannot be believed — but in any case, even Excrucians without Domain or Realm have enough potential in that Attribute to have the corresponding Miracle Points. Therefore, they can use their DMP-based Gifts.

Excrucian Strategist

The machines of war opened their mouths and blew a great wind of famine across the land. They blew forth a wind of pestilence. They blew forth a wind of death. After each such gout, the people came to their King and said, "You must save us." Each time, he answered, "I have foreseen this wind; all proceeds according to my plan."

When the wind of death had passed, the last people of the kingdom said, "Your plan has failed, your majesty, for your land is dead."

The King looked at them, as if from very far away. "Had they sought to kill the land, and I to stop them, then I would have failed; but they did not, and I did not. Their only goal was to torment my heart with the suffering of my people. My only goal was to seal my heart in stone."

—from *Legends of the Nobilis*, by Luc Ginneis

Characters with this template are Excrucian Strategists and similar creatures from the Lands Beyond Creation.

- Strategists cannot be directly warded, created, destroyed, or changed with miracles if they have even 1 MP remaining. Each time they use this resistance, they must spend a Miracle Point of any type.
- Strategists have ratings between 0 and 7 in Aspect and Spirit.
 - Strategists must spend one Miracle Point each time their Auctoritas stops a miracle's effects. If they have no Miracle Points remaining, their Auctoritas does not function.
- Strategists can have ratings between 1 and 7 in Domain or Realm through a Focus.
- Strategists have a base of 5 MPs in all four Attributes, even if they have no Attribute rating.
- Strategists can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to Excrucians.
- Strategists can have Superior Attributes from 0 to 7.
- Strategists can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers and miraculous energy directly.
- Strategists can create Strategist-shards.
- Strategists can perform Imperial miracles.
- Strategists can take the World-Breaker's Hand for 0 Character Points.

Example

Evemy Syriack claims responsibility for the creation of Eurytos, also called Horror. Certainly she displays its mark: circular scars dot her body, as if made by the poisoned weapon's spines. Her soul is also tainted by the Abhorrent Weapon; a twisted madness grips her, bearing little resemblance to the calm, polite destructiveness typical of Harumaph's Children. She has been known to display aberrations ranging from mass murder to bargains with the Imperators or the Nobilis. She has the Excrucian Strategist template.

Excrucian Warmain

In the Chancel of Lorelle Clark, one may always choose to sacrifice one's life to save another's. This is not magic. This is not a miracle. It is the law of the world.

Lorelle dueled the Warmain Hesychia Symeonius in the center of her court. Hesychia's blade hungered for Lorelle's life, but could not take it; each time it plunged into her heart, or chopped away her side, or ripped through her spine, one of the silently watching courtiers stood up and took that death in her place. The Warmain was snarling, hateful, angry, and realizing with horror that it was possible to lose. As for Lorelle, I have never seen a woman look so radiant or so beautiful. She was lost in the rapture of it, for Lorelle is a Power of the Dark.

—from *On Serving the Nobilis*, by Luc Ginneis

Characters with this template are Excrucian Warmains and similar creatures from the Lands Beyond Creation.

- They are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Warmains have ratings between 0 and 7 in Aspect and Spirit.
- Warmains can have ratings between 1 and 7 in Domain or Realm through a Focus.
- Warmains have a base of 5 MPs in all four Attributes, even if they have no Attribute rating.
- Warmains can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to Excrucians.
- Warmains can have Superior Attributes from 0 to 7.
- Warmains can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers and miraculous energy directly.
- Warmains can create Warmain-shards.
- Warmains can perform Imperial miracles.

Example

Oreute Bryde has seven aspects and exceptional skill at invading reality. If she can break even the smallest piece of herself into the world, she casts forth seven unusually powerful Warmain-shards. The Assassin wears violet and pursues its goals in stealth. The Brute wears indigo and serves its purpose with strength and violence. The Knight wears blue and pursues its ends with honorable force. The Judge wears green; it acts with discretion and seeks poetic endings. The Thief wears yellow and indulges in cleverness and guile. The Diplomat, in orange, seeks to divert Oreute's enemies through bluff, persuasion, and barter. Finally, the Healer, in red, does not serve Oreute's purposes at all. Damaged by some unknown force, this aspect of the Warmain opposes the others and strives to defend and heal the world and the Powers caught in Oreute's machinations. Oreute has the Warmain template.

Imperator

Once, I believed in the sanctity of life. It has grown harder, as the years progressed, to cling to that belief – to resist going out at night and killing, simply to kill. This is not sociopathy or rage. It is my burning wish to honor the Lord of Expectations, Ananda, Emperor of Murder, whom once I saw.

—from the Thought-Record of Robert Baxt

Characters with the Imperator template are creatures of pure *spiritus Dei*.

- They are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Imperators have ratings between 0 and 7 in Aspect, Domain, Realm, and Spirit, and a base of 5 Miracle Points in each.
- Imperators can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to Imperators.
- Imperators can have Superior Attributes from 0 to 7.
- Imperators can have Gifts. These Gifts can only affect things that are part of some Estate.
- Imperators can create Chancels and Nobilis.
- Imperators can use Imperial miracles.

Example

The Megalith Wasps (p. 213, **Nobilis**) are not normally considered Imperators; much like mortal wasps, they have minimal intelligence at best. However, these giant wasps derive their substance from the World Ash on which they nest, and are therefore creatures of pure *spiritus Dei*. They obey the Imperator template.

Noble

This is how Bao Way-ming punishes the worst offenders brought before his court. He strips them of their memories and replaces them with his own. Thus, the shameful creature remembers themselves as the exalted Way-ming – but finds themselves suddenly human, suddenly a branded criminal, and suddenly powerless, unworthy to so much as pledge themselves to Way-ming’s glorious Estate or Code. He does not let them commit suicide; they must live out their lives with the horrible pain of that loss, and most go mad.

— from *Chamomile Book*, by Chien Shan-lee

Characters with the Noble template have miraculous abilities and a miraculous nature.

- They are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Nobles have ratings between 0 and 5 in Aspect, Domain, Realm, and Spirit, and a base of 5 Miracle Points in each.
- Nobles can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to Powers.
- Nobles can have Gifts. Their Gifts can only affect creatures vulnerable to direct miracles.

Example

Claudia Müller was born under just the right stars, blessed with good fortune well beyond mere miraculous luck. Division II of Austria’s Federal Ministry of the Interior recruited her for the occult investigations branch of its Directorate-General for Public Security; there, she unraveled some of its most puzzling cases. In those days, she obeyed the External template and her Luck Gift was able to twist the actions of Imperators, Nobles, and Excrucians alike. After she defeated several Excrucian-shards through guts and providence, the Imperator Yefef recruited her as a Power. Her Luck can no longer affect miraculous entities; the Noble template has a higher priority than the External template and imposes a limit on the character’s Gifts.

Strategist-shard or Warmain-shard

I watched its eyes. Sometimes, I can tell the difference between them – 'tween Warmain and Strategist-shards – by the way the stars fall. And it matters. It matters a whole lot.

Warmains don't get in my way. Not often, anyway. They see my Lord's work in the world, and they smile, and they stand aside to let me do it. Strategists, though, they get all funny about it, as if there's something about my Lord that the Warmains don't quite get.

This one was a Strategist-shard. I signaled the snipers. The stars in his eyes witnessed that gesture, and instantly they understood.

—from the Thought-Record of Hugh Rosewood

Creatures with these templates are shards or other extrusions of an Excrucian's nature.

- Excrucian-shards are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Excrucian-shards have ratings between 0 and 5 in Aspect, Domain, Realm, and Spirit, and a base of 5 Miracle Points in each.
- Excrucian-shards can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any exclusive Attribute available to them.
- Excrucian-shards can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers and miraculous energy directly. Not all of their Gifts do.
- Strategist-shards can take the World-Breaker's Hand for 5 character points.

Note that Strategist-shards do *not* spend Miracle Points to fuel their Auctoritas and resistance to direct miracles.

Example

Malakai Fang is an occasionally-seen shard of Malakai Mesmer that takes the form of a wolf. He obeys the Animal and Strategist-shard templates. He can therefore purchase Superior Speed 3 as a wolf and a cheap World-Breaker's Hand as a Strategist-shard.

Highest Priority

Transcendent

“Look,” said the Serpent, “you don’t just come in and talk to the World Ash. She wants to talk to you, she’ll call you.”

“It’s about Lucifer,” I said. There was a pause.

A green and leafy voice from the next room said, “Show her in.”

—from *The Kifri Murders*,
by Kalliope Tsouderos (unpublished)

Characters with the Transcendent template have a nature beyond miraculous — they are either Imperial creatures on a scope that far exceeds the Angels, such as the World Ash, or truly exceptional monsters from the Lands Beyond Creation.

- Transcendent creatures are not a part of any Estate. Similarly, no aspect of their mind or body is part of any Estate. Thus, they resist direct miracles.
- Transcendent creatures can have ratings between 0 and 9 in Aspect, Spirit, Domain, and Realm. They have a base of 5 MPs in each.
 - Transcendent creatures can take any concept as a Domain or Secondary Domain. This includes concepts already taken by other Powers or Imperators as well as normally illegal concepts like “miraculous energy”.
- Transcendent creatures can have ratings between 0 and 5 in any appropriate exclusive Attribute.
- Transcendent creatures can have Superior Attributes between 0 and 9.
- Transcendent creatures can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers, Imperators, and miraculous energy directly.
- Transcendent creatures can use Imperial miracles.
 - This ability may be sharply limited in scope, or, alternately, quicker than it is for Imperators.

Example

Epititiokh has come into Creation twice, and where she passes she brings the drought; water and life alike dissolve with her passage, green things and blue things die, and even in her walk through Heaven she killed the flowers as she passed. No one can stop Epititiokh, or bend her to their will — but men and hermaphrodites may offer themselves to her as lovers. When she has taken one, and drained in their climax every last drop of water and life from his flesh, she leaves Creation once again.

Unearthly

As the Emperor stepped into our world, I felt a change in the air: suddenly, I understood the ideas of Komm and Iax, which had not been part of the Earth before. I shall not describe them here. No doubt they would confuse both myself and the reader when the Lord Hadasdagoy of Dionyl has gone.

—from *On Serving the Nobilis*, by Luc Ginneis

Characters with the Unearthly template come from another world on the Ash, or from outside Creation entirely.

- Unearthly characters can have Superior Attributes between 0 and 9.
- They can have Gifts, including Gifts that affect Powers or miraculous energy directly. These Gifts are not arbitrary, but rather represent Gifts available to the appropriate character type on their world.

Example

Jusguarin is an Power from Abaton, a dark and hollow world far from Earth. He has both the Noble template and the Unearthly template. The HG could allow Jusguarin and other Powers from Abaton to have a specific kind of Gift that affects Powers directly. The HG could also rule that the natural inhabitants of Abaton have up to 5 levels of Superior Night Vision. If for some reason Jusguarin is a player character, these things will require negotiation.

Entities

As a Noble, you must accustom yourself to strangeness. At any time, a giant may stop in for tea, or a spirit seek to become your lover.

—from *Becoming Noble*, by Fayola Osiagobare

This section presents a selection of the strange entities that occasionally interact with the Nobilis on a social level.

Handicaps

Impermanent Gifts

Recipients can transfer away a Charitable Being's gift with a suitable celebration.

Gives 1 DMP (included in Attribute total.)

Slow Work

It takes time for a Charitable Being to locate a suitable gift.

Gives 1 DMP (included in Attribute total.)

Erratic

Charitable Beings are not sane or self-interested.

Gives 1 AMP (included in Attribute total.)

Charitable Blessing

Charitable Beings can offer almost anything as a gift, if they spend long enough searching for it. They can graft on new arms, enhance others' Attributes, adjust a Noble's genitive force so that their future children come out toads, deliver masterful alchemical creations or stolen Abhorrent Weapons, or anything else of that sort. This is purchased as a Major (Creation or Change) of any Estate, as shown below.

Miracle Level	Invocation	Range	Utility	Common?	Cost
9+7 Penetration (Domain)	Normal	Global	Full	<i>No</i>	
16 CPs	-2	+1	+1	+1	17*3=51 CP

Lawbreakers

Noble, Unearthly Entities

“I have sworn not to relinquish my guardianship,” I said. “If I should let you pass, I die.”

The creature fixed me with its burning eyes. “I am not of this world,” it said, “and your oath does not recognize that I exist.”

I have heard the speech of Deceivers and their shards. I knew that what I felt was not persuasion or a lie. With a strange, sick feeling, I understood that its words were truth, and that the sanctity of my oath would not defend me from its passage.

— from the Thought-Record of Christoph Balleroy

The Lawbreakers come from the Lands Beyond Creation: cadaverous creatures with burning eyes and shallow breath. Despite their name, they do not truly break laws — they are simply invisible to them. Duties and oaths — even the oaths of characters with the Honorable Virtue — treat the Lawbreakers as nonexistent. Mortal police ignore their most egregious crimes. Powers have used alliances with the Lawbreakers to shelter certain actions from the Code Fidelitatis or their Imperator’s disfavor; Lord Entropy shows no sign of extending the Code to cover the Lawbreakers’ actions. The social order does not recognize these creatures; the *res* (pg. 101) treat them as nonexistent, and can even pass through them physically as if they were so much air.

The Lawbreakers willingly bargain with Powers who summon them. Powers pay them for their services by accepting *weirds*, a concept that does not translate well into the languages of Creation. In practice, each accepted *weird* imposes a certain insanity on the Power for a certain length of time. The Lawbreakers can extend their protection slightly, so that actions taken in close concert with them are equally invisible. High Summoners who wish to commit treason often spend much of their lives closeted with a Lawbreaker. This drives them insane, but ensures protection against the anger of their Imperator and the punishments of Lord Entropy.

The insanity of a *weird* varies across the full range of normal mental illness, and many mythic conditions as well. Players making deals with Lawbreakers can discuss the *weirds* they might accept with the HG.

Handicaps

None.

Lawbreaker

Aspect 0-2 5 AMP

Domain *unrated* 5 DMP

Realm *unrated* 5 RMP

Spirit 1 5 SMP

Durant

Eternal

Immune to Law

Wound Levels (Durant) —

Deadly []

Serious []

Surface [][]

+1 Serious for Aspect 1 []

+1 Deadly for Aspect 2 []

Nobilis: A Game of Sovereign Powers (Previews)

Immune to Law

Laws, social order, and agreements simply do not apply to these creatures from the Lands Beyond Creation. The exception is agreements involving the *weirds*. This is purchased as a Major Destruction of Social Contracts — or, specifically, the property that makes them apply to the Lawbreaker — as shown below.

Miracle Level	Invocation	Range	Utility	Common?	Cost
7+7 Penetration (Domain)	Automatic	Global	One Trick	<i>No</i>	
14 CPs	+1	+1	-3	+1	14 CP

Annul Miracle

Peregrine bears can counter any miracle they see used; this costs them one DMP. This is purchased as a major destruction of miraculous power, with miracle level increased to 9, as shown below.

Miracle Level	Invocation	Range	Utility	Common?	Cost
9+7 Penetration (Domain)	Normal	Local	Comprehensive	No	
16 CPs	-2	-1	-1	+1	13 CP

The Accords at Babylon

mini preview

Sacred Contracts

. . . The *res* are sacred contracts bound in a physical form. The body of a *res* can take any form, from a smooth stone to a bronze spear; some *res* even take form as a human or animal. The covenant held within that body can sanctify an ordinary bargain, embody a group with specific goals, or bind Nobilis together in service to the common good. Powers who agree to participate in the covenant become “bound” to the *res*. . .

The Book of Purity

mini preview

. . . The second moral virtue, *purity*, measures a character's personal growth. As a character frees themselves from human failings, their purity increases. . . .

Terrene Particles

Black and white particles are two aspects of the terrene essence, the moral grounding of the soul, the element of the earth. These particles create certain forms of malignity and innocence, as well as the harvest, the soil, and stone.

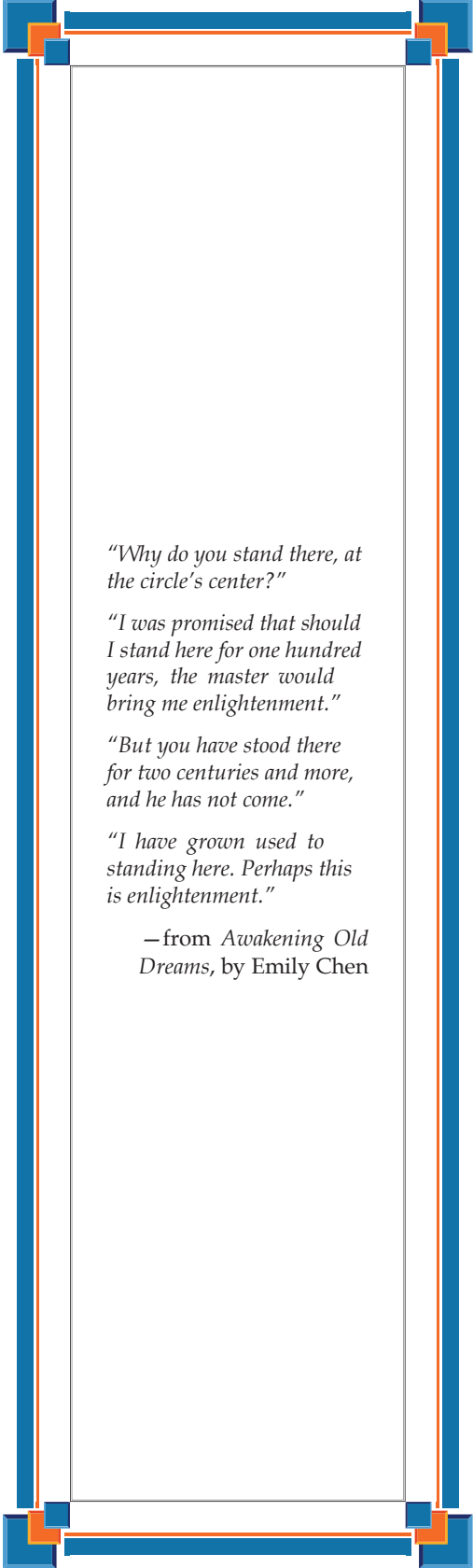
Black particles are the particles of empathy. They call to one another, forming a channel by which one soul can know another's pain. These particles create prudence, wisdom, constancy, evil, falsehood, and error. Solid black particles create moments of malice, in which one seeks to hurt another through the sudden understanding that one can. They also give rise to moments of conscience, where one suddenly sees and acts to ease another's pain. A deep and persistent appreciation of the nature of suffering manifests the power of the clear black particulate substance. This pure inspiration, as with the polluted black, can inspire a character either to enhance or remove others' anguish.

White particles define the quest for abstract virtue. This is the substance of philosophers and the spiritual essence of ethics itself. This substance creates purity, truth, innocence, magic, hope, and beauty. The solid white substance inspires those who blindly adopt ethical codes and standards of behavior, whether learned from their culture or a charismatic leader. Clear white particles brace and empower the souls of those who develop their ethics from rational introspection or spiritual inspiration.

Vincent Guntali did not believe in Hell; nor did he believe that, should such a place exist, he would be exiled there. Perhaps this amused the Prince of Lies, for he struck a bargain with Vincent's soul. Now Vincent sits in a high place overlooking the flames and suffering. So long as he remains unwavering, remains certain that he does not belong in Hell, he shall not suffer from it.

He did well at first, but for the past year, he has dared think nothing else but "I am not in Hell."

—from *Observations of the Damned*, by Quan Feng-Ying



*"Why do you stand there, at
the circle's center?"*

*"I was promised that should
I stand here for one hundred
years, the master would
bring me enlightenment."*

*"But you have stood there
for two centuries and more,
and he has not come."*

*"I have grown used to
standing here. Perhaps this
is enlightenment."*

—from *Awakening Old
Dreams*, by Emily Chen

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Author's Note

I've always been proud of this stuff, all the 100,000+ words of **A Society of Flowers**, and I've wanted to get it out there —

But it has a different feel than the stuff I write these days.

That's made it really hard to finish. I haven't been sure what to do about that, but I figured out where to start. I'm going to start by making sure you can use it in your games.

So . . . here!

Have these words, as I wrote them, so many years ago.

And please forgive me if I have edited them, perhaps, written a bit more, fixed a few things, as I went along. It's like eating candy. ^ _ ^

And also please accept my regrets that this small book cannot contain all the goodness that was in the files I had sitting around; and that is why, you see, there must be other peculiar books to come.

What you will find here is the first part of **A Society of Flowers**, as it was written and as it perhaps will be. I'm glad I could do this, and I hope it brings you joy.

Best wishes,

Jenna
(was: R. Sean Borgstrom)

